

Naji Al Ali

Palestine's Foremost Cartoonist Assassinated

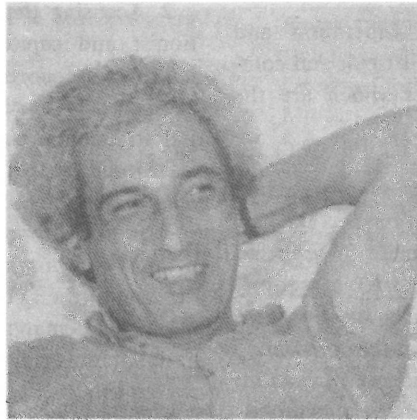
The assassination of Naji Al Ali was an attack on the Palestinian cause and on Arab progressive thought.

Shortly after 5 p.m. on Wednesday, July 23rd, Ali Naji Awad Al Adhami, known as Naji Al Ali, was shot and critically wounded outside the offices of *Al Qabas* newspaper in Ives Street, London. After five weeks of suffering, he passed away. Thus another grave loss was added to the list of great Palestinian and Arab thinkers who have been assassinated.

Naji Al Ali was simply the most outstanding and courageous cartoonist in the Palestinian and Arab press. His weapons were his pen and the caricatures which he said were put in the service of «the common man in the Arab world, who has few outlets for expressing his point of view.» Unfortunately, the assassination of Naji Al Ali at this particular time comes as no surprise. Before Naji, there was Ghassan Kanafani, Majid Abu Sharar, Hussein Mroweh, Mahdi Aamel... and the list of those martyred for their thinking goes on and on. These great people were targeted by a well-defined decision aimed at eliminating all the bright values, history, heritage and any outspoken voice in the Arab nation.

The loss of Naji Al Ali is a loss to the Palestinian national culture. It is the loss of a genius, an artist deeply dedicated to his people's cause and homeland, an artist whose life was a struggle to safeguard the revolution and expose all threats and conspiracies against it. Throughout his long and hard struggle, Naji Al Ali resisted all attempts to intimidate or lure him into altering his principles. He was distinguished for his art which he dedicated to fighting injustice, oppression and capitulation.

Naji Al Ali was the voice of the poor and oppressed. He drew their suffering and their happiness, their hopes and their tears. His simple drawings touched the hearts of the poor and filled them with a desire for life, revolution and hope. Since Naji Al Ali clearly took



sides, his enemies were many. They were the enemies of democracy and thought, of reason and logic, of change and revolution. His enemies were to be found in the Zionist and imperialist camp, and among Arabs as well. His enemies were those who feared his caricatures, for these unmasked the ugly face of the oppressor. These enemies feared Naji's ability to mobilize the poor against all oppression and manipulation, against all forms of subjugation and surrender, and ultimately against them themselves.

But Naji never feared these enemies. He kept on drawing pain, revolution and the future, disregarding the reactions of his enemies. In fact, their reactions only gave him greater incentive and strengthened his convictions. Naji was therefore pursued from one place to another. His enemies realized that his 'danger' spreads and that his calls for change and revolution were non-stop and effective. They saw how the people treasured his caricatures, how these drawings decorated the walls of houses and offices. Looking at Naji's caricatures in the morning newspaper had become a daily rituals for millions.

Naji Al Ali's assassination was the result of a conscious decision taken by the enemies of the national cause and culture. Unfortunately, one cannot say that his assassination will be the last. Those who seek to eliminate the Palestinian cause in order to achieve their own goals, are ready to use all means to eliminate progressive nationalist thought, for only such thought can expose conspiracies and mobilize the national conscience of the oppressed.

Palestinian freedom fighters are the key to the solution.

