

## **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."

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### **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."

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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?"

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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."

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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.

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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.....

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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.

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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?

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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

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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

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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

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**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.

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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

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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

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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.

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## **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.

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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

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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

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