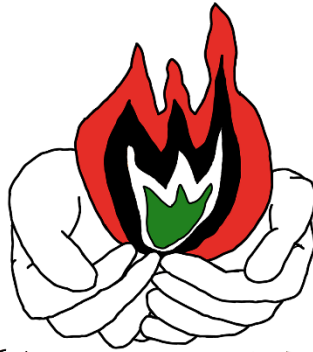


Poems of Pain and Hope for Broken Times

A Diasporic Palestinian tries to process a genocide, and shares their journey with you in this Zine



MAY GAZA LIGHT A FIRE
IN ALL OUR HEARTS SO
WE ALL FIND STRENGTH
WE NEVER KNEW WE HAD.

Liz Bajjalieh

Note from the author

Thank you to everyone who purchased this zine. As you know, I compiled all the poems I have written in Gaza as a mutual aid effort to support my friend Belal al-nemnems. As I am typing this, he has at multiple times gone days without food due to Israel's continuing starvation blockade. This is their final solution. But unlike the Nazis of WWII, this time, social media exists, and we can connect directly to the millions of Gazans starving. This is a profound blessing (Alhamdullilah), and means we have to use this window of opportunity to keep our friends alive. They deserve to live, and we have ways to help them do that. The Al-nemnem family deserves our support. Please, after reading this, keep sharing Belal's campaign and, if you can, donate again, and consider becoming a monthly donor to sustain him.

At the end of this document, I have shared additional resources for you to better support Belal's campaign.

Message me at @dandelion.tea.art if you're interested in getting more involved in keeping his family alive. You can also contact Belal directly at @belal.alnemnem1996.

You can also find the link to his campaign here: https://chuffed.org/project/help-belal?fbclid=PAZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAafnMqKfB30qhokx03cjjTm9QXbXuba0BE4d2ypf8CshAslxhbCfdMDY8uf1uQ_aem_l3E_MDq86gYdiUicU7DbUg

Do the damn dishes

Looking up towards a wooden moon
I saw three empty cups towering above
Sitting on an empty ledge
Usually the home of a pothos or two
But yesterday, I snatched those plants
away

In hopes to protect them from January's
frost

Creeping slowly onto the window

Tonight, I melt my soul to the ground
Washing dishes in the tub on the floor
That I usually use as a spare drying rack
Filled with the drips of water plopped
from the sink
Running all day so the pipes don't freeze

I'm trying to do something

I want to be good

Here in the small moments, I think of
what's big

I think of spirits floating through Gaza

In a haze of prayer for tomorrow

Martyrs lay in the streets

After begging for a last breath under the
rubble

I put my rubber gloves on

I sink my hands into the murky water

I look in the mirror and ask who I am

And there sits the window ledge

Bare of life for the moment

The plants I still tend to like children

It's where I try to hold on

Something to grab so I don't float away
I need to be here, rooted in the moment
Because we cannot let Gaza down, none
of us

So do the damn dishes
Cry a million tears
Hurt with every cell of your being
This is what the world has come to
What we fought for and lost
And it is what you have to hold onto

Grasp it
Take a breath
Bang your tired feet to the ground
Until it splits the earth in two
Breathe, breathe again

We hold our hearts like ticking clocks

We will work for liberation again

When we wake up tomorrow

Grief as a revolution

As restless bags carve under your eyes

Lay on my chest, open your mouth, and
scream

Scream so loud the cabinets shake

And the dam that was built into your
throat bursts

So a river may flow from your lips

May water push the front door open and
slam down the stairs

Coursing into the street where the
midday commuters bear witness

Let them witness it all

The trenches scraped into your gut

The bombs that reigned above Gaza

Stealing life from children not even given
the privilege to breathe their first breath

All for Israel's righteous cause of collateral
damage

My love, please do not suffer in silence
anymore

Let the commuters cry their rivers too

May your truth teach them to crawl into
their own mouths

And find the walls that were built in front
of their eyes, ears, noses and stomachs

So they can swallow the taste of death
without retching

But may your story teach them to wretch

May your waves tear their walls down

May they fall to the ground in rage and
sorrow

So they can purge their bodies of every
rancid lie stitched into their skin

For this is the world Palestinians were
made to swallow like knives for decades

Being told their cut lips were the
wonderful cost of a greater man's
liberation

So let them wail, let them scream

Let the rivers that flow from their mouths
join yours together into a wild storm of a
sea

Pulsing higher and higher above the
ground

Drowning away every horror the soured
souls in power built

Let all Palestinians who live with the
nakba Israel sliced into their throats

Let every Indigenous peoples

Float to the top

So all of us healing our blistered scars and
salt filled lungs

Can rest, and gaze peacefully

As the sun sets, rises

And the moon glows in-between

A message for the modern-day colonizer

And from the chaos of her throat

The woman sang,

"These were the grains of rice I told you
to plant

At the heart of your soul. And what have
you done?

Thrown them into your mountains of
waste and said,

'I am the God of this tower

Crumbling beneath my feet'

But you did not care of how it rotted, for
now

At least you had a view

That supposedly stretched your horizon

Further than the rest

But did you not learn your lesson?

The drums of time beat fast before you

Feel its tension, like the trigger of a gun

The slingshot you played with as a kid

You are a spec. Did you know? Did you
see?

If you'd planted the rice you would've
then heard

The soft hum of earth and stone

The whispers she breathes from her chest

Instead, you found oil

Not knowing that somehow within its
black tar

Is eons of you and your blessed ancestors

Condensed into one flowing story

Can you imagine?

What could've been if you looked down

With the eyes of a child, wondering how
many stars

Shined over the creatures you've made
into plastic

Your alchemy is a hoax, no matter the
past

Instead of beauty you made bombs for it

A wicked dream of dollar bills

That will only be but compost soon

Break down into nothing, but do you
care?

Do you care at all?

Each moment holds an eternity

What magic life could be

If you'd live within the wisdom

Of rice, of stars, and of stone."

Cradle of my soul

Cradle of my soul

My arms weep for justice

Cradle of my soul

This world will not always hurt

Cradle of my soul

Listen with soft eyes and a broken heart

The world bleeds as never before

Between each blink Gaza still burns

Blood splattered like paint on your
precious sand

Cradle of my soul

Rock every Gazan, alive and dead, in your
arms

Give me the strength each morning to
forever be alongside them

In the fight for their liberation,

Healing, a universe away from the
Zionist's treachery

The shards of glass they left on the floor

Let them, oh let them go home and
rebuild

Let us lift the rubble with them

Cradle of my soul

Look to the sea

How far out do our eyes expand?

For how long do we hold our breath

To swim freely in these waters?

Cradle of my soul

Keep Gaza alive

Let every Gazan grieve a million tears

Let me hurt, let me beg for the end of this
with each shattered breath

Let it end

Let it end

Let it end

14,000 and counting*

How many of them had said their first word?

How many of them had taken their first step?

How many, with a crayon in their hand

Ever tried to draw a cat for the first time?

What were their favorite colors?

As a kid we were asked what we want to be

When we grow up, the sky is the limit

But what happens when the sky is from where the bombs fall?

I wonder how many of them said they want to be astronauts

Were they excited for their next birthday?

Did they have their outfit picked out?

How many of their mothers had spent
hours at the market

Searching for the perfect gift?

How many fathers held their daughter's
hands

To help them climb up tricky stairs?

What do those mothers search for

And what do those fathers hold onto
now?

How many teenagers had had their first
crush?

Stomach twisted in their classroom as
they dreamed about them

What their life would be like together

Wedding gowns, kids of their own?

How many ditched class? How many were
straight A students?

How many tucked their head and cried on
the way home, too scared to open up?

Too young to know how to say they're
hurting?

How many had stomach flus, fought with
their best friend,

woke up from a bad dream,

Went to bed after a bad day with their
brother rubbing their back and saying,

"Don't worry, I'm sure tomorrow will be
better. There's always, always
tomorrow"?

**This number is pulled from a statistic
from Spring of 2024 that Israel had killed
14,000 children. Not only was this statistic
already likely an underestimate due to a
lack of hospital records after Israel
bombed all of them, and did not include
deaths from the West Bank, but as I am
typing this during the Israeli created Level
Five Famine in Gaza, this number is
undoubtedly now significantly higher.*

The room is half filled with water

The surface hangs a few inches above my
nose

Some days, this is but a puddle or cackling
stream

But today I am drowning

But the children of Gaza say their water
tastes of salt

Their meals could be cupped between
their small hands

And still they use what they have to feed
the stray cats and dogs

How much am I supposed to give?

What is the perfect percentage to match

What I give and what I take

To make me a master of all I do for their
liberation?

I give too much and I am a useless pool
on the ground

Illness flares up, I'm unable to get out of
bed

I give too little and I'm like a Zionist

Complicit at every twist of another
mangled corpse in the rubble

But maybe this isn't a numbers game

Maybe there's no perfect poem I can
write

No magic word I can say to make it all
click

Make my Senators listen

Get the media's head out of his ass

Maybe this isn't something I can just fix

Only something I can fight for every day

I have to pray to God and look to the
moon

As the same moon that hangs over Gaza

I have to keep this all alive and running

I have to hold hope even when I have
nothing else

More than Dreams

From the swells of my eyes

I will find something more than this
brokenness

Stitched into our skin

Time sways back and forth

And the present moment swings right
into our hearts

The full force of it like a bullet to the
chest

I wonder what floats in the minds of IOF
soldiers

What breathing exercises have they
studied on their phones

Meant to soften their muscles

So they can sleep better at night?

What foods do they crave

As they walk boredly to their military
perch

Assigned to snap metal into the heads of
grandfathers and grandmothers

Do they dream of home cooked meals?
Of new foods they've found exotic in their
travels?

I don't like to think of the futures they
dream

Awake or asleep

Truly I don't care for them anymore

I prefer to curl into the minds of their
blessed enemies

Who've trekked rubble and fruit filled
land for decades

Land more colorful and soft only decades
before

I don't know Gazan lives

I only know pictures and videos of their
screams

Their joys, their favorite meals

Their Babas singing stories of what it once
was like

What it must be again

Their present that I see a torn gift

Turned to cardboard shrapnel scattered
across the gray

But I want to go deeper, hear what their
ears hear

Smell the wicked or dainty or well-
nourished or starving

Or nothingly taken smells they breathe on
the daily

Broken glass and metal foundations

I need to dream and I need to be there
for you

I want to know your dreams if that's what
will help you

I want to know what perfect thing I must
to do to fix this

The world should've stopped turning just
to save you

The world needs to stop turning just to
save you

No hell I've had burned onto my tongue
rages anything close to what Gazans have
had burned into their skin

Your future must not be cardboard
dreams

It must be real, more than shattered
homes and nightmares

And Instagram videos reminding us you're
still alive

Gaza, nothing about this is fair or
humane

The wretched men who've carved their
gold-filled desired destinies into bone
While refusing to hold anything sacred in
their mouths

Only lies

Only their own personal hells they
swallow into smiles for the camera

"I believe in a two state solution"

"Once the hostages are free this will end"

"Such sorrow these Gazans must be
collateral damage"

"But what about Hamas?"

"But what about Hamas?"

"But what about Hamas?"

"But what about Hamas?"

May their personal hells burn in every
dream they have

May rest be their enemy

So dreams can run from them back to
you

May every Gazan know lives softness and
ease forever

Horror but an old wives tale

May everything stolen from them be
taken back

Every Gazan must be given more than
what they need

More than dreams, more than OpEds

Gazans must be given the world

**"When Allah willed to break us,
hypocrisy fed us grief and ripped us
apart"***

When I look down to my arms
The first thing i see is their limits

I reach forward to try to touch you
But soon the divot between my shoulders
starts to ache
My spine holds me back, no more can I
move

No man can save the world alone
And to wish for as much is to lay waste
To the beauty that is born when we chose
to be an Eachother

But this body is the only thing I can
control

And if I could I'd stretch myself across the
sea to cover you,

Take my fingers and twist every gun from
their hands

Every Israeli fighter plane and bomb away
from their so-called soldiers

And cast them into the ocean

I'd become a temple that can bring back
the dead, if that's what they want

I want to make it stop

So you are no longer forced kiss a dead
child's eyes

To wake try her up

I wish I could fix this but I can't

When I look down to my arms

The first thing i see is their limits

I wish I could save you

I wish this mouth knew how to scream
loud enough

To blow away all the broken parts of their
souls that boast how this is a divine duty

I wish I could steal their bodies from the
freezers

Did you know that?

Did you know Israel keeps dead
Palestinian hostages in fridges?

They want them to "finish their criminal
sentence"

Yet no soul is left in that skin to process
their own prison

But the mind of the massacre cares not
for their humanity

Cares not for the earring her grandfather
pinned to his shirt when she died

They don't care for that sweet
grandfather's smile

He reminds me of my father

The soft way he sighs on a bad day

And how light builds in his eyes when a
cardinal lands on the birdfeeder

Why the hell are some of you still silent?

How can you still turn your face from
these horrors?

When I look down to my arms

The first thing i see is their limits

I can't save my father from this grief even
as he holds hope

I can't save anyone today, I only fight with
chapped hands

And a silhouetted heart

That beats blood into the back of my
head

What makes them smile? What birds fly
in Gaza's skies?

And what happens when the child chases
them through the rubble?

How many shades of gray do they know
by now?

How many hues of blood are stained into
their memories?

I considered myself a pacifist

But that's easy to say when you've never
had a gun put to your head

What of their rage? Statistics don't mean
shit

When you're watching your brother fight
for his life

In the home that nearly crushed him to
death last week

This isn't over, stop pretending it's over

It won't be over when Israel's planes stop
flying

And the howls of Gazan mothers no
longer drench the sky

When I look down to my arms

The first thing i see is their limits

Genocide is too kind, too soft of a word

What are they supposed to do with all
that grief?

When I look down to my arms

The first thing i see is their limits

I see how high they rise when I look up
I see the sky and its many shades
And I pray for the day we all can feel the
beauty of its blue
And live for nothing else

**English translation of a line of a poem
from Arab poet Burthaina bint al-
Mu'tamid ibn Abbad, 11th century*

Grief, diaspora

Helixes of DNA

Wrapped around like strings of a violin

Plucked by death's thin fingers

I feel each one rattle in my chest

And guts, so hollow

The oil of their skin smudged onto my
own

Wiping away the stories that grew from
my pores

Oil stains, the olive trees used to grow
freely here

I felt the warm sun of 500 years ago

And the laughter of my ancestors, my
people

As they sat before the Mediterranean sea

Swallowing fresh fruit and talking about
nothing at all

I smelt five and fifty years ago

Burnt shrapnel, twisted corpses

That could pile as high as the Mount of
Beatitudes

A sermon of silence never written, never
given the chance

Sun on the water that pools up to my
ankles

Helixes try to swim free

I am lost, I am searching

Untitled

I wish, like roots

I could stretch my arms beyond their
current reach

Flying through the air

Across the sky into Gaza

One by one, I would pick each person
trapped in genocide

Up with my fingers, and gently drop them
to safety

Let them rest on my palm, make sure
they find

The softest hospital beds, the warmest
homes

That I could flick away every IOF
warplane

Crush every bomb falling from the sky in
my palms

Keep everyone in Gaza forced to suffer for
so long fed

But my arms have limits

My heart is a rock

I can only be we

And we can only keep going

With every atom of strength that we
have

And more

Until the day Palestine is free

Rewritten

First, they came for the Palestinians

And I didn't speak up because, well, we
can't be moral purists

For the movement, we need to
accept that not all politicians are
perfect

Then they came for the trans and queer
population

And I didn't speak up, because well, yeah,
it's sad,

But it could be a lot worse, have you seen
Trump?

Then they came for the immigrants

And I didn't speak up, I want to see good
in the Democrats

Maybe they have a point anyway, open
borders are too unrealistic

Security is good for me too! There's
always going to be collateral damage, we
can't help that

Our immigration system is way too
complicated

Then they came for the women, yes even
the white ones

(Let's be real, they're always harming all
people of color)

And I didn't speak up, change takes time

Be patient, this is just our political reality

Maybe we'll fix it by funding the cops?

Then they came for the poor

Or were never there for them anyway, I
guess

And I didn't speak up because, well, you
know,

I just, I mean

I don't know if they'll come for me

But they probably will, depending on my
tax bracket I suppose

I guess we'll just wait and see

But if they don't come for me, will I ever
speak up anyway?

What will it take for me to care?

Untitled

Where does evil go

When it pulls itself from our throats

And scratches itself onto paper?

Where does evil go

After it's blood beats through our arms

Into our fingers, so we can pull the
trigger?

How does evil survive in a world so raft
with sorrow

Yet overflowing with blue abundance?

How does it claw down the street

And into the wheels of a car

Or a tank that crunches their bodies into
dirt?

What does it take for neurons to be born
Like stars, and whisper to the mud of our
meat

That what we are doing is okay

That this can persist, it's just how it is?

Half the world torn into their beds

Heavier than the sun

And begging for the moon

To cool their hearts?

Because they who drop the bombs know
this

Those in suits whose tremors from their
mouth can shout "aye"

So bombs can fall over their siblings'
heads at night?

How does such cruelty manifest without
curdling

Without death, without even pausing to
take a breath?

Where does evil go

And what will it take to kill it?

**May the day come when it's just bad
weather**

May the day come when it's just bad
weather

A fly in their coffee

And a tire that needs fixing

May the day come that it's just their
neighbor who plays music too loud

Forgetting to pack an umbrella

And sometimes a broken heart

May the day come where for their
children

Checkpoints are a mystery

Home demolitions are a scene from a
movie

And IDs are just a thing you carry

May the day come where the most
difficult part of my visit

Is the stomach flu I get on day three (I
always get one when I travel)

May not a single Israeli bomb ever drop
again

May the walls become a myth

And the green line just a string from the
yarn ball that the cat pushed onto the
ground

May Palestinians only know simple pains
and grievances

Not concave and complex maps meant to
dissolve them

May they have overflowing lives

May Palestine be free

May steadfastness only be needed for
their olive trees to grow

What is it that we owe Gaza?

From the depths of our shattered hearts

We owe Gaza persistence

From the wails of our screaming mouths

We owe Gaza our voice

From the aching winds of winter nights

We owe Gaza the light of tomorrow

We owe them a burning of what's been
built

The glass lies that scrape our feet

As shards, we blamed the blood on
ourselves

Our misgivings, but now we owe Gaza the
fire of truth

Beaten into the minds of all who choose
to turn away

Chose quiet lives over the stories of burst
ear drums

From the bombs they reign above Gaza,
Syria, Lebanon and beyond

We owe Gaza everything

Every piece of ourselves we can give

We owe them our strength, the strength
we're only beginning to know

The strength we've carried our whole
lives

We owe Gaza the weight of our bones

We owe Gaza a grief alchemized into
action

The shelter of our lives a solace, a
solstice

So much at our disposal we cannot waste

So bang your pans, shout to the sky
Let no mouth claim this is just how it is
We owe Gaza a world never known
Never imagined by our fractured minds

A world built from ruins beyond
The colonizers shaky knives and guns
And planes and bombs, their weapons
are not facts
But the objects of cowards too scared of
the truth
That there is a world where they aren't
our kings
There is a world where Palestine is free,
where everyone knows real freedom
It lives in our hearts, and the thing we
owe Gaza

Is to bring that world into being with
them

Thank you for taking the time to read and sit with my words. I come to you now with one way to be a fight for Palestinian liberation, and that is to help keep a family in Gaza alive: the AlNemnem family.

Please screenshot and share the graphic, QR Code, and link to his campaign on the following page as widely as possible. Share it on social media (on Instagram, feel free to add me as a collaborator, @dandelion.tea.art), email folks, shoot direct messages to friends you know from like high school who are likely at least somewhat sympathetic to the movement. You can also print this graphic and share flyers at local businesses or on lampposts (check your local laws to make sure this is legal first; different cities/towns vary and your level of risk is up to you).

HELP BELAL & HIS FAMILY SURVIVE



EVERY DONATION BRINGS HOPE

Please support Belal!



Belal and his family need urgent support to afford food, medicine, and other basic needs. Please share widely and donate - any amount will help them survive!

<https://chuffed.org/project/help-belal>



Link to campaign:

https://chuffed.org/project/help-belal?fbclid=PAZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAafnMqKfB30qhokx03cjjTm9QXbXuba0BE4d2ypf8CshAslxhbCfdMDY8uf1uQ_aem_l3E_MDq86gYdiUicU7DbUg

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