

Writing and Witnessing

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Anonymized Affiliation

writing and witnessing

two close friends tell me that their mothers—both of whom are undocumented—have been in a lockdown until further notice. i am scared for my friends.

in daylight, they fire tear gas. they get on horses only so they can hit people with wooden rods. they fire rubber bullets. the city i love morphs into a police state. helicopters. drones. surveillance. curfews. national guards. federal troops. active-duty marines. facial recognition. i am scared.

when i see a few unknown cars, i get scared for my neighbors.

in between the days, i read a book of poems by Refat Alareer. the foreword of the book says, “Refat did not die, he multiplied.” Refat wrote and wrote and resisted and told stories, despite everything. Israel murdered Refat. His last poem dedicated to his daughter has a line, “If i must die, you must live to tell my story.”

there has been an indefinite curfew in downtown LA for a week now. fine, draw a boundary on a map. tell people they can’t move around after 8 pm. cut the public transit lines. but remember, arbitrary lines on a paper will not deter people from resisting.

i worry about the flower vendors in koreatown if i don't see them for a few days. when i don't see the aunties that sell shampoos and coffee for a few days, i worry. i worry about the safety of those that the state will disappear soon. those that have disappeared. i worry for us all.

¹ Contact: Intentionally anonymized. Bio: Intentionally anonymized.

my neighbor tells me that her sister is going to meet her mother after thirty years this month. thirty years. because. because. because. borders. borders. borders. burn. brutal.

i watch a video of a middle aged unhoused person being taken by []. a woman filmed the kidnapping. as he is taken by [], she asks his name, his date of birth, and a few questions in spanish.

i think about the checkpoints in palestine. the checkpoints i have only read about. the checkpoints i have watched in documentaries and movies. israeli soldiers. they murder. they occupy. they starve people. and yet, palestinians fight/resist/fight. it is our responsibility to resist.

policy sounds like police. they kidnap people because they can. *immigration policy*. they fire tear gas because they can. *crowd control strategy*. they militarize our city because they can. *public safety*.

a week later, there is already a demand for more detention beds. Corecivic—one of the companies that owns and manages detention facilities—has seen profits soaring lately. here, private companies own prisons. here, more prisoners means more profit. here, there is a business case for detaining and disappearing people. i am scared for everyone.

sometimes there is sadness that cannot be explained in words. that is not an excuse to stop writing and witnessing. my words will not stop [], but i must write.