



# DAZED





## explore loss, longing and life in exile

Longing: In Between Homelands features the work of three Palestinian photographers grappling with displacement, conflict and survival



### TEXT JAMES GREIG

“Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience,” wrote the Palestinian academic Edward Said in 1983. “It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.”

77 years after the Nakba, Palestinians remain a displaced population: there are more people today classed as Palestinian refugees than there are living in Gaza and the West Bank, which was true even before Israel began its genocidal war. It can be challenging or downright impossible for Palestinians to make even a brief visit to their homeland, thanks to Israel's rigid control of Palestine's borders, and returning to live there long-term is, for the vast majority of people, simply out of the question. The condition of exile has therefore become one of the great themes of Palestinian culture, as successive generations of artists have grappled with displacement, cultural memory and the longing for home. A new exhibition at the Palo Gallery in New York, Longing: In Between Homelands, continues this rich tradition.

The exhibition showcases the work of Ameen Abo Kaseem, Nadia Bseiso, and Lina Khalid – three Palestinian photographers living in exile. The work of Beirut-based Kaseem evokes a sense of urban loneliness: people are captured in states of motion or departure; religious figures are set against weapons and demolished buildings. Khaled's stark, monochromatic images of the Dead Sea – a dividing point between Jordan and Palestine – convey a sense of terrible longing, as solitary figures stroll the shore and the hills of the West Bank appear as a faint presence on the horizon, tantalisingly close but out of reach. Bseiso's photographs of the borders surrounding Jordan gesture towards an impending ecological crisis, as Israel hoards the region's water resources, which are abundant but settle to dwindle as the Earth heats up: children splash around in a half-empty pool; two figures meet against the backdrop





sulky) subjectivity”. The three photographers featured in this exhibition have certainly achieved that, creating work full of insight and specificity.

Below, we meet the three photographers featured in *Longing: In Between Homelands* as they discuss what photography means to them and its resonance in the current moment.

## AMEEN ABO KASSEM



### Ameen Abo Kaseem, *We deserved a better time on this earth*

8 Images

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*Ameen Abo Kassem is a multidisciplinary artist, photographer, and filmmaker based in Beirut. In 2023, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Visual Arts from the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus. Over the years, his work has focused on deeply personal themes, exploring the environments he inhabits, toxic lifestyles, and the mechanisms of survival which people develop in challenging circumstances.*

“This collection is rooted in the ‘nowhere’ I’ve lived all my life – in the spaces between borders that aren’t drawn on maps but exist within me. Born Palestinian and raised in Syria, I’ve never truly known home. Now, in Beirut, I am a refugee under the radar, a shadow in a city that does not claim me. In this nowhere, I search for Palestine – not in maps or passports, but in the invisible lines that stretch across reality, between the faces I know and the land I’ve never touched. Palestine, for me, is not a place I’ve held – it’s a dream suspended in my mind.

“This work isn’t about giving answers – it’s about holding space for the questions. What does it mean to belong when your home exists only in memory? How do we carry the land within us, making it visible even when it feels lost? And how do we keep moving forward, with love and poetry, even in the shadow of exile?”



## Lina Khalid, To Look Over There is a Sin

8 Images

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*Lina Khalid Ramadan is a Palestinian-Jordanian photographer and filmmaker based in Jordan. Her work focuses on the themes of identity, belonging, and the relationship between the body and its surrounding environment. To Look Over There is a Sin comprises photographs of the Dead Sea, a land-locked salt lake which borders Jordan, Israel and the West Bank.*

“The Dead Sea, for me, is layered with meaning. It’s not just a place tied to legend, marked by Lot’s wife and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; it’s also a space of paradoxes. It’s both sacred and cursed, a symbol of judgment and survival. For Palestinians in exile, particularly my generation, it’s the closest point to home.

“As children, we visited the Dead Sea not for its mythical associations or as a tourist destination but to stand on its shores and look toward Palestine. Jericho shimmered in the distance, both vivid and unreachable. It became a place where memory, loss, and longing converged – a salty expanse that mirrored the bitterness of exile and the desire for return.

“Photographing the Dead Sea was my way of confronting these layered histories – both the mythical past and the lived experience of exile. Through the lens, I sought to capture the tension between proximity and distance, between the seen and the unseen, and to preserve that quiet act of gazing from afar at a land that feels simultaneously so close and so far away.”

## NADIA BSEISO



*Nadia Bseiso is a Jordanian documentary photographer based in Amman. She concentrates on long-term projects, based on personal research in geopolitics, history, anthropology and environmental degradation. Infertile Crescent examines the environmental destruction inflicted upon the areas surrounding the man-made borders around contemporary Jordan.*

“My projects are driven by a curiosity that triggers research in history, geopolitics and mythology, which is later transformed into a visual narrative. I’m fascinated by the everyday, personal lives of people as well as the vast, varied landscapes of our region.

“‘Occupied Golan Heights seen from Jordan’ and ‘Hot Spring’ are both taken on the Jordanian border with the occupied Golan Heights, an area which was captured by Israel from Syria in the 1967 Six-day War. They were both taken in different resorts along the river where hot springs are found bursting from the mountain. I found it very surreal to have a resort in this area where you relax while looking at an occupied land and military zone right in front of you.

“The photo of the boys was taken in a quick second where I was baffled by the amount of people enjoying the barely-filled pool, and the strange metal fence surrounding it, like a prison. The barely-filled pool symbolises the amount of water Jordan actually gets from the peace treaty with Israel versus its actual needs. It represented so many things for me: the water crisis, what is waiting for us in the near future, the restrictions we have on our freedom and the fact that this geographical area is rich with water, but geopolitics plays a very big role on who gets what, how much and when.

“It’s the same context as the other photo with the boy and girl: the water source is a hot spring, below the fence is the Yarmouk River and the mountain seen ahead is the occupied Golan. A resort being so close to a military zone just brought an eerie feeling – the feeling that you are being watched and controlled while taking a swim. I couldn’t help but imagine what had happened in this land before occupation and what was waiting for it in the future.”

*Longing: In Between Homelands* is on view at Palo Gallery (21 East 3rd Street in New York City) until 22 February, 2025. All proceeds from the exhibition will go directly to the artists.



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