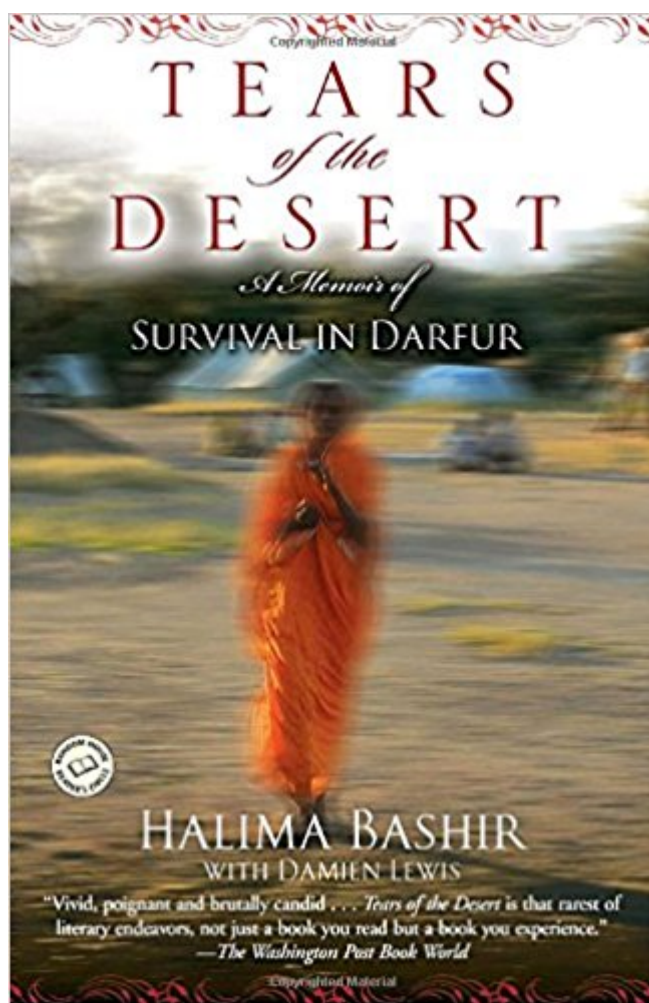


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Tears Of The Desert: A Memoir Of Survival In Darfur (Random House Reader's Circle)



Synopsis

Born into the Zaghawa tribe in the Sudanese desert, Halima Bashir received a good education away from her rural surroundings (thanks to her doting, politically astute father) and at twenty-four became her village's first formal doctor. Yet not even Bashir's degree could protect her from the encroaching conflict that would consume her homeland. Janjaweed Arab militias savagely assaulted the Zaghawa, often with the backing of the Sudanese military. Then, in early 2004, the Janjaweed attacked Bashir's village and surrounding areas, raping forty-two schoolgirls and their teachers. Bashir, who treated the traumatized victims, some as young as eight years old, could no longer remain quiet. But breaking her silence ignited a horrifying turn of events. Raw and riveting, *Tears of the Desert* is the first memoir ever written by a woman caught up in the war in Darfur. It is a survivor's tale of a conflicted country, a resilient people, and an uncompromising spirit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Writing with BBC correspondent Lewis (Slave), Bashir, a physician and refugee living in London, offers a vivid personal portrait of life in the Darfur region of Sudan before the catastrophe. Doted on by her father, who bucked tradition to give his daughter an education, and feisty grandmother, who bequeathed a fierce independence, Bashir grew up in the vibrant culture of a close-knit Darfur village. (Its darker side emerges in her horrific account of undergoing a clitoridectomy at age eight.) She anticipated a bright future after medical school, but tensions between Sudan's Arab-dominated Islamist dictatorship and black African communities like her Zaghawa tribe finally exploded into

conflict. The violence the author recounts is harrowing: the outspoken Bashir endured brutal gang-rapes by government soldiers, and her village was wiped out by marauding Arab horsemen and helicopter gunships. This is a vehement *cri de coeur* "I wanted to fight and kill every Arab, to slaughter them, to drive them out of the country, the author thought upon treating girls who had been raped and mutilated" but in showing what she suffered, and lost, Bashir makes it resonate. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Bashir's story of her life in Darfur is difficult to read largely because so much of it is ordinary. She recounts growing up in a loving family, attending school, and, with the strong support of her father, becoming a doctor. After she enters professional life, civil war comes to her doorstep, and her life is torn apart. She witnesses horrible suffering and is herself brutally treated by the Janjaweed, the armed militias fighting with the tacit approval of the Sudanese government. As a black African, Bashir recalls years of discrimination from ruling Arab Africans, but the spreading war accelerates the violence to epic and devastating levels. After fleeing to Britain, she finds herself in a new battle to prove that the nightmare in her country is real. Bashir is now a powerful voice for the victims of Darfur, speaking out on numerous painful subjects, from her own genital mutilation to rape and the loss of her family. Harsh in its honesty, Bashir's chronicle is shocking and disturbing. An unforgettable tragedy. --Colleen Mondor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a powerful book that should have helped many who were unsure of the damage of the conflict in Sudan to see the destruction of the lives of the people there. This book will make you smile, cry, and yearn to help those within its pages. Dr. Halima Bashir has escaped to a safer life in England but many in her country have not. Something that shocked me was that she does not know where her family is? Her mother and sister who ran to try and save her from the government and her two brothers who joined the resistance. It is hard for me to imagine not knowing where my family was. I tried to do a few searches to see if maybe in the four years since it had been published she had been able to locate her family, I was unable to find any indication that she had. I found that I didn't want to stop reading the story even though it was heart breaking at times. It is detailed but not so much so that we are overwhelmed by the grotesque events that take place. There is a genuine dislike for the Janjaweed as well as the government police and military who abuse the Africans just because of the color of their skin.

I had heard about the tragedy of Darfur and wanted to know more about the story of this country. I am so glad that this book is available to provide information about the people and their situations. I loved reading about the daily lives of the people there - the food they ate, their unique housing arrangements, the games they played and most of all their love and respect for family and community. But that was before the terror of invasion of brutality into their quiet lives. Each time we hear of such things in our world, we say "Never again". We must identify with our fellow humans to each work hard to make this a true saying. This book was very meaningful and enjoyable.

The author does a spectacular job sharing the joy, sadness, challenge and yes, the horrors of her world in this book. Much of the time I felt as though I was right there with her, participating in her experiences. I laughed and cried with her and I felt her pain and humiliation deep in my soul. One cannot help but grow as one reads this book. It is more than a good read... it is an education about an ancient, exotic culture and a lesson on empathy, love, compassion and fear. Those who follow events that reveal man's inhumanity to man (and women) are aware that the author showed great courage by placing her personal safety at considerable risk with this book. By refusing to remain a victim and telling her story she has pointed the finger of guilt at her aggressors. They are fearful and striking back with accusations and threats but the world knows the truth of their inhumanity now, so try as they may, their efforts will fall on deaf ears.

Michael James Jaquish
Author:Â Beyond Courage:
Tales of a Country Cop in Africa
The Buddha And The Badge: A Journey of Personal Discovery
A Monk Without A Monastery: An Examination of Self-Discovery

One woman's fight for survival against barbarians. Ultimately, the book shows the uselessness of the United Nations to stop genocide of millions of people. It was interesting to read how prejudiced the Arabs were against the blacks of Darfur and surrounding areas, yet, they are all Muslims; skin color is more important than religious preference. This story of ultimate survival leaves you with a sick feeling against mankind's cruelty.

Originally, I read this book in hopes to use in the classroom for world literature. From a literary standpoint, some chapters seem to drag along; the memoir could certainly benefit from better editing. The first couple of sections of the book could certainly be shortened, and several typos exist (at least in the Kindle version). As far as Bashir's account of Darfur is concerned, it is a chilling reminder of just how evil mankind can be; we typically tell ourselves that something this horrific could

never take place in the 21st century! Think again. We Westerners believed similarly prior to the Jewish holocaust. When will this cycle end. Her epilogue certainly opened my eyes about China's indirect involvement in this crisis. Although I will most likely not have students read the book in entirety, I may use excerpts from this account to supplement units covering such themes as contemporary war and Africa in the 21st century.

Well written, eye opening. I find it hard to describe, it isn't fiction, it is someone's life! The courage and determination Halima demonstrated will be with me forever. I think every American of appropriate age should read this book. If it doesn't make you count your blessings I don't know what would!

I can't recommend this book enough. It's not for the faint of heart and there are no happy endings for many suffering in Darfur but it opens your eyes. This book allowed you into the life of her African tribe, their day to day rituals and even though they are a world and culture away, you see the love of family. Children even in Africa create simple neighborhood games, family and friends celebrate with food and gatherings. Their tribe was all about family. And you see the similarities even in our lives in the USA. And then you're shown the ugly part of this world we live in. A world where animals feel they are better. Animals who justify rape, murder and savagery. You feel first hand the suffering, feel the fear and the despair when people are hunted down like animals. This would make a fantastic movie and would bring attention to the atrocities in this world that are going on as we speak. Highly recommend.

Sitting in my safe, comfortable home made it difficult to read this book. I hope that everyone who becomes aware of Halima's story will feel the need to be more welcoming to those seeking asylum. And willing to support the women, children and men still struggling with genocide. Hard for me to believe there is this level of hatred and evil in today's world.

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