



Refaat Alareer (1979-2023)

Was a prominent Palestinian writer, poet, professor, and activist from the Gaza Strip, who taught literature and creative writing at the Islamic University of Gaza. On December 6, 2023, around 6 p.m. local time in Gaza, Alareer was murdered in a surgical Israeli airstrike along with his brother, sister, and her three children.



If I Must Die

*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.*

Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008)

Was a renowned Palestinian poet and author, widely recognized as Palestine's national poet. In 1988, he penned the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, formally establishing the State of Palestine. Darwish's works garnered numerous awards, and he skillfully employed Palestine as a metaphor to explore themes of loss, rebirth, dispossession, and exile. Known as a poet of faction, he embodied the Islamic tradition of the politically engaged poet. Additionally, Darwish served as an editor for various literary magazines in Palestine.



To Our Land

*To our land,
and it is the one near the word of god,
a ceiling of clouds
To our land,
and it is the one far from the adjectives of
nouns,
the map of absence
To our land,
and it is the one tiny as a sesame seed,
a heavenly horizon ... and a hidden chasm
To our land,*

*and it is the one poor as a grouse's wings,
holy books ... and an identity wound
To our land,
and it is the one surrounded with torn hills,
the ambush of a new past
To our land, and it is a prize of war,
the freedom to die from longing and burning
and our land, in its bloodied night,
is a jewel that glimmers for the far
upon the far and illuminates what's outside
it...
As for us, inside,
we suffocate more!*

Dareen Tatour (b. 1982)

Is a Palestinian poet, photographer, and social media activist. Writing in her native Arabic, she has become a symbol of artistic resistance. However, in 2018, Tatour faced trial, conviction, and a five-month prison sentence by an Israeli court for charges of "inciting violence" and "supporting a terrorist organization" due to her social media posts, including a video featuring a reading of one of her poems. Despite these challenges, in 2019, Tatour received the prestigious Oxfam Novib/PEN Award for Freedom of Expression, highlighting her commitment to artistic freedom and her unwavering voice.

Resist, My People, Resist Them

*Resist, my people, resist them.
In Jerusalem, I dressed my wounds and
breathed my sorrows,
And carried the soul in my palm
For an Arab Palestine.
I will not succumb to the
'peaceful solution',
Never lower my flags
Until I evict them from my land.
I cast them aside for a coming time.*

*Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist the settlers' robbery
And follow the caravan of martyrs.
Shred the disgraceful constitution
Which imposed degradation
and humiliation
And deterred us from restoring justice.
They burned blameless children;
As for Hadil, they sniped her in public,
Killed her in broad daylight.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist the colonialist's onslaught.*

*Pay no mind to his agents among us
Who chain us with the peaceful illusion.
Do not fear doubtful tongues;
The truth in your heart is stronger;
As long as you resist in a land
That has lived through raids and victory.
So Ali called from his grave:
Resist, my rebellious people-
Write me as prose on the agarwood;
My remains have you as a response.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist, my people, resist them.*



Hiba Abu Nada (1991-2023)

Was a Palestinian poet, novelist, nutritionist. Her novel 'Oxygen is not for the dead' won second place in the Sharjah Award for Arab Creativity in 2017. She was killed in her home in the Gaza Strip by an Israeli airstrike in the 2023 Israel-Hamas war. Her final post to X on October 9, 2023 was in Arabic and reads: "Gaza's night is dark apart from the glow of rockets, quiet apart from the sound of the bombs, terrifying apart from the comfort of prayer, black apart from the light of the martyrs. Good night, Gaza."

I Grant You Refuge

- 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
phosphorous
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.*



Poetry, for as long as it has existed, has been a powerful tool in the hands of the oppressed and marginalized, allowing them to rise above adversity and reclaim their agency.

