

The News International
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A hundred beats
By Fatima Bhutto

A hundred beats of the heart, my heart.

How else can I tell you the things I see and feel?

Through every closing and opening of my eyes I promise to be true and open, looking at the world at home and ahead of us so that I may show you the things that move me.

Pedro Salinas, the Spanish poet, once said "I want you as a glass, never as a mirror".

But let us return, let us return to us.

Each beat will bring us, you and I, closer as we traverse farther and farther away from our universes. I'll take us from Karachi, to Larkana my home, to Muzaffarabad, to Lahore and Islamabad (but only if you really insist), to the minefields of Balochistan, to the myriad places in between and beyond this city by the sea that we call our own. But let us not make the mistake of calling home the land where we stand, limiting it solely to the ground beneath our feet. We are not confined by our religion(s), our language or our skin: the tide of global revolution is here.

There will be time for question and answers, time for transgressions, time for confessions and more. But first, a stage to set these beats: This is no longer the year of the 'for now', it is the now. We are witness to extraordinary history.

Lebanon -- I left you last under IDF bombing raids, under no electricity and no end in sight. We will return to Lebanon, it is only a beat or two away, I have more to say and more to share, but remember that Israel was not able to turn back the clock on Lebanon twenty years. Israel left, its soldiers wounded and confused. Lebanon, its people, and the fighters of Hezbollah, bloodied but unbowed, their homes destroyed but still rooted to their soil, remained. It seems callous to claim victory with so many lives and people lost, but the Lebanese -- the fighters, the resistance, the proud -- they persevered. Israel -- the aggressors, the mighty, and the powerful -- they ran.

When Hugo Chavez's attempted coup against the political oligarchy in charge of Venezuela in 1992 was quashed, he appeared on TV and claimed responsibility for the uprising. Venezuela would remain trapped in a political quagmire where the wealthiest five per cent of the population had incomes that were 53 per cent greater than the poorest five per cent, where the terrorism of hunger and poverty attacked daily, and where the mass of ordinary men suffocated under American businesses and their bloodlust for Venezuela's oil.

It would be another seven years before things began to change. Chavez, a military man I would like to stress, appeared on television and in 74 seconds captured the imagination of his people. "Comrades" he said, "the objectives we set for ourselves have not been possible to achieve for now -- por ahora -- but new possibilities will arise again, and the country will be able to move forward to a better future". For now.

Today the Bolivarian Revolution under Chavez is making those changes to ensure a better, more just future.

Now.

And what about that other Muslim country, like ours, but so different from ours? Iran. Are they going to be at the receiving end of another disastrously named and planned American invasion? Can we be certain that Iran will not fall like Baghdad, like Kabul? During a recent interview with CBS's Mike Wallace, President Ahmedinejad was asked if it was true that he said thousands of Iranian men and women -- suicide bombers they call them -- are prepared to give their lives to obliterate any foreigners that invade their land. President Ahmedinejad smiled and responded "Don't ask me if it's true or not, why don't you ensure the conditions where it doesn't have to be true".

In our own home, right within our borders, a civil war rages. Not just in Balochistan, reeling from the maniacal military machinations of the state, but also within our jails where thousands of people are incarcerated without trial, without charge sheets, and without the supremacy of justice to defend them. In our slums this war is evident too, with families being evicted forcibly because they are an eyesore to the "Karachi Beautification Project". In our universities and schools where you cannot hold a teacher's job if you do not teach an invisible history and where you cannot learn without your family going hungry that night.

Soon, they will bring this war to our minds. A ministry is being created as we speak to control and censor 'anti state' websites on the internet - don't worry if you didn't hear about it, it was only a small box in the papers right at the end of the page.

Another small box, in the papers a month ago, which you were not meant to see either, had a statement from the President of the American Congress-Council for World Jewry, Jack Rosen. Speaking from Islamabad, Mr Rosen assured the people of Pakistan that the negotiations for peace with Israel have not been set back by this recent Lebanon debacle. No, Mr Rosen said, moderate Muslims in Pakistan are excitedly still working to ensure that Israel will have a new trading partner in the East. Who are these moderates, these Pakistanis that Mr Rosen is so confidently talking about? I will not sign my name to recognise a criminal state whose occupation and annihilation of a legacy of people continues unabashedly more than fifty years after its founding and I have the feeling that I am not alone.

I am getting ahead of myself, more than one beat ahead.

I came here just to introduce myself, to present the 'now' and the year ahead of us. I look forward to our journey.

My name is Fatima Bhutto, pleased to meet you