

Aswat (Palestine): an LGTB conference under pressures

Tuesday 13 March 2007, by [Aswat](#) (Date first published: 13 March 2007).

Dear friend of Aswat;

We are two weeks away from our special and great day for Aswat. "Five Years for Aswat Conference", to be held the 28th of March 2007 in Haifa, is a celebration of Five years to Aswat existence and contribution to the Palestinian community.

In this celebration we launch the first book to be published in Arabic about LGBTIQ issues, titled "Home and Exile in Queer Experience: collection of articles about lesbians and homosexual identity". This event enables you as a supporter and guest to meet your allies at Aswat. For Aswat this is a chance to raise the LGBTIQ issue and to put it on the Palestinian and the International social agenda.

After announcing the conference program and its aims to the local public inside Israel we received different responses, some of which are supportive while others are objecting as a result of the sensitivity surrounding the issue of lesbianism and homosexuality within the Arab society.

On the 4th of March 2007, the Islamic Movement made a public announcement signed by its leaders asking Aswat to cancel the conference; besides; they are accessing many Media sources (journals, radios, the web.), to disrupt the carrying out of the conference and the existence of Aswat as well.

The Islamic leaders wrote to the journals that they "were shocked to hear about the existence of the conference" and that "Aswat is a group that encourages deviation from the norms and devotes all its work for deviation." They described Aswat as a "Fatal cancer" that should be forbidden from spreading out within the Arab society and from eliminating the Arab culture". Moreover they referred to all participating organizations; to cancel their participation and assist in stopping the conference.

The media, especially the Arab media, is making a big fuss over this matter and they are trying to make the issue more complicated.

Aswat group and supporting friends will keep holding the conference, we believe in our existence and in the importance of having our work carried out within the Arab community that suppressed the LGBTIQ issues for years.

With your support Aswat hopes to overcome the obstacles and challenges that some groups within the Arab society try to put on our way with the aim of stopping

our activities towards equal rights and free will.

Hence, all women in Aswat urge you, our friend/s, to take an act of solidarity in supporting our fight and struggle in a way that you consider is appropriate by referring to your media; the organizations that you support; circulating the invitation in your mailing list or/and sending representatives on your behalf to support us in this crucial day.

Be sure that your support is highly appreciated and important to Aswat.

Sincerely Yours,

Rauda Morcos, General Coordinator

&

Alhan Jeries, Resource Development Coordinator

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Aswat - Palestinian Gay Women are Happy to Invite You to:

“Home and Exile in Queer Identity”

Conference

On the 28th of March 2007

On this day Aswat celebrates five fruitful years of engaging in social change and raising awareness in the Palestinian Community

Aswat also proudly launches the publication of our first book in Arabic:

Home and Exile in Queer Identity: Collection of Articles about Lesbian and Homosexual Identity

Program:

10:00 - 10:30: Participants Registration

10:30 - 11:00: Opening of the event with presentations by:

Rula Deeb - Kayan Director

Shahira Shalabi - Shatil Center

Aswat Board Coordinator

11:00 - 12:00: First panel: "Homosexuality and Lesbianism in the Arab community"

Participants: Aida Touma-Solaiman, Yousef Abu-Wardy, Ruti Gur, and Rauda Morcos

12:30 - 13:00: Musical Interval: The Palestinian Women Rappers Band "Arapiat" and a slide show by Aswat

13:00 - 14:00: Lunch break

14:00 - 14:30: In Solidarity: Terry Greenblatt - Feminist activist, Leslie Fienberg - Peace and Freedom of Speech activist, Brenda Funches - Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Hanneke Kamphuis and Naima el Moussati - Mama Cash representatives, Global Fund for Women representative

And Open Society Institute representative

14:30 - 16:00: Second panel: "Home and Exile in Queer Identity"

Participants: Raafat Hattab, Nabila Espanioli, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Haya Shalom

16:00 - 16:30: Musical Interval: "Arapiat" Returns

16:30 - 17:00: Conclusions and Closing Remarks

There will be simultaneous translation to three languages; Arabic, Hebrew and English

Cameras and Photographing are not permitted

Note: Registration Fees are 25 NIS. Entrance for pre-registered participants only

For More information please write to: ipcoordinator@aswatgroup.org

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You can also visit <http://www.aswatgroup.org>

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