

Be glad you are not Palestinian

Reflections in the company of absence

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(1)

Mahmoud Darweesh, the exiled Palestinian poet says:
“As for me—as I have filled
with all the reasons of absence
then I am not for me
I am not for me
I am not for me...”

(2)

The question remains: To whom belongs the Palestinian?
The answer: He is for the suffering, pain, and exile of 60 years since, all mixed with grief. So be glad, you are not a Palestinian...

(3)

If to you the number 60 signifies retirement—beginning of rest after a long journey of devotion, and a mark of the esteem of your society you served over 60 years, then— be glad you are not Palestinian. The number 60 for all Palestinians worldwide coincides with the memory of the Nakba—the Catastrophe. During the war of 15 May 1948, more than 750,000 Arab Palestinians were expelled and divested of their land, homes, and possessions. Today, they number more than 6 million refugees; that year was named the year of Nakba, due to its catastrophic consequences for the Palestinian people.

(4)

If you were born and live in your homeland, or live abroad out of your free choice, and may return at any moment, then—be glad you are not Palestinian. Three-quarters of the Palestinian people are either refugees or displaced. The Palestinian refugees are considered the oldest victims of conflict in the world, and the most widely scattered. The majority of Palestinian refugees can be traced back to 500 villages situated inside Israel, which were destroyed during the 1948 war and afterwards; a majority remain uninhabited and abandoned to this day. Israel is adamant that the Palestinian refugees can never be allowed to return home.

(5)

If you travel freely inside your homeland, and are treated fairly as is your due as a human being and citizen, then—be glad you are not Palestinian. At this moment, there are more than 300,000 displaced persons inside the Green Line, who had originally been displaced by the 1948 war. Despite granting them Israeli citizenship, Israel continues to deny them return to their homes, and to reclaim their lands and possessions—as is the plight of all Palestinian refugees.

The number of displaced Palestinians inside the Green Line was estimated as 300,000 in 2006. In addition to more than 115,000 displaced to the territories occupied in 1967.

(6)

If you believe in the justice of rule of international law, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, in whose memory are etched these UN General Assembly Resolutions—yet none implemented in any form.

The UN General Assembly on 11 December (1948) endorsed Resolution 194(3) stating that Palestinian refugees, including those displaced inside the Green Line, had the right to return to their homes, reclaim their possessions, and receive compensation for the moral and material harm and damage they had suffered; those refugees who chose to not exercise their right to return, had the right to compensation for their property, and the right to receive help for their resettlement.

UN Security Council Resolution 237 of 14 June 1967 affirms the right of those Palestinians made refugees and displaced in 1967 to return to the homes they were expelled from.

(7)

If your mind is full of happy memories, beautiful beginnings, and images of family, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, whose memory is filled with destruction, death, killings, and massacres. The majority of dates for the Palestinian people are of pain and being torn apart:

- 2 November 1917 - the disastrous Balfour Declaration.
- 1947 - the UN recommends the partition of Palestine into two States.
- 14 May 1948 - the British withdrawal, and beginning of the 1st Arab-Zionist war.
- 15 May 1948 - the Palestinian Nakba.
- 9 April 1948 - the massacre of Deir Yassin.
- 14 October 1948 - the massacre at the village of Qibya.
- 28 October 1948 - the massacre at the village of al-Dawayma (Ed-Dawayimeh).
- 29 October 1956 - the massacre at the village of Kafr Qasim.
- 5 June 1967 - the 2nd Arab-Zionist war, and the Naksa (Debacle).

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- 28 June 1967 - declaration of the annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel.
- 12 August 1967 - the massacre at Tel al-Za'tar Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon.
- 6 June 1982 - the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.
- 16 September 1982 - the massacre at Sabra and Shatila.
- 20 May 1990 - the massacre of Palestinian labourers at 'Uyun Qarrah.
- 2 October 1990 - the massacre in the sacred al-Aqsa Mosque complex.
- 3 April 2002 - the beginning of the Israeli assault on Jenin refugee camp.
- 20 May 2007 - the Lebanese Army launches a broad military campaign on al-Bared refugee camp.
- March 2008 - the Gaza Holocaust.

(9)

If you rejoice in many joyful occasions, and continuing celebration, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian; all the occasions remembered are tied to exile, grief, and death:

- 30 March - commemorating Palestinian Land Day.
- 21 March - International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Xenophobia).
- 17 April - Palestinian Prisoners Day.

- 25 May - Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories seeking freedom, independence, and human rights.
- 20 June - World Refugee Day.
- 2 June 1967 - the founding of the PLO.

(10)

If you live in a land, and are not cruelly and unjustly forced out of it, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, cruelly and unjustly displaced time after time from his land.

(11)

If you do not suffer crises due to any war or armed conflict in the world, and are not displaced as a result, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, against which all policies of eviction and displacement are directed in Iraq, Lebanon, inside the Green Line, and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. More than 18,000 Palestinians were forced to flee Iraq; in addition to others, who are stranded on the Syrian-Iraqi-Jordanian border, since the 2003 American invasion of Iraq.

(12)

If you do not suffer any racial discrimination, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, who suffers all forms of racial discrimination at home, work, dealings, and in the media, and lives the consequences in killings, detention without trial, confiscation of identity documents, house demolitions, and ceaseless military operations.

(13)

If you live in a house you own, or rent, in the place of your choosing—a nice neighbourhood, with sunshine and air, enjoying access to services and healthy infrastructure, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, forced to live in one of the 52 refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, or Lebanon, after being expelled from your land and home. During the 1967 war, more than 400,000 Palestinians were displaced from the Palestinian Territories. The number of displaced refugees in the world total 950,000 people.

(14)

If you support any sanctions or punitive measures against any State, due to its violation of international law then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, who suffers the pain of seeing international law sidelined on the issue of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons, which obstructs the implementation of a final settlement for this issue over 60 years, and to more violations of the rights of the Palestinian people; foremost is the Apartheid wall built by Israel on land in the occupied West Bank.

(15)

If you live in your homeland, and can move freely from one place to another, without obstruction or barriers, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian imprisoned in their house by the Apartheid wall built on occupied West Bank land; an illegal wall, considered by the Palestinian people a symbol of the continuing Nakba.

(16)

If in May you are celebrating 60 years since the establishment of the Zionist entity in Palestine, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, who will be consumed with pain on 15 May on the passage of 60 years of his Nakba, expulsion, and a journey of suffering and homelessness on Earth.

(17)

If you are grieving for the loss of a family member, loved one, or friend, who was killed, went away, or fell ill, or fear the loss of a dear one, home, or land then—be glad you are not a Palestinian; every Palestinian household has suffered the pain of loss: a martyr, a prisoner in Israeli jails, or enduring the suffering with an injured person, consumed by the pain of a home demolished, cultivated field confiscated, or tree uprooted. Many Palestinians have suffered all these types of pain.

(18)

If you carry the key to your home or to the property in which you live, then—be glad you are not a Palestinian, carrying old, rusty keys, aged 60 years or more, for a home they had been forced out of, and dreams of returning to.

(19)

If you have seen your homeland, and kissed its soil, then—be glad you are not me, a Palestinian, exiled and forbidden to kiss the earth of her homeland.

(20)

If the world were to be ashamed of some act, then it should be ashamed of its silence towards what is happening to the Palestinians.

(21)

If you are betting that the Palestinians will never return home to Palestine, then withdraw your losing bet immediately, because we are going to return...

The land has called for its absent people, and the time for reunion draws near...