



THROUGH ART, WE CAN DOCUMENT MOMENTS, SPACES, MEMORIES, DREAMS, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.

It is a tool of resistance, survival, and hope. Woven together with illustrations, pictures, art, poems, reflections, letters, research, and more, akin to the traditional Palestinian tatreez practice, this publication is an ode to past, present, and future Palestinians.

It is an offering, an invitation, and a call to action to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and recognise its central role in our collective liberation.

Towards Our Liberation: Palestinian Girls and Young Feminists Weaving Resistance and Hope, 2024

www.TowardsOurLiberation.org

ILLUSTRATION

Generations Y and Z - or as Palestinians call them, Pre-Oslo and Post-Oslo Generations, respectively - grew up under spatial and temporal boundaries set by Zionist settler colonialism. The life they know is one of military violence, restrictions, surveillance, and precarious living conditions. Their memories have been coercively formed with the presence of tanks, live ammunition, and heavy artillery, and serve as a critique of the intimate dichotomies of peace and war. Given the decades-long reality of oppression in Palestine, the mere existence of Palestinians on the land in the face of unprecedented tyranny in modern history is a pure act of resistance. While the reality is dire and the lived experiences portray testimonies of agony and suffering, there is so much more to Palestine and the Palestinian youth. [When you visit this country](#), bathe on the beaches of Jaffa, enjoy the sweetness of the strawberries of Gaza, rejoice in the olive trees of Bethlehem, walk through the old city of Jerusalem, hear the church bells and Muslim calls to prayer, you feel the warmth of the people, food, and rich culture of Palestine. It becomes personal. Palestine today, as it has always, combines a blend of beauty and hospitality.

Within the illustrative identity of this publication, we share the beauty of Palestine with you. We share with you the 'thob' - the Palestinian traditional dress that grandmothers have worn for centuries - reflecting how culture and identity are integral political aspects of the struggle for liberation. The illustrations are an invitation to contemplate the beauty of Palestinian nature, heritage, and resources before they were militarised. The vivid colours and visual elements represent the hope, joy, and drive for life that accompanies painful journeys of resistance. The connection between women, and more specifically, women's bodies and the land, speaks volumes.

Let the visual elements take you on a journey to imagine what the past looked like in Palestine, when the lands were green, and women and girls harvested and laughed on farms, before their lands and homes were stolen, and they have been holding the keys to their homes and dreaming of return ever since.



[Click here to access playlist](#)

MUSIC

Immerse yourself in the *Falasteen* playlist, curated with songs that honour, celebrate, and take you on a journey through Palestine, its people, culture, and power. *Falasteen* is the Arabic pronunciation for Palestine.



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FOREWORD

Towards our Liberation is the culmination of a multi-year journey to document the political history and current organising strategies of Palestinian girls and young feminists. By weaving together generational lived-experiences, first hand testimony, liberation theory, art, and political praxis, this publication offers a foundational historical and narrative account of girls' and young feminists' efforts towards the liberation of past, present and future Palestine.

Written collaboratively by more than 30 Palestinian girls and young feminists and allies from across the world, this volume could not be more timely, or more urgent. Officially initiated at the close of 2022, the project has taken on a new kind of meaning since October 7th. A meaning that is so soul shaking there is no language yet written to make sense of the genocide that we are witnessing.

And yet, find words we must, as the girls and young feminists in these pages do. Over these chapters, you will hear directly from girls and young feminists from across historic Palestine, exposing the crushing weight of the occupying forces - and the Zionist project that underpins it - on their very bodies, minds, and spirits. You will hear how the ravages of settler colonial violence touch and seek to destroy everything - literally every corner of life.

But this is only one part of the story.

Throughout these chapters you will also hear of the ways that girls and young feminist activists are holding the line and evolving the agenda with a political clarity that puts to rest any question of their central role in the liberation struggle in Palestine and across the world. Rooted in a revolutionary love ethic, the girls and young feminists in these pages demand a feminist peace that should be a rallying call for all of us that believe in our collective humanity, in liberation, in joy, and a future where the colonisation, exploitation, and occupation of our bodies and lands is abolished. It is the demand - and the tangible enactment of that demand - of a radical vision for peace that transcends borders. It is one of the most profound dreams seeded by each generation: collective liberation.

The question for those of us reading these pages is therefore really this: How do we move with the solidarity and clarity that this moment demands of us so that we can get free together?

Palestine will be free, Palestine is freeing us.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE MENTAL LABOUR

This publication provides an in-depth documentation of Palestinian girls' and young feminists' experiences, strategies, and realities. Each chapter has been written collaboratively with Palestinian girls and young feminist activists to bring to the fore their historical documentation, analysis, and liberatory efforts, and to resist the ways in which their lives as Palestinians, girls, and young feminists, continue to be targeted.

Writing about Palestine is not an easy task. It is loaded with terms, emotions, and ideologies that we despise and attempt to disrupt. It is an agonising and, very often, dehumanising process. It entails the processing of facts and traumas at magnitudes and frequencies that one is not necessarily ready to encounter. Writing about Palestine is a practice of confronting our lived realities - pausing to approach them from the outside, taking a moment to step out of manufactured contexts that keep us overwhelmed, burned out, exhausted, and depressed. **At the same time, the process of writing engages us in a practice of remembering the ones we lost, the homes and memories we left behind, and the fears we carry in our hearts when Palestinians are killed every morning and every night.**

There is a level of detail to our everyday life under oppression that cannot be verbally expressed. Crying at the sound of fireworks as if they were bombs, enduring humiliation at the checkpoints that were built on our own land, asking for permits to go to our beaches along the Mediterranean Sea, suffering in the biggest open-air prison in the world, having to explain the history of Palestine every time we travel through Jordan because we are not allowed to have our own airport, and so many other personal experiences that are emotionally loaded.

Exposing lived experiences under ongoing fascist settler colonialism, and the struggles for decolonising the land and the mind, brings many emotions to the surface as we co-create this publication. Within this reality, mental health needs, rest, care, and emotional wellbeing are systematically ignored in Palestine as part of a deliberate strategy to undermine collective healing and personal and political recovery. Nevertheless, we remain acutely conscious of the pivotal role of rest and healing in our struggle for liberation.

We defy the threats to our wellbeing, and we are here with each other, holding our community with grace and care until, one day, we will no longer have to write about oppression and instead, we will celebrate the joy of liberation. The joy of healing Palestine's past, present, and future.



TOWARDS OUR LIBERATION

Girl and young feminist Palestinians and their allies are at the forefront of revolutionary resistance² and organising efforts within Palestine and in the diaspora.³ Rooted in a transformative love ethic, they work towards achieving the liberation and peace of past, present, and future Palestinians. This publication provides a historical account of the occupation and oppression that Palestinians have faced for over 75 years and an analysis of the current context by documenting the experiences, memories, and strategies of Palestinian girls, young feminists, and their communities. Centring the power, courage, and creativity of their organising, we provide concrete recommendations and resources that support a practice of radical feminist solidarity.

“ I’m against the occupation. I’m against settlements. I’m against anything that has to do with injustice. Anything that has to do with inequality. I believe that everyone should be equal, everyone should have justice, peace, and equality. That’s what I am fighting for. I’m fighting for my freedom as a girl and for my freedom as a Palestinian.” - Janna Jihad, Palestinian feminist activist⁴

The oppression that Palestinians endure is not new or separate from systemic injustices across the world, but rather a profound and compounded microcosm of other single injustice. We must firmly reject any notion of isolating social justice issues, be it gender justice, Indigenous rights, or climate justice, from the broader cause of Palestinian peace and liberation.

“ Just as the struggle to end South African apartheid was embraced by people all over the world and was incorporated into many social justice agendas, solidarity with Palestine must likewise be taken up by organisations and movements involved in progressive causes all over the world. The tendency has been to consider Palestine a separate - and unfortunately too often marginal - issue. This is precisely the moment to encourage everyone who believes in equality and justice to join the call for a free Palestine.” - Dr. Angela Davis, Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement (2015)

All systems of oppression, including Zionism,⁵ patriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and imperialism work together to oppress, silence, and erase people, culture, and history. Systems of oppression thrive by dividing and conquering marginalised people. We will only bring about our collective liberation through our collective solidarity and struggle.

“ We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.” - Nelson Mandela

GENOCIDE, COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT, AND ETHNIC CLEANSING

The realities of the oppression and injustices faced by Palestinians become all the more evident in the midst of the ongoing Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people wherein numerous war crimes have been committed. These crimes have been and continue to be denounced by the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and many other global human rights organisations. Over 70% of the countries of the world are demanding an immediate ceasefire. In December 2023, South Africa filed a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice and the court then ordered provisional measures to protect and prevent genocide and Israel has failed to comply with these measures. At the same time, Indonesia brought a separate proceeding to the International Court of Justice regarding Israel's longstanding occupation of Palestine — a landmark case with over 50 countries presenting arguments.

For girls and women, who already grapple with the highest and deepest forms of oppression globally, the situation in Palestine is even more dire. Before October 2023, girls and women were already experiencing complete mobility control and restrictions, lack of access to health and education resources, and severe psychological trauma due to the targeted persecution, criminalisation, and violence of the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation forces. In the the ongoing genocide in Gaza, girls and women constitute the majority of those killed and displaced, have no safe spaces, face the least access to food and humanitarian resources, and have been forced to resort to using unsanitary hygiene materials, exposing themselves to infections and life-long illnesses. There is a 300% increase in miscarriages and the risks of childbirth and obstetric complications are significantly heightened due to the collapse of the healthcare system and lack of medical supplies, including basic pain medications. Women are undergoing C-sections without anaesthesia. All this occurs against a backdrop of minimal humanitarian assistance resulting from the blockade by the Israel state, and significant funding cuts depleting the critical aid provided by United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).



“ The situation is getting worse every single day with the absolute absence of humanitarian aid for people in Gaza. Regional humanitarian agencies publish numbers to be contacted in case of need for those in need of aid support. The list of phone numbers looks legitimate, until people in dire need call the numbers, to only discover that the numbers are not functional. We are being gaslighted by everyone, including humanitarian aid [agencies], the one that is supposed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity.”
- Anonymous Palestinian activist

The urgency of the situation is underscored by the fact that, as of February 2024, over 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, more than 60,000 have been injured, and over a million have been displaced. Furthermore, there is very limited access to food and essentially no safe drinking water in Gaza since October 2023.

“ My dream is for us to stay alive and to live in peace. For them to stop bombing our houses and towers to scare us. And to let people leave their homes. We feel sad because people lost their houses and had nowhere to go. Then stayed on the streets not knowing where to go and live. This is our right. It is our right to stay alive. It’s our right to stay living in our homes. To be happy with our families. I hope to God we all stay alive.”
- Palestinian girl’s dream⁶

As noted by the [Migrants’ Rights Network](#), all injustices, such as the genocides in Sudan and Congo, are the products of the same apparatus of systemic oppression that stems from colonialism, imperialism, and occupation. By understanding and identifying the interconnectedness of systemic oppression, we are better able to transcend siloed approaches that debilitate our social justice movements, bolster anti-human rights agendas, further inequality, and exacerbate crises globally.

“ The problem of Palestine, although it directly affects only the Palestinians, is not the concern of Palestinians alone. The Zionist settler-state, bent on expansion, is a threat to the security and territorial integrity of the Arab states as well. It has already invaded their lands. It still covers their territories. As a colonial venture, which anomalously came to bloom precisely when colonialism was beginning to fade away, it is in fact a challenge to all anti-colonial peoples in Asia and Africa. For, in the final analysis, the cause of anti-colonialism and liberation is one and indivisible” - Fayez Sayegh, Syrian-Palestinian Academic and Diplomat⁷

The historical context and gravity of the current moment clearly demonstrate not only the magnitude of the crimes committed against Palestinians and their dehumanisation by the Israeli occupation state, but they also emphasise the pressing need for collective solidarity, commitment, and action that firmly supports the strategies and efforts of girls and young feminist Palestinian activists and their communities.

“ How many times do we have to go through forced displacement and how many generations have to go through the same brutality? Why is this happening to Palestinians?”
- Anonymous Palestinian activist



A PROCESS GROUNDED IN FEMINIST PEACE AND LIBERATION

This publication was officially initiated in January 2023, yet the knowledge, experiences, wisdom, and unwavering solidarity by the people and communities that have contributed to its creation transcend time, generations, and borders. The process was made possible by the remarkable contributions of Palestinian partners, allies, and comrades. Over the course of several weeks, our Palestinian community connected us with many wise and courageous activists across historic Palestine. Within a week, WhatsApp messages and emails piled up in extraordinary ways, where Palestinian activists were discussing, recommending others, sharing how they felt and what their families were going through. Connecting with dozens of activists in record time is a testament to **the vibrant resistance and activism infrastructure in Palestine, which demonstrates a revolutionary love ethic⁸ in the feminist movement where activists are ready to act quickly and meaningfully.**

The very existence of this publication also speaks to the deep desire of Palestinian activists to narrate and share their own stories and struggles as an expression of their resistance. Even in the face of intentional obscuring and erasure of Palestinian experience, knowledge, and power, the ways in which activists come together displays their steadfast commitment to share the truth with the world by relaying their own experiences. When complete family lines are being erased by bombs, millions displaced, and children are left as the sole survivors in their families, documenting the stories, experiences, and realities of Palestinians with their own words is a profound act and call for justice.

At the same time, this sense of belonging and commitment is relentlessly targeted by the colonial⁹ and apartheid¹⁰ regime that seeks to fragment Palestinian society geographically, economically, socially, and politically. The feminist movement is aware of the Zionist aim to divide

and conquer through political elites by sabotaging the Palestinian educational system and curricula, attempting to erase and delegitimize the Indigenous narrative and collective memory. These represent just a few among many strategies of imperial expansionism that impact political feminist mobilisation and organising, **with the goal of depoliticising¹¹ and co-opting the young feminist movement.**

In light of this context and the current moment, the feminist movement across Palestine holds space for community - as it has always done - despite the ongoing campaign of genocide. The movement continues to strengthen popular education and critical consciousness approaches to remain vigilant and disrupt Zionist attempts to erase and dispossess all Palestinians. It shows up in moments of agony and joy. It names power dynamics within the movement and builds a clear political vision for feminist peace and liberation, extending from Palestine to Sudan, Afghanistan, Congo, Nicaragua, and throughout the world.

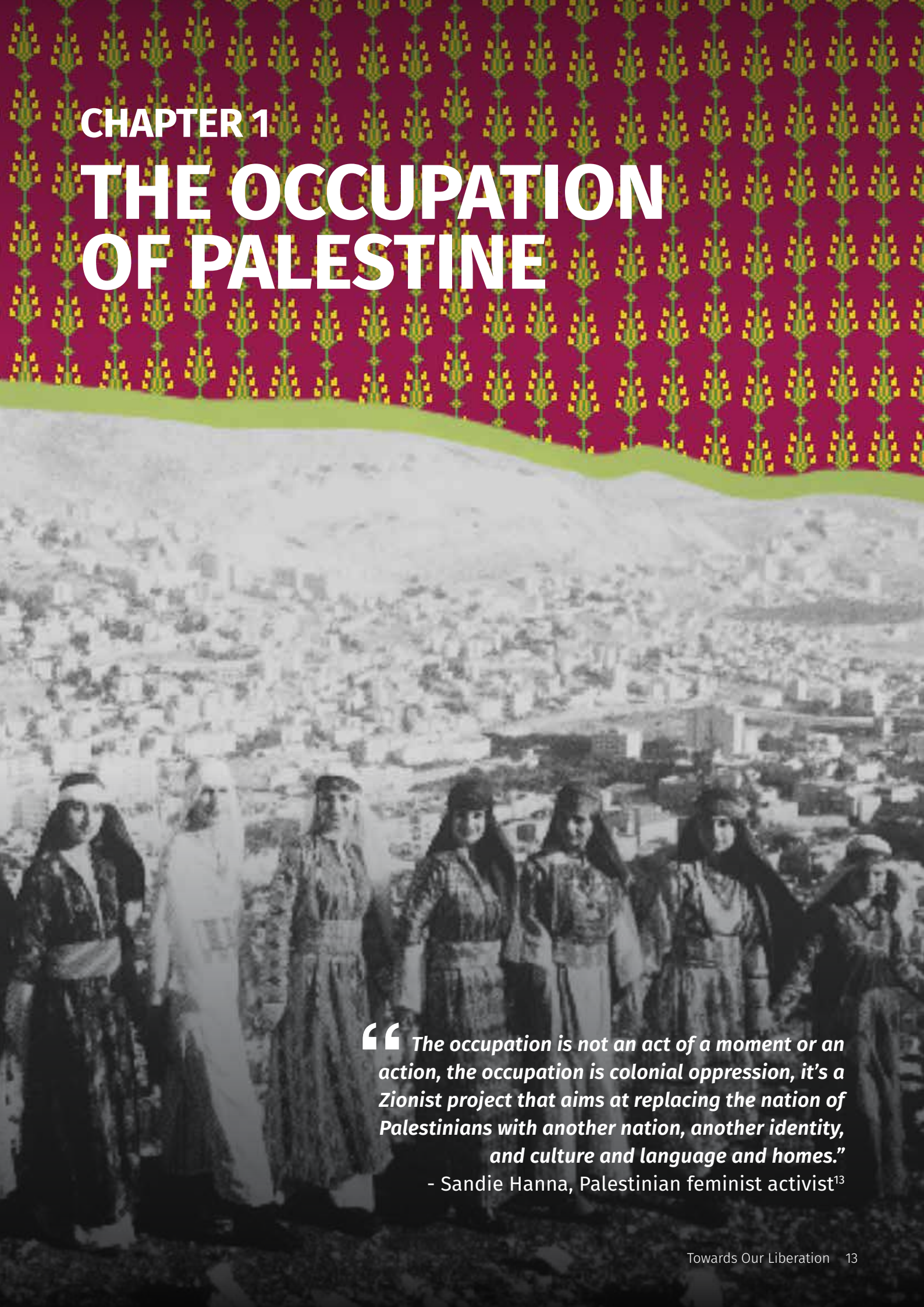
As feminist movements in every corner of the world do, it is imperative to anchor our solidarity efforts in these very principles of feminist peace and liberation, understanding the interwoven nature of our collective struggles.

“ As much as it is a war against Palestinians, it’s not only against Palestinians. I think everyone who has been demonised, brutalised, killed, faced with forced placement, faced with exploitation, faced with slavery, faced with stealing their lands understand this moment. And it’s not complicated. It’s not complex. It’s not about two sides. It’s about colonisation. It’s about racism. It’s about racialized capitalism.”
- Soheir Asaad,
Palestinian feminist activist¹²



CHAPTER 1

THE OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE



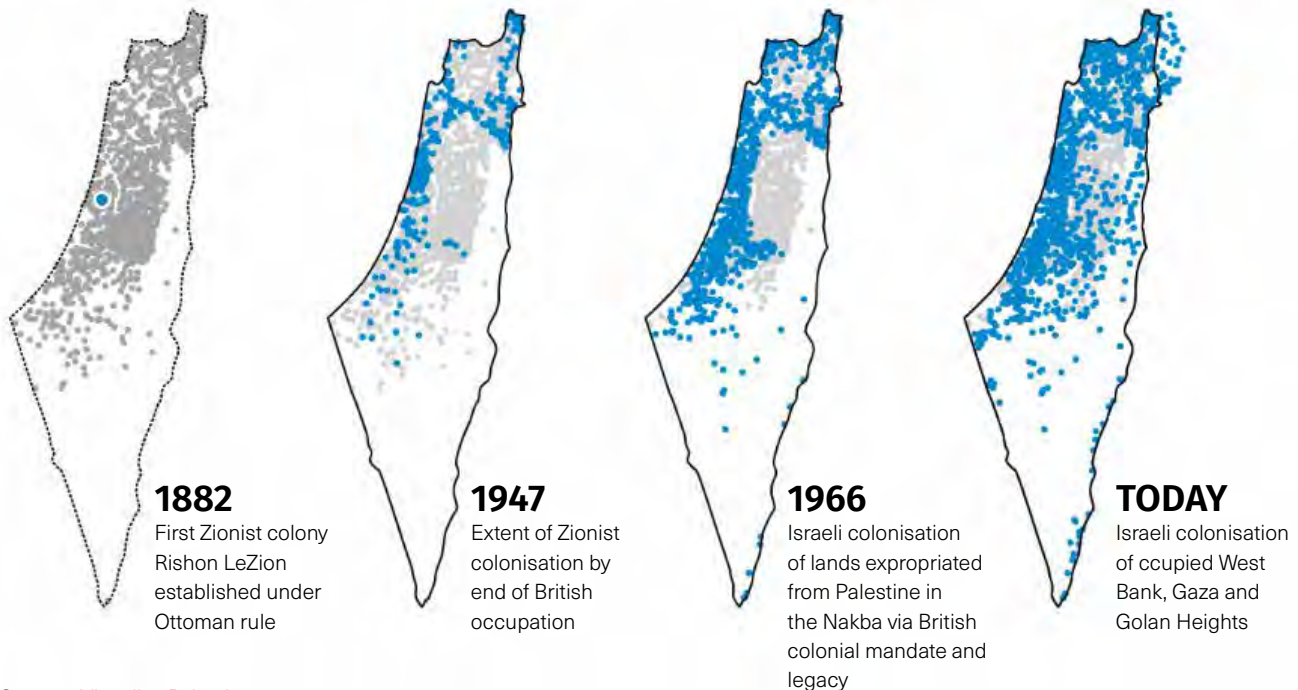
“ The occupation is not an act of a moment or an action, the occupation is colonial oppression, it’s a Zionist project that aims at replacing the nation of Palestinians with another nation, another identity, and culture and language and homes.”

- Sandie Hanna, Palestinian feminist activist¹³

THE ZIONIST COLONISATION OF PALESTINE

● Zionist/Israeli locality

● Pre-existing/Palestinian locality



Source: [Visualize Palestine](#)

The 1948 Nakba¹⁴ marked a historic war crime against Palestinians, the origins of which predate 1948 and are rooted in a fascist Zionist settler-colonial project concealed within religious claims. The significant particularity of the context in occupied Palestine is the rapidly shifting landscape and the fact that while the Nakba resulted “[in the dispossession of an estimated 750,000 refugees from historic Palestine and the uprooting of two-thirds of the Palestinian Arab population and their society in the process of the creation of the State of Israel](#)” in 1948, it also was the beginning of consistent catastrophes. As most recently indicated in [leaked Israeli plans](#) and [rhetoric from their officials echo](#), **the Nakba is a consistent, violent, and deliberate process of ethnic cleansing embodying a Zionist strategy to expel Palestinians from their land.** Along with the erasure of the Palestinian people, this strategy aims to dispossess Palestinians of their culture, heritage, language, social, and culinary identity in order to create a future without Palestinians and Palestine.

In November 1947, [the UN General Assembly proposed a plan to partition Palestine into Arab and Jewish states](#). Since [Jews have been living in Palestine for centuries, the struggle during the 20th century was against Zionism and its ideology, and not against Jews living in the country](#). Zionist practices are grounded in erasure, dominance, and exploitation as the cornerstones of their aspirations for a sovereign Israeli state on stolen land. Pushing back against Zionism or Israel is not equivalent to being hostile to Jews or Judaism. As [Jewish Voice for Peace](#) and many other human rights organisations have described, one of the main propaganda strategies employed by Israel in order to maintain impunity from the war crimes it commits and continues to commit against Palestinians is equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. In reality, Israel has co-opted Judaism to legitimise their racist occupation agenda.

“ **Zionism offered itself as the solution to anti-Semitism, but became the main reason for its continued presence.**”

- Ilan Pappé, Israeli historian and political scientist (2017)

Israel's alleged concept of return, and guaranteeing a homeland for Jews from across the world, was dependent on the expulsion of the Palestinian people. By early 1948, Zionist militias had committed massacres to capture dozens of villages and cities, forcibly expelling and displacing thousands of Palestinians. Today, Israel systematically rejects the Palestinians' right to return to their land. It not only ignores UN Resolution 194, which asserts the Palestinian right of return, but has also issued its own [Law of Return for the Jewish People](#), a measure to further guarantee Palestinians cannot return to their homeland.

“ **Many times the Israeli soldiers took 10 of the [Palestinian] youngsters in the middle of the village, shot them in order to kill them [so] all the others would see and run away.**”

- Theodor Katz, Israeli historian

Zionist aspirations for an Israeli sovereign state shaped separatist policies entrenched in white supremacy, affording Jews a racially privileged status while disregarding the inalienable rights of Palestinians to self-determination and the reclaiming of their land. These aspirations were realised by prioritising settler colonialism in their vision and implementation, necessitating the imposition of various forms of oppression and cultural appropriation of the Indigenous population of Palestine.

In July 2018, after 70 years of consistent ethnic cleansing, Israel enacted the Jewish [Nation-State Law](#) to continue its Judaisation of the occupied territories of 1948, solidifying Jewish racial supremacy and perpetuating racial injustice against non-Jewish Israeli citizens. This law also ignored Israel's obligations as an occupying power under international law toward the people it occupies and is emblematic of Israel's racist policies and structure over all of historic Palestine. In 2020, Donald Trump's [peace plan, also known as the Deal of the Century](#), backed Israel's racist supremacy, [“denied the internationally-recognised Right of Return by Palestinian refugees” in section 14 of its political framework](#), legitimised land annexation and the expansion of illegal settlements, and imposed very few economic and political concessions on Israel to undo racism and colonisation. Today, it continues to serve as a mechanism for corporations to profit from the suffering, oppression, exploitation, and displacement of Palestinians.

In the early hours of July 11th, 2023 the [Gaith-Sub Laban family](#) (Nora, 68, and her husband, Mustafa, 72) were forcibly displaced from their home in the Old City of occupied Jerusalem where they lived all their lives and raised their children. Israeli forces brutally kicked them out of their house, left behind the majority of their belongings, and turned it over to Israeli settlers. The “illegal eviction” and the forced displacement of the Gaith-Sub Laban family and the other 150 families living at risk of displacement in Jerusalem is part of Israel's colonial ethnic cleansing mechanism and apartheid machinery at work. This systematic practice is a war crime that Israel commits in violation of international law, ignoring the illegitimacy of forcible transfer as an occupying power.

ISRAEL'S COLONIAL PLAN: DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Territory under Israeli control since 1948/49

STATE OF ISRAEL



78% of historic Palestine. Founded on lands of 500+ depopulated Palestinian villages

Internationally recognised Palestinian territory under Israeli occupation since 1967

WEST BANK



Divided into 166 separate enclaves. Colonized by 220+ Israeli settlements

EAST JERUSALEM



Annexed from rest of West Bank and divided by Israel's separation wall

GAZA STRIP



Cut off from West Bank and under Israeli-Egyptian siege since 2007

Source: <https://101.visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/palestinian-territory-divided-and-fragmented>

In 1967, 19 years after the Nakba, ethnic cleansing and dispossession were further exacerbated by the Naksa, or the “setback,” during which Israel took control of the [remaining 22% of historic Palestine](#) that is known today as [East Jerusalem](#), [the West Bank and the Gaza Strip](#), as well as the Syrian Golan Heights and Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula during the [Six-Day War](#) with neighbouring Arab countries.

“*There’s no way you could have ever created a Jewish state without oppressing and expelling the local population with British empire protection. Jewish Israeli historians have shown without a doubt that the expulsion of Palestinians was persistent, pervasive, cruel, murderous and with deliberate intent – that’s what’s called the ‘Nakba’ in Arabic; the ‘disaster’ or the ‘catastrophe.’ In Canada, there’s a law that you cannot deny the Holocaust, but in Israel you’re not allowed to mention the Nakba, even though it’s at the very basis of the foundation of the State.*”

- Dr.Gabor Mate, Hungarian-Canadian physician and Holocaust survivor (2023)



After ordering people to move,
Israel has bombed them on the way.

One man here lived through the Nakba, the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine. After being expelled from his original home as a child, he grew up in Maghazi refugee camp.

It is located in central Gaza. Our visitor recalls when “tents started to go up all over” the camp.

Now – in October 2023 –
he has been uprooted again;
“I don’t think they will let me go back home,”
he says.

Today, he cannot go to his original home in historic Palestine or to where he grew up in Gaza. Once again, he has been displaced inside his homeland.”

- [Sahar, Palestinian story from Gaza published on the Electronic Intifada in 2023](#)



“What comes to mind when you think of Palestine? The rich culture, the people that live there. Sadly, this is not the image for most people. They think of a long troubled history that’s too complicated to understand. But, it’s much simpler. It’s a story of injustice of Indigenous people fighting to survive and not being raised. It’s a story of colonialism - modern day colonialism.”

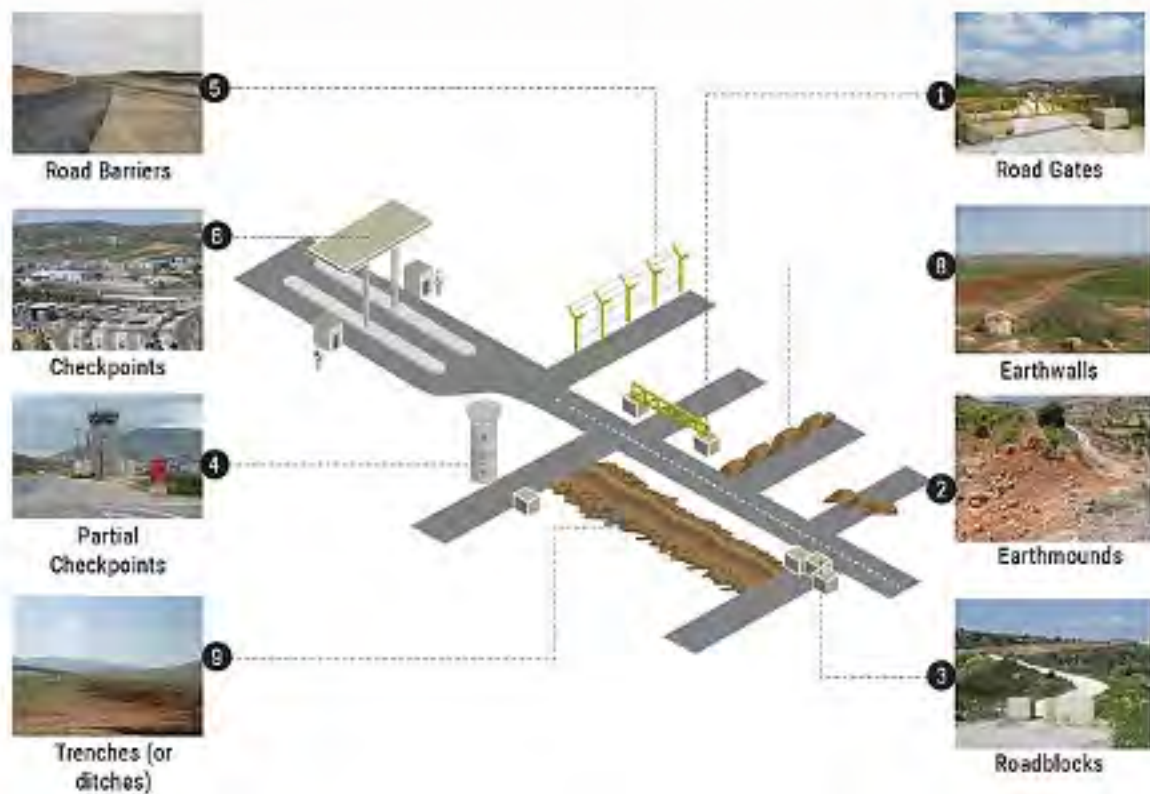
[Click here to watch](#) the educational video produced by Makan, which delves into the history of injustice faced by the Palestinian people, from colonialism to displacement to present-day apartheid.

THE SETTLER COLONIAL PROJECT: AN APARTHEID REGIME

In 2002, Israel constructed an apartheid wall to further annex land and tighten its separation policies over resources and the lives of Palestinians. [“The Wall is 8 metres high – twice the height of the Berlin Wall – with watchtowers and a “buffer zone” 30-100 metres wide for electric fences, trenches, cameras, sensors, and military patrols.”](#) The apartheid wall, [deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice](#), not only

physically separates communities but also cuts deep through privately owned farmland, natural resources, and families. Moreover, the wall is strategically constructed in close proximity to schools and homes, isolating these areas and severely restricting the livelihoods, movement, and daily lives of the Indigenous Palestinian population, with a particularly pronounced impact on women and girls.





Source: <https://www.stophthewall.org/the-wall/#wall-map>

In its early years of its military occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, the settler-colonial project deployed land theft to build settlements “for military purposes.” Thereafter, Zionist forces started to explicitly issue seizure orders on privately-owned land for the purposes of building occupation settlements. According to B’Tselem, [from 1967 to 2017, more than 200 Israeli settlements were established in the West Bank](#) and more than 620,000 Jewish-Israeli citizens currently reside in those settlements. **The question of Palestinian refugees’ right of return to their homeland and reparations, the withdrawal of illegal settlements under international law, and the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine are all at the heart of achieving a sustainable solution to the struggle in Palestine.** If Israel abides by these concessions, then it will be undoing apartheid and recognising its colonial project, which are two reasons Israel is resistant to a two-state solution and genuine prospects of peace.

“ Our freedom struggle is not for a state but for belonging to the land, to remain on it, to keep our homes, to resist erasure. But somehow by calling it by its name on social media, revealing to the world what has been happening for decades, seems more offensive than our ongoing displacement at gunpoint”

- Noura Erakat (Palestinian-American lawyer, activist and academic) and Mariam Barghouti (Palestinian American writer, researcher and journalist) (2021)

ISRAELI SETTLER VIOLENCE IS STATE VIOLENCE

Israel's apartheid system relentlessly persists through the widespread indoctrination of settlers who engage in land theft and extrajudicial killings, heavily armed and supported by the state and its allies. Settler violence is an integral component of Israel's settlement enterprise and extermination strategy, solidified structurally by the appointment of extremist and ultra-nationalist settlers in government positions committed to advancing their expansionist agendas. Recent examples highlight Israeli officials employing dehumanising language to describe Palestinians through [genocidal terms](#), depicting them as [sub-human](#) and [evil](#). In August 2023, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir ["praised a settler who murdered a 19-year-old Palestinian man, calling him a "hero"](#) and in June 2023, [he defended young settlers who rampaged through the West Bank attacking Palestinians and torching their homes and cars, calling them "sweet boys."](#) In addition [Ben-Gvir is known to have had a framed photo of the American-born settler who massacred 29 Palestinians in Hebron in 1994, displayed in a place of honour in his home.](#)

Image credit: www.savemasaferyatta.com

TESTIMONIES FROM MASAFER YATTA:

“ I'm in my friend's house when suddenly armed settlers barge in. Children begin to scream. Settlers break home after home, saying they "lost a screwdriver", and the village should be expelled. Soldiers help them & attack us. Life in Masafer Yatta.”
- July 2023

“ On this hot day, the settlers put a tent for their sheep over a water well for a family in Thuraya Tuba/ Masafer Yatta, with the help of the occupation army. They expel the family and do not allow them to use the water.”
- August 2023

“ Youssef Abd al-Hamid and his family had a bee box project that they took care of and harvested honey every year and sold it to live in Wadi village. (Israeli civilians) burned 20 boxes only because they belong to a Palestinian family.”

More on Masafer Yatta: [Save Masafer Yatta](#), as well as [Stop The Wall](#).



THE INHERENT FAILURE OF THE HISTORICAL PEACE AGREEMENT

Between 1993 and 1999, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a series of agreements, known as the Oslo Accords, that were described as constituting a political breakthrough and achieving a phased peace process. The [Oslo Accords](#) have perpetuated power asymmetry in favour of the occupation and threatened genuine prospects of peace, ignoring the need for a human rights lens that protects the basic rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous people, guaranteeing their right to live in dignity.

“ We should acknowledge that the Oslo process was not a fair and equal pursuit of peace, but a compromise agreed to by a defeated, colonised people.”
- Ilan Pappé, Israeli historian and political scientist (2017)

The agreement did not address questions around refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, and borders, all of which would force recognition of Israel as an apartheid settler-colonial state. Further, the Oslo Accords led to the establishment of security coordination between Israel and, what is now known as, the Palestinian Authority (PA). The agreement terminated any audacious hope for the PLO to act as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian peoplehood as an incubator for a liberation movement, and instead, brought to the front the Palestinian Authority; a semi-state, structured farce with no sovereignty. In addition, under the agreements, the West Bank was divided into [three areas: Area A, under Palestinian civil and security control; Area B, under shared control; and Area C, under Israeli civil and security control](#). Area C, which constitutes 60% of the occupied West Bank, is mostly agricultural land. In recent developments, Israeli terror attacks have intensified in Jenin and Nablus, two cities of Area A that are supposed to be administered

by the PA. During Israeli military raids, aerial bombing, incarceration, and confiscation of land, the PA refrains from operating in Area A and these violations are communicated ahead between both sides.

Post Oslo, much of the grassroots activism was encapsulated in non-governmental organisational structures. Not only was the political vision to a great extent depoliticised through this transition, but the resources moved to civil society organisations have been scarce and centralised. [Traditional and multilateral donors from the global North have hoarded resources and imposed restrictions and unrealistic requirements for moving funding, perpetuating transactional relationships and manifesting discrepancies between their progressive values and their practices](#). This strategised and structured resource drought has left feminist and political work in critical conditions. Over the years, and in addition to increased surveillance by the occupation and the PA, this lack of resourcing has led to a shrinking civic space and de-politicised work. As the [Funding Freedom: Philanthropy and the Palestinian Freedom](#) report highlights:

“ There is currently an extraordinary gap between the enormous amounts of money raised annually to support continued Israeli apartheid compared to the amount raised to fight for Palestinian liberation. A number of factors, including changes and challenges within the philanthropic sector, an evolving understanding of Palestinian resistance and Israeli oppression, and a growing pressure for aligning values across movements rooted in justice, are leading to a new willingness among donors, funder networks, and foundations to support and participate in the Palestinian liberation movement. But enormous obstacles—including smear campaigns, legal threats, and false accusations of antisemitism—continue to make it difficult for donors to make long-term, sustainable commitments to funding work on Palestinian liberation.”

JEWISH VOICE FOR PEACE APPROACH TO ZIONISM¹⁵

“While Zionism is often referred to as a movement of ‘Jewish self-determination,’ the Zionist movement defined this term in a narrow political sense, rejecting the diaspora as inherently toxic and unhealthy for Jews. The Classical Zionist concept known as shilhat hagalat (‘negation of the diaspora’), demeaned centuries of a rich Jewish spiritual and cultural history – often to the point of using anti-Semitic imagery. For instance, famed Zionist journalist/writer Micah Josef Berdichevsky claimed diaspora Jews were “not a nation, not a people and not human.” Hebrew literary icon Yosef Hayyim Brenner called them “gipsies, filthy dogs and inhuman,” while Labor Zionist AD Gordon referred to diaspora Jews as “a parasitic people.”

Zionism, as a political ideology and as a movement, has always hierarchised Jews based on ethnicity and race, and has not equally benefited or been liberatory for all Jewish people in Israel. Zionism is and was an Ashkenazi-led movement that othered, marginalised and discriminated against Jews from across the Middle East and North Africa that it termed Mizrahim (the ‘Eastern Ones’)



DISMANTLING THE ZIONIST PROPAGANDA MACHINE

Through its state-run [Hasbara¹⁶ programme and industry](#), funded by a [combination of state and individual donors from the United States](#), Israel has propagated lies and myths to whitewash its explicit policies and practices of racism, apartheid, colonisation, and ethnic cleansing. This is an attempt to establish and bolster public relations and diplomacy that perpetuate the culture of impunity enjoyed by Israel, despite its documented record of committing crimes against humanity for decades. This has become even more clear as the International Court of Justice hearings present detailed evidence of [“Israel’s armour of impunity.”](#)

As a result of years of spreading wide campaigns of misinformation and tainting narratives, the Hasbara efforts have significantly influenced the perceptions held by Western populations regarding Israel and the Arab region. They have effectively dominated mainstream media, promoting the Zionist assertion that Israel has the right to self-defence against an Arab population portrayed as extremist, terrorist, and uncivilised. This narrative has [fueled substantial funding from Western countries for Israel’s military, perpetuating the displacement, oppression, and killing of Palestinians](#). Moreover, it established a [foundational framework to criminalise and weaponize Palestinian solidarity, advocacy, and calls for justice](#), as outlined in the briefing paper published by Palestine Legal and the Center for Constitutional Rights.

MYTHS MANUFACTURED BY ISRAEL

Israel has been built upon a foundation of myths, historical distortions, and fabrications that form the cornerstone of its propaganda efforts. These narratives have been carefully crafted to create a semblance of legitimacy and to garner support for the occupation of Palestine, as well as the crimes Israel has committed and continues to perpetrate. As Ilan Pappé explains in his book *Ten Myths about Israel*, the Zionist version of history, regarding the establishment of the state of Israel, relies on a series of myths that subtly undermine the moral claim of Palestinians to the land. Regrettably, these myths are often unquestioningly accepted as truth by Western mainstream media and political elites, serving as justification for Israeli actions over the past 75 years. This section sheds light on three fundamental myths manufactured and spread by Israel through its propaganda apparatus.

MYTH #1: ‘ISRAEL MADE THE DESERT BLOOM’

[The myth that “Israel made the desert bloom” has been vigorously promoted by Israel and its allies.](#) However, it is, in reality, an [oppressive and racist slogan](#) at the heart of [Zionist colonial propaganda](#). It is used as a slogan to justify Israel’s war crimes and perpetuate the violations they are committing in the name of bringing civilization and prosperity to a land and people considered “savage and backward.”

This supremacist, imperialist proclamation suggests that it was the Zionist settlement that enabled Palestine to thrive, [while in fact, Palestine is abundant with resources, primarily water and a Mediterranean climate, and Palestinians have cultivated the land for centuries.](#)

Through this rhetoric, Israel is engaging in greenwashing¹⁷ to conceal the inhumane realities of its colonialism and apartheid. Israel has been found guilty of deploying [white phosphorus](#), prohibited by international humanitarian law, in military attacks on Gaza and [across the region](#) - a war crime that predates the ongoing genocide that began in 2023. Additionally, Israel ranks among the world's major arms traders, significantly contributing to warfare, environmental degradation, and the [exacerbation of climate change](#) across the world. The Israeli state has also been [heavily involved in large-scale tree destruction campaigns, particularly in the West Bank, involving the burning or bulldozing of olive, citrus, and almond trees, among others](#).

It is crucial to highlight that Israel promotes forestation efforts as environmentally friendly; however, in this context, planting trees—particularly in ecologically unsuitable areas—[serves as a colonial tool, exploiting the land to enhance its public image](#). When conducted without due consideration and precautions, these projects can exacerbate environmental harm rather than mitigate it. Israel's forestation endeavours resemble colonial plantation projects, with aims to appropriate land, restrict Palestinian demographic and agricultural expansion, exploit and seize resources, and undermine food sovereignty and natural livelihoods.

MYTH #2: 'THE ONLY DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST'

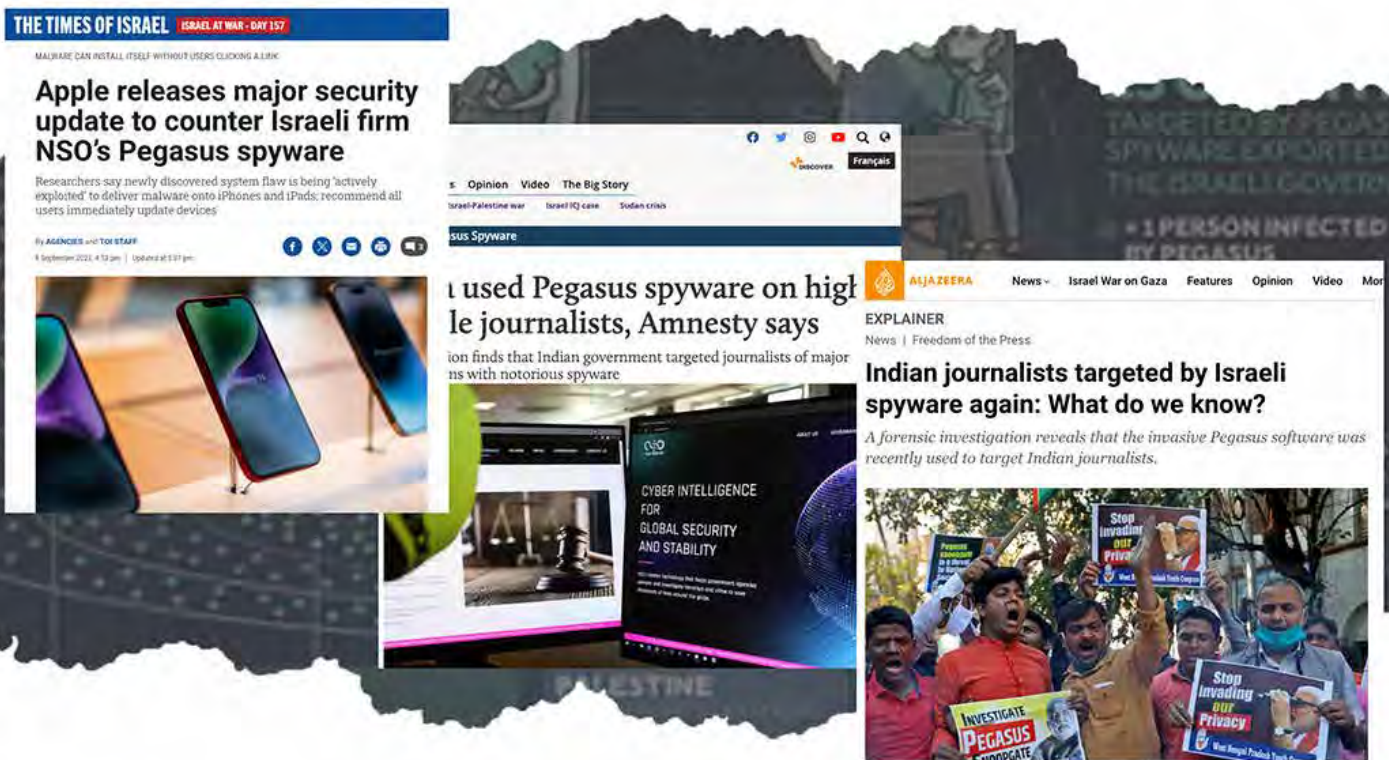
This is [another myth](#) that Israel is fervent about and it begs these questions: What is democracy? Is it listening to the needs and realities of citizens? Is it holding fair elections? Is it separating authority and power? Is it applying a domestic progressive policy?

“**Israel is not the only democracy in the Middle East. In fact, it's not a democracy at all.**” - Ilan Pappé, Israeli historian and political scientist (2017)

How can Israel claim to be a democracy when it legally upholds discrimination against its citizens based on their nationality? Jewish Israelis are granted first-class citizenship, while Palestinians with Israeli citizenship face suppression of their rights and freedoms solely because they are not of Jewish descent. How can Israel portray itself as a diverse and democratic society when human rights organisations, including the United Nations, denounce its apartheid policies and ongoing genocide campaigns? Moreover, some state ministers openly profess to being [“proud homophobes,”](#) and the Jewish Home party has [unequivocally rejected the recognition of same-sex marriage](#). These statements underscore Israel's systematic discrimination against its LGBTQI+ community, even as it engages in extensive [pinkwashing efforts to present a liberal image on gay rights](#) and divert public attention from allegations of human rights abuses and war crimes. Meanwhile, they falsely depict Palestinians as uniformly homophobic, creating a misleading and violent narrative that erases the existence of LGBTQI+ individuals in Palestine.

In its quest for indoctrination and [colonial dominance](#), Israel has extended its surveillance and censorship capabilities into the digital sphere, exporting oppressive technologies on a global scale. The structures of militarism facilitate a broad spectrum of digital censorship and surveillance aimed at the Palestinian population, ranging from [facial recognition technology at checkpoints to spyware programs](#). As extensively documented by [Zamleh](#) and other organisations, Israel boasts the highest number of surveillance companies per capita.

With one of the world’s largest cyber and surveillance industries, primarily driven by its military, Israel has established a framework for surveillance corporations to compromise the devices of Palestinian journalists, activists, and human rights defenders using the [Pegasus spyware marketed by the Israeli NSO Group](#). The global proliferation of Pegasus, and other Israeli cyber-surveillance technologies, is contributing to an unregulated expansion of oppressive surveillance tools exported from Israel to repressive regimes and governments worldwide and [has been used by Israel to manipulate governments](#).



“ When Pegasus is installed on a person’s phone, an attacker has complete access to a phone’s messages, emails, media, microphone, camera, passwords, voice calls on messaging apps, location data, calls and contacts. The spyware also has the potential to activate the phone camera and microphone, and spy on an individual’s calls and activities.”

- Front Line Defenders

MYTH #3: 'ZIONISM IS JUDAISM'

Israel has, and continues to, equate Zionism with Judaism as one of its cornerstone strategies to maintain control over the definition of Judaism. This tactic aids in covering up its crimes and perpetuating impunity. By asserting Judaism as synonymous with Zionism, Israel lays claim to Judaism and presents it as the sole solution to antisemitism, [despite evidence that this approach actually exacerbates it](#).

“ We deserve life, all of it, every bit of it, rightfully and unapologetically, with all the good things and wonders it contains. We deserve life, and our children deserve better, to play under blue skies, just like all the other children, to have friends that are not martyrs, to run in streets that are not soaked with death and blood, to go to school and grow up in a world they can feel they part of, not exiled from, to belong to a city that is not bombed so much that it has become unrecognisable to even the oldest of its inhabitants. That conviction is not an act of antisemitism.”

- Nama'a Qudah, Palestinian interdisciplinary researcher¹⁸

From the beginnings of Israel, Jewish communities across the world have had a long tradition of speaking out against Zionism and Israel's role in claiming the definition of Judaism to push forward its agenda of occupation and oppression. In the 1940s, [Jewish leaders spoke out against the visit of Zionist terrorist groups - the Irgun and Lehi - who had massacred over 200 Palistinians](#). These efforts continue today, with leading groups such as Jewish Voice for Peace, who expand on the harm of Zionism for Palestinians, the Jewish community, and all social justice struggles.

Whether it be the claim of “making the desert bloom,” being the “only democracy in the Middle East” or the owner of Judaism, Israel employs indoctrination and endorses hatred and censorship throughout its society to uphold its existing state and perpetuate the myths that reinforce its authoritative influence with international allies.

“ We organise our people and we resist Zionism because we love Jews, Jewishness, and Judaism. Our struggle against Zionism is not only an act of solidarity with Palestinians, but also a concrete commitment to creating the Jewish futures we all deserve. We are fighting for a thriving Judaism and Jewish communities, for a multiplicity of Jewish cultures and for the future of the Jewish people.

We gain strength from the long lineage of Jewish freedom fighters. Behind us are Salonican socialists, Warsaw Ghetto fighters, [Israeli Black Panthers](#), labour organisers, Civil Rights veterans and many more ancestors who worked tirelessly for liberation – of Jews and all people.

We know our communities are under threat. We commit to dismantling antisemitism in the most effective way possible: as part of our struggle against all forms of oppression and bigotry. Our struggles must be united to succeed and we intend on succeeding.

We refuse to see the safety of our communities threatened so the Israeli government can continue to evade accountability for perpetrating atrocities against Palestinians. There is no real freedom on stolen land, no real safety with a boot on the neck of your neighbour. We fight for a different future for Israelis and all of us. We're fighting for true safety and will accept nothing less.

Zionism is a false and failed solution to our safety. Let's grieve together. Let's name our fears but not freeze. Let's choose another path. Let's win real safety and create new kinships along the way – kinships that will help us weather the storms ahead and will outlive supremacy in all its forms.” - Jewish Voices for Peace

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS COMPLICIT IN ISRAEL'S WAR CRIMES THROUGH THE HUMANITARIAN-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The 16-year-long blockade on Gaza, described as [Israel's "Open-Air Prison" by Human Rights Watch](#), has effectively isolated the Strip from the outside world and reframed the crisis and humanitarian aid. Over a decade of multiple Israeli military attacks and genocides in Gaza, followed by humanitarian efforts for aid and relief, humanitarianism has played out as both patriarchal and colonial. In Gaza, people are rarely consulted about their needs during crises and how they envision the most effective humanitarian response. However, they are the ones facing the greatest challenges, enduring immense suffering and coping with profound trauma, while having the least agency and power in these circumstances.

Crisis responses often employ a one-size-fits-all approach, assuming a level of knowledge and expertise while disregarding the right to local ownership. Accountability and transparency regarding the nature of assistance, how it is delivered, by whom, and its connection to the liberation of Palestinians are frequently lacking. **The mainstream humanitarian industry in Gaza has inadvertently contributed to the dehumanisation of its people and has failed to incorporate sustainability measures that could mitigate the escalation of crises.** The humanitarian-industrial complex¹⁹ is rooted in dichotomies, such as barbarism and civilisation, progressiveness and backwardness, wealth and underdevelopment, often ignoring that the resources it accumulates are rooted in centuries of slavery, extraction, exploitation, and condescension. Furthermore, during the ongoing genocidal campaign in Gaza, humanitarian aid and access to basic human rights, including essential resources like water, controlled by Israeli occupation forces, have been used as instruments of colonial oppression and extermination.

Humanitarianism, in the context of Gaza and Palestine at large, has also demonstrated an extractive and complicit nature. Crises, be they in humanitarian or security contexts, can significantly disrupt resistance movements when activists' demands and messages shift, adapting to rapidly changing priorities that often prioritise security and ending war. Humanitarianism is intrinsically linked to the rise of capitalism and neoliberal free-market policies. In the aftermath of a crisis, contractors and corporations often prosper amid the wreckage. International and United States (US) nationals overseeing USAID projects aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction are offered substantial salaries, even as the US channels billions of taxpayer dollars into expanding settlements and supporting the settler-colonial project in Palestine. Unfortunately, war and instability present [lucrative opportunities](#), as evidenced by the [dramatic surge in defence stocks](#), [the allocation of billions in funds that have been approved in the US budget - benefiting officials who hold such stocks](#), and the [approval of gas exploration off the strip of Gaza](#). Additionally, [Israel has now gained recognition as one of the world's leading exporters of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles \(UAVs\) and was estimated to have supplied roughly 60 percent of the global market over the previous three decades, with the Israeli UAV industry primarily dominated by Elbit Systems](#).

During and after every crisis, a small number of groups reap financial benefits while the working-class population grapples with deteriorating public infrastructure, escalating prices of essential goods, and a rise in unemployment and poverty. Stocks, oil, and currency markets have transformed into crisis-driven profit engines, offering quick and substantial gains during times of turmoil.

CHAPTER 2

DIVIDE AND CONQUER: REFLECTIONS ON LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION FOR PALESTINIAN GIRLS AND YOUNG FEMINISTS

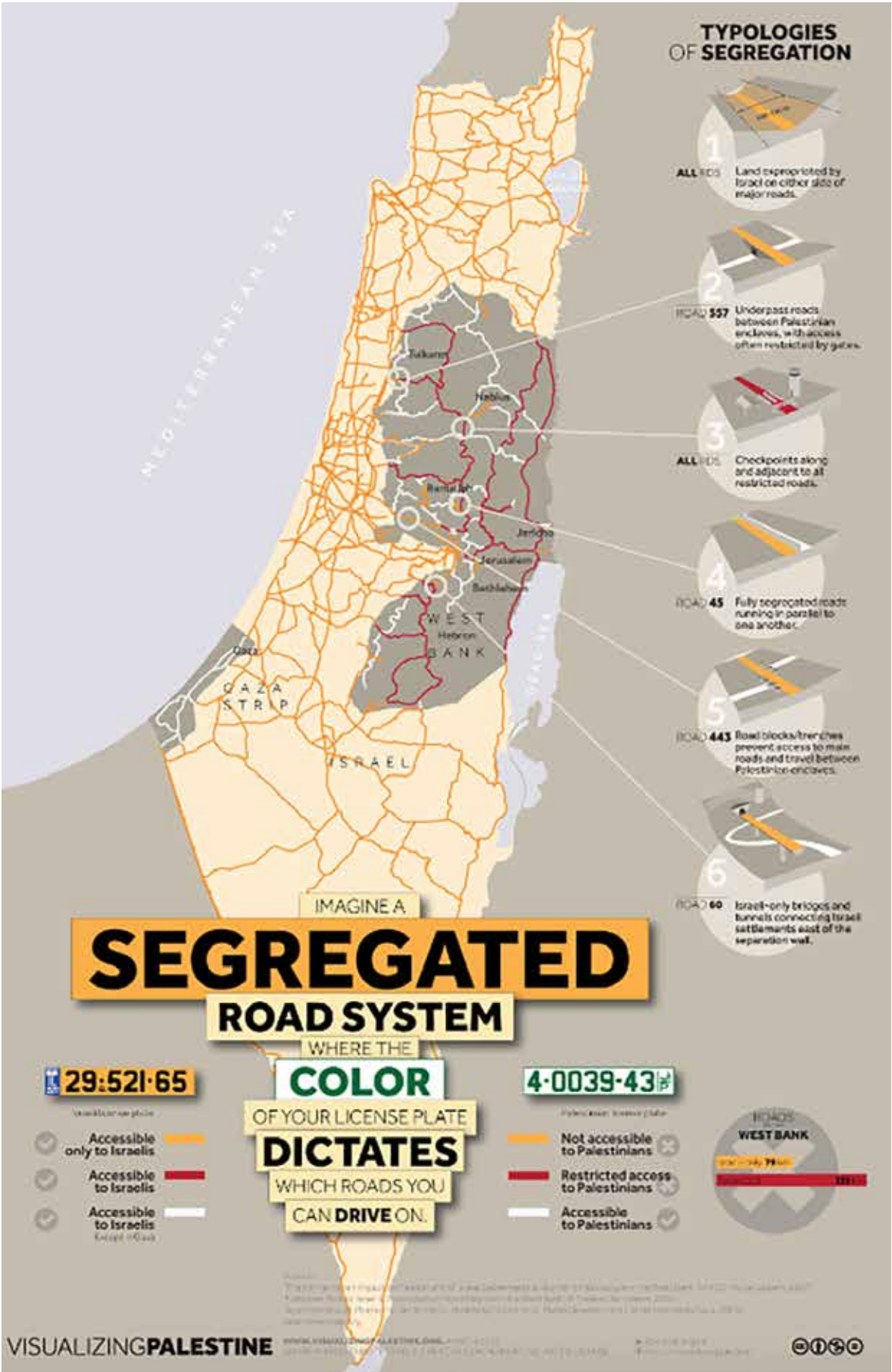


Zionist imperialism has employed a vast spectrum of violent and systematic strategies of collective punishment since long before October 2023. These strategies include the prohibition of construction, residency revocation, house demolition, compounded fuel, electricity, and water crisis, military raids, the blockade on Gaza, juvenile incarceration, mass murder campaigns, administrative detention, and much more. Across historic Palestine, the consequences of settler colonialism and imperialism manifest in various forms and degrees within subcontexts in different territories, which have been geographically fragmented due to the colonial regime and strategy to divide and conquer.

This section centres the experiences and reflections of Palestinian feminist activists, in their own words.

Before diving into the sub-contexts of occupied Palestine, it is of pivotal significance to note that Palestinians believe in the historical right to return to their ancestral land and a free Palestine, from the river to the sea, and therefore denounce the term 'Occupied Palestinian Territory(ies)'. This term signifies geographical fragmentation, reducing Palestine to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip which are positioned as two separate geopolitical entities and as the 'residue' of Palestine. The term 'Occupied Palestinian Territory(ies)' deliberately ignores the key issues in the Palestinian cause; refugees and the right to return, political prisoners, and Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.





IMPRISONMENT AND UNCHILDING

According to [Addameer](#), “by the end of 2021, there were 34 women prisoners in Damon prison – of whom eight have been sentenced to more than 10 years – 15 detainees who are awaiting trial, one administrative detainee, six wounded while 10 others suffer from various diseases – including dental problems, joint and ear pain, psychological problems – and 11 mothers.” Palestinian women in prisons face inhumane conditions, including a lack of sanitation and ventilation, rusty beds that cause back pain, extreme interrogation conditions, heinous raiding of cells, confiscation of belongings that are often books, restrictions on family visits, solitary confinement, medical negligence with the aim of torture, and imprisonment outside their territories. Women prisoners of all parts of historic Palestine are incarcerated in Damon prison, which is located in the 1948 occupied territories (see Occupied 1948 section below) and therefore, requires families to apply for permits to travel to these territories and visit their sisters, mothers, daughters, etc. **Israel is explicitly violating the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that an occupying power must not relocate detained residents of an occupied territory in prisons outside this occupied territory.**

Khalida Jarrar, a former member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, was denied release to attend the funeral of and bury her youngest daughter in 2021. In the same year, Anhar Al-Deek, 26, was heavily beaten by the Occupation forces when she was 3-months pregnant before being imprisoned. In 2015, [Israa al-Ja’abes was travelling from Jericho to Jerusalem in her car with a TV and gas tube she was taking home for her in-laws](#) when her car crashed, causing a fire that burned her face and body and led to the loss of eight of her fingers. Israa was arrested, imprisoned, and accused of attempted murder by blowing up a gas tube. She was denied the medical care she needed, as a systematic practice of the brutality and immorality of the Zionist system.

During the first week of September 2023, Palestinian prisoners incarcerated in Israeli jails announced the beginning of an open-ended hunger strike to protest the draconian policies of the far-right government against prisoners, especially National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir’s decision to limit family visits to once every two months. Hunger strikes have historically been a key pillar of the Palestinian resistance against the brutal campaigns of mass incarceration and the [slow-killing conditions at incarceration centres](#).

In December 2021, the number of child prisoners was 160, according to Addameer. **Palestinian children are systematically arrested in an attempt to spread fear and as a practice of collective punishment. They undergo inhumane interrogation, and the conditions of their incarceration are no different than those violating the human rights of women and men.** Many children are forced to sign statements in the Hebrew language that most of them cannot read or understand.

Israel’s state violence against children underpins its settler-colonial strategy and ideology. Most of the literature around childhood violations in Palestine is shaped, at best, by an emphasis on trauma and children getting caught in the crossfire which rarely portrays the reality of the systematic targeting of children. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian is a Palestinian feminist activist and scholar who led seminal work on constructing and introducing the idea of Palestinian children as political capital in her book [Incarcerated Childhood and the Politics of Unchilding](#).

The terminology of unchilding describes how children are one of many other targets of domination through state violence to assert and perpetuate colonial expansion. Shalhoub-Kevorkian sheds light on the personal experiences of children and offers a critical analysis of how they are exploited from a necropolitical perspective, arguing that Zionist ideologies look at Palestinian children as “demonised and dehumanised born

terrorists.” [As Heidi Morrison describes in a review for the *Journal of Palestine Studies*](#): “Unchilding refers to the authorised eviction of children from childhood for political goals, and is maintained by a violent, racist, sexist, and classist machinery that exists everywhere and always. Shalhoub-Kevorkian crafted this term in the context of the Zionist settler-colonial project which uses Palestinian children, from conception to death, as tools to build the State of Israel. She argues that to eliminate the next generation of Palestinians, Israel treats Palestinian children as both nobodies who are unworthy of global children’s rights, and as dangerous and killable bodies, needing to be caged and dismembered, physically and mentally. This process operates through a self-propelling ideology of sociolegal claims, economic and securitized profit, the language of the sacred, and spatiotemporal control.”

Children in Gaza are systematically killed or [traumatised beyond their endurance](#) at the hands of those who hold the social and political power to determine how some may live and others must die. During the military assault of Jenin in July 2023 martyrs were aged between 16 and 23 years old. When children across Palestine are systematically interrogated and imprisoned, they become far more than collateral damage or caught in the crossfire - they are the deliberate and intended targets of Israeli state violence and control.

This is evident with the ongoing genocidal campaign led by Israel occupation forces that have displaced millions of people and thousands of children. The severity of this situation has led the United Nations to name Gaza as a [graveyard for children](#). [UNICEF warns that over one million children need urgent mental health support](#), and Doctors Without Borders has reported that [“these psychological injuries have led children as young as five to tell us that they would prefer to die.”](#)

Compounded with the killing, torture, displacement and imprisonment of Palestinian children, the violent colonial machine maintains its grip around every aspect of their lives by controlling their movement, depriving them of choice and opportunities, and surveilling their educational curricula in an aim to demoralise and depoliticise them. This kind of intentional suppression and targeting of children makes it clear that they are never simply collateral damage.





Anonymous Palestinian activist (23) was arrested in 2020 for 21 months. Her understanding of the colonial project shaped her resistance at an early age, as she spent much of her childhood visiting her father in Israeli jails. She writes:

“In our patriarchal Arab society, women often experience various forms of abuse, ranging from physical violence and harassment to blackmail and, tragically, even murder. However, it is impossible to address the oppression of women and the societal abuses they endure without connecting them to the political and economic oppression that Palestinian women face.

When addressing the Palestinian context, we are referring to a situation characterised by social, political, and economic oppression because of living under colonial rule. This circumstance notably lacks autonomy across economic, social, and political spheres.

As colonialism extends beyond political control to encompass cultural, social and economic dimensions, when addressing oppression and its tactics within society, it's important to recognize that these are interlinked chains of subjugation.

I am a senior college student, majoring in sociology. I have also been a “former detainee”, having spent 21 months in custody during my junior and senior years of college. I come from a conservative village, where I became the first young woman ever detained. From this perspective, the occupation sought to intimidate me, using statements like, “What will people say about you? A girl arrested by the army in the middle of the night. We now have control over your life.”

*In its interactions with Palestinians, the occupation shows no distinction. **Yet, within the framework of the prevailing social hierarchy and the patriarchal system, coupled with a deep comprehension of colonialism, the oppressor seeks to exploit any available leverage to exert pressure. Nevertheless, the efforts to deter them do not discourage many politically conscious women from their roles in both societal advancement and the intertwined political struggle.** There are numerous examples in the history of the Palestinian struggle that illustrate this unwavering commitment.*

When addressing women's political engagement, it's crucial to acknowledge that within a context of colonisation, participation isn't a matter of personal choice but rather an obligatory path towards securing fundamental rights for survival.

Amid the current political situation, there are numerous tales of heroism, and various forms of struggle. In the perspective of the wives, mothers, and sisters of martyrs, they too are fighters who have experienced unforgettable challenges under the occupation that history will never forget.

The struggle may take direct or subtle forms, yet it cannot be concealed that women's political activism demands a resilience that equals, if not surpasses, that of their male counterparts. Women are required to engage in social activism alongside their political struggle because, in my perspective, a genuine struggle cannot be selective, focusing on one aspect while neglecting others.

The level of education of the women in my village is commendable; however, their participation in the workforce remains relatively low. In my perspective, this aspect significantly contributes to women being subjugated within the patriarchal structure, thereby hindering their ability to achieve independence.

During a conversation, a woman once shared, "The most painful thing is my inability to leave my husband's house and purchase my own home to break free from injustice." This contributes to an increased sense of women's dependence, further accentuating the issue.

With the weakening of political organisations and parties that advocate for women, whose role was once an integral part of their political and social agendas, and after the Oslo Accords and their consequences, civil institutions have stepped in to fill this gap, with social movements now assuming a more substantial role.

Consequently, this has resulted in a decline, a loss of strength, and even a separation between popular movements and political parties. This outcome is a consequence of the political stagnation we are currently facing post the Oslo Accords and their subsequent developments.

In the present circumstances, it's important to recognize that women's concerns aren't the only ones entailing exploitation or oppression. Yet, the issue of women and their challenges can't be relegated to a secondary position; it holds a crucial role in breaking away from colonialism and dismantling the lingering effects of the Oslo Accords, which manifest in diverse ways, including the oppression of the working class and women, among others.

From this standpoint and drawing from the lessons of liberation, the struggle is holistic and inseparable. It stands against colonialism, dominance, slavery, subordination, and the marginalisation of women.

Moreover, the struggle actively pursues economic self-reliance and the emancipation from cultural subjugation. It does not neglect any matter that diminishes human dignity, because the ultimate focus is on humanity itself, on the wellbeing of nations, and the liberation of nations equates to the liberation of the land."

GAZA STRIP²⁰

Gaza has been under an increasingly normalised blockade since 2007; generations of children have been born into and stuck within complex realities of multiple oppressions. Gazans bear witness to a chronic humanitarian crisis where less than 4% of fresh water is drinkable, making 96% of water unfit for human consumption. The population suffers from restrictions on movement and intricate security checks as pretexts to deny permits for travel. People are locked in without the freedom to travel in or out of the Strip. In 2019, [Aisha Al Lulu, 5, was diagnosed with brain cancer, and both her parents were denied permits to accompany her to get treatment in Jerusalem. An elderly friend of Aisha's aunt volunteered to accompany Aisha, whose mental well-being deteriorated as she was receiving treatment without her parents by her side.](#)



ACTIVIST, FIDA'A AL ZANIN, REFLECTS ON LIFE IN GAZA:

Forms of Violence and their Impact

"Since 2007, the blockade enforced by both Israel and Egypt has profoundly shaped the existence of those living in Gaza, imposing severe limitations on their ability to access land, air, and sea routes. For the residents of Gaza, the Rafah crossing stands as the sole gateway for entry and exit, a journey riddled with challenges extending from the initial registration process to the eventual arrival in Cairo, Egypt. Another passageway available for transit is the Erez checkpoint, albeit with restrictions limited to international travellers, urgent medical cases and individuals granted permission by the Israeli authorities subsequent to a rigorous security assessment.

The blockade's consequences extend to a shortage of vital resources such as medicine, goods, and construction materials, culminating in an alarming humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the relentless assaults by the Israeli military on Gaza have inflicted complete devastation upon its infrastructure, including critical health facilities. The absence of functional infrastructure and essential services like electricity and potable water compounds the difficulties confronting Palestinians, with women disproportionately bearing the brunt, compelling them into an unceasing struggle for survival. The violence and trauma stemming from these military offensives and the prolonged blockade have etched profound and enduring imprints onto the mental well-being of Gazans, leaving a lasting legacy of psychological distress.

Multifaceted Struggles: Diverse challenges confronting women in Gaza

The factors detailed above exert an impact on the entirety of Gaza's population; however, their influence manifests diversely across different segments. Specifically, women in Gaza encounter a two-fold experience of adversity. On one hand, they face colonial violence stemming from their Palestinian identity, while on the other hand, they grapple with societal violence rooted in their gender, translating into gender-based violence.

Freedom of Movement: Constraints on mobility

The prevailing blockade curtails the unrestricted movement of individuals throughout Gaza, affecting the general populace. However, its ramifications are more intricate for women. Unmarried women, regardless of age, face an additional layer of restrictions: the need to secure authorisation from a male guardian prior to leaving Gaza. This requirement has notable repercussions, leading to missed opportunities for women to travel, escape domestic violence, or pursue their academic ambitions. This is particularly relevant when considering cases where women have secured scholarships to advance their education abroad.

Loss of Life: Navigating femicide, honour killings, and gender-based violence

The toll of Israeli aggression on Gaza reverberates within every household, where the loss of a beloved family member is an all too familiar reality and creates pressure and tension for all Palestinians. Yet, within the context of femicide, gender-based violence and honour killings, it is women and young girls who are the primary victims, with the perpetration of harm, predominantly originating from immediate family members. Despite concerted efforts, discussing these fatal incidents remains enshrouded in taboo. It is noteworthy that a significant number of these killings stem from motives beyond honour, but conveniently cloaked as such to garner societal acceptance. Crimes committed by the Israeli regime prevent Palestinians from focusing on their internal struggles because they are constantly in a state of survival.

In terms of holding those responsible accountable, which often includes fathers, brothers, and husbands, the legal system has some weaknesses that can allow wrong-doers to avoid facing consequences. An example that stands out is Madlen AlJarab'aa's case. She lost her life because of her communication with her mother after her parents' divorce. Shockingly, her father - the one responsible - was released from custody within the same month.

More recently, the situation of Fatimah and Wisam illustrates these challenges further. These two young sisters repeatedly tried to leave their home to escape violence and even attempted to leave Gaza. However, due to the restrictions of the male guardianship law, they were prevented from doing so. Sadly, authorities sent them back to their father's custody, and they have been confined to their home for months, with their wellbeing uncertain.

Access to Land and Land Ownership: Disparity in agricultural rights

Many farmers in Gaza face limitations in accessing their own land due to the presence of the Israeli army. When farmlands are subjected to tank shelling, the destruction is indiscriminate, affecting both men and women working on the land. However, it's important to note that a significant number of women engaged in farming do not hold ownership over the land they cultivate. Even if they are working on family-owned land, they often do so without compensation, akin to unpaid domestic and caregiving labour. Unfortunately, these women lack legal rights to the property they work on, mirroring the situation of unpaid household and care-related work.

Addressing Mental Health

Broaching the subject of mental health and seeking therapy remains taboo within Gaza. This hesitancy stems from existing gender norms and apprehensions about confidentiality breaches. Women, influenced by past negative encounters—ranging from broken trust to even instances of therapist-related sexual harassment—are hesitant to seek therapeutic assistance within the region.

Family Laws: Navigating custody and divorce

Navigating the process of divorce in Gaza can be emotionally taxing, particularly for women with children. Custody matters are even more challenging. Current custody regulations in Gaza typically grant fathers custody by default for girls over 9 years old and boys over 7 years old, without sufficiently considering the child's best interests. Contemporary efforts within Gaza are striving to amend these custody laws. Currently, Gaza does

not have personal status laws to protect women and adhere to a specific interpretation of Islamic law. Palestinian society has become further insular as a reaction to Israeli dispossession and state violence.

Unemployment: Struggles in securing economic independence

Amid the multifaceted challenges, Gaza contends with notably high rates of unemployment for everyone, posing a significant socio-economic conundrum. Despite commendable literacy levels and a substantial pool of university graduates, women face greater hurdles in securing employment due to prevalent discrimination and restricted entry to certain job sectors and public services. As a result, women often occupy sectors that offer the lowest compensation, such as kindergartens, or sectors that have become predominantly for women due to societal perceptions, such as care work (nursing). It's important to note that recent years have witnessed an upswing in women entering the job market with family permission, primarily driven by financial necessities. However, this doesn't equate to attaining financial independence.

Housing

While Israeli bombings disregard household leadership, post-war periods present distinct challenges for women-led households and internally displaced women. Both groups face considerable difficulties in re-establishing a semblance of normalcy, especially concerning accessing support for securing new housing or rebuilding their economic standing after substantial losses. Be it local policies or humanitarian initiatives undertaken during and post-war, they still lack gender-sensitive considerations.

Additional Gender-Based Injustices and Violence

Further injustices and gender-targeted violence encompass inheritance deprivation, child and forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and societal pressures rooted in concepts like honour and chastity."



FROM GAZA CITY UNDER BOMBARDMENT

By Zainab Al-Ghonaimy

Day 107 of the genocidal war on Gaza - January 21, 2024 | The Challenges, Cruelty and Anguish that Women Face under the Weight of the Zionist Aggression

“Today, the stories of women I know gathered before me. Those whose lives were turned upside down because of this Zionist onslaught. I’ve previously written about the details of their daily lives, similar in hardship across all areas of the Gaza Strip, but there are variations from one region to another. In the end, though, they all live in harsh, inhumane conditions, terrorised by the imminent threat posed by the occupation army in the areas they raid.”

One by one, female colleagues told me about their suffering. One of them wrote to me in a message: ‘How are you our Ms. Zainab? Please tell me how you’re doing, and tell me, how is Gaza City? Do you expect them to let us return? When? By God, we are tired and have no more capacity to endure this.’ She and those with her were forced to seek shelter in the central region after her home and her family’s home were both destroyed. She wishes to return, even if she had to live in the ruins of her home.

Another colleague who was forced to flee to Rafah says, 'We are living and not living. We stand in line for hours to get a sip of water, and we cannot find a piece of bread for the children.'

One of them expressed her psychological state of deep anguish and injustice due to the violation of her and her daughters' privacy living in a tent on a street in Rafah—a state that is amplified by her feeling exposed to the world or maybe her shock and inability to fully process the situation they are in, of displacement and the loss of her husband and her home.

And then there's the woman who was forced to live in a metal caravan in Khan Yunis, which was too cramped to begin with and later bombed by a drone. She and her husband were injured, and three of her children were martyred, except for two girls who were playing outside.

In Gaza City, hundreds of women and their children were forcibly separated from their husbands and fathers by Zionist soldiers. They were loaded onto large trucks and transported south towards Rafah against their will. Meanwhile, the men were placed in a separate truck and transported to the borders of Deir al-Balah.

This happened yesterday when the occupation army stormed three shelter centres inside UNRWA and government schools at Ansar roundabout in the Al-Rimal neighbourhood after besieging them. The [Zionist] soldiers brutally forced the hundreds of women and men inside these shelters to go down to the courtyards. They searched every room in each school, then separated children under sixteen and women from the men, and then executed three men in front of everyone before they arrested a number of young men and piled the rest onto trucks.

A young woman who went to the maternity and delivery health centre in the Daraj neighbourhood said that she and her husband miraculously survived. She had just undergone a caesarean section to deliver her baby, but she was still forced to flee two hours after giving birth because the [Zionist] army bombed the vicinity of the health centre. She was unable to run and walked in extreme pain for 200 metres, stopping to rest at the entrance of a house, before continuing to walk to her family's home.

Today, I was surprised by a visit from a relative of mine who lives with her family in the house of a relative who was displaced to the south. She told me with great agony: 'I never imagined that I could live with strangers in the same house. May God curse the circumstances that made us accept anything just to live, and we are not living well even.' She added: 'But it's also really sad because these strangers' houses were also damaged a lot, and they do not know when they can return, and are also waiting for the situation to calm down.' She meant that she was surprised by the presence of a strange family displaced from the northern region in the relatives' house where she had taken refuge. They were let in by the building guard, as they were also seeking refuge.

I have lived through almost all of these events, and I have gone through similar experiences with those around me, and I feel, like them, the bitterness of life and daily suffering. But we, on each passing day, are all trying to cling to the hope that this aggression must end soon.

This dispatch was translated from Arabic by Hanaa Safwat and is part of daily dispatches written by Zainab Al Ghonaimy and shared with the world through a collaboration involving her daughter, Farah Barqawi, alongside a team of volunteers, translators, and graphic designers. Published by WHRDMENA, a contributor and partner of *Towards Our Liberation*. All dispatches are accessible on www.whrdmena.org.

WEST BANK

The Zionist establishment has endorsed a strategy to shrink Palestine and expand Israel, including shrinking the land, rights, spaces and hope of Palestinians. Post the Oslo Accords, the West Bank (which is 20% of historic Palestine) was apportioned into 11 governorates that are administratively fragmented, and bear witness to barbaric violations of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Area A, Area B, and Area C comprise the West Bank. Area A is 18% of the West Bank and is controlled by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Area B is 22% of the West Bank and the PA holds administrative control whilst sharing security control with Israel. Area C is 60% of the West Bank and is controlled by Israel. Most of the lands in Area C are agricultural, and this area divides Area A and Area B into hundreds of segments.

On July 3rd, 2023, Israeli occupation forces launched their largest military assault on the West Bank in 20 years on the Jenin refugee camp. With drone strikes, snipers on rooftops and troops on the ground, they killed more than 12 people between 16 and 23 years old and wounded hundreds, destroying infrastructure across the town and refugee camp. These acts of colonial military occupation are human rights violations that are perpetuated by a culture of impunity and lack of accountability, not only impacting the dignity, safety, and well-being of millions of people but also that of generations to come.

Hundreds of permanent and flying checkpoints are systematically scattered within and around the West Bank, many of which are administered by security companies which profit from these colonial instalments and pump billions into the corporate militarised surveillance industry. These checkpoints disintegrate the territorial unity of Palestine and penetrate the daily lives of civilians.

Checkpoints vary in their staffing and structure, and those authorised to cross them. Many are equipped with tunnels, terminals, biometric means of verification, conveyor belts, police dogs, and heavily armed security personnel. Women and children experience high levels of danger, anxiety, fear and trauma crossing these checkpoints. They are subject to inhumane search practices and violent communication in Hebrew, which many of them don't understand. The checkpoints are almost always overcrowded. Pregnant women, elderly people and babies are disproportionately impacted by the dire and precarious conditions.

These checkpoints restrict the movement of Palestinians' within the West Bank. In fact, the expansion of Israel is built on depriving Palestinians of their right to travel to Gaza, Jerusalem and occupied 1948 territories, as they are forced to apply for permits from the Occupation to enter these occupied territories. Very often, the procedure of obtaining permits is maliciously complicated and permits are arbitrarily denied.

“ ***Driving a distance of 28 kilometres, between Ramallah and Bethlehem, should take no more than 30 minutes. For Palestinians, a one-way journey can take 60-90 minutes at best, calculating traffic and time to cross checkpoints, and on some days, this journey can take between three to four hours, depending on the amount of torture the soldiers at the checkpoints are up for.***”

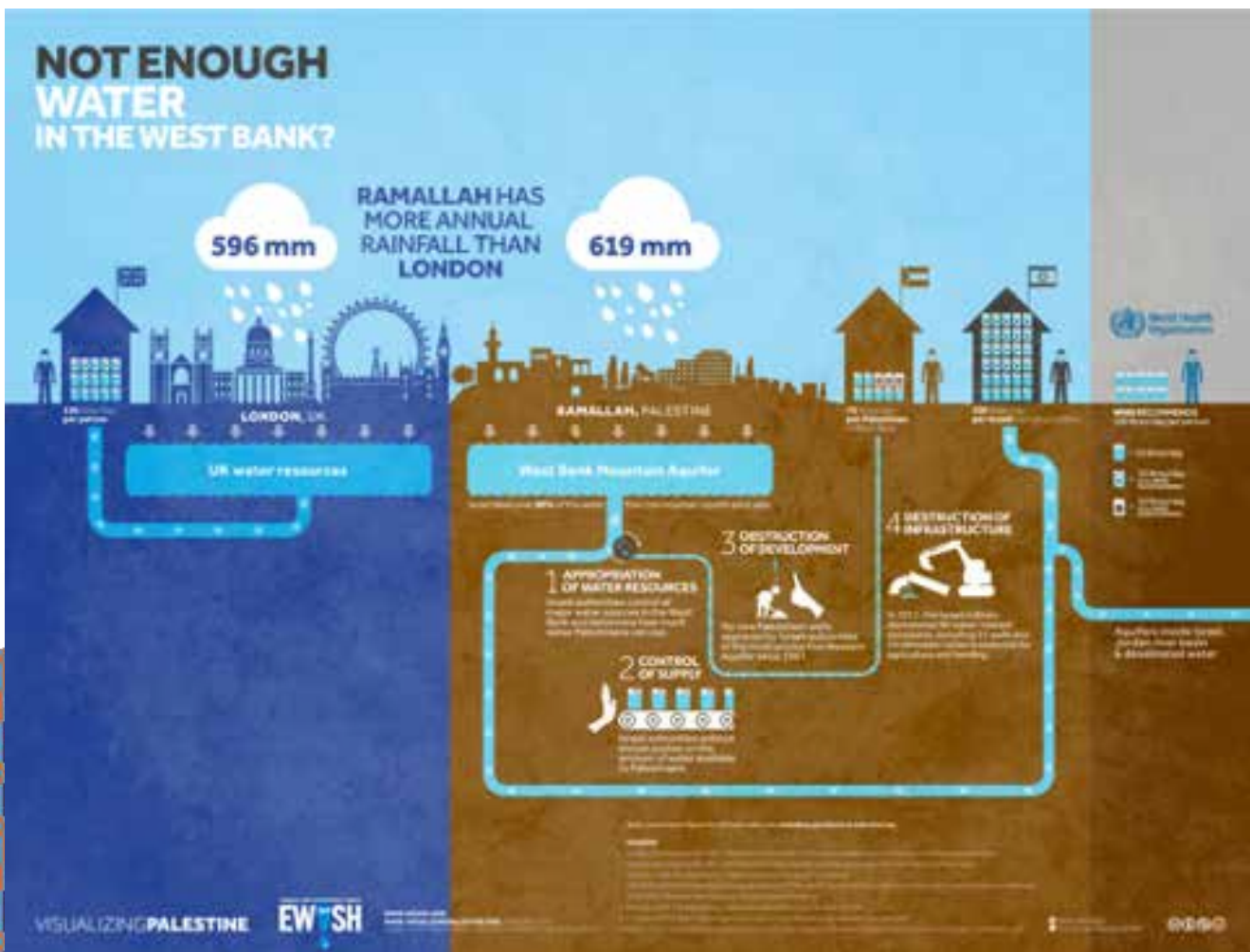
I remember the day I was travelling to Bethlehem for a meeting. I spent two hours on the road and another two hours at the checkpoint until the soldiers decided they were not letting anyone through. I had to return to Ramallah and cancel the meeting.

A year earlier, I was with my family in the car driving to Nablus to meet some friends, and the soldiers at Huwara started firing at young men who were throwing stones while our car was literally passing between the soldiers and the young men. My two-year-old daughter was in the car.”

- Sandie Hanna, Palestinian activist

Nablus, Hebron, and Jenin are among the cities in the West Bank that are culturally, architecturally and politically vibrant with ancient neighbourhoods, scents of jasmine that fill the senses and a rigorous commitment to resistance and liberation, especially among the youth. Yet, the realities that youth and their families endure are difficult to imagine, with a twofold impact on women and girls. Colonial fascist practices

of storming Palestinian houses while people are sleeping, firing tear gas at Palestinian teachers while they try to reach their schools in the villages, imposing unlawful temporary sieges on the cities, committing arbitrary detention, demolishing houses and inflicting a [water crisis](#) constitute only some of a wide continuum of colonial practices of collective punishment.



Source: <https://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/west-bank-water#&qid=1&pid=1>

JERUSALEM

A TESTIMONY, EXPERIENCE, AND ANALYSIS BY FEMINIST ACTIVIST FAYROUZ SHARQAWI:

“When I moved to Jerusalem in 2000 to pursue my studies, I was immediately captivated by its breathtaking beauty, rich history, and remarkable resilience. Being 19 years old at the time, I already understood the significance of Jerusalem as the heart of our Palestinian struggle for liberation and a symbol of our entire homeland. I was aware of the looming threat posed by Israeli colonialist agendas to the Palestinian presence in the city. However, it was only when I immersed myself in the daily life of the city that I truly grasped the essence of being a Palestinian in Jerusalem. Living there, I came to understand the unique blend of privilege and responsibility that comes with being a Maqdisi (Jerusalemite).

Following the occupation of the eastern part of Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli occupation authorities declared their intention to ensure a Jewish Israeli majority within the expanded municipal boundaries of the city. In pursuit of this objective, they implement policies of systematic displacement against Palestinians, ostensibly under the guise of upholding the rule of law and maintaining order.

Similar to other settler-colonialism endeavours, the Israeli occupation employs a dual strategy of displacing Palestinians from Jerusalem while steadily increasing the number of settlers. Central to this scheme is the systematic confiscation of Palestinian lands and demolitions of homes to establish and expand settlements. Moreover, Israel intentionally undermines the Palestinian economy and disempowers communities through policing, mass incarceration, and control of the education system. This oppressive approach extends to various policies that target Palestinians in the city, such as revoking legal status, criminalising political organising, and suppressing freedom of expression.

These policies are deeply gendered and disproportionately affect women. Often, colonial powers view indigenous women through a lens of patriarchal superiority, objectifying them and denying them agency. In the context of a patriarchal society, Palestinian women confront multiple layers of gender-based violence, discrimination, and barriers to public participation. The Zionist settler-colonial regime reinforces and amplifies these patriarchal structures, further restricting the freedom of Palestinian women. As a result, the Palestinian feminist struggle has always aimed to combat both intersecting forms of oppression.”



NAQAB

For many, Al Naqab is not a familiar name, and this Palestinian desert is propagandised as “Negev” following the co-optation of Indigenous names by the Zionist entity, [erasing the original 46 villages](#). Today, many of these villages are unrecognised by Israel, and their Indigenous people face racism and colonisation. [Since Al Nakba, the Zionist project has employed various violent mechanisms to erase and replace the culture, identity, and heritage of the Bedouins²¹ in Al Naqab](#). In pursuit of its colonial settlement expansion goals, Israel has orchestrated a humanitarian crisis, jeopardising the lives and wellbeing of Bedouin communities. [This crisis includes restricting access to electricity, water, and safe roads to schools and medical clinics, demolishing and confiscating homes, subjecting streets to police brutality, and denying the right to own and access land](#).

[One of Israel’s implicit colonial mechanisms of ethnic cleansing and colonisation is afforestation, the planting of trees where forests did not previously exist. While this might initially appear as an environmentally friendly practice, forestation can lead to the devastation of unique biodiversity](#). Additionally, Israel’s motivations behind forestation are rooted in its colonial agenda. The [Jewish National Fund](#), which has become a quasi-governmental organisation according to Israeli law after Al Nakba, has played a pivotal role in greenwashing colonisation. The Fund self-brands as a green organisation, yet [evidence points to its role in portraying an environmentally progressive image of Israel to conceal the colonial practices of land theft and discrimination against non-Jews inside the Green Line](#).²²

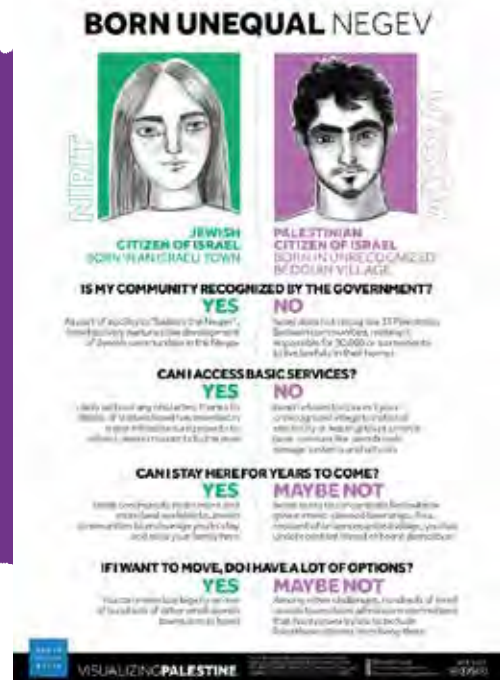
When Israeli bulldozers seize Palestinian land to ‘make it green,’ they are expropriating the land of the Indigenous population, depriving them of residing, cultivating, accessing, or building a life over a piece of their homeland. This is systematic erasure, and Israel has outlined its plan through the [so-called Begin-Praver plan \(2013\), budgeting \\$5.6 billion for the mass expulsion of thousands of Bedouins from their ancestral homelands](#).

Al Naqab stands as a living testament to Palestinian organising and resistance in the face of Israel’s colonial practices of Israel-isation. Its people remain steadfast and rooted in collective memory and conscience against Israel’s spectrum of dominance and its relentless attempts to subordinate Palestinians. They protest and push back against Israel’s efforts to culturally and politically assimilate the Palestinian population of Al Naqab. During Habbet Al Karama (also known as the Dignity Uprising or May Uprising), Bedouin communities reiterated their unity with Palestinians across the historical map, defying all political and geographical borders created by the Occupation.

Bedouin girls and women continue to be among the most affected and are at the forefront of resistance efforts. Recognising the interconnected nature of gender, age, race, class, and other social identities, feminist organisers are advocating for justice regarding land rights and resisting Israeli discriminatory policies and laws. Their grassroots campaigns and political organising aim to reclaim the identity of Al Naqab, the rights of Palestinians against the prejudice and oppression of the Zionist state that discriminates against non-Jewish Israeli citizenship holders, and the power of women and girls.

As girls and young women are at the heart of the social and political fabric of resistance, they are arrested, and if released, many are sentenced to house arrest. The Occupation suppresses their freedom of speech and right to assemble, often violently dispersing peaceful demonstrations and subjecting them to unimaginable levels and forms of violence. And yet, girls and young women remain courageous and determined to defy the Zionist establishment. They are taking to the streets, reclaiming their voices, especially in spaces that dismiss their realities and lack representation. They are utilising social media, political education, awareness-raising circles, the arts, and every tool they can access to resist and shape a reimagined reality grounded in justice and safety.

OCCUPIED 1948; ISRAELISATION AND THE WEAKENING OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS



A TESTIMONY, EXPERIENCE, AND ANALYSIS BY NIDA NASSAR:

“Since the Nakba in 1948, Palestinian society within the borders of Israel has endured a complex web of Israeli colonial policies, which have evolved in various forms over the years while maintaining certain enduring elements. Numerous studies have underlined the pivotal role played by the Second Intifada and the subsequent uprisings of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa in reshaping the relationship between this segment of the Palestinian population and the Israeli state. These political dimensions of the uprising highlighted a growing sense of alienation from the Israeli establishment and the failure of the “integration” narrative. The impact of these events reverberated not only in the lives of Palestinians in the 1948 territories but also in Israeli policies towards them.

Since the Second Intifada and particularly after 2008, two primary trajectories have emerged in Israel’s approach to Palestinians within its borders. The first trajectory centres on the control of national political behaviour, while the second focuses on economic inclusion. Israel seeks to establish a controlled Israeli Zionist citizenship based on two key principles: separating the national struggle from the daily material realities of life within these territories, and linking aspirations for development to the process of Israel-isation.

Hence, comprehending the reality of Palestinians in the 1948 territories necessitates more than just scrutinising the impact of policies rooted in racial and colonial discrimination. While these policies involve control, oppression, the official legalisation of racism and fascism, prosecution of political, national work, and threats to Palestinian

identity, there exists another dimension; one that has gained momentum over the past decade and has taken a faster track over the last five years. This dimension revolves around a policy of containment which needs to be acknowledged in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Palestinian situation in the 1948 areas, and comprises Israel's broader neo-liberal policies, especially as they pertain to the Palestinian population. Significantly, these policies coincide with Israel's full membership in the global Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Israel started following up the 'gap-bridging policy' in 2007 and established the 'Socio-Economic Development Authority' with a focus on the 'Arab community' within its borders. This authority introduced numerous economic and social initiatives, all conspicuously divorced from the political status of Palestinians in these territories. Notably, in December 2015, Israel green-lit its largest five-year plan, allocating NIS 15 billion for the 'economic development of the Arab community'. It is important to highlight that the Israeli government only approved this plan after incorporating substantial modifications, which included what it referred to as 'political behaviour control'.

The plan's approval was conditional on the acceleration of Israelisation projects, such as integrating young Arabs into the Israeli civil service and security services, as well as expediting what Israel terms 'the implementation of planning and building laws', essentially translating into the demolition of unlicensed homes according to Israeli standards.

The fact that the timing of these plans coincided with the escalation of the prosecution and criminalisation of Palestinian political organisation at home constitutes clear evidence of the aforementioned two trajectories in Israeli politics; namely, controlling and taming political organisation and Palestinian identity on the one hand, and containing economic ambition through 'inclusive citizenship' - which some researchers have called 'colonial citizenship' - on the other.

At the core of these developments, a significant shift has occurred, with individuals increasingly prioritising personal salvation over collective solutions to their shared social and political challenges. A prevailing hypothesis has taken hold among substantial segments of society, suggesting that abstaining from organised national collective efforts is the path to individual success, ostensibly guaranteed by Israel. However, this guarantee is contingent upon conformity to the established institution, a trend that has become increasingly pronounced in the wake of the outbreak of the conflict on the 7th October 2023.

We've witnessed a troubling pattern wherein hundreds of individuals working in Israeli official or private institutions have faced dismissal and legal prosecution simply for expressing their solidarity with their fellow Palestinians in Gaza. Concurrently, destructive social phenomena, notably violence and crime, have surged to unprecedented levels over the past decade. These issues are exacerbated by a sense of alienation and fragmentation within the same population, fueled in part by the wider societal disengagement from collective identity. In a society where the foundational national social contract is absent, the influence of groups centred on narrow identities gains prominence, while the collective identity wanes. In this context, practices of repression - often justified in the name of family, religion and tradition - become distressingly normalised. These practices frequently result in the cancellation of artistic events and women's activities, with the rationale being that these activities do not align with the parameters of the public sphere as perceived by these particular groups.

Like all colonial regimes, the Israeli establishment exploits societal dynamics and gaps politically to serve its agendas, enabling an imaginary margin of freedoms for groups that suffer oppression in society - namely women and queer people - in an attempt to reinforce alienation towards the oppressive Arab society that appears more oppressive when compared with the enlightened

Israeli society. The city of Tel Aviv, for example, became the 'safe space' for queer Arab groups or for women who want to obtain a space of individual freedom and self-realisation, and thus the Israeli system washes its dirty hands with our many social challenges, which we would have addressed differently had it not been for Israel's incursion into the fabrics of society.

The intertwining of the political, social and economic contexts described indicates the need for the same contexts to be linked with corresponding political and feminist action in this specific context. It is virtually impossible to disentangle the various factors of oppression from each other. Consequently, the elements of action, movement, and organisation that endeavour to challenge and disrupt the existing power dynamics cannot focus solely on securing temporary and contingent individual or civil advantages.

This process has been extremely ferocious on Palestinians in general, specifically for those living in the 1948 territories. If one views the overall scene of the youth, national and feminist movement in the last five years, an absence of civil, popular and mass movements and groups is very much noticed. No more than five instances have occurred in which youth and feminist movements have combined national and political discourse on the one hand and radical and progressive feminism on the other. While some of them have succeeded, even partially, in reaching various segments of society, the challenge has been to extend beyond a limited political society and translating and activating this discourse among people in a way that responds to their immediate needs and aspirations; to be classified finally as an elite movement, even if elitism was not its driving force. On the other hand, there are other groups - often localised within specific towns - which have positioned themselves as non-political from the outset. Their primary mission is to address the everyday needs of individuals, particularly young people and women, without delving into the broader social and political contexts that underpin these challenges. Examples of such groups include various local women's clubs or university

student associations. While these movements have succeeded in engaging broader segments of youth and women, they have struggled to offer a comprehensive social and political framework or vision to accompany this outreach.

Similar to other Palestinian sectors, Palestinian civil society in the 1948 occupied territories faces challenges related to its ability to organise and confront the state power specifically when it comes to opportunities to interfere with and change reality. This challenge has been fundamental since the establishment of an independent civil society that separates itself from institutions of the 'Zionist left' since the mid-nineties.

On the other hand, Arab civil society is full of 'independent' initiatives on 'developing youth and women leaders', yet these initiatives depend on co-funding. The funding generally comes from American Jewish federations. These federations have peaked their interest in the Palestinian society of 1948, especially after 2015, when most of these federations decided to change the ruling coalition in Israel. 'Maoz', 'Sehrya', 'Rothschild', and 'Joint Leadership-Abraham Fund' are just some examples of the type of initiatives proposed to the Arab community which claim to develop future leaders of society that integrate Arab society into Israeli society.

These and other developments have contributed to the dominance of a certain pattern of Palestinian civil society work - a pattern in which the 'exploitation of Israeli opportunities and plans' is its main pillar and central logic. From this standpoint, a reformist approach has formed within Palestinian civil society, driven by capitalising on 'exploitation of the available margin' without collective regulation. In this context, the work of dozens of initiatives and many Arab NGOs comes to the surface, aligned with this pattern of operation.



In contrast, the voice of Palestinian national and feminist civil society and those opposed to these policies and plans—or at least critical of them—has been subdued and marginalised. The erosion of the political centre has contributed to the atrophy of Palestinian civil status, as well as a scarcity of funding resources and even more limited funding opportunities that are politically unconditional.

This atrophy and erosion has resulted in the absence of a reference body and a great distortion to civil action in both form and course. This means that civil work has become less immune to the new Israeli plans and less able to influence the institutions of the Israeli centre. The repression and limitation of possible spaces of action by Israeli institutions means a lack of funding and unconditional resources that enables civil work to expand further among the people and compete

with other institutions supported by government institutions or funds of the Zionist left. Civil organisations often find themselves forced to compete with institutions that are financially armed, and they struggle to gather enough energy to engage in organised collective action capable of forming a strong enough Palestinian current to challenge those swallowed by the Israeli centre of gravity.

Amidst this complex landscape, where the demand for organised Palestinian feminist political action is evident and the challenges are multifaceted, the significance of alternative funding mechanisms rooted in solidarity and strategic collaboration become apparent. These approaches aim to empower the community to assert its control over its own realities, concerns and future, rather than perpetuating its reliance on existing power structures.”

ON THIS LAND

by Mahmoud Darwish

There is what makes life worth living,
 April's hesitation,
 the aroma of bread at dawn,
 A woman's prayer for men,
 Aeschylus's writings,
 the beginning of love,
 Grass on a stone,
 mothers standing on the thread of a flute,
 and the invaders' fear of memories.

On this land,
 There is what makes life worth living,
 September's end,
 A woman leaving forty
 in full bloom
 The hour of sunlight in prison
 A cloud reflecting a swarm of creatures
 A people's applause for those who face their own erasure with a smile
 And the tyrant's fear of songs.

On this land,
 There is what makes life worth living
 On this land
 The lady of our land
 The mother of all beginnings
 And the mother of all ends
 She was called Palestine
 Her name later became Palestine
 My lady....
 Because you are my lady
 I deserve life



CHAPTER 3

THE DIFFERENT FACETS OF RESISTANCE

Palestinian resistance is diverse, rich, and vibrant across generations. It is filled with life, joy, love, and pain. Palestinian girls and young feminists resist by documenting their history, sharing healing practices and art, questioning, and holding truth to power against the violent systems that seek, among other things, to weaponise and criminalise their bodies and efforts to survive. This section curates the reflections of young Palestinian activists' unwavering resistance, exemplifying the breadth and diversity of their efforts and collective struggle for liberation.

HAVE YOU EVER ASKED YOURSELF WHEN AND HOW PALESTINE WAS WIPED OFF THE MAP?

Raya Sharbain, Palestinian feminist activist

“Good evening everyone,

Our last performance for the night is going to be Zahrat al-Mada’en, which means “flower of all cities” in Arabic. This is our name for the city of Jerusalem in Palestine.

This song was originally sung by Fairuz and composed by the Rahbani brothers. But it was Edward Torikian [Lebanese musician and composer of Armenian descent] that crafted this specific arrangement to include various prayers within the song, giving you the feeling of walking inside the old city of Jerusalem and being surrounded by the prayers.

If you’ve ever been to Jerusalem, you know that the old city is protected by a wall adorned by seven gates. The song talks about our plight of return to Palestine and at the end, you’ll hear us knock on the gates of the city and – in triumph – open them. We’re imagining the moment we’re finally able to go inside Jerusalem and pray in our city.

All music mirrors a reality and a history and this song represents our reality and our own hope for liberation and return.

To Palestine.”

In September 2022, our choir was invited to perform in the World Choir Expo in Lisbon, Portugal. On the last day of the Expo, our choir – formed mostly of Palestinians exiled in Jordan – closed its performance with Zahrat al-Mada’en. This was the fourth time we had performed it in Portugal. We had sung it in two schools, a church, and the finale was at the Centro Cultural de Belém. Belém just happens to be the Portuguese name for the city of Bethlehem in Palestine.

The first time we sang it, our choir’s conductor looked up from his podium and quickly introduced the song as simply being “about Jerusalem,” which left me in total exasperation. Upon finishing the first performance, we ran to the conductor and lamented stripping our songs from their political and spiritual meanings.

After some short deliberations, the choir’s leadership granted our plea to write two short paragraphs, one introducing the whole set of songs we were performing, and another introducing just Zahrat al-Mada’en. We wrote drafts and shared them with the group. My paragraph included the word ‘occupation’, which ignited a common reaction from one of the choir leaders: “We cannot say that word: the moment you turn things political, people stop listening.” While I attempted to demonstrate why our reality, the colonisation of our homeland, the essence of our existence, is not and should not be grounds for strife, my protest was ignored; I was told yet again to detach my emotions from the life I’m living.

“Occupied is the word I see on the water closet door of an aeroplane – and the first thought is always, when will it be vacant?” wrote my mother’s cousin, Johnny, reflecting on being Palestinian. He was forced to leave Palestine during the first Intifada for resisting the occupation.

The next two times we sang Zahrat al-Mada'en, I would go up in front of the audience and recite a shorter version of the text. For the last performance however, I decided – without seeking prior approval and admittedly with a couple of drinks inside of me to quell my nerves – to slide the word 'liberation' in. The choir's leadership did not react to my addition, and perhaps the ban on the word 'occupation' did present some opportunity to frame Palestine as a liberation project.

We assume that, as Palestinians, censorship stems only from the Israeli Occupation, 'friendly' nation-states, media and social media. We fail to admit that this silencing is also bred unto us. Our thinking on Palestine is drawn by the settlers who colonised it, and so we teach ourselves to not reiterate the very words that make us Palestinian - wiping Palestine off our mind maps, and leaving our hearts abandoned.

“ ...please do not fail to drop us [a] few lines every now and then because here we are left lonely and secluded in this deserty side of Jordan, without relatives and without friends.” – Amman 21st. July, 1967

This is how my maternal grandfather concluded a letter to his friends, a few weeks following the Nakba of 1967. Anton Hazboun, a Bethlehem-born Palestinian, was expelled from Palestine during the Nakba. Upon reaching Syria he was once again threatened with expulsion for his political activism. He ended up in Jordan in hopes for a more stable life.

In late 2007, I applied for a visa to return home for Christmas. Of the tens of family members who applied, mine was the only application denied by the colonisers. I was 13. This strategy of denying the youngest or most vulnerable in a family access is meant to discourage an entire group from returning.

As well as physical isolation from Palestine, censorship perpetuates an emotional and intellectual isolation. How can you ask me to not say 'occupation' when occupation and its synonyms are core to my vocabulary and how my life exists at the whim of the very occupation whose existence is so often denied? But in all honesty, I cannot blame my own people for mimicking the 'oppressor's characteristics', the colonisers' greed does not stop at land, but breaches minds in order to maintain this state of submersion. In a sense, the oppressed group is left collectively isolated. And I have been coping with isolation by sifting through what my grandparents left behind, recently unearthing a picture that I have been hearing about from my mother and aunts for years.

The picture dates back from 1988, when my grandmother René Nasser took my eldest brother Raja for a stroll around our Amman neighbourhood. She had placed a small Palestinian flag on his onesie and had bannered the front of the stroller with a paper that read:

**“ The generation of the Intifada
We will continue until we liberate our ancestral land
Land Day Anniversary
30 / 3 / 1988”**

For years, my mother would react to me participating in protests calling for Palestine's liberation by recounting the year during the first Intifada when her mother took her son for a stroll: “We were so sure your brother's generation was the one that would live in a free Palestine.”



“But it’s been over 30 years,” she would add, “and nothing has changed.” Implicitly, I’m being asked to accept Palestine’s occupation and colonisation as a given destiny. “Let’s just get through this life, we will not fix this world, it is corrupt from time immemorial,” I’m told.

In reading the above and writing this, I ponder what liberation translates to in Palestinian, with [Paulo Freire’s](#) words constantly ringing in my ears: “Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one.” Palestine is an exercise in revolutionary pedagogy, requiring mental, physical, and spiritual labour.

The question lies not in what our goal is – because that’s clear, we want Palestine freed from Zionist ideology, free from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea – but how do we get there? Martyred Palestinian caricaturist [Naji al-Ali](#), insisted that “the road to Palestine is neither far nor near, it is the distance of the revolution.” The number of years until liberation is therefore irrelevant - why even keep count?

That was a recent conversation between Johnny, my cousin, and I. Can we reach a consensus on what our revolution looks like? How else will we free Palestine if not in our collective terms?

I dream to see Palestinians voraciously bringing down the separation wall, breaking into the Occupation’s prisons and freeing every last Palestinian prisoner, Zionist settlers leaving our land in flocks, and us Palestinians in the diaspora, returning to our native home. “How will we run the land once freed?” I often hear. I’m not sure: I have to buy into the idea of nation-states before I start thinking of legal democratic structures for Palestine. What matters is not determining Palestine’s conclusion, but rather working towards concluding its occupation and the Zionist settler colonial project. Through thinking of the ‘hows’ of Palestine’s liberation, I also seek to interrogate our attachment to these lines drawn in the sand.

Oh how I wish to crush Zionist tyranny, and every last grain it occupies, with my bare body. For now, I will continue to close my presentations on how my grandfather concluded his letters, reminding readers and listeners about us, to ignite a unifying rage until we reach the occupation’s end.

In expressing our isolation we seek not pity but solidarity.

I leave you with ‘My Neighbours’, a poem written by my grandfather Anton Musa Hazboun, a refugee banned from seeing Bethlehem, his birthplace and home:

They say my neighbours are the folk
Who lives next door to me.
“My neighbours” - such a friendly
phrase,
I’m sure they couldn’t be!
The folk who live next door?
We never get together
And talk about the things we love-
We talk about the weather!
A handclasp, smile, or friendly word
With them, would little be-
I find no kindred spirit
In the folk next door to me.
My friends are not my neighbours;

Or so the world would say-
Because the ones I really love
Are mostly far away.
Yet near my heart they always seem,
and far more neighbourly
Than any of the other folk
Who live next door to me !
And so I think, it matters not
If we are far apart;
My “ neighbours and my friends are
those
WHO LIVE NEXT TO MY HEART.

نيطسلف ايحت و شيعن

HEALING AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE AND PRACTICE OF LIBERATION

By Hanin Tarabay, Palestinian Feminist Storyteller

Since 2003, I've accompanied women and youth groups, primarily focusing on women and girls' rights. My journey in community work started as a specialist in community nutrition. It became evident to me that there was a lack of awareness, or sometimes a disregard, within the healthcare system for the root causes of diseases and eating disorders. I realised it was more crucial to understand these underlying causes and work on preventive measures rather than just addressing the physical symptoms, which are the ultimate outcomes. Eating disorders and our complex, often misunderstood, relationship with our bodies and how we perceive them, served as the foundation from which I first launched my career and activism.

It was truly disheartening for me to solely address the visible symptoms without acknowledging the underlying causes. Consequently, my focus shifted to community engagement, particularly working with women and girls near the social affairs offices in Jerusalem. I initiated a project known as "Body and Soul," which extended over a five-year period and involved collaborations with schools and community institutions. Throughout this time, I immersed myself in the study of theatre, delving into how the broader realm of art, especially theatre and storytelling, can serve as a means to enrich our self-awareness, understand our relationships, tackle conflicts, address systemic issues, and facilitate transformative change through artistic expression. This revolves around three core elements: Theatre dedicated to the oppressed or marginalised, reenactment theatre, and the art of storytelling.

As time passed, I have developed an approach and a space that seamlessly merges the domains of art and community engagement, health, nutrition, and healing. It's evident that professional evolution stems from an ongoing cycle of awareness, exploration, discovery, and learning. At a certain point, we realise that we will forever be students, observing the cosmic interplay between our roles as learners in the school of life and the universe. Our awareness extends to our own spiritual journey and purpose, as well as the never-ending process of our personal growth and depth. Whether we see ourselves as educators, coaches, facilitators, artists, or healers – or any term that best captures the multifaceted nature of this connection – our primary aim, whether in individual, group, or community contexts, is to establish a secure and supportive environment.

My professional journey took me from Jerusalem to the West Bank. In this capacity, I worked as a theatre artist, distinct from the Israeli artistic system, as I hold Israeli citizenship and am based in the occupied '48 territories, while also engaging with the Palestinian community, including those residing in the 1948 territories.

Certainly, as I navigate between the three spheres of identity (the occupied '48, Jerusalem, and the West Bank, with Gaza inaccessible to me and my interaction with certain activists and groups restricted to digital platforms and video meetings), I am also deeply immersed in my personal healing journey, intricately connected to the collective awareness of shock and post-traumatic symptoms, prompting us to consider how we can, as a community, establish a secure haven for processing and assimilating our collective shocks and post-traumatic symptoms.

Furthermore, it leads us to contemplate how these experiences impact the energy flow within our bodies, our overall health, our mental and emotional states, and consequently, our self-perception

and interactions with others and society. How can these secure environments help us break free from the lasting impacts of trauma and establish a space that enables us to breathe and initiate a process of healing, both individually and collectively?

At a certain juncture, we realise that, as individuals, we also contribute to the healing of our ancestors who endured traumas they couldn't fully process or assimilate due to the absence of safe spaces. We aren't merely coping with the consequences of past trauma; we are living through our own trauma, specifically the Nakba experienced by our Palestinian people in 1948, which continues to affect us today. It's as if we inherited this generational pain within our souls, sensing its weight on our shoulders, often without complete awareness.

Our objective is to work towards our own healing and that of women and girls. We aim to delve into the depths of consciousness and the journey of the soul, unveiling what could be described as the "caves of Ali Baba." Additionally, we strive to explore intergenerational communication and appreciate the significance of delving into our collective pain, acknowledging its importance.

Initiating the journey of self-awareness and healing presents significant challenges. Regrettably, most systems, including societal institutions, often do not provide the appropriate spaces and conditions necessary for growth in this specific context. Establishing a continuous and accumulative process to contribute to our community's healing, while simultaneously grappling with various colonial systems, is a complex undertaking. We confront our trauma, which we perceive as an enduring wound stemming from the catastrophe, the occupation of our land, and the colonial endeavour to erase the identity and rights of our people before the entire world.

Given the interconnected nature of all elements, it's impossible to compartmentalise our struggle or liberation efforts into isolated sections; it inherently encompasses all aspects. When a people aspire to freedom and work towards the liberation of their land, they bear certain responsibilities. These include upholding justice and truth and effectively conveying our voices, causes, and challenges to the world, often described as political and national activism.

Another pivotal element, essential for any genuine transformation pursued by any group, involves dissecting and scrutinising all societal structures. We must be acutely aware that the liberation of our land is intrinsically linked to the liberation of our communities. As per the natural laws governing energy and the universe, we cannot persist in establishing small circles that replicate oppressive dynamics and perpetuate them. This sustains power dynamics, resembling the patterns imposed by colonialism within smaller circles in our society.

After years of extensive research and in-depth exploration within my field, carefully examining various aspects, I've come to see that the processes of consciousness and healing, which are built on direct connections with the Earth, individuals, and groups, resemble the gradual peeling of an onion. With each step, we uncover new layers and levels, necessitating a fermentation and digestion of each stage as our companions and an increased awareness of our personal journeys.

The effects of borders, movement limitations, and barriers on our experiences in different spaces differ significantly. **In my opinion, it would be neither compassionate nor well-informed to approach the Palestinian situation as a single, undifferentiated entity without taking into account the broader context of feminist efforts. Each region has its unique characteristics, situations, and challenges. It is unrealistic to expect that a woman from Gaza, who has endured a lifelong siege, would share identical experiences with a woman from the West Bank, where movement restrictions and encounters with settlers are common. Similarly, a woman from Jerusalem confronts a**

substantially distinct social, political, and cultural milieu due to the city's significance in the colonial context. Additionally, a woman residing in the Palestinian territories within Israel interacts daily with the colonising authority and may occasionally share spaces with individuals from other communities, creating a diverse mosaic.

Hence, it is imperative to consider all these distinctions while acknowledging our common roots and history. Colonisation compelled us to categorise ourselves into different groups, each with unique traits and limitations. These distinctions have a significant impact on our capacity to establish spaces where women in all these settings can share their personal narratives and collaborate toward the cultivation of a healthy society.

A significant portion of my work is centred around Jerusalem, and I named my project “Her Story.” Its purpose was to capture the individual narratives of women, the collective storyline, and eventually extend to encompass the narrative of the land and the nation. This endeavour operated on two fronts: one involving documentation, where I archived these stories to preserve our oral history and ensure its protection, and another on a societal level, where we recognised that **engaging with our narratives and healing processes was an essential and integral element of our liberation mission as a community.**

Our struggle, cumulative development, connection to our roots, and understanding of our history would all be unsustainable without a clear vision that included healing and establishing safe spaces for women and society. Later, my work expanded to include diverse groups and teams, particularly within educational and instructional settings, to drive systemic change. Furthermore, **fostering open communication and dialogue within healthy environments became a fundamental necessity for our collective continuity as a people and our ongoing progress and healing as we journeyed toward liberation.**

Over the course of approximately a decade of my involvement in artistic, social, and feminist community activities, it has become evident how focusing on one's personal narrative serves as a fundamental space for addressing our current shocks and challenges. **Furthermore, connecting our personal narratives to the collective context and subsequently to the historical and cultural backdrop tied to our ancient history, civilisation, and governance, which stretches back through the ages, has proven vital. We are the result of this historical continuum.**

Real, profound change cannot be realised without taking responsibility for our healing as individuals first and foremost, and then secondly as a community and people. Moreover, it's imperative that we learn from the past to prevent and safeguard future generations from the weight of inherited collective shocks that persist across generations

Art in the broadest sense, and storytelling particularly, hold a special place for me as some of the most powerful means and platforms through which we can connect with ourselves and others. As the Sufi wisdom suggests, storytelling can be seen as “the shortest distance between two individuals.” It serves as our conduit for engaging with our shared humanity, whether as individuals, groups, communities, or entire societies and cultures.

Narratives, whether in their traditional, inherited folk forms or in their symbolic, allegorical dimensions with concealed messages, such as the myths born out of the tapestry of our history, civilisation, and culture, illustrate how our personal and collective stories play a crucial role in shaping our oral history. They are an intrinsic part of the organic and natural process of our development as societies and cultures.

TO LIVE FREE²³

By Laila R. Makled, A gender expansive human; grandchild of Lebanese immigrants, a Palestinian refugee, & a Scottish-Baptist settler

On Trans Day of Visibility last year, I posted a photo of myself after top surgery, and commented on what it means to be trans. My Jiddo responded, “We see you and love you as you are.” He understands, in a way few can, the necessity for affirmation of one’s existence.

My Jiddo’s name is Nabil Ahmed Izzat Tahha. In 1948, at the age of 7, he witnessed neighbours in Haifa, Palestine lying naked and dead in the streets, and children “going crazy” over the loss of their families. Luckily, he, along with his parents and six siblings, was able to escape to Sur, Lebanon.

My great-grandmother, Badrieh Al Khamra sold her jewellery to keep everyone fed. This kept my family alive for a while, but after five months, all of it was gone, and the food along with it. Their arduous journey took them to Syria and, eventually, the United States.

In 1959, my Jiddo was accepted into Purdue University with less than \$20 to his name. He took a job as a dishwasher making \$0.80/hour to pay for school and living expenses. Then, in 1964 while at a church event to get some food, my Muslim Palestinian Jiddo met my grandmother: Sharon Elizabeth Hood, a young, white Baptist, small-town girl from Texas. Not long after that, on February 24, 1965, my mom, Rhoda Nabil Taha Makled, was born in Baytown, Texas.

Despite long odds and unrelenting racist encounters, and through hard work and education, my Jiddo was able to make a life and raise a family here and eventually attain citizenship.

To colonising propagandists, our story is the American Dream. To us, it’s an ongoing tragedy. Every few years, when Palestine reenters the news cycle, we are forced to relive the trauma our family went through, feeling deeply the continued suffering of those living in our homeland. Israel’s current, blatant slaughtering of Palestinians has only made my jiddo’s recurring night terrors worse.

In my mother’s words, “In a world where colonisation still draws painful borders around Indigenous lives, through silent echoes of the past and loud clamours of the present, the narrative of my dad’s shattered dream and unyielding survival stands as a testament. It is a soul-stirring reminder of the human spirit’s unyielding flame, burning fiercely amidst the chilling winds of conquest, illuminating the paths of resistance for generations to come.”

The trauma of genocide will continue to be felt in our bodies for generations, but so will our beauty and resilience. It’s part of what’s given me the strength to be openly trans, and my family to support and love me unconditionally.

“ We [Palestinians] are not going away. We’re in this world to stay, and the world is going to have to deal with us.” – Jiddo



Laila and their Jiddo (Nabil) at an ice skating rink in New Jersey, 1997.

'To Live Free' was initially featured in *Adi Magazine*, a contributor and partner of *Towards Our Liberation*. Dr. Nimmi Gowrinathan discusses why documenting and centering the voices and stories of Palestinians is so important and particularly critical at this moment.

"In the introduction to Mohammed El Kurd's [poetry collection](#), Aja Monet writes, "*Solidarity is a feeling. It cannot be contrived.*" *Adi Magazine* was created to bridge the gap between policy and intimate spaces of impact. In recent months we have wondered if the gap is too wide: there is no braided essay that reaches from a mass grave to the top floor of the United Nations. So perhaps we, as a collective who have inherited legacies of violence, are accidental cartographers of consciousness. *Adi Magazine* is an overtly political project. Our desire is to exist as an answer to a question posed by Afghan writer [Sonia Ahsan-Tirmizi](#), "*How do you lay out a narrative of oppression without succumbing to a pornography of pain?*"

As one of the first literary spaces to open its pages to Palestinian thinking, art, and reflection we were overwhelmed by the response. In one email a young poet mourns her martyred uncle writing that "... *without him, I wouldn't laugh the way I laugh.*" We had hoped to curate a counter-narrative. We have likely published a living archive. We are all held captive to narrative ceilings set by the state, each of us trying to twist terminology in our favor. This issue lays bare the reverberating ruptures of genocide in the raw voices of Palestinian writers. May they, as Aja Monet hopes, "*help you find the words for what you already know to be true.*"

- Dr. Nimmi Gowrinathan, Founder, *Adi Magazine*

CHAPTER 4

PALESTINIAN GIRLS AND YOUNG FEMINIST ORGANISING AND RESISTANCE



Political organising in Palestine is deeply rooted in Paulo Freire’s model of conscientization. Organisers are constantly engaged, to varying degrees, in the process of examining and identifying the interconnected structures of power and dominance that impact their realities. This political understanding is essential for developing a clear political strategy for liberation and guides how Palestinians revolt against and disrupt oppression while envisioning alternative realities and futures. This political clarity lies at the heart of shifting mobilisation efforts toward organising.

While mobilising is a testament to how we respond humanely to acts of injustice, it can be problematic, as people may mobilise selectively only when issues directly affect their lives and interests. The political clarity that organisers possess in Palestine is aimed at dismantling entire systems rather than responding to isolated issues. They are dedicated to revolutionary actions that lead to collective emancipation rather than achieving temporary reforms. When the masses are organised and grounded by a political compass, they reclaim and pool their power. As Kwame Ture, Pan-African civil rights activist and organiser, described, “If we are not careful, we allow mobilisation to become events. The struggle is never an event. It is a process — a continual, eternal process.”

“ Our strategy should be not only to confront the empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness – and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we’re being brainwashed to believe.”

- Arundhati Roy, Indian activist and writer



On December 8, 1987, the First Palestinian Intifada began.

In 2022 marking the 46th Land Day commemoration of when Palestinians rose up against land expropriation by Israel. (Getty images)

Across time and space, Palestinian young feminists have been creative in their organising and resistance. They have been protesting, striking, writing, singing, drawing, and boycotting. In late April and May of 2021, as Israel escalated its violent campaign of ethnic cleansing in the Palestinian Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem, an unprecedented wave of resistance swept across historic Palestine. People from various sub-geographies and movements united to defy the oppressor’s tyranny in what became known as the “abbet Ayyar/May Uprising”.

Women and girls played a pivotal role in taking to the streets during this uprising, educating their peers, advocating for strikes and creating safe spaces for mutual support and recovery. Working women and young women have also been at the forefront of resistance movements, using labour strikes as a means of expressing dissent and demanding radical change. These women and girls aspire to a free, decolonised Palestine where they can live safely, move freely, and fully access their land’s resources and the wealth of opportunities it offers. However, another layer of their reality reveals an ongoing struggle against a patriarchal and corrupt government that discriminates against women and girls, both in law and in practice.

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Images used below: (left) 1940s - Palestinian girl and young feminist protesting British colonialism and demanding to end the British mandate over. (right) Palestinian girl activists Janna Jihad and Ahed Tamimi protesting against Israel’s violence. West Bank, Palestine.

SPOTLIGHT: HISTORICAL FEMINIST ORGANISING IN JERUSALEM

by **Fayrouz Sharqawi**

The roots of Palestinian feminist organising can be traced back to Jerusalem in 1929, with the establishment of the Arab Women Association and their powerful march against British colonial support for the Zionist movement. The early feminist movement advocated for both Palestinian liberation from colonialism and women's liberation from patriarchy, although it primarily focused on the national/political struggle against colonialism. However, during its initial stages, the movement was urban and class-divided, neglecting the inclusion of women from the working class or rural areas.

After the 1948 Nakba, and especially during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Palestinian feminism was marked by significant developments and challenges as part of the broader Palestinian liberation movement. During this period, Palestinian women played increasingly visible roles in various aspects of activism, resistance, and community organising. Feminist organising in Palestine evolved into authentic grassroots efforts, with women's collectives emphasising the significance of embracing feminism to advance women's rights and issues lying in parallel with the national aspirations for freedom and self-determination. The first Intifada (1987-1993) marked the apex of this phase in the history of community/feminist organising.

The signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 marked the beginning of the NGO-isation era in Palestine. Many collectives that had been deeply engaged in community organising transformed into registered civil society organisations reliant on international aid. This shift brought about donor-imposed agendas, discourse, and activities that disconnected these organisations from their communities. As a consequence, aid depoliticised civil

society and redefined its role from being revolutionary and emancipatory to becoming professionalised and globalised. This general Palestinian shift had particularly detrimental effects on feminist organising. Post-Oslo, Palestinian feminist activism increasingly veers towards charity and social services, sidelining its pivotal role in the struggle for emancipation. Additionally, these organisations tend to overlook crucial issues such as class and gender diversity in their analysis of feminism and the feminist struggle.

In Jerusalem, the post-Oslo conditions are exacerbated by the Annexation and Expansion Wall, which isolates the city from the rest of the West Bank, leading to isolation and detrimental effects on feminist organising. The weakened social networks and hindered community mobilisation efforts make it difficult for feminist groups to organise and resist effectively. Moreover, the Occupation authorities' crackdown on Palestinian civil society organisations adds another layer of challenges specific to Jerusalem, further limiting access to grassroots support and weakening the collective power and solidarity vital for successful mobilisation.

In recent years, criticism of civil society organisations has grown louder, as their dependence on foreign funding that is destroying Palestinian civil society, erodes their authenticity and grassroots support, thereby reducing their impact and collective power. The younger generation of Palestinian organisers has been learning from the successes and failures of previous decades, leading to the emergence of new initiatives that prioritise freedom from donors and grassroots connections, ensuring a more responsive and effective approach to social and political change.

In 2019, a significant feminist initiative called Tal'at (Stepping Out) emerged in response to the brutal murder of Israa Ghayeb by her family members, making her the 34th woman killed in Palestine that year. In the aftermath of this tragedy, a group of women issued a powerful call to protest under the slogan; "There is no free homeland without free women." A few weeks later, on 26 September, 2019, thousands of Palestinian women in 10 Palestinian cities, as well as Beirut and Berlin, took to the streets to raise their voices against femicide and all forms of discrimination and oppression faced by Palestinian women.

The slogan embodies the core principles of Tal'at, showcasing today's organisers' profound understanding of the interconnectedness between colonialism and social oppression. Their call is to resist all forms of systemic violence, whether perpetuated by the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian political leadership, or capitalism, by coming together collectively across the fragmented parts of Palestine.

In June 2020, Tal'at organised a powerful protest in the streets of Jerusalem to denounce the recent murder of Eyad Hallaq, a Palestinian teenager with a mental disability, shot dead by occupation soldiers in the Old City. This demonstration was organised by Tal'at and gathered hundreds of people, including men, and turned into a march. However, the occupation forces responded with violence, arresting three women and halting the march. For those familiar with the situation in Jerusalem, where the space for Palestinian protests is constantly shrinking due to the occupation's actions, this day was a remarkable and emotional sight. In the three years leading up to this march, whenever protests were attempted in Jerusalem, they were met with immediate attacks by the occupation forces, often due to the small number of participants. Despite the challenges, the collective strength shown during this particular protest stood out as a poignant moment of resistance.

Tal'at firmly believes in achieving emancipation by addressing capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy simultaneously. They refuse to prioritise one struggle over the other, emphasising the importance of incorporating the feminist discourse as a critical component in the national liberation struggle. Their vision of emancipation encompasses all aspects—social, political, and economic—and cannot be divided or ranked in importance. For Tal'at, true liberation can only be attained by confronting and dismantling these interconnected systems of oppression together. Their commitment to their vision is mirrored in their organisational approach, embracing decentralisation and inclusivity. They established local branches across various parts of occupied Palestine while maintaining national working groups, ensuring the representation of the diverse lived experiences of Palestinian women.

However, along with significant responsibility, comes considerable challenges. Recently, the movement has experienced a decline in its street presence. This might be attributed to the difficulties of organising across walls, checkpoints, and diverse lived experiences, or the lack of practical knowledge in building social-political movements in Palestine's complex political reality. Whether we witness a resurgence of Tal'at or not, the crucial takeaway is to glean valuable lessons from this unique and inspiring experience.

We live in a transformative era in Palestinian feminist organising, driven by a young generation that is redefining the Palestinian struggle, centralising feminist discourse, and emphasising the importance of genuine solidarity, both within and beyond our community. This inclusive approach holds particular significance in Jerusalem, where it becomes essential to break through isolation and disempowerment, re-establishing connections vital for collective healing and achieving genuine emancipation.

ART AND CULTURE

With the support of **Inad Theatre in Bethlehem**, a girl-led group emerged to create safe spaces for girls, especially girls with disabilities, and offer them platforms to raise their voices and lead peer-learning efforts. Emilia, the group lead, shares:

“The Inad Theater presented me with a remarkable opportunity to collaborate with girls and young women, including those with disabilities, over the years. I had the privilege of delivering impactful theatrical performances at girls’ schools and forming a troupe of girls with disabilities to enact a compelling theatre play titled ‘The Match Girl.’ Moreover, we conducted theatre and drama therapy workshops, specifically designed for girls from remote and marginalised regions, providing them with a liberating space to express themselves and release their inner struggles within a male-dominated society.

Through our collective work, we challenge societal norms and constraints, using the power of art and music to uplift girls and young women’s voices, contrary to the prevailing

belief that a woman’s voice is shameful. Our performances on the theatre stage echo our demand for equality and rights, proclaiming, ‘Our right and yours and their right: Our right to education, a healthy life, nourishment, safety within family and society, play, medication, love, and security in our homeland.’

The impact of theatre on our lives has been profound. We firmly believe in the transformative power of art to effect change, development, and strengthen community connection, while also resisting ignorance, occupation, and backwardness. Our performances serve as a means of resistance against oppressive forces attempting to silence girls.

*At present, we are utilising the funding to conduct a study on how to economically empower girls with disabilities based on their unique needs. **The flexible nature of this funding has allowed us, as girls, to express ourselves openly and create safe spaces where we can candidly discuss our needs, emotions, thoughts, and rights in a society that tends to suppress our voices.***

- Emilia Massou, Palestinian feminist activist



Also engaging young women through theatre and performance, **Amal Al Mustaqbal/The Hope of Tomorrow in Gaza** emphasises the importance of young women's personal stories to reflect on their realities and the circumstances around them that impact how they build bridges and enjoy their rights and freedoms:

"Before we organise any activity with women and girls, we need to thoroughly comprehend the challenges that women encounter, their various aspects, and the underlying causes. Our approach to addressing one aspect of the issues young women face involves engaging a group of young women and girls in a theatrical production, a method that might not be embraced by significant portions of our community. Through this theatrical engagement, which has garnered substantial media interest and meaningful connections with those involved in the theatre, our group has had a space and many conversations on what our role for change looks like, highlighting our narratives and advocating for our right to self-determination and return. We had a successful first performance and are now gearing up for

additional performances abroad, particularly in Italian theatres where we received a lot of support and solidarity.

*Flexible funding provides youth groups with the distinct advantage of complete freedom of movement and a focused approach towards core tasks, enabling the attainment of desired objectives instead of squandering time in routine and non-routine correspondences and meetings. **As youth groups aspiring for positive change and national liberation, we look forward to disseminating a culture of change and critical thinking to all. We also hope that greater emphasis will be placed on funding youth groups, rather than exclusively focusing on institutions. This shift would provide youth groups the opportunity to organise towards the change, while they navigate what their organisational structure looks like. We believe in self-sustaining funding, allowing us to finance ourselves independently and continue executing our programs as planned, without the need to await external funding."***

- Nadim Jad



COLLECTIVE HEALING AND POWER

Grounded in a belief that Palestinian women and girls have a right to recover from the years-long trauma they have and continue to endure, **Tajwal Artistic Group in Gaza** is offering young women an alternative reality to what the group's co-founders experienced years ago, they struggled to express their needs and challenges, and had no access to spaces of collective care and community support.

Rooted in approaches to community theatre, they hold therapeutic sessions with women and young women to share their personal stories, be in community, offer reciprocal support and compassion, and express their stories through theatrical performances. Hana'a has always dreamed of how to kick off this initiative, thinking about her calling in life and her desire to offer support for peers who were looking for theirs:

"We thought a youth gathering is the answer, predominantly composed of women and young women, and so we went for that and started 'tajawal' (meaning 'wandering' or 'touring' in Arabic) in 2016, symbolising our team's primary objective of touring various locations across Gaza, from north to south. We want to promote cultural awareness through art and theatre within schools, institutions, centres and associations. New members join our group every year, comprising individuals with diverse talents, including actors, dancers, writers, directors, storytellers, costume and set designers and workshop leaders and coordinators for the projects undertaken. We constantly try to build the skills of our team to live up to the needs of our society, to foster connection and growth among us, and to secure more support and funding opportunities.

We enjoy working with children by conducting drama workshops in schools and local community institutions to help them relieve some of the stress, anxiety, and traumas they're

enduring in the Gaza Strip because of the many wars they have survived. We also engage with youth through theatrical performances that address diverse topics to convey specific messages, fostering social, political, and economic awareness among young people. A great deal of our organisation is also dedicated to creating spaces and outlets for women and young women who bear heavy burdens in our society in light of the blockade on Gaza. We want to highlight two main approaches we use during sessions with women. The first is holding Barometer workshops that collect information from local women based on their lived experiences, and collectively discuss crucial issues affecting their daily lives and security. Women offer support to each other in these circles and strengthen a sense of belonging. The other approach is the 'hakawati/storytelling' programmes, where women are part of collective storytelling to focus on the stories of Gazan women, providing them with psychological, social, and moral support.

*The experience of flexible funding we encountered with Purposeful was both new and significant for us. **We never experienced such flexible funding before. We usually used to struggle to meet funding conditions, and during times when we got funding, we used to work under pressure, using our energies to engage in a constant struggle to meet the requirements so we don't lose the funding. This flexible approach provided us with a sense of comfort in our work. It enabled us to focus on the work on the ground, instead of channelling all our energies to focus on reporting.** With flexible funding, our team experienced a work environment filled with positive energy. Furthermore, receiving funding prior to initiative commencement allowed us to secure transportation, pay for the venue, and immediately reward the team upon initiative completion. This not only provided them with a sense of comfort and security but also eliminated the financial burdens usually associated with post-initiative funding delays. **Conditional funding imposes the pressure of 'not wanting to do anything wrong' that will***

displease the funder. Although the constantly shifting landscape sometimes means that our plans must change to accommodate the new priorities - a reality that many funders don't understand. With flexible funding, we have the freedom to experiment with new ideas that were not favoured by traditional funders, and test new approaches that link our resistance with the social and collective women's liberation."

- Hend Abuhasanein and Hana'a Abdel Nabi

The struggle for liberation is a painful process loaded with collective loss and grief. Efficiently navigating through this process is grounded in a sense of community where people hold space for and with each other to practise collective care and healing. The traumas that the oppressed endure in Palestine necessitate that feminist organising also addresses mental health and efforts for political recovery.

Sehtek B Dehktek, "Your Wellbeing in your Laughter," is a feminist collective of young women aged 22 to 30 in the Gaza Strip that addresses mental health among women and girls, particularly in the city of Rafah in the southern part of the Strip.

"We specifically design efforts with two groups: female journalists who are in dire need of continuous psychological care due to the pressures of work, event coverage, and the

ongoing conflict in Gaza, as well as female teachers working in preschools. This latter group is crucial as they are heavily impacted by the difficulties kids face by living in an open prison, and as they play a great role in shaping the realities and resilience of future generations, necessitating their consistent mental wellbeing. In Gaza, these teachers struggle with low salaries and significant neglect in terms of care. Our work is carried out individually and voluntarily, with funding acquired on a voluntary basis, although not on a continuous basis. We strive to expand our group and include more young women in the future.

We believe that flexible funding is important and fundamental for our organisation. It allows us, as an independently established group, to operate more easily. This flexibility empowers groups to allocate resources to the most pressing aspects to continue our humanitarian work, where the need is most acute and urgent. This assists in providing both material and psychological support to the most vulnerable segments of society, primarily women and children. It ensures that funds are distributed fairly without excessive taxation or additional costs, directly benefiting individuals."

- Mariam Ramzi

Image: Ramallah - Arab Women's Union of Ramallah (1934-39)



SPOTLIGHT: IN QUEST OF MEANING AND LIBERATION

By Daniela Massou

According to Irvin Yalom, a renowned existential psychiatrist, the essential existential preoccupations in human life encompass subjects such as death, freedom, responsibility, meaning, and isolation.

Yalom's perspective suggests that engagements with the aspects of existence are frequently propelled by "immediate experiences" or in other words "borderline encounters." For instance, the loss of a family member is considered one of the 'immediate experiences' that stimulate contemplation on existential topics such as death, meaning, and responsibility.

In Palestine, and within a settler-colonial system, "urgent experiences" are not momentary experiences, but rather a recurring reality and an inherent part of the existential experience of the Palestinian person. For example, between 2000-2022, the number of martyrs in Palestine reached 11,541, according to the figures of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. The numbers and reports do not reflect the depth of the genocide and terrorism of the settler-colonial forces with its various dimensions at the physical, psychological, social, economic, cultural, environmental and other levels, with the aim of imposing complete control over the Palestinian people and annihilating their identity and free existence.

Hence, the Palestinian people do not need "immediate experiences" to address the existential concepts posed by Yalom, as they are constantly engaged in a conscious or unconscious struggle with death, freedom, responsibility, meaning, and isolation. This is reflected in their life and psychological well-being, as well as in their decisions and relationships. Confronting these issues can

greatly influence how an individual engages with others, with themselves, and the way they lead their lives.

As a Palestinian woman, I have consistently found myself deeply reflecting on the core concept of freedom at different stages of my life.

During my teenage years, for instance, my awareness of restrictions and taboos grew, and I found myself in a struggle with the male-dominated system that placed my identity within socially acceptable molds, limiting my freedom of existence; constraints on thought, restrictions on linguistic expression, limitations on gender discourse, and more (readers may investigate the interplay between masculinity and colonialism in the Palestinian context).

Furthermore, there is my ongoing struggle against the colonial settlement system, which limits my ability to express myself, move freely, and interact with diverse individuals, thus constraining the broadening of my intellectual perspectives. Moreover, there is a conscious and unconscious sense of constant threat arising from recurrent encounters with various dimensions of military violence.

Prior to realising the interplay between personal conflict and the socio-political environment, my anger used to be directed towards my surroundings, relationships, and even self. This proved detrimental to both self and others, leading to the destruction of relationships.

Following years of existential introspection and personal reading, along with observing my environment, I concluded that my sense of isolation, loneliness, submission, lack of

purpose, and loss of control are intricately and directly linked to the colonisation that restricts me in various ways.

Considering the points discussed earlier, and as professionals in the realm of community mental health, along with our colleagues, we strongly advocate for the significance of establishing environments that encompass a psychological journey. Within these settings, individuals or groups can engage in exercising their entitlement to unrestricted thinking, contemplation of occurrences, discovering significance, and formulating narratives that aid in unravelling their emotions. This process also facilitates effective communication with others, countering isolation, and making informed decisions.

Within these well-organised spaces characterised by respect, empathy, and sincerity, individuals initiate the exploration of meaning within their life experiences. They construct a personal or collective narrative that becomes a part of their identity. This narrative serves as a conscious guide for making thoughtful decisions, enabling them to break free from blindly conforming to the existing circumstances enforced upon them by prevailing systems of authority.

In this way, the individual or group regains their narrative as a source of empowerment and a means of taking control over their own fate.

My journey in community and psychology work began by organising storytelling workshops, then evolved into leading support groups for women and minorities, including individuals with diverse gender and sexual experiences in Palestine, and now, I provide psychological services for children and supervise caregivers as well.

According to the psychological strategy for children and adolescents, presented by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, it is mentioned that childhood in Palestine is not taken for granted but rather needs to be planned, understood, and revitalised in this context.

All the experiences that individuals undergo within the spaces we create as feminist activists and psychological practitioners confronting colonisation are inherently within the realm of community. This belief stems from our understanding that genuine self-awareness, comprehension of others, and the transformative outcomes that follow can only emerge within the collective context. In these interactions, individuals mirror certain aspects of each other, allowing them to perceive situations from a more expansive perspective beyond their internal world. This also helps them identify elements of themselves in others and aspects of others within themselves.

Thus, we connect with one another, empathise, forgive, unite, and influence each other.

In my experience, I have found value in unrestricted funding, which has offered me the means to organise and engage in community service without imposing any form of control over my thoughts and actions.

DIGITAL SECURITY AND ADVOCACY

Digital security and cyber violence play a key role in girls' access to virtual safe spaces. Like physical spaces, the online world poses threats to the safety and wellbeing of girls and young women.

Siper Women, a feminist collective in the Rafah Governorate in the Gaza Strip, is dedicated to strengthening young women's awareness of digital advocacy and supporting them to navigate online platforms for self-expression safely:

"We focus on forming young women's groups to train them to advocate for their issues through digital advocacy, mainly through the use of social media. We work together to raise awareness in the field of digital security and support young women to become proficient leaders in this field. We collaborate with young women so they are prepared to multiply the effect and work with girls aged between 14 and 21. We convene through a WhatsApp group due to the absence of suitable spaces. This is

primarily because we are young individuals with limited access to resources and are unable to afford a structured space that mostly requires rent and government-approved registration. Our group was founded in 2021, by volunteer young women to encourage cyber security education in school settings.

We operate as a group within funded initiatives in exchange for a modest reward. However, the stringent reporting and financial documentation requirements from the funders put significant strain on us. These reports often cause delays in delivering rewards to the girls on time, leading to their disengagement from project activities. Another challenge is the lack of sustainability of these types of initiatives. Nevertheless, flexible funding would enable us to carry out activities more efficiently, receive timely rewards, and ensure the continuity of our work. This funding approach would greatly contribute to educating a substantial number of girls in the field of digital security, training them in effectively utilising social media tools for advocating Palestinian women's issues."

- Thraya Abu Zehri

A Palestinian refugee holds up the key to her home, waiting for her right of return.



SPOTLIGHT: ORGANISING IN THE GAZA STRIP

by **Fidaa' Elzanin**

Grassroots Feminist Initiatives Shaping Change in Gaza

The era following the Oslo Accords and the “building a state” phase in Gaza marked the emergence of various local and international NGOs, including those focused on women’s rights. These organisations were dedicated to promoting human rights and combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV). It’s noteworthy, that while many of these organisations are led by women affiliated with political parties, the mere presence of women leadership does not inherently render an organisation feminist or progressive. Political associations can impose certain constraints on the agendas of these NGOs.

Conversely, recent years have borne witness to the emergence of initiatives driven by young women, primarily falling within the age range of 19 to 30. These grassroots collectives centre their efforts on exposing instances of sexual harassment, safeguarding women and children from violence, increasing awareness about women’s rights, and propounding feminist principles. These initiatives are underpinned by progressive ideals, guided by a greater objective: the struggle against patriarchy is intricately intertwined with the pursuit of liberation. These smaller initiatives predominantly harness the power of the internet, due to its ability to offer a degree of anonymity and protection while amplifying their messages and advocacy endeavours. Additionally, these initiatives engage in on-the-ground activities like workshops and small reading groups to further their work.

For example, amidst the pandemic, a small group of young women embarked on a notable initiative (Milad) by initiating weekly feminist workshops. This endeavour effectively created a modest yet impactful learning platform rooted in feminist principles. Its focus included promoting awareness about women’s rights and addressing pressing issues like femicide and violence inflicted by male family members. Utilising the potency of social media campaigns, they sought to cast light on these crucial matters while advocating for justice. Nevertheless, the existing restrictions on movement posed a challenge to broadening their engagement across diverse communities. This limitation curtailed their ability to provide educational sessions, establish networks, and extend their influence beyond certain boundaries

Navigating Obstacles: Challenges Faced by Grassroots Feminist Initiatives in Gaza

In Gaza, both NGOs and grassroots feminist initiatives confront substantial challenges, with the blockade and recurring conflicts standing as primary impediments. Following each attack, the community’s attention shifts towards immediate survival and reconstruction, often prioritising humanitarian funding over longer-term developmental support. Consequently, critical matters like combating GBV, can find themselves relegated to the periphery. The scarcity of financial resources compounds the predicament for these organisations, discouraging active participation, especially among women, in community initiatives advocating for women’s rights and against GBV.

Following each attack, the community's attention shifts towards immediate survival and reconstruction, often prioritising humanitarian funding over longer-term developmental support.

Smaller grassroots feminist initiatives encounter additional hurdles, particularly concerning sustainability. Frequently reliant on short-term funding, they grapple with maintaining their essential work over extended periods. Financial resources tend to gravitate towards specific organisations, leaving smaller initiatives with meager or no funding. Furthermore, the intricate process of applying for funding places these grassroots organisations at a disadvantage, especially given their limited human resources.

Despite these formidable challenges, grassroots feminist initiatives have made substantial contributions. They have played a pivotal role in shedding light on GBV cases that might have otherwise remained obscured, as exemplified in the cases mentioned earlier (see Gaza Strip section), such as Madlen Al Jarabaa's. Moreover, they have heightened awareness about domestic violence. While some of their endeavours have yielded success in preventing further harm, deeply entrenched power dynamics within certain families and the broader society have occasionally hindered their impact.



Palestinian graffiti artists depict Israeli violence against children in Gaza

EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Education and leadership are among the main pillars of feminist organising in the work of **Al Manar Society in Bethlehem**, which was established in 2019 at Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem.

“We operate as a cohesive team of Palestinian women and advocates for women’s rights. Our work involves forming specialised groups and task forces that operate in various fields, including child protection, women’s empowerment, psychological and social support, awareness and education, and facilitating women’s access to education, among others. These groups are comprised of enthusiastic and dedicated women who work in the camps, employing a spirit of collective effort, enhancing solidarity, and cooperation, particularly among the refugee women, to bolster their role in effective community participation.”

We consider flexible funding to be vital and essential for sustaining our work and achieving our feminist and national objectives. Flexible funding enables us to adapt to changing needs and societal challenges, providing us the flexibility to execute projects and initiatives that address the needs of women and girls in Palestine. Through flexible funding, we can direct resources to activities and projects that promote women’s rights, support their empowerment, work towards changing unjust social systems and laws, and enhance awareness and education on women’s issues. Moreover, this flexible funding reinforces our resilience as a feminist organisation in terms of covering rent expenses, operational costs, and other necessary expenditures.”

- Anonymous Palestinian activist

Tawjeeh Center for Democracy in Bethlehem emphasises the importance of economic independence among women and young women, especially those with disabilities or those forced out of schools and universities, as the main bedrock to strengthen women’s contribution to all aspects of social and political life:

“We strongly believe that women must achieve their economic independence in order to be able to prove themselves in society. Therefore, the idea of implementing workshops to teach women and girls food processing came so that each one of them can establish her own project and have an income from selling their meals.”

- Anonymous Palestinian activist

“Through the flexible grant from the Global Resilience Fund, we were able to carry out vocational training for 15 unemployed young women whose circumstances did not allow them to pursue their university education. Their ages range between 18-23 years, and they had previously participated in many of the centre’s activities. These girls are from rural villages surrounding the city of Bethlehem. The overall objective of the ‘Girls’ Comprehensive Development and Economic Empowerment’ project is to ensure girls’ social and economic independence, ensuring they have access to economic development opportunities that can help them break free from poverty, enjoy a decent life and live in dignity. We support young women in learning new skills relevant to producing food and crafts, and we train them on how to market their products. The biggest challenges we face are the lack of resources and the need to convince families to allow their daughters to join our centre’s activities.”

Flexible funding helped us achieve what we are working for without imposing conditions on an idea or goal, especially since we live in a country that is under occupation and it is difficult for us to abide by the funder’s

conditions if they contradict what we believe in, or our path towards liberation. We felt that our friends in the Global Resilience Fund are expressing their respect for our principles, ideas, and our struggle by providing flexible funding.”

- Anonymous Palestinian activist

In addition to Tawjeeh Center, **Al Domari Society in Jerusalem** provides vocational training to raise awareness and generate opportunities for women and girls in Shu’fat. They focus on providing vocational education, particularly for those who haven’t completed their primary or higher education.

“We hold vocational workshops in various skills such as cosmetics, learning foreign languages, food preparation, and handicrafts, which can generate income for women and young women.

The empowerment workshops and courses play a significant role in bringing about a positive change in the lives of these women. This is particularly important due to the exceptional circumstances surrounding Palestinian women in East Jerusalem, where the presence of Israeli occupation poses obstacles to their development. Notable examples of these obstacles include security road closures for extended periods, hindering the professional and career progress of many women. In some cases, these security closures can lead to psychological and physical distress for Palestinian women.

Another obstacle is the economic aspect, as living conditions in Palestine in general and Jerusalem specifically suffer from a high cost of living compared to other Palestinian cities. In such cases, families in Jerusalem often require multiple breadwinners, leading to women being forced to accept any available job opportunity to support their families. The third factor is racial discrimination between Arab Palestinian women

in Jerusalem and Israeli Jewish women. This is due to the rights enjoyed by Israeli women across various aspects of life, which surpass the rights granted to Arab Palestinian women in terms of employment opportunities and wages. The fourth factor, which I personally consider the most important based on my work in a Jerusalem-based women’s association, is the existence of international and Israeli women-focused institutions that either lack or fail to offer support for Palestinian women. There are two distinct segments of women in Israel.

Al Domari Society relies on funders who care about women, women’s rights, and children to support its training workshops. The Society does not receive support from either Israeli or Palestinian governments. Being located in Jerusalem makes it extremely sensitive from a political standpoint. Institutions in Jerusalem face the challenge of restricted funding, often tied to various conditions. What external funders may not know is that institutions, especially if they are Arab, face intense scrutiny under Israeli control. Charitable activities within these institutions require numerous financial reports, and they are subjected to regulatory oversight, which can be extremely costly. This is where the importance of flexible funding lies, as it alleviates pressures and difficulties faced by institutions in Jerusalem.

Another issue is the linkage some funders make between funding and political stances. This is particularly challenging, as funders often ask Jerusalem-based institutions to adopt specific political positions in exchange for funding. Compliance with such demands can lead to the institution being questioned or even shut down by the Israeli occupation. Non-compliance could result in the loss of funding for crucial training workshops that could have had a significant impact.”

- Anonymous Palestinian activist

SPORTS AND PLAY

Play-based education was Asma's genuine approach to working with girls in the Gaza Strip. As a Global Teacher Award Winner (2020), Asma is committed to creating spaces for girls aged 13 - 25 years old, to learn English and skills to strengthen their confidence. With five other English teachers, she founded Gaza English Coffee. The group's journey started when Asma' encountered an unexpected event while teaching English in the marginalised and besieged northern region of Gaza.

During a lesson when Asma' was implementing educational games for the English language class, one of her students eagerly raised her hand to share her thoughts. She said, *"I'm really happy because we're playing. I don't have any toys at home, and my dad is unemployed. There are 11 of us living in a two-room house."* Her moving words had a profound effect on Asma', and made her think about the ways she could make a difference.

"Since 2018, our unwavering determination has united us in our quest for learning and sharing experiences. Within Gaza English Coffee, compassion and mutual support have guided us. We gather every Thursday evening at precisely 5:00 PM, according to Gaza's local time. Gaza, a besieged area coping with severe hardships, including oppression, deprivation, domestic violence, and societal turmoil, while facing repeated assaults from the Zionist occupation. In this place, Palestinian women in Gaza experience profound suffering and hardships."

- Asma' Mustafa

After having embraced the use of educational games as a teaching strategy, Asma' embarked on research and refinement of this teaching approach, accumulating her expertise and innovation into an English-language teaching handbook, which now serves as a valuable reference for many educators, both locally and internationally.

"We are actively reaching out to underprivileged girls in marginalised regions of Gaza who face financial barriers to pursuing their education. Our mission is to offer this support free of charge, via Zoom and other online platforms, as a means of creating opportunities for girls, offering them support to manage their entrepreneurial ventures, helping some secure scholarships abroad, and supporting many others in marketing themselves and their businesses using English language within the digital marketing sphere."

We convene either at the beginning of each month or every two months to reflect and incorporate new insights from our collective experiences over time. We attentively receive feedback from each team member, documenting observations and giving due consideration to diversity, innovation, development, and the evolution of our work. Our adaptations are guided by the specific needs of the girls, their locations, and their exceedingly demanding social and economic circumstances."

In the past two years, we have organised over 300 sessions for numerous girls' groups, reaching out to more than 500 girls hailing from the marginalised and border regions of northern Gaza, situated adjacent to areas under Zionist occupation. The girls' ages typically span from 13 to 25 years old, although there are some above 30 who also benefit from this training. We've established educational partnerships with 66 countries from diverse regions worldwide, conducting over 300 meetings and more than 50 remote training sessions for other groups of girls."

Over the past year, our women's group has been supported by flexible funding from Purposeful. We are deeply thankful for this generous support, which has played a vital role in enabling us to reach girls in the marginalised southern, eastern, central, and northern border areas of Gaza more effectively and efficiently. Throughout our efforts, we have encountered instances of teenage girls who discontinued their education due to financial constraints. The Gaza Coffee team played a pivotal role in re-enrolling some of these girls in school, and for others, they received English language education after completing high school to pursue scholarship opportunities.

This flexible funding has played a pivotal role in transforming the lives of numerous girls who, due to various circumstances, required this support to master the English language. Purposeful has opened doors for them, whether through online education or intensive training.

Our experience transcended the Palestinian borders. Through our educational electronic twinning, we witnessed a profound sense of love and peace among people worldwide, creating a global community that values humanity across the globe. We observed genuine love, peace, and robust human compassion from others towards the Palestinian people as a whole, and Gaza specifically, considering the periodic military aggressions and hardships it endures."

- Asma' Mustafa





SPOTLIGHT: “GAZA BOXING WOMEN”

A letter from Rima Abu Rahma

Hey there! We're the 'Gaza Boxing Women' – the very first women's boxing club in the Gaza Strip. We're not just a club; we're a group of women on a mission! Our goal? To empower young girls and women across Gaza through boxing. Some of us are hardcore fighters, others just want to learn self-defence, and some simply enjoy the fun and fitness.

Our club is a hub of energy! One of our co-founders takes care of all the paperwork, planning and numbers, while the second, our coach, is the mastermind behind our killer training sessions and cool events. The rest of the gang handles our online image and spreads the word about our fantastic journey. Most of us are volunteers, we even pay subscription fees when we want to train, as kind of support to our club. We see our club as a social project, aiming to help deliver our services to every girl or woman who needs them.

We started as a group of friends who wanted to feel safe and strong. Thanks to a fantastic boxing trainer who wanted to challenge everyone with us and break stereotypes, we began training – even his own daughters joined in. But things weren't easy; finding places to train was tough and expensive, and the society was not that supportive. At some point, Purposeful stepped in with a kind donation that changed a lot. With their support, we got our own spot in the heart of the city. Now, our place is not just a club; it's like our second home, decorated with our pictures and style.

But there's more to our story! We're not just boxing; we're breaking barriers. In a place where not everyone understands our dream, getting funding was tough. Flexible funding saved us from relying on certain organisations that might change our vision and limit our ideas.

Plus, it helped us do more. Now, we're training women to be trainers themselves. They can teach in other clubs or even here with us. It's about spreading the fire! We are also looking to reach more women, and young girls, who dream of becoming professional fighters, because, why not?

To all the awesome people out there, here's a tip: see feminism in different lights, different contexts. In our community, some might get scared if you call it 'feminism', for the bad image that our society developed through time about feminists. So, we focus on the goal, not the label, by spreading more positive words, without labelling them for the moment. We are making women strong, confident, and capable of defending themselves. Parents here, for example, want the best for their girls – but they just follow what they know, feminism scares them, so we change our language to reach them. We're taking small steps to change mentalities.

Oh, and always look after the small projects and young ideas! They're the sparks that can light up our future, and in our society, they are not getting much support. We've been through a lot, but we're still here, full of hope and energy to make things better.

And you, yes you, can stand with us in so many cool ways. Our journey got a huge boost from Purposeful, but even a simple follow on social media means the world. Sharing our story, talking about us, sending us encouraging messages – it all keeps us going. Someone even drew a picture of us – how awesome is that? Friends from all over, your support fuels our fire and keeps us punching above our weight!

Images below from: <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/sports/2021/05/14/gaza-boxing-reema-aburahma-women-sport-palestine-israel-conflict-spt-intl.cnn>



LEADING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

As genocidal attacks by the Israeli occupation forces have persisted for over four months, Palestinian girls and young feminists are at the forefront of crucial, creative, and urgent emergency response efforts across Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and beyond. While we respect and honour their power and wisdom, it's crucial to acknowledge the unrelenting and soul-crushing burden they continue to bear and question the deeply dehumanising systems and states causing this to be the case. They have to confront the harsh reality of being denied basic rights to peace, safety, and dignity, and having to flee for their lives amidst barrages of bombs while simultaneously mobilising to provide food for their community, seek shelter, document crimes, provide mental health support and more.

In this section, we highlight some of the emergency response efforts undertaken by Palestinian girls and young feminists since October 2023. **We must recognise that the ongoing genocide and violent attacks across Palestine have directly impacted the Palestinian girls and young feminists who have collaborated on this publication - many have had family, friends and community members killed, are facing displacement and are grappling with profound pain and trauma. This is a grief that defies comprehension.**



FOOD, WATER, AND BASIC NEEDS

Gaza Women's Boxing, Tajwal group, and Gaza English Coffee have been mobilising to provide critical basic needs to support displaced girls and families, including water, food, sanitary pads, batteries, blankets, diapers, and formula milk despite their own displacement.

Ha' Noon, a young feminist group from Gaza that documents the stories and lived experiences of women, young women, and girls, recognised the urgent need for humanitarian assistance. Consequently, they reorganised themselves into Shabab Gaza and successfully distributed dignity kits to hundreds of women and girls.

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND COLLECTIVE CARE

Despite facing displacement and the inability to convene as a group, **The Hope of the Future** has been establishing wellbeing spaces for children in hospitals. These spaces aim to help children emotionally and mentally process amidst the violence and chaos of genocide and its impact on them. Members are also individually pursuing efforts to maintain connections on the ground and create reimagined moments of reality for those most affected.

Gaza English Coffee has organised an art and play space for children at the shelter where they are staying, aiming to distract them from the bombings.

Psychology Spa creates wellbeing spaces for young women in the West Bank and is currently responding to the trauma experienced by children and young women because of the genocide in Gaza. The group is conducting debriefing sessions with young women, girls, and children in refugee camps, particularly those grieving lost loved ones in Gaza.

SHAMS is also providing socio-emotional support for women and children in the West Bank, along with creating a performance inspired by the current situation to help navigate this collective moment.

DOCUMENTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Palestinian girls and young women have been documenting the ongoing genocide, ensuring that evidence is gathered and reaches the world. They report on the attacks and heart-wrenching reality with courage and determination. Their reporting not only showcases their bravery but also plays a crucial role in building the case for the International Court of Justice. As they report, they endure brutal attacks while also grappling with the pain of losing loved ones and witnessing the devastation of their homes.

Images below: (left) Lama Abu Jamous, a 9-year-old girl journalist in Gaza, Palestine reporting on the ongoing genocide. (right) Sumayya Wushah, 11-year-old war reporter in Gaza, Palestine reporting on the ongoing genocide.

“ In the absence of humanitarian aid during the blockade and the most recent acts of brutality against Palestinians, in particular in Gaza, women-led organisations and women human rights activists were at the frontline of crisis response, to shelter, feed people and make warm clothes for the cold winter. They stepped into new added roles, in addition to their heavy community care responsibilities. Women human rights activists in particular are the ones that have been the most solution driven in this complex, brutal challenging context. Recognizing their extraordinary efforts should not also normalise or romanticise it. People from Gaza are the most creative and solution driven, under high levels of pressure and terror they continue to find ways to collectively care about their communities. For these reasons and more, local feminist movements need to be involved in decision making around rebuilding Palestine. Feminist philanthropy holds the responsibility of advocating for meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding.”
- Global Fund for Women



ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADVOCACY

Palestinians within Palestine and in the diaspora are leading critical accountability and advocacy with unwavering courage and persistence, resoundingly declaring an end to the genocide and the occupation. They are joining efforts and advocating for our governments to fund and support the wellbeing of all, instead of funding weapons of destruction and war.

“ **Our work at Adalah Justice Project, a Palestinian organisation in the diaspora, is grounded in struggling against the colonial fragmentation that divides Palestinian exiles and refugees in the United States and our people in the homeland. Our strategy is rooted in the right of return as the cornerstone of full justice and liberation. Everything we do is informed by the material reality in Palestine.**” - Sandra Tamari

“Palestinians are one of the final reminders that a future without colonialism is possible. Right now, we continue to prepare for a future without colonialism while so many powers across the world are preparing for a world without Palestinians. Our presence and persistence reveal a dangerous truth. We are not only a register of love and life in the most precious and precarious of ways, we are a register of what is real. What this genocide proves is how settler colonialism endures in the twenty-first century. Standing up to this terrifying truth, beyond any one category or strategy, our people in Gaza represent the most powerful enactment of enduring love possible today. The fight to end the colonial conquest of our lands and people in Gaza is a fight for the liberation of all peoples.”

- Devin Atallah and Sarah Ihmoud,
[A World Without Palestinians \(2024\)](#)





CHAPTER 5

**FROM MOVING
RESOURCES IN
CRISIS TO MOVING
RESOURCES FOR
LIBERATION**

RESOURCING FRONTLINE RESPONSE OF GIRLS AND YOUNG FEMINIST ACTIVISTS

[Purposeful](#) has resourced girls and young feminists in Palestine, across Gaza and the West Bank since our inception. We are steadfast and unshaken in our political commitment to walking alongside girls' in their struggles for liberation, justice, and dignity. We believe that another world is not only possible, it is already being built right here and now, in the ways that girls are organising with each other, imagining with each other, pushing us all a little further towards liberation. Over the last five years, through the [Global Resilience Fund](#) (GRF), a collaborative feminist fund at Purposeful, centred on resourcing girls and young feminists responding in crisis, we have resourced more than 25 young feminist led groups and organisations across Palestine. Many are unregistered, and all are embedded in their communities, and led by young activists. We have funded with sustained resources, ensuring our support goes beyond the transaction of money to deep solidarity. Many of the groups we have funded share their work and stories in this publication.

We funded girls in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, after the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) launched a military assault campaign on August 5, 2022 in Gaza and after July 3, 2023, when the IOF conducted a major assault on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, and we deepened our support since October 2023. We move flexible and rapid resources to girls and young activists, sometimes within 24 hours, through different channels, and have continued to move money into Gaza based on the needs we are hearing from our grantee partners. We have the intention to continue to resource girls in their resistance and liberation in Palestine for the long term. In the spirit of solidarity and creating a feminist funding ecosystem, we have channelled funds on behalf of other funders with no overheads, where they are struggling to get money in. Beyond the money that continues to be needed, we have a firm commitment to resourcing girls to document their narratives, experiences, and cultural production and preservation. Many are using funds to document crimes against humanity

and the violations they are experiencing. As a funder, we recognise the power and responsibility that comes with moving money. As a way to deepen our accountability to Palestinian young activists, our strategy, and the decisions on resource allocations are driven by Palestinian young feminist advisors in deep relationship and collaboration with our Palestinian team member who leads this work. Even during unspeakable times of crisis, living through what they experience on a daily basis, our advisors show up to ensure resources get to their communities, and to document crimes against them. In the midst of destruction, this work of moving money is an act of solidarity and resistance.

Our work is deeply rooted in the recognition of the violent systems of oppression that girls and young activists are fighting against in Palestine, the same systems that manifest in Sudan, Myanmar, West Papua, and Congo and in crisis contexts across the world. The systemic injustices that have led to brutal oppression and violence, affecting communities worldwide, are intrinsically interconnected. Palestine is not an exceptional case, it embodies and lays bare the different and interconnected systems of oppression and their relentless impacts on girls and young women. When we resource girls and young activists in Palestine, supporting their emergency response is both a political act. It is a liberatory act to fund their demands, and their dreams for liberation, healing, and justice. We work to lift up their interconnected struggles, their revolutionary and radical work, and cultivate support and global south to south solidarity.

And, we see the shameful limitations of what it means to move money, in our inability to stop the violence, in our inability to do more. This moment, more than ever before, has exposed the cracks, the faultlines, the hypocrisy, and the inadequacy of the philanthropic response. Yet, as funders, and as feminists, we will continue to show up and move the money and deepen our solidarity in the ways we know how.

WAKE UP PHILANTHROPY, THE GOAL IS LIBERATION NOT NGO-ISATION!

**A conversation with Soheir Asaad
and Colleen Jankovic of Rawa:
Creative Palestinian Communities
Fund**

Colleen: I've been thinking about conversations we've had about (progressive) philanthropy's relationship to movements. Sometimes the acknowledgement that philanthropy is not the movement is about saying philanthropy shouldn't dictate how people understand their own lived reality, how they resist, and what liberation looks like. But in other ways, the idea that philanthropy is in a separate realm can let philanthropy off the hook— it doesn't have to look at its role and how it has impacted movements. I'm curious what you think about this relationship these days. As a feminist Palestinian activist who's now had different roles in philanthropic spaces, how do you reconcile being "in" philanthropy but not "of" it? And, how are you reflecting right now about how philanthropy is relating to movements, including the Palestinian liberation movement?

Soheir: There is a growing illusion in part of philanthropy - amongst public foundations that support movements or do human rights work - that they are part of the movement and part of the ecosystem of the movement. I think that's very problematic. Philanthropy is and always will be part of the geopolitical dynamics of domination of the Global North's relation to the Global South. It cannot be detached from that, viewed outside, or certainly not seen as a resistant force to those powers. **Even with attempts to shake philanthropy from within, do we see philanthropy disengaging itself from that power and radically transforming or reforming itself by really joining with movements in resisting that power? Or do we instead see philanthropy acting as a force of co-option and taming movements?**

In Palestine, we've seen for many years the impact of philanthropy further eroding our infrastructure for liberation, turning us into a reformist project, furthering the NGO-isation of our liberation movement, including the feminist movement, and fragmenting liberation into "separate projects."

When progressive philanthropy moves into this trend of "centring movements," I don't see it coming from the perspective of questioning its structures and their role within the systems of domination that movements resist. When Rawa and others go to philanthropy spaces and push this conversation of asking funders to invest in independence, decolonisation, and ultimately dismantling philanthropy, we don't see real change in the structures, and we don't see funders taking seriously what we say about harm and accountability. It makes me wonder - what the fuck are we doing here? **When you see your movement language, your discourse, your revolutionary frameworks used by philanthropy -it might be the same terminology, but you don't recognise it. It becomes sterile, too clean, detached from the lived reality and the dynamics on the ground.** As movements, why are so many of us flying around the world to be in these funder spaces - are we seeing deep changes as a result? Are we really decolonising and dismantling philanthropy, or are we providing it with cosmetics - only the words and signs of change, but not the real transformation? And in that way, are we instead actually further empowering this system by letting it co-opt our voices instead of building our own language and space together?

& A

“ The learning I think we want to see is one that cannot be separated from accountability, from philanthropy proactively wanting to shake off the saviour mentality and take a hard look at its mistakes, failings, and harms. And to take ownership of those harms, not to assign failures to movements as if philanthropy is a kind of neutral broker.”

Philanthropy should recognise that it is movements that have to stretch to meet funders' structures. This is backwards. Funders should be stretching hard for movements, shaking their internal structures, risking their own legitimacy, and going outside of their comfort zones. Instead, the movements end up having to stretch for the funder to fit a programme and to deliver outcomes. To keep their funding, the movements end up harmed, changed, tamed, and pulled into the NGO-isation world. If we fall behind these expectations, the fault is our own – we were not “creative” enough, not “productive” enough. We are measured to Orientalist and white supremacist standards.

So, philanthropy apparently wants to hear radical voices on the stages at funder conferences, to clap for us (“or for itself”) for allowing us to speak, feeling good about itself that it is progressive enough to invite us and to use our revolutionary language. But it doesn't want to face what those radical frameworks really mean for philanthropy. So long as things continue this way, the harm of philanthropy is inevitable.

In our work together, you've talked a lot about how challenging it is for Rawa to engage funders on a level of learning, not just learning about what is happening on the ground in Palestine generally, but specifically learning about the impact of philanthropy itself on the Palestinian liberation movement. From my experience, the kind of learning that funders do is often Orientalist – it is a perspective of studying us as Global South subjects so they can better understand how to “help” us. It comes from a saviour mentality.

Colleen: Funders have often come to Rawa after they've already decided to offer funding to Rawa, so the learning conversations, if they come, often come later. And only as part of the pre-defined program for the grant. Sometimes, when a funder has approached Rawa, we've asked right away

to have conversations about their programmes, how they understand Palestine, and their political understanding of the Palestinian struggle for justice and liberation – essential understandings for Rawa to be able to enter a partnership and begin to build a basis for trust. We've been told we first need to become a grantee; these conversations can come later. This is not even just about the learning, but it also skips over relationship and trust-building and the foundation for deep and sustained solidarity.

The learning I think we want to see is one that cannot be separated from accountability, from philanthropy proactively wanting to shake off the saviour mentality and take a hard look at its mistakes, failings, and harms. And to take ownership of those harms, not to assign failures to movements as if philanthropy is a kind of neutral broker. To see that it too has been a force working against movements, and for philanthropy to achieve its stated goals it must be dismantled.

In all the databases of learning that donors have captured from reporting, from various MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) approaches, how much of this documentation truly reflects an ongoing, iterative learning process about philanthropy within the broader landscape? How much of it traces material connections of philanthropy to its historic legacies and ongoing interconnections with imperialism, racialised capitalism, and white supremacy – the very systems it claims to challenge through its grant-making? What will happen if more funders who have decades of experience funding movement partners took on this kind of learning, sharing not just their successes, but also their failures, acknowledging they failed or harmed movements, and how they reflected on those and where they made changes toward at least reducing that “inevitable harm” you talk about?

Soheir: Let's face it, if you as a funder have been funding a movement for decades, your (and other funders') "landscape analysis" better include you. We want to see a particular kind of learning, a self-humbling kind of approach that actually is willing to look at the harm, the deep harm built into the very structures and historical roots of philanthropy and how it accumulates wealth via racialised capitalism and continued domination.

An important message that came from a recent political education series on Palestinian reality for donors was that you don't have to be an expert on Palestine to speak up and stay grounded in solidarity. You should speak and act authentically from your beliefs and from what you know. Philanthropy more broadly can do this, but in a different way—as a funder, you should be an expert on harm caused by philanthropy.

Colleen: Many funders fund in a lot of different geographies and in different areas of work; they should know a lot about how funding can cause harm. But they only know this if they look at it, and only if they see themselves inside the equation, not outside of it. How many ask of their movement funding, not "did the movement succeed or fail," but "did our funding and intervention make the movement stronger? Weaker?" Or, especially seeing extreme examples the last few months of funders using their funding to punish Palestinians

for their resistance, or even just for existing, since even those who have "followed the rules" (like UNRWA) have seen their funding cut, perhaps more honestly we shouldn't ask whether we need philanthropy to achieve liberation, but rather ask: How can we expect liberation if philanthropy is not dismantled?

Soheir: Palestinians are increasingly recognising that harm doesn't solely stem from politically conditioned or unstable project-style funding, nor from funding that is wielded over as a form of domination. We are also thinking more about how the structure and language of funders can also be a source of harm—not theoretical harm, but harm that actually leads to fragmentation, to a distortion of understanding our reality, and that drags us into this world of compliance.

We are expected to comply with a ceiling of what we can say, and to mould our experiences, our trauma, our pain, the violence into the frameworks of the funders, and not our own frameworks. Funders are so far not understanding why Palestinian initiatives are saying no to funding. Apparently, it seems unreasonable and irrational and can be dismissed as us working against the movement and against ourselves. Everyone is shocked if we say no.



“ So, were you listening when you invited us to speak? Were you taking us seriously? Or were you clapping for yourself for simply listening?”

FUNDING CENTRED ON RADICAL FEMINIST SOLIDARITY

As funders, it is imperative that we adopt an approach firmly guided by radical feminist solidarity. This goes beyond conventional, transactional, and surface-level practices that fail to genuinely support systemic solutions. We cannot afford to perpetuate the same cycles of injustice. The world is on fire, demanding a radical reassessment of our strategies. Without a transformative shift and deep commitment to solidarity, our work is useless, and we risk complicity in the very problems we seek to address.

“Feminist movements around the world recognise Palestine as a feminist issue, central to decolonial feminisms and to struggles for justice and liberation. In this context, how do we translate this recognition into impactful action, to stop this massacre and advocate for a free Palestine? We believe it is possible through building resistance across borders, pushing for change, often when avenues for change have been blocked in the traditional spheres of influence. It relies on universal human rights and feminist principles and on feelings of empathy, care, and shared responsibility. Resistance has always been a core strategy of feminist movements around the world. It must continue against all odds.”

- Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)

Now is the time for a bold and transformative change in our approach - one that requires the courage, creativity, and commitment that communities worldwide are calling for. This is radical feminist solidarity, a practice and commitment urgently needed in the immediate and long-term. This imperative shift is particularly crucial in the context of Palestine. As June Jordan wisely said and [Angela Davis](#) echoed, “*Palestine is a moral litmus test for the world.*” It is a liberation effort intrinsically linked to the broader canvas of social justice movements committed to dismantling the interconnected web of systems that perpetuate injustice. This connection goes beyond a mere association; it signifies a profound recognition that injustice knows no boundaries and thrives through systemic connections.

In funding practices, radical feminist solidarity acknowledges the inherent connection between the struggle for Palestinian liberation and broader social issues such as gender equality, women’s rights, Indigenous rights, education rights, racial justice, bodily autonomy, and climate justice. It asserts that Palestinians, especially girls and young Palestinians, are central to dismantling patriarchy, colonialism, and occupation in Palestine and beyond. This section provides a crucial call for radical feminist solidarity and action co-developed by Palestinian girls and young feminist activists and spotlights essential recommendations crafted by Funding Freedom to guide donors in supporting Palestinian Freedom.

PALESTINIAN GIRLS AND YOUNG FEMINIST CALL FOR RADICAL FEMINIST SOLIDARITY AND ACTION

Committed to supporting the grassroots movements in Palestine throughout its struggle for liberation, we have documented essential funder recommendations from Palestinian activists.²⁴ Our goal is to ensure that we are amplifying their needs, demands, and dreams without dilution. Palestinians have already endured decades of oppression, dispossession, violence, and torture. This is our opportunity to learn and show up with radical feminist solidarity and the action which is urgently needed in this moment.



COMMIT TO A LIBERATORY FUNDING PRAXIS

Ensure flexible resources move at the scale and speed needed by Palestinian social justice movements through multiple years of commitment, recognising that systemic change often needs a lot more than a couple thousand dollars of support and extends beyond the typical one to three years of grant terms. Provide support for both short-term efforts in crisis contexts and community-led strategies, facilitating mobilisation for medium and long-term rebuilding and recovery.

“We earnestly appeal to the international community to maintain flexible funding, free from conditions and restrictions. This provides us, as girls, with the space and opportunities to leverage our talents to the fullest. In turn, we can extend our reach to more girls from marginalised and remote areas, involving them in initiatives, activities, and theatrical performances tailored to their needs.” - Inad theatre

“Funders need to build more flexible, inclusive, intersectional, long-term-oriented frameworks that are rooted in the lived realities and voices of women and girls, serving not the survival of Palestinians but genuinely linking their resistance to their future-facing approach to political liberation. Funders should trust funding young feminist unregistered groups and accommodate their various needs in receiving funds, as they are innovatively at the frontline of resistance.” - Anonymous Palestinian activist

“Prioritise funding that adapts to the rapidly changing events and dynamics in the Palestinian context, ensuring that funding continues periodically. And engage in flexible funding with individuals rather than institutions, as funding provided to institutions often does not trickle down to individuals.” - Sehtek B Dehektek

“Donors should adopt a sustainable funding approach that entails providing prolonged assistance to grassroots initiatives. Flexibility in funding with easy application procedures can substantially enhance the sustainability and triumph of these initiatives.”

- Fida' Zanin

“Rethink age-related funding restrictions. When resources are always prioritising “young feminists,” activists above the age of 35 who have shaped their consciousness and journeys at a later age, and are not well-connected to resources and funders, are sidelined and pushed to the margins. The idea of linking funding to individuals under the age of 35 poses an obstacle and is unjust for us, particularly considering our circumstances. Our journey towards feminist liberation has only recently begun, and the ages of some of our group’s members already surpassed 35. To ensure the inclusivity and flexibility of the funding approach, age-related criteria should be reconsidered, with focus on funding intergenerational groups.” - Tajwal

“We encourage funders to support projects and programs that demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to the changing needs of the community and evolving circumstances. We urge funding towards long-term projects that build community capacities and achieve sustainable development that ensures opportunities and participation of women and girls. We also stress the importance of funders adhering to principles of transparency and accountability in their funding process, providing regular and detailed reports on how they moved funds and what their support looked like.” - Al Manar Society



COMMIT TO DEEP-ROOTED RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY

Decades of violent colonial practices have prompted the dehumanisation of Palestinian suffering. Activists and citizens are not victims, nor super powerful people. They are humans longing for full lives free from violence, oppression, expulsion, and all of the injustices endured throughout their lives. Build relationships grounded in trust and genuine solidarity with the Palestinian community, fostering meaningful and consistent opportunities for dialogue and connection.

“As non-Palestinian activists, we urge you not to view us through a condescending or victimising lens nor simply as people under occupation. Although we endure the challenges of occupation and land usurpation, it in no way diminishes our capabilities, potential, aspirations, and talents that the world deserves to acknowledge. We, the girls of our country and society, have much to offer. Our strength, courage, and determination in confronting the occupiers have fostered a resilient spirit that has endured throughout years of conflict. As the saying goes, art emerges from suffering, and for us, it has become a means of resistance. Books chronicling our struggles, poems speaking of the occupier, and plays that illuminate our reality stand as testaments to our rooted presence on our land, like trees deeply rooted in the land. In the words of the Palestinian writer and activist Ghassan Kanafani, ‘In the end, a person is a cause, a question,’ and we are the cause and question that will not fade away.” - Inad Theatre.

“Be bold and intentional about building and sustaining relationships with partners based on trust and solidarity.”

“It is very important for the funder to understand the nature of the country and the place to which the funding is provided because the political, social, and economic conditions differ from one country to another, and this greatly affects the situation of women and girls.” - Tawjeeh Center for Democracy



LEARN, LISTEN, AND SUPPORT PALESTINIANS' NEEDS AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Learn, support, amplify the needs, realities, and voices of Palestinian girls and young feminists activities and their communities, in ways that do not diminish their needs or restrict their expansive visions for change. Ensure their access to decision-making spaces and active participation in conversations. These spaces and platforms support their efforts toward shifting narratives, changing policies, and transforming systems.

“Support organisers in amplifying their voices and concerns on the global platform. Championing policy shifts that target the underlying causes of the Gaza crisis—such as lifting the blockade and ending the occupation—holds the key to radical change.”

- Fida' Zanin, Palestinian activist

“Activists need platforms and spaces to share firsthand what’s happening on the ground from their own feminist perspective. Their response efforts are usually unrecognised and way under-resourced as if there’s a political decision to refrain from nourishing their political vision for liberation.” - Anonymous Palestinian activist

“Organise digital advocacy campaigns to highlight the work of grantee partners, and encourage thematic collaboration among partners from various geographies.”

- The Hope of the Future

“Don’t restrict us in any way. Don’t oblige us to follow any form of structure that you have put in place for us. It feels funny to me when we’re applying for a fund that has to do with any form of liberation movement that we still have to fill out the form that has objectives, outcome, activities, KPIs. I wonder if when Algeria was liberating itself from France it had to think about KPIs ... It feels silly. We are experts in our context.” - Anonymous Palestinian activist



DECOLONISE FUNDING PRACTICES, STRUCTURES, AND SPACES

Supporting the freedom and safety of Palestinians in meaningful ways, rather than merely facilitating short-term survival gains, constitutes a political stance grounded in transnational solidarity. This approach consciously departs from the white supremacy gaze and the perpetuation of colonialism. It means decolonising funding practices, aid structures, spaces, and relationships, placing at the centre the communities most impacted by injustices. They are the experts of their reality. In the humanitarian sector, there persists a significant incorporation of condescending elements and adherence to inherited silos and neocolonial practices that [exacerbate injustices and contribute towards more crises](#).

“Funders must notice power asymmetries in both the traditional multilateral funding landscape and the philanthropic sector, and shift them towards decolonising their spaces, practices, policies, and relationships, promoting anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist collaboration with other actors in the ecosystem and dismantling transactional relationships of funding.” - Anonymous Palestinian activist

“Foreign aid cannot continue to operate in the current ways. While they are convincing Palestinians that they are moving money for them, they are actually monopolising the resources and moving them in ways that serve the colonial and Zionist project to keep Palestinians dependent on restricted money, spaces operating in languages other than Arabic, and transactional relationships with funders - all of which are intended to slow down the liberation project. We have seen how Gaza became a ‘market’ for Israelis to kill people in test modes of new weapons prototypes that sell in millions after each aggression on Gaza.” - Anonymous Palestinian activist

“We are being asked to prioritise project deliverables and requirements at the expense of the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Gaza. We have been told that we should spend the funds in the West Bank instead of Gaza since operating in Gaza is challenging. How are we supposed to turn a blind eye to Gaza? I admit that the West Bank needs attention. Yet in the face of the brutality Gaza is living, we cannot be a priority now.”
- Anonymous Palestinian activist

“Encourage funding initiatives that align with principles of liberation, social justice, and gender equality. Give precedence to projects that centre on systemic transformation and enduring impact.” - Fida' Zanin, Palestinian activist

“If you want to support any work in Palestine, you should acknowledge the colonial regime, and it means that you should also acknowledge our right of resistance. And this is at the core. Because women cannot be free as long as this colonial regime is there.”
- Anonymous Palestinian activist



SUPPORT COLLABORATIONS ACROSS MOVEMENTS AND BORDERS

Support cross-border political learning among movements and liberation struggles, employing movement-building strategies for efficient resource allocation. Activists are currently organising various liberation struggles across Palestine, the diaspora and the world, all stemming from common systems of oppression. Creating opportunities for peer learning and collaboration is key to the richness of bridging lineages, strengthening radical feminist political solidarity, and building sustainable peace for young people and girls.

“Coordinating training sessions and meetings in multiple countries to facilitate the exchange of experiences and broaden horizons for the success of positive change initiatives. It’s important to facilitate networking efforts by activists in Palestine with others across the globe by encouraging dialogue and awareness sessions on positive change and liberation, and sprouting the collective experiences and wisdom of activists from various countries on specific themes.” - The Hope of the Future

“Donors should prioritise enhancing the capabilities of small grassroots initiatives. This backing can materialise through financial resources, training, and mentorship. Involving organisers in the decision-making process ensures that initiatives remain contextually relevant and efficacious. Funders should also facilitate connections between Gaza-based initiatives and analogous groups beyond the region that share parallel experiences. This networking can offer invaluable backing, knowledge exchange, and a sense of solidarity.” - Fida' Zanin

“We invite funders to think of crisis response as a moment in the movement’s work and not in isolation from the general political landscape and context. Response efforts should be co-created through participatory processes, centring girls and young people, and remaining true to their local ownership. We also encourage funders not to internalise the double standards of international justice and respond to cross-regional crises without bias or selectiveness. We have observed response efforts to Palestine and other parts of the region like Syria, Yemen, Sudan, and Libya playing out without the speed and intention needed.” - Anonymous Palestinian activist



RESOURCE AND RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF REPARATORY AND HEALING JUSTICE

Palestinians are enduring multiple layers of generational, chronic, and ongoing trauma. They bravely document their stories and the injustices they face, educate the world about their struggle, and resist oppression, all the while, undergoing brutal violence and oppression. It is crucial that funding for their response efforts and resistance does not overlook the vital need for collective care, both for themselves and their communities. Reparatory and healing justices play a central role in envisioning a radical world for all, advancing political clarity and vision within liberation movements, and collaboratively shaping a future free from the shackles of intersectional and intergenerational trauma.

“Palestinian women still need a lot of support, beyond just financial aid, due to the many aspects that require assistance. Among these is the need for psychological and emotional support, as many Palestinian women are mothers, sisters, or wives of prisoners, injured individuals, or martyrs who have faced immense pressures and responsibilities. Especially if they are the sole breadwinners, they sacrifice their freedom and accept any job opportunity to support their families.” - Al Domari Society

“Extend aid to ensure that women have access to psychosocial counselling both within Gaza and through online services.” - Fida’ Zanin, Palestinian activist

“Focus on providing psychological support for women and children, given the challenging psychological circumstances people in the region are facing.” - Sehtek B Dehktek



HOLD YOURSELF AND THOSE IN POWER ACCOUNTABLE

Use organising practices to weave collaboration across the ecosystem that supports the movement of resources, encourage other actors to reconsider their grantmaking and advocacy practices, and mobilise support for shifting public opinion. All with the goal of ensuring accountability. The culture of impunity currently enjoyed by Israel has allowed its gross violations of human rights in Palestine to persist unchecked. With settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing intensifying, and the ongoing genocide, the imperative for accountability is clear. Partners in Palestine elaborate further on their recommendations for bolstering international political will to achieve sustainable peace in Palestine and dismantle Israel’s military occupation and violence:

“Realising there’s a substantial debate on the possibility and feasibility of sanctions against Israel, especially around the acts of imposing sanctions in a political arena that is shaped by allyships and economic interests, we call on ceasing the fully unconditional aid relationship between Israel and the US and call for revoking the status of tax-exempt US non-profits who move millions of dollars into Zionist colonisation in Palestine. We also

urge foreign policies to de-exceptionalise Israel from their commitment to international justice campaigns, and enshrine the formulation and implementation of sanctions that control Israel's military industry and regulate its weapon trade as the primary military recipient of US tax dollars.

We also demand UK parliamentarians to uphold their ethical standards about the right of Palestinians for freedom and self-determination by opposing the UK anti-BDS bill that shields Israel from accountability.

We call on the free people of the world to pressure their governments to impose a military embargo on Israel and divest from collaborating with military companies such as Elbit. According to Al Haq: "Elbit is an Israeli-based manufacturer of military, security and surveillance equipment. Its surveillance technology is used in Israel's Annexation Wall. Elbit's unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are also documented as being used during West Bank raids, including in the course of arbitrary arrests, as well as "intelligence gathering operations in Gaza." We believe in the power of people. In 2014, Elbit Systems lost a deal with Brazil due to the pressure of social movements, trade unions, student groups, the World March of Women, and more.

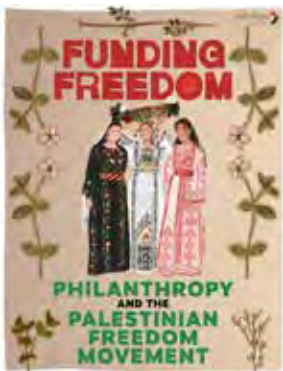
And lastly, we encourage you to look for credible resources of information and facts. The Zionist establishment is constantly countering the narrative of the Indigenous population, aiming to distort and erase our identity, heritage, stories, lived experiences, and relationship with the land and body. You can rely on evidence-based advocacy and documentation carried out by Al Haq human rights organisation, Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement, the Stop the Wall Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, and Visualizing Palestine."

- Joint statement from partners

"The silence on the accountability part is just deafening. When anyone wants to support Palestine, they cannot just send funds, because simply any space or opportunity or resource dedicated to Palestinians will always be missing and short-sighted if it is not accompanied by commitment and actions centring accountability. No matter how progressive any support for Palestine is, if it's not backed up by concrete actions that lead to a thriving process of liberation, then everything is more or less going to fall apart in a matter of time." - Sandie Hanna, Palestinian activist

FUNDER RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT PALESTINIAN FREEDOM

We are at a pivotal moment of growing global awakening, solidarity, mobilisation, and support for Palestinian liberation. The philanthropic sector holds a unique opportunity to be a partner in these efforts if it hopes to meaningfully contribute towards Palestinian human rights and social justice efforts at large. We are bound to fail if we do not meet this moment with the commitment and action it demands.



The [Funding Freedom](#) report, published by [Solidaire Action in 2022](#), offers a crucial analysis of historical and current barriers that have curtailed Palestinian liberation efforts. It also outlines a roadmap to shift and create funding conditions and practices that contribute to the cause of Palestinian freedom. From the report, the [Funding Freedom](#) project has emerged to support the organising needed to drive action towards the recommendations shared in this publication.

Complementary analysis and reflections have been incorporated into the recommendations



BE PREPARED

“At this moment, people in philanthropy, including progressive people in philanthropy, are making a clear choice, which we need to speak about. They’re threatening to cut funds. Some of them are cutting funds, and some of them are re-evaluating their programmes. This is not surprising for any Palestinian. It’s not because of the moment - it’s not new. We always knew that a lot of support in philanthropy was about political subordination of Palestinians for so long. It was about controlling our struggle, telling us what’s legitimate and what’s not legitimate, what is acceptable, and what is out of line - fragmenting our social structures for liberation, encouraging individualism, and killing our ability to struggle together on the ground. We’re not going to die silently. We’re going to power and we are going to struggle. It is the moment for action, it didn’t end. It’s happening right now. And as much as we appreciate praying, as much as we appreciate feelings and sympathy. What we need now is action.”²⁵ - Rawa Fund

- **Anticipate and prepare for pushback:** While many or even most funders do not receive any pushback for their giving to Palestinian and Palestinian solidarity organisations, ensure that you can demonstrate how your donation aligns with your principles. Equip your board and staff (if applicable) with a thorough understanding of the grantee’s work, along with crucial historical and contextual information, to support them to clearly articulate the importance of the funding decision.

“In times of crisis and war, when total and unconditional solidarity with victims and survivors should prevail, we are witnessing an increased criminalisation of solidarity with Palestinians, which weakens all the efforts made by a very wide range of social movements, including feminist movements, to influence their governments and to actually change the course of action and stop the war. We continue to witness how indiscriminate attacks, restrictions and disinformation about what is happening in Gaza have weakened international solidarity with Palestine, and downplayed the sheer scale of destruction and devastation to peoples’ lives. In a context of extreme and increased polarisation of international relations, where most Global North States have lost their credibility over human rights because of their undeniable double standards, the issue of a free Palestine has become a major faultline, and this has and will continue to have dire consequences on world peace and the achievement of human rights for all.”²⁶ - Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)

- **Set principles that apply to all grantmaking:** A clear and consistent set of values for funding decisions is essential for intentional giving that is internally and externally accountable. It provides a consistent baseline, highlights potential inconsistencies in applying commitments to human rights, democracy, freedom, and justice, and contributes to an internationalist solidarity framework which helps in articulating the importance of the funding decision. In the case of Palestine, where fears, stereotypes, pressure, and misinformation can all contribute to reluctance to give, it is an essential tool. If you haven’t already adopted a set of principles, conduct a process to clearly define the values guiding your funding decisions. This can surface any misalignment among stakeholders or between values and actual grantmaking.
- **Build collective power:** Unlock the enormous potential of funders organising - this means uniting with fellow funders to advocate together for shifts in philanthropy and public policy. Collaborate with colleagues and peers to protect and defend organisations under attack, advocate for changes in policy that impact giving to Palestinian and Palestinian support organisations (for example; terrorism designations, anti-BDS laws, the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and charitable tax status for settler organisations), and work to enlarge the circle of donors and funders who will do the same in the immediate and long-term.

“As a giver, if you’re not organised, you’re part of the problem. The most politically powerful model is resource redistribution where people work together in consistent ways as part of a political project. This work is about relationships, making commitments, and most important of all is to communicate clearly. So much of what boards and donors need is emotional fortification. I would love for there to be more public discourse about donors supporting Palestinian liberation.”²⁷ - Sam Jacobs, Jewish individual donor and Resource Generation member



ENGAGE IN DONOR ORGANISING, POLITICAL EDUCATION, AND PEER SUPPORT

In a world where everything is burning, we cannot effectively drive and push forward any change that is sustainable and realistic without collectivising our strategies. As funders, this requires humility and creativity, and a recognition that we must do things differently and move away from this single organisation approach. Systemic oppression works inherently to divide and scatter our work. So the question is how do we keep collective momentum, political education, and community building at the core of our strategies? Purposeful

- **Donor network:** Donors, especially those new to giving in support of Palestinian liberation, need peers to talk to, take courage from, learn with, strategise and exchange resources with, and develop collective practices and work. This can take the form of individual mentorship, informal circles, or established donor organising networks and funder alliances/ communities. Whether through one-on-one mentorship, informal circles, or established networks and alliances, these spaces foster long-term relationships, trust, and deepen commitment. Philanthropic organisations and intermediaries should invest in creating and making accessible these spaces to donors. Donors can support and fund this type of donor organising, complementing and strengthening programmatic work.

“Funding is a political act. It requires learning and accountability to movements. History teaches us that funding that is not based on solidarity and continuous growth can undermine liberation struggles. A commitment to Palestine means understanding the colonial roots of oppression in Palestine and the intersections Palestinian justice has to racial, climate, immigrant, and queer justice. Our work is grounded in the belief that no one is free until everyone is free.” - Adalah Justice Project

- **Invest in political education with an intersectional lens:** In the face of overwhelming Israeli and pro-Israel propaganda and mis-information, it is crucial to invest the time and resources to learn about Palestinian history, the movement for global solidarity, and how it fits in with other movement work and commitments. It is often most effective to do this as part of existing networks. Learn about the history of funding in the sector and the ongoing attempts to repress solidarity with Palestinians and how those methods are being exported to other movements. Hear directly from Palestinians. For foundations and funding networks, make sure staff and board participate in political education, and provide resources in various media for individual donors to learn more and share with their families and communities.
- **Join action-oriented delegations:** Nothing compares to seeing the situation with your own eyes. Create or seek out opportunities to see for yourself, especially with peers. If you are part of a foundation or network, go as a group. Design your itinerary or work with an organisation already partnered with and trusted by Palestinian groups, that prioritises hearing directly from Palestinians and complies with the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel’s (PACBI) Ethical Tourism Guidelines, such as Eyewitness Palestine. Create opportunities for individual and group accountability to take concrete steps and commitments at the end of the trip and beyond.

“Our visit to Palestine last year, part of a delegation we organised, was a profoundly beautiful and painful time in the largely impenetrable coastal enclave. We spoke to people who had lost their entire families during previous Israeli military onslaughts; observed the squeeze of inadequate food, water, and fuel resources; and heard from children who were haunted by the sounds of jets. Of course, we didn’t know then what we know now: that whether Israel/’48, the West Bank, or Gaza, in just a few weeks, Palestine would never be the same. Many of us have since lost friends and colleagues – while Palestinians, especially those in and from Gaza, have lost more than we can imagine. At Grassroots International, we know that the struggle for justice knows no borders. We redouble our commitment to accompany our Palestinian partners through this bleak time of genocide and extreme violence, to call for for a permanent ceasefire, for stopping US military support to Israel, for sufficient humanitarian aid to reach all parts of Gaza, for an end to brutal attacks in the West Bank, and for all parties to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law. We answer the call of Palestinian movements to build the necessary bridges together for long-term solutions that can create the conditions for a just peace – an end to apartheid, and to the processes of settler colonialism and militarised siege.”²⁸

- Grassroots International



COUNTER PHILANTHROPIC HISTORY

“Funding Palestinian activism poses numerous challenges, primarily because many institutional funders receive funds from governments that either restrict or prohibit funding in Palestine. These funders often struggle to provide sufficient funding for initiatives in Palestine, largely due to a lack of understanding of the socio-political situation, the geographical complexities of Palestine and its occupied territories, as well as the dynamics within and across these areas.” - Astraea Foundation

- **Understand roots of distrust for the philanthropic sector:** The philanthropic sector has harmed Palestinians and those in solidarity with them by imposing litmus tests on political positions, chiefly around the willingness to talk about Zionism; it enshrines the fracturing of Palestinian society in its giving practices; it fosters an atmosphere of competition rather than joint action; and it has at times eliminated funding due to political pressure. To repair the harm and support Palestinian freedom, donors should expect that it will take time, willingness to listen, and funding without preconditions to build trust and partnership with organisations that are bringing this history with them.
- **Create opportunities for Palestinian-led organisations:** Palestinian-led organisations, both in Palestine and globally, encounter resource and networking challenges rooted in historical exclusion and the philanthropic legacy mentioned earlier, all stemming from the enduring impacts of colonialism, racism, Islamophobia, and orientalist²⁹ constructs. Palestinian organisations report often being the only Palestinian organisation in the room even when the subject under discussion is their own lives, experiences, and aspirations. To counter this, funders can integrate Palestinian organisations by facilitating introductions, inviting them to speak at events, sponsoring gatherings that highlight their voices, act as a validator for less well-known organisations, ensuring that panels prioritise Palestinian representation, and committing to increase the proportion of your funding allocated to Palestinian-led or Palestinian organisations.

“Centre the voices of the Palestinian movement in advocacy spaces, through deep listening to Palestinian activists in their diversity, including different generations and diverse genders, without making assumptions about their aspirations and struggles. One guiding principle to crises that Global Fund for Women uses is to listen and respect the lived experiences of those closest to the crisis, and then follow their lead.” - Global Fund for Women

- **Caution regarding gatekeeping:** For many decades, organisations, specifically those who are anti-Zionist, have faced formal and informal restrictions in receiving funding. Philanthropy more generally, whether through individual gifts or foundations, relies upon recommendations and introductions from trusted interlocutors. Think about ways to continue to broaden access to potential funders, especially for smaller, less connected organisations. As a funder, consider whom you rely upon for introductions and recommendations, as well as whether they have stated or unstated political litmus tests that are inconsistent with your own values.
- **Accountability:** Devise and share accountability measures and commit to evaluating your progress. Measures of accountability might include the amount of funding committed, the percentage of funding allocated to Palestinian-led organisations, transparency about your process, percentage of funding going to organising/power-building of frontline communities, accessible application and reporting processes, a percentage of gifts going to multi-year gifts, progress toward divestment, etc.

“We are aware of the tactics and tools employed to keep in question the humanity of Palestinians, serving as a means to justify their suffering and sustain their oppression by Zionists. This is directly connected to the lack of funding for Palestinian organisations and efforts. We are deeply committed to being in solidarity and supporting Palestinians who, for decades, have endured oppression and the ongoing violation of their human rights. These challenges are deeply rooted in the legacies of colonialism and the pervasive influence of white supremacy, both of which aim to erase Palestinian lives, lands, and identity. Our current context serves as a clear exhibit of this reality. To dismantle oppression, we need to centre the experiences, strategies, and dreams of those most impacted by injustices. The current context vividly illustrates this reality. To dismantle oppression, we must prioritise and be accountable to the experiences, strategies, and aspirations of those most affected by injustices. The Palestinian communities play a crucial role in this effort. Their liberation is our collective liberation.” - FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund



TAKE CONCRETE ACTION

“As Palestine remains unrecognised and invisibilized, it has been and continues to be critical for Astraea to highlight Palestinian voices and make visible the resilience and strength of Palestinian queer organisers, particularly women, girls and trans people. Hence, funding in Palestine has been a steadfast commitment throughout the existence of the organisation’s International Fund.” - Astraea Foundation

- **Move money:** Funders supporting justice for Palestinians are vastly outspent by those supporting Israeli oppression. If you can contribute more and encourage others to do the same, push yourself to do so. Make multi-year commitments and fund Palestinian-led and/or trusted organisations working with Palestinians. Use movement-centred funding

strategies, make general support grants without preconditions, and support organising and power-building, which are under-resourced across all movements and are the root of fundamental structural change. Create space for organisations to be able to experiment and fail in support of finding long-term tactics and strategies that work.

“Emergency funding is short term, but the crisis is long term. Funders should seek to learn from past processes about how to provide long-term support despite emergency response grants having a short funding term. Funders need to commit to contributing to the enabling, strengthening and sustainability of feminist grassroots movements in order to co-create the community infrastructures needed to collectively heal and rebuild through accompaniment, funding, and beyond.” - Doria Feminist Fund

- **Divestment:** Consider divesting your grantmaking funds from companies that are supporting or profiting from Israeli apartheid. If you are a shareholder, especially a significant one, in a company, pension fund, or other institution that invests in those companies, organise fellow shareholders and advocate for divestment.
- **Be bolder:** Funders hold immense power in matters of discourse, advocating for policies, and setting new norms and standards. Given the barriers facing funding for the Palestinian freedom movement and the ongoing harm to Palestinians, taking risks, especially collectively, can significantly impact philanthropy and its ability to influence conditions on the ground and the potential for liberation.

“We need to shift the way we approach community liberatory work. We have so much to unlearn after all the harm inflicted on us. We want to start the conversation not with ‘How much money do we need from funders?’ but rather, ‘What is our agenda, how do we want to pursue it, and what kind of resources and knowledge do we already have in our community?’ Then we can say, OK, we need larger financial resources to see this bigger vision through, so who wants to support us in solidarity? And can these resources be an ‘investment’ in ending dependency on donors? Would donors be bold enough to strengthen the movement by supporting their own irrelevance? These are the kind of conversations we’ve been having at Rawa for a long time – talking about different ways to shift power to our [Palestinian] hands, to end the fragmentation of our work. Only now we’re having them with many others who are interested in making this change.”³⁰ - Rawa Fund

THIS IS THE RAY

By Hala Shrouf

This is the ray that has kept me alive until now.

I gaze upon the scene from the highest branch of a tree
as I cannot extend that to memory:
The grass is free in the wind's embrace,
The wind is free sweeping over the river's water,
The river is free on its way to land,
The road is free on its own.

I see nature's artistry in its storytelling:
The wind emerges from the wind, leaving behind the echo,
The river emerges from the river, leaving behind pebbles in its bed.

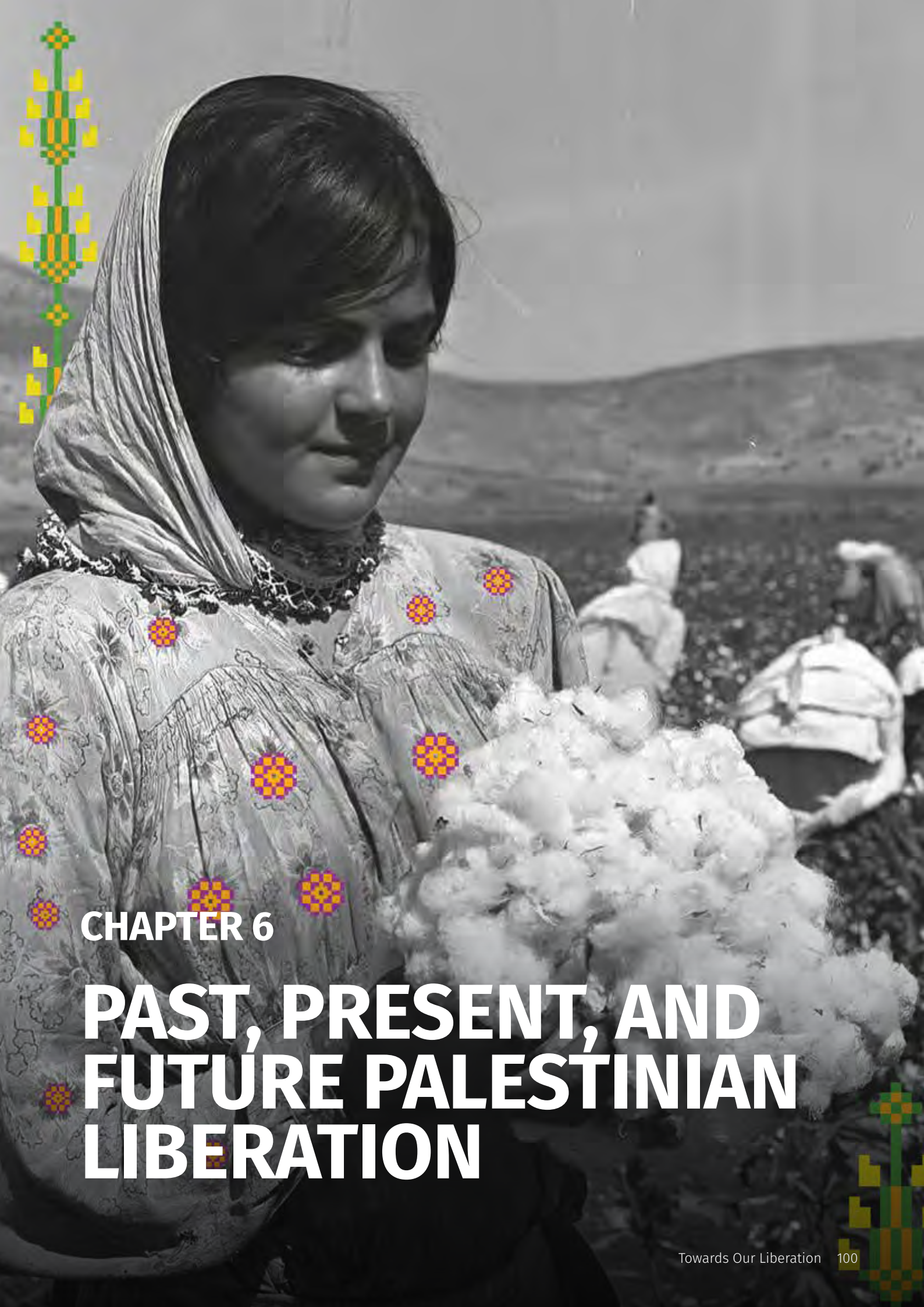
The night emerges from the night, and darkness remains unchanged.
Light emerges from light, and the road stands still.
This is a destination I have never reached:
The starting point of anything.

In the desired places, I said:
I bless you, O distance!
O great creation of the Lord and wisdom,
O temple for the spirit,
O beacon of clarity,
O strength, a corner stone facing the storm's fury,
O solace of a heavy heart.

In the darkest hour of the eternal moments, I said:
I bless you, O darkness,
You veil of angels and their protection.
You, my ladder to the depths of my being.
You, my master of faith.
You, my strength in the raging storm.
You, my lightness in the arm of the fire.

In the moment of killing, of death, I said:
I bless you, O death,
You destination of all beings,
You, barrier in all roads,
You, the release of all souls,
You, a lever for humans to the ultimate Cedar in heavens,
You, a star's way to extinction,
You, the master of all parables.

This is the question that resurrected me in the mountains,
in the form of a majestic woman,
crowning me with a new awareness, a light:
What can I bless you with, O pain, except with harvest?



CHAPTER 6

**PAST, PRESENT, AND
FUTURE PALESTINIAN
LIBERATION**

“ If liberation is just about political education and learning, then it’s not going to get us anywhere. But if we add to that a re-imagined reality, world, possibilities, and we walk together towards that and take action with commitment, love, and political clarity, then this road makes sense.”

- Sandie Hanna, Palestinian feminist activist

Liberation is at the core of peace, safety, and justice. Liberation goes beyond the end of occupation and colonisation. It is grounded in healing, reparations, and honouring of life, land, cultural, and historical identity. Liberation is a constant practice and commitment. It is neither homogeneous nor superficial but instead expansive and profound, guided solely by the wisdom and guidance of the communities with lived and generational experience.

“ As a Dalit feminist, I extend my unwavering solidarity to Palestine. Our struggles may be distinct, yet they are deeply intertwined within the same fabric of resistance against targeted, systemic and intergenerational oppression. We understand the urgency of dismantling the structures that dehumanise and marginalise us, and in doing so, we affirm our solidarity for Palestine’s right to self-determination, freedom, and dignity.”

- Priyanka Samy, Dalit feminist activist, India

The liberation of Palestine is central to every single global social justice issue. It is a reality in which Palestinians return home and celebrate the joys of liberation, enjoy the river and the sea, bask in the beauty of nature, witnessing the flourishing of olive and orange trees. It is a world where children grow up with their families thriving by their side. While the past, present, and future Palestinian liberation is an ongoing effort and commitment, which we do not intend to simplify or underestimate, the insight, analysis, and recommendations shared by Palestinian activists provide a clear roadmap to support ongoing efforts toward the liberation of Palestine.

“ Unless Palestine is free this would continue to be overwhelming for me and my peers in terms of fighting for justice and freedom and within everything that’s going on in the West Bank and Gaza and everywhere in historical Palestine. And the wars ... the constant killing and bombing, it would be very unfair or realistically not sustainable to keep thinking on the personal individual level only, because the dreams and hopes would never be fully achieved unless there’s a sustaining environment that can maintain our dreams.”

- Sandie Hanna, Palestinian feminist activist

“ I believe I’m a person who is fighting for her right as a woman, fighting for her right as a girl, as a Palestinian, and I’m trying to include all of that in my resistance, in my activism. Because I believe we need to literally be free of everything and try to make our lives better.”

- Janna Jihad, Palestinian feminist activist

“ As a Palestinian occupied woman, my resistance is tied to gaining my freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of movement, freedom to wear what you want, freedom to political expression, freedom to your own life choices.”

- Aisha, Palestinian feminist activist

“ Liberation in Palestine is going to the sea. I’ve only been once and I was only 7 years old. I can see the sea from the roof of my house. It is only 30 minutes from my house but I’ve only been to the sea once because of the apartheid wall, because of the checkpoints. Liberation would be to go into my school without a checkpoint, to wake up without seeing the settlement, to have land and to not wake up to the sound of gas canisters. Just having freedom to do whatever I want, as a child, without anything standing in my way. Everything is possible.

Nothing is impossible.”

- Janna Jihad, Palestinian feminist activist



GRATITUDE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This offering was woven together with the wisdom, reflections, and experiences of Palestinians and their allies. Over 30 Palestinian activists and groups, and allies contributed to its co-creation. The process was rooted in the power of documenting moments, spaces, memories, dreams, and strategies of liberation to serve as a tool of resistance, survival, and hope. It is crucial to recognise the brutal pain and violence that Palestinians have endured for decades. Many of the contributors of the publication have had their family and friends

killed, their homes and communities bombed and the Israeli state has turned them into refugees in their own homeland.

Bringing together all of the analysis, reflections, and insights by Palestinian authors and contributors, along with allies, the publication was co-written by Sandie Hanna and Laura Vergara in collaboration with Dr. Tana Forrest. Copy edited by Erin Barnes, Rasmieyh Abdelnabi, and Dr. Tana Forrest. Illustrated by Rand Daboor and designed by Alike Creative.

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[Adalah Justice Project:](#) A Palestinian-led advocacy organisation based in the US that builds cross-movement coalitions to achieve collective liberation. Our work is rooted in the conviction that drawing the linkages between US policy abroad and repressive state practices at home is crucial to shifting the balance of power.

[Al Domari Society:](#) Provides vocational training to raise awareness and generate opportunities for women and girls in Shu'fat. They focus on providing vocational education, particularly for those who haven't completed their primary or higher education.

[Al Manar Society:](#) A women and advocates for women's rights organisation forming specialised groups and task forces that operate in various fields, including child protection, women's empowerment, psychological and social support, awareness and education, and facilitating women's access to education, among others.

[Amal Al-Mustaqbal/The Hope of Tomorrow in Gaza:](#) Engages young women through theatre and performance to emphasise the importance of reflecting on their realities and the circumstances around them that impact how they build bridges and enjoy their rights and freedoms.

[Baladna Arab Youth Association:](#) Baladna was founded by a group of young Palestinians committed to advancing the social, political, cultural, and economic rights of the Arab Palestinian youth in the occupied territories of 1948. It is a non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering youth to overcome discrimination and marginalisation while advancing their individual and collective rights.



Decolonize Palestine: a collection of resources for organisers and anyone who wants to learn more about Palestine developed by two Palestinians.

Gaza Boxing Women: As the very first women's boxing club in the Gaza Strip, it is dedicated to empowering young girls and women across Gaza through boxing.

Gaza English Coffee: Creates spaces for girls to learn English and to strengthen their confidence.

Inad Theatre in Bethlehem: A girl-led group emerged to create safe spaces for girls, especially girls with disabilities, and offer them platforms to raise their voices and lead peer-learning efforts.

Sehtek B Dehktek (Your Well-Being in Your Laughter): A feminist collective of young women aged 22 to 30 in the Gaza Strip that addresses mental health among women and girls, particularly in the city of Rafah in the southern part of the Gaza Strip.

Psychology Spa: The first specialised non-profit company in Psychoeducation in Palestine since 2016. Psychology spa is a place where groups meet to learn, discuss, share, and seek ways to gain psychological knowledge.

SHAMS Dance Company: A Palestinian community organisation that seeks to create inspirational art. The group runs yoga, dance and body movement classes for women, adolescents, and children; produces dance shows; and coordinates community projects in the West Bank.

Siper Women: A feminist collective in the Rafah Governorate in the Gaza Strip dedicated to strengthening young women's awareness of digital advocacy and supporting them to navigate online platforms for self-expression safely.

Tajwal Artistic Group in Gaza: Provides therapeutic sessions for young women to share their personal stories, engage in community, offer reciprocal support and compassion, and retell their stories through theatrical performances.

Tawjeeh Center for Democracy: Committed to promoting and upholding social justice and peace through human rights education and advocacy.

Rawa Fund: A Palestinian initiative working to strengthen an emancipatory, resilient Palestinian social ecosystem capable of resisting the Israeli colonial regime. Rawa supports generative spaces for Palestinian grassroots initiatives to envision and bring forth this vision, including through participatory grantmaking across historic Palestine. Rawa promotes solidarity and support of Palestinian self-determination and independence from donor conditions through trust-based partnerships and awareness of (and accountability for) historical harms of funding.

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Adi Magazine: A new US-based literary journal rehumanizing policy. Through narrative journalism, experimental essays, fiction, poetry, commentary, and art, Adi celebrates the conversations often marginalised from mainstream Western debates on policy, creating a space for nuanced exploration and insisting that policy reflects lived experiences.

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice: A public foundation rooted in LGBTQI+ communities and movements. Astraea raises and distributes funds to programs and initiatives led by and for diverse constituencies, prioritising groups led by lesbians and queer women, trans and gender non-conforming people, intersex people, and people of colour.

Association for Women's Rights in Development

(AWID): A global, feminist, membership, movement-support organisation. AWID envisions a world where feminist realities flourish, where resources and power are shared in ways that enable everyone, and future generations, to thrive and realise their full potential with dignity, love and respect, and where Earth nurtures life in all its diversity.

Doria Feminist Fund: A feminist fund seeking to create a feminist ecosystem where the new generation of feminist movement in the MENA region has access to more and better funding and resources which enables the development and sustainability of its activism to advance the rights, wellbeing and security of all women & LGBTQ+ individuals and groups.

FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund: A young feminist fund providing young feminist organisers with the resources they need to amplify their voices and bring attention to the social justice issues they care about. We enable the support, flexibility and networks to sustain young feminist visions.

Funding Freedom: An organisation building solidarity and support for Palestinian freedom through education, advocacy, communications in philanthropy, with a focus on individual donors, donor networks, and family foundations.

Global Fund for Women: A feminist fund offering flexible feminist funding and support to fuel collective action and create meaningful change that will last beyond our lifetimes. Global Fund for Women envisions a world where movements for gender justice have transformed power and privilege for a few into equity and equality for all.

Global Resilience Fund: A collaborative feminist fund working with and for girls and young feminists impacted by and responding to crises. The Fund brings together a diverse set of funders and activists from across the social justice ecosystem, including womens funds and feminist funders, UN agencies, public, private and family foundations, and NGOs.

Grassroots International: A global grantmaking and movement support organisation. We accompany, fund, and work in solidarity with movements, predominantly in the Global South and the US, on the frontlines of change. Grassroots International has a 40-year history of funding movements in Palestine. For donors, Grassroots International has regular delegations to Palestine, and has a Philanthropy and the Palestinian Freedom Movement Donor Engagement Group practicum that is a model in the field.

INCITE! Palestine Force: A global taskforce comprised of former co-leaders of INCITE!'s antiwar task force and Palestine solidarity work.

Jewish Voices for Peace: As the largest progressive Jewish anti-Zionist organisation in the world, Jewish Voices for Peace organises a grassroots, multiracial, cross-class, intergenerational movement of the US Jews into solidarity with the Palestinian freedom struggle, guided by a vision of justice, equality, and dignity for all people.

Purposeful: An Africa-rooted global hub for girls' organising and activism. We believe that another world is not only possible, it is already being built right here and now, in the ways that girls are organising with each other, imagining with each other, pushing us all a little further towards liberation.

Regional Coalition of WHRDs in the Middle East and North Africa: A coalition of defenders in the Middle East and North Africa Region which aims at consolidating ways to protect the defenders in the public sector, shedding light on the violations against them, as well as offer support systems through advocacy, sharing experiences, knowledge, activities, and the production of knowledge and positive arrangements to challenge the culture of patriarchy and the hegemonic masculinity and discrimination against women in the different societies, as well as provide safe spaces to do that.

Young Feminist Solidarity with Palestine: A global coalition of young feminist activists from across the world committed toward the liberation of Palestine and all oppressed people.



RESOURCES

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

[The Nakba - a Zionist Strategy to expel Palestinians](#)

[Nakba-Archive](#)

[The Nakba: Five Palestinian towns massacred 75 years ago](#)

[The Palestine Academy](#) is a digital space about Palestine to reclaim the Palestinian narrative.

[The Palestinian Nakba: What Happened in 1948 and Why It Still Matters](#)

[Understanding Palestine: Online course developed by Makan to provide a cohesive and complete story of Palestine through the lens of history, identity, and politics.](#)

[Until Liberation: A Series for Palestine](#) focused on providing education in the context of current events

[“Zionism and Imperialism: The Historical Origins,”](#) by Abdul-Wahab Kayyali, Journal of Palestine Studies, 1977

CURRENT CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

[BJC- Occupation of the senses](#) by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

[Colonial Necrocapitalism](#) by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

[Criminality in Spaces of Death- BJC](#) by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

[Curriculum on Antisemitism](#) by PARCEO

[Gaza is Palestine](#) by Adalah Justice Project and MPower Change

[On Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism and Dangerous Conflations](#) by Jewish Voices for Peace

[Terrorism and the Birthing Body in Jerusalem](#) by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

[Ten Myths About Israel by Ilan Pappé \(Free e-book\)](#)

[The Myths of Liberal Zionism](#) by Yitzhak Laor

[Unchilding and the Killing Boxes](#) by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

ة نوي هصل لة لاه إلو او سدق ل

[Israelism documentary](#) by Simone Zimmerman and Eitan

ORGANISING, DATA, AND TAKING ACTION

[All Out for Palestine – Digital Action Toolkit](#) by Palestinian Feminist Collective

[Curriculum On Antisemitism From A Framework Of Collective Liberation](#) by PARCEO

[Funding Freedom: Philanthropy and the Palestinian Freedom Movement](#) report by Funding Palestinian Freedom

[Take Action](#) by Jewish Voices for Peace

[Visualizing Palestine](#) 101 is a data-led visual resource and educational hub for people learning and teaching about Palestine.

[What is Boycott, Divestments, Sanctions](#) by the BDS movement.



GLOSSARY

Language shapes the narratives that define our understanding of the world. These narratives have far-reaching implications, influencing the larger context, guiding policy and funding decisions, and permeating every aspect of society. In recognition of its critical role as a political imperative and an instrument to dismantling systemic injustices entrenched in the very fibers of the language that has been used for colonisation and oppression, we have curated and drafted this glossary to offer clear definitions for key terms across the publication.

Given the constantly rapid shifts in the political landscape in Palestine, we encourage you to revisit the terms included below for an up-to-date and broader political engagement with facts, narratives, and variables in the history of Palestine. Applying an intersectional, decolonial, and feminist critical lens to this reading will invigorate your understanding of oppression and resistance in Palestine and across the world.

A

Administrative Detention: “Administrative detention is incarceration without charge or trial, on the premise that a person plans to commit a future offense. It has no time limit, and the evidence on which it is based is not disclosed. The Israeli military court system employs this measure extensively and routinely, and has used it to hold thousands of Palestinians for lengthy periods of time. Although an appeal process nominally exists, detainees cannot reasonably mount a defence against undisclosed allegations.”

Apartheid: Apartheid—an Afrikaans word meaning “separateness” (or literally “apart-hood”)—was the name given to the system of racial segregation and discrimination against indigenous African and other non-white populations in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. To outlaw similar regimes, the “crime of apartheid” is defined in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as “inhumane acts [...] committed in the context of an

institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime.” Israeli policies and practices against Palestinians have been widely compared to South African apartheid, while experts including UN Special Rapporteurs John Dugard and Richard Falk have both suggested that Israel’s system could meet the definition of the crime of apartheid.

Areas A, B, C: The Oslo Accords divided the Palestinian West Bank into three administrative zones: Area A (18%), where the Palestinian Authority (PA) administers civil and security matters; Area B (22%), where the PA administers only civil matters; and Area C (60%) where Israel maintains full control. Area C includes all Israeli settlements and two thirds of the West Bank’s fertile agricultural land. While Area C is a continuous territory, Areas A and B are fragmented into 166 separate enclaves. In spite of the breakdown of the Oslo process, Areas A, B and C remain in force today.

B

Bedouins: Indigenous Palestinian communities whose ancestral land is the Naqab.

British Mandate: “The Mandate system was established by the League of Nations in 1919 for victorious powers of the First World War to administer conquered territories towards independent self-rule. The British Mandate for Palestine—which formally came into force in July 1922 and ended in May 1948—was complicated by its adherence to the Balfour Declaration, followed by the contradictory statement that “nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

C

Colonial/Colonialism: The term “colonial” is derived from “colonialism,” which signifies a system of oppression and domination imposed upon a group of people, their land, and resources, with the primary aim of dispossession, exploitation, control, and erasure. This oppressive practice has been used to claim control and rule over many people, their land, and resources across the world. Colonisers often use laws, policies, principles, and agreements made by them or other colonial powers to legitimise their colonial efforts. Historically and in the present context, colonialism has led to devastating consequences, including genocide and apartheid.

D

Depoliticized: strategies employed by oppressive states and systems to create an illusion of “neutrality,” ultimately aiming to preserve economic, political, and social control. This tactic is employed to undermine activism, resistance, and organising efforts rooted in political agendas for societal transformation. Originally termed an “anti-politics machine,” it has been implemented globally. Depoliticization typically involves stifling dissent, restricting civic spaces, and disincentivizing or criminalising political participation.

Diaspora: Used here to refer to the majority of people and communities across the world who have left their home countries out of necessity rather than choice, often making it the sole option for survival. The contexts that have given rise to these realities are deeply entrenched in the legacies of systemic injustices. In the context of Palestine, this is starkly evident, as the [occupation and oppression have resulted in the widespread forced displacement and exile of Palestinians](#). Within this analysis and context, reference to the diaspora encompasses all Palestinians living outside of Palestine.

E

Ethnic cleansing: “A purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.”

Extrajudicial Killing: “or extrajudicial executions, happen when someone in an official position deliberately kills a person without any legal process. Such arbitrary deprivations of life, which can also be carried out by militias, death squads or other non-State actors, often target political opponents, activists, or marginalised groups.”

F

Fascism: “Fascism is a form of extreme right-wing ideology that celebrates the nation or the race as an organic community transcending all other loyalties. It emphasises a myth of national or racial rebirth after a period of decline or destruction. To this end, fascism calls for a “spiritual revolution” against signs of moral decay such as individualism and materialism, and seeks to purge “alien” forces and groups that threaten the organic community. Fascism tends to celebrate masculinity, youth, mystical unity, and the regenerative power of violence.”

Forced Displacement: “Forced displacement, or forced transfer, refers to the movement of individuals or a population against their will. Article 8 of the Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court states that “the deportation or transfer [by the Occupying Power] of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside [the territory it occupies]” is a war crime. Forced transfer is also outlawed under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is estimated that almost two thirds of all Palestinians worldwide are refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of forced displacement by the State of Israel and/or during its creation in the Nakba.”

G

Genocide: “In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”

Greenwashing: A performative practice falsely representing work to support climate justice and environmental efforts, which has a deep-rooted history of diverting attention from actual harm being inflicted. This practice has been used by colonial and imperialist powers to exploit communities who are rightfully the stewards of their resource-rich lands. The context of Israeli settler colonialism in Palestine serves as both a contemporary and historical illustration of greenwashing that pushes forward green colonialism.

Green Line: “A term that emerged in the wake of Israel’s establishment in 1948, whose proper name is the 1949 Armistice Line. It refers to the border separating pre-1967 Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and constitutes an internationally recognised border. However, it is important to note that Israel has never specified the boundaries of its own state.”

H

Historic Palestine: “A term used to refer to the whole territory defined by the British Mandate of Palestine, comprising of present-day Israel and the occupied Palestinian Gaza Strip and West Bank, but not including the Syrian Golan Heights.”

Humanitarian-industrial complex: “the undemocratic, top-down, siloed, and centralised control of power and wealth in the humanitarian sector to maintain socio-political and economic leverage.”

I

First Intifada: “The First Intifada was a Palestinian mass resistance movement that lasted from 9th December 1987 until 13th September 1993. After four Palestinian men were run over by an Israeli jeep outside of Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza on 8th December 1987, grassroots protests against twenty years of Israeli occupation and subjugation of Palestinians broke out in Palestinian refugee camps and eventually spread across the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).”


Second Intifada: “The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, lasted from 28th September 2000 to 8th February 2005. This second mass resistance movement against the Israeli occupation was sparked by then-candidate for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque.”

K

Key to Return: “When 700,000 Palestinians fled from or were thrown out of their homes during the Nakba in 1948, they took their house keys with them, convinced that they would come back after a week or two and re-open their front doors. The keys have been passed on from generation to generation as a reminder of their lost homes and as lasting symbols of their ‘right of return.’ The Palestinian right of return or compensation was internationally recognised by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, adopted on 11 December 1948.”

N

Nakba: “The Nakba—meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic—generally refers to the [forced displacement] of over 800,000 Palestinians and depopulation of 500+ Palestinian towns and villages before and after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. This mass displacement is described as “ethnic cleansing” by academics including Israeli historian Ilan Pappé. In fact,



forced displacement of Palestinians began during the British Mandate period, while many refer to an “ongoing Nakba” to describe the continuing displacement of Palestinians by the Israeli state up to the present day. Today an estimated half of all Palestinians around the world are descended from those displaced in the Nakba, and are denied the [right to return] by Israel.”

O

Occupation: “According to Article 42 of Hague Convention (IV) “[t]erritory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army.” The civilian populations of occupied territories are protected by international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL). In the context of Palestine/ Israel, “the occupation” refers to the Israeli regime of control over the Palestinian and Syrian territories it has occupied since the Naksa (1967 war). In law, occupation is assumed to be a temporary situation, and the occupying power is not permitted to actions that would change the political or demographic status of a territory, as Israel has attempted to do through its annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and through its construction of illegal settlements.”

Occupied Palestinian Territory(ies): “Areas of historic Palestine occupied by the state of Israel in June 1967 (i.e. the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem). They comprise approximately 22 percent of the land of Palestine, which was controlled by the British Mandate authorities prior to 1948.”

Orientalism: A groundbreaking conceptual framework, developed by Palestinian academic and activist Edward Said, that “sheds light on the underlying structures of power, knowledge, hegemony, culture, and imperialism that have been historically embedded in what Said was called “colonial discourse” - a discourse that presents the Orient as the Other.” Through politics guided by Orientalism, the West developed systems to uphold the Orient in ways that “controlled and managed it through a hegemony of power

relations, working through tropes, images and representations of literature, art, visual media, film, and travel writing, among other aspects of cultural and political appropriation.”

P


Palestinian Authority: A governing body that has overseen parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank since the mid-'90s. Its creation was supposed to pave the way to an independent Palestinian state, but today it is considered to have little real power and is operating under the control of the Israeli military.

Palestine Liberation Organization: “With the proclaimed aim of the “liberation of Palestine” through armed struggle, in part by acting as an umbrella political organisation to centralise the leadership of various Palestinian groups. The Arab defeat in the 1967 War enabled the PLO to forge a more independent path from Arab states. In 1974, the PLO was recognised by the Arab Summit as the “sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” (and many other states around the world went on to recognise this status). Since then the PLO has represented Palestine at the United Nations.”

Pinkwashing: “Pinkwashing is a deliberate strategy used by Israel’s government, agencies, and the Israeli LGBT community to exploit Israel’s relatively progressive stance on gay rights, and to deflect international attention from its gross violations of human rights and international law.”

R

Resistance: Individual and collective political action and efforts seeking to dismantle systems of oppression, such as colonialism, imperialism, white-supremacy, patriarchy, and ableism. Resistance as a liberation strategy has been led by and grounded in the experiences and wisdom of communities and people across the world who have endured oppression, violence, exploitation, and silencing. Thus, the very existence of those who resist - their self-determination and autonomy -



is a form of resistance as the main objective of systems of oppression is to dominate and erase their existence.

Revolutionary love ethic: An intersectional political framework grounded in collective liberation and freedom. This framework arises from the resistance, dreams, organising, and pain experienced by racialized and oppressed communities who, despite systemic injustice, envision realities where liberation is attainable for all. It is the commitment and conviction that change is possible through individual and mutual solidarity and accountability. As bell hooks reminds us in [Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations](#): “The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others.”

Right of Return and UN Resolution 1948: In the aftermath of the displacement around 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees remained in refugee camps, waiting to return home. [The United Nations issued Resolution 194 in December 1948](#), stipulating that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.” The Right of Return is intrinsic to the liberation and cause of Palestine.

S

Settler Colonialism: “A distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of Indigenous populations with a settler society that, over time, develops its own distinctive identity and sovereignty. The Zionist settler colonisation of Palestine has been widely compared to settler colonialism in the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa and elsewhere.”

W

West Bank and Gaza: “As the Zionists continued their ethnic cleansing campaign against the Palestinians, war broke out between neighbouring Arab countries and the new Zionist state. The UN appointed Swedish diplomat Folke Bernadotte, as its mediator to Palestine. He recognised the plight of the Palestinians and attempted to address their suffering. His efforts to bring about a peaceful solution and halt the ongoing ethnic cleansing campaign ended when he was assassinated by the Zionists in September 1948. By 1949, over 700,000 Palestinians had been made refugees, and more than 13,000 had been killed by the Israeli military. The UN continued to push for an armistice deal between Israel and those Arab countries with whom it was at war. Bernadotte was replaced by his American deputy, Ralph Bunche. Negotiations led by Bunche between Israel and the Arab states resulted in the latter conceding even more Palestinian land to the newly founded Zionist state. In May 1949, Israel was admitted to the UN and its grip over 78 percent of historic Palestine was consolidated. The remaining 22 percent became known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.”

Z

Zionism: “Historically, Zionism was a settler colonial political ideology and movement that emerged in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century with the aim of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine at a time when over 90% of the population was not Jewish. Today, the term Zionism describes a spectrum of political ideologies that have in common the support for the continued existence of the present-day State of Israel as a Jewish state.” As [Jewish Voices for Peace](#) describes: “Palestinian dispossession and occupation are by design. Zionism has meant profound trauma for generations, systematically separating Palestinians from their homes, land, and each other. Zionism, in practice, has resulted in massacres of Palestinian people, ancient villages and olive groves destroyed, families who live just a mile away from each other separated by checkpoints and walls, and children holding onto the keys of the homes from which their grandparents were forcibly exiled.”

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END NOTES

1. Settler Colonialism: [“A distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of Indigenous populations with a settler society that, over time, develops its own distinctive identity and sovereignty.”](#)
2. Resistance: Individual and collective political action and efforts seeking to dismantle systems of oppression, such as colonialism, imperialism, white-supremacy, patriarchy, and ableism. Resistance, as a liberation strategy, has been led by and grounded in the experiences and wisdom of communities and people across the world who have endured oppression, violence, exploitation, and silencing. Thus, the very existence of those who resist - their self-determination and autonomy - is a form of resistance as the main objective of systems of oppression is to dominate and erase their existence.
3. Diaspora: Used here to refer to the majority of people and communities across the world who have left their home countries out of necessity rather than choice, often making it the sole option for survival. The contexts that have given rise to these realities are deeply entrenched in the legacies of systemic and colonial injustices. In the context of Palestine, this is starkly evident, as the [occupation and oppression have resulted in the widespread forced displacement and exile of Palestinians](#). Within this analysis and context, reference to the diaspora encompasses all Palestinians living outside of Palestine.
4. Janna Jihad, a Palestinian activist, is featured in the *Palestinian Girls’ Resistance: Towards Our Liberation* publication. Although her story was documented in 2019, its resounding relevance persists just as strongly today. Visit [TowardsOurLiberation.org](#) to read her story and to explore the entire publication.
5. [Zionism](#): As stated by Jewish Voice for Peace: “Historically, Zionism was a settler colonial political ideology and movement that emerged in [Europe at the end of the nineteenth century with the aim of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine at a time when over 90% of the population was not Jewish](#). Today, the term Zionism describes a spectrum of political ideologies that have in common the support for the continued existence of the present-day State of Israel as a Jewish state. Palestinian dispossession and occupation are by design. Zionism has meant profound trauma for generations, systematically separating Palestinians from their homes, land, and each other. Zionism, in practice, has resulted in massacres of Palestinian people, ancient villages and olive groves destroyed, families who live just a mile away from each other separated by checkpoints and walls, and children holding onto the keys of the homes from which their grandparents were forcibly exiled.”
6. Dreams of children in Gaza, documented in 2021 by Mohannad Abu Rizk. [Click here to watch the video and explore the full series.](#)
7. Fayez Sayegh, [“Zionist Colonialism in Palestine \(1965\),”](#) Settler Colonial Studies 2, no. 1 (2012): 224-25.
8. Revolutionary love ethic: An intersectional political framework grounded in collective liberation and freedom. This framework arises from the resistance, dreams, organising, and pain experienced by racialised and oppressed communities who, despite systemic injustice, envision realities where liberation is attainable for all. It is the commitment and conviction that change is possible through individual and mutual solidarity and accountability. As bell hooks reminds us in [Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations](#): “The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others” (2006:250).
9. Colonial: The term ‘colonial’ is derived from ‘colonialism,’ which signifies a system of oppression and domination imposed upon a group of people, their land and resources, with the primary aim of exploitation, control and erasure. This oppressive practice has been used to claim control and rule over many people, their land and resources across the world. Colonisers often use laws, policies, principles, and agreements made by them or other colonial powers to legitimise their colonial efforts. Historically and in the present context, colonialism has led to devastating consequences, including genocide and apartheid.
10. Israeli policies and practices against Palestinians have been widely compared to South African apartheid, while experts including UN special rapporteurs John Dugard and Richard Falk, have both suggested that Israel’s system could meet the definition of the crime of apartheid. These claims have received additional support from investigations and assessments conducted by organisations such as [Human Rights Watch](#), [Harvard Law School in collaboration with Addameer](#), [B’Tselem](#), and [Amnesty International](#).
11. Depoliticized: strategies employed by oppressive states and systems to create an illusion of “neutrality,” ultimately aiming to preserve economic, political, and social control. This tactic is employed to undermine activism, resistance, and organising efforts rooted in political agendas for societal transformation. Originally termed an “anti-politics



machine,” it has been implemented globally. [Depoliticization typically involves stifling dissent, restricting civic spaces, and disincentivizing or criminalising political participation.](#)

12. [Excerpt from the original video published by Rawa Fund from the Edge Funders Alliance conference.](#)
13. Sandie Hanna, a Palestinian activist, is featured in the Palestinian Girls’ Resistance: Towards Our Liberation publication. Although her story was documented in 2019, its resounding relevance persists as strongly today. Visit [TowardsOurLiberation.org](#) to read her story and to explore the entire publication.
14. The term Nakba was used in 1948 to describe the massive forced displacement and dispossession that occurred, but during the genocide in Gaza, [Israeli officials](#) have been using the term to describe their goals for Gaza. [Experts also argue](#) that what is happening in Gaza is comparable to what happened in 1948.
15. Excerpt from an article originally published on the Jewish Voice for Peace website. [Click here to read the full piece.](#)
16. [“Hasbara,” officially translated from Hebrew as “public explanation” but more usually meaning propaganda. That includes not only government public relations work but more secretive dealings the Israel occupation ministry has with a battery of private organisations and initiatives that promote Israel’s image in print, on TV and online.](#)
17. Greenwashing: A performative practice falsely representing work to support climate justice and environmental efforts, which has a deep-rooted history of diverting attention from actual harm being inflicted. This practice has been used by colonial and imperialist powers to exploit communities who are rightfully the stewards of their resource-rich lands. The context of Israeli settler colonialism in Palestine serves as both a contemporary and historical illustration of greenwashing that pushes forward green colonialism.
18. This quote was originally published in Adi Magazine, a contributor and partner of this publication. [Click here to read the full piece](#) and the accompanying pictures and [here to explore the Adi Magazine’s Palestinian perspective issue.](#)
19. [Humanitarian-industrial complex](#): the undemocratic, top-down, siloed, and centralised control of power and wealth in the humanitarian sector to maintain socio-political and economic leverage.
20. This section was written before October 2023; nonetheless, it effectively outlines the systemic injustices endured by Palestinians in Gaza and the consistent inhumane treatment they have faced from Israeli occupation forces.
21. Bedouins: Indigenous Palestinian communities whose ancestral land is the Naqab.
22. [Green Line](#): A term that emerged in the wake of Israel’s establishment in 1948, whose proper name is the 1949 Armistice Line. It refers to the border separating pre-1967 Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and constitutes an internationally recognised border. However, it is important to note that Israel has never specified the boundaries of its own state.
23. “To Live Free” was originally published in Adi Magazine, a contributor and partner of Towards Our Liberation. [Click here](#) to read the full piece and the accompanying pictures and [here to explore the Adi Magazine’s Palestinian perspective issue.](#)
24. These recommendations were documented prior to October 2023. Nevertheless, they remain a vital roadmap for radical feminist solidarity and action in the present moment.
25. [Excerpt from the original video published by Rawa Fund from Edge Funders Alliance conference.](#)
26. [Excerpt from the original video published by Rawa Fund from Edge Funders Alliance conference.](#)
27. [Quote originally published in Funding Freedom: Philanthropy and the Palestinian Freedom Movement report.](#)
28. [Adapted quote from a piece originally published in November 2023.](#)
29. Orientalism: A groundbreaking conceptual framework developed by Edward Said that [“sheds light on the underlying structures of power, knowledge, hegemony, culture, and imperialism that have been historically embedded in what Said has called “colonial discourse” - a discourse that presents the Orient as the Other.”](#) Through politics guided by [Orientalism, the West developed systems to uphold the Orient in ways that “controlled and managed it through a hegemony of power relations, working through tropes, images and representations of literature, art, visual media, film, and travel writing, among other aspects of cultural and political appropriation.”](#)
30. [Excerpt from an interview with Soheir Asaad originally published on Proximate.](#)
31. As a security precaution, some contributors opted to remain anonymous. We want to express our gratitude and recognise the wisdom, experience, and analysis that they contributed to this publication and collective effort.

TOWARDS OUR LIBERATION

**Palestinian Girls and Young Feminists
Weaving Resistance and Hope**



This publication is an ode to past, present, and future Palestinian girls and young feminists. It is an offering, an invitation, and a call to action to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and recognise its central role in our collective liberation.

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