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Twice-displaced refugee stories brought to light

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Director Carol Mansour in the alleys of Burj al-Barajneh

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Carol Mansour premiered her new documentary, "We Cannot Go There Now My Dear," in not one, but two, packed auditoriums on 23 October at Empire Sofil in Achrafieh.

With the Syrian war intensifying and attacks on the refugee camps like Yarmouk being part of some of the more brutal bombardments, Palestinians, already displaced from their original home, have been forced to flee yet again.

The documentary retells the stories of Palestinians who were initially told to "sit under the Beiruti pine trees for a bit until Palestine is liberated." They have been moving from place to place for 66 years with an "endless sense of loss and instability" ever since.

Highlighting the life-or-death predicament of a two-time refugee, the film sheds light on what "double refugee-ness" entails, in terms of basic human rights being stripped away and the discrimination that inevitably follows.

Despite the fact that the Palestinians who were interviewed are forced to deal with one tragic situation after another, they still find time to look at life from the bright side and make acerbic jokes.

Youssef, aka Abu Muhammad, 57, is asked in the documentary about what he brought with him from his two moves. He responds with a smirk, "My mattress; its wool is from my grandfather's sheep […] This is my marriage mattress." The audience burst into laughter at this remark.

Nael, 28, now living in Sweden after moving from Yarmouk in Syria and Nazareth in Palestine, discussed his attachment to his kitten called Fustu' (Peanuts). He adopted her after finding her on the street. The significance of sharing this small tale was meant to be his way of comparing the amount of love and attachment his mother would have for her children who have moved all over the world. "She's happy to have us travel because she knows it would benefit…She's a liar", he joked. "Having loved ones leave to different parts of the world is not the easiest to deal with."

"We Cannot Go There" was beautifully crafted; it had the audience laughing through teary eyes. The purpose of the documentary is not to offer an in depth analysis of the political situation in the Levant, but rather to describe and highlight the social and human implications through the eyes of individuals who have dealt with continuous displacement. Sadly enough, it tells only a fraction of the stories of the twice-over refugees scattered all over the world.
Keep an eye out for more screenings around Beirut in the coming month—it is a must-see.

Photo source: dailystar.com