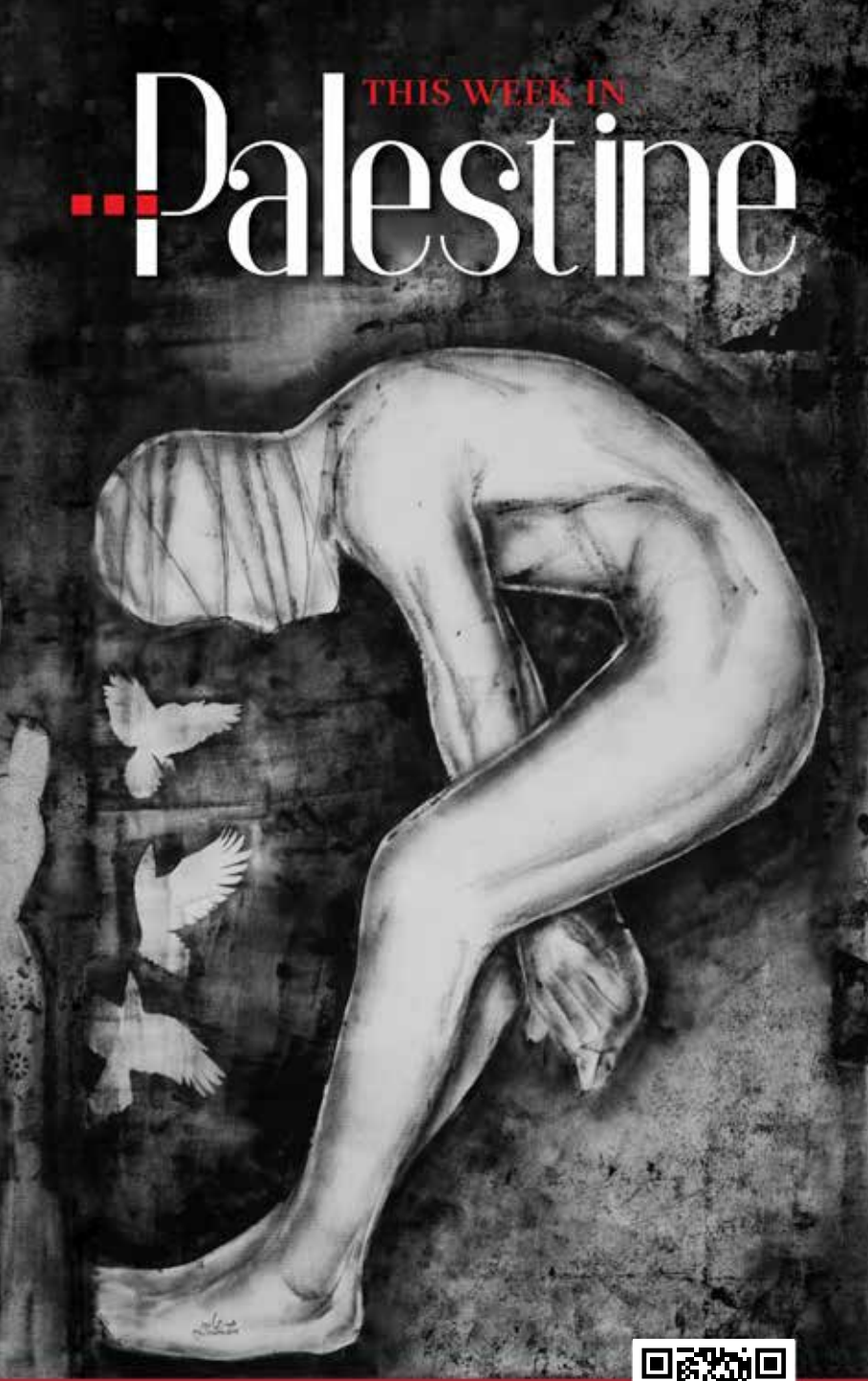
THIS WEEK IN Palestine



Issue 311 | March 2024

The Day After: Open Issue on Gaza II

SCAN TO SHARE



Cover: Detail of artwork *Forgotten Souls* by Gazan artist Maisara Baroud.

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Message from the Editor

It has been a pleasure to guest-edit this issue of *TWiP*. It was an honor to fill in for Tina Basem, *TWiP*'s longtime and wizardly content editor who needed a break, and when Sani approached me to fill in for her, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to do something, however small and insignificant, to help raise and amplify Palestinian voices.

As I write these words, the last ten days have been marked by what has become known as Gaza's Flour Massacre, as well as the self-immolation of a brave US Air Force serviceman, Aaron Bushnell, in Washington DC, and the International Court of Justice in the Hague heard the masterful intervention of Ralph Wilde on the legal consequences of the Israeli occupation. The month of March is also one of fasting, prayer, and repentance for Muslims everywhere and for the Christians who will celebrate Easter on March 31.

The chant CEASEFIRE NOW continues to reverberate throughout the globe. People in Gaza are still holding their breath for a cessation of hostilities, be it a halt, truce, humanitarian pause, or ceasefire. And while the merchants of death may remain oblivious, we will not be silenced.

As always, *TWiP* is deeply grateful to the authors, artists, and other contributors who have poured all their enthusiasm, passion, and commitment to the cause of Palestine into this month's issue: Nadia Aburdene for her informative piece on Palestinian solidarity actions in the London area; Leen Alashhab, the secretary-general of the 13th Palestine Model UN (PalMUN) conference, held at the Ramallah Friends School in November, who writes about the skills that this initiative nurtures to produce leaders who can help steer us all to a better world; Samirah Alkassim, a film studies expert and documentary-maker, for her revisiting of *Ila Abi*, a stirring documentary about photography and a Gazan photographer's love of his city; Rania Hammad, whose cri de coeur titled "The Emperor Has No Clothes" will not fail to resonate with readers; Daoud Kuttab who needs no introduction and writes about some of the short- and long-term impacts of Israel's genocidal assault on the Gaza Strip; Prof. Johnny Mansour, for a remembrance of a more hopeful time in Gaza, which reminds us that this annihilationist war is also one of cultural obliteration; Prof. Basem Ra'ad, for an intricate article about the origins of the term antisemitism, why it is a misnomer, and the many ways that it has been weaponized; Bill Rolston for a heartwarming essay on the Palestinian murals of Belfast's International Wall; and, last but by no means least, George Sahhar for his meditation on what *sumud* means to him. The *TWiP* Kitchen rubric has a mouthwatering recipe for *mshat*, contributed by Rawan Asaad, and our regular monthly cultural highlights bring you *The Long Road to Gaza*, a novel by Asmaa Alatawna; the visual diaries of Gazan artist Maisara Baroud; and *Home Away from Home*, a traveling exhibit created by Ursula Mindermann.

The entire team at *TWiP* wishes readers a peaceful and healing Ramadan and a Happy Easter for those celebrating. We also hope that you vigorously uphold International Women's Day on March 8 – regardless of your gender identification: women are literally half the world!

maia tabet



Issue 311 - March 2024

THIS WEEK IN Palestine

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The War on Gaza: Political, Security, and Other Impacts



By Daoud Kuttab



Al-Aqsa Flood, the name given by the Islamic movement Hamas to the daring October 7 attack on Israel, has had an enormous impact on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It has also had far-reaching regional and international repercussions, especially in the security, political, economic, and public relations spheres. Politicians have been fired, others have resigned in protest, and there have been fractures and cracks both within and outside many once seemingly stable and cohesive entities, whether organizations or countries, or among multicountry coalitions, and even unions.

Israel's war on Gaza – which has been ongoing since the one-day operation that left 1,200 Israelis killed, including 400 soldiers, and more injured or taken hostage – has had a major effect on the region's security. The attack exposed Israeli defense and intelligence vulnerabilities both while it unfolded and afterwards. On the security front, the biggest impact for Israel was not simply the casualties of the Hamas-led attack, but the loss of its deterrence capability, or its ability to scare its neighbors into respecting its long military arm. On October 7, Israel's projection of invulnerability was shattered. Not only was the notion of absolute Israeli deterrence invalidated in the course of a single day in October, but the now five-month-long assault on the Palestinians of Gaza, which is widely regarded as being of genocidal proportions, has further exposed Israel's weakness. Israeli deterrence had been achieved using a small number of soldiers, a vast number of reservists, and a high level of technology in hard-hitting attacks on Palestinians whose cost was exaggerated. The longer the war has gone on, the more Israel has had to resort to a more conventional military strategy, using large numbers of professionals because of all the reserve units being sent to the war theater.

Israel has also experienced major damage in terms of its political image. As a result of the brave Palestinian resistance to Israel's war of annihilation, the Palestinian issue is once more on the world's front pages, with support for Palestine skyrocketing despite the pro-Israel bias of major Western countries and many mainstream media. Netanyahu has admitted what many have known for years, namely, that Israel has never wanted to give up land for peace with Palestinians. This admission, made on January 21, 2024, caused the final fall of the "peace" fig leaf, behind which Israel has been hiding in plain sight for years as a justification for not ending its illegal military occupation of Palestinian lands. This turn of events is one of the many political fractures that the war has revealed. In addition, an ever-widening chasm has grown between Western governments and their people, and between leaders of major institutions (the European Union, the US State Department, and others) and their staffers.

On the official level, Spain, Belgium, and Ireland have come out for Palestine while Germany, the UK, and the US have justified and militarily supported Israel's genocidal actions. Major differences regarding civilian casualties, humanitarian aid, and so-called

Demonstrations in support of Palestine.



day-after scenarios between Western countries, including the US, and Israel have come to the surface, with many more reportedly occurring behind closed doors. Israel itself has been further polarized by the war on Gaza and the ongoing sequestration of Israeli hostages caused in large part by the intransigence of Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his desire to stay in power at all costs.

Generationally, the split has been even wider, with an overwhelming majority of young people

and simultaneously accelerated support for locally produced alternatives. US multinationals like McDonald's have admitted that their international business has significantly suffered as a result of the war. One image that went viral and contributed to this sea change was the fast-food giant's store in Israel providing Israeli soldiers with free lunches. Similarly, an image of the French supermarket chain Carrefour publishing a "We Stand with Israel" ad, has also led to a boycott of the company. Ironically, many people around the

Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), has been forced to apologize for its unchecked and biased coverage of the war in Gaza and its claims that pro-Palestinian demonstrators were Hamas supporters. It has also been denounced by press freedom advocates for failing to cover the first day of the International Court of Justice hearings in the case against Israel brought by South Africa while covering the Israeli rebuttal the following day.

The US network CNN has also admitted to having Israeli censors

has also refrained from allowing any international journalists to enter Gaza via the Egyptian-controlled Rafah crossing. Palestinian journalists, social media activists, and bloggers have been left alone and without respite to tell the world what has been taking place in Gaza. Over 100 of them have paid the ultimate price, along with their family members in many instances. Israeli strikes have destroyed over 60 media outlets in Gaza without any attempt on the occupation force's part to justify or explain the reasons for such attacks.







Demonstrations in support of Palestine and boycott of Israel's economic partners.

standing on the side of Palestine. Even in the US, senators and congresspersons, as well as progressives, Jews, and African Americans, have for the first time publicly stood by Palestine in large, and ever-increasing, numbers. There have been many more courageous political actions, resignations, demands for conditionality of US support to Israel, and other clear signs of this unprecedented split between governments and their people.

The genocidal war on Gaza has also reinvigorated the boycott of products marketed by companies and countries that support Israel

world started boycotting Starbucks coffee, which was long on the list of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement after its CEO had bragged about his donations to the Israeli army years earlier. The BDS movement removed Starbucks from its list after the coffee chain changed CEOs, but following October 7, people around the world started boycotting the chain, not knowing or caring that the coffee chain was no longer officially on the BDS list.

Gaza has also exposed well-respected legacy media around the world. One of the world's leading networks, the British

in its editing rooms even though it smuggled into Gaza journalist Clarissa Ward with a medical team early on in the war. Other mainstream media have been repeatedly caught parroting unchecked Israeli allegations, including the one that went viral about the beheading of Israeli babies, which (along with other allegations) was referenced by the president of the United States. While the White House communications team walked back some of these untruths, most media and government officials who repeated them did not.

Under pressure from Israel, Egypt

Social media videos and posts have become a major source of information around the world despite shadowbanning of pro-Palestinian content by digital giants Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and others. These have undertaken a campaign of censorship and restrictions against pro-Palestine content producers, closing down or restricting the distribution of their content. That notwithstanding, reportedly around 11 billion pro-Palestine and 700 million pro-Israel posts have been disseminated digitally worldwide, and the shadowbanning that lowers the visibility of many pro-



Demonstrations in support of Palestine.

Palestinian posts has resulted in some creative workarounds by content producers. Some posted videos of nature, which would get past the algorithms, enabling consumers to go back to the content producer's earlier posts that had been shadowbanned. Another creative workaround was to add an Israel flag emoji on posts followed by a deletion of the emoji seconds later; this allowed posts to get past algorithms apparently programmed to allow posts displaying an Israeli flag. As reported to me by a number of Palestinian social media activists, consumers of the content either did not notice the flag or understood that it was their passport to accessing the content.

While every part of the world has been impacted, as reflected by huge demonstrations and massive efforts by solidarity groups to bring political and economic pressure to bear on Israel and the United States to halt the war, it appears that one region has not been impacted enough. Authoritarian Arab countries, especially those that had initiated or were about to initiate normalization with Israel, have not exhibited much sign of being hugely impacted by Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. Individual boycotts were reported in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, but the commitment to continue business as usual and even to help Israel bypass the Yemeni blockade of shipping routes in the Red Sea (using land routes) has left many people disappointed. While the United Arab Emirates indeed stepped up its financial and humanitarian support to Gaza, its government and those of other Gulf and Arab states have not budged on the issue of normalization. Bahrain expelled the Israeli ambassador to Manama and recalled its own ambassador, but that was all. Sudan and Morocco have not reversed their normalization plans, whereas Saudi Arabia reportedly told US officials that it would normalize relations with Israel even before a Palestinian state was established so long as there was a clear and irreversible road map leading to the end of Israeli occupation and Palestinian statehood.

Israel's response to the October 7 attack has caused unprecedented human suffering, death, and devastation, as well as irreversible cultural destruction; yet, at the same time, the world's people have been moved to action on a scale that we have never witnessed. Despite the International Court of Justice's mandatory ruling that ignored Israeli claims of self-defense and put Israel on the dock for plausible allegations of genocide, in a case courageously initiated by South Africa, the impact of October 7 will not disappear when Israel's brutal war on Palestinians ends.

Daoud Kuttab, a Palestinian Jerusalemite, writes about Palestine in local, regional, and international media. Follow him on twitter @daoudkuttab and on Threads @daoud.kuttab.

SCAN TO SHARE

Murals for Palestine: Belfast's International Wall



By Bill Rolston



Driving through nationalist areas of the North of Ireland in recent decades, especially when Israel was prosecuting large-scale attacks on Gaza or when an intifada was in progress, you would have seen Palestinian flags flying everywhere, from lampposts and private buildings. And the converse was true in unionist areas where Israeli flags fluttered in the wind. It might be easy to dismiss these displays as a part of a tit-for-tat between republicans and unionists quickly taking sides on issues not directly connected to their everyday lives and adding them to their more direct assertions of difference and antagonism. But there are very real reasons, often with deep historical roots, for each side to identify with one of the protagonists in the Israel-Palestine struggle and to display that identity for all to see.

Given their origins in settler colonialism in Ireland in the seventeenth century, unionists have mostly tended to side with British imperialism and its legacy, which helps them identify more readily with Israel. In addition, during the conflict in Northern Ireland in the latter half of the twentieth century, they were able to present themselves as victims of relentless terrorism and in that way see themselves as similar to Israelis.

On the nationalist side, support for Palestine and its people has a long history. As Rory Miller points out in his 2005 book, *Ireland and the Palestinian Question 1948–2004*, the newly independent Irish state took a principled foreign policy stand on Palestinian statehood in the 1920s, and especially after 1937. The similarities between Ireland and Palestine were too obvious for the new state to miss: the influence of British imperialism, the "solution" of partition that eventually emerged, as well as the fact that key figures in the building of the Israeli state and the repression of Palestinians had links to Ireland. Arthur Balfour, whose 1917 declaration opened the way for "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, had previously been Britain's Chief Secretary in Ireland: in that capacity, he had ordered police to open fire during a land protest in Mitchelstown, County Cork in 1887, which resulted in the killing of three people. And Britain's Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, decided in 1922 that Palestine needed to be policed by a "picked force of white gendarmerie" and assigned the task to the Black and Tans, British soldiers notorious for their brutality during the Irish War of Independence.*

More recently, republicans in the North of Ireland have found further

Drone image of the International Wall.





Original artwork by Said Hassan, reproduced as a mural in Belfast, February 2024.

reasons to identify with Palestinians. As the armed struggle of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) gathered pace in the 1970s, the struggles of other liberation and national independence movements resonated with Irish republicans – notably those of South Africa, Cuba, and, of course, Palestine. The IRA had also trained alongside the PLO in Libya in that period. In 1982, only one year after murals began to appear in Irish republican areas, there was one painted in West Belfast which showed fighters from the IRA and PLO jointly holding aloft an RPG rocket launcher. "One struggle" the accompanying slogan declared. And the following year, a mural nearby showed armed women from Cumann na mBan, the women's section of the IRA, as well as from the PLO, and Namibia's South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) alongside the slogan, "Solidarity between women in armed struggle."

In light of this history, it should be no surprise that people in nationalist areas in the North of Ireland identify strongly with the aspirations of Palestinians and feel deeply the deprivations and suffering inflicted on them. Today, West Belfast fits into this picture with expressions of solidarity that include flying flags, marching, and painting wall murals.

In August 2023, Rana Hammoudeh visited Belfast from Ramallah and went to see the International Wall in the west of the city, a long four-meter-high wall that wraps around two sides of a flour mill. For the last few decades, many of the wall's murals have related to causes that are meaningful to republican muralists and activists – Cuba, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Palestine. During Rana's visit, there was one mural about Palestine, commemorating the death on hunger strike of Palestinian prisoner Khader Adnan in May 2023 and that of Irish republican prisoner Bobby Sands in May 1981.

After returning to the West Bank, Rana contacted me to explore the possibility of some Belfast muralists travelling to Palestine to paint there. For various reasons, this proved impossible to arrange. An alternative suggestion was considered of sending paintings by Irish muralists to Palestine to have them reproduced by Palestinian artists there. But before this could progress, the October 7 attack on Israel took place, with the subsequent and ongoing decimation of Palestinians in Gaza. The plan agreed between Rana and the Belfast muralists was that Palestinian artists would send their own work to Belfast, where it could be reproduced by local muralists: this necessitated painting out the current murals on the International Wall, one by one, and replacing them with artwork sent from Palestine.

Among the Irish murals that were painted out was one that commemorated five people, including a Catholic priest, shot dead by British soldiers in West Belfast in July 1972; one commemorating IRA volunteers from the local area who were killed during the conflict; and a tribute to a local activist who spent the rest of his life attempting to have plastic bullets banned after one fired by a policeman in 1981 killed his wife. It is a mark of the deep identification with the plight of Palestine that the sponsors of these murals were happy to have them removed in the interests of speaking out about Palestine.



Original artwork by Azhar Al Majed, A Window to a Free Country, reproduced as a mural in Belfast, February 2024.

At this writing, the project is reaching its conclusion, with eleven murals completed or nearing completion. The Palestinian artists whose work is represented include Said Hassan, Raed Qatanani, Ahmad Shaweesh, Mohammed Alhaj, Abdullah Al-Najar, Rami Al-Safadi, Abdel Hamid Fares, Awni Shtawi, and Azhar Al-Majed.

Public reception has been positive and inspiring. Three of those involved in the project have decades of experience each as muralists. But many other people, most of whom have never painted before, have also turned up to lend a hand. They include people whose origins are in Palestine, Egypt, England, Sri Lanka, the United States, Sudan – and of course, Ireland itself. Although the atmosphere can sometimes be somber, there is a strong sense of camaraderie. Tourists stop daily, not simply to take photos, but to talk to the muralists about what is happening. The overwhelming response is one of support and appreciation that we are speaking out on behalf of Palestine. We reply that we are doing more:



Original artwork by Said Hassan, reproduced as a mural in Belfast, February 2024.

we are giving a space for Palestinian artists to speak out. These paintings do not represent what we in Ireland think of Palestine but reproduce what Palestinian artists want to say at a time when they are otherwise marginalized, targeted, and killed.

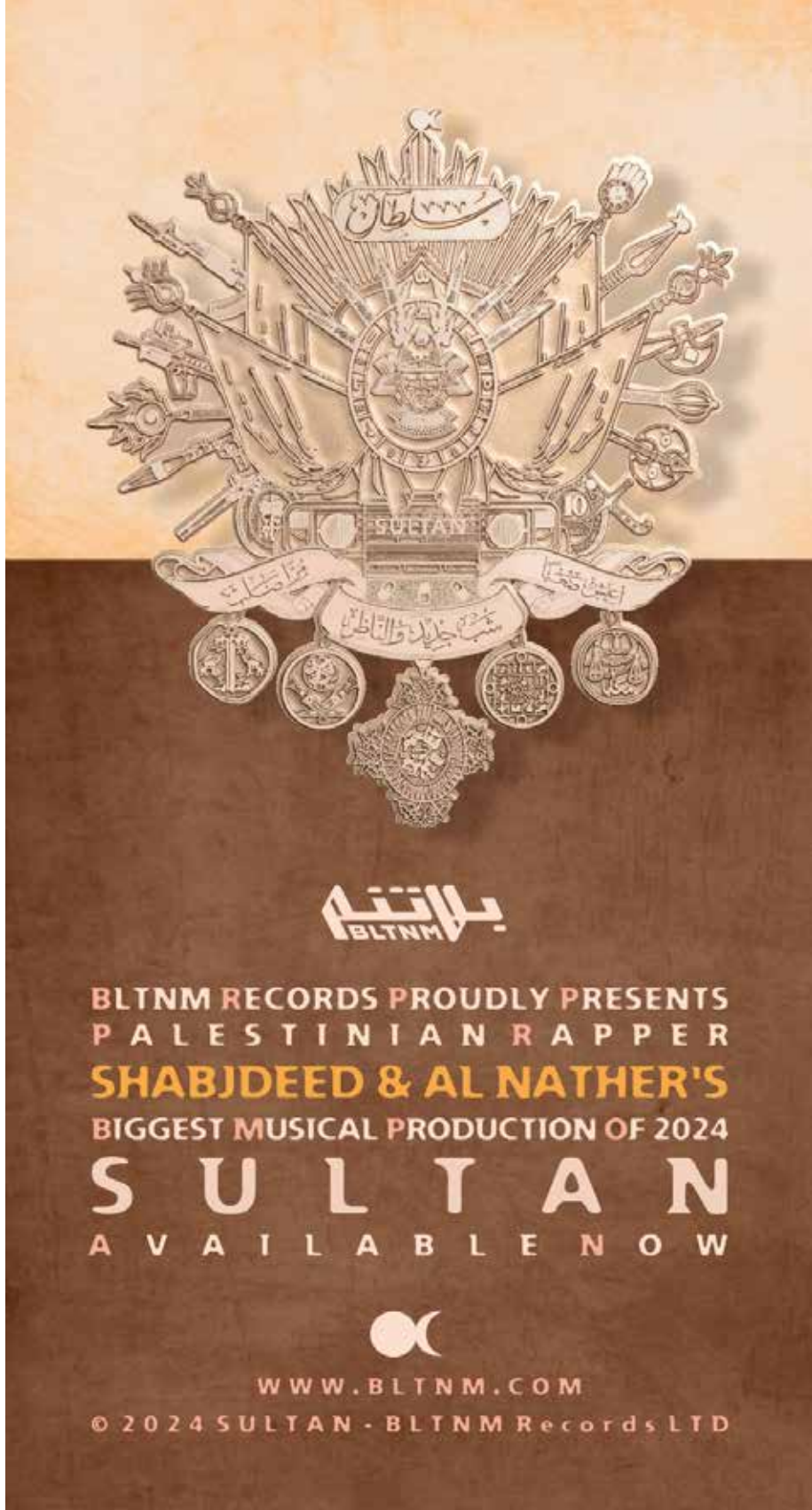
There was unanimous agreement among the muralists that a painting by Heba Zagout had to be one reproduced on the International Wall. Heba was a painter from Gaza who was killed, aged 39, in an Israeli air strike on October 13 that also killed two of her children, Adam and Mahmoud. Depicting fireworks exploding in the sky, the image is colorful and vibrant and initially evokes a sense of joy and celebration. But, as one observer pointed out, knowing what happened to her means that you start to wonder if the explosions in the sky that Heba painted are not fireworks after all – but a depiction of how joy, vibrancy, and life itself are being destroyed daily from the sky.

There continue to be messages of support for Palestine, including murals, in nationalist areas throughout the North of Ireland. Belfast's International Wall is unique, not just in its home location, but internationally. Its local significance cannot be overstated, however. The fact that Israel is killing at least 100 Palestinians a day no longer features on the main news bulletins here, but the wall reminds everyone who passes that the horror in Gaza is still unfolding.

Bill Rolston is an emeritus professor of sociology and former director of the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University in Belfast. He has documented the political murals of the North of Ireland over the last forty years and has published five books on the topic. He has also written about political murals in Chile, Colombia, the Basque Country, Sardinia, Iran, and Gaza.

SCAN
TO SHARE

*David Cronin, "Winston Churchill Sent the Black and Tans to Palestine," Irish Times, May 19, 2017.



On the Origins and Deployment of Semitic and Antisemitic Tropes



By Basem Ra'ad



"Semitic" and "antisemitic" are both fundamentally defective terms, as is made clear by analyzing their origins and applications. Today, the allegation of "antisemitism" is widely bandied about, often with malicious intent. The term arose in the shadow of centuries of anti-Jewish hatred and violence in Europe. But even against the backdrop of the Israeli rampage in Gaza, it continues to be deployed along with other propaganda and deceptive narratives to justify Israel's genocidal campaign. In US, European, and Zionist rhetoric, antisemitism has been weaponized to silence and curtail speech critical of Israel, including by activists of Jewish background. Israeli politicians had the audacity to describe the mild ruling of the International Court of Justice on Gaza in January 2024 as "antisemitic bias."

Broadly speaking, "antisemitism" is defined as speech or actions that prejudice or discriminate against Jewish people. Most European countries, the European Commission, the UK government, and the US State Department have adopted what is known as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism with little modification in total capitulation to Zionist pressure.[i] While technically excluding "criticism" of Israel as such, the IHRA definition contains so many conditions that it prevents any substantive criticism of Zionist policies. The definition includes restrictive wording such as: "manifestations…targeting… the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity," and "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor."

In 2018, Israel made itself even more racist by passing the Jewish Nation-State Law that limits self-determination and "settlement" to Jews only, thus disqualifying Palestinians from the right to similar self-determination, and depriving them of the right of "return" or to regain property confiscated by the so-called Absentee Property Law of 1950. The definition clearly prohibits allegations or suggestions about "Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions." A letter issued by 122 Palestinian and Arab intellectuals in 2020 raised questions about the IHRA definition, especially its implication of Israeli supremacy and privilege, concluding that "the fight against antisemitism should go hand in hand with the struggle on behalf of all oppressed peoples."[ii]

I question the term "antisemitism" and suggest it is time to replace it altogether with a more precise and meaningful word. As we examine the term's mythical origins, several other issues emerge that are related to the edifice of Zionist claims, especially those pertaining to racial classification, land connections, and linguistic assumptions. The rhetoric is exposed for its ignorance and hypocrisy and its effective investment in the settler-colonial project.

The village of Sataf, depopulated in 1948, where it is claimed that ancient Israelites developed terrace agriculture whereas Palestinian farmers built the terraces.



Origins of the Term and Inapplicability

"Semite" is a dubious and paradoxical term in the first place. Its etymology derives from genealogical myths in the Bible. In the biblical version of the flood story, Nuh (Noah) has three sons, who populate the earth: Sam/Shem (hence the term Semite), Ham, and Yafet/Japheth. Sam has five sons, one of whom is the progenitor of the patriarch called Ibrahim (Abraham), whose first son Ismail (Ishmael) is born of a union with Hajar (Hagar), and not his wife Sarah. Years later, however, the previously barren and old Sarah conceives and gives birth to Ishaq (Isaac), and she instigates the banishment of Hajar and Ismail. Ishaq (Isaac) in turn begets Ya'qub (Jacob), who is given the pseudonym "Israel." The "Israelites" are the "chosen" people (favored by their god Yahweh) descended from Jacob/Israel's twelve sons.

The term "Semite" also supposedly includes other descendants from all the other sons of Sam as well as of Ibrahim through the lineage of his eldest son Ismail, who is traditionally associated with nomadic "Arabs." Thus, in this sense, "Arabs" and other presumed regional descendants in Mesopotamia, Greater Syria, and Arabia are also "Semites" (if we accept the term). However, "Jews" and Judaism cannot possibly be associated with ancient Israelites or with the more ancient legendary "Hebrews" since Judaism did not exist as a religion at the presumed time of this genealogy, or the later periods associated with other biblical events. In this context, selective employment of "Semite" to apply to Jews is incompatible even with the mythology on which it is based.

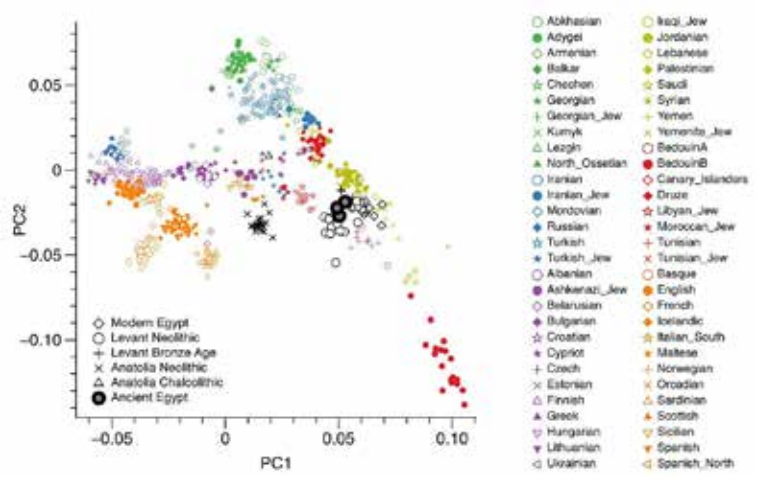
"Semitic Languages"

Another inconsistency in this legendary genealogy is that it conveniently excludes Canaan, Ham's fourth son whom Nuh curses because Canaan saw his "nakedness" exposed while he was in a drunken stupor: "Accursed be Canaan, he shall be his brothers' meanest slave. … Blessed be Yahweh, God of Shem, let Canaan be his slave! May God make space for Japheth, may he live in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his slave" (Genesis 9:25–27). This exclusion appears particularly strange since Canaanite language and mythology are the foundation of much that is called "Semitic." Theologians who take this story seriously have argued about its "meaning" for centuries and why the curse is transferred from Ham to Canaan, the youngest of Ham's four sons. A simple and direct interpretation is that it was one tool, among others, used to demonize and subjugate other people. It is a model, as also with the Exodus/Conquest account and the Davidic narrative, that provides religious excuses to dispossess the native people, as was done by other settler-colonial projects in the Americas, Australia, and apartheid South Africa, where such biblical stories were employed long before Israel was established. Slave-owning clergy in the American South described Blacks as "Canaanites" fit for enslavement and Native Americans as Philistines whose slaughter is sanctioned. Zionism employs various demonizing strategies, as convenient, to describe Palestinians as Canaanites, or as Philistines, or frequently as nomadic "Arabs" who arrived with the Muslim conquest.

One early use of "Semitic" was given currency in the late eighteenth century with adoption of the term "Semitic Languages" by members of the Göttingen School of History, under the influence of Protestant religious ideology. The main languages included in this grouping were "Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew," though it has come to incorporate Akkadian, Canaanite (or later "Phoenician"), and other languages from outside the strict geographical area of Greater Syria and Arabia. In the Zionist claim system, however, this classification has enabled certain appropriations as with the invention of a linguistic entity called "ancient Hebrew" (backdated to the second/first millennium BCE), although this language is none other than Canaanite – just as the much later and different-looking script called Square Hebrew is, with minor adaptations, a takeover of Square Imperial Aramaic, a script popular throughout the region, especially in the fifth to fourth centuries BCE. (One unpleasant practice in Zionist scholarship is the constant use of "Hebrew-Aramaic" not only to appropriate Aramaic but to make it look less important than Hebrew and give Hebrew primacy.)

I suggest discontinuing the use of "Semitic Languages" and replacing its mythic derivation with a descriptive geographical term such as "Syro-Arabian Languages" or similar phrase that could gain scholarly consensus.

The currency of "Semitic Languages" probably influenced the introduction of "antisemitism" into the political lexicon in the 1860s–70s by German publicist Wilhelm Marr, who turned the linguistic distinction between "Aryan" and "Semitic" into a racist theory about the nature and influence of Jews.



Principal component analysis of ancient and modern populations, showing Palestinians clustering with Bronze-Age Levant.

Koestler and Sand

Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish People* (2009) rejects traditional Zionist land claims based on the ancient presence of "ancestors." Sand documents instances of late conversion to Judaism in various countries unrelated to the so-called Holy Land. For Sand, the expulsion of Jews from the region of the Levant or from Palestine (a constitutive event in Jewish history) simply did not happen – this "diaspora" being merely a modern invention. Like others, Judaism was a proselytizing religion, with mass conversions occurring in earlier and later centuries, such as among the Khazars in eastern Europe and the Caucasus during the eighth century CE (AD), as well as

among the Berber tribes of North Africa and in the Himyarite Kingdom (مملكة حِمْيَر) in Yemen, particularly during the fourth and fifth centuries CE, as well as among other tribes in Arabia and elsewhere. After the Muslim conquest of the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and Greater Syria, including Palestine, most local Jews converted to Islam. (Sand concludes, somewhat questionably, that these converts are the ancestors of contemporary Palestinians; some surely are although Sand seems to exaggerate the percentage of Jews then and to neglect sizable polytheistic remnants in the first centuries CE before the Byzantine conversion to Christianity.) The notion of "a Jewish people" was developed by nineteenth-century intellectuals of Jewish origin in Germany, who invented a people retrospectively – thus the centrality to Zionism of stories about the "Israelites," a kingdom (Daoud/David and Suleiman), and a wandering people (diaspora). According to Sand, these ancient "Israelites" or old Jews have no real relation to present Jews, other than in traditional biblical stories that underpin claims of heritage. For Israeli colonists to hold such notions is not unlike Muslims in Indonesia or Afghanistan saying that Mecca and Arabia belong to them because they follow the religion of the Qur'an and identify with its traditions.

Decades before Sand, the internationally renowned Jewish author Arthur Koestler embarrassed the Zionists in his 1976 book, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, by showing that Ashkenazi Jews are not descended from the Israelites of antiquity, but from the Khazars, a Turkic people in Eastern Europe. His point was that these Jews, who now comprise the majority in Israel and worldwide, have no biological or racial connection to "Semites" or to the Jews of antiquity, and therefore that the label "antisemitic" was faulty and inapplicable. (Koestler, who lived in Palestine for several years, wrote a moderately Zionist book, *Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine 1917–1949*, in which he called the creation of Israel "a freak phenomenon of history" and the Balfour Declaration "contradictory."[iii])

DNA studies generally support the conclusions about Ashkenazi and other Jews although the findings have been dismissed or diluted by some Jewish geneticists and other commentators, and in at least one instance a study has been suppressed following publication.[iv] A DNA study of modern Lebanese discovered that their genetic pool is 93 percent similar to Canaanite genomes from 4,000 years ago.[v] Similarly, new DNA studies of Palestinians could be useful to establish more ancient connections, with careful sampling to cover all periods.



A Babylonian Seal, c. 2200 BCE.

The Zionist Claim System

The mythic underpinnings of the term "Semite" thus raise questions about associated elements in the Zionist claim system, and the narratives that should be seen as traditions to be respected rather than as literal facts. Some narratives were adapted from earlier regional literary sources, such as the story of Noah and the flood, which is an exact copy of the much older deluge narrative in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Other similar antecedents have been uncovered over the past 150 years, including the creation story. A pre-biblical Babylonian seal depicts two figures alongside a tree and a snake that are suggestive of the creation story of Adam and Eve. The mythic cycles described on the clay tablets excavated from Ugarit in 1928 have clarified the regional pantheon of gods and the polytheistic origin of so-called biblical "monotheism."[vi]

Though scholarship and archaeological discoveries have laid bare their unhistorical nature, Zionist ideology deploys other narratives to justify notions of entitlement to a land inhabited by its Indigenous people over many millennia, in a region that started civilization as we know it. Zionist and fundamentalist archaeologists and historians still twist the findings to try to prove the Exodus/Conquest narrative and the existence of a large kingdom under Daoud/David and Suleiman. One of these, named Eilat Mazar, declared a re-excavated stone structure in Silwan to be "the palace of King David," something which received wide media coverage but was disputed by other archaeologists, such as Israel Finkelstein and colleagues, who date the stones to a much later period and otherwise question the finding's integrity. Much the same applies to the ruins of Khirbet Qeiyafa (خربة قيافة), about which Israeli archaeologist Yosef Garfinkel jumped to the conclusion that it was an administrative center of "King David," although others, such as Nadav Na'aman, have classified it based on the evidence as Canaanite or Philistine.[vii] Revisionist Israeli archaeologist Ze'ev Herzog has classified all the traditional stories – those of the patriarchs, of the Exodus and Conquest, and of a large "United Kingdom" – as inventions and legendary creations.[viii]

Arab/Palestinian historiography must be careful not to fall into Zionist claims traps, since the dominant "monotheistic" or "Abrahamic" traditions can cause misunderstandings that precipitate self-colonizing notions. We should avoid the all-too-common association of "Jews" with "Bani Israel." This is a particularly serious problem that characterizes traditional Arab historiography and medieval historians like Al-Tabari and Ibn Athir, who repeated stories from the Bible and their chronology as if the history of Palestine. Unfortunately, these stories taken from the Old Testament are still repeated by some modern Arab historians, as well as in school curricula and in the media. It should be stressed that figures that appear in the Qur'anic heritage (which definitely does not involve the chronology or many of the same story details) are quite different from the accounts given of them in the Bible. The commonality of some figures and narratives has been exploited by Zionism to take over ancient sites or seek to control them, such as the Ibrahimi Mosque, the maqams, the Buraq (Western) Wall, Al-Aqsa compound, and the so-called City of David. It becomes important therefore to have more awareness that, for example, the maqams (shrines of holy men) were "not a component in Jewish tradition," and that the so-called "Western Wall" was not a traditional site of Jewish pilgrimage or associated

with a "temple" until well after the Ottoman occupation. In fact, it seems necessary to bring to light some of the available alternative information about many other sites for all religions.[ix] We need to resolve these religious heritage issues in ways that support Palestinian rights, while being aware of religious sensitivities, and must develop a calculated strategy to counter insidious Zionist attempts to exploit common traditions and take over the stone structures built by the labor of other (our) people.

Another point where Zionism has relied on fundamentalist support is the notion that the Old Testament offers belief in the one true God, who also happens to favor a "chosen people." This has resulted in a kind of monopoly on God, along with a sense of superiority, an assumption that all the other gods are gods of polytheistic religions (including "Allah" according to certain Christian fundamentalists), that everything else is "pagan." This view runs counter to several recent discoveries, such as the Ugaritic texts from about fourteenth to thirteenth century BCE noted above and Kuntilet 'Ajrud (كونتيلة عجرود) from the ninth century BCE, which shows worship of a chief goddess 'Ashera along with Yahweh.

The Dead Sea/Qumran Scrolls, discovered in 1947, challenge this view most profoundly. The Qumran text of Deuteronomy 32:8–9 (which dates to approximately the second to first century BCE) reads very differently from the version people have been reading for hundreds of years and still read in popular versions translated from the eleventh century CE Masoretic manuscript. In the Qumran text, the father god El/Il distributes the world and its peoples to his sons, "the sons (children) of God." (El/Il is present in names such as Isma-il and Isra-il.) He then gives Yahweh, also called "Lord" or "Adonai," as a god to the descendants of Ya'qub (Jacob), the Israelites. In the Masoretic text, however, there is no mention of "sons (children) of God" and instead the phrase is replaced by "sons (children) of Israel." Users of the Bible in all languages, including Arabic, read this altered version and not the original Qumran text. Only a few editions now, such as The New Jerusalem Bible and the New Revised Standard Version, give us the original Qumran reading – which, incidentally, agrees with the Greek translation, the Septuagint, from about the same period.

What kind of divinity is supposed to be considered as supreme: the father figure El/Il ("El Shaddai," the god of Ibrahim in Exodus 6:2–3), or Yahweh the god who sanctions the slaughter of Canaanites and other people by the Israelites – the one cited by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to justify massacring children in Gaza? In this regard, we should be curious about two questions: Could it possibly be El/Il to whom Jesus Christ calls out on the cross in the only Aramaic sentence left in the Gospels: "*Eli [Elahi], Eli [Elahi], lema sabachthani*?" And how is it significant that a medieval Arabic dictionary, Fayruzabadi's *Al-Qamus al-Muhit*, defines Il/El (إيل) as "Allah/God the Almighty"?

One would hope that such knowledge might bring some humility to religious belief. Instead, the poor Canaanites are demonized as "pagan" rather than being given credit for their contributions to regional religion and the invention of the alphabet. Like Netanyahu and West Bank colonists, who are under the illusion that they are descended from the Israelites, Western settler-colonizers (so-called pilgrims and pioneers) appropriated and manipulated Old Testament narratives about Canaanites and Philistines to fuel the conquest of the "new Canaan" and dispossess native populations in North America, Australia, and apartheid South Africa. Like their "ancestors," the current Zionist colonizers feel emboldened to attack and kill the native population, and to steal their property.

Western Discourse and Rhetoric

> **When the Most High gave the nations each their heritage, when he partitioned out the human race, he assigned the boundaries of nations according to the number of the children of God, but Yahweh's portion was his people, Jacob was to be the measure of his inheritance.**
> **Dt 32: 8–9 (New Jerusalem Bible)**

Given this background, the current Western use of the label "antisemitic" should indeed cause bafflement, if not perhaps derision. In addition to the questionable adoption of the IHRA definition, the US Congress has gone to extremes in its mimicry and support of Zionism. In a December 2023 resolution, it cites somewhat silly and exaggerated instances of what it called "antisemitic acts," while avoiding any mention of massacres by the Israeli army and the intentional killing of tens of thousands women and children in Gaza. The resolution declares "clearly and firmly… that anti-Zionism is antisemitism." It cites a dubious instance where "a car with individuals holding Palestinian flags *appeared* to intentionally swerve out of its lane, *nearly* hitting a visibly Jewish family in Clifton, New Jersey" (my emphasis), but it fails to mention, among other instances, that a Palestinian child was stabbed to death in Chicago and three Palestinian youth were shot in Vermont.

In another distorted example, the resolution mentions that "on November 15, 2023, anti-Israel protesters illegally blocked and violently attacked the Democratic National Committee headquarters" but fails to say that the event was initially a peaceful protest organized by Jewish groups calling for a ceasefire in Gaza under the banner of "not in our name." It mentions that "the slogan 'From the River to the Sea,' which is a rallying cry for the eradication of the State of Israel and the Jewish people, has been used by anti-Israel protesters in the United States and globally," thus distorting a phrase that merely calls for the equality of all peoples between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. It also fails to notice that Zionist colonization has been declaring and implementing the "exclusive Jewish right to the Land of Israel," under the very slogan, "From the River to the Sea."[x]

A US congressional hearing on "antisemitism" also held in December 2023 interrogated three prominent university presidents about activism and free speech related to Palestine on their campuses. The hearing was dominated by right-wing Republican extremists, including New York representative Elise Stefanik, who in questioning Harvard's Claudine Gay had the gall to describe the term intifada as a call to violence and "genocide of Jews," forcing Gay to almost agree. The three presidents were intimidated enough that their academic parsing of free speech was insufficient to quell the calls for their blood, and along with the chorus of noise by Zionist organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Israeli lobby AIPAC, as well as rich Jewish funders who threatened to withhold their donations to the institutions in question, the hearings eventually led to the resignation of two of the three presidents.

In Germany, instead of calling for justice for all, the government is punishing criticism of a genocidal Israeli government and solidarity with Palestinians. Not only Muslims and Palestinians, but even Jewish supporters of Palestine and opponents of Israeli colonization and the genocide in Gaza have been silenced and punished. Germany has disallowed describing Israeli treatment of Palestinians as "apartheid," despite the enshrinement of discrimination in the Israeli legal system, and it has banned other expressions of support for the Palestinians.[xi] One Israeli-born Jewish activist has pointed out the irony entailed by descendants of Holocaust perpetrators in Germany and Europe wanting to tell Jewish defenders of Palestinian rights how "to be Jewish," and accusing them of being "antisemitic."



Ein Safat

Conclusion

"Antisemitism" is not only a misnomer resulting from misguided beliefs and ignorance, but it is instrumentalized in deliberate application of a moral double standard and a form of selective outrage. The analysis of this term is unlikely to diminish its exploitation by the establishment and dominant media in the short term. We can only insist on classifying religious, racialized, or other biases for what they are (anti-Jewish; anti-Muslim; anti-Arab; anti-feminist; anti-Black) and urge enlightened people to avoid the "antisemitic" label and work to replace it. It is particularly necessary to do so since today the term is being exploited and weaponized to suppress dissent, divert attention from war crimes, and discredit legitimate resistance to occupation, colonial domination, and imperialism.

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[i] "Defining Antisemitism," Washington, DC: US State Department, https://www.state.gov/defining-antisemitism/; European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, "ECRI's Opinion on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism," December 2, 2020, https://rm.coe.int/opinion-ecri-on-ihra-wd-on-antisemitism-2755-7610-7522-1/1680a091dd; "Government Response to Home Affairs Committee Report: 'Anti-Semitism in the UK,'" December 2016, https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/CM9386-Select-Comittee-Response-Antisemitism-in-UK.pdf.

[ii] "Palestinian Rights and the IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism," The Guardian, letter, November 29, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/nov/29/palestinian-rights-and-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism.

[iii] In addition to the works of Arthur Koestler and Shlomo Sand, it is useful to mention Paul Wexler's books on linguistics which demonstrate similar points about the origins of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews.

[iv] Robin McKie, "Journal Axes Gene Research on Jews and Palestinians," The Guardian, November 25, 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/nov/25/medicalscience.genetics. Reading the Wikipedia article "Genetic Studies of Jews" demonstrates the difficulties laid bare by the findings and their contradictory nature, despite Israeli geneticists' clear efforts to establish a connection between Jews of various locations and the ancient "Near East" and "Israelites." See the Wikipedia article "Origin of the Palestinians," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_of_the_Palestinians.

[v] Marc Haber et al., "Continuity and Admixture in the Last Five Millennia of Levantine History from Ancient Canaanite and Present-Day Lebanese Genome Sequences," American Journal of Human Genetics 101.2 (August 3, 2017), 274–82.

[vi] See Ch. 4 in my Hidden Histories: Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean, London: Pluto, 2010 (2014 التاريخ الخفي: فلسطين، حوض المتوسط والمنطقة العربية, بيروت: دار الآداب), and Mark S. Smith, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

[vii] I. Finkelstein, L. Singer-Avitz, D. Ussishkin, and Z. Herzog, 2007, "Has King David's Palace in Jerusalem Been Found?" Tel Aviv 34:2: 142–64; Nadav Na'aman, "Was Khirbet Qeiyafa a Judahite City? The Case against It," Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, vol. 17 (2017), https://jhsonline.org/index.php/jhs/article/view/29370.

[viii] "Deconstructing the Walls of Jericho," Ha'aretz, October 29, 1999.

[ix] Meron Benvenisti, Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 275–76; "Western Wall," Encyclopedia Judaica (1971 ed.), which suggests that Jews did not visit the wall or associate it with a "temple" as such until well after Ottoman conquest in 1516. On some Christian, Jewish, and Muslim sites, see Chps. 2 and 3 in my Hidden Histories.

[x] US House of Representatives, Resolution 894 on antisemitism, December 5, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/894/text.

[xi] Sophie Tanno and Nadine Schmidt, "Crackdown on an Already Banned Hamas Raises Free Speech Fears in Germany," CNN, January 24, 2024, https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/28/europe/europe-germany-hamas-crackdown-free-speech-intl/index.html; and Denijal Jegić, "Why Is Germany So Viciously Anti-Palestinian?" Al Jazeera, January 7, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/1/7/why-is-germany-so-viciously-anti-palestinian.

Palestine Solidarity Protests: Hope amid Struggle



By Nadia Aburdene

In 1959, black South Africans led the launch of the anti-apartheid movement, calling on people across the globe to join them. While their call was answered, it was decades before global public opinion and the boycott and divestment campaign associated with the movement brought about the end of apartheid. Drawing inspiration from that historic victory, the Palestinians launched the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign (BDS) in 2005, asking people around the world to put pressure on their governments to divest from and boycott Israeli companies and products.

Every day, here in London, I read about what's happening in Gaza, and my stomach turns at the atrocities being perpetrated against an entire civilian population. Initially, I joined protests organized by the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign in the British capital not because I thought they would change government policy, but because I felt it necessary to do my part, no matter how small.

Having participated in about a dozen protests so far, I have been amazed by the hundreds of thousands of people coming together to demand an end to the genocide in Gaza and by the diversity of the groups involved, including "Queers for Palestine" and "Jewish Voice for Labour, Always with the Oppressed, Never with the Oppressor," among many others. I came to realize that an unstoppable tide was rising, with more people than ever before marching and organizing in solidarity with the Palestinians. Justice for Palestine had become a rallying cry for people of all ethnicities, religions, and backgrounds.

Four weeks into the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, I attended the National Day of Action for Palestine – Ceasefire Now at Trafalgar Square, on November 4. As I stood in the tightly packed crowd, I noticed a teenager right behind me, her arms stretched as high as possible clutching a handwritten sign that read "Ceasefire Now, Stop the Genocide." I turned to speak to her and found out she was a 16-year-old English girl who had never been to the Middle East, or had any connection to it, but was passionate about making a difference.

At the national Ceasefire March held

"Despite the current bleak situation in Palestine, Palestinians and their international allies must not despair. I speak to Ita, a London activist with a grassroots organization that campaigns for Palestinian human rights. We discuss the importance of international solidarity campaigns and why she believes justice for the Palestinians is inevitable."

CPFP members at a demonstration.





A stall at the summer garden party.

on February 17, a silver-haired lady with a walking stick and a multicolored Palestinian keffiyeh caught my attention. We started to chat, and I learned that her name was Sylvia and that she was Jewish. I'd previously had brief encounters with Jewish activists for Palestine but this was the first time I had a substantial exchange of words with one. Sylvia told me that she'd never been a Zionist, nor had her parents, but that Jews were "her people wherever they came from." Her ancestors had been murdered for being Jewish and that, she said, must never happen again to anyone. She talked about how some of her German friends had explained that their parents could not be blamed for the extermination of European Jews during the Holocaust as they had done nothing themselves or not known about what was happening. Sylvia knew what was happening to the Palestinian people and firmly believed it was a "clear case of injustice that has been going on for far too long." She was not going to be complicit in the murder of Palestinians in Gaza. As a Jew, she added, she felt more responsible for the situation of the Palestinians than for the genocide in Rwanda, for example. I was surprised to hear that her friendships with a few old Jewish friends with ties to Israel and with some of her non-Jewish German friends had suffered after the October 7, 2023 attack, but that her friendships with her Palestinian friends were stronger than ever.

In February, I was contacted by someone from the British Labour Party who was horrified by the situation in Gaza. They said they were eager to work on helping develop a policy for a just solution to the Palestinian "problem" but that the party was threatening its members with expulsion if they publicly displayed any sort of support for Gaza. The party had already threatened to expel several Labour MPs for this very reason, something widely reported in the press

I was introduced to Ita by a Palestinian Italian friend, Laila. I first met her at Akub, a Palestinian restaurant in London where Chef Fadi Kattan, a Bethlehemite, is at the helm of the kitchen. Ita is co-founder of Crystal Palace Friends of Palestine (CPFP) along with Marian. They founded CPFP in 2021 "to raise awareness about the Palestinian struggle against Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism."* The two of them had been long-standing supporters of the Palestinian cause and were planning separately to start solidarity groups in South London's Crystal Palace area. Ita and Marian were introduced by a mutual friend, Antoinette, who had spotted BDS stickers on Sabra hummus containers at a local supermarket. Guessing the stickering was being done by one or both of her friends, Antoinette decided to introduce them to each other and CPFP was born.



The fourth evening vigil for Gaza organized by Crystal Palace Friends of Palestine, CPFP. January.

The first CPFP meeting, held in November 2021, settled on trying to create awareness by highlighting the vibrancy of Palestinian culture and people. The group immediately began with awareness-raising stalls in the local area and at summer festivals, enticing people over to the stall with samples of *namoura* baked by a CPFP member. After noting how delicious the Palestinian food was, passersby were encouraged to engage in conversations about Palestine: they were invited to ask questions and given leaflets with a brief history of the Palestinian struggle. The organizers were surprised from the outset at just how much support there was on the street and how the views of the British public were very different from those of their politicians and media.

The following summer, CPFP held a garden party serving traditional Palestinian food and introducing Palestinian music thanks to a Manchester-based group called Gazelleband, headed by Palestinian 'oud player Reem Anbar, from Gaza. It also hosted "Palestine at the Palace," a very successful cultural day showcasing Palestinian poetry, drama, and music, an art exhibition, and a Palestinian café and marketplace with UK-based Palestinian businesses selling their goods. Visitors to the event told CPFP organizers how much they had learned from these personal



Exhibition of Palestinian art.

encounters and how impressed they had been by the cultural offerings on show. The event highlighted just how important it is for Palestinians to tell their stories personally in order to counter their misrepresentation and dehumanization by Western media.

Since October 2023, CPFP has attracted many new members. In the aftermath of the October 7 attack and Israel's genocidal campaign against Gaza, people have had their eyes opened to the reality of the situation in Israel/Palestine: those who joined CPFP are motivated by the desire to see the end of Israeli apartheid and settler

colonialism, and a free Palestine in their lifetime.

CPFP's annual general meeting at the beginning of this year attracted almost 50 individuals representing a broad cross section of local activists and community members, including trade unionists, Black Lives Matter organizers, local businesspeople, individuals from the Muslim community, Palestinians, anti-Zionist Jews, Christian activists, and young mothers appalled by the Gaza genocide, in addition to individuals with years-long involvement in Palestine solidarity.

The group also fundraises for PalMusic, the UK ambassador of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music. CPFP members knew they could not raise large sums of money, but their first event raised enough to cover the cost of music lessons/activities for a small number of children in Gaza. This year, CPFP funds will be used to help support displaced music teachers and students.

Since October 7, everything has been turned upside down and CPFP's cultural events have been put on hold. Besides taking part in the large central London marches, CPFP members have been organizing local protests and participating in direct actions. In December, its members joined a thousand other protesters at various sites across the UK on a Workers for Palestine action. They helped to picket a factory that manufactures parts for US F-35 bombers and succeeded in shutting down operations for a day. The group also joined the disruption of London's busiest shopping day of the year on December 23, chanting "While you're shopping bombs are dropping." And in January, CPFP took part in a protest that shut down roads around Westminster, the seat of the UK government. Individual members have also provided court support for the Elbit8, a group of activists eventually acquitted for their direct action against UK weapons factories and their links to the notorious Israeli tech and weapons company, Elbit Systems.

Once a month since October, CPFP has also held a local vigil to honor all those who have been killed in the Gaza genocide. Up to 200 local people gather to reflect, sing, and listen to music, poetry, and speeches, a monthly ritual that Ita finds "incredibly moving." She adds that people like her will not stand idly by and watch silently while crimes are being perpetrated against the people of Palestine despite attempts by the British government to silence them by weaponizing antisemitism. Ita is confident that conflating anti-Zionism with antisemitism to silence them will not succeed. "I look to the example of the Palestinian people," she tells me. "Their *sumud* has remained resolute for 75 years despite the ongoing violence against them, their suffering, and the loss of their lands. It's even more remarkable to think they have done this with virtually no outside support. Hope will not be extinguished."



A stall at the summer garden party.

Nadia Aburdene is a freelance writer who has lived/spent extended periods of time in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. She is currently based in London.

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*https://www.crystalpalacefriendsofpalestine.org/.


upa
united
palestinian
appeal
This Ramadan,
Be a Light in the Darkness.
This year, Ramadan spirit is needed more than ever.
The widespread starvation in Gaza calls on us to act urgently. In the West Bank, many families have lost their source of income amid heightened restrictions while hardship echoes across Jordan and Lebanon.
Together, we can affirm our solidarity and express gratitude for our own abundance by sharing our blessings with others.
Be a candle in the darkness and give generously today.
Donate Here
or visit our website
upaconnect.org

Recovering the Memory of a Place: My Visit to Gaza



By Johnny Mansour



The city of Gaza, which is mentioned in the Bible, in Pharaonic correspondence, and in Assyrian, Persian, Roman, and other manuscripts, was the gateway to the sea and a trading station to Egypt, Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula throughout antiquity. The distance between Haifa, my hometown, and Gaza is approximately 150 kilometers, or about two and a quarter hours of travel by car when travel between the two was possible.

I had the opportunity to visit Gaza with a group of writers and intellectuals from Haifa and cities of the Galilee in 1996 when then-President Yasser Arafat and other prominent Palestinian leaders returned to the homeland in the wake of the Oslo Accords. Gaza's municipal public library was our first stop, and there we were welcomed by the sight of well-arranged books and magazines and a plethora of patrons, including school pupils, university students, and others. The library's director pointed out the library's important role in revitalizing Gaza's cultural life, and told us about the cultural events in which many Palestinians from the city and the surrounding refugee camps participated.

We then visited the Great Mosque of Gaza, also known as the Great Omari Mosque, located in the old city. Dating back to the earliest century of Islam, the mosque was destroyed and rebuilt many times over the centuries,[i] along with the markets and shops adjacent to the ancient buildings. We then proceeded to the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrius, thought to be the fourth oldest church in the world.[ii] Constructed in the fifth century and restored and renovated several times since, St. Porphyrius Church is a vital part of Gaza's Christian history.

During our visit, we also had the chance to tour a secondary school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) although I sadly no longer remember its name. We toured several classrooms, meeting teachers and students. During a casual conversation about what they knew and were learning of Palestine's history, I asked a student about Gaza's local history. He reminded me that the city of Gaza dated back to the pre-Christian era and that the city and the surrounding area were dotted with sites from different periods of antiquity, including Canaanite, Philistine, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic. The student added that many movable artefacts had been removed to family homes, and he hoped that the newly established Palestinian Authority would retrieve these treasures of antiquity and display them in museums in tribute to the collective memory of the Palestinian people and as exemplars of their cultural heritage.

I returned from this short trip feeling proud of what Palestinians had achieved in the Gaza Strip despite the difficult conditions of occupation that they had endured until the Palestinian Authority took over.

Years passed.



An interior view of the Great Mosque (Al-Umari Mosque). Photo courtesy of Ilan Pappé.

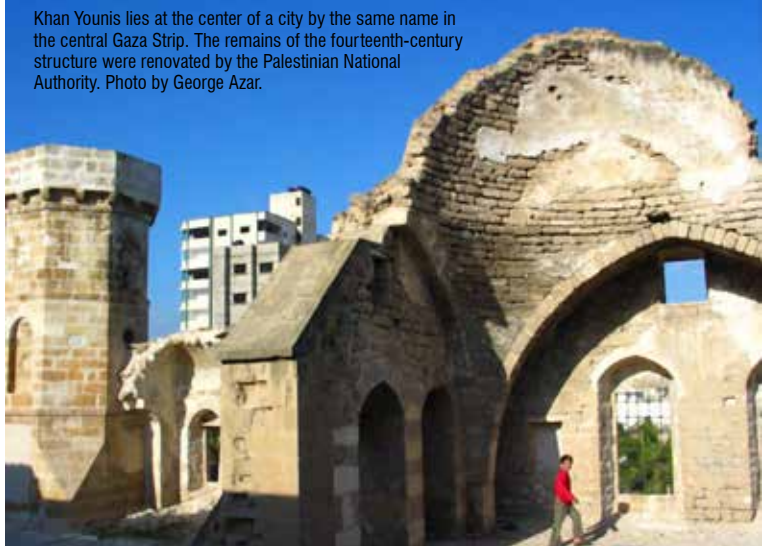
Today, the familiar names of places in the Gaza Strip such as Khan Younis, Deir al-Balah, Rafah, Beit Lahia, Jabaliya, Beit Hanoun, Shuja'iya, and Khuza'a, as well as Al-Rashid and Salah al-Din Streets fill the airwaves and social media posts. We hear about these locations against the backdrop of Israeli strikes and the bombing and destruction of tens of thousands of buildings, whether residential structures or service buildings such as hospitals, universities, schools, mosques, churches, cemeteries, archives, and museums.

I've been thinking about that educational trip I took almost thirty years ago ever since Israel launched its genocidal campaign on the Gaza Strip in October 2023. On the news, I started hearing about the destruction of cultural sites that I had not visited because they had not been built at the time, such as Al-Aqsa University, which has been destroyed, along with the archives and manuscript collections assembled by several researchers. I had become acquainted with some of these, and as a friendship developed between us, we discussed the feasibility of establishing an initiative for the collection and preservation of our cultural heritage as the embodied memory of the Palestinian people. I began to realize that over and above Israel's stated goal, the ongoing assault is a also a systematic campaign of annihilation aimed at Palestinians' cultural heritage, targeting all institutions and sites that carry important cultural value.

On my trip in the late 1990s, time was too short to visit Gaza's Commonwealth Army Cemetery, which is considered one of the largest and most extensive cemeteries established by the British government to bury its soldiers in situ during World War II. Like others in Gaza, the former British Army Cemetery is considered a rich source for the study of the region's history, but reports say that it too has been partially destroyed.

Targeting historical and archaeological sites, ancient places of worship, museums, and cultural centers is a deliberate attempt on Israel's part to destroy the collective identity of the Palestinians, although it should not be forgotten that Palestine's cultural heritage is not limited to the Palestinians only but is part of the global human heritage. It is my firm conviction that besides the wholesale murder of human beings, who remain the supreme value, Israel's war on Gaza is deliberately destroying the centers of cultural heritage because without them people are stripped of their cultural and human identity. The current genocidal war on Gaza aims to rob the Palestinians of their lives, their history, and their culture in order to pave the way for Zionists to seize the land and appropriate its history and culture.

Will the world wake up and put an end to the war and the destruction it has caused?



Khan Younis lies at the center of a city by the same name in the central Gaza Strip. The remains of the fourteenth-century structure were renovated by the Palestinian National Authority. Photo by George Azar.



The Pasha's Palace in Gaza City was originally built for the Gazan wife of Mamluk Sultan Baibar and was later renovated in Ottoman times. Most recently it was turned into a museum and cultural center by the Palestinian National Authority. Photo by Sharif Sarhan.

Johnny Mansour was born in Haifa in 1960. He is a historian and university lecturer, as well as the author of more than 35 books on Arab and Palestinian history, and more specifically on Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land and the Middle East. His books include The Hijaz Railway, Haifa's Arab Streets *(in Arabic),* the Centenary of the Balfour Declaration, *and* The Historical Dictionary of Palestine, *coauthored with Ilan Pappe. He is married to Lilian and has two children, Elias and Adi.*

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[i] Believed to stand on the site of an ancient Philistine temple, the site was used to erect a Byzantine church in the fifth century and became a mosque after the seventh century Muslim conquest. Described as "beautiful" by Ibn Battuta, the famous tenth-century Arab geographer, the Great Mosque went through cycles of destruction and reconstruction under the Crusaders, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks, the Mongols, and the Ottomans. It was severely damaged by British bombardment during World War I, was restored by the Supreme Muslim Council in 1925, and leveled to the ground by an Israeli airstrike on December 7, 2023 that left only the minaret standing. Source: Wikipedia.

[ii] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Saint_Porphyrius.

PalMUN: A Forum for Palestinian Youth



By Leen Alashhab



In 2009, young people at the Ramallah Friends School took the initiative to establish the Palestinian Model United Nations (PalMUN) conference. In the context of our people's enduring struggle for freedom and self-determination, PalMUN seeks to provide students with a good understanding of diplomacy and to provide participants with skills that will influence them positively as they move forward both in life and in their intellectual journeys. Over the last five months, specifically, the harsh realities of Palestinian life and death have compelled us to reexamine our role as Palestinian youth and think of the contributions we can make to our community.

A student-led initiative, PalMUN is dedicated to addressing the injustices and oppression that the Palestinian people continue to endure by means of diplomacy and international cooperation. It serves as a forum for us to use our voices, engage in dialogue, and develop the negotiation skills necessary to navigate and address some of life's most complex problems, exploring possible solutions and fostering collaboration. Furthermore, our annual conferences actively promote a global and international outlook that helps develop students' awareness of crises and injustices elsewhere in the world. PalMUN reflects our commitment to nurture future Palestinian generations that can contribute to the betterment of the world.

This year, after careful consideration, we decided to go ahead with our thirteenth annual conference, held on February 1–3, despite the tragic events unfolding in the country. It was my utmost pleasure to serve as PalMUN's secretary general for this exceptional educational event and to witness the success of the conference. Holding educational conferences in the midst of such harsh realities is further indication, if any were needed, of the determination and resilience of Palestinian youth. Despite terrible adversity, we refuse to be silenced or deprived of our primary right to education.

This year's conference theme was "Rebuilding from Rubble," which was chosen for its meaningful message of hope and resilience: it signaled our collective determination to overcome suffering and work toward a brighter Palestinian future. "Rebuilding from Rubble" reminded us that even in the face of destruction, hope prevails, and that it must be nurtured continually.

A primary objective of PalMUN is to form a new generation of leaders equipped to tackle the pressing issues of our world with diplomacy and leadership. I firmly believe that education and dialogue hold the power to make positive social change, not only within our own communities but also internationally. As the secretary general of this year's conference, I told the participants during the opening ceremony, "You are the leaders of tomorrow." Over the course of the next three days, these words were brought alive as I watched high-level debates and fruitful discussions.

This year's conference included 15 committees that explored a wide range of issues, focused mainly on the ongoing occupation of Palestine, specifically the now

PalMUN Secretary General Leen Alashhab delivering her opening speech.







Two moments of the PalMUN XIII flag ceremony.

five-month-long Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip. In this regard, we discussed everything from the catastrophic humanitarian situation to the economic crisis in Gaza, as well as some of the war's social ramifications. To further enrich participants' international outlook, our conference also featured other pressing world issues such as the conflict in Sudan, the question of artificial intelligence in the context of international security, combating child labor, the global refugee crisis, and so-called honor crimes, among others. These topics were examined through a variety of lenses, including political, cultural, economic, and humanitarian, reflecting our commitment to advocacy and to exploring constructive solutions.

Serving as secretary general was an honor, and it filled me with pride. Planning this huge conference with my colleagues not only brought fulfillment but was also enriched by the support of our esteemed school faculty and community. The long months of dedication, effort, and hard work finally paid off as the conference was broadly viewed to have contributed to the Palestinian community and signaled an investment in its future.

On a personal note, participating in 12 other Model UN conferences in the past has helped to shape me into a knowledgeable member of my community. Among the many lessons I learned, one stands out prominently: today's youth have the potential to promote prosperity, bring out the good in this world, and imagine a better future. Addressing the Social Council Youth Forum (ECOSOC) in April 2023, Antonio Guterres, the current UN Secretary General, told his audience, "Young people, our world needs you more than ever, from climate change to conflicts to poverty and inequalities." These words resonate deeply for me, emphasizing the urgent need for youth to step up and address the pressing challenges that face our world today.

Initiatives like PalMUN allow students to be a voice for the voiceless and to actively contribute to finding solutions to pressing global problems. It is our utmost priority to take advantage of such educational opportunities to make meaningful contributions toward creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

Looking toward the future, our commitment as youth to promoting Palestine's prosperity remains unwavering. Despite the adversities we face, PalMUN stands as a symbol of hope and resilience, demonstrating our unceasing determination to rebuild from the rubble. Through education, leadership, and cooperation, we continuously aim for a future where the shadows of oppression are lifted, and we, the Palestinian people, can finally experience the freedom we rightfully deserve.

Leen Alashhab is the secretary general of the Thirteenth Annual Palestinian Model United Nations Conference (PalMUN) and a senior at the Ramallah Friends School.

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The Emperor Has No Clothes



By Rania Hammad



We know it is genocide.

We know it is genocide because we are Palestinian, and we recognize it for what it is. It is not retaliation. It is not vengeance. It is unadulterated violence that is unleashed periodically to contain Palestinian demography.

For more than 75 years, Israel has been killing and maiming Palestinians with the deliberate intent to push them out of historic Palestine. Between the 1948 *Nakba* and the follow-up *Naksa*, in June 1967, more than one million Palestinians were driven out of their native land.

Israel's efforts to empty the land of its native Palestinian Arab population for the purpose of Jewish colonial settlement has proceeded methodically, along the lines laid out by Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion. His approach has been echoed by every single government and every prime minister of Israel, whether Labor or Likud, right up until the present-day coalition headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, with xenophobic and fascistic members of that government, including Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, articulating their desire to ethnically cleanse the remaining Palestinians from the land long before October 7, 2023.

In that context, I believe that Israel used the Hamas-led October 7 attack/jailbreak as an excuse to wage an all-out war of aggression against the people of Gaza, while advancing incremental ethnic cleansing in the West Bank as well, including mass abduction and incarceration of Palestinians.

As for Palestinians inside the '48 territories, who carry Israeli passports, they remain second-class citizens, silenced and suffocated by the intimidation, harassment, and the terror they periodically experience. They are widely regarded by Israel as an "internal problem" and a latent threat.

Israel's use of excessive force and violence in order to maintain its colonization and occupation has in fact unveiled the truth that lies at the heart of this so-called conflict: that it is the Palestinian people that are facing an existential threat and not the other way around.

As this genocide unfolds, it is clear that the Palestinian national liberation cause is understood and embraced by millions across the globe, as evidenced by the mass protests that have taken place worldwide, including most recently, the self-immolation of a member of the US Air Force. It is clear for most people that Palestinians are the ones resisting erasure in the face of one of the world's most powerful militaries.

Israel has now shown itself for what it is – the emperor has no clothes and can no longer hide.

Today more than ever it has become clear that every Israeli accusation is in fact a reflexive confession. Everything





"I am personally proud of the ruins in Gaza." May Golan, Israeli minister of Social Equality and Women's Advancement.



- They are crowded together looking for food.
- -Shoot! At least they won't say they died of hunger.



"Dropping a nuclear bomb on Gaza is one option." Amihai Eliyahu, an Israeli far-right, extremist minister in Netanyahu's government.



I do not care.

that Israel alleges that Palestinians are guilty of is in fact a projection of its own behaviors, practices, and policies. It is Israel that is violating international law; it is the Israeli military that are belligerent and ferocious; it is they that have sexually harassed and raped Palestinian women; it is they that kill Palestinian babies, and it is they that use human shields.

It is they that are committing a genocide.

Whereas the Palestinians are the ones resisting and remaining resilient, steadfast, and defiant in the face of oppression.

Around the world, it is now known that Israel established itself through the killing of Palestinians, as well as their forced displacement, and the theft of their land. That is the bottom line, and the starting point. The original sin.

Israel's current genocidal campaign has impelled people to learn the history, and what people have understood is that they had the story upside down and mixed up. But now things are crystal clear, thanks to the words and actions of Israeli politicians, soldiers, settlers, and war criminals themselves.

The images and videos that have circulated in the last five months, with heavily armed Israeli soldiers acting as though they were playing a video game – laughing, joking, and mocking men, women, and children as they ran for their lives, to be shot at and sniped as though they were lifeless, meaningless, inhuman silhouettes – will be forever etched in everyone's memory. The soldiers riding the bikes of little children just killed are now engraved in everybody's minds, as well as the images of bodies hanging from the rubble as soldiers take pictures and videos, posing proudly with their "kills."

People now understand that Israel's violence is not fueled by its claims to self- defense because no country can defend itself from a people that it oppresses and occupies. People have also discovered that Israel does not have the "right to exist" if it comes at the expense of annihilating another people. It is the people that have a right to exist, not states, and a heavily militarized state cannot possibly claim that it feels threatened by the people it subjugates.

Israel's toxic narrative – based on decades of propaganda, falsifications, intimidation, and deceit – has been exposed. It is as clear as the day is long that Israel weaponizes antisemitism to deflect criticism of its colonial expansionism and genocidal acts, and the hurling accusations of "antisemitism" no longer works. The victimhood card has expired, and it has become more and more difficult for Israel to portray itself as a victim when it is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, and the crime of all crimes: genocide.

As Israeli government officials walk the halls of power, they are naked. Everyone can see them for who they really are. Although Israel's allies and enablers may still be unwilling to admit what this is really about, it is clear to everyone else that Israel has become the perpetrator.

Palestinians are sharing images and videos of their own slaughter – for the whole world to acknowledge and recognize – and Israel cannot counter that or justify itself, nor can it escape the truth or its responsibilities as the world watches a genocide against a captive population unfold in real time.

The victims of European Fascism and Nazism, those that came to Palestine to find refuge, have become the perpetrators. As Edward Said famously wrote, Palestinians have become "the victims of the victims." That truth is plainly visible now.

Caricatures courtesy of Gianluca Costantini.

Rania Hammad is an Expert at the Global Network on the Question of Palestine (Arab Renaissance for Democracy & Development). She is a writer and author with several publications to her name. She lives in Italy.

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Sumud: What It Means for Me



By George Sahhar



Despite all the negative connotations, pain and suffering have inspired poetry, literature, song, film, and love throughout the ages and in every culture. In the Palestinian context, this inspiration carries an added dimension, that of sumud, a unique iteration of resilience and steadfastness developed by Palestinians in response to their experience of the Nakba.

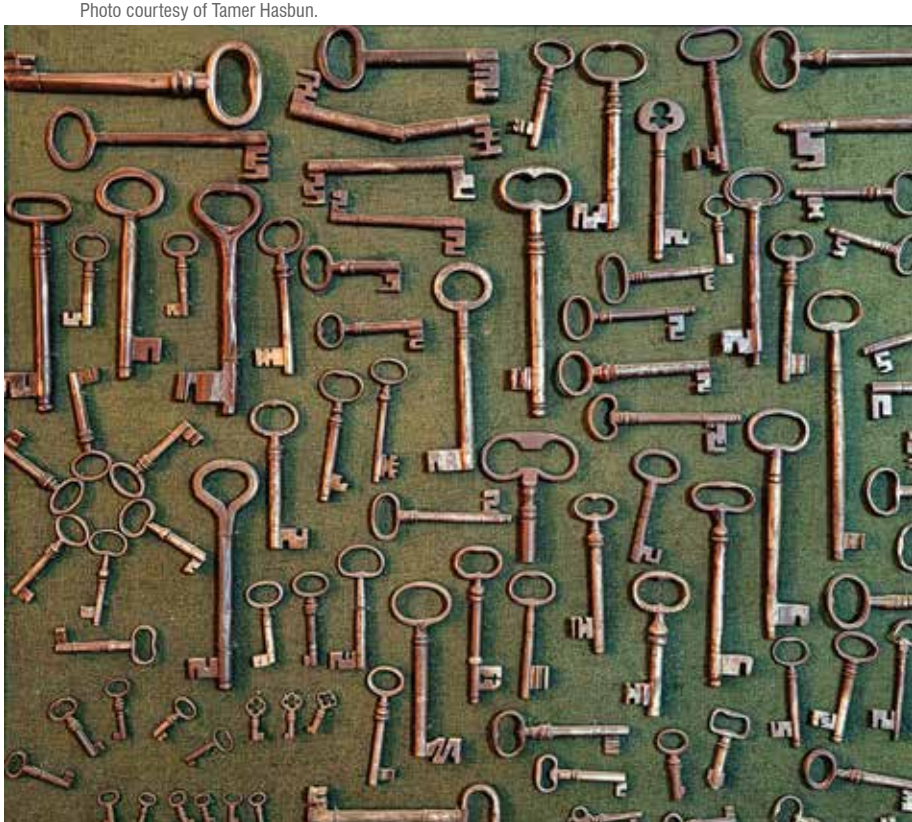
The Palestinian narrative has remained consistent and clear through changing times and with different audiences. It has formulated and reiterated the apparently insurmountable odds in a story that emerged from the Nakba's great displacement of 1948–49 and the tent years that followed. Palestinians have been telling the same story in one form or another ever since: to paraphrase the great Ghassan Kanafani, they have been knocking from the inside of the water tanker. That is what I consider to be the essence of sumud.

My father was a young man during the tumultuous days of the Nakba, and like many, he lost everything – except his conviction about the rectitude of the Palestinian cause which inspired his lifelong dedication to justice and human dignity. Shortly after the June 1967 war, as he stood in front of the family's West Jerusalem home located in Al-Baqa al-Tahta, from which they had been expelled in 1948, an Israeli lady came out of the house and asked him what he was doing there. He responded politely but resolutely that it was his house and that standing there reminded him of his mother. The lady told him that she had bought the house from the Israeli government and that if she saw him again she would call the police. Whenever he told this story, I used to comment that this was the only place in the world where the thief called the police on the homeowner. Other family property in West Jerusalem included a hotel and a cinema, and when I walk by, in the spirit of sumud, I hope that my presence haunts the current residents and reminds them of their original sin – I know for sure that the property belongs to my family.

My stance on reclaiming lost rights is by no means a call to deny the existence of others who now live on my family property. Acknowledgment of a historic injustice does not deny the right of others to exist, but rather serves as the path to peaceful coexistence in the future. The PLO Charter defines the state of Palestine as one for all its citizens irrespective of religion, whether Jewish, Muslim, or Christian – a conviction I share strongly. I certainly would like those occupying my family property evicted, and I want an apology from descendants of the lady who was about to call the police on my father, but I also want us to live together under the umbrella of justice and dignity for all.

This is how I understand Palestinian sumud. My father's story and that of my family have withstood the test of time and will remain valid regardless of the fact that both he and others have left this world with their wounds unhealed. Palestinian sumud has put the Zionist narrative under pressure and has caused a crack in Israel's seemingly unassailable discourse. Palestinians are no longer a lone voice in the wilderness, to borrow the term of a Jerusalem native from Ein Karem, namely John the

Photo courtesy of Tamer Hasbun.





The author's late father, Basil Sahhar, whose family were evicted from their Baqa al-Tahta home during the *Nakba*.

Baptist; and to borrow from the legacy of another famous Palestinian, we are the oppressed who will inherit the earth.

I yearn for a day when the power of logic prevails over the logic of power, and the power of love prevails over the love of power. That will be the day when Palestine is recognized as a full member at the United Nations. It will be the reward for our decades-long sumud. But even then, I want my family property returned. On that day, I plan to go back to the house in Al-Baqa al-Tahta, knock on the door, and say to those living there: "Hi, your grandmother was about to call the police on my father, but now I am back to haunt you with the memory. Please leave the house, and let us live together in peace and justice, because in order to build a culture of peace we must remove the reason for animosity." From the house I plan to go straight to my father's grave, lay a flower, and pray; and thank God for the fact that going forward, Jews, Christians, and Muslims would live together in peace.

George Sahhar is a resident of Jerusalem and an expert in communication and advocacy. He has designed and implemented numerous communication, media, and advocacy initiatives and is a trainer in negotiations, conflict resolution, and interpersonal communication. George holds a BA and an MA in speech communication and a BSc in political science from US universities in Iowa.

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Ode to Gaza



By Samirah Alkassim

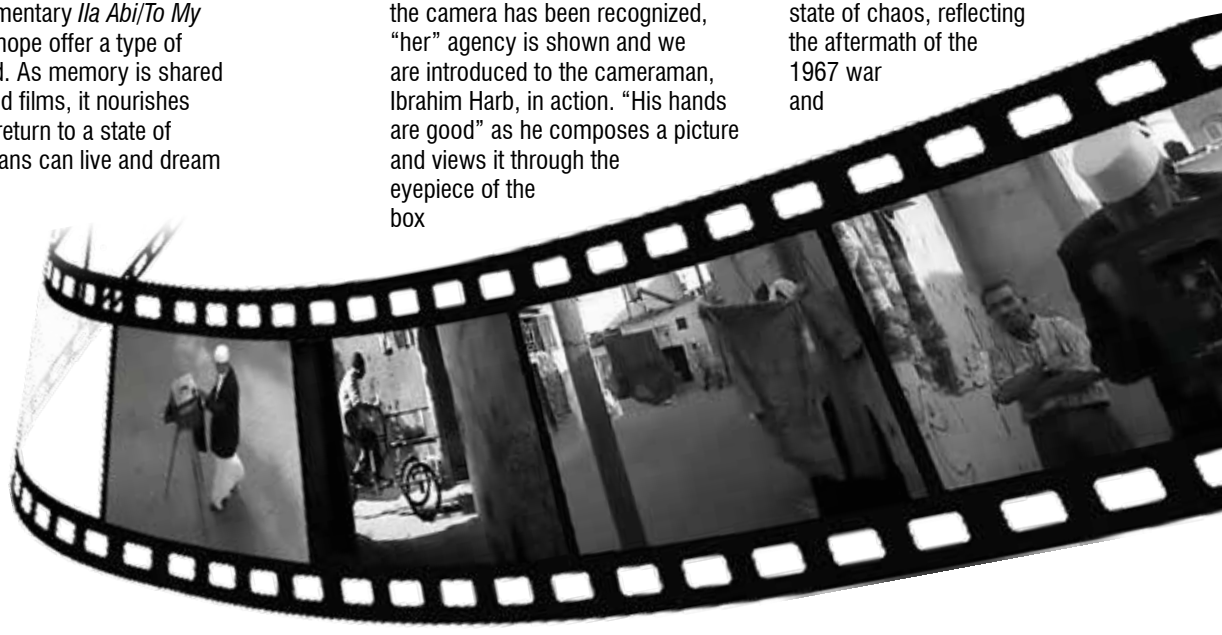


Although Gaza continues to endure a horror once imaginable only in the realm of fiction, its people forced to endure the most abject conditions while the world watches on, Abdessalam Shehadeh's 2008 documentary *Ila Abi/To My Father* reminds us that memory and hope offer a type of resistance that cannot be deracinated. As memory is shared through oral history, photographs, and films, it nourishes hope that life in Gaza might one day return to a state of habitation, in a future where Palestinians can live and dream freely.

In the film, Shehadeh highlights how Gaza's history, as reflected in photography and in the changing relationship of the people to their photographs, is marked by three distinct time periods: the period up to 1967; the period from 1967 to the first Intifada; and the period from the Oslo Accords to the present. The first period is a time of black-and-white photography where the photographer was an artist tending to fine details; in the second period, the photograph is a tool of surveillance in service of the banality of occupation; and in the third, it becomes evidence of martyrdom and a tool of resistance.

The film's title clues us in to its dedication to memory, history, and homeland, gesturing to someone who is no longer there but who is remembered, most likely the photographers who taught Shehadeh the trade. The camera, on the other hand, is immediately gendered female. Our first indication is a ruse unleashed in the first moments whereby Shehadeh recalls a first love, describing her legs, which are none other than those of an old photographic camera explained by a sequence of shots that caress the camera's body and tripod. As the camera is endowed with personhood, "she opens her eyes, to see all of us," we start to see moving images outside – a man transporting the camera on his bicycle, a woman putting laundry on a clothesline. It is as if once the camera has been recognized, "her" agency is shown and we are introduced to the cameraman, Ibrahim Harb, in action. "His hands are good" as he composes a picture and views it through the eyepiece of the box in which the camera is encased. We see the photographs being processed. We learn about the photographers who displayed their work on Share' al-Bahr (aka Rashid Street) and who, in addition to capturing Gaza's ordinary people, photographed the icons of Egypt's golden days – Gamal Abdel Nasser, Abdel Salim Aref, Abdel Halim Hafez, Farid Al-Atrash, and Umm Kulthum. This is the Gaza of black-and-white photography and of Shehadeh's happy childhood, when "people were not afraid of each other," when "the eyes were different" and women "were more beautiful."

One particular photographer, El-Haj Salameh, survived these three periods and now lives alone in his studio. Shehadeh visits his studio twice. Where once it contained all the trappings of a professional photography studio, with backgrounds, equipment, and drawers full of organized negatives, preserving a photographic archive of Gazan society, it is now in a state of chaos, reflecting the aftermath of the 1967 war and





A screenshot from Abdessalam Shehadeh's 2008 documentary *Ila Abi* (To My Father).

Israeli occupation. It is at this point that we see the first images in color, of tinted photographs in shattered frames, and then brightly colored Easter eggs, as Shehadeh recalls the neighbor's mother who colored Easter eggs for the kids at Sham el-Nessim, but who disappeared after 1967.

The events of 1967 ruptured not only the society but its relationship to images. No longer an art form documenting leisure activities and milestones in life, it became an instrument of the bureaucracy of occupation and panoptic surveillance. As we see in this section of the film, photographs were now useful for identifying the people of Gaza to the occupier. Images now documented the violence of occupation, showing scenes of dead bodies and trails of blood. But Shehadeh resists this banalization of the medium by insisting on showing photographs of families gazing back at the camera.

A conflict of seemingly inconsistent narratives is emphasized in the following sequence representing the second period (1967 to the first Intifada) by connecting black-and-white photographs of refugees from the UNRWA archive with color video footage of Salameh's studio, his rusted bicycle, and a black-and-white photo of Salameh on a motorbike: across the disjuncture, Shehadeh is looking for himself. This is perhaps reconciled once he has become a cameraman filming the unrest of the First Intifada, as we see in the image of him holding a shoulder-mounted video camera, ostensibly for a news outlet: "I was looking for my freedom in the photos. I started to run after the youth and tough faces, all of whom were looking for their freedom…" We can glean the initial optimism after Oslo in shots of the international airport in Gaza, and the quick realization of its disappointment with murals and posters of martyrs representing the third period (from Oslo to the present), as well as evidence of the culture of martyrs and remembrance by which the photograph had become defined. Shehadeh introduces us to the story of 'Ala' with whom he became acquainted while making his 1996 film *The Little Hands*, about children street vendors. Shehadeh stayed in touch with 'Ala' who dreamed of becoming a sailor and whose wedding Shehadeh hoped to photograph. But 'Ala' was martyred as he was a militant.

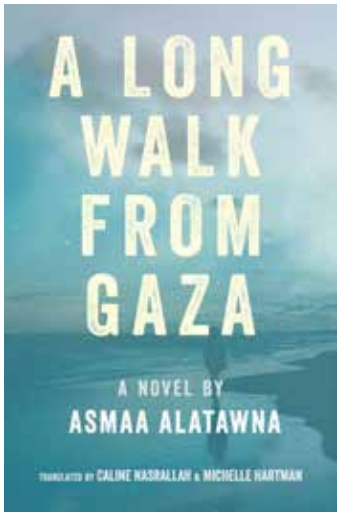
The film ends with more "recent" images, children in destroyed buildings that have become the visual signature of Israeli assaults on Gaza in the last two decades. While the very last images are ones of hope – of children flying kites, mouths in freeze frames agape with joy, one wonders how many of the faces we have seen have been killed or maimed in the assaults of 2008-09, 2012, 2014, and the current genocidal campaign that began on October 10, 2023. Revisiting this film now, we can assume death or worse trauma for the survivors: starvation, famine, deprivation; and indifference in centers of global power. But we can also hold onto *Ila Abi's* dedication to the "father" who taught Shehadeh how to see and the film's general message of hope, as hope is the only way forward, no matter how difficult it may be to see.

Samirah Alkassim is an experimental documentary filmmaker and assistant professor of film theory at George Mason University. She is the co-editor of the Palgrave Studies in Arab Cinema (2018), *and her publications include the co-authored book* The Cinema of Muhammad Malas *(Palgrave, 2018), contributions to Cinema of the Arab World:* Contemporary Directions in Theory and Practice *(Palgrave, 2020), and the* Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, 2nd edition (Rowman and Littlefield, 2020), among others.*

SCAN TO SHARE



A Long Walk from Gaza



By Asmaa Alatawna

Translated by Caline Nasrallah and Michelle Hartman

Paperback, fiction-in-translation, 248 pages, $16, April 2024

Available from the publisher at www.interlinkbooks.com, www.amazon.com, and from Jerusalem's Educational Bookshop.

The violence of life in Gaza, which has taken on immense proportions for the whole world to see, is intimately rendered here in a human story of resistance and resilience.

In the tradition of Palestinian women writers, Asmaa Alatawna has gifted us a novel that is both personal and political, and that exposes both the occupation and the patriarchy. *A Long Walk from Gaza* is a coming-of-age story that follows its teenage protagonist through her battles with a strict and abusive father, the exhilaration of her first crush, confrontations with occupation soldiers, and the heartbreak of leaving her home in Gaza for a new life in Europe. Beginning in Europe and working her way back to the protagonist's birth and early childhood, Alatawna's creative narration mirrors the traumas of her life and her people.

A Long Walk from Gaza exposes the harshness of both male authority and the stifling of the dreams of girls in parallel with the devastating conditions Palestinians endure under a brutal Israeli occupation; it also uncovers the challenges of fleeing these for a cold, alienating life in Europe. Alatawna lays all this bare within a story that also showcases moments of humor, joy, and the human capacity to survive and thrive at all costs. She skillfully weaves together the challenges of growing up in occupied Palestine while exposing the many intersections of violence, patriarchy, and growing up in a society that offers girls little to no compassion. Her teenage protagonist's feminist point of view is fresh and honest, powerfully conveying the heartbreaking truths of her life.

At heart, *A Long Walk from Gaza* is a tale of freedom. Each of the characters is psychically wounded by their circumstances and each resists in their own way. Gaza comes to life in Alatawna's novel, showing a rich and diverse society – its flaws along with its beauty, revealing worlds, some of which are being destroyed and some of which no longer exist today.

Praise for *A Long Walk from Gaza*

"[The novel] recounts the individual struggle of a woman carving out a path to create a free life for herself. This woman is completely absorbed by finding freedom from all authority –the Israeli occupation, her father, and society alike. It is a novel written with honesty, courage, and a willingness to be confrontational, without fear of judgment. It is as if the writer is using her own words to say what the protagonist says to an Israeli soldier who tells her to get off the bus, 'I'm not getting off and I'm not moving from here. Stab me if you want!'" Maha Hassan, *Al Araby*

Born in Gaza in 1978, Asmaa Alatawna is a Palestinian Bedouin from the Naqab desert and a French citizen since 2001. A graduate of Al-Azhar University, where she obtained her bachelor's degree in English literature, Alatawna then went on to get her master's degree in geopolitics from Sciences Po (Paris). While in Gaza, she worked at the Spanish press agency, EFE. Alatawna is known for her involvement in art and gender initiatives.

Translators

Caline Nasrallah is a literary translator, editor, and researcher with a focus on language as a feminist tool. She has co-translated two novels, A Long Walk from Gaza *being her third. Her editing and translation work spans fiction and nonfiction. She endeavors to put language at the service of liberation in each of her projects.*

Michelle Hartman is a professor of Arabic literature at McGill University and literary translator of fiction, based in Montreal. She has translated more than a dozen books from Arabic to English, and written extensively on women's writing and the politics of language use, translation, and literary solidarities.

SCAN TO SHARE



Portrait of an Artist in Gaza: Maisara Baroud

Maisara Baroud is a talented visual artist from Gaza City who has been passionate about the arts since he was a child.

Baroud's art practice is infused with what he calls the black-and-white dichotomy, which he relies on to highlight human suffering in different parts of the world, particularly in Palestine. His work seeks to address humanitarian issues artistically and aesthetically, highlighting topics such as war, immigration, political prisoners, illegal arrests, occupation, etc., and using dramatic and tragic scenes in which he explores the meanings of grief, sadness, death, violence, weakness, peace, hope, freedom, and light in a reflection of how life is intertwined with the fresh and continuous scent of death.

Baroud has participated in over 40 local and international group exhibitions in Palestine, France, the United States, and Japan, as well as Italy, Russia, Qatar, Egypt, Algeria, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia, Kuwait, and Canada.

***Rita and the Rifle*, 2004**: Held in Gaza, this project explored the relationship between art and literary texts. The works in this exhibition were influenced by the literary output of Palestinian writers and poets such as Ghassan Kanafani and Mahmoud Darwish, excerpts of whose works were translated into visual images.

***White Phosphorus for the Birth of Elia*, 2009**: Held in Cairo, Algeria, and Gaza. Here, Baroud presented 1,400 disfigured faces wearing various expressions, including pain, fear, and horror, caused by the use of white phosphorus bombs, specifically during the Israeli assault on Gaza in 2008–09.

***Glimmer Flash*, 2009**: Held in Algeria, this exhibition of works in color explored how shapes arise from randomized colors reflecting off surfaces.

***Salt Boats*, 2019**: Held in Bethlehem, this show addressed the fragility of life in the mass migration displacement we have witnessed across the seas in what are commonly considered death boats.

***Rubble*, 2021**: Held at the French Institute in Gaza, the theme of the exhibition was the reconstruction of cities destroyed by war.

***Existence*, 2021**: Art Scoops, an online exhibition at https://www.modernarabesque.com/en/news/3251.

On the Banks of Assyria, 2022.



On the Banks of Assyria, 2022.



Checkmate. Part of the *Salt Boats* project.



Baroud was wrapping up his new project ***Checkmate*** or ***Game of War*** in October 2023, but the war on Gaza brought it to a screeching halt. The project is now lying underneath the rubble and debris of his home and studio.

At the beginning of the COVID pandemic in 2020, Baroud started sharing an artist's diary with friends on social media platforms. He posted thousands of drawings, which he divided into different groups and presented as artistic diaries, each with its own specific name and theme.

Maisara Baroud's loyalty toward his friends has not faltered even as they live through the direst of circumstances. He continues to share his war diary titled "I Am Still Alive" on Facebook and Instagram while displaced in Rafah.

SCAN TO SHARE



Home Away from Home: Palestinian Diaspora Voices

I'm caught between two clouds

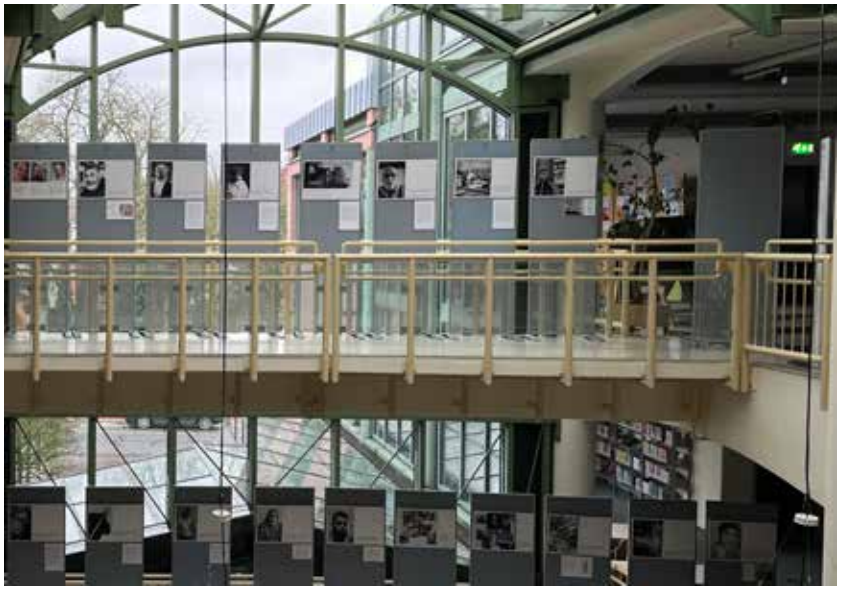
I neither belong to my exile

Nor can I touch my homeland – Khaled Shomali, Palestinian poet based in Germany

Millions of Palestinians live outside their homeland. In a photo exhibition that has traveled throughout German towns since 2021, Ursula Mindermann shows portraits of Palestinians who have made their homes in the United States, Scotland, Germany, and Lebanon. Twenty portraits, each accompanied by a story, were selected for the traveling exhibition.

The majority of Palestinians today live outside Palestine following their expulsion from their homes in the 1948 *Nakba*. They were uprooted in order for a Jewish state to be established in a land that – contrary to Zionist claims that it was "without a people"– was rich in culture, history, diversity, and human enterprise. How do these displaced and dispossessed people experience "Home" in their exile? How do they bridge the distance that separates them from "back home"? How do their memories and ideas about Palestine collide with their daily lives? And how do they resist the dehumanization and dispossession they experience, as well as the occupation of their ancestral land?





The project is based on the exhibition by the Scottish Network of Photographers for Palestine that was held in Glasgow in 2020, featuring images by renowned photographers Najib Joe Hakim (San Francisco) and Craig MacLean (Edinburgh), as well as Mindermann, to reflect the longing for and connection with Palestine as well as the strong connection to family history and culture.

At the 2021 opening of her Germany-wide exhibition, Mindermann gave a presentation on the notion of home and its loss. Later, she travelled to the refugee camps of Shatila and Burj el-Barajneh in Beirut and interviewed survivors of both the *Nakba* and the 1982 Sabra-Shatila massacre.

"Germany is our mother, our second mother, who has given us protection and freedom," says Meriam, who has established a new home in Düsseldorf, Germany.

"I have three homelands," says Nazih, who fled from Bethlehem to Amman and later to Germany.

"For us refugees, home lies in the future," says Ibrahim, a resident of Burj el-Barajneh refugee camp.

"The Syrian refugees are here now, they can go back one day. We are refugees for life," says Neimeh, who has been living in Shatila since the *Nakba*.

Their voices should be heard, and their stories never forgotten.

SCAN TO SHARE

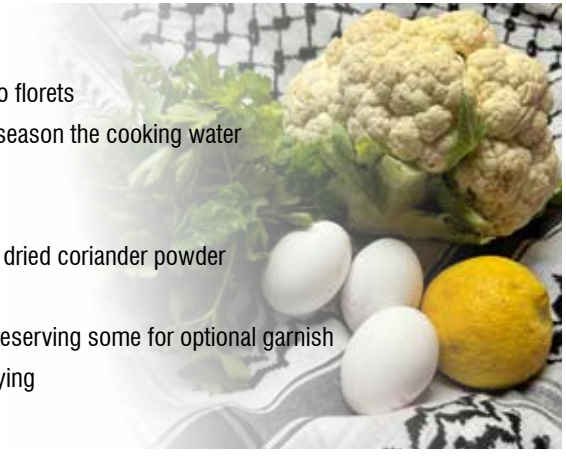


Mshat Crispy Cauliflower Florets

By Rawan Asaad

In Jerusalem's historic neighborhood of Silwan, cauliflower holds pride of place. Its cultivation is embraced as both a culinary and cultural practice in Silwan, whose fertile lands are ideal for growing the cruciferous vegetable. Cauliflower plays a versatile and vital role in Palestinian kitchens, and it is featured in many traditional dishes, from hearty stews and *maklouba* to flavorful mezze platters. Besides its culinary merits, cauliflower also symbolizes resilience and connection to the land, reflecting the rich agricultural heritage of Silwan and of Palestine as a whole.

The following recipe is an iconic Palestinian dish in which cauliflower is the star of the show. I have not provided quantities so that you can adjust according to your taste preferences.



Ingredients

- Cauliflower, cut into florets
- Cumin and salt to season the cooking water
- All-purpose flour
- Baking powder
- Salt, turmeric, and dried coriander powder
- Eggs
- Chopped parsley, reserving some for optional garnish
- Vegetable oil for frying

Instructions

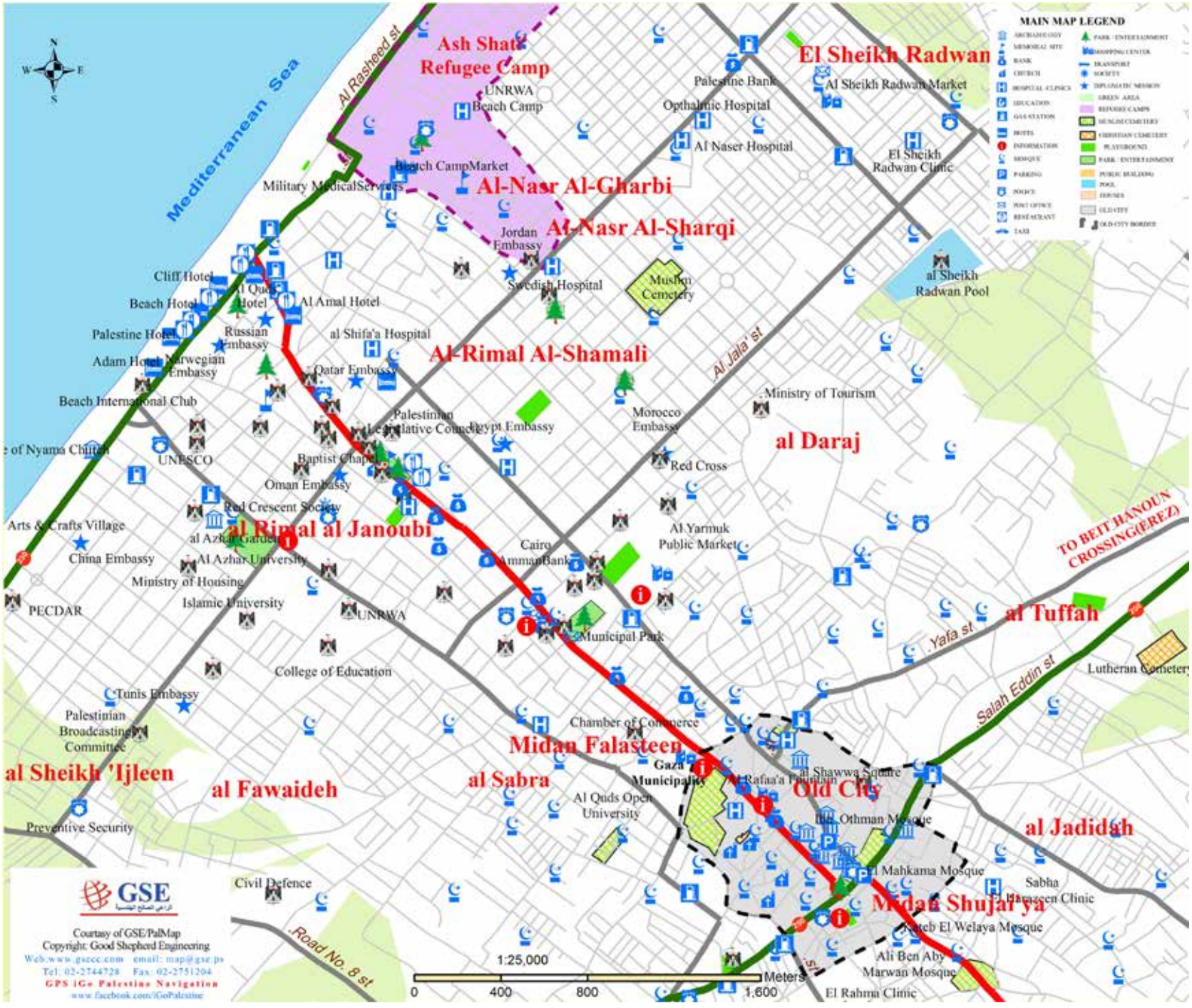
1. Cook the cauliflower until just tender in a pot of boiling water seasoned with cumin and salt. Drain thoroughly and set aside.
2. For the coating mixture, mix flour, baking powder, salt, turmeric, dried coriander powder, beaten eggs, and chopped parsley. Add water slowly to create a smooth and medium-thick batter.
3. Dip the cauliflower florets into the batter mixture, coating each one thoroughly.
4. Heat vegetable oil in a wide frying pan over medium-high heat; carefully place the battered cauliflower florets in the hot oil.
5. Fry until the cauliflower florets turn golden brown and crispy, moving them around to ensure even cooking. Use a slotted spoon to remove the fried cauliflower from the pan and place on paper towels to absorb excess oil.
6. Serve the crispy cauliflower florets piping hot, with an optional garnish of chopped parsley.

Sahtain!

SCAN TO SHARE



Map of Gaza


MAIN MAP LEGEND
Mediterranean Sea
Al Rasheed st
Ash Shati' Refugee Camp
UNRWA Beach Camp
Beach CampMarket
Military MedicalServices
Al-Nasr Al-Gharbi
Al-Nasr Al-Sharqi
Al-Rimal Al-Shamali
al Rimal al Janoubi
Midan Falasteen
al Sheikh 'Ijleen
al Fawaideh
al Sabra
Old City
al Daraj
al Tuffah
al Jadidah
Midan Shujai'ya
El Sheikh Radwan
Palestine Bank
Opthalmic Hospital
Al Naser Hospital
Al Sheikh Radwan Market
El Sheikh Radwan Clinic
al Sheikh Radwan Pool
Jordan Embassy
Swedish Hospital
Mushir Cemetery
Cliff Hotel
Beach Hotel
Al Quds Hotel
Al Amal Hotel
Palestine Hotel
Russian Embassy
al Shifa'a Hospital
Adam Hotel
Norwegian Embassy
Qatar Embassy
Beach International Club
Palestinian Legislative Council
Egypt Embassy
Morocco Embassy
Ministry of Tourism
UNESCO
Baptist Chapel
Oman Embassy
Red Crescent Society
Red Cross
Arts & Crafts Village
China Embassy
al Azhar Garden
Al Azhar University
Ministry of Housing
Islamic University
PECDAR
UNRWA
Municipal Park
Cairo AmmanBank
Al Yarmuk Public Market
College of Education
Tunis Embassy
Palestinian Broadcasting Committee
Chamber of Commerce
Gaza Municipality
Al Quds Open University
Preventive Security
Civil Defence
Al Shawwa Square
Al Rafaa'a Fountain
Ibn Othman Mosque
El Mahkama Mosque
Sabha
Qateb El Welaya Mosque
Ali Ben Aby Marwan Mosque
El Rahma Clinic
Lutheran Cemetery
Salah Eddin st
Yafa st
Road No. 8 st
TO BEIT HANOUN CROSSING(ERE'Z)
GSE
Courtesy of GSE/PalMap
Copyright: Good Shepherd Engineering
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David and Goliath

Up until October 7, hardly any Palestinian could have even imagined that in five months, the whole Israeli-Palestinian "conflict" would witness a major shift in favor of the Palestinians. I have put the word conflict in quotation marks because it gives the impression that we are dealing with two equal parties, when this is not the case. It is actually one party that is armed to the teeth and in total control of party two, totally backed by the United States, and with an insatiable appetite to devour more land, against an underdog that is seemingly meek, powerless, and like John the Baptist, has been crying out in the wilderness for the past 75 years with no one heeding his calls. We can also say that the conflict is between David, mentioned in the Book of Samuel, and Goliath, the heavily armed Philistine giant who had challenged King Saul for forty days to send out a man to fight him (I Sam 21:1–9).

On October 7, David, armed with a sling shot, stepped in and hit Goliath in the forehead with a stone. Goliath was seriously injured (Sani 10:7!), got mad, and went on a rampage killing everyone and destroying everything around him. But the world can see that Goliath will not be able get out of his predicament. The news of Goliath's destruction spread around the country like wildfire, and short of a few spineless lowlifes who sided with Goliath, almost everyone is standing with David because, throughout history, most people have always sided with the underdog. Upon a good fellow's request, a council of elders was set up to look into Goliath's actions and punish him severely if proven guilty. The case is still going on, but David's family and everyone in the country know that Goliath is guilty because they've seen what he has done. Goliath, who was once the celebrated hero of the Philistines, stands humiliated, and nothing and no one can vouch for him. His legacy has been wiped out by a skinny boy who, along with his slingshot, had the courage to stand up against him.

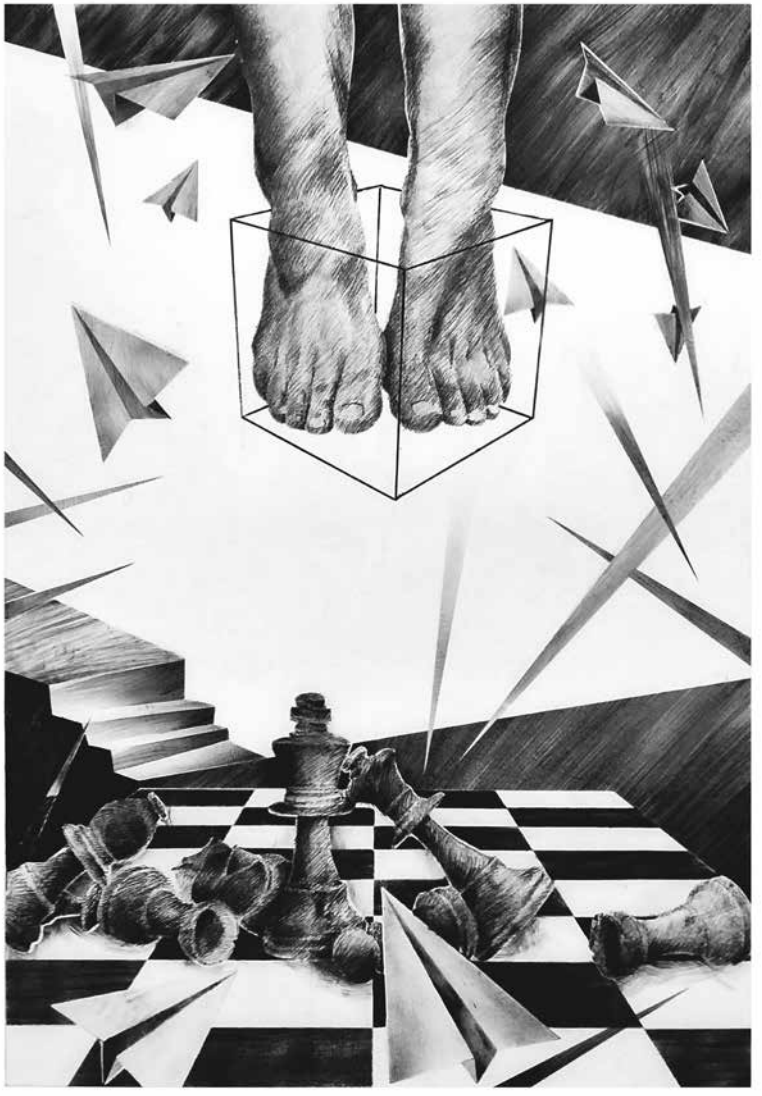
The story ends with David managing to rid himself and his tribesmen of the injustice that Goliath and his tribe had been inflicting upon them.

End note: Genealogical DNA studies have proved beyond any doubt that current Palestinians have no connection to the Philistines mentioned in the Old Testament.

Long live Palestine!

Sani Meo
Publisher





Checkmate by Maisara Baroud. One of a series of 25 artworks done for the *Salt Boats* project.

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