



## Apologies to All the People in Lebanon

BY JUNE JORDAN

*Dedicated to the 600,000 Palestinian men, women, and children who lived in Lebanon from 1948-1983.*

I didn't know and nobody told me and what  
could I do or say, anyway?

They said you shot the London Ambassador  
and when that wasn't true  
they said so  
what

They said you shelled their northern villages  
and when U.N. forces reported that was not true  
because your side of the cease-fire was holding  
since more than a year before  
they said so  
what

They said they wanted simply to carve  
a 25 mile buffer zone and then  
they ravaged your  
water supplies your electricity your  
hospitals your schools your highways and byways all  
the way north to Beirut because they said this  
was their quest for peace

They blew up your homes and demolished the grocery  
stores and blocked the Red Cross and took away doctors  
to jail and they cluster-bombed girls and boys  
whose bodies  
swelled purple and black into twice the original size  
and tore the buttocks from a four month old baby  
and then

they said this was brilliant  
military accomplishment and this was done  
they said in the name of self-defense they said  
that is the noblest concept  
of mankind isn't that obvious?  
They said something about never again and then  
they made close to one million human beings homeless  
in less than three weeks and they killed or maimed  
40,000 of your men and your women and your children

But I didn't know and nobody told me and what  
could I do or say, anyway?

They said they were victims. They said you were  
Arabs.

They called your apartments and gardens guerrilla  
strongholds.

They called the screaming devastation  
that they created the rubble.

Then they told you to leave, didn't they?

Didn't you read the leaflets that they dropped  
from their hotshot fighter jets?

They told you to go.

One hundred and thirty-five thousand  
Palestinians in Beirut and why  
didn't you take the hint?

Go!

There was the Mediterranean: You  
could walk into the water and stay  
there.

What was the problem?

I didn't know and nobody told me and what  
could I do or say, anyway?

Yes, I did know it was the money I earned as a poet that  
paid  
for the bombs and the planes and the tanks

that they used to massacre your family

But I am not an evil person

The people of my country aren't so bad

You can expect but so much

from those of us who have to pay taxes and watch

American TV

You see my point;

I'm sorry.

I really am sorry.

June Jordan, "Apologies to all the People in Lebanon" from *Directed By Desire: The Collected Poems of June Jordan* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2005). Copyright © 2005 by The June M. Jordan Literary Trust. Used by permission of The June M. Jordan Literary Trust, [www.junejordan.com](http://www.junejordan.com).

Source: *The Collected Poems of June Jordan* (Copper Canyon Press, 2005)

---

**CONTACT US**

**NEWSLETTERS**

**PRESS**

**PRIVACY POLICY**

**TERMS OF USE**

**POETRY MOBILE APP**

61 West Superior Street,  
Chicago, IL 60654

© 2023 Poetry Foundation

