



Fathi Gaben
painting

to 'state security'. The judge held that despite the personal problems of the defendant who provides for seven people, the court could not ignore the danger of the crime, and had decided to execute the law fully...»

GABEN'S ORIGINS

«Fathi Gaben had become a hero. He never had a formal art education. He is from a family who used to live in Herbia, near the area of the kibbutz Yied Murdachai. In the 1948 war, his family fled to Gaza, as did all the village inhabitants. Since then, Herbia has been only a memory to its inhabitants who became refugees.

«The details of the story should be known in order to penetrate Gaben's personal and artistic life. The story has become old, but its repercussions on his life and art continue to develop. In a dialogue, Fathi revealed other dimensions of his experience.»

Name: Fathi Gaben

Date of birth: 1947

Place of birth: Herbia, Gaza Strip

In 1969, Gaben began to work as a professional artist. He is a member of

the Plastic Arts Union in the Occupied Land. He has had several exhibitions of his own, and participated in many others with other artists in the occupied land. His works have been confiscated by the Zionist authorities many times.

«Identity»



He started his art work with oil paintings which showed the beauty of nature, in addition to the Palestinian heritage. He then turned to more purposeful works based on the experience of everyday life and the Palestinians' sufferings under occupation.

Gaben worked as a house painter for several years. Later, he turned to art. At first, he copied magazine pictures, but then started drawing from his imagination. When asked why he turned to drawing, he said, «This is like asking why do you play soccer... God gave me this talent; there are some people who studied drawing in universities, but did not succeed.»

The contents of his paintings, and those of every honest Palestinian artist, are Palestine's tragedy. He says, «We take from this tragedy all the contents of our art works, but the one painting that identified me to the audience is the one called *Identity*. This painting acquired a broad local and international reputation.» Gaben's works are usually classical in style, but sometime cubist, because «this reaches the hearts of the masses.»

«We Palestinians,» says Gaben, «have a cause, and my artistic aspirations will not be fulfilled until our cause is justly and honorably achieved... The artistic complexity and symbolism that appear in some art works are the natural consequence of civilization's advancement in the 20th century, a fact that no one can deny or ignore. Human beings do not like complexity, but they are attracted to it and plant it in their subconscious. The more complicated life becomes, the more mysterious it is. Ultimately this benefits the arts. Maxim Gorky said that the abundance of complexity in different environments creates few characters - few in quantity, but rich and positive in suffering. The contemporary artist's mission is to pick up these complexities, develop and then surpass them, because life's nature is complexity. Ultimately, this affects art which is created from life.»

THE SCHOOL OF SUFFERING

Fathi Gaben's artistic career has yielded 22 paintings that are in public circulation, 27 paintings which are kept in his own collection and 170 paintings that have been sold. All express the Palestinian people's heritage and suffering. Gaben's own financial situation and the repression practiced against