



TWO PORTRAITS IN RESISTANCE: ABU 'UMAR AND MAHJUB 'UMAR

JEHAN HELOU AND ELIAS KHOURY

The word "Palestinian" today, at least in the realm of politics, almost automatically attaches itself to the word "Authority." This calls forth images of an entity that in fact has no sovereignty, no real jurisdiction, painfully limited authority, and precious little dignity, dwarfed as it is by its Israeli and U.S. overseers and patrons. In such circumstances, it may be difficult to recall that there was a time when the word "Palestine" spontaneously evoked another word, "Resistance," and a far different set of associations.

*In the 1960s and 1970s, "Palestinian Resistance" referred to a movement made up of men and women who called themselves fida'iyyin (meaning those who sacrifice themselves), and for whom self-sacrifice for the cause of Palestine was their *raison d'être*. They did so in myriad spheres, from the cultural and the social to the political and the military. Many of the best among them made the ultimate sacrifice in this cause. These included several of the movement's most prominent cadres and leaders, who from the 1970s onward were targeted for assassination by Israel and at times hostile Arab regimes. Notable among these victims was the gifted author and artist Ghassan Kanafani, who was murdered by Israeli agents forty years ago this summer.*

In later years, mistakes, miscalculations, deviations, and corruption clouded and eventually dispelled the image of these early years of the resurrection of the Palestinian national movement. This is why the two short appreciations of departed fida'iyyin that follow are so welcome, serving to revive our memory of a time when commitment and self-sacrifice were the rule rather than the exception in the Palestinian Resistance—or at least ideals actively to be pursued.

It is pure coincidence that these remembrances came to us at the same time, for they concern two men whose deaths are separated by almost four decades: "Abu 'Umar" disappeared off the coast of Lebanon in 1976, and "Mahjub 'Umar" died in Cairo earlier this year. Even among the selfless men and women who filled the ranks of the Resistance in the early years, these two stood out for their utter devotion to the cause, and the intelligence and commitment with which they served. Neither of them was well known to the outside world, but both were renowned, not only within Fatah, to which they both belonged despite their Marxist politics, but also far beyond. Both joined the Resistance at around the same time, in the wake of the 1967 war, and they knew each other through their work at the Palestinian Planning

Center. Both were highly educated, both could easily have chosen more comfortable careers, and both dedicated their lives to serving others, each in his own unique way. Their most important contributions were political and intellectual, combating negative trends within the Palestinian national movement that unfortunately have since grown much stronger. Those who knew them, as I did, were always struck by the fact that for all their brilliance and wit, they were truly simple, unprepossessing, and humble men.

Their lives, then, serve as reminders of the early history of the Palestinian national movement, now largely forgotten by a generation that knows only the disappointments of the years after the PLO's forced withdrawal from Beirut in 1982, and the tragic failed compromises of the Oslo years. Abu 'Umar (his nom de guerre; his real name was Hanna Ibrahim Mikha'il) and Mahjub 'Umar (his real name was Ra'uf Nazmi Mikha'il) joined the Resistance because they were committed to changing the stagnant status quo in an Arab region riddled with regimes characterized by hollow nationalist rhetoric and dominated by regional and international powers, from Israel and the Shah's Iran to the United States and the Soviet Union. Abu 'Umar was one of many Palestinians who returned from abroad, in his case from an academic career in the United States, to place their abilities at the service of their people. Mahjub 'Umar, an Egyptian militant who served the Palestinian Resistance for fifteen years, was one of thousands of volunteers who joined the movement from across the Middle East and from farther afield. In this age of cynical exploitation of religion for various ends throughout the Middle East, it is worth recalling the trajectories of these two secular intellectuals imbued with Marxist ideas, but who were deeply respectful of the role of religion in Palestinian and Arab society.

These two short portraits were drawn by individuals close to their subjects. That of Abu 'Umar was penned by his wife, Jehan Helou, his companion and comrade in the Resistance. That of Mahjub 'Umar was written by Elias Khoury, editor of our Arabic-language sister publication, Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya, who knew him well during his years in Beirut and later Cairo. The two remembrances are very different. Jehan Helou's is more descriptive, more explicitly biographical, and gives prominence to her husband's political views. Elias Khoury's obituary for his friend is more evocative, allusive. But in evoking these exceptional—yet representative—men, they eloquently convey the spirit of an era long gone. The Journal of Palestine Studies is fortunate to be able to present them.

—Rashid I. Khalidi

ABU 'UMAR (1935–1976): PORTRAIT OF A PALESTINIAN FIGHTER

JEHAN HELOU

HANNA IBRAHIM MIKHA'IL, later known by his *nom de guerre* Abu 'Umar, was thirteen years old when he witnessed first hand the unfolding of the Nakba in his home town, Ramallah. Thousands of displaced refugees poured into the town, sleeping in orchards, in gardens, in every available public place as well as in the homes of residents willing to take them in, like Hanna's family. The immense suffering and misery he saw while he helped his father distribute food and supplies to the destitute made a lasting impression on him and formed the basis of his deep national commitment.

An outstanding student at the Ramallah Friends School, Hanna won a scholarship to Haverford College in Pennsylvania, where he studied chemistry. He went on to earn a doctorate in politics and Islamic studies from Harvard University, writing his doctoral dissertation on the medieval theoretician of the legitimacy of the state, al-Mawardi, under the distinguished British Orientalist Sir Hamilton Gibb. With teaching positions in political science first at Princeton and then at the University of Washington in Seattle, he seemed firmly headed for a successful academic career in the United States.

The 1967 War: A Life-changing Event

The massive Arab defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967, however, changed the course of his life, pushing him to leave his university position for full-time political activism. He joined Fatah, taking a leading role in setting up its public information office. Later, he explained his choice of Fatah over other Palestinian groups. Not only was it "the largest and most popular and effective Palestinian movement," but its lack of "a precise ideology allowed members to educate themselves freely and take initiatives hardly possible in the highly centralized organizations."

Two years later, he left the United States to join the Palestinian Resistance in the Middle East. Fatah Central Committee member Khalid al-Hassan had urged him not to leave, wanting him to continue the important media work he had begun in America. He never looked back. From then until his tragic disappearance in July 1976 while on a mission in Lebanon, he devoted himself fully to the Palestinian struggle.

When Abu 'Umar arrived in Jordan in summer 1969, the Palestinian military bases had little bureaucracy and no clear division between the

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fighters and political cadres. This allowed him to focus on the fighters' political formation and to set up educational programs and youth activities in the refugee camps. Despite its many organizational flaws, the Resistance attracted large numbers of Palestinian, Arab, and even foreign fighters and cadres, and the bases were characterized by enthusiasm, a spirit of sacrifice and giving, and simplicity. Relations among the fighters and between Palestinians and Jordanians were close, despite attempts by some to sow discord, as well as encroachments and errors on the part of the Palestinians.

In the early days Abu 'Umar lived at the bases, but the leadership soon asked him to help organize the central information apparatus in Amman. He took charge of the then-embryonic foreign relations with Western European countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Switzerland, and reached out to personalities sympathetic to the Palestinians, support groups, and those interested in learning about the Palestinian cause. Through his efforts, a solid communication network was established. He organized symposia, festivals, and friendship committees and helped run the "International Solidarity Camp" in Amman to foster ties between Western Europeans and the Resistance. Abu 'Umar also played an important public-relations role with visiting journalists and delegations, and for a time acted as the media advisor of Fatah leader Yasir Arafat.

The bloody events of Black September 1970 led to the withdrawal of the Resistance from Amman. For several months Abu 'Umar's family knew nothing about his whereabouts. Instead of leaving with the retreating forces, he was among the few political cadres who insisted on remaining with the fighters who continued to resist in the forests of Jarash. After the final confrontation with the Jordanian army in late summer 1971 ended the Palestinian armed presence in Jordan, he moved to Beirut where the Resistance was now headquartered.

The events of 1970–71 in Jordan dealt a painful blow to the Palestinian Resistance. Although Abu 'Umar's resolve did not falter, it was after Jarash that he began to realize the price of the leadership's lack of strategy and revolutionary structure. In Beirut, where he lived in a room with a Palestinian family, his priorities began to crystallize. He joined the Palestinian Research Center and the editorial board of *Palestinian Affairs* [*Shu'un Filastiniyyah*] and became a member of the Palestinian Planning Center. At the end of 1971, he joined the Organizing Committee for the Occupied Territories, whose aim was to mobilize and reinforce steadfastness inside occupied Palestine.

After 1973, when in addition to his other responsibilities he became a member of Fatah's Leadership Committee for Lebanon, he had less time to devote to media and external affairs, intervening only at important junctures. The following year, after the United Nations recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, Arafat asked

him to be the PLO's first delegate to the world body. He refused, however: despite his strong belief in the importance of the struggle at the international level, he gave absolute priority to building up and strengthening the internal structures and preferred to devote himself to that challenge.

Political Views

Abu 'Umar had joined the Resistance because of his understanding of the Palestinian revolution as a popular movement organically linked to Arab and international liberation movements. Like most Palestinians and progressives at the time, he was a great admirer of the Vietnamese revolution, and in autumn 1975 he spent three months in Hanoi along with other Palestinian cadres studying the Vietnamese experience. His long involvement in political and organizational work strengthened his belief in Marxism as a scientific methodology. He was deeply opposed to coercive solutions, emphasizing instead the need to work for the unity of the Left and the importance of organizational structures based on healthy democratic relations.

While Abu 'Umar believed in Fatah's revolutionary role, he was deeply concerned about the lack of planning and the randomness that prevailed in the Palestinian struggle. He deplored the absence of social content, which he considered essential to the success of any revolution, especially one confronted by a coalition of Zionism, imperialism, and Arab reactionary forces. He was critical of the bureaucracy proliferating within the PLO institutions, which he saw as undermining efficiency and revolutionary development. He was particularly disturbed by the lavish spending and signs of favoritism and corruption among some PLO cadres. In his view, the struggle needed to make full use of the resources and capabilities available to provide programs based on self-reliance, a deep understanding of the objective circumstances, and the experience of international liberation movements.

Together with leftist cadres within the movement, he attempted to found—within the framework of the Organizing Committee for the Occupied Territories—a revolutionary stream inside Fatah with a clear political vision based on strategic planning and imbued with a deep understanding of Palestinian cultural heritage. The objective was not to form a separate group, but to contribute to raising awareness and correcting Fatah's revolutionary path through working to unite Palestinian leftist groups.

Abu 'Umar believed in the legitimacy of armed struggle when it was necessary, but he did not consider the rifle either a sacred means or an end in itself. For him, weapons were useful only when they served carefully thought-out strategies and plans. He was also opposed to external operations (i.e., those outside the occupied territories) because of the damage they did to international perceptions of the Palestinian struggle; instead, his emphasis was always on the role of civil society and peaceful

struggle in the march to national liberation. He believed that the defeat of the Zionist movement and the dismantling of the structures of colonization should be followed by the establishment of a democratic state where all citizens, Arabs and Jews, would share equal rights without discrimination based on religion or race.

As for negotiations with Israel, Abu 'Umar was not against them in principle provided an acceptable balance of power had been achieved and the Palestinians' means of struggle was maintained. Nor did he reject the idea of a Palestinian state on whatever part of Palestinian land could be liberated, but only as a first step and only if all the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people were met within that state (a condition he believed impossible given Zionist policies and imperialism's support for the Zionist state). To his mind, an independent Palestinian state could not be achieved without a radical transformation in the balance of power, the presence within Israel of a strong democratic movement that stood against Israel's racist colonial policies, and the development of equally strong movements in the West, especially the United States, ready to pressure their governments to support Palestinian rights. Absent these conditions, he believed, any idea that a Palestinian state could come into being was a dangerous illusion.

Teacher and Revolutionary Intellectual

As a revolutionary intellectual, Abu 'Umar demonstrated the same qualities that distinguished him as an educator. He had a marked preference for simple expressive words and brevity: indeed, his PhD dissertation, "Politics and Revelation: Al-Mawardi and After," which the great historian of the Middle East Albert Hourani called "the most interesting essay on Sunni political thought that I have ever read," did not exceed one hundred pages. His thesis was published in English and Arabic after his disappearance.¹

Abu 'Umar was critical of academics who used complex terminology as a badge of erudition; in line with his conviction that knowledge is "the most important tool for liberation," what mattered to him was conveying ideas with clarity and simplicity. He was able to summarize and analyze (for example) the history of the Palestinian Resistance from the Mandate period onward in a few pages. He had a talent for simplifying the most complex political theories to make them accessible, and he often used popular proverbs, jokes, and puns in colloquial language and peasant dialects to make ideas easier to remember. His ambition was to simplify cultural material to make it popular and easy to grasp, lest it be restricted to the elite.

For Abu 'Umar, political (and general) education was the key to successfully forming cadres and developing revolutionary performance. He carefully selected the educational material—in politics, sociology, and literature—to make sure they drew on good Arabic sources and the Islamic heritage; this, he believed, would foster Arab national affiliation while at the same time instilling an appreciation of the Islamic heritage and

civilization. At the time of his disappearance, he was working on writing the history of our Arab region from a different perspective and approach from that of the Orientalists. Unfortunately, the parts he had completed at the time of his disappearance were lost during Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, along with many of his other unpublished writings.

Because of his strong belief in the importance of revolutionary awareness, he nurtured civil-society activities such as the nascent theater movement in the occupied territories. Emile 'Ashrawi, among the founders of the "Balaline" theater troupe in Jerusalem and Ramallah, reported that when members of the group were unable to enter Egypt, Abu 'Umar arranged introductions for them to theater people in Lebanon and Syria, where they stayed for three months. During their visit they met with leading figures in the world of drama such as Roger Assaf and Chouchou, among others, and got some training while attending rehearsals.

It is worth mentioning that Abu 'Umar was the only Arab member of the jury in the Second International Russell Tribunal for Peace on Latin America. He remained a member and stayed in contact with the president of the tribunal, the Italian senator Leilo Basso, and with other friends and personalities who were ardent supporters of the Palestinian cause. Most notable among these was the great French writer Jean Genet, who frequently mentioned Abu 'Umar in his book *Prisoner of Love*, a memoir of his time spent with the Palestinians.

Personal Qualities

Abu 'Umar and I met in Amman in 1969. At the time I was affiliated with Fatah and a member of the General Union of Palestinian Women, where I was a passionate advocate of women's liberation. We had many things in common and got married in 1972. That was a time of probing discussions within the Left on many issues, including the social content of the Palestinian revolution with regard to equality, women, the family, and the household. Both of us were progressives, but we always took into account the need to respect the social traditions important to the people. Abu 'Umar was an enthusiastic defender of equal rights between men and women. He worked hard to spread awareness of women's rights, which he himself scrupulously observed on a daily basis. He had the habit of evaluating his own behavior and would sometimes joke that despite his theoretical conviction of the equality of the sexes, practicing it in real life could be difficult. Thus, while he insisted on taking part in all the housework, at times he would complain and express impatience. This he ascribed to centuries of conditioning by reactionary social values, and to the unresolved contradiction between reason and emotion, logic and desire.

His lifestyle changed radically when he abandoned his academic career for the resistance. He became accustomed to living and eating collectively; his home for a time was Fatah's Information Office. From the formal dress of his teaching years he adopted the simple clothing of the

freedom fighter, even buying used jackets. His austerity applied equally to public money. He consistently refused to accept the private car for work purposes offered by the movement, preferring to walk or use public transport. He also refused to receive a salary, even a symbolic one, unless and until his savings had been exhausted. Yet when his sister Joyce came from New York to visit him in Beirut in 1972, she remarked: "Throughout the seventeen years he spent in the United States, I have not seen Hanna as happy and relaxed as he is now."

Abu 'Umar was greatly respected by all the cadres and fighters of the movement. His popularity stemmed from his extreme modesty, the simplicity of his bearing and manner, his democratic nature, and his respect for others regardless of political or intellectual differences. Abu 'Umar was unwavering in his beliefs and principles, but never lost his temper or was dismissive of the opinions of others. Thus he did not come into conflict with those who held ideologies and political views different from his own, even with regard to how things should be done or directions to take.

When the issue of a Palestinian national authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and a new political agenda first emerged in the new political situation that followed the 1973 war, the result was a split among Palestinians in general and within Fatah itself. Despite his solid rejection of this "interim plan," he argued for dealing with the various differing viewpoints from within a unified front capable of resisting attempts to "tame" or liquidate the revolution. He was very critical of the leadership's compromising manner and trust in the U.S. government, but he was keen on opening a dialogue. He also tried to convince members of Fatah's left wing, which had rushed to support the interim plan, of their error in believing that the Soviet Union would put its weight behind bringing into being an independent Palestinian state. While firmly convinced that such a gamble was nothing but an illusion, he never flagged in his dedication to serving the cause.

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In late July 1976, when the Lebanese civil war was at its peak, Abu 'Umar and nine resistance cadres, including Fatah Revolutionary Council member Na'im ('Abd al-Fatah al-Wishahi), set off from Beirut in a small fiberglass boat for the northern Lebanese port city of Tripoli, which was under siege. It was impossible to reach the city by land because East Beirut and its hinterland were completely controlled by hostile Phalangist forces. The mission's purpose was to reinforce the leadership of the Palestinian cadres and fighters in the refugee camps in the Tripoli region and to link up with the Lebanese National Movement in the northern sector. Abu 'Umar, nine cadres and two sailors disappeared at sea, and despite an assiduous search that continued intermittently for years and which turned up some important information, the exact fate of Abu 'Umar and his comrades remains unknown to this day. With it disappeared Abu 'Umar, who left behind a legacy of self-sacrifice, modesty, commitment to resistance, and intellectual honesty.

MAHJUB 'UMAR (1932–2012): *FIDA'I* AND HUMBLE SERVANT

ELIAS KHOURY

Ra'uf Nazmi Mikha'il was his name. The title "Doctor" was added after he graduated from medical school following his release from prison. We knew him only as Dr. Mahjub, and we lived by his words and in the shadow of his friendship.

The first time I met him, I realized that I already knew the man. We were at the Palestinian Planning Center on the eve of the outbreak of Lebanon's civil war in April 1975. Comrades of mine who had lived through Black September 1970 had often spoken about the Egyptian doctor who fought when it was time for fighting and who tended to the sick and wounded when it was time for medical treatment. He led the toughest missions, but he could also write poetry in the Egyptian dialect and sing 'Abd al-Wahab. His calling was to serve.

His written account of the shelling of the Ashrafiyya Hospital in Amman during Black September had preceded him, and his interactions with a group of my Lebanese friends, whether political or cultural, had already etched a picture of this resistance fighter in my mind. His diverse cultural and literary endeavors were imbued with the same childlike sense of wonder that inspired their creation.

Yet I couldn't believe my eyes when I first saw him—he was humility and asceticism personified. A *feda'i* in appearance, just like the rest, but deep down he was an Egyptian monk from the heart of Upper Egypt who came to teach us the meaning of austerity.

"You're *the* Mahjub 'Umar of Ashrafiyya Hospital in Amman?" I asked him.

"The very same," he replied. "Your humble servant."

From then on, that is how I thought of him. His real name was not Mahjub 'Umar, and I wasn't known then by my real name either, so why not add one alias to another?

Dr. Mahjub was indeed a humble servant. A stranger in Lebanon, he bore none of the angst typical of the exile. He was at home in every Arab country he visited, from Egypt to Palestine, from Algeria to Jordan, and from Lebanon back to Egypt.

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It was the time of the *fida'iyyin*: resistance fighters were humble, unseen, and dedicated to serving the people. They possessed little besides their blood and their *kuffiyah*-wrapped heads held high.

Coming out of prison, the Egyptian communist and physician had chosen to be a *feda'i*. In other words, he elected to be invisible, to remain concealed—*mahjub* in Arabic—and thus picked a most apposite alias. His name vanished when the fighter was called up, and that is how Palestine, the cause, the revolution, was born—before thronging opportunists appropriated the regalia conferred by martyrdom, death, and humility.

What brought this Egyptian communist into the ranks of Fatah, where he was both an offspring of the organization and one of its pillars? And what was the secret of his bond with the fallen leader, Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad)?

In Egypt 1954, Mahjub had been an advocate of a national front uniting both communists and Islamists to fight the British and later to stop the creeping militarization of the new regime. The endeavor failed and the Egyptian Communist Party was decimated—externally, thanks to the repression, and internally because the Soviets demanded complete subservience irrespective of principles or ideals.

But Mahjub the Marxist was not deterred. He picked up his dream and carried it to Palestine. Following the disastrous defeat of June 1967, when the focal point of the conflict shifted to the Israeli occupation, he took himself off to the battleground. Having served as a doctor in Algeria during the war of liberation, he joined the *fida'iyyin* as a physician in southern Jordan; he became a political commissar, as well as a leader and strategist, in Lebanon; and in the wake of the 1982 Israeli invasion, he went back to Cairo, returning to his beloved city a Palestinian.

He brought to the Palestinian arena the best of his Egyptian experience of the struggle: self-effacement, austerity, and a commitment to unswerving service so that the voices of the poor might be heard and the faces of the refugees seen.

I don't remember why I lingered after the meeting at the Planning Center where I first met him. Perhaps because I wanted to get acquainted up close with the author of "Dialogue in the Shadow of the Guns." He invited me to lunch, and instead of taking me to the Shumu' Restaurant, the favorite eatery of the intellectuals of dispossession who grazed at the trough of the Palestinian Revolution, he led me into the kitchen. There he prepared a feast consisting of four hard-boiled eggs. Seeing the look of disappointment wash over my face as he finished peeling the eggs, he burst out laughing, and reassured me that the dish he had in mind was really quite special. He filled a skillet with oil, placed it on the stove, and proceeded to deep-fry the eggs. That day, I had one of the best meals in the *feda'i* repertoire, as Mahjub's conversation, peppered with humor,

ranged from political analysis to poetry, from personal reminiscences to questions about me.

He was known as the monk and ascetic of the revolution. Until then, no one had seemed to notice that the man was bound by vows of poverty similar to those professed by monks. I don't know at which temple he made his vows, because this Coptic Christian was just as much a Muslim.

He was a man of many identities: Egyptian, Palestinian, and (even) Lebanese; Marxist, Christian, *and* Muslim; a physician, a poet, and an author of stories and plays. He was among the first to be open to Islamists, and he remained immune to the revolutionary fatigue that assailed so many of his peers after they embraced Islam in the wake of the Iranian Revolution, only to end up in a political wasteland. He knew how to mesh the very diverse layers of his identity because he learned early on in the struggle, while still at university, to identify with the workers, the poor, and the oppressed, come what may. It was this core identification that defined who he was and that enabled him to be the multidimensional man he became: that is how Ra'uf could hide behind Mahjub without vanishing, and how Mahjub, concealed by the *feda'i*, enabled Ra'uf to master the language of the dream and the vocabulary of change.²

I went in search of him on my first visit to Cairo following the exodus of the Palestinian fighters from Beirut in 1982. Mahjub was unfailingly generous in all things. He took me to all his favorite places, from Wikalat al-Balah (Suq Bulaq) to the home of his friend, a painter who nicknamed him The King. He had his wife, the good Muna, take me to Fayyum. Together we strolled through the streets of Fatimid Cairo and it was with him that I learned that the Nile takes its source deep inside the well of the Egyptian people, and that Cairo is '*umm al-dunya*,' mother of the world, our mother.

Walking along the streets of his city, I thought that he had come back to dispel the dust of exile still clinging to him. But I was wrong. Mahjub overturned every preconception we ever had about him. In Beirut, he had been an Egyptian fighting in Palestinian ranks, and in Cairo he became a Palestinian in the Egyptian struggle. I don't know why he chose the fate of being a stranger wherever he went. His estrangement carried none of the bitterness so common to exiles longing for home. His was a different sort of estrangement, composed in equal measure of wonderment, commitment, and playfulness. Mahjub did not return to Egypt to resume the struggle that was interrupted when he joined the ranks of Fatah, but to pursue his Palestinian commitment in Egypt. That's how he was: an Egyptian in Palestine and a Palestinian in Egypt. And that is how he chose to die.

When I saw him during his protracted illness, the youth lurking behind the frail old man was there holding up the mirror of his younger self to Mahjub. I have never known a man whose trust in people was as deep as his. He could, in the pitch dark, find a pinpoint of light, and

amidst all the sadness unearth some little joy from a hidden corner, and in death, behold life.

That was the secret of his bond with Khalil al-Wazir. Abu Jihad fashioned the dream to the same drumbeat of despair when he laid down the foundations of the first intifada in 1987. Once all the stones were in place and the people rose up, the tranquility that radiated across Mahjub's face was one born of faith. The delayed response of the Palestinians inside occupied Palestine to the defeat of 1982 in Beirut took us by surprise; for Mahjub, it was an illustration of his quiet and deep-seated confidence in the ability of the people to uncover new horizons.

On 17 March of this year (2012), Mahjub died. But he did not die forgotten or secluded. What might have seemed like isolation was in fact part and parcel of a man who was able simultaneously to be noble and humble. Ra'uf Nazmi Mikha'il, or Mahjub 'Umar, died knowing that his lifework and that of his fallen comrades had benefited all who had sacrificed for the dream. He remains a living memory for future generations, the model of the revolutionary who gives up everything in his quest for justice. He lies today in the eye of the sun which has begun to pierce through the veil of darkness enveloping the lands of the Arabs.

ENDNOTES

1. *Politics and Revelation: Mawardi and After*, Preface by Edward Said (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

2. Here, the author is punning on the words *mahjub*, which means veiled/hidden/concealed, and *Ra'uf*, which means benevolent/kindly/gracious.