

Staying Silent Creates Consensus for Genocide: A Spoken Word Poem for a Free Palestine

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Content Warning: genocide, ethnic cleansing, bombing

Translated from Romanian by the author



Figure 1: The image features the author, white with chest-length brown hair and silver glasses, dressed in a salmon-colored sweater with a Palestinian flag pin. In the background there is a curtain with an illustrated black cat pattern upon which a protest sign says, “decolonization is not a metaphor.” The picture is a screenshot from the performance of the poem, which was recorded on video. The subtitles on the video say: “staying silent creates consensus for genocide/colonizers are washing their hands/in blood.”



Figure 2: QR code to the video recording in Romanian. An earlier version of “Staying Silent Creates Consensus for Genocide” in Romanian, with English subtitles, was performed as a spoken word poem and recorded on video at the 4th Feminist Literature Days in Romania in November 2023. You can find the video online here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mebu9_YzH6g&t=217s (or by QR code). The English translation below is a longer, updated version of the original.



Staying Silent Creates Consensus for Genocide

after the first bombs dropped on Gaza in October 2023,
after the capture of Palestinian workers
humiliated, spat on and pissed on by the israeli army,
identified with numbers,

after more bombs dropped on Gaza,
motherless premature babies dying when the incubators stop,
and more bombs dropped,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,

tens of thousands of tonnes of explosives
dropped over a territory 41 km long and 6, maximum 12 km wide
where more than 2 million people live

AND AGAIN BOMBS

every day bombs,
every night bombs,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools!

over 100 000 tonnes of explosives
the equivalent of more than 6 times the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
bombs over a prison, the concentration camp Gaza has been for 17 years,



it was now made into an extermination camp,
no water, no electricity, no food, no medicine, no fuel,
just bombs bombs bombs bombs

I can't think of anything else
of no other suffering
solely of the GENOCIDE committed by israel
in Palestine

perhaps the first genocide
we can follow live on social media
so widely, with thousands of videos from journalists
and from local people holding dead children in their arms
from locals, women and men and children searching through the rubble
for food, for survivors and for the dead

among hundreds maybe thousands of others
@wizard_bisan1, a Palestinian filmmaker
documents on her Instagram
the atrocities and the fears and the sufferings
on November 5th, 2023, she said in a video
that they have nothing left but salt water from the sea
that they no longer have the privilege of eating at least once a day
as they did at the beginning of the bombings

that they no longer have anything to eat
it's just hunger hunger hunger hunger hunger
over two million people
and there's no clean water and no food
it's just hunger hunger hunger hunger
hunger hunger hunger hunger hunger hunger
thirst

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip
are making videos in English
so that the globalized world
can stand witness
so together we can do something
to stop the bombs in Gaza
to stop the attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank
to stop ethnic cleansing
stop colonialism
stop genocide



what does it mean to witness a genocide?
how do you talk about a genocide that is happening NOW?
that is happening in front of our eyes,
are *you* talking about the televised genocide?

over 9000 Palestinians killed in Gaza
in less than a month
and still counting
**over 64,522 killed since I first wrote the poem and in September 2025 still counting—
upwards of 680,000 killed if we look at estimates by scholars**
more children killed in the first three weeks than annually
in all global conflicts after 2019
and still counting
in autumn 2023 every 10 minutes a child was bombed to death

the Palestinian death toll is compared to many war statistics
from other parts of the world
why does the suffering have to be compared for people to believe that what is happening
is genocide?
why does it have to be mentioned that almost a third of these deaths are children?
if they weren't children, would you condemn 680,000 people to death by bombing and torture
and famine and thirst?
the western world and europe
why do they need convincing?
that the genocide of the Palestinians is unacceptable!
that their suffering is suffering!

for years scholars have counted israel's activity in Palestine as genocidal
for years israel has ticked nine out of ten globally agreed stages of genocide:

1. classification
2. symbolization
3. discrimination
4. dehumanization
5. organisation
6. polarization
7. preparation
8. persecution
9. extermination
10. DENIAL

EXTERMINATION, the last stage, begun with the offensive on the Gaza Strip in October 2023
when the entire population enclosed between the border walls from all directions
put under a total blockade and thus without water, electricity and food,
under continuous bombardment

bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,



bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,
bombs over ambulances, hospitals and homes and schools,

bombs over the tents in Rafah
tents burning above refugees
people being burned alive by israel

and israel didn't let almost anyone go
there's not a tiny little bit of safety left anywhere
israel has declared that they want to make the whole of Gaza disappear,
that they want to exterminate the entire Palestinian population of Gaza,
that they want to kill EVERYONE

why does the world need convincing
that the genocide of Palestinians is unacceptable?
that the genocide of Palestinians is a genocide?
that their suffering is suffering and suffering exists!
that their death is a massacre!

Palestinian suffering has existed for more than 75 years
since the first Nakba
since the Zionists formed israel,
an apartheid and settler colonialist state
supported by the great western powers
from 1948 until now
it's not enough to shout stop the bombing of Gaza
those bombs don't get there by themselves
let's call the perpetrators by their names!

ISRAEL IS A COLONIALIST STATE
formed around Zionist
ethnonationalist and genocidal policies
aimed at ethnic cleansing
and murder of the Indigenous Palestinian population
who had been inhabiting the territory of the then-newly-founded state, had lived there for
hundreds of years
and since the first Nakba in 1948
the Indigenous Palestinian people
have become obstacles that the colonialist state
is trying to remove

Palestinian suffering has existed for more than 140 years
since the first Zionist settlements began to form in Palestine in the 1880s
and the preparations for the Zionist colonialist state began
Palestinian suffering existed



at the beginning of the 20th century
when Palestine was placed under british administration
that same great britain that then supported the formation of israel

and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,
and more bombs,

9000 people massacred only between 7th October and 5th November 2023
** approx. 680,000 people massacred before September 2025, and still counting**
but the Palestinians killed are not just a number!
and even that number is not recognized
as having enough importance
in the official global discourse
complicit in genocide
what is the threshold by which it is accepted
by common consent between the major powers
between countries in europe and the western world
that what is happening is genocide?
and when do we reach that threshold?

the complicity of the western world in the genocide of the Palestinians
has to do with eurocentric colonialism practiced for hundreds of years
which has exterminated and massacred Indigenous Peoples
hundreds of millions

colonizers wash their hands in blood
colonizers wash their hands in blood
colonizers wash their hands in blood
colonizers wash their hands in blood
COLONIZERS WASH THEIR HANDS IN BLOOD

I cannot choose to be silent
because silence gives the perpetrators consent

millions of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, the israeli-occupied territories
and millions of other refugees in exile
are shouting: STOP THE GENOCIDE!
millions of people on the streets of cities around the world



and students in front of their faculties
are shouting: STOP THE GENOCIDE!
and politicians
power holders
the arms trade
and the mainstream media
condone, accept, encourage israel's actions
war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide,
white phosphorus, a banned chemical weapon
white phosphorus that burns the skin
white phosphorus that also reactivates in wounds
when in contact with oxygen
white phosphorus thrown at the same time as flyers
ordering people to evacuate to the southern Gaza Strip
millions of people asked to flee while there's white phosphorus in the air
bombs bombs bombs bombs
and there's not even food left

but nothing is forbidden
for those who write the laws
there is no obstacle
for those who own the official story
if you have a STORY that creates a consensus for genocide
you can KILL thousands of people on camera

for genocide you need the consent and silence of the people
for genocide you need a story that covers up the murderous acts
for genocide you need the consent and silence of the people
for genocide you need a story to cover up the murderous acts
for genocide you need the consent and silence of the people
for genocide you need a story to cover up the murderous acts
and the international media repeating that this is a war between israel and terrorists
and not a genocide made and started by the israeli colonialist state for 75 years
the media and those giving consent are giving the green light to kill

staying silent creates consensus for genocide
colonizers are washing their hands
in blood

I remember that in school
in literature class
in history class
in civic education
we talked about the silence of the people
who lived near the extermination camps
for Jews, Roma, Poles, queers, and disabled people
in World War II



so too will our children speak
about the silence
of people who choose NOT
to look now
who choose not to see
nothing but the story
in the name of which consensus is created
for genocide

staying silent creates consensus for genocide
colonizers are washing their hands
in blood

a poem cannot stop a bomb
not even hundreds and thousands of Palestinian poems could
and who knows if millions of protesters would
if the resistance of millions of Palestinians will

I feel powerless
and from where I am, the greatest power that I still HAVE, is
to speak
to oppose
to protest
to not give my consent to genocide

staying silent creates consensus for genocide
colonizers are washing their hands
in blood

I believe in a free Palestine
and a decolonial world
I do not allow myself to lose hope
witnessing from afar
having rent, a job and food and water,
what a privilege in colonial capitalism,
I can't afford to lose hope,
but I want to use all my resources, my anger and grief
that I have, to fight in solidarity with the Palestinians
to fight for a free Palestine
even if I am far away,

especially BECAUSE I am far away
it would be easy to choose not to see, to forget everything,
not to think about my Palestinian comrades,
it would be so easy from so far away to remain silent,
and that's precisely why I won't,



THAT'S PRECISELY WHY I am not allowed to be silent,
WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BE SILENT

**and many of us are not so far away when our countries make arm deals with israel.
romania, where I am from, made a deal for 10,33 milliard rons, while also producing israeli
arms in 4 factories in Bacău and Măgurele. finland made an arms deal with israel for 317
million euros. I am in finland now, and you – where are you?**

Palestinians sentenced to death do not have the privilege of choosing silence
and the colonial world tries to drown out their voices and shouts
and the colonial world tries to drown out the voices and shouts of Palestinians
but it cannot! it won't succeed!
I want to shout with the Palestinian comrades
so that the genocide can no longer be masked and covered up!

I want to shout with the Palestinian comrades
to show the perpetrators that *we* can unite, globally
that voices of solidarity are heard from all over the world
that we dream together of freedom
and what israel is doing with the support of others, other great powers
does not go unnoticed
we do not accept
it's genocide

I believe in a free Palestine
and a decolonial world
we do not stop fighting
as long as the Palestinian anti-colonial resistance keeps calling
for a FREE Palestine!

as long as hundreds of millions of people
shout out together that the people united cannot be defeated
everyone shout FREE PALESTINE!

as long as the anti-colonial resistance
of all Indigenous Peoples
the anti-colonial resistance
of all living beings who suffer
under colonialism and coloniality
the anti-colonial resistance
of all those who build new worlds on the move
still dream of FREEDOM

staying silent creates consensus for genocide
colonizers are washing their hands
in blood



feral feminisms

Free Palestine!:
Voices of Decolonization

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let's fight back
dream and shout
speak up and write
protest
stop the genocide!
land back!
Free Palestine!
Free Palestine!

Publishing Note

An earlier Romanian language text version was published in December 2023 in the book-zine, *Queers pentru Palestina. Luări de poziție, eseuri și poeme* [*Queers for Palestine: Statements, Essays and Poems Collected by Blocul Roz* [Pink Bloc]]. Another updated version was published in May 2024 on the blog of *Literatură și feminism* [*Literature and Feminism*]. Fragments of the Romanian and English versions were also published in the sheet-zine, *Them, All Magazine*, under the title, “Waking in the Dark: Poems in Solidarity with Palestine, 5th-10th Dec, 2023” (<https://www.them-all-magazine.com/issues/sheetZine/waking-in-the-dark.html>). The Romanian version is part of the author’s new poetry collection to be published in 2025 with Magga Books.

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