



# THE LATEST AT BALADNA

## MARCH 2021

### Baladna and Harak youth activists investigate the needs of young people in the Arab Palestinian society

Over the course of 2020, Baladna worked with youth groups in 8 villages and towns to gather information on the needs of young people in the Arab Palestinian society. To this end, the youth held interviews with peers and teachers via video chat, conducted surveys, documented the experiences of youth through photography, and gathered information on the services available to young people in their schools and neighborhoods. In addition to targeting their own localities, the youth supported a professional researcher to compile data on the needs, perspectives, and interests of young people across the Arab Palestinian society in Israel. This component of the needs assessment included a large phone survey, eleven focus groups with young people from across the region, and a mapping of youth services and community engagement frameworks. We are currently compiling the findings in a report which will be published and disseminated this spring.

Our needs assessment marks the first time that youth in the Arab Palestinian society have been mobilized to investigate their own needs. It is also the first study of Arab Palestinian youth to take place since Baladna conducted its last needs assessment in 2012. Once published, the needs assessment will serve as a guiding resource for civil society organizations, educators, social workers, and policymakers working to advance the rights and well-being of Arab Palestinian youth. It will also serve as a resource for youth involved in Baladna's projects. Most notably, youth involved in the Harak project will use the findings to design and implement their own social change action plans with the aim of generating sustainable services and policies that address the needs of young people as they themselves have identified them.



Harak youth activists participating in a two-day workshop prior to the spread of Covid-19

### What is Harak?

The Harak Youth Leadership project aims to empower Arab Palestinian youth as transformative agents of change by providing them with skills and frameworks to develop and implement action plans that will generate tangible, needs-responsive results. The project places youth at the center of all stages of the social change process, enabling them to identify their own needs, priorities, and strategies. Baladna's role is simply to provide structure and guidance as the youth take the lead in advancing their rights and the well-being of their communities.



A focus group meeting conducted as part of the youth needs assessment

## Harak youth activists participate in a second cycle of leadership trainings

All of the youth involved in the Harak project undergo a series of trainings. The trainings prepare them for the activities ahead by enhancing their leadership skills and deepening their understanding of principles of democracy, gender equality, and human rights. In addition to these workshops, which took place last winter, Baladna trained a core group of 25 youth activists who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in the project. The trainings, which took place from November to February, built on the awareness and skills the youth had developed through prior trainings and the needs assessment process. The training topics, which were selected by the youth themselves, covered gender equality, community organizing and engagement, and public speaking and debate.



A poster used to recruit the 'tjijal' tour guides



'Tijual' tour guides participating in a four-day training camp

## Baladna launches a training program for ten young Palestinians to become 'tjijal' tour guides

Through our Hawiya project, we seek to provide young people with opportunities to explore their identity, history, and culture. To do so effectively, we employ innovative and engaging methods, such as interactive board games and interesting videos. We also coordinate 'tjijal' hiking tours. 'Tjijal,' which means 'roaming' in Arabic, refers to the ways in which people can learn about a place through the exploration of its geography, history, and social life. We believe that, through such explorations, youth can also learn about themselves. In the final months of 2020, we recruited ten young Palestinians, ages 18 and up, to build and lead their own 'tjijal' hiking tours. Thereafter, the tour guides began a series of trainings aimed at developing their skills and knowledge in areas relating to popular history, geography, archeology, indigenous plants, and research. As part of this process, the youth guides visited Suba, a displaced village located west of Jerusalem. During the visit, they explored its ruins and learned about the history of the people who inhabited it. They also learned how to use topographic maps, putting what they learned into action while hiking in the area. Once the youth guides have completed the trainings, they will design their own tjijal hiking routes. Beginning in 2022, they will use these routes to lead their own hiking tours. Through these tours, which will be open to the public, the youth guides will extend what they learned to hundreds of other young people.

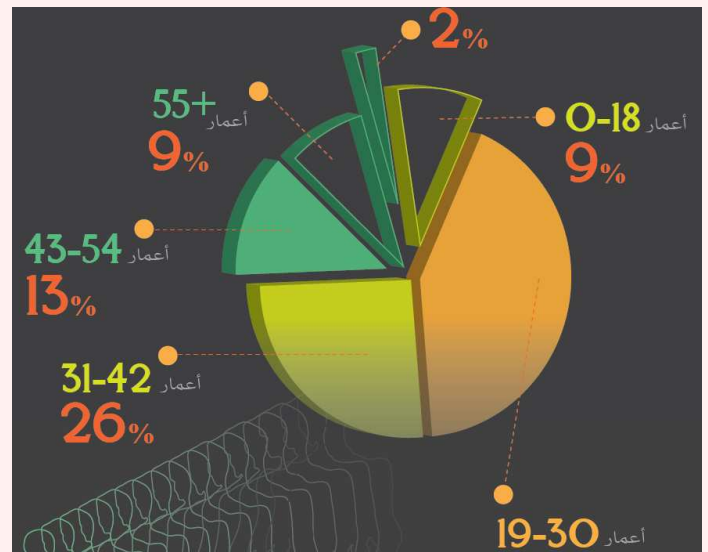


'Tijual' tour guides participating in a four-day training camp

## Baladna and Coventry University conduct five case studies on the proliferation of violent crime among youth in the Arab Palestinian society

Violent crime in the Arab Palestinian society has escalated rapidly in recent years, taking over 600 lives since 2011. The impact on youth is considerable. According to our findings, nearly 60% of those killed between the years 2011 and 2019 were under the age of 30. In 2020, we set out to identify the underlying dynamics and factors contributing to this deadly phenomenon. In cooperation with the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Coventry University and a team of seven young researchers, we carried out case studies of five of the localities most impacted by violent crime (Jaffa, Taibeh, Umm al-Fahm, Nazareth, and Acre). The case studies involved a range of activities, including a review of official documents and academic literature, analyses of court cases, and 60 interviews with relevant stakeholders, including youth implicated in organized criminal networks.

Baladna and Coventry University are currently in the process of compiling the findings in a report, which we plan to publish this spring. In addition to disseminating the findings through community events and a media campaign, we intend to put our findings to use. In the next stage of the Youth for a Peaceful Society project, we will work with youth stakeholders in Jaffa, Taibeh, Umm al-Fahm, Nazareth, and Acre to build evidence-based strategies to address the systemic vulnerabilities contributing youth involvement in violent crime.



An infographic depicting the age break-down of murder victims in the Arab Palestinian society

## New Partnership with Pontifical Mission

Baladna is excited to announce a new partnership with Pontifical Mission. Pontifical Mission will support our Youth for a Peaceful Society project, enabling us to catalyze grassroots strategies to address the proliferation of violent crime among youth in the Arab Palestinian society.

## Baladna, Palvision, and AFSC develop the first online platform to address Palestinian youth across the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, and the 48 regions

Since 2017, Baladna, Palvision, and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) have worked together to overcome barriers, stereotypes, and fragmentation between Palestinians in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the 48 regions. In the past, we have done so primarily through regular exchanges between youth in each of the three geographic areas. Restrictions on movement and safety concerns resulting from Covid-19, however, threw a wrench in our plans for 2020. To adapt to the new reality, we have been working with Palvision and AFSC to develop an online platform that addresses the same themes as our exchanges. The platform, which we plan to launch this spring, includes a video page for interactive events, a library with content on Palestinian identity and fragmentation, electronic games that address fragmentation and the Palestinian cause, and virtual tours of various Palestinian locales in the West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza, and the 48 regions.



A board game developed by Baladna that will be adapted for the online platform



The Nazareth Youth Center

## Baladna opens a youth center in Nazareth's Old City

In 2020, we set out to establish a space for youth in Nazareth to further themselves and their community. Over the course of the year, we have succeeded in achieving this objective, transforming a derelict building in the Old City into a warm, welcoming community space. The two-floor building is now equipped with spaces for workshops; a stage for lectures, movie showings, and concerts; a room for art exhibitions; a café; a library; and quiet spots for reading and studying. In addition to developing the physical space, we worked with nine young activists to form the Center's organizational structure, identify its values, objectives, and target groups, and plan its activities. Through this process, the youth activists and Baladna's staff built three main programs for the Center, including an Art and Culture Program, a Community Development Program, and an Education Program.

An event to celebrate the Center's official opening will take place on Friday, April 9th. For more information/to RSVP, please contact [cor@baladnayouth.org](mailto:cor@baladnayouth.org).



A Zoom meeting for the activists involved in planning and coordinating the Center's activities

## Baladna and Youth of Sumud hold the first meeting of the new Sumud project

The Sumud project responds to the geographic, social, and political fragmentation of the Palestinian people through the promotion of a common vision and unified collective action among Palestinian youth from different regions. In cooperation with Youth of Sumud, which is located in the Southern Hebron Hills (Area C), the project involves a series of sessions during which thirty young activists from the West Bank and the 48 regions will get to know one another, jointly explore issues relating to fragmentation and the occupation, develop a collective identity, and devise joint strategies to overcome fragmentation and promote Palestinian rights. During the first meeting, which took place over Zoom, the two groups had the chance to get to know one another and set their expectations for the upcoming experience. The next meeting will take place in the West Bank on March 20th.

## New Member of the Team

Baladna is pleased to welcome Khaled Sayed on our team as the new coordinator of our Hawiya project. Khaled earned his BA in Economics and Business Administration at the University of Haifa. He has been active in a variety of social and political movements, including as a youth mentor at Baladna and in efforts to combat sexual assault. Before joining Baladna's staff, he worked in several fields, including journalism, editing, and translation.



Khaled Sayed, the new coordinator for Baladna's Hawiya project



Young activists participating in the first meeting of the Sumud project