



## Message from the Editor

Palestine's cultural scene has recently come under attack – by local perpetrators. ASHTAR Theatre's Eid al-Adha parade was violently assaulted; Al-Mustawda3 café and charity organization was violently attacked, then terrorized for weeks, and subsequently closed until further notice; the concerts of Bethlehem's PAM FEST's hip-hop and DJ festival have been postponed due to explicit security threats; and a concert at A.M. Qattan Foundation was moved online for the same reason. ASHTAR Theatre suspects that homophobic motives and a misinterpretation of the parade's colorful props prompted the attack. Al-Mustawda3 (with an exhibition space, a book exchange, and a second-hand shop whose profits supported charity) was attacked by a large group of homophobic youth who objected to a concert and attacked even after it was canceled, destroying property and injuring two. Unfortunately, subsequent daily threats have not led to police protection. Instead, PR specialists advised the owners to remain silent, given the extensive hostility expressed on social media. Because A.M. Qattan Foundation has a significant cultural presence, there is an ongoing debate over whether its decision (dictated by Palestinian security forces) to cancel the concert to protect both performers and audience might indicate that closed-mindedness and reactionary voices are winning. This segment of Palestinian society assumes the role of guardians of morality in the name of its interpretation of religion or in order to restrain what it perceives as a threat to traditional culture. Its presence on social media is vocal and apparently influential enough to prevent Palestinian security forces from assuming their role of protecting Palestinian civil society. The Palestinian Ministry of Culture has yet to react.

These voices represent only a part of the Palestinian people, however. *This Week in Palestine* strives to show the culture, open-mindedness, sophistication, diversity, and tolerance that continue to characterize most Palestinians – a people who has existed for centuries in the (home) land of three faiths and persevered in solidarity while facing invaders and increasingly aggressive occupiers. Teaching acceptance and convincing others that diversity is an asset is no easy task. But it is absolutely crucial! Palestine's rich culture is a source of identity and an important, effective tool in its efforts to engage in resistance!

We wish to thank the authors who have contributed to this month's issue: Tony Khashram, Dr. Shaddad Attili, the Ministry of Telecom and Information Technology, Dr. Felecia Adeeb, Ali Hamoudeh, Mohammed Musleh, Hani Abu-Dayyeh, Bishara Dabbah, Dr. Saleem Zoughbi, Hani Alami, Jamal Jawabreh, and Silvia Arancia. Our historical personality of the month is Mawlana Mohammed Al-Khalyly, presented by Dr. Ali Qleibo. We are happy to feature three books: Raja Shehadeh's new release *We Could Have Been Friends, My Father and I*, Donald E. Wagner's *Glory to God in the Lowest*, and the beautiful collection of artworks titled *Qanady! Al-Aqsa* by Shehab Kawasmi. Our artists of the month are Edward Muallem and ASHTAR Theatre, and Wadei Khaled. We are also embarking on a new series titled *Wildlife in Palestine*, presented by Rana Hijawi. Enjoy the many listed events.

Our entire team wishes you a more peaceful summer,

**Tina Basem**

