



**Sheikh Zayed Book Award announces 2020 winners of one
of the world's most lucrative literary prizes**

www.zayedaward.ae

- **Each winner receives a career-changing prize of AED 750,000 (USD 204,000)**
- **Judges praised a record-breaking year for submissions, led by entries to the Literature and Young Author categories**
- **Cultural Personality of the Year awarded to veteran literary personality Salma Khadra Al Jayussi, aged 94**
- **Winners hail from six countries including the UK, the US, The Netherlands, Iraq, Tunisia and Palestine**
- **The awards will be presented via a livestream ceremony on Thursday 16th April, via the Sheikh Zayed Book Award website.**

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 8th April 2020: The Sheikh Zayed Book Award, one of the Arab world's most prestigious and lucrative literary prizes, has announced the winners of its 14th edition across seven key categories.

In a record-breaking year for submissions, the awards will go to recipients from six different countries (UK, US, The Netherlands, Iraq, Tunisia and Palestine), highlighting the global imprint and influence of Arabic writing and culture.

Each winner will receive prize money of 750,000 UAE dirhams (204,000 USD) to both recognise and further enable their creative and cultural achievements. The awards will be formally presented via a livestream ceremony, hosted on Thursday 16th April via the Sheikh Zayed Book Award website.

The annual Award aims to recognise some of the most challenging and exciting work coming out of the Arab world or engaging with its culture, including both literary and scholarly works. Writers, translators, academics, and publishers from around the world are awarded for their exceptional contributions to advancing Arabic literature and culture. In the words of this year's Children's Literature winner Ibtisam Barakat, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award is *"the Arab world's equivalent to the Nobel prize"*.

Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, HE Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, said, *"The mission of our organisation is to nurture and promote culture in all its forms, and it is with great satisfaction that we have seen the Sheikh Zayed Book Award grow and flourish year on year. This incredibly successful 14th edition boasts a roster of talented and distinguished winners who have made significant contributions to the cause of furthering and disseminating Arabic culture. It is our hope that this recognition will open further opportunities to them, and we look forward to seeing what they do next."*



“We are proud to highlight the cultural endeavours that are happening all over the world with the shared mission of furthering Arabic culture,” commented **Dr. Ali bin Tamim**, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Authority and Secretary General of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award. *“From works exploring the significant influence of the Arabian Nights on Western literature and Western representations of Islamist theology, to the incredible efforts of our Cultural Personality of the Year and Banipal magazine in promoting Arabic literature in translation, this year’s winners represent the connectedness of Arab culture to a global network of understanding and scholarship. Through this prize, we hope they can further their achievements and go forth to inspire the next generation of makers, intellectuals, creators, publishers, and youth in the Middle East and the world at large.”*

British prize alumni **Dame Marina Warner** (Arab Culture in Other Languages, 2018) celebrated this year’s winners, hailing the Award as one that nourishes the academic community, *“less of a trophy than a lavish bursary that allows the recipient to continue their adventures in understanding”*.

The 2020 Sheikh Zayed Book Award winners:

Literature was awarded to Tunisian poet Moncef Ouhaibi for his book *Belkas ma Qabl Al Akheera* (The Penultimate Cup) published by Meskeliani Publishing and Distribution (Tunisia) in 2019. Marking the first time that the award has been given to a work of poetry, Ouhaibi explores the position Tunisia occupies within the Mediterranean, between the Arab and Western symbolist tradition. A ‘poetry of experience’, the collection unfolds the realities of love and of death, including poems dedicated to his parents and to the Syrian tragedy.

Young Author was awarded to Iraqi writer and academic Hayder Qasim for his book *ilm Al Kalam Al Islami fi Derasat al Mustashrikeen Al Alman* (Islamic Theology in the Studies of German Orientalists) published by Al Rawafed Culture Publishers (Beirut) and Ibn al-Nadim Publishing and Distribution (Algeria) in 2019. His book reviews the work of notable German theologian Joseph van Ess, investigating how German academics have interpreted and represented Islamic theology through the lens of Orientalism.

Children’s Literature was awarded to Palestinian-American author Ibtisam Barakat for her book *Al-Fatah Al-Laylakeyyah* (The Lilac Girl), published by Tamer Institute for Community Education (Palestine) in 2019. The beautifully illustrated story is about a young Palestinian girl who loves to paint but who has lost her home due to war. Through recreating her house in a rainbow of watercolours she finds freedom in the world of her imagination and creates beauty from pain.

Cultural Personality of the Year was awarded to Palestinian poet, writer, translator and anthologist Salma Khadra Jayyusi for her profound contribution to Arabic literature and culture. Jayyusi’s scholarly career spans the UK, Spain, Italy, Germany, England, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, Sudan and the USA, where she has lived and worked. She is the founder and director of East-West Nexus and the Project of Translation from Arabic (PROTA). Jayyusi has also edited indispensable anthologies of Arabic literature, including *Modern Arabic Fiction: An Anthology*; *Modern Arabic Poetry*; and *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, among others.



Publishing & Technology was awarded to Banipal Magazine in London, UK. The independent magazine showcases contemporary Arab authors in English translation, from wherever they are writing and publishing. The magazine was founded in 1988 by Margaret Obank and Iraqi author Samuel Shimon and publishes three issues per year, alongside an active online platform.

Arabic Culture in Other Languages was awarded to the Dutch author, translator, and scholar Richard van Leeuwen for his book *The Thousand and One Nights and Twentieth-Century Fiction: Intertextual Readings* published by Brill Publishers (Leiden) in 2018. The book reveals how the Arabic collection of stories provided an endless resource for some of the most important authors of the 20th century, including both highbrow and popular writers.

Translation was awarded to the Tunisian translator and academic, Mohamed Ait Mihoub for *Al-Insan Al-Romantiq* (L'homme romantique) by French philosopher Georges Gusdorf, translated from French to Arabic and published by Dracher Sinatra/Tunis Institute for Translation in 2018. The book explores the key tenets of Romanticism and their impact on Western thought, culture and civilisation, including physics and medical science in particular. Mihoub's translation provides a new audience with access to a seminal book in Western philosophy and the human sciences.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Please find all images and information in the Press Pack [HERE](#).

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Further information about the prize, selection process and past winners is available at
www.zayedaward.ae

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Richard van Leeuwen, Ph.D. (1992) University of Amsterdam, is senior lecturer in Islamic Studies at that university. He has published widely on the history of the Middle East, Arabic literature, and Islam, and is also a translator of Arabic literature. His publications include *Notables and Clergy in Mount Lebanon* (Brill 1994); *Waqfs and Urban Structures* (Brill 1999); (2004; *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara 2004; with U. Marzolph); *The Thousand and One Nights: space, travel and transformation* (2007) and *Narratives of Kingship in Eurasian Empires, 1300-1800* (Brill 2017).



Moncef Ouhaibi, born in 1949 in Tunisia, is Professor of Arabic Literature at the Universities of Kairouan and Sousse and a permanent member of the Tunisian Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts. He has published numerous poetry books in both Arabic and French, as well as writing short films and documentaries, notably *En attendant Averroès* (Waiting for Averroès), *Paul Klee à Hammamet* (Paul Klee in Hammamet), *Devant les portes de Kairouan* (Before the gates of Kairouan) et *Pays qui me ressemble* (Country that looks like me), which has been translated into several languages. He has been nominated for several prizes including the Comar d'Or literary prize, the Okaz Poet award for Arab poetry, and the Nikos Gatsos literary prize.

Salma Khadra Jayyusi is author of *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry* and editor of *Literature of Modern Arabia*, as well as *Modern Arabic Poetry*, *Modern Palestinian Literature*, and *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. The winner of many prestigious awards, including the Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Cultural and Scientific Achievement Award, the Edward Said Award for Career Excellence, and an award from the State of Kuwait for distinguished services to Arab and Islamic culture, Jayyusi is the founder and director of East-West Nexus, dedicated to scholarly work on Arabic civilization and cultural achievements, and the Project of Translation from Arabic (PROTA).

Mohamed Ait Mihoub received his Ph.D. in Arabic Language and Literature from the University of Arts and Humanities of Tunisia (2007). He currently works as assistant professor of Arabic language at Zayed University, Abu Dhabi. From 2008 to 2019 he taught Modern Arabic Literature and Translation at the University of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis. He has produced a number of literary programmes for Cultural Radio of Tunisia. He is the president of both: The Judgement Committee of the short story competition by "CTAMA" foundation as well as the Judgement Committee of "Mustapha Azouz" Award for Child Literature, and has served as a judge for numerous literary prizes. He won the Highest Tunisian Literary Prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

Ibtisam Barakat is an award-winning, Palestinian-American author, poet, translator, artist and educator, based in the United States. She publishes in both English and Arabic— her memoir, *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* (2007), received considerable critical acclaim and has been translated into several languages. Her poems, essays and short stories have appeared in magazines including *World Literature Today*, *The Nation*, *Wasafiri* and the *Washington Post*. *The Lilac Girl* is her sixth book for younger readers.

Hayder Qasim is an Iraqi author and academic who teaches in the Department of History at the University of Baghdad. He holds a PhD in Islamic History, Thought and Orientalism from the University of Baghdad and is Associate Chief Researcher at the Bayt Al-Hikma Foundation. He is Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Historical Studies*. His publications include several books on Islamic history, as well as editing and contributing to books and anthologies. He has had research papers and studies published in a number of Iraqi and Arab scientific journals.

Banipal magazine showcases contemporary Arab authors in English translation, from wherever they are writing and publishing. An independent magazine, founded in 1998 by Margaret Obank and Iraqi author Samuel Shimon, Banipal's three issues a year present both established and emerging Arab



writers through poems, short stories, excerpts and author interviews. The magazine is a vehicle for intercultural dialogue and exchange, opening a window for UK and other Western audiences on the realities of Arab culture in all its diversity and vibrancy.

ABOUT THE SHEIKH ZAYED BOOK AWARD

Mission

The Sheikh Zayed Book Award is one of the world's leading prizes dedicated to Arabic literature and culture, and has brought recognition, reward and readership to outstanding work and individuals in the fields of literature, academia and publishing since 2006.

Each year, prizes are awarded by an independent jury to writers, intellectuals and publishers as well as to young talent whose work reflects the scope and depth of Arabic cultural achievement, both in Arabic and other languages.

The main prizewinners receive 750,000 UAE Dirhams (£160,000 / \$204,000). The prize can transform the winner's career, creating opportunities for greater scholarship and creativity. Winning titles in the Children's Literature and Literature categories are eligible for translation funding to encourage the appreciation of Arabic writing in other languages.

The 2020 awards cover seven categories: Literature, Translation, Young Author, Children's Literature, Arab Culture in Other Languages, Publishing and Technology and Cultural Personality of the Year.

In each category, the decisions of the jury are meant to answer the programme's overarching goal, to encourage greater scholarship and creativity by recognising and rewarding significant cultural achievements in Arabic culture.

The Award does not only recognise major literary and cultural achievements, but also aims to boost the publishing industry. Last year saw the launch of the Sheikh Zayed Translation Fund, to help produce more quality Arabic books that are translated, published and distributed outside the Arab World, with a focus on English, German and French languages.

The Sheikh Zayed Book Award reflects some of the most exciting and, in some cases, challenging cultural work coming out of the Arab world today — all parts of the world can benefit from the significant achievements of these winners.

History

The Sheikh Zayed Book Award was established in memory of Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan, to continue his legacy in unifying, developing and building the United Arab Emirates, its society and culture.

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جائزة الشيخ زايد للكتاب
Sheikh Zayed Book Award

Sheikh Zayed is remembered for his progressive worldview that helped transform the UAE into a modern, prosperous state, reflected in the importance he attributed to literature and culture. To quote from his writings, *“The book is a container of science, civilisation, culture, knowledge, literature and arts. Nations aren’t only measured by material wealth, but also by their civil authenticity. The book is the basis of this authenticity and a key factor in the confirmation of its civilisation.”*

The works nominated for the Award must be published in Arabic, except those nominated in the Translation and Arabic Culture in Other Languages categories, in which the prize is respectively awarded to works translated from Arabic into other languages or works written in any foreign language.

The Award was established in 2006 under the authority of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, part of an ongoing commitment by the body to advance Arabic culture. The total amount of the prize money is 7,000,000 Emirati dirhams (\$1,900,000), shared between nine categories.

During the history of the prize, the number of nominations has increased by over 200% to 1,904 entries in its 14th edition, submitted by publishers and individuals from 49 countries.

To ensure a rigorous selection process, the Award’s scientific committee appoints a group of distinguished regional and international cultural experts in their respective fields, who serve on an independent, highly selective judging panel.