

Safe Haven

By Maha Hararah

Located in San Francisco, which is the home of the Giants, is AT&T Park, a great green field moderately flooded in a gush of white-uniformed baseball players gyrating in circles to get to home plate. In the vicinity of these players, like a vast blockade enclosing the flood, linger the colossal walls and the stands of the ballpark. Surrounding the field is a flood of men and women of every race and nation sitting high up in the stands and cheering 'Let's go Giants...!' On Thursday, July 21, 2006, my family and I were getting ready to witness the San Francisco Giants smother the Los Angeles Dodgers. This baseball game was particularly important in that it was the game in which Barry Bonds was to hit another one of his milestone homeruns. Obviously, we were planning on having an amazing time indulging in a great American tradition.

Within the Gaza City walls, people quaked as the sounds of an Israeli siege began on July 13, 2006. The Palestinians heard the warlike sounds of Israeli tanks, helicopters, and guns. Missiles thundered over the civilian homes. Outside the walls, hundreds of green soldiers covered the hills. The Israeli Occupation Forces had carried numerous attacks on Gaza homes. On July 22, 2006, four family members from Gaza were killed and their home demolished. By July 26, 2006, thirty-one Palestinian children had been killed in thirty-one days. As Israeli troops broke through parts of the city, desperately, Palestinians attempted to plug the breach. However, Gaza had fallen that day.

As I was eating the ballpark's famous garlic fries, and waiting for Barry Bonds to hit a ball in my direction, I began pondering about my family's love of baseball. Then it came to me; not the homerun Barry Bonds hit, but the reason why we love baseball. Baseball symbolizes many aspects of American life to my family. Such a concept is simply due to the fact that

baseball is representative of the American dream. By American dream, I mean a few words that were uttered by a man a few years ago (more like 232 years ago). These few words lit a fire under the people of colonized America, a fire that allows Americans to enjoy the freedoms that we have today. These words are “Give me liberty or give me death!” Patrick Henry uttered these words during a speech to the colonized on March 23, 1775. In fact, he was praised as a hero after exclaiming such zealous terms.

On Friday, July 22, 2006, at 5:50 a.m., a family in Gaza was preparing a rooftop breakfast, a summer tradition in Gaza. A disabled 25-year old was heating water for tea in a fire pit when he was suddenly engulfed by a huge flash of light. His nephew, a 20-year old, ran up the stairwell to see what pandemonium has just occurred on top of his home. He soon realized that his uncle’s body was ripped to shreds by an Israeli shell. Two of his other nephews, ages 12 and 13, ran after their brother after hearing the shouts and blasts coming from the rooftop. Soon, another flash engulfed the two little boys. This flash was the second Israeli shell and two more people had been murdered at the hands of the Israeli forces. The children’s mother was standing in the stairwell, near the remnants of the first shell, when she, too, was blasted by a shell. Her body was found lying on top of her sons’ bodies.

At about 8:00 p.m. in San Francisco, my brother receives a frantic phone call from my mother, ordering us to go home. She did not give us a reason to go home, but just told us to go. We listened to her wishes and left the ballpark. We rushed home, only to find the house filled with sobbing relatives. Four of my cousins were just killed in Gaza. Palestinian officials say that they were targeted on account of living in a home higher than other homes, and that their home had overlooked the eastern border.

I found it ironic that when I was watching Barry Bonds run home, my family lost their home. However, during the entire trauma my family was going through, I only thought about Patrick Henry's aforementioned words and his sense of patriotism. I thought about the fact that his words reflect the Palestinian struggle. The "liberty" that Patrick Henry was referring to does not exist in Palestine. In fact, the Occupation has caused thousands of other Palestinian homes to be demolished since 1948, reducing the very freedoms that God has endowed on His servants.

I do regret going to that baseball game. However, I realize that I cannot tell the future and cannot possibly know that such a tragedy was to come. I also regret never teaching my cousins the game of baseball. I feel this way because baseball represents our passage through life. When the player leaves home plate, life begins, and thus, the player has to overcome any obstacles that come his way in order to get back to home plate. Home plate reminds me of home. By the term "home," I mean the peaceful aspect of having your own safe haven. I just hope that my cousins have found a new home in Heaven.