



# Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine

*Refaat Alareer*

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*Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine*, edited by Refaat Alareer, is a compelling collection of short stories from 15 young writers in Gaza, members of a generation that has suffered immensely under Israel's siege and blockade. Their experiences, especially during and following Israel's 2008-2009 offensive known as Operation Cast Lead, have fundamentally impacted their lives and their writing. Indeed, many of these writers saw the war as a catalyst for their writing, as they sought an outlet and a voice in its aftermath. They view the book as a means of preserving Palestinian memories and presenting their own narratives to the world without filters.

Their words take us into the homes and hearts of moms, dads, students, children, and elders striving to live lives of dignity, compassion, and meaning in one of the world's most embattled communities. (Some of the stories also take us with courage and empathy into the imagined world of Israelis living just on the other side of the great barriers Israel has built in and around Gaza and the West Bank to wall the Palestinians in.) These stories are acts of resistance and defiance, proclaiming the endurance of Palestinians and the continuing resilience and creativity of their culture in the face of ongoing obstacles and attempts to silence them. Whether tackling the tragedy that surrounds missile strikes and home raids or the everyday indignities encountered by Palestinian refugees, *Gaza Writes Back* brings to life the real issues that the people of Gaza face.

One prominent theme in many of the stories is the value placed on the wisdom of parents and grandparents. A sense of longing pervades the book, as the characters in the stories reveal desires ranging from the mundane to the complex—including, in several of the stories, a strong yearning to return to the characters' long-cherished family homes and properties after many decades in exile from them. Social differences within Gaza are also sensitively explored. A few stories are especially difficult—but critical—to digest due to the vividness with which they depict the experiences of victims of Israeli military strikes and confront the legacy of violence and occupation, particularly on young people.

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