

Culture x Palestine

For more than 70 years, Palestine has been the victim of a systematic violation of its fundamental rights and freedoms. Numerous resolutions adopted by the United Nations and other international institutions have denounced the situation. Despite this, under the guise of a democratic state, Israel continues to occupy its territory and to act with absolute impunity.

The people of Gaza have been living in a chronic humanitarian crisis caused by a siege for more than 15 years. The systematic destruction of its infrastructure and military actions against its population by the Israeli government repeatedly violate International Law and International Humanitarian Law. Since October 2023, this situation has worsened and has led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis with the massive destruction of the entire Strip. The bombardment has destroyed thousands of homes and infrastructure, killed more than 26.000 people -half of whom are children- and wounded an extremely high number of people, leaving them in a situation of extreme vulnerability and plunging the Gazan population into an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, **violence in the West Bank has increased exponentially**: Israeli military incursions are daily and violent attacks by settlers on the Palestinian population are on the rise. Raids, clashes, extrajudicial arrests, house demolitions and forced displacement by the Israeli state are constant.

To this situation must be added the systematic violation of the cultural rights of the Palestinian people, with an increasing number of artists, poets, writers and journalists being killed. Israel continues to target and destroy cultural and religious heritage buildings.

The city of **Jenin** and the Jenin refugee camp are one of the epicentres of constant attacks by the Israeli army. Since 2006, the Jenin refugee camp has been home to **The Freedom Theatre**, a theatre and cultural centre that advocates for Palestinian resistance and liberation through popular culture and art. The centre uses theatre, music and other artistic disciplines as a means for social change. They produce and stage professional plays, organise performance workshops and offer training in performing arts, pedagogy and photography. [The Freedom Theatre](#) has become an international centre of reference in the vindication of cultural resistance. A space where the power of culture to transform lives is recognised.

Since July 2023, the theatre has suffered constant attacks on its offices, breaking much of its equipment. On 13 December, the Israeli army arrested **Ahmed Tobasi** and **Mustafa Sheta**, the two directors of The Freedom Theatre. The Israeli army entered the theatre, destroyed its offices and opened fire from inside. They also broke down a wall separating the offices from the house next door. After destroying the theatre, they entered the houses of Ahmed Tobasi and Mustafa Sheta and arrested them.

Tobasi was released two days after the arrest, but Mustafa Sheta continues to be held in administrative detention without charge. Administrative detention is a procedure that allows the Israeli army to hold Palestinians indefinitely under "secret information", without charge or trial. 800.000 Palestinians have been held under this system since 1967, with eight years being the longest detention.

From the [Associació Catalana per la Pau](#), we promote this manifest in defence of the cultural rights of the Palestinian people. The cultural entities and professionals of the performing arts who have signed this manifest, in the face of this emergency situation in Palestine, demand:

- The immediate release of cultural rights defender Mustafa Sheta, General Director of The Freedom Theatre.
- Compliance with United Nations resolutions on the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people and the recognition of the Palestinian state by Spanish and European institutions.
- A permanent ceasefire, with an end to shelling and population displacement, ensuring urgent humanitarian access to victims and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the entire Gaza Strip.
- The end to arms trade with Israel and military and security cooperation, thus ending the EU's arms relationship with Israel.