REMEMBERING REFAAT ALAREER

September 23, 1979–December 7, 2023

The assassination of Refaat Alareer with his entire family is a demonstration of the barbarism that the Zionist entity has been perpetrating on the Palestinian people for over 75 years and more recently in its genocidal attack on the Palestinian people in Gaza in partnership with the United States. The Zionist entity’s aggression and its destruction of Gaza as well as the mass murder of Palestinians, mostly children, women and elderly, goes on with impunity. The US vetoes in the UN Security Council have allowed the genocide to continue unabated in the service of the US grand design for West Asia and the Arab world. The lynchpin of US strategy is to put an end to the Palestinian struggle for liberation, a *sine qua non* for dominating West Asia and the Arab world. Once that is completed, the US imagines, then Chinese and Russian presence in those regions would be significantly weakened if not ended. In this failing scenario, the US hopes to reboot the Zionist entity’s role as the guardian of US global capitalist interests in the region.

It is now clear that the US and its minion, the Zionist entity, would go to any length to achieve that strategic goal even if it meant producing a second Nakba not only in Gaza, but in all of Palestine. The targeting of medical doctors, reporters, ambulance personnel, rescue workers, educators, and academics makes it obvious that the goal of the US–Zionist genocide is to also destroy Palestinian culture.

The struggle of the Palestinian people for liberation, however, has thus far foiled those grand imperialist machinations. As Martyr Refaat Alareer wrote in “If I must die,” there will always be Palestinians to fly the banner high and continue the fight until liberation.

The Editor

In Memory of Refaat Alareer

*Cynthia G. Franklin*

In 2013, I attended a Faculty Development Seminar in the West Bank, organized by the Palestinian American Research Center. While there, in tandem with
a former student, Morgan Cooper, living in Ramallah, I conceived the idea for a special issue of *Biography*, a journal I coedit. My colleague and friend at the University of Hawai‘i, Ibrahim Aoudé, joined us. Our objective in coediting this special issue was to include contributors from throughout Palestine. The first to come to our minds from Gaza were Refaat Alareer and Yousef Aljamal. They both agreed, and their friendship was beautiful to witness, and it was a true privilege to get to work with them both. In 2015, I participated with them and Lina Al-Sharif (Lina and I via Skype), for a Gaza launch of the special issue at the Islamic University – and getting hard copies of the journal into Gaza with help from a friend of Refaat’s in Jerusalem was its own story! Refaat’s contribution to the special issue, “Life in Occupied Palestine” (an issue that is open access on Project
MUSE) was brilliant and moving – and utterly characteristic of him. In “Gaza Writes Back: Narrating Palestine,” we see Refaat as a riveting teller of tales; a generous and inspiring teacher, mentor, and editor; a loving father; a Palestinian fighting for his beloved homeland; and more. He begins his piece detailing the terror Israel unleashed during “Operation Cast Lead,” and he concludes his piece with “If I must die” – the same poem he posted to his X account days before Israel assassinated him as part of their ongoing genocidal campaign. In 2014, as we were wrapping up the special issue of Biography, Israel killed Refaat’s brother Mohammed Alareer. When we learned of this terrible event, we could not imagine how Refaat would continue to work on his piece for our journal, but he did. It was part of his profound commitment to his children, to his students, and to the people of Palestine to continue narrating Palestine – to not only denounce Israel’s horrific colonial violence, but also to showcase Palestinians’ creative resistance. We dedicated that special Biography issue to Refaat’s brother, and ten years later, it is heartbreaking and enraging that the Israeli occupation continues, and that Israel has now killed Refaat as well. What they cannot kill are his stories, which will live on. As he says in his Biography essay, “Palestine can be a beautiful reality. Palestine is a martyr away, a tear away, a missile away, or a whimper away. Palestine is a story away.”