



We're building a world where Palestine is liberated and all are free

Eyewitness Palestine's monthly Newsletters are back and we are focusing on Palestine's deep-rooted beauty, from art to food and everything in-between. Kicking off this month is Akka, a breath-taking northern port city along the Mediterranean Sea. Inside of its historic walls, which have protected the city for hundreds of years, Akka is bursting with life, art, and culture. Despite the occupation, Palestinians in Akka are particularly well-known for their determined spirits and steadfastness and a local arts scene that embodies that spirit.



AKKA ARTIST HIGHLIGHT:

A CONVERSATION WITH KHER FODY OF WALLA'AT BAND

By Moureen Kaki

Kher Fody is the vocalist, composer, lyricist, *and* percussionist for the Palestinian band, [Walla'at](#). As though that isn't enough creative range for one person, Fody is also a poet, a title that becomes obvious when you listen to the band's lyrics. His songs are loaded with references and dedication to the liberation of Palestine, while sometimes sprinkling in sarcasm and humor. Based in occupied Akka, Fody and the Walla'at Band use their music to pay homage to the resilience of the people of their hometown. Inspired by artists and creatives in his own family, Fody has always found himself drawn to music. Fody credits his late Uncle Khamis Jaber Fody, who is considered by locals to be the founder of Akka's underground music scene, as one of his many inspirations to pursue art. He recalls the voice of his mother, a storyteller and singer, who would sing in synchronization with the movements of the afternoon coffee she would brew when Fody returned home from school.

With a range of art talents waiting to be showcased, Fody left school and at 17 and rented a house in Akka, determined to launch his career as an artist. There was no shortage of artistic fuel: "I'm a musician because of the pain," he shared in reference to the occupation of Palestine broadly, but also with respect to how it affected Akka. "[Residents of Akka] evacuated the city in the late 1970's and I lost all of my neighbors, who were like family to me, because people couldn't afford to maintain their houses, many of which were built during the times of the Ottoman Empire and over 400 years." His own experience with dilapidated housing led to some of his first experiences of composing music. "During the winter," Fody recalled, "my mama placed different pots—copper, plastic, aluminum, stainless steel, whatever—to catch the droplets of water from the leaking roof and in order for me to sleep, I had to compose a kind of percussion concert in my head. And this is how I became a percussionist."

Throughout my conversation with Fody, a common theme emerged: family and community. He spoke of the strong feelings of kinship that is innate to the community of Akka. When asked about the inspiration behind the band's lyrics, Fody's answer was simple, "It's the people," he said, "We are an inspired nation. We love life. As long as you are Palestinian, you are *stubborn* because a Palestinian will never surrender their identity."

One of Walla'at's most popular songs, translated to "If They Drank the Sea," sings about the importance of Akka residents not selling Akka [to Zionists], even if it may seem easier. When asked whether this is still the message he sends to his community, Fody said yes and added: "This is my home, my family, and my life. It is better for me to stay in Akka. Akka is my blood, my sense, my neighbors, my thoughts and feelings, and my heart. If I walk out into the city, and my neighbor sees me, they can tell if I'm upset. They can

smell it. Without even knowing what's wrong, they can comfort and support you. This is Akka."

Fody has met with delegations of visitors to Palestine in the past and shared his opinion on the importance of delegations, "To learn, you have to be uncomfortable. It might cost you a little bit because it is painful, but if you are curious, you have to be willing to leave your comfort zone and then you can really have empathy and understand what happens in Palestine."

You can keep up with Kher Fody via his [website](#) or [Instagram](#).

ART AND CULTURE IN AKKA



Nawaya Gallery & Cafe

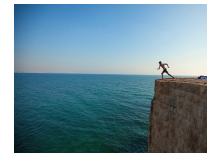
NAWAYA is an independent initiative that was created with the help of a collective of artists. Historically, the space was a famous bookstore for the whole region that was established in 1959 in the Old City of Akka. This project seeks to support and motivate our local designers and artists while creating a cultural and artistic scene that could gain visibility on local and international levels.

[Follow Nawaya Gallery on Instagram](#) to learn more about their work.



Hummous by the Seashore

Looking for good places to eat next time you're in Palestine? Look no further than Abu-Sohil's hummous shop nestled inside the city walls of Akka which serves up delicious hummous with a spectacular view. Run by two sisters--Soheila and Miriam, Abu-Sohil's or "Sohila's" as it's called by local Akka residents, has become internationally known for their hummous and fuul, a deliciously tangy fava bean dip. [Check them out on Trip Advisor](#) and be sure to stop by for a dip next time you visit Palestine!



Recommended Watch: *It's Better to Jump*

If you're interested in learning more about Akka through the lens of art and culture, then check out the 2014 film *It's Better to Jump - The Story of Akka* (2015). Awarded "Best International Documentary Feature" by the Oaxaca International Film Festival, *It's Better to Jump* brings the harsh realities of occupation to screens by illuminating the cultural erasure of Palestinian Arabs native to this ancient seaside city. You can [watch the trailer and find a stream link to the film here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Be sure to stay tuned for the following programs! Click on each link to learn more about our upcoming events.

ART UNDER OCCUPATION

AN OPEN CONVERSATION WITH PALESTINIANS ABOUT THE BEAUTY AND STRUGGLE OF ART UNDER OCCUPATION.

THURSDAY, SEP 21, 2023

12:00 PM (ET)

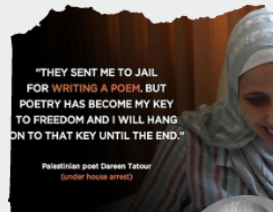
9:00 AM (PT)



SLIMAN MANSOUR
ARTIST



KHER FODY
MUSICIAN & ARTIST



DAREEN TATOOR
POET & PHOTOGRAPHER



SALEH BAKRI
ACTOR



YAZID SADI
GALLERY OWNER & TALENT MANAGER



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Scan Here to Register

- "Art Under Occupation" - The second installment of our monthly educational Zoom series which will feature Palestinian creatives like Sliman Mansour, Saleh Bakri & more. Register below to join us on Thursday, September 21 at 12 noon ET/ 9am PT.

Register here for the Art Under Occupation Event

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