

LETTER TO THE AMERICANS



You know as well as I do that a people under occupation will be unhappy, that parents will fear for the lives of their precious children, especially when there is **NOWHERE TO HIDE**.

You know as well as I do that a husband's memory of his wife forced to deliver their child at a checkpoint will not be a happy one. You know as well as I do that the form of her unborn child beaten to death in the womb

will never leave a mother's mind. And you know as well as I do that a girl will have cause to wonder at the loss of her grandfather, made to wait on his way to the hospital, and she'll have cause to cry at the bullet lodged

in her brother's head — You know as well as I do that watching someone who stole the land you used to till water their garden while you hope some rain might collect to parch your weary throat

might cause bitterness — You know as well as I do that a family, a village, a city, and a people punished for the act of an individual might not react well to the idea of "two sides." You know as well

as I do that Hamurabi's Code was a great legal precedent and that the translation of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth means **ONE PUNISHMENT FOR ONE CRIME** — no thing more and

no thing less. You know as well as I do that aerial bombardment and white phosphorous and naval blockade and tanks and snipers and barbed wire and walls and house demolitions and land

confiscation and the uprooting of olive trees and torture without trial and collective punishment and withholding water and access to the sea and even the sky itself are no match for rocket

propelled grenades and all the nails ever put into every homemade bomb ever made even though metal still pierces every skin — You know as well as I do that justice dwells in the soul as in the soil

and though you can't ever know what you'd do if you were in someone else's shoes, maybe you would have the strength to carry your elders on your back, the courage to stay at the operating table

or drive an ambulance after your children were killed, the nerve to face the daily grief compounded by loss after loss until all you have left is the unutterable scream you possess in the

heave of your breast and the depth of your chest. But you also know as well as I do that the size of the prison increases the capacity to resist, and the extent of the suffering makes fear

just another feeling among many because the most occupied are also the most free since there are no illusions left but the vision of freedom and how to

realize it. You know all this but you know too, just as I do, that enough is enough and those below will continue to rise up.

Ammiel Alcalay
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