**Dark December**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

What is the meaning of life in a shroud of darkness?

I imagine myself with my sister Razan Zaitouneh, who has been absent for almost two years.

Razan is a hero back home in Syria. She dedicated all of her time to help political prisoners. She spent her time helping them, their cases and their families. Razan met with them, took their cases to court, and she was in hiding most of the time because of her work. Razan was kidnapped on December 9, 2013.

I imagine the extent of the darkness that prevails in her cell, which her jailer doesn’t allow her to exit from.

I start crying with a severe burning sensation and appeal to the walls which surround me. Perhaps they will open by a word similar to Ali Baba’s “Open sesame”. I try and try but the walls do not open.

I sense my spirit in her body. I feel angry and want to see her and whisper in her ear, “smash the walls, you can do it, I am here for you, don’t you hear me?”

Sometimes I feel that Razan is in the room next to me, that she lives in a long coma and will wake up soon and talk to me and allow me to rest. But soon I wake up from my coma and feel the walls of my reality. I shut out the voice of my crying, and go back to my miserable computer screen, which she gave me one day as a gift.

I was happy at the time when I received a new computer. I did not expect that day to mark the day she would be kidnapped in the center that she established to demand freedom and justice as a part of everyday Syrian life.

I spend countless hours just trying to get through the days and weeks. I never leave, not even for a moment away from the computer screen she gave me, in the hope for news, in the hope of hearing her voice again.

Everyday without my sister is a dark day.

*Reem Zaitouneh*

Reem Zaitouneh is the sister of human rights defender, lawyer and journalist Razan Zaitouneh. She now resides in Canada, where she continues the work of the Violations Documentation Center in Syria that was founded by Razan.