

A young man and woman are embracing on a rocky ledge. The man is wearing a black t-shirt and black leggings, and the woman is wearing a white t-shirt and light blue jeans. They are both looking up and smiling. In the background, there is a large, rough wall made of concrete and debris, with some graffiti visible. The sky is clear and blue.

**DHIP**  
the danish house in palestine

# Annual Report 2019

# Annual Report 2019



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# WHO WE ARE

The Danish House in Palestine's vision is to strengthen mutual understanding and appreciation between Danish and Palestinian culture, as well as encouraging values of openness, tolerance and democracy.

We - The Danish House in Palestine—including our staff, partners, volunteers, project participants, supporters, board and guests are all a combination of both Palestine and Denmark, women and men, young and old.

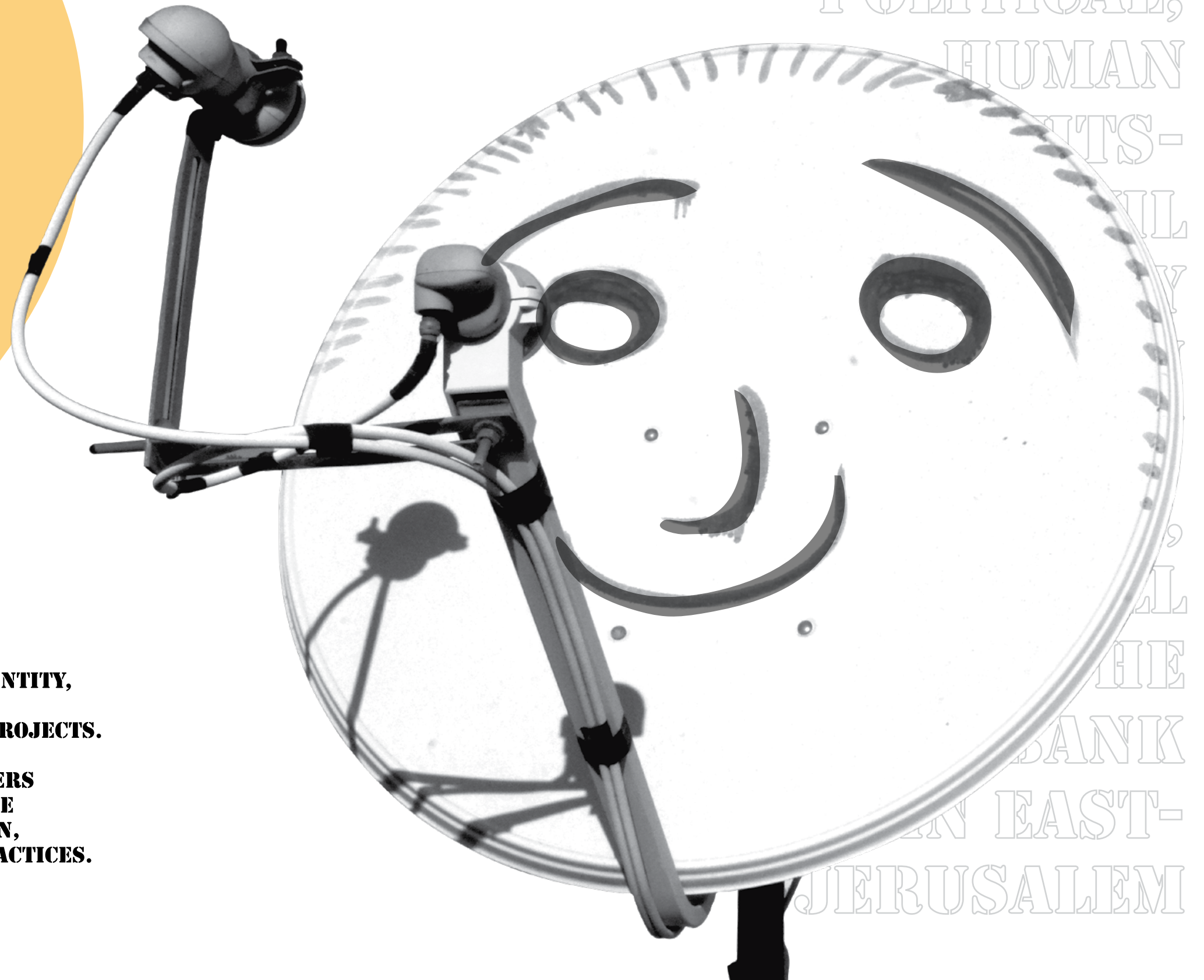
We are an independent, non-political, human rights-based, civil society organization based in Ramallah, working all over the West Bank and in East-Jerusalem.

We are an transparent entity, always open to change, improvements and new projects.

We ask our partners, supporters and all others to hold The Danish House accountable to its vision, mission and business practices.

We expect all our projects to be based on equality - and to be sustainable in ways that our projects have the potential to continue beyond our involvement.

**WE ARE AN TRANSPARENT ENTITY,  
ALWAYS OPEN TO CHANGE,  
IMPROVEMENTS AND NEW PROJECTS.  
WE ASK OUR PARTNERS,  
SUPPORTERS AND ALL OTHERS  
TO HOLD THE DANISH HOUSE  
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RAMALLAH,  
WEST-BANK  
AND EAST-  
JERUSALEM

# CREATIVITY, ART AND CULTURE SET YOUNG GIRLS AND BOYS FREE – IT GIVES THEM A VOICE



**DEAR READER,  
NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE  
OUTBREAK OF COVID-  
19, HAS IMPACTED EVERY  
ASPECT OF OUR LIVES.  
INCLUDING THE PUBLI-  
CATION OF OUR ANNUAL  
REPORT FOR THE YEAR  
OF 2019. AS SUCH, BY THE  
TIME THIS LEAVES THE  
PRINTING PRESS, THE  
CALENDAR WILL DISPLAY  
AUGUST 2020. WE APOLO-  
GIZE FOR THIS DELAY.**

As the director of the Danish House in Palestine it is my pleasure to formulate a few words as a precursor to our annual reports. This year, however, finding the right words to express my feelings and thoughts has been a difficult task. As such, I have turned to quotes and diary entries that I believe accurately describes life on the West Bank, and place our work at The Danish House of Palestine in its context:

## **WE ARE MORE ISOLATED THAN EVER**

Were the words of a good friend from Beit Jala, an old Christian town next to Bethlehem. Early March this year, authorities closed the city gates and effectively sealed off the two towns from the outside world. The population spent eight weeks confined in home-quarantine. As in every country across the globe, the outbreak of Covid-19 has touched on all spheres of life in Palestine with a massive impact. Livelihoods have been obstructed, poverty on the West Bank is feared to double, children experience stress and anxiety, domestic violence is on the rise, and thousands of children lacking proper access to the internet have been denied their right to education.

## **WE ARE IMMERSED IN VIOLENCE**

Children wake up in the night to the sound of shock grenades. Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces erupts in the streets. Young people fight Israeli forces in the hills and villages, protesting the expansion of settlements, demolitions of their homes, and the search and arrest operations. Simultaneously, rockets and balloons loaded with explosive devices are launched towards Israel from the besieged Gaza – and are answered by Israeli airstrikes targeting facilities in Gaza. Stabbings, or alleged stabbings, occur often leading to the death of the apparent assailant. And Palestinian farmers are attacked while working on their land and thousands of their trees - olive, almond, grapes – are uprooted by Israeli authorities or vandalised by assailants believed to be Israeli settlers.

## **WE ARE LEFT TO OUR OWN DESTINY**

The words of a gentle Palestinian man, I met in the fields outside Qalqilya. An academic who as a child experienced the Nakba. His words fell as reflections on the Israeli annexation plans, which are on the agenda while Covid-19 rages on. Maps of the areas to be annexed in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley are drawn as I write these words. A unilateral Israeli annexation would be a violation of international law. The plans have been condemned by the UN and EU. It is widely believed that an annexation will also render the two-state solution impossible. The man in the fields outside Qalqilya shrugged: 'Our land was taken a long time ago. An annexation will make it clear to everyone that the occupation was never meant to be temporary'.

## **WORKING IN A MINE FIELD**

Palestine's civil society organisations and individuals face massive challenges. As a civil society actor, you are subject to smear campaigns. Artists are threatened and cultural events are cancelled. External donors set conditions, potentially undermining your existence and legitimacy, and you risk spending months negotiating fair and just terms. Furthermore, you face restricted contact with colleagues living outside Palestine, censorship and self-censorship, and limited access to venues, audiences and resources. Manoeuvring this exhausting mine field, is a constant disrupter of your work, delaying your progress and diverting your attention from the core mission.

## **THE DANISH HOUSE IN PALESTINE**

For ten years, we have supported freedom of expression in Palestine. And despite the overwhelming challenges outlined above, we and our partners continue our work. Palestinians and Danes have demonstrated that trans-national collaboration, understanding and recognition is possible, strong, and essential. Through our work, it is evident that creativity, art and culture can set young girls and boys free and give them a voice. That it provides them tools to expand their world and help them deal with trauma and anxiety. Participation in cultural life contribute to democratic consciousness and social cohesion. It enables civic engagement, and gives rise to informed and qualified dialogues in the public domain. These are essential components of a flourishing society and of particular significance in Palestine where freedom of expression is under pressure and where solid democratic practices are yet to mature.

**ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, YOU CAN  
READ HOW OUR PARTNERS AND WE  
CHOSE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE REALISA-  
TION OF THE HUMAN RIGHT TO FREEDOM  
OF EXPRESSION IN PALESTINE IN 2019.**



# OUR PROJECTS

**BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS ARE ALWAYS AT THE CORE OF OUR WORK AND OUR PROJECTS WITH PALESTINIAN AND DANISH PARTNERS. DEMOCRACY, GENDER EQUALITY, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, FREE MEDIA RUNS THROUGH BOTH THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND THE DAILY WORK – ALL THE WHILE PROMOTING AND ENHANCING DIALOGUE AND MORE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PALESTINE, THE ARAB WORLD AND DENMARK.**

We work with culture, art and media. In 2019, as well as in the past years since The Danish House in Palestine was created back in 2010, we aim at supporting and engaging in a diverse portfolio of projects:

**CIRCUS SCHOOLS IN PALESTINE AND DENMARK** supporting The Palestinian Circus School with various professional videos and photos for their educational promotion and documentation.

**INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT, INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM** training Palestinian journalists from local media, with Danish and Jordanian-Palestinian journalism experts, on investigative journalistic skills, including online data research, code of journalism ethics, fake news, facts checking.

## **TAMER INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND DANISH PUBLISHERS, YOUTH LITERATURE AND ILLUSTRATION**

- promoting literary culture in Palestine, and introducing young readers in Palestine to illustrated novels, translation of children's books Danish/Arabic, reading activities for children, program and workshops with Palestinian community librarians and a Danish librarian.

## **PALESTINIAN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND DANISH ACADEMIA**

- publishing new Palestinian history books with a critical, non-biblical perspective, Danish-American authors touring universities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem with lectures and Q&A's with students and local scholars.

## **FILMLAB: PALESTINE, PALESTINE CINEMA DAYS, FILM LITERACY AND EMPOWERING STORYTELLERS**

– supporting the industry and development of films and documentaries in Palestine, connecting Palestinian, Danish and international film professionals. Supporting 'Next Generation', workshops and trainings focusing on children's and youths' understanding and critical thinking of film/video production, and training of local trainers together with Danish film professionals.

**AL HARAH THEATRE** - tour of theatre play 'Meramiyeh' throughout the West Bank, and training Palestinian drama teachers - together with Danish theatre partner Opgang2 in pedagogical methodology to support their social impact on young people through theater.

In the following pages you will find articles and interviews with some of our key partners and people we have worked with – giving them the voice to express their ambitions and dreams, their challenges and achievements.





# Father's Footsteps : Danish Filmmaker In Palestine

“I have read lots about separation walls, checkpoints and inherited hate. But it is something else to actually see and feel, to experience it. To stand in the airport and being questioned as if I was somehow guilty of something by just visiting Palestine. To walk right next to armed soldiers all the time. It was a tangible recognition of the conflict and how all-consuming it is.”

**SAYS EMIL  
NØRGAARD MUNK**

While in Palestine, Emil Nørgaard Munk stayed at The Danish House's guest house, a free residency offered to Danish filmmakers, curated and organized by Aarhus Film Workshop and financed by The Danish House.

“The residency in Palestine is a great opportunity for the film talents to get a different kind of input and inspiration than they would otherwise get in Denmark.

At the same time, it is also an exchange of culture,” says Josephine Maria Leopold, Project Manager with Aarhus Film Workshop, an institution which for many years has supported non-commercial film production, mainly new, mostly young film talents developing their professional and artistic skills.

During the past years, dozens of directors, photographers, scriptwriters and other people from the Danish film industry have collaborated with The Danish House and our local film producing - and teaching partner, Filmlab Palestine on numerous film projects (read more: “Critical Thinking Opens Bigger World”, page 32).

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

The Danish House, being based on empowering freedom of expression within art, culture and media, also supports and sometimes hosts screenings of high quality documentaries and films.

Part of supporting filmmaking and visual expression in general, The Danish House provides the free residences for Danish filmmakers coming to Palestine for shorter or longer periods.

The goal of the filmmakers is to get their own hands-on experience - both professional and personal - while staying in Palestine, and then share these new findings, dilemmas, questions, challenges with their friends and colleagues in the cinematic community back in Denmark. Let alone the learnings of simply filming in a foreign country, collaborating with local filmmakers, are valuable.

In 2019, Danish filmmaker Emil Nørgaard Munk travelled to Palestine to shoot footage for a documentary about his late father. The journey was made possible with the residency in collaboration between The Danish House and Aarhus Film Workshop. At the time, in February, the Danish documentary director and cinematog-

rapher was in the middle of creating a personal film about his father who died in 2011:

“My father travelled a lot in the Middle East and especially Palestine in the 1970's and 1980's. Palestine is an important part of who he was, and my stay was like travelling in his footsteps.”

**SAYS EMIL  
NØRGAARD MUNK**

## **RESIDENCY CREATES OPPORTUNITY**

His father was involved in political advocacy work, he wished to raise awareness of US imperialism, and was very interested in the decolonization of the Middle East. Although Emil Nørgaard Munk grew up with his father's stories of Palestine at the dinner table, he never had the opportunity to go and experience himself - but then he got the residency with The Danish House. Before his departure, the director was not sure if he was going to Palestine only to do research, or if he would also be able to film. Being there he was fortunate to find exactly what he needed, he got his camera rolling, and at lot of the footage from his tour is now crucial

parts of his final film:

“I tried to find the places where my father travelled to. I would stand with his diary notes and pictures and compare them to my experience 30 years later. It was very touching and interesting to actually feel some of my father's descriptions of barbed wire, checkpoints and the Palestinian people.”

**SAYS EMIL  
NØRGAARD MUNK**

The motivations of the numerous Danish filmmakers' for going on work residencies in Palestine are many. While some are visiting to produce specific films and documentaries, others come without needs of actual production but rather to get more insight in the region, the people and to seek inspiration. Aarhus Film Workshop is responsible for selecting the applications for residencies and deciding, based on the filmmakers potential and specific projects, who is going to the West Bank. Then, The Danish House, besides a free place to stay in our guest house in the old city of Ramallah, provides briefings on the situation and connects filmmakers with its local network.



## WALLS, CHECKPOINTS, HATE

The residency and tour around the West Bank and Jerusalem left filmmaker Emil Nørgaard Munk with a deeper understanding of Palestinians, the challenges and struggles within the society combined with the ongoing occupation from and conflict with Israel:

“I have read lots about separation walls, checkpoints and inherited hate. But it is something else to actually see and feel, to experience it. To stand in the airport and being questioned as if I was somehow guilty of something by just visiting Palestine. To walk right next to armed soldiers all the time. It was a tangible recognition of the conflict and how all-consuming it is.”

**” SAYS EMIL NØRGAARD MUNK**

During his stay he worked with many supportive Palestinians as well as Israelis. Two local film producers in Ramallah helped him find the right places for filming from looking at his father's sometimes 50 years' old photos, and in Jaffa he stayed with an Israeli documentary director. Among the places Emil Nørgaard Munk visited was a biodynamic farm outside Ramallah. Here, he met a farmer who had lost his land to a group of Israeli settlers. The farmer had found a new way of “saving” the Palestinian land by travelling from farmhouse to farmhouse to teach about sustainable farming and biodiversity. He also travelled to a bedouin camp in the West Bank, in risk of being demolished to make space for new Israeli settlements in the area: “I have gotten a lot of different perspectives on the land the Palestinians live on, all the ways the soil can be utilized and politized,” Emil Nørgaard Munk says. Meeting the Palestinians and getting first hand experience with the conflict also gave the Danish filmmaker a better understanding of his father's engagement in the area: “I could understand the injustice that he felt. Because it all feels totally unfair. The experience gave me an understanding of why my father could get so involved, spend so much time, and invest so much emotion in a conflict that he basically had no connection to.”

## NETWORK & SUPPORT

The filmmaker also sees parts of his father's thoughts in The Danish House:

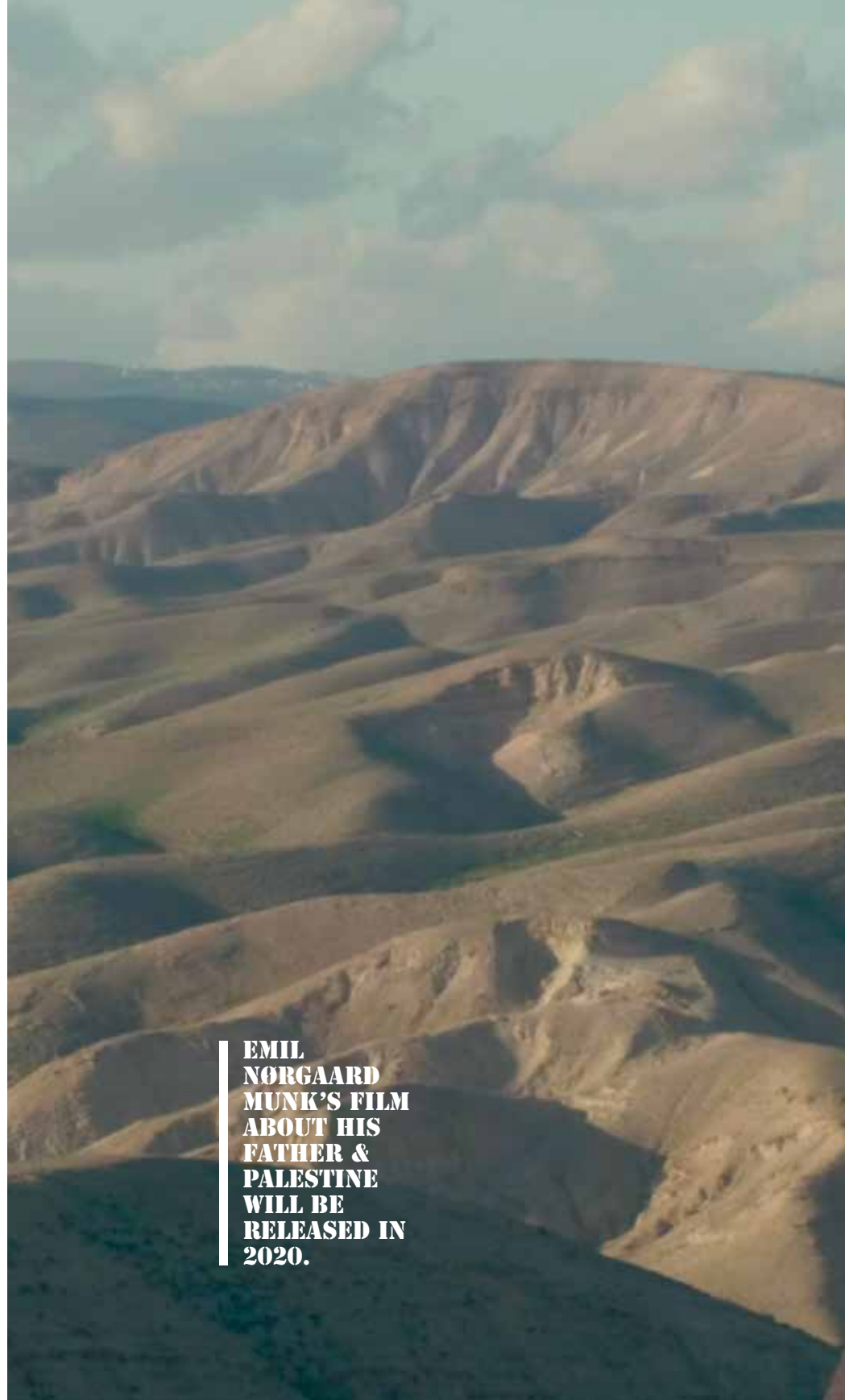
“One of the things my father spent a really long time doing, was trying to convey to the Danes what challenges and problems the Palestinians have, in order to built more understanding. Also in that way, I really appreciate The Danish House's vision, because it is completely in my father's spirit. To me, it is very meaningful.”

**SAYS EMIL NØRGAARD MUNK**

However, travelling to and working in a foreign country can be almost impossible or quite hard to overcome when time is limited, and you start out with neither professional nor personal insights: Who can help, where to go, how do practicalities work, why are people this way, what is behind the surface. Not only is there a lot of need to know but also a lot of nice to know, facts as well as feelings and understandings that are necessary in order to, in this specific example, actually produce a film that both reflects and respects reality.

The Danish director and cinematographer is very grateful for the support of The Danish House, and he highlights the conversations he had with Communication Manager Jeppe Nybroe who gave him advice about travelling with a camera shooting film and connected him with local filmmakers: “It was so helpful to have a network from the very start,” says Emil Munk Nørgaard, “arriving in Palestine and not have the feeling of being totally alone and having to figure everything out on your own.” says Emil Munk.

**EMIL NØRGAARD MUNK'S FILM ABOUT HIS FATHER & PALESTINE WILL BE RELEASED IN 2020.**







# **“THE MIND IS LIKE A PARA- CHUTE - IT ONLY WORKS IF WE KEEP IT OPEN”**

Our collaboration with Danish folk high schools is growing, thus opening doors in Palestine to hundreds of eager young people from Denmark. In the spring of 2019 we had a series of meetings with schools of journalism and folk high schools in Denmark, and since then a steady stream of students and teachers has come to visit The Danish House, and even more are on the way.

Both during springtime, autumn and early winter, groups of photo- and journalism students from Krogerup Højskole and Rødding Højskole (folk high schools) visited us and met with Palestinians across the West Bank. Focusing on culture, art and history, discussing politics, media and freedom of speech.

After briefings about our work and the current situation, one of the groups also experienced a combination of hard work, family life and a thousand years old tradition when they, alongside Palestinian friends, spent a full day harvesting olives in an olive grove half an hour drive outside Ramallah.





**“EDUCA-  
TION AS A  
LIFE LONG  
JOURNEY.”**

## 175 YEARS OF CRITICAL THINKING

The folk high schools are unique institutions of Denmark’s educational and cultural heritage. In 2019, in festive events, lectures, and articles, Danes – students and teachers as well as our prime minister and the royal family, businesses and media, actually people from all circles of life – celebrated a special birthday: The opening of the first Danish folk high school some 175 years ago.

When this educational movement in Denmark started at Rødding Højskole the 7th November in year 1844, one of the core ideas of the founder – Danish poet, philosopher, priest and teacher, mr. Niels Frederik Severin Grundtvig – was to enable all citizens to express a critical voice towards the people in power. To engage in democracy. Critical thinking is still at the very heart with the now almost 70 folk high schools spread all over Denmark, offering alternatives or supplements to universities and other educational institutions in Denmark.

The Danish Folk High Schools, from its birth until today, are based on fundamental freedom of expression and enlightenment – also illustrating that the better the education of the people, the better the people can use their freedom rights. Through 175 years, the founder Grundtvig’s motto “school of life” is still essential – teachers must educate and prepare students for life as it is. Today, many of the Danish Folk High Schools specialize in various fields, for example music and art or media and journalism, but all share – together with Denmark in general - the understanding of education as a lifelong journey.

## FACE REALITY

In the future, more students from the Danish folk high schools are joining us, including Vallekilde Højskole who will meet other young people, refugees, experts, Palestinians from all walks of life in Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Ramallah. The young Danish journalists in spe will have their first meeting with The Wall, face reality at checkpoints as well as in the smart cafes, and join the Danish House.

After the many visits, photos and articles - a lot of knowledge about Palestine; read, seen and heard by young Danish eyes - will be shared with hundreds of other students, families, and friends in Denmark.

The proverb "The mind is like a parachute - it only works if we keep it open" - attributed to both the philosophical scientist Albert Einstein and musician Frank Zappa - perfectly matches these groups of young people who visit us and Palestine with a strong appetite for listening, learning, engaging and expanding their horizons.



# Face To Face With The Catastrophe

In the fall of 2019, Al Harah Theatre took their play 'Meramieh' to Jordan. This was only the second time the play was performed outside of Palestine.

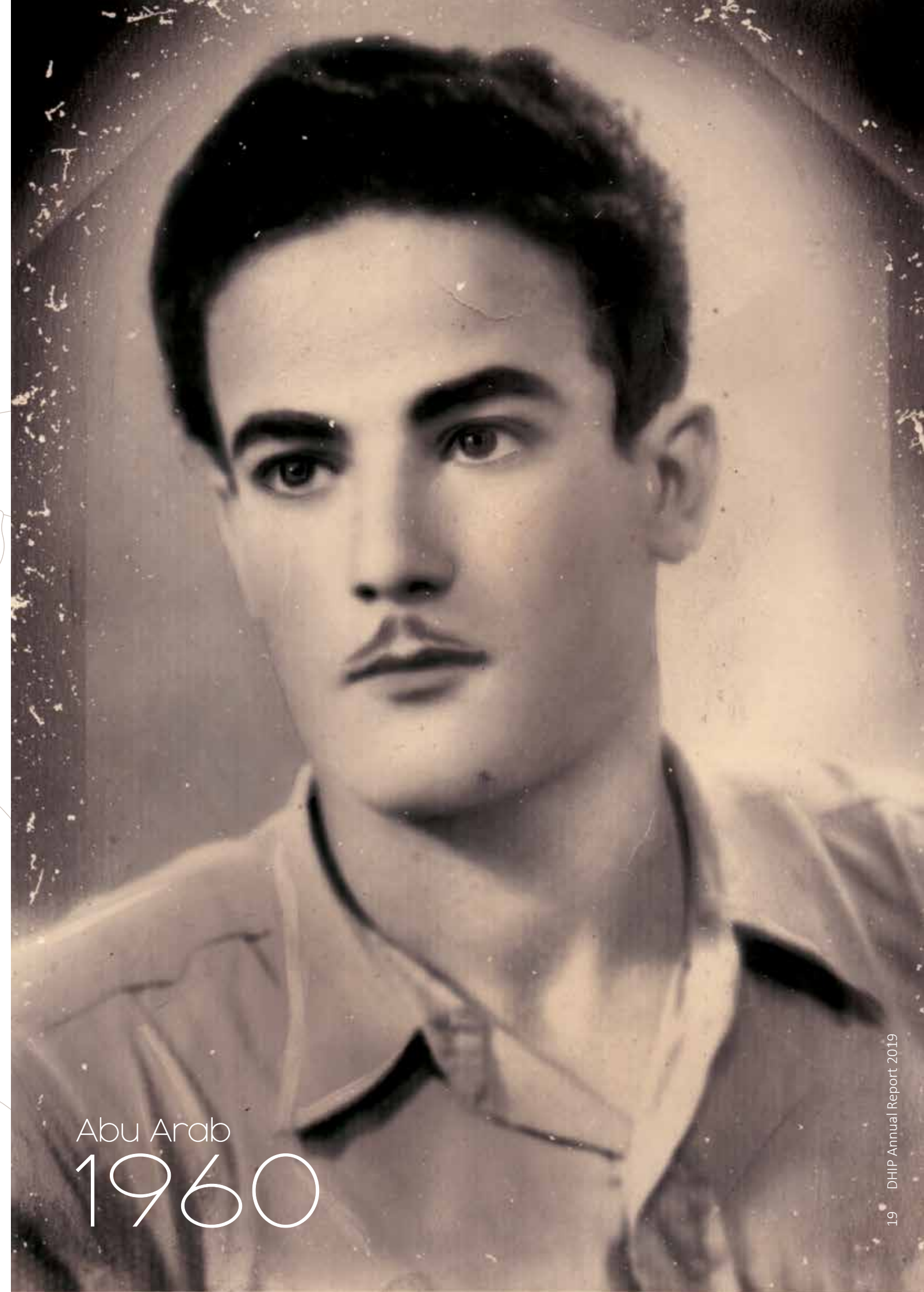
Although the play 'Meramieh' only has two actors and a simple stage design, the story it tells is powerful and moving. When the play begins, the actors Faten Khoury and Nicola Zreineh are unconcerned, happy and unaware of the catastrophe that will later hit them. They make tea from sage, in Arabic meramieh, play with each other and go about their everyday lives.

However, Nakba - in arabic 'the catastrophe', referring to 1948 when Israel was created and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced away from their homes and land - will turn their lives upside down. Barbed wire suddenly divides the stage in two, mirroring the wall and division that Palestinians have to live with every day. The characters' expressions are haunted as they tell of the homes, villages and belongings they have had to leave behind.

During 2020, 'Meramieh' will be performed on the West Bank.

Faten Khoury and Nicola Zreineh portray the actual experiences of six Palestinians who lived through Nakba and the displacement of Palestinians after Israel declared its independence.

Based on true stories, the portraits of these six Palestinians hang on a wall furthest back on the stage. More than 70 years have now set their marks on the faces in the portraits, they are a constant reminder that what is happening on stage are real memories of real people who experienced this time, with some of them still living to share testimonials of the horrors - and life long consequences.



Abu Arab  
1960



## EMOTIONAL AUDIENCE IN JORDAN

Co-funded by The Danish House, 'Meramieh' was first performed in 2017, after director Mirna Sakhleh transformed the testimonials of the six Palestinians into a script. Since then, the play has been performed all over the West Bank. In the fall of 2019 the troupe went on tour again.

"The tour went very well. People really loved the way we put the play together," says Ms. Marina Barham, the General Manager of Al Harah Theatre whose home-theatre is based in Beit Jala, next to Bethlehem in the West Bank.

In total, the play was performed in 11 different places, including old castles, buildings and courtyards, some of which have been renovated. 2019 also marked the second time Meramieh was performed outside of Palestine, in the Jordanian city Zarqa at a theatre festival.

"The Jordanians were very emotional, especially the ones with Palestinian origin. In particular the younger generation was moved, because they do not know a lot about Nakba," says manager Marina Barham.



## POWERFUL SPEECH

One performance stands out in Marina Barham's mind: the one in Nazareth. Amin-Mohammad Ali Abd Al-Mu'ti, or just Abu Arab, is one of the six Palestinians' memories Meramieh is based on. He was present in the audience that day.

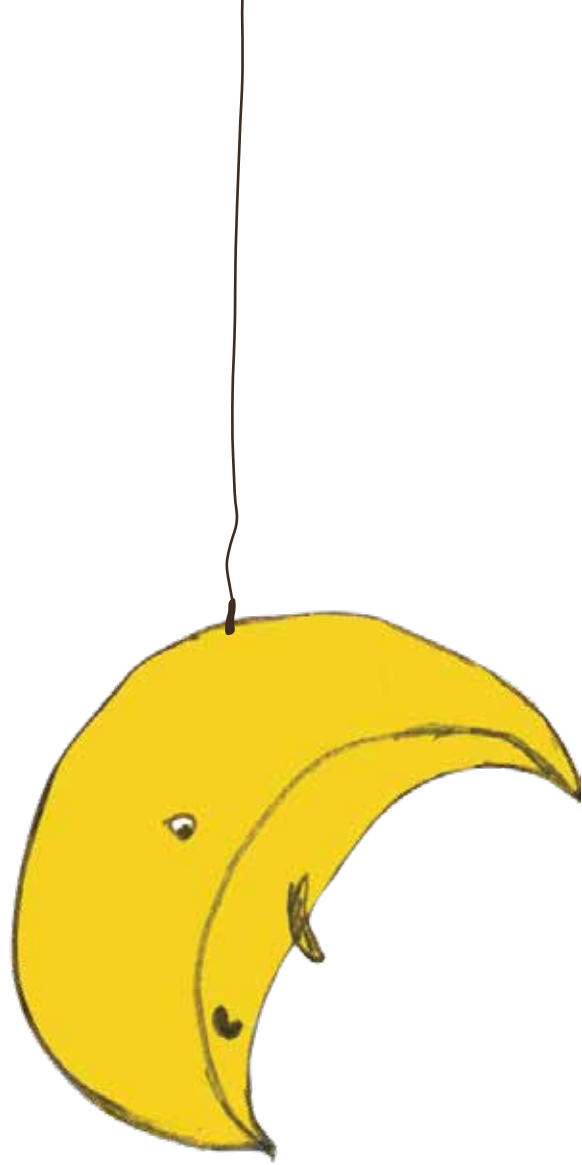
Abu Arab was born in 1935, making him 84 years old today, in a village named Safforiyeh which was located six kilometers north of Nazareth. The village was ethnically cleansed on July 16, 1948.

"Abu Arab gave a very emotional speech after the play about what it meant to him and his family to hear his story told," says Marina Barham and explains that especially the younger generation was touched by the story, sitting more or less face to face with what happened during The Nakba, the catastrophe, some seven decades ago.









"Take  
responsibility,  
if you want  
change"



**BE OPEN-MINDED AND  
TOLERANT, STOP BLAMING  
OTHER PEOPLE FOR  
ALL YOUR PROBLEMS -  
INSTEAD, LOOK YOURSELF  
IN THE MIRROR AND  
TAKE A PERSONAL  
RESPONSIBILITY. THOSE  
ARE SOME OF THE KEY  
MESSAGES IN THE DANISH  
CHILDREN'S BOOK 'MR.  
LION AND THE APPLE  
THIEF' PUBLISHED IN  
PALESTINE.**



“The book is about how quickly we tend to point fingers, blame others and make a scene,” says the book’s Danish author, Jan Oksbøl Callesen.

Themes like taking responsibility for your own life and hereby making a better world, rather than tend to finger-pointing and blame everyone else, are central to the author’s writing and the messages he wish to promote to the young readers.

“The main theme in many of my stories is personal responsibility. There are so many problems where you can be seduced by the idea that it is someone else’s problem and therefore they have to solve it. All my books are about looking inward. You have to take responsibility if you want something changed,” says Jan Oksbøl Callesen.

These messages are new in children’s literature in Palestine.

“Mr. Lion and the Apple Thief’ represents an excellent example of an artistic picture book of high quality for young children. The book comes with new themes for young readers in Palestine as it conveys a highly relevant story about scapegoating. The book stimulates the young Palestinian readers to reflect on the issue of inequality and the importance of confidently raising one’s voice when witnessing wrongdoing,” says Sahar Soufan, pointing out that the book received an award from The Danish Arts Foundation in 2016 as one of the best books of the year.

#### TEACH TOLERANCE

Program Officer Sahar Soufan believes that Danish literature in particular is useful in introducing different cultures of storytelling and visual expressions to Palestinian children. Danish children books will, she thinks, ultimately teach kids the values of being open-minded and show tolerance towards the diversity of people and life.

“The change of minds helps to create spaces for learning and expression, spaces where children in Palestine can be presented and exposed to alternative artistic expression in order to advance their literary creativity and enhance their critical thinking,” says Sahar Soufan.

When ‘Mr. Lion and the Apple Thief’ was published in Denmark back in 2016, author Jan Oksbøl Callesen never imagined that his book would make its way to Palestine.

“I am really excited to see how it is going to be received there. And I am happy to see the book written in the beautiful Arabic letters,” says Jan Oksbøl Callesen, who hand-wrote the book himself in the Danish version.



The colorful illustrations tell the story of a town populated by animals. In the town square an apple tree is growing, and on the tree is one single red apple. Eventually, Mr. Lion, living in the town, decides to grab the apple. When the rest of the animals in town discover that the apple is gone, accusations about who the apple thief might be are quickly flying all over. Every animal has a different version of what happened to the apple, and although Mr. Lion tries to confess, none is listening, and he soon forgets that the apple is right in his pocket.

The “juicy” intrigue was translated in 2019 into Arabic and published by Tamer Institute for Community Learning together with The Danish House. Now, the book is being distributed throughout Palestine, and the Danish publisher of the children’s book, Jensen and Dalgaard, is excited: “We definitely think warmly of the book, because it is a humorous, modern fable about picking a scapegoat who is different from yourself. It is a recognizable human mechanism, both for those who are pointing fingers and those who are being pointed at,” says Jeanne Dalgaard, who makes up one half of the publishing house.

Jeanne Dalgaard and Bjarne Michael Jensen, the other half of Jensen and Dalgaard, have visited Palestine, gotten first hand accounts of the situation in the West Bank, and established long lasting friendships: “It was an eye-opener to meet people who, under such severe conditions as in Palestine, have quite the same understanding of the importance of children’s literature as ourselves. Literature can make the world bigger and people more empathetic,” says Jeanne Dalgaard.

#### MISSION: HAPPINESS

She and Bjarne Michael Jensen recently received photos taken by The Danish House’ staff from one of the reading sessions that Tamer Institute regularly organizes for school children, on this occasion about the girl ‘Silly Lilly’ - in Danish, ‘Dumme Lilly’ - which is another Danish children’s book translated to Arabic and published in cooperation between Tamer Institute and The Danish House. The children are smiling from ear to ear, eyes wide open, intensively listening, sharing the struggles and joys of the girl, Silly Lilly.

Author Jan Oksbøl Callesen is not expecting “a commercial breakthrough” having his book published in Palestine, but he hopes for reactions with another, deeper value to it: “Palestine is something else, here the book is on a different mission. If it can spread a little bit of happiness in a place where living conditions can be tough, it would be amazing,” he says.

‘Mr. Lion and the Apple Thief’ is the fourth book for children and youth that The Danish House has translated into Arabic in collaboration with Tamer Institute.

In 2017, the book ‘Silly Lili’, by Danish author Mette Vedsø, was distributed to kids all over the West Bank - sharing the story of the girl Lili who has swallowed the word ‘silly’ and now cannot stop acting silly and saying impolite words. Fortunately, she meets some adults who see her for what she really is, among other good things kind to and patient with other people.

The book shows, with kindness and beauty, how you feel when you cannot

stop being nasty, even though deep down, you really want to stop. Also in 2017, the book “مذكرات تلميذ ابتدائية” by Palestinian author Khaled Juma and illustrator Abdallah Qawariq was translated to Danish - for kids in Denmark - and given the title ‘Hvis de lagde skolen ved vandet’ (in English, ‘If They Put The School By The Water’). The book centers around the everyday life and dramatic situations of a young Palestinian boy who writes his experiences in his diary.

Soon after, the Danish graphic novel ‘Zenobia’ by Danish author Morten Dürr was translated and published in Arabic in 2018.

The graphic novel is illustrated by Lars Horneman and given the title “زنوبيا” in Arabic. ‘Zenobia’ tells the story of Amina, a Syrian girl who is forced to flee her country when the war reaches her village. In order to escape, Amina boards a small boat crammed with other refugees, but the turbulent sea sends the girl overboard. In the dark water, the young Syrian refugee remembers her family and she travels back in time to the Palmyrene Empire in Syria, recalling the brave warrior Zenobia.

**Get more information about Tamer Institute for Community Education:**  
[www.tamerinst.org/en](http://www.tamerinst.org/en)  
 - and Danish publishes Dalgaard and Jensen: [www.jensenogdalgaard.dk](http://www.jensenogdalgaard.dk)







# CAN THESE JOUR- NALISTS CHANGE LIFE?

**THEY CAN, AND IN PALESTINE THEY PROBABLY WILL IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ALL OF THEM PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL TRAINING OF PALESTINIAN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS CONDUCTED AND MAINLY FINANCED BY INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT AND SUPPORTED BY THE DANISH HOUSE.**

“As a journalist, I must uncover the many things that the people actually do not see. We are the eyes of the people. It is our responsibility,” says reporter Anwar Abdoh, joining the special training in autumn 2019.

All journalists in the training express a strong commitment to support Palestinians in making the informed decisions and changes they might need to improve everyday life. By the end of the year and throughout 2020, the reporters are investigating a string of cases from all over the West Bank: from corruption in the educational system to the business of drug users, from misuse of tax money to fake religious therapy.

“I am truly amazed by the power of these young journalists. Their ideas are really great, and they really want to make a difference” says the Danish investigative reporter Mr. Henrik Jensen, from one of the leading national newspapers, Berlingske – employed at the same team that won the most important journalism award in Denmark, Cavlingprisen (Cavling Prize), for uncovering international money laundering. The Danish House invited reporter Henrik Jensen to share his knowledge with the Palestinian reporters, and he conducted the journalism training together with Jordanian-Palestinian film maker and media consultant Ms. Rawan Damen who for many years has produced documentaries for major international media outlets like Al-Jazeera and BBC.

## SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

The two trainers worked to strengthen the tools, the methods, the ethics of investigating and revealing important stories that are often kept away from the public’s eyes and ears. Enhancing the young Palestinian reporters’ skills - 11 women and 2 men - in asking the hard questions, searching for the true answers from authorities, decision makers and the people in power. The group of media professionals - from Hebron, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem - inspired and devoted to keep asking, keep digging, keep searching for the truth. Though simple, the question “Is it raining?” illustrates

to some extent, how investigative journalism is different from a lot of ordinary news reporting. Many reporters in day-to-day news reporting would ask two people; one says yes, the other says no, both quotes are printed. Investigative reporters aim at going (at least) one step further. Not only do they ask the two people if it is raining – they actually go outside, look around,

check the facts. They may even try find out, why in some places it is raining more, when other places are getting

too little rain. They search for “the best obtainable version of the truth”, as some of the world’s most famous investigative reporters from The Washington Post put it. Now, these dedicated journalists are back at their media outlets, digging up hidden information, fact-checking and confronting those in power. Young reporters who in the coming years will be fighting for freedom of speech in Palestine. And fighting for their clear, outspoken ambitions, expressed when they received their diploma from International Media Support of investigative journalism training: “We want to challenge corruption, the abuse of power, to make people’s lives better.”

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# Critical Thinking Opens Bigger World

“The more we are exposed and open to the bigger world, the more we develop our own thoughts, self-perspective and knowledge. This will empower us and turn us into more critical thinkers,” says Program Manager, Ms. Valentina Alkam from Filmlab: Palestine - highlighting the very vision of the Palestinian film school’s program ‘Next Generation’.

Many children and young people in Palestine are deprived from opportunities that enable them to be creative and express themselves. Filmlab: Palestine’s program ‘Next Generation’ - which started as a pilot project two years ago, supported by The Danish House, now a core program for children - gives the youth and future generations, the opportunity to do just that through filmmaking: Express!

“The ‘Next Generation’ was launched with the belief that cinema culture significantly contributes to long-term cultural change and empowerment,” says Valentina Alkam, who is responsible for the ‘Next Generation’ program at Filmlab: Palestine. Screenings of critically acclaimed films for children and youth is a core part of the program. The screenings are always followed up by talks with the kids, seeking to teach the children respect for others, people different from themselves - and to promote peaceful resolutions with those who have different opinions.

Making films hands-on is also a key element in ‘Next Generation’. In 2019, workshops led by trainers from Filmlab: Palestine and supported by The Danish House were held in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron and Gaza with 250 children joining. The children, aged 11-15 years, were taught the basics of filmmaking, from coming up with an idea to editing all the video into a small film. Using iPads, filming and editing every scene, the kids shaped their very own stories into small films.

## HANDLE PROBLEMS, EXPLORE LIFE

“Our workshops in filmmaking encourage children and youth to learn how exactly to tell their stories, express their feelings and thoughts about themselves, their communities, families and neighbourhoods. The training also gives them tools, while producing short films, to handle their problems and explore their opportunities in life,” says Valentina Alkam.

The ambition is to encourage more children to positively express themselves - while at the same time listening to and respecting new ideas even if they might not agree with those ideas and opinions.

The children’s workshops resulted in 43 short films which have since been published on Filmlab: Palestine’s YouTube channel. The short films cover a wide array of topics like social media, school grades, finding inner strength and the

importance of not giving up, but keeping on practicing and training. Using social media is of high value, as it provides both great tools and platforms for the children to express themselves, says Valentina Alkam, leading the program ‘Next Generation’ - hoping that the exposure to filmmaking can be a way for the children to use their smartphones productively to record and edit small films.

Yet another step forward for the ‘Next Generation’ program in 2019 was ten special days of ‘Talent Campus’ in the West Bank city Bethlehem. Five girls and three boys, who showed great interest and talent for filmmaking during the initial workshops, joined this intensive training. The children gained practical experience in script writing, acting, makeup effects, lighting, sound, filming, editing - using professional equipment. In the end, two films produced by the children in collaboration with the trainers were screened during the Palestine Film Festival.



## DANISH EXPERTS, NEW KNOWLEDGE

And then, bringing in film experts from Denmark helped taking some big steps forward in the process of having Palestinian filmmakers focussing much more on the younger generation, says Valentina Alkam from Filmlab: Palestine: “The proof is the lack of productions for children. Moreover, the low number of participants in the children’s workshop that we organized. We trust that the foreign expertise can change the perspective, bringing knowledge and learning tools to this important field.”

Two of the Danish experts visiting Palestine in 2019 were Ditte Mejlhede, textbook author on filmmaking for children, and Kasper Olesen, partner at the film production company LommeFilm. During their workshops they engaged with Palestinian youth, bringing iPads for film production, and teaching them to think critically both when creating and watching films. All the participants in these workshop were trainers that Filmlab: Palestine potentially would hire to teach other children and youth - so, part of the workshop was for Danish experts to train the local trainers while also working with kids in community centers.

The result was 13 Palestinian trainers who continued to work with Filmlab: Palestine after the workshops. And the new, young trainers' enthusiasm seemed to inspire the other students, Valentina Alkam explains: “Many of the children involved decided to continue studying film. Whether or not their career goals are to stay in film-making, their enthusiasm gives us more motivation to continue, spread and improve our ‘Next Generation’ program.”

The Danish House’s financial support of ‘Next Generation’ includes co-funding of the program. In addition to a contribution of Danish children’s movies with stories revolving around human rights, tolerance, openness and social diversity, to be screened by Filmlab: Palestine and then always followed by discussions of the themes with the children. Nurturing critical thinking, opening a bigger world.

**GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
FILMLAB: PALESTINE:  
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# new eyes on palestine's history

"Thompson and Hjelm's book is a must read for anyone interested in an objective and empirical, fact-based history of Palestine," says one review from a leading Palestinian scholar, professor Jamil Khader from Bethlehem University.

“In an area whose history for centuries has been occupied by religious agendas in irreconcilable conflicts with one another, it is beneficial to have a book that seeks to write a history that will not be directed or manipulated by the use of the Holy Scriptures.”

Says Professor Emeritus from University of Copenhagen, Dr. Mogens Müller.





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It was a long “birth”, as it often is with books: First the idea, then all the hard work of bringing thousands of complicated details together to bring it all alive, and then after many months of careful preparation: *The Ever Elusive Past: Discussions of Palestine’s History and Heritage*

The ‘parents’, the book’s authors, the Danish-American couple, Dr. Thomas L. Thompson and Dr. Ingrid Hjelm, explain that they felt a strong motivation writing the book, because: “Important parts of Palestine’s history are manipulated, misused or misunderstood - and often used as an ideological weapon in establishing exclusive rights to the land,” as the couple put it, spending decades on researching the history of Palestine.

The idea of publishing this book developed over a year ago, after the two retired professors in April 2018 presented their ten lectures on Palestinian history and heritage in front of almost 500 students on universities all over the West Bank, supported by The Danish House. The lectures were re-written into a book in its own, lectures that are challenging the biblically oriented, traditional history of the region: “Our research is based on archaeological and historical evidence, rather than on a reading of the traditional narratives of the Bible, which project a mythical past and interpret biblical stories and traditions as if they were historical accounts.”

## new eyes on palestine's history

As the authors put it, the critical, non-biblical studies of Palestine’s history challenge, “the use of history as a weapon, leaving Palestinians as a threatened people without a history of their own”. To question the fundamental history that people have been taught for generations is controversial for many, yet also highly appraised by academic colleagues: “Their endeavors have for obvious reasons been received as highly controversial. The debate has often been very harsh and hostile, but their project – to restore the history of ancient Palestine to the Palestinians – is a necessary part of a major project, to present today’s Palestinians with a memory of their own past, something that has been taken from them in modern times,” says professor emeritus from University of Copenhagen, Dr. Niels Peter Lemche.

In November 2019 the book, “The Ever Elusive Past: Discussions of Palestine’s History and Heritage”, was officially presented to the public by the two authors at an event at The Palestinian Museum in Birzeit close

to Ramallah – and then on seven different lectures at universities all over the West Bank. The audiences were mainly teachers and students, many of whom asked questions and discussed how to actually write a new and more factually updated history of Palestine: “The questions were mainly about how we can write the history so that it includes both Muslims, Jews and Christians. And how can we use history to defend the Palestinians’ right to their own land. How can we give Israelis a response to their demands to the land. What can the young generation do?” says The Danish House’ program officer Sahar Soufan, the book’s ‘mid-wife’, leading the long process from developing the idea to picking up the book still warm from the printer, and then touring almost two weeks with the new ‘Book Baby’.

The Danish House has supported the book’s publication, which can be purchased online at amazon.com in both English and Arabic. A number of books are also being distributed to Palestinian universities.

Professor Jamil Khader from Bethlehem University stresses the importance of the Danish-American professors’ book: “These pioneering researchers succeed where others in the field of biblical archaeology and Palestinian history have failed: They do not only correct earlier histories that are centered around an “all-Israel” ideology and debunk the biblical myths and distortions upon which they are based. More importantly, they insist on writing a multicultural and inclusive history of the land of Palestine throughout its history, including the Iron Age and beyond. The challenge they pose for those engaged in developing a nationalistic Palestinian history that seeks to prove the continuous presence of Palestinians on their land must be taken seriously: Such a history of the Palestinian peoples must be reconstructed, they warn, without falling back onto the same structures of origin mythologies, scholarly fabrications, and anachronistic ideologies of state, race and ethnicity that the Zionist and Israeli establishment has

weaponized in justifying its colonial theft of Palestine.

Another Danish colleague, professor emeritus from University of Copenhagen, Dr. Mogens Müller, adds this comment to the new book: “In an area whose history for centuries has been occupied by religious agendas in irreconcilable conflicts with one another, it is beneficial to have a book that seeks to write a history that will not be directed or manipulated by the use of the Holy Scriptures,” says professor emeritus from University of Copenhagen, Dr. Mogens Müller.

Now the book is out, and, as the authors say, academic books often take some time to ‘grow up’ - it takes time to discuss, then do more research, built up more facts, and keeping on questioning and understanding the history: “No history writing is purely objective or just. Even Google maps cannot give you a full picture in every detail. The present we know, but the past changes every day!” says Hjelm and Thompson.

“No history writing is purely objective or just. Even Google maps cannot give you a full picture in every detail. The present we know, but the past changes every day!”  
Says Hjelm and Thompson



### CLARA NÆSBORG OLSEN AND CATHRINE VILBY

We had a really nice stay in Palestine. We lived in Ramallah for two months and on weekends we had the opportunity to travel around and see the other cities and beautiful scenery of the country. We were volunteers at Sawa, which is an NGO that works fighting violence against women and children, including domestic violence. We have helped find foundations and wrote articles based on statistics and previous reports.

In Denmark we study law, and for the past three weeks we have also worked with Lawyers for Justice, a law firm working to promote freedom of expression in Palestine, doing reports on the country's international obligations to secure freedom of expression, as well as the office's specific cases, which typically deal with journalists who have been administratively deprived of liberty for expressing criticism of the Palestinian government. The first thing we come to think of when we think of Palestine and our

stay in the country is that people are extremely sweet, welcoming and helpful. We have been welcomed wherever we have been, whether at work, at cafes, on the streets. We have been allowed to gain an insight into everyday life in Palestine, the people's values and personal stories. We have gained an insight into the conflict with Israel, but also an insight into the conflicts that are internally in Palestine.

Do it! You will come home with a better understanding of the situation in the country, which also gives new perspectives on life in Denmark. People are grateful that you are visiting, you are guaranteed to feel more than welcome. You probably will not be able to fit your clothes when you get home to Denmark, food in Palestine is just too good.

The Danish House was a form of safety, so you never feel alone down here. The intro briefing at the beginning was great, and it was nice to be well received and guided around Ramallah.

### MAI MØLLER NIELSEN

I worked for the Palestinian women's rights NGO, Sawa. I wrote an evaluation report for them on a program on violence against women. I have a very positive experience of Palestine - or perhaps the Palestinians. Their mood, openness and hospitality are incomprehensible, given the circumstances. There are many things in society that do not work or do not work optimally or effectively, but you feel safe and included.

Do not hold back! It may seem unsafe if you only follow the news media coverage of the area, but you are really safe in everyday life, I have not met any foreigners in Palestine who have not fallen in love with the population, and you cannot avoid learning a lot. I can clearly recommend The Danish House. You get relevant briefings, housing assistance and guided tours. The support made my stay very comfortable from the beginning, so that I could concentrate on all the new impressions rather than practicalities.

## INTERNS & VOLUNTEERS : TESTIMONIALS

### CHRISTOFFER ŠTARNOV

I lived in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem where I was affiliated with an activity centre for the children, I gave a helping hand wherever needed it was missing. From setting up chairs to initiating the activities, interacting with the local community - a really good process.

I have gained insight into the culture and history of the Palestinian people. It was also exciting and at times hard to be allowed to feel a little lonely, to be alone in a foreign culture, and then to experience the difference it makes to one's understanding of oneself that you are well received. If I should recommend to others a stay in Palestine, I would say: Be curious, patient and courageous.

The Danish House helped me to get to know the conditions well before I came to camp, and I had constant contact with their sweet employees. I always knew where I could get help and answers, and it gives a good sense of security, and then it is just nice to

be able to share some of the impressions you get with some others who understand your perspective.

### KATHRINE SLOTH GUDBJERG

I was in an internship at Palestine Red Crescent Society, where I did administrative work and volunteered in the ambulance service twice a week. My experience of Palestine was generally positive. People were wildly sweet and welcoming, on the other hand, however, there were some cultural things that are hard to get used to. I learned being in the present and not having to be so busy in everyday life. It is really a mentality I learned from during this stay.

Going to Palestine is an insanely cool experience where you are allowed to experience a completely different culture and some completely different issues than those you struggle with in Denmark. Support from and cooperation with the Danish House was very good. We got an apartment ready for us already before we arrived, and everything was in control of the

internship. It is also nice to have someone to talk to when it comes to the challenges you may encounter in Palestine.

### EVA GIVERSEN

I worked in an internship at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Palestine is a hectic yet really nice place to be.

The most important thing I have learned was living in a different world where things work in a different way, and then find my ways of fitting my skills and knowledge to this different setting. You should do it! And if possible then come and stay with some locals, they are just so friendly and helpful. The support from The Danish House was very good. I think they will be there as much as you need them, and that is a nice feeling to have.

### HEVIN ISMAEL

As a volunteer nursing student, I worked at a hospital where I observed the differences between the Danish and the Palestinian health care system. I experienced Palestine as being very beautiful, interesting, exciting and filled with history and accommodating people.

The most important thing I bring home from my stay is the 'truth' about Palestine and the conflict. It is something completely different to experience on your own than what is known and seen in the media. I have definitely learned not to blindly trust what you are told or watch on a screen, if you have not lived in it yourself.

You should go to Palestine, if you have the opportunity! It is something very special and cannot be compared to other journeys. You will have the wildest experience that you will remember for life. A combination of exciting things: Religion, history, nature, nice and thoughtful people, cool and lively atmosphere, and the most beautiful sights.

We (three fellow nurse students) were so lucky to have a nice, close collaboration with the Danish House, where we always felt that we got the support we needed. Always present, and you always get the necessary briefings and knowledge about the things that you were in doubt about.



**ISABELLA MURRAY**

I was in Palestine for my 7th semester in nursing school. The course was called "Global Health in Palestine", and the purpose of the stay was to gain an understanding of the health system in Palestine. I was affiliated with Al Ahli Hospital in Hebron three days a week, where we followed nurses in an intensive care unit, an emergency room, a heart operation ward, and a week with midwives at a maternity ward. In addition to that, I had teaching one day a week at Al-Quds University in Abu Dis. And then we had one day a week where we got out to see other organizations or initiatives in the healthcare system, for example a health clinic in a refugee camp, where we got an insight into how health professionals worked and what services they could offer.

My experience of Palestine was a stark contrast to everything I had experienced before. It is very chaotic and there are many people everywhere. In contrast, the Palestinian people are the most hospitable and helpful people I have ever met. I never felt unsafe wherever we were. There was an incredible amount to see and experience, and I wish I had had much longer time there than my five weeks. I thought I was well informed about the situation in Palestine before I left, but when I got there I was very surprised that it was so much worse. Despite this, the Palestinians have a tremendous energy in welcoming and being hospitable, and they always want to tell new people about life in Palestine.

Before I left, I had the impression that it was not easy to get to Palestine and that it was not very safe either. The most important thing I bring with me from my trip is that you can easily travel to Palestine, and that you are surprised at how safe you feel because people are so hospitable. I do not think there is enough focus on the situation at home, and going there is the best way to learn and see the situation with your own eyes.

For future volunteers considering a stay in Palestine, I would highlight that you as an individual is part of tailoring your own stay. which can be both an advantage and a disadvantage.

If you are very outgoing, you can be allowed to do whatever you want, because the Palestinians are always interested in making your stay exactly what you want. However, it can also be a disadvantage because you can quickly feel that things are not under control. I would say to others who came from my educational institution, that they should be aware that you still have to take the exam at home and that it can cause some problems.

Most of all, I would say that it was an unforgettable experience that everyone should try.

During our first week, we had briefings and introduction by the Danish House to Palestine and how to navigate, it was a huge help and worked really well.

**SEBASTIAN DREYER NATHAN**

I worked with the Tamer Institute who publishes and disseminates literature, primarily for children and adolescents. I have partly worked in their administration and with their releases. I saw Palestine and Ramallah as a really nice and exciting place, and I have felt very welcome.

What is the most important thing I have learned...it is hard to say, but at least one thing has been the experience of coming to a foreign country, with a culture I do not know and a language I do not understand, and in spite of this quickly feel like settling in, having a network of sweet and helpful people, hereby creating an everyday life where I really felt good. I would recommend going - Palestinians are a very good company! People you meet and bump into are just so sweet and nice. In addition, Palestine is of course one of the most interesting places in the world, if you are interested in history, culture, politics or religion. And then I would recommend that you travel a little around the West Bank, the country is incredibly beautiful, and although a relatively small area there are big differences from the north to the south.

I have felt very welcome in the Danish House. It was a big help especially at the beginning of being briefed about practical things, local history and culture. Also, in relation to everything with preparation and travelling there.

During the stay it was nice to have ongoing contact with someone who would just make sure everything was fine. And then the Danish House also acts as a cultural organization that houses some really exciting events that I have been happy to attend.

**SMILLA BILDSØE**

I worked in the Palestine Red Crescent Society at their school for deaf people, arranging English lessons for pre-school and middle school children. I experiences Palestine as an open and warm place where I always felt welcome, both at work and in my spare time. I met people with both the energy and desire to welcome a stranger to their group of friends, their home and their workplace, to tell their story and hear mine.

I learned a lot during my stay. Among other things, what it is like to live in a mainly Muslim city, Ramallah, which is a life in great contrast to Copenhagen. After my stay, I feel much wiser about the Middle East, especially the Israeli-Palestine conflict. One of the most important things I have taken home with me is an understanding of what life also can be like in relation to different cultures, traditions, religion and political situation.

Palestine is a hugely interesting and important place to visit. Be prepared, that you meet people who will share with you their often very tough stories of their life, important but also hard to listen to and sometimes tough to deal with.

I did not use The Danish House very much, yet mainly in the beginning it was great to have them introducing me to people and showing me around. I have had no doubt that if I needed help, the House would give me this, if possible. Feeling safe was important given the situation, and it was reassuring to always get an update from The Danish House on WhatsApp about safety and security, whenever something happened around us.

**FAIZA USMAN**

I was in Palestine with two other Danish nursing students, we were there during our last semester. We were primarily in a hospital in Hebron,

where we came to different departments and got to experience the culture within the hospital system and the way they worked and their interdisciplinary collaboration. The experience of Palestine itself and the Palestinians was only positive. Everyone was so friendly, helpful and accommodating. But at the same time, it was also terrible to see the circumstances under which they live. What I bring with me home to Denmark is that you really have to appreciate what you have and not take anything for granted. We Danes always complain and are never satisfied. But after seeing how hospitable and happy the Palestinians are, despite the conditions under which they live, one must truly appreciate the smallest things and be grateful. Palestine is clearly something to experience.

You must travel as much as you can, every town has its charm and history. And you should not be afraid of not being able to find your way, because everyone is so helpful and you can feel safe. During our first week we were ‘under the wings’ of The Danish House. When we arrived in Hebron, we were ‘handed over’ to Doctor Akram, our contact person in the hospital, and he was so helpful that we did not really need that much help from The Danish House, but their intern Sofie was still following us and we knew all along that she could be contacted, so all in all a good collaboration with The Danish House.

**SOFIE JØRGENSEN,**  
Program Intern

It was important for me that The Danish House is a small place where I would be learning from and working together with Palestinian colleagues. I was also drawn by the Danish House’s focus on bringing people together through art and culture, which I believe is a strong way to create dialogue and understanding. I do not think it would do justice to the things I learned to highlight one thing. I think I have learned a lot on many different levels.

I have learned a lot about managing and developing projects in a culture organization in Palestine. Getting a lot of experience with cultural sensitivity

in a Palestinian context. Workwise I’ve had many experiences. One thing that have made a huge impression on me have been the effect of the occupation. I think it is hard to imagine the extent of it, if you have not lived it. The limitations, the considerations and not the least the indomitable energy and creativity that I have seen and meet. I have experienced that I was challenged by my own perceptions of why things evolved as they did. In these situations, the ability to ask my colleagues have been priceless.

In the Danish House you become part of a team. You are expected to be involved, give inputs and have opinions. Simultaneously, I have experienced that my colleagues took it seriously that it is also a learning process. They have taking time for introductions, critique and explanations. On a more personal level, the Danish House is a very caring place to be with a lot of smiles.

**ANNA BERNSEN**  
Communication Intern

I have previously lived and travelled in the Middle East and I am absolutely charmed by the region and its people. Palestine has always been on my list of places that I wanted to visit in the area, so doing an internship with The Danish House was the perfect opportunity to really see and experience the country by working and living here. Being a communication intern was also a good opportunity to gain more work experience that I can bring with me in future jobs.

I have learned a lot from Communication Manager, Jeppe Nybroe, in particular how to make high quality and compelling videos. Before starting my internship, I had never before tried producing videos, so I started from scratch. However, Jeppe taught me everything from filming and getting the best pictures to editing the video and making it interesting from start to finish.

As a communication intern I am pretty dependant on communicating with other people to get interviews, information or just to confirm an appointment. However, this has turned out to be a real challenge, as people, both Palestinians and Danes, can be slow

at responding to emails, texts or calls.

I love to travel, so seeing and experiencing all the different Palestinian cities and villages have been a huge experience for me. Particularly the small village Aboud stands out. Naela, The Danish House’s house keeper, was born and grew up here, so she spent a day with me and a handful of volunteers showing us around and telling us about the village’s history and religious sights. We had lunch at Naela’s sister’s house, where we ate delicious chicken, wine leaves, rice and bread.

There are many reasons for choosing to intern with The Danish House! It is a small organization, so getting help or feedback is easy. You also have a lot of responsibilities, which means that you learn fast and really feel like you make a difference on a daily basis. The fact that we are not many people working at The Danish House also means that you know everybody, which makes the atmosphere nice and family-like. Another plus is that travelling on the West Bank is easy and cheap. During the six-month long internship you get the opportunity to see everything Palestine has to offer!

**ULRIK AAGAARD POVLSEN**  
Program Intern

I choose the internship because it made it possible to work in a place where there was both contact with Denmark and Palestine. This interaction I find interesting, to work in Palestine from a Danish perspective. I have acquired a great deal of knowledge about politics, economics, religion and cultural elements in the Palestinian context, which has contributed to my personality as a whole. The most important thing was all the lovely people working in The Danish House, who were a part of my life for seven months and whom I have appreciated to get to know.

My greatest experience professionally was to be allowed to write a project application in collaboration with Birzeit University and their department of design and art. Educationally, traveling around the West Bank, exploring the different cities and making new friendships wherever you go. Of course, it is always challenging to start working in a new context.





## SARA MAARUP THOMSEN

Communication Intern

I chose to apply for an internship with The Danish House in Palestine because I wanted to work as a journalist in the Middle East, tell stories about life in the West Bank and work with Palestinians. The most valuable thing that I took with me from my half year as an intern was getting close to people, both at The Danish House and in Ramallah. My half a year as an intern at The Danish House was filled with great experiences; Learning how to film, produce and edit videos. Telling stories about life in Palestine. Travelling around the West Bank. Running at the Bethlehem Marathon, celebrating Eid and visiting the homes of my colleagues. Meeting amazing people and experiencing an overwhelming openness.

Ramallah is a difficult place to explain, but a great place to live. Everyday, I had a feeling that I had experienced something new and I had gained a little more perspective on a situation that I will probably never fully under-

stand. Of course, it is also challenging trying to adjust to a culture and a social life that is completely different from your own. But when I returned to Copenhagen after half a year in Ramallah, I felt like everything was too quiet, too organized and devoid of the intensity that, among a lot of other things, characterizes life in Ramallah. I missed my colleagues, my roommates and my friends in Ramallah. I even kind of missed the crazy traffic and eating falafel almost every day.

You should apply for an internship at The Danish House in Palestine because it is a unique opportunity to gain relevant experience and work closely within a small communication team with high ambitions. As an intern in The Danish House, you will develop yourself as a journalist and make stories, both about the projects and work of the house, and about the normal life and feelings of Palestinians and the complex and difficult situation that they live in. You will get to work within a field that demands sensitivity and understanding. You get to challenge yourself and broaden your

perspective, socially, culturally and politically. Most importantly, you will get a chance to experience Palestine, travel around the West Bank, and make great friends.

## TENNA SØRENSEN

Program Intern

I applied for the internship position as intern at the Danish House in Palestine after having followed the organization for little more than a year. My initial interest and reason for applying was based on my interest for a future career within the NGO sector. Moreover, I found the size of the organization suitable because I believed that a small workplace would allow me to have more influence and responsibility in its work and hence gain more knowledge and experience within the field.

I did not have much experience from the Middle East or the greatest insight into the Palestinian case but the Danish House's blend of Danish and Palestinian staff, partners and visitors intrigued me and ended up teaching

me a lot. In retrospective, I believe this to be what I value the most from having been an intern at the Danish House.

What is the most important thing that I have learned from being an intern at the Danish House? I think the ability to appreciate diversity. Not only does the Danish House have staff members from two very different cultures, it also consists of diverse, unique and very strong personalities. Being around these people for a six-months period, I therefore became aware of how important it is to recognize and value these differences as contributing factors and never as a restraint. Together we can achieve greater and better things!

I also quickly learned that bringing my Danish uptight scheduling to Palestine would not get me far, and that making the effort to pay a visit to a partner organization once in a while gets you a lot further than indifferent phone calls. I believe that the accumulation of all the small experiences on an everyday basis during my entire stay

was the most memorable moments to me. Greeting the same elderly man every day on my way to work, sharing laughs during music breaks with my co-workers, enjoying the sound of prayers at sunset and numerous cherished moments with my friends are just a few examples of this. Simply put, having a daily life in Palestine is one of the greatest experiences of my life.

One of the biggest challenges for me was the language barrier. This was both related to my position in the Danish House but mostly in general. Not being able to understand what is being said and sometimes feeling a little bit disregarded can be exhausting. At the same time, this is expected and after a while it became a source of satisfaction and laughter when words or phrases were picked up or practiced for fun.

I believe that there are a million reasons to why you should apply for an intern position with the Danish House in Palestine. One of these is to get confronted with and experience the Palestinian people and the conflict

they live under every day on a human level and through people's stories as opposed to reading about it in textbooks. Another reason is a possibility to get hands-on experience on how to plan and carry out projects within the artistic field in a small workplace where your voice is heard and your thoughts actually count. Most importantly, you should apply because it will leave you with a second place to call home, people to consider part of your family and the constant urge to come back. Yalla, send that application.







# Passionate Partnership : 10 Years Anniversary

The Danish House in Palestine was founded with a mission: to strengthen dialogue and encourage greater understanding between Danes and Palestinians. In the wake of a Danish cartoon that made some people around the Middel East burn the Danish flag. Easier said than done, says the first director - on the 10 years anniversary - and now looking at the small Danish-Palestinian NGO with words like "amazing", "impressive", "break into bloom".



Year 2020 marks the 10 year anniversary of The Danish House in Palestine. On this happy occasion we have reached out to Ms. Nathalie Khankan, who, as the first director of the organization, played a key role in creating and developing the initial spirit of the house.

"The idea was to build an institution that could help facilitate collaborative engagements, projects and exchanges between Danes and Palestinians.

A place that would make it easier for Danes to visit, work with and get to know Palestinians in Palestine, and, conversely, make it easier for Palestinians to meet, work with and get to know Danes. To build mutual understanding, professional relationships and friendships across seas." says Nathalie Khankan.

Originally, The Danish House was founded as a 'forening' in 2005, the Danish word for a group of people working together to cultivate and promote common interests - in this case, Danish-Palestinian relations. The group consisted of people, in particular teachers, who had close relations with and great knowledge of Palestine.

## URGENT PROJECT

Meanwhile, the project grew more urgent when Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published 12 cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in 2005. Muslims in many places of the world, including Palestine, viewed the cartoons as insulting blasphemy and some angrily attacked Denmark. The newspaper as well as the Danish government defended the cartoons as part of the country's fundamental freedom of expression, however some Muslims tried to start up boycott of Danish products, dairy products in particular, and some people were burning the Danish flag in the streets.

The so-called "Cartoon Crisis" also received attention from The Danish House. Mr. Sune Segal was Chairman of The Danish House's board back then and he stated to a Danish media that the house could not, "make every Palestinian forget about the Mohammed drawings and eradicate all negative stereotypes" - instead, he pointed to the potential of people-to-people meetings between Danes and Palestinian as a way to calm the conflict and dealing with mutual prejudices.

Former Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Per Stig Møller, saw the potential and supported the house by granting one million Danish Kroner as initial seed funding, and in February 2010 the Danish House was officially registered in Palestine.

## BOYCOT AND DONATIONS

The Danish House's vision and mission - to build and expand bilateral relations, and increase intercultural understanding through cultural and professional exchange - took on an urgency for politicians and donors outside the usual donor segment.

The major Danish dairy company, Arla, who felt in their business the boycott of some Muslims, donated money to a pilot project in 2008, two years before The Danish House was formally registered as an organization. The project was a culinary exchange between Danish chefs Rasmus Kofoed and Kille Enna, and Palestinian chefs Ghada Abd el-Nur and Joseph Asfour.

In the early beginning, The Danish House-staff consisted only of Nathalie Khakan herself and a part-time assistant. Later, the assistant became full-time and a project manager and interns came on board.

The small team was breaking new ground and creating everything from nothing but passion of the human relations and cultural partnerships between Palestinians and Danes. During this time the support from partners, advisory committee and the Danish board was priceless.

"It was fun wrestling with translating an idea on paper into a bustling platform for cultural exchange, and also tremendously difficult creating an institution in such a volatile context, under military occupation, and with only short-term and contingent funding. The resources were scarce, our team was so small," Nathalie Khankan tells.



## NO PLACE FOR ACADEMICS AND HIGH-BROWS

At its core, The Danish House was grassroots initiated and grassroots oriented: “It was meant to serve and facilitate collaboration between ordinary people, professionals, mechanics, carpenters, architects, cooks, journalists and so on.

The Danish House was a private grass-root initiative, independent from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Danish government. And, importantly, not meant to be an academic or high-brow culture institution,” says the first director Nathalie Khankan.

This is also what makes The Danish House such an important institution, Nathalie Khankan believes. The Danish House is a two-ways window into Palestinian culture, and into Danish culture: “The Danish House facilitates the writing of new stories of cooperation, collaboration, and connection between our cultures. And stories of Palestinian resilience and resourcefulness in spite of the occupation. These stories are rare in Denmark, as in the rest of the world,” says Nathalie Khankan.

At the time of its founding, this is what set The Danish House in Palestine apart from similar Danish institutes in Cairo and Damascus. The organization in Palestine was meant for the average Dane and Palestinian, and its mission was to envision and facilitate creative and meaningful frameworks for vocational and professional exchange.

“There was nothing like it anywhere in the Middle East. The Danish House in Palestine was, and is, a people's house, a house for ordinary people,” Nathalie Khankan underlines.

## MONEY AND VISA PROBLEMS

The last “official stones” to the The Danish House in Palestine, as it exists today, were laid in 2009 and then the organization was officially founded in February 2010.

And so The Danish House began to take shape. The old, beautiful building in the old city of Ramallah, that the organization still works from, was renovated and furnished, and Nathalie Khankan was hired as director.

The grand opening of The Danish House in Palestine finally took place in September 2010 with 150 people in attendance, including the then Palestinian Minister of Culture, Siham Barghouti, and then Head of The Danish Representative Office in Ramallah, Lars Adam Rehof.

## HEART AND HOME

Director Nathalie Khankan left Palestine years ago, but at the same time she never left. By soul and body Palestine in many ways is part of her. She has worked on and written about Palestinian poetry and cultural production, she is married to a Palestinian-American, and her two daughters are born in Palestine. “All this to say, Palestine is both heart and home to me.” she says.

Nathalie Khankan grew up in the Danish capital, Copenhagen. At the university there, she studied a master in Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic Literature for which her thesis ‘The Absentee: Love and Grief in Early Arabic Poetry’ won a gold medal in 2001. Arabic poetry was also the focus of her PhD, which she completed at University of California, Berkeley in 2009.

Today, she lives in San Francisco and teaches Arabic language and literature at UC Berkeley.

Although she is no longer a part of The Danish House, Nathalie Khankan has kept an eye on the house and Palestine.

“It has been amazing to see the house grow from afar. It has been gratifying and delightful to watch the house unfold and delightful to witness the organization branch out in new directions under different leaderships, how it has broken into bloom. The growth and professionalization have been impressive,” Nathalie Khankan says. She adds, that she is happy to see that housekeeper Naela Awad, Internal Auditor Mohammad Awar and Administration Officer Abeer Habash, who were all a part of the house from the beginning or near-beginning, are still part of the organization.

“My hope was, when I left, that The Danish House would not only be an institution that would endure, but that the work would touch and be valuable to Palestinians and Danes,” says Nathalie Khankan - today, a passionate partnership, “I am very proud of The Danish House.”





# When Broken Cars Can fix misunderstandings



A decade ago, two Danish car mechanics took a road trip on the West Bank, visiting and sharing experiences with Palestinian mechanics. 'Know thy engine' was the very first project created by The Danish House, wanting to bring together Danish and Palestinian culture - while fixing cars.

Travelling on the Palestinian roads was an also first-hand experience for the Danish mechanics to what living in an occupied country is like.

"It is one thing to be told mobility is restricted for Palestinians, another thing entirely to experience and drive on potholed roads, unpaved roads to avoid a checkpoint, be stuck in lines, to reroute and work with contingency plans, separate road systems, checkpoints and so on," stresses the first director of The Danish House, Nathalie Khankan, who also was the one who made this very first project roll. The occupation is also something that the two Danish mechanics Henrik Bo Frederiksen and Ivan Lykke remember

clearly. Especially visiting the biggest city on the West Bank, Hebron, made a big impression on them. Due to a small number of Israeli settlers living inside the old city of Hebron, major parts of this area are completely off limits to Palestinians. The occupation and division is particularly visible in one street where Palestinians live in the houses on street level, and the settlers have occupied the floors above. Barbed wire is stretched out between the two levels to prevent people from having direct contact with each other.

Henrik Bo Frederiksen remembers how one shoemaker told them that his Israeli upstairs neighbor would throw trash or dangerous metal objects out the windows one day, but come and buy shoes from him the next. Today there is not even the commercial contact between the settlers and the Palestinians in the area, only confrontation, and more settlers coming in to occupy once Palestinian homes.

## CHECKPOINTS VS. FREE MOVEMENT

His colleague, Ivan Lykke remembers how they had to pass through a checkpoint within the city. Something that felt very foreign to a Dane, who grew up in a country with free mobility.

Ten years has passed since Mr. Henrik Bo Frederiksen and Mr. Ivan Lykke, two mechanics from Denmark, visited the Middle East for the first time in their lives. Back then, their everyday job was at the roadside assistance company Dansk Autohjælp, where in minutes they could make broken cars run again or if too damaged tow them away.

Then, in the fall of 2010, the two mechanics replaced the smooth driving on well-maintained Danish highways with rougher Palestinian roads: "We saw a truck which had been sitting on the side of the road for the past 10 years, because no one was able to fix it or saw interest in moving it. In Denmark, all roads are quickly cleared, but they are not able to do that in Palestine," Henrik Bo Frederiksen remembers.

## RINGS IN THE WATER

The purpose of 'Know thy engine' was simply to bring together Danish and Palestinian mechanics to share experiences, knowledge and know-how in their field, explains The Danish House's first director, Nathalie Khankan, who also joined the road trip.

"We wanted to build professional connections and friendship, and hereby increase the understanding between the two cultures. Like throwing a stone in the water, we wanted The Danish House's projects to create many rings," Nathalie Khankan says, "I remember spending a long time in traffic and smoky garages, and I truly enjoyed and was moved by the conversation between the mechanics. We were met with open arms wherever we went."

The Israeli occupation also has a great impact on how Palestinian car mechanics are able to do their actual, hands-on work. These days software is a big part of how cars work, are diagnosed and eventually fixed, the Danish car mechanics explain, but their Palestinians colleagues did not have access to the necessary software. Among others, they visited an authorised workshop for Volkswagen cars:

"He only had an old-fashioned toolbox. So we tried to explain to him that he needed testing equipment to find out what is wrong with the car. But they were not able to get that sort of equipment," says Ivan Lykke, "because import was blocked by Israel."

## SMILES AND OPEN ARMS

Ivan Lykke, now 63 years never forgets celebrating his 53rd birthday in the Palestinian mountains. Alongside his companion Henrik Bo Frederiksen he was finishing up a car in the Volkswagen workshop in the outskirts of Ramallah, and had to drive through a hilly area in order to return home to the city: "We stopped on the top of a mountain which overlooked a bedouin camp. Here, Henrik, Nathalie (the director) and the mechanic from Ramallah sang 'Happy Birthday' to me in Arabic."

All in all, Henrik Bo Frederiksen and Ivan Lykke still think back on their short time on the West Bank, especially the small lessons of understanding a very different culture in a few days of work and friendship.

"You hear a lot about the Middle East in the news, but it is completely different to experience the culture in person. Everywhere we went we were welcomed with open arms and a smile and we never heard anybody speaking badly of Denmark," Henrik Bo Frederiksen says.

In other words, the mechanics experienced first hand another understanding of Palestine - other nuances, other sides - and not only the most frequent stories portrayed in news media of angry, young Palestinians throwing rocks and fire bombs, clashing with Israeli soldiers. In some ways, fixing broken cars side by side with Palestinians fixed some misunderstandings for the two Danes about different cultures, different ways of living, different struggles and opportunities in everyday life: "I never regretted that I went to Palestine. It was a great experience," Ivan Lykke says, adding with a smile: "and not somewhere you otherwise would usually go on holiday."

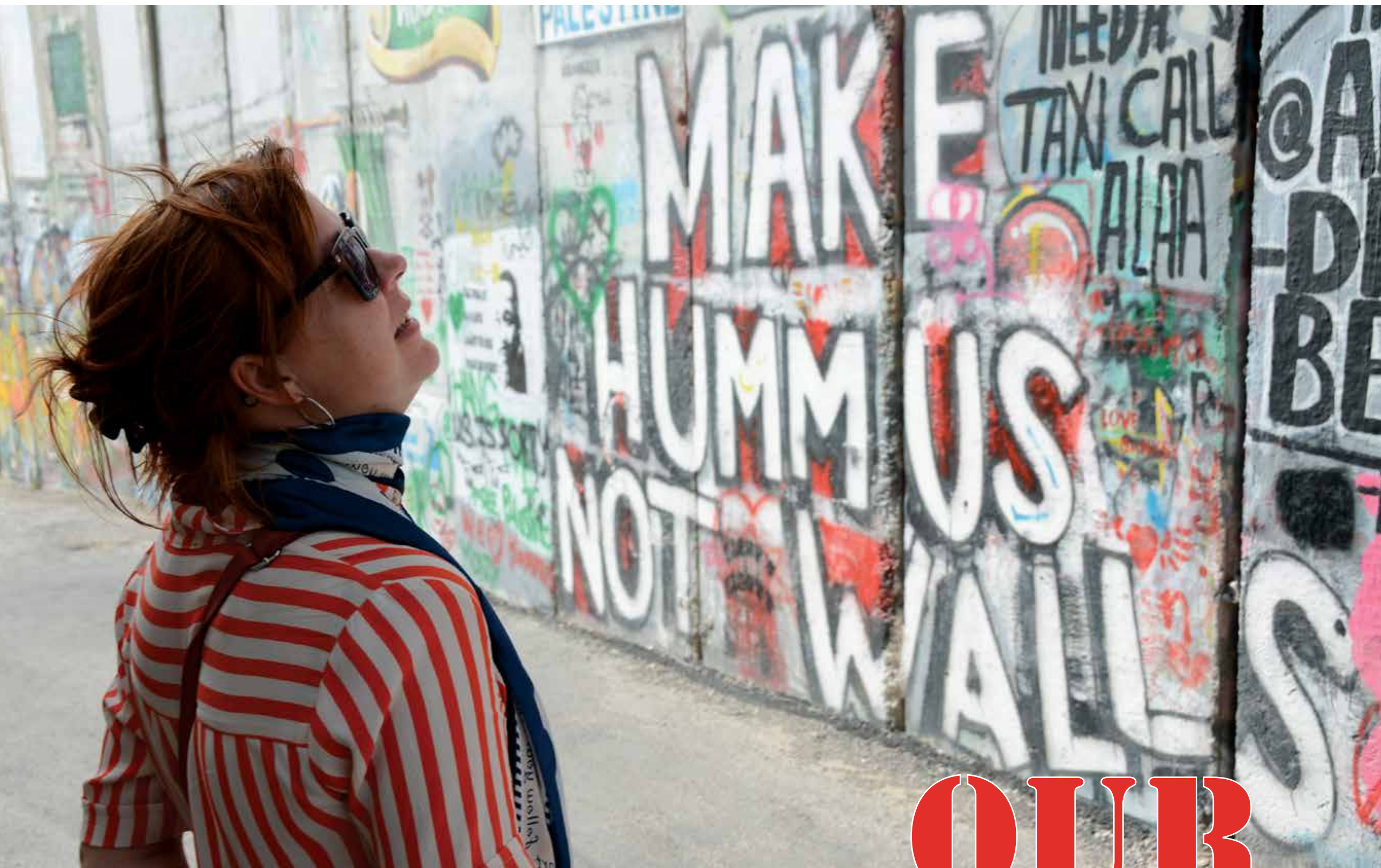
The two Danes are still in the business of car fixing, still nurturing good memories of the experiences and good times spent with Palestinian colleagues a decade ago.











**OUR DOORS ARE ALWAYS OPEN. OPEN DOORS ARE ONE OF OUR CORE PRINCIPLES. AND OUR OPEN DOORS ARE ALSO PART OF OPENING THE HEARTS FOR MANY OF OUR HIGHLY APPRECIATED GUESTS VISITING, JOINING AND ENGAGING WITH US.**

We welcome young, adventurous Danish backpackers dropping by for a cup of tea, and we help them hooking them up with like-minded Palestinians. We have senior international correspondents and photographers asking for the latest up-to-date briefings, connecting them with people and unique sources of information. And we have strong women like Ms. Dorte Olga Dalsgård, 63 years, close to having a 50 years old "love affair", in her own words, with Palestine: "Some people in Denmark don't understand why I come here in Palestine. They think it is dangerous. They say 'why can't you just go work in a thrift shop?' But I can not. I have to do what my heart tells me to do and somehow, this became it." Dorte Olga Dalsgård, from Aarhus in Denmark, first travelled to Palestine in 1976, and has returned almost every year since - sometimes several times a year - to experience Palestine, visit lifelong Palestinian friends, and to run the Palestine Marathon.

# OUR GUESTS



# OUR GUESTS

## SPECIAL MARATHON EVENT

In 2019, thousands of people from 76 countries joined the marathon, running through the streets of historic Bethlehem, passing refugee camps, The Wall and cheering crowds – among them 50 Danes.

Just after the race, The Danish House hosted a three hours special event for the Danish runners, briefing a very engaged audience about our work and the current situation in Palestine. Besides Dorte from Aarhus, we met 73-year old, retired teacher Annebeth who follows the work of The Danish House on Facebook: “Fantastic! Really encouraging!” and we had a long talk with Line, 23 years, midwife and visiting Palestine for the first time: “For sure it affects you, running alongside The Wall...and you think, should it really take two-three hours driving from Ramallah to Bethlehem, when the distance is only 30-35 kilometers. I think it is a strong signal to do a marathon here. Because of the The Wall, the barbed wire, the refugee camps. Very fantastic and very sad at the same time.”

## CAMERAS AND RUNNING SHOES

Dorte Olga Dalsgård will return for the Palestine Marathon. After crossing the finishing line in Bethlehem, just a few meters away from where Jesus is believed to be born, today a city surrounded by settlements, soldiers and The Wall, Dorte phrased her long-standing engagement with Palestine in these words: “I am running alongside Palestinians, and I'm thinking that if they can keep going, I can too” – cheering the motto of this one of a kind marathon: Freedom of Movement. Whether you are carrying a backpack, notebook, camera or running shoes, our doors are open to Danes, Palestinians, and whoever wish to open their hearts and minds and to connect with people.

## STAND UP COMEDIANS AND OLIVE PICKERS

On top of our many different guests in 2019, also including external consultants from Denmark’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, evaluating the work of The Danish House, during the year we were also enriched by five interns and almost 20 volunteers (read their testimonials on page 38). We also welcomed film directors, nurses, professors, actors, board members, librarians, law students, circus artists, diplomats, family, photographers, literature experts, stand-up comedians, artists, media experts, olive pickers, website developers, designers, tourists, friends and families, visitors in our guest house, and all the others who walked through the doors of our beautiful old house in the old city of Ramallah.





# NEWS BRIEF PALES- TINE 2019

## GENERAL

Fear of new, major annexations of the West Bank and East Jerusalem lingered as dark political skies through the year. In the wake of the Israeli election stalemate, both leading frontrunners, prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Benny Gantz, campaigned in favour of annexation. In the light of US president Donald J. Trump in 2019 approving the decade long Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights there was a general concern among Palestinians that this could be yet another step towards losing even more authority over land and people. Moreover, during many months throughout 2019 there were rumours of an eminent revelation of US' so-called 'Deal of the Century', mapping a proposed future of the Israel-Palestine conflict – with Palestinian Authority, Hamas and all other Palestinian factions refusing whatever would come, including any forms of negotiations as long as US was involved. 'Deal of the Century' was not published until January 2020.

## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

From postings on Facebook to torture in prisons - all sorts of psychological as well as physical abuse and violations of Human Rights and law are continuously reported from all major Human Rights organizations operating in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. On a daily basis, media reports on various forms of attacks, arrests, clashes, wounded and often killed – by all sides, but the majority of reported violations of Human Rights are referred to Israel as the superior occupation force.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Every day, journalists are somewhat attacked in Palestine. Reporters, politicians, activists, youth, basically anyone publicly expressing their thoughts and opinions in Palestine are under restrictions and attacks from various sides: From Israel to the Palestinian Authority, from social and religious norms to big companies as Facebook. In 2019, one of the most notable attacks on the West Bank was the Palestinian Authority's closure of numerous news websites and Facebook-pages.

The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms, MADA, is monitoring and list in total 678 violations against media freedoms in Palestine in their annual report 2019 – the report is a part of the project "A Step Forward towards Promoting Freedom of Expression in Palestine", supported by the European Union. According to the report, Israeli occupation forces and authorities were behind 44% of the violations – while Palestinian Authority, Hamas, and various Palestinian authorities are responsible of 29% of attacks against journalists and other media people. On top, closures, censorship and other violations through social media (mainly Facebook) amounts to 27%.

Calls for freedom of expression and free media also grew significant popular awareness and support using social media as the main platform. Most famously, Palestinian journalist Muath Amarneh in November 2019 was shot in the eye while covering protests near Hebron in the West Bank, apparently hit by a rubber-coated bullet from Israeli forces. In the following weeks, support postings on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter of the now one-eyed reporter – with people showing a photo of themselves while covering one eye - spread fast all over The Arab World and beyond. Also, in Europe and US the hashtag "EyeOfTruth" was used to call for the support and protection of free media.



# PRESS REPORT 2019

Together with our Palestinian and Danish partners we are grateful and proud that many of our projects and activities were reported in a string of media outlets.

Among other examples, numerous websites, newspapers, radio, social media, and TV reported when two Danish-American professors in autumn 2019 published their new book on Palestine's history, "The Ever Elusive Past", followed by lectures at universities in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank – including national Palestinian broadcaster, Palestine TV; Danish newspaper, Kristeligt Dagblad; and our program officer Sahar Soufan interviewed in live morning-radio in Ramallah.





# Refugee Kids Becoming Authors

Thousands of Palestinian children live in the country's 19 refugee camps. Here, focus is often on basic needs, while playing and speaking out using artistic creativity comes second, third or is not really a part of daily life. 'The Young Book Debutants' from the West Bank is a project giving refugee children a voice through their own written words and illustrations.

"We believe that opening and boosting the world of writing stories will contribute to providing a safe learning environment outside the refugee camps and provide an in depth learning experience with a focus on reading, literature and development of positive self-perception and life-skills," says Haneen Khairi, program officer with Tamer Institute and the project, and adds:

"This project is important because it provides a space for the children to express themselves."

Common for all boys and girls who grow up in refugee camps is a high prevalence of violence in general, also in the form of military confrontations with Israeli soldiers. On top of the unsafety and vulnerability, school facilities are not up to par. The annual budget per child is about 1,100 US dollars per year - Denmark spends approximately 10 times per child.

The often negative, destructive environment in many ways steal the children's fundamental rights to education - hereby preventing the kids from being able to achieve higher education, limiting their opportunities of employment and improving their life situation in general.

With these circumstances of daily life, a total of 100 children aged 12 to 15 years from the refugee camps Qalandia, Jalazone and Al-Amari - all around Ramallah - will now be introduced to the world of words, art, freedom of expression within workshops organized by Tamer Institute for Community Learning and The Danish House.

"The poor and violent living conditions are affecting the learning and school environment of the children in all of the refugee camps. Almost 25 percent of all boys drop out before they finish secondary school," says Haneen Khairi, Tamer Institute's program officer on the project.

## STORIES BREAKING TABOOS

During the workshops, the young 'book debutants' will either work with creative writing and illustration or literature and animation. The final outcome will be one book, a collection of the children's stories, and three animated films.

"The initiative will result in a number of interesting stories reflecting the kids' suffering, dreams, fears, humor, imagination and values. All beautifully illustrated and expressed," Haneen Khairi predicts, and underscore that the children will also gain a feeling of being heard and not being alone.

However, the goal of the project is not only to release the book and animated films - it also aims to strengthen the children's identities and personal growth, in years to come, through their heightened literary and creative skills.

"These stories break the taboo that children only write when doing their homework and are not encouraged to express themselves due to a tight and over-protective paternal system," says Haneen Khairi.

The children's collected productions - the book and the films - will be shared with 70 libraries and 50 schools in the West Bank and Gaza. And, the young authors and illustrators will themselves visit schools and libraries and talk with their peers about the stories and the thoughts behind them.

"I hope that the children will get a chance to have their voices heard all over the world," says Haneen Khairi from Tamer Institute.

The project is supported by Erik Thunes Legat with approximately 200,000 Danish Kroner (26.000 Euros) while The Danish House contributes with about 15,000 Danish Kroner (2.000 Euros).

**GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TAMER INSTITUTE FOR  
COMMUNITY EDUCATION: [WWW.TAMERINST.ORG/EN](http://WWW.TAMERINST.ORG/EN)**





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Filmlab: Palestine, Ramallah  
Tamer Institute for Community Education, Ramallah  
Al Harah Theatre, Beit Jala

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Ibdaa Cultural Center, Bethlehem  
Institute for Modern Media, Ramallah  
Jalazon Hospital, Ramallah  
Palestine Red Crescent Society, Ramallah  
Ramallah Hospital, Ramallah  
Sawa Organization, Ramallah



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2019 (DKK)

## INCOME

Projects grant (unspent 2018)	483,062
Danish MoFA	3,000,000
Erik Thunes Legat	194,709
Danish Lottery Fund	98,000
Total project grants	3,775,771
Unrestricted grants/income	
DHIP programs and activities	103,426
Accommodation	37,544
Total unrestricted	140,970
Total Available Income	3,916,741

## EXPENSES

Projects/activities	2,687,507
Rent and operating costs	271,355
Administration	130,797
Loss (Gain) on currency differential	8,939
Depreciation	41,863
Total expenses	3,140,461

## 2019 BALANCE SHEET (DKK)

### ASSETS

Current assets	1,267,526
Prepaid expenses	149,944
Fixed assets (net)	118,084
Total assets	1,535,554

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Accruals and payables	187,234
Net assets	1,348,320
Total liabilities and net assets	1,535,554



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