

# [***I Booked a Dream Trip to NYC. Then the US Gave Me a Moral Dilemma***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJD-VV61-JBR6-93B4-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 962 words

**Byline:** Sanobar Sabah

**Highlight:** I gave up my morning brew from the coffee chain, our cherished meal of finger-licking goodness, and the golden arches feast.

**Body**

When my husband first booked our tickets to the U.S. in June last year, I was thrilled to finally realize my childhood Christmas dream trip to NYC, at the age of 43.

As someone of Indian Muslim heritage, I was brought up in the Middle East and have spent my entire life residing here. The only other trip we made to the U.S. as a family was a pre-COVID holiday in Los Angeles when the kids were much younger. They're 16 and 11 now.

I spent the next few weeks compiling a checklist—warm jackets and thermals for the family, bookmark *Time Out*'s 100 best things to do in NYC, [*Google*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/google?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) the *Home Alone* tour—the Rockefeller Center with the Christmas tree was at the top of my list, as was posing in front of the iconic Statue of Liberty for that keepsake touristy shot.

Everything was going ahead as planned. Then, October 7 happened.

Hamas launched attacks on communities along Israel's southern fence with Gaza.

Around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed, according to an Israeli government estimate. About 240 others were taken hostage, including children. Israel responded to the attack with a disproportionate bombardment of Gaza, triggering a call by Amnesty International for an investigation into [*war crimes*](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-as-israeli-attacks-wipe-out-entire-families-in-gaza/).

That bombardment extended to my psyche through my glaring mobile screen. Images of dead babies hit differently when you're a mother. Residing close to an airport, the once exhilarating noise of planes taking off and landing, now made me fearful.

I spent sleepless nights anxious, imagining the families living under constant bombing in Gaza.

How did children manage to sleep at night under a screaming, trembling sky raining bombs in the dark? How did mothers pacify their terrified children? Were the Israeli child hostages safe? Where did people's cats and dogs go?

The more I thought about the persistent violence, the more I felt we needed an end to the nearly six-decade-long [*Israeli apartheid against Palestinians*](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/). Gaza, specifically, has been under an Israeli [*blockade*](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/07/world/middleeast/gaza-blockade-israel.html) for 16 years.

Initially, to safeguard my sanity, I avoided watching social media altogether. However, I soon learned the intricacies of the war of algorithms. Engaging with posts—liking, sharing, and commenting—became a means to keep the message alive, amplifying Palestinian voices. My involvement in social media deepened, but it still felt insufficient.

Despite not being proficient in embroidery, using watermelon colors, I embroidered names to contribute to the [*Threads of Solidarity*](https://induviduality.substack.com/p/threads-of-solidarity) project—a digital tapestry in remembrance of those who lost their lives in Gaza.

On November 29, observed as The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinians, I read the [*Gaza Monologues*](https://www.ashtar-theatre.org/the-gaza-mono-logues.html). The monologues are testimonies crafted by Ashtar Theatre youth in 2010.

2010. [*Not October 7, 2023*](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/28/israels-war-on-gaza-in-ten-explainers).

It was around this time that I came across the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions ([*BDS*](https://bdsmovement.net/)), a nonviolent Palestinian-led movement promoting boycotts, divestments, and economic sanctions against Israel, and the [*Jewish Voice for Peace*](https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/), a group of progressive Jewish activists, prompting me to follow their [*Instagram*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/instagram?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) accounts, especially the [*JVPNY*](https://www.instagram.com/jvpny/?hl=en) chapter.

Up until then, I had no idea that an entire community of Jews rallied behind Palestinian liberation.

Inspired by the BDS movement, I gave up my favorite morning brew from one of the world's largest coffee chains, our cherished meal of finger-licking goodness, and the legendary golden arches family feast.

The more I witnessed America's complicity in Israel's aggression against Gaza, the more I hated everything American.

Local schools had started collecting donations to be sent to Gaza. For the first time ever, my privileged kids and I started discussing ***politics*** at home.

Growing up as a third-culture kid, navigating political affiliations has always been perplexing for me. In fact, the inclination was often to avoid engaging in ***politics*** altogether and find security in that sweet 'neutral' spot.

Do I have the right to comment on rising fascism in India while residing elsewhere? Why do I experience empathy witnessing the plight of Palestinians in Gaza, even though I'm not an Arab?

Gaza proved to be the turning point for me. As an Indian Muslim who grew up in the Middle East, the Palestinians in Gaza feel all too familiar—reminiscent of the people I observed in our schools, parks, malls, and workplaces.

With our tickets purchased, and our hotel reservation done, I decided to go ahead with our scheduled journey to the States. We arrived in New York on Christmas Eve.

On December 27, demonstrators including Jewish protesters, [*blocked JFK airport in NYC*](https://apnews.com/article/jfk-lax-palestine-protest-israel-airports-dd5981ea903961f77309c27a7b52ed07) demanding a ceasefire.

On December 28, [*Jewish Elders*](https://gaycitynews.com/jewish-lgbtq-activists-mourn-civilian-deaths-gaza/) organized a silent demonstration in Bryant Park calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an end to [*U.S. military*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/u.s.-military?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) aid to Israel.

Every area we touched, spanning from Times Square and Bryant Park to Union Square and beyond, observed near-daily protests.

Notably, some of the loudest voices calling for a ceasefire have emerged from the Jewish community in the United States.

Feeling like a hypocrite, I was on the verge of canceling my holiday trip of a lifetime.

It was right here in New York though, that little Kevin McCallister discovered the heartwarming importance of compassion and human connections. Just like I did.

*A budding writer,* [*Sanobar Sabah*](https://sanobar.substack.com/) *is an Indian Muslim residing in the Middle East for three generations now. After a long search for identity, Sanobar has finally discovered that her home lies in the wits and charms of her two children, her squabbles with her husband, the company of her snobbish rescue cats, and, most importantly—in her writings.*

*All views expressed in this article are the author's own.*

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[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2362069/sanobar-sabah-israel-palestine.jpg)

**Graphic**

Sanobar Sabah Israel Palestine

Sanobar Sabah

Sanobar Sabah (L) is an Indian Muslim residing in the Middle East. Union Square, New York, (R) pictured by Sanobar.

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