



he Last Word

*A letter to the man featured in an article in Haaretz on July 18, 2018:
“Prominent Jewish Donor to Israel Questioned by Airport Security Over
‘Palestine’ Pamphlet”*

Dear Mr. Koplou,

My name is Sani Paul Meo, a Palestinian from a Jerusalemite family that “made aliyah” some 900 years ago. The word is that my family came to Palestine with the Crusaders. They seem to have liked the land and decided to stay.

I also happen to be the publisher of that cheeky little magazine, *This Week in Palestine*, which caused you some distress at the hands of the security personnel at Ben Gurion Airport when they found a copy of my magazine in your luggage. Let me start with an apology for the incident. I assure you it’s an odd case because, for years, people have been carrying copies of my periodical when they travel, and I’ve never heard that it has been the cause of any harassment by Ben Gurion security.

This Week in Palestine prides itself on the fact that, essentially, it promotes and documents Palestine (and has been doing so for the past 20 years, without missing a single issue). We’re a thematic monthly publication that offers a forum for discussing issues such as tourism, cultural heritage and identity, design, agriculture, sports, gender, youth, health, culture – you name it. In fact, there’s hardly an area that we haven’t covered. We position ourselves as Palestine’s national, liberal, and secular publication. Our aim is to portray a modernist view of Palestine and at the same time to instill some hope among our people. You might be surprised to know that one of my dream projects is to have the content of my magazine translated into Hebrew! I figure that if Israelis were to read about women race-car drivers or about the Palestinian Philharmonic Orchestra or even about a human story of a hard-working mother trying to cope with social pressures, it just might make a dent in changing Israeli perceptions of Palestinians. I firmly believe that, in general, Israelis have a negative impression of us Palestinians, to put it mildly. Demonizing each other, in my opinion, is one of our major obstacles, and humanizing each other is the first step towards reaching a solution.

I would like to end with part of the comment I sent to *Haaretz* regarding its article about the incident with you. Here’s the link to the article which I’m sure you’ve already seen: <https://archive.is/4IQRM>.

I am the publisher of the “pro-Palestine pamphlet” found in Koplou’s baggage at Ben Gurion. In 2014, my little magazine *This Week in Palestine*, or TWiP as we call it, was the first to be honorably mentioned (after *Al-Jazeera* English) in the Awards for Exemplary News Teams given in Beijing at the World Media Summit Global Awards for Excellence. Incidentally, *Haaretz* was mentioned, too; you can ask Simon Spungin. I understand Koplou’s attitude at Ben Gurion in describing TWiP as “propaganda” material and “not real journalism,” but what I do not understand is that you called the magazine “pro-Palestinian.” I ask you, do you describe *Haaretz* as a “pro-Israeli” publication? Or simply as an Israeli publication? I do not believe that your description was appropriate. Our August issue, for your information, is all about hiking trails, cycling, motorbikes, 4-wheeler excursions, and alternative tourism. You really should pick up a copy; it’ll be a wonderful, upbeat, summery issue!

Unfortunately, *Haaretz* didn’t have the courtesy (or the courage) to even post my comment.

Best regards,



Sani Meo
Publisher