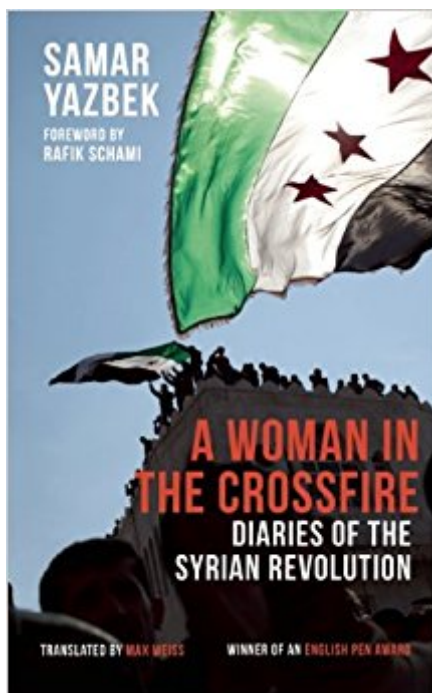


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A Woman In The Crossfire: Diaries Of The Syrian Revolution



Synopsis

A well-known novelist and journalist from the coastal city of Jableh, Samar Yazbek witnessed the beginning four months of the uprising first-hand and actively participated in a variety of public actions and budding social movements. Throughout this period she kept a diary of personal reflections on, and observations of, this historic time. Because of the outspoken views she published in print and online, Yazbek quickly attracted the attention and fury of the regime, vicious rumours started to spread about her disloyalty to the homeland and the Alawite community to which she belongs. The lyrical narrative describes her struggle to protect herself and her young daughter, even as her activism propels her into a horrifying labyrinth of insecurity after she is forced into living on the run and detained multiple times, excluded from the Alawite community and renounced by her family, her hometown and even her childhood friends. With rare empathy and journalistic prowess Samar Yazbek compiled oral testimonies from ordinary Syrians all over the country. Filled with snapshots of exhilarating hope and horrifying atrocities, she offers us a wholly unique perspective on the Syrian uprising. Hers is a modest yet powerful testament to the strength and commitment of countless unnamed Syrians who have united to fight for their freedom. These diaries will inspire all those who read them, and challenge the world to look anew at the trials and tribulations of the Syrian uprising.

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Customer Reviews

“The best account of the revolution’s early months.” (National

Samar Yazbek is a Syrian writer and journalist, born in Jableh in 1970. She is the author of several works of fiction. An outspoken critic of the Assad regime, but also of what she identifies as erroneous perceptions of ideological conformity within the Syrian Alawite community, Yazbek has been deeply involved in the Syrian uprising since it broke out in March, 2011. Fearing for the life of her daughter she was forced to flee her country and now lives in hiding. Yazbek was awarded the PEN/Pinter International Writer of Courage Award in 2012, awarded to an author of outstanding literary merit who casts an 'unflinching' eye on the world. She is also the author of the novel *Cinnamon* (2012).

This author has done her country a great service by risking her life and her homeland to report through the medium of a diary the atrocities of the Assad regime. I will long remember and mourn for those Syrians demonstrating for some form of democracy. The cruelty will surely be recorded in modern history as the worst of any Arab country.

I'm working alongside Syrian refugees and this compelling book has deepened my understanding of what they have faced and why they fled. It is not a comfortable read, but it is very well worth reading. Samar Yazbek brings the experience of the conflict to attention without overwhelming the reader emotionally but it is quite hard hitting.

too graphic, too awful, couldn't stand to read it.

Riveting reading for anyone interested in how Syria's democracy protests morphed quickly into a civil war without end.

A very deep personal narrative about the situation in Syria. Full of information and insight from a real first person perspective of one survivor.

If one were to judge the book just on the courage of the writer, then it would rate five stars. However, despite some interesting details and some literary flourish, the book drags on after the first 80 pages or so. The stories become rather predictable, the actors identical, the circumstances consistent. It brings home the brutality of the Assad regime as it hangs onto power, but it isn't something that continues to hold interest over time...

My copy had a dogleg about 150 pages in where it went back to page 88 for about 20 pages & I never got back the missing pages. Unfortunately, not a big loss. As others said, it gets pretty repetitive and bleak. Nonetheless, she is a great writer and the repetition and bleakness was Assad's fault, as he truly did and still does horrible things to his people. Hopefully his end is soon and my copy was a fluke. Regardless, more people should read this to know what really is happening there.

Translated by Max Weiss (who also won a PEN award, this one for the translation) and with a foreword by author Rafik Schami, the diary entries begin March 25, 2011 and quickly grow in urgency. As she tries to get into war torn cities to gather information, she shows her tenacity and her commitment to documenting the events of Syria's civil war. The imagery stays with the reader, even one who has only a cursory knowledge of the issues in Syria. In April of 2011, she writes, "I try to find one woman, someone to speak with more easily, but there are no women in the street. When I hear women screaming and the distant sounds of gunfire I head back to the car. By the end of the day, I am going home with documents. Documents of flesh and blood, of wailing and bullets and the faces of murderers who don't know where they're going" (21). I appreciate that Yazbek reminds us that the experience of war is gendered, that women and men experience war differently. In this case her discussion of mobility reminds us that women are often behind closed doors during revolution. I am grateful that she took the time in the midst of maintaining a life and the life of her daughter to document with detail and patience and dedication so that readers may be offered an opportunity to understand the suffering in Syria. Only a few months pass in the book but the entries end July 9, 2011 but the reader gains access to the mind of a brilliant writer, artist, and citizen. The book ends with a choice made for her daughter: "This is the first time I put my daughter first. All I want is to find an agreeable way to make the hardships all around me end" (255). I encourage readers to bear witness to the months in between this choice and the earlier entries, to see why Yazbek is so deserving of the accolades bestowed upon her.

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