



ENCOUNTER  
Listen. Learn. Lead.

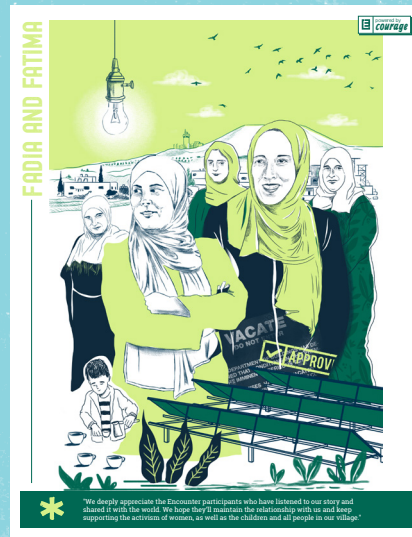
# USHPIZIN



"Both Jewish and Palestinian communities have a history of pain and trauma that has been carried into this conflict. Peace is about being humble in listening to these communities' needs and strengthening them to make the right decisions for their lives."



"The story of our village is the story of all the villages around us, and a peaceful future for us requires that there be peace for all. Inshallah, may it come soon."



"We deeply appreciate the Encounter participants who have listened to our story and shared it with the world. We hope they'll maintain the relationship with us and keep supporting the activism of women, as well as the children and all people in our village."



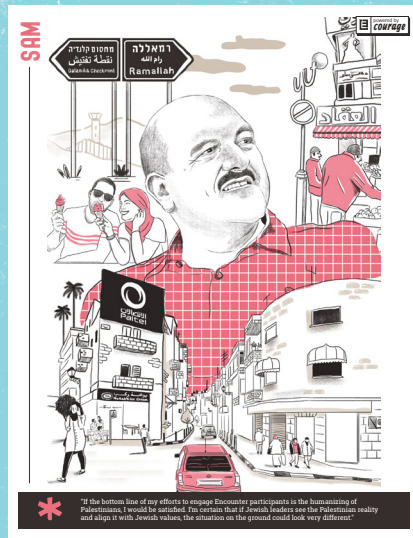
"I look forward to a time when Palestinian and Israeli mothers will go to bed each night free of fear for the lives of their children and their beloved ones."



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"The pain I feel inside my stomach when telling my story to Jewish leaders is matched only by the hope I see in their eyes."



"If the bottom line of my efforts to engage Encounter participants is the humanizing of Palestinians, I would be satisfied. I'm certain that if Jewish leaders see the Palestinian reality and align it with Jewish values, the situation on the ground could look very different."



"The connections of both Palestinians and Jews to the land are in our souls and hearts. Nobody can take that away. Recognizing the needs, feelings, and suffering of both peoples in this land is the beginning of a long path toward reconciliation, freedom, and dignity for all."



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Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, 1962







# FRAMING

Encounter is proud to share this new set of *ushpizin* and *ushpizot*, beautifully designed by Elad Lifshitz from *Dov Abramson studio*: Palestinians with whom the Jewish People's destinies are inextricably linked, and whose stories and perspectives are critical for us to engage.

For fifteen years, a diverse range of Palestinians have hosted thousands of Encounter participants, inviting us into their lives and caring for our nourishment, our safety, and our intellectual and emotional learning. They do so even where it can take tremendous courage to invite Jews in. This resource asks **what it might look like for you to courageously invite Palestinians in** – to “host” them in your consciousness around Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sukkot encourages us to shift our perspective - to step out of our homes and entrenched ways of seeing into the widened lens of the *sukkah*, to explore what's missing or incomplete, and to reflect on what we want to take back into our lives and practice year-round.

Likewise, at the core of Encounter's work seeding more informed and constructive Jewish leadership on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a **commitment to a lifelong practice of perspective-taking**. Sometimes, as Rabbi A.J. Heschel observes, rather than “feeling painfully the lack of knowing what we see” we default to seeing only what we already know. For Jews who care about Israel, **integrating**

**often-missed voices into our engagement with Israel and the conflict is one key way to take responsibility for advancing a better future for all who live in the Land.**

The tradition of *ushpizin* supports us in this act of perspective-taking through the wisdom and diverse worldviews that these honorary guests provide. Many Jews have symbolically expanded who we look to for inspiration by including in their *ushpizin* those our traditional lens overlooks: modern role models, non-Jewish visionaries, and extraordinary Jewish women. Inviting Palestinians into our sukkah - and our lives - is more complicated. Yet the fates of Jews are intertwined with those of Palestinians; the thriving of the Jewish people depends on our ability to understand their perspectives and life experiences. **Encounter therefore offers these *ushpizin* as part of a *kavanah* (intention) toward courageous invitation:** the courage to invite in those who are not always welcome in our communities or who we ourselves find challenging to engage.

**The images, ideas, and questions offered here are designed to be relevant in any moment connected to Israel or the conflict.** We invite you to integrate them into your viewfinder throughout the year: Where do they fit? How does including them in your lens impact everything else in the frame? And how can this perspective-taking guide your engagement with Israel in a way that increases both *Ahavat Yisrael*, love of the Jewish people, and *K'vod Ha'adam*, the dignity of all?



"Both Jewish and Palestinian communities have a history of pain and trauma that has been carried into this conflict. Peace is about being humble in listening to these communities' needs and strengthening them to make the right decisions for their lives."





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# FADIA AND FATIMA

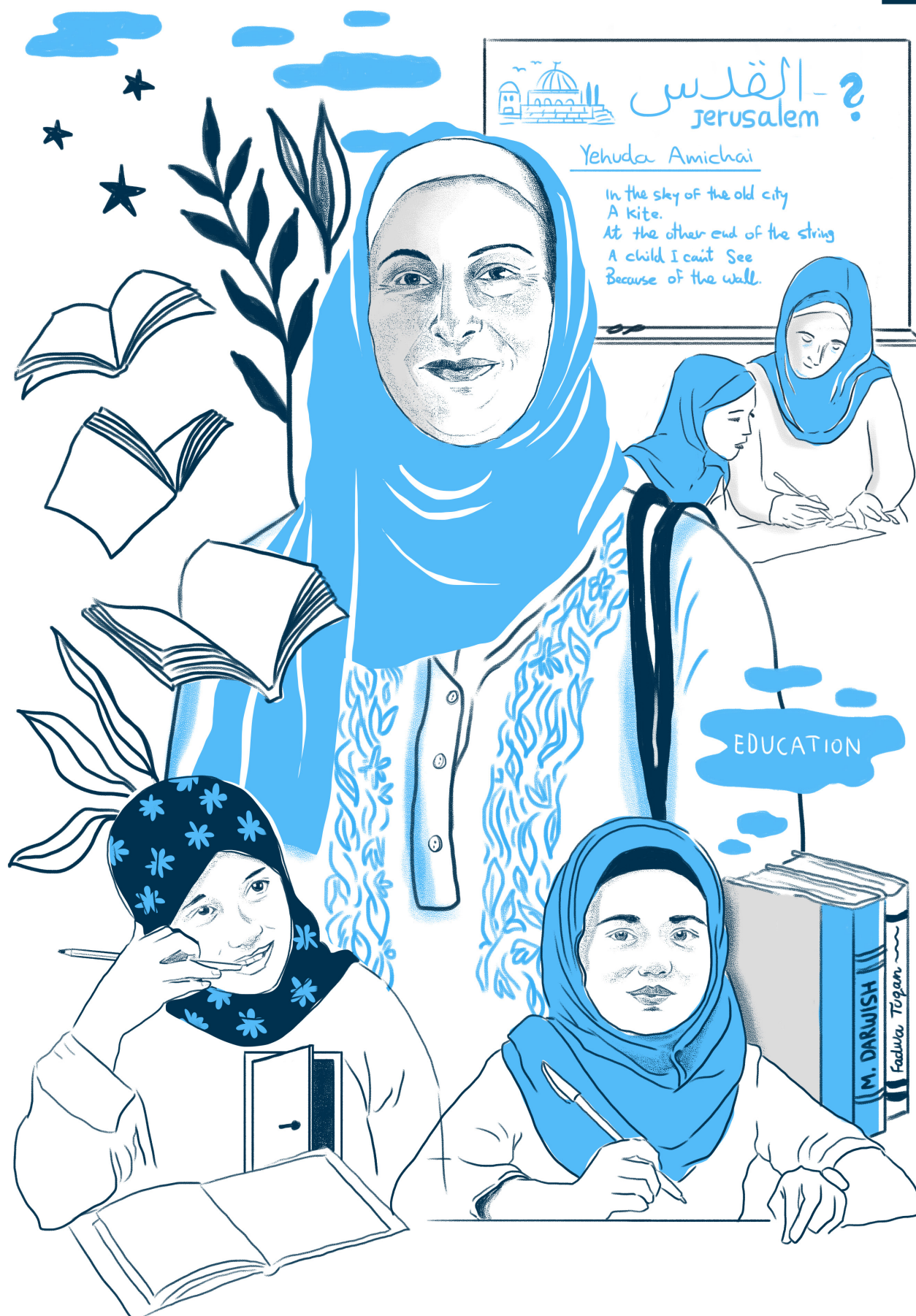


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# SULAIMAN AND OSAMA



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# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

At the heart of this resource is **an invitation to courage**. As you take in these images and ideas and consider how to share them, it may help to keep Encounter's Values and Principles of Practice in mind:

## רוח ניסוי

### *Ruach Nisu'i* **Labspace**

Encounter invites the practice of experimentation and messiness: a willingness to try on new ideas and to allow others to do the same without fear of attack or judgment.

For many this subject matter is loaded, and much as we may appreciate the individuals profiled here, discussing the issues surfaced here can be challenging and even trigger a sense of unarticulated fear. This is to be expected when we engage the fraught political realities that underlie these stories - and yet it is necessary. We have a responsibility as a community to engage the uncomfortable. So enact that courage by inviting yourself and others into a **labspace of experimenting with messy new ideas**. It can help mitigate some of the unease we may encounter and create space for generative engagement and conversation.

## אומץ

### *Ometz* **Courage**

Encounter values courageous leadership in relation to the conflict, and strives to support Jewish leaders who exercise bold agency in their communities even in the face of potential risk.

Notice: What feels comfortable or easy to engage? What feels generative? Toward who and what do you feel a sense of responsibility? Where is there risk or resistance? Ask yourself: How might you mitigate that risk or resistance and, **powered by courage**, what steps can you take toward sharing with an eye toward meaningful impact?

## שמע

### *Sh'ma* **Resilient Listening**

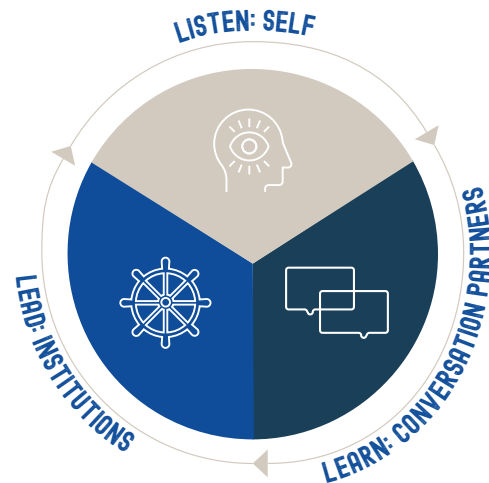
Encounter encourages resilient listening toward Palestinians and toward Jews with differing worldviews, even in the face of challenges to deeply held commitments or beliefs.

Invite colleagues, peers, or constituents to explore this resource with you as part of an authentic dialogue. The goal is not to persuade them to see things *\*your\** way. Instead **take the time to listen, ask questions, and truly hear** what your conversation partners are feeling and thinking, even if their views are challenging for you. The goal is not for everyone to agree but rather for each person to genuinely engage in the process of expanding their own viewfinders and grappling with new and diverse perspectives.



# THREE SPHERES OF ENGAGEMENT

We invite you to explore three spheres in which to use and engage with this resource, corresponding to the three elements of Encounter's tagline: **Listen. Learn. Lead.**

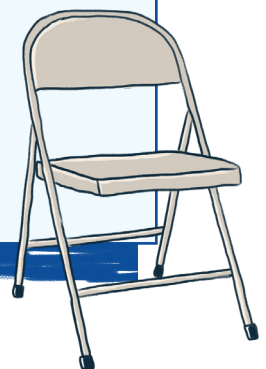


## LISTEN: SELF

**Begin by reflecting on what arises for you,** both personally and as a Jewish leader, as you explore this resource. If you had the opportunity to meet the featured person, think back to your experience with them:

- What stands out for you about this person and their story? If you met them, what do you remember about that experience or their leadership?
- If you could continue to be in conversation with this person, what would you want to discuss? What questions do you still have?
- What kind of responsibility, if any, do you feel toward this person, as someone whose fate is inextricably linked with yours? What does it look like for you to embrace your integrity around the life experiences and perspectives they shared?
- ✳ **Notice where the voices, experiences, and perspectives of Palestinians already show up for you personally and professionally, and where they are missing.**

What is one kavanah you have this year for perspective-taking or courageous invitation into your own awareness?







## LEARN: CONVERSATION PARTNERS

**Explore with a chevruta or two:** We all need chevrotot (learning partners) with whom to think things through, especially on charged issues. With whom is it important for you to be in conversation on these issues?

- > **Identify and reach out to a trusted colleague or thought partner:** Summoning the courage for difficult conversations is easier when we can discuss first with someone we trust. Reach out to a “safe” conversation partner with whom you can speak openly, who can help you think through how to share this resource in more challenging spaces.
- > **Identify and reach out to a challenging conversation partner:** What would it look like for you to step into a courageous conversation about the images and ideas here, and with whom do you envision that discussion happening? Can you identify 1-3 colleagues or peers to share and discuss this resource with, as part of your role in holding the Jewish people accountable to expand our lenses and become more introspective about where Palestinian perspectives and stories fit into our own?
- ★ **Notice where the voices, experiences, and perspectives of Palestinians already show up in your conversations with colleagues and peers, and where they are missing.**

What is one kavanah you have this year for bringing Palestinian stories and perspectives into your conversations?





## LEAD: INSTITUTIONS

**Impact your institution:** Every Encounter Network Member has various institutional spheres of influence in the Jewish world. Identify which are yours and how you can bring this resource to those institutions and to your sphere.

- > **Locate yourself institutionally:** Identify the institution(s) that you're connected to and in which you have influence. Are you a professional, donor, or on a board? What are the levers of influence in your institution, and whose support do you need to enlist in order to make headway on sharing this resource with your community?
- > **Do a quick scan of your institution(s):** Where do the stories and lives of the people featured here, or those like them, show up for your institution's constituents? What is one place you can identify where, powered by courage, you would like to invite these voices into your institution?
- > **Make a plan:** Decide who in your institution you would like to share this resource with, and what that looks like. It could be as part of a class with students or congregants, a presentation to fellow board members, teachers, or rabbis, or an informal activity with campers. Or it could mean hanging the posters in a visible location and inviting colleagues and peers to learn more.



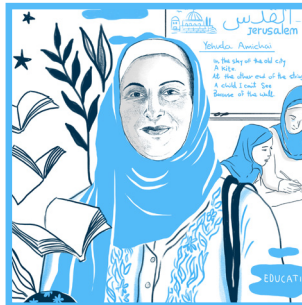
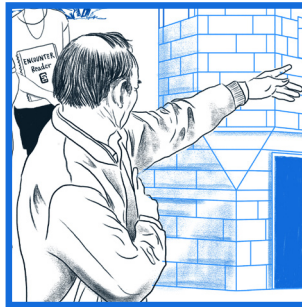
Whatever direction you take, if you need help thinking about and implementing a plan to use this resource, or if you'd like to be part of a pod of Encounter network members thinking this through, we want to help -- reach out to us at [poweredbycourage@encounterprograms.org](mailto:poweredbycourage@encounterprograms.org)

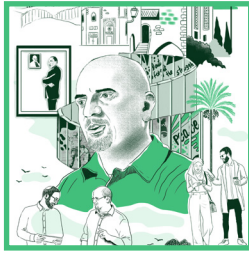




## LEGEND

Like a legend on a map that helps identify where you're located, this unconventional legend is designed to help you "read" the images shared on the *ushpizin* posters. Here we offer a window into the lives of the highlighted people and places - as we see them, as well as in their own voices, as partners and co-creators of this resource. We invite you to consider how you might integrate these images into your own conceptual framework of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What do you want to share with others as a commitment to the practice of perspective-taking on this issue?





## Sami, Holy Land Trust, Bethlehem

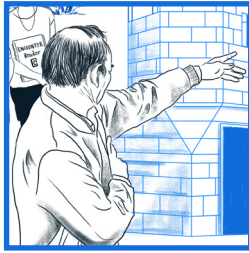
Sami is the founder of Holy Land Trust, an organization whose name reflects the view that all inhabitants are trustees in stewarding the land which is holy to three faiths. A prominent leader following the legacy of his uncle, renowned nonviolent activist Mubarak Awad, Sami embodies deeply courageous leadership in exploring the root causes of violence and a commitment to transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in ways that honor the dignity and rights of all peoples. He perseveres in the face of both internal pressures from Palestinians who accuse him of “normalization,” as well as the external stresses that permeate the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank.

Years ago Sami traveled to Auschwitz, where he was profoundly impacted by learning about the trauma and pain of the Jewish experience of the Shoah as well as about the persecution of Jews throughout the centuries. He speaks frequently about his conviction that much of the failure to reach a durable peace derives from the fact that the agreements to date were crafted by secular elites on both sides who excluded and marginalized the voices and needs of religious communities. Sami is distinguished by his willingness to speak with anyone, including many “unlikely partners” - Jews and Muslims throughout the land who are often seen as “hardliners” by their own communities - despite the significant risks this entails.

On the wall of Sami’s office hangs a framed photograph of Martin Luther King Jr., looking up at a photograph in his own office of Mahatma Gandhi; Sami often cites these two visionaries as inspirations for his own work. As you look at the images of Sami, MLK, and Gandhi in this poster and think about their values in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, what throughlines do you see and what more do you want to learn?







## The Village of Bayt Zakarya

Bayt Zakarya is located in the heart of Gush Etzion in Area C of the West Bank. With its 650 residents, Bayt Zakarya is nearly imperceptible among the twelve Jewish communities that now cover the surrounding hilltops.

Nestled next to the Jewish community of Alon Shvut, with its Har Etzion yeshiva that many Encounter Network Members have studied at and feel a strong connection to, the village's proximity highlights and crystalizes an inherent challenge at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the necessary sharing by Jews and Palestinians of the physical land. One area in which this challenge plays out is in the lack of building permits issued by COGAT to allow for natural growth of this village and others in Area C, forcing younger Palestinian residents to leave in search of places to live in Areas A or B where construction is permitted. Witnessing the contrast between their own reality and the rapid construction and growth they see in nearby Jewish communities causes significant tension and highlights more macro disputes over who the land "truly" belongs to.

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The 1993 Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C with varying levels of autonomy, with the original objective of incrementally increasing Palestinian autonomy toward an eventual independent state. Area C is the largest swath, administered by the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), with Palestinian villages and Jewish communities scattered throughout. As of the fall of 2020, Israel's Prime Minister and many MKs advocate for annexing part or all of Area C to Israel.

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This challenge is also reflected in the village's cramped school building and unfinished minaret pictured in the poster. The village residents began building the minaret as part of a mosque at what is understood to be the tomb of the prophet Zecharia/Zakarya but were prohibited from completing construction, so the minaret has stood unfinished for decades. The five-room school with its metal rooftop, built during the Second Intifada amid a years-long curfew on the village, has a standing demolition order over it that has to date not been enforced. The village leader embodies a dignified, gentle, and resilient leadership in his relentless endeavors to work with his Israeli Jewish neighbors toward respect, dignity, and rights for all of the region's residents.

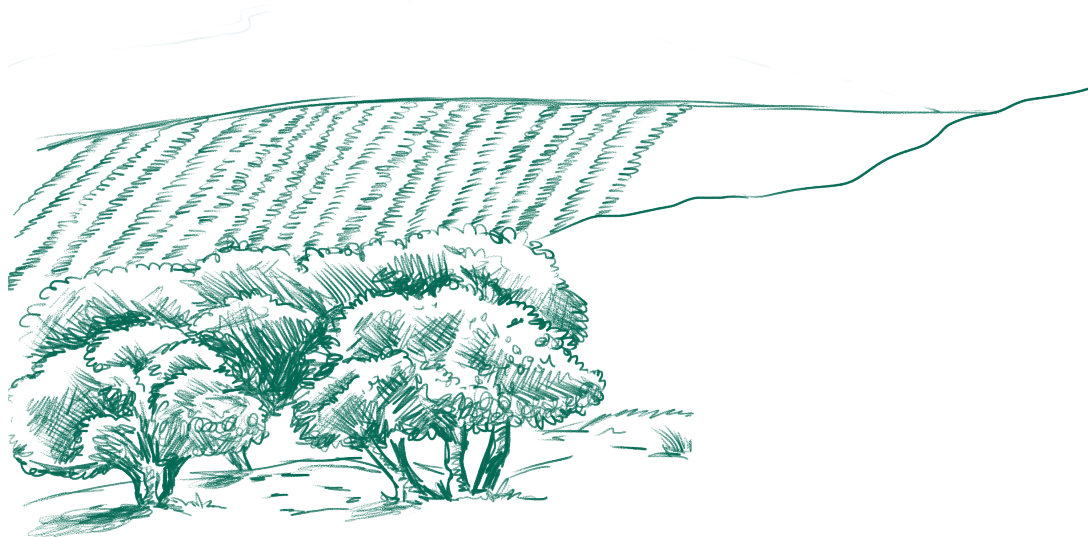


## Women's Committee, Jubbet al Dhib

The village of Jubbet al Dhib is also in Area C of the West Bank, at the foot of the ancient site Herodium. Like Bayt Zakarya, this village has encountered significant challenges regarding basic infrastructure. For decades the village

leadership has been denied approval by Israeli administrative authorities to connect to electric and water networks and to build a school. Deeply frustrated by many failed attempts by the male leaders of the community to resolve these challenges, Fadia, Fatima, and several other women founded the *Jubbet al Dhib Women's Committee* to take matters into their own hands. After a several-year legal battle, they won the rights to install a solar powered electric system with the help of the Israeli organization Comet-ME. They also succeeded in building a tiny school.

When Encounter cohorts visit, Fadia often flips on the light switch with pride and shares how doing so for the first time caused her tears of joy. The solar panels and electric lighting are a reminder for the women that their courageous leadership and refusal to give up endow them with tremendous power to continue transforming the lives of the village residents despite the many forces arrayed against them. The women do not understand why their desire for electricity and a school is viewed as a security threat; there is a growing sense that undergirding this is the dispute about who "truly owns" the land.







## Mahmoud at The Educational Bookshop, Jerusalem

The *Educational Bookshop*, owned by the Muna family, is in the beating heart of East Jerusalem's cultural center.

From two branches on Salah a-Din Street and one at the iconic American Colony Hotel, Mahmoud, the "*Bookseller of Jerusalem*," sells and delivers books on Palestinian identity, politics, and culture to locals and internationals alike, and hosts frequent literary salons and other cultural events.

Mahmoud's courageous leadership is reflected in a commitment to not sparing his interlocutors his anger and his pointed and often provocative views, while simultaneously radiating warmth and humor, deep integrity, and an optimistic faith in the power of human beings to make a difference. Mahmoud speaks candidly of his belief that the Palestinian national project in its recent form has been defeated, and that both Palestinians and Israelis need to rethink how to move forward from that failure and consider what it means to start anew in a way that will ensure security, justice, freedom, and equality of rights for all. Surrounded by the fraught political reality in Jerusalem where the air is thick with tension, Mahmoud's bookshop and his work offer a glimpse of a better and more optimistic future.





## Lama's Classroom in Dura, Hebron Region

Lama is a world-wise teacher of English literature in a religiously and politically conservative girls school in Dura, near Hebron, and works actively with the Israeli organization

Women Wage Peace. She comes from an exceptional family led by strong women: her sister is the Middle East Director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace; her eldest daughter is a dynamic young peace activist shaped by her mother and aunt; and Lama herself manifests a gentle yet fierce leadership on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a profound maternal commitment to working toward a better life for all Palestinian and Israeli children. She speaks often about her passion for literature, teaching, and life-long learning, reflecting a deep moral imagination which she employs in a constant effort to understand the experiences and emotions of the other and to serve as a bridge-builder. She channels this commitment, skill, and vision into the ways she educates her students and her own five children.

Encounter Network Members are often moved by a story Lama tells about introducing her students to the poem *Jerusalem* by Yehuda Amichai without initially sharing the poet's name, and how her students assume it is written by a Palestinian; Lama relates the shock her students express at learning that there are indeed Jewish and Israeli poets, and that they too love Jerusalem. She holds this up as an example of the importance of learning about the other – including those you see as your enemy. While Lama is anything but average, she demonstrates daily the extraordinary power of ordinary people to make change and to bring forth a better future.







## The Bustling Streets of Ramallah with Sam

Sam is known fondly as “the tallest man in Ramallah” - an attribution which captures both his physical stature and his larger-than-life presence. He is a tireless and outspoken

activist, unofficial spokesperson for the Palestinian people, and bridgebuilder with an MBA from Tel Aviv University who maintains relationships of mutual respect with scores of Israeli and American Jews, holding them alongside his intense Palestinian patriotism. His warm, friendly and jovial character exists side by side with his unapologetic, piercing, and exacting assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the history leading to the current precarious stalemate, and serious criticisms of both the Palestinian and especially the Israeli leadership. Jewish leaders who participate in Encounter’s programs often find his ideas provocative, troubling, and frequently offensive, challenging their own long-held truths and attachments even as they may see aspects of themselves in his thoughtful sophistication and intellectual prowess.

A Palestinian-American businessman born in Youngstown, OH, Sam married a Palestinian woman and they relocated after the signing of the Oslo Accords to Al Bireh, his father’s hometown adjacent to Ramallah, in the hopes that he could play a valuable role in building a Palestinian state. He demonstrates pride in showing Encounter cohorts around Ramallah, a city he has played a key role in developing over the past two and a half decades, including through his founding of Paltel, the first Palestinian telecom company.

The images on the poster capture the energy that permeates downtown Ramallah as Encounter cohorts walk through - the crowded, bustling vibration of new and old energies, with vendors selling fruit from pushcarts and coffee from jugs carried on their backs while cosmopolitan businesspeople rush between on their way to work or social events. At the center is Rukab’s ice cream shop, an iconic landmark established in 1941 where locals and internationals alike enjoy Palestinian ice cream made stretchy through a unique recipe based on Arabic gum.



## Sulaiman (a.k.a Souli) and Osama in the Land

Souli and Osama both grew up in the central West Bank - Osama in Jericho and Souli in the village of Hizme. As boys in the shadow of the First Intifada, they became politically activated and were drawn into paths of violent resistance. Both spent significant time in Israeli prison as young teenagers - Souli for stabbing and lightly wounding two Israeli young men, and Osama for publicly hanging a Palestinian flag, reflecting the intensity of the times. Alongside the trauma of being separated from their families and spending much of their youth behind bars, in prison Souli and Osama each also learned to speak Hebrew and interacted with Jews for the first time.

Souli spent much of his prison time reading writings by Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and other nonviolent leaders, which set him on a lifelong path of dedicated nonviolence, including co-founding the joint Palestinian-Israeli organization Combatants for Peace (CfP), nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Many Encounter Network members are indelibly touched by Osama's story of weeks spent in solitary confinement, during which he found comfort every several days from a beautiful melody sung by a voice nearby – a melody which, years later when attending his first Shabbat dinner, he realized was the hymn *Shalom Aleichem*. After several years as a Palestinian security officer and having a close friend shot by an Israeli soldier, Osama reluctantly accepted a friend's invitation to a CfP meeting. There he was shocked to encounter, for the first time, Jewish Israelis who expressed sorrow at the death of Palestinians. He is now a dedicated activist with CfP, and spends significant time working on behalf of Palestinian villagers in the Jordan Valley who lack almost any infrastructure and are at constant risk of eviction.

Osama and Souli embody the discipline, rigor, and ideals of nonviolence not only as a strategy but as a life path. Souli shares: *"Choosing nonviolence is harder than choosing violence. Holding a nonviolent philosophy - not just as a tactic but as a style of life and living on all levels - requires a lot of patience. But nonviolence does not come from weakness; nonviolence and forgiveness carry a huge amount of power and strength to make change."* Reflecting their roles as leaders in a joint Israeli-Palestinian movement, a unique and moving dynamic reflecting their linked futures has unfolded especially in Osama's and Souli's interactions with Encounter's Jewish Israeli Network Members. The banana trees portrayed in the poster remind us of Jericho's signature crop, which Osama often brings to share. The stones, hills, and roots evoke Souli's and Osama's deeply-rooted connection to the land and its natural and historical landscape, and Souli's stories about his grandfather's sleeping stone.



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SAMI

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BAYT ZAKARYA

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# MAHMOUD



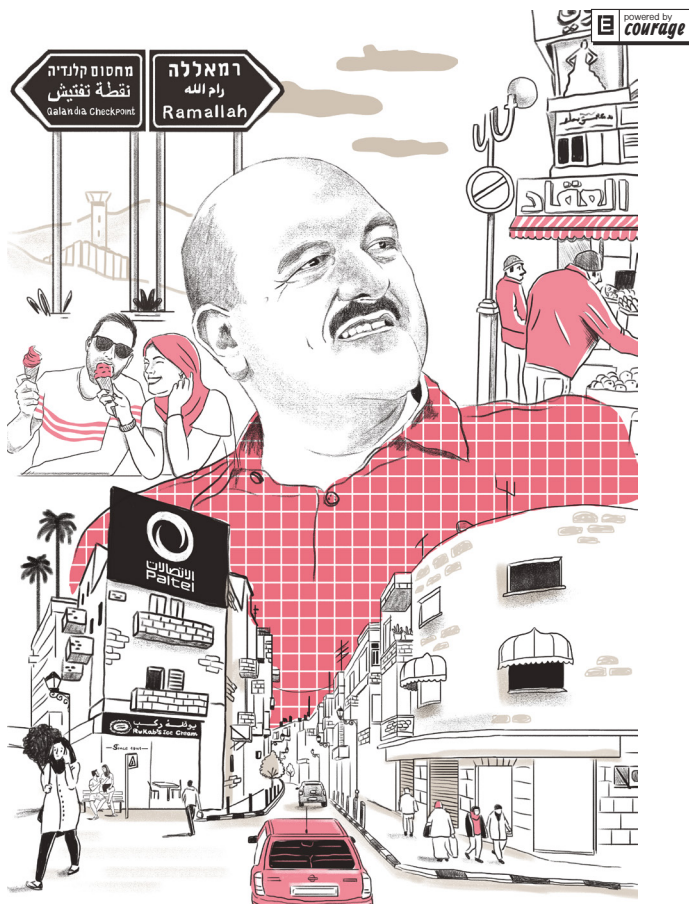
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