

# Except for my Homeland Palestine, my Eye, and Lebanon, my Other Eye



**Talal Abu-Ghazaleh**

I watch with profound sorrow the scenes of suffering that spill across small screens, shattering the hearts that resonate with love for the homeland—specifically, for Palestine, the cradle of purity, sanctity, and prayers, as well as for Lebanon, a land of goodness, love, and beauty. I wrestle with feelings of oppression, despair, and pessimism, yet I firmly believe that humanity has a rightful claim to the land, created to uphold dignity and pride. This land has demonstrated that it is not just home to the unrivaled green olive trees, which yield exceptional quality oil; it is also a bastion of strength that cannot be entangled in the “mazes” of ambiguity found in numerous imitations that proliferate like harmful weeds and poisonous mushrooms in both Arab and Western societies alike. I will not reiterate the details of the situation here, as people everywhere are already aware of what has transpired from 1948 to the present day. Many have harbored doubts, but the rapidly unfolding events highlight the implications of well-established concepts like “human rights,” “freedom of expression,” “respect for opinions,” “genocide,” “war crimes,” and other terms that have dominated prestigious venues and prominent publications for years. However, in this critical moment, many of these frameworks have succumbed to the pitfalls of pretense and overt hypocrisy, losing the respect of even those close to their international platforms, as they remain passive, failing to take a stand or condemn the atrocities committed by the treacherous enemy against the beloved Palestinian and Lebanese people.

I am not here to recount the events, as they are already well-known to everyone. However, just yesterday, I was moved by a short report on Al-Jadeed TV that showcased the efforts of two sisters from Akkar who are doing everything possible to support their displaced Lebanese compatriots. The report described their work making woolen blankets for some who have taken refuge in schools and official buildings. One sister was packing the woolen blankets as winter approached, threatening

to bring severe cold to those mountainous regions. The standout moment came when the other sister discussed her innovative design using leftover fabric from the blankets, and sewing a jacket in various colors and patterns. She plans to hold an auction for this jacket to provide similar pieces to anyone in need of a short coat, particularly for those who have been displaced and could not bring their winter clothing due to the destruction of their homes, which prevents them from accessing any stored clothing from last season.

The sight of the jacket brought me back 73 years, to the child I once was and to my family, who supported one another to stay warm during the cold winter nights as we shared meals and the fruits I saved from my daily meals at the A.U.B. week to week. It reminded me of my mother’s wisdom and resourcefulness, as she did not want me to be vulnerable to the cold on my long journey to the official school in Ghaziyeh. She tailored for me a coat from the aid blankets provided by UNRWA, which the enemy is currently trying to undermine to strip it of its role and responsibilities toward those affected by the heinous aggression. It brought to mind the excellence and courage in confronting overwhelming circumstances that gave me the strength to persevere, create, and resist. It took me back to the comments of my peers as if yesterday were today. How distasteful it is to be reminded of the saying “History repeats itself.” Indeed, the history of pain is similar everywhere and at all times, but today Palestine is stronger than ever, as its people have not abandoned it or fled from confrontation. For over a year and several weeks, the machines of death and destruction have not stopped, and dozens of martyrs spill their blood to nourish the land daily. Every unarmed Palestinian in Gaza prepares with nothing but their bodies to defend Gaza, much like the heroes in southern Lebanon. The land bears witness to its saviors, allowing flowers to grow from its soil generation after generation. In times of tragedy, it delves deep to embrace the heroes, one martyr after another. Meanwhile, outsiders are packing their belongings and heading toward the exit from which there is no return, boarding the first available flight to a destination that will remind them, upon arrival, of how deluded they were to think they could occupy a land they claimed had no people. They will ultimately realize that a Palestinian is not merely a citizen living a daily life with a stubborn disposition; rather, a Palestinian that embodies a history rich with profound truths, and it is time for the world to read it carefully, regardless of how long it has postponed its concern.