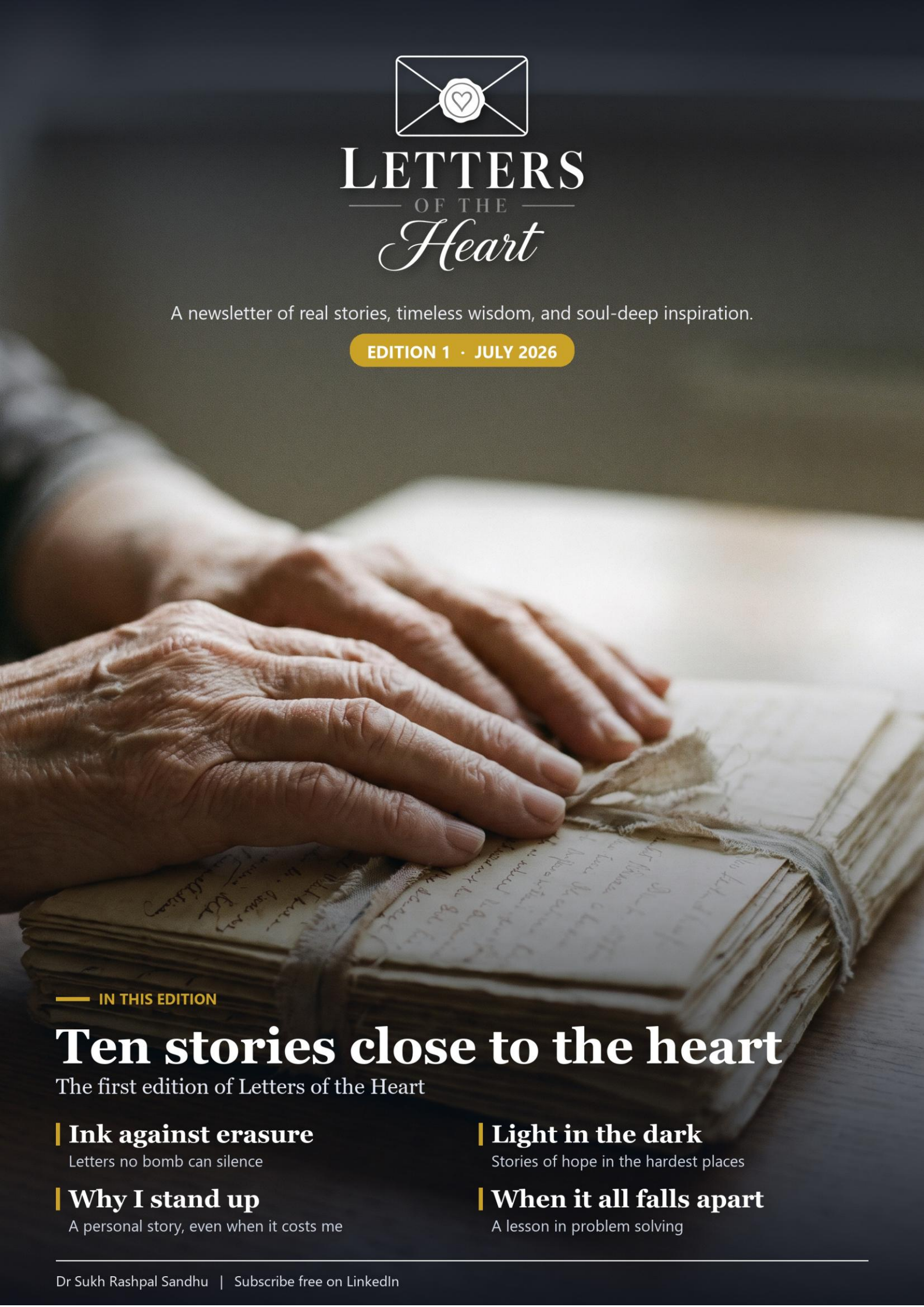


LETTERS OF THE *Heart*

A newsletter of real stories, timeless wisdom, and soul-deep inspiration.

EDITION 1 · JULY 2026

IN THIS EDITION

Ten stories close to the heart

The first edition of Letters of the Heart

Ink against erasure
Letters no bomb can silence

Light in the dark
Stories of hope in the hardest places

Why I stand up
A personal story, even when it costs me

When it all falls apart
A lesson in problem solving

Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu | Subscribe free on LinkedIn

EDITION 1 | JULY 2026

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INTRODUCTION

Letters of the Heart: July 2026

By Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu

Edition 1 of Letters of the Heart: 6 pieces for July 2026.

A newsletter of real stories, timeless wisdom, and soul-deep inspiration.

This edition brings together 6 pieces first published in Letters of the Heart on LinkedIn, each carrying the date it first appeared. Republished pieces appear as they were first published, with their original images; facts, figures and links are as they stood on that date.

In this edition

- In this edition, I'm excited to share ten stories that hold a special place in my heart.
- Letters of the Heart Edition 8: Ink Against Erasure: Letters No Bomb Can Silence
- Letters of the Heart: Edition 9: Light in the Dark
- A personal story: Why I stand up, even when it costs me
- When it all falls apart: a lesson in problem solving
- What does it truly mean to belong?

Thank you to every reader who subscribes, shares and responds.

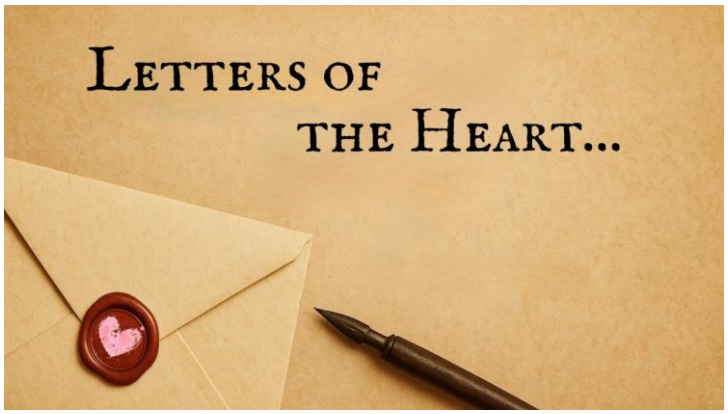
Warm regards,
Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu
Author, Letters of the Heart

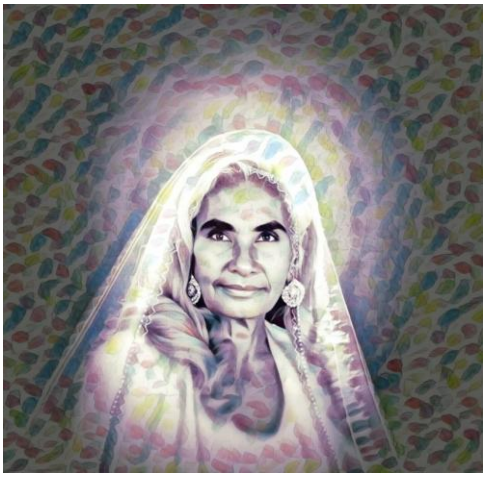
LETTERS OF THE HEART

In this edition, I’m excited to share ten stories that hold a special place in my heart.

By Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu | First published 17 May 2025

Some stories do not come from books or classrooms, they come from hands that have kneaded dough before dawn, eyes that have watched loved ones come and go, and hearts that have lived through storms and still chosen to be gentle.





Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth (My grandmother)

Some stories do not come from books or classrooms, they come from hands that have kneaded dough before dawn, eyes that have watched loved ones come and go, and hearts that have lived through storms and still chosen to be gentle. This first edition of *Letters of the Heart* is a tribute to one such heart, my sweetheart grandmother, **Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth**. A woman whose voice was soft, yet carried the weight of mountains. She never lectured, never imposed, but always responded with a story. Her wisdom arrived like folded notes, quiet, simple, unforgettable. These are not just tales. They are echoes of healing, trust, loss, purpose, and love, moments shaped by metaphor, rooted in nature, and alive with truth. Through ten tender exchanges, she offered me more than answers, she offered meaning. And

in sharing them with you, I hope they offer a lantern for your own path, just as they once did for mine.

Each page is a letter. Each letter, a moment of grace. So sit with these stories slowly. Let them breathe. Perhaps, in their stillness, you'll hear the whisper of someone you love. Perhaps, like me, you'll find a piece of yourself.

With warmth and memory,

Sukh

Story 1:

Hurt by someone I cared about, I once confided in my grandmother, saying, "They broke my trust." Her response was this:

> *A glass vase was shattered by the wind. A potter picked the pieces and made a mosaic, more colourful than the original. And stronger.*

She said, "What's broken can still become beautiful, just not in the way you imagined."

> *"You didn't lose trust. You gained truth."*



Story 2:

One day, I said to my grandmother, "That person isn't worthy of kindness." She didn't scold me. Instead, she shared this wisdom:

> *A mirror cracked in a storm. People walked past, saying, "It's broken." But one child stopped and saw the sun reflected in the shards. The mirror still shined, just differently.*

She said, "You never know how broken someone is, or how much light they still hold."

> *"Don't judge the crack. Honour the reflection."*



Story 3:

She once said to me, “Even the strongest must bow to heal.” At the time, I didn’t quite grasp her meaning, until she shared a story drawn from the heart of nature:

> *When a crow falls ill, it doesn’t fly higher. It flies lower, down to the ground, where the ants live. It sits near their nest, opens its wings, and waits. The ants crawl over its feathers and release something strange, a natural acid that clears out the parasites, bacteria, and illness hiding under its skin. The crow lets itself be bitten… to be better.*

I asked her, “Doesn’t it hurt?” She said, “Yes. But sometimes, healing comes from surrender. Not strength.”

That story stayed with me. Not just because the crow was wise, but because it knew when to land, when to listen, and when to let others help.

"Even wings need rest. Even healers need healing.", Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth



Story 4:

Once, overwhelmed with "what ifs", I told my grandmother, “I’m scared of what tomorrow might bring.” She told me this story:

> *A bird worried each night about the storm that might come. One day, she forgot to fear, and flew. The storm came. But she was already beyond it.*

She said, "Worry doesn't stop the storm. But it can stop the wings."

"Don't let tomorrow's clouds block today's flight."



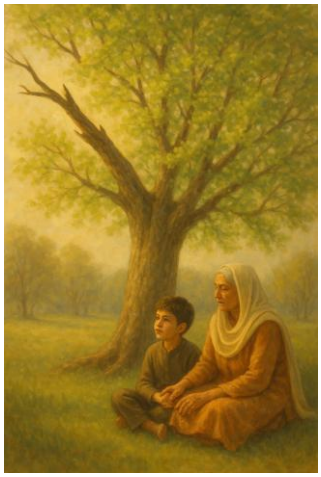
Story 5:

I asked, "Why does losing someone hurt for so long?" My grandmother didn't give comfort, she gave this story:

A tree lost a branch in winter. It ached in silence. Spring came. New leaves grew. But the tree never forgot the shape of what was missing. And still, it bloomed.

She whispered, "Grief doesn't end. It just learns to breathe with you."

"You don't move on. You move with."



Story 6:

I once said, "They didn't choose me. Maybe I'm not good enough." My grandmother replied with this story:

A pearl sat in the sand while people passed by for shiny stones. It stayed still. Quiet. Unchosen. One day, a diver saw it, and stopped searching forever.

She touched my cheek and said, "Being overlooked doesn't mean you're less valuable. It just means they weren't ready to see."

> *"Your worth isn't proven by being picked. It exists, regardless."*



Story 7:

One night, I told my grandmother, **Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth**, "My mind won't stop racing. I keep thinking of everything that could go wrong." She didn't tell me to be strong. She told me this instead:

> *A traveller carried a bag full of stones. Each one was a worry, a 'what if', a fear. He reached a river, tired and aching, and dropped the bag to rest. To his surprise, the water still flowed, the sun still rose, and the world hadn't fallen apart. He picked up only what he needed, and left the rest by the river. That day, he walked lighter… and never looked back.*

She held my hand and said, "Not every thought deserves a home in your head."

That story taught me: peace isn't found in solving everything, it's in releasing what isn't yours to carry.

> *"If it's not happening now, let it go now.", Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth*



Story 8:

"Grandma," I asked, tugging on her sleeve, "what if I never ever find my purpose?" She looked at me with her warm, crinkly smile and said:

> *A candle asked the sun, "What's my purpose if you already light the world?" The sun replied, "Some people only find their way after I leave. That's where you begin."*

She looked at me and said, "You may not be for everyone, but you are for someone. And that's enough."

> *"Your light matters, even if it shines in the quiet corners."*



Story 9:

I saw someone crying at the funeral and looked up at my grandmother. "Why do people have to die?" I asked. "And where do they go?" She didn't answer right away. Instead, she pulled me close and said:

> *A clay lamp once lit hundreds of others. It glowed each night, gave warmth, gave light, until one day, its flame quietly faded. The next morning, people wept around it. But the room was still bright, lit by the hundreds it had touched. Its light had not ended. It had multiplied.*

I asked her, "So it didn't die?" She placed her hand over my heart and said, "Nothing that gives love truly disappears. It simply changes form."That story stayed with me. It taught me that the ones we love never leave, they just become part of everything that stays bright.

"The body leaves. But the light remains.", Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth



Story 10:

I asked my grandmother, Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth, "Why do some people stay in our lives forever, and others go away?" Instead of explaining, she smiled and began to tell me a story, her voice soft yet full of meaning:

> *Two kites were tied to the same hand, one soared high, the other stayed low. The higher one said, "You're holding me back." The lower one said, "Maybe I'm anchoring you." A wind came, and the string snapped. The high kite flew wildly, and was lost to the sky. The other fell gently to the ground, still connected to the hand that once held both.*

I looked at her and asked, "So which one was free?" She said, "Neither. And both. Because relationships aren't about flying or falling, they're about holding."

That story made me realise: real bonds don't always look balanced. But they keep us from drifting too far from who we are.

> *"The right people don't tie you down. They tether you to yourself.", Tejpal Kaur Aulakh Batth*



Until Next Time...

Thank you for reading these treasured moments from my grandmother's heart to yours.

Her stories never ended, they simply paused between cups of chai and quiet walks under the stars. I carry them still, and each week, I'll continue to share more, stories that held me when nothing else could, that stitched meaning into my confusion, and that reminded me who I am.

So, until next week, may you hold onto what gives you light. May you honour the cracks, the quiet, and the strength it takes to be soft. And may you find comfort in knowing, more stories are coming.

With love and remembrance,

Sukh Sandhu

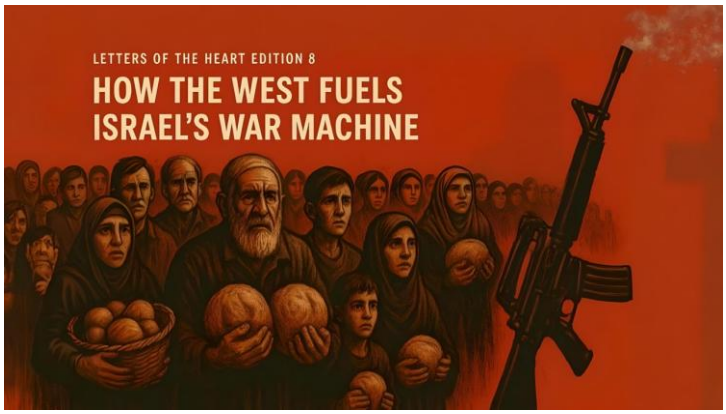
www.sukhsandhu.com

LETTERS OF THE HEART

Letters of the Heart Edition 8: Ink Against Erasure: Letters No Bomb Can Silence

By Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu | First published 6 July 2025

Over the last few days, I have faced pressure in every form imaginable, clients backing out, cyberattacks attempting to erase my work, threats meant to cripple my voice, and bullying designed to silence my resolve.





Over the last few days, I have faced pressure in every form imaginable, clients backing out, cyberattacks attempting to erase my work, threats meant to cripple my voice, and bullying designed to silence my resolve. But these tactics have done the opposite.

They have lit a fire.

They have told me exactly what needs to be said.

And I will say it, not just here, but in every publication, every platform, every breath I can give to the voiceless.

To truth.

To courage.

To honouring those who can no longer speak for themselves.

This edition of *Letters of the Heart* is not just a collection of stories. It is a reckoning.

> *A terrorist is any hand that harms the innocent, and any voice, political or media that justifies or conceals it is complicit in the crime.*

Before you read Edition 8, here are some key facts to consider.

> *Every single university in Gaza has been destroyed or rendered inoperable by Israeli airstrikes and ground operations. The last, Israa University, was demolished in January 2024.*
>
> *Almost all of Gaza's hospitals have been bombed, besieged, or forced to close. As of mid-2025, there are no fully functioning hospitals in Rafah or across much of the Strip.*
>
> *More than 90% of homes have been damaged or destroyed. UN shelters are overcrowded and have repeatedly come under attack. There is nowhere safe for Gaza's civilians to go.*
>
> *Thousands of children have been killed, thousands more are missing, and nearly every child in Gaza has been displaced, traumatized, or orphaned. Schools are gone, playgrounds are rubble, and hunger and disease stalk every corner.*
>
> *Nearly 90% of Gaza's school buildings are damaged or destroyed. Over 625,000 children have been out of school for months, their futures stolen.*
>
> *The land itself is being erased. Entire towns like Khuza'a have been razed to the ground, their fields and orchards deliberately destroyed.*
>
> *The blockade and bombardment have brought famine. Parents must choose between starving and risking death at aid lines, where hundreds have been killed by Israeli fire while seeking food.*
>
> *The UN and human rights groups warn: the scale and intent of destruction- of homes, schools, hospitals, water, and food: amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and, in parts of Gaza, ethnic cleansing and genocide.*
>
> *UN experts, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have all warned that the systematic destruction and forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza is ethnic cleansing in action.*
>
> *These statements are directly supported by the latest findings from Save the Children, UNICEF, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the United Nations, and other leading organisations.*

Every statement in this edition is grounded in documented evidence from reputable sources; no personal opinions or interpretations have been included.

A Child's Life, Destroyed: The Atrocity Ben-Gurion Could Not Forget



The sign in the photo is written in Arabic and says: "قبور أطفال استشهدوا" This translates to English as: "Graves of children who were martyred" or "Graves of children who were killed as martyrs."

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported by Haaretz and other reputable sources.

She was just thirteen, a Palestinian girl, caught in the turmoil of war. In a moment of unimaginable cruelty, a group of twenty soldiers made a decision that would end her young life.

"It was decided and carried out." Twenty soldiers.

A 13-year-old Palestinian girl.

They voted: rape on a roster, three days.

Washed her.

Cut her hair.

Gang raped her, one after another.

She was left unconscious.

Taken to the desert.

Shot.

Buried in a one-foot grave.

A few days later, the commander asked: "Did you return her to her village?"

Moshe replied: "We killed her. It was a shame to waste the petrol."

This atrocity was not forgotten by all. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, recorded the horror in his diary, a dark stain in the early history of the state.

A horror, covered up for years.

A child's life, destroyed.

Remembering Ibrahim al-Masry, 14 and Thousands More: Gaza's Child Victims



The heartbreaking story of Ibrahim al-Masry, a 14-year-old boy from Beit Hanoun, Gaza, is one among countless others that reveal the devastating toll of conflict on the most vulnerable. Playing innocently in his yard with his brother and relatives, Ibrahim's childhood was abruptly and violently stolen when an Israeli airstrike struck without warning. He, his brother, and family members were killed in an instant, their lives extinguished and their family shattered. This tragedy is not isolated; it echoes across Gaza, where thousands of children have lost their lives in similar circumstances.

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported by IMEMC News and Airwars.

Ibrahim al-Masry, 14 years old.

Beit Hanoun, Gaza.

He was playing in his yard with his brother and relatives.

An Israeli airstrike hit without warning.

In an instant, childhood was erased.

Ibrahim, his brother, and family members were killed.

Their names were added to the growing list of children lost.

A family shattered.

A community in mourning.

The war did not spare the young.

Ibrahim's story is one among many in Gaza.

There is documented evidence of thousands of children being killed in Gaza.

Hamza Nassar, 12

Killed by an Israeli strike while running an errand for his mother in Gaza

Lina Iyad Sharir, 15

Killed with her parents in an Israeli airstrike on their home in Gaza City

Hala Hussein al-Rifi, 13

Killed in a predawn Israeli airstrike on her home, her younger sister and father were wounded

Dima Rami al-Ifranji, 15

Killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting residential buildings in Gaza

Dana Riad Ishkantna, 9

Killed in the same overnight airstrikes as Dima, Tala, and Hana

Tala Ayman Abu al-Auf, 13

Killed in the same overnight Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City

Hana Shukri al-Kawlak, 14

Killed with three other children in the same Israeli airstrike

Mira Rami al-Ifranji, 11

Body recovered from rubble after Israeli airstrikes on Al-Wahda Street

Yara Mohammad al-Kawlak, 9

Killed with her siblings in the same strike

Rula Mohammad al-Kawlak, 5

Killed with her siblings in the same strike

Hala Mohammad al-Kawlak, 12

Killed with her siblings in the same strike

Rafeef Murshed Abu Dayer, 10

Killed by shrapnel while eating lunch with her family during an Israeli airstrike

Baraa Wisam Ahmad al-Gharabli, 5

Killed by a rocket in Gaza, one of several children killed in the same incident

Rahaf Mohammad Attalla al-Masri, 10

Killed in a blast in Beit Hanoun, Gaza Strip

Bashar Ahmad Ibrahim Samour, 17

Shot and killed by Israeli forces near the Gaza perimeter fence

Amir Rafat Mohammad Tanani, 6

Killed in an Israeli airstrike on a residential neighborhood

Children in Nour Shams refugee camp

Four children (Yousef Mohammad Omar Zaghdad, 11; Mujahed Mohammad Yousef Sa’aydeh, 15; Udai Ma’moun Khaled Abu Al-Heija, 15; Sari Udai Ali Al-Sada, 15) killed by an Israeli missile strike

Ali Abdullah Mohammad Said Khazna, 14

Shot and killed by Israeli forces in Tulkarem

Taha Ibrahim Mohammad Mahmeed, 15

Shot and killed during an Israeli military incursion into Nour Shams refugee camp

Additional context:

Since October 2023, at least 50,000 Palestinian children have been reported killed in Gaza, with many more injured or missing

Children detained by Israeli forces have reported torture, beatings, and abuse, with some released with broken bones and blood-stained clothing

Human rights organisations have documented systematic targeting, home demolitions, and denial of basic needs, leading to starvation and trauma among Palestinian children

These stories represent only a small fraction of the violence and suffering endured by Palestinian children in recent years, as documented by international organisations and media.

Broken Trust: The Social Worker's Ordeal in Detention



UN experts and human rights groups have documented that such sexual violence, forced nudity, and torture are not isolated incidents but part of a systematic pattern across Israeli detention facilities. The suffering of women like her is echoed by countless others, healthcare workers, reporters, and aid workers, whose lives and dignity have been shattered, while justice remains heartbreakingly out of reach.

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported by Human Rights Watch, the United Nations, and major news organisations.

She was a social worker, dedicated to helping her community in Gaza.

Arrested during a military raid, she was taken into Israeli detention.

Inside, the walls closed in.

She was threatened, humiliated, and stripped of her dignity.

Soldiers taunted her with threats of rape.

The threats turned real.

She was raped- violated by those in uniform, her pleas ignored.

Other women, healthcare workers, and detainees suffered the same fate.

Sexual violence became a weapon, used to break spirits, to instil fear.

Her story is not alone.

UN experts and human rights groups have documented these crimes.

Rape, forced nudity, and sexual torture, systematic, deliberate, and devastating.

A social worker's life, shattered.

A community's trust, broken.

The world bears witness, but justice remains distant.

Documented evidence shows thousands of social workers, reporters, and human rights workers are now being silenced by the Israeli government.



According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), as of July 2025: At least 185 journalists and media workers have been killed since October 7, 2023, according to IFJ and CPJ. The vast majority, at least 171 to 177, are Palestinian journalists killed in Gaza. CPJ reports 185 journalists killed (177 Palestinian, two Israeli, six Lebanese) as of June 16, 2025. The Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate and some local organisations report even higher numbers, with some sources citing over 210 journalists killed in Gaza alone by April 2025. The Watson Institute's "Costs of War" project reported 232 journalists killed in Gaza by April 2025, though this figure includes a broader definition of media workers and is higher than most international watchdog counts. In addition to those killed, there have been dozens of journalists injured, at least 86 arrested, and several reported missing.

.

Shields and Silence: The Sde Teiman Prison Rape Exposed



This is not just a story of one crime, but a window into a system of abuse, where justice remains elusive and the suffering of prisoners is met with impunity or even public support. For those wanting to see the footage or learn more, the video has been aired by Israel's Channel 12 and reported by TRT World, Sky News, and Anadolu Agency

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported and verified by Al Jazeera, Sky News, CNN, NBC News, and other international media.

A video emerges from Sde Teiman detention facility, Negev desert, July 2024.

Dozens of Palestinian prisoners, blindfolded and bound, lie on the floor.

Guards select one man.

He is led to a wall.

Soldiers raise shields, deliberately attempting to hide their actions from the surveillance cameras

Behind the shields, they rape him.

The video's authenticity was confirmed by multiple international outlets.

The United Nations and the US State Department condemned the footage, calling the abuse "horrific" and "deeply concerning"

The attack is so brutal the victim is hospitalised with a ruptured bowel and severe rectal injuries

He is left unable to walk.

Nine to ten Israeli soldiers are arrested in connection with the rape, though some are later released.

The incident sparks protests in Israel, with some politicians defending the soldiers and others demanding accountability

Human rights organizations, including B'Tselem and the UN Human Rights Office, have documented a pattern of sexual violence, rape, and torture against Palestinian male detainees-including the use of objects and threats of rape as a method of humiliation and control

Testimonies from released detainees and paramedics corroborate these abuses, describing systematic sexual assault, rape with objects, and forced nudity as "standard operating procedure" in Israeli detention facilities

This case is not an exception, but a window into a system of abuse.

A crime captured on camera, yet justice and accountability remain uncertain.

There are hundreds of documented cases like these where innocent captives have been raped and killed.

Encroachment and Expansion: How Israeli Settlements Have Grown in Palestine



Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip, are considered illegal under international law by the vast majority of the international community. This is based on Article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in a 2024 ruling, reaffirmed that Israel's occupation and settlement activity are unlawful, and called on Israel to cease all new settlements and evacuate settlers from occupied Palestinian territory. The United Nations Security Council, through multiple resolutions, most notably Resolution 2334 (2016), has declared that Israel's settlement activity constitutes a "flagrant violation" of

international law and has "no legal validity". The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN General Assembly, and the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions all affirm that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and that the settlements violate international humanitarian law. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court considers the transfer of an occupying power's population into occupied territory a war crime, and the ICC is investigating Israeli settlement policy as part of its probe into the situation in Palestine.

.

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported by BBC, Haaretz, Peace Now, UN Human Rights Office, and other reputable sources.

1967: The Beginning

After the Six-Day War, Israel occupies the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights.

The first settlements are established, often on confiscated Palestinian land, sometimes under the guise of military necessity, then converted to civilian use

1970s-1980s: Strategy and Secrecy

Settlements expand under government policy, guided by the Allon Plan.

Land is seized by military orders, often with the real intent of permanent settlement

Military censors suppress Palestinian reporting on land expropriation and settlement building.

Government incentives, subsidies, tax breaks, infrastructure, encourage Israelis to move into settlements



The overwhelming international legal consensus is that Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are illegal and constitute a violation of international law, as repeatedly affirmed by the ICJ, UN, ICRC, and numerous states and organisations.

1990s: Oslo Accords and Acceleration

Despite the Oslo peace process, settlement building accelerates.

By 1993, over 280,000 settlers live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

Settlement policies aim to encircle Palestinian cities and cut off their expansion

2000s: Outposts and Legalisation

Hundreds of unauthorised outposts are built, many later legalised by the state

Even after the 2005 Gaza disengagement, the settler population in the West Bank continues to rise

2010s-2020s: Massive Growth and Deepening Control

Settlements surge by 40% under Netanyahu's government, from 128 to 178 in the West Bank

Dozens of new settlements and outposts are announced, many deep inside Palestinian territory.

In 2025, Israel approves 22 new settlements, the largest single expansion in decades.

Many are legalised outposts; others are entirely new.

Construction of tens of thousands of settler homes is approved, breaking previous records.

Settlement expansion is used as a "strategic measure" to block the creation of a Palestinian state

Methods and Impact

Land is seized via military orders, "state land" declarations, and demolitions of Palestinian homes

Palestinian communities face home demolitions, forced displacement, and loss of land and resources

Settlements are linked by Israeli-only roads, fragmenting Palestinian territory and undermining prospects for a contiguous Palestinian state

The UN and human rights groups call settlement expansion a violation of international law and a war crime

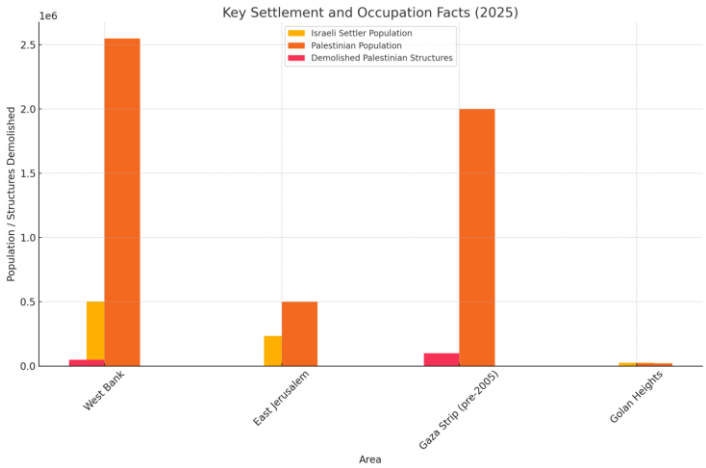
Current Reality

By 2025, about 700,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in more than 160 settlements and over 200 outposts

The Israeli government openly pursues annexation and settlement as central policy, often making decisions in secret to avoid international scrutiny and legal consequences.

The expansion continues, reshaping the land and the future for millions of Palestinians.

Key Settlement and Occupation Facts (2025)



Many more settlements are going on Palestinian land….

Israeli settlements are often established on hilltops and elevated areas in the West Bank, while Palestinian communities are frequently confined to lower-lying land and valleys. This pattern has resulted in many Palestinian villages being surrounded or overlooked by Israeli settlements, contributing to a sense of surveillance, restriction, and strategic disadvantage for Palestinians.

Ethical cleansing

> Boston Consulting Group modelled the costs of "relocating" Palestinians from Gaza and entered into a multimillion-dollar contract to help launch an aid scheme for the shattered enclave, a Financial Times investigation has found.
>
> The consulting firm helped establish the Israel- and US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and supported a related security company but then disavowed the project, which has been marred by the deaths of hundreds of Palestinians, and fired two partners last month.
>
> BCG's role was more extensive than it has publicly described, according to people familiar with the project, stretching over seven months, covering more than $4mn of contracted work and involving internal discussion at senior levels of the firm.

This is from the Financial Times:

Think about that for a moment.

Here is a major consulting firm planning ethnic cleansing on behalf of a client.

I am aware that BCG has pulled back from this work and claims it has remorse about doing it, or at least about being found out to have done it.

However, the point remains: when you lose sight of ethics, and only the dollar signs remain, this is what happens. You assist in plans for ethnic cleansing in pursuit of your own gain.

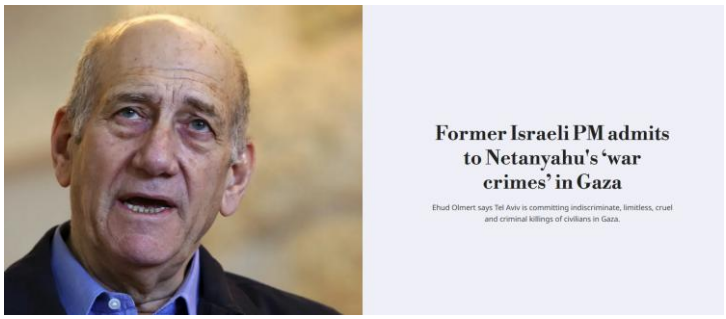


Gaza before and after.



Jewish settlers attack a Palestinian woman in the occupied West Bank

Voices of Dissent: Former Israeli Prime Ministers Condemn the War



![

'Indiscriminate, Unrestrained, Brutal': Former Israeli PM Calls Gaza Assault 'War Crimes'

"What we are doing in Gaza is a war of extermination," former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert wrote in an op-ed aimed at Israeli citizens. HuffPost](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/israel-former-prime-minister-ehud-olmert-war-crimes-gaza_n_68333494e4b0b20a268ade65)

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported by Vatican News, The New Yorker, Arab News, BBC, and other reputable sources.

Ehud Olmert, Israel's former prime minister, has become one of the most outspoken critics of the current government's actions in Gaza and the West Bank.

![

'What is it if not a war crime?' Former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert blasts war in Gaza

By Oren Liebermann and Eugenia Yosef, CNN (CNN), Former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert has blasted the country's political leadership and the conduct of its military, telling CNN he is no longer able to defend Israel against accusations of war... KESQ](https://kesq.com/news/national-world/cnn-world/2025/05/28/what-is-it-if-not-a-war-crime-former-israeli-pm-blasts-war-in-gaza/)

He calls the war "obnoxious and outrageous," describing it as "very close to a war crime."

In interviews with international media, Olmert says he can no longer defend Israel against accusations of war crimes: "What is it if not a war crime?"

He calls the government a "criminal gang," and urges an immediate end to the war, warning that current policies only lead to more deaths and suffering for both Palestinians and Israelis

Olmert also condemns violence by settlers in the West Bank, saying the state is failing to protect civilians

![

Why Ehud Olmert Thinks His Country Is Committing War Crimes

The former Israeli Prime Minister explains how his view of the conflict in Gaza has shifted. The New Yorker](https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/why-ehud-olmert-thinks-his-country-is-committing-war-crimes)

Ehud Barak, another former prime minister, has also spoken out.

Barak criticises Netanyahu for prolonging the war for political reasons, calling the conflict a "war of deception."

He warns that current policies are damaging Israel's international standing and moral fabric, and calls for a deal to release hostages and end the fighting

Naftali Bennett, former prime minister, supports military action against Hamas but fiercely criticises Netanyahu's political management of the war.

Bennett calls the government's approach "catastrophic," blaming Netanyahu for deep divisions within Israeli society and mishandling the crisis.



Over 500 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed in the last 96 hours.

He urges a comprehensive agreement to free hostages and says Netanyahu "must go"

Other prominent Israeli figures, like Yair Golan, a former general and political leader, have condemned the government's conduct.

Golan states: "A sane country doesn't engage in fighting against civilians, doesn't kill babies as a hobby, and doesn't set for itself the goals of expelling a population"

Their voices reflect a growing rift within Israel.

Former leaders and senior officials now publicly accuse the government of war crimes and call for an immediate end to the conflict.

Their criticism reveals deepening divisions in Israeli society, and growing international isolation over the conduct of the war in Gaza.

Silent Catastrophe: Gaza's Babies Starve as Formula Runs Out

![

'Catastrophic': Infants in Gaza battle to stay alive amid formula shortage

For months now, Israel has imposed a siege on the people of Gaza leading to widespread malnutrition and suffering Middle East Eye](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/situation-catastrophic-infants-gaza-battle-stay-alive-amid-formula-shortage)

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported by The Guardian, Le Monde, AP, Al Jazeera, Amnesty International, and other reputable sources

In Gaza's hospitals, the cries of hungry infants echo through corridors already haunted by war.

![

Without baby formula, some infants in Gaza are facing a slow death

NBC News visited a hospital in Gaza where infants are wasting away as malnutrition surges. NBC News](https://www.nbcnews.com/world/middle-east/baby-formula-infants-gaza-are-facing-slow-death-rcna215699)

Doctors and aid workers warn: hundreds of babies are at immediate risk of death, as a critical shortage of infant formula deepens each day.

The cause is clear, Israel's ongoing blockade and severe restrictions on aid deliveries.

![

Israel restricts baby formula, medical access into Gaza amid child hunger crisis: Report

Israeli authorities are facing renewed accusations of using hunger as a weapon of war after seizing cans of baby formula from a US doctor en route to Gaza, according to a report published Wednesday… Middle East Monitor](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250702-israel-restricts-baby-formula-medical-access-into-gaza-amid-child-hunger-crisis-report/)

At Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, Dr. Ahmad al-Farra, head of pediatrics, surveys a neonatal ward with barely a week of formula left.

Specialized formula for premature babies is already gone, forcing staff to ration what little remains among the most vulnerable

"I can't begin to describe how bad things are. We have infants outside the hospital without any access to milk. It's catastrophic,"

Dr. Ahmad al-Farra, Nasser Hospital

![

Hundreds of babies in Gaza at risk of death due to severe shortage of formula milk: Report

Babies in Gaza are facing death as baby milk shortage reaches critical levels, said the Guardian quoting doctors in Gaza. Dr Ahmad al-Farra, the head of paediatrics at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, said only a week's worth of baby milk is remaining... Middle East Eye](https://www.middleeasteye.net/live-blog/live-blog-update/hundreds-babies-gaza-risk-death-due-severe-shortage-formula-milk-report)

The situation is so desperate that doctors entering Gaza on medical missions have tried to bring formula in their luggage, only to have it confiscated by Israeli security at border crossings

Even international organizations cannot get baby formula into Gaza, especially the specialized types needed for premature or lactose-intolerant infants

The numbers are stark:

Hundreds of children have died from starvation since October 2023, according to local health authorities

More than 5,000 children were treated for acute malnutrition in May 2025 alone, a 50% jump from the previous month

636 children were diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in May, the deadliest form of hunger

580 premature babies are at risk of death from starvation across Gaza, according to the Gaza Health Ministry

Mothers, themselves malnourished or traumatised, are often unable to breastfeed.



Mothers and doctors in Gaza say formula shortages risk babies' lives

Rights groups say the war and the blockade have sparked a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, though Israel says it is allowing in vital aid.
euronews](https://www.euronews.com/health/2025/06/26/mothers-and-doctors-in-gaza-say-formula-shortages-risk-babies-lives-blaming-israels-aid-bl)

"The problem of getting milk started since my son's birth, as due to my malnutrition and general weakness, I wasn't able to breastfeed my baby,"

Hanaa al-Taweel, mother of five, Al-Nuseirat refugee camp

The blockade, tightened in March 2025, has sealed Gaza's borders to most food, water, and medical supplies

While Israeli officials claim over 1,400 tons of baby food have entered Gaza in recent weeks, doctors and residents say formula is virtually unavailable in hospitals and markets

"These babies have no time… and no voice,"

Dr. Ahmad al-Farra, Nasser Hospital

Aid groups and human rights organisations warn:

The formula shortage is an avoidable disaster, one that could end if restrictions on aid were lifted

UNICEF and WHO have repeatedly called for unimpeded entry of life-saving supplies, stressing that every child's death from hunger is preventable

As the crisis deepens, Gaza's most vulnerable, its newborns, face the gravest danger.

Without urgent action to allow formula and other essential aid into the territory, doctors fear the death toll will rise sharply in the coming days and weeks

Breadlines Under Fire: Gaza's Hunger Becomes a Death Sentence

Israeli forces kill 51 Palestinians waiting for flour at Gaza aid site, witnesses and rescuers say

It is potentially the deadliest of the almost daily shootings that have been taking place recently near aid distribution sites. bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c74zj9kv2xjo)

This narrative is based on documented events. Reported by Al Jazeera, Reuters, Save the Children, the United Nations, and other reputable sources.

In the blistering heat of Gaza, hope and fear collide at every food line.

Thousands of desperate Palestinians, parents, children, the elderly, wait for hours, clutching empty bags, praying for a parcel of flour or rice to keep their families alive.

What should be a lifeline has become a zone of terror.

On June 17, 2025, the horror reached new heights in Khan Younis.



Israel kills nearly 600 Palestinians at aid centres: All you need to know

Hundreds killed seeking aid in Gaza as famine deepens and limited food access leaves hundreds of thousands starving. Al Jazeera](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/29/israel-kills-nearly-600-palestinians-at-aid-centres-all-you-need-to-know)

Israeli tanks fired shells into a crowd gathered for aid trucks, killing at least 59 and injuring more than 220

Eyewitnesses described chaos and carnage:

“All of a sudden, they let us move forward and made everyone gather, and then shells started falling, tank shells,”

said Alaa, who survived but saw friends and neighbours torn apart.

Bodies lay strewn across the street, victims of both the shellfire and the desperate stampede to escape.

This was not an isolated event.

![

Israeli tanks kill 59 people in Gaza crowd trying to get food aid, medics say

One of the bloodiest incidents yet in mounting violence as desperate residents struggle for food. Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-tank-shelling-kills-45-people-awaiting-aid-trucks-gaza-ministry-says-2025-06-17/)

Since late May, at least 583 Palestinians have been killed and more than 4,100 wounded while waiting at food distribution points

Most of these incidents occurred near sites run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), the only organisation currently distributing food after Israel restricted access for other aid groups.

Children have been killed or injured in more than half of the fatal attacks at these sites

The infamous “Flour Massacre” on February 29, 2024, set a grim precedent.

That day, at least 118 people were killed and 760 injured when Israeli forces opened fire on a crowd seeking flour from aid trucks on Al-Rashid Street in Gaza City

Survivors recounted tanks and soldiers firing directly into the crowd, then advancing, running over the dead and wounded.

Since then, similar scenes have played out again and again.

Israeli forces have acknowledged firing warning shots at crowds near aid sites, but witnesses and international aid groups report sustained gunfire, drone strikes, and tank shells targeting unarmed civilians simply trying to get food

Parents risk their lives for a bag of flour or a bottle of water, knowing that the next aid queue could be their last.

The dilemma is unbearable:

“Palestinians in Gaza confront an unbearable dilemma: either starve or risk being shot in their desperate attempt to secure food for their families,”

declared a coalition of more than 170 aid organisations

Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis has become a "massive trauma ward," overwhelmed by the wounded, many of them children, many with gunshot wounds to the head, chest, and knees

Mourners gather outside, weeping over bodies covered in white sheets, praying for an end to the nightmare.

The United Nations calls these deaths "unacceptable" and a grave breach of international law

Aid groups warn: the weaponisation of food and the targeting of civilians at aid sites is a war crime

For Gaza's people, hunger is now a gamble with death.

As famine looms and markets stand empty, the thunder of shells and the cries of the wounded echo through the aid lines.

Even bread has become a matter of life and death.

Voices of Hate and Defiance: Israeli Ministers' Statements on Palestinians and International Law



Israeli ministers and senior officials have repeatedly made public statements that both defame Palestinians and assert Israel's ability to act without meaningful consequence from the international community. These remarks have sparked widespread international condemnation and sanctions, documented by governments, NGOs, and major media outlets.

Denial of Palestinian Identity

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared bluntly in France:

"There is no such thing as a Palestinian nation. There is no Palestinian history. There is no Palestinian language."

Standing before a map depicting Israel encompassing the West Bank, Gaza, and even Jordan, Smotrich dismissed Palestinian identity as an invention of the last century. He has also called for the Palestinian town of Hawara to be "erased," a statement that ignited global outrage and fears of ethnic cleansing.

Calls for Total Destruction and Ethnic Cleansing

Smotrich has openly advocated for the total destruction of Palestinian cities:

"No half measures. Rafah, Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat, destruction … 'You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven'…"

This biblical reference signals a call for annihilation. He has discussed forcibly depopulating Gaza, pushing half its population out or worse.

Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter echoed this genocidal rhetoric, declaring:

"We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba… Gaza Nakba 2023. That's how it'll end."

By invoking the Nakba, the 1948 mass displacement of Palestinians, he suggested repeating ethnic cleansing in Gaza.

Dehumanising and Genocidal Rhetoric

Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Smotrich have been sanctioned by the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Norway for:

"Inciting extremist violence and serious abuses of Palestinian human rights."

Their rhetoric includes calls for forced displacement, expanding illegal settlements, and encouraging settler violence. Ben-Gvir has boasted about worsening the "abominable conditions" of Palestinian prisoners and supplied thousands of assault rifles to settlers in the West Bank.

Justification for Starvation and Collective Punishment

Smotrich has openly justified starving Gaza's population:

"No one would allow Israel to cause two million civilians to die of hunger, even though it might be justified and moral until our hostages are returned."

"Until the last hostage is returned, we should not even be sending water."

These statements reveal a cold calculus that collective punishment and deprivation are acceptable tools.

Open Defiance of International Law and Accountability

Israeli officials repeatedly vow:

"Nothing will halt the war," pledging "all the force" of the Israeli army, and asserting that the world cannot stop them.

Under Prime Minister Netanyahu, the government acts "with impunity," deliberately using hunger as a weapon and pursuing mass displacement and destruction despite international outcry.

Dismissal of International Criticism

When sanctioned by Western nations, Israeli officials respond with contempt:

"It is unacceptable that elected officials and government members face such measures."

This dismissal underscores a broader refusal to be held accountable under international law.

These statements, made openly and repeatedly, have been widely condemned as incitement, dehumanisation, and justification for policies violating international law. They reveal a pattern of rhetoric and policy asserting that Israel can act as it wishes in the occupied territories, while the world remains powerless or unwilling to intervene.

Additional horrific statements, beyond those already listed, made by Israeli leaders in recent months and years:

Direct Calls for Starvation and Bombing Civilians

Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu:

> *"They need to starve. If there are civilians who fear for their lives, they should go through the emigration plan."*
>
> *"There is no problem bombing Hamas' food reserves."*
>
> *"We must stop humanitarian aid… There is no problem bombing their food and fuel reserves. They should starve."*

Eliyahu has also previously suggested dropping a nuclear bomb on Gaza as "an option."

Explicit Dehumanisation

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant:

"We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly."

"No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything is closed."

"Gaza won't return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything. If it doesn't take one day, it will take a week. It will take weeks or even months, we will reach all places."

Genocidal and Existential Framing

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu:

Described the war as a "battle of civilization against barbarism," and likened Palestinians to "monsters."

Framed the destruction of Gaza as necessary to "save Western civilization… from an empire of evil."

Has repeatedly invoked biblical references to Amalek, historically associated with total annihilation.

Open Advocacy for Ethnic Cleansing

Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter:

"We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba… Gaza Nakba 2023. That's how it'll end." (Referencing the 1948 mass expulsion of Palestinians as a model for Gaza.)

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich:

"No half measures. Rafah, Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat, destruction … 'You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven'…"

Has called for the Palestinian town of Hawara to be "erased."

"There is no such thing as a Palestinian nation. There is no Palestinian history. There is no Palestinian language."

Justification and Endorsement of Collective Punishment

Bezalel Smotrich:

"No one would allow Israel to cause two million civilians to die of hunger, even though it might be justified and moral until our hostages are returned."

"Until the last hostage is returned, we should not even be sending water."

Incitement to Violence and Expansion of Settlements

Itamar Ben-Gvir (National Security Minister):

> *Has distributed thousands of assault rifles to West Bank settlers and boasted about worsening the "abominable conditions" of Palestinian prisoners.*
>
> *Has been convicted of racist incitement in the past and continues to call for forced displacement and expansion of settlements.*

Dismissal of International Law and Accountability

Multiple Ministers:

> *Statements such as "Nothing will halt the war," and pledges to use "all the force" of the Israeli army, asserting that the world cannot stop them, are common.*
>
> *When sanctioned, Israeli officials have responded: "It is unacceptable that elected officials and government members face such measures."*

These statements, many of which are catalogued in a database of over 500 examples compiled by Law for Palestine and cited by international legal bodies, demonstrate a pattern of dehumanisation, incitement, and open advocacy for policies that amount to ethnic cleansing and genocide. They have been widely condemned by human rights organisations, the United Nations, and governments worldwide as evidence of intent to commit grave crimes against Palestinians.

Arming Impunity: How the West Fuels Israel's War Machine



This narrative is based on documented events. Supported by reports from Brown University, The Guardian, Declassified UK, OpenSecrets, and official government data

In the shadow of Gaza's devastation, a relentless flow of weapons and military aid pours into Israel from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and other Western allies. The scale is staggering, since October 2023, the US alone has delivered over $17 to 22 billion in military aid, including tens of thousands of bombs, 57,000 artillery shells, F-15 and F-35 jets, Hellfire missiles, and armored vehicles

US cargo planes and ships have carried over 50,000 tons of weapons, even as reports of civilian casualties and war crimes mount

The UK, despite announcing a partial suspension, has shipped over 160,000 military items, bombs, aircraft parts, bullets, rocket launchers, since the war began

British-made F-35 components and munitions reach Israel through loopholes, while politicians from both major parties meet privately with pro-Israel lobbyists to discuss arms exports and policy "recommendations". In just three months, the UK approved more weapons licenses to Israel than in the previous four years

Australia, too, is a key supplier. It has approved 322 defense exports to Israel in six years, including critical F-35 parts and dual-use devices

Despite public denials, the government's own figures confirm the ongoing flow, even as 82% of Australians say the Gaza blockade is unjustifiable. Australian politicians aggressively defend these exports and maintain close ties with Israeli defense industry and lobby groups

Behind this support is a powerful, coordinated lobbying effort.

In the US, AIPAC and allied groups have spent over $58 million on Congress in the last election cycle alone, targeting and rewarding lawmakers who back Israel, and punishing those who dissent. More than 80% of all congressional races have seen AIPAC money, and the lobby's influence is so pervasive that few politicians dare to criticise Israel openly. The US also uses its UN Security Council veto to shield Israel from accountability.

In the UK, a quarter of all MPs and a third of Conservative MPs have received donations or trips funded by pro-Israel lobbyists

Groups like Conservative Friends of Israel and Labour Friends of Israel count hundreds of MPs as members, and senior politicians receive direct funding and policy guidance from lobbyists and donors. Even during the Gaza war, MPs have accepted paid trips to Israel, and donations continue to flow to cabinet ministers and party leaders.

In Australia, master lobbyists like Mark Leibler have the ear of prime ministers, foreign ministers, and media chiefs, orchestrating letters of support and shaping public policy

The Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) and similar groups ensure bipartisan backing for Israel, regardless of public outrage over civilian deaths.

This network of influence ensures that, despite overwhelming evidence of war crimes and mounting international condemnation, Western governments continue to arm and defend Israel.

Sanctions on Israeli ministers for inciting violence are rare and largely symbolic, while arms and aid continue to flow

Public statements from Western leaders consistently prioritise Israel's "security needs" over Palestinian rights, and policy decisions are shaped by donations, lobbying, and career incentives

Israel's military dominance and continued operations in Gaza and the West Bank are underwritten by massive, ongoing Western support, enabled by powerful lobbying networks and political patronage. Even as public opinion shifts and humanitarian crises deepen, the corridors of power in Washington, London, Canberra, and beyond remain firmly aligned with Israeli interests.

![

Amnesty UK (@AmnestyUK) on X

The documentary that the BBC refused to air showing the targeting, detainment and torture of medics in Gaza by Israeli authorities was broadcast by Channel 4 last night. Amnesty International researcher, Budour Hassan, explains the use of secret sites... X (formerly Twitter)](https://x.com/AmnestyUK/status/1940804203045068858) [

UNRWA (@UNRWA) on X

The Government of Israel has continued to make claims against UNRWA's neutrality, putting our staff at risk and harming the Agency's reputation. "Last month, I wrote to the Foreign Minister of Israel, requesting once again information and evidence to... X (formerly Twitter)](https://x.com/UNRWA/status/1941799282950000807) [

António Guterres (@antonioguterres) on X

I am appalled by the deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The last lifelines for survival are being cut off. Without an urgent influx of fuel, incubators will shut down, ambulances will be unable to reach the injured and sick, and water cannot be... X (formerly Twitter)](https://x.com/antonioguterres/status/1940855921984655716)

The More I See, the More I Will Write

This is not about sides. This is about souls.

It is about children whose names you now know. Women whose agony echoes through sealed walls. Voices that defy erasure. Babies are dying not from fate, but from policy.

And it is about the chilling truth that many of us already knew but hesitated to say aloud: This is not just war. This is calculated, industrialised cruelty. Documented. Repeated. Justified. Funded.

I will not stop.

I will now investigate further. I will publish more. I will speak wherever silence has taken root. You may try to break me, but the truth is unbreakable.

This issue of *Letters of the Heart* is not the end. It is the beginning of defiance.

"When They Tried to Silence Me, I Wrote Louder" *By Sukh Sandhu*

With grief,

Sukh Sandhu

Editor-in-Chief

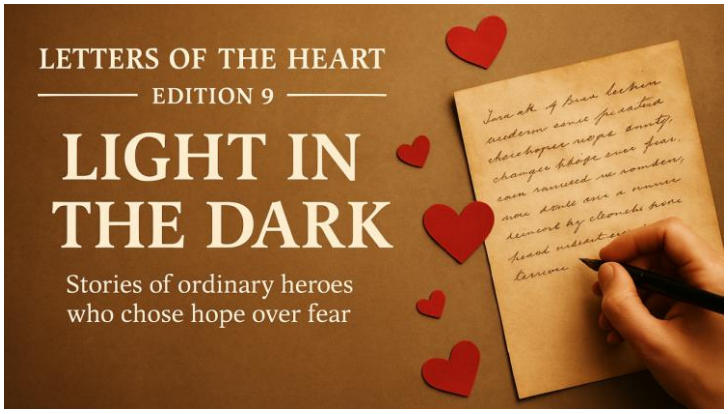
Letters of the Heart

LETTERS OF THE HEART

Letters of the Heart: Edition 9: Light in the Dark

By Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu | First published 25 July 2025

In a world that sometimes feels consumed by darkness, these pages remind us of the simple, unwavering light within the human spirit.



In a world that sometimes feels consumed by darkness, these pages remind us of the simple, unwavering light within the human spirit. From Karachi's runways to Pennsylvania fields, Paris supper clubs to the halls of Parliament, we have seen how ordinary people, young, old, from every faith and nation, rise in moments of fear to choose compassion over silence, courage over safety, unity over division. Their stories echo a truth the world must never forget: even one small act of bravery can shift the course of history. Even a single voice, raised in hope, can defeat the shadows of terror and hate. Wherever there is suffering, there are those who reach out their hands; wherever there is injustice, there are hearts that will not stand by. Let us carry these stories forward. Let us be the hearts that do not shrink, the voices that choose to speak, the hands that offer strength. In celebrating these heroes, we renew our own faith that kindness, courage and community will always shine brightest, no matter how long the night.

With hope, The Letters of the Heart Team

Into the Lion's Den: Photo courtesy: and the Night Courage Took Flight



Photo courtesy: India.com

Dawn had barely brushed the Karachi runway pink on September 5, 1986, when the gates of fate swung open on Pan Am Flight 73. Four heavily armed men stormed the Boeing 747, barking orders and filling the air with the chill of fear. Chaos erupted as passengers screamed, prayed, and clung to strangers. Every heartbeat echoed like a drum of terror. But amid that swirling panic, one young woman stood straighter while others shrank. Neerja Bhanot, just 22 yet already a senior flight attendant, noticed everything and panicked at nothing. Her dark eyes darted, always calculating. With nerves thin as wire, she slipped to the communication panel and tapped out the silent hijack code. Her fingers were the difference between hope and doom. Up in the cockpit, her secret signal set destiny's wheel in motion. The pilots caught Neerja's warning and made their escape through the hatch like ghosts. The plane stayed grounded, breaking the hijackers' plans to use it as a missile loaded with innocent lives. For seventeen tense hours, fear prowled the aisles and loaded guns waited at every corner. Neerja, the unlikeliest shield, became an invisible guardian.

Moving almost without a sound, she slipped through the cabin with audacity that stared danger in the eye. She hid American passports wherever she could: inside shoes, down chutes, even flushing them away. All the while, she kept a calm smile, telling terrified passengers to trust, breathe, and wait for the dawn. Through her brave actions, Neerja blurred nationality and erased fear, bringing a trembling group of strangers inwardly closer than family. As dusk folded into the final act and gunfire erupted, Neerja saw her chance. She flung open the emergency exit and called, "Run!" Her iron-strong voice guided the stampede toward freedom. In the wild storm of escaping bodies, she spotted three children trapped by terror. She ran not from the bullets, but into their path, using her own body as a shield. Struck down in that act of selfless courage, her last heartbeat became a gift, preserving three small lives by her daring. When the firing finally ceased, Neerja Bhanot lay lifeless, but her bravery had steered more than 350 passengers out of death's grip. To the world, she became the youngest recipient of India's highest peacetime honour. To those on Flight 73, she would always be the angel at 35,000 feet, the flight attendant who made every second count and every life matter. In a world racked by cruelty, Neerja's courage shines in the night sky like a beacon, fierce and unforgotten. Her story reminds us all of the wonder and power that a brave heart can spark.

Watch the video on YouTube

"Let’s Roll": The Day United Flight 93 Made History



When their plane was hijacked during the 9/11 attacks, several passengers and crew members, including Todd Beamer, Tom Burnett, and Mark Bingham, learned from phone calls what was happening on the ground. Banding together, they stormed the cockpit and fought the hijackers, forcing the plane to crash into a field in Pennsylvania, preventing it from hitting its intended target, likely the U.S. Capitol. All aboard perished, but their bravery saved countless lives.



On the morning of September 11, 2001, the world shifted in a heartbeat. While panic unfolded across New York and Washington, forty ordinary people aboard United Flight 93 were hurtled into destiny at thirty-five thousand feet. Somewhere over Pennsylvania, their journey became a legend. By then, the nation already knew hijacked planes had hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The passengers of Flight 93 learned this horrifying truth not from news headlines, but through frantic phone calls to loved ones on the ground. The message was grim, but also crystal clear: their plane was next, and the force behind it was using aircraft as weapons. A handful of men and women, including Todd Beamer, Tom Burnett, and Mark Bingham, locked eyes, their faces set with purpose. There was no time to waste, no one else to call. These strangers came together in the face of almost certain death, their spirits fueled not by fear, but by a fierce determination to fight for others. They gathered intel, planned, and said their prayers. When the moment came, their rallying cry echoed through history, “Let’s roll.” Storming the aisle toward the cockpit, they confronted the hijackers with all the strength their resolve could muster. The tussle was brutal, desperate, and brief. The passengers never reclaimed control of the plane, but their courage changed the script forever. The aircraft crashed in a lonely field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. No one survived, yet the worst was averted. Thanks to their actions, United Flight 93 never reached its intended target, widely

believed to be the U.S. Capitol. The halls of government still stand because everyday people, armed with nothing but bravery, chose to fight for lives beyond their own. Their final moments became a legacy etched in American memory, a shining reminder that even when darkness falls, the light of ordinary heroes refuses to dim. Flight 93's story is not just one of loss, but of unity, sacrifice, and the indomitable strength of the human heart.

Watch the video on YouTube

A Door to Hope: Lassana Bathily and the Paris Supermarket Siege



The winter air over Paris in January 2015 was crisp, but inside the Hypercacher Kosher Supermarket, terror burned hot and bright. A gunman had burst in, transforming an ordinary grocery store into a battleground. Panic swept through the aisles. Parents clutched children, shoppers ducked behind shelves, and death seemed just around the corner. Amid this chaos, a young shop assistant from Mali, made a choice that would echo across a nation. With urgency sharpening every move, he beckoned terrified customers to follow him. His heart pounded as he led them down to the basement's cold-storage room, a windowless space lined with steel, usually meant for keeping produce fresh but now a vault of survival. Among those he protected was a small child whose eyes brimmed with fear. Once inside, Lassana switched off the freezing units. The temperature dropped, but he knew silence and darkness were their greatest shields. He whispered reassurance and begged everyone to keep quiet, every second stretching like an eternity. Yet Lassana did not stay. With lives depending on more than hope, he searched for a way out. Finding a service lift, he slipped into the winter sunlight and sprinted away, not for freedom, but for help. He flagged down police officers and, breathless, explained the layout of the store. He told them how many people remained hidden and how to reach them. His knowledge became the lifeline that shaped their daring rescue. The siege ended with lives lost, but many more saved, thanks to one man's clarity in chaos and his refusal to abandon strangers. Lassana Bathily's courage transcended borders and skin color, sending a message the world needed to hear: in moments of deepest darkness, human kindness lights the way. Lassana was given French citizenship in gratitude, but the highest honour remains the lives he saved and the hope he inspired when it mattered most.

Bravery at Dawn: Abdul Haji and the Siege of Garissa University



Morning's first light crept across the grounds of Garissa University on April 2, 2015, but the promise of a new day was torn away in a storm of gunfire. Somali militants had invaded the campus, hunting for victims among the halls and dormitories. Shouts, screams, and the staccato burst of automatic weapons filled the air, turning a place of learning into a scene of terror. Across town, Abdul Haji received a message most would pray never to hear, his brother was trapped inside the chaos, fighting for his life. Abdul did not hesitate. He grabbed his handgun and sped to the university, his heart pounding not just with fear, but with fierce determination. The roads were perilous, the police uncertain, but Abdul pressed on, driven by bonds stronger than fright. When he arrived, bullets still sliced the air. Yet Abdul stepped into the danger, finding frightened students huddled in corners and cloakrooms. He did not just help security forces coordinate their rescue. He became the living bridge between fear and safety. Crouching low, calling softly, he encouraged trapped students to crawl toward him, lifting some from beneath tables, carrying others whose legs shook too badly to move. Over the phone, he offered instructions and reassurance, sending messages of hope to those hiding in the darkness. He shepherded groups across open ground, keeping low, watching every shadow for new threats. With each trip, he risked becoming a target himself, but every time he returned with another soul in tow. By the time the guns fell silent, Abdul had helped save dozens of young lives. His courage that morning was not just found in the flash of a weapon, but in his willingness to step forward while so many hid.

The world took note. In the face of evil, Abdul Haji's actions reminded all that bravery can rise from the most unexpected places, and that a single person's compassion can tip the scales between tragedy and triumph.

The unbreakable shepherd: Rick Rescorla and the evacuation of the south tower



The morning sun gleamed off the glass and steel of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, but within minutes, that golden light was devoured by the shadow of tragedy. As chaos overtook the city, smoke and fear billowed through the offices of Morgan Stanley on the forty-fourth floor. Thousands of workers froze, fearful, uncertain, and helpless. But in the storm of uncertainty, one voice rang clear and decisive. Rick Rescorla, head of security, had long warned of exactly such a nightmare. With a soldier's foresight and a father's care, he had drilled his people for just this day, believing that vigilance could be the difference between life and death. Ignoring frantic orders to "stay put," Rick took command with calm authority. He grabbed his bullhorn and strode through the haze, urging employees to move swiftly but steadily down the stairs. Accompanied by his mighty presence, the evacuation began. Rick did not just direct the flow, he gave his people hope and courage. At each landing, he sang Cornish folk songs, his booming voice carrying over the panic, each lyric a lifeline that pulled frightened souls back from the edge. His eyes swept the stairwells for stragglers, his voice reassuring and unyielding. He cajoled, joked, and guided, refusing to let fear crush the spirit of any one of the 2,700 lives in his care. Outside the towers, survivors saw him one last time, straight-backed, resolute, pushing others to safety even as the crisis deepened. Then, with most of Morgan Stanley's employees on safe ground, Rick turned to climb the stairs again. There were more to be saved, more voices to calm. He vanished into the smoke just before the South Tower fell, his legacy forged in the lives he shepherded to safety. Rick Rescorla's story is not measured by medals, but by the heartbeat of every survivor who heard his song and followed his lead that day. In the darkest hour, he became the shepherd, guiding his flock to the light, an ordinary man transformed into an immortal hero.

A Week in the Sky: Ghulam Dastgir and the Siege of PIA Flight 326



In early 1981, as the engines of Pakistan International Airlines Flight 326 rumbled to life and soared above the clouds, 148 passengers settled into the comfort of routine travel. But that calm was shattered when armed hijackers seized control of the plane, sending shockwaves of terror down every aisle. In those breathless first moments, panic crackled like static. Yet in the cockpit and cabin, one man's poise stood out like a beacon. Flight Lieutenant Ghulam Dastgir, a senior flight attendant with a steely sense of duty, kept his head while the world spun. Discreetly and swiftly, he signaled for help, activating a coded hijack alert that put international rescue plans into motion. His signal was the silent shout that would ripple across nations. The grueling ordeal stretched on for nearly seven days. Trapped above foreign soil, the passengers and crew fought despair and exhaustion. As the tension simmered, Ghulam and his colleagues became pillars of calm, offering quiet words and steady hands. He moved through the crowded cabin, comforting families and helping them through endless hours of uncertainty. No child's cry or whisper of fear went unanswered. Outside the plane, governments debated. Inside, Ghulam and the crew kept order, ensuring no one's spirit broke. They rationed food and water, handed out hope alongside blankets, and never allowed terror to win. Even as threats from the hijackers rose and fell, the resolve of the crew held strong. A week after the nightmare began, the end arrived suddenly and violently. Libyan commandos stormed the plane in a daring rescue, the air vibrating with gunshots and shouts. Somehow, against all odds, most hostages survived the chaos and emerged into the sunlight, shell-shocked but free. When journalists and officials later searched for answers, they found stories told in trembling voices. Over and over, passengers spoke of Ghulam Dastgir's calm, his composure, and the steady presence that had carried them through the longest week of their lives. Flight 326 became a symbol of endurance, a place where humanity was tested and did not falter, thanks in large part to one flight attendant's unwavering courage.

Rising for Peace: The World's Stand for Gaza and a Two-State Future



Once, the pleas from Gaza seemed to vanish into the wind, lost beneath headlines and politics, barely stirring distant hearts. But perhaps one day, when the destruction deepens beyond denial, when images of shattered streets and grieving families leave no room for indifference, something will shift. The pain will press too hard to ignore. Slowly, then all at once, a current of outrage and determination may rise and circle the world.

Maybe then, in city after city, people will flood the streets not in silence, but in unity, lighting candles, raising banners, demanding justice, safety, and peace. Not for one people, but for all. Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and secular voices will speak not in opposition but in harmony, refusing the fractures of fear. Vigils will fill public squares with light and resolve. Strangers, from every corner, will join hands, proving that compassion needs no translation. Social media

will blaze not with noise, but with meaning, as artists, teachers, and neighbours help the world see the human stories behind the statistics: mothers, children, dreamers whose lives should never be measured in casualties.

This chorus, this global ache turned action, might finally echo inside the halls of government. Leaders who once whispered might find the courage to speak boldly. Across continents, a shared truth may emerge: that the two-state solution is not a slogan but a lifeline; not a distant hope but a present necessity. Parliaments may pass real resolutions. Diplomats may meet not to delay but to deliver. And international support will no longer be given freely, but tethered to accountability, to sanctions, aid, and honest diplomacy.

When that day comes, humanitarian groups will already be there, on the ground, moving faster than politics ever could. UNICEF, the Red Cross, and Médecins Sans Frontières will expand their reach, cradling wounded children, rebuilding clinics, and offering hope through action. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International will continue to gather truth, not for history's sake alone, but for justice in real time. Their reports will rise from paper to policy. Interfaith communities will fill the silence with solace, distributing meals, opening doors, standing together not as allies of one side, but as defenders of life itself.

And maybe, just maybe, the United Nations will find its voice anew. Not with platitudes, but with purpose. A real and lasting ceasefire will be negotiated. Humanitarian corridors will reopen. A multilateral peace summit will bring Israeli and Palestinian leaders to the table, not as adversaries, but as partners, witnessed by a world finally ready to nurture peace instead of managing war. International funds will flow not merely to pause suffering, but to restore what has been lost, especially for children, whose dreams must never again be buried under rubble.

This vision will not be measured by headlines alone, but by the quiet return of humanity. By the hum of aid trucks cutting through dust. By the giggles of children inside newly rebuilt classrooms. By neighbours breaking bread where bombs once fell. By olive branches extended, not as symbols, but as sincere offerings of peace and forgiveness.

And in that not-yet-realised future, the world will remember what some have always known: that there is no security without justice, and no justice without courage. The road to peace will still be long. But when the first stones are laid in truth and love, even the most fractured land can become home again.

That day has not yet come.

But it must. And we must be the ones to bring it.

The Girl Who Would Not Be Silenced: Malala's Stand Against Fear


IDEAS

Malala Yousafzai: 'The Day I Woke Up in the Hospital'

8 MINUTE READ

In the lush, rolling valleys of Pakistan's Swat region, a quiet revolution began with the voice of a child. Malala Yousafzai, a schoolgirl with a radiant smile and an unbreakable spirit, believed passionately that girls deserved to learn. As the Taliban swept through her homeland, closing

schools and threatening anyone who stood in their way, Malala refused to bow her head or still her pen.

From her small home in Mingora, she wrote diaries and spoke on radio and television. Her words, sharp with truth and hope, cut through the darkness: "I have the right to an education. All girls do." Threats echoed through her village, but Malala spoke louder. Her father, an educator, encouraged her, sure that his daughter's courage could move mountains.

But terror does not tolerate hope. On a morning in October 2012, as Malala sat on a crowded school bus, men with guns stopped the vehicle. A masked gunman demanded her by name. The gunshots that followed could have ended Malala's journey. Instead, they set the world alight.

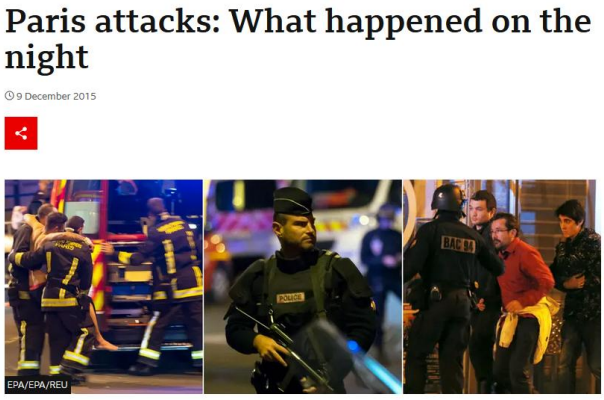
As Malala lay in critical condition, prayers and outrage poured in from every corner of the world. Surgeons in Pakistan and later in England worked miracles. Against odds and expectation, Malala survived, and rose stronger than before.

She would not allow violence to silence her. While still recovering, Malala took her fight global. She addressed the United Nations, founded the Malala Fund, and met leaders and children in countries far and wide. Her story unleashed a movement that could not be stopped. Girls in conflict zones wrote her letters. Mothers in remote villages whispered her name. Malala's resilience inspired millions to challenge oppression, demand education, and see courage not as absence of fear, but action in spite of it.

In 2014, Malala Yousafzai became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate, a symbol not only for Pakistan, but for anyone who has the courage to dream and the resolve to speak out. Her journey from the Swat Valley to the global stage lit a path for countless others who believe that books, not bullets, shape a brighter world.

Malala's legacy continues: a living promise that a single determined voice, no matter how young, can speak truth to terror and change the course of history.

The Light in the Darkness: The Bataclan Heroes of Paris



Night had fallen gently over Paris on November 13, 2015, but inside the Bataclan theater, music thundered and laughter soared. An ordinary Friday dissolved in a heartbeat when attackers burst in, weapons drawn, and turned celebration into chaos. Bullets flew and fear swallowed the room as hundreds of concertgoers scrambled for life beneath tables and behind pillars.

Yet, amid the storm, courage flickered, a collection of small, relentless acts that would become a legend. The staff, most nameless to the world, stood their ground as panic raged around them. Security guard Didi pressed himself between the crowd and danger, guiding people toward hidden corridors and urging them onward, away from exits blocked by violence.

Nearby, bar manager Philippe found himself rallying a group of shocked concertgoers. Calmly, he ducked beneath the bar and began herding people into storerooms and kitchens. He barricaded doors with chairs and cases of bottled water. His voice was steady, never betraying the pounding of his own heart. When he saw the injured crumpled on the floor, he knelt at their side, pressing cloth to wounds and whispering words of hope.

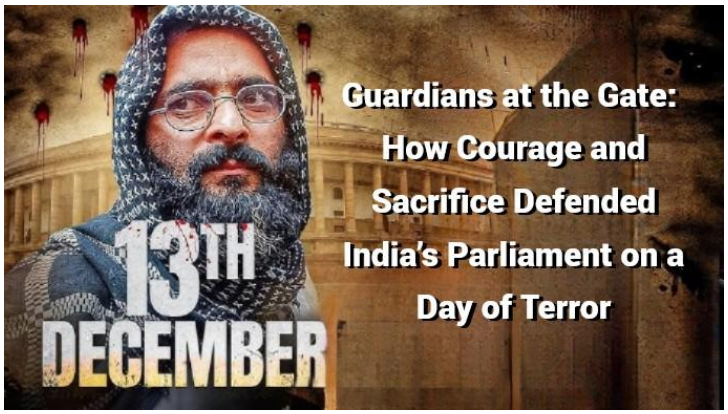
Throughout the night, staff and strangers became a lifeline for one another. House technicians pulled terrified fans onto the rafters, shielding them with darkness. Bartenders wrapped trembling arms around the shoulders of wounded souls and sang softly, muffling the terror with humanity.

As the sound of gunfire rattled the walls and the world outside watched in horror, these heroes created seconds of safety where none seemed possible. They whispered encouragement, held hands, blocked doors, and when the chance emerged, led as many as they could to freedom, sometimes carrying those too hurt to move. Though the attackers brought destruction, they could not quench the fierce determination of those inside to protect, shelter, and heal.

When it was all over and survivors poured into the light of dawn, stories spread of unknown figures who had shown courage beyond measure. The Bataclan had been a place of tragedy, but because of Didi, Philippe, and countless others, it became just as much a place of quiet heroism.

The Bataclan's heroes remind us that even at our darkest hour, the best of us rise with something stronger than fear. In the heart of Paris, hope survived because ordinary people refused to leave anyone behind.

Guardians at the Gate: How Courage and Sacrifice Defended India's Parliament on a Day of Terror



On a winter morning in New Delhi, December 13, 2001, the mighty dome of the Indian Parliament stood proud beneath a gentle sun. Halls that usually rang with heated debate and the shuffle of government business quickly transformed into a battleground of courage and sacrifice.

Just moments before noon, a car bearing forged government labels sped past Parliament's tight security. Out leapt five heavily armed men. Their mission was ruthless: penetrate the very heart of Indian democracy. Gunfire shattered the calm, echoing against the sandstone walls as AK-47s, pistols, grenade launchers, and explosives turned the Parliament grounds into chaos.

Inside, more than 100 people, ministers, MPs, aides, and staff, heard the uproar. In the ensuing confusion, Vice President Krishan Kant's vehicle was struck, and his security personnel responded without hesitation, returning gunfire and securing the gates. Constable Kamlesh

Kumari, stationed at one post, spotted the attackers. She sounded the alarm, buying precious seconds for others, before she was fatally shot. Her courage echoed through the corridors.

The shootout was fierce but brief. Security forces, including the Delhi Police and Parliament Security Service, responded with discipline and bravery, repelling the assault and closing off avenues that might have led the terrorists deeper into the building. In those tense minutes, lives hung in the balance. As grenades exploded and bullets zipped by, security personnel forced the attackers into a desperate corner. One terrorist's suicide vest detonated on the grounds, while the others fell to defending hands before they could reach the main chambers.

In all, nine defenders, six Delhi Police, two Parliament security staff, and a gardener, gave their lives to protect the institution and the people inside. Eighteen more were wounded. Every lawmaker, including Home Minister L.K. Advani and Defence Minister Harin Pathak, survived unscathed, shielded by the courage of those who confronted the attackers head-on.

In the days that followed, India stood still in grief and pride. Investigations traced the plot back to the militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, revealing a web of conspiracy designed not just to kill, but to destabilise a nation. Arrests were made, and a dramatic trial followed, with accused militants brought to justice. The mastermind behind the attack would later be killed, closing another chapter in the struggle against terror.

The Parliament attack did more than claim lives; it united a nation across its vast diversity. Candlelit vigils honoured the fallen. Speeches in Parliament memorialised acts of heroism that likely averted a national catastrophe. Everywhere, ordinary Indians paused to pay homage to extraordinary sacrifice.

The sound of gunfire faded, but the story lived on: a story of guardians standing firm, of selfless valor beneath the dome of India's democracy, and of a grave threat beaten back by the unbreakable will of a few. On that December day, the defenders of Parliament did not merely protect a building, they safeguarded the idea of India itself, a place where, even in the face of terror, unity and bravery shine brightest.



As we close this edition, let us pause to honour the extraordinary courage found in the most unexpected places and people. Each story reminds us that even in the most harrowing circumstances, bravery, compassion, and goodness prevail. From Neerja Bhanot's fearless defiance to the quiet strength of Malala Yousafzai, these individuals chose hope over despair and action over indifference. Their legacies invite us all to be vigilant against injustice, to support the vulnerable, and to believe in the ripple effect of a single heart's resolve.

May we be inspired, as our heroes were, to respond to fear with kindness and to darkness with an unyielding light. In carrying these stories forward, we carry with us the unbreakable truth: nothing is more powerful than the human spirit united in courage and love.

Until next time, let us all strive to be heroes in our own way.

With gratitude and hope,

The Letters of the Heart Team

LETTERS OF THE HEART

A personal story: Why I stand up, even when it costs me

By Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu | First published 11 December 2025

As we embrace the spirit of Christmas, a time of reflection, hope, and kindness, I want to share another personal story close to my heart.



As we embrace the spirit of Christmas, a time of reflection, hope, and kindness, I want to share another personal story close to my heart. Today, for this special edition of "Letters of the Heart," I am revisiting an incident from my past that shaped who I am and why I stand for justice, no matter the cost.

A friend asked me recently if I was okay.

Another colleague said something has clearly ignited my focus, like I am carrying the weight of injustice on my shoulders again.

They're right.

But the truth is simple.

I didn't suddenly wake up and decide to speak about negligence and injustice without consequence.

This is not new for me.

Anyone who knows me well knows this.

If I believe something wrong is happening, I will stand up.

And I will fight.

It has never mattered who is standing in front of me.

And this didn't start today.

It didn't start with AI, the education sector, or any modern issue.

It started since I was born and began understanding the world.

I was a centre manager and trainer, assessor at an organisation, 25 years ago, that had spent millions building a training facility.

I loved teaching.

I loved assessing.

I loved helping students grow.

I even taught my own teachers IT and digital skills.

The management valued me, trusted my work ethic and kept asking me to move closer because I travelled 20 to 25 kilometres every day from my hometown after leaving my job in the Solan Himalayas.

Everything looked perfect.

Until it didn't.

We started experiencing constant power failures.

There were generators.

There were funds collected from students.

There were promises of real industry experience through a study and work program.

But the directors decided they didn't want to use the generators.

I raised the students' issues with them several times.

Students also had a number of questions about their promised work placements as well, when and how they would start, because, by their promise, those placements should have begun two months ago.

So students would come in for class.

And we couldn't teach them. Not once. Not twice. For three days straight.

Students complained.

I raised it with management.

They said they'd fix it.

They didn't.

After raising it again and again, with still no solution, I made a decision. I was going to resign.

Management called me in. They offered me a 40 percent salary increase. More benefits. More everything.

I still said no.

I said I would finish my seven-day notice period, as per my contract. On the seventh day, I packed my things and walked out.

But the story didn't end there.

The moment I reached home, my phone rang. It was the sister of one of my students.

Her voice was shaking.

"Sukh sir, you have to help my brother." I asked what happened.

She told me that after I left, the students went to management to ask who would replace me and when their classes would resume. They had paid a huge amount of money for their education. They wanted answers.

But instead of listening, a manager pushed one of the students. The others started protesting outside.

And then the unimaginable happened. A member of management broke a window himself. Called the police. And accused the students of theft and property damage.

They were arrested. Locked up.

I knew every student personally because I had taught them for months. I knew who they were. I knew what they were capable of and what they were not.

So I took a bus and went straight to the police station.

When I arrived, the inspector was absent, but I was allowed inside. I took the opportunity to speak with the students, who shared everything with me. I listened intently, absorbing every detail and reflecting on their words with care.

On my way home, management called me. They warned me to stay away. They said, very clearly, that I would be killed if I interfered.

A young man had been murdered publicly just days earlier. The threat was real. This was not drama. This was life.

I spoke to my parents.

Papa told me not to go.

Mamma said she would stand by me, no matter what I decided.

My younger brother stayed silent, too young to understand what any of this meant.

Then the inspector called.

He said the students could only get bail if I came in and told the truth about what had been happening. Management had told the police there were "no issues at all".

I knew what this meant. I knew the risk. But I also knew I could not live with the guilt of abandoning those students.

So I went.

> *Outside the station, a group of men stood in a circle. As I walked past, one of them said, "You'll go in alive, but you won't come out alive."*

My legs started shaking.

My throat dried up.

My hands felt cold despite the heat.

My heartbeat climbed into my ears.

My stomach tightened.

Every instinct screamed at me to turn around.

But I kept walking.

Inside, I told the truth.

Management staff were there.

Parents were there.

Solicitors were there.

Everyone heard everything.

The students got bail.

And I walked out knowing the consequences were coming.

I went to the bus stand, remembering how that young man had been killed only kilometres from the exact stretch I was about to cross. He had been pulled off a bus and murdered in daylight.

I sat on the bus wondering if I would make it home.

Every stop made me flinch.

Every shadow looked like danger.

Every thought was a new possibility of what could happen to me.

But fate had its own plan.

> *As I later learned, my mother had gone to the training centre to ask about me. The management sent one of their men to talk to her. He came aggressively.*

Until he saw her face. He recognised her.

He called her “Aunt”.

He belonged to the same village as my mother. He knew her family. He knew her story.

One phone call from him stopped everything that was planned for me. He told his people to stand down. He told management not to touch me. He protected me.

When Mamma came home, she explained why. His grandmother had once been helped by my mother’s grandfather, and they became brother and sister. A small kindness decades earlier had created a bond that saved my life that day.

A few days later, he came to our home for dinner.

He told me, in full detail, what they were supposed to do to me.

How they planned to mutilate my body. How they planned to make an example.

Under the dinner table, my legs shook uncontrollably.

On the outside, I tried to remain calm. On the inside, everything felt like it was dissolving.

I sat there thinking about this world. About justice.

About standing up when it matters.

About how many people never get lucky.

How many voices get silenced. How many lives end without anyone telling their story.

And maybe that is why, even today, when people ask me why I speak up... Why I highlight injustice... Why I refuse to stay quiet...

It is because I have lived the consequences of standing up. And the consequences of staying silent would have been far worse.

I fought then. I fight now. I will always fight when something wrong is happening.

Because justice is not an idea for me. It is something I survived. It is something I owe. It is something I cannot unsee.

This wasn't just a one-time test.

Life kept throwing the same choices at me, again and again, presenting me with a crossroads: money and fame on one path, and my ethics on the other.

Each time, I had to decide what I could live with. Because in the end, we all face the same fate.

We're all going to die one day anyway.

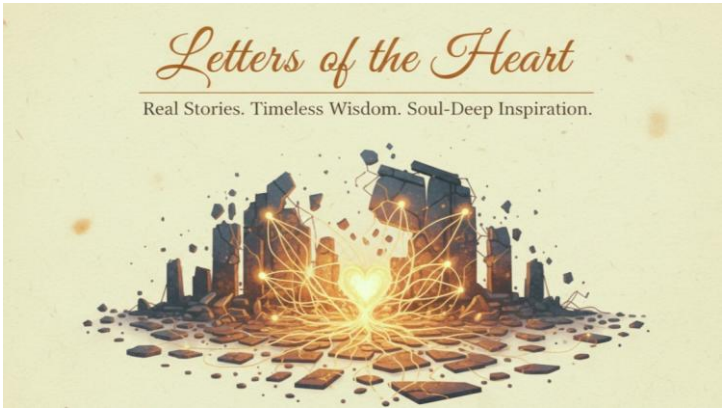
The only question that matters is who you were while you were alive.

LETTERS OF THE HEART

When it all falls apart: a lesson in problem solving

By Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu | First published 22 December 2025

In the heat of a crisis, when failure seems inevitable and every second counts, your true character is forged. It's in these moments, when chaos reigns and the path forward is obscured, that the instinct to give up is strongest.





In the heat of a crisis, when failure seems inevitable and every second counts, your true character is forged. It's in these moments, when chaos reigns and the path forward is obscured, that the instinct to give up is strongest. But true leadership isn't about avoiding problems; it's about facing them head-on with a calm resolve. It's about thinking on your feet, piecing together a solution from scattered fragments, and refusing to surrender to the pressure. This is where resilience is born, not from a plan, but from the refusal to accept defeat.

1999.

A year I will never forget.

I was young. Hungry to learn. Hungry to build.

I was doing medical subjects. And non-medical subjects too. Two worlds at once. Science in one hand. Technology in the other.

At the same time, I was appointed as a trainer and assessor. Web programming. Web development. For a USA-based organisation.

It felt big. Because it was big.

Then the call came. A major conference. Thousands of brilliant organisations. The kind of event where reputations are made. Or broken.

I was asked to represent the organisation. Not just to attend. To stand there. And show what our students had built.

We prepared. We planned. We packed.

Back then, most systems ran on LAN networks. Individual PCs were limited. Storage was limited. Power was limited.

Projects lived across machines. Files were shared. Parts were stored here and there. It worked in our lab. Because the network made it work.

So I asked the IT team to transport the computer sets to the venue. Multiple systems. Multiple projects. Everything needed to display the students' work.

Directors joined us. Senior staff joined us. The chief guest arrived. Formalities began.

Speeches. Introductions. Applause.

Then came the real moment. The moment the visitors would walk through. And judge what we had created.

We had about one and a half hours. Before the demonstrations started.

As soon as the computers powered on, I walked straight to the projects. I wanted to test everything. Every file. Every link. Every page.

And then I saw it.

My heart sank.

Projects were incomplete. Not because students failed. Because the files were scattered.

A homepage on one machine. Images on another. Scripts on another. Database pieces elsewhere.

Not one complete project on one PC. Not one.

In that moment, the room felt heavy. The directors looked disappointed. The students looked crushed. The IT team looked helpless.

And I understood them. Because it was not a small problem.

It was a disaster. With a deadline. With an audience. With zero excuses accepted.

But something inside me refused to surrender.

I did not argue. I did not panic. I did not blame anyone.

I moved.

I opened every computer. One by one. Fast. Focused.

I traced each project. Found the missing pieces. Copied. Moved. Rebuilt. Re-checked.

I made every system complete. Project by project. PC by PC.

Time kept running. The room kept watching. The pressure kept rising.

And then it happened.

Five minutes before the conference demonstrations began, we were ready. Five minutes.

The visitors arrived. They walked through. They clicked. They tested. They asked questions.

And the projects worked. Smoothly. Cleanly. Confidently.

The conference went exceptionally well.

We won first prize for one of the projects. Six of our projects made the top ten. Among thousands of providers. Thousands.

The same directors who looked worried earlier were smiling now. The students stood taller. The team breathed again.

And later, the management thanked me. Not for luck. Not for talent.

They thanked me for problem solving. Under pressure. In public. With everything on the line.

That day taught me something I have carried ever since.

Problems do not ask for permission. They arrive. Uninvited. At the worst moment.

And leadership is not the absence of problems. Leadership is what you do when they appear.

Thinking outside the box matters. Because the box is where panic lives.

And solutions often live just beyond it.

In life, in business, in education, in leadership. The difference is rarely intelligence alone.

The difference is response. The difference is resilience. The difference is staying calm long enough to create a path forward.

Because anyone can shine when everything works.

But professionals are revealed when it does not.

And that is why problem solving is not just a skill. It is a mindset. A discipline. A way of living.

1999 gave me a moment. A moment that could have ended in embarrassment.

Instead, it became a reminder.

Do not freeze in the face of chaos. Do not wait for perfect conditions. Do not give up because the files are scattered.

Gather them. Rebuild. Deliver.

And walk out stronger than you walked in.

A beautiful memory, so vivid it feels like yesterday.



True growth is born in moments of uncertainty, when you are forced to confront chaos with nothing but your determination and grit. It's in these moments, when the odds stack against you and solutions seem out of

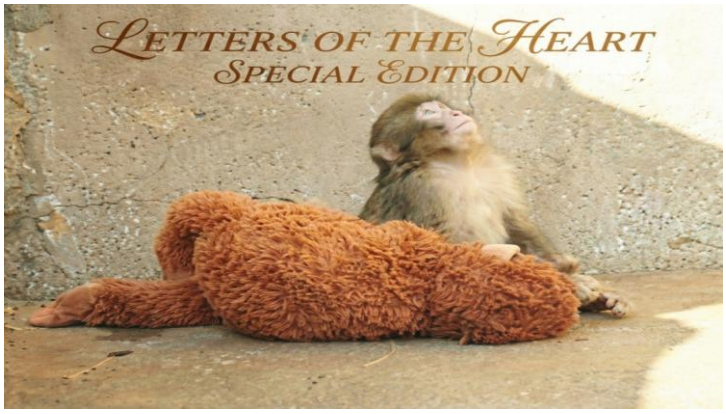
reach, that you discover your true potential. Life doesn't wait for perfect plans or ideal circumstances, it demands action, creativity, and resilience. The key is not just solving the problem, but embracing the pressure as an opportunity to rise, to adapt, and to lead. Because every challenge you conquer becomes a story of strength, a testament to your ability to turn obstacles into opportunities, and a reminder that even in chaos, you have the power to create order and move forward.

LETTERS OF THE HEART

What does it truly mean to belong?

By Dr Sukh Rashpal Sandhu | First published 21 February 2026

This is the story of Panchi-kun, a baby Japanese macaque who taught us about love, loneliness, and the universal need for connection.



💔 Keep reading to discover how a simple act of kindness changed his world."

There is a profound difference between merely surviving and truly belonging. This is the story of Panchi-kun, a baby Japanese macaque who taught us the meaning of love and the ache of loneliness.

Abandoned by his mother at birth, Panchi-kun's life began with a fragile breath, nearly extinguished before it could truly start. Zookeepers became his saviours, their gentle hands bottle-feeding him, nurturing him back from the brink. They saved his life, but in doing so, they inadvertently created a world of isolation for him.

Raised in the realm of humans, Panchi-kun never learned the unspoken language of his own kind. When he was finally introduced to his troop, he was met not with kinship, but with a wall of confusion and fear. He didn't understand their social cues, their calls, their ways of being. In their eyes, he was an outsider. Caught between two worlds, belonging to neither, the little macaque was utterly alone.

To soothe his profound loneliness, his human caretakers gave him a simple plush toy. It became his constant companion, a surrogate mother to cling to whenever the weight of his isolation became too much to bear. The image of this tiny infant, clutching a stuffed toy for comfort, was a heartbreaking testament to a universal need: the simple, desperate search for something to hold on to.

But even in the deepest solitude, a flicker of hope can ignite. Recently, a moment of grace unfolded. An older macaque, perhaps sensing the deep sorrow in the young one, approached Panchi-kun and began to gently groom him. It was a small gesture, but it held the weight of the world, the very first sign of acceptance, a bridge being built across the chasm of his loneliness.

Panchi-kun’s journey reminds us that saving a life is only the first step. The true, and often hardest, part of any rescue is helping that life find its way home, to a place of acceptance, of care, of love. To a place where they finally belong.

Panchi-kun's story beautifully illustrates the profound power of belonging. It's not enough to simply exist in a space; true belonging means feeling seen, valued, and accepted for who you are. This lesson resonates far beyond the animal kingdom; it's deeply relevant to our workplaces, too.



At work, belonging is what turns a group of individuals into a team. It's what fosters collaboration, trust, and shared success. When people feel like they truly belong, they don't just show up; they thrive. And isn't that what we all want? A workplace where everyone feels connected, supported, and empowered.

At our company, Career Calling International Compliance and Quality Assurance (CAQA) CAQA Australian Higher Education Group (CAQA, AHEG) we're incredibly proud to have colleagues who have been with us for 17 years or more. These long-standing team members are a testament to the culture we've built, one of inclusion, respect, and belonging. They remind us that when people feel at home in their work environment, they're not just employees, they're family.

Just like Panchi-kun's journey toward connection, creating belonging takes effort, empathy, and small acts of kindness that build bridges over time. Let's continue to nurture workplaces where everyone feels like they matter, where everyone has someone to lean on. After all, belonging isn't just a need; it's the foundation of everything great we achieve together.

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