

# أسبوع التراث في بيرزيت Birzeit Heritage Week 17-13 تموز 2016



## Birzeit Heritage Week

### Preserving Palestinian Cultural Heritage, Preserving Existence

By Mary Sayej

As the month of Ramadan moves towards its conclusion, Birzeit's old town is dressing up for its 8th Heritage Week, when visitors will be able to experience and connect with the unique features of Palestinian culture and cultural heritage. Birzeit's alleys and narrow streets evoke the thrill of being connected to the past. The smell of freshly baked thyme manaqeesh can transport you back to the lives of our grandparents and the memory of rural ladies gathering to stitch an embroidered dress while men meet to exchange news over a pot of mint tea.

For the eighth year, Al Rozana Association is presenting opportunities to connect with the essence of Palestinian being – its culture and heritage. Activities will be installed and conducted in Birzeit's old houses, attics, courtyards, and alleys. Each corner of the historic area will become vibrant: watch an artisan shaping a duck at a glass-making oven and another weaving a wool carpet; admire booths filled with handcrafted embroidery and jewelry and a platform where local artworks can be exhibited by anyone. The young and the young at heart can enjoy plays, listen to music, experience dabka dances, and hear dal'ona songs performed by groups from surrounding villages. Vincent van Gogh would simply have put a frame around this mosaic of vibrant activities that will come to life in the rehabilitated historic area, accompanied by the smiles and hugs of friends and families gathering from all over Palestine and the world.

The Birzeit Heritage Week mascot, Amti Toteh, an elderly Birzeiti lady dressed in a traditional thob, will entertain guests during the Palestinian traditional wedding Zaffa, celebrated at the opening ceremony, and at the "Flowers of the Countryside" competition where, on the second day, young girls representing various Palestinian villages and towns, including those inside the 1948 areas, will compete with their Palestinian dresses and knowledge of their heritage, highlighting the role of women in the preservation of Palestinian culture and its transmission from one generation to the next.

The festival will take place on five consecutive nights from July 13 to 17, 2016, in the old town of Birzeit, serving to bridge ancient Palestinian heritage with modern cultural styles and the cultural scene with the economic well-being of rural communities, symbolized literally by the wooden Cultural Bridge that will be erected at the center of the old town. "My Country, My Heritage" is our vow that we will continue to guard our culture, heritage, and identity that exist abundantly in rural Palestine. These elements will always be utilized as a tool to preserve our existence on this land. They also provide a rich opportunity for exchange with world cultures in order to send a message of coexistence, tolerance, and humanity.

Birzeit's 8th Heritage Week is held in cooperation and partnership with a number of community organizations from Birzeit and the surrounding rural communities, and reflects Rozana's vision to nominate Birzeit as the capital of Rural Palestine.

Come and join us. Your presence will fill us with joy!

Mary Sayej is the director of Birzeit's 8th Heritage Week.



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الروزي الكفيلاني،



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