

Naya Farhat

~ When a Child of the Cedars Talks ~

~~“Dear diary,”~~

No, this wasn't a diary. This was a far more important notebook, let alone a diary!

~~“It was a bright sunny day in the middle of September”~~

Why can't I find anything useful!? I had to think. I had to write.

“To the future generations of Lebanon, to my dear Lebanon”

Yes, that could do the job.

“To the future generations of Lebanon,

If you are seeing this, I am dead.”

This was depressing but true. I needed to write this. Because I may or may not die soon. And I wanted to leave a letter, a word, a message...so I don't fall into the abyss of forgetfulness.

“My name isn't important, and neither is my identity.”

That was true. I wasn't looking for credit, for recognition or for fame by writing this.

“I was once like you, a teenager living in a house, sweeping those streets, walking to the beach with my friends, listening to music, dreaming about the future, or the past.”

“I used to be like you, just like you, a child of this country, the ‘*hope*’ of this fallen nation”.

“My generation used to be just like your generation too, all of us, children of the cedars...”

“When I was writing this, a friend of mine told me: are you trying to be the next Anne Frank or something?”

“Back then, I couldn't respond, but now I know the answer: No...I'm not trying to be the next Anne Frank”

“Because, I know how her story ended, and truthfully...I don't want my story to come to an end...”

“But I need to talk...”

I need to write...

I need to tell...

Or I was going to end up like them all: another collateral victim in a war too big for me to understand. And in order for us to figure out how to mold our future, it is important to understand the past.

So let me begin...”

Thursday, September 19th 2024

I need to talk about this. I think something bad is going to happen soon, and I am afraid.

Today, Lebanon faced what I can best describe as a tactical technological attack. Pagers started exploding out of nowhere...Ambulances rushed to help and so did first responders.

Screams...I can still hear the screams. Disturbing, blood-curdling screams as if they were taken out of a horror movie, as if someone was being butchered or burned alive. Because that's what was happening. Organs exploding, legs, ears, eyeballs, skin burning...

People were shocked and just mortified... Questions multiplied and so did fear: what about phones? What about other electronic devices? Thousands and thousands of pagers just randomly overheating and exploding in their owner's pockets? This can't be a coincidence. It must be coordinated. Planned. Some went blind, others deaf, others just straight up died on the spot.

I'm afraid that this is only the beginning of something bigger...something worse...

Oh, my dear Lebanon...protect your people...

Friday, September 20th, 2024

6 AM sharp. The alarm rang. I didn't want to leave my comfortable bed, my warm sheets and blankets to sit on a hard wooden chair, a cold desk, and a strange classroom. But I got up anyway, woke my sister up, got dressed, and ate breakfast mechanically. I said goodbye to my mother, jumped into my father's car, and arrived to school. The day was endless. I wanted to sleep. I wanted to leave, and honestly, the history lesson about "Jamal Bacha" wasn't worth staying awake for. But the last bell finally rang, interrupting my daydreams.

I was already thinking about the « kibbeh » waiting for me at home. I wanted to lie down on my bed and lounge on my cell phone after enjoying a delicious dish of tabbouleh that Mom had prepared. Once I got home, I threw my bag on the floor and took the dish out of the fridge and put a plate full of salad.

One bite, two bites, three bites.

On the fourth bite, a deafening sound split the air. I assumed it was just drone breaking the sound barrier as usual.

As usual...

How silly of me saying that...just another day, another plane, another drone. So, I texted my friends just to check-up on them, but instead of the typical messages, I was met with fear, apprehension and pure horror. Then came the phone-call. It was dad:

- Pack everything fast.
- What?
- Do as I say, I'm coming...

I took a look over at mom. She had a calculating look on her face, as if she was trying to predict what was going to happen. Her expression was as cold as my «kibbeh».

- Do as your father said, she told us. And make it quick. I'll be with you in a minute.

I didn't want to be scared, but this gut-wrenching feeling sank in my empty stomach. I looked at the kitchen's window: nothing but peace and calm, life continued as if I never received those messages and that phone call.

But I knew...

They were going to come back: the sounds, the screams, the sirens, the ambulances, the panic I was trying so hard to conceal under a mask of neutrality. They'll all come back, just as quickly as yesterday. I then understood the gravity of the situation. My sister asked me:

- What do you think?
- I don't know. But we have to do as they say.

A few moments later, I heard a knock at the door: it's Dad. He looked serious and worried. He might argue with my mother. We shout. We pack. We think. We obey our parents; we look for our textbooks. We ask ourselves questions:

Do we go to the countryside? What if we go from there? Which streets have they closed? No, there'll be traffic jams around here...Where can we go? To school, maybe? Which road?

I couldn't help but be afraid. My house, which a few moments ago smelled like mint and lemon, now reeks the smell of war, worry, fear, and imminent bombings. I don't know what's going on around me.

I don't have time to understand. I try to help. I try to understand. I want to help, but I don't understand anything...

My father fills the car with heavy, overflowing belongings, and I... I fill my entire life into a pitiful suitcase: I want to take everything with me. I don't want to leave anything, I don't want to leave anything for them to destroy, just as they were going to destroy my country, my beautiful country, my beautiful Lebanon...

Oh, my dear Lebanon, I'm scared...

I want to take everything with me, but I know that's impossible.

The bare minimum...just the bare minimum...

I didn't have the chance to look back at the house, at my room, at my memories... Mom was closing everything, making sure we took what we could, making sure we saved everything we could from the upcoming missiles which may or may not hit our house.

We never know...

The dark swallowed us whole as the electricity was cut. We got separated; my sister went to mom's car as I walked to dad's. The trunk and the backseat were full, full of bits of a life I was desperately trying to save. I sat next to dad. He was trying not to get angry, although it showed, he clearly was. Rage and anger were boiling...in all of him, in the way he turned on the car, in the way he was frowning his eyebrows, in the way he was driving, in the way he was clenching his teeth and his jaw.

For the first time in my life: I didn't feel safe. I didn't feel safe in the very car I rode in multiple times, in the very house I was raised in, in the very street I wandered in countless times, in the very city I knew by heart, in the very country that saw me become who I am today.

I don't feel safe my dear Lebanon... I don't feel safe...

I felt scared and vulnerable. I felt like a prey waiting for its predator to come. I felt like a bird waiting to be snatched from its mother's nest. I closed my eyes and started counting.

One, two, three, four...

People are starting to realize what's happening. They were going to come back...I knew it...the screams, the ambulances, the drones... not the people...*not yet*...

Five, six, seven, eight...

The smoke, the smell, the sounds...

Nine, ten, eleven, twelve...

- Dad...we have to go.
- I know...

Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen,

Even my father was reluctant...but even he knew leaving was inevitable.

- Last time they didn't even issue a warning, dad muttered under his breath.
- They always do.
- But it's not like a five-minute warning will do anything.

Roads were blocked. Streets were crammed. Cars were everywhere, fleeing from the upcoming danger. Dad was listening to the news, he was stressed, it's understandable. We were stuck in traffic. There was a bus next to us where people were packed like sardines in a box. A young mom was holding her only bag and her only son. He seemed to be about two years old, younger maybe. She tucked his hair behind his ear and hugged him tightly:

- Do you see the sky, she said with a worried smile on her face as the kid nod accordingly.
Do you see the sun? Isn't she beautiful?

She tickles him. He laughs, showing his beautiful smile. She continues:

- You know, your dad is up there. He's waving at you. He says that you're the bravest little man he's ever seen. He loves you. And I love you too.

She hugs him again. The wind and the honking of cars drown their conversation. I can't hear her words anymore.

I'm still thinking about this young widow and her son. I didn't know anything about them, not their names, not their identity, not where they come from or where they were going. I just know her heart aches for her fallen husband and her son who will grow up never seeing his father.

Next to us, there's an old man driving a red "Corolla" as old as him. His wife is sitting next to him holding two small children. In the backseat, there's a girl who was sticking her head out the window. Next to her, there was a boy who seemed to be a little older than me. He was trying to comfort his mother:

- God is good, mom. God is great. He never leaves anyone. He is merciful and He will help us pull through. Don't worry mom. Don't worry...

He was patting his younger brother's shoulder as he was trying not to panic himself. I stopped a minute to look at this complete stranger and I couldn't help but wonder... that day... that was the day a boy turned into a man...

My dad's voice broke the silence that was slowly taking over the car:

- Are you hungry?
- No, I'm fine? Are you?
- Yes, a little.
- I have a sandwich still sitting in my backpack, but it's in the back.
- Forget about it.

A few seconds later, he asks:

- What does it taste like?
- Labneh.
- Oh no, I can't you know I'm lactose intolerant.
- I have water if you want.
- Oh yes, water!

He takes a big sip and says:

- That felt good...

The landscape stretches out before us. I contemplate Beirut. She's beautiful. Not as if she's going to get bombed and shattered later.

I vaguely banish a thought from my mind, the thought that this might be the last time I'll see these skyscrapers, this airport, these buildings...and this beautiful city where my home stood still...

As we arrived to the village, we saw multiple cars piled up in the usually empty driveway. The leader of a big political party was giving a speech. The whole village was listening. The whole country was listening. The atmosphere was tense. There was no sound, not from a cat, not from a crow, not from a single soul. It's like the whole world could feel this.

One, two, three, four...

We were all waiting.

Five, six, seven, eight...

He was still talking. He finished...

Another one came up, another political party, another ideology, and then another and then another, and then another, then the last... they said different things. Different irrelevant things in this situation. They were all giving out directives as if the situation could be controlled. They were going to bomb, everyone knew that. We just didn't know when they were going to bomb, or who or even where so all of these directives were just empty words. Each were telling their "followers" promises that won't ever be fulfilled. There was no president...no one to lead a country in crisis.

Nine, ten...bomb...

Then they bombed. They blew-up somewhere in the southern suburb of Beirut.

In a situation like this there is usually a two case-scenario: fight or flight

But this time, came a third...

Freeze

The building shook, the tree branches quivered, the birds flew away, the cat hissed, the crow cawed, the children cried, the adults stood, apprehending what was yet to come...

And I...I just froze. I didn't yell, didn't cry, didn't shout from anger. I just *froze*...

Monday 23rd September 2024:

When I got back to school, we were all discussing what had happened, whispering questions...no one dared to speak out loud. But behind closed doors, everyone was talking politics. Teachers were shushing anyone they saw speaking about it.

- You should focus on your classes, they said. You can do nothing about the war...you are just teenagers...

Tension was rising in the air. Even jokesters seemed worried, no one was in the mood for jokes. No one whined or complained, everyday problems seemed irrelevant in this situation...

Wednesday 25th September 2024

It's my birthday in a few days. I am excited but I'm not expecting anything to be honest. We're in the middle of a war... I just wish things get better until then.

Friday 27th September 2024

Something big happened...

Sunday 29th September 2024

I couldn't write two days ago...the house was...tense. They killed the leader of a big political party...they have been targeting him since the nineties. The whole country shut down for a bit. For a second, no one believed it. No one wanted to. Enemies and allies. Conspiracy theories multiplied. Some say his allies from his inner circle betrayed him. Some say he's still alive, planning for something bigger. Some are still in disbelief. I don't know what to think, I don't know what to say. I have never been with any political party whatsoever but the news, the TV, the WhatsApp groups...everything is talking about it. They say they bombed the building with 80 tons of explosive from all sorts...

Monday 30th September 2024 - 3:04 AM

Today is my birthday. I turn fifteen...I don't feel like it. I feel...I can't feel a thing. I feel numb and angry. I am angry at myself for feeling sad. I am angry at the leaders of my country who couldn't provide me, my family, my people, the safety we deserve. I am angry at the leaders of

other countries. I am angry at people of power because they failed, and they failed us, they failed me... I am angry at everyone and everything and I just wish for it all to be over.

Monday 30th September 2024 - 11:23 PM

I am so grateful. I am so grateful for having my mom, my dad, my twin, my family, my house. I am so grateful for having a roof above my head and a plate of food on my table. I am grateful to have friends like the ones I currently have, who are able to make me smile even throughout this pitiful situation. I am so grateful...for everything... I am so grateful for being alive.

Tuesday, October 1st 2024

Sunday, we passed by a school but it was teeming with refugees. There was a public garden next door. Parents were trying to cheer their children up, telling them the garden is like a camp-site and they were just camping. The classrooms were transformed into bedrooms and kitchens. Women were drying laundry on chairs and desks. Some had put sheets on the windows of their cars to sleep in. I was trying as much as possible to gather donations, through social networks in order to do my part and help as much as I could.

Oh, my dear Lebanon...look at your people

Wednesday 2nd October 2024

Why God? Why would you let this happen to people? Why would kids have to starve and beg for food? Why would people have to die trying to get a bag of flour? Why would a child, a six-year-old little girl have to call an ambulance over for her dead family and then get shot in the head while waiting... Why would a mother have to lose not one, not two, but all of her children and her family because their only sin is being born on a land the West didn't agree on. Why would an entire nation be forcefully starved and stripped of its identity and its rights?! It's not about religion or nationality...it's about humanity...

I know You don't allow it?

Why God, I do believe in Your wisdom but why? You are Merciful and Fair. I know You never let a soul carry more than it can bear so why is this happening?

Friday 4th October 2024

The teachers are right... and I am so angry.

I am so angry at myself, for being a kid, for being a fifteen-year-old girl, powerless, just sitting at home while people are living in schools and children are being starved to death. I am so angry at myself because I want to help, but I can't... I am so angry at the West, at the Arab countries, at the people in power, because they can help, they can send funds, they can send food, they can send aid, they have the power to end this all, but they just don't want to, and I can't even fathom why... I am so angry at all the teenagers of the world that are complaining about pathetic problems and pathetic lives...but, what about me.

What about me!

Am I not still a kid, just like them, and don't I too, deserve to live. Don't I too, deserve to feel safe, to feel happy, to feel all the normal things those people get to feel? Or am I just...just another one. Another life, another Arab, another Lebanese, another number... am I just another soul meant to be forgotten and lost in the abyss of a life I didn't even choose to live...

Oh, my dear World...shame on you...shame on your people...

Saturday 5th October 2024

I just realized something: I am not powerless. Because instead of a gun, instead of a rifle, instead of a bomb, I have a pen. I have a pen and a paper, and I have my education. My gun is my pen; my rifle is my paper and my education is my bomb. That's how I'm fighting back, that's my weapon. Because I don't need a gun, a rifle or a bomb, I had what I had and that was how I was going to beat them all.

Tuesday 8th October 2024

My grandfather is sitting on his bed. He is almost 90 years old. He's reading the news on his phone. His face is unusually pale. I come in. He smiles at me. I ask:

- Anything new, jeddo?
- No. War. Just war...
- How was it back then? Was it like today?

- Today is actually worse than it was during my time. They didn't use bombs like those. They didn't starve people as bad as they are doing now...bastards...
- Oh...
- Every war is worse than the one before it.
- Who do you think will win?
- Nobody wins in a war...

My grandfather will end up dying as soon as the ceasefire ended...

May your soul rest in peace, Jeddo, I love you... (28 – 01 – 2025)

Monday 14th October 2024

Sometimes, I feel like an ant. I feel powerless and helpless because whatever I will do will end up benefiting governments who can't even protect me and can't even prevent preventable wars. I feel like those governments are grasshoppers. Us ants fend for ourselves, we work, we pick food for ourselves and somehow for them too. And we still are considered weak...We are still considered powerless but we are not powerless, I can feel that.

Thursday 17th October 2024

- Ba'ato kharayit... (they sent maps)

That sentence was the most common sentence I heard all throughout the war. They used to send maps...of the places they were going to bomb.

The irony wasn't lost on me...

When this was said, we all transformed to political analysts and geographers. The men gathered around the television in the living room, analyzing each and every detail of the map.

- Yes, yes this is near the library.
- Is it? Is it not closer to the bakery?
- Why would they target the bakery? It contains eclairs not explosives.
- Honestly at this point, who knows...
- Umm...they said it's next to the bank.
- But this road is clearly the one behind the gas station?
- Of course not! It's behind the pharmacy, see, check out the red dots.

WhatsApp groups were lit. We were no cartographers but we turned into ones in seconds

Monday 21st October 2024

It's been exactly one month and one day since I left my home.

One month and one day.

This month has been difficult. Everything seems uncertain, odd and...incomplete. I feel like I'm watching a movie, except this movie is real life I'm living its events, and I don't know the end, I can't spoil anything to myself, I can't move backwards or forwards and I certainly can't skip any parts...I wish I could...

Sunday 27th October 2024

I have been writing less and less frequently. I have been busy with school. I don't have the energy anymore; I don't have the patience, or even the passion...I don't want to lose my passion. It is very dear to me...as dear as this country is ...

Tuesday 29th October 2024

They destroyed it all...I'm scared.

Oh, my dear Lebanon...I'm tired...

Friday, November 1st 2024

I come from a village in the South. It's called Khiam. It is beautiful. I spent most of my childhood in it. I memorized the streets, the valleys, the lake, the cats, the ducks, the sceneries...

I'm afraid those details will only remain alive in my mind and memory...

Tuesday 5th November 2024

I came back from school today to find my mom sitting in bed, phone in hand, tears running down her cheeks. The spark in her eyes was fading away, withering as days passed and war progressed. Her family comes from Khiam: her uncles, her aunts, her grandparents...They have a whole neighborhood dedicated to them in the village. Today, nothing remains of it...

Monday 11th November 2024

My maternal grandmother came today, and for the first time in my life, I saw her crying. I get it. Hasn't she seen and lived enough wars, she, who lived her entire childhood and adulthood with explosions as background noise? They were constantly obliterating the South, where she grew up, where she raised her daughters, where I grew up too.

And they still are...

Wednesday 13th November 2024

The situation was getting out of hand. We started online-schooling.

Thursday 14th November 2024

Online schooling is kind of fun. It's like we're back in 2020, covid-era. It's funny because I don't think we're back in 2020, it's more like we're back in 2006, or 1975, where wars used to erupt out of nowhere, on a random Friday afternoon...

Friday 15th November 2024

Today, we tried to joke a little. One of my classmates tried to lighten the mood by playing the national anthem during class which as a little ironic because we were learning about World War I. The Great famine. The dictators... And for the first time since September, I really laughed. I guess that's what's amazing about the Lebanese people: it's our ability to laugh, to smile, to keep going even when fire is burning and war is raging outside.

Oh, my dear Lebanon... we are your people...

Tuesday 19th November 2024

Soon enough, some schools opened again. They decided to install what they called "hybrid education" which meant the kids who wanted to, the kids who could...would come back to school and the others stayed online. At some point, dad told us to ditch online school and to come back regularly.

- It's better, you'll focus more and benefit more, he said.

I'll never forget the day I came back to live-school. We were five in class...including the teacher...

Wednesday 20th November 2024

School came back to partially normal. Today's material: swimming exam. Yes, you heard that right. In the middle of war, school decided to evaluate us with a swimming test. Additionally, the administration decided to have a "drill test" in case a "real" bombing occurs, as if the bombings that were already happening were fake. So, I had been laughing with my sister all week:

- What if they decide to do the drill while you're in the pool? she told me
- Then I just need to remember to bring my towel.

Test day came. The teacher blew his whistle and off I went. When I arrived at the other end of the pool, a loud sound erupted. At first, we thought it was another drone breaking the barrier of sound, so we waited to hear the second commotion. Eventually, the second came...then the third...and the fourth...and the fifth. Then we automatically associated it to the drill but we could clearly see through the glass thick black smoke forming from a route. They bombed a van driving up the highway. The teachers quickly told us to get out and to wash-up. But there was no time for us to wash-up. We all walked out, got dressed as fast as we could, towels on our backs, crocs on our feet, hair half wet, goggles dangling off our backpacks. When we arrived to the main building, we saw the whole grade huddled up in a corner, some crying, some shouting. I found my sister a bit later.

- I told you this was going to happen...
- Except this time, it was real...

Saturday 23rd November 2024

- Mom, you won't believe what happened at school today!
- What happened?
- The teacher didn't come.
- Is she sick or something?
- No, she's in Cyprus.
- What do you mean she's in Cyprus?
- She went to Cyprus due to the situation.
- You're kidding, right?
- No. She's teaching us online.

- But you're...in class.
- Yeah.
- And she's in Cyprus
- Yeah...

Sunday 24th November 2024

I just want one thing in life... I just want the stability that this country is missing. This painfully beautiful country... This splendid and brilliant country lost for nothing. This wounded country lying on its own Mediterranean Sea, the waves washing the blood of its sons and daughters... this country, this is my country, this Lebanon, this is my Lebanon... and I miss it.

Monday 25th November 2024

Oh, my dear Lebanon, I miss you...

I miss your roads, I miss your scent and I miss your buildings too.

I miss the way I used to be so safe, roaming around with no concern.

And now I lay on my cold bed, waiting for the next bombing to occur.

I miss your streets, I miss your beach, and I miss your pearly gold sand

I miss the way I used to go out with my cousins, walking hand-in-hand

I miss your forests, I miss your mountains and I especially miss your cedars

Now I just sit at home, the TV on, listening to speeches from world leaders

I miss your shops, I miss your crops, and I miss your great pieces of land

I miss the way I used to go to concerts listening to local bands

I miss your schools, I miss your pools, I miss the water in which I would swim

I miss the ice-cream cones I used to eat which were always filled to the rim

I miss my house, I miss my home, I miss the places where I grew up

Each and every day I pray that they don't get blown - up

Oh, my dear Lebanon, I miss you, I miss every piece of you,

Every cloud in your sky, every drop in your sea

I miss you and I miss you dearly, I wish things could go back to the way they used to be

Oh, my dear Lebanon, I miss you, I miss every bit of you

And I wish my words would be enough to express that, but they never will be

I miss your churches, I miss your mosques,

I miss the calming sound of prayers instead of the thunder and the bombs

I miss the Al-Amine Mosque or even the Church of St-Peter

I miss all 10,452 kilometers

But oh, oh, my dear Lebanon, what can I do?

I am just a child, I have no guns, no bombs and no rifles too...

Oh, my dear Lebanon, I am just a kid

And I have absolutely no idea how to get rid

Of wars, of missiles, and of misery

I just live in a world that's full of cruelty

But, oh, my dear Lebanon, maybe I do not need no guns, no bombs and no rifles

Maybe I am not meant to be like those government officials

Maybe I am not meant to fight in wars that are just bigger than me

Maybe I am just meant to sit, to ponder, and to see

But oh, my dear Lebanon, I have seen enough

Enough death, enough crimes, enough innocent people whose hands are chained in cuffs

Enough speeches, enough promises, enough of leaders thinking they are respected or tough

Oh, my dear Lebanon, enough is enough

I am just fifteen-years-old and I deserve to live

Oh, my dear Lebanon, I won't forget and I won't forgive
I just wish I could've laid in my bed like I usually do
I just wish nothing happened during that unfortunate afternoon
I just wanted to go home, to my bed, to my room
I just wanted to feel bored, I just wanted to stare into the moon
Why did all of this happen?
And why me!? Why so soon?
Why you! Why you, my dear Lebanon, haven't you lived it through and through
Over and over again, why re-open this wound?
My country is bleeding but I am helpless what can I do?
I am just a girl trying to live, awaiting an upcoming doom
Oh, my dear Lebanon, I just have my voice, my paper and my pen
I just want this war to stop, but oh, my dear Lebanon, when!
Why does this keep happening again and again
The only thing I can truly do is keep writing
It is my personal resilience, it is my way of fighting
Oh, my dear Lebanon... this may never stop
The rich are getting richer
And the poor are getting poorer
My country is breaking and no one to be the restorer
People are suffering
And people are dying
And yet you come to us, young people, for hope

*Where can I get this hope
When people are suffering
And people are dying
With their thoughts their fears their tears they have been juggling
While their children's stomachs have been non-stop rumbling
And prices have risen
And people have risen
But misery, Misery has risen too
And bombs keep bombing
And people keep dying
The situation is sickening
Oh, my dear Lebanon, we should rise
We are like the cedar
We are rooted in perseverance and in toughness we grow and we persist
We are proud and we are fierce; we are smart and we are powerful
And when we wilt and we decay
Our rooted legacy and seeds of resilience live on
We dance in defiance and grow in resistance
You can't just expect to erase us from existence
You can't just expect to silence us forever
Because our voices are too loud
And our minds are too strong
Because we are Lebanese, and that's just the way we are.*

Tuesday 26th November 2024

I write this and I recite the names of all the Lebanese martyrs. I write this and I recite the names of all the Lebanese regions. I write this and I pray for Lebanon... for the South, for the North, for Mount Lebanon, for the Beqaa, for the East, for the West... and for Beirut... and I pray for a better Lebanon, I pray that Lebanon becomes... Lebanese again.

At first, I cried. I cried because of the situation. But I soon realized that there's no room for whiners on days like these, in life all together. I had to wrap my tears in a bag and throw them into the ocean. I had to make this sadness, this anger, this rage, explode somewhere else, somewhere positive, and I certainly shouldn't let it go in vain. So, I had to focus on two things. These two things that were most important to me. First, my education. I had to study and I had to succeed. I needed to prove everyone wrong. I needed to tell them: you can't win. You won't win, not as long as I had my education and my knowledge. I won't let this wretched war strip me from my education. I won't let them be stronger than me and smarter than me because they are not. They may be living comfortably in their homes, not sensing a bombing or an explosion, they may have resources and stability...yes, they may even have stability, but they won't win...because I simply won't let them. Secondly, my writing. I have to keep writing. I may not publish a book, I may just save these notes to myself but I have to keep writing, so that I won't forget because I don't want to forget...I won't forget the martyrs, the sounds and the horrors... I feel moved every time I write because I feel that I really make a difference... it's my way of expression, my way of fighting, my resilience, me...

Wednesday 27th November 2024

War is over...

I can't even believe it.

Today, I woke up late. We hadn't been going to school since last week. My bed was empty and...surprisingly warm. I looked out the window. The sun was shining, deploying her light on the mountains. The birds were chirping happily on a tree and...for the first time since forever...I couldn't hear the drones above my head...no MK in sight. It was like the weather knew something good happened.

What's happening?

I stood up, and went to my mother's room. Her eyes looked tired like she hasn't slept all night, but hopeful and...happy. And I saw it. I saw the spark in her eyes come back...

- Mom?
- War is over...
- What-
- War. Is. Over.
- Really?
- Yes.
- Mom...what day are we?
- I don't know.
- What happened?
- War is over.
- Why...what did I miss?
- War is finally over.
- War is-
- Over

I was in utter disbelief. It can't be. War ended on a random Wednesday... But then, another realization hit me...I could...I could finally go home. My mother held me in a hug as we both cried...

War is over.

We went to the living room. News were blasting anthems and hymns of hope and patriarchy.

Oh, my dear Lebanon...you're back. You came back.

Oh, my dear Lebanon...I missed you. I missed you so much

Saturday 30 November 2024

I was born to parents who survived wars. I thought I would grow up hearing their stories. But I never imagined I would soon enough write my own...

"So, to the future generations of Lebanon, now that you understood the past, in a way only teenagers like yourselves could, I only have one thing to say...I am counting on you, just like our

forefathers were counting on us. I am counting on you, to keep my country safe, to keep my Lebanon safe, because I am trying to build it the best way I can, but I cannot do this alone.”

Sunday, December 1st 2024

The war will end
The leaders will shake hands
The old woman will keep waiting for her martyred son
That girl will wait for her beloved husband
And those children will wait for their heroic father
I don't know who sold our homeland
But I saw who paid the price.

Mahmoud Darwish (2024)

Monday 1st September 2025

This message is addressed to world leaders, and not to the future generations of Lebanon.

Ants are not meant to serve grasshoppers. I've seen these ants do great things, and year after year, they somehow manage to pick food for themselves, and you. So, who is the weaker species? Ants don't serve grasshoppers! It's you who need us! We're a lot stronger than you say we are... and you know that, don't you?

A Bug's Life (1998)