FADWA TUQAN

THE POET OF LOVE AND PAIN
(1917 - 2003)

"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."

Excerpt from *Enough For Me*, 1969

The poet Fadwa Tuqan witnessed so much. Born in 1917 in Palestine under British rule, she lived through Britain's issuance of the Balfour Declaration, the *Nakba* in 1948, the 1967 war and beginning of the Israeli occupation, the 1993 Oslo Accords and the formation of the Palestinian Authority, the initial construction of Israel's Apartheid Wall, and two *Intifadas*.

Born into a deeply conservative household in the city of Nablus, Fadwa rejected any customs she felt stifled her pursuit of knowledge. She learned to write poetry at an early age from her talented brother Ibrahim, a famous poet himself. Her early work reflects a pioneering bravery in its candid accounts of femininity, love, and emotion. After the 1967 war and Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, her poetry adopted a more overtly political tone, emphasizing anti-colonial resistance and the role of women in social protest. Israeli army general Moshe Dayan is known to have said that reading a poem by Tuqan was like facing 20 enemy commandos. [1]

In 2003, Tuqan died of natural causes in her hometown as it was under Israeli siege. Today, she is considered to be among the most distinguished figures of modern Arabic literature, an indomitable writer and poet who defied patriarchy, colonization, and occupation to give voice to Palestinian national loss and resistance.

Highlighted quote: Poem *Enough for Me* from *The Night and the Horseman*, 1969
[1]: *Poet of the Palestinian Nation's Sense of Loss*, The Irish Times, 2003
Artwork by Zelda Edmunds, original image reference: open source

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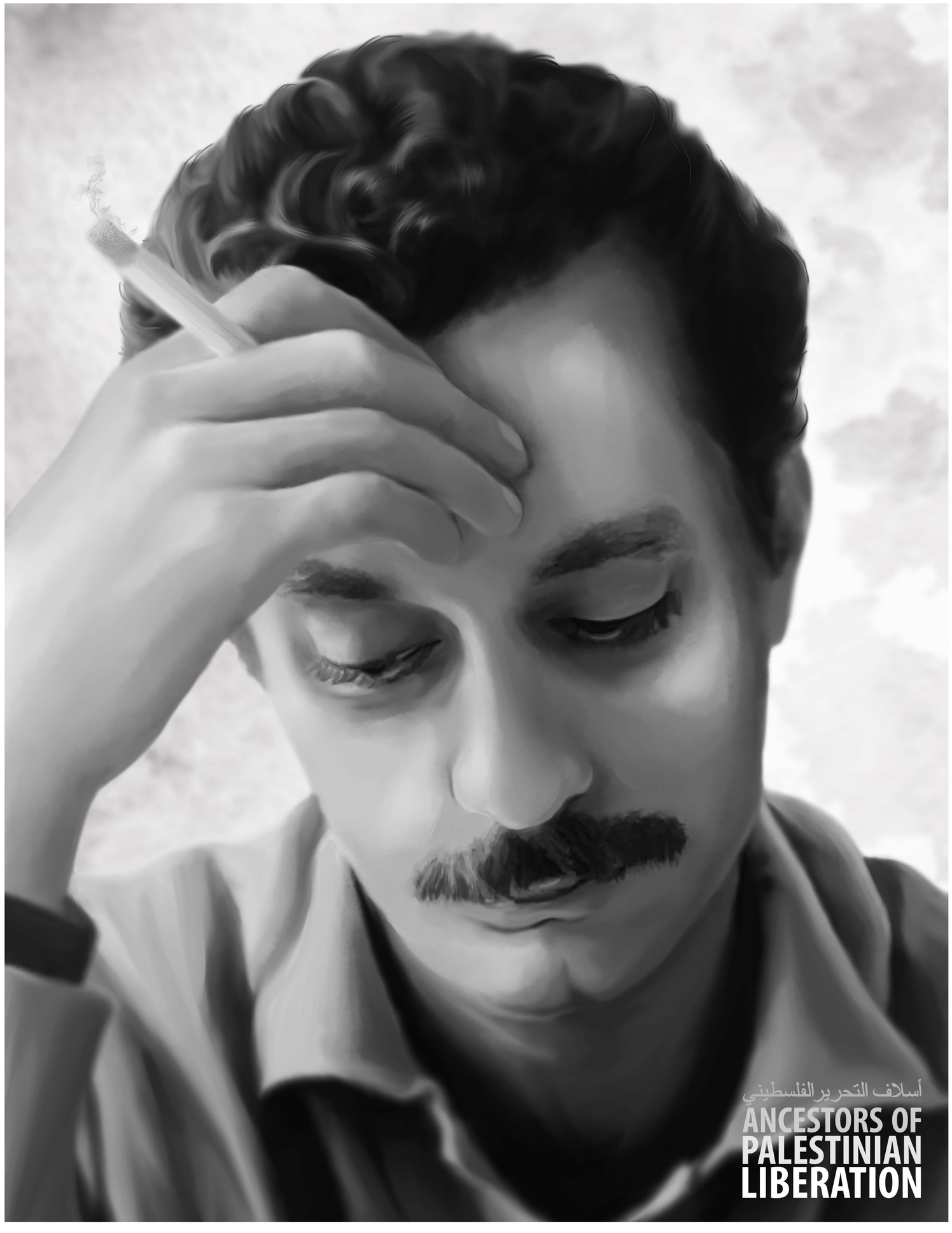

GHASSAN KANAFANI

THE FEARLESS WRITER OF RESISTANCE AND TRUTH
(1936 - 1972)

"We were heaped up there, withdrawn from our childhood, away from the land of oranges… 'oranges that died', an old farmer once told us, 'if watered by strange hands.'"

Excerpt from *The Land of Sad Oranges*, 1958

Ghassan Kanafani was a prolific Palestinian journalist and writer, an unapologetic speaker, and a pioneering cultural leader. Decades after his assassination at age 36 by the Israeli Mossad, Kanafani's writings continue to inspire, reclaiming the right of Palestinians to narrate for themselves their ongoing struggle for liberation.

Forced into exile by Zionist forces in 1948, Kanafani worked as an art teacher for Palestinian refugee children in Damascus, Syria. There he was inspired to write short stories to help his young students cope with their own dispossession. Among his most well known stories are *Men in the Sun* (1962) and *Returning to Haifa* (1969). Kanafani's writings broke with tradition, employing new literary styles to explore Palestinian statelessness and exile. He wrote everything from short stories to novels, plays to analytical studies, and boasted a massive body of journalistic work. In some ways, Kanafani seemed to live as though he knew his time was limited, writing constantly and publishing without respite.

He fearlessly spoke truth in the face of powerful, hostile governments, emphasizing the liberation of Palestinians as part and parcel of the liberation of all oppressed people across the world. Kanafani was never able to return to his homeland. His obituary in the Lebanon *Daily Star* called him "A commando who never fired a gun, whose weapon was a ball-point pen, and his arena the newspaper pages." [1]

Highlighted quote: *The Land of Sad Oranges*, Ghassan Kanafani, 1958
[1]: *Profile: Ghassan Kanafani (1936-1972)*, Middle East Monitor, 2019
Artwork by Zelda Edmunds, original image reference: open source

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NAJI AL ALI

THE TIMELESS PALESTINIAN CONSCIENCE
(1938 - 1987)

"He [Handala] was the age I was when I had left Palestine and, in a sense, I am still that age today... He was the arrow of the compass, pointing steadily towards Palestine. Not just Palestine in geographical terms, but Palestine in its humanitarian sense — the symbol of a just cause…"

Al Ali to Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour, 1985

Naji Al Ali was a satirist, political cartoonist, and visual journalist. Forcefully displaced from his village of Al-Shajara in 1948, his family fled to Lebanon where they lived in a refugee camp. His drawings, which numbered approximately 40,000 over his lifetime, expressed solidarity with the poor and marginalized, criticizing the Israeli government, Arab regimes, and Palestinian politicians alike for their crimes and failures. "This man draws with human bones," Time magazine wrote of Al Ali, whose drawings were first published by Ghassan Kanafani in *Al Hurriyya* magazine. [1]

He developed a cast of characters including Fatima the unyielding, ingenious Palestinian woman, and the Evil Man, a fat, bare-bottomed depiction of oppressive and corrupt forces. His most famous character is the ten-year-old boy Handala, named after *Handhal* - a deep-rooted, bitter Palestinian fruit that grows back when it is cut. Handala reflects Al Ali's experience as a child refugee: barefoot, destitute and deprived, but enduring. A representation of Palestinian agony and steadfastness, he appears with his back turned, looking towards his homeland. Handala remains frozen in time: ten years old until all displaced Palestinians are able to return home.

Al Ali lived as a refugee until his assassination in 1987. His unwavering integrity and exceptional work earned him the distinction of being "one of the best cartoonists since the 18th century." [2]

Highlighted quote: *Revisiting the great Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali 30 years after his assassination*, PRI.org
[1]: *Handala Will Age Again Soon*, Jadaliyya, 2012
[2]: *Who killed Naji al-Ali, Palestine's most beloved artist?*, The New Arab, 2017
Artwork by Zelda Edmunds, original image reference: open source

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MAHMOUD DARWISH

THE POET OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY
(1941 - 2008)

"I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a single word: Home."

Excerpt from *I Belong There*, 1986

A cornerstone of Arabic literature, Mahmoud Darwish was a deeply beloved poet, author, and cultural icon. Expelled from his village of Al-Birweh in 1947, he soon returned to find that it had been destroyed, two Israeli settlements standing in its place. Over the course of his life, he lived as an exile in seven countries, as a refugee in his own homeland, and as a prisoner behind Israeli bars for resisting the colonization of his land through pen and paper. "Sometimes they arrest you while you are committing a dream," he wrote. [1] No stranger to Israel's silencing tactics, Darwish was even placed under house arrest when Palestinian demonstrators turned his poem *Identity Card* into a protest song.

Darwish's over 30 books of poetry speak of love, of exile and longing for homeland, of Palestinian resistance, and of the joy and pain of the common human experience. His writing has on multiple occasions sent Israeli society and politicians into uproar. "The Israelis do not want to teach students that there is a love story between an Arab poet and this land," Darwish said. "I just wish they'd read me to enjoy my poetry, not as a representative of the enemy." [2]

In 1996, Israel granted him permission to live in the Palestinian city of Ramallah. He passed away in 2008. A kind, polite man with a sharp wit and sense of humor, a humanist and poetic tour-de-force, Darwish will forever be remembered as the Palestinian National Poet.

Highlighted quote: Poem *I Belong There* from *Unfortunately It Was Paradise*, Mahmoud Darwish, 2003
[1]: *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, Mahmoud Darwish,1973
[2] *A Love Story Between an Arab Poet and His Land. An Interview With Mahmud Darwish*, Journal of Palestine Studies, 2002
Artwork by Zelda Edmunds, original image reference: Denis Dailleux / Agence VU'

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RIM BANNA

THE VOICE OF PALESTINE
(1966 - 2018)

"Oh root of my roots,
I will surely return, so wait for me
Wait for me in the cracks of the rocks
and the thorns in the olive blossoms,
in the color of the butterflies"

Excerpt from *The Voice, the Fragrance and the Figure*, 2005

Rim Banna was a fearless singer, lyricist and composer. She used her voice as a means of cultural self-assertion and a call for steadfast resistance to colonization. Born and raised a Palestinian citizen of Israel in the city of Nazareth, she was known for her modern interpretations of traditional Palestinian folk songs and poetry, reviving stories at risk of being lost due to Israeli erasure of her people's culture.

Banna's musical career began in the 1980s, her voice bringing hope to Palestinians in the occupied territories living under a relentless military campaign. By the 2000s she was known across the world by Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike as a cultural icon. First and foremost an artist led by principles, Banna denied numerous lucrative contract offers to work on projects that failed to acknowledge Israel's crimes against her people, refusing to compromise her commitment to uplifting the Palestinian struggle. Peace would not come at the expense of justice, no matter how profitable. Her album *April Blossoms* was dedicated to Palestinian children, and *The Mirrors of My Soul* was dedicated to all Palestinian Prisoners. Her music explored themes of love, childhood, homeland, freedom, and revolution.

Banna produced 13 albums. Though breast cancer claimed her life in 2018, the music she left behind continues the work of resistance, unstoppable by neither Apartheid Wall, military checkpoint, nor gun-toting soldier.

Highlighted quote: *The Voice, the Fragrance and the Figure* from Rim Banna's album *The Mirrors of my Soul*, 2005
Artwork by Zelda Edmunds, original image reference: Kirkelig Kulturverksted

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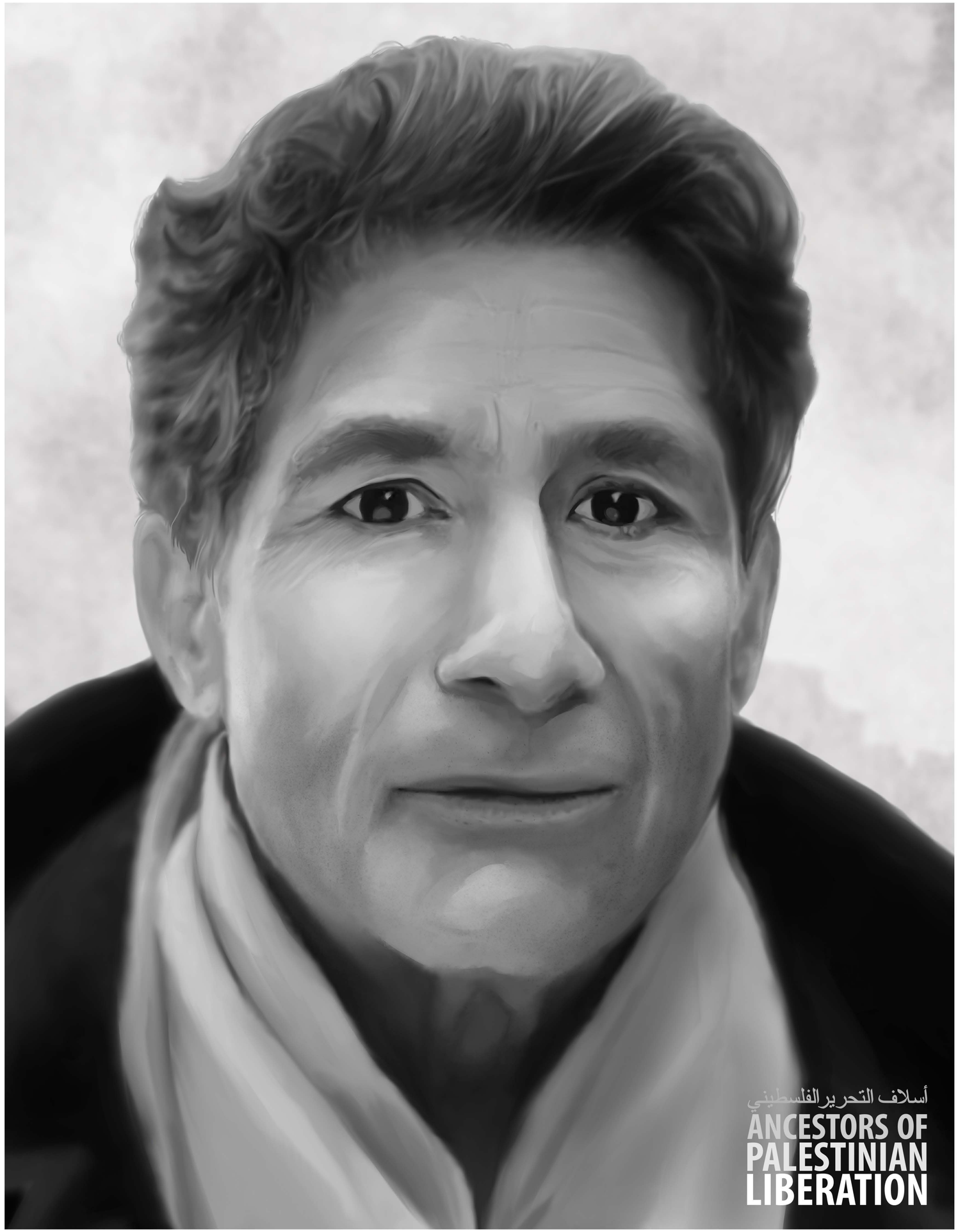

EDWARD W. SAID

THE VOICE OF PALESTINIAN SELF-NARRATION
(1935 - 2003)

"Criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom."

Excerpt from *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 1983

Edward Said was a prolific scholar, activist, and public intellectual. Born in 1935 Jerusalem, Said left Palestine just before the *Nakba* and lived most of his life in the United States, eventually becoming a professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University.

His experience as a Palestinian in exile informed his belief that boundaries and barriers (invariably set by oppressors) must be crossed, that intellectuals must speak truth to power in service of justice. He questioned: who narrates stories of the marginalized, and why not the marginalized themselves? Said's ground-breaking book *Orientalism* (1978) and subsequent publications helped to create entirely new fields of study. These included *Postcolonialism*, a school of thought that critiques European colonial control and violence, disempowers theories born of this control from generating knowledge about colonized peoples, and centers impacted peoples' voices in describing their own experiences and identities.

A relentless advocate for equal political and human rights for Palestinians, Said never shied away from criticizing the U.S. government's unconditional support for Israel, despite facing consequences in his personal and professional life. He condemned many U.S. endeavors in the Middle East and beyond, and indeed spent his last months vocally opposing President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq before passing away in 2003 after a twelve-year battle with leukemia.

Highlighted quote: T*he World, the Text and the Critic*, Edward W. Said, 1983
Artwork by Zelda Edmunds, original image reference: Jeremy Pollard

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RAZAN AL NAJJAR

THE ANGEL OF MERCY
(1997 - 2018)

"We want to send our message to the world: I'm an army to myself, and the sword to my army... We have one goal, and that's to rescue and evacuate, and to send a message to the world, that we — without weapons — we can do anything."

Al Najjar told the New York Times in 2018

Razan Al Najjar was born and raised in Khan Yunis, Gaza, where her family has lived as refugees since the *Nakba*. In her 20 years of life, Al Najjar lived through three of Israel's deadly wars on Gaza. Vibrant, hopeful, generous, and tenacious, she dreamed of being a doctor.

Unfortunately, the Israeli blockade left her family unable to finance her aspirations, so she instead took courses in nursing. Al Najjar often worked 13-hour shifts, while providing pro bono medical services to the sick and injured whenever possible. She dismissed societal criticism for her work, responding that: "women are often judged, but society has to accept us. If they don't want to accept us by choice, they will be forced to accept us. Because we have more strength than any man." [1]

When Gaza's Great March of Return protests started in 2018, Al Najjar sold her jewelry and cell phone to buy medical supplies. She was the first woman to volunteer as a medic, treating demonstrators injured by Israeli soldiers, despite suffering injuries herself.

During a protest on June 1, 2018, the Israeli army sniper shot and killed Al Najjar as she carried out her medical duties. Even after her death, she continues to inspire bravery and strength of spirit, including in her own mother, who has since taken up the torch as a paramedic for the ongoing Great March of Return.

Highlighted quote: *A Day, a Life: When a Medic was Killed in Gaza, Was it an Accident?* The New York Times, 2018
[1]: *A Woman Dedicated to Saving Lives Loses Hers in Gaza Violence*, The New York Times, 2018
Artwork by Zelda Edmunds, original image reference: open source

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أسلاف التحرير الفلسطيني

ANCESTORS OF PALESTINIAN LIBERATION

***Ancestors of Palestinian Liberation* is a project aiming to uplift, learn from and celebrate the lives and work of Ancestors that have shaped the diverse and resilient fabric of Palestinian culture - past, present, and forthcoming.** In light of western attempts at historical erasure, this project serves as a tool to bring Palestinian names, faces, and histories into everyday spaces. Let us learn from the stories and voices of these Ancestors to further deepen our understanding of Palestinian contributions to our world today.

Ancestors features seven Palestinian social, cultural, and political icons: one individual for each of the decades that has passed since the *Nakba* (Catastrophe) of 1948. Each figure's biography briefly describes their connection to the Nakba, their life's work, and their enduring legacy. The project also provides a glossary of relevant terms and a list of resources for further learning towards a more holistic picture of the depth of their work.

Vision, design & creation **Zelda Edmunds, Anemoia Projects** Contributor: **Sarah Gold**
Funding & collaboration: **Palestine Advocacy Project** Translator: **Abdelrahman**

In the face of immense, long-term adversity and ongoing colonization, Palestinian courage, brilliance, and creation persist:

Fadwa Tuqan
The Poet of Love and Pain

Ghassan Kanafani
The Fearless Writer of Resistance and Truth

Naji Al Ali
The Timeless Palestinian Conscience

Mahmoud Darwish
The Poet of Palestinian Identity

Rim Banna
The Voice of Palestine

Edward W. Said
The Voice of Palestinian Self-Narration

Razan Al Najjar
The Angel of Mercy

For more information on this freely-accessible project, including how to print these images yourself, further learning resource and how you can share these stories within your community, visit:
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