



Beirut 39

To celebrate Beirut Unesco World Book Capital 2009 the Hay Festival has created **Beirut39**, a project to select and celebrate 39 of the best Arab writers under the age of 39. Beirut 39 will be the flagship project of **Beirut Unesco World Book Capital 2009**.

A panel of four fellow writers will choose the final 39 from a long list selected by publishers and literary critics from across the Arab world. Members of the public will be able to have their say by nominating writers at libraries and through a dedicated website, **www.beirut39.com**.

The judges, chosen for the literary authority and respect they command, are the Egyptian writer **Alaa Al Aswany**, Lebanese poet and cultural editor in chief of *Al-Hayat* newspaper **Abdo Wazen**, Lebanese writer **Alawiya Sobh** and from Oman **Saif Al Rahbi**, poet and chief editor of the cultural magazine *Nizwa*. The judges will study each nominee's body of work, however large or small, and will look for development potential.

The final 39 names will be unveiled in Beirut in September 2009, and the **Beirut39 Festival** will run from **4–7 March 2010**. Over four days the selected writers will participate in events held in venues across the city – in libraries, universities, schools and other public spaces. There will be approximately 50 sessions on topics ranging from the nature of writing and the state of contemporary Arabic literature to influences and inspirations for writing. The writers will also read from their work.

The legacy of Beirut39 will be to increase the access to, and reach of, contemporary Arabic literature through the publication of an anthology of short stories by the selected writers. This will be available in Arabic, English and Spanish, and will be promoted internationally.

Beirut39 follows on from the extremely successful **Bogotá39** which the Hay Festival ran to celebrate Bogotá's status as World Book Capital in 2007. Thirty-nine Latin American writers were picked from over 250 entrants and took part in four days of events in Bogotá, Colombia. They have since spoken at Hay Festivals in Hay-on-Wye in Wales, Segovia and Granada in Spain, and Cartagena de Indias in Colombia.

The Hay Festival of Literature & the Arts has been promoting literature, debate, comedy, world music and more for 22 years, and attracts over 100,000 visitors annually. Hay Festival is a global institution with festivals and projects in Spain, Colombia and Kenya, and sister festivals in Italy and Brazil.

HAY FESTIVAL

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In order to qualify for consideration as a Beirut39 nominee, entrants must be Arab writers, writing in Arabic or any other language, born in 1970 or after, and have at least one book published (fiction or poetry).

Current partners of Beirut39 include **Beirut UNESCO World Capital of the Book Committee, Banipal, The British Council, Lebanon and Metaform X.**

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