

Evening Talk: Palestine ...

Kawkab al-Sharq, 28 October 1933

Even were there nothing at all between us and our own brethren, the people of Palestine, beyond this same general human fraternity, shared alike by every people, every generation of humankind, however much places, times, and circumstances may differ — even then, the events that befell them yesterday would have every genuine right to melt our own hearts with grief and sorrow, to fill our own souls with anguish and heartache, to stir in us both pity for them, and genuine admiration, and a sincere longing that God grant them a victory restoring to them their own right, preserving their own dignity and honour, and securing for them genuine triumph, and success.

Yes — even were there nothing at all between us and our own brethren, the people of Palestine, beyond this same general fraternity, it would still be our own genuine duty never to stand before these same events that befell them yesterday as mere onlookers, seeing yet unfeeling, witnessing yet unmoved. Those who witness these same painful scenes, and feel no pain; who receive this same grievous news, and feel no grief; who see an entire people struggling simply to live, only to find themselves barred from life itself, compelled, by iron and fire, to submit to abasement, and poverty, and everything abasement and poverty bring in their own wake — and whose own emotions never stir, whose own souls never trouble themselves, with this same sacred human sympathy for the wronged — such people scarcely deserve the very name of humanity at all; they are, rather, a people whose own hearts have hardened, hearts like stone, or harder still. How much more so, then, when between us and our own brethren, the people of Palestine, there exists the bond of shared land, shared language, shared faith, shared higher ideals, and shared experience of exactly the same injustice, the same oppression we all endure alike, the same shameful indignity we are all made to suffer alike — an indignity no honourable person could ever accept, nor ought ever to accept.

How we wish our own brethren, the people of Palestine, could feel that we genuinely share with them whatever pain and grief they feel, whatever anguish they carry within, whatever sighs they let escape, whatever indignation and protest they openly declare, against this same injustice the foreigner pours down upon them without restraint — for no

reason at all, except that they wish to live safely in their own homes, at peace, harming no one, harmed by no one, wronging no one, wronged by no one, coveting nothing that belongs to others, coveted by no one for what belongs to them — for no reason at all, except that they wish to enjoy, in genuine tranquility, this very life God has granted them, under the shelter of right, justice, equality, and fairness.

How we wish our own brethren, the people of Palestine, could be genuinely certain that we feel exactly what they feel, sense exactly what they sense, suffer exactly what they suffer. How we wish we could turn aside from them some part of the harm inflicted upon them, lift from them some part of the injury they suffer. How we wish they could be genuinely certain the bonds between us and them are far too strong, far too sincere, for us ever to stand indifferent, or lukewarm, before these same abominable trials being inflicted upon them, with no regard whatsoever for sanctity, no respect whatsoever for right, no genuine feeling whatsoever for religion, or for morality.

How very alike, dear brothers, is what you suffer in your own country, and what we suffer in ours! Your own pure blood is spilled, your own souls — souls God has forbidden anyone to take, save by right — extinguished, for no reason at all, except that you wish to declare to the world, peacefully, securely, with genuine care for your own well-being, that you are wronged, that you detest injustice, reject it, and wish it lifted from you. And before this, pure blood was spilled in Egypt too, souls extinguished in Egypt too — souls God has forbidden anyone to take, save by right — because Egyptians, likewise, wished to declare to the world, peacefully, securely, preferring their own well-being, that they were wronged, and wished this same injustice lifted from them.

Here you are, then, made to face this same evil imposed upon you — and yet you are expected to meet it with neither protest, nor indignation, but with genuine acceptance, genuine submission instead. Your own adversaries, had they the power, would ask you to openly declare satisfaction with whatever befalls you, and genuine delight in whatever is visited upon you, and to welcome ever more immigrants still. And here we are, likewise, made to love what we do not love, accept what we reject, and rejoice in what tears our own hearts apart with anguish and grief. Yet whenever we ourselves have tried to bring our own hearts, our own faces, our own tongues into genuine accord, to bring our own convictions and our own actions into alignment — to show indignation, because our own hearts are filled with indignation; to declare protest,

because our own souls are filled with protest; to demand freedom, because we can accept nothing less than freedom — this same evil has been unleashed upon us, exactly as it is unleashed upon you; we have been baited, exactly as you are baited; we have faced exactly what you faced yesterday, and endured exactly what you endured yesterday. Egyptian souls have ascended to heaven, exactly as Palestinian souls have ascended to heaven; Egyptian soil has been stained with Egyptian blood, exactly as Palestinian soil has been stained with Palestinian blood. And yet the Europeans still claim, after all of this, to be the champions of civilization and progress, the messengers of peace and security, angels of mercy and love, guides leading humanity from darkness into light.

No — it is no genuine call to civilization, nor to progress, to attack a people while they remain at peace, to compel a people toward what they do not want. No — it is no genuine spreading of peace and security to seize rights by force, violate sanctities, and starve one people so another may be fed. No — it is no genuine mercy, no genuine love, to secure one people only to terrify another, to satisfy those you favour at the expense of those you do not, to breed, among the different classes of people, exactly the kind of hatred and enmity that ends in precisely what happened yesterday in Palestine. No — it is no genuine leading of people from darkness into light, to teach them how to hate one another, how to attack one another, how selfishness comes to replace selflessness among them, how force comes to replace right among them, how oppression comes to replace justice among them, how souls, hearts, and minds alike come to be enslaved to the dominion of money, iron, and fire.

The Europeans say a great deal, filling the earth with their own claims to be genuine guardians of peace, genuine opponents of war, genuinely committed to sparing human blood and safeguarding human life, to settling matters through justice and law, rather than through iron and fire. Yet, when they fill the earth with this same talk, they mean by it nothing but themselves, and the relations among themselves alone. They detest their own swords ruling among themselves — yet feel no real reluctance, it appears, in letting those same swords rule over the affairs of other peoples. What else, after all, is Egypt's own subjugation to English power? What else is Palestine's own subjugation to English power, and Zionist greed? What else is the subjugation, beyond Egypt and Palestine, of every other country and land on this earth, to these same raging, ferocious European powers — powers that assume the guise of peace and security within their own countries, only to bare iron fangs,

the moment they cross beyond them?!

The Europeans deceive only themselves, when they hope the people of the East might genuinely come to love them, or feel any real trust toward them. Force and aggression have never, on any single day, been a genuine source of love or trust — force and aggression have always been, rather, a source of fear and dread, at first, and then, in time, a source of the very reaction that grants the wronged their own eventual triumph over their own wrongdoers.

The Europeans know full well that the people of the East have already awoken from their own slumber, grown alert after their own negligence, grown active after their own languor, grown learned after their own ignorance — and that it has become entirely impossible for them to accept, today, what was once imposed upon them yesterday, or to tolerate, today, the very conduct once reserved for savage tribes, possessing no share whatsoever of civilization, hope, or history.

The Europeans, in persisting with this same conduct toward the peoples of the East, do nothing but create for themselves genuinely bitter rivals, and genuinely powerful enemies. Should their own situation appear easy, and simple, today, it may well prove hard, and difficult, tomorrow. It might well do the Europeans some genuine good to reconsider themselves somewhat, and to remember that, whenever they cross the sea, from their own countries to the East, they land among peoples who genuinely feel, and sense; who genuinely hope for, and love, honour and dignity; who genuinely refuse abasement and indignity — feeling, in all of this, exactly what they themselves feel. Should they do so, they would spare themselves a great deal of evil, and spare humanity an abomination without any real limit. Should they fail to do so, they will prove no less regretful than the peoples of the East themselves, no less grieved than the peoples of the East themselves, over their own failures, when failure could so easily have been avoided, and their own excesses, when excess could so easily have been avoided too.

The martyrs of Palestine rest now in God's own keeping; the fallen of Palestine rest now in God's own keeping; the sufferings of the Arabs in Palestine rest now in God's own keeping. For nothing, however great, and no pain, however immense, is too much a price to pay, in the cause of one's own homeland, and in the cause of freedom, honour, dignity, and independence.