

# ghassan kanafani

***Ghassan Fayiz Kanafani*** (8 April 1936 – 8 July 1972) was a Palestinian writer and a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Kanafani was born on April 9, 1936, in city of Acre (Akka) under the British Mandate of Palestine.

His father was a lawyer, and Ghassan was sent to French missionary school in Jaffa. During the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Kanafani and his family were forced into exile in neighbouring Lebanon, but soon moved on to Damascus, Syria, to live there as Palestinian refugees.

When, in 1967, George Habash led the dissolution of the MAN and the formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Kanafani joined and became one of its spokesmen. In 1969, he drafted a PFLP program in which the movement officially took up Marxism-Leninism. He also edited the movement's newspaper, al-Hadaf (The Target), which he had founded in 1969, and contributed to it until his death with political, cultural and historical essays and articles.

He was assassinated on July 8, 1972, in Beirut by car bomb planted by the Mossad.



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# ***Ghassan Kanafani***

The story of Ghassan Kanafani, Palestinian journalist and author, member of the Palestinian resistance movement, assassinated together with his niece Lamees by Israeli agents in Beirut on July 8, 1972.

Written and told by his wife, Anni.  
Originally published in Volume 7 of Palestinian Liberation Army's (PLA) magazine  
*the Arab-Palestinian Resistance.*

**ANNI KANAFANI**

1973



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**THE JASMINE HAS GROWN, BOYS**

*(unnamed excerpt)*

A foreign journalist whom I came to know well during his long stay in the Arab countries received instructions from his newspaper before the June War to move to occupied Palestine and be their correspondent there.

Many months passed. Last week this man finished his work and returned to his own country. From there he wrote to me: “Perhaps you have forgotten me: the distance of eighteen months that separates us is filled with events, destruction, the smell of gunpowder and death.

When I recall that little more than eighteen months has elapsed, I can scarcely believe it. However, we live, I am sure now, in an unbelievable world. I saw with my own eyes that history is false, geography too...

“Something”, in some way, happened to me: I remembered you for no particular reason and decided to present you with something useful. I took a camera and went to Acre. There I asked about your house. From the neighbours I found the houses of your family and began to photograph them one by one – with my colour film.

I remembered some of the stories you had told me – especially that description of the long road to the east and north of Acre. I don’t know how I got there, but I photographed what I thought you had described. “These pictures are now between your hands. Do you think I have succeeded in sending you something you love, across all these months of ruin, destruction and death?”

TO ANNI FROM IMAD SHEHADEH

(Open letter in The Daily Star July16,1972)

**Dear Mrs. Kanafani,**

When your husband lost his country, he did not dismiss it with a tear. He knew that tears never righted a wrong or regained a right, that grief would be a consecration of his loss, that sorrow would be a public announcement of defeat. His eyes were dry when he pledged himself to his country and his people.

We have lost your husband. We will not dismiss him with tears. To weep over him now would be to negate everything he stood for, everything he died for. Ghassan Kanafani died alone. His people live on, and through them, his hopes and his courage and his determination survive him.

Ghassan Kanafani, deceased, has been endowed with omnipresence by his people. When his people lose sight of his hopes, when they lose their grip on his courage, when they relinquish their hold on his determination – that will be the time to mourn him.

You have lost a husband. Your children have lost a father. To comfort you we can only offer the thought that your husband and their father did not live in vain, nor did he die a meaningless death. His life and his death have made millions proud of their identity.

*Sincerely yours,  
Imad Shebadeh*

***On the morning of the assassination*** we all sat longer than usual drinking our Turkish coffee on the balcony. As always Ghassan had many things to talk about, and we were always ready to listen. That morning he was telling us about his comrades in the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and then he and his sister Fayzeh began to talk about their childhood in Palestine..

Before leaving for his office, he fixed the electric train for our son Fayez and his two cousins. The three of them were playing inside the house that morning. Lames, Ghassan's niece, was to go down-town with her uncle for the first time since she had arrived from Kuwait with her mother and brothers one week before; she was going to visit her cousins in Beirut--she never got there. Two minutes after Ghassan and Lames had kissed us good-bye there was a dreadful explosion.

All the windows in the house were blown out. I ran down, only to find the burning remains of our small car. We found Lames a few meters away, Ghassan wasn't there. I called his name – then I discovered his left leg. I stood paralyzed, while Fayez knocked his head against the wall and our daughter Laila cried again and again: 'Baba, Baba.'

Still I had a small hope that maybe he was only seriously injured. They found him in the valley beside our house and took him away-I had no chance to see him again.

Usamah sat beside the body of his dead sister, telling her, 'Don't worry, Lamees, you'll be all right and you'll teach me English again, like before...

In the evening our little Laila told me: 'Mama, I asked

Anni – we need your courage.

Your courage at this crucial moment means a lot to me, and to all comrades and fighters of the P.F.L.P. What hurts me most, at this moment, is that Hilda and I cannot be beside you. The reasons are well known to you, I suppose.

It is a deep pain to me not to see Ghassan and talk to him before his burial. What I must repeat: we need your courage and your feeling that you are not and never will be alone. Waiting for the first opportunity to see you, Hilda and I remain your sincerest sister and brother.

– G. Habash

*TO ANNI FROM DR. GEORGE HABASH*

Dearest Anni,

It irritates me so much that English, not being my mother tongue, will not enable me to express all that I feel, all that I want to say, at this crucial and difficult moment. Ghassan, to me personally and to our Front as a whole, was so dear, so precious, so indispensable; I have to confess that we received a painful blow.

Now Anni, all of us, yourself in particular, face the following question: what shall we do for a man, for a comrade, precious and so sincere?

There is only one answer: to courageously suffer all the pain that no one of us can avoid, and after that, to work more and work better, to fight more and fight better.

You know very well, dearest sister, that Ghassan was fighting for a just cause, and you know that our Palestinian people, for more than 50 years, have been fighting a just war. Lately, true revolutionaries all over the world are standing up for and supporting our just war. This means that Ghassan's blood added to the great stream of blood that our people have been paying for 50 years is the price that we ought to pay to win freedom, justice and peace.

I need not tell you that the experience of oppressed people all over the world tells that this is the only way to defeat Zionism, imperialism and reactionary forces. Anni – I know very well what Ghassan's loss means to you, but please remember that you have Fayez, Laila, and thousands of brothers and sisters who are members of the P.F.L.P., and above all you have the cause Ghassan was fighting for.

Baba to take me in the car and buy chocolate, but he was busy and gave me a bar he had in his pocket. Then he kissed me and told me to go home. I sat on the steps of our house to eat the chocolate, then there was a big bang. But Mama, it wasn't his fault – the Israelis put the bomb in Baba's car.

I am the widow of Ghassan Kanafani – one of the Palestinian revolution's great martyrs. My native country is Denmark. I can dimly remember the German occupation which began April 9, 1940. My father joined the resistance movement along with other Danish men and women. Many freedom fighters gave their lives, others ended up in the Gestapo's prisons or concentration camps in their struggle against German occupation. The Germans called the Danish resistance fighters 'terrorists', in the very same way as occupying powers the world over malign those oppressed people who resist occupation and start struggling for their freedom and independence. The Danish resistance movement also helped to rescue Jews from the German Nazis.

When Israel was established, May 15, 1948, the Danes, like most other people in the 'civilized' world, were ignorant enough to be happy. We heard something above perch titis sad to aghand pralied that not until twelve years later that I became aware of the existence of a Palestinian people, expelled from their native country with the help of the big powers – mainly the USA and Great Britain.

In 1960 I participated in an international teachers' conference and later a students' conference in Yugoslavia. Here for the first time I was confronted with the Palestinian problem through my meetings with some Palestinian students. On my return home I joined the International People's College of Denmark, where I

continued to discuss the problem with fellow-students. Some of us also went to London and joined the Aldermaston March, organized by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and led by Bertrand Russell. When he died at the age of 97, Bertrand Russell was still fighting for justice – this time for the Palestinians.

Ghassan's father moved with the whole family to a mountain village, Zabadanie, in Syria. Life there was hard – hunger and cold the daily diet. Later on they moved to Damascus. Ghassan's eldest brother and he began assembling paperbacks in order to earn a little in support of the family of eight and the eight other relatives living with them. After a while they both continued their studies at night school, working during the day.

At that time he was thirteen years old. His sister Fayzeh (the mother of Lames) obtained her high school diploma, and in 1952 she went to Kuwait, where she became one of the country's first female teachers – one of the many Palestinians to contribute to the development of the Arab countries as teachers, engineers, doctors, etc.

After passing his Brevet at sixteen, Ghassan started teaching in an UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) school. Another teacher and he were responsible for the teaching of 1,200 Palestinian refugee children; but his most important aim was to make the children politically aware.

Seventy percent of Ghassan's students at the UNRWA school have since become commandos. Before joining the UNRWA school Ghassan had been working as an apprentice on a printing press in Damascus, and in 1955 he was asked by the ANM to work partly as an editor for their paper Al-Rai and partly in the printing

It is as if this new love, which filled her suddenly when they told her she had given birth, this overflowing love that no human being can have for another except the mother for her child--it is as if this love has washed everything away with a mythical hand.

Between them – he in the hands of the nurse behind the glass pane, and she in her bed unable to walk to see him with me – I was standing, washed in love and fear, limpid as a piece of glass. There is nothing occupying my thoughts or interests; there is just a man, like millions of other men who do not know the reality of the future- just a small incapable man who stands confronting the unknown which surrounds Him.

When the nurse put him back to sleep I began walking back to my wife's room, but as soon as I heard the sound of my steps I returned to my own world; a world encircled with something called real love, a love without commitment or punishment, a love for its own sake, without compensation, without an alternative, price or fear, serene love that I have never felt before--never; a love for that child that was born from me, because of me and for me. Its cost was my love for her, and her love for me.

While leaving your mother's room I also knew the meaning of worry. The load that lies heavy on the shoulders of men because it springs from. Within, from deep within and which gives life that noble motive which a man who does not know the meaning of an inner burden lacks.



## **FROM GHASSAN'S DIARY**

An hour and a half before midnight Fayeze was born. When the nurse called congratulations I felt him, Fayeze, falling upon my shoulders, and for a few moments I was seized by a feeling akin to dizziness. Amid the clamour of sensations that were taking hold of me, I felt I was more closely linked to the land upon which I walk. It was as if his fall upon my shoulders had planted me deep in the earth.

In the morning, the nurse brought him and showed him to me from behind the glass. He seemed a stupid red piece of fish; closed-eyed, open-mouthed and trembling palms: eyes that have much to see, mouth that must chew for a long time, and two palms – are they for giving or receiving, or both?

The doctor who was standing beside me said:

How do you feel?

– *I feel nothing*

Nothing at all?

– *Nothing.*

It was as if I was saying to myself: there is time for millions of feelings, time for anger, joy, surprise, disappointment, happiness, misery, laughter, sadness, love, hate, waiting and boredom--millions of moments abundantly full of all the contradictions found on this earth.

In the other room is his mother lying on the bed. She has forgotten all the pains she had to bear for his birth; she has forgotten all the tears she shed during the last twenty hours; she has forgo ten everything...

of it. He became a member of the ANM that same year.

The following year he joined his sister Fayzeh and brother Ghazi in Kuwait. The three of them sent most of their salaries back to the family in Damascus. His father now had a monthly income with which to support the rest of the family, meanwhile he obtained permission to practise as an advocate in Damascus, where most of his clients were Palestinians and very poor.

During the following six years in Kuwait, Ghassan continued his political work there. He was teaching art and sport, and in fact those years proved to be a very important part of his life. All his spare time was spent painting, writing, and reading – reading mainly politics: Marx, Engels, Lenin, and others. In 1960 Dr. George Habash convinced Ghassan to leave Kuwait for Beirut in order to work on Al-Hurriyah.

From the first days I met with Ghassan I felt I was confronted with an exceptional human being. Our relationship developed through the Palestinian cause into a personal relationship. In spite of an insecure situation – as a Palestinian Ghassan had neither passport nor work permit, he had no money, and worst of all he suffered from an incurable illness, diabetes – we soon realized that only death would be able to separate us.

I started to teach in a Kindergarten. Two months after my arrival in Lebanon we married – neither of us ever regretted it. Like most other Palestinians we had our difficulties, economically and otherwise. In January 1962, when the political situation was particularly unstable, Ghassan had to remain hidden at home for more than a month because of his lack of official papers. During this period he wrote the novel *Men in the Sun*, which later became known throughout most of

the Arab world, and he dedicated it to me.

Ghassan translated all his novels and stories for me while writing them, and I became acquainted with his political writings as well. His compulsion to write was unlimited – it was as if he contained a fountainhead of words and ideas from which he wanted to fill page after page about Palestine, his country, and his people. He was always busy, working as if death were just around the corner. Ghassan was a painter and designer as well. One of his paintings from that period shows man crucified in time.

I was greatly influenced by Ghassan's ideas, but he never tried to impose them on me. The same went for our foreign friends, who would discover the Palestinian case through him. Many of them later took up the problem in their own countries. My relationship with Ghassan's family became very close; from the beginning they welcomed me with all their hospitality and warmth and I came to love them dearly.

Our married life was based on trust, respect, and love, and so it was always significant, beautiful, and strong. Our first child, a boy, was born August 24, 1962. Fayeze it means Victor – was named after his grandfather.

Ghassan was now busier than ever and completely involved in his work. He was by this time established as a writer and journalist, and in 1963 he was offered the post of editor-in-chief of a new daily, Al-Muharrer, which represented the Nasserite and progressive forces. The paper soon became the second daily in Lebanon and was also widely distributed to other Arab countries.

He worked for five years on this paper, at the same

*LETTER TO GHASSAN FROM HIS SON, FAYEZ  
To my father, Ghassan Kanafani,*

When I was small, my father used to take me to Al-Muharrer; seat me on his own chair and ask me to draw some pictures. When he moved to Al-Amar, I used to accompany him there too. Then he moved to Al-Hadaf and took me, along with my sister Laila, to meet his colleagues there.

My father was a good man. He bought me all I wanted and I still love him, although he is dead. I found Arabic difficult but he taught me lots of things. As a result, I could read all the articles written about him. I liked having such a father because he was very intelligent and people loved him.

When we were in Denmark, Laila and I used to miss him very much and asked my mother to take us back to him. When we returned we used to see him working in the garden every Sunday, planting flowers with gentle hands.

Sometimes we worked together and when it got hot we used to take our shirts off. After work, he would often teach me how to use the small rifle he had bought me. I liked to watch television with him. When I grow up I want to be like my father and will fight to return to Palestine, my father's homeland, the land he and Umm Sa'ad used to tell me so much about.

From now on, I will help my mother and sister a lot so that they won't miss him too much. But we will never forget him, or Lamees who died with him and whom we all loved very much - Lamees who was always kind and never lost her temper.

*– Fayeze Ghassan Kanafani*

strong and wonderful people from the camps and elsewhere I felt so much of that strength, that I called for Fayeze to join us.

In his proud walking everyone recognized that he was the son of Ghassan, no one could doubt that he, together with our beloved Laila and other Palestinian children, would take up your torch and continue the struggle for the Palestinian people. Some day Palestine will become that world which you wanted to give 'to Lames, Fayeze, and all other children who do not have a world'.

***Yours,  
Anni***

time publishing the weekly Falastin, which represented the Palestinian branch of the AM and dealt with Palestinian affairs. During 1963 the ANM was on the way to scientific socialism, and in 1964 it decided to prepare for armed struggle in Palestine. Shortly after that the first commando group was established, although its aim in the beginning was not to carry out military operations, but to contact the Arabs in Israel and create a base for the coming armed struggle.

The ANM was soon to give its first martyrs in the struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Ghassan later dedicated his novel *All that is Left for You* (later to receive the 1966 Lebanese Literature Prize) to one of those martyrs, Khaled Al-Haj' – 'The first one to return and who is still marching'.

In 1965, Ghassan was officially invited to China and India, where he met the Chinese Foreign Minister Cheng Lee, the Indian Prime Minister Shastri, and other political leaders in those two countries. He discussed the Palestinian problem with them and was no doubt greatly influenced from this trip.

After his second trip to China – he participated in the Afro-Asian writers' conference – four-year old Fayeze gained a beautiful baby sister. We called her Laila, after the heroine in one of the most famous stories of Arab folklore; Laila is also a Scandinavian name, common among the Lapps north of the Arctic Circle.

Ghassan adored his children and often wrote about them. Even though his time with us was limited, he used to play with them frequently and would teach them many things. He seldom lost his temper and never hit them. His enjoyment of their company extended to include their friends, and he would often cart them

all off to the cinema or join in their games at home.

One week before the June War, Ghassan's mother died suddenly from a heart-attack in Damascus. Even though his love for his mother was very real he didn't shed a tear during the funeral; instead he tried to encourage his father and the whole family. But on our way back to Beirut, Ghassan broke down and for the first time I saw tears in his eyes. Similarly, when President Nasser announced his resignation after the June War and many people lost hope, Ghassan refused to succumb to defeatism.

In critical moments he was unbelievably strong and tried to give some of that strength to others. Later on he would express his feelings in political and literary writings. I never had any doubt that Ghassan had chosen the correct road. Had I tried to stop him from his revolutionary struggle and commitment, he might still be my husband, but not the fine and honest person whom I loved and admired.

I did my best to join Ghassan in his struggle; I made contacts with people in the West interested in knowing the truth about the Palestinian struggle. A Danish left-wing magazine asked me to write a background article about Palestine – it was to be the first of several. Since the June War I have written hundreds of letters to old and new friends in Scandinavia and other countries; one of our correspondances was with the well-known Jewish anti-Zionist writer in the United States, Moshe Menuhin (author of *The Decadence of Judaism in our Time*). We came to consider him as one of our personal friends.

In the autumn of 1967 Ghassan joined the editorial board of the daily *Al-Anwar*, a leading Nasserite pa-

ing--writing, painting, gardening; your good and beautiful hands and mind were always creating, giving to us--to the people. Your great ability to convince foreign visitors of the Palestinian people's just cause was well-known.

You were able to explain in simple terms the most difficult political ideas – that is why people listened to you, read your articles and books and will continue to do so. And that is why the enemies had to destroy you. But they did not succeed. Nobody can destroy an honourable human being rooted through revolutionary struggle among his people. You will always be with us Ghassan – a martyr, a symbol, a flame of liberation and revolution for the Palestinian people and for other Afro-Asian people.

It seems to Fayeze, Laila and me that you have just started a long journey together with Lamees, whom you loved so dearly, and who inspired you to write stories for her from the moment she was born. Our dear Lamees – so good, so sweet, so patient and intelligent that everyone had to love her. Like you she loved human beings and life- she loved her parents and brothers so much and her love and admiration for you, Ghassan, was deep and sincere.

On that Saturday morning, July 8, because I had to stay at home to take care of Laila and Fayeze, our dear Lamees joined you on the unexpected journey back to your beloved Palestine. The funeral procession for you and Lamees was the people's promise of continued and increased revolutionary struggle. I am eternally proud of being your wife – I didn't want to cry, but to continue your struggle.

While walking with our family, Umm Sa'ad and all the

### ***To Ghassan-my husband and teacher***

You once said: 'A people's history isn't the work of an individual, but the will to join the masses' unceasing struggle to defeat all kinds of national and class exploitation.' I believe you were right; but great and honest people like you, Ghassan, are those who give example to the struggling people. You proved to your Palestinian people that they are fighting a just battle, and now in your death you are encouraging them to continue that struggle.

I came to Lebanon more than ten years ago to 'study' the Palestine problem. In you I found Palestine – the land and its people--and through our marriage I became a part of Palestine, the mother of our two Palestinian children, Fayez and Laila. From the very first moment we met, I trusted you, Ghassan. You were always completely honest; even in proposing marriage you put the cards on the table – no country, no future, no money, no passport, and a very severe chronic illness.

All that made no difference to me-it was you Ghassan, I loved and admired. In spite of the many broken 'promises', you gave me nearly eleven years – the most happy and significant of my life- from which I can draw strength for the difficult years to come.

For Fayez, Laila and me you were not only a wonderful father and husband, you were a teacher and comrade too. On Sundays you gave yourself completely to the three of us. You loved our home, to work in the garden and get your hands into the earth, to play with the children and the cats, and to drink coffee while translating for me your stories and articles.

Sometimes, we just talked together. You enjoyed work-

per, and became editor-in-chief of its weekly magazine. At the same time he had begun to play a leading role in Palestinian and PFLP informational activities. It is a known fact that any newspaper or magazine to which he contributed articles or editorials would raise its standard and distribution rapidly. His weekly article in Al-Anwar, 'Behind the Scenes', because of its accurate political analysis, was regularly translated by the French and other embassies in Beirut.

However, in 1969, Ghassan decided to leave the security of his job at Al-Anwar, in order to start the political weekly, Al-Hadaf, even though this meant a drop in income. He never worked because of financial considerations- his inspiration for writing and working unceasingly was the Palestinian-Arab struggle, the liberation of Palestine, and by July 1969 the first issues of Al-Hadaf had appeared, with Ghassan as chief editor. He was convinced that the paper would transmit the message of the PFLP and other progressive forces to the Arab masses and to world public opinion. He was right.

In the next two years Al-Hadaf developed into one of the best political weeklies of the Arab world, where it was extensively quoted. Many of its articles and editorials were translated into other languages.

As a political theorist, Ghassan participated in formulating the political programs and manifestos of the PFLP. Much of his work he did at home in order to be near us. Many of his articles and of the PFLP's posters were designed at home, with Fayez and Laila willing helpers and happy to watch their father painting and drawing.

Ghassan worked continuously, contributing a good

deal to Al-Hadaf. When he also became official spokesman of the PFLP he had less and less time for me and the children – so the time we had together was very precious. I had no wish to stop him.

Daily his comrades gave their lives in the struggle, or ended up under torture in Israeli prisons. It was his duty to tell the world about the Palestinian revolution. As The Daily Star put it (July 9, 1972): “Ghassan was the commando who never fired a gun. His weapon was a ballpoint pen and his arena newspaper pages. And he hurt the enemy more than a column of commandos.”

During the PFLP’s hijacking of four Western airliners we did not see Ghassan for more than a week. This became the busiest period in his active life of information. He had returned from Amman on the last flight on the eve of the terrible massacre instigated by the Jordanian regime against the Palestinian people and the resistance movement in Jordan.

If none of the hundreds of foreign correspondents who filled the by then legendary office at Al-Hadaf were unable to put Ghassan down in a dialogue, it was because the answers he gave were always penetrating, sharp and accurate, the main reason being that the cause which he was defending--the Palestinian revolutionary struggle – is a just one. Many journalists and others who honestly tried to understand the Middle East conflict visited us at home; many came back, some became our personal friends.

Ghassan was one of those who fought sincerely for the development of the resistance movement from a nationalist Palestinian liberation movement into a pan-Arab revolutionary socialist movement of which the liberation of Palestine would be a vital component.

At Al-Nakura, our truck parked, along with numerous other ones. The men began to hand in their weapons to the officers, stationed there for that specific purpose. When our turn came, I could see the rifles and guns lying on the table and the long queue of lorries, leaving the land of oranges far behind and spreading out over the winding roads of Lebanon.

Then I began to weep, howling with tears. As for your mother, she eyed the oranges silently, and all the orange trees your father had left behind to the Jews were reflected in his eyes; all the wholesome orange trees he had acquired one by one were visible in his face and glistened through the tears he could not check, even in front of the officer. When we arrived in Sidon that afternoon, we had become homeless.

In the evening, when darkness descended, you returned home. Your father was ill, your mother sitting by his side. All of you, your eyes were glimmering like cats’ eyes, and your lips were scaled as though they had never been unsealed. Your lips were like traes of an old wound that had not quite healed. You were heaped there as estranged from your childhood as you were from the land of oranges.... Your father was still ill, prostrate on his bed, your mother swallowing the tears of a tragedy that welled in her eyes.

I entered the room stealthily, like an outcast; and as my eyes touched your father’s face, tremulous with wrath, they also met the black pistol lying on the low table. Next to it was an orange. And the orange was withered and dried.

### **THE LAND OF THE SAD ORANGES**

*(This dedication appears at the beginning of the book of short stories entitled *The Land of The Sad Oranges*.)*

(It was in no way a tragedy when we left Jaffa for Acre. Our departure resembled that of people who leave their home town every year to spend the holidays elsewhere. Our days in Acre passed unpeturbed. Indeed,

I may even have enjoyed those days as they interrupted my cumbersome obligation to attend school. However, Acre's image began to stand out in my mind after the night of the great attack—a harsh and bitter night reflecting itself in the glum faces of the men and the supplications raised by the women. You, I, and our contemporaries were too young to comprehend the meaning of what was happening; but during that night, matters began to fall into perspective, and in the morning when the Jews withdrew, thundering and smoking, a big truck parked at our front door and a meagre quantity of mattresses and quilts was flung into it from time to time with quick spasmodic movements.

I stood there leaning against the old, shabby wall of our house while I watched your mother climbing into the truck, then your aunt, followed by the little ones. Your father hurled you, along with your brothers, into the lorry on top of the luggage. Then he fished me out from my corner and lifted me over his head. I was deposited in the compartment above the driver, where I found my brother Riad sitting quietly.

Before I had the chance to settle, the engine had started and my beloved Acre gradually vanished behind the curves of the road leading to Ras Al-Nakura.?

He always stressed that the Palestine problem could not be solved in isolation from the Arab world's whole social and political situation.

In spite of protestations from writers' and journalists' unions, Ghassan was imprisoned in November 1971 for an article in *Al-Hadaf* about the reactionary regime in a certain Arab country. The Lebanese press registered its protest about his imprisonment in articles and editorials. Because of his illness he spent the time in the prison hospital, where he had time to read some of Strindberg's plays and a long novel by the Icelandic Nobel Prize winner, Halldor Laxness; but apart from that he was not able to relax. He had to work, and wrote a part of his long unfinished novel about Palestine.

This novel, *The Lover*, in which he wanted to write about the whole Palestinian struggle from its beginnings against the British authorities and the Zionist forces up to the present revolutionary struggle for the liberation of Palestine, had been in his mind for several years. He interviewed Palestinians from all over Palestine – in the camps and elsewhere, including the fighters who joined the Palestinian rebellion in 1936-39 and who are still fighting. He had planned to finish *The Lover* during the summer of 1972. A part of it has now been published and according to readers it is a strong and moving work.

Besides writing, he was painting a lot – mostly horses. The horse played an important role in some of his stories and novels. The horse to us Arabs, he said, symbolizes beauty, courage, honesty, intelligence, truth, and freedom. For me, Ghassan himself had all these characteristics. His horses – he did more than twenty in recent years--are now hung on the walls of our family and friends in Scandinavia and the Arab countries, and

on the walls of the guards, doctors and nurses from the prison hospital.

Ghassan's literary work went side by side with his journalistic and political activities. Long before his death he was considered among the best of Arab and Palestinian writers. Usually he built up the whole story, novel, or play in his mind; then he would write it all down in a short time, making very few corrections afterwards. All his manuscripts were written by hand – he never made a copy.

In Lebanon and the Arab world in general one is prohibited from questioning religion and confessionality, but Ghassan, in his play *Al-Bab* ("The Door"), managed to do this through an Arab metaphysical theme dealing with religion and existentialism. Incidentally, although he was a Moslem and I a Christian, this was no obstacle to our relationship, since we shared the same point of view on religion. In 1964 *Al-Bab* was translated into French and appeared in the literary magazine *L'Orient* in Paris.

Ghassan's love for children was expressed in his short-story collection of 1965, *A World Which Is Not Ours*. It is dedicated to 'Fayez, Lames, and all other children for whom we want a world'. The same year he published *Essays about Resistance Literature in Palestine*, which for the first time revealed to the Arab world that strong and determined Palestinian Arab poets existed in Israel. Among those poets introduced in the book were Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Kasem, Tawfik Zayad and several others who later became well-known in the Arab world and other countries.

In 1969, Ghassan wrote *Umm Sa'ad* (Sa'ad's Mother). *Umm Sa'ad*, a dear old friend of ours, was a symbol to

with his own drawings. Even though Ghassan had many political opponents he had no personal enemies.

On the contrary, he was liked and respected even by those with whom he differed. His opponents would often meet with him; they followed him to the graveside and I met them in our home when they came to express their sympathy.

The assassins of Ghassan hoped to encourage defeatism among the Palestinian refugees and a split in the resistance movement. They achieved the opposite. The people understood Ghassan's greatness – they loved him and showed their love by closing ranks.



death of President Nasser, were workers and farmers, intellectuals, refugees from the camps, members of the different groups of the Palestinian resistance movement, representatives of most political parties and of public life.

They are the same ones who flocked in hundreds to our home on the outskirts of Beirut in the days following the assassination. Workers, intellectuals, well-known artists, and political parties from all over the world expressed their sympathy with the liberation movement and with his family; at the same time they promised to carry on the struggle to which Ghassan devoted his life.

I sometimes spend the morning in the small garden which was Ghassan's pride. I remember how Hussein, the father of Lames, arrived happy that Saturday evening to tell his daughter that she had been accepted at the medical faculty of Amman to start after the summer holiday. When he arrived his daughter was dead.

Now when Lames' parents talk about their daughter and Ghassan, their eyes glow and their voices are strong. It is important to them that others know about Lames and Ghassan, about their lives, about the hope to which the Palestinian people cling, scattered as they are all over the Arab world.

Ghassan's literary activities started in fact with a small book to Lames. All her life she was his muse; that Saturday, seventeen years later, they were killed by the same bomb. When, after the funeral, I tried to comfort Hussein, he said: "She has always loved Ghassan- her death together with him was her gift to him." Nearly every year Ghassan sent a book to Lames, written for her alone. They were written by hand and illustrated

him of the Palestinian woman in the camp and of the worker class, and the book about her speaks directly to the people whom she represents. In the dialogue between him and Umm Sa'ad, it is the illiterate woman who speaks and the intellectual who listens and puts the questions.

Ghassan first ripened as a Marxist in his literary work. Umm Sa'ad is written by a Marxist novelist; but he had been developing ideologically from the beginnings of Falastin so that in his later years he had become a Marxist analyst too. In 1970 came his last novel, Back to Haifa, but he left two unfinished novels and an unpublished play. There is no doubt that Ghassan was a very talented writer, and this was recognized in the Arab world; I am sure that one day the rest of the world too will extend its recognition.

They killed him while he was still developing: he was too dangerous for them as a journalist and spokesman, as an artist and human being. The Daily Star Supplement, of 16, July 1972 said: "Israel used the attack on Lydda airport to build up the image of Ghassan as the man responsible, although his field of work within the PFLP did not make him more directly involved than other leaders. The Israelis were probably motivated by two facts: first, he was an easier target; second, they would not only justify [his assassination] to the outside world, but also appear as having succeeded in avenging the Lydda attack." It also commented that the Western press, notably Die Hamburger Zeitung, La Stampa, and The Daily Mail, played into the hands of the Israelis by publishing false evidence of Ghassan's involvement in the Lydda action, which gives them a certain responsibility for what happened.

Why did they have to kill Ghassan that way? "He was

like a mountain-and a mountain can only be destroyed by dynamite,' wrote a Beirut paper about him. Only one hour after the assassination the Israeli radio announced that the PFLP's official spokesman had been killed, together with his wife, after a bomb explosion in their car.

Had the killers watched us for a long time? Did they know that I used to go down-town with my husband every Saturday? During the week I worked in a school for retarded children – only that particular Saturday I didn't go down with Ghassan. Had the killers noticed that the cool garage used to be the playground for all the children of the building? By chance the children had left shortly before. If the car had exploded inside the garage a part of the building would have been completely destroyed.

By now I have been a widow for almost a year. The great moral support and help from our family, the Palestinian resistance movement, neighbours, known and unknown friends from all over the world, have helped me through this period. It is still not possible for the children and myself to believe that our beloved Ghassan and our dear Lames are no longer with us.

The assassination happened on the morning of Saturday, July 8. The day before, Ghassan had taken Fayzeh, Lames, me and the children to the beach. We were eight people in the car-it could have happened that Day...

That same evening he came home early, something he had been doing for the preceding two weeks. Love of life necessitates violence. Ghassan wasn't a pacifist. He was killed in the class-struggle like Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Ernst Thalmann, Lumumba and Ché

Guevera. As they loved life- so did he. Like them he saw the necessity of revolutionary violence as self-defense against the oppression from the exploiting classes. In spite of repeated threats against his life he was not subdued.

The Palestinian liberation movement has been forced to answer violence with violence; it has sacrificed itself in the unequal struggle and it has been forced to face death every day. A Western correspondent asked Ghassan shortly before his assassination: 'Does death have a meaning to you?' \*Of course death means a lot. The important thing is to know why. Self-sacrifice, within the context of revolutionary action, is an expression of the very highest understanding of life, and of the struggle to make life worthy of a human being.

The love of life for a person becomes a love for the life of his people's masses, and his rejection that their life persists in being full of continuous misery, suffering and hardship. Hence, his understanding of life becomes a social virtue, capable of convincing the militant fighter that self-sacrifice is a redemption of his people's life. This is a maximum expression of attachment to life.

Often we visit the graves of Ghassan and Lames. They are buried in the shadows of the trees – the earth is as dry and red as the soil in Palestine from which their people have been expelled. For his struggle to give the Palestinian people the possibility of returning to their homes in Palestine he had to pay with his life. The people loved him; he expressed their hopes and dreams; he proved to them that life can be different from the misery of the refugee camps.

The tens of thousands who followed Ghassan to his grave in the biggest popular demonstration since the