

Advance Praise for *Born Sacred*

“Born Sacred: Poems for Palestine is a profound work of grace and solidarity, rooted in a hard-earned understanding of colonialism’s insatiable appetite. What Smokii Sumac has done, over the course of 100 searing, open-hearted poems, is give voice to the immeasurable grief of bearing witness to genocide—the overwhelming magnitude of it, colliding with a knowledge that this has happened before, that there is an age-old methodology to the act of endless taking. I am so grateful for this work, for this beautiful, honest reminder that, whatever power empires wield, we have what it can never take. We have one another.”

— **OMAR EL AKKAD**, author of *What Strange Paradise*

“The succinct starkness of Smokii Sumac’s offerings are an X-Ray to the grief and absurdity of our times. This dangerous dichotomy of trying to live one’s everyday life while holding the tragedy of everyday loss is profoundly captured in each stanza.”

— **CATHERINE HERNANDEZ**, author and screenwriter of *Scarborough*,

“This collection is the antidote to the silence and cowardice of millions, and the medicine for those who watched the first recorded genocide unfold and needed to be seen and witnessed. Creating room for collective grief, Smokii Sumac shows us the responsibility and power of the poet to face the blank page in the here and now and the necessity for words to remain as a testimony to history. *Born Sacred* is an essential work in the fight for collective liberation and a reminder that hope can be rooted in allyship.”

— **RAYYA LIEBICH**, author of *Min Hayati*

“I am always drawn to the constellational consciousness that permeates so many Asian refugee, Indigenous, and Black literary and cultural works. This constellational consciousness, the culturally-informed relational view of life and solidarity in struggle, is vital in Smokii Sumac’s collection. In both form and content, the poems shatter dominating linear and compartmentalizing interpretations of the world with constellating stanzas, voices, and experiences that reveal the intertwined histories and presents of colonial harm and Indigenous survivance.

— **MARAL AGUILERA-MORADIPOUR**, Simon Fraser University



BORN SACRED

POEMS FOR PALESTINE

WRITTEN BY

Smokii Sumac

FOREWORD BY

Zaynab Mohammed



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This collection is dedicated to Palestinian and Indigenous life.

EXCERPT

FOREWORD

POEMS, IN MY PERSPECTIVE, ARE PRAYERS. They are offerings of solace. They are subtle, yet loud reminders that carry seeds of hope, wonder, connection and possibility. They defy gravity. They have the power to rip our hearts open, turning them inside out. When I look around in our “western world” and beyond, I see many vacant, void and empty hearts. Fear, comfort and complacency have locked some people into a desensitized reality of separation. Poetry, then, is one of the most needed medicines of our times.

Maybe I am wrong. Maybe I don't give the world and its inhabitants enough credit. I am also affected by the state of the world and can't imagine who I could be if I didn't feel fear and pain regularly. As a person who is sensitive beyond desire, I sense hopelessness and indifference more often than not in others and unfortunately, at times, in myself.

What Smokii has done here, writing these poems for Palestine, has been a refuge for many of us during the first months of the genocide in Gaza. The people who are affected from this war machine, that is everyone on the planet, are on some level in a state of shock and disbelief.

If you are not, then I ask you, where is your humanity?

The bloodshed continues. The destruction is mind bending. Famine has set in. Even when the bombs stop, the war will not be over. Palestine has been under occupation for decades. However, it has been more than 100 years since a British man wrote the Balfour Declaration handing over Palestine to Zionists.

As poets, artists and humans, we are entrenched in responsibility to ourselves, our communities and the earth. This is how I see life. We

all have a duty in our lives to share our gifts from within us as best as we can. I pray we all discover what we have in us to give and give it with minimal doubt or hesitation. Simplicity is at the heart of this equation.

Smokii has the gift of weaving words into poems and prayers and has done so in this powerful collection. He has kept this window through time open. A window for all those who may be too young to witness the details of the destruction of Gaza. A frame for all those who are indifferent, who don't know how or don't want to witness apartheid in real time. A means for all those who have not looked away from this genocide to grieve and reflect. These poems capture this moment for us, wait for when we are ready to see the truth, and encourage us to lean into each other in rage, grief, horror and commitment to continue to show up despite societal indifference.

It is never too late to change heart or to let our hearts be ripped open. I know this is not something most people have learned in their lives. If we don't have examples of people who are vulnerable, strong and walk with dignity, how will we grow into people like this? I mention this because these poems will awaken your heart in a way that may feel unbearable. And for this, I want you to know that it has been unbearable for all of us who choose to walk with our hearts open.

Every time I reveal myself through my own poems, I think, "there I go again." I want to live a private, simple life. Yet I cannot afford to sit silent on the sidelines. And neither should you. We all have power that fuels us. Yet we let the systems we are entrenched in rob us of our power. It's an automatic happenstance until we realize what is happening.

Have you heard the line, "we are not freeing Palestine, Palestine is freeing us?"

This is the first ever live-streamed genocide in the history of time. People usually learn about genocides after they happen. How many people have you seen murdered, blown up, ripped to pieces, heads blown off, burnt to ash, decomposed into skeletons? How many

children's ribs have you witnessed on their frail starved bodies? Can you imagine dying of starvation while the rest of the world has access to food? How many buildings have you seen bombed, blown up, made into rubble, hollowed out, homes and memories destroyed in an instant? How many soldiers have we seen make a mockery of themselves, by posting videos wearing thongs of people they've murdered, revealing their ignorant flaws, highlighting their lack of humanity? How many families have been wiped off the face of the planet in this genocide? Too many. It is too much. We have had enough. And yet the war machine continues.

What have you learned from this genocide?

Truth is deflected. Our politicians are gaslighting us. As is mainstream media. Shame on them.

The double standards and hypocrisy of our time have revealed themselves, clearer than ever. No one can deny this anymore. Despite how easily manipulated we are, we can educate ourselves and take back our power. Accountability is a prayer many of us are on our knees calling in.

It's overwhelming when I look at the corruption of this world. Why was I born with such a caring heart? Why can't I turn off the love I feel for this world? This may be the price of being an artist, as it is my duty to reflect the world I see with my artistic practice. Smokii knows this and does this too.

The words you will read in this book come from a very sensitive person. This person took time out of their day to try to understand a catastrophe happening on the other side of the world.

Separation is a veil I hope we can rip off our eyes and begin to truly see what is before us and the tasks at hand. Palestinians are helping us realize and remember our inherent connection to life and all that is alive. Palestine is freeing us.

Smokii's generous gift of word embroidery in this poetry collection is a testament to solidarity in action. Thank you Smokii for inviting us into your sacred prayers.

May these poems give us permission to feel our shattered hearts. May they give us space to express our grief. May they inspire our gifts as individuals while continuously connecting to our communities. May they open a way for love to shine through, inside and out. May they ignite passion and determination for honoring life's sacredness. May they pull us towards the tasks of being who we are and doing what we are here to do. May they remind us that we are *born sacred*. May these poems add rhythm to our heartbeat. May these poems move us all in to action. May these poems for Palestine be poems for the liberation of all oppressed peoples on this planet. May these poems change what needs changing inside of us. May these poems bring us closer together.

And in doing so, may we become a "we" once again, from the rivers to the seas.

— ZAYNAB MOHAMMED, Poet, Storyteller, Artist

PREFACE

TODAY IS OCTOBER 8th, 2024. I do not know how to tell you of what it felt waking up this morning. Yesterday's date marked one year since October 7th, 2023, a date that many of us remember as marking the events leading to the escalation of genocide in Gaza. This preface will speak of my own accountability when it comes to understanding that Palestinians have been experiencing this for much longer than we, the world, have been watching this year. However, there is no denying that this year brought things that we cannot fathom. Horrors unimaginable across our screens. Yesterday I wept at various times throughout the day. My nervous system frayed from completing the manuscript review of this book, from remembering the early parts of this past year, and all that I witnessed, and from knowing it's not only ongoing, but that Israel in recent weeks has invaded Lebanon, and that more people, children, families, bloodlines, are experiencing even more extreme suffering than before I wrote this book.

And yet, I believe in the power of words. I believe in the power of this book to continue to change culture. I told my generous and faithful editor, Jazz Cook, "I want to ensure that for any event I do, anywhere, for as long as I am alive, that this book will be on the merch table." It's a small act in some ways, and yet in this world that has censored the artists and the poets, that has tried to silence us through means of propaganda, bullying and lies, I must believe it matters. Thank you, dear one, for picking up these pages. For honouring this witnessing, for giving these poems, these stories, your time.

To Palestinians,

I begin with an apology. To Lebanese people, to Iraqi and Irani and Syrian and Congolese and Sudanese people, I am sorry. I am sorry that it took me until October 2023 to open my eyes and learn more about what has been happening to your people, your homelands, your children. I am sorry, and I am grateful to you for your grace and friendship, and for the ways your courage lights a fire in me to never be silent in the face of injustice. Thank you for waking us up. Thank you for your dedication. Thank you for relentlessly speaking up loud enough that I finally heard. May more of us awaken. May more of us listen.

Following this apology, it is important to me to give you more context. Hu nini Ktunaxa. *I am Ktunaxa*. I am a member of a First Nation in so-called Canada, and for Ktunaxa, there are no words in our language to say, “I’m sorry.” Instead, when we asked our Elders if we had a Ktunaxa concept for the English word “reconciliation,” there was silence. For Ktunaxa, when our Elders are silent, they may be thinking hard about an answer, or they may be signalling that we are asking the wrong kind of question.

As we pressed on, asking about how people acknowledged harm, it became clear that for Ktunaxa, a high-context culture, we couldn’t speak about a general harm, but had to talk about what brought us “out of balance” in the first place. It became clear that to absolve ourselves of harm, we must be accountable through our *actions*. In a Ktunaxa understanding, we must work to bring things back into balance, and in doing so correct the harm we’ve caused. In order to “fix our road,” as we say, we must do something differently than we did when we caused the harm.

This book is a beginning, a continuing and a seed for the future. This book is an offering of amends through action. What I have heard most from Palestinians since October 2023 is the call to speak up. This book is my initial attempt at answering that call. On October 18th,

2023, after witnessing eleven days of escalation of Palestinian genocide following the events of October 7th, I posted the first poem in this book on Instagram. In witnessing the horrors—of children being pulled out from under the rubble of their homes, of bombs dropping on tents, of consistent removal, packing few belongings and being forced into travel, people becoming refugees in seconds, told to evacuate to safe zones that never ended up being safe—I was called to return to a practice of poetry. In times like these, the role of the poet becomes less muddy for me. When Palestinian poets are being targeted and murdered for their words, it becomes my responsibility, as a poet, to find my own words, to practice our art, to help readers and audiences make connections they may otherwise not see in this world.

Poetry has always been an experience of connection for me. It is important to me to connect to my audience. In these poems, it is my hope that I am helping you make connections. Connections between those of us watching as we experience this devastation from the strange place of comfort and privilege across the world, and connections with Palestinians, calling out over the internet for us to witness, to speak, to say their names and tell their stories, and see the connections between genocides—between what has happened to my people here and what is happening to your people over there. Connections between the stories and the lives and the deaths of our families, communities and children.

I am sorry I didn't commit to learning about Palestine before. I commit and recommit to learning, listening, and when called to, speaking—as often and as loud as I can—since understanding what I have been witnessing over the last year.

On Apology

I open this preface with an apology because I now realize that I am sorry I didn't try harder before fall of 2023. I am sorry that I took the “complexities” of the Palestine/Israel “conflict” at face value. That even while being steeped in critical thought about colonialism in my own Ktunaxa context, I was unable to see the similarities until they

were right in front of me; a colonial genocide being livestreamed on my cell phone, through Instagram, an app I had downloaded years before to share photos of my friends at parties and the meals we ate.

There are no words to signal apology in the Ktunaxa language. This strikes me as important in our context; in this country they call Canada, during this time that we often call the “Age of Reconciliation.” In 2008, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued “a Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools.”¹ At the time, my grandma attended a gathering of residential school survivors to hear this statement. She also went through the process of sharing her stories, only to have lawyers tell her which ones were “provable” (the ones she, at 70+ years old, still had physical scars from) and which ones were not (the ones that left invisible fears, palpable only inside her, but not enough for the “justice system” in Canada to see.) As much as I can critique these moments, I know that all of this meant something to her. I know it means something to me too.

I know some of my readers will be wondering why I am speaking all this in a book for Palestine. First, I imagine some of you don’t have a history of who I am, as a Ktunaxa person. I am from a people who pre-date the country they call Canada by tens of thousands of years, or, as my teachers say, “we’ve been here since the animals were the people.” We are told that we are the blood of a being who was killed during the formation of the Rocky Mountains. We are only now, over 150 years since the confederation of a foreign government on our (Indigenous) lands, beginning to understand the weight of what has happened to our people.

Palestine is bringing that clarity for me. There is a weight to understanding a colonial government is starving people in the same way they did to our own ancestors. I keep seeing an image, referenced in poem “76,” of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) breaking into Unist’ot’en Camp tearing down a barricade set up by land and water protectors, cutting through a sign that says “reconciliation”² before arresting matriarchs and grandmothers as they sang prayer

songs. I am now aware that many of the RCMP in Canada have trained with the Israel Occupation Force (IOF).³ Colonialism is interconnected in so many of the ways we (Indigenous peoples) understand interconnection. Just as biodiversity is reliant on these connections, the destruction of life finds its way around the world in similar ways.

Statement of Reconciliation

To return to the voices of our Ktunaxa Elders, I share with you that upon further discussion, and when we explained the context of why we wanted to hear about “reconciliation” (that we were asking about this concept in terms of Indian Residential schools) they came up with the following statement, which is republished in poem “20.” This statement took many meetings, and was finalized by the Ktunaxa Nation Council’s Traditional Knowledge and Language Advisory Committee on August 16, 2018:

ñini ku qatwiyana

[this is what is in our hearts]

qaga?ni ma yaqawitknawaski

[what they did to us is true]

qapitpañin

[say it all/tell the whole story]

mika yaqatitknawaski hu qayaqatqacatani

[despite what happened to us we made it through]

hu qatwinañani kuç suki? aqstmakniñ nañ

[we want a good life for ourselves]

hawiçkinin kçmak kyam ç çina·kinin

[hold the truth and go forward].

çinñ qaga

[so be it]

ma?ç kuktkinin!

[do not change this statement!]⁴

When I teach about this statement, I talk about how much we can learn from these words. That first line, “*this is what is in our hearts*”; our hearts are where Ktunaxa find knowing. This reference to our hearts is a reference to the deep knowledges that we have carried forward through generations. This is followed by an assertion of truth. Still today we see residential school denialism among Canadians just as we see our leaders debating terms of “genocide” when it comes to Palestine. How many resources are used for this debate that could be used to end the genocide, instead?

This third statement, “q̓apilpałnin” or “*say it all/tell the whole story*,” is a call that I am answering with this book. While I am unable to tell the entire story of what is happening in Palestine, or even of what has happened to us, as Ktunaxa in so-called Canada, I am answering the call of Palestinians and my Ktunaxa Elders alike: to speak. To share the stories of lives lost, of trauma inflicted upon us, of what it means to survive a genocide.

It is my prayer that years from now Palestinians will be able to echo the words of Ktunaxa here “*despite what happened to us we made it through*.” I refuse to imagine a world without Palestinians. Just as there is no word in Ktunaxa for “I’m sorry,” there is no word in our language for “extinct.” May we honour this knowledge and continue to pray, fight for, and honour Palestinian life and Indigenous futures.

When I hear the fourth statement, I cannot help but think of the Palestinian people I have witnessed celebrating children’s birthdays, dancing dabke, delighting at finding a blooming poppy or a small turtle, flying kites made of the limited emergency supplies they have amongst the devastation of the genocide they are living through.

We want a good life for ourselves.

There are a thousand and one stories by racists and colonizers about what Indigenous people want. I have heard it all. And yet, I remember these words from my knowledge holders. I remember the

words of Palestinian poets and writers and young people who have had to become journalists out of necessity, not out of a dream. They want to return. They want to inhabit their homes and go to their schools and drink their teas and nourish themselves with the foods and waters of their homelands. They want to grow the olive trees of their ancestors and watch sunrises and sunsets in peace in their homelands.

We want a good life for ourselves.

I have recently read a horrifying statistic from 2021 that the average life expectancy for a First Nations man living in Alberta has dropped to 60 years old (nearly 20 years lower than the average non-First Nations man).⁵ When my Elders share this statement, we are saying: we want our children to live long, happy and healthy lives.

I extend that to Palestinian children and their families; parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, aunties, uncles, community members, school teachers. No person should go through what Palestinians are facing now. No Ktunaxa person should have gone through what my ancestors went through either.

There's a saying in our Ktunaxa culture that we each walk our own road. When someone is straying off their path, or taking a side route, we may hear a call from our aunties or family members to "fix" our "road." I think of this when I think of the concept of apology. Perhaps I was on the wrong road for a bit, so what do I need to fix it? Sometimes I've gone far down that wrong road and need to backtrack some miles before being able to find my way. Other days, I may have only taken a step or two and can easily correct my actions.

Palestine, this book is the beginning of "fixing my road." I will admit, as a young Indigenous person growing up in ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa (small-town southeastern British Columbia, Canada), I did not know about your people or what was happening in your lands.

Seeds

It has become important for me to share my journey to shouting “Free Palestine!” loud and clear and without shame or fear. We know that there are still many people who don’t understand, who have chosen to look away, or who feel like it’s all just too much to understand. Perhaps they do understand, but fear speaking up. Perhaps the cost feels too high. This next section outlines a bit of my history, to offer up that each time we think of Palestine, and each time we are brought into interacting with Palestinian stories, I believe a seed is planted. While none of these things got me as far as this year has, these are moments on my road when I could not look away. I think they are also important to remember, to honour the work of all the incredible thinkers, knowledge holders, speakers, intellectuals, artists and activists who were doing this work long before I began writing poems.

When I went away to Simon Fraser University (named after a colonizer of Coast Salish Lands) I began to connect with larger communities, most specifically LGBTQ+ people, and I vaguely remember conversations of pinkwashing happening at that time. I will admit I didn’t look far into the conversation. I was afraid of my own queerness and was overwhelmed by the journey I was on—of learning the truths about what had happened to my own people. I want it to be clear here that my own Two Spirit identity, my identity as a transgender person and my identity as a queer man, only serve to deepen my desire to speak up for Palestine. While this initial moment interacting with these ideas didn’t immediately get me here, it was a moment on my road that led me to today’s commitment. I will not allow pinkwashing to sway me.

The next thing I can remember in my work of fixing my road was when the Indigenous academic community expressed outrage at the un-hiring “controversy” involving Palestinian and Jordanian professor Steven Salaita in the 2010s.⁶ I wore a pin a friend gifted me that said “Fuck Civility,” and yet, I didn’t fully comprehend what was happening outside of my belief in academic freedoms and the deep feeling of knowing when an injustice had happened.

It was a few years later (years in which I enrolled in a PhD program, moved across the country, got sober, came out as transgender and began participating in Indigenous ceremony) that I found myself on Facebook sharing about how happy I was with my switch from sugary sodas to carbonated water because I had bought a Soda Stream. I am grateful now to the Indigenous Studies professor who brought my attention to the company being Israeli owned. While there is a pang of shame, I share this story to honour those who are coming to this fight late (all of us), and who may relate to this consistent unknowing. I had seen the proud stamp of “Made in Israel” on the box but had not understood, at the time, what the BDS (Boycott, Divest and Sanction) movement was, or how it applied to this company. That being said, a few days after the post and comment, I felt a familiar nagging, like something just wasn’t sitting right with me about the whole thing. I posted a request to my Facebook friends and followers on November 9, 2017:

So, insecure truth-telling time: I know very little about Israel/Palestine conflicts, and what I can do to (help? ...probably the wrong word) context: I’m trying to learn about BDS due to my previous Soda Stream post and it’s become very clear to me that I know very little about the complexities of this situation-which is probably why I haven’t tried to learn anything before now...

My truth is that I work where my gifts are used best: at home, in our Indigenous communities, with Indigenous students, and in the Canadian/Indigenous context that I have spent the last 10 years of post-secondary learning about.

That being said, I don’t believe that we exist in a vacuum, and I think it’s time for me to open my eyes a bit.

It’s going to have to stay on the corner of my desk, but if there are folks that know more about this and are willing to say, grab a coffee, set a time to skype chat, or whatever (fully out

of interest/passions sake, and in full recognition that I am requesting some labour from you) I would be grateful and I think we could have some good conversations, because I think there are connections to be made.

Also, if you've got books/articles etc. out there to recommend, I'll add them to the list. Because I recognize there are many scholars and folks who have done the work to make the connections that I "think there are" to be had, already. Due to current time constraints (ie. writing my own dissertation) I simply spend time searching on my own right now, but please trust I will do the labour of reading whatever you do the labour of sending my way.

As always, your support in my learning endeavours is greatly appreciated.

In many Indigenous cultures, including Ktunaxa, the number seven holds spiritual significance. I have learned that in seven years, much can change. It's not lost on me that I will be completing final edits on this book going to production around the same time that seven years has passed since this initial post. While I admit my first round of research from this initial post was lacking, I want to be clear that it's because the propaganda and desire for me not to know is so strong in the world. I remember reading links and finding so much about the "complexity" of the "conflict." I remember feeling confused, and instead of pushing through that confusion, stepping away, returning to learning about contexts I understood more easily, and to my own little life. It's so easy in this capitalist world to look away.

And yet, I know that post planted a seed. The story of Steven Salaita cultivated the earth for this seed. Rectifying my limited understanding of pinkwashing shook loose what I understood about the world and made way for my commitment to writing and publishing this collection.

I have been asked what made me start, and again, with my neurodivergent trauma brain, I'm not sure exactly what image it was that pulled me to write. When I teach creative writing workshops, I often say "I am a poet because when the feeling gets too big, I need somewhere to put it." What I can say is that the feelings witnessing the initial days of this present-day Palestinian genocide were far too much for me to contain within myself.

I saw children with their limbs blown off, I saw entire blocks of housing brought down to rubble, I saw hundreds of Palestinians walking through the streets in terror, trying to help each other, trying to find where the calls of pain were coming from underneath the rubble of their homes. I witnessed surgeons performing surgery on people with no anesthetic. I became familiar with the names of Palestinian youth-become-journalists; Bisan Owda (@wizard_bisan1), Motaz Azaiza (@motaz_azaiza), Plestia Alaqad (@plestia.alaqad), and those of the diaspora, like Jenan Matari (@jenanmatari) and Tasha Nadia Matar (@tahrirtherapy). I connected with acquaintances, some I had only met in person briefly, others I had only met on zoom, who were following, sharing, posting and witnessing alongside me. At some point, I started referring to these relationships as "comrades in genocide." After the first poem, there came another and another.

At some point I realized that this genocide would be ongoing. At some point, in spite of my desire and hope for a heroic stop to the violence, in spite of my faltering faith in the systems, I began faxing each poem to the office of Justin Trudeau. I wrote my local Conservative MP, and had a racist diatribe emailed back to me. I donated to GoFundMes and raffles, I joined local groups and signed on to speak at panels in other cities, months down the road, because I learned that this was not going to be an easy ending. I learned that I would need to sustain. I kept writing poems.

Perhaps two or three months in, I realized that this sustained practice would go on longer than anticipated. I realized that while the swell of pro-Palestinian protests and phone calls to our government gave me the hope that this would end quickly—that our governments

would listen to us, the people, and stop these horrors from happening—my hope and this fire inside me wasn't enough to stop colonization across the world. I kept writing poems, and slowly my goal became to reach one hundred poems. This book, *Born Sacred: Poems for Palestine*, holds those one hundred poems, which I wrote between October 2023 and April 2024, as I worked through all the feelings that came along with being a survivor of genocide, while witnessing genocide happening in real time across the world from me.

I refuse any ambiguity. My heart and spirit stand for a free Palestine. These poems are one small act of resistance. One small act of “fixing my road,” and committing myself to the truth that I have stepped into in witnessing and speaking out for Palestinian life. I hope it blossoms a seed of resilience in you too.

On a final note, I want to share that this book would not be possible without Black activists. I would not have awoken so abruptly to Palestine if I had not been awakened by Black Lives Matter, to concepts like reparations and abolitionism. I would not be here to write these poems without so many incredible Indigenous people before me. In the initial draft of this preface, I had proposed republishing work from the late Sto:lo aunty, Lee Maracle, however, I instead want to direct you, reader, to her entire book, *Talking to the Diaspora*, inscribed “for Mahmoud Darwish & the children of Gaza.”⁷

I am far from the first Indigenous person in Canada to understand and draw attention to the connections between our people and the people of Palestine. May this book inspire others, and may we continue writing, fighting, resisting, loving, breathing and connecting until we see our dream of a Free Palestine, and #landback throughout the world, come true.

— SMOKII SUMAC, October 2024



EXCERPT



EXCERPT

1.

today
my body is in pain
every piece of wood
i stacked to get ready
for winter
for winter

for my love to
keep the home fire
burning

every movement
etched into my
muscles
every time
i laid another piece
on the wood pile
i said a prayer

no more war
help us all
find the peace
of stacking
wood
for winter

may the fires of Palestine
turn to those of warming
peace

a cats head resting
beside them

may the burning of
bomb explosions
cease

and the fires
of nourishment and
rest be lit

freedom
to stack wood

to prepare for
a future
we can
trust
will
come

2.

i pour water for my tea

*i lost my water ration for
the day*

my husband waters the
plants

*500mL
the water has been cut off*

i let the water pour over
me in the shower
longer than usual
today

*the women are taking
pills
to stop menstruation
no water to clean*

i fill up the water glass
beside my bed

*i lost my water ration for
the day*

i pour fresh water
into the cup
on my altar

and
pray
for
Palestine

*free
free
Palestine*

3.

today i woke up
sobbing

a truth screaming
into my being

from my unconscious
from the place
truth lives

when we wont
look at it

how do so many
look away?

soothe themselves
tell each other
little stories

close their eyes
drive away

how do we
go on?

today i woke up
sobbing
i watched a video
of a Palestinian child
crying for their mother

felt the deep well of pain
inside me
remembering crying
for my own

how many generations
taught not to cry?
to take it out
on themselves?

the least i can do
is weep today

let the truth
break me open