

OXFORD

**HUMAN RIGHTS
FESTIVAL**

2026

**BREAKING
FREE!!**

**13TH - 20TH
MARCH**

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FORWARD

Dear students, staff and all,

Welcome to the Oxford Human Rights Festival. The theme of this year's festival, 'Breaking Free,' is an affirmation of the universal aspiration to be free to pursue our dreams and to live a life that we value. Yet, for millions globally, this remains an impossibility. Discrimination, poverty, inequalities and the devastating impacts of conflict, wars and natural hazards continue to violate individual and collective human rights. This festival serves as a vital space to confront these realities. It is an invitation to reflect on the roles we play—individually and collectively—in nurturing a just, free, and secure future for everyone.

Grounded in our commitment to global solidarity, the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) is proud to present a diverse program of films, performances, exhibitions, seminars, talks and cultural events from Friday 13th March -20th March 2026.

This journey is a collaborative one, bringing together the Schools of Architecture, Arts and other departments at Oxford Brookes University with our partners in civil society. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our CENDEP students, OxHRF 2026 organising committee, and our festival coordinator, Syafiq Sanusi, whose tireless dedication has brought this vision to life. I warmly invite you to join us.

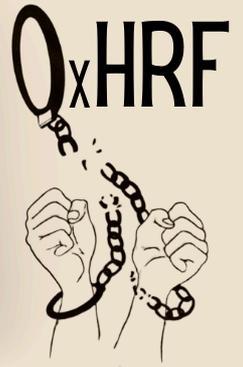


Supriya Akerkar
Director, Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP)
Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK



OXFORD HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL

2026



Venue: JHB Main Lecture Theatre, John Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

Join us for the Annual Nabeel Hamdi Lecture, featuring award-winning architect Peter Clegg, who received an OBE in 2025 for his social and environmental contributions. This event opens the Oxford Human Rights Festival 2026 with an introduction by Professor Helen Laville, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University. Peter will discuss his studio's mission to prioritise social value and sustainable design through community-informed architecture. He will also reflect on twenty years of educational projects across East Africa with the Feilden Foundation. Light refreshments will be provided at the end of the lecture.

**Friday
13 MARCH**

**Nabeel Hamdi Lecture:
Delivering Social Value
In Architectural Practice
by Peter Clegg OBE**

17:30-19:30

**Saturday
14 MARCH**

**Resistance Through
Tatreez: Traditional
Palestinian Embroidery
Workshop**

13:00-16:00

Venue: Room JHB B08 Lecture Theatre (Basement), John Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

The event begins with a display of heritage items, including Palestinian Thobes and prints from the Palestinian History Tapestry. This is followed by a presentation from the Al Amari Women's Centre on the history of Tatreez and the current situation for families in the camp. The session concludes with a two-hour immersive workshop celebrating the art of Tatreez. This hands-on event invites you to learn techniques and symbolism while engaging in dialogue around Palestinian human rights, cultural preservation, and collective memory. All skill levels are welcome, and materials are provided. Refreshments will be provided

Venue: Room JHB B08 Lecture Theatre (Basement), John Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

This event celebrates the heartbeat of Palestinian heritage, opening with spoken poetry and short films from the Gaza Hands Up Project. These works create a space for voice, reflection, and collective listening while amplifying Palestinian stories. Following the films and a period of shared reflection, the afternoon includes a break to try traditional bread and Za'ttar. The programme then moves into Joy in Dabke. This energetic and communal Palestinian dance carries the rhythm of the land and the strength of its people. Through movement, unity, and shared footsteps, the Dabke gathering with the Oxford Dabke Group honours Palestinian culture, identity, and collective resilience together. Refreshments will be provided

**Sunday
15 MARCH**

**Voice, Rhythm, and
Resistance: Short
Films from Gaza,
Poetry, and Dabke**

13:00-16:00

**Monday
16 MARCH**

**Incarcerating Eve by
Mandala Theatre
Company**

16:45-18:30

Venue: CLC G.03 (SKW Hall Flat), Clerici Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

Through 2000 years of patriarchy, women have faced imprisonment and torture for perceived crimes like witchcraft or hysteria. Today, women's freedoms face a disturbing global retreat through the rollback of reproductive rights and rising domestic abuse. *Incarcerating Eve* exposes the narratives used by organised religion and politics to suppress women throughout history. The play unearths Herstory to reveal ancient wisdom where feminine and masculine energies existed in balance. By connecting these origins to modern stories, the performance asks how we can build a world rooted in love rather than violence.

SURABAYA
nalkan sama arek-arek
Wali Kota Surabaya T
bakal calon w
Jatim Puti G
(CF)

Monday 16 MARCH

Dancing with the Devil:
Film Screening and
Discussion with Jon
Blair CBE

19:00-21:30

Venue: JHB 308 Kennedy Lecture Theatre, John Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

Film screening of *Dancing with the Devil*, a documentary by Academy Award-winning director Jon Blair CBE. *Dancing with the Devil* provides an unfiltered look into the drug war in Rio de Janeiro. The film follows three individuals on different sides of the conflict: a gang leader in the favelas; a police inspector from the elite civil police; and a pastor who mediates between the two worlds. Through these personal accounts; the documentary examines the moral choices and human cost of living within a cycle of systemic violence. It offers a rare perspective on the complexity of law enforcement; crime; and the struggle for peace in one of the most violent urban environments in the world. Event include a post-film Q&A with the director, Jon Blair CBE.

Tuesday 17 MARCH

The Phoenix of Gaza:
Film Screening and
Q&A with Yousef Al
Helou

19:00-21:00

Venue: JHB Main Lecture Theatre, John Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

This film captures the final records of cultural and social life in Gaza before the widespread destruction began in October 2023. Journalist Yousef Alhelou travelled back to his childhood home to document the hidden beauty of the enclave, including historic buildings and vibrant community spaces. His footage now serves as a rare and vital archive of a community under blockade through the eyes of a person returning home. Following the screening, Yousef Alhelou will lead a live discussion and Q&A session regarding the film and the current situation in Gaza.

Wednesday 18 MARCH

I am Cuba: Breaking
Free in Revolutionary
Cinema

18:00-21:30pm

Venue: JHB Main Lecture Theatre, John Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

Experience the visual masterpiece *I Am Cuba*, a Soviet-Cuban co-production that remains one of the most stylistically ambitious films in cinema history. The session begins with a short introduction to the historical context of the 1960s and the film's revolutionary production techniques. The screening is followed by a discussion on the portrayal of resistance with Dr Francesco Sticchi and Dr Neil Harris. We will examine the lasting effects of the revolution on the Cuban people and reflect on the film's hopeful imagery in contrast to the subsequent challenges and oppression under the Castro regime.

Venue: Oxford Castle & Prison, 44-46 Oxford Castle, Oxford, OX1 1AY

Step inside the walls of Oxford's historic Prison for an immersive exploration of justice, punishment, and human rights!

Theme: Human Rights Violations in Prison

This guided tour uncovers centuries of prison life, from harsh conditions and punitive practices to evolving rehabilitation. Discover how ideas of confinement and punishment have changed over time, and reflect on their relevance to modern human rights in prisons.

Thursday 19 MARCH

Right Behind Bars:
Oxford Prison Tour

10:15-11:45

Thursday 19 MARCH

Right Behind Bars:
Panel Discussion

14:00-16:00

Venue: Room JHB 304, John Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

This panel discussion addresses human rights violations in prisons, legal concerns surrounding incarceration, and the effectiveness of reintegration programmes. Experts will explore the social realities faced by prisoners to encourage critical reflection on the justice system. Speakers include Dr Richard Carver (Oxford Brookes University), a specialist in torture prevention; Jeanette Hall (Royal Holloway, University of London), a researcher and former prison manager focused on detention conditions; Tom Bartlett, a Senior Support Worker for "Through the Prison Gate" assisting prison leavers; and Fatima Rahman, a member of the People's Tribunal researching state violence and accountability. Refreshments will be provided. Stay after the talk for a chance to connect with the speakers and fellow attendees.

Venue: Room CLC 1.02, Clerici Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

Join Yasmin Sidhwa from Mandala Theatre Company for a creative workshop exploring women's empowerment and the history of gender based oppression. This session focuses on the silencing of the feminine principle, reproductive rights, domestic abuse, and postpartum mental health. Participants will learn to express their perspectives through drama, creative writing, and poster making. You will be guided to devise monologues and poetry in a supportive environment. No prior experience in the arts is necessary.

**Friday
20 MARCH**

**Creative Workshop:
Exploring Women's
Empowerment and
Oppression by Mandala
Theatre Company
15:00-17:00**

**Friday
20 MARCH**

**Gentle Angry Women:
Film Screening and
Discussion**

19:00-21:30

**Venue: JHB 308 Kennedy Lecture Theatre, John Henry Brookes Building,
Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP**

Join us for a screening and discussion of Gentle Angry Women. This coming-of-age documentary follows three young activists as they uncover the history of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Movement and the reality of British nuclear armament. The film bridges past courage with present hope through intergenerational dialogue and stories of peaceful protest. Following the screening, Dr Michele Paule will moderate a discussion with filmmaker Barbara Santi and activists Nuala Young and Di McDonald. This event is open to everyone above 12 years old.

EXHIBITIONS — Mon 16 March - Fri 20 MARCH

Venue: The Glass Tank, Abercrombie Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

Discover what freedom means across different generations. Join us for a powerful art exhibition that unites the voices, stories, and visions of liberation from youth to elders. This reflective experience challenges your perspective and reveals new ways of seeing the human struggle for independence. Step into a space where the wisdom of the past meets the bold energy of the future.

**Intergenerational
Freedom**

**Iraqi Women Art
and War:
Breaking Free**

Venue: The Glass Tank, Abercrombie Building, Oxford Brookes University, OX3 0BP

Iraqi Women Art and War: Breaking Free is a collective exhibition amplifying women's voices through art. It stands against all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, child and forced marriage, sexual exploitation, and the objectification of women.

Featuring works connected to Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Baluchistan, the exhibition expresses solidarity with women's struggles for dignity, freedom, and human rights. Through 2D and 3D artworks, textiles, ceramics, and recorded interviews, art becomes a space for resistance, healing, and reclaiming voice, especially for women, refugees, and asylum seekers.

**Venue: The Lab, Abercrombie Building, Oxford Brookes University,
OX3 0BP**

This exhibition is a personal response by an Israeli architect to the near-total silencing of the genocide in Gaza within Israeli public life. Confronting media censorship, political denial, and public indifference, the work uses scale, numbers, and figurative drawings to make Palestinian suffering impossible to ignore. It functions as a visual wail, an act of witness and moral refusal, demanding recognition of violence rendered invisible.

**A Wail by Proxy: An
Architect's Duty in
the Face of a
Genocide**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all who have contributed to the delivery of this festival. Firstly, a warm thank you to all collaborators, guest speakers and participants. Thank you to The Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association, Oxford Prison & Castle Tour, The Mandala Theatre Company, The Oxford Brookes Gaza Scholarship, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Iraqi Women Art and War (IWAW), People's Tribunal on Police Killings, Aspire Oxford, Oxfordshire Peace Campaign, Bartlett's Residential Care Home, Tynedale Community School and Windmill Primary School.

Thank you also to the staff and students of the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) at the School of Architecture, Oxford Brookes University, and the student organising committee, without whom this festival could not go forward each year.



ABOUT CENDEP

Founded in 1985, the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice is a multidisciplinary centre that brings together academics, development practitioners and policy makers. Our work concentrates on:

- Human rights and forced migration
- Inclusive recovery and development
- Conflict, humanitarian action and peacebuilding
- Shelter, housing and home in crises.

CENDEP offer a range of postgraduate courses. Join CENDEP's MA in Global Development and Humanitarian Practice for an amazing career in International Development, Humanitarian Practice or Human Rights work.

See <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/global-development-and-humanitarian-practice>



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For more information about each of the events and to register your attendance, please visit oxfordhumanrightsfestival.net.



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