**Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre**

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Named after the educator, essayist, political commentator, poet, and diarist Khalil Sakakini (1878- 1953), Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre (KSCC) was founded in May 1996 in a three-story heritage house in Ramallah, Palestine. The Palestinian Ministry of Culture (PMC) restored the building and managed and funded the KSCC up until May 1998, the date when the KSCC became a non-profit and non-governmental organization. The PMC used the KSCC building as a gallery for showcasing Palestinian cultural artifacts and art, but since it acquired the new legal status, the KSCC has quickly garnered attention and evolved into a world-renowned cultural hub. It has attracted artists, writers, scholars, performers, and cultural ambassadors from around the globe. The KSCC’s primary objectives, however, revolve around the national scene: in addition to introducing non-Palestinians to the history of the land, the people, and the conflict through Palestinian eyes, collective memory, and imaginative work, the KSCC aspires to “promote art and culture in the Palestinian society, through actions committed to the encouragement of creativity and the enhancement of the aesthetic in everyday life,” “nurturing the visual arts,” “recording and disseminating Palestinian narrative,” and “energizing cultural life.” In celebrating Palestinian cultural heritage, artistic productions, and identity, the KSCC aims to “help overcome some of the burdens of [the Israeli military] occupation, such as isolation, and hopelessness,” and to aid in the Palestinian collective effort of “building a democratic and prosperous Palestinian homeland,” according to the KSCC mission statement (n. p.).

To that end, the KSCC regularly organizes book signings, concerts, art exhibits, literary events, film screenings, photography exhibitions, public readings, literary conferences, seminars, creative writing workshops, open studios, musical performances, and children’s activities. Some of its past events were co-organized with other cultural centers, foundations, and official cultural bodies including the French Cultural Centre, Al-Ma’mal Foundation for Contemporary Art, the A. M. Qattan Foundation, the Goethe Institute, the Franco-German Cultural Centre, Tamer Institute for Education, the Palestinian Theatre League, and the Palestinian Ministry of Culture. To stimulate, and draw support for, the Palestinian literary and artistic scenes, which constantly suffer as a result of systematic military Israeli attacks on Palestinian educational and cultural sectors, the KSCC regularly invites artists to exhibit, literary authors to read, dancers and musicians to perform, and commentators to lecture on art and literature. In addition to Ernest Pignon-Ernest, Mahmoud Dabdoub, Andrea Esswein, Dominik Mentzos, Bernd Uhlig, Gert Weigelt, Peter Welz, Iyad Sabbah, and Véronique Vercheval, local and international artists Rasheed Quraishi, Raouf Al-Krai, Edward Salem, Joumana Manna, Vera Tamari, Samia Halaby, Suliman Mansour, Eduardo Castalado, **Valerie Jouve, Djamel Tatah,** Bashar Alhroub, Vibeke Jerichau and Karen Ozmec exhibited their works at the KSCC. Similarly, the KSCC hosted literary readings from Mahmoud Darwish, Ahdaf Soueif, Janna Teller, Teju Cole, Haifa Zangana, Sahar Khalifa, Suheir Hammad, Ibrahim Nasrallah, Ahmad Harb, Amer Badran, Dalia Taha, Maya Abu Al-Hayat, Zakaria Mohammed, Shaker Al Loabi, Manar Harb, **Raja Shehadeh, Rema Hammami, Penny Johnson, and Rana Shereen Barakat. According to Adila** Laïdi-Hanieh**, famous musicians Khaled and Samir Gibran performed at the KSCC. The** KSCC was also visited by a number of celebrities, including the actor Richard Gere and President Yasser Arafat (46). During the 2002 Israeli military reoccupation of Ramallah, among other Palestinian cities, the KSCC suffered substantial damage after Israeli troops stormed the building using high-detonation explosives.

Since 2003, the KSCC has been housing Khalil Sakakini’s intellectual belongings in the form of books, personal items, and volumes of diaries. Sakakini is known for founding the Wataniyya School in 1925 and the Nahda College in 1938. Both were important educational institutions that served Palestinian students up until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Following the Nakbah, Israel confiscated both buildings and stripped them of their function as educational institutions. Like hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were forced out of Palestine, Sakakini became a displaced person. He went to Egypt and gradually participated in its cultural and intellectual scene. There, Sakakini became acquainted with the famous Taha Hussein who recommended him for a membership in the Arabic Language Academy. Sakakini died in 1953and was buried in Egypt. Following in the footsteps of Sakakini, the KSCC seeks to educate the world about Palestine, connect Palestinians to the rest of the world through art and culture, and protect Palestinian culture and memory from forgetfulness and erasure.

**Bibliography:**

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