

## Arab-American Activism

### "History Recalls and Nothing Has Changed"

Northeastern University hosted a haunting exhibit, "History Recalls and Nothing Has Changed," from Jan. 8 to 27, 2007 at the Curry Student Center Art Gallery in Boston, MA. The exhibit's photographs and artwork focused on the human costs of warfare, especially for those left behind. Two American artists, Rania Matar and Naveed Nour, and two Iranian-Australian artists, husband and wife Nasser Palangi and Farideh Zariv, all lived through war as ordinary citizens. Their disturbing photographs, drawings, paintings and murals reflect their experiences during these times.

Nour, an Iranian-American, took his powerful photos when Iran and Iraq were at war from 1980 to 1988. Documenting the social and economic effects of war on society, his work provides an insider's perspective into a society in the throes of conflict. Nour's compelling photos can be seen at [www.naveednour.com](http://www.naveednour.com).

The two Iranian-born artists now living

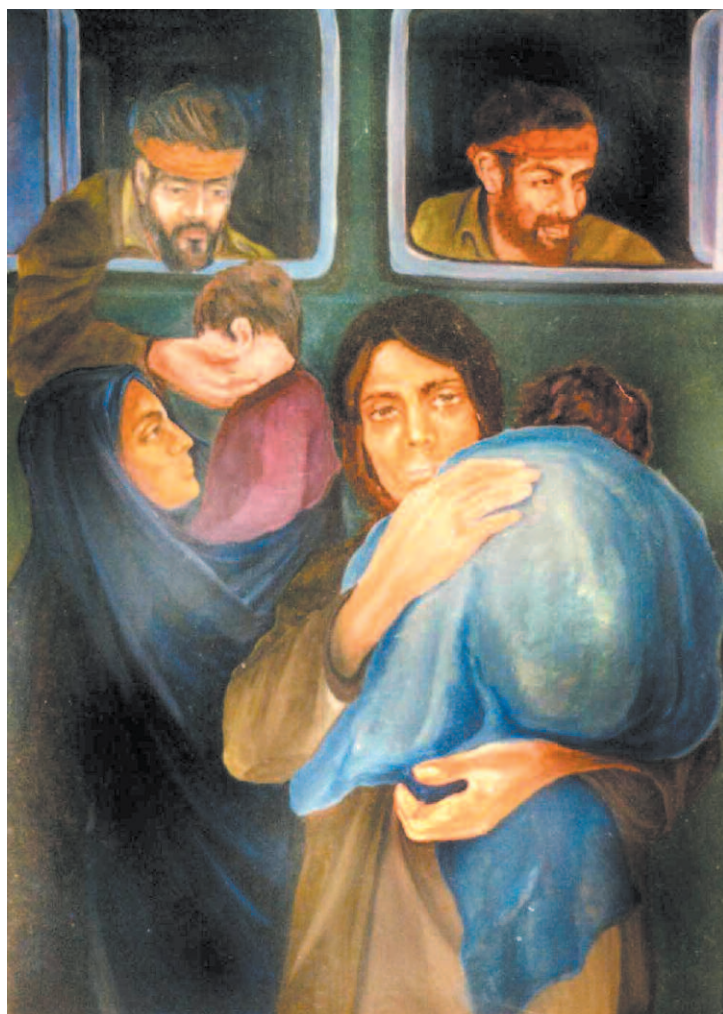
in Canberra, Australia also displayed images from the Iran-Iraq war. One of the murals Palangi painted during that conflict still stands



LANIA MATAR



NAVEED NOUR



FARIDEH ZARIV



NASSER PALANGI



in the war-torn city of Khorramshahr. His paintings can be viewed on his Web site, <[www.palangimural.com](http://www.palangimural.com)>.

Zariv helped paint the world's longest painting, organized by Médecins Sans Frontières, in the United Arab Emirates. Her 2005 exhibition "Hand of Fatima," at the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery won high praise. Her Web site is <[www.faridehzariv.com](http://www.faridehzariv.com)>.

Arab-American Matar has traveled widely in the Middle East and photographed street scenes in Lebanon, Syria and Turkey, focusing on the humanity of the people, women and children especially. Her black-and-white photos documenting the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and showing Lebanon after its brutal civil war, are deeply moving. Matar's portraits of women and children provide an intimate look at daily life in war-torn Lebanon. The Jerusalem Fund Art Gallery in Washington hosted a well-received exhibit of Matar's work called "The Forgotten People: The Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," from Jan. 27-March 3, 2006. To view more of her photography visit <[www.rania-matar.com](http://www.rania-matar.com)>.

The Web site for the "History Recalls" exhibit also serves as a forum "for all those who like to use their artistic talent, in any form and shape, to share their experience or voice their views about war and oppression." Here, members from both sides of a conflict are invited to "meet to extend a hand of friendship to each other and to work to prevent future wars by displaying their work and bringing awareness to the rest of the world."

According to Naveed Nour, its founder, "The primary goal for 'History Recalls' is to find global interest and collaborators who are willing to help to promote this cause and movement. 'History Recalls' is a nation of no flags or all flags, a nation of no religion or all religions, a melting pot of all cultures and a place to embrace all that is offered to us as a gesture of friendship."

Exhibit sponsors, donors, volunteers and, of course, artists are invited to collaborate on this worthy project. Although these works span 25 years, time is of no essence and, regrettably, the stories have remained the same. Civilians bear the brunt of war and their eyes forever carry that pain. In fact, if every world leader could tour an exhibit like this, they may think twice before they launch an attack on another country. For more information about the exhibit and the "History Recalls" project, visit <[www.historyrecalls.com](http://www.historyrecalls.com)>.

—Delinda C. Hanley

## Circle of Light Around White House

While shoppers scrambled to buy last-minute gifts, some Americans took the time to remember the original Christmas journey. More than 200 protesters joined a young Palestinian-American couple dressed as Mary and Joseph, along with a donkey, as they circled the White House on Dec. 23. Each person held a candle in the hope of "creating a circle of light around the White House." A banner carried behind the couple read, "2000 years later...Bethlehem is surrounded by a concrete wall. Could Mary and Joseph get in at all?"

The event was sponsored by the AD Hoc Committee for Bethlehem, whose objective was "not only to bring the joy of the season, but the fervent desire for better days ahead in the land where Jesus was born." Today Bethlehem residents, along with all Palestinians living in the occupied territories, cannot move freely due to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli military and the illegal barrier of concrete that Israel has built around this holy city.

As the birthplace of Jesus, Bethlehem is sacred to Christians all over the world. Due to the Israeli occupation, however, Christian Palestinians are emigrating from the city in large numbers—400 Christian families have left the area since the year 2000. Open Bethlehem, <[www.openbethlehem.org](http://www.openbethlehem.org)>, is trying to prevent Bethlehem from becoming a city of the past.

In a press release handed out to the crowd, Open Bethlehem chief executive Leila Sansour stated: "Our town has become a prison for those of us who live here.

It is right that Christians should know this, and that their prayers in this season be directed toward the many people suffering dire poverty in Bethlehem as a consequence of the Israeli occupation...Bethlehem needs the world, and the world needs Bethlehem. We must not let the wall separate us."

The protesters ended their march in front of the White House, where the crowd quietly sang several Christmas carols. The young lady portraying Mary led the group in song.

—Jamal Najjab

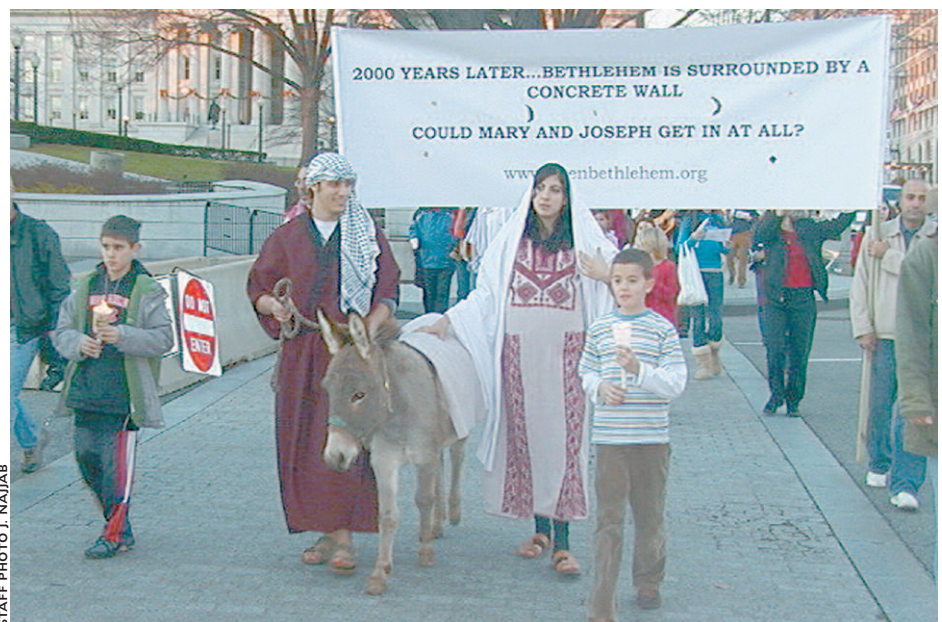
## NAAJA Looking for Members

National Arab American Journalists Association (NAAJA) is working across the country to build a new network of Arab, Muslim and Middle East American journalists. The organization has no presidents, no membership fees—just networking opportunities to help each other when help is needed.

Members believe they need to do something to bring their divergent voices together beyond the few issues that might separate them and keep them apart and weak. If professionals join together on some larger issues, together they can improve their media product.

Please visit the NAAJA web page <[www.naaja-us.com](http://www.naaja-us.com)> and join the organization if you feel that Arab- and Muslim-American journalists and others who write about the Middle East need to work together to form a strong network. E-mail NAAJA-US@naaja-us.com; or write to NAAJA, PO Box 2127, Orland Park, IL 60462.

—Ray Hanania



Two days before Christmas, protesters call attention to the plight of Christians, and other Palestinians, in Bethlehem.