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No one is free, until everyone is free. How do actions for Palestine fit into the mission of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network

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No one is free, until everyone is free¹

How the actions for Palestine align with the goals of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network

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Abstract

Faithful to the principles of freedom, justice and the defence of human rights, the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr) aligns its Palestine-related activities with its goal of using theatre as a means of social transformation. Since 2010, TENet-Gr has participated in international campaigns, such as *The Gaza Monologues* by ASHTAR Theatre, and has developed educational and artistic programmes that amplify Palestinian voices. By establishing the “4 Colours” group, the organisation has reinforced its support for The Freedom Theatre and the Cultural Intifada movement. It has held, and continues to hold, public readings, online screenings and other solidarity events, and to collaborate with Palestinian artists. Through these initiatives, TENet-Gr promotes and supports cultural resistance to the settler-colonialist, apartheid and dehumanising regime that the Palestinian people have endured for over 70 years.

Keywords: *Theatre/drama, arts in education, Palestine, human rights, cultural resistance, TENet-Gr, The Freedom Theatre, Gaza Monologues, solidarity*

Introduction

According to the statute, one of the goals of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr) is to promote the exploration of approaches and techniques for using theatre as an art form and a learning tool, as well as a means of social transformation in both formal and non-formal educational settings. Social transformation involves changing societies and people for the better. For TENet-Gr, this “better” is inextricably linked to the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, self-determination, safeguarding human rights and children’s rights and solidarity.

For this reason, TENet-Gr has been organising educational programmes and various other initiatives on issues such as human rights, discrimination and refugees for two decades. In this light, the organisation could not remain indifferent to the ongoing Nakba² in Palestine (Al-Awda, 2025; United Nations, n.d.; United Nations Special Committee on Israeli Practices, 2025), a situation perpetuated either by the deafening silence of the majority of the mainstream media or by the reproduction of Zionist propaganda. In Palestine, a 19th-century Zionist plan is still in place, despite us living in the 21st century. Colonialism and an apartheid system, worse than that which existed in South Africa, are still present. There are settlements and ghettos, such as the Gaza Strip, which is reportedly the world’s largest open-air prison. This information comes from various sources, including the United Nations (n.d.), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2010), Human Rights Watch (2023) and Høvring (2018). Contemporary historians such as the Israeli scholar Ilan Pappé (2016; Avgi Newsroom, 2017) have reflected on this situation in their work, as have politicians such as the former UK Prime Minister David Cameron (Watt & Sherwood, 2010). Indeed, relatively recently, international humanitarian organisations, scientific associations and experts have argued that genocide is being committed in Gaza (Albanese, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024; International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2025; International Court of Justice, 2024).

Our concern has always been about how we could make a contribution to this cause through the arts, especially theatre and drama, to give a voice to oppressed Palestinians and reach as many people as possible.

The Gaza Monologues and a poetry anthology

The first occasion arose in 2010 when Iman Aoun, the artistic director of the Palestinian ASHTAR Theatre, invited TENet-Gr to participate in the international



campaign about *The Gaza Monologues*, based on texts written by teenagers during and after the Israeli offensive against Gaza in 2008–2009 (Ashtar Theatre, 2010; <https://www.gazamonologues.com/>).

At that time, TENet-Gr translated and published these monologues in Greece. The organisation also coordinated student performances and readings in many cities across Greece, in which thousands of students and hundreds of teachers participated. A related video was posted on the TENet-Gr YouTube channel (Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network [TENet-Gr], 2010). The translated texts were also used by theatre professionals in Greece, including Mania Papadimitriou, who directed the performance *Gaza Is... (Survival Lessons)* in 2011. Papadimitriou dedicated this performance to the memory of Juliano Mer-Khamis, who was a director, activist and the founder of The Freedom Theatre. He was murdered by Israeli occupation forces in the Palestinian city of Jenin in April 2011. Drama pedagogues and TENet-Gr members Sonia Mologousi and Iro Potamoussi (2011) authored educational material based on the performance. Two years earlier, TENet-Gr and Nisos Publications had published a bilingual (Greek and Arabic) poetry anthology by Mahmoud Darwish, titled *...να σκέφτεσαι τους άλλους...* [...Think of Others...] (2009). Proceeds from its sale covered the travel and participation expenses of two young ASHTAR Theatre actors at the TENet-Gr Theatre Summer Camp in Spetses in 2011. The actors took part in the Young Theatre Voices workshop alongside Greek peers who had performed their *Gaza Monologues* at school festivals the previous year.

The creation of the “4 Colours” group

Following the events in Gaza on 7 October 2023, several members of the TENet-Gr approached the Board of Directors with a proposal to set up a working group to address the issue of Palestine. This group would monitor developments, particularly with regard to arts and education, and study ways



to take action and establish partnerships. It would also provide advice and support to TENet-Gr members and friends throughout Greece, helping them to plan and implement theatre and drama education activities, as well as other artistic events to show solidarity with the Palestinian people. Thus, the “4 Colours”³ group was formed and continues to be active to this day. The group has played a key role in the following actions.

The Gaza Monologues in 2023

To mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2023, TENet-Gr organised public in-person and online readings of *The Gaza Monologues* in Athens, Thessaloniki and other cities. This was in response to an appeal from ASHTAR Theatre to the international arts community. Furthermore, the Northern Greece Office of TENet-Gr organised a livestreaming of the readings in Thessaloniki, which was subsequently made into a video. This video has been subtitled in English and has been made freely available on the organisation's YouTube channel for use by members, friends and anyone interested (TENet-Gr, 2024b).

Actions in solidarity with The Freedom Theatre

In December 2023, Israeli occupation forces attacked the internationally renowned Palestinian Freedom Theatre in the Jenin refugee camp for the umpteenth time, vandalising the theatre and arresting its staff. As part of an international campaign of solidarity, TENet-Gr started collecting signatures by sending an open letter to its members, friends and collaborators in Greece. This letter was addressed to individuals, organisations, foundations, artists, educators and professionals in the fields of culture and education. The letter called for the release of The Freedom Theatre staff and members of the Jenin community, as well as for the theatre to reopen. The open letter was circulated online and read out at theatres and other artistic venues.

At the same time, members of the “4 Colours” group translated *The Revolution's Promise*, a theatrical composition created by The Freedom Theatre and Artists on the Frontline (2024), into Greek. They also translated individual narratives-testimonies of Palestinian artists. These shocking texts honour cultural resistance, highlighting the scope and

absurdity of censorship, as well as the brutality of Israeli attacks against artists. The texts form part of the global artistic movement, the Cultural Intifada (<https://www.theculturalintifada.com/>), which is a form of creative resistance against occupation, apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide in Palestine. The translated texts can be found on the TENet-Gr website (<https://theatroedu.gr/>).

To celebrate World Theatre Day 2024, and as part of the solidarity campaign with The Freedom Theatre, TENet-Gr organised an online event in solidarity with The Freedom Theatre on 26 March 2024. In order to share the experiences of Palestinian artists with the widest possible audience, the event featured readings by the renowned Greek actors Orpheas Avgoustidis, George Karamichos, Maria Protopapa, Klelia Renesi and Yannis Stankoglou, as well as the rapper 12th Monkey. The readings were taken from the Greek translation of *The Revolution's Promise* (Artists on the Frontline & The Freedom Theatre, 2024). More than 500 people attended the event. We were delighted to have students from The Freedom Theatre Drama School join us online: Chantal Rizkallah, Aya Samara and Naqaa Samour. Chantal also read her prose poem, "Sounds of the Absurd" (2024).

Structured ten-minute discussions were facilitated between the readings, with participants being randomly assigned to groups of ten. The following questions were asked:

- i. Why are arts and culture such powerful tools against oppression?
- ii. Why do you think artists' work is censored?
- iii. How does the personal testimony you heard differ from what we hear and read about Palestine, the Palestinians and the Israeli occupation in the Western media?
- iv. Are you aware of any other cases in history where boycott strategies have been used against states other than Israel? Why do you think the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement could be an effective tactic? Where could you read a testimony monologue? In your workplace, classroom, theatre group or student club? Elsewhere?
- vii. Is there a possibility for you to arrange a public reading of the full theatrical piece, *The Revolution's Promise*, in your area?
- viii. In what other ways can we demonstrate our tangible support for Palestine?

In solidarity with the Freedom Theatre, local TENet-Gr offices organised numerous in-person events across various cities. These events, held in

collaboration with educational and artistic organisations, featured materials from *The Revolution's Promise* and *The Gaza Monologues*, as well as poems by Darwish (2009).

Online screening of the documentary film *Where the Olive Trees Weep*

Deeply convinced that knowledge is power, TENet-Gr organised a public online screening of the documentary film *Where the Olive Trees Weep* (2024), directed by Maurizio and Zaya Benazzo. The screening took place on 27 June 2024 and was organised in collaboration with the educational group Skasiarcho, the Greek branch of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS Greece)⁵ and the feminist organisation To Mov.⁶ The film is part of a wider project examining colonial trauma in communities around the world. It documents the lives of Palestinians under Israeli occupation, shedding light on the pain, intergenerational trauma and resilience resulting from displacement, home demolitions, the destruction of farmland, water deprivation, the denial of basic human rights and imprisonment. The film also raises moral questions about justice and freedom, asking what makes the oppressor so blind to their own brutality. The film's central figures are Ashira Darwish, a Palestinian journalist, activist and therapist; Ahed Tamimi, a Palestinian activist; Amira Hass, an Israeli journalist; and Dr Gabor Maté, a Hungarian-Canadian Jewish physician and author who is internationally recognised for his work on the relationship between mental and physical health. He offers therapeutic sessions to female victims of torture in Israeli prisons.

Following the online screening of the film, there was a discussion with Ashira Darwish and Themis Tzimas. A lawyer with a PhD in Public Law and Political Science from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece, Tzimas writes articles and gives public speeches analysing the legal dimensions of Palestinian resistance based on international law.

With the Palestinian artist group "We" in Gaza

In line with TENet-Gr's ongoing commitment to amplifying Palestinian voices, the Northern Greece Office collaborated with the recently established Palestinian arts collective "We", who had been displaced from northern to southern Gaza at the time, to celebrate World Drama/Theatre & Education Day 2024. The group was invited to participate in the day conference virtually to present their work. The group comprises Fidaa Ziad, an educator and writer who is responsible for the group's public



representation; Alaa Al Jabari, a visual artist and digital graphic designer; and Mahdi Karira, a puppeteer and theatre director. We spoke to them live about how the group formed, the writing, art and puppetry workshops they hold in Gaza and their experiences as educators and artists during the ongoing war against Gaza. More than 200 members and friends of TENet-Gr attended the online presentation and discussion in person and remotely. The video footage is available on YouTube (TENet-Gr, 2024a).

Making use of the material: More actions

The freely accessible translated texts and videos provided several TENet-Gr members with an opportunity to express their creativity by designing original artistic and drama education activities for children and adults. These activities were either implemented as events organised by TENet-Gr local

offices, or in collaboration with other local artistic organisations as part of larger initiatives. Examples include anti-racism festivals in Chios, Athens, Thessaloniki and Kalamata, a feminist festival in Athens and interventions in Patras, Corfu and elsewhere.

At the same time, and continuing to do so, TENet-Gr responded to invitations from other cultural and artistic bodies to participate in discussions and present artistic and drama-based practices in solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people. In this context, TENet-Gr participated in the newly established Cultural Network for Palestine-Greece conference in Athens in April 2025. The author presented a paper titled "So That Their Voices Be Heard!"

This text will conclude with the voice of Mustafa Sheta, The Freedom Theatre's production manager, who wrote a letter of gratitude entitled "From Jenin with Love". The letter was written on 12 April this

year, a few days after his release from prison. It was addressed to TENet-Gr in response to their open letter of solidarity and petition demanding his release. Mustafa chose this particular date – the 19th anniversary of the founding of The Freedom Theatre – to pay tribute to the sacrifices of martyr Juliano Mer Khamis and freedom fighter Zakaria Zubeidi, and to honour the efforts of all those who support the theatre. He writes, “We will continue our journey, even though our theatre in the refugee camp is now closed and occupied by snipers and cruel soldiers of the occupation. I am here, ready and steadfast, and I will continue”.

The “4 Colours” group is also here, along with members and friends of TENet-Gr. We will continue to plan and implement training and solidarity actions for Palestine, collaborating with individuals and organisations that share our goals and vision.

Translated from Greek by Nassia Choleva



Photos by Christos Zikos, Hara Tsoukala and Nikos Govas

Notes

1. A shorter version of this text was published in the weekly supplement *Skasiarcheio* (Truancy) in the *Efimerida ton Syntakton* newspaper on 6 August 2024.
2. The term “Nakba” (meaning catastrophe in Arabic) refers to the displacement of around 700,000 Palestinians from their homes in 1948 during the establishment of the State of Israel, the destruction of over 400 Palestinian villages, and the onset of the Palestinian refugee crisis. The concept of the ongoing Nakba encompasses not only the 1948 expulsion, but also the ongoing violence, loss of territory, displacement, and denial of the right to return that Palestinians have experienced since then.
3. All TEN-et-Gr members are welcome to participate in the “4 Colours” group. More information are available here: <https://shorturl.at/TLvAT>
4. The educational group *Skasiarcheio* (Truancy) is a collective of educators and creators. It aims to promote a public school that compensates for inequalities, with a political character; a community school in which critical and institutional pedagogy will find their place. To find out more, you can visit: <https://synathina.gr>
5. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is a global campaign of peaceful resistance launched by Palestinian civil society organisations in 2005. The movement promotes boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel with the aim of ending the occupation, the apartheid system and discrimination in historic Palestine.
6. To Mov (The Purple) is a Greek feminist collective that campaigns against the violence and exploitation of women.

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