**Jerusalem calling**

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Palestine is ablaze once again. Images of young children being buried by a broken society, under the screams of wailing mothers, haunt every living soul. All, except those whose hearts have been hardened by the fleeting expediency of this menial existence. “Deaf, dumb and blind—so they will not return [to the right path].” (Quran: 2:18).

Over the past few days, Israeli airstrikes have martyred more than 150 Palestinians—including 39 children and 24 women—while injuring another 900 innocent civilians. People in Gaza and the West Bank—when they are not running for their lives—are chanting slogans of “Labbaik Ya Al-Aqsa”. There are reports of entire families sleeping on one bed at night—so that if they are struck by the Israeli air raids, they all die; none survives to mourn their family members.

What is the crime for which the world is exacting such a punishment from the Palestinians? They want to live in their homes, in their land, with their families. And this crime carries with it the punishment of being bombarded, in the middle of the night, by precision guided missiles.

[Pakistan reports 4,207 new cases, 131 deaths in one day](https://nation.com.pk/20-May-2021/pakistan-reports-4-207-new-cases-131-deaths-in-one-day)

Continuing with its unconscionable tradition of the past several decades, the ‘Muslim World’ has shown its callousness to Palestine. Its leaders have—for the most part—turned a blind eye to the Palestinian plight. The Arab world, which had (for the most part) made peace in the sham ‘Abraham Accords’, is just waiting for Israel to complete its operation, before the news-cycle of CNN and Al-Jazeera moves onto the next issue of the hour. The non-Arab Muslim States, with the exception of Iran and Turkey, are acting as though this is someone else’s problem. In Pakistan, we have institutionalised the idea that our role in Palestine is nothing more than a token statement, followed by a meaningless hashtag. The argument is: why should we stick our feeble necks out? We are not Palestinians, or even Arabs. Should we risk a conflict with the almighty Israel and US, for the sake of some hapless people who live 3,000 km away? Why should it bother us? Why should we care? And, even if we wanted to, what can we do?

[Gaza death toll from Israeli attacks hits 227, including 64 children](https://nation.com.pk/20-May-2021/gaza-death-toll-from-israeli-attacks-hits-227-including-64-children)

Let us parse this out.

Pakistan’s argument for being inert in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stems from three ill-conceived ideas: 1) It is not our fight; 2) Getting involved in Palestine will invite the wrath of our (Arab) friends; and 3) We do not have the strength to fight the Israel-US alliance. Wrong. From a moral, ethical, humanitarian or religious perspective, it is our fight. It is the fight of every conscientious member of our species. And most of all, it is the fight of those who have the strength (and weaponry) to fight it. Even if democracy and ‘public will’ was the yardstick, we would find that a majority of the people of Pakistan want our diplomacy and military muscle to come to the rescue of the Palestinians. The fear of ‘annoying’ our Arab friends is a cop-out excuse at best. Even while we were not getting involved in Palestine, our Arab friends had cast us out to dry. What happened to these friends after revocation of Kashmir’s special status by India? Did they all rush to our aide? Did they commit their resources in our cause? And, to the last point, Pakistan should be the last country that harbours any ‘fear’ of confronting the Israel-US alliance. Did we not face the same alliance in Afghanistan? Who won there? Has Cuba not survived, for so many decades, in the face of American opposition? Has Iran not done so? Has Venezuela? Nations survive or die as a result of their own failures—not because of fear or favour from the outsiders.

[KP reports 28 death, 186 newly infected cases of COVID-19](https://nation.com.pk/19-May-2021/kp-reports-28-death-186-newly-infected-cases-of-covid-19)

Why should we be involved? Well, even away from all the religious and moral imperatives, there are two fundamental reasons for why Pakistan should be more assertive in this perennial conflict. 1) Our stated national policy, since Jinnah himself, opposes Israeli occupation of Palestine. And national policy objectives should mean something. They can’t just be empty rhetoric. Nations are known by the principles they uphold and the issues they are willing to fight for. 2) The world must know that Pakistanis are a peace-loving people. Yes. But, when a red-line is crossed, they do not shy away from conflict. All nations, worth their salt, fight for what they believe in. Like the United States in the Middle East and Far East Asia. Like Iran, across the murky borders of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Like Turkey in Azerbaijan. Like Russia in Chechnya, Ukraine, and Syria. Or NATO, across so many countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. Even Pakistani forces in Jordan, back in the 1970s.

This brings us to the most important question: if we were to support the Palestinians, against Israeli war-crimes, what could we do? Well, that depends on our level of national commitment, and the extent of our (unfounded) fear of the Judaeo-Christian military power. Ideally, we would send a small peacekeeping force—no more than 100 soldiers, perhaps—to the West Bank and Gaza. This (non-offensive) force would just be there to keep peace, and help the Palestinians in rebuilding their homes. However, we would announce that if any harm befalls even one of our soldiers, as a result of Israeli aggression, it would be considered an act of war against the State of Pakistan—with corresponding consequences. If that’s too much to ask for, alternatively we could supply the Palestinians with the necessary equipment and resources to wage their own battle. Clandestinely, perhaps. The way Iran has done so. The way Turkey is doing. If even that sounds too difficult, we can at least realign our posture to show that we ‘may’ revert to use of force, to counter Israeli aggression in Palestine. A mere posturing of this sort, by a nuclear power, without the actual use of military muscle, may be enough to save innocent Palestinian lives. Is even the posturing of aggression beyond our feeble grasp?

[PSL 6 likely to be postponed indefinitely](https://nation.com.pk/19-May-2021/psl-6-likely-to-be-postponed-indefinitely)

Away from soporific constraints of present-day politics, there is also the larger religious argument (for a believer). The Quran, declares, “Then we said to the Israelites, ‘Now you should settle down in the [Promised] land, and when the prescribed time of Resurrection comes about, We will gather all of you [there] together.’”—[Quran 17:104].

Are we living through such a time? Is modern-day Israel the prophesised “gathering” of the Israelites in the Promised land? Will this culminate in a battle between good and evil; the final coming; the climactic drop-scene in the eternal conflict that rests at the heart of humankind’s redemption. Perhaps. But if that be the case, there will be no redemption for those who remain neutral. There will be no sympathy for the bystanders. And each of us, individually as well as collectively, must choose—here and now—which side are we on.