

for

Palestine



AFZAL MOOLLA

Walking in Gaza

*Walking amidst the rubble,
a mother wails.*

*The bloodied rags that once clothed her six year old daughter reeks of caked
blood,
stale urine,*

death.

*Walking amidst the rubble,
a father weeps.*

*The shelling reducing the home to bits of this and bits of that,
burnt flesh,
charred memories,*

death.

*Walking in Gaza,
amidst the smouldering school,
the bombed – out hospital,
the blood running into the sewers,
now clogged with emptiness.*

*Walking in Gaza,
amidst the savage fallout,
in – between the mangled homes,
the shuttered bazaars,
Hope lives.*

Hope breathes.

Hope soars.

*Walking in Gaza,
the resistance to tyranny holds firm,
as it has,*

*as it always will,
as it always must!*

Ode to Gaza

*We seal our mouths,
lips sewn shut, the complicity hushed,
furiously wagging silent tongues shushed,
mute, impotent,
the deafening silence apalls,
while we build more and more walls.*

*Still we remain mute,
hushed,
human beings, all,
helplessly desolate,
mowed down each day while our sewn lips remain shushed,
and as the forgotten petals of weeping olives,
are strewn about,
brutally crushed.*



The Tears of Olives

*Trickling down shrapnelled
flesh, tears fall,
like
blood
on
bloodied
cheek.*

*In the sun,
lifeless bodies
lie cold as stone,
thetearsofolives
flow,
salty sentinels
of memory:*

*pain,
suffering,
occupation,
hunger,
the tears of olives
perennially streak,
etching pathways of dust,
between alleyways of desolation,
hopelessly bleak.*

*The slaughter continues,
as more dead bodies,*

*rot,
reek.*

The Unworthy Victims

*The mighty,
the all-powerful,
the "civilised" of this world,*

spew platitudes;

*"Freedom".
"Democracy".
"Justice".
"International Law",*

*whilerepugnantlysewingtheirmouthsshut,
when their \$1 million dollar missiles decimate an innocent villager's
hut.*

They believe their complicity in this ceaseless genocide will remain hushed,

*They believe their spurious double-standards will - under the carpet - remain
shamelessly brushed.*

*They arm the oppressors,
they coddle the fascists,*

they mourn the deaths of the "worthy victims",*

almost always the white and blue-eyed,

while the "unworthy victims"of the world bleed,*

*and while the "civilised", like vultures,
continue to feed.*



Today in Gaza

*Today in the rubble that is Gaza,
a mother wails.*

*The bloodied rags that once clothed her six year old daughter reeks of caked
blood,
stale urine,*

death.

*Walking amidst the rubble,
a father weeps.*

*The shelling reducing the home to bits of this and bits of that,
burnt flesh,
charred memories,*

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*Walking in Gaza,
amidst the smouldering school,
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the resistance to tyranny holds firm,
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The following poem "A Mangled Heap" is a howl of rage at the ongoing betrayal by an impotent world of the Palestinian people in their just cause resisting the brutality of occupation and their battle for freedom, justice and human dignity.

A Mangled Heap

*a soul lies strewn aside,
a rotting mangled heap,*

*a putrid heart decays inside,
a will too dehydrated to weep,*

*a festering me, aching to hide,
a mind too diseased to sleep.*

*a severance from the here, the now,
a life of constantly needing to bow,*

*a torn wail of pain, wailed somehow,
a frigid heart with nothing to endow,*

*a stench reeks from each guilty bow,
a stream of hot tears on blinded brow,*

*what happens when the mind itself claws and scratches and mercilessly
lashes,*

*what can you do when the soul itself
shatters and rips apart to the blade
that slashes,*

it is nothing but a barren boulevard of slowly seeping dread,

it is nothing but a mute howl of all the volumes left unsaid,

it is nothing.

*it is nothing but the ghastly odour of the parade of the endlessly decaying
dead.*



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The Crushed Skulls

*The crushed skulls,
the mashed limbs,*

*the diplomatic charade,
meaningless speeches from the corridors of power,*

*the horrendous parade,
of human beings scissored to shreds,*

*shrapnel tearing off bones,
sniper shots piercing countless heads.*

*Women, men, children,
young, old,
human being all,*

*bodies stacked up,
dried crusty reddish blood,
pummelled black and brown,
bloated purple,*

human flesh rotting into sickening hues,

*as the senseless killing,
streams out live on 24/7 news.*

The gaping wounds soaked in blood,

*dismembered corpses piled high,
in putrid mortuaries,*

*on and on and on and on,
till the olive groves will all be felled
leaving in their place,
a land pockmarked with cemeteries.*

*War is ugly, they tell us,
war is necessary too,
we go to war for peace,
we rain down death on the other,
for the greater common good,
we slaughter for the safety,
of him and her and me and you.*

*War is ugly,
it is indeed,
but so are we,
as we flip channels,
switching off our humanity,
too triggered to see,
the peeled-off skin of that 4 year old,
as she lies face-down,
dead and cold.*

*War is ugly,
but don't be so naive,
don't you know we all have chores to do,
margarine to buy,
so we burrow and stick our heads in the sand,
too fatigued to acknowledge the putrid smoke-filled sky.*

*War is ugly,
so they tell us,
while launching the missiles without much of a fuss,*

War is ugly,

*and repugnant and brutal,
war is evil as the hounds of hell,*

*but we won't spare more than a moment of
two, for we have sneakers to buy,
bitcoin to trade,*

and stocks to sell.

War is ugly,

but aren't we all,

our eyes glaze,

*as we schedule a few minutes a day,
our concentration reduced to tik-tok time,*

*as we freshen our comfort-zones,
in a detached "what can I do" daze.*

*War is ugly,
but so am I,*

*these pompous words,
this useless verse,*

*smug with indignation,
oh-so righteous I am,*

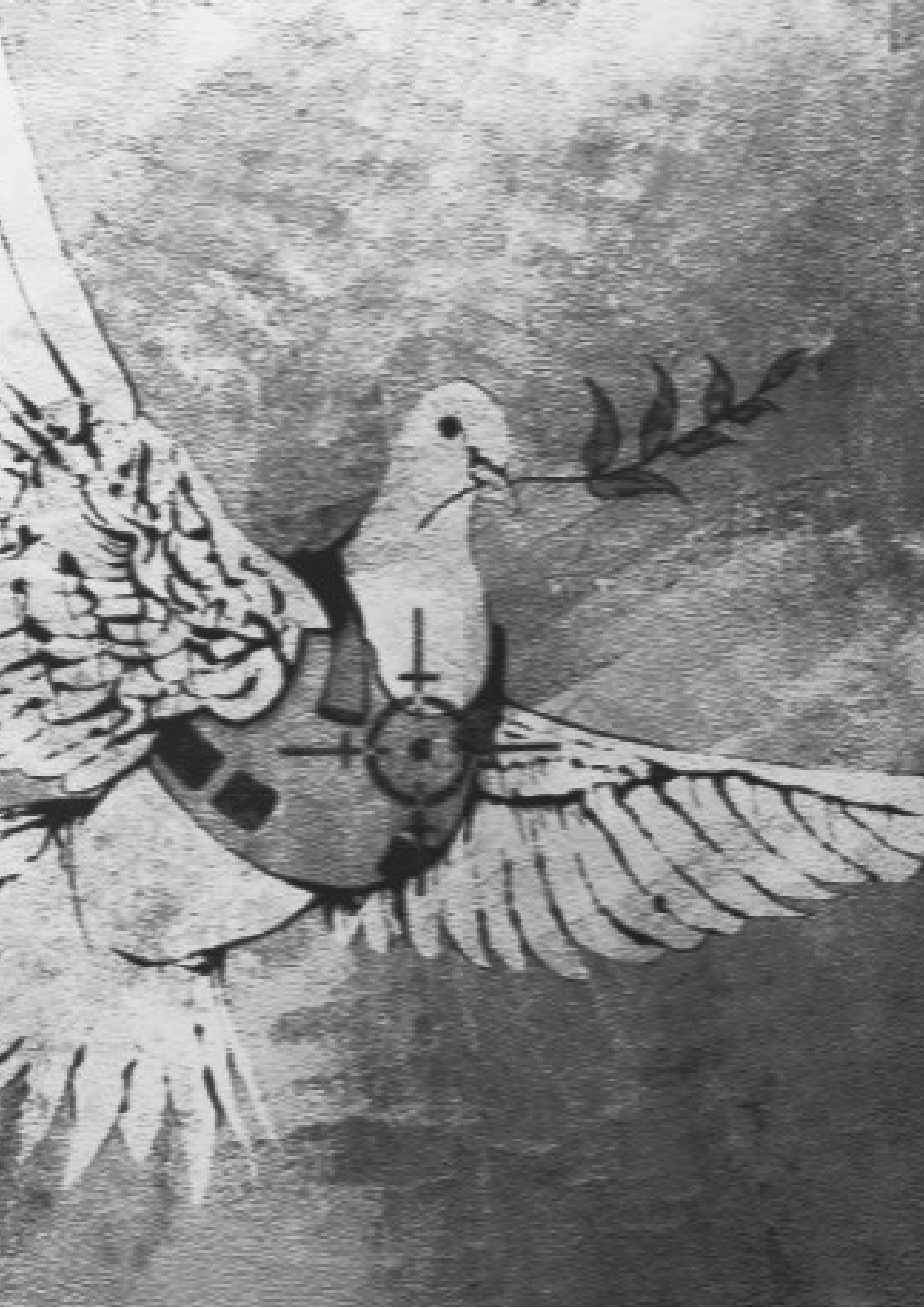
*and truth be told,
as long as my bread is buttered,*

I'll scribble on,

*my words, my outrage,
just theatre and nothing more,*

*so please excuse me,
my new iPhone is here,*

*yes,
that's the delivery guy,
ringing the bell at my front door.*



Talkin' Death in Gaza Blues

*So, if you want to really know,
what a mother's agonised scream sounds like,
take a walk in Gaza today.*

*she will bear her broken heart,
as she bore the coffin that held her 11 month old child's body,
as it lay lifelessly broken and torn apart.*

*The mother screams in anger and in pain,
her howls and shrieks echo on the bloodied plain,
so take a walk in Gaza today,
and feel the rage that a mother nurses,
and bear the brunt of a mother's curses.*

*You see, she laid her little baby in the cold, blood-soaked ground,
while you diplomats and peacemakers and politicians were buzzing around,
so stop buzzing,*

*and take a walk in Gaza today,
and for once,*

*for once,
listen to what a mother has to say,*

"they've rained down death on us for years,

*they've torched our olive groves while you have shut your collective ears,
they've killed our children over and over and over again,
and we've cried oceans of tears that have disappeared down the drain,
so tell me as I cradle my dead baby in my hand,*

"who gives a damn?".

This is what you will hear when you walk in Gaza today.

It is what you have heard for years and years now,

and all I can think as I write these words is 'how?'

*how could you fail,
you peacemakers and diplomats and politicians,
how could you fail the mothers of Gaza,
over and over and over again,
is it because Gaza's mothers' tears are forgotten,
because they simply disappear down the drain.*

*And how can you not stem that ocean of tears,
cried by countless mothers,
and fathers,
and children whose eyes are blinded by inexpressible pain,
whose days are haunted,
not by phantoms,
but by living fears.*

So can you take a walk in Gaza today?

*and what possibly could you have to say,
to the mothers who have cried oceans of tears,*

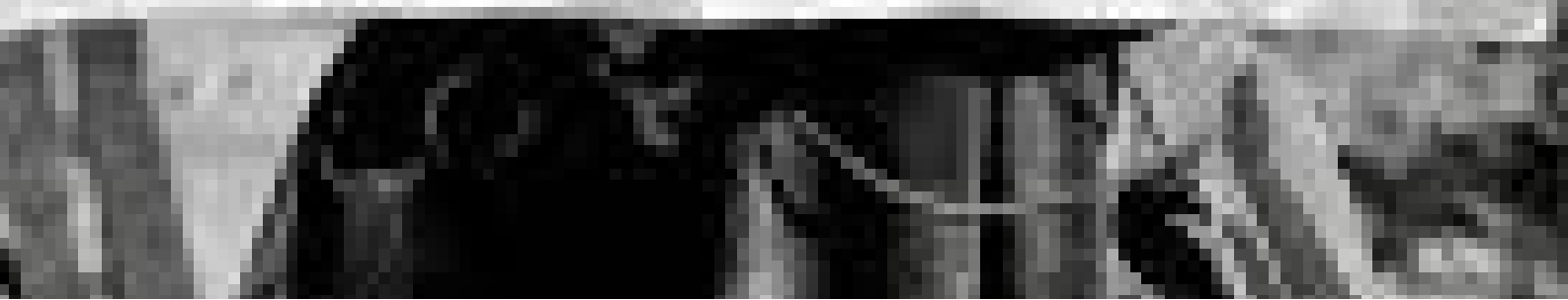
again and again and again,

*or are Gaza's mothers' tears forgotten,
because they simply disappear down the drain.*

(for the people of Gaza and the Occupied Territories)



*Our freedoms
nothing without
the freedom of
the Palestinians!*
- Nelson Mandela



The Keys to the Freedom of Palestine

1.

*Our elderly clutch rusty keys to ancient doors,
their humble abodes pillaged generations ago,
where once fragrant orange trees would grow.*

Our elderly do not forget.

They are the keys to the freedom of Palestine.

*Our young hurl stones at the oppressors' metallic beasts,
as their brutal steel wreaks havoc.*

Our young do not forget.

They are the keys to the freedom of Palestine.

*Our mothers have shed a deluge of tears,
their cheeks rarely dry.*

Our mothers do not forget.

Our mothers' tears are the keys to the freedom of Palestine.

2.

*Our time will come.
Our cause is just.*

*We seek no retribution,
we crave no bloodlust,*

we stand as one to reclaim what is ours:

*These mangled olive groves,
These poisoned wells,
These crushed oases.*

Nature does not forget.

Nature breathes within the delicate tendrils of every vine.

Bounteous nature herself holds the keys to the freedom of Palestine.

3.

*We will return,
this desolate void of exile will end.*

*Our struggles will continue,
as our dignity we unflinchingly defend.*

Our struggle is infused in your veins and mine.

Our struggles are the keys to the freedom of Palestine.

4.

*We have been torn apart by the shrapnel of F-16s,
multitudes of human beings reduced to blood soaked shreds.*

These torn shreds contain a multitude of threads.

*The flag of our freedom shall be woven by each of these countless threads.
These threads that around each thud-thudding heart do entwine.*

These threads are the keys to the freedom of Palestine.

5.

We who have borne witness to the seething blood of our people.

*The blood of our sisters,
our fathers.
The blood of our brothers,
our mothers.*

*The blood of defiance spilled while steadfastly holding the line.
Every drop of blood is a key to the freedom of Palestine.*

6.

*We hear you,
your leaders and your kings' deafeningly mute shock.*

*We see you,
your diplomats warmly embraced by the vultures' flock.*

*We have known your ilk for decades,
your cowardly charade of toothlessly ineffectual fuss.*

*We have known your ilk for decades,
you who have crafted the art of perennially forsaking
us.*

*We have known your ilk for decades,
your bloviating drivel droning on as you whine.
We have known your ilk for decades,
you have taught us much.*

Every lesson holds a key to the freedom of Palestine.

7.

Our collective memory is seared in our minds.

The memories of those who have fallen in war.

The memories of those who are imprisoned by exile.

The memories of those with an unshakeable core.

The memories of those we honour.

The memories of all whom we dare not defile.

Our memories.

Our memory.

Our collective memory will be the key to the freedom of Palestine.

Our memories.

Our memory.

This shared memory strengthens our slingshots.

Our slingshots are the keys to the freedom of Palestine.



Olives & Dates

*The foul odour of burnt flesh.
The stench of decomposition.*

*Grandmothers,
babies,
sisters,
wives,*

*once so alive,
calling their kids home for lunch,*

*now lie strewn,
formless, silenced,
ripped apart, torn,*

on blood-soaked soil.

*The surgical strikes.
The laser-point accuracy.*

*GPS-guided million dollar missiles,
launched at the switch of a button.*

*The smartest weapons,
salivating,
ravenous,*

*deployed mercilessly,
to decimate darker-skinned people.*

*Black and brown people,
pummelled black and blue.*

*The LCD screens miles away,
surveilling,*

*The drones like birds of prey,
scanning, seeking, gluttonous,*

*coldly primed,
weapons hot,*

*lock onto a date seller's cart,
picking out a 6 year old child,
holding her mother's hand,*

at an olive stall,

*in a market-place
In the cross-hairs.*

LEILA KHALED

ليلى خالد

DON'T FORGET THE STRUGGLE

STUD

STUD



We, The People of Palestine

1.

She bleeds,

*just a girl,
a girl who skipped her way to school,
now torn into pieces, her tiny body that mere minutes earlier had been whole,*

yes,

just a girl,

*all of nine and a half years old,
whose laughter always warmed her mother's soul.*

She bleeds,

*just a girl,
gnarled shrapnel slicing her stomach,
her life fleeing, the light dimming in her blood streaked eyes,*

yes,

just a girl,

*soaked in seeping warm scarlet hues,
the colour of the tomatoes her mother buys.*

She bleeds,

*just a girl,
writhing in horrendous pain,
her little fingers feeling around for her charred books,*

yes,

just a girl,

*her blood soaking her Palestinian soil,
the colour of the beetroot her mother cooks.*

She bleeds,

*just a girl,
the light in her eyes dimming, fading,
the ribbons in her hair a leafy olive green, a serene white, a fiercely defiant
red,*

yes,

just a girl,

*the mangled heap of a nine and a half year old girl,
her lifeless eyes open as she lies cold and dead.*

2.

We bleed,

*a people bludgeoned, brutalised,
a people shackled in the dungeons of oppression.*

We bleed,

yet the struggle for freedom burns bright.

We bleed,

yet we rise as one, reaching for freedom's glorious light.

We bleed.

*We bleed in Beit Sahour,
Khan Yunis,
Ramallah,
Beit Jala,
Jabaliya,
Tulkarm,*

*al-Bireh,
Rafah,
Jenin,*

*in our dusty refugee camps,
in our suffocating ghettos,*

in this hell that plunders the innocence from our young ones' sparkling eyes.

We bleed,

*yes indeed,
we all bleed,*

*you and I, and him and her,
she and us, all of us,*

*your mother and your father,
your brother and your sister,*

*we all bleed,
each of us,
every family,*

*yours and hers,
his and mine,*

we all bleed.

We, The People of Palestine.



FREE PALESTINE

What's on the news?

*A woman lies face down in the dust,
the back of her head is a caved-in hole where her brain used to be.*

*A man lies bellowing out in pain,
the shattered bones of his leg jutting through his torn skin.*

*A child lies cold, dead and limp,
the flesh of her body ripped off by shrapnel hanging like confetti.*

"I'll have a Macchiato, please, and a glass of water with lemon but no ice".

"Thanks".

Band-Aids

*They tell me that oppression cannot last.
They tell me that inequality cannot last.
They tell me that injustice cannot last.*

"They are unsustainable", they tell me.

*They tell me that freedom will prevail.
They tell me that equality will prevail.
They tell me that justice will prevail.*

"It is an historical inevitability", they tell me.

*They tell me to be less acerbic.
They tell me to be less angry.*

"It is counter productive", they tell me.

*They tell me that change takes time.
They tell me that it is complicated.
They tell me I don't understand.
They tell me to be more patient.*

"You're being too simplistic", they tell me.

*They tell me so much of the same and much, much more.
They tell me that there are no quick-fixes.*

They tell me to place my trust in their untiring efforts.

They tell me to place my trust in the mechanisms in place.

They tell me about their various programmes.

They smile benevolently when I nod and turn around.

And then they continue handing out band-aids.

All Art by Banksy

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South Africa

A black and white photograph of Nelson Mandela. He is shown from the chest up, looking slightly to the left of the camera with a serious expression. His right hand is raised, with the index finger pointing forward. He is wearing a dark suit jacket. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**"WE KNOW TOO WELL THAT OUR
FREEDOM IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT
THE FREEDOM OF THE PALESTINIANS."**

— Nelson Mandela