



The Symphony of a Homeland

It is said that it arrived to us on a ship that docked at our shores. Contrary to our customs, we are unable to welcome it! Although it does not fly for long, it is smart enough to know how and when to snipe at our young chicks and kill them in cold blood. Again contrary to our custom, we must encourage its expulsion. Otherwise, our grandchildren will not hear the sound of birds singing. This is the Indian raven, a true enemy in disguise. As much as we fear the loss of our birdsong, the enemy makes us fearful for what we own and love. We want our children, grandchildren and all future generations to enjoy forever the rustling of almond trees in Ramallah, the humming of vineyards in Hebron, the palm fronds playing music in Jericho. All these rhymes come to us accompanied by the roars of waves from the sea in Gaza. The maestro of this symphony is the voice that calls for prayers from al-Aqsa Mosque. We live as our reality preaches, identifying and sniping the enemy who threatens and snipes at our survival. Long live national unity.

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Division at lightning speed ... ending at a turtle's pace

Mohammad Yunis

The political division of June 2007, termed a 'military resolution' by Hamas and a 'black coup' by Fatah, took four days. It was recently agreed in Cairo to end the division in a first stage in four months, although many observers expect it to take years. To end the division, Fatah is pursuing the path of 'handing over rule' while Hamas is 'burning bridges', i.e., destroying every bridge to ending the divide to ensure there is no way back.

The agreement stipulates two stages: The first of giving powers to the government for four months and the second by tackling the major issues, inter alia, partnership in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), reconstruction of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), and reviving the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), to be discussed in a meeting of all factions in Cairo on the 21st of this month.

The first stage includes handing over the ministries and border crossings to the government and finding a solution for the 40,000 civil and military employees appointed by successive Hamas governments: 23,000 in the civilian sector and 17,000 in the police apparatus and security.

It was agreed that an administrative and legal committee would be appointed to discuss the issue of civil servants, and that the heads of security services in the West Bank would meet their counterparts in the Gaza Strip to discuss ways to reconstruct the police and security apparatus.

The border crossings were formally handed over to the government early this month but the issues of government institutions and the security apparatus have yet to be resolved. The administrative and financial committee should resolve the first issue and a delegation of security chief personnel from the West Bank will visit the Gaza Strip to deal with the security apparatus, which is the most complex issue.

The handing over of border crossings demonstrated the intense tension between Hamas and Fatah. A brief statement by Hamas political bureau member Mousa Abu Marzouk following the handing over of crossings revealed the extent of the differences between the two movements regarding ending the division. He stated: "The agreement that was signed makes no mention of the handing over, empowerment or legitimacy of one party without the other. The reconciliation agreement signed in the Egyptian capital on the 4th of May 2011 is based on partnership and national consensus".

Officials in the two movements acknowledge that a large gap exists in positions towards the first stage. Hamas is demanding the merging of new employees appointed by them with the previous employees appointed by the Palestinian Authority. Fatah argues that it cannot

accept the inclusion of a Hamas-appointed security apparatus because Hamas would then control the PA through their influence in the security services.

Internal differences are apparent in Hamas and sometimes surface over the "concessions" being made to end the division. However, close sources to the key Hamas decision-maker, Yahya Sinwar in Gaza, state that Sinwar is determined to end the division even if very painful concessions are required.

A close source to Sinwar said: "We are committed to maintaining the current security apparatus and merging them with the PA security services, but if the PA insists otherwise, we will find a way out". The alternative to keeping the security apparatus is difficult but not impossible. The existing security apparatus is powerful and effective. Egypt has demanded that it remain because it has proved effective in maintaining security in the Gaza Strip and the borders. If it is dissolved from service, there will be serious concerns about the chaos that existed prior to the division".

Commander of the security forces in Gaza, Major General Tawfiq Abu Naim, said: "We are all Palestinians and there will be no exclusion of any employee from the security services in the Gaza Strip. We will not accept the exclusion of any person".

He added: "An agreement was signed in Cairo in 2011 primarily to merge security forces and resolve the issue of the security apparatus and its employees in the Gaza Strip".

However, Fatah argues that this Cairo agreement is no longer valid for current issues. As a result, many believe that the problem of the security apparatus may take a long time to resolve, especially as Egypt, which is sponsoring the reconciliation, supports the Hamas demand to retain its security apparatus to fight Salafist groups and protect the borders.

In addition to the police and security apparatus, the military wing of Hamas poses a dilemma in ending the division. According to Dr. Mohammad Eshtayeh, member of Fatah Central Committee, one of the most significant benefits of reconciliation is having "one authority, one security personnel, and one gun". Many Fatah leaders point out that this demand is echoed by President Mahmoud Abbas and means the return of Hamas to its role as a political movement alongside Palestinian political movements.

President Mahmoud Abbas has called upon Hamas more than once to find a solution for its military wing. At a recent meeting of the PLO Executive Committee and in an interview with the foreign media, he stated that he would not accept the presence of "armed militias" in the Gaza Strip. Whether this stance by the President is a negotiating maneuver or a final decision is not known. Sources close to the President said that he is progressing with the reconciliation very



A poster printed and distributed in Belgium in 2012 by the Free Palestine group.

cautiously. They pointed out that he did not repeal the unprecedented decrees and decisions imposed on the Gaza Strip such as reducing the salaries of employees by 30%, cutting electricity supplies, and other measures.

Hamas offered President Mahmoud Abbas a serious deal for acceptance of the presence of its military wing in the Gaza Strip based on a commitment made to the Egyptian sponsor not to conduct any military action or have any armed or masked personnel on the ground in the Gaza Strip. Some observers believe that President Abbas may agree to this pledge if Hamas drops other demands regarding its appointed police, security apparatus, civil servants and others.

But even if rule is transferred in the Gaza Strip from Hamas to the PA, there are no guarantees that the key issues to end the division will be resolved in the foreseeable future, such as partnership in the PLO and government. Sources close to President Mahmoud Abbas say that Hamas participation in the PLO and government is not possible without acknowledgement of their political program, which is rejected by Hamas because it involves recognition of Israel and all agreements signed with Israel. To overcome these obstacles, Hamas proposes a return to the 2011 Cairo agreement, but Fatah believes that much water has gone under the bridge since the agreement was signed and therefore many of its articles are no longer valid.

An interview with al-Hal newspaper

Shaath: Trump policy is still vague and we will reject it if it is at the expense of our demands

We are currently working to revive the French initiative and strengthen the roles of Russia and China

Interview conducted by: Jihad al-Qaq*

The advisor to President Mahmoud Abbas for Foreign and International Affairs, Nabil Shaath, said that the policy of US President Donald Trump is still vague and its goals are unknown. As Palestinians, we must be prepared to follow it if it suits us or oppose it if it bypasses us. Shaath made these comments in an interview with al-Hal newspaper in Ramallah following his return from a political tour in Brussels last month.

Shaath added that our political path will be enhanced by the reconciliation because the division was used as a pretext by some countries in the international community not to proceed with the negotiations to end the conflict.

He added that reform of the PLO must also proceed after concluding the reconciliation.

Shaath, a longstanding leader in Fatah, abstained from commenting on the probability of reconciliation with what is known as the Mohammad Dahlan stream and the Fatah mother movement.

What is our approach to the United Nations, especially as you returned this week from a tour in Brussels within the framework of future political efforts? Where are we headed politically?

The international community always blames Palestinians for the division that stands in the way of any progress in the Palestinian cause. There is no doubt that Palestinian national unity and reconciliation will enhance our position and demands for recognition of the state of Palestine. It is a decisive point that counters doubts about us and what we represent. Constant activity is required to support the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, which has suffered from wars in recent years, in addition to many problems, the most important of which are unemployment, and shortages of electricity and water. We will work, especially after achieving national unity, to resolve the problems that burden our people. Work is underway to achieve unity that will strengthen us on political and public levels, and will enable us to redirect part of our efforts towards reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

Palestinians face difficulties in opposing a Israeli occupation that does not recognize any of our rights. We must be aware of this problem so we can confront it.

Everyone must understand that we cannot accept any regional resolution without a response to our demands, the most important of which is recognition of the state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and a solution to the refugee problem. We will accept a peaceful resolution based on international legitimacy to ensure the rights of our people.

We have an open dialogue with Russia and China. I was also in Brussels in an attempt to revive the French initiative and promote the roles of Russia and China. We must protect the Palestinian national cause until we reach a peaceful solution that guarantees us full recognition.

What does America want from the 'deal of the century' and where will this deal take us?

There has been nothing so far from the American President Trump. His policy is still obscure. He



pledged to move the American embassy to Jerusalem but has not yet done so. We are in permanent contact with the US and told the US administration what we want as Palestinians and what our demands are. If their policy matches these demands, we will go along with it, but if their policy will be in favor of the Israeli entity, we will reject it.

If reconciliation is accomplished and Palestinians are united, will we witness a change in the international position, especially that of the Arab countries?

The biggest dilemma lies in the internal problems of the Arab countries and the wars they face. We hope that Arab unity will be regained to face dangers. There is no doubt that some Arab countries played a positive role in Palestinian reconciliation, first and foremost our Egyptian brothers who opened their arms to us Palestinians. This does not mean that no Arab countries played a negative role in the Palestinian cause.

What explosive elements remain on the reconciliation agenda and what elements of control exist?

We have come a long way with the reconciliation, especially after Hamas dissolved its administrative committee in the Gaza Strip. Work is underway to initiate the national unity government, agree on a mechanism for elections, and hand over and open borders and crossings.

Some difficulties require intense efforts to be resolved, mainly the security issue and the weapons of the resistance. However, we are very determined and will work to face all problems and difficulties that impede reconciliation. No one can deny that we have made many positive steps.

In your opinion, is there any intention to reform the PLO? Or will the options remain linked to the stages passed through by the PLO?

The PLO is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Therefore, its role must be revived and a great effort is needed to restore its image.

Nothing about this is difficult or impossible and we should know this, especially after achieving unity.

The PLO is the umbrella under which we stand to realize our national rights. Hence, the PLO is very important and all political factions should cooperate. **Has the concept of armed struggle ended in exchange for a peaceful and transitional solution with the Israeli occupation?**

No one can deny that resistance is a right of our people whose lands were raped. The resistance is a right practiced against the occupation as long as Israel violates international law. But we do not follow the course of resistance, only because of the terrible and negative consequences it causes us.

We live in a small homeland with very limited resources in face of a huge military force. Therefore, acts of resistance and struggle are very costly at every level. The best example is what happened in the Gaza Strip, which underwent many wars where weapons of resistance were used and rockets were fired on Israel. But in return, Gaza was destroyed and the damage outweighed the benefits.

Therefore, we need popular and peaceful resistance in addition to the boycott of Israel and directing efforts towards international forums to deter Israeli policies.

Is there a possibility for fresh reconciliation between the different trends inside Fatah and an end to internal conflict within Fatah? In particular, there is a considerable following for Dahlan outside the framework of the movement. Are there any thoughts about reuniting the Fatah movement?

Fatah holds a great responsibility to unite the framework of the movement. This was an important objective of the 7th Fatah conference.

National unity exists and is based on the work of a national unity government that represents all parties and factions. There is no need to dissolve any party or merge them in one, but to unite efforts within all parties to strengthen them to work together.

There are no objections to any dissident from Fatah formulating a party of his own, as long as it is legal, but it is totally unacceptable for someone to impose himself on the Fatah movement with an external agenda.

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The women's march: Controversy over engagement with the other and accusations of normalization

Enas Baker

At a time when the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS) rejects all forms of normalization with the Israeli community, a number of events have run counter to this. The most recent was the women's peace march in Jericho, organized by a number of Palestinian women and Israeli women settlers, and met with great anger by Palestinians as a form of normalization. Others described it as political and intellectual engagement with the Israeli occupier. Al-Hal investigated some points of view.

The general coordinator of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), Mahmoud Nawajaa, believes that the women's peace march reflects the weakness of those who call for normalization in the Palestinian society. This was evident in taking women to participate in the march without informing them what it was about. Many women withdrew from the march, although there were few participants, indicating popular rejection for activities of normalization such as these marches.

Israeli dream team

Nawajaa described the recruitment of six Palestinians from the 1948 territories by the Israeli occupation to combat the BDS movement as: "Part of Israeli attempts to stop the movement, but it shows their weakness and fear that they recruited people for this purpose. They must be out of their minds to attempt to confront a very large movement that is becoming one of the strongest solidarity movements in the world".

Penetration of Palestinian society

The coordinator of national and Islamic forces, Issam Baker, expressed "the seriousness of

the expanded scope of normalization and Israeli attempts to penetrate Palestinian society under different guises". Baker clarified that "being dragged towards normalization, sometimes through youth and cultural exchange or other projects, are merely attempts to cover up the crimes of the Israeli occupation and refine its image to the international community".

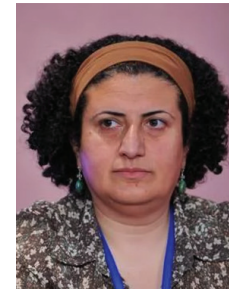
Baker described the 'women's peace march' as one of such attempts that are rejected and said that some people hide behind these activities and are unaware of Israeli intentions. He added that: "A number of women were contacted to participate in the march and were told that it was a trip to the Spanish garden. They were not informed about the normalization meeting. When they got off the bus, they were surprised to find a number of women settlers who are known for their stance against Palestinian rights". Baker explained: "The criterion for defining normalization as stipulated by BDS is the ban on any meeting with any Israeli at any level, whether directly or indirectly, unless this party recognizes Palestinian national rights as defined in international law".

Whitewashing the image of the occupation

Samia Botmeh, boycott committee coordinator at Birzeit University, clarified that the women's march is a 'normalization march' because of the foundations on which it was based. It does not take into consideration that the Palestinian relationship with the Israelis is not equivalent since Palestinians are people under occupation and they are occupiers. She pointed out that



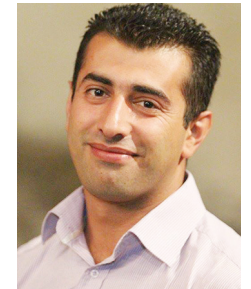
Elias Zananiri



Samia Botmeh



Issam Baker



Mahmoud Nawajaa

"the foundation on which this march was based is 'building peace bridges' but the Palestinian people have a 40-year experience with the peace process that did not yield the desired result of ending colonization in all its forms". Botmeh explained: "We do not have a problem with Israelis if the intention is to end colonization, but these activities show that we and the Israelis are in the same trench, which is exactly the opposite on the ground. We welcome Israelis who are ready to oppose Zionism by totally dismantling its system".

The Interaction Committee:

A political and intellectual engagement, not normalization

The vice-chairman of the PLO Committee for Interaction with Israeli Society, Elias Zananiri, said that the march was part of a popular movement that has no links with the Interaction Committee. The women's group that started these activities a year and a half ago approached the Interaction Committee hoping for participation by token women. In other words, they wanted some Palestinian

women to participate and present them to the audience. Hence, official approval was issued and a message on behalf of President Mahmoud Abbas was addressed to the rally of 1520- thousand people. Zananiri denied that the women had not been informed that the march was with Israelis and it was simply a misunderstanding because women had been asked to participate of their free will.

Zananiri added: "Ultimately, this event is part of the policy of real political and intellectual engagement with Israelis. It is not normalization, which is a relationship between Palestinians and Israelis on the basis that the occupation is permanent and there can be coexistence".

Zananiri said that the Interaction Committee is an official committee emanating from the PLO and Fatah movement. It was formed by President Mahmoud Abbas in 2012 with the mandate of engaging in political and intellectual dialogue with various sectors of Israeli society.

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Palestinian and Israeli women participating in a controversial march organized last month (al-Jazeera website)

In Gaza Strip prisons... reform of conjugal visits

Narmin Jadi

"I did not know the meaning of cruelty, alienation and the burden of responsibility before my husband was imprisoned. Since that time, I have been visiting him with my children constantly. On one occasion, he asked me for khalwa Sharia (his right to a private conjugal visit). Initially I hesitated because it was a difficult request, but I reluctantly agreed after he kept insisting. It was very embarrassing because everyone working in the prison would know the reason for my visit.

"When I had my youngest baby daughter Salma, my joy was tempered by the fact that her father was still in prison and she would grow up without him." This was how Eman (a pseudonym), a woman in her thirties, spoke with difficulty to an al-Hal correspondent to sum up her suffering due to the permanent absence of her husband who is serving a long term in prison. Eman is one of dozens of wives in the Gaza Strip who find themselves trapped in

a circle of shouldering all the responsibility for their families, and protecting their families from disintegration and destruction due to a crime committed by the head of the family. For various reasons, and under the guise of religion and 'a husband's right', she forced herself to have an intimate relationship with her husband inside the prison walls.

Institutions for prison reform in the Gaza Strip provide a number of social welfare programs that not only serve the prisoner inside prison but also address social issues in programs devised to support the prisoner and his family to enable them to overcome social, psychological and physical obstacles.

Social worker Suha Hammad said: "Programs for psychological support must be directed to the wives of inmates who are burdened by the responsibility for their families, not to mention society's view of them and their children. Reform institutions work to alleviate the emotional stress experienced by the

families of inmates in programs. For example, recreational trips bring children together with their father, plus conjugal visits help women to regain their sense of femininity and their natural role as a woman who complements her man rather than being separated from him, experiencing loss of self-esteem with each psychological challenge."

Um Ayman (a pseudonym) from Nuseirat refugee camp is the wife of a prisoner who committed a criminal offence. She said: "My husband always got himself in trouble. After his imprisonment, my family asked me to divorce him but I refused because I thought of the fate that my children would face, the life they would live, the stigma of abandonment because of social rejection as their father is a prisoner and their mother is divorced". Um Ayman proceeded with heavy sigh: "I used to visit him in a small room in prison with one of my sons. One day he asked me for a conjugal visit. I refused adamantly for many reasons as he was the cause of what had happened

to me and my children, of how the society looks at us and how those around us treat us. In addition, this is very embarrassing."

Al-Hal interviewed the spokesman of the Ministry of Interior in the Gaza Strip, Iyad Buzum, to enquire about conjugal visits and their objectives. Buzum said: "The conjugal visit project was implemented three years ago. A request for a conjugal visit is approved for those who were married before being imprisoned and have a long sentence; it is not granted to those serving a short prison term. The inmate applies to the prison administration expressing his need for a conjugal visit and specifying the time. His case is examined and if he is serving a long sentence and his conduct in prison is good, the application is accepted. The wife of the prisoner is contacted to coordinate between them. The mother and mother-in-law of the prisoner must accompany the wife to the prison on the date of the conjugal visit and an organized and orderly framework is ensured."



Leen at large

Rand Abdul Qader

"Are you depressed? Sit and let's talk." This phrase has been written on a large board by Leen Awartani as she sits by the crowded Law School in Birzeit University campus. Leen spent her break surrounded by a number of amazed students, waiting for someone to dare to sit in the chair placed opposite her. Leen's goal is to raise the awareness of an illness that is a taboo in Palestinian discourse. The 18-year-old girl glows with a serenity that conveys positive energy to all those surrounding her. She has a strong presence with her long curly hair and colorful flowing trousers that some people find strange. Although Leen has faced many criticisms, her optimism and wide smile are full of hope. "Are you having a bad day? Sit down and let's talk" Leen started her creative activities in the school playground when she carried a similar board on which she

wrote "Are you having a bad day? Sit down and let's talk". The idea proved acceptable and prompted Leen to repeat the experience in locations where people are unfamiliar with it. In the university, reactions ranged from mocking looks and admiration. Breaking the fear of mental illness This is this way that Leen aims to tackle sensitive issues such as mental illness. She told al-Hal: "People see these illnesses as psychological states or madness. They think that mental illness is shameful." As a law student at Birzeit University, she admits that she cannot treat the mentally ill, but hopes to encourage discussion and debate about this type of illness. Although few students participated, dozens inquired about the purpose of her project and Leen therefore achieved her objective of raising awareness about mental illness two days after World Mental Health Day. Leen's determination was not undermined when people criticized her on Facebook after she posted a video of her project. She declared that she had freed herself from the constraints of society and no longer cares about how people

view her. Most of the criticism revolved around her trousers or what was labeled as her 'ridiculous ideas'. Leen believes that these are "criticisms that stem from a lack of awareness about mental health, plus shallow comments and opinions about young people's initiatives." Leen did express her gratitude to those who provided constructive and sound criticism. She received huge support from psychologists who offered to help with her new idea. Also, the BZU guide added something about her role in helping the mentally ill students. Away from her cheerful personality and striking attire, Leen describes herself as an isolated introvert. She expresses her feelings through poetry that she shares with others at Sard (narrative), an event held every month in Ramallah to provide space and a platform for expression by writers, poets and artists. She believes that it is important to express herself in a way that does not harm those around her. Leen's Facebook page, called 'Leen at large', is where she posts images, ideas, and experiences with people.

Read then get a piece of cake for free

In the coming weeks, Leen is working on a new project to encourage reading called 'Read and get a piece of cake for free'. She has not set a date for the launch of this activity yet but confirms that she will offer free, freshly baked cake to all who read some pages from the books she will put in

the university.

Both joy and sadness

Leen defends her unusual activities by saying: "The concept is that society determines what our generation is allowed to do and how to behave. I want to convince people that we are the society, not the older generations. Your thoughts today are what will determine your future, and what will liberate or crush you." Leen is not so different from other young people of her age. She once was afraid of the way people looked at her, how they stared at her pimples, and their opinion of how she looks. Yet she has discovered the concept that we have ignored, namely that to abandon society's expectations is to be completely liberated. In brief, she has done what we have not dared to do and has become the person she wants to be by renouncing the idea that she needs to justify anything to the rest of society. Leen described how she feels and lives: "I feel a deep happiness when I have inner peace because we often find it difficult to appreciate a moment of joy. When I am satisfied and at peace with myself, I am happy wherever I find myself." Leen is an unusual being: unfamiliar and mysterious; a mix of strength and delicacy, sweet and sour, innocence and confidence. She can construct a clear self-image for others and a special aura through which they view her.

Rand Abdul Qader is a student at the Media Department of Birzeit University.

Without support and with few places for training

Street workouts remain a neglected sport

Sayed Ismail

"I spent nearly \$1000 during about two years on the iron structures we installed on the shore of Gaza city for workouts. The municipality dismantled and removed the structures twice. We asked the municipality for a space to practice our sport without any success." According to Baker Maqadma (aged 25): "When we gave up with the municipality, we talked to the Ministry of Youth and Sports but it also faced financial constraints. This caused the break-up of our team, which was one of the largest doing street workouts in the Gaza Strip."

How did street workouts emerge?

According to www.street-workouts.com, the roots of this sport date from the Greeks who practiced outdoor sports. However, the sport was actually established in the United States by the poor of the New York suburbs who were unable to pay the high costs of exercising in halls designated for that purpose, turning to parks and open spaces to practice sport. Practitioners of this sport perform individual movements on iron fixtures set up in the open air. The exercises require a great deal of agility, flexibility, and body strength. A federal body was established for this sport in 2011 and the first championship was held in Riga, the capital of the Republic of Latvia, in the same year. Baker said: "I learned about this sport from videos on YouTube in 2014. Swimming since I was a child helped me to build my physical fitness and I established a team called Bar Palestine comprising six individuals, including two children. We practiced the game using fixtures that we set up on the

shore of Gaza because there were no designated spaces for this exercise. We practiced without any safety precautions due to the costs. Although this was dangerous, the sand on the beach alleviated the effect of our falls during exercising." After some months, Baker was forced to break up the team because of the frustrating circumstances for practitioners of this sport in the Gaza Strip. He said: "Several press interviews were conducted without any success and we finally had to give up our dreams and give in to our bitter reality. All individual sports lack official support or that of big companies like Jawwal and Watania. For instance, I won first place in the local swimming championships of the Gaza Strip for five successive years but never received any attention or support, unlike team sports, especially soccer."

Costly equipment

After four years of practicing street workouts, Mohammad al-Hour (aged 23) recalls the beginning of his love for this sport: "I fell in love with this game from the very first time that I watched a video clip on YouTube. Unlike many who practice street workouts now, I was not practicing any kind of sport at that time. I do not know how I set up a place for exercise with the minimal simple means that I had and started exercising with great passion. Later, Mohammad Nabahin joined me and we formed the GBS team for street workouts."

Difficult obstacles

As a result of the inappropriate conditions for engaging in this sport, Mohammad al-Hour has suffered multiple injuries. This sport requires a special ground surface that can



One of the street workout teams during their training in the Gaza Strip.

absorb shocks. Also, the metal construction on which Mohammad performs his exercises is incompatible with the international standards laid down by World Street Workout and the Calisthenics Federation. Mohammad said: "I was injured several times and had to stop training for long months on two occasions when I had severe bruises on the face and a foot ligament injury, since I do my exercises without any safety precautions. Nevertheless, I will continue given my great passion for this game." Dilemmas related to travel to participate in championships abroad remain a substantial problem for Mohammad who added: "Since there is no local committee for this sport in

Palestine, I had to look for an opportunity to participate in a competition abroad. The permanent closure of the Rafah border crossing has prevented my dream from being achieved so far." Baker Maqadmeh added: "This is an individual sport that requires support of every kind to ensure safe training, including the establishment of a local Palestinian federation to bring the game to professional, then global level, with the possibility of moving abroad to train, compete, and exchange experiences among players and referees alike. Unless all this is achieved, there will be no real development of our game and our dreams will wither day by day."