



BOOK OF THE MONTH

I AM FREE (*Ana Hurra*)

A play by Valantina Abu Oqsa

Interrogation sessions in the dungeons of Israeli prisons, based on testimonies and true stories.

Winner, Etel Adnan Award, 2012.

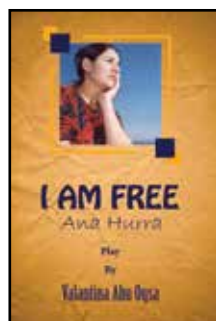
Book launch in Cape Town, July 2015, as part of the Women Playwrights International Conference.

The issue of political prisoners has been haunting me for a long time now.

This is not a purely political issue, but also a humanitarian one. Imprisonment denies a person their basic rights of thinking and defending their freedom of thought and expression. Then there are all the dangerous humanitarian repercussions for the families of prisoners, and through them to Palestinian aspirations overall. There is not one single family that was spared the experience of imprisonment and particularly the loss of a loved one.

I wouldn't have taken the initiative to discuss an issue this important and this dangerous, or taken this difficult path, if I were not certain of my intellectual, professional maturity and life experience to help me see this work through. I went searching not only for the facts, but also the most specific details. I realized and I became confident in my writing of this play after each in-depth examination and research of these issues that I knew little about but wanted to learn more.

In 2009, I set out from Haifa in search of real experiences of Palestinian women prisoners in the Israeli Occupation prisons. It was a personal endeavour for me to write and produce a theatrical play based on facts taken from live stories and testimonies, rather than to



rely solely on what is written in human rights reports and other publications. However, published information did form part of the references used for my in-depth research along with testimonies of men and women prisoners with whom I met for the purpose of documenting the details of their experiences.

I realized that the interrogation phase is the most decisive one in the imprisonment experience—from the moment of arrest until release, including the time spent in the darkness of the prison cell. It is this awareness that became the theme for my play, and unfolded layers of pain, boldness, awareness, hope, and maturity. The text is also sensitive to conflicts and contradictions that the Palestinians live through in prison, representing the experiences of both female and male prisoners. It is not affiliated with any political faction, time period, or age group. It symbolizes the Palestinian cause, not one specific faction.

The published edition includes media reports, artistic opinions, and an introduction by Dr. Ahmad Qatamesh. It also includes photographs and the text of the play in three acts, all offered with honesty, courage, and a deep commitment to uncovering this critical issue while also offering theatrical excellence.

Information about upcoming events and readings are be available on the Facebook page, "Valantina Abu Oqsa Fans"