

Words

for the

Silenced



Spotlight on Exiled Writers Ink Agit Lit Café

**An evening in partnership with Amnesty
International**

Words for the Silenced

By Simone Theiss

The idea for the “Words for the Silenced” poetry evening goes back about one year. I contacted Catherine Temma-Davidson in August 2018 to organise an evening which would combine poetry and human rights. At that time I was mainly thinking about Ahmed Mansoor’s poetry. Ahmed Mansoor is a well-known human rights activist from the United Arab Emirates who had been arrested in March 2017. I started campaigning for him shortly after his arrest. I wrote my first blog post about him and two other prisoners of conscience in May 2017 and organised a tweet storm in September 2017 to mark the day six months after his arrest. More blog posts, tweet storms and many individual tweets followed. Ahmed Mansoor is primarily known and highly regarded for his human rights work. In October 2015, he received the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders which he could not accept in person because of a travel ban against him. I learned in February 2018 that he also writes poetry and had published a collection of his poems (in Arabic) some time ago. I love poetry and was also involved in a human rights and poetry event with Exiled Writers Ink in February 2017 (an evening focusing on writing about and from those imprisoned in Iran). I thought an event which would focus on Ahmed Mansoor’s poetry might get a new audience interested in his story.

Catherine loved the idea and we soon realised that the evening should not only focus on one prisoner and writer, but rather on four of them: Ahmed Mansoor (UAE), Ashraf Fayadh (Saudi Arabia), Galal El-Behairy (Egypt) and Nedim Türfent (Turkey). Ashraf and Galal are both in prison for their poetry. Ahmed and Nedim both write poetry, but Ahmed Mansoor is being punished for his human rights activism and Nedim Türfent for being a journalist.

On March 4th, at the Poetry Cafe I was quite nervous, wondering whether everything would work and whether we would have an audience. We had 14 participants and we also wanted to show a number of video clips (one which was sent to us only a few hours before the event and excerpts from two YouTube clips).

In the end the café was packed. I was delighted that so many people came. It was wonderful that all the emails, WhatsApp messages and Twitter Direct Messages finally resulted in a moving evening, in which poets, writers, artists, journalists and human rights activists showed solidarity and brought us closer to the four writers and their works, by sharing their stories, but also by sharing works written for and by those four writers.

I am very happy that Danielle and Catherine decided to give the poems, stories and interviews an even greater audience by making them into this Webzine. I hope that there will be many who discover our four writers and decide to support the campaigns for their release. All four of them are prisoners of conscience.



Part I :



Ahmed Mansoor

By Simone Theiss

Ahmed Mansoor is a prominent blogger and human rights activist. He is an engineer, a member of several human rights organisations, and a poet. He published a collection of poetry in Arabic in 2006. Some of his poems are translated into English.

On 20 March 2017 Ahmed Mansoor was arrested. His arrest was the culmination of years of harassment, arrests, travel bans and physical and electronic surveillance. On 29 May 2018 he was sentenced to ten years in prison for false information on social media which “insulted the status and prestige of the UAE and its symbols” and “incited hatred and sectarian feelings”. The court of appeal decided on 31 December 2018 to uphold the sentence which is now final.

Ahmed Mansoor went on a four week hunger strike on 17 March 2019 to protest poor prison conditions and his unfair trial. According to information which the Gulf Centre for Human Rights received the conditions of his imprisonment are terrible. He had spent all the time since his arrest in solitary confinement. His cell has no bed and no running water. The toilet is a hole in the floor and he has no access to a shower. Apart from very limited family visits he is never allowed to leave his cell, not even to get food at the canteen – a

privilege which is granted to all other prisoners in the isolation ward. After the end of his hunger strike, he was once allowed to go outside in the sports yard.

If you want to support the campaign for Ahmed Mansoor's release, then please follow on Twitter the account [@FriendsOfAhmed](#) and like and follow on Facebook [@FriendsofAhmedMansoor](#). Twitter account and Facebook account were set up by friends and members of different NGOs to campaign more effectively for Ahmed Mansoor's release. Please campaign for Ahmed Mansoor using the hashtag #FreeAhmed.

What Are All Those Stars For?

By Ahmed Mansoor

Translated by Tony Calderbank

What are all those stars for?

And the night

And the clouds

And the sky erected like a tent in the desert

In a place like this

Everything is

Luxury

ثم لما كل هذه النجوم
و الليل
و الغيوم
!السماء المنصوبة مثل خيمة في العراء ،

،في مكان كهذا
كل شيء
تر

If We Do Not Talk Who Will?

Ahmed Mansoor and Walt Whitman

By Bill Law

In *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1855, the great American poet Walt Whitman posed a question to himself but also to all of us. The gist of the question was why do we struggle, why do we contend with forces far more powerful than us, why do we not just give up and passively accept the fate assigned us and over which we have no control?

And he answered thusly:

“That you are here—that life exists, and identity;
That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse.”

I think of my friend Ahmed Mansoor, held in solitary confinement, in a jail in the United Arab Emirates, sentenced to ten years for having the courage to speak truth to the brutally repressive power of the autocrats ruling over that small Gulf state. Already he has contributed much more than a verse to the fight for freedom. His every day incarcerated adds a new line to his courageous and noble struggle.

“Resist much, obey little.”

That is another line of Whitman’s that makes me think immediately of Ahmed. He too is a poet and the spare and elegant lines he writes remind me of Whitman’s marvellous ability to deliver deep emotional insights and profound truths in a style that is translucent in its clarity.

This poem, one of Ahmed’s, makes me think of courage, of fortitude, of stillness and of an ineffable, transcendent beauty that surmounts the walls of the tiny cell in which he is held. Walt Whitman would embrace it:

“What are all those stars for?
And the night
And the clouds
And the sky erected like a tent in the desert
In a place like this
Everything is
Luxury”

We must demand that the UAE government release Ahmed Mansoor. And we must demand that our government calls for his release while condemning the crushing of dissent in the UAE and other Gulf states. It is already a deep stain on the UK that we have accepted so many gross violations of human rights in countries throughout the Middle East, in return for trade deals and weapons sales. Ahmed would want me, and all of us, to break the silence that vicious regimes have imposed on thousands of peaceful activists and that the acceptance and encouragement of western governments has allowed to flourish. He would want us to see them all and to speak for them:

“How did you not see me,
As if I were hiding behind a mountain,
And how did I see you then,
Passing in a distance of two leagues,
Curving the moon with a gaze,
And pulling the stars,
To the field?!”

To which I can hear Whitman respond with poetry that gives hope and shines light into the darkness of a prison cell:

“Not I, nor anyone else can travel that road for you.
You must travel it by yourself.
It is not far. It is within reach.
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born, and did not know.
Perhaps it is everywhere - on water and land.”

Ahmed Mansoor knew that at any time the men in black balaclavas would seize him. I asked him once why he persisted in going down a road that would lead again to his incarceration. He replied: “The only way to counter repression is by revealing it. And yes there is always that possibility I will go back to jail. But if we do not talk, who will?”

How Did You Not See Me

By Ahmed Mansoor

How did you not see me
As if I were hiding behind a mountain,
And how did I see you then,
Passing in a distance of two leagues,
Curving the moon with a gaze,
And pulling the stars,
To the field ?!

كيف لم ترين،
كما لو أنني مخبأً خلف جبلٍ؛
وكيف رأيتك إذاء،
تمرين على بعد فرسخين
تعقفين القمر بنظرة
وتجرين النجوم
إلى الحقل؟!

'The Last Human Rights Defender in the United Arab Emirates'

First published in the journal *Surveillance & Society* 15 (3/4), pp 596-609.

In May 2016, artist, researcher and activist, Manu Luksch, travelled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to conduct research on 'smart city' initiatives in the region, and also to interview renowned human rights defender, Ahmed Mansoor.

Since Mansoor was re-arrested in 2017, the UAE has been one of 4 Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia, who have extended their authoritarian campaign against dissidence beyond their borders to target other states who they regard as threatening the status quo.

What follows is an edited excerpt from an interview originally published in the journal *Surveillance & Society* in which Ahmed Mansoor discusses the events that led up to his first arrest in 2011 and his struggle to promote freedom of expression in the wake of the 2011 uprising, also known as the Arab Spring.

Manu Luksch: Would you tell us a little bit about yourself? Where did you grow up?

Ahmed Mansoor: I grew up in that little village, finished primary school and high school in that Emirate, and then later on moved to a different city for college education. After that I went to the United States, [for] my Electrical Engineering degree

and Master's degree in Telecommunications. I came back to the UAE in the year 2000; since then I've lived in Dubai and in 2008 became a citizen. Of course, throughout this history I was involved in many different things. The first was literature—I'd been writing in almost all the newspapers in the UAE about literature and specifically about poetry, and later I published a book on poetry. That's where the value of freedom of expression became of great importance for me, and I started my involvement in human rights driven by the great respect that I have for freedom of expression.

ML: Let's move forward in your personal history to the time slightly before and around 2011, if you could describe the atmosphere?

AM: 2011 was a turning point in the history of the UAE, really. What happened after 2011 is different to anything that happened before 2011. It's a remarkable history. Of course, the reason is that there's something that is called the Arab Spring, that started toward the end of 2010. [We'd] seen some of its initial results during early 2011.

...

I myself along with a few individuals established an online discussion forum. At that time, the forums were flourishing, but the discussion was poor and it was not promoting human rights and tolerance. So we established this online discussion forum that we called UAE dialogue (UAEHewar.net). I thought that we can do something that is really different and promote freedom of expression to an extent that these guys cannot do, because of their own internal censorship, because of the restrictive environment that they work

in, because of their orientation, because of many other reasons—so we came up with our site. And we opened the site for all types of discussions, political, religious, cultural, social... We had some parts that talk about music, and even the ruling system in UAE and adjacent countries. We even [translated] some of the articles that had been written about the UAE in the foreign media that would not be published here because [the authorities] do not want the people to know about these negative things that are being said about the country. We allowed people from different backgrounds to give their views and write their thoughts, we had some liberal people who were writing, we had some atheists, we had some religious people and they were all interacting and creating a dialogue that we'd never seen, and were craving in the country. Shortly after that the site became the focus of a lot of people and it was a daily site that lots of people [would] log in [to] and see what is written and what kind of discussion.

Of course after that the site became really [a] trendsetter, you could say, in discussions. And people were spreading discussions through emails, through Blackberry Messenger, and were talking about it in the society. That attracted security worries and close monitoring of the site and resulted [in] blocking [of] the site six months after that. First of all they [did] some sort of technical blocking, so that when you opened the site it would tell you, there's a system issue, the site is not loading. I have an engineering background, [so] I could understand that they'd blocked the site [at] the DNS [Domain Name Server] level, so the site name wouldn't translate to the IP address that pulls the site. So I asked people to write the IP address directly and they were able to reach the site. But then a few months after that they blocked the whole site [again], so it's formally blocked,

and we tried to challenge that through the courts, but then we reach 2011 and I was arrested. But of course before the arrest we were very active, lots of intellectual people were very active, we'd been thinking a lot about what is happening around us.

ML: What happened after the [UAEHewar] site had been taken down and you had been arrested?

AM: During that time the smear campaign was going on against us and we were mistreated in the jail as a group. We were isolated in many aspects from the rest of the inmates in the jail, initially during the solitary confinement, and then afterward as well. We weren't given the same rights as everybody else in the jail. [When] I was admitted in the jail, one of the careless police officers did not give me clean clothes; he saw a wheelchair [with] some clothes on it and told me, 'you can wear these things'. I was really shocked—at least he should have given me some clean clothes—but because I did not have any experience, I did not know how things happen in the jail. A few days after that I felt my waist itching, and I started to get some spots on the waist and on the lower part of my body. [The] spots became larger and black, so I started to complain. And then the cell that I was in was very, very dirty and it wasn't air conditioned. During April it was OK, but afterward in the summertime—imagine how bad a cell that is not air-conditioned in the middle of the desert could be. During my stay there, one guy passed away inside one of those cells probably because of the heat, mainly.

[After] that, we were taken to the general blocks while [we] were prepared for trial. The hearings did not start at once. We were taken back and forth for interrogation about the online discussion forum [and] what had been written there, and political views.

During that time they told people not to talk to us about our case because there was a huge campaign running against us throughout the period that we were in jail—almost 8 months—in all the government media. Not only that but they also invoked the tribes and different Emirates to go and sign a petition against us and to take me to court because I ‘hurt their feelings’ by criticising the government and the president and so on... well, I didn’t do anything of that. I can criticise anybody politically, I have the right to do so, and I still do that, but I do not make derogatory comments, and we didn’t even allow libellous comments or defamation of people—we need people to focus on ideas as opposed to individuals and personal things. But anyhow during our time in jail we were not allowed to go to the library, to the recreation centre, we weren’t given the same level of communication capabilities with the outside world like everybody else, [and] we were isolated in the visiting area.

The worst thing that happened to me was that I couldn’t get medical treatment. After that skin disease I also got scabies, where my whole body became itchy and I wasn’t able to sleep, day or night. I’d write letter after letter [asking] to see a dermatologist, but they would not allow me to see him. In the beginning they told me he’s on leave, and then after he came off leave, they told me ‘you’ll be seeing him’. I kept running after all the officers there to allow me to see a dermatologist, because I really couldn’t sleep, my whole body was itching day and night. I was in a miserable situation for more than three months, until I managed to see a doctor—the general practitioner, but not the dermatologist. He was able to figure out easily that I had scabies and he had to send me right away for medical isolation. The treatment was easy, you just had to do it—but that was the most difficult thing that happened to me health-wise.

Also throughout this period, they were moving us between the cells arbitrarily so that we did

not have a stable place inside the jail. I’d spend 10 days here and then suddenly they’d come to me in the middle of the night or early in the morning and say, ‘you’re going to be relocated to a different cell’. And they weren’t putting us together—the five of us had to be in different blocks, so that we didn’t have that psychological stability.

And then, the trials were going on, and every time we got to the trial, we’d see people protesting outside, government-sponsored individuals protesting outside. The police served them juice and water, and wouldn’t allow people to support us outside. Initially the hearings were on camera, behind closed doors—basically nobody was allowed to enter the hearing—and they changed the judge three times during this whole trial! We weren’t really comfortable and could see things were not right, our lawyers weren’t given the right time to talk, we weren’t given the right time to talk, the hearings were closed for I don’t know what reasons... At that time we were still receiving death threats from outside and people were making [up] stories about us every day inside the jail. So we told the judge, ‘either you open the door and let the hearing be public, or we’re going to leave, we’ll boycott the hearings’. He totally ignored what we told him and our request, so we decided to open the door and move away from the courtroom, but not the court—there is another block outside. So we left, we just opened the door and walked out there, and then we boycotted all the subsequent hearings until the end. So over the course of maybe three months, we wouldn’t go to court. Every time they came to us to take us to the court, we refused, and then in the last 16 days we went on hunger strike, all five of us.

And then afterwards—the hearings after the one that we walked out from was opened to the public, and many human rights organisations were able to come into the country and attend the hearings. They saw something that usually doesn’t happen in courts—basically, some

lawyers who were appointed by citizens who wanted to sue us conducted an economic presentation inside the court, and showed how prosperous the people were and what good things the government did for them. The human rights organisations were amazed to see this kind of thing happening inside the court, and understood the reasons that we boycotted the hearings. Anyhow, that continued until the very last date. On the verdict date, the phones were switched off deliberately so that we could not call our families and understand what was happening. But we had some radios there and came to know from the BBC that I was sentenced to three years, and that everybody else was sentenced to two years. However, the next day the sentences were commuted and we were released on presidential pardon.

Now things did not stop there for me. When I was walking out of the jail, a journalist waiting outside asked if we were going to stop doing what we'd been doing now that we'd received a pardon. I told her, 'To the contrary, I really do not have the courage to back off. I have more reasons, now that I went myself through this experience, to continue my work in human rights. Not only have I been listening to others' stories, now I have my own story as well'. So I continued my activities. I was immediately fired from my job. The authorities did not return my passport (till this day, by the way). They denied me a Certificate of Good Conduct which means that I cannot even work, because it's a prerequisite for applying for any job in the UAE.

ML: The kind of human rights breaches in the UAE that are well known abroad concern the construction site workers—migrants, not Emiratis.

AM: What characterises the biggest human rights issue in the UAE is the lack of freedom of expression—not simply a lowered ceiling, but that it does not exist, it is completely destroyed

by the laws that the UAE introduced and by the practice on the ground. They enforce arbitrary detention (according to international terminology); they enforce disappearance and [making] people incommunicado, [they use] torture and ill-treatment and degrading treatment of individuals, [there are] political trials—these are the main human rights violations in the UAE according to the international community. We never expected the UAE to have that image, and there's really no reason for it to be in that spot really, but if you go and search about human rights in the UAE, this is what you will get. And when you talk about torture and when you talk about enforced disappearance you're talking—according to international law—about crimes against humanity. If it's practised systematically, it could [amount] to crimes against humanity—besides the fact that it is subhuman behaviour. This is where we are, unfortunately, today.

I think the UAE could really be a great country, it could be an example, it could be the candle in a rather dark region. But why are we not respecting Emiratis? Why are human rights and freedom of expression and opinion not preserved, not respected—they do not really constitute any danger to this country. You cannot have just one part of the equation. If you want to be a modern, progressive city, then human rights is a core value—otherwise you're just setting a different standard of progressiveness according to your understanding of it, which is basically a lean understanding.

Ahmed's Car

By Drewery Dyke

Ahmed Mansoor's clapped out, mid-1980s, mud-brown Chevy, that he had when I last spent time with him in November 2013, had no rear suspension. But it conveyed as much about what is good, honest and dignified about Ahmed as what is bad, dishonest and sullied about the United Arab Emirates, in part because the state made sure that Ahmed could not afford anything better than that car.

The authorities released him in on a "pardon" in November 2011 following months of arbitrary detention in the "UAE 5" case. The United Nations' Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), amongst many other international bodies, had called not only for his release - granted - but also *reparation*. But the UAE, amongst the richest countries on earth, steadfastly refused to provide anything of the sort.

Instead the government orchestrated a vicious social media smear campaign against him, including attacks on Twitter ("traitor"; "Ahmed Mansoor should hang") and in SMS messages circulated to users in the UAE. He received death threats and, in September 2012, he was twice attacked at Ajman University, where he was taking university courses.

From his release in November 2011 to his shocking enforced disappearance in March 2017, his laptop, phone and online presence were repeatedly attacked, sometimes hacked and, like his person, intensely surveilled.

In 2013, he faced the theft of savings of around \$140,000 from his bank account and his car. The car was "stolen" from grounds adjacent to the public prosecution in Abu Dhabi. But the police took no action and, as a result, the insurance company would not compensate him.

In 2014, courts stymied his efforts to recover his passport - confiscated during the 2011 arrest and never returned. He later learned that other, unrelated but spurious allegations had been made against him, about which he had no knowledge, but whose very existence was almost impossible to challenge.

Even though he managed to obtain a 10 year identification card in 2014, the authorities never accorded him a "certificate of good conduct", ensuring that he would never be able to use his skills in a well paid government job. Without a passport, in 2015 they prevented him from travelling to Geneva to take part in the [Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders](#) ceremony and collect the award given to him.

Sure, the travel ban and the confiscation of his passport violated his right under international human rights law to freedom of movement. These restrictions were used to punish him. Why? Because he spoke out, without distinction, for those whose human rights the UAE government had violated. He spoke publicly and in international fora about scores, if not hundreds of cases.

The relentless harassment and intimidation he faced from 2015 aimed only stopping him from being able to peacefully exercise his rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and above all: his engagement as a human rights defender. And they succeeded: in May 2018, 14 months after his state “kidnapping”, they unfairly sentenced him to 10 years’ imprisonment. Not content with silencing him, they want to break him. They should release him now.

And the car? He used it for his family and to shepherd those or family members of those who faced human rights violations. It was what he could afford, earned through his own graft and used to advance UAE communal solidarity by using it to bring together those who had suffered, an acknowledgement of their human dignity. It stands in contrast to shabby, dishonest practices like announcing a “Year of Tolerance” or “Ministry of Happiness” that masks deeply held greed and undignified notions of self-entitlement. Is it Ahmed’s car that is clapped out or the UAE?

Final Choice

By Ahmed Mansoor

Winter 2006

I have no other means now
but a tight-lipped silence in the square and through corridors.
Since I have tried everything –
screams, chants, signboards,
obstructing roads,
and lying on the ground in front of the queues.
Cutting through the procession with eggs, tomatoes, and blazing tires.
Hurling burning bottles and stones.

Stripped naked in front of the public.
Carving statements in the flesh.
Walking masked in front of cameras.
Dressed in shackles.
Tied and chained to garden fences.
Swallowing rusty razor blades and splintered glass.
Hacking off fingers with a machete
and hanging myself from the lampposts.
Dousing the body with kerosene
and setting it aflame

I have tried all this, but you didn't even turn to look.
This time, I swear
I won't utter a word, or move.
I will stay the way I am
until you turn to look
or until I am petrified.

،ليس لي من وسيلة الآن
،سوى الصمت المطبق عند الساحة العامة
أو عند الممرات
:فقد جربت كل شي
،الصراخ والهتافات واللافتات
،إعتراض الطريق والاستلقاء أرضاً أمام الطوابير
،رشق المواكب بالبيض والطماطم وإشعال لإطارات
،وقذف الزجاجات الحارقة والحجارة

،التعري أمام الملأ
،ونحت عبارات على الجسد

لبس الأقمعة والمشى أمام الكاميرات
،التسريل بالأغلال
وربط السلاسل بأسوار الحدائق
،إبتلاع أمواس صدئة وبرادة زجاج
،جز الأصابع بساطور
،وشنق نفسي بعواميد الإنارة
،رش الكيروسين علي الجسد
و إضرام النار فيه

،جريت كل ذلك و لم تلتفت
هذه المرة، قسما، لن أنطلق أو أتحرك
،سأبقي هكذا
،حتي تلتفت
!أو أتحنط

**'How Did You Not See Me' and 'Final Choice' were translated from
Arabic anonymously**

Across in-betweenness By Albert Pellicer

It might be true
the half truth
when a poem is a paper boat
sinking in
the last piece of news

the paged sea
reads the
naval routine
and waves flap bodies above

there is no more news now
this was the last

pitch dark night

I saw I was

the Moon followed Capricorn

by heart
while
rotting the wake
when I sank
a paperless horoscope
like a magazine in the kerb
followed the sun

Saturn in the 11th house

Midheaven in Jupiter
further
the fumigated planet

the sunrise fungus
spotted
jelly-faced fish
transparent
you
appear
walking on water
to dry a dream
healer of death

the Sun in Pisces shimmers

the scaled raindrops

There is a fragment

crossing

that will reach

the town

semi-square

I'm not sure if sound is an invention

here

the

down-poured puddle

reflects my writing

disrobes the surface

the idea of the alien

in partial submission

the panic planet at the end of the 10th orbit

as above the placement of excess

the conventional is sought and displayed

**Written for the English PEN Modern Literature Festival in support of Ahmed
Mansoor**

Part II:



Galal El-Behairy

By Simone Theiss

Galal El-Behairy is an Egyptian poet and lyricist who was arrested on 3 March 2018. There were numerous charges against him including being a “member of a terrorist group, spreading false news, abuse of social media networks, blasphemy, contempt of religion and insulting the military”. The charges all relate to an unpublished poetry collection “The Finest Women on Earth” and the lyrics to the song “Balaha” which is sung by the Egyptian rock singer Ramy Essam.

When Galal appeared the first time in front of the court he showed signs of beatings and severe torture. On 31 July 2018 a military court sentenced Galal to three years in prison and a fine for his poetry.

Galal continues to write poetry in prison and the poems we publish in this Webzine were written in prison. Please check Ramy Essam’s website (<https://www.ramyessammusic.com/balaha>) for further information about him,

poems, a link to a petition and other ways how you can support the campaign for Galal's release. If you use social media, then please follow [@Free Galal](#) on Twitter and like and follow [@FreeGalal](#) on Facebook.

A Letter From Tora Prison

By Galal El-Behairy

You, something
in the heart, unspoken,
something
in the throat, the last wish
of a man on the gallows
when the hour of hanging comes,
the great need
for oblivion; you, prison
and death, free of charge;
you, the truest meaning of man,
the word "no" —
I kiss your hand
and, preparing for the trial,
put on a suit and pray
for your Eid to come.
I'm the one
who escaped from the Mamluks,
I'm the child
whose father's name is Zahran,
and I swim in your name, addiction.
I'm the companion of outlawed poets.
O my oblivion, I'm the clay
that precedes the law of concrete.

In the heart of this night
I own nothing
but my smile.
I take my country in my arms
and talk to her
about all the prisoners' lives... out there
beyond the prison's borders,
beyond the jailer's grasp,
and about man's need... for his fellow man,

about a dream
that was licit
and possible,
about a burden
that could be borne
if everyone took part in it.

I laugh at a song
they call "criminal,"
which provoked them
to erect a hundred barricades.
On our account, they block out the sun
and the thoughts in the head.
They want to hide the past
behind locks and bolts,
preventing him from whispering
about how things once were.
They want to hide him
by appointing guards—
weak-minded foreigners
estranged from the people.
But what wonder is this?
His fate is written
in all the prison cells.
His cell has neither bricks
nor steel,
and he was not defeated
within it.
Outside... a squadron of slaves.
Inside... a crucified messiah.
The thorns above his brow
are witnesses: You betrayed his revolution
with your own hands.
With shame in your eyes, you
are the Judases of the past,
whatever your religion, whatever
miniscule vision you have.
We've come back
and we see you.

You who imprisoned
the light, that naked groaning.
The light doesn't care

how tall the fence is;
it's not hemmed in
by steel bars
or officers' uniforms.
It cannot be forgotten.
You can take a public square away from us,
but there are thousands and thousands of others,
and I'll be there, waiting for you.
Our land will not betray us.
With each olive branch
we're weaving your shrouds.
And the young man you killed
has come back, awake now
and angry.
He's got a bone to pick
with his killer.
He's got a bone to pick
with the one who betrayed him,
the one who, on that night of hope,
acquiesced, fell silent, and slept.
His wound has healed; he's come back,
a knight
without a bridle;
he's setting up the trial
while an imam prays among us
and illumines the one who was blind;
he's rolling up his sleeves, preparing
for a fight;
he was killed—yes, it's true—and yet
he has his role in this epic;
he stands there now
and holds his ground.

We've returned
to call on God
and proclaim it: "We've come back,
come back
hand in hand."
Again we proclaim it: "We've come back,
and we vow
to spread the light,
the new dawn,
the keen-sighted conscience."

We've come back, and we can smell
the fear in in your veins;
and our cheers tonight
are the sweetest of all:
"We are not afraid.
We are not afraid."

We saw a country
rise from sleep
to trample a pharaoh
and cleanse the age
of the cane and cudgel.
We saw a country sing:
those were no slave songs,
no harbingers of doom, rather
songs fitting
for a new kind of steel.
We saw it.
We saw a country
where no one is oppressed.

Tora Prison in Cairo
May 2018

Translated from Egyptian Colloquial Arabic.

رسالة من طرة

-مفتتح-
يا شئ فى القلب مش منطوق
يا شئ فى الحلق
يا اخر رغبة للمشقوق
يا ساعة الشنق
يا حاجة شديدة للنسيان
ياسجن و موتة بالمجان
يا أصدق معنى للإنسان
يا كلمة " لأ "
ببوس ايدك
وبلبس بدلة التحقيق
على لحمى فى صلاة عيدك
أنا اللي هربت من المماليك
وانا الطفل اللي ابوه " زهران "

أنا اللي فى لمة الصعاليك
بسيح باسمك الادمان
يا ناسيانى
أنا الطين اللي قبل شريعة الخرسان...
....

وفى قلب هذا الليل
ماملكش غير انى ابتسم
واخذ بلادى فى حضنى واحكيها
عن سيرة كل المحبوسين .. برة
خارج حدود السجن
وقبضة السجنان
عن حاجة الإنسان .. الى الإنسان
عن حلم كان جايز
و بالإمكان
عن شيلة كانت ممكنة
والكل شايلينها.
....

واضحك
"على غنوة قالوا " مجرمة
وقاموا لها ميت متراس
لاجلن يصدوا الشمس
والفكر جوه الراس
عايزين يخبوا الأمس
بالضبة والترباس
مانعين عليه الهمس
ومعينين حراس
غربان ضعاف النفس
مابيشبهوش الناس!
لكن .. وبالعجب
قدره هناك مكتوب
من جملة الزنازين
زنانته مافيهاش طوب
ولا حتى فيها حديد
ولا فيها كان مغلوب
براهها ... سرب عبيد
جوه .. مسيح مصلوب!
والشوك مافوق جبهته
شاهد وبدينكم
خنتوا هناك ثورته
والذل فى عيونكم
انتم يهود الأمس
مهما اختلف دينكم
وان مهما زاد اللبس

راجعين وعارفينكم.

.....

ياللى حبستوا النور
النور اهه عريان
لا يهمه علو السور
ولا تفهمه القضبان
ولا بدلة المأمور
ولا يشتهيها نسيان
لو خدتوا منا ميدان
فيه ألف ألف ميدان
انا فيه ميعاد منظور
وميداننا مش خَّوان
من كل غصن زتون
ح نحيك لكم اكفان
و ح يرجع اللى اتقتل
صاحى .. فتى .. غضبان
له تار مع اللى قتل
له تار مع اللى خان
واللى فى ليل الامل
طاطى ووطى ونام
راجع وجرحه اندمل
فارس مالهبش لجام
راح ينصب المحكمة
ويصلى بينا إمام
وينور اللى اتعمى
ويشمر الأكمام
مقتول صحيح إنما
له دوره فى الملحمة
واقف هناك أدام

.....

راجعين
بنسمى الله
ونقول راجعين
راجعين
الإيد فى الإيد
ونقول راجعين
راجعين حالفين ح نطول النور
مع فجر جديد وضمير شَّواف
راجعين شامين فى عروقكوا الخوف
وهتافنا الليلة ده أحلى هتاف
"ما احناش بنخاف"
ما احناش بنخاف!..

.....

ورأينا بلاد
بتقوم من النوم
وتدوس فرعون
وبتغسل عصر العصا والشوم
ورأينا بلاد
بتغنى أغاني تليق بولاد من خلق حديد
ولا تشبه اى غناوى عبيد
ولا تشبه كل نعيق البوم
ورأينا بلاد
مافيهاش مظلوم..

جلال البحيرى
سجن القاهرة
مايو 2018

“I met Galal in the Egyptian revolution on February 1st 2011 at Tahrir Square, Cairo. I had just sung on the stage at the square for the first time, when he came to introduce his poetry to me. It was clear to us we would work together. In July 2011 we wrote our first song El Serk (“Circus”) together, sitting in front of my tent in the middle of the square.

Galal’s poetry makes you see. His words make you see scenes that are so real. His point of view, his insightful way of telling the truth keeps impressing me, it opens the eyes of the reader and listener.

Since 2011, we have written many songs together, of which seven have been released. Segn Bel Alwan (“Colourful Prison”), a song about equality and women in jail, released in 2017, is our biggest hit. And Balaha is another. After – and because of – its release in February 2018, Galal has been imprisoned. A year ago he was sentenced in the Military Court because of his poetry. But even when jailed in a place like an Egyptian prison – definitely not a place for any human being to stay in – his pen is as sharp as ever. Words cannot be jailed. Three of Galal’s poems from behind bars have been released and translated into English during the past 500 days.

Currently Galal and I are working on new songs, of which one is The Tartan Shirt. And our next song, soon to be released, we are very passionate about. It is a song for the people in Sudan fighting at the moment for their freedom.

Meanwhile goes on the fight for Galal’s freedom.” - Ramy Essam, 23 July 2019

The Tartan Shirt

By Galal El-Bhairy

Your letter's tucked away
in the sleeve of a tartan shirt:
it flies towards you
and greets you.
Yet I fear that if they searched that shirt
it, too, would become afraid
and forget how to speak.
I fear that as soon as they set it free
it would run away, promising
never to return.
Then it would be just a shirt – nothing more.
Forgetting its ID,
it would walk slowly among the masses
and be ambushed
and stripped of its dignity
by His Eminence
who would do it harm.
It howls and cries... but who is there to call to?
“Help me, world! For shame!” it yells.
Then the officers start beating it,
and some might even
loosen their belts. And so
that venerable shirt of mine returns to prison
and is accused: “Enemy
of the state.”
I'll write your letter:
It will either reach your door
or remain in the shirt
and be lost.
.....
My dear young lady,
my loving rose:
It is to you
that the prisoner writes,
surrounded by soldiers,
soldiers everywhere.
He greets you
and misses you –
you, a song carved on walls,

you, the caravan of ports,
of doors,
the jailer of the man
who is a part of you.
You, the one who blocks the ears
and suppresses the truth
and denies the call to prayer
until all that's left
are the claws of ghouls
crushing all hopes
and burning all dreams.
All that's left
are the waterwheels groaning
and a thieving, toothless fox.
But all that's needed
is a bit of faith
for your daylight to return,
for you to be fertile and green again,
for your fire to scorch
the cowards' nests.
I hope your health returns, you beauty –
you, the last old woman
and the first young lady
in the eye of time.
In the end, I'll love you.
As a prisoner, I'll love you.
As a free man, I'll love you.
Even when you stubbornly oppose me,
still I'll love you.
So ends the letter
of your lover, the prisoner
surrounded by soldiers –
soldiers everywhere,
soldiers and walls.

Galal El-Beairy

Tora Prison

June 27, 2018

القميص الكاروه

جوابك فى كم القميص الكاروه
يرفرق اليكى ويرمى السالم
اخاف ع القميص اذا فتشوه
يخاف القميص وينسى الكالم
واخاف من قميص مجرد مايطلع
وينفذ بجلده فـ يحلف مايرجع
و يصبح مجرد قميص والسالم
ويمشى مطاطى فى وسط العوام
فـ ينسى البطاقة ويدخل كمين
فـ يغسل كرامته سيادة الألمين
ويعمل فى حقه حاجات مش تمام
فـ يصرخ و يصرخ .. حـ يصرخ لمين
وينده غيتونى يا عالم حرام
فـ تشبع لياقته كفوف مخبرين
ويمكن كمان يفكوا الحزام
ويرجع قميصى الميجل سجين
ومتهموم بأنه عدو النظام
فـ هكتب جوابك
يا يوصل لبابك
يا اما عليه العوض فى القميص
وحق القميص

.....

حبيبتى يا شابة
ياوردة محبة
بيكتب اليكى نزيل الليمان
بحيث العساكر
وراهم عساكر
وخلف العساكر عساكر كمان
بسلم عليكى
وبحضن عنيكى
يافايتة الغانى فى نقش الحيطان
ياقافلة الموانى
وقافلة البيبان
فـ حابسة اللى منك
و سادة الودان
يا كاتمة الحقيقة
وناكرة الدان
فـ كل اللى فاضل
مخالب غيالن
تدوس المانى

وتحرق غيطان
وكل اللى باقى
أنين السواقى
وتعلب حرامى
ومالهُوش سنان
فكل اللى الزم
شوية ايمان
ليرجع نهارك
يعيدلك خضارك
ويحرق بنارك عشوش الجبان
سالمتك يا لوزة
يا اخر عجوزة
واول صبية
فى عين الزمان
ختاما بحبك
سجيننا بحبك
و حرا بحبك
ومهما ان تعاندى
هحبك كمان
رسالة حبيبك
سجين الليمان
حيث العساكر وراهم عساكر
وغير العساكر
عساكر حيطان

البحيرى 6/27 طرة

Galal El-Behairy's poems were translated from Arabic anonymously

Part III:



Nedim Türfent

By Simone Theiss

Nedim Türfent is a Kurdish journalist and worked for the pro-Kurdish Dicle News Agency. He reported mainly from the borders to Syria, because he wanted to give a voice to the people in the cities, town and villages there; those people “who would normally not be heard”.

On 12 May 2016 Nedim was arrested. In prison he was subject to inhuman treatment and torture. He spent almost two years in solitary confinement in a small cell. On 15 December 2017 he was sentenced to eight years nine months in prison for “being a member of a terrorist organisation”. The conviction was based on witness statements made to the public prosecutor, even so 19 out of 20 witnesses recanted their witness statement at court.

Nedim Türfent started writing poetry in prison. He said *"I try to make use of my time in prison, and I try to make this period as colourful and alive to the extent that is possible. To do this, I put words together here and there."*

If you want to support Nedim Türfent, then please raise awareness for him on Social Media. You can also write to him and send him a message of support. His address in prison is: Nedim Türfent, Van Yüksek Güvenlikli, Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu, Koğuş A53, Van, Turkey.

Searching Trails Of You (Love)

By Nedim Türfent

Translated into English by Ege Dündar

Solitude touches my heart
Within me
Somewhere right in there
A thin veiled ache,
A tender melody
How must I explain
In tar black darkness
I toil in your absence

Your absence
An adventure upon an obscured end.
I fall weaseling
Onto empty pages
Line by line
In your absence...
Turns out
To write about you
To touch upon your absence is heavy labour!
To dare writing about you,
A stuttering state,
A scarlet face.
To swallow tongue
In these fertile pages...
I live in the frontlines (ranks)
Of your absence
Easier said than done

On the crestfallen shores of my eyes
I long for you.
In a cell the size of a palm
A world of longing
Is your absence...
In the joy of smuggled tea at sunset
You enlighten
My narrowing/shrinking/shrunken horizons...

In your imagined existence you make lawmen
And hellhounds swim upstream
Me wrapped in lights
Asleep
In the earth's pulsating carotid
As water flowing underground
Invisible
Without a face, or a voice...

As I think
As I dream
I can't be contained to the length of lines.
My bones won't hold
My body without a skeleton,
Spineless, powerless...
I zone out to the skies
My body under my eyes arrest
Dappled night stars,
August, in all seasons
Warm yellow prevailing
Minutes don't chase each other
Your memories, in my weary heart
Their heart wrenching photos
Where we met halfway.
Memories are pillars of the future.

I'm seeking trails of you
About you
Amidst all the mass of cement
Yet yearning in resistance,
Falls from the word and the tongue!
From the parakeet's beak
To the mosquito perching in the heaters core
I seek trails

Of you.. In vain!
In your absence everything is touching
Now you are far as history.

10.August.2017 A-49, Van High Security Prison

SANA DAİR İZLERİN PEŞİNDE

Yüreğime dokunuyor yalnızlık
içimde
oracıkta bir yerde
ince bir sancı ,
dokunaklı bir ezgi ,
nasıl anlatsam
katran karası karanlıklarda
cebelleşiyorum yokluğunda.

yokluğun
sonu belirsiz bir serüven.
çalakalem düşüyorum
boş sayfalara ,
satır satır
yokluğunda...
yazabilmek seni
yokluğuna değinebilmek
ne zor işmiş meğer !
yazmaya yeltenmek seni
bir kekeme hal ,
bir lal hal.
bir türlü dile gelememe hali
bu doğurgan sayfalarda...
saflarında yaşıyorum
yokluğunun...
dile kolay
gözlerimin kırgın kıyısında
özlüyorum seni.
bir avuç hücrede
bir dünya hasret
yokluğun...
gün batımı kaçak çay sefasında
bin aydınlatıyorsun
daralan ufuklarımı...
kanun adamlarına

ve zebanilere
hendek atlatıyorsun
düşsel varlığında...

ve ben ışıklar içinde
bir uykuda.
toprağın şah damarlarında ,
akan yeraltı suyu misali
görünmez ,
edasız
sedasız...
yokluğunda nikah kıyıyorum.
heybemde yalın bir yanılısama.
bakışlarım aşır geçiyor
duvarları ,
nizamiyeyi ,
surları...
demir parmaklıklı gölgeleri
afroz edip
her hücremine doluyorum hücremin ,

düşündükçe
düşledikçe
sığmıyorum uzunluğuna satırların.
tutmuyor kemiklerim
bedenim iskeletsiz
omurgasız ,
takatsız ve mecalsiz...

seyre dalıyorum semaya
bedenim göz hapsinde.
nokta nokta gecenin yıldızları ,
biraz da puantiyeli...
mevsimlerden ağustos
sarı sıcaklar egemen
birbirini kovalamıyor dakikalar
bitkin
yorgun
bağırmda hatıraların
kalp acıtan fotoğrafları ,
ortak paydada bulduğumuz...
hatıralarımız
geleceğimizin payandası...

izler peşindeyim
sana dair
sana ilişkin
sana ait
onca beton kütleleri arasında...
fakat
direnmekte özlem ,
söze ve dile gelmemekte !
muhabbet kuşunun gagasında
kalorifer peteğine tüneyen
sivri sineğe
izler peşindeyim
sana dair...
beyhude !
yokluğunda her şey
içime dokunuyor
zira
artık tarih kadar ıraksın....

Tarih: 10.08.2017 Yer: A-49

985 Days

By James Miller

January 24th, 2019

Nedim Türfent has now been in prison 985 days.

985 days is 140 weeks is 23640 hours.

985 days for opening a window to the truth,

For showing the reality of a situation,

For showing what is.

A 'curfew' was declared in the villages of Mezra, Geman and Mergan, in Zawite, Koprulu and Minyanis.

985 days

985 days ago, my daughter was not even a heartbeat on a scan,
Not even a blurred shape in the womb.

A life waiting to be conceived, waiting to be brought into the world.

985 days.

In the last 2 days: 24 Kurds, including journalists and politicians, were arrested in Van, Antep, Isparta, Silopi, Khorasan, Amed and Idil. The last 1 month, how many?

Now, my daughter is eighteen months is 547 days old.
Eighteen months abundant with life, eyes open, smiling, inhabiting the world.
Eighteen months is 547 days of sleeping and not sleeping.

In Gever a "security" outpost under construction today. Concrete blocks brought in by trucks all day long.

Eighteen months. Time to go from milk to food,
New teeth happily munching muffins, sausages, pasta, cheese
A face smeared with yogurt and berries.
Eighteen months enough time to learn to say "more" and "no" and jiggle in her high chair.
And then throw the food on the floor.

The attack on the police station in Giresun killed police officer, Senior Sergeant Zafer Caliskan.

Eighteen months is 547 days.
Enough time for a wriggle to grow into a sit up and a turn over.
547 days is 13,128 hours.
Enough time for a turn over to become a crawl, head forward, bottom up, hands down moving with curious determined purpose.
Enough time for a crawl to become a stand, on wobbling, chubby little legs.
Arms outstretched, a giddy smile.
Amazed at herself.
13,128 hours is enough time for a stand to become a totter, a precarious forward wobble.
Enough time for a totter to become a walk.
Almost enough time for a run.
More than enough time for a climb, a scramble and a slide.

Air-assisted military operation continues in Mount Goman. Heavy bombing from artillery and howitzer.

Eighteen months is 547 days is 13,128 hours enough time to learn to say
Hello, goodbye, Moma, Dadda, moon, star, car and nose.
Enough time to turn the pages of a book, to point and say
"Roar" at the lion, "Tiger" at the tiger.
Enough time for a little finger to point at the duck and say
"Quack quack."

*5th Day of Operation: Special troops and ammunition were downloaded to the areas of
Mêrgesaw, Gorbadina and Çiyayê pane.*

Eighteen months is 547 days is 13,128 hours is enough time to see autumn, winter,
spring, summer, autumn and winter again.

*Spring has come to my mountains, colourful flowers opened. The Frontier Battalion is a
dagger in the heart of nature!*

Seventeen months is 547 days is 13,128 hours is a very long time to see nothing,
Shut from the light, cut from your freedom
Separated from your family, deprived of your children
Simply for seeing the truth, for showing others the truth.

So far Nedim Türfent has been in prison 985 days, which is 140 weeks which is
23,640 hours.

**Written for the English PEN Modern Literature Festival in support of Nedim
Türfent**

Let My Heart Give Life (Hope)

By Nedim Türfent

Translated into English by Ege Dünder

Your heart has become the earth
let it pour elixir of lava into the veins
bring fertility to the soil
from the springs behind the mountain Qaf.
let the benevolence of the crops
be the silver key to life.
let your heart soothe

the farmer
the peasant
the day laborer
the distressed
let it massage the broken wings of birds
with ointments
let it grant refuge
to the ants, working collectively, in solidarity
let your heart fill with generosity
giving butterflies an extra day of life, even if in dreams
let it be a lifeline
like the womb
let your heart be crystal clear
as clear as water
spring to the barren,
for ever..
let it suckle milk from the sun's pure breast
and feed the needy
let your guts give life to the lifeless.

Van High Security Closed Prison February 2018

CAN VERSİN YÜREĞİM

Yanardağ olsun yüreğim
lav selleri akıtsın
karamsarlığın soğuk yüzüne ,
eritsin kalpler arasındaki
buz dağlarını
veya soğuk bir duş etkisi yaratsın,
ülkenin üzerinde dolaşan kefenden hayaletlere.

mesken olsun yüreğin
saadet zinciri için
dövüşenlere.
direnci olsun
sorgu odasında tutsağın.
sabır olsun
sayılı günleri olanlara .
mutsuzların ağızlarını
koca koca gülüşlerle doldursun.
kocaman olsun yüreğin

içine umut dağları sığsın.

yeryüzü olsun yüreğin
can suyu versin damarlarına .
toprağa bereket getirsin ,
Kaf Dağı'nın ardındaki pınarlardan.
toplanan ekinlerin sadakası dahi
yaşamın çözüm anahtarı olsun
köylüye ,
marabaya,
ırgata...

reva olsun yüreğin
darda olana ,
deva olsun.
merhem sürsün
kuşların kırık kanatlarına .
göz kulak olsun
imece usulü çalışan karıncalara .
fedakar olsun ,
cömert olsun yüreğin,
kelebeklere yaşanacak
fazladan bir gün versin .
yaşam kaynağı olsun
ana rahmi misali...

berrak olsun yüreğin
su renginde ,
su gibi aziz olsun.
kuruyanı yeşertsin
her daim...
süt emsin güneşin apak memesinden
ve emzirsin ihtiyacı olanı.
yaşamın efsunlu tınısıyla
cansız kalana
can versin yüreğin.

Yer: Van Yüksek Güvenlikli Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu , A-49 Tekli Koğuşu
Tarih:05.02.2018

Part IV:



Ashraf Fayadh

By Simone Theiss

Ashraf Fayadh is a Palestinian poet who was born in Saudi Arabia.

On 6 August 2013 he was arrested following the accusation that he was “promoting atheism and spreading blasphemous ideas among young people”. These accusations were made in the context of his poetry collection “Instructions Within”. He was released the next day, but rearrested on 1 January 2014.

On 17 November 2015, the General Court in Abha (Saudi Arabia) sentenced Ashraf Fayadh to death for apostasy. He appealed the judgement. On 1 February 2016 the court of appeal reversed the decision of the General Court. They overturned the death-sentence and replaced it with eight years in prison, 800 lashes (to be carried out on 16 occasions with 50 lashes each time) and public repentance. There is no further information about his current situation.

Ashraf Fayadh was subject of a worldwide reading at the Berlin International Literature Festival 2016 and his poetry collection “Instructions Within” was published in 2016 / 2017 in the US and the UK (with English translations). You can also find translations of many of his poems on the ArabLit website (arablit.org).

Please campaign for Ashraf Fayadh on Social Media and use the hashtag
#FreeAshraf

The Last of the Line of Refugee Descendants

By Ashraf Fayadh

Translated by Jonathan Wright

You give the world indigestion, and other problems too.
Don't force the ground to vomit,
and stay close to the ground, very close.
A fracture that can't be set.
A fraction that can't be resolved
or added to the other numbers.
So you cause some confusion in global statistics.

Being a refugee means standing at the end of the queue
to get a fraction of a country.
Standing is something your grandfather did, without knowing the reason.
And the fraction is you.
Country: a card you put in your wallet with your money.
Money: pieces of paper with pictures of leaders.
Pictures: they stand in for you until you return.
Return: a mythical creature that appears in your grandmother's stories.
Here endeth the first lesson.
The lesson is conveyed to you so that you can learn the second lesson, which is
"what do you signify?"

On the Day of Judgment, they stand naked,
as you swim in the spillage from the cracked sewage pipes.
Barefoot – that's healthy for the feet
but unhealthy for the ground.

For your sake we will set up podiums and hold conferences,
and the newspapers will write about you in an appropriate manner.
A new formula has been developed to eliminate obstinate dirt,
and at only half the price.
Hurry to buy up half the amount,

as the water shortage is very severe.

Serious negotiations
are under way to provide ashes for free so you won't choke,
without affecting the right of trees to live on Earth.
Learn to avoid using up all your ash allowance in one go.

They taught you how to lift up your head
so you can't see the dirt on the ground.
They taught you the Earth is your mother.
And your father?
You're looking for him to confirm your lineage.
They taught you your tears are an extravagant waste of water.
And water ... as you know!

Tomorrow,
it'll be a good idea to get rid of you,
because the Earth would look better without you.

Children are like sparrows,
but they don't build nests in dead trees.
And the U.N. agency isn't responsible for planting trees.

Use yourself as a bargaining card,
as a piece of paper with a poem on it, a piece of toilet paper,
a piece of paper for your mother to light the stove
and bake some loaves.

The weather forecast:
the sun is lying in bed because it has a temperature.

The bones, clothed in flesh and then with skin.
The skin gets dirty and gives off a horrible smell.
The skin burns and is affected by supernatural factors.
Take you for example.

Don't give up hope.
Take heart from the exile from which you are fleeing!
This is intensive training for living in Hell
and its harsh conditions.
My god, is Hell somewhere on Earth?

The prophets have gone into retirement,

so don't expect any prophet to come and save you.
For your sake the observers submit daily reports
And are paid high salaries.
How important money is
for the sake of a decent life!

Abu Said's felafel are exposed to contamination
and the dispensary is announcing that the inoculation campaign is ending,
so don't worry about your children being contaminated
as long as the dispensary is there.

Live coverage of the proceedings of the beauty contest:
that girl looks good in her bikini,
and that one has rather a large bottom.
Breaking news: Sudden Rise in the Number of Deaths
from Smoking.
The sun is still a source of light
and the stars are peeping in at you, because your roof needs
repairing.

An argument at the taxi depot:
"We don't have enough passengers to leave yet."
"But my wife is in labour."
"This is her tenth pregnancy. Hasn't she learnt anything? There are reports warning
of random population growth. Random – that's the word I've been seeking for ages.
We're living in a random world. We're multiplying and our children stand naked.
Sources of inspiration for film-makers, or for discussion around the table at the G8.
We are small people but they can't live without us. For our sake buildings have
fallen down and railway stations have been blown up. Iron is liable to rust. For our
sake there are plenty of picture messages."

We are actors who don't get paid. Our role is to stand as naked as when our mothers
gave birth to us, as when the Earth gave birth to us, as the news bulletins gave birth
to us, and the multi-page reports, and the villages that border on settlements, and
the keys my grandfather carries.

My poor grandfather, he didn't know that the locks had changed. My grandfather,
may the doors that open with digital cards curse you, and may the sewage water
that runs past your grave curse you. May the sky curse you, and never rain. Never
mind, your bones can't grow from under the soil, so the soil is the reason we don't
grow again.

Granddad, I'll stand in for you on the Day of Judgment, because my private parts are no strangers to cameras.

Do they allow filming on the Day of Judgment?

Granddad, I stand naked every day without any Judgment, without anyone needing to blow any last trumpet, because I have been sent on in advance. I am Hell's experiment on the planet Earth.

The Hell that has been prepared for refugees.

Contributors –

Ege Dündar co-authored in 2005 the fable book “Duvar” with his father Can Dündar. He produced and presented the weekly music show “Alternatif” in Numberone TV between 2011-2013 and worked as a Sunday columnist in Milliyet Daily newspaper. A graduate of International Politics at City University Ege Dündar lives in London and has been working at PEN International for the last three years, campaigning for free expression. He is the founder and coordinator of the young writers platform “İlkyaz.”

Drewery Dyke is Fellow of the UK's Foreign Policy Centre and co-founded the UK-registered human rights organisation, Rights Realization Centre, in May 2018, but currently works with the Bahrain-focused Salam for Democracy and Human Rights as well as the Saudi Arabia-focused ALQST. Between 1999-2017 he worked as a Researcher for Amnesty International, where he focused in Iran, Afghanistan; countries in the GCC such as the UAE and statelessness.

Ramy Essam Rock artist and human rights defender Ramy Essam is considered to be one of the loudest voices of today. His resilient journey from the hub of the Egyptian revolution to the international stages has included viral hits and awards as well as moments of struggle. With his background in being the voice of the streets of his country, Ramy today stands for social justice and human rights worldwide.

Bill Law is a journalist and political analyst based in London with a long expertise of the Middle East and North Africa. He formerly worked for the BBC and is now a freelance journalist focusing on the Gulf. He tweets @BillLaw49

Manu Luksch Currently Resident Artist at Somerset House and Open Society Fellow, Luksch investigates the rise and pitfalls of the ‘Algorithmic City’. Her films are included in the Collection de Centre Pompidou, BFI National Archive, and the Core Collection (Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences).

James Miller is the author of the novels Lost Boys (Little, Brown 2008), Sunshine State (Little, Brown 2010) and UnAmerican Activities (Dodo Ink 2017) as well as the experimental, collaborative poetry collection Strays (HVTN 2017) with Julia Lewis. He is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Kingston University where he runs the MA and MFA in Creative Writing.

Albert Pellicer is a poet born in Barcelona and based in London. He is a lecturer in Modern Languages and Creative Writing at Kingston University. He writes, performs and publishes in English, Catalan and Spanish. His poetry explores the margins of text and looks into the concept of ‘timbre’ in poetry (the ‘exactitude of the unheard’ - according to Jean Luc Nancy and Michel Deguy). He has been described as ‘the poet who writes in the air’ for his work on the whistling languages and the use of long kites to write verses.

Simone Theiss is a member of Amnesty International. She uses Social Media (in particular Twitter) to campaign for human rights and raise awareness about prisoners of conscience in MENA (Middle East and North Africa), in particular Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Iran and Egypt. She blogs under <https://ciluna27.wordpress.com/>. Her blog posts are sometimes also published on other websites, including the websites of the Raif Badawi Foundation for Freedom (FRBF), Raif Badawi Website, International Campaign for Freedom in the United Arab Emirates (ICF UAE), Emirates Centre for Human Rights (ECHR), "Untold Stories of the Silenced" and the magazine "The Wolfian".

Jonathan Wright was a journalist in the Middle East for many years. He turned to literary translation in 2008 and has since translated about a dozen novels, winning the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2014 and the Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation on two occasions.