



I will leave it to others to discuss the precedents for Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, from [Thích Quảng Đức](#) to [Norman Morrison](#) to [Mohamed Bouazizi](#)

to

[Irina Slavina](#)

to

[Wynn Alan Bruce](#)

. Yes, this has happened before.

The world has been a terrible place for too many for too long, and for that reason, the rare few most inclined to feel that terror, to breathe in its ashes, have found no other option but to set themselves on fire in protest. So that others may be forced to breathe in some of those ashes too.

A debate has erupted about how best to interpret Bushnell's last act. Was it heroic? Pointless? Another opportunity to opine on the need for more robust mental health services. Or to scold those who have dared to take Bushnell [at his word](#). After all, he was anything but inexplicit: *"My name is Aaron Bushnell. I'm an active-duty member of the United States Air Force. And I will no longer be complicit in genocide. I'm about to engage in an extreme act of protest, but compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonizers, it's not extreme at all. This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal."*

When someone commits an act like this, and leaves us with words like that, I feel obligated to take the person at their word. And the words couldn't be more instructive.

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