

## **By Heart and Soul**

I was not born in Palestine,  
but I belong to my people — by heart and soul.

Belonging is not written on papers,  
nor shaped by borders.  
Belonging is written in the heart.  
Belonging is carried in the soul.  
Belonging is witnessed in love, in loyalty, in sacrifice.

I have never stood on the shore of Gaza watching the sunset fade into the sea.  
I have never walked the hills of Jerusalem glowing with sunlight.  
I have never harvested olives from its ancient groves.  
I have never prayed in the courtyards of al-Aqsa, beneath its timeless arches and eternal sky.

I have never awoken to the roar of planes.  
I have never fled from the ruins of shattered homes.  
I have never buried my children under the light of broken stars.  
I have never gathered the remains of my loved ones into a plastic bag.

And yet — every wound has wounded me.  
Every unjust death has weighed upon my chest.  
Every orphan's cry has shaken me.  
Every mother's tear has silenced me.  
Every father's prayer has steadied me.  
Every child's hope has lifted me.

Their wounds are my wounds.  
Their steadfastness is my pride.  
Their hope is my strength.  
And their cause is my duty.

I do not stand among them as a visitor.  
Nor do I speak of them as a stranger.  
I stand as kin.  
I stand as family.  
I stand unique yet never alone.  
I stand unique as my name, and one with my people as my destiny.

I am not bound to them by soil, but by love.  
Not by passing fate, but by destined fate.  
Not by a narrow citizenship, but by a vast nation.

I fight not with weapons, but with words.  
I resist not with hatred, but with truth.  
And I defend my people as a lioness defends her cubs:  
with a love that does not weaken,  
with a courage that does not break,  
with a loyalty that does not rest until her little ones are safe.

For truth is my sword.  
Justice is my shield.  
Patience is my armor.  
And with these, I will never surrender.

I was not born in Palestine,  
but Palestine was born in me.  
And I will remain with my people —  
until the chains of injustice are broken,  
until justice flows through the land like a river,  
until the call to prayer rises free from every minaret,  
until safety — the safety of truth — returns to the land of prophets and martyrs.

And I say: I will not forget.  
I will not be silent.  
I will not turn my face away.  
Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever.

I will remember the martyrs.  
I will honor the steadfast.  
I will carry the cause.  
I will guard the hope.  
And I will struggle — with word, with truth, with soul —  
until God's promise is fulfilled,  
and the oppressed inherit the earth.