



Dear honored guests,

My name is Majda Shaheen, I am a Palestinian residing in a short strip of land called the Gaza Strip. As you all probably know, our current situation is exceedingly difficult in light of the last war we experienced. It is still unclear what the upcoming days will bring, but I hope with all my heart that we will succeed in obtaining true peace, so that my children and all the Palestinian people will be privileged to live a good and ordinary life.

It is a great honor to accept this wonderful award from the Cartoonists' Rights Network International. Unfortunately, I am not able to attend this ceremony or fly to the United States of America, a country that only in my sweetest dreams am I able to witness its wonders.

The importance of art in my life has nothing to compare, in its intensity. From the moment I first experienced the beauty of art my life was changed. It is not a simple matter for a woman like me to express my opinions with such clarity, particularly when these opinions don't coincide with those of the current rulers, The Hamas movement.

Cartoons are the instrument which I use to express myself as a person and to present my own opinions and values as an independent person. On one hand, cartoons are a medium many identify with and accept, and through which people are exposed to new philosophies and schools of thought. On the other hand, many who have become entrenched with their own beliefs come into conflict with cartoonists, disregarding all other opinions which might threaten them. This has occurred to me on multiple occasions.

Despite all the obstacles and challenges put in my way, I still believe in the influence of art on society and culture, even when that influence might be undetected. It is essential for me to express myself as a woman and as a Palestinian living in Gaza, a place where opinions similar to mine are rarely heard and are not given the opportunity to be broadly communicated. Our political leaders willingly choose to ignore or silence voices that do not match their agenda. Revolutions begin from the simple people, who raise their voices to speak for themselves and represent the silent majority.

I want to thank whomever supported me and stood by me through the most difficult of times. A special thanks to Dr. Russell and members of the CRNI Board of Directors who have given me a place to express my opinions, helped me through most difficult moments, and have granted me this wonderful award. Let us hope that art will overcome all hardships and guide us towards a better and more just society.

Thank you very much, Majda Shaheen