**A cinema for Rojava**

Mr. Chairman, members of the conference, thank you very much for inviting us to today´s session and explain our aims. Thank you for focussing finally also on the needs of liberated areas in Rojava.

We are coming up with a quite unusaul project in the context of war, destruction and suffering in Rojava. We are the oganization A Cinema for Rojava.

**Background**

Until today, the fire in the cinema of Amudê is an open wound in the collective commemoration of the Kurdish people of Rojava in the north of Syria: at the 13th of November 1960, nearly 200 children died, when the cinema of Amudê burned down.

**Political background**

The fact that (i) the fire happened in an overcrowded ballroom and (ii) the tragedy later on has never been investigated by the Syrian regime makes people still believe, that the lives of their children were valueless. Kurdish culture, language and political activities have been suppressed violently by the state for decades.

Today, more than 50 year later, Amudê is part of the Cizire County, of Rojava. The people of Rojava fight for freedom, self-determination and democratic self-administration.

In these times, there are –of course- different needs from that cinema, but still there is a great longing to watch movies, stories, feelings, and have dreams and learn together without censorship.

**The project**

The project is building a cinema in Amudê. It should have a stage for other cultural activities. It should be build by local means. It should be low-budget. It should be a symbol of international solidarity with Rojava carried out by the local youth and internationalists.

**Goals**

The project focuses on a number of issues:

* To give back a part of history to the people of Rojava
* To implement cinema as part of current culture
* To implement a place for cultural interchange
* To implement a place for educational and recreational purpose
* To foil censorship in the Middle East
* To accompany the construction story by a film project
* To give handycams to young people being able to document their life in Rojava
* To write down a project handbook and make the project reproducebale

**Summary**

Building a cinema is a highly political project: it not only stands for a neglected Kurdish history, but also for freedom from censorship, may it be in Syria, Turkey or the so-called Islamic State. Freedom always also means the freedom of political discourse and expression of native culture.

There are already good examples for such projects like Cinema Jenin in Palestine or the Intl. Filmfestival in the Polisario Camps of Western Sahara.

We want to support the democratic experiment in Rojava, we want to strengthen civil society and highly agree with the statement, that Rojava must be internationally accepted as a self-determined political entity.

With this project we already reach out to cultural oganisations and culture workers who were not involved in Curdistan Solidarity so far.

We are supported by film makers and theater regisseurs and technicians and universities from GB, Canada, USA, Mexic, Chile, Turkey, Egypt, France, Portugal, Spain, and Germany, we are supported by the Beuth University for Theatre and Cinema-Techniques, Berlin, e.g. Carmen Castillo, Jose Quiroga, or Ken Loach, just to mention a few well known names

I want to close with a citation of Ken Loach, who wrote to us:

*“To build a cinema in Amudê is a wonderful idea. It should be a place where there is a free exchange of ideas as well as somewhere to hear stories, find excitement and humor and connect to others from around the world. I am pleased to be a supporter of the cinema project. These are tragic times for all the people of the region. I agree with you that the intervention of the West has been based on self-interest and has had disastrous consequences in the past. Let´s hope that your cinema will be a glimmer of light”.*

(Ken Loach, London, 08.04.2015)

**For further information please contact**

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