



## PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH

### Nawal al-Khatib

#### Proud and Happy to be a Palestinian Policewoman



Lieutenant Nawal Faraj al-Khatib is the only female member of the tourism police in Bethlehem. She is part of a team of 27 officers and one of the 5 officers who work inside and around the Church of the Nativity during its opening hours.

Lieutenant Nawal's responsibilities at the church include giving assistance to tourists, visitors, and pilgrims. In addition, she makes sure that everyone abides by the rules and regulations of the Status Quo, the laws that regulate the responsibilities and rights regarding the use of the church by the various denominations and the smooth running of services. (Editor's note: This role is significant since the church is shared among three denominations, and the allocation of such rights and duties has

in the past led to heated disputes among the clergy.) She is also responsible for keeping statistics on the visitors to the church, noting their numbers and countries of origin. On a typical day, she works mainly in and around the Church of the Nativity and ensures the visitors' well-being. She thoroughly enjoys serving as a tour guide for official visitors and groups. People generally approach her when they need to find a member of their group who is missing, or if they have lost an item of their belongings. She and her colleagues help with the search, and in most cases they are successful.

Lieutenant Nawal expresses great satisfaction and pride in being able to care for the safety and security of this very special church, one of



Christianity's most holy places. She enjoys meeting the many people that come from all over the world in order to visit. She clearly enjoys her work and is passionate about all aspects of her responsibilities and duties.

In addition to courses that covered the required rules, laws, and procedures relating to the Status Quo, Lieutenant Nawal's training as a tourism officer included a number of other courses as well, such as classes in the art of communication, in etiquette and protocol, as well as foreign language classes. These classes generally last from one to six months and may take place locally or abroad. This training is essential, since dealing with people from so many countries can be a challenge, especially due to the language barrier. But Nawal assures us that, most of the time, the officers find a way to communicate and to help with whatever is needed.

Lieutenant Nawal has many stories to tell about her daily experiences, but there is one that she remembers often and with great pleasure. Once, an elderly lady from Russia had lost her group. Being in an unfamiliar

environment and completely lost and confused, she sought out Nawal, most likely since she felt safer dealing with a woman. The lady was so upset, she was crying. It took a bit of investigation, but finally Nawal and her team found out that the Russian group had not noticed that the lady was missing and had gone to visit the Shepherds' Field in Beit Sahour. Nawal took her there in a police car. When they arrived, the entire group started to cheer and clap. The old lady was so overjoyed, she began to cry again. The whole situation was heart-warming, and Nawal will always remember her feeling of pride and joy in having been able to help.

*TWIP interviewed Lieutenant Nawal by telephone on January 21.*

