

INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARLY CONFERENCE

Reimagining and Rebuilding Palestine: *Genocide, Trauma, and the Future of a Suffering Nation*



Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου
University of Cyprus

30 – 31 January 2026
University of Cyprus Campus

PRESS RELEASE

International Scholarly Conference

Reimagining and Rebuilding Palestine: Genocide, Trauma, and the Future of a Suffering Nation

30–31 January 2026 | University of Cyprus, Nicosia

Cultural Programme

Art, Memory, and Testimony under Conditions of Extreme Violence

The International Scholarly Conference *Reimagining and Rebuilding Palestine: Genocide, Trauma, and the Future of a Suffering Nation* incorporates a carefully curated cultural programme that functions as an integral component of its intellectual and ethical architecture. Conceived not as a supplementary set of events but as a parallel mode of inquiry, the cultural programme foregrounds artistic expression as a critical form of testimony, memory-work, and epistemic engagement in contexts marked by mass violence, dispossession, and collective trauma.

Through poetry, music, theatre, and visual documentation, the cultural programme engages dimensions of experience that often remain inaccessible to conventional academic discourse, while

remaining firmly situated within the conference's analytical and normative framework. It seeks to articulate the affective, memorial, and imaginative registers through which historical violence is lived, narrated, transmitted, and contested.

Poetry Readings: Language, Memory, and Survival

The programme includes poetry readings by a Palestinian poet and a Cypriot poet, staged as a dialogical encounter between distinct yet historically resonant experiences of displacement, loss, and endurance. Poetry is approached here not merely as aesthetic expression, but as a form of political and ethical articulation—one that preserves memory, resists erasure, and affirms human presence under conditions of systematic dehumanisation.

The poetic readings create a shared reflective space in which language becomes a medium of survival, testimony, and solidarity, allowing individual voices to resonate within broader collective and historical trajectories.

Lisa Suhair Majaj is a Palestinian-American poet, writer, scholar, editor, and children's author. She holds a PhD from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. A scholar of Arab American literature, she has co-edited four volumes of critical essays on Arab, Arab American, and international women's writing. Her poetry and creative essays have been published across the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, and India, and individual poems have been translated into eleven languages. Her 2009 poetry collection *Geographies of Light* won the Del Sol Press Poetry Prize. Her poetry was featured in the 2016 exhibition *Aftermath: The Fallout of War—America and the Middle East* at the Harn Museum of Art and was included in a 2024 limited-edition art book of Palestinian testimony titled *Passport of Witness*. Her recent poetry appears in the anthologies *Heaven Looks Like Us: Palestinian Poetry*; *Unsilenced: Poems for Palestine*; *Ask the Night for a Dream: Palestinian Writing from the Diaspora*; and *Fifty Poems for Palestine*, as well as in a number of journals. Her new poetry collection, *Why Doesn't the Sky Love Us?*, is forthcoming from Fernwood Press. She has lived in Cyprus since 2001.

Takis Hatzigeorgiou is a Cypriot politician, journalist, and writer. Born in Pano Akourdaleia, Paphos, in 1956, he studied Law at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Journalism in Athens. Following the events of 1974, he served on the Green Line as a reserve Second Lieutenant. He later lived and worked in Germany and Australia.

He worked as a radio producer at the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, gaining wide recognition through the programme *Without Frames*, which explored controversial and lesser-known aspects of Cypriot history and was later published as a book. He served for twelve years as Director of ASTRA 92.8 radio, playing a key role in the establishment of Cyprus's first left-wing pluralistic radio station.

Hatzigeorgiou was elected Member of Parliament with AKEL in 1996 and re-elected in 2001 and 2006. He served as a Member of the European Parliament from 2009 to 2019. He has participated in numerous parliamentary committees and international parliamentary bodies. He has published three books and hundreds of articles, primarily addressing the Cyprus problem and education.

Theatrical Reading: Moral Collapse and Human Vulnerability

A theatrical reading of *The Slaughterhouse* by **Ilan Hatzor** constitutes a central element of the cultural programme. Presented in the form of a staged reading rather than a full theatrical production, the work offers a stark and concentrated exploration of violence, moral disintegration, and human vulnerability in situations of extreme coercion and ethical breakdown.

The choice of the theatrical reading underscores the primacy of text, voice, and moral tension, allowing the audience to confront the ethical questions raised by violence without the distancing effects of spectacle. The performance functions as a space of critical confrontation, compelling reflection on responsibility, complicity, and the fragility of moral order.

[Slaughterhouse by Ilan Hatzor - ETHAL](#)

Slaughterhouse by Ilan Hatzor

Author: Ilan Hatzor

Translation: Corallia Sotiriadou

Director: Minas Tingilis

Set and Costume Designer: Nikos Kouroushis

Music Curation: Tasos Zachariou

Light Designer: Aleksandar Jotovic

Actors:

Iakovos Iakovou

Panayiotis Larkou

Andreas Nicolaidis

Premiere: December 15, 2010, ETHAL Theater (2nd Stage)

Musical Intervention: Sound, Mourning, and Collective Reflection

The cultural programme is further enriched by a musical intervention by composer **Giorgos Kalogirou**, whose work introduces a sonic and affective dimension to the conference's thematic concerns. Music operates here as a medium of mourning, endurance, and collective reflection, articulating emotional and temporal layers of experience that resist straightforward verbalisation.

Through restrained and contemplative musical expression, the programme invites audiences to inhabit moments of pause, resonance, and shared affect, complementing the discursive intensity of scholarly debate.

Giorgos Kalogirou

Giorgos Kalogirou was born in 1981 in Nicosia, Cyprus. He graduated in 2008 from the School of Byzantine and Traditional Music *En Chordais* in Thessaloniki, where he was awarded a Diploma in Byzantine Music and a Degree in Traditional Music, with specialisations in the lute, Greek folk song, and music theory.

He holds a Degree in Theology from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2005). Earlier, in 1999, he completed studies in violin and advanced music theory at the National Conservatory of Nicosia, under the tutelage of Dimitris Petridis. From 1989 to 1996, he undertook violin studies with Georgia Orfanou.

Photographic Exhibition: *FLEEING TO SAFETY*

The cultural programme includes the photographic exhibition *FLEEING TO SAFETY*, which examines forced displacement through a series of powerful visual narratives portraying refugees, asylum seekers, and forcibly displaced people in Cyprus and across the world. The exhibition traces key dimensions of displacement and resettlement, including arrival and first reception, temporary accommodation, political and diplomatic frameworks, humanitarian care, the establishment of reception centres, pathways towards professional integration, and everyday life under conditions of precarity.

At the centre of the exhibition are the individuals themselves—men, women, elderly people, and children—represented not as passive recipients of humanitarian assistance, but as subjects marked by vulnerability, resilience, and determination. Through these portraits and personal testimonies, the exhibition invites reflection on trauma, memory, familiarity and estrangement, and challenges viewers to confront the ethical unease often provoked by encounters with forced displacement.

By foregrounding personal stories alongside photographic documentation, *FLEEING TO SAFETY* affirms the fundamental right of every person to seek safety and dignified living conditions, irrespective of origin or circumstance. In a global context in which more than 100 million people have been forcibly displaced, the exhibition underscores both the urgency of addressing the root causes of displacement and the imperative to safeguard the right to asylum under conditions of security, dignity, and respect.

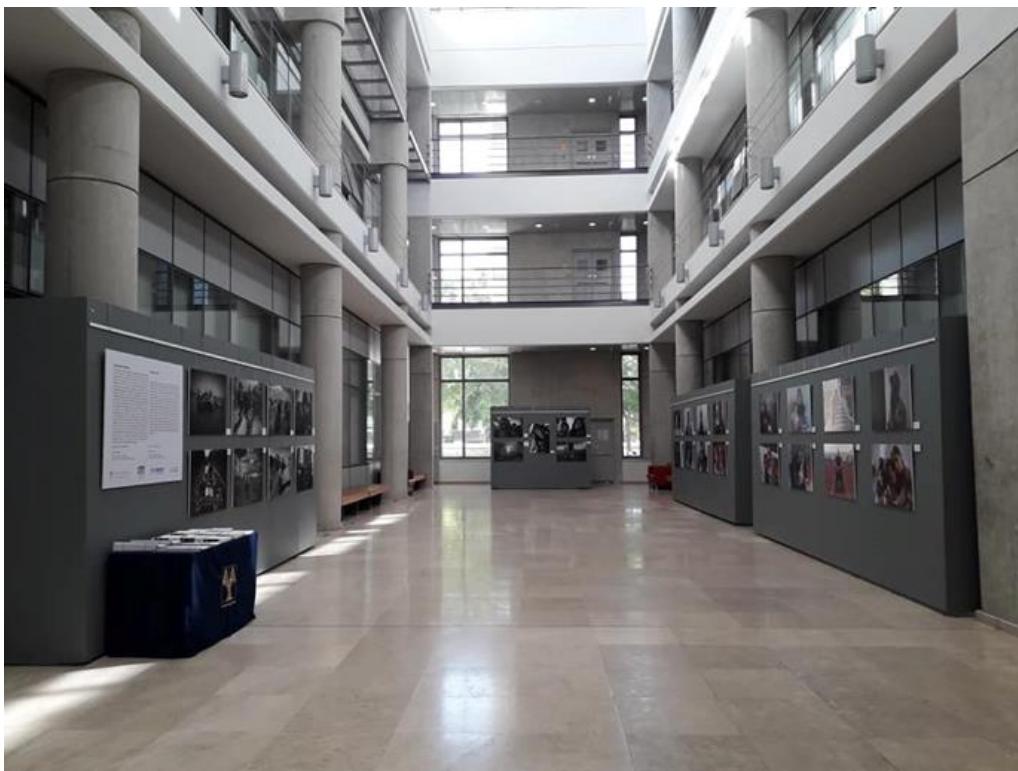
The exhibition features the work of **Sebastian Rich**, an award-winning photographer and cameraman whose career spans decades of hard news and documentary reporting from major conflict zones worldwide. His work has been recognised with the Royal Television Society's *Cameraman of the Year* award and has been widely praised for its ethical sensitivity and visual integrity. Rich has collaborated extensively with international humanitarian organisations, including Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children, WWF, UNICEF, and UNHCR.

Contributors: UNHCR · Universitas Foundation · Bridges for Tomorrow Foundation

Cultural Practice as Scholarly Engagement

Taken together, the cultural components of the conference articulate a conception of art as a form of knowledge production—one that engages memory, affect, and imagination alongside historical analysis, legal reasoning, and political critique. By integrating artistic practices into the core structure of the conference, the cultural programme affirms the necessity of multidimensional engagement with genocide, trauma, and reconstruction.

In this sense, the cultural programme does not merely accompany scholarly inquiry but actively extends it, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of violence, survival, and the conditions under which dignity, justice, and future-oriented reconstruction may be envisioned.



Photographic Exhibition: *Fleeing to Safety*

The Character of the Exhibition

Through a series of powerful photographic impressions of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced people in Cyprus and around the world, the exhibition traces the multiple and interrelated dimensions of forced displacement and resettlement. It addresses the key stages and processes that shape the experience of displacement, including arrival and first reception; temporary accommodation and living conditions; political developments and diplomatic frameworks; efforts to provide care, shelter, and food; the establishment of reception and hospitality centres; pathways towards professional integration; and the textures of everyday life under conditions of precarity.

Central to the exhibition are the individuals themselves—men, women, elderly people, and children—portrayed not merely as passive subjects of humanitarian concern, but as protagonists marked by anxiety about the present and, simultaneously, by resilience and determination in relation to the future. Through these visual narratives, the exhibition invites visitors to reflect on the concepts of trauma, memory, familiarity and estrangement, and to confront the unease often provoked by the encounter with the “foreign” refugee. In doing so, it challenges viewers to examine not only what appears unfamiliar or unsettling in the other, but also what may be avoided or suppressed within themselves.

The personal stories presented alongside the photographic portraits serve as a stark reminder that every human being has the fundamental right to seek safe and dignified living conditions—regardless of who they are, where they come from, or when they are forced to flee war, persecution, or violence. At a time when more than 100 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced due to armed conflict, political instability, violence, and systematic human rights violations, the urgency of addressing the root causes of displacement has never been greater. Equally imperative is the responsibility to ensure conditions of safety, dignity, and respect for all those forced to leave their homes, as well as to safeguard their inalienable right to seek asylum through secure, humane, and accessible procedures.

The Photographer and His Work: Sebastian Rich

Sebastian Rich has worked throughout his career as a photographer and cameraman specialising in hard news, documentary, and current affairs reporting. He has filmed and photographed virtually every major war and conflict of recent decades, including in El Salvador, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Lebanon, the Gulf, Bosnia, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and, most recently, Ukraine.

He has been awarded the prestigious Royal Television Society's *Cameraman of the Year* award for his compelling visual documentation of war and famine across Africa. The British journalist and television presenter Jon Snow has described Sebastian Rich as "probably the finest news cameraman and photographer of his time... his camera work is among the most sensitive I have ever witnessed."

Sebastian Rich has collaborated extensively with international non-governmental organisations, including Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and several United Nations agencies, most notably UNICEF and UNHCR.

For further information:

www.sebastianrichphotography.com

Contributors to the Exhibition

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Universitas Foundation

Bridges for Tomorrow Foundation



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