

Barr Fellowship Learning Journey To Jordan, October 2023

Contextual Briefing Guide: Background of Organizations & Speakers

PART ONE: LGBTQI & IDENTITY.

Date: Saturday, October 14, 2023

Speaker: Madian Al Jazerah

Madian Al Jazerah: A Palestinian Jordanian, born in Kuwait. In 1997, Madian opened Amman's Books@Cafe, the first internet cafe/bookstore in the Arab world. Since its founding he has been engaged in human rights work and LGBTQI activism. He is currently the Diversity Consultant for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the Middle East & North Africa (MENA), sensitizing and ensuring that All LGBTIQ+ displaced persons are equally protected.

Madian published his first book, "Are You This or Are You This?" in June 2021 as a story of identity and worth - his frank and moving memoir narrates his battles with adversity, racism and homophobia.

ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION & CLIMATE CHANGE.

Part One: Carob Farm Seminar

Date: Sunday, October 15, 2023

Guide: Rakan Meyhar (bio below)

We are all part of an interconnected food web. How we care for our soil and grow our food matter. This experience will show you how to produce clean and natural food with minimal inputs while preserving and celebrating an indigenous farming heritage and local cuisine. During this seminar, you will tour Carob Farm in Madaba and learn how a local family is working with nature to combat climate change and transform what was a dry piece of land into a diverse food production system. Learn about healthy soil and permaculture design - what it takes to harvest rainwater, make compost, produce your own nutritious food and establish a resilient ecosystem to live within.

Part Two: Panel Discussion

Date: Sunday, October 15, 2023

Speakers: Individuals & bios below

1. **Rakan Meyhar, Founder of Carob Farm & Restaurant:** A conservationist at heart and a generalist in profession. With over 17 years of experience in the adventure tourism industry, Rakan founded Terhaal Adventures and is a Co-Founder of the Jordan Trail. In 2020, he went on a primal quest into the world of natural farming and indigenous food production. Rakan is currently on a mission to save soil, design resilient farms, grow nourishing food and create inspiring experiences. And so, he founded Carob Farm and Carob House as way to link these.
2. **Mohammad Asfour ([LinkedIn Profile here](#)):** A global green strategist; Mohammad believes that aligning passion, skill and opportunity are the ingredients to leading a meaningful life. He has co-founded, chaired and advised numerous networks and organizations, including WordBGC's Middle East & North

Africa (MENA) & Africa Networks. He has counseled on energy, environmental and water development programs with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Jordan Economic Development Program. He has a passion for adventure, photography and hiking and currently serves on the board of the Jordan Trail Association. He also co-founded Ahel Al Balad, which is a non-political grassroots' movement that aims at spreading positivity in the community through volunteering. Mohammad received his BA in Business from the University of Jordan and his Masters in Positive Leadership and Strategy from the IE in Madrid and has continuously maintained a presence in the business world through a forth generation diversified family business.

3. **Samer Judeh, Co-Founder & Chairman of Jordan Wind:** Co-founder and Chairman of the Jordan Wind Project Company PSC. Samer has been instrumental in the development, construction, operation and management of the Wind Farm, the first and largest privately sponsored utility scale wind farm in the region. He was also the founder and Chairman of Shamsuna Power Company, which developed, constructed and is currently operating the first utility scale solar project to connect to the Jordanian national grid. Samer has been an active member of the renewable energy sector since 2007, and has been a key player in the negotiation of contracts and the implementation of laws and regulations for the industry. A Jordanian businessman, Samer has over 30 years of experience in managing a wide range of initiatives in the fields of renewable energy, information technology, security and infrastructure. His extensive international business experience affords him key insight into the development and management of large-scale projects as well as the establishment and deployment of innovative enterprises. He is currently the Chairman of the board of the American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan and also a Board member and Vice Chair of EDAMA (EDAMA in Arabic means "sustainability"). Samer is also a member of the Advisory Board of Jordan's Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply. Samer is a graduate of Georgetown University in Washington DC, with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master's degree in Arab Studies.
4. **Shahd Almahameed, Generations for Peace (Website [here](#)):** An ecofeminist and a peace-builder with over five years of experience in international and local non-governmental organizations. She holds an MA degree in Human Rights and Human Development from the University of Jordan. Shahd is a graduate from Lazord Fellowship, Public Policies for Innovation Program at WANA Institute, and Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung's Middle East & North Africa (MENA) Leadership Academy III. She has a diploma from Swedish Institute's Leader Lab. Currently, she is a Program Officer at Generations For Peace (GFP) where she leads the Climate Action program in all 12 governorates in Jordan through advocacy in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Youth. Shahd is an advocate for climate action, gender equality, and civic engagement through technology.

PART TWO: LGBTQI & ACTIVISM.

Date: Sunday, October 15, 2023

Speakers: Musa Shadeedi & Eliza Marks (My.Kali Editors, Writers, Staff & Activists)

My.Kali Magazine (Website [here](#)): My.Kali is a conceptual webzine for/from the Middle East and North Africa. The magazine was established in 2007 by a group of passionate students with various interests ranging from design, to the arts, and politics. My.Kali strives to address social problems, and empower the youth to defy mainstream gender binaries in the Arab world.

My.Kali is a new form of activism; a voice for social justice in oppressive societies. The magazine builds on the understanding that cultural stereotypes stem from countless factors and discourses that are created and reinforced every day. My.Kali addresses these stereotypes through visually engaging features

and social commentary with a local and regional flavor. The magazine hosts bloggers, guest writers, and photographers to come together from across the Middle East and North Africa, and the writing reflects unheard and marginalized opinions, uncensored voices, and unabashed attitudes.

- **Musa Shadeedi:** A queer Iraqi writer and researcher based in Jordan, who primarily looks at queer histories in relation to colonialism. He has published four books – *The Day We Never Had a Father*, *Non-normative Sexuality in Arabic Cinema*, *Oum Kalthoum's Sexuality*, and *Homosexuality in Invading Iraq* – and has had articles published on various queer feminist platforms. Musa is also the Arabic Editor at My Kali Magazine and the Founder and Director of Cinamji, a queer-feminist film initiative.
- **Eliza Marks:** A PhD Candidate in Anthropology at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Eliza's dissertation focuses on the processes that produce experimental sound and music spaces and networks in/between Amman, online, and "outside," and the social, aesthetic, political economic, and historical forces that inform them. Eliza joined My Kali Magazine in 2018 and is currently the Managing Editor and English Editor. She has also taught at Hunter College and City College (New York), and King's Academy (Jordan).

EDUCATION.

Date: Monday, October 16, 2023

Organizations: *Questscope & Ministry of Education*

Questscope (Website [here](#)): An international non-governmental, non-profit organization founded in 1988 for youth mentorship, alternative education, juvenile justice, community-building, mental well-being, and humanitarian aid programs in partnership with marginalized and refugee communities in the Middle East. Questscope aims to put the last, first by relying on a theory of social change that recognizes the interconnected nature of individual transformation, institutional response, and policy changes at the governance level. Questscope believes that a country must have a strong formal and cohesive education system for development and equitable opportunities.

- **Dr. Curt Rhodes:** Founder and Chief Vision Officer of Questscope, Dr. Rhodes believes there are two fundamental principles driving his work in fostering leadership; inclusivity and participation. These principles cannot be applied without recognizing the importance of knowing people as spiritual beings - who must be known in relationships of trust that go beyond the basic physical needs for food, shelter, clothing and education.

He began his career in the Middle East as an associate professor and assistant dean in the Faculty of Health Science at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon in February 1981. He redirected his career towards social development initiatives in 1984 after observing the outcomes of the 1982 war in West Beirut and thus, founded Questscope in 1988.

Dr. Rhodes holds a Masters of Public Health (MPH) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and MS and PhD degrees from the University of Wisconsin. He was recognized in 2011 as Social Entrepreneur of the Year in the Middle East by the Schwab Foundation/World Economic Forum for visionary, pragmatic and courageous contributions that significantly improve the state of the world. In 2014, he was awarded the Tufts University/Dr. Jean Mayer Global Citizenship Award for his dedication to solving the most pressing problems facing the world.

- **Dr. Ahmad Shadid:** The Strategy Development Senior Manager of Questscope, Dr. Shadid is a leader in educational development, consistently identifying and addressing gaps in learning infrastructure and methodologies. Backed by an academic lineage that spans fields from Economics to Econometric Methodology,

Dr. Shadid employs his vast knowledge to enhance educational frameworks and systems. He pioneered the development of a Learning Management System (LMS) tailored for the educational landscape of Jordan which ensured that educators and students had access to resources, feedback mechanisms, and curricular pathways designed with inclusivity in mind. Other focuses of his work include the role of educational assessments and integration of technology to be inclusive and support students' educational journeys.

- **Ma'en Rayyan:** Currently Questscope's Jordan Country Director, Ma'en joined the organization in 2004 and oversees all technical and financial aspects of Questscope's work in Jordan. He has extensive experience in implementing Questscope mentoring and non-formal education programs and thrives on building relationships in communities where Questscope work. Ma'en not only brings a wholistic experience in the sector in his time in the development world, he has worked in almost each development, and has offered each one growth and evolution. Ma'en has an innate ability to maneuver through governmental red tape, and the maze of ministries affairs.
- **Officials from the Ministry of Education may include:**
Important Note: There can be frequent turnover in the government, so Questscope has not provided the names of these individuals as the individuals we meet with may change.
 - Director of Education
 - Non-Formal Education Director
 - Inclusive Education Director

FEMALE EMPOWERMENT.

Date: Tuesday, October 17, 2023

Organizations: Collateral Repair Project (CRP), Iraq Al Amir Cooperative, Beit Sitti

Collateral Repair Project (CRP) (Website [here](#)): Collateral Repair Project is a 501(c)(3) organization in the United States of America and is registered with Jordan's Ministry of Social Development. The organization was set up in Amman, Jordan, where many refugees were relocating during the height of the second Gulf War in Iraq. Much of CRP's early work was charity-related, but as the organization grew it ran numerous programs focusing on community-building, education, and trauma relief in addition to emergency aid. CRP utilizes a holistic approach, addressing physical needs as well as trauma relief. They now have two community centers that are seen as refugee hubs, resource centers and community spaces, providing basic-needs assistance to hundreds of families through in-kind aid, information and referral services, and a monthly food-voucher program that provides eligible households with coupons to purchase fresh produce and groceries. The centers offer many activities and learning opportunities to allow refugees to begin to rebuild the communities they lost after fleeing their home countries.

CRP's Hope Workshop is a craft collective that provides refugee women, who have been displaced, a safe space to collaborate, create, socialize, while earning income for their households. The Workshop offers women a place to gather, foster community and psychosocial support. The women run the workshop. CRP's goal is for participants to earn income with dignity, providing a sense of ownership and independence. With support from CRP, the women design and produce products and 90% of the profit from all sales goes directly to the women, while the rest funds supplies needed to run the workshop.

- **Amanda Lane:** Amanda is the Executive Director at CRP. An accomplished international development professional, Amanda has served as a consultant on program evaluation and design with international governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Prior to her work at CRP, she led British Council Jordan's

governance and youth programs. Before coming to Jordan, Amanda consulted for nonprofit boards of directors in Seattle, made documentary and promotional films for nonprofit organizations, served on the board of directors of the Arab Center of Washington, and served in the Peace Corps (Cameroon, 1993-1995).

- **Salah Eildeen Ghannam:** Salah holds the position of Senior Community Center Programs Coordinator at CRP's Community Center in Hashmi Al-Shmali, Amman. With an educational background in Computer Science, Salah started his career in the NGO sector at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, working for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) as a Data Entry Assistant. He then moved to Azraq refugee camp, where he assumed the role of Distribution Center Officer, reporting to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Ultimately, Salah became responsible for leading the Help Desk for the World Food Programme, (WFP) at the Azraq camp. He joined CRP in 2023, first as a Community Center Programs Coordinator, and recently became a Senior Coordinator.

Iraq Al Amir Cooperative (Website [here](#)): Founded by the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation in 1993, the Iraq Al-Amir Women's Cooperative has empowered skilled craftswomen in rural communities in Jordan to be financially independent through dignified work, thereby raising their standard of living and preserving local heritage. With the training received, they now have the ability to take on leadership roles and make decisions in the villages of Wadi Seer.

The Iraq Al-Amir Women's Cooperative consists of four workshops: ceramics, paper making, soap, and weaving. The products are sold in the gift shop as well as on-line. It is the oldest independent women's cooperative in Jordan and a member of the Jordanian Cooperatives Association.

The TreadRight grant, delivered in partnership with Tourism Cares, will allow the organization to consistently have the necessary materials on hand as well as help to complete a build-out of their gift shop, as well as provide merchandising expertise, and allow the group to expand their food services, creating more income opportunities for the cooperative's members.

Beit Sitti Website (Website [here](#)): Beit Sitti means "grandmother's house" in Arabic, a fitting name for a place to share traditional Arabic dishes, passed down from generations of women. Inspired by their Grandmother, Vera, the Beit Sitti cooking school was started by her three granddaughters and their mother, Sherin Mesies Haddad. Their belief that women are the backbone of society drives their passion to empower women through food. Here, participants learn from female Arabic chefs from different Middle Eastern countries to cook traditional dishes, share stories and celebrate their culture. This women owned and run business supports local women's initiatives, including a line of pantry products for sale.

SOCIAL INCLUSION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP.

Date: *Wednesday, October 18, 2023*

Organizations: *Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), 7Hills*

Speaker: *Dr. Oroub El-Abed*

Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) (Website [here](#)): JOHUD, originally called the "Queen Alia Fund for Social Welfare Fund," was established in 1977, when His Late Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal issued a Royal Decree for the creation of a Fund to improve the lives of the poorest Jordanians. It now stands as the oldest and largest non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting rights-based, sustainable human development in Jordan.

With a network of 51 Community Development Centers located throughout the country, JOHUD is at the forefront of building a brighter future for those living in under-served, poor and remote communities. JOHUD provides sustainable support that empowers individuals to work with their neighbors, strengthen their communities and secure access to resources they need to achieve healthy and fulfill lives.

JOHUD's main four areas of development (1. learning, 2. governance & sustainable living, 3. livelihoods and 4. inclusion & protection) provide a holistic approach in supporting communities across different sectors, enabling those with limited access and social support to receive help which they most require. Under each area, a variety of sub-programs and interventions are in place to ensure that JOHUD targets a wide range of individuals including the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities and refugees.

7Hills (Website [here](#)): Founded in 2014, 7Hills is a skateboarder-run grassroots, non-profit organization, with a mission of developing safe and inclusive spaces, run free-of-charge skateboarding sessions, informal education and arts programming for youth from all of Jordan's diverse demographics.

Over the past 100 years, Jordan's population has been growing exponentially, largely due to the country welcoming migration and displaced people who flee from surrounding wars and unrest. The country hosts the second largest per-capita forcibly displaced population in the world, with Amman having a population of over 4 million people. Although more than 60% of Jordan's population is younger than 30 years old, there is an immense lack of public spaces and free recreational outlets for this young population of the country.

Alternatively, recreational spaces tend to be private, residential, or serve the richer segments of Jordanian society and are largely inaccessible to the young and displaced population of Jordan. Accordingly, 7Hills works with local municipalities to provide free safe spaces for youth affected by displacement, young people with disabilities, and families from Jordan's lower socioeconomic classes.

It's free-of-charge skate program consists of skateboard sessions and a Youth Leadership Program. It is designed to empower Amman's most marginalized youth, utilizing skateboarding sessions to overcome gender, racial, religious, and socioeconomic differences.

The organization deems itself a hybrid non-profit organization and social enterprise where community members are involved in its design and construction. Through a new art hub, 7Hills offers a space for youth to harness their creative skills and eventually have income-generating experiences to support its financial sustainability.

Dr. Oroub El-Abed: An associate professor, researcher and author. Dr. Oroub is currently teaching at the School of Graduate Studies at Birzeit University.

Her publications include articles in the area of development (education and employment) and forced migration in the Middle East. Her book on the Palestinian origin of Jordanians of East Amman is soon to come out and she is currently editing a book studying the limited options for youth citizens and refugees in the Levant. Her research has been focused on refugees and vulnerable minorities in the Middle East. She has taught several courses on development, livelihood and forced migration issues and has consulted for several UN and international NGO's.

Dr. Oroub completed her PhD in Political Economy of Development Studies from School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London.

Tourism - Economic, Social, Environmental and Political Impacts.

Date: Friday, October 20, 2023

Organization: SELA

Speaker: Dr. Sami Al-Hasanat

SELA (Website [here](#)): SELA was founded in 2015 by five members of the communities living in the surrounding areas of the World Heritage site of Petra. The organization aims to protect cultural heritage, building capacities within communities living in the surroundings of heritage and archaeological sites and enabling sustainable preservation of cultural heritage by promoting the active involvement of the host communities in its protection. During the visit, you will meet with some of SELA's leadership at the Roman Bathhouse in Petra, where they currently have a training program and conservation project.

- **Ahmad Almousah - President:** A conservation technician with 20+ years of experience in archaeological excavation and conservation.
- **Maria Elena Ronza - Vice President:** Naturalized Jordanian, Elena is an architect and an archaeologist. She served on numerous archaeological and conservation projects in Jordan. Her career focuses on community engagement in heritage management.

Dr. Sami al-Hasanat: Uniquely qualified as a tourism professional with a passion for preserving his cultural heritage and natural environment, Dr. Sami al Hasanat navigates both Western and Jordanian cultures from learned experience - from his birth in a Bedouin tent in Petra, to advanced degrees from universities in Europe, to a seat as a member of Jordanian Parliament. His focus and expertise on the natural sciences, geography, and crisis management, led to establishing his own tour agency, and teaching at the Petra College for Tourism and Archaeology, at Al-Hussein bin Talal University.

Dr. Sami al-Hasanat belongs to many international tourism and scientific societies, including the Jordanian Tour Guides Association, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and the German Society of Geography. He has consulted on crisis management, biodiversity, adventure tourism at both the regional and national levels.

Important Note: Speakers and organizations are not listed beyond October 20 because the group will be exploring Wadi Rum and the Dead Sea at the end of the trip, with the Closing Circle on October 24.