



MOUSA**QOUS**

Mousa Mohammed Qous was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1962 to a Chadian father and a Palestinian mother, and has lived his entire life in what is now known as the African quarter. Located in the heart of the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, directly adjacent to Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, the African quarter is home to some 350 Jerusalemite families of African descent. Mousa's father made the journey from Chad in the early 1940s as part of a religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to Al-Aqsa Mosque, and ended up remaining in the city after the 1948 war broke out and the borders were sealed. He eventually married a Palestinian woman from Jericho and settled in the Old City, where he has been working as an Aqsa guard.

Mousa graduated from the Collège des Frères at New Gate and went on to get a bachelors' degree in English literature from Bethlehem University, followed by a diploma in journalism and a master's degree in international relations from Birzeit University. He is currently the director of the African Community Society, a Palestinian nongovernmental, nonprofit organization that was founded by the Afro-Palestinian community in Jerusalem in 1983. The society's mission is to "promote development in Jerusalem's Old City by empowering and rehabilitating children, youth, and women to improve their quality of life based on reviewing their ongoing needs." These sectors, says Mousa, are often marginalized in Palestinian society in general, and in Jerusalem in particular, given the additional layer of living under Israeli occupation.

Much like most of Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, Mousa has not been immune to the occupation. He was imprisoned twice in Israeli jails – once for eight months during the first Intifada in 1988, and then again for five consecutive years, beginning in 1990. His three brothers also served time in Israeli prisons for their political activism. A father of two, Mousa is also an editor for Al-Quds Newspaper, and now focuses his energies on developing the Jerusalem community and the larger Palestinian society through his grassroots NGO.