

OUR WRITERS AND THEIR WRITING

Compiled by Taqwa

Photo by Amira

Throughout **Lines to the Future**, many of the students in Gaza shared their poetry and journalism. Some are established writers, while others were inspired to write and share for the first time. In this section, we showcase some of their work.

"If I must die, you must live to tell my story."

Dr. Refaat Alareer

Before we meet the writers, we want to mention someone who inspired them.

Hala was the first to talk about Dr Refaat Alareer in our main group, and he subsequently appeared many times. Dr Refaat was a beloved academic, poet, and writer from Gaza who was killed by the occupation in the early stages of the genocide. Before he died, he wrote the powerful poem, "If I must die, you must live, to tell my story."

Dr. Refaat also co-founded the **We Are Not Numbers project** that Taqwa, Hala, Amal and Esraa are proud to be part of, and touched the lives of many students at the Islamic University of Gaza and beyond.

As Taqwa wrote in an article published July 2025, "Some teachers leave the classroom at the end of the day, while others become the classroom itself. Dr. Refaat was the latter type — he didn't just teach literature, he was literature. He didn't merely explain texts, he lived them, felt them, and transformed them into something deeply human, something fiercely Palestinian. He didn't ask his students to memorize, he asked them to remember. To remember their land, their stories, their strength. And even now, 18 months after Israel assassinated him, Gaza still whispers his name. He was an idea that never dies."

Read the full article.



ELEGY FOR DR. REFAAT ALAREER A VOICE THAT CANNOT BE SILENCED

by Weam Anwer

He walked among us with a book in his hand,
A homeland in his eyes,
And a storm of words in his chest.

Dr. Refaat Alareer was not just a university professor—
He was a house of thought,
A refuge for truth,
A voice that echoed with dignity and defiance.

He taught us to write,
Not to fill pages,
But to shatter walls.
He would say, "Write... for writing is resistance."
And we wrote—
Not knowing that one day,
writing would be all we had left of him.

Refaat was martyred.
His final breaths... poetry.
His last stance... a lesson.

They took his life,
But they could not take his voice.
They crushed the walls around him,
But his words still stand like monuments.

His sentences now walk the streets of our memory,
Calling out:
Don't be silent.
Write.
Do not kneel.

Rise with your pen.

Refaat did not only teach literature—
He taught us how not to die,
Even when death comes.

We read him now,
And see him alive.
We open his work,
And smell the soil of Palestine.

Refaat—
Peace upon your pen,
Your courage,
And your legacy that guards our minds like a lighthouse in the fog.

Sleep gently,
You who wrote us before we could write you...
You are now a flame
That war cannot extinguish,
And time cannot erase .

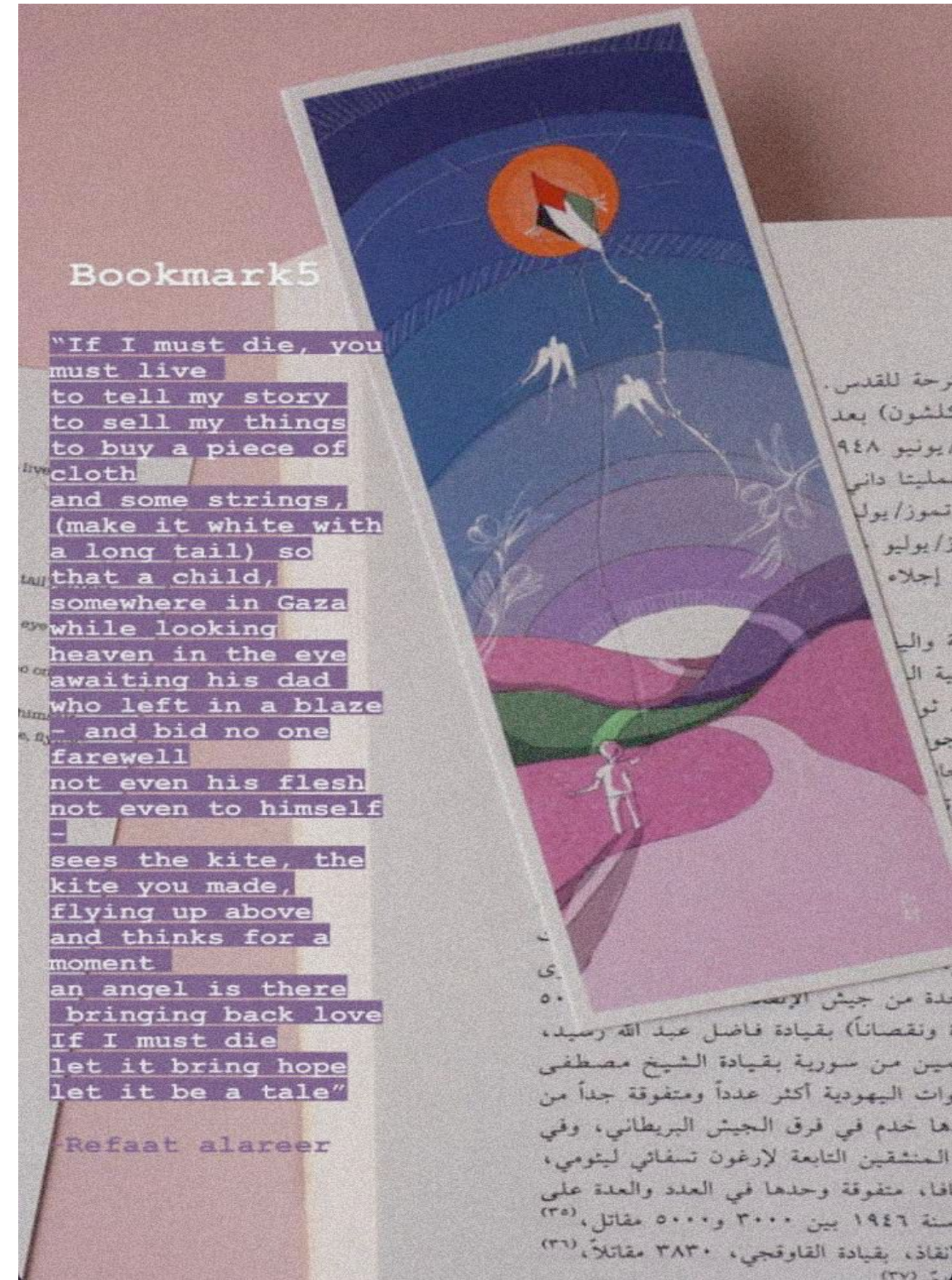
TRIBUTE TO DR REFAAT

by Imad

Since you have gone, my days are drowned in darky night,
Why can't I see you once again, where do you hide?
Where is the spark you used to bring, so pure and bright?
Are you upset? Or is there sorrow deep inside?
I'm ready now to do it all to hear you say,
Your voice, your soul, your way of life—I miss each part.
No gold or gem could ever steal my heart away, You were my strength, unbreakable in Art.
They told me you were murdered in the battle of word,
Defending home and soul—how twisted is what they use.
Now you reside in paradise, near your Lord,
To lose you from this fake world is the saddest news.
Dr. Rifaat, rest in peace—we walk your path to survival.
We breathe your art into our hearts, stay near and be comfortable.

Hala's sister, Nada created this bookmark, based on Dr Refaat's most famous poem.

[See Nada's Instagram](#)



Taqwa Ahmed Al-Wawi

"I'm Taqwa Ahmed Al-Wawi, a Palestinian writer, poet, and editor from Gaza, and a 19-year-old English literature student at the Islamic University of Gaza. Through my writing, I aim to amplify Gaza's voice and bring to light stories that are too often left untold."

You can read all my writing here and also support me by buying my zine: Gaza Calling – Will the World Pick Up?

BLIND WORLD

Blind world,
keep ignoring us.
Turn your face like you always do.
Shut your eyes to the blood.
Stay silent while we burn.
But we are here—
erased from your maps,
trampled in your headlines,
reduced to a footnote no one reads.
We are dreams lost before their time,
faces blurred on your screens,
silence pinned to a wall no one remembers.
Keep pretending,
live your life as if nothing happened,
but remember—
we held a life better than yours.
We hate you when you sleep
as our children dig their graves with bare hands.
We hate you when you laugh
and our voices break inside our throats.

We hate you when you move on
as if nothing happened.
Not because you are strong,
but because you are cowardly.
Because you know,
and still choose not to care.
Blind world,
maybe you erase us—
but you never wash yourself clean of us.
We are the scar you cannot cover,
the voice that refuses to die,
we are the ones
who never forget.

I MISS MY OLD LIFE

I long for Gaza, before the war,
When winter nights were warmed not by heaters, but
by my grandfather's voice threading through the cold,
telling tales that curled around our fingers like steam
from tea.
I long for his house, where peace didn't need to be
spoken—it sat quietly in every corner,
like the sunlight that filtered through lace curtains.
I long for the garden trees, for the way his hands—
older than the soil—lifted the water each morning and
gave it to them like a ritual.

I long for my uncle's house,
for the way my aunt's laughter lingered in the kitchen
long after she had gone.
I long for my uncle, my male cousin, and my female
cousin—
not just names, but echoes of warmth still knocking on
memory's door.

I long for the moments I sat beside my uncle,
His voice carries a timeless rhythm, like a heartbeat
from the past.
He spoke as if every word mattered,
and every pause held something sacred, something
unsaid.
Back then, we lived through golden hours we mistook
for ordinary—
Only now do we see how brightly they shone.
I long for the talks, for the softness of voices mingling
over tea,
and for the laughter that arrived without needing a
reason.

I long for my loved ones,
the ones who used to walk in and light up the hallway
with their presence,
who filled the air with footsteps, stories, and smells of
food that meant love.
I long for the faces that once made rooms feel like
entire cities—
the ones who didn't just exist, but brought the walls to
life.

I long for my friends,
for the late-night talks that seemed to stretch endlessly
into the dark,
where our dreams soared higher than the kites we
never had the chance to finish.
We spoke of futures as if we held the very stars in our
hands,
and our words could shape the course of hope itself.
We passed books, shared our deepest thoughts, and
asked questions that seemed trivial—
yet each conversation wove us closer together, a
delicate thread binding our days, keeping us connected
in the face of time.

I long for my school,
where the sound of the bell marked the beginning of
endless possibilities,
where the chalk dust danced in the air, carrying
whispers of unspoken dreams.
I long for the Islamic University,

where the buildings were more than structures—they
were the foundation of my future,
where my aspirations found their first breath and took
their first steps.
I long for the teachers who pushed me to speak English,
and the professor who smiled gently and said, "Mistake
is halal"—
as if failure were not something to fear, but a necessary
part of learning

I long for the streets we walked,
our shadows long with dreams that dared to stretch
ahead of us.
And for the mosques where our whispered prayers rose
like birds—
free, fierce, and full of faith.

I long for the simple life,
for moments we didn't pause to admire,
because we were too busy living them.
For the safety that used to wrap Gaza like a mother's
shawl,
for mornings that began with bread, not breaking
news.
I long for the peace that arrived with the call to prayer
and stayed until the second cup of tea.

To Fridays with the big chicken dish,
its scent traveling down the stairs before the plate ever
reached the table.
I long for the way the family gathered—shoulder to
shoulder, story to story—
how laughter rose like steam from the rice,
how home felt less like a place and more like a breath
you didn't want to exhale.

To those days,
when we didn't yet carry the weight of names we no
longer call.
When "loss" was just a word in a story, not the story
itself.
But most of all,
I long for the girl I was—
The one who smiled without fear,
Whose laughter didn't tremble when windows rattled.
She dreamed with arms wide open,
Wore hope like a favorite color,
A constant flame that never dimmed.

She was whole,
Before sorrow etched cracks on her joy,
Before grief became her shadow,
Before the world grew heavy with loss.

Back then, each new day was a sky,
Endless, free, without limits,
She believed tomorrow was hers to walk—
Step by step, without fear,
Unaware that war would come,
Drawing red lines through her dreams,
Scattering them beneath the rubble,
Like forgotten pages of a diary.

That girl,
The one before the storm,
Before her world turned to ash,
She is the one I long to be again.

Imad Qudaih

Imad Qudaih is a 22-year-old from the Gaza Strip, Palestine.

"I am a university student specializing in English language translation at the Faculty of Arts at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). I work as a freelance journalist with BBC News and have been involved in multiple community and international projects."

Imad provided us with powerful on-the-ground reports from Gaza through regular BBC broadcasts. Covering forced displacement, famine, bombing of hospitals, and the daily struggle for aid and survival, his voice brings clarity and courage to international airwaves, and we've been lucky to have him keeping us up-to-date throughout the project. Imad also shared some of his poetry with us.

LET ME SEE YOU

Let me see you...
I want to stay with you, in any of the lands.
Let me see you...
I want to dance and sing with you, like birds in the sky.

Your voice is like something magical—
it brings joy into my life.
Your voice is like a medicine
I'd gladly take just to survive.

I'm ready to do anything
just to see your beautiful eyes.
To see you smile, to make you happy—
for that, I'm ready to sacrifice.

There is a moon so beautiful in the sky,
but there's another moon beside me,
shining on my life so bright.
It's a wonderful truth, not one of the lies.

I miss you.
I love you with all of my might.
In my dictionary, nothing is impossible.

I will try—again and again—
and in the face of challenge,
I'll never say goodbye.

My only choice is to fight.

Whenever I hear your voice,
my spirit soars—my mood flies high.
Let me hear that gentle tone...
Don't hide.

And when I look at your face,
I feel like a bird, ready to fly.
Please don't say no—
let me see your face every time you pass by.

My biggest dream is simple,
to hear from your lips—just once—a sweet "hi."
Please... say "I love you,"
and I promise...
you will never cry.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Where are you going? What
did you come here to do?
I want to have the biggest
dream loaf of bread.
You can't do that. Not your
turn today. Go ahead.
I can't do that—it's too far,
and I'm sick too.

Lie down on the ground—an
attack hits the place.
Our end—the price of a loaf
we did not get.
The attack is over. What's that
blood on your face?
To have a bite to eat, with
death we just met.

Why is there such a big mess,
people clapping around?
A truce on the screens—we're
close to stopping the war.
We are used to this—every
day, the same sound.
This is the true warning: a
new attack once more.

Allah wills—in the end, the
right will be retained.
No matter how long, darkness
by light is drained.

[Facebook link](#)

Weam Anwer Al-Fajam

"I am Weam Anwar Al-Fajam, a 21-year-old Palestinian from Bani Suheila – Khan Younis in Gaza.

I am a translator and a researcher in English literature who believes in language as a bridge that connects cultures and worlds.

"I believe in the power of words to reveal truth and protect human memory. Gaza is not just a place—it is an identity that never fades and a spirit that can never be defeated. Portugal has earned a special place in my heart for its courageous and humane stance with the people of Gaza."

*My elegies are written not only to mourn, but to preserve.
To hold their names like candles in the dark,
And to say — we remember.*

IN MEMORY OF SHADI, MY BROTHER

He was a hero, brave and true,
A soul of light, in all he'd do.
He'd say, "I'm no loss in God's great plan,
For Heaven's price is dear to man."

His faith was strength, his heart was kind,
So gentle, humble, pure in mind.
When he appeared, peace filled the air,
And hearts found comfort just by his care.

He loved to cook, his laughter warm,
A tender soul in every form.
An engineer so skilled, so bright,
Who worked with faith and endless might.

Though wronged by life, he never broke,
His faith, his patience — what he spoke.
His weapon was his steadfast prayer,
His dream — a Heaven pure and fair.

I saw in him my dreams come true,
And prayed for grace to be like you.
Each laugh, each word, each act remains,
A melody that soothes my pains.

Now hearts still whisper, "Shadi's gone,"
But mine believes — he still lives on.
For God has called him, brave and blessed,
To gardens where the pure find rest.

ELEGY FOR MY UNCLE ADEL WHEN A MOUNTAIN FALLS

How hard it is to write an elegy for a man...
Who stood in our lives like an olive tree that never
broke,
Until one moment—
The sky shook him... and he fell.

Uncle Adel...
Was not just a passing figure in life.
He was life—Its weight and its warmth, all at once.
He was tall... with quiet eyes that matched his
wide, comforting chest.
Broad-shouldered, as if he was born to carry the
burdens of those around him.
And on his face...
A smile you couldn't buy,
A smile that reached before he did,
And stayed long after he left.

Each elegy is not only sorrow — but testimony.
May their names never fade

His home was always full—
With people, with the scent of good food,
With stories that started in laughter...
And ended with shared meals.

He was generous,
Even with his emotions—
Giving love without needing to be asked.

He loved his wife deeply—You could see it in the
way he looked at her.
And he adored his four children.
He lifted them high,
As if trying to hide them from a cruel world.

But the world showed no mercy.
Not to him,
And not to them.

In one moment...
The house fell silent.
The laughter died.
And the faces that lit the home—vanished.

Uncle Adel didn't die alone.
He left with a whole world tucked into his chest.
It's hard to believe,
That the strong body is now just dust.
That those shoulders we leaned on—
Were buried under broken concrete.

But we still see you...
In every laugh that echoes your voice,
In every hand that fed the hungry,
In every child you raised,
Whose memory we now hold like a fragile dream.

Sleep peacefully, Uncle...
You were a mountain—And even when you fell,
you stood tall.



Esraa Abo Qamar

Esraa Abo Qamar is a 20-year-old student at the Islamic University of Gaza, where she’s majoring in English literature.

“I love writing, photographing, and documenting the realities around me. Through my work, I strive to amplify Palestinian voices and shed light on life under occupation and war.”



This is an excerpt from an article Esraa wrote for the Guardian website on 16th June 2025. Read the full article.

At Netzarim distribution point, people weak with hunger walked up to 15km over hot sand but, on arrival, were stopped at barriers and forced to pass through them one by one. Then they were led into an area surrounded by fences, where boxes of basic supplies were scattered on the ground, triggering frantic scrambles. People fought desperately to reach them. Some took only items they deemed valuable such as flour, which has become unaffordable, and left the rest behind. There were no clear systems to prioritise vulnerable individuals such as widows, the injured or elderly people. The scene resembled throwing meat into a cage of starving lions and watching them fight for survival. Of course, only the strongest win. After only 10 or 15 minutes, tanks began approaching the fences and opened fire on the crowd shooting at everyone, young and old alike. People began running, desperate to escape. Some carried the little they managed to grab, others fled with empty hands. They saw people falling around them, but couldn’t stop to help. Stopping meant dying. Some made it out alive from their visits to aid points. I heard my neighbour returning from a trip that lasted more than four hours. He was calling to his children: “Baba, Baba, I brought you bread! Baba, I brought you sugar!” I looked through the window and saw his children screaming with joy and hugging him. He was dripping with sweat, wearing only a vest. His shirt was tied to his back, filled with the small amount of aid he’d managed to gather. People are desperate. People are hungry. We are not bad people. We are not violent or wild. We are people who value our dignity more than anything. But the hunger we are facing is indescribable. Food is a right, not a privilege to be fought for. Yet we are living through famine. There is simply nothing to eat. When we go to the markets, there is nothing available. The roads are full of armed men who target the weak to take any aid they do manage to access. Then the merchants take it and sell it at hugely inflated prices.

Osama Mazen Alabadla

Osama Mazen Alabadla is a 22-year-old poet and translator, originally hailing from Al-Qarara, Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

“I archive the soul of my homeland through verses and ensure that its pulse is felt globally. My work is a raw, rhythmic testament to life lived on the edge of the world. I dismantle linguistic walls, making the complex truth clear, and I am the voice carrying the southern wind.”

1.

Palestine will be free
People all can this see
Nazis want us to flee
This we say will not be
Post bombing, sand is mud
We are soaked! is this flood?
No, it's not, it is blood
Bombs all killed man and bud
"We condemn!", cowards say
And say for you we pray
What I say will I say
In your coop stay and lay
We did make our choice
Let us not hear your voice

2.

They say immigration will
Be applied on you but still
You will pay a bigger bill
Leave your land, live in the hill
Yet I say this rings a bell
Since Gazans stand very well
All said so did go to hell
And Gazans live very well.
Our cause will never die
As long as we don't feel shy
As long as words can fly high
Reaching all in earth and sky
Try and fail, don't fail to try
To sing "this cause will not die"

Amal Rafiq

"I'm a 19-year-old writer and student of English language and literature.

I have taken it upon myself to be both the chronicler and the guardian of my people's memory. Through my writing, I try to find my message in this world."

Read more from Amal:
A Gaza Girl's Story
Crying 'wolf' to create terror

ENOUGH, PLEASE!

Lonely, I walk through my sorrowful land,
Where dreams are throttled by a harsh hand.
Rubble everywhere I turn my eye,
Debris of my beloved city cries hope's a lie.
In ruthless heat, my people crouch in tents,
Where dust and despair surround as a fence—
Despair of life, or even of the world, That lets them
suffer for that long.
I saw a child with a tearful face,
Waiting in a line beneath the blaze.
Clutching a pole with blurred sight,
His childhood was stolen by a cruel blight.
Beside him limps a youth with a shaky crutch,
He paid the price — it cost too much. His leg is
gone, he asks why,
Too young, he's learned how dreams can die.
A mother, bent over, trembling in place,
Her baby held in her embrace.
All faces pale, all bellies bare, Grief is a language
they all share.
At night, when the dark takes hold,
We share our fears like we share our food.
A blast smashes the silence of night — with no
warning—and we ask, Who didn't make it till
morning?
A father wishes to surrender, yet must fight,
Fight to survive and feed his child.
He questions what sin he's committed, yet again,
To deserve all of that pain.
My single cry of justice—enough please!
Enough of wars, we hunger for peace. For time to
rest, for time to heal— From wounds no soul can
bear.

I DARE SAY

When will this horror movie end,
Then return to joyful time we used to spend.
That nightmare prolonged,
And I dare say it'll affect us for long.
That movie plays within a cave,
So dark, so deep, so cold, so grave.
Forces us to run, forget to breathe,
No pause, No peace, no true reprieve.

A soul reaper walks without a heart,
Tearing my people's land apart.
harvests their innocent souls—
With no pity yet endless holes.
It's unfair, I dare say.

A graveyard —my beloved city became,
May God send them sorrow and shame.
The smell of death haunts the air,
A silence deeper than despair.
Survivors wish to flee, to fly,
Far from this stage beneath the sky.
Hating the roles they had to play,
Which make them lose, day after day.
Lose the ones they loved the most,
And live as a shadow, like a ghost.
With no asking nor permission,
It forced them to submission.
It's unfair, I dare say.

That silly movie never ends,
Yet drags us through its scenes.
I always wonder what can erase the scar,
And wake us up from this nightmare?

But still we will rise, though hope so thin,
And break the chain they locked us in.
To collect the straggling dreams —
And pray for light, for brighter beams.

Hala Al-Khatib

Hala Al-Khatib is a 20-year-old writer and poet from Al-Nusirat refugee camp in Gaza.

*"My words are my bridge to the world,
allowing you to witness what we're living
through in our own words."*

You can read more of Hala's poems [here](#)

MY BRIGHTEST STAR

At midnight, under a sky stained red,
and air heavy with the scent of blood,
I sit on the rooftop,
in the same corner where we once smoked in secret.
Now I sit alone,
thinking of you.

I look for the sky you once adored,
the one you sent me pictures of,
with your favorite star.
I try to find it,
but the smoke of war has hidden its glow,
just as it stole your light from my world.

You always loved the night sky.
On your balcony you would sit,
writing to it,
defying the world
with your cigarettes
and with words no one ever got to read.

But your sky betrayed you.
It answered your voice,
not with gentleness,
but with a missile that shattered your balcony,
pulled your body beneath the rubble,
and choked you with gunpowder
that was never as tender as your smoke.

Still, you will remain the brightest star,
shining in another sky,
in another world..

HALF AN HOUR IN GAZA

The call to prayer rises.
My brother goes out to pray at the mosque —
the same mosque the Israelis threatened to
bomb many times.
A rocket sound.
We rush to the windows,
looking for my brother.
We sit,
hearts heavy with the pain of past losses,
afraid, waiting for the sound of the door
unlocking.
Mohammed comes back,
smiling,
telling us how he survived death once again.

They say the price of flour has dropped.
My father hurries out to buy some.
I get up to bake a cake with what's left of our
flour — to celebrate.
I secretly add a lot of sugar,
even though only a few grains are left in the jar.
But my mother doesn't get angry —
she's happy,
waiting for the flour.
My father returns, but he brings worry instead of
flour.
He tells us the flour disappeared from the market
by the time he arrived.

I put on my red lipstick,
trying to feel some of the femininity the war
took from me.
Then my little niece comes,
and says this is the color of the blood she saw on
the martyrs' shrouds.
I pause for a moment.
Then I continue putting the blood on my lips,
unbothered.

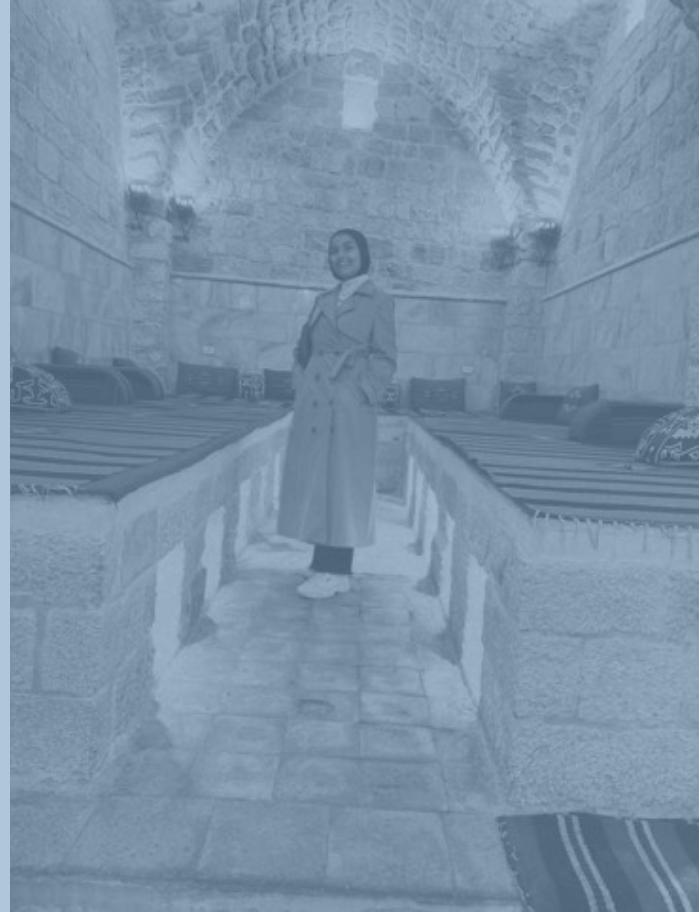
This is not a nightmare.
Not a drama film.
It's just half an hour
in Gaza.

Amera Atiya Abu Al-Husain

"I am Amera Atiya Abu Al-Husain, a 21-year-old writer from Rafah, Gaza.

*In the heart of war, I discovered that words could be my only weapon.
When the world around me collapsed, the pen refused to surrender. It became my witness, my voice, and my way to keep our stories alive.
Through writing, I resist. Through words, I survive.
For me, writing is not merely expression. It is existence itself."*

*Find out more about Amera and her book, **The Diary from Gaza**, [here](#).*



THEY DID NOT LET ME

They did not let me hold my brother's bones.
They did not allow me to approach the body either.
I was screaming, while they were screaming back:
"Don't do that, please don't look!"

So they forced me not to look,
for the last time,
for the farewell glance.

They did not allow me, fearing the horror of the scene.
But I told them:
It would still be beautiful,
even if my brother were nothing but bones.

Please, do not do the same
when we find the body of my other brother.
Please, do not.

I know you are afraid for me,
afraid that I might be shocked.
But I was already shocked at the age of three,
when we found my father
burned in the house,
by phosphor

COME BACK TO ME

Come back to me...
Can you return?
The seconds are stuck,
They haven't danced since your departure.
Will you come back?
Please, come back to me.
The basil tree has withered,
It needs you too,
Not just me.
Come back to me,
I promise I won't ask for things,
Nor ask for too many outings.
Just you, come back,
And I'll be by your side.
I'll cook food,
And prepare tea, for sure,
Your cup will have extra sugar,

And I'll iron your clothes.
Just come back,
We all need you.
How selfish I am,
I wish you'd return from your journey,
After even the dogs betrayed you,
Even after you became a meal for them.
So I developed a phobia of dogs,
A phobia of loss,
And of everything painful.
But my friend,
You were my safety,
And now I am utterly lost.
You were my support,
And now all the walls around me are broken.
What can I do?
Longing is painful,
And loss is agonizing.

A TABLE WITHOUT NOISE

I feel embarrassed when I sit at the dining table
without my family.
Each of us now sits in a different corner, quietly sipping
on our painful memories.
That table has become incomplete, even though it
used to be so full, overflowing with laughter and warm
faces.
Many used to sit around it, filled with the sounds of
children, and my mother's voice saying:
"We need two tables, so there's room for everyone!"

I miss all of that.
I miss the noise, their voices, my mother's warmth, my
father's warmth, and my siblings' touches.
I miss safety, family, and life.
I miss the basil tree by the door and the house that
brought us together and held our memories.

Can all of this really become just a "memory" in one
year?
Do the years pass with this heaviness?
Or is it only loss that breaks time inside us?

The house that used to bring us together is gone,
everything is gone.
We are, for the thousandth time, without a home.
The stones are gone, and only the memory remains
stuck in my mind, refusing to leave.