

Rafeef Ziadah? – a rather objectionable “poet”

Next month’s ‘International Literature Festival Dublin’, will feature numerous speakers of a certain political persuasion – the likes of Naomi Klein, Yanis “evilly grinning the IMF/EU into submission” Varoufakis, and [so-called “peace activist”](#) Margaretta D’Arcy.

The oddity of art events universally promoting hard-left politics, with a revolutionary slant, in festival after festival, is worthy of comment. Indeed, such events do not seem to be complete without an Arab-Palestinian or two completing the bill. In this instance, one of the two stages of the Abbey Theatre will be [graced by Rafeef Ziadah](#) on the 22nd of May. To quote the International Literature Festival’s promotional literature:

“Rafeef’s poetry demands to be heard” ~ Ken Loach

Rafeef Ziadah is an acclaimed Palestinian refugee poet and activist. Her poem ‘We Teach Life, Sir’ – an impassioned attack on media misrepresentation of the Palestinian cause – went viral within days of its release, clocking up millions of views, and since then she has toured the world, representing Palestine at the Poets Olympiad in London in 2012 and releasing We Teach Life, an acclaimed new album of poetry and songs. This live show offers an exciting blend of poetry and music, which she brings to the stage with Australian guitarist and We Teach Life producer Phil Monsour.

It is standard in the promotion of such events for the contentious and often objectionable character of such guests to be completely ignored. Thus, Rafeef Ziadah is presented merely as a “Palestinian refugee poet and activist”. Whilst it might be unfair to expect promotional material to afford full

voice to her critics, it is nonetheless quite a white-wash, given her close association with a number of highly objectionable organisations. Perhaps indication of such would raise question (in the mind of the reader) about the legitimacy of her invite.

Ziadah claims to be a Lebanese-Palestinian refugee but uses her family history to [promote a victim narrative](#) that is out of step with the historical record of the era.

Ziadah is first and foremost a leading and [widely publicised BDS campaigner](#). She is as a member of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), which is [“the Palestinian coordinating body for the BDS campaign worldwide.”](#) She is also a member of PACBI (Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott Initiative) – [a group](#) that became notorious for its dishonesty, stances opposed to reconciliation, and inflammatory pseudo rights-based rhetoric, and claims on her website to have been a founding member of “Israel Apartheid Week”, a movement which is noted for its [anti-Semitism](#), which has increasingly made campuses a [hostile space](#) for Jewish students,

Ziadah is also a leading member of controversial UK charity ‘War on Want’, which has [engaged in particularly egregious activity](#) designed to inflame extreme hatred, leading the [UK government to cease](#) affording the organisation the [financial benefits](#) of a charity.

Ziadah is a lecturer at SOAS, University of London (the School of Oriental and African Studies), doubtlessly teaching her brand of hatred at the university’s ‘London Middle East Institute (LMEI)’ and ‘Centre for Palestine Studies (CPS)’. In her role she has presided over events that [forwarded](#) discredited, demonising, and decidedly anti-Semitic theories, such as the claim that Israel harvests the organs of Arab-Palestinians, and engages in the systematic rape of Arab

prisoners.

Ziadah opposes the Oslo Accords and effectively [calls for the destruction](#) of Israel. Much like her boss at PACBI, Omar Barghouti, She has made it clear that [the boycott movement is an effort](#) to destroy Israel, regardless of any future placement of its borders:

“Rafeef concluded the forum with an open invitation to all to her house in Haifa, once Palestine is free. Once she can return home. And the campaign to boycott the products of Carmel Agrexco is a step along the way.”

Ziadah makes much of her claim that those who collectively make up Arab-Palestinian society “teach life”. This is of course a response to criticism concerning normative Arab-Palestinian incitement, which teaches a particularly [violent form of hatred](#) towards both Israeli citizens, and Jewish people more generally. Such sentiments are inculcated in a systemic form from childhood, through education, familial bonding and popular entertainment. And yet Ziadah has praised figures like Khader Adnan, who is a [leading member](#) of Islamic Jihad, noted for his encouragement of suicide-terrorism. However, she believes it is to engage in a [racist discourse](#) to actually discuss this abiding threat to Israel’s existence.

Ziadah’s hypocritical posturing does not make her “We teach life” meme any more sincere than rather ambitious mass-invites to her future home. However, her message will continue to be presented uncritically at festivals in the coming months where she will promote her new album.