

Resist, My People, Resist Them: Poetry Is Not A Crime, Except For Palestinians

by

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After what critics called "a hollow charade of a trial" and "theatre of the absurd," an Israeli court Thursday convicted Palestinian poet and photographer Dareen Tatour, 36, of "incitement to violence" and "support of a terror organization" for publishing her poetry on social media. The trial came nearly three years after Tatour, a Palestinian Israeli citizen from the village of Al-Reineh near Nazareth, was [arrested](#) in October 2015 in the middle of the night by Israeli authorities during a wave of Palestinian protests and lone-wolf attacks against IDF forces. After being imprisoned for three months, she was put under house arrest in an Israeli apartment, forced to wear an ankle monitor and forbidden to use the Internet or phone. Last year, an Israeli court allowed her to continue living under house arrest in her village.

During the "trial" critics charged that prosecutors who lacked any evidence Tatour had provoked violence instead resorted to distortion, propaganda and deliberate obfuscation: "By the end of the hearings, not a single fact was left standing." Examining a series of poems she posted on Facebook and YouTube, they systematically demonised - "as if Google didn't exist" - three key words Tatour often uses in her work with clearly non-violent meanings: qawim, or 'resist,' intifada, 'shaking off', and shahid, 'martyr,' which refers not to attackers but victims. Critics said Israelis particularly misconstrued Tatour's anti-occupation poem "Qawem ya sha'abi, qawemhum," or "Resist, My People, Resist Them," written in sorrowful response to the extrajudicial execution of a Palestinian student and the burning of two Palestinian children. The result, they said, was a fear-mongering "display of vindictive incompetence."

Tatour's case had sparked an international solidarity campaign by activists arguing that, "Poetry is not a crime," except for Palestinians. In 2016, over 150 literary icons, including Alice Walker and Dave Eggers, signed a letter in solidarity with Tatour, calling for her release; PEN International did the same as did over 1,000 Israelis in a 2017 petition. During the trial, writers and activists testified about what Tatour's words did and didn't mean, and about the historic role of dissident poets in oppressive regimes. Citing a 1985 essay by Mahmoud Darwish called "The Madness of Being Palestinian," a piece in *The Electronic Intafada* argued that Tatour's trial showed "The Madness of Being Israel." After attacks against Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Darwish wrote that a Palestinian could only do one thing: "Become more Palestinian, a Palestinian until homeland or liberty, a Palestinian until death." Tatour's crime "was becoming more Palestinian in her words and her poems."

"Say it again, resist times ten," writes Palestinian-American poet Naomi Shihab Nye in her poem, "Talking Forever," in the letter of support for Tatour. The same spirit of perseverance echoes in Tatour's "Resist My people, Resist them, "I will not succumb to the 'peaceful solution.' Never lower my flags/ Until I evict them from my land," she writes. After Thursday's verdict, a defiant Tatour said her case revealed to the world "what Israel's democracy is - a democracy for Jews only." "The court convicted me of terrorism," she said. "If that's my terrorism, I give the world a terrorism of love." *From "Common Dreams", May 3, 2018*



Resist, My People, Resist Them

Resist, My People, Resist Them
Resist, my people, resist them.
In Jerusalem, I dressed my wounds and breathed my sorrows
And carried the soul in my palm
For an Arab Palestine.
I will not succumb to the “peaceful solution,”
Never lower my flags
Until I evict them from my land.
I cast them aside for a coming time.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist the settler’s robbery
And follow the caravan of martyrs.
Shred the disgraceful constitution
Which imposed degradation and humiliation
And deterred us from restoring justice.
They burned blameless children;
As for Hadil, they sniped her in public,
Killed her in broad daylight.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist the colonialist’s onslaught.
Pay no mind to his agents among us
Who chain us with the peaceful illusion.
Do not fear doubtful tongues;
The truth in your heart is stronger,
As long as you resist in a land
That has lived through raids and victory.
So Ali called from his grave:
Resist, my rebellious people.
Write me as prose on the agarwood;
My remains have you as a response.
Resist, my people, resist them.
Resist, my people, resist them.

Dareen Tatour

