

English Translation:

Woman behind camera: We have in Iraq a group of writers and authors, playwrights, novelists. I hope if you could mention, mention a few names with their novels, especially if they were, for instance, against the government or for example their writings deal with the, the, the bitter political situation in Iraq and the bad economic conditions. We know that the, any criticism, in most Arab countries of course, any criticism of the country or to the president is rejected and whoever says it ends up in a prison or dead. So I wish you could speak about whoever you remember among the names that appeared and vanished, or appeared and still exist, or appeared and went to other countries, I hope.

Man: By God, we have, I mean, the, the, the Iraqi history and the, the Iraqi literature and the, the Iraqi art are filled with big names ...aaa... who had to leave the country as artists and painters and writers and poets. I mean among the artists I remember Naheda el-Ramah and...aaa... Khalil Shawki and Ronak Shawki and May Shawki and another big number by God, I mean, among the artists who left, who had to leave Iraq because I mean...aaa... the Iraqi regime's insistence to ignore those artists and marginalize them and...aaa... to interfere even in the theatrical scripts and their activities and so on. And it forces them not to work [freely]. Also among the, among the poets: the poet Mudafar el-Nawab, the poet Adnan el-Sa'egh.

Woman behind camera: Have they, these poets, have they criticized the government for instance or...?

Man: They couldn't criticize the government in, inside the country unless they go abroad and sacrifice their freedoms and sacrificed their lives in order to write, abroad, about this government.

Woman behind camera: True.

Man: Because whoever writes inside gets killed...

Woman behind camera: Correct.

Man: ...he dies. And also, among the writers who left the country, I mean...

Woman behind camera: Jasem el-Rasif, you remember him, perhaps?

Man: Yes, Jasem el-Rasif...aaa... there are, in fact, many writers, I mean that I can't remember many names...aaa... including Ishmael Fahad Ishmael ...aaa... Abdul Rahman Munif lived for a while in, in Iraq. The man is of a Saudi origin but he lived for

a while in Iraq also and he started writing about his famous novel East of the Mediterranean. It described events from Iraq in a real-real way.

Woman behind camera: East of the Mediterranean, exactly, exactly.

Man: ...aaa...

Woman behind camera: A very beautiful novel.

Man: Yes, true. So, I mean people have experienced oppression of their rights because of their political opinions.

Woman behind camera: Right, right.

Man: A person, I mean, ...aaa... during the regime of Saddam Hussein and even in the previous national regime which is the regime of Abdul Salam Aaref and Abdul Rahman Aaref...aaa... they are oppressive regimes that tried to ...aaa... restrict people, restrict their thoughts, restrict their ethics and values, eliminate the other political resisting movements, eliminate the word 'no' in the country.

Woman behind camera: Correct.

Man: And people were fiercely restricted. Iraq was full of libraries, I mean full; everywhere we go, there were libraries and many books about world literature and resistance literature and criticism literature. ...aaa... these books started to disappear even, even from the libraries. The number of libraries shrank under the constant surveillance of people, chasing them and suppressing their freedoms and, and the constant searching of their homes and confiscating the books and confiscating people's freedoms...

Woman behind camera: Yes.

Man: ...and arresting them and killing them. Many of them, I mean, have lost their books, and lost their connections, and lost their homes and...aaa... left the country and went abroad in order to write, in order to be free, in order to think.

Woman behind camera: True, true.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use everyday. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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