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A Jerusalem website let's the capital's diverse sectors get a look at each other's point of view

JERUSALEM----Jerusalem, aside from being Israel's capital, is also its largest city. At nearly 900,000, its population is double that of Tel Aviv, Israel's second largest city. Jerusalem is not just Israel's most populated city, it is by far its most complex. With a population consisting of roughly 22 percent ultra-Orthodox Jews, 40% Secular and modern-Orthodox Jews, and 38% Palestinians, and each one of those groups confined to their own neighborhoods, one could easily mistake Jerusalem for three completely separate entities, each with its own language, culture, values, and of course – media.

Being so different from one another, the different populations in Jerusalem rarely see eye to eye with each other on many issues, with different events and matters holding very different meanings and significance for each sector. For instance, the recent protests by certain sects in Jerusalem's Ultra-Orthodox community against military conscription has been portrayed in Ultra-Orthodox media as a noble protest, while the non Ultra-Orthodox community viewed the protests as a nuisance, and the Palestinians all but ignored the matter, which is a complete non-issue for them. Another example of the separate points of view can be seen in the portrayal of the issue of prayer at the Temple Mount. While religious-Zionist groups lobby for the rights of Jews to pray at their holy site, the city's Muslim community considers Jewish ascension to the mount an act of aggression and a threat; the ultra-Orthodox community for its part views praying on the Mount as a violation of halachic laws.

It's been said that there are two sides to every story, in Jerusalem there are at least three.

Enter 0202, an internet platform aimed at providing readers with the different points of view presented in Jerusalem's diverse media outlets.

Following the 2014 murders of Jewish teens Gilad Shaer, Eyal Yifrah and Naftali Frenkel in Gush Etzion, and the subsequent murder of Arab teen Muhammad Abu Khdeir in Jerusalem, Michal Shiloh, a peace activist and later the founder of 0202 would go down to Zion Square and engage in 'dialogue circles' with protesters from Lehava, a right-wing group opposed to Jewish assimilation and other groups congregating and expressing anti-Palestinian sentiments. Shiloh would try and convey what the feelings were on the eastern side of city, hoping to grant her counterparts with some insight and understanding. At a certain point, she felt like she had become a sort of "spokesperson" for Palestinians and east Jerusalem, and came up with the idea of creating a platform through which the Hebrew speaking population in Jerusalem could get an unfiltered view of the east Jerusalem narrative as it was presented in Arabic-speaking media outlets.

Thus, 0202 – A View From East Jerusalem, was born in early 2015. It first started out as a Facebook page providing readers with translations of headlines from east Jerusalem's various Palestinian media outlets, as well as context and translations of select comments on

Palestinian social media, aimed at painting a clearer picture of the public sentiments on the city's eastern side.

Some time later, a page with translations from Arabic to English was founded as well.

Later on, the page expanded to include 0202 – A View From ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem, and one focused on translating Hebrew media from west Jerusalem into Arabic is currently in the works.

The largest contrasts between the narratives can naturally be seen surrounding issues regarding the conflict, with some Palestinian outlets referring to attackers as martyrs and to Israeli security forces as 'occupation forces'.

"There's a lot of semantics involved in what we do: It's not just what you say, it's how you say it," Shira Laurence, Director of 0202 told Tazpit Press Service (TPS), "It's not about taking a specific political position, but more about granting people access to the points of view on the other side of the city, and representing them as accurately as possible."

Besides representing different and often conflicting points of view, 0202 has also managed to instigate some real change by shedding light on issues that are often ignored by the general public and authorities. A very present example of this is trash and pollution.

"Trash collection is a huge issue in east Jerusalem, for many reasons,' said Laurence, "On the one hand you have the neglect of many neighborhoods by the municipality, but you also can't ignore the fact that sometimes when a garbage truck does enter certain neighborhoods, kids would throw rocks at it."

In response to this difficult situation, Mini-Active, a group of about 1,000 Palestinian women from east Jerusalem's neighborhoods started a social media campaign where they would take photos of the trash heaps in the streets, and post them on Facebook in hopes to get the municipality to come clear it up. 0202 decided to start translating some of the group's posts regarding the issue, which got the attention of city council member Ofer Berkovitch, the head of the Hitorerut (Awakening) faction and resulted in the trash being picked up the same day. "The other side of that story," says Laurence, "was the women from Mini-Active urging the neighborhood's youth not to attack the garbage trucks, because they are the ones being harmed by it."

Laurence also pointed out that some issues which appear to only affect the east side of the city actually affect its entirety. "The trash story made City Hall realize that they need a much larger sanitation budget, and when the sanitation workers went on strike last year, causing the entire city to look like a huge garbage dump, it was surrounding that issue."

Small victories such as those make Laurence believe that 0202 can serve as a real catalyst for grassroots change. "It's not about moving mountains or solving the conflict, it's about opening people's minds and making things just a little bit better for everyone."