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The leadership decided to develop a new form of media work so it could show the world, and especially the Palestinian people and the Arab nation, that a new way of doing things was beginning to emerge. This was especially the case following the 1967 defeat... the Egyptian and Arab media at the time were offering a false model for doing things - telling us we are victorious when we were, in fact, being defeated. So the leadership of the Fateh movement decided we need to be a new media, using fresh voices and methods, new people, and different words. The leadership decided to select a number of students then receiving education in Egypt. The relationship between Fateh and the Egyptian Republic under the leadership of President Gamal Abdel Nasser was beginning to growing, and the leadership chose a number of students studying Arabic or English language. When I asked about it, as an English language student, they mentioned those who knew English should also have full command of Arabic. This was an opportunity to bring new voices, and a new consciousness, for committed youth.

A number of Fateh student cadres in Egypt, perhaps 20 or 25 cadres, were selected. An announcer's test was conducted and four were chosen by brother Fuad Yasin (Abu Sakher), the first director of the Palestinian Revolution Radio: those selected were Al-Tayeb Abdel Rahim (who is currently a member of the Fateh Central Committee), Abdel Shakour Totanji (who was a medical student at Cairo University and is now practicing as a famous doctor), and Yahya al-Omari (a young man from Irbid in the north of Jordan who was studying Arabic at al-Azhar University), and yours truly Khaled Musmar (I was studying English at al-Azhar University). All of us needed training on media work. In fact, we did not even know the basic alphabet, the ABCs of radio. The leadership chose brother Fuad Yasin because he had previously worked at Damascus Radio and Palestine Radio in Cairo, and possessed 10 years of experience.

After the announcers test, we were given training. They wanted us to be coached at 'Voice of the Arabs' radio. Ahmad Hamzah, the chief presenter at 'Voice of the Arabs', was the first person who taught us proper radio enunciation, with assistance and oversight from brother Fuad Yasin (Abu Sakher). This happened in total secrecy. No one in the Maspero Building, the headquarters of Egyptian Television and Radio, knew what was going on - even Ahmad Hamzah did not know which radio we were training for until a

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few hours before launching, when brother Fuad Yasin decided we must train on pronouncing the exact name of the station.

Of course, we could not yet say we were proper presenters, because the training period only lasted some hours: it took place over several days, and we were given a few hours per day. Nevertheless the leadership decided that we must launch the station. Ahmad Hamzah was baffled. He told us that it took a presenter no less than six months to come on air and announce: 'This is Cairo'. He thought that what we were doing was madness: "you want to launch a new station on air having only trained for a few hours!" But brother Fuad Yasin insisted, and we trained hard; even when we were walking up the stairs in the radio building we would practice saying the name of the station in a low voice. We would whisper, without anyone hearing us: "the Voice of Asifah, the Voice of Fateh, the Voice of the Palestinian Revolution". That was the name of the radio station. One of the training methods was to read something just as if he was an ordinary student in school... behind this media work was brother Fouad Yaseen, who would say: "not like this! Speak with style. Get the word to come out forcefully, let it emanate from the depths of your soul!". We didn't initially know how to speak in that manner!

Abu al-Houl (Hayel Abdel Hamid) was head of Fateh in Egypt at the time. As is well known, he later became a Central Committee member and the Director of Central Security in Fateh until he was martyred. He told me: "I want you Khaled to describe the battle of Karamah as if you were in Karamah. Describe the battle to the audience that is listening to you". Of course, Karamah was a great battle in which a large number of Fateh cadres were martyred, 90 or more Fateh martyrs fell in this battle... And he asked me to describe the atmosphere of the battle. I really started to feel that I was inside the battle, describing it to the audience from within, so the words strongly came out of my mouth. He said: "this is how we want words to be uttered in this radio station: instead of saying, 'the Voice of Asifah, the Voice of Fateh, the Voice of the Palestinian Revolution' in a calm way, you must say it with vigour."

So our voice performance became radically different, with the launch of the station took place on May 11, 1968. The leadership had wanted it to be launched around the Nakba anniversary in May, just a few days before then, and this happened through the hard work of the great brother Fuad Yasin (Abu Sakher), who had, as mentioned, taught us the ABCs of Palestinian media work. The work began, and through it, I met the leadership of Fateh for the first time. Just before the launch, a young man entered wearing a khaki suit, without any sign of him being a leader of Fateh, or a leader of the Palestinian revolution. He looked like an ordinary young man: "how are you

guys? how's the progress of the work? are you ready?". Of course I muttered to myself: "what is this? who is this guy who is interfering in our affairs, at a time when we were operating secretly, without anyone knowing about us?". He told us we should send a press release to MENA (Egypt's Middle East News Agency), announcing the specific time in which the radio station will go live on air. I asked: "who is this person interfering with us? what is his relationship to us?". Someone exclaimed: "don't you know him?". "No I don't", I answered. He replied: "this is brother Abu Jihad!". That was my first encounter with brother Abu Jihad (Khalil al-Wazir), the deputy commander of the Fateh movement and its Asifah forces. I noticed then, the modesty of our movement's leaders, and how they worked without pretensions.

That day, we left after recording the programme. Instead of being broadcast live, it had to be recorded so as to avoid technical problems - this was especially the case given the fact that we were all new trainees. And so we walked out into the street from the Sharifein Street building, which was the old headquarters of Egyptian radio before it moved to the Maspero building by the Nile.² We all walked together until we reached Tahrir Square: brother Abu Jihad, brother Abu al-Lutuf (Farouq Qaddoumi), Al-Tayeb Abdel Raheem, Fuad Yasin (Abu Sakher), and the young men of the radio station. From Tahreer, each took public transportation home, the evidence of our leadership's humbleness back then was the absence of the fanfare and convoys, that unfortunately appeared later.

We used to live in university city, in al-Azhar's *Madinat al-Bu'uth al-Islamiya* dorms. The youth of the Fateh movement and other young Palestinians gathered so they could listen to this new station that was about to launch. I noticed the station I was working in, drawn to the voices and the recordings that came on. For the first time, I heard the radio station and felt that we had done something really great: at the time, I could not imagine those voices coming out of the radio set were our voices. Later on, we felt that the station had a large audience, especially in Egypt. Action, especially military action, was the cornerstone of organisation, and so reports of military operations and military communiqués were read regularly, and this kind of news used to arrive on the spot. For the first time, there were new voices on air, and it would be announced: "we have now received the following breaking news..." This would give a strong boost to morale for the Arab street especially following the June 1967 defeat.

² Radio broadcasts from the enormous Maspero building commenced on the 21 July 1960, the eight anniversary of the 1952 revolution.

After the enormously uplifting Karameh victory, Fateh had a huge name on the Arab level and within the Palestinian street - everyone would listen when the radio presenter used to announce, "we have now received the following breaking news! a military communiqué issued by the General Command of al Asifah Forces: our striking commandos have..." Everyone would follow what the Voice of Asifah broadcast; the Arab street was gaining back its morale, especially following the Karameh battle and the growth of armed operations inside the occupied land. The masses of the occupied homeland began to demonstrate without fear of the military occupation, and the nightmare that had nested deep inside the chests of our Palestinian people. People were especially moved when the masses would go out, chanting they are steadfast in the face of the occupation, and resolute in confronting home demolitions.

The poet of the revolution, the late Al-Mzayen (Fata al-Thawra), brilliantly captured what was going on inside the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian fighters, in his revolutionary songs. Aside from the songs of Fata al-Thawra, there were lyrics by Mohammad Haseeb al-Qadi and a number of Palestinian poets in this period. Also notable were the poets of the occupied land whose work began to appear afterwards: the chant "I am steadfast", for example, was made into a song: "I am steadfast, steadfast, steadfast, even if they demolish my home, I am steadfast". Such songs really caused a stir in the Palestinian street, and the masses used to come out chanting them. Likewise, there appeared:

By the name of God
By the name of Fateh
By the name of the popular revolution
By your name O Palestine
We have announced it to the millions:
Asifah, Asifah, Asifah

All of these songs moved the Palestinian and Arab streets. The finishing touches of brother Fuad Yasin were crucial. He would sit with a poet, and ask for a song that would not last for more than a minute, half a minute, or two minutes at the most. He used to pressure each poet so that the words would come out in a concise and powerful manner. Poets like Abu al-Sadiq and Haseeb al-Qadi used to spend a lot of time on distilling each word so that the song would have double the impact, so that it would be filled with power. The radio at the time adopted the method of issuing slogans: short sentences without comments or news. There was no political editor and there was no political commentary. Instead, we had tiny paragraphs that would not last for

more than seconds. This had a strong impact on the Palestinian and Arab street, and it achieved much on the media level, not the least because it was a new way of doing things. In sum, there was a new style, delivered in a new voice that was not coming out from any other radio station...

In the beginning, the Voice of Asifah team was made up of four individuals led by brother Fuad Yasin. We were then joined by other brothers such as Barakat Zaloum, who had a powerful voice that really added to the work, and Yahya Rabah, who used to write pieces dedicated to the Occupied territories, and also wrote reflections, and revolutionary stories. Rabah really excelled in his: "Words for Palestine, the Homeland and the People". Rasmi Abu Ali joined us from Jordan, from the Jordanian radio station. He had a calm voice, unlike our powerful voices by which we would project the strength of al Asifah. Nabih al-Omar arrived, who also had a full and calm voice, and so did Arif Saleem, an excellent presenter known for his beautiful and rich voice. Murid al-Bargouthi also came: besides possessing a strong voice, he later became one of the poets of the Palestinian revolution and contributed some songs for the radio station. The late Hassan Youssef al-Qazaz came to us, one of those young men who truly loved the radio station, trained fast, and launched his voice powerfully.

The Radio station launched, as I mentioned, on 11 May, 1968 and it broadcast strongly from then on. However, things changed around the time of the Battle of September 1970. Just before September, President Gamal Abdel Nasser agreed to the Rogers Plan. We in Fateh felt at the time that the Plan was effectively a ceasefire between the Arabs and the Occupiers and we rejected it. Instructions arrived from our information leadership to that effect. The Fateh Commissioner for Information was at the time the martyr Kamal Adwan, who used to draw the media line for the radio station. He would put down a number of points, and that was the line we were required to follow in engaging with what was taking place around us. Since the Rogers Plan was opposed by our leadership in Fateh and by the other parties of the PLO, we had no choice but to announce our rejection of this plan and whoever accepted it - in this case of course, we were directly attacking the policy of Gamal Abdel Nasser at that time.

At the time, the Egyptian Minister of Information and Guidance was Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, the distinguished and renowned writer. He tried with us, saying it was not correct we were attacking Egyptian policy, when we were actually broadcasting from Egypt. He engaged with us in a highly civilised manner, but he could not explain to us why Egypt had accepted this plan. We later learnt that Egypt was trying to provide cover for

the rockets it was preparing in the context of the war of attrition. Of course, they did not inform us of the details and we continued to reject and resist the Rogers Plan. Heikal visited the station on several occasions (three times as far as I can remember) and sat with brother Fuad Yasin. At the end he said: "You are attacking Abdel Nasser. This is Abdel Nasser, brothers! And you are attacking him in his own country!" To be honest, the late Fuad Yasin said that we follow our leadership and cannot but express our opinion. That this was the position of the Palestinian revolution - and the radio broadcasts in the name of Fateh, and the Palestinian revolution, not in the name of Egypt. As a result, the brothers in Egypt shut down the radio station. However, they did so in a decent way. I mean, when I went to the station, the intelligence officers who were guarding the building said: "greetings to you Mr Khaled! The station will not be broadcasting today".

When Egypt closed the radio station in 1970 in the context of the Rogers Plan, we had to find an alternative. Earlier on, while we were still broadcasting, brother Khatab (Izzat Abu al-Rub) visited us. He was a militia leader in Jordan, and told us he had a local radio station in Amman and wanted to train on how to use it. By chance, brother Fouad Yassin had asked me to train brother Khatab. Brother Khatab was tall and broad shouldered, and as you can see, my stature is very different! He was also a very senior cadre, and I was required to train him. But he was very humble, and once he trained, he began to broadcast from his local station. After the closure of the station in Cairo, we had no option but to go to Amman, and take over the station that he was running. Before that, I went with brother Fuad Yasin to Beirut. The Fateh regional official there at the time was Hamdan Ashour, and he said that he had a station in one of the camps. Unfortunately though, it had a weak signal and was not useful for our purposes. So we headed to Amman. Of course, some brothers like Yahya Rabah, Hassan Youssef al-Qazzaz, Arif Saleem, and Barakat Zaloum went to Algeria and a few other Arab countries to start new radio stations from there.

In any case, brother Fuad Yasin and I arrived to Amman and we began to test the station, which was based on the Ashrafieh hill in Amman, and was a modest station with a limited transmitter operated by brother Attah Kheiri (who is now our ambassador to Jordan). He used to run the recordings and the songs. In addition to me and Fuad Yasin, we had a brother who was a trainee at Iraqi Radio, Issam Bseiso who came from Cairo, and Azmi Khamis who was a presenter based in Jordan, and had previously worked at the Voice of the PLO, in the Shuqairi days. Of course this is a different story: the PLO Radio and al Asifah Radio merged later, when Anwar al-Sadat reopened our station in Cairo in 1973.

In Amman, we also had Rasmi Abu Ali and the late Sakher (Abu Nizar), and we were led by brothers Fuad Yasin and Ribhi Awad. After preparing the station, brother Fuad Yasin left us to start a new station in Dera'a in Syria. Meanwhile, the station in Amman was launched, named Zamzam 105. Zamzam was the name of the wireless transmitter managed by Rafi' Khalidi, who was one of the wireless operators under brother Abu Jihad. We called the station Zamzam 105 and began broadcasting. The situation in Jordan escalated at the time, and there were constant clashes that had negative impacts on the Jordanian street and on the Palestinian revolution... the outcome was the September Battle of 1970. Of course the station continued broadcasting throughout that battle, and brother Abu Jihad used to visit us from time to time. He maintained a constant and special interest in radio work. Even when brothers Abu Iyad and Abu al-Lutuf were arrested which was announced through the Jordanian radio station, and even after Jabal al-Hussein fell, we continued broadcasting.

Broadcasting continued until the Arab League initiative was launched by Egypt and Sudan's Numeiri. President Jafar Numeiri was sent by the Arab League and Egypt to Jordan so as to terminate the battle and put an end to what was going on. We were at the time in disagreement with Abdel Nasser, and we felt that the leader that we loved, respected, and counted on so much, was silent about what was happening in Jordan. Afterwards, an urgent Arab League summit was called for, and Abu Ammar had to leave Amman. His departure took place via the Kuwaiti embassy. When al-Bahi al-Adgham then came to end the fighting and facilitate our exit from Jordan (a long story I don't want to go into), brother Rasmi Abu Ali announced on our airwaves, and in his calm voice, how Numeiri and the Arab committee carefully moved from the meeting place with brother Abu Ammar and the Palestinian leadership, so as to avoid the crossfire...

In any case, brother Abu Ammar was able to leave and reached Cairo... He signed an agreement with King Hussein that stipulated a ceasefire and resulted in our exit from Jordan - I leave the story of our exit for others to talk about. What matters to us here is the radio. It was agreed I would leave with the fighters going to Syria, to Dara'a, so we could establish the Palestinian Revolution Radio there, and Brother Ribhi Awad remained in Amman as director of the radio station. The station in Jordan was moved to the woods in Jerash and Ajloun, and it continued to broadcast until 1971 when all our forces were driven out of Jordan...

When I arrived in Dera'a in Syria, the station was not ready. President Nasser passed away around then. With his death even more sadness descended on an already melancholic Amman. The people in Jordan forgot all the calamities that had befallen them, and every home in Amman raised black flags, mourning the departure of Abdel Nasser. That was September 28, 1970.

When President Sadat took power, he agreed to reopen the station. However, this was on the condition that it would be unified. We had two stations: PLO Radio which was established during the time of the late Shuqairi, and the Voice of Asifah which was set up by Fateh. The two stations even shared the same building. We had the second floor and the Voice of Palestine, the Voice of the PLO had the third floor... At any rate, brother Fuad Yasin was appointed as the director of both stations and worked towards merging them. The names of the stations were changed. Previously, one was called "Voice of Asifah, the Voice of Fateh, the Voice of the Palestinian Revolution", while the other was called the "Voice of Palestine, the Voice of the Palestine Liberation Organisation." A new name was selected: "Voice of Palestine, the Voice of the Palestinian Revolution".

We were then confronted with another dilemma, which is style. The PLO Radio station was calm, while al Asifah Radio was strong and forceful...also, we did not reveal our names, whereas PLO Radio would announce the names of its presenters... all of us in the initial cohort of Voice of al Asifah used to feel we were giving to Palestine - the names of our programme writers or presenters were never announced. The only presenter who would be mentioned by name was Yahya Rabah, because he was reading something closer to poetry: when we used to broadcast poetry, we would say, this is a poem written by so and so, and we would announce the name of Yahya Rabah in that way.

Eventually, the two stations merged into one. We needed to deal with another problem, which were the songs. We had a song entitled: "By the name of God, by the name of Fateh". How could we broadcast that song when we were now speaking in the name of Palestine as a whole? This dampened our spirits, because the song came straight out of the heart of the battle: "By the name of God, by the name of Fateh, by the name of the Popular Revolution." How were we supposed to erase that? It was difficult, but we let it go. Then we had the song: "my homeland, my homeland, my homeland, Fateh is a revolution against the enemy bands". It was a great song. How were we supposed to change that? It was also difficult. Whenever we took out the word Fateh from a song, it became meaningless... It was a sad situation, but we had to work for Palestine rather than the party or organisation that we belonged to.

الثورة الفلسطينية

The Palestinian Revolution