



We* Refuse

As 2015 dawns, Palestinian drivers still refuse to remain in line as they wait to be checked at a checkpoint. Whether we're rebellious and unruly by nature or have become so because of circumstances, or whether it's an unconscious refusal of the status quo, we push and shove, go against traffic, curse anyone who dares bypass us, and simply do whatever it takes to get out first. It's a jungle out there and the mentality of "survival of the fittest" reigns.

I am convinced now that walking through traffic in the middle of the street is a Palestinian trait. We simply refuse to walk on the pavements. For crying out loud, a few days ago I saw a beggar in a wheelchair who was sitting smack in the middle of Ramallah's Manara Square waving a paper and asking people for help!

We refuse to drive another 100 metres to make a legal U-turn and insist on holding up traffic to make a U-turn at a "No U-Turn" traffic light, and by doing so risk our own lives and those of others. We refuse to wait the last few seconds for the light to turn green before barging ahead through the intersection. We refuse to keep the trash in the car and insist on throwing it from the window. And we surely refuse to abide by the law that forbids talking on the phone and texting while driving. We certainly deserve the term "refusniks!"

On the other hand, our freedom fighters rightfully refuse ill treatment and inhumane conditions in Israeli prisons. Hunger strikes have been the most common response, and we think of Samer Issawi, who set a record with his 8-month hunger strike before his wardens gave in and eventually released him. We refuse to stop demonstrating every Friday in Bil'in, Ni'lin, and Nabi Saleh. We refuse the war on Gaza, we refuse the regular incursions on Al-Aqsa Mosque; we refuse land confiscations, home demolitions, the apartheid Wall, the squatters' attacks on our villages, the unification and Judaisation of Jerusalem, ID confiscations, children's detentions, uprooting of the Bedouins, partition of the Ibrahimi Mosque and the Old City of Hebron. We refuse to assimilate. Hell, we refuse injustice.

"All I want for Christmas is Justice!" proclaims a big banner that hangs next to the Christmas tree in Bethlehem. Sounds like a request if you ask me, but unfortunately, the world seems to refuse to grant it. So we have no choice but to refuse its refusal and continue to refuse injustice.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

* "We," in this context, refers to a few of us Palestinians.
I'm using "we" to emphasise the point.

**Warmly,
Sani P. Meo
Publisher**

