

Crossing the Bridge: Poetry, Hip-Hop and the Palestinian Experience

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Global Research, August 26, 2008

26 August 2008

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

In 1948, my grandmother was expelled from Palestine. Like many of the 780,000 evicted that year, she never saw her birthplace again. But she always dreamed of a dignified return: to Yaffa, her home city, a place of warmth and beauty; to her house, which in her heart, towered higher than the hills of Lebanon; and to an unfettered life, which no apology or compensation could ever replace. My grandmother passed on her story to inspire and galvanize—to insure that her children and grandchildren, and all those they encountered, would never forget Palestine.

Poets For Palestine continues this vision as a unique collection of poetry, spoken word, hip-hop and art devoted to Palestine. Unifying a diverse range of poets who have used their words to elevate the consciousness of humanity, this book aims to bridge a younger generation of poets with those who, for decades, have cultivated and strengthened the poetic medium.

The concept of this volume was conceived after a night of spoken word at the historic *Made in Palestine* art exhibit in New York, in 2006. Invigorated by the capacity of spoken word to enliven a crowd, Palestinian artist and Al Jisser co-founder, Samia Halaby, encouraged me to capture the night's vivacity by publishing a brief chapbook featuring poems from the event.

As we ventured further into the project, we found ourselves eyeing grander goals. We sent out a call for poetry that reached a multitude of countries; we received submissions from the Occupied Territories, the broader Arab world, Europe, Australia and the United States. We chose not to limit the subject solely to the topic of Palestine, instead widening our scope to issues as varied as the ongoing occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as poetry on the Sudan and Lebanon. Our aim was to convey that the basic appeal of justice is a fundamentally, irreducibly *human* appeal.

In compiling the 48 poems that appear in the collection, I discovered a mixture of new voices, each of whom propelled me to further grasp the necessity of poetry and art as human expression. From Amiri Baraka to Patricia Smith to the N.O.M.A.D.S., poetry, spoken word, and hip-hop are embodied in *Poets For Palestine*. Other poets in the book include the late Mahmoud Darwish, Naomi Shihab Nye, Suheir Hammad, Nathalie Handal, E. Ethelbert Miller, D.H. Melhem, Junichi P. Semitsu, Fawzia Afzal Khan, Annemarie Jacir, Ibtisam Barakat, Alicia Ostriker, Marilyn Hacker, and many more.

With this anthology I strived to gather an assortment of work that transcends ethnic, religious, and generational lines in hopes of tapping into the core of what makes us all alike. All of the proceeds of this volume will go towards funding future cultural endeavors in the

US that highlight Arab artistry. At a time when conditions for Palestinians have become increasingly devastating, *Poets For Palestine* seeks to give humanity its proper voice and attempts to further demonstrate the role art takes in transmitting and projecting the enormous weight of compassion.

Poets For Palestine is available on www.PoetsForPalestine.com. The book will soon be featured in independent and progressive bookstores throughout the US as well as on Amazon.com

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