

Multilingual Literature in Conflict Zones
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Language of Trauma: Words, frameworks, systems

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In 2012, Lebanese writer Elias Khoury (a transnational public intellectual) wrote *Awlad al-Ghitu* (Trans 2018, 2018, *My Name is Adam: Children of the Ghetto*). The novel is a work on the long legacies of the Nakba, the rippled harm of the Palestinian displacement in 1948, and the violence of continued policies of erasure.

The novel claimed the experience of the ghetto (transliterated as *ghittū* in Arabic letters), and called the horrific work of Palestinian residents of the city of Lydda collecting and burying their own dead the work of the *Sonderkommando* (the German, rendered with Latin letters). There was a predictable upheaval over the use of these terms to describe the Palestinian experience.

This year, the word genocide has been used – in literature, in international courts of law, in news commentary, in testimony; from the English, transliterated and – to describe the experience of another ongoing atrocity in Gaza.

There have been similar but far wider reaching upheavals over the usage, despite international legal institutions finding that the situation is a plausible genocide. This talk presents the use of Anglo/European *ghetto* and German *Sonderkommando* in Elias Khoury's work as a theoretical and literary foundation, on which to layer the usage of the word genocide in the contemporary context of the atrocities being meted out on the Gaza Strip.

The aim is to and expand, through thinking about multilingualism, about the politics of the language of trauma when it comes to Palestine.