



## The Almond Tree

*Michelle Cohen Corasanti*

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*This is an alternate-cover edition for ASIN B008XM0AZM.*

Gifted with a brilliant mind that has made a deep impression on the elders of his Palestinian village, Ahmed Hamid is nevertheless tormented by his inability to save his friends and family. Living under occupation, the inhabitants of the village harbour a constant fear of losing their homes, jobs, belongings – and each other.

On Ahmed's twelfth birthday, that fear becomes a reality.

With his father now imprisoned, his family's home and possessions confiscated and his siblings quickly succumbing to hatred in the face of conflict, Ahmed embarks on a journey to liberate his loved ones from their hardship, using his prodigious intellect. In so doing, he begins to reclaim a love for others that had been lost over the course of a childhood rife with violence, and discovers new hope for the future.

## The Almond Tree Details

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Author : Michelle Cohen Corasanti

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## From Reader Review The Almond Tree for online ebook

### Marisa Sauco says

Precioso. ♥?

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### Jaeri Ayarez says

I was late to find out that I won this book last dec. 1~  
I just check my mail and found out that I won~  
This MADE MY DAY into BRIGHTEST!!!  
I was really surprise, it was my first experience to won in giveaway :D  
Thank you so much :D

I'm excited to read it x)  
I wonder what will I learned and realize after reading this book ^^  
can't wait :D

Re-edited:

When I received this book last Dec. 17, 2012:

I went home really depressed (because of my exams. I think I will fail, I'm not really good at science especially in physics. Then when i opened our door and entered our house. My mom told me that there was a package. I saw it in a table. i quickly grab it. I was like...

"Eh??? Really??? It already arrived?? Wahahahahaha (I really laughed like that) Yehey!"

Then I joyously went to my room and open it. I was so excited and happy. When I had a glimpse of the book, I expressed "OMG Oh my God"

then I got it, I hug it and jump and giggled. Then i open it and smelled it. It smell nice ^-^  
then I look at the page and was able to recognize this lines, ""The examiner approached the microphone. Let C be the unit circle  $x^2 + y = 1$ ." (O\_O)  
but then I laughed. I saw a letter saying:

A gift note from michelle corasanti:  
May the battles that we fight be for the advancement of humanity  
From: Michelle

It was really a nice message :)

Your book lighten up my day~ Thank you so much~ Thank you so much for this~ I'm really happy ^-^

Now as I read this wonderful book and after I read it:

(I will first mention my overall comment, I will last my reactions to some scenes, so readers can choose not to continue reading my review to avoid spoiling them)

First, my expression was that it was well written :)

The flow was really good and I like it ^^

Readers will enjoy reading it continuously. It's just

I paused sometimes when I cried and when I have some important things to do.. But surely, you will love reading this book ;D

For those who will read this, please prepare a tissue. I honestly just cried two times other was just having teary eyes. Since, it was well written, I could really imagine the scenes that's why tears just crawl on my cheeks as I read the book.

About the wars... I hear news about war in the middle east. First I know it was horrible and they shouldn't act like that. I've been wondering why they have to fight like that. I know some lives were really affected. And in this book, I had more clear vision of what is happening there or to such war. It's so sad that I wish I called stop the war.

Ichmad and Abbas. First I really like Ichmad. He was smart and idolized Einstein as I do too. I wish i was smart like him. I was studying as Civil Engineering after all. And the way they study in school shock me and how their teachers ask them. I wouldn't like to be asked directly like that because for sure I wouldn't be able to answer.

It's not only his knowledge that I liked but also how he choose his path. I like his father's advice. It will really bring peace. It's great that the two of them has a talent that made them survive.

I always think that Ichmad was really a good person because he choose that path.. BUT...

Abbas. I don't like Abbas because he letting himself be eaten by anger. But then when he explained to ichmad why he choose to be a terrorist that he was doing it for his people and how he help others. I changed my mind a little. The way that Ichmad did might be really selfish but Abbas option too wasn't really that good. Just like someone said Hatred is the reason why people kill. But when you kill, another hatred will be born and that person might kill someone too. I think it was Kenshin in the live action movie said that.

Both of them has their own kindness. It's just that the path they had chosen has different effects on their lives and others. I was wondering what would I choose. Ichmad's way or Abbas? Since I'm a girl, I wouldn't be able to fight like Abbas. But if I chose Ichmad's, I think I will feel guilty. I'm having a good life while others suffers?

Or maybe just like him, I will first had a good job, save money and help each family and others. Yes, I think I will also follow Baba's advice. I really salute his father ^^

One of the good about this book was it make us think of what to do in such situations. But if I was really there, I think I would die early since I'm thin and not really healthy. But who knows, God may protect me ^^ And people will see the difference if they choose the path of Ichmad or Abbas. Most would probably choose Ichmad.

Also, the books has many lessons in it. and lines to be quoted and be a principle in life. ^^

I really love this book especially that it was about Life and Science. I really like to understand life and how people lives. I also like Science even though I'm weak to it.

((SPOILER..))

This is not really a spoil but I would like to share the word I would love to live with.

"Success is not about never falling, but about rising every time you fall" -Teacher Mohammad of The Almond Tree-

"You cannot go back and make a new start, but you can start now and make a new ending" -Teacher Mohammad-

"People hate out of fear and ignorance. If they could just get to know the people they hate, and focus on their common interests, they could overcome that hatred"  
-Nora-

"Only if one dares to fail can one achieve something great"  
-Baba-

"Success in life isn't about the number of failures we think we have, but about how we react to those failures"  
-Baba-

"Life isn't about what happens to you, but about how you choose to react to it"  
-Ichmad-

There are other good lines to be quoted but they are my favorite ones ^^

Now the spoil..

As I read what happened to Amal, on how she died, I was shock that tears were crawling in my cheeks. because I can really imagined that scene. Her smile and that moment when she was thrown up because of the landmine and her smile was fading, it was heart-breaking.

I also cry hard when Nora died. I really like her personality. I wish to be like her. But she died like that. Why? Why did it happened? Why that guy with the bulldozer cold-halfheartedly do that??? I keep asking this question as I cry and fallen to asleep. I had a hard time moving forward in that scene where she died T\_T RIP Nora :'(

And Abbas. I was worried about him. I even thought that he might kill Ichmad. Good thing he still has a kind heart.

Then Khaled, his son. Why did he have to commit suicide. yes, he had explained it and somehow it is a good reason too. But I feel irritated. Maybe not to him, but to those people who cause the war. A dream was shattered because of the war. I just hate it!

I wish the war would end. It's not really good. There are still war in the middle east right? Aren't they ashamed? Other countries leaving peacefully and helping each other to have a better life, while they are fighting like that? I wish they would stop. This book could help change others view in Wars. They probably

would choose Ichmad's way. Thinking that it is possible to take that path.

Reading this book, feels like I was the almond tree witnessing everything ^^

Love reading it :)

Thank you Goodreads and Thank you Michele Cohen ^^

Thank you God :)

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## Liz says

### *A Goodreads Giveaway Book*

For Ichmad and Abbas, the world was Hell.

One boy would carry that hell around with him like a prison. The other would rise above it, and try to transform it. Both worked toward the same cause: one with a heart fueled by hate, the other with a heart guided by love.

Michelle Cohen Corasanti's *The Almond Tree* is the story of Ichmad Hamid--a young boy, growing up in an Israeli-occupied Palestinian village. It's a story of war. Ichmad and his family were the victims of hate, victims of fear, victims of war-mongering politics. But Ichmad was more than just a victim. He was his father's son...

Corasanti's novel is a novel of endurance. It is a novel that tells the story of two oppressed peoples: one turns into the oppressor; the other, the oppressed.

But Corasanti does something important. She makes both sides human.

In Western culture, our media tells the same story; the American story; the side of the story that we politically "support." Corasanti brings the Palestinian side of the story to life through Ichmad and Abbas. She brings the Israeli side of the story to life with Professor Sharon. She shows us things—real things—that we do not see in the media. She shows us *people*. And that's what is important here. People.

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## Debbie "DJ" says

WOW! What a powerful book and such an incredible story. This one got inside me right away, and held me to the very end. It's a riveting account of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict told mainly through the eyes of one

family. The family's extremely different viewpoints all held points of validity. I can clearly see how "doing the right thing" can be so different for each person. How can anyone judge another's experience under such impossible circumstances. I wanted to say this is also a story of hope, but it is really one of luck. I can say this book opened my eyes in a profound way. I highly recommend it.

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## **Doreen says**

I looked forward to reading this book because of the subject matter; unfortunately, the novel was disappointing.

The book is the fictional memoir of a Palestinian named Ichmad Hamid. Covering the years from 1955 to 2009, the focus is on the extreme suffering of Ichmad's large family at the hands of the Israeli occupiers. Crisis follows crisis, although Ichmad is able to better his life because of his intelligence.

A major problem is the weak characterization. Ichmad's portrayal is unrealistic as evidenced in the repeated references to his exceptional abilities. From the beginning Ichmad sees himself as different: "I knew from a young age that I wasn't like the other boys in my village" (14). He is "promoted by three grades" (19) and, because he becomes a backgammon champion, he becomes "a welcome and honoured guest . . . sort of a legend" (19) at the village tea house. His father speaks of his eldest son's "extraordinary mathematical mind" (30) and his mother calls him "my masterpiece" (31). The village teacher speaks of him as a genius (112) who will make his people proud (69). Despite his limited education because he has to go to work to help support his family, he enters a mathematics competition, graduates at the top of his class (198), and in his research makes "tremendous progress" (263). And he is nominated for a Nobel Prize "each of the last ten years" (338)!

To make matters worse, Ichmad is exceptional in other ways. Twice he is a hero: "[W]ithout fear," he rescues a girl from a rabid jackal (80), and later he saves two students from a fire (197-198). Twice it is mentioned that he works "around the clock" (196, 289). His generosity knows no bounds: he buys his nephews convertible Mercedes (324) and pays for the university education of seventeen nieces and nephews. In his sixties, his body is "firm and strong from years of running" (317), though not once is reference made to his running to stay in shape.

Character transformations are also incredible. A man "well known for his . . . dislike of Arabs" (137) who may have beaten and arrested Ichmad's father (159) becomes Ichmad's "closest friend" (344)? He is not the only one to undergo such a miraculous change. When Ichmad first meets Yasmine, he says that everything about her "screamed ignorance. Her veil, her thick, unplucked eyebrows, her traditional robe. . . . Her teeth were yellow and were crooked and she was plump" (271). She has "a ready array of excuses" (276) to not adapt to her new life in the United States, but later she is described as wearing "tight black trousers" (305) and having earned a "master's degree in elementary education" (310).

And then there are the gaps and inconsistencies. Abbas "can barely walk" (253) yet twice he travels a considerable distance to find his brother Ichmad (154, 187), and both times he knows exactly where to find him at different locations on the university campus. The village teacher tells Ichmad, "If you win, I'll find jobs for your brothers in my cousin's moving company" (110), yet he doesn't keep his promise when his prize pupil wins the mathematics competition? A woman is described as wearing a "lacy undergarment that conformed perfectly to the round fullness of her breasts" (235), but she never wore bras (278)? A family agrees not to tell a man about the death of his daughter "until he was released" (57). When he is released fourteen years later, his first words to his family are about the death of the daughter (207). When was he told? A professor accuses Ichmad of cheating. A classmate, without ever being told about the accusation,

comments that the professor has become lazy (163). That classmate “‘figured out what happened’” (174), but the reader is never told how Ichmad is cleared.

The writing style is repetitious. When surprised, characters stare “with their mouths open” (118). On the same page, another person is described: “His mouth was open” (118). A classmate’s “mouth gaped open” (147) in awe at Ichmad’s skills at backgammon. His brother stares at him “open-mouthed” (189). And the protagonist stares with “mouth agape” (186). When Ichmad first sees a woman, she is described as “the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen” (79) or “the loveliest girl I’d ever seen” (218). Dialogue is unnatural. Why would Ichmad have to tell his brother, who was there, “‘Don ’t forget, everything we owned was destroyed’” (77) or that the Jews “‘control over ninety per cent of the land’” (81)? Then there are the lengthy advanced math problems (117 – 118, 139, 201) which serve virtually no purpose in a work of fiction.

Symbolism is simplistic. The almond tree and olive trees at the back of Ichmad’s family home are the major symbols. Ichmad says, “They reminded me of my people. . . . I’d marveled that despite their exposure to beatings, arid landscape and fierce heat, the trees survived and bore new fruit year after year, century after century. I knew their strength lay in their roots which were so deep that even if the trees were cut down, they survived and sent forth shoots to create new generations. I always believed that my people’s strength, like the olive trees’, lay in our roots” (207 – 208). The symbol should speak for itself; it should not need to be explained.

There is no doubt that the author is passionate about the Palestine-Israel conflict. Certainly, the Palestinian perspective needs to be given, and to have a Jewish American attempt to do so is daring. It is unfortunate that the skills required to write a good novel are missing.

**Please check out my reader's blog (<http://schatjesshelves.blogspot.ca/>) and follow me on Twitter (@DCYakabuski).**

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### **Maureen says**

A first reads giveaway. Thank you so much goodreads! The story follows Ichmad, a Palestinian boy and his family. I have never read a book before from a Palestinian perspective, but I'm so glad I have now. It's a brutal, heartbreaking read, but I would recommend *The Almond Tree* to anyone. Amazing book. Well done Michelle for an alternative perspective.

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### **Chad Sayban says**

Death and hardship are the reality of Ichmad Hamid’s life growing up in a Palestinian village ruled over by the Israeli military. From birth, Ichmad has been taught that the Israelis are the enemy as he has seen his siblings killed or maimed by their brutality. But when his mathematical genius gives him the opportunity to study at the Hebrew university, his wrongly imprisoned father is the only person who insists that Ichmad should follow his dreams and espouse peace rather than conflict. However, he will be pitted against intolerance at every turn – even from inside his own family. The endless battle to use his intellect has the power to either save or destroy those he loves in a part of the world where conflict seems to be the only constant.

*The Almond Tree* is the debut novel Michelle Cohen Corasanti, an American of Jewish descent growing up

in Utica, New York. She was raised in a strict Jewish household and knew nothing of the struggles of Palestinians until she studied in Israel in her teens. I bring up the author's heritage only because it makes the writing in *The Almond Tree* all the more remarkable. The story of Ichmad Hamid and his family does not read like a fiction account by an author with a summary knowledge of what is going on. It reads as a first-person memoir by a man who lived every second of the struggle and powerfully relates every visceral emotion of a lifetime of uncertainty.

Corasanti's writing flows beautifully and she captures the spirit of her characters in *The Almond Tree*. Throughout the story, I felt for the characters – I got angry when they were unfairly treated, I rejoiced at Ichmad's successes and recoiled at the devastating events. Very simply, Corasanti made me care about this family as if they lived next door to me. No small feat considering I have virtually nothing in come with them other than being human. Even more, Corasanti never once becomes preachy or one-sided. There are heroes and villains on both sides and we see perceptions evolve throughout the book.

*The Almond Tree* demonstrates that there are many different ways to bring the struggle for justice forward. Ichmad exemplifies what duty to one's family and honor to yourself and those around you can produce in the face of intolerance. Moreover, Corasanti is never heavy-handed. She knows she is writing a story first and this one is a real page-turner that happens to also have a message. As the days have gone on, the story of *The Almond Tree* has not left me. I dare anybody to read this book and not come away altered in some way by what is inside. That is what makes it great – that is why it receives a rare 5-star rating from me. It is one of the best books I have read – ever.

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## **Jen says**

A remarkable story about Ichmad, an impoverished child living in war torn Israel through the fighting between the Jews and Palestinians. A devastating view of war and how unarmed citizens are pulled in innocently stripping them of loved ones, necessities and at times, even spirit. The story of Ichmad is of a 12 year old boy who was able to rise above and move beyond the barriers of poverty because of his genius mathematical skills. It cost him loved -ones including his own brother who believed him to be a traitor by working and studying with a Jew. It's also a story about faith and hope - about what peace can do to bring 2 fighting nations as well as fighting neighbours and family members together. I've read some harsh reviews about this book, but the reality is, it is a work of fiction. It was a story that kept me engaged and one I could go back and read again. 5 stars.

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## **Raluca says**

Book source: received for review via LibraryThing

The Almond Tree tells the story of a young boy, Ichmad Hamid, who manages to succeed in life only thanks to his intelligence and good will. Caught in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ichmad's family is left with no home or possessions, so he has to struggle to earn money and survive. Thanks to his natural talent in Sciences, Ichmad receives a scholarship to study in Israel (the country of the soldiers who killed two of his sisters and imprisoned his father), and later moves to America, from where he is able to help his family back home.

By becoming a successful researcher, Ichmad manages to draw worldwide attention to the situation in Palestine, and to raise funds in order to help his compatriots. However, the story of the Palestinian Arabs has

not yet come to an end, and we are witnessing the history being written from suffering and oppression.

Although it saddened me a lot, I really enjoyed reading this book. There were many emotional, heart-warming moments, and the end was bright and motivational. It kept me captivated from the first page straight to the last, and even though I was relieved by the (almost) happy end, I still wanted more. There are so many things to be said about the conflict between the Israeli and the Palestinians!

The characters were well-described and I was able to put myself in the place of any of them. Each of the characters, either Arab or Israeli, faces great pain at some point. The book made me cry a lot and suffer along with the characters.

Another aspect that I liked was that I got to learn many fascinating things about the Arabic culture, and I also had fun trying to solve Ichmad's Physics and Math problem. The readers who are interested in History, Sciences or Arts will surely enjoy this book.

It is such a shame that all we do is to sit comfortably in front of our TV's, unaware of what is happening around us. It would not be bad to learn more about this subject and help, even just by spreading the alarm signal. The Almond Tree got me totally unprepared. I barely had an idea of what is happening in the Middle East, and I'm glad this book opened my eyes. I got captivated by the subject of this book and I will certainly read more of this kind.

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### **Susan Abulhawa says**

I reviewed this novel in a longer essay regarding novels that pervert the cultures and struggles of marginalized peoples. Here is the relevant portion:

Michelle Cohen-Corasanti's debut novel, *The Almond Tree*, is yet another example. The narrative creates sympathy with the oppressed (in this case, Palestinians) by enumerating the litany of injustices they must endure. Cohen-Corasanti, a Jewish White American woman of considerable privilege, said in an interview that she wrote this novel because she "wanted to bring about peace between Palestinians and Israelis" and to show that "we are all human beings and we're all equal."

In this context, a quote from novelist Teju Cole comes to mind: "The banality of evil transmutes into the banality of sentimentality. The world is nothing but a problem to be solved by enthusiasm."

Cohen-Corasanti said she wanted to show how a "Palestinian and Israeli could overcome obstacles and work together to advance humanity." By "obstacles" she means the wholesale destruction of Palestinian society, use of the most advanced weaponry against principally unarmed civilians, demolition of homes, daily humiliation at hundreds of checkpoints, colour-coded license plates, Israeli-only roads, segregated buses, assassinations, imprisonment without charge or trial, theft of land and water, theft of homes and dignity, bombing of schools, curfews, deportations, multiple generations of refugees, and the general erasure of Palestine off the map.

Her idea was to create "the perfect Jewish woman" (Nora) for her protagonist, Ichmad, an unlikely, insufferable Palestinian man. Nora is later killed in a brazen insensitive event stolen from the life and murder of Rachel Corrie. Ichmad's next wife, Yasmine, is a simple-minded Palestinian who can't hold a candle to Nora. She "wasn't tall like Nora. Her facial features weren't delicate like Nora's; they were hidden in layers of baby fat. Her teeth were yellow and crooked and she was plump...How could I bring her to the States? How would she ever fit in at faculty parties?" On their wedding night, Ichmad pretends she is Nora.

"Yasmine lay on the bed without movement, like dead meat." The insults, and Ichmad's contempt for his people, don't end.

As Teju Cole remarks: "The White Savior Industrial Complex is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege."

Regarding the protagonist's name, "Ichmad" is how Israelis pronounce Ahmad, the second most common name across the Arab world. Even Palestinian reviewers who liked this book couldn't stomach this Israelised version. Cohen-Corasanti claims "Ichmad" is an authentic pronunciation in the Triangle. I am familiar with the fellahi dialect in Um-el-Fahm, Taybeh and other Palestinian villages that make up the Triangle. No one pronounces Ahmad with "Ich" sound.

In fact, "Ichmad" is a form of an Arabic verb meaning to suffocate or subdue. Had the author consulted with a Palestinian or Arabic linguist, she'd have known that. But, according to her, in the seven years that it took to write this novel, she hired six editors: five Jewish, one Christian Fundamentalist, and all clearly lacking expertise in her subject matter. That alone speaks to the carelessness and arrogance with which Cohen-Corasanti approached Palestinian lives. That she did not conceive of hiring a Palestinian editor gives a lie to her avowed values of equality and partnership.

A Palestinian editor likely would have objected to another name: Professor Menachem Sharon (Menachem Begin meets Ariel Sharon - Grand Wizards of war criminals and wanton murders). Cohen-Corasanti mixes these two monsters to create a name for her Nobel Laureate professor character, who takes Ichmad under his wings.

Ichmad, whose family is impoverished by Israel, is a math prodigy who studies on a scholarship in an Israeli university in Jerusalem. Aside from the fact that most Palestinians in the West Bank cannot enter Jerusalem, much less go to university there (on a scholarship, no less), the notion that the path to success is necessarily through the oppressor's educational system is a typical supremacist assumption. It happens that even under the horrors and limitations of Israeli occupation, Palestinians have managed to build 26 institutions of higher education in the tiny enclaves of the West Bank and Gaza.

Since publication of *The Almond Tree*, the author has hired a Palestinian actor to "play" Ichmad in an interactive website, effectively commercializing Palestinian misery and humiliation.

Even irrelevant details are offensive. Only in the most orientalist imaginations would a Palestinian groom lift the veil of his bride with the tip of a sword. And only in the mind of a white American socialite does a poor brown Palestinian college student have only "homemade clothes" and must borrow someone's bellbottoms to wear to a party - as if "homemade clothes" are cheaper than a cheap pair of jeans; as if his family ran a sewing machine from their tent; as if residents of shantytowns the world over don't wear store-bought clothes.

An excellent review by Vacy Vlazna details other ways in which this racist, orientalist novel serves to make a hero of a self-loathing obsequious Palestinian cartoon of a man, and makes a pitiful villain of his brother, Abbas, who opts to defend his family and people by whatever means necessary. Vlazna also points out how the "bad" Palestinians are of darker skin colour in this novel. Her review, however, is a lone voice in a sea of praise extolling this novel. The Huffington Post predicts it will be the greatest seller of the decade. Sadly, they may be right, and, like *The Help*, it will eclipse authentic accounts of what it means to inhabit a world that considers you a lesser form of human.

Thus, a people's narrative is commandeered. When we are robbed of everything, broken and humiliated, the false saviours step in, colonise our wounds and bring our pain under their purview. And they profit from filling our cultural legacies with their racist assumptions, orientalist distortions and inglorious heroes of

small subservient character.

Teju Cole: “The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening”

As close as I feel to African-American culture and as much as I think I know about anti-black racism, I cannot imagine presuming to know enough to write from an African-American character’s voice about deep current and historic pain that I have neither lived nor inherited, but in fact have benefited from by virtue of living in a country and in an economy built from the ineffable misery of the Maafa, holocaust of slavery.

I think such presumption cannot come from noble or enlightened sentiments. Although seemingly distant topics, both books come from a master narrative that perverts another people's truth to fit within the framework of a neoliberal white supremacy cloaked in sympathy and pseudo-solidarity.

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### **Angela M says**

Something so terrible happens to a family in a small village in Palestine in the first chapter of this powerful novel and I thought they couldn't endure anymore . I was wrong ; bad things just keep happening and the loss and suffering was overwhelming . Yet, I am glad that I kept reading - actually I couldn't put it down .

Ichmad , the oldest son , through a rash and immature decision , has to become the caretaker of his family who live in this occupied village. He is extraordinarily intelligent and as the story unfolds , he becomes an extraordinary man. The only way to save his family is for Ichmad to leave and go to the university , studying and working and sending nearly every penny home .

While the focus is on Ichmad and his family's suffering , the author who is an American Jewish writer , also depicts the loss and suffering of Ichmad's Jewish professor , who has lost his family .

This story is about more than the conflict , it is about family , friendship , loss and it is about forgiveness that Ichmad's father teaches him . It is heartbreaking but yet offers up hope . It's an emotionally tough book to read but well worth it.

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### **Karen says**

Heart wrenching and yet heartwarming novel that everyone should read.

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### **Jana says**

Disclaimer: I do not feel that I am educated enough to judge this novel against real and documented history. The political situation in Israel, Palestine, and the surrounding areas is complicated enough without me taking a ham-fisted swing at it; therefore, I will only be looking at this novel as a work of fiction and weighing it accordingly.

The Almond Tree made me roll my eyes so hard and so often that they now swing freely in their sockets. I have googly eyes. I look like a certain cookie-jonesing monster.

The book begins with a melodramatic bang and ends with empty platitudes. It's just one long litany of predictable plot-device tragedies--deaths, accidents, beatings, explosions, misunderstandings both great and small--more than should ever happen to just one family in a small village. It seemed as though Ms. Cohen Corasanti couldn't trust her readers to feel sympathy for anyone other than Ichmad's family, so everything bad that could possibly happen is centered completely on them. If I had been able to see other families with dynamited houses or starving children, it would have had a much greater impact upon me and the story in general.

Additionally, I couldn't engage with any of the frustratingly one-dimensional characters. Baba is saintly, Mama is traditional, Abbas is angry, Ichmad/Ahmad is good. Israeli soldiers are inhuman monsters, but Israeli people are wonderful once they see the truth of Ichmad's humanity and overwhelming genius. Characters who are good are saintly; characters who are bad may as well be supervillain masterminds bent on world domination.

Take, for example, the character of Nora. Not only is she a blonde and blue-eyed "first-year law student at Harvard" who "could have been a beauty queen," but she's "the loveliest girl [he's] ever seen," she "[helps] abused women get restraining orders," "she works in a soup kitchen," she "taught English in a Palestinian refugee camp," and "[s]he and her parents went to South Africa to protest apartheid." Just two or three of those characteristics would have been enough to get the point across: Yes, she's a good person. But heaping the goodness on only makes her seem less realistic and more like a figurehead.

Abbas, Ichmad's younger brother, has "skin the colour of burned cinnamon, black unruly hair and long arms." He's angry at the world, and frankly, it's not hard to see why. Ichmad is a mathematical prodigy who receives the most attention, the most praise, and special tutoring in order to help his gifts flourish. The only special characteristic Abbas seems to have is charisma, a way of speaking with people, but after a horrible accident he is relegated to sleeping under tarps and in refrigerator boxes while Ichmad goes off to Hebrew University with an enormous scholarship. Whether Abbas is crippled or not seems to depend on whether the plot requires it--sometimes he can only get around by pulling himself across the ground, and sometimes he crosses great distances and stands perfectly upright with no explanation as to how or why.

There are other problems with consistency throughout the text. In Chapter 6, Ichmad specifically says, "There was no saviour. No uncle....that would come and rescue us." Chapter 7 begins with, "Uncle Kamal bought us a tent from the village market." Ichmad, as a character, can't seem to decide whether women in his culture should be allowed to choose who they love--his younger sister is married off to an older man through an arranged marriage, and that's fine, but when a young woman is forced to marry her cousin, because that directly affects Ichmad, he "curse[s] his culture for taking from women the right to choose their own spouse."

There's no condemnation, from Ichmad or anyone else, of anything the Palestinian terrorists do, and that's very troubling. No mention of the invisibility of women, or of any problems in his village unless they're specifically caused by Israeli soldiers. It's just not realistic at all. The narrative needs a balancing voice--someone who isn't as supernaturally lucky or gifted as Ichmad. Maybe an Israeli whose life was destroyed by Palestinian terrorists, just to show that there is always more than one viewpoint for any situation. If this had been a story about a young alien living in difficult circumstances on a faraway planet, and the only perspective was his, I would have the exact same complaint.

I could go on and on, but what it comes down to is this: I do not think this is a good novel. There are no compelling characters, no plot occurrence that does not feel contrived or forced, and the way in which this story is told is absolutely heavy-handed. I cannot recommend this book.

*I received a free copy of this book through a giveaway on Goodreads.*

## Rowena says

“Throughout history the conquerors have always treated the conquered this way. The bad ones need to believe we’re inferior to justify the way they treat us. If they only could realize that we’re all the same.”

The story follows the life of Palestinian Ichmad Hamad and his family over the span of half a century, living in a Palestinian village controlled by the Israeli army. Of his village Ichmad says, “Only five years earlier, it had been filled with olive trees. Now it was filled with landmines like the one that killed my baby sister, Amal.”

Ichmad is highly intelligent, and has Einstein as one of his role models. He sets about trying to use his intellect to keep his family afloat when his father (Baba) is wrongfully imprisoned for 14 years.

The book is definitely about injustice, and there’s plenty of it. It was hard not to get angry and upset while reading this book. So much of what the Palestinians faced was unfair, to say the least, and the fact that it’s been going on for generations is truly mind-boggling. The landmines, the curfews, the blatant racism shown towards the Palestinians..., the list goes on.

However, this book doesn’t paint Israelis as inherently bad or Palestinians as inherently good. In my opinion, the author offers a very balanced opinion about the people involved in this conflict; she shows very clearly that there is good and bad in every race/ethnic group, a point that I feel is so important to remember. I think it’s also important to note that the writer is Jewish-American. I applaud her for writing a novel about a very controversial topic.

The story is about forgiveness and seeing the humanness in someone above seeing their religion or ethnicity. I did like the hopeful tone in the book despite the tragedies.

This is one of those books which are important to read in spite of the difficult subject matter. I don’t think I will ever forget this story.

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## Ammara Abid says

Heart breaking & reality based. But it didn't hit me the way it should be.

I'm in between 3 & 4 stars.

Nevertheless this book has many beautiful lines.

*"Courage, I realised, was not the absence of fear: it was the absence of selfishness; putting someone else's interest before one's own."*

*"Don't allow guilt to enter your heart, because it's a disease, like cancer, that'll eat away at you until there's nothing left."*

*'It's about his sentence, isn't it?' 'Tell me what it says.'*

*Fourteen years. That was 730 weeks rounded down. 5,113 days; 122,712 hours; 7,363,720 minutes; 441,824,200 seconds. Which figure sounded like the least amount of time? I took a long, deep breath and tried to steady my voice. 'Fourteen years.'*

*'Good things make choosing difficult, bad things leave no choice.'*

*'What's better? To forgive and forget, or to resent and remember?'*

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## **Laura says**

I think I was the only Goodreads member to not receive a copy of this as part of the Goodreads Giveaway. However, my husband was a fortunate recipient of the book. I am not sure that all the political facts were accurate in this book but I do know I loved the story. Highly recommend this book that boasts of courage and perseverance. Favorite quotes from book, "Good things make choosing difficult, bad things leave no choice" and "Courage....was not the absence of fear: it was the absence of selfishness; putting someone else's interest before one's own."

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## **Poet Gentleness says**

I have no pleasure to rate a book with one star, so I'll exceed myself on the explanations.

**Before you complain about my rating or my review on my curated space, please read, learn and think about the real facts.**

**Don't make a judgement based on what someone told you. Be impartial and listen to both sides. In fact, listen to all sides before you decide for yourself.**

**If you are rude, you're going to be flagged. If you want to discuss my review, do it politely. I'm always available and you can always convince me I'm wrong if you have the correct arguments.**

**Respect and toleration are what make relationships possible.**

I was almost compelled to say this book is science-fiction because it doesn't portray the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but another completely different conflict and I haven't seen any human being in this book. There is no one so good, and there is no one so bad, unless they are psychos. We, human beings, are somewhere in between angels and demons.

But unfortunately, I can't joke with this because this book's message is too serious and it is too jumbled to let it pass.

We need a stop in the dictionary, as I've seen people using the wrong terms in their reviews:

*Israeli*, used as a noun means: "a native or inhabitant of Israel, or a person of Israeli descent."

*Israelite* is: [a] "a member of the ancient Hebrew nation, esp. in the period from the Exodus to the Babylonian Captivity (c.12th to 6th centuries bc). [b] and [some consider it to be] an old-fashioned and sometimes offensive term for Jew."

*Palestinian*, as a noun: “a member of the native Arab population of the region of Palestine (including the modern state of Israel).”

*Jew* is: “a member of the people and cultural community whose traditional religion is Judaism and who trace their origins through the ancient Hebrew people of Israel to Abraham.”

*Muslim* is: “a follower of the religion of Islam.”

I don't agree in calling this conflict “Israeli-Palestinian”. IMHO, we diminish the whole dimension of the conflict if we stick with the name given to the land.

Is this about land? Yes. But it's about a *sacred*, holy land; This conflict has deep roots in religion.

No one has ever heard of a Catholic wanting possession of Israel or Palestine.

So, let's lift the bride's veil and call it by its correct name: This is a Jewish-Muslim conflict.

**I'll not discuss who is right or who is wrong, mainly because I believe both are wrong.**

And if no president of the United States of America, no prime minister of Israel or no Palestine authority have reached an agreement so far; no great diplomat or no representative of the United Nations could end this daily battle until now, it's not me that will hand you the solution.

Besides, this is a book review.

I fervently wish that I'm wrong, but **this book is a loaded gun in the wrong hands.**

“The *accusative* of violence, like that of love, destroys the in-between, crushes or burns it, renders the other defenseless, strips itself of protection.

In contrast to this stands the *dative* of saying and speaking, which confirms the in-between, moves within it.

Then again there is the accusative of the singing poem, which removes and releases what it sings from the in-between and its relations, without confirming anything. When poetry and not philosophy absolutizes, there's rescue.”

Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch (on free translation: Thinking Diary, or Book of Thoughts)*, vol. 1 of her “Notebooks”, p. 428 August 1953.

In short, for those who doesn't know Hannah Arendt is: A German-Jewish born political theorist, she managed to escape from a concentration camp where she was held because of her ideas and moved to America. She wrote wonderful works, but her most famous one was *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, due to her sharp criticism of how Eichmann trial was held in Israel.

In this work, Arendt also criticized the way some Jewish leaders acted during the Holocaust.

This caused - and still causes - a considerable controversy and even animosity toward Arendt and her work in the Jewish community.

She was criticized by many Jewish public figures, charged with coldness and lack of sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust, which was never her intention.

She had regretted using the expression “banality of evil” until she died.

A small explanation on the quote:

Elegantly used as grammatical idea to hold two different thoughts together, the “accusative” and the “dative”

are two of German's four grammatical cases, in which pronouns and nouns are changed, or given specific endings, to signal their relationship to another part of a sentence.

Roughly, the *accusative* case is used when something is the direct object of a verb, when in action, when one thing "dominates", to use a trendy word, or "accuses" another.

On the other hand, the *dative* case is used for indirect objects, and originally with objects to which or to whom something is given, or those who "submit" or are under the action of the other, the "accused".

Incidentally, acknowledging the *submission* (or the guilty accusation) doesn't mean one is nulled by the dominator or that the *dominant*, again the trendy word, is always a brute, with no respect for the other, with a thirsty for pain and blood;

Let's not fool ourselves: Domination and submission exist on every relationship. Parental, marital, commercial and so on. Well-balanced and used with wisdom and respect, they are what makes a relationship work.

They have an inner poetry, when not measured by outside standards, but by their own.

**Determining the forces of a relationship, or of a conflict, no matter how unalterable those may be, is a freedom that few achieve to reach. This acknowledgment doesn't mean that the submission has to be forever lived as such. No. Knowledge is the best way to understand, plan and act to free oneself if the submission was imposed, or to feel comfortable on one's skin if the submission is chosen.**

I'm not talking about sex, slavery, conflicts or war. I'm talking about daily, normal relationships. Still.

**Those two sides of a relationship are beautifully emphasized by Arendt when she ties this grammatical distinction to her often repeated contrast between violence and speech.**

**But they are also actions that can co-exist, side by side in a single course of action. Stupefied by my statement? Explanation will come soon.**

If The Almond Tree were sci-fi, I would have given it a 3 star rating, as it is NOT, this barely deserves one star for the author's... hmmm... creativity (?) at making fun of an edgy situation.

She even attempts at a not-funny-at-all joke by linking the names of Menahem Begin and Ariel Sharon, prime ministers of Israel, turning them into Professor Menahem Sharon, Ichmad's teacher.

I didn't understand if she was trying to honor or to offend the real persons.

We're living in difficult times. A single sparkle can set those forever burning ashes of the Arab world into a uncontrollable bonfire and kill many.

And even transform this "located" war in something bigger.

Something I don't even want to imagine.

I know Israel. I've been there more than once; the first time more than twenty-five years ago when my parents, Catholics, Brazilians, and Italian and Portuguese descendants decided to visit the region.

And I began to follow the truculency of the region very closely and with interest, not only because I'm a converted Jew, but because I'm a woman of the world.

I agree that there is a lack of toleration in that region.

**In fact, toleration in general has been bleeding through our stressed and violent daily routine drain, as quickly as desert sand through a cracked hourglass, as we've been looking only in the narcissistic mirror of ourselves.**

But this lack of toleration, of understanding on the Arab region, on that small piece of sacred land, that all

are fighting for, that all want to take a bite, can hardly be put solely onto Jewish shoulders.

Stated that, about the book:

**A 3 star rating for the sci-fi creativity because:**

**There are problems with plot consistency; typos; lack of research, causing even suspension of disbelief, one sided-characters, there is not one who is that good or that evil, unless it's a psycho;**

**The story lacks substance, the writing is childish and repetitive, she lost her hand and control of the story as characters transforms themselves in an unbelievable way (hmm... that's reminds me of something and someone).**

**There is no helpful clarity for those who are not schooled in Middle East politics.**

**Either they'll believe in distorted facts, or they have to continually stop to search online to find more information about the story, including the setting, to fully understand the circumstances.**

**There are over-used clichés of need for cooperation and so many stereotypes that it became difficult and boring to read.**

**The author fills in with math and science questions completely unnecessary and that did not move the story or make it more believable - only less.**

But all that is irrelevant to my review, so I closed my eyes to them on my 2nd reading.

The author, Michelle Cohen Corasanti, daughter of American orthodox Jews, says she is Jewish, highly educated in Harvard as she affirms on her website <http://thealmondtreebook.com> and that she knows the Jewish-Muslim conflict deeply and is dedicated to end it, but there is such a lack of perspective in her book that I can only call it flat and look at Corasanti's credentials with disbelief.

I didn't go to Harvard website to research her because I have no reason not to believe in her words, but I doubt that she understood what she was supposed to learn, which is quite different.

The Israelis, except for two or three persons, are portrayed as completely cruel and unfeeling, the archetypes of evil.

The plot written by a Jewish was so one-sided in its anti-Israeli sentiment, and why not say it, ANTI-SEMITIC, that it read more like Nazi propaganda than a novel.

I don't think Israel is perfect.

I'm open-minded and I was eager to have a look on a different side so I tried to overlook it on my first reading, but as I had to write the review and I was really unable to pinpoint what had me so annoyed with the book, I gave it a second reading.

And as Umberto Eco says, a book is only never completely understood on its first reading.

- She states that all she wanted when she wrote her book was to "bring peace between Palestinians and Israelis" and to show that "we are all human beings and we're all equal." I would applaud if she really meant it. But that is irrelevant.

I don't presume she wants to share her knowledge for free, does she? But that is irrelevant too.

She is totally entitled to her royalties.

**- This book is being announced and heavily promoted as the reality of the Jewish oppression on the Palestinian people with the real POV of a Jewish author who lived 7 years through the conflict... Really?!;**

- To promote her debut novel, The Almond Tree, she unashamedly uses her "background", and more... she uses it to give **historical facts a distorted, irresponsible and unreal truthfulness.**

**This book has only the author's personal POVs and insights and that has to be said, so people do not**

**confuse it with reality.**

- She may have meant well, and I choose to believe so until proven the opposite, but **the book has no peace message.** Much on the contrary, but I will arrive there soon.

If the book were half as helpful to peace as it is being said, I would be the first to give it five stars and recommend it.

- Imho, Corassanti, as a promoter of peace, lacks its first and foremost important quality: humbleness. She stated she knows how "Palestinian and Israeli could overcome obstacles and work together to advance humanity." Maybe the US government should employ her immediately...

- Novels are fictional works of art, and although written with noble or enlightened sentiments, they bring with them the author's truth or point of view, and should be treated as such: nothing more than fiction.

Novels lack what biography or historical books should always have: the compromise to stick with the truth. This book is not a treaty on how to promote peace. This books distorts historical facts galore.

**AND it wears its mask of supposedly injustices against the Palestinian people askance.**

**It makeup itself and shows unreality heavily painted with sympathy and solidarity as its main character is a genius, wonderful, spectacular man telling the heart-wrenching, silly, childish view of the story of an oppressed-oppressor people, (whose extremists have no shame to use women-bombs or armed children against unarmed civilians. But again, how their extremists act is not my main point.)**

- The story is a prejudiced, one-sided, unbalanced POV, focused mainly on the life of two Palestinian males: the masterpiece Ichmad and the one-sided cliché character, Abbas.

(About the leading character's name: I believe Corasanti meant Ahmad, that is also Mohammad, the last and most important Islam prophet. A Palestinian reviewer said she probably meant Ichmad to insult the Palestinians - according to the reviewer in Arab "Ichmad" has a similar sound to the verb that means "subdue". I cannot blame the reviewer's tone against this book or her angry words.)

It's because of people with such funny ideas that we have this terrible conflict on the region...

- And what surprises me, it's how can many people be FOOLED by Corasanti. She is not only being prejudiced against Jews, BUT she is being highly prejudiced against the Palestinians. Abbas couldn't have been drawn in "grayer" tones, again using a trendy word.

Here on her GRs dashboard and in her interactive website, a Palestinian actor plays Ichmad, divulging the Palestinian misery.

Why? This is not the way to solve any conflict.

Corasanti's badly written book is throwing more fuel on the already burning conflict.

AND THIS IS EXTREMELY RELEVANT.

Maybe some of you have noticed my using of trendy words. Why did I use them?

Because this book, as 50 Shades of Grey, is narcissistic.

This is about Corassanti.

Her life in Israel; her problems with her Palestinian friends, her extremely orthodox Jew family, her own rebellion against the education she received; her own fantasies.

This is not about any conflict, any religion or any people. It is a narcissistic, badly written work of science-fiction.

Words have power. And speech and violence as Arendt so wisely showed so many times in her many works can walk hand-in-hand, and can be cloaked under a thin veil... of a Jewish or Muslim bride?

Or maybe as Corassanti prejudicially narrated: under the layers of baby fat of the ugly, simple-minded, short Yasmine, Ichmad's Palestinian bride, who would never compare herself with Nora, his over-the-top perfect, beautiful, tall, Jewish love-of-his-life.

To add insult to injury, on their nuptial night of their arranged wedding, otherworldly intelligent hero Ichmad fantasies of his perfect, dead Nora while he has a still Yasmine beneath him on bed.

**STOP!**

**LET'S STOP FOR A MOMENT AND BREATHE DEEP!**

BECAUSE the leading character's attitude and the comparison done by the author, in a book which is intended to promote peace, is so REPULSIVE that it was what made me realize that I was reading a ticking bomb. That is what got me nagged and annoyed with this book. It's narcissistically dense. It's a fantasied autobiography. <http://thealmondtreebook.com/author/>

How did Hitler convince so many Jews to segregate themselves? WORDS.

How did Hitler gain so many followers? WORDS.

When he proposed violence, he had already hypnotized a whole army, a nation, with his ideas.

Not even the wise (?) rabbis could see what he was doing because they were hearing what they wanted: Jews are to stick with Jews.

But in an even more dangerous way, Corasanti, a Jewish-American author, has no knowledge of what she is doing, she has no idea of the power of her prejudiced words; of how can them be used against what she is supposedly intending, peace (?), destroying the almost nothing had been achieved so far in that mined ground.

Intelligent Muslim, lucid Jews, wise Israelis, Palestinian or rather, rational, sane PERSONS know she is not doing this for peace, as ELJames did not write 50Shades to defend BDSM practitioners or women's right to have sex as they wished.

Want to write an autobiography? So, do it. It would be much more commendable and interesting to read about the POV of a Jewish woman that had lived in Israel for 7 years and had great issues with her religion, her strict orthodox parents and the way she has grown.

Want to write about your sexual fantasies? Do it. For sure, *voyeurs* and stalkers will buy your book.

But don't try to justify your prejudicially, badly written works saying you're defending other's people rights or promoting peace.

**This narcissistic authorial catharsis that have been happening recently is confusing the minds of many - special teenagers and YA - that have no such knowledge to distinguish between fantasy and reality.**

**I would dare say: it's unhealthy therapy done in public and at the readers' cost.**

To end this review, a last thought:

**Arendt raised the question of whether evil is radical or simply a function of thoughtlessness, a tendency of ordinary people to obey orders and conform to mass opinion without a critical evaluation of the consequences of their actions and inaction.**

I agree with her point of view and I believe evil resides - in most cases - in simple thoughtlessness. Evil can start, for example, with a simple omission. That is why I am not omitting myself.

It could have started with me, as a reader, not being knowledgeable of the intended submission I was being forced to. That's why I'm saying NO to those many 5 star ratings; NO to those who write for their own narcissist purposes (please don't confuse with commercial, or artistic).

I'm a free, intelligent, thinking woman and I refuse to be fooled or lead by a supposedly heart-wrenching beautiful story told by a noble woman, that is the one who holds the formula of secret, magic powder which will bring peace between the ancient feud of Israel and Palestine, of Jews and Muslims.

Life is not a fairy tale. We cannot live only on fantasies.

Please, let's grow up.

Let's talk and behave like adults. We are not children or teenagers anymore. We had the opportunity to dream of winning the gold medal in the school writing concourse or kissing hurriedly the first boyfriend on the front door step before Daddy opens it.

Now, as adults, we have the responsibility of building a better world for our grandchildren, without excluding anyone.

This review costed me more than twenty hours to write because this subject is explosive and I didn't want to add more fuel to it, so the facts are all well researched and my first opinions have been well tempered. Or so I hope.

I think I've been clear, **but let me be clearer: I don't recommend this book. At all.**

For those who want to read more on what is the reality of the conflict and [this book](#), there are a few excellent, knowledgeable reviews, please see them in the comment as I had no more review space left.

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**Aneela ?the\_mystique\_reader? says**

My Rating: 5 ?????

In One Word: Superb!

Review:

**“I had no idea words could have so much power and beauty.”**

I smiled and cried while reading. I was left speechless when I finished the book. Pondering over every sentence I read, every bit of emotions I felt, I was over-whelmed how beautifully sad a novel can be.

The Almond Tree is a heart-wrenching, self-narrative story of a Palestinian kid, Ichmad Mahmud, his family

and their struggles.

*It is the story of unjust occupation.*

*It is the story of extremism on both sides.*

*It is the story of never giving up.*

*It is the story of two lovers.*

*It is the story of love vs hate.*

Ichmad Mahmud is a 12 year old Palestinian who lives in a village with his parents and siblings. He is a genius kid with unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He loves solving math and physics problems.

One day, his younger sister Amal fell prey to the field mine near their house and was blown up into pieces. To bury Amal, they had to wait for the permit from Israeli soldiers and for the curfew to end. So- they spent the whole night with her dead body at home, comforting her that she is finally free.

After few days of Amal's death, the Israeli soldiers took their home, their orange groves, relocating them to a small house on the hill. Nearby their new house, there stood an Almond Tree. After his father was sacked to jail, he was desperate to share the boiling agony in his heart, he be-friended the Almond Tree.

**"I said to the almond tree, "Friend, speak to me of God, and the Almond Tree blossomed."**

The Almond Tree became the companion of his sorrows, happiness and loneliness. He would climb and sit on it, looking over his old house and orange groves with his hand-made telescope. The Almond Tree stood there tall, witnessing everything silently. How his new house was demolished, his tent set on fire and burnt down to ashes many times. How he fell in love with an Israeli Jew.

This novel has lows and highs of gripping emotions. It shows you how the extremes on both sides affect the peace in the area. Whose fault is it when schools are bombed, depriving them of education and blissful childhood. With lack of education and "hope", they have no where to go and no path to choose except that of destruction, destruction of self and destruction of others.

Written by an Israeli Jew, this novel is unbiased and gives the glimpse of negatives and positives of both sides.

It is a must read for those who love intriguing and heart-touching stories. I have read this book for once and I would like to read it again but I don't find enough courage in myself to go through the pain of 10 and 12 year old souls again.

Ending my review with a quote from The Almond Tree:

**"You can not go back and make a new start, but you can start now and make a new ending."**

### **Paddy O'callaghan says**

There is no doubt in my mind that Michelle Cohen Corasanti is one of today's greatest novelists, and most important socio-political commentators. What she's done with The Almond Tree is highlighted the cause of one of the world's most unjustifiably maligned, and oppressed people. She's also produced a beautiful multifaceted story which is in equal parts utterly riveting, shocking, and addictive. If you liked Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner, you'll love this.

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### **Ehtesham Khan says**

I got a new friend. His name is Ichmad Hamid. Thank you Michelle Cohen Corasanti for writing a good story. I'm biggest fan of The Almond Tree.  
Full rating novel.....

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