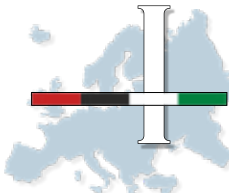




# A Culture Journalist Who Creates Bridges

## Liana Saleh



In a beautiful poem, Lebanese poet Etel Adnan suggests, “The voyage is infinite. The passenger is not.” As a Palestinian in France, I perceive my experiences in a similar vein.

I was 18 years old when I first arrived in Paris to study film. It was a gray autumn day in October 2005. At the time, it marked the beginning of a new life journey for me.

From a young age, I came to realize the potential of storytelling. When I was 16 years old, a student at Saint Joseph School in Ramallah, I directed a short fiction film entitled *A Ball and a Coloring Box* that tells the story of three Palestinian children who transcend the constraints of the Israeli occupation through the sheer force of imagination, as they seek to transform their dreams into reality. My passion for film motivated me to study cinema in France, where I became more aware of the power and agency dynamics that lie in the formation of narratives. In the spring of 2006, I joined Monte Carlo Douliya radio as a student intern. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this internship opportunity precipitated my journalism career. From Monte Carlo Douliya, I transitioned to its sister, France 24, where initially I worked as a news editor and reporter at the height of the newly erupting Arab Spring. Thus, I had the chance to be on the ground in Syria and Libya to cover the events of one of the most important turning points in the twenty-first century that reverberates into the present moment. I also was able to travel to Jordan and Turkey to interview refugees from Iraq and Syria. This formative exposure opened the space for me to explore the universal dimension of being Palestinian, specifically the capacity to establish common denominators between the Palestinian experience, both in the collective and individual realms, and the experiences of other marginalized groups in other parts of the world.

Interviewing French artist JR in Cairo.

Interview with Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof in Cannes, 2017.



I have striven to strengthen the agency of the people who have lived through political turbulence and its aftermath, whether as activists, bystanders, or refugees. Through my journalistic efforts, I wanted to let the people have power over the narratives formed about them.

In all honesty, I see Palestine in every injustice I encounter. This guides me to remain on the side of the displaced and of those who are left behind.



Working on the short documentary *Stateless in Palestine* in spring of 2018.



With Lebanese artist Ali Cherri.

For eight years, I have hosted a culture show on France 24. I invite artists, writers, and cultural figures from the MENA region and offer them a platform where they can communicate their experiences, make a contribution, and publicize their work.

I have traveled to numerous countries in the MENA region and met many artists, writers, and musicians whose works reflect their societies and treat taboo subject matters such as religion, politics, and social stigmas. From Lebanon to Morocco, Iran, and Egypt, artists, writers, musicians, and filmmakers produce artworks that recount alternative stories, giving us a unique opportunity to understand and reflect on the dynamics of change and continuity in the region. Art allows us to deconstruct the complexity of the present and consider the relationship between the past, the present, and the future.

In my work as a culture journalist, I seek to create bridges between the diverse and unmolded cultural scenes found in the Arab world and connect cultural practitioners with new Arab audiences.

With Algerian singer Souad Massi.



Where do you come from?

I'm from Palestine.

Oh, from Palestine. Then you know how it feels!

A Syrian refugee in Turkey



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