



The Silent Tears of Palestine

Dania Ayoub

It is the year 2008, the month is April. The tension and hatred pervading this period can be felt, the havoc and corruption can be seen, the unremitting and futile struggle of oppressed people has well and truly snuffed out the flame of hope. They are still waiting to cast off the chains of oppression, which continue to subject them. Amid this war-torn country, Palestine, the land of the three monumental faiths, is where the Palestinian Arab people were born. It grew and developed, thus ensuring for itself an everlasting union between itself, its land and its history. This is a revelation of the devious genocide of war and the systematic devaluation of human lives. Viewed through the fear-stricken eyes of a young boy, reflecting on the minutes before his death as he runs through the streets of Gaza. Glorious summer weather stretched all over Palestine and with the heat came war, which scorched like hell itself.

I know that I am beyond the seen and yet I long to see and touch the earth of my land and realise it is tangible. Bewildered and confused, I am only aware of a state of nirvana, of perpetual peace I have entered, weightless I float. I am numb to the feelings of pain, yet beyond my peaceful realm the war continues in a blaze of blind fury. I see the battered body ... myself. With my sunken face of the old, my chest on which one could count every bone and my rickety legs. I shed silent tears for this pitiful creature flung limply on the rubble of my home. The anguished wail of my mother ... father ... little sister take me

back, back to the moments before I had finally abandoned the dream of tomorrow ...

... Lines of lush green meadows pass me by as I hurry home from school, an air of serene harmony trembles through the sweet-scented wind. The air is sweet and fresh fields of olive trees wave upright. Glittering minnows dart under the banks. Jubilant laughter erupts forth as I absorb the beauty that God has bestowed upon this earth ... my joy dies abruptly. Shrapnel shells burst overhead just near my home; screams pierce the noise of the explosion. I feel a rush of hot air as the blast reaches around the corner and suddenly I see clouds of evil grey smoke billowing upwards. I hear an explosion, it sounds far away. I am plunged into the horrors of this conflict.

I freeze stiff like I have never frozen before. My home is but a mile away, yet to me it seems like for ever. My mind is crippled with haunting thoughts. I vividly recall the picture of pieces of dead bodies under the rubble that I saw earlier on the news. Moreover, the times when the night sky was lit to the east by intermittent flashes like distant summer lightning ... and one could hear in the distance the deep grumbling of guns like thunder.

With my heart trembling with fear and pumping loudly, I run through the barren streets of Gaza. Fear simmers in my heart as I absorb the carnage and destruction around me. My breathing becomes labored; above the loud, erratic breathing of my heart is the overbearing noise of bombs, bombarding my home ... of shrapnel splitting into pieces, tearing into the human flesh of my mother ... sister ... father.

I run against an almost concrete wall of whistling and whining rifles and smattering of bullets. My uncle is suddenly before me, writhing on the ground in his death throe; his face has been shot away. Another man yelling and whimpering holds his hands to his belly and through his fingers the insides of his stomach protrude, as he screams for his mother. I hear a tormented wail rip through the air and realise it is me, wailing with despair. I drag my nails down my face, maddened with anguish. Horrified at what my youthful eyes are witnessing. Yet I keep running, running to my home, to the gentle, protective

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arms of my mother. To wipe away my tears and sing softly the words of the forgotten song. The noise becomes distant, there is a kind of numbness and fascination with the horror around me ... almost mechanically I continue forward.

Suddenly my feet slow down until I am standing still amid the remnants of my home. My mind is muted to the harsh sounds of war around me. People crawl out of the rubble with inflamed eyes, their faces blackened and their clothes splattered with the blood of loved ones. Bleached flesh, the earth smutted with blood ... with corpses. It made me crouch, huddled and trembling in the darkness of the street next to the rubble of my home ... Suddenly, the noise returns and my head is filled with the screams of my people in agony. Shells are raining down, the bombardment continues for what seems like hour after deafening hour.

I see through the rubble and smoke many soldiers with their weapons of death clasped closely to their heart, closing in on me. I hear the crunch of bones as the walls of a crumbling building smash the body of a young girl ... Tomorrow people will shake their heads over the tragedy of such a pointless death. Then they will get on with their practical existence and her small, crushed body will become another number among many.

As their machine guns start their deadly rattle, I know in my heart that I will not live to see the sunset upon my lifeless body. My instinct is to scream for help, knowing that death is only a heartbeat away. Yet, even then I am not prepared for the first shot, striking me in the stomach ... penetrating my body. As I fall, gesticulating wildly, my eyes gaze emptily at the shimmering evening, bared with the blood of sunset, asking ... asking ... how long will justice be muted?



Dania Ayoub wrote this in 2008 when she was in Year 11 at Preston Girls Secondary College in Victoria.