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Freedom Theatre of Jenin

Freedom for Nabil Al-Raei and Zakaria Zubeidi in Palestine

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Occupied Palestine is the scene of commonplace violence by the Israeli occupation army: every day brings its share of arrests without cause, carried out in most cases at night. We see harassment against the nonviolent resistance, whether it be in the West Bank village of Bil'in, in Al Araqib in the Negev or against the Freedom Theatre in Jenin, a symbol of cultural resistance.

The Freedom Theatre in the Jenin refugee camp was set up by Juliano Mer Khamis in memory of his mother Arna Mer's work with the children of the camp to whom she taught drama to help them release themselves spiritually and physically from the pressure of the occupation. One year ago Juliano Mer Khamis was murdered in Jenin in circumstances which have never been clarified. Since then, the troupe, who have bravely picked up the torch of resistance theatre once more, haven't stopped worrying: everyone who was called in as part of the murder investigation responded to the summons. This has not prevented the Freedom Theatre from being subjected to four Israeli army attacks, the arrest and interrogation of its members, and detentions, which led the Freedom Theatre members to state: "We believe the regular and systematic harassment employees of the Freedom Theatre has nothing to do with the investigation into the murder of Juliano, but is clearly a campaign against the Freedom Theatre itself."

On June 6, before dawn, Nabil Al-Raee, artistic director of the Theatre, was arrested at his home and taken away without explanation by Israeli soldiers. His family learned the next day that he was being held at the Jalameh detention centre, north of Jenin, notorious for its interrogations undertaken often with inhumane methods, which include the use of sleep deprivation, psychological pressure and restraints in painful positions.

Informed of this arrest, we learned that Zakaria Zubeidi, a well known figure in the Jenin camp, was arrested again on May 13 and is being held by the Palestinian security forces in prison in Jericho. His lawyer has not yet been able to see him even three weeks after he was detained. The former leader of an armed resistance group which he joined after his mother was killed by the Israeli army and his family home destroyed, he renounced violence in 2005 and joined Juliano Mer Khamis in cultural resistance as co-founder of the Freedom Theatre.

The Friends of the Freedom Theatre of Jenin ask you to intervene with the Israeli, Palestinian and French authorities, as well as with your elected representatives to secure the immediate release of Nabil Al-Raee and Zakaria Zubeidi. Light must be shed on these series of arrests and the harassment of the Freedom Theatre members must stop, as it endangers the very existence of this magnificent place of liberty and of artistic and cultural development.

Post-scriptum :

You can call the Israeli military District Coordination 00 972-4-640-73-12

to ask for news from Nabil Al-Raee (National ID Number 906349162) and

the Israeli Embassy in France: 01 40 76 5500.

And the following numbers regarding the detention of Zakaria Zubeidi:

00-970 - (0) 59-777-88-87 Majd Faraj, Chief of Intelligence of the Palestinian Authority

00-970 - (0) 59-900-00-11 Abo Mohammad Shadeh, head of presidential security

00-970 - (0) 59-944-75-47 Dr. Said Abo Ali, Minister of the Interior

Freedom for Nabil Al-Raei and Zakaria Zubeidi in Palestine

00-970 - (0) 59-930-38-50 Saeb Erekat, Chief Negotiator

00-970 - (0) 59-955-88-22 Ataeb Abdurahem, National Security

To express your solidarity with the Freedom Theatre in Jenin:

www.thefreedomtheatre.org

www.atljenine.net