

Commemorative Museum In Palestine To Open On Nakba Day 2016

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Global Research, August 21, 2015

palestinianmuseum.wordpress.com 19

August 2015

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Ramallah (19/8/2015) - May 15, 2016 has been confirmed as the opening date for the Palestinian Museum. The Museum, which will be located in Birzeit (25 km north of Jerusalem), is to act as a link between Palestinians in historic Palestine and those living in the diaspora. It will be dedicated to preserving and celebrating the culture, society and history of Palestine over the past two centuries.

The Museum's director, Jack Persekian, has issued a general invitation to Palestinians living in historic Palestine and the diaspora to join with the Museum in producing and presenting new narratives of the Palestinian people, encompassing its history of dispersion, resistance, steadfast and hope.

The opening date coincides with the 68th anniversary of the Nakba, the watershed event that led to the displacement and dispossession of over 60% of the Palestinian population.

According to Persekian, "The decision to open the Museum on the 15th of May is designed to underline the enduring importance of the Nakba to the Museum's work". The Museum, a flagship project of the Welfare Association (an independent non-profit organisation committed to providing development and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians), was first conceived of in 1998 as an institution that would commemorate the Nakba, documenting this tragedy and its pivotal role in recharting the course of modern Palestinian history. "Although this original concept has since been considerably modified," Persekian added, "the Nakba still has a central role to play in the Museum's work,"

"More than half of the Palestinian population currently resides in the diaspora, and what makes the Palestinian Museum different from any other institution of its kind is that it is located in Palestine, where many will be unable to reach it," he went on to observe. "It is for this reason that its digital presence and international partnerships are so important. These networks and branches are the backbone of the Museum, and are just as important as its hub in Birzeit."

"The Museum refuses to be constricted by geographical and political borders; rather, it is to be an institution capable of traversing such boundaries, and overcoming the obstacles to free movement faced by so many. To this end, it is working to establish a whole network of partnerships around it, as well as using its digital platforms and networks to connect with its publics wherever they are in the world," Persekian added.

The Museum team is currently working out of temporary offices in Ramallah to prepare a full programme of exhibitions and projects, both within historic Palestine and in several other

parts of the world, which will coincide with the opening of the physical Museum in May. Also underway is the establishment of a digital archive, and a series of educational programmes. These projects, all of which seek in different ways to challenge and diversify the prevailing Palestinian historical narratives, will be implemented via partnerships across major cities including: Jerusalem, Haifa, Nazareth, Gaza, Amman, Beirut, Dubai, London, San Diego, Santiago, and Cape Town.

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