

# Resilience *Amidst* Displacement

VOICE OF A REFUGEE ✦ QUARTER 1



International Human Rights Art Movement

2024

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT  
**LITERARY MAGAZINE**

FIRST QUARTERLY EDITION 2024



*Curated & edited by Bridget Reaume*

*A publication of the International Human Rights Art Movement (IHRAM)*

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT LITERARY MAGAZINE  
*First Quarterly Edition 2024*

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# INTRODUCTION

BRIDGET REAUME | EDITOR & CURATOR

I am overjoyed and humbled to present the International Human Rights Art Movement's first quarterly literary magazine. Following the overwhelming response to the IHRAM Literary Magazine's weekly publications and the 2023 Literary Magazine Collected Works, the IHRAM team decided to dedicate four literary magazines a year to our authors' and artists' most passionate topics. The first quarterly magazine of 2024 is dedicated to the displaced; those forced to leave the comfort of their home, abandon their life goals, and uproot their families, often out of survival.

*Home* is a privilege so many of us take for granted. Whether it's a simple roof over our heads, enclosed walls to shelter our loved ones, or the luxury of a locked door. What is *home* without the safety of four walls, familiar streets, or trusted community members? Where is *home* when you are uprooted, forced to abandon everything you have ever known? Consider your identity—what makes you *you*. How much of you lives in the comforting scents of your home and the familiar rhythms of your daily life; down to your regional dishes, the smell of your regular detergent, the seasonal weather of your home city?

The authors and artists featured in *Resilience Amidst Displacement: Voice of a Refugee* bravely share their stories and reflect upon the experiences of others; tales of being torn from home, watching their cities destroyed from afar, navigating unfamiliar cultures, and reconstructing their understanding of *home* within themselves.

Bridget Reaume  
Publishing Editor  
International Human Rights Art Movement  
Edinburgh, UK

## ON MY EXILE; A FORM OF HOME

NAZARII NAZAROV | UKRAIN, RESIDING IN FRANCE

In the days of silence, despair and hardship  
in a foreign land, in distant exile,

if you have managed to hear me,  
give me a message in return.

If it is impossible to hear you in the darkness,  
in the twinkling of the stars,

if you are not there, like the god  
the old prophets searched for

in the days of silence, hardship, and despair,  
at least show me the traces, the breadcrumbs

that led us all here  
like a flock of birds fleeing the cold front.

The silence lasts like a siege;  
thick fogs accompany my sorrow,

which, despite the roads,  
returns to the abandoned cities.

A new landscape of unknown windows,  
awakened by the siren of an air raid;

a passing of time wasted with age;  
a passing of a day outside the prison walls.

I too live between freedom and captivity,  
overcoming new darkness every day.

Time pulsates in a vessel on my temple.  
I say something aloud, without knowing to whom.

If you have managed to hear me in a foreign land,  
in a distant exile, in days of silence, despair,

and hardship, please send me a message in return.

*The poem belongs to the cycle “A Form of Home” that I wrote following my from Ukraine to France due to the war. I would like to share this poem with everyone who also has lived through their own exile—of any nation and region of Earth. The war that Russia wages on Ukraine remains an open scar on the life of every Ukrainian. Still, this war urges us all to consider a broader context. This war is about imperialism, does not acknowledge the existence and value of other parties, and does not want to hear the voices of the suppressed and colonised. During these days of sorrow, I expressed my grief through poetry. Some of them were written in Ukrainian, and some in English. The poem that is published here has an universalist approach to the problem of violence: in this poem, I appeal to anybody, from any place in the world, in order to broadcast of the voices of all those who have experienced violence, repression or discrimination in their lives.*

## COMPANION

TARAS ILIYN | UKRAINE

Oh, the carefree life of a dog, so grand!  
 Bounding joyfully across the yard we roam,  
 Playing with their humans, a merry band,  
 Resting on the grass, finding bliss at home.  
 Indulging in delicious treats at command,  
 Oh, the carefree life of a dog, so grand!

Oh, the strange life of a dog, it's true,  
 Waking up in their familiar space,  
 To find water's all we can view,  
 Swiftly seeking their human's embrace,  
 Rescuing belongings, their rescue too,  
 Even saving a fussy neighbor's grace,  
 Oh, the strange life of a dog, it's true!

Oh, the unexpected life of a dog, unknown,  
 Paddling through the water with all their might,  
 That engulfed their human's cherished home,  
 Unaware of the Russians who caused this plight,  
 Exhausted and frail, needing help to be shown,  
 Oh, the unexpected life of a dog, unknown!

Oh, the happy life of a dog, it shines,  
 For he lived it with the world's best kin,  
 Though uncertain how it all aligns,  
 As everything sank that couldn't swim,  
 But a Ukrainian rescue boat finds,  
 Our little pup, emerging from the grim,  
 And he'll thrive despite the tragic signs,  
 Oh, the happy life of a dog, it shines!

*At about 2:50 am on June 6, 2023, during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the occupation forces of the Russian Federation destroyed the dam of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. Tens of thousands of people were affected by the tragedy. Animals suffered along with people. I had the idea to tell about this terrible disaster in my country from an unexpected angle - on behalf of my friends' dog. I accidentally learned about their story. I hoped that such an unexpected point of view would help the reader to dive deeper into the topic and understand it.*

## WHERE HAS THE SPARROW GONE?

Z.S.A.RAZACK | SRI-LANKA

Rays of the sun reaches up to me,  
Warming my curls and stroking tenderly,  
From the untidy nest hanging on the beam,  
Wake up! Wake up! It seems to scream.

Darting through holes wide and narrow-  
"Tweet Tweet", chirped the brown feathered sparrow.  
I run to school along the sandy path,  
Overtaking the jingling bullock cart,  
Shadowing me is the brown feathered sparrow-  
Sheltering on a mango tree into a tiny burrow.

As the recess bell ring violently,  
I clutch the crumbs and leave the class silently,  
"Tweet Tweet", I imitate with outstretched hands,  
Whisking past, on my palm the sparrow lands,  
Pecking with the golden beak all the crumbs,  
Leaving my palm pink and almost numb

Huddled by many I show off so proudly,  
To friends and foe who stare enviously,  
But alas!  
The misery of war leaves my village in devastation,  
Throwing all of us out into different directions.

The last I remember of my precious childhood-  
With tear filled eyes waving goodbye as soon as I could,  
The tiny bird flapped its wing confused,  
The roaring of engines didn't spare a minute  
but disappeared in high speed,

With wounds of war grey and old stands my home,  
Like the untidy nest which once hung on the beam,  
A streak of withered grass still hangs on,  
Like the ruins of a kingdom lost and never found,

I stood there alone,  
With sorrows unknown,  
Where has the sparrow gone?

*I was born in a tiny village called Sammanthurai in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. A village nestled among lush green paddy fields and an abundance of rivers snaking across.*

*My family consists of seven members—my parents three older brothers and a younger sister. We were blessed to be part of a family with renowned politicians and educators. My father was a principal at the only national school in my village where my mother was a teacher as well. As my mother juggled a full-time career and five children, she would often rely on her parents for support with childcare.*

*She would drop us at their home before work, where we would spend the day exploring the 2-acre orchard that enveloped the property. This home is where my passion for writing was ignited. The property was dense with fruit trees—neem, mango, tamarind, and banana trees. A large well stood in a corner of the acreage where often my grandfather would bathe us. Occasionally, spotting cobras, my siblings and I would scream and run for our consoling grandparents. The harmonious nature and many folk tales narrated by my grandfather would draw me into a world of my own filled with trees animals and birds that would talk to me, comfort me, and befriend me.*

*But when the internal war between the Armed forces and the rebels (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) peaked in the early 80s, my village was wrecked. My father lost his beloved brother to the war and soon decided to evacuate us. We moved to Colombo leaving that house, my grandparents; leaving my roots.*

*The 30-year civil war ceased in 2009 but the wounds remain fresh. As an adult, my return to my ancestral home which is now in complete ruin was an emotional one. Upon my visit home, I wrote Where Has the Sparrow Gone? in reflection of what was lost and what remains.*

## ARRIVAL IN FLORIDA

HOMA MOJADIDI | AFGHANISTAN, RESIDING IN THE USA

I remember people asking me,  
is Afghanistan in Africa?  
when I first arrived  
in Jacksonville, Florida

Oklahoma? They scoffed  
when I told them my name.  
No, it's spelled H-O-M-A

How many times  
must I spell my name  
over and over again?  
Tell people that the inflection  
is on the "a" in Persian

But they can call me Ho-ma if they wish  
they used to call my cousins who arrived before me  
Moja dumb dumb because our last name is Mojadidi

But even that's the American version  
to make it easy on American tongues  
not used to the shud of Arabic on the daal  
the emphasis on the first "d"  
saying it as if the letter appeared not once  
but twice—

It's so difficult to trace  
the trajectory of a life  
or a name—  
with all its people and places,  
its alphabets, accents, and mother tongues  
you were forced  
to abandon along the way

time erasing them from your memory  
as if they were written with a pencil  
leaving behind only

their indelible impression—

*When my mother and I first arrived in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1991, after living as refugees in Islamabad, Pakistan for nine years, we entered a predominantly white, Southern landscape. There was a small Afghan immigrant community, but Jacksonville's population was not very diverse. I was often asked where I was from and when I answered, Afghanistan, most people did not know where that was or why we had to come to the United States. This poem is based on peoples' actual responses and reactions to my telling them my name and where I was from.*

## AMRITSAR TRAIN MASSACRE

ELA KINI | INDIA, FIRST GENERATION USA CITIZEN

step away, ma.  
 the train is cracking and even  
 we women cannot bind metal seams.  
 I never truly learned the weight  
 of masculine complications  
 until you and I grew beards (armor)  
 instead of braids because they say  
 our flesh knotted together,  
 pummeled and righteous, is a battalion  
 of infants and maids:  
 massacre is justice only when  
 the dead can be called soldiers,  
 but the fissures of women's thighs  
 can only be misnomered  
 to be seen as so brutal.  
 the train mocks our broken mouths,  
 our broken bodies: I to be, I to be chasm  
 for bruised army. I to be ragdoll of night  
 and of battle cry, I to be body  
 splintered into caves. and that rang poetic,  
 our bodies not doorways to pry open.  
 you shot, you bulleted, your feet sliced air,  
 your speed always a thing of violence,  
 your choosing to stand  
 parked between our homeland  
 and our homeland (next, upcoming)  
 to buy time, our only weapon.  
 this hope will break, too, but we are broken objects  
 meant, like any women, only to hold our kin.  
 you tell me borders are built with rail lines,  
 build us our cemetery plot from flesh and shrapnel

screeching into foreground, death colliding  
 with my skin-bare skeleton in search of refuge  
 in another corpse, bringing a pound down  
 off my waist, the blood soaking  
 that sogging cotton engine, its body splitting  
 right where we'd sewn it up before.

*My family's emigration from India into the United States was, in many ways, my first experience of escapism. For me, to be born in the United States is to escape the history of my mother country: its colonization, division, and brutal journey into the present day. I explore my history through poetry. AMRITSAR TRAIN MASSACRE (1947) is based upon the true event, in which over three thousand Muslim refugees were murdered. This poem presents a mother and daughter, civilians in war, to tell the story of this event of the Partition, as well as shed light on the devastating reality that innocents in war have historically received no pardons.*

## INTERVIEW WITH A SUDANESE REFUGEE

ADESIYAN OLUWAPELUMI | NIGERIA

For Safia Elhillo

How many times have you woken up a ghost  
just to speak with the dead? Can you translate

the language in which the silence speaks?  
How loud is the voice of your dead uncle?

Can you hear as silence echoes within these walls?  
Can you still hear the sounds of gunfire and

shelling braiding the streets of your hometown  
in Khartoum? Are you safe now here, away from

home? Do you still have a home or is home a gesture  
towards ruined monoliths and graveyards?

How many letters have you addressed to a place  
that no longer exists on the map? How much

memory of your lost homies do you still hold  
in the sieve of your mind? Is forgetting a burial

or a Lazarus that will rise after three days?  
How much family do you have left now?

Do you now stutter in English? Has this foreign  
dialect wash the memory and history off your tongue?

Are you still human? Are you sad and angry? Can  
you count the dead you have lost? Does counting

gives the hurting a lifespan? Are you hurting yourself  
enough to heal enough? Do you still hear voices in

your head screaming at you to run? Did you see  
the bomber's  
faces. How far across the border are you now?

Are you coming back? Where are you coming  
back to?

Who are you coming back for? Are they there?

*Grief-stricken by the news coverage of Sudan and in solidarity with the resistance community, I wrote this poem, dedicated to the Sudanese-American poet Safia Elhillo. I was overwhelmed and in communal grief from this loss. Such cruelty; disturbing and heartbreaking. To borrow her words: "The callousness of this country I live in now, where language works like poison. Where in the headlines, Palestinians are not "killed" or "murdered" by a genocidal occupation—instead, they merely "die," as if it the natural order of things. Where my people, Sudanese people, do not even bear a passing mention..." I wake up every morning with a question in my heart, how does a Sudanese Refugee suffer in this unfair landscape. Curious as to how she was feeling about all this, the poem began.*

## DISPLACEMENT: LABELS

SANA HASHIM | CANADA, AFGHAN REFUGEE



*“Displacement: Labels” is an evocative piece within the Entropy art series. As a refugee, my experiences have inspired this collection, which explores themes of war trauma, displacement, bureaucratic struggles, and resilience. Comprising of six chapters and 13 artworks, Entropy endeavors to humanize the realities of life before, during, and after conflict. “Displacement” offers a glimpse into the emotional journey of those torn from their homes, shedding light on the stereotypes they face, and showcasing both the hardships endured and the strength found amidst adversity. Through this series, I aim to foster empathy and understanding for those affected by war, inviting viewers to reflect on universal themes of loss, survival, and hope.*

## DESIDERIUM

SAJJAD ABDOLLAHI | IRAN

My heart was pounding in my chest  
 Apprehension was swerving around my head  
 I was walking as if I was missing something  
 Every breath was a last gasp  
 Perishing upon my lungs and leaving its corpse on the  
 shoulders of the wind Still into the unknown  
 In search of an elusive enigma  
 Deserted of life  
 There was no crowd on the street  
 Only the wanderings of pain and sorrow  
 A glimmering of lights paved the way  
 The wind brought a rain  
 I paused  
 Drops were falling from the edge of an umbrella  
 Like bombs  
 On a puddle emerging from the rain  
 Ripples of alarum reached me  
 I sewed my chin to the collarbone  
 To perhaps recognize  
 The reflection of a wavy face on the wet of the road  
 Let up too soon  
 She folded the umbrella  
 Packed her face away  
 Better to forward than stay  
 Oh, what a vague strange feel  
 My heart is pounding in my chest  
 Apprehension is swerving around my head  
 Who am I missing?

*Based on personal experiences and inspired by the words of Friedrich Nietzsche:*

*“Sit as little as possible; do not believe any idea that was not born in the open air and of free movement — in which the muscles do not also revel.”*

## WORMHOLE

MUHAMMED SANI OLOWONJOYIN | NIGERIA

I walk through this city as a being who cannot be burnt or scathed by the claws of his country. Armored, as if between a steel veil. Neither here, nor there, nor where I'm supposed to be. Yet, my instinct is to bathe in the loneliness hovering in the air. I step further and see a sidewalk adjacent to a home, spotlighted in the setting sun and swirling dust. My dog barks at an unusual presence. Our souls are in communion. Both of us in a collision of grief. But how do I grieve an entire community, hundreds of people, homes flattened? Hardly rubble. Half memories. How do I grieve for nothing? Do I lay flowers in a cemetery of trees that once hosted our hides and seeks games? This is the hour we hide, out of fear of what accompanies the darkening of the day. But here, I breathe in the silence. I am a lost thing in a universe with nothing of my own to hold. Just ratatats of bullets in my memory before my home crumbled into ruin. I walk in silence with no one to sing me into the calm of the evening.

*The world is crashing, and it seems like for some places, it's coming to an end. Many of what we love have been taken away — dreams, people, and the places we danced at nights. I woke up from a dream — I imagined a world where everything, including myself, have been annihilated. I tried to speculate what it feels like to be a ghost trapped in another dimension — whether the connections to the things we love, feelings and grief still exist even after we're long gone. What the world we left behind would look like.*

## ALEXA? PLAY AFRICA BY TOTO

SERENA PAVER | SOUTH AFRICA, RESIDING IN ENGLAND

When I first moved to England, I toyed with how I might begin writing my life there. At first, I wanted to write England the way the English wrote my home. As a native South African, I was accustomed to the form my own and neighbouring countries took in their western depictions. Exoticised, strange, unknowable, uncontrollable. A danger to be lost in. I wondered if I could write England like that too. How would it be if such a place was used as a hazy mise-en-scène for the singular self-growth of one African native? Ever the brave explorer, I set about capturing England in my logbook.

I began in the distances and joys of it. I documented the chill in the air at that time in a late autumn morning, when the sun has not yet finished rising, and the way the bloodless tips of my body become pink, fight to not fall off from cold. I noted the specific lilting way Londoners say *'like'*, *'bro'* and *'innit'*, sometimes all in one sentence: *Bro, that's bare rubbish though like, innit.* I charted the palpable sense of post-WW2 scarcity that imbues all interaction, as if the UK is not a country rich in social currency that will never run out.

While living in England, the mysteries of the literature I imbibed during childhood solved themselves in increments. Each season brought new understanding to phrases commonly used in the likes of Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, CS Lewis and Jacqueline Wilson. In the summer, my head echoed constantly with *Aaaaaah, so this is...*, finally revealing to me what *'bracken'* was and why animals could so easily disappear into it. What bluebells and buttercups looked like. The quaintness and mildness of a pleasant summer evening, the sun finally deciding to call it a night after staying up long past its African bedtime. All of it so charming, so rolling, so faerie-like that I felt the urge to sit and compose odes to it, like the white male Romantics I scorned in my university years (WRITE ABOUT

SOMETHING REAL).

Summer in this foreign land was so unlike the excesses of my home. The expected heaviness of rich, dry air that makes you walk slower and laugh louder and carries your voice for what seems like miles (*Kunjani, tshomi*). Summer in this strange (too little) place was gentle. It inspired softness, subtleness, slipping away into unseen-ness. It made me understand, in part, why the British never seem to say things quite how they are, skirting around topics and covering them with flowers. They aren't trained properly by the weather.

In autumn, when the drumbeat of my feet on the emotionless London pavements became padded with the crunching reverb of fallen leaves, I finally learnt what a conker was and why little boys might find joy in playing with them. There's a World Conker Championship, a friend told me once. They had to deal with some controversy because people would soak their conkers in vinegar to make them harder for game play.

*'Find some real problems, England,'* I replied.

In winter, the foreboding echo of a single raven on a leafless tree was bone-chilling. *Oh*, I thought, *it's because I'm so fucking cold already.* The threshold is not hard to reach. If summer made me understand the Romantics, winter brought to life the Gothics with extreme clarity. Living in England was, of itself, a literature course. I came to understand that the *'Human Condition'* each era respectively epitomised, which had so eluded me during my two literature degrees, had nothing to do with being human. Rather, they spoke to being human in English weather. I vibrated with the excitement of my discovery.

But my excitement quickly turned to anger, and I wondered why, in my childhood, I never read books with recognisable landscapes. Stories that depicted snakes disappearing into fynbos shrubbery and the head-shattering cries of a hadeda (*As die hadida oor 'n huis vlieg en sy angs roep oor die vallei, dan sê hulle dat iemand gaan sterf. Dit is dan wanneer die wolf uit sy skuilplek sal kom*). Why did I read books with strange unrecognisable names like Dick, Fanny, George and Edmond, and not names like Fanie, Xoliso, Mlondiwethu and Annaliese. I seethed with

the fact that the people surrounding me in each of my discoveries (*You've never seen a buttercup before??*) did not grow up deciphering and translating in their minds, like I did. That their world was shown back to them like a mirror, telling them: *'Yes, you live in the right place. You are Seen. Your story is worth telling. We are telling it now. We will always be telling it. And one day, when you want to tell it yourself, we will do anything to hear it.'*

In my anger, I felt a renewed vigour to, instead of writing England, tell the story of my home. Africa, but unaccompanied by the sounds of distant drumbeats (sometimes I think foreigners must be confused when they arrive on the continent and hear only the sounds of passing traffic and planes taking off – But where are the sounds of distant drums and the echoes of tribal warrior calls?). No, not Africa. South Africa. Because Africa is a continent I hardly know, having inhabited only one country out of 54. (*No I don't speak the language, which one? There are 11 official ones in my country alone.*) When I speak to people about my country—about the way I was held in joy by people who had every reason to hate me; about the way my education demanded me to question and research and deliver new knowledge with each assignment; about the genuine joy that my peers felt at working hard to create something new, not as a way to tick boxes, but as a way to elevate themselves, their subject, their people, and the world; about the medical innovations that are started and developed there; about the artistry I witnessed; about the love I witnessed; about the deeply held sense of humour I witnessed, despite all the disappointments and pain—I am met with faces of genuine surprise (*'Oh! That happened in A-free-ka?'*)

Eyebrows raise and heads half-cock with pity. It is common knowledge that nothing that happens south of the Mediterranean can be held at any level of esteem. The continent exists only for people to discuss with furrowed brows the *A-free-ka* problem and to prove to friends and foes alike how deeply caring one is (*'Well I want to help orphans in A-free-ka'*), as if the orphans of the west are less sad, less needy, less vulnerable. It is common knowledge that a piece of paper achieved after six years of study in Africa is worth a great deal less than the 'equivalent' one achieved after four years of study in the UK. It is common knowledge that if one wants to be successful, they must do it in a country outside of Africa to be acknowledged to any degree. It is common knowledge that once

one has left, it is unlikely they will return.

When I speak to people about my country, I tell stories that live in the crinkled corners of my eyes. About my father finding nuts in the brackets of newly fallen pinecones from a pine forest made up of alien trees. About taking an ill-advised road trip around the country in a beaten-up, pimped-out Toyota Yaris (suspension lowered) with my sister. I avoid talking about the wildlife we saw from the car—a giraffe, some deer, two dead snakes and one live one, too many monkeys, a whale, a group of fighting piglets, a retreating hyena, and a zebra—and unpack instead, in detail, how the waiter at a resort restaurant in the mountains offered his company, jokes, serviettes, water, free food, free drinks and eventually a spliff in a harrowed attempt to stop me crying during a mid-dinner (carbonara) panic attack. I like to talk about how the man who fixed my car tires in university leaned down over my window as I began to drive away and said warmly, *hamba kakuhle, sisi*, even though he had every expectation that I would not understand his farewell. About the way we used to dance: *eish, haibo*. About the way we used to kiss. About the way we used to call out to each other with very little care who else heard, and how we used to laugh at everything, slapping each other's shoulders in merriment. Hilarity in South Africa meant gentle bruises. About the way we used to sit on the balcony on a thick summer night, under the purple flowers of a jacaranda tree, and send slow twirling smoke tendrils up towards the flaking white paint of the ceiling, Ella Fitzgerald crooning in the background. I used to feel the landscape in my body. I used to say of my home in the Eastern Cape, the veil in so thin here, I swear I can hear the other side tapping on it, waiting to seep through into our reality. I used to say of my home in Cape Town, when gazing out over the horizon, beyond the turbulent dark seas of the Cape of Good Hope, we're at the very tip of everything here, it's amazing we don't just fall off.

But the more I talk about my home, the more I realise it won't ever matter what stories I choose to tell. In this place in which I now live, with its tight-lipped inflexibility (born of frozen winters) and its light-footed careful wording (born of ambiguous summers), any story I begin to tell will be dipped in the guise of Africa, which existed long before I was born and will exist long after I pass on. Africa does not get to have human stories, it is too mythic, too essential. Africa is a concept which, much like a beautiful woman, is turned into something that

is spoken about in CAPITAL LETTERS and *Italics*, used only for how one might benefit from their interaction with it. It is not a place with people in it, but a Place. When I try to imbue it with humanity, I am met with glazed-over, dreamy eyes. Sometimes I worry, the more time I spend away from it, the more I paint it with that same romantic generality. I am scared it will lose its shape in my mind, become hazy and blurred, like the air above a tarred road on a summer afternoon. I feel desperate to return. I want to roll around in the reality of it, bathing in all of its contradictions, once again be sure of myself as an African person and not as the westerner which people ascribe me to be, by virtue of my borderline-translucent skin.

It was this same state I found myself in, after a year and a half of isolation in London's sodden streets, aching for a return to my native land, when I was reminded once again of my home's place in the pecking order of political power. I was on the verge of flying to Cape Town, plans funded by generous relatives and scraped together pennies, when the universe has added in its own curveball. SARS-CoV-2 virus evolutionary variant B.1.1.529. A dense math equation of a sentence which I could not solve. Omicron, the transformer of lives, the awakener of my only briefly rested rage. The variant was first reported to the World Health Organisation by South Africa on 24 November 2021, exactly a month before the date of my flight home, my triumphant re-entry into a recognisable, understandable world. The world went mad. Desperate to protect their countries from the devastation of a new strain, when citizens were only just getting their lives back, governments around the world made the decision to sequester southern Africa with immediate effect. For the UK's part, South Africa, along with nine other southern African countries, were placed on the travel 'Red List', meaning a traveller entering the UK from these countries would have to pay over £2000 for official, hotel-bound quarantine. This was a governmental a move that said to Britons everywhere: We want you to know you are protected. We are saving you, once again, from the dangers that run rampant in darkest Africa. This, despite the fact that only 4 out of those 10 countries actually have confirmed Omicron cases. My visit home was cancelled.

As the days passed, and Omicron was now a known entity to be alert for, the variant was located and reported in countries across the world: most of Europe,

Canada, the USA, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Saudi Arabia. Worldwide, cases rose, and more evidence began to suggest that the variant did not develop in South Africa. In fact, it was only first detected in the country due to the advanced lab work already at work before Covid was a word we all knew. And yet, no changes were made. No countries were added to the UK Red List. None were removed. In the political chess game that constituted the UK government's response to something no government could control, Africa became a pawn while the knights and bishops held cheese-and-wine meetings. What could this possibly communicate other than Africa is not valuable? Other than up to this very day we continue to live in a world that benefits from and perpetuates the patterns of interacting with Africa that were constructed during the colonial era? I found myself living in (stuck in) a country that said of my home, and all the people living in it: You don't matter. You never mattered. And no matter how amazing you are, talented you are, intelligent you are, innovative you are, advanced you are—none of that will matter if you continue to be so in Africa. And I was sad.

I still am. I love my home. I have so much more to say about it than just as a *'I-absolutely-cannot-wait-to-leave anarchic hellhole, but with good weather'*. Now, I no longer quietly take jokes, political decisions, clout-gathering charity at Africa's expense. I am not quiet anymore. Much to my European friends' chagrin, I take any opportunity to stand proudly on my soapbox and proclaim: *'I speak. Let me speak. Let my people speak'*. There are still so many voices that are hitting up against the wall of 'Africa', waiting to be heard, stuck inside their own echo chamber of frustration. I don't want to be angry in a mirror anymore, so I am practising being angry out the window. I hope, one day, I won't have to be angry at all.

*I am a South African currently living in the UK. This piece was inspired by my experience living as an 'invisible foreigner' in England, where, based on my appearance, I am often assumed to be from the west. It is written in the post-colonial tradition and explores countries as concepts. It was partially written during the Covid-19 lockdowns, when harsh travel restrictions on African countries meant I was unable to go home, while the same attitude was not held towards other western countries. It questions what it would be like to feel centred in global narratives as an African person, and looks with hope towards the celebration of Africa and African people.*

## STONE FEET BLACK FEET

SELENE BEY | FRANCE

The boy has about him,  
 A look.  
 A frown laboring through sun and dust,  
 Not their books.  
 He guides the flock,  
 With his stick.  
 His feet are bare and as strong as stone,  
 But still he is quick.  
 Those with foreign clothes,  
 And black feet,  
 Speak a tongue brought all the way,  
 From the north to this mountain heat.  
 They taught him the names of rivers,  
 And cities of the motherland.  
 No Seine, no Rhône does he see here,  
 Though he could trace them on his hand.  
 He eyes tire in their presence,  
 Always lowered to the ground.  
 His being is part of the scenery,  
 When they arrived he was all they found.  
 Squatting on rocks he twists his forelock,  
 Throwing stones as his companions graze.  
 And wonders if he would ever witness,  
 The departure of all those black feet, one day.

*This piece is heavily inspired by my father's experience growing up under the French colonial control of Algeria. Black Feet or Pieds Noirs is a term largely understood to refer to French or European people living in Algeria during French colonial rule. The poem presents the shepherd boy's view of the foreign presence he exists along side. His experience of education is alienating because the information he is given relates to a foreign land he knows nothing of. His existence is perceived by those in control as merely decorative and unimportant but behind his lowered gaze is the very anger and frustration that the Black Feet fear the most.*

## A LINE THROUGH OUR HEARTS

AMMU ASHOK | INDIA

The roaring, fast-flowing Himalayan River split families as tall, green mountains loomed. The breeze that swept along the current chilled the gorge as fast-paced torrents crashed against the rocks on the riverbed. Its sound echoed through the vigilant valley.

Families gathered on both sides of the river and waved to their better halves. I glanced at the river and realized it would be impossible to talk to him; the narrow river remains the only thing that separates the two archrivals.

The fast-moving river is a continuous companion to my ever-flowing tears. A mountain with flat notches cut into its side to create fields for agriculture. The river flows unaware of the raging battles above: army soldiers camouflaged behind the trees, guns have fallen silent today. Peace on Karnah.

Today, no bullet crossed the river from either side, no shelling and mortar fire, no one runs for their lives. A sense of security. Picturesque Postcard Vigilant Valley of Kashmir.

I saw him glance across the water. We are so close to one another, it's a line through our hearts, yet, I can't talk to and hug him.

The mosque from across the river sounded the Azaan identifying the time for prayer. Slowly he decided to move to Salat forcing oneself to depart. He waved from the border two countries waving at each other over the blood that flows through the river between us.

*Many families in the border of Kashmir migrated to the other side of the river during the peak of militancy, to escape daily atrocities. When the border was opened, they could only wave at each other like strangers. Communication with the dear ones on the other side of the river is impossible. The poem displays the silenced deep love of people when they meet each other along this border.*

## D-ROOSTER

LUIS PEDRO PICASSO | URUGUAY



*Chuck represents a vital part of my thinking, the equality of our essence no matter how we look on the outside.*

*No matter your skin color, hair color, eye type, no matter if you're beautiful or not for the canons of world beauty, we were all created on the same basis.*

*Our skeletons represent the cornerstone of life on earth.*

*My greatest aspiration as an artist is that the one who sees my work feels a little of the energy when I realize the work, anger, joy, sadness or what my work gives off. You see, I think that the title of artist is earned by people, it is they who must decide whether you are an artist or not.*

## THE SMOKE SIGNALS A MIGRANT RETURNING

NWUGURU CHIDIEBERE SULLIVAN | NIGERIA

*After Ocean Vuong*

A sandpiper teeters under a November sky, setting the atmosphere to the tune of a wanderer. The Earth is always in motion, always moving, depending on the direction of the sunlight. It was this time of the year that Abbey left, on a dusty afternoon — the road before him unfurled like a scroll, his dreams scribbled all over it. Through the Sahara, among fifteen other migrants, he scrambled past sand hills, across valleys, passing through borders; a nomad traveling in a clouded trajectory. To wander is to meditate in uncertainties, still, they hoped for their transit into Sicily, where they would manifest their dreams into realities. Maybe it would make up for these sufferings. Every wanderer is a dreamer whose quest ignores boundaries. To survive, then, is only a matter of trial, of trying. Deep into their journey, they switched from trucks to lorries, from okadas to wagons, journeying in stealth, ghostly, sojourning in open camps at Agadez & Sabratha. Only in these dreadful moments did they lose loved ones and travel companions, some tortured to death for failure to afford a passage through the checkpoints. Once, Abbey watched a flock of sparrows migrating as one; the flock danced in formation against the clear sky, &

he imagined them to be his lost mates flying back home in style. It seems death, sometimes, is the only escape route, & if you must remember anything, remember that no one deserves to live just once. Unmarked graves cannot hold wandering, unfinished ghosts. They had been traveling for months, & the Mediterranean was still miles away. The desert only yielded more checkpoints, enough for them to abandon all their valuables; a mouth opening into more mouths, swallowing without chewing. May passed & June wasn't a good time to cross the ocean, so they waited for July. Then August. The wait stretched into months for Abbey, into years of hard unyielding labor; until one unremarkable day, he was called to board the raft. Strange how a dream of more, of better could lead them into the wild; & if you must remember anything, remember that wounds do not heal when the body is in constant motion. So he mailed his regrets back home by smoke. We received it, the memory of a man leaving home.

*“The Smoke Signals A Migrant Returning”, captures the journey of illegal migration through the Sahara Desert to Europe from the perspective of a Nigerian illegal migrant. Illegal migration through the Sahara is a brutal journey but people here still engage in it, especially since the government continues to make life difficult for the citizens, thus, forcing them to seek refuge elsewhere, even at the expense of their lives.*

## MEET THE GLOBAL AUTHORS

OF THE QUARTER ONE IHRAM 2024 LITERARY MAGAZINE

### NAZARII NAZAROV

...was born in 1990 in a small village in the Ukrainian steppe. Before the invasion of Ukraine he lived in Kyiv and Irping, Ukraine, where he worked as a translator, a linguist, and a researcher. He was in Paris at the beginning of the war and still remains, continuing his creative and research activities. He writes his poems in Ukrainian and English. His Ukrainian poems were selected for representative national anthologies, whereas his English poems and translations have appeared in *Eratio*, *Eunoia*, *Literary Shanghai*, *The Tiger Moth Review*, and *IHRAM Publishes*. In collaboration with Norwegian poet Erling Kittelsen, he published an anthology of Ukrainian folk poetry in Norwegian translation (under a pen name Nazarii Nazar).

### Z. S. A. RAZACK

...is a revolutionary writer from Sri Lanka. She pens the burning global issues concerning human rights violations, gender-based violence, and children's rights. She speaks for the voiceless, oppressed people of the world while exposing the ignored trauma of the many displaced persons throughout the world.

### TARAS ILIYN

...was born in Ukraine. He started writing poetry at school. In college, he participated in poetry competitions and poetry reading contests. While studying at the university, he started working on the radio. He created a radio program where he read and popularized poetry on the air. Since 2020, he has been hosting poetry streams every evening to promote poetry. After the outbreak of Russia's full-scale and unprovoked war against Ukraine, he began working on an English-language collection of poetry.

### HOMA MOJADIDI

...is an Afghan American poet and translator, fluent in English, Farsi, and Urdu. Her translations are published in *Asymptote* and her poems in *The Blue Mountain Review*, *Beyond Words Literary Magazine*, and *One Art magazine*. Homa's poetry explores loss, exile, memory, and mysticism. She has an M.A. in English Literature from the University of North Florida and is pursuing an M.F.A. in Creative Writing (poetry) from George Mason University where she currently teaches English Composition.

### ELA KINI

...is a student and daughter of immigrants, based in NYC. Her poetry appears or is forthcoming in the *Rising Phoenix Review*, *Ghost City*, *National High School Poetry Quarterly*, *Eunoia*, and elsewhere. She is recognized for her work by the *National YoungArts Foundation* and *Scholastic Art and Writing Awards*. She edits for *Argus*.

### ADESIYAN OLUWAPELUMI

...is a medical student, poet, essayist & Assistant Editor of *Fierce Scribe Review* from Nigeria. Winner of the *Cheshire White Ribbon Day Creative Contest* (2022), his works are published/forthcoming in *Fantasy Magazine*, *Poet Lore*, *Tab Journal*, *Poetry Wales*, *Variant Literature* & elsewhere.

### SANA HASHIM

...is an Afghan refugee currently residing in Canada. Hashim's artistic practice predominantly explores abstraction, drawing inspiration from her formative experiences in Afghanistan and her journey as a refugee. Through her work, she seeks to articulate the complexities of displacement, identity, and resilience while inviting viewers to contemplate the intersections of memory, culture, and belonging.

### SAJJAD ABDOLLAHI

... has a long-standing interest in the arts, starting with composing poetry and the publication of his poems in different university magazines, the determining decision of his career was to pursue filmmaking upon graduation, which led to winning more than 50 international awards.

### MUHAMMED SANNI OLOWONJOYIN

...is a Nigerian poet and a student of Biochemistry at the University of Ilorin. Winner of the *2023 Dawn Prize* for Poetry, he and his poems have been featured or forthcoming in *Best Small Fictions*, *QAE Journal*, *Gutter Magazine*, *Pepper Coast Lit*, *Writer Space Africa*, *Olney Magazine*, *Stanchion*, *Poetry Column NND*, *Brittle Paper*, *Sunlight Press*, and elsewhere.

**SERENA PAVER**

...is a queer dance/movement psycho-therapist, writer, and choreographer. Now based in London, England, Serena grew up in Cape Town, South Africa, next to a somewhat famous mountain, which is perhaps what began her interest in shadows and what hides inside them. Her work centers on the body, mental health, (mis)communication, and human connection, and has been published in *Transnationalism*, *The Foreigner Press*, and *Roey Writes On*.

**SELENE BEY**

...is half Algerian and half English and was brought up in England in the 1980s. She has always had one foot in England and the other in Algeria and this experience has shaped and impacted every aspect of her being.

**AMMU ASHOK**

...is a poet, translator and educator. Her works have been featured in many anthologies, books and electronic media. She was honored with the 'Distinguished Poet Award- 2023' in the *International Rabindranath Tagore Poetry Prize 2023*.

**NWUGURU CHIDIEBERE SULLIVAN**

...is a speculative writer of Izzi, Abakaliki ancestry; a finalist for the *2023 Rhysling Award*, a nominee for the *Forward Prize*, a data science techie and a medical laboratory scientist. He was the winner of the *2021 Write About Now's Cookout Literary Prize*. He has works at *Strange Horizon*, *FIYAH*, *Uncanny Mag*, *Nightmare Mag*, *Augur Mag*, *Filednotes Journal*, *Antithesis Journal*, *Kernel Magazine*, *Mizna*, and elsewhere.

**LUIS PEDRO PICASSO**

...is a graphic designer, illustrator since child and painter. He is passionate about creating characters in his mind and bringing them to life. During the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, he began to paint and it caught him in such a way that he could not stop. He believes that each person has an artist within them, it depends on them to release it. He likes to work on the basis of each organism, highlight its colors and exploit them to give life. Though he has never studied painting, he lets the creativity flow through his body. He believes life is a constantly expanding work of art; let us try to provide our brushstrokes.

**International Human Rights Art Movement**

The International Human Rights Art Movement (IHRAM) offers creative programs promoting freedom of expression, human rights, and social justice around the world. We envision a world where artist activism is honored as a human right, and a source of social change.

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**Thank you for being part of a greater cause**

# LITERARY MAGAZINE

VOICE OF A REFUGEE ✦ QUARTER 1

*Home* is a privilege so many of us take for granted. Whether it's a simple roof over our heads, enclosed walls to shelter our loved ones, or the luxury of a locked door. The authors and artists featured in the *Resilience Amidst Displacement: Voice of a Refugee* bravely share their stories and reflect upon the experiences of others; tales of being torn from home, watching their cities destroyed from afar, navigating unfamiliar cultures, and reconstructing their understanding of *home* within themselves.

The IHRAM magazine was created with a simple goal: to celebrate and uplift up-and-coming authors from all over the world; each of the authors in this anthology contend with their identities in the context of their environments, providing readers with their unique perspectives on issues of human rights.

Thank you for being part of a greater cause.

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Curated & Edited by Bridget Reaume

A publication of the International Human Rights Art Movement (IHRAM)



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