THIS WEEK IN
Palestine
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Issue 329 | November/December 2025

A Resilient Palestinian Economy

SCAN TO SHARE



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Message from the Editor

President Trump's so-called peace plan, widely criticized for its vagueness and failure to include Palestinians, was adopted by the United Nations after Mike Waltz warned that any vote against it would mean a "return to war." Proposing international supervision, it entrenches US-Israeli control of the Gaza Strip, where the daily killings continue, albeit in reduced numbers, and aid is denied entry, including essential medicines, tents, blankets, and heaters, as well as food. With the population facing a famine, complaints have been voiced that the delivered food items consist of chocolates and chips, while the available stockpiles of nutritious food have been denied entry and go to waste nearby. Torrential winter rains have flooded the tents that house Gazans amid the tons of rubble that remain of their former homes, and parents are unable to keep their children dry or warm. In the enclave that previously was known as the most densely populated area on earth, 2 million people have to live in less than 50 percent of what they once inhabited, as Israel retains the area beyond the newly established yellow line under its control, killing any civilian who tries to enter and retrieve belongings or relatives buried under the rubble. Israel is said to be arming and training militias of Gazans who are willing to collaborate with Israel. This could be a recipe for civil war. And anyone who has observed the fate of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank can see that such cooperation with Israel does not guarantee that the rights of Palestinians will be respected.

Germany has announced that it will resume the provision of military equipment to Israel which it had reluctantly halted this fall. France has recognized a Palestinian state yet canceled a symposium on Palestine this month. Journalists are still not permitted to enter the Strip. The pattern is similar to what happened with the signing of the Oslo Accords: The first Intifada had raised attention to Palestinian concerns, but once the so-called peace process was initiated, the sense of urgency dissipated. The mere absence of open conflict enabled Israel to continue its settler-colonial expansion and ethnic cleansing unabated – international supervision is not likely to contain it. And Palestinians will not accept foreign rule.

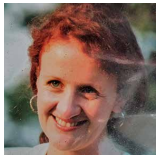
It is unimaginable how Gazans are enduring these conditions! Yet amid these developments, life goes on. The articles in this combined November-December issue present how Palestinians have endured for decades and shed light on the Palestinian economy and what the term resilience means in the context of the occupation that prevents any real development.

We wish to thank those who chose *TWiP* as a platform to advertise their services, thereby contributing to our sustainability. We also thank the authors who added value to this issue. They include H.E. Eng. Mohammad Al Amour, the Minister of National Economy of Palestine; Raja Khalidi, the former director-general of the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS); Fuad Abu Saif, the founder of the Palestinian Seed Bank; Arab Hospitals Group; Omar Da'na, an independent policy advocacy and human rights expert; Dr. Ali Qleibo, an artist, author, and anthropologist; Rift Valley Farms; the Palestine Capital Market Authority; Mohammad Ali Hammoudeh, who leads NextGen Power; and Ziad Anabtawi, a leading entrepreneur and philanthropist.

If you are looking for Christmas presents, take a look at our three books of the month: *Israel on the Brink* by Ilan Pappé, *Palestine Mapped* by Tom Suárez, and the children's book *Everything Grows in Jiddo's Garden*. Visit our Exhibition of the Month, *Northward … Southward* by Yousef Saadeh.

We are grateful that Tamer, our designer, is in better health and wish a blessed holiday season to all who are celebrating. Most of all, we wish for a peaceful new year for all!

Tina Basem



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A Future by Design

How Palestinians Are Building Their Own Economic Reality



By H.E. Mohammad Al Amour

In my role as minister, I review reports filled with data and projections. But the true state of our nation is not found in spreadsheets. It is found in the eyes of a young entrepreneur in Gaza coding through a power cut, in the calloused hands of a farmer in the Jordan Valley, and in the quiet determination of a woman in Nablus managing her family and a small business against all odds. From the heart of our collective pain rises their unbreakable will to build.

My mission, and the mission of this government, is to serve that will. The path forward demands more than reconstructing what was destroyed; it requires a fundamental shift from a mindset of mere survival to one of productive action. Economic resilience is not a government slogan; it is the foundation of our dignity.

For decades, we have seen our economic potential systematically stifled. An economy does not breathe when it is choked by 898 checkpoints and barriers. A business cannot grow under these conditions. Those 60 million lost work hours represent trucks of fresh produce spoiling in the sun, and skilled workers standing for hours in line, all just to get from one place to another This reality was designed to force dependency, trapping us in a cycle of temporary aid. But a life lived on aid is not the future our people demand or deserve. The only dignified alternative is to build for ourselves, driven by the ingenuity I see in every corner of Palestine.

Ministry of National Economy

Our vision is to cultivate an economy that creates real opportunities for our people. This vision rests on three commitments:

First, we will empower our local producers and connect them to the world. I have seen the quality of Palestinian goods, the craftsmanship, the innovation. Our identity is woven into what we create. That is why we are proud of the new TURATHI Center, funded by our partners in India, which is dedicated to preserving our cultural heritage by empowering artisans with modern technology. We are boosting exports through the TASDEER program that gives companies the tools to compete globally. And through

Behind the headlines of checkpoints and barriers, a different story is unfolding in Palestine. It's the story of a young woman launching a tech startup, an artisan preserving our heritage, and a farmer adopting green technology. Our government's role is to empower their spirit. We are building an economy where a business can be registered in five minutes, where honest entrepreneurs get a second chance, and where our products can reach any shelf in the world. This is how we build our future: not by waiting for permission, but by creating a new reality, one success story at a time.

A visit to Hebron.





The launch of the new automated business registration systems.

the SAWA 2 project, we are helping small businesses adopt green and circular economy practices.

Second, we will ensure that everyone has a fair chance to succeed. A resilient economy leaves no one behind, especially our women and youth. This is why we are launching the PROSPER project with support from Canada, a five-year initiative to create sustainable jobs for women and youth in the vital sectors of agribusiness and renewable energy. We are unlocking our tech potential through the $24 million IPSD project, which provides direct grants to innovative startups. And through the A-FIN II program, we are working with banks to see the person behind the loan application and providing entrepreneurs with the financial literacy to turn their vision into a viable business.

Third, we will build a government that serves, not suffocates. We are building a modern regulatory environment that fosters trust and growth. We recently approved the E-commerce Law to protect digital transactions. Critically, we are finalizing a modern Insolvency Law, because a strong economy is one that gives honest businesses and individuals/consumers a second chance to rehabilitate, not one that punishes failure. A sound insolvency framework encourages new investment, guarantees fairer access to credit for our small businesses, and strengthens our entire financial system. By also joining the global GS1 organization, we are enabling our products to carry internationally recognized barcodes, opening the doors to global supply chains.

This vision is not a dream. For those looking to invest in Palestine, we are creating a secure and predictable environment with a new Investment Law that protects your contributions.

To our partners and our diaspora, we say: Join us in building a new model of partnership. Let's move beyond temporary funding and co-invest in projects that create a future. We seek partners who will help us build capacity, measure our shared success through clear, tangible results, and solve root problems for good.

Skeptics will ask how this is possible. My answer is that we build our sovereign future in the present. Every company we register in five minutes, every law we modernize, and every product we prepare for a global shelf is a brick in the foundation of the independent Palestine to come. We do this not as a substitute for our political rights, but as a powerful expression of them.

Ultimately, economic freedom is the path to political freedom. Palestinians do not aspire merely to survive; we are determined to build, to create, and to thrive. Our work is to plant the seeds of a dignified future worthy of the unwavering steadfastness of our people.

H.E. Eng. Mohammad Al Amour is the Minister of National Economy of Palestine. A distinguished business leader with extensive experience in the private sector, he has founded several successful companies and previously served as chairman of the Palestinian Federation of Business Associations. As minister, he is focused on advancing institutional reform and building a resilient, self-reliant economic future for Palestine.

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Sumud

From the Economics of Resilience to the Economics of Survival in Palestine



By Raja Khalidi

Economists following Palestinian economic development issues are no longer surprised by the volatile and uncertain economic scene and by the recurrence of structural economic challenges, which result from over 55 years of occupation of Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Developmental, economic, and social goals as well as technical concepts and solutions have been adopted over the years to address problems that, at their core, are produced by unresolved political contradictions that arise from the limited legal jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its diminished political reach.

Anyone following this journey, especially since the Oslo era, knows well how the concepts, programs, and policy and economic priorities of the PA on one hand and the donor countries and their international organizations on the other have intertwined. The latter come with messages, goals, templates, and methodologies of "sustainable development" that they aim to plant in Palestine in the hope that they will sprout in the form and substance of good "Palestinian economic governance." Perhaps the most enduring among these various concepts summarizes the thinking that has predominated in attempts to deal with the conflict over the many decades of Palestinian economic history: It acknowledges that there can be no development under prolonged occupation, and proposes "steadfastness" as an attainable goal for economic policies – indeed steadfastness was the only feature one could hope for in the pre-2023 stagnation phase.

For the past 30 years, we have witnessed the various stages of international aid to Palestine, delivered within mandates of either "promoting the peace process" (international donors) or "providing

SUMUD
THE FINNISH PALESTINE NETWORK
صُمُود - شَبكة فِلسطين الفنلَنْديّة.

Over its long history, the concept of sumud, steadfastness, has generated numerous studies and writings that blend its various meanings and contexts, which has led to a distancing from its original meaning and intent. Modern variant terms have been floated, such as "resistant" or "emancipatory" steadfastness, which aim to recognize the original meaning of the concept that included the acknowledgment of the Palestinian right to resist the occupation and efforts to achieve independence and true sovereignty.

A water security project funded by the World Bank aimed at enhancing Palestinian water resilience and sustainability.





Palestine's resilient olive tree.

assistance to the Palestinian people" (UN agencies). Aid flows have approached a total of 44 billion dollars over those three decades. Each phase had its specific goals that changed according to political shifts and international funding agendas. Since the mid-2010s, serious discussions have taken place between donors and Palestinian partners regarding the future role of donor funding, especially with the lack of any political horizon. The realization of the dead end of Oslo/Paris challenged the conventional development-aid concepts that might have justified continued intervention (and spending) in Palestinian economic, political, security, and financial affairs under an Israeli occupation that clearly is showing no signs of packing up.

On the eve of the 2023 war, a press release issued by the World Bank – donors' preferred intellectual patron – regarding new programs planned for the Palestinian water sector reads as if that institution had discovered how to reinvent the Palestinian developmental wheel. This old wine in new bottles called for terms to keep pace with the current phase and take into consideration the Palestinians' political sentiments and their frustration with the entire international community for leaving Palestine "behind the curve."

What may have gone unnoticed, however, by those who follow the World Bank's work in Palestine, which of course has delivered a lot of good results over 30 years, is the dressing up of such routine projects in a locally colored guise, framing them in ways that aim to give momentum and charm to what are actually very mundane infrastructure projects. Such work has for over half a century been at the heart of the Bank's global mandate. In Palestine, however, such projects are presented as "enhancing Palestinian water resilience and sustainability," which seems to be a nice way of saying that Israel controls all Palestinian water resources.

So where, one might ask, did they come up with this developmental concept and this catchy term? At first glance it may seem that the Bank's use of the term resilience (*sumud*) in the Palestinian context reflects a concept that has been derived from international developmental experiences, localized, and translated into the Palestinian context in order to frame international programs, as evidenced by its use by several countries and donor institutions that operate in Palestine. But could it be that the concept of *sumud* (originally translated as "steadfastness") has its Palestinian history, one that is unrelated to the international understanding of the word or the purpose of its use at this particular stage?

To appreciate the meaning of "steadfastness" in the post-2023 context – where it permeates the discourses and policies of a wide spectrum of Palestinian and international institutions as a central goal of their funding – it is useful to delve a bit into its history. Each party that uses the term does so based on its own vision and interests, without there necessarily being a common understanding between what the World Bank, the PA, or any economic researchers or policy makers might mean by incorporating the concept into their discourse. While the concept of steadfastness is translated into technical applications through development plans and projects by donor countries in various sectors, aiming to achieve family, community, or natural resource resilience, it is worth noting the origin of the concept, its intention and meaning that date back to an entirely different era.



Palestine's olives.

Sumud's first developmental translation was in a distinctly political and Palestinian context: It was conceived 50 years ago, when the "Egyptian victory" in the October 1973 war led to a political process that resulted in the first Arab-Israeli normalization agreement while also proving a setback for the unified Arab stance and for Palestinian aspirations for an independent Palestinian state. At that stage, only 10 years had passed since the occupation of the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and the economic situation of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories was not yet threatened, although regional developments were beginning to threaten the liquidation of the entire Palestinian cause.

Therefore, when in 1978 the Arab Summit was held in Baghdad, with the aim of a pan-Arab isolation of Egypt , its slogan was "The Conference of Confrontation and Steadfastness." This reflected the Arab opposition to the Israeli-Egyptian-American alliance, and ensured a united Arab position that rejected normalization and stressed the persistence of the Palestinian people in their land and their ability to confront the occupation. This means that the underlying political motivations for the concept's entry into the political scene were liberationist and humanitarian, and that steadfastness and resistance were understood not as separate notions but rather as complementing each other.

In the decades that followed the Baghdad Summit, the concept was readily taken

up by Palestinians to frame important developmental political initiatives that were introduced both from within the occupied territories and outside. Thus, in the early 1980s, in both Jerusalem and Amman, two ambitious economic programs were established.

The first was a comprehensive Palestinian embodiment of the concept of practical steadfastness, realized through the convening of the Development for Steadfastness Conference in 1981 in Jerusalem, organized by the Arab Thought Forum. This conference resulted in a monumental research book to

A parallel development was the establishment of the Joint Jordanian-Palestinian Committee to Support Steadfastness in the Occupied Territories, which served in the 1980s as a clear indication of new Arab alliances. It particularly aimed at mending the rift between the Palestinian and Jordanian sides, ten years after the battles between the Jordanian army and the Palestinian resistance. The committee was tasked with managing the Supporting Steadfastness Fund to which Arab states contributed around half a billion dollars over the



Failed Oslo Accords.

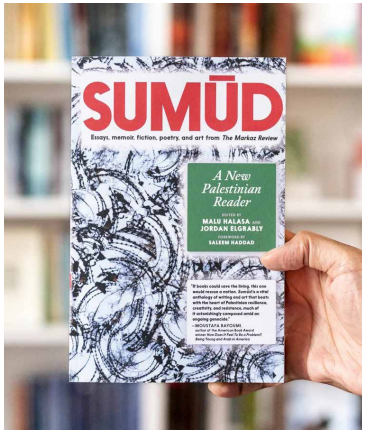
which the first generation of Palestinian sociologists, economists, and planners contributed, led by the engineer and activist Ibrahim Dakkak. This valuable collection formed a reference for original scientific research from the front lines, analyzing the devastating effects of the occupation on all aspects of Palestinian life, and proposing policies and strategies to ensure development and steadfastness. The aim was to strengthen the struggle to end the occupation and dismantle the settlements, a goal that at the time seemed reasonable and enjoyed broad Arab and international consensual support.

following years (rather than the billion originally pledged). The committee allocated these funds to agricultural, cooperative, housing, educational, productive, media, and research projects in the form of grants and loans (mostly nonrepayable), distributed through institutions and individuals with affiliations to both sides in one way or another. The Jordanian side was headed by the Minister of Occupied Territories Affairs, while the Palestinian side was headed by Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), the military commander of Fatah in the occupied territories. He certainly appreciated the importance of material support to people's steadfastness under occupation, but his primary focus, until his assassination in 1988, remained on integrating development into a broader doctrine of resisting the occupation.

Thus, within a few short years of Palestinian economic history, a dilemma emerged that remains valid to this day. It is perhaps the only one that can be considered meaningful in the context of confronting a war of extermination: the correlation between efforts to achieve a degree of development to bolster the necessary human, social, and economic resilience and those to enable the Palestinian people to resist colonialism and defeat the occupation. Simply put, Palestinian economic resilience is meaningless, and possibly self-defeating, when detached from steadfastness/resistance. This bold phase of organized Palestinian action, directed both internally and externally, was followed by the years of the first Intifada and its various radical economic and social movements, alongside violent resistance.

However, the Palestinian development vision, struggle, and aspirations were radically transformed following the shift in political circumstances and the balance of power, particularly after the Gulf War and the 1991 Madrid Conference. Then came the achievement of Professor Yusif Sayigh and a team of experts, drawn on talent from within and outside Palestine, who in 1993 developed the Development Program for the Palestinian National Economy for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Yet this monumental vision could not withstand the recalibration of Palestinian development aspirations by the political limits of non-sovereign development that were agreed by the PLO under the Oslo/Paris Accords, beginning in 1993. For a couple decades at least, *sumud* was largely relinquished to the back pages of Palestinian development doctrine.

Fast forward to 2023: On the eve of the war, the PA was on the verge of adopting a development program to lock in a less politicized interpretation of the concept to batten down the hatches and weather an assumed six years of no political horizon. This latest iteration (promoted by a well-intentioned but weary UN agency) dubbed "transformative resilience," appropriated the term to suit a liberal, nonconfrontational agenda, much like its use in promoting routine infrastructure projects. This latter formulation is perhaps the most insidious yet floated, as the intended transformation is



Sumud - A New Palestinian Reader.

supposedly toward a better life: jobs, services, and other individual gains, without offering any real change to the structural problem of occupation and the denial of sovereignty. Those promoting this resilience message do not claim that it would bring the Palestinian people closer to their national goal of independence, only that it may enable them to not be erased or left behind by globalization.

At the same time, even in the wake of the Gaza War earthquake, we witness the continued use of the resilience slogan by Palestinian leaders who call on the



International aid to Palestine.

people to rally around it in the absence of any alternatives beyond supporting the people's continued presence on their land. At points in the war, many Gazans on social media disparaged their compatriots in the West Bank and elsewhere for saluting their *sumud* at a moment when they were facing extinction.

This raises critical questions for observers of the Palestinian political and development landscape as to how and why the organic link between resilience and resistance in the Palestinian vision has been abandoned, whereby development and resilience become ends in themselves, no longer fashioned as a means to liberation. We have already seen how international parties sympathetic to the Palestinian cause (without being able to address the root cause of the Palestinian people's deprivation of their rights) can find a plausible justification for continuing to support the Palestinian people, using program themes that align with Palestinian development plans, which were themselves formulated with the aim of supporting steadfastness.

The question, already legitimate before 2023 and pressing today, is whether the experience of 30 years of transitioning from an authentic development doctrine to imported interpretations of it – without achieving development or realizing the project of liberation and independence – will be repeated in the indefinite normalization of the term "steadfastness," as it is transformed into a repetitive pattern of planning and Palestinian life and aspirations.

The harmony between international actors and the PA on the strategy of resilience might be seen as reflecting best practices in international aid provision, that is, international funding that responds to the visions of the recipient. However, the problem here is that despite the convergence on the broad slogan, this agreement masks a "dialogue of the deaf" between the two sides in Palestine. The Palestinian people always understood and practiced in their daily lives steadfastness as a means to liberation, not as an end in itself, a goal, or a mere living condition. For donors, it's a buzz word.

While Palestinians legitimately can claim copyright to the concept of *sumud*, this comes not out of attachment to the term, but from compulsion: Meanwhile, friendly donor countries and agencies, despairing any radical change in the status quo, have surrendered to the power of Israeli colonialism on the ground and globally. Even in the face of a devastating war of extermination targeting everything Palestinian, their programs, policies, and projects for Palestinian steadfastness are stripped of any liberationist vision or objective, especially under the pressure of Israel and the United States, as they dehumanize their assistance to Palestine. They are detached from the obligation of working to implement international resolutions and agreements that are supposed to protect and realize Palestinian rights, and they refrain from any confrontation with unilateral Israeli actions.

At a moment when steadfastness is no longer the challenge that Palestinian development is facing, and confronting the impacts and risks of genocide will continue to be a primary goal, survival becomes the overarching theme for tomorrow. There are no textbook or World Bank policies for managing an economy amidst a genocide, except surviving it and repulsing it. While donor programs may succeed in providing relief to the Palestinian people by providing basic necessities and fostering limited technical improvements – however beneficial in themselves – the history books will explain most likely that such engagement perpetuated the occupation and, even worse, risked complicity in its crimes.

Raja Khalidi is a development economist who has widely researched, published, and lectured on Palestinian economic conditions in Lebanon, in the Arab region in Israel, and in the occupied territories. After serving as senior economist with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD-Geneva) until 2013, between 2019 and 2025, he was director-general of the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), the premiere Palestinian economic think tank.

SCAN
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The Seed That Outlived the Bulldozer



By Fuad Abu Saif

The journey of preserving Palestine's seeds began more than two decades ago, in 2003, amid a time of siege, curfews, and eroding agricultural independence. It was then that the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) initiated the first systematic effort to collect, document, and safeguard the indigenous seed varieties that had nourished Palestinian generations for centuries. The motivation was not academic curiosity but survival. Farmers were beginning to notice something deeply alarming: the steady disappearance of their *baladi* seeds, wheat, barley, lentils, onions, and countless others, that had long defined local farming systems and diets.

This decline was no accident. In those years, the Palestinian market was flooded by Israeli and foreign seed companies selling hybrid and genetically modified varieties, often aggressively promoted through supply chains tied to imported fertilizers and chemicals. These seeds, while promising high yields, came with dependency. They could not be replanted after harvest, forcing farmers to purchase new seeds each season and tying the future of Palestinian agriculture to external suppliers. By the mid-2000s, field teams from the UAWC began documenting a sharp reduction in the availability of traditional seeds among smallholder farmers. The genetic and cultural foundation of Palestinian farming, painstakingly preserved through centuries of local selection, was under threat of extinction.

Against this backdrop, and often under difficult financial and political conditions, UAWC's agronomists and partner farmers launched a quiet resistance. They began collecting remnants of traditional seeds from elderly farmers, storing them in small containers, and testing their germination season after season. Each saved seed was a testimony of continuity. Each bag labeled with a village name was a small act of reclaiming history from disappearance. The initiative was not a project born of laboratories or foreign funding, it was born of necessity, a belief that whoever controls the seed controls the food, and whoever controls the food controls the future.

After seven years of persistent fieldwork, trials, and documentation, this vision materialized in 2010 with the establishment of the Palestinian Seed Bank in Hebron, the first national institution dedicated to conserving and multiplying local varieties adapted to Palestine's climate and soils. It was the outcome of a long and dangerous process that combined scientific rigor with grassroots determination. The seed bank emerged as a declaration of sovereignty, a living repository built from the conviction that protecting seeds is inseparable from protecting life, land, and dignity.

The Palestinian Seed Bank is a living system that renews itself each season through farmers who plant, reselect, and multiply their seeds before distributing them to other farmers in a cycle of conservation and renewal.

Today, more than twenty years after those humble beginnings, when the first jars held local zucchini and *fakous* seeds, carefully stored in a small room

Sunflower in field with team, illustrating successful cultivation from seed bank stock





Large tomato the field, showcasing seed bank harvest quality.

in Hebron, the Palestinian Seed Bank stands as both a scientific achievement and a human story of perseverance. It is far more than a technical project; it is a testament to the intersection of research, farming, and resistance. The seed bank remains an evolving experiment in how a people living under occupation continues to cultivate independence, one seed at a time.

The Palestinian Seed Bank is a living system that renews itself each season through the farmers who plant, reselect, and multiply their seeds. Seeds here are not meant to be preserved and forgotten, they are meant to live, to return to the soil, to adapt, and to feed the people who have protected them for generations. In a modest laboratory and in small fields scattered across different areas of the West Bank, seeds are tested for germination, drought tolerance, and local adaptation before being redistributed to farmers as part of community-based partnerships built on trust and shared knowledge. In this way, the seeds move continuously between the bank, the soil, and the farmer, creating a cycle of conservation and renewal.

Each growing season, farmers return part of their harvest to the bank for documentation and storage while replanting the rest in their own fields. This exchange lies at the heart of the "community seed bank" concept, where farmers are not passive recipients but active custodians of biodiversity. Over time, this system has evolved into a decentralized network that stretches across the West Bank, linking women's and youth cooperatives that cultivate local varieties and market them under the simple but powerful message: From our land to our tables.

The bank has developed a detailed database that records each variety's characteristics, its origin, genetic and agronomic traits, and field performance as reported by the farmers who grow it. This integration of scientific knowledge and local experience has produced a unique model that bridges modern agronomy with the wisdom of the land. In Palestine, a farmer who experiments with a seed in his or her field is as crucial as the researcher who analyzes it in the lab; together, they are redefining what agricultural research means under occupation.

The seed bank has also become a learning hub, training farmers, students, and young agronomists in traditional conservation practices and climate adaptation using local resources. Among its rows of labeled jars and test plots, a new generation learns that development does not begin with externally funded projects but with knowledge rooted in the soil. It has become a meeting place between women who safeguard seeds in their kitchens and experts who study them under microscopes – a meeting between memory and science, between heritage and innovation, between nostalgia for the past and the right to the future.

In this sense, the Palestinian Seed Bank has transformed from a storage facility into a symbol of agricultural sovereignty. It is as much a scientific enterprise as it is a national project, redefining the relationship between people and land in a time of occupation and climate crisis. It proves that resistance is not only fought on the front lines, it can begin with a small seed planted in free soil, quietly growing into food, dignity, and freedom.

This community-based partnership, built on trust and shared knowledge, is an experiment in cultivating independence under occupation, a testament to the intersection of research, farming, and resistance.



Okra seeds, an example of local seed preservation.

The Palestinian Seed Bank was never intended solely to preserve plant biodiversity; its deeper purpose has been to redefine the foundations of Palestine's agricultural economy. Every locally preserved seed represents a self-sustaining production cycle, a coin kept from flowing into import markets, and a job created in the countryside instead of lost to migration or unemployment. Over the years, the seed bank has evolved from a modest laboratory into a quiet economic engine, supporting thousands of farmers through a system grounded in participation, cooperation, and independence rather than dependency.

At the heart of this system lies a simple but profound principle, when farmers plant their own seeds, they are reclaiming the entire economic value chain, from seed to market. Local seed multiplication saves farmers from the high costs of imported inputs and strengthens their ability to plan and produce without relying on what is available in Israeli-controlled markets. Experience has shown that local varieties are a sustainable economic resource, capable of forming the backbone of a resilient national economy.

In recent years, this vision has taken tangible shape. Women's and youth cooperatives across different areas of the West Bank have been using local seeds to produce *mouneh* goods, jams, and packaged legumes, selling them in local Palestinian markets where demand for organic and naturally grown food is steadily increasing. These products are not treated as mere commodities but as living stories of the land where the seed came from, how it was multiplied, and who the farmers and women were who turned it into nourishment. Thanks to their superior quality and authentic flavor, these goods fetch excellent prices in domestic markets, becoming a symbol of Palestinian consumers' renewed trust in their own produce, and proof that local agriculture can be both economically viable and a quiet act of food sovereignty.

At the same time, other varieties have helped lower production costs, especially those adapted to dryland farming and drought conditions. In many parts of the West Bank, such varieties have enabled farmers to return to lands they had abandoned for years due to the high cost of irrigation. Field data show that farmers who use well-adapted local seeds can reduce their overall expenses by up to 40 percent, yielding a higher net profit even when total output remains modest. It is a simple equation: smaller yields, lower costs, greater resilience.

Cultivating seeds as economic policy and a tool of resistance: The farmers and researchers associated with the seed bank seek to preserve plant biodiversity as a means to redefine the foundations of Palestine's agricultural economy, creating a self-sustaining production cycle that is independent of the Israeli-controlled import market.



Seed storage and conservation room at the Palestinian Seed Bank.

Through this emerging economic cycle, the seed bank has become a bridge between science and the marketplace. The research carried out within it no longer ends in reports but translates into tangible results: improved varieties, local markets that grow around them, and supply contracts with educational institutions and community kitchens that use traditional produce in their meals. With each season, this web of local economic activity expands, an economy rooted in fairness, diversity, and sustainability, rather than in quick profit or corporate uniformity.

This model demonstrates that food sovereignty is a coherent economic practice: from seed to storage, from field to table. It represents a transformation from an aid-based economy to one built on self-reliance, from dependency on donors to the creation of value within the community itself. For this reason, protecting the seed bank has become a matter of Palestine's economic security.

As the world faces deepening food and climate crises, the Palestinian Seed Bank offers a compelling model from the Global South, an economy of resilience that springs from the soil and restores its value. Here, the seed is social and economic capital, linking science with justice, resistance with development, and the memory of the past with the possibility of the future.

A Test of Resilience

On the morning of July 31, 2025, Israeli forces raided the Seed Multiplication Unit of the Palestinian Seed Bank in Hebron. The team on site was forced to evacuate under threat as soldiers surrounded the compound. Moments later, the main control room was deliberately destroyed, cutting off electricity and water to the entire facility. The irrigation network was torn apart, laboratory and field equipment looted or crushed, and parts of the paper and digital archives were scattered across the soil. What had been a living space of research and renewal was turned into a landscape of silence and dust.

International environmental and human rights networks condemned the attack as a direct assault on civilian agricultural infrastructure, an effort to undermine the Palestinian people's right to food and biodiversity. Yet what followed was not a chapter of despair, but one of adaptation and resolve. Within days, the seed bank's staff, supported by dozens of partner farmers, began assessing the damage and activating a contingency plan that had quietly existed for years, decentralization.

Since its inception, the bank had maintained small community fields and seed houses across different areas of the West Bank precisely for such a scenario. When the main unit in Hebron was destroyed, these dispersed plots became lifelines. Duplicate seed samples, stored with farmers, in women's cooperatives, and in small community-run cold rooms, were quickly gathered and replanted. By early September, new fields were already sprouting in multiple locations. What had once been a safety precaution became proof of concept: no single attack could erase a living network of Palestinian seeds.

The incident also laid bare the moral and legal dimensions of the occupation's war on agriculture. Destroying a seed bank is the deliberate erasure of a people's biological memory, a clear violation of international law, and an assault on the foundations of self-reliance.

The immediate response was an urgent appeal, a call to conscience addressed

to partners and allies around the world to act swiftly in defense of Palestinian local seeds and the heritage they embody. Messages were sent out within hours, urging international networks, research institutions, and solidarity movements to help protect what remained of the genetic material and to ensure the continuation of the seed bank's mission.

The rebuilding process has since taken on a symbolic and strategic meaning. The new model relies on a distributed, community-driven structure made up of smaller, independent multiplication units connected through a shared digital archive and regular seed exchanges. This decentralized approach not only reduces risk but also empowers communities to become true custodians of their local biodiversity. As one farmer put it during a field visit: "They can destroy a building, but not a network of hearts."

In the months that followed, the story of Hebron's destroyed unit echoed far beyond Palestine. Agroecology and biodiversity networks around the world cited it as a case study in how resilience must be cultivated before catastrophe, not after. The act of replanting amid ruins became a declaration of continuity. Where bulldozers had torn through the soil, new shoots began to rise, fragile, green, and alive.

I have seen with my own eyes how a single seed, saved, planted, and multiplied, can reorder an entire season. I have watched farmers return to lands once declared barren and watched children taste bread made from wheat their grandparents once grew. In these moments, I am reminded that sovereignty begins in the soil.

The Palestinian Seed Bank is an act of memory, defiance, and hope. Every seed saved is a refusal to surrender, every sprout that pushes through the dust is a quiet declaration that life persists, even under occupation. What was once a handful of jars in a small room in Hebron has become a living testament to our collective will to endure and to dream.

Seeds of memory are seeds of freedom! Heirloom seeds enable the cultivation of lands that had been abandoned for years due to the high cost of irrigation.

The destruction we faced in 2025 did not erase this work, it renewed it. From the rubble grew a clearer vision, that our resilience must be built from within, rooted in communities that refuse to vanish. This is the story of a people reclaiming their right to decide what to grow, how to eat, and how to live.

As I write these words, seeds collected decades ago are being planted again in the soil of Palestine. They carry the memory of loss and the promise of return. They remind us that freedom, like the seed itself, can be buried, but it can never be destroyed.

Fuad Abu Saif is a Palestinian researcher and activist devoted to the land, seeds, and the right of people to grow their own food. He conceived the idea of establishing the Palestinian Seed Bank and has since dedicated his work to protecting local seeds as the foundation of food sovereignty and community resilience in Palestine.

SCAN TO SHARE



Arab Hospitals Group

A Pillar of Economic Resilience

مجموعة مستشفيات العربي
ARAB HOSPITALS GROUP

Courtesy of the Arab Hospitals Group

Palestine's modern economy has been shaped by uncertainty: closures, restrictions, political instability, and war. In such a context, building and sustaining resilient institutions is near impossible. Yet, over the past 25 years, the Arab Hospitals Group (AHG) has defied that reality. From a single center, it has grown into the country's largest private healthcare network, not only providing critical services to patients, but also contributing meaningfully to the Palestinian economy.

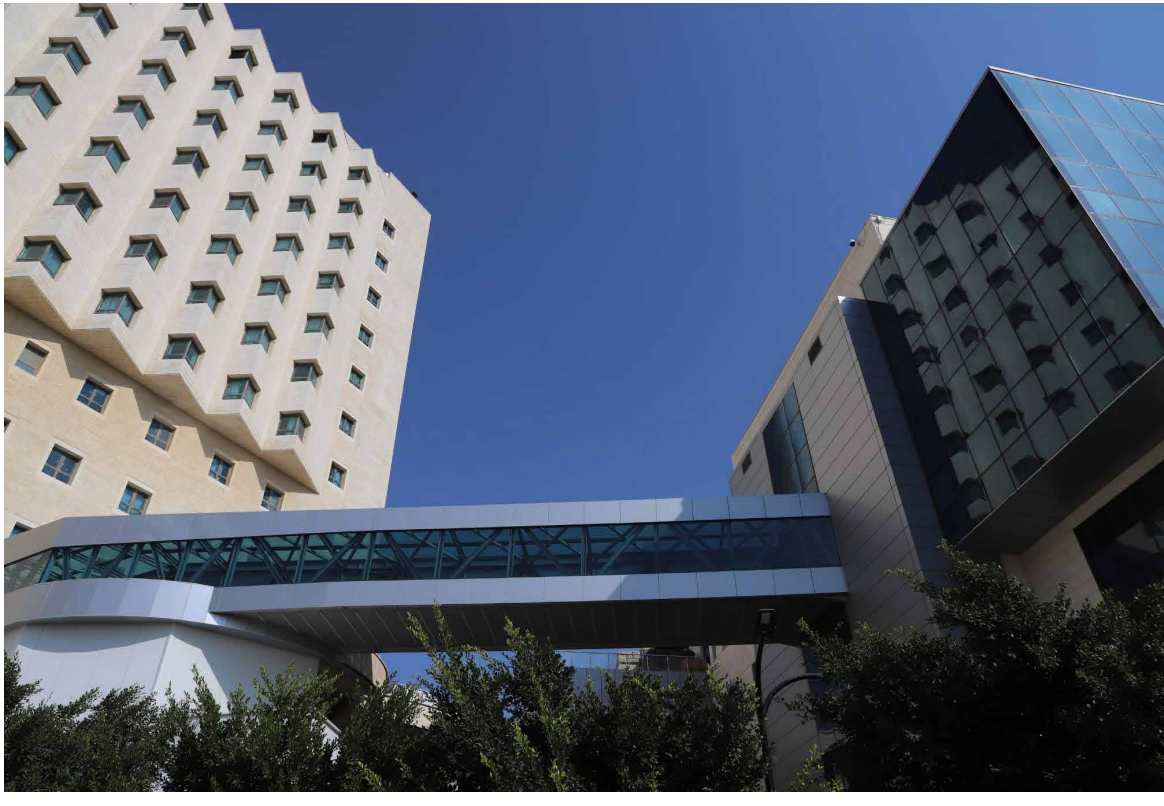
AHG was founded in 1998 with a simple but ambitious mandate: to deliver high-quality, internationally accredited healthcare to the Palestinian people at an affordable cost. At the time, many specialized services were simply unavailable in Palestine. Patients had to travel abroad, with the associated immense logistical and financial strain, to receive care. Since then, AHG has steadily filled that gap, introducing enhanced services such advanced cardiology and neurology services, kidney and bone marrow transplants, molecular genetics and advanced diagnostics, neurosciences, and most recently, a comprehensive cancer center, the only one of its kind in the country that offers comprehensive oncology services under one roof.

This expansion has been paired with a commitment to quality, backed by Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation and other global standards. The group now operates four hospitals with over 800 beds, primarily tertiary care, and is preparing to launch new facilities in Hebron and Gaza. These investments represent more than just healthcare delivery; they are investments in human capital. A healthy population is a precondition for a productive economy.

But AHG's impact extends beyond clinical services. Its growth has helped move Palestine toward a long-term national objective: medical sovereignty. In the early days of the Palestinian Authority, much of the health system relied on referrals abroad, at significant cost to both the public budget and patients. Through the expansion of local capacity, institutions like AHG have helped reverse that dependency. More services are now available domestically, improving access, reducing out-of-pocket expenditure, and helping narrow the trade deficit.

The group's direct economic footprint is also substantial. Today, AHG employs over 1,200 people directly and supports many more through procurement and service

Istishari Arab Hospital and Istishari Cancer Center.





Ibn Sina Hospital, Jenin.



Istishari Arab Hospital, Ramallah.



Specialized Arab Hospital, Nablus.



Istishari Cancer Center, Ramallah.

contracts. It contributes to workforce development through training programs, residency schemes, and partnerships with Palestinian universities. It is also actively recruiting diaspora Palestinian specialists, reversing brain drain, and launching new services that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

Beyond the hospital walls, AHG is investing in long-term resilience. A solar power plant in Jericho now supplies clean energy to key facilities, while a new oxygen plant aims to meet medical and industrial demand locally, securing a critical resource and reducing import dependency. These are not side projects; they are strategic moves designed to fortify national infrastructure in a deeply vulnerable context.

Finally, and most importantly, in the wake of the Gaza war and the collapse of healthcare infrastructure there, AHG is preparing to do more. A concept design for a hospital in Gaza has already been completed, with the aim of launching when conditions allow. As Palestine looks to recover and rebuild, institutions like AHG will be central, not just to healing, but to rebuilding a stronger, more resilient future.

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WHERE HOPE FINDS A WAY

Resilience as Resistance

Toward a Just Palestinian Economy



By Omar Da'na

On a crisp morning in Gaza, amid a landscape of shattered concrete, the aroma of freshly baked bread wafts from a makeshift community kitchen. A circle of women, sleeves rolled up, stirs giant pots of lentil soup and kneads dough for thousands of displaced neighbors. In war-torn Rafah and Khan Younis, these *tekiya* – community kitchens – have sprung up as lifelines. They do far more than fill empty stomachs. By employing hundreds of locals as cooks and helpers and by sourcing produce from Palestinian farmers who have managed to keep their production going, finding ways to grow small crops amid the rubble, they inject wages into families and sustain local agriculture. This scene is a microcosm of Palestine's economic resilience: grounded in care, cooperation, and a refusal to surrender even in the darkest times. It is resilience as resistance – an economy of survival and hope that is defying a system of engineered despair.

That system of engineered despair is painfully real. After two years of genocidal onslaught in Gaza and over 76 years of ongoing dispossession, the Palestinian economy remains trapped in a colonial chokehold. Military occupation, settler colonization and land theft, and a 17-year blockade on Gaza have conspired to make Palestine's economy one of the most restricted on Earth. Israel's permit regime and separation walls fragment markets; 793 checkpoints strangle commerce; and resources such as water, land, and energy are weaponized to undermine Palestinian livelihoods. Gaza's isolation is particularly brutal: even before the latest war.[1] Then came the carnage after October 2023. In a single year of war, Israeli bombardment decimated Gaza's infrastructure: over 42 million tons of rubble[2] now blanket entire neighborhoods, two-thirds of all buildings have been damaged or destroyed, and the economy lies in ruins. By early 2024, Gaza had lost roughly two-thirds of its pre-war jobs, some 200,000 positions wiped out. Unemployment in the Strip has since surged to nearly 80 percent, a staggering figure that conveys not only lost livelihoods but also a systematic attempt to make life unlivable. This economic strangulation is warfare by other means. And yet, despite these objective horrors, Palestinians continue to do what they have always done: refuse to vanish. They organize, they rebuild, and they reimagine an economy that is rooted in dignity and self-determination.

Crucially, Palestinians are not content with merely bouncing back to a status quo of precarity; they are "bouncing forward" – innovating models of economic justice even under siege. The animating vision is one of economic sovereignty: the ability to provide for their communities' needs and futures without dependency on the occupier or international aid. This vision is bold, given that donors and NGOs have long dominated the development sphere. But today a decolonial, feminist, rights-based approach is gaining ground, driven by activists, cooperatives, and community leaders. It insists that the path to a resilient Palestinian economy must center the people – especially women and youth – and the land itself, rather than top-down plans or perpetual humanitarian relief. In practical terms, this means cultivating what Palestinian scholar-activists call a "resistance economy," built on collective effort, mutual aid, and ingenuity. From Gaza's rubble to West Bank villages, people are crafting livelihoods that also fortify their freedom struggle. The result is an impassioned, ground-up economic movement that is hopeful yet unflinching in naming the forces it confronts: military occupation, apartheid policies, and settler-colonial theft.

Young Gazan freelancers collaborate at a solar-powered tech hub in Deir al-Balah, Gaza. Initiatives like the TAQAT hub provide crucial internet, electricity, and workspaces – enabling youth to keep working and innovating even amid war.[3]



Anera's Tekiya provide jobs and hot meals in Gaza. Photo courtesy of Anera.



A demonstration in Brazil in support of Palestine.

Women are at the forefront of this economic resistance, even if their work is often invisible or undervalued. For generations, Palestinian women have been the backbone holding families and communities together through war, displacement, and crisis. They juggle waged jobs (when available), farming family lands, volunteering in their neighborhoods, and an immense load of unpaid care work at home. (Indeed, Palestinian women perform nearly eight times more unpaid care work than men – one of the most unequal divisions in the world.) This burden is a testament to patriarchy's toll, but it is also the source of a profound societal strength. In moments of breakdown – a lockdown, a bombardment, a pandemic – it is women's informal networks that step in to provide childcare, elder care, food, and comfort, keeping the social fabric from tearing apart. One striking example comes from the Gaza community kitchens mentioned above: These are largely women-led care economies in action. When formal services collapsed under bombardment, women mobilized to feed entire neighborhoods, effectively treating care work as vital infrastructure.

Such efforts underscore a feminist economic principle: care is as critical to the economy as concrete or oil. Recognizing this requires expanding our definition of "productive" labor to include the labor of love and survival traditionally done by women. Imagine if policies and aid treated these community kitchens and home-based care circles as essential services worthy of investment – akin to power grids or factories. In Gaza, that's precisely what happened on a small scale. Local organizations helped pay stipends to the women running the kitchens, formally acknowledging their labor as part of the rebuilding process. The result was a virtuous cycle of economic justice – caregivers earned income, families were nourished, and dignity was upheld amid destruction.

Women are not only caring, they are also building and leading formal enterprises that embody resilience. Across Palestine, women-led cooperatives have blossomed, proving that collective ownership can unlock opportunities even where markets and mobility are restricted. In the West Bank town of Dura, for instance, two dozen women banded together to produce traditional Palestinian foods such as *maftoul* (hand-rolled couscous) and grape molasses. With time and support, their small partnership grew into a thriving business – a cooperative that now boasts a two-story processing center and an annual budget of 2 million shekels. The Dura cooperative not only generates stable jobs, it has become a pillar of the community, strengthening social bonds and inspiring local women to seek economic independence. "We love the cooperative more than our homes," one member laughed, while rolling a batch of couscous, highlighting how this enterprise had become a second family. Similar stories abound: In villages near Hebron, women's co-ops are baking bread and pastries for regional markets. In Gaza, a sewing cooperative of war widows produces school uniforms and face masks to supply local schools.

Each of these initiatives is a seed of a more democratic economy – one where profits are shared, decisions are made collectively, and women assert control over resources. To truly fortify such models, experts suggest policy shifts such as dedicating procurement quotas for women-led businesses, improving access to childcare and safe transport for women workers, and expanding microfinance that is tailored to women entrepreneurs. The structural barriers are real – Palestinian women's labor force participation remains under 20 percent, among the lowest in the world, and female unemployment is roughly double that of men – yet the success of these cooperatives offers a blueprint for change. Economic resilience, it turns out, will be feminist – or it will be fragile. No economy can be resilient if it ignores the genius and labor of half the population.

If women are the backbone of resilience, Palestinian youth are its kinetic energy – innovators tirelessly forging new paths in the harshest of circumstances. The numbers paint a bleak picture: youth unemployment in Gaza was about 75 percent even before the recent war, and by mid-2024 it had skyrocketed to nearly 80 percent. For young women, it's even worse – approaching an almost total absence of formal jobs. In any other society, such statistics would spell a "lost generation." Yet travel (virtually, if not physically) into Gaza's neighborhoods or West Bank refugee camps, and you find not a generation lost, but one busy problem-solving a future.

Take the example of a modest building in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza: here a group of fresh graduates and tech entrepreneurs have created TAQAT, a co-working tech hub, literally amid the rubble. Founded in April 2024 during a lull in fighting, TAQAT offers young freelancers a lifeline – free desks, solar-powered electricity, and high-speed internet – in a place where power cuts and connectivity blackouts are daily torment. Within months of opening, over 2,000 people applied for 500 spots at the hub, desperate for the opportunity to resume online work and support their families. One digital marketer described TAQAT as "a lifeline": Living in a tent after his home was bombed, he finally had reliable electricity and Wi-Fi to restart his freelance business, thanks to the hub's solar panels and generators. Another young woman, a computer science student, said the space allowed her to continue her studies and pick up coding gigs despite the chaos around her.

These stories illuminate a broader trend: across Palestine, youth are leveraging technology and creativity to circumvent the barriers of occupation. Before the war, thousands of Gazan youth were active on global freelancing platforms, offering graphic design, translation, and programming services to clients abroad – often working offline and uploading work in the few hours of electricity they had each day. Others set up community innovation labs: one group of engineering students in Gaza City began 3D-printing spare parts for medical devices that



Food distribution in Gaza. Photo courtesy of Anera.

couldn't be imported due to the blockade, while a team in Nablus developed a low-cost water filtration system for villages under settler attack.

Every such initiative chips away at dependence on outside aid or Israeli supplies. Crucially, these young innovators are not working in isolation – they form peer networks, share knowledge via Telegram groups during internet outages, and nurture what some call a "repair economy." By fixing broken generators, repurposing scrap metal, or writing code that bridges logistical gaps, Palestinian youth are not just earning an income; they are modeling the economy of tomorrow. They imagine a Palestine where being cut off from global markets is no longer a curse because local talent and digital connectivity can transcend checkpoints. If the siege has bred this kind of ingenuity, one wonders what these youths could achieve in a free Palestine with full access to the world.

Any discussion of resilience would be incomplete without Gaza's steadfast spirit of regeneration. Where does one begin in a territory subjected to what UN experts call "a livestreamed genocide" and years of total blockade? Perhaps in the rubble itself. Gaza now contains 14 times more debris[4] from destroyed buildings than all the debris of previous wars since 2008 combined. Mountains of concrete and twisted metal are everywhere – but Gazans are finding ways to turn this destruction into renewal. Within months of the 2023 onslaught, local entrepreneurs and engineers mobilized to recycle rubble into building blocks. It's not a novel idea – after a 2014 war, a young female engineer, Majd Mashharawi, famously invented affordable bricks made from war debris and coal ash, a project she dubbed "Green Cake." Her innovation made headlines for enabling Gazans to rebuild homes despite Israel's ban on cement imports. Mashharawi's philosophy, echoing that of many Palestinians, was that "we cannot rely on aid alone; we must build our own future." Today, dozens of small workshops across Gaza have embraced that ethos, grinding rubble into aggregate for new concrete and training youth in basic construction skills. In Khan Younis, one father-son team started by making tombstones from bombed-out concrete[5] – a grim but necessary business – and then shifted to crafting paving stones for roads. Such grassroots recycling not only provides materials for reconstruction, it gives people a tangible way to reclaim agency from the ruins of war.

Alongside rubble recycling, Gaza's turn to renewable energy stands out as a story of community-driven resilience. Before the war, faced with chronic power outages imposed by Israel, Palestinians in Gaza led a quiet solar revolution: By 2023, at least one-third of Gazans and over half of Gaza's businesses had solar panels on their rooftops. This proliferation of solar power – the densest concentration of rooftop solar in the world – kept lights on in hospitals and homes when the grid went down. Even now, under the shadow of destruction, solar panels glint atop the few intact roofs, and neighborhoods have rigged up micro-grids with shared generators and batteries. Every ray of sun harnessed is a small victory against the siege.

These community micro-infrastructure projects, from desalination units to neighborhood wells, are the skeleton of what a free Palestinian economy could look like: local, self-sufficient, and focused on basic needs such as water, food, energy, and shelter. They also embody the adage "necessity is the mother of invention." Gaza's people have become unwilling experts in sustainable survival, pioneering techniques in water harvesting, urban farming (rooftop vegetable gardens are proliferating to counter food shortages), and solidarity-based distribution of goods. Imagine if global donors invested in scaling up these local solutions – training thousands of Gazans in green construction trades, funding solar cooperatives, or rebuilding agriculture through seed banks and hydroponics. The international community often asks how to "help Gaza"; Palestinians are showing the way by helping themselves, if only the world would listen and support rather than impose and control.

Young Palestinian women lead the way in agro-ecological farming—restoring land, food sovereignty, and gender equity through community-led agriculture initiatives in the West Bank. Al Darb Farm, youth members preparing raised beds in their ecological farm.



Finally, Palestine's economic resilience draws from a wellspring of global solidarity and justice-seeking that extends far beyond its borders. Palestinians do not struggle alone. Across the Global South – from South Africa to Brazil, India to Ireland – activists, social movements, and even governments have increasingly embraced the Palestinian call for freedom as part of their own quests for justice. They recognize the familiar patterns of colonial exploitation and racial apartheid in Palestine's plight. This has translated into a growing chorus demanding that Israel's impunity end and that Palestinians be allowed to live and trade as equals.

One powerful vehicle has been the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, launched by Palestinian civil society in 2005. In the 20 years since, BDS has galvanized unions, churches, universities, and artists around the world to boycott companies and institutions complicit in Israel's oppression of Palestinians. Its economic impact on Israel is debated, but its political message is resounding: Ordinary people worldwide are willing to take action to uphold Palestinian rights when governments fall short. Notably, many of BDS's strongest backers hail from the Global South, recalling how international boycotts helped topple apartheid South Africa. Trade unions across Africa, Asia, and Latin America have endorsed BDS as a "key form of solidarity with Palestinian workers," linking their struggles against neoliberalism and neocolonialism with the Palestinian struggle.



Majd Mashharawi famously invented affordable bricks made from war debris and coal ash, a project she dubbed Green Cake.

This global pressure matters. It was South Africa's government that in 2023 led an initiative at the International Court of Justice to seek legal opinion on Israel's culpability for genocide in Gaza. Countries like Chile and Namibia have pulled ambassadors, while others have canceled trade deals or military cooperation with Israel in protest. Such steps, while modest, begin to challenge the structural violence that suffocates Palestine's economy. They also give Palestinians hope that the world has not completely abandoned them.

In practical terms, Global South solidarity can bolster Palestinian economic resilience by pushing for fairer trade policies (for instance, preferential import of Palestinian products), direct support to grassroots projects, and protecting Palestinians' rights in international forums. It can also mean sharing knowledge from other liberation struggles: how Latin American cooperatives built post-conflict economies, how Indigenous movements elsewhere reclaimed land and resources, how feminist budgeting can reshape a recovery plan to be more inclusive. For Palestinians, knowing that millions around the world see their fight for economic justice as part of a broader human struggle infuses their efforts with strength and optimism. It is a reminder that the quest for a resilient Palestinian economy is not a parochial issue, but a global test of justice – as activist Angela Davis said, "Palestine is the moral litmus test for the world."

Where do we go from here? As Palestine rebuilds from yet another catastrophe, there is an urgent opportunity to reset the trajectory – to replace the paradigm of perpetual humanitarian crisis with one of people-centered economic sovereignty. This requires action at all levels.

At the grassroots, Palestinians will continue to organize cooperatives, community enterprises, and solidarity networks; they have already proven their effectiveness. What these groups need is greater support and recognition. One recommendation is for Palestinian authorities and NGOs to channel more funds to community-driven projects – trust the people who are doing the work on the ground. Imagine if a fraction of international aid bypassed expensive foreign contractors and instead went to local women's associations, farmer cooperatives, and youth startups. The impact would be direct and multiplied within communities.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

For international observers, the takeaway is both sobering and inspiring. The sobering part is the clarity that there can be no true economic resilience under endless occupation. Justice – including economic justice – requires freedom. The international community must not shy away from this truth: humanitarian aid and development projects will never substitute for the liberation of a people and their economy. The hopeful part is realizing that Palestinians are already mapping the road from relief to reconstruction to sovereignty. They ask us, as allies, not to pity them, but to stand with them in concrete ways: support their businesses, amplify their campaigns, pressure our own governments to end complicity in repression. As this chapter of Palestinian history unfolds, one can imagine a future article in *This Week in Palestine*, years from now, celebrating a truly independent Palestinian economy – one no longer suffocated by checkpoints and blockades, where innovation flourishes not just out of necessity but out of opportunity. Getting there will take unwavering commitment from Palestinians and genuine solidarity from the world. Economic resilience is not a technocratic goal; in Palestine, it is a form of resistance – one that we, as global citizens, have a stake in. In the steadfast determination of Palestine's women, youth, and communities, we see the blueprint of a more just economy, and indeed a more just world. It is now on all of us – local stakeholders and international allies alike – to help turn that vision into reality. Palestinians have shown they will not vanish; it's time to ensure that their economy doesn't either, and in fact, that it prevail and prosper as a cornerstone of an independent, dignified future.



Samar Miqdad with her range of candles at the launch of Free Soul Artisan.

At the policy level, the Palestinian leadership (both the Palestinian Authority and de facto authorities in Gaza) should adopt an explicit strategy of economic decolonization. This could include investing in sectors that enhance self-sufficiency (agriculture, renewable energy, tech), providing tax breaks or grants for cooperatives and social enterprises, and reforming laws that hinder women and youth from starting businesses. For example, easing registration for cooperatives or guaranteeing a percentage of public procurement for local producers would strengthen the domestic market.

Any such strategy, of course, runs up against the immovable wall of Israeli restrictions – which is why political action for freedom is inseparable from economic strategy. Palestinian officials and advocates must persist in leveraging international law and diplomacy to demand an end to the blockade and occupation. This means pursuing cases at the International Criminal Court for the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure (a war crime), pressing the UN and world governments to enforce the recent ICJ advisory opinion declaring the occupation illegal, and calling for targeted sanctions or an arms embargo until Israel complies with its obligations. Some of these steps may sound far-fetched in the current global power imbalance, but history shows that sustained pressure can bring change. South Africa's apartheid economy eventually buckled under global boycotts and isolation; so too can the structures buttressing Israeli apartheid, if enough states and civil societies choose principle over profit.

Meanwhile, international stakeholders – from donor agencies to solidarity movements – have a crucial role. Donors should prioritize "localization" of aid: funding Palestinian-run initiatives and aligning all projects with the goal of reducing dependence on Israel's economy. They must also ensure that aid does not inadvertently entrench the status quo (for instance, infrastructure projects that benefit illegal settlements or bypass Palestinian labor). International civil society can help by expanding campaigns to boycott settlement products, divest from companies complicit in the exploitation of Palestinian land (such as those that extract in occupied quarries or run checkpoints), and by pressuring their lawmakers to oppose trade deals that perpetuate Palestinian economic captivity. Global activists might also support practical exchanges – bringing Palestinian farmers, engineers, and entrepreneurs to learn from peers in other countries who faced similar challenges under oppression. These forms of solidarity fuel Palestinian resilience not with charity, but with shared struggle and knowledge.

Palestinians often say that *sumud* – steadfastness – is their most abundant resource. The story of Palestine's economy, even in 2025, is not merely one of victimhood under colonial assault; it is also one of *sumud* in action, every single day. A women-run farm cooperative reviving heirloom seeds in Jenin; a collective of disabled youth in Gaza repairing broken wheelchairs for their community; fishermen in Gaza City forming a union to demand access to the sea; volunteers escorting West Bank farmers to protect the olive harvest from settler attacks (over 10,000 olive trees were vandalized by settlers in 2023, yet Palestinians replanted saplings in defiance). These acts may seem small against the enormity of apartheid and military aggression, but they are the sturdy threads that, woven together, form a fabric of economic self-determination. Each cooperative, each kitchen, each startup and union and savings group, is an assertion: "We have the right to live and thrive on our land." In the face of an occupier intent on making Palestine unviable, Palestinians are keeping viability alive through sheer will and collective creativity.



TAQAT, a tech hub that rose amid the rubble in Gaza.

Author's note: This article is dedicated to the grassroots economic warriors of Palestine – the cooperative members, volunteers, farmers, and young innovators – who teach us how to build hope amid ruins.

Omar Da'na is an independent policy advocacy and human rights expert with over 20 years of experience in the Middle East and North Africa. He has led national, regional, and global advocacy initiatives and specializes in international law, human rights education, and humanitarian policy.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

Tourism and State Building



By Ali Qleibo

Global tourism has become one of the most prominent economic enterprises of the twenty-first century. The unprecedented growth and significant global economic and social impact of tourism are clearly visible in Palestine, which has become a favorite tourist destination. The flood of package-tour group travelers and itinerant tourists, apart from religious tourists on pilgrimage, diversifies to include those in search of pleasure, while others seek fame, knowledge, or adventure, and not a few travel for the mere sake of travel – to satisfy a restless and "truant" disposition in the land where two civilizations collide.

"The story of the rediscovery and Western exploration of the Holy Land in the nineteenth century is a fascinating chapter in the long history of religious and secular tourism in Palestine," explains George Sahhar, grandson of George Sahhar, who had pioneered in the tourism business during the British Mandate period, working in parallel to Thomas Cook. "Once steamships replaced the old sailboats," he elaborated, "travel time across the Mediterranean was dramatically reduced and made easier. When the three-week distance from London to Istanbul was reduced to less than a hundred hours, various travel itineraries were developed by the 1830s. The steamboat stops in Napoli, Malta, Alexandria, Izmir, Salonika, Athens, Venice, Constantinople, and Jaffa, transforming the Mediterranean into an easily traversable lake."

With newly forged alliances between Turkey and European powers, the Mediterranean enjoyed an unprecedented state of safety. Shortly after the Egyptian campaign in Palestine and the Crimean War, the newly wedged alliances and the corollary Ottoman concessions, the Near East became part of the classical European tour. By 1870, Egypt had become the top choice as a winter-season resort, and Palestine had its share of enthusiastic visitors.

Thomas Cook is the undoubted originator of the package tour. The firm is rightly considered to have almost single-handedly inaugurated the era of mass tourism by

The severe and devastating blows of the Gaza war and the accompanying state of lawlessness in the West Bank have brought the Palestinian tourism industry to a near standstill, with widespread cancellations, empty hotels, and immense financial losses across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, while tourism in Gaza has been nonexistent for decades due to the blockade and repeated wars and bouts of destruction.

Nineteenth-century tourist postcard from the Holy Land.





The Stone of Unction whence the body of Jesus was anointed In the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

recognizing and satisfying the increasingly global appetites of Europe's growing middle classes. Thomas Cook escorted his first party to Egypt and Palestine in 1869. By the end of the nineteenth century, the company had arranged travel to Palestine for about 12,000 people. One of these travelers was German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II. Making travel arrangements for Kaiser in 1898 crowned the efforts of the company.

Thomas Cook – and Thomas Cook & Son, as the business was later named when John Cook joined his father – helped change regional accessibility. Rather than venture alone, the company set up safer, planned group tours for people wishing to explore Palestine. Little did he see that he had forged the path for tourism in general and the Palestinian tourism industry in particular. As he was a former Baptist preacher, Thomas developed tours for Christian pilgrims to walk the Holy Land in the footsteps of Abraham and Jesus. Cook's extensive guide, *Handbook to Palestine and Syria*, reflects this. Attractions included Solomon's Pools, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and Jesus's birthplace in Bethlehem. Missions, mosques, and old synagogues were attractions too, along with Roman archaeological ruins.

The Noble Sanctuary, Al-Haram Al Sharif, after which Jerusalem acquired its Arabic name Al-Quds al-Sharif.



"In 2019, the gross income of the tourism sector amounted to 15 percent of the GDP," explains Tony Khashram, the ex-president of the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association. "The total gross income of the tourism industry, as revealed in bank transfers, amounted to US$450 million annually by the early 2020s. This figure shows that tourism has been the backbone of the Palestinian economy, second only to the cash income of the Palestinian workers employed in the Israeli market," he further explains. "You must take into consideration that other sectors, such as agriculture and various craft centers, workshops, and factories, contribute a much lower scale to the total gross income."

The economic impact of tourism in the occupied Palestinian territories extends far beyond direct hospitality services, creating ripple effects across multiple interconnected sectors due to what is known as the multiplier effect. This includes a wide variety of traditional handicrafts, such as embroidery work, pottery-making, weaving, olive wood and mother-of-pearl carvings, among others. Palestinian cities in the West Bank, particularly Bethlehem, Hebron, and Nablus, have gained renown as traditional centers specializing in the production of a particular handicraft, with the sale of such items forming a key part of each city's economy and the overall Palestinian GDP.

Tourism's role in economic development is far-reaching, as it generates income for tour guides and bus drivers, creates jobs in the hotel industry, and boosts local businesses.

The Nativity Church in Bethlehem.





The Thomas Cook office in Jerusalem, Palestine was located just inside the Jaffa Gate.

of Palestinian economic life. During their sojourn, tourists consume food: meat, fowl, and a great diversity of agricultural products purchased from the local market. Moreover, the tourist coordinators have the responsibility for the welfare and health of the tourists, which creates connections with a great cross section of Palestinian institutes, shops, and individuals. This is paralleled by a great sense of moral economic duty to the community along religious and political sectarian lines, reflected in the allocation of funds to various institutions for such purposes as furnishing rooms in hospitals, the upkeep of centers for persons with disabilities, providing scholarships for needy students at universities and schools, the upkeep of orphanages, senior living facilities, and public kitchens, and financing summer camps, scouts, and various community-related youth projects. Given that the tourism sector in Palestine is highly personalized, a significant portion of its economic transactions involves direct face-to-face intimate experiences, which adds to the onus of providing monetary assistance to those in need in the immediate circle of interaction and their families. These contributions are, in fact, sporadic emotional handouts. Though charity is a significant source of immediate aid to cover basic needs, the tourism industry falls short of longer-term pledges that would support essential services and provide a secure economic basis for the development of various institutions and programs. Earlier, in the nineteenth century, the Cooks had established the associated activities in both Egypt and Palestine. Proceeds from the tourism profit funded the Jerusalem Ophthalmic Dispensary, a free hospital, and similarly, in Egypt, a general hospital.

The 2023 October war and ongoing genocide in Gaza and ethnocide in the West Bank have had calamitous and far-reaching economic consequences: a complete collapse of the economic infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, accompanied by a sharp decline in production in the West Bank and an unprecedented increase in unemployment rates. Palestine is experiencing an economic, humanitarian, environmental, social, educational, and food catastrophe, which has led to a contraction in the productivity base and a structural distortion in its economy.

This decline is exacerbated by the effects of the violence on the Palestinian tourism sector, once a main contributor to local incomes, which has sustained great blows in the recent war. The ongoing genocide and massive destruction in Gaza and the onslaught of gangs of Israeli settlers against defenseless Palestinian peasants, which include setting olive groves, cars, and properties on fire, have deterred most visitors. The state of lawlessness into which the West Bank has fallen, with loose gangs of settlers taking to the roads, blocking traffic, and harassing Palestinians on the highways, further impedes freedom of travel.



Al-Haram al-Sharif in Al-Quds, Jerusalem.

According to a report from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2024, estimates indicated an unprecedented sharp contraction in the GDP of the Gaza Strip, with a decrease exceeding 82 percent, along with a rise in the unemployment rate to 80 percent. This contraction has also affected the economy of the West Bank, where the GDP declined by more than 19 percent, and the unemployment rate rose to 35 percent. In total, these factors have contributed to a 28 percent decline in the Palestinian economy, along with a rise in the unemployment rate to 51 percent.

The dire economic impact of the genocide on the tourism sector and related network of dependents raises many questions concerning the economic structure of the tourist industry (and other economic enterprises) and its responsibilities to Palestinian society, and throws light on the difference between sporadic charity and long-term pledges as made manifest in the Japanese experience. The key differences between sporadic charity (one-off donations) and sustainable long-term pledging lie in their timing, predictability, and impact on a nonprofit's ability to plan and create lasting change. In contrast to the Palestinian scene, Japanese companies integrate social, medical, and cultural contributions into their business strategies and view these activities as essential for building a positive corporate image, fostering employee engagement, and ensuring long-term sustainability and value



The Meo souvenir shop at Jaffa Gate was an early landmarkin Jerusalem tourism.

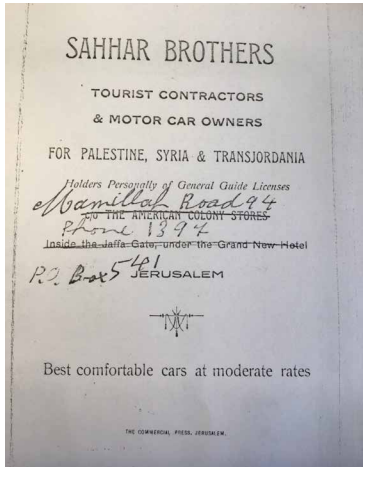
creation for society. While some companies, like Ajinomoto, provide grants for nutrition-related projects, others, like Kirin and Saraya, have engaged in funding clean water and hygiene projects in developing countries. Pharmaceutical companies in Japan also make significant donations to healthcare institutions and research. The Duskin Ainowa Foundation sponsors overseas training for young people with disabilities, and companies like Hulic support organizations such as the Japan Service Dog Association to aid people with disabilities. Chugai Pharmaceutical sponsors art and music programs for children with disabilities. Community development is also a target, whereby many companies prioritize local community support, including educational programs, career development assistance for foreign residents, and local festival preservation efforts. The initiatives of the various companies cover the gamut of Japanese life that includes cultural programs such as museums, theaters, and preserving traditions.

The Palestinian tourism sector shows resilience but struggles to reach its potential due to Israeli control over borders, movement, and sites, which limits economic growth and curtails the ability of the guides to present Palestinian cultural narratives. Despite Palestine's rich history and potential, the tourism sector faces severe challenges such as Israeli control over entry points, movement restrictions for tourists and goods, and the appropriation of key heritage sites. These limitations prevent Palestinians from fully benefiting from their own tourism resources, highlighting the need for political solutions to achieve economic growth. Nevertheless, the income in periods of relative peace is substantial, a fact that is attested by the sporadic charitable contributions of the tourism sector to Palestinian society, albeit along denominational lines. It provides crucial "instant energy" for immediate needs. At this historical juncture of state-building, short-term contributions are insufficient. Long-term commitments are crucial for establishing stable and sustainable institutions and security. They act as the reliable reservoir of funds that sustains the economic and cultural system and ensures its ability to create lasting change that withstands the trials and tribulations of history in war and peace.



Kaiser Wilhelm visit to the Holy Land (Palestine) in 1898. The visit of the Kaiser was organized by the cooks and set the itinerary for future.

The Sahhar family were among the pioneer Palestinians in the tourism sector.


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Dr. Ali Qleibo is an artist, author, and anthropologist. Born in Jerusalem and educated in the United States, his books and artwork have taken him all over the world. Dr. Qleibo has lectured and held senior positions at Al-Quds University, conducted a fellowship at Shalom Hartman Institute, and served as visiting professor at Tokyo University for Foreign Studies and Kyoto University in Japan. At The Jerusalem Research Center, Dr. Qleibo developed the Muslim tourism itinerary in Jerusalem, encompassing tangible and intangible heritage. A specialist in Palestinian social history, he has authored the books Surviving the Wall, Before the Mountains Disappear, Jerusalem in the Heart, *and* Mamluk Architectural Heritage in Jerusalem *and published a plethora of articles locally and internationally.*

SCAN
TO SHARE

Agriculture in Palestine

The Backbone of a Resilient Palestinian Economy

Courtesy of Rift Valley Farms

In Palestine, resilience has always been more than a slogan or an idea, it is a way of life. It manifests in every season, in every field, and in the farmers who cultivate life against all odds. Among the sectors that are driving economic endurance and national identity alike, agriculture remains the quiet but indispensable foundation of Palestinian resilience.

Agriculture is not only one of the oldest economic pillars of the Palestinian economy, it is also one of the most adaptive. Despite constraints on land access, water, and movement, the agricultural sector continues to employ tens of thousands of Palestinians, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. In times of crisis, when other industries falter, agriculture becomes the fallback, the sector that feeds families, sustains livelihoods, and keeps rural economies alive.

The recent war and its impact on people's mobility has revealed a truth that policymakers and economists have long known: A strong local agricultural base is essential to economic sovereignty. It ensures food security, cushions external shocks, and nurtures smallholder self-reliance. It has also allowed many of whom were left without income to regain economic independence and cultivate their previously abandoned lands.

While traditional farming remains vital, recent years have seen the emergence of modern agribusinesses that integrate technology, traceability, and global market access. A case in point is *Rift Valley Farms*, a vertically integrated producer and exporter of premium Medjool dates. From AI-powered sorting lines to advanced cold storage, Rift Valley Farms exemplifies how Palestinian enterprises are transforming heritage crops into competitive export industries.

These innovations extend beyond profit. They create ripple effects: new jobs for rural women, fairer pricing for smallholder farmers, and pathways to international certification and trade. Rift Valley's operations connect Jericho's date palms with retailers and consumers in Europe, North America, and the Gulf, turning agricultural resilience into tangible economic growth.

Agriculture has been an anchor during uncertain times, a quiet but indispensable foundation of Palestinian resistance, as we have been and remain tied to our lands, cultivating a future through our traditional and modern-day crops.

Jasmine tree in Jericho. Photo courtesy of Johnny Saba.



Yet, for all its potential, Palestinian agriculture faces profound challenges. Globalization has opened local markets to imported fruits and vegetables, often subsidized and sold at prices far below the cost of local production. With limited trade protections, Palestinian farmers find themselves competing unfairly against large-scale producers from neighboring countries. This race to the bottom in pricing threatens not only their livelihoods but also the continuity of agricultural life itself.

Compounding this are severe restrictions on land and water. Large portions of fertile land, particularly in Area C, remain largely inaccessible to Palestinian farmers. Water resources are tightly controlled, forcing many to rely on expensive, limited irrigation systems or to abandon certain crops altogether. Add to that the rising costs of inputs, fertilizers, packaging, and transportation, and it becomes clear that Palestinian farmers are being asked to survive on shrinking margins in an increasingly hostile marketplace.

The story of modern Palestinian agribusiness is a journey from survival to modern methods and export capabilities despite the challenges posed by globalized markets and the restrictions imposed through the occupation.

Despite these challenges, agriculture remains more than an economic activity, it is a form of steadfastness. Every tree planted, every field harvested, is an act of preservation and belonging. Agriculture keeps Palestinians tied to their land and sustains rural communities that might otherwise disappear. It reinforces a collective presence on the ground, asserting both identity and ownership at a time when they most need it.

From the olive terraces of Nablus to the date palms of Jericho and the herb fields of the Jordan Valley, farming anchors people to the land. It is this rootedness that gives agriculture its deeper significance, protecting the land by living from it, and preserving it by refusing to leave it.

A resilient Palestinian economy cannot be imagined without a vibrant agricultural sector. The land continues to sustain not just livelihoods but identity, dignity, and community cohesion. With fairer trade policies, better water access, and stronger institutional support, agriculture could evolve from being a survival strategy to a strategic growth engine, anchoring national resilience through productivity, employment, and land preservation.

The story of Palestinian agriculture is, ultimately, the story of Palestine itself: enduring, rooted in the land, and resilient.



Palm trees in the Jordan Valley.



Local Palestinian seeds.



Oranges grown in Jericho. Photo courtesy of Johnny Saba.

SCAN TO SHARE

Building and Sustaining a Resilient Palestinian Economy

The Role of the Palestine Capital Market Authority

هيئة سوق رأس المال
Capital Market Authority

Courtesy of the Palestine Capital Market Authority

Regulating and developing nonbanking financial sectors such as securities, insurance, financial leasing, and mortgage finance, the Palestine Capital Market Authority (PCMA) plays a key role in the building of a resilient Palestinian economy. As an autonomous agency, it works to ensure the integrity and efficiency of the financial market under challenging conditions to attract investment and facilitate economic stability and growth.

Since its establishment two decades ago, PCMA has prioritized the cultivation of robust capital market sectors, making this a cornerstone of its legislative, oversight, and regulatory duties. It has meticulously and with high efficiency governed, authorized, and overseen the components of the nonbanking financial sectors within its purview, achieving numerous significant milestones and maintaining these sectors' stability and continuity. Succeeding despite the difficult political and economic conditions that the State of Palestine has been facing, the PCMA's supervisory activities have aligned with best practices and international standards, solidifying its position as an effective regulatory body.

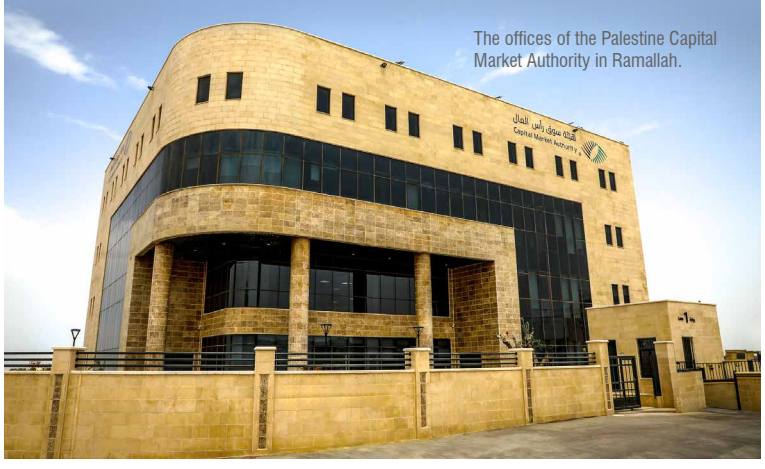
Across all sectors, PCMA has intensified efforts in corporate governance, financial literacy, and sustainability – aligning its regulatory practices with global standards and the national digital transformation agenda. Its proactive oversight during the Israeli aggression on Gaza demonstrated institutional flexibility and crisis-response capacity, ensuring the continuity of financial markets and the protection of investors and policyholders.

In the securities sector, PCMA has over recent years implemented key regulatory reforms to strengthen transparency and investor protection. It expanded its oversight to unregulated foreign exchanges (FOREX) and launched awareness campaigns about the risks of unlicensed platforms that provide (FOREX) services, reinforcing the integrity of the local capital market. It furthermore launched consultations on governance rules for listed companies and exchange-traded funds. Despite a contraction in economic activity due to regional instability, the Palestine Exchange maintained a market capitalization exceeding US$4 billion, accounting for nearly 23 percent of the GDP.

The PCMA's achievements reflect a commitment to stability, innovation, and sustainable growth across the insurance, securities, financial leasing, mortgage finance, and financial technology sectors – all of which serve as essential pillars of a resilient Palestinian economy.

The insurance sector has demonstrated notable resilience, underscoring the sector's pivotal role in economic and social stability. In 2024, total collected premiums reached US$383 million, while paid claims rose slightly to nearly US$260 million, and despite a 4 percent decline in written premiums due to war-related disruptions and reduced purchasing power, insurance penetration increased to 3.51 percent of the GDP, signaling a deepening market. PCMA's supervisory measures and digital oversight tools contributed to this trend by enhancing transparency and efficiency across the sector.

A key milestone for the PCMA was its drafting of the new Insurance Law that has been presented to the Council of Ministers for a first reading. Developed in close consultation with industry stakeholders, the new law aims to modernize the regulatory framework governing the insurance market, strengthen consumer protection, and introduce flexible mechanisms for innovation and technology adoption



The offices of the Palestine Capital Market Authority in Ramallah.

in insurance services. Once enacted, it is expected to significantly improve market efficiency and resilience, aligning Palestinian insurance practices with international standards. PCMA's collaboration with international experts on InsurTech initiatives further advanced the integration of technology and risk management, while promoting inclusive products such as micro-insurance and agricultural insurance

In financial leasing, PCMA's regulatory and developmental efforts enhanced access to nonbank financing for individuals and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The sector continues to expand its portfolio of asset-based financing solutions, reflecting its importance in promoting financial inclusion and economic empowerment, particularly in light of traditional credit constraints.

The mortgage finance and real-estate appraisal sector also witnessed growth, with PCMA emphasizing transparency, valuation standards, and improved data systems to ensure sound lending practices. These efforts support the housing sector's contribution to economic resilience and social stability.

Meanwhile, financial technology (FinTech) remained a major strategic focus. PCMA accelerated its digital transformation agenda, implementing internal automation programs and promoting innovation through its regulatory innovation hub "Ebtaker" to facilitate technological advancements across all supervised sectors. It also put in place frameworks to regulate innovative financial services, ensuring that modernization goes hand in hand with consumer protection and market integrity.

PCMA's role in building and sustaining a resilient Palestinian economy requires continuous efforts to regulate and develop the capital market sectors and comprises the modernization of its approaches and tools to carry out the mandatory supervision tasks. It supports sustainable finance and Islamic finance, considering them complementary approaches that share many principles, including ethical considerations, social responsibility, and a focus on positive societal impact. PCMA has a full agenda of Islamic finance initiatives for 2026, where part of the authority's efforts to advance sectors, ensure their sustainability, and develop them are within the framework of implementing its 2021–2025 strategic plan. Specifically, the second program focuses on promoting Sharia-compliant financial services and tools, and work is under way to achieve this through measures such as the issuance of *sukuk* (Islamic bonds), the strengthening of the legal and regulatory environment necessary for *ijara* (Islamic financial leasing) operations in the financial leasing sector, expanding *takaful* (Islamic insurance) services, and creating an enabling environment for increased investment in Palestine that is in accordance with Sharia principles.

PCMA has taken several strategic steps to achieve the Sharia-compliant program. In the insurance sector, the new draft Insurance Law contains a chapter with 17 articles allocated to *takaful*. Regarding securities, the draft *Sukuk* Law is in its final stages of drafting and expected to be presented to the PCMA board of directors by the end of this year. In addition, PCMA, in cooperation with the Palestine Exchange, launched an Islamic index for companies that in previous years have been listed publicly on the Palestine Exchange. Therefore, the authority's sectors are about to witness important developments that will expand the demand for financial services and achieve the PCMA's aims in regulating and developing the Islamic financial services industry in Palestine. This will develop Islamic financial services in a way that achieves the PCMA strategic goals in the field of revitalizing and deepening the capital market sectors and provide new and diverse investment opportunities for different groups in society.

Whereas sustainable finance integrates environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors into investment decisions, Islamic finance is governed by Sharia principles that inherently support sustainable and ethical practices. The two financial models are increasingly converging to address global sustainability challenges, and this approach complements PCMA efforts in building and sustaining a resilient capital market.

Looking ahead, PCMA plans to launch its physical presence in Gaza to ensure and stimulate all the activities currently overseen and monitored by the authority: the securities sector, insurance, mortgage finance, and financial leasing. The arrangements necessary for launching this phase are being designed, particularly in the insurance sector and its activities in Gaza.

Before October 2023, PCMA visited the Gaza Strip to explore with various stakeholders how PCMA could fulfil its role in the specific sectors it oversees. Among the most pressing issues is the reorganization of the insurance sector. Recognizing how vital this is for both individuals and companies helps PCMA draw development plans that are similar to the ones that PCMA successfully implemented in the West Bank. While insurance companies are present in the West Bank, focusing on urban and rural areas, in the Gaza Strip such companies are largely absent or have limited activity. PCMA is acknowledging the importance of developing various financial services that use the existing financing tools, such as support for the issuing of *sukuk*, since a significant percentage of the population prefers to access financial services that are compliant with Islamic Sharia standards.

We cannot ignore or deny that the economic situation in Palestine is tense. In addition to the effects of the war on Gaza, major restrictions in the West Bank are causing high economic losses. These factors include territorial fragmentation, the lack of control over borders, and Israel's refusal to pay clearance revenues, among others. Thus, while the economic conditions in Palestine are not encouraging new financial services providers who could help existing companies grow and new companies emerge, efforts to build a sustainable and resilient capital market persist.

To enable PCMA to regulate its sectors in a way that allows it to develop Sharia-compliant financial services, it is working to prepare and develop the necessary infrastructure and well-designed legal framework for developing financial products that align with the principles of Islamic Sharia.

Given the current hardships, PCMA focuses on the improvement of framework conditions that facilitate increased access to inclusive sustainable financial services, particularly among underserved and marginalized segments of the population, while simultaneously promoting environmental, social, and economic sustainability. This approach integrates the principles of inclusivity and sustainability into financial systems, ensuring equitable access and positive impacts on the Palestinian society.

As the PCMA looks ahead, its work stands as a testament to resilience through reform – transforming challenges into opportunities for a more stable, inclusive, and innovative Palestinian financial system.

SCAN TO SHARE



Renewable Energy

A Lifeline for Palestine's Economy and Energy Sovereignty

By Mohammad Ali Hammoudeh

The Palestinian economy has lived under decades of structural dependency on Israel – especially in the energy sector, where over 90 percent of electricity is imported through Israeli companies. This dependency is not only economically draining but also politically dangerous. Renewable energy, particularly solar power, offers a rare and strategic path toward both financial independence and national resilience.

Electricity purchased from the Israeli Electric Corporation (IEC) costs Palestinians hundreds of millions of dollars annually – money that leaves the local economy instead of circulating within it. By investing in renewable energy projects this expenditure transforms into local investment: Panels, inverters, batteries, installations, and maintenance all become part of a domestic economic cycle.

Every kilowatt-hour generated locally means less cash flow out of the country and more growth for local engineering firms, contractors, and suppliers. Even small-scale rooftop systems in cities like Ramallah, Hebron, and Jericho have proven to drastically reduce electricity bills, freeing households and businesses from the volatility of imported energy prices. In short, renewables convert imported dependency into domestic productivity.

Recent history has proven that Israel can – and does – use electricity as a political weapon. The threat of collective punishment through power cuts remains very real. A grid dominated by local generation and battery storage creates resilience. Solar hybrid systems, supported by energy storage, give Palestinian communities the power to maintain hospitals, schools, and basic infrastructure even under politically motivated blackouts. They also serve as a quiet form of civil defense: The ability to keep the lights on when others would prefer darkness. Renewable energy, in this sense, is not just an environmental or economic initiative – it's an act of self-preservation and sovereignty.

In 2026, the risk of both scheduled and unscheduled blackouts looms larger. Israel continues to delay approvals for expanding Palestinian grid connection capacity, despite clear growth in population and demand. This bottleneck is intentional; it limits industrial development and public infrastructure growth.

Renewable energy enables financial savings and local value creation as well as technology transfer while creating jobs.

Utility-scale solar projects are crucial in Palestine's fight for grid capacity.



Solar and battery systems blunt that weapon. Whether for a factory in Nablus or a school in Bethlehem, localized renewable installations ensure continuity even when the main grid fails. The technology is already mature. With lithium battery prices falling and inverter technology evolving rapidly, Palestinians can maintain a reliable supply of electricity even under systemic grid constraints.

Renewable energy provides a backup against collective punishment and political pressure and protection from planned and unplanned power shutdowns.

Moreover, renewable energy is a job engine. Every solar project demands engineers, technicians, electricians, safety specialists, logistics experts, and software professionals. From feasibility studies to power system monitoring, the sector pushes technical knowledge forward and builds local expertise. Unlike fossil fuels, renewables have a distributed value chain. That means that opportunity spreads – small workshops in Tubas or Gaza can participate alongside large EPC contractors in Ramallah. This drives both employment and technology transfer, empowering a new generation of Palestinian engineers to compete globally.

Energy independence is a cornerstone of political independence. By generating power from the sun that falls freely on its land, Palestine can reduce its strategic vulnerability. The renewable sector represents the one domain where Palestinians can outpace their imposed limitations – using technology, not politics, to reclaim control.

Renewable energy is not just an economic tool; it is a shield. It guards against political manipulation, grid instability, and financial leakage. It creates jobs, builds knowledge, and gives Palestinians a degree of self-determination in a system designed to deny it. For a nation perpetually denied sovereignty, generating its own power is both literal and symbolic liberation. The future of Palestine's economy depends not just on what it imports, but on what it can produce – and in the sun, it already has all the fuel it needs.



Solar PV installations have created thousands of new jobs and local expertise.



Public buildings and facilities could become strategic in the future if microgrids are to become a necessity.

Mohammad Ali Hammoudeh leads NextGen Power, driving Palestine's shift toward renewable energy through solar, hybrid, and storage solutions. With years of engineering experience, he champions energy independence, technological growth, and local innovation, forging partnerships with global brands to build a more resilient and self-sufficient Palestinian energy future.

SCAN TO SHARE

Al'Ard Group

Building a Nation Through Work and Will

Having transformed itself from a trader to a creator, the Anabtawi family business facilitates resistance through adaptation, forging and redefining partnerships with local producers, and exhibiting a legacy of will.



By Ziad Anabtawi

From a modest corner store in 1960s Nablus, named Palestine Grocery, the Anabtawi family's journey began in trade and quiet defiance. What started as a shop serving neighbors became, over decades of struggle and persistence, a symbol of how Palestinian enterprise itself can be an act of resistance.

In the 1980s, the family made a bold shift. After years of reselling international brands, they asked a simple but radical question: Why not build our own? That moment marked the birth of Khayal and Safi, Palestinian brands in edible oils that reflected the tastes and aspirations of the people they served. It was a business decision that carried with it a clear assertion of independence and identity, borne of the realization that true sovereignty begins with economic ownership.

The First Intifada brought curfews, checkpoints, and roadblocks that fractured Palestinian cities and made movement nearly impossible. Yet rather than yield to paralysis, the family reimagined their operations. They expanded beyond their headquarters in Nablus in the northern West Bank and opened new facilities in Ramallah in the central West Bank, in Bethlehem in the south, and in Gaza, ensuring that their products could reach every Palestinian home. Every delivery became an act of defiance, and every worker who crossed a checkpoint embodied the quiet, daily struggle to keep life moving.

After the Oslo Accords of 1993, as the world began to discuss a two-state solution, the Anabtawi group sought to make that recognition tangible in business. They challenged global corporations to sell directly to Palestinian distributors rather than through Israeli intermediaries. The negotiations were difficult and met with resistance and hostility from Israeli companies, but the Anabtawi family persisted and proved that only Palestinian companies could truly serve Palestinian communities. As a result, the Anabtawi group became one of the first Palestinian companies recognized by major international suppliers as an independent partner rather than a sub-dealer. It was economic diplomacy conducted with determination and vision.

In 2001, Palestinian farmers found themselves with an abundance of olive oil and faced the risk of it going to waste without access to broader markets. Recognizing both the opportunity and the challenge, farmers turned to experienced marketers such as the Anabtawi family for guidance. Anabtawi responded by founding Al'Ard brand, transforming this moment into a platform for empowerment. Through new farmer cooperatives, fair-trade pricing, and creative global branding, they carried Palestinian olive oil, *za'atar*, and Nabulsi soap to international markets.



Palestinian extra virgin olive oil.

Ziad Anabtawi is a Palestinian electrical engineer with a master's degree in engineering management and a leading entrepreneur, philanthropist, and pioneer in the country's FMCG food industry. As the founder and CEO of Al'Ard Group, he has championed innovation and upheld high standards of quality in the local market while playing a key role in promoting Palestinian agricultural products on the global stage. A founding member of the Palestinian Businessmen Association, Anabtawi has been instrumental in establishing joint business councils with several countries, expanding trade opportunities, and strengthening Palestine's economic footprint internationally.

Operating under the realities of occupation, where checkpoints, transport restrictions, and administrative hurdles make the cost of doing business far higher than in neighboring countries (Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan), Al'Ard refused to compromise. They positioned Palestine as the land of authenticity, heritage, and quality, inviting consumers worldwide to support a just cause through products they could trust. Two decades later, Al'Ard stands in more than 25 countries, a living testament to how resilience, vision, and innovation can turn abundance into strength.

Like every Palestinian growing up under occupation, Ziad Anabtawi learned the meaning of resistance from those around him, as every household felt the pressures of daily life under occupation. For Ziad, his greatest role model was his father, Haj Subhi Anabtawi, the founder of the Anabtawi legacy. At a young age, Ziad witnessed his father's imprisonment by the Israeli occupation, a moment that would shape his understanding of perseverance and responsibility. One memory stands out vividly: When his father was detained, the family business had payments due to suppliers the very next day. Aged only 17, Ziad visited the company's largest customers across different villages and, with their support, collected the payments overnight to deposit them in the bank the following day.

This experience left a lasting impression. It reinforced the strength of Palestinian solidarity, showing how communities support one another in times of hardship. For Ziad, it was a moment of pride, both in his father and in the network of customers who stood together. It was a lesson that would guide him in building Al'Ard into a symbol of resilience, identity, and economic resistance.



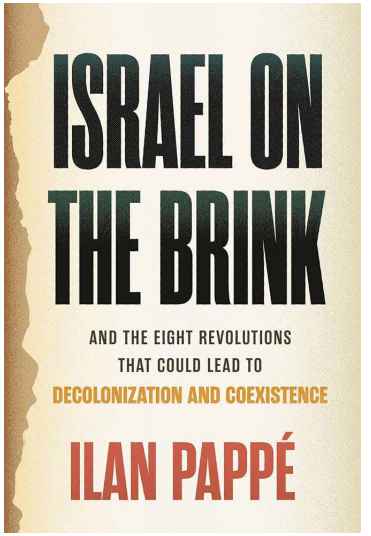
Palestinian extra virgin olive oil.

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Israel on the Brink

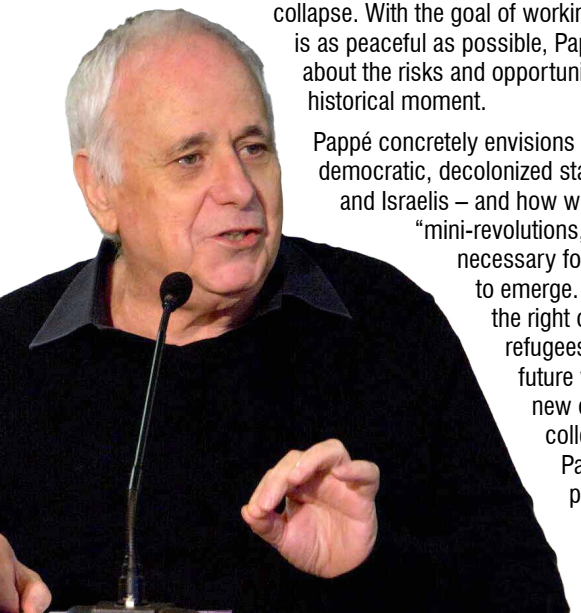
And the Eight Revolutions That Could Lead to Decolonization and Coexistence



By Ilan Pappé

Beacon Press, September 2025, hardcover, 216 pages, US$27.95

In this timely book, historian Ilan Pappé argues that with the 2022 election of the most right-wing government in Israel's history, the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, and the subsequent Israeli war on Gaza, political fractures inherent in the Jewish state have expanded dangerously – and will potentially lead to Israel's collapse. With the goal of working toward a transition that is as peaceful as possible, Pappé sets out his thoughts about the risks and opportunities emerging from this historical moment.



Pappé concretely envisions a more just future – a democratic, decolonized state for both Palestinians and Israelis – and how we might get there. Eight "mini-revolutions," he argues, will be necessary for this more hopeful future to emerge. They include: relocating the right of return of the Palestinian refugees to the center of the future vision; establishing a new definition for the Jewish collective in historical Palestine; finalizing a plan for the future of the Jewish settlements built in the West Bank since 1967; and creating a new strategy for a united Palestinian national movement.

"Ilan Pappé supplants slogans for a single democratic state with a detailed program comprising eight mini-revolutions. This is a bold undertaking and offers abundant ground upon which to debate a vision and transform it into a program. Even, and especially, for those in disagreement, *Israel on the Brink* offers a point of departure to take seriously the work of decolonization." Noura Erakat, author of *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine*

"Ilan Pappé's *Israel on the Brink* is a tour de force, essential reading for anyone who seeks to understand the disintegration of the Zionist project and its consequences. Pappé, one of the foremost scholars on the Israel-Palestine conflict, has authored a series of groundbreaking and important books. This one is no exception." Chris Hedges, Pulitzer Prize–winning former Middle East bureau chief for the *New York Times*

"When you think that everything that could be said has been, Ilan Pappé provides this eye-opening, original, and, most importantly, hopeful book." Eyal Weizman, author of *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation.*

SCAN TO SHARE

Book of the Month II

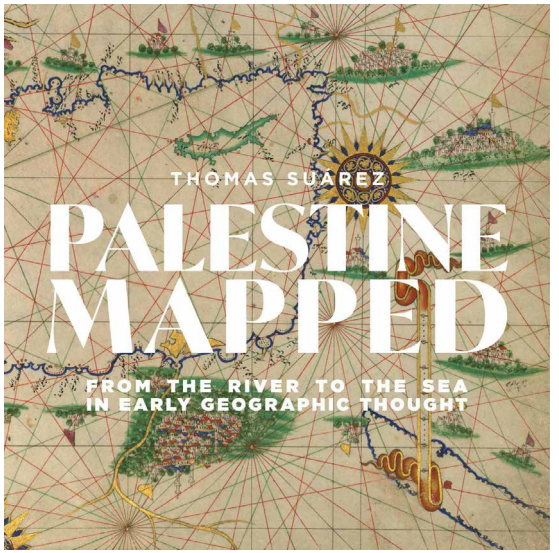


Palestine Mapped

From the River to the Sea in Early Geographic Thought

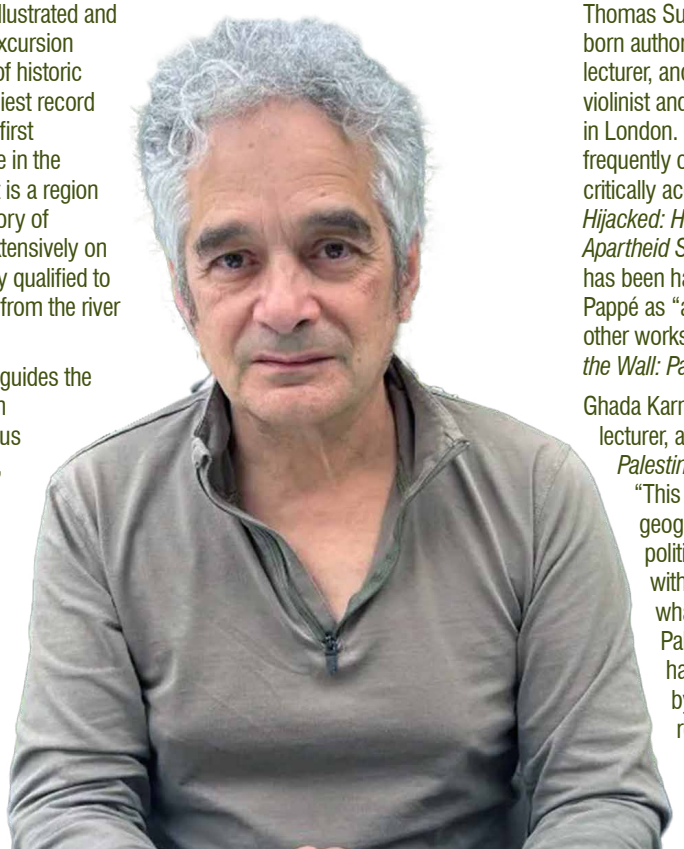
By Thomas Suárez

Hardcover, 343 pages, US$25



This book is a lavishly illustrated and meticulously guided excursion through the mapping of historic Palestine from the earliest record through to the twenty-first century. Palestine is as much a place in the psyche of those who mapped it as it is a region of the earth. An authority on the history of cartography who has also written extensively on Palestine, Thomas Suárez is uniquely qualified to address the mapping of this region "from the river to the sea."

Richly illustrated, *Palestine Mapped* guides the reader through the Greek and Roman concepts of Palestine, those of various medieval Mediterranean civilizations, and the European "Holy Land" mapping that has dominated for half a millennium and continues to inform modern political thought. Suárez dissects that prevailing mindset rather than viewing the land through its lens, setting the book apart from all others on the mapping of the region.



Thomas Suárez is a New York–born author, historical researcher, lecturer, and accomplished concert violinist and composer, now based in London. He writes and speaks frequently on Palestine, and his critically acclaimed book *Palestine Hijacked: How Zionism Forged an Apartheid State from River to Sea* has been hailed by historian Ilan Pappé as "a tour de force." His other works include *Writings on the Wall: Palestinian Oral Histories*.

Ghada Karmi, an academic, lecturer, and author praised *Palestine Mapped* stating, "This is a gem of a book. Part geography, part history, part political analysis, it is written with a fine understanding of what is at stake in mapping Palestine. Nothing like this has ever been produced by any previous researcher."

Salman Abu Sitta, the founder of Palestine Land Society wrote, "A remarkable book, a unique and powerful survey of the mapping of Palestine. The book shows how 'mapping' gave an image of veracity to the European Orientalist mindset, its perception of Palestine that informed later colonial conquest … a wonderful feast of search, inquiry, and analysis."

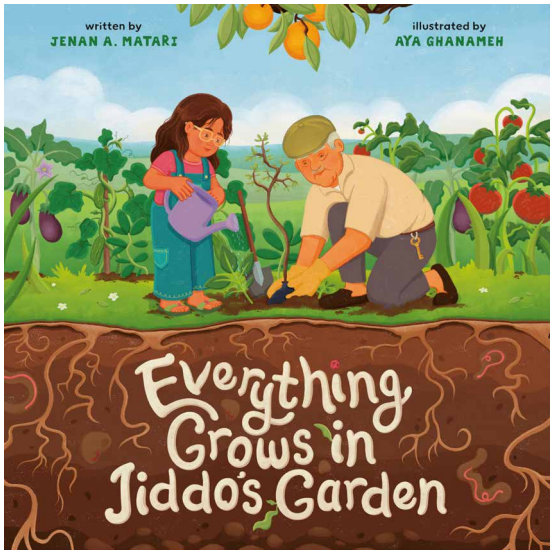
Ilan Pappé, the historian and author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, said, "Tom Suárez offers a unique cartographic representation of Palestine, the land with people, coveted by foreigners, colonized by Europeans and gradually destroyed by Zionism. Beautifully produced, it gives hope that maps will one day represent liberation and freedom for everyone between the river and the sea."

SCAN TO SHARE

Book of the Month III



Everything Grows in Jiddo's Garden



By Jenan A. Matari

32 pages, hardback, for children aged 3 to 8 years

An imprint of Crocodile Books, 2025, $19.95 from Interlink Publishing

Everything Grows in Jiddo's Garden is a tender, evocative picture book about a young Palestinian girl and her beloved Jiddo – her grandfather – whose garden overflows with life, love, and memory. In Jiddo's garden, everything grows: fig trees, fragrant herbs, and, most importantly, a deep connection to identity and home. As the two work side by side, the girl learns that tending the earth is more than caring for plants – it is an act of remembrance and resilience, a way of holding on to stories, traditions, and the hope of return. Jiddo teaches her that while their family was forced to leave their homeland, the seeds of Palestine still live in their hearts and hands, blooming wherever they are planted.



This deeply moving debut picture book by Jenan A. Matari, an award-winning Palestinian American storyteller, explores themes of displacement, belonging, and the enduring connection between people and their land. Matari, known for her powerful advocacy and storytelling that focuses on identity, resistance, and culture, infuses every page with authenticity and warmth. As actress and activist Diane Guerrero reflects, "Jenan writes from a place deep within that we all share – a place where love is so abundant it can never stop growing." Palestinian American activist and creative director of Watermelon Pictures, Alana Hadid calls the book "the children's book I wish my father had been able to give to me as a child."

With striking, richly detailed illustrations by Aya Ghanameh, a Palestinian artist, writer, and designer, *Everything Grows in Jiddo's Garden* captures the emotions of life in exile. Ghanameh's art, grounded in her family's own experiences of displacement, mirrors the story's power, portraying a garden that is both a physical space and a living memory for home, heritage, and hope.

Critics have praised *Everything Grows in Jiddo's Garden* as "a poignant tale that voices the hopes and heartaches of many diasporic Palestinians" (*Kirkus Reviews*). *Foreword Reviews* calls it "a heartfelt picture book" where "the home rooted in his heart sprouts hope," while *Publishers Weekly* celebrates it as "a tender, yearning work about how the home in Jiddo's heart 'makes everything grow.'"

Together, Matari's lyrical storytelling and Ghanameh's stunning visuals create a timeless celebration of love, family, and the unbreakable bond between people and the land that shaped them. Even far from home, this story reminds readers, young and old alike, that what we tend with care, memory, and love will always continue to grow.

SCAN TO SHARE



Northward... Southward

Displacement into the Unknown

A solo exhibition by Yousef Saadeh

October 25 to November 22, 2025

Bab idDeir Gallery, Ramallah

Bab idDeir Gallery in Ramallah presents the solo exhibition *Northward … Southward: Displacement into the Unknown* by the artist Yousef Saadeh. In this exhibition, the tragedy of displacement is revealed as a forced, unstable movement, as if directions have lost their meaning. The displacement occurs repeatedly between north and south, crossing through stations of pain that are now united by human suffering rather than separated by geography.

Here, in the artist's paintings, color becomes testimony, and lines a trace of passage. Bodies lie motionless, as if rooted in a moment of utmost chaos, the climax of the event when time stops and movement transforms into intense silence. The faces disappear, leaving only the collective features, as if to say that the individual has melted into the collective and that the tragedy has transcended personal boundaries to become collective in passion, features, and destiny.

The white color in some works is not pure light but rather a shroud preparing to depart from life, while patches of red and blue seep in behind it, colors undulating between life and death, between memory and disappearance. It is the duality of existence versus annihilation and the duality of homeland versus disorientation. Despite the apparent stillness of the scene, there is an internal tension in the lines, as if the painting is breathing from its depths and resisting being reduced to tragedy. This contrast between stagnation and subtle movement reflects resilience, where survival itself is transformed into an act of resistance.

When we contemplate the works, we see them as a documentation of the status. The first group appears to be the first stage of displacement: several groups, young and old, bags on the ground and bundles carried on shoulders. Then, the groups are fewer, bodies and faces appear more abstract, with no bags or bundles visible. At times, we see two figures in the artwork amid overlapping colors, or perhaps a single figure engaged in dialogue with itself: a body and its reflection, representing presence and memory, as if the artist is reenacting the duality experienced by an exiled person within their homeland – half present, half lost.



From the *Northward ... Southward - Displacement into the Unknown* solo exhibition by Yousef Saadeh.



From the *Northward ... Southward - Displacement into the Unknown* solo exhibition by Yousef Saadeh.

Displacement continues: Where can we return? And in what direction shall we go when the compass is lost?

Yousef Saadeh, born in Al-Qubeibeh (Emmaus), is a dedicated self-taught artist. Although originally educated as a lawyer in Syria, Saadeh's passion for art has remained a constant driving force in his life. He lived in various European countries before returning to Palestine, which has influenced his exposure, vision, and art techniques.

In addition to holding many solo exhibitions, Yousef has participated in numerous collective exhibitions both locally and regionally and in collaborative projects led by acclaimed international artists and curators. In 2006, he was awarded the Cité internationale des arts residency award. He also was selected to participate in the Zaher project, curated by Pierre Muylle.

SCAN TO SHARE

My Grandfather Was Not a Hero

It must have been the early 1970s. I remember one evening when my grandmother's house in Bethlehem was full of people who came to congratulate her on the release of her son Husni who had just been freed from a Jordanian prison. Husni was imprisoned prior to 1967 by Jordan for being a communist and an activist. At some point there was some extra commotion in the house. I could hear my grandfather raising his voice and then some laughter. It seems that the mayor's daughter had sat in my grandfather's armchair and after his repeated polite requests to unseat her, he lost his temper and almost shouted at her, saying that this was his seat! My short-tempered grandfather was in his eighties and as a true Nazarene, he often used cuss words!

Elias As'ad Haddad, my grandfather, was born in Nazareth sometime in the 1880s. After he finished school, he travelled to Istanbul to pursue his education. He then caught typhoid and had to abandon his dreams and return to Palestine. He worked for a while and then married Shafika, my grandmother, and had four children. Hoping to realize his dream, my bookworm grandfather studied law in Jerusalem (at night) and became a lawyer, practicing until he retired in the 70s. A turning point in his life came during a football match pre-1948: Tewfic Haddad, his youngest son, collapsed and died. Apparently, Tewfic had a heart problem but had not informed his parents. The close-knit society of West Jerusalem, where my grandparents were living then, was in shock. My grandmother wore black for ten years.

As I grew up, my almost-perfect image of my grandfather was eventually tarnished as I comprehended more about his work with the British Mandate police force. Among other tasks, his responsibilities included confronting the Palestinian freedom fighters who were fighting the British Mandate which was aiding the Zionist gangs. Although he was compassionate to the imprisoned freedom fighters (and often fed them from his own pocket, as I was told), my grandfather was tough and followed British orders to a tee. In other words, much to my dismay, my grandfather can be called a collaborator. And with all his achievements, which included being awarded an exemplary medal by the British forces along with only other person, he was no hero, given that he did not support the freedom fighters.

The interesting twist in this is that my grandfather was never chastised for his acts. I can only deduce that the freedom fighters didn't carry a lot of societal weight then and that despite Zionist threats, Palestinians were benefitting from the relative affluence brought by the British Mandate, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s. Dido, as we called my grandfather, aged with dignity and had a beautiful funeral.

Long Live Palestine

Sani Meo
Publisher



This Week in Palestine
would like to sincerely thank the following amazing individuals who have contributed financially during the months of October and November 2025.

Victor and Toula Serna

Andre and Sarah Serna

Jacqueline and Maxim Sansour

Anton Najjar

Haiganoush Preisler

Randa and Bill Veach

Damaris Köhler

Kenza Robinson

Mona Halaby

Maya Kayali

Their contribution has not only made this publication possible but also strengthened the voice of Palestine that is being deliberately suppressed.

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