

After ten years of managing Kayan Feminist Organization

2023 – 2013


After ten years of managing Kayan Feminist Organization, and managing the community department for seven years prior, I can say that that the time has come for renewal and reinvention. Making this decision is not easy for me, as my time at Kayan has been the most impactful experience for both my professional and personal life. Kayan has been my greenhouse, it is where I've learned, explored myself, and developed. I've accompanied the organization and its growth, with all the achievements and challenges we've witnessed, over many years.

After this long journey, I am confident that renewal is the most appropriate next step for me, as well as Kayan, whose continued survival, giving, and progress I remain whole-heartedly dedicated towards. Every organization needs to revitalize and grow, and for me personally, it will be a time to discover and create a new future.

It is important for leaders to make room for others, to pass the radiant torch so that it can shine to its brightest potential. I am one of those who believe that our journey towards social justice requires courageous steps, steps that allow new energy to come in for creation and innovation. I also believe that a hand that closes a door out of love will opens other doors to new life.

Six months ago, I informed the staff and board of my decision to step down as general director. Kayan is in my heart. I am strongly attached to the organization, its work, and its vision. What has made my decision even harder, despite my love for Kayan, is that it was always clear to me: I will not be a director for more than 10 years. As I have said, this is the correct step for Kayan and for the crucial work that continues.

It has been my honor to work with Kayan's staff and board, who have been and remain dedicated to our society, the Palestinian cause, women's struggle for achieving their rights in our extremely complex context where we face discrimination from both the State and society, and to Kayan's work for bringing about social change predicated upon justice and equality. While the team continues to face immense challenges, I know that they will remain steadfast in their work, as despite the professional and personal backlash they've faced from the society and State, always remained willing to learn and continue. My respect and admiration for this perseverance is something I always carry with me, and is the foundation for Kayan's continued success. Similarly, Kayan's board has been a body of dignified and courageous leaders who are fully involved in Kayan and have supported our team professionally and emotionally. Kayan's board has faced difficult decisions in times of crisis with wisdom and foresight, which makes all of our work possible, is instrumental to Kayan's progress, and ensures that we work in a safe and secure environment.



Palestinian women's status, security, and freedom. Despite struggling against extreme forms of patriarchy and inequality, we have consistently succeeded to put Palestinian women's rights on the national and international agenda, and have succeeded to show the relationship between national/political issues and the issues facing women. In this reality we cannot isolate gender-inequality and the issues facing women from national issues, political issues, and from ending the occupation. Another important point of progress has been developing our approach to change, in which we work directly with our right holders, Palestinian women. Kayan has created a grassroots women and youth movement that takes the lead within their local communities and nationally through the Jusur Forum of Arab Women leaders, a national group of Palestinian women representing each of the local groups that Kayan has trained, empowered, and supported in their local activism. This grassroots work is a cornerstone of Kayan, and has been an enormous and worthwhile investment from all of our staff, as we see tangible change in the field with Palestinian women's leadership taking hold. Finally, we are so proud of the regional work we've begun with groups like the Fada coalition. Uniting with our Palestinian sisters in addressing common cross-border obstacles to gender-equality and security has amplified the solidarity and effectiveness of the movement for Palestinian women's rights, as we face a shared struggle against the oppression of patriarchy and occupation. Finally, Kayan staff have worked around the clock to respond to the needs in the field. Through our hotline we ensure that no woman is left behind, and that in moments of real crisis women have a safe place to turn to for support and resources. Recently, we've also managed to promote a critical message to our society: women's rights are a common social issue, not just a women's issue. From this message we've brought more men and youth into our work, which sets momentum for deeper levels of lasting change.

For the past four months, the board has been active in recruiting a new director. After a long and deep process, we are very happy to announce that we unanimously selected Nisreen Tabare. Nisreen has been a member of Kayan's staff since 2020. She quickly took a leading role, working in the field, running our emergency hotline, and heading our volunteer network. Nisreen's dedication, organization, aptitude for leadership, and passion for social justice and Palestinian women's rights will serve Kayan well in this new chapter. As we go through a very difficult time as Palestinians living in Israel during a human rights catastrophe, I still remain confident that Nisreen will carry the torch far and keep it shining bright, that she will bring progress and innovation to Kayan, and that she will be a kind, wise, and discerning leader for the organization. Please feel free to contact Nisreen for all matters related to Kayan.

In gratitude and solidarity,

Rafah Anabtawy
15.12.2023