

Read praise for our book:

This is the first book I have read that gives space and voice to a marginalised sector that is not spoken about in our Palestinian community - people with mental illness. These are people we tend to forget about even though they live among us, who we not only pretend not to see or acknowledge, but who we also belittle and address in stigmatising terms, even describing them as crazy. In fact what they need from us is empathy, love, understanding, and support.

What is the situation of these people in our Palestinian community? The book answers this question through their voices, as they tell us about their problems, their dreams, and their aspirations, including their unrelenting determination to live and work, to love and be loved, and to form families like everyone else, and all this in a language that captures the heart.

Rajiah Abu Sway (Director of the Mental Health Project at the Office of the World Health Organization in Palestine)

There is nothing more beautiful than when a person speaks about themselves in their own words straight from the heart, reaching the hearts of others, not just their ears. And therefore, I promote the idea that we listen with their ears and see with their eyes, so we can grasp the meaning of their words, and feel what they go through. This book increases my determination to understand and deepens my conviction that this is a great way to appreciate people's feelings. There is no more eloquent or deeply insightful way to really comprehend a situation than when those who are affected speak for themselves in their own language, without representative or intermediate. This book embodies the real collaboration between the researcher and the researched, between the narrator and the listener without filter or intervening adjustments.

This book gives us the opportunity to think about how patients with mental illness see themselves and their surroundings. They spoke in their own way, in simplicity and depth, without affectation or pretence, about the concepts of safety, dignity and rights, all of which are considered the pillars of humanity. Even though I supposedly know a lot about the subject, the book, with its similes and meanings, increased my knowledge and widened my perceptions of the void that still exists. It reminds me that we always can and must do what we can as individuals to contribute to an improvement of the situation, either in the cultural, legal or infrastructural dimension.

Doctor Fathi Fleifel (Director of the Mental Health Center of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society)

When people with lived experience speak, we must listen.

This book, with its easy content and beautiful illustrations, teaches us much about living with a mental illness in a community that is afraid of 'craziness' and under occupation. The people with lived experience share with us the social challenges they suffer from, like stigma, marginalisation, loss of employment opportunities, difficulties of community integration, and weak resources, and they suggest possible solutions, which includes a

chance to exercise their full rights as citizens, the equal right to choose their way, and to seek solidarity from the community.

This participatory research is a vitally important contribution to our knowledge about the experiences of people who suffer from mental illness, and their relations with their families and the community, in a context of limited income, and exposure to political violence. And this provides evidence to policy makers, mental health professionals, and community leaders, so they can realise that treatment is not limited to medication and does not end between the walls of the hospital. The advocacy for the rights of people with mental illness and a guarantee that they can be integrated into the community are the main elements for individual and community wellbeing.

Doctor Samah Jabr (Director of Mental Health at the Palestinian Ministry of Health)