



مركز مساواة لحقوق المواطنين العرب في اسرائيل
Mossawa Center The Advocacy Center For
Arab Citizens In Israel

Building Tomorrow's Activists: The Mossawa Center's Youth Human Rights Seminar



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Tuesday, July 27, marked the opening of the Youth Human Rights Seminar, a five-day long series of workshops and activities organized by the Mossawa Center and the Committee for Educational Guidance for Arab Students, in the Carmel Community Center in Haifa.



“The purpose of the workshops is to support and empower the Palestinian Arab youth to become future leaders in our society, and to strengthen their sense of belonging to their culture, background, and community,” said Mossawa Center’s Civil Society Coordinator, Ali Ali Saleh. The seminar was attended by 50 participants from various Arab localities and mixed cities, ranging from ages 15 to 18, with the purpose of building a strong network of young activists by breaking barriers and stereotypes.

DAY 1



participants took part in team building exercises to get them acquainted with each other and familiarize them with the schedule for the seminar. They were welcomed by Mossawa Center staff and the instructors who will be working with them. Mossawa Center Executive Director Suha Salman Mousa introduced the students to the work of the Mossawa Center, specifically its

parliamentary, economic, social, and cultural advocacy at the national and international level.



Afterwards, Mossawa Center founder and General Director Jafar Farah led a workshop in which we introduced the students to important historical events for Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel such as Land Day and the Kafr Qassem Massacre, as well as figures such as Palestinian Arab writer and historian Boulos Farah. He also spoke with them about legal and international advocacy.

In the second part of the day, producer Baher Eghbaria led a workshop on film production and filmmaking aimed at refining participants' visual, artistic, and cultural skills. Eghbaria also urged the participants to watch cultural films and shows to further develop their critical and intellectual capabilities.



DAY 2



The group visited the Knesset, where they had the chance to sit and meet one-on-one with Palestinian Arab Knesset Members including MK's Ayman Odeh, Aida Touma-Sliman, Sami Abu Shehadeh, Walid Taha, and Osama Sa'adi. They were introduced to what parliamentary work was like and learned about parliamentary advocacy.

The Knesset Members spoke with the students about numerous issues including the demolitions in the Bedouin village of al-Araqeeb, Palestinian Arab village of Jisr AzZarqa (the poorest locality in Israel), education, welfare, and discriminatory legislation such as the Citizenship Law which recently expired following the Knesset's failure to renew it. A group of participants were also given the chance to visit the Israeli Supreme Court and learn about the judicial system in the country, as well as sit in on a court session.





The Mossawa Center youth group was hosted by a Jerusalemite youth group, organized by the Burj Al-Luqluq Association, who introduced them to some of the landmarks of the Old City, as well as the activities of local youth and women's civil society organizations. The two youth groups met with each other and talked about their individual experiences, where one student spoke of an incident in which he was wrongfully detained while another spoke of the countless pressures and obstacles they face while living in Jerusalem.

A third student spoke about parents' fear for the safety of their children due to the erosion of a sense of safety in public spaces. She spoke of the fact that any student or minor may be subjected to harassment, assault, and violence by Israeli police, border patrol, or the military without provocation and with impunity. One student also discussed the suffocating situation in the Naqab (Negev), where the Bedouin community, especially in the al-Araqeeb village, face constant repression by Israeli authorities through home demolitions and land confiscation. At

the end of the session it was agreed to schedule more sessions between the Jerusalem youth group and the one participating in the Mossawa Center's seminar in the near future.

They were accompanied by Dauod Al-Ghoul who explained the connection between the events occurring inside the Old City and Al-Aqsa Mosque and the policy of dispossession and forced displacement throughout the Palestinian Arab neighborhoods in the city, as well as the settlement activity happening in places such as Silwan.

DAY 3

The group met with the staff at the British Embassy to understand the role of the international community in the region. The meeting was attended by the embassy's political advisor, Samar Hawila Bisharat, as well as the embassy's political and educational staff. The participants learned about the importance of diplomatic relations, the work of the British Embassy in the country, and of projects the embassy is working on with the Palestinian Arab community.



Mossawa Center Executive Director and Friends of Mossawa Director Suha Salman Mousa gave the participants a chance to raise positions, issues, and questions that concern them to the embassy staff. The participants discussed with and debated the British Embassy staff on the UK's position regarding the Palestinian struggle, the struggle of al-Araqueeb, the impoverishment of Jisr AzZarqa, the Citizenship Law, and other issues relating to human rights.

Following the visit to the embassy, the group visited the cities of Jaffa and Haifa where they visited local landmarks and discovered the various projects being worked on in the Jaffa Theatre.

DAY 4

On the fourth day, the participants took a tour through the city of Haifa where they visited landmarks and historical sites. They also visited Palestinian Arab neighborhoods like Wadi Nisnas whose residents refuse to move out in order to keep their active Palestinian Arab presence in the city. They learned not only the rich Palestinian history of Haifa, but also the importance of perseverance in the struggle for equality, justice, and human rights.

Following the Haifa tour, the participants visited the Musawa News Channel headquarters, where they had the opportunity to meet with journalist Firas Khatib who spoke with the students about media and news production and a small group even visited the control room.

The day culminated with an evening talk with Palestinian Arab political and social activist Nabiha Murkus who spoke of her life's work in the political, social, and cultural spheres in Palestinian Arab society. When asked who her role model is, Murkus said "my people are my role model." She spoke of her challenging the cultural and social norms at the time by being politically active, while at the same talking about the difficulty of raising a family when you are so active in such a way.





Mais Saleh, a participant in the program, said, “she is a role model and leader to us and showed us all the importance of holding on to our identity and culture. We used to think that we were socially and politically aware, but after these workshops I realized just how much we still have to learn and explore. These workshops have expanded my horizons and I see the world and community around me in a wholly different way.” Another participant, Baraa Arooq, said, “we are different people now. We understand ourselves and others and know how to deal with people around us. We now have the tools, skills, and capabilities to lead our community in the future.”

DAY 5



The students took part in a lecture with journalist Wael Awad, the participants learned about media and journalism. Awad gave them nuanced arguments against remaining neutral and the importance of taking a stance on critical issues when reporting on them. Awad talked about the power of the media in manipulating public opinion. He focused particularly on incitement in the media against certain groups, something that is very common in Israel against its Palestinian Arab citizens. At the same time, he explained the importance of fact-based reporting and identifying false or misleading reporting.



This was also the day of the closing ceremony, where all the participants presented their groups' initiatives and projects for social change in their own communities. Prior to the ceremony, there was a workshop for them to develop and finalize their project proposals. Participants worked with Mossawa Center staff to tackle various aspects of the projects, including scope, funding, and mission. The projects ranged from cultural workshops and events aimed at strengthening a unified sense of identity and political consciousness to opening safe spaces for members of the LGBTQ+ community in Palestinian Arab society. The proposed projects were presented to Mossawa Center staff and board members, and the Mossawa Center intends to follow up with this network of future leaders to implement such projects in the community.



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