

LEILA MANIFESTO

For the translation of Arabic literature

We, as professional translators and scholars concerned with the translation of Arabic literature in Europe, strongly believe that:

Sustainable, long-term policy and funding decisions are required to allow translation to fulfil its potential and keep pace with the dynamism of contemporary Arabic literary production.

Cultural policies and commercial decisions should take into account the vast geographical, linguistic and cultural diversity of Arabic literature, and the fact that Arabic is an essential part of the European linguistic landscape.

Poetry, short stories, drama, life narratives, travelogues are an integral and vital part of Arabic literature and deserve to be translated and published in order to better capture its breadth.

Arabic literature must be included in European curricula in order to raise a new generation of curious and empathetic readers and reflect its major cultural and literary significance.

Translators are sources of expertise in their fields and must be empowered as such within the publishing industry. In particular, their work must always be properly remunerated and credited by name.

The European publishing industry and literary ecosystem more widely must deepen its understanding of Arabic literary production and improve standards in translation and publishing. We call upon the industry and public bodies to support training, development and networking programs for literary professionals.

In smaller markets, extra support is required to assist the publication of modern Arabic classics which are already available in the major European languages.

Writers and translators of Arabic literature have an inalienable right to free speech, and censorship on the grounds of race, nationality, religion, gender, political orientation, or other grounds, is unacceptable. We note with dismay the silencing of Palestinian writers such as Adania Shibli, who was cancelled at the 2023 Frankfurt Book Fair.

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