

TO THE UNESCO ARTISTS FOR WORLD PEACE

UNESCO soundly designated you as UNESCO Artists for Peace, chosen from among the top artists and creative individuals in present times, and based on your devotion to your work, the transmission of your experiences to the global level as a sign of originality, innovation, and constant venturing into the unknown, and on the popularity and high acclaim you have earned in your respective countries. UNESCO also made the right choice when it adopted art as a message and a messenger, realizing its vital role in developing great human values.

More perfect is the UNESCO's choice to define the message as being 'for peace'. Art is the synonym of peace: peace with one's self and with others. It is man's biggest demand today, when need is great for internal calm and security, and for a deep sense of the principal values that maintain the human being within. Even greater is the need to humanize relationships among mankind, to reinstate these relationships on the basis of tolerance, love, fairness, and dignity, and to forsake violence, bigotry, coercion, persecution, and occupation.

Your selection to carry this message did not occur by chance, for they are the same values UNESCO asked you to represent that you devoted your art to defend.

I, the undersigned, Marcel Khalife,

Implore you as a colleague and holder of the same title, UNESCO Artist for Peace, not to turn a blind eye to the mass misery brought on by Israeli military forces to Lebanon and the Lebanese people, and to Palestine and the Palestinian people. Nothing justifies our art other than to speak for those who cannot speak. This is the cause for which we dedicated our efforts, and the cause that endorsed our voices. We only wished to take it as far as we can, and vowed to release our work as songs of love for, and unity with, the victims of persecution everywhere, regardless of their race, religion, color or national belonging.

In these decisive moments that my countrymen are living, I expect your objective understanding of the human cause at hand. Let us keep it within sight. Let us relieve the burden of the daily killing taking place before the eyes of the 'civilized' world. I hope you are following on television, along with the whole world, the horrors that are taking place. Let us loudly express our utter rejection to the killing my people are subjected to by the Israeli occupation forces.

Dear UNESCO Artists for Peace,

Let us bring happiness to people, and relieve them of the destructive anguish of war. Let us bring joy that allays sadness, hope that defeats despair, greenery that stops aridness, a horizon that leads to the unknown, a whisper that radiates love, and a meaning that re-defines the cause yet again should it be lost in the ensuing chaos.

My friends,

We find in you what remains in human sense. Be the hope that saves us from the loneliness of death, bringing back the meaning of things. Be a cure in an age when salt is rubbed into wounds poked by the super powers. Be the voice of protest to old wounds that never healed. Be a roaring anger, magnificently composed, unruffled by people's rage, and unyielding to the temptation to escape the question with an obscure, prepared answer. Carry the password "Human Dignity" without fuss or loll, and take it to a new stage of struggle against occupiers and their masters. Always remember, should this sourness fall in our throats, remember!

My friends,

Joining us in solidarity means that we do not despair under the daily hammering of our people, that we stand in the face of malice, brace ourselves with those whom we address, and safeguard our humanness with love. It means that we protect the beauty upon which we established our homeland.

UNESCO Artists for Peace,

Let us stand together and give concerts for the benefit of Lebanon and Palestine. Let them be covenants of love and communication. Let us join in a declaration of faith, at a time when mankind and life are controlled by war lords and greed.

We do not want to believe that the world has changed and lost its meaning, and that its politics have turned into absurdity, although the malicious Israeli policies attest to relative success of the debauchery machine in manufacturing such a world. The United States' remorseless rulers, with their systematic, steady, and malevolent crimes, with their indifferent brutality, and merciless contempt that disregards the United Nations and international law, wear the alleged mask of a force defending good in the world! The international community, in turn, maintains silence in the face of this criminality, turning a blind eye to the crimes of the "leader of the free world!"

We need not go far. The U.S. invasion of Iraq is nothing but a blatant act of international terror, revealing absolute contempt for international law.

How were those rulers able to reach that far? How did this group of prejudiced, ignorant hypocrites in possession of destructive weapons usurp democracy and freedom, and spread chaos everywhere, branding every form of resistance with "terrorism"?

My friends,

Let us return to our belief that all that's human is never crushed under the feet of war, that beauty always rises again from the ashes, that hatred is short lived, and froth always disappears. Let us not compromise our values at a time of war. Let us, instead, face up to life, renewal, and resistance, and open a window to vent a region strangled by war.

The Lebanese people choose resistance, a confrontation they realize is harsh, but understand its greatness and nobility: they rise against an Israeli army that seeks to destroy their lives. Under such circumstances, when forced to guard their sleep, their breath, and the pound of flour with iron and blood, they are beset with spontaneous solidarity that recreates itself and provides endurance. With this endurance, their home will become home again, trees will grow from the soil again, and flowers will show their colors. Their endurance exposes the arrogance of the aggressor, with its repeated bombings and massacres. It exposes, at the same time, the extent of the general failure of the Arab regimes, without exception, to react to what is happening in Lebanon and Palestine.

The desertion of Lebanon by the Arab leaders is one aspect of their collusion with Israel. Further, their oppression of their people is one part of their responsibility for the general collapse. The near total Arab silence in response to the war being waged in Lebanon and Palestine is horrific, and seeks to undermine the will to resist, and to push in the direction of despair and surrender.

Today, as the Israeli enemy pounces on our children, flowers, streets, songs, happiness and love for our land, we call upon all nations to aid our people to return to their homes, to protect them, and provide them with all means necessary for a dignified life.

My friends,

Let us actually get involved in the inescapable rebellion against hatred and destruction. Let us answer the pertinent questions, and express the important causes of the world. Let us create the incentives that could change the present reality, for what is the value of an artist who is not true to the cause of freedom and human liberty? What is the value of an artist who is not rebellious? Civilization was born in a moment of rebellion.

Marcel Khalife



