

“All the Consent
That’s Fit to Manufacture”

THE PROMISE TO RETURN

RESISTANCE UNWAVERING AFTER 77 YEARS OF NAKBA

FROM THE LEBANESE CAMPS

Youth in al-Beddawi remain steadfast

The Palestinian Youth Movement conducted this interview in writing with youth from the Beddawi camp in northern Lebanon who are third generation refugees from occupied Palestine. The interview was translated from Arabic and edited for clarity.

Palestinian Youth Movement: Can you tell us about the current climate among the youth of the camps amid the ongoing war in Lebanon and Gaza?

Yousef K: Since October 7, the camps experienced a radical shift, especially among the youth. The day of October 7 birthed a pivotal moment, a moment of consciousness and dignity, in which the camps regained their Palestinian political identity with complete clarity, not only on walls and with flags, but also in daily discourse and individual and collective decision-making.

Because of Gaza’s resistance, the camps experienced a rare moment of joy. It wasn’t superficial. It was the joy of restored dignity, of breaking the colonizer’s arrogance, of the real potentiality of action. In a deeper sense, the camps were suddenly no longer just a symbol of the Nakba, but the starting point for a new consciousness. The refugee was no longer a mere victim or spectator, but a bearer of the struggle with a role to play in it, who declared his intention to join the ranks of the resistance and be part of the liberation project.

There were serious discussions, both politically and organizationally, about struggle, about preparing for it, about the role of the youth, about the idea of returning to the front lines. This would

not have happened without tremendous upheaval enacted by the resistance, which reactivated collective memory and empowered young people — who hadn’t experienced the Intifadas, 2006, or any other major aggression — to speak the language of struggle with discernment and confidence. And so the camp transformed from a place of residence into a space of political, cultural, and psychic confrontation.

Haya A: Over the past 18 months, the Israeli aggression on Gaza escalated into a regional war that included Lebanon and the Palestinian refugee camps there, which resulted in violent air strikes and waves of forced displacement. Life has become much more difficult in Lebanon, especially in the shadow of the deterioration of the economic situation and of UNRWA’s services, alongside intensified security crackdown on the Palestinian camps.

Despite these challenging conditions, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon still hold on to their right of return, and their commitment to the struggle has only increased with the escalation of the Israeli aggression. The youth play a pivotal role in this steadfastness, namely through their popular support for the resistance and their involvement in cultural initiatives. The participation of young people from refugee camps in this war breathed life into the Palestinian struggle and galvanized tens of young people to engage in resistance, underscoring that the youth are the main hope and life force behind the fight.

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Mothers of Palestinian prisoners at a protest in the courtyard of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Jerusalem, 1987.

REBELLION IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS

A new generation finds purpose in prolonging moments of freedom and confrontation

By ABDALJAWAD OMAR

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, new forms of resistance have taken shape that recenter the refugee camp as a primary site of political change and activity. Amid curfews and limitations on social activity, the camp reasserted itself as an incubator of militancy, of new networks, and of practices attuned to the rhythms of confinement, surveillance, and collective endurance.

A new generation of youth emerged in the camps during this time. Neither fully formed political subjects nor mere victims of history, these young people forge a way forward, animated by the Palestinian Authority’s eroding legitimacy and the failed promises of the Oslo Accords. They refuse to conform to Palestinian leadership’s demands for acquiescence and political concession.

Jenin Camp, the Old City of Nablus, and other refugee camps across the northern West Bank transformed from zones of abandonment into terrains of organized defiance. The Jenin Brigades and other militant formations emerged soon after the COVID curfews were lifted.

The camp’s narrow alleyways and crowded dwellings bear the weight of forced displacement while never conceding to the permanence of settlement. It speaks a language both of memory and refusal. The camp persists — awkwardly, defiantly — suspended between expulsion and return, between state abandonment and political overpresence.

Within its densely layered social fabric, a distinct form of life takes shape. The camp becomes not merely a space of survival, but a space from which to unmake the logic of surrender and reconstitute the very meaning of political presence. The camp does not merely resist; it configures an alternative horizon rooted not in future guarantees but in the immediacy of risk, refusal, and collective endurance.

The emergence of the camp as a sovereign space

The emergence and intensification of rebellion in the West Bank — including lone-wolf attacks, mass mobilizations, and the resurgence of armed organizations — respond to an expanding and intensifying settler-colonial structure.

Resistance is a structural response born out of confrontation with a regime that is deepening its dispossession and violence. This regime seeks to choke its victim and forces Palestinians into a position of “resistance.”

What we are witnessing in the West Bank cannot be reduced to a reactivation of earlier moments of struggle, nor can it be grasped through the worn-out binaries of colonial analysis alone. These rebellions are symptoms, yes — but of a deeper crisis: a collapse in the very coordinates of political intelligibility, a



Children playing with tires in a yard destroyed by Israeli Occupation Forces in Jenin refugee camp during the Second Intifada, April 2003.

fragmentation of the horizon.

The Palestinian context today is marked by an unresolved contradiction. We are situated in a suspended present where fantasies of postcolonial sovereignty co-exist with brutal facts of colonial permanence. This collapses the frameworks that once made political action legible and coherent. The grand narratives of liberation that underpinned the Palestinian revolution in the mid-20th century and the later Islamist insurgencies of the 1980s no longer offer sufficient coordinates. They return as echoes, not as guides.

We face not merely a crisis within the political field but a crisis of the political field, a breakdown in the ability to define the horizon between what is possible and what is thinkable. This is why the current wave of resistance cannot be read as a revolution in the classic sense. It must be understood as a practice of freedom enacted through confrontation.

The current wave of resistance privileges the act itself — the moment of resistance — as a political assertion not necessarily embedded in a coherent project. It insists on action even in the absence of a clear horizon. This is not a failure of thought but an exposure to the limits of our inherited narratives. It answers the question “What is to be done?” simply: Act — and when you are unsure, act more.

The resistance offers no full program. It offers no claim to the state, no roadmap. Instead, it confronts the field of domination directly — through action, presence, and endurance. Its wager is not on the future as a promised project but on the present as a site of interruption.

The camp, while being reduced to rubble, is not dead.

The new *fida’i* is not a figure who emerges from revolutionary classes nor from the contours of political education. This figure participates in a discourse of absolute commitment — one that builds small zones of sovereign refusal and spaces of sacrifice. What distinguishes this moment is precisely that such sacrifice is not animated by an image of the future.

This generation accepts the logic of sacrifice not because it guarantees a future, but despite knowing it may not. Its acts are not subsumed within grand narratives of national liberation, nor are they reducible to nihilism. They instead offer a gesture that unsettles both: a form of struggle that reveals the exhaustion of inherited frameworks and insists on staying with the rupture.

Take, for example, the moment the

martyr Mohammad al-Dakhil recorded an Israeli intelligence officer. The officer, in a final attempt at command, threatens death. Al-Dakhil responds: “We are not afraid of death... so don’t threaten us with it.” The message does not land. The language of threat is neutralized. The officer, stripped of linguistic power, turns to the bullet. Violence here is not the continuation of discourse — it is its failure. The officer, hearing the words al-Dakhil tells him, says, “I will drink your blood, you son of bitch.”

This is the scene of contemporary revolution: a refusal to be addressed by the language of domination. A moment where a generation writes itself not through the promise of the future but through the insistence on presence.

Sovereign spaces have emerged in the West Bank — not in the legal or institutional sense but as formations that refuse to receive the message of the colonizer. Not because the message was unheard, but because it was illegitimate. These spaces confront the collapse of grand narratives that once animated the Palestinian national imagination.

Their formation is itself a symptom of that collapse. They reclaim certain foundational narratives — particularly that of martyrdom — not as a call to metaphysical transcendence but as a mode of extracting truth from the living and of constructing an ethical self whose legitimacy is measured by divine satisfaction.

These formations have succeeded in forging a new equation, outmaneuvering the colonizer’s apparatus of total surveillance through swift, agile operations that blend defense with offensive capacity.

This elevates the value of immediate experience, what Georges Bataille refers to as a sovereign moment — where the sovereign is precisely the one who is capable of inhabiting the present, of enjoying time itself without being diverted by a deferred horizon.

Resistance in the past couple of years does not accumulate meaning through promised redemption but through the extension of the present — through the capacity to prolong the moment of rebellion, to dwell in its intensity even with the full knowledge of an anticipated encounter with death.

Four tactics the occupation uses to face this renewed resistance

In parallel with the emergence of this renewed resistance formation centered around the refugee camp, the Israeli occupation began recalibrating its strategy. The intensification of armed operations confronted the Israeli security establishment with a pressing imperative: to neutralize a phenomenon it could no longer dismiss as sporadic or marginal.

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NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

A STRUGGLE AS ESSENTIAL AS LIFE ITSELF

On May 15, 1948, Zionist militias entered Palestinian villages and began rounding up and shooting entire families in their homes. As word of the Zionist terrorism spread, up to 1 million Palestinians were forcibly displaced, leaving meals half-finished and laundry half-folded. Shouldering only what they could carry, each went in the direction that held the nearest promise of safety: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt. No matter where they went, all believed that they would soon return home. Instead, they and their descendants were to endure 77 years of statelessness and exile, scattered across neighboring Arab countries and the globe.

The story of the Nakba is the story of “Israel’s” creation. One word, containing within its boundaries the massacre and annihilation of over 500 Palestinian villages.

And yet the Nakba is not a singular event, but a historical process whose political groundwork was laid by Zionists and Western imperialists in the late nineteenth century, and whose violent system of erasures continues today. The unending massacres in Gaza, the forced mass exoduses from refugee camps like Jabalia and Jenin, and the slow-motion destruction of Arab land and life across Palestine are all part of the long, uninterrupted arc of one Catastrophe.

Over the past 19 months, we have borne witness to the Catastrophe’s most acute phase: the relentless obliteration of Gaza’s schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, neighborhoods and refugee camps, the engineered starvation of over 2 million of our people. But while May 1948 and October 2023 are painful incisions that puncture Palestinian collective consciousness, the Palestinian struggle is about far more than enduring hardship and commemorating exile. The history of our struggle is not predicated on the hopelessness of exile, but rather, on the promise of return: a covenant that keeps our people’s revolutionary spirit alive, generation after generation.

As we mark 77 years of Nakba, we remind the world that the Nakba is not the start of Palestinian history. Palestinians and Arabs across the region have resisted imperialism for over 100 years. From the Great Arab Revolution of 1936 to the war of the camps in Lebanon, to the tearing down of the border wall in 2023, the Palestinian people stubbornly insist on life and on remaining rooted in their land.

It is through this stubbornness that the path to liberation is born. Paved by the blood of our martyrs and guided by the light of our prisoners, this path is neither straight nor easy, but we follow it nevertheless. In the face of setbacks and unanswered questions we march forward, because we know that the

struggle will lead us to liberation.

Today, our struggle is at a crossroads. The Zionist state and its Western backers are waging a war of extermination against our people, from Gaza, to the West Bank, to the broader Arab region and the far diaspora. The scale of the human loss in Gaza and the attack on our movement in the diaspora are realities bound to produce feelings of hopelessness and despair.

As long as Zionism attempts to eradicate us, we know we have not been defeated.

So we offer the pieces in this issue as fuel, for if there was ever a moment to confront hopelessness, and replace it with conviction, that moment is now.

This issue of *The New York War Crimes* is being published on the 77th anniversary of the Nakba as a partnership between the Palestinian Youth Movement and Writers Against the War on Gaza. In it are texts that articulate clearly the antagonistic contradiction between Palestinian liberation and Zionism, between imperialism and Arab sovereignty, demonstrating unequivocally that the two can never co-exist. The horrors of this moment then, are not only reflections of Zionism’s barbaric nature, but are also a reflection of the strength of our will to resist, to remain, and to return. For as long as Zionism attempts to eradicate us, we know we have not been defeated.

Across these eight pages are stories of displacement, imprisonment, and martyrdom, which testify to the promise of resistance and return. Through archival research, translated works, and new writing, what you have before you is a body of work that serves as a vindication of our people’s resolve, of their unshakable refusal to compromise and capitulate.

Few Palestinian survivors of May 1948 remain alive with us today. Yet the scale and distance of 77 years should not dissuade us. In the words of Nakba survivor Ahmed Qasim Ubayd, whose testimony is featured in this issue: “Everyone we’re talking about is dead now; we’re here talking about memories. It’s so that the generation that comes after us understands the value of the homeland.”

Let their memories renew our commitment to the struggle and the homeland. Let their sacrifices serve as that steadfast flame, lit by the first generation and passed on by each subsequent one, guiding us forward on the road to liberation and return.

‘What Is the Solution Until Liberation?’

An excerpt from Walid Daqqa’s “Control Through Time”

Gilboa Prison, Beit She'an, April 11, 2021

The fragmentation of time manipulated by the colonial jailer makes him a partner, a party, in shaping our consciousness of ourselves, our perception of our identity. The objective of creating this differentiation between prison sections or Palestinian enclaves is to transform time into an instrument of surveillance and control. And this control harbors a paradox, an internal contradiction: the jailer engraves the prisoner and creates the prisoner in the image of his fears, while the prisoner, in turn, engraves the jailer in the image of his fears as well.

The jailer looks at the prisoner and finds resemblance, and he fears that the prisoner might take his place in a moment of inattentiveness. And so, the jailer is always seeking to shackle the prisoner's wrists, to bind him with iron, or perhaps, in modern times, to bind him with time, so he remains immobile in his space and time, and so he does not take the jailer's space and time.

On the other hand, in the jailer's quest for control, he gazes into the prisoner's mirror to find his own hideous self. He fears what he has created and how the reflections in the mirror might skew his perception of himself, and so he seeks to destroy it. Between shackling the prisoner with iron or with time and destroying the prisoner's mirror, or, in other words, between rights and confiscating life through physical annihilation, the jailer moves to use instruments of control — the manipulation of the pace of time — to objectify the prisoner and to confiscate the self as a political agent, until he ultimately reaches political annihilation.

At the very least, Israel has succeeded in imposing five prisons — or five Palestinian population centers (the interior of Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and the diaspora). To each one of those prisons, Israel has inscribed a different spatial and temporal reality, and a distinct legal and political reality. Decades have passed under these conditions, where spatial and temporal obstacles have deepened and been enshrined in a political and legal order. This separate structure, which was meant to be temporary, has become almost permanent. This condition is then what creates diverging identities.

Here, we pose the question: How can things go on without the fragmentation of the Palestinian identity which is, at this very moment, forming and devel-

oping in diverging spatial and temporal contexts? What is the solution until liberation? Assuming that identity is not a fixed given, but requires infusion with imagination, how can we go on without “Khalidoun” transforming into “Dov,” as Ghassan Kanafani warned us in *Returning to Haifa*?

If time is segmented into different contexts and rhythms among distinct Palestinian spaces, then what might consolidate Palestinians to maintain their identity? And how can we achieve that when the occupation owns the sharpest and most effective time chisel to engrave the identity of space, for it not only controls the spatial fragmentation of real time, but it also controls the fragmentation of hypothetical time.

Awareness, human consciousness, is Gestalt, total, holistic. Awareness, then, is not only what our senses transmit to us and reflect on our cognitive mirror, but it is an awareness that surpasses the senses and might even consist of sensory perceptions that remain unknown to us or that we are yet to name. This awareness cannot be situated in the traditional philosophical binary between materialism and idealism; It is awareness through one's heart, or through one's spirit.

Thinking through these organs points to an awareness that Hussein Barghouti explained as “nurturing olives with oil.” This awareness is not delimited by the parameters of thought that designate the mind as a reflection of material reality, but even further positions the soul in opposition to the mind, the realm of ideals against material awareness, and imagination in opposition to truth.

Truth, for us here, is imagination, as much as imagination is Truth. Time and space are twins. Time stretches into space, and space stretches into time. A minute in Gaza is the same as a minute in Ramallah.

What I mean by the pace of time is its segmentation into longer or shorter intervals. A minute during which only a portion of a space is uncovered is not the same as a minute where the entirety of the space is revealed. In other words, the more compressed the time interval is, that is, the more densely populated it is with spatial content, the longer it is perceived by us.

For example, the sensation of a 24-hour day in the tented sections of the Negev prison feels much longer than a 24-hour day in the cell sections of the same prison. What is permitted or for-

bidden in each section differs. In other words, the legal and political system regulating one's mobility, access to the prison yard, and conditions of life is structured around the segmentation of time and the pace of its passage differently from one section to another.

I have said that the calculated logic employed by the occupation in its attempt to control Palestinian time in ghettos and prisons is one that treats time according to the equation: time = distance ÷ speed. So long as the distance is effectively zero, given that the occupier controls space, the result will remain zero no matter how the other variables in the equation are changed. Thus, the logic which insists that 1 + 1 = 2 is replaced by the prisoners with a different logic, which I choose to call a “rationalist logic.” This rationalist logic refuses to accept the conventional calculated logic and its predetermined outcomes, such as: 1 + 1 = 2.

Had this not been the case, how could we then make sense of a prisoner embarking on an indefinite hunger strike, possibly even refraining from drinking water, while demanding their freedom, or in pursuit of an even a lesser demand, like improved living conditions? What does it mean to take such a step, which, applying the logic of 1 + 1 = 2, almost certainly leads to death? Is it a desire for death and a readiness to accept it as an anticipated outcome? Or is it a love for life and the conviction that it is life that will be the outcome? Are these cognitive calculations? And if we admit that these calculations are rational by nature, what exactly do these calculations encompass? In other words, what are the instruments through which this thinking operates?

I have often stood in awe of the will and the determination of a young man, no older than 20 years, weighing no more than 50 kilograms, beginning an indefinite hunger strike and, without any prior experience, withstanding the challenges and agony of hunger. Then, I find myself asking: Is this emanating from a lack of reason? Or is it another kind of reason that animates this body? Is it that the young man is simply unaware, mentally, of the consequences of his decision that drove him to be so indifferent about those very consequences?

The truth is, I have found that in most of the cases I encountered, these young men are fully aware of the consequences, and their decision is never a derivative of ignorance. They are completely aware that 1 + 1 = 2; however,

they remain resolute with a willfulness that surpasses the instrumental calculations of the mind to rationalist calculations (which encompass the mind, the spirit, the heart, and the body) that they rely on in their thought. This rationality does not acknowledge the calculations of reason that perpetuate reality or change it, but rather takes objective reality and elevates it. Their rationality refuses to stoop to reality and embed in it, but rather descends with the goal of attaining a higher plane.

This rationality brings together ethical, moral, human, and national considerations, along with values specific to the self, which transform the mind, along with the body and the heart into more than their mechanical sum for the objective of confronting the occupation which has turned irrationality into a new rationality, driving our elites into the corner of mental calculations. Our political elites and — while diverse, to some extent — also our cultural elites, regardless of where they are situated — including in the interior occupied in 1948 — have internalized mental logic and deduced from it constructs that decisively reaffirm this logic, such as realism and objectivity.

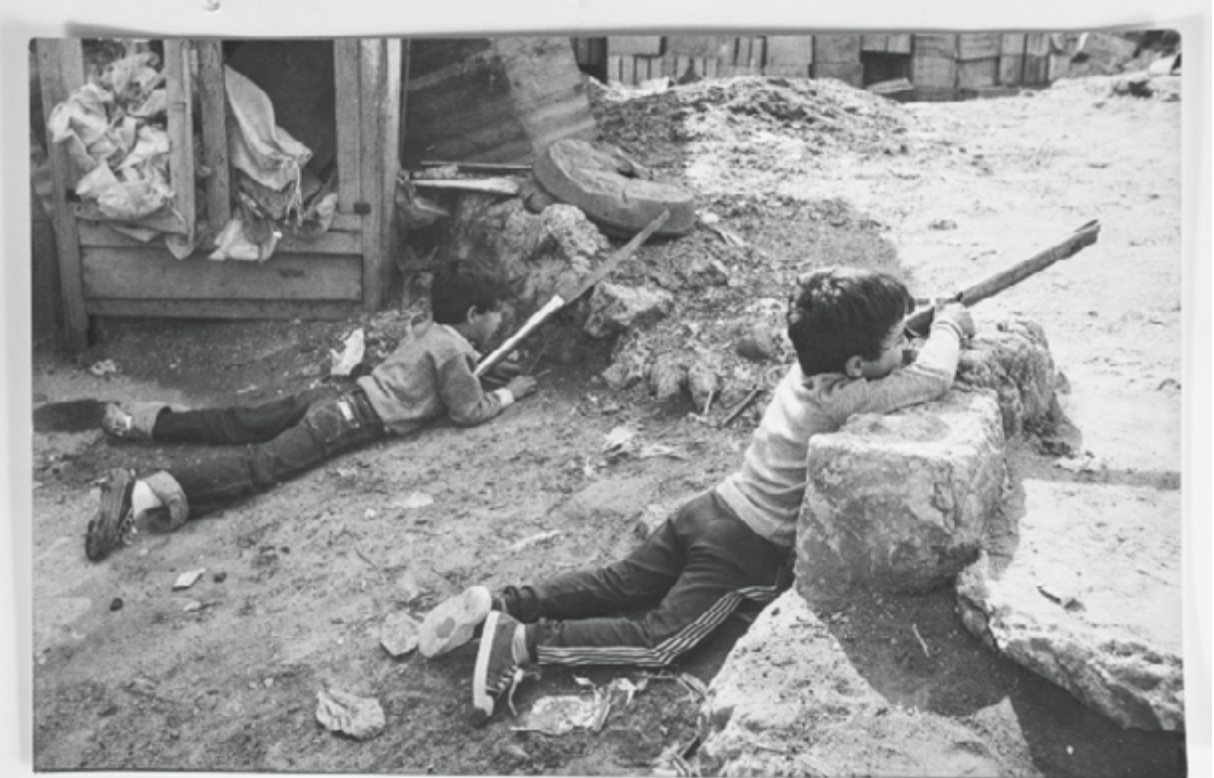
The gesture towards realism and objectivity is neither realistic nor objective when it is bound to the mental logic of these elites. This objectivity has never directed us towards changing this objective reality, but only towards reaffirming it. This is the objectivity and the realism of a mind that is defeated, a mind that lacks will. And this logic repeatedly called on us to give in to distance, give in to the vast chasm between the desires and orientations of the heart, and between what is hoped for and what is to be realistically expected. But this distance was shattered by the imagination of the prisoners, armed with will, backfilling the distance until eternity.

Our overall political and cultural discourse broadcasts to us, under the crushing weight of our objective reality, that we are inevitably defeated, and that we need to accept this defeat and move from this defeat to construct our positions and establish our media and our political and cultural behavior. But there is a distinction between admitting defeat as a reality that we must confront and transform, and taking defeat as a starting point for a defeatist discourse, robbed of its will.

Our elites are not helpless. No, they lack will. They lack imagination. Full stop.



ABOVE: Daqqa with his mother, Farida, on the occasion of his wedding in Asqalan prison. **BELOW:** Daqqa and his daughter Milad, conceived with sperm smuggled out of prison. The two images are non-contiguous, reflecting the brutal separation of father and daughter by the Zionist occupation.



Palestinian children play in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp near Sidon in southern Lebanon in the 1980s.

Al-Beddawi resists

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Abed A: The Palestinian resistance proved that nothing is impossible, that even in the face of the strongest armies, it can carry out high-calibre operations with an iron will and simple tools. These attacks shook the enemy, who, in return, responded with savagery against civilians, thinking this aggression would protect the Zionist project whilst feeling its approaching demise.

The air strikes against four Palestinian camps in Lebanon over the past 18 months only increased the youth's commitment to resistance. They witnessed the brutality of the aggression against civilians and the defenseless, and it kindled within them a rage that pushed them to engage in resistance, including through cultural and national liberation organizations. Despite all the devastation, the residents' collective will remained strong and the aid that the camps' youth provided to the displaced created an active link between the resistance and the people.

Can you tell us more about how the youth and other residents of the camps maintain their political commitment to the struggle?

Yousef K: Despite the passage of more than 75 years since the Nakba, the Palestinian refugee continues to hold on to the promise of return, not as a romantic dream, but as an active political commitment lived out every day. In the camps, national identity is not merely a slogan, but a state of consciousness that is always renewing. From generation to generation, the struggle is reborn with new methods and tools.

Personally, I'm part of our camp's

culture club. Through it, we organize an annual “Nakba Camp,” an exhibition that depicts the Nakba not as a single historical event, but as a sequence of Palestinian catastrophes, from the mass displacement of 1948, to the repeated Israeli aggressions, to the refugee crisis which continues to this day. The exhibition attracts thousands of residents and turns into a national event that chronicles, documents, and reaffirms that the camp is not a waiting room, but a fortress of steadfastness and a commitment to the truth.

Above all, the Palestinian refugee refuses to compromise on his rights. The Oslo Accords, which attempted to erase the idea of return and separate the refugee from his struggle, is completely rejected in the camps. The Accords were not only a political concession, but undermined the fundamental aspirations of the struggle: liberation and return. Today, the camps are more aware of and more committed to their full right to liberation and return without compromise or resettlement projects.

Haya A: Cultural centers and clubs, chief among them the Palestinian Culture Club, have been active in organizing cultural activities to increase consciousness of the history and geography of Palestine. These materials are absent from the curriculum taught in UNRWA schools due to their so-called “neutrality” policy. We believe that cultural development and the observance of national heritage are among the most important pillars of support for the struggle. Therefore, we seek through all our activities to elevate cultural consciousness and confront conspiracies that surround our people both internally and externally.

Abed A: Today, the relationship be-

tween the youth and the Palestinian struggle is nurtured by activities organized by the culture clubs and some Palestinian cultural organizations, as well as by works of resistant art such as murals that include images of the key of return, maps of Palestine, and poems that express national unity. These artistic works present grandparents' testimonies of war, the biographies and audio recordings of martyrs, and the footage of clashes between the resistance and the enemy which all contribute to nurturing political consciousness and strengthening national identity in the youth.

The refugee camps have played a pivotal role in strengthening the resistance and steadfastness of our people. Nahr al-Bared, for example, occupied an important geographical position as the only Palestinian camp located directly on the Mediterranean Sea. This camp was extensively destroyed by shelling from the Lebanese army in 2007. Can you tell us more about the state of resistance in the camps?

Yousef K: Since the second day of the war, the camps have been a strong presence, offering martyrs in defense of Gaza and forming a part of the resistance that extends beyond the borders of Palestine. This is why they were directly targeted by the Israeli occupation, with four Palestinian camps in Lebanon experiencing bombardment during the war. As of today, the Palestinian camps in Lebanon have offered more than 50 martyrs since October 7, 2023 — a significant, significant number that insists that the diaspora's place is not on the margins, but at the heart of the fight.

This advanced role has placed the camps under double attack, on one

hand from Israeli military aggression and, on the other, from UNRWA's policies aimed at strangling resistance efforts, whether by suspending employees on charges of “national affiliation” or by reducing services in an attempt to isolate the camps and cripple their political and organizational capacity.

Today, the camps have once again become a central arena in the Palestinian national project, not only through their steadfastness, but through their consciousness, through their martyrs' blood, through their role in protecting the memory and the narrative of the Palestinian people, and through their readiness for any future confrontation with the Zionist enemy.

Haya A: The youth played an important role in helping displaced families during the war. The Palestinian Culture Club was very active in relief efforts at a time when most political organizations and international institutions were absent, seemingly due to the camps' political positions.

On the resistance front, the camps play a historic role in exercising steadfast moral and material support. Among them is Nahr al-Bared, which experienced extensive destruction in 2007 and remains a symbol of resistance. In October 2023, the camp witnessed massive marches in support of the resistance. Protests against the Israeli aggression on Gaza in Nahr al-Bared and al-Beddawi continue to this day.

Abed A: The youth in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon demonstrated a high willingness to support people forcibly displaced by bombings during the war by offering logistical services and support, such as finding housing. A general sense of solidarity and responsibility prevailed within the camps and the people felt that it was their duty to avenge the blood of the martyrs and to defend Palestinian rights. Several questions swirled in their heads: What is my role? What can I possibly do? They saw in the displaced their own homes and families, and they considered them partners in blood and in destiny.

How are the people of the camps coping with the fierce attack launched by the United States and Benjamin Netanyahu and the Western powers against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in an attempt to liquidate the right of return?

Yousef K: Residents of the camps in the diaspora, especially in Lebanon, no longer see the attack on UNRWA as an isolated event, but rather as a part of a clear attempt to liquidate the struggle of the refugees by eliminating one of the most prominent international witnesses to the Nakba.

From within the camp, people can see how the United States, the occupation, and Western powers are working to drain UNRWA by cutting funds, practicing political blackmail, or pressuring

the agency to dismiss employees under the pretext of “national affiliation” or accusing them of supporting “terrorism,” especially after October 7.

The people of the camps are not naive. They have a time-served consciousness of what it means to attack UNRWA: (1) It means indirectly undermining the right of return (2) It means that Palestinians lose their legal status as refugees, paving the way for the obliteration of their political identity (3) And it means destroying the infrastructure that nourishes daily steadfastness — education, healthcare, relief work — forcing young people to emigrate, fall into despair, or explode in random acts.

But here's the irony: despite all these pressures, the camps are transforming once again into spaces of conscious resistance, and we're witnessing an organized campaign in defense of UNRWA, not as a charitable organization, but rather as a political witness to the Nakba with a mandate to uphold the rights of refugees until their return.

Today, the people of the camp understand that the attack on UNRWA is an extension of the narrative battle with the Zionist entity. That's why we're seeing a growing popular movement against any attempt to drain the agency's services or change its mandate, as well as a heightened consciousness of the dangers of removing it from the political file and transforming it into a neutral humanitarian organization.

The Great March of Return in Gaza in 2018 and the March of Return in Lebanon in 2011 were pivotal events in the recent history of our struggle. Tell us about the 2011 experience and its goals. What was the significance of these marches when viewed in their historical context?

Yousef K: The Nakba Day march of 2011 marked a rare and exceptional moment when thousands of Palestinian refugees along with Lebanese people, joining in solidarity, set off in the direction of the border with occupied Palestine, specifically in the village of Maroun al-Ras. This was not a symbolic march, but a direct action in which the Palestinian refugee expressed his genuine commitment to the right of return.

The Palestinian camps in Lebanon were the backbone for the organization and mobilization of this march, especially the camps of the south like Rashidieh and al-Buss. The refugees were even prepared for martyrdom. Indeed, more than 10 martyrs fell from occupation bullets fired at the border and tens more were wounded. This demonstrated that Palestinians in the diaspora are not merely “victims” or passive bystanders, but living and engaged participants in the national project.

Significantly, these marches were the first time in decades that Palestinian refugees returned to the border in a collective and organized way. The occupation and many other regimes were sur-

prised by the sight of tens of thousands at the border. Until today, many of the youth who participated in this march speak of it as the closest they have ever come to Haifa or Lyd or Jaffa... Even though they didn't cross the border, just seeing their occupied lands with their own eyes gave them a conviction that return isn't impossible, but requires will and organization.

Abed A: Though I was young at the time and did not participate, I can say the results of the 2011 march were tremendous. They marched tens of kilometers towards the border just to see Palestine. They offered martyrs at that border. It demonstrated that the people of the camps had not forgotten their homeland. The experience of seeing the occupied lands and looking the enemy in the naked eye, not behind a screen, was enough to ignite an inner sense that return is a duty and that fighting for it is a right that will never die.

What meaning does Nakba Day carry for you all this year? How do you view the occupation's attempts at destroying the refugee camps in Gaza and the northern occupied West Bank in light of the resistance efforts underway in the camps in Lebanon?

Yousef K: The Palestinian refugee experiences national holidays as if they are personal appointments — with dignity. Land Day, Prisoner's Day, the anniversary of the liberation of Gaza — these are highly symbolic dates, commemorated by initiatives from the people themselves, whether through events and discussions or the sharing of memories. The streets of the camp are always full of talk about the homeland, about the villages, and about “the house that we were displaced from.” These memories never fade away.

This year, Nakba Day carries a different and heavier meaning than previous years. For the first time, we are seeing a comprehensive and systematic attempt to annihilate the refugee camps in Gaza — Jabalia Camp, al-Bureij, al-Nuseirat — not only through bombing but also through their geographic and demographic obliteration. The same process is repeating in the occupied West Bank, especially in Jenin camp, which has become a model for popular and armed resistance and which is being targeted repeatedly with raids and forced displacement. We understand that the occupation targets camps because they are a living symbol of the failure of the Zionist project to obliterate the Palestinian existence.

From our perspective in the camps in Lebanon, we see our situation as a natural extension of these fronts and our duty today is greater than ever before: to protect the right of return, to defend our existence, and to continue in the attempts to make the camp a place of struggle and collective memory, no matter how great the attempts to isolate us or drown us in crises.



The Wounded Memory of the Nakba

By
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What follows is the first English translation, by Alex Jreisat, of the Palestinian revolutionary intellectual and martyr Basel al-Araj's essay Al-dhakirah al-jar'hah lil-nakbah ("The Wounded Memory of the Nakba"), which explores political questions of memory during and after catastrophe through unflinching portraits of several geographies that faced Zionist annihilation campaigns from 1947 to 1949, including Tantura, Deir Yassin, and al-Dawayima. The study then presents three narrative themes focused on the tools of extermination during the Nakba: extermination by incineration in al-Tira, by biological warfare in Akka, and by death march in al-Lidd and al-Ramleh. Due to the length of the essay, the latter sections will not be featured in print, though the full essay can be read online at newyorkwarcrimes.com.

While the work below is harrowing and brutal, it is a fitting rejoinder to any who believe the destruction of Palestinian life to have begun with the al-Aqsa Flood operation. This text was prepared as part of the effort to translate and publish the works of al-Araj collected in the 2018 book of essays Wajadtu ajwibati (I Have Found My Answers). The project came about in consultation with al-Araj's family and comrades, and will be published in 2026 as a free electronic book as well as a print book by the recently established publishing house Safarjal Press (Instagram: @safarjalpress).

The word, “Nakba,” summons in memory that momentous event that befell the Arabs in 1948. When Constantin Zureiq used the term for the first time, he was both accurate and justified in his description of this event. The Nakba left an enduring, paradigm-shifting impact beyond its immediate occurrence to the events that followed. The Nakba is a lasting event that began before 1948 and whose effects and actions have never ended despite the armistice decision. The settler-colonial replacement projects are not a momentary event (a war or a battle), but rather an ongoing structural process that seeks to replace one society with another.

Palestinians created two types of memories around the Nakba, which is considered a persisting embodiment of the Palestinian tragedy. One is in terms of subject matter and the other of individuals and the collective. Regarding subject matter, Palestinians have developed a wounded memory that entails the crimes perpetrated by the enemy against their people, as well as the magnitude of the loss they've suffered. Additionally, there's a memory of heroism and sacrifice that includes the heroic acts carried out by the Arabs and their few supporters from among the free peoples of the world in defense of their land and nation.

From another perspective, three types of memory and narrative around the Nakba were born among the Palestinians: individual narratives carried by those who lived through the Nakba and passed down to their descendants, which then coalesce into a “group” memory. The sum of these “group” memories forms a single “collective” memory.

The student of Palestinian oral history about the Nakba will note that it starts with discussions about life in the village/city before displacement, often portraying Palestine as paradise lost or the heaven that Palestinians were deprived of. However, the same narrative does not exclude talk about the poverty, hardship, and toil that Palestinians suffered before the Nakba due to the economic and social structure and oppressive colonial policies. Salih Abd al-Jawad considers this issue from the angle of real feelings in the magnitude of loss, which also intersects with the topic

of responsibility for the loss and defeat. Palestinians do not hesitate to hold the whole world responsible for their tragedy, while even blaming themselves and also devaluing their own resistance, and engaging in self-flagellation due to the sense of the scale of loss that they suffered.

The first generation of refugees carried a heterogeneous memory of the homeland and village, combining both misery and bliss. However, the following generations supplanted narratives of misery and poverty with the narrative of supposed joy in the lost nation, drawing an image of Palestine that was not entirely accurate.

Even after 67 years, Palestinians still carry their villages and cities in the diaspora, be it in the names of their sons and daughters, the signs of their shops, or even by preserving the remnants of the original social structure of the Palestinian village. The refugees took up residence in the camps, every village in its own part of the camp, as did each clan and family. They carried their heritage, practices, and traditions with them to their diaspora, even if that heritage was exposed to a kind of acculturation or cross-pollination with other villages and cities.

This exploratory study examines the immediate aspect of the Palestinians' wounded memory around the Nakba. Compiling the wounds which the Nakba has left on Palestinians is challenging for three reasons. The first is because it is a lasting and interminable event. The second is because every group and every individual carry wounds within themselves that make them difficult to process and compartmentalize. Thirdly, all talk about Palestine and its pre-Nakba *being* carries a pain and wound in its folds. We will not be enumerating the economic, social, and cultural losses for Palestinian society, and will instead only address the immediate wounded memory. The wounded memory of Palestinians around the Nakba speaks to the direct actions of the enemy against them. It is divided into the events of the war, the tools of the extermination and massacres, the impetus for the exodus, and the long path to the camps and the pain and suffering it brought.

The Nakba brought about the loss of 78% of the area of Mandatory Palestine, the destruction and ethnic cleansing of 531 Palestinian villages and cities, the displacement of 805,076 Palestinians, and “the perpetration of 35 documented massacres, though the actual count surpassed 100” (Abu Sitta). In addition, there were also 16,721 martyrs from among those who had fought alongside the Palestinians and whose names, count, locations or dates of their martyrdom, or village names were known (al-Arif 1958: 9).

This study presents several biographies of place and narrative themes, where place is the focal point of the story. Autobiographies are absent from this research due to the subject matter of the study's contents, as the event was far too significant to be reduced to the biography of an individual. Hence, the individuals mentioned in the study presented themselves only as eyewitnesses to the Nakba, surpassing the individual in its narrative.

The Tantura Massacre

Tantura falls 24 kilometers south of Haifa, directly on the coast, perched on a small hill “25 meters above sea-level.” It had a train station and, according to the 1945 census, was inhabited by 1,490 Arabs across 202 households. It had a school for both boys and girls, and the village subsisted on agriculture and fishing. On May 22 and 23, the 33rd battalion of the Haganah (the 3rd Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade) attacked the village (al-Khalidi 1998).

On May 15, Jewish intelligence officers offered surrender to the population of Tantura. However, the villagers refused the offer. On the night of May

22nd, the village was attacked from four directions, and this departed from the campaigns of all previous operations where attacks were conducted from three directions, tactically leaving the fourth as an exit for the expulsion



of the inhabitants. The residents were gathered on the coast, where the men were separated from the women and children (Pappé 2007).

Fawzi Mahmud Ahmad Tanji offers his testimony:

They gathered us near the beach. The men on one side and the women on another. Boys and young men older than twelve were placed with the men, and those younger were placed with the women. After that, they picked out seven to ten men and brought them to a place close to the village mosque. They shot them there. Then they returned and led another group and so on, until the number reached close to ninety individuals. A group of soldiers accompanied each group, while some of the villagers stood and watched what was happening. Afterwards, they took all who remained to the village cemetery and stood them there. They planned to shoot everyone. At that point, about fifty to sixty individuals from Kibbutz Zikhron Ya'akov arrived. When they saw what was happening, several of their senior officials intervened. They stopped the massacre and said, ‘Enough...’

He adds:

These soldiers, the looks of whose faces I will never forget as long as I live, seemed to me like angels of death. As I stood there, I was cer-

tain these were the final moments of my life, and that they would come at any moment to take and shoot me too. I don't know why they did to us what the Germans did to them...

To counter the resilience of the villagers, the attackers sought backup from the Palmach forces stationed at a military encampment near Jerusalem. These forces, in turn, shelled the village with mortar fire to facilitate the attackers' mission. By noon, the village was completely devoid of any resistance. Consequently, the Stern and Irgun forces decided — according to Mercillon — to employ the method they knew best: dynamite. Thus, they overtook the village by blowing up the houses one by one.

After they ran out of explosives, they began “cleaning” the area of the last elements of resistance by way of bombs and machine guns. They fired at everything that moved inside the houses, be they men, women, children, or the elderly.” They stood dozens of villagers against the walls and shot them. The killings continued over the course of two days (Yasir 2009).

The Zionist forces carried out deliberate operations of mutilation (torture, assault, amputation of limbs, and the killing of pregnant women while betting on the gender of the fetuses). 53 children were thrown alive over the old village walls. 25 men were rounded up in buses to be paraded around Jerusalem in a victory procession similar to that of ancient Roman armies, before being executed by firing squad.

The bodies were thrown in the village cistern and its hatch was securely locked to conceal the evidence of the crime. According to Mercillon:

Within minutes, in the face of unprecedented resistance, the men and women of the Irgun and Stern, who had once been young people with high ideals, transformed into “butchers,” cruelly and coldly killing just as the soldiers of the Nazi forces had.

The Zionist military organizations prevented the Red Cross delegate, Jacques de Rainier, from entering the village for more than a day. Meanwhile, members of the Haganah occupying the village meticulously collected other bodies and blew them up to deceive the representatives of international organizations and suggest that the victims had perished during armed clashes (the Red Cross delegate eventually found the bodies that had been thrown in the cistern) (al-Khalidi 2007).

The al-Dawayima Massacre

On 29 October 1948, some soldiers of the Stern and Irgun gangs besieged the village of al-Dawayima while others stormed it. They did this while the villagers were at the markets or in their homes as was the norm on Fridays, and while no one — neither from the Arab resistance nor the forces of the Arab armies that were fighting in Palestine — was in the village. Many fighting-age village men were killed without any military necessity. There was no force defending the village, nor any sources of resistance activity or weapons caches to be feared (al-Khalidi 1998).

The massacre was followed by a massive exodus of the population from the area, in fear for their lives. Once the town was occupied, the gangs rounded up between 80 to 100 women and children. The Zionists bashed the heads of the children in with batons until there wasn't a single household in the town without a fatality. Women and elderly men were confined inside homes, deprived of water and food. When a demolitions expert was brought in, and refused to demolish two houses with elderly villagers still inside, a soldier volunteered and proceeded to demolish many houses, burying the occupants alive.

Reports on the massacre leaked, as well as the Zionists’ assault on some of the caves where the residents had taken refuge, lining up about 500 Arabs in a single row and killing them with machine gun fire. After news of the mas-

sacre spread, a sham investigation was conducted with some members of the battalion that assaulted the town. The report concluded that the villagers had attacked nearby Jewish settlements and assisted in the attack on Gush Etzion.

An Israeli soldier confirmed that the 89th Battalion was composed of former terrorists from the Irgun and Stern gangs, emphasizing that the massacre was perpetrated by leaders and intellectuals who had become despicable criminals. The Israeli leaders obstructed visits to the town by United Nations observers. After numerous requests, the Belgian adjutant Van Wassenhove and his team were permitted to visit the village. They observed smoke rising from the houses, which was to conceal the rotting corpses in the village. Wassenhove remarked on this, “I smelled a peculiar odor as if bones were burning inside.” When the Belgian adjutant asked why the houses were being blown up, the Israeli officer replied that the houses contained poisonous vermin, so they were being demolished.

The Israeli Minister of Agriculture at the time, Aharon Cizling, commented in front of the Israeli cabinet: “I feel that the things that are going on are hurting my soul, the soul of my family and all of us here. ... Jews too have behaved like Nazis, and I feel my entire being has been shaken.”

After the Zionist gangs stormed the village and perpetrated the aforementioned acts, we present a collection of documented testimonies from the mouths of several Jewish military men and politicians in Israel, which emerged in the years following the massacre in the village of al-Dawayima. These testimonies shed light on further details about what happened in the village.

One soldier bragged to his colleagues, “I raped an Arab woman before I shot her,” corroborating what the researcher Ahmad al-Adarbah put forth in his book, *Qariyat al-Dawayimah (The Village of al-Dawayima)*. Another soldier stated that he forced a woman from the nursery to move bodies before killing her and her child. Others took three girls in their military vehicle; they were found on the outskirts of the village, “raped and killed.”

Corroborating testimony from the village *mukhtar*, some soldiers from the Zionist Irgun gang fired on a child breastfeeding from his mother. The bullet pierced his head and the mother's chest, killing them both while the child was still suckling her breast, with milk dribbling from the corners of his mouth.

After these crimes, the remaining unarmed villagers were terrified and took refuge in the village mosque, which was considered the final sanctuary and was known as “al-Zawiya Mosque.” It was the main place where the villagers gathered according to Isma'il Abu Rayyan, one of the men of al-Dawayima, in his book also titled *Qariyat al-Dawayimah*. The mosque was used as the site of congregation for clan members, the reception of guests and vagrants, and occasions such as funerals and weddings. It also served as an information center and was also frequented by poets and storytellers.

While the villagers took refuge in this mosque to avoid the threat of the Zionist gangs, the villagers were pursued and killed inside. It is estimated that 75 people were martyred within. Most of them were the elderly and disabled who were unable to flee on foot. After it was tightly sealed, the mosque was burned down with whoever was inside to prevent any potential wounded survivors from escaping and testifying about the crime. Some martyrs were buried in a hole near the mosque the villagers had previously dug out to expand the mosque; the rest of them were buried in a mass grave. No one escaped save for a single woman.

Abdaljawad Omar: When killing the camp fails to erase the struggle

Continued from page 1

In the years leading up to October 7, this process consolidated into a strategic framework structured around four core tactics. These tactics responded to the emergence of zones that had gradually exceeded the reach of colonial surveillance and containment by the Palestinian Authority.

The Zionist entity's first tactical pillar focused on sealing off access points between the West Bank and the rest of Palestine, especially the areas occupied in 1948. The occupation deployed forces along the annexation wall to prevent the movement of resistance fighters into the interior of the settler colony.

This maneuver sought to reconstitute the colonial boundary between the settler “heartland” and the frontier settlements surrounding Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, and Tubas. This boundary was reinforced, even as settlers continued to live on both sides.

The second tactic involved constructing an extensive intelligence infrastructure. This included tracing the flow of arms and funds, mapping leadership structures, and identifying the media and political strategies of armed formations. A significant expansion of arrest campaigns across the West Bank targeted militants and political figures affiliated with factions exhibiting revolutionary tendencies.

The principal fear was that these sovereign spaces, particularly in the north, might cohere into a new form of politi-

cal leadership — one autonomous from both the Palestinian Authority and traditional party frameworks.

The first two pillars worked together to prevent autonomous political projects from maturing and to isolate sovereign zones from wider forms of organization or expansion.

The third tactic revolved around sustaining continuous pressure on sovereign spaces without escalating into full-scale warfare. This doctrine was anchored in a dual logic. First, the establishment of an expansive surveillance infrastructure — 3D satellite imaging, drone reconnaissance, cyber monitoring, acoustic tracking, and human intelligence networks. Second, the tactical insertion of elite special operations units (like the Yamam, Maglan, and Mista'aravim) designed to rapidly enter densely inhabited urban spaces and assassinate figures like Mohammad al-Dakhil, whose blood would flow alongside that of his two comrades after Israeli units attacked their car.

The fourth and final tactic concerns negotiation and symbolic neutralization. This effort aims to depoliticize the fighter through the offer of reintegration into the social and economic order administered by the Palestinian Authority.

This tactic seeks to erase the space carved out by resistance. The negotiation is premised on unraveling the wager that the fighter has already made — a wager on death, on ethics, on an unknown horizon of politics. It is not the militant's life that is targeted, but the sovereign ges-

ture itself — the refusal to be governed, the dignity of disobedience.

Taken together, these four tactics informed the occupation's pre-October 7 counterinsurgency doctrine. While temporarily effective in isolating and fragmenting resistance, these tactics ultimately failed to extinguish its generative core. They underestimated the ability of resistance networks to regenerate, adapt, and migrate.

Resistance did not vanish. It expanded into new camps, rural peripheries, and zones once imagined to be pacified. It recruited new generations, recalibrated its methods, and persisted in its refusal. In response, “Israel” began to flirt more openly — though still cautiously — with large-scale military maneuvers inside Palestinian cities and camps, particularly in the northern West Bank. This culminated in one of the most significant operations in years: the July 2023 assault on the Jenin refugee camp.

Part of the internal reckoning in “Israel” after October 7 involved an admission: The escalation in Jenin, Nablus, and surrounding areas rendered its southern front more vulnerable than anticipated.

Killing the camp

Genocide emerges not only as a final expression of racialized domination but also as a symptom of the colonial project's inability to render the land governable. It marks the moment where the settler's claim to permanence is destabilized, where its aspiration to totality falters.

In this reading, genocide does not simply operate as a technology of elimination but as a revelation: The settler-colonial order, despite its claims to mastery, has failed to subdue the field of refusal. The camp that persists, the village that remembers, the child that returns — all these fracture the settler's fantasy of uncontested rule. Genocide is unleashed not from a place of confidence but from the abyss of colonial anxiety.

The violence of erasure becomes the midwife of a new insurgent geography — one not yet mapped, but already inhabited.

The camp in the West Bank also stands as a sign of the failure of the word *nakba* to fully “catastrophize” the Palestinian condition. The camp does not simply signify dispossession or loss. Instead, it articulates a surplus of presence — a bulwark against attempts to collapse resistance into a single moment.

In the aftermath of “Israel's” failure to contain Gaza — the dense geography where thick social relations, militant intimacy, and the immediacy of time converge to produce rupture — the colonial apparatus shifted its orientation from containment to unleashing.

The breach of the border, the shattering of the illusion of impermeable security, and the collapse of the spatial

asymmetry between settler and besieged marked a conceptual failure, not just a military one. Gaza had reversed the direction of violence, projecting the camp outward.

Even prior to October 7, strategic panic had begun to materialize in the West Bank, particularly in camps like Jenin, where the occupation launched prolonged military incursions — days and sometimes weeks of continuous

operations aimed at dismantling infrastructure, arresting fighters, and liquidating sovereign nodes of resistance. These operations targeted the very conditions that made resistance thinkable: the relational architecture of the camp, its density, its memory, its refusal.

“Israel” is now engaged in a full-scale campaign to eliminate the camp — not merely as a site of resistance, but as a place to live. The assault does not distinguish between civilian and combatant, between home and cover, between presence and threat. The first target is the camp as a geography that concentrates memory, density, and political steadfastness. The second is those who inhabit it, whose very dwelling within

the camp is read as an act of defiance.

The camp becomes a problem to erase. The deeper aim of its destruction is to extinguish the possibility of a Palestinian togetherness that exceeds governance. To destroy the camp is to destroy a world.

Ironically, the destruction of the camp has become a generative force in its own right. The forced displacement of around 40,000 Palestinians in the West Bank alone has given rise to new zones of compression, new densities of life, memory, and relation. In seeking to erase the camp, the occupation has inadvertently set in motion the formation of new camps — not always formally, but socially and effectively.

New relations, improvised solidarities, and spatial intensities are emerging that reconstitute the very conditions of resistance the Zionist entity sought to annihilate. The violence of erasure becomes the midwife of a new insurgent geography — one not yet mapped, but already inhabited.

The camp, while being reduced to rubble, is not dead. Its people are already sneaking back under the cover of night or when the soldiers are looking the other way. The question that lingers today: What will unfold when the killing of the camp and the logic of genocide fail to erase?

This text is based in part on the author's essay “The Wager of Resistance,” which was originally published in Arabic in Bab el-Wad, May 2023.



The Palestinian Oral History Archive contains more than 1,000 hours of testimonies from first-generation Palestinians and other Palestinian communities in Lebanon. The archive is being completed in partnership with the American University of Beirut Libraries, the Nakba Archive and the Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts (AL-JANA), and will ultimately expand to include additional oral histories of Palestinians in Lebanon and the surrounding region.

These eyewitness narratives of first-generation refugees preserve traditions and histories from pre-1948 Palestine, as told by Palestinians living in refugee camps and Lebanon. These personal accounts of the Nakba help clarify a defining moment in Palestinian history. The collection also contains historical narratives of the pre-Nakba period, folktales, and stories of the women in Ein el-Helwe camp after its destruction in 1982.

What follows are three archival histories selected from thousands. Their stories are singular in their horror, but they represent the universal Palestinian experience of Nakba, an ongoing project. Using a map from Palestine Open Maps, we identify the Galilean villages that the Zionists tried to bulldoze and erase. These villages may no longer exist on Zionist maps, but they survive in memory. They cannot be erased.



Aishah 'Abd al-Ghani Sulayman
Born 1928 in Ailut, Palestine. Witness to massacres in Ailut and Balad al-Sheikh. This was recorded on January 24, 2006. Sulayman resided in al-Loueizeh, in Nabatieh, South Lebanon.

We are peasants. Our village, Ailut, was of peasants. Us, al-Mujaydil, and Ma'alul. Those villages all neighbored each other, in the district of Nazareth. They were all farming villages. We grew wheat, barley, sesame, and lentils. We worked on our land. Our homes were built with arches. We had two homes; a home built with four archways and a home built with three. On the roofs, they'd lay tree branches, and on top of that we'd cement a layer of mud, we'd take the stairway and scale up to the roof and lay the mud down. This was our life.

We were young girls, we'd go to each other's homes, spend our evenings together. We'd roast chickpeas, eat raisins — the heat from the fire kept us warm. *Alhamdulillah*, our lives were great by the grace of God. We were peasants, yes, we worked hard and put in all we had, it was as if we were in Heaven. You wouldn't feel tired, you felt alive, living off your own livelihood, your own blessings. Every year, we'd sell sesame, lining both roofs full with it. Oh, how I loved planting and harvesting sesame. Oh, why did we ever leave? I wish we had never left.

When the war started, the *mukhtar* in our village bought a radio, a small radio. All the boys would go to his home to hear the news about what happened in the surrounding villages. We all thought, "What is this? This tiny thing that spoke about our villages?" Wallahi, we were peasants, we didn't have those sorts of things. And so everyone would go over to his house and listen: "What happened in that village? They went down there, they killed them over here." Until one day they reached Shefa Amr and Kufr Kanna and Kufr Manda, and the boys told us, "The Jews are here, the Jews have reached us."¹

Now, when someone would go down to the field to harvest, they [the Zionists] would hunt him. As soon as they saw him, they'd shoot to kill him. After that, my cousin said he wanted to leave. He went down to Balad al-Sheikh and submitted an application to Haifa to work as a police officer. It wasn't six or seven months after that that he died.

We went to Balad al-Sheikh, to visit his parents, and the Zionists attacked the village. We locked the door latch and barricaded it with cabinets. They attacked the village for two hours straight. The towns above us had all been massacred. They'd break through the doors with an axe, and shoot whoever was in there. After they left, I went outside and saw the slaughter. There was a pregnant woman, who, I don't know if she was stabbed, but her child was played out in front of her. There was a wife, asleep in bed with her husband naked, they had both been butchered.



Ahmad Qasim Ubayd
Born 1932 in al-Safsaf, Palestine. Witness to the massacre in al-Safsaf. This was recorded on October 3, 2004. Ubayd resided in al-Baddawi Palestinian Refugee Camp, Tripoli, Lebanon.

When the Jews occupied Safad, the people fled from the villages that surrounded the city. Some lived in the mountains, others in the wilderness, and, after some time, we returned. We returned to al-Safsaf during the harvest season. We plowed and planted wheat, remained in the village until the wheat was harvested and stored all the crops in the houses. Then, on the 27th of October, 1948, at 4:30 PM, the planes came. The Arab Salvation Army (ASA)² had already positioned itself in the village, with the understanding that the massacre in Deir Yassin had already happened, and that the Zionists had taken control of Haifa, Acre, and Safad.

The first plane came and circled the village. At that time, my father had sold some cows and bought a German Mauser rifle with the money. It came with 36 magazines and so I took the gun and started firing. I'd fire at the plane and run west, but none of my shots did anything. Then, suddenly, the plane hit me with a missile. It threw me into the dirt and I lay there, hiding. Then the plane turned towards where the Salvation Army was stationed and fired a missile. It killed three of our soldiers.

Then the battle started on the eastern side of al-Safsaf, in the meadows. Of course, all the village's men went out to fight; we had, together, about 35 rifles. The Zionists tried to break through on the eastern side but couldn't. Then they tried to enter from the south, but the rocky terrain blocked them off. It wasn't until they brought in tractors and bulldozers that they were able to break in.

The tanks finally came in from the northwest, and they entered to the south of the Salvation Army, in an area called al-Zabadani. The people started yelling, "the Jews have reached the market! The Jews have reached the market!" My mother told me, "We need to leave, my son. The people are fleeing, let's go with them." I told her I wasn't leaving without my father; I wanted to go see my father. Everyone in the village was gathered in Ismail Nasser al-Zaghmout's home. They thought that mud houses, like his, were less likely to cause harm if destroyed. I left al-Zaghmout's home and headed to ours, the house farthest from his in the entire village. On the way, a man headed towards the market found me and yelled out, "Where are you going now? They'll kill you, the Jews have taken over the village!" I told him I wanted to see my father.

I got home, calling out to my father, "Yaba, Yaba, Yaba!" There was nobody. The mattress was thrown across the floor, and no one was home. I got out of there and went back to al-Zaghmout's house. My mother asked what I found and I told her there was nobody there, that I was calling out, but nobody answered. And so she said to me, "Then let's go, let's flee."

After we stepped outside, the Jews started spraying down a herd of goats moving north, towards Ein al-Foqa. Between the goats was Mohammed and Mariam Azizi and their children. All of them, save for one son and one daughter, were killed, left dead between the herd. After we watched their murder, I told my mother that there was no way we could flee, and we returned to al-Zaghmout's home.

The shelling ended at midnight and, of course, the Jews entered the village that morning. The western front of the village was empty, there was nobody there. Jewish tanks and militias entered with ease and all of the young men returning from the north were trapped. I was among them as well. There were maybe thirty of us. They grabbed everyone else who was in al-Zaghmout's home and lined us against the wall. After they lined us up, a Jewish soldier came up to me, laughed at my shaved head, rubbed it, and pulled me out of the group. I ran back into the home, and the gunfire started. After that, a soldier walked by with a metal rod, to check if anyone was still alive. Two brothers pretended to be dead and after the Jews left, we heard them moving. The women pulled them out from among the corpses, and we hid them in al-Zaghmout's home. We stayed in the house for three days; no water, no food, nobody could go outside.

You could see bullets falling like raindrops.

On the third day, the Jews came and grabbed me and two other men. They took us around the village before we began gathering the dead from the houses and the streets. That man who had warned me about going back to my home — he and his son were killed by the Jews. When we tried to carry their corpses we couldn't pull them apart; their hands had stiffened into each other.

They made us take the dead to a hole in Ein al-Foqa, about 4 or 5 meters wide and 7 meters deep. We gathered the dead and placed them there. When the hole filled up and no more bodies could fit, they brought a bulldozer and pushed dirt atop the dead to press them down so they'd sink deeper. When we finished, they made us clean the bulldozer, clean it of the blood and dirt.

The last thing I saw in al-Safsaf was that the market was full of Israeli cartridges, maybe five hundred of them, piled up, around a meter and a half long and two or three meters wide. That's how many bullets they shot out in celebration. But there's no one more cowardly than the Zionists. They don't dare sit anywhere without first firing their guns and you'll never see one or two of them alone, it's always at least four.

Everyone we're talking about is dead now; we're here talking about memories. It's so that the generation that comes after us understands the value of the homeland. Because I want to remember my father and my uncle, how we used to be. You feel it in your heart. Praise be to God in all circumstances.



Maryam Uthman
Born 1937 in al-Husayniyah, Palestine. Witness to the massacre in al-Husayniyah. This was recorded on May 9, 2004. Large parts of this were translated by The Nakba Archive.

The British started withdrawing and handing things over to the Jews. The Jews started hating us; they could no longer look at an Arab. The day the British completely withdrew, we began seeing them train every single day, outside the village — young men and women, at dawn, training outside. People said, "These are tourists, they're here for a breath of fresh air." They trained girls as well as boys. A short while later, they started taking revenge on the Arabs. Wherever they found an Arab, they pulled him over. They began hating the Arabs.

They entered the village for the first time at night, around one in the morning. They surrounded it from the east, from the *qibla* in the south and from the west. The northern side remained open for a bit. Where were we to go? The village itself was tiny. The village guards who died, died when they ran out of bullets, and those of them who found a place to hide were safe. They stayed until they blew all the houses up and whatever was inside them, and then picked up and left. They even killed one of the revolutionaries, among the few who were sleeping at Husayn Ja'far's house. They say he was kicked out and they took him along with them. That's what I heard; I didn't see any of it. I wasn't awake, but that's just what I heard. As soon as they entered, I woke up; I heard gunshots, I heard cries, I heard it all.

"see us." The door was sort of hidden. My father had a small gun, he pressed himself against the door and began shooting at them. What's this gun supposed to do? It was raining bullets outside. He said, "It's only death. Let us just die." The Jews were digging a hole near the door. Near the door! They wanted to place a mine there.

Do you know what they did so no one would see them? They started throwing sonic bombs that exploded inside the house, but the smoke that came out of them blinded you. I was awake at that moment. My father came and told my mother, "They're about to blow up the house on us. You're going to be martyrs, you're going to die. We're all going to die tonight." He pulled out the mattresses for us, all the way over there and brought two covers, and he put them on Ahmad and I, and Rasmiya. We were sleeping. He covered us with them fearing the bullets would hit us, and thinking that if they did, the covers would protect us.

He had barely finished that when the whole house blew up. We had no idea what had happened, nor what hadn't happened. We stayed there until the morning, until the villages came, from al-Shum, from Marus, from 'Ammuqa. The neighbouring village also came and asked whether we were dead or alive. I was not really conscious; I didn't know where to go. I sat there and I saw Ahmad, my brother, they pulled him out dead, and they were still working on getting Rasmiya, my sister out. They kept pulling on her body, from among the wood and the metal. They tore her leg apart and her bones showed. They pulled out one girl; she was about eight months old. My mother was holding her and breastfeeding her, a rock fell on top of her, and the girl died. My mother was completely disfigured, and my father was hit by many bullets, his hair was completely entangled. There was my father's cousin, who also lived with us, along with his daughter. They died at the door. The soldier placed a mine at our door — he was digging a hole for it and she was standing near the door. She told him: "Wallah, sir, we are women, there are no men among us. There aren't any men or —" "Ok. Ok." Her and her daughter turned into flesh, their bodies were torn into two or three pieces. They blew up, her and the house.



¹ It is common parlance, particularly among Nakba survivors, to refer to invading Zionist forces as "Jews," as Zionists' religious identity served to define the exclusionary nature of their colonial ideology.
² The erstwhile Jordanian monarch.
³ A volunteer army formed in '48 to defend the land against Zionism.

Map images courtesy of Palestine Open Maps, a digital archive documenting the dispossession and depopulation of historic Palestine.

Martyrs Never Die

The revolutionary lives of Abu Jildeh, Guevara of Gaza, and al-Araj

Countless martyrs have left indelible marks on the history of the Palestinian struggle through their fierceness of heart, clarity of vision, and commitment to defeating Zionism, no matter the cost. Here, we offer the stories of three: Abu Jildeh, who organized the peasantry to fight the British and the Zionists in the early 1930s; Guevara of Gaza, whose military prowess and ability to evade the enemy made him a legend in Gaza after the 1967 Naksa; and Basel al-Araj, who penned some of the most memorable and galvanizing texts of the post-Oslo era.

Taken together, the stories of these three martyrs form a century-long narrative arc, illuminating overlapping waves of revolt and the tidal pull of resistance. They also shed light on the class dynamics that have long frustrated the fight

to free Palestine. Like so many revolutionaries of the Third World liberation movements, these three men are considered heroes among the poor and dispossessed, but scorned as troublemakers and outlaws by the elites of their time.

Basel al-Araj drew on this paradox in his essay “Exiting Law and Entering Revolution,” published three years before his assassination at the hands of the occupation army and the comprador forces of the Palestinian Authority in 2017.

“In many cases, outlaws become figures of agitation in societies that persist in a state of submission, as they are the most capable of existing outside of the system that imposes humiliating conditions on the living,” he wrote. “We’re talking about individuals whose consciousness is formed by material expe-

rience and whose life begins with rejection by society. Yet they come to be heroes: women sing of them at weddings and men hail their names and virtues as they become models of heroism and rebellion.” He may not have known it at the time but, for young people battling Zionism in the post-Oslo era, he may as well have been describing himself.

The *New York War Crimes* editorial collective hopes that these stories, pieced together from archival newspaper clippings, Arabic-language articles, and documentary footage, will awaken the hearts and steel the nerves of our readers in hours of despair. The struggle to free Palestine from Zionism is long and heavy, but its path is embroidered with the wisdom and sacrifices of legends. In their memory and spirit, we carry on the fight.



Abu Jildeh and al-Armeet await their execution after being captured by the British in 1934.

ABU JILDEH

“A strange feeling... I kept reading about Abu Jildeh. I was amazed by the newspapers that mentioned his name more than they did the names of politicians. And I was baffled by the newspaper vendors who shouted “Abu Jildeh’s news!” and “Abu Jildeh’s incidents!” And I was bewildered by the street vendors who called out “Apples! Abu Jildeh’s Apples!” Even more astonishing was when a British soldier sneezed and the “malicious” would say, even to his face, “Abu Jildeh,” instead of “May God protect you.” And so, you see, Abu Jildeh filled everyone’s ears, even though he didn’t fill their eyes...”

— from the 1934 novel *Abu Jildeh* by Gazan writer Helmi Abu Shaban

Deep in the high mountains north-east of Nablus in the occupied West Bank, a cave attracts visitors from across Palestine each year. It was once the hideout of Palestinian legend Ahmad Hamad al-Hamoud, popularly known as Abu Jildeh. In the 1930s, he formed a resistance cell that fought the British and the Zionists, evading dozens of planned ambushes and redistributing the wealth of feudal lords to

Palestine’s working class.

Born a peasant in the village of Tammoun during Ottoman rule, Abu Jildeh was radicalized as a youth watching the Turks confiscate Arab lands and



A rare photo of the Palestinian revolutionary legend Ahmad Hamad al-Hamoud, popularly known as Abu Jildeh.

hand them over to exploitative absentee landlords. His first act of rebellion was the evasion of an Ottoman draft to fight the British during World War I, choosing instead to travel through the northern villages and recruit young men to help Palestinian farmers reclaim their land.

When the Turks eventually lost the war and the British occupied Palestine, Abu Jildeh began working as a porter at the Port of Haifa. By then, the Jewish National Fund was buying up land from wealthy elites across the Upper Galilee. Ex-tenant farmers were drifting into Haifa in search of work, leaving behind their villages and traditional ways of life. Arab leaders who had once vocally opposed British imperialism were now trying to negotiate with the imperialists to curb the escalating dispossession of Palestine’s Arab masses.

Inspired by the words of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who delivered speeches advocating for armed struggle against the imperialists at the Independence Mosque in Haifa, Abu Jildeh gathered a group of trusted comrades in the cave near Tammoun. He contacted his friend al-Armeet from the village of Beita and asked him to find them weapons. They were ready to fight.

And so Abu Jildeh’s outlaw opera-

tions began, both against the British and their wealthy Arab collaborators, men like Haj Musa al ‘Ouri who got rich during the Ottoman days off taxing peasants for their labor. Whatever plunder they collected from these at-

Palestine is a trust in your hands... Do not let go of a single grain of sand from the land of Palestine.

tacks, Abu Jildeh and his men distributed among the poor, who in turn gave them food and shelter. In the early 1930s, the groups became infamous and were covered in both Arab newspapers and the foreign press, with one

French magazine claiming that Abu Jildeh’s fame had “surpassed the achievements of the Grand Mufti of Palestine.”

In 1933, riots broke out across Palestine as Jewish land purchases soared and Arabs were further marginalized politically. In October, the British police opened fire on thousands at a demonstration in Jaffa, killing 19 and injuring around 70. In the aftermath, Abu Jildeh and al-Armeet reorganized their forces and coolly intensified their revolt, attacking police checkpoints and disappearing traceless into the night. In response, the British launched an expensive campaign to hunt the men down. They tried everything: disguising soldiers as fruit vendors to collect news of the rebels, erecting a border force to cut off the band’s supplies, setting countless traps. Nothing seemed to work.

The British government finally caught wind of Abu Jildeh’s hideout after offering a reward of 350 lira to anyone with information that could lead to the rebels’ capture. In the spring of 1934, British soldiers tracked Abu Jildeh and al-Armeet to the cave near

Tammoun and took them to the occupation’s military court. They were sentenced to death by hanging. When al-Armeet’s mother came to visit her son in prison, he told her to bring a dagger with her next time so he could take it to his grave and slaughter the traitor who’d betrayed them.

An angry and mournful crowd waited outside the courtroom at the hour of the revolutionaries’ execution. Appearing before the gallows, the two men looked like they were going to an unforgettable wedding: their hands were dyed with henna, their beards were shaved, their clothes were neat and clean, and their skin shone with fragrance. In a testimony published in the newspaper *Al-Difaa*, one writer described Abu Jildeh as meeting death with unmatched bravery, as if he were “going to the cinema, swaggering and strutting like a lion.”

As he advanced toward the gallows, ignoring the British officers, Abu Jildeh said: “For your sake, young men... Palestine is a trust in your hands... Do not let go of a single grain of sand from the land of Palestine.”

GUEVARA OF GAZA

“Mohammad al-Aswad or Guevara of Gaza. More than 36 years after his death, this is all I’ve managed to find of him: three photographs and some scattered pages to try to create something from ... attempts, I’m not sure how effective, to restore his mysterious existence after we’ve leapt into the new century...”

This is how Palestinian filmmaker Khalil al-Muzain opens his documentary about Mohammad al-Aswad, the specter that haunted the Zionists in the early 1970s. Strangely, al-Muzain points out, each of the photos he found seem to depict a different man — evidence, perhaps, of the multiple personalities the revolutionary put on to evade Israeli intelligence agents. In one, he holds a gun in his right hand and stares into the camera, his body casting a long shadow across the wall behind him; in another, he is clean shaven and looks like an ordinary university student.

Muhammad al-Aswad was born in 1946 in Haifa, a city he would never know. At the age of two, his family fled their home as Zionist militias closed in around Arab towns and villages across northern Palestine. They settled in Gaza’s al-Shati refugee camp in the shock of those post-Naksa years, bearing witness to violent clashes between Palestinian fedayeen and Zionist forces amid the harshness of life in the camps. As a

teenager, al-Aswad was inspired by the founders of the Arab Nationalist Movement in Lebanon, who popularized slogans of unity, liberation, and revenge.

This is the path to victory. The enemy will never destroy our will to fight.

The Palestinian struggle experienced a major setback during the 1967 Naksa, when the Israeli occupation captured the Gaza Strip and badly defeated the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian armies, effectively ending neighboring Arab states’ resistance against “Israel.” Conditions in Gaza rapidly deteriorated after the war. Now it was the Israelis, not the Egyptians, who were administering the Strip and Jewish settlements there began multiplying rapidly. In the bleakness of those years, Palestinians shook off the dust of defeat and reorganized their ranks. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or PFLP, announced its launch in December of 1967, as an extension of the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement.

Mohammad al-Aswad was chosen to lead a group of guerilla fighters for the PFLP in al-Shati. They engaged in street warfare and surprise attacks against the Zionists, ambushing Israeli police during their nightly patrols or detonating explosive devices next to military jeeps loitering in the alleyways. The occupation retaliated with a series of arbitrary arrests. al-Aswad was among those detained, spending a total of 30 months behind bars. After his release, al-Aswad went underground, careful to evade all forms of capture — from photography to arrest. This is how he came to be known as the Guevara of Gaza, first by his fellow comrades and locals and, later, by the Zionists themselves.

“We rule Gaza by day, and Guevara rules it by night,” then-Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan said.

al-Aswad was a student of Third World liberation movements and Marxist thought. In a text published posthumously in the Popular Front’s “Record of the Immortals,” he wrote of the class antagonisms issuing from the prevalence of Gaza’s bourgeoisie, concluding that there would be “revolution even after liberation and victory.”

Applying the same shrewdness to political education as to military operations, he worked to cultivate revolutionary fervor throughout the lower classes. He encouraged the formation of women’s and workers’ committees, helped

organize demonstrations and strikes, and developed a clandestine system for the transport of weapons and messages to guerilla fighters. Through these activities, he gained the trust of his people and he played a leading role in thwarting “Israel’s” plans to displace Gaza’s Arab population.

The Israeli intelligence searched long and hard for al-Aswad, and sought to infiltrate and divide his ranks. Dozens of members of the Popular Front were arrested and interrogated in this period. During a raid in the spring of 1973, the Zionist army surrounded a house that the PFLP used as a base for their operations, and a confrontation ensued. Al-Aswad and two of his comrades, Kamel al-Amsi and Abdul Hadi al-Hayek, were martyred in the exchange of fire.

“This is the path to victory,” declared George Habash, a co-founder of the PFLP, at a demonstration in Beirut to honor the fallen revolutionaries. “The enemy will never destroy our will to fight.”

To the right: One of the few surviving photos of Mohammad Mahmoud al-Aswad, or “Guevara of Gaza,” taken circa 1970 in Gaza.



BASEL AL-ARAJ

Al-Walaja, Palestine; October 21, 1948. The Zionist Haganah militia descended after nightfall and drove more than 1,800 Palestinians from their ancient village, al-Walaja, on the high mountain ridge south of al-Quds. Most became refugees in the West Bank and neighboring Arab states, but a hundred or so managed to remain after relocating to a hill just south of their former homes. The residents of New Walaja

lived in caves and crude shelters provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

After the Six-Day War in 1967, the Zionist regime illegally expanded Jerusalem’s city limits to encompass al-Walaja’s northern half and began demolishing Arab homes there to clear the way for new Jewish settlements, rendering many residents refugees twice over. The occupation’s cruel Separation Wall encroached upon the villagers’ remaining land, leaving only one road open to

other parts of Palestine.

Basel al-Araj was born in 1984, in the midst of the ghettoization of a storied village. He studied pharmacy in Egypt and practiced in al-Quds’s Shuafat refugee camp, but left the field behind in 2011 to devote himself fully to the study of Palestinian history. Around 2014, al-Araj became involved in the Popular University, a project established by the volunteer-based Suleiman al-Halabi Department for Colonial Studies for the purpose of raising consciousness about

joint struggle and other subjects not covered in traditional Palestinian curricula, from the Black Panther party in the U.S. to liberation struggles in Latin America.

Through the initiative, al-Araj taught classes and led walking tours where he discussed Palestine’s history of resistance. In one video captured in the city of al-Khalil (“Hebron”) in 2015, al-Araj tells the story of three Palestinian fighters who in 2002 ambushed and killed twelve Zionist soldiers in a narrow pass that became known as the “Alley of Death.” He spoke with deep love for the material, breathless and precise.

“When the Zionists reevaluated the situation and studied what had happened, all the military leaders in Hebron were replaced,” he concluded to laughter from the tour group.

During the 2010s, al-Araj wrote prolifically — about the searing legacy of the Nakba in Palestinian consciousness, about the role of the revolutionary in Palestinian society — though many of his writings were not published until after his martyrdom. In addition to his educational work, al-Araj attended demonstrations against the Separation Wall in al-Walaja, and helped locals pave new roads to reconnect the village to Bayt Lahm. The occupation destroyed these routes as soon as they caught wind of them and arrested anyone suspected of their construction — including, time and again, al-Araj.

On May 15, 2011, the 63rd anniversary of the Nakba, Zionist soldiers arrested al-Araj for a day and broke three of his ribs. In November of the same year, he was detained for riding an Israeli-only bus. The Palestinian Authority arrested al-Araj along with five of his friends in 2016, stating that their intention was to “protect” the men from arrest by “Is-

rael.” During interrogations, al-Araj was tortured so severely he required medical treatment. Four months into their detention with no charges filed, the six men went on hunger strike, inspiring a public pressure campaign that led to their release.

But getting out of the PA’s dungeons didn’t guarantee the men’s freedom. By that time, it had become customary for the PA to kidnap and torture Palestinians at the whims of the Israeli intelligence and then later facilitate their re-arrest by the Zionists. Expecting this, al-Araj went into hiding as “Israel” began its hunt for the released men. He evaded

had only served to preserve the corrupt Palestinian Authority while condemning the Palestinian people to “Israel’s” escalating dispossession and terror, year after year. After his martyrdom, protests against the comprador forces of the PA erupted in Ramallah. “Israeli soldiers killed him but the PA paved the way for them,” said al-Araj’s mother Siham, adding that her son had “scared the two states.”

In a eulogy for al-Araj delivered in al-Walaja after his martyrdom, Khaled Oudatallah said “Basel did not call on us to be resistance fighters. Nor did he call on us to be revolutionaries. Basel told us to be true, that is all. If you are true, you will be revolutionaries and resistance fighters.”

In addition to his lectures and writings, al-Araj left behind a will. We include a translation of it here:

Salutations to Arabism, the homeland, and liberation.

If you are reading this, it means I have died and my soul has ascended to its Creator. I pray to God that I meet him with a sound, guiltless heart, willingly — never reluctantly — and with sincerity, free of hypocrisy. It is very difficult to write your own will, and for years, I have read the wills of martyrs and was confused by them. They were brief and disappointing, lacking eloquence, and did not sate my desire for answers about their martyrdom.

Now I walk to my fate, satisfied that I have found my answers. How foolish I was. Is there anything more eloquent than the act of martyrdom? I should have written this many months ago, but what stopped me were your questions, you, the living. Why should I answer for you? You must look for them yourselves. As for us, the people of the graves, we are only looking for the mercy of God.



Basel al-Araj being detained during protests against Israel’s wall in his home village of al-Walaja, 2010.

The 77th year of the ongoing Nakba comes on the heels of 18 months of the genocidal Israeli-U.S. war on Gaza. The horrors of this genocide expose the brutal realities of Zionism: an irredeemable project premised on the mass murder of Palestinian men, women, and children; the bombing of hospitals, mosques, and churches; the torture of prisoners; the weaponization of starvation; the assassination of journalists and medics; the annihilation of entire families.

But the truth of Zionism was written into its founding literature over a century ago. In 1923, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a Russian Zionist poet, wrote an essay called "The Iron Wall" in which he posits that for Zionism to establish a state in Palestine it must employ brute military force against the Palestinian people — for "there has never been an indigenous inhabitant anywhere or at any time who has ever accepted the settlement of others in his country." Jabotinsky's thesis of the necessity of violently imposed settlement preceded the Nakba; the mass displacement, genocide, and subjugation of the Palestinian people, which began officially in 1948 and continues today. This project — to construct and maintain a Zionist state on Palestinian land — required the erection of an unbreachable and only partially figurative iron wall: a barrier against the inevitability of resistance, or, in Jabotinsky's words, "a strong power in Palestine that is not amenable to any Arab pressure." The foundations that make up this Iron Wall are threefold: military, economic, and propagandistic.

Propaganda gives symbolic cover to Zionism's military and economic barbarism. Without its foundational myths, this Iron Wall would crumble. "As soon as the literary movement gave rise to political Zionism," wrote Palestinian revolutionary Ghasan Kanafani in his foundational 1967 text *On Zionist Literature*, "the latter enlisted it to play its designated role in its colossal scheme." This scheme involves ongoing indoctrination not only within the Jewish psyche but on a global scale. Hasbara — a term used to describe Israel's public image and propaganda efforts — was weaponized by the Zionist entity as early as the 1950s as a formal wing of government public diplomacy. However, the practice of Hasbara actually predates the creation of the so-called state of Israel, becoming a key component in justifying the state's existence.

Zionist propaganda seeks first and foremost to resolve the contradictions that emerge from the existence of Israel. The Zionist project is faced with the ultimate contradiction, which Jabotinsky grappled with: the existence of a native Arab people on Palestinian land. Zionist propaganda simultaneously portrays Palestinians and Arabs as non-existent ("a land without a people for a people without a land") yet a present threat — barbaric, backwards, uncivilized terrorists who do not value life. Kanafani identifies one of the core narratives of Zionism's literary project to be Jewish supremacy, in general, and supremacism of Jews over Arabs, in particular, which provided justification for the violent uprooting of the Palestinian people from their land.

The refugee camps are the clearest manifestation of this contradiction. If Palestine is indeed the land of the Jewish people, how can one make sense of the population that lived there before 1948? Or the 877,000 Palestinian refugees who reside in the region's UNRWA camps? These are not abstract or hypothetical questions — they are facts that challenge the foundational structure on which Zionism is built. A defining moment in Zionism's attempt to resolve — or more accurately, to liquidate — the contradiction of the refugee camps was the Sabra and Shatila massacres during the Lebanese Civil War. Over the course of three days in 1982, Zionist forces, in collaboration with the reactionary Lebanese Phalangist militia, besieged the camps and massacred over 3,500 Palestinian refugees. While this was not the first Zionist mass massacre since 1948, it was unique in that it was widely reported by the Western press. For the first time since its founding, "Israel" faced international condemnation, its propaganda challenged before the world.

"Israel's" narrative propaganda in its current genocide in Gaza are not new, but are a continuation of over a

century of Zionist propaganda. From its outset, Zionism constructed a mythology to resolve three fundamental questions: (1) Why Zionist settlers are entitled to the land of Palestine despite the presence of indigenous Arabs; (2) Why Zionism is required to confront (Western) antisemitism, i.e., the "Jewish question;" (3) How Zionism could serve as an extension of Western imperialism to garner and maintain its support in order to instantiate itself.

In response to the Jewish question, Zionist propaganda continuously posits antisemitism as an exceptional, metaphysical, and transhistorical force, while telling Jewish people that only the Zionist project guarantees in real terms what would otherwise be a contingent right to exist. It produces an eternal justification for "Israel": antisemitism is not a force that can be confronted and overcome through solidarity and anti-racism but, instead, requires a militarized garrison state that permanently occupies Palestine. For non-Jewish Zionists, the mass migration of Jewish people out of Europe was seen as a convenient resolution for their own antisemitism. For Zionist Jews, Zionism redirected the answer to Jewish political and social precarity in Europe away from revolutionary alternatives that embraced socialism and anti-imperialism, to ally with and serve as an extension of Western imperialism. Jews would be positioned outside of shared humanity save for where they can serve Western imperialism or, in the case of Christian Zionism, for their role in bringing about armageddon. Zionism would take the deeply reactionary answer to the Jewish question and present it as a path for liberation premised on racist claims: 1) Jewish people cannot acquire social integration wherever they find themselves and must instead become settlers in Palestine; 2) antisemitism is uniquely personified by Palestinians and their supporters because they oppose their inhumane treatment.

In the thick of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, Zionism's propaganda pillar is deteriorating. [Its] justifications have unraveled.

From its very foundation, Zionist propaganda seeks to explain how Zionism can serve — or even save — the West. In 1903, Theodore Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, begged then-Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain for Britain's help in establishing a Zionist state, promising that "at one stroke, England will get ten million loyal subjects active in all walks of life all over the world." Zionist propaganda constantly demonstrates how Zionism is a tool for the West. After all, as former U.S. President Joe Biden — then a U.S. Senator — stated in 1986, just four years after the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, U.S aid to "Israel" is "the best \$3 billion investment" America has ever made. He further said that if "Israel" didn't exist, they would have had to create it. Zionist propaganda bills Zionism as a civilized "Judeo-Christian," Western, liberal, democratic state that constitutes a bulwark against communism, socialism, Islamism, the East, and third world nationalism. In the words of Benjamin Netanyahu's 2024 address to Congress: "We're not only protecting ourselves, we're protecting you." In this formulation, the West both protects "Israel," and "Israel" protects the West as its proxy in the Middle East by safeguarding "Judeo-Christian" values.

Zionist propagandists pave what Kanafani called a "psychological ground," which they then turn "into an

BEFORE NAKBA: A HISTORY OF PALESTINIAN REBELLION

The groundwork for the Great Palestinian Revolt (1936-1939) emerged from seismic policial shifts that had begun 21 years prior. During World War I, the British made contradictory promises to various parties: to Sharif Hussein of Mecca they implied support for Arab independence in exchange for their participation in the British offensive against the Ottoman Empire while to the Zionist movement, they promised a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine via the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the British Mandate actively enabled Zionist settlement. Jewish land purchases, often facilitated by absentee landlords, led to widespread eviction of Palestinian *felaheen* who worked the land and lived on it. Palestinians responded with petitions, protests, and periodic riots. The Nebi Musa riots (1920), the Jaffa riots (1921), and the Buraq Uprising (1929) revealed both the depth of popular frustration and the ineffectiveness of elite Palestinian leadership tied to British structures. Militancy began to surge amongst the Palestinian people when

diplomatic channels failed to effect any meaningful change. By 1934, Jewish land ownership had increased by nearly 100,000 dunams leading to the depopulation and destruction of over 100 Palestinian villages.

By the early 1930s, growing numbers of Palestinians — particularly workers, *felaheen*, and displaced villagers — were turning away from the empty promises of change via political channels and toward popular action and armed resistance. The death of resistance leader and founder of al-Kaff al-Aswad (the Black Hand), Izzedin al-Qassam, in 1935, after a standoff with British police, marked a turning point. His martyrdom galvanized popular anger and inspired a new generation of militants.

By 1936, with mass unemployment, land dispossession, and no political recourse left, the stage was set. The revolt that followed would be one of the most sustained anti-colonial uprisings of the interwar Arab world — rooted not in elite negotiation, but in grass-roots resistance and militancy and the determination of ordinary Palestinians to endure beyond erasure.

By PALESTINIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

arena for their activities and ideology." The brute military force that Zionism deploys needs its propaganda: the web of narratives that justifies the criminal actions required to maintain the occupation of Palestine. In Kanafani's words, Zionist propaganda is "a most grotesque and wide-ranging process of cultural disinformation, which serves illegitimate political and military ends, and has largely succeeded in justifying those ends to large numbers of people, having encompassed them in a virtually impenetrable shield."

Yet, in the thick of the ongoing genocide on Gaza, Zionism's propaganda pillar is deteriorating. Despite the hegemonic success of Zionist propaganda in the West, the war of extermination on Gaza has collapsed the strength of Zionist propaganda outside of ruling class discourse. Zionism's justifications have unraveled. Warnings have been issued to Israeli Occupation Force soldiers, advising those who participated in military operations in Gaza to avoid traveling abroad. At the cost of the wholesale, live-streamed destruction of Gaza over the past 18 months comes a cultural and social paralysis of Zionism and its supporters. Soccer fans are

launching campaigns like the Red Card Movement to publicly oppose "Israel's" participation in the upcoming FIFA championship. The world has awoken to the crimes of Zionism — making it socially and legally unacceptable to defend the Zionist project. It is no longer safe to declare your allegiance to this genocidal project. It is no longer acceptable for war criminals to vacation on the shores of Thailand without legal repercussions. The ceaseless images of Palestinian children murdered by U.S.-Israeli bombs are etched into humanity's collective conscience, moving everyday people across the world into action for Palestine.

At this crossroads, "Israel" asks itself if it will be capable of recovering Zionism's shattered image. With \$150 million of its 2025 budget earmarked to propaganda efforts, "Israel" seeks to answer affirmatively, "Israel" understands very well that it has secured a criminal reputation on the world stage — that it will need to reshape international public opinion by promoting shameless lies, myths, and carefully crafted misinformation. While imperialist governments and their regional partners act as accomplices

to "Israel," the majority of the world has poured into the streets in rejection of Zionism. Globally, popular opinion recognizes that "Israel" is carrying out a crime of annihilation against the Palestinian people, and that this crime has persisted for over 77 years. Zionism's propaganda efforts attempt to chip away at the truth that has been exposed by Palestinians and the millions of people across the world who stand with them — it attempts to replace clarity and consciousness with confusion.

By deepening the cracks of Zionism's Iron Wall, we degrade Israel's ability to repair its image.

Zionism seeks to repair the cracks in its Iron Wall in order to save a colonial regime from its inevitable defeat; to create the conditions wherein it becomes acceptable to declare alle-

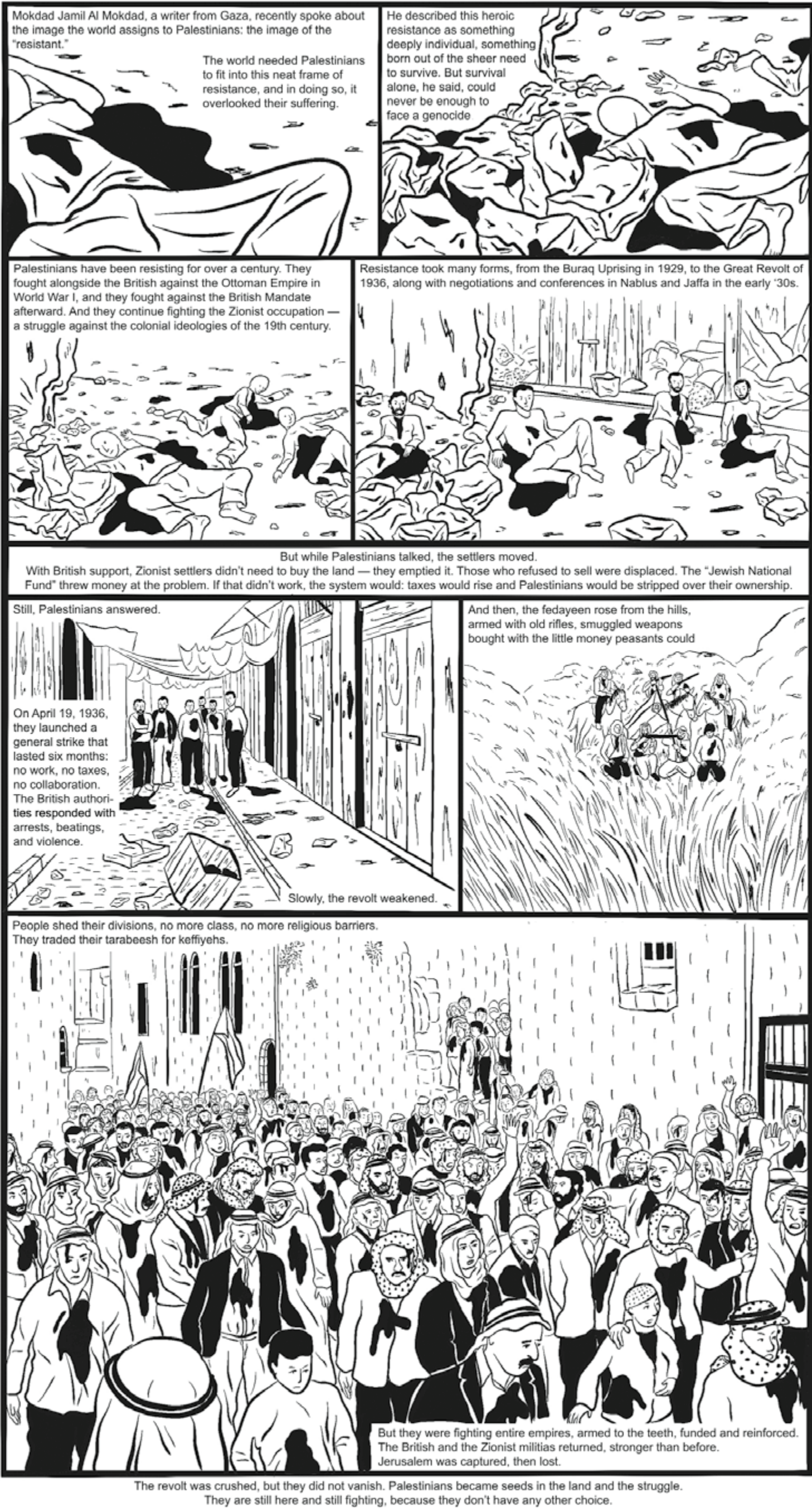
giance to the Zionist project. In reality, by deepening the cracks of Zionism's Iron Wall, we degrade Israel's ability to repair its image. In the past 18 months, the world's rejection of Zionism has surged; now we must ensure that it will never embrace it again. This is a critical stage in the battle against Zionism — a stage taking place on the battlefield of ideas. It requires of us — those who stand with Palestine — a vigilant, proactive approach to create conditions that make it impossible for Zionism to survive, for their Iron Wall of propaganda to be repaired. It requires a lifetime commitment to justice.

As Palestinian revolutionary Walid Daqqa writes, "I could have easily gone on with my life as a painter or a gas station worker. I could have married young, like many do, to one of my cousins, had seven or ten children [...] All of that was possible — until I witnessed the horrors of the Lebanese war and the massacres at Sabra and Shatila."

Today, Gaza presents us with a similar rupture, a genocide that demands of us an answer: Will we go on as painters or gas station workers, retreating into the private safety of our lives? Or will we become what Gaza — and history — demands of us: revolutionaries committed to bringing down Zionism's Iron Wall. The Iron Wall, for all its posturing, is not as unbreachable as they claimed it to be. It appears, with a clarity that only Gaza can offer, to be nothing more than a paper tiger wrapped up in the ultimate ornamentation: propaganda.

Perpetual resistance

Nour Hifaoui



* Mokdad Jamil Al Mokdad's conversation was broadcast on TagarodPodcast by Ahmad Biqawi.

‘Kids Grow Up Afraid of the Sky’

1948: A beginning that never ended

By
PLESTIA ALAQAD

My grandmother was only two years old when she was forced from her home in Jaffa during the Nakba of 1948. 75 years later, she was displaced again, this time from Gaza, where she had tried to rebuild a life after losing everything once before. Gaza became her second home, only for Israel to destroy that as well.

I come from a family of exile. A family that has spent generations carrying the weight of keys that no longer open doors, of memories tied to places that no longer exist. A family that knows what it's like to lose everything.

I know what it's like to have your house bombed while your memories are still inside.

I know what it's like to lose a loved one, suddenly, violently, and to have no time to mourn or process your emotions. I know what it's like to look around and feel that everything you once called "life" has been turned to ash.

Surviving an Israeli aggression — surviving genocide — is not just about living.

It's about carrying what you cannot bury. It's about finding the words to describe a reality that defies language.

This is not just my grandmother's story, or mine, it's the story of millions of Palestinians. One of them is Karam Eleiwa, a Palestinian who grew up in Gaza who now lives in the UAE, and works in media. Karam has lived through multiple Israeli aggressions. "Each one," he says, "left a deep mark on who I am today."

Karam's story of these attacks throughout his life offers a timeline that reflects the fragmentation and heartbreak so many Palestinian families endure. The first war he fully lived through, in 2008, came when he was just 10 years old in Gaza. "It shattered my sense of childhood safety," he says. In 2012, during what he calls the "war without my father," his father was in the West Bank opening a restaurant, while his mother, Hanan al-Masri, a well-known journalist, was reporting

on the ground.

Two years later came the "war without my mother" — the longest and most destructive he had physically witnessed — while she was outside the country. By 2019, Karam was a university student in Los Angeles, experiencing war "from afar" for the first time, emotionally torn as his entire family remained in Gaza. During the current genocide, Karam lives in the UAE with his immediate family, but his father and extended relatives are still in Gaza. "This is the hardest war," he says, "because I'm far from [my father] and constantly worried."

As long as you're Palestinian, whether you're physically in Palestine or not, you're always experiencing Israeli aggression or genocide — because our minds, our hearts, and our loved ones are there.

I know what it's like to look around and feel that everything you once called "life" has been turned to ash.

Reflecting on the difference between living through war in Gaza and watching it from afar, Karam explains: "Inside Gaza, the fear is physical. You feel it in your body, your breath, your sleep—or lack of it. But outside Gaza, the fear is psychological. You're safe, but you're constantly checking news, making calls, refreshing WhatsApp. You feel useless, guilty, and removed, even though your heart is right there."

Being in Gaza during war is pure survival mode—your senses are heightened, and every sound makes your heart race. When you're outside, the pain hits differently. It's a mix of guilt,

helplessness, and constant worry. But the hardest, by far, is having someone you love still inside. "Every day, I wake up afraid to check my phone. Every missed call or delay in hearing from my father sends me spiraling. You're physically safe, but mentally, you're in pieces," Karam says.

The Lingering Effects of War

"There's one moment I'll never forget," says Karam. "I was clutching a bag of our belongings as we were evacuating to my grandmother's house, trying not to cry. My mother had just survived a bombing near her office. The smell of smoke was everywhere. The sky felt heavier than usual. I remember looking out the window and realizing I was just a kid, but this was war. And in war, no one is exempt."

The sound of fighter jets still gets me. And fireworks? I hate them. They remind me of the bombs we used to hear before windows shattered.

You carry it with you. Even on normal days, I struggle with anxiety and overthinking. I still flinch at loud noises. I over-worry about my family. And every time there's another escalation, everything else in life feels meaningless. It's hard to focus, to plan, to dream.

The Unseen Trauma of Survival

"I feel guilty for being able to eat when my father is searching for bread. I feel guilty for taking warm showers, for sleeping in peace, for having a future to look forward to. The only way I cope is by trying to always stay connected to my father and the family over there. Work helps, but still, the worry is constantly there."

People think it ends when the bombing stops. But it doesn't. The trauma stays. Kids grow up afraid of the sky. Parents live with unending grief. Families are permanently broken. It's not just destruction of buildings, it's destruction of memories, dreams, and futures. "Genocide doesn't always look like what we're taught in books. Sometimes, it's slow, repeated, and quietly erased from global headlines."



Young students assemble in a schoolyard in Weifel Camp in Ba'albek, Lebanon.

OUR ROOTS WILL ALWAYS RETURN US

In interviews conducted for *The New York War Crimes*, Islam al-Astal and Abubaker Abed spoke with Palestinians in Gaza at the beginning of the ceasefire. This conversation has been edited for length and clarity and translated from Arabic by the *New York War Crimes* editorial collective.

Umm Tariq, 68:

I was in az-Zawayda when the ceasefire was announced, in a tent, and my daughter came to me, joyous, and she hugged me. She sat there crying out, "There's a ceasefire, Mama! There's a ceasefire! We can leave our tents. We can leave, finally." And she jumped up and down, up and down, and I said to her, "Really?" I couldn't believe it. Honestly, I couldn't believe it. And then I started yelling. We weren't sure, we weren't sure at all if we would return. Just as our parents fled in '67 and in '48. We said, that's it, we're never going to return to those areas. We'll never see our homes, we'll never see our lands, but *alhamdulillah*, *alhamdulillah*, *alhamdulillah*.

Before '67, we were safe in Gaza. I swear, we used to sit at the foot of our homes every day. We were in Al-Shati [refugee camp], and we used to stay out late with all of the neighbors, we'd stay out till 11 or 12. But after the Jews came and occupied us, they instituted a curfew. The Jews used to warn people, on microphones, "Nobody is allowed out of their house." From 7 and onwards, no matter what, you couldn't leave your house. And sometimes even during the day, they wouldn't let us leave our homes. If, for example, they saw a *fida'i* [resistance fighter], they would block off the entire area. That would be it. Nobody could leave their

homes except for the two hours that they would allow us, two hours to run all your errands.

People died of hunger. Some ran out of flour, some ran out of water. I was young, but I helped them. We'd go collect bread and food that people

Palestine will always be Palestine, it won't change. The times will change and the people will change, but our roots will always return us.

had prepared and we'd put them in baskets. We'd throw it to them over the barbed wire fence that separated us. There were many people there inside who'd collect the supplies and distribute them across the area. *Alhamdulillah*, people loved each other and their hearts were together.

But this war is harder. We were cut off from flour, we were cut off from

food and drink. We have no money. My son works for the Gazan government, they give him 800 shekels. But it is 800 shekels enough for an entire family? And for myself, who's sick and needs it to buy medicine? How? There is nobody who gives us money, nobody who can work, there is not even work. Really, this war broke people's souls. It humiliated them. People stopped loving each other, stopped helping each other.

But would I leave the country? No. We're going to die on our lands. We must continue the journey. Leave and empty the country for whom? Leave, and leave it for whom? No, we were the first here, this is our land, we were the first here. No matter what happens to us, no matter if our children die, no matter what is taken from us, we will persevere, persevere in our faith in our Lord. Maybe He is testing us.

Palestine will always be Palestine, it won't change. The times will change and the people will change, it's true, but our roots will always return us. Our essence brings us back. *Alhamdulillah*, we are all one hand. It's true we differ, our cultures differ, our ideas differ, but we return again, we shall return again. *Alhamdulillah*, we are patient and steadfast on this land, and *alhamdulillah*, we will liberate it, with the grace of the Lord of the worlds, God willing.

Ta'ziz al-Sumud: Turning the Table into a Mountain

By
PALESTINIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

Have you ever interrogated a table? I am a table now. Go interrogate a table. If it talks back to you, come to me and you'll find that I have become a mountain.

—The martyr Ibrahim El-Ra'ii, to the Shabak interrogator torturing him

Few philosophies are as prominent in Palestinian collective identity as the concept of *sumud*. Best translated as "steadfastness," *sumud* is the commitment exhibited by Palestinian political prisoner Ibrahim El-Ra'ii when he refused to submit to his captors in his torture chamber: It is a pledge to defiance. *Sumud* is a vow to never abandon the struggle.

Zionism has unleashed a boundless cruelty on Palestinian existence, an onslaught in which every red line has been crossed and no family has been spared. In response, the people of Gaza have constructed a collective steadfastness which etches the very word, *sumud*, indelibly into every moment. The names written on the body bags of martyrs describe not only lineages of blood but legacies of resistance. "We are tiny," says one child, emerging from rubble, "and yet the whole world cannot defeat us." Gaza herself is steadfastness distilled: enduring the steel-toed boot of colonialism even as it crushes her esophagus, and springing a well of resilience from a land parched of water.

For too long, Gazans have sourced this strength from their own flesh and faith. As we move into a new phase of the struggle against Zionism, we must ensure that the unwavering people of Gaza do not stand alone. The diaspora—the shatat—must take up our historic role in *sumud* as a liberation strategy: When genocide threatens to break the bones of Palestinian society, the solidarity movement has an obligation to strengthen its steadfastness, in Arabic, *ta'ziz al-sumud*. For as much progress we have made in popularizing the Palestinian cause, Gazans on the ground have little to show for it. Hearts and minds will not deliver insulin, potatoes, or water. We must move resources, not only opinion polls.

When genocide threatens to break the bones of Palestinian society, the solidarity movement has an obligation to strengthen its steadfastness.

Sumud as a practice was popularized to resist interrogation and torture in Zionist prisons. Through the practice of *sumud*, the ordinary Palestinian prisoner could become a legend, protecting their people from the usurping Zionist entity by refusing to submit or confess. Resistance factions even developed a handbook to instruct members on *sumud*, titled *The Philosophy of Confrontation Behind Bars* (1978). They defined *sumud* as a strategy that "simultaneously reflects and creates victory. It determines the consequences of the confrontation between the two poles of the conflict in favor of the struggler."

In prison, *sumud* often involves a mental strategy of transcending the physical realm to construct an alternate reality outside of the torture chamber. This is what Ibrahim El-Ra'ii means when he defiantly states that he is a table with the potential to transform into a mountain. To confront the occupier, he reconfigures his very personhood in the image of his resisting nation. In so doing, he flips the colonial script — reversing the "poles of the conflict" in his favor. He summons the nation into the cell — four cement walls dissolving into the open air of the market of his hometown, Qalqilya, the chair beneath him softening into the couch of his mother's living room, and the table before him burgeoning into Jabal Jarzim, the mountain overlooking Nablus. The confrontation that *sumud* promises is the power of the collective, inserted into a space of isolation or deprivation.

Sumud (steadfastness), *samed* (steadfast individual), *samidoun* (the steadfast people).

Sumud is embedded in the Palestinian vernacular not as a single word, but as a collective strategy: the refusing prisoner draws on their *sumud*, the bold resistance fighter is *samed*, and today, the enduring people of Gaza are the *samidoun*.

Sumud as confrontation is not merely a personal practice but a blueprint for national liberation. Past generations of Palestinians understood that sustainable resistance requires an uncompromising popular cradle — a concept referring to the

community support of the resistance — and that the cost of resistance rises with every martyr. Fathers and sons, often the breadwinners of their homes, were murdered or stolen to Zionist prisons, making it harder for families to make ends meet. To respond to this escalating repression, *ta'ziz al-sumud* developed as a new current of the liberation project.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization initiated several projects of *ta'ziz al-sumud* in the late 1960s and subsequent decades, including Usar al-Shuhadaa' (Martyrs' Families Organization), Children of Martyrs' Workshop Society, and SAMED — named after the strategy itself. Many of these projects were seen as so essential to the national liberation project that they were initially clandestine. Women would visit the families of martyrs or prisoners to understand the contours of the crater created by the loss of a father, mother, or son. They would then summon the community to fill the void with financial and material support.

The diaspora played a critical role in this national strategy. The PLO's SAMED is one such example. Operating mostly in Lebanon, SAMED was an economic strategy to build a Palestinian-led economy and support the self-reliance of the Palestinian people. Their aim was "to create the nucleus for a Palestinian revolutionary economy, to develop economic self-sufficiency for the revolutionaries and the masses." Increasing the autonomy of a colonized people is elemental to *sumud*.

The introduction of neoliberalism into the PLO, however, defanged this revolutionary strategy. Within the capitulating framework of Oslo, the nascent Palestinian Authority (PA) abandoned the national liberation struggle for the futile promise of a Palestinian state. Like the Greek myth of Sisyphus who was condemned to push a boulder up a hill for eternity, the PA forced Palestinian laborers to work on the futile task of state-building in perpetuity. Economic self-sufficiency was left behind with the conditions imposed by Oslo — so too was the strategy of *sumud*. The embrace of neoliberal economic order robbed our people of nourishment from a unified national liberation movement, setting in motion capitalist reforms, privatization, and NGO-ization. Austerity measures were imposed, and without a resilient economy, conditions of hardship proliferated. The neoliberal model facilitated the shrinking of Palestinian space and the erosion of Palestinian control of the supply chain that shaped their lives. Whereas *sumud* is a strategy of confrontation, state-building became a strategy of collaboration — and the masses of Palestinians paid the price. If *sumud* deepens our people's roots in their land, neoliberalism withers them — priming our land for the taking. Despite these challenges, Gaza rejected this path, defiantly choosing resistance, the very essence of *sumud*.

But colonialism is a project of theft, and what Zionists cannot pillage in the political arena they plunder by force. The seventeen-year blockade on Gaza imposes the same sovereignty-denying limitations that Oslo facilitated in the West Bank. By controlling what comes in and out of the open-air prison, Zionism has fabricated an occupation economy.

Before this war, Israel kept the people of Gaza "on a diet." They calculated the minimum calories necessary for human survival and allowed only 85% of that amount to reach over two million people. That already insufficient aid amounted to 500 trucks daily.

Throughout this genocide, less than 100 trucks a day pass through. Gaza is being subjected to a siege even more suffocating than before. Zionism has vaporized the infrastructure of survival. It annihilated the last remaining bakery

in northern Gaza. Engulfed the Kamal Adwan hospital complex in flames. Pulverized the Al-Aqsa, Al-Shifa, the Indonesian, Al-Ahli hospitals. Transformed grocery stores and pharmacies into piles of rubble littered with the limbs of shopkeepers. The societal deficit of genocide is astronomical. This loss is everywhere: the crater where makeshift homes once stood, the empty graves of abducted martyrs, the child's leg that ends at the knee. In this brutal equation of survival, we must ask ourselves: How can we be an asset to the *sumud* of our people?

The Palestinian struggle for liberation is a face-off between F-35s and human flesh. It is a contest between Merkava battle tanks and Adidas-clad resistance fighters. It is the clash between the gluttony of global capitalism and a mother's endeavor to stretch her dinner ration for a family of eight. In other words, this is a battle between the most brutal empire known to this earth and our people's will to resist and remain.

In this confrontation, we must return to the lessons of *sumud*. Gazans are leading the struggle in their continued resilience on the land, in the community networks that they are building, and in their defiance in the face of a brutal genocide.

This is a battle between the most brutal empire known to this earth and our people's will to resist and remain.

It is the inherited duty of the diaspora to support these networks and invest in infrastructure that places Palestinians back home in control of the conditions that shape their lives. This means funding organizations and projects led by our people, ones that do not make aid conditional on capitulation, but rather, that offer aid in devotion to the land and struggle. By asserting that support is an act of solidarity, not charity, we position our people as the rightful stewards of our land and resources.

Increasing steadfastness is equally crucial a confrontation with the Zionist enemy as our face-off with its enablers like defense contractor Elbit Systems and MAERSK, which ships military cargo to the Zionist entity. Ultimately, *ta'ziz al-sumud* is not just about putting dinner on the table. It's about transforming the table into the mountain: facilitating a revival of the natural abundance of our land, the self-determination of our people.

As Walid Daqqa, the martyred Palestinian prisoner and writer, profoundly expressed:

"I yearn for the homeland or the memory we will create. I long for the future, the home I will build, where I will rearrange the memory in the place I will choose."

Daqqa's words encapsulate the essence of *ta'ziz al-sumud* — the active creation of a future shaped by Palestinian hands. Despite the confines of his prison cell, his vision, like the *samidoun* before him, extends beyond walls and bars: He yearns not just for a return to a lost past but for the deliberate crafting of a new reality. Our collective responsibility must expand in kind. The *samidoun* of Gaza, amidst destruction, are building the foundations of a liberated future. It is our duty to support them — to engage in *ta'ziz al-sumud* — and to help them build a free Palestine.



ذكري النكبة ٧٧

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77TH NAKBA DAY
MAY 15, 2025

TO PALESTINE,
WE RETURN

عائدون لفلسطين

