

HBKU Press Publishes Khalid Hosseini's Fourth Book, Sea Prayer, in Arabic

Doha, Qatar: Aylan Kurdi unwillingly became the face of the refugee crisis when, on 5 September 2015, a picture of his lifeless 3-year-old body washed up on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea circulated around the world. In the media storm that followed, it was revealed that he and his family were Syrian refugees trying to reach Europe amid the European refugee crisis. Photographs of his body were taken by Turkish journalist Nilüfer Demir and quickly spread around the world, prompting international responses.

Among such international responses was that of famed Afghani-American best-selling author, Khaled Hosseini. The award-winning author's three published books, *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*, all deal with the effects of conflict in and around the region of Afghanistan on human relationships and on the human spirit.

Impelled by the haunting image of young Kurdi and hoping to bring focus to the tragedy and the wider refugee crisis, Hosseini penned *Sea Prayer*. Short and powerfully illustrated, the book is composed in the form of a letter, from a father to his son, on the eve of their journey. Watching over his sleeping son, the father reflects on the dangerous sea-crossing that lies before them. It is also a vivid portrait of their life in Homs, Syria, before the war, and of that city's swift transformation from a home into a deadly war zone. Through the book, Hosseini hopes to pay tribute to the millions of families, like Kurdi's, who have been splintered and forced from home by war and persecution.

"I have two children of my own. When I first saw the photo of Aylan's lifeless body lying face down at water's edge, I struggled and failed to imagine the anguish of his father, who also lost his wife and another son on that same day. How does a person endure a thing like this? How does one wake up the next morning, live out the hours of that day, then those of another, and another?" mused Hosseini in his piece in *The Guardian* on 17 August, 2018.

Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press acquired the rights to translate the book in Arabic, which will be released in this year's Doha International Book Fair. The indelibly moving work has been translated by Fakhri Saleh and will give Arab readers in the Gulf and MENA region a



snapshot of the tragedy as captured by a critically-acclaimed narrator. HBKU Press has also previously translated all of Hosseini's past work into Arabic over the years, which can be found in bookstores all over Qatar.

Khaled Hosseini has more than fifty-five million copies of his novels sold worldwide in more than seventy countries and is also a Goodwill Envoy to the UNHCR, and the founder of The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, a non-profit that provides humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

Hosseini will donate author proceeds from this book to the UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) and The Khaled Hosseini Foundation to help fund lifesaving relief efforts to help refugees around the globe.

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ABOUT HBKU PRESS

Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press (HBKU Press) launched its program in 2010 as a world-class publishing house founded on international best practices, excellence and innovation. HBKU Press strives to be a cornerstone of Qatar's knowledge-based economy by providing a unique local and international platform for literature, literacy, scholarship, discovery and learning. Headquartered in Doha, Qatar, HBKU Press publishes Fiction and Non-Fiction titles for adults and for children, and academic and reference materials. HBKU Press aims to promote the love of reading and writing by helping to establish a vibrant scholarly and literary culture in Qatar and the Middle East.