

# alhal

## A film in black and white

The crescent moon was sighted last night. We took to the streets. Children carried lanterns that were lit and authentic. Women talked happily to each other about so many things. Fathers were around, but did not venture out that night. Not one of them went out, even those responsible for protecting the city walls.

It was a peaceful night. No one felt under any imminent danger. There were no devils, no thieves and not even Jews. Peace prevailed and was felt. Windows were all open, with curtains waving in and out, strangely with no difference between the inside and outside.

There was no concept of having a government, or of ruler and ruled. On this occasion, vehicles carried us Palestinians as they once travelled from Ramallah to Beirut, Amman, Baghdad, and to Gaza, the most beautiful of all. But, the loveliest were those who I saw there: a young man and woman who are cousins and in love. They were planning to marry and have many Palestinian children. Certainly, they were not afraid of Jews or Fatah or Hamas. They live in the beautiful past to which we all escaped in dread of tomorrow.

Editor-in-Chief

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4 PAGES

INSIDE

**02** Roshmia: A unique refuge in Haifa ... between documentary and fiction

**03** Dear Palestinian tourist: Do you know anything about Bedouin tourism in Jerusalem and Jericho?

**04** Mar Saba Monastery...isolated from civilization...electricity and women are not allowed

## "Conciliation"...national caution and pretexts by Hamas

**Ebaa Abu Taha**

Talk about prolonged "conciliation" between Hamas and Israel resurfaced in media headlines recently following the publication of a report in Yediot Aharonot Hebrew newspaper entitled "Israel holding direct and indirect negotiations with Hamas to reach an agreement for prolonged conciliation between the two parties". Local media also described a trip by senior Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk to Qatar for meetings to put the "final touches" to the proposal by an international official who visited the Gaza Strip a week ago.

The report prompted a denial by some Hamas leaders, although others confirmed that a "long-term truce" to introduce a conciliation agreement was concluded on the 26th of August under Egyptian auspices following the last war on the Gaza Strip and includes mechanisms for lifting the siege and reconstruction. In the meantime, Fatah describes this step as a "national trap" that Hamas is falling into in ignoring the Palestinian Authority and governing the Gaza Strip on its own. Abu Marzouk, deputy chairman of the political bureau of Hamas, denied that there was currently any written proposal with regard to the truce. He said that all talks taking place are oral conversations to collect information from European Union delegations visiting the Gaza Strip and to discuss the Gaza seaport on the initiative of the German Foreign Minister.

Abu Marzouk added that PA anger is unwarranted and reports of negotiations with Israel are fabricated and lack foundation in truth.

Hamas political bureau member Ziad al-Thatha told Al-Hal that talks are taking place on an imminent accord between Hamas and Israel in view of the faltering reconciliation with the PA and in search of new prospects for Hamas amidst deteriorating political

and economic conditions in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Thatha said: "We want the Rafah border crossing to be opened permanently and around the clock to allow for the entry of materials needed for reconstruction".

In his interview with Al-Hal, analyst Alaa Rimawi pointed out that the negotiations framework is based on drawing up the details of previous talks about items in the "temporary" truce with regard to the seaport, reconstruction and the movement of commodities. European mediators called for assistance after Egypt changed its method of negotiations on conciliation to an agreement to lift the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. This allowed Hamas to achieve some goals in terms of lifting the siege, entry of building materials for reconstruction and protection for weapons of resistance.

**Abdallah: Hamas has fallen into a national trap**

Abdallah Abdallah, a PLC Member of Parliament from Fatah, told Al-Hal: "The continued negotiations between Hamas and the Israeli occupation disregard all national and moral considerations". He believes that the truce will lead to the isolation of the Gaza Strip from its natural environment, will exclude the Palestinian leadership from any upcoming negotiations, aggravating the political division and plunging Hamas into a national trap. He added: "Hamas should call upon the Palestine Liberation Organization to take responsibility for the truce, reconstruction and lifting the siege instead of driving by themselves into negotiations with the Israeli occupation".

About the Hamas allegation that the Palestinian leadership caused the siege on the Gaza Strip, Abdallah said: "This is a false allegation without any foundation. The failure of the reconciliation government in the Gaza Strip was due to Hamas

themselves. They were also the ones who wrecked the steps carried out by the Palestinian leadership to lift the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip".

Political analyst Saleh Hawash clarified to Al-Hal that Hamas was disregarding other political factions in these indirect negotiations with the Israeli occupation. This has political and legal risks for the Palestinian cause as it may end by solving the problems of the Gaza Strip, but leaving the West Bank marginalized in negotiations with the PA, thereby deepening the Palestinian division in terms of relationship and geography. Writer Fayez Abu Shamaleh indicated in his interview with Al-Hal that the PA does not object to conciliation as such but to the method of indirect negotiations with the Israeli occupation through international and regional mediators. He believes that in the event of Hamas succeeding in reaching a political and national achievement, this will be seen as a blow to the PA after 22 years of its presence.

**Hamas message: end PA ineffectiveness**

Rimawi argued that with this step, Hamas has accentuated its presence in the region, obliging Egypt to back away from labeling it a terrorist movement. Hamas wants to convey a message to the PA to stop interfering in the livelihood of the Gaza Strip by tightening the siege as a price for the failure of the reconciliation government to fulfill its tasks.

Abdallah pointed to the need for an urgent meeting to be convened by the PLO leadership to adopt a responsible position on all the developments surrounding the Palestinian cause. The President of the PA must call upon the PLC to convene and take a balanced position with regard to many issues of concern to the Palestinian people.

## Palestine in the joint Arab military force: Fact or fiction?!

**Abdellatif Hijawi**

In their last meeting held in Sharm al-Sheikh, the chiefs of staff of Arab armies agreed to create a "joint Arab military force", alongside the formation of a team to draw up the executive procedures and legal framework for the work of this force, which is to defend the interests of the Arab states.

The Secretary-General of the Arab League, Nabil al-Arabi, declared at the end of the Arab summit: "This is a relaunch of the Arab League since the decision to create a joint Arab force had been always a goal and is important in view of the unprecedented threats facing the Arab world". However this force will take no action against Israel at present as its mandate is to resolve disputes that emerge between Arab states, or to control disputes within a state itself instead of calling in foreign forces as in Iraq and Syria. According to statements by the Palestinian ambassador to Egypt, Jamal Shobaki, Palestine has the right to participate in this joint force. But the question arises whether Palestine

has the capacity to participate? What is Palestine's interest in participation? How would we deal with the argument that "Palestine should take a back step away from all parties in the Arab world, especially after the Arab Spring".

To obtain answers to these questions, Al-Hal spoke to Dr. Khaled Sabatin, Director of the office of Chief of the Palestinian Civil Police, Major General Hazem Attallah, who led the Palestinian delegation to Cairo to participate in meetings on this military issue. Sabatin confirmed that the issue is still in its infancy and cannot be discussed because it has not yet been finalized in the Arab League agenda. Thus, nobody is authorized to speak as it requires an official position by the State of Palestine.

**Shahin: Ink on paper**

Dr. Murad Shahin, Professor of Political Science at Birzeit University, said that there is a need for the creation of joint forces. However he expressed skepticism with regard to its formation on the ground beyond



Adel Samara

mere ink on paper since Arab states have been unable to resolve less complicated issues. In other words, the realities in the Arab world do not give rise to optimism about the creation of such a force.

Dr. Shahin added: "For example, the dispute between Saudi Arabia and the UAE over the headquarters of the Gulf Central Bank is still unresolved". In other



Murad Shahin

words, if less complex issues are not yet resolved, how would the Arabs decide on a complex issue such as joint forces?

He added: "The creation of this force today may perhaps resolve an existing dispute or become a permanent force. In either case, it would not be successful because, in the event of its formation, it would serve a



Wasef Oreikat

very limited purpose and would complicate many of the existing problems."

He questioned whether the joint force agreed upon could actually resolve Arab problems. And what are these problems and with whom? Who would lead and finance these forces and where would their headquarters be?

► see more page 3

## Roshmia: A unique refuge in Haifa ... between documentary and fiction

**Azhar Oweidah**

Wadi Roshmia (Roshmia Valley) is the final refuge, the sole haven found by an elderly displaced Palestinian couple at the time. This is a return to pre-Nakba times when Palestinians lived in a shack without water or a power supply. The story is narrated in Salim Abu Jabal's film entitled Roshmia. Roshmia is a film that mixes documentary with fiction as a form of film-making. We cannot classify it as a documentary or as a narrative: In this form it makes up for the gap we usually feel when watching a documentary.

The narrative features reflected in Abu Jabal's documentary won him the jury award at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) and first prize at the Tetouan International Festival for Mediterranean Cinema (FICMT) held in Morocco. The film later toured and was shown throughout Palestine, starting in Gaza at the Karama (dignity) Human Rights Film Festival, then the West Bank and the 1948 territories.

Roshmia is a long film about an old Palestinian couple who are displaced in 1956 for the second time to Roshmia, a green forgotten valley on the outskirts of the city of Haifa. In 2008, this valley was turned into a street connecting the coastal neighborhood with the neighborhoods of Mount Carmel. This impacted on the life of the elderly refugees Abu Abed and Um Suleiman, the couple who had shared good and bad times together from the Nakba to the present day. We see them clash as a result of the heightened

emotions as they are aware that they will have to find another refuge after the decision to demolish their house. They see leaving their home as a declaration of the end of their marriage bond.

The audience is aware of the wife's overwhelming desperation, thinking only of what her share would be and what would she do with it. The husband needs to be left to live his remaining years in the place he loves with the plants he has reared like offspring.

The film leaves us in a state of internal turmoil about the new phase of life facing the old couple, an uncertain situation in which official solutions are offered by the authorities in an attempt to compensate the old couple for the history of a life woven here.

The film was shot in the Roshmia Valley and pictures the natural habitat. The main characters acted with no sense of the presence of a camera thanks to the building of a relaxed relationship of trust with the three characters in the film. The director told Al-Hal that he shot the film alone in 35 days spread over three years and he spent long hours to catch the footage he needed for his documentary-fictional film. Initially, the photography contributed to the campaign against the demolition of the house. As a result, the demolition was postponed more than once. The footage also contributed to the development of a certain tension that eventually turned the film into a long one.

According to Abu Jabal, the editing stage was the most difficult in terms of selecting incidents and building the scenario from a



*The shack relates the story of a phase in a life.*

large amount of material in which scenes were included or deleted. He dispensed with music in the film and sufficed with the sounds of nature inspired by the location, making little use of the radio.

In the film of Roshmia, director Salim Abu Jabal embodies the unique suffering experienced by the characters due to the demolition of their home, their final refuge

in life, and the deprivation of their basic civil rights, i.e. to stay in dignity in their home. This correlates with the suffering of all Palestinians whose houses have been demolished under the occupation, who have been permanently displaced from their land, and deprived of leading their lives with the right to their land and homes.

## International Arab-American legal expert supports Palestine

### Joseph Schechla: Palestinian endorsement of international conventions is a big mistake!

**Abdel Baset Khalaf**

Joseph Schechla, coordinator of the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), a global network for housing and land rights and social justice, believes that Palestinians have made a big mistake in endorsing two international covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, in addition to the conventions on combating torture, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, corruption, the rights of the child and the rights of persons with disabilities.

Schechla, an expert in economic, cultural and social rights and a practitioner of international law, states that the mistake lies in exempting the occupation of its obligations towards the Palestinian people. Israel has been released from its liabilities and is no longer obliged to provide any information relating to Palestine to reports contracted to international organizations to monitor the occupation.

"Israel has abstained in the past from providing any information or

references about the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip to the Commission of Civil Economic and Cultural Rights. This time, they will have a stronger pretext".

Legal regulations  
Schechla continues: "Under international regulations, a state is liable for individual and collective matters within its local jurisdiction and actual zone of control. Since Israel has no defined borders and the Palestinian state has assumed authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, control has been transferred outside of Israel's obligations; this is the situation following the Oslo Accords".

Schechla, an American who speaks Arabic fluently with an Egyptian accent, supports the Palestinian cause. He rejects his country's policies towards the people of the world. He states that Israel has supplied records of all the discussions by commissions in Geneva stating that the Palestinian Authority is responsible and holds actual control over its land once it ratified and became part of international treaties.

"Palestinians committed a mistake in signing these agreements and rushed to sign up without giving the matter sufficient thought,

thereby releasing Israel of all its obligations. The occupation state has been relieved of submitting reports to the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Israel no longer presents a legal controversy as Palestine will present its reports before the Committee as a state, even though it does not enjoy full membership in the United Nations".

He explains: "The PA should have been more vigilant before signing these treaties. It should have studied the issue and consulted because it lacks adequate experience in this regard, which is not an easy topic at all".

History and politics  
Schechla has supported the Palestinian cause since the late 70s and spent three years in the Gaza Strip. He spares no opportunity to attack the policies of his country: "The historical guilt about the policies of one's country cannot be seen as a collective responsibility, but rather the guilt of the individual who commits it. Thus, each American citizen must work conscientiously and we need to understand everyone's position before we accuse them".

Joseph, blond-haired and with American features, started

discovering the contradictions in his country's policies towards the Palestinian cause at an early stage when he embarked on contemporary Arab studies. He toured the region, mixing closely with Palestinians and Israelis. He also explored aspects of international law affecting land and productive resources in times of disputes, occupation and war.

Schechla studied Arabic language for six years and makes presentations on dispute issues and occupation resulting in the displacement of the population. Since 2000, he has been responsible for the coordination of global programs and Middle East and North Africa programs at the Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Right Network (HIC-HLRN) based in Cairo. This comprises NGOs active in the field of human rights to adequate housing, water and land. He previously worked as a coordinator at the Office of the High Commissioner Office for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Palestine from 1998-2000- and a representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Tunisia in 2011.

Peoples and population  
Schechla asks: "What is the relationship between George



Washington, whose name was given to Washington state (4000 km away from the capital which also carries his name) where I was born and that location?" He replies: "It is wrong to call the indigenous peoples of America prior to the US Red Indians. This is a colonial relationship with the indigenous peoples, who were annihilated".

Schechla warns of the danger of terms such as the word "population", which indicates that they are not a people with a right to self-determination or collective rights, but are only "crumbs". He says that mawel is an Arabic word referred to in Surat al-Kahf (the cave) in the Holy Quran to mean a refuge.

He concludes: "Some call me 'moaning George' because of the many views that I present and for my opposition to historical colonization and occupation".

## Dear Palestinian tourist:

# Do you know anything about Bedouin tourism in Jerusalem and Jericho?

**Aseil Sobhi Eid**

On the way to the lowest spot on earth, the rays of the sun are reflected on the sand of the desert on both sides of the road and add a distinctive golden color to the scenery. You walk there as if in a fairytale, enjoying the surroundings, while the Bedouin, the desert inhabitants, face persistent racism in Israeli demolition and deportation orders aimed to displace the Bedouin for the second or perhaps the third time in an ongoing Nakbah since the 1948 War.

Despite repeated visits of solidarity to support Bedouin steadfastness against eviction and demolition notices, the situation remains unchanged. Racist Israeli laws continue to snatch the land from its owners by force and replace the owners with settlers from outside. As a result, the Bedouin in the desert of Jerusalem and Jericho started a project against these decisions entitled "Sahari (deserts) for eco-tourism".

A Bedouin tourist guide for the Sahari project, Ahmad Hamadin, explained that the idea of the project actually started in 2014 to support Bedouin to hold onto their land and to highlight their cause by introducing tourists from local and foreign communities to Bedouin culture, traditions, livelihood and lifestyle.

Hamadin explained that the project starts by receiving visitors in a tourist house, a tent made of sheepskin. After having coffee, there is a journey to Tabaq Qatif, a high area overlooking most of the desert. Different trails are taken each time and tour guides provide historical accounts of the civilizations that lived in that area, the Bedouin communities, monasteries, Islamic and Christian religious sites, and environmental information about the location. Lunch is served for visitors before or after the journey as they wish.

**Tourist network**

Another tour guide in the Sahari project, Tareq Qarshan, described future objectives of the project to maintain the presence of Palestinians in the area through weekly tours, to receive more visitors by all available means, and to use the revenues for infrastructural development of Bedouin communities and to provide stationery and a library for students.

He added: "Bedouin are one entity. We aim to expand the project via a joint tourist network in the West Bank, in cooperation with all Bedouin communities, to receive



*Al-Hal reporter in a Bedouin tourist tent.*

visitors and strengthen relationships with other Bedouin communities in the Negev, Wadi Rum and Sinai".

In addition to introducing visitors to the Bedouin lifestyle and the threat of forcible deportation, the Sahari project has succeeded in creating an income for Bedouin families who make food. They were also able to establish a kindergarten for 15 Bedouin children, according to Qarshan.

He added: "Without the Bedouin families living here, we are nothing. This is community tourism based on the local community. Without community participation, the project will not succeed and the goals will not be achieved".

Tareq Qarshan, Ahmad Hamadin and Jamil Hamadin obtained tour guide licenses accredited by the Ministry of Tourism for the area of the Jerusalem desert following a six-month specialized course at Dar al-Kalima College in Bethlehem. This enabled them to implement the first steps of the Sahari project to highlight the

lives of Bedouin and the threat of forcible deportation.

The deportation plan for Bedouin communities east of Eizariah, Abu Dis, the areas surrounding Maaleh Adomim settlement (Jabal al-Baba, al-Khan al-Ahmar, al-Kasarat), Maghayer al-Deir and al-Muarajat and their relocation in Tel Nuweimeh, Fasayel and the mountain area, targets 46 Bedouin communities with 7000 people according to the 2014 Annual Report of the Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission.

Israeli allegations that the deportation of the Bedouin aims to improve and develop the lives of the Bedouin raises questions. Mukhtars (mayors) and prominent Bedouin in the Jerusalem and Jericho desert explained to Al-Hal that they have actually been prevented from developing their lives. Their houses and schools have been demolished and they were prevented from constructing roads or buildings. They also asserted that they repeatedly appealed to the Israeli courts to protest against the

eviction and demolition orders, but these courts deferred hearings, leaving the issues unresolved.

British MP: Horrible treatment of Bedouins  
British Member of Parliament Martin Lenton described his visit to the Sath al-Bahar Bedouin community. He found that: "Israeli treatment of Bedouin in the West Bank and the Negev is horrible. Bedouin have been living there for thousands of years and have been in this area long before the Israelis existed". He added: "It is high time that the world wake up to what is happening to the Bedouin, who are friendly people, very generous and hospitable. It is terrible to treat them in this way".

Lenton also said "Many British ministers visited the area, such as William Hague and Wallis Debert, to see the Bedouin cause with their own eyes. But coming and sympathizing is one thing and taking action to stop Israeli measures is another. The only thing politicians can do is to put economic pressure on Israel to treat the Bedouin with respect".

## Palestine in the joint Arab military force: Fact or fiction?!

Is this joint force a substitute for the joint Arab defense force stipulated in the Charter of the Arab League? If so, Arabs would be better off creating the force referred to in the Charter rather than creating a replacement. Dr. Shahin also said that if this force were to be established, Palestine would have no interest in becoming part of it because "the principle not to take sides with one Arab party against another should be maintained". Palestine desperately needs to maintain good relationships with everyone as it is a non-independent state lacking full sovereignty. Even in the future when it becomes an independent state, Palestine needs the Arab community materially and ethically, in addition to the fact that Palestine does not have the capabilities to join this force.

### **Oreikat: We should participate under conditions**

Military analyst Wasef Oreikat stated that Palestine should stand with any joint Arab force on condition that its military doctrine and strategic objective would be confrontation with Israel. He argued that the main battle should be against Israel since the internal fighting and terrorism currently taking place is prompted by Israel. These events cannot be overcome individually but must be eliminated at their source. Therefore, for these events to be overcome, pressure must be put on Israel. President Abbas has always confirmed that Palestine stands with all Arab brethren, but if the leadership decides to join this force, how would this stance be maintained,

especially in a war between two Arab countries?

### **Samara: We would be exploited as a people**

Writer and political analyst Adel Samara believes that in the event of joining this Arab force, Palestinians would be in a position to be exploited by the Arabs. Samara added that when people do not have control over their land or enjoy sovereignty, they are vulnerable to two situations: as a people who resist or as a people who are exploited, the latter being most likely in our case.

Samara questioned what issue would unite the Arab states under current conditions. What developments prompted this project?

He views it as an American project to destroy states operating as a republic on the grounds that these are rogue states.

Samara argued that Palestinians would be unable to join the Arab force without the approval of Israel. Talk about embarking upon this project is a type of prattling and a waste of time for people as they are engaged in dreams that will never be realized.

Many questions revolve around this issue. In light of the official silence on this subject, the public must wait for an official Palestinian decision to be issued and for the Arab League to approve the regulations on the work of the joint military force, including agreement on details of the size, leadership, financing and locations to resolve the current controversy.

## Mar Saba Monastery...isolated from civilization... electricity and women are not allowed

✚ **Muhannad Al-Shaer**

The monasteries and churches covering the land of Palestine embody a wide range of cultural and historical heritage. Some buildings still exist, while others were destroyed by natural earthquakes or by events that occurred in Palestine over its long history. The Monastery of Mar Saba is one of those that remains. It is one of the most famous monasteries after the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem.

The monastery is famous for its location in the desert, making it ideal for meditation on the kingdom of God. Its religious status dates back to its founder, a monk who quit the world and its lack of authenticity for a clear mind and to meditate with a pure heart. The monastery was built by monk Saba between the years 478 - 484 AD with the help of 5000 monks.

The monastery of Mar Saba is situated on the top of a mountain adjacent to a deep valley. It was built on part of the Qadroon desert to the east of Bethlehem and to the south-east of Jerusalem. There is no life in that location apart from a palm tree and a spring dating back to Christ. The closest inhabited area is al-Obeidiyeh town.

Gayatha: A world without power  
Mohammad Gayatha, Director

of Antiquities and the Cultural Heritage Department said: "When you get inside the monastery, you feel you are entering a small village since it consists of five floors and over 100 rooms connected by narrow alleys".

He added: "In spite of its size, it has only a few orthodox monks who live according to specific laws, rules, customs and traditions that they impose on all guests of the monastery. Photography is forbidden inside the monastery, where they live a primitive life under the banner of asceticism and abstinence; it is a hard arduous life that few can tolerate apart from those who believe in its objectives. They use no electric power for lighting or for heating. They refuse to obtain water via pipes and taps as they believe that any of these types of civilization hinder their connection with God. They drink water that comes from a natural spring in a cave underneath the monastery and at night, they light candles using olive oil.

Gayatha noted that women are not allowed to enter the monastery because they believe that if just one woman enters inside the monastery, it will collapse on the residents because, according to their beliefs, women are worldly temptation that block communication and access to the blessings of God Almighty. The only building that can be accessed by



The monastery from a distance as photography is not allowed inside.

women is the women's tower close to the entrance to the monastery. Gayatha pointed that the residents of the monastery tend olive and lemon trees, preventing the planting of other trees that might consume the time available to the monks, who pray daily from 6:30 am. until 10:30 am the next day. Qomsiah: We seek to place the monastery on the tourist map Jeries Qomsiah, the Ministry of Tourism spokesman, highlighted that the monastery is in a charming and stunning location that prompts many

visitors to tour the site, especially in the spring. It is considered to be a major tourist destination in Palestine and an archeological site.

He said: "The Ministry of Tourism seeks to put the monastery on the Palestinian tourist map and to promote it in the same way as other monasteries and religious and touristic Palestinian sites".

The monastery of Mar Saba contains the remains of its founder, Monk Saba. The Tomb of the Saint and the Church of God was originally a cave in the mountain on which the small

church was built. The Monastery Graveyard holds the remains of many monks and clerics who died in the monastery. The John of Damascus Hermitage lies there and the 18-meter high Justinian's Tower was built for surveillance.

A visitor can view all these, including the remains of Monk Saba laid in a glass box. His body may have shrunk slightly and some skin deteriorated, but the clergymen at the monastery refute the idea that his body was mummified and say that he is protected by God.

## Aleph Yaa...an e-store that supplies books from the shelf to the palm of your hand

✚ **Fatima al-Zahraa Suhweil**

"Aleph Yaa (A-Z)...from the shelf to the palm of your hand" is an electronic store that relaunches bookshops and promotes the purchase and reading of paper books, countering the domination of electronic reading where readers can read digital books for free. The Aleph Yaa e-shop delivers paper books to readers.

The concept of this website is based on reclaiming the consumers who used bookshops. It is a result of several youth initiatives to enhance and promote reading in the community.

Dr. Jamal Bader, who initiated this concept, said: "Aleph Yaa assists the reader to select the books he wants, eliminating the effort of searching for the book, and we deliver it at no additional cost. The reader will have confidence in our service and be satisfied; he buys the book and only pays when it is delivered to his doorstep".

Bader recalls that the idea did not appeal to bookshops in the beginning. However, they now provide lists of their available books. "We use technological solutions to promote the reading of paper books in a simple and attractive way. There are also special services on the site such as the "gift book" service, which enables you to select a book as a gift in an expression of love and to promote the acquisition of knowledge at the same time".

Site user Riham Nakhaleh described her experience: "I believe that Aleph Yaa is a unique experience to encourage competition among Palestinian bookstores to satisfy the thirst of customers for education and knowledge rather than being merely stores. Also, the services provided by the site enrich cultural exchange between youth in the Gaza Strip and may also expand to include intellectual interchange with the West Bank. I hope that the site



The logo of the e-store.

will help us to obtain all the books that we have difficulty sourcing". Nakhaleh highlighted that: "The idea of combining electronic and paper bookstores boosts my desire to read and motivates exploration into new intellectual worlds that appear in the lists of books I intend to read. Those in charge of this concept are intellectuals and not merchants whose goal is merely to sell books. Thus, I can identify my objectives with them". She is delighted with the used books service and said: "My concerns about

pointlessly hoarding books vanished when I discovered that books that do not satisfy my needs can be sold to Aleph Yaa for other people who may need them. This encourages the exchange of knowledge and promotes the idea of giving up the selfish possession of a book when I can obtain a new one".

Another site user, Mahmoud Hillis, said: "My interest in reading is always expanding as electronic browsing suggests many books that I had never intended to read before. Now I want to read these books and

more". Hillis believes that Aleph Yaa is a smart form of online marketing for paper books and a successful strategy that makes a site visitor become a permanent customer who pursues new published books. He also believes that the used book service enhances market competitiveness because the book auctions it offers give readers the opportunity to buy if the offer suits them or wait until prices drop by 60%. Then the book is sold automatically and its price is kept as points that can be used to buy new books or other used ones. This exchange is satisfactory for both parties.

Hillis agreed with Dr. Bader that Aleph Yaa represents a positive investment in technological capacity without being detrimental to paper books. It saves the time and effort of readers via an electronic search for the book in the bookstores of the Gaza Strip and obtaining it to read physically without having the bother of looking for the book on the bookshop shelves.