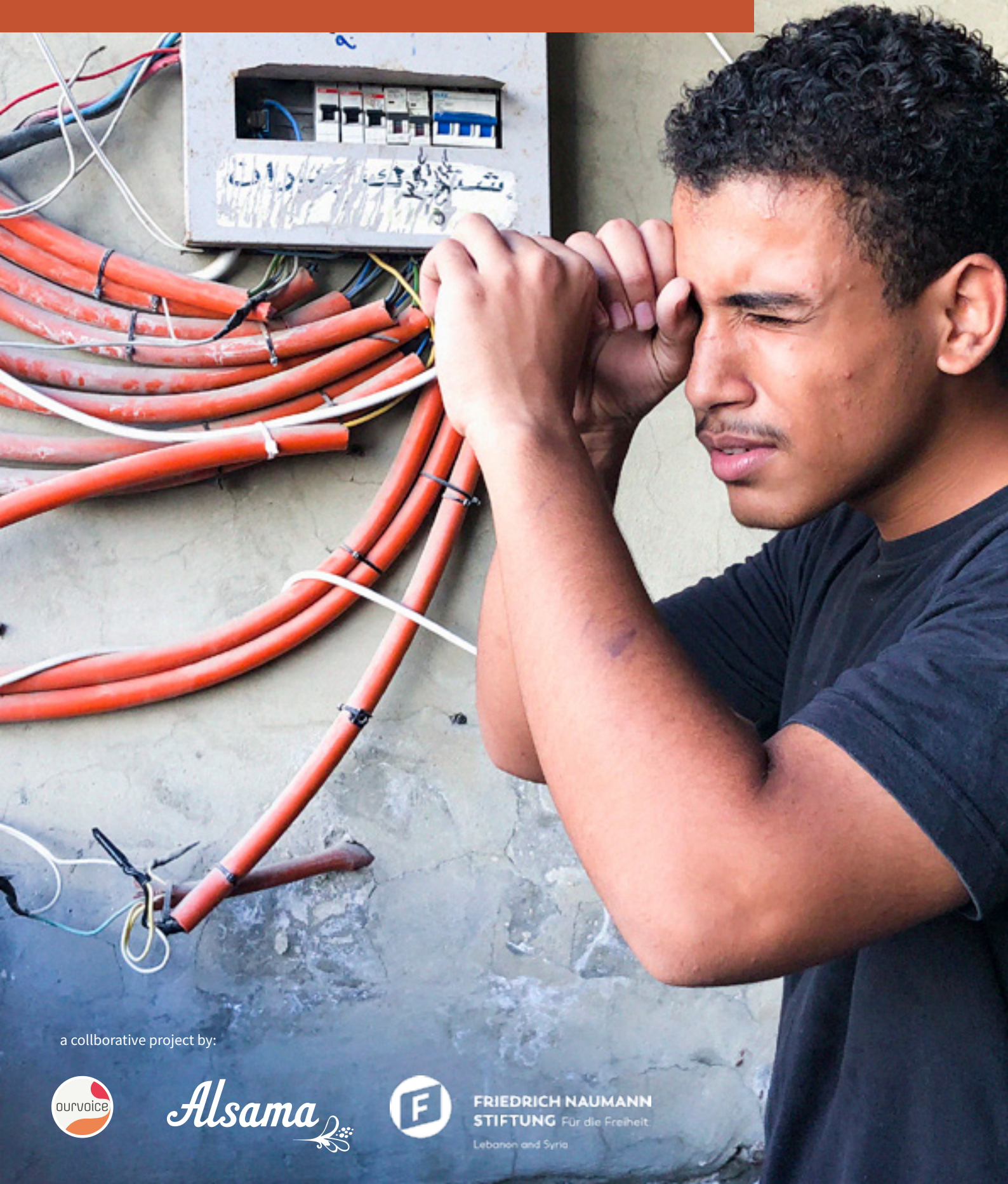


# Shatila our views



a collaborative project by:



*Alsama*



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN  
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.  
Lebanon and Syria

## My homeland

I left my homeland without saying goodbye.

I left my small house and I buried my doll under the dirt

The people with whom my heart is connected, will remember me some day.

For days and years, I suffer the pain – just like a young bird whose mother has flown away.

I went up to the mountains with tears on my cheeks like a river.

I know the way of migration is difficult.

Migration has separated us but the heart still keeps us together.

*Amal Al Khalaf*

## Editorial

The zine you're holding in your hands is the result of a two-week workshop, Ourvoice held in Shatila, Lebanon in September 2022. Twelve gifted students (aged 14 to 25) of Alsama Project, an amazing, donor-funded school here, collaborated with us in order to share themes they deemed important in their lives: they said they were worried about stray bullets in their community, a common phenomenon in the region, killing citizens for no reason. They told us, that they want to educate teenagers about early marriage and want to show them viable alternatives to a married life with babies at age 14. And they tackled the problem of violence and drugs in Shatila, reporting on alternative and healthy ways of life.

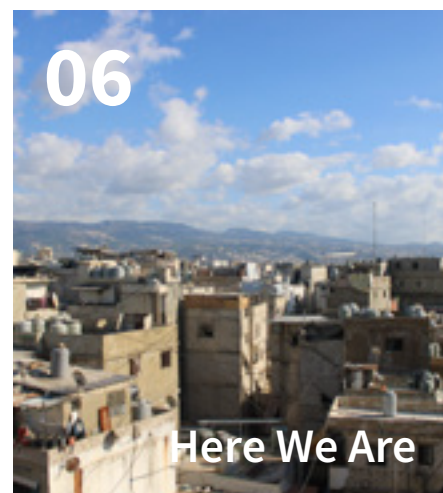
Equipped with just simple smartphone cameras and notepads, the youth went out into the field, looked for protagonists, led interviews and shot lots of photos to support their articles. It wasn't always easy, but they met suspicion and many other challenges with a steadfast will to accomplish the task. They are convinced that it's important to share their findings with you, to be heard and to be seen.

You may wonder: why? As you are reading these lines, more and more people worldwide are leaving their home countries in search for a dignified life. What we know of our fellow humans outside our bubble, we are being told by commercial media outlets - often in brilliant stories and images - but from an outside perspective. We believe it's time to better understand the needs, wishes and worries of migrant communities. A part of the world population that is growing every day and becoming a large part of our society at breakneck speed. Ourvoice listens by empowering young people to share their views. The better we apprehend, the better we can act.

We invite you to take a close look at the stories our students are sharing with you. It's a precious gift, a personal statement and hopefully the beginning of more empathy and understanding.

*Erol Gurian, founder Ourvoice  
Beirut, September 2022*





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Here We Are



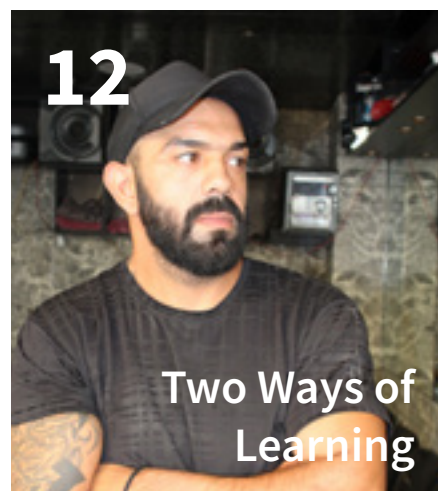
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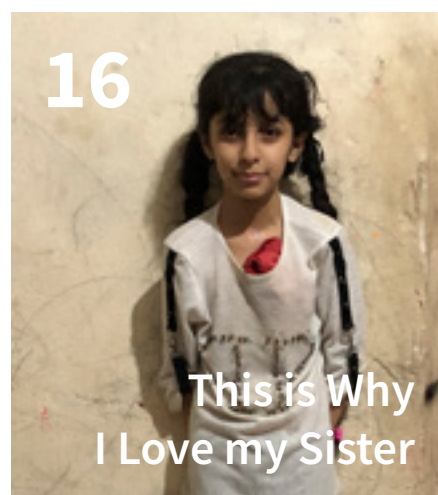
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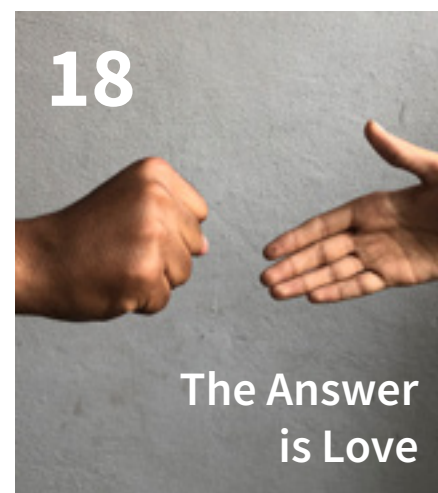
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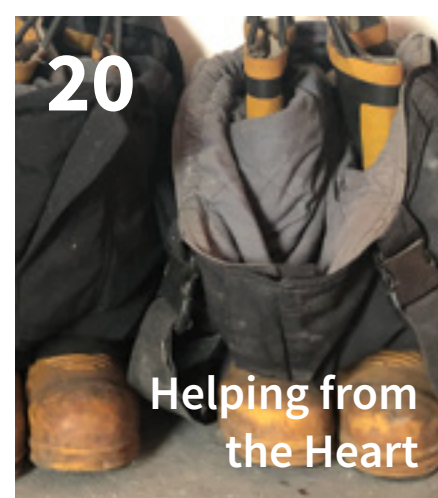
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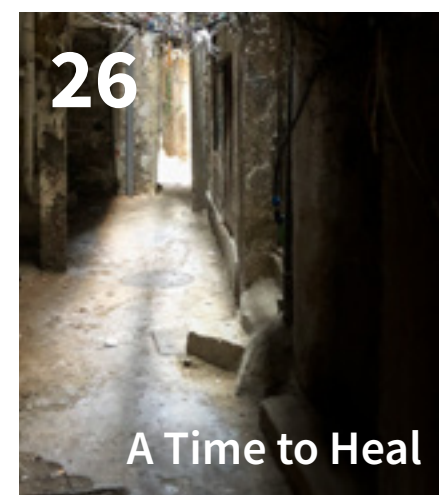
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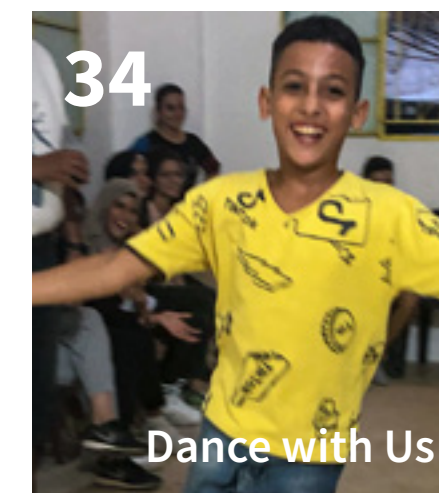
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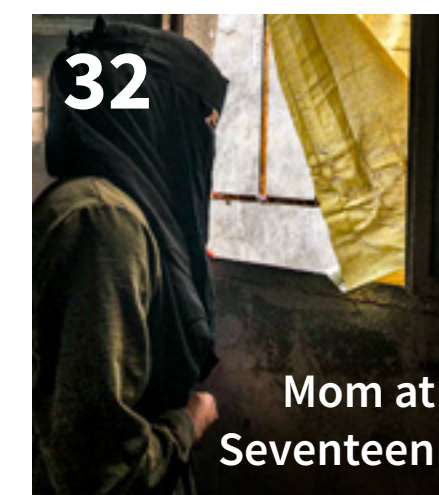
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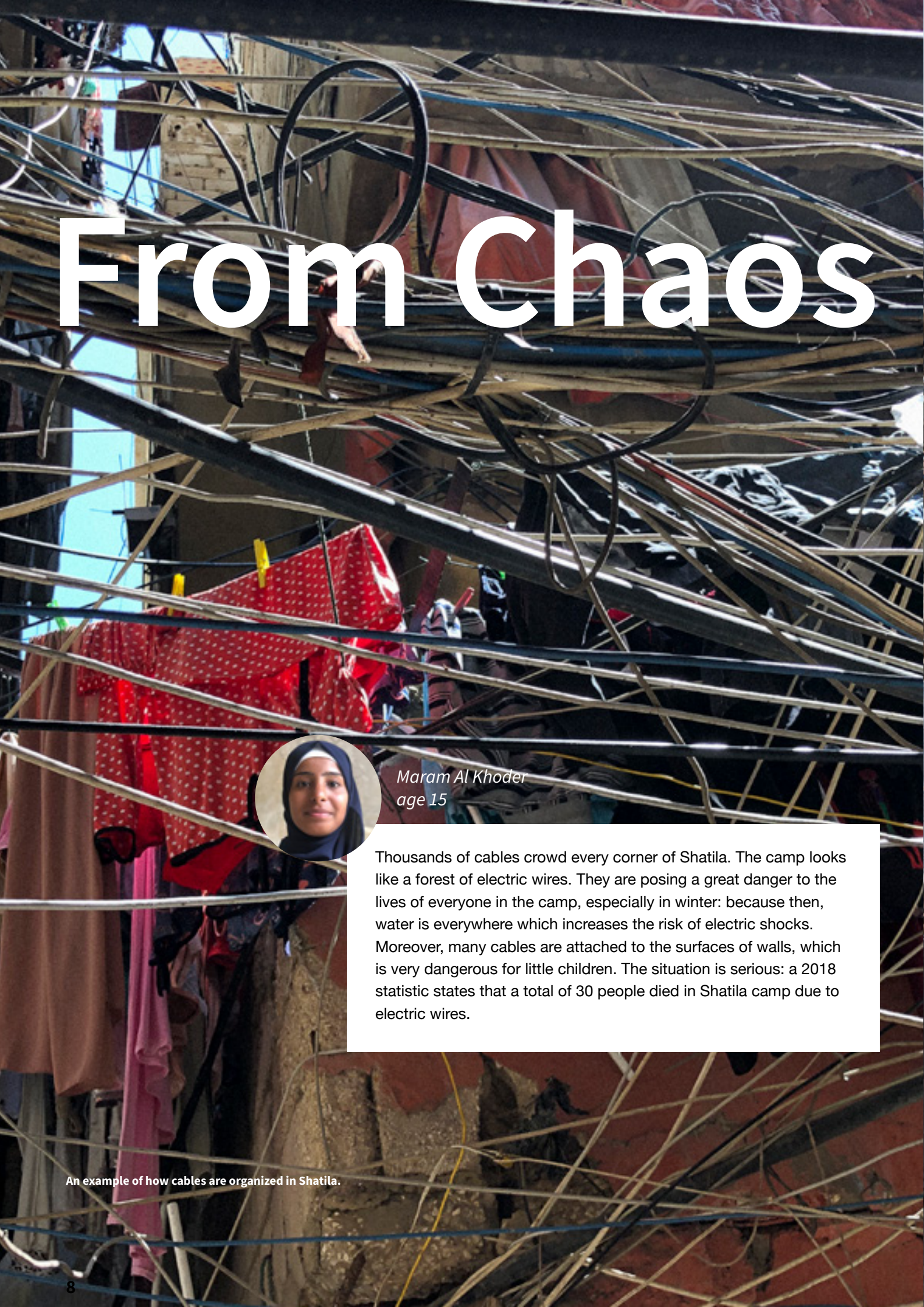
## Here We Are

The first Palestinians arrived in Shatila, Beirut in 1948 after the creation of the State of Israel. In the beginning they settled in tents provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Since the start of the war in Syria in 2011, the camp has also become a home for thousands of Syrians. It covers an area of just 1.5 square kilometers and houses a total of well over 20.000 inhabitants.



*Mahmoud*  
age 20





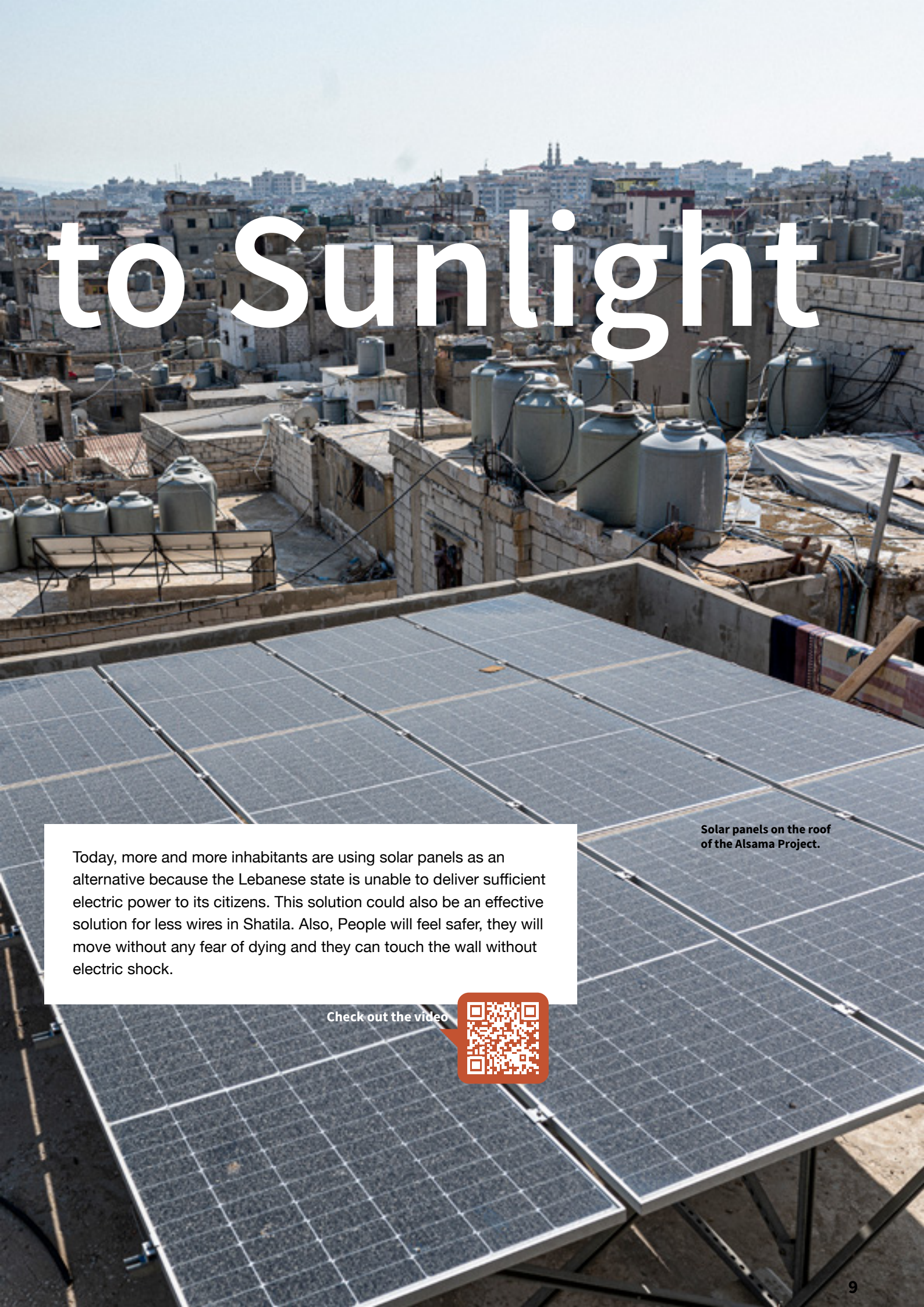
# From Chaos to Sunlight



Maram Al Khoder  
age 15

Thousands of cables crowd every corner of Shatila. The camp looks like a forest of electric wires. They are posing a great danger to the lives of everyone in the camp, especially in winter: because then, water is everywhere which increases the risk of electric shocks. Moreover, many cables are attached to the surfaces of walls, which is very dangerous for little children. The situation is serious: a 2018 statistic states that a total of 30 people died in Shatila camp due to electric wires.

An example of how cables are organized in Shatila.



Solar panels on the roof of the Alsama Project.

Today, more and more inhabitants are using solar panels as an alternative because the Lebanese state is unable to deliver sufficient electric power to its citizens. This solution could also be an effective solution for less wires in Shatila. Also, People will feel safer, they will move without any fear of dying and they can touch the wall without electric shock.

Check out the video







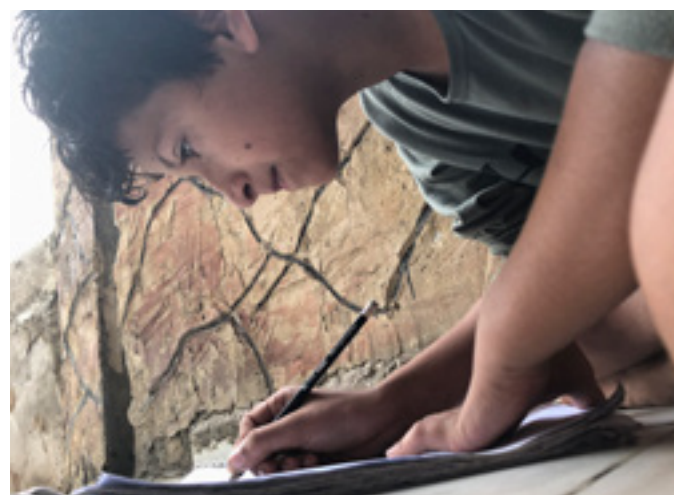
Malek working his night shift.

# Working in the Streets of Sabra

Malik is ten years old from Deir Alzor in Syria. He lives in Sabra with his family of seven. His father is in Syria for two weeks to solve some family issues and his mother is here in Lebanon to take care of her kids. Malik works as a plastic collector in the streets of Sabra. He provides money for the family to buy food and water. Sometimes he also works at a small market near the house.

Malik doesn't go to school, because he is the one who feeds the family. Every day before work his sister Amal sits with him at the house and teaches him how to count, read and write. He has been working for 5 months now. His night shift is from ten p.m. until three a.m.. He goes daily with a group of three or four other boys to collect plastic in the camp. He says: "When I get tired, I sit on the side of the street: no cars, no people ... I am just by myself looking at the stars in the sky".

His parents force him to work and if Malik brings home less than 100.000 Lebanese Pounds (around three USD) they hit and insult him. Malik doesn't enjoy this work. If he had the chance to choose, he would prefer to stay home to color pictures and do some math.



Malek is learning what his sister Amal thought him the day before.



Malek and his friend Hail are going home after one night collecting plastic.

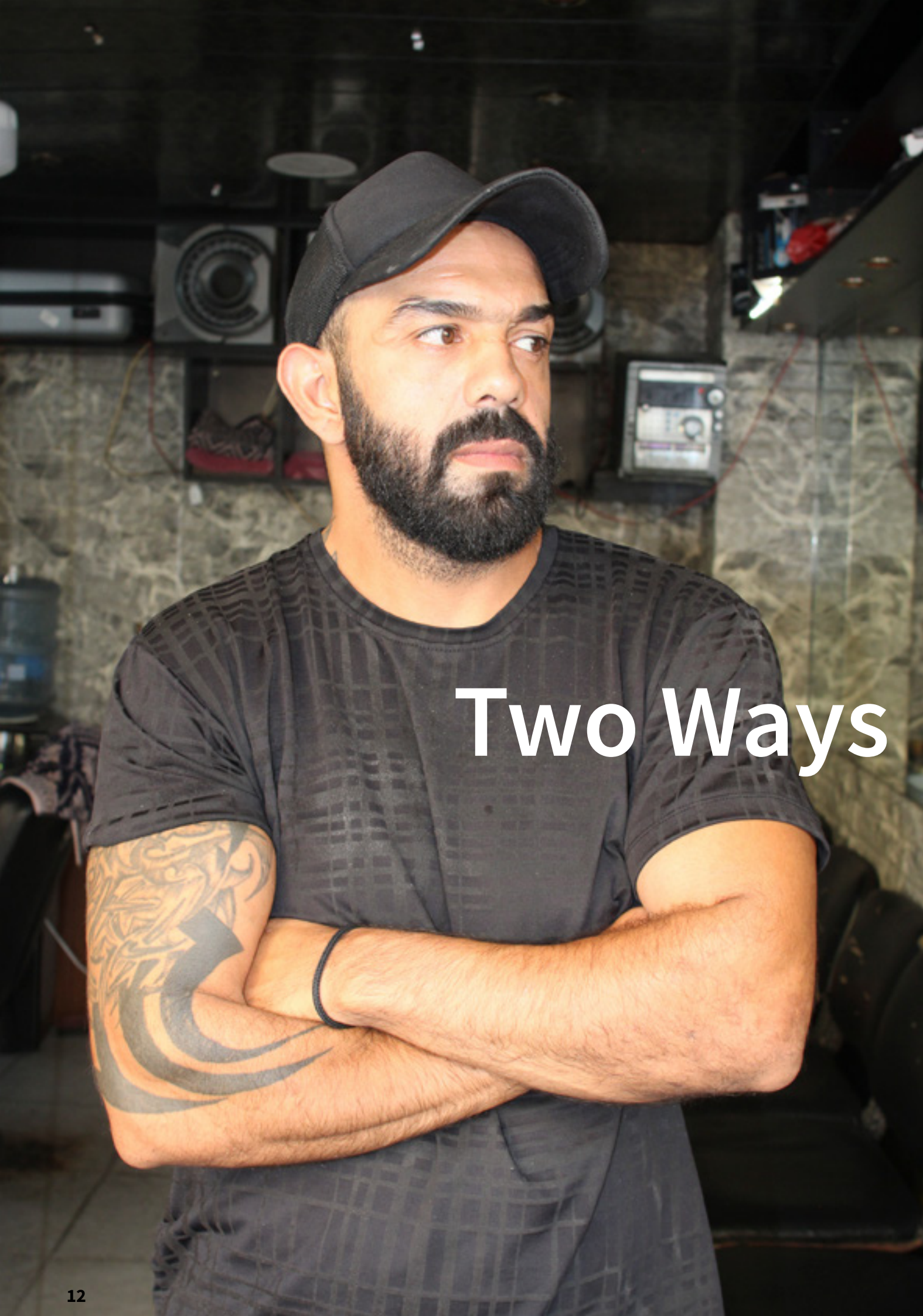


*Amal Al Khalaf*  
age 17

Check out the video







Two Ways



of Learning



"I am Khader Hamdan, 33 years old, I am running a barber shop. I was born here and I went to school only until grade four, in order to work and help feed my family.

I grew up in the street, and eventually was subjected to violence and beatings from thugs. I remained in this situation for years, learned to protect myself and became known as a trouble maker. But I didn't want this life and the streets that taught me to become like this.

My dream is to study and leave this place".

"I am Ahmed Nafaa, 30 years old, I was born in Shatila camp and studied mechanical engineering. I opened an educational institution as a free space for anyone who would like to learn. My goal is to try to help everyone here. Because the camp is full of violence, early marriage, drugs, and ignorance. The people in the camp look down on educated individuals, they think that we are weak and not strong. I have been teaching for five years, and many are benefiting from that. My dream is to open more educational centers because this is the only way to have a brighter future outside the camp".



*Mahmoud*  
age 20



# This is Why I Love my Sister

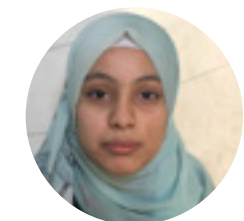
My sister, Iman (12), was born with a health problem. She was unable to eat, drink, or even breathe properly because her throat was completely closed. She had to stay in hospital to take vitamins through

The bullying that she receives from people, even from our brothers, makes her extremely sad all the time.

She spends most of her time drawing because it's the one thing that makes her feel happy. She especially loves drawing houses and animals.

I love spending time with my little sister because she is really close to me. I see her as the cutest, most creative girl and her engaging, charismatic way of speaking makes others excited to listen. She is so curious about the world around her.

We spend a lot of quality time together. She helps me with the housework, we comb each other's hair and we sleep next to each other every night. She keeps my secrets, and I can tell her anything at all, without any judgement or shame. I wish for her to fulfill her dreams. She is my universe, and this is why I love my sister.



*Dalal Hassan*  
age 14

**Some of the drawings Iman did in the last months.**

a tube inserted into an opening in her stomach. She went through surgery three times and eventually the surgeons had to cut directly into her neck to make an opening in her throat big enough to eat through.

She experiences constant pain and soreness in her throat. The surgeries have also left her vulnerable, and her throat regularly gets infected. To eat, she has to use her finger to cover the opening in her throat, to stop the food or drink from spilling out.

**Iman, 12 years old, standing in her apartment where she spends most of her time.**



# The Answer is Love



Hassan (16) is a Syrian refugee living in Shatila, Lebanon. His biggest struggle is the violence that he faces in the street. Every day after school a group of boys insult him, treat him in a bad way and bully him. It makes Hassan sad, but he can't express his feelings – it's too painful. His friends ask him if he's doing well, but no one really knows what is going on inside him. To protect himself and to hide his sadness he wears a facemask outside his house.

The last incident he faced was really harmful on a physical as well as a psychological level. Three men attacked him near his house because he asked a guy to move his leg to let him pass with the bike. The man was aggressive and hit Hassan with two other guys. They pushed him, he fell and they threw the bike on him. He cried. He couldn't stop them. They continued beating his stomach and every part of his body.

Hassan's case resembles that of many other people in this camp. Street violence is a big issue and puts many kids at risk of being insulted and beaten. All Hassan wants, is to live peacefully without any fear in the camp. Unfortunately, there isn't anything related to child protection in Shatila. There are efforts taken by small NGOs or personal initiatives, but they only focus on psychological support for kids. Hassan is still going to school every day. His pain is still there. He believes that violence isn't the solution but acceptance: peace and the love that unites all people.



*Louay Al Kadro*  
age 16

Check out the video







# Helping from the Heart

Nidaal, the founder of first Civil Defense Center in Shatila, explains the role of this volunteer organization.

Check out the video



The equipment is always ready in case of an emergency.

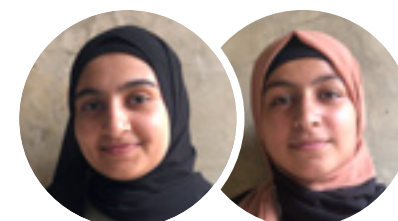


The Civil Defense during a training.

Here in Shatila a group of people gathered in 2014 to ensure the safety of the the camp. They are now called the Palestinian Civil Defense. In the beginning, they focused on protecting the people from fire, but later on they decided to expand their role to new missions for the camp and their society. They divided their work into three sections: firefighting, crisis containment and search & rescue.

They choose to the work on a voluntary basis to show humanity. It comes from the bottom of their hearts. The leaders of the Palestinian Civil Defense are both women and men; to them, their nationality, skin color, or gender are unimportant– everybody can help. So, they welcome everyone who wants to join, no matter if they are Syrian, Lebanese or if they have black or white skin. Now, there are 55 volunteers with the Palestinian Civil Defense. Their leader, Nidal Maarouf, is happy to share with us an example of their amazing work:

“One day, we received an emergency call. An elderly woman was alone in her house, slipped and broke her pelvis. She was on the 8th floor and when we arrived the door was closed. We rescued her by going down with a rope from the rooftop to the balcony. The mission was successfully completed. We also responded quickly when the Beirut port explosion happened. We used our experience to rescue people from the buildings. Our work is purely human and we feel happy helping our community”.



Oula Al Khalaf,  
Afraa Al Abdoullah  
age 16, 14





# Faces

These Shatila residents have been living here all their lives.



Mohammad Abed Al Haji

“I want to return to Palestine and live a beautiful life”, Mohammad Abd Al Haji is 55 years old he was born in Shatila Camp. Mohammad has been working in decoration for 35 years.



Mohammad Monir Daaboul

“I want a wonderful future for my family”, Mohammad Monir Daaboul, 66 years old. He has been working as a car body painter for 50 years.



Mahmoud Saad Al Din Batrish

«The future is not good”, Mahmoud Saad Al din Batrish, 60 years old. He works in herbal medicine and he has been an Imam at the mosque for 20 years.



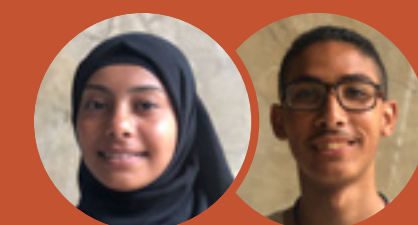
Mossa Al Assfar

“I love my camp, I want to live here forever”, Mossa Al Assfar, from Palestine, 55 years old. He has been working as a carpenter for 35 years.



Mohammad Yusuf Sweden

“I want to live peacefully with my family”, Mohammad Yusuf Sweden, 55 years old. He has been selling vegetables in Shatila for 35 years.



Marwa Al Khoder,  
Abudallah Abo Hijazi  
age 16, 18





In Shatila it's common than more than one family is living in one room to spare money.

# Too Close for Comfort

Can you imagine three families living in one room? Here in Shatila it is a common situation!

The two sisters-in-law Zahraa (16) and Nahla (18) are sharing one room with their husbands, two brothers-in-law, their mother-in-law and three children.

Zahraa says: "We are ten people living in this small room. There is no privacy. Even if I want to tell my husband something, everyone will



Zahraa and Nahla living without privacy.

Check out the video



A dangerous staircase leads to the room on the first floor.

hear us. There's not enough space to sleep comfortably: we have to squeeze and sleep on top of each other.

We eat together in this room. Sometimes we eat and sometimes we don't because we don't have any food. For me as a conservative woman it's not easy to live with my brother in law. I have to wait until the room is empty to remove my Hijab and when night comes I will

wait for him to fall asleep before I remove my scarf. I would prefer to have my own room but we can't afford the rent our own private place".



Wissal Al Jaber  
age 15



A narrow, dimly lit alleyway in a refugee camp. The walls are made of rough, weathered concrete and brick. Numerous pipes and a chaotic mess of electrical wires hang from the ceiling. The ground is uneven and littered with some debris. At the end of the alley, there is a bright opening, possibly leading to the outside. The overall atmosphere is one of poverty and cramped quarters.

# A Time to Heal

## The survivor

“We choose our path - but not all the time. Sometimes life is hard and tough, it gets out of hand”. Nader got into drugs when he was 14 years old. Someone put it in his candy to use him in his own interest. “It wasn’t my decision; I was forced to it. I am trying to resist and to get back to normal life. But if you live in Shatila it’s hard to refuse any drugs. They are everywhere. You used them as an escape from reality”. Today, Nader is 20 years old: after six years of addiction he decided to stop and heal his wounds.

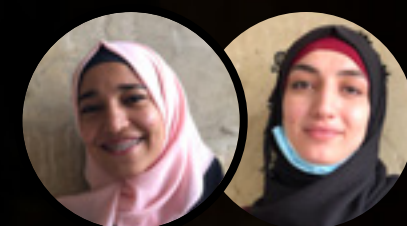
## The recovery

“Dad, you burned my doll. I don’t like you anymore!”. That was the first sentence Khalid heard when he got out of prison after one year. He burned his own house when he was out of control.

Khalid was rejected from his community and his family. Then he decided to enter a rehab center, to start his recovery journey. “I am scared to be outside. My family doesn’t accept me - they are scared of me. If I return to life in the camp, I will go back to drugs”. Khalid still lives at Insane (Arabic for “human”) Rehab Centre in Borj Barajne Camp.

## The safe place

Insane (which means “human” in Arabic) Rehab center is a special place established in 2013 at Borj Al Barajne Camp. It is a center for people who are addicted to drugs. It went from a one room operation to ten rooms. The entrance features a quote by Gibran Khalil Gibran: “For you are not half a being, you are a whole that exists to live a life not half a life”. A saying which empowers it’s readers and gives hope for a better future.



*Nour Al Issaa ,  
Zainab Houran  
age 19, 26*





**Three boys from Syria. They live in Shatila Camp and sell vegetables at Sabra Market.**  
**They can't study because they work all day from 7am until 8pm**  
**to earn 50,000 Lebanese Lira (around 2 USD).**

Check out the video



*Marwa Al Khoder*  
*age 16*



# Catch the Bullets

Bullets collected in front of the Alsama School.

Check out the video



Stray bullets are a huge problem in the camp. People hear shots all day. It makes them feel scared and unsafe.

The people here start shooting without any reason, maybe because they are celebrating someone's wedding or because of a fight in the street, or because someone is just feeling angry!

During 2021 around 13 people lost their lives because of stray bullets. "Ahlam Lajaa" or "Dream Of A Refugee" Association has delivered awareness sessions about the dangerous consequences of shootings which often leads to death.

Abo Jaafar, was responsible for these awareness sessions. He said: "We did our best to make a difference and we tried to change this behavior but we didn't have any impact. Because, this is the only way in which people express themselves here. Also they feel like a "real man" while shooting. They are addicted to it".



"In my opinion bullets are very dangerous. When I want to go to the store I feel afraid and insecure. Shootings make us feel unsafe. I wish we would have a law that prevents shootings by fining the shooter. All citizens should teach their children good things and provide a healthy environment". Ali Murad, I'm 73 years old.



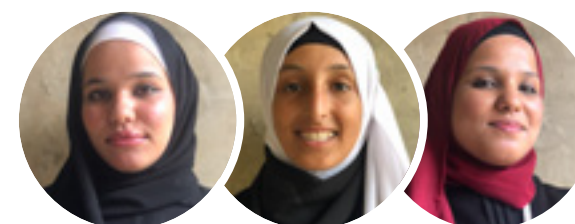
"Five years ago, I was a victim of stray bullets. My foot was injured when I was sitting on the roof with my daughters to relax. The only solution is to arrest the offender and confiscate all illegal weapons". Ghufuran Omar, 37years old.



"I don't see any effective solution for this problem, because everyone has a weapon and shoots for any reason. When a woman gives birth, they shoot. When kids graduate from school, they shoot. The solution would be to have officials in the camp who are responsible for preventing any shootings". Sami Sharqieh, 50 years old.




"I have been living in the camp for 25 years. I hate the word weapon. I used to see weapons during the civil war, but since I moved to Sabra I see them at every corner. The only solution is for the people's committee to search all residents and confiscate all unlicensed weapons". Simon Michel Hattab, 82 years old



Safa Al Omar, Amal Al Khalaf,  
Marwa Al Omar  
age 19, 17, 19



A woman wearing a black headscarf and a dark jacket is seen from the side, looking out of a window. The window is partially covered by a yellow tarp. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window.

# Mom at Seventeen

“Everything was fine, but 3 months after our marriage my husband changed. He and his family started treating me badly. After I got pregnant for the first time, they acted in a nice way because they thought that I will bring a boy to the family. Unfortunately, I miscarried.

I got pregnant again but on the day I delivered, my husband left me alone at the hospital because I had a girl. He refused to see our baby or to play with her. He said he hated me because I delivered a girl.

Today, I am living with my family who takes care of my three-month-old baby. I work at a supermarket to make money and feed my little daughter. My only wish is to take care of her and let her study”.

Rania is 20 years old. She got married when she was 17, just to satisfy her family.



*Nour Al Isaa*  
age 19





# Dance with Us





"Dabkeh is all my life, the only thing that reminds me of Palestine."



"I am Nancy and I decided to open a Dabkeh school in the camp in 2019 to teach children and adults our traditional dance. My goal is to keep their roots strong with their heritage, customs and traditions."

Dabkeh is a place of psychological rest for children, where they can unload their thoughts and feelings. It is important to have a place like this because we live in a camp and there's no other possibility for such activities. Here they can express their emotions and enjoy their time."

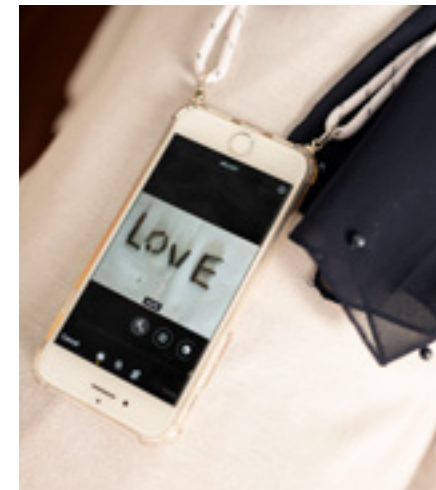


Marwa Al Omar  
age 19





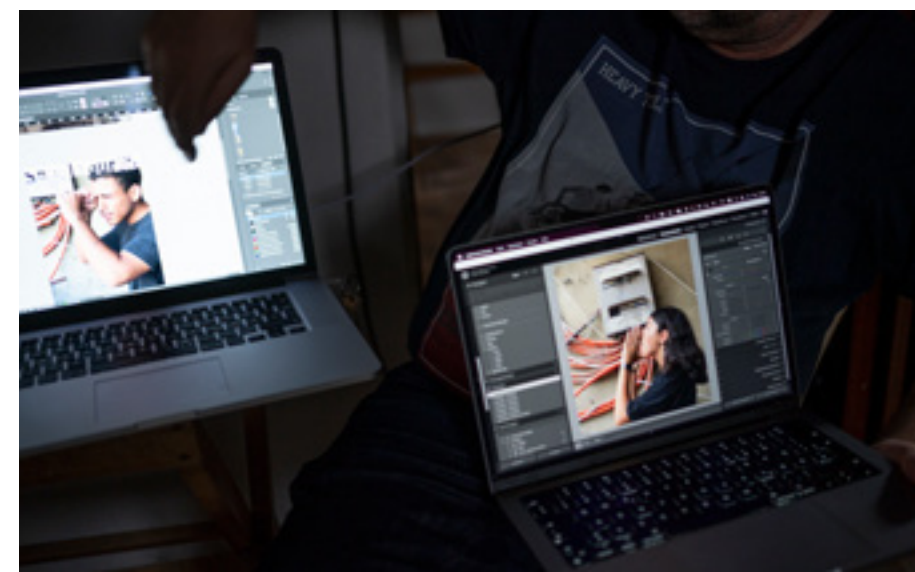
**We were twelve student-journalists and four trainers, who spent two weeks working hard in Shatila, Beirut. Together, we shared laughs, tears and ideas.**



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN  
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.  
Lebanon and Syria



*Alsama*







**Lilia Benbelaïd**

(born 1991) is an Algerian-French visual artist based in Beirut, Lebanon. As part of her final degree, she focused on the topic of refugee camps, which marked the starting point of an approach that is both personal and artistic.

[https://www.instagram.com/liil\\_bnd/](https://www.instagram.com/liil_bnd/)

