



PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH



Samir Abdulhadi

When asked to picture a prominent entrepreneur, few would imagine someone as humble and grounded as Mr. Samir Abdulhadi. Yet this man has been a driving force behind one of the largest and most successful engineering and architectural firms in the Middle East.

Abdulhadi was born in Jerusalem in 1942 to a highly influential Palestinian family. He completed his high school education in Ramallah's Friends Boys School prior to obtaining a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the American University of Beirut. He quickly moved on to work at the Arab Engineering Company in Tripoli, Libya, becoming chief engineer within only a few years.

In 1972, he joined Khatib & Alami in Dubai as the area manager for the Arabian Gulf region. Under his

leadership, K&A became a prosperous company, having achieved a repertoire of impressive architectural feats. From its humble beginnings, K&A now boasts the creation of towers and skyscrapers across the skylines of the Gulf. In his time at the company, he climbed the ranks to eventually become the vice-chairman of the board of directors.

Abdulhadi was well respected within his company. His relationship with his employees was highly personal and familial. With his charismatic leadership style, he helped to harbor a sense of unity and family among every his team, earning him the camaraderie of his peers and the respect of his employees. When asked about the biggest challenge of his forty-year career, Abdulhadi replied, "Maintaining

our professionalism, and, at the same time, carrying out our operations with morality."

Over the course of his expansive career, he never lost sight of Palestine. After his expatriation, he always intended to return and support his community and countrymen. After a thriving career, Abdulhadi decided to retire from K&A. His contributions to society, however, are far from complete. Upon retirement, he claimed, "I want to devote myself to national, humanitarian, and charitable activities."

Abdulhadi now plays a pivotal role in the Welfare Association, an organization that works towards the sustainable development of Palestine and the maintenance of its heritage and cultural identity. He is now vice-chairman of the board of trustees and chairman of the resource development committee. The Welfare Association has undertaken many notable projects, including the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza and community development projects across the country. He is also a member of the board of directors of IbdAA Microfinance Bank in Palestine, which provides loans to aspiring small business owners, and gives other opportunities for success to Palestinians.

Abdulhadi has similarly made an active effort to improve educational facilities across Palestine. He has contributed greatly to Birzeit University, helping its expansion and the development of its operations. Likewise, he has provided significant assistance to Nablus' An-Najah University, and established three primary schools in the city, helping more of the city's youth gain an education. Organizations such as Arab Student Aid International and the Palestine International Research Institute have also benefitted greatly from his involvement. In commenting on his national efforts, Abdulhadi explains, "Educated and cultured youth are our real hope for improving and developing Palestine." It is no wonder then that Abdulhadi is most proud of his accomplishments after retirement. His philanthropic ventures have benefitted communities across the country, and brought Palestine's educational facilities one step closer to becoming world-class institutions.

The main reason Mr. Abdulhadi agreed to be interviewed by *This Week in Palestine* is that he hopes that others will follow in his footsteps, and that those who have achieved success abroad will return to Palestine and aid in its cultural and economic development.

Article written by Elias Rizek



Mr. Abdulhadi with Welfare Association leadership during signing ceremony with The Saudi Fund for Development. Photo courtesy of Welfare Association.