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41 years upon his martyrdom: Remembering Comrade Ghassan Kanafani

41 years on the martyrdom of Comrade Ghassan Kanafani, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine looks once more toward Kanafani and his work, immortal words of literary brilliance, political insight and blinding integrity that continue to inspire us all in the struggle, 41 years on. We remember Ghassan Kanafani - today, we remember Kanafani the martyr, and also the writer, the political leader, the spokesperson not only for the PFLP but for the Palestinian revolution, the committed revolutionary, the groundbreaking novelist, and the warm and inspiring human whose written, political and social legacy is one of unquestioned and uncompromising steadfastness and resistance.

Comrade Ghassan Kanafani was assassinated by the Mossad on July 8, 1972, by a car bomb in Beirut, along with his niece, Lamis, because of his clear, Palestinian, revolutionary voice that always exposed Zionism and imperialism, celebrated and returned power and history to the hands of the Palestinian popular classes.

Perhaps the Mossad and the Zionist state believed that by killing Kanafani, they could kill his ideas and everything he represented. On the contrary, his elegant words, his literature, and his political clarity remain inspirations for generations of Palestinians, his words echoing in Palestinian hearts in the homeland and exile everywhere. Today, we pledge once more to continue to march along the path of Comrade Ghassan Kanafani, toward his - and our - goal, of liberation, victory and return.

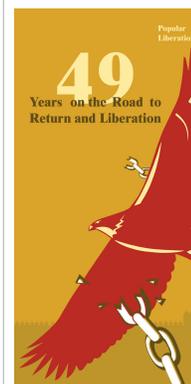
[Ghassan Kanafani and the Culture of Resistance](#)

[Video of Comrade Kanafani's funeral in Beirut](#)



Ghassan Kanafani poster created by Lebanese art collective Jamaa al-Yad

49th Anniversary of PFLP

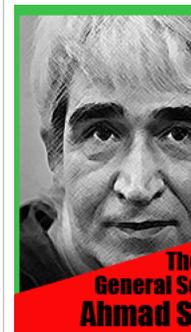


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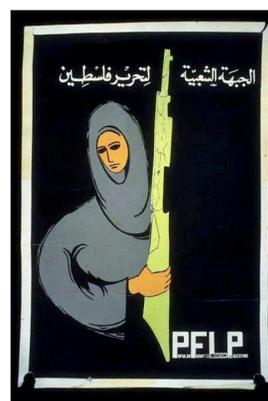
Ghassan Kanafani: The Leader, The Writer, the Martyr

Comrade Ghassan Kanafani was born in Acre in 1936, and his family was expelled from Palestine in 1948 by Zionist terror, after which they finally settled in Damascus. After completing his studies, he worked as a teacher and journalist, first in Damascus, and then in Kuwait. Later he moved to Beirut and wrote for several papers before starting Al Hadaf, the weekly paper of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), in 1969. He was the spokesperson of the PFLP and a member of its Political Bureau, as well as a great novelist and artist whose immense contributions cannot be overstated.

To begin with, Kanafani was an active member of the Arab Nationalist Movement, the forerunner of the PFLP, but later, along with his comrade George Habash, he became a Marxist, believing that the solution to the problems which faced the Palestinians could not be achieved without a social revolution throughout the Arab world.

Kanafani was killed when his car exploded in July 1972: murdered by Zionist agents. His sister wrote:

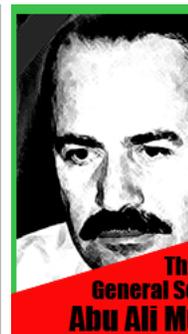
“On the morning of Saturday, July 8, 1972, at about 10:30 am, Lamees (Kanafani’s niece) and her uncle were going out together to Beirut. A minute after their departure, we heard the sound of a very loud explosion which shook the whole building. We were immediately afraid, but our fear was for Ghassan and not for Lamees because we had forgotten that Lamees was with him and we knew that Ghassan was the target of the explosion. We ran outside, all of us were calling for Ghassan and not one of us called for Lamees. Lamees was still a child of seventeen years. Her whole being was longing for life and was full of life. But we knew that Ghassan was the one who had chosen this road and who had walked along it. Just the previous day Lamees had asked her uncle to reduce his revolutionary activities and to concentrate more upon writing his stories. She had said to him, “Your stories are beautiful,” and he had answered, “Go back to writing stories? I write well because I believe in a cause, in principles. The day I leave these principles, my stories will become empty. If I were to leave behind my principles, you yourself would not respect me.’ He was able to convince the girl that the struggle and the defense of principles is what finally leads to success in everything.”



Early PFLP poster designed by Kanafani

In the memoir which Ghassan Kanafani’s wife published after his death, she wrote:

“His inspiration for writing and working unceasingly was the Palestinian-Arab struggle...He was one of those who



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fought sincerely for the development of the resistance movement from being a nationalist Palestinian liberation movement into being a pan-Arab revolutionary socialist movement of which the liberation of Palestine would be a vital component. He always stressed that the Palestine problem could not be solved in isolation from the Arab World's whole social and political situation."

This attitude developed naturally out of Kanafani's own experiences. At the age of twelve he went through the trauma of becoming a refugee, and thereafter he lived as an exile in various Arab countries, not always with official approval. His people were scattered, many of them making a living in the camps or struggling to make a living by doing the most menial work; their only hope lay in the future and in their children. Kanafani himself, writing to his son, summed up what it means to be a Palestinian:

"I heard you in the other room asking your mother, 'Mama, am I a Palestinian?' When she answered 'Yes' a heavy silence fell on the whole house. It was as if something hanging over our heads had fallen, its noise exploding, then - silence. Afterwards...I heard you crying. I could not move. There was something bigger than my awareness being born in the other room through your bewildered sobbing. It was as if a blessed scalpel was cutting up your chest and putting there the heart that belongs to you...I was unable to move to see what was happening in the other room. I knew, however, that a distant homeland was being born again: hills, olive groves, dead people, torn banners and folded ones, all cutting their way into a future of flesh and blood and being born in the heart of another child...Do you believe that man grows? No, he is born suddenly - a word, a moment, penetrates his heart to a new throb. One scene can hurl him down from the ceiling of childhood onto the ruggedness of the road."

"To our departed and yet remaining Comrade; you knew of two ways in life, and life knew from you only one. You knew the path of submission and you refused it. And you knew of the path of resistance and you walked with it. This path was chosen for you and you walked with it. And your comrades are walking with you."

Comrade Kanafani's ability to illustrate, beyond any shadow of doubt, the deprivation and sufferings of his people, as well as to transform an ideology and political line into popular literature made him a grave threat to the Zionist entity.

The following are excerpts from a tribute to Ghassan by one of his colleagues, a Palestinian author, S.Marwan, published in Al Hadaf on July 22, 1972.



PFLP poster in support of Gaza designed by Kanafani

THE STRUGGLE OF THE OPPRESSED OF THE WORLD

"Imperialism has layed its body over the world, the head in Eastern Asia, the heart in the Middle East, its arteries reaching Africa and Latin America. Wherever you strike it, you damage it, and you serve the World Revolution."

Imperialism is not a myth or a word repeated by the news media, a motionless picture that doesn't affect the human reality. In Ghassan Kanafani's conception, it is a mobile body, an octopus which colonizes and exploits, spreading itself over the world through western monopolistic enterprises.

Imperialism is directing various forms of aggression against the toiling masses of the world, and particularly in the underdeveloped countries.

Based on the slogan: "All the Facts to the Masses", raised in Al Hadaf, Ghassan Kanafani put his clear intellect in the service of the masses and their objective class interests, leading him to state: "The desire for change which is sweeping through the Arab masses, must be motivated by ideological and political clarity, which is absolute. Thus, Al Hadaf devotes itself to the service of that revolutionary alternative, as the interests of the oppressed classes are the same as the goals of the revolution. It presents itself as the ally of all those carrying on armed and political-ideological struggle to achieve a liberated progressive nation."

The natural base for Ghassan's intellectual and artistic work was adopting and defending the interests of the toiling masses, not only of the Palestinians, but also the Arabs and the international oppressed classes. Because of this fundamental base for all of his work, Ghassan Kanafani, as a Marxist, adopted the path of armed struggle as the only way to defend the oppressed.

He was himself part of them; he lived and experienced the poverty caused by capitalism and imperialism and he remained within the ranks of the oppressed masses, in spite of the capitalists' temptations and their attempts to encircle his journalistic life. He remained a humble man who worked day and night to raise and develop the quality of human life out of the adversity imposed by history.

Addressing himself to a group of students, Ghassan said: "The goal of education is to correct the march of history. For this reason we need to study history and to apprehend its dialectics in order to build a new historical era, in which the oppressed will live, after their liberation by revolutionary violence, from the contradiction that captivated them." Ghassan Kanafani had not only achieved the knowledge of historical materialism, but he applied it in his work. The concept that he believed in and lived for was shown clearly in what he said and wrote. The primary contradiction, is the one with imperialism. Zionism and racism. It is an international contradiction, and the only solution is to destroy these threats by a united and steadfast armed struggle, he encouraged and raised the spirit of internationalism among all the people he addressed or knew.

This belief made him reject all compromises, all bourgeois or divisive solutions, which do not encompass or apply the thesis and development of the revolution and its long path towards liberation, striking the interests of imperialism and consolidating with the masses. He said in a comment about the martyred Patrick Arguello: "The martyr Patrick Arguello is a symbol for a just cause and the struggle to achieve it, a struggle without limits. He is a symbol for the oppressed and deprived masses, represented by Oum Saad and many others coming from the camps and from all parts of Lebanon, who marched in his funeral procession."

In discussions about the imperialist reactionary schemes against the revolutionary forces, he stated:

"The results of the imperialist assault will be directed against the oppressed masses to prevent them from mobilizing and fighting."

This position was based on the analysis of the stand of the Arab regimes and the regimes of the underdeveloped countries in general, which retreat under the strokes of imperialism.

In the context of international revolution, he said:

"Vietnamese revolutionaries have been struggling against imperialism for tens of years. They will transfer their revolution to other places; first, because their revolution is continuous, second, because they are internationalists . . ."

"The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary, wherever he is, as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses in our era."

As the struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism was the main issue for Ghassan Kanafani, the conspirators behind his assassination feared his clear and logical confrontation stand, which was revealed in his works and through the western news media. This drove imperialism and its reactionary allies to stop the pen which refused to surrender to their temptations or warnings. Ghassan Kanafani transformed the Palestinian and Arab cause to a cause through which we adopt the struggle of all the exploited and oppressed in the world.

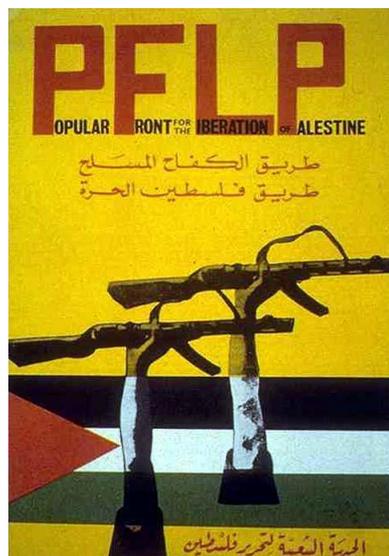
Ghassan's commitment will remain a monument for the struggling masses. He said in a meeting with the staff of *Al Hadaf*: "Everything in this world can be robbed and stolen, except one thing; this one thing is the love that emanates from a human being towards a solid commitment to a conviction or cause."

Comrade Kanafani's literary work

Selected works:

Mawt Sarir raqm 12, 1961

Ard al-burtugal al-hazin, 1963



Early PFLP poster designed by Kanafani