

MAHMOUD SALIM RABBANI



“By success I mean ensuring that all parties are treated equitably, and that none are left with the feeling that peace has been achieved at their expense. For such a peace is, in the end, no peace at all and only the spark for a further conflict.”

– MAHMOUD S. RABBANI, NOVEMBER 17,
1993

Mahmoud Salim Rabbani was a Palestinian refugee who was offered a scholarship to study in the Netherlands. Eventually, he felt at home in both parts of the world and became a prominent figure in Euro-Arab dialogue.

Founder, Lutfia
Rabbani
Foundation

(Haifa, 2 May 1934 –
Wassenaar, 30 May 2002)

Motivated by the belief that Arabs and Europeans still have much to learn from each other and that once they have come to a genuine understanding a much broader and stronger cooperation can emerge, Mahmoud Rabbani established the Foundation in 1979.

CELEBRATING MAHMOUD RABBANI

1934

Mahmoud Salim Rabbani is born in Haifa, Palestine. The eldest of four children, he was orphaned at a young age and subsequently, along with most of his compatriots, forced to leave his native Palestine in 1948.



Young Mahmoud Rabbani

1956

After completing his secondary education in Lebanon and Syria, he left for the Netherlands, where he had received a scholarship to study at the Technical University of Delft. In 1958 he however discontinued his studies, and left Delft for The Hague to establish the Middle East Bureau for the Promotion of Economic Relations (MEPER Export, later merged into RTC - Rabbani Trading and Consulting BV), a private company which mediated the export of agricultural and other products from the Netherlands to the Arab states of the Middle East and North Africa.



*Mahmoud as a student,
Delft University*

1962

In recognition of his services to the Algerian independence movement, whose camps along the Algerian-Tunisian border he helped provision with foodstuffs (thus circumventing a strict French boycott), he was a guest of honour at Algeria's independence celebrations in 1962.

1966

Mahmoud Rabbani was appointed Honorary Consul of the State of Kuwait to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, declining an offer to become ambassador so he could continue to pursue his private interests. With his intimate knowledge of the Netherlands, easy command of the Dutch language, and personal commitment to the rights of the Palestinian and Arab peoples, he quickly became the leading spokesperson for the Palestinian and Arab points of view in what would become his homeland in exile.



Mahmoud Rabbani with members of Farce Majeur, a comedy group who wrote a carnival song about the oil crisis

1973

Mahmoud played a key role during the Arab oil boycott of the Netherlands. A constant presence in the Dutch media and lecture circuit, he gained widespread appreciation for his ability to both represent the Arab point of view and foster mutual understanding between the Netherlands and the Arab world. A leading player in the expanding commercial contacts between the Netherlands and the Arab world as well, he was commonly referred to as the "bridge builder" in recognition of his role in promoting improved Dutch-Arab relations.



Mahmoud as guest of Paul Witteman and Astrid Joosten

1979

Mahmoud Rabbani established the Lutfia Rabbani Foundation, dedicated to fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between Europe and the Arab world through dialogue and cultural and educational exchanges. The Foundation was named in honour of his late mother in recognition of her sacrifices in providing for the upbringing and education of her children despite being confronted by adverse circumstances.

1985

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1989

Mahmoud Rabbani was knighted by the Dutch Queen in 1985 as an 'Officier in de Orde van Oranje – Nassau' in recognition of his work as bridge builder. In that same year, he accepted an appointment by the late King Hussain of Jordan to serve as the Hashemite Kingdom's Honorary Consul-General to the Netherlands, which he remained until 1989.



Lutfia Rabbani surrounded by her four children

1990s

Mahmoud continues developing RTC Rabbani Trading and Consulting, a commercial company which initiates and/or implements numerous projects in the field of Euro-Arab trade and commerce.

1991

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2002

Throughout his career, Mahmoud Rabbani sought to promote the values of dialogue, cooperation, and exchange between cultures and countries as a constructive alternative to conflict and dispossession. Subsequently, from 1991-1996, he served as a member of the PLO's Palestine National Council. He passed away in the Netherlands on 30 May 2002 at the age of 68.

