



## Gaza Writes Back (#1)

*Refaat Alareer (Editor/Contributor)*

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## **Gaza Writes Back (#1)** Refaat Alareer (Editor/Contributor)

"Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine", edited by Refaat Alareer is a compelling collection of short stories from fifteen young writers in Gaza, members of a generation that has suffered immensely under Israel's siege and blockade. Their experiences, especially during and following Israel's 2008-2009 offensive known as "Operation Cast Lead", have fundamentally impacted their lives and their writing. Indeed, many of these writers saw the war as a catalyst for their writing, as they sought an outlet and a voice in its aftermath. They view the book as a means of preserving Palestinian memories and presenting their own narratives to the world without filters. Their words take us into the homes and hearts of moms, dads, students, children, and elders striving to live lives of dignity, compassion, and meaning in one of the world's most embattled communities. (Some of the stories also take us with courage and empathy into the imagined world of Israelis living just on the other side of the great barriers Israel has built in and around Gaza and the West Bank to wall the Palestinians in.)

These stories are acts of resistance and defiance, proclaiming the endurance of Palestinians and the continuing resilience and creativity of their culture in the face of ongoing obstacles and attempts to silence them.

Whether tackling the tragedy that surrounds missile strikes and home raids, or the everyday indignities encountered by Palestinian refugees, Gaza Writes Back brings to life the real issues that the people of Gaza face. One prominent theme in many of the stories is the value placed on the wisdom of parents and grandparents. A sense of longing pervades the book, as the characters in the stories reveal desires ranging from the mundane to the complex—including, in several of the stories, a strong yearning to return to the characters' long-cherished family homes and properties after many decades in exile from them. Social differences within Gaza are also sensitively explored. A few stories are especially difficult—but critical—to digest, for the vividness with which they depict the experiences of victims of Israeli military strikes and confront the legacy of violence and occupation, particularly on young people.

Readers will be moved by the struggles big and small that emerge from the well-crafted writing by these young people, and by the hope and courage that radiates from the authors' biographies. The contributors are university students and recent graduates, Palestinians who have chosen to speak out in their second language, which is an "expressive way to be more creative in a world where words are significantly mighty," according to Tasnim Hamouda. Another contributor, Nour El Borno, believes "that if a person can write effectively, it is his or her duty to get up, write, and help change this world to something better."

Five years after Operation Cast Lead, these stories remind us that the pain lingers on and the people of Gaza will be forever scarred by the attack. Yet, the call for justice remains forceful and persistent, and these young Gazan writers refuse to let the world forget about them—their land, their people, and their story.

## **Gaza Writes Back (#1) Details**

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## From Reader Review Gaza Writes Back (#1) for online ebook

### Justin Podur says

Devoured it in a day, then went back and re-read the stories. These are the real voices of young Palestinians in Gaza. They did a lot to be heard, to get to this point. Listen to them...

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### Beya says

I can't begin to express how I feel about this book. I personally rarely express physical emotions while reading but, I don't know if it's the writing or what, but some of those stories left me sobbing, made me smile, made my heart pound... And I'm not used to that... but it was worth it! Because, after getting past all this rollercoaster of emotions, this book made me think a lot. Yes, even though a lot of these stories include death and tragic events, it actually still radiates with hope and justice, and that's true bravery right there.

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### Batul says

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### Samar Dahmash Jarrah says

What an amazing project to help Gaza kids cope with their abnormal lives under a brutal military occupation.

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### Guneet says

How would you feel when a building crashes and you are left under the rubble? Your house taken away? Your best friend dies in front of your eyes.

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## **Casey says**

Great collection of short stories. These are not stories that are commonly told in the media and are written by youth who paint a clear, tragic but human picture of life in Gaza. Some are tragic, some witty. Well worth a read for a different perspective.

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## **Refaat Alareer says**

<https://justworldbooks.com/praise-gaz...>

From SAMAH SABAWI

Palestinian commentator, author, poet and playwright originally from Gaza:

Gaza Writes Back is a confronting, bold and intriguing book that takes us up close and personal into the minds of a young articulate Palestinian generation born stateless, under occupation and growing into adulthood under siege in one of the world's most oppressed and dangerous environments.

This is a generation that is physically confined within Israel's walls and emotionally scarred by Israel's relentless bombings and incursions. Though the stories are Palestinian, Israel's presence is felt on every page. In fact, a few writers have even tried to enter the minds of Israeli soldiers by creating Israeli characters and trying to imagine how they think and how deeply they may regret their actions. It is as if reducing the IDF to human size, imagining them capable of fear, lament and guilt helps the writers overcome their own fear of the "other."

This book also expresses anger at the uncertainty of life while the writers continue to cling to faith and hope. But make no mistake about it, unlike other works that romanticize Palestinian steadfastness or "summud," this book intimately reveals a simple truth; steadfastness is not a deliberate choice or a romantic defiant act of resistance, it is simply a human instinct to survive.

The overwhelming voices of "Gaza Writes Back" young female writers and their refined eloquence and capacity to express dissent not only challenges our stereotypical perception of Palestinians and women in Gaza in particular, but it also challenges the norms within Palestinian society itself. One can't help but contrast this with the lack of young female presence in Palestinian official political circles.

This book is a promise of a change in societal norms and a positive sign of what is to come. Despite the horror, the frustration, the physical and emotional scars, the voices in Gaza Writes Back have not given up on their ambitions and have not resigned their dreams for a better future.

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## **Nico Chiodi says**

Wow. Why can't I write like that?

An anthology of short stories all written by young Gazans, Gaza Writes Back is diverse in its subjects, from the story of a freedom fighter ambushed to the story of a mother whose son died in prison, while all written on one particular subject; what it's like to live in modern-day Gaza. All these stories were specifically

designed to hit an emotion, and all of them succeeded.

"I didn't even know if my eyes were open." So begins 'From Beneath' by Rawan Yaghi, my favorite story; it is a the first person narrative of a child trapped underneath the rubble of their home, waiting to be rescued. Yes, it's as powerful as it sounds. But hidden underneath is an even better metaphor; the story of the child is much like that of Palestine. Buried under the rubble of the Israeli occupation, they are bleeding out, waiting, hoping that someone will come and help them out while the world turns a blind eye.

Very well written, thoughtful and heart-breaking (or warming, depending on the story), I would highly recommend this to anyone who would like to know what it's like to live under the occupation, or just wants to know what it's like to be Palestinian in general, or to anyone who likes a good read.

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### **Hwayda says**

The stories mentioned in this Gazan Book hold immense deals of feeling of black sadness of distress days the people of Gaza (me one of them) passed through years ago. Each December the people recall the pain again as it just happened. These humankind experiences need to be told to the whole world, because we know how much this express peace. My heartfelt thanks goes to Dr. Refat, and to those who articulate the pain in kind words.

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### **Jasmin says**

a selected series of short stories written by the youth of Gaza .. different stories different pain but the common thing about these youth writers is Hope holding on hope generating hope for daily survival .... I was thinking to myself as a young Libyan and other young libyans how would our version of stories would be ... with the collapse of the country and hoping for a better chance of a successful well established state with all the struggles we are facing ... even though the circumstances and conditions are 180 degrees different from the youth of Gaza but what is common is Hope in gaza in libya in the whole region of the Middle East.

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### **Kevin Boleyn says**

Some very moving stories.

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### **José Pedraza says**

"El palestino como una víctima indefensa, un simple objeto de simpatía; o como un salvaje sediento de sangre. Los palestinos no son ninguna de las dos".

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### **Shrouq Aila says**

Indescribable resistance way!

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