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Kayan Feminist Organization Premieres its Documentary “Bridge of Return”

Amid Large Public Attendance

Amid a large public presence in the unrecognized Village of Al-Zarnouq, Kayan Feminist Organization held a premiere on Tuesday for its documentary “Bridge of Return.” The film was directed by Essam Billan and produced by Kayan Feminist Organization. The film tells the story of two ancient cities, the historic cities of Safad in the north of Palestine and Bir Al-Saba’ in the south. The film narrates personal stories told by the displaced generations of the Nakba. These personal stories intertwine with the national cause adding a human face to the political aspect of the Palestinian narrative. The film specifically focuses on the stories of women by highlighting their role, narrative, and suffering which has long been absent from the written and oral historic narrative. The film aims to pass on these stories to younger generations, who continue to dive into the history pages and remnants of memories to find the root of these stories and ascribe a path for the long-awaited return.

The screening took place in the unrecognized village of Al-Zarnouq (Abu Qwaidar) located in the southern Naqab region. The participants attended a tour in the village, allowing them to see the ruins of the demolished homes in the vicinity of the Village, which is the home of 6,000 residents.

As the public gathered after the tour, Ms. Nisreen Tabari, the Coordinator of the project “Generations Inheriting Memory and Covenant” spoke of the importance of this project that aims to empower women by giving them a better understanding of history. This knowledge allows them to understand the current policies that continue to target Palestinians in their homeland with the objective of displacing them through demolitions and confiscation of their lands. This leaves no doubt that the Nakba is still ongoing to this day.

Attorney Alhan Nahhas- Dawoud delivered Kayan Organization’s speech to talk about Kayan’s role in promoting the role of women in the Palestinian society. She added that the film is another step in the project “Women on the Path of Return”, which has been implemented for years by the Organization. The project aims to empower the discourse on the right of displaced and refugees to return and raise

awareness of the role of Palestinian women to voice out their historically ignored voices and to increase women's awareness and mission in the national struggle.

Mayyadh and Mohammad Abu Qwaider, the hosts of this event, talked about the resilience of the inhabitants of the village and their determination to disclose the Israeli narrative, which depicts them as clans or tribes. The area is called "Abu Qwaider Clan", while the inhabitants insist the name is Al-Zarnouq, which is the historical name of this unrecognized village. Mayyada reiterated, "we are here, we are present and resilient, even if the state does not recognize us, our existence cannot be effaced".

After the speeches, the film was screened, and the public was invited to listen to the stories of the protagonists. Essam Billan, the film director, stated that the film relied on a dialogue between the characters as opposed to conducting separate interviews with each of them. By using this technique, the memories and dreams of the characters are woven together into a visual narrative that weaves the entire film. Furthermore, the activist Huda Abu Obaid, who belongs to the third generation of Palestinian displaced in the Nakba, narrates the story of being uprooted and the difficulties of adjusting to this situation, which brought the displaced persons to the verge of hunger. Furthermore, Nisreen Tabary, from Kayan Organization, talked about her personal experience in looking for the protagonists who took part in the film and explained the difficulties she faced. She focused on the voice of women in the narrative of Palestinian history.

Following this event, Kayan paid tribute to the characters that participated in the film, starting with Ms. Amena Hlehel, whom the film was dedicated to. She was displaced from Qadita, near Safad, at the age of twenty-seven. She conveyed a message to us to continue to persevere and passed away two months before the film was screened. The other participants were also honored for their magnificent contributions to the film's production including Mr. Saeed Al-Safadi, Ms. Basma El-Sana', Dr. Johnny Mansour, Ms. Ibtisam Hlehel, Dr. Mansour Nasasrah, Ms. Ayah Sarryeh, and Ms. Amjad Issa. Kayan Organization wishes to thank journalist Sana Hammoud for her reading of the poem "Safad" by poet Salem Jubran.

"Bridge of Return" is a production of the "Generations Inherit Memory and Covenant" Project. It links various Palestinian generations of those that lived through the Nakba and displacement and the following generations to conserve its memory and keep it alive until the right of return becomes a reality while also focusing on the stories and role of women. Kayan will screen the film in other locations over the next months, including displaced and existing Palestinian towns. The film was produced with funding from the Arab Fund for Economic & Social Development and supervised by Taawon Association.