



2015 IN BRIEF

In 2015, The Freedom Theatre made reality of a long-time dream: to launch a comprehensive child & youth program that included theatre workshops and a theatre production for children and youth. The play, *Math Exam*, is our first production for children that is entirely created in-house, based on accounts by children in Jenin Refugee Camp. We also progressed our plans of offering creative activities to small children in a more comprehensive form that can meet local needs for day-care.

In the spring we organised another Freedom Ride in occupied Palestine, inviting artists, activists and others from around the world to join in a solidarity ride to communities around the West Bank. We offered training in playback theatre and interactive performances and cultural events to marginalised Palestinian communities who have little or no access to culture.

Throughout the year we performed internationally. Our play *The Island* was invited to the International Theatre Festival of Kerala, India, and to France. We toured Britain for the first time with *The Siege*, a play inspired by the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem during the height of the second Intifada.

"It is very exciting to welcome The Freedom Theatre's tour of their new play 'The Siege' to Britain. This is real political theatre, performed out of the both terrible and inspiring experience of a struggle for freedom and justice. They are living proof that telling stories and entertaining audiences are powerful acts of resistance to oppression. Do go and see them, they have news for us. This little theatre could change the world." Howard Brenton, playwright

Our Theatre School students spent the last months of the year in India as part of the Freedom Jatha, a collaboration between The Freedom Theatre and street theatre group Jana Natya Manch. The Freedom Jatha is the first-ever India-Palestine theatre collaboration and includes workshops, field visits, public events and a joint production that during January 2016 will tour ten locations in India.

We were invited to The Netherlands for an exhibition and a series of public events under the title 'Freedom, Theatre, and the Oppressed', as well as to Sweden and USA for workshops and public presentations.

We welcomed new Friends of The Freedom Theatre associations and branches, and extended our international network in many parts of the world.

Join us in looking proudly upon some of the main highlights of 2015, and catch a glimpse of what is to come in 2016:

THEATRE

THEATRE SCHOOL

The Freedom Theatre School is a three-year educational programme with a focus on acting, devising and cultural resistance. While gaining professional acting skills, our students are encouraged to engage in their communities using drama as a tool for social and political change.

Our group of aspiring actors had workshops in Brecht, Shakespeare, imagination, voice, playback theatre, street theatre, and storytelling for children. The students developed six children stories into performances: Cinderella, Child Goes to Camp, Love Story, Aladdin, The Wolf's Story and The King is Naked. The students accomplished a hugely impressive task, performing 18 times over the course of two days to children aged 4 to 12, reaching an audience of 475 children. The number could have been at least twice as many but the groups were intentionally kept small.

The Freedom Theatre School initiated an extensive collaboration with street theatre group Jana Natya Manch from India, who held workshops with our students first in Jenin and towards the end of the year in India. During the anniversary of the murder of The Freedom Theatre's co-founder Juliano Mer Khamis in April, the students performed a street theatre piece developed by Sudhanva Deshpande from Jana Natya Manch.

In the Imagination workshop the students worked on adapting several different novels into scenes. In the Shakespeare workshop the students learned about rhetorical speech and poetry and for the first time had to tackle translations in Classical Arabic. They had to understand the complexity of the characters and how every part relates to something important in each actor's personal experience. "This is why to pitch yourself against some of the most brilliant dramatic text in the world teaches much about acting and more about life", says Di Trevis, who led the workshop.

PRODUCTIONS AND TOURS

This year The Freedom Theatre produced two new theatre plays, *Power/Poison* and *The Siege*, co-produced one play, *Hamesha Samida*, and re-staged one of our most successful productions to date, *The Island*. There were also a number of playback theatre performances as part of the annual Freedom Ride and shorter Solidarity Stays in marginalised communities, as well as smaller public presentations by our Theatre School students and theatre workshop participants. Over 3000 people attended our performances in Jenin refugee camp and elsewhere in the West Bank.

Internationally, we performed *The Island* in India and France, *The Siege* in Britain and *Hamesha Samida*, a joint production with Jana Natya Manch in India. Some of our Theatre School graduates also performed in *Ouda*, a commedia dell'arte play, in Holland. The performances abroad reached around 4400 people.

[Power/Poison](#) is a theatre play for youth that focuses on sibling relationships within an uncertain world. It deals with the fear of abandonment that is common among all children – but in Palestine this fear is aggravated by arbitrary arrests and killings that separate children from parents. *Poison/Power* puts the spotlight on how children and youth copy the reality they see around them, in this case Jenin Refugee Camp, and how the behaviour of adults affect how the young imagine their future. The play reached an audience of 463 children and youth.

[The Siege](#) is inspired by the real-life accounts of a group of fighters and civilians who in 2002 took refuge in the Church of the Nativity as the Israeli army closed in. The directors traced the fighters, now exiled across Europe and Gaza, and collected their untold accounts of an event that with time has taken on almost mythical proportion.

The Siege opened to a full house at The Freedom Theatre on April 4, the fourth anniversary of the unsolved murder of the theatre's general director and co-founder, Juliano Mer Khamis in 2011. April 4 is also the anniversary of the large-scale invasion of Jenin Refugee Camp by the occupation forces in 2002, which played out in parallel to the siege of Bethlehem. *The Siege* was also performed in Bethlehem, a highly symbolic event attended by over 350 people, some of whom had personal experiences of those fateful 39 days when the entire centre of Bethlehem was under curfew. In total, *The Siege* reached over 1270 people in Palestine.

"We chose to portray the siege of the Church of the Nativity because it was such an important event in Palestinian society. It is still important for a lot of people, especially for the fighters who were exiled indefinitely, and for their families. We used the story of the siege of Bethlehem to speak about the siege of Palestine that is ongoing since 1948." - Nabil Al-Raei, artistic director of The Freedom Theatre and co-creator of *The Siege*

In spring 2015 *The Siege* embarked on The Freedom Theatre's first-ever UK tour, with twenty performances at some of the main theatre venues in Britain. It received exceptional reviews throughout the tour. *"One would struggle to find a more authentic piece of theatre, or indeed one that speaks to such a brutally urgent case of injustice"* stated [The Public Reviews](#), while [The Guardian](#) wrote: *"It develops into an unexpectedly compelling theatrical experience with a rough and ready energy, and, in the very act of its telling, speaks for the voiceless and forgotten."*

The UK tour was organised by [The Freedom Theatre UK Friends](#), a network of over 300 people in Britain who are engaged in the theatre's activities.

"I think it is important that The Freedom Theatre comes to Britain because it is about time that British people understand the true narrative of what is going on in Palestine, and our

relationship to that. I believe that The Freedom Theatre is one of the strongest voices to tell those stories.” - Zoe Lafferty, British co-creator of The Siege

Reading of Suicide Note from Palestine

The Freedom Theatre’s play *Suicide Note from Palestine* was read at a Marathon Reading event in April 2015 at Unga Klara in Stockholm, Sweden. During a full-day and half-night reading, presentations and talks were held about drama and theatre culture in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Lebanon, India, Zambia, Palestine, Kurdistan and Syria.

Math Exam centres around Kareem, a boy who lives with his family in Jenin Refugee Camp. *Math Exam* is The Freedom Theatre’s first children’s play that is entirely created in-house, based on accounts by children in Jenin Refugee Camp. The play will open in January 2016 and run for twenty performances during the winter school holidays.

CHILD & YOUTH THEATRE

The Freedom Theatre arranged a highly successful summer camp for 45 children aged five to thirteen, where the focus was on offering a space to create, reflect and play together. Five leaders, former Theatre School graduates Ahmed Tobasi, Ahmad Al Rokh, Alaa Shehada and Faisal Abu Alheja and volunteer Natalie Quatermass, introduced the children to theatre and worked on building a sense of community among the children and increase their leadership skills, communication skills and self-confidence. At the end of the summer camp, the parents and siblings of the participants families were invited to see examples of what the children had been doing and also got a chance to join in the fun. The involvement of both parents and children was inspiring for the whole theatre and led to the evolvement of ongoing theatre workshops for children and youth that ran throughout the autumn, with two groups of 18 and 14 participants.

HOSTING PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

The Freedom Theatre hosted performances by among others Al Harah Theatre, The Palestinian Circus School as well as individual artists. The hosted performances reached over 900 children, youth and adults. Throughout the year, we also made our theatre hall and workshop spaces available to other organisations and artists.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Stage Management operates at the very heart of the working processes of a fully functioning theatre company. Our two stage management students graduated this year and started working as stage managers in the theatre. One stage management assistant started his studies.

PLAYBACK THEATRE AND THE FREEDOM BUS

The Freedom Bus project carried out an annual Freedom Ride in Jenin, Bil’in, Nabi Saleh, the Jordan Valley and the South Hebron Hills. People from across Palestine and abroad joined residents in some of the most marginalised Palestinian communities where they participated in interactive cultural events, volunteer work and workshops.

The ride had 50 participants and involved close to 1500 people through performances and events. The Freedom Ride was organized in close cooperation with the South Hebron Hills Popular Committee and the Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign, along with other popular struggle committees in the communities involved in the ride.

“An intense, transformative journey came to an end today, on Land Day, as this year’s Freedom Ride in occupied Palestine finished.

The original plan was to spend the two last days of the Freedom Ride in Jerusalem. A symbolic and actual defiance of the enforced separation between Palestinians in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. However, realities on the ground came in the way.

Despite several attempts, the Palestinian members of the Freedom Ride, including The Freedom Theatre’s staff, students and actors, were denied permits and thus could not cross the checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem. The international members of the Freedom Ride were put in a dilemma – continue or stay? In the end half the group stayed behind to in Ramallah and the other continued into East Jerusalem. In the evening the two groups carried out parallel playback theatre events, sharing stories of isolation, marginalisation and the difficulties of having to separate from the Freedom Riders who were not granted permission to enter their own capital. There were also accounts about solidarity between people from around the world with Palestine and how that inspires and gives hope.” – Freedom Bus blog

The Freedom Theatre also offered a 12-day Playback Theatre intensive workshop carried out in Jenin and Aroub refugee camps, where 11 participants learned and practiced the core elements of Playback Theatre with emphasis upon its use within the Palestinian context. The workshop included training in movement, voice work and in particular Playback Theatre’s ability to promote critical consciousness and sociopolitical change.

MULTIMEDIA

FILM

The Freedom Theatre’s documentary *Journey of a Freedom Fighter* was screened at the Chicago Palestinian Film Festival and at several venues as part of the UK tour of *The Siege*, including Glastonbury Festival, in Amsterdam as part of the ‘Freedom, Theatre and the Oppressed’ exhibition in Amsterdam, and during an exhibition at Panora art house cinema in Sweden.

PHOTOGRAPHY & EXHIBITIONS

This year The Freedom Theatre ran five photography courses, with a total of 24 youth and 13 children. The groups produced several exhibitions this year. *Feelings* was showcased to more than 445 children and adults in Jenin and Arrabee village. The exhibition was also shown in Holland and Sweden, together with *Stories* from the year before, in the multi-day event ‘Freedom, Theatre, and the Oppressed’ arranged by Prince Claus Fund. 130 people saw the exhibition. In France, our Friends Association ATLJ also held an exhibition that was attended by some 1400 people.

Two new exhibitions, *Shadow* and *Childhood*, were showcased at The Freedom Theatre this year to an audience of 700 people. The exhibitions will continue to be displayed in 2016.

DRAWING & PAINTING WORKSHOP

During the summer The Freedom Theatre arranged a two-week drawing and painting workshop with ten participants. The workshop was led by Haifa Abu Salah, former photography student at The Freedom Theatre. The participants tried out various forms of painting and drawing, and at the end of the workshop held a public exhibition that 600 people attended.

"I have led many workshops in painting but this is the most beautiful one ever. I like the girls, I like their views about art and their incredible talents. This workshop has strengthened my confidence, it's wonderful to be a leader." - Haifa Abu Salah

PUBLICATIONS

This year, The Freedom Theatre published two issues of the youth magazine *Voices* which were distributed in 6000 copies each and also made available online. One issue of *Voices* had a special focus on popular resistance while the other tackled the issue of women's rights and women's situation in Palestine.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2015 we strengthened our social media presence significantly. Arabic twitter and instagram accounts were added and we increased activity on the Arabic Facebook page with several hundred per cent. The English facebook page had close to 9,000 likes by the end of the year.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

OUTREACH

In 2015, The Freedom Theatre reached out to 30 communities across the occupied West Bank. With us we brought theatre performances, storytelling workshops and performances, playback theatre trainings and photography exhibitions. These efforts significantly contributed to overcoming the isolation of Palestinian communities and building alliances between organisations, artists and individuals.

Internationally, The Freedom Theatre's staff, artists and associates travelled to Europe, India and USA. Altogether the international tours and events reached approximately 6000 people directly through performances, workshops and public events, and many more through media coverage in all the countries we visited.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The theatre began a process of strengthening its sustainability through a number of measures. The process will continue in 2016. Several members of the artistic team also received further training in Palestine and Europe. Two of our theatre technicians

continued their training at PARC, Al-Harah Theatre's Performing Arts Technical Training Center, and one of them pursued an internship with Cirkus Cirkör in Sweden.

HOSTING VISITORS

Some 1700 individuals from Palestine and all over the world visited the theatre to learn more about its activities and meet with staff and students. The theatre also arranged overnight stays for visitors who were welcomed in the homes of residents in Jenin Refugee Camp.

PPAN

The Freedom Theatre is part of the Palestinian Performing Arts Network, PPAN, which connects performing arts organisations in a network that aims to "contribute towards the development of a democratic and pluralistic society that respects human rights and enhances Palestinian national identity". The network also advocates for arts and culture to be at the forefront of national priorities, by acting as a collective voice towards decision-makers. PPAN consists of Al Kamandjâti Association, Al-Harah Theatre, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Ashtar for theatre productions and training, El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe, The Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, The Freedom Theatre, The Magnificat Institute, The Palestinian Circus School, Popular Art Centre, Theatre Day Productions and Yes Theatre.

Among many other joint activities this year, PPAN members issued a call: End the Longest Military Occupation in History. An extract from the statement:

"We, organizations and individuals that make up the majority of the Palestinian cultural sector; musicians, circus artists, actors, and dancers, call upon our fellow cultural workers and organizations around the world to condemn Israel's deliberate and systematic policies of occupation, settler colonialism and apartheid against the Palestinian people."

SUPPORTERS

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

Arts Council England	Prince Claus Fund
British Council	Swedish Institute
European Cultural Foundation	Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)
European Union	Swedish Postcode Lottery
Europese Culturele	The Arab British Centre
Kinderpostzegels	The Lipman Miliband Trust
Internationalt Forum DK	The Roddick Foundation
Medico International	Tides Foundation
MECA – Middle East Children's Alliance	Tower Hamlets Jenin Friendship Association / Tower Hamlets PSC

We are equally grateful to the many individuals all over the world, who have supported the theatre through private donations. Among them we would especially like to thank:

Patricia Ann Abraham
Miriam Adams
Jerry B. Arnold
John Tom Barnard
Mireille Bergenström
Nesbitt Blaisdell
Anita Block
Robert Brooks
Maria Burman
Inea Bushnaq Engler
Helene Lucas Byrnes
Henry Chalfant
David Chavkin
Patricia Mary Davis
Joanne Ehret
Eve Ensler
Malysa Essex

Lenore Friedman
Felice Gelman
Nizar Ghossaini
Valerie Ghossaini
David Good & Mary
Tomassetti - Tree of Life
Jeannette Grauer
Kathryn Grody
Susanne Hoder
Howard Horowitz
Steve Jungkeit
Gabrielle Kirk
Jill Kirshner
Nathan Lawrence
Steve Low
Liz Magnes
Victoria Mills

Luisa Morgantini
Sarah A. Patterson
Michael Ratner
Constancia Romilly
Harold Samhat
Andy Shallal
Louis Sebastien
Harold Shapiro
Helen Schiff
Jean Stein
Agneta Timotej
David Toorawa
Margo Viscusi
Dorothy M. Zellner

The late Chandran Owen, his family and friends who have donated to The Freedom Theatre in Chandran's name.

PARTNERS

In 2015, The Freedom Theatre collaborated with the following organisations and communities:

Al Harah Theatre, Bethlehem, Occupied Palestine
Al Jalameh School, Occupied Palestine
Al Kasaba Drama Academy, Ramallah, Occupied Palestine
Al Khadamat, Jenin, Occupied Palestine
Al Mufaqqarah community, Occupied Palestine
Al-Quds Open University, Jenin, Occupied Palestine
Arab American University in Jenin, Occupied Palestine
Aroub Refugee Camp, Occupied Palestine
Arrabe Municipality, Occupied Palestine
Ashtar Theatre, Ramallah, Occupied Palestine
Atuwani community, Occupied Palestine
Bardala community, Occupied Palestine
Beit Sahour Guesthouse, Occupied Palestine
Cinema Jenin, Jenin, Occupied Palestine
Dar Al-Kalima College, Bethlehem

Der Abu Masha'al community, Occupied Palestine
Ein al Hiluwa community, Occupied Palestine
Faquaa Community, Occupied Palestine
Fasayil community, Occupied Palestine
Goethe Institute, Ramallah
Ibrahimin School, Jenin, Occupied Palestine
Jenin Governor's Office, Occupied Palestine
Jenin Visitor Centre, Occupied Palestine
Jiftlik community, Occupied Palestine
Jordan Valley Solidarity, Occupied Palestine
Kay La Nansa, Jenin Refugee Camp, Occupied Palestine
Khirbit Samra community, Occupied Palestine
Local Committee, Jenin Refugee Camp,

Occupied Palestine
 Makhul community, Occupied Palestine
 Ministry of Education, Occupied Palestine
 Palestinian Performing Arts Network,
 Occupied Palestine
 Palestinian Circus School, Birzeit, Occupied
 Palestine
 Palestinian Heritage Center, Jenin,
 Occupied Palestine
 Palestinian Medical Relief Society,
 Occupied Palestine
 Popular Struggle Coordination Committee,
 Nabi Saleh, Occupied Palestine
 Qalqiliya Municipal Library, Occupied
 Palestine
 Ras Al Ahmar community, Occupied
 Palestine
 Rehabilitation Center, Jenin, Occupied
 Palestine
 Red Noses Society, Occupied Palestine
 South Hebron Hills Popular Committee,
 Occupied Palestine
 Tamer Institute, Occupied Palestine
 UNRWA Girls School, Jenin, Occupied
 Palestine
 Women's Center, Jenin, Occupied
 Palestine
 Women's Cultural and Heritage

Association, Jenin, Occupied Palestine
 Working Women's Association, Jenin,
 Occupied Palestine
 Youth Development Association,
 Sebastiya, Occupied Palestine
 Yes Theatre, Bethlehem, Occupied
 Palestine

Follow the Women, Denmark
 Internationalt Forum, Denmark

Theatre Hotel Courage, Netherlands

Cirkus Cirkör, Sweden
 Film pedagogerna, Sweden
 Filosofiska i Sverige, Sweden
 Gothenburg University, Sweden

Folkwang University of Arts, Germany

Nordic Black Theatre, Norway

ITFOK, India
 Jana Natya Manch, India

Middle East Children's Alliance, USA
 Transversal Theater Company, USA

FRIENDS ASSOCIATIONS

As every year, The Freedom Theatre's Friends Associations have made invaluable contributions to our work, through networking, fundraising and representation all over the world.

- Associacao dos Amigos do teatro da Liberdade da Palestina
- Friends of The Freedom Theatre, Germany
- Frihetsteaterns Vänförening, Malmö, Göteborg and Stockholm, Sweden
- Les Amis du Théâtre de la Liberté de Jénine, France
- Scottish Friends of The Freedom Theatre, Scotland
- The Friends of The Jenin Freedom Theatre, United States
- UK Friends of The Freedom Theatre, United Kingdom

STAFF

Adnan Nagnaghiye, Location and Stage
 Manager
 Ahmad Al-Rokh, Actor and Instructor

Ahmed Mattahen, Theatre Technician
 Ahmad Tobasi, Resident Artist
 Alan Wright, Production Stage Manager

Baraa Sharqawi, Photography Instructor
Faisal Abu Alheja, Actor and Instructor
Habeb Al-Rae, Technical Stage Manager
Johanna Wallin, Communications Officer
Jonatan Stanczak, Managing Director
Micaela Miranda, Theatre School Director
Miriya Abu Ateyah, Housekeeper
Mohammed Moawia, Multimedia
Coordinator
Mohammed Yousef, Stage Manager
Nabeel Al-Rae, Artistic Director
Omar Kabeya, Financial Director
Rania Wasfi, Program Coordinator
Rewa Attiyeh, Translator and Interpreter
Sami Saade, Theatre Technician

Associates

Alaa Shehada, Actor and Trainer
Anna Gisle, Set Designer
Ben Rivers, Applied Theatre Practitioner
Christin Hodali, Actor
Diane Trevis, Director
Fidaa Atayah, Freedom Ride coordinator

Fidaa Zidan, Actor
Gary M English, Artistic Associate and
Consultant
Hassan Taha, Actor
Khaleel Botran, Actor
Lubna Al-Warawrh, Translator
Malak Abo-Gharbieh, Actor
Milad Knebe, Actor
Nour Al-Rae, Musician
Rabi Hanani, Actor
Samer Abu Hantash, Musician
Zoe Lafferty, Associate Director

Theatre School students

Ameer Abu Alrab
Ibrahim Moqbel
Ihab Talahma
Osama Al Azzeh
Raneen Odeh
Samah Mahmood

VOLUNTEERS

The Freedom Theatre is fortunate to benefit from a large number of volunteers who contribute greatly to the theatre's work with their skills and commitment. During 2015, the following people volunteered for The Freedom Theatre:

Andy Purves, UK
Bryan Reynolds, USA
Daniel Gott, UK
Dror Feiler, Sweden
Farha Bi, UK
Fredrik Holmberg, Sweden
Larry Ng, Hongkong
Linn Reinius, Sweden
Mina Kouvara, UK
Munya Salami, Palestine
Natalie Quatermass, UK
Nikola Kodjabashia, UK
Peter Melin, Sweden
Phillip Gallon, Germany
Rianna Postma, Holland
Robert Lyons, USA
Skip Schields, USA
Sara Karoline Steinmoen, Norway
Stan Verstraete, Holland

Sudhanva Despandhe, India

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Abed Zubeidi, Board Member
Bilal Al-Saadi, Chairperson
Ibrahim Abu Khalifa, Treasurer
Imad Abu Hantash, Vice Chairperson

Jamal Al-Ghanim, Board Member
Mervat Ayyash, Board Member
Mustafa Helal Sheta, Secretary
Rami Nursi, Board Member
Susan Haj Saleh, Board Member

In addition to being registered as a non-governmental organisation under the Palestinian Authority, The Freedom Theatre is also registered as a foundation in Sweden.

The Freedom Theatre Foundation Executive Board:

Avraham Oz	Taiseer Khatib
Dror Feiler	Luisa Morgantini
Henry Ascher	Salwa Nakkara
Judith Butler	Suzanne Osten
Khulood Badawi	

The Freedom Theatre Foundation Honorary Board:

Abeer Kopty	Michel Khleifi
Elias Khoury	Noam Chomsky
Etienne Balibar	Salim Daw
Howard Brenton	Sana'a Badawi

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2016 The Freedom Theatre celebrates its 10-year anniversary. This milestone will characterize the year, as we plan a series of events centred on cultural resistance. During March 21 to April 1, we will invite friends and comrades from around the world to join us for workshops, performances, cultural activism, networking, discussion forums and much more.

In January, The Freedom Theatre will continue the Freedom Jatha tour in India, performing in ten cities across the country together with street theatre group Jana Natya Manch. In April, Jana Natya Manch will join us in Palestine for a tour of the co-production Hamesha Samida.

Our Theatre School students will also travel to Jordan in a collaborative project with Ashtar Theatre, where we will perform and hold workshops in Palestinian refugee camps.

In the new year we hope to further progress our plans of establishing a comprehensive **child centre** with many different activities for children, that can also meet local needs for day-care.

We will present new **photography exhibitions** made by our photography students. We also hope to publish a **text and photography book** about The Freedom Theatre.