

Yousri Alghoul

Creativity Shaped by a Refugee Camp

By Mohamed Abu Alqumboz



Being among those whom fate commanded to stay in one of Gaza's small refugee camps could be a cause for dejection. However, the author, essayist, and human rights activist Yousri Alghoul, born in 1980, endured the miserable conditions of Al-Shatee Camp (Beach Camp) and, starting as a young man, used them as an inspiration to write about life in the camps, about wars, and about love.

His numerous novels and articles describe life in Gaza and cover or touch upon all major events that have taken place since 2002. His short stories and novels deal with Palestinian affairs in general and relate the depressing situation of youth in the Palestinian Territories and particularly in Gaza.

Yousri's works are widely read and influential in Palestine. He is active in literature, journalism, human rights, political affairs, and youth activism, which has enabled him to establish a wide network of local and international contacts. As a social media activist, he writes about all major topics that affect the Gaza Strip. Representing the voice of ordinary Gazans, he does not shy away from clashing with his government – which has repeatedly put him into a position where he needed his people to support him.

A son of the camp, Yousri is a member of a number of civil society organizations and regularly takes part in workshops related to human rights, international humanitarian law, and diplomacy. He is also the founder of Global Shaper Community – Gaza Hub, Cordoba Cultural Meeting (the best-known cultural initiative in the Gaza Strip), and Shaghaf Youth Initiative. He holds a master's degree in Middle East studies from Al-Azhar University in Gaza, and his political engagement has led him to participate in numerous conferences and lecture tours in places such as the United States, Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Spain, Germany, Belgium, France, and Egypt, spreading awareness of the dire conditions in Gaza and its refugee camps.

Through his publications and youth initiatives, Yousri desires to convey to the entire world the message that the people of Gaza seek hope and love in spite of their miserable situation. His philosophy is simple: Life is about the creative

search for beauty through music and literature, and this search will lead to peace among the diverse Palestinian ideologies and political organizations.

Yousri Alghoul is a UNAOC alumni, a researcher of EuroMed Rights (formerly the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network), and a former editor of the intellectual and cultural magazine *Madarat* from January 2010 until April 2012. In 2007, he published his first collection of short stories, *Singing at Her Death*, and in 2010, he published the novel *Before Death, After Madness*, both through the Ugarit Center for Translation and Publication in Ramallah. Since then, he has published *The Dead Resurrected from Gaza*, *Fifty Days*, and *Layla* through Fadaat Company (all in Arabic). Yousri's latest novel, *Gaza 87*, was published in 2017, and focuses on Gaza since the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987. It has been translated into English and is available at Samir Mansour Publishers.

