

A reading of the *Gaza Monologues* in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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In solidarity with the people of Palestine and their young performing artists, the Mind Adventures Theatre Co and the Stages Theatre Group in Sri Lanka performed a reading of the *Gaza Monologues* at the Palestine embassy in Colombo on November 29—the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The performance was limited to around 250 spectators due to the lack of space available. Reservations were closed days earlier because of the heavy demand, an indication of the wide concern in Sri Lanka about the brutal Israeli war in Gaza. This writer had the opportunity to attend the event.

The Colombo event was in response to the call issued by the Ashtar Theatre, a non-profit Palestinian ensemble, based in Ramallah on the occupied West Bank, for international readings and performances of the *Gaza Monologues* on November 29.

The Ashtar Theatre noted in November: “Tragically, these monologues are still accurate today. They are highlighting the horrors, hopes and resilience of the courageous Gazans to a wider audience, bringing out the voices of children and people in Gaza.”

Ruwanthie de Chickera of the Stages Theatre Group outlined the background to the *Gaza Monologues*, and the performance of the day. She explained how the Ashtar Theatre group worked on these monologues, written by youth aged 11 to 16, who lived in Gaza under siege from 2006 and through the murderous attacks of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) since 2008.

“There’s tragedy and there’s great power in these writings,” Chickera said. “Ironically the authors of these monologues, 33 children, could never ever perform these monologues outside Gaza because they were never allowed to leave Gaza.

“The theatre group did something powerful. In 2010 it set a date, October 17, and sent out a worldwide call asking young people all over the world to perform the *Gaza Monologues* in lieu of the children who could not leave Gaza to perform them anywhere else. On October 17, 2010, approximately 1,500 children all over the world performed

the *Gaza Monologues* in solidarity with the children who wrote them. Sri Lanka too performed the *Gaza Monologues*.”

Chickera explained that in 2023, in the midst of the continuing horror and tragedy, a collective of over 2,000 readings of Gaza monologues was happening on November 29 in 40 countries. “This is not performance,” she said. “There’s no way we can perform anything when we see the tragedy and the horror that is happening in Gaza right now.”

The readings were made by Sri Lankan youth from the theatre group. The young readers infused emotions to the reading, reminding the audience of the gruesome atrocities being conducted in real time against the Palestinians in Gaza by the fascistic Israeli regime.

Even though there have not been mass demonstrations in Sri Lanka against the genocide of Palestinians, the response of the participants to this event points to the far wider anger directed against the lies, coverups, misinformation and pro-Zionist justifications spread by the corporate media with the backing of the Sri Lankan government.

Lohan Gunaweera, a visual and performance artist who attended the event, commented to the WSW: “The *Gaza Monologues* was a very moving event; a powerful expression of solidarity with the people of Palestine who are being subjected to a horrendous genocide by the state of Israel. I think the young readers rose to the occasion, grasped the seriousness of the task and delivered...”

The effect of the monologues have been amplified by the context. The fact that this was one of the 2,000 performances from 40 countries is a reflection of the scale of the mass opposition to the ongoing atrocities...

“The theatre group must be commended, not only for playing their part in the struggle, but also for indicating how theatre practitioners and other artists should turn toward burning questions of historical and global significance.”

A video of the Colombo event can be viewed [here](#).

The following are excerpts of the readings performed in Colombo. The complete *Gaza Monologues* texts are available [here](#).

Ahmad El Ruzzi

15 years old

Al Wehda Street

(Read by Ruwin de Silva in Colombo)

Before the war I used to feel Gaza as my second mother. Its ground is warm. It's a warm chest I could lay on. And its sky was my dreams without limits—sea would wash away my worries. But today I feel it's an exile. I stop feeling it's a city of my dreams.

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The tragedy is that things keep getting worse, and the biggest tragedy is that there's nothing to stop that happening. Every pit has a bottom except Gaza.

I dream of living one day in freedom. And I don't think it's a big dream but it's hard to come true. My dream is also to end the Palestinian division. Which gives us schizophrenia. I am tired of thinking but I can't stop it.

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Ahmad Taha

12 years old

Al Daraj

(Read by Hidai Cassim in Colombo)

I ask myself where are we? We are so far from rest of the world. That's why I am always at the sea. Because I feel it's not from Gaza. I keep writing my name on the sand and the waves come and erase it. Before the war I wanted to be an electronic engineer. But since the war I hate going to school. I feel I won't be anything important in my life, and even if I will, so what? It's all the same in this city. Am I going to be the prettiest flower on a garbage heap?

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In the Shifaa hospital I saw a sight that I will never forget. Hundreds of corpses one on top of the other. Their flesh, their blood, and their bones all melting on each other.

You wouldn't know the woman from the man or even the child. Piles of flesh on the beds, and lots of people screaming and crying, not knowing where their kids are, their men or their women.

That night, I came home from hospital and was awake till morning from fear. I thought that it would only be that night that I couldn't sleep, but till today I see them in front of me and I can't sleep!

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Sujoud Abu Hussein

13 years old

Ash Sheikh Radwan

(Read by Gihan Mendis in Colombo)

They took our land and threw us out of our homes... And because we are defending ourselves, all this happens to us? There's no water... no electricity... no phones... no petrol... What are we to the world, aren't we human?

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Yasmeen Ja'rour

12 years old

Al Daraj

(Read by Hajara Faleel)

Our future in Gaza is obscure and unknown... Like a calm volcano that can erupt at any second... As if we're on a boat without a captain in the midst of a raging sea... we go right and left... and no-one knows where to lean.

I hear that in other countries, childhood is sacred, and children live their lives without problems and fear... but Gaza's children are forgotten and outside the picture...

After the war I visited Rafah Crossing, and saw the flags of Palestine and Egypt next to each other, yet separated by a wire. I felt the difference between the two flags and that this wire is the border of this biiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiig prison that we live in. I felt how stupid and unjust is the world, and I felt like breaking all borders and ending all differences between races and religions, so that everyone in the world would be brothers. My dream became to live in a safe country, even in a small village, in a distant island at the end of the world.

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Yasmeen Abu Amer

12 years old

Al Shuja'iyeh

(Read by Shala Amarasuriya in Colombo)

After the war I started to always dress in a very clean and tidy way, so that if I die I would die a nice death. But it would be the biggest problem if I was hit by a rocket because I'd become 100 pieces and I'd like to die in one piece. Wow, Gaza and Gaza's dreams... Our dream has become to die a good death, not live a good life!



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