

Israeli-vandalized West Bank's Freedom Theater nominated for Nobel Peace Prize



Ramallah, February 14 (RHC)--Peppered with Israeli shrapnel and bullets, the occupied West Bank's Freedom Theater has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize with Palestinians hoping that the iconic cultural haven still generates resistance through art from within the Jenin refugee camp.

The once vibrant and lively Palestinian community-based theater and cultural center was ransacked and vandalized during several days of barbaric airstrikes and ground assault by the Israeli regime against the 24,000-person refugee camp.

The Freedom Theater was the beating heart of peace and hope inside the crowded camp but it stopped due to the attacks, while its walls were disfigured by numerous gunshot holes and scrawled with the Star of David.

During a raid on the theater house in December, the Israeli military also shot from inside, destroying the offices and knocking down a wall of the building that houses the theater.

In a statement on its official account on Tuesday, the Freedom Theater announced that it was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

"We continue to be inspired by the vision of our co-founders, Juliano Mer Khamis, murdered in 2011, and Zakaria Zubeidi, currently held in Israeli occupation prison. Together, they dreamed of a new generation of artists who, from the heart of Jenin Camp, would raise their voices against discrimination, occupation and oppression. Our movement of children, youth, women and men continues to grow stronger, despite continued invasions in Jenin Camp and attacks on our theater," it said.

After raiding the camp and vandalizing the Freedom Theater, Israeli soldiers took away a number of the theater authorities after being blindfolded and handcuffed. All were released later except producer Mustafa Sheta who is still in Israeli detention.

"Today marks two months since our producer, Mustafa Sheta, was taken by the Israeli Army and imprisoned without trial or charge. Mustafa is one of many in our team who have sacrificed their liberation for the goal of freedom of expression for all," the statement further said.

Freedom Theater in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin now bears the painful marks of vandalism by occupation forces and is a powerful witness to Zionist barbarism. The military raid on the internationally renowned Palestinian cultural center came amid Israel's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip, which has already killed more than 28,500 people.

Since the regime launched its deadly campaign in the coastal Gaza Strip on October 7, arbitrary military raids have also increased in the occupied West Bank, with hundreds of people killed.

"As daily massacres take place in Gaza, invasions continue in the West Bank, and Palestinians face persecution from the river to the sea, we urge everyone to call for an end to the genocide of Palestinians and to stand up for equality, justice and liberation," the statement said.

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