

Baghdad to Brooklyn — a memoir by Laith Yousif. MindStir Media, published August 25, 2026.

“I left Baghdad to get away from buildings getting blown up, moved to New York, first job was the World Trade Center — then 9/11 happened.”

Press resources for the 25th anniversary of September 11.

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Who he is

Laith Yousif is an Iraqi-born engineer who started work at the World Trade Center on March 26, 2001 — one of the very few Iraqis inside those buildings on the morning of September 11. He grew up in Baghdad under Saddam Hussein, through the Iran–Iraq war, the 1991 bombardment and a decade of sanctions, and left in 1998 by way of Dubai. Six months into the job he loved, in the city he had fallen for, the towers came down. In the aftermath his visa was cancelled and his contract terminated; he filed for asylum rather than be deported to Iraq — just as the United States prepared to invade it. He waited years for an answer, did not see his brothers for a decade, and now lives in Brooklyn with his wife, Dina, whom he met at a United Nations event on the Iraqi refugee crisis. He also does stand-up.

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Three story angles

The Iraqi inside the towers

Twenty-five years of first-person September 11 accounts, and almost none from an Arab who was in the building. He describes the World Trade Center as the safest, most indestructible place on earth – a boy from a bombed city who thought he had finally reached somewhere that could not be hit.

Best for anniversary first-person, radio, documentary.

Asking America to keep him while America bombed his home

The double bind almost no September 11 story contains: he watched Shock and Awe on television while his asylum application sat in a drawer, unanswered. Work permit in September 2003, approval years later, green card in late 2007.

Best for immigration policy, legal affairs, features.

Neither side's man

After the invasion he became a stand-in for a war he had fled – asked to explain why Iraqis were shooting at American soldiers, and pushed into a “Middle Eastern” box he never chose. Even when invited to speak at the UN on Iraqi refugees, he was coached to use lighter language so as not to bruise the room.

Best for identity, opinion, culture desks.

Interviews

Based in Brooklyn. Available for phone, remote, studio and in-person interviews around the anniversary and after. Comfortable live and unscripted.

Email Dina@LaithYousif.com for scheduling and a direct phone number.

Book details

Title

Baghdad to Brooklyn

Author

Laith Yousif

Publisher

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Previous coverage

- *Kirkus Reviews*, 2026 – a “Get It” pick
- [TIME Magazine](#), 2008
- [UN Foundation](#), 2019
- [Dissent Magazine](#)
- *The Wind of Al-Amal*, 2013 – documentary
- ABC News, 2006 – on the eve of Saddam Hussein’s execution

Laith Yousif · laithyousif.com