



Culture in Spite of the Pandemic & Lockdowns

**Annual Report of
the Arab Culture Association
2020**

Introduction

2020 was filled with challenges faced by cultural organizations and workers; the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic around the world, which resulted in imposing restrictions on freedom of movement and closure of public venues. This challenge represented an opportunity for the Arab Culture Association (ACA) to think about how to deal with cultural work during crises, and the attempt to appropriate cultural work to novel conditions if any pandemic is to occur.

When many of our 2020 annual pre-planned programs were canceled, we were able to create new plans in short period time that fit the new requirements, believing in the importance of our work and our vision of providing independent Palestinian culture, fortifying the national Palestinian identity and working with youth, students, and different groups.

Because we care about a Palestinian Arab society which preserves its cultural heritage and has aspirations of freedom, cultural self-governance, creativity and giving back, we continued our activities in spite of the difficult conditions, and to continue in the journey of the Arab Culture Association (ACA) in building artistic and literary abilities, and bridging relationships with Palestinians everywhere, Arabs regionally, and internationally, and networking with the cultural sector according to standards preserving belonging, creativity, historical narrative, and professionally.

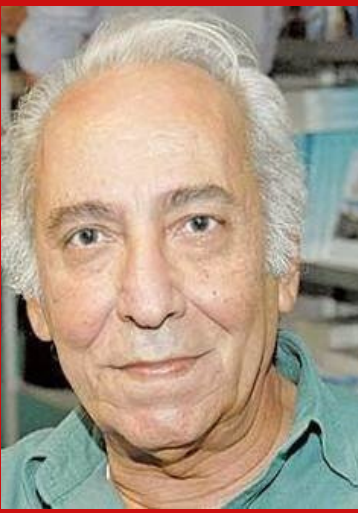
Celebrating Writers, Academics & Artists

In 2020, we honored a group of Palestinian writers, academics and artists as appreciation for their literature, research and produced artwork.

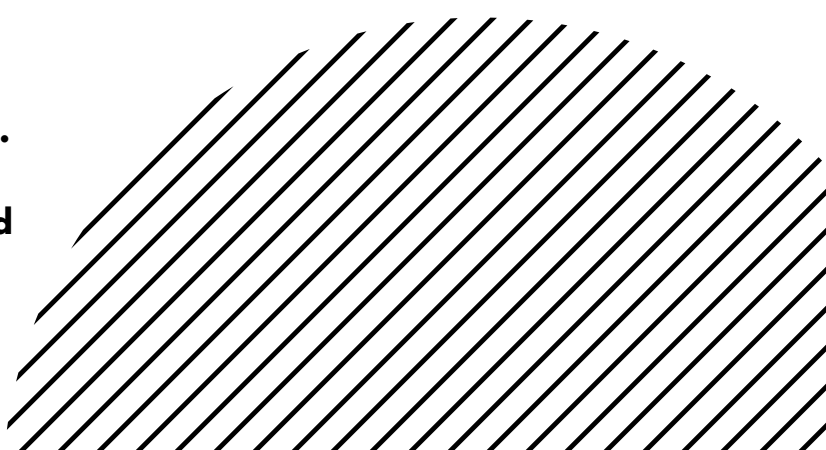


- Celebrating Palestinian Writer Shikha Hilweh in a special evening in Haifa, after her short story collection “AlTalbia” won AlMultaka Prize. Reem Ghanaeim and Hisham Nafaa participated in the event. [Watch.](#)
- Celebrating Palestinian poet Dr. Ayman Egbariya, in a poetry evening in Haifa after the second edition of his collection of poems “Clothespins” was released. The evening included poetic readings performed by artist Amer Hlehel, while Artist Alaa’ Azzam played the Oud. Introductions and discussion was done by Dr. Aida Fahmawi. [Watch.](#)
- We were happy to host a special event organized by Mada Al-Carmel Arab Center for Applied Social Studies, celebrating the released of Palestinian researcher Dr. Nadira Shalhoub Kevorkian’s book titled “Incarcerated Childhood and the Politics of Unchilding”, which is a study that Shalhoub conducted by interviewing Palestinian children living under the Israeli colonial reality. [Watch.](#)

At the early stages of the Corona Virus pandemic, we transformed all our events to virtual symposiums and lectures so that we continue to reach our supporters and reach a bigger audience. This allowed us to celebrate the works of writers and researchers in Palestine and abroad. We organized many virtual events for our annual Book Fair and AlMadina Festival for Culture and the Arts.



- During our annual Book Fair, we hosted Palestinian Artist Nabil Anani, to celebrate publishing his memoirs “Going into the Light”, published by the Institute for Palestinian Studies. Artist Radi Shehadeh and writer Ali Muwassi were part of the event. [Watch.](#)
- We also hosted Palestinian writer son of Nazareth Raji Bathish, in a book launch for his new novel “Bassi Street Apartment” published by the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing. Writer Bakriya Muwassi introduced him and facilitated the discussion. [Watch.](#)
- From Kuwait, we hosted Palestinian displaced writer Mohammed Asad, to discuss his famous novel “Children of the Dawn” published by Al Feel Publications. Journalist Saa’ed Nijem interviewed him. [Watch.](#)
- Among the activities of AlMadina Festival, we celebrated Palestinian poet Najwan Darwish for the launch of his new poetry collection “We Woke up Once in Heaven”, published by Al Feel Publications and the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing. Mustafa Qsqasi introduced and facilitated the event, which contained many readings. [Watch.](#)
- We also organized a special evening celebrating late Palestinian Artist and son of Akka Tawfiq Abdel Al, which coincides with his first artwork gallery in Palestine at the Museum of Beir Ziet University titled “Hynms of Survival”. Artist Nasser Al Somi and his son Tareq Abdel Al participated non the event, and writer Rana Anani facilitated the discussion. [Watch.](#)
- We had an event celebrating a group of young Palestinian writers and poets from all over Palestine, where they presented readings of their texts, and Palestinian poet Asmaa’ Azzaizeh interviews them about their styles and methods. In participation with: Amir Hamad (Jerusalem), Mamhoud Abu Arisha (Jaffa), Ali Qadri (Nahaf), Mai Kaloti (Jerusalem), Jadal Alqasem (Ramallah), Yahya Ashour (Gaza), Ra’fat Amna Jamal (Haifa), Missan Hamdan (Berlin), and Mohammed AISalhi (Amman). [Watch.](#)



Learn Arabic on YouTube

We published an electronic version of an Arabic Course, presented by Dr. Elias Atallah, and a children's literature course that was presented by a group of lecturers and specialists, both of which were produced 10 years ago by the Arab Culture Association (ACA) in its project "Learn Arabic and Teach it to People", now available on our YouTube channel.

The Arab Culture Association (ACA) attempts through its projects, including "Learn Arabic and Teach it to People", which was launched in 2009, to strengthen the status of the Arabic language in society and for its people, because of the effect language has on building and strengthening the national identity of any nation, especially in an ongoing occupation reality such as what Palestinians have been living through since 1948 till this day.

These two courses showed the results of this research and studies, as an attempt to build correcting agents who realize the importance of the language, and develop it equally for every Palestinian child to grow his thinking and awareness, in addition to empowering his national and patriotic identity. The two courses can benefit: students, teachers, Ministry of Education counselors, parents of children, and any organization concerned with childhood and language.

Watch:

**Children's
Literature Course**

**Arabic Spelling
Grammar Course**



Short Story & Photo Story Competitions

We announced the results of our annual Short Story Competition, and a new competition for Photo Stories.

Over 105 Palestinian students from Arab schools in the 1984 territories participated in the Short Story Competition for Middle-school and High-school students. After the judging committee went over all the submissions, the committee decided to give 4 prizes to the Middle-school participants, and 3 prizes for the High-school, with no ranking given.

We also decided to publish the winning stories in Fusha Palestinian Cultural Magazine, in order to support the student writers. In addition, we announced the fourth edition of the competition this year, and have received tons of submissions so far from different schools, which will be judged in 2021.



Read:

[Winning Short Stories](#)

[Judging Committee's Statement](#)

We also released a new competition titled “Home Isolation Diaries” Photo Story Competition

52 participants submitted their entries and 5 won; 3 won the judges selection, and 2 were voted by our audience. The stories were published in an electronic file, and we organized a gallery at the office of the Arab Culture Association in Haifa during and after the annual Book Fair.



Links:

[Winning Photo Stories](#)

[Judging Committee's Statement](#)

Tours & Volunteering



The Scholarship program at the Arab Culture Association (ACA), Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship, organized in 2020 a group of tours and volunteering days, which hundreds of university students participated in.

In order to get to know the history of the city of Haifa and its sites and historical narrative, a series of tours were organized under the title 'Haifa in Arabic' guided by tour guide Bilal Dirbas, whom presented the displacement story and the city's destruction in 1984 and its current reality. For more about the Tours.

During AlMadina Festival for Culture and the Arts, 3 volunteering days were organized in the coastal cities of Akka, Haifa, and Jaffa in participation with "Akka 5000" movement, Haifa Youth Movement, and the Islamic Kashfi Club in Jaffa. These volunteering days aimed to renovate historical and archaeological sites, in addition to Palestinian organizations in the 3 cities, to strengthen the connection and belonging to the place.

[Volunteer Day in Akka](#)

[Volunteer Day in Haifa](#)

[Volunteer Day in Jaffa](#)

New Students & Graduates

In the Scholarship program which was established in 2007 and funded by the Galilee Foundation, the Arab Culture Association (ACA) graduated a new class of its Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship students, and opened the door to new students for the new school year.



ACA provides scholarships to over 250 university students in the country, to support higher education. Furthermore, the scholarship program offers an educational program to support students during their education journey for three years, in addition to community volunteering.

This year 90 new students joined the program, and a series of welcoming events were conducted to greet them.

Also in 2020, 80 students graduated after finishing their 3 year academic journey, and a series of evaluation and farewell events were organized.



[More](#)

Preserving Architectural Heritage

In 2020, the Arab Culture Association (ACA) launched a new project under the title “Preserving Palestinian Architectural Heritage in the Public Sphere” funded by the European Union, in partnership with Emek Shaveh. The project aims to document and follow up with cases concerning Palestinian architectural cultural heritage in the country, to prevent discrimination against it.

ACA is working on this project for a Palestinian Arab society preserving their identity and cultural heritage from democratic and humanistic values and foundation, and the Arab minority’s right to the preservation of its history of the country, as it is guaranteed by charters of international organizations such as the UNESCO.

In the first year of the project, which is coordinated by researcher Dr. Ramez Eid, ACA worked on preparing and publishing a report which documents the violation and discrimination against many buildings and historical and heritage sites in different Arab towns. A number of events and lectures were organized, and a student group was formed from the Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship program, whom contributed to the project. The project aims in the coming years to raise awareness and communicate with influencing people locally and internationally in order to change the systematic policies towards our architectural heritage.



Links:

[Nakba Day Launching of the Project](#)

[The Report Published](#)

[Lecture in Akka](#)

Book Fair 2020

At a time book fairs around the world were being canceled or postponed because of the Covid 19 pandemic, we decided to arrange a book fair after the first lockdown, while taking into consideration all health protection regulations, so we could launch our annual book fair in Haifa city. Hundreds attended the book fair daily, and so the book fair was extended twice for 10 days.

For the second year in a row we were able to bring books from all over the Arab world and Palestine, a great majority is not available in the 1948 territories, so that it would become available to the people, and encouraging seeking knowledge and reading and exchange and cultural connection with the Arab homeland and its cultural productions, in spite of the colonial cultural siege policies.

We were happy that in 2020, we received tens of orders for books from our general audience, through email or social media, and in return we provided the books, either by direct pick up from our office or mail delivery. We also participated in the Jaffa Cultural Festival with a book corner for 3 days, and reached a bigger audience in Jaffa.



After organizing it twice, this book fair has become one of the Arab Culture Association (ACA)'s important projects, which we work on developing every year, and bring in more intellectual, academic, literature and children's books, by partnering with organizations and Arab and Palestinian publishing houses.

[More](#)

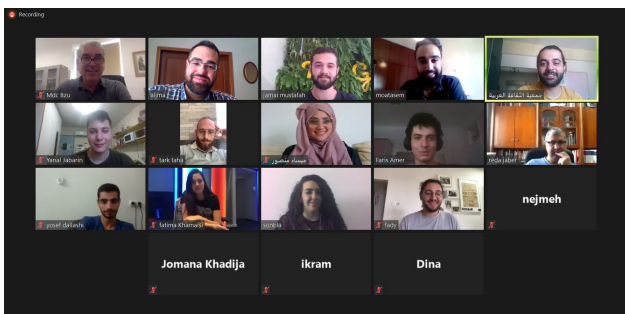
Workshops

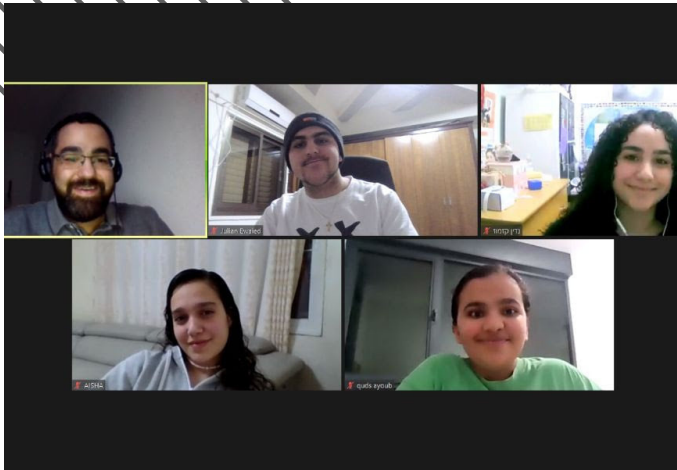
This year we organized 20 workshops in different fields, which targeted different groups such as students, artists, political and cultural activists, and some of them resulted in productions such as literary texts, journalism articles, interviews, and more. Some of these workshops started 2020, and continue to go on in 2021.

- **Photography Workshop** with Palestinian photographer Mohammad Badarneh; the workshop was 4 sessions long over Zoom, it discussed recommendations and tracks for career forwarding and development for photographers, and how to develop their work and selves in the field. [More](#)
- **Stand-up Comedy Workshop** with Palestinian Artist Ayman Nahas, which was 5 sessions long, and focuses on writing and developing scripts for Stand Up Comedy performances, how to prepare skits and humorous clips from social and personal experiences. [More](#)
- **Digital Marketing Workshop** with trainer Ahmad Barakat, in partnership with Hamleh- the Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, which specialized in digital marketing for artists, and how to present their productions and artworks and cultural projects through social media platforms. [More](#)
- **Creative Writing Workshop** with writer Majd Kayyal; it addressed subjects and methods in writing and how to develop texts, targeting university students. [More](#)



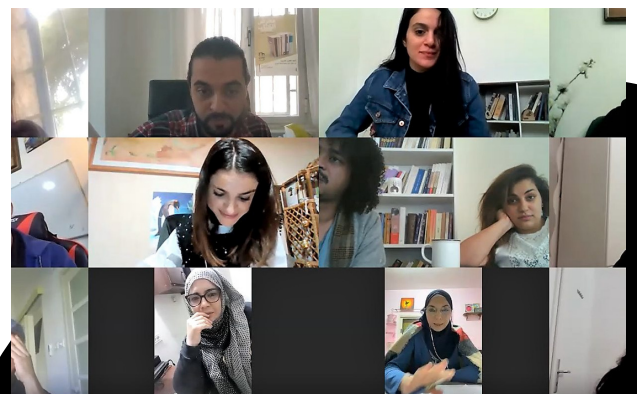
- **Journalism Article Workshop** with journalist Saleh Masharqa, in partnership with Arab 48 News, which addressed over 4 sessions the foundation of journalism writing, the types of articles, and how to develop article writing. At the end of the workshop each participant published an article. [More](#)
- **Public Speaking Workshop** with trainer Amal Oun, for students of the Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship, which aimed to present the appropriate tools for students so that they can develop public speaking in front of audiences. [More](#)





- **Research Methods Workshop** by lecturer Louai Watad for students of the Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship, in order to help students in their university assignments by using professional tools in scientific research and writing, in addition to using necessary resources.
- **University Education Workshop** by trainer Mohammad Zidani for students of the Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship, which addressed how to manage time and academic schedule for students before the first semester finals. It also addressed prioritizing techniques and the correct way of using resources.
- **Journalism Interviewing Workshop** with Journalist Saleh Masharqa in cooperation with Arab 48 News; workshop aimed to provide training in deep in-depth journalism interviewing with influencing personalities. Journalist Rawan AlDamin from Amman also took part in the training as an honorary guest. Participants completed interviews which were later published by their names. [More](#)

- **Spoken Word Workshop** by Artist Fidaa Zidan, which introduced to the art of Spoken Word and trained on the techniques and fundamentals in the development of Spoken Word texts, which considered one of the modern performing and poetry writing arts. [More](#)
- **Literature Writing Workshop** by writer Ali Muwassi, for the Middle and High-School students who won in the Short Story Competition organized by the Arab Culture Association, which addressed writing different literature genres.
- **Technological Tools for Student Life Workshop** by trainer Amal Oun for students of the Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship, which aims to help students learn the tools for virtual learning and how to use them especially because of the current educational circumstances that have been enforced by university and college students because of the Corona pandemic.



- **Women Rights and Safety Workshop** given by activist Jumana Ashqar from Assiwar- The Feminist Arab Movement, which tackled issues concerning issues fighting all forms of exploitation and oppression on a patriarchal, economic and national level, through understanding the power relations and prevailing dominance in society, and uncovering all forms of explicating, and understanding the complex intersections. In addition, the workshop addressed sexual assault issues and societal violence, male dominance in society, and deconstructing social norms in those aspects. [More](#)
- **Justice During the Covid Pandemic Workshop**; as part of the educational program of the Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship, a series of workshops were organized connecting the Covid Pandemic to the Palestinian context under Israeli governmental policies. Attorney Suhair Assad presented 3 workshops under the title “Justice and Human Rights during the Covid Pandemic” to talk about security policies, and taking advantage of the pandemic to implement violations on human rights and liberties in the world and specifically in Israel, and about union and societal work which is against these violations.
- **Narrative Writing Workshop** with Palestinian Writer Raji Bathish, which specialized in postmodern narrative writing, through eight sessions which combined writers and amateurs, and was concluded with participants many literary texts. [More](#)
- **Poetry Writing Workshop** with Palestinian Poet Najwan Darwish, also titled “First Collection of Poems (Diwan)”, and “How to Prepare your First or Second Collection of Poetry for Publication” which aimed to give tools for producing poetry collections for young poets.
- **HealthCare Workers: Between their Professional and Social Roles**; Doctor Usama Tannous gave three workshops for students in the medical field on “Medical Workers: Between their Professional and Social Roles” in order to talk about the Israeli health care system, and its effects on the living standards of the Palestinian society, giving an explanation on the Israeli media discourse which only includes in our context Palestinian doctors in Israeli hospitals, without addressing the complications and policies imposed on the Arab Palestinian society which is suffering from a bitter reality in the pandemic.
- **Identity and Nakbah Workshops**: as part of the educational program of the Dr. Rawda Bishara Atallah Scholarship, three different workshops were organized about the current political context associated with the Palestinian Nakbah; researcher We’am Baloum gave a workshop titled “**Violence and Crime in the Arab Society**”, based on his research for Baladna Organization about Violence and crime in the 1948 territories, and its relationship to the Israeli social context and security. In addition, Lawyer Maysanah Mourani from Adalah, The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, gave 2 workshops on “**The Nakbah and the Role of Law in fabricating the Space**” which presented Israeli policies and how they are manipulated to confine Palestinians, especially in the AlNaqab area by procedures which aim to confine them in order to impose a new colonial reality in the area. The program ended with two workshops for first year scholarship students, presented by researcher Khaled Anabtawi titled “The Historic Narrative” addressing the historic events of the Nakbah and before from a series of events that took place which contributed to occupying Palestine, and affected the current political and social situation. [More](#)

One of our main projects at the association is organizing lectures and discussion circles on different political cultural and social subjects, believing in the importance of enriching the public space with rational professional and pluralistic discussions, through insights provided by various people from different specialties. After the Covid 19 pandemic, we moved to a virtual lecture system which allowed us to host personalities outside of the 1948 territories:

Lectures

- **The Trump Netanyahu Plan: a discussion group about a book written by Arab thinker Dr. Azmi Bishara “The Trump Netanyahu Plan”, in participation with writer Anton Shalhat, researcher Maen AlTaher, researcher Ali HabibAllah, and journalist Rabea Eid. [Watch](#)**
- **Realities and Challenges of Journalistic Work in the 48 Territories: in participation of journalists: Jacky Khoury, Rami Mansour, Firas Khatib, Suha Arraf, and Ahmad Darawshe. [Watch](#)**
- **Jerusalem in the Palestinian Cultural Imagination: a lecture in cooperation with the Palestinian Museum researching the manifestations of Palestinian cultural imagination towards the city of Jerusalem, in participation with the director of the Edward Said National Conservatory, Artist Rawan Sharaf, Writer Mohammad Abu AlFilat, the discussion was managed by Dr. Salim Abu Thaher. [Watch](#)**
- **A Space for us in our Songs? A lecture in cooperation with Al Qaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, about different experiences in our music which is gender diverse, in participation with wider Mousa Saleh, Activist Omar Khatib, and singer Maya AlKhalidi. [Watch](#)**
- **October 2000 Riots; 20 Years and the Criminals have not been Held Accountable Yet: a lecture in cooperation with Adalah, The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, about the policies of police unaccountability as a colonial heritage protected in the laws and constitution of racist regimes, in participation with Advocate Suhad Bishara, Lawyers Foad Sultani and Jamil Dakwar. [Watch](#)**

Cultural Monitor & Ramadan Songs

At the beginning of the Covid pandemic and while lockdowns were imposed, we launched the cultural monitor during in home isolation, which aimed to detect cultural events allowed to participate in virtually from home. This step was done in order to organize all suggestions and cultural initiatives which spread online digitally, so that the Cultural Monitor can serve as a reference anyone can go back to at any time and choose whatever activity they prefer at their own convenience at home. The activities varied between movies, books, lectures, workshops, recorded tours, and much more.

During the holy month of Ramadan, we also published posts on our FaceBook page explaining stories behind famous Arab Ramadan songs, to introduce the audience to the background of these productions.

[More](#)

[More](#)

Two New Seasons of “Cinema Al Inshirah”

After the success of the first season of the project “Cinema Al Inshirah” which we launched in 2019, in 2020 we organized two new seasons where we screened seven Arab movies, in the open air of the Arab Culture Center in Haifa.



The second and third season specialized in Egyptian movies from the fifties and sixties which revolve around women and gender issues in the Egyptian and Arab society; such as the female struggle in the workplace and how society perceives her role and place, challenging traditional roles, and issues of family honor in conservative societies and changing political tensions.

Named after “Bustan Al Inshirah”, one of the most prominent recreational parks in Haifa during the 1930s and 1940s, it was the only space for the residents at the time to enjoy cultural and entertainment events. Om Kolthum and Monira Hadya performed in Bustan Al Inshirah, in addition to plays by Yousef Wahbi, and many other performers and productions.

[More](#)

Al Madina Festival



After launching Al Madina Festival for Culture and the Arts in its first experimental edition in 2019, we organized the festival the next year under the title “The Coastal Cities: Akka, Haifa, and Jaffa”, in which we try to provide an alternative cultural space with a Palestinian identity, resisting “Israelization” policies and attempts of erasing the existence and the Palestinian culture from the public space.

The Arab Culture Association chose the Palestinian coast as a central theme for the festival that lasted seven days, represented by three Palestinian coastal cities, which are Akka, Haifa, and Jaffa. Since the Nakbah these cities are facing systematic planning to bury its Palestinian landmarks and forge its identity, history and culture, targeting the Palestinian Native citizens.

The Festival’s main vision for this year was the Palestinian context and aspirations for a culture that reflects the soul of the Palestinian coastal city; the Palestinian Cultural history was addressed in the coastal cities, its historic and political importance, the development of the cities in its modern form by tackling subjects such as history, cultural policies, creativity, and Palestinian imagination in art, literature, poetry, music, theatre, dance, and more.

The festival was organized virtually, following changes enforced because of the Covid Pandemic, which lead to the cancelation of many activities. The virtual experience allowed the festival to reach a wider audience, and all the activities were recorded and archived and can be revisited anytime.



[Al Madina Festival
for Culture and the Arts
Website](#)

Publications

This year we partnered with magazines and Palestinian and Arab cultural platforms, in order to publish different publications, as a consequence of our activities such as lectures and workshops. And this comes as a part of our vision to spread the cultural productions of our activities to a bigger audience, as a cultural resource for the future. These are a group of the publications.

- [Detailed report for Roman Cultural Magazine on the Architectural Heritage Challenges](#)
- [“School Pens” Stories Written by Students of the Short Story Competition Workshop](#)
- [Palestinian Cultural Production 2019](#)
- [Palestinian Coast Dossier as Part of Al Madina Festival for Culture and the Arts](#)
- [“The Workshop” : productions of both journalism and journalistic interviewing workshops with Arab 48 News](#)
- **We also issues statements on different causes such as the allegations against [Artist Mohammad Bakri](#), and the drowning and death of [Artist Ayman Safiya](#).**
- [Portrait of New Palestinian Literature](#)
- [Mussawa TV interview on Palestinian cultural civil society organizations during the Covid pandemic](#)
- [Fusha Cultural Magazine interview on Palestinian civil society organizations during the Covid pandemic](#)
- [Preserving Palestinian Architectural Heritage in the Public Sphere](#)

Social Media

Followers

570



3700



1200



630



Views

88334



184365



15080



Partners & Collaborations

