

## **Poems for Palestine**

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Zena Agha  
Liane Al Ghusain  
Hala Alyan  
Ahlam Bsharat  
Samah Serour Fadil  
Suheir Hammad  
Noor Hindi  
Sheikha Hlewa  
Rawan Hussein  
Kamilya Jubran  
Najwa Juma  
Lisa Suhair Majaj  
Fargo Nissim Tbakhi  
Rafeef Ziadah**



This booklet is a collection of poems with and for Palestine that brings together multiple Palestinian voices. The collection includes poems written between 2010 and 2024, with words by leena aboutaleb, Hiba Abu Nada, Zena Agha, Liane Al Ghusain, Hala Alyan, Ahlam Bsharat, Samah Serour Fadil, Suheir Hammad, Noor Hindi, Sheikha Hlewa, Rawan Hussein, Kamilya Jubran, Najwa Juma, Lisa Suhair Majaj, Fargo Nissim Tbakhi, Rafeef Ziadah.

# NOOR HINDI

**Noor Hindi** is a Palestinian-American poet and reporter. Her poems and essays have appeared in several magazines. She lives in Detroit. *This poem was published in December 2020 and can be found on: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/154658/fuck-your-lecture-on-craft-my-people-are-dying>*

## **Fuck Your Lecture on Craft, My People Are Dying**

Colonizers write about flowers.

I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks  
seconds before becoming daisies.

I want to be like those poets who care about the moon.

Palestinians don't see the moon from jail cells and prisons.

It's so beautiful, the moon.

They're so beautiful, the flowers.

I pick flowers for my dead father when I'm sad.

He watches Al Jazeera all day.

I wish Jessica would stop texting me *Happy Ramadan*.

I know I'm American because when I walk into a room something dies.

Metaphors about death are for poets who think ghosts care about sound.

When I die, I promise to haunt you forever.

One day, I'll write about the flowers like we own them.

# LISA SUHAIR MAJAJ

**Lisa Suhair Majaj** is a Palestinian-American author and a scholar of Arab-American literature. Her grandmother was from Jaffa and her father was from Jerusalem. She lives in Cyprus. *This poem was published in October 2023 and can be found on: <https://adimagazine.com/articles/for-the-dead-among-us/>*

## **For the Dead Among Us**

We will keep you alive / in our longing, in our breath.

We will open the day for you,  
and the night. We know  
that you are beneath the earth,  
or ash on the wind. But in  
some space or time you still  
live. Even as funeral bells  
clang and the priest swings  
the incense, the heart remembers  
how to open. We will invite you  
to the table to eat. We will light candles  
on our mantelpieces and in  
our hearts. We do not know  
what messages of light and smoke  
will reach you, but we will keep  
sending them. We will keep you alive  
in our longing, in our breath.  
We will sing with you, together  
in a space of music, even if you never  
sang in life. Love finds a way.  
It is not linear, with a destination,  
a closure. Love starts over and over,  
circling back to the source, the way  
two people lose and find each other  
repeatedly, but when they look  
into each other's eyes they see  
each other—the light of recognition  
that makes the world whole.

# AHLAM BSHARAT

**Ahlam Bsharat** is a Palestinian writer and poet, born in the village of Tammun in the Jordan Valley, and a trainer specialized in creative writing. She is an author of short stories, picture books, novels, and memoirs. *This poem was translated by Fady Joudah, and was published in June 2021; it can be found on: <https://thebaffler.com/latest/how-i-kill-soldiers-bsharat>*



## How I Kill Soldiers

Colonial soldiers,  
what have they been doing  
to my poetry all these years  
when I could have easily killed them  
in my poems  
as they've killed my family  
outside poetry?

Poetry was my chance  
to settle the score with killers,  
but I let them age outdoors,  
and I want them to know decay  
in their lives, their faces to wrinkle,  
their smiles to thin out,  
and their weapons to hunch over.

So if you, dear readers, see a soldier  
taking a stroll in my poem,  
trust that I have left him to his fate  
as I leave a criminal  
to his many remaining years,  
they will execute him.

And his ears will execute him  
as he listens to me reciting my poem  
to grieving families,  
he won't be able to slink out  
of my book or the reading hall  
as the seated audience stares at him.

You will not be consoled,  
soldier, you will not,  
not even as you exit  
my poetry event  
with slumped shoulders  
and pockets full of dead bullets.

Even if your hand,  
tremulous as it is  
from so much murder,  
fidgeted with the bullets,  
you will not  
produce more  
than a dead sound.

—*Ramallah*

# RAFEEF ZIADAH

**Rafeef Ziadah** is a Palestinian-Canadian poet and human rights activist who was born in Lebanon to Palestinian refugee parents and grew up in Tunisia. She currently lives in London. This poem was written as a response to a journalist who asked her «Don't you think it would all be fine if you just stopped teaching your children to hate?». *This poem is from 2011 and can be found on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKucPh9xHtM>*

## **We Teach Life, Sir.**

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound-bites and word limits.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound-bites and word limits filled enough with statistics to counter measured response.

And I perfected my English and I learned my UN resolutions.

But still, he asked me, Ms. Ziadah, don't you think that everything would be resolved if you would just stop teaching so much hatred to your children?

Pause.

I look inside of me for strength to be patient but patience is not at the tip of my tongue as the bombs drop over Gaza.

Patience has just escaped me.

Pause. Smile.

We teach life, sir.

Rafeef, remember to smile.

Pause.

We teach life, sir.

We Palestinians teach life after they have occupied the last sky.

We teach life after they have built their settlements and apartheid walls, after the last skies.

We teach life, sir.

But today, my body was a TV'd massacre made to fit into sound-bites and word limits.

And just give us a story, a human story.

You see, this is not political.

We just want to tell people about you and your people so give us a human story.

Don't mention that word "apartheid" and "occupation".

This is not political.

You have to help me as a journalist to help you tell your story which is not a political story.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre.

How about you give us a story of a woman in Gaza who needs medication?

How about you?

Do you have enough bone-broken limbs to cover the sun?  
Hand me over your dead and give me the list of their names in  
one thousand two hundred word limits.  
Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into  
sound-bites and word limits and move those that are desensi-  
tized to terrorist blood.  
But they felt sorry.  
They felt sorry for the cattle over Gaza.  
So, I give them UN resolutions and statistics and we condemn  
and we deplore and we reject.  
And these are not two equal sides: occupier and occupied.  
And a hundred dead, two hundred dead,  
and a thousand dead.  
And between that, war crime and massacre,  
I vent out words and smile "not exotic", "not terrorist".  
And I recount, I recount a hundred dead,  
a thousand dead.  
Is anyone out there?  
Will anyone listen?  
I wish I could wail over their bodies.  
I wish I could just run barefoot in every refugee camp and  
hold every child, cover their ears so they wouldn't have to  
hear the sound of bombing for the rest of their life  
the way I do.  
Today, my body was a TV'd massacre  
And let me just tell you, there's nothing your UN resolutions  
have ever done about this.  
And no sound-bite, no sound-bite I come up with, no matter  
how good my English gets, no sound-bite, no sound-bite, no  
sound-bite, no sound-bite will bring them back to life.  
No sound-bite will fix this.  
We teach life, sir.  
We teach life, sir.  
We Palestinians wake up every morning to teach the rest of  
the world life, sir.



# HALA ALYAN

**Hala Alyan** is a Palestinian American writer and clinical psychologist whose work has appeared in several magazines. «*WHEN THEY SAY PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE, I SAY*» was published in 2021 and can be found on <https://theadroitjournal.org/issue-thirty-three/hala-alyan-poetry/> and «*Naturalised*» can be found on <https://jewishcurrents.org/naturalized>

## WHEN THEY SAY PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE, I SAY

my country is a ghost // a mouth trying to say sorry and it comes out  
all smog // all citizen and bullet and seed // my country is a machine  
// a spell of bad weather // a feather lacing my mother's black hair  
// I mean her dyed hair // I mean her blonde hair // I mean her hair  
matches my country // so shiny and borrowed and painted over // my  
country is a number

like—

it is 1948 and my great-great-grandmother flattens bread with her  
hands // while my other great-great-grandmother prays with her hands  
// one watches her land disappear // the other builds a house on land  
that will disappear

my country is an airport line a year of highways an intermission // my  
country is Stockholm syndrome // is immigrant mouth saying thank  
you saying please saying // my country is no country but ghost // is no  
man but ghost // my country is dead // my country is name the dead //  
give them their salt

my country is a mouth trying to say pledge and it comes out all salt //  
my country is a mouth and nobody can pronounce my name // I mean  
my country forgets my name // I mean my country is always asking for  
my name // and I'm always saying it twice // spelling it like an address  
// my country is a number

like—

it is 1967 and every Arab leader is crying every mother is clutching //  
the sons she has left and my great-grandmother names my mother //  
nostalgia while my other great-grandmother names my father // a gun  
// my country is all ghost // my grandmother is all ghost // my grand-  
mother is a country I mean my grandmother is my country // I mean  
my country is a lie is an emptied house is one thousand cardboard  
boxes // my country is remember when we left Akka // I mean Gaza //  
I mean Homs // my country is a number

like—

it is 1990 // my mother is crossing a border I mean desert I mean life  
// I am at her heels // I am paying attention // I mean I am learning to  
pray to a flag // I mean I am learning English // I mean I am forgetting  
Arabic

or—

it is 1994 and I am falling in love with a white boy // a habit I'll never  
kick

or—

it is 2006 and my grandparents won't evacuate // won't leave another  
war // and all summer I dream of floods // collect bullets and love the  
wrong person

or—

it is 2003 and I am in Beirut watching Baghdad burn because of Ameri-  
ca // I mean I am in my country // watching my country burn because  
of my // country

or—

it is 2016 and who saw it coming // some saw it coming

or—

it is 2020 and the women in Beirut are a sea // I mean my country //  
looks beautiful in red // I mean I look beautiful in red // I mean this  
country likes me in red

or—

it is every year and my country is taken // I mean my country is stolen  
land // I mean all my countries are stolen land // I mean sometimes  
I am on the wrong side of the stealing // my country is an opening //  
I mean bloom // I mean bloom not like flower // but bloom like ex-  
plosion // my country is a teacher // I mean do you want to see my  
passport // I mean do you like my accent // I mean I stole them // I  
mean I stole them // I mean where do you think I learned that from



## Naturalized

Can I pull the land from me like a cork? I leak all over brunch.  
My father never learned to swim.  
I've already said too much.  
Look, the marigolds are coming in. Look, the cuties  
are watching Vice again. Gloss and soundbites.  
They like to understand. They like to play devil's advocate.  
My father plays soccer. It's so hot in Gaza.  
No place for a child's braid. Under  
that hospital elevator. When this is over. When this is over  
there is no over but quiet.  
Coworkers will congratulate me on the ceasefire  
and I will stretch my teeth into a country.  
As though I don't take Al Jazeera to the bath.  
As though I don't pray in broken Arabic.  
It's okay. They like me. They like me in a museum.  
They like me when I spit my father from my mouth.  
There's a whistle. There's a missile fist-bumping the earth.  
I draw a Pantene map on the shower curtain.  
I break a Klonopin with my teeth and swim.  
The newspaper says truce and C-Mart  
is selling pomegranate seeds again. Dumb metaphor.  
I've ruined the dinner party. I was given a life. Is it frivolous?  
Sundays are tarot days. Tuesdays are for tacos.  
There's a leak in the bathroom and I get it fixed  
in thirty minutes flat. All that spare water.  
All those numbers on the side of the screen.  
Here's your math. Here's your hot take.  
That number isn't a number.  
That number is a first word, a nickname, a birthday song in June.  
I shouldn't have to tell you that. Here's your testimony,  
here's your beach vacation. Imagine:  
I stop running when I'm tired. Imagine:  
There's still the month of June. Tell me,  
what op-ed will grant the dead their dying?  
What editor? What red-line? What pocket?  
What earth. What shake. What silence.

# SHEIKHA HLEWA

**Sheikha Hlewa** is Palestinian writer, born in Dhayl 'Araj, an unrecognized Bedouin village near Haifa. *This poem was translated by Lena Tuffaha, published in 2021 and can be found on: <https://thebaffler.com/latest/memory-hlewa>*

## Memory

All is disordered in my usurped Bedouin memory.  
The young man who was electrocuted as he watered his field  
was a potential groom for several little girls.  
His pores were potential lanterns in the dark after that charge of light.  
In all possibilities, memory betrays me.  
Was he a groom or a deferred lantern or a green field?  
My mother has a habit of squaring every detail in my memories.  
The young man became a field, the green a lantern,  
and electricity never once reached my village.

—*Haifa*

# LIANE AL GHUSAIN

**Liane Al Ghusain** is a Palestinian-Kuwaiti artist who lives and works in Dearborn, Michigan. Liane has been awarded various grants, prizes, residencies and fellowships, including scholarships and research grants. *The poems are published in Octobre 2023 and can be found on: <https://adimagazine.com/articles/liane-al-ghusain-three-works/>*

## **Letters to the Unliving and Unborn [for Palestine]**

We are the land and the land is us. / Its holiness and grime cannot be dispelled from us.

### **Letter to the Unborn**

Rami Habibi,

I will tell you about consent, about not touching others without asking and not letting others touch you without assenting.

I will tell you about the patriarchy, I will tell you that as a man, if you identify as one, that you have even more responsibility to smash it.

Rami habibi, I will tell you about Palestine.

I will not tell you that as you grew in my womb, I also held the children of Gaza there,

I will not tell you that some were dead and some were alive.

I will not tell you that I hope you will save us all, myself included.

I will not tell you that every day I see us marching into the apocalypse, with you at our lead.

...But I will tell you that the purple lightning and turquoise tidal waves, the plasma-screen bright forest fires and the split-legs-in-the-air earthquakes, the crawling vine nooses on the monuments of men and the navel-shaped cyclones anchored by iron-chain chords...are the souls of the indigenous, back for what's theirs.

Baby Rami, this is only the half of it. I hate to break it to you, but your father is Lebanese.

Our tears are lava, our hearts are active volcanoes. Our souls are so bullet-ridden that we can't sleep from the starlight the constellations heap upon us. Our pupils have not stopped dilating since the first world war.

I will not tell you that it is you who will put us to sleep, my baby. It is

you who will rock your father and feed your mother.  
We were dehumanized

before being born. It is us who have last names that built the waiting rooms at airport security and the faces deemed untrustworthy without a fresh shave and a fake smile. It is you will humanize us. You will soften our outlines to strangers. Who were Joseph and Mary without Jesus? Just two Arabs.

I will tell you that we love our Lebanese mountains and Palestinian hills, so deeply, that they mistook us for stones. We were so identified with the olive and cedar trees, they thought us inanimate. Unalive. A land without a people. They didn't realize that to us, the two are interchangeable. Not only do we know the land but the land knows us. We are the land and the land is us.

Its holiness and grime cannot be dispelled from us. That's like asking a pine tree to spit up the very seed it came from. That's like asking me which cell of yours I first grew, when the truth is, you were projected all at once, dead before you were alive and autonomous before you were ever mine.

Love, your mother, and inshallah your friend,  
Liane

### **Letter to the Unliving**

My grandmother, sitt el-kul, Teta Salima...

They exploded the home you were forced to leave, the home I never visited, never fell asleep in before you could cover me with a blanket.

Gaza is a tombstone. The sea is a silent witness.

I got my sweetness from you, the sweetness they mistook for weakness, the sweetness that decays teeth and rots insides, that leaves gaping holes where trespassers can come in.

You're lucky you're not alive to see this. It's only us that NYtimes characterizes with "murderous fury." Not our colonizers, not the guests

we took in sweetly saying “no no, stay another night. Of course you’re tired after the Holocaust.”

They get to be the victors of history. The winners of the Sadness Olympics.

We put date-filled sweets on their plates and covered them with powdered sugar.

They put us in open-air prisons and danced in front of the prison bars.

“Savages,” while they tucked a strand of hair behind your ear,

“Dirty infidels,” while they tore your laundry down from the clothing line and prepared to move into your house.

They had cut your water supply, so your hair was greasy and the laundry had been hung up to air without being washed. You did, in fact, feel like a savage. Feral and unclean, by their design.

You were the granddaughter of a general. A man who wore a green velvet uniform and built a house of stone at the gates of Jerusalem. You’d burnt sage and camphor to keep the horse stalls clean and you’d never had a rat infestation...before this one.

They told your father, the freedom fighter, that his weapons shipment had arrived. He was going to take back the laundry line, redraw the borders of Palestine. When he arrived to the alley to collect the shipment, there was a tank blocking his path. He was shot dead, they all were. The stones remain their silent witnesses to this day.

A talisman, worn smooth by time and etched with serpentine numbers and letters sinks to the bottom of a spring that has never forgotten its name. It holds the magic spell for freedom.

It lands behind my navel and is baptized by my amniotic fluid. I am of you, and you are of the same land as the Virgin Mother. Our holiness has survived this genocide, this time.

Love, your granddaughter in this life and inshallah every life,  
Liane

# SAMAH SEROUR FADIL

**Samah Serour Fadil** is an Afro-Palestinian writer, editor, and translator who resides in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. *Gooood Mourning Pa-les-tiiiiiiiiine!* was published in January 2024 and can be found on: <https://www.guernicamag.com/good-mourning-palestine/>. *Then, A Palestinian Was Born* can be found on <https://poetry.onl/read/samah>.



## **Goood Mourning Pa-les-tiiiiiiiiine!**

Goood Mourning Pa-les-tiiiiiiiiine! Hey, this is not a test, this is rocks and stones. Time to rock it from Masaffer Yata to Jerusalem. Is that me or does that sound like a Mahmoud Darwish poem? To Our land, Oh To Our Land, Ana Min Hinaak, Ana Min Hinaak, the compound I must make is my homeland . . . Hey, is it a little too early for being that loud? Too late! It's O six hundred and they've already killed a hundred. What's the O stand for? Oh my God it's Occupation! Speaking of Occupation, how about those Cro-Magnons who fund it? Thank them for silky smooth sin, makes me sound like an angel when I speak . . . Rocks and Stones! Edward and The Dreamers of yore.

Waitwaitwaitwait . . . This is the wrong speeeeed.

For those of you who are recovering from another killing, that's going to sound just right. Let's put it right back down again. Let's try it a little bit faster, see if that picks it up a little bit. The big O is coming up on 75. We've already gone through 74. Those soldiers are going IreallylikethepowerIreallylikethepowerIreallylikethepowerIreallylikethepower. Oh, it's still a bad call. Hey, wait a minute. Let's try something, Let's play it backwards and see if it gets better. Vovesnyevéh. This-regime-is-the-devil. Vovesnyevéh. They-are-funded-by-the-devil (Gasps!) Let us sing. Na na na na, na na na na, hey hey hey, goodbye. Picture a man going on a journey beyond sight and sound. He's left Gaza. He's entered . . . the Checkpoint Zone. Aaaah! De de la de de de la de boom. All right! Hey, what is this Checkpoint Zone? What do they mean by clashes? Sounds like a couple of Occupation forces in Jenin going "Uh, she looks like a pretty target." Hey, whatever it is, you must like it because it gets you on your toes better than a strong cup of Joe. What is a Checkpoint Zone? Sounds like something out of the Wizard of Oz. Ohhh nooo! Don't go in there! Hey ho, birthright beau, you've now landed in Jericho. You're among the big people now. You represent the IDF, the IDF. Oh no! Follow the birthright trail. Follow the birthright trail. Oh I'll get you my pretty. Oh my God it's the Wicked Witch of the East Jerusalem! It's Ben! It's Golda! Now where's your I.D. You and your little to-do too! Oh Benjamin. Ben-ja-min. What're you doing Benjamin? Oh, Bennett, you slut! You've been native to everywhere but Palestine. Stop it right now . . . hey, uh, hi, can you help me? What's your name? My name's Naftali. Naftali, what town were you stationed in? When you beamed with pride in between flying bullets aimed at Arabs? What was the weather like out there? Was it hot? Damn hot!

Real hot! Hot as it is, it's still no comparison to what awaits. Well can you tell me what it feels like? Fool! Why it's hot, I told you again. Were you born on the sun? It's damn hot! I said it's so damn hot I saw these little trees in the olive grove burst into flames, it's that hot, you know what I'm talking about? What do you think it's going to be like tonight? It's going to be hot and burning. That's nice if you're with a lady, but it ain't no good if you're in the desert. Here's a song coming your way right now. Dami Falasteeni By Mohammed Assaf. Yes! Hey, you know what I mean. Whew! Was that too much?

### **Then, A Palestinian Was Born**

Cleansing souls to Rome's twisted roads  
Paved on stones thrown from Bethlehem  
Death came from sin  
And he was adorned  
It was then that a Palestinian was born

Brown shaded and hairy  
Prickly as the fruit  
Planted at the root  
I search for its name yet  
Bloody pulp pursues

A memory I describe to try and remember  
Instead, salted earth and fog rubble my brain  
Unimaginable if I had grown on the tilth  
Of the soil meant to toil the mulch  
Of our germinating grains

Ground that begat us  
Bespoke, then be gone with us  
The mud asks where I am  
With the patience of man  
And the same sleight of hand, I remember

I remember the Arabic word for patience is sabr  
Sabr, the name of fruit I'd forgotten  
Sabr I can no longer extend

Sabr grows where European trees wither  
Sabr is every checkpoint from West Bank to Rafah

Sabr asks me where I've gone  
I don't know where to start  
My parents played in its shadow  
Holding hands with its stem  
Withstanding Occupation out of scorn

In those moments, a Palestinian was born  
When even our flag unbearable for Settlers to see  
They denied us the pride of a culture's dignity  
When sabr left,  
We planted watermelon seeds

Grew symbols and ate them piece by piece  
A juicy flesh beneath thin layers of green  
Digging out an escape  
For those meant to be free  
Our politics, a spoon carved out of stone

It is with a rock in hand that a Palestinian is born

# RASHA ABDULHADI

**Rasha Abdulhadi** is a queer Palestinian Southerner and the author of *Who Is Owed Springtime* (Neon Hemlock, 2021) and *Shell Houses* (The Head & The Hand Press, 2017). The poem was published in Octobre 2023 and can be found on <https://theoffingmag.com/enumerate/two-litanies-for-palestine/>

## **a litany of refusals to become ghostly**

all the women are dying or forming battalions in the mountains  
all the women are dying or going underground  
all the women are dying or going into exile  
all the women are dying or giving birth at the checkpoint  
all the women are dying or in prison  
all the women are dying or taking detours over the homes they can't go back to  
all the women are dead or else they are embroidering  
money and food to stitch to their children's tongues

all the children are dying or they are in protest  
all the children are dead or they are reading poems at the border  
all the children are dead or they are taking pieces of the wall home in their pockets  
all the children are dead or they are flying kites against fighter jets  
all the children are dying or they are becoming the adults who are dead

all the men are dead and on posters or they are in prison  
all the men are dead or they are writing books  
all the men are dying or they are digging escape tunnels with spoons  
all the men are dying or they are leading songs along the wall  
all the men are dying or they are flipping ladders over fences  
all the men are dying or flying over every border  
all the men are dead or else they are against the wall

all the students are dying or else they are organizing  
all the students are dying or they are being gassed  
all the students are dead or they are losing their scholarships  
all the students are dying or they are stealing food for each other  
all the students are dead or they are doxxed

all the women have been arrested or they are driving themselves  
all the women have been assaulted or they are leading the people gathered in the square  
all the women have been assassinated or else they are arresting the police

all the queers are dying or they are taking the old mens' microphones

all the people are dying or they are refusing to go home  
they are dying and dying and dead or they are refusing  
we are dying we are dying we are dying we are dead  
or else we are refusing to our last breath

# NAJWA JUMA

**Najwa Juma** is a Palestinian teacher, translator, writer, and activist from Gaza, who is a member of the General Union for Palestinian Writers. She is currently an asylum seeker in Germany while her family is in Gaza. They're hoping for family reunification. *The poems were published in December 2023 and can be found on: <https://mizna.org/literary/najwa-juma/>*

## **WE WANT A NORMAL DEATH**

To come without fear  
Or anticipation or dread  
To be light without weight  
To come silently  
In its usual color  
With its expected pallor  
And its ancient coldness.  
We don't want a loud death  
Scattered with body parts.  
Oh death, please grant us  
An ordinary death!

## **SONGS OF LIFE**

Here, there or everywhere,  
you find those going to death,  
by land by sea, or air,  
bombing, burning, or suffocating.  
There is no salvation but return,  
to ask the grandparents chanting  
songs of farewell to burn for.  
Then we can freely break out  
a song of eternity  
on the hill of slaughter,  
until the ones who were killed say loudly:  
*Here we returned, and this is the beginning of infinity.*

# RAWAN HUSSEIN

**Rawan Hussein** is a Palestinian poet from Gaza. This poem was translated by Fady Joudah.  
*It was published in 2021 and can be found on : <https://thebaffler.com/latest/dawn-hussin>*



## **Dawn**

Dawn broke on our heads.  
Endings were cut down to size.  
Our little ones' feet  
rapidly turned  
toward the sky.  
Time set itself aside  
and places shut their eyes,  
like a child with words  
that gray behind her lids.  
Ceilings tumbled  
waterfalls of stone,  
and under the rubble  
the last perceived image  
hangs: a final painting  
sculpted on our faces.  
Alone we grow old tonight,  
weave hours and wear them,  
gobble the terror that runs  
down our kids' mouths.  
Who will devour  
our rusted lips?

—*Gaza*

# HIBA ABU NADA

**Hiba Abu Nada** was a Palestinian poet, novelist, and educator. She was killed in her home in the Gaza Strip by an Israeli airstrike on October 20, 2023. She was 32. *This poem was translated from arabic by Huda Fakhreddine, published in December 2023, and can be found on: <https://mizna.org/literary/not-just-passing/>*

## Not Just Passing

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!*

# SUHEIR HAMMAD

**Suheir Hammad** is an American poet, author, and political activist. *This poem is transcribed from extracts written by Suheir in 2009/2010 of serie called Gaza Suite; it can be found on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qba2boXSWo>. What I Will can be found on <https://blog.ted.com/text-of-what-i-will-by-suheir-hammad/>*

## **When i stretch forth mine hand**

a great miracle happened here  
a festival of lights  
a casting of lead upon children  
an army feasting on epiphany

i know nothing under the sun over the wall no one mentions  
some must die wrapped in floral petroleum blanket  
no coverage

i have come to every day armageddon  
a ladder left unattended  
six candles burn down a house  
a horse tied to smoke  
some must die to send a signal

no open doors no open seas no open  
hands full of heart five daughters wrapped in white

children on hospital floor mother beside  
them the father in shock this is my family  
i have failed them this is my family i did  
not raise their heads i have buried them  
my family what will i do now my family is bread  
one fish one people cut into pieces

there is a thirst thefts life  
there is a hunger a winter within winter

no army does not apologize has never  
apologized authority chases paper assembly  
occupation settles deeper

a great miracle here  
the living are dying and the dying living

a festival of lights  
a strip a land a blaze  
the sea a mirror of fire

a casting of lead upon children  
an army feasting on epiphany

a bell fired in jericho rings through blasted windows  
a woman carries bones in bags under eyes  
disbelieving  
becoming numb  
dumbed by numbers  
front and back Gaza  
onto gaza  
for gaza  
im sorry gaza  
im sorry  
she sings for the whole powerless world  
her notes pitch perfect  
the bell a death toll

### **What I Will**

I will not  
dance to your war  
drum. I will  
not lend my soul nor  
my bones to your war  
drum. I will  
not dance to your  
beating. I know that beat.  
It is lifeless. I know  
intimately that skin  
you are hitting. It  
was alive once  
hunted stolen  
stretched. I will  
not dance to your drummed  
up war. I will not pop  
spin break for you. I  
will not hate for you or  
even hate you. I will  
not kill for you. Especially

I will not die  
for you. I will not mourn  
the dead with murder nor  
suicide. I will not side  
with you nor dance to bombs  
because everyone else is  
dancing. Everyone can be  
wrong. Life is a right not  
collateral or casual. I  
will not forget where  
I come from. I  
will craft my own drum. Gather my beloved  
near and our chanting  
will be dancing. Our  
humming will be drumming. I  
will not be played. I  
will not lend my name  
nor my rhythm to your  
beat. I will dance  
and resist and dance and  
persist and dance. This heartbeat is louder than  
death. Your war drum ain't  
louder than this breath.

# KAMILYA JUBRAN

**Kamilya Jubran** is a musician who grew up in Al Rameh - a palestinian village situated in Galilée. She moved to Europe in 2002 and lives now in Paris. *Ghareebah* is one of her songs. It can be found on: [http://www.kamilyajubran.com/audio\\_lyrics\\_01.htm](http://www.kamilyajubran.com/audio_lyrics_01.htm)



## **Ghareebah**

A Stranger - female

A stranger in this world..

A stranger..

In estrangement there is cruel loneliness

And painful desolation

But it makes me forever think

Of a magical home I know not

It fills my dreams with shadows of a far away land

My eyes never saw

A stranger in this world

I wandered East and West on earth

But found not my birthplace nor met one who recognizes me

Or who heard of me.

# leena aboutaleb

**leena aboutaleb** is an Egyptian and Palestinian writer. *This poem was published in Novembre 2023 and can be found <https://poetry.onl/read/leena-a>*

## Languaging Memory

You, we, I. Do you remember? He was your age now. Tall. The rifle. Four, then seven, then ten. Qalandia. Ramallah. September. Yarmouk. Kuwait. Can you say the name? Everyone wants futurity. Let them languish and despair, disguising pride in cowardice. I am born in fugitive, the cover of eternity clothing me. If not this life, the next. If not us, the next. They will forget. I list massacres in my head by the decade. What has been stolen cannot be said. What do I know of theft? What do I know of loss? My lungs permanently damaged from the teargas. I am scared for my womb. April, the fear of motherhood. What was I supposed to tell him? Maryam called. Did they think one begets emptiness? Father of what? The strikes left on me like an infant suckling. My daughter will hold them as I have. Like her mother, she will grow into her mother. The banner of fire setting her aflame. The prison, the sound bombs, the stampedes. I grew with hands tracing the walls in search of radios, training paranoia. My mother's daughter. Her eyes and her will. I know the shape war leaves. I, too, played between the abandoned homes. Stuck my fingers through the bullet holes like a portal, a looking glass into the other side, imagining the width of despair as if I am not made of my mother's fractured hips and begotten memory. I still know the shape of the bunker. We spent twenty years not eating lentils afterwards. Would you give birth in Palestine? I can no longer wait. I remember forever now, embraced in the still death. How memory becomes tangible, genetics permanently altered. I speak like my father. How beautiful you are, habeebi. To'burni. I'll see you on the other side, our children naming the fruits.

# FARGO NISSIM TBAKHI

**Fargo Nissim Tbakhi** is a queer Palestinian-American writer and performer from Phoenix, Arizona. *This poem was shortlisted for the 2019 Peach Gold in Poetry and can be found on: <https://www.peachmgzn.com/fargo-tbakhi-2>*

## Image of a dabke at the Great March of Return

In the video the feet are shouting  
    over the whine of bullets. Bullets whine-  
in this way and others, they are like  
    children. The snipers as close as a panic attack  
in the morning. A cardboard cutout of a fence,  
    a diorama susurrating belonging or not.  
In the video, you can see spurts of dust leaping into the air  
    as bullets displace them, showers of sand on my people's  
impeccable kicks, designer jeans (yes, Palestinians really wear these  
    to protests. A zaghareet for our flexing! Our banana republic!)  
Yes, the dust is poetic license. It is also true. Yes, susurrus is a word only  
    poets and leaves find useful. Yes, I am a mound of crinkly leaves  
worth diving into. My autumnal body play, my decaying center.  
    In the video it is hard to see the fence  
behind the roil of the tire smoke, which acts as backdrop  
    for the feet, which act as percussors for the legs,  
which act as representatives of the body, which acts as bodies do: it takes  
    up space. Dancing scarecrow. Corpse bride.  
In the video, you can hear the jaws of white people halfway across  
    the world drop. You can hear the crocodile admiration: how  
can they dance? so brave the way they  
    undulate.  
Susurrus, from the Latin for "humming, whispering." The noise of it  
    a mimesis of its action. The stamp of our feet on the dirt  
a mimesis of what our hearts do every day at dawn, rising to make the  
    coffee. The audacity of us: to render the entire desert our club,  
the tear gas our fog machine, the lights of the drones our strobes.  
    If I was not a poet, I would simply show you the video and call it  
good. If I was not a poet, I would simply dabke for you,  
    nudging bullets out of the way with every kick.  
If I truly believed what I said, I would not say anything.  
    The Latin for susurrus is just susurrus: we did not change a thing  
in the adoption. In this way, etymology is straight-forward,  
    like a child,

speeding at the leg of a dancer tamping down the desert sand  
to spite the barrel of a sniper's child-hurler propelling little  
children at approximately three thousand four hundred feet per second  
towards the dancer and the dancer's family, and all the dancer  
does is dance, and all the snipers do is breathe, and all I do is try  
and say anything at all of why we dance other than the tea  
is still steeping or the toenail is the riot shield of the toe or my father  
had poor reception this morning but we are trying again tonight  
or we're only impervious to bullets in poems and comic books  
and I cannot draw. In any case,  
I know how to spell susurrus and can use it properly.  
Surely that counts for something.  
Why dance? Why rise each morning? Why not simply stop  
breathing? Surely it would be simpler  
to let the children lead us to god.  
Surely there are better ways  
to try and flaunt survival.  
A theory of the origin of the dabke holds that it comes  
from the way we had to stamp the dirt  
in order to harden a floor for our huts.  
Of course, due to the crumbly, ever-shifting nature of dirt,  
this would mean, of course,  
that our dance  
will never be finished,



# ZENA AGHA

**Zena Agha** is an Iraqi-Palestinian writer and analyst born in London, currently based in New York. *This poem is from her book *Objects from April and May*, published in 2022.*



## **Elegy for Return #1**

Let me be clear about what I want. I want to return, yes, but more. To turn stones back. I read once about a mosque being made into a bar. Now, I'm not an iconoclast, but that did offend. You hate when I talk about return but some things just have to be spoken and anyway, my father is older than you and while he never spoke it, he was mighty pleased to see the lemon. I told you it's a kibbutz now. Off route 90, near where Jesus fed five thousand. And so, it is perfectly right that my savage nose of a father was born near Jesus and my grandmother turned chairs into thrones.

## Donations

Medical Aid Palestine

<https://www.instagram.com/medicalaidpal/?hl=en>

Palestinian Feminist Collective

<https://palestinianfeministcollective.org/>

Palestine Children's Relief Fund

<https://www.pcrf.net/>

Beirut Art Center (BAC) collect for Palestine

(ask until when the fundraiser will be ongoing before donating)

<https://beirutartcenter.org/donate/>

For Gaza artists and their families

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/srmap-a-shelter-for-gazas-artists>

Operation Olive Branch is a continuously updating spreadsheet of Palestinian escape funds where progress towards their goals is being tracked. As of right now, there are over 100 funds listed there:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vtMLLOzuc6GpkFyVtKQOY2j-Vv-goUsChMCFst\\_WLA/htmlview](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vtMLLOzuc6GpkFyVtKQOY2j-Vv-goUsChMCFst_WLA/htmlview)

For families:

[https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-us-evacuate-our-family-from-a-war-zone?utm\\_campaign=p\\_lico+share-sheet-first-launch&utm\\_medium=copy\\_link&utm\\_source=customer](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-us-evacuate-our-family-from-a-war-zone?utm_campaign=p_lico+share-sheet-first-launch&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=customer)

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-lina-and-her-family-to-evacuate-from-gaza>

@everpresshq / <https://everpress.com/radio-alhara-store>

All proceeds from the sales of *radio alhara* tee shirts will go to Gaza Clear Water Emergency Initiative, that will provide immediate, desperately needed clean drinking water to thousands of our brothers, sisters & their families in Gaza. With the help of the extended Shawa family on the ground starting in Rafah, the initiative has a high impact route to immediately help thousands of families by partnering with a trusted Gazan-owned water desalination company. Gaza Clear Water Emergency Initiative is now directly financing & operating a metered clean water source through an operational desalination plant in Rafah, disbursing this water to Gazans in need for free. Donors & operation remains anonymous to the public. For more contact the initiative on [daniashawwa@icloud.com](mailto:daniashawwa@icloud.com) for wiring instructions and for wire confirmations.



