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# Kingdom Of Olives And Ash: Writers Confront The Occupation



## Synopsis

A groundbreaking collection of essays by celebrated international writers bears witness to the human cost of fifty years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. In *Kingdom of Olives and Ash*, Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman, two of today's most renowned novelists and essayists, have teamed up with the Israeli NGO Breaking the Silence— an organization comprised of former Israeli soldiers who served in the occupied territories and saw firsthand the injustice there—and a host of illustrious writers to tell the stories of the people on the ground in the contested territories. *Kingdom of Olives and Ash* includes contributions from several of today's most esteemed storytellers including: Colum McCann, Jacqueline Woodson, Colm Toibin, Geraldine Brooks, Dave Eggers, Hari Kunzru, Raja Shehadeh, Mario Vargas Llosa and Assaf Gavron, as well as from editors Chabon and Waldman. Through these incisive, perceptive, and poignant essays, readers will gain a unique insight into the narratives behind the litany of grim destruction broadcasted nightly on the news, as well as a deeper understanding of the conflict as experienced by the people who live in the occupied territories. Together, these stories stand witness to the human cost of the occupation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Dramatic testimonies... radiant with telling details, vital portraits, and explosive facts.... This sensitive, galvanizing, and landmark gathering brings the occupation into sharp focus as a tragedy of fear and tyranny, a monumental failure of compassion and justice, a horrific obstacle to world peace.” (Booklist, starred review) “On the 50th anniversary of Israeli occupation of

Palestine, top writers bear witness to oppression and despair.... moving, heartbreaking, and infuriating.... Deeply unsettling, important stories call for urgent responses to the Middle East conflict. (Kirkus, starred review)

A groundbreaking collection of essays by celebrated international writers bears witness to the human cost of fifty years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. In *Kingdom of Olives and Ash*, renowned novelists and essayists Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman have teamed up with the Israeli NGO Breaking the Silence—an organization comprised of former Israeli soldiers who served in the occupied territories and saw firsthand the injustice there—and a host of illustrious writers to tell the stories of the people on the ground. *Kingdom of Olives and Ash* features contributions from some of today's most esteemed storytellers, including Colum McCann, Jacqueline Woodson, Colm Toibin, Geraldine Brooks, Dave Eggers, Hari Kunzru, Raja Shehadeh, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Assaf Gavron, as well as from editors Chabon and Waldman. Through these incisive, perceptive, and poignant essays, readers will gain unique insight into the narratives behind the litany of grim destruction broadcasted nightly on the news, along with a deeper understanding of the conflict as experienced by the people who live in the occupied territories. Together, these stories stand witness to the true human toll of the occupation.

What is amazing about this book, in so many ways painful to read, is that it is inspiring. While humans can so easily justify astoundingly stupid cruelty, we can also be heroically resilient, brave, wise and dedicated to the light. Hurray for writers and their ability to chronicle the human heart!

The book's subtitle -- "Writers Confront the Occupation" -- tells you what the many compelling chapters in this book are about. Invited by the book's editors Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman, along with the Israeli anti-Occupation group Breaking the Silence, to experience first hand the effects of Israel's Occupation of Palestinians living on the West Bank, the authors responded with their varied and often moving essays. An important book for anyone wanting to educate themselves about the Occupation and about its effect on not only the Palestinians, but on the young Israeli soldiers whose job it is to enforce the frequently harsh and sometimes seemingly arbitrary "rules" of the Israeli government.

This is an important and insightful book about Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories by a number of distinguished authors. One might wonder how much more we can hear about this fraught

subject, but this collection of essays and stories manages to offer fresh perspectives. The editing is skillful. The writing is varied, but always good. I would say it is a "must-read" book about the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and I strongly recommend it to anyone wanting to gain understanding of it. It should sell a million copies. Disclosure: My son, Assaf Gavron, wrote one of the chapters. He is good, but so are all the others.

beautifully written. A must read for anyone interested in the subject.

I very much appreciate this book, and it gives me a clearer understanding of the dangers faced daily by the people whose lives are so affected and so deprived of everyday things which are so much a part of life here in Canada: Safety, security, food, work, education, medical care and family life. In fact, things that people all over the earth should be able to access and enjoy. How will the end of this horror finally come about? Thank you for sharing these personal experiences. I continue to support UNHCR and hope that some of the money reaches the young and gives some encouragement to keep good faith that human beings will see the light sooner than later. Thank you.

The problem with this book is that the stories are repetitive. The information presented is true, documented by B'fachot, B'tselem, Human Rights Watch, and others, including Israeli papers of record, New York Times and Wall Street Journal, to name just a few. So veracity isn't the issue. The problematic Sussiya settlement, Shuhada Street, Kiryat Arba, all of this is well-known for those of us who have taken an interest in this region. The challenge for the writer is how to make these essays compelling and not just recitations of injustice, show the reader some form of insight that is absent from journalistic coverage. Sadly, only a few essays succeed in this regard. I want very much for readers to become outraged and lend their efforts to end the occupation, but outrage is a tough emotion to hold productively for the length of this book, overwhelming the reader, and leading to despair rather than a place of energized advocacy.

The content is painful enough that I only read a chapter at a time. Thanks to Michael Chabon for assembling this remarkable group of writers to witness the cruelty of life in Palestinian Israel.

In the final chapter of his book, *My Promised Land*, Ari Shavit, said the Occupation was unsustainable and would lead to the inevitable downfall of Israel. This book spells out "why". A nation without a conscience can't survive.

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