

THE THORN AND THE CARNATION

Yahya Sinwar



Prairie Fire Publishing

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Foreward

Prairie Fire Publishing is proud to present *The Thorn and the Carnation* by Yahya Sinwar, a semi-biographical novel which reveals the enduring courage and determination of the Palestinian national liberation movement.

Sinwar was the chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau and the leader Hamas in the Gaza Strip until his assassination by the Zionist Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in October 2024. Through *The Thorn and the Carnation*, Sinwar delves into the complexities of organized resistance, examining the dynamics of power, oppression, and the resilience of a people determined to achieve national liberation. The book situates the Palestinian cause within the global anti-imperialist movement, exploring its connections to global struggles against colonialism and national oppression.

Exposing the mechanisms of colonial violence and the aggression of imperial powers, Sinwar's analysis details the importance of unity and strategy in confronting a militarily superior opponent, while expressing the reality faced by Palestinians on the ground throughout over 80 years of armed conflict, occupation, displacement, and genocide.

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Part One

I

The winter of 1967 was heavy, refusing to depart and competing with the spring trying to peek through with its bright, warm sun. The winter fought back with clouds gathering in the sky, and then the rain poured down heavily, flooding the simple homes in Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City. Streams ran through the camp's alleys, invading the homes and crowding the residents in their small rooms with floors lower than the nearby street level.

Time and again, the winter floodwaters surged into our small home's courtyard and then inside the house where our family had been living since settling down after migrating from the town of Faluja in the Occupied Territories in 1948. Each time, fear gripped me and my three brothers and sister, who were all older than me. My father and mother would rush to lift us off the ground, and my mother would hurriedly raise the bedding before the invading waters soaked it. Being the youngest, I would cling to my mother's neck alongside my infant sister, who was usually in her arms in such situations.

Often, I woke up at night to my mother's hands shifting me aside to place an aluminum pot or a large clay dish on her bed to catch the water droplets seeping through the crack in the tiled roof covering that small room. A pot here, a clay dish there, and a third container somewhere else. I would try to sleep again, sometimes succeeding, only to be awakened by the sound of water

droplets hitting the accumulated water in that container rhythmically. When the container was full or nearly full, the water would splash around with each drop. My mother would then get up to replace the full container with a new one and go outside to empty it.

I was five years old, and on a morning during winter, when the spring sun was trying to reclaim its natural place and erase the traces of the winter's dark nightly assault on the camp, my seven-year-old brother, Mohammed, took my hand, and we walked through the camp's streets to its outskirts where an Egyptian army camp was stationed.

The Egyptian soldiers at that camp were very fond of us. One of them got to know us and called us by our names. Whenever we appeared, he would shout, "Mohammed, Ahmad... come here..." So, we would go to him and stand beside him, lowering our heads in anticipation of what he usually gave us. He would reach into the pocket of his military pants and pull out a piece of pistachio candy for each of us. We would grab our pieces and start devouring them eagerly. The soldier would pat our shoulders, stroke our heads, and tell us to go back home. Then we would start dragging our feet back through the camp's alleyways.

Winter eventually left after a long stay and severity, and the weather began to warm up wonderfully. The rain no longer ambushed us with its calamities. I thought a long time had passed since the wait for winter, and that it wouldn't return soon. However, I sensed an atmosphere of anxiety and confusion around me. Everyone at home

was in a much worse state than those rainy nights. I couldn't comprehend what was happening, but it wasn't normal, not even on winter nights. My mother was filling all her containers with water and placing them in the courtyard. My father borrowed a pickaxe (Torriya) from the neighbors and began digging a large, long hole in the yard in front of our house, with some help from my brother Mahmoud, who was twelve at the time.

After they finished preparing the hole, my father started placing pieces of wood on it and then began covering it with zinc sheets that used to cover part of the courtyard like an arbor. I realized my father was in a quandary as he started looking for something and then I saw him begin to dismantle the kitchen door to cover that hole. But then I saw my mother and Mahmoud descending into the hole through an opening that hadn't yet been sealed. That's when I understood the work was finished. I dared to approach that opening and peered into the hole, finding what looked like a dark room underground. I didn't understand anything, but it was clear we were expecting something difficult and unusual, seemingly much harsher than those stormy rainy nights.

No one held my hand again to take me to the nearby Egyptian army camp for a bit of pistachio candy. My brother repeatedly refused to do so, a significant change for me and Mohammed, which I couldn't understand. Hassan, too, didn't know our secret. Perhaps he did, but he wasn't part of it.