القفص
Дания القيادي

Al-Qafas (The Cage)
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And prison is torture.
My story began when I realised that my own thoughts were actually trapped within me.
Everything I saw became a cage, there were cages everywhere...
They came in different shapes and sizes.
People were trying to get out of them.
I, too, tried to get out of my cage, but I soon found myself in another one!
It was here when I decided: I had to go on a personal journey and try and understand what life was all about. I just had to.
My first goal was to leave home, the very first cage I'd known. It was a daily experience of imprisonment and lack of freedom. There were many things I wanted to do, but I felt trapped. I had to leave home.
Leaving home was revolutionary: I was able to see the world around me from a new perspective, my very own. I realised there were lots of things I didn't know about; I discovered new ways of being in the world! New narratives and scenarios I could draft for myself and enjoy savouring the fresh taste of every detail of these new, exciting experiences! Such fun!
So I left! I left my country, which had been savaged by a bloody war. I looked back one more time as I was leaving and I saw the cage with the door firmly shut and locked behind me. I looked ahead but all I saw was another, bigger cage, more like a proper prison, in the new country I moved to.
Well, I soon realised that this new country was pretty much like my own – despite the superficial differences here and there.

We really are very similar – almost identical!
I walked around town and I saw the new cage looming over me.
It was everywhere: it manifested itself in society’s interference in the ins and outs of my life! It felt all too familiar!
I had a horrible déjà-vu! The cage was all around me once again!
Or was it? Maybe the cage is something I carry with me; maybe it is within me! I spoke to friends and people around me and I realised they all had their own cage, or multiple cages; they knew the pain of being in their personal prison.

These cages may be different, but they all produce the same negative affect: a paralysing and demoralising helplessness. For some, it's like drowning or suffocating; for others, it's like being squeezed or crushed to death!

Many different cages can produce that horrible feeling of suffocation... it's a slow death: think of the stranded refugees fleeing war zones and trying to make it to safety in other countries; many are left in a limbo... in a no-man's land... in an infinite cage of bureaucracy and nasty immigration politics. Even when they die, their coffins act like cages separating their bodies from their souls.
فيما نبدأ من البيت وندرك عنه، يظهر أبو مسكي هو يَكون أول قفص قرب...

الأطفال يَعزووا الأهل كفسوقة وقت يَزعم كوف الدهم يعَهم بما منازعوس الأزد ليَهمهم، ضمن مواقع متفقين من كل شيء. ورشم فيهم فيَهم الناس على يَهمهم. وفجأة تَهمهم الأهل، وهم مَعَه، وهم مَعَهم. وفجأة تَهمهم الأهل، وهم مَعَه، وهم مَعَهم. ما فيهم يَهمهم أو يَزعم عنه، يَعزووا الأهل. وأيضاً المغرب هو قفص...

رؤساء الأطفال المدرسية في بعض البلدان عادة في اللغة العربية يُخبر الأطفال ماهية موقع وحوام مصيرهم بالغرفة التزاحم، نتائج مهاراتهم بشكل عام، وأن الأطفال يبنون اساليبهم غير التعليمية ضمن المراحل التعليمية الأساسية...

و لِذا كل طالب يحس بالاحترام ويعمل الشيء البشري، ما عن الصغر. لازم يكتشفوا ماهي المحفونه غالبًا خلف...

There really are lots and lots of depressing 'cage situations' in the world, but let's talk about something more generic. Situations most of us have experienced: most children's first experience of the 'cage' is their home and the way their parents worry about them (often too much); parents make rules that restrict their children's choices: from choosing friends to the long list of 'yes's and 'no's of how to behave... of what is socially acceptable and what is not. Children often don't understand their parents' excessive fear and translate it into a 'cage'.

Another early 'cage situation' that children experience (especially those living in the Arab world) is school: more often than not schools operate under certain oppressive political regimes that limit children's creativity; the child's individuality isn't respected. All children are expected to fit within an existing prefab model. Dissidence is not tolerated, which crucially impacts the child's creativity from an early age.
Leaving school doesn’t mean liberation! Young people soon come face-to-face with an intricate network of complex rules and regulations that govern and dictate the way love and relationships are to be conducted in society. For some, this becomes a very rigid, oppressive cage!

While getting a job and starting your professional career may be liberating in so many ways, it can also become a dangerous trap, especially when repetition and tedious routine creep in. Monotony and lack of change and challenge at work can turn the workplace into a very depressing cage!

And then, of course, there’s the ‘intellectual cage’, which is the socio-cultural cage that controls and imprisons our intellect. The strict enforcement of ‘social norms’ creates a less tolerant society, one in which non-normative behaviour is severely frowned upon (if not penalised), making all forms of dissidence (political, ideological, or otherwise) a dangerous taboo.

What’s more, this oppressive policy of social engineering is supported by modern technology as well as specialised media outlets actively promoting ‘normative’ behaviour while cracking down, sometimes violently, on any form of dissidence, regardless of how peaceful it may be.
Anyway, these are just a few examples of mundane, day-to-day “cage-scenarios”? I’d like now to move on to something a bit bigger: “trans-national cages” – the sort you encounter when you move from one country to another. This opens a Pandora’s box of tricky entrapment situations especially for vulnerable refugees: some may eventually be admitted through the border if they’re lucky, but many are unable to cross the border, due to cruel inhumane immigration policies, leaving them stranded in the middle of nowhere. They can’t go back; they can’t continue their journey and it’s often unsafe for them to stay where they are. This is a very cruel cage – the cage of transnational borders.

Unfortunately, unfair immigration policies affect certain people (with certain passports and nationalities) more than others. The sad thing is that it’s a man-made thing – there’s nothing natural about a piece of paper (your passport) that arbitrarily grants or limits your freedom of movement in the world. Roaming animals, migratory birds and even insects and microbes certainly don’t need these papers, so why should humans? So-called ‘national borders’ are, in most cases, a seamless continuation of natural landscape – land that has been partitioned and divided up into territories to create artificial entities called ‘nations’, which no other creature recognises apart from us, humans. Nationalist ideology is dangerous: it imagines difference and uses it to justify segregation and oppression. National passports, a crazy human enterprise, cause so much misery if you’re born with the ‘wrong’ nationality. They allow certain humans (usually wealthier, more powerful ones) to oppress other humans (who tend to be poorer and more desperate for help) on some arbitrary basis! The whole thing is insane if you really think about it! How would you explain that to an alien from outer space? Why should some be born privileged and use that privilege to oppress those who weren’t born with it? The whole thing is messed-up and just so wrong.
What's more, these unjust policies tend to impact the most vulnerable in society. This becomes a nightmare for refugees caught up between national borders: it can often result in unjust imprisonment; being sent to a real cage, a prison that's more suffocating than the metaphorical one surrounding every aspect of an individual's life. Meanwhile, powerful people can do what they like and enjoy immunity, which often comes at the expense of oppressing the defenceless and the vulnerable. The cage in these scenarios becomes a physical reality, not just a psychological state of mind. Injustice is a great, terrifying cage. Unfortunately, it defines and runs through most societies, even 'civilised' ones in wealthier, richer nations.

But there are 'fair cages'; too! I speak of prison sentences handed to criminals, killers, rapists and other offenders. The cage should be preserved for those and those only.
The cage could also be a great leveller: in a way, we are all trapped within the ozone layer of Planet Earth that keeps us all in. Very few are those who, under strict scientific experiments, have been able to break free from this great big ‘cage’ and go beyond our natural habitat. But, of course, most of us haven’t experienced that—we are all stuck in this together, which somehow makes us all equal.

So... after all, there’s a cage everywhere: your house, car, school, street, thoughts, society, city, country and even the entire planet we live on. The list goes on... Indeed, the cage starts within us and expands to the very planet that houses us.
And here's my big question to you: you, as a human being, would you really like to live in a cage? Do you really want to do that for the rest of your life?

But what is your cage? Remember, your biggest cage is the one constructed within you; it's your compliance with social norms and behaviours. Shake yourself free and liberate yourself from the shackles of normativity! Set yourself free! Think for yourself and take control of your own path – only then will you be liberated, mentally, emotionally and physically.

This is my simple message to everyone, to humanity at large ... with love.
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