

“GAZA HAS NO THROAT”

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“Gaza has no throat. Its pores are the ones that speak in sweat, blood, and fires” (from the poem “Silence for Gaza” by Mahmoud Darwish).

It is Monday the 14th of May, the day the US Embassy is scheduled to be moved to Jerusalem. I know, we all do, that a large massacre is coming. My heart is heavy. I think, as I had many times in the past weeks, of a historical event I learned about in grade school - the murder of unarmed protesters in Czarist Russia by the Czar’s army, and what a scandal it was back then. I keep checking my Facebook timeline for the reports of the friends in Gaza. Theirs is the only reporting I trust, at times like this. Finally, the blood starts flowing. It is almost a relief not to have to wait any longer. “They are killing us like fish, like birds”, my Palestinian friends struggle to find words, “my friend is dead, heart-broken, everyone loved him”, “every five minutes, another person is killed”, “a child”, “a man in a wheelchair”. My Jewish activist friends speak up angrily and firmly, demanding an end to the massacre. I do too. Inside, though, I feel helpless, paralyzed. I ignore the Jewish friends’ phone calls - it feels pointless to talk. Do we even deserve each other’s support? It’s not we who are getting murdered.

Out in the streets of Tel Aviv, everyone seems fine, there is laughter. The police are busy making arrangements for a large open air dance party scheduled to take place that night, in celebration of Neta Barzilai’s Eurovision victory. In the evening, the large Rabin Square, not far from my house, fills up with tens of thousands of Israelis ready to celebrate.

The following morning, I’ll hear my students discuss Gaza for a minute or two during the break - “they are just committing mass suicide”, I overhear. A moment later, they drop the topic and go back to singing “I am not your toy” (Neta’s hit).

Several days down the road, as I begin to regain my voice, I find myself arguing with a friend - a nice, gentle, apolitical woman. "You have such strong feelings about this," she says, "You don't recognize that this is complex, that they are forced to go to the border." "We have no border!" I say in exasperation, "And God, how can you believe that someone can force somebody else to go risk their life if that person doesn't want to - would you, could someone force you to do that if you didn't want to? Can't you see that this doesn't make sense?" I understand from her facial expression that she feels I am being too angry, uncontained. I feel bad. It's not her fault. It's the banality of evil, that's all. I make sure I haven't rubbed her the wrong way.

On the first Friday of the Great March of Return, a friend in Gaza - the younger sister of a very close friend, after whom I named my daughter - said to me, "You may laugh at this, but the one thing the people here want is for the Israelis to understand how we feel. They don't care if the whole world understands, it's the Israelis that they care to get through to. That's what they are ready to die for".

I've known since the summer of 2014 that hundreds can get killed in Gaza without any major political player anywhere intervening, and with very few Israelis (hundreds, not thousands) consciously experiencing significant distress. The third may not be fully dead (is it ever?) but its voice is not strong at all and is actively being silenced.

"The leaders of the Arab world don't return our calls anymore," a friend who works for the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank told me on the eve of the Great March of Return in Gaza, "They've received the instructions from Trump to ignore us. It's not enough for Bibi and Trump for us not to have a state, they want the Palestinians to no longer matter to anyone as a people."

The Israeli society has been thoroughly convinced that Palestinian lives don't matter and that Palestinians cannot be subjects (they are driven to protest by somebody else - unlike us, who ostensibly choose freely what we think and do). Protesters from within are silenced in any way possible (a demonstration organized by the Israeli organization Another Voice in the vicinity of Gaza was physically attacked by passersby).

I don't think the Americans are true bystanders - you guys are paying for all this! But whether as perpetrators or bystanders, we are all complicit in some ways. Let us not allow for the conversation on Palestine to be silenced because talking is the essential first step to understanding our complicity and owning our responsibility. I wish to thank *USA-Palestine MHN* for fighting to make this conversation possible.

If you are part of the *International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (IARPP)*- please continue to think of ways in which this conversation can be facilitated within *IARPP* at large. *IARPP* has pledged to make possible an open dialogue on Israel-Palestine - let's make sure this actually happens.

If there are more ways in which you want to get involved as an activist/activist professional and are not quite sure how, talk to us. To Y, to Z, to myself, to Elizabeth, Christine and Rebecca here. Please do act. We need international involvement. Thank you.