Mic Check: Hip-Hop from North Africa and the Middle East

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House
Mar 9 at 7:30pm
Approximate running time: one hour and 40 minutes, no intermission

Amkoullel with Yacouba Sissoko
Deeb
Brahim Fribgane
El Général with Oussama Ben Amor
Shadia Mansour with DJ Johnny Juice
(of Public Enemy)

Produced by BAM
Curated by Zeyba Rahman

The concert will close with a finale on the theme of justice, human rights, and peace, with all the artists collaborating together.

Lighting design by Alban Sardzinski

Lyrics at BAM.org/MicCheckLyrics
AMKOULEL, a Malian rapper, took his stage name from the title of one of the novels of the greatest Malian writers, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, in order to pay tribute to all African cultures. He started getting serious about rap when, in his first experience on the radio at the age of 13, he was banned by the authorities. A year later he organized his first rap concert with scholarship money. He went to France to study law but changed course when he realized that he would rather be the voice of the voiceless onstage. Amkoullel has released three albums and has been honored at the Mali Hip-Hop Awards three times. In response to the radical Islamist rule in northern Mali, he created a collective called “Plus Jamais Ça” (never again) “to defend the democracy and the sovereignty” of his country.

DEEB is an Egyptian hip-hop artist and poet who first appeared on the scene in 2005 with the Egyptian hip-hop group Asfalt. Born in Cairo in 1984, Deeb left Asfalt in 2007 to found Wighit Nazar (which translates as “point of view”) with Mohamed Yasser. Their brand of Arab hip-hop took audiences by surprise with its positive yet sarcastic wordplay. Deeb has focused on his solo career since 2010. Cairofornia, his first solo album, is written in colloquial Arabic and addresses social, personal, and cultural concerns of everyday life in Egypt. Mic Check marks Deeb’s US debut.

BRAHIM FRIGBANE is a Moroccan oud player and percussionist based in New York City. He has performed with Dr. L. Subramaniam, Sami Yusuf, Hassan Hakmoun, Zakir Hussein, Steve Gorn, and Reggie Workman and has recorded with Harry Belafonte, Paula Cole, Club d’Elf, Jamsheid Sharifi, Leni Stern, DJ Logic, Malika Zarra, and Morphine.

EL GÉNÉRAL, Tunisian rap musician, is best known for his song “Rais Lebled,” released in 2010, which has been described as the “hymn” of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution by protestors. He is known for his intensity and social conscience. His lyrics provoke listeners with strong words as he lays bare issues of political and social corruption while pressing for the rights, justice and dignity of his people. Two days after his second famous protest song, “Tunisia Our Country,” was released on YouTube and one week after the protests in Tunisia began, he was arrested by Tunisian police and imprisoned for three days. His forthcoming album La Voix du Peuple (The Voice of the People) has been given the support of the new Tunisian Ministry of Culture. He began rapping when he was 17. Mic Check is El Général’s US debut.
SHADIA MANSOUR, Palestinian, entered the musical arena during her teens at the forefront of public protests in London highlighting injustices against her people. She quickly established herself on the hip-hop scene after joining the first Arab crew from the Diaspora, ARAP, in 2000. Her political drive stems from her interest in speaking truth to power at political rallies from an early age using hip-hop as a “musical intifada” to express and globalize the voice of the struggle. She states, “Arabic hip-hop is not just a certain genre of music, it is the finger that points at everything and questions to instigate change. This is a culture of resistance. The only way it can be eradicated is if we refuse to exist.” Mansour has recorded with Johnny Juice of Public Enemy. Her single features M1 of Dead Prez and is titled “Al Kufeyyah Arabeyyah,” (The Kufeyyah is Arab).

OUSSAMA BEN AMOR started rapping at the age of 21 and is a member of El Général’s group. Mic Check is Oussama Ben Amor’s US debut.

DJ JOHNNY JUICE is an Emmy-nominated composer, producer, turntablist, engineer, MC, DJ, and community activist. Raised in the Bronx and transplanted to Long Island, he formed a crew with MC’s KBMC and Chill O Ski who became Charlie Brown and Busta Rhymes of Leaders of the New School. Juice won a DJ contest organized by Chuck D and Hank Shocklee, and became DJ and MC for The Kings of Pressure. He became the ghost scratcher and member of the Bomb Squad, and went on to scratch and add production to hip-hop albums including Public Enemy’s Yo! Bumrush the Show!, It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back, Slick Rick’s The Great Adventure of Slick Rick, and L.O.N.S.’ A Future Without a Past.

YACOUBA SISSOKO is a Malian traditional musician and griot known for his mastery of the stringed ngoni instrument and talking drum. He has performed with many of the greatest musicians of today and has toured internationally with master musicians ensemble Afrocubism.

ALBAN SARDZINSKI (lighting designer) Previous productions at BAM include: When Past & Future Collide (John Cale), Red Hot + Cuba, Dr. John: Insides Out, Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Red Hot + New Orleans, and Yoko Ono.
Q&A with Zeyba Rahman, Mic Check curator

Q: What is the role of hip-hop in the Middle East and North Africa? How has it evolved even in just a couple of years?

A: Hip-hop is a common medium for youth in societies around the world to express themselves. In the Middle East and North Africa, it is a very popular means for emcees to be social commentators, giving voice to burning social and political issues. As such, hip-hop culture and rap music has wide appeal across the region. Over the last couple of years, with so many Arab countries in the grip of a social-political tsunami, hip-hop has emerged as a prominent form of cultural resistance, an alternative to armed movement, and a strong voice for change.

Q: How do you see more traditional music fitting into this wave of new socially conscious artists, both of which will be onstage at BAM?

A: We humans are a storytelling species; we share stories constantly in so many different ways—by writing, singing, dancing, and acting them out to share with the world around us. Conscientious hip-hop emcees use their medium as storytellers and are social activists who draw attention to civic issues just as so many traditional artists do. They can be accompanied by accomplished musicians who build a rich soundscape to heighten the listener’s enjoyment of the message. Here, I’m thinking most especially of Africa’s ancient tradition of griot musicians. For Mic Check at BAM, live traditional musicians will accompany some emcees and also create musical links in between sets of each one.

Q: Are there musical trends you are watching emerge in that area now?

A: It’s fascinating to see the ways in which musicians are constantly experimenting with traditional and contemporary music from their countries and around the world. Often, we can hear some of those influences re-imagined and layered into their music in creative new ways.
AMKOULEL

1/ S.O.S
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
Everything must change!

This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
Everything must change!

The people rage,
Their dreams are being killed,
They no longer know in what to believe

Lies rise,
Always the same thing,
The truth is buried
We would not be surprised
If one day it all just explodes

The people rage,
Their dreams are being killed,
They no longer know in what to believe

If there is no hope,
Always the same,
Don’t be surprised,
If one day it explodes,

Look at me,
Look at my Maliba
What are you doing?
Why is it like that?

Everyone shuts up,
Technical chameleons,
New religion,
Have millions

Weakest link,
This is the law of retaliation,
You have scruples, die!
How cute

We have waited too long
I’m tired of having an outstretched hand!

REFRAIN
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
Everything must change!

This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S!
Everything must change!

Students piled one upon another, crowded together,
Odors and perspiration mixing,
Teachers starving,
How can they receive proper educational training in these conditions?

Until now the country is on its knees
The darkness of illiteracy is terrible
We are in the dark
And the country’s leaders have neglected us

Develop your mind and your knowledge, work,
That’s the only thing that you really possess, even in the after life,
Nobody can steal it,
A place to teach should not to be confused with a place to do business,
Bribes rule everything when little brother gets caught cheating,
And little sister uses her body to pay if she gets caught cheating

The nation’s children need education
The nation’s children need education
The nation’s children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The nation’s children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The nation’s children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The density of illiteracy is very dark

Study, study, study
The density of illiteracy is very dark
Study, study, study
The density of illiteracy is very dark
Study, study, study
The density of illiteracy is very dark
Study, study, study
The density of illiteracy is very dark
Study, study, study
The density of illiteracy is very dark
Study, study, study

2/ TEACHING, STUDIES
Since 90, the Malian school, slipped into crisis
Solutions proposed are ridiculous
Pupils and students that neglected
Here comes the time of reckoning,

Private schools, so well equipped,
Public education, neglected,
The poor have no choice,
[They’re] just following the instructions of others.

The country’s children need education,
The darkness of illiteracy is very dense
The country’s children need education,
The darkness of illiteracy is very dense

Studies for knowledge
Studies for knowledge
Studies to thrive
Study, otherwise one day you’ll be sorry
Studies for knowledge
Studies to thrive
Studies in progress
Studies, otherwise one day you’ll be sorry
Others are advancing,
We are going backwards
Others advancing,
What is Africa waiting for?
Lyrics

Others are advancing,
We are going backwards
Others argue,
Nobody will wait for us
The nation’s children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The nation’s children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The nation’s children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark

3/ TOMORROW
Each one carries his own cross, his burden on this earth,
One only shouts out rage to the sky
What should I do,
What do I say?
Every day I pray
For Africa to get out of the darkness
I pray
For a better tomorrow
I pray
That the law of the powerful ceases
I pray
For the end of racism
I pray
For educational problems to be resolved in Mali
I pray
For Africa to come out of darkness
I pray
For a better future
I pray, I pray
Each one carries his own cross, his burden on this earth,
One only shouts out rage to the sky
What should I do,
What do I say?
Every day I pray
Only the work will take us out of this misery
Without sacrifice and without effort, things will only get even worse and worse
Only work will make Africa no longer dependent on others
The world wonders: Africa, why are you still stagnant in misery?
It says that it’s famine, war and diseases that ravage Africa
Stand up and get working to change that
Only work will take us out of this misery
Without sacrifice and without effort, things will only get worse and worse
What should I do,
What do I say?
Every day I pray

4/ FARAFINA (AFRICA)
Africa, Africa
It is time
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
Africa
The hour of freedom has arrived
You don’t have to beg for respect, but it is your right
In fact, this dependence is presuming the same thing
As slavery, which is already passé
Now I just need to immigrate
So many things that they proposed to us, that they show to us on TV
It’s normal for young people to dream, and want to participate
The only thing they do not tell you is if you’re black you just cannot,
No you cannot, if you come from Africa, eh!
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
That we only have famine, war and desolation
That is why nobody respects us
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
The hour of freedom has arrived
Either it is contempt, or even worse, pity.
How would you respect those who are always needy,
Constantly stereotyped,
Thanks to the TV,
Lobotomized, self-denigrating,
The country’s youth are lost, dreaming of big bucks,
Shackled hand and foot, left to shine,
The country’s youth are lost, dreaming of big bucks,
Jamana deminsennoun Sinin Yé Yé!
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
We only have famine, war and desolation
Lyrics

That is why we do not get respect
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
The hour of freedom has arrived
The media is perpetuating this propaganda
Only our misery and our failures are projected on screens
Our successes have been quietly forgotten
And the truth is often distorted
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
That we have only famine, war and desolation
That is why we do not respect us
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
The hour of freedom has arrived
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
The time to work has arrived
The hour of freedom has arrived
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
That there is famine, war and desolation in us
That is why we do not respect us
Work!

COME DANCE
Come dance,
Dance, dance,

Come as you are
Shake what you have
Fat, come and shake it
Slim, come and shake it too
Don't be embarrassed,
Show us what you've got,
Be proud of who you are
Be yourself and don't care about what people think about you
I know you are beautiful,
You know you are beautiful
You are beautiful because you know it
So keep on shaking who you are

Come dance,
Dance, dance,

DEEB

1) MIGRATING BIRDS
I want to travel somewhere far and go on an adventure in a new country just like Ibn Battuta (Arab explorer) when he sailed his ship, They give me a weird look when they hear my heavy accent, which makes them want to know where I'm from, A stranger is easily identifiable and can be recognized at first glance,
You can tell he's not from town when you spot him in the metro trying to read the signs, I have my map and rhyme book where I write all my observations and thoughts just like Anis Mansour (Egyptian writer), You'll cross seas and travel all around the World but there isn't a place better than home, Traveling and changing your environment and surroundings is a must as it gives you a birds' eye view when you go back home similar to when a flying bird lands down to feed its chicks, The mind is a terrible thing to waste, which is why I dusted the spider webs off it and brushed the fear off my body, My time here is limited, I cannot stay quiet, The ink of my pen will cross borders as long as I'm alive.

Come as you are
Shake what you have
Fat, come and shake it
Slim, come and shake it too
Don't be embarrassed,
Show us what you've got,
Be proud of who you are
Be yourself and don't care about what people think about you
I know you are beautiful,
You know you are beautiful
You are beautiful because you know it
So keep on shaking who you are

Come dance,
Dance, dance,

DEEB

1) MIGRATING BIRDS
I want to travel somewhere far and go on an adventure in a new country just like Ibn Battuta (Arab explorer) when he sailed his ship, They give me a weird look when they hear my heavy accent, which makes them want to know where I'm from, A stranger is easily identifiable and can be recognized at first glance,
You can tell he's not from town when you spot him in the metro trying to read the signs, I have my map and rhyme book where I write all my observations and thoughts just like Anis Mansour (Egyptian writer), You'll cross seas and travel all around the World but there isn't a place better than home, Traveling and changing your environment and surroundings is a must as it gives you a birds' eye view when you go back home similar to when a flying bird lands down to feed its chicks, The mind is a terrible thing to waste, which is why I dusted the spider webs off it and brushed the fear off my body, My time here is limited, I cannot stay quiet, The ink of my pen will cross borders as long as I'm alive.

Come dance,
Dance, dance,
**CHORUS:**
I'm traveling like a migrating bird, Carrying a message to the World just like pigeons, I'm traveling free in the air with no chains, I know the way back home so, of course, I'm coming back home, I'm traveling, I'm traveling

The alarm clock went off reminding me that I have a meeting with the clouds, But I'm sleeping comfortably in bed and I don't have the energy to get out from under the blanket, I have to continue my struggle, A hot shower and a double shot of espresso does the job, some people say 'Cafe' We say 'Ahwa' (Arabic for coffee), welcome, drive slow taxi driver and everything will be alright, They envy me for traveling around the world but don't know the heavy feeling of loneliness, Being a stranger can get a toll on you especially when you miss your family, friends, food, I come back home to find my Mom preparing my favorite dish for me, The next day I join a protest to demand the freedom for my country, My country is like a butterfly that just spread its new wings, flashing off its colors in her garden, Swearing an oath never to go back to its sorrows

CHORUS
Sitting in the airplane with people from very far away places, Some are going back home to check up on their ill mothers, others looking to spend a happy trip, The air hostess smiled innocently, which helped to ease the tense atmosphere, I put on my headphones and played music, Its weird how certain tunes remind you of special occasions in your life, a place you visited, an old joke or even an incident with a friend, I don't buy into the old saying, “Birds of a feather flock together,” because it doesn't solve the problem of a diverse society, we're not one type of bird, we're ducks, pigeons and swans, Enough with the superstitions, we're living between two extremes, Aliya Mahdy (revolutionary woman blogger who stripped naked to make a point about freedom) strips down and this guy wants to cover statues (reference to extreme Islamists and their view on arts) The people out there looking for truth are sick of the chase, And when you open your eyes to the truth, one of their snipers pops it (referring to the incident where snipers were shooting at Tahrir protesters eyes in Mohamed Mahmoud clashes) I'm a citizen returning home and I feel betrayed, I love it when I see the arrivals sign in the airport, I know I'm home, I've carried so many bags you'd think I do weight training, My generation is persistent, since January 25 I've been a new person, I spread my wings and fly against the strongest winds

2) **MY COUNTRY**
I went to the land of Thebes and met up with its lovely people, Aswan is a favorite, I love Luxor and I'm not talking about the beer brand, I'm talking about the city with the beautiful temples, If you look at the map from the south, you'll find Quena, decorated with its beautiful white houses,

You'll feel the generosity of Upper Egypt, the people there will get out of their way to help you out even if you're a stranger, As I travelled down the Egypt Agricultural road, I bumped into a beautiful Minyan girl, People go to Port Said to eat seafood and buy new clothes for weddings), Sinai is where I'll be honeymooning, fishing on the docks of Nuweiba,

Ladies & Gentlemen that was the end of my story, sending out my love and loyalty, Egypt is my country Chorus:

Have you ever drank from the Nile and thought about singing a song to Her? I carry Her in my eyes and I feel her problems and sorrows, My country, my country, I give you my love and loyalty

3) **4th of DECEMBER**
On the 4th of December, 1984, Maha and Ahmed El Deeb celebrated the birth of their first baby, They named me Mohamed like my Grandfather, it also coincided with the birth of the Prophet Mohamed PBUH, I was born in a hospital overlooking the Maadi corniche, The name of the hospital was 'The Peace', now you know why I say the word peace a lot, Do you know why I want to enlighten the World like lanterns? Why I want to wake up the hopeless who are living their life like bats, waking up at night and sleeping in the morning, I spent the majority of my life in the Gulf just like million other Egyptians who immigrated in search for a better living, It was my Father, Mother, Brother and I, During our childhood, we participated in soccer tournaments, Karate and played...
Lyrics

Nintendo, Back when art was real
art and had a message

CHORUS
My name is Mohamed El Deeb, I’m
here to bring you some fresh
rhythms like milk to give you the
nutrients that you need, I travelled
the whole of Egypt from Delta to
Upper Egypt

My very first performance in Egypt
was in 2005, I was joined by
Meya Meya, Zeroboyz, MSE,
Asfalt (underground Hip-Hop
bands), Back then, I didn’t write
my rhymes in Arabic until this one
night in Assiut the same year I
wrote my first verse in colloquial
Arabic, I joined Asfalt in 2006,
it was comprised of Yasser, Gad,
Ibrahim and myself, We rocked
shows everywhere, experienced
the good and bad, Until everyone
had to go in their own separate
way even though the fans wanted
us to continue, We solved our
problems like grown men and un-
derstood that each one of us had a
valid point of view, 2008 was the
birth of my new duo, ‘Wight Na-
zar’ (point of view in Arabic),
We had an impact on the scene, but
that had to end too because of
creative differences, There’s no
hard feelings with music, and its
fate that leads you on, I’m saying
this with the same positive attitude
that is felt in rain dances

CHORUS
On this occasion I’d like to thank
everyone who supported me and
motivated me to continue, at-
tended one of my shows/open mic
sessions or even came across my
music by chance,

I’m clever in this field and I’m
happy doing what I love, I’m
working on achieving a dream
with a meaning, I can’t see myself
doing a 9-5 and sitting down on
a desk, The normal evolution of
things is for me to dedicate my life
to music so that one day I don’t
look back and regret it, I don’t
want to chase net profit, I’m going
to reach my goals without the help
of a genie and a lamp, Since my
birth I’ve been singing songs, I’m
doing this for the records, don’t
forget about me History, It started
as a personal thing and now its
a strong movement in our com-
community (referring to Hip-Hop), I’m
not Nostradamus or a shrink but I
always had a hope and confidence
in my people, My imagination
didn’t betray me, which is why I’m
positive,

4) PROMISED
A call to all liberals, Islamists,
womanizers or Judges, let me
speak my mind and lets not look
at the past, The past is gone with
its sadness and hurting, During
the transitional period, the people
in charge bombarded us with so-
plicated terms like ‘Technocrat
Government’ and failed to solve
the real problems,

Corruption was prevalent in the
country and stank like arm-
pits, And the cops were being
commanded to take and execute
orders like Robocop, I’m using the
Arabic language to express myself
and remind the people of the
discrimination we faced, Before
the revolution, if you spoke up you
would get whipped and thrown
in jail, The people that carried
this out are what we refer to as
counter-revolutionaries (Felool is
the Egyptian word), The current
government is complacent and is
not addressing the real issues, We
still export our gas, Gaza is still
under siege, harassment is still
an everyday issue in our streets
ask our Sisters, It turns out that
we’re the majority (the People)
and you are the minority (Muslim
Brotherhood), Before banning
porn sites, tell us who the third
party is (forces acting against the
revolution were given this term),
They asked me what is humanity?
I told them it’s a human being and
his intentions

CHORUS
Promised a better life, because the
one we’re living today isn’t rosy,
Stand by me or else we die, Shout
out loud, “No to the ruling of
monkeys, this is the time of Lions”
“No to the ruling of monkeys, this
is the time of Lions”

I’m not an amateur, I’m a musician
like Sayed Mekkawy (famous
Egyptian musician) Sayed Met’al
(folkloric Egyptian musician) told
us a lot of things but you weren’t
listening, You turned your eye on
a lot of things, its as if your con-
science was empty in the middle
like a bridge, They’re (govern-
ment) playing with us like video
games, My tongue is my horse
(old Egyptian saying), I’ve tamed it
to protect me, I’ve lived a quarter
of a century, and I’m going to sing
to the day God decides to take my
soul, I demand the return of my
country, 1 year and a half passed
since Mubarak stepped down and
still my people are not satis-
fied, Don’t blame the revolution for
the unfortunate events today, The
previous regime (counter-revolu-
tion) was working a system to de-
feat our revolution, Remember the
withdrawal of the security forces,
slowing down of trials? Even an
illiterate could process the infor-
mation and understand what was
going on, The Muslim Brotherhood
must stop lying to the people, The
media hasn’t changed and it still
deceiving people just like Susan
Mubarak days, I’m out of words
when I see the newly elected
parliament members (majority
represented by Islamists) putting
their heads down in the ground
like ostriches

5) STAND UP EGYPTIAN
The stock has been put out of
commission, The old slogan is
back: Police is in the service of the
people, The situation was tough

Today it is better, We can make our
desert green, We got rid of Hitler’s
rule, A damned pharaoh, With
the presence of Facebook and
Twitter the Egyptian walks
confidently, Using the language
EL GÉNÉRAL

1/ RAIS LEBLED/MR. PRESIDENT

Why are you worried? Would you tell me something? Don't be afraid! Mr. President, today I am speaking in the name of all the people and myself who are suffering in 2011, There are still people dying of hunger who want to work to survive, But their voice was not heard, Get yourself into the street and see, People have become like animals, Look at the police with batons, takatak, they don't care, Since there is no one telling them to stop, Even the law of the Constitution, Put it in water and drink it. Every day I hear of invented process, In spite of what the servants of the State know, I see the snake that strikes women in headscarves, You accept this for your daughter? You know these are words that make you weep, As a father does not want to hurt his children, Then this is a message from one of your children, Who is speaking of his suffering, We are living like dogs, Half of the people are living in filth, And drank from a cup of suffering. Mr. President, your people are dead, Many people eat from garbage, And you see what is happening in the country, Misery everywhere and people who have not found a place to sleep, I am speaking in name of the people who are suffering and were squashed underfoot.

CHORUS

Rise up, O Egyptian, No revolution can be terminated in a night and day, Bear with it a little, Have endurance and tolerance, Don't fear over the cycle of production, There should be a revolution against oneself, Tomorrow is better than the past A transitional period. A commercial break, Tea and Cleopatra (Egyptian cigarettes brand), Yellow faces staying up at night, To follow the newscast, A penalty. The audience is waiting for the goal, Every day in newspapers we read news about a dog that has looted the country, Stop! return the gold, Weren't you in charge of the country's media? False statements, odd expressions, The hard part is over and history has been written, Don't think that the people is exhausted

2/ ENA ERRAP/I AM RAP

I am RAP, who was confused, They locked the doors in my face, I live happy one day and the day after I suffer a lot, I am RAP, who was oppressed, Not like in the other countries where there is RESPECT, Now, everybody knows that RAP is making a difference, They create big trouble and sabotage me. They said that my musical style is not compatible with our traditions, they said it is sinful, But in fact it is THEM who are doing sinful things and they will continue until the end. For them I am problematic, I am the one who is a nuisance to them, I am the one who denounces the SYSTEM's injustices against my people.
They only like arts and artists that serve them and their interest in this country,
That's why they cancel all rap concerts,
I am not on stage because for them, I am outside the system,
I prefer to stay outside the system instead of prostrating to the dictators.

REFRAIN
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
I am RAP, the voice of the country,
It's been a long time since I have been fighting against conflict,
Against racism, against wars, against rotten mentality and misery
I am RAP, still moving forward,
My soul is still the same [fighting for justice],
I won't abdicate,
Every military watchman is afraid,
My words are grenades,
I am BACK!

I am RAP, I am ready to start,
always on the move,
Never stopping,
My fire will never turn off,
I'm RAP, rapping for the public
against the political system's shenanigans
I am helping you with my critiques,
Do you think you will change your ways?
I will never change,
My words are addressed to the "enlightened" people,
I am free and have been for a long time

REFRAIN (two times)
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
It's been a long time since I have been fighting against conflict,
Against racism, against wars, against rotten mentality and misery
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
It's been a long time since I have been fighting against conflict,
Against racism, against wars, against rotten mentality and misery

3/ WELCOME TO MY WORLD
Welcome!
Just know that I am still hardcore,
My voice is my weapon, my rap is strong,
Wherever there is evil I am facing it,
I am ready for life or death
Don't need to talk, the public knows my story,
General of the heart, General of war,
I am rapping for [the struggle for social justice],
For the voice of truth, the voice of the oppressed. and the voice of the country,
I dedicate this to the jealous who envy so intensely.
These dogs are standing, watching me as I fly high,
Many were happy when the President threw me in jail,
But I reappeared like a nightmare,
My rap disturbs, it has a cause, it doesn't serve the government or political parties,
I am blacklisted by the secret service,
My rap makes them intensely angry.

REFRAIN
Welcome to my world,
Step with me and follow me.
It's me versus my enemy,
You can never stop me
Welcome to my world,
Step with me and follow me.
It's me versus my enemy,
You can never stop me
All my life is a risk and danger,
I am a soldier in every war,
My road is dark and full of holes.
I am here,
As you already know from the beginning, my lyrics and my rap are that of a [socially] engaged artist,
That has been my intention from the first day, Many people listened to me, listened to my art, while at the same time other MCs hate me, They cursed me thinking they are putting me down, We are living in a country where no one has the courage to speak the truth, Everyone is fake and can be corrupted, Except the one who has humanitarian values, I cannot be bought, neither can my message or my voice, My voice is free and I won't prostrate to the political games, I have credibility and rap is a responsibility

Case after case, we try to show the truth, Because of oppression, my pen feels compelled to speak out on paper, We are still standing, Although, for years the water in the glass has been overflowing [with social pressures and troubles], My rap is advancing at an even greater speed.

I address my words to you the public, My greetings to you, Without my public I could never have been what I am, From the South to the North from the East to the West, Public, thanks to you I have reached my goal and realized what I want [to do], Thanks to God, he gave me new life, I am alive, I could have been dead and far away from you, With you, I move forward, With you, I live like a volcano, With you, lyrics live!

5/ DIRTY GAME
Looking for a BUZZ and fame, Rap in Tunisia sold its soul, That is why in Tunisia the rappers are just rapping rubbish, Following the policy of nonsense, [Excuses from policy makers like] I forgot to tell you that the ladder is broken, Come back tomorrow.

You are cursing, but thank God I am advancing, You insult, dreaming that I am being affected by it [forcing me to stay up] all night, Many words, many rumors about me, Looking down at you from a distance, And I am on top, The Boss is back! Go back, back to your place, Time to set everything in order, Tunisian rap is a jungle, Full of [predatory] animals, full of lions, tigers, eagles, crocodiles and dinosaurs, Everything is imitation, all are thieves and hypocrites, The public is aware of your games, That is why my fans love me, Because I am very sincere, With the help of God, My name and image won't fail.

REFRAIN
Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always on the move, Welcome to my world.

Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always on the move, Welcome to my world.

We do not use the language of those using drugs as in some neighborhoods, In life you should respect yourself, You are speaking a language that has been passé since 2000, You were silent before, Where were you during Zineelabdine Ben Ali's [the former Tunisian president overthrown by the Jasmine Revolution] time? In Tunisia what was sinful then is an honor today, Look at the Revolution, Everybody used it and drank from it like milk from a cow, While I am fighting, You and ones like you are singing about gooey love, I am well known and you are insulting me, As a result, you are still look like spit on a wall. You are talking behind my back, And at the same time you want to be featured in a collaboration with me. I cleaned up Tunisian rap and made it listenable, I am the one who gave it value and with me the flag is flying high, I am pulling you by your ears [I am carrying you], Like Messi [Spain’s star soccer player] is carrying FC Barcelona [Spain’s famous soccer team], I am like a thorn in your side, Rappers and government you’re still the same, And I am still here like the eagle and you [standing there like the owl]

REFRAIN
Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always on the move, Welcome to my world.

Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always on the move, Welcome to my world.

4/ WAKFEEN/STANDING UP
General, OK, OK, Welcome to my world.

We are still standing up even though they’re talking badly about us, We don’t care about them, Each one has their own character, You see a lot of jealousy, a lot of hate in hearts, You don’t want to accept destiny, We are still standing even when, we were betrayed by friends, I open my doors to them, But at the end they betrayed me like the dogs that they are, The people today are judged by the money
Lyrics

they have,
Specially in Tunisia,
When people get rich,
everyone kisses their
hands,
Do a comparison between
the one who falls down
and the one is standing
up,
The one who falls, they
step on him,
And the one who is flying
high, they stand in line
to meet with him.
Sick hearts, full of poison,
Like vipers they eat
[the weak sheep] with
wolves and then cry to
shepherd,
Like vampires they drink
the blood of the hands
that helped them,
Look to people with val-
ues, not to people that
sold their souls,
General! Strong and
successful but never an
oppressor,
Many things were said,
I was young but now I
am older.

REFRAIN
We are still standing until
we die
With all that they say
about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing,
Like rocks of the pyra-
mids,
Because we are standing,
many of them cried as
they are fake rappers.
Snow doesn't melt during
its season,
The cold is accustomed
to cold.
Those who are accu-
stomed to cheapness, are
humiliated like faded
flowers.

REFRAIN
We are still standing until
we die with all what
they say about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.
We are still standing until
we die with all what
they say about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing,
Even though they tried to
give us a bad reputation,
I am not disturbed by
rumors,
People know my truth
very well.

We are still standing,
Even the media are play-
ing games and sabotag-
ing us with the public.
They want to put me in
a box,
They want to make fun
of me and drive out the
reality.
Don't listen to them or
follow them, we are not
on the same subject.
They sell your secret to
others, because they are
disrespectful,

The bad mannered
always remain on the
bottom,
And will never see the
light.
We are kind of lost and
we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing until
we die with all what
they say about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing until
we die with all what
they say about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing until
we die with all what
they say about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing until
we die with all what
they say about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing until
we die with all what
they say about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

REFRAIN
We are still standing until
we die,
With all what they say
about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

We are still standing until
we die,
With all what they say
about us,
We are still standing and
as we are standing they
are crying,
In their eyes you can see
the jealousy,
Like it or not you are
jealous.

SHADIA MANSOUR

1/ KOLHUM ENDHUM

DABABAAT

Produced by: Sandhill;
Lyrics: Shadia Mansour
Oh Gaza of blood, Oh
Gaza of worry
We share your sorrow and
shall fulfill your struggle
Palestine, oh land of
lions, we shall return
Oh freedom fighters, with
your faith,
You will defeat the
Zionist, racist, cowardly
mission
Oh righteous martyrs of
Gaza
For too long, you have stood in the line of fire
Your souls, shall be our beacons
Your victories, written all over the walls
Long live, long live, long live, Palestine
And to the Arab leaders, who are still sleeping
Where are you?
Where are your voices that should be filled with outrage and fury at this situation?

REFRAIN
They all have tanks, but we have stones
They demolish our homes and kill our children
Oh Palestine the free, oh Gaza the brave
Zionism shall be defeated

2/ KUFEEYEH ARABIYE/
THE KUFEEYEH IS ARAB
Produced by: DJ Johnny Juice; Lyrics: Shadia Mansour
Good morning cousins
Come in and honor us with your presence
What would you like us to serve you, Arab blood or tears from our eyes?
I think that’s how they hoped we would receive them
That’s why they got tangled up when they tripped up on their own mistake
That’s why we wore the kufeyyeh

REFRAIN
That’s why we wore the kufeyyeh
Because it is our national symbol
That’s why we wore the kufeyyeh
Because it is our original identity
Come on, raise your kufeyyehs
Raise them up for Bilad esh’sham [Greater Syria, that includes Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine]
The Kufeyyeh is Arab, and it stays Arab
There is no other after the Arab people
Show me one region in the world that is more influential
The picture is clear, we are the origins of civilization
Our history, tradition and custom bears witness to our existence
That’s why I wore the Palestinian dress
From, Haifa, Jenin, Jabal e’naar (Nablus) to Ramallah
Let me see the kufeyyeh (the red and white one)
Raise it up to the sky
I am...Shadiyat el Arab
And this scarf is my I.D.
From the day I was born, the people have been my responsibility
Look, I was raised, between the East and West
Between two languages Between the rich and the poor
However, I am like the kufeyyeh
However you wear me, wherever you leave me I stay true to my origin...Palestinian.

3/ THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE
Produced by: Lethal Skillz; Lyrics: Shadia Mansour
Beware of the language of peace,
It’s all gibberish when its just words with no action
The people are sick and tired of broken promises.
I've heard enough of this language of peace,
Of hearing the same slogans over and over,
Getting bored of the same old story...
Beware of the familiar faces,
Of the sketchy smiles,
Of the scripts we all know too well
One minute you're considered a terrorist
And the next minute you could be considered A partner of peace or a statesman...
Peace seems to be hurting us, instead of saving us,
Is anyone hearing us?
How many times should we allow our dignities to be exploited?
How long should we allow this silence to go on for?
More than 60 years and we’re still waiting for peace,
As long as peace remains in progress,
The people will continue to pay the price

REFRAIN
Since ’67, meetings and assemblies
And the people suffer from this language of peace
TIME WARNER IS PROUD TO SPONSOR
DIVERSE VOICES AT BAM

©Time Warner Inc. 2012. All trademarks and service marks incorporated herein are owned by Time Warner Inc. and/or one of its affiliated companies. Photos by (clockwise from top left): Jack Vartoogian, Julita Cervantes, Deolinda, Julita Cervantes. Center: Camane and Jack Vartoogian.
BAM Salutes Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art

For their leadership support of *Mic Check: Hip-Hop from North Africa and the Middle East*