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# Kultur 3

By Marcus Rubin

## Palestinian Reality Show: The President

'More than 1,200 young Palestinians compete to be Palestine's new leader in a new television show.

The aim is to create interest in politics among the young, says the woman behind the show.

It is not easy being Palestinian President.

There are problems with Israel, settlers, the Islamist Hamas movement in Gaza and in general, in creating the basis for a viable state.

But precisely because the challenges are so large and the political process so locked, a Palestinian television station has now launched a new reality-show in where young Palestinian's compete to be named the country's new 'youth president'.

The show called 'President', was launched earlier this month, and according to one of the inventors, Suheir Rasul, the interest has been overwhelming. More than 1,200 young Palestinians from both the West Bank, Gaza and inside Israel have signed up as partners, says Rasul, who is the leader of the international NGO "Search for Common Ground" in Palestine which has cooperated with the Palestinian broadcaster Ma'an in developing the format.

Search for Common Ground focuses on non-violent conflict resolution, and it is just what Rasul hopes that the new reality show can help to promote in Palestine.

"Our goal is to create a platform for peaceful, constructive changes among the young Palestinian generations, in order to prepare a democratic future," said Rasul.

"Judging by the huge participation and interest in the community for the program it is clear that the Palestinian Youth are full of energy and ready for positive changes, she says, and hopes the show can help to boost the political process.

"It is high time that the Palestinians get an

opportunity to choose their leaders again, so we very much hope that the program help put pressure on the authorities to announce an election," she says, referring to the fact that there has not been held national election in Palestine since 2006. "The idea is to let new Palestinian generations voices be heard," says Rasul.

During the program's ten episodes, participants, all of whom are between 25 and 35 years old, compete in a wide range of areas.

"Participants will, during the program, be tested on speeches, campaigning, and ability to win votes," says Suheir Rasul. She explains that the tasks are becoming more demanding and comprehensive underway.

In the second-to-last stage,, the four finalists will be sent out of the country, to act as Ambassadors of Palestine in Europe and the Middle East. They will try to create international support for a Palestinian state. The two finalists will meet in a live television debate, and then viewers will select the final winner through SMS-voting.

The winner will be selected at the end of June. What the prize consists off is not known. But it might become a new political career set on tracks.

There is no official record of audience in Palestine, but according to Rasul and Ma'an and her organization, the number of SMSès and email's will be used to assess the success of the program.

#### **Need for renewal**

Filming of the latest show, took place in Ramallah on Thursday, just as U.S. President Barack Obama visited the city.

After two preliminary rounds, the number of participants now is down to about 50, and among the lucky ones who are still in race, is the 20-year old student Wa'ad Farajeh, from Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. He hopes that the show will make a real change in real life.

"The young people in Palestine are fed up with the old leaders, so I hope that this program will give a young person a chance to get into the political system and give it a breath of fresh air," he says and promises even to raise the bar, if he is elected as 'President'. "If I am elected, I will try to focus on my people's needs and wishes - and treat everyone fairly," he says, smiling.

Also 29-year-old Hamada Jaber from Rafat is optimistic, following today's recordings. "It was my third recording, and I think it went well," said Jaber, who works as administrator of a Palestinian study center. And like her competitor, Wa'ad Farajeh, she thinks that the program is a fantastic idea. "It is a wonderful program - because it gives youth in Palestine a chance to be taken seriously as political thinkers," she says.

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