

Speech by Carlos Almeida, representing MPPM, at the demonstration on 8 December 2023 in Lisbon

The cynicism and utter lack of empathy with human suffering of those who explain the technicalities of carnage to us on television every day is unbearable. We've run out of patience for confabulations about wars when what we're witnessing is genocide. We can no longer stand the ridicule of those who, masquerading as journalists, endlessly repeat Israel's propaganda. Today, there are more than 17,000 registered fatalities and many more will lie under the rubble of razed buildings. Many families have simply been erased from existence. We multiply this macabre accounting and even the numbers seem to help in this operation to dehumanise the men and women in Gaza, in Jerusalem, in the West Bank, throughout Palestine, who are fighting for their survival, minute by minute, amid the general indifference of governments and political leaders.

That's why today, in the short time of this speech, I want to talk to you only about people, about men, women and children, concrete and real people, about their lives, their dreams.

About Lubna Alyaan, the 14-year-old girl, a student at the Gaza branch of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music who dreamed of pursuing a career as a violinist and died in a bombing raid that killed 45 other members of her family on 21 November;

About Sreen Elattar, 39, an obstetrician trained at the University of Jordan in Amman, a university lecturer, a WHO-certified professional in the development of neonatal care programmes, one of the victims, with her daughter, of Israel's bombing of the Bureij refugee camp:

About Waseem Abdrabou, the 7-year-old boy who cultivated a passion for chess, who dreamed of being an architect or engineer and of travelling the world, and who, together with his father Husam Abedrabou, an engineer in a telecommunications company, succumbed after days buried in the rubble of bombed-out buildings;

About Muneeb Sarsor, a 31-year-old who ran an oriental food restaurant, Kenan, in Gaza, from where he made a living for his family, after his father had died in previous offensives, and who fell victim to Israeli army bullets;

About Beirut Mohammad Abu Shamala, three years old, born on the same day as the explosion in the port of the Lebanese capital and therefore named after that city, who succumbed with other members of her family to the bombing of their home;

About Doaa, the young woman who, together with her partner, had gone to visit her family in Gaza and had taken her children with her, a Portuguese-Palestinian citizen and worker in a call centre company, who died together with two of her children as a result of Israeli bombardment when she was identified to be evacuated from Gaza and Israel knew her location, leaving only little Nour alive;

About Heba Kamal Abu Nada, a 32-year-old poet and novelist, descended from refugees who in 1948 were expelled from the village of Bayt Jirja, just 15 km north-east of Gaza, a graduate in Nutrition from Al-Azhar University, victim of an Israeli bombing that destroyed her home in Khan Younis on 20 October;

About Refaat Alareer, writer and university professor of comparative literature, Shakespeare specialist, co-founder of the organisation We Are Not Numbers, from where most of these stories were collected, who died yesterday early evening, the victim of a missile that hit his sister's house where he had taken refuge, killing him, his brother, and sister and their four children.

Lives destroyed, buried under the barbarity of the Israeli army but, what's more, silenced in their humanity by an imperial and media order that, a hundred years after Balfour, continues to deny the existence in Palestine of a people equal in rights to all other peoples in the world.

We are here to pay them our simple but heartfelt tribute, and to make our own and raise high the words that Heba Abu Nada left written in one of her last poems:

"If we die, know that we are cheerful and firm, and tell the world, in our name, that we are just and true people"

For them. With them. Palestine forever!

Largo José Saramago, 8 December 2023

Carlos Almeida