CONSISTENT QUALITY, EXPANDED REACH:
AL-SHABAKA IN 2015 AND BEYOND
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Executive Director</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Building Al-Shabaka</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thematic Focus in 2015: Root Causes of Economic and Political Disarray</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Al-Shabaka’s Growing Reach</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. An Intellectual Hub</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Financial Report and List of Donors</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. List of Al-Shabaka Advisors and Members</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2015 marked a watershed for Al-Shabaka: A coming of age five years after our Palestinian think tank without borders was launched in 2010 by an all-volunteer team. Thanks to the intellectual contributions of the Al-Shabaka network, we gained a reputation for quality policy analysis. This was reinforced in 2015 by establishing a policy fellow program that is being expanded in 2016. Our network of policy analysts grew by nearly 15% bringing the number of members to 120 by year-end and 150 by June 2016.

In 2015 we maintained our rank in the Best Think Tank Network category of the Global Go To Think Tank Index, for the third year running. And, in a reflection of the confidence being placed in us, our budget increased from just over $120,000 in 2014 to $190,000 in 2015.

We have also maintained our commitment to publishing our analysis in both English and Arabic and our content is now being picked up and translated into French, Italian, and Spanish, among other languages. In addition, we started a program to place op-eds in the Arabic-language media that quickly proved its success. We also redesigned our website in April 2015 - exactly five years after Al-Shabaka was launched – providing easier navigation and a more user-friendly experience.

None of this calls for complacency. The purpose for which this organization was founded is more urgent than ever. The tragic conflicts and loss of life
throughout the Arab region and the intra-Palestinian divides have made the promotion of Palestinian rights that much harder. The new generation of Palestinians living under Israel’s occupation, under siege, and in exile faces a bleak future dominated by Israel’s relentless drive to colonize Palestinian land and empty it of Palestinians.

Israel has redoubled its attacks against the Palestinian quest for freedom, justice, and equality, both on the ground and in targeting the discourse shift in favor of Palestinian rights. And there is no question that a shift is taking place, driven by the success of a rapidly growing global civil society movement inspired in large part by the Palestinian-led boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) call to action, as well as by organizations like ours.

At Al-Shabaka, we seek to help shape the discourse by ensuring that Palestinian policy voices reach Palestinian, Arab, and Western policy communities as well as active and engaged Palestinians and other citizens. We provide a forum in which to propose and debate alternative strategies to the challenges in the political and economic spheres as well as in refugee affairs and civil society. The analysis we produced this year has been published in media outlets as diverse as The New York Times, Assafir, Al-Akhbar, Le Monde Diplomatique, Haaretz, Maan News, The Gulf News, Vice, and Salon and cited in research papers and studies.

We could not have done this work without the valued support of Al-Shabaka’s partners and donors and the engagement of our policy network. The Board joins me in thanking all those who placed their confidence in the organization and have enabled us to begin to fulfill its potential.

Nadia Hijab
Executive Director
1. BUILDING AL-SHABAKA

Al-Shabaka was launched on April 10, 2010, bringing together its first 60 policy advisors, almost all Palestinian, half from Palestine and the Arab world, and the rest based in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. The founding of Al-Shabaka was also made possible due to the generosity of Abdel Mohsin Al-Qattan, who extended a founding grant and continued to support the organization (see Section 5 for the full list of 2015 donors).

Al-Shabaka was registered in California in 2009 as Middle East Policy Network doing business as Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network. It was granted 501(c)(3) by the US Internal Revenue Service in 2013. The 501(c) (3) status enables US citizens to earn tax relief on contributions, thus encouraging donations to the organization.

Our volunteer Board is currently comprised of Sam Bahour (2012-present), Nadia Hijab (co-founder), Osamah Khalil (co-founder), and Mary Nazzal-Batayneh (2014-present).
Beginning in 2015, Al-Shabaka transitioned from relying on volunteer and part-time staff and by June 2016 had two full-time and four part-time staff members and three contract employees.

2. THEMATIC FOCUS IN 2015: ROOT CAUSES OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DISARRAY

Today, Al-Shabaka’s intellectual contribution is an impressive body of solid analysis written by the members of the network (see Section 6 for a list of publications from 2010 to 2015.) Much of this analysis has stood the test of time, and is republished as events warrant.

Al-Shabaka’s analysis has sought to challenge the conventional wisdom in policy discourse, and to craft evidence-based policy recommendations. For example, our economic analysis has tackled the obfuscation of the aid industry and focuses on root causes for the Palestinians’ dire economic conditions. Examples from 2015 include policy briefs on the way in which a failed state has been created in Palestine because of the application of “technical solutions” shorn of political analysis as well as the self-enforcing system of corruption.

In 2015 Al-Shabaka analysts also examined what could be done to spur economic development even during existing conditions of occupation and colonization by addressing the demand for women’s labor not just the supply side. In addition, policy analysis addressed the ways in which the Israeli military occupation exploits Palestinian resources, including its control of 3G and 4G services, as well as the impact of the illegal
settlements on the Palestinian economy, rebutting claims that labeling settlement goods would harm Palestinian workers.

Al-Shabaka’s political and refugee sections have fostered debates amongst its members, asking tough questions such as whether political parties have any role in the youth revolt that erupted in late 2015 and examining the potential and reach of the Joint List established by largely Palestinian parties in Israel. A debate with many opposing views was sparked by the policy brief advocating a bold proposal for Palestine to give its refugees citizenship. The specific legal discrimination against Palestinian refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict was also the subject of thorough analysis.

The network has also provided the most comprehensive assessment of Palestinian options at the International Criminal Court on the day Palestine’s membership went into effect. Other key issues investigated included the need for Hamas to definitely address its Charter and not just distance itself; the use of a “religious war” discourse to cloak Israel’s colonization of East Jerusalem; and the shaky status of the Palestine state project.

3. AL-SHABAKA’S GROWING REACH

In North America and Europe, Al-Shabaka’s reach has been strong from the start and continues to grow. Al-Shabaka analysts have also had success in placing op-eds in the media, with key placements in 2015 including The New York Times, The Nation, The Hill, Le Monde Diplomatique (English
The Huffington Post, and Open Democracy as well as interviews in media outlets such as Vice and Al-Jazeera.

The organization’s reach within the Arab world is growing as Al-Shabaka becomes more widely known, and our policy analysis is now being featured in the Arabic-language media. In 2015, Al-Shabaka policy analysts had op-eds in Al-Quds, Al-Ghad, Al-Akhbar, Assafir, Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed, Al-Hayat, and Huffington Post Arabic. It plans to grow the Arabic reach by expanding its media outreach program.

Al-Shabaka’s influence continues to grow. Perhaps one of the most important indicators is its consistent ranking, for three years running, in the “Best Think Tank Network” category of the Global Go To Think Tank Index which, in 2015, was produced through the efforts of 4,750 faculty, journalists, policymakers, and think tank scholars as well as 900 functional area and regional specialists. Al-Shabaka maintained its ranking at 33rd place even though the number of think tanks in the Best Think Tank Network surveyed increased by 24% to 79. As such, it was ahead of such think tanks as the International Relations and Security Network (Switzerland), the Royal Institute for International Affairs (UK), and IPEA (Brazil) and just six spots after the US Council on Foreign Relations and two spots after the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Another sign of recognition is that Al-Shabaka’s policy analysis is considered valuable enough to be translated into other languages by organizations, using their own resources. Agence Media Palestine is republishing many policy pieces in French, as are other French-language outlets on occasion (l’info alternative, and Info Palestine.) Nena News is republishing Al-Shabaka pieces in Italian; Blog Sobre Palestina republished an Al-Shabaka piece in Spanish; and Local Call has republished one of our pieces in Hebrew.
Al-Shabaka staff and analysts are also called on to speak at major forums. Executive Director Nadia Hijab spoke at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and the Jewish Voice for Peace bi-annual conference, among other forums addressed in 2015. Program Director Alaa Tartir travelled to Peru as a panelist at the annual conference of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, where he challenged the notion that fragility could be addressed outside of politics sparking a response by the Bank’s Palestine Country Director.

In addition, Al-Shabaka also posted good social media growth in 2015. The number of its Facebook Fans increased by 7% to over 15,000 in 2015 while the number of Twitter Followers increased by some 14% to nearly 5,000 with 31% in the US and 8% in Palestine.

4. AN INTELLECTUAL HUB

By pulling in members from all over the world, Al-Shabaka is helping to transform the Palestinian dispersal and exile into a knowledge base that can be tapped in support of Palestinian human rights. It is growing slowly but steadily in order to ensure member engagement and a quality output. Its capacity enables it to bring in about 30 members a year, working with the Board and its Membership Committee.

Since 2010, Al-Shabaka has attracted an ever-larger number of younger thinkers and writers to join the established scholars who dominated the network at the start. Al-Shabaka has also successfully improved its gender balance to reach nearly 50-50, a major goal.
Most importantly, Al-Shabaka has tapped a rich intellectual capacity, positioning it to grow its scope for analysis in the next five years. The network brings expertise in political economy and economic development, politics, human rights and international law, history, education, information technology, gender, and political activism, among other areas. These strengths are reflected in the quality of analysis in Al-Shabaka’s policy briefs, commentaries and roundtables, as well as in the op-eds placed in English- and Arabic-language media.

GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF AL-SHABAKA NETWORK

- THE UNITED STATES
- WEST BANK AND GAZA
- PALESTINIAN CITIZENS OF ISRAEL
- THE UNITED KINGDOM
- LEBANON
- JORDAN
- SWITZERLAND
- FRANCE
- CANADA
- OTHER COUNTRIES
To strengthen its intellectual contribution, Al-Shabaka launched a policy fellow program in 2015, bringing in two policy fellows in Palestine (West Bank including East Jerusalem) each serving for part of the year, with plans for policy fellows in Gaza and in the US in 2016. The program proved its value in 2015, with the Palestine policy fellows producing or co-producing three very solid pieces of analysis on corruption, 3G access, and settlements that were widely disseminated. They were also presented at roundtables in Ramallah co-organized with our partners the Heinrich Boell Stiftung.
5. FINANCIAL REPORT AND LIST OF DONORS

From its all-volunteer base, Al-Shabaka nearly quadrupled its budget to almost $190,000 in 2015. This demonstrates the trust placed in an organization that has consistently produced quality results. The 2016 plan envisages a budget of $295,000, an ambitious increase of almost 60%.

Al-Shabaka takes this opportunity to thank all of its generous donors and partners. Every contribution made has helped to establish Al-Shabaka on a firm foundation. In 2016, Al-Shabaka will maintain and expand its capacity for policy analysis by expanding its staff and increasing the size of the network.

Throughout, the fundamental goal remains providing a forum in which to debate alternative policies and strategies and ensuring that Palestinian policy voices reach Palestinian, Arab, and Western policy communities as well as active and engaged citizens so as to contribute to the Palestinian quest for freedom, justice and equality.
MAJOR DONORS

Abdel Mohsin Al-Qattan
John and Henrietta Goelet

Zina Jardaneh
Nabil Qaddumi

Tayseer Barakat
Fred Hadeed

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Mayssun Succarie
Daniel Strum
Susan Wood
Mona Younis

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6. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS
2010 - 2015

This list covers analysis published between April 2010 and December 2015. To consult these materials as well as the most recent publications, visit al-shabaka.org. All materials are available in English & Arabic.

CIVIL SOCIETY


6. The Customs Union and Israel’s No-State Solution, Amal Ahmad, November 2014.


10. The Palestinian Capitalists that Have Gone Too Far, Tariq Dana. Policy Brief, January 2014


NEGOTIATIONS
1. Palestinian Dead End Highlights the Right of Return, Randa Farah. Commentary, May 2014.

POLITICS
5. EU Alarmed by Israel, Frustrated by Palestine, Nadia Hijab, Commentary, June 2015.


47. Declaring an Independent Bantustan, Haidar Eid. Commentary, April 2011.


REFUGEE ISSUES


5. From Our Facebook Balconies, the Dark Heart of Yarmuk, Ahmad Diab. Commentary, June 2014.
7. LIST OF AL-SHABAKA ADVISORS AND MEMBERS

Samer Abdelnour (Co-founder and Board Member, 2009 – 2016)
Ayman Abdul Majeed
Rabab Abdulhadi
Wassim Abdullah
Hazem Abu Helal
Mai Abu Moghli
Mjriam Abu Samra
Mohammad Abu Zaine
Refqa Abu-Remaileh
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Najwa Al-Qattan
Samer Alatout
Maureen Ali
Nijmeh Ali
Zarefa Ali
Ahmad Amara
Sabrien Amrov
Nur Arafah
Naseer Aruri (Passed away in 2015)
Yara Asi
Valentina Azarova
Fatht Azzam
Tareq Baconi
Cecilia Baeza
Sam Bahour (Board Member, 2012 – present)
Rana Barakat
Ahmad Barclay
Omar Barghouti
Nadia Barhoum
Ayah Bashir
Samar Batrawi
Hatem Bazian
Tamara Ben-Halim
Nael Bitarie
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Irene Calis
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Haidar Eid
Oroub El-Abed
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Abaher El-Sakka
Noura Erakat
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Basem Ezbidi
Hani Faris
Randa Farrah
Basil Farraj
Leila Farsakh
As’ad Ghanem
Toufic Haddad
Yassmine Hamayel
Awad Hamdan
Fajr Harb

Zaha Hassan
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Jamil Hilal
Khalil Hindi
Zaina Jallad
Hazem Jamjoum
Muhammad Jaradat
Ingrid Jaradat-Gassner
Mousa Jiryis
Nour Joudah
Safa Joudeh
Jamal Juma’a
Andrew Kadi
Salma Karmi-Ayyoub
Victor Kashkoush (Board Member 2010 – 2012; passed away in 2012)
Anis Kassim
Victor Kattan
Remi Kenazi
Aziza Khalidi
Ismail Khalidi
Rashid Khalidi
Asem Khalil
Osamah Khalil (Co-founder and Board Member, 2009 – present)
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Ameer Makhoul
Camille Mansour
Hani Masri
Mazen Masri
Dina Matar
Faysal Mikdadi
Salwa Mikdadi
Raya Naamneh
Razi Nabulse
Nadim Nashif
Basel Natsheh
Mary Nazzal-Batayneh (Board Member, 2014 – present)
Munir Nuseibah
Dina Omar
Dena Qaddumi
Mezna Qato
Fadi Quran
Loubna Qutami
Mouin Rabbani
Kareem Rabie
Fadia Rafeedie Khoury
Oraib Rantawi
Nadim Rouhana
Samah Sabawi
Tareq Sadeq
Grace Said (Co-founder, Board Member 2009 – 2014)
Julia Salameh
Jamil Salem
Zac Sammour
Jacqueline Sansour/Shoen
Maxim Sansour
May Seikaly
Sherene Seikaly
Omar Shaban
Khalil Shaheen
Aimee Shalan
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Halla Shoaibi
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