

Recommendations from the Speakers Fellows

A Glimpse into Arab Society: Books, Movies, and More

The Speakers Fellowship connects the next generation of changemakers in Arab society in Israel with American Jewish communities. In response to requests from our partners, members of the inaugural cohort of 7 Fellows recommended resources for American Jewish educators and learners to access the perspectives of Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel.

You can learn more about the Fellowship [here](#).



While some date back to the period surrounding the 1948 War and its aftermath (often called the War of Independence by Jews and the *Nakba*, or catastrophe by Arabs), most sources focus on the complex realities and identities of Arab/Palestinian citizens today. This list prioritizes sources that are in English, easily accessible online, and do not require extensive knowledge to understand. It does not include academic books or articles.

As an educational organization, the Task Force does not endorse any of the opinions reflected in these resources. Rather, we provide them to offer a window into the discourse and experiences of Arab/Palestinian citizens through cultural expression. Some of the narratives, perspectives, and experiences in these sources may be challenging, uncomfortable or even contradict other information you have encountered. We encourage you to grapple with the complexities raised by these sources, ask questions, and contend with how they relate to your broader experiences and education about Israel.

Note that this resource was designed for people high-school-aged or older. **We encourage educators to create frameworks, offer contexts, and a container for discussion when utilizing the sources listed below with learners.**

Our staff are happy to help you brainstorm program ideas and prepare for introducing and exploring the topics of Arab citizens and Jewish-Arab relations. You can see some of our other resources for educators, including movie discussion guides and explainers [here](#), and [contact us here](#).

Books



Film and TV



Columns



Poetry and Music



■ THE SECRET LIFE OF SAEED: THE PESSOPTIMIST

Author: *Emile Habibi*: A leader of the Israeli communist party (first Maki then Rakah), Habibi was a member of Knesset for two decades. Born in Haifa, he also was a renowned author who won the Israel Prize for Literature in 1992.

About: Hilarious and poignant, this short satirical fiction chronicles the misadventures of an Arab citizen of Israel named Saeed during the 1948 War and subsequent military rule period. This classic showcases balancing act and insecurity experienced by citizens of Israel.

VARIOUS WORKS BY SAYED KASHUA

Author: *Sayed Kashua*: A novelist, columnist, journalist and screenwriter originally from Tira. His works for print and screen received significant recognition in Israel and abroad. His humorous and cynical storytelling reveals the complex identity of Arab citizens and the maze of daily realities the community navigates in modern Israel.

The following are select novels. See below for his film and TV shows:

- **Dancing Arabs:** A Palestinian teenager from an Arab village needs to juggle preserving his identity and integrating into Israeli society while attending an elite all Jewish high school in Jerusalem. It follows his winding journey from this decision into adulthood.
- **Let it Be Morning:** An uncertain and chaotic political situation erupts during a wedding in a traditional Arab town in the triangle region. One man who came home for the wedding is now trapped, figuratively and literally.
- **Second Person Singular:** This novel is a maze of love, mystery, and betrayal through the experiences of multiple Arab citizens of Israel who successfully integrated into Jewish Israeli society. It asks how well we can truly know ourselves and those around us.

■ HOPE IS A WOMAN'S NAME

Author: *Amal Elsana Alh'jooj*: Born and raised in the Negev, Amal is a pioneering Bedouin feminist and peace activist and grassroots leader. She founded the [Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation](#) (AJEEC), a leading civil society organization in the Negev, which she co-led from 2005-2012.

About: This recently published autobiography chronicles Amal's childhood in the Negev through her work as an activist and civil society leader. It highlights the unique challenges faced by Bedouin women due to intersecting and layered marginalization as minorities within a minority. This is an inspiring story of perseverance, leadership, and bridge-building between Arabs and Jews.



Film and TV

■ BAR BAHAR - *IN BETWEEN* (2016)

Writer and Director: *Maysaloun Hamoud:* A writer and director from Dir Hanna, she has also lived and worked in Jaffa. Her acclaimed film *In Between* won the NETPAC Award for World or International Asian Film Premiere. In 2017, Maysaloun received the Women in Motion Young Talents Award at the Cannes Film Festival.

About: This film follows three young Palestinian living in Tel Aviv as they build relationships, friendships, careers, and struggle to understand their identities and place in the world around them. It is a particularly great film for exploring women's experiences. [See here for a movie discussion guide](#) that the Task Force made for this film.

■ JUNCTION 48 (2016)

Writers: *Tamer Nafar and Oren Moverman* **Director:** *Udi Aloni*

About: *Junction 48* tells the story of a young Arab citizen from the mixed city of Lod who is an aspiring rapper. Through daily struggles, the film showcases the specific challenges of crime, poverty and Jewish-Arab relations in Lod. It also examines the ambitions and attitudes of young adult Arab/Palestinian citizens.

■ THE TIME THAT REMAINS (2009)

Writer and Director: *Elia Suleiman*

About: Using absurdist humor, this semi-biographical drama film spans four generations of an Arab family in Nazareth, from 1948 through the early 2000s.

MOVIES AND TV SHOWS BASED ON THE WORKS OF SAYED KASHUA

Sayed Kashua is one of the leading modern writers about the complex realities experienced by Arab citizens of Israel. The following movies and TV shows were either written and created by him or are based on his novels.

■ MADRASA (2023)

Director: Guri Alfi

About: Madrasa is a lighthearted yet poignant sitcom set at a bilingual Jewish-Arab high school in Jerusalem, inspired by the Hand in Hand school model. Its focus on shared society and short episode lengths make it broadly accessible. [See here for the Task Force movie guide for this show.](#)

■ A BORROWED IDENTITY | DANCING ARABS (2014)

Director: Eran Riklis

About: A Palestinian teenager from an Arab village needs to juggle between preserving his identity and integrating into Israeli society while attending an elite all Jewish high school in Jerusalem and forming relationships with his peers.

■ LET IT BE MORNING (2021)

Director: Eran Kolirin

About: An uncertain and chaotic political situation erupts during a wedding in a traditional Arab town in the triangle region. One man who came home for the wedding is now trapped, figuratively and literally.

■ ARAB LABOR (2007 - 2013)

Directors: Ronnie Ninio and Shai Kapon

About: A sitcom filled with black humor that explores the Jewish-Arab cultural divide in Israel and the bizarre situations that Arab citizens face in the simplest of interactions as a minority population.



Poetry and Music

■ TAMER NAFFAR

The star and inspiration for the film Junction 48, Naffar is a well-recognized rapper and writer. His songs discuss the experiences, feelings, and struggles of Arab/Palestinian youth in Israel. Some of them have English subtitles.

Salam Ya Sahibi (Goodbye My Friend): An emotional song grappling with the epidemic of crime and violence within Arab communities in Israel.

■ **TAWFIQ ZIYYAD**

Born in Nazareth in 1929, Ziyad was a political activist who served as the Mayor of Nazareth and a Knesset member for the communist party. He was also a well-known poet who reflected on the aftermath of 1948 and the Arab/Palestinian citizen experience.

■ **MAHMOUD DARWISH**

Widely recognized as the national Palestinian poet, Darwish was born in the Galilee and also lived in Haifa before living across the broader Middle East. His poems explore Arab/Palestinian identity, narratives of the Nakba and his life- including an impactful romantic relationship with a Jewish-Israeli woman.

■ **TAHA HUSSEIN ALI**

From the Galilee, Taha was a self-taught poet who chronicled the experience of Palestinian citizens of Israel, reflection on despair, loss, connection, and hope.



Columns

The Fellows recommend reading opinion pieces from the following Arab/Palestinian journalists in order to understand discourse and priority issues in Arab society today. While some may be challenging to read or reflect a different perspective than American Jews normally see, they showcase some of the opinions in Arab society on current events and developments. These recommendations are only for English-language columns, inherently limiting diversity.

■ **Odeh Bisharat**, Haaretz

■ **Hanin Majadli**, Haaretz

■ **Sheren Falah Saab**, Haaretz

■ Abed Abo Shahadeh, +972 and other sources

■ **Samah Salaime**, +972

■ **Baker Zoubi***, +972