

Seven share \$1.4m Sheikh Zayed Book Award

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Winners of one of the Arab world's most prestigious and lucrative literary prizes revealed, including London's Banipal magazine

Now in its 14th edition, and after a record-breaking year for submissions with 1,904 entries, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award has announced winners across seven key categories.

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 16 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.' This year's Children's Literature winner Ibtisam Barakat said the Sheikh Zayed Book Award is "the Arab world's equivalent to the Nobel prize."

Chairman of Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism His Excellency 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."

Dr. Ali bin Tamim, chairman of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Authority and Secretary General of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, said: "We are proud to highlight the cultural endeavours that are happening all over the world with the shared mission of furthering Arabic culture.

"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."

Dame Marina Warner, who won the Arab Culture in Other Languages category in 2018, described the Award as "less of a trophy than a lavish bursary that allows the recipient to continue their adventures in understanding."

The award organisers released a full list of winners, plus explanatory citations:-

'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 (aged 94) 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. 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.'

Pictured (l-r): Winners of Arab Culture in Other Languages Richard van Leeuwen, Cultural Personality of the Year Salma Khadra Jayyusi, and Ibtisam Barakat, winner of Children's Literature category

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