

Algae dream of roots

Anyone who watches algae growing and spreading envies it, believing that it is strong and perhaps fortunate. But this is not the truth since it lacks roots, stems or even leaves. Yes, it is as green as a comfortable carpet, but this is an illusion. To elaborate on our description, we can say that it is just a color without a real nucleus of life. In fact, it is truly terrifying and should not be underestimated. Algae has drowned one [person] and threatened another. It has never stopped dreaming of roots and may therefore devour us all from north to south.

Open your eyes wide. We may finally succeed in being ourselves, with all the details that 'ourselves' entail, and realize that what is entrapping us, engulfing our speech and trying to swallow us is simply algae, while we have roots.

Hamas-Dahlan reconciliation may change the political scene

✚ **Mohammad Yunis**

All of a sudden and without any preface, two breakthroughs occurred in Palestinian politics that will probably have long term impact: these are the understandings between Hamas and Egypt and understandings between Hamas and Dahlan on the various crises in the Gaza Strip.

These developments coincided with two other major developments: the first the unprecedented measures implemented by the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip; and the second the boycott imposed on Qatar by Saudi Arabia and its allies to demand that Qatar halt its support to 'terrorist' powers, including the Hamas movement, according to the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister.

Amidst the 'suffocating siege', the Hamas movement received a 'lifeline' from its key adversaries: Egypt and Mohammad Dahlan.

Hamas is aware that this is not 'the hand of God' but is based on the political interests of those parties coinciding at this political moment with the interests of the 'old enemy', Hamas. Egypt faces an open war with Salafi groups in Sinai and has had reports demonstrating that Hamas is well-informed about these groups, their locations, and the sources of their arms. Egypt also knows that these groups are using the Gaza Strip as their backyard where their wounded are transferred for treatment. These groups also send fighters and people wanted by Egypt to the Gaza Strip for short periods to prepare for forthcoming operations away from the jurisdiction of the Egyptian army and intelligence services.

Dahlan has been completely absent from politics after the failure of pressure exerted by the 'Arab Quartet' on President Abbas to return him to Palestinian politics and is seeking another entry point. It seems that the most feasible point is home, the Gaza Strip, where he enjoys

widespread popularity among Fatah members.

The Hamas movement, whose economic, financial and political crisis has been exacerbated recently due to the imposition of the local, regional and international siege, found an outstretched hand as an opportunity to break, or diminish, the siege and accepted it with alacrity. Hamas paid the price required in return of security cooperation with Egypt and allowing their 'old enemy' Dahlan to return and work from the Gaza Strip, and to appear as a savior for the Strip and its people.

Described as politically shrewd, Dahlan has made use of recent changes on the ground such as the new Hamas leadership being based in the Gaza Strip instead of Qatar, new and stringent pressures on the authorities in the Gaza Strip that have a negative effect on the general public and not only Hamas, and the need of Egypt to win support in its war of attrition against Salafists in Sinai; Dahlan moved rapidly to create a new political environment and alliances. The Hamas delegation met with the leadership of the Egyptian Intelligence Service and reached security understandings that Hamas started to put into effect rapidly and overtly when it redeployed its forces on the borders with Egypt under the supervision of security chief commander Tawfiq Abu Naeem, one of the members of the Hamas delegation to Egypt.

According to sources in Hamas, Egypt pledged to facilitate movement on the Rafah border crossing after the ongoing renovation work has been completed.

A senior official in Hamas said: "Egypt informed us that they cannot open the border crossing normally without the participation of the Palestinian Authority, but they can facilitate movement until an agreement is reached".

The understandings reached after four long meetings in the Egyptian capital between Hamas and Dahlan and his

team concern joint work to solve the problems facing the Gaza Strip, and to allow the wing led by Dahlan to conduct open and free political activities in the Gaza Strip.

The implementation of these understandings started with the return of a number of leaders from Dahlan's group to the Gaza Strip, plus the provision of \$50 million to accomplish communal reconciliation and pay compensation money (blood money) for all the victims from both Fatah and Hamas movements.

It is likely that these developments will improve the position of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, thus improving its role in Palestinian politics. It is also likely that the return of Dahlan will lead to him playing a more important role as his status is enhanced in the Gaza Strip, whose population comprises 40% of the total population of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Many Gazans view Dahlan as their potential savior from the siege. This is due to the failure of the Hamas movement to provide minimal services for the 2 million residents of the Gaza Strip and the failure of the Palestinian Authority to improve the situation there.

If these understandings are implemented, the influence of the Palestinian Authority is expected to decline in the Gaza Strip. According to Churchill: "There are no permanent friends or permanent enemies in politics, but there are permanent interests". This was said one day and became a political theory. Yahya al-Sinwar, who used to curse Dahlan with strong accusations, agreed to meet him and reach a serious understanding. This demonstrates the pragmatism of the new Hamas leader and prime decision-maker, and indicates that he is prepared to step over ideological barriers when an opportunity and political interests loom on the horizon.

Joined the top 3% of world universities

Birzeit University, the first Palestinian university to break into the QS World University Ranking

✚ **Carmen Kishek**

Birzeit University (BZU) has made a quantum leap into the ranks of QS World University. For the first time in the history of Palestinian universities, Palestine acquired a top ranking on the QS list, reaping its efforts to seek excellence in education, research, and community service on a national, regional and international level.

Following the success of BZU last year in achieving first rank locally and fiftieth on the Arab QS ranking, this year it succeeded in entering the QS World University Ranking for 2018. This includes about 950 world universities selected from 26 thousand universities as the best 3% of universities in the world. BZU was also one of the 32 best universities selected from over 500 Arab universities in 12 Arab countries.

A qualitative leap

Birzeit University President Abdellatif Abuhijleh described this as a "huge achievement" and said: "This improvement in ranking is testimony to the constant efforts exerted by BZU to maintain academic, research and community excellence. We seek to be the best nationally, in the region and among prestigious world universities, not merely for the sake of ranking or classification but for our daughters and sons who will create the future prosperity of our country".

International classifications are generally one of the most important indicators of the quality of education offered by the university in accordance with criteria and standards set by the parties responsible for each of these classification systems. The QS World University Ranking is one of the most important three classifications of universities in the world. It is issued annually by the British company Quacquarelli Symonds and specializes in higher education. Global ranking lists are announced in addition to regional lists for different parts of the world, including the Arab region. Universities around the globe attach special importance to their rankings due to the impact on attracting outstanding teachers and students as well as funding.

The QS ranking is based on six key criteria with varying weights. BZU scored first nationally as follows: 40% for the University's reputation among academics; 10% for the University's reputation among employers; 20% for the number of citations per faculty; 20% for the faculty to student ratio; 5% for the number of foreign students; and 5% for the number of foreign faculty members.

Dean of Graduate Studies Dr. Talal Shahwan believes that the QS ranking is of special



BZU President Abdellatif Abuhijleh during a press conference on BZU accomplishment.

importance compared to other classifications because the criteria it takes into account reflect the educational environment of the university, its academic research status, the student competence and ability to excel in various fields of work, plus highlighting the performance of faculty members and their academic accomplishments by examining the number of citations from their published research. Shahwan explains that the requirements for this ranking are many and tough. The

standards of the QS criteria are also greater than other university classifications. The entry of BZU into the international list of universities for this year means that it has succeeded in meeting these requirements, which reflects the advancement of BZU on academic and social levels. For example, BZU achieved its best scores on academic reputation. What does this mean in terms of its ranking?

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Majd and Amal:

Two entrepreneurs extending from the Gaza Strip to Japan

Talal al-Nabih

From the alleys of the Gaza Strip, the smell of success and entrepreneurship reached the neighborhoods of the Japanese capital, Tokyo. The success of two female engineers, Majd Mashharawi and Amal Abu Meilek, and their brilliant initiatives were seen in an exchange of the fruits of their work with Japanese entrepreneurs. Extensive scientific development in Japan provided pioneers Mashharawi and Abu Meilek with the opportunity to travel to the country for work and study, and to transfer their unique initiatives in which they had excelled in the Gaza Strip despite the constant 11-year siege.

Al-Hal interviewed the two engineers on how they took their pioneering experiment to Japan and their great passion and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and scientific innovation that they both achieved while at university.

Engineer Mashharawi (23 years of age) graduated from the Faculty of Engineering at the Islamic University of Gaza in 2016 and is the inventor of the 'Green Cake' project. She explained to the al-Hal reporter that taking first place in the Japan Academic Challenge Contest qualified her to travel to Japan to introduce her pioneering project.

Mashharawi said that her trip to Japan was an exceptional opportunity that introduced her to Japanese innovation. She said: "We made efforts to network with engineering companies to develop our pioneering projects in this field". She pointed out that they were also introduced to new industries and cultures while displaying their work to

fellow entrepreneurs in Japan.

Mashharawi said that the 'Green Cake' project comprises innovative building blocks that are environmentally friendly and made in the Gaza Strip from coal ash. These compete with other building blocks available in the local market.

The 'Green Cake' block is light in weight and weighs approximately half that of a normal building block. Its density is low although it is as strong as other blocks and has excellent insulation against sound and heat, and is fire-resistant.

Mashharawi sees her win as an exceptional opportunity to travel to Japan and present her project in the final stages of the competition with other projects from more than 80 countries as Index Award Finalists. In addition, they are competing for the sustainability of these projects for twenty years to come.

Engineer Abu Meilek expressed her excitement about winning the Japan Academic Challenge Contest and being able to transfer her innovative project of a staircase-climbing cart to help people with special needs to go up and down flights of stairs easily. She was successful in convincing the Contest team who came to the Gaza Strip about her project in addition to the 'Green Cake' project.

Abu Meilek started her company, called Sketch Engineering, with three colleagues and launched her pioneering project to assist mobility-impaired individuals. She travelled to Japan to learn new techniques for precise development of the wheelchair. Abu Meilek stated that travelling to Japan



Science: Bringing a block from the Gaza Strip to Japan

exposed her to extensive information about similar engineering projects, although her project has some differences. It provided her with the opportunity to organize her project and create a better product for the future by seeking investors to provide the chair to people with special needs.

She stated that the idea behind her invention of a staircase-climbing cart is to facilitate the mobility of people with special needs in light of the constant power failures in the Gaza Strip, and the lack of electric elevators in some buildings that prevent disabled people from attending school, university or social activities.

Abu Meilek said that she developed the product with her engineering team using triangular wheels and electricity as a force and presented it to companies and other parties for marketing.

The two engineers expressed their gratitude to everyone who contributed to their trip to Japan to take their Palestinian initiatives beyond Palestinian and Arab borders. They urged Palestinian young people and students to increase their efforts in scientific research and develop their professional skills to be able to travel to Japan or other scientifically advanced countries.

Al-Eizariya ...

The site of the miracle of Christ's resurrection of Lazarus

Nahil Abu Ghayth

The two rooms inside a cave are reached via some twenty steps down stairs to the depths of the tomb of Eleazar [Lazarus]. This is where the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus by Christ occurred in Al-Eizariya [its medieval name is Bethany] in Jerusalem according to the Gospel of John.

The monumental tomb of Eleazar is one of the most important religious sites in the town. His revival from the dead was known as the miracle of Christ and the town became famous as a result, being named 'al-Eizariya' after 'Eleizar' or al-Azir, as referred to in the Holy Quran.

A tour guide from al-Eizariya, Zayd Hamdan, told al-Hal: "The first room in the cave is used to pray for the dead, while the second is the tomb where Eleizar was buried before his resurrection by Christ (Peace Be Upon Him)."

He explained: "Four days after the death of Eleizar, Christ came from Jericho to al-Eizariya and learned of the death of his friend. Christ asked his two sisters, Mary and Martha, to take him to the grave, where he removed the stone covering the corpse and screamed three times: "Rise Eleizar", bringing him to life

and to walk out of his grave."

Hamdan added that Eleizar died later in Cyprus and was buried there thirteen years after his resurrection.

Every year Christians celebrate the rituals of 'Eleizar Saturday', which has become a traditional celebration of the miracle. Throughout the year, about half a million foreign tourists from Cyprus, Greece and Europe visit the grave and the town, whose population is 11,000 and covers 179 dunums, to see the archeological sites and churches.

Segred Elyvestegon from Norway sometimes acts as a tour guide for foreign delegations visiting Palestine, including the town of al-Eizariya. "I have accompanied families in a visit to this grave that was mentioned in the Holy Bible. We know the story of the resurrection of Eleizar, especially when the two sisters who reported the death of their brother asked Christ, 'Why didn't you come earlier', and he replied 'He who believes in me will live even if he dies'. Thus, it was their bother's belief in Christ that allowed him to return from the dead." In the Holy Quran, al-Azir (Peace Be Upon Him) passed through the holy land, specifically the village of al-Eizariya which was named Bethany,



The Christian's annual pilgrimage on Eleizar Saturday

meaning the 'house of misery' or the 'house of dates'. He was surprised to find its houses destroyed and its people killed and said: "Who can revive this after its death?". He went into a cave to sleep. When he awoke, he thought he had slept for one day but his donkey was a skeleton and he learned that God

had made him sleep for a hundred years as an example to those who question God's power.

The town of al-Eizariya has a special religious and archeological place after Jerusalem and Bethlehem and has two churches with a mosque in the middle of them.

An interview with al-Hal newspaper

Fadwa Barghouti: The prisoners' strike uncovered a flaw in the national movement...The prisoners achieved their victory with their own hands

Qamar al-Sharif*

Lawyer Fadwa Barghouti endured multiple crises during the prisoners' strike as she is the wife of a prisoner, not just any prisoner but a leader in the Fatah movement who led the 'dignity strike' that lasted for 42 days. The strike ended with an agreement between the prisoners and their leaders and the Israeli Prison Service to meet the demands of the prisoners.

Al-Hal met with Fadwa as she played an active role alongside innumerable national personalities in organizing events in support of the strikers. She is also the closest to Marwan Barghouti and the lawyers who met with leaders of the prisoners.

Did the PNA and the Fatah movement do their best with regard to the prisoners' strike?

There is a consensus throughout Palestine on the issue of the prisoners, whether by factions or the people. Nevertheless, official interaction by the PA and some parts of the Fatah movement was inadequate. The strike lasted for more than 42 days; if all official and popular groups had fulfilled their duties properly, the strike should not have taken all this time. However, the prisoners endured and maintained their stance, despite some falling by the wayside, and marked a victory with their empty stomachs and great determination.

The failure of the political organizations was real. They are credited with only 30% of the victory achieved by the prisoners. This failure has proved the weakness of the national movement and political organizations, and their inability to support such a major activity as a hunger strike. Some factions even followed the popular movement rather than leading it in the escalation against the Israeli occupation.

Was there strong public support for the prisoners or did the majority of people simply interact via social networks?

There was no main sit-in strike attended by all the families of the striking prisoners (approx. 1500 prisoner) as well as members of the public in support of the prisoners. Instead, each family of a prisoner held a sit-in their locality, which damaged the core cause of the prisoners. In spite of this, I witnessed great interaction by the public, most noticeably in Ramallah. It was adequate bearing in mind Palestinian conditions of a political divide, plus other pressures and concerns.

While I do not want to underestimate the importance of electronic engagement with prisoners' issues, this is a double-edged weapon. On the one hand, it transmits the prisoner issue locally and globally, where 'salt and water' campaigns were widespread: the largest campaign was launched in the United States in spite of the hostility of the



new US administration. On the other hand, many of those active on social networks were content with this level of participation and did not take to the streets to participate physically in solidarity.

Did the prisoners' strike succeed in uniting Palestinians and the political discourse of their leaders?

The prisoners' strike played a role in uniting and bringing Palestinians together psychologically. The majority of the people were united on the ground everywhere, locally in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Diaspora.

What are the latest health conditions of Marwan Barghouti and other prisoners?

The information that we receive about the prisoners' health is scarce and insufficient but what we have heard is alarming. The health of the prisoners is very bad. The news about Marwan that I received from a detainee who was released recently from Hadarim jail is that he is in poor health. His body cannot accept any form of drink and he has health problems in the stomach and intestines, for which he makes repeated visits to hospital. We have no idea about the health of other prisoners because both lawyers and families are forbidden from visiting.

What is your opinion of the fake video posted on social media by the Israeli occupation and how did you deal with this crisis? What was its impact on ordinary people?

Leader Marwan is used to such deceit and falsification; he has warned of such rumors before starting the strike. In the 2004 strike there was a similar situation and fabricated videos were disseminated about breaking the hunger strike. Marwan has spent some 1000 days in cells equipped with

cameras to monitor any move and what was posted is a video recorded before the strike. In addition, he was also placed in solitary confinement on more than 22 occasions. Marwan described his experience in dungeons and the oppressive measures used by the Israeli occupation in a book that he authored entitled 1000 Days in a Dungeon. As a result, Palestinians condemned the video as soon as it was broadcast and called for it to be disregarded rather than be bogged down by rumors that could undermine the prisoners' strike and shatter their determination.

Was the Palestinian media successful in bringing the prisoners' cause to the attention of the international community, or at least making it a cause of concern for the Arab regimes?

The strike came at a time when the world is preoccupied with other issues; the Palestinian cause has been sidelined and the Arabs are concerned with resolving their problems and conflicts. However, the prisoners' courage and resolve enabled them to raise the flag of victory. They formed a media committee from the Commission of Detainees and Ex-detainees Affairs and the Supreme Committee for the Support of Palestinian Detainees was the platform for conveying the true state of prisoners' suffering. They published an interview with Marwan in the New York Times and a number of letters were sent to parliamentarians the world over to promote advocacy campaigns in a number of countries. In addition, I contacted the Pope and some Nobel laureates.

The media was positive sometimes and negative at other times. It was positive in its extreme loyalty to the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate (PJS) played a role in urging journalists to cover the strike extensively. Sometimes our media lacked a strategy and there were some individuals who were unsuccessful in conveying the situation of the strike to the Arabs and the world.

Has the Israeli occupation actually implemented the prisoners' demands?

The agreement that ended the strike was divided into two parts: The first was approved by the Israeli Prison Service and two committees were formed: one committee was to follow up, discuss and implement what had been agreed upon, and the second to monitor the conditions of the prisoners and their demands. For instance, a public phone is one of the prisoners' demands that has not been met as a right for civil and not political detainees. The rest of the list of demands remains for review and negotiation.

* Qamar al-Sharif is a student at the Media Department of Birzeit University.

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The QS official site clarifies that the academic reputation criteria have greater weight over other criteria by 40%. The administrators at Quacquarelli Symonds Company conduct an academic survey of academics and researchers from all over the world in universities running for ranking directly or indirectly to ask them about the quality of teaching and scientific research in each university. This year, 75 thousand academics working in higher education responded. Shahwan added that academics are requested to evaluate surrounding universities other than their own. For instance, a professor at BZU can only evaluate universities other than his; this gives the survey greater credibility and objectivity in reflecting the capacity of the university to make an impact on its surroundings through its accomplishments. The citations criterion is another key element in qualifying BZU to enter the QS ranking as the University published 258 research studies in various fields of specialization over the past five years (2011-2016-) and scored 1314 citations.

QS World University Ranking is a guide for enhancing performance

International classifications affect policy making at universities and the choices of students and their parents since they are seen as a measure of the quality and standard of education provided by universities to students and communities. Dr. Aziz Shawabkeh, assistant to the President of Birzeit University, confirmed that QS ranking criteria have great value as a reference point for BZU administration in its continuous development of academic programs and extracurricular endeavors that encourage innovation, creativity and pioneering, alongside the original methodology for the development of academic research.

Shawabkeh said that BZU always tries, within its capacity, to provide high quality education to its students. Through a constant stream of new programs and projects, BZU goes beyond the traditional track of education to offer a unique experience that enhances the academic, cognitive, cultural and pioneering skills of its students. This directly reflects on the University's excellence locally and globally.

Shawabkeh added that during the academic year 2016-2017-, BZU started a new method of teaching English language by adopting a comprehensive system in line with international practices and approved international standard tests. This offers a new methodology for critical thinking and enables students to develop their language and academic skills to support their education during their years of study at BZU by focusing on the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. BZU introduced several programs to polish the skills of its students and their creative and entrepreneurial capabilities. The launching of the "Entrepreneurship and Effective Citizenship" program earns students a range of skills that assist in raising awareness, self-confidence and engagement in an in-depth learning experience that enables them to lead their lives and plan for their future. The MASARI portal was also launched as a networking platform to connect employers, graduates and alumni of Birzeit.

Future challenges and endeavors

The ranking indicators and criteria could have been more equitable and objective if they took into consideration the special case of some universities, especially the number of foreign students and teachers. Although BZU achieved progress in QS ranking, obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation on the mobility of foreigners will limit any progress in these criteria. Shawabkeh clarified that standards must be more flexible to take

into account the local context of the university, such as the political situation, size of the university, and the number of students and teachers. Despite this, Shahwan stressed that BZU is capable of achieving a high ranking on classification lists. He revealed that BZU will enter new global ratings due to the numbers and documents relevant to scientific research since the University is continuously initiating its research production and enhancing its relations with the local community and employers.

Shawabkeh said: "We are not in a race to a summit. Although our progress in ratings reflects the quality of education, research and services offered by BZU, ultimately the ranking is not our goal but a means to reach our goals". Shahwan added: "We must engage in entering classifications as they guide us to the gaps that need to be addressed and areas that need enhancement. These classifications are a means that can be invested for progress, advancement and optimal decision making regarding our students, teachers and society".

Lubna Abdelhadi, Director of Public Relations, emphasized that communication and intercommunication are at the core of the University's reputation abroad. It also plays an important role in enhancing this image locally, regionally and internationally through media and publications. She said: "Our role in the public relations office complements the efforts of BZU administration, its faculty members and students in elevating the position of the University and communicating its academic mission to the world". Regardless of the rank of a university, the higher education sector remains a place that brings together academics, researchers and students from around the world to exchange experiences and ideas, and to build global communities united by science, knowledge and culture.

Media professors comment on the introduction of three new courses in the media syllabus at universities



Amjad Tamimi



Enaam al-Obaidi



Said Abumualla



Farid Abu Dheir

Basil Rizqallah

As part of its initiative to develop Palestinian media, the Media Development Center (MDC) at Birzeit University launched three new courses: "Media and Gender", "Media and the Law", and "Media Ethics" to be taught at Palestinian universities and colleges that grant bachelor and diploma degrees in journalism and media.

This initiative won the attention of those responsible for media development. These courses include three developments: the use of a teaching model for each week of study; participatory authoring by more than one author for each course; and the introduction of many sub-specialties in the fields of study for the three courses deserving of introduction in university teaching.

Al-Hal interviewed media professors who will teach these courses in Palestinian universities and colleges to discuss their opinions on this subject as follows:

Al-Obaidi:

The courses will fill a gap

Birzeit University Media Professor Enaam al-Obaidi said that media ethics is an essential component in the press and not a luxury or a purely academic issue. She added that the ethical aspect must be present at all stages of work in the press. The role of professional ethics is for a journalist to know that his decision is not a matter of fact or pleasing the media owner or any party or financier who has an interest in the journalist making a particular decision rather than another.

Al-Obaidi, who will teach the media ethics course, said it will fill a gap in universities because some professors do not highlight the ethical dimension and ethical journalism for their students in the different courses that they teach. She said: "Prior to the course, I was obliged to allocate a theoretical unit on professional ethics within the various

courses that I teach".

She pointed out that what is important about this course is that it raises many questions requiring students to make decisions when they are assigned a duty or practical task, starting with selection of a topic, gathering information and documents, conducting interviews, and writing an article.

Al-Obaidi stressed that it is important not to stop training and discussions at the end of the course but to integrate them into practical duties.

As the courses are not yet being taught, al-Obaidi said it is too early to discuss any shortcomings but the courses will be subjected to evaluation and amendments once they are completed. She believes that the courses should be adapted to the Palestinian context in spite of the universal nature of ethical principles and codes of conduct because special cultural and political factors exist in addition to economic and technical disparities that necessitate the inclusion of these ethics in society.

Media professor al-Obaidi said that development of the media curriculum in universities requires the will plus administrative support for the partial release of specialist media professors with experience in higher education to work on these teaching plans.

Abu Dheir: The courses link theoretical with practical

Media professor at An-Najah National University Farid Abu Dheir said that such courses have been taught in the university for a while but the ones developed by MDC are important in terms of enhancing existing courses, adding to them, linking theory with practice, and providing new ideas in their field of specialization.

Abu Dheir explained that shortcomings in the courses may appear after several years and are associated with developments in the fields they deal with. The need for

changes will emerge because the media is connected with many other multifaceted disciplines.

He believes that the development of media academics also requires enhanced coordination between media departments at Palestinian universities, the upgrading of teaching skills in passing on information to students, and transiting students to the world of the press as practitioners who are aware of the nature of the profession and recognize its impact on individuals and society.

Abumualla: The courses are needed

Media professor at the Arab American University Said Abumualla said that these courses are needed in light of the issues presented to and raised by the media. The textbooks will enrich the Palestinian and Arab media library, where there is a lack of an academic environment, which has an impact on students and teachers alike.

Abumualla pointed out that any shortcomings in these courses will not become apparent before the teaching and evaluation of these courses where some deficiencies in certain topics may show and need to be strengthened.

He argued that a media teaching environment open to Arab and international experiences and developments is required. This is important to inform the parties working in the academic field of what is happening in the rapidly changing world of the media. He called upon the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to understand the ongoing need to develop

and modify media teaching plans.

Abumualla added: "The student also has a role to go beyond the textbook and homework to the world of the media which is full of challenges, mainly the challenge of information, mastery and taking on board new concepts".

Tamimi: The importance lies in addressing each topic independently

Amjad Tamimi, media professor at the Modern University College, said that the new courses are important because they deal with topics independently and not as part of other courses as was the case previously and which undermined the impact on students. He also believes that the courses link theory to practice and provide an opportunity to act as a unifying factor in the curriculum of all media departments.

Tamimi clarified that courses need to include specific Palestinian features and are heavy with theoretical material that could have been avoided. Nevertheless, this does not diminish their importance or the efforts exerted to develop the courses. Tamimi stated that in order to achieve the desired developments in the media, means and resources are needed to keep abreast of developments and new trends in this field, in which considerable leaps forward are taking place, especially in the techniques used. In addition, meetings should take place between media specialists to exchange ideas and expertise.