

THE FILM SEMINAR AGAINST AUSTERITY PRESENTS

RETURN TO HAIFA

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
GHASSAN KANAFANI

SCREEN PLAY AND DIRECTED BY

KASSEM HAWAL

STARRING

HANAN AL-HAJALI

PAUL MATTAR

GUEST STAR

CHRISTINE SCHORN

CO-STARRING

MUNTER HILMI

SALIM MOUSA

ALI FAWZI

JAMAL SULEIMAN

HUSSAIN LUBANI

FILM IN COLOR

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

GEORGE LUTFI KHOURY

PRODUCED BY AL ARD FILM PRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

MOHAMAD SALIM

EDITING:

KAISS AL-ZUBAIDI

DIRECTOR ASSISTANT

With a video message from director Kassem Hawal,
introduction and discussion with Prof. Dr. Abed Shokry (Gaza)

We are showing the film in the original Arabic-
English version with German subtitles.

- Free of charge -

www.schuldenbremse-streichen.de

On 26.11.2024, 8 pm in Lecture Hall D of the Philosophenturm (Von-Melle-Park 6)

"Return to Haifa"

A film by
Kassem Hawal
(PLO, 1982)

Art and culture are a source of sustenance. Critical and enlightened, they create a universal awareness of the changeability of historical and social reality for a more humane future. In times of existential threat, they can become vital for survival. Not at least for this reason, genocidal intentions always aim to destroy the history and culture of a people. The Palestinian struggle for liberation, sovereign statehood, and humane development pro-

spects—inextricably linked to the global struggle for nonviolent, civil, and solidarity-based living conditions—is so unbreakable and exemplary because it is based on a vital cultural foundation of resistance.

One of the central works in this foundation is the novel *Return to Haifa* by Ghassan Kanafani, published in 1972 and filmed ten years later by Kassem Hawal as one of the first independent screen productions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in exile in Lebanon. The story is a symbolic allegory of the conflict over the land of Palestine itself, linked to the violent founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Said and Saffiya reluctantly decide to take advantage of the brief opportunity afforded by the military occupation of the West Bank in 1967 to visit their former home in Haifa, from which they were driven out in 1948 by the marauding militias of the Haganah. This tense journey to their lost homeland is fueled by the vague hope of finding a trace of their firstborn son Khaldoun, whom they had to leave behind—then 5 months old—in the turmoil of their sudden forced flight. In her house, which has hardly changed on the outside, she is welcomed by the current resident, Mirjam, a Jewish woman who fled Poland in 1947 and survived a concentration camp. After the expulsion of the Arab population of Haifa, the Zionist occu-

pation authorities handed over the house to her and her husband, who has since passed away, on the condition that they adopt the child living there, which Mirjam accepted, even though she was deeply horrified and disillusioned by the army's brutal methods. The dispute between the three about the right and wrong

of the past initially ends with the Solomonic agreement that the adopted son should now decide for himself where he belongs. However,

when he enters the room in the uniform of the Israeli military, it quickly becomes clear that the agreement is based on distorted premises. Growing up as an Israeli for 19 years has made Khaldoun, now called Dov, insensitive to the suffering fate of his biological parents and their struggle for reconciliation and amend. Disillusioned, Said and Saffiyaleave, while their second-born son Khaled joins the Fedayeen.

Told in quiet tones, this cinematic parable uses dialogue to unfold a highly topical, deeply humanistic, enlightening and reflective effect, illuminating in a contradictory manner all those historically caused wounds that need to be understood and healed in order to achieve a just peace and a civilized perspective for development.

To this end, it is crucial today that the causes of evil—Western colonialism, racism, imperialism—be permanently overcome and that the consequences of the 1945 liberation, as enshrined in international law, be actually realized globally. This also includes a comprehensive demilitarization of international relations, the immediate termination of all arms exports, and the global community's guarantee of an independent, viable Palestinian state. We must learn from history. Cultural heritage leads us the way. International solidarity – end austerity!

"Everything that promotes cultural development also works against war."
Sigmund Freud, letter exchange with Albert Einstein in: „Why War?“, 1933.