



MEN A
PRISON
FORUM

مُنْتَدَى الْمَشْرُوقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ
لِلشُّؤْنِ السَّجْنِيَّةِ

SWAYING BODIES

Novella

Ahmad Abdul-Halim

LOG VI

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Ahmad Abdul-Halim

SWAYING BODIES

Novella





www.menaprisonforum.org | www.umam-dr.org



MENA PRISON FORUM

[A project by **UMAM D&R**]

MPF LOGS [6]

Beirut 2019/2020

Tel.: + 961 1 553604

P.O. Box: 25-5 Ghobeiry

Beirut - Lebanon



The views expressed herein are solely the responsibility of their author and of their publisher. The contents of this publication do not reflect the opinions or organizational perspectives held by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa).

This publication was produced thanks to financial support from the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa), which is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

All This is Prison Also...

Swaying Bodies, contrary to other texts that address carceral systems, does not present an analytical nor theoretical analysis of the prison “experiment” but instead contents itself with the storytelling of an experience.

The author Ahmad Abdul-Halim is an Egyptian writer and researcher born in 1995 whose contributions have been published in various media outlets. He insists *Swaying Bodies* is a work of fiction: nonetheless, it leaves the reader with strong feelings of unease.

The description of the narrowness of the cells and the sardine-like piling up of the inmates makes the reader feel like the space around them literally shrinking; the description of the various ways in which the inmates do their business causes the reader visceral disgust; the description of the inmates' sexual frustration and the ways they resort to relieving themselves all compels the reader to ground his body to reassure himself that he is not directly involved in the scenes playing out in the text. The illustrations by Dima Daly, a Syrian activist and painter born in 1997, additionally stress the images evoked by Abdul-Halim's writing.

Abdul-Halim can claim as much as he wants that *Swaying Bodies* is a work of fiction, but this does not necessarily convince the reader, who is unable to stop wondering as he reads the vivid descriptions of the prison from where the author was able to get the forensic minutia and detail in describing the prison.

Whether indeed a novella or a masquerading testimony, this publication, the sixth in the MENA Prison Forum Log series, continues to put forward that prison is not just a general abstract idea, an “experiment” to be theorized upon, but an ordeal that indelibly changes all those who experience it.