

By Pilar Elhamoury

LAILA AKEL

Co-founder and COO of RedCrow

Laila Akel is a Palestinian self-made entrepreneur and innovator with a passion for art. According to the consensus of the people around her, she is a strong and empowering woman and an avid advocate of perpetual learning and self-development.

At 18, Laila traveled to Tunisia to study theater and then moved on to the United States to obtain a degree in applied science. After returning to Palestine, she worked as a graphic and web designer. To advance in her career, Laila taught herself online and social media marketing. When she became interested in the data aspect of it all, inspired by the collected data and the patterns it created, she found her passion for data-driven solutions.

In 2016, after two years with only occasional freelance and part-time jobs, Laila co-founded RedCrow, a company that provides practical risk-mitigation solutions to organizations and individuals in the MENA region. "I wanted to work harder and be more innovative; every job was an experience and sculpted a different skill, preparing me to take the risk and jump from being an employee to becoming an entrepreneur and a business owner," she explains.

Together with her co-founders Hussein Nasser Eddin and Tayeb Akel, Laila worked on developing an application that helps people safely navigate through difficult and volatile environments.



By automating the intelligence cycle, they created a better way to collect data, thereby converting data into security and safety information in real time. RedCrow started in Palestine yet today works in seven countries in the MENA region – Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Pondering her success, Laila notes, "Seeing RedCrow develop from an idea into a company made me realize that it's not just about the responsibility to myself but also to the people who believed in me."

The words of her late father Abdul Latif Akel, a poet and professor of sociology and philosophy, also weighed in on her character and career choices. "Alternating between what I wanted to do and what should be done has taught me a lot about myself and shaped the kind of person I wanted to be," he frequently told me," she remembers. "He taught me not to conform to society's expectations but to set the standards high for myself. This gave me the confidence to take on bold roles in my career and life."

