



NO2TA: TAKING BACK THE NARRATIVE, BRINGING IN THE CHANGE

No2ta is a women-led regional media collective based in Lebanon. Through innovative feminist production, No2ta aims to shift the online narrative in support of women, girls and marginalized communities in the Arabic-speaking region. No2ta's ultimate objective is to drive positive socio-cultural change and dismantle the patriarchal status quo. Supported by Doria Feminist Fund among other donors, No2ta seeks to challenge gender stereotypes and influence attitudes, behaviours, and societal norms.

Taking back the narrative is a source of power and truth. Telling our stories, the way we want, is a mighty tool to reclaim agency, break the patriarchal muzzle, and advocate for feminist change and justice. Standing firm in this belief, Alia Awada, the co-founder of No2ta Feminist Lab, has always been adamant about speaking truth to power. "I studied journalism because I have always been passionate about telling stories, the stories of my community and other communities around me, in Lebanon and elsewhere", Alia says.

Reclaiming rights and bringing about change starts by breaking the silence and declaring one's existence. "We are here. Full stop", No2ta's bio line reads on Instagram, projecting an assertive presence. "I want to tell stories of strength, courage and power. I have dedicated the past 16 years to producing feminist knowledge of high-quality, but most importantly, innovative and creative knowledge", Alia says enthusiastically.

For Alia, feminist knowledge production is not only about shifting attitudes and opinions, but also changing policies and laws that are oppressive and discriminatory against particular segments of society. "This is how No2ta started in the first place. A group of women, including me, decided to launch a new experiment in feminist production that aims at controlling the digital narrative in favour of women, girls and marginalized communities. Changing the narrative also shifts attitudes and policies", Alia explains.



In September 2023, No2ta organized a regional feminist forum for content creation in Beirut, Lebanon (SHIF_s). Among the invited content creators from across the region, was Bissan Owda, the now famous Palestinian filmmaker and storyteller based in Gaza strip. A few weeks after attending SHIF_s conference, the events of October 7 occurred, and Israel launched its most brutal war on Gaza. “We started working with Bissan to cover the gendered impact of the war using a feminist lens”, Alia says. This powerful collaboration between No2ta and Bissan Owda can be followed on both their pages on Instagram, where diverse issues are covered. From lack of access to reproductive health services amidst the systematic destruction of Gaza’s hospitals, to the planned emptying of the devastated strip, and the massacring of women, men and children at al-Shifa hospital in Gaza city, the list goes on.

When we gather in closed conference rooms, it can be difficult to imagine our impact in the real world out there. But when we go out, visit the field and watch closely, it becomes impossible to ignore the change we have been creating. Enthusiastically, Alia tells us how the SHIF_s conference brought together content creators from all over the Arabic-speaking region, who now organically collaborate to push the Palestinian narrative against the Israeli war machine. “Across different platforms and social media channels, these content creators have come together and joined forces to put forward a critical feminist narrative about what’s happening in Gaza”, Alia says, “that’s when we realize how meaningful our work is”.

Keen to make a real impact, No2ta meticulously runs baseline/endline surveys and performs online listening to better understand its audience engagement and interaction. “At first, we were met with a lot of attacks whenever we posted about “taboo” topics... but with time, we managed to reach our audience through innovative and creative ways that stir discussion instead of confrontation”, Alia says. “When we check the comment section now and compare it with before, we see a huge shift in opinions and expressions”, she explains. Feminist content is indeed a mighty tool that can dismantle the master's house.

