



POETRY FOUNDATION

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.

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