



Announcement from the Judges' Panel of the Beirut 39 Competition

After several meetings in Arab capitals and most recently in Beirut, the panel of judges for the Beirut 39 competition has agreed upon a shortlist of 39 authors. These writers will participate in the festival "Beirut 39", which is being produced by the Hay Festival, and which will be one of the events in the festivities celebrating Beirut as World Capital of the Book.

The abundance of young entrants in the competition is especially noteworthy: more than 450 young authors from across the Arab world, and from the Arab Diaspora in Europe and America, submitted their works.

The members of the committee, headed by Egyptian literary critic Gaber Asfour, and which includes the Lebanese novelist Alawiya Sobh, the Omani poet Saif Al Rahbi and the Lebanese poet and critic Abdo Wazen, pored over the multitude of work sent in by authors and publishers, in order to make their selection. The committee worked by elimination: it first picked 100 names; then brought the list down to 60; then, after long discussions and much debate, to the 39 finalists. On more than one occasion, the debates stretched for hours at a time, since there were so many wonderful books that deserved to win. Getting the final selection was a difficult, demanding, and meticulous process.

The 39 names that have been shortlisted were chosen based on their superior qualities, whether as novelists, short story tellers or poems. They represent an ideal mixture of tradition and modernity, and display high literary and critical standards. These are the voices of young talents, who have managed to form their personalities and impose their experiences and views, in addition to sharing an exemplary use of language, technique and vision.

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The final choice of the 39 shortlisted names does not detract from the worthiness of many other important contributors. Many entrants were eligible to be shortlisted in the competition, but the Hay Festival's commitment to the 39-name rule proved to be unlucky for some.

In conclusion, we would like to pay tribute to young Arab writing, which is emerging as an idiosyncratic and unique literary genre. Perhaps this generation of young writers will forge the future for Arabic literature!

Thanks are also due to *Banipal*, and its editors Margaret Obank and Samuel Shimon, who helped to gather names, arrange for books, and assist the committee in other ways.

The winners are:

Abdullah Thabit (Saudi Arabia, 1973), **Abdelaziz Errachidi** (Morocco, 1978), **Abdelkader Benali** (Morocco/The Netherlands, 1975), **Abderrahim Elkhassar** (Morocco, 1975), **Abderrazak Boukebba** (Algeria, 1977), **Abdellah Taia** (Morocco, 1973), **Adania Shibli** (Palestine, 1974), **Ahmad Saadawi** (Iraq, 1973), **Ahmad Yamani** (Egypt, 1970), **Ala Hlehel** (Palestine, 1974), **Yahya Amqassim** (Saudi Arabia, 1971), **Bassim al Ansar** (Iraq, 1970), **Dima Wannous** (Syria, 1982), **Faiza Guene** (Algeria/France, 1985), **Hala Kawtharani** (Lebanon, 1977), **Hamdy el Gazzar** (Egypt, 1970), **Hussein al Abri** (Oman, 1972), **Hussein Jelaad** (Jordan, 1970), **Hyam Yared** (Lebanon, 1975), **Islam Samhan** (Jordan, 1982), **Joumana Haddad** (Lebanon, 1970), **Kamel Riahi** (Tunisia, 1974), **Mansour El Souwaim** (Sudan, 1970), **Mansoura Ez Eldin** (Egypt, 1976), **Mohammad Hassan Alwan** (Saudi Arabia, 1979), **Mohammad Salah Al Azab** (Egypt, 1981), **Nagat Ali** (Egypt, 1975), **Najwa Binshatwan** (Lybia, 1970), **Najwan Darwish** (Palestine, 1978), **Nazem El Sayed** (Lebanon, 1975), **Rabee Jaber** (Lebanon, 1972), **Randa Jarrar** (Palestine/Egypt/USA, 1978), **Rosa Yassin Hassan** (Syria, 1974), **Samar Yezbek** (Syria, 1970), **Samer Abou Hawwash** (Palestine, 1972), **Wajdi al Ahdal** (Yemen, 1973), **Yassin Adnan** (Morocco, 1970), **Youssef Rakha** (Egypt, 1976) and **Zaki Baydoun** (Lebanon, 1981).

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