

"No one can say: I didn't know," by Carlos Almeida

History books are full of violence, crimes and massacres, genocides, institutionalised forms of domination and dehumanisation of the other.

When we read them, we ask ourselves: How was this possible? What happened so that what today, from a distance, seems intelligible in its causes, was not stopped? We might say that at the time it happened, the world perhaps did not know about it, news did not travel as fast as it does today. And we inevitably wonder who the men and women of that time were, what they said, what they did to stop this violence, what values they defended, what positions they took?

The day will come when it will be time for our children, our grandchildren to look at the history books and learn to spell the word Gaza, Palestine. They will hear about a time when it was possible for a population of more than 2 million people, imprisoned in a territory of 300 square kilometres, to be bombed, massacred for weeks, who knows maybe months, without it being possible to stop the slaughter.

And you might ask: what did the men and women of that time do? Fortunately, many of us will still be alive, and it will be us who will have to answer in the first instance: where were we? what did we say? what did we do? Each and every one of us will take responsibility. There's only one thing no one can say: I didn't know.

Since late yesterday, Gaza has been silent. All communications have been cut off. Not even the humanitarian agencies can reach their agents. Judging by what has happened in recent weeks, in full view of the world, we can only imagine the worst. Entire families, in some cases, have already been wiped out. Around 8,000 people have been killed, more than a third of them children. Hospitals, health centres, schools, shelters, mosques, churches—it is true, in Gaza there are churches, in some cases centuries old, and Christians—are being massively bombed. But not only in Gaza. In the territories of the West Bank, in the refugee camps, in the Palestinian-majority towns and villages within the state of Israel, a repressive campaign of extreme violence is underway. Since 7 October, more than 100 people have been killed, adding to the 240 or so murdered since the beginning of the year. In a fortnight, the number of Palestinians imprisoned, men and women, as many as children, has doubled and now stands at over 10,000. Reports of abuse, punishment and torture are coming from Israeli prisons. Two people have been killed in Israeli prisons in the last week. Already this morning, we have just learnt, Israel has dropped leaflets on the northern half of the Gaza Strip, including the city, declaring the whole region a war zone and that the shelters—precarious as they may be—are no longer a safe zone, if they ever were.

The word I want to bring you here is just one: urgency! urgency! The urgency of solidarity, solidarity with a people who are fighting for their survival, for their freedom. In the name of a sense of humanity, of the most basic and elementary values that are the foundations of the notion of community, which unites and must unite all human beings, equal in rights and duties. For every bomb dropped on Gaza, for every child buried under the rubble of their home, each of us dies a little. Yesterday, the UN Secretary-General published a brief note on a social network that ended with the phrase: this is a moment of truth.

Today it is our turn, this is our time, this is our responsibility. We must stop the genocide, the road to the abyss, the hysteria and irrationality, the most monstrous campaign of dehumanisation we know,

so cruel, so brutal that the simple demand for a ceasefire has become a radical demand, so radical that we have invented euphemisms—such as "humanitarian pause" - in order not to say simply and clearly, stop the war, stop the massacre. That's all, nothing more, nothing less.

We need to occupy streets and avenues—tomorrow in Lisbon—then in many other towns and cities, bringing the Palestinian flag everywhere, on every occasion. Multiply actions and initiatives, small and large. Call on everyone to participate. To intervene. To make their voices heard. So that when that day comes, we can look at our children and grandchildren with our heads held high and tell them, we were there. And we fought. And we said no. Not in our name.

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