

Palestinian illustrator Mahasen Al-Khatib murdered in Israeli airstrike on Jabalia refugee camp

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Mahasen Al-Khatib, a digital illustrator from Gaza, was killed during an Israeli airstrike on the Jabalia refugee camp on October 18. The attack, a flagrant violation of international law, killed 33 Palestinian civilians, including the remaining members of the artist's immediate family. The Biden-Harris administration and the other imperialist governments, which have enabled and sanctioned Israel's crimes, bear responsibility for the young woman's murder.

Al-Khatib, who was 32, worked as a storyboard artist and designed characters for various clients around the world. She also founded the Rawasi Palestine Foundation for Culture, Art and Media. She posted her digital illustrations on Instagram and on TikTok, which earned her a following on social media. Throughout the barbaric massacre of Palestinians that began following October 7, 2023, Al-Khatib used her illustrations to depict the Zionist state's war crimes and to raise a voice in defense of human rights. As well as portraying moments of terror, the artist depicted human resilience and hope.

"Mahasen was one of the most professional, humble and lovely artists in Gaza," Jumana Shahin, a student and friend of the artist told Press TV, a news network owned by the Iranian government. "She left a lasting impression on everyone she taught or met."

The artist impressed her acquaintances with her courage and perseverance as well. "I have never met someone as resilient as her. Even when she would speak about her suffering from starvation and the terrifying sounds of bombings, she did it with a sense of humor," said Shahin. Al-Khatib had said that "she wanted to share her knowledge and experiences as much as possible because if she were to be killed, at

least her knowledge would live on through others," according to Shahin.

In January, the artist made a Facebook post that anticipated her death. In it, she included a photo of herself by which she wanted to be remembered.

After Al-Khatib's father died, she became the provider for her family. Like millions of other Palestinians, they were forced to relocate many times by the criminal and deliberate Israeli attacks on civilians. Their home was damaged in several airstrikes. Al-Khatib's art supplies also were stolen, jeopardizing her ability to earn her family's subsistence.

Seeking to escape from Gaza, Al-Khatib created a GoFundMe page in June. "In this tough situation, I am a digital artist finding solace and resilience through my art ... pixels and colors," she wrote.

The artist and her family could not, of course, escape the effects of Israel's unconscionable blocking of food, water and humanitarian aid from entering Gaza. For months, the family was reduced to eating leaves to survive. In August, Al-Khatib posted a video of her brother's reaction when the family had at last managed to get hold of a chicken. Her brother played with it happily as they talked about how they should cook it. He suggested making *maqluba*, a traditional dish with rice and fried vegetables. Al-Khatib suggested boiling the chicken, which is the tradition on festive occasions. The chicken had to be divided among eight people.

In a social media post on the anniversary of the genocide, Al-Khatib wrote that she and her family were staying in Jabalia, "because after we lived through displacement many times, we know there is no escape."

The artist posted *We Are Burning*, her last illustration,

only a few hours before she was killed. The picture honors Shaban Al-Dalou, a 19-year-old student in Gaza who was burned to death by an Israeli airstrike on the Al-Aqsa Hospital compound in Deir al-Balah. Al-Dalou was receiving treatment at the time and was connected to an IV drip.

Compounding the cruelty of Al-Khatib's murder, Israel's heavy bombardment of northern Gaza has made it impossible for the artist's family to claim her remains. "We still can't bury her body, which is at Kamal Adwan Hospital, because of the dangerous situation," the artist's uncle Hosam told Press TV. Her body is being held at the hospital indefinitely.

To date, Israel has killed at least 42,792 people in Gaza, including nearly 16,765 children, according to the latest figures from the Palestinian Ministry of Health. It has injured more than 100,412 people. In the West Bank, it has killed at least 760 people, including at least 165 children, and injured more than 6,250 people. But these official figures are known to be significant underestimates.

Al-Khatib is among the latest victims of Israel's campaign to not only exterminate the Palestinian people, but also eradicate their culture. As of January, the Zionist state had murdered 28 Palestinian artists, intellectuals and authors, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Culture. The number is undoubtedly higher today. Among the victims of the genocide are the following artists:

- Heba Zaqout, visual artist and teacher of fine arts
- Heba Abu Nada, poet and teacher
- Omar Abu Shawish, poet, novelist and social activist
- Inas Saqqa, actress, playwright and teacher
- Yousef Dawas, musician, writer, journalist and photographer
- Mohammed Qraieqa, cartoonist, artist and photographer
- Nooraldeen Hajjaj, playwright and novelist
- Refaat al-Ar'eer, poet, teacher, author, translator

Israel's bestial rampage is the sharpest and most horrifying expression of the terminal decay of capitalism, the continued existence of which is incompatible with the survival of humanity. The tasks of ending the genocide, preserving and renewing the arts and protecting civilization itself are inseparable from the fight for socialism.



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