



Light a Candle

According to an article entitled “The long, steady decline of literary reading,” published in the *Washington Post* in September 2016, the percentage of adult Americans who read any work of literature – novels, poems, short stories, or plays, whether in print or online – between 1982 and 2015, had dropped from 56.0 percent to 43.1 percent. In 2015, the *Guardian* claimed that, according to a US study, the number of American children who say they love reading books for fun had dropped almost 10 percent in the previous four years. These statistics are from a society that is generally known to value reading. I wonder about the percentage of readers among Palestinians. To be candid, I wonder exactly how many Palestinians (living in Palestine) read *This Week in Palestine*.

We’re also in the business of design, which to me is a topic close to aesthetics and which, in turn, is generally associated with stability, social justice, and possibly affluence; a precise description of Palestinian society, right? So are we, as a company, in the wrong business? Maybe. But then again, maybe not.

Many would argue about the meaning of success, which certainly has a variety of interpretations. No doubt financial success is paramount, otherwise a business would need to fold. I’d like to believe, however, that success could also be measured by the ability to withstand pressure and work against adversity and odds. According to this interpretation, practically all Palestinian businesses would be successful.

Whether you have a business that operates from the West Bank and you need to get your goods or services to Gaza, or vice versa; or you’re a manufacturing company or a farmer trying to move your products from Jenin or the Jordan Valley to Hebron; or you’re trying to sell goods to Jerusalem, it’s a logistical nightmare replete with varying degrees of transportation challenges. Are all these enterprises in the wrong business? Should they all fold? I don’t think so. What are the odds that a young musician could make a living out of his/her music career? Equally, what are the chances of talented actors or dancers living off their talent in Palestine?

If every Palestinian or Palestinian business lets go of a dream because of the challenges that lie ahead, we might as well give up as a people and throw in the towel. Even given the current circumstances and conditions that Palestinians live in and under, there are many more places in the world where the conditions are far worse than here. Let’s stop complaining and move on. At the moment, we have no choice but to do so. As they say, light a candle rather than curse the darkness, and be an example to others.



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