

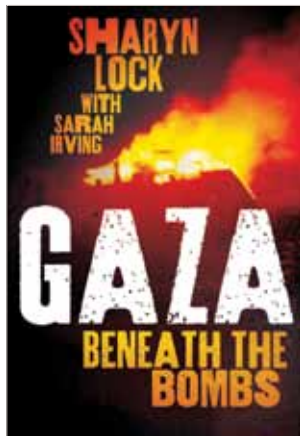
# Fill in the adjectives

**Gaza: Beneath the Bombs**  
**Sharyn Lock with Sarah Irving**  
Pluto Press

By the time I put it down, my copy of *Gaza: Beneath the Bombs* is creased up with a kennel's worth of dog-ears. I folded over a corner for each passage that, in capturing the abject horror and amazing humanity of Gaza under Israeli attack (during December-January 2009 and beyond), was a must-recall for making *The Case for Palestine*.

Sharyn Lock entered Gaza as an International Solidarity Movement activist on a Free Gaza Movement boat. As a volunteer with the Red Crescent, she was at the centre of that horror and humanity. The medical services epitomise the pile-up of pain in Gaza. Already under strain from siege, they then have to contend with an insane and impossible mass of casualties; and as they do so, themselves come under direct attack by bullets, missiles and white phosphorus.

Being a blog-to-book enterprise, *Gaza: Beneath the Bombs*



has its drawbacks. Entries jarringly alternate between tenses and it lacks an overarching narrative to pull the reader from page to page. This is not to suggest that Lock's priority should be distilling Palestinian suffering into an easy literary experience but that readability is a key means to a vital end here: these stories so deserve and need to be read, and read widely.

The drawbacks are, however, a reasonable price to pay for the blog-to-book benefits. Lock kept her diary on a near-daily basis. She didn't have time to step back and embellish; she simply tells us what she saw and what she heard that day. The spare adjectives, the spare emotion even (in a state of shock, Lock doesn't cry over the corpses of children; she is without fear in terrifying circumstances), strips away the author and places us, the readers, in Gaza.

We fill in the adjectives, we feel the emotion. We also get lovely quotidian details, little asides that reveal big Palestinian generosity and Gazan humour. And so significant are these details when Israel's actions rely on (and perpetuate) the dehumanisation of Gazans.

Pick up this book, read it, fold over the pages that tug and go re-tell those tales.

**Andrea D'Cruz**