

Palestinian artist and community activist Dorgham Quraiqi: Another victim of the Israeli genocide

Erik Schreiber
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Palestinian artist Dorgham Quraiqi was killed March 18 by an Israeli airstrike on a residential area in Gaza. He was sheltering in the ruins of his home in Gaza City with his new wife and his brothers, who were also killed. Quraiqi had recently lost his sister in the Israeli military's attacks. At age 28, Quraiqi became the latest artist to be murdered in the Zionist state's systematic campaign to eliminate the Palestinians and their culture.

"It's a pretty heavy blow to obviously everybody who had interactions with Dorgham and knew him and knew his work," Saskia Marsh, a trustee at the charity Hope and Play, told the *Art Newspaper*.

The self-taught artist's life and work were unavoidably shaped by Israel's violent and criminal occupation of the Palestinian territories—and by the resistance to this occupation. Quraiqi painted with oils in a figurative style, and his work has been exhibited widely in Gaza. In addition to pursuing his own art, Quraiqi participated in many collective art projects and helped to educate and inspire displaced children. In addition to creativity, the artist demonstrated generosity and a communal spirit.

In 2022, Quraiqi volunteered at the Gaza Training Center, which is run by Dar Al-Kalima University. There, he helped paint a group mural showing Shireen Abu Akleh, a journalist who was murdered by the Israel Defense Forces.

The artist participated in several group exhibitions, including one at Shababeek (Arabic for "windows") for Contemporary Art, which was based in Gaza. Another such exhibition was "Shrapnel of the City," which featured 27 artists from the Gaza Strip in 2023.

Quraiqi also prepared for what would have been his

first solo exhibition, which was to be called "Until the Chair Grows Wings." The show was scheduled for the end of 2023 at Shababeek. With characteristic barbarity, Israel destroyed Shababeek, which was Gaza's last space for contemporary art, in April 2024.

Quraiqi then involved himself in the work of Hope and Play, which is based in the UK and provides education and trauma relief to Palestinian children. Since Israel's genocidal campaign began, the organization also has been providing emergency relief and organizing creative activities such as art workshops. Quraiqi described the charity's activities as a way to "paint your emotions away."

"Despite losing his home, being displaced many times and countless other great dangers and challenges, we have seen Dorgham bringing smiles to the faces of many thousands of displaced children over the last 1.5 years," Hope and Play said in a statement. The artist's "energy and motivation seemed endless," it added.

In its presentation of its "Gaza Emergency Support," the organization describes the situation:

Deliberate starvation on a mass scale. Worse destruction than in World War Two; 70% of the north of Gaza obliterated. Over 10,000 children killed, 17,000 children orphaned and alone. 18,000 children injured. Over 1,000 children are now amputees. Everyone—young and old—is deeply traumatised by the past several months, and likely to suffer the after-effects for years to come.

As a volunteer with Hope and Play, Quraiqi participated in a workshop that brought an entire displacement camp together to create a collage. He described the project as “an opportunity for participants to express their soul, their love for Palestine, to mourn the loss of their homes and to reflect on what remains of their dreams.”

Quraiqi’s friends say he loved working with children and helping them express themselves in workshops. He partnered with the Palestinian NGO Film Lab to show films to children in refugee camps. Before he was killed, Quraiqi was on the verge of beginning a new series of mobile movies for children. He also gave art classes affiliated with the Tamer Institute for Community Education.

Since Israel’s assault began in 2023, Quraiqi was forced to flee the bombing many times. He first took refuge in the European Hospital in Khan Yunis, where his injured mother received care. Later he fled to Rafah, then to the Al-Qarara Al-Gharbiya area.

After Israel allowed people to return to their homes in the north of Gaza as part of the ceasefire agreement, Quraiqi found his home and studio in ruins. Writing about his damaged paintings in February, he posted on Facebook, “They were part of my soul, of dreams I had long wished to share with an audience.” The artist correctly observed that the destruction was Israel’s attempt to erase the memory and culture of the Palestinians. “But as the saying goes, ‘Hope only dies with the death of the soul,’ and art is my soul,” he wrote.

A few days before the attack that killed him, Quraiqi told Shareef Sarhan, a cofounder of Shababeek, his idea for a new children’s workshop. “His death has definitely impacted Gaza’s art community. We lost a friend,” Sarhan told the *Art Newspaper*.

Another artist and close friend of Quraiqi’s spoke to the *Art Newspaper* under condition of anonymity. Two nights before Quraiqi’s death, the artist saw Quraiqi buy a gift for his new wife’s birthday. “I feel like I have lost my right arm,” said the artist.

The Israeli bombardment that killed Quraiqi was part of a series of airstrikes conducted on the same day. This sudden and unprovoked attack marked a new phase in the genocide of the Palestinians. Using American bombs, and in coordination with Washington, the Zionist state killed more than 400 people, mostly

women and children, on March 18. This attack, one of the deadliest since the beginning of the genocide, ended the charade of the “ceasefire,” which Israel had been violating systematically.

Quraiqi’s murder reveals, most immediately, the utter savagery of the Netanyahu regime and US imperialism and its adjuncts. It also demonstrates that the fight to preserve and advance human culture is inseparable from the fight against war and its root cause: the capitalist system. For artists and for all mankind, the situation poses but two alternatives: socialism or barbarism.



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