Yes, it's dark. I'm wondering how long we can all stand it without picking up our phone and turning the flashlights on. Seconds? Minutes? A whole hour? Don't worry, I'm not going to give you my whole speech in the dark. But it's something I'm used to.

For more than 10 years, I and two million people back home have been living in darkness, locked between two borders that are nearly impossible to leave, literally, in an area that spans 25 miles long and about five miles wide. I am Palestinian, and I am from Gaza. I grew up there and I still live there.

In Gaza, we have a whole lot of nothing. And I aim to create something from that nothing. When a community is cut off from the world, all that we need to do is ... what? To think outside the box. Way outside the box. That thinking led me to two projects to address two serious issues in my community. The need for building materials and the need for electricity and energy. Two essential ingredients of life. Both are in lack of supply in Gaza.

First, I'm not here ... just to talk about the occupation we have back home. The siege, the wars, the bombs, the protests or the death toll. I am here because I wanted to show that we can live through it all. I am here because I wanted to make a change. I am here to tell you that I am a statistic that cannot be ignored.

In the 2014 war, thousands of houses were destroyed. Those houses were made from sunbaked stones and blocks. Those houses stood for decades and decades. Those houses were for my family, friends, neighbors, everyone I know. At that time, I asked myself a question: What can I do for people? How can I help them? I knew we weren't able to get cement, aggregate and sand to rebuild what the war destroyed. But also, maybe we can use something from inside the community, something we already had.

I started to put things together. First, paper as a filler, instead of the aggregate we import. But that did not work out. What about using glass powder to replace part of the cement? But that failed, too. I guessed making building blocks out of mud would be a great idea. But unfortunately, it didn't work out. During the process of burning the mud blocks, we had a huge amount of ashes. And I was like, "Why don't we use those ashes?" The idea flashed in my mind. "Let's use it and combine it with the rubble of the demolished houses and make building blocks out of it." After more than 150 failed experiments, and over six months of research, I actually made it.

(Applause)

I created a building block out of the ashes and rubble of the demolished houses. It's here, it came all the way with me. Well, it came before me. So, it's lighter, it's cheaper, and it's stronger.

(Applause)

This building block -- of course, you ask yourself, "How did this girl do it?" It's not that hard, and it's not that easy. First, we collected rubble from all around the Gaza Strip. Then we combined it with the ashes that came from the landfills. When the recipe is done, it's time for baking. So we mold the blocks, as you can see in the photo, and we cure it using water steam. I call the material "Green Cake," and people now can use it not only to rebuild old houses, but also to build new complete structures.

Green Cake so far has created jobs for more than 30 people. And we were able to rebuild around 50 apartments, each one of them the size of a household almost for eight people. We also trained fresh graduates, female and male, which is not very common in the community. And we got several awards, locally and globally. This block is not just only a building block. It changed the stereotype about women in Gaza that stated this type of work is meant for men. Education is the strongest weapon we have to fight for our freedom, decent life and future.

My background helped me to do this block. I went to the Islamic University of Gaza, and I studied civil engineering, where there was a one-to-six female-to-male ratio. Everyone told me I would end up without a job. I went for a major that's meant for men. But their lack of encouragement did not deter me; it inspired me.

(Applause)

After this long journey with the block, and after two years, what Gaza does need is not just building blocks. We also need electricity, we need the energy. I developed a new company called SunBox. SunBox is a smart solar kit that we source from China, and we engineer it to fit the market need. It powers not only light, but also laptops, phones, internet connection, a fan or a TV. We teach local vendors and technicians to sell, install and provide customer services for people.

We got the project off the ground by providing 15 families with solar energy. One of the solar units we installed in a refugee camp. The next day I came to check what happened with the solar, and I found a whole neighborhood watching a football match using our device. I was like, "Wow, that's going to create a huge impact in the community." That encouraged us to go to the second round of bringing 200 units. But each unit costs around 350 dollars. And a Palestinian family can't afford the 350 dollars.

So we had to think, again, outside the box: How can we make this happen? If a whole neighborhood can watch a football match using one device, it means two, three and four families can share one device and enjoy the electricity. What we did is, we created a new business model called "sharing is caring."

(Laughter)

The sharing is caring business model says two families share one unit, three families share one unit, and they split the cost, so they can afford paying for it. Well, the idea caught on. I didn't expect that, but it just happened. In less than two weeks, we were able to provide over 200 people with electricity.

(Applause)

And the question here: How did the idea catch on? We went to community centers -- those are places, you know for whom? Only for men. So it was so weird for a woman to go there. And I told them, "We have a great idea. We will give you electricity, you give us people who need this electricity."

Now, families are approaching us from all around the Gaza Strip. I received a phone call from the team this morning, saying, "Majd, please, we are under pressure, we work 16 hours a day, we will not be able to work like this. Families are calling us every second. They want solar energy." Muna, from one of the families we installed the solar unit for, she told me, "You know, Majd, I've never imagined I will control something in my life. Now I can control my source of energy. I feel so special."

What you take for granted is a privilege for others. People like Muna. She doesn't want to fight. She doesn't want to stay in a bad life. She's only looking for a better life. Our vision, or I would say, everyone's vision in Gaza -- which I am very privileged to represent the people back home -- is to have a good life, a future. We need to build the infrastructure of hope. We want to tell them it's possible to happen, it's possible to be treated as a human being. I don't have to cross four borders to come here. I can just go to the airport, see the people outside, see what the world looks like.

Thank you so much.

(Applause)