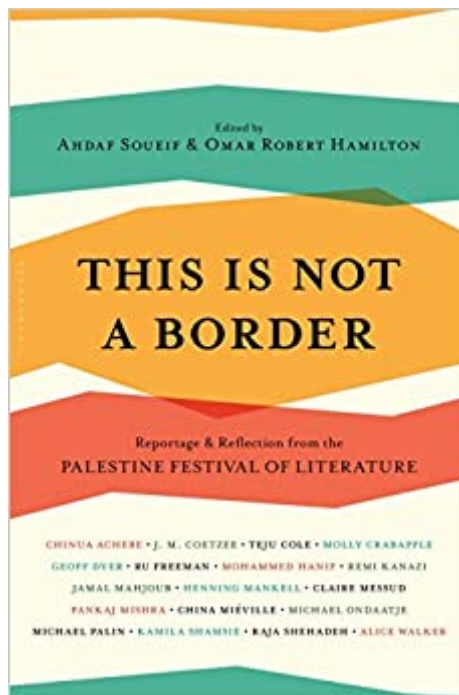




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# This Is Not A Border: Reportage & Reflection From The Palestine Festival Of Literature



## Synopsis

Writers from Alice Walker to Michael Ondaatje to Claire Messud share their thoughts on one of the most vital gatherings of writers and readers in the world. The Palestine Festival of Literature was established in 2008 by authors Ahdaf Soueif, Brigid Keenan, Victoria Brittain and Omar Robert Hamilton. Bringing writers to Palestine from all corners of the globe, it aimed to break the cultural siege imposed by the Israeli military occupation, to strengthen artistic links with the rest of the world, and to reaffirm, in the words of Edward Said, "the power of culture over the culture of power." Celebrating the tenth anniversary of PalFest, *This Is Not a Border* is a collection of essays, poems, and sketches from some of the world's most distinguished artists, responding to their experiences at this unique festival. Both heartbreaking and hopeful, their gathered work is a testament to the power of literature to promote solidarity and hope in the most desperate of situations. Contributing authors include J. M. Coetzee, China Miéville, Alice Walker, Geoff Dyer, Claire Messud, Henning Mankell, Michael Ondaatje, Kamila Shamsie, Michael Palin, Deborah Moggach, Mohammed Hanif, Gillian Slovo, Adam Foulds, Susan Abulhawa, Ahdaf Soueif, Jeremy Harding, Brigid Keenan, Rachel Holmes, Suad Amiry, Gary Younge, Jamal Mahjoub, Molly Crabapple, Najwan Darwish, Nathalie Handal, Omar Robert Hamilton, Pankaj Mishra, Raja Shehadeh, Selma Dabbagh, William Sutcliffe, Atef Abu Saif, Yasmin El-Rifae, Sabrina Mahfouz, Alaa Abd El Fattah, Mercedes Kemp, Ru Freeman.

## Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA (July 18, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1632868849

ISBN-13: 978-1632868848

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.9 x 232.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #176,962 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in Books > Travel > Middle East > Israel > General #142 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Middle East #183 in Books > History > Middle East > Israel & Palestine

## Customer Reviews

"The writers express the belief that words will be the things with feathers that will eventually bring

attention--and peace . . . A chorus of lyrical voices singing hopefully about a most contentious, divisive, and violent situation." - Kirkus Reviews"Commemorating 10 extraordinary years of PalFest, the Palestine Festival of Literature, mother-son cofounders Soueif and Hamilton gathered 47 literary luminaries to create this essential testimony . . . Throughout this gathering of essays, poetry, reportage, and confessions, certain words--apartheid, erasure, pain, powerlessness, complicity, waiting, wasting, humiliation, absurdity--repeatedly resonate. But what linger longest are hope, expectation, and the demand for peace." - starred review, Booklist"

**In This Is Not a Border: Reportage & Reflections from the Palestine Festival of Literature**, an impressive, global team of writers reflect on their experiences traveling to the Palestinian Occupied Territories . . . fascinating, intimate and brutally candid . . . This Is Not a Border transcends politics to reveal the common humanity of our world, to uncover optimism and hope in the most hopeless of places. Ultimately, the collection is a testament to the enduring power of art to unite people." - Shelf

**Awareness** "Every literary act, whether it is a great epic poem or an honest piece of journalism or a simple nonsense tale for children is a blow against the forces of stupidity and ignorance and darkness . . . The Palestine Festival of Literature exists to do just that--and I salute it for its work. Not only this year but for as long as it is necessary." - Philip Pullman

"A literary festival as well as a journey . . . it has made me quite poignantly aware of what the occupation means to people and of their determination to speak up for the writers and musicians who feel that the occupation has taken their voice away . . . An eye-opening experience." - Michael Palin

"PalFest is not only the most powerful and important literary festival it's ever been my privilege to attend, it's one of the most powerful and important things I've experienced, full stop." - China Miéville

"PalFest has quickly established itself a much-loved international festival. As a charity, it is unique in bringing creativity, beauty, partnership, and tolerance into all our lives, and I can't think of many cultural institutions more deserving of our full support." - Andrew O'Hagan

"It's a festival like no other. It is so much more than a festival. Stimulating and enjoyable -- I hope so anyway! -- for the Palestinians, it is an eye-opening and moving educational experience for the visiting participants . . . A vital part of the cultural and political calendar." - Geoff Dyer

"The festival is a recognition of the independent life of the Palestinian people. Coming through the invisible barrier of fear has actually filled me with hope. I found deep humanity on the other side." - Adam Foulds

"PalFest's uniqueness stems from the fact that during the day it allows writers to carry out that most important of writerly tasks--bear witness . . . We go to PalFest to feel ourselves part of the world." - Kamila Shamsie

"PalFest is a necessary, confronting

and enlightening event for anyone with an interest in writing, freedom and human rights . . . A life-changing experience. – Bidisha – “Thanks for being who you are and for giving us such exposure to wonderful people. Palestine is proud of you. – Suad Amiry – “Truly life-changing . . . As a human being and as a writer, this was a revelatory experience. – William Sutcliffe – “Packed with so much genius and courage and heart I don’t know what to say except thank you and I have new favourite writers. – Molly Crabapple – “The most rewarding -- and challenging -- literary festival a writer could hope to take part in. – Jeremy Harding – “One of the most affecting trips of my life. – Sabrina Mahfouz – “PalFest is a visionary enterprise, there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world that I know of, the radiant intimacy of writing, live audiences, bodies and souls touching, all in a land surviving under occupation. – Meena Alexander

Ahdaf Soueif is the author of *Aisha*, *Sandpiper*, and *In the Eye of the Sun*. Her bestselling novel *The Map of Love* was shortlisted for a Booker Prize. The founder of PalFest, she is a key political commentator on Egypt and Palestine. Soueif lives in London and Cairo. [ahdafsoueif.com](http://ahdafsoueif.com) Omar Robert Hamilton co-founded PalFest and has written for the Guardian, the London Review of Books, and Guernica. His debut novel, *The City Always Wins*, is forthcoming from Farrar, Straus. [orhamilton.com](http://orhamilton.com)

For ten years, PalFest has been taking writers to Palestine where they speak, teach, talk, and witness. Then the authors return home and write about what they have seen. This anthology is a testament to the power of that work. (Disclaimer: I am a contributor to the volume. I participated in PalFest 2010).

This is an excellent collection from a wide variety of writers who have attended PalFest over the past ten years. It gives both an insider/outsider perspective to life under the occupation from cultural workers who have contributed to the festival by reading their work. In Occupied Palestine today there are many man-made borders that participants must cross to reach their audiences, as PalFest brings literature to the people, rather than vice versa. But between participants from many countries, and between participants and their audiences there are no borders, only a shared understanding through art.

Brilliant collection of first hand stories of Palestine from some of the best writers out there.

Refreshing new voices too. Thanks for putting all these voices into one book. There's a LOT here.

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