

THE USE OF CARTOONS IN POPULAR PROTESTS THAT FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES

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Abstract

The comics and related arts (cartoons, graffiti, illustrated posters and signs) have always played an important role in shaping public protests. From the French Revolution to the recent Arab Spring revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests, these visual means have stood out thanks to their ability to transmit their message quickly, clearly and descriptively. Often these means have enabled the masses to see their social, economic and political reality in a new and critical light. Social, economic and political cartoons are a popular tool of expression in the media. Cartoons appear every day in the newspapers, often adjacent to the editorials. In many cases cartoons are more successful in demonstrating ideas and information than are complex verbal explanations that require a significant investment of time by the writer and the reader as well. Cartoons attract attention and curiosity, can be read and understood quickly and are able to communicate subversive messages camouflaged as jokes that bring a smile to the reader's face. Cartoons become more effective and successful in countries with strict censorship and widespread illiteracy, among them many countries in the Arab world.

Cartoonists are in fact journalists who respond to current events and express their opinions clearly and sometimes even scathingly and satirically. They translate political, social and economic issues into locally familiar cultural symbols, as well as using symbols that are universally recognized. The products of their work complement social protests arising from the street. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate how cartoons can be used to understand geographic, social, economic and political processes by focusing on the cartoons of Naji Al-Ali as a case study.

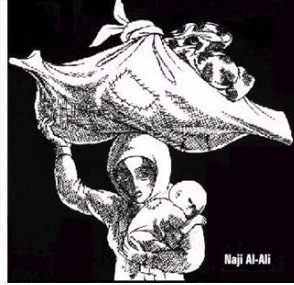
Keywords: *Handala, Naji Al-Ali, Palestinian iconography, Palestinian refugees, Political cartoons, political geography*

1. THE PALESTINIAN CARTOONIST NAJI AL-ALI

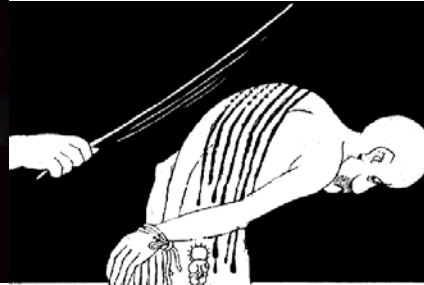
The Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al-Ali was considered one of the most prominent cartoonists in the Arab world. A year after his death, the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers posthumously awarded him the Golden Pen Award and described him as “one of the best cartoonists since the 18th century” (Mamoun, 2001).



Cartoon 2¹



Cartoon 3²



Cartoon 4³

Al-Ali's cartoons influenced millions of people throughout the Arab world.⁴ His cartoons were not intended to entertain the readers, but rather always conveyed political messages. In addition to expressing his personal views, they were sarcastic and daring reflections of the feelings of the Palestinian refugees. The loss of Palestine was the main inspiration for his cartoons. Therefore, he dedicated most of his cartoons to the suffering of his people, especially the poor living in the refugee camps. Some of his work was also dedicated to the oppressed people of the Arab world as well as oppressed people worldwide. Although most of his cartoons were very pessimistic, some were full of hope, dreams and aspiration for a better life for the Arab people in general and the Palestinians in particular.

Al-Ali addressed taboo issues while avoiding the strict censorship imposed on Arab newspapers. His cartoons were simple, clear and easy to understand and were often published next to editorials with political messages. The cartoons spoke to and about ordinary people. His readers waited eagerly to see his drawing on the last page (which became their front page) of many Arab dailies in Lebanon, Kuwait, Tunisia, Abu-Dhabi, Egypt, London and Paris. On the other hand, many Arab countries prohibited him from entering and banned his cartoons from their local newspapers (Mandell, 1987).

Al-Ali criticized the injustice done to the Palestinian people by Israel. He scathingly criticized the Arab regimes as well as Arafat's leadership for their submissiveness and corruption (Orayb, 2007). His sharp political and social criticism embarrassed many Arab leaders, who became his enemies and tried to silence him by censoring his work. During his lifetime he received hundreds of death threats and ultimately was assassinated in 1987.

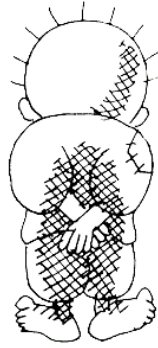
Naji Al-Ali drew more than 40,000 cartoons, but he was famous mainly for *Handala*, the little Palestinian boy who stands on the sidelines watching the injustices done to his people. *Handala* became Al-Ali's trademark and a major icon of Palestinian iconography.

¹ <http://www.almoltaqa.ps/english/showthread.php?t=10752>

² <http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/ideology/naji.html>

³ <http://www.art-for-a-change.com/Naji/naji.html>

⁴ The New York Times: “If you want to know what the Arabs think of the U.S. look at Naji Al-Ali's cartoon.”



Cartoon 6⁵

Naji Al-Ali was born in 1937 in the northern Palestinian village Al-Shajara,⁶ situated between Nazareth and Tiberius. His family, like 750,000 other Palestinians, was uprooted during the Nakba (the catastrophe) in 1948, and his village was destroyed along with another 480 Palestinian villages. Al-Ali's family settled in the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp near Sidon in south Lebanon when he was ten years old. The Nakba and life in the refugee camp had a tremendous influence on him and served as the main inspirations for his work. He began drawing at school in the refugee camp and received encouragement from his teachers. He witnessed the constraints imposed on Palestinians by the Arab countries serving as their hosts. His refugee experiences made him swear to immerse himself in politics and serve the Palestinian cause. His first drawing, "a hand holding a torch ripping a refugee tent," represents his commitment to the Palestinian revolution.



Cartoon 7⁷

Al-Ali continued his studies at the Union of Christian Churches School in Sidon. Later he moved to Tripoli and attended the White Friars' vocational school for two years. He subsequently moved to Beirut, where he lived in the Shalita refugee camp and worked at various industrial jobs. After qualifying as a car mechanic in 1957, he went to work in Saudi Arabia for two years. In 1959 he returned to Lebanon and joined the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) established by Dr. George Habash and his university colleagues as a protest against the defeat of the Arab regimes in 1948. Al-Ali was expelled from the ANM four times within a year for lack of discipline. Together with his some ANM comrades he published a handwritten political

⁵ <https://alsawsanadot.wordpress.com/2012/07/27/%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%86/>

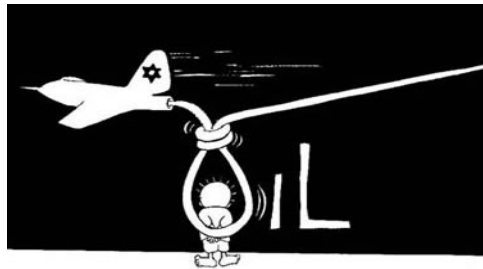
⁶ A mixed village where Christians and Muslims lived together in harmony.

⁷ Al-Fakih, H. 2008. Political Development based on Naji Al-Ali's awareness-raising cartoons. Thesis submitted to Nablus University. <http://www.najah.edu/thesis/5171614>

magazine called *Al-Sarkha* (the cry), which appeared for two years (1960-1961). He enrolled in the Lebanon Academy of Art in 1960, but was unable to continue his studies there as he was imprisoned many times for taking part in political activities in the Palestinian camps. He began drawing on the walls of the Lebanese jails as a form of political expression. Each time he was arrested he made sure to take his ammunition with him — his pencils for drawing cartoons (Fayek, 2007). He later moved to Tyre, where he worked as a drawing instructor at the Ja'fariya College.

The turning point in Al-Ali's life as a political cartoonist came in 1961, when Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani⁸ discovered his talents. Al-Ali's first drawings were published in the *Al-Hurriya* (liberty) magazine⁹ together with an article written by Kanafani. In 1963 Al-Ali moved to Kuwait as a result of Lebanese constraints imposed on Palestinian refugees and also due to the great demand for professionals in the Gulf States at that time. He also hoped to save enough money to continue his studies at one of the famous art academies in Paris. He married in 1964 and continued living in Kuwait, where he worked for the Arab nationalist weekly magazine *Al-Tali'ah* (the forefront). In 1968 he moved to the *Al-Siyasa* (politics) newspaper, even though he did not approve of its political orientation. Feeling that freedom of speech was being limited at the newspaper, in 1969 he introduced *Handala* to his readers for the first time. During his time in Kuwait he made several visits to Lebanon.

In 1974 Al-Ali moved back to Lebanon and began working at the Lebanese newspaper *Al-Safir* (the ambassador). He was shocked by the major trends sweeping the Palestinian refugee camps at that time. He claimed that prior to 1973 the refugee camps had been united and had clear goals, but due to the oil money brought by the PLO into the camps they had become chaotic armed jungles. He accused the Arab regimes as well the PLO leadership of corrupting the young generation of Palestinians.



Cartoon 8¹⁰



Cartoon 9¹¹

Al-Ali witnessed and scathingly criticized the battles within the Palestinian refugee camps, the split in the Arab world after the 1973 war and the civil war in Lebanon that broke out in 1975. He called for unity among Christians and Muslims and for improving the status of women in the Arab world. He criticized corruption, lack of democracy and the widening social and economic gaps in the Arab countries.

⁸ He was assassinated in 1971 by the Israeli Mossad.

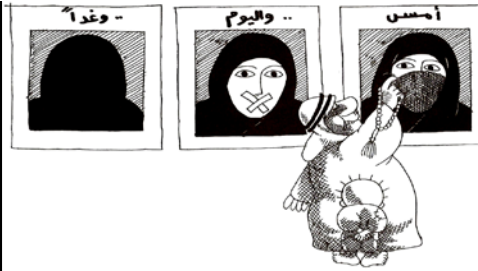
⁹ *Al-Hurriya* under Kanafani's editorship was considered the voice of the Arab Nationalist Movement. Al-Ali's first drawing appeared in No. 88 in September 1961.

¹⁰ <http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/ideology/naji.html>

¹¹ <http://www.handala.org/cartoons/cartoon-gallery/oil/2.html>



Cartoon 10¹²

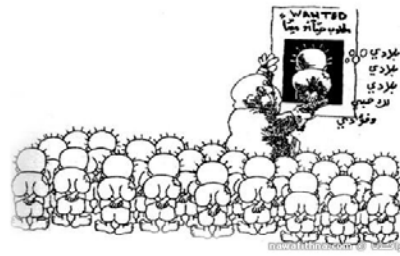


Cartoon 11¹³

During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Al-Ali was detained for a short time by the Israeli army. That traumatic war made him once again move to Kuwait in 1983, where he worked at the *Al-Qabas* newspaper. He was frequently detained by the Kuwaiti police, and in 1985 a decision was made to expel him for good. He decided to settle in London and work for the international edition of the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Qabas*. Two years later he was shot in the head outside the London offices of *Al-Qabas*. He was 49 years old when he was killed.¹⁴ The assassin's identity remains unknown. Two weeks before his assassination he received threats from prominent Fatah¹⁵ leaders, who warned him not to go too far with his political criticism of Arafat. In one of his cartoons he depicted Arafat as a dictator willing to make humiliating compromises.



Cartoon 12¹⁶



Cartoon 13¹⁷

During his lifetime Al-Ali published three books of cartoons, in 1976, 1983 and 1985, and was preparing another book when he was killed. In 1979 he was elected president of the League of Arab Cartoonists, and was awarded prizes at Arab cartoonist exhibitions held in Damascus in 1979 and 1980.

2. AL-ALI'S CARTOONS

Al-Ali avoided long political speeches about the situation in the Middle East. Most of his work dealt with the plight of the Palestinian people and with criticism of Israel and the Israeli

¹² <http://breadsandcircuses.wordpress.com/2007/07/29/naji-al-ali/>

¹³ Right to left - Yesterday, today, tomorrow: Women's right are shifted by conservative Arab Elite (January 1985). Sacco (2009). *A Child in Palestine: The Cartoons of Naji al-Ali*, British Library Cataloguing in Publication London.

¹⁴ He was shot on July 22nd and died on August 30th 1987 at Charging Cross Hospital in London. At the time of his death he was married and the father of five children.

¹⁵ Fatah is the main faction in the PLO, headed by Yasser Arafat.

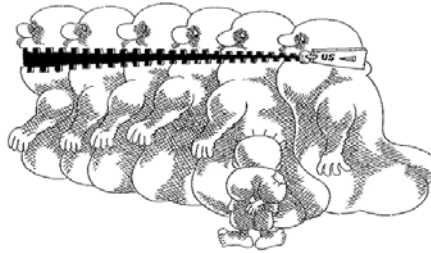
¹⁶ <http://electronicintifada.net/content/naji-al-ali-timeless-conscience-palestine/5166>

¹⁷ <http://vb.we3rb.com/showthread.php?t=2139>

occupation responsible for the Palestinian catastrophe. But he also criticized the hypocrisy of some of the PLO leaders, who used the willingness of young fighters to sacrifice their lives for their own aggrandizement. He criticized the lack of democracy in the Arab world and the silencing of the opposition. He drew many cartoons under the title “No to Silencing.” In some of his cartoons he expressed his solidarity with the Vietnamese people as well as with the Iranian people under the Shah's regime.



Cartoon 14¹⁸



Cartoon 15¹⁹

Al-Ali also criticized the corruption of the Arab regimes and their alliance with the two super powers against the interests of their own people. He attacked the USA for its support of Israel and its arms policy. He also criticized the Soviet Union (though not as severely as he criticized the USA) for using some of the Arab countries to promote its own interests. He blamed the Arab governments for their failure to solve the Palestinian cause. He also blamed the Gulf States for their submissiveness to the West and their responsibility for widening the gaps between the classes. He defined himself as a realist aligned with the poor.

Many of his cartoons expressed his position towards solving the Palestinian cause. Al-Ali opposed any settlement that would not vindicate the Palestinian people's right to all of historical Palestine. He rejected the willingness shown by certain factions in the PLO after the October 1973 war to settle for only part of historical Palestine.

Other Palestinian intellectuals, among them Professor Hisham Sharabi and Edward Said, also criticized the way the PLO leadership dealt with free speech. They believed that the silencing of free speech allowed terrorism to determine how differences were settled among the Palestinians.²⁰

3. AL-ALI'S MAIN CHARACTERS

Unlike many cartoonists, Al-Ali rarely drew specific politicians or satirized actual people in his cartoons.²¹ Instead, he created several characters that appeared in most of his drawings throughout his thirty-year career. He also used many symbols that served as a broad visual vocabulary, used even after his death. These symbols were divided into three categories: symbols of positive values,²² symbols of the Palestinian struggle²³ and symbols of the Israeli occupation

¹⁸ <http://www.elaphblog.com/posts.aspx?u=1603&A=22521>

¹⁹ <http://www.handala.org/cartoons/cartoon-gallery/arab-regimes/index.html>

²⁰ An interview conducted with Prof. Hisham Sharabi in *Middle East International* on 10 October 1987.

²¹ Only in a few of his works did he draw Arafat, Kissinger and Begin.

²² The positive values included hope, love, respect, democracy, human rights, education, freedom of speech and strong ties to the land. He used flowers, birds, hearts, trees and roots to express these values.

²³ The key wrapped around Fatima's neck (the main female character in Al-Ali's cartoons) symbolizing the right of return; the Palestinian flag; the Palestinian keffiyeh; the passport representing the loss of political sovereignty; the

and oppression.²⁴ In many of his drawings he used scenes with Christian symbols, such as the Crucifixion, to represent Palestinian suffering.



Cartoon 16²⁵



Cartoon 17²⁶

Al-Ali's cartoons included four main characters: *Handala*, *Fatima*, *Al-Zalama* and the *Evil Man*.



Cartoon 18²⁷

Fatima represents the good Palestinian woman. Al-Ali drew *Fatima* using simple and sharp lines. *Fatima* is the dedicated mother and wife who worries and takes an active part in the struggle for freedom. She makes sure her man does not digress from the path of resistance. She symbolizes Palestine, Lebanon, the refugee camps and the struggle for independence. She usually wears a dress with traditional Palestinian embroidery and has a house key around her neck, and she is strongly rooted to the land (Fayek, 2007). She is willing to give birth to more freedom fighters to strengthen the resistance movement. Pregnant *Fatima* represents the Intifada. In some of the cartoons she resembles Mary, mother of Jesus.

map of Mandatory Palestine; the cactus plant symbolizing the Palestinian villages destroyed during the Nakba; the tents symbolizing the Palestinian refugee camps; and children throwing stones at the Israeli tanks, representing the resistance of ordinary Palestinians which became the main weapon of the First Intifada.

²⁴ He used American and Israeli soldiers wearing helmets, tiles and blocks symbolizing the settlements, prisons and jails and borders blocking the Palestinians from returning to their homeland.

²⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6911815.stm>

²⁶ <http://redsocal.uimp20.es/profiles/blogs/naji-al-ali-refugiado>

²⁷ <http://www.oweis.com/Handala.pdf>



Cartoon 19²⁸



Cartoon 20²⁹

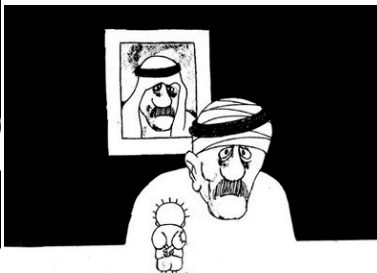


Cartoon 21³⁰

Al-Zalama (man) is the second main character in Al-Ali's cartoons. He is a thin, miserable-looking man, also drawn using simple and sharp lines. He represents the Palestinian as victim of Israeli oppression and other hostile forces. He also represents the poor, the oppressed, the refugees and the abused citizens of the Arab world. He is usually dressed in ragged clothes. He represents positive values and fights for democracy. One of the cartoons depicts him drawing up his will after having written an article about democracy.



Cartoon 22³¹



Cartoon 23³²



Cartoon 24³³

The Evil Man is the opposite of the two previous characters. He represents ugliness and all the negative values in the Arab world. He is usually depicted as fat, well-dressed and smoking a cigar (Fayek, 2007). Al-Ali drew him without a neck or feet and with a stupid look on his face. The Evil Man represents the Arab regimes that oppress their people and hinder progress and democracy. These regimes are busy plotting against the resistance movement and collaborating with Israel and the West. The Evil Man also represents Palestinian political leaders who live a comfortable life. Al-Ali criticized these leaders for the compromises they made at the expense of Palestinian refugees and freedom fighters.

²⁸ <http://uprootedpalestinians.blogspot.co.il/2009/07/child-in-palestine-cartoons-of-naji-al.html>

²⁹ <http://breadsandcircuses.wordpress.com/category/naji-al-ali/>

³⁰ <http://empowered-a.blogspot.co.il/>

³¹ <http://majdah.maktoob.com/vb/majdah68554/>

³² <http://sha3teely.com/?m=200705>

³³ Your article on democracy was very impressive .. What are you writing for tomorrow? - I'm writing my will.
<http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/ideology/naji.html>



Cartoon 25³⁴



Cartoon 26³⁵



Cartoon 27³⁶



Cartoon 28³⁷

Handala is the 10-year-old barefoot Palestinian boy who appeared in Al-Ali's cartoons since 1969 and became an icon of Palestinian identity and defiance. He is a mute witness who stands on the sidelines and experiences the misery and the humiliation of the Palestinian people (Orayb, 2007). Al-Ali used to sign his name on his cartoons, but after he introduced *Handala*³⁸ to his readers, the boy became Al-Ali's signature. *Handala* symbolized Al-Ali's lost childhood³⁹ as well as his allegiance to the poor in general and to the Palestinian refugees in particular.

The word *Handala* refers to a medicinal bitter desert fruit that can endure hardships. Al-Ali depicted *Handala* as an ugly boy with spiked hair that can be used as a weapon. The artist stated that *Handala* is not beautiful, pampered or well fed, but despite his looks he is affectionate, honest and outspoken. He is always barefoot and wears ragged clothes, like many of the children in the refugee camps. Al-Ali said that *Handala* became an icon that watched over him and prevented him from slipping or forgetting his commitment to the Palestinian cause. *Handala*, Al-Ali said, was committed to the people who cherish him (Orayb, 2007).



Cartoon 29⁴⁰

After 1973, Al-Ali began depicting *Handala* with his back to the viewer and his hands clasped behind his back to indicate Al-Ali's rejection of the outside solutions offered by the US

³⁴ <http://www.oweis.com/Handala.pdf>

³⁵ <http://www.handala.org/cartoons/cartoon-gallery/arab-regimes/index.html>

³⁶ <http://www.ikbis.com/shots/105993>

³⁷ <http://albared.wordpress.com/2010/08/29/%D9%8A%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B1-%D8%A3%D9%86-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86-%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A/>

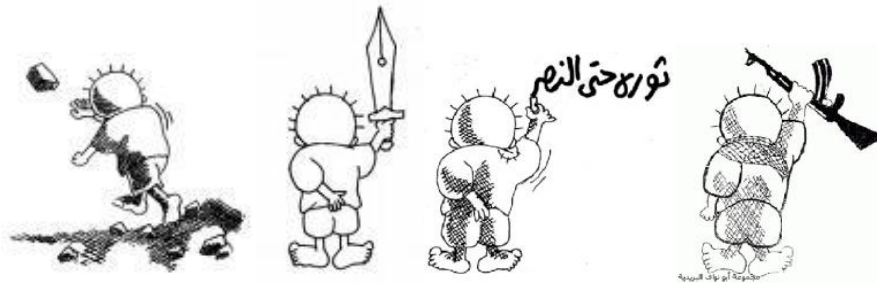
³⁸ When he working at *Al-Siyasa* ('politics') newspaper in Kuwait.

³⁹ Al-Ali was ten when he was exiled during the Palestinian Nakba. Therefore, *Handala* will remain ten years old until he returns to Palestine. Al-Ali said many times that the rules of nature do not apply to *Handala*.

⁴⁰ <http://www.almoltaqa.ps/english/showthread.php?t=10752>

and the Arab regimes after the October 1973 war.⁴¹ After the Sabra and Shatila massacre in 1982, Al-Ali's *Handala* figure lost its sense of serenity. The character became active and militant and was depicted throwing stones at the Israeli flag, writing graffiti on walls, and brandishing a rifle, a sword and the Palestinian flag.

Al-Ali used *Handala* to show that the Palestinian problem was not yet solved, stating that *Handala* would reveal his face to the readers again only when the Palestinian refugees return to their homeland and Arab pride is regained. *Handala* began as a Palestinian boy and became an icon of the Palestinian struggle.



Cartoon 30⁴² Cartoon 31⁴³ Cartoon 32⁴⁴ Cartoon 33⁴⁵

Handala is depicted in three different situations. In some of the scenes he appears as an outsider watching passively what is happening around him (45%), in others he plays an active role in what is happening (30%), and in still others (20%) he is an observer with a defined role (Al-Asadi & Tadmouri, 1984).



Cartoon 34⁴⁶

Cartoon 35⁴⁷

Cartoon 36⁴⁸

Over half of Al-Ali's cartoons were not accompanied by any text, as the message was usually clear and understood. Some cartoons had short texts, and others were primarily text (Orayb, 2007).

⁴¹ He reflects the passiveness and helplessness of the Palestinian refugees and their rejection of the offers made by Kissinger, the American Middle East advisor.

⁴² <http://alweehdat2.blogspot.co.il/2012/04/blog-post.html>

⁴³ <http://oweis.com/handala.html>

⁴⁴ http://msuliman.wordpress.com/2012/07/02/observing-the-arab-uprisings/577477_305868536168464_1720693386_n/

⁴⁵ <http://uprootedpalestinians.blogspot.co.il/2009/07/child-in-palestine-cartoons-of-naji-al.html>

⁴⁶ <http://www.arab4ever.com/montada/showthread.php?threadid=12753>

⁴⁷ paper: autonomy. <http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/ideology/naji.html>

⁴⁸ <http://vb.we3rb.com/showthread.php?t=2139>



Cartoon 37⁴⁹



Cartoon 38⁵⁰



Cartoon 39⁵¹

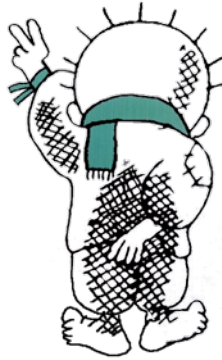
Al-Ali was not afraid to express his views even after receiving hundreds of threats. Through *Handala* he dedicated his cartoons to freedom of speech, human rights and democracy.

Al-Ali was killed four months before the outbreak of the first Intifada, which he had predicted. He also predicted his own assassination. *Handala*, however, survived the assassination and continues to live until today. Al-Ali said, “*Handala*, who I created, will not end after my end. I hope that this not an exaggeration when I say I will continue to live with *Handala*, even after I die” (Alessandra, 1998).

Al-Ali’s legacy continues to flourish. *Handala* appeared on the poster of the “the conscious”⁵² list in the 2006 Palestinian elections. He has been used as an icon by many Palestinian student organizations worldwide. The Iranian green movement established after the 2009 Iranian presidential election adopted *Handala* as its icon, depicted with a green scarf around his neck and a green band on his left hand, raised in the victory sign.⁵³



Cartoon 40⁵⁴



Cartoon 41⁵⁵



Picture 42⁵⁶

⁴⁹ <http://www.handala.org/cartoons/cartoon-gallery/oil/2.html>

⁵⁰ <http://www.alwarsha.com/articles/%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A>

⁵¹ <http://arab-unity.net/forums/showthread.php?t=2275>

⁵² The Popular Front of Palestine’s list of Abu-Ali Mustafa.

⁵³ Timeline of the 2009 Iranian election protests:

Handala's figure can be seen at festivals and parades alongside other Palestinian iconographic symbols,⁵⁷ such as the map of villages destroyed during the Nakba. *Handala* has also been adopted as the formal icon of UNESCO's freedom organization. A 1992 film about Al-Ali's life was greatly admired throughout the Arab world (Arjan, 2004). In 2007 a documentary film called *The Icon* was made about his life, and in 2008 he was a dominant figure at the 60th commemoration of Al-Nakba. Many exhibitions of his work have been shown around the world under the title "Shooting the Witness."

Today *Handala* figures can be seen throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, drawn on the Separation Wall built by Israel as well as on the walls of houses. Dozens of Internet sites teach the legacy of Al-Ali, and many Facebook pages provide instructions on how to draw *Handala*. Young people wear necklaces with the *Handala* figure or make *Handala* tattoos on their bodies as an icon of defiance. *Handala* figures also ornament many objects in souvenir shops and appear in campaigns boycotting Israeli products.



Figure 43⁵⁸



Figure 44⁵⁹

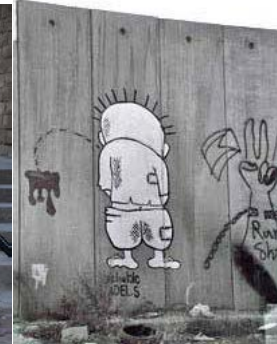


Figure 45⁶⁰

4. SUMMARY

Political cartoons can have a greater impact than written articles. In countries with a high rate of illiteracy and strict censorship, cartoons are an effective alternative to prohibited words. Al-Ali wisely circumvented the strict censorship imposed on the newspapers of the Arab world and dealt with issues that were taboo at the time without embellishing reality. His simple and clear cartoons were placed adjacent to editorials conveying political messages. The symbols and the characters he used have become a rich visual vocabulary that is still used after his death. His cartoons challenged readers to take stands and express their positions on events taking place in the Middle East.

Al-Ali used his four main characters to express his views of complicated and contradictory matters. He used his *Handala* icon in diverse situations: sometimes as a passive observer clasping his hands behind his back and sometimes as a player active in the scene. He used many powerful Palestinian symbols, such as the house key to symbolize the right of return, the map of Palestine drawn on a keffiyeh and the passport symbolizing the refugees' imprisonment and

⁵⁷ Palestinian iconography includes the rifle, the fist symbolizing the struggle, the V for victory sign, the Palestinian flag, the key symbolizing the right of return, the map of Mandatory Palestine and the black and white keffiyeh (head scarf).

⁵⁸ http://www.alrassedonline.com/2010_12_12_archive.html

⁵⁹ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dastenras/galleries/72157625264970575>

⁶⁰ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/48567883@N03/5242116289/>

inability to obtain any citizenship. His cartoons expressed the feelings and aspirations of the Palestinian refugees.

Handala was brave and faithful to his own beliefs. He was dedicated to freedom of speech and human rights, thus becoming an icon of oppressed and poor people worldwide. He preached freedom of speech, improved status for women and Arab unity. He criticized the Israeli occupation, dictatorship in the Arab world and the hypocrisy of the Arab and Palestinian leadership.

As Al-Ali predicted, *Handala's* role did not end with the death of his creator. Even today *Handala* remains a unifying national icon for all Palestinians. He has become an international icon that represents freedom of speech and the suffering of children. *Handala's* image is still used by human right organizations as well as at demonstrations, with dozens of Internet sites and Facebook pages teaching his legacy.

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