
Decalogue on Indecency

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It's indecent that the European Union, after so many months of complicity, the deaths of 55,000 Palestinians, most of them children, women, and the elderly, and the displacement of 90% of the Gaza population, declares that "there are indications" (still unconfirmed) that Israel has violated human rights.

It's indecent that I take refuge in the hardships of my people, blockaded and suffocated, but with their own sovereign, unyielding government—even when these hardships, which are not few, are part of the global war (a euphemism I find to describe this ongoing world war)—just because they affect my daily life, when death is stalking millions of human beings. Indecency, however, has become a virtue: lies, cynicism, contempt for the human life of others. "Defend us, you who know how to write!" an old woman said to Alejo Carpentier in 1937 in the depths of Spain, during that country's civil war. I don't know how to fulfill that poor woman's plea right now. I don't know if I know how to write, if I'm capable, effective, if anyone will read me. Will my words save a woman, a child, from death? Are we all so crazy?

I can't go to Gaza, Tehran, Lebanon, as I would like, because the most decent thing we could do is die there, fighting alongside those under attack. José Martí wrote a lot, but when the time came, he rode on his horse and drew his pistol. The dilemma of intellectuals then is the same today, faced with war and the resurgence of fascism around the world. To serve or to be served, to put one's creative capacity at the service of humanity, or to pursue "personal transcendence." André Malraux told our great novelist a revealing anecdote: a man was walking hurriedly with a large roll of paper under his arm while the bombs were falling over Madrid, and he, intrigued, wanted to know what he was up to. But the man responded imperturbably: "It's paper glued to replace the wallpaper in my room." Then, relying on that metaphor, Carpentier declared: in decisive times for humanity, "there are too many intellectuals who only think about changing the wallpaper in their rooms."

Does anyone believe that what happens in the Middle East or on the Ukrainian front doesn't affect them? That what the criminally blockaded people of Cuba and Venezuela suffer is no one's business? The bells toll for everyone, as the poet said, and Hemingway declared. Human nature degrades, reaching its most basic biological stage when a decadent civilization defends its "territory" with bites and claws, like the alpha male of a pack, because it knows no

