

Novel Has Man Fearing for His Life

By David Milberg, New York-based Entrepreneur

In most cultures and countries, if you write a book, you might get nasty reviews on Amazon, but that's about it. But, after a young Palestinian author is now stuck in Qatar after Palestinian authorities accused him of including "provocative sexual terms" in a book dealing with such cultural taboos as fanaticism, extremism, and homosexuality.

These legal accusations could land the 29-year-old author, Abbas Yahya in jail, and that reality has touched off a firestorm of debate pitting the much larger Palestinian conservative cohort against a small minority of more liberal people in their communities.



Yahya had been on a trip to Doha, Qatar when he learned it may not be safe for him to return home. He told the Associated Press: "I don't know what to do. If I go back, I

will be arrested, and if I stay here, I can't stay far from my home and family..."

It's a price the young author likely considered, but probably

dismissed before he wrote and published the novel, "Crime in Ramallah," which follows the fictional lives of three young Palestinian men who meet up in the city of Ramallah, which just happens to be the seat of Palestinian government. In the book, the guys are coworkers in a bar in which a murder takes place. One of the guys is accused of the crime, arrested and interrogated. He's eventually cleared of any wrongdoing, he's beaten and abused by the police. Later, the character moves on to France, hoping to find someplace that might accept his homosexuality.

Guy number two is ostracized by his heavily conservative family because he works in a bar that permits the sale of alcohol. His character journey ends with him transforming into an Islamic extremist.

The third guy in the unlucky trio is the boyfriend of the murder victim. He witnessed the brutal murder and just can't let the memories go. He was unable to act after the fact ... should he chase the killer or help his girlfriend? This guilt stays with him through the story. Later – spoiler alert – he commits suicide.

As author Rhonda Adams notes, "Every story line in the books is either heavy with political symbolism or cultural critique, and there are some in the country who are simply not willing to take that kind of challenge to the status quo."

The question hovering over all of this is what did the author really expect would happen? Between the overt content and the subtext, he had to realize there would be some negative feelings toward the work. Clearly, he didn't think it would land him in prison ... and it may not ... but there's a lesson in this. **In every creative effort, there are unforeseen consequences ... and escalating incidences that should be foreseen and planned for long in advance.**