

**AL JALIAH**

Issue n. 1 - 2026



# الجالية

Magazine for Arab and Arab-Diasporic Affairs

**Al Jaliah**  
**Magazine for Arab and Arab-Diasporic Affairs**

**Issue 1.**

**March, 2026.**

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# INDEX

## EDITORIAL

8

## HISTORY-POLITICS-SOCIETY

*Yesterday and Today*

Mustafa Lutfi Al Manfaluti

14

*Conflict between Muslim and Catholic Arabs in 1914 in the city of Salvador de Bahia*

Adma Muhana

20

*Adib Al Shishakli: The Long Shadow of a Dictator from Syria to Brazil*

Gustavo Racy

38

*The Nodding Head (Yes-No): the Conflict between Ruler and Ruled*

Mwaffaq Al Hajjar

54

## **CULTURE-ARTS-LETTERS**

*The Ship of the Syrians and Lebanese in 25 de março street* 68  
José de Souza Martins

*Al Jaliah Exhibition* 74  
João Sousa

*If I must Die, by Refaat Alareer* 92  
Comics adaptation by Douglas Lambert

## **REVIEW**

*The Borders of Palestine: Psychoanalysis as a Practice of Resistance* 98  
Marcus Vinícius Neto Silva

## **ANECDOTE**

*And you, sharhou* 108  
Sami Joaquim Racy

## **ABOUT THE AUTORS**

113



# EDITORIAL

One year ago, issue zero of Al Jaliah was born. On that occasion, we dedicated ourselves to crafting our founding manifesto and establishing the guiding principles of our work. We have attempted to reclaim the Arab intellectual legacy and deepened research on diasporic issues. Today, we present our first issue, the fruit of an unrelenting effort to build bridges of knowledge and broaden intellectual horizons for all those who pursue renewal and transition towards alternative visions.

The ideas published in this issue seek to connect past and present, striving to outline forms of relation between the collective representations that ground ways of knowing reality, and to affirm the interconnection between collective and individual political trajectories as a mirror of the community and an embodiment of the phenomena that give our society its shape at a moment of danger—danger that never ceases.

Syria, Brazil, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia. From historical commentary to book review, from photography and poetry to the essay form, from the moral tale to the anecdote, the new issue of *Al Jaliah* moves through geographic and symbolic spaces, maintaining its critical posture and vision through paths by which it constitutes itself and, in turn, helps to shape. Here, we seek to present a diverse panorama of texts and experiences that revolve around a single question: how do we define ourselves today, as we follow the traces of identity among multiple memories and distant places?

Therefore, it is not by chance that we open this issue by recovering a text by Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti written especially for the Christmas edition of *Al Jaliah* in 1923. It was published five days before the author's birthday; he would die eight months later. "Yesterday and Today" oscillates between epistle, treatise, and tale, addressing questions of virtue and vice with a language that blends reformist sensibility with a contemplative tone, seeking to prompt the reader to question the haze we voluntarily place over our eyes in daily life, propped up by the false certainty that we alone understand the essence of virtue and practice it correctly.

From Manfaluti's lesson that inaugurates the new issue, we move to the historical commentary by Adma Muhana, "Conflicts Between Muslim Arabs and Catholics in 1914 in the City of Salvador, Bahia." The text interrogates an incident extensively reported by the Brazilian press at the time, revealing the complexities, ambiguities, and contradictory representations that shaped the image of Arabs in one of Brazil's largest capitals during the early twentieth century. The text does not limit itself to deconstructing the common stereotypical image in Brazil of the disciplined, hardworking Arab immigrant; it also places us before manifestations of racism, both explicit and implicit, directed against Arabs in general and Muslims specifically, establishing important references for understanding our history in the diaspora.

In a connected context addressing the 1950s and 1960s, Gustavo Racy retrieves the trajectory of Adib Al Shishakli, former Syrian president assassinated in rural Brazil. Through this incident, scarcely present in Brazilian memory, the text opens a space for reflection on the ironies of history and its unexpected intersections between Syria and Brazil, in a scenario suggesting that history does not cease to repeat itself.

Under the title "The Nodding Head (Yes–No): The Conflict Between Ruler and Ruled," Mwaffaq Al Hajjar presents an article engaged with questions left open by Racy. Hajjar reflects on the Syrian political and social climate during moments of acute transition, and on the ideological mechanisms that lead societies to reproduce patterns of power and submission. Relying on Jacques Derrida's observations on the work of Alain, while also drawing from Louis Althusser and 'Abd al Rahman al Kawakibi, Hajjar raises an ethical question that becomes increasingly pressing: how does one say "no" at a time when everything seems susceptible to hesitation?

Moving to the section dedicated to arts and letters, we present the translation of a chronicle by Brazilian sociologist José de Sousa Martins, dedicated to the memory of the Syro-Lebanese community in São Paulo. The issue also presents a visual essay authored by Portuguese photographer based in Beirut, João Sousa, who introduces a photographic testimony and the personal experience of the events that

have shaken Lebanon on October 7, 2023, until the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah. It is a powerful essay, bringing to the surface the delicacy of a life that resists unceasingly.

In the book review section, psychoanalyst and editor of *Edições Inadequadas*, Marcus Vinicius Neto Silva, reflects on the book *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*, by Stephen and Lara Sheehi. There, Silva questions the role of psychoanalysis in the context of colonialism: can psychoanalysis serve as a tool for understanding suffering in the context of settler colonialism, or by claiming neutrality, does it risk becoming part of the mechanisms that produce it?

In conclusion, honoring our tradition, we publish the amusing anecdote titled "And you, Sharhou," retrieved from the archives of the *Al Jaliah* edition of November 30, 1923, reminding us that humor and irony are also historical documents and references for research and analysis, in addition to being instruments of critique.

Here, then, is our new issue. In its diversity, it brings together a particular sensitivity to history, memory, and the questions raised by the Arab experience of yesterday and today. We want to thank all those who have supported us throughout this first year. We hope you enjoy, learn, have fun, question, and find in our pages a door to even more questions.

**The Editors,  
Curitiba,/Paris  
February, 2026.**



HISTORY

POLITICS

SOCIETY

# YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Mustafa Lutfi Al Manfaluti

Translated by Yara Osman and Gustavo Racy

Originally published in:  
*Al Jaliah* n. 51, 25/12/1923.

I believe that vice and virtue, as much as beauty and ugliness, are relative concepts that change according to place and epoch. Just as what is beautiful to one nation may not be to another, as I believe that what is considered a virtue in one era may, in a different one, be considered a vice. Virtues and vices are not holy and immutable names, like the names of God. A virtue is a virtue because it leads to happiness; and a vice is a vice because it leads to suffering. Where one characteristic brings happiness, there is virtue, even though this could be something we otherwise called a flaw. And where an action leads to suffering, there is vice, though this action could have been considered worthy in different times.

Scholars of morality, in various places and times, from Adam to today, have become accustomed to presenting two fixed tables in their books and treatises: one entitled "Virtues," under which they write "courage," "generosity," "honesty," "loyalty," "honour," "truthfulness," "justice," "mercy;" the other, entitled "Vices," under which they write "cowardice," "avarice," "betrayal," "perfidy," "greed," "foulness," "lie," "injustice," "cruelty."

But I believe it is time to acknowledge that people today are not the same as yesterday's, and that current lifestyles differ from the past's. Many of the qualities which, in times of simple and rudimentary life, were considered vices, rejected and despised, have become, in this our utility- and interest-based materialist modern era, established conditions of the social system as well as indispensable fundamentals of all human activity. If one wishes to compete as an equal in the struggle for life, then it is impossible for people to escape these qualities; they must learn them systematically just as they learn the other sciences that rule their subsistence and determine their happiness.

When people used to acknowledge the favour they received, benefiting those who helped them, generosity was a virtue. If the generous person fell into poverty, they would find among those they had helped someone who would extend them a hand to lift them from their suffering. Today, however, when people deny the good they receive and are bothered by the burden of gratitude—even mocking the benefactor when he stumbles—generosity is no longer a virtue, and it does not seem wise to recommend it.

Mercy was a virtue when people were honest about their own conditions: only the miserable would admit their misery, and only the one who really could not wear new clothes would wear old ones. Today, however, souls have degraded: many pretend poverty without knowing it; others emulate a suffering they have not experienced. Half of the people have become lazy and live without work; they take refuge in the shadow of compassionate hearts, exploiting piety until draining it completely. Thus, mercy has become immediate poverty and certain loss.

Courage was a virtue when people supported the brave and followed his tracks without abandoning him until the desired victory. Today, however, spirits have cooled, wills have dissipated, and courage has faded from souls. When one sees someone undertake a national or social cause, they incite them to carry on while watching from afar. If the person succeeds in their struggle, they rush to share in the laurels of triumph; if they fail, they abandon them and pretend not to know them. Thus, courage becomes a sort of madness that leads to ruin and suffering.



Contentment was a virtue when the criterion for judging people's value was merit. Poverty honoured the noble person of elevated soul, and riches embarrassed the vile person. Today, however, when nothing is left of glory if not financial glory, and people recognize each other more by clothing than by action, contentment has become humiliation, constant misery, and lasting suffering.

Anger was a vice when the virtue of patience was acknowledged, being esteemed by people who would bow in reverence in front of the patient. Now, however, when people have become perverse, carrying their evils over their shoulders and roaming around with them in search of a head to hit—and they are not pleased by a weak and docile head that knows not how to defend itself—there is no good in patience. Good, all good, lies in anger. For life is a battlefield whose heroes are the perverse and whose weapons are vices; and whosoever does not combat with the same weapons perishes in the first clash.

It would be desirable for everyone to be virtuous so that virtue might bring happiness to all; or for everyone to be vile, so that some might fear the strength of others. However, the fact that only a few wield the fragile instrument of virtue, while the majority wield the stronger weapons of vice, can only be interpreted in one way: the noble will be destroyed, and the vile will survive at their expense.

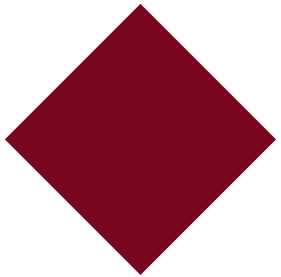
Thus, I conclude that calling for goodness, generosity, mercy, justice, honesty, and loyalty in these present times has become a trap set by the strong and cunning to deceive the naïve and the weak, leading them away from the banquet of life so they can enjoy it alone. Whoever calls for generosity only wishes to transfer money from the pockets of others into their own. Whoever calls for forgiveness only wishes to attack without suffering retaliation. Whoever praises contentment only wishes to reduce the number of opponents. And whoever stands up for truthfulness wishes only to enjoy the advantages of lying.

If we all lie, why censor lying? If we all pretend to be friends with the enemy, and flash a smile to the false friend, why condemn hypocrisy? If we all wish to possess, all alone, the goods of the earth, why criticize avarice? If each one surveils the other so as to take what they have, why complain about injustice?

As much as religious leaders have manipulated faith in the past, and politicians manipulate patriotism in the present, we act as such because we wish to use virtue for our own goals.

Ever since their first day in school, children must learn that real life is different from books, and that the stories of virtuous and generous people, of knights, heroes, and the brave, are historical narratives of a time long gone. Thus, the child will not be surprised upon discovering the true face of the world, and will not waste his life between attempts and failures.

If only those who know the backstage of modern life could write a schoolbook, like history books, teaching how the businessman lies, how the artisan debauches, how the lawyer falsifies, how the doctor cheats, how the usurer steals, how the religious person pretends, how the politician manipulates, how the journalist turns a blind eye. If so, then they would tell them:



**“Such is life, and such is the path to live it, if you wish so. If not, then take refuge by yourselves, alone, in a cave high up a mountain, nourishing yourselves on insects and drinking from the rain, till death meets you.”**

Evil is only fought with evil; injustice is only overcome with equal force; and the bearer of the sword only sheathes it before another bearer of a sword. The mighty river only stops if there is a mountain before it.

Whoever desires virtue, true virtue, let them follow its high and pure path. But whoever wishes to use it as a means of livelihood in this time and among these people, let them know that they have chosen the wrong path.

***How beautiful is virtue, and how sweet to live under its shadow... Were it not for the fact that the wickedness of the vile has come between us and it. May God have mercy on virtue. And how much we long for its days and times!***

750

# الجالية

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Microfilm of the 1924 issue of Al Jaliah dedicated to Manfaluti.

# Conflict

## Between Muslim and Catholic Arabs in 1914 in the City of Salvador, Bahia

Adma Muhana

It remains uncertain as to when waves of Arabs began immigrating to Brazil, more specifically to the port of Bahia. However, in December 1914, according to an estimate by the newspaper *A Notícia*, there were 1,400 Syrians in the city of Salvador, of whom 1,100 were Muslims and 300 were Catholics. The Catholic denomination consisted of Maronites; those adhering to the Eastern rite, as they never separated from the Church of Rome.

Judging by the chronicles of the time, Arabs were often surveilled, as shown by the Bahia public databases. Frequent headlines, especially in the *Diário de Notícias*, included derogatory titles, such as "Thieving Arab" (*Diário de Notícias*, 14/10/1914), "Disorderly Arab" (*Diário de Notícias*, 29/10/14 and 10/11/14) and "Turbulent Arabs." The "Disorderly Arab" in November 1914 referred to the peddler Monédio Ignácio, who, in the Taboão district, had insulted "a lady to whom he had gone to collect a debt." The newspaper's commentary was the result of an attempt to implore the chief of police, in order to repress these new merchants, who, it was said, sold goods on installment plans. The same newspaper, citing Alexandre Ferreira as another "Disorderly Arab" one month prior, reported that Ferreira had ignited a dispute on Rua das Laranjeiras, leading to his subsequent arrest at the Sé police station. Regarding the "Thieving Arab," João Abdon, it is alleged that he had robbed a fellow countryman named Miguel Cholin, also facing arrest at Sé station.

In examining the newspapers of Salvador from 1914, we find references to Arabs as victims, not aggressors, on only two occasions. The first can be found on October 26, 1914, when the *Jornal de Notícias* reported a "Work Accident." Salomão Ismai, an Arab resident of Rua das Laranjeiras, went to the Santa Isabel Hospital, "Where he presented the fingers of his left hand completely crushed as a result of a falling barrel of cement." He was treated and returned home. On November 10, in turn, *O Estado* reported that a certain Leandro José dos Santos was arrested on Rua do Carmo, finding him "Somewhat intoxicated, he was severely beating an Arab woman named Martha Salomão." Suffering violence seemed to be the exception.



Of priority were religious and political developments affecting immigrants from the ailing Ottoman Empire in Bahia and their connections to European countries on the verge of colonising the Middle East. This was the moment when, after the start of the First World War in July 1914, Turkey allied itself with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while France, Russia, and England joined forces as the opposition, forming the so-called Triple Entente. In Brazil, "Turks" quickly became synonymous with "Arab" (specifically Arab Muslims) while "Syrian" generally designated the Christian Arab inhabitants of Lebanon, a region belonging to Syria that would be occupied by France after the allied victory in the First World War.

In this scenario, on October 27, 1914, under the headline "Fierce Duel," the *Jornal de Notícias* reported a conflict between an Arab named Michel Sonsim and the owner of the La Samaritaine store, Mr. Anad (sic), which resulted in the two "grappling in a tremendous struggle." The altercation severely escalated and required intervention by civil guards, who ordered "the two fighters" to appear before the Police Delegate. The newspaper *O Estado* published this as "Among Arabs, Over Religious Issues." It was discovered that the argument which took place at the door of the La Samaritaine fashion house had occurred between Amad Kalil and Michel Sonsino. Both individuals began discussing religious matters, leading to a moment where, "at the height of the argument, became exasperated, coming to blows." This led the employees to flee in terror and the following arrest of Kalil and Sonsino at the Sé station. Addressed as "Mr. Kalil" in *O Estado*, Kalil was considered prosperous "Syrian," as a Christian Arab, whose shop was inspired by the largest and most famous Parisian department store, La Samaritaine. Inaugurated in 1870, the sumptuous building was notable for its splendor in the first quarter of the 20th century, establishing itself in Salvador. References to other Arabs without the qualifier "Mister," as seen in the *Jornal de Notícias*, became a hallmark for those regarded and relegated to the position of disqualified, turbulent, and disorderly persons. Incidentally, the following month, the *Jornal de Notícias* warned against two of these "subjects of Essad Pasha," who assaulted a sex worker who "was sleeping peacefully" in her room. The motives were not clarified, though it was reported that these "furious Turks," José Gabriel and Mamédio "Something," armed with revolvers, brutally attacked her.

1.º Anno	Bahia--(Brazil)--Segnuda-feira 7 de Dezembro de 1914	N. 69
Jornal vespertino, elegante, noticioso e ilustrado	<b>A NOTICIA</b>	Modas, literatura theatros e notas estrangeiras
REDACÇÃO, GERENCIA E OFFICINAS RUA CARLOS GOMES, 95	DIRECTOR-GERENTE ARTHUR MATTOS	ENDEREÇO TELEGRAPHICO -NOTICIA- TELEPHONE N. 133
<b>AINDA O CASO DO HYPOTHECARIO</b>  <b>Terminou o summario</b>  As declarações do sr. Eduardo Guinle	<b>O resgate só abrangeria o capital particular</b> Esse resgate, desde o inicio das negociações, ficou assentado que só abrangeria o capital particular: o do estado só seria restituído no preso e pela forma que ulterior-	<b>Comparece a juizo expontaneamente</b> Protesto, pois, contra este erro. Acrescentarei que, confiante na justiça e certo de minha innocencia, compareci espontaneamente a defender-me, nunca havendo recebido do Rio de Janeiro citação deprecada pelo juiz summariante." Ante essa declaração, o juiz per-
		<b>OS QUE VOLTAM DA EUROPA</b> <b>Edú Chaves regressou ao Brasil</b> 

A major event which exposed the tension between both religious groups occurred on December 6, 1914 in front of number 66 on Rua Rui Barbosa, at 6 p.m. This resulted in the deaths of Mr. Abraham Felix Kraychete (also spelt as Craichet, Crechete, Crecht, Gresseti, Crachette, and Keacheti) and Mamede Jendié (Mamedi Lindi, Mamedio Jaudi, or Mamede Jamil Gendya). A Notícia stated that the second deceased was a “Mohammedan” (a pejorative term for Muslims) named Zamrini Abdelkader, who did not reappear in police pages. In addition to this, other individuals, of whom three were injured, were taken to the Santa Isabel Hospital, including: Elias Bader, with 3 blunt injuries to the forehead; Salvador Ferreira da Silva, with 2 gunshot wounds in the arm and buttock; and Aly Hubaibi, with two stab wounds, one of which was located on his back.

On Monday, December 7, 1914 all five major newspapers in the city swiftly reported the confrontation. Their headlines included:

**“Jornal Moderno:**

*How the European Conflict Echoes Here. Major Conflict Between Mohammedan and Christian Arabs. Dead and Wounded. Police Action.”*

**“Jornal de Notícias:**

*Conflict Among Arabs in the Sé District. Mohammedans and Catholics – Two Dead and Three Wounded – Police Measures.”*

**“Diário de Notícias:**

*Major Conflict. Arabs Grapple and Kill Over Religious Issues.”*

**“O Estado:**

*The Holy War. Two Deaths. Conflict, Shootout, Deaths and Wounded. Mohammedans and Catholics.”*

**“A Notícia:**

*Shots and More Shots. Among Arabs. On Rua Ruy Barbosa – Mohammedans “versus” Catholics. The European War Contributed... 2 Dead and 3 Wounded.”*

## TIROS E MAIS TIROS

# ENTRE ARABES

## Na rua Ruy Barbosa--Mahometanos «versus» catholicos A guerra europea collaborou... 2 mortos e 3 feridos

Ha muito que entre os arabes residentes nesta capital estabeleceram-se duas correntes, determinando esse facto a actual guerra europeia.

Os mahometanos filiaram-se á Cruz vermelha allemã e ha poucos dias deram um festival no cinema Fratelli Vita e os catholicos estão correndo listas de inscripção para effectuarem um festival em favor da Cruz Vermelha franceza.

Ante-hontem, no districto da Sé o arabe Antonio Capezi, catholico, altercou com Joseph Mamedio, mahometano, e com uma navalha feriu este no rosto. O Civil 239 effectuou a prisão de Capezi á ordem do subdelegado da Sé.

Muitos mahometanos chefiados por Mustaffa Jubaile prepararam um ataque aos catholicos, ficando de emboscada no predio n. 66, á rua Ruy Barbosa.

Vindo do cinema S. João passava ás 18 horas por aquella rua, calmamente, o sr. Abraham Felix Crechete, em companhia do seu cunhado Elias Bader, sendo inopinadamente agredido por Mustaffa Jubaile, Mahomed Hassau Bogdadi, Bader Chaik, Osman Chaih, Taubouk, Ahmed Hassau Kasein, Aly Hubaibi e José Jubaile, que dispararam diversos tiros não somente da rua, mas também das janellas do predio n. 66.

O agredido cahiu de braços fallecendo immediatamente.

O seu cunhado, na lucta conseguiu arrebatár nma faca de ponta e com esta feriu nas costas a Aly Hubaibi.

--Na mesma rua, quasi nos fundos do Thesouro, cahiu ferido por faca e bala o mahometano Zamrini Abdelkader, que falleceu alguns minutos depois.

A policia, pelos srs. subdelegado da Sé e o dr. Martinelli, assim como pelo escrivão do dr. chefe de policia tomaram varias providen-

cias; sendo dentre em pouco porrem presos quasi todos que faziam parte do grupo aggressor.

Elias Bader foi preso, quando fugia, pelo capitão Patricio, sendo encontrado em seu poder uma grande faca de ponta, tinta de sangue.

Os mortos foram conduzidos na ambulancia da Assistencia Publica e no carro do Nina Rodrigues para a morgue, onde hoje foram autopsiados.

Os feridos foram recolhidos ao hospital Santa Izabel e são: Elias Bader, com 3 ferimentos contusos na região occipito frontal; Salvador Ferreira da Silva, ganhador de Mustaffa Juvaile com 2 ferimentos por arma de fogo nas regiões externa do braço direito e giutea esquerda, o Aly Hubaibi com um ferimento inciso na região frontal e outro penetrante no bordo do thorax, lado direito.

--O infeliz Abraham Crechete era casado a 1 anno e deixou um filhinho e estava estabelecido á Praça José de Alencar.

--Hontem mesmo á noite foram recolhido á Casa de Correção 12 arabes, envolvidos na scena sangrenta da rua Ruy Barbosa.

--A policia anda no encaicho de Mustafa Isbella, apontado como principal responsavel pelos assassinios de hontem, não tendo até as 11 horas de hoje descoberto o seu paradeiro.

--Está servindo como interprete nas diligencias policiaes, o sr. João Rafal, arabe e negociante ha muito estabelecido no commercio.

--Para indagações, sobre os crimes de hontem, a policia já effectuou 25 prisões, tendo para isso cercado diversas casas, no districto da Sé.

--E' calculado em 1400 o numero de syrios exitentes nesta capital, sendo 1100 mahometanos e 300 catholicos.

The details of the incident vary among the periodicals. However, upon observation, it can be deduced that in the conflict among the Arabs, the “Mohammedans” allegedly attacked the Catholics (with one newspaper referring to the latter as "Christians"). Several of these newspapers attribute the conflict to an extension of the European war. For example, the *Jornal de Noticias* begins its account by depicting the constant and violent discord between the two groups of Arabs over religious motives. Such violence escalated during World War I culminating in deaths. According to the newspaper, the Mohammedan Arabs explicitly applauded Turkey's position, calling for a Holy War against Christians. This rhetoric fueled violent assaults, demonstrated by a group residing in the Saldanha and Conceição da Praia districts, ultimately leading to an attack against the local Catholic community. Approximately thirty of them are said to have gone with this purpose to Rua Rui Barbosa, where they encountered the Arab Bader Chaik, whom they began to jeer at. He fired a shot at the group, wreaking havoc immediately by conducting a shootout that lasted five minutes. This resulted in several casualties, including: Abrahão Felix Gresseti, a merchant residing at Pelourinho 61, 25 years old, Catholic and a native of Beirut, married with one minor child; and Mamede Jamil Gendya, a Muslim, itinerant merchant, residing at Rua do Saldanha, 28 years old, single, and a native of Tartus, Syria.



*The first victim received a gunshot wound in the frontal region, and the second victim a stab wound in the left pectoral region of the brain.*

The wounded were: Elias Bader, a Mohammedan marble worker, 29 years old and a resident of Pelourinho; Aly Hubaibi, a Muslim native of Beirut; and Salvador Ferreira da Silva, 25 years old, an employee of Mustafá Isbelle, resident at Rua do Tesouro 44.

Elias Bader, the presumed murderer of Mamede Jamil, was arrested with a blood-stained knife. At the police station where he was taken, he said he had been attacked and that they arrested him when he grabbed a knife to defend himself. The following Mohammedans were also arrested: José Mamedi, Abrahão Salma, Felipe Abrahão, José Antoni, Mamedi Abdon, Selim Chalome, José Abdon, Arsenio Mamedi, Raymundo Mamedi. In addition, 26 Arabs were sent to the correctional house, both Catholics and Mohammedans, and many were arrested in the Conceição da Praia district. The police were vigilant to prevent further conflicts on the occasion of the burials at the Quinta dos Lázaros cemetery. In the morning, about 14 Syrians residing at Rua Rui Barbosa and Rua do Tesouro wanted to revolt against the Catholics. It had been rumored that they would try to free their partners from the Sé station.. They were arrested and sent to the Correctional House.

As for the *Diário de Notícias*, it highlights that the murder was perpetrated by "Mohammedans," while *O Estado* emphasizes its opposition to the large number of "Mohammedans" residing in the Sé district, for indulging in the practice of all crimes and vices, ostensibly "exploiting humanity."

The account in *A Notícia* is the most extensive in terms of causality and apparently more impartial. It also brings information that diverges from other sources. It affirms the existence of two factions among the Arabs residing in Salvador, determined by the European war. It adds that the Mohammedans joined the German Red Cross and a few days earlier had held a festival at the Fratelli Vita cinema. The Catholics, in turn, were circulating lists for a festival in favor of the French Red Cross. Days prior, the Catholic Arab Antonio Capezi had an altercation with the Mohammedan Joseph Mamedio, injuring him in the face with a razor. Capezi was arrested by order of the Sé sub-delegate. Led by Mustafá Jubaile, they prepared an attack on the Catholics and ambushed themselves in building 66 on Rui Barbosa. Mr. Abraham Felix Crechete and his brother-in-law, Elias Bader, were approached by Mustafá Jubaile, Mohamed Hassau Bogdadi, Bader Chaik, Osman Chaih, Taubouk, Ahmed Hassau Kasein, Aly Hubaibi, and José Jubaile, who fired shots

from the street and from the windows of the same building. The victim died immediately. Elias Bader snatched a pointed knife and wounded Aly Hubaibi in the back. On the same street, behind the Tesouro, the Mohammedan Zamrini Abdelkader was wounded by a knife and bullet, dying shortly after. The police subsequently arrested Elias Bader, who was carrying a large blood-stained knife, including the alleged attackers. Twelve Arabs were taken to the Correctional House. For questioning, they surrounded several houses in the Sé and arrested 25 Arabs. Mustafá Isbelle, identified as the main culprit responsible for the murders, was still being sought. Mr. João Raful, a merchant long established in commerce, served as an interpreter in the police investigations. Abraham Crechete was a businessman at Praça José de Alencar, who had been married for a year, leaving behind a young child.

Amid disagreements about the facts and divergences in the spelling of locations and personal names, stemming from the transliteration of Arabic pronunciation, the constant reproduction of the episode attests to the relevance of the Arab presence in Salvador.

Both the Catholic and Mohammedan communities hired lawyers to follow the investigations. . The Mohammedans did so at the house of Mr. Jacob Grunfeld. All those detained in the Correctional House were released, except for Aly Hubaibi, named as the perpetrator of the murder of Abraão Crachete, who was still in the Santa Isabel Hospital. He said he had been attacked by Abraão and his brother-in-law Elias Bader.. The investigations pointed to Mustafá Isbelle as the person responsible.. Isbelle presented himself to the police, together with his accomplice, Mamede Sena, who assisted Isbelle to escape the crime scene. The burial of the other victim, Mamede Jamil Gendya, was paid for by the State, the funeral procession leaving from Nina Rodrigues hospital towards Campo Santo.



José de Alencar Square,  
also known as “Largo  
do Pelourinho.”  
Early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From the album “O  
negro brasileiro nas  
primeiras décadas do  
século XX”  
Fundação Biblioteca  
Nacional

An important detail relevant to the investigations can be found in an open letter to the press, signed by the "Catholic Syrians," addressed "To the High Authorities of the State." Published on December 10 in the *Diário de Notícias*, it designates Muslims as “bandits” and “savages” unequivocally calling for their deportation. I transcribe it below:

*The Catholic Syrians domiciled in this capital, where they have respectable interests, currently possessed by genuine anguish in the face of the gravity of recent events that, besides mourning the home of some, have confirmed the serious threat against the individual security of all, are obliged to come to the press to appeal to the high civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the State, asking them for a gesture of protection and support for the rudimentary right to life of each one of them, threatened with losing it by the savage Muslims, also resident here.*

*Everyone knows that, for many years, since the Muslim hordes landed on these shores, they have constantly promoted fights, disturbing public order, in pursuit of their Christian compatriots resident here.*

*Such bandits thus dare to reproduce, in this beautiful country, the scenes of barbarism practiced by them against Christians in the common homeland, persuaded, perhaps, that in this country they will achieve the same criminal official protection that they unfortunately enjoy in their country of origin.*

*Really, there is no one who ignores the atrocious persecutions suffered by Christians in Turkey.*

*Their possessions are confiscated, their homes looted, their children and relatives mercilessly murdered.*

*Forced by this to emigrate from the motherland, we, the Catholic Syrians residing here, sought preferably Brazil and the State of Bahia, trusting in the constancy of its climate, in the intense Catholic sentiment of its population, and in the tolerant and liberal regime of its laws.*

*Oppressed by longing for their homeland and relatives, the Catholic Syrians took refuge here in the comforting hope of respect for their rights.*

*And, despite small and frequent conflicts occurring between compatriots of different sects and religions, the cases did not take on great proportions thanks to the prompt intervention of the national authorities.*

*Lately, however, Turkey, having been led by its corrupted government to take part in the European conflict, the savageries committed over there by*

*the Mohammedans against Christians have intensified.*

*The news of the savageries committed over there that reach us by private letters are indescribable and horrifying.*

*The Christian populations are being victimized by the blackest and most horrendous depredations, authorized by the nefarious government of Turkey.*

*Just now, Italy, driven by noble Christian sentiment, has sent troops to guarantee the safety of Catholic populations persecuted by the religious intolerance of the Mohammedan bandits.*

*The sectarians of this sect, resident here, understood how to imitate their leaders from overseas.*

*In constant meetings they held in this capital, they resolved to attack and kill their Christian compatriots.*

*Despite the frequent warnings we had, we never believed that our adversaries in faith would dare to commit crimes, knowing that they would not go unpunished.*

*Unfortunately, we were mistaken – our good and dear friend and compatriot, Abrahão Crachette, desirous of ending rivalries and establishing harmony in the colony, dared to reason in good manners with the chiefs of those bandits, in their den, and there, coldly and cowardly, he fell to the ground, murdered with several revolver shots and many stab wounds.*

*A similar crime is provoking severe repression less in reparation for the inconsolable widowhood and desolate orphanhood of unfortunate beings, than in vindication of Brazilian civilization, vilified by bandits who well deserve to be deported from the territory of the Republic.*

*Until this happens, the Catholic Syrians, in the face of the precedent, will not feel sufficiently guaranteed in their individual security.*

*It is for this reason that they dare, from the press, transfixed with pain and*

*anguish, to launch a solemn appeal to the high authorities of the State, to the venerable Archbishop of this archdiocese, and finally to the pure and respectable Christian sentiments of the hospitable and generous people of Bahia, so that in a movement of Christian solidarity, all may contribute so that the Catholic Syrians resident here may peacefully rest on this blessed soil and enjoy the individual guarantees that the Brazilian constitution and laws assure to nationals and foreigners.*

### ***The Catholic Syrians.***

Under the headline "Over There as Over Here," A Notícia reported that also in Rio de Janeiro, Turkish residents had been agitated over religious issues, but there, it was the Mohammedans who went to the police in a commission requesting guarantees, complaining that they were threatened by the Catholics. The police sent double patrols to the streets where they reside, to prevent a meeting between the two groups. Some interviewees declared that the disagreement among the compatriots was motivated by the same causes that gave rise to the conflicts in Bahia: besides religion, the various sympathies for the European nations at war, with the Christians supporting France and the Mohammedans supporting Germany.

On Saturday, December 12, the editorial of the Diário de Notícias invoked respect for the people of Bahia, who were "almost entirely Catholic," warning of the danger posed by the offenses of the Mohammedan Arabs against the Christian Arabs, which threatened to turn against the very inhabitants of the land.

Due to its vehemence, it deserves to be transcribed (also in updated spelling):

### ***Disturbances Among Arabs Respect the Land!***

*On several occasions the press has recorded scenes of brawls and deaths among the Arabs resident here, for various causes and motives: abuses of commercial trust, family scenes, alcoholic exaltation.*

*Now, however, these facts have worsened, taking on a more serious character, and with a known cause and declared purpose.*

*They are no longer isolated, common facts, among people without the cultivation of moral and civic education sufficient to restrain momentary passions.*

*No.*

*Now the case is different.*

*In the Arab colony that has settled here, that lives here, either selling peanuts or with a case and meter, swindling through the streets, the instinct of simmering hatred, the fanaticism of religious belief that divides the Arab race, has developed.*

*The entry of Turkey into the war, in which the great powers of Europe are engaged, served as a pretext for the explosion of repressed hatreds and vengeance; and, this race divided into two opposing currents, each declared itself fond of one or another of the nations fighting in the war.*

*The Catholics are for France and the allied powers; the Mohammedans are for Germany.*

*Such situations serve as a pretext for the explosion of hatreds, this manifestation of sympathy, for one side or the other, has served to motivate the commission of barbaric and inhuman acts,, of which the telegraphic dispatches show us: the slaughter and atrocities committed by the Mohammedan Arabs against the Catholic Arabs who, without support from their country's government, live there as pariahs, massacred, despoiled, without rights and without guarantees.*

*The Mohammedan Arab gentlemen would like to do here the same thing that is practiced in Turkey, discredited by cultured peoples dominated by feelings of humanity. They seek to transform the streets of the capital of Bahia into a theater of these scenes that debase these people.*

*Bahia, which has known how to remain neutral in this struggle in which interests, of one order or another, have dragged the great friendly nations into such a bloody war; Bahia, which shelters, with the traditional and*

*never-failing spirit of Brazilian hospitality, the children of the belligerent nations, respecting their feelings of patriotic love, cannot and must not consent that, under the sky of this land, acts of savagery are practiced, which are not even permitted, honestly, over there on the theater of struggle.*

*Among the members of this fraction of the Mohammedan Arab colony there must necessarily be some superior and reflective spirit who, judging the moral reach of these acts practiced against brothers, even if divergent in beliefs and affective sentiments, but who are sheltered and protected by our hospitality and under our sky, advises the exalted, or deranged by the fanaticism of religious belief, to change course, out of respect for the land, and even to the beliefs of the people in whose midst they live.*

*And they must do so.*

*The offenses made here to members of the Syrian colony, due to their Catholic beliefs, or affection for this or that country, also offend the people of Bahia, who adopt and practice them and who cannot tolerate these acts of brutal savagery, calm*

*and indifferent; because tomorrow this hatred may turn against the people of Bahia, who are almost entirely Catholic, and among whom there are also those fond of the allied nations, as there are also those fond of Germany.*

*Respect and tolerance for the intimate sentiments of each individual are problems of transcendental importance in social order and harmony.*

*Well then, if the people of Bahia have observed the great principle of tolerance of religious or political beliefs; if our Constitution protects the guarantee of all religious beliefs, how can it be allowed that, within its domains, a disoriented group, which came here to shelter itself in search of occupation for its activity (even if this is not otherwise well applied), and improvement for its individual conditions, wants to impose its beliefs, its feelings on another brother group, but which thinks differently; and when, by laws and sentiments, the very land that shelters them does not practice acts of intolerance nor makes impositions of its beliefs and political affections.*

*And if these disturbers of order and public peace do not know their duties of respect to the society in which they live, to the Public Powers of the State, and mainly to the police, within the law and the Constitution, it falls to us to teach them to maintain obedience to the norms prescribed for the country's citizens.*

*It is necessary that the scenes of this fratricidal struggle, these conflicts between Arab brothers, are no longer reproduced.*

**Respect the Land!**

Further conflicts had been raised during Christmas. Under the title "Turbulent Arabs," the *Jornal de notícias* of 26/12 narrated that on the previous night a group of drunken Arabs began firing shots at random, causing the people attending the Christmas celebration at Sete Portas to flee. The civil guard arrested some and others fled.

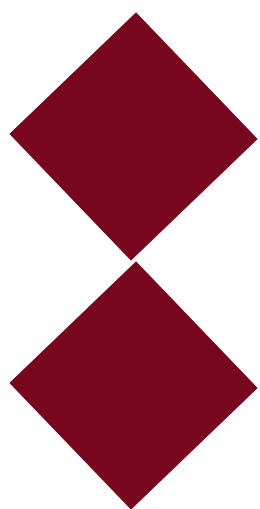
The last update found regarding the murder of Abraão Crachette was that provided by the *Diário de notícias* on January 29, 1915, which outlined that the Arab, Ali Huboile, was indicted for the murder of the Syrian merchant Abrahão Crachette, and the Arab named Abdel Kader Faiara, previously denounced as a co-participant in the crime, was not indicted.

From all the above, we can conclude that conflicts between Muslim Arabs (mostly peddlers) and Christian Arabs (largely Lebanese, established merchants) were not uncommon in the early 20th century in the city of Salvador. These conflicts intensified with Turkey's entry into the First World War on the side of Germany, whom France and England were adversaries of. Although Brazil would only take the side of the Triple Entente in 1917, the sympathy for the "Christians" and animosity against the "Turks" of the Ottoman Empire was evident from the start of the war. The newspapers of the time abound with reports of martyrdoms of Christians and the violent conversion of churches (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) into mosques by the Ottoman Turks.

The murder of one Christian Arab and one Muslim was a critical moment in these conflicts in Bahia. Why these specific individuals is not very clear. Why did Abraão go to a street where he knew Muslims lived? Why was he attacked? And Mamede Jendié? And what is the reason for everyone placing the entire blame on Aly Hubaibi? The depositions and testimonies suggest that the attack on Abraão Crachette was fortuitous, like that of a scapegoat for the entire threatened Christian community ("the Mohammedans attack the Christians without justifying motives"); the Muslim, in turn, would have been killed in the ensuing shootout and confusion.

It is doubtful that the events unfolded that way. The death of both occurs by means of many stab wounds, and although the news reports highlight the presence of many shots, the autopsies demonstrated that only one bullet hit Mamede Jendié in the leg and two hit the employee of Mustafá Isabelle; none of them caused any of the deaths. Mustafá Isabelle, who at first is pointed out as a known criminal and responsible for Abraão's death, after presenting himself at the police station and accusing Aly Hubaibi of the deed, is not only exonerated by the witnesses but is even said to have tried to save the Christian. Elias Bader, initially accused of the murder of Mamede Jendié, both by Mohammedans and by a police captain, is subsequently exonerated; the captain even withdraws his previous statements and, later, fails to appear when summoned. Apparently, there was a rush to conclude the investigations: despite the large number of deponents and the difficulty of finding impartial interpreters, they lasted only a week. The conclusion of the lawyers for the widow Adma Bader Crachette was that Ali Hubaibi murdered Abraão Crachette with stab wounds, without pointing out anyone responsible for the death of the Muslim Mamede Jendié, except to exonerate Elias Bader, the widow's brother, of it. According to the court records, still in September 1917, the widow was appealing (unsuccessfully) to the Court of Justice, unhappy with the acquittal of Aly Hubaibi. The police investigation, however, concluded that Abraão Crachette was killed by Mamede Jendié, who was in turn murdered in retaliation, with a gunshot, by Elias Bader. At no point before had it been said that Elias Bader carried a revolver. Nothing in the news reports foreshadowed such conclusions.

On December 29, 1914, the *Jornal de notícias* carried a lengthy article entitled "Civilization is Descended from Christianity," which warned that the Sultan of Turkey had issued a decree calling all Muslims to Holy War (Jihad), not only in his country but throughout the world. The episode of the death of the Christian Syrian in Bahia, although posing as a family conflict, was part of this war. The Syrians came to Brazil fleeing the barbarities that the Muslims committed "over there," but those of this sect who came here, having received the order of Jihad, , pursued and killed them, with the blessing of the clergy: "Do you know who the enemies of your ancestors are? Well, they are these Muslims!" (emphasis in the original). It also warned that the fabric trade was a facade, as their main occupation was to ruin beautiful maidens and, some, to traffic as a gift for their Sultan. Today, a discourse inciting such hatred towards a religious group would scandalize us, but it also gives us the dimension of how deeply rooted fear and discrimination against the adherents of Islam were in Bahian society at the beginning of the 20th century – possibly since the Malê revolt and the beginning of colonization.



## Author's Note

On the occasion of the death of Abraão Kraychette in December 1914, his widow, Mrs. Adma Bader Kraychette, was the mother of a young son, Emílio, and was pregnant with a girl, whom she named Hortência Kraychette, born the following January. Having been widowed, four years later she married a younger man named Gabriel Muhana, a Syrian-Lebanese Maronite, with whom she had many descendants. The eldest of them, Humberto Muhana, became my father. All I knew about my grandmother was that she died in 1954 without ever having learned Portuguese, that she died of emphysema from smoking too much, and that she loved her second husband. Perhaps as an explanation for my grandfather's dislike for her and her brother, children from the first marriage, my Aunt Hortência insinuated that Grandfather Gabriel had no means and had won her mother's affection by aiming for a profitable marriage with the inheritance left by her biological father. Reading between the lines, there was a suspicion that our grandfather was in some way involved in the violent death of Mr. Kraychette. I set out to clarify this family story and, while exonerating Grandfather Gabriel from the suspicion of murder, I ended up finding a bloody page of the Arab community in Bahia, at the dawn of the First World War.

3S, 4S, 5S, 10S e 20S mensaes, sem fiança nem conhecimento, com tanto que lhes comprassem, os mascates!

E era encontradora a curiosidade alegre da freguezia a bisbilhotar nos sujos cadernos de nomes, escripturas enviezadas dos turcos, começando da direita para a esquerda, á canhoto como lhe dizem os freguezes.

---Uli, uli! não quiere nada hoje, "cantavam com a bocca cheia de lingua os andarilhos commerciantes...

Hoje, os poucos que ainda existem, ahi estão desconfiados e medrosos, mas sempre tendo nos labios um sorriso para os compradores e a mesma cantilena de vender mais barato do que no commercio...

Fazem feira, agora, surpreendendo todos os sabbados, com frascos de *corylopsys* e blusas feitas, a ingenuidade de gosto feminino das operarias de Plataforma, da Conceição, da Luiz Tarquinio e de tantas outras colmeias, raparigas que despejam nos bolsos sujos dos mascates os vintens magros da féria.

E a instituição dos *mascate* ainda não desapareceu, porque em seu favor militam milhares e milhares de pobres...

O corpo saíu do Nina Rodrigues, ás 10 horas, acompanhado por uma força de cavallaria e outra de infantaria.

Essa medida foi tomada por constar que pretendiam promover disturbios por essa occasião.

O sr. major Cosme de Farias, advogado do mehometano Aly Hubaibi, requereu ao juiz da 1ª circumscripção criminal uma ordem de *habeas-corpus*, em favor do seu constitulante.

O juiz concedeu a ordem para informações da autoridade policial, que hontem mesmo as enviou áquelle magistrado.

Os autos do processo são volumosos e alem dos depoimentos já alludidos, delles constam 3 autos de corpo de delicto e 2 autos de necropsias, de 18 folhas de papel, cada um.

Feram peritos os Drs. Octaviano Pimenta, Alvaro Pontes Bahia e Alvaro Borges dos Reis.



Assad

### Um arabe "calceteiro"

#### Trabalhador mais "caipora"

Salomão Ismai, é um arabe, mas um d'aquelles que precisa-se n'esta terra, rompendo a linha dos seus patricios que só procuram trabalhos leves, não fallando nos vendedores de *mandobi* torrado e dos tiros ao alvo, verdadeiros *tiros de algibeiras*, entregou-se ao afanoso trabalho de calceteiro. Porem pela falta de pratica, aconteceu que o instrumento com que trabalhava lhe batesse no pé, produzindo esmagamento no grosso artelho esquerdo com arrancamento da unha. No Hospital, recebeu curativos.

### Cobrança original

#### Um arabe foi cobrar dinheiro e não achando esbofeteou a fregueza

Na rua Silva Jardim ante-hontem o arabe Mamede Nasse foi effectuar a cobrança de Maria Pastora.

Como esta não tivesse dinheiro, o mascate ficou damnado e esbofeteou-a.

O subdelegado da rua do Paço a quem foi apresentado o espancador pelo civil n. 39, lavrou auto de flagrante delicto.

### Um rôlo em Plataforma

#### Questões antigas determinaram o facto de ante-hontem

Em Plataforma, no domingo, ás 10 horas, houve um conflicto entre o arabe José Paulo, a mulher deste e Carlos Leite, sahindo todos feridos, inclusive dois patricios.

A auctoridade local tomou conhecimento do facto que tem como novel questões antigas.



eram avidamente esperados á janella pela anciedade de pobres e ricos, operarios e burocratas, que, alli, na porta compravam o necessario para se apresentarem decentes, e quantas vezes *chics*?, em meio da sociedade

Depois, o *mascate* genuino, o



# ADIB AL SHISHAKLI:

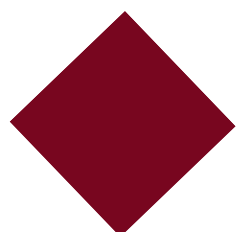
## The Long Shadow of a Dictator, from Syria to Brazil

Gustavo Racy

Although the campaign “As-Suwayda is ours and a part of us” surfaces from time to time as the backdrop to some news story, the campaign itself already seems like a relic of a distant past, despite having taken place only last October. . Perhaps this indicates the limited scope of its impact in the attempt to build a bridge over the gap it originally aimed to fill by (at least according to the official narrative) promoting national unity and providing direct support for the people of the city. Perhaps it serves as evidence of the life cycle of Syrian news and the relative brevity of its vocabulary. Even so, at the time of its launch, the campaign registered what could be considered a noteworthy rupture in the field of memory: Adib Al Shishakli, the grandson of the former Syrian president who bore the same name, donated 10,000 US dollars to the campaign, stating that his grandfather, if he were among us today, would have done the same.

Such a claim would not go unnoticed. The name Al Shishakli is linked to As-Suwayda for reasons that certainly do not include donations of this kind; until recently, he remained an object of strictly historical interest and in a very different way from what his grandson attempted to present during the campaign. Any observer attentive to the current Syrian scene, however, knows that some of today’s skirmishes derive their momentum not only from the past, history, and its lessons – as in the cases of Al Shishakli or others – but simultaneously act to rewrite them.

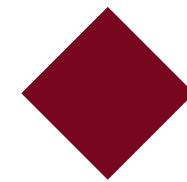
Indeed, Al Shishakli's story, in particular, seems, for these reasons, worthy of close examination: both for its unique details, which brought him to power during a neglected phase of Syria's history, and for those that outlined his place on the broader map of diaspora politics and culminated in his assassination in Brazil. This, however, by no means signified the end of his story in the popular imagination, which, although it may have seemed to move beyond it, today once again finds itself confronted with it in two ways: one, flesh and blood, in which Al Shishakli returns to life and As-Suwayda re-enters the broader debate; and another, perhaps of greater impact, though less obvious, in which the immigrant, or the displaced person, returns to have his say once more, at a moment that feels familiar, in which Syria appears as an exhausted entity, surrounded by various regional and international forces in search of a "leader" figure.



Adib bin Hassan Al Shishakli (Hama, 1909 – Ceres, 1964) served as President of Syria twice: briefly in 1951 and later between 1953 and 1954, when he resigned amid growing social unrest. A central figure in critical moments of the country's modern history, Al Shishakli was trained as a military officer during the French Mandate and, after Syria's independence, became one of the first members of Antoun Saadeh's Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP).

In 1948, he joined the Arab Liberation Army, which fought against Zionist militias during the establishment of the Zionist Entity in Palestine. In 1964, Shishakli would be killed in the small Brazilian town of Ceres, in the state of Goiás, by a fellow Druze. What connections can be traced along this trajectory? How does diaspora appear as an integral part of the Levant, even when reduced to a seemingly minor detail: the fateful destiny of a dictator from a republic largely ignored by the global public, yet coveted by the great powers? And what does this say about us, Arabs and diasporics

today? As we shall see further ahead, the connection between the national history of Syria and its relationship to the global presence of Syrians abroad, as well as with the political context of the epoch remains to be analysed and articulated regarding the telling of the country's history.



## Post-Independence Syria

The Arab defeat against the Zionists further weakened Syria's already fragile parliamentary system, leading to the overthrow of then-President Shukri Al Quwatli through a coup led by Husni Al Za'im. Al Za'im himself was soon deposed, leaving the country under a junta headed by none other than Adib Shishakli and Colonel Sami Al Hinnawi, a former comrade of al Za'im.

According to historian John McHugo, one of the less-explored aspects of the 1949 coup is the role of the U.S. Embassy in Damascus and the CIA, both dissatisfied with Al Quwatli's government for its failure to sign an armistice with the Zionists and its opposition to constructing a Saudi oil pipeline through Syrian territory. Though we cannot approach this issue at length, the CIA argued that Syria needed a strong officer willing to make unpopular decisions, such as peace with Israel. That man was Husni Al Za'im.

Al Za'im had arranged a four-stage plan with the Americans: first, he would install a nominal figurehead as president while exercising real power as defense minister. Second, U.S. financial aid would follow, legitimizing the coup. Third, Syria would receive military supplies. Finally, the government would reform the country and expand the army, modeled on Atatürk's Turkey.

CIA officer Miles Copeland described Al Za'im as "utterly unscrupulous," desiring to become a dictator—even of a "banana republic" kind. He promoted himself to

Field Marshall, adorned with a \$3,000 uniform and makeup, imposed unpopular policies, declared his wish for an armistice with Israel, and handed communist officers to foreign authorities. His coup marked the beginning of a new era in Syrian politics—an era that would also define Al Shishakli's rise.

Less than four months later, Al Za'im was arrested at home, still in his pajamas. He was beaten and executed by the same officers who had supported his coup, seeking revenge for his hand in delivering Antoun Saadeh to Lebanese authorities, who then executed Saadeh. Sami Al Hinnawi took power, organized elections for a constituent assembly, and was soon overthrown on December 19 by another officer: Adib Shishakli. He would govern for four years, until February 1954, not without first toppling a 12-hour provisional government led by Ma'ruf Al Dawalibi.

As McHugo notes, Al Shishakli maintained a relatively discreet public profile, ruling indirectly through a nominal president while ensuring that politicians could not challenge his authority. Yet it was Shishakli who gave Syrians their first taste of military rule. Initially popular, he expanded the army to 43,000 men (not only for external defense but also to suppress internal uprisings), thus establishing the Syrian army's police power as a tool of national unification through the repression of regional and sectarian identities.

Al Shishakli tightened control over foreign schools, discouraged ethnic or sectarian associations, banned foreign land ownership, and rejected U.S. aid.

Unlike Al Hinnawi, he opposed the idea of a Syrian union with Iraq – a pan-Arab notion popular at the time and supported by the People's Party, backed by Aleppo's wealthy merchant class. Al Shishakli's coup was partly meant to prevent such a union. The idea was also rejected by other key figures, such as former Education Minister Michel Aflaq and former Agriculture Minister Akram Al Hawrani. Together, they founded the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, attracting rural intellectuals and students, alongside Al Hawrani's strong base in Hama—the hometown of both men.

By 1952, Al Shishakli had transformed Syria into a one-party state. Secretly backed by Iraq, strikes and protests erupted against him, beginning in Aleppo and spreading quickly to Homs, Hama, and Damascus. When unrest reached Sweida, in the Hawran region, Shishakli feared a Druze uprising reminiscent of 1925. He ordered artillery strikes on the city, resulting in a massacre. Soon, a military revolt began in Aleppo, sparking a chain of conspiracies that ultimately forced Al Shishakli's resignation in 1954. He fled to Beirut and later to Brazil.

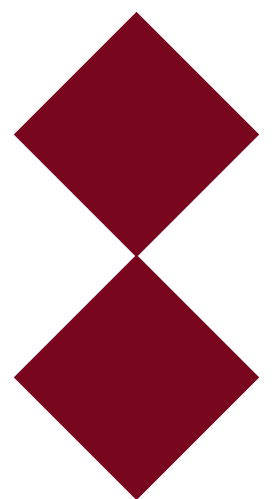
After his fall, parliamentary power was restored, and the Ba'ath Party became a dominant force during Syria's brief democratic period, which lasted until the country's union with Nasser's Egypt in 1958. What followed, however, lies beyond the scope of this brief reflection.

### **Al Shishakli: From Coup Leader to Refugee**

In a memorandum dated June 27, 1957, from George Allen, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, American officials discussed the possibility of Adib Al Shishakli's return to Syria through a new coup.



Husni Al Za'im, on the cover of the Syrian Army Magazine on the day of the coup: "One Thousand and One Nights, there is a leader in Damascus!"



According to the document, Al Shishakli had fled Syria first to Lebanon, then to Saudi Arabia, passing through France, Spain, Italy, Egypt, and Turkey before returning incognito to the Levant during the 1955 presidential elections. The memorandum questioned whether his 1956 return to Saudi Arabia signaled a possible rise to command within the Saudi armed forces, or even a joint Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi military alliance. After all, Al Shishakli had traveled under a Saudi passport and was reportedly receiving financial support from King Saud.

The memorandum also made clear that Al Shishakli was a staunch opponent of communism and of Israel, believing that national development expenditures were being overshadowed by the cost of defending against these two perceived threats. Yet his fall from grace (both within Syria's state apparatus and among its population) made him, in Washington's eyes, an unlikely candidate for a successful coup. The report also described him as suffering from "chronic alcoholism," marking him as an undesirable type of leader for Syria.

Nevertheless, U.S. officials recommended keeping him under observation, since under the right conditions – specifically, if he could be persuaded to align with American interests – Al Shishakli might once again become “a viable option.” The memorandum concluded by noting that a verbal report would also be provided to the Secretary of State.

Beyond its historical curiosity, this document highlights a largely forgotten period of Syrian history, especially from the perspective of so-called internationalist analyses, and particularly within Brazilian scholarship.

Since the fleeing of Bashar Al Assad in December 2024, most analyses have centered on the last fifty years of Syrian history, with particular attention to the rise of Abu Muhammad Al Julani - HTS commander and ISIS man in Syria - who assumed the presidency under the current name, Ahmad Al Shara'a, his image carefully sanitized by Western suits and diplomacy.

However, the U.S. memorandum on Al Shishakli offers a kind of historical mirror for the present Middle East. It reminds us how political machinations operate beneath the watchful gaze of great powers, ever eager to manipulate public sentiment and intelligence networks that track “persons of interest.”

Just as Al Shishakli could once again have been deemed “a good option,” Al Julani has emerged as an equally convenient alternative for steering the Syrian state. There is little doubt that Turkey, the Zionist Entity, Saudi Arabia, and the United States have all played active roles in this transformation, dividing Syria into zones of influence after Al Assad’s fleeing and following the retreat of Russian and Iranian intervention.

The briefly made parallel between Al Shishakli and Al Julani deserves a further exploration as it may help unfold the contemporary history of Syria providing important elements for political analysis regarding the influence of regional powers and the sectarian divide used to manifest, justify and maintain governmentality. We must, however, go back to Al Shishakli especially, unravelling what can be the grounding for such a further exploration.

According to a 2022 Al Jazeera documentary, the precise reason for Shishakli’s downfall remains uncertain. Some argue he stepped down to contain the rebellions that erupted in Jabal Al Druz; others believe his resignation was a kind of self-coup, designed to facilitate a later return to power – a theory echoed in the U.S. memorandum. The documentary also suggests Shishakli may have resigned to avoid further bloodshed, as claimed by Haidar Al Kuzbari, the officer who asserted the Druze insurgency could have been crushed militarily. Whether this portrays him as a man averse to carnage – or whether it was simply a post-facto justification remains secondary.

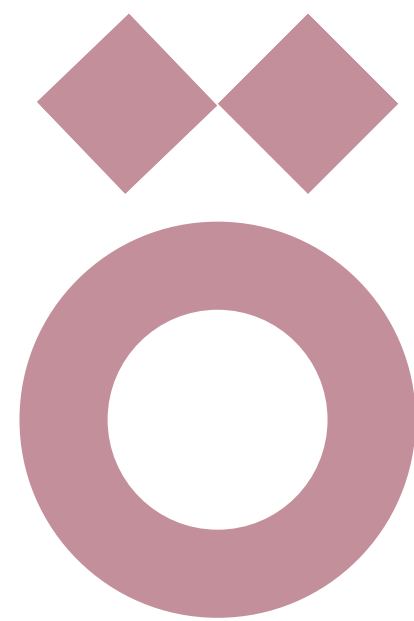
As for U.S. State Department memorandum, this 1957 report appears to be the last one of any relevance regarding Al Shishakli. After that, he disappeared from Washington’s radar.

Probably relying on acquaintances – and perhaps fearing for his life – Al

Shishakli arrived in Brazil in the early 1960s. He would die there in 1964—the same year Brazil fell under its own civil-military dictatorship—shot dead by Nawaf aAl Ghazala, a Druze from As-Suwayda and itinerant merchant whose parents had perished during Shishakli’s shelling of the city years earlier.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Al Shishakli’s son claimed his father’s death may have been the result of a Ba’athist conspiracy. Although Shishakli had once enjoyed Ba’athist support for his nationalism, his anti-communist stance may have been the motive for revenge. His grandson agreed: his grandfather had fled Syria to prevent further bloodshed, and the regime that followed had erased his accomplishments. Speaking even before Assad’s fall in 2024, he said the mission now was to retell that history as part of the country’s reconstruction effort.

The fact remains simple: Adib Al Shishakli, former President of Syria, a military officer who lived and shaped a crucial chapter in Syria’s modern history, was shot dead in Ceres, Goiás, Brazil, on September 27, 1964.



## **Brazil-Syria**

Ceres, a small town that according to the 2021 census had just 22,407 inhabitants (in a country of over 220 million), had been incorporated as a municipality only eleven years before Al Shishakli’s death. It is said that he lived there modestly, working as a small farmer and trader, selling the produce of his own estate.

It was while crossing a bridge to the neighboring town of Rialma that he encountered Nawaf Al Ghazala, who fired five shots at him. Al Ghazala had arrived in the city three days earlier and waited for hours for the former president, even interacting with him briefly, according to witnesses.

Tried by a popular jury and defended by Romeu Pires de Campos Barros and Nelson Hungria (the latter would later become a Justice of Brazil's Supreme Federal Court), Al Ghazala was acquitted. Today, the case file is on public display at the Goiás State Court's Memory and Culture Center. ("Processo sobre assassinato de ex-presidente sírio em Goiás vai ser exposto no Centro de Cultura e Memória." Tribunal de Justiça de Goiás, July 30, 2019.)

What does this crime reveal about our intertwined realities?



In the midst of Brazil's newly installed dictatorship following the coup of March 31, 1964, the Syrian community in Brazil remained closely attuned to the events unfolding in their homeland – a country also defined by coups and dictatorships.

The fact that networks of contact in a vast country like Brazil were able to track down Al Shishakli's whereabouts illustrates the enduring closeness – often reduced to the actions of a few individuals – between the *mahjar* and the Levant.

Nawaf Al Ghazali.  
Ceres Municipality.

This closeness often appeared in mundane details: reportedly, it was an interview Al Shishakli gave to the magazine *O Cruzeiro* in 1962 that first drew Al Ghazala's attention.

On the day of the murder, Al Ghazala returned to the boarding house where he was staying, took a shower, and watched a film at the local cinema. Only the next day did he flee Ceres, heading for Anápolis, where he forced three friends—at gunpoint—to drive him to Belo Horizonte. From there, he continued on to Teófilo Otoni, where relatives raised 100 million cruzeiros for his legal defense, reportedly celebrating his act.

A week later, Al Ghazala surrendered to the police, showing no remorse. During the investigation, four anonymous members of the Druze community—two in Belo Horizonte and two in Brasília—stated that the assassination had been planned by the Druze community of Minas Gerais.

At the time, the murder was widely reported. Ceres, 179 kilometers from Goiânia, entered history as the place where a foreign head of state met his end. Yet little has been written about the episode since – and even less about the ways in which the trajectories of Syria and Brazil intersected in that moment.

## **The Mahjar and the Missing Narrative**

In Brazil, academic criticism has rarely explored the political dimensions that shaped the Arab diaspora.

It is through the work of Joseph Leidy (2023), of Brown University, that we find a detailed account of Syrian nationalism within the mahjar between 1934 and 1944 – when Antoun Sa'adeh sought to establish the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) among Syrian and Lebanese immigrants across the Americas.

Upon arriving in Buenos Aires in 1939, Sa'adeh and his Syrian Cultural Association promoted a powerful nationalist narrative aimed at young

immigrants, reaffirming the party's mission. The association even staged a play about a prince who saves his homeland, but soon clashed with the rival Lebanese Patriotic Association, which accused Sa'adeh's group of subversive activities.

As Leidy notes, the local press, particularly *La Bandera Árabe*, sided with the Lebanese group. This controversy exemplified how Levantine political conflicts were transplanted into the Americas, lived with the same intensity as in the homeland. The political mobilization of immigrant youth in the interwar period, Leidy argues, helped legitimize new political actors not only in Brazil and Argentina, but also back in the Levant.

Sa'adeh himself had lived in São Paulo in the 1920s, working with his father, a newspaper editor, before founding his party in Beirut in 1932, with a base among university students. After being imprisoned in Lebanon and later in Brazil under suspicion of pro-Axis sympathies, he settled in Argentina, where his activism troubled the diasporic communities and revealed the growing influence of transnational populist movements among Arab youth.

His success was notable: between Brazil and Argentina, he established party cells and publications, including a women's branch in Buenos Aires and regional chapters in Minas Gerais, and even visited Tucumán and Córdoba, receiving support from as far away as Vila do Rio Novo, in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo. With his future wife, Juliette Elmir (al-Mir), Sa'adeh denounced the materialism of the mahjar and its fragmentation into clubs and associations.

Not all reactions were positive. Publications across the Americas denounced the proto-fascist tendencies of his movement—even among Arab nationalists, as seen in Argentina in 1944. In Brazil, the poet Elias Farhat initially admired Sa'adeh, dedicating to him the poem "*The Youth of Syria*." Yet, as Leidy records, when Farhat publicly disavowed Sa'adeh in a 1938 article for the magazine *al-Sharq*, he claimed ignorance of the true nature of the party. Nonetheless, Sa'adeh's magazine *al-Zawba'a* republished the poem in 1941.

In Brazil, Sa'adeh's most vocal critic was Rashid Salim Al Khouri, whose 1940 lecture honoring the Prophet Muhammad was attacked by Sa'adeh's followers for portraying Islam as an ideal synthesis between Jewish law and Christian spirituality. Sa'adeh also criticized other Arab-American writers, such as Elia Abu Madi and Abd al Masih Haddad of New York, rejecting their claim that linguistic and cultural Arab unity was enough to sustain Syrian nationalism, instead defending the "geographic and sociological unity of Syria" (Leidy, 2023: 92).

According to Leidy, Sa'adeh's trajectory anticipated the political transformations that would later end what historian Albert Hourani termed the "politics of notables." Hourani himself was a product of the diaspora—his parents, from Marjayoun, Lebanon, had settled in Manchester, while other relatives migrated to Brazil and the United States.

This transnational web underscores the deep entanglement between mahjar events and developments in the Levant. For Hourani and Philip Khoury, these diasporic movements helped consolidate modern ideologies that ultimately displaced the traditional politics of local elites. The case of Antoun Sa'adeh, better known and studied than Al Shishakli's, serves as an allegory for understanding Shishakli's own fate in Brazil.

Today, Arab heritage, particularly in São Paulo, is often reduced to personal success stories and a limited culinary identity, yet beneath this surface lies a dense web of historical connections. Forged within the mahjar, these networks reverberated in the Levant as much as they echoed events that unfolded there.

It falls to historians, sociologists, and anthropologists to uncover the dynamics that shaped Arab sociability in Brazil, in light of a dual political existence: simultaneously integrated into Brazilian society and attentive spectators of their homeland's transformations.

The transplantation of Syrian conflicts to Brazil was not unique to this community, but it assumed particular forms marked by the exclusion of the Arab-Brazilian diaspora from mainstream narratives of Levantine history.

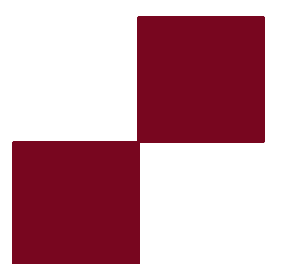
## Conclusion

The story of Adib Al Shishakli, if more thoroughly recovered, could provide valuable insight into both the transnational politics of the *mahjar* and the contemporary dynamics of Syria where, strikingly, Al Shishakli's figure seems to reappear in current narratives surrounding the new Syrian government and the leadership of al-Julani, the so-called “transitional president” of a country once again divided among external powers: Zionist Entity, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States.

Each of these actors continues to marshal nationalist discourse around the image of a “strong leader” who, for now, has not ceased to inflict horrors reminiscent of Al Shishakli's own bombardment of Jabal Al Druze, like we see in the recent massacres perpetrated by the Al Julani government in Lattakia and As-Suwayda and the ongoing kidnapping of alawite women and social media videos of HTS enthusiasts calling for the death of “infidels.”

Vindicated by his family and by witnesses, Al Shishakli nonetheless met his death at the hands of a fellow countryman—whether or not financed by his community remains uncertain. In the heart of Brazil, in the small town of Ceres, a former president was killed; and perhaps precisely because it happened in Brazil, the story has been largely forgotten.

Thus, revisiting this episode is not merely for documentation purposes, but also serves to re-inscribe it within a broader framework of historical analysis—especially in the contemporary context of the Arab world, where power patterns are reiterated and nationalist discourses are reformulated, while transnational connections remain a hidden, albeit sometimes decisive, factor in shaping its unfolding events.



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Ex-Presidente da Síria  
assassinado numa  
cidadezinha de Goiás

# O ÓDIO NÃO ESQUECE

TEXTO DE OSWALDO AMORIM  
FOTOS DE ROBERTO STUCKERT



Adib Chichakli morava em Ceres, pequena cidade do interior de Goiás. Até mesmo amigos bem chegados sabiam apenas que ele era um sírio, mas não tinham, considerando suas palestras, elementos seguros para saber que ele era, ou tinha sido, um político em sua terra e que a política o elevara à Presidência da República e o atrairia depois ao exílio povoado de grande tranqüilidade da cidadezinha de Ceres. Essas conversas não tinham muito interesse para o homem que, um dia, conversando com um repórter desta Revista, desejara tão-somente que a Síria trilhasse o verdadeiro caminho do progresso e da paz e que não fosse derramada em seu solo "uma só gota de sangue árabe". O sangue de Adib Chichakli caiu sobre o chão de Ceres (Estado de Goiás), por causa da política síria.

Cover of *O Cruzeiro* magazine reporting Al Shishakli's assassination.



View of Rialma. The photograph shows the wooden bridge built in the 1940s. Credits: Cícero Leão Júnior



Supporters carry Al Shishakli's casket. Credits: Correio Brasiliense



# THE NODDING HEAD (YES-NO):

## THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RULER AND RULED

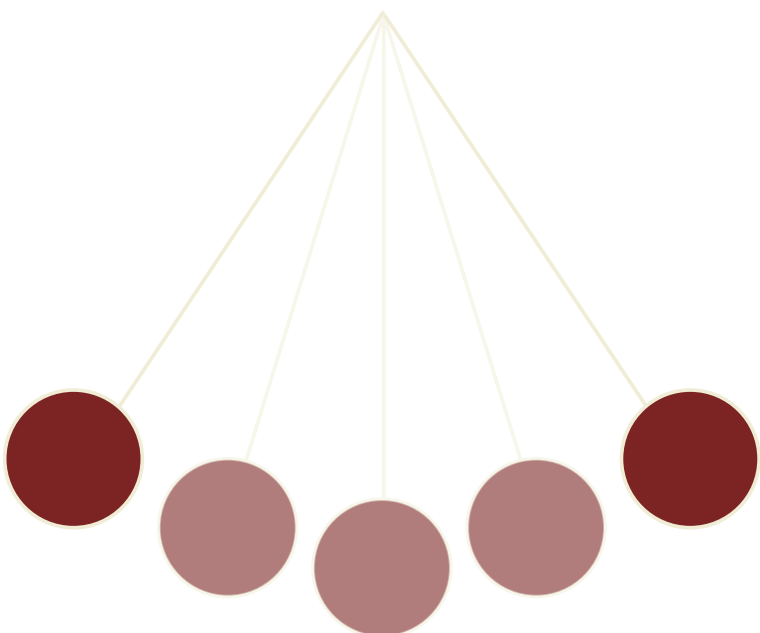
Mwaffaq Al Hajjar

*The moment the human head resumes its ancient motion from top to bottom in order to say “yes,” kings immediately return.*

— Alain (Émile Chartier)

What does it mean to think? For the French philosopher Alain (Émile Chartier) (1868-1951), the answer was simple: “To think: to say no.” In a 1961 lecture recently published in a four-part book, Jacques Derrida takes this direct assertion as the starting point for a deconstructive journey. He initially sides with Alain, affirming that saying “no” is the ultimate project of consciousness—a refusal first directed at the self's urge to simply surrender to reality. It is an internal struggle waged in pursuit of something better. In other words, this negativity is a resistance to what is in order to arrive at what ought to be. Refusal, then, is fundamentally an ethical act, driven by the pursuit of the ideal.

In the second part of the lecture, Derrida reframes Alain's dictum by interrogating the very nature of thought. He argues that thought does not negate itself, but rather rejects its own degradation, embodied in submission. For Derrida, submission is a naïve and vulgar "yes" that blinds judgement, surrendering to mere appearances or to the nearest authority. Following Alain, Derrida points out that submission and doubt form a dialectical pair, each necessary to the other. To say "no" to submission, therefore, is to say "yes" to the intrinsic value of truth. Accordingly, one may also say: to think is to say "yes," "yes" to value (axiological value), that is, to the will to truth. This raises a fundamental question: Is every will inherently a will to the good? Is every "yes," in one way or another, a will to the good? What distinguishes, then, the one who says "yes" and from the one who says "no" to a given idea?



## A Bloody 'Yes'

As I read the book, the word "yes" spun wildly through my head, summoning blurred images of a moment when a single word seized the streets of Damascus in 2007: "Yes" (to Bashar Al Assad). It was a simple phrase, repeated relentlessly until it blinded one's eyes to it. It appeared on walls and road signs, flashed in television advertisements, clung to windows of government institutions, and lined the façades of shops, falafel stands and hummus restaurants. Across Damascus – and surely all of Syria – every alley and street echoed with a singular, monumental "yes." With those three letters, the state took control of the city, declaring that the Syrian people had made their choice ("It wasn't your decision, the people chose you") and voiced their word ("Yes to Bashar Al Assad"). Three letters – Y, E, S – shackled an entire country. Dabke circles shook, drums beat, free shawarma was distributed, and things remained as they were. Until the Syrian revolution. That awakening began with a clear, resounding "no," before fracturing into complex language games where meanings and motivations blurred: skeptical "nos," fearful

“yeeses,” “nos” disguised as “yeeses,” “yeeses” disguised as “nos,” and other sayings that will not end.

Now, in the present moment, with Bashar Al Assad’s “yes” finally shattered and the criminal having fled the reality of Syria, the dilemma of “yes” and “no” returns to the Syrian socio-political landscape in a regrettable way. It manifests as a relentless conflict, both in the streets and across social media, waged by opposing armies of the certain and the doubting who clash over what is and what ought to be. Fingers point toward faces, hurling clashing ideas and ideologies, releasing their sticky accusations – accusations that can prevent a body from existing, or an idea from remaining, by means of sweeping charges that always oscillate between “yes” and “no.” A finger points directly at our faces, demanding a choice. We must answer: “yes” or “no.” In doing so we are forced into extremes: killer or killed, survivor or missing, victim or sacrificer; and above all, patriot or traitors, cheerleaders or dissidents. All these bitter quarrels culminate in a forced “yes” or intensify into a defiant “no.” But without fail, they all weaponize those two deceptively simple words.



## **“What Was” and “What Ought to Be”**

The tension between what is and what ought to be governs all political action; it is the ultimate expression of a collective desire for change. As Derrida (2003) suggests, every will is inherently a will to the good. Those who demand change genuinely believe their vision is supreme, and that the truth they pursue is more legitimate than any alternative. Consequently, the one who says “yes” to the status quo and the one who says “no” are merely two sides of the same coin—the coin of the will to the good. Everyone takes pride in their own ethics, their own brand of patriotism, or their own religious purity. What, then, actually separates these competing desires?

Today, Syrian ideologies clash on every front, each party consciously or unconsciously scrambling to take control. This struggle is magnified in the wake of the Assad era, or the collapse of the Ba’athist regime, which for decades dictated the epistemic (episteme) and ideological framework for Syrians, whether they supported it or opposed it. In this moment, of political truth, our collective ideological destabilization becomes painfully clear. It marks the beginning of a fierce battle, ignited the exact moment that long-suppressed-ideologies finally rush back into the open.

This ideological crisis mirrors the insights of Louis Althusser (2006), who argued that ideology is, in its essence, profoundly unconscious—even when it masquerades as conscious thought. For Althusser, ideology is a system of representations and cultural objects that we perceive, accept, and endure, shaping us through a process whose true mechanism remains hidden. Crucially for our understanding of the Syrian tragedy, Althusser notes that ideology is rooted in the relationship of suffering that binds people to their world. Within an ideological framework, individuals do not express their actual conditions of life, but rather the manner in which they live their relationship to those conditions. As he famously observed: “In ideology, the real relationship is inevitably subsumed by an imaginary one—a distortion that expresses a collective will, hope, or nostalgia rather than describing a given reality” (Althusser, 2006: 10).

The masses divide between “yes” and “no” according to unconscious ideology, bound to their real and imagined suffering in a narrative that shapes the reality of Syrian societies (or its components). Ideology thus becomes the primary driver of the value of these “yeses” and those “nos;” it is what determines our vision of reality and our ethical space. It is what places us at different levels and at varying distances from the form of Syria over which we struggle. Thus, the audience of the new authority rushes to defend it out of fear of a return, or of the emergence, of another Syrian reality that does not correspond to their suffering, which has been narrativised in different ways until truth was lost in falsehood.



Today, the Syrian conflict appears as a “yes” for the ruler and a “no” for its Syrian enemies, a “yes” for the ruler’s ideology and a “no” for those who oppose it, that is, a conflict of political ideas between an Islamist state (with an Umayyad imaginary) and a secular state, or a civic state, or a remnants-of-the-regime state, or a federal state, and others. But this ideological conflict is, first and foremost, a conflict of power – a conflict that seeks despotism in rule and consolidation. That is, it is not only a conflict over how to see reality and how to live within it, but a conflict to control reality and to attempt to negate its plurality. And this despotism will always rely on the crimes of its supporters and on their exceptional ability to say “yes” to them at every step.



Syrian crimes multiply today, and voices rise that imagine their suffering, mixing their (historical) imagination with their reality, and the idea of “Syria” becomes more complex than it was. Smaller identities surface at the expense of Syrian identity (whose political project seems to have failed), and everyone mixes their communal imaginaries, their ideological dreams, with the reality that has passed, is passing, and will pass. To varying degrees, Syrians exchange chairs in a game that hardly ends until the last “Syrian” dies with it.

Legitimate questions appear, such as: Did the revolution begin to revive the Umayyad state? Or did it begin to build mosques in university colleges? Did it begin so that the lands of the Ministry of Religious Endowments [1] might be returned, or to change the holders of international contracts from East to West? Did it begin to change the “Shi’a/Alawite” political reality into a “Sunni” reality? For, according to what Syrians agreed upon, the revolution began for dignity, from an ethical impulse aiming to restore the dignity that had been squandered for Syrians, not to humiliate some groups rather than others, or to reproduce humiliation in a new form. Will we see “Yes to Ahmad aAl Shara’a” or other rising names on the streets of Damascus and other Syrian cities?

### **(Yes and No) in the Citizen’s Head**

During the Syrian revolution, accusations were always directed toward the grey population in Syria, insofar as they were neither supporters nor opponents of the state at the time, and everyone hated the presence of the politically inactive greys. Are the greys still part of Syria’s political scene? Nassif Nassar (2017) writes about the invalidity of the idea of the waning of ideology in his lecture on democracy and doctrinal conflict, and defines ideology as one of the expressions of the social human being as an acting subject.

On the basis of this definition, we can describe the greys as ideological subjects who are politically inactive. Where are they today, and how does their ideological unconscious affect the Syrian struggle over power? Does everyone in Syria have a political agenda that seeks to realize a reality that suits them? Is there a head not engaged in political action in a country exhausted by a long war that has afflicted nearly all Syrian communities?

[1] The Ministry of Waqf (or Ministry of Awaqf) is the government body responsible for the administration of Islamic religious assets known as waqf — properties or resources permanently donated for religious or public utility purposes, such as mosques, schools, and charitable institutions. In Muslim-majority countries, such as Syria, the ministry oversees the management of these foundations, regulates religious activities in mosques, and exercises guidance and institutional control over aspects of public religious life.

Greys have not disappeared; rather, their "neutrality" has transformed into a profound strategy for survival within a shattered episteme. If ideology is an expression of the acting subject, then the refusal to act, the choice to remain grey, is a deliberate, unconscious preservation of the self against a reality that offers only totalizing binaries. Their political agenda is not the conquest of power, but the endurance of life. Yet, in a struggle over absolute control, this passive ideological unconscious acts as a silent weight—a resistance to the violent "yesses" and "nos" that attempt to colonize their existence. In a country exhausted by a long war that has afflicted nearly all Syrian communities, even the head that refuses political action is engaged in a silent, ideological war just to remain human.

No one can deny the pains of the long conflict the Syrian people generally endure, nor the calamities of poverty, need, scarcity, and wretched living. So what does the Syrian citizen want? Did they ever want secession? Did they want an Islamist state? Did they want decentralized rule? Did they want recognition of identity? Do we truly reflect on these questions, or discuss them openly, especially amid a media landscape saturated with competing narratives and the illusion of millions of dollars promised for Syria's reconstruction? Such promises can easily compel people to defend those who make them, provoking both online and real-world mobilizations against anyone who dares to challenge them. Can we therefore doubt that this popular alignment with the government is an ideological agreement with it? Can we think of it as an attempt to cling to the idea of survival? And in the same way, can we think that one side's agreement with Israeli intervention, or the formation of an internal region under self-administration, does not stem from ideological agreement, but from an attempt to survive the surrounding death?

Syrian cultural diversity – ideological, religious-doctrinal, and recently narrative (in the sense that each group has a different narrative of what happened/is happening) –



undoubtedly reflects itself in Syrians' online disputes, and takes shape on the ground through strikes, protests, marches, quarrels, and even through tribal mobilisations, clan formations, and religious and historical fantasies. But can we think that the new reality compels some Syrians, some of them politically inactive, to enter this battle out of concern for the lifeline that appears in every ideology?

## **“I Am a Human Being, Not an Animal” or “I Am Syrian, Brother”[2]**

What, today, can we rely upon to halt the growing hatred between the political and non-political segments of society – a hatred that increasingly hardens into a struggle defined by narrow identities? This is especially urgent as the fragility of the idea of Syrian identity has become clear, given that it depended primarily on the identity of the Ba'ath Party in the past. As soon as the Ba'ath fell, the features of Syrian identity itself began to crumble, and smaller narratives spread in order to resist disintegration. As Aziz al-Azmeh (2015: 156) observed, “There is no future for Syria as a country unless it is reinvented.” So we must reinvent it and invent a Syrian national identity. Until then, can we think about what Syrian patriotism means today? Can we think about what defines the one primary belonging that unites the members of the people and its groups in a comprehensive horizontal and vertical unity? But before we define Syrian patriotism, and until such a definition emerges, should we not resist this blind surrender to degradation?

'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (2010: 16) writes “Any government, of whatever type, does not cease to be described as despotism unless it is under strict oversight and uncompromising accountability.” Should we

[2] The expression “I am human, not an animal” was spontaneously uttered in 2011 by Syrian citizen Mohammed Abdel Wahab, in the early days of the Syrian uprising, on the border with Turkey, as a form of protest against the repression of the previous regime and against the dehumanizing treatment imposed on the population. The phrase “I am Syrian, my brother” became widely recognized due to its circulation in videos associated with members of the new government, released during episodes of violence against minorities, in which it appears as a response to the question “what sect are you from?”, functioning as a rhetorical marker in situations of humiliation and execution.

reconsider all this drift and cheerleading? Should we put an end to the free festivals in order to confront the condition of certain Syrian cities – cities whose people we once lived alongside, and with whom we shared both oppression and bread? No doubt, this requires struggling against the self that instinctively says “yes,” the self that longs to surrender to easy and reassuring answers, content to declare: this reality is better than what came before, and leave it at that.

Did people die because they deserved to die?

“The possibility of tyranny, that is, the possibility of servitude, requires my saying ‘yes’ and my ceasing criticism.” (Derrida, 2023: 40) From this phrase we begin our doubting of Syria’s new reality and its new and vulgar government. If every “yes” uttered since the moment the regime fell had thought about itself before thinking about others, it would have understood that these unconditional “yesses” will allow the criminal to seize the street and to tear the flags under which we once sought shelter. For whoever does not grieve the death of an innocent will hardly be troubled by an electricity bill; and thus the streets are surrendered to the criminal.

This article does not seek an authoritarian alternative, does not propose a project of rule, and does not claim possession of a ready answer for a fractured Syria. This article seeks nothing but to call for stopping the reproduction of the savage “yesses” for which Syria has become notorious. I want us to pause, even for a second, before a finger presses the trigger. To remember that “I am a human being, not an animal” and “I am Syrian, brother” are parallel expressions, each affirming a value that transcends doctrinal disagreement. They are communal phrases because, in both, the citizen appeals to a shared sense of belonging that precedes ideology, authority, and political division. They call on the criminal to think before pulling the trigger, and on the spectators to think as well — that is, to say “no,” and to abandon this incomprehensible certainty in the face of Syria’s fragmented reality today.

Today, our friends and relatives mock us before our enemies do, when

we cry out and say that this endless violence returns blood to waterfalls of hatred and revenge. They mock us if we ask them to think about the government's position toward the neighbouring entity that wants to devour rivers. They mock us if we say that the dominance of a single ideology will destroy the possibilities of the future. And they mock every word "no" in the face of criminals who washed themselves in the moment of liberation and appeared to us as saviour heroes. Only today does the possibility of saying "no" seem more urgent than at any other moment in Syria's short history; we need one "yes" for the Syrian human being, and an endless "no" for every ruler who seeks to secure their throne upon our skulls.

## **No, and a Thousand Nos**

We must preserve the "no" that toppled the criminal, for which hundreds of thousands of Syrians perished – a "no" that thinks of the necessity of stopping Syrians' deaths, a "no" that wants a better reality for all Syrians. We must preserve the possibility of saying this "no," and allow others to say it too, because through this "no" alone, and through refusal alone, we can obtain what we want. This does not mean we are not patriotic. Rather, submission to the matter and satisfaction with reality are nothing but remnants of post-colonial thinking, stemming from French, Ottoman, or other past reality in which the coloniser imposes reality upon colonised peoples and forces them to nod their heads and accept what is without thinking about what ought to be.

"No," and a thousand "nos." After more than a full year has passed since the change, some still sing of illusory achievements and chase the authority's statements in order to say "yes"— by soul and blood [3] —"yes" to this new authority, and no to everyone who says no to it. They laugh over graves and sing over corpses. They say "yes" to imaginary butterfly projects, "yes" to trampling and crushing everyone who opposes the government, "yes" to a Syria that does not accept others, "yes" to declaring our kin infidels, "yes" to removing employees from their jobs, "yes" to combating begging and chasing beggar children, "yes" to killing Alawites and Druze and bombing Christians if necessary, "yes" to undocumented arrests and to detainees who kill themselves

with sharp tools [4], “yes” to howling and to “cry and you’ll feel better,” [5] “yes” to sectarianism, invasion, and the rousing of bloody history, “yes” to cooperating with enemies, “yes” to forgiving criminals, “yes” to returning to the embrace of the countries that destroyed Syria, “yes” to massacre, “yes” to ignorance, “yes” to interfering in people’s daily lives, “yes” to violence, “yes” to a People Assembly with no people in it, “yes” to placing loyalty above competence, “yes” to blind state media.

“Yes” to everything the state does. And “no,” and a thousand “nos,” to Syrians. “No” to every Syrian who does not want to say “yes.” And this “no” may mean that we kill this Syrian, or attack them online with laughter and insults until they fall silent completely, submit, and say “yes” – a naïve, stupid “yes” that suits our reality that does not think.

And although the army of “yes” is much larger, I will remember every existing “no,” and I will keep remembering the man who said “no,” in the form of “Syrian, brother,” when he refused to answer a simple, lethal question. I will remember the peasant that said “no” to an arrogant army officer, and the child who said “no” to a minister who asked trivial questions. I will remember every Syrian “no,” because it is the only way to survive.

[3] The expression “Yes, with soul and blood” was used as a slogan of loyalty to the Assad regime, referring to the idea that support for the leader should be total, absolute, and offered as proof of patriotism (editors' note).

[4] Reference to the episode in which Yussef Al Labbad, a Syrian man who returned from Germany to Syria to fulfill a promise, was captured and killed by men of the new regime for no apparent reason, nor due process of investigation by the government (editors' note).

[5] A phrase made famous mainly after the massacres that began in Latakia. While many people shared images of their murdered loved ones, trolls repeatedly uttered the phrase “howl and cry, and you’ll get better” (editors' note).



In short, what we need today is not agreement on a new “yes,” but the courage to endure a “no” whose consequences are not guaranteed. “No” does not claim purity, nor does it claim possession of the future, but it prevents the repetition of the past. Thinking, as Derrida reminds us, is not comfort but anxiety, not certainty but a constant resistance to slipping into obedience. Only this fragile and stubborn resistance may open the possibility of a homeland not built on graves, and not governed by a nodding head.

After that, we can argue intellectually and oscillate between “yes” and “no,” both aiming to produce a different political reality.

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CULTURE

ARTS

LETTERS



# THE SHIP OF THE SYRIANS AND LEBANESE ON 25 DE MARÇO STREET

**José de Souza Martins**

*From O Coração da Pauliceia ainda Bate, 2017.  
São Paulo: Editora UNESP; Imprensa Oficial do Estado.*

Translated by Gustavo Racy

## **Editor's Note**

Most readers probably will not be accustomed to the geographical and cultural references in the following text. Similarly, they might not have heard of its author. Prof. José de Souza Martins is one of the most emblematic sociologists of the last 40 years. Amongst his many studies, his work on the history of São Paulo is pivotal for understanding the transformations of the city — and the state — throughout the twentieth century. The title choice of the book from which the following chronicle comes is exemplary: “Pauliceia’s (a nickname for São Paulo) heart still beats.” Merging his deep knowledge of São Paulo’s streets and geography, Martins refers to places that have been transformed over time. The Tamanduateí River, for instance, where Pedro I supposedly declared Brazilian independence, was once navigable, and goods from the hinterland and the shores would arrive at the Porto Geral de São Bento (Saint Benedict’s General Harbour). After the area’s landfilling, only the slope remained, leading to the symbolic epicenter of the Arab community today: 25 de Março Street. Martins also links the symbolism of the area with his own experience as a child of the countryside, a *caipira*, and the presence of Syro-Lebanese people far beyond the metropolitan centers. In a few lines,

the author manages to merge the now practically inexistent *caipira* and mythical Arab manners: the chitchat and the coffee, the beans with maize flour, and the peddler's briefcase.

São Paulo is home to the largest historical Arab diaspora, especially Lebanese, and yet, for many, our city and history remains unknown. It remains so, many times, even to ourselves. Translating Martins' homage to our people is a humble yet meaningful way of presenting this history to you.



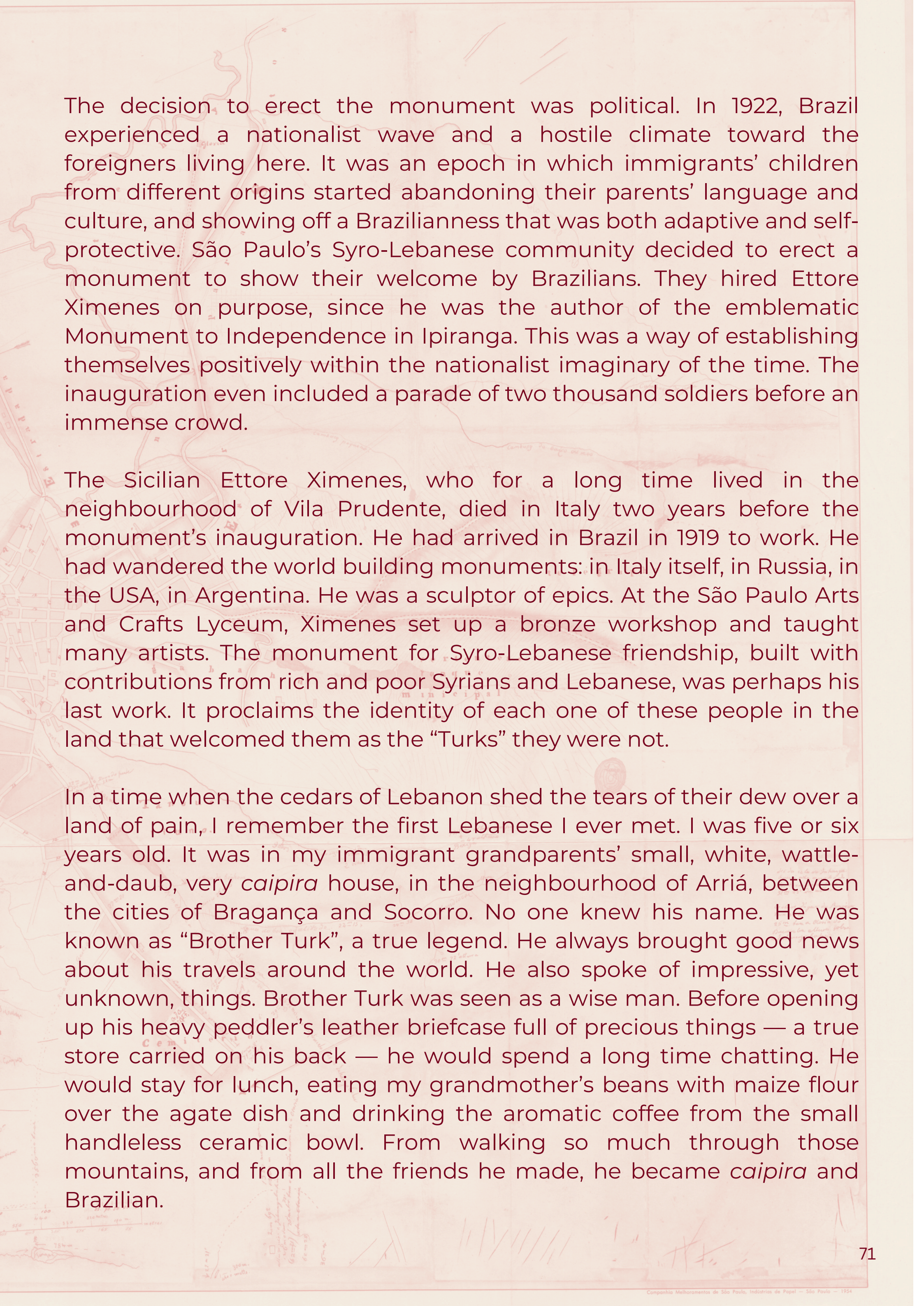
The 25 de Março Street in 1915.



## THE SHIP OF THE SYRIANS AND LEBANESE ON 25 DE MARÇO STREET

“Where the Tamanduateí River once flowed placidly, a few meters were moved aside to make room for D. Pedro II Park in São Paulo, and there now stands the Ragueb Chohfi Square and 25 de Março Street. At the foot of what is today the Porto Geral Slope, there once stood the Porto Geral de São Bento, where canoes rowed by slaves arrived, bringing produce from monks’ farms in São Caetano and São Bernardo. One day, when the river’s course had already been altered, a Phoenician ship harboured in the shape of a monument meant to celebrate Syro-Lebanese friendship. It had been commissioned from the Italian sculptor Ettore Ximenes (1855-1926) by the Syrian and Lebanese community of São Paulo to celebrate the centennial of Brazilian independence.

According to Ximenes himself, quoted in a 1928 news piece in *\*O Estado de S. Paulo\**, when the monument was inaugurated, three sides of it contained reliefs representing the Syro-Lebanese contributions to the world of culture: Phoenicians as pioneers of navigation, the discovery of the Canary Islands by Haitam I, and the teaching of the alphabet. A fourth side of the monument celebrated the Arab insertion in Brazil, representing commerce that led to prosperity. On top of it, three human figures in natural size: a female one representing the Brazilian Republic turned toward a Syrian maiden making an offering to a Brazilian brother, an indigenous warrior. Two plaques exhibiting a poem by Elias Farhat in Portuguese and Arabic were stolen. Farhat had emigrated to Brazil in 1910. According to historian Jeffrey Lesser, a monument with similar allegories exists in Tucumán, Argentina.



The decision to erect the monument was political. In 1922, Brazil experienced a nationalist wave and a hostile climate toward the foreigners living here. It was an epoch in which immigrants' children from different origins started abandoning their parents' language and culture, and showing off a Brazilianness that was both adaptive and self-protective. São Paulo's Syro-Lebanese community decided to erect a monument to show their welcome by Brazilians. They hired Ettore Ximenes on purpose, since he was the author of the emblematic Monument to Independence in Ipiranga. This was a way of establishing themselves positively within the nationalist imaginary of the time. The inauguration even included a parade of two thousand soldiers before an immense crowd.

The Sicilian Ettore Ximenes, who for a long time lived in the neighbourhood of Vila Prudente, died in Italy two years before the monument's inauguration. He had arrived in Brazil in 1919 to work. He had wandered the world building monuments: in Italy itself, in Russia, in the USA, in Argentina. He was a sculptor of epics. At the São Paulo Arts and Crafts Lyceum, Ximenes set up a bronze workshop and taught many artists. The monument for Syro-Lebanese friendship, built with contributions from rich and poor Syrians and Lebanese, was perhaps his last work. It proclaims the identity of each one of these people in the land that welcomed them as the "Turks" they were not.

In a time when the cedars of Lebanon shed the tears of their dew over a land of pain, I remember the first Lebanese I ever met. I was five or six years old. It was in my immigrant grandparents' small, white, wattle-and-daub, very *caipira* house, in the neighbourhood of Arriá, between the cities of Bragança and Socorro. No one knew his name. He was known as "Brother Turk", a true legend. He always brought good news about his travels around the world. He also spoke of impressive, yet unknown, things. Brother Turk was seen as a wise man. Before opening up his heavy peddler's leather briefcase full of precious things — a true store carried on his back — he would spend a long time chatting. He would stay for lunch, eating my grandmother's beans with maize flour over the agate dish and drinking the aromatic coffee from the small handleless ceramic bowl. From walking so much through those mountains, and from all the friends he made, he became *caipira* and Brazilian.



The "Syro-Lebanese Friendship" Monument at Ragueb Chohfi Square, Downtown São Paulo. [UNESP Digital Collection](#)



Detail of the human figures on top of the monument. Backwards to the viewer, a Syrian damsel delivers a Phoenician boat to an indigenous warrior, embraced by the representation of the Brazilian Republic. [UNESP Digital Collection](#)

*Al Jaliah*  
Exhibition

João Sousa

## Editor's Note

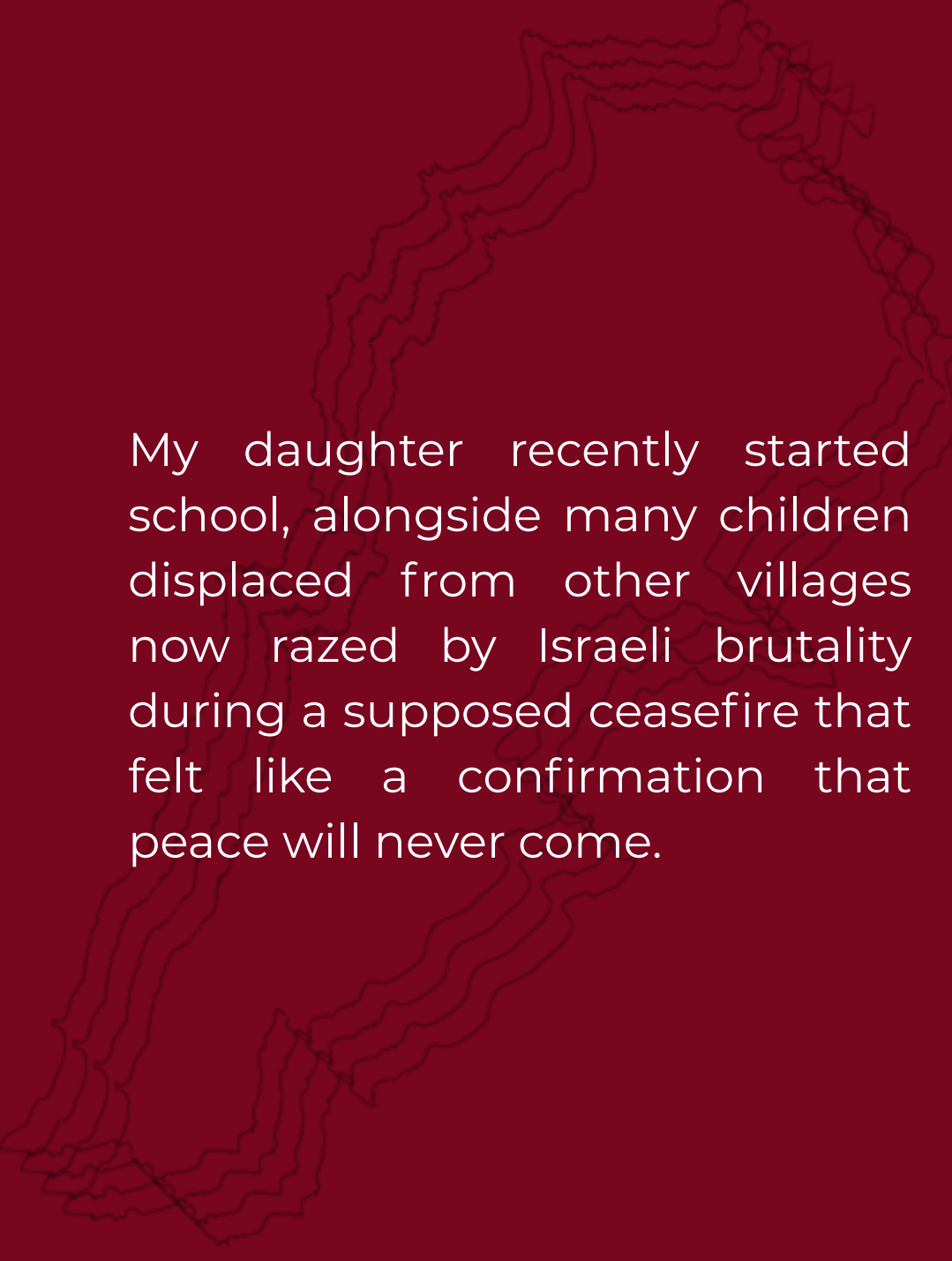
This text was shared by the author in November 2025. João Sousa provided us with a testimony in the heat of a specific moment that, at the time of publication of this issue, is unfortunately repeating itself with the Zionist aggression in Lebanon. In a conversation in February 2026, the author asked the editors if an update would be necessary, to which we replied no; although time has passed and the dimension of the crisis in Lebanon has expanded, João's photographs – and his textual account – explicitly present their historical index (to use a term from Walter Benjamin): they transport us to a specific moment that very clearly exists in a continuum that brings us to the present, that is presentified, that shows that the true catastrophe is that everything remains as it is. There are those who prioritize content, who desire information and numbers. Here, however, the well-defined form of João Sousa's essay, constructed from the sensitive account that introduces the images, constitutes a precious record of the document of barbarity that is contemporary culture. And, more importantly, how to respond affirmatively to such barbarity. And survive it.

"We have so many martyrs now," Ali told us after picking us up in Beirut on our way to the south. We had been away for nearly half a year, after a repatriation period in Portugal, my homeland, where I stayed with my wife and daughter. This was the longest period we had ever spent far from our Lebanese family, whose members suffered the most bloody and obscure period of the war against Israel, displaced and scattered throughout Lebanon, and even in parts of Syria and Iraq. While we were in exile, one of our cousins was killed by an Israeli airstrike at the end of October 2024. It was a devastating event we have yet to mentally process, or mourn adequately. The geographic distance was an implacable element that prevented us from grieve alongside our kin during that horrendous episode.

The following day, I witnessed the destruction of my wife's village and the numerous banners with the portraits of the local martyrs. Ali was right; this time, the death toll was unprecedented.

Our decision to go back to Lebanon was not an easy one. How could we assume that the promise of a ceasefire would be a basic safety guarantee, and the path to reconstructing our lives? The answer came quickly, with the unending hum of Israeli drones flying overhead, and the frequent news of indiscriminate bombing in residential areas, and civilian assassinations during what should be a peace period. On different occasions, we contemplated leaving again, this time, forever. "Perhaps it was a mistake coming back to Lebanon" is a thought I share daily with my wife. A terrible dilemma of leaving our loved ones once more, knowing we might never see them.

There are times when, certainly, we regretted the return. One of them was when some relatives barged into our house in the south, amidst desperate screaming, alerting us that Israel was about to bomb our neighbourhood, which led us to flee to a different part of the region, not knowing whether we would be able to go back. Hours later, however, we were informed by the Lebanese Armed Forces that it was safe to go back home. On a different occasion, we were abruptly surprised by the sound and impact of intense bombing close to Nabatieh, even feeling we would be killed. My two-year-old daughter asked me: "Dad, what is happening?" For the first time in her life, she realized that this was not normal. Her realization saddened me deeply, and made me feel guilty for exposing her to the terrors of war.



My daughter recently started school, alongside many children displaced from other villages now razed by Israeli brutality during a supposed ceasefire that felt like a confirmation that peace will never come.


Dahiyeh, where I have lived for over four years, is devastated. Whole apartment blocks have vanished and we regularly need to find alternative routes for navigating through debris and arrive at some of the familiar places that used to be part of our lives. On certain occasions, we look around and simply do not recognise where we are. This is one of the most perverse effects of urbicide: your own city becomes so disfigured by mass destruction that you become momentarily unable to identify where you are. Dahiyeh is also where thousands of displaced families now live, trying to begin anew. Local businesses hesitate to invest, not knowing whether they will have to close everything in case of a new escalation by Israel. Many people I speak with profess a desire to leave the country as soon as possible; these are the same people who, some years prior, were happy to remain in their land despite the multiple crises affecting Lebanon's socioeconomic reality.

And yet, here we are, and probably we will remain here until it is absolutely impossible to carry on. "To exist is to resist;" by existing on this land, we resist occupation. This is my wife's land, as well as where our dear family remains. Despite the bombs and the threats of a new terrible escalation by Israel, our community is an unbreakable unity. We laugh, we pick olives, we smoke narguile, we worry sick to death. Then we laugh again.

**We rebuild every day.**




شهداء  
في العراق المقدس



الشهيد السعيد  
نبيل ابراهيم حسن  
( أبو شكيب )

شهداء  
في العراق المقدس



الشهيد السعيد  
حسين عبد المنعم ابو الحسين  
( أبو عتد )

شهداء  
في العراق المقدس



محمد جعفر فرج الحايوي  
حسين احمد الحايوي

بالشهداء لتينا























**Douglas Lambert**

## **"If I Must Die" - Refaat Alareer**

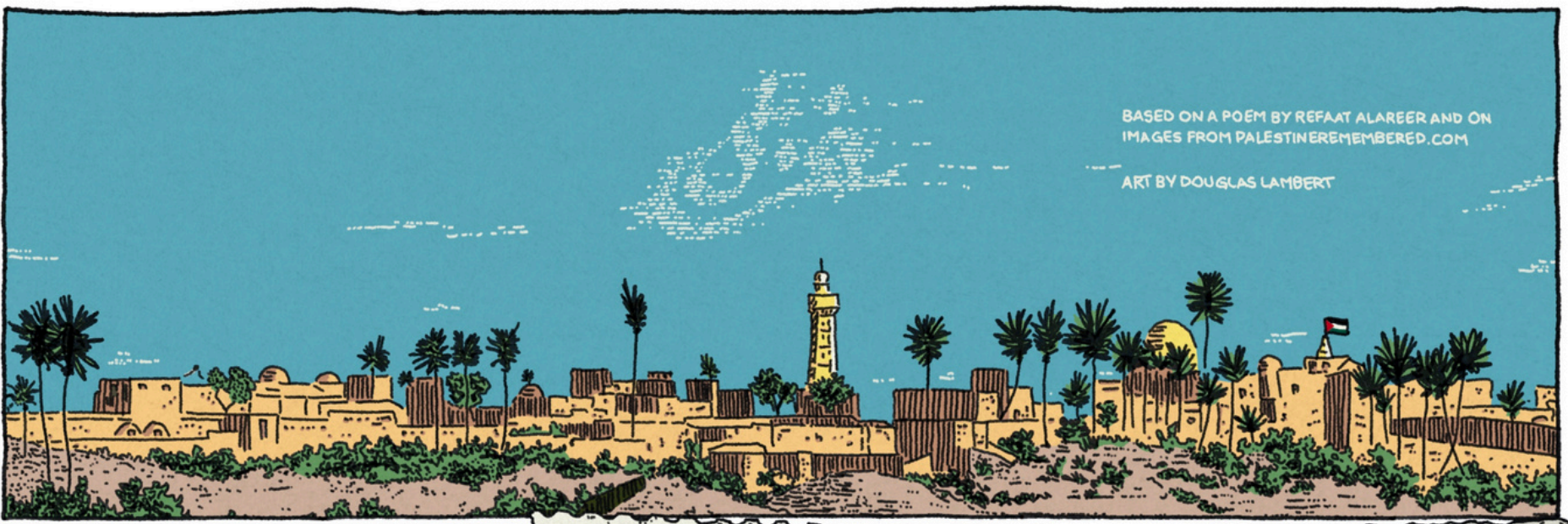
I did not know Refaat Alareer before the Palestinian genocide resumed in 2023. When I came into contact with his work, he was no longer alive. His poem "If I Must Die," posted in English to Twitter shortly before his assassination by the Israeli army, had been adapted into a comic strip by American artist Melissa Mendes, and published by the collective Cartoonists For Palestine, a collective of artists and editors who united to produce a charitable anthology for victims of that massacre. The poem, the comic, and the harrowing images of that war moved me deeply. Melissa had done a beautiful and delicate job, but it bothered me that her art, legitimately, focused on the present situation in Gaza and left little space for hope beyond the kite mentioned in the poem itself.

From this unrest, I decided to produce my own adaptation of "If I Must Die." I began by translating the poem into Portuguese with the help of an anonymous collaborator. Then, I delved into research for old images of Palestine, prioritizing records from the pre-Nakba era. For the illustrations themselves, I chose a style reminiscent of the Tintin stories, with their clear line and an economy of color. Hergé, though strongly influenced by Belgium's horrific colonial past, produced racist and prejudiced work early in his career, but was able to learn from his mistakes and, starting with "Tintin and The Blue Lotus," began to portray peoples and cultures with greater realism. His style and his work carry this history of change and regret, something I imagined would give more power to the depiction of a past now completely destroyed.

My adaptation of "If I Must Die" was published by Crucial Comix in "Cartoonists for Palestine" (2024) and by the American magazine "In These Times," in its August/September 2025 issue. In early 2025, the Belgian magazine Apache, published in Hergé's homeland, featured "Als Ik Moet Sterven," the Dutch translation of my work.

BASED ON A POEM BY REFAAT ALAREER AND ON IMAGES FROM PALESTINEREMEMBERED.COM

ART BY DOUGLAS LAMBERT



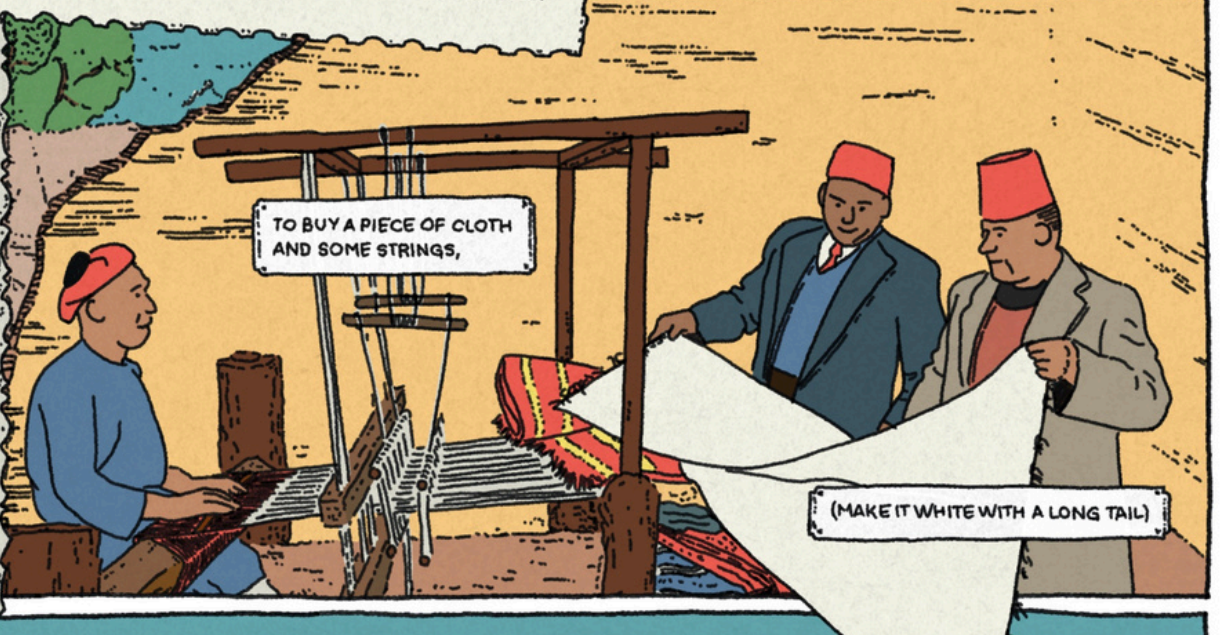
IF I MUST DIE,  
YOU MUST LIVE



TO TELL MY STORY

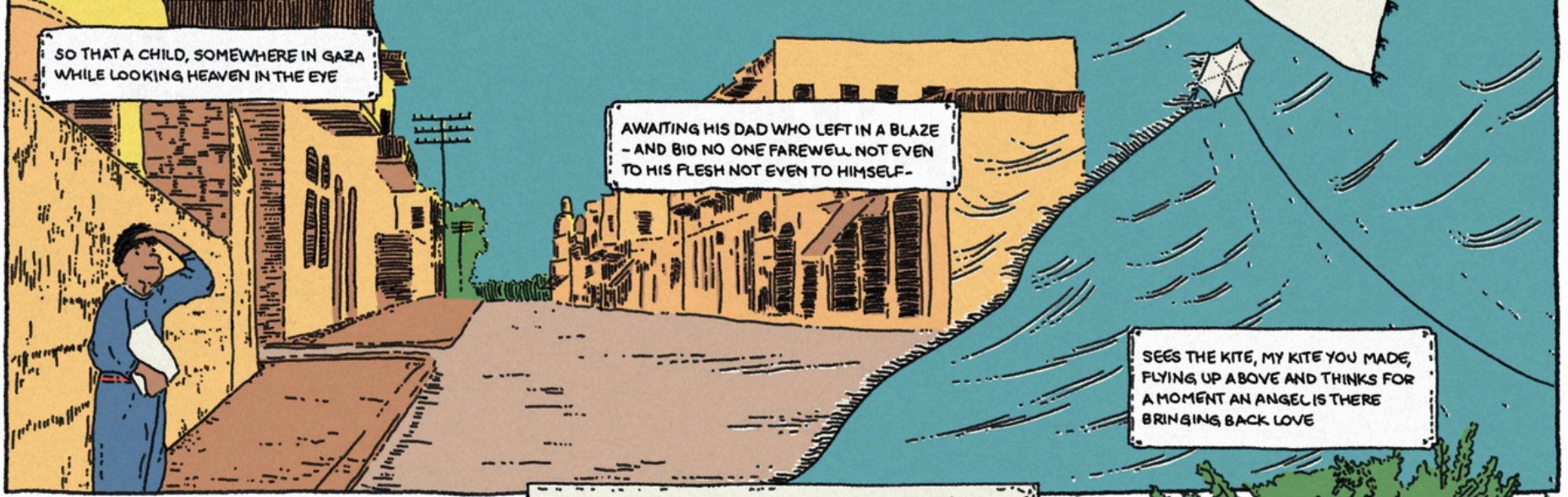


TO SELL MY THINGS



TO BUY A PIECE OF CLOTH  
AND SOME STRINGS,

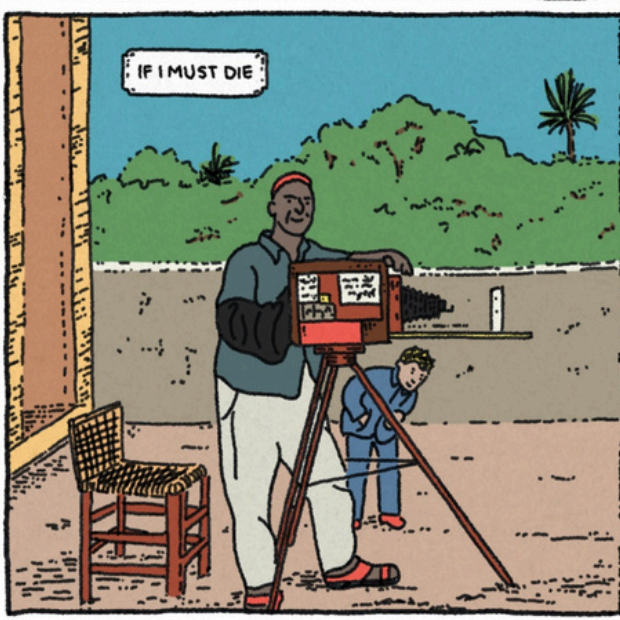
(MAKE IT WHITE WITH A LONG TAIL)



SO THAT A CHILD, SOMEWHERE IN GAZA  
WHILE LOOKING HEAVEN IN THE EYE

AWAITING HIS DAD WHO LEFT IN A BLAZE  
- AND BID NO ONE FAREWELL, NOT EVEN  
TO HIS FLESH NOT EVEN TO HIMSELF-

SEES THE KITE, MY KITE YOU MADE,  
FLYING UP ABOVE AND THINKS FOR  
A MOMENT AN ANGEL IS THERE  
BRINGING BACK LOVE



IF I MUST DIE



LET IT BRING HOPE

LET IT BE A TALE

1947

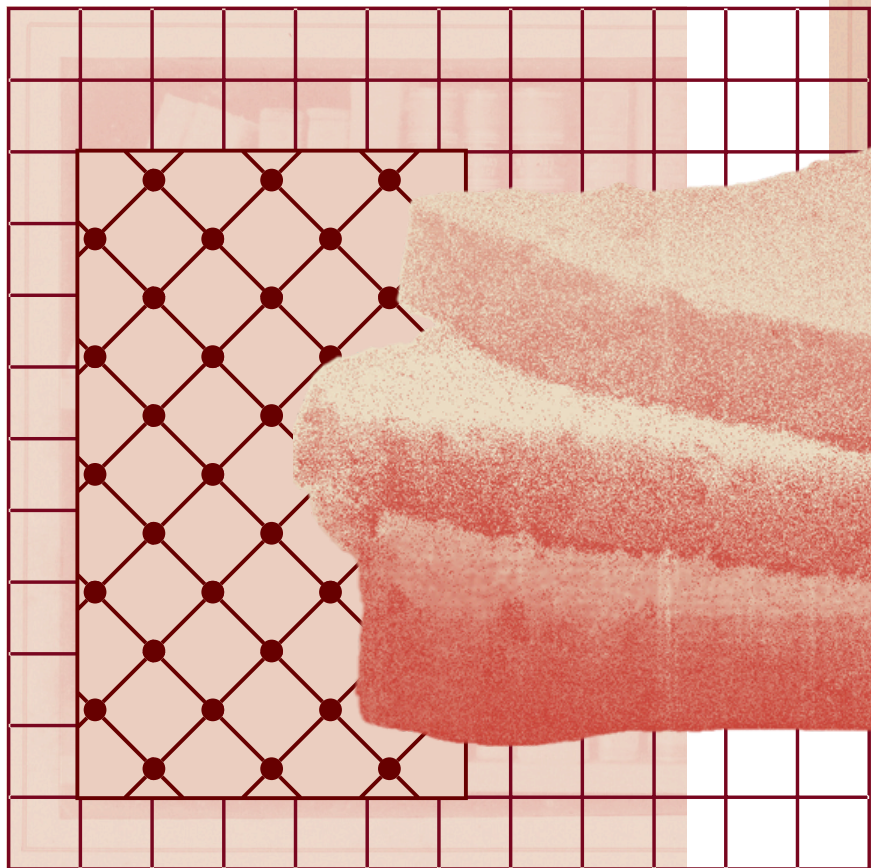
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REVIEW

# THE BORDERS OF PALESTINE: Psychoanalysis as a Practice of Resistance



Marcus Vinícius Neto Silva

In psychoanalysis, we greatly value the idea of repetition, of return, of revisiting places and memories so that, at some point, this can acquire new meaning. In the case of Palestine, however, these notions carry other meanings. The return to the land, which is desired but prevented. The incessant and suffocating repetition of the violence of colonization. The impossibility of revisiting what has been destroyed by the hands of the Zionists.

Moving through these and many other impasses and tensions between what psychoanalysis can produce that is liberating and its use as a tool for silencing, Lara and Stephen Sheehi, in *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*, lead us to questions that lie at the core of our practice as psychoanalysts from the Global South.

The book, published in 2022, predates the genocide carried out by Israel in Gaza and the increase in Israeli colonial violence in the West Bank, as well as the subsequent attacks and invasions of the territories of Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. Even so, the sophisticated and in-depth analysis offered by the authors stands as an important weapon to be wielded by psychoanalysts in debates on Palestine within the psychoanalytic movement. The Brazilian translation of the book is currently being prepared, with an expected publication date in 2026 by Edições Inadequadas.

The study comprises four chapters, each addressing different aspects of psychoanalytic practice in Palestine. One of the constant elements throughout the work is the consideration of the "dynamic and fluid boundary between the social and the psychic, between the political and the subjective, and between the collective and the individual" (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022: 91).

The first chapter, "Practicing disalienation," centers on a discussion of Amjad's case, which presents exemplary challenges faced by local psychoanalysts, and it has implications that enable access to forms of resistance through analytical practice. The second chapter, "The Will to Live in Palestine," discusses the efforts of Palestinians (patients and analysts alike) to create ways of affirming life, which inevitably involves considering the meanings and functions of suicide, as well as the "slow death" imposed by occupation. In the third chapter, "Psychoanalytic Innocence," the authors critically assess attempts to establish "dialogue" between Israelis and Palestinians, which tend to ignore the disparity in conditions between the two parties. This same critique is extended to the analyst's neutrality, a technical tool that helps mask or even conceal the ideological factors at play. Here, the authors draw on the episode where the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy ignored requests from members and non-members to boycott Israel, analyzing how psychoanalytic institutions ideologically align with Zionism, even when they believe themselves to be taking an impartial stance.

The fourth chapter, “Psychotherapeutic Commons in Liberated Palestine,” explores how Palestinian clinicians understand their position within the system and the coping strategies they develop, given the collaboration of psychoanalytic theory with the forces that sustain the system. This is accomplished through accounts from Palestinian psychoanalysts about their training and supervisory experiences with Israeli psychoanalysts, with special attention to the use of language in these relationships. Finally, in the epilogue “Resistance Keeps Us Sane,” Lara and Stephen Sheehi draw on the work of Palestinian poets to reaffirm a rejection of the role of victimhood so often offered to Palestinians. Echoing the words of Nidal, one of the clinicians they spoke with, they reinforce the notion that “resistance keeps us sane,” meaning that confronting the suffering produced by the ongoing Nakba involves building collective forms of struggle, and psychoanalysis can also be implicated in this movement.

### **Resistance through psychoanalysis**

Ever since its foundation, the State of Israel works both to rewrite the history of the region (and, in so doing, justify its existence), and to silence Palestinian resistance (or to keep it under its rule). In the words of Edward Said (1992: 175), “Israel’s political goal has been to keep the Arabs pacified, never capable of preventing their continued domination by Israel.”

One of the fronts on which Zionism operates is the erasure and rewriting of the history of psychoanalysis. This action is evident, for example, in the publication of two books that aspire to narrate the entry of psychoanalysis into Palestine and to discuss the connections it establishes there. Both in *Freud in the Kibbutz* and in *Psychoanalysis in Israel* (both published in Brazil in 2023), Liebermann narrates a history in which Arabs and Palestinians are merely supporting characters. They always appear in the background, as dangers that forced the Zionist pioneers to fight. A shamelessly Zionist narrative, laden with idealizations of these supposed heroes who pioneered those lands while promoting a kind of burial of the history of the Palestinian people, who only appear in a line or two as a threat to be overcome by the settlers.

This objective of erasure, pursued zealously by Zionists, always encounters a very real limitation: the various forms of resistance and confrontation by the Palestinian people, who insist on not allowing themselves to be subjugated. Sheehi and Sheehi are categorical in this regard:

we acknowledge that Zionist settler colonialism is not only what constitutes Palestinian identity and selfhood, individually and collectively. Within this context, we understand that the indigenous peoples of Palestine (Arabs, Armenians, Circassians, and others) have a complex subjectivity that precedes the rise of Zionism in Palestine but also continues to exist outside of it (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022: 22).



Lara Sheehi



Stephen Sheehi

Thus, the authors will follow the accounts of Palestinian psychoanalysts regarding the cases they treat, as well as the difficulties they face and how they deal with the overlap between the colonial reality and the analytical setting. This is a point that reappears throughout the entire work: how do psychoanalysts deal with this violence that insists on invading the (supposedly safe) space of analysis? "One way or another, the occupation always enters the consulting room," states Yoa'd, one of the psychoanalysts with whom the authors dialogue. "The occupation exists even when it is not mentioned," points out Karim, a clinician, political activist, and former political prisoner (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022: 36).

A recurrent assertion made by several of the clinicians the authors spoke with is that the occupation provided the language that shaped their patients' symptoms. They present this to us in various forms. Amjad, a man with a sensation of having a ball in his throat and difficulty speaking and breathing, brings to mind the scene where an Israeli soldier forbids him and his daughter from leaving the car, forcing the girl to urinate inside it, embracing her father. The humiliation, the feeling of suffocation, and the violence of colonization invade the father-daughter bond, attacking Amjad's self-perception as a man. Another patient, diagnosed as schizophrenic, fears going through the gates of the Old City, believing he would float away. A third patient could not even leave his house, which might be read as a very severe obsessive neurosis, but which reveals that, in the recent past, he had been imprisoned and held for some years. This patient's fear of leaving home, of abandoning his mother, and the profound anguish he faced could not be seen as disconnected from the reality he endured. Different symptoms and modes of suffering, all constructed from the symbols available within the colonial reality.

The authors do not abandon the possible psychoanalytic readings of Palestinian suffering; they render them more sophisticated by considering them alongside the living conditions of those individuals. The discussion presented on the suicide of Mohannad Yunis is exemplary. It was not merely a death produced by the context of oppressive restriction of his movements (denial of a visa to leave the country, which limited his educational and work opportunities), but also by the abandonment and restrictions imposed by Mohannad's father (refusing to help him with the dowry needed to marry, constant statements of his worthlessness). Mohannad's strategies for coping with these pressures and to take ownership of them do not seem to find a satisfactory path, despite his promising literary output. It is not possible to locate merely a kind of failure in his defense processes against the violence that strikes him, but perhaps his death also presents itself as an affirmation of life. Beyond seeking to explain what might have motivated Mohannad, the authors demonstrate how he (and every person living under the Zionist occupation) is subjected to a reduction in the space in which a person can move freely, and that this aims at the

destruction of the self (*nafs*). Taking this case as an example, throughout the discussion of different aspects of clinical work in the context of colonization, one sees the imposition of the idea of a “parallel between material and psychic realities and the ways in which Palestinians may or may not metabolize personal and collective suffering” (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022: 88).

## **Neutrality of complicity?**

This context of Zionist colonial violence presents challenges for both patients and analysts. Palestinian psychologists and psychoanalysts often also work subjected to Zionist control or threatened by it. Whether due to the obligation to have an Israeli supervisor, as reported by Yoa'd, who pressured her to steer the case in a certain direction and against whom she had to create ways to evade in order to make a listening possible, or due to the precarious funding of clinics serving Arabs, a fact mentioned by Ali, which imposed far-reaching limitations.

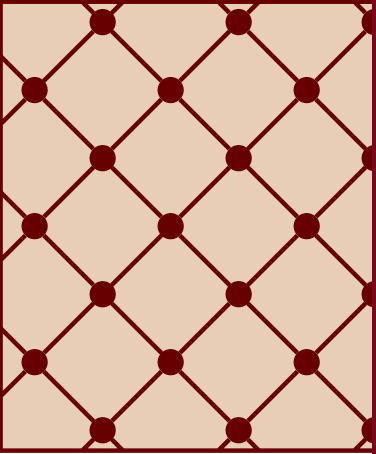
But the authors do not confine their reflections to concerns about treatment direction and problems of psychoanalytic technique. They propose to directly challenge the psychoanalytic institutions that ally themselves, directly or indirectly, with the Zionist colonial state called Israel.

Through the critique of the analyst's neutrality, they cite examples of institutions that organize conferences in Israel, despite protests and calls for boycott, in the name of a supposed impartiality. It becomes evident that initiatives proposing a "dialogue" between the two parties end up, in practice, validating the Zionist position and erasing the conflict. Thus, "these initiatives are steeped in 'both-sidesism' where the sides are asymmetrical and uneven and where there are two distinct traumas (the Shoah and the Nakba), and where violence is bidirectional. In the end, no one is guilty/everyone is guilty" (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022: 126-127). We find here echoes of the positionality of many Brazilian psychoanalysts, who repeat a condemnation of the violence "of both sides" and propose building an exit "through words", when, in practice,

the conversation takes place between the neck and the sword (taking Kanafani's expression).

It is also through the action of those who corroborate the Israeli occupation that Palestinians die: "[...] the academics indulging in arrogance and wilful misinterpretation, who mutilate Frantz Fanon and Walter Benjamin, deny human nature, and contest even the laws of physics in order to pathologize our resistance" (El-Kurd, 2025: 15). The strength of *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation* lies in targeting these figures, exposing how the validation produced in research laboratories and psychoanalysis schools works in favor of the Israeli genocidal machine.

Throughout the work, therefore, the authors keep confronting us with the cruel strategies of Israeli apartheid of erasure and control, while simultaneously presenting us with forms of confrontation and resistance built by Palestinians in particular, but also by Arabs in general. Regarding psychoanalysis, we have its aforementioned use as a tool for validating Zionism and pathologizing resistance, but it also occurs that



[E]ven a cursory mapping of a representative history of Arab psychoanalysis is so difficult because the colonality of psychoanalysis itself structures Arabs and colonized peoples as “outside” of its tradition. We, as racialized and colonized peoples, are permitted an entrée into psychoanalysis only as an accompaniment that repeats the colonial logic and language (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022: 18).

What is at stake, and what we are fighting for, is not only the borders of Palestinian territory, invaded and parasitised by the Zionist occupation. The struggle that should interest psychoanalysts is also for the borders of the psychoanalytic field itself. How far will we be willing to go, incorporating discussions and reflections from other fields to make psychoanalysis a truly liberating practice? What will we need to forcibly uproot from our discipline so that it does not continue to produce and

reproduce violence, control, and submission? When will we finally confront the power structures of psychoanalytic institutions that not only collaborate but also profit from maintaining the domination not only of Palestinians, but of various other peoples in the Global South?

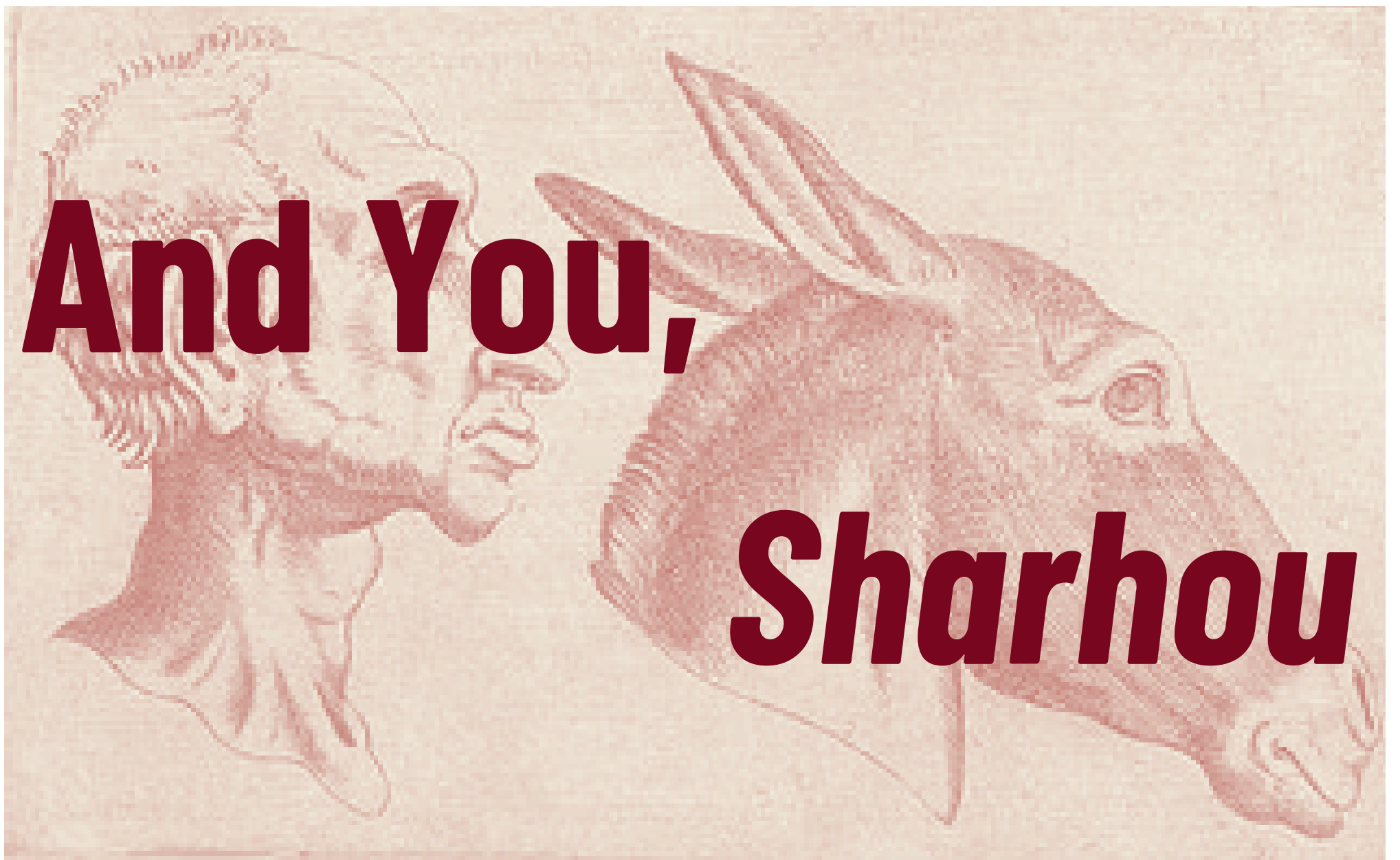
After following the path proposed in *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*, every psychoanalyst must ask themselves how much they are willing to yield to this system (colonial, patriarchal, capitalist); they must reflect on what their dignity is worth and decide whether to dig in their heels and close ranks with the wretched of the earth, making the liberating potential of psychoanalysis count. Here, in *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*, we have a good map for achieving this purpose.

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**ANECDOTE**



## **Sami J. Racy**

Translated by Yara Osman and Gustavo Racy

Al Jaliah, November, 30th 1923  
*ju3bat al dhurafa2*

### **Original Editor's Note**

Perhaps I am not mistaken in saying that out of every ten readers of Al Jaliah four know who Jubran Bunduqi is. And perhaps the majority of these four know him as a merchant, a hard worker, and a loyal friend. However, what the majority may not know is that he is a man of letters with a light soul, a lover of jokes, and someone who always has a quick-witted reply. The following anecdote is his, and if he hadn't authored it itself, he would undoubtedly have been the one to publish it.

At one of the tables in Yusuf Lutfi's restaurant, the following gentlemen were seated, with all due respect to their titles: Jubran, Aziz Samin, Bechara and Jamil Mhardawi, Shakib Jrab, Chafic Gabril, Zaki Dib, Amin Siriani and Chafic Khoury, Mikhail Malouhi, Mikhail Nassif Farah, Anis Racy and Abdullatif Younes. The plate of greens was resting in front of Jubran and Anis Racy wanted to tease him, so he said to him:

"Jubran, you haven't left any hashish for us."

To which Jubran replied:

"And you, *sharhou*."



Aziz Samin then said, with his Egyptian accent:

"What does that mean, Mr. Jubran?"

Jubran, again, replied:

"They say that Tannous Boutros, who was well-off, brought his wife to live in one of the houses on 25 de Março Street. There, he opened an account at his neighbor's grocery store, on the condition of paying the tab at the end of each month. At that time, the shopping was done by his maid, who always carried a notebook with her. The grocer would give her the orders, writing down the product name, quantity, and price in the notebook, and return it to the maid to take to her mistress.

[1] The 25 de março street is an iconic street in downtown São Paulo historically occupied by Arab businesses since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As soon as the first month ended, Tannous's wife, taking the notebook to review the accounts, stood up astonished and consumed by anger, even before finishing the review of the first page. As soon as he entered the house, she began to scold Tannous, saying to him:

'You trust that grocer who robs us as if money grew on trees?'"

"What do you mean by that, woman?" said Tannous.

"Take the notebook and look," the woman replied. "Between one product and another, that wretch writes '*sharhou*'. We didn't buy *sharhou*, we haven't seen *sharhou*, and this *sharhou* never even entered the house. So you'd better go to that thief and explain that he won't manage to rob educated and literate people!"

Tannous, twirling his mustache, said:

"You're right, woman. Give me that notebook so I can see what the problem is."

Doing so, he went to the neighbor:

"Is this how educated people behave, my good neighbor? We trusted and placed our hope in you, only for you to rob us? Mashallah! So honest!"

The grocer was stunned.

"I don't know what you mean by that, my friend" he said.

“And where did you get this sharhou between one product and another on the bill? Just to double the bill, of course! We didn't ask for sharhou, we don't know what it is, and if we ever tried it, may it turn to poison in our stomachs!”

The grocer laughed:

“Give me the notebook, Tannous. On the 5th, your maid took one kilo of sugar; the next day she came back and took another kilo. The price per kilo is 14 cents. On the 7th, she took half a kilo of margarine and on the same day came back and took another half kilo. *Sharhou* means 'the same', or 'also', or 'ditto', which is repeated every time when counting meters of fabric. Understood?”

“You are right. My apologies, neighbor,” said Tannous, with a nod of the head.

Tannous paid the bill and returned home. His wife was waiting for him at the door, also expecting the grocer's head. As soon as he crossed the threshold, the woman said to him:

“What happened, man? What did that wretch tell you?”

Tannous replied:

**'He told me that I am stupid.  
And you, *sharhou*.'**



# ABOUT OUR AUTHORS



### **Muwaffaq Al Hajjar**

Is an independent poet, artist and researcher based in Naarm (Melbourne), in the territory occupied by the Australian state. Al Hajjar holds an MA in Comparative Literature and explores themes such as exile, memory, spatial justice and politics of the self. He organised two poetry books and contributed to numerous literary anthologies. He is also the founder of Shirwmir Magazine.

### **Douglas Lambert**

Videoeditor, screenwriter, journalist and photographer, Lambert had his work published in Folha de S.Paulo, Canal Futura, Combate, Arte1 e UOL, besides collaborating with cultural institutes such as Itaú Cultural. Between editor, screenwriter, photographer and comics illustrator, Lambert was part of the award-winning crew that authored “A Batalha de Belo Monte” (2013), having received two ExxonMobil award for Journalism and one Validimir Herzog Award for Human Rights.



### **Adma Muhana**

With a PhD in Philosophy (1996) from the University of São Paulo, Dr. Muhana is a professor in Portuguese Literature in the same institutions. She also has also made her postdoc in the EHESS (2012), and in the CRIA-ISCTE (2017-2018).

**Mustafa Lutfi Al Manfaluti**  
**(Manfalut, 1876 - Cairo, 1924)**



Mustafa Lutfi Al Manfaluti was an Egyptian novelist, short story writer, and essayist. He became famous for his mastery of the Arabic language, adapting several European plays. Having received a religious education, Manfaluti memorized the Quran at the age of 12. This education, combined with the social context of the Nahda, undoubtedly contributed to his social concerns, focusing in his writings on social and gender inequality. He was one of the most important writers of the turn of the century, blending religiosity and modernity.

**Sami Joaquim Racy**  
**(Saida, 1880 - São Paulo, 1927)**

Sami Joaquim Racy was Al Jaliah's founder and director. After many entrepreneurial efforts in São Paulo, he founded the magazine, which rendered him great success until his early death in 1927. He authored the *Kita al-Wajibat* (The Book of Incumbencies), in 1911 and contributed to many political and social discussions within the journalistic field. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Beny, in the direction of Al Jaliah.



## **José de Souza Martins**

Martins is an Emeritus Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Humanities at the University of São Paulo, full professor of the Simon Bolívar Chair at Cambridge (1993/1994) and fellow at the Trinity Hall. He worked for the UN and is a three-time receiver of the Jabuti Award and once receiver of the Florestan Fernandes Award of the Brazilian Sociological Association. He is a member of the São Paulo Academy of Letters and the author of more than twenty books.



## **Gustavo Racy**

Currently a substitute Professor at the Federal University of Paraná, Gustavo Racy holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Antwerp and currently finishes his postdoc at the Federal University of São Paulo. He is one of Al Jaliah's directors.



### **Marcus Vinicius Neto Silva**

Psychologist and psychoanalyst, Silva holds a PhD in Psychology from the Federal University of Minas Gerais. He is a member of the Independent Research Group of Psychoanalysis in Palestine and of the Research Group on Public Psychoanalysis Collectives and Clinics in Belo Horizonte.

### **João Sousa**

Is a photographer and photojournalist. He lived amongst nomads, anarchists, refugees and shepherds for five years, eventually fixating in Lebanon. Sousa has collaborated with numerous initiatives such as USAID, Norwegian Church Aid Fairtrade and The Volunteer Circle.



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Editorial/"The Ship of the Immigrants" - Ana Laura e Silva

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"Conflict Between Arabs" - Melina Poulin

"Adib Al Shishakli" - Hussein Faour

"The Nodding Head" - Yara Osman

João Sousa/Douglas Lambert - Raphael Lysander

"The Borders of Palestine" - Jamila Usama Baja

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