

RESIST, MY PEOPLE, RESIST THEM REINEH NEAR NAZARETH

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PHOTOGRAPHER**

I was always aware of what I wanted to be, and that was a writer.

I remember my extreme obsession with knowing the meanings of words until one of the teachers told me outraged, "Go and buy a dictionary". I asked my grandmother to buy me a dictionary and presented it to the teacher as if it was a novel.

As I got older, I started turning everything I learned from my grandmother about our history into political poetry.

In 2015 I witnessed the killing of dozens of Palestinian youths who were murdered in cold blood.

I watched how they killed a woman at the checkpoint because she refused to take off her hijab.

The kidnapping and murder of a 16-year old boy by Israeli settlers.

The firebombing of a home, that severely burnt a baby and killed his parents.

I was feeling suffocated, unable to express the ugliness of these crimes. I felt guilty as a human being and it was breaking my soul.

How are these children killed in front of our eyes while we are just watching?

It is a stain on our forehead.

So I wrote a poem* calling for my people to resist this crazy violence. It was the cry of pain I was feeling.

I posted the poem on Facebook.

It was three in the morning and I was asleep. Suddenly, I hear the scream of my family saying: '*Dareen, the Israelis are coming to arrest you*'.

There were more than 40 soldiers in my home and five armoured vehicles closing the entrances.

They transferred me between several prisons for interrogation. My family did not know where I was. I was washing and wearing the same wet clothes I was arrested in.

Then they searched my Facebook account.

And after approximately 21 days, they presented my poem 'Resist, My People Resist Them'. Through the poem, they accused me of planning to carry out a suicide operation and that I support terrorist entities.

I spent five months in prison, then they sent me to house arrest. Notice the contradiction; they claimed that I intended to kill Israelis and carry out terrorist operations, and at the same time, they put me in a house in an Israeli settlement.

All they wanted from the beginning was for me to break and apologise, and this is what I did not give them. Apologise for what?

After two years, six months and eighteen days I was released from house arrest.

Since then the settlers tried to kill me three times. I received many threatening and racist messages. I felt constantly in danger. I couldn't work, study, or publish my books. If I published or performed my poem, I would return to prison. I tried to open new doors, but I couldn't.

Finally, I left for Sweden on a grant for two years for artists under threat. Here I can continue my fight through cultural resistance.

* Resist, My People, Resist Them is available to read here: <https://arablit.org/2016/04/27/the-poem-for-which-dareen-tatours-under-house-arrest-resist-my-people-resist-them/>