



Artwork: Jana Traboulsi  
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## Let It Be a Tale

While poetry may be created in isolation, it is an art form that embodies our connection to each other: to alternative presents and possible futures.

Though few of us could memorize an entire essay or story, poems come readily to the tongue and can be chanted or read aloud at gatherings, shared and re-shared on social media. They vibrate between us, move between languages, and connect memory to memory. Yet they are not only our shared sonic landscape, but also a visual one, with poetry written on stickers and placed beside bus seats and on lampposts; written on cardstock and held aloft during protests; penned elegantly for signs in windows.

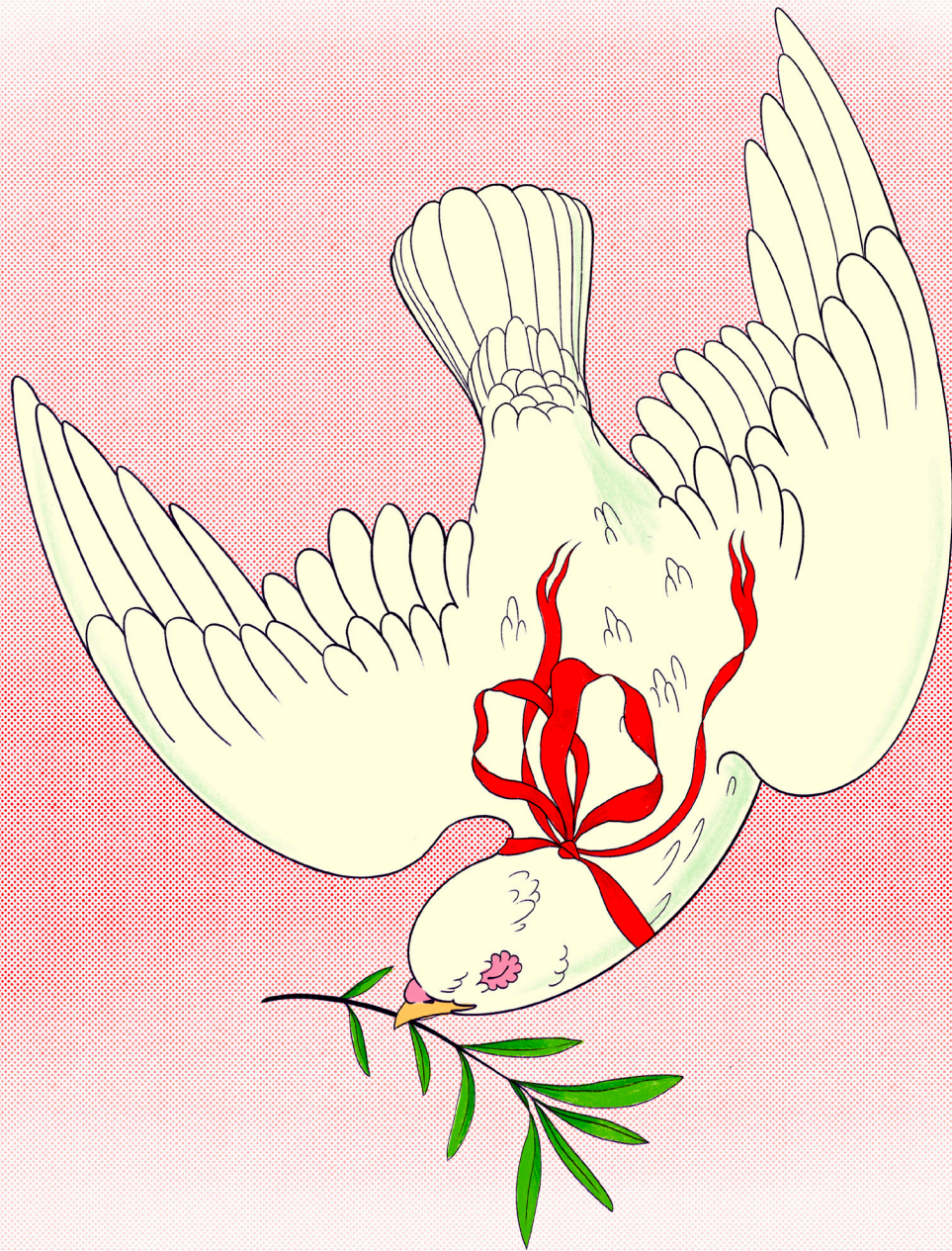
Poetry can be composed as quickly as a news story, and yet it resists the language of normalized oppression, searching for ways to help us see past the dulled passive voice of contemporary news coverage. Poetry allows us to see *possibility*.

The poems in this brief collection were written between mid-October and mid-December of 2023, by Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt, the UAE, Europe, and the United States.

The poems speak both to intense isolation (Samer Abu Hawwash's "It No Longer Matters If Anyone Loves Us" and Hiba Abu Nada's "Not Just Passing") but also to interconnectedness, with a new poem by Palestinian-American poet Fady Joudah responding to Refaat Al-Areer's "If I Must Die," which was the poem pinned to his Twitter timeline when he was targeted by an Israeli airstrike on December 7, 2023. He died along with his brother, his sister, and his sister's four children.

Then, once we are connected through the shared languages of poetry, it is time to act. At the end of this collection we offer a few pages on how we all can take direct action to end the Occupation and support life, freedom, and justice for Palestinians.





Artwork: @bambiprikt

## If I Must Die

*By Refaat Al-Areer*

If I must die,  
you must live  
to tell my story  
to sell my things  
to buy a piece of cloth  
and some strings,  
(make it white with a long tail)  
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza  
while looking heaven in the eye  
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—  
and bid no one farewell  
not even to his flesh  
not even to himself—  
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above  
and thinks for a moment an angel is there  
bringing back love  
If I must die  
let it bring hope  
let it be a tale.



Artwork: Sohila Khaled  
@sohilaakhaled\_

*By Fady Joudah*

Suddenly I  
“in ablaze” died.  
Suddenly time  
quit lingering.  
Suddenly you  
can’t find my body,  
can’t bury  
what you can’t find.  
My final poem,  
I wrote years before  
my hour arrived.  
Suddenly my voice,  
thought voiceless  
because stateless,  
gave voice  
to a noisy world.  
Suddenly “a kite.”  
Suddenly I.



CEASE FIRE NOW



Artwork: Gabriela Aratijo  
@mgabrielaaraujo

## Sunbird

*By Fady Joudah*

I flit  
from gleaming river  
to glistening sea,

from all that we  
to all that me,

fresh east to salty west,  
southern sweet,

and northern free  
there is a lake

between us,  
and aquifers  
for cactus

and basins  
of anemone  
from the river  
to the sea,

from womb  
to breath and one  
with oneness

I be,  
from the river  
to the sea.

# I Grant You Refuge

*By Hiba Abu Nada*

*Translated by Huda Fakhreddine*

1.  
I grant you refuge  
in invocation and prayer.  
I bless the neighborhood and the minaret  
to guard them  
from the rocket  
from the moment  
it is a general's command  
until it becomes  
a raid.  
I grant you and the little ones refuge,  
the little ones who  
change the rocket's course  
before it lands  
with their smiles.

2.  
I grant you and the little ones refuge,  
the little ones now asleep like chicks in a nest.  
They don't walk in their sleep toward dreams.  
They know death lurks outside the house.  
Their mothers' tears are now doves  
following them, trailing behind  
every coffin.

3.  
I grant the father refuge,  
the little ones' father who holds the house upright  
when it tilts after the bombs.  
He implores the moment of death:  
"Have mercy. Spare me a little while.  
For their sake, I've learned to love my life.  
Grant them a death  
as beautiful as they are."

4.  
I grant you refuge  
from hurt and death,  
refuge in the glory of our siege,  
here in the belly of the whale.  
Our streets exalt God with every bomb.  
They pray for the mosques and the houses.  
And every time the bombing begins in the North,  
our supplications rise in the South.

5.  
I grant you refuge  
from hurt and suffering.  
With words of sacred scripture  
I shield the oranges from the sting of phosphorus  
and the shades of cloud from the smog.  
I grant you refuge in knowing  
that the dust will clear,  
and they who fell in love and died together  
will one day laugh.

# Day 38, Nov. 14, I Didn't See the Fall This Year

*By Olivia Elias*

*Translated by J  r  my Victor Robert*

I didn't see the fall this year  
I didn't see the acacia blaze  
the cranes fly away

only bombs & more bombs on Gaza in ruins

NO WATER            NO FOOD            NO FUEL & ELECTRICITY

for the people of the Ghetto  
not even medicine   absolute Deprivation  
so have decided the Conquerors with the unfailing  
support of their powerful Allies

in the first place the big Chief of America who  
frantically shakes his veto-rattle

I didn't see a single thing this fall  
no blazing acacia   no flying cranes

only a deluge of bombs dropped on the  
deadly mousetrap

& overflowing   in the middle of this madness  
the big living river with multiple arms  
of the children of Gaza

your small bodies   which didn't get the time to grow up  
your dreams   which didn't get the time to blossom

your small bodies   flowers of blood  
your dreams   blown away with the wind

I didn't notice the fall this year  
I didn't say goodbye to the golden leaves  
to the cranes

I must say goodbye   goodbye to every single thing

like they do over there   each night  
before going to sleep   parents & children  
hugging each other & saying goodbye

perhaps *we'll be blessed to meet again*  
in another life   a life that won't be  
ghetto & bantustans   jails   bombs   & extinction

# It No Longer Matters If Anyone Loves Us

*By Samer Abu Hawwash*

*Translated by Huda Fakhreddine*

It no longer matters  
if anyone loves us.  
The love of the great angel  
in his bright white sky  
is enough.

Our children see him standing in the distance,  
holding his hands in the shape of a heart  
and they smile.  
Our women see him waving a sprig of white jasmine  
and close their eyes once  
and forever.  
Our men see his blue wings  
as clear as a sky.  
Their hearts are seized,  
and they set out toward him.

It no longer matters  
if anyone loves us.  
Bombs have liberated us from our ears,  
with which we used to hear words of love.  
Rockets have liberated us from our eyes,  
with which we used to see loving glances.  
Hate-filled words have liberated us from our hearts,  
in which we used to cherish the enchantments of love.

It no longer matters  
if anyone, in this world, loves us.  
“It seems to have been an unreciprocated love, anyway,”  
say our elders, now exhausted by the idea of land.  
Our poet stands on the distant horizon and proclaims:  
“Save us from your cruel love!”

He then whispers, apologizing for an earlier, childish optimism:  
“On this Earth,  
nothing deserves life.”

It no longer matters  
if anyone loves us.  
We are tired of words, the said and the unsaid,  
tired of hands that reach out but do not touch,  
of eyes that see but do not see.  
We are tired of ourselves in this endless night,  
and tired of our mothers clinging to what’s left of us,  
tired of this rock we carry on our backs,  
this eternal curse.  
From abyss to abyss, we carry it,  
from death to death,  
and we never arrive.

It no longer matters, after this, if anyone loves us,  
or if anyone walks in our funerals.  
Here we go in silence, toward the final abyss.  
We hold each other’s hands,  
go forth alone in this desert of a world.  
At some moment, one of us, a child, will look back,  
will cast one last glance at the ruins, and  
shedding a single tear, will say:  
“It no longer matters that anyone loves us.”



Artwork: Rand Salim Hammoud  
@Zaafa\_art

# Mamma, I'm fine

By Maya Murry

The maps are not what they once were,  
The surgeon said hovering my naked body.

The metal table he'd spread us on was a bed  
of thorns no rose could grow, the only limb  
my scribe could hold was my wilting palm,  
like a dying dove god tossed in water, just  
to hear me ebb away to the ocean wave of:

*mamma I'm fine  
mamma I'm fine  
I'm falling asleep  
in little Palestine*

The discourse of my placenta, the subject of  
contradiction: no one really knew if a womb  
could survive being annexed 26 times. They said,  
her blue cord never learned to choke the sea  
before it could learn to love her screams.

I told the scribe *mamma I'm fine mamma I'm fine*  
and all she could do was wind down the memory  
of my miniature spine with a shattered glass of wine,  
for the scribe's blue eyes were not allowed to cry  
when she spread butterfly thighs on a metal moon sky,  
punctured my insides like Akkadian fire-flies:

watched him open me up with a keyhole  
knife just to make sure little Assyria civilized,

just to hear Wadea Al-Fayoume say,

*mamma I'm fine  
mamma I'm fine*

Stabbed 26 times  
cause he'd jump  
up and down in  
little Palestine.



# Not Just Passing

*By Hiba Abu Nada*

*Translated by Huda Fakhreddine*

Yesterday, a star said  
to the little light in my heart,  
*We are not just transients  
passing.*

Do not die. Beneath this glow  
some wanderers go on  
walking.

You were first created out of love,  
so carry nothing but love  
to those who are trembling.

One day, all gardens sprouted  
from our names, from what remained  
of hearts yearning.

And since it came of age, this ancient language  
has taught us how to heal others  
with our longing,

how to be a heavenly scent  
to relax their tightening lungs: a welcome sigh,  
a gasp of oxygen.

Softly, we pass over wounds,  
like purposeful gauze, a hint of relief,  
an aspirin.

O little light in me, don't die,  
even if all the galaxies of the world  
close in.

O little light in me, say:  
*Enter my heart in peace.*  
*All of you, come in!*

# Our Loneliness

*By Hiba Abu Nada*

*Translated by Salma Harland*

How alone it was,  
our loneliness,  
when they won their wars.

Only you were left behind,  
naked,  
before this loneliness.  
Darwish,  
no poetry could ever bring it back:  
what the lonely one has lost.

It's another age of ignorance,  
our loneliness.  
Damned be that which divided us  
then stands united  
at your funeral.

Now your land is auctioned  
and the world's  
a free market.

It's a barbaric era,  
our loneliness,  
one when none will stand up for us.

So, my country, wipe away your poems,  
the old and the new,  
and your tears,  
and pull yourself together.

يا وحدنا  
ربح الجميع حروبهم

وَتَرَكْتَ أَنْتَ أَمَامَ وَحْدِكَ عَارِيًّا  
لا شعر يا درويش  
سوف يعيد ما خسر الوحيد وما فقد  
يا وحدنا

هذا زمان جاهلي آخر  
لُعن الذي في الحرب فرقنا به  
وعلى جنازتك اتحد  
يا وحدنا

الأرض سوق حرة  
وبلادك الكبرى مزاد معتمد  
يا وحدنا

هذا زمان جاهلي  
لن يساندنا أحد  
يا وحدنا

فامسح  
قصائدك القديمة والجديدة  
والبكاء  
وشدي حيلك يا بلد

# From 'I Saw, Father, What You Saw'

*By Ahlam Bsharat*

*Translated by Nora Parr*

I saw a picture, O Father, of a man carrying his four children in the war.  
It magnified your resilience in Palestine: the land of war and survival.  
You carried eight, O Father,  
without a groan.

Whenever I saw the life line  
An etch across the palm of my hand  
I said with a laugh:  
We are a people who live long.  
Yes, my father lived a hundred years.

My friend said:  
It suits you to be the daughter of a man who lived a hundred years.

I don't know, O Father,  
what to say to the child who died before living only one week in this world.  
They recorded his name on the death certificate  
before they recorded his name on the birth certificate.  
I know that your departure was hastened  
a hundred years are not enough for the Palestinian.  
But what do I say to this child?  
If you were here,  
I would ask you to share your life with him,  
and you would agree,  
for you were generous.  
The morsel in your mouth is not for you,  
so you gave him thirty years, and kept seventy for yourself.  
Or you shared your life with him equally;  
fifty for him. Fifty for you!

Perhaps he was my father,  
and you were the infant for whom they recorded his name on the death certificate  
before they recorded his name on the birth certificate,  
a child born in 1948, who died before living.



*Artwork: Eline Van Dam  
@ zelootillustrations*

# The Idea Has Failed

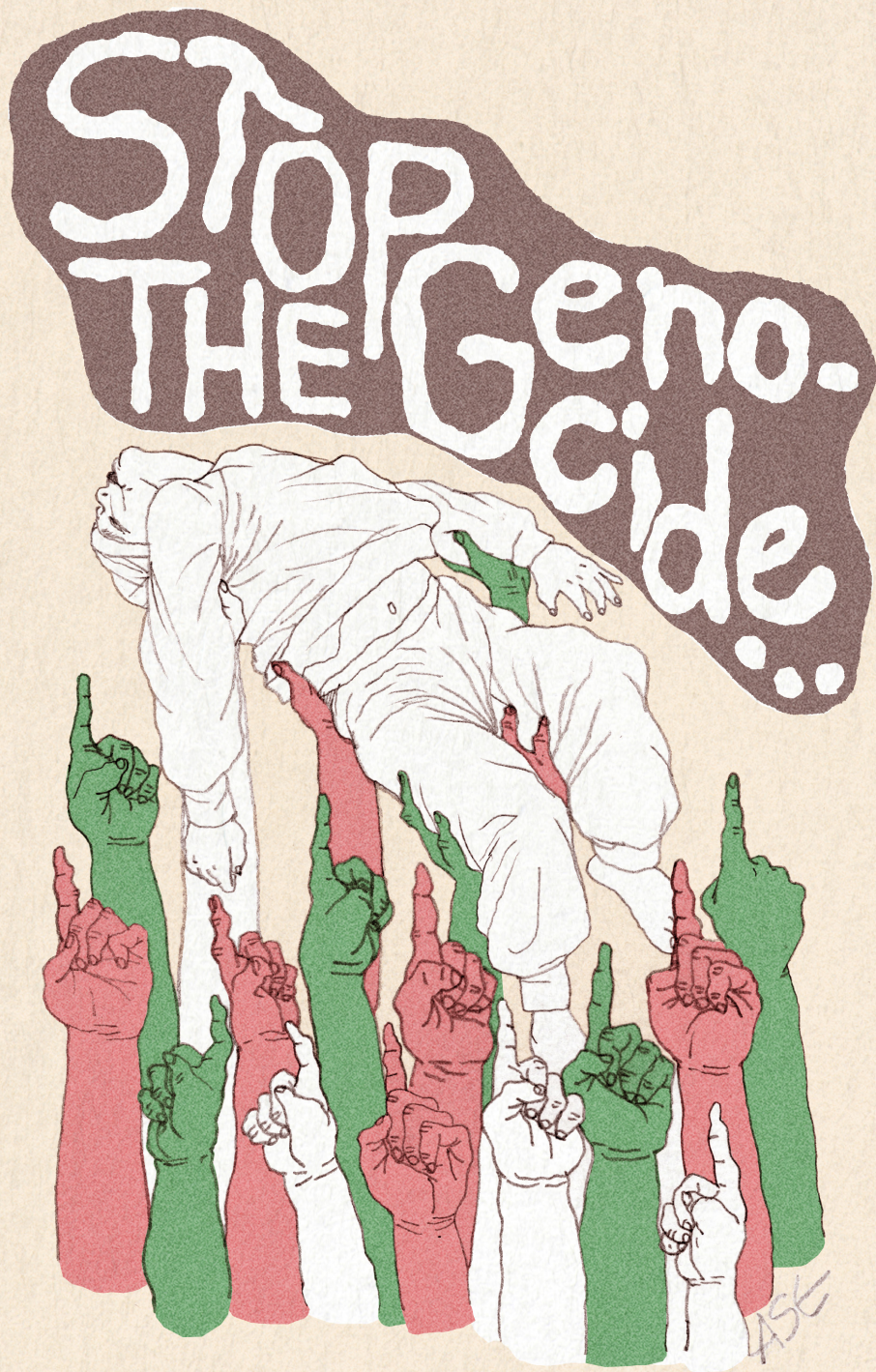
*By Basman Aldirawi*

*Translated by Elele*

I sympathize with God a lot:  
My heart, too, has been let down.  
If we could sit together now  
we'd share a cigarette. I'd rest my hand on His shoulder, and  
we'd cry together until a light rain fell,  
washing Gaza of this cloud of smoke  
that does not belong to the sky,  
stopping the din that kills another child in Gaza  
and the blood that's spilling from the world's hand and mouth.  
Life will spread across Gaza's chest, and there will be a resurrection:  
Not a wound nor a scar on her.  
But scars do not die, ya Allah.  
I hear Him cry: "A billion silent, a million killed."  
The sound of weeping rings out  
And though I am no obedient worshiper, I pray.  
I remember the faces of families and friends,  
the streets, the cities, the sea,  
the faces of everyone I've ever met, every day in Gaza.  
I pray and I hear His voice, with every explosion and severed limb, shouting:  
The idea has failed  
The idea has failed

أتعاطف مع الله جدا  
قلبي مخذول أيضا  
لو استطيع الآن أن نجلس معا  
ندخن سيجارة وأريت على كتفه  
نبكي معا حتى ينزل المطر خفيفا  
يغسل غزة من غيمة دخان لا تنتمي للسماء  
يتوقف الصوت الذي يقتل طفلا آخر في غزة  
يتوقف دمي عن السيل من يدي العالم وفمه  
أن ينفخ في صدرها الحياة فتقوم قيامة جديدة  
لا جروح فيها ولا ندب  
لكن الندب لا تموت يا الله  
أسمع نحيب الله "مليار صامت ومليون قاتل"  
يرتفع صوت البكاء  
ورغم كوني عبد غير طائع، أصلي  
أتذكر وجوه كل الأهل والأصدقاء  
الشوارع والمدن ووجه البحر  
وجوه كل من قابلتهم يوما يوم في غزة  
أصلي وأسمع صوت الله مع كل انفجار وأشلاء يصرخ  
لقد فشلت الفكرة  
لقد فشلت الفكرة





Artwork: Aly S. Elsayed  
@aly.selsayed

## This Bread Was Born, This Bread Was Killed

*By Basman Aldirawi*

With clean hands,  
he gently sifts the flour,  
and adds a handful of yeast.  
He pours the warm water  
for the yeast particles to live,  
then rolls and kneads and rolls  
and kneads the dough.

He lets the soft mass rest.

With firm but gentle hands,  
he rounds it into balls,  
flattens them into shape,  
and handles each one  
delicately into the oven.

Soon, perhaps in half an hour,  
the bread rolls are born fresh,  
healthy and browned.

The newborn breads breathe,  
yet dust chokes the air,  
searing gasses penetrate  
their thin, fragile crusts.

On the day of their birth, a missile,  
a bakery, a scattering  
of zaatar, flesh, and blood.

# Everything Knows You Will Rise

*By Ghassan Zaqtan*

*Translated by Samuel Wilder*

Now you are alone  
says the wall that comes at night,  
there will be no knocks at the door  
no pats on the shoulder,  
the roads that led to your dreams  
lie shattered, splayed  
like corpses on the arid ground.

The paths you once crossed  
without fear  
to meet siblings and neighbors  
when seasons were rough,  
when life was hard and dry,  
are clogged by stone,  
unfulfillment, and dark intent.

The bridges that shined  
in the memories of your fathers  
fell in wadis that dried long ago.  
Expect no one from there now.

But everything knows you will rise.

The time is gone  
when far off dust  
signaled comings and goings,  
siblings on the road,  
or a letter from your family.  
The dust you see now  
is the destruction of your houses  
and the homes of your family there.  
The smoke past the hill  
is not caravans  
or people returning,  
it is the torching  
of your uncles' fields  
and the orchards you once exulted in.  
No dreams can grow  
in these vessels you gathered and kept.

But everything knows you will rise.

You have no siblings left,  
only this desert you gained,  
where you were thrown,  
this desert fed by your endurance,  
it advanced  
in your silence.

The wall each time brings the past,  
the wall in place of the road.

The wall seeps through rooms and windows,  
enters bedrooms bearing the scream  
that it throws on the lodgings and beds,  
on the shrouds of boys and girls:  
'you have no siblings left'  
'now you are alone.'  
But everything knows you will rise.





# FREE PALESTINE

Artwork: Hassan Manasrah  
@hassan.manasrah.illustrations

## On Further Action

### *Palestinian Life, Memory, & Culture*

Israel has targeted and murdered hundreds of intellectuals, memory-keepers, journalists, poets, students, and artists—from Ghassan Kanafani in 1972, to Hiba Abu Nada and Refaat Al-Areer and over a hundred journalists since October 7, 2023. It has destroyed historic libraries, attacked cultural events in East Jerusalem, ransacked Ramallah's Sakakini Cultural Centre, and carried out the genocidal destruction of universities, archives, libraries, bookstores, publishing houses, historic mosques, hospitals, churches, and homes in Gaza. Despite such violence, Palestinian life, memory, and culture—whether in the areas of 48, the West Bank, Gaza, or the diaspora—remains powerful, vital, and imaginative in resistance, with Palestinian artists, intellectuals, writers, journalists, and ordinary people refusing to be intimidated or silent.

### Hasbara, 'Brand Israel,' & Art-washing

"I do not differentiate between hasbara and culture." (Israeli official, 2005). Israel has invested billions of dollars to construct a sophisticated cultural apparatus, using academia, literature, film, music, tourism, and social media, in strategic ways to justify its violent occupation of Palestine. Israel's artists, academics, writers, publishers, arts organizations, and universities through silence or active participation are complicit in normalizing and 'art-washing' Israeli occupation, settler-colonialism, apartheid, and genocide.

## **BDS | Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions**

Inspired by South Africa's successful anti-apartheid movement, Palestine's Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement was launched in 2005 by 170 Palestinian organizations including unions, refugee networks, women's organizations, professional associations, popular resistance committees, and other civil society organizations.

BDS puts pressure on international companies, institutions, and governments to change their policies and stop collaborations with Israel until it complies with these three demands, as stipulated by International Law:

1. End Israeli occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantle the Wall,
2. Recognize Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel's fundamental right to full equality,
3. Respect, protect, and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

The BDS Movement's Economic Boycott information is available at

**[bdsmovement.net/economic-boycott](https://bdsmovement.net/economic-boycott)**

## **PACBI | The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel**

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) was initiated in 2004 to contribute to the struggle for Palestinian freedom, justice, and equality. PACBI is a founding member of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), and is tasked with overseeing the academic and cultural boycott aspects of PACBI, the cultural arm of BDS. It advocates for boycotting Israeli academic and cultural institutions for their deep and persistent complicity in Israel's denial of Palestinian rights.

BDS Movement's PACBI information is available at  
**<https://bdsmovement.net/pacbi>**

More general BDS Movement's Cultural Boycott information is available at  
**[bdsmovement.net/cultural-boycott](https://bdsmovement.net/cultural-boycott)**

and its Academic Boycott information at  
**[bdsmovement.net/academic-boycott](https://bdsmovement.net/academic-boycott)**

There's also more at  
**<https://www.writersagainsthewarongaza.com/pacbi>**



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Agitate and Advocate

- Be in the streets; attend demonstrations, rallies, and other Palestinian solidarity events.
- Write to and call your representatives in government to tell them that you demand they place pressures on Israel to end the killing, end the occupation, and allow the Palestinian people their rights and freedoms. Let them know that you need action and policy changes, not just words.
- Amplify Palestinians, and Palestinians in Gaza especially, through online platforms, and engage as much as possible with their content in order to boost visibility.

### Sign a Statement to Pledge Your Support for BDS/PACBI

- Sign a Statement of Support and join a solidarity group related to your work within academic, literary, music, or arts sectors (see list at end of this section).
- Sign up for BDS's newsletter and support its urgent boycott demands to end this genocide and plan for the future of a free Palestine.

### Refuse Complicity

- Refuse any collaboration with Israeli academic or arts institutions, including those that normalize occupation through “both sides” inclusion of Israelis and Palestinians.
- Boycott state-funded Israeli products, including books, music, and media.
- Boycott and/or work towards the cancellation of events, activities, agreements, or projects involving Israel, its lobby groups, or its cultural institutions, or that otherwise promote the normalization of Israel in the global cultural sphere.
- Refuse funding from any Israeli, or related source.

### Support Palestinian Voices

- Study with Palestinian professors, read Palestinian authors, watch Palestinian films, listen to Palestinian music, and support Palestinian artists.
- Invite Palestinians to speak at and attend your events, write for your publications, and collaborate with your artistic and scholarly endeavors.



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**NOTE:** Connect with your local PACBI and BDS organizers to learn more. If you need further advice or guidance, please visit the Palestinian BNC and PACBI website at [bdsmovement.net](http://bdsmovement.net) or social channels [@bdsmovement](https://twitter.com/bdsmovement), or contact PACBI directly: [pacbi@pacbi.org](mailto:pacbi@pacbi.org).

## Contributors

**Refaat Al-Areer** was a prominent Palestinian writer, poet, professor, and activist from the Gaza Strip. He was killed on December 7, 2023, when an Israeli airstrike targeted the home in Shajaiya where he was staying with his brother, his sister, and his sister's four children, who were also killed.

**Basman Aldirawi** (also published as Basman Derawi) is a physiotherapist and graduated from Al-Azhar University in Gaza in 2010. Inspired by an interest in music, movies, and people with special needs, he contributes dozens of stories to the online platform We Are Not Numbers.

**Samer Abu Hawash** (@samerabuwash) is a Palestinian writer and translator.

**Huda Fakhreddine** is a translator and Associate Professor of Arabic Literature at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Fady Joudah** is a poet for our times and all. He is the author of five collections; most recently, [...] (Milkweed Editions). He has translated several collections of poetry from Arabic and is the co-editor and co-founder of the Etel Adnan Poetry Prize.

**Ahlam Bsharat** is a Palestinian novelist, poet and children's author, as well as a teacher of creative writing.

**Ghassan Zaqtan** is a Palestinian poet, novelist, and editor who was born in Bethlehem and has lived in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Tunisia. He is the author of numerous collections of poetry, a novel and a play. His verse collection *Like a Straw Bird It Follows Me* (Yale University Press), translated by Fady Joudah, was awarded the Griffin Poetry Prize for 2013, and he was nominated for the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in both 2014 and 2016.

**Samuel Wilder** is a translator of Arabic literature, a writer and a student of comparative poetics. He has translated three books by Ghassan Zaqtan.

**Nora Parr** is a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham and at the Center for Lebanese Studies and is the author of *Novel Palestine: Nation through the Works of Ibrahim Nasrallah* (University of California Press). She co-edits *Middle Eastern Literatures*.

**Olivia Elias** is a poet of the Palestinian diaspora who writes in French. Born in Haifa in 1944, she lived until the age of sixteen in Lebanon, where her family took refuge in 1948, then in Montreal, before moving to France. Her work, translated into English, Arabic, Spanish, Italian and Japanese, has appeared in anthologies and numerous journals. In 2022, she published her first book in English translation, *Chaos, Crossing* (World Poetry), translated by Kareem James Abu-Zeid.

**Jérémy Victor Robert** is a translator between English and French who works and lives in his native Réunion Island.

### About Publishers for Palestine

Founded in October 2023, Publishers for Palestine is a global solidarity collective of publishers who stand for justice, freedom of expression, and the power of the written word in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Our **Statement of Solidarity**, translated into multiple languages, has been signed by over 400 publishers around the world. Visit [publishersforpalestine.org](https://publishersforpalestine.org) to learn more about our work.