

## **Poem #1: "To My Mother" by Mahmoud Darwish**

*Dearly I yearn for my mother's bread,  
My mother's coffee,  
Mother's brushing touch.  
Childhood is raised in me,  
Day upon day in me.  
And I so cherish life  
Because if I died  
My mother's tears would shame me.*

*Set me, if I return one day,  
As a shawl on your eyelashes, let your hand  
Spread grass out over my bones,  
Christened by your immaculate footsteps  
As on holy land.  
Fasten us with a lock of hair,  
With thread strung from the back of your dress.  
I could grow into godhood  
Commend my spirit into godhood  
If I but touch your heart's deep breadth.*

*Set me, if ever I return,  
In your oven as fuel to help you cook,  
On your roof as a clothesline stretched in your hands.  
Weak without your daily prayers,  
I can no longer stand.*

*I am old  
Give me back the stars of childhood  
That I may chart the homeward quest  
Back with the migrant birds,  
Back to your awaiting nest.*

## **Poem #2: "Death Sentence" by Sulafa Hijjawi**

*At night, orders came to the soldiers  
to destroy our lovely village, Zeita.  
Zeita! Bride of trees,  
of blooming tulips,  
speak of the winds!*

*The soldiers came in the dark  
while the sons of the village  
the trees and fields and flowerbuds  
clung to Zeita  
hugging her for shelter...*

*"Orders demand that all of you depart  
Zeita will be destroyed before the night ends."*

*But we held tight, chanting:  
Zeita is the land, the heart of the land,  
and we her people are its branches.*

*That's how people fall—  
A few moments of resistance,  
so Zeita remains an eternal embrace across the nights  
In moments she was rubble,  
not a single bread oven remained.  
Men and stones were panted and powdered by enemy tractors,  
scattered forever in the light of the impossible.*

*now in the evenings  
in the song of our wind,  
Zeita arises, igniting its scarlet spark  
upon the plains  
And by morning  
Zeita returns to the fields  
As tulips do.*

*Night is morning in Zeita,  
Night is morning.*

**Poem #3: "The Deluge and the Tree" by Fadwa Tuqan**

*When the hurricane swirled and spread its deluge  
of dark evil  
onto the good green land  
'they' gloated. The western skies  
reverberated with joyous accounts:  
"The Tree has fallen !  
The great trunk is smashed! The hurricane leaves no life in the Tree!"  
Had the Tree really fallen?*

*Never! Not with our red streams flowing forever,  
not while the wine of our thorn limbs  
fed the thirsty roots,  
Arab roots alive  
tunneling deep, deep, into the land!*

*When the Tree rises up, the branches  
shall flourish green and fresh in the sun  
the laughter of the Tree shall leaf  
beneath the sun  
and birds shall return  
Undoubtedly, the birds shall return.  
    The birds shall return.*

**Poem #4: "The Story" by Kamal Nasser**

*I will tell you a story ..  
A story that lived in the dreams of people ..  
A story that comes out of the world of tents ..  
Was made by hunger, and decorated by the dark nights  
In my country, and my country is a handful of refugees ..  
Every twenty of them have a pound of flour ..  
And promises of a relief .. gifts and parcels  
It is the story of the suffering group  
Who stood for ten years in hunger  
In tears and agony ..  
In hardship and yearning ..  
It is a story of a people who were misled  
Who were thrown into the mazes of years  
But they defied and stood  
Disrobed and united  
And went to light, from the tents,  
The revolution of return in the world of darkness*

## **Poem #5: “Born on Nakba Day” by Mohammed Al-Kurd**

*Your unkindness rewrote my autobiography  
into punch lines in guts,  
blades for tongues,  
a mouth pregnant with  
thunder.*

*Your unkindness told me to push through,*

*look,  
listen.*

*I was born on the fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba  
to a mother who reaped olives  
and figs  
and other Quranic verses.  
watteeni wazzaytoon.  
My name: a bomb in a white room,  
a walking suspicion  
in an airport,  
choiceless politics.*

*I was born on the fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba.  
Outside the hospital room:  
protests, burnt rubber,  
Kuffiyah’ed faces, and bare bodies,  
stones thrown onto tanks,  
tanks imprinted with U.S. flags,*

*lands  
smelling of tear gas, skies tiled with  
rubber-coated bullets,  
a few bodies shot, dead–died  
numbers in a headline.*

*Birth lasts longer than death.  
In Palestine death is sudden,  
instant,  
constant,  
happens in between breaths.*

*I was born among poetry  
on the fiftieth anniversary.  
The liberation chants outside the hospital room  
told my mother  
to push.*

## **Poem #6: "I Love You More" by Abu Salma**

*The more I fight for you, the more I love you!  
What land except this land of musk and amber?  
What horizon but this one defines my world?  
The branch of my life turns greener when I uphold you  
and my wing, Oh Palestine, spreads wide over the peaks.*

*Has the lemon tree been nurtured by our tears?  
No more do birds flutter among the high pines,  
or stars gaze vigilantly over Mt. Carmel.  
The little orchards weep for us, gardens grow desolate,  
the vines are forever saddened.*

*Whenever your name sounds in my ears, my words grow more poetic  
planting desire for you on every stoop.  
Is it possible these words could be torches  
lighting each desert and place of exile.  
Oh Palestine! Nothing more beautiful, more precious, more pure!  
The more I fight for you, the more I love you.*

**Poem #7: "In Jerusalem" by Mahmoud Darwish**

*In Jerusalem, and I mean within the ancient walls,  
I walk from one epoch to another without a memory  
to guide me. The prophets over there are sharing  
the history of the holy ... ascending to heaven  
and returning less discouraged and melancholy, because love  
and peace are holy and are coming to town.  
I was walking down a slope and thinking to myself: How  
do the narrators disagree over what light said about a stone?  
Is it from a dimly lit stone that wars flare up?  
I walk in my sleep. I stare in my sleep. I see  
no one behind me. I see no one ahead of me.  
All this light is for me. I walk. I become lighter. I fly  
then I become another. Transfigured. Words  
sprout like grass from Isaiah's messenger  
mouth: "If you don't believe you won't be safe."  
I walk as if I were another. And my wound a white  
biblical rose. And my hands like two doves  
on the cross hovering and carrying the earth.  
I don't walk, I fly, I become another,  
transfigured. No place and no time. So who am I?  
I am no I in ascension's presence. But I  
think to myself: Alone, the prophet Muhammad  
spoke classical Arabic. "And then what?"  
Then what? A woman soldier shouted:  
Is that you again? Didn't I kill you?  
I said: You killed me ... and I forgot, like you, to die.*

**Poem #8: "Rifqa" by Mohammed Al-Kurd (Page 1/3)**

*Nowadays, grandmother walks fragile,  
so unlike the past she battled.*

*Wrinkled faces  
hide inside the wrinkles of her face.  
tell the story of that event:  
organized undying.*

*The morning of a red-skied May                      1948.  
Could've been                      today.  
They knocked the doors down,  
claimed life as their own.  
The chances of their staying      fragile.  
But now look:  
houses are in ruins,      keys around necks,  
odds far from even,              far from running water.*

*Ramadan      villages retired singing,  
rifles sang instead,  
announcing      declaring  
an anticipated empire on the ruins of another.*

*Seven decades later  
they harvest      organs of the martyred,  
feed their warriors our own.  
The people of Haifa left.  
Some fled after news some stayed,  
gave coffee to massacre.  
Some              walked a straight line into the sea  
back to their city.  
  
refused to be martyred.  
refused to exit.*

*They were one with Haifa,  
drowned  
in this life  
soaked in salt.*

*My grandmother—Rifqa—  
was chased away from the city,  
leaving behind  
the vine of roses in the front yard.  
Sometime when youth was  
more than just yearning.*

*She left poetry.  
What I write is an almost  
I write                      an attempt.*



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*She left behind clothes folded ready to be worn again;  
her suitcases  
did not declare departure.*

*Rifqa left Haifa to go to Haifa.  
to go to Haifa.  
Rifqa walked solid.  
"We'll return once things cool down,"  
and she believed,  
wore her key  
until her key her neck her memory  
became the same color.*

*Next stop another city-to-be-destroyed  
photographs of Haifa stamped on her heart,  
then on her imagination.*

*She went shelter to shelter.  
I wonder, was it the shelter that ran from her?*

*Children along the way, six  
storied them their homeland,  
and so they grew up  
singing songs of arrival,  
the songs of homecoming.  
1956*

*lucky refugees given houses  
lucky wrapped in the shiny promises of  
UNRWA the Jordanian government grandma  
a lucky refugee grew vines of roses around the house;  
this time the roses had thorns  
just in case.*

*Invaders came back once again,  
claimed the land  
with fists and fire excuses beliefs  
of the chosen and the promised  
as if God is a real-estate agent.*

*Sometime she became a thirty-something-year-old widow  
homed a half-dozen hungers  
denied hers.*

*She worked,  
worked,  
and worked  
until survival was a funny story to tell  
on evenings with  
what remains of the family.  
1967 another Nakba*

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*another man-made catastrophe  
names of places            dispossessed.  
names on tombstones    rewritten  
Sheikh Jarrah became Shimon Ha'tsiddik  
Jerusalem  
bride of the fantasy  
once more.*

*Years passed and the vines of the roses  
were        vines of grapes.  
vines of barbed wires,  
ripping open the veins of the city.*

*Years passed            children  
became my aunts    my father  
the twenty-first century didn't stop the Nakba  
from continuing        years of resistance  
popular            fever and rashes  
unable to stop the cancer from spreading.*

*May 15, 1998,  
I was born before a closed house.*