

## Music Rights Award 2025: Statement from Manal Awwad, Director of the Gaza Music School

"I wished that my colleagues in Gaza - the ones who, with unyielding determination, continue carrying out the activities of *Gaza Sings: Voices of Steadfastness and Hope* in the midst of the genocide waged by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people, under the disgraceful complicity of the international community, teaching children music under bombardment, in tents, and among the rubble - were the ones standing to receive this award; for it is they who truly deserve this recognition.

Despite the systematic destruction of every aspect of life and the repeated forced displacement endured by our people in Gaza, our colleagues there insisted that the sound of music must remain present and loud in the face of Israel's machinery of extermination.

They carved out for the children fleeting moments of joy in a time when the Israeli occupation deliberately and brutally assassinates both childhood and humanity.

The news that *Gaza Sings* had won the 2025 IMC Music Rights Award reached me at the very moment when Israeli warplanes were launching another stage in erasing the beautiful city of Gaza, demolishing its high towers, just as they had already done in Rafah, Khan Younis, Jabalia, Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Shuja'iya, and Zeitoun. At that moment, the award was not merely international recognition of our work; it was a stance against genocide and a refusal to accept erasure. It was an affirmation of the Palestinian people's right to freedom, dignity, security, and self-determination on their land. These are the rights for which Palestinians have struggled, generation after generation, in an unbroken fight to end the occupation, achieve justice, and bring to an end the historical injustice imposed on them for decades"

Manal Awwad, Director of the Gaza Music School (now displaced in Cairo) on behalf of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music.