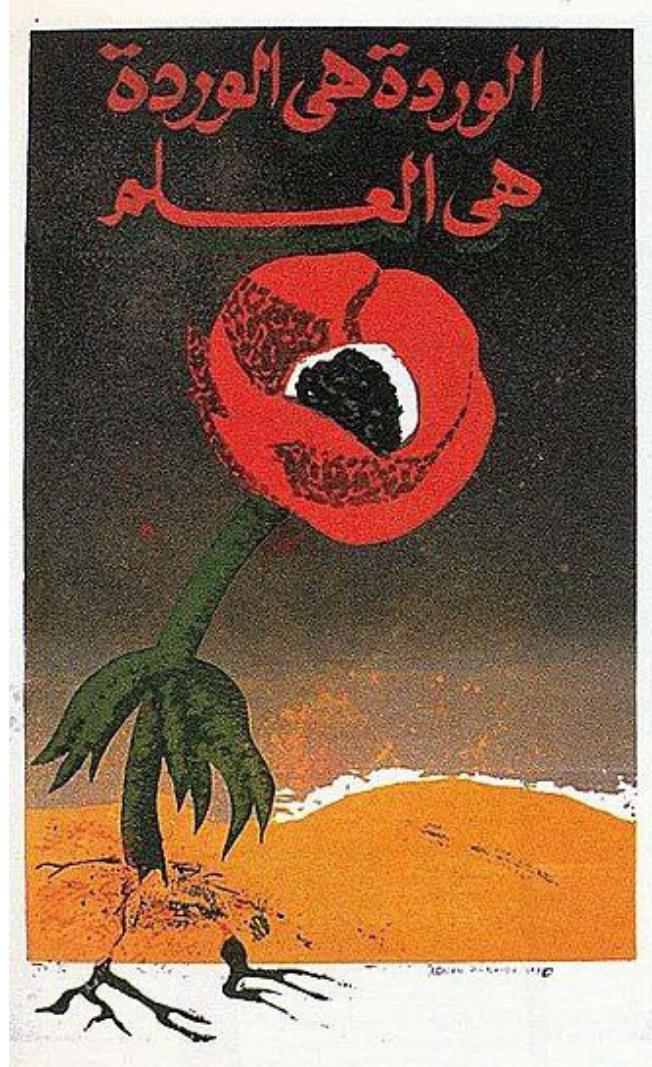


Prairie  
zine

A Rumman poetry zine



قصائد من وإلى فلسطين



We share this small collection of poems born from a long and resilient tradition of Palestinian poetry — from the powerful voices of Mahmoud Darwish, Fadwa Tuqan, and Samih al-Qasim, to contemporary poets like Refaat Alareer, and others writing from Gaza today. This collection includes works that confront political oppression, censorship, and the silencing of voices. It is poetry born in tents, in exile, in prison cells, in streets, through checkpoints, and under the rubble. Poetry born from occupation, from censorship, from walls that were meant to silence.

The poems follow a loose timeline, tracing nearly a century of Palestinian writing. They speak of life under occupation, of dispossession, of prisons — both visible and invisible. Across generations, the same themes echo: loss, longing, resistance, love, and the struggle to preserve identity and memory. Within these pages, you will find layered voices: Palestinians living under military rule, voices from prisons in Israel and across the Arab world, voices silenced for speaking, for writing, or for simply existing.

This zine moves between languages — Arabic, English, Egyptian dialect, and German — reflecting the dispersed, multilingual reality of those bringing it to life. It resists tokenism: it refuses to reduce Palestinians to symbols, headlines, or statistics. These voices were always there. Palestinians have always written to remember, to connect to their land and their ancestors, and to build viable communities in the spaces where survival is a daily act of resistance. These poems invite us to listen, feel, imagine, and act. Compelled by words that carry the weight of history and hope, and the voice of Mahmoud Darwish's, we repeat: Palestine is not only a land, it is an ancient and living story.

" On this land, the Lady of the Earth,  
mother of beginnings, mother of endings,  
it was called Palestine  
Her name later became .. Palestine "  
أُمُّ الْبِدَائِيَاتِ أُمُّ النَّهَائِيَاتِ. كَانَتْ تُسَمَّى فِلِسْطِين. صَارَتْ تُسَمَّى " فِلِسْطِين ".

Wir teilen diese kleine Sammlung von Gedichten, geboren aus einer langen und widerständigen Tradition palästinensischer Poesie – von den kraftvollen Stimmen Mahmoud Darwischs, Fadwa Tuqans und Samih al-Qasims bis hin zu zeitgenössischen Dichter\*innen wie Refaat Alareer und anderen, die heute aus Gaza schreiben. Diese Sammlung umfasst Werke, die sich politischer Unterdrückung, Zensur und der systematischen Zum-Schweigen-Bringung von Stimmen widersetzen. Es ist Poesie, geboren in Zelten, im Exil, in Gefängniszellen, auf den Straßen, an Checkpoints und unter den Trümmern.

Die Gedichte folgen einer losen Chronologie und zeichnen fast ein Jahrhundert palästinensischen Schreibens nach. Sie erzählen vom Leben unter Besatzung, vom Exil und von Enteignung, von Gefängnissen – sichtbaren und unsichtbaren. Über Generationen hinweg hallen dieselben Themen wider: Verlust, Sehnsucht, Widerstand, Liebe und der Kampf, Identität und Erinnerung zu bewahren. In diesen Seiten begegnen uns vielschichtige Stimmen: Palästinenser\*innen, die unter militärischer Herrschaft leben, Stimmen aus Gefängnissen in Israel und in der arabischen Welt, Stimmen, die zum Schweigen gebracht wurden.

Dieses Zine bewegt sich zwischen Sprachen – Arabisch, Englisch, ägyptischem Dialekt und Deutsch – und spiegelt damit die verstreute, mehrsprachige Realität jener wider, die es geschaffen haben. Es widersetzt sich jeder Form von Tokenismus: Es weigert sich, Palästinenserinnen auf Symbole, Schlagzeilen oder Statistiken zu reduzieren. Diese Stimmen waren immer da. Palästinenserinnen haben immer geschrieben – um zu erinnern, um sich mit ihrem Land und ihren Vorfahren zu verbinden, um lebensfähige Gemeinschaften in Räumen aufzubauen, in denen Überleben ein täglicher Akt des Widerstands ist.

Diese Gedichte laden uns ein, zuzuhören, zu imaginieren – und zu handeln. Getrieben von Worten, die das Gewicht von Geschichte und Hoffnung tragen, und der Stimme Mahmoud Darwischs folgend, wiederholen wir: Palästina ist nicht nur ein Land, es ist eine uralte und lebendige Geschichte.

"Mutter der Anfänge  
Mutter der Enden,  
einst war sie bekannt als Palästina  
und sie wird wieder bekannt als Palästina"  
أُمُّ الْبَدَائِيَّاتِ أُمُّ النَّهَائِيَّاتِ  
كَانَتْ تُسَمَّى فِلِسْطِين  
صَارَتْ تُسَمَّى فِلِسْطِين"

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## **Samih al-Qasim**

A poet (1939–2014) from Galilee, al-Qasim shared with Mahmoud Darwish the experience of being a Palestinian living under surveillance and military rule. A member of the Israeli Communist Party (later Hadash), he refused exile, insisting on resistance through presence.

His voice is sharp, declarative, and full of irony his poems sound like speeches, chants, or court testimonies. He uses repetition and rhythm as weapons of defiance, turning accusation into art.

In "The Man Who Visited Death", ""Come forward!", and "I Walk Tall" he is declarative, rhythmic, and metaphorical the personal voice becomes a witness to injustice, and the poems transform private experience into a public call for resilience and presence.

In "Confession at Midday" and "Travel Tickets", he exposes the absurdity of a system that calls him "citizen" while denying his homeland.

Al-Qasim's poetry is political in tone but moral in heart it speaks of dignity as the last homeland.

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# Enemy of the Sun

Samih al-Qasim

I may – if you wish – lose my livelihood  
I may sell my shirt and bed.  
I may work as a stone cutter,  
A street sweeper, a porter.  
I may clean your stores  
Or rummage your garbage for food.  
I may lie down hungry,  
O enemy of the sun,  
But  
I shall not compromise  
And to the last pulse in my veins  
I shall resist.

You may take the last strip of my land,  
Feed my youth to prison cells.  
You may plunder my heritage.  
You may burn my books, my poems  
Or feed my flesh to the dogs.  
You may spread a web of terror  
On the roofs of my village,  
O enemy of the sun,  
But  
I shall not compromise  
And to the last pulse in my veins  
I shall resist.

You may put out the light in my eyes.  
You may deprive me of my mother's kisses.  
You may curse my father, my people.  
You may distort my history,  
You may deprive my children of a smile  
And of life's necessities.  
You may fool my friends with a borrowed face.  
You may build walls of hatred around me.  
You may glue my eyes to humiliations,  
O enemy of the sun,  
But  
I shall not compromise  
And to the last pulse in my veins  
I shall resist.

O enemy of the sun  
The decorations are raised at the port.  
The ejaculations fill the air,  
A glow in the hearts,  
And in the horizon  
A sail is seen  
Challenging the wind  
And the depths.  
It is Ulysses  
Returning home  
From the sea of loss  
It is the return of the sun,  
Of my exiled ones  
And for her sake, and his  
I swear  
I shall not compromise  
And to the last pulse in my veins  
I shall resist,  
Resist—and resist.

# سأقام

ربما أفقد ماشت معاشي  
ربما أعرض للبيع ثيابي وفراشي  
ربما أعمل حجارة.. وعتالاً.. وكناس شوارع  
ربما أبحث، في روث المواشي، عن حبوب  
ربما أخمد.. عريانا.. وجائع  
يا عدو الشمس.. لكن.. لن أساوم  
إلى آخر نبض في عروقي.. سأقام  
ربما تسلبني آخر شبر من ترابي  
ربما تطعم للسجن شبابي  
ربما تسقط على ميراث جدي  
من أثاث.. وأوان.. وخواب  
ربما تحرق أشعاري وكتبي  
ربما تطعم لحمي للكلاب  
ربما تبقى على قريتنا كابوس رعب  
يا عدو الشمس.. لكن.. لن أساوم  
إلى آخر نبض في عروقي.. سأقام  
ربما تطفيء في ليلي شعله  
ربما أحمر من أمي قبله  
ربما يشتم شعبي وأبني، طفل، وطفله  
ربما تغنم من ناطور أحلامي غفله  
ربما زيف تاريخي جبان، وخرافي مؤله  
ربما تحرم أطفالي يوم العيد بدلهط  
ربما تخدع أصحابي بوج مسنعار  
ربما ترفع من حولي جداراً وجداراً وجدار  
ربما تصلب أيامي على رؤيا مذله  
يا عدو الشمس.. لكن.. لن أساوم  
إلى آخر نبض في عروقي.. سأقام  
يا عدو الشمس  
في الميناء زينات، وتلويح بشائر  
وزغاريد، وبهجه  
وهنافات، وضجه  
والأناشيد الحماسية وهج في الحناجر  
وعلى الأفق شراع  
يتحدى الريح.. واللّّي.. ويتجاوز المخاطر  
انها عودة يوليسيز من بحر الضياع  
عوده الشمس، وإنساني المهاجر  
ولعبيها، وعينيه، يميناً.. لن أساوم  
إلى آخر نبض في عروقي  
سأقام  
سأقام  
سأقام

## Fadwa Tuqan

Fadwa Tuqan (1917–2003) was born in the city of Nablus in 1917, where she received her primary education. Her life was marked by a succession of personal and national tragedies. She lost her father, and soon after, her brother and mentor, the poet Ibrahim Tuqan. Fadwa Tuqan began as a poet of love and solitude, often compared to the great romantic women poets of Arabic tradition. The 1948 Nakba and the occupation of Palestine deepened these wounds, shaping her early poetry and giving her first collection, *alone with the Days* (1952), its tone of grief and introspection. Yet this same suffering drove her toward political engagement during the 1950s, as she transformed personal loss into collective voice.

After the Arab defeat of 1967, she emerged from her solitude and became active in public life. The intimate became collective; her personal sorrow turned into national lament. In poems like "The Night and the Horsemen" and "Enough for Me", the tone is both maternal and insurgent. She writes as the "mother of the martyred," embodying Palestine itself. Her voice holds an unusual combination of tenderness and rebellion.

Fadwa Tuqan passed away on December 12, 2003, at the age of eighty-six.

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# Enough for me

Fadwa Tuqan

Enough for me to die on her earth  
    be buried in her  
to melt and vanish into her soil  
    then sprout forth as a flower  
        played with by a child.  
Enough for me to remain  
    in my country's embrace  
to be in her close as a handful of dust  
    a sprig of grass  
        a flower.

## كفاني

كفاني أموت على أرضها وأدفن فيها  
وتحت ثراها أذوب وأفنى  
وأبعث عشباً على أرضها  
وأبعث زهره تعيش بها كف طفلٍ نمته بلادي  
كفاني أظل بحصن بلادي  
    تراباً  
    وعشباً  
    وزهره

## **Zeina Azzam**

Zeina Azzam, a Palestinian American poet, writer, editor, and community activist, is Poet Laureate Emerita (2022-25) of the City of Alexandria, Virginia. Her full-length poetry collection, *Some Things Never Leave You*, was published by Tiger Bark Press in July 2023. In the words of Luisa Igloira (20th poet laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Emerita), "Despite the wars that wage in the world and a multitude of things we can no longer claim, these poems find anchor in their belief in the goodness of family and the wisdom of ancestors." Poet Lena Khalaf Tuffaha (Winner, National Book Awards 2024 for Poetry, for her book *Something about Living*) adds that "Through her childhood memories in Arab cities to the repeated farewells and departures of exile, Azzam's poems alternately mourn and celebrate the wonders of life." Poet James Crews (author of *Kindness Will Save the World*) writes that "Whether reaching out to a mother in Baghdad wailing for her lost son, or relishing the spices of childhood, Azzam's necessary poetry roots itself in the earth that belongs not just to one country or one person, but to all of us."

Zeina's chapbook, *Bayna Bayna, In-Between*, was published in 2021 by The Poetry Box. The back cover statement by Maryland State Poet Laureate Grace Cavalieri says that in this collection, Zeina "creates a world of beauty and patience, even when ideals are shattered." Literary Activist E. Ethelbert Miller offers that "Zeina Azzam writes about being the history book and the poem. She writes between mind and heart."

The themes that Zeina's poetry addresses include war and displacement, the refugee and immigrant experiences, the elusive distance between home and exile, the feeling of being in-between cultures and languages and identities, and encounters with different kinds of loss. Zeina notes in her book that she has a "bicultural and bilingual view of the world that is bewildering, enriching, and beautiful, all at the same time." Her poetry is also inspired by the natural, wondrous world, the joys and challenges of personal relationships, and social justice issues.

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## Write my name on my leg

Zeina Azzam

Write my name on my leg mama  
Use the black permanent marker  
With the ink that doesn't bleed if it gets wet  
The one that doesn't melt if it's exposed to heat

Write my name on my leg mama  
Make the lines thick and clear  
Add your special flourishes  
So I can take comfort in seeing my mama's handwriting  
when I go to sleep

Write my name on my leg mama  
And on the legs of my sisters and brothers  
This way we will belong together  
This way we will be known as your children

Write my name on my leg mama  
And please write your name and baba's name on your  
legs too  
So we will be remembered as a family

Write my name on my leg, Mama  
Don't add any numbers  
like when I was born or the address of our home  
I don't want the world to list me as a number  
I have a name and I am not a number

Write my name on my leg mama  
When the bomb hits our house  
When the walls crush our skull and bones  
Our legs will tell our story

How there was nowhere for us to run

## **Schreib meinen Namen auf mein Bein**

Zeina Azzam

Schreib meinen Namen auf mein Bein, Mama.

Nimm den schwarzen Permanentmarker

Mit der Tinte, die nicht verläuft, wenn sie nass wird.

Den Marker, der nicht schmilzt, wenn heiß wird.

Schreib meinen Namen auf mein Bein, Mama.

Mach' die Linien dick und deutlich

Schmücke ihn mit deinen besonderen Schnörkeln,  
sodass ich mich damit trösten kann, die Handschrift  
meiner Mutter zu sehen, wenn ich schlafen gehe.

Schreib meinen Namen auf mein Bein, Mama.

Und auf den Beinen meiner Schwestern und Brüder

So gehören wir zusammen,

Auf diese Weise werden wir als deine Kinder  
erkannt.

Schreib meinen Namen auf mein Bein, Mama.

Und bitte schreibe auch deinen Namen und den

Namen von Papa auf eure Beine.

So können wir als Familie in Erinnerung bleiben.

Schreib meinen Namen auf mein Bein, Mama.

Füge keine Zahlen hinzu

wie bei meiner Geburt oder die Adresse unseres  
Zuhauses

Ich möchte nicht, dass die Welt mich als Nummer  
aufzählt

Ich habe einen Namen und ich bin keine Nummer  
Schreib meinen Namen auf mein Bein, Mama

Wenn die Bombe unser Haus trifft,

Wenn die Wände unseren Schädel und unsere  
Knochen zermalmen,

Unsere Beine werden unsere Geschichte erzählen.

Wie es für uns keinen Ort gab, an den wir hätten  
fliehen können.

## اكتب اسمي

لقد لجأ بعض الآباء والأمهات في غزة لكتابية أسماء أطفالهم على رجليهم لتسهيل التعرف عليهم في حال ”مقتلهم أو مقتل أطفالهم“  
شبكة سبي ان ان الأخبارية، 22 أكتوبر 2023 -

اكتب اسمي على رجلي يا ماما  
استخدمي قلم الحبر الأسود  
الذي لا يزول  
الحبر الذي لا ينزع بالماء  
والذي لا يذوب في الحر

اكتب اسمي على رجلي يا ماما  
اجعلني الخطوط عريضة وواضحة  
وأضيفي لمساتك المزخرفة  
لكي أطمئن  
برؤية خط أمي عندما أخلد للنوم

اكتب اسمي على رجلي يا ماما  
وعلى رجلي أخواتي وأخواتي  
هكذا سنكون معا  
هكذا سنعرف  
بأننا أبنائك وبناتك

اكتب اسمي على رجلي يا ماما  
ومن فضلك اكتبني اسمك  
واسم بابا على رجليكما أيضا  
هكذا سُذكر  
أننا كنا عائلة واحدة

اكتب اسمي على رجلي يا ماما  
لا تضيفي أي أرقام  
كتاريخ ميلادي أو عنوان بيتنا  
لا أريد أن يذكرني العالم كرقم  
فأنا لدي اسم ولست رقمما

اكتب اسمي على رجلي يا ماما  
فعندما تتصفق القنبلة بيتنا  
وعندما تحطم الجدران جماحمنا وعظمنا  
ستتحكي أرجلنا قصتنا  
وكيف أننا لم نجد مكانا نرکض اليه

زينة عزام، شاعرة مدينة الاسكندرية (بولاية فرجينيا) -  
نشرت هذه القصيدة في [فوكس.بوبيولي](#) (صوت الشعب). تم إعادة نشرها بموافقة المؤلفة.

# Rafaat Alareer

Rafaat Alareer (1979–2023) was a Palestinian writer, poet, professor, and activist from the Gaza Strip whose work embodied the link between literature and resistance. Born in Gaza City under Israeli occupation, Alareer often said that life under siege had shaped every choice and movement in his life. He studied English literature, earning his BA from the Islamic University of Gaza in 2001, an MA from University College London in 2007, and later a PhD in English Literature from Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2017, where he wrote his dissertation on the metaphysical poet John Donne.

Upon returning to Gaza, Alareer taught literature and creative writing at the Islamic University and co-founded We Are Not Numbers, a platform that paired young Palestinian writers with international mentors to help them tell their own stories to the world. For Alareer, storytelling was both a personal art and a collective act of resistance. On 6 December 2023, during the Israeli invasion of Gaza, Alareer was killed by an Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza along with his brother, sister, and four nephews. The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor reported that the strike appeared to have deliberately targeted him, describing it as a “surgical” bombing that followed weeks of threats he had received from Israeli accounts. Months later, on 26 April 2024, another airstrike on Gaza City killed his eldest daughter and her newborn child.

In his poetry Rafaat Alareer wove together tenderness and defiance, using the English language as a bridge between Gaza’s lived reality and the global conscience. His final poem, “If I Must Die,” written only weeks before his death, became a collective elegy for Gaza and a testament to the resilience of Palestinian art under siege. Circulating widely after his killing, the poem’s closing lines—addressed to an imagined friend asked to tell his story to the world—turned his death into a voice that refused silence.

Alareer’s work drew on a long tradition of Palestinian resistance literature, yet it was grounded in the immediacy of contemporary Gaza: the classrooms without light, the bombardments, and the fragile insistence on beauty amid destruction. Through teaching, mentoring, and poetry, he built a literary community that transformed grief into language and language into survival.

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# If I must die

Refaat Alareer

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

# **Wenn ich sterben muss**

Refaat Alareer

Wenn ich sterben muss  
Musst du leben  
Um meine Geschichte zu erzählen  
Um meine Sachen zu verkaufen  
Um ein Stück Tuch zu kaufen  
Und ein paar Schnüre  
Und dann mach ihn weiß, mit einem langen Schweif  
Damit ein Kind, irgendwo in Gaza  
Wenn es dem Himmel ins Auge schaut  
Um seinen Vater zu finden,  
der verschwunden ist in einem Blitz  
Und sich von niemand verabschieden konnte  
Nicht mal von seinem Leib  
Nicht mal von sich selbst  
Damit das Kind den Drachen sieht,  
meinen Drachen, den du gemacht hast  
Wie er da oben fliegt  
Und für einen Moment lang denken kann  
Dass da ein Engel ist  
Der die Liebe zurück bringt  
Wenn ich sterben muss  
Lass es Hoffnung bringen  
Lass es eine Geschichte sein, die bleibt

# Ahmad AlShaer

Born on 02/24/1999, in Rafah city. He is a writer and artist who studied to become a chef and was supposed to graduate in June 2024. During his time in Gaza he ran a community kitchen, cooking for the families in his neighbourhood.

He left Gaza unwillingly, when it was still possible crossing the border to Egypt by himself in May 2024. His parents decided to stay since the rest of his family could not afford to cross the border, but they supported him leaving.

He openly talks about being queer and his neurodivergence, and also the challenges he faces from not being able to receive his prescribed medication for various serious mental illnesses that have been diagnosed before the war. As he described it, alone the constant sound of the drones would make him go mad – limiting major life activities for himself. Further on, he describes the struggle to deal with his mental health after escaping the war, participating in online therapy, which worked, until it didn't. The situation was grave, when he contemplated suicide. "Filling a form was difficult. Seeking out help and finding organisations that offer assistance seemed impossible to do."

You can find more of his work and support him directly here: [buymeacoffee.com/gazablanka](https://buymeacoffee.com/gazablanka)

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# **Ich suche euch in Schatten und in Träumen**

Ahmad AlShaer

Ich suche euch in Schatten und in Träumen,  
in der Hoffnung, euch im sanften Mondschein zu  
entdecken...

Aber ihr seid nicht mehr hier, nur nur ein Echo  
der Vergangenheit –  
hinterlasst ihr mich in der Erinnerung, die für  
immer bleibt.

Mein heimatloses Herz,  
allein und voller Schmerz,  
in einer Welt, in der ich weitergehen muss.  
Aber irgendwo in der Tiefe meiner Verzweiflung  
weiß ich, ihr seid immer da.

Ein Teil von mir verloren; eine unerfüllte Leere,  
die bleibt.

Ein Kummer, den die Zeit nicht heilt.  
In meinem Herzen aber werdet ihr immer sein:  
Als eine zärtliche Erinnerung an der Liebe  
süßer Pein

# I search for you in shadows

Ahmad AlShaer

I search for you in shadows and in dreams  
hoping to find you in the moon's soft beams...  
But you're gone, and a phantom of past -  
Leaving me with memories that last.

My displaced heart  
aching and alone  
in a world where I must carry on  
but somewhere in the depth of my despair  
I know you'll always be there  
A piece of me lost; a void unfulfilled.  
A heartache that time has not stilled.  
But in my heart you'll always remain:  
a tender reminder of love's  
Sweet pain

# Mahmoud Darwish

Mahmoud Darwish (1942–2008) was born on March 13, 1942, in the village of al-Birwa Galilee, northern Palestine, to a family composed of five sons and three daughters. In 1948, when he was seven years old, he was forced with his family to seek refuge in Lebanon following the Nakba of Palestine, where he stayed for a full year before returning secretly to his homeland.

Mahmoud Darwish's poetry is inseparable from the history and identity of Palestine. Across his lifetime, his work traces the trajectory of a people living under dispossession, exile, and occupation, while also exploring universal questions of belonging, memory, and existence. His poetry evolves with his life's geography from the villages of Galilee to Cairo, Beirut, Paris, Amman, and Ramallah reflecting the changing realities of Palestinian life and the personal, political, and philosophical transformations he experienced.

Darwish's works can be understood in four interlinked stages. His early poems give voice to personal dispossession, where the individual "I" becomes a mirror for collective suffering under military rule. In the late 1960s, freed from linguistic constraints in the Arab world, his poetry explores language and belonging, negotiating the tension between identity and inclusion within broader state narratives. During his years in Beirut, amid the Lebanese Civil War and Israel invasion to Lebanon, and his political engagement with the PLO, his poetry takes on the gravity of resistance and siege, becoming both testimony and elegy for the tragedies of war.

Finally, in his later years, living between exile and return, his work turns reflective and universal, meditating on memory, mortality, and the permanence of art itself.

Darwish's poetic journey from individual resistance to collective myth, from political witness to philosophical exile maps not only the evolution of a poet but also the shifting consciousness of Palestine. Each stage of his life reshapes his tone, imagery, and rhythm, offering a layered portrait of a people's endurance and a poet's profound engagement with history, identity, and the human condition.

# My Mother

Mahmoud Darwish

I long for my mother's bread  
My mother's coffee  
and my mother's touch

Childhood grew up in me  
as each day rests upon the next.

And I must be worth my life  
At the hour of my death  
Worth the tears of my mother.

And if I come back one day  
Take me as a veil to your eyelashes

Cover my bones with the grass  
Blessed by your footsteps

Bind us together  
With a lock of your hair  
With a thread that trails from the back of your dress

I might become immortal  
Become a God  
If I touch the depths of your heart.

If I come back  
Use me as wood to feed your fire  
As the clothesline on the roof of your house

Without your blessing  
I am too weak to stand.

I have aged, feeling the weight of years.  
Give me back the star maps of childhood  
So that I can chart the path  
Back to your waiting nest.  
Along with the songbirds.

# أمي

أحنُ إلى خِبْزِ أمِي  
وَقَهْوَةِ أمِي  
..وَلِمَسَةِ أمِي  
وَتَكِبِيرِ فِيَّ الطَّفُولَةِ  
يَوْمًا عَلَى صَدْرِ يَوْمٍ  
وَأَعْشَقُ عَمْرِي لِأَنِي  
، إِذَا مُتْ  
! أَخْجَلُ مِنْ دَمْعِ أمِي  
خَذِينِي أمِي ، إِذَا عَدْتُ يَوْمًا  
وَشَاحًا لَهْدِيلُكَ  
وَغَطَّيَ عَظَامِي بِعَشْبٍ  
تَعْمَدَ مِنْ طَهْرِ كَعْبَكَ  
وَشُدُّدَيَ وَثَاقِي  
..بِخَصْلَةِ شِعْرٍ  
..بِخَيْطٍ يَلَوَّحُ فِي ذِيلِ ثَوْبِكَ  
عَسَانِي أَصِيرُ إِلَيْهَا  
إِلَهًا أَصِيرُ  
! إِذَا مَا لَمَسْتُ قَرَارَةَ قَلْبِكَ  
ضَعَيْنِي، إِذَا مَا رَجَعْتُ  
وَقَوْدًا بِتَنْورِ نَارِكَ  
وَحِبْلَ غَسِيلَ عَلَى سَطْحِ دَارِكَ  
لِأَنِي فَقَدْتُ الْوَقْفَةَ  
بِدُونِ صَلَةِ نَهَارِكَ  
هَرِمْتُ ، فَرَدَّيَ نَجْوَمَ الطَّفُولَةِ  
حَتَّى أَشَارَكَ  
صَفَارَ الْعَصَافِيرَ  
.. دَرِبَ الرَّجْوَعِ  
! لَعْشَ انتِظَارِكَ

# The dice player

Mahmoud Darwish

Who am I to say to you  
what I say to you?

I was not a stone polished by water  
and became a face

nor was I a cane punctured by the wind  
and became a flute...

I am a dice player,  
Sometimes I win and sometimes I lose  
I am like you  
or slightly less...

I played no role in who I became  
It was by chance that I became a male ...  
and by chance that I saw a pale moon  
like a lemon, flirting with sleepless girls

I did not strive to find  
a mole in the most secret places of my body!

It was by chance that I became  
a survivor in bus accident

Where I was delayed  
because I forgot existence and its conditions  
when I was reading a love story the night before,

I impersonated the role of the author,  
and the role of the beloved - the victim  
so I became the martyr of love in the novel  
and the survivor in the road accident

Who am I to say to you  
what I say to you  
at the door of the church  
and I am but a throw of a dice  
between a predator and a prey  
I earned more awareness  
not to be happy with my moonlit night  
but to witness the massacre

I survived by chance:  
I was smaller than a military target  
and bigger than a bee wandering among the flowers of the fence  
I feared for my siblings and my father  
I feared for a time made of glass  
I feared for my cat and rabbit  
and for a magical moon,  
above the high minaret of the mosque  
I feared for the grapes of our vines  
that suspend like the breasts of our dog ...  
Fear kept up with me and I continued with it  
barefooted, forgetting my little memories  
of what I wanted from tomorrow -  
there is no time for tomorrow -

I am fortunate that the wolves  
disappeared from there by chance,  
or escaped from the army  
I played no role in my life, except,  
when it taught me its hymns,  
I said: is there any more?  
and I lit its lamp then tried to amend it...  
I train my heart to love  
so it can have room for roses and thorns ...  
This is how I bluff:  
Narcissus is not beautiful as he thought.  
His makers entangled him with a mirror.  
He prolonged his meditation in the air distilled with water...  
Had he been able to see others,  
he would have loved a girl gazing at him,  
oblivious the reindeers running between the lilies and the daisies...  
Had he been a bit more clever,  
he would have broken his mirror  
and saw how much he was the others...

# لاعب النرد

## محمود درويش - فلسطين

من أنا لا أقول لكم  
ما أقول لكم؟  
وأنا لم أكن حجاً مقطنة المية  
فأسيس وها  
ولا قصّة ثقنة الرياح  
فاصبح ناياً...

أنا لاعب النرد،  
أريح حياً وأخسر حيَا  
أنا ملائم  
أو أقل قليلاً...

ليس لي أية دور بما كتبتُ  
كانت مصادفة أن أكون  
ذكرًا...

ومصادفة أن أري قمراً  
شاحناً مثل ليمونة تحرّش بالساهرات

ولم أشهد كي أجد  
شامة في أشدّ مواضع حسني سريرًا!

كان يمكن أن لا أكون  
كانت مصادفة أن أكون  
أنا الحي في حادث الماين  
حيث تأذُّنَ عن حالي المدرسية  
لأنّ نسيبي موجود وأحواله  
عندما كتُبْتُ أقرّ في الليل قصّة كُتُبْ  
تقعّدُ دور المؤاقي فيها  
ودور الحبيب - الصحيفة  
فكّث شهيد الهوى في الرواية  
والخي في حادث السير

لادور لي في المزاوج مع البحر  
لكنني وأذن طالش  
من هواه التسكيك في حادثة ماء  
ينادي : تعال إلى؟

ولادور لي في النحاة من البحر  
أتفاني نوش أحمرُ  
رأي الموج بصطادي ويشلّ يدي

كان يمكن أن لا أكون مُصاراً  
يُجنِّي المقلّفة الحالية  
لو أن زواية الاراد كانت شمالية  
لأن نظل على البحر

لو أن دورّة المجنين لم تر نار القوى  
ختبر الليل

لو أن خمسة عشر شهيداً  
أعادوا بناء المترابطين

لو أن ذلك المكان الزراعي لم ينكسر  
رُثما بيرث ربونة  
أو قفل حفراها  
أو خيرًا بملكه العمل  
أو حارساً للصدى!

من أنا لا أقول لكم  
ما أقول لكم  
عند باب الكنيسة  
ولست ببعض رميم النرد  
ما بين مفترقين وورسسة  
رحيت مردداً من الصحو  
لا تكون سعيداً بلتني المفمرة  
بل لكي أشهد المدحرة  
نحوٌ مصادفة: كُتُبْ أصفر من هدف عسكري  
وأكيد من طبلة تدقق بين زعور السياج  
وخفت تبكي على أحذوني وأني  
وخفت على زفني من زجاج  
وخفت على قطفي وعلى أربين  
وعلى قمر ساهر فوق قمة المسجد العالية  
وخفت على عنق الدالية  
بندل كأنهاء كلتنا...  
ومش إلخوف بي ومشيت به  
حافيا، ناسيا ذكرياتي الصغيرة عما أربد  
من القد - لا وقت للغد -

مَنْ أَنَا لِأَقُولُ لَكُمْ  
مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ  
عِنْدَ بَابِ الْكَنِيْسَةِ  
وَلَسْتُ سَوْيَ رَمِيَّةَ النَّرْدِ  
مَا بَيْنَ مُقْبَرَيْنَ وَفَرِيسَةَ

رَبَحْتُ مُزِيداً مِنَ الصَّحْوَ  
لَا لِأَكُونْ سَعِيداً بِلِيلَتِي الْمَقْمَرَةَ  
بَلْ لِكِي أَشَهَدُ الْمَجْزَرَةَ

نِجُوتُ مَصَادِفَةً : كُنْتُ أَصْغَرَ مِنْ هَدَفَ عَسْكَرِيٍّ  
وَأَكْبَرَ مِنْ نَحْلَةٍ تَتَنَقَّلُ بَيْنَ زَهْرَ السَّيَاجِ  
وَخَفَتْ كَثِيرًا عَلَى إِخْوَتِي وَأَبِي  
وَخَفَتْ عَلَى زَمِنٍ مِنْ زَجَاجْ  
وَخَفَتْ عَلَى قَطْنِي وَعَلَى أَبْنِي  
وَعَلَى قَمَرِ سَاهِرٍ فَوْقَ مَئْذِنَةِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْعَالِيَّةِ  
وَخَفَتْ عَلَى عِنَبِ الدَّالِيَّةِ  
... يَتَدَلَّلُ كَأَثْدَاءِ كَلِبِنَا

وَمَشَى الْخَوْفُ بِي وَمَشَيْتُ بِهِ  
حَافِيًّا، نَاسِيًّا ذَكْرِيَّاتِي الصَّغِيرَةِ عَمَّا أَرِيدُ  
- مِنَ الْغَدِ - لَا وَقْتَ لِلْغَدِ -

لَا دُورَ لِي فِي حَيَاّتِي  
سَوْيَ أَنِّي،  
عِنْدَمَا عَلِمْتُنِي تَرَاتِيلُهَا،  
قَلْتُ: هَلْ مِنْ مَزِيدٍ؟  
وَأَوْقَدْتُ قَنْدِيلَهَا  
ثُمَّ حَاوَلْتُ تَعْدِيلَهَا...

هَكَذَا تَوَلَّدُ الْكَلْمَاتُ . أَدْرَبْ قَلْبِي  
عَلَى الْحُبِّ كَيْ يَسْعَ الْوَرْدَ وَالشَّوْكَ...  
هَكَذَا أَتَحَايِلُ : تَرْسِيبُ لِيْسَ جَمِيلًا  
كَمَا ظَنَّ . لَكِنْ صُنَاعَةُ  
وَرَطْوَهُ بِمَرَأَتِهِ . فَأَطَالَ تَأْمُلُهُ  
فِي الْهَوَاءِ الْمَقَّطَرِ بِالْمَاءِ ...

لَوْ كَانَ فِي وَسْعِهِ أَنْ يَرِي غَيْرَهُ  
لِأَحَبَّ فَتَاهَ تَحْمِلَقُ فِيهِ ،  
وَتَنَسَّ الْأَيَّالُ تَرْكِضُ بَيْنَ الزَّنَاقِيْنَ وَالْأَقْحَوَانِ ...  
وَلَوْ كَانَ أَذْكَى قَلِيلًا  
لَحَطَّمَ مَرَأَتَهُ  
وَرَأَى كَمْ هُوَ الْآخِرُونَ ..

# On this land

Mahmoud Darwish

On this land, is what makes life worth living:  
    the return of April, the smell of bread  
    at dawn, a woman's opinions on men, the  
        writings of Aeschylus, love's  
beginning, moss on stone, mothers standing  
        on the string of a flute,  
    and the invaders' fear of memories.  
On this land, is what makes life worth living:  
    the end of September, a lady leaving  
her forties full of apricots, the hour of sun in  
        prison, clouds becoming  
a swarm of creatures, the chants of a nation  
        that faces its demise  
    smiling, and the tyrannies' fear of songs.  
On this land, is what makes life worth living:  
    on this land is the lady of the land, the  
        mother  
of beginnings and endings. She was named  
        Palestine. Still  
named Palestine. My lady, I am worthy,  
        because you are my lady,  
    I am worthy of life.

## على هذه الأرض

Mahmoud Darwish

على هذه الأرض ما يستحق الحياة: تردد إبريل، رائحة الخبز  
في الفجر، آراء امرأة في الرجال، كتابات أсхيليوس ، أول  
الحب، عشب على حجر، أمهات تقفن على خيط ناي، وخوف  
الغزاة من الذكريات.

على هذه الأرض ما يستحق الحياة: نهاية أيلول، سيدة تترک  
الأربعين بكامل مشمسها، ساعة الشمس في السجن، غيم يُقلّدُ  
سرياً من الكائنات، هتافات شعب لمن يصعدون إلى حفهم  
باسمين، وخوف الطغاة من الأغنيات.

على هذه الأرض ما يستحق الحياة: على هذه الأرض سيدةُ  
الأرض، أم البدايات أم النهايات. كانت تسمى فلسطين. صارتُ  
تُسمى فلسطين. سيدتي: أستحق، لأنك سيدتي، أستحق الحياة.

# Ahmad Fouad Najem

Ahmad Fouad Najem (1929–2013) was born into a poor peasant family in Sharqiyya, rural Egypt. His father, a police officer, died when Ahmed was still a child, and the family fell into deep poverty. He grew up among Egypt's working class and peasants, absorbing the dialect, humor, and defiance in the same tone that later gave his poetry its unmistakable power and authenticity.

He left school early and worked a variety of manual jobs, eventually landing a position as a government clerk. During that time, Egypt was reshaping itself after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the end of British rule, a period marked by Nasser's Arab nationalism, pan-Arab dreams, and strong state control over culture and media. Art was mobilized as propaganda for the new nation-state.

Najem's response was to write against that machinery in the people's tongue. His choice to write in Egyptian colloquial Arabic, rather than classical Arabic, was itself an act of rebellion: it broke with elitist literary norms and spoke directly to the street, the factory, and the prison yard. He became politically active and joined leftist and communist circles, believing that liberation had to come not from slogans but from confronting social inequality. This led to repeated imprisonments under three Egyptian presidents: Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak. Yet prison became his creative workshop. Behind bars, he met Sheikh Imam Issa, a blind musician who set his words to music. Together they formed one of the Arab world's most important artistic duos, the voice of the voiceless.

While the official culture glorified the state, Najem and Imam's songs spread through cassette tapes and whispered performances, becoming the pulse of a counter-culture that rejected state narratives. Their work mocked hypocrisy, corruption, and the cult of leadership always using humor, rhythm, and love to smuggle critique through censorship. Najem was part of the early counter-culture movement in modern Arab politics — a rare and courageous cultural resistance born out of the contradictions of postcolonial nation-building. He didn't just oppose rulers.

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# Forbidden

Ahmad Fouad Najem

I'm forbidden to travel,  
forbidden to sing,  
forbidden to speak,  
forbidden to yearn,  
forbidden to be angry,  
forbidden to smile.

And every day, for loving you,  
more and more is forbidden.

And every day I love you  
far more than the day before.

My beloved — my ship —  
eager and imprisoned.

A spy in every knot,  
soldiers in every port,

They'll stop me if I change toward you  
or try to fly away.

To your arms I would come and sleep,  
in your wide lap,

in your heart of spring;

I return like a newborn,

aching from the wrench of weaning.

My beloved — my city —  
dressed up and sorrowful.

In every lane, a grief;

in every palace, a show of splendour.

I'm forbidden to wake up

adoring you or to sleep wrapped in you.

Forbidden to argue,

forbidden even to be still.

And every day, for loving you,  
the list of bans grows longer.

And every day I love you  
more than I did before.

ممنوع من السفر  
ممنوع من الغنا  
ممنوع من الكلام  
ممنوع من الاشتياق  
ممنوع من الاستيءاء  
ممنوع من الابتسام  
وكل يوم في حبك تزيد الممنوعات  
وكل يوم بمحبتك اكتر من اللي فات  
حبيبي يا سفينه متلشوه و سجينه  
مخبر في كل عقده  
عسکر في كل مينا  
يمنعني لو أغير  
عليك أو أطير  
بحضنك أوأنا  
في حرك الوسيع  
وقلبك الريبع  
اعود كما الرضيع  
بحرقه الفطام  
حبيبي يا مدینه  
متزوجه وحزينه  
في كل حاره حسره  
وف كل قصر زينه  
ممنوع من اني اصبح  
بعشقك او ابات  
ممنوع من المناقشه  
ممنوع من السكات  
وكل يوم في حبك تزيد الممنوعات  
وكل يوم بمحبتك اكتر من اللي فات

# My Will to Those Who Will Carry My Coffin

Ahmad Mohsen

## My Will to Those Who Will Carry My Coffin

By Ahmad Mohsen

My will to you after my death —  
to those who will carry my coffin:

Do not march in a procession toward a pit

to lay my body in it,  
to throw earth over it,

to recite the Opening Chapter of the Quran,  
to write above it:

“The tomb of the departed...”

to visit it from time to time,  
to lay flowers —

roses and jasmine,

to burn incense and sage,

to scatter sweets over my grave  
on each Eid before the prayer.

My will to you after my death —

to those who will carry my coffin:

Seal the casket tightly

and take it to the sea,  
at the hour of its calm.

For your safety,

as for me — I will await the storm,  
for after every calmness comes a storm.

Place the coffin in the sea —

I would be grateful.

Let my coffin drift upon the waters,  
perhaps the wild waves will toss it about  
until it reaches the shore of my homeland,  
the shore of Palestine.

Perhaps I will reach my country — even in my coffin —  
for I have long dreamed of reaching it while alive,  
but I have not yet reached.

I reached the borders, the barbed wires  
but they did not let me come closer  
to my homeland.

They did not let me enter.

They sent me back — so I had to return.

Perhaps my coffin will reach the shore of Acre,  
or crash upon its wall,

the same wall before which Napoleon once stood,  
bewildered, unable to act,

and found his salvation in throwing his hat over the wall,  
so that history would remember him!

Or perhaps I mention him here  
so that I might remember instead.

Perhaps I will reach Haifa... or Jaffa... or Gaza...  
Who knows?

It does not matter — all of it is Palestine,  
and I am her son.

Perhaps I will not return to you —  
perhaps my fate is to remain far  
from my homeland, my country, my land — Palestine —  
even in death.

Then Do not bury me in a grave.  
Do not think of it.

Take me from the coffin,  
cast my lifeless body into the midst of the sea,  
so that I may remain food  
for fish and sea creatures —

perhaps they will swim toward my homeland,  
and return carrying fragments of me within them.

# وصيتي لحاملي نعشي

وصيتي لكم بعد موتي  
لمن يحملون نعشي  
لا تُسيروا موكي نحو حفرة  
تضعون فيها جثمني  
ترمون فوقه التراب  
تقرأون فاتحة الكتاب  
تكتبون فوقه  
ضريح المرحوم...  
تزوروه كل حين  
تضعونه الورود...  
الجوري والياسمين  
تشعلون البخور والقصعين  
توزعون الحلوي فوق قبرى  
كل عيد قبل الصلاة  
وصيتي لكم بعد موتي  
لمن يحمل نعشى  
ان يحكم أغلق التابوت  
بقصد البحر  
وقت هدوئه  
لسلامتكم...  
لأنظر هيجناه  
"فبعد كل هدوء هيجان"  
ضعوا التابوت في البحر  
أكون لكم من الشاكرين  
اتركوا نعشى يطوف فوق المياه  
لعلها تتفاوض به الأمواج الهائجة  
وأصل الى شاطئ بلادي  
الى شاطئ فلسطين  
ربما أصل وطني وانا في العرش  
طالما حلمت ان أصل اليه وانا على قيد الحياة  
لكن.... لم أصل بعد  
ووصلت الى الحدود  
الى الأسلام الشانكة  
لم يسمحوا لي بالاقتراب أكثر... الى وطني"  
لم يسمحوا لي بالدخول  
أعادوني... فعدت...  
ربما يصل نعشى الى شاطئ عكا  
او يصطدم سبورها  
الذى وقف امامه نابليون حارثاً  
عاجزا عن فعل اي شيء  
انتهى به الخلاص ان يرمي قيعنه فوق السور  
ليذكره التاريخ!!!!  
او ربما لا ذكره هنا!!!!  
او ربما أصل الى حيفا... الى يافا... الى عزّة... من يدري؟؟  
لا بهم... كلها فلسطين  
وانا ابنها  
ربما اعود اليكم  
يكون لي التصريح ان ابقى بعيداً  
عن وطني... عن بلادي... عن ارضي... فلسطين  
حتى حين موتي...!!!!  
لا تقلوني الى قبر  
لا نفكروا في ذلك  
أخرجوني من التابوت  
أفذوا جثتي الاهامدة وسط البحر  
لأنق طعاماً للسمك والحيوانات البرية  
ربما رحلت صوب وطني وعاد مني فتات في بطئها

# Mosab Abu Toha

Mosab Abu Toha (Arabic: مصعب أبو توهہ, romanized: Muṣ'ab Abū Tūha; born 1992) is a Palestinian writer, poet, scholar, and librarian from the Gaza.. Abu Toha is the author of *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear: Poems from Gaza* (2022, City Lights), which won a 2022 Palestine Book Award. He founded the Edward Said public library in Gaza City, which he filled with English-language books for Gaza's confined yet highly educated population.

In 2022, he published his first poetry collection, *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear: Poems from Gaza* with City Lights, which won the Palestine Book Award and the American Book Award.

In 2024, he released his second collection, *Forest of Noise*. But these achievements have come as Mosab and his writing have been transformed by grief, loss, and anger. He hasn't kept count, but he estimates that he and his wife have lost over 100 relatives since Israel's genocidal attacks on Gaza started after 7 October last year.

He was, however, arbitrarily detained by them in November 2023, when he tried to evacuate Gaza with his wife and three kids (US officials told them they could leave as Mosab's three-year-old son has a US passport).

The Palestinian poet described this as "the most traumatising experience in my life" as he was seized with 200 other civilians. They were undressed, blindfolded, handcuffed, beaten, and brought to an unknown location.

"It was painful to have to sit on your knees for three days, except for when you go to the toilet once a day. I think if it wasn't for the international community, I would have stayed there for a longer time," he said, recognising how his important status and connections accelerated his release.

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## My grandfather and home

Mosab Abu Toha

my grandfather used to count the days for return with his fingers  
he then used stones to count  
not enough  
he used the clouds birds people

absence turned out to be too long  
thirty six years until he died  
for us now it is over seventy years

my grandpa lost his memory  
he forgot the numbers the people  
he forgot home

i wish i were with you grandpa  
i would have taught myself to write you  
poems volumes of them and paint our home for you  
i would have sewn you from soil  
a garment decorated with plants  
and trees you had grown  
i would have made you  
perfume from the oranges  
and soap from the skys tears of joy  
couldnt think of something pure

i go to the cemetery every day  
i look for your grave but in vain  
are they sure they buried you  
or did you turn into a tree  
or perhaps you flew with a bird to the nowhere

i place your photo in an earthenware pot  
i water it every monday and thursday at sunset  
i was told you used to fast those days  
in ramadan i water it every day  
for thirty days  
or less or more

how big do you want our home to be  
i can continue to write poems until you are satisfied  
if you wish i can annex a neighboring planet or two

for this home i shall not draw boundaries  
no punctuation marks

Do you know what Sa'd used to do when the camp was  
flooded with rain?

He would walk through the muddy paths, watching the  
men as they dug the trench, and then he would say to  
them, softly, almost like a prophecy:  
"Tonight, this trench will swallow you."

Once, his father asked him, puzzled:  
"Why do you say that? What do you expect us to do?  
Do you think there's a drain in the sky that we must  
block?"

We all laughed. But when I looked at him, I saw  
something in his face that chilled me. He seemed lost  
in thought, as if the idea had taken root deep inside  
him. As if he were already planning to go the next day  
and block that drain himself.

"Then he went, he went."

**An excerpt from Umm Sa'd by Ghassan Kanafani**

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Weit du, was Sa'd tat, wenn das Lager vom Regen  
berflutet wurde?

Er ging durch die schlammigen Wege, beobachtete  
die Mnner, wie sie den Graben aushoben, und sagte  
dann leise zu ihnen – fast wie eine Prophezeiung:  
„Heute Nacht wird dieser Graben euch verschlingen.“  
Einmal fragte ihn sein Vater, verwirrt:  
„Warum sagst du das? Was erwartest du, dass wir tun?  
Glaubst du, es gibt da oben im Himmel einen Abfluss,  
den wir verstopfen mssen?“

Wir lachten alle. Aber als ich ihn ansah, sah ich etwas  
in seinem Gesicht, das mir einen Schauer ber den  
Rcken jagte. Er wirkte gedankenverloren, als htte  
sich die Idee tief in ihm festgesetzt. Als wrde er  
schon planen, am nchsten Tag wirklich hinzugehen  
und diesen Abfluss selbst zu verstopfen.  
„Und dann ging er. Er ging.“

**Ein Ausschnitt aus Umm Sa'd von Ghassan Kanafani**

