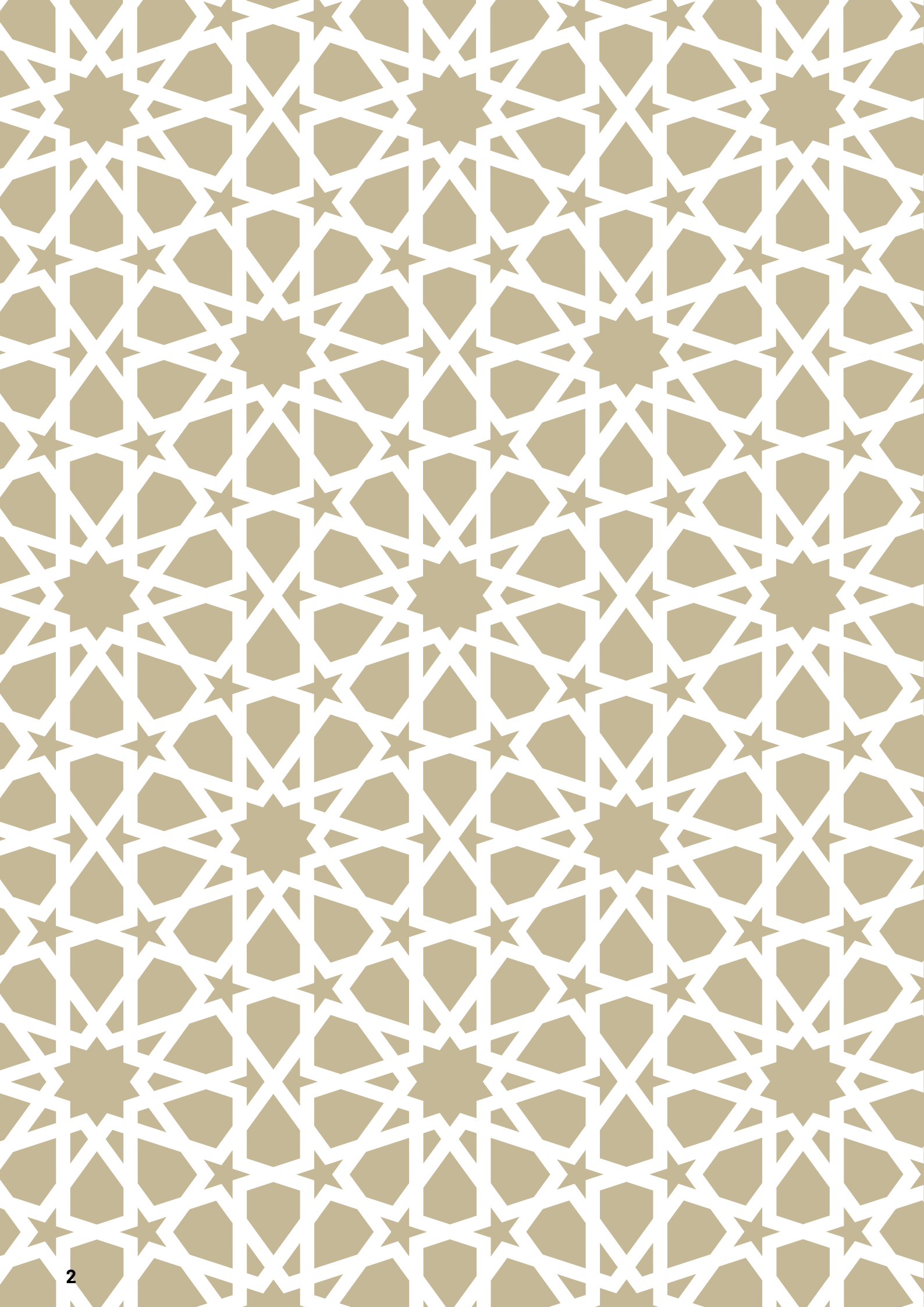




BOURJ

HERE WE ARE

**BREAKING BARRIERS:
THIS WOMAN FIGHTS FIRES**



Editorial

This is the second edition of OUR-VOICE magazine. Its 40 pages were created by 14 young and talented students of the Alsama Secondary Educational Institute in Bourj al-Barajneh, Beirut. Their stories are the result of two weeks of hard work: researching, shooting photos and leading interviews on a variety of subjects. Each one of them expresses him or herself in a unique way. Our role was to guide and mentor them to produce the best stories.

There is a female firefighter who showcases the strength of women in the camp and their ability to take on tough tasks. A story that highlights the importance of mental health and its impact on children and their parents. And an interview that focuses on strategies to fight common misconceptions and ideas that can harm children, such as child labor, early marriage, and gender discrimination. OURVOICE features a story on green spaces and their significance in the lives of the camp's residents.

Finally, the camp's daily life and its thrift shops are probably not what you expect to see.

This edition of OURVOICE wouldn't have been possible without the efforts of the youth who worked with us. We also appreciate the cooperation of Alsama, providing the space and collaborating with us on this project, as well as the support from FNF, which aims to continue this project.

We invite you to delve into the visual stories created by our remarkable students, offering you a special view of life inside Bourj Al-Barajneh.

*Sara Hteit, team OURVOICE
September, 2023*



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students

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Small Camp, Big Heart:

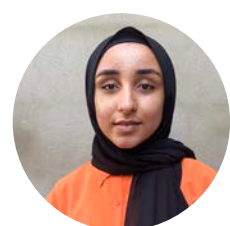
Daily Life In Bourj Al-Barajneh





In Bourj Al-Barajneh camp lots of different people live together. There are Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. The camp's story started when the first Palestinians came here in 1948. They had to leave their homes because of a big war when Israel was created. At first, they lived in tents given by the Red Cross. Over time, this camp turned into a real home for them. When the war in Syria started in 2011, it became a safe place for many Syrians too.

Even though the camp is not very big, covering approximately two square kilometers, it's home to more than 25,000 people. You can see a lot of people working on the streets: there are all sorts of jobs here, and it's a bustling place.



Asama Al-Damen
age 16

You'll often see shopkeepers running small stores, selling everyday items to the camp's residents. Some folks work as street vendors, selling fresh fruits and vegetables. Others are craftsmen, skilled at making things with their hands. There are tailors sewing clothes or carpenters crafting furniture.

But the streets are not just about work. They're also a place where people gather, chat, and share stories. You'll see kids playing and making the most of their time outside. And despite the challenges, there's a sense of community here. Bourj Al-Barajneh is a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of the camp's residents, who find ways to make a living and find happiness despite the difficulties they face.



Check out the video





BREAKING BARRIERS

This Woman Fights Fires



„She’s the female firefighter, the one battling the flames,” says Malak Makia, a 20-year-old Palestinian living in Bourj Al-Barajneh camp, describing people’s reactions when they see her. To her, these are „some of the happiest and embracing moments.”

When she was 16, Malak decided to become a firefighter, even though she was scared they might reject her application. To conquer her fear of burns and wounds, she volunteered with the Palestinian Civil Defense. Her first mission was tough, but her colleagues told her to „hold the hose tight” to encourage her.

With her family and friends’ support, she overcame her fear completely. Now she helps people with injuries bravely. One of her hardest missions was responding to the Beirut explosion on August 4th of 2020. It was her first time facing such a huge disaster with lots of people in distress.



Malak has been on seven missions outside the camp and many more inside. She volunteers for three days each week, balancing her time with her boxing training. There are 40 men and 8 women in her team. „I feel strong and proud as a woman working in this field. It’s not easy, but I do what I want. I’m breaking stereotypes, and I love to challenge myself with new hobbies like riding a motorbike and climbing”.

“I feel strong and proud as a woman working in this field. It’s not easy, but I do what I want.”



Mariam Al-Mawass,
Mosaab Oweis
age 17, 16



Abed Al-Hussein is a 29-year-old Palestinian born in Bourj Al-Barajneh. He's got a talent, and he decided to use it for something good. Abed is a football coach and he loves working with kids. He noticed that many children in the camp were playing in the streets or not going to school in the afternoons, so he had an idea.

GAME CHANGER



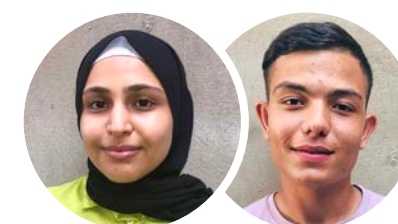
In 2017, Abed started an initiative: he opened a free soccer place for kids in the camp. At first, there were 35 children coming every day. These kids are Syrians and Palestinians, from six to 15 years old. They play together for about two and a half hours every day and once a month there is a match against outside teams.

Abed says it wasn't easy in the beginning, but he learned a lot. Dealing with kids taught him to be patient and calm. He used to get angry quickly, but now he takes his time before reacting. This change even affected his personal life: he says, he has become better at handling his two-year-old daughter.



The kids sometimes get upset if they lose or don't play well. Abed learned how to encourage them and make sure they enjoy the game without feeling sad about a defeat. Besides football, Abed also lets the kids play basketball and a game called 'Harqus'. He also gives them awareness sessions. It's not just about playing, it's about raising his kids' self-confidence and strengthening their personalities.

One father even came to Abed and thanked him because his son became more talkative and sociable since coming to the center. The kids love it there. Abed is proud when he hears a child say he loves coming to the playground and spending as much time as possible. For Abed, being on the field with the kids is like a whole different way of life that not many people know about.



*Mariam Al-Mawass,
Mohammad Kolal
age 17*



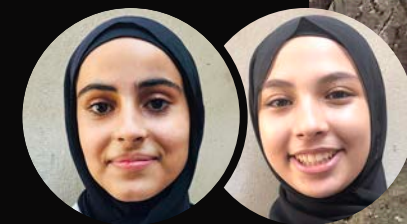
MAZE MAGIC





Impressions of people who walk
through these streets every day:

**DANGER LINGERS NEAR
NEIGHBORS UNITED
SEWAGE WATER
ELECTRIC WIRES
DANGER
POTENTIAL THREAT
SIDE BY SIDE
DARK
SCARY
ISOLATED
DIRTY
CATS AND MICE
BAD FEELINGS
COZY
SOME FUN
ARRIVING QUICKLY
CALM DOWN**



Amouna Al-Ahmad,
Zahraa Hammadeh
age 16



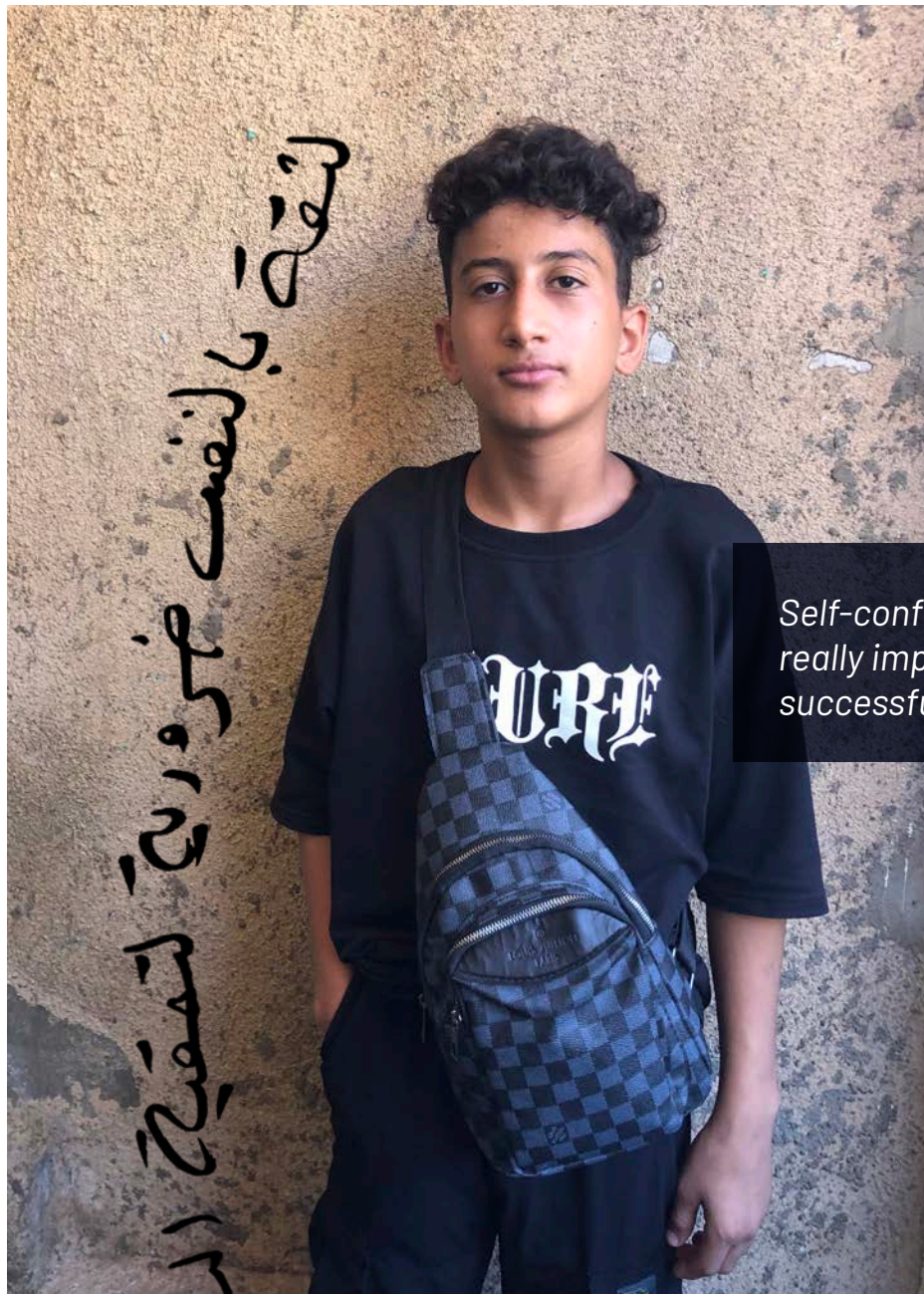
Rise and Shine:

Showing the Craft of Self-Confidence

"I didn't have much self-confidence when I was younger. It was something I struggled with. People always talked about it, but I didn't really get it. Then, at Alsama school, they taught me how important it is to believe in myself and express myself freely. I used to be shy and quiet, but I've learned to love and accept myself more."

- Ayoush Al-Hussein

Ayoush Al-Hussein, 16 and Najah Al-Sharif, 19 are showing self-confidence in an artistic way: their portraits of teachers, students and residents and their respective hand-written quotes demonstrate what self-confidence means to them.



Self-confidence is really important to be successful

Tarek Al-Hassan



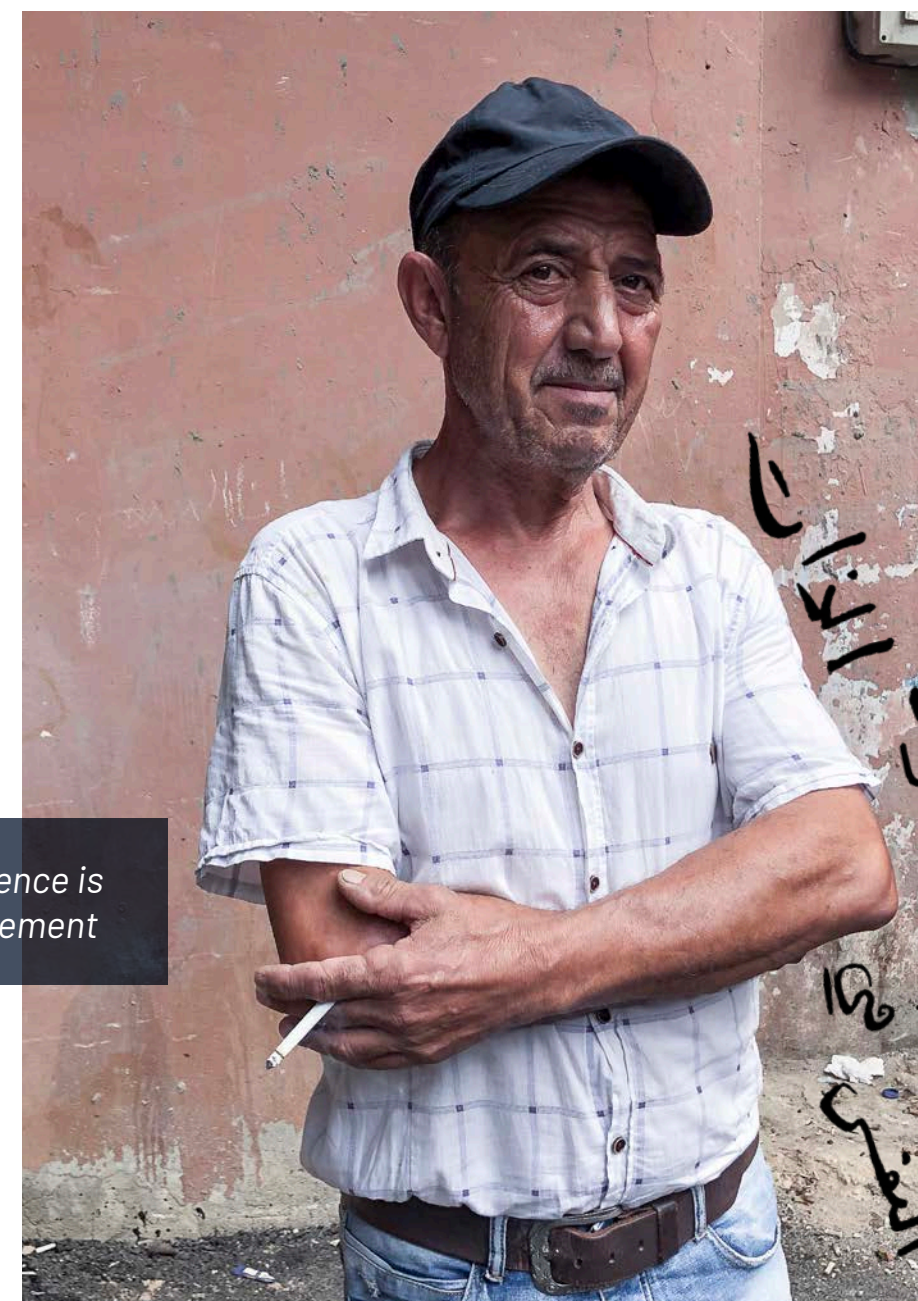
Self-confidence is an acquired characteristic from life experiences and social environment

Rima Hamoud



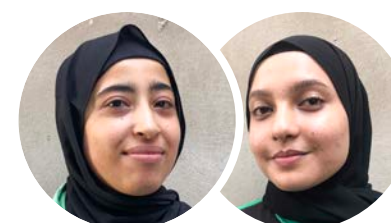
Self-confidence is being confident with my characteristics and my capacity

Rawaa El-Hussein



Self-confidence is self-improvement

Abou Shadi



Najah Al-Sharif,
Ayoush Al-Hussein
age 19, 16



Colorful Symbols of Hope



Life is tough inside Bourj Al-Barajneh Camp. It was established in 1948 and houses one of the largest Syrian and Palestinian communities in Lebanon. It's super crowded and often there is a lack of resources.

But amidst the chaos, there is something special in our camp: trees and plants that protect our streets from the hot sun. They provide cool shade and make Bourj greener. Some families even plant small gardens on their balconies. It might not be much, but it means a lot to us. These trees and tiny gardens are more than just decorations. They help cleaning the air we breathe.

In the middle of our challenging lives here, these trees and tiny gardens remind us that even in hard times there can be beauty and a connection to nature. They are symbols of hope to us. By taking care of them and planting more, we can make our camp a better place to live and breathe.



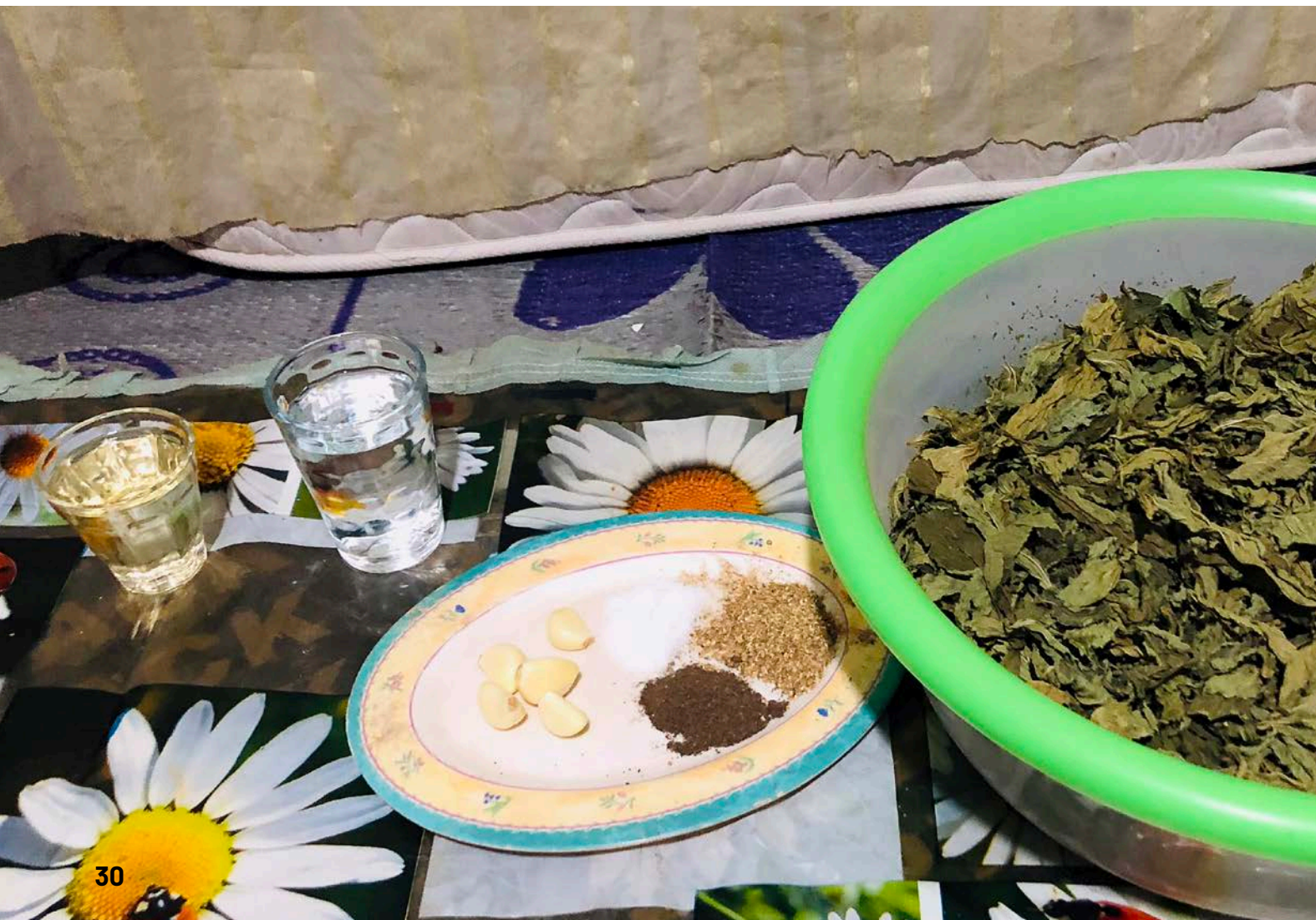
Aziza Al-Sharif
age 14



MOLOKHIA

Molokhia, also known as jute mallow, is one of our favorite dishes. We typically prepare it during the winter when the weather is cold, as this meal provides warmth.

Molokhia is a very common dish among Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinians. It can be prepared in two versions: soupy and leafy. For this occasion, we decided to prepare the leafy version. Here is our step-by-step recipe.



STEP ONE

Start by washing the Molokhia and soaking it in water for 5 minutes until it gets soft.



STEP TWO

Drain the water from the Molokhia, then place half of it in a cooking pot with some olive oil.



STEP THREE

Add the rest of the Molokhia to the pot and a bit more olive oil.

STEP FOUR

After it's fried,
add garlic, ...



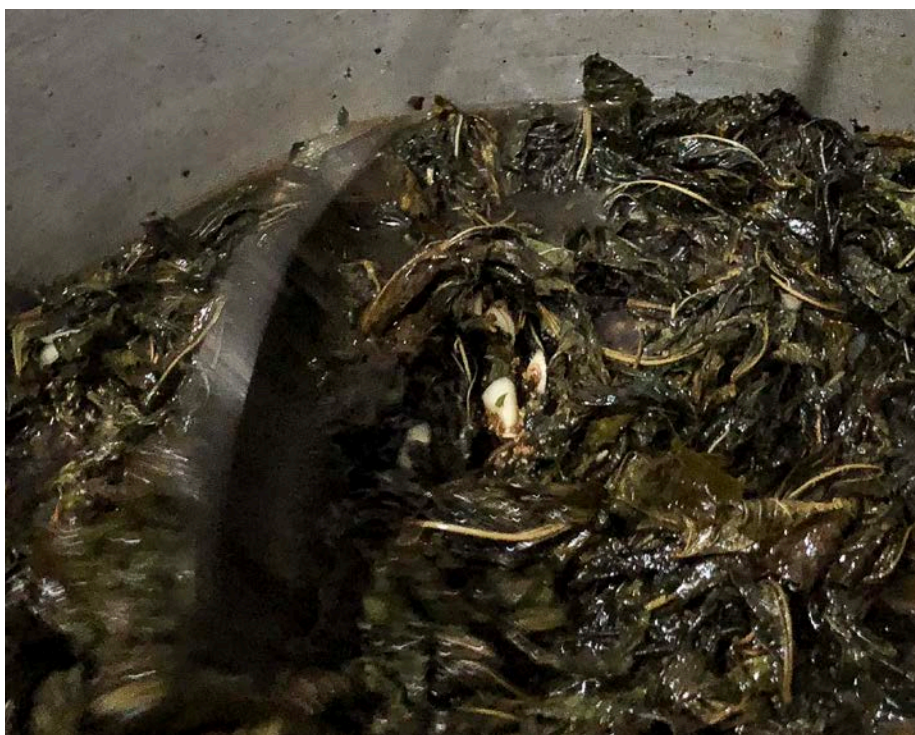
STEP FIVE

...black pepper, salt,
coriander, and a small
cup of water.



STEP SIX

Cook it for 45 minu-
tes, while boiling some
pieces of chicken in
another pot until they
are tender.



STEP SEVEN

Remove the Molokhia from the pot
and serve it hot on a plate with rice.
For a tastier flavor, squeeze half a
lemon over the plate.

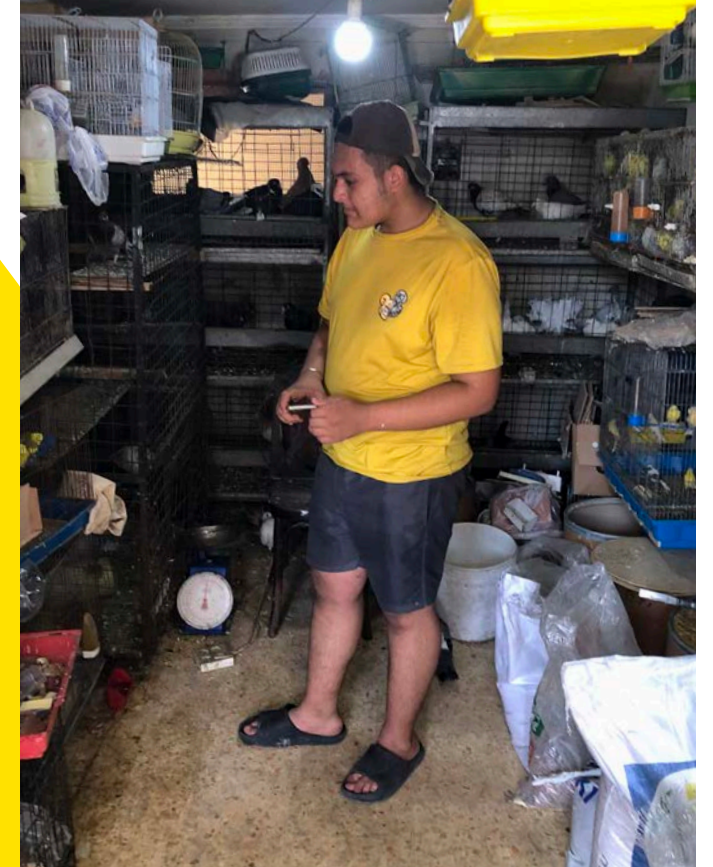


Tarif Zaetoun,
Abedalslam Al-Fawaz
age 15, 13



Rainbow of Feathers

You can find this bird shop at the entrance of Bourj Al-Barajneh. It has 350 birds of different types, like pigeons, goldfinches, and canaries. The owner, Abdullah, loves taking care of birds and collecting various breeds. It is the only profession he knows. The busiest time is in winter when people buy birds to keep at home or give as gifts. Prices range from \$25 for local breeds to around \$60 for foreign ones.



Shaimaa Al-Jabar
age 16

MAKE A CHANGE



Mental health is a key priority at Alsama Institute. The school offers children social support classes and psychological support sessions. Social support covers important topics like early marriage, bullying, child labor, and more. These awareness sessions are designed for both kids and parents. In the following interview, we speak with Sanaa Ezzedine, Alsama's psychologist, to learn more about her work and the positive impact of these sessions on people's lives.

Can you describe your role at Alsama and the specific services you provide to the people here?

I'm a psychologist at Alsama Secondary Educational Institute. I provide support to students, parents, employees, and everyone who comes to us. I start by listening to them and giving them a safe place to talk. Then I use therapies like CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), music therapy, drama and others to help them to understand their feelings like fear and anxiety.

What made you want to become a psychologist and work in a refugee camp?

I used to teach psychotherapy in school for 15 years, but I wanted to make a bigger difference in people's lives. So I joined Alsama one year ago. I didn't know it would be so challenging, but I wanted to help - especially women - and prevent early marriages.

What are the common problems people in the camp face, and how do you help them?

Many people in the camp struggle with things like gender discrimination, discrimination based on appearance, sadness, and low self-confidence. I use therapeutic techniques, and assign daily tasks, such as reading or writing positive affirmations about themselves. These methods help them to understand themselves and to try to achieve their own goals. Additionally, I do drama therapy to enable people to express their deep emotions.



Can you share a story of someone you've helped in the camp?

Certainly! There was a young woman who was divorced and very sad. She couldn't sleep, cried a lot, and felt shaky. After 20 therapy sessions, she improved a lot. She became sociable, decided to engage more with the society, and helped others learn about self-improvement. We've also helped children who couldn't talk, like a little boy who improved after 12 sessions. Also, we've inspired other parents by showing success stories for individuals in the camp, who have become teachers, football players, doctors and more, demonstrating that dreams can be realized even in challenging circumstances.

How do you explain the importance of your work given the difficult conditions people are facing?

It's not always easy because some people think emotional support isn't important when they struggle to feed their families. We work hard to explain why it matters and how it can help the community. Our approach involves working closely with both kids and their families, which is a key factor in the success of our work.

What message do you have for camp residents who might be hesitant to get help?

Remember, psychological support is important for your well-being which is a key factor of our successful work. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.



Ahmad Osman,
Abedallah Duifat
age 14



THRIFT SHOP

**Sustainable Fashion
Unbeatable Prices**



**50.000
LBP**



**40.000
LBP**



**20.000
LBP**

There are seven thrift shops in Bourj Al-Barajneh, a relatively high number for a camp of only approximately two square kilometers size. They have become very popular since the inflation in Lebanon has soared to over 200% in 2023. Even with a tiny budget, shoppers can find items that are very affordable, ranging from children's sport shoes for 20.000 Lebanese Lira (= 20 US cents) to a school backpack for 100.000 Lebanese Lira (= one US \$). OURVOICE authors Najaa and Ayoush have combined fashionable outfits for men, women and children.



40.000
LBP

40.000
LBP



40.000
LBP



100.000
LBP



50.000
LBP



20.000
LBP



Najah Al-Sharif,
Ayoush Al-Hussein
age 19, 16



14 student-journalists, four trainers, two weeks to create a magazine. It contains their ideas, pictures and stories to present Bourj Al-Barajneh to the outside world.

I talked to new people and went to new places.

These ten days were the best time of my life.

I learned how to take photos of people and be self confident.

I learned how to write a good story and how to shoot a perfect picture.

I learned how to work with my fellow students.

I learned how to take photos from the best angle and how to write a caption.

I practiced my English with our teachers and the people outside.

– Feedback of the students





Amouna Al-Ahmad, age 16

Bourj – here we are is a collaborative project by:



Alsama



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STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.
Lebanon and Syria