# Newsletter

A vision of Latin America and the Caribbean countries

17 April 2024

Weekly Newsletter covering Latin America and the Caribbean issues. A Project between Green Zone Foundation and Telesur.


## Arab Union of Cuba: Strengthening Ties between Brothers and Sisters.

**The Arab immigrants who arrived in Cuba gradually became part of the island's population to the point of becoming fully Cuban.**

On April 4, 1974, the Arab community of Cuba realized its goal of having an organization around which to unite: the Arab Union of Cuba.



Newsletter

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Those arriving from distant lands sought to share their experiences in Cuban lands, to strengthen ties with their countries of origin, to help the new emigrants. To this end, they chose as a fundamental premise to build an organization without discrimination of origin, religion, having as its purpose the promotion and dissemination of Arab identity, traditions and culture.

**Background**

The Arabs who arrived in Cuba came mainly from Syria, Libya and Palestine. According to scholars, "Between 1906 and 1920, 12,219 Arabs arrived in Cuba and between 1921 and 1937 the number of Arab immigrants increased to 21,700 Arabs. As a result of these two large waves and sporadic arrivals of Arab immigrants, the total number reached 33,919 people. In the case of Havana, these groups settled in the Calzada de Jesús del Monte, because that area was close to the port and commercial activity predominated. Undoubtedly, the topography of the place, similar to Lebanon, also had an influence."

The Arab immigrants gradually blended in with the island's population to the point of becoming fully Cuban. However, they never renounced their deep-rooted customs: religiosity, culinary art, clothing and the high degree of belonging to the family as the fundamental nucleus of their existence.

Newsletter

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With an important number of Arab immigrants already in Cuba who had settled definitively throughout the country, the need to group together in institutions, to organize themselves according to their needs, began to emerge.A wide range of activities began, from mutual aid and relief societies, at first, to recreational clubs, with pantheons in cemeteries and a broad social activity.

Before the foundation of the Arab Union, they were grouped in different organizations according to their place of origin, social group. During those years the Arab Palestinian Society of Cuba stood out, which came to have a prominent role within the Cuban civil society. It influenced Cuba to vote no in the United Nations when it was decided to split Palestine into two states. Other important organizations were the Lebanese Society and the Syrian Progress Society of Havana.

Finally, as a sign of strengthening ties between brothers and bridge the geographical distances of being far from their roots, they decided to create an organization that would group them without discrimination of origin or religion. Forty-five years later, the Arab Union of Cuba is the space where the Arab community converges to share and keep alive the love for its origins.

**Published 12 April 2024**

Newsletter

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17 April 2024

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# Cuban Design Students Open Art Exposition Supporting Palestine

**The works mix the colors of the Palestinian flag with lines that intersect to become kufiyas, faces of children, women or doves of peace.**

Students and professors of the Instituto Superior de Diseños (ISDI), inaugurated an exhibition of posters related to Palestine, its culture, identity and the genocide by Israel to which they are subjected.



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The works mix the colors of the Palestinian flag with lines that intersect to become kufiyas, faces of children, women or doves of peace.

According to the vice-dean of ISDI, "Ernesto Fernández, this initiative is a cry for peace, a call to the essence of the human being, a voice on behalf of children without a voice, because Palestine hurts and from that pain is born creation and love".

One of the exhibitors, Sofia Chico, explained that the exhibition seeks to make visible and condemn the genocide of "Israel" against Palestine. "The least we can do as communicators and human beings is not to stop talking about it," he explained.

The exhibiting students chose Canaan as the name of the exhibition, referring to the ancient name of Palestine.

According to exponents, each of the paintings are also the result of an academic exercise and in turn identification with the Gazati cause.

**Published 11 April 2024**

Newsletter

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# Syrian Soap Opera Revolution in Latin America.

**We can enjoy soap operas that expose controversial issues such as abortion, AIDS, Islam and even political dissidence.**

Latin America has one of the largest soap opera audiences worldwide. Brazil, Mexico and Colombia are some of the countries in the region with the largest such industry.



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This television genre, full of dramas, stereotypes, victims and villains, manages to cross borders all over the world.

In recent years, there has been a boom in the presence of Syrian and Turkish soap operas on Latin American home screens. The audience has been fully captivated by the plots of these productions coming from distant lands.

Turkish soap operas have been competing with the Latin American industry for several years, with high levels of acceptance and causing a furor among audiences in the region. But today we will talk about the Syrian industry, a country that for many years, just before the beginning of the war, was at the forefront of the Arab countries in the production of soap operas. This has become a reality again after the consolidation of peace in most of the Syrian national territory.

With the recovery of national stability, the soap opera industry has experienced an upturn, reaching the top of the charts and even joining the ranks of Turkish soap operas. Syria is beginning to have a high level of audience in Latin America.

What makes Syrian soap operas so attractive to an audience with totally different beliefs, customs and ways of life?

Western society has undergone profound changes in the conception of certain social canons. The Arab countries have also been subject to this process to some extent, and although it is true that Syria is a secular state with great religious diversity, it is still an Arab country.

Newsletter

A vision of Latin America and the Caribbean countries

17 April 2024

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There is a certain conservatism in these productions, a prominent role of the traditional family, with well-defined roles between men and women. Far from being out of sync, they end up being resounding soap operas that capture the attention of an audience that perhaps is in need of those resources that have been left behind in regional productions. Today, the region's soap operas are increasingly inclined to highlight modern trends.

This nostalgic void has been filled by Syrian soap operas, with other codes but in tune with the Western imaginary. Although the veil and Muslim religiosity are present in the dramas, they have high levels of acceptance. It turns out that the viewer assumes the production without a hint of prejudice, away from the propagandistic scenarios of news agencies that daily raise the tone around the Arab-Muslim culture.

Also noteworthy are the new approaches taken by Syrian production companies, which have dared to present dilemmas that until very recently were totally prejudiced in the Arab world. Thus, we can enjoy soap operas that expose highly controversial issues such as abortion, AIDS, Islamism and even political dissidence. All this, together with excellent histrionics, excellent scenery, cozy images of cities and towns and a mid-westernized atmosphere, have made the Syrian soap opera industry dispute the supremacy of the local industry.

**Published 14 April 2024**

Newsletter

A vision of Latin America and the Caribbean countries

17 April 2024

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# Latin Americans Who Have Won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

**Latin American writers who have been honored with the Nobel Prize for Literature have enriched the global literary landscape with their talent.**

Since its creation in 1901, a total of 116 writers of up to 25 languages have been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, the highest award a writer can receive. Of them only 6 have been Latin American, the most recent being Mario Vargas Llosa in 2010.



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They are: the Mexican poet Octavio Paz in 1990, the Chileans Gabriela Mistral (1945) and Pablo Neruda (1971), the Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias (1967), the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez (1982) and the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa (2010).

Latin American writers who have been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature stand out not only for their creative genius, but also for their deep commitment to exploring the human condition and complexities of society. From the lyrical poetry of Gabriela Mistral to the magical prose of Gabriel García Márquez, these authors have left an indelible mark on world literature.

**Gabriela Mistral** received the Prize in 1945. She was the first Ibero-American woman and the second Latin American to receive a Nobel Prize. Born into a family of modest resources, Mistral served as a teacher's assistant in various schools until obtaining her degree in Magusterium and became an important thinker regarding the role of public education.
Her great poetic themes were pain and love, and among the considerations of the jury to give him the prize was that "her lyrical poetry, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world".

Newsletter

A vision of Latin America and the Caribbean countries

17 April 2024

Weekly Newsletter covering Latin America and the Caribbean issues. A Project between Green Zone Foundation and Telesur.

In 1967 the Guatemalan **Miguel Ángel Asturias** received the Nobel. Novelist, playwright and journalist among his most famous books are the novella Mister President, Men of Maize, Tales of Guatemala, and the The Banana Trilogy. Also Asturias was awarded the Soviet Union's Lenin Peace Prize for La trilogía bananera (The Banana Trilogy) in which he criticizes the presence of aggressive American companies such as The United Fruit Company in Latin American countries.

"For a poetry that with the action of an elemental force gives life to the destiny and dreams of a continent," said the Nobel committee when it presented the prize to the Chilean **Pablo Neruda** in 1971. Of Basque descent, among his most famous poetry books are Residence on Earth, Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair, and 100 Love Sonnets.

The Colombian **Gabriel García Márquez** received the Prize in 1982 "for his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the real combine in a world richly composed of imagination, reflecting the life and conflicts of a continent." Among his main works are the novels One Hundred Years of Solitude, Autumn of the Patriarch, and Chronicle of a Death Foretold.

# Newsletter

## A vision of Latin America and the Caribbean countries

17 April 2024

Weekly Newsletter covering Latin America and the Caribbean issues. A Project between Green Zone Foundation and Telesur.


**Octavio Paz** poet and essayist Mexican received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1990. According to the jury he was awarded the prize for his "passionate writing with wide horizons, characterized by sensory intelligence and humanistic integrity". His poems have been published in anthologies of Mexican poetry translated into English, and other of his most relevant works are Collected Poems, and the essay The Double Flame.

Since 2010, when the Peruvian **Mario Vargas Llosa** was handed the Nobel Prize, he has not returned to a Latin American writer. His cartography of the power structures and his biting images of the individual's resistance, rebellion and defeat were the jury's considerations when deliberating.

Latin American writers who have been honored with the Nobel Prize for Literature have enriched the global literary landscape with their talent, passion and commitment to truth and beauty. Their legacy will endure far beyond the pages of their books, inspiring future generations of writers and readers to explore the infinite possibilities of art and imagination.

**Published 13 April 2024**