



## PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH



### SANAA HAMMOUD

“Soar with my imagination and try to understand the wisdom of our being in this world at this time - and I think about my children,” Sanaa’ Hammoud answered reporter Fateh Allah Mureeh when during an interview for Panorama he asked her what she does and where she goes when the universe narrows down on her.

A television broadcaster, producer, commentator, and filmmaker, Hammoud began her career in media very early in her life. She graduated from the Arab Orthodox College in Haifa in 1992 and received her L.L.B. (Bachelor of Arts in Law) from the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya in 1998. Her Bar Membership at the Lawyers Union began in the year 2000. Then, she went on to pursue her M.A. in Journalism and Public Affairs from the American University in Washington, D.C., which she received in August 2004. She also carries an M.F.A. (Masters in Film & TV), obtained from Tel Aviv University in 2009. “Academia serves as a venue for gaining knowledge and competence, as well as for connecting and engaging with professionals in the field, through which we can grow mentally and physically in the universal realm of discourse and debate,” Hammoud annotates.

Born in Akka, Hammoud has an edge over news coverage and media generally, and within the occupied 1948 territories specifically, which include Haifa, Nazareth, and the Galilee Heights. She talks passionately and expresses herself fully in Arabic. She is also fluent in Hebrew and English. Hammoud’s

grounded spirit and illuminating charisma shine through the screen when she speaks about Palestine 48, the new television channel under the umbrella of Palestine TV. She was nominated for membership in the Advisory Board on 29 May; the launching of the channel was announced on 1 June 2015. Attentively, she grasps the viewer with her calm and strong voice, “similar to most new channels, Palestine 48 faces many challenges. Externally mainly for political reasons, with the arbitrary and oppressive attempts by the Netanyahu Government to shut it down and silence the voice of Palestinians living in the 1948 occupied territories. And internally with the current structure of the channel and its decision-making mechanism, which suffer from serious problems, particularly due to differing views about the message of the channel.” Consequently, Hammoud stepped back from the current operations of the channel.

Media in Palestine face many challenges; and the geopolitical division from which the area suffers adds to the obstacles that TV broadcasters and reporters are facing. “The main challenge revolves around limiting Palestinian televised media to a formal discourse in the absence of political pluralism, knowing that broadcasted television is the most widely spread, and hence has the potential of being most influential in developing and refining attitudes that would contribute

to social and political mobilization,” explains Hammoud. “There is no doubt that there is a gradual improvement regarding coverage of Palestinian channels, which stems mainly from constructive competition that has resulted from the information revolution we have seen at the end of the nineties with the launch of regional satellite channels.”

As Senior Communication Advisor, Hammoud is an expert in the fields of public relations, public opinion campaigns, and communication planning and implementation. Her experience extends locally with her contribution to the launch of Palestine 48, and regionally through her work with the Al-Jazeera News Channel. We asked her what needs to be done to make the best out of our local television channels. “We don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” she replied, “we can derive some lessons from the Lebanese model, which is ahead of the game in the satellite media scene in many aspects.” Local media channels, she recommends, can and should: make more efforts to mirror the reality of citizens; build a national media strategy adopted from a clearly defined political and national strategy; hire more educated professionals; provide opportunities for political pluralism and open the doors for presenting them creatively; ensure and protect freedom of expression, as well as ensure an ample space for self-criticism; enhance public awareness about our political and social issues and empower citizens to take a more

active and therefore influential role in resolving them; enhance the status of national, independent, and intelligent media personnel and establish a special committee, or nominate an independent competent professional to receive public complains, in order to ensure transparency, professionalism, and the rule of law.

Interestingly, Hammoud considers Oprah Winfrey a role model whom she greatly respects and looks up to. She shares her ambitions: “In the short term, I wish to host and produce a talk show about the most heightened political and social issues in the 1948 territories with Al-Mayadeen television channel, which I consider closest to my political, national, and moral views. In the longer term, I hope to manage a national, independent, televised media organization that operates according to well thought-out strategies, and enjoys credibility, transparency, professionalism, political pluralism, and respect for Arab and Palestinian public opinion.”

Finally, when asked for her advice to the younger generation in the field, she asserts, “Don’t forget your professional and ethical commitment. Our first mission is to transfer reality as it is and to shed light on the issues of ordinary people (MQS - Man On the Street), conveying his or her concerns and dreams. Remember, your place as decision-makers requires your morality and professionalism in fact-finding, unveiling the truth to the public, and contributing to the modification of the defect when such need arises.”

