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Lockdowns and Curfews

by Lesley Dawson

Every day is the same, nothing different marks out which day of the week it is. What is the point of getting up in the morning if there is nothing to do and nowhere to go?

I have reread all my crime fiction novels and am so bored that I have started to read some of the medical textbooks that I never read when I needed to but kept them on my bookshelves for show. I have even managed to paint a couple of pictures. I had every intention of doing more painting as I had set out my garden shed as an art studio. Despite this good intention, the tops of the paints remain unopened, the canvases remain uncovered and I can't be bothered to walk across the garden to the shed or put on my painting apron. What a time to be living alone.

And yet, remembering times in Bethlehem under curfew, I had plenty of energy to do things then, especially things I wasn't supposed to do. We were confined to our homes except for one hour per day when we women went to queue up at the bakery for bread. Yesterday's bread is never good enough to eat today. Often, we would chance going to the grocery shop down the hill to stock up on matches and candles for when the electricity went off. By the time I was ready to go home the soldiers were out with their loudspeakers sweeping everyone inside. Once or twice I just managed to close the outer door to our flats before their jeep came round the corner.

I knew that the punishment for Palestinians being caught outside during curfew was a imprisonment but couldn't imagine them doing that to an expat. Perhaps they would expel me from the country.

Of course, I might have been alone in my flat, but my neighbours in the other flats were always up for a party. They would send the kids round to knock on my door saying "Yalla Lesley, beitna; come to our house". Having grabbed a bottle of Cremisan wine and whatever else I had to hand, I would climb the stairs to the top flat so we could amuse ourselves by looking out of the windows at the bedraggled soldiers standing in the rain on the road to Manger Square.

We would eat and drink, listen to Arabic music and tell stories (all at the same time), sometimes in candlelight when the electricity was turned off. They would keep going all night, knowing that the kids wouldn't be able to go to school and none of us would be expected to go to work the next day. They were not impressed with my ability to keep up and as I began to show signs of falling asleep, they would escort me back to my flat and wish me good night.

All this reinforces the point that any idiot can face a crisis; it's this day-to-day living that wears you out. I bet they are still partying in Bethlehem.