

Librarians and Archivists with Palestine Action Packet for Gaza

The following are excerpts of Palestinian literature and poetry that [Librarians and Archivists with Palestine](#) read on the NYC subway on Saturday, August 2, in solidarity with Gaza. We also passed out double-sided bookmarks with poetry and websites with more information ([front](#) & [back](#)). We will continue to do similar actions and encourage you to do so as well.

Before each excerpt is written the approximate amount of time it takes to read aloud. Note that the opening and closing statement takes about 30 seconds, so add that to each time.

Please send us photos, videos, and reports of your actions.

INTRO & CLOSING:

25 seconds intro:

"Good afternoon. We are librarians and archivists who support Palestinian rights and oppose Israel's bombing and siege of the Gaza Strip. We are here to share with you Palestinian literature in an effort to honor Palestinian life in the face of massacre. [This is a poem called _____ by _____; This is an excerpt of _____ by _____]"

5 seconds at end:

"Thank you for listening. You can find out more on the websites on the bookmarks we gave you."

Readings that take one minute or less:

Under 1 min [less if just the first paragraph]:

From the beginning of the novel *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa

"In a distant time, before history marched over the hills and shattered present and future, before wind grabbed the land at one corner and shook it of its name and character, before Amal was born, a small village east of Haifa lived quietly on figs and olives, open frontiers and sunshine.

It was still dark, only the babies sleeping, when the villagers of Ein Hod prepared to perform the morning salat, the first of five daily prayers. The moon hung low, like a buckle fastening earth and sky, just a sliver of promise shy of being full. Waking limbs stretched, water splashed away sleep, hopeful eyes widened... Today they prayed outdoors and with particular reverence because it was the start of the olive harvest. Best to climb the rocky hills with a clean conscience on such an important occasion."

25 seconds:

From the short story "Returning to Haifa" by Ghassan Kanafani:

"...What is a homeland? Is it these two chairs that remained in this room for twenty years? The table? Peacock feathers? The picture of Jerusalem on the wall? The copper lock? The oak tree? The balcony? What is a homeland? Khaldun? Our illusions about him? Fathers? Their sons? What is a homeland?"

1 minute:

From the book *I Saw Ramallah* by Mourid Barghouti:

"Start your story with "Secondly," and the world will be turned upside-down. Start your story with "Secondly," and the arrows of the Indians are the original criminals and the guns of the white men are entirely the victim. It is enough to start with "Secondly," for the anger of the black man against the white to be barbarous. Start with "Secondly," and Gandhi becomes responsible for the tragedies of the British. You only need to start your story with "Secondly," and the burned Vietnamese will have wounded the humanity of the napalm, and Victor Jara's songs will be the shameful thing and not Pinochet's bullets, which killed so many thousands in the Santiago stadium. It is enough to start the story with "Secondly," for my grandmother, Umm 'Ata, to become the criminal and Ariel Sharon her victim."

1 min:

"The Earth is Closing on Us" by Mahmoud Darwish

The Earth is closing on us
pushing us through the last passage
and we tear off our limbs to pass through.
The Earth is squeezing us.
I wish we were its wheat
so we could die and live again.
I wish the Earth was our mother
so she'd be kind to us.

I wish we were pictures on the rocks
for our dreams to carry as mirrors.
We saw the faces of those who will throw
our children out of the window of this last space.
Our star will hang up mirrors.
Where should we go after the last frontiers ?

Where should the birds fly after the last sky ?
Where should the plants sleep after the last breath of air ?
We will write our names with scarlet steam.
We will cut off the head of the song to be finished by our flesh.
We will die here, here in the last passage.
Here and here our blood will plant its olive tree.

Under 1 minute:

“I Come From There” by Mahmoud Darwish

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 sea-gulls,
I have my own view,
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 learned all the words worthy of the court of blood
So that I could break the rule.
I learned all the words and broke them up
To make a single word: Homeland.....

50 seconds:

“Abd El-Hadi Fights a Superpower” by Taha Muhammad Ali

In his life
he neither wrote nor read.
In his life he
didn't cut down a single tree,

didn't slit the throat
of a single calf.
In his life he did not speak
of the New York Times
behind its back,
didn't raise
his voice to a soul
except in his saying:
"Come in, please,
by God, you can't refuse."

—

Nevertheless—
his case is hopeless,
his situation
desperate.
His God-given rights are a grain of salt
tossed into the sea.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury:
about his enemies
my client knows not a thing.
And I can assure you,
were he to encounter
the entire crew
of the aircraft carrier Enterprise,
he'd serve them eggs
sunny-side up,
and labneh
fresh from the bag.

40 seconds:
"There Was No Farewell" by Taha Muhammad Ali

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?

50 seconds:
"the gift of memory" by Suheir Hammad

who will mutter
the mighty acts of israel
muster declarations
of shrapnel truth

the dead will they
speak to the silences swallowed
with bulldozed earth

the dead will they
bear skeletal witness
to their own lives remind
us long after headline ink

up rise and search
behind rocks and trees
behind peace and paper
search out god's ear
to whisper the truth
they know

the poets the
doctors the emergency
room politicians
will they report
these acts of gods
ordered by men

the dead will they recite
recall rewind the video tape
if the dead forget
will the living
remember

to remind us we are
reaping what was
sown the dead fruit
of mangled roots

Under 1 min:
"the givers" by Suheir Hammad

this is modest beauty
a lowered gaze, muted color
a flutter, shadows
a murmur

i am looking for history
in neon light, billboards
splayed on chests
but this is quiet
beauty

and i need to sit
still, concentrate to hear
the blood below my
feet, the spirits in
the wind, on me

under every stone a myth
behind every branch a prophecy

trees here bear fruit as
sisters bear life
as duty and beauty both
giving and rooted

trees here stand, roots
apart, branches on trunks
necks turned to god
and say, girl where
you been what you
bring, drink some tea
we got stories to tell you

1 min:

“ramallah walk” by Suheir Hammad

i have never seen the bride
gold heavy and made up
step lightly
pumps in mud
after november rain

i have never seen the
boy of six correct the falafel
man saying i am not
a boy mouth in pout

i have never seen
the falafel man who is a man
of other things at other
times smile and say you
are right young brother

i have never
seen myself walk this
clear morning the moon
still visible in the sky

i have
never seen
the sight of a nine year old blinded

the bullet aimed at the brown
worlds in his face

i
have
never

a
morning walk
moon still visible
rain in the air
falafel stepping lightly in oil
the bride who is other
women at other times
mud in a pout
brothers smiling gold at a
woman walking heavy
brown worlds in her face

Readings that take one to two minutes:

1 min, 20 seconds:

“What I Will” by Suheir Hammad

I will not
dance to your war
drum. I will
not lend my soul nor
my bones to your war
drum. I will
not dance to your
beating. I know that beat.
It is lifeless. I know
intimately that skin
you are hitting. It
was alive once
hunted stolen
stretched. I will
not dance to your drummed
up war. I will not pop
spin break for you. I
will not hate for you or
even hate you. I will
not kill for you. Especially
I will not die
for you. I will not mourn
the dead with murder nor
suicide. I will not side
with you nor dance to bombs
because everyone else is
dancing. Everyone can be
wrong. Life is a right not
collateral or casual. I
will not forget where
I come from. I
will craft my own drum. Gather my beloved
near and our chanting
will be dancing. Our
humming will be drumming. I
will not be played. I
will not lend my name

nor my rhythm to your
beat. I will dance
and resist and dance and
persist and dance. This heartbeat is louder than
death. Your war drum ain't
louder than this breath.

1 min, 20 seconds:
"love poem" by Suheir Hammad

it is late raining tonight
the only safe space i know
is the air still warm right after
a kiss the place where lips almost meet
breath lives electric

need is past now i hunger
not in heat but searching
for more than a pyre to sun me and my body
is straining against sleep
close

i want to be open and hide
the children of palestine within me
head first i would bear down
bring them into me
an act of desperate love

the israeli army shoots children in the head

i would shelter them where
it is warm where limbs meet
where life is where babies
come from horizon dawning

pray these children
grow up fall in love
make love everywhere always
be human be alive

it is said sex is
in the head where god is
where too ancestry where
vision and memory
and the ability to hear angels

place palestine's
children in this sacred
air between kisses breathe them in
love them safe until
the israeli army stops
shooting children in the head

2 min:

"an other gaza" by Suheir Hammad

in chaos one man collects
his daughter into a plastic bag
oh my god the bag is leaking
one kisses a cave was baby boy face just this
morning braids unplaiting phosphorous
wordless exhaust smoke shock

what is it that remains of us now
then what is recyclable in us

men's beards carry their lineage
refracted memory drones
drummed ears echo frequency
children call for siblings reborn
skulls fracture eyes the color purple
here the steeliest doctors weep

the sea waves shelled boys
sirens post explosions

all is shrapnel and hunger
none is safe all are waiting
between wall and wait and sea
and wall there is no day
what are we

flares rain metal escalation

descent upon heads ladders of spine collapse
night eats sleep the people hold fasts

children of lightening no rain
sewage into water skin flamed to ash
the women's faces track lifelines
grief upon grief astronomical
dust was people last night
tunnel is the people now

raising horizon in coffins
there is no recovery

she says they light the night with bombs
she says that's not the sun at all
she says this is a crime against my heart
she says nothing
 touch me
she says listen

we are shelter and target
we are stars exploded

the people run into themselves for refuge
they catch up to their ghosts
between devastate and displace
what is destroyed again is everything
what is created is a hole
an other

2 minutes:

"Gaza, from the diaspora" by Jehan Bseiso

I

Even from space Gaza is on fire, is
Children, sheltering in UNRWA schools (hit), is,
Entire families huddled in hospitals (hit), is
You sitting perfectly still in the dark, hoping this one,
Will miss you.

II

From Amman, from Beirut, in Chicago.

We, online, yes.

But no 146 characters this.

1000 killed, 4000 injured, thousands displaced no place.

III

Twitter feeds and facebook timelines and

10 reasons why you should boycott Israel Now, and

5 Ways Children Die in Gaza today or

How to Lose 18 members of Your Family in One Minute

(@Bibi54 stop saying the rockets are in the damn hospitals, in the school rooms, under the beds of four year olds)

Maybe it helps that 8 Celebrities Expressed Their Outrage.

tweeted and deleted.

(@CNN@Foxnews Bas rewriting history, Bas lies on tv)

@Jon Stewart, thank you for educating the silent majority with satire.

IV

Day 17: What happened? what is still happening?

In Jabaliya, the dead console the dying ;

Anisa, with one child in her arms, and another in her belly (dead).

In the hospital, they put the pregnant women alone, because they're carrying hope, because they don't want them to see what can happen to children.

Oh white phosphorous (and unconfirmed reports of illegal dense inert metal explosives).

V

I can confirm this:

International law, is clearly for internationals only.

By now, a 7 year old in Gaza has survived 3 wars already, and you're still talking about talks, and sending John Kerry to the Middle East, and thanking Egypt for facilitating nothing.

There's more blood than water today in Gaza.

Readings that take more than 2 minutes:

3 minutes, 15 seconds:

“We teach life, sir” by Rafeef Ziadeh

Today, my body was a TVed massacre. Today, my body was a TVed massacre that had to fit into sound bites and word limits. Today, my body was a TVed massacre that had to fit into sound bites and word limits, filled enough with statistics to counter measured response, and I perfected my English, and I learned my U.N. Resolutions, but still, he asked me Ms. Ziadah, don't you think everything would be resolved if you would just stop teaching so much hatred to your children? Pause.

I look inside of me for strength to be patient, but patience is not at the tip of my tongue as the bombs drop over Gaza. Patience has just escaped me. Pause. Smile.

We teach life, sir. Rafeef, remember to smile. Pause.

We teach life, sir. We Palestinians teach life after they have occupied the last sky. We teach life after they have built their settlements and apartheid walls, after the last skies. We teach life, sir.

But today, my body was a TVed massacre made to fit into sound bites and word limits, and just give us a story, a human story. You see, this is not political, we just want to tell people about you and your people, so give us a human story. Don't mention that word apartheid and occupation. This is not political, you have to help me as a journalist to help you tell your story, which is not a political story.

Today, my body was a TVed massacre. How about you give us a story of a woman in Gaza who needs medication? How about you? Do you have enough bone broken limbs to cover the sun? Hand me over your dead and give me the list of their names in 1,200 word limits.

Today, my body was a TVed massacre made to fit into sound bites and word limits, and move those that are desensitized to terrorist blood.

But they felt sorry, they felt sorry for the cattle over Gaza. So, I give them UN Resolutions and statistics and we condemn and we deplore and we reject and these are not two equal sides, occupier and occupied, and 100 dead 200 dead, and 1000 dead, and between that war crime and massacre, I vent out words and smile not exotic.

Smile, not terrorist, and I recount, I recount a hundred dead, 200 dead, 1000 dead. Is anyone out there? Will anyone listen? I wish I could wail over their bodies. I wish I could just run bare foot in every refugee camp and hold every child, cover their ears so they wouldn't have to hear the sound of bombing for the rest of their life the way I do.

Today, my body was a TVed massacre, and let me just tell you there is nothing your UN Resolutions have ever done about this, and no sound bite, no sound bite I come up with, no matter how good my English gets, no sound bite, no sound bite, no sound bite, no sound bite will bring them back to life.

No sound bite will fix this. We teach life, sir. We teach life, sir. We Palestinians wake up every morning to teach the rest of the world life, sir.

2.5 minutes:

“A Poem for Gaza” by Remi Kanazi

I never knew death
until I saw the bombing
of a refugee camp
craters
filled with
dismembered legs
and splattered torsos
but no sign of a face
the only impression
a fading scream

I never understood pain
until a seven-year-old girl
clutched my hand
stared up at me
with soft brown eyes
waiting for answers

I didn't have any
I had muted breath
and dry pens in my back pocket
that couldn't fill pages
of understanding or resolution

in her other hand
she held a key
to her grandmother's house
but I couldn't unlock the cell
that caged her older brothers
they said:

we slingshot dreams
so the other side
will feel our father's presence!

a craftsman
built homes in areas
where no one was building

when he fell
silence

a .50 caliber bullet
tore through his neck
shredding his vocal cords
too close to the wall
his hammer
must have been a weapon
he must have been a weapon
encroaching on settlement hills
and demographics

so his daughter
studies mathematics

seven explosions
times
eight bodies
equals
four congressional resolutions

seven Apache helicopters
times
eight Palestinian villages
equals
silence and a second Nakba

our birthrate
minus
their birthrate
equals
one sea and 400 villages re-erected

one state

plus
two peoples
...and she can't stop crying

never knew revolution
or the proper equation
tears at the paper
with her fingertips
searching for answers
but only has teachers
looks up to the sky
to see Stars of David
demolishing squalor
with Hellfire missiles

she thinks back
words and memories
of his last hug
before he turned and fell
now she pumps
dirty water from wells
while settlements
divide and conquer
and her father's killer
sits beachfront
with European vernacular

this is our land!, she said
she's seven years old
this is our land!
she doesn't need history books
or a schoolroom teacher
she has these walls
this sky
her refugee camp

she doesn't know the proper equation
but she sees my dry pens
no longer waiting for my answers
just holding her grandmother's key
searching
for ink

Almost 3 minutes:

Gaza: Poem by Suheir Hammad (2009)

a great miracle happened here
a festival of lights
a casting of lead upon children
an army feasting on epiphany

i know nothing under the sun over the wall no one mentions
some must die wrapped in floral petroleum blanket
no coverage

i have come to every day armageddon
a ladder left unattended
six candles burn down a house
a horse tied to smoke
some must die to send a signal

flat line scream live stream river a memory longer than life spans
the living want to die in their country

no open doors no open seas no open
hands full of heart five daughters wrapped in white

each day jihad
each day faith over fear
each day a mirror of fire
the living want to die with their families

the girl loses limbs her brother gathers arms
some must die for not dying

children on hospital floor mother beside
them the father in shock this is my family
i have failed them this is my family i did
not raise their heads i have buried them
my family what will i do now my family is bread
one fish one people cut into pieces

there is a thirst thefts life
there is a hunger a winter within winter

some must die to bring salvation

i have come to end times always present

the woman lost parents her children and screams
my sister i have lost my sister i want to die
my sister's eyes were honey her voice mine
i can't face this only god only god my sister

medics killed schools hit convoys bombed
the injured are dying the dead are buried in three
hours the people pray together and curse the people
mourn loud and quiet always too loud not enough

some must die because they are in the vicinity
some must die because it was written

no army does not apologize has never
apologized authority chases paper assembly
occupation settles deeper

a great miracle here
the living are dying and the dying living

a festival of lights
a strip a land a blaze
the sea a mirror of fire

a casting of lead upon children
their heads roll off their shoulders into streets
their tops spin in hands

an army feasting on epiphany
driving future into history
carrying torches into women
