

Dear Friends,

Al-Harah Theater was established in 2005 and registered as a nonprofit organization registration. Al Harah Theater strives to produce highly artistic, yet accessible theater productions and present them to audiences throughout Palestine, the Arab world and abroad. Believing that theater can change the lives of those who make it and those who watch it, Al Harah theater has a lot of experience in using drama and theater in helping children and youth to overcome their trauma caused directly by the war or the challenging conditions in Palestine that these children have been living under.

Al Harah Theater has hosted an IETM Caravan in 2019 as part of an EU funded project.

During the last three months, beginning of October 2023, the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank has been disastrous. Most of those who have been affected by the hostilities of war are children.

Over 30000 people have been killed, more than 60000 injured, over 10000 are children. 70% of the houses in Gaza have been destroyed by Israeli airstrikes and bombs. Over 1.5 million people have lost their homes and are in tents and at UNRWA schools.

It did not all start from the beginning of October 2023, but it has been going on for more than 55 years at least and even since before 1948. We passed through several wars in 1967, in 1987, in 1992, in 2000 and it continued all through the years with oppression of the Israeli Occupation, more confiscation of lands, building of settlements and the Separation Wall, restrictions on movement and travelling, imprisonment of people, daily invasions, and deprivation of basic rights of the Palestinian people.

In 2019, just before Covid started we faced a new challenge with the EU parliament adding a new political condition on their funding to Palestinian organization where they consider seven Palestinian Political Factions Terrorists. By accepting this condition, we accept incriminating our people and rejection of our work in the Palestinian community. So, as a result, Palestinian Civil Society organizations refused to accept this condition rejecting conditional funding that resulted in losing main sources of funding including the EU, Swedish Development Agency and the German funds.

As the war on Gaza Strip started, several international governments and NGOs announced their support for the war on Gaza and withheld their fund to Palestine and the Palestinian organizations. Two of our main largest funds were cancelled for 2024 and some other projects funded for this year were cancelled. This has left us facing great challenges with the continuation and sustainability of our programs and our work with the local communities; especially at such challenging times.

Since the beginning of the war on Gaza, all entrances and exits of Palestinian cities were blocked. Over 5000 people have been arrested by the Israeli occupation. Schools in the West Bank have not been operating regularly, and now as they commenced schools once again, children are suffering from fear and trauma from all the news they are hearing about war, hostilities, aggression on Palestinian cities, Israeli settler's violence against entire communities, and the like.

As a result, there has been an increasing demand from the local schools in Bethlehem area towards psychological interventions with the children. Some of them reached out to Al Harah Theater to provide psycho-social drama activities for children, in order to help them express their feelings and learn how to cope with the traumas they have endured.

Al Harah Theater has decided to change some of its programs in order to support children in the schools of Bethlehem area, to overcome their trauma through psychodrama activities for groups of 15-20 students 8-12 years old.

Al Harah Theater has hired drama trainers who are specialized in such activities in schools, taking into consideration the needs of the children in different locations. We started more than one month ago and have implemented about 30 sessions in schools in Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour and Dheisheh refugee camp and at the theater space.

As a Theater we also felt responsible to record stories of the lives of martyrs in Gaza with English subtitles as a way of showing that they are not only numbers.

Al Harah Theater is at the doorsteps of a challenging new year where the future is not clear and the challenges are significant. Al-Harah Theater aims to continue working with the Palestinian community sustaining its own programs, and putting more focus on supporting artists in Gaza when the situation allows.

Artists and partners in IETM are requested to continue demanding the ceasefire on Gaza and also the liberation and freedom for Palestine from the Israeli Military Occupation by standing with justice

Marina Barham
General Director