

# Who is Handala?

Handala appears in every cartoon that the cartoonist Naji Al-Ali drew. His back is turned to the world and he is watching the action of the cartoon, inviting us to do the same. At times, he takes part in the action in the cartoon. Handala means 'medicinal bitter desert fruit' in Arabic.

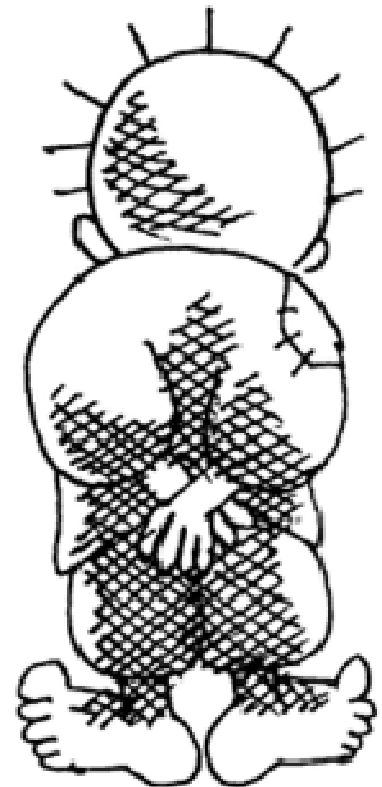
Handala was born ten years old and remains ten years old, the age Naji Al-Ali was when he was expelled from his village in 1948. Two out of every three Palestinians were expelled from their homes when Israel was established. They have not been allowed home and remain refugees.

## What Naji Al-Ali said about Handala....

The character of Handala was a sort of icon that protected my soul from falling whenever I felt sluggish or I was ignoring my duty. That child was like a splash of fresh water on my forehead, bringing me to attention and keeping me from error and loss. He was the arrow of the compass, pointing steadily towards Palestine. Not just Palestine in geographical terms, but Palestine in its humanitarian sense — the symbol of a just cause, whether it is located in Egypt, Vietnam or South Africa.

His name is Handala and he has promised the people that he will remain true to himself. I drew him as a child who is not beautiful; his hair is like the hair of a hedgehog who uses his thorns as a weapon. Handala is not a fat, happy, relaxed, or pampered child. He is barefooted like the refugee camp children, and he is an icon that protects me from making mistakes. Even though he is rough, he smells of amber. His hands are clasped behind his back as a sign of rejection at a time when solutions are presented to us the American way.

I stood facing it all with my pen every day. I never felt fear, failure or despair, and I didn't surrender. I faced armies with cartoons and drawings of flowers, hope and bullets. Yes, hope is essential, always.

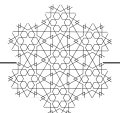


### Other characters that appear in Naji Al-Ali's work:

- ◇ Poor thin man in patched rags
- ◇ Proud woman in traditional Palestinian dress
- ◇ Arab/Palestinian elite represented as deformed and legless
- ◇ Israeli soldier

### Symbols that appear in Naji Al-Ali's work:

- ◇ Key
- ◇ Map of historical Palestine
- ◇ Kuffiyeh – a traditional Palestinian scarf



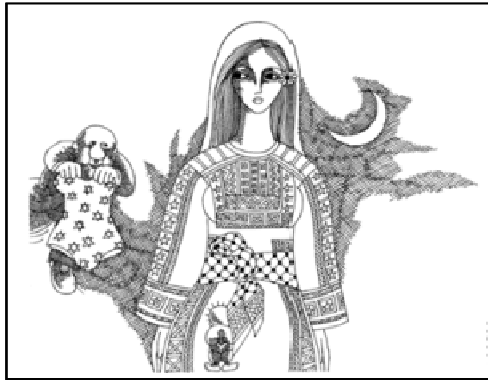
Cartoon 1



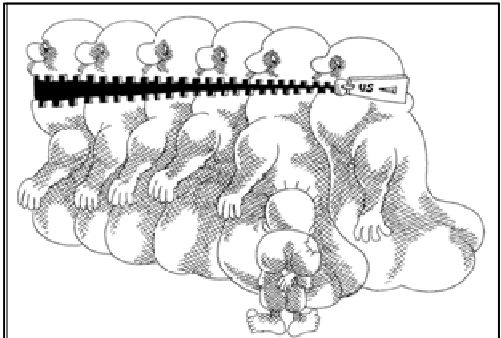
Cartoon 6



Cartoon 2



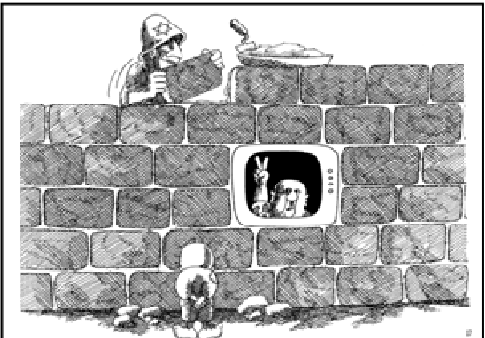
Cartoon 7



Cartoon 3



Cartoon 8



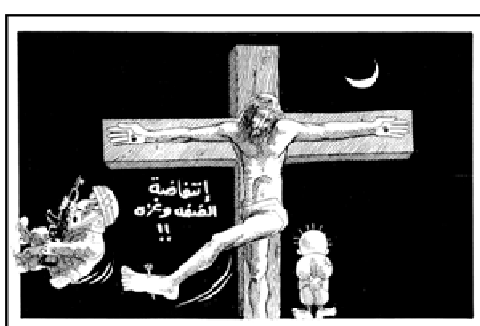
Cartoon 4



Cartoon 9



Cartoon 5



Cartoon 10

