



كافيه فلسطين كولونيا  
cafépalestinecolonia

tends to result in lively conversations that repeatedly have led to an exchange about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This conflict has been on people's minds for a long time, but they find little space or opportunity to discuss it elsewhere.

Events take place at least once a month, mostly in the space we are renting. But we also use other venues in Cologne,

## Café Palestine

# Colonia in Cologne

## Suraya Hoffmann



Why Café Palestine in Cologne? I was born to Palestinian parents who lived in the Galilee, raised in Jerusalem, and have lived in Germany since 1969. For more than 20 years, I have worked actively with a German-Palestinian women's association. In Palestine, we have carried out various women's projects; in Germany, our work has focused mainly on political events.

When discussions showed that my fellow German citizens

tend to know relatively little about Palestine, two friends Michael Keller, the late Annelise Butterweck and I tried to find ways to make up for this deficit. The idea of Café Palestine Colonia emerged from these considerations, and it opened in May 2012.

When people talk about Palestine, they focus mainly on its tragic fate. The fact that Palestine also enjoys a high level of culture – with literature, painting, music, and much more – is hardly known to the German public. Café Palestine aims to bring this aspect to the fore. On the one hand, it highlights the situation in Palestine itself; on the other hand, it raises awareness of Palestinian art and culture in Germany, especially in the Cologne area. Of course, the political situation is not ignored.

Our offer is diverse and includes lectures, readings, Arabic-German book fairs, art exhibitions, presentations on the *Nakba*, film screenings, concerts, and theater performances. We have recently featured the exhibitions *Bethlehem Reborn* and *Thoub* (Palestinian Identity Yesterday and Today). In this way, we inform German society about the rich culture of Palestine. We frequently present personal stories as well, which

The exhibition *Art and Journalism* was a side event of the Palestine Film Festival in Cologne in November 2022.



Images of the opening ceremony of the *Palestinian Thoub* exhibition, April 2023.



The *Bethlehem Reborn* exhibition, held in collaboration with Köln Bethlehem Association, opened in December 2021.

such as cinemas, theaters, and church and community rooms, particularly when we invite guests from Palestine or abroad. We frequently cooperate with other clubs and organizations and rely on a team of volunteers for logistics. But Café Palestine Colonia is not an association; it is just a group of men and women who share an interest in Palestine. Our audience consists mostly of Germans from all levels of education but also, to a lesser extent, Palestinians.

Our funding is primarily covered by donations and by the proceeds of the Palestinian handicrafts, art, and foodstuff that we sell, all of which are very well received by our visitors. The money that

we don't need to maintain the café is used for projects in Lebanon. For example, we have provided support over the past five years to a Palestinian child who lives in Shatila Refugee Camp.

We advertise our activities on social media, through our mailing list, and on our homepage, where we also provide information about past events. Visit us on Facebook at Cafe Palestine Colonia.

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