

Acceptance Speech of Professor
Husam AlK Din Amin AlK Khatib

CoP Winner of the 2002 King Faisal International Prize
For Arabic Literature

Saturday 9 March 2002 (25 Dhu AlP Hajjah 1422H)

Your Royal Highness, Prince Sultan Ibn Abd AlP Aziz
Second Deputy Premier, Minister of Defense and Aviation
And Inspector General
Your Royal Highnesses
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Guests

AlP Salam alaikum,

The King Faisal International Prize is a noble tree sown in a noble land, and nurtured through the years by dedicated men, led by a great poet, His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, and an elite team of administrators and committee members. It is no wonder, therefore, that it grew steadfastly, with the names of great thinkers, scientists and servants of Islam glittering on its leaves. It is also undoubtedly a profound honour for anyone in the Arab world, the Islamic world or the entire globe to have their names inscribed on its leaves, let alone someone like myself, who claims to be no more than a humble learner in a boundless realm of knowledge.

While being deeply thankful for the honour bestowed upon me, I am also tremendously aware of the enormous responsibility that I now have to shoulder as a "leaf on that tree" and by the values and obligations that I have to strive - more than ever - to fulfill. The King Faisal International Prize reflects all the great values of Islam and of learning and promotion of knowledge. It also reflects the importance of preserving the Arabic language and literary heritage, without disregard to modernization.

It adds tremendously to my honour that this year's prize in Arabic literature is assigned to the study of Palestinian literature, a literature that embodies the vigor and perseverance of our nation as it struggles at three fronts: the liberation of its occupied lands, the preservation of its cultural identity and the aspiration to transcend to new dimensions. The Palestinian literature bears a touch of humanism that enables it to explore new literary boundaries.

It also adds to my honour to share this prize with my late colleague and friend, Professor Husni Mahmud, may Allah have mercy upon him.

I would like to emphasize that the works for which I have been awarded the prize are the product of the efforts of my teachers throughout the years. I would like, in this respect, to mention my father, the late Amin Abd Allah AL-Khatib, who also happened to be my tutor in the primary school. Being my father, he was tougher on me and demanded more of me than any of my classmates. He continued teaching me to earnestly seek knowledge and depend on myself qualities that have helped me profoundly in my life, in the middle school in Safad (Palestine) and in high school in Damascus (Syria), I learned under the tutelage of great teachers, whose faces expressed a combination of kindness and resolute, similar to my father. At college in Damascus, I was again fortunate to study at the hands of great mentors; they took me as a younger friend and assistant, and in that way I learned more directly from them than from the classroom. The same was true during my graduate studies at Cambridge University in Britain.

It is for all of those great teachers and mentors that I dedicate this prize, for they are the ones that deserve the recognition. While savoring the role they played in my life. I cannot forget for one moment the tragedy of my own people in Palestine, which was a driving force behind all my works. That, coupled with the values I drew from the

Arabic cultural environment of Syria, where I grow up, have helped shape my cultural identity and protected me from being confined within a narrow sphere of regionalism. It is because of my exposure to the rich cultural life of Damascus that my all works reflect a wider spectrum of Arabic literature. This trend has been enforced by my experience of working in vivid atmospheres of several Arab universities, especially in Yemen and Qatar, as well as my exposure to the cultural life of the Arabian Peninsula at large.

As you can see from all of that, it is the good fortunate of being exposed to those rich cultural backgrounds that brought me before you tonight. And indeed none of my works could have been possible without the tremendous support and encouragement of my wife, Um Al-Amin, whose artistic touches are present in all my works.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the patrons of King Faisal International Prize and to its administrators, and of course to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. May Allah protect this country, and help it remain a strong fortress for Muslims and Arabs..

Al-Salam alaikum