

Cultural organizations condemn the Israeli occupation's attack on 'Yabous', the 'Edward Said National Conservatory of Music' and 'Shafaq' in Jerusalem

We, the undersigned, strongly condemn the attack by Israeli occupation forces on Yabous Cultural Center, the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM), and Jerusalem Arts Network-Shafaq, in Jerusalem on Wednesday July 22, 2020.

Israeli police and intelligence agents raided yesterday the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Jerusalem conducting a large-scale search process, and confiscating files, documents, and computers. Simultaneously, another Israeli force raided the houses of Rania Elias, director of Yabous Cultural Center, and Suheil Khoury, director of ESNCM. The Israeli forces confiscated computers from their houses and arrested both of them, before releasing them at a late hour that night. Israeli forces also raided the house of Daoud Al Ghoul, director of the Jerusalem Arts Network-Shafaq, searched it and tampered with its contents before arresting Mr Al Ghoul.

This attack reiterates the Israeli occupation's ongoing targeting of all institutions engaged with Palestinian culture and activism in Jerusalem. The presence of these Palestinian organizations highlights insistence on the identity of Jerusalem as a city that provides residents regardless of background and its visitors, a cultural and a social space that strengthens bonds and deepens the sense of belonging and relating to a culture and to a city. Jerusalem has always embodied a cosmopolitan cultural and historical character. Israel continues to seek to obliterate it through systematic acts of oppression.

The violations against our Jerusalem-based institutions confirm that the Israeli occupation is determined to deprive us of all spaces that enable our people to express their identity. Yabous Cultural Center and the ESNCM are active institutions that are considered beacons of cultural and artistic activity. They offer a wide range of artistic and cultural programs, targeted primarily at children and youth, that provide alternative options to those pushed by the Israeli occupation. The artistic and cultural activities offered by the two institutions provide the opportunity for the children and youth to strengthen connections and a sense of belonging to their city and to their national heritage. All this in the face of the fierce campaign launched by the occupation against the identity, history, and the residents of the city. Israel continues to target the city for what it represents in terms of its values of tolerance, of diversity and of pluralism. The values that set the foundations of peace in the city over centuries.

The blatant aggression by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian cultural institutions in Jerusalem and elsewhere is strong evidence of the occupation's recognition of the

importance of Palestinian cultural activism and the major role it has acquired over the past decades. Palestinian cultural institutions keep national awareness alive, educate and strengthen insistence on national identity and cultural heritage, thereby empowering Palestinians to express their narrative and address the world. This in turn generates a heightened state of solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle. And deepens the cultural and ethical isolation of the Israeli occupation.

This recent heinous assault highlights the Israeli occupation's ongoing policies used to legitimize the suppression of all forms of Palestinian cultural expression that deepen the Palestinians' sense of belonging to their roots and to their identity, and strengthens their ability to insist on their humanity and on their national rights. This blatant racism is manifest each time a Palestinian artist or intellectual is targeted by assassination, imprisonment, and oppression for being loyal and for being true in their expression of their people's suffering, their hopes, and their aspirations for freedom.

Palestinian Performing Arts Network

A.M. Qattan Foundation

First Ramallah Group – Sareyyet Ramallah

Filmlab Palestine

Palestinian Art Court-Al Hoash

Al Ma'mal Foundation

Visual Arts Forum - VAF

Palestinian National Theater- Al Hakawati