



The Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company Aspirations and Accomplishments

Courtesy of The Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company



If we think of our country a hundred years ago, in the midst of the British Mandate, we would realize that the formation of a local transportation company was a national project based entirely on individual effort and without any assistance from a ruling power or government. The main goal was to serve the country's development interests by connecting cities and providing easy communication and support to commercial traffic inside and abroad. This modest project led to the advancement of culture and knowledge, and strengthened the country's commitment to the necessity and importance of community cohesion in order to build the nation and escape the clutches of colonial occupation. Success grew slowly through the collaboration between local capital and the national population, which resulted in the establishment of a national transportation company.

With the *Nakba* in 1948, national ties were severed and the country came under Jordanian rule. After things settled, however, the founders of the national company started to rebuild with more knowledge and experience. They managed to expand the company and increase the number of routes to serve various areas. Their situation continued to improve as bus lines brought people together and facilitated commercial and cultural exchange.

In 1967, with the event of the second *Nakba*, called *Al-Naksa*, which brought about the suffering of our people as the rest of Palestine was occupied, the company continued to promote unity in the field of transportation. During that time the structure of the company was rebuilt to allow it to keep its independence and national identity. The spirit remained nationalist despite the various names: Ramallah-Al Bireh-Jerusalem Bus Company, Hebron National Buses, Bethlehem-Beit Sahour Bus Company, Al-Azaryah-Abu Dis Bus Company, Wadi Al-Joz and Shufat Buses, Beit Hanina Bus Company, and buses to various villages such as Bir Nabala, Hizmeh, Al-Jeeb, Bidu, Qibya, among others. These were all lines that were based in the heart of Jerusalem.

After the second *Nakba* and under occupation, the field of transportation was rebuilt despite the lack of support from the government. Individual efforts enabled the running of a national company according to international standards. The company's commitment to modernization ensured the replacement of older vehicles and the reliance on experts in the field to implement the important aspects of the project,





which continued to improve until the first Intifada in 1987.

The first Intifada deeply impacted transportation and made investors wary about continuing the process of modernization. In fact, investors decided to withhold funds until a vision for the future became clear, especially after owners sustained losses due to damage to their buses and the constant risk under which they operated, which was a brand new reality.

Things became worse when the Occupation authorities began the construction of the Separation Wall around the holy city, which was the main center for all carriers to and from nearby towns and villages. This situation completely dissipated all hopes for progress and improvement, not only because of the occupation but also due to the dominance of the new

“Ford Transit system of transport” on the roads after public transportation seemed to stop due to the above-mentioned conditions.

The second Intifada further complicated the situation and reinforced the company’s state of stagnancy until April 2004, when an agreement was forged between the governing authority of the city of Jerusalem and company owners and shareholders. This agreement served to restart the various bus lines and services, and combatted the Ford phenomenon, which had caused a serious mess.

After the national public transportation companies suffered significant losses during the first and the second intifadas, the owners and shareholders managed to bring these companies back into existence and continue to improve and strengthen them through

generous collective and individual efforts, even in the absence of real government support. We are referring here to a group of companies that were operating separately, with ownership rights to the lines from Jerusalem: the bus companies of Jerusalem-Ramallah, Beit Hanina, Ram and Bir Nabala, and Kufur Aqab Buses, each of which had been able to establish itself as a company with high financial and moral standards, providing comprehensive transportation services to citizens in a civilized manner, despite all the difficulties and obstacles they encountered.

After a few years of solo work, the owners felt that these companies and their shareholders needed to unite in a manner that would

preserve their interests but strengthen their overall work and goals, a move that furthered their capacity and proved to be a success. After the unremitting efforts of the parties responsible, the official name of the company became the Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company, which reinstated the prestige and power that had been lost.

In order to progress, develop, and ensure sustainability, it was necessary to search for modern mechanisms that would enable quality service provision to citizens. To this end, the company formulated a strategic plan that called for the appointment of directors, executives, and consultants who were specialized in the field, in order to engage in the restructuring of the company.

According to Iyhab Al Qutob, who was recently appointed chief executive of the Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company, and who is also an expert in the field of management, “We have hard work ahead of us in order to reach our goals that focus on creating a new and different reality that ensures continuity in a more powerful and more civilized manner to meet the needs of the traveling public.” He adds: “We are still at the beginning. We need more time. I’m creating a new administrative body of major shareholders that include a number of advisers in multiple fields, such as economy and information technology.... We will hold training courses for drivers in order to raise the quality of services provided to customers in addition to bettering driver performance in general.... We have devised a call center for customers to communicate with us through regular methods and social media so that we can listen to their complaints and improve our overall performance.”

All this planning and work is for the sake of the travelers, the city, and the country in general, and to maintain an organization that is a symbol of the city and an economic pillar that continues to support our national existence, identity, history, and rights, which are constantly being taken from us.

For more information, visit our Facebook page, The Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company or call us at 02-627-4334.

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