

2010

2010

the freedom theatre

annual report 2010

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from the director

Dear Friends,

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Despite recent tendencies among the donor community to reduce support for cultural activities in Palestine, The Freedom Theatre in the past year succeeded to maintain and even expand our activities.

The greatest proof of our development during the year was our large scale production of *Alice in Wonderland*, with which we reached new levels of professionalism - artistically as well as technically. This play was also an indicator of the change that has taken place in Jenin since we started our activities five years ago. Thousands of children and youth attended the show, which tackled many taboo issues in the community, such as early marriage, relationships between men and women and individual freedom. During the performances we could feel the spirit of the Arab world revolutions sweeping through The Freedom Theatre.

Nevertheless, the financial pressure on cultural organisations in Palestine is great and we call upon all of you to raise your voices against the tendencies to undermine culture and the arts in conflict areas such as ours. Particularly in societies that have been fragmented and torn apart by conflicts and violence, culture and the arts play a crucial role in the process of rebuilding the foundations of a healthy and progressive society.

With your support, we move into the new year with continued optimism, determination and a strong belief in the importance of our work for the children and youth in Jenin!

**Juliano Mer Khamis**  
General Director

the freedom theatre





## mission

The Freedom Theatre is developing a vibrant and creative artistic community in the northern part of the West Bank. While emphasising professionalism and innovation, the aim of the theatre is also to empower youth and women in the community and to explore the potential of arts as an important catalyst for social change.

## organisation

The Freedom Theatre, a theatre and cultural centre in Jenin Refugee Camp, is developing the only professional venue for theatre and multimedia in the northern part of the West Bank in Occupied Palestine. It offers a unique programme of workshops and activities, allowing participants to express themselves and explore their creativity through theatre and multimedia.

Through its work, The Freedom Theatre aims to:

- Raise the quality of performing arts and cinema in the area.
- Offer a space in which children and youth can act, create and express themselves freely, imagining new realities and challenging existing social and cultural barriers.
- Empower the young generation to use the arts to promote positive change in their community.
- Break the cultural isolation that separates Jenin from the wider Palestinian and global communities.

## culture under occupation

During more than 40 years of military occupation, the Palestinian people have suffered daily invasions and assassinations by the Israeli army, it has been divided and immobilised by checkpoints, roadblocks and curfews, secluded in neglected refugee camps, and imprisoned by the Separation Wall.

The Jenin area in the northern part of the West Bank has been particularly harshly affected during the decades of occupation, and particularly during the Second Intifada. As the political, economic and social conditions deteriorated in this period, cultural activities were also largely neglected. When The Freedom Theatre opened its doors in 2006, few of the local residents had ever seen theatre or had the opportunity to learn acting or filmmaking.

Strong in its belief that the arts form a crucial corner stone to the ideals of an open and free society, The Freedom Theatre is therefore committed to continue developing an independent space in which young, aspiring artists can come together to explore their creativity, express themselves and perform. As the only organisation offering such a space in the area, The Freedom Theatre aims to enrich cultural life of the region and play an active role in rebuilding the shattered foundations of Palestinian culture.

*activities in 2010*





## alice in wonderland

In 2010, The Freedom Theatre worked on putting up its largest and most technically advanced production to date. Performed by its Acting School students, *Alice in Wonderland* featured flying actors, a revolving stage, fantastic costumes and advanced light effects.

In The Freedom Theatre's adaptation of the famous children's story Alice escapes a reality of poverty, oppression and conservatism where she is constrained to doing chores in the home, into a new Wonderland where she meets fantastic characters who reflect and challenge her previous life experiences. Through her encounters Alice reflects upon her own identity as she is continuously forced to question what she considers "right" and "wrong", "normal" and "abnormal".

## theatre programme

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The Freedom Theatre continued developing its theatre programme to increasingly professional standards during 2010, recruiting a new class of students for its Acting School and putting up two student productions which reached high artistic and technical standards. At the same time it continued serving the younger generation in the area through drama activities and it hosted a range of performances in its theatre hall.

### Acting School

*Total participants:* 15

In 2010, The Freedom Theatre's Acting School reached its third year of activity which meant the first class of students began their third and final year of study. At the same time a second, new class of students began their three-year programme in the autumn. Students continued taking part in a diverse study programme of acting, movement, voice, social and cultural studies, as well as a range of specialist subjects. They also applied their skills through two high quality student productions; *Men in the Sun* and *Alice in Wonderland*.

### Drama Activities and Psychodrama

*Total participants:* 40

Through this project, groups of children and youth continued to experience the playful as well as healing aspects of theatre. Participants engaged in exploring their internal conflicts and acting out their emotions in a safe and contained structure, through improvisations, movement and stories, thus learning to better understand themselves and their surroundings. In addition, the young participants engaged in the exciting process of preparing their own plays and presentations, which were presented at The Freedom Theatre.

### Hosting Performances

*Total performances:* 63  
*Total attendance:* 14,100

Throughout 2010 The Freedom Theatre continued hosting a wide range of performances in its theatre hall, exposing children, youth and adults in the Jenin area to new, entertaining and thought-provoking experiences - something out of the ordinary. Through this project the organisation hopes to build up a large audience which loves and appreciates theatre.

## multimedia studio

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During the past year The Freedom Theatre carried on with its multimedia work, training youth in photography, creative writing as well as filmmaking, setting the foundations for developing a large scale professional, cinema studio in Jenin Camp. One of the major achievements of the Multimedia Studio in 2010 was the publishing a of a new photography book; *Captured*.

### Filmmaking

*Total participants:* 40

Thanks to a successful capacity-building project in 2009, The Freedom Theatre was able to significantly increase its capacity in providing filmmaking training for youth in the past year. Several new trainers worked with groups of youth, teaching them both theoretical and practical skills of filmmaking. Building upon this experience, The Freedom Theatre also started planning a further expansion of its filmmaking project into a professional Cinema Studio. It is hoped activities for this project will start at the end of 2011.

### Photography

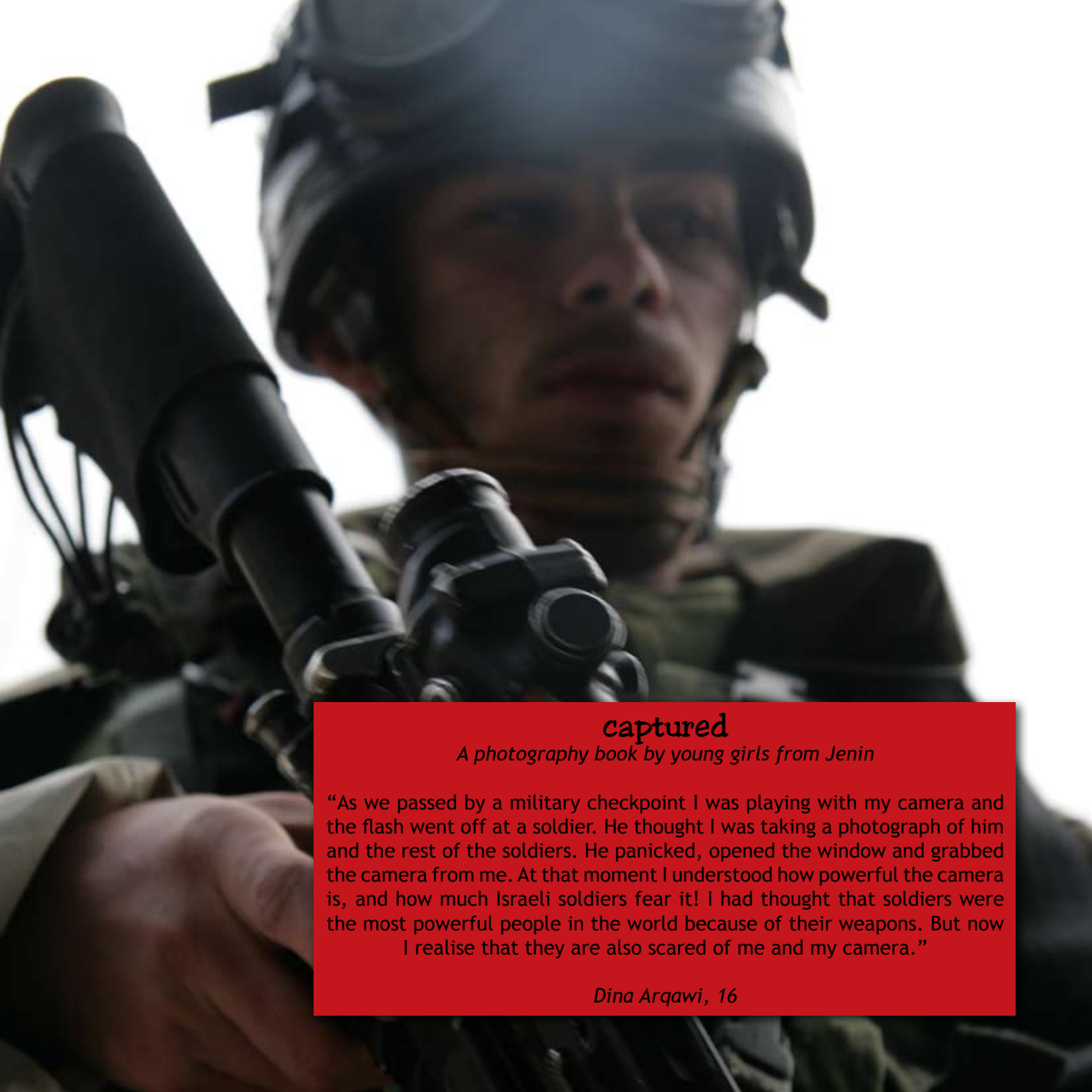
*Total participants:* 44

In the past year, youth in Jenin Camp have continued learning technical skills of photography, as well as how to use this medium for story telling. They have worked together with youth in the Journalism and Creative Writing workshops to produce material for The Freedom Theatre's quarterly youth magazine, *Voices*, and they have produced their own photography book, *Captured*.

### Creative Writing

*Total participants:* 21

Through these workshops, youth have learned a range of skills in journalism and creative writing and continued producing articles and stories for The Freedom Theatre's quarterly youth magazine, *Voices*. Each issue of the magazine was printed in 8,000 copies and distributed in the local community.



## **captured**

*A photography book by young girls from Jenin*

“As we passed by a military checkpoint I was playing with my camera and the flash went off at a soldier. He thought I was taking a photograph of him and the rest of the soldiers. He panicked, opened the window and grabbed the camera from me. At that moment I understood how powerful the camera is, and how much Israeli soldiers fear it! I had thought that soldiers were the most powerful people in the world because of their weapons. But now I realise that they are also scared of me and my camera.”

*Dina Arqawi, 16*



## **new theatre in jenin city**

In 2010 The Freedom Theatre began constructing a new theatre building in Jenin City - the largest and most professional theatre in northern Palestine. This new theatre will provide an important space where young, aspiring artists can come together to express themselves and perform, reaching large audiences from the whole Jenin area.

The building will include seven large spaces: a theatre hall, backstage, four workshop spaces, and offices. The large theatre hall will have a stage sized 16x13m (the biggest in the West Bank) and will be able to host an audience of up to 400 people.

## **facilities**

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### **Theatre Hall**

The Freedom Theatre currently stages and hosts performances in a semi-professional Theatre Hall, seating up to 250 people. Although sufficient as a small community theatre, the space is not well suited for larger theatre performances and has proved too small to meet the needs of the local population.

### **Drama Workshop Space**

The majority of The Freedom Theatre's Acting School classes as well as drama activities take place in a spacious workshop room next to the theatre hall.

### **Cinema Studio**

The Freedom Theatre's cinema activities all take place in its Filmmaking Studio, located next to the theatre. The studio holds two workshop rooms, two film editing suites as well as a small film screening room.

### **Library**

An Arts and Media Library make a wealth of resources available to the constituency of The Freedom Theatre, including a wide range of books, CDs and DVDs on the subjects of theatre, music, film and other arts.

### **Other**

In addition, an office space hosts the administrative department, which enables the smooth running of all of The Freedom Theatre's activities. The Freedom Theatre also offers guest accommodation for visitors, volunteers and trainers.

institutional development





## capacity building

Due to the severe isolation of the Jenin area and the almost complete neglect of cultural and artistic activities, The Freedom Theatre finds it crucial to keep building up both technical and human capacity in the fields of theatre and the arts.

While continuing to organise numerous short-term capacity building courses for its staff, The Freedom Theatre's activities programme itself forms the most important long-term capacity building initiative. Through its professional Acting School programme for example, the organisation hopes to develop a cadre of professional actors, directors and drama teachers for the future while its Cinema Studio will hopefully develop similar capacity in the field of filmmaking.

## resource development

During 2010 The Freedom Theatre's Resource Development department continued developing both new and existing relationships with international funding institutions, successfully raising funds to cover its extensive programme of activities. Complementing this work, a number of fundraising events were also organised internationally by The Freedom Theatre's friends and supporters worldwide.

### supporters

The Freedom Theatre is grateful for the generous support of the following funders:

- United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA)
- Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)
  - Freedom to Create
  - Ford Foundation
  - Annenberg Foundation
  - Medico International
- Al-Jazeera Children's Channel
- Nathan Cummings Foundation
  - A.M. Qattan Foundation
- British Consulate General in Jerusalem
  - Grassroots International

# networking

In 2010, The Freedom Theatre continued developing its strong network of friends, supporters and partners, who provide crucial support for the organisation's work. The Freedom Theatre's friends associations and partners include the following:

## Friends Associations and Support Networks

- The Friends of The Jenin Freedom Theatre, United States
- Les Amis du Théâtre de la Liberté de Jénine, France
- Frihetsteaterns Vänförening, Malmö, Sweden
- Frihetsteaterns Vänförening, Stockholm, Sweden
- Friends of The Freedom Theatre, Berlin, Germany

## Partners

- Arab American University, Jenin, Occupied Palestine
- University of Song and Music, Gothenburg, Sweden
- Centraltheater/Spinnwek, Leipzig, Germany
- Al Kasaba Theatre, Ramallah, Occupied Palestine
- New York Theatre Workshop, New York, United States
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, (UNRWA)

# outreach

## Websites

During the past year, The Freedom Theatre continued regularly updating its main website ([www.thefreedomtheatre.org](http://www.thefreedomtheatre.org)) with news, pictures and events. It also renewed its Acting School ([www.actingschool.ps](http://www.actingschool.ps)) website, updating it with new information and giving it a new look.

## E-News

The Freedom Theatre continued sending out regular updates and news to its mailing list, including press releases as well as invitations to events and performances.

## Newsletter

In 2010 The Freedom Theatre also began sending out quarterly newsletters to its supporters and friends.

## Media

The Freedom Theatre has been successful in developing a high media profile both regionally and internationally. A wide range of print, radio, and television media reported on The Freedom Theatre's events and activities in the past year.

Handwritten notes in Arabic script on a spiral-bound notebook. The text is written in black ink, with a prominent title in red ink. The notes appear to be a list or a set of instructions, possibly related to a project or a study. The handwriting is cursive and somewhat informal.

Handwritten notes in Arabic script, including a prominent title in red ink. The text is written on a spiral-bound notebook page.

Handwritten notes in Arabic script, including a prominent title in red ink. The text is written on a spiral-bound notebook page.

evaluation





## plans for the future

In 2011, The Freedom Theatre aims to:

- Complete the construction of a new theatre space in Jenin City
  - Stage several theatre productions
- Enrol a third class of students in its professional Acting School programme
- Set up its first professional Acting Group which will stage productions as well as teach drama for children and youth
- Begin work on setting up a professional Cinema Studio in Jenin Camp

## achievements

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The Freedom Theatre has many achievements to be proud of in the past year, including the following:

- Establishing itself as a major cultural force in the northern part of the West Bank.
- Beginning the construction of a new theatre space in Jenin City, which upon completion will be the largest theatre in the West Bank.
- Staging two large-scale theatre productions; *Men in the Sun* and *Alice in Wonderland*.
- Publishing a new photography book, *Captured*, by young girls from Jenin.

The factors which contribute towards making The Freedom Theatre a strong and sustainable organisation include:

- A commitment to maintaining high standards in all aspects of its work.
- A broad base of support, in the local community and internationally.
- Promoting a work ethic that emphasises transparency, accountability and cooperation.

## challenges and solutions

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Despite much success, The Freedom Theatre's work is not without challenges.

Since theatre and cultural activities have been severely neglected due to the continuing occupation, and especially during the Second Intifada, The Freedom Theatre has found it very difficult to find professional teachers and instructors in the area. In addition to working on long-term capacity building initiatives, a shorter-term solution has been to recruit large numbers of professional, international volunteers to teach in the Acting School and other projects.

Another main challenge The Freedom Theatre has faced since its establishment has been the inclusion of girls and women in its activities. Under the pressure of occupation and isolation, the local community has turned to increasingly conservative values and this has affected girls and women particularly harshly, often preventing them from participating in activities outside of the home and school. The Freedom Theatre has therefore put great effort into recruiting girls to join its activities and as the organisation has become increasingly established in the past two years it has seen female participation increase dramatically.

organisational structure



## staff and volunteers

In 2009, the work of The Freedom Theatre was carried out by the following staff and volunteers:

### General Staff (Palestinian, unless otherwise stated)

Juliano Merr-Khamis, *General Director*  
Samia Steiti, *Programme Manager*  
Adnan Nagnaghiye, *Location Manager*  
Jenny Nyman (Finland), *Resource Development Director*  
Frida Ullberg (Sweden), *Resource Development Coordinator*  
Shaina Low (United States), *Resource Development Coordinator*  
Mussadaq Jarrar, *Accountant*  
Rania Wasfi, *Administrative Assistant*  
Mei Tubase, *Secretary*  
Ahmed Al-Araj, *Webmaster*  
Miriam Abu Atiyah, *Housekeeper*

### Project Staff (Palestinian, unless otherwise stated)

Rawand Arqawi, *Acting School Coordinator*  
Nabeel Al-Raei, *Acting School Teacher*  
Micaela Miranda (Portugal), *Acting School Teacher*  
Salwa Nakkara, *Acting School Teacher*  
Julia Katarina (United Kingdom), *Acting School Teacher*  
Jacob Gough (Wales), *Theatre Technician*  
Mohammad Assaadi, *Theatre Technician*  
Ahmad Matahen, *Theatre Technician*  
Sami Assaadi, *Theatre Technician*  
Mohammed Moawia, *Film Instructor*  
Ahmed Al-Araj, *Film Instructor*  
Iman Aldamaj, *Film Instructor*  
Buthaina Abu Atiyah, *Film Instructor*  
Mustafa Steti, *Photography Instructor*  
Taiseer Khatib, *Creative Writing Instructor*

### Volunteers

Josh Perlstein (United States), *Acting School Teacher*  
Zoe Lafferty (United Kingdom), *Acting School Teacher*  
Suzanne Osten (Sweden), *Acting School Teacher*  
Jan Tiselius (Sweden), *Acting School Teacher*  
Britt Louise Tillbom (Sweden), *Acting School Teacher*  
Stephan Wolf-Shonburg (Germany), *Acting School Teacher*  
Giovanni Papotto (Italy), *Acting School Teacher*  
Rashna Nicholson (India), *Acting School Teacher*  
Brian Blecinski (United States), *Acting School Teacher*  
Noelle Ghossaini (United States), *Acting School Teacher*  
Maren Hoff (Germany), *Acting School Teacher*  
Stephanie Gillman (United States), *Acting School Teacher*  
Daniel Gott (United Kingdom), *Acting School Teacher*  
Agnetha Junich (Germany), *Acting School Teacher*  
Jo Tyabji (United Kingdom), *Acting School Teacher*  
Emmanuelle Brandstorm (Sweden), *Acting School Teacher*  
Harald Nilson (Sweden), *Acting School Teacher*  
Arnold Khorne (Germany), *Acting School Teacher*  
Lydia Ziemke (Germany), *Acting School Teacher*  
Linn Reinius (Sweden), *Set Designer*  
Gunnar Bergsten (Sweden), *Theatre Technician*  
Sophia Robbins (United States), *English Teacher*

# board of directors

## Palestinian Organisation

Dr. Mervat Ayiash (Chair Person), *Professor at Al Najah University*  
Lubna Hamashi (Treasurer), *Employee of the Ministry of Youth and Sports*  
Bilal Assaadi, *Merchant*  
Bassima Abu Nami, *Director of Al Muntada in Jenin*  
Wafaa Habb-AlReeh, *President of the Palestinian Women's Union*  
Jamal Tubasi, *Merchant*  
Mohammad Saba'ni, *PR Manager at the Arab American University in Jenin*  
Sa'ed Qabha, *Programme Coordinator at the Ministry of Education*  
Khaled Abu Al Heja, *Engineer*

## Swedish Foundation

Khulood Badawi, Chairperson (Occupied Palestine), *Human Rights Activist*  
Noam Chomsky (United States), *Professor in Linguistics*  
Judith Butler (United States), *Professor in Philosophy*  
Louisa Morgantini (Italy), *Politician and Member of the European Parliament*  
Etienne Balibar (France), *Professor in Political Science*  
Howard Brenton (United Kingdom), *Playwright*  
Elias Khoury (Lebanon), *Novelist, Playwright and Critic*  
Avi Oz (Tel Aviv), *Professor in Theatre*  
Suzanne Osten (Sweden), *Professor in Directing*  
Michel Khleifi (Nazareth), *Film Director*  
Mohammad Bakri (Be'ene), *Actor and Director*  
Salim Daw (Haifa), *Actor and Director*  
Salwa Nakkara (Haifa), *Actress*  
Henry Ascher (Sweden), *Paediatrician*  
Dror Feiler (Sweden), *Musician and Composer*  
San'a Badawi (Jenin Refugee Camp), *Public Relations, Jenin Governorate*  
Abeer Kopty (Nazareth), *Political Activist*  
San'a Badawi (Jenin Refugee Camp), *Public Relations, Jenin Governorate*  
Abeer Kopty (Nazareth), *Political Activist*

*the freedom theatre*

Jenin Refugee Camp

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