

MEDIA RELEASE

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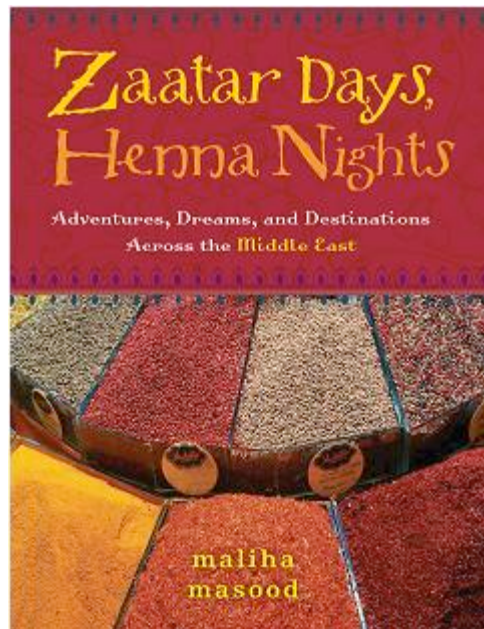
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Zaatar Days, Henna Nights
Adventures, Dreams, and Destinations across the Middle East

By Maliha Masood

*She traded in her desk job for soul searching in the Mideast in order to discover a truer self,
"a more essential me that couldn't entirely be placed amid the bullet points of my resume."*

Disillusioned with her nine to five existence as a Seattle dotcommer, **Maliha Masood** needed a fresh lease on life. So she submitted her letter of resignation and decided to embark upon an open-ended journey. Unsure of where she would go or when she would return, she bought a one-way ticket to Paris. After traveling around Europe for six months, Masood felt herself drawn to the Middle East and arrived in Cairo at the height of regional tension in September 2000.

Fueled by curiosity and unbridled wanderlust, Pakistani-born Masood ventured on a yearlong expedition through Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. Part travel memoir, part cultural commentary, *Zaatar Days, Henna Nights: Adventures, Dreams, and Destinations Across the Middle East* (Seal Press/February 2007/\$15.95), chronicles a behind the scenes look at the world's most newsworthy region. Transitioning from professional cog to adventuress, Masood recounts the pleasures of an impromptu picnic with a Kurdish family and the uncanny sound of silence in the Sahara. She befriends a cross-dressing couple in the streets of Damascus, convenes with Sufi mystics and gets mistaken for a spy in the mountains of Turkey. Navigating the duality between her Islamic roots and Western culture, Masood offers insights and entertainment in the hearts and minds debate as someone who belongs on both sides. She also speaks to the experience of a Muslim female traveler adrift in the Arab world with "no alibi other than raw will power and madness."

After a year and a half on the road, Masood culminated her journey in Istanbul, satisfied with her "spiritual warfare." She returned to Seattle just ten days prior to the events of September 11. Having experienced up-close the culture, people and politics of the Middle East, Masood found a new objective. Now, instead of having all the answers, she would simply seek to ask better questions. With beautifully crafted language, *Zaatar Days, Henna Nights* will invite the reader to share in the intimate experience of one woman's quest for self-discovery that would lead half way across the world, but somehow remain strangely close to home.

About the Author:



Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Maliha Masood moved to the States at the age of twelve and grew up in Seattle. Fluent in her native Urdu, Arabic and French, she studied International Business at the University of Washington and worked as a researcher and consultant specializing in technology and development. An award-winning writer in creative nonfiction, Maliha's work has been widely anthologized and published internationally in *Al-Ahram Weekly* and *Asia Times*. Maliha also appeared in and co-wrote the documentary *Nazrah*, exploring gender, politics and Islam. She has a Master's in Law and Diplomacy from Tufts University and is the founder of The Diwaan Project, an Islamic cultural institute. An avid public speaker, Maliha has been featured on NPR and PBS. More information at www.zaatardays.com