

Poem by Taha Muhammad Ali

Taha Muhammad Ali is one of the preeminent Palestinian poets of the Nakba generation. Born 1931 in Saffuriyya, Galilee, he died in 2011 in Nazareth. His family fled to Lebanon when he was 17 after their village came under heavy bombardment in 1948. The following year, he returned to Nazareth, eventually operating a souvenir shop and writing poetry.

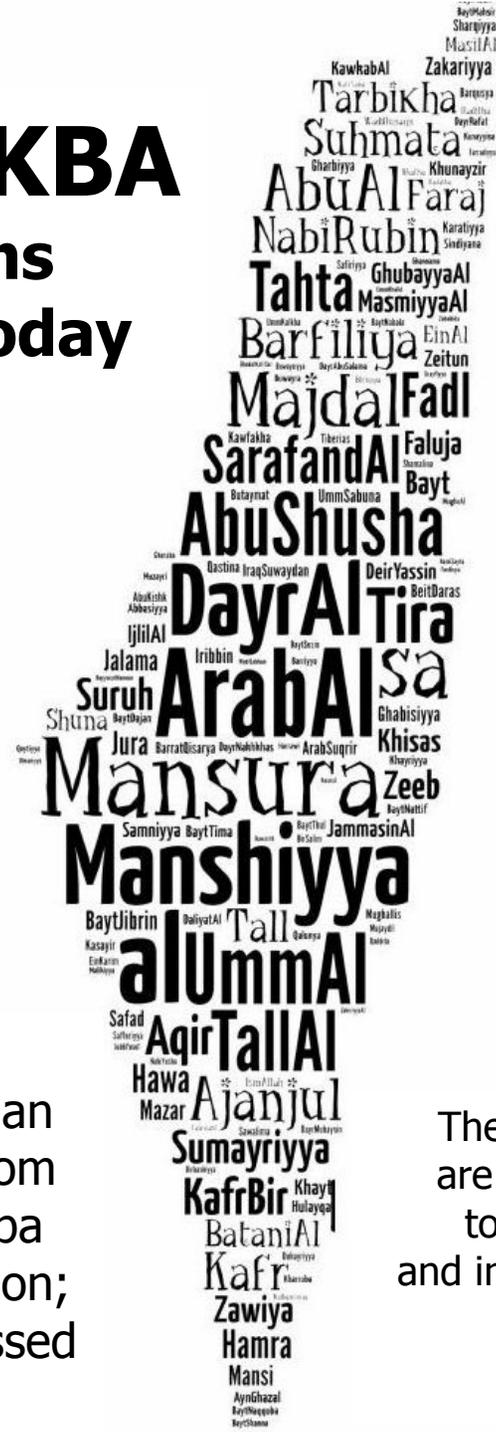
There Was No Farewell

We did not weep
when we were leaving-
for we had neither
time nor tears,
and there was no farewell.
We did not know
at the moment of parting
that it was a parting,
so where would our weeping
have come from?
We did not stay
awake all night
(and did not doze)
the night of our leaving.
That night we had
neither night nor light,
and no moon rose.
That night we lost our star,
our lamp misled us;
we didn't receive our share
of sleeplessness-
so where
would wakefulness have come from?



NAKBA Poems for today

Three
Palestinian
poets from
the Nakba
generation;
now passed
away.



Their poems
are anthems
to memory
and inspiration
to seek
freedom.

Poem by Fadwa Tuqan

Fadwa Tuqan, the "Grande Dame of Palestinian letters" is considered one of the great contemporary Arab poets. She was born in Nablus in 1917. Her work often deals with feminine explorations of love and social protest. Moshe Dayan, the Israeli general, likened reading one of her poems to "facing 20 enemy commandos." She died in 2003.

Hamza

Hamza was just an ordinary man
like others in my hometown
who work only with their hands for bread.

When I met him the other day,
this land was wearing a cloak of mourning
in windless silence. And I felt defeated.
But Hamza-the-ordinary said:

'My sister, our land has a throbbing heart,
it doesn't cease to beat, and it endures
the unendurable. It keeps the secrets
of hills and wombs. This land sprouting
with spikes and palms is also the land
that gives birth to a freedom-fighter.
This land, my sister, is a woman.'

Days rolled by. I saw Hamza nowhere.
Yet I felt the belly of the land
was heaving in pain.

Hamza — sixty-five — weighs
heavy like a rock on his own back.
'Burn, burn his house,' a command screamed,
'and tie his son in a cell.'

The military ruler of our town later explained:
it was necessary for law and order,
that is, for love and peace!

Poem by Mahmoud Darwish

Mahmoud Darwish, Palestine's most renowned poet was born in al-Birwa, Galilee in 1941 and died in 2008. A poet and author, he won numerous awards worldwide. In his work, Palestine became a metaphor for the loss of Eden, birth and resurrection, and the anguish of dispossession and exile. He has been described as incarnating and reflecting the man of action whose action is poetry.

I Come From There

I come from there and I have memories
Born as mortals are, I have a mother
And a house with many windows,
I have brothers, friends,
And a prison cell with a cold window.
Mine is the wave, snatched by seagulls,
I have my own view,
And an extra blade of grass.
Mine is the moon at the far edge of the words,
And the bounty of birds,
And the immortal olive tree.
I walked this land before the swords
Turned its living body into a laden table.
I come from there.
I render the sky unto her mother
When the sky weeps for her mother.
And I weep to make myself known
To a returning cloud.
I learnt all the words worthy of the court of blood
So that I could break the rule.
I learnt all the words and broke them up
To make a single word: Homeland.