

We Palestinians Are Also Murderers

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It is a deliberate, powerful act of morality for Palestinians to say, even when nearly 20,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza: 'We also kill Israelis.' And the Palestinian narrative, our demand for national liberation, will not only survive that epiphany and confession: It will be reborn

This is the hour of blood. But I'm not talking about the blood of my Palestinian people which continues to be spilled in Gaza, but that of Jewish Israelis.

Ironic, isn't it? Because as I write, nearly 20,000 [Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, many of them civilians](#) and I, a Palestinian, deliberately choose to talk about your dead and not ours.

I am choosing to talk about your loss and grief not because we must "balance" the two narratives, not because it is important to present a complex political situation, and not in order to sound a different voice amidst the shameful failure of Palestinian leadership.

I write these words mainly to young Palestinian women, some of whom dared to write to me privately, to confide that each time the dominant Palestinian national narrative blinds them to a certain script, they go back and read my articles and posts on social media which offer them a different view.

Palestinians search for bodies and survivors in the rubble of a residential building destroyed in an Israeli airstrike, in Rafah southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. Credit: Fatima Shbair /AP

But I am also writing these words to the Jewish Israeli women who are my partners in the struggle to end the occupation.

To them I say:

Beautiful Souls, I vividly remember the day in which the weight of your losses came crashing down in all its heaviness and did not begin to lift until I admitted that we, the Palestinians, also murder Israelis. I know well the day, time, and moment of this "confession" that took place in the kitchen of a Jewish friend. It was before the war, but [the events of October 7](#) – and the denial of some Palestinians and supporters of the Palestinian cause to acknowledge [the atrocities](#), let alone those who describe them as [acts of resistance](#), has made me revisit that moment.

I was there with another Palestinian Israeli friend and the three of us were sitting at the kitchen table trying to write poetry. But what we actually did was light cigarette after cigarette in hunger, anger, helplessness, and discussed the eternal "situation" we are in, when suddenly I felt overwhelmed by the violence of the [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#).

My Kindred Souls in Resistance, I will confess. I did not plan that confession, I did not think or

imagine that I could ever utter it. Perhaps like many Palestinians I resisted, I denied, I fought it. I tried so hard to escape this sentence, but the horror suffocated my soul. I shouted into the mirror: there is no room for more blood – the tragedy of one people is unbearable enough! How will I manage the burden of two people?

I said to myself again and again that I have nothing to do with the spilling of Israeli blood. After all, my national expertise is Palestinian loss and grief. I must speak it, convey it, showcase it, and also use it when necessary. Moreover, I must *be* that story.

For years this kitchen table confession was stuck in my throat. I feared the persecution campaigns, the discourse of betrayal, the destruction of my Palestinian narrative.

That day was the first time I was able to say this sentence fully. My voice trembled and I came out with something clumsy. My tongue was not used to this strange movement in which it suddenly says “We also kill Israelis.”

After all, I used to say only, “They’re the murderers” and now I have to also say “we” too. I remember my Jewish friend shuddered slightly, alarmed. I know this look very well: she did not believe that I, the Palestinian woman who reluctantly serves as a representative of the Palestinian collective, could say such a sentence. Back then I couldn’t even imagine that I would be able to launch such a nuclear bomb upon [the Palestinian narrative](#).

Friends and family mourn Alon Lulu Shamriz, one of three Israeli hostages who were mistakenly killed by the Israeli military while being held hostage in Gaza by the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, at his funeral in Shefayim, Israel this week. Credit: VIOLETA SANTOS MOURA/ REUTERS

A harsh and violent silence fell upon the three of us: no cigarettes, no mugs of coffee and no candied oranges could break it. We knew that your blood was spilled, its weakened voice reached us, but Palestinian blood that was spilled before October 7 had always prevailed in my outlook and that of so many Palestinians. And then came the images and names of those thousands killed in Gaza, among them so many children who died under the wreckage of Israeli bombs supposedly looking for Hamas members, but instead finding them.

It was not just October 7 that let me see your dead and to bring the forever loss close to my heart, it was and still is, a conscious ethical, moral and political choice. This choice should not be subject to the measure of the cruelty of any specific event or to the dominant Palestinian discourse that has lost its compass, nor the declarations of morally failed Palestinian politicians. It is a deliberate, powerful act, because it places the watchdog of “morality” above sometimes blinding nationalism.

My friends, this confession was catastrophic on the narrative level, but it set me free. Still, my mind was busy with questions such as, What story will I tell now? What Palestinian narrative will I create from the burden of compassion for both Jewish Israelis and Palestinians? How can the Palestinian national narrative survive such an epiphany?

My Palestinian friends, you will be surprised. The Palestinian narrative can survive and even be reborn if we acknowledge this taking of lives, and denounce it to create an alternative Palestinian narrative without double standards. We, as Palestinians, will only survive if we decide that the narrative we told ourselves no longer works. We will only survive if we embark on the painful journey to create an alternative story, so all violence will be a red line.

I am not afraid to say this and still demand national liberation. This confession does not justify the occupation, deportation, settler violence in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley, nor the bombing of Gaza. More than that, if anything, it should not stand in contradiction with the Palestinian secular

national narrative which is deeply moral.

If our just demand for national liberation is first and foremost a human moral demand before being political, then it cannot in any way contain a fundamental moral contradiction that allows us to shed the blood of others, just because the dominant Palestinian narrative defines them as “enemies” who must be fought at any cost.

Dear Palestinian women, “at any cost” is the equivalent of “Israel’s right to defend itself.” “At any cost” is to be endlessly deep in the taking of Israeli lives and refusing to see it. “At any cost” is to feed the wolf thirsty for revenge and not the one thirsty for freedom.

Dear Palestinian and Israeli women, this understanding suits all of us who know we share this place on earth, for all who yearn to live freely here, without the overwhelming fear and insecurity that threatens to consume us all.

Rajaa Natour

P.S.

- Haaretz. Dec 21, 2023:

<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2023-12-21/ty-article-opinion/.premium/we-palestinians-are-also-murderers/0000018c-7cbc-d301-a3ac-fefda4e40000>

- Rajaa Natour is a Palestinian journalist and poet currently based in Amsterdam. She has a degree in conflict resolution, specializing in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Middle East. On X/Twitter: [@RajaaNatour](https://twitter.com/RajaaNatour)