

Life Fractures

Youth Hopes Displaced



By Nabil Darwish

We define what we are by the soul that makes us who we are. That is the so-called common-sense understanding of the reality in which we live. And yet, we question: Is this the true reality through which we live? How would it be if we were to take that reality, fracture its so-called common "truth," and reform it into a reality where *what we are* is made up of a displacement of the ground on which we live?

The story of Ahmad and his younger brother starts at dawn and lasts till dusk. Day in and day out they face the denominators that make up the life of two young Bedouin boys. They consider the routines that are placed on them a common ground, an opportunity to dream of a life that could be something. Taking their own steps to learn, explore, and survive, life's wind tunnels turn into an open stream.

They simply dream.



Mohammed picks up a bullet shell, one of the many he has found, one of the many shot into areas where he as a child roams with his sheep.



Morning eyes are looking into a day ahead of Ahmad and his younger brother Mohammed.

Part of a family of six, the two live on the outskirts of Birzeit, in the district of Ramallah, one of the many locations from and to which they travel. Their displacement is constant, as is that of many others in the same situation. They are among the 30,000 Bedouin refugees who face the threat of being exiled from their locations in the country that they call home to an isolated unknown, according to an Israeli "transfer plan." Their reliance on their livestock is not enough, and their reliance on anyone else is not even an option. They have no other choice than to rely on themselves and be by themselves.

"We depend on each other," they keep repeating. The sheer strength of that bond is indescribable. This bond is inherited and shared by the children and youth who make up more than 60 percent of the 7,000 Palestinian Bedouins who residences are scattered over approximately 46 small areas in the West Bank. Ninety percent of them depend on herding as their primary source of income, but places for herding are disappearing. Eighty-five percent lack connections to electricity and water networks. If they build semi-permanent structures, they are most likely to face demolition orders. Yet no one hears their call of distress.

And so, without solid education other than home schooling and life's schooling, without a real, sustainable economic backbone for support, these two demand only their right to live, from the moment they wake up to herd their livestock for grazing.

The stories they tell over the course of a day provoke chills and smiles. Their people are not recognized by anyone. They recount how many simply pass by, listening to them in some cases – but doing nothing. The two ask a few innocent questions, wondering how and why. Their curiosity to know and learn



Reflections of a smile.

unites them and gives them hope and food for thought as they ponder what they want out of life. "Who am I to give hope?" I wonder.

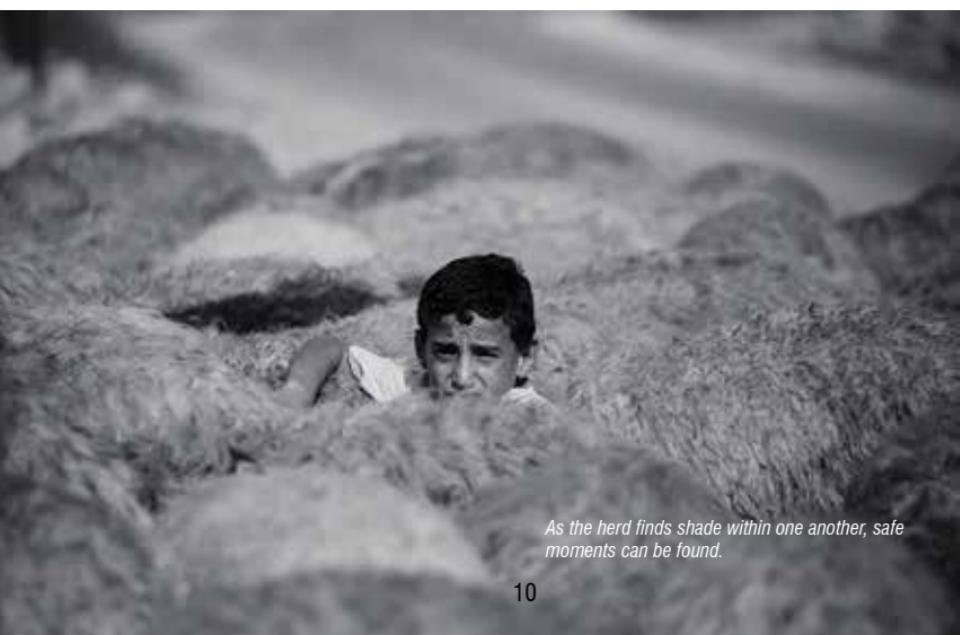
"We walk for hours and sit even longer," they say. "It is different each day, even the same places we pass. We make it different every day, but till when? We want more. And we don't know how much longer we can endure."

Even in the farthest horizon of their walks, their story of a dream can only fall short of what that fractured reality has spread through their actual lives and the possibilities for the future.

So ask yourself about that same, common-sense reality in which you live: what defines your soul – what you are, were, and will be?

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As the herd finds shade within one another, safe moments can be found.