

Children's Book Rights Roundup: London to Bologna



In Feature Articles by Porter Anderson / March 22, 2024

On the off-ramp from London Book Fair and road to Bologna: rights news from Palestine, Italy, Croatia, Finland, the States, and Québec.



Rights trading at the 2023 Bologna Children's Book Fair. Those preparing now for Bologna will remember that this year the program has three rights trading centers: children's; generalist (non-children's); and a new trading floor for television and film. Image: BCBF

By Porter Anderson, Editor-in-Chief | [@Porter_Anderson](#)

See also:

- [Children's Book Rights: Bologna's Fourth 'Kids Licensing Days' Conference](#)
- [Children's Book Rights: Jon Fosse's Kids' Books Go to Bologna](#)

Looking Ahead to Bologna's Children's Book Rights Trading

As many have commented to *Publishing Perspectives* this week, [London Book Fair](#) felt almost “frenetic” at times (the word chosen by several), a dynamic that critic [Rosa Lyster](#) from *The New York Times* captured, writing, “For three days, agents, editors, publishers, scouts, and many other people whose jobs are harder to explain gather in a frenzied fashion.” One major publisher went so far in speaking to us as to describe the feeling of the energy at LBF as “chaos.” Others have talked about it as “feverish”—in a good way, mind you, but frequently “intense.”

Part of this was the compression of the space created by the ongoing redevelopment of Olympia London—a renovation that will continue to impact the size of the show’s footprint both in 2025 and 2026,



according to show director **Gareth Rapley**. The **30,000 attendees the London trade show has reported being there** definitely felt the newly tightened space availability.

Nevertheless, while **the London fair reported a raft of deals**, some book professionals are hoping for and happily expecting a somewhat less “frenetic” experience at **Bologna Children’s Book Fair** (April 8 to 11) in BolognaFiere, which of course is a far larger than can be found on Hammersmith in London, a sprawling complex with many whole buildings at director **Elena Pasoli’s** command and at least a good chance of seeing the spring sunlight of the Emilie Romagna between them.

And as we look ahead now to Bologna as well as to **Ospite d’Onore Italia**, Guest of Honor Italy, coming October 16 to 20 to **Frankfurter Buchmesse**, we begin our special Rights Roundup of children’s literature today with an Italian edition of a book that originated in Arabic and was brought to our attention at **London Book Fair** last week by Silvia Vassena Milano Scouting and Consulting, which is based near Bologna.



Il Profumo della mamma (*Mama’s Scent*) is by the Lebanese author Sahar Naja Mahfouz, who now lives in Dubai, with the illustrations of the Palestinian artist Baraa Awoor. We’ve asked to be able to #NameThe Translator of the book from Arabic to Italian, and have learned that the translation was created by the author, Mahfouz, Vassena herself, and Lebanese journalist Camille Eid (who now lives in Milan and is an instructor in Arabic).



Silvia Vassena

“The Italian edition,” Vassena tells us, “is considered the master now for all international editions.”

And Gaza City’s Awoor, Vassena tells us, is safe. Having been honored with an award from **Sharjah Book Authority** CEO **Ahmed Al Ameri** at last year’s **Sharjah Children’s Reading Festival**, she was granted a visa to the United Arab Emirates in January. (The 2024 Sharjah Children’s Reading Festival runs May 1 to 12 this year, preceded by the Booksellers Conference on April 27 and 28.) She initially left Gaza to teach an illustration seminar in Amman on October 6, one day before the Hamas attack on Israel. As it would turn out, Vassena says, she has not been able to re-enter Gaza to find her family members and boyfriend.



Gaza City illustrator Baraa Awoor receives an award for her work from Sharjah Book Authority CEO Ahmed Al Ameri at the 2023 Sharjah Children’s Reading Festival. The 2024 Sharjah Children’s Reading Festival runs May 1 to 12 this year, preceded by the Booksellers Conference on April 27 and 28. Image: Acoma Books

Reportedly, Awoor’s aging parents are struggling, having been forced to live mostly in the open air since October in northern Gaza. Awoor’s studio has been razed to the ground, her work there lost, and her family members left unable to get out. “The price of getting them out of Rafaa,” Vassena says, “is growing day by day.”

An online fundraising account to help her 12 family members leave Gaza is attracting donations as Awoor works to create a studio for herself outside of Gaza.

With the news today (March 22) of Russia and China veto-ing a new United States-led cease-fire resolution in the United Nations' Security Council (here is [Alan Yuhas' and Victoria Kim's report at The New York Times](#)), it's notable that Awoor is the only Palestinian illustrator, Vassena tells us, whose work has been included in the first tranche of 300 illustrations selected for display at Bologna from the more-than 3,000 entries in this year's core [Illustrators Exhibition](#) competition, making its own 58th appearance at the fair. [Here is our coverage of the winners of that competition](#), which saw submissions from 3,520 illustrators.

And Vassena tells us that the author of *Mama's Scent*, Beirut's Sahar Naja Mahfouz, is expected to be at Bologna where the Acoma Books/Vassena Consulting stand will have the first printed copies of this new Italian edition of the book. You'll find that stand in [Hall 26, at position B-24](#).

Pre-Bologna Rights Roundup Listings



A detail from the illustrations by Baraa Awoor for 'Mama's Scent' by Sahar Naja Mahfouz. Image: Acoma Books

As in each roundup, we use some of the sales copy supplied to us by agents and rights directors, editing that copy to give you an idea about a book's nature and tone, but limiting the promotional elements. If you'd like to submit a deal to Publishing Perspectives, see the instructions at the end of this article.

Mama's Scent ***(Il profumo della mamma)***

By Sahar Naja Mahfouz
Illustrated by Baraa Awoor

- Publisher: Acoma Books, Brescia in the new base edition in Italian
- Rights contact: Silvia Vassena, Acoma Books
- Book info: [Read more here](#)



Reported rights sales:

- Newest – South Korea: Risio Publishing
- Simplified Chinese: Beijing Sino-German Intelligence Education Culture Company
- Arabic: Kiwi Books (Dubai)
- English/United States: in negotiation
- Spanish/Mexico and South America: in negotiation

“A profound picture book that aims at discovering the strong bond between kids and moms. The scent is the tool of a baby’s recognition and stays in our memory. Also it’s a strong metaphor of belonging and identity. Such true origins teach the language of cosmos.



Sahar Naja Mahfouz, left, and Baraa Awoor

“One page depicts mom embracing a baby girl in her womb: through her heart can be seen stars, planets, and doves of peace.

The body of mom becomes a window through which the universe is recognized, is not a barrier. And at the end in the encounter of the outside world and relationship, the school, a new life appears: shopping bags and possible towns appear. With the scent of mom inside the body and heart-memory, a new life is possible in the vast horizon of reality.”