

# The Commitment Trend in the Poetry of Khalil Zaqtan

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## Abstract

This research introduces an artistic trend that emerged in contemporary Arabic poetry: commitment. Its subject is an exploration of the literary value in the poetry of Khalil Zaqtan. The fervor of commitment is evident in his unpublished poetic works, which include poems inspired by Palestinian and Arab tragedy, reflecting the poet's complete commitment to human, national, and Arab unity concepts. Thus, Khalil Zaqtan's poetry serves as a meaningful message, a service to his homeland, and a reflection of the issues of his society, expressing their desires, inclinations, and aspirations in simple language and realistic imagery. The circumstances of the time provided Khalil Zaqtan with intellectual awareness and thematic maturity, with the clearest manifestation being his focus on the values of beauty, truth, and goodness in his poetry. Therefore, this research aims to understand the thoughts and perspectives of the poet Khalil Zaqtan towards poetry by analyzing the commitment in his poetry as an artistic path of expression, seeking to elucidate its echoes and manifestations while attempting to comprehend its dimensions. According to this, the researchers utilize the data of the realistic approach in light of the theory of social interpretation to subtly address and pursue the research material and to keep pace with the description of the commitment phenomenon and link its dimensions. As the poems depict the catastrophe of Palestine, the displacement of its people and their suffering in refugee camps, and glorify the Arab nation, and praise its characteristics and authentic qualities. Therefore, the research will attempt to elucidate the features of commitment in unpublished poetic works and establish its presence, embodied in the realistic features of the poet confining his thoughts and feelings to the reality of his people and nation. The research will also present poetic texts that align with the philosophy of commitment, aiming to engage the poet in the issues of his era, the problems of his homeland, and his nation. As a result, the research concluded that Khalil Zaqtan's poetic works are extracted from reality and depict aspects of Arab and Palestinian life. In summary, his poetry did not follow the experimental artistic approach because, in his view, poetic experience had no intrinsic value apart from its purposes or external requirements.

**Keywords:** Literary Movement, Commitment, Khalil Zaqtan, Realistic Approach, Resistance, Poetic Experience, Palestinian Cause.

## 1. Introduction

The choice of the poet Khalil Zaqtan is due to his conscious committed stance. Accordingly, we chose his poetic works because commitment is an essential theme in his poetry. This is manifested in various dimensions and trends. This research certainly intersects with studies that have addressed the concept of commitment in Arabic literature, especially in poetry. Additionally, theoretical research on this topic is extensive, so the scope of this research does not allow for an in-depth examination of them, to avoid lengthiness, repetition, and the pitfalls of following them too closely.

Undoubtedly, this research has benefited significantly from previous studies, as it sought to utilize many of the prior efforts in enriching the theoretical framework, formulating the proposed concept, selecting the appropriate methodology for this research, and crafting the research title: "The Commitment Trend in the Poetry of Khalil Zaqtan." It also aimed to identify the characteristics and representations of this trend.

One of the most important previous studies is the study titled "Revelations of Suffering in Khalil Zaqtan's Poetry," conducted by the Jordanian researcher Emad Al-Dhmour. Its significance lies in its value and its reference to commitment. However, comparing the two studies reveals only superficial external similarities, potentially overlooking what is essential in both studies (Al-Dhmour 2014).

Here is not the place for comparison between the two studies. Suffice it to say that the current study aligns with (Al-Dhmour 2014) in terms of methodology while differing in its subject matter. This study will address a multi-faceted and multi-pathway thematic gap by exploring the phenomenon of commitment, its nature, and its trends in Zaqtan's poetry. Moreover, it will not be limited to a single topic. Still, it will encompass a range of subjects to accurately diagnose the commitment phenomenon in Zaqtan's poetry, collecting its scattered pieces and bringing together its various aspects distributed across his unpublished poetic works.

Therefore, proposing to name the research "The Commitment Trend in the Poetry of Khalil Zaqtan" reflects the extent to which the poetic text benefits from, and submits itself to, the realistic social and cultural framework in which the poet lives. This is because "artistic creativity is attributed to the fact that art is collective, not individual, meaning that it shapes up the inclinations of a society within its environment, its desires, and its needs," in light of the theory of social interpretation of art (Eid 1974:75).

Zaqtan is one of the poets characterized by intellectual maturity and commitment to the issues of his homeland, nation, and society. Thus, this study aimed to examine his poetry, revealing the uniqueness of his perspective on events, reality, and the world. The underlying assumption, which is of significance in this research, is that the concept of commitment in Zaqtan's works emerged as a result of his engagement with the issues of reality and life. This affirms that the poet, being a product of his own reality, cannot live apart from its issues but must contribute through his poetic vision to expressing them or advancing their cause to the best of his ability through words.

Thus, our appreciation for the poetry of Khalil Zaqtan is not only an appreciation of his artistic and linguistic expression but we also take into account the social, human, and national values and content that the poet conveyed.

## **2. Preface: Poetry in the presence of occasion and audience**

Khalil Zaqtan was born in Palestine in 1927 and passed away due to a heart attack while delivering a speech at a public celebration in Jordan in 1980. He is considered one of the poets of the first decade of the second half of the twentieth century who lived through the tragic ordeal of Palestine, suffered its calamities, and moved between the camps of poverty and deprivation. Among his poetic works is the collection 'The Voice of the Hungry,' which was first published in 1953 by the printing press of the Islamic Orphanage in Jerusalem (Ministry of Culture 2014:93).

Zaqtan began composing poetry at an early age. His poetic talent blossomed following the Palestinian catastrophe and the displacement of many into exile and refugee camps. His poetry leaned towards realism, engaging with the masses in their hardships, and sufferings, and expressing their pains and hopes. Moreover, his poetry bears a strong resemblance to his contemporaries among the poets of resistance, as they all used poetry as a weapon for confronting and opposing the occupier.

Khalil Zaqtan used to recite his poems at public events. Some of them were broadcast on various Arab radio stations. He became famous for his passionate, angry, and revolutionary poems, providing a powerful testimony against tyranny and colonialism. The political conditions and circumstances played a significant role in fueling the spirit of resistance and revolution against the occupiers and invaders. This fully explains the limited dissemination of his poetry, with most of it being lost.

The researcher Ziad Abu Laban undertook the task of collecting and editing his scattered unpublished poetic works in 1995, totaling thirty-seven poetic texts. Perhaps, the truth is that what the researcher has accomplished is only the minimum.

It should be noted that the poet concludes some of his poems with references that clarify Arab political and social events. This also indicates the probability of them being the product of a modern historical era (Abu Laban 1995).

The political and social circumstances in the mid-20th century compelled Zaqtan to engage with the concerns and issues of society. Among the issues he participated in was the Palestinian cause, utilizing his poetry to advocate for the cause, expose the colonizer, and condemn injustice and tyranny. Khalil Zaqtan's poetry was deeply influenced by the historical, political, and social circumstances that played a prominent role in shaping its thematic elements. His poetry began to record its presence actively and conscientiously in shaping reality.

Khalil Zaqtan did not attain the same level of fame as other poets, nor did he occupy a prominent place in memory like others who have been written about. He was a contemporary poet who had a profound understanding of his era. He portrayed people's innermost feelings, pains, and hopes,

and he shared in their joys and sorrows. He was deeply affected by the political events and social incidents of his time, drawing inspiration from them. His poetry served as a true reflection of the pent-up emotions in his heart. Perhaps we are not mistaken in our judgment, for the reader of his poetry will find the human, national, and patriotic sentiments evident in it. It is worth mentioning that Occasional poetry represents an important aspect of committed poetry. It also constitutes a prominent pattern in the modern era, specifically in the second half of the twentieth century. Zaqtan was distinguished by his occasional poetry, as he did not leave any occasion without expressing it. His poems were associated with various occasions, whether religious, national, or patriotic.

And if we assume, as an argument, that the poet's voice fades away and disappears after the occasion has ended, it is worth noting that a skilled and proficient poet can, through his insights, transform the poem into something human and existential, thereby achieving a lasting psychological, emotional, and moral impact. Whatever the case may be, "sincere poetry, regardless of being a personal expression of its author, inevitably touches, whether directly or indirectly, the circumstances of the life experienced by the community" (Ismail 1966:4).

The poet, as a member of a group, is a product of his environment, living like other poets in a social milieu, influenced by it and influencing it. He shares concerns, opinions, aspirations, and ambitions with them. Therefore, his poetry acts as a reflective mirror of society's conditions and preoccupations. In this context, the poet represents a group of individuals, expressing individually their specific stance on reality. True poetry is a message of life, and for those whose noble aim is this poetic message, their poetry must be something precious.

### 3. Literary Commitment and Realism

The commitment trend is considered one of the important trends that contemporary Arab poets have focused on. The concept of commitment is based on the idea that "the creative individual should consider their creativity as a means to serve a specific idea about humanity, not merely for the sole purpose of entertainment whose only aim is pleasure and beauty" (Wahbah 1974:79).

The idea of commitment, from a critical perspective, became associated with social issues and freedom of expression. It is worth mentioning that commitment, in its exchangeable sense, began to be employed during the dominance of the realism movement in literary arts. Aesthetic judgment on literature, whether in poetry or prose, became linked to commitment because it represents a sincere reflection of life and social issues. It stirs the recipient's emotions about their surroundings based on the extent of the revolutionary and transformative currents it carries. Thus, the bonds between literature and life are strengthened.

In this context, the research aims to highlight commitment – related to social issues - in the poetic texts of Zaqtan by examining their rhetorical function, represented by their interaction with human experience and the developments of the era. This is done to unveil the enchanting sentiment of the significance of the word, and the roles and responsibilities it carries, firstly within its social framework, and secondly on an individual level, all while preserving the artistic principles inherent in poetry. Because the writer's commitment to the issues of their nation does

not diminish the artistic value of their literary work. "The separation between the artistry of literature and its sociability is an anomaly in the logic of life and art together" (Abdulrahman 1970:233).

"In commitment, there is nothing that contradicts the idea of creativity and uniqueness, nor does it contradict the values of beauty and pure poetic elements. Instead, it is awareness, conviction, and faith in the message of poetry and its responsibility" (Shawqi, 1972:101).

Based on what has been mentioned, this type of literature is considered a realistic and purposeful art form that carries within it the values of liberation from any oppressive force, in order to achieve - through struggle and sacrifice - a happy and just life. In the same context, Abu Haqqa affirmed that: "Artistic work seeks to uncover social relationships, enlighten people in societies dominated by darkness, and assist them in realizing the social reality in order to change it" (Abu Haqqa 1979:31). Because the life of any artistic work is based on what it takes from life, what it gives to it, and what it records for the social and psychological reality, in a way that combines its movements and develops its experiences, to progress in life toward the desired goal.

The word "commitment" carries in its contextual uses a philosophical, cultural, and intellectual meaning closer to the literary and critical concept. The concept of commitment encompasses various aspects of life within society. It has evolved semantically, and it is linked theoretically to the ideas of utility and purpose in literature. It is worth noting that commitment is one thing, and obligation is another. Commitment implies freedom of choice. It is based on the positive, voluntary initiative of the individual when responding to conscientious motives arising from the depths of their soul and heart. Perhaps it is this freedom that gives commitment its sense of responsibility (Abu Haqqa 1979:14).

We must mention that this call was a response to a flawed and misguided literary theory, which was imprecise for artistic literary concept. It advocated for stripping literature of any intellectual frameworks, ethical standards, or utilitarian values. It is also inaccurate to comprehend literature, whether prose or poetry, as suddenly emerging, independently of any considerations or external influences. The notion that: art is for the sake of art can be completely disregarded. From this perspective, the concepts of literature and commitment converge more than they diverge, as both represent a vision of reality and a reflection of the world. Despite the imposition, coercion, and obligation that may be associated with the word 'commitment', when we delve critically into it as a literary trend and path, we find that it signifies an acknowledgment and affirmation of freedom.

The commitment, as a human consciousness, represents in literature an intellectual stance, through the engagement of the writer and their active participation in the political, social, intellectual, and ethical issues of society, and defending them (Abu Haqqa 1979: 14, 49, 60). On this basis, the commitment of the poet is meant to be "the necessity of his participation with his thoughts, feelings, and art in national and humanitarian issues, and in what people suffer from pains, and what they build of hopes" (Hilal N/Y:562).

In this context, literature in the light of commitment represents a human and social beneficial goal, "requiring the writer to contemplate the literature's relationship with society, to embody a commitment to the people and the community" (Burada 2005:14). It is defined by the extent to

which the writer is connected to the issues of the people in their society, and the solutions they propose for these issues, or even just by raising awareness of them" (Ismael 1988:376). Certainly, the assertion that separating commitment from the reality of life is a significant fallacy. "Commitment is a deliberate choice, a conscious awareness, and the fusion of the poet within the crucible of the nation's issues is nothing but the fruit of this will and that awareness" (Al-Hasheem 2011:264).

Accordingly, poetic commitment embodies the poet's sense of responsibility towards societal issues, presenting his visions, suggestions, and solutions (Burada 2002:32). This is because "the literary artist is not a being suspended in a vacuum, but rather a person within a society, born in it, growing within its environment, influenced by its people and circumstances, drawing his consciousness, inspiration, and creativity from the life around him" (al-Asad 2000:201).

In commitment, there is not just a theoretical endorsement of an idea, but rather an endeavor to achieve it. We are not here to assess this hypothesis as much as we believe that literature represents a noble message and a beneficial goal that can only be realized when we link it to the needs of the community. There is no use in discussing commitment without referring to literary realism and its close association with literary commitment. Perhaps such a reference helps in understanding commitment as both a literary trend and path.

### 3.1 Literary Realism.

The modern era, specifically the second half of the twentieth century, marked the emergence of commitment as a literary trend. During this period, Khalil Zaqtan lived and began to take the lead, advancing his poetic messages.

Therefore, discussing commitment leads us to discuss literary realism, where critics associate realism as a literary term with French realism. It was initially used to refer to human reality (Azdi and Mutasem 2003:10).

Realism is considered a rhetorical style and a literary and expressive approach that is based on observing and recording reality. It addresses the issues of society, the aspects of poverty and misery from which the population suffers, drawing its material from the life of the people (Mandour 1957:82-83). The creative writer is the one who shares his experiences with the experiences of his people and records them in a realistic style, thereby conveying the life of his people to a new and idealized life (Izzuddin 1968:17).

In light of that, the theory of reflection is one of the critical theories that views literature as a mirror of reality and its interpreter, embodying social efficacy, and reflecting aspects of society and its issues.

## 4. Dimensions of Commitment in Khalil Zaqtan's Poetry

Through the studied poetic samples, we will notice that the poetry of Khalil Zaqtan represents a message, and the concept of literary commitment in his poetry takes an intellectual dimension, manifested in three dimensions: the human-social, the national, and the Arab-national.

Concerning the first human-social dimension, we can notice that his poetry draws from social life, the plight of people, and the lives of the homeless, expressing their feelings and calamities. The second national dimension embodies the cause of refugees, the determination on the right of return, calling for revolution. The third Arab-national dimension is represented by unity and rallying together. In light of this, it is necessary to provide examples of Zaqtan's poetry to illustrate the paths of his literary commitment.

#### 4.1 The Human-Social Dimension

Commitment in the human direction is manifested in portraying the poet's view of society as it is, committed to the issues of his time and the problems of his community while taking note of external factors and conveying aspects of life.

Moreover, Zaqtan's humanitarian commitment is embodied in his engagement with the issues of his society, his preoccupation with its daily problems, and his profound sense of indignation, rejecting the reality of poverty, homelessness, and suffering. In a poem titled "And It Was Your Wish to Die as a Martyr," he says:

I swear by the hungry and the naked,  
And by the honor in the marketplace of wolves,  
If the goals of my people do not unite,  
My nation will surely head towards destruction. (Abu Laban 1995:40).

In this regard, the committed poet engages with society's concerns and preoccupations, expressing the echoes of life. Their literature is referred to as "committed literature" or often "literature of stance." This is because the writer takes a stance on the problems and issues of their time. On this basis, the poem titled "Who Has a Card?" portrays, with a questioning tone, the suffering experienced by Palestinians, the misery they endure in refugee camps, the deprivation, and various kinds of oppression and humiliation:

Handfuls of sardines and dates, and diverse types of milk,  
And blankets and rags woven from strange burlap,  
And tents that rose above the dunes,  
And acts of kindness raised by crescents and crosses,  
And rows of people assembled in a strange formation,  
Driven by hunger from dawn and remained till sunset,  
Who has a card, there is a bit of warmth in their meals,  
Every face carries a tale of tragedy within it, like a flame. (Abu Laban 1995:70).

Khalil Zaqtan felt the reality of the Palestinian people's lives, their existence in refugee camps, and their hunger, depicting the harsh moments of refugees' lives. The reality in his poetry is

portrayed with bitterness and darkness, where he moans under the burden of poverty, hunger, and deprivation.

Accordingly, in Zaqtan poetry, the poem takes on a realistic appearance, attempting to depict life as it is, without embellishment or exaggeration, making the depiction objective, and closer to accuracy. Realism is embodied in representing the subject matter with a genuine sense of engagement, where every sense, heartbeat, and emotion becomes involved, conveying its events and details with utmost sincerity and truthfulness. Thus, portraying a painful realistic scene, reflecting the reality of Palestinians in the refugee camps. Whatever the case may be, it is not a coincidence that Palestinian poetry is the most preoccupied with the theme of commitment.

Therefore, the poet's sense of the impoverished and oppressed class is a profound feeling, only to discover in the end that they are stripped of all human qualities. Their lives bear no meaning, uniqueness, or distinction. Therefore, the Palestinian human soul, which perishes in the camps of misery due to hunger and poverty, appears as nothing but a number, as he says in a poem titled "A Number from My People":

Qaddoura, Qaddoura died,  
How simple these words are,  
Some children in the street cried,  
And the street's commotion suppresses... distorts the words,  
From within the crowd, from the heart of the street, we heard no sigh,  
We were not embarrassed to ask who? and where did we carry him?!

Qaddoura possesses no wealth or fame,  
The state knows him not by name,  
He never asked about authorities,  
A person who passed through life like a breeze,  
Qaddoura died,  
A number from my people died. (Abu Laban 1995:56).

The poems of Khalil Zaqtan are enriched with humanitarian imagery, distinguished by emotion in its finest and most expressive forms. They portray the aspects of misery, suffering, and the impoverished, as they wither away from hunger.

Zaqtan delves into reality, revealing its issues to appear like a photographer. Although both language and imagery are quite simple, they are deeply moving, and they leave their impact on the reader. In his poem titled "Our Street," he says:

Our street piled on the ground without balconies,  
Our street lying in the mud, swimming in tragedies,



At night, it dies behind the rotten huts,

Our street eats, drinks, and moves by cards. (Abu Laban 1995:95).

The poet here uses the language of everyday life, which is one of the characteristics of his poetic works. This language is remarkably close to the reader, and it has a greater ability to elicit emotions between the poet and the audience. It serves as a suitable intermediary for deepening the relationship between the poet and the people. In a poem titled "For Those Who Care About Words," he portrays an aspect of his country's social situation:

A message from the tents,

Shaking and exposing the slumberers,

A message deeply rooted,

Stumbled upon the maze of eras,

To fill the sultan with pride,

And the writer of verses will never return,

Distributing sardines, tents, and dates,

And digging graves,

For those who care about the matter,

The tale of the stranger and the inclination,

Because I disbelieved in submission,

Because I trusted the masses,

O lords of oil and gold,

And bearers of titles and ranks,

From the ocean to the Gulf to the Negev,

Ninety million Arabs,

Practicing the curse of escape. (Abu Laban 1995:72-74).

Here we notice that Zaqtan captures moments of people, imbued with bitterness and frustration, to present a poetic image filled with revolution, anger, pain, and suffering. Thus, the value of his poetry lies in its portrayal of the most precise features of social and human life, as if it were a musical instrument upon which society imprints all its desires, inclinations, and visions (Ismael 1966:22).

This demonstrates the depth of sincere interaction between the poet and his society, as well as the tumultuous life events surrounding him. Commitment within the human dimension emerges in Zaqtan's poetry through various techniques, most notably the everyday language, the emotional style in discussing social issues and addressing them and portraying the plight of the

underprivileged. This arouses anger, revolution, protest, and rebellion in the souls. In doing so, the poet succeeds in making reality in his poetic verses come alive with tragedy, leaving the reader and the listener to feel as if they are experiencing it fully, thus providing them with an opportunity for imagination and visualization.

#### 4.2 The National Dimension

Khalil Zaqtan's poetry reveals the intricacies of the political circumstances in the second half of the twentieth century. Each of his poems has a unique key, encapsulated in the title of each poem, around which it revolves. The title of each poem signifies its content.

The poetic experience of Khalil Zaqtan was influenced by a range of factors that contributed to the emergence of the theme of commitment in his poetry. These factors include the occupation of Palestine and the fact that the poet was one of the persecuted refugees, as he says:

I was exiled from my homeland, since my childhood,

And I wept for it with nostalgia, I wept for the refugees with the heart of a poet. (Abu Laban 1995:45).

He also says:

The people of the tents take an oath, that they will not negotiate or engage in dialogue,

I swear by the hunger of refugees and the nakedness of the residents of the caves,

We will fight, (whether) elderly, young, or minors,

We will meet at dawn in Akka, and the master of the house will be present. (Abu Laban 1995:46).

Death becomes a beloved destiny here, and it becomes a demand, just as a sacrifice for the homeland in the poem "Oh Childhood Companion" is indeed stirring. He says:

O childhood companion, who among us has gone,

Who died in prison? Or who died as an expatriate?

Nothing remained in the world, to lose it,

Except for the (un-slaved) blood, we give when asked for,

A bullet behind Jerusalem, we fire,

Equal to poetry, writers, and books. (Abu Laban 1995:88-89).

The poem of Khalil Zaqtan throbs with the cries of the people. It can be called a poem of stance, representing a reflective mirror of himself, the echo of his surroundings, and his era. In his poem "A Pledge for Jaffa," he says:

I pledge I will take wrongdoing as a creed,

Until I liberate my homeland from its tragedy. (Abu Laban 1995:52).

The poet, as a person belonging to the community, expresses their concerns. The poet's worries are inseparable from the concerns and issues of the community to which he belongs. In this way, the committed poet presents a subject that directly touches their lives. In a poem titled "Pay", Zaqtan says:

I have no homeland, and my childhood home,  
The occupiers have erased its landmarks.  
I, -O son of my people- am a giant power,  
And the chisels of my philosophy will remain vengeful,  
Until the fragments of our land are returned to us,  
And we live in those fields (as humans) with pride. (Abu Laban 1995:14).

The commitment appeared in Zaqtan's poem as a representation of resistance and opposition to the occupier, reflecting a revolutionary and resistant struggle. He depicts the image with force and intensity, leading the reader to a deep sense of the need for change, urging them toward revolution and protest. He made the people the subject of his vision, emphasizing the complete alignment of the poet with the people, just as the Sufis' concept of solutions. In a poem inspired by a letter from an Egyptian soldier to his young son, he says:

I am not alone, O my son, in the battle for survival,  
For the people are one army, with a call on every corner.  
And the peoples of the earth are all revolting, sharing in our redemption.  
Life is built on sacrifices, not on supplication and hope. (Abu Laban 1995:28).

Khalil Zaqtan's commitment is a product of his interaction with his society and culture, reflecting the connection of his literature to life and society. This is to achieve his desired goal of evoking the feelings of the reader and the listener:

I die when I die, in my village,  
And I come to life when I live with my brothers (Abu Laban 1995:38).

The ground upon which Zaqtan stands is a ground composed of an occupied homeland, shattered, burdened by hunger, oppression, and poverty. His poems reflected the pains of catastrophe, displacement, loss, suffering, and the feeling of alienation. He says in a poem recited during a seminar on Palestine titled "Welcome, O Delegation of the World":

I do not lament a lost homeland but complain about the aggression.  
I complain to you, and I present the tragedy of my country as proof. (Abu Laban 1995:61).

In addition to what was mentioned above, national commitment is manifested in getting rid of all forms of colonization, revolting against the occupying oppressor, feeling intense resentment,

defending the homeland, clinging to the land, and the right of return. As he says in his poem "Identity":

Engraved in the memory of the olive tree,

My name... my love... and my addresses,

And the land over there is ornamented,

With my steps and the fragrance of my collections. (Abu Laban 1995:116).

Khalil Zaqtan's commitment to the national path transformed his poetry into what can be described as more direct, rhetorical, and declarative. The researchers might call it emotional and passionate outbursts. He says in the poem "Welcome, O Delegation of the World,":

The homeland of freedom is the entire world,

and the language of freedom is every tongue.

And my return with you signifies the victory of our two causes. (Abu Laban 1995:61).

Zaqtan spent most of his life enduring the hardships of exile, far from the Palestine he loved. Palestine continued to flow through his veins until his death. It is not uncommon in such circumstances for feelings of sorrow, sadness, and pain to permeate his poetry, where the experience of exile is depicted in its harshest forms, revealing his deep sense of patriotism, the extent of pain, and the bitterness of suffering. In his poem "Stranger 1 and 2," he outlined the general image of the Palestinian:

A stranger above the homeland; darkness slaps my forehead,

I gaze into the distance; wishing to rupture the darkness,

I distract my brothers with affection at times and with a smile,

I distribute (packages) among them and consider it a service. (Abu Laban 1995:79).

A stranger, O thieves of the field, and the olive trees are mine,

A stranger, I used to be when I composed poetry to protect me. (Abu Laban 1995:80).

#### 4.3 The Arab-National Dimension

The circumstances of the era, as we previously indicated, provided Khalil Zaqtan with intellectual awareness and a mature thematic and artistic depth. This is most clearly represented in a clear commitment and complete dedication to the issues of his Arab nation. The commitment was manifested through revolution and protests against the prevailing regime, and the exposure of colonialism, as he says in a poem titled "Sana'a Is a Must":

Despite the enemies of life... Despite the enemies of peace,

There must be a happy, revolutionary Yemen,

In sacrifice, it expresses our will if the land is violated,

And the rebels' grenades know how to choose the answer. (Abu Laban 1995:67-68).

In the manner of extrapolation, the poem entitled "My Son" embodies a form of commitment, represented by refusal. The poem, originally inspired - as previously mentioned - by a letter sent by an Egyptian soldier in the Suez Canal to his young son, says:

My son, if you grew up, and walked in the path of men,

And asked about the inheritance of the ancestors and whether there was a wealth,

Your mother would tell a red story of bloody shadows,

That I, my father, and his father have lived it -as an answer to the question-,

Our motto is that if I fall, take my place in the struggle,

And I advise you to live its chapters no matter what. (Abu Laban 1995:24).

Khalil Zaqtan's poetry is blazing with rebellion, revolution, and protest. It carries a strong national and Arab identity, marked by a fighting sensibility that is rebellious and revolutionary. The poem takes on an escalating form, as it states:

The red bullet speaks louder than the babble of the rostrums,

From a poet like me chewing his wounds and living against his will.

Poetry did not bring back the snatched homeland, nor did creative prose.

Today, the machine gun speaks, and the persistent effort. (Abu Laban 1995: 45-46).

Khalil Zaqtan makes use of occasions to express his rejection and anger. In the poem "I, O Struggle," which was recited in the early days of the announcement of the alleged Zionist entity's statehood. He portrayed the struggle of a segment of the Algerian people during their victory. Resistance constitutes an important theme in this poem, as Zaqtan paints a truthful picture of the people's struggle, saying:

The people are too great to stoop to thieves and bow down,

No coalition after today will assassinate life in my homeland,

I have touched something within me that gathers my rebellion and leads me,

So, I realized that I am of this land and that is my true character. (Abu Laban 1995:16).

The circumstances in which the Arab world, in general, and Palestine, in particular, found themselves under the weight of Western colonization, contributed to the emergence of commitment in Khalil Zaqtan's poetry, giving his poetry a revolutionary character. For this reason, his poems are not devoid of confronting and opposing injustice, tyranny, and oppression, looking towards freedom, and giving his imagination free rein to depict a beautiful, achievable future, in which he brings back the brightness of the past and its glory, as he says in his poem "Prayer for War":

I have disbelieved in submissive peace... Does it befit a life like mine?

The house is inhabited by thieves, and the Ashkenaz plunder my field,  
And my identity is a (card) that determines my worth and my roots. (Abu Laban 1995:76).

The poetry of Khalil Zaqtan is poetry of strength and vigor. It extends beyond its local framework to national dimensions, igniting the Arab spirit in people's hearts and kindling the enthusiasm of the masses. In a poem titled "Diary of a Commando in the Jordan Valley," he says:

Give me the kerosene and the gold, and gather the hatred and anger,  
Show me the unity of your people, and take victory for the Arabs,  
To see the west kneeling by your feet with respect,  
Your fault lies in your differences, And the (Positions) are the reason,  
The unity of the Arabs, O my brother, The unity of the land and heritage,  
The unity of purpose and aspiration, The unity of tears and exhaustion. (Abu Laban 1995:103).

In a poem titled "Outdoors," the rejection is evident in a manner not devoid of sarcasm and mockery. The poem features clear exposure and a resounding condemnation directed to the symbols of the oil and petroleum elite, saying:

O Master of Petroleum, my reality slaps you, and my values condemn you,  
O Master of Petroleum, I disavow you, From my nation in the square of the firmament,  
For Jerusalem was once not of my father, Nor Jaffa, from the blessings,  
This is the cause of my nation forever, so please step in defending it, like nations (Abu Laban 1995:85).

Although Khalil Zaqtan's poetry is characterized by its simplicity, his poetry serves as a direct incitement and an effective weapon. This gives his poetry a distinctive intellectual and revolutionary character, particularly in its defiance of the occupier. In his poem "No Night in Wahren," he says:

I do not believe in Arabism while the land with the Jews,  
I believe in that fire is fought by fire. (Abu Laban 1995:94).

As a result, Zaqtan's poetry reflected a commitment to resistance and opposition, manifested in his pursuit of liberation, resistance against the occupiers, condemnation of their policies, and the awakening of spirits. In a poem titled "Processions" he says:

O you, who asks about my trench, my weapon,  
My comrades on the paths of struggle,  
About the race of sacrifice in every field,  
Stories of heroism... and forgiveness,

Pulling the night off the morning's forehead,

The dawn of my people is behind these sacrifices (Abu Laban 1995:114).

It is evident from the above, that Zaqtan was completely committed and dedicated to the causes of his nation. His keen observation of their realities, struggles, concerns, and aspirations, has made national commitment a cherished goal and a necessary path. In doing so, the poet expressed the hopes and pains of the people, rallying spirits, revealing the faces of oppression, colonialism, and tyranny, exposing their flaws. His poetry played a revolutionary role, making his poetic language more intense and illuminated. In his poem "Prayer for War" he says:

War, I know it had taken my beloved ones,

And I may die tomorrow if its hellfire ignites, along with my child,

But I ask for it eagerly, and with my thoughts, I pray,

I have disbelieved in submissive peace... Does it befit a life like mine?

I have disavowed all books and prophets in the universe,

A thousand calls for fight, by my wounds and by my kin. (Abu Laban 1995:76).

It is evident that Zaqtan presents the reader with an image of the Palestinian persona, which is characterized by revolutionary and militant dimensions, inspiring defiance, resilience, and liberation. He states in his poem "Mawwal":

My lyre in the trench is a cannon,

And my words for the revolution... a dawn.

And the dawn rises from the fingertip,

So, I will press my machine gun and I will sow. (Abu Laban 1995:109).

Commitment in Khalil Zaqtan's poetry was not limited to a single theme. Zaqtan addresses various themes poetically. The poetic examples themselves suffice for commentary and elaboration, indicating the state of poetry, Zaqtan's approach and style, as well as his understanding of poetry. This is an indication of the values of truth, goodness, and beauty.

In summary, the commitment in Zaqtan's poetry is reflected in his dedication to the Palestinian cause, the Arab national dimension, and the human dimension in terms of the social, political, and activist aspects. However, the amount of evidence we have mentioned serves as an indication that commitment is a prominent feature in Zaqtan's poetry, interacting with life and society. We also find that the poet's language and ideas, as evidenced by the poetic texts and exploration we have cited, are presented in a simple, clear, and straightforward style. When the audience responds to the poet's enthusiastic poetic texts, their response is primarily emotional, and expressive.

The observer of Zaqtan's poetry finds it closer to the realistic style. The poet directs his attention to real events, expressing his stance, dedicating his poetry to serving his country and addressing the issues of his society, expressing their desires, inclinations, and aspirations. Therefore, the

commitment trend in Zaqtan's poetry was not limited to a single issue, but rather addressed multiple issues and directions. His poetry encompasses national, social, and human themes. We have presented all this to illustrate the direction of commitment, indicating what poetic commitment could be like in a traditional, straightforward manner. We believe it is sufficient to mention some of the poetic commitment contents, such as rebellion, revolution, rejection, pain, sorrow, and exile.

## 5. Conclusion

Literature, as a message and expression of the community and the majority, represents a vision of the world and a reflection of reality and society. This vision is based on the idea that the writer is obligated to the collective emotional and sentimental feeling. Literature, especially poetry, cannot be separated from its realistic and cultural framework, within which the poet lives. Commitment in literature is an attempt to establish reconciliation and a bridge of communication with marginalized, oppressed, and freedom-thirsty communities and masses. Clearly, commitment is the fundamental line that gave poetic texts unity and coherence, forming a significant axis in Zaqtan's works. It has achieved emotional impact and a collective psychological sense. Khalil Zaqtan is considered a national poet, and his poetry is an extension of the journey of committed poetry addressing national issues. The Palestinian cause is a primary source of inspiration and motivation for him.

Therefore, his unpublished poetic works, aside from being extracted from life's experiences, are distinguished by their depth, genuine depiction, and emotion. The Palestinian cause, alongside social and political circumstances, stands as a primary source of poetic experience for Zaqtan. His social, national, and patriotic poetry is clearer than needing anyone to highlight it.

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