

alQaws Statement

On 18 August, the Palestinian Police Force issued an official statement banning the activities of alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society. The announcement followed an unprecedented attack on alQaws in social media channels. The statement promotes incitement against alQaws - and LGBTQ Palestinians - by encouraging members of society to report on alQaws activities. alQaws has since denounced such fear-mongering by Palestinian authorities, and criticised efforts to position the organisation as a “foreign agent.” alQaws and its members and activists are an integral part of Palestinian civil society working both to support LGBTQ groups in Palestinian society, as well as fighting for freedom from Israeli occupation and colonisation. alQaws has refused the ban on its activities and noted it will continue its work to fight patriarchy, colonialism and homophobia across historical Palestine.

We are overwhelmed by the support we have received from across Palestine and internationally. It is important for us to shed light on 5 ways you can make your report or post more supportive of Palestinian queers and alQaws:

1. Center Palestinian LGBTQ voices in your reporting

We are constantly talked about but our voices are rarely heard. When reporting on issues that pertain to LGBTQ Palestinians, just ask yourself: whose voice does this story center? If it doesn't center the voices of LGBTQ Palestinians, then your actions might lead to more harm even if your intentions are to help. Come talk to us and hear our perspective. Do not simply copy and paste translated Hebrew/Israeli media to tell our story. alQaws activists and staff always provide our names when interviewed, so if you read an article/post with a claimed quote from us with no name attributed, you should know it is not from us.

2. Realize that colonialism, patriarchy and homophobia are all connected forms of oppression

Singling out incidents of homophobia in Palestinian society ignores the complexities of Israel's colonization and military occupation being a contributing factor to Palestinian LGBTQ oppression. We have been living under more than 7 decades of Israel's military occupation. We see the Israeli occupation of our land and bodies as connected to and amplifying the diverse forms of oppression experienced in every society around the globe. alQaws believes the way to truly counter homophobia in Palestine is by understanding and applying the broader political context in any solidarity activities. We ask that you situate Palestinian LGBTQ oppression within the larger context of Israeli occupation, colonialism, patriarchy and homophobia at large.

3. Steer clear of pinkwashing

Perpetuating tiresome tropes of presenting Palestinians as inherently oppressive and Israel as a liberal state that protects LGBTQ rights is counter-productive and factually baseless. Israel is a settler-colonial state that offers no rights to Palestinians, queer or otherwise. Our struggle as queer Palestinians is against Israeli colonialism as much as it is against homophobia and patriarchy in Palestine. Israel uses pinkwashing tactics to lie about “saving” LGBTQ Palestinians from their society. We ask that you steer away from these lies that are intentionally used to justify their colonization of Palestine. alQaws and our allies in Palestine will continue to amplify our message as well as provide protection and a political home for LGBTQ Palestinians. Israeli LGBTQ groups do not have a say in the work that should be done to fight patriarchy and homophobia in Palestine, including the incitements led by the Palestinian police.

4. Understand our commitment to our local community organizing

alQaws has been organizing in historic Palestine to educate Palestinian society on sexual and gender diversity since 2001. We are a small team of dedicated activists who believe change comes from working within our local context. We put enormous daily and strategic efforts in our local grassroots advocacy organizing in Palestine. Therefore, and especially in such a crisis, we prioritize providing education and safety to our communities first. Please be patient with us as we respond to your media inquiries.

5. Support our work and vision

We believe in the power of people to make social change possible. Some practical ways you can help amplify our vision for change is by educating yourself and your networks on the work that we do at alQaws. Follow us on social media, share our resources, talk to your friends and family about the importance of standing up against bigotry towards LGBTQ people, and make sure that your vision of liberation and freedom in Palestine includes us all.