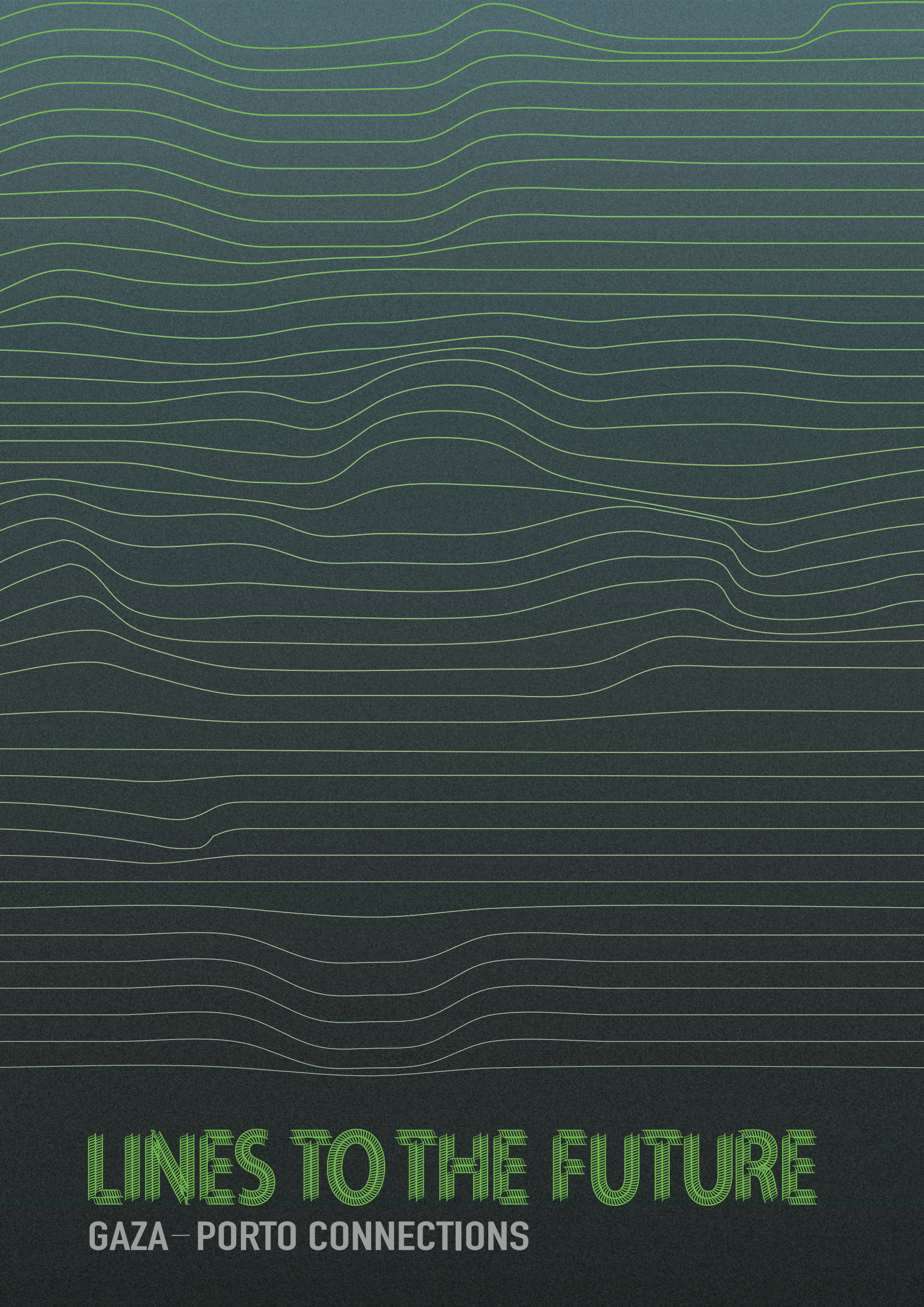




LINES TO THE FUTURE

GAZA – PORTO CONNECTIONS

Ahd Zaher Alshawish
Alaa Ahmed Dmeida
Amal Rafiq
Amna Ahmed Dmeida
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Francisca
Guilherme Silva
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Haya Sami Ismail
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Mariia Kumanets
Mais Jamil Jumma Elbahnasawi.
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Osama Mazen Alabadla
Raghad Raed Abu Ireban
Rodrigo Claro
Rodrigo Moreira da Costa
Rozana Baraka
Sara Serria
Sofia José Pinheiro da Silva
Sofia Silva
Tiago Brandão
Taqwa Ahmed Al-Wawi
Vera
Weam Anwer Al-Fajem

NEXT STOP: YESTERDAY

Ahd / Baraa / Farah A / Liz
Rawan / Rodrigo / Sofia S

ZERO

Ana / Letícia / Mais
Sara / Sofia J

A VOICE FROM AFAR

David C. / Ekaterina / Hala / Haya
Mariia / Tiago / Weam

UNSEEN TIES

Amal / Imad / Nuno
Rodrigo M / Rozana / Sofia S

AT THE LEGENDARY LAND

Esraa / Farah E / Taqwa

BEYOND THE INK

Alaa / Amera / Amna / Asala
Francisca / Mafalda / Vera Ramos

MISSING HOME

Guilherme / Matilde / Matilde S
Osama / Raghad

PROJECT TEAM

- Damian Ross** Project lead, University of Porto
- Dr Nazmi Al-Masri** Co-lead, Islamic University of Gaza, Palestine
- Dr Sahar Alshobaki** Project coordinator, University of Glasgow
- Ali Makkeh** Film production trainer and mentor, website design, Istanbul
- Dr Dave Gerow** Creative writing trainer and mentor, report editor, Glasgow
- Dr Giovanna Fassetta** Research lead, University of Glasgow
- Dr Maria Grazia Imperiale** Lines for Palestine lead, University of Glasgow
- Beatrice Catanzaro** Report design, Milan

CREATING THE REPORT

The content of this report was compiled by **Ahd, Amal, Esraa, Farah E, Farah A, Guilherme, Hala, Imad, Letícia, Liz, Mais, Matilde, Raghad, Taqwa, Vera and Weam** in a series of Padlets. The content was then edited by David G and Damian, and designed by Beatrice.

LINES4Palestine

Lines to the Future is a part of **LINES4Palestine**, which began as a response to the genocide in early 2024.

Visit linestothefuture.com to see the films and workshop materials and to find out more about the project **LINES4Palestine**.



Supported by



**LINES TO
THE FUTURE**
GAZA – PORTO CONNECTIONS

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Read our poems and journalism	page 80
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Next stop: Yesterday	page 18
Beyond the ink	page 24
A Voice from Afar	page 42
Unseen ties	page 54
Zero	page 58
Missing Home	page 72

Watch all the films and find out more about the project at
linestothefuture.com

IT WASN'T JUST A LEARNING
EXPERIENCE; IT WAS A SPARK
THAT AWAKENED CREATIVITY IN
ALL OF US. A JOURNEY THAT
REMINDS US HOW POWERFUL
EDUCATION CAN BE WHEN LED WITH
HEART - JUST LIKE DR. NAZMI
AL-MASRI ALWAYS ENSURES IN
EVERY OPPORTUNITY HE BRINGS
OUR WAY.

PROLOGUE

Esraa, Farah E, Taqwa

The news is shaking the earth. Terrified voices are being heard in a small land in a parallel world, the Legendary Land. After several attempts with the gatekeepers who protect the passage between the two worlds, I was the only reporter granted entry.

Upon entering the city, the first anomaly became clear. Time had frozen. All my devices displayed 6:25 AM, and the sky remained cloaked in eternal dawn. Soon, I realized I was not merely an observer; I was being observed.

“Can anyone hear this? Can you hear this?”

As I approached Julia, a lot of visions appeared. A blinding white light flooded the visions, and within, a lot of voices began to scream, vivid and haunting, like memories from another world, a world of miserable people screaming and weeping.

“And we had a life.”

“How many times must we begin from zero?”

“We are still worth saving.”

“If we stop dreaming, we will die.”

“We have no light, no clean water. We sleep to the sound of bombs, if we can sleep at all.”

“When we started building our dreams, society was destroyed.”

“Nothing in life is free.”

I followed the trail of ashes until the sky screamed. Ravens, the birds of death, filled the sky. Their cries are echoing like shattered glass. A fireball fell upon a group of people before my eyes. When I rushed to save them, I noticed the symbol of infinity on their right hands, which meant they had reached the ultimate level of goodness. It didn’t take long before the martyrs’ bodies disappeared and plumed into white flowers in the orchard. Each flower whispered a name, fragile echoes of lives erased too soon. Their voices trembled like ghosts in the wind, desperate not to be forgotten I stood among them, drowning in the grief of those who never had a chance to say goodbye.

Maya 13, an explosion claimed her life.

Omar, 50, caught in the crossfire of a brutal conflict.

Noor, 21, the beautiful bride, her wedding dress never worn.

After leaving the orchard, I found a notebook beneath a fig tree. It was faintly glowing with blood stains on its cover.

They told me to pick one fig as a choice, so I planted my own fig tree as an option.

Promise me, whatever happens to me, don’t forget my tree

Water it with your tears, as I will water it with my own blood.

As I approached a plain, I found a young man pounding on a standing door and saying, “Let me in! I was there before.” I asked him, “What’s behind the door?” “My home, my mother’s voice, the last meal we shared. Why won’t it open? Maybe, maybe it forgot me. Maybe I was never meant to leave.”

“Don’t come home. Don’t come home.” They say home is where the heart is. But Melissia’s heart is buried beneath rubble now, and she no longer knows where to belong.

What I saw was not fantasy. It was memory refusing to die.

“Mama, come here with us. We miss you mama.”

“Carry me in your heart, my love.”

Run! Save your life. There is nothing but blood in this land. Tell them about the fig tree. Tell them about the girl who ran home. Tell them we weren’t just names. We were dreams. We were love. We were alive.

We are still alive. We still dream. We still write.

INTRODUCTION TO LINES TO THE FUTURE

Welcome everyone! This is Mais, Taqwa, Raghad, and Farah E, from Gaza, along with Vera, in Porto. If you’re asking what the Lines to the Future project is, here’s an introduction!

Lines to the Future is an international collaboration between a total of 50 students at the Islamic University of Gaza and the University of Porto, and started in April 2025. It is also supported by the University of Glasgow and British Council Palestine.

The project brought together students to craft powerful science fiction movies. Rooted in cultural exchange and visionary storytelling, it provided us with practical experience in filmmaking, particularly within the science fiction genre, and the opportunity to make new connections. In blending personal experiences with speculative imagination, we reflected on our realities while building new, shared worlds that transcend borders and inspire hope.

This report tells the story of the project through documenting our exchanges and the making of the films during genocide. It also provides a short anthology of poems and other pieces of writing which we created and shared during the project.

When the project began

When the Lines to the Future project began, students in Gaza were living under the harsh realities of siege, displacement, and ongoing violence. Daily life was marked by fear, destruction, and limited access to basic necessities like electricity, clean water, and education. Many universities were damaged or closed, and students had to study under extreme psychological stress and uncertainty. In this bleak and difficult context, the project arrived as a spark of hope, a rare opportunity for creativity, connection, and self-expression. Through planning and filming science fiction shorts with peers from Portugal, students found a space to escape, imagine, and reframe their future beyond the limitations of their current reality. The project not only gave them a voice but also reminded them that their dreams and ideas still matter.

Students in Porto were already immersed in exploring science fiction as part of our English curriculum. It was a theme that sparked genuine interest among many of us. We had been reading sci-fi stories, discussing their social and philosophical dimensions, and even trying our hand at writing some ourselves. So, when our teacher Damian Ross introduced the idea of collaborating with students in Gaza to create short sci-fi films, it felt like the perfect extension of what we were learning—only now, it had a real-world purpose and a global reach. This collaboration allowed us to take what we had studied in class and apply it creatively. We were able to develop our writing, filming, and editing skills in a way that was both educational and enjoyable. But more than anything, it offered us the chance to connect—with people, with stories, with perspectives we had never encountered before. Working with students whose daily realities are so different from ours, yet who share the same interest in storytelling and imagination, added a deeper layer of meaning to everything we were doing.

The idea of creating something meaningful together, despite distance and difference, was what truly brought the project to life—and it worked.

"Participating in this project was a really great opportunity. I got to know people from different countries, wonderful people in every sense of the word, whether it was trainers, project coordinators, or students from Portugal. They were all wonderful. The communication was as if I was communicating with people I have known for a long time. They were full of love and kindness. As for the project, I am very happy to be part of it, as it was a means to convey our voice as the people of Gaza in light of this genocide. Through it, we shared our daily lives, the news, and what the Israeli occupation is committing against us, from famine, displacement, and the killing of innocent children and the elderly."

First impressions

Both the Palestinian and Portuguese students approached the project with a mix of curiosity, excitement, and uncertainty. For the Palestinian students, the project felt like a rare window to the outside world – a chance to connect with peers beyond borders and to express their inner thoughts and dreams through the lens of science fiction. Many were surprised and deeply moved by the interest and solidarity shown by their Portuguese counterparts. On the other hand, the Portuguese students were initially intrigued by the opportunity to engage creatively with students living in a very different and challenging context. As the project unfolded, both groups quickly discovered common ground through shared imagination and storytelling. These first impressions laid the foundation for mutual respect, empathy, and a powerful sense of connection that grew stronger with every exchanged idea and story.

"Despite initial hesitation, I am so glad I joined because not only was I able to meet so many kind and talented people from Gaza I probably never would've met otherwise, but I also made new friends in Portugal along the way through the project. It was and still is a very emotionally deep and charged project. Despite having engaged with Palestinian liberation movements for years now, long before this current spike in aggression and occupation, having personally connected with so many people now adds a new layer to it in my heart."

Workshops and Whatsapp

The Lines to the Future project was structured around four dynamic workshops that guided students through the process of creating their own science fiction films, ongoing support from the trainers through around 30 meetings and thousands of messages in our smaller Whatsapp groups, and constant interaction in our main Whatsapp group.

The first workshop took place on April 21st and focused on the "What if?" question – a key element in science fiction that encourages imagining alternative realities and futures. This session sparked a wave of creativity, leading to the initial ideas for the student films. During this stage, participants were divided into seven groups, consisting of around 6 students from Portugal and Gaza tasked with developing a unique concept.

The second workshop centered on pre-production and filming. Students had worked on summaries and scripts since the first workshop, and now we developed storyboards in order to begin shooting scenes, bringing their imagined worlds to life. The third workshop focused on post-production, editing and sound design. Finally, the fourth and final workshop was held as a screening event, where all the almost-completed films were showcased. It was a moment of pride and celebration, allowing us to share our visions and witness the results of our collaborative storytelling journey.

Over the summer, we edited our films, worked on this report, and continued sharing our experiences, poems and friendship on our main WhatsApp group. Those exchanges tell the story of our collaboration and form the basis of the report.

"I used the science fiction filmmaking workshop as a way to escape from the harshness of reality into a realm of imagination where dreams could actually be realized. In Gaza, the weight of daily life is often unbearable—bombings, destruction, loss, and uncertainty surround us constantly. Science fiction gave me a rare space where I could step outside of this suffocating present and envision other possibilities, other worlds. It allowed me to imagine futures not defined by war, but by creativity, innovation, and freedom."

"For writers in Gaza, science fiction can be a powerful framework. It opens a door to possibilities that reality denies us. It allows us to picture ourselves not only as victims of oppression but as dreamers, inventors, and creators of worlds beyond the walls of blockade and rubble. Through science fiction, we can reclaim the right to imagine futures where Palestinians thrive, where technology and progress serve us rather than destroy us, where our children can look at the sky and dream of stars rather than drones."

Taqwa, in an interview with Arablit website

"The two ever-present feelings throughout this project have been unwavering kindness and almost stubborn strength. I felt it in every meeting, every text people sent. As I said, in the foundation of this project is kindness and strength, but the difference between the two is that kindness is infinite, while strength isn't. So how can this world, our world ignore such strong people? Where have we gone wrong?"

"We were sold this idea that everything bad done by humanity has been done in the past, that it can't happen in our times. But it is our duty as human beings to open our eyes for once and look around."

AT THE LEGENDARY LAND

Esraa / Farah E / Taqwa

We are a small group who joined late because our ""Writing for Publication"" course was postponed, so Prof. Nazmi advised us to join this one instead.

This meant the workload was double. We used to start working from 8 PM until 3 or 4 AM to catch up, as our days were spent preparing for midterm exams. Despite all the pressure, we did it -- and we're truly proud of ourselves!

Our film traces the journey of a reporter who was granted rare access through the gate that separates our world from a parallel one. In this parallel world, he entered the Legendary Land-- a place where beauty and tragedy coexist. Along the way, he encountered the characters from the six other films in this project, making our film both a narrative report and a collective trailer. What he witnessed left a mark on him; he didn't just walk away from the city-- he carried its voices with him, their echoes lingering in his soul long after the gate closed.

Hello Here's the beginning of our synopsis and how we imagined their journey will begin, and the full details will be after we got the scripts of other groups.

9:40 PM

After getting the permission to enter the parallel world through the passage between the two worlds, a three reporters had only 4 hours to report what is happening in one of the strangest cities ever there, The Wasteland (we can change the city name). With limited information and budget, they went in different directions and captured the weird and unexplained events they saw there!

*We're thinking about showing the reality of what we've been witnessing for a year and half in an indirect way(like an allegorical place, everything is a symbol to what is happening in Gaza in the real world.)

9:42 PM

Damian
This is brilliant!

9:45 PM

Ali
I am lost for words! This is brilliant and moving.

9:45 PM

These moments marked the birth of our Group's idea--an idea that bloomed after long hours of reflection, imagination, and deep thought. Watching it come to life was magical. And the instructors' reactions? Simply heartwarming , and encouraging to keep going and reach new levels of creativity we never imagined we'll reach.

The night before the final workshop was a story in itself. We spent the day racing against time, collecting every last shot we could. The clock wasn't on our side, and the internet added to the struggle. Still, we stayed up through the night, determined to finish what we started. By morning, despite it all, the film was ready, marking a quiet triumph born in the dark.

Hi everyone, Sahar I attached the video I would be grateful if you could confirm that it went as you wanted .

9:25 AM

Sorry for the delay but we've all been having trouble with the internet..

@Sahar

Damian
Hi taqwa, I can see the video in the folder - can't wait to watch it!

9:51 AM

Ali
I can't wait!!!

9:55 AM



NOT JUST MESSAGES--BUT SUPPORT, KINDNESS, AND REAL HELP. THANK YOU, KIND DAMIAN, DR. DAVID, MR. ALI, AND KIND SAHAR. YOUR WORDS MEAN A LOT TO US.

At The Legendary Land unfolds through a series of haunting locations experienced by a lone reporter. From the eerie entrance where time is frozen, to a ravaged orchard blooming with white flowers that whisper forgotten names, and a vast desert scattered with mysterious doors, each scene reveals fragments of memory, loss, and hope. The reporter encounters spectral visions, displaced souls trapped in floating bubbles, and silent pleas for remembrance. The journey culminates at the gate between worlds, where dawn's eternal light fades and the weight of untold stories lingers.

SCENE 1: THE LEGENDARY LAND GATE – A SILENT VOID – DAWN-LIKE MIST

1. Establishing Shot – Wide aerial view of the Legendary Land Gate surrounded by mist and eternal dawn.
2. Wide Shot (WS) : Captures the gate and surrounding landscape from a distance, highlighting the symmetry and calmness in a simple and easy-to-film way.
3. Long Shot – Reporter walking alone toward the gate, highlighting his isolation.
4. Medium Shot – Reporter holding his camera, recorder, and notebook cautiously approaching.
5. Close-Up – Reporter's devices showing "6:25 AM – No Signal – No Sound".
6. Point of View (POV) Shot – From the reporter's perspective as he senses something watching him. The point of view shows what the reporter is seeing. To convey that he



Sahar
As long as it's ready by Saturday before session, yes no worries.

...

Thanks for your understanding! We'll do our best to get everything done ASAP

Edited 4:08 PM

Sahar
You're all amazing and we're so proud of you

4:28 PM

Our first rough cut was more than a draft as it was the first heartbeat of a dream. In just one week, we raced against time, reaching out to six distant groups, gathering every fragment we could. It felt like stitching light from shadows. Yet through that storm of pressure, our instructors' voices echoed like a calm breeze reminding us to keep going.

LINES TO THE FUTURE – The Story

Compiled by Imad, Farah A, Guilherme and Liz

This section tells the story of the project, mostly through our main Whatsapp group, which was the beating heart of Lines to the Future. Participants shared their thoughts, feelings, poems, newscasts and often what they were experiencing in Gaza. Every day brought news of more death and destruction, as well as moments of connection, collaboration and solidarity.

PART ONE - A project is born

February 11 *An Invitation to Students in Porto*

On the first day of the winter semester at the University of Porto (UP), Damian invited students in his second-year English language classes to join a project that would see them collaborate on short sci-fi films with undergrads at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). Twenty signed up, despite uncertainty about whether the project would run. At that time, a ceasefire had been in effect for three weeks and two days.

March 18 – 20 *The Ceasefire Ends; The Project Begins in Porto*

The ceasefire ended when Israel conducted extensive surprise attacks on March 18, killing hundreds of men, women and children in the following days. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu **warned that the bombardment was “just the beginning”**.

Three days later, the Lines to the Future team went ahead with a scheduled briefing session for the Porto students. The session took place on Zoom and featured a presentation by Project Coordinator Sahar Alshobaki, who introduced the Porto students to Gazan culture, history, music, language and food. The students also met their two instructors, Ali Makki (Film instructor, based in Istanbul) and Dave Gerow (Creative Writing instructor, based in Glasgow). Ali, who has worked extensively in refugee resettlement, briefed the Porto students on how to work with classmates experiencing genocide.

April 11 *An Invitation to Students in Gaza*

With the wheels in motion on the Porto end, Damian and Dr Nazmi Al-Masri (Professor of Language Education at IUG) sent an invitation to the undergraduate English students of IUG.

Thirty students from Gaza signed up in a couple of days. Imad, one of the participants and a co-author on this report, reflected that “this initiative stands as one of many valuable opportunities provided by the Islamic University of Gaza, which, despite the war and humanitarian crisis, continues to offer its students spaces for hope, learning, and resilience”.

LINES 2 the Future Application Form

Dear IUG English students,

I hope you and your family are doing well and staying safe.

This is an invitation to join a project which allows you **to develop and express your creativity** on an international stage, and to make new connections with students in Portugal. You will have the chance to **develop your English skills in an authentic context and learn about creative writing and film-making**.

LINES to the Future is a sci-fi storytelling and filmmaking collaboration between students at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) and the University of Porto (Portugal), with support from colleagues at the University of Glasgow (UofG) (Scotland). It is part of the LINES4Palestine project, and continues a decade-long partnership between IUG and UofG, strengthening education and promoting Palestinian voices globally.

Why Sci-Fi?

“Science fiction is any idea that occurs in the head and doesn’t exist yet, but soon will, and will change everything for everybody, and nothing will ever be the same again. As soon as you have an idea that changes some small part of the world, you are writing science fiction. It is always the art of the possible, never the impossible.” - Ray Bradbury.

Science fiction is about more than aliens and spaceships. **All it requires is a question: “What if...?”**

What if the whole world was a computer simulation, and Gaza was just a test to measure humanity’s morality? What if advanced nanotechnology could instantly rebuild every destroyed home, school, and hospital-but only at the cost of erasing our memories of the past? Or even, what if I woke up speaking only Portuguese? The “what if” questions are as limitless as your imagination.

Most sci-fi stories focus on one person: the hero. But by telling that person’s story, they tell the story of humankind: the dangers we walk into, the atrocities we allow. No other genre is quite as profound or as universal as science fiction. And all you need to tell your story is a phone, a few collaborators, and a question: What if...?

IUG students will work with colleagues in Porto to produce 5-minute science-fiction films exploring themes of your choice. “What if...?”

Part 1: April and May

- **four online workshops** where students from each university get together and **receive training and support on film and story-telling**.
- **ongoing online meetings** and discussions between small groups from Gaza and Porto to get to know each other and work on films, with personal **support from experts**.

Part 2: June to September

Over the summer, you will receive support in refining and editing your films, and then, if you want to, there is an opportunity for your films to be shown publicly at a festival in Glasgow, Scotland.

Sign Up! Fill in this form **by Friday 11th April at midnight**. Numbers are limited to 25 students from IUG and it will be first come first served.

Best regards, Dr Nazmi Al-Masri, IUG, Palestine and Damian Ross, University of Porto, Portugal

April 14 Introductions

With the Gazan and Porto students signed up and added to the WhatsApp group that would become our primary channel of communication, Sahar shared a link to a padlet where we could introduce ourselves and give a sense of our interests. Here are a few of our introductions.



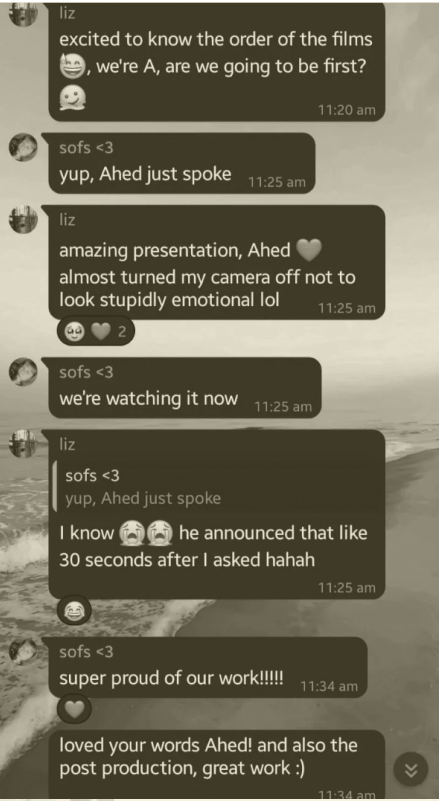
NEXT STOP: YESTERDAY

Page written by Ahed Shawish

Ahed / Baraa / Farah / Liz
Rodrigo C / Sofia S

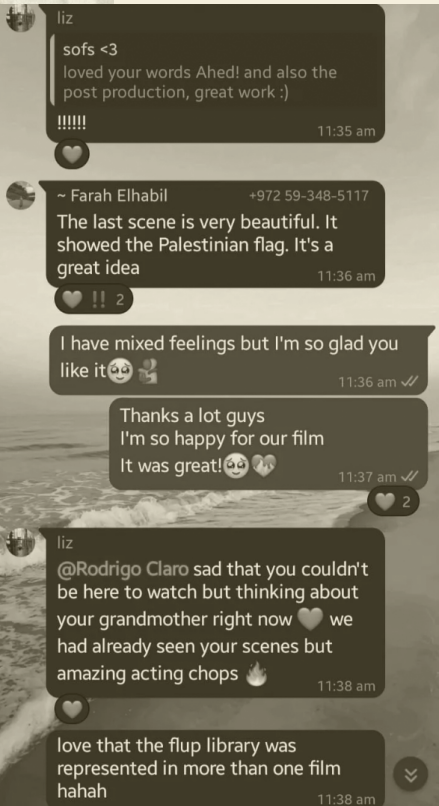
The film revolves around comparing the living conditions between the Gaza Strip and Portugal. The film begins in a tent with the main character Adam, to live with him his day in the destroyed Gaza Strip. Then, while he is walking in one of the parks, he finds a door and opens it to move to another life completely different from the one he lived in Gaza. He moves to Portugal to see a wonderful life full of security and the basics of life. Then, he hesitates between himself whether he wants to stay there or return to his country, until he decides in the end to return to his country and rebuild it.

*The main idea of our film:
To deliver the voice of the
Palestinian people to the
outside world and let them
know about the crimes and
suffering we have been
experiencing daily for nearly
two years.*



*Screening our rough cut.
I am so happy to be part
of this amazing team.*

*To my friends in the
group, it was a great
opportunity to get to
know you.*

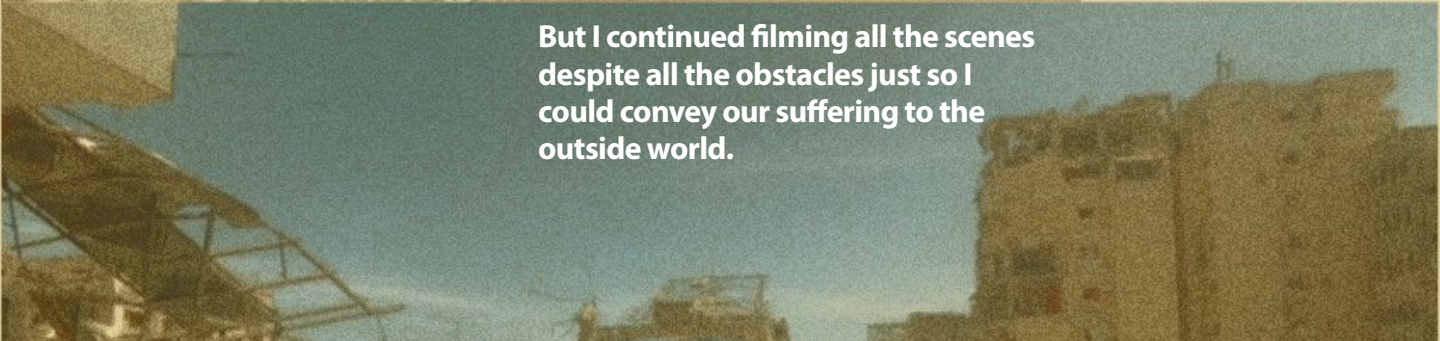


As the photographer and editor of the film, the work was very difficult and I faced many obstacles while filming the scenes in the Gaza Strip due to the difficult conditions and lack of security.



But I continued filming all the scenes despite all the obstacles just so I could convey our suffering to the outside world.

Everyone thinks it's just a tent, but for the people of Gaza who live in camps that don't protect them from the cold of winter or the heat of summer, it's the worst place to live!



In contrast, all other countries have a beautiful life that we had before the war, but the war came to take away everything beautiful from us.

SCENE 5 – Portal - Garden - Night

Shot	Shot Size / Angle	Movement	INT/EXT	Time of Day	Shot Description	Notes
5.1	Wide	Tracking	EXT	Night	Adam walks under garden lights	Quiet, warm lighting
5.2	Two-Shot	Static	EXT	Night	Guard offers: "You can stay"	Subdued tone
5.3	Close-Up	Static	EXT	Night	Adam replies: "No, I want to rebuild Gaza"	Inspirational beat

SCENE 6 – Gaza - Return - Day

Shot	Shot Size / Angle	Movement	INT/EXT	Time of Day	Shot Description	Notes
6.1	Low	Dolly-Out	EXT	Day	Adam exits door, notebook in hand	Empowered
6.2	Medium	Static	EXT	Day	Adam looks at sky, smiles	Sunrise symbolic
6.3	wide	Static	EXT	Day	Adam surrounded by the camp	Fade to black
6.4	Text Overlay				"Every change begins with a dream..."	Fade to black

Part of our shotlist



Watch all the films at linestothefuture.com

The students were left with the task of working collaboratively over the coming days via WhatsApp to develop synopses for their films, which they would share with Dave and Ali for feedback. After that, they would create scene breakdowns, followed by scripts. All this was to be completed within two weeks, in time for the second workshop.

The main obstacle during the workshop was the unstable internet in Gaza, which prevented some students from attending, but also from downloading the recording afterwards. One participant noted their inability to access essential material due to file size limitations.

In response, project coordinator Sahar swiftly compressed and reuploaded the video file, ensuring all participants—especially those in Gaza—could access the material.

Ali also offered his support, writing to the WhatsApp group:

If anyone is facing any difficulties or would like to reach out with any questions, I am available, and I will try to help if I can.

This first workshop not only laid the groundwork for creative exploration but also highlighted the team's adaptability and the students' determination to push forward despite the ongoing challenges of war, siege, and displacement.

PART TWO - The Collaboration Begins

April 21 The First Workshop - Visit linestothefuture.com to see all the workshop materials

The first workshop was originally scheduled to take place on April 14, but delays in communication within Gaza meant some of the students were added too late to be able to attend. It was therefore postponed one week, and – like all the workshops and meetings – was recorded for the benefit of any students unable to attend. It finally went ahead on April 21, the same day [the United Nations announced it had run out of tents to shelter displaced people in Gaza](#).

The first workshop began with an overview of the project from Damian and Nazmi, as well as introductions to the team. The students were placed into six groups with a rough balance of IUG/UP students. Ultimately, each of these six groups would produce a film. The groups were given time to chat within breakout rooms. Most of the Porto students had never spoken with a person in Gaza before, and vice versa. If one of the key aims of the project was fostering cross-cultural communication, it really began in those breakout rooms.

The bulk of the workshop consisted of a session led by Dave, the Glasgow-based Creative Writing teacher. He began with an overview of science fiction in general and in the Arab world specifically (citing, for instance, "The Flying Horse" from *The 1,001 Nights* as a prototypical sci-fi story, and drawing on the 2023 sci-fi anthology *Palestine+100*). He argued that the common denominator of all sci-fi stories is that they're predicated on a "What if?" question: e.g. "What if aliens came to Earth?"; "What if time travel were possible?" The students were then put in groups to pose "What if?" questions to one another with an eye to coming up with a premise for their films.

Next, Dave presented the simple formula: Concept + Character = Story. A time travel story, for instance, will be very different depending on the values and decisions of its protagonist. With character emphasised as the beating heart of every story, Dave walked the students through the traditional story arc, using "Little Red Riding Hood"/"Layla and the Wolf" as an example all the students would understand. Finally, the six groups were put back into breakout rooms to discuss specific story ideas.

April 28 The Iberian Power Outage

Our first workshop had taken place on a Friday. During the following seven days, [the children of Gaza were reported to be experiencing the worst phase of malnutrition](#), and the death toll rose by nearly 1,000, including [a pregnant woman and her three children who were killed while sheltering in a tent near Khan Younis](#). Meanwhile, Ali and Dave met with each of the six groups individually to discuss their ideas. Ali told them not to worry about practicalities: "Just write whatever you can imagine," he said, "and we'll find a way to translate it to film."

It's always tricky to schedule meetings with six or seven people at a time, but the group meetings had fantastic attendance. Some students were buzzing with ideas, others were waiting to hear what their groupmates might say. There was a sense that everyone was listening closely to one another.

As the Creative Writing instructor, this was Dave's busiest period during the project. He remembers those days as being "full of ambition and excitement" as the groups each submitted their synopses, received feedback, moved on to their scene breakdowns, received more feedback, then finally wrote their scripts. Each stage had to be approved by Dave before the groups could move on to the next step. Filmmaking instructor Ali, was already heavily involved, attending every meeting and solidifying his role as collaborator/teacher/cheerleader. The excitement was tremendous. Things were underway.

The most significant snag that was a power outage that took place not in Gaza, but across the Iberian peninsula and parts of France.

The irony wasn't lost on the group, with Ali WhatsApping this mock news report:

Ali:

On Monday, April 28th, 2025, a series of power cuts were reported in various locations, attributing to disruptions caused by a group of students in Gaza and Porto. It has been revealed that these students were conducting experiments involving space and time, leading to interference with electrical signals and subsequently contributing to the power

failures.
The European Union expressed concern over the situation, emphasizing the importance of adhering to ethical boundaries and accountability in scientific research. Meanwhile, the United States has called for a thorough investigation into the matter to understand the extent of the disruptions and their implications.
It is essential that corrective measures are taken promptly to mitigate the effects of these disruptions and ensure the stability of electrical systems in the affected areas.

Lamis:
Wait...
Guys are we caught now?
Plans are canceled?

Raghad:
I guess yes... Time travelers: 0, Electricity company: 1

Later in the day, as the power returned to Portugal, the students became more reflective.

Ahd:
I don't know, but after reading your messages, a question came to my mind. Electricity and the internet were cut off in different locations in your country for less than a day. Some of them had this problem resolved, and I hope it will be resolved for the rest. My question is, can you imagine our suffering in the Gaza Strip, which is about to complete two years without electricity or good internet connection? :)

Rodrigo C:
I was thinking about it today

Imad later reflected, "This incident opened up space for mutual understanding between people living in vastly different realities. This moment of shared disruption quickly turned into a powerful bridge between cultures. Within the Lines to the Future project, what could have been a simple technical issue became a spark for emotional dialogue and creative empathy—and perhaps, a key inspiration for the collaborative films in development."

May 1 Rising Voices, Bold Stories: Lines to the Future Welcomes a New Wave of Talent

Taqwa, Farah E and Esraa are three English students at IUG who had been involved in a separate project called "Writing for Publication". When that project was postponed, Nazmi invited them to join Lines to the Future instead. Together, the three new students formed Group G, which was tasked with making a film that somehow draws together all the other students' films. The idea was that Group G's film could serve as a trailer or a pseudo-news report. Within days, they had written the synopsis, scene breakdown and script for a dreamy, poetic film called The Legendary Land. This is now the prologue for this report (page 8).

May 4 A Message from Osama

Group E member **Osama** sent this message to the group:

I know this will be out of context, but I really want to say this.
PLEASE 🙏🙏 be thankful for everything you go through, yes everything including these daily things that you consider annoying. PLEASE 🙏🙏, reconsider these small things you never cared about as blessings. To let you understand what pushed me say so, today in order to get something I needed from a friend, I had to WALK for about 10 kilometres which took me about two hours resulting in reeeaaaally exhausting me. Before I could catch my breath, My parents called me to go to an important issue so I went for about 8 kilometres, but fortunately this time I could borrow a bicycle.
What I am saying is this, be happy with the traffic jam you go through every day as here we nearly don't have transportation.
Be happy with having obstacles in your life or living in routine because here we don't have a chance for life rather than obstacles or routine.
PLEASE, remember this from me **"When you feel bad about your classic life, remember that this bad life from your point of view, is other people's wish in other countries."**

BEYOND THE INK

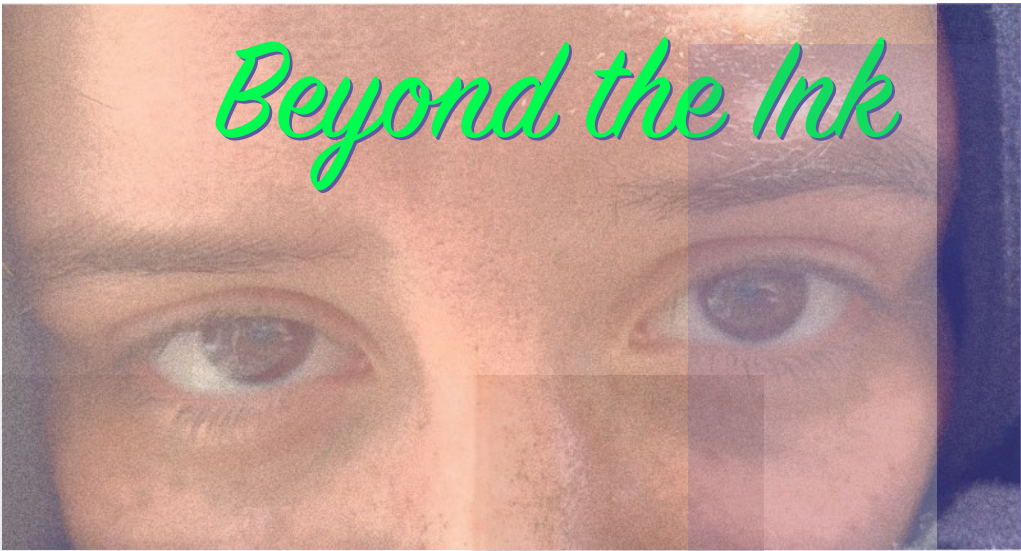
Page written by Vera

Alaa / Amara / Amna / Asala
Francisca / Mafalda / Vera

Seventeen-year-old Lily sits on a thin mattress inside a worn-out tent, its edges fluttering in the cold wind. Nearby, a small fire crackles, its flames dancing as if guarding the quiet of the moment. Far away, the soft sounds of explosions come and go, but she's used to the quiet that comes after—like the world stops for a moment to make space for a new dream. She holds a tattered old book, its pages frayed from being passed around, and begins to read softly, her voice rough from smoke and dust: "I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked..." She stops, swallows hard, then pulls out a patched notebook and begins to write: "I wish I could live every life I ever imagined... to be everyone I once dreamed of becoming, far from this ash. But Lily didn't realize that sometimes, words are more than just ink on paper. As she writes, the world around her begins to shift. The wind stills. The fire calms. The tent fades. In a blink, she finds herself in a modern lecture hall, filled with technology and spacious rooms. Another flash: she finds herself standing in front of a blackboard, looking at students listening with

wide eyes. She knows exactly what she's saying—her voice is strong, full. Another flash: a wooden table in a quiet café, pages covered in poetry lying before her, as if she had bled out every story that never found a chance to be told. Another flash: a crowded city street, she's holding a child's hand—they laugh, run, live She's suddenly back in the tent. The fire still burns, but it's not the same. Her eyes are filled with a wonder she's never known before. What she experienced wasn't just imagination—it was a taste of what's possible. She picks up the book again and continues reading: "I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose..." This time, she doesn't feel despair—but urgency. She grabs her pencil and writes—not about escape, but about resolve. About a path she'll create for herself—even under tents, even among the ashes and under the sounds of bombing She writes: "I won't choose just one fig... I will grow a tree from the roots of this pain, and make it bear fruit the way I want.

Beyond the Ink



Coming up with the scenes was a full team effort. We imagined, we debated, and sometimes we just laughed through the chaos. Not everything went as planned, so we had to improvise a few moments. Despite that, the results were pretty close to the overall idea!!

SCENE 8 – Busy Street – Day

Shot #	Shot Size / Angle	Movement	INT/EXT	Time of Day	Shot Description
8.1	Wide	Tracking	EXT	Day	Lily runs through the crowd holding a child's hand.
8.2	Medium	Static	EXT	Day	They laugh and smile joyfully.

SCENE 9 – Back to Tent – Night

Shot #	Shot Size / Angle	Movement	INT/EXT	Time of Day	Shot Description
9.1	Wide	Static	INT	Night	Lily returns to the tent, fire still burning.
9.2	Close-Up	Static	INT	Night	Her eyes now filled with

Probably one of the hardest yet more enjoyable parts of this project, having to film in the crowded streets of Porto was truly chaotic. We also committed the mistake of underrating the audio, all of the videos start with either Mafalda or me saying : "zuuuuum" as a way of saying "action". There were a lot of struggles to find ways to portray Gaza as well, since everything including our character was filmed in Portugal. However, we had the amazing help of students from other groups, as Farah Albahnsawy, who were able to film, and provided us with beautiful shots.

BODY SWAPPING!
Since we couldn't exactly film every "life" we originally created for the script our improvs consisted of:
Student in a university class
Passionate reader in a library
Adventure lover by the sea
Tourist exploring crowded streets
Writer in a coffee shop
Which one is your favourite?



Part Three: Lights, Cameras, Struggles

May 5 The Second Workshop - Visit linestothefuture.com to see all the workshop materials

The second workshop took place on a Monday when Israel launched attacks in [Lebanon](#) and [Yemen](#), as well as further assaults within Gaza, including one that [killed 14-year-old Hassan Ayyad](#), who had gone viral during the war with his [acapella singing](#).

The workshop was the first of two to be run by Ali, who had an ambitious agenda. He needed to teach the students about preproduction, including how to translate their scripts (which most groups had completed during the past two weeks) into shot lists. He then gave a crash course on different types of shots, which he illustrated using a video that he had made himself, which the whole group was hugely impressed by. The workshop drew on films with high production values, but the focus was on achieving what's possible with limited equipment and expertise.

After the workshop, **Taqwa** wrote:

A very enjoyable, beautiful and useful session. Thank you all without exception, especially a big thank you to Mr. Ali. Thank you for your tremendous efforts. We all appreciate this and I am sure that we will learn and apply it!

Although some students were unable to attend due to connectivity problems, the recording was once again made available by Sahar. The students left the workshop with instructions to begin filming. Their assignment was to collect enough footage to assemble their rough cuts after the third workshop, which would focus on editing.

May 5–6 Students on the Radio

Throughout the project, a number of Gazan students had articles and interviews published in media around the world. The first of these were shared with the group on May 5 and 6 (as per BBC policy, the links are sadly no longer available).



Hala:

I'd love to share with you that today I had the opportunity to speak in an interview with BBC World Service. It was a powerful chance to share our voices, to talk about what we've lived through during the war, and the impact of Israel's ongoing expansion in Gaza.

Imad:

I would like to share with you my coverage as a journalist working for BBC News on the events related to the new Israeli plan to attack Gaza by land, causing people to migrate to the southern Gaza Strip, the new aid plan, in addition to the impact of drought and malnutrition that has become widespread here in Gaza.

The group sent a huge number of appreciative responses, including:

Rozana:

So proud of you Hala.
Keep shining

Sahar:

Proud of you Hala

Damian:

Hala, you spoke so powerfully. Sending love to you all.

Damian:

Thank you so much, Imad, for doing this important work and sharing it with us. You explained the situation with Rafah so well.

Vera:
Our hearts are with you during these incredibly difficult times. To be able to work together is really great, I hope you know your voice is being heard! Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us and letting us know more about what is going on.

Ali:
Imad, thank you for sharing this. The way you reported on the aid distribution was so powerful. I have no words now. All our friends in Gaza, please stay safe and I am sending my love.

Dave:
@Hala, @Imad Qudaih, these are powerful and moving. I'm so proud to be working with you both. Thanks for sharing

Francisca:
Hello Imad,
Thank you so much for your work which is so important and the only way we, outside of Palestine and more specifically Gaza, can stay informed about what is happening there.
It breaks my heart that you and so many others are having to live through this. It's inhumane and should have never happened.
I can only hope that this will end and that you will all be able to start rebuilding your country and healing.
I'm so happy we all get to work with you guys and get to know you a little bit.
I hope you all stay safe

May 7 Life-Lovers: A Reflection by Guilherme and Farah E

The joyful moments we shared in this group held a magic all their own – *fleeting yet unforgettable*. It amazes me how people, surrounded by grief and shadow, *still choose to laugh, to love, to live*. In every burst of laughter, there was *resistance*; in every light moment, a deep lesson in how to *find life amid the ruins*. These memories are etched in our hearts as well as these echoes of beauty that bloomed even in the hardest of times.

May 8 More Tragedy

Osama wrote to the group:

Hello people, hope you are all good and safe, I don't know for how long, but I will not be with you for a period of time as my sister, brother in law, nephew, sister's mother in law got bombed at about 2am. They are all injured and my sister is still in surgery.
I am sorry for this, but excuse me for not being here for some time at least.

The previous day, **Ali** had sent a message that would resonate again and again throughout the project:

Sometimes, I don't know what to say here. After hearing your stories, I find myself speechless—and I imagine our friends in Portugal might feel the same. So what can I do? Well, first, I'm being honest with you. I'm reaching out, and maybe that's a good place to start. I'm here if you need anything, and I truly believe this workshop can be a space for us to connect and create something beautiful together.

May 13 Another Tragedy

On May 13, Alaa shared what had recently happened to her and her twin sister and fellow project member, Amna.

Alaa:
I don't know how to start, but I'd like to share with you what happened to us recently.
The place where we were displaced – a school – was bombed in the middle of the night, without any warning.
Twenty people were martyred, men, women even innocent children.
We survived by a miracle, but the place is still destroyed, and we have nowhere else to go.
We tried, in despair and hopelessness, to find what would keep us alive – clothes, food, flour, even a working phone – and we tried to fix the place just enough to live in again, because there's no other option.
I'm sorry if this is heavy to hear, but this is the painful reality we're forced to live, day after day.

As always, the responses poured in. Here are just a handful:

Giovanna:
I don't have the words to say how sorry I am, Alaa, for all the people who died and for you and the others who have to go through this day after day after day for so long. I hope and pray for an end to these atrocities very soon, although I know it will never be soon enough even if it were to be today. I am also relieved that you were not physically harmed and I hope that you can find a good shelter and all you need very soon.

Hala:
Thank God you are safe, Alaa. I feel for you and I know that words cannot even describe the situation you are in. If you need anything, please let me know. I'm here for you honey.

Francisca:

First I'd like to say that I'm relieved to know that you are alive and still fighting on. I am truly sorry that this has happened to you and I hope you will soon find some refuge elsewhere.

It pains me that we live in a world where these terrible and unjust attacks are happening and being allowed to happen. No human being deserves to be put through this and there is no possible explanation or justification for what is happening to the people of Palestine.

Once again I truly hope, with all my heart, that you will soon be able to return to your homes and live in peace. That you might start healing and rebuilding your country and continue building your futures which you all deserve.

I'm deeply thankful for this opportunity to work with all of you and get to know you. I'm so proud of all of you for, despite your current circumstances, still finding the will, strength and energy to work with us.

Please feel free to reach out and, above all, take care of yourself and your loved ones.

All of my love goes out to you and your families, I will be thinking of you all.

Sofia:

i don't have words to describe how i feel after hearing what happened, I'm terribly sorry about everything that has been happening, for the lives lost, and what the survivors have been put through. There's no need to apologise for informing us, as heavy and hard it might be to read it. If there is anything we can do, to support you right now, even just hearing you, please reach out.

Much love to you and your loved ones.

May 15 Another Attack Close to Home

Throughout this period, the groups managed to film scenes in fits and starts, sending their footage to their individual group chats, where Ali, Dave and their groupmates would feed back on them. Meanwhile, the main group chat received one awful update after another.

Imad shared a number of pictures and videos of a family house that had been bombed, and reported on May 15:

Thank God my family is safe. This destruction occurred in the place where my family lives as a result of targeting a tall house next to them What forced them to move out late at night? Please note that this house belongs to our relatives.

Two days earlier he had shared this video that he'd made about his former home:



IMAD'S VIDEO

The responses included:

Ali:

Very sorry to hear that Imad and i hope you and everyone in Gaza are safe and strong.

Dave:

Imad, this is horrible, and the look on the face of the man in the other video is also so sad to see, as his home is badly damaged for no reason. I'm so sorry. I'm glad that your family weren't hurt last night, though

Sahar:

Very sorry to see this Imad. May God compensate you all for everything you've lost. Thank you for sharing this with us... Alhamdulillah that you're all safe. Stay strong and take care of yourself and your family. Our prayers are with you all

In Gaza, houses cling to each other. There are no real gaps between us—we share everything: our sadness, our laughter, our food, and even our fear. Our neighborhood is not just a collection of homes; it's a close-knit family. No one is ever absent from the daily gathering after sunset, huddled in a dark corner under a sky bright with danger, talking about the current situation, finding solutions, or just sharing the heavy weight that each heart carries. Together, we have lived through massacres, mourned the souls we've lost, and survived grief side by side. Many houses here stand half-broken, but proud—wounded warriors refusing to fall.

From **Crying 'wolf' to create terror** by Amal. See more of Amal's work on in the last section of this report.

May 16 Osama's Recording

Osama sent this message to the group:

This is one minute I recorded at the early morning to let you know how this night was going. You need to know that this record doesn't actually give the real feelings, but just to give a simulation...
It's a bloody night

Throughout the day, people responded.

Grazia:
my dear.. I pray pray and pray that this hell ends.

Ali:
يحييكم و الله يحييكم أسامة! عم ادعيلكم الله يصبركم

Sahar:
Salaam Osama, I know it's not even that close to the sound in real life and it is 1000% more horrific. I pray you all stay safe and may this nightmare ends
الله يحييكم ويصبركم يارب

Sahar:
that sounds so close!

Ali:
Is it possible to move from this area? Is it allowed?

Imad:
It is difficult to do this, Ali, because all the areas are full of displaced people. If you leave your place, someone else will come and take it. Then you will not find the new place and you will not be able to return to your previous place because all the places are full of displaced people.

Imad:
Yesterday was almost equal to all the days of the war, as the bombing did not stop for a second. Imagine that in my town, Khuza'a, people were bombed. No one was allowed to spread the bodies of the martyrs from the streets. In addition to that, some people remained trapped there without food or drink. In addition to that, many of the houses in the town of Khuza'a were destroyed without mercy.

Imad:
Palestinian medical sources are talking about recovering and counting. Just pay attention to this word. The count of 250 martyrs here in Gaza, in addition to hundreds of injuries, not to mention those who remained under the rubble and have not yet been counted. The matter is extremely catastrophic.

Damian:
@Osama @Imad @Taqwa and everyone in Gaza, we are devastated to hear all this. You are constantly in our thoughts, and we are here, even though our friendship is all we can offer. Obviously, please don't worry at all about the project. We will keep finding ways to include your brilliant ideas and tell your stories, and you can join in or drop out as you want. Sending you all our love and hopes that things get better. Please stay as safe as possible.

Osama:
BTW, I'm not trying to make you sad, but just to dot the (i)s , cross the (t)s and give you a chance to live it for one minute similar to the 845280 minutes (587 days) we have been and still living!
Love you people
Very happy for the time we had together...
Hope we can continue but if couldn't remember us as good, persistent, brave, life-lovers, and life-deserving HUMANS!

Recalling that moment months later, **Guilherme** and **Farah E** wrote: "That brief minute carried the weight of countless untold sorrows, offering our group a haunting glimpse into the daily, relentless struggles woven into the lives of such resilient souls."

May 16 Ali's Poll

A respite came on May 16 in the form of a fun, light-hearted interaction.
*It began with a request from Group G's **Farah A**:*

Hello everyone
Hope you are all doing very well.
Due to the midterm exams period that we IUG students will have this week, unfortunately, it will be hard for us to attend tomorrow's workshop...
Can we have it postponed for the end of this week? Because we're really eager to attend and learn more from each workshop, but everything this week is out of our control.

Jamil:
Yes, I totally agree with what Farah is saying. Midterms are taking all our time, and we're really interested in the coming session, so it will be sorry if we missed it. I think postponing the session is great idea

Esraa:
You read my mind! I'm overwhelmed with my exams and can't find time for anything else...

Ahd:
I can't agree more, midterms take a lot of time and effort from us, in addition to the instability we are experiencing these days. Of course, we enjoy every meeting and would like to attend more, but these circumstances are beyond our control.

*In response, **Ali** wrote:*

Hello, we want everyone to benefit from the workshop, and we would love everyone to attend. Since this is a late notice to postpone the meeting, we will do a quick poll on either keeping the meeting for tomorrow or postponing it till next Saturday. If we have enough votes in 2 hours, we will continue with the poll results. But in any case, we will provide all materials needed, video links, and the presentation recordings in order for everyone to catch up. I am willing to do a mini workshop for those who missed tomorrow's meeting to do a recap.

Ali set up a poll in which students could vote to postpone the workshop or to continue with it.

Taqwa:
I feel excited, I don't know why

Grazia:
@Taqwa so am I - I am checking the poll's results - which seem quite clear... but let's see if there is a twist!

Hala:
Both work for me, but i wont betray you guys

Amal:
I agree with you guys, but I felt sorry for the first option, so I chose it

Taqwa:
I'm really still excited that I even stopped studying and took a break to see the results

Hala:
It's been awhile since the last time I felt like this

Ali:
the votes being counted!

Giovanna:
Guys, I leave my phone for a short bit, and everything is happening in here!! What are you like!

Ahd:
Oh, if only these were truce negotiations

Taqwa:
I wish this from the bottom of my heart

Raghad:
Y'all made this poll feel like it's about choosing the next president or something

Hala:
I haven't seen any of you, but i feel like I've known you for a long time, and you're all very nice and lovely
Sending love to all of you

Ali:
Democracy won! Friends, according to the votes, the workshop 3- post production - will be postponed till next Saturday, the 24th. However, tomorrow scheduled meeting will remain open for whoever wants to come and discuss and concerns, filming advice, or if they have any questions. Damian and I will be there, and we can meet and chat if you want.

Later, **Nazmi** sent another of his heartwarming and cheerful texts.

Salam [Peace] to all,
With a big smile,
a relieved heart, renewed hope,
and fresh energy,
I read all your comments and followed the voting process.
I'm proud of you all – both the team and the students.
Wishing you all the strength and inspiration to turn your dreams into reality.

Farah E and **Guilherme** commented on this later: "It is very nice to hear Dr Nazmi or read his texts because he always has an aura of positivity and strength, and this is so important."

May 17 *Instead of the Workshop...*

The third workshop was delayed less than 24 hours before it was meant to take place. Instead, Damian, Ali, Sahar and Dave turned up on Zoom to chat with any students who wanted to attend. Ultimately, seven or eight students from Gaza and Porto came for a chat.

The conversation was wide-ranging and, for the most part, extremely light. Dave recalls, "a lot of laughter, a lot of excitement, a real feeling of community". Hala shared images of her sister's artwork, which was stunning; Ali and the students discussed regional variations of dishes; Imad and Weam shared memories of the poet Refaat Alareer, who had been a teacher at their university. There was some talk about the project and the practicalities of filming, but for the most part, that would-be-workshop turning into a coming together and a celebration of our ties.

Ali's Video

That meeting was also significant because Ali had brought a treat for the students: A video he had edited together using the footage the students has shot so far for their films. The music by Ludovico Einaudi was introduced to Ali by Letícia, and the voiceover was a collection of lines Ali selected from Group G's script and asked Dave to record (which he did in a public toilet).

A few hours after the meeting, **Ali** shared the video in the main WhatsApp group with a message:

This is all you! Done by you and with each contribution a film was made. With few footage, a poem and a song a film was made. Congratulations! Imagine what you can do with your film.



That moment felt truly special as it captured the spark when ideas began to bloom into reality. Guilherme and Farah recall, "The video Ali shared wasn't just a clip; it was a gentle push that awakened our imagination, showing us how far we can dream and create, even with the humblest of tools."

Nobody knew Ali was working on the video, so it was received with surprise and enormous excitement:

Esraa:
Wow! speechless This is a masterpiece!

Ali:
This is your masterpiece, all of you. A contribution here and there, every part matters.t

Ahd:
That it's absolutely amazing

Weam:
It's a great work, I'm so touched by the video, excited to see all the full film.

Farah E:
This is brilliant. Can't wait to see how our films will be at the end of this outstanding project

Guilherme:
wow, that is genuinely awesomee @Esraa Sameer @Farah E @Taqwa you guys wrote the poem? it's really beautiful, I thought it was from a book until i read the credits

Taqwa:

I can't find the words to express the beauty of this video

Imad:

What I saw made my heart excited to finish our film as soon as possible and show it to my colleagues here, God willing.

Vera:

wow, this is really good! great job!!! The words are really touching

May 18–19 Gideon's Chariot & Portuguese Elections

On May 18, Portugal held elections to the General Assembly, Portugal's Parliament, after President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa announced the dissolution of Parliament and the need for new legislative elections scheduled for May 18. It represented the second time the Portuguese people have been called to vote for parliament in a little more than a year. The results established continuity, with right-wing politician Luís Montenegro maintaining his position as Prime Minister in a non-majority assembly. These elections were particularly polarizing and uncertain due to the rise of the Far-Right political party Chega, currently tied with the traditional Socialist Party as Portugal's second major political force, basing its campaign on anti-migration and authoritarian rhetoric. Its rise follows the worrying current European political trend.

Meanwhile, the Israeli forces issued evacuation orders for several areas and launched a new ground operation called "Arabat Jid'uan" (Gideon's Chariot). The students faced the dual challenge of instability and relocation to unfamiliar areas.

The following day, evacuation orders were implemented for Khan Yunis, Bani Suheila and Abasan al-Kabira, with Khan Yunis declared a combat zone.

The students in our group sent news throughout the day, including the following:

Imad:

Hi all, Now they are telling us that we must evacuate from the Khan Yunis area, even the camp we are in is also being ordered by the Israeli army to evacuate. Where should we go? I don't know the Mawasi area, which is being bombed daily. There is no safe place in Gaza at all.

Rozana:

We got bombed yesterday. I lost 5 of my family and my house got destroyed. Pray for us, guys

Rozana:

We evacuated to Khanyounis beach and built a tent where it's too hot.

Osama:

Things are getting reeaally haaard I also lost some of my extended family the other day

Esraa:

The situation is escalating and bombing is everywhere, hope you all stay safe along with your loved ones

عظم الله اجرکم وما تشوفوا شر یارب

Nazmi:

Dear Rozana, Imad and all, I am speechless and unable to do anything for a week or so. We are left alone to be killed, starved, displaced, distressed, and living in total uncertainties, etc. None knows what's and who's next making us all live on our broken hearts and nerves. Thanks all for your support and solidarity. Proud of this group

Refugee by Amara

Nothing used to sadden me more than being a refugee in my own homeland, striving to gain my freedom in my blessed land. When I was a lost and oppressed child, I didn't know why my grandfather carried a key everywhere. In my imagination, it was a souvenir from a dear person, but today I realize that the dear one was the house, the land, and the olive trees. Today, I find myself living what my ancestors lived; it's as if time is repeating itself and the pain has not stopped. Today, I live the same pain, holding on to the key just like my land. But I didn't leave my home, and I won't pass on the legacy of being a refugee to my children again. Nor will I tell them that we have a house far away that was inhabited by slaves who were an extra burden. It's not easy for me to be called "a refugee!" And "where is your land, young man?" Rather, I want to boast and say, "I am the owner of the land, the identity is mine, the home is mine, even the straws of the tree are mine, and everything here is mine. We are the owners of the land; only we have spilled our blood, and the land has been watered with our musk." It's not easy for a stranger to live on my land; he will refuse to leave a paradise like my land. God forbid that I leave and abandon the house for a stranger to violate my memories, suppress my being, and take the straws from my exhibition as proof of existence. I will not allow the almond trees and orange seeds to be uprooted, and I will not give up the wheat stalks and the trees of the house so that the hand of the occupier won't make them cry. I will die here, in the paradise of my land, in the bliss of the soil that perfumes with every sunrise.

May 20 Imad's Journey

Early in the afternoon of May 20, **Imad** sent the first of a series of picture and video updates documenting his evacuation from Khan Yunis.

Imad:

I am preparing for a displacement journey to a future with an unknown destiny. I do not know which street I will stay on.

Imad:

I left all my memories in the tents, I left all my things, now I will begin the journey of displacement on foot.

Imad:

I walked for a long time, about 8 kilometers on foot. I took a rest during the trip, but what made the trip more tiring was that I was carrying a number of bags that contained some food and water, in addition to some clothes. I also left a lot of things behind me. I left my tent and everything because of the lack of transportation. I will return to them if I have the opportunity to transport them to this area. The trip took me about three hours, as I took a rest from time to time.

There were beautiful initiatives waiting for the displaced people in an area close to Al Mawasi. This initiative consisted of distributing bags of water in addition to chairs for rest.

Imad:

A smile is drawn on people's faces. Hope is returning a little during the bread distribution phase by the World Food Programme to the camps for the displaced in western Khan Yunis and other areas of the Gaza Strip.

May 24 Weam's Cousin's Tragedy

On May 24, a heartbreaking piece of news was shared by Group F's Weam. Like many people forced to flee their homes, Weam's family sought refuge along the western coast of Gaza, setting up a tent near the sea — one of the few places left with enough space due to the overwhelming number of displaced civilians.

Weam shared that one of her relatives, attempting to cool off from the unbearable heat, entered the sea but tragically drowned. She expressed the grief and despair felt across Gaza in her message:

In Gaza, the causes of death are many. Everyone in Gaza has a story that is more cruel than the afterlife. As most of you know, I am now displaced. We headed towards the sea, the safe zone, but there was no escape from death. My cousin entered the sea to escape the intense heat, but it was her fate never to go out into the world again. Please pray for her mercy.



The following day, **Weam** updated us:

We spent 24 hours on the beach without sleep, waiting in hopes that at least her body would be found, but despite that, there was no news of her. Please pray that we find her.

She later wrote:

The girl is 14 years old. It was very hot, so she went to the beach and was pulled by the whirlpool. No one could save her. Now, all of us are searching for her body all over the sea. Perhaps the sea threw her out so that we can honor her and bury her and reassure her parents.

Finally, on the evening of the second day, **Weam** wrote:

We hired a lot of sailors, rescuers, divers and ships, today found her stuck between rocks. A little while ago we buried her.

As always when the students reported tragic events, the WhatsApp group was flooded with consoling messages. Farah E recalls, "Weam's words captured the unending grief and silent suffering that so many Palestinians are forced to carry, loss after loss during this war. In that moment, all we could do in this group was surround her with as much care, warmth, and support as we could offer."

ELEGY FOR ALIN – THE LITTLE SOUL OF THE SEA BY WEAM

She wasn't meant to leave.
Alin—
A name that barely had time to echo in this world.
A child full of warmth,
Of questions,
Of laughter that could make the sun smile on Gaza's darkest days.
She wasn't running from fear,
She was running from heat—
From the suffocating weight of war and displacement.
They said the sea was safe,
They called it the "safe zone".
But in Gaza, safety is a lie we whisper to children so they can sleep.
She entered the water with her small feet,
Perhaps giggling, perhaps tired—
But she never came back the same.
The sea held her too long.

And when it returned her,
She was silent...
Still...
Free in the most painful way.
Her body was small,
But her absence fills the sky.
She will never grow into a teenager.
Never wear a graduation gown.
Never light a birthday candle again.
Yet somehow—she is more alive in our grief
Than many who still walk this earth.
We speak her name with love.
We mourn her like a whole world lost.
Alin,
May the waves carry your spirit gently,
May the stars write your name across the night.

You were only a child...
But now, you are an ocean.

THE VOICE FROM AFAR

Page written by Weam

David / Ekaterina / Hala / Haya
Mariia / Tiago / Weam

Our film follows Huda, a mother who returns to the rubble of her destroyed home in Gaza. As she searches through the debris, she finds objects once held by her children — a football shirt, a doll, and her engagement ring. Each item unlocks memories of laughter, warmth, and family life before the war. In a final scene, far from Gaza, the same doll is seen in a museum in Portugal — displayed as a symbol of connection, memory, and the resilience of those who lived through unimaginable loss. From the rubble, love echoes on.

"I MISS HER TINY FINGERS
FIXING MY HAIR,
HER SOFT VOICE
WHISPERING SECRETS
TO ME,
THE WAY SHE DANCED WITH
ME WHEN NO ONE WAS
WATCHING. WITHOUT HER,
I'M JUST STILL.
BUT IN HER HANDS, I WAS
ALIVE."

Throughout the duration of the project, Gaza was under extreme pressure due to continued bombings, forced evacuations, and constant electricity and internet outages. I personally experienced multiple displacements with my family as we were forced to move from one area to another in search of safety. There were days when I had no access to the internet at all, which made it difficult to stay in touch with the team or access materials. Despite these challenges, I remained committed to the project because I believed in the message we were telling.

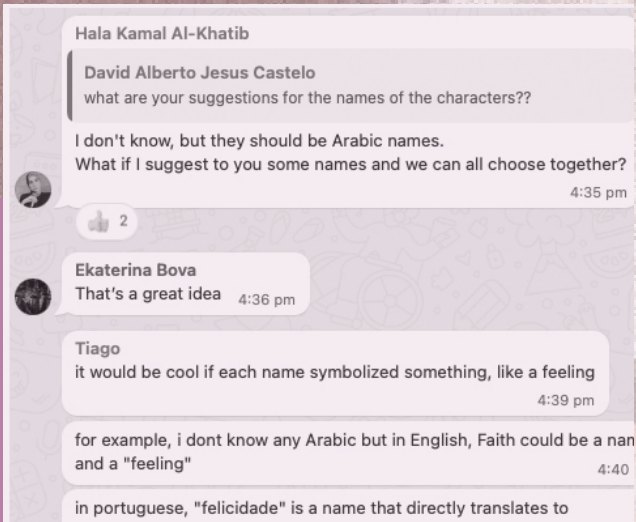
Meanwhile, learning about Portugal and its peaceful environment during our discussions reminded me how different life can be depending on where you live. It made me reflect on how much we take for granted when we have peace—and how much we long for it when we don't.

The project accompanied me through some of the most emotionally intense moments of my life. I would often work on editing or scriptwriting in the dark, using a small flashlight or candle due to power cuts. Sometimes I had to wait until after midnight just to upload a video or send a message because the signal was better then. One night, I finished filming a scene and immediately had to evacuate due to nearby shelling. This project became a form of resistance for me — a way to preserve memory, love, and life in the face of destruction.

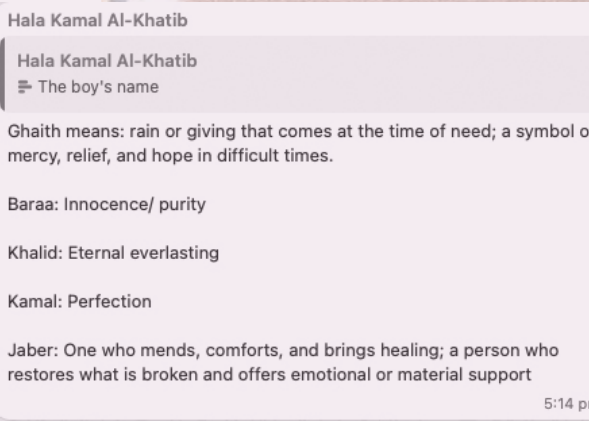
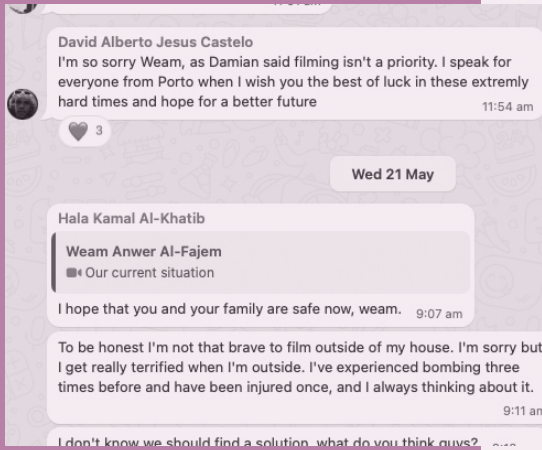
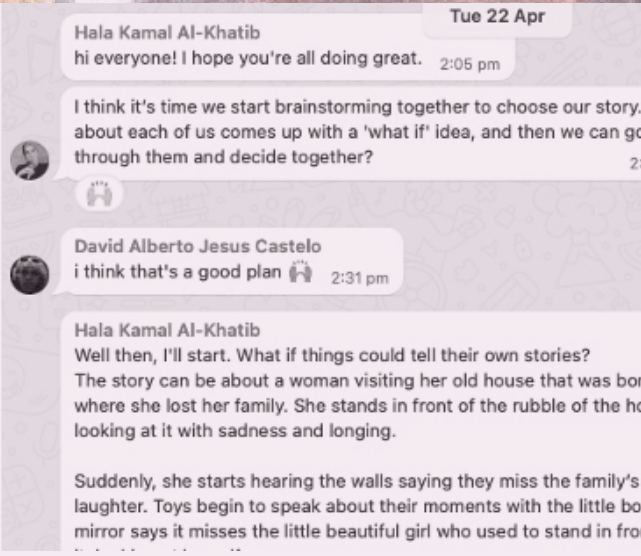
POEM BY WEAM

WHEN WALLS CRUMBLE AND VOICES FADE,
WE SPEAK THROUGH MIRRORS, SHIRTS, AND DUST.
WE CARRY NAMES THAT TIME BETRAYED,
BUT NEVER BROKE OUR LIVING TRUST.

IN BROKEN TOYS, OUR HEARTS REMAIN,
IN SILENT SKIES, OUR DREAMS IGNITE.
WE WRITE OUR TRUTH IN GRIEF AND PAIN,
AND TURN THE DARK INTO A LIGHT.



This project gave me a voice when everything else was being taken away. It gave me a sense of purpose and a way to express both my pain and my hope. Working with teammates from different places, and hearing their perspectives, helped me feel less alone. Even though the story was fictional, it carried so many real emotions and memories. The moment the objects started talking in the story — it felt like my own memories were being spoken out loud. I realized that storytelling can be powerful, healing, and political. *It reminded me that even when buildings fall, stories can rise.*



Part Four: Putting it Together

May 24 *The Third Workshop* - Visit linestothefuture.com to see all the workshop materials

The third workshop was delayed one week to accommodate midterm exams at IUG. When it finally took place, Ali once again came prepared with an enormous amount of material, this time on the subject on post-production. The students were instructed in making necessary edits, cutting unnecessary segments, adding music, and incorporating audio and visual effects into their films.

By this point, the groups were at varying stages of progress. All of them had scripts and shot breakdowns, but only a few had managed to shoot a significant amount of footage, and one or two had yet to film anything. Privately, the project coordinators agreed that they would be happy if we finished the project with two or three completed films.

May 29 *False Hope and True Beauty*

The WhatsApp chat on May 29 was a mix of two subjects: The hope of a ceasefire and Taqwa's sharing of her first ever poem.

*The first message of the day came from **Taqwa**:*

Hi everyone, Today marks 600 days of war in Gaza. This is my first-ever poem, which I hadn't planned to share. An editor and friend from California, who interviewed me before, read an early draft—not this final version—and encouraged me to publish it. So I chose to publish it with the Palestine Chronicle platform because they don't change a single word of what I wrote. Though personal, the poem reflects the feelings of many here. I would be happy if you read it and share your thoughts with me.

Excerpt from Taqwa's first poem

*I long for Gaza, before the war,
When winter nights were warmed not by heaters, but by my
grandfather's voice threading through the cold,
telling tales that curled around our fingers like steam from tea.
I long for his house, where peace didn't need to be spoken—it sat
quietly in every corner,
like the sunlight that filtered through lace curtains.
I long for the garden trees, for the way his hands—older than the
soil—lifted the water each morning and gave it to them like a ritual.*

read the full poem in the final section of this report

The responses poured in, with some people quoting the lines that most resonated with them and others commenting on the poem as a whole:

Ali:

"for moments we didn't pause to admire, because we were too busy living them."

Thank you for sharing and I pray you live those moments again.

Farah:

This is the priceless lesson we've learned through this tragedy – to cherish every moment, to appreciate the blessings around us, and to find meaning in the small details that shape our days. Hoping that these peaceful days will return once more very soon.

Damian:

Beautiful and painful, Taqwa. This professor who says "Mistake is Halal" sounds like a wise one.

Taqwa (replying to Damian):

I mean our wonderful Dr. Nazmi. He said it to me in person at the university--not just to me, but to all of us, his students. He even repeated it in his voice messages! Mistakes are allowed

Guilherme:

I think this is very very beautiful, it is also so painful: "When "loss" was just a word in a story, not the story itself." This line is so emotional. Thank you for sharing it Taqwa.

Mais:

I missed these days so much

Grazia:

Very beautiful, @Taqwa thanks for sharing it with us!! lots of beautiful vivid lines.. maybe one of the ones that spoke to me: 'I long for his house, where peace didn't need to be spoken—it sat quietly in every corner'. Beautiful work. I pray too that these days will return sending love

While this chat was going on, the White House had claimed that Israel had accepted the terms of another ceasefire (after having broken the previous one two months earlier). Nobody knew the details, but just the whiff of peace was enough to stir up hope. As Farah recalls, "The WhatsApp group embraced and shared these emotions with heartfelt sincerity and deep solidarity."

*It started with a message from **Imad:***

I have just been told that Hamas and Israel have agreed to a ceasefire. The details will be announced by US President Trump in a few moments.

For the rest of the day, the chat was a mix of responses to Taqwa's poems and these expressions of hope for a ceasefire:

Damian:

Hope with all my heart they do it and stick to it.

Taqwa:

Really!!! It would be a dream come true if this happened!

Ali:

praying we have good news this evening!

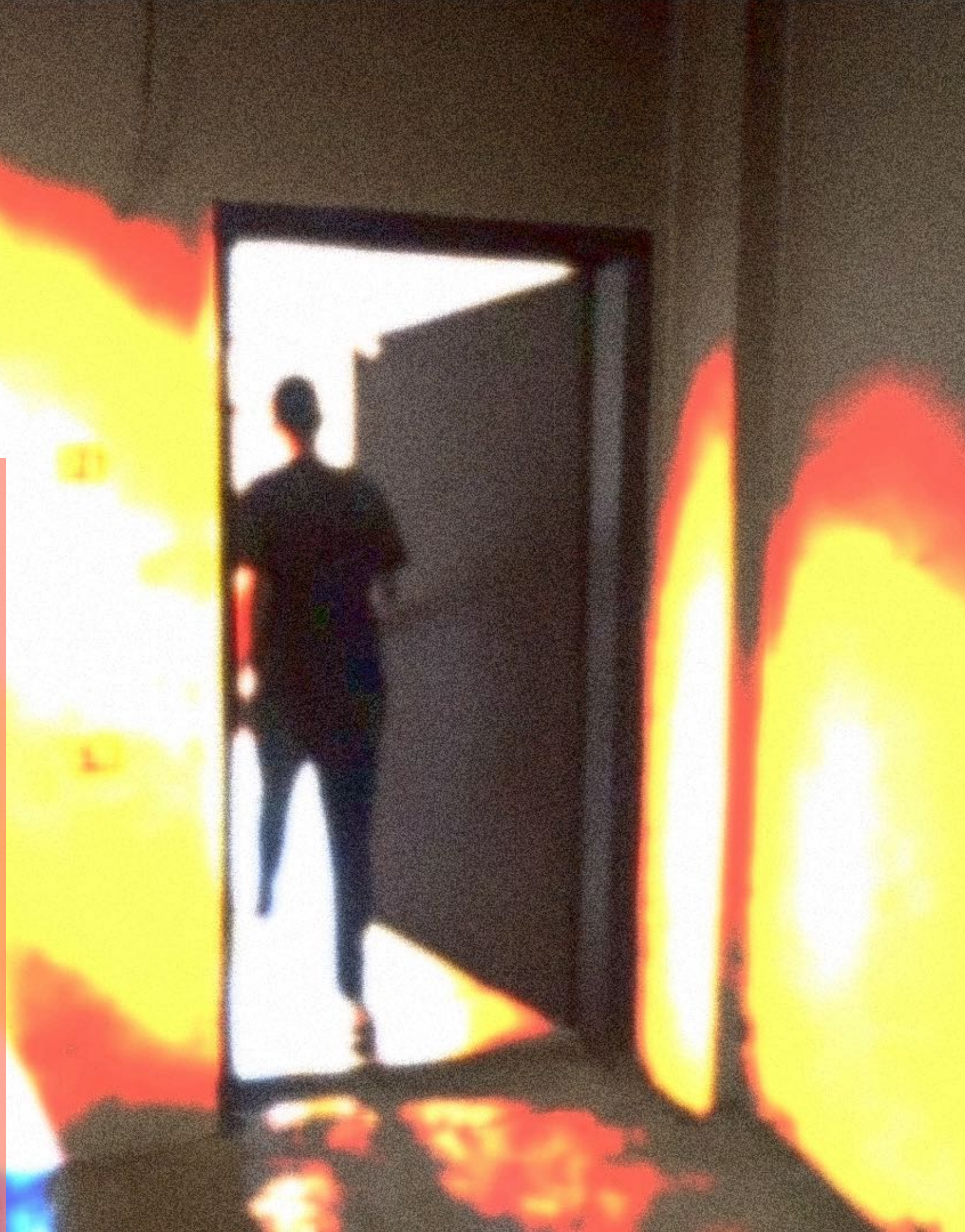
Taqwa:

I feel like crying. I really wish this war would end!!

SAUDADE by *Taqwa*

Oh, my mind—
let's sit down tonight and speak in silence,
for the noise inside is louder than bombs,
and the smoke of worry
blurs my view of the stars.
I am drained—
not by walking,
but by carrying the weight
of questions with no answers.
I am like a burning tree
in the middle of a genocide zone—
every leaf is a memory,
every root is a wound.
My soul is dug up
like ruins after a raid,
shattered into fragments
too brittle to name.
I want to scream,
but my voice
is buried under
the rubble of grief.
Instead of shelter,
I find a battlefield
in my own mind—
where I fight myself
each sleepless night.
I make my escape
from the bullets of thought,

but they follow me
like shadows
in broad daylight.
I see the sky crack open
not with rain—
but with silence
too loud to bear.
We are a generation
gasping for air
in a room full of smoke,
begging for peace
as a newborn begs for breath.
We carry saudade
in every heartbeat—
a longing for what we lose
and for what we never have.
Even sleep
is no longer a refuge —
our dreams turn
into documentaries
of what we lose.
Still,
with each breath,
I carry hope—
a flame trembling in the storm
yet stubborn,
unyielding,
and alive.



June 1 Saudade

In one of the group meetings, Damian had brought up the concept of “saudade”, a Portuguese word which had been defined for the Anglo world in 1912 by travel writer Aubrey Bell as “a vague and constant desire for something that does not and probably cannot exist, for something other than the present, a turning towards the past or towards the future; not an active discontent or poignant sadness but an indolent dreaming wistfulness”. It was a concept that resonated with the feelings of the students in Gaza. The word became incredibly meaningful, as it gave everyone a way to express themselves with more clarity and emotional weight. As Guilherme later reflected, “In a world where students often struggle to be heard, having the right words to fully communicate their feelings makes a real difference.”

Tagwa:

This term Saudade caught my attention and I searched for it. After reading a lot, I can define it like this: Saudade is a Portuguese word that describes a deep emotional feeling--like when you miss someone or something that's gone or far away. It's not just missing it's more like a mix of love, nostalgia, and sadness, especially when you know that what you miss might never come back.

Giovanna:

It's such a good word, isn't it? there isn't one in Italian or English that has exactly the same connotation (you would have to use a few words to get the idea). What about Arabic?

Sahar:

Maybe حنين

What do you think, Tagwa?

Tagwa:

Yes, saudade is a very deep feeling. In Arabic, we have words like حنين (nostalgia) and شوق (longing), لوعة (heartache) or وجع الفقد (the feeling of loss) but saudade goes beyond that. It's a mix of love, pain, and yearning, with an acceptance that what's lost may never return. This combination of emotions is what makes saudade so unique and hard to translate!

Weam:

Yes, saudade is a word that touched me deeply, because it opens the door to emotions we often carry in silence – longing, yearning, and the ache of absence. It's not just missing someone who is gone; it's the sense that their absence has become a part of you. It's a love that doesn't fade, memories that don't die, and a heart that keeps reaching across the distance. That feeling is what moved me to write elegies. My words were not meant as a goodbye, but as a way to preserve their presence – to keep a thread of light between then and now, between those who are gone, and the ones still filled with their love. In Arabic, we call this feeling “ḥanīn” (حنين)... sometimes “ishtiāq” (اشتياق). But these are not just words – they are emotional states that live within us. We carry them. We write with them. They rise to the surface every time memory becomes heavier than silence.

Hala:

I think what we're feeling now in Gaza is a deep longing for everything before the war; the places, the normal life, the people we lost, and even the versions of ourselves we used to be. Maybe this feeling can be described by the word saudade.

Guilherme:

Even though I am Portuguese, I can't really define it, maybe the feeling of saudade isn't just longing for something or nostalgia, it's feeling those things but not being able to go back to the time you miss or long for. Maybe the feeling of saudade is born out of the tension between the longing for something but that something not being there. It's not just missing something, it is the feeling we feel when we miss something but know we can't have it again just as it was. But a definition is not very important, I think what you described, Hala, has to be it.

Hala:

I've always thought that there's no word can describe what we feel. Now I guess I found it.

June 3 Jafaar & Salem

Hala shared a series of messages about two of her family members who had been killed:

Hala:

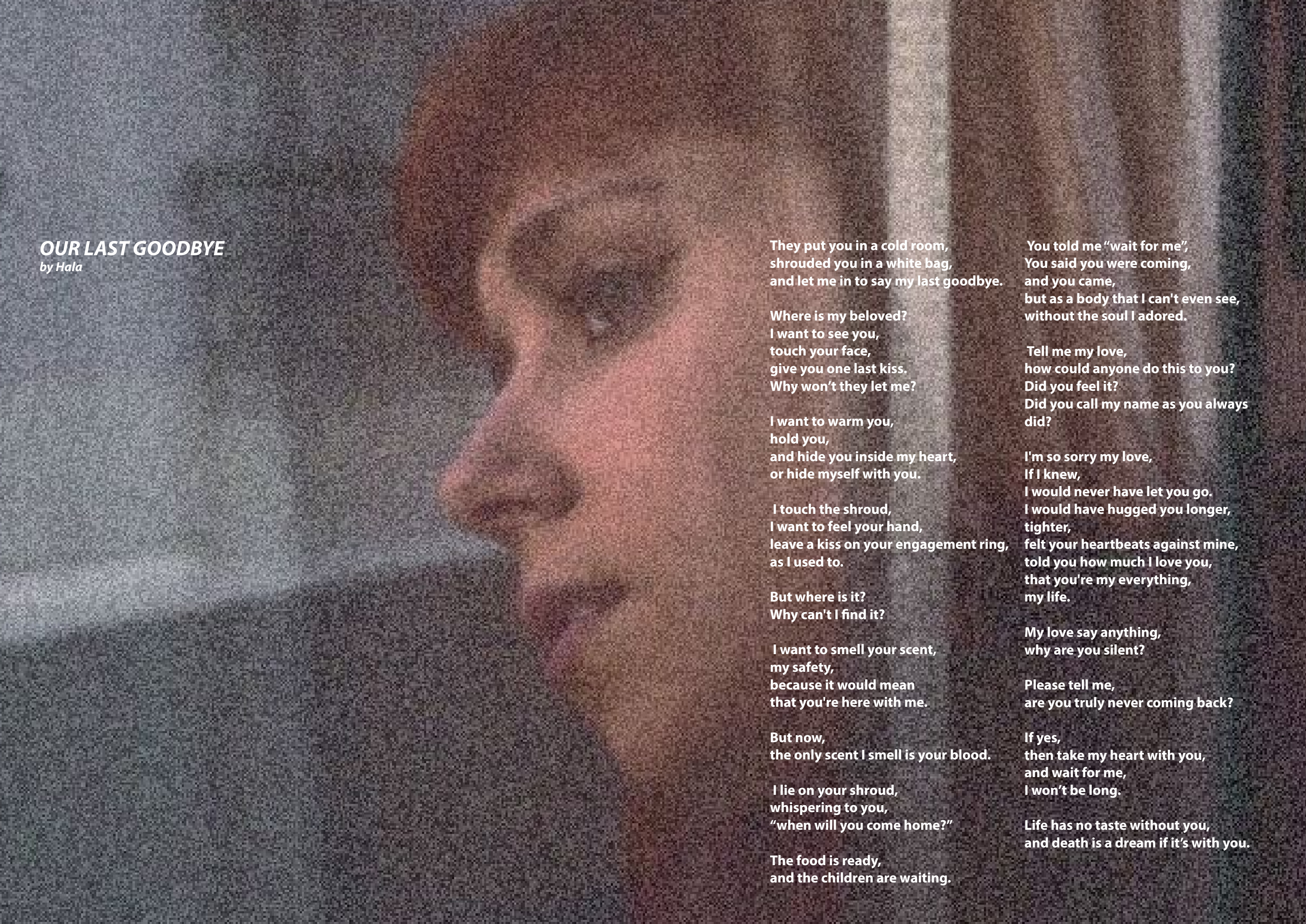
Both of my sisters' husbands were martyred during the war. One of them was a resistance fighter, and the other was a police officer responsible for securing aid. They were both martyred while performing their duties, and they are a great source of pride for us. They were not the monsters the news tries to portray—they had the kindest and purest hearts I've ever known. They never harmed anyone and were among the most joyful, life-loving people you could meet. But there are those who are forced to make silent sacrifices for the sake of their people, even as the world views them as monsters. Jaafar was smiling. His body wasn't whole, but his face was beautiful. As for Salem, we weren't allowed to see him, he was wrapped in a white shroud. But when I reached out and touched him, I could tell his head wasn't intact, and I can never forget that feeling. I don't know why I'm suddenly telling you about them, but I just want to tell the whole world about them. I want everyone to see them, love them, and remember them; because they truly deserve it.

Ali:

I love Arabic names, they have meanings and people are proud of them, you meet any Arabic person and for sure they will know, and tell you what their names mean. Jaafar is a beautiful name. It means a spring, river, or a person who is generous, probably like a river. My brother was called Jafaar. I rarely meet people who know a Jafaar, a very unique name. I am sure they were very generous and unique, Hala.

Hala:

Salem and Jaafar both carry the qualities of their names. Jaafar was very generous. He (and Salem) lived with us during the war. When food was scarce, he would hide for me whatever he brought from the market or found by chance. He would share with all of us, even if he had very little. As for Salem, his name means peace, and he truly lived up to it. Salem was a strong and brave man, and everyone feared him. But despite that, whenever he saw orphaned children, he would cry. (Who would have thought that one day his own children would become like that?) Once, he accidentally ran over a cat with his car. He couldn't sleep for two days and was consumed with remorse, even though it wasn't his fault. He didn't drive for a long time after that. Both of them carried the purest and most beautiful qualities. May God have mercy on them, they are a great loss to us, but they deserve to rest in paradise after all they went through.



OUR LAST GOODBYE

by Hala

They put you in a cold room,
shrouded you in a white bag,
and let me in to say my last goodbye.

Where is my beloved?
I want to see you,
touch your face,
give you one last kiss.
Why won't they let me?

I want to warm you,
hold you,
and hide you inside my heart,
or hide myself with you.

I touch the shroud,
I want to feel your hand,
leave a kiss on your engagement ring,
as I used to.

But where is it?
Why can't I find it?

I want to smell your scent,
my safety,
because it would mean
that you're here with me.

But now,
the only scent I smell is your blood.

I lie on your shroud,
whispering to you,
“when will you come home?”

The food is ready,
and the children are waiting.

You told me “wait for me”,
You said you were coming,
and you came,
but as a body that I can't even see,
without the soul I adored.

Tell me my love,
how could anyone do this to you?
Did you feel it?
Did you call my name as you always
did?

I'm so sorry my love,
If I knew,
I would never have let you go.
I would have hugged you longer,
tighter,
felt your heartbeats against mine,
told you how much I love you,
that you're my everything,
my life.

My love say anything,
why are you silent?

Please tell me,
are you truly never coming back?

If yes,
then take my heart with you,
and wait for me,
I won't be long.

Life has no taste without you,
and death is a dream if it's with you.

UNSEEN TIES

Page written by Amal

Amal / Imad / Nuno / Rodrigo M
Rozana / Sofia S

Our film is about a spiritual connection between Porto and Gaza. One young girl, named Julia, started to see signs about the war in Gaza. Though no one around her could understand, she deeply felt the pain of Gaza's people. This made her empathize profoundly with their experiences. What she did was try to convince journalists she knew and those she didn't know about the idea of conveying Gaza's voice to the world and explaining what was happening there. She faced difficulties, but she succeeded in the end.

Each of us shared his or her own idea for the film. Then we discussed them together, combining our thoughts and suggestions. Through collaboration and adjustments, we were able to develop and write the final one. Every team member contributed and was part of this creative journey.

The first step was writing the synopsis — a brief summary of the main events and characters of the film. It serves as an overview of what the story is about, without going into detailed scenes or dialogue.

- 3. The sound grows unbearable, piercing her head, leaving her dazed and disturbed.
- 4. Days later, while working on her laptop in the university library, another message appears—it shows destroyed homes, real footage from Gaza.
- 5. Through a strange virtual window, she sees people digging through rubble, searching for pieces of their past.
- 6. The third message reaches her as she walks down a crowded street; the atmosphere shifts, and she hears rapid gunfire, sees explosions—she freezes.
- 7. Terrified, she ducks behind a wall, heart pounding, as if she were under attack herself.

After developing the synopsis, we moved on to writing the script. This stage involved expanding the main idea into detailed scenes, describing what happens, where it happens, and what each character says or does. It helped us visualize the story step by step and prepare for the filming process.

Scene 1: Apartment – Julia (Portugal) – Night

(Julia lies in bed, eyes open. Dark circles under her eyes. Buzzing sound begins—low, steady.)

Julia (V.O.)
Again... that sound.

(She presses a pillow over her ears. It doesn't help. The buzzing continues.)

Julia
(tired)
Please... stop.

(She sits up slowly, rubbing her temples. The buzzing gets louder.)

Julia (V.O.)
It's not outside.
It's inside me.

Finally, we created the shotlist — a detailed breakdown of each scene from the script into individual camera shots. It includes information such as shot type, camera angles, camera movements, sound details, and the time of day for filming each scene. This table served as a practical guide during production. We were able to reach this final stage successfully thanks to the guidance and support of David and Ali.

Behind the scenes: glimpses into our WhatsApp chats, capturing the teamwork, ideas, and moments behind the making of our film *Unseen Ties*.

Would it be a good idea for you to join the meeting today at 10:00 PM Palestine time / 8:00 PM Portugal time?

Select one or more

Yes 4

No 0

1:32 pm

View votes

Imad Qudaih

Forwarded

LINES2F_Shooting schedule

SHOOTING DAY_18.05.25 SCENE: 2
TIME: afternoon 15:30 - 16:30 LOCATION: rua Santa Catarina TEAM: Natasha

Imad Qudaih

Filmsourcing_Shot_List-ADVANCED_v.1.0 (1).pdf (1 page)

LINES2F_shotlist

SCENE SHOT SHOT S...

docs.google.com

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1McMyzwoomjJ-8PXuhHFFaGjINPpY4ssnw-7e3nVPZ28/edit

I've made a document for us to fill in

1:00 pm

Natash

Hi guys

Hope you're all doing well!

Nuno and I were thinking about Scene 6 (Faran's report). What if Faran shares his report online instead of on the news? Since he's an independent reporter, he could have his own YouTube channel, for example...

Let us know what do you think about it

@AMAL RAFIQ great job on the scenes 3 and 5! Thank you!

4:19 pm

Group C

David, Imad, Mr Ali, Natash, N...

14 May 2025

I wish you the best, my friend. Hope you get better fast! On this side, praying for you

6:34 pm

Imad Qudaih

Natash

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1McMyzwoomjJ-8PXuhHFFaGjINPpY4ssnw-7e3nVPZ28/edit

7 May 2025

Hi guys

Hope you're doing well. Great job so far, I noticed scenes 1, 2 and 4 are all. So do you want us to work remaining ones 3, 5, 6, that enough for now?

6:35 pm

Imad Qudaih

Rodri

I wish you the best, my friend. Hope you get better fast! On this side, praying for you

6:35 pm

Rozana Baraka

Imad Qudaih

I am watching your work closely, friends. I am proud of what the team here is doing.

Hope you get better soon.

6:39 pm

Natash

You

Hi guys

Hope you're doing well. Great job so far, I noticed

Hi Amal

It would be great if you s working on the scene 3

happy to help with

Your ideas are we like the balance b characters, Suhai and Julia on the c of them represen

How many actors and actresses are there? Seven actors and actresses.

12:04 pm

ame: ease can you share the for the following:

10:21 am

ame: filmed in: any actors/actresses

10:21 am

daih

ame: filmed in: any actors/actresses

the name of the film?

i Ties."

i countries will the movie be filmed? Portugal, Porto, Palestine, Gaza.

SCENE	SHOT	SHOT SIZE/ANGLE	MOVEME NT	INT/EX T	TIME OF DAY	AUDIO	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
3	1	Wide shot / Eye level	Static	EXT	afternoon	Ambient street noise ,vendors , kids laughing and people's footsteps.	A bustling street , Julia walks through the street, clutching her bag , eyes scanning nervously.	Establishing + tension intro
3	2	Medium Close - up/ Over-the- Shoulder	Static	EXT	afternoon	distant gunfire, a sharp explosion Julia: "No—no, no, no..."	Suddenly Julia hears the loud sound in her head.She drops to the ground overwhelmed by the imagined sounds in her head.	Internal conflict and psychological breakdown.
3	3	Meduim shot / Eye level	Slow Push-In	EXT	afternoon	Stranger: "Miss? Are you okay?"	People stop. Some stare, confused. A man reaches toward her, concerned.	Social tension



June 6 Eid Under Fire

On June 6, 2025, the people of Gaza marked Eid al-Adha, one of the holiest and most joyous days in the Muslim calendar. But in Gaza, the usual sights of joy, family gatherings, and festive rituals were overshadowed by the ongoing genocide. While people in other parts of the world were sacrificing animals in peace and abundance, the people of Gaza struggled to find even a piece of bread to eat or a safe place to rest their weary and emaciated bodies.

Despite the devastation and ongoing suffering, the spirit of the people in Gaza greeted Eid with resilience and dignity, clinging to hope for the end of the war and the return of peace. This spirit was reflected on the project's WhatsApp group, where Gazan students shared Eid greetings with love and warmth.

Among them, **Imad** sent a heartfelt message:

Eid Mubarak to all of us from the heart of besieged and burning Gaza. We hold on to joy despite the pain and celebrate the rituals of Eid despite the siege and fire. We send our blessings to everyone standing with us in prayer and support, hoping this Eid brings mercy, safety, and better days for us and our loved ones.

Nazmi responded:

Eid Mubarak. May you and your loved ones and all the people of Palestine be safe and well. We ask God to extinguish the fire of war and relieve our suffering by His will.

Taqwa shared a video of her last Eid before the war, along with a moving message:

This was the vibe of our last Eid al-Adha -- at home, captured by my sis Doaa. Before the war and bombs stole everything in 2023. Now it's our 4th Eid under war... Genocide, bombing, famine, pain, loss, separation, displacement.
Wish we could rewind time!!
PS: I felt I had to share this with you all... to remind you that once, our life was full of beauty and quiet love. So live each moment like it's your last--cherish it, seize it, and never take it for granted!

Meanwhile, two messages underscored what has been lost.

Farah A shared a [link to an Instagram](#) post with this description:

All of these people were murdered by the Israeli occupation. My sister, Islam Elhabib, lives in Malaysia. She holds a master's degree and will soon earn her PhD from UKM. The person who encouraged and advised her and her husband to pursue their master's and PhD degrees was Dr. Rifaat. All of these people were friends of my sister's family. She created this wall in her home to remember them, pray for them, and tell everyone who visits her about them, so they are never forgotten. P.S. The person singing in the video was also killed in this war by the Israeli occupation.

Rozana shared a photo of her sitting beside a girl of about 9 years old, who is lying in a hospital bed. Both are smiling and giving the thumbs-up sign to the camera, but Rozana's caption shows what's behind those brave faces:

I got to know Nehal in the hospital. When I heard her story, I cried actually. She got bombed with all of her family. Everyone got injured and her mother passed away. She got in a very bad mental situation. She always cries and shouts that her legs hurt her and she needs her mother but nobody can help her. Please pray for her.

According to **Imad**, "Our celebration of Eid this year was not just a religious ritual—it was a quiet declaration that life, faith, and love still exist, even under siege."

June 7 The Final Workshop

On June 7, the fourth and final workshop of the Lines to the Future project took place. This was the day to witness the first fruits of the seeds planted by students throughout the project. The young participants presented the rough cuts of their short films — powerful reflections of their realities, dreams, and shared human experiences.

Each film showcased a unique voice and vision. Some focused on the spiritual connection between Gaza and Portugal, offering viewers around the world a deeper sense of Gaza's suffering and resilience. Other stories creatively explored travel through a symbolic window between Gaza and Portugal, contrasting a war-torn, chaotic world with one of peace — yet united in solidarity with Gaza. The diversity and depth of the films reflected not only the pain and challenges faced by the students, especially those in Gaza, but also their strength, imagination, and unwavering hope. It was a celebration of artistic growth, empathy, and the power of storytelling to bridge distant worlds.

After the session, **Mais** messaged the group:

Hello everyone, I hope you're all fine, I want to say, could you share the record of today's meeting? I want to watch it again cause it made my day, and the rest of the group wants to watch it, so we can celebrate our achievement together

Students reported rewatching the films repeatedly, and there was a sense among the group that they had created something.

ZERO (THE MAKING OF)

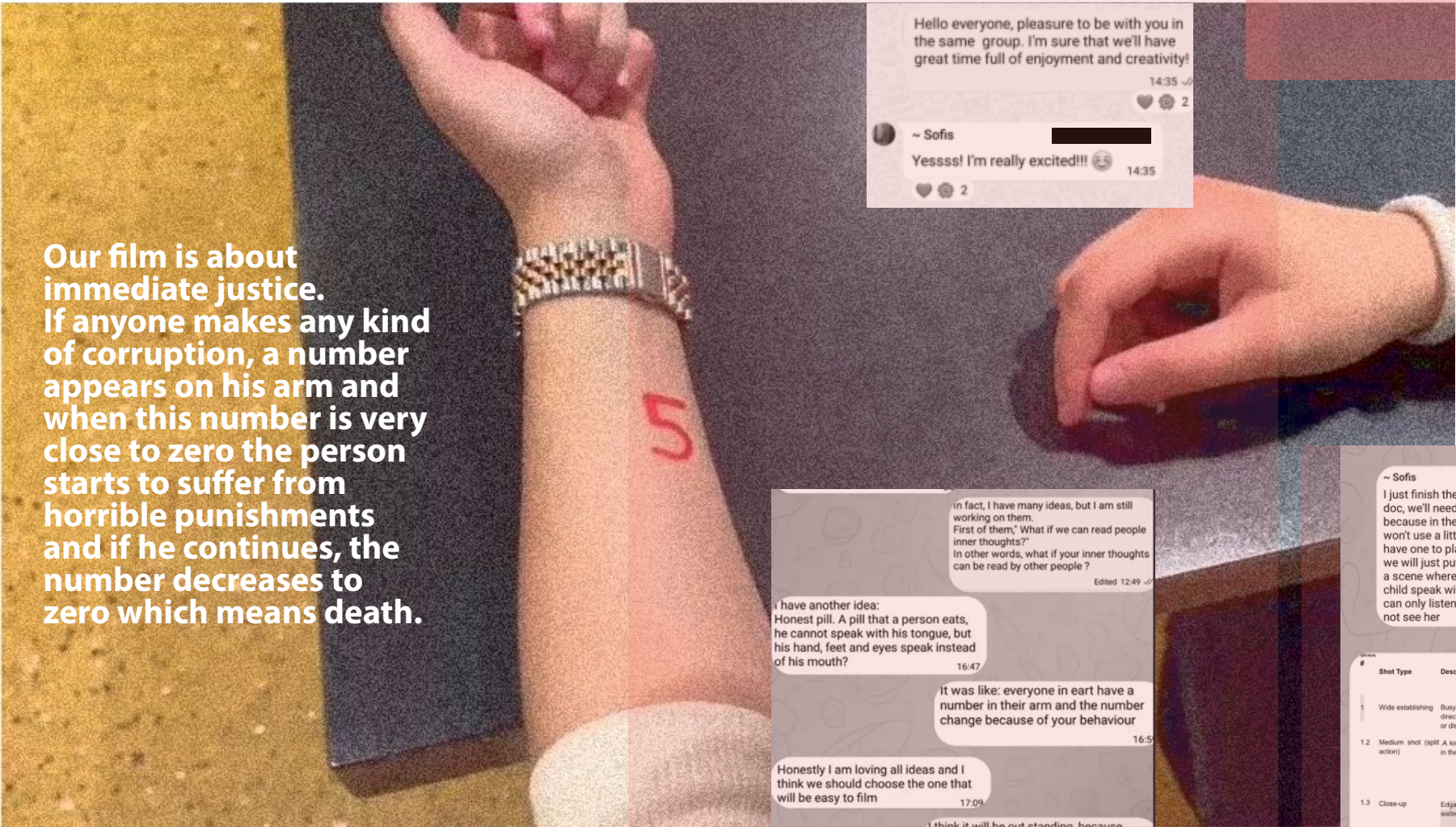
Page written by Mais

Ana / Mais / Letícia
Sara / Sofia J

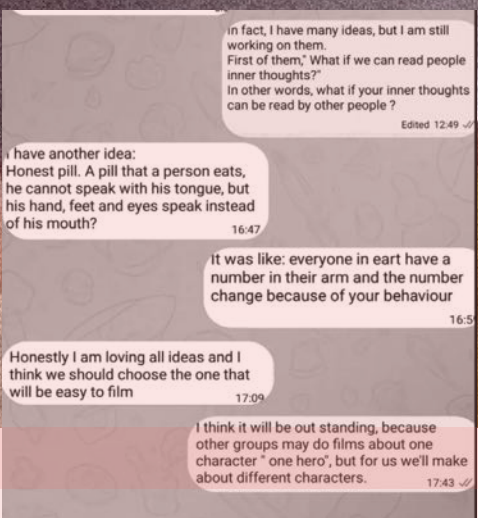
The first greeting between the team members took place after the first workshop on April 21st, and it was a truly memorable moment. It was the first time we all stood together as a team, and the air was filled with excitement and warm energy. Everyone was smiling, introducing themselves, and sharing their early ideas. There was a strong sense of curiosity and enthusiasm, as if we all knew something special was beginning. The positive vibes were contagious, laughter, encouragement, and creative sparks flew everywhere. It was clear from that first meeting that this journey would be full of collaboration, inspiration, and unforgettable moments.

Script: The journey of writing the script was a truly collaborative and inspiring experience. Mais, Leticia, and Sofia worked closely together, sharing ideas, editing lines, and shaping the story with equal passion and creativity. Each one brought a unique perspective that enriched the narrative.

Filming and voiceover: The filming stage, performed by Sofia, Leticia, Ana, and Ameera, was one of the highlights of our project. It was filled with emotion, creativity, and strong collaboration. Both Dr. David and Dr. Ali were truly impressed, and praised our performance for its authenticity and impact.

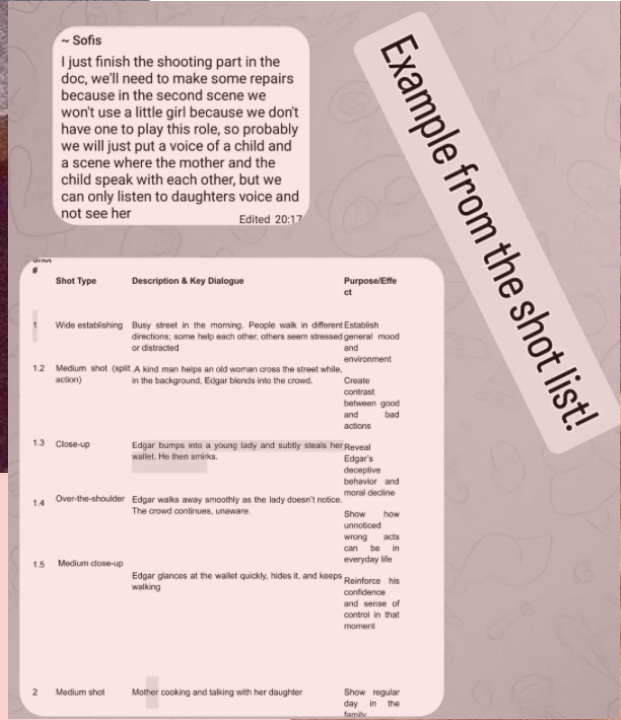


Our film is about immediate justice. If anyone makes any kind of corruption, a number appears on his arm and when this number is very close to zero the person starts to suffer from horrible punishments and if he continues, the number decreases to zero which means death.



The team worked hard to transform our ideas into a full story. It wasn't easy, we had two different attempts at developing the plot. So, we went back to brainstorming, discussing every detail with patience and creativity. After deep conversations and listening to each other's feedback, the team agreed on the second version of the story. It was stronger, more emotional, and more meaningful. Everyone felt that this version truly reflected our vision, and we were proud of what we had created together.

Shot List: During the shot list creation stage, Sofia played a key role in shaping the visual vision of the film. She carefully led this process by organizing the scenes, selecting camera angles, and outlining the needed visual movements. Her guidance helped the team visualize the final look of the film even before shooting began.



Post-Production: The editing phase was led by Leticia and Ana, who took charge of producing the final version of the film. They worked with great focus and creativity to shape the scenes into a powerful 7-minute movie.

The **voice-over** was beautifully performed by Mais and Sara. Mais took on the role of the narrator, guiding the story with clarity and emotion, while Sara brought the character of the scientist Matilda to life with depth and energy.



Part Five: Honing final cuts and compiling the story

Ali and Dave collaborated on feedback for the rough cuts and sent each group a write-up. Some students were satisfied with this as an ending, while others wanted to hone fine cuts. In the coming weeks and throughout the summer, some eager students worked with the tireless Ali to film missing footage, to make further edits, and to prepare their films' final cuts. Meanwhile, between June and August, a group of students volunteered to work on recording the story of the project – which you are reading now. The genocide continued, with the situation getting worse day by day.

June 12 Another Internet Blackout

On June 12, internet services were cut off across wide areas of the Strip, affecting almost every region. The blackout severed all communication between Gaza's students and their counterparts in Porto, Portugal, as well as the coordinators of the Lines to Future project. Over the next two weeks, the internet would frequently disappear in different areas of Gaza, and updates on who had internet where and when became a main topic of conversation in the group.

The outage was caused by Israeli airstrikes targeting internet lines and the optical fibers of the Palestinian Telecommunications Company. Despite the company's round-the-clock efforts to repair and improve services, the task proved extremely difficult amid a war that has dragged on for nearly 20 months, devastating people, nature, and infrastructure.

*Project coordinators expressed deep sympathy for the affected students. On June 14, **Damian** wrote:*

Hello everyone. I don't know how many of you in Gaza are able to get messages at the moment, but I just wanted to say I hope you are safe, and we are thinking about you as always.

The blackout lasted several days. In the meantime, some Gaza students managed to access the internet through mobile data or satellite-connected SIM cards — options available only on the newest smartphones.

***Farah**, one of the few able to connect, replied:*

Thank you so much for your kind words, Damian. I'm truly one of the few lucky people with internet access right now. It honestly feels like we're living in isolation, cut off from the world. Hopefully, things will improve soon, the internet will be restored, and we'll be able to hear good news from everyone in Gaza.

*Students from Porto also expressed support and solidarity. **Guilherme** wrote:*

Great news! I hope it comes back to everyone else.

When the internet finally returned, Gaza students rushed to reconnect. **Hala** messaged the project's WhatsApp group:

We're back!!

Giovanna:
Lovely to see you back!

Amal:
We came back to life again. It was such a hard time—living without any internet connection and not knowing what was going on. But finally, the internet came back just ten minutes ago

Francisca:
So glad to have you guys back! I hope you're all well and as safe as possible

Taqwa:
We are alive haha!!
But I really miss you all!!
It was a tough 3 days of scary isolation)):

Esraa:
Long time no see
I really miss you, guys!
Didn't know that life was that hard without internet!

Dave:
Welcome back!! Three full days without knowing when the internet would return. How has everyone been?

Esraa:
It was so boring
No food and no internet
with the internet we at least distract ourselves from hunger, but I can't endure both

Taqwa:

Honestly, the internet was one of the few things that helped us deal with everything around us. It gave us something to hold on to -- whether it was studying, Writing, trying to think about something other than the war sounds, or just escaping for a little while from the scary reality we live in. With all the fear, destruction, and hunger around us, having the internet helped us feel connected, even a little, to the outside world -- to something normal and human. It made time go faster. It gave us a reason to keep going, by helping us learn, talk to others, or just feel less alone. Even a simple message from a friend could make us feel better. But when the internet was gone... everything stopped. The silence was very heavy. The loneliness was hard to bear. Every second felt very long. Those 3 days without any connection -- no news, no calls, no messages -- felt like 3 years. IDK how much we needed it, not just to talk to others, but for our minds to feel okay)):

This incident is just one small glimpse of the immense suffering endured by the people of Gaza throughout a war that, since October 7, has relentlessly targeted lives, nature, and infrastructure, making pain and loss part of daily existence.

Ali reflected:

If someone cuts food, it is no surprise they will cut the internet. But as Neruda said; you can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep the spring from coming. I have nothing but prayers to offer, but they are very sincere and strong prayers, and I know they will be answered.

Farah and **Guilherme** later reflected on the importance of the internet in Gaza:

*“That fragile thread connecting Gaza to the outside world was mercilessly severed, leaving her bleeding in silence, her cries met only with the echo of her own voice. **When the signal finally returned to our devices, it felt like a moment of rebirth as if we were reconnected to something human, something alive and full of color, after drifting too long in the dark.**”*

THREE DAYS OF ISOLATION

by Taqwa

They don't just cut the internet,
they cut the thread
that keeps us connected to the world—
and to ourselves.
No news.
No messages.
No way to say “I am still alive.”
For three days,
we are erased
from life outside these walls.
The hours don't pass—
they stretch.
Each minute drags like chains.
Three days
feel like three years
with no proof
the world is still turning.
I keep whispering to myself:
Is this how it ends?
Will light ever return?
Has the world forgotten us?
Is anyone still out there—waiting, listening?
The occupation forces don't just fire missiles—
they fire silence,
cutting us off
from breath, from news, from life.
It traps us alone
with our fears and memories.

When the outside world vanishes,
the inside one collapses.
Memories pour in
like a flood—
people I lost,
words I never said,
the version of me
that once believed
this nightmare would pass.
In that void,
I am not afraid—
I am forgotten.
Cut off from the sky,
from the warmth of voices
that once remind me
I am not invisible.
And when the signal finally returns,
when a single message blinks back to life—
the world rushes in.
But part of me
remains trapped
in those long, dark hours,
when I became a question suspended in the void,
left unanswered.
And still I ask:
How long
can a soul survive
without being heard?

June 24 Yet Another Tragedy



On June 24, **Hala** shared a photo of her brother-in-law with the following message:

Today, Khamis, the brother of my sister's husband Salem, went to the American aid distribution point in Netzarim, hoping to get some food in the midst of this famine.

Khamis went along with many other young men, but instead of receiving food, they were targeted.

The quadcopter deliberately shot at the youth (aiming at their necks, chests, or heads) to make sure they were killed.

I don't understand why this is happening to us.

Why are our young men--who have never experienced hunger before-- now dying just to bring home flour for bread?

I hate this world, and I hate its silence in the face of our deaths.

Among the various responses of sympathy, **Liz** wrote:

Using the pretext of distributing aid to deliberately target and harm people is just cartoonishly evil and absurd, I am very sorry for your family and everyone going through the same

June 26 Hala Finds Her Poems on Instagram

Here's a funny moment when Hala was casually scrolling through Instagram, only to suddenly stumble upon a video in French telling the story of her and her sister. Completely confused, she rushed to the group for help, and that's when Liz stepped in, reassured her, and explained that everything was just fine.

Hala:

Does anyone here understands French?

Liz:

depends how fluently you mean hahah but yes

Hala:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLWmsO_qU7M/?igsh=dTd2YjhyYnhmeW04
i found this reel about me and my sister but I can't understand anything. I'm just afraid they're asking for money using our names

Liz:

seems to be mostly translations of your poems - no money being asked haha

Grazia:

It is very beautiful!! And powerful!!

Hala:

Really! I was going to ask them to delete it, but I think I won't now

July 4 Imad's Touching Words

With these beautiful words, Imad touched all our hearts with his deep reflection on how nature comforts him - gently reminding him of everything both beautiful and painful at once.

Imad:

Amid the harsh war in Gaza, I find the sea to be my refuge and faithful companion. Its gentle breeze softly touches my face, as if sending me messages from loved ones, whispering in my ear: "Do not be sad, for hope is still alive." The waves rise and fall, muffling the sounds of shelling, and bringing back a sense of calm I had lost in nights of fear. The waves brushing against the shore remind me of the beauty of our village that we had to leave behind, and teach me that freedom, like the sun, knows no bounds and will shine again.

I gaze beyond the sea toward my loved ones over there, knowing that a face-to-face reunion will one day come, and that the ship of freedom will arrive--no matter the challenges--to say to Gaza: "We have not forgotten you, and we will always stand by your side."



Damian:
I really loved reading this, Imad. This feeling is probably something we can all relate to, despite our different circumstances. And the sea literally connects us.

Osama:
Wooow! Imadoo wallahi yaa man you captured my full attention!!

Ali:
I love the picture Imad! As Damian said, the water connects us, and we wish to see you all happy. I hope this ceasefire starts soon and is permanent.

Dave:
This is beautiful, Imad. I'm glad the natural world offers you some respite from your unnatural situation.

Giovanna:
What a lovely picture, Imad! I'm glad you got to enjoy a moment of calm in the sea. Thanks for putting your experience so beautifully

July 4 Exams in Gaza Begin Leaders of Lines to the Future Support Gaza Students Amid War and Final Exams

On July 4, 2025, the leaders of the Lines to the Future project showed great understanding toward students from Gaza who were preparing for their final exams at the Islamic University. They sent messages wishing the students good luck in their studies and suspended any project-related demands during this period, as a significant gesture of support and balance between academic and professional life.

One of the students, **Taqwa**, responded appreciatively, saying:

Thank you for your kind message
Final exams start tomorrow, back-to-back, finishing July 15, 2025.

Gaza students participating in the Lines to the Future project are working under extremely harsh and tragic conditions caused by the war that began on October 7 and continues to this day. The war has targeted all aspects of life, leaving them with repeated internet outages across large parts of Gaza, and sometimes throughout the entire Strip, in addition to shortages of food, medicine, and all essential services needed for survival.

Furthermore, most educational facilities have been destroyed. Nevertheless, under the guidance of educators in Gaza, students have continued their studies online, refusing to surrender to ignorance. They remain determined to pursue education, knowing that life in Palestine without knowledge holds no value.



July 18-20 Ongoing Starvation

In the middle of July, the group chat was dominated by stories and outcries about food scarcity in Gaza, caused by the ongoing Israeli blockade. Below is a sample of the messages and responses sent during those days.

Imad:
#The_Revolution_of_the_Hungry_Has_Begun
A popular uprising against street vendors and merchants began this morning due to their raising of food prices. Markets are closed today. Everyone is participating... Final warnings to merchants: Either lower your prices and sell your merchandise, or people will be informed about your warehouses and locations, and nothing will remain.

Osama:
Anyway, today a displacement warning has been issued for some blocks that are exactly next to where we are. Not to mention that yesterday I walked through the market about 1,5 - 2 kilometres looking literally for anything affordable to eat and didn't find, putting into consideration that I am not from the poor class since my dad is a professor in Optical Physics, however, life is still not affordable. We are dying people, but this time I will not say slowly ... I have never seen people disappointed and depressed as yesterday. It's just a few days in such circumstances, you'll either see us eating the leaves of the trees or you will not see us...!

Hala:
It's not about money anymore. There's simply nothing in the markets. And if anything is available, they only accept cash, but not everyone has cash now because the war has lasted too long and the banks are closed, so we can't withdraw our money. And if we try to get it from exchange shops, they take half of it as a fee. Prices are insanely high to a level even the rich can't handle. Nothing makes sense. We go to sleep and wake up hungry, even if we eat. Families can barely afford more than one meal a day, and it's usually very little. The last time I ate was yesterday at sunset, and now I have one piece of bread left. I'm saving it because we don't have any flour once I eat it, there won't be more. And all this, even though I have enough money in my bank account to support a family of ten in normal times. But we're in Gaza, and nothing here is fair or logical.

Ali:
I have been watching the news about the forced starvation in Gaza since two days ago, and the number of starving cases arriving to the hospitals. I am just praying nonstop to end this now. Hearts and thoughts with you ussama and all friends in Gaza. I truly wish I can do anything now more than praying.

Osama:

Also now we are experiencing a new version of suffering, Doctors and Stuff Nurses are starting to collapse due to the lack of food

Taqwa:

What's really driving me crazy is that we actually have money -- we're not poor. There's money in our bank accounts. But what's the use of it when there's nothing in the stores to buy? And when something is available, the prices are unbelievably high. We have so much dignity -- even more than many people outside Gaza, and yet, we've been completely abandoned by the world. That's what hurts the most. I carry so much anger and so many words inside me, but none of them feel enough to explain what we're going through. This is the hardest time we've faced since the war started. We're not being dramatic -- this is just the truth. Sometimes I try to make myself feel better by thinking that others might be in even worse situations. But really, how long can we keep thinking that way? Yes, I believe in being patient and I know Allah promised a reward for those who endure. But we're human -- and humans have limits. Honestly, I feel exhausted every day. I don't have the energy to do anything. Writing is the only thing that helps me escape a little -- it gives me some space to breathe. But even then, the dark thoughts find their way in. The world: blind and silent. Still, something deep inside me keeps telling me not to give up..

Imad:

Since the early morning, I've been fighting just to get a bit of flour—our tent hasn't seen a single piece of bread in a week. I can no longer focus, walk, or carry out even the simplest tasks of the day. Lately, I feel like I can't breathe from how tight and overwhelming everything is. I go to the market hoping to find something to eat... but there's nothing. I survive on some tea and water throughout the day. And if I'm lucky enough to get a bit of soup, cooking it feels like a battle in itself. The situation here is deadly—truly, unbearably deadly.

Nazmi:

Let me clarify part of what was just mentioned above :

The vast majority of Palestinians in Gaza do not have bank accounts or money, as they have spent their savings, women's jewelry and cars and furniture (if they could before they were destroyed,) during this prolonged devastating, constant displacement, forced starvation, and the high cost of living — much much higher even than in London or New York. Gaza has become the most expensive city in the world, though our blood and lives have been the cheapest to governments that have no values, ethics, or humanity. This cruel world has proved to be absolutely hypocritical, and humanity and morality bankrupt. This complicit world is partner in criminal deprivation of Palestinian rights to dignity, safety, food and education. Yes, we, the Palestinians, work hard and strive to obtain quality education in order to become fully self-reliant, with the intention of leading a decent life and doing so with honour and dignity.

Dave:

The reports every day are more and more horrendous — forced starvation is clearly, undeniably being used as a weapon. I feel so angry with the governments of my own countries — UK and Canada — for being too cowardly to even acknowledge that this is genocide, let alone intervene. It is absolutely shameful. What's the point of leaders who don't work toward peace, who actually support genocide??? Israel and the US may be the leaders, but the western democracies continue to cover themselves in shame every day they offer their complicity.

My wife and I are constantly thinking about what's happening to you, but feel utterly powerless and useless. I tell everyone about these amazing students I know who fight for their education and their lives, and everyone says, "It's so tragic, it's so inspiring, etc. etc.", but this is useless when we can't actually provide what you need: food and peace and relief from this horror. Just like writing this message, it all feels useless. You don't deserve any of this. You're humans. We see you and we hear you and I thank you for communicating with us, and I can only continue to hope and pray for the peace you deserve.

Taqwa:

Blind world.

Amal:

The most heartbreaking thing for me is that my mum has an urgent surgery this Wednesday, and the patients need special care and proper nutrition to recover—but in the middle of this war, we have no options. There's nothing available, and the surgery can't be postponed

July 22 Osama's Search for Food

Osama sent this heartbreaking message to the group:

Today's Wild Goose Chase for Veggies

So, my brother Haitham woke up this morning, bright and early, thinking he'd just pop out and grab a couple of veggies. Easy, right? He tells me he found some green tomatoes — the kind you can't even eat right away. You'd have to wait 3-4 days for them to ripen. He asked about the price, and get this: 90-95 shekels a kilo, and you gotta pay with a banking app. Then there was a "slightly better" kind for 90 shekels cash. Seriously?

Then the eggplant... 50 shekels a kilo! And cucumbers? Don't even get him started. He says it's been over 100 shekels for ages now. He tells me he finally gave up, just grabbed one cucumber and one eggplant, and asked the guy to weigh them. They came out to 23 or 24 shekels. Then, to pay, he needed the Wi-Fi password to transfer the money to the vendor's account. But with the internet being so spotty and networks overloaded, he couldn't even make the transfer. So what? He ended up just giving the cucumber and eggplant back to the guy, went home, and that was that. What a day!

July 27 Academic Excellence in Spite of Everything

According to the July 2025 edition of the Webometrics Ranking, the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) has been ranked 2nd among 28 higher education institutions in Palestine, 83rd out of about 1,300 Arab universities, and 1,359th out of over 30,000 universities worldwide — placing it within the top 5% globally. Leaders of the Lines to the Future project extended their heartfelt congratulations on this significant success, especially given the ongoing war that has devastated all aspects of life in Gaza, particularly educational facilities that nurture the minds challenging the occupation with their knowledge and expertise.



August 1 The Fire Belt

Osama shared an Instagram reel to help participants understand the scale and terror of the “fire belt” - an intensified wave of Israeli attacks that spares no one.



August 11 Killing of Al Jazeera Journalists

The WhatsApp group came alive on the morning of 11 August with responses to the killing of Al Jazeera’s crew of journalists in Gaza City, in front of Al-Shifa Hospital. Among them was Anas Al-Sharif, a highly regarded reporter throughout the genocide.

Taqwa:

Israel assassinates ANAS AL-SHARIF. He was martyred, along with most of the Al Jazeera crew — the ones who carried our voices to the blind, deaf world. We will never FORGIVE, and we will never FORGET!

Raghad:

This is not just a loss, it’s a wound to our very voice. Anas was more than a journalist; he carried our hopes, our truth. We waited for him to bring news of a ceasefire and now he’s gone. The pain cuts deeper knowing he won’t be the last, the genocide goes on. We will never forgive.

Ali:

Oh my god! I just woke up and I am reading this! I am so sorry this is very painful.

Taqwa:

Journalists in Gaza often do not live with their wives and children; they stay elsewhere for safety. Anas had not seen his only daughter except during the brief truce before March. Now Anas has been killed by Israeli occupation. What will the world say to his little girl and his young son, Salah? (Anas’s story is just one among many in Gaza — and there are others far more painful.)

Taqwa:

The occupation has assassinated journalists like this — one after another. I believe there is no one left; Anas was our last voice. "We had all been waiting for him to tell us about a CEASEFIRE — not to hear of his DEATH!"

Giovanna:

I’m really sorry for this loss, everyone, in the knowledge that ‘sorry’ is yet another inadequate word. What is happening is just criminal. I hope that there will be justice. There must be justice, for Anas and everyone in Gaza

Taqwa:

I have a question: what does the word "justice" mean? It doesn't carry any meaning here!

العادل هو ربنا فقط.

Damian:

Dear friends, I am so sorry to hear this. It’s especially painful because Anas and all the other journalists and writers are voices of truth to the rest of the world. Like Ali said, these voices will never be silenced.

August 18 Moments from the Edge

At this point in the summer, the group chat would fall silent for days at a time. As Hala wrote on September 1, “I feel — and I think all my friends in Gaza feel the same — that we are tired and no longer have the desire to talk or do anything.” Still, there were moments when the chat would start up again, sparked either by an update on our work together or by a first-hand report of the ongoing atrocities in Gaza.

One such update came from **Imad** on August 18:

Moments from the Edge

Today, I was spending time at a café when suddenly something strange and unexpected happened. I felt a sudden, strong impact on my finger, and then everyone around me started shouting, "Help me! Help me! I'm hurt!" At the same time, there was a loud explosion nearby, and I could hear the sounds of cars, motorcycles, and ambulances rushing to transport the killed and the injured. Among the victims was a small child, only ten months old, and the scene was truly tragic.

I realized then that I had been only a few steps away from death, and I understood how fragile life really is. This experience taught me a lot about the importance of forgiveness and kindness, and to cherish every moment we live and care for those around us.

MISSING HOME

Page written by Guilherme

Guilherme / Matilde / Matilde S
Osama / Raghad

The story follows Melissa, a young woman who gets a strange message from her brother telling her not to come home. The message arrives at a weird time that doesn't make sense. Feeling confused and worried, Melissa tries to call him, but he doesn't answer. With no clear answers, she decides to stay the night at her friend's house, not knowing that something much stranger is about to happen.

Street that leads up to her house, now an abandoned building covered in ivy and deteriorated by time.
Melissa walks confidently along the familiar path that leads to her house.
When she turns to what used to be her house she is devastated and speechless with what she sees.

What if questions - generating ideas

what if every time we listened to music we travelled to a memory of our past?

what if one person discovered that every decision they make creates a parallel version of themselves, but one of these versions begins to collapse, threatening all realities?

what if someone is reading a book and then is transported to the place and time of that book?

what if we could download memories of ancestors but it would cost some of our own?

what if every act of violence created a parallel world and someone found a way to collapse into one peaceful timeline?

what if an invisible alien observer fell in love with a girl, and had to choose between revealing itself or losing her forever?

what if you received a video message from your future self warning you about a decision that could destroy your life, but you don't know which decision?

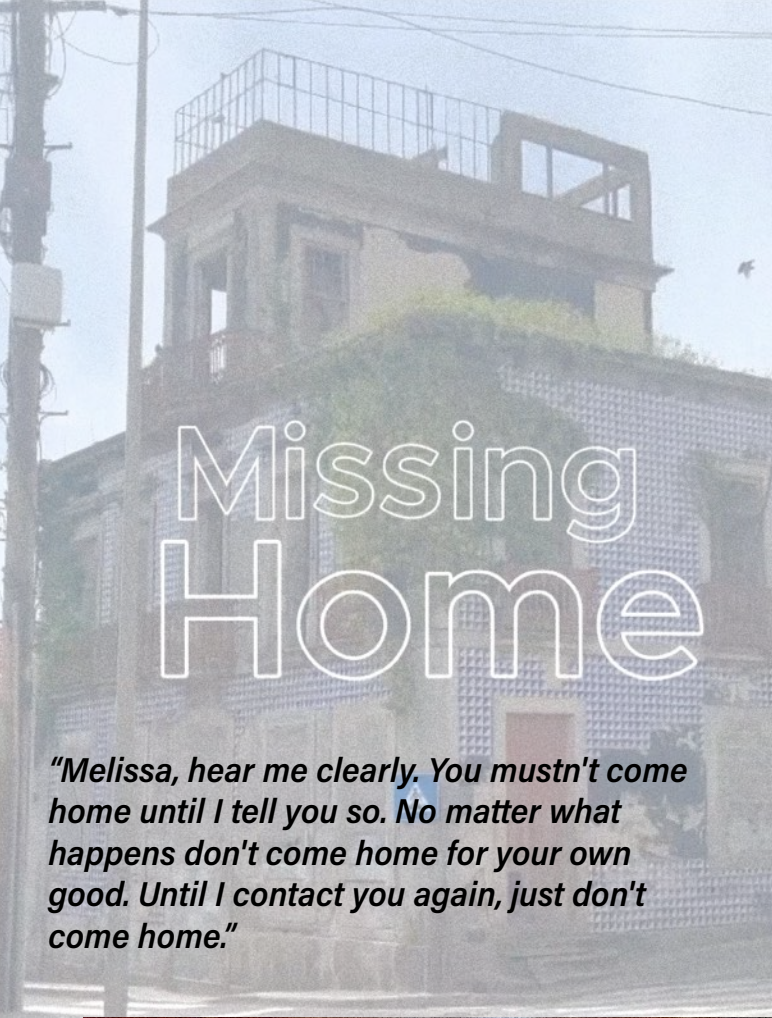
what if your phone camera started showing a reality that's different from what you see with your own eyes, and you begin to believe the truth is in the video, not in the real world?

what if you downloaded an app that grants your wishes instantly, but each wish takes away something important from your life and you don't know what until it's gone?

what if you discovered your world is just a simulation, and the closer you get to the truth, the more parts of your reality start to disappear?

what if you started receiving video messages from a friend living in another country, and then realized they were sent 10 years ago?

what if every time you record a video, someone you've never met from across the world appears in your footage, and they are seeing you in theirs too?



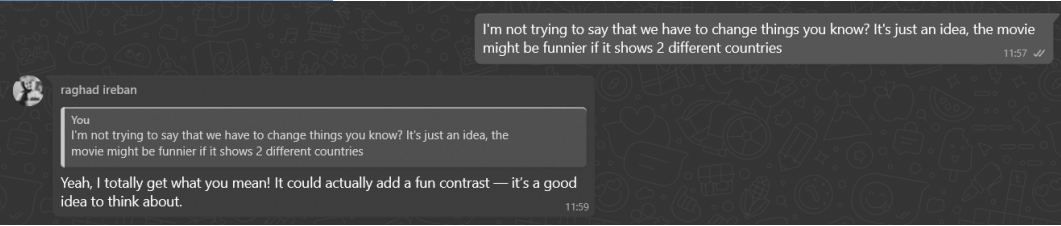
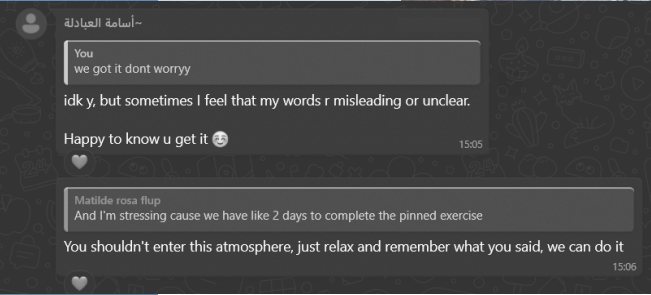
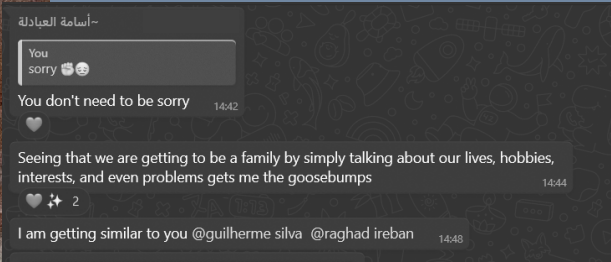
SCENE	SHOT	SHOT SIZE / ANGLE	MOVEMENT	INT/EXT	TIME OF DAY	SHOT DESCRIPTION
scene 5	tracking shot	medium	tracking	interior	morning	they are having breakfast, Melissa leaves, friend closes the door
scene 6	pov	medium	tracking	exterior	morning	Melissa walks in a rush to the bus stop, checking her phone
scene 6	pov					Xavier's pov (to be decided)
scene 7	establishing	wide	static	exterior	morning	the same shot as the first scene, but without the friend
scene 8	hand-held shot	medium	tracking shot	exterior	morning	Melissa walking to her house
scene 8	close up	dutch angle	static	exterior	morning	Melissa looks at her house
scene 8	pov	wide	static	exterior	morning	run down house covered ivy

Learning from new friends

From talking with Osama, who is always excited and eager to chat, I learnt how to be grateful. From talking with Taqwa and Farah, who are always polite, very kind and ready to work, I learnt a lot about work ethic and again, kindness. With Raghad, who is very funny and caring, I learnt how you can be friends with people no matter how far apart and how different you are.



On 11th October 2025, Osama, one of our group, shared this photo of his house after he returned home.



Postscript

By the end of August, the students compiling the content for the report and website had submitted their work, and communication in the WhatsApp group was increasingly sporadic. These last two entries have been written by trainer and report editor David Gerow, who has chosen a couple of particularly impactful moments from the last couple months, and included alongside them his reflections on some of the recurring themes in our group chat.

September 6 *Honest Conversations*

Osama shared an Instagram post showing the destruction of the Mushtaha Tower, one of the residential high-rises built after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

He commented:

This was yesterday... Still no one stepped a step

The theme of the world's blindness to the genocide in Gaza is one that emerged frequently in our WhatsApp group, and it seemed to come up more and more as August and September dragged on.

Taqwa responded:

It's fine – the world is busy enjoying the genocide show!



The caustic, embittered tone of Taqwa's message provides a very real expression of the frustration she felt after nearly two years of siege. On one hand, here was a small group of outsiders, mostly living in Portugal and the UK, telling the Gazan students that they cared, that they wanted an end to the violence. But those words must have rung hollow – or at least felt laughably ineffectual – when the governments of those same European countries were allied with Israel and the U.S.A.

When I read Taqwa's comment, I had a number of simultaneous emotional responses.

The first was the discomfort of recognition that comes with any evocative imagery: the idea of people "enjoying the genocide show" is a gut-punch of an image. Simultaneously, I felt that as an onlooker myself, I was being accused of sadistic voyeurism. Part of me felt misrepresented – I have certainly not enjoyed watching events unfold in Gaza – but another part of me felt seen in an unsettling way: I do follow the news and my students' posts with the comfortable degree of remoteness that everyone outside Gaza is free to enjoy. I can step into the news, but I can also step back out. I can sleep soundly; I never fear for my life. I sometimes scrape my children's uneaten leftovers into the bin, each time thinking how desperately those scraps would be welcomed by people who are living under siege.

During a recent visit to the hospital, I found myself imagining again and again how terrifying and chaotic it would be if the ward I was in were to suddenly come under fire, as has happened repeatedly in Gaza. But of course I knew there was no chance of that happening, that I could close my eyes, drift off, fear nothing. Particularly since joining the Lines to the Future project, I've become hyper-aware of my safety and luxury, and that awareness comes with intense feelings of guilt that are easily stoked by a message like Taqwa's.

My other instinctive response to Taqwa's message was frustration that she saw the world this way: as indifferent at best, callous or sadistic at worst. I felt misrepresented. It wasn't just that I don't "enjoy the genocide show", but that none of my friends or family do either; we are, in fact, utterly incensed about it. This isn't the first time in my life that the actions of my government are in direct opposition with my own values, but it was the first time I'd been in direct contact with a person who was a direct victim of those actions. My instinct was to distance myself from my government, to make clear that their allegiances are not mine or my friends'. But it felt like anything I wrote would come off as a defensive platitude.

Happily, Sahar stepped in with a series of replies that expressed exactly what I wanted to, and in more convincing terms than I could have. She shared nearly a dozen videos of a protest taking place at that moment in London.

Some of the videos, such as those in which protestors chanted "Shame on you!" as police carried protestors away, clearly illustrated the gulf between the State and the people. The full context – that they were being arrested not simply for protesting on behalf of Gaza (which is perfectly legal), but for supporting the recently proscribed Palestine Action – wasn't important. In black and white terms, these were people completely at odds with their country's official position, and who had taken to the streets to voice their views to their own detriment. I was so grateful to Sahar for sharing those images.

I felt emboldened to comment:

The government really doesn't reflect the vast majority's view on the genocide. These protests in London are only the most recent example.



At the same time, **Giovanna** wrote:

Yesterday i was at an event in Rome. It included a live talk by people on board of the Sumud flottilla. Most ordinary people are angry and asking for an end to this genocide. Governments and politicians (the ones that could stop this in a heartbeat) are disgusting criminals.

In response, **Taqwa** wrote:

I want to clarify something important: when I mention my hatred for the world, I don't mean you, my friends. I have friends, mentors, and editors who worked with me on my articles with different platforms – I love and appreciate their support. But what's happening is beyond belief; nothing about it feels normal):

Damian:

Thanks for saying this, Taqwa, but I hope you always feel this is a place where you can speak honestly. It's difficult to find a way to respond, and I guess we all often feel guilt, shame and above all a horrible frustration at not being able to do more, and that makes it even harder to find the right words. Even expressing those feelings seems self-indulgent in the context of what you're living. We are thinking about you all the time, even though I know that's a very small comfort.

This interaction was a precious one because it drew lines between people and their governments, between the personal and the political, even though those two spheres impinge on one another every day. It was important for Taqwa to be able to express her true feelings without any of us outsiders taking personal offense, or, if we did take offense, also using our empathy and understanding to consider where she was coming from. I wrote earlier that I had felt “misrepresented” by Taqwa’s message. I was being truthful there, but I didn’t feel that Taqwa’s message was unfair. She was representing the world as she saw it, and how else could she see it given the reality that surrounds her? Damian’s reply summed up how I felt: He offered what he could (a willingness to hear and absorb Taqwa’s sincere anger), while acknowledging that there was little we could offer beyond psychosocial support.

This exchange reaches the very core of the Lines to the Future Project: In practical terms, those of us outside Gaza could offer nothing more quantifiable than some training in soft skills. But the real contribution of the project was that it established lines of communication between people who were experiencing ceaseless injustice, and people whose governments were partly accountable for that injustice. In those circumstances, bitterness and cognitive dissonance are inevitable, but the bridges we had managed to build over the course of the project were strong enough to absorb those feelings and remain intact.

October 10 Another Ceasefire

Throughout the remainder of September and October, there was a fair bit of good news among the ongoing horrors. Hala got engaged. Amera’s book, The Diary from Gaza, was published. Imad had numerous reports published. Taqwa continued to create and publish at an astonishing rate. The biggest news, which had been anticipated for weeks, was the ceasefire that went into force at midday on October 10.

Hala wrote:

For the first time today, I understand what peace feels like. I’m sitting now on the rooftop at ten at night, without fear of the quadcopter drones, listening to soft songs and crying.

From Portugal, **Francisca** wrote:

I was at work when I saw the news about the ceasefire, and my reaction caught the attention of my six-year-old students. I ended up explaining (very simply) what was happening, and they were so happy to hear that my friends in Gaza could finally feel free and have real hope for thei

Ali:

I can't stop daydreaming that we, all the team, can come to Gaza right now and tell you in person how much we thought of you over the last few months. How much we prayed that no harm comes to you and your loved ones. to be with you and to be able to see you safe and with that strong defiant smile that they can't take away.

Of course, the peace was a fragile one, violated repeatedly within days of being signed. The students continued to share images of their destroyed homes and memories of their murdered loved ones. There was never going to be a happy ending to this story, or any ending at all. But at time of writing, the ceasefire remains in place, the editing of our films is nearly complete (the goal being a screening in Porto in mid-November), and our WhatsApp group remains a place where we stay connected through our stories and poems.

You can read more of these in the anthology section at the end of the report and at linestothefuture.com

WHEN I RETURN

by Amera

When I return to the ruins of my home,
I will embrace it and tell it
of the days I spent as a refugee in the streets.

I will tell it of the cold winter nights,
how they killed the young and the old,
for the bitter cold showed us no mercy.

And I will tell it of the summer sun
that scorched us,
and of the weary steps on foreign pavements
that never knew our names.

When I return to the ruins of my home,
I will say to it, "The home's people have departed.
They left the house and the city,
and nothing remains but you, my home,
a witness to the anguish."

I will set you standing again,
I will make a small museum of their memories,
and from your rubble, an everlasting memory.

How I wish I had lost no one,
How I wish I had a home
like the homes of others.

OUR WRITERS AND THEIR WRITING

Compiled by Taqwa

Photo by Amira

Throughout **Lines to the Future**, many of the students in Gaza shared their poetry and journalism. Some are established writers, while others were inspired to write and share for the first time. In this section, we showcase some of their work.

"If I must die, you must live to tell my story."

Dr. Refaat Alareer

Before we meet the writers, we want to mention someone who inspired them.

Hala was the first to talk about Dr Refaat Alareer in our main group, and he subsequently appeared many times. Dr Refaat was a beloved academic, poet, and writer from Gaza who was killed by the occupation in the early stages of the genocide. Before he died, he wrote the powerful poem, "If I must die, you must live, to tell my story."

Dr. Refaat also co-founded the **We Are Not Numbers project** that Taqwa, Hala, Amal and Esraa are proud to be part of, and touched the lives of many students at the Islamic University of Gaza and beyond.

As Taqwa wrote in an article published July 2025, "Some teachers leave the classroom at the end of the day, while others become the classroom itself. Dr. Refaat was the latter type — he didn't just teach literature, he was literature. He didn't merely explain texts, he lived them, felt them, and transformed them into something deeply human, something fiercely Palestinian. He didn't ask his students to memorize, he asked them to remember. To remember their land, their stories, their strength. And even now, 18 months after Israel assassinated him, Gaza still whispers his name. He was an idea that never dies."

Read the full article.



ELEGY FOR DR. REFAAT ALAREER A VOICE THAT CANNOT BE SILENCED

by Weam Anwer

He walked among us with a book in his hand,
A homeland in his eyes,
And a storm of words in his chest.

Dr. Refaat Alareer was not just a university professor—
He was a house of thought,
A refuge for truth,
A voice that echoed with dignity and defiance.

He taught us to write,
Not to fill pages,
But to shatter walls.
He would say, "Write... for writing is resistance."
And we wrote—
Not knowing that one day,
writing would be all we had left of him.

Refaat was martyred.
His final breaths... poetry.
His last stance... a lesson.

They took his life,
But they could not take his voice.
They crushed the walls around him,
But his words still stand like monuments.

His sentences now walk the streets of our memory,
Calling out:
Don't be silent.
Write.
Do not kneel.

Rise with your pen.

Refaat did not only teach literature—
He taught us how not to die,
Even when death comes.

We read him now,
And see him alive.
We open his work,
And smell the soil of Palestine.

Refaat—
Peace upon your pen,
Your courage,
And your legacy that guards our minds like a lighthouse in the fog.

Sleep gently,
You who wrote us before we could write you...
You are now a flame
That war cannot extinguish,
And time cannot erase .

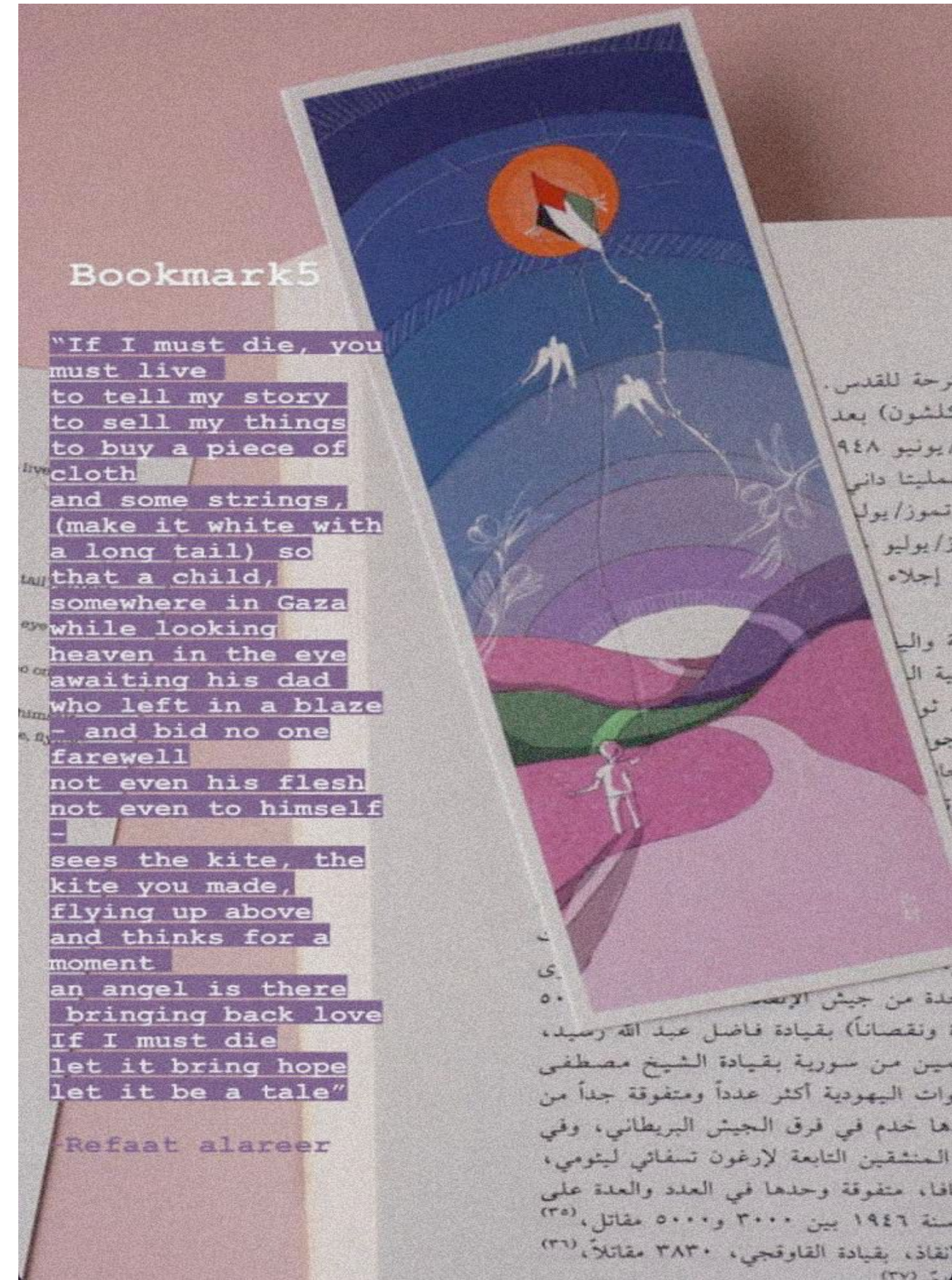
TRIBUTE TO DR REFAAT

by Imad

Since you have gone, my days are drowned in darky night,
Why can't I see you once again, where do you hide?
Where is the spark you used to bring, so pure and bright?
Are you upset? Or is there sorrow deep inside?
I'm ready now to do it all to hear you say,
Your voice, your soul, your way of life—I miss each part.
No gold or gem could ever steal my heart away, You were my strength, unbreakable in Art.
They told me you were murdered in the battle of word,
Defending home and soul—how twisted is what they use.
Now you reside in paradise, near your Lord,
To lose you from this fake world is the saddest news.
Dr. Rifaat, rest in peace—we walk your path to survival.
We breathe your art into our hearts, stay near and be comfortable.

Hala's sister, Nada created this bookmark, based on Dr Refaat's most famous poem.

[See Nada's Instagram](#)



Taqwa Ahmed Al-Wawi

"I'm Taqwa Ahmed Al-Wawi, a Palestinian writer, poet, and editor from Gaza, and a 19-year-old English literature student at the Islamic University of Gaza. Through my writing, I aim to amplify Gaza's voice and bring to light stories that are too often left untold."

You can read all my writing here and also support me by buying my zine: Gaza Calling – Will the World Pick Up?

BLIND WORLD

Blind world,
keep ignoring us.
Turn your face like you always do.
Shut your eyes to the blood.
Stay silent while we burn.
But we are here—
erased from your maps,
trampled in your headlines,
reduced to a footnote no one reads.
We are dreams lost before their time,
faces blurred on your screens,
silence pinned to a wall no one remembers.
Keep pretending,
live your life as if nothing happened,
but remember—
we held a life better than yours.
We hate you when you sleep
as our children dig their graves with bare hands.
We hate you when you laugh
and our voices break inside our throats.

We hate you when you move on
as if nothing happened.
Not because you are strong,
but because you are cowardly.
Because you know,
and still choose not to care.
Blind world,
maybe you erase us—
but you never wash yourself clean of us.
We are the scar you cannot cover,
the voice that refuses to die,
we are the ones
who never forget.

I MISS MY OLD LIFE

I long for Gaza, before the war,
When winter nights were warmed not by heaters, but
by my grandfather's voice threading through the cold,
telling tales that curled around our fingers like steam
from tea.
I long for his house, where peace didn't need to be
spoken—it sat quietly in every corner,
like the sunlight that filtered through lace curtains.
I long for the garden trees, for the way his hands—
older than the soil—lifted the water each morning and
gave it to them like a ritual.

I long for my uncle's house,
for the way my aunt's laughter lingered in the kitchen
long after she had gone.
I long for my uncle, my male cousin, and my female
cousin—
not just names, but echoes of warmth still knocking on
memory's door.

I long for the moments I sat beside my uncle,
His voice carries a timeless rhythm, like a heartbeat
from the past.
He spoke as if every word mattered,
and every pause held something sacred, something
unsaid.
Back then, we lived through golden hours we mistook
for ordinary—
Only now do we see how brightly they shone.
I long for the talks, for the softness of voices mingling
over tea,
and for the laughter that arrived without needing a
reason.

I long for my loved ones,
the ones who used to walk in and light up the hallway
with their presence,
who filled the air with footsteps, stories, and smells of
food that meant love.
I long for the faces that once made rooms feel like
entire cities—
the ones who didn't just exist, but brought the walls to
life.

I long for my friends,
for the late-night talks that seemed to stretch endlessly
into the dark,
where our dreams soared higher than the kites we
never had the chance to finish.
We spoke of futures as if we held the very stars in our
hands,
and our words could shape the course of hope itself.
We passed books, shared our deepest thoughts, and
asked questions that seemed trivial—
yet each conversation wove us closer together, a
delicate thread binding our days, keeping us connected
in the face of time.

I long for my school,
where the sound of the bell marked the beginning of
endless possibilities,
where the chalk dust danced in the air, carrying
whispers of unspoken dreams.
I long for the Islamic University,

where the buildings were more than structures—they
were the foundation of my future,
where my aspirations found their first breath and took
their first steps.
I long for the teachers who pushed me to speak English,
and the professor who smiled gently and said, "Mistake
is halal"—
as if failure were not something to fear, but a necessary
part of learning

I long for the streets we walked,
our shadows long with dreams that dared to stretch
ahead of us.
And for the mosques where our whispered prayers rose
like birds—
free, fierce, and full of faith.

I long for the simple life,
for moments we didn't pause to admire,
because we were too busy living them.
For the safety that used to wrap Gaza like a mother's
shawl,
for mornings that began with bread, not breaking
news.
I long for the peace that arrived with the call to prayer
and stayed until the second cup of tea.

To Fridays with the big chicken dish,
its scent traveling down the stairs before the plate ever
reached the table.
I long for the way the family gathered—shoulder to
shoulder, story to story—
how laughter rose like steam from the rice,
how home felt less like a place and more like a breath
you didn't want to exhale.

To those days,
when we didn't yet carry the weight of names we no
longer call.
When "loss" was just a word in a story, not the story
itself.
But most of all,
I long for the girl I was—
The one who smiled without fear,
Whose laughter didn't tremble when windows rattled.
She dreamed with arms wide open,
Wore hope like a favorite color,
A constant flame that never dimmed.

She was whole,
Before sorrow etched cracks on her joy,
Before grief became her shadow,
Before the world grew heavy with loss.

Back then, each new day was a sky,
Endless, free, without limits,
She believed tomorrow was hers to walk—
Step by step, without fear,
Unaware that war would come,
Drawing red lines through her dreams,
Scattering them beneath the rubble,
Like forgotten pages of a diary.

That girl,
The one before the storm,
Before her world turned to ash,
She is the one I long to be again.

Imad Qudaih

Imad Qudaih is a 22-year-old from the Gaza Strip, Palestine.

"I am a university student specializing in English language translation at the Faculty of Arts at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). I work as a freelance journalist with BBC News and have been involved in multiple community and international projects."

Imad provided us with powerful on-the-ground reports from Gaza through regular BBC broadcasts. Covering forced displacement, famine, bombing of hospitals, and the daily struggle for aid and survival, his voice brings clarity and courage to international airwaves, and we've been lucky to have him keeping us up-to-date throughout the project. Imad also shared some of his poetry with us.

LET ME SEE YOU

Let me see you...
I want to stay with you, in any of the lands.
Let me see you...
I want to dance and sing with you, like birds in the sky.

Your voice is like something magical—
it brings joy into my life.
Your voice is like a medicine
I'd gladly take just to survive.

I'm ready to do anything
just to see your beautiful eyes.
To see you smile, to make you happy—
for that, I'm ready to sacrifice.

There is a moon so beautiful in the sky,
but there's another moon beside me,
shining on my life so bright.
It's a wonderful truth, not one of the lies.

I miss you.
I love you with all of my might.
In my dictionary, nothing is impossible.

I will try—again and again—
and in the face of challenge,
I'll never say goodbye.

My only choice is to fight.

Whenever I hear your voice,
my spirit soars—my mood flies high.
Let me hear that gentle tone...
Don't hide.

And when I look at your face,
I feel like a bird, ready to fly.
Please don't say no—
let me see your face every time you pass by.

My biggest dream is simple,
to hear from your lips—just once—a sweet "hi."
Please... say "I love you,"
and I promise...
you will never cry.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Where are you going? What
did you come here to do?
I want to have the biggest
dream loaf of bread.
You can't do that. Not your
turn today. Go ahead.
I can't do that—it's too far,
and I'm sick too.

Lie down on the ground—an
attack hits the place.
Our end—the price of a loaf
we did not get.
The attack is over. What's that
blood on your face?
To have a bite to eat, with
death we just met.

Why is there such a big mess,
people clapping around?
A truce on the screens—we're
close to stopping the war.
We are used to this—every
day, the same sound.
This is the true warning: a
new attack once more.

Allah wills—in the end, the
right will be retained.
No matter how long, darkness
by light is drained.

[Facebook link](#)

Weam Anwer Al-Fajam

"I am Weam Anwar Al-Fajam, a 21-year-old Palestinian from Bani Suheila – Khan Younis in Gaza.

I am a translator and a researcher in English literature who believes in language as a bridge that connects cultures and worlds.

"I believe in the power of words to reveal truth and protect human memory. Gaza is not just a place—it is an identity that never fades and a spirit that can never be defeated. Portugal has earned a special place in my heart for its courageous and humane stance with the people of Gaza."

*My elegies are written not only to mourn, but to preserve.
To hold their names like candles in the dark,
And to say — we remember.*

IN MEMORY OF SHADI, MY BROTHER

He was a hero, brave and true,
A soul of light, in all he'd do.
He'd say, "I'm no loss in God's great plan,
For Heaven's price is dear to man."

His faith was strength, his heart was kind,
So gentle, humble, pure in mind.
When he appeared, peace filled the air,
And hearts found comfort just by his care.

He loved to cook, his laughter warm,
A tender soul in every form.
An engineer so skilled, so bright,
Who worked with faith and endless might.

Though wronged by life, he never broke,
His faith, his patience — what he spoke.
His weapon was his steadfast prayer,
His dream — a Heaven pure and fair.

I saw in him my dreams come true,
And prayed for grace to be like you.
Each laugh, each word, each act remains,
A melody that soothes my pains.

Now hearts still whisper, "Shadi's gone,"
But mine believes — he still lives on.
For God has called him, brave and blessed,
To gardens where the pure find rest.

ELEGY FOR MY UNCLE ADEL WHEN A MOUNTAIN FALLS

How hard it is to write an elegy for a man...
Who stood in our lives like an olive tree that never
broke,
Until one moment—
The sky shook him... and he fell.

Uncle Adel...
Was not just a passing figure in life.
He was life—Its weight and its warmth, all at once.
He was tall... with quiet eyes that matched his
wide, comforting chest.
Broad-shouldered, as if he was born to carry the
burdens of those around him.
And on his face...
A smile you couldn't buy,
A smile that reached before he did,
And stayed long after he left.

Each elegy is not only sorrow — but testimony.
May their names never fade

His home was always full—
With people, with the scent of good food,
With stories that started in laughter...
And ended with shared meals.

He was generous,
Even with his emotions—
Giving love without needing to be asked.

He loved his wife deeply—You could see it in the
way he looked at her.
And he adored his four children.
He lifted them high,
As if trying to hide them from a cruel world.

But the world showed no mercy.
Not to him,
And not to them.

In one moment...
The house fell silent.
The laughter died.
And the faces that lit the home—vanished.

Uncle Adel didn't die alone.
He left with a whole world tucked into his chest.
It's hard to believe,
That the strong body is now just dust.
That those shoulders we leaned on—
Were buried under broken concrete.

But we still see you...
In every laugh that echoes your voice,
In every hand that fed the hungry,
In every child you raised,
Whose memory we now hold like a fragile dream.

Sleep peacefully, Uncle...
You were a mountain—And even when you fell,
you stood tall.



Esraa Abo Qamar

Esraa Abo Qamar is a 20-year-old student at the Islamic University of Gaza, where she’s majoring in English literature.

“I love writing, photographing, and documenting the realities around me. Through my work, I strive to amplify Palestinian voices and shed light on life under occupation and war.”



This is an excerpt from an article Esraa wrote for the Guardian website on 16th June 2025.
Read the full article.

At Netzarim distribution point, people weak with hunger walked up to 15km over hot sand but, on arrival, were stopped at barriers and forced to pass through them one by one. Then they were led into an area surrounded by fences, where boxes of basic supplies were scattered on the ground, triggering frantic scrambles. People fought desperately to reach them. Some took only items they deemed valuable such as flour, which has become unaffordable, and left the rest behind. There were no clear systems to prioritise vulnerable individuals such as widows, the injured or elderly people. The scene resembled throwing meat into a cage of starving lions and watching them fight for survival. Of course, only the strongest win. After only 10 or 15 minutes, tanks began approaching the fences and opened fire on the crowd shooting at everyone, young and old alike. People began running, desperate to escape. Some carried the little they managed to grab, others fled with empty hands. They saw people falling around them, but couldn’t stop to help. Stopping meant dying. Some made it out alive from their visits to aid points. I heard my neighbour returning from a trip that lasted more than four hours. He was calling to his children: “Baba, Baba, I brought you bread! Baba, I brought you sugar!” I looked through the window and saw his children screaming with joy and hugging him. He was dripping with sweat, wearing only a vest. His shirt was tied to his back, filled with the small amount of aid he’d managed to gather. People are desperate. People are hungry. We are not bad people. We are not violent or wild. We are people who value our dignity more than anything. But the hunger we are facing is indescribable. Food is a right, not a privilege to be fought for. Yet we are living through famine. There is simply nothing to eat. When we go to the markets, there is nothing available. The roads are full of armed men who target the weak to take any aid they do manage to access. Then the merchants take it and sell it at hugely inflated prices.

Osama Mazen Alabadla

Osama Mazen Alabadla is a 22-year-old poet and translator, originally hailing from Al-Qarara, Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

“I archive the soul of my homeland through verses and ensure that its pulse is felt globally. My work is a raw, rhythmic testament to life lived on the edge of the world. I dismantle linguistic walls, making the complex truth clear, and I am the voice carrying the southern wind.”

1.

Palestine will be free
People all can this see
Nazis want us to flee
This we say will not be
Post bombing, sand is mud
We are soaked! is this flood?
No, it's not, it is blood
Bombs all killed man and bud
"We condemn!", cowards say
And say for you we pray
What I say will I say
In your coop stay and lay
We did make our choice
Let us not hear your voice

2.

They say immigration will
Be applied on you but still
You will pay a bigger bill
Leave your land, live in the hill
Yet I say this rings a bell
Since Gazans stand very well
All said so did go to hell
And Gazans live very well.
Our cause will never die
As long as we don't feel shy
As long as words can fly high
Reaching all in earth and sky
Try and fail, don't fail to try
To sing "this cause will not die"

Amal Rafiq

"I'm a 19-year-old writer and student of English language and literature.

I have taken it upon myself to be both the chronicler and the guardian of my people's memory. Through my writing, I try to find my message in this world."

Read more from Amal:
A Gaza Girl's Story
Crying 'wolf' to create terror

ENOUGH, PLEASE!

Lonely, I walk through my sorrowful land,
Where dreams are throttled by a harsh hand.
Rubble everywhere I turn my eye,
Debris of my beloved city cries hope's a lie.
In ruthless heat, my people crouch in tents,
Where dust and despair surround as a fence—
Despair of life, or even of the world, That lets them
suffer for that long.
I saw a child with a tearful face,
Waiting in a line beneath the blaze.
Clutching a pole with blurred sight,
His childhood was stolen by a cruel blight.
Beside him limps a youth with a shaky crutch,
He paid the price — it cost too much. His leg is
gone, he asks why,
Too young, he's learned how dreams can die.
A mother, bent over, trembling in place,
Her baby held in her embrace.
All faces pale, all bellies bare, Grief is a language
they all share.
At night, when the dark takes hold,
We share our fears like we share our food.
A blast smashes the silence of night — with no
warning—and we ask, Who didn't make it till
morning?
A father wishes to surrender, yet must fight,
Fight to survive and feed his child.
He questions what sin he's committed, yet again,
To deserve all of that pain.
My single cry of justice—enough please!
Enough of wars, we hunger for peace. For time to
rest, for time to heal— From wounds no soul can
bear.

I DARE SAY

When will this horror movie end,
Then return to joyful time we used to spend.
That nightmare prolonged,
And I dare say it'll affect us for long.
That movie plays within a cave,
So dark, so deep, so cold, so grave.
Forces us to run, forget to breathe,
No pause, No peace, no true reprieve.

A soul reaper walks without a heart,
Tearing my people's land apart.
harvests their innocent souls—
With no pity yet endless holes.
It's unfair, I dare say.

A graveyard —my beloved city became,
May God send them sorrow and shame.
The smell of death haunts the air,
A silence deeper than despair.
Survivors wish to flee, to fly,
Far from this stage beneath the sky.
Hating the roles they had to play,
Which make them lose, day after day.
Lose the ones they loved the most,
And live as a shadow, like a ghost.
With no asking nor permission,
It forced them to submission.
It's unfair, I dare say.

That silly movie never ends,
Yet drags us through its scenes.
I always wonder what can erase the scar,
And wake us up from this nightmare?

But still we will rise, though hope so thin,
And break the chain they locked us in.
To collect the straggling dreams —
And pray for light, for brighter beams.

Hala Al-Khatib

Hala Al-Khatib is a 20-year-old writer and poet from Al-Nusirat refugee camp in Gaza.

*"My words are my bridge to the world,
allowing you to witness what we're living
through in our own words."*

You can read more of Hala's poems [here](#)

MY BRIGHTEST STAR

At midnight, under a sky stained red,
and air heavy with the scent of blood,
I sit on the rooftop,
in the same corner where we once smoked in secret.
Now I sit alone,
thinking of you.

I look for the sky you once adored,
the one you sent me pictures of,
with your favorite star.
I try to find it,
but the smoke of war has hidden its glow,
just as it stole your light from my world.

You always loved the night sky.
On your balcony you would sit,
writing to it,
defying the world
with your cigarettes
and with words no one ever got to read.

But your sky betrayed you.
It answered your voice,
not with gentleness,
but with a missile that shattered your balcony,
pulled your body beneath the rubble,
and choked you with gunpowder
that was never as tender as your smoke.

Still, you will remain the brightest star,
shining in another sky,
in another world..

HALF AN HOUR IN GAZA

The call to prayer rises.
My brother goes out to pray at the mosque —
the same mosque the Israelis threatened to
bomb many times.
A rocket sound.
We rush to the windows,
looking for my brother.
We sit,
hearts heavy with the pain of past losses,
afraid, waiting for the sound of the door
unlocking.
Mohammed comes back,
smiling,
telling us how he survived death once again.

They say the price of flour has dropped.
My father hurries out to buy some.
I get up to bake a cake with what's left of our
flour — to celebrate.
I secretly add a lot of sugar,
even though only a few grains are left in the jar.
But my mother doesn't get angry —
she's happy,
waiting for the flour.
My father returns, but he brings worry instead of
flour.
He tells us the flour disappeared from the market
by the time he arrived.

I put on my red lipstick,
trying to feel some of the femininity the war
took from me.
Then my little niece comes,
and says this is the color of the blood she saw on
the martyrs' shrouds.
I pause for a moment.
Then I continue putting the blood on my lips,
unbothered.

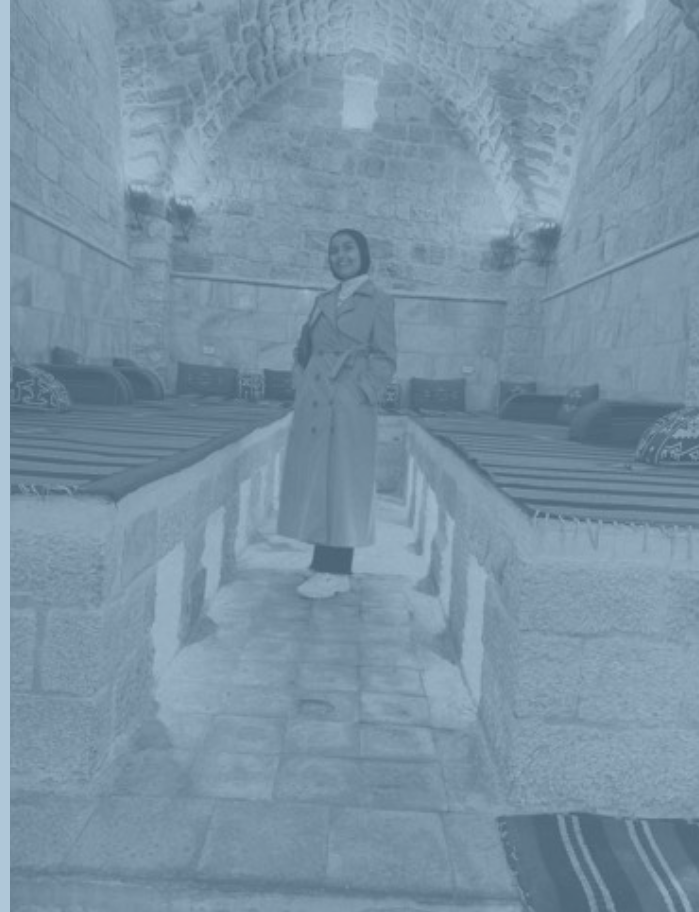
This is not a nightmare.
Not a drama film.
It's just half an hour
in Gaza.

Amera Atiya Abu Al-Husain

"I am Amera Atiya Abu Al-Husain, a 21-year-old writer from Rafah, Gaza.

*In the heart of war, I discovered that words could be my only weapon.
When the world around me collapsed, the pen refused to surrender. It became my witness, my voice, and my way to keep our stories alive.
Through writing, I resist. Through words, I survive.
For me, writing is not merely expression. It is existence itself."*

*Find out more about Amera and her book, **The Diary from Gaza**, [here](#).*



THEY DID NOT LET ME

They did not let me hold my brother's bones.
They did not allow me to approach the body either.
I was screaming, while they were screaming back:
"Don't do that, please don't look!"

So they forced me not to look,
for the last time,
for the farewell glance.

They did not allow me, fearing the horror of the scene.
But I told them:
It would still be beautiful,
even if my brother were nothing but bones.

Please, do not do the same
when we find the body of my other brother.
Please, do not.

I know you are afraid for me,
afraid that I might be shocked.
But I was already shocked at the age of three,
when we found my father
burned in the house,
by phosphor

COME BACK TO ME

Come back to me...
Can you return?
The seconds are stuck,
They haven't danced since your departure.
Will you come back?
Please, come back to me.
The basil tree has withered,
It needs you too,
Not just me.
Come back to me,
I promise I won't ask for things,
Nor ask for too many outings.
Just you, come back,
And I'll be by your side.
I'll cook food,
And prepare tea, for sure,
Your cup will have extra sugar,

And I'll iron your clothes.
Just come back,
We all need you.
How selfish I am,
I wish you'd return from your journey,
After even the dogs betrayed you,
Even after you became a meal for them.
So I developed a phobia of dogs,
A phobia of loss,
And of everything painful.
But my friend,
You were my safety,
And now I am utterly lost.
You were my support,
And now all the walls around me are broken.
What can I do?
Longing is painful,
And loss is agonizing.

A TABLE WITHOUT NOISE

I feel embarrassed when I sit at the dining table
without my family.
Each of us now sits in a different corner, quietly sipping
on our painful memories.
That table has become incomplete, even though it
used to be so full, overflowing with laughter and warm
faces.
Many used to sit around it, filled with the sounds of
children, and my mother's voice saying:
"We need two tables, so there's room for everyone!"

I miss all of that.
I miss the noise, their voices, my mother's warmth, my
father's warmth, and my siblings' touches.
I miss safety, family, and life.
I miss the basil tree by the door and the house that
brought us together and held our memories.

Can all of this really become just a "memory" in one
year?
Do the years pass with this heaviness?
Or is it only loss that breaks time inside us?

The house that used to bring us together is gone,
everything is gone.
We are, for the thousandth time, without a home.
The stones are gone, and only the memory remains
stuck in my mind, refusing to leave.