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Palestine

# Palestinian Authority bans LGBT group, calls for repression

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**On Saturday, August 17th, the spokesperson for the Palestinian Authority police, Louai Irzeqat, issued a statement concerning alQaws' activities in the West Bank. This first-ever statement about alQaws declared that the PA police would prohibit any event organized or held by alQaws for Gender and Sexual Diversity in Palestinian Society. The police claimed it goes against "traditional Palestinian values" accusing us as "foreign agents." The statement went further, calling on citizens to complain about any "suspicious" activities and for the persecution of alQaws staff and activists.**

This statement comes a week after alQaws held a widely published discussion-based event in Nablus, and three weeks after last month's stabbing of the Palestinian queer teen and alQaws' subsequent organizing around it. Prior to Irzeqat's statement, there had been a wave of unprecedented attacks by dozens of people flocking to alQaws' social media platforms, angered by the announcement of our event in Nablus, considered a sacred "traditional" Palestinian city. Those hateful messages and posts threatened violence and prosecution, promoted lies about alQaws and our activities, as well as myths about LGBTQ people in general.

alQaws condemns the use of prosecution, intimidation, and threats of arrest, be it by the police or members of society. We have always been public and accessible about our work, through maintaining an active website, social media presence, and engagement in civil society. However, we have never received threats to this extent before. This backlash paves the way for unethical media practices to thrive by adopting and fueling violent discourse that is gaining traction and legitimacy in social media. We believe that the police and Palestinian society at large should focus on combatting the occupation and other forms of violence that tear apart the sensitive fabric of our society and values, instead of prosecuting activists who work tirelessly to end all forms of violence.

This recent backlash is in direct response to the dismantling of societal denial regarding the existence of LGBTQ Palestinians! For the past couple of weeks, alQaws and LGBTQ Palestinians have faced an unprecedented amount of violence and incitements, which has escalated in the last couple of days. However, it is clear that this backlash is the response to twenty years plus years of field-work. That and alQaws' strategic focus in the past few years to challenge society's denial through various grassroots professional and community initiatives.

The crackdown against the fight for sexual and gender liberation is not new. Throughout modern history, it has served as a powerful card for oppressive regimes and governments. Sadly, the PA statement and subsequent public responses are well-honed tactics in the game of political gain and smoke-screening, not limited to the Palestinian Authority or to this particular event.

While we face a storm of attacks and violence, we want to uplift the love and appreciation of our many supporters and allies. Especially those who have publicly rejected the violence and prosecution and taken an active stand in support of alQaws and LGBTQ Palestinians. This past month our allies have advocated publicly to combat social violence and take a clear stand in support of LGBTQ people in Palestine.

The police's statement prohibiting alQaws' activities in the West Bank and calling for the prosecution of our team is unacceptable. Furthermore, the accusation of alQaws being a "suspicious entity" working to break up the Palestinian society is unfounded and entirely untrue. As such, we request the police and its spokesperson, Irzeqat, read and educate themselves on the values and the work of alQaws.

We are a Palestinian anti-colonial organization that works in all of historical Palestine since 2001 and challenges

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patriarchal, capitalist and colonial oppression. We have collaborated with dozens of other Palestinian civil society organizations to create programming and spaces to discuss gender and sexual diversity issues. For two decades, alQaws has worked tirelessly to combat the violence of the Israeli occupation as well as social violence against LGBT Palestinians as part of our vision for a liberated Palestine. We will continue to do so despite colonial barriers and threats of prosecution, in the hopes of expanding the discussion around sexual and gender diversity.

[alQaws](#)

*PS:*

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