

All beautiful poetry is an act of resistance.

- Mahmoud Darwish  
tr. Catherine Cobham

# Poems from and for Palestine

October 2023

## **RESOURCES**

### **Further Reading**

<https://arablit.org/>  
<https://mizna.org/mizna-news/mizna-the-palestine-issue/>  
<https://thebaffler.com/logical-revolts/poems-from-palestine>  
<https://jewishcurrents.org/category/poetry>  
<https://arabfilmstitute.org/palestinian-voices/>  
<https://www.nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/no-human-being-can-exist/>  
<https://lithub.com/a-palestinian-meditation-in-a-time-of-annihilation/>

### **Accounts to Follow**

LIVE FROM GAZA	CONTENT HUBS	ANALYSIS
@motaz_azaiza	@eye.on.palestine	@mohammedkurd
@byplestia	@cravingpalestine	@gazangirl
@ahmedhijazee	@qudsnen	@anat.international
@aborjelaa	@theimeu	@adnan_barq
@salma_shurrab	@mondoweiss	@jenanmatari
@joegaza93		

### **Donations**

Palestinian Feminist Collective: <https://palestinianfeministcollective.org/>  
Middle East Children's Alliance: <https://www.mecaforpeace.org/>  
Palestine Children's Relief Fund: <https://www.pcrf.net/>

### **Direct Aid to Gaza**

Follow and DM @malfofeh for instructions to donate through them to trusted organizations distributing funds on the ground, including Center for Women's Legal Research, Counseling and Protection, a feminist organization based in Gaza.

*All of the poems in this pamphlet were shared on social media in October 2023, in response to the Israeli government's assault on Gaza.*

**LENA KHALAF TUFFAHA** is a poet, essayist, and translator. She is the author of three books of poetry, *Water & Salt* (Red Hen Press), *Kaan and Her Sisters* (Trio House Press, 2023), and *Something About Living*, forthcoming from University of Akron Press, 2024.

Read **FAISAL MOHYUDDIN**'s poem "Allah Castles" from the May 2021 issue of Poetry. And listen to the Poetry Magazine Podcast where Faisal and Ashley M. Jones talk about faith, teaching, race, human connection, authenticity, seeing and honoring others, and the place of poetry in our lives.

**OMAR SAKR** is a poet and writer born in Western Sydney to Lebanese and Turkish Muslim migrants. He is the acclaimed author of a novel, *Son of Sin* (Affirm Press, 2022) and three poetry collections, notably *The Lost Arabs* (University of Queensland Press, 2019), which won the 2020 Prime Minister's Literary Award. His newest collection is *Non-Essential Work* (UQP, 2023).

**GLENN SHAHEEN**'s book of poems, *Predatory* (University of Pittsburgh Press), won the Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize and was the finalist for the Norma Farber First Book Award. He is the author of the chapbook *Unchecked Savagery*, available from Ricochet Editions. His second collection of poetry, *Energy Corridor*, was published in 2016. He is the President of the Radius of Arab American Writers, co-editor of *Matter: A Journal of Political Poetry and Comment*, and co-editor of the chapbook press Tram Editions.

**NAOMI SHIHAB NYE** is an Arab American poet, editor, songwriter, and novelist. Born to a Palestinian father and an American mother, she began composing her first poetry at the age of six. In total, she has published or contributed to over 30 volumes of poetry.

**LISA SUHAIR MAJAJ** is a Palestinian-American poet who was born in Iowa and raised in Jordan. Educated at the American University of Beirut and the University of Michigan, Majaj currently resides in Cyprus. Her essays and poems have been published widely, and she is the author of *The Geographies of Light* (2008).

**FADWA TUQAN** was a Palestinian poet known for her representations of resistance to Israeli occupation in contemporary Arab poetry. Sometimes, she is referred to as the "Poet of Palestine."

**ISSAM ZINEH** is author of *Unceded Land*, which was a 2021 Trio Award finalist and editors' selection, and the chapbook *The Moment of Greatest Alienation* (Ethel, 2021). His most recent poems appear or are forthcoming in *AGNI*, *Pleiades*, *Guesthouse*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, and elsewhere. Find him at [www.issamzineh.com](http://www.issamzineh.com) or on Twitter @izineh.

## PHOBIA

Najwan Darwish  
translated from Arabic by Ahmad Diab

They will evict me from the city before the dark  
They say I did not pay my air bills,  
I did not pay the price of light.  
They will evict me from the city before the evening time  
They say I did not pay the sun's fees or the cloud's dues,  
They will evict me before the sunrise  
Because I bickered with the night without praising the stars  
They will evict me from the city before I leave the womb  
Because for seven months I scrutinized existence and wrote poetry  
They will evict me from existence because I sided with the void  
They will evict me from the void because I am suspect of contacting  
existence  
They will evict me from existence and the void because I am the son  
of becoming  
They will evict me

First published in *Wasafiri 80: Beautiful Resistance:*  
*A Special Issue on Palestine*

## NATURALIZED

Hala Alyan

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.

**HALA ALYAN** is a clinical psychologist and the author of the novels *Salt Houses*, and *The Arsonists' City*, and four collections of poetry, most recently *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. Her work has been published by the *New Yorker*, the *Academy of American Poets*, *Lit Hub*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and *Guernica*.

**NAJWAN DARWISH** was born in Jerusalem in 1978. Since the publication of his first collection in 2000, his poetry has been translated into ten languages. He is the author of *Nothing More to Lose* (New York Review Books, 2014).

**MOHAMMED EL-KURD** is an internationally-touring poet and writer from Jerusalem, Palestine. His debut collection, *RIFQA*, was published in 2021 by Haymarket Books. His work has been featured in the *Guardian*, the *Nation*, *This Week In Palestine*, *Al-Jazeera English*, and other places. Mohammed graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design, where he created the multimedia poetry magazine *Radical Blankets*.

**SUHEIR HAMMAD** (Amman, Jordan, 1973) is a Palestinian-American poet. Her books include *Born Palestinian*, *Born Black* (1996), *Drops of This Story* (1996), *ZaatarDiva* (2006), and *Breaking Poems* (2008). She has also performed in the Broadway play *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry Jam*. Her work has been featured in various anthologies, magazines, plays, and films.

**NOOR HINDI** is a Palestinian-American poet and reporter. Her debut collection of poems, *Dear God. Dear Bones. Dear Yellow.* was published by Haymarket Books in 2023. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Poetry* magazine, *Hobart*, and *Jubilat*. Her essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *American Poetry Review*, *Literary Hub*, and the *Adroit Journal*.

**JUNE JORDAN** (New York, NY) was an activist, poet, writer, and teacher, as well as a prominent figure in the civil rights, feminist, antiwar, and LGBTQ movements of the twentieth century.

**FADY JOUDAH** is a Palestinian-American physician, poet, and translator. His collection of poetry, *The Earth in the Attic* (2008), won the 2007 Yale Series of Younger Poets competition. Joudah translated several collections of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's work in *The Butterfly's Burden* (2006), which won the Banipal prize from the UK and was a finalist for the PEN Award for Poetry in Translation.

**KHALED JUMA** is a Palestinian author, writer of children's books, and poet who lives in Gaza. He is currently Head of the Cultural Department in Palestine News and Information Agency and was previously Editor-in-Chief of *Roya Magazine* for seven years. Khaled's books have been published in Arabic, English and Dutch.

**RASHA ABDULHADI** is calling on you, dear reader, to join them in refusing and resisting the genocide of the Palestinian people. Wherever you are, whatever sand you can throw on the gears of genocide, do it now. If it's a handful, throw it. If it's a fingernail full, scrape it out and throw. Get in the way however you can. The elimination of the Palestinian people is not inevitable. We can refuse with our every breath and action. We must. @rashaabdulhadi

**GEORGE ABRAHAM** (they/he/,) is a Palestinian American poet, performance artist, and writer from Jacksonville, FL. They are the author of *Birthright* (Button Poetry, 2020). They are a board member for the Radius of Arab American Writers (RAWI), and Executive Editor of the journal Mizna. Their collaborations include co-editing a Palestinian poetry anthology with Noor Hindi (Haymarket Books, 2025), and a performance art project titled EVE with Fargo Tbakhi.

**MOSAB ABU TOHA** is a Palestinian poet from Gaza. His debut poetry book, *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear*, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and won an American Book Award. His essay, "The View From My Window in Gaza," recently appeared in the *New Yorker*.

**ZENA AGHA** is a Palestinian-Iraqi writer, poet and multi-disciplinary artist from London. She is the author of *Objects from April and May* (Hajar Press, 2022). Zena's short film, "The Place that is Ours," co-directed with Dorothy Allen-Pickard, premiered on Nowness in November 2021 and was selected for the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival in 2022. Her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Nation*, the *Margins*, *NPR*, *El País*, and elsewhere.

**GHAYATH ALMADHOUN** was born in Damascus, Syria as the child of a Palestinian father and a Syrian mother. He studied Arabic literature at Damascus University. In 2008 he emigrated to Sweden and became a Swedish citizen. He now lives in between Berlin & Stockholm. An English translation of his work, *Adrenaline*, was published by Action Books in 2017.

**AHMAD ALMALLAH** is a poet from Palestine. His poetry books include *Bitter English* (University of Chicago Press, 2019) and *Border Wisdom* (Winter Editions, 2023). His writing has appeared in *Jacket2*, *All Roads will lead You Home*, *Apiary*, *SAND*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Making Mirrors: Righting/Writing by Refugees*, *Kenyon Review*, *Poetry*, and other places. He is currently Artist in Residence in Creative Writing at the University of Pennsylvania.

**ZAINA ALSOUS** is the author of the poetry collection *A Theory of Birds* (University of Arkansas Press, 2019). Her poetry, reviews, and essays have been published in *Poetry*, *Kenyon Review*, the *New Inquiry*, *Adroit*, and elsewhere. She edits for *Scalawag Magazine*, a publication dedicated to unsettling dominant narratives of the southern United States.

## INCOMPLETE LIST OF UNAUTHORIZED PALESTINIANS

Pending Review, Subject to Amendment\*

Rasha Abdulhadi

palestinian pilots, flight attendants, & air traffic controllers  
palestinian real estate agents & elementary school teachers  
palestinian science fiction writers  
palestinian professors of math and chemistry  
palestinian journalists  
palestinian baristas  
palestinian taxi drivers  
palestinian train conductors  
palestinian ticket takers at the movie theatre  
palestinian cashiers & car salesmen  
palestinian appliance repairmen  
palestinian lawyers  
palestinian women comedians  
palestinian drag queens and kings  
palestinian editors, bank tellers, & engineers  
palestinian astronauts & astrophysicists  
palestinian bus drivers  
palestinians who don't speak arabic or english  
palestinians who speak german or spanish or french  
palestinians with one non-palestinian parent  
palestinians with one non-palestinian parent who isn't white  
palestinians with one non-palestinian parent who is also indigenous  
palestinians who are the children of any of those palestinians  
palestinian children  
palestinian civilians  
palestinian non-combatants  
palestinian innocents  
palestinians on every continent except antarctica  
palestinians in antarctica  
palestinians on the moon, on the sea  
palestinian fishermen past the blockade line  
palestinian plumbers  
palestinian veterinarians  
palestinian trauma surgeons & trauma therapists  
palestinian rescue workers & medics

palestinian web designers  
palestinian photographers  
palestinian climate scientists  
palestinian toxicologists, ecologists, & graphic designers  
palestinian pastry chefs & painters  
palestinian contractors & carpenters, at least one of them famous  
palestinian shepherds and farmers  
palestinian tailors and fashion designers  
palestinian wedding planners  
palestinian equestrians  
palestinian bodybuilders  
palestinian kickboxers & filmmakers  
palestinian historians & world champions  
palestinian tunnel diggers  
palestinian marching bands  
palestinian flag makers & freedom fighters  
palestinian revolutionaries & race car drivers  
palestinian fútbol players and referees  
palestinian catchers, pitchers, batters, umpires and outfielders  
palestinian swimmers & distance runners  
palestinian arborists, entomologists, & house mothers  
palestinian nurses  
palestinian blood donors  
palestinian epidemiologists  
palestinian researchers  
palestinian publishers & copyeditors  
palestinian knitters, quilters, & crocheters  
palestinian sculptors  
palestinian musicians  
palestinian singers  
palestinian barbers  
palestinian wigmakers & hydrologists  
palestinian environmentalists & make-up artists  
palestinian mermaids  
palestinian beekeepers & birdwatchers  
palestinian adults, children, and elders

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 or dance to bombs  
because everyone 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.

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## NAVIGATION IN A WORLD FILLED MOSTLY WITH EMPTY FIELDS

*Glenn Shaheen*

The support beam is hopelessly  
rotted. To replace it means  
to replace the roof. Or we could let  
the thing crash down on us.

Only one of the members  
of the firing squad has a bullet  
in his rifle. This kind of care  
is rampant in our world.

I am paralyzed by interest.  
That is, I want to absorb  
everything. That is, I  
am incapable of absorbing anything.

It's wrong to call  
that Devil. I don't blame  
my heart's wayward  
movements on a God.

NAVIGATION IN A  
WORLD FILLED  
MOSTLY WITH  
EMPTY FIELDS

When the sun rises  
on the ocean there is  
a brief flash of green as light  
passes cleanly through water.

More like a tilt  
in thought. We wonder what if  
we push the woman into  
traffic, but spare her child.

I've laid my scent in  
many rooms. Some have  
since been demolished. Most  
are now full of strangers.

The Devil pushes us each in  
different ways. Which  
isn't to say that I even  
believe in a Devil.

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*Originally appearing in the Offing*

## MASSACRE

*Ghayath Almadoun*

Massacre is a dead metaphor that is eating my friends, eating them without salt. They were poets and have become Reporters With Borders; they were already tired and now they're even more tired. 'They cross the bridge at daybreak fleet of foot' and die with no phone coverage. I see them through night vision goggles and follow the heat of their bodies in the darkness; there they are, fleeing from it even as they run towards it, surrendering to this huge massage. Massacre is their true mother, while genocide is no more than a classical poem written by intellectual pensioned-off generals. Genocide isn't appropriate for my friends, as it's an organised collective action and organised collective actions remind them of the Left that let them down.

Massacre wakes up early, bathes my friends in cold water and blood, washes their underclothes and makes them bread and tea, then teaches them a little about the hunt. Massacre is more compassionate to my friends than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Massacre opened the door to them when other doors were closed, and called them by their names when news reports were looking for numbers. Massacre is the only one to grant them asylum regardless of their backgrounds; their economic circumstances don't bother Massacre, nor does Massacre care whether they are intellectuals or poets, Massacre looks at things from a neutral angle; Massacre has the same dead features as them, the same names as their widowed wives, passes like them through the countryside and the suburbs and appears suddenly like them in breaking news. Massacre resembles my friends, but always arrives before them in faraway villages and children's schools.

Massacre is a dead metaphor that comes out of the television and eats my friends without a single pinch of salt.

*Appearing in Adrenalin (Action Books, 2017)  
tr. Catherine Cobham*

## CATASTROPHIC SONNET

*Issam Zineh*

"Remembering is an ethical act..."

—Aarushi Punia

[My grandfather still has his house key from 1948. He says he lives in the part of the village where the past doesn't kill you. He invites his neighbors in for fruit and mixed nuts and something cool then something hot. There is a belligerence of songbirds every square mile. He says, come see what I brought you from the market: cucumbers, local, pomegranates, zaatar. I see you've renounced your birthplace, which is of course your right. You will dream of male sunbirds feeding on nectar mid-air. When they come for you, they will ask about your love's name, her contours, her address. Where is it written that we're supposed to call? I misheard him talk of our rightful place at the top of the hill. My kids fell in love with imperialism last summer in London. They discovered legacy in the gardens. They woke to the logics of the enterprise. I miss the burgers at Johnny's].

*Originally appearing in Lunch Ticket*



### From DETAILS

*Ghayath Almadhoun*

It was the most beautiful war I've been in in my life, full of metaphors and poetic images, I remember how I used to sweat adrenalin and piss black smoke, how I used to eat my "esh and drink screams, death with his scrawny body leaned on the destruction committed by his poem, and wiped his knife clean of my salt, and the city rubbed my shoes with her evening and the street smiled and the city counted the #ngers of my sorrow and dropped them on the road leading to her, death weeps and the city remembers the features of her killer and sends me a stabbing by post, threatening me with happiness, and hangs my heart out on her washing line strung between two memories, and oblivion pulls me towards myself, deeply towards myself, deeply, so my language falls on morning, and balconies fall on songs, headscarves on kisses, back streets on women's bodies, the details of alleyways on history, the city falls on the cemeteries, dreams fall on the prisons, the poor on joy, and I fall on memory.

### REMOVE

*Fady Joudah*

You who remove me from my house  
are blind to your past  
which never leaves you,  
yet you're no mole  
to smell and sense what's being done  
to me now by you.  
Now, dilatory, attritional so that the past  
is climate change and not a massacre,  
so that the present never ends.  
But I'm closer to you than you are to yourself  
and this, my enemy friend,  
is the definition of distance.  
Oh don't be indignant,  
watch the video, I'll send you the link  
in which you cleanse me item after limb  
thrown into the street to march where  
my catastrophe in the present  
is still not the size of your past:  
is this the wall  
you throw your dice against?  
I'm speaking etymologically, I'm okay  
with the scales tipping your way,  
I'm not into that, I have a heart that rots,  
resists, and hopes, I have genes,  
like yours, that don't subscribe  
to the damage pyramid.  
You who remove me from my house  
have also evicted my parents  
and their parents from theirs.  
How is the view from my window?  
How does my salt taste?  
Shall I condemn myself a little  
for you to forgive yourself  
in my body? Oh how you love my body,  
my body, my house.

*Suheir Hammad*

there is no outside anywhere  
anymore just where we are and  
what we do while we are here

**ON A STARLESS NIGHT**

*Mosab Abu Toha*

On a starless night,  
I toss and turn.  
The earth shakes, and  
I fall out of bed.  
I look out my window. The house  
next door no longer  
stands. It's lying like an old carpet  
on the floor of the earth,  
trampled by missiles, fat slippers  
flying off legless feet.  
I never knew my neighbors still had that small TV,  
that old painting still hung on their walls,  
their cat had kittens.

*Originally appearing in Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear: Poems  
from Gaza (City Lights Books, 2022)*

**INTIFADA INCANTATION: POEM 38 for BBL**

*June Jordan*

I SAID I LOVED YOU AND I WANTED  
GENOCIDE TO STOP  
I SAID I LOVED YOU AND I WANTED AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION AND REACTION  
I SAID I LOVED YOU AND I WANTED MUSIC  
OUT THE WINDOWS  
I SAID I LOVED YOU AND I WANTED  
NOBODY THIRST AND NOBODY  
NOBODY COLD  
I SAID I LOVED YOU AND I WANTED I WANTED  
JUSTICE UNDER MY NOSE  
I SAID I LOVED YOU AND I WANTED  
BOUNDARIES TO DISAPPEAR  
I WANTED  
NOBODY ROLL BACK THE TREES!  
I WANTED  
NOBODY TAKE AWAY DAYBREAK!  
I WANTED NOBODY FREEZE ALL THE PEOPLE ON THEIR  
KNEES!

I WANTED YOU  
I WANTED YOUR KISS ON THE SKIN OF MY SOUL  
AND NOW YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME AND I STAND  
DESPITE THE TRILLION TREACHERIES OF SAND  
YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME AND I HOLD THE LONGING  
OF THE WINTER IN MY HAND  
YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME AND I COMMIT  
TO FRICTION AND THE UNDERTAKING  
OF THE PEARL

YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME  
YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME

AND I HAVE BEGUN  
I BEGIN TO BELIEVE MAYBE  
MAYBE YOU DO  
I AM TASTING MYSELF  
IN THE MOUNTAIN OF THE SUN

**EVERY DAY**

*Omar Sakr*

Every day I say a prayer for Palestine  
And every day a dog runs away with it  
Vanishing down an alley, tail wagging  
To benefit who knows which wretch.  
I tell myself it doesn't matter who receives  
The gift of my kindness. Such lovely lies  
We bestow upon ourselves. Sometimes  
I am the dog feeling with a bastard's  
Love clenched in my slaving jaw.  
Sometimes I am the one curled at the end  
Of an alley, blessed by the unexpected  
Warmth of a snuffling mouth telling  
Me I am not forgotten. Every day  
I say a prayer for Palestine.

**OH RASCAL CHILDREN OF GAZA**

*Khaled Juma*

Oh rascal children of Gaza.  
You who constantly disturbed me  
with your screams under my window.  
You who filled every morning  
with rush and chaos.  
You who broke my vase  
and stole the lonely flower on my balcony.  
Come back,  
and scream as you want  
and break all the vases.  
Steal all the flowers.  
Come back..  
Just come back..

because this land has only one name—  
and its people are only  
its people  
Call them what you may, that doesn't change a thing—they too disappear  
and they too will reappear—

\*

Once upon a time, Gaza,  
there was no need for anyone to give you any  
empty words, like this poem. Your only hope  
is to look us straight in the eye, and say once more, that you were,  
and are, once upon a time.

\*

## A POEM FOR GAZA, A POEM FOR PALESTINE

Ahmad Almallah

Gaza, the last thing you need is a poem. Don't say!  
I have nothing else to give. A poem is a poem...what can it do? Don't say!  
But simply be like a poem.  
You were an open land, and  
your sea was no sight  
for blood. Yes, once upon a time,  
you asked nothing  
of the world,  
and it gave you  
nothing.  
Gather our words and toss them into  
the empty well.  
Screams don't linger, but they do not  
disappear—  
They lodge themselves  
beyond the ear,  
and once they begin to haunt  
they appear, they  
reappear.

\*

Corrupted by the attempt to apply logic  
to the wound. We are all talk  
no action!  
We all know, that talk is talk  
that's why no one  
listens.  
Reality wounds can't be mended by  
thoughts. We all know—  
Don't keep me in your prayers, and please  
spare me the guilt.  
Where can the eye rest on the sight –  
screaming children?

\*

I want my words to spill blood and when I say  
that once upon a time...  
I want you to cringe

## CONVERSATION

Lisa Suhair Majaj (Gaza 2014)

*What did you do while the children of Gaza  
were dying?*

I argued with their killers.

*What did you say?*

I said that the innocent deserve innocence.  
That the sound of laughter is better than nightmares,  
and briefer. That the cost of killing  
may be higher than the price of dying.

*Did they listen?*

Do killers ever listen? They are deafened  
by their weapons' drone and by the grate  
of their own voices raging, denying.

*Why were they angry?*

They said that they needed to feel safe.

*Safe from the children?*

They said there are no children in Gaza,  
only young combatants.

*And the babies?*

They said they are little snakes that will grow,  
and it is better to kill them in their nests.

*And what of the teachers? The singers? The artists?  
The fathers? The mothers?*

They said that all who live there are terrorists.

And as for the mothers, they said it is they  
who bear the little snakes.

*Did your protestations do any good?*

No. I lost my breath, I lost my words, I lost my heart.  
But had I not argued, I would have lost my soul.

*Did any children survive?*

In body, yes. In spirit, it is not sure.

*The children who lived, what will become of them?*

Their eyes will sear holes in the night sky.  
Remember this when you look at the stars:  
that it is the burning eyes of Gaza's children  
that hold your gaze.

*Originally appearing in Baladi Magazine*

I do not mention that there are many more allies out there  
than we might recognize, that I wish  
I could be brave enough to be one too.

I do not tell my student, in that moment or after class  
when no one is around to hear us talking,  
that I admire his courage. I do not commend him

for speaking up, do not tell him I had been wrong about him  
all along, that he had good reason to be  
so quiet, to not care as much as I had always wanted him

to care. I do not touch my quivering lips.  
I do not drop the pen in my hand and pretend  
it was an accident. I do not

think about how, days later, I will be writing  
a poem about all this—writing this  
very poem.

I do not tell the student  
that I am losing faith in poetry,  
in the power of words,

in myself as his teacher,  
in myself  
as a human being.

When this student of mine brings up Palestine,  
I simply pretend not to hear him,  
knowing full well that everyone else will

pretend with me,  
certain that this student  
will play along too.

*Originally appearing in RHINO Poetry*

because they would have so few  
likes otherwise. I do not say a word about how  
I have been checking out all the recent

posts by my closest friends, by people and organizations  
I have long admired, by individuals  
who always seem to be speaking up against

injustice—just to see what  
they are and aren't posting about. I do not admit  
that the silences I find again and again

make it harder to sleep, that enough small disappointments  
can break a person's heart, that this is a truth  
every teacher understands all too well.

I do not get angry at him, call him out  
for deliberately trying to derail an otherwise  
meaningful conversation, do not accuse him of being difficult

or unnecessarily political, or some kind of punkass  
who plays video games instead of doing  
homework. I do not even look at him

because I am afraid of seeing that familiar exhaustion  
in his eyes, a defeated spirit etched across  
his face too. I do not form a prayer

in my mind, do not believe God will give even partial credit  
for work I mean to do but won't actually do.  
I do not look around the room

to catch others' expressions, to see which one of his classmates  
is already primed to report my response  
to their parents, to my department chair, my principal,

ready to pounce on me for not saying  
the only thing I or anyone is allowed to say on the topic.  
I do not open up one of those heavy

red dictionaries on the far wall, review the definitions  
of truth, hypocrisy, cowardice, brutality,  
occupation, self-defense, solidarity.

**from FINISHED WITH THE PEACE**

Rasha Abdulhadi

interrupting Siegfried Sassoon, 1917

*—you can tell, can't you, hayk hatha, how the peace is the war they won.  
Pursuing peace has been the best excuse for making war. That peace of  
quelling, peace of graveyard, peace of the heaven of the carpet-bombed  
and altar-bled, peace of the quiet they require. Peace of the weight of  
chains. Peace of the drowned. Peace of those by their own lives taken.  
Peace of total surrender. The peace of everything stolen and nothing left  
to fight for or defend. Peace of evicted homes. Peace of full prisons. Peace  
of 23 hours in solitary. Peace of checkpoints. Peace of total surveillance.  
The peace of no dissent or disagreement. Peace of no payment for the  
workers. Peace of empty farms. Peace of full slaughterhouses. Peace of  
blood on the slaughterhouse floor. Peace of the empty clip and empty  
canister. Peace of the tank's tread. Peace of the drone's hum. Peace of  
the hardshelled fist, of speed and progress, of a more perfect union with  
the end of the baton. Peace of the long road from the locked city to the  
village. Peace of the smooth surface of the long wall. Peace of the sniper's  
perch. Peace of disappearance, peace of kidnapping, peace of trussed and  
gagged and*

*no more the din of petition and protest, no more our jokes played, our  
banners planted on the back of police vans, our murals covering barri-  
cades, no more our dances against an audience of riot shields. No noise  
of the living, noise of the resisting, noise of children chasing each other,  
no noise of old folks talking story. No noise of groceries delivered, medi-  
cines delivered, dinners delivered, of debts loudly cancelled and forgiven.  
No noise from the painters and poets and musicians, the puppetmakers  
and sculptors, no more our mics electrified and feasts spread. No more  
the insurgent sound of us tending each other, making repair, reclaiming  
houses, derailing train engines to run as generators, so—*

**WEDNESDAY**

*Mohammed El-Kurd*

A man wailing is not a dancing bear  
—Aimé Césaire

There's death in the eyes of this newborn.  
I heard the baby complain about a treacherous defeat,  
called it the same old catastrophe.  
A storm in his ear says it's raging for silence.  
Thunder erupts when he's shushed.  
What a worsened scenario. He skipped ahead.  
What do you do when your destiny is predetermined?

Life in this hospital laughs at us.  
Long is the wait. Wild is the wind.  
I ask if there's a wedding going on.  
The nurse complained of the clouds.  
If I were a stupid flower, I'd wither under the rain.  
They asked her, What's wrong with the flower?  
not What's wrong with the rain?

*Originally appearing in RIFQA (Haymarket Books, 2021)*

**WHEN ONE OF MY STUDENTS BRINGS UP PALESTINE,**

*Faisal Mohyuddin*

I do not smile at him, happy though I am  
to finally hear his voice  
in class. I do not say his name,

thank him for his comment,  
for how it is living proof that our study of literature,  
of fictional lives, of rhetorical moves,

really does matter, is a matter  
of life and death. I do not ask follow-up questions,  
do not inquire about what sources

he consulted, if he evaluated their credibility,  
their bias, their audience and purpose,  
if there was evidence of the spin

of some hidden agenda. I do not ask others to respond  
before I do, do not ask him to elaborate,  
to explain how and why any of this connects

to those poems about spiders,  
to the ending of *The Great Gatsby*, to what prompted  
Chief Seattle to write his letter,

to why it failed. I do not direct our conversation  
back to the dangers of silence,  
a topic every discussion inevitably returns to.

I do not reach to scratch that sudden itch  
on my neck. I do not look out the window and wonder  
if it will still be raining on my drive home,

if the traffic will be terrible,  
if I might again find myself dozing off at the wheel.  
I do not tell him that I haven't slept well

for weeks, that I spend hours each night scrolling  
through social media feeds, seeking out people's posts  
about Palestine, that I like every single one



**ENOUGH FOR ME**

*Fadwa Tuqan*

Enough for Me  
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 from my country.  
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.

**THE WORKERS LOVE PALESTINE**

*Zaina Alsous*

The week before the SUN announced hospice  
my great-great-great-grandchild the harpist announced:  
WORKERS OF THE WORLD  
JOIN THE STRIKE FOR GUARANTEED LIGHT  
The florists union in Caracas and the Algerian weavers presented joint  
proposals  
TOWARD ILLUMINATION THAT MULTIPLIES  
Bare hills, lakes of salt sutured dim ruins  
shadowless  
of shipping yards and empires of memories of sarin  
The children's council listened in wreaths of yellow iris,  
patterned leaves designating each role  
Did you know that within attunement to effort  
the end of monument resides?  
Then the harpist, my progeny, that fate I had so long evaded—  
  
debt I owe to demographic warfare  
and names sliced open, reborn in disfigured repetition—  
sang three hundred years of returning

Language is merely the placeholder  
for what the LAND has always known  
Species being is an observation of MOM (preface)  
Absent the wet painting of a razed village (sold)  
This land is land  
Land is land

LAND LAND

I AM COMING  
HOME

*Originally appearing in Jewish Currents*

## FUCK YOUR LECTURE ON CRAFT, MY PEOPLE ARE DYING

*Noor Hindi*

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.

*Originally appearing in Poetry Magazine*

## SEPARATION WALL

*Naomi Shihab Nye*

When the milk is sour,  
it separates.  
The next time you stop speaking,  
ask yourself why you were born.  
They say they are scared of us.  
The nuclear bomb is scared of the cucumber.  
When my mother asks me to slice cucumbers,  
I feel like a normal person with fantastic dilemmas:  
Do I make rounds or sticks? Shall I trim the seeds?  
I ask my grandmother if there was ever a time  
she felt like a normal person every day,  
not in danger, and she thinks for as long  
as it takes a sun to set and says, Yes.  
I always feel like a normal person.  
They just don't see me as one.  
We would like the babies not to find out about  
the failures waiting for them. I would like  
them to believe on the other side of the wall  
is a circus that just hasn't opened yet. Our friends,  
learning how to juggle, to walk on tall poles.

*Originally appearing in The Tiny Journalist  
(BOA Editions, 2019)*

## ELEGY FOR RETURN #1

Zena Agha

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.

Originally appearing in *Objects from April and May*  
(Hajar Press, 2022)

## ars poetica in which every pronoun is a Free Palestine

George Abraham

& so it is written: the settlers will steal God's land & FREE PALESTINE will curse the settlers with an inability to season FREE PALESTINE's food,

a sunburn the shape of the settler dictator's face on everyone who will claim FREE PALESTINE's earth but not FREE PALESTINE's skin

soil-stained. there. FREE PALESTINE said it. no one really owns anything FREE PALESTINE didn't unwrite to make it so—FREE PALESTINE's sea

*israeli*; FREE PALESTINE's sky *israeli* but not FREE PALESTINE's thunder—the blame will always be FREE PALESTINE's & so this will be called an accurate

history; the expense of FREE PALESTINE's visibility, willed in bloodied cloth—or paper—FREE PALESTINE's longest suicide: FREE PALESTINE will die

in jail & become *israeli*—FREE PALESTINE will die in protest & become kite on fire—FREE PALESTINE will call Hamas fable of every

*HEADLINE: israeli* falafel so dry FREE PALESTINE could start an intifada with it

*HEADLINE: israeli* falafel so dry FREE PALESTINE could free Palestine with it

no, FREE PALESTINE will never give FREE PALESTINE's self a name not rooted in upheaval—FREE PALESTINE, hyphenated by settler flag:

FREE PALESTINE hyphenated by settler pronouns: FREE PALESTINE will not pledge allegiance to Arabic. or english. FREE PALESTINE will exist

in no language; FREE PALESTINE will write poems of olive tree & checkpoint with no free Palestine to be found; FREE PALESTINE will name the violence

& never the resurrection, like FREE PALESTINE hasn't survived impossible histories to get here. It is written: the blood will be on FREE PALESTINE's

hands—might as well paint FREE PALESTINE's nails while FREE PALESTINE's at it—what? is this not what FREE PALESTINE expected? did FREE

PALESTINE not think FREE PALESTINE would have the last laugh all along?

Originally appearing in *Mizna 19.2: The Palestine Issue*

## **RUNNING ORDER**

*Lena Khalaf Tuffaha*

They call us now,  
before they drop the bombs.  
The phone rings  
and someone who knows my first name  
calls and says in perfect Arabic  
“This is David.”  
And in my stupor of sonic booms and glass-shattering symphonies  
still smashing around in my head  
I think, Do I know any Davids in Gaza?  
They call us now to say  
Run.  
You have 58 seconds from the end of this message.  
Your house is next.  
They think of it as some kind of  
war-time courtesy.  
It doesn't matter that  
there is nowhere to run to.  
It means nothing that the borders are closed  
and your papers are worthless  
and mark you only for a life sentence  
in this prison by the sea  
and the alleyways are narrow  
and there are more human lives  
packed one against the other  
more than any other place on earth  
Just run.  
We aren't trying to kill you.  
It doesn't matter that  
you can't call us back to tell us  
the people we claim to want aren't in your house  
that there's no one here  
except you and your children  
who were cheering for Argentina  
sharing the last loaf of bread for this week  
counting candles left in case the power goes out.  
It doesn't matter that you have children.

You live in the wrong place  
and now is your chance to run  
to nowhere.  
It doesn't matter  
that 58 seconds isn't long enough  
to find your wedding album  
or your son's favorite blanket  
or your daughter's almost completed college application  
or your shoes  
or to gather everyone in the house.  
It doesn't matter what you had planned.  
It doesn't matter who you are.  
Prove you're human.  
Prove you stand on two legs.  
Run.

*Originally appearing in Water & Salt (Red Hen Press, 2017)*