

Sonallah Ibrahim

Sonallah Ibrahim was born in Cairo in 1937.

1952 he began to study law and worked as freelance journalist and translator.

As a result of his political activities he was arrested several times and finally given a prison sentence of five years and six months during Nasser's campaign against leftists in 1959.

His first novel *Tilka r-ra'iha* (The Smell of It) was published in 1966. The novel was confiscated immediately after publication.. It appeared in incomplete versions several times before it was finally published in full version 1986, in three different editions in Khartoum, Cairo and Casablanca.

After his dismissal Sonallah Ibrahim worked 1967 for the Egyptian news agency Middle East News Agency (MENA). In 1968 he moved to East-Berlin; there he worked for the East German news agency ADN from 1968 until 1971.

Sonallah Ibrahim translated *The Enemy*, a novel by the American writer James Drought, into Arabic. Also he translated *Brudians Esel*, a novel by the German author Günter de Bruyn and different works of prose by Western authors which were published in 1994 in an anthology under the title *at-Tagriba al-unthawiyya* ('Female Experience').

Since 1975 he gave up working to be able to concentrate on his writings. It was this year that he got married.

He wrote several novels and short stories for younger readers as method of education, for example he wrote a novel on animal and plant life in the Red Sea.

Awards

In 1992 Sonallah Ibrahim received the Ghalib-Halsa-Award from the Jordanian Author's Union and in 1994 the Sultan-Uwais-Award (United Arab Emirates). 1998 he rejected the Naguib Mahfuz-Prize of the American University in Cairo. He also decided to refuse the Arabic Novel Award which was offered to him in 2003 by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. In his speech he explained his reasons by criticising the political attitude of Egypt and other Arab states to the American predominance, being obsequious to American dictation, he also criticized their ignoring Israeli occupation and destroying war against the Palestinian People.

Literary Works

One of his most important works is his novel *al-Lagna* (The Committee) 1981, which is distinguished by the use of intertextual references to contemporary history. It deals with the influence of global markets and expanding capitalist concerns on the continents worldwide.

Beirut Beirut (1984) is about the Civil war in Lebanon.

Dhat (1992) and *Sharaf* (1997) deal about the difficult reality that Egyptian society is confronted with after the policy of liberal market during Sadat's

regime.

Warda (2000) is a novel on the struggle for liberation led by Zuffar in Oman.

Sonallah Ibrahim's last work is his novel *Amrikanli* (Americanish) 2003 -

It is the story of an Egyptian professor who is teaching history at an American university, the history of both countries are being compared. The title consists of three words "Amri kana li" that are put together in one word meaning: Once I was my own master.