

# Cinema Jenin Proposal



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# Cinema Jenin

Built in the early 60's, Cinema Jenin (West Bank) was considered to be one of the largest and most impressive cinemas in Palestine. Hundreds of people attended it daily to watch films from the Arab world. Later, it started presenting action films and American B movies until it was closed as a movie theatre with the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987.

Ishmael Khateeb, a resident of the Jenin refugee camp, Marcus Vetter, a renowned German documentary film maker, and a group of enthusiastic locals and foreigners want to bring the old cinema back to life.

In 2005, Ishmael's 11 year old son Ahmed was shot down by the Israeli army. Despite his grief, Ishmael decides to donate his son's organs to Israeli children thus saving their lives. A year later, still deeply affected by his son's death, he opens a culture centre for the children of the camp as an alternative for their street life. Thanks to foreign donations the centre starts providing many activities among which film courses are given. After a while the children want to produce their first short film, only to realize that they have no place to show it in. The only cinema in town was closed more than twenty years ago.

The resurrection of Cinema Jenin has enormous dramatic potential and its story will be told in the form of a documentary which follows a parallel process where the children of the camp make a film about their lives. At the same time they are taking part in reopening what would become their future stage.



# Introduction

*"We, the Goethe Institute in Palestine support the initiative to renovate and operate the Jenin Cinema. Currently Jenin is a city with very limited opportunities for its citizen's leisure time. Palestine has only one movie theatre and most young Palestinians have never watched a movie on the silver screen. Redeeming the vintage cinema can help reviving the cultural life of the northern West Bank and counterbalancing the growing influence of political and religious radicalism and intolerance."*

- Fareed Majari  
Head of the Goethe-Institute in Palestine

Cinema Jenin is located in the heart of the city of Jenin, next to the old church, the market and the main transportation routes. Jenin has a population of 50,000 inhabitants. Nearest is Nablus city (40 km away), which counts 140,000 inhabitants. The only running cinema of the West Bank is located in Ramallah which is 100 km away and practically inaccessible for the population of the northern regions. Since the city of Jenin suffers from great isolation on all levels - economic, social and cultural - there are very few possibilities of enjoying leisure activities and benefiting from cultural nurturing. Inhabitants are often stuck at home, mostly in front of television. So the window to the world is television and internet for those who have access to a computer.

The aim is to encourage a culture of cinema-going for both the population of Jenin and its refugee camp by showing a mixture of unique, thrilling, entertaining and courageous quality films. These include fiction films, documentaries, comedies, children's films, Arabic classics and contemporary movies.





# Goals and Objectives

*"We are excited about reviving the cinema. We have many programs and ideas and we think that about 300-400 people will come per day. The cinema will not be only for screening films, but will also become a stage for the whole community that can host celebrations, conferences and special activities of different associations and NGOs."*

- Ishmael Khateeb  
30th of march 2008



## The main objectives of the project are:

- Reestablishing a culture of cinema-going
- Building local capacity in film making and other art
- Encouraging an educated enjoyment and dialogue with films and different arts
- Opening a window to the outside world in times of occupation and siege
- Providing a venue for local artists
- Creating job opportunities for the people of Jenin which is plagued by unemployment
- Fostering principles of peaceful conflict resolution, co-existence and acceptance of others by denouncing all forms of violence and fanaticism.



## Step 1

# Renovating the building

The cinema resides in a large building surrounded by a vast garden. It has 200 seats on the first floor and another 200 on a balcony in which there are also private booths. Three 35mm projectors are still in place.

However, having been closed more than 20 years ago it is in a deplorable condition. The wooden chairs are in a state of advanced decay, the 35mm projectors are out of service and the screen has been torn up. The building itself and several pieces of equipment and amenities are in need of repair or replacement.

Keeping its original design, local professionals, with the help of the children of the refugee camp, will restore the chairs, paint the walls, renew the toilets, repair the roof, and fix the air conditioning and the electrical system. The garden surrounding the cinema will be transformed into a cafeteria for visitors and participants of the workshops and conferences which will take place in the future.

The cinema projection, the light and the sound systems will be installed and supervised by two German production companies, guaranteeing high quality digital cinematic standards. This partnership ascertains a liaison with international distributors who will help providing appropriate films.





## Step 2

# Activating the Cinema

Upon completion of the renovation a team of local citizens will manage and operate the cinema.

The cinema's programming will be supervised by a board of directors that will consist of local dignitaries, Palestinian and international film makers.

It is planned to have six screenings along with other activities everyday. In each section the audience can vote for the films they liked most. These films will be shown on weekends.

The official ticket price will be 10 NIS (2 Euros). There will be discounts for families, students, children and local charity associations. A website will be created to present the various activities of the cinema.

It is too early at this stage to estimate the number of daily visitors to the cinema. We base our calculations upon a minimum of 300 visitors a day, a number which we wish to enhance through additional activities such as presenting films for schools, short films created by local youths, international and local music concerts, theatre plays, literature, poetry etc.

Giving the symbolic nature of the project and its location, we aim to convince distributors to accept minimum or no return for films.

During the first years of the cinema's work, the operating costs will need to be subsidized by international foundations. Despite it being an "art house cinema", the goal is to free the cinema of subsidies and make it run independently by the 5th year.





## Step 3

### Sustainability strategy

In order to ensure a long term success of the cinema, workshops in filmmaking, computer and English in cooperation with our partner, the "Ahmed Khateeb Center for Peace" have already started. Those youngsters will not only take part in rebuilding the cinema, but also will be engaged in the future work related to it. Examples of this are; maintaining the website, writing newsletters, supervising the subtitles, maintaining contact to the film market and international distributors, and producing advertisements for local companies to be shown in the cinema and elsewhere.

Most importantly, the young participants of those workshops will gain professional knowledge and will qualify other people in Jenin to successfully run the cinema themselves.

The aim is to evoke enthusiasm among the participants in order to create an initial team which can maintain a sustainable progress.

Technical equipment such as editing rooms, cameras and sound will be needed to guarantee a process which continues beyond one time workshops. Film projects resulting from these activities will have the chance to be shown in the cinema.





# Action Plan

## By September 2008

Founding an NGO and contacting local and international companies and governmental and non-governmental institutions that would support the project and be involved in the renovation process of the cinema.

## By December 2008

Complete the Renovation of the cinema.

## By June 2009

Create a team of people who would run the cinema and ensure a supply of films to screen in the cinema's first year of work.

Create a jumpstart event for the opening of Cinema Jenin, making this a major affair for Palestine.

## By the end of 2010

A team of volunteers and professional workshop trainers will encourage continued progress of activities related to film, acting, photography and other arts. By this time we will be able to gradually hand over the cinema to local people in Jenin. The "Freedom Theater", which is working to establish a film school, could be a perfect partner to supervise, to run or to help fundraise the cinema in the future.





# Supporters of the project

Donators and supporters of the project will be given credit in the newly renovated Cinema Jenin venue and be mentioned in movie trailers that are currently being produced to be screened on our website and in selected cinemas in Germany.

Several companies, institutions and private individuals have already shown interest in supporting the project.

**The Goethe Institute**, the Federal Republic of Germany's international cultural institution, is our main partner in the project.

**The Freedom Theatre** (Jenin) will contribute its expertise in implementing cultural activities in the Jenin area. It will be represented in the artistic board that will select suitable films.

**Al Kasaba Theatre** (Ramallah) will share their expertise, train the projectionist and supply films.

**Bewegte Bilder AG**, a German media company based in Tübingen, will install and supervise a digital projection and sound system.

**Filmperspektive GmbH**, a German production company based in Stuttgart, will provide the cinema with a lighting system, technical support and contacts to international distributors.

**Sinnstiftung**, a German NGO, has given its consent to make available their bank account for donations until an NGO is established for Cinema Jenin.

**Maracoh Co.**, a local construction company in Jenin, offers their free participation in the renovation work.

**The German government** committed itself to finding private sponsors in Germany to guarantee sustainability of the project.



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PALÄSTINENSISCHE GEBIETE  
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