

"All the Consent
That's Fit to Manufacture"

The New York ^{WAR} Crimes

The Prisoners Edition
"The end of my words is a call:
Free the prisoner
and liberate the homeland"

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FREE

'UNBARRED AND FREE'

MAKING RENT IN A TIME OF GENOCIDE

By
RASHA ABOU JALAL

At the end of every month, Ahmad Madi counts what little money his family has left. He and his wife sit in the corner of their small rented apartment in Al-Nasr, west of Gaza City, and spread the cash across the floor. The bills are divided by need: food, transportation, schooling for their four children. It is their rent, however, that necessitates this calculation.

Their home in northern Gaza was destroyed during the two-year Israeli genocide. "My wife and I both work. We even sell part of the aid we receive from relief organizations just to cover rent," he tells me, staring at the shallow pile of money. "Sometimes it feels like our entire life is reduced to paying for a roof over our heads."

His family's eviction is imminent. Their landlord has repeatedly raised the rent, justifying the increase by the demand and the scarcity of livable homes in Gaza. Though he's tried to fight the hikes, his pleas have proved futile. If he doesn't intend to pay, the landlord tells him, there are ten families ready to take the apartment. "And I know he's telling the truth," Madi says. "So I can't really object."

This practice has become routine for Madi's family, a desperate accounting at the end of the month that decides whether they will be forced, again, out of their home. Some months ago, his wife sold some of her gold jewelry in an attempt to avoid yet another displacement.

Inside their tiny apartment, Madi glanced over at their children. "What frightens me most is not the bombing, but that there may come a day when I can no longer pay the rent, where we could end up on the street or back in a tent. The war destroyed our homes, but rent can destroy what remains of our lives."

The war has obliterated over 90% of Gaza's residential infrastructure. This destruction has forced over one million people into a rental crisis never seen before. Tens of thousands of families who lost their homes and could no longer bear to continue living in tents have been forced to rent whatever they can find: apartments, single rooms, partially damaged homes, rooftops and storage spaces unfit for living. This shortage has driven rents to unprecedented heights and produced what is now described locally as a new rental economy. As habitable housing has become scarce and commodified, securing shelter now rivals the challenge of securing employment.

Under this new system, households allocate the majority of their income — or the aid they receive — towards rent. Before the war, when the average income was closer to \$600 a month, families spent at most \$200 on rent. Today, the average rent sits closer to \$800 while the typical household income has



People welcome freed Palestinian prisoners in Ramallah following the Gaza ceasefire deal, January 25, 2025. Photo by Zain Jaafar.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

A Battle of Wills

The Arabic word for confession — *i'tiraf* — also means recognition. A Palestinian prisoner who refuses to confess is refusing to recognize, let alone legitimize, the colonizer's power. This is the battle of wills at the heart of every Zionist dungeon. Ahmad Qatamesh, in his forthcoming book *Interventions for Formulating the Alternative*, traces the moral foundation of such a refusal: "[Revolutionary] work requires toughness, *sumud*, the acquisition of the skills of struggle, and not surrendering [...] so these values become moral values, whereas betrayal, lying, and fragmenting the collective serve the enemy." It is a creative and collective refusal, unsustainable by individual will alone, built on a full-hearted belief in the victory to come.

This belief has never been more sorely tested in the history of our struggle. "The door shut behind me, and a new life began within those corridors of slow death," writes Hassan Salameh, who endured 500 days in solitary confinement, of the haunting threshold between life and death. "Everything was now unknown. There would be no one you would speak to, and no one who would speak to you."

Every US-backed Israeli onslaught, incursion, and massacre must be understood as coterminous with the logic of the dungeon. The political prisoner tortured at Sde Teiman and the family buried under rubble in Dahieh are not separate victims of separate campaigns, but targets of a single colonial project whose existence hinges on annihilating what they cannot subjugate.

While we were putting together this issue, the US and Israel launched another front of genocide: a criminal war of aggression against Iran. A war which explicitly seeks the destruction not only of the sovereignty of a nation-state, but of "a whole civilization." The war expanded into Lebanon, where the Islamic resistance joined into battle, determined to expel the Zionists from the lands they seek to occupy in the South. After Iran secured a ceasefire agreement that included Lebanon, the entity rained down more than 100 bombs in minutes — an interval that Netanyahu boasted about — flattening apartment buildings on residents' heads and straining hospitals to capacity. The goal of this wanton annihilation is to punish the people of the

MURDER BECOMES THE LAW

The Knesset seeks a final solution

The Zionist entity's latest attempt to legalize genocide is both a horrifying development and a convulsive admission of defeat. Having failed to subjugate the resistance through decades of torture, isolation, and deprivation, a flailing Leviathan now reaches for the noose.

On March 30, the Knesset passed the Death Penalty for Terrorists Law, championed by Itamar Ben-Gvir's far-right Otzma Yehudit party, by a 62-48 vote. MK Limor Son Har-Melech, who spearheaded the legislation, called the vote a day on which "Israel chose life," and framed this grotesque law as an expression of true "Jewish morality."

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Salameh was sentenced to 48 life terms, and denied release by the Occupation as part of the 2011 prisoner exchange deal. After decades of torture and isolation in Israeli prison, where he still remains, he asks God for relief only so that he may return "to the field of battle as a *mujahid*." We offer a select translation of Salameh's memoir here — in English for the first time — in the hope that his unerring resolve under grim odds will guide those of us lucky enough to bear witness to his story.

The First Phase of Isolation (1997)

My experience in isolation, within these sections fashioned for a slow death, where one lives, really, in limbo, has lasted as long as my detention itself. On May 17, 2011, it will be fifteen years since I was first imprisoned.

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Across every site of confinement and ruin runs a current of refusal and resistance, gathering force and coalescing into a struggle that cannot be brought to its knees

Palestinians in the general prison population have historically maintained and fought for some ability to organize, to coordinate activity between cell blocks, and to sustain the elating pulse of comradeship. Since October 7, 2023, all this has been stripped away. Prisoners cling to bare life.

The martyred prisoner Walid Daqqa used "big prison" to describe a homeland under occupation and "little prison" for the architecture of the cells, where Zionism manifests in its purest, most malignant form. The prison is fortified by barbed wire, Hebrew legal code, and international impunity. Imprisonment itself steals childhood from children, abducts parents from their sons and daughters, and extracts leaders from the resistance movement. Despite all this, Palestinians have transformed the hellfire of prison into a kiln that forges the struggle. Leaders have emerged from the prisons' torture chambers with wisdom on how to wage war against their torturers. From behind bars, writers like Daqqa and Wisam Rafeedie have produced literature that has moved the nation and the world alike into action.

The object of Zionism is the destruction of the Palestinian as a Palestinian. As former prisoner Hadeel Shatara puts it: "You take a hostage to do an exchange [...] to achieve something. Israel imprisons Palestinians to end our existence."

The prison walls mark the bound-

ary of Zionist imagination. Every US-backed Israeli onslaught, incursion, and massacre must be understood as coterminous with the logic of the dungeon. The political prisoner tortured at Sde Teiman and the family buried under rubble in Dahieh are not separate victims of separate campaigns, but targets of a single colonial project whose existence hinges on annihilating what they cannot subjugate.

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South and turn them against the resistance, an objective that reveals how little the Zionists understand the people they aim to defeat. "We support the war," says Miriam Fneish in a piece co-published with *The Public Source* in Beirut, "because we believe the result will be victory — and the return of the prisoners."

In this issue — a collaboration with the Palestinian Youth Movement — you will learn of hunger strikers who have turned their bodies into weapons. You will bear witness to the terror of electrocution at Sde Teiman. You will find yourself seated on the floor of Ashkelon prison among revolutionaries plotting their victory, hear the triumphant verses uttered in court by Ayham Kamamji after his recapture following the Gilboa prison break, and learn of the grassroots efforts to free Lebanese abducted from their land. And you will learn about the international campaign, Freedom for Palestinian Political Prisoners, which asserts the centrality of the prisoners movement to every facet of our fight for liberation.

This issue insists that across every site of confinement and ruin runs a current of refusal and resistance, gathering force and coalescing into a struggle that cannot be brought to its knees. As one of our contributors writes from Beirut, "Their machines may swarm the sky, but we are the keepers of the earth."



Daily life in Gaza, as photographed by Majdi Fathi.



13-year-old Ahmad Manasra in an Israeli detention facility. He was released on April 10, 2025, at the age of 24, after spending nine years imprisoned by the Zionist occupation.

The Sun Rises from the South

'We will never surrender the path of resistance'



Families return to South Lebanon after the 34-day war in 2006.

We knew the Great War was coming. We could feel it around us all the time, in the harsh white lights that cut toward us from the occupied hills, in the amphitheater of sound that the enemy erected over our heads: bleat of the Hermes 450, roar of warplanes, hiss of quadcopters at night. Daily death by drone was something to write about in 2009, according to the average American news editor, taken as she was by the specter of the detached killing machine. By 2024, a year deep into the Gaza genocide, such instruments had grown banal, a moral question of the past. But those of us beneath the occupied skies knew: This was not a life.

In the capital, politicians celebrated the nation's new dawn. Billboards with images of the president and prime minister's smiling faces rose along the sides of the highway. "The resistance has been defeated," they intoned in parliament, at press briefings — and the state would at last have a monopoly on arms. They affirmed that the neoliberal order would be restored; the downtown frequented by elite clientele; the banks padded with fresh dollars from the Gulf States. American envoys began making regular trips to Beirut to grace the city with their pretension and bigotry; Morgan Ortagus got a blow out and took a selfie with Lebanese fashion designer Elie Saab; Tom Barrack called Lebanese journalists "animalistic" at a press conference. All was forgiven in the spirit of the Zio-American quest to turn Lebanon into the next comprador Arab state.

But beneath the prized earth of the South, the resistance regrouped, studied the enemy's movements. The Zionists' daily assassinations and incursions were a test of patience; the resistance must only wait for the right moment to strike back and defend the land. It came at last on the second night of the US-Israeli assault on Iran: six rockets fired from the South toward Zionist missile defense systems in occupied Palestine.

The Zionists immediately escalated their campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing against the people of the

South, issuing sweeping displacement orders that sent hundreds of thousands fleeing north in the middle of the night with nowhere to go. The government, punch-drunk from its tryst with the Americans, dragged its feet on securing shelters for the displaced. Along the seaside boardwalk, many ended up pitching tents in the cold, rainy nights.

The Zionist massacres began to multiply: eight martyred in Sour as they sat for iftar, 41 martyred in Nabi Chit

as they fought an IOF helicopter incursion, eight martyred in a strike on a tent encampment in Beirut's Ramlet el-Bayda's public beach. The Zionists bombed displaced Shia in the predominantly Christian areas to which they had fled, prompting some host communities to expel their new residents. Thousands packed their bags and returned to the South, preferring to die at home than live in humiliation.

On the border, the cowardly enemy

invaded under the cover of artillery shelling, razing homes to the ground and burning the land with white phosphorus bombs before moving in to seize territory. Again and again, they were repelled by the very resistance that they declared defeated a year prior. The village of Khiam — famed for its eponymous prison, where the Zionists tortured resistance fighters during its 18-year occupation of the South — was the front line. The resistance allowed their convoys of Mer-

kava tanks to enter before setting the first and last in the line alight, forcing the enemy to send in helicopters to evacuate the soldiers stranded in the middle. The resistance set traps, settled beneath the ground in waiting, emerged to ambush the invaders and then disappear. *We are fighting ghosts, enemy soldiers cried in Gaza. Lebanon is a graveyard for Israeli soldiers, squalls the Zionist press today.* Their machines may swarm the sky but we are the keepers of the earth.

Enraged by their failed attempts to take our land, the Zionists have resorted to their usual playbook, releasing fire from the sky. As in Gaza, healthcare infrastructure has become a central target. Ambulances rushing toward the wounded, doctors and nurses sustaining medical centers across the South, EMS personnel digging through rubble are being struck day after day — yet they refuse to leave their posts, even at the cost of death. In late March, two of the South's bravest voices, Fatima Ftouni and Hajj Ali Shoueib, were martyred in the Jezzine district while on assignment for al-Manar and al-Mayadeen broadcast channels, respectively. Thousands attended the funerals, weeping while throwing rice toward the coffins in congratulations for the martyrs' sacrifice to God, to the land, and to the people.

The Zionist entity took its scorched-earth policy to a depraved new low, consumed by their cowardice and unraveling: Less than one day after agreeing to a ceasefire with Iran, Israel rained 100 bombs across the South, Bekaa, and Beirut in just 10 minutes. Buildings flattened on peoples' heads, entire towns in the South decimated with a single strike, massacres similar in scale to those in Khan Younis replicated. According to the latest estimates, 300 martyrs ascended; some are still trapped underneath rubble.

After nearly a century of this rabid rage, this enemy still cannot see us. It can study the contours of our earth with its high-resolution imagery; it can track the signals on our devices, even learn our language; it can burn our groves and destroy our villages — all in pursuit of breaking our will and changing the direction of our hearts. In vain. No matter how much destruction it wreaks on our land and people, no matter how much fire rains from the sky, we will never betray the blood of our martyrs. We will never surrender the path of resistance. We will never normalize with the enemy of land and life. And we will survive, and we will resist, and we will return, and we will remain.

'The hardest part is carrying this responsibility'

In Lebanon, grassroots organizers do what the government won't

By
DANA HOURANY

This report was co-published with The Public Source.

At 1:30 a.m. on March 24 in the village of Halta on Lebanon's southeast border, a high-pitched scream tore through the night, followed by the sound of gunfire. The village's roughly 200 families were jolted awake.

"We thought it was a local brawl," Issa Abdel Aal, Halta's mukhtar, or local leader, told *The Public Source*. He stepped outside, thinking he might be able to intervene, but within moments, bullets began to rain down. The sound of fighter jets rumbled overhead.

"Israeli forces were in the village," he recalled then realizing. "Anyone who went outside would be shot."

Messages began flooding the village WhatsApp group. Residents warned that occupation soldiers were moving through the streets. They had already raided the home of Shadi Abdel Aal and abducted the young father of two.

A few blocks away, Ashraf al-Kaderi stepped onto his balcony, and was hit by Israeli gunfire, leaving him with severe injuries to his leg and pelvis. Fifteen-

lage as a farmer," the mukhtar said. "He takes care of his cows every day. We don't have anyone here affiliated with political parties or anything that would make Israel target them. The village is predominantly Sunni."

Israel's pattern of abductions shows it does not distinguish between sects. Just a week earlier, Israeli forces entered the nearby village of Kfarshouba (also predominantly Sunni) and detained Kassem al-Kaderi before releasing him shortly after.

Abdel Aal's family has raised the case of their abducted relative with the Lebanese army and the United Nations peacekeepers; they are still waiting for information. There is no guarantee that they will receive an answer anytime soon.

For months, families of detainees say they have been trying to push the case of the Lebanese detainees forward. Their primary demand, they told *The Public Source*, is simple: to know where their loved ones are and what condition they are in. Many families said that the only information they have received came from Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners freed as part of ceasefire deals.

Working alongside the Committee of Representatives of Prisoners and Freed Detainees and the Lebanese Associa-

tion of Prisoners and Detainees, relatives of the detainees have organized protests, issued statements, and sought meetings with state officials. They met with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on December 12 and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam on January 29.

They said that they left those meetings with assurances — but have since seen no action.

Lebanese organizers founded the Lebanese Association for Prisoners and Detainees in 1982, the first year of Israel's brutal 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon. During the occupation, the association focused on documenting prisoners' cases and maintaining contact with detainees through coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It also organized sit-ins to demand the release of detainees and arranged medical treatment for wounded or sick among them.

After southern Lebanon's liberation in 2000, the organization's work shifted toward supporting freed prisoners and

their families and addressing the long-term effects of detention, Ahmad Taleb, the association's head, told *The Public Source* in an interview. Taleb himself was abducted by the Lebanese Forces, handed over to Israeli authorities later that year, and spent over 12 years in detention in occupied Palestine until the liberation of southern Lebanon in 2000.

Recent abductions of Lebanese citizens by occupation forces echo the days of the Israeli occupation. Between October 2023 and the November 2024 ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel, Israeli forces abducted nine people from inside Lebanon. In one of the most high-profile cases, Israeli naval commandos seized Lebanese navy captain Imad Amhaz from the coastal town of Batroun on November 2; CCTV footage showed armed men leading him away with his shirt pulled over his head.

During the 15-month ceasefire that followed — one the United Nations says Israel violated more than 15,000 times, including at least 1,500 incursions into Lebanese territory — occupation forces abducted another 12 people.

During the war, the association initially held off on organizing protests, Taleb told *The Public Source*. "We thought hostages would be released

ues to do so, but has so far been unable to visit those still held there. They also visited the ESCWA headquarters in Beirut on February 20, where they met with Special Coordinator Janine Hennis-Plasschaert. During the meeting, they renewed their call for the United Nations and other international organizations to take all necessary measures to secure the prisoners' release, hold Israeli authorities accountable, and bring to justice those responsible for war crimes against the detainees and, more generally, the Lebanese people.

Taleb says the Lebanese state — not organizations like theirs — should be taking the lead by forming a committee to follow the detainees' cases, coordinating with international institutions, and working with human rights bodies, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Enforced Disappearances.

But detainees' families told *The Public Source* that they have yet to be contacted by state officials.

"We only want the government to adopt this case so it can move forward and we can act alongside it," Taleb said. "But they won't even acknowledge it."

Hussein Karaki, 36, was driving his sister Fatima and their mother, Tamara Chehimi, toward their border village of Markaba on January 26, 2025. It would be the first time they laid eyes on their home since they fled the previous fall. They parked their car in Wadi al-Hujeir and continued on foot — a two-hour trek across bulldozed terrain, dirt mounds, and fallen trees. Along the way, they were joined by the family of Rabih Zaraket and his two 16-year-old sons.

At the entrance to the village, a barbed wire fence blocked the road. As they approached it, Israeli gunfire erupted.

Tamara Chhimi and Rabih Zaraket were killed instantly. Hussein sustained a gunshot wound in his back and collapsed.

"I dissociated and went to another world," Fatima told *The Public Source*. At first, she thought her mother had simply fallen.

Israeli soldiers soon surrounded her and the two teenagers.

"They were pointing their firearms at me constantly, trying to intimidate me," she said. "They kept pressuring Hussein to stand up even though he couldn't."

The soldiers confiscated her phone and initially refused to allow her to call an ambulance. After examining Hussein themselves, they placed him in a police vehicle and withdrew.

"One officer glanced at me as if deciding whether to take me too," Fatima recalled.

Her father later arrived to retrieve her. Because ambulances could not reach the village, her mother's body had to be carried out on a motorcycle as Fatima retraced the same route on foot back to Wadi al-Hujeir.

Since her mother's murder and brother's abduction, Fatima Karaki has become an unofficial spokesperson for the prisoners' cause, frequently appearing on television and online media to demand answers.

"The hardest part is carrying this responsibility," she said. "When Hussein was here, I never had to account for anything. I relied on him for everything. He was my world."

A similar story unfolded in the nearby village of Taybeh a day later.

Hassan Hammoud had gone with his wife, Zeinab Bahjat, to check on their village home. Around noon, Bahjat headed back to Jibchit, where they were living at the time, while Hammoud stayed behind to fix the water pipes and



Photo by Fatima Joumaa.

fill the water tank.

As night fell, Israeli soldiers descended from a hill near the Al-Abbad military post.

Hammoud's youngest nephew spotted them and alerted his father, initially thinking they were Lebanese soldiers. Realizing they were Israeli forces advancing toward Hammoud's house, the family called to warn him.

Hammoud ran to hide in a nearby olive grove, but the soldiers spotted him using red laser lights and immediately kidnapped him.

"It's more of a space than a structure," journalist Hussein Chaabane, one of the group's organizers, told *The Public Source*. "People come together, share their skills, and produce work that keeps the case visible."

The campaign shares updates, posters, photographs of detainees, and short videos of protests and vigils online. It also supports symbolic actions and public events aimed at keeping the prisoners' cases in the spotlight and maintaining pressure on authorities for answers.

For now, many of these efforts have slowed as the war once again escalated in Lebanon. Since March 1, Israeli strikes have killed more than 886 people and injured over 2,141.

For some families, however, the renewed fighting has renewed a sense of hope.

The Public Source previously spoke with the family of Ali Fneish, a fisherman abducted during a fishing trip on June 4, 2025. His sister, Mariam Fneish, said the family supports the resistance's decision to enter the war, seeing military pressure as the only way to secure the detainees' release.

"We tried to work with the government, but it was a major disappointment. They gave us nothing," Fneish told *The Public Source*. "We support the war because we believe the result will be victory — and the return of the prisoners."

Fatima Karaki echoed this view. "As families of prisoners, we've lost hope in diplomacy bringing any concrete results," she said. "Without the resistance's pressure and without detainees on the Israeli side as leverage, nothing will change."

The war has taken a sharper, more or less predictable turn than in 2024. Hezbollah has demonstrated unexpected strength, catching Israeli forces off guard and challenging assumptions that the group had been weakened. Each strike and counterstrike keeps the country on edge. For the families of detainees, it has also reignited the hope that their loved ones may finally come home.



Families of Lebanese prisoners in Zionist prisons protested outside a United Nations building in Beirut on February 28, 2026. Photo by Fatima Joumaa.

year-old Mohammad Ali Abdel Aal, a distant relative of the mukhtar's, also stepped outside to see what was happening. When he saw the Israeli soldiers, he quickly turned back.

He didn't make it. Israeli soldiers shot and killed him instantly.

The raid is part of a growing pattern. At least 22 Lebanese are believed to be held in Israeli prisons, captured over the past two years during Zionist incursions carried out both during the war with Hezbollah and in the so-called ceasefire that followed.

Two of the abductions occurred within the last several months. Ahmad Chokor, a former Lebanese General Security officer, disappeared in mid-December after being lured to a meeting with a man later identified as a collaborator with the Israeli Mossad. Then, on February 9, Israeli forces raided the Hasbajyya district before dawn and seized Atwi Atwi, the former mayor of the village of Al-Habbaryeh, and an official with Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya, a Sunni political organization.

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lages as a farmer," the mukhtar said. "He takes care of his cows every day. We don't have anyone here affiliated with political parties or anything that would make Israel target them. The village is predominantly Sunni."

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‘The Butchers of Humanity’

Journalist and former prisoner Mohammed Qaoud on six forms of torture at Sde Teiman

I will focus on the abuse that Palestinian prisoners are subjected to by Israeli soldiers at Sde Teiman, who we prisoners call the “butchers of humanity.”

I was arrested from Al-Shifa hospital alongside hundreds of injured and displaced, and taken to Sde Teiman military detention camp in Al-Naqab. The seven-hour trip — which usually takes less than one — was full of extreme torture and beatings. We suffered beatings on our heads, necks, and backs. We were burned, electrocuted and hurt in injured areas. The trip was seven hours of certain death.

When we arrived at Sde Teiman, the military captain responsible for the detention camp said, “I don’t know if you believe in life after death or heaven and hell, but you have arrived in Israel’s hell and you will not leave alive.” He was

counting. They even controlled the way we would sit. We were forced onto our knees for more than 18 hours a day, handcuffed and blindfolded. We would sleep for a couple hours and even that was interrupted with torture.

Torture by starvation

We’d receive food three times a day, and each “meal” consisted of three to four pieces of small toast, covered in mold. The prisoners would try to eat around it, which would leave them in total a small piece of toast; a spoonful of yogurt; and half a cucumber or tomato that was also moldy and unfit to consume. Once a month, we’d receive a spoonful of jam after they’d see that our blood sugar levels were so low due to the extreme deprivation of any sugar. The prison guards would throw the

from one cell to another, or during torture by Israeli soldiers, both men and women; the third is sexual assault and rape using solids like batons, hoses, and extinguishers; and the fourth is rape by animals trained to rape. During torture they would bring dogs trained to rape, strip the prisoners naked, and rape the prisoner in the cell in front of other prisoners. And the fifth way: rape by Israeli soldiers and guards. Based on testimonies from both men and women prisoners, Israeli soldiers would gang rape prisoners.

Dehumanization

The second a prisoner enters the prison he is transformed from a human being into a number and no longer called by his name. You are not allowed to change your clothes at all

punishment. They would tell you: “You are not human, my dog lives a better life than you.” They don’t see us as humans because if they did, they would not treat us this way. This was all intentional, as their goal was to destroy the prisoner psychologically.

Psychological torture

During the period when we were at Sde Teiman, we struggled through an extremely difficult psychological state. There were several methods used by the jailer, such as a disco room specifically designed with large speakers and loud music playing around the clock. This prevented the prisoner from controlling himself, from even thinking about the future or how he could mentally prepare to face the interrogation and the upcoming stages.

intentional and systemic, and were approved at the highest ranks of the Israeli military.

We had broken muscles, broken bones, open wounds, and blood everywhere. But no one was seen by a doctor.

During an interrogation related to my journalistic work, I suffered severe fractures in my rib cage, resulting in a state of extreme unconsciousness. I needed to go to the clinic. And by the way, going to the clinic is a kind of torture. On the way back, you get beaten a lot, even by the so-called doctor — not a doctor, but a butcher. The doctor will beat you and deny you any medical treatment, use your wounds against you, and hurt your wounds even more.

I couldn’t breathe due to a blood clot in my chest. I insisted on seeing a doctor, risking the consequences. Only af-

ter pain.” He suffered with a broken pelvis for an entire year, and was left to use the bathroom standing, with both hands and feet tied while blindfolded.

The authorities treat the journalist as an equivalent to the fighter. Before our release, we were threatened. If we returned to journalistic work or spoke about the conditions of detention, we’d face two options: to be killed with your entire family, or never-ending detention and torture.

Israel takes very seriously the impact of everything that is said and which takes hold in popular narratives, as it realizes deep down that it is an illegitimate entity — ostracized today and tomorrow and the day after — and so it lives in con-

There isn’t a single prisoner who has been in Sde Teiman that hasn’t had tens of broken bones. In my first months of detention, I would count my broken bones and I reached 19 and stopped counting



Prisoners in the courtyard of Sde Teiman prison, February 14, 2024.

The authorities treat the journalist as an equivalent to the fighter. If we returned to journalistic work or spoke about the conditions of detention, we’d face two options: to be killed with your entire family, or never-ending detention and torture

very true in his words. Sde Teiman is not just hell, it is the lowest circles of hell.

In this hell, there was a standardized and set program of extreme torture, which I will outline in six types.

Physical torture

Beatings, electrocution, straining in what is known as the “ghost position” for extended periods of times, amputation of limbs, forcibly removing fingernails, and breaking joints and bones. There isn’t a single prisoner who has been in Sde Teiman that hasn’t had tens of broken bones. In my first months of detention, I would count my broken bones and I reached 19 and stopped

food at us, step on it, pour water, throw cigarette butts and garbage on it, allow animals or insects around it. All prisoners lost at least 30 to 40 kilograms from their body weight. I personally lost 42 kilograms during my year in occupation jails. There are prisoners who have lost 85 kilograms, the body weight of an entire human, because of the torture in Israeli prisons.

Sexual torture

The most extreme and difficult type of torture is sexual torture. This is done in multiple ways. The first is by completely stripping the prisoner of their clothes; secondly sexual harassment during interrogation, during transport

during the entire period of detainment, which usually ranges from one to five months.

I, personally, spent 100 days in Sde Teiman, blindfolded and handcuffed, without showering. Showering in Sde Teiman is three minutes with cold water without soap, once a week, without changing clothes, without changing underwear. Some of the prisoners had health complications, like urinary incontinence, and would stay in the same clothes, not allowed to cut their nails, not allowed to shave, and barred from speaking to anyone.

You’re also forbidden from speaking, from even moving your lips. If you did, the guards would give you the harshest

This was also done by completely cutting off news from Gaza while the war continued, so you didn’t know if your family was alive or not. Soldiers would lie and tell prisoners that their families were killed, and their wives and children were killed, which wouldn’t be true. Also, through the constant insults and shouting that never stopped around the clock. Prisoners were subjected to the most obscene and worst language, a type of oppression, abuse, and psychological torture.

Medical neglect

The last form of torture was through the collusion of medical staff with the state. All of these types of torture were

ter 42 days did I see a military person who identified himself as a doctor. The doctor told me that I had broken ribs that resulted in internal bleeding, which leads to clots in the lungs. He told me in Hebrew, “Drink water, water is the cure for all illnesses. You complain of cancer, drink water. You complain of pain, drink water. Water is the solution for everything.”

Some prisoners had limbs amputated that did not need to be amputated, a result of deliberate medical neglect and the doctors’ eagerness to torture us.

One of the prisoners had a broken pelvis. The doctor took a picture of him, and told him “I will not help you, I will let you suffer until you die from the

stant fear of the impact of the word.

It is essential to speak about the prisoners if we want to enact real change in this war. I do not mean speaking as a fleeting activity, I mean adopting the voice of the prisoners in a real sense in every arena, whether it be in the legal, media, or social arenas. This is our role towards people who are suffering and dying for no reason every day inside Israeli prisons.

Mohammed Qaoud shared this testimony during a Palestinian Youth Movement webinar on Palestinian prisoners. It has been edited for length and clarity. He holds a masters in journalism and media studies from the Islamic University of Gaza.

GENOCIDE IN THE SHADOWS

Testimony from a freed prisoner
April 2026

Away from cameras and lights, in the shadows of narrow prison cells, the Shabak military counterintelligence apparatus practices some of humanity’s most brutal forms of oppression. In these prisons occurs a confrontation between an individual and a complex security system armed with imperialist wealth, military expertise, and time.

Interrogation is not aimed only at extracting information. Its true goal is to break the Palestinian, empty him of his revolutionary spirit, and intimidate him so that he deviates from the path of resistance. Sometimes the interrogator knows that there is no useful information to extract, but this fragility of the Zionist entity is always in search of symbols of dominance, torturing heroes of our national struggle to intimidate the entirety of Palestinian society.

This confrontation begins from the moment of arrest, during which rifles are always pointed at the prisoner’s body. Between death and life is a resentful soldier whose hand rests on a trigger that decides your fate. These moments remain engraved in the minds of Palestinian prisoners.

Many go through what is known as field interrogation: an interrogation under threat of death, in which confessions are extracted by brute force and severe beating. Then the prisoner is transferred to an interrogation center where a new phase begins, more severe, more lengthy, carefully studied, and aiming to break the Palestinian from within.

Here the prisoner’s body is weaponized against itself: The prison guard agitates the prisoner’s open wounds, pressures his fractures, and deprives him of sleep and medicine. Sleep, food, the cell, and the nervous system — all turn into tools of torture. The body, time, and the surrounding environment all unite against the prisoner, until death becomes an easy idea, even desirable — not because he has nothing to live for, but because everything around him is designed to push him toward breaking.

I cannot present all the methods of physical or psychological torture, or even the testimonies of the tortured. What I know is that there are wounds that do not heal despite time. Time in the darkness of interrogation has another meaning: One minute under torture becomes eternal, its impact extending years after release.

What happens in the darkness of interrogation is not interrogation. It is genocide in the shadows.



A Palestinian prisoner released from Omer military prison embraces his father in Ramallah, October 13, 2025. Photo by Zain Jaafar.



LEFT: Patients in a makeshift clinic in Gaza City, December 31, 2025. Photo by Anas Baba. **RIGHT:** Palestinian forensic and civil defence recover human remains at the grounds of Al-Shifa hospital after it was destroyed a two-week Israeli raid, on April 8, 2024.



TREATMENT TRAP

How a death-dealing medical regime ensnares Palestinian patients

By
**MOHANAD MAHER
EL-HEMRAWI**

Mousa Hassan, a 29-year-old Palestinian from Gaza, thought he had overcome the most difficult battle of his life: cancer. After months of chemotherapy and a successful bone marrow transplant, he was almost back to normal. Instead, Israeli forces kidnapped him while he was receiving cancer therapy in Tel Aviv. Denied life-saving medications and proper medical care and beaten repeatedly in prison, Mousa's story reveals a grim reality for many Palestinians in detention: They are punished for who they are.

It wasn't easy for Hassan to receive cancer treatment in the first place. He was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma at Al-Shifa hospital in 2018. But due to the Israeli blockade, which prevents life saving medication from en-

tering the strip, his treatment was not available in Gaza.

"My biggest dream was to live long enough to have a child and watch him grow up," he says in an interview last month in Gaza.

In order to receive treatment at a hospital near Tel Aviv, Hassan needed a security permit from the Israeli Occupation Forces.

His permit was approved after months of efforts. In 2019, Hassan began chemotherapy at Sheba Medical Center. The treatment was exhausting, but doctors told him that his prognosis was improving. "The first thing that crossed my mind was the dream of having a child and a normal life," he explains. "But that didn't last for long."

Israel revoked his permit to leave Gaza suddenly and without explanation. Hassan joined the ranks of Palestinians whose prognosis depends on the whims of an oppressive colonial bureaucracy.

It took eight months for Hassan to

be granted a new permit. All the while, cancer cells metastasized through his body.

Once again, he started chemotherapy at Sheba Medical Center. It was harder the second time, but after 18 months, his prognosis had improved. And once again, his permit was suddenly revoked without explanation.

"When you have cancer, every missed treatment matters," Hassan says.

By the time he got his third permit, several months later, pain from his worsening condition prevented Hassan from moving. An ambulance had to transport him to Sheba Medical Center.

For a third time, Hassan underwent the exhausting ordeal of chemotherapy. He underwent a successful bone marrow transplant. Months of the arduous labor cancer treatment requires passed. And his prognosis improved.

He was at the Tel Aviv hospital early in the morning on October 7th waiting for the doctor when announcements across Israeli media demanded all Pal-

estinians in Israel depart for the West Bank, even those from Gaza.

Hassan took his bag and boarded a bus for the West Bank. "I kept wondering what would happen if my treatment stopped," he shares. "Would I die this time?"

Israeli soldiers stopped the bus and detained all 40 Palestinians on board, who were all following commands. Hassan tried to explain in both Arabic and Hebrew that he was a cancer patient with a permit. Soldiers beat him with iron rods in the head and chest until he could barely breathe. They confiscated his bag, which included medications he had to take daily to ensure the success of his bone marrow transplant.

When he arrived at a detention center, Israeli guards mocked him for asking for his medications. He was detained in squalid and freezing conditions. Detention and prison conditions for Palestinian prisoners post-October 7th are brutal even for the healthy. But cancer patients need to maintain

immaculate hygiene standards since chemotherapy weakens the immune system.

Hassan would go on to spend nearly six months imprisoned without trial or charge. He was visited by a doctor just once, but never received any medications despite three separate promises from Israeli judges. Guards at his prison beat him repeatedly for telling a doctor he was sick.

Finally freed and in Gaza, Hassan faces a difficult road. There is still no treatment available in Gaza, and he cannot return to Israeli hospitals. "Pa-

tients in my situation need a country willing to receive them," he explains. "Many cancer patients I met at the hospital during my tests have died over the past two years, not because of bombing, but because of the lack of treatment, the destruction of hospitals, the restrictions on medical supplies entering Gaza."

But he hasn't given up. "Every day, I am still trying to find a way to travel and receive the care I urgently need."

Read Mousa Hassan's full interview with journalist Mohanad Maher at www.newyorkwarcrimes.com.

Time of War Danez Smith

i.
first you need to understand is fear –
its nine arms, its three mouths, its million eyes closed as coins

the first thing you need to understand is fear
is a monster the size of a mushroom cloud
its soul's eyes closed its dance a cruel gravity
reckless and flattening, blood staining its feet

fear is a monster throwing a tantrum in a city
the people below drown as it weeps
drones and smoke and snipers
bombs and phosphorus and weeps the bread away
it weeps rape and prisons and propaganda
it weeps blue flags and blue dollars and blueprints
to build where they blew us up

fear is the size of a bomb is the soul eyeless
is the history used to kill the future
is the future has a price is the future is numb
to her dead sisters is fear hates all sisters
as your life burns and chokes on the dust of being
made nothing fear is the size of nothing
we've ever seen so big it starts to look
like greed it looks like its crying
it's eating really eyes closed mouths open
those aren't tears it's spit how did we get in its mouth?

the second thing you need to understand is money:

ii.

the question reaches its dust-blinded, water-starved hand
scratching in the seven directions of time -

where is my child?

meanwhile, in America, someone changes the channel to cartoons.
in America, we don't need our enemies' help to kill our children.

iii.

i worry who i would be
if you handed me
a map
and a gun
and told me
i could be free.

iv.

my captor's brother is my captor, too.
my captor's brother's captive the other half of my key.
the key, if not in reason, in the captor's cleaved heart.
Ms. Jordan, thank you for making me know.

v.

get it right
Martyr

doesn't mean they killed me

Martyr

means the victory will be made of my name.

vi.

the moon is full
which means
again we are in the light of god
and again
the light will turn from us

again into the darkness
trying to find a witness
or a savior
and found only
myself

so, left to chaos,
i become the rain
and find my center
reroute the storm
to my will.

'They're trying to confiscate our lives'

Hadeel Shatara on the struggle and organization of Palestinian prisoners

Hadeel Shatara is a faculty member at Birzeit University, an activist in the Palestinian prisoners movement, and a former prisoner, liberated in the exchange deal of January 2025. She lives in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. This transcript from an interview she gave with PYM's Popular Cradle podcast has been edited for length and clarity. The full interview is available at www.palestinianyouthmovement.com/popular-education/popular-cradle-podcast.

Can you talk more about the conditions of the prisons and describe how conditions have changed for prisoners since October 7th?

Hadeel Shatara: The Palestinian prisoners have historically organized themselves inside the prisons to demand human rights. And they have accomplished so much: access to education, access to news, monthly family visits, improvement in health conditions, and access to better food. All these accomplishments were bathed in the blood of the Palestinian prisoner movement.

You take the
hostage in order to
achieve something.
Israel imprisons
Palestinians to end
our existence

After October 2023, the first hit the Zionists started with was the prisons. Palestinians had turned the imprisonment and the isolation that the Occupation was trying to impose on them into a place where you actually learn how to organize, fight, how to be active, how to defend the cause.

Now, the prisoners have lost everything. The Zionists started torturing them right away on October 8. All the prisoners were beaten, shot at, dragged into isolation cells. The attack was massive, and then they started designing a different system for the prisoners. The system is based on three main pillars.

The first is to create instability on a daily basis. Almost every night, they would search a specific room or division. They took all the libraries, they took all the food, they took all the clothes and every personal belonging. The prisoners didn't even have pictures of their families. They had no access to any cleaning supplies for health and hygiene. The Zionists come up with a different tool every single day to create instability.

For example, they took plastic bread bags away. They took all of our underwear. It's completely arbitrary, completely absurd. There's no justification other than cruelty, torture, dehumanization. They want to break prisoners and to break the spirit.

Women prisoners had to fight for pads. And when they bring the pads, they bring a disgusting type that is not usable and that does not protect from anything. And this increases your instability and the feeling of being put in this place where you have no control over anything. In this world, you are fully controlled from every aspect.

The second tool is starvation. It's a way to create a weaker body. So instability creates mental issues, and starvation creates physical issues. They weaken the person's health. We had no healthcare inside the prisons. That's why scabies have hit the prisons really badly.

And the last thing is isolation. The Palestinian prisoners are completely isolated from the whole world. Even when lawyers visit, they are watched by the prison guards. The lawyers are not allowed to carry papers or written letters from families. They have to memorize what your family is trying to tell you. They are not allowed to tell us any news about the world outside.

Putting all these three together, what they are trying to do is to break the Palestinian prisoner's spirit.

Some people say Palestinian prisoners are "hostages," but I think a more apt term is political prisoners. How do you think we should refer to Palestinian prisoners?

"Hostages" does not describe what happens to Palestinians inside the prisons. You take a hostage to do an exchange. You take the hostage in order to achieve something. Israel imprisons Palestinians to end our existence.

Every Palestinian inside the Zionist prison is a political prisoner because we're fighting for a cause. They're trying to confiscate our lives. We're trying to fight back. It's an act of steadfastness. It's a political cause. So the Palestinians inside the Zionist prisons are there because they are Palestinians and they're defending their lands and their rights. And they're fighting for freedom. They are actually freedom fighters.

So we are political prisoners, and the Palestinian political prisoners movement has taught the world so many lessons throughout history. Look at the history and the story of Walid Daqqa. He writes about how inside the prison, you are living in a different time that the Occupation is trying to force on you, a different place and a different time. And how you [mentally] break through and you break free from these prison doors and cells.

Walid is a martyr who was martyred inside the prison; he was killed by the



"We cannot liberate Palestine without liberating the world."

Zionist occupation authority. He hadn't even met his little daughter, Milad. This is the story of the Palestinian prisoners. And this is what they represent. They represent freedom.

His body is still held by the Zionist entity. Even in death, he hasn't been released.

They're afraid of his body. Despite this whole system that they have designed and what the prisoners are facing at these horrifying times, they still cannot break them. You cannot break the Palestinian prisoner movement because you're fighting for a true cause and you're fighting for freedom.

Could you talk about how you see the struggle of Palestinian prisoners inside prison as connected to the struggle for national liberation outside of prison?

Nowadays the leaders of the prisoners' movement are isolated in the prisons. They were not released during the exchange deals. But what they represent to the Palestinian society is the idea of freedom and liberation.

And we know that they imprison us in order to end our cause. But this process makes us stronger. We might have a few health issues, but the spirit

is there. The aim of liberation is there, and we know for a fact that they cannot defeat us. That's why we continue to fight. You always come out stronger because now you're not only fighting for the liberation of the land, you're fighting for people who are inside the prisons who you have lived with, who you experienced the horrible conditions with. This only makes us more human — we become real fighters and stronger fighters. What they try to do is to break this, but when you are released, you become stronger. This is a fact.

Is there anything else you want to leave people with?

There's one message: This is not the Palestinians' fight alone. It's a joint struggle. The Zionists are strong because imperialism is protecting them. And we cannot liberate Palestine without liberating the world. It's our fight. All of us. What people are facing in Sudan, what people are facing now in Iran, in Iraq, in Lebanon; in Africa, in South Africa; and in Cuba, in Venezuela: It's all connected. It's one fight for one cause. Ending imperialism will liberate Palestine, and it's a duty for all of us. And the liberation of every political prisoner in the world is the duty of all of us.

Voices from Inside

A dialogue between four prisoners, smuggled out of Ashkelon prison



Palestinian prisoners in an Israeli occupation jail, August 20, 2008.

Written as the Second Intifada ebbed under overwhelming Zionist force, amid fractured Palestinian leadership and the regional shock of the Iraq War, this excerpt is extracted from a clandestine seminar organized inside Ashkelon Prison. It was smuggled out of the walls of one of the Occupation's oldest prisons — with roots dating back to the British Mandate — and sent to Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya, where it was originally published in 2003 (Volume 14, Issue 54).

The seminar was organized by prisoners — most serving life sentences — representing different political factions: Ahmed Jabara “Abu Sukr” of Fatah (imprisoned in 1976), Mu’ayyad Abd al-Samad “al-Shays” of the Popular Front (last arrested in 1987), Walid Daqqa of the National Democratic Assembly (arrested in 1986), and Firas Jarras of Hamas (arrested in 1993 and sentenced to 16 years). At the time of the seminar, the moderator, Nimer Shaaban al-Safadi, had spent 15 years in Ashkelon Prison.

The group discusses the history of the prisoners movement and how it serves as a microcosmic reflection of Palestinian society itself. They trace the movement's periods from the 1970s, where prisoners had to fight for basic rights; to the 1980s, where prisoners witnessed significant gains and a vibrant cultural life; and finally to the post-Oslo Accords period, which marked a sharp decline in conditions and organization. In this phase — when 600 Palestinians newly detained during the Second Intifada entered Ashkelon — Oslo undermined much of the unity and organizational structure previously built. Just as Palestinian political society fragmented, particularly with the rise of the Palestinian Authority, so too did cohesion within the prison walls erode.

The central thesis of this excerpt is that the Palestinian prisoners movement — acting as an extension of broader political conditions of the struggle — must overcome fragmentation, weakened organizational structure, and the weakening of collective values to preserve its unity and role as a driving force in the national liberation struggle.

This translated excerpt has been edited for length and clarity. The People's Center for Palestine, in partnership with the Institute for Palestine Studies, has published the excerpt at pc-palestine.org.

Nimer al-Safadi: The national prisoners movement has a long history and legacy of struggle that is difficult to cover in a single seminar — or even in several seminars. Nevertheless, there are key milestones and phases that allow for comparison across various dimensions, such as the relationship with prison administration, the relationship with the outside world, and also what this experience has yielded in terms of organization and struggle. I hope you will address these at the beginning of our seminar, before we move on to the political topic.

The prisoners movement both influences and is influenced by what happens outside the prison walls

Ahmed Jabara (Fatah): The prisoners movement lived through conditions in the 1970s that are difficult to describe or imagine due to their extreme severity, given the scale of the targeting to which Palestinian prisoners were subjected. Deprivation and the loss of the most basic elements of a dignified human life were the hallmarks of that period. The small cell where we spent our days and years contained nothing but a large number of prisoners who slept on the floor (if there was even room to sleep). You had to sleep on a “blanket” and cover yourself with another, using your shoes as a pillow, until the hunger strike of 1980, after which it became possible

for prisoners to sleep on a “mattress.” The prisoners movement, through hunger strikes and the sacrifice of martyrs, succeeded in creating better conditions and achieving a number of demands for the Palestinian prisoner-activist. Following the 1985 strike, the most significant achievement was the introduction of radio and television into Israeli prisons. Contact with the outside world was limited to communication with relatives through visits. Personally, I met my sons after many years of detention; I met the first one in prison 19 years after my arrest and the second one 23 years later, as he had been outside the country and was able to return following the Oslo Accords.

Mu’ayyad Abd al-Samad (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine): I will begin by discussing the relationship between the prisoners and the prison administration. The 1970s constituted a formative phase for the prisoners movement — a period of intense struggle to assert its presence and strengthen the cohesion of the movement at that time. The relationship during that period was characterized by a confrontational struggle with the administration, which sought to crush the prisoners movement, fragment the Palestinian prisoner's identity and sense of belonging, and rehabilitate him according to the Israeli perspective. It was also characterized by a balance of power tilted in favor of the prison administration. Repression, intimidation, and deprivation — this was truly an epic battle, during which the prisoners defended their existence, further deepening their connection to the cause.

The 1980s were different. This decade was marked by the fact that the prisoners movement made significant strides in establishing itself as a powerful movement with militant, political, cultural, and educational achievements and a long legacy of struggle. This was expressed through a series of strikes that transformed the movement, most notably the 1980 Nafha strike and the Juneid prisoners strike. The strikes, along with other steps, contributed to a broad-based revival, achieving progress in raising the level of consciousness within the prisoners movement, as well as the public awareness of the prisoners cause. With the exception of a few harsh periods, the 1980s witnessed a degree of stability and advancement in the reality of the prisoners movement, and this phase extended into the 1990s, during which the prisoners raised the bar on their demands and managed to improve their living conditions following the 1992 hunger strike.

This was followed by the Oslo phase. This phase, particularly after the release of thousands of prisoners, witnessed a decline in several respects, despite the prisoners movement's efforts to preserve itself. The primary concern of the Palestinian prisoner is no longer self-development within prisons and the accumulation of achievements, but rather the pursuit of freedom; the issue of liberation from captivity became the central focus of the prisoners' struggle. This was accompanied by a sense of vulnerability, tension, and rifts among the prisoners. The “crisis of freedom” intensified further due to the forms of oppression inflicted on the remaining prisoners, particularly through the marginalization of their cause and discrimination among prisoners under various labels: this one being accused of wounding a Jew, another of killing, this one opposed to Oslo, that one from Jerusalem, and similar classifications.

of the relationship between the prisoners and the prison administration. This was driven by the arrival of thousands of new prisoners and the intensification of hostility between Palestinians and Israelis. During this period, the prison administration launched a harsh and brutal campaign in both its methods and procedures; in contrast the prisoners movement found itself in a weakened, defensive position.

A unique form of communal life emerged, adapted to the reality of prison life

Responsibility for this oppression lies with two parties: the Palestinian side, which has neglected this issue and treated it as a secondary matter, not rising to the level of our people's fundamental causes and therefore subject to agreements between Israel and the Palestinians; and the Israeli side, which hardened and intensified its classifications of these groups, thereby imposing a “veto” on their release. All of this led to major setbacks for the prisoners movement, causing the prisoners to neglect their internal issues — specifically the development of the movement's achievements. It also led to a decline in the values that prevailed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Organizational and educational programs were canceled, and the capacity of organizational and national structures to deal with the prison administration weakened; the pace of seeking achievements and improved living conditions also slowed. It came to be accepted that our presence inside the prison was no longer strategic, but rather merely a temporary phase while awaiting release. The level of influence Palestinian prisoners had on society also declined during this phase.

Given that the Oslo years were characterized by a relationship of coexistence with the Israeli side and an effort to build trust, the intensity of the conflict within the prisons subsided, and the primary focus shifted from preserving achievements and confronting the administration's plans to building trust between the two sides. Outside the prisons, the Palestinian national struggle waned, and the role of Palestinian society diminished; an attempt was made to build an alternative society, but it turned out to be lame, like a crow trying to imitate a partridge's gait, ending up neither crow nor partridge.

With the eruption of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a change occurred in the nature

of the relationship between the prisoners and the prison administration. This was driven by the arrival of thousands of new prisoners and the intensification of hostility between Palestinians and Israelis. During this period, the prison administration launched a harsh and brutal campaign in both its methods and procedures; in contrast the prisoners movement found itself in a weakened, defensive position.

Walid Daqqa (National Democratic Assembly): I will try to summarize the three phases: the early 1970s through the mid-1980s; the mid-1980s through the start of Oslo; and Oslo to the present moment. I consider the first phase to be the phase of organizational formation, the establishment of organizational structures, and the shaping of the unifying values of the prisoners movement. This phase, and the subsequent two phases, are in practice a reflection of what was happening in the broader Palestinian reality in terms of political movement and political reality.

The prisoners movement both influences and is influenced by what happens outside the prison walls. Consequently, the first phase witnessed the beginnings of the formation of the national prisoners movement, which entailed giving full weight to the unifying values of this movement: granting significance and a role to what was called the National Committee within the prisons and assigning roles to organizations at the expense of the roles of the hometown, the region, the neighborhood, the group, and all the primary affiliations that formed the basis of the connection between individuals and groups in prison. This phase was not easy and required strenuous effort. However, the objective circumstances and the pressure exerted by the prison administration through all its repressive measures and tools forced the prisoners movement to structure itself in this way and to establish institutions and organizational methods that would enable it to confront this phase and preserve itself and its elements within the prisons. This, then, was a stage shaped by objective circumstances that compelled individuals and groups to create mechanisms and an organizational framework to confront the realities of prison life.

A prisoner who entered prison illiterate would emerge with a significant store of culture and knowledge

In the second phase, which I call the doctrinal and ideological phase, lasting from the 1980s and to the early 1990s, ideology and unifying values began to take root within the prisoners movement. The movement developed diverse tools and forms of struggle to confront the prison administration, whose goal was to end and dismantle this collective situation so that prisons would not become schools and universities for producing “terrorists.” In fact, the prisoners movement managed to produce a very rich organizational and struggle-based legacy that has been well-documented and archived. An active cultural movement also took shape during this phase. There were hand-copied notebooks and magazines published within the prisons, and there

was also a focus on the individual in terms of education, intellectual development, and character building. A prisoner who entered prison illiterate would emerge with a significant store of culture and knowledge. This phase was accompanied by an encouraging political reality, as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) held a prominent position and was internationally recognized as a political entity; the Palestinian cause occupied a prominent role both in the Arab world and internationally. All of this was reflected in our reality and gave us the ability to organize and develop ourselves.

This phase culminated in the 1992 strike, after which the material reality of the prisoners was greatly enriched; in other words, there was now freedom of choice. Thus, diverse attitudes and opinions began to emerge, along with greater independence in thought. The era of ideology and the “single color” gave way to an era of pluralism. This pluralism of opinions and positions, which arose on the basis of material abundance (so to speak), was not matched by a suitable organizational reality or tools for accommodating it. The old organizational tools — such as national committees, proportional representation, and so on — remained in their old form. Over time, this pluralism gave way to individualistic tendencies, and instead of propelling us forward, it became a source of weakness for the prisoners movement. This weakness was further exacerbated after the Oslo Accords, which undermined what had existed in the 1970s and 1980s: collective values, organizational structure, and unity. They were replaced with a state of disintegration and an inability to confront challenges.

Then came the Oslo “classifications,” which dealt the final blow to what remained of the collective values within the prisons and what remained of ideological convictions.

However, during this period, Islamic movements and forces emerged based on their opposition to Oslo and began to take shape as a force to be reckoned with inside the prisons. Today, following the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the arrest of thousands of new prisoners, the inability to accommodate these waves is evident, as only a very small number of the most experienced prisoners remain in the prisons. Add to this the confusion and weakness that afflicted our people during the Intifada.

Firas Jarrar (Hamas): The significant challenges faced by the Palestinian prisoner compelled him to organize his life in such a way to overcome them. A unique form of communal life emerged, adapted to the reality of prison life, regulated by rules that included mechanisms ensuring democratic leadership rotation, guaranteeing rights for all, and precisely defining each prisoner's rights and obligations. Over time, it came to resemble a social contract governing all aspects of life in prisons.

In recent times, however, this way of life has lost the form, substance, and meaning it once had; the organizational institution fell into a state of paralysis following the Oslo Accords and the first wave of prisoner releases that followed. This significantly impacted the course of the prisoner's life as an individual and the prisoners movement as a collective. During that period, up until the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, prisoners lived with the obsession of liberation, bidding farewell to one agreement and welcoming another, in the hope that it would bring what its predecessor had failed to deliver: the long-sought dream of freedom. This is what caused the organizational institution to lose its standing and the capacity it previously possessed to maintain a solid, cohesive, and effective collective organizational life.



Bethlehem, Palestine, 2000.

'My son, Hassan, don't you dare regret'

Excerpts from Hassan Salameh's memoir *Five Thousand Days in the World of Barzakh*

Continued from page 1

Arrested on May 17, 1996, I remained in their "interrogation" cells until December of that same year. They then moved me out to the prison wing for less than a month before I returned again for interrogation. I came out in the second month of 1997.

During this period, I was held in Ashkelon, in the sections cordoned off for what they called "security prisoners." It was a time of repeated court appearances, of real torture. I was constantly abused by the Nahshon Unit — the military battalion responsible for transporting prisoners between the prison, the courts, and the hospital. I was usually taken to court alone — at Erez, at the Beit El Military Court in Ramallah, and at the Al-Majnoona court in Hebron — and thus left regularly exposed to abuse. Rarely, if ever, did I return from a hearing without being beaten. Though the other prisoners tried to do something to protect me, it was futile; the cycle persisted.

I cannot speak about my time in isolation without mentioning a particular instance of tragic irony. In the final days of my interrogation, I was once again taken to court. The journey itself was a form of torture: My hands were bound behind my back, a sack pulled tightly over my head. Only at the doors of the court in Hebron did they finally remove it. By then, my hair had grown long and my appearance, I imagine, resembled someone brought back from the dead. I entered a courtroom where journalists of all sorts and a large number of soldiers awaited me. Still bound and in my depleted condition, the journalists swarmed as I entered the courtroom. The same single question recurred across their tongues, and I felt then as if I had been brought, unknowingly, to my own execution. The question was repeated: Do you expect the death penalty?

It was a terrifying moment, a sense that all my feelings were colliding at once. Coming straight from the interrogation cells, where I had spent more than four months, I truly felt that I had been brought to this courtroom to die. I felt that my execution would be carried out right then and there. I do not know from where calm whom in that instant, but I know to whom it belongs. It was God, the Glorified and the Exalted, who steadied me, and so I entered the courtroom with a smile on my face and with my head held high. With complete calm, I answered their question about my apparently looming death. I was certain, I told them, that my release

would come sooner than they imagined. The room suddenly burst with laughter, pointed roars at this prisoner marked for execution, but who was instead talking about his release. I reiterated my response several times, but the laughter and the commotion did not subside until the judge entered the room.

What I'm trying to do is place the reader of these memoirs inside the world I was living in, inside a world imposed upon me long before my time in isolation and detention. Things continued this way until the beginning of July 1997. Those were days marked by escalating confrontations with the prison administration. On the night of July 3, 1997, we were told that I had to be ready the next morning to be taken into isolation. Soon after, I sent word to the prisoner leadership in the wings that I would refuse to go, and, indeed, they supported me and urged me not to go. And that is exactly what happened: The next morning, I refused to prepare myself and refused to leave my cell. The wings were then sealed off, no one was allowed in or out. The repressive Nahshon unit was put on standby, ready to storm in and take me by force. The prisoners in my wing stood with me, as one. Standing guard, they refused to allow me to be taken unless it was under an agreement that clearly defined the duration of my confinement. The standoff continued this way until noon, when the spokesperson for the detainees emerged; he had made a decision with the prisoner leadership. In order to spare the prisoners a crackdown they would rather avoid, they asked me to go. I found then that I had no choice but to agree to leave even in the face of all the prisoners in our section who opposed my departure. With the help of the others, I gathered my things quickly and the Nahshon Unit took me to the inspection area. Because I had resisted, they treated me with deliberate provocation. During the search, they piled all my belongings — food, juice, clothes, sugar, salt — atop each other and shoved them into bags. They placed me into the isolated section of the bosta and drove off, announcing the beginning of my life in isolation. I would be taken to my first solitary cell, in the wing of Ramla-Ayalon known as "the old section."

I arrived at Ramla prison in the afternoon. They brought me down along with all my belongings and began the search. I was, of course, handcuffed the entire time, and even while bound, I was made to carry my bags and move my things until the search was finally finished that night. I was then transferred from the inspection area to that dreaded

solitary wing. The door shut behind me, and a new life began within those corridors of slow death. At that moment, because I had no idea what awaited me or where I was being taken, everything felt unknown and indistinct — even my own emotions were difficult to define. I was overcome by a number of passing emotions. A fear of the unknown. The urge toward that unknown as if it were an adventure. A tension. And, finally, a sort of faith. I was calm, content with what had been written, patient and willing to endure it in anticipation of God's reward. Though these were the bulk of my emotions, I won't hide the truth from you: I was haunted by the thought that these people had brought me here to get rid of me, to assault me, to undermine my steadfastness, to break my will, to make me unrecognizable. Each possibility was harsher to imagine than the last, but the hardest part was that everything was now unknown. There would be no one you would speak to, and no one who would speak to you.



A Palestinian prisoner in an Israeli occupation jail, October 2011.

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A Letter to My Mother after Twelve Years of Denied Visits

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and prayers and peace be upon the Master of the Messengers,

My Lord, all praise and thanks are Yours for what You have given me. You freed me and my brothers from the graves of isolation where we had been buried alive. You granted me the blessing of seeing my elderly mother after they had denied me visits with her for twelve years. For all of this, I give You all the praise and gratitude.

The visit was half an hour. The first

seven minutes were lost as I was unable to hear her, and she, me. I sat before her as the receiver carried no sound, and still, watched as she spoke to me with her eyes.

Oh, how beautiful those moments were, as she kissed me through a glass partition! I was a child again. My wish was only to fall in her arms, to hold her! I longed to bow and kiss her feet. Your cane pained me, mother, especially as you tried to hide it! Will you forgive me for the tears that fell despite yourself? Will you forgive my helplessness to wipe them away? I begged you, with a gesture, not to cry. Meanwhile, the child inside was weeping uncontrollably, reaching with longing for you. I searched your eyes, traced your face, placed this moment, finally, beside another, distant one. Seventeen years ago, I had come out of an interrogation wounded when your ululation broke the silence. The prisoners stood in respect, the guard rushed to silence you, but your voice broke through. A declaration of victory.

I still carry your words: "My son, Hassan, don't you dare regret." And today, mother, it broke me to see that tear. Because, I swear, I chose this path so that you would not have to cry. It was then that I truly felt the passage of time. We saw each other anew, startled by the sight of the other. My heart wept for your tears, for your cane, for your face, for you. It wept for my own helplessness before your pain. Forgive me, mother, forgive me!

My Mother!
Despite all the pain, my joy in seeing you was immense. To stand before you, to speak to you, to say the word "mother" and have you hear it.

We spoke quickly and widely, chatting as if in a race against time. It passed in an instant, as if only a minute had gone by. Even in that brief span, it felt like my whole life had been returned to me.

"Hassan," they told me, "you have a visitor." I couldn't believe it. I was almost afraid to. But they confirmed, and the visit happened as it did. Even now, I live inside this memory. The image does not leave me. I laugh, then fall into a sadness, again and again, as I retrace every detail of our encounter.

I ask myself: will there be another visit? It is the question that plagues every prisoner; will our lives pass like this, our familial memories measured in brief visitations? I told her, jokingly: "You're still young, mother," though she had just passed seventy. "What if we got you married?"

She replied: "What has kept me in this life is to see you married." It is the wish of every mother, every wife, every son and daughter, to live alongside their loved ones. And God, in His mercy, grants such relief.

She left me too quickly. It felt as though my soul, my heart, my dreams, my whole life, had abandoned me. In her leaving, it was as if she were asking that my absence not stretch too long, as if she were holding onto life for my sake. And I, my mother, hope that my imprisonment will not be much longer, that the sun of freedom will rise soon, the sun whose light we love, whose rays we long to feel unbarred and free.

My Mother!
For my sake, be patient. For you and I have a date to come, and a covenant to keep: You will remain strong, and I will endure. "Don't regret, Hassan." A

I was haunted by the thought that these people had brought me here to get rid of me, to assault me, to undermine my steadfastness, to break my will, to make me unrecognizable

sentence that has lived in me, still lives, and will never leave me. And how could it when my allegiance is with God! And I have a mother who said to me: "Do not regret." That was her charge to me, first in ululation, and now in tears. And I remain between the two a witness, dignified and honorable, and I will not regret. For I have a mother who raised me in the school of her simplicity. From her, I learned the love of a homeland, the philosophy of struggle, the path of resistance. Lessons born in her utterance: "Do not regret!"

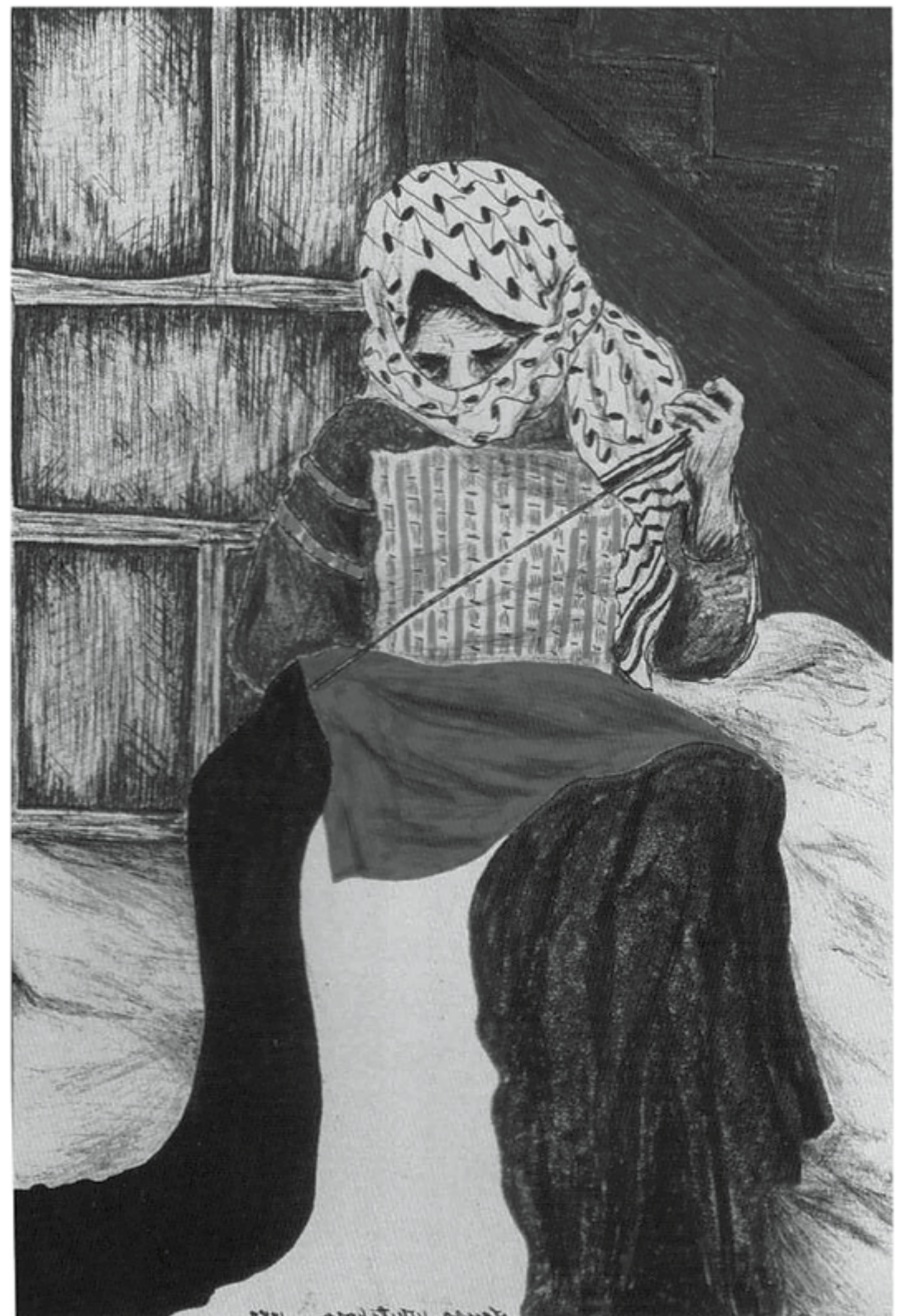
I will remain, my mother, faithful to the covenant. Steadfast and strong, I will not regret.

'Free the prisoner, and liberate the homeland' The Poetry of Ayham Kamamji

Ayham Kamamji began reciting the verses below in 2021, surrounded by Zionist guards, as he exited his trial following his recapture after the heroic Gilboa prison break. Kamamji, along with five others, dug their way out of the notorious high security prison using only a spoon in what became known as the "Freedom Tunnel" operation. The prison break shattered the illusion of Zionist technological superiority, captured the imagination of liberation fighters around the world, and defied the occupier's illusion of stability. After evading Zionist forces for two weeks, Kamamji and the other heroes of the prison break were recaptured, beaten, tortured, and sentenced to additional prison time. After Kamamji was liberated in the October 2025 prisoner exchange, he completed his poem, and recited it to the world.

Born on the eve of the First Intifada, in 1986, in Kafr Dan near Jenin, Kamamji participated in his first resistance operation in high school. In 2006, he was given two life sentences for resisting the occupation of his homeland. Kamamji said he escaped prison to visit the grave of his mother, after the occupation denied him permission to attend her funeral in 2019. Kamamji's actions and words shatter the fragmentation imposed on the Palestinian people and speak of national unity in the pursuit of liberation.

مرج أم عامر	Marj Umm Amer
قم وحدث قصّة أبطالها	Rise, and narrate the story of its heroes,
نفروا إلى الرحمن	they rushed forth to the Most Merciful.
عافوا قيود الدال	They loathed the chains of humiliation,
عافوا أسرهم	They loathed their captivity,
عافوا جدار الظلم والحرمان	They loathed the walls of injustice and deprivation.
فالصقر يأنف أن يكون مقبلاً	For the falcon disdains to be shackled,
واللبيث يأبى ذلّة الخرفان	And the lion refuses the disgrace of sheep.
لكن عزائي أنّ لي في غزوة إخواننا	But my consolation is that in Gaza I have brothers,
وبأسرهم غريان	though surrounded in captivity by the ravens.
يا من نسيت بلادنا وخذلنا	O you who forgot our land and abandoned her,
إسمع، ستعرف أرضنا بنوان	Listen, you shall know our land in seconds:
إسراء سيدنا، وأولى قبلة	The Night Journey of our Prophet, the first Qibla,
مهّد المسيح، وأصلنا كنعاني	The cradle of Jesus, and our origins, Canaanite.
وأعلم بأن بني سرايا إخوة	And know that the sons of the Saraya are the brothers
لكنايب القسام في الإيمان	Of the Qassamist brigades in faith.
وأعلم بأن رجال فتح عزّة	And know that the men of Fatah are of Honor,
ورفاقنا در على النيجان	And that our comrades are pearls set upon crowns.
ونهاية شعري، ونهاية قولي	O listener, at the closing of my verse,
يا سامعي، دعوة	And the end of my words, is a call:
فك الأسير، وحرر الأوطان	Free the prisoner, and liberate the homeland.



Drawing by Laura Whitehorn, former U.S. political prisoner, in the DC jail in 1989.

RESISTANCE BEHIND BARS

A CENTURY OF ORGANIZING AGAINST ZIONIST PRISONS

من سجن عكا طلعت جنازة محمد جمجوم وفؤاد حجازي جازي عليهم يا شعبي جازي المندوب السامي وريعه عموما

From Akka's Prison came the funerals, Muhammad Jamjoom and Fouad Hijazi
Avenge them, O my people, avenge them from the High Commissioner and his people

— Nuh Ibrahim, "Min Sijjin Akka"

The executions of Fouad Hijazi, Atta al-Zeer, and Muhammad Jamjoom (1930)

The British hoped that hanging these men for their involvement in the 1929 al-Buraq uprising would deter future rebellion. Nuh Ibrahim wrote one of the most famous poetic tributes to these men, memorialized through song in the 1980's by the band Al-Ashiqeen, and today thousands of Palestinians — from the West Bank to the diaspora — still sing the famous anthem "Min Sijjin Akka."

Abu Jilda and al-Armeet (1931)

Abu Jilda and al-Armeet were two of the earliest Palestinian revolutionaries to resist British occupation; they laid the early foundations for the Great Arab Revolt. They were caught by the British in the cave where they were hiding, near Tammoun village, after months of evading capture. In April 1934, Abu Jilda and al-Armeet were tried in military courts, where they were sentenced to death by public hanging in the British-controlled Jerusalem Central Prison.

The labor camps (1948)

Zionist militias kidnapped close to 9,000 Palestinians during the Nakba and forced them to work at gunpoint to support Israel's wartime economy. Tactics developed in this era, after 1948, are still practiced in occupation prisons.

One day, buses loaded with prisoners stopped for the laborers to drink from a single tap. They rushed to drink. The soldiers shot at them randomly. I saw tens fall before my eyes. The ground was soaked with blood and water. I later [learned] they were from Lydda and Ramla.

— Adel Muhammad Amuri of Tantura, who was harvesting fruit from Palestinian orchards

If I have to die, then die with honor, Aisha, I will not say a word, I will not surrender to this madness; will not let them win! I prepared myself for death.

— Aisha Odeh, in *Dreams of Freedom*, her account of her interrogation, torture, and imprisonment in 1969

Post-Naksa (1967)

Prisoners from this period testified to solitary confinement, prolonged interrogation, torture, and forced labor.

Early prisoner organization (1970)
Abdul Qader Abu al-Fahem was the first martyr of the Palestinian prisoners movement. He was martyred during the 1970 hunger strike of Askalan Prison as a result of forced feeding by Zionist prison authorities. His martyrdom became a defining moment, galvanizing early efforts to organize the prisoners movement.

Struggle means that we live, give, and contribute, that we light candles that illuminate the path for my children and your children. Struggle is a difficult process imposed by oppression, and as long as it exists, I will continue to give and contribute.

— Abdul Qader Abu al-Fahem, in response to his comrades exempting him from partaking in the hunger strike due to his already deteriorating health

The Nafna martyrs (1980)

The Palestinian prisoners movement was highly organized. Prisoners wielded their bodies as a weapon against the Occupation to achieve their demands. The July 1980 Nafna strike lasted for 33 days and sparked international attention after the martyrdom of four prisoners through forced feeding. Despite occupation prison guards' attempts to break the will of the Nafna hunger strikers, they won access to beds and larger cells.

The Jibril Exchange (1985)

Named after the Palestinian national leader of the PFLP-GC, Ahmed Jibril, this exchange freed over 1,000 prisoners, including Lebanese prisoners who were captured during the 1982 Lebanon War. Many of the freed prisoners went on to form the leadership and backbone of the First Intifada.

Opening of Ansar III Prison (1988)

March 1988 marked the opening of Ansar III, a military detention center encircled by barbed wire in a remote section of the Negev Desert. Under the desert heat, Palestinians were kept hundreds of miles away from their family — degrading prisoners' psyches under the punishment of sustained isolation and the denial of family visits. Many of them were held in administrative detention and subjected to torture and collective punishment.

The mass strike (1992)

Tens of thousands of arrests during the December 1987 Intifada only strengthened the prisoner movement. The 1992 mass strike by 7,000 prisoners ended strip searches, closed Ramla's solitary confinement section, and restored and extended family visits.

The Oslo Accords division period (1993–2000)

The Oslo Accords created a political split within the prisoner population that weakened the organizational capacity of the movement, causing many of the gains it had struggled for to be lost, including organizational and educational programs. The focus within the prisons shifted from a primary focus of preserving achievements and confronting the administration to the issue of liberation from captivity. The accords also eroded the movement's capacity to coordinate with national structures in negotiations with the prison administration.

The aftermath of the Second Intifada (2000)

Individual hunger strikes emerged as a primary tactic, alongside a few collective hunger strikes.

The hunger strike continues (2012)

Khader Adnan's 2012 strike won his release and sparked a series of individual and collective hunger strikes within occupation prisons.

The strike continues, the strike continues, the strike continues until freedom and dignity.

— Sheikh Khader Adnan, on the 66th day of his hunger strike demanding his freedom in 2012

Wafa al-Ahrar (2013)

The 2013 Wafa al-Ahrar, or the Gilad Shalit exchange, liberated over 1,000 prisoners, including prominent names such as Yahya Sinwar. Repression for those remaining imprisoned intensified.

Freedom Tunnel escape (2021)

At dawn on September 6, 2021, six prisoners shattered the illusion of Zionist omnipotence by digging a tunnel to escape out of the high-security Gilboa Prison with nothing but spoons and scrap metal. During their escape, they tasted a freedom as sweet as the fruit Mahmoud al-Ardah described to his mother — figs and guavas plucked from the land — before their recapture and eventual liberation in the Al-Aqsa Flood exchange deals.

Do not despair, for whatever the occupiers may do, no matter how much they may trespass upon us with their occupation and injustice [...] God's victory is near [...] My greetings to the families of martyrs and prisoners, my greetings to them and to all revolutionaries and free peoples.

— Sheikh Khader Adnan, final will, written in the Ramleh prison clinic, April 2, 2023

The hungry revolutionary (2023)

Khader Adnan's martyrdom in May 2023 after an 87-day hunger strike marked the first Palestinian prisoner death from hunger striking in three decades. He had been arrested 12 times in two decades and spent roughly eight years in prison, where he waged repeated hunger strikes, bearing his body as a weapon to demand dignity and freedom.

Genocide behind bars (2023–present)

Since October 7th, the number of Palestinians held in occupation prisons has surpassed 9,500. Despite the release of Palestinian prisoners in seven successive batches as a result of the first phase agreements of Al-Aqsa Flood, the targeted attack on Palestinian prisoners and systematization of new and unprecedented torture methods have overturned the achievements of the prisoners movement. The harrowing conditions and the revocation of the rights achieved by the prisoners movement have voided the possibility of organization.

'History has not been kind to this theory of control'

Continued from page 1

This from a woman who, weeks earlier, had posed on social media holding a noose and syringe in gleeful celebration of execution methods. The silence inside Israel says everything, and it is not the silence of a society grappling with its fringe. The majority of Israelis are not horrified, they are on board.

As always, the law presents itself in the guise of neutrality, though its structure is anything but. Palestinians in the occupied West Bank are tried exclusively in military courts, where execution is now the default sentence for murder. Even before the passage of this legislation, these courts convicted Palestinians at a rate of 96 percent on confessions routinely extracted through torture and coercion. There is neither a right of appeal nor any possibility of clemency. Executions must be carried out within 90 days. Israeli settlers living in the same occupied territory are explicitly exempt, overseen instead by an entirely different legal framework, built to reward their lust for Arab blood. Tried in civil courts, settlers who murder Palestinians are convicted

at a rate of around three percent; IOF terrorists are indicted on those same charges at a rate lower than one percent. These are the monsters who will not hang.

The law presents itself in the guise of neutrality, though its structure is anything but

In civilian courts, authority to issue the death sentence has been expanded to apply to any person who "intentionally causes the death of another with the aim of harming a citizen or resident of Israel, with the intent of rejecting the existence of the State of Israel." In practice, this shields Jewish perpetrators while ensnaring 1948 Palestinians and their descendants, the

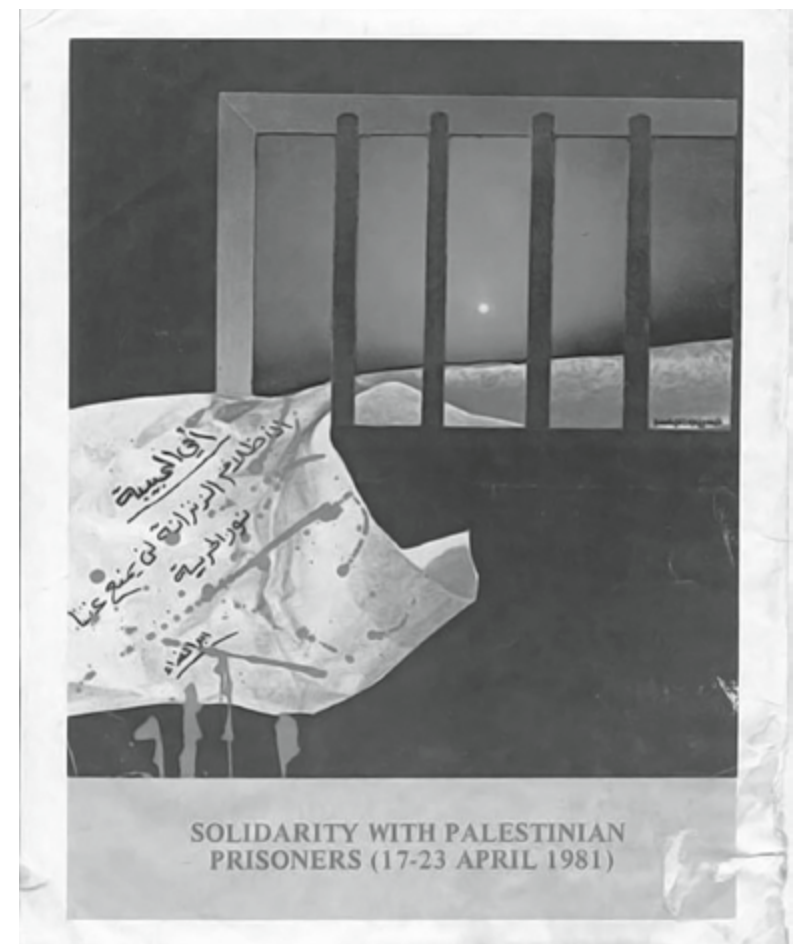
only population inside Israel for whom "rejecting the existence of the state" could plausibly be treated as a criminal motive.

This legislation continues Israel's escalation of lawfare as an element of its campaign for Zionist supremacy. The 2018 Nation-State Law enshrined Jewish ethno-national supremacy as a constitutional principle. Declaring Israel the exclusive homeland of the Jewish people, it formally demoted Palestinian citizens to second-class status in their own country, stripping Arabic of its status as an official language and making no mention of equality. In 2023, the Knesset passed a citizenship revocation law making it easier to dispossess Palestinians of residency or nationality upon conviction for acts Israel defines as terrorism — a law currently being used to deport Palestinians from Israel. Since Al-Aqsa Flood, the Knesset has passed over thirty additional laws targeting Palestinian civil and political life: laws criminalizing consumption of media produced by "designated terrorist organizations," authorizing the dismissal of Palestinian teachers, revoking welfare benefits from families

of those convicted of security offences, restricting access to legal counsel, and making permanent the "temporary" emergency measures that had suspended prisoners' rights.

History has not been kind to this theory of control. The British hanged Irish republicans and produced martyrs whose names are still invoked a century later. The French executed Algerian militants and accelerated the collapse of their entire colonial project. Apartheid South Africa put ANC members on death row and handed the liberation movement its most enduring moral authority. In each case the skewed logic was identical: Raise the cost high enough and resistance becomes irrational. In each case, that logic catastrophically misread the essence of resistance, the most righteous and rational response.

Resistance is a political response to political conditions that remain entirely unaddressed. Movement, construction, access to water, family unification — all are controlled by the military apparatus of a colonial project intent on the eradication of the Palestinian people, but still failing.



1981 solidarity poster. The letter reads: "To my love, the darkness of the prison cell will not block the light of freedom."

For fifty-eight years, I built a home, brick by brick. Then suddenly, it was gone.

Al-Zaytoun

MOHAMMED MANSOUR

We're about 250 meters from the Yellow Line. Honestly, we've gotten used to it. We face gunfire every day, mostly in the mornings. About ten days ago, the Occupation was working on something just across the Yellow Line. I don't know exactly what they were doing, but whenever anyone walked through the street, they were shot at. People were scattering constantly. Similarly, there was a girl from the Haddad family who was shot in the neck while in her home. The bullet went through one side and came out the other. That same day, early in the morning, maybe at 8:30, the Thair family was sheltering at a junction on Salah al-Din Street. They were shot at repeatedly. The father and his wife were severely injured; the bullet hit a major artery in his leg.

If the house came down on me, I still wouldn't leave. Where would I go? I have acquaintances and friends in the south, but they have been displaced. Aside from the cost, it's more needless suffering. Why would I go stay with someone who has already been displaced? You can make do in your own home, so why would you go be a guest in someone else's?

Any talk of a ceasefire is fickle. At any moment, you expect they'll strike. Some time ago, we were displaced again. It was a terrifying situation for everyone. They told us the tanks were breaching toward the area. When people saw them, panic spread. Everyone fled, so I left with them, even though I didn't really want to. May God guide everyone toward the right path — it's the only way we can sustain. But living in this chaos is just wrong.

AHMAD RAMI

Life here is really painful. It feels like the war is still ongoing. There's gunfire and shelling nearby. Every day there are martyrs and wounded. Most of the time, the Jews advance and then pull back, crossing the Yellow Line more every time. There's also Abu Shabab's militias. It's all such a painful existence; you can't live daily life.

The constraints are constant. You have to make sure you're home by maghrib before Israeli forces move in and the shelling begins. You're forced into impossible decisions constantly. If someone gets sick, for example, and you need to go outside at night, you just can't. You must wait until morning before you can get to a hospital. You're deprived even of prayer. You could wake up for fajr, for example, get ready, make wudu, and prepare to leave. Then the gunfire starts. We're trapped, unable to move freely, stuck in a closed circle.

But the truth, is you can't really leave your home. People are no longer able to take others in. God help them with their own thirst, their own daily needs. How could anyone manage to get through a day?

About a week ago we were in the neighborhood when, suddenly, the quadcopter started firing. My friend's sister was shot in the neck while sitting in her home. In reality, you're not even safe in your own home.

You ask me why I've ended up here. It's because there is nowhere else to go.



The Yellow Line Closes in on Gaza

Testimonies from North Gaza as the enemy chokes the border

By ALI SKAIK

To describe Gaza as the world's "largest open air prison" is to recognize its colonial borders as the walls of confinement — and the region's wider frontiers as the contours of a broader carceral system of control.

The 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, following the Nakba, delineated Gaza and the occupied West Bank along the Green Line — designating them as territories bounded by lines intended as non-permanent. Israel's construction of border infrastructure and military surveillance systems over decades transformed that boundary into a permanent frontier for encroachment. Following the October 2025 ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, the Occupation announced the creation of a new military demarcation line, the Yellow Line, that reduced Gaza's land area by almost 60 percent, further squeezing the population against the coastline. Occupation forces continue to close in, cementing this line into the lives of Palestinians in Gaza through yellow-painted concrete blocks, planted even beyond Israel's unilaterally imposed boundary. Zionism continues its relentless campaign to occupy the land and strip it of Palestinians.

What do these changing borders mean to those living on the land? Working with journalists on the ground, *The New York War Crimes* gathered ten firsthand accounts from Palestinians living within the barriers and boundary lines that structure daily life in Gaza — tracing both the limits imposed on them and the ways they continue to live and resist.





YELLOW LINE MARKERS

Al-Tuffah

MOHAMMED AL-HABASHI

We are residents of Al-Sha'af. Our home was destroyed at the start of the war. The army obliterated everything. We endured, said, "May God ease things," then they pushed us toward the Yellow Line. We were forced to stay there, but day by day the army advanced one or two hundred meters at a time until we were forced towards Salah al-Din. We found ourselves sleeping on the street; there was nobody to turn to. When the second ceasefire was declared, we hoped for the best.

I was displaced ten times. My brothers and parents were martyred. I have no place to go. All I ask is that the world look at us with mercy. There is nobody here who can take someone in anymore. I tried to rent twice. I stayed in tents by the sea and the port. We're exhausted. Just yesterday, the army stormed into our area. They attacked relentlessly. Two or three times, Abu Shabab's militias have come in without warning, without any regard, and dragged everyone out to the street — young women included. By the grace of God, my children and I survived.

The Occupation is stationed exactly 150 meters away from me as I'm speaking to you. On the street behind me, there are military vehicles, tanks, and special forces. They're raiding houses. They're rigging homes with explosives. They're burning houses and cars. Every day.

My children are afraid. The whole household is afraid. The neighbors around us are afraid. We have no water, no electricity, nothing reaches us. This is not a life. Only a few houses remain. As I'm speaking to you right now, the quadcopters are overhead, the planes are overhead. The situation is catastrophic. No one could live like this. The military vehicles are right there, they're right in front of you, it's about 100 meters between us and them.

REFAT AL-KHALILI

I'm from Al-Tuffah, in Al-Shawa Square. I've been here since the beginning of the war. You hear all this talk of a ceasefire, but there's been gunfire, shelling, F-16s every day. The explosive devices — the robots the Jews deploy — are used everyday. It's ongoing, it won't stop, and we won't leave this place no matter what happens.

Death is ever present here. The American President spoke of a ceasefire, but we've seen none of it. Every day Abu Shabab's militias encroach, Occupation forces encroach. Every day there are martyrs and wounded. Behind us is Salah al-Din. Tanks are positioned there, towards al-Sanafir, and snipers are present in the buildings on the eastern side.

This entire area is living in a state of fear and terror imposed by the Israeli occupation and Abu Shabab's militia every day. Yesterday, they came to the area around Al-Qa'qa' Mosque and told people they had until twelve to fully evacuate their homes. It all speaks for itself. Nothing has changed.

The war never ended here.

Jabalia Camp

NAYEF AL-SLEIBI

I'm a resident of Jabalia camp, on Al-Hawa Street. We returned here after the ceasefire was declared and found the Occupation army still stationed. We sheltered at Al-Yaman Al-Saeed Hospital waiting for them to leave, but they never did. They continue to shell the area constantly. Just tonight, they detonated an explosive robot.

There's no life here at all. There are few people. There's no water, none of the bare necessities. Most everyone retreated west. There's no room to make a mistake. The quadcopter can barely catch up with itself, it's so busy firing at people.

It's impossible for one to return home. Snipers surround the entire camp, they're positioned facing every house. God willing, they will withdraw, and people will return here, and water will return, and life will return. But without withdrawal, there is no life.

YOUSSEF AL-BARDAWEIL

I live not 50 meters from the Yellow Line, by Al-Khulafa Al-Rashideen Mosque. The fear is constant, 24 hours a day. Quadcopters are overhead. Gunfire and shelling don't stop. It's all intent on driving us out of the area. But we have no other place to go. There is no alternative. Even if I wanted to rent, all our money was lost in the first, second, and third displacements. I was forced back here, but we're trying to make do, though the house is badly damaged.

We're exposed to danger, but if we could leave, we would have left like others before us. Right now, around Al-Khulafa, no more than seven families remain. The rest of the area is completely abandoned. When the quadcopter begins shooting at us, we scatter towards abandoned homes, trying to escape the gunfire.

The Yellow Line is right there and my family's home is right here. There's a room beneath the rubble where I live with my family. It's incredibly difficult to enter. You have to crawl through something like a tunnel just to reach the room — the space is no more than about 50 meters. It's dangerous, but it's all dangerous. Just this morning, I walked past the Yellow Line, and the Israeli Forces were present, working on something, I don't know what.

MOUSSA AL-MADHOUN

I'm a resident of Jabalia. This Yellow Line they talk about, the one we're forbidden from crossing, people's homes are there! Families can't even reach their belongings, their winter clothes. In the camp itself, they've divided the area into a Yellow Line and a Green Line. The Green Line is supposed to be safe and the Yellow Line off-limits. But of course that isn't true. It's all the same. Gunfire reaches, tanks are advancing, there is no life here.

People can't even return to the rubble of their homes. Why? All because of this Yellow Line? We call on the United Nations, on international institutions, on Arab and Islamic countries to move this line. If it is not returned to its previous boundaries, there will be no life in northern Gaza.

Shuja'iyya

HALA ABEED

I'm from Shuja'iyya, right across the Yellow Line. We were displaced first to Deir al-Balah, then to this area. We've been forced to leave things behind over and over. We have nothing now, no bedding, no clothes to keep us warm.

They've occupied our home. The place I'm in now is extremely dangerous. We're exposed to death at any moment. When my children or I go outside, we're exposed to gunfire constantly. It flies right around our feet, above our tents.

The tents are unbearable. After all the suffering we're forced to witness every day, we'd hope to have the night to rest. But the flies and mosquitoes are killing us. The heat, the sun is relentless.

There simply aren't any other places left. We had no choice but to stay here. There are no food distribution sites here, no real aid. Even water has to be fetched from a hose that's very far away.

We've been forced to leave things behind over and over. We've left behind bedding, our children's winter clothes, our own winter clothes. We have nothing now, no bedding, no clothes to keep us warm.

Even making a cup of tea is a struggle. You have to do it over fire, under the heat of the sun. There's no shade, no relief. I wish I had cooking gas. I just want to make a cup of tea on a gas stove, cleanly and with some peace of mind.

We're exhausted. Exhausted! My husband has been imprisoned for a year and nine months. I've been forced to carry all the responsibility. We just want to rest after these two years. They say there's a ceasefire, but there's nothing. There's gunfire above us, rockets overhead twenty-four hours a day. We sleep in fear. The war never ended here.

AKRAM JARARA

After everything we endured in Shuja'iyya, I tried to flee to a number of places, but Gaza's streets, unfortunately, are crowded with displaced people and tents. When Trump's ceasefire was declared, under instructions from the Israeli army, we returned north again and tried to set up a tent over the rubble of our home. We remained there for about a month before even that was taken away. The Yellow Line shifted, and suddenly we found ourselves living inside the prohibited zone. I'm now forced to live in this unsafe place, completely unfit for human life. I'm with my wife, my married son, and his family. My daughter is with us too, along with her children. Her husband was martyred. We are crammed together. Day and night snakes, reptiles, and stray dogs rummage through this place.

I used to own a six-story home and now we live here, forced to use this indecent bathroom. This is the suffering we must live with. Now, we lack everything: medicine, food, water, shelter. We've been displaced 21 times during the war. Street to street, neighborhood to neighborhood, city to city, north to south. Twenty-one displacements. This isn't just hardship; every one required significant sums of money.

The reality is that there is no ceasefire. If you want to see a man die of hunger, you will see it. Children die of hunger. People die of cold. People die from snake bites, stray animals, lack of medicine, the absence of hospitals. People die from bombardment, destruction, and the continuous pursuit of the Israeli army.

For 58 years, I built a home, brick by brick. Somewhere I could grow old and finally rest. Then suddenly, it was gone. It would take another 60 years to build something like it. Look at the years that were lost from our lives. Today, our greatest hope is to find a tent that's fit for living. For a loaf of bread to feed our children. For one night without fear.

About three months ago, my home was completely destroyed. It is difficult now to retain even the most basic sense of time. Dates mean nothing. We are psychologically ill. The mind cannot hold onto anything anymore. The bombing, the hunger, the cold — they have broken us. We can no longer process anything.

BASSAM ABU SHEYBE

I was displaced more than 12 times. From Gaza City to Nuseirat, from Nuseirat to Deir al-Balah, from Deir al-Balah to Rafah, then back to Deir al-Balah, then to Nuseirat, then back here. Then we left again, back to Deir al-Balah, and came back here again for the final time. It's unbearable. There's nothing left. We have no patience nor will to keep going.

You ask me why I've ended up here. It's because there is nowhere else to go. There is nowhere for somebody to stay. There are no apartments left, no rentals we could stay in, nothing fit for life. So you come here, even though it's dangerous. At night, there's constant gunfire, shelling all night. They say there's a ceasefire, but it hasn't stopped. We're here because we have nowhere else to go. This is all that's left. If Shuja'iyya were open, we would go back immediately, but it's closed.

I miss my home dearly, but who doesn't miss his home? It's your home! The place where no one tells you to leave or demands money. It's the only place you can truly rest.

I miss my home dearly, but who doesn't miss his home? It's your home!

Light in the Dungeon

Basem Khandakji on the cultural and intellectual development of prisoners

In his essay, "Studies from Prison: The Indomitability of Palestinian Knowledge Production," Palestinian writer and former political prisoner Basem Khandakji inverts the site of the Zionist prison from one of colonial repression to that of anticolonial intellectual production. The excerpt presented here guides the reader through the two most recent phases of the Palestinian Prisoner's Movement, recounting its sacrifices and achievements.

Gaza's centrality in this narrative is pivotal. The first Palestinian educational program for prisoners was notably introduced by Al-Aqsa University in Gaza. Parallel to the Israeli bombing of Gaza's educational infrastructure, Palestinian prisoners have been denied books, pens, and paper. The calculated assault on Palestinian knowledge production is integral to the genocidal reproduction of Zionism. Against all odds, Gaza's teachers and students continue to congregate and learn in tents, and Basem, who faced prolonged torture and interrogation for his writing, went on to mentally compose an entire book in memory of his late friend, Walid Daqqa.

Despite its recent publication in the Summer 2025 issue of Al-Janoub, the context in which "Studies from Prison" was produced has dramatically transformed. Al-Aqsa Flood, itself a prison break that catalyzed further prison breaks, has accelerated the already genocidal telos of Zionism.

The conditions in Zionist prisons have acutely deteriorated, with prisoners subjected to an escalation in rape, torture, starvation, and deprivation. Basem's essay reminds us that the logic of coloniality is condensed in the prison, making the prison break from above, below, and within decisive in our liberation. He theorizes one such method of prison break, laying the groundwork for the next.

This excerpt has been edited for length and clarity. Read the full essay at www.newyorkwarcrimes.com.

The Historical Context of Palestinian Imprisonment

With cultural and intellectual decline overshadowing the Prisoners Movement, the fifth phase (2000-2009) began to take shape. During this time, the prisons became overcrowded with hundreds of fighters and resistance cadres from Al-Aqsa Intifada. The first half of this phase witnessed the rebuilding of the Palestinian Prisoners Movement in a way that ensured its ability to absorb and organize hundreds of new detainees. The prison's overall cultural and intellectual landscape during this phase did not deviate from the prevailing norms around party political education and organized nationalist mobilization. Furthermore, the Zionist "Prison Service" intensified its monitoring and confiscation of prisoners' writings, particularly those known as "capsules" or kabsulat — secret organizational letters written on thin, lightweight paper, folded and compressed so meticulously that prisoners could ingest and



smuggle them through their bodies. During this phase, cultural activity and communication were confined to the organizational priorities of the Prisoners Movement and its revival. There was a marked absence of cultural and intellectual exchange with the space-time outside the prison, particularly a lack of collaboration with cultural and academic forums and institutions that could have otherwise enriched cultural life within the prison. This notwithstanding, the number of prisoners enrolled in the "Open Hebrew University" noticeably increased in the absence of any serious efforts to introduce Palestinian or Arab academic systems. This continued until 2010, when student prisoners at the "Open Hebrew University" were denied the right to education and barred from completing their studies following the enactment of "Shalit's Law" in the Zionist colonial parliament, which stipulates that Palestinian prisoners are prohibited from enrolling in Zionist universities.

The sixth phase (2010-present) is no less significant than the foundational phase. Indeed, it arguably represents the basis of the qualitative shift

that unfolded in the cultural and academic context of the carceral space-time. During this phase, a Palestinian educational program was introduced for the first time after a partnership agreement in 2010 between the prisoners and Al-Aqsa University in Gaza.

ence to social work and sociology. The most significant development occurred when a graduate program in "Israeli Studies" at Al-Quds University was approved in early 2012 with Hadarim prisoners, thanks to the efforts of the national leader Marwan Barghouti,

graduated from the "Hadarim Liberation Forum." Their research outputs demonstrate a high degree of specialization and expertise in the affairs of the Zionist colonial apartheid system.

This period continues to witness remarkable growth in the publication and dissemination of literary works, particularly in the space-time outside the prison. The cultural and literary activity of some prisoner writers has also become accessible outside the prison, through book launches, discussion circles, and media coverage, which have helped shed light on prisoners' literary experience. This represented a victory for the prisoner writer/intellectual in their ongoing struggle against their Zionist colonial captor, who relentlessly chases the prisoner's words, confiscating them and scrutinizing their tone and rhetoric for any "incendiary material that presents an existential security threat" to their exclusionary system.

Writing about the prison from within is both an act of defiance and a duel between the prisoner and their captor. It represents the reclamation of the prisoner-intellectual's time from prison space-time, a time that represents mo-

Writing about the prison from within is both an act of defiance and a duel between the prisoner and their captor

Dozens of prisoners enrolled in this program to study history and earn their BA degree. Following the success of the Al-Aqsa University program, academic programs from other universities, such as Al-Quds Open University and Al-Quds University in Abu Dis, were adopted and implemented. The initiative went beyond simply enrolling prisoners in bachelor degree programs in the social sciences from political sci-

who was being held in the Hadarim colonial prison at the time. This program was developed to become a critical liberatory platform that would contribute to raising the cultural, intellectual, and academic levels of the participating prisoners. The program also played an important role in establishing the field of prison studies, through the publication of dozens of research papers and studies by Palestinian prisoners who

'It feels like a shelter, not a home'

Continued from page 1

Cash payments compound these pressures. Most landlords now demand to be paid in bills, despite the liquidity crisis that continues to plague the Strip. Most Gazans rely on transfers or electronic payments, and such a demand puts them into an increasingly vulnerable position.

The result is an imbalance of power between landlord and tenant that is entirely new in Gaza. Evictions are rampant, and competition for housing continues to drive people back out onto the streets. "Even those who pay on time are replaced if another tenant offers more. The market is now governed solely by supply and demand, with no other considerations," al-Badrasawi says. Never before have prices been so high and, critically, never before has a family had to spend all their earnings to ensure they remain sheltered. "This is not normal."

In an apartment no larger than 120 square meters in Gaza City, Abdullah Mteir lives with his wife and three children. They are not alone. The home is shared with two other families — eleven people in total. They share the rooms, the kitchen, the bathroom, and above all else, the exorbitant rent.

Mteir says this arrangement is the only way. Unable to afford separate apartments, the families chose to split the rent despite the strain of living together. "Sometimes it feels like a shelter, not a home. There's no privacy. The children are everywhere, and conflicts happen, but what can we do? It's better than the street or a tent."

When Mteir first rented the apartment last October, the monthly rent was 1,500 shekels, around \$500. The price, already high relative to the rentals they were accustomed to before the war, was still manageable when split between multiple families. But as the housing crisis deepened and demand grew, the landlord raised their rent more than four times in a couple of months. The families are now expected to pay 2,500 shekels or about \$800 combined.

The justification was again the same. "There are others willing to pay more," Mteir says. "If we don't agree with the increase, he tells us that we can leave.

We know he could rent the apartment within a day, so we have no choice."

Conversely, as rental prices surge across Gaza, Mteir's income has all but collapsed. Before the war, he worked as a construction contractor, but with building projects halted and Israel continuing to restrict the entry of construction materials into Gaza, he lost his job. He now relies on sporadic, temporary work and earns, at most, 1,000 shekels a month (about \$300).

From the inside of their living-room-turned-bedroom, it's evident how this rental crisis has gradually exhausted the family. They siphoned all their savings first and when that ran out, they turned to his wife's jewelry. Again, that was insufficient. They've since sold what little furniture filled the apartment. They began with the bedframe, then the couch, and then the dining table.

Now, when the rent comes due, the families, like clockwork, come together to negotiate their survival. They begin, always, with the same question: Who has money? Then: Who can borrow any? Before, finally, agreeing to what pieces of furniture would be sold.

"It's as though we have to sell our home piece by piece just to remain in it," Mteir's voice dulls to a whisper. "Sometimes, it's as though I'm not living for my family. I'm living just to pay rent. All of our pain and exhaustion across each month ends up going towards the rent. And then we return to zero again."

Mahmoud Abu al-Abd never imagined he'd be forced to one day split the apartment he had spent years building. He'd never imagined he'd divide the space, barely 140 square meters, in half: one side to rent a section to a family and another to live in. But the war, as is said, changed everything.

After the war robbed Abu al-Abd of his only source of income as a foreman, he built a wooden divider in the middle of the apartment, fashioning two semi-separate entrances and renting it out. The space is no more than 70 square meters and Abu al-Abd charges the family upwards of \$700 to the family who stays there.

"Before the war, I never thought about rent or renting," he shares. "But once I lost my job and prices soared,

we no longer had enough income to survive. I started thinking about how I could make use of the apartment itself." The division itself is rudimentary, a wooden slab and some sealed-off doors. Though they don't share the kitchen or the bathroom, Abu al-Abd says the living quarters are still cramped. "Still, it's better than having no income at all." It's the only thing, Abu al-Abd says, that allows his family to live "an acceptable life."

He's now thinking of renting out the uncovered roof of his home in order to increase their cash flow. For a monthly fee, they'd be able to set up a tent or makeshift room above the apartment. "It may sound strange," Abu al-Abd said, "but in Gaza today, every meter can be turned into a source of income."

This is Gaza's current reality. Every square meter of land is a potential source of income. Rooftops and even vacant agricultural sites are being repurposed as rental spaces. Families live in these small plots — often abandoned farmland — to avoid overcrowding of shelters and typical tent lots. In those fields, rent is charged by the square meter, at roughly \$2 per unit.

"Sometimes I feel sad because I no longer live in my home the way I used to," Abu al-Abd tells me. "We've started measuring our movements inside the apartment so we don't disturb the tenant, and there's less privacy. But we were forced into this. Today, people don't rent out their homes because they have extra space; they rent out parts of their homes just to survive."

Though the rising rents in Gaza may resemble those of a typical city decimated by war, this crisis is inherently more severe. There are structural consequences, economic expert Ahmed Abu Qamar argues, that have compounded the effect.

"In most wars and disasters, the destruction of housing reduces supply and drives up demand, which in turn raises rents," he explains. "But Gaza is different. The scale of destruction is enormous, there are no clear prospects for reconstruction, and people have lost the majority of their sources of income. This is a housing crisis far more severe than a simple surge in price."

When asked if the situation was exploitative, Abu Qamar was ambivalent.



Daily life in Gaza, as photographed by Majdi Fathi.

"Yes, in some cases there is clear exploitation of the crisis, when rents are raised repeatedly over a short period or when tenants are evicted simply because someone else is willing to pay more. But at the same time, some landlords have also lost their livelihoods and now depend on rent for income. So the picture isn't entirely black and white. It reflects what is, in every sense of the word, a crisis economy."

The absence of a regulatory body has also deepened the problem. Abu Qamar described the need for economic and social intervention — policies, whether from government bodies, municipalities, or some other institution, to cap rents or regulate the relationship between landlords and tenants. "Housing is not an ordinary commodity; it is a fundamental need. Leaving it fully exposed to market forces during a humanitarian catastrophe risks severe social consequences."

The depth of this crisis is tied entirely to Israel's ongoing blockade on reconstruction. The calculation is simple: as the number of habitable homes stalls, the population in Gaza will continue to increase. Tens of thousands of homes need to be built. Otherwise rent prices will not change.

This new rental economy will continue for years, Abu Qamar predicts. "We may see new forms of adaptive housing emerge in the future: subdivided homes, vertical constructions, the renting out of rooftops and land."

'It's as though we have to sell our home piece by piece just to remain in it'

As larger and larger shares of household income are consumed by rent, spending on education, healthcare, and food will inevitably decrease. Debt will surge as families continually sell off what remains of their assets. A destitute Gaza will be plunged into an economic crisis now driven principally by a housing shortage.

This crisis has created deep social and psychological scars in the population. This is evident already in the wide-

spread delays of marriage in Gaza. As young men and women are unable to secure suitable housing, the formation of new families continues to be postponed. Even when housing is secured, it typically includes multiple families confined to a single quarter. Here, the issue is only exacerbated. Dardah al-Shaer, a professor of social psychology at Gaza University, sees this manifest in the everyday. "Conflicts sometimes escalate into arguments or threats of eviction, which increase psychological pressure on families. The feeling of insecurity in the place where they live creates constant tension."

As privacy is foreclosed, relationships between spouses and children continually erode. "Children no longer have space to play or study, and parents struggle to maintain any sense of daily routine," al-Shaer said. But there remains no other choice. The hell of living in tents invites physical risk: the threat of weather and the absence of basic services like water and electricity. But the toll of displacement remains inescapable, felt across Gaza, among every member of a family housed in a tent or an apartment. A life reduced to a false dilemma.

'THE LAST WEAPON'

Former prisoners on the power of the hunger strike

Across struggles for freedom and liberation, hunger strikes have been used to transform the body into a front of battle — from Long Kesh in Ireland that held Bobby Sands to Soledad Prison in California that held George Jackson. In Palestine, hunger strikes also belong to a long history of embodied resistance, where the human body is employed as a weapon in pursuit of political gains. Hunger strikes are life-affirming and life-sustaining for both the individual prisoner and the Palestinian national struggle.

There have been dozens of hunger strikes throughout Palestinian history that have been used to win critical gains for Palestinian prisoners and leaders behind bars, while drawing attention to the prisoner's struggle in moments when Zionist forces attempt to isolate the prisoner's movement. From the historic strike of 1992, which forced the lengthening of family visits, improved medical care, and permitted study and organizing behind bars, to the Karma (Dignity) strike of 2012, which ended long-term solitary confinement for several prisoners, hunger strikes ignite collective consciousness and build national unity.

Through hunger strikes, Palestinian prisoners exemplify national leadership from behind bars, using their stomachs to launch a confrontation with the occupier — a confrontation that has historically extended beyond prison walls and moved Palestinians, and people around the world, into action.

The following is an edited transcript of a conversation between Loay Odeh, Heba Muraisi, and Jeanine Hourani discussing the significance of hunger strikes both as an individual and collective tactic, the generative relationship between the movement inside and outside of prison, and the connections between the unique experience of Palestinian prisoners and the Filton 24 in Britain. Loay is a liberated Palestinian political prisoner from Jerusalem who was first imprisoned at age nine, spending a total of 12 years behind bars. He currently lives in Belgium and organizes with Beitna. Heba is a Yemeni British organizer and a member of the Filton 24 who spent 15 months in British prison. Jeanine is an organizer with the Palestinian Youth Movement.

Jeanine Hourani: Loay, tell us what you learned about hunger strikes during your formative years in Zionist prison.

Loay Odeh: The hunger strike is the tactic of last resort. In the history of the Palestinian captive movement, you use every tactic available before you resort to using the body, the last weapon, as a means of struggle.

When we talk about the Palestinian prisoners movement, we are talking about thousands who are on hunger strike at the same time. There are far graver dangers to the lives of the hunger strikers, uncertainties that are hard to predict, such as unexpected illnesses. You also have to factor in how the Israelis will react to the hunger strike and the consequences that the captives will face. With every strike, the prison administration develops new responses. I believe there are no comparisons to these concerns in Britain. The Israelis are professionals in such matters.

The hunger strike requires at least a year of planning. Everyone participates in compiling the demands, no matter how silly or seemingly insignificant such demands are. Every participant in the hunger strike must acquire a stake in the process of shaping the demands.

When collecting the demands, the list would grow and grow with each contribution. Everyone listed what they wanted. Someone once requested a bicycle and added it to the list of demands. Then, a core list of ten demands is chosen, and the rest become secondary demands. Why? This empowers the captives themselves to feel a stake in the strike, to feel they have participated and made active decisions. But the first and most important demand was always centered on our comrades in solitary confinement.

Then there are the communiqués that outline the potential health risks, providing guidelines on what to do the first few days and few weeks, leading up to the more challenging periods. Psychological mobilization is also addressed, reinforcing the importance of the struggle and the necessity of persevering and adhering to the directives of the leadership of the strike and their negotiation strategy. There are four layers of leadership for each strike, following a nested strategy that allows for continuity.

In Palestine, the power of the prisoners movement is derived from the power of the collective condition

Preparation is the most vital task. If we enter a hunger strike without due preparation or a sense of cohesion, the strike can be broken in the first few days. It only takes a few captives to give up for the collective spirit to deteriorate.

The hunger strike is the single most important tactic for improving conditions inside Zionist prisons. At the beginning [in the early '60s], the conditions were as they are now. Blatant oppression, gratuitous torture, and death. Hunger strikes achieved progressive wins, like rights to television, then to self-rule inside of prison, then to official representation of political parties in the "internal order," which allowed us to continue organizing in factions. They take what we've achieved, and we reclaim it.

Another factor in the success of a hunger strike is [popular support]. The challenge and the endurance of our families and people outside of prison was the single most strategic rallying point behind our victory.

Heba, how did members of the Filton 24 decide to take up a hunger strike? How did you all agree on the five demands?

Heba Muraisi: It was also a kind of last resort. We had been imprisoned for nearly a year. The demands were very difficult to narrow down. It took some time, especially because we were also isolated from each other. Even though I was in the same prison as, for example, Qesser, Amu, and John, I hardly ever saw them. We actually had our own language. We would write to each other with this language and try to get other

prisoners to pass the message.

We were thinking about doing a hunger strike for a while before we reached a consensus. I think the decisive moment came when me and two other activists were forcibly shipped out. It affirmed our decision and ignited everything that we were feeling inside. Less than four weeks after I got shipped out, my hunger strike began. For us, it was not only a form of resistance to state repression, but it was also about rejecting the institutional framework.

There is some overlap between the prison system in Britain and the Israeli prison system. For example, administrative detention — meaning that prisoners can be held without charge or trial — was initially introduced in Palestine under the British mandate. Similarly, the Filton 24 were being held on remand without charge or trial. But there are also differences. Loay, can you discuss what sets the Palestinian hunger strike apart from those in other contexts?

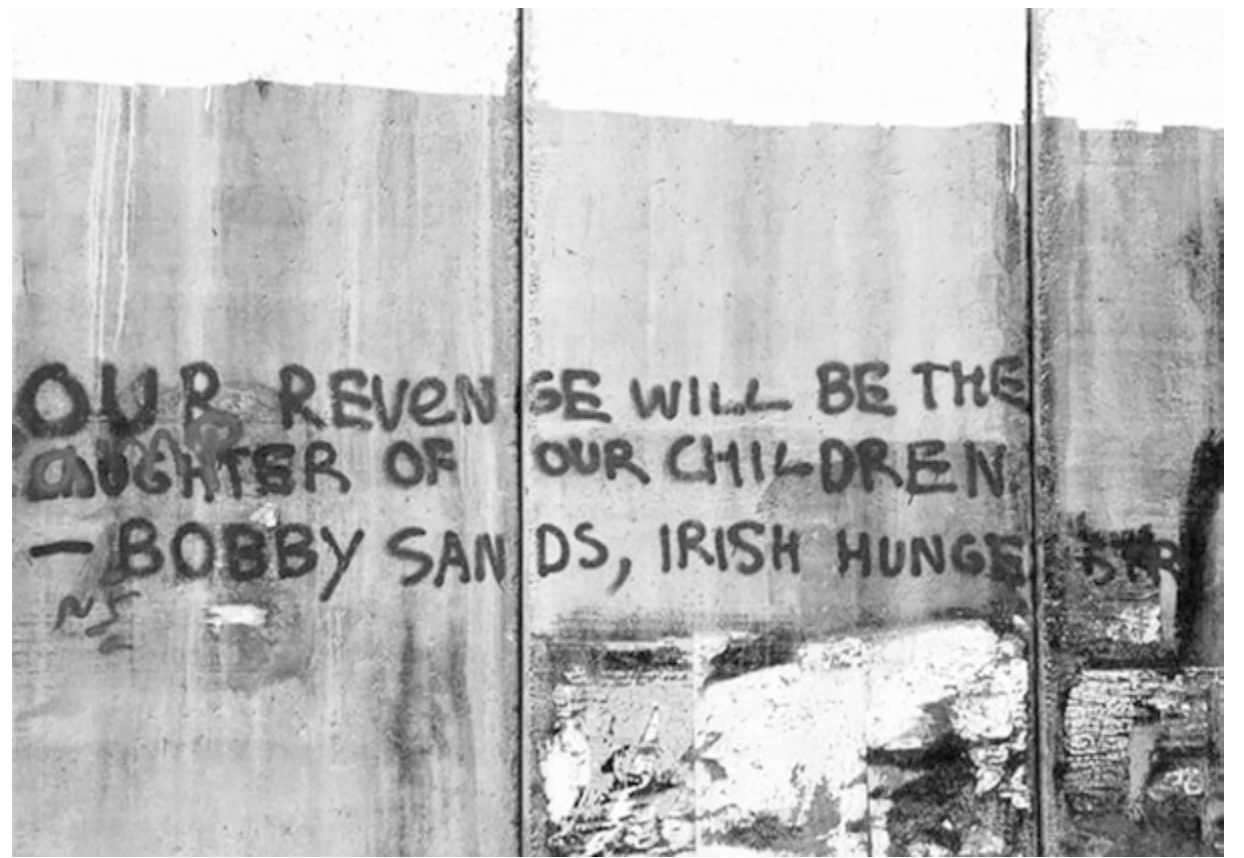
Loay Odeh: The Zionist movement inherited the prison system from the British in quite literal terms. They didn't just adapt the system, meaning the torture and the mistreatment, they took the buildings themselves. All the prisons that I've entered in Israel are, in architectural terms, British prisons. When I visited Dublin, I visited some of the prisons there and found that they were identical [to Israeli prisons in Palestine]. I saw the same architectural and building style, the same watchtowers, the same types of rooms to hold people in captivity. The Zionists also inherited the British Mandate legal codes that govern prisons. In drawing on their British predecessors, they strive to legitimize and legalize their oppression through historic precedent.

I think there are big differences between incarceration in Britain today and the Palestinian prisoners movement, which is more accurately compared to the Irish movement. What properly distinguishes the Palestinian captives movement from other movements for national liberation that involve incarceration is the extensive Palestinian internal organization within prison. The "internal order" was initially set up in 1964, and it has developed and persists till today.

Every Palestinian captive who enters Israeli prisons becomes part of this "internal order," which governs all aspects of life [...] from brushing your teeth in the morning, to how to engage in a hunger strike, to who represents and speaks on behalf of the captives, and everything in between.

There is a really unimaginable level of organization inside of prison. This has not historically been the case in other movements for national liberation, neither the Irish nor the Kurds. Why is that? Perhaps time is a factor: The Palestinians have endured the longest under occupation.

The other element is the level of popular democracy in the internal organization of prison life. Since the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization, it has had representatives in prison, in addition to the multiple factions that were part of the PLO on the outside. Within each faction, there are agreed-upon structures of decision making and coordination. Whereas, in the Irish context, the rule of the single party was such that anyone captive that does not belong to the party lives subjected to the administration and decision-making of the centralized party.



TOP: The words of Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands painted on the apartheid wall in the West Bank, Palestine. **BOTTOM:** Demonstration in support of the hunger strikes in Britain, January 2026.

The Palestinians have a radically different experiment in democracy [...] of course, I don't love the concept of "democracy." But what I mean is the democratic relationship amongst parties and between parties. This developed a form of unity and cohesion that allowed us to confront the Israeli prison administration. The democratic structure has been in place, more or less, since the 1960s, despite the numerous divisions and disagreements between and among political parties. I represented the Palestinian captives movement for a long time. [...] I would decide who would be in which room, or in which prison. Because there was a high level of cohesion amongst factions inside and outside of prison, we also had effective channels to mobilize the street in coordination with our demands. The extensive organization allowed us to operate as a single unit.

The situation, of course, has changed drastically since the beginning of the genocide. But I have faith that our comrades and fellow captives will return to the historic path of the prisoners movement.

Heba Muraisi: What I experienced is nothing compared to what Palestinian prisoners experience. Even to try to compare feels insane, or like an injustice within itself.

The pre-trial detention systems that are used — that's the only comparison that I can see. Otherwise, treatment is very different. Whenever I experienced mistreatment, I would immediately try to compare it to a prisoner in Palestine and it's like, *Well, at the end of the day, at least I have somewhere safe to sleep, at least I'm getting fed three times a day, at least I have access to water.* I was still able to communicate with my family back home. I was still able to have visits. I was still able to give my mom a hug. Whereas Palestinians undergo consistent systematic torture.

Our battle with them is ongoing. They take what we've achieved, and we reclaim it

Loay Odeh: In Palestine, the power of the prisoner's movement is derived from the power of the collective condition. We are many, and many of us are in prison. Our parents, families, and

communities are all intrinsically and organically part of our struggle, and this makes a huge difference.

The internal struggle against the self is probably far more difficult in Britain than it is in Palestine. This is because you, Heba, and your friends are fighting the community in which you were born. You are fighting the government and the broader colonial structure. Those who are willing to pay a real price in this fight are a rare few, and this requires a tremendous amount of courage. From you, from your family. Palestinian prisoners are part of a broader struggle that they and their communities are, and must be, willing to pay for the sake of freedom.

The sacrifices you and your families have endured, on an emotional and psychological level, are really heavy. Of course, the conditions inside of prison are incomparable, as you say, but your ability and willingness to swim against the currents is not easy at all. This is where your contribution must be acknowledged, because you stand on the very front lines occupied by the Palestinian prisoners movement in confronting the imperial, colonial system. Victory is approaching [...] in Yemen, in Palestine, in Iran, in Lebanon. And hopefully we will have conversations like this on the steps of Bab al-Amud in Jerusalem, soon.

FREEDOM FOR PALESTINIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

END THE GENOCIDE BEHIND BARS

WE MUST ACT NOW.

An international coalition of organizations has launched the Freedom for Palestinian Political Prisoners campaign, advancing that all free people of the world must uphold Palestinian prisoners as a central facet of the struggle for liberation, advancing their stories, voices, and demands for freedom in every aspect of organization and struggle.

Since October 2023, Israel has escalated its violence against Palestinian political prisoners, carrying out a genocide hidden behind closed doors. Today, more than 9,300 Palestinians, including over 350 children, are behind Israeli bars facing systematic forms of torture and degradation by Israel's Prison Services (IPS). Political prisoners freed from occupation prisons after October 2023 have given staggering testimonies of the inhumane conditions, torture, infectious outbreaks, and humiliation tactics they've faced.

These mechanisms of abuse are not new to the IPS's arsenal of violence waged against Palestinian prisoners; what sets them apart is their systemization, volatility, and frequency. Through laws, prisons, courts, and systematic torture, Israel has turned prisons into specialized death camps, a form of collective punishment to deter any form of resistance, fragment Palestinian society, and break the will of the Palestinian people.

"In fact, not only do you have to speak about the prisoners, you have to become the voices of the prisoners, and you have to take up this work in every avenue of your life until this genocide and war on our people, and on the prisoners specifically, is over."

— Mohammed Qaoud, freed Palestinian prisoner and journalist

As Israel carries out its war of extermination against the Palestinian people and struggle, using imprisonment as a key instrument, we must act now. The Freedom for Palestinian Prisoners campaign advances that people of conscience must heed the call for Palestinian prisoners and join in demanding:

1. Independent investigation to disclose the identities and conditions of Palestinian political prisoners
2. Immediate end to all forms of torture
3. Immediate access to legal representation, family visits, health care, and adequate access to water, food, and hygiene
4. Restoration of all rights achieved by the Palestinian political prisoners movement
5. Accountability and sanctions against all perpetrators of war crimes against Palestinian political prisoners
6. Freedom for all Palestinian political prisoners



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Freed Palestinian prisoners arrive at Khan Yunis, Gaza, October 13, 2025.

‘Save Us From Death, We Live in Graves’

Lawyer Khaled Mahajna on Israel’s genocide of Palestinians behind bars

Since the war on Gaza began, Israel has waged a parallel war in its prisons.

I have worked in Israeli courts and visited Palestinian prisoners for more than 17 years, and followed the cases of hundreds, if not thousands, of prisoners all throughout my career. The last two years are completely different than before. What is happening after October 7th is a war on prisoners, without media attention and without any oversight. Israel even barred the International Red Cross from visiting prisoners and monitoring their conditions.

Ben-Gvir, the minister responsible for Israeli prisons, allows all prison guards to take revenge on Palestinian prisoners. This is in addition to removing all prior gains from the prisoners movement, from food to personal items, and further isolating them from the world, including their lawyers.

Even according to Israeli law, prisoners are allowed visitations with their lawyers whenever the prisoner or lawyer wishes. Under Ben-Gvir’s order, lawyers were completely banned from visits for the first four or five months of the genocide. In the first two weeks of the war on Gaza, the first prisoner was martyred in Megiddo prison. He was an elderly man with no prior illnesses but was killed because of the torture and abuse he suffered as revenge for October 7th.

After lawyers were allowed to visit prisoners from the occupied West Bank, Jerusalem and ‘48 occupied lands, we heard testimonies that surpassed imagination. Prison guards abuse and torture prisoners in the most disgusting ways. They’ve controlled prisoners’ food portions and what they are allowed to eat. Prisoners were denied a change of clothes and stayed in the same set of clothing, including underwear, for months or years.

Ben-Gvir has made it his goal to take revenge on Palestinian prisoners. He has been personally involved in limiting the portions and types of food given to prisoners. Food has been given to prisoners without any consideration for choice or for dietary or medical restrictions, including

As a lawyer, I have lost all hope. I do not believe that the Israeli court system can bring any justice to Palestinian prisoners, especially those from Gaza

diabetes. What is more concerning is the quantity, designed to give prisoners a slow death. The world has seen the physical state of released prisoners and how they’ve lost tens of kilograms because of the systemic policy of starvation.

Even more saddening, concerning, and unbearable are the crimes Israel has committed without any consequences in the military detention camps — like Ofer, Sde Teiman, and others — that Israel has not yet disclosed. I could never have imagined the horrifying testimonies that I heard about the conditions of prisoners from Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria in the military camps.

Israel completely hid the existence of these torture camps. We, as legal representatives, had no idea and assumed for a long time that the thousands of Palestinian prisoners from Gaza were in prison administration waiting to be processed, which is the only place, according to Israeli law, in which prisoners can be detained. Only after the release of prisoners from Gaza did we discover that there are Israeli military camps imprisoning thousands of Palestinians. From

Teiman, as a means of torture and revenge. The man was taken from his cell by Israeli guards and stripped of his clothes, with both his hands and feet tied behind his back. These 19- and 20-year-old Israeli guards, both women and men, inserted their military batons in his anus. These teenage soldiers shamelessly filmed this with their phones. The prisoner was then taken back to the cell and was left without any medical attention or care. The same day the prisoner died due to the sexual abuse and blood loss.

I know the name of this prisoner, but have decided to keep it private to protect his dignity. There’s another case of rape using a fire extinguisher. Can you imagine? A fire extinguisher.

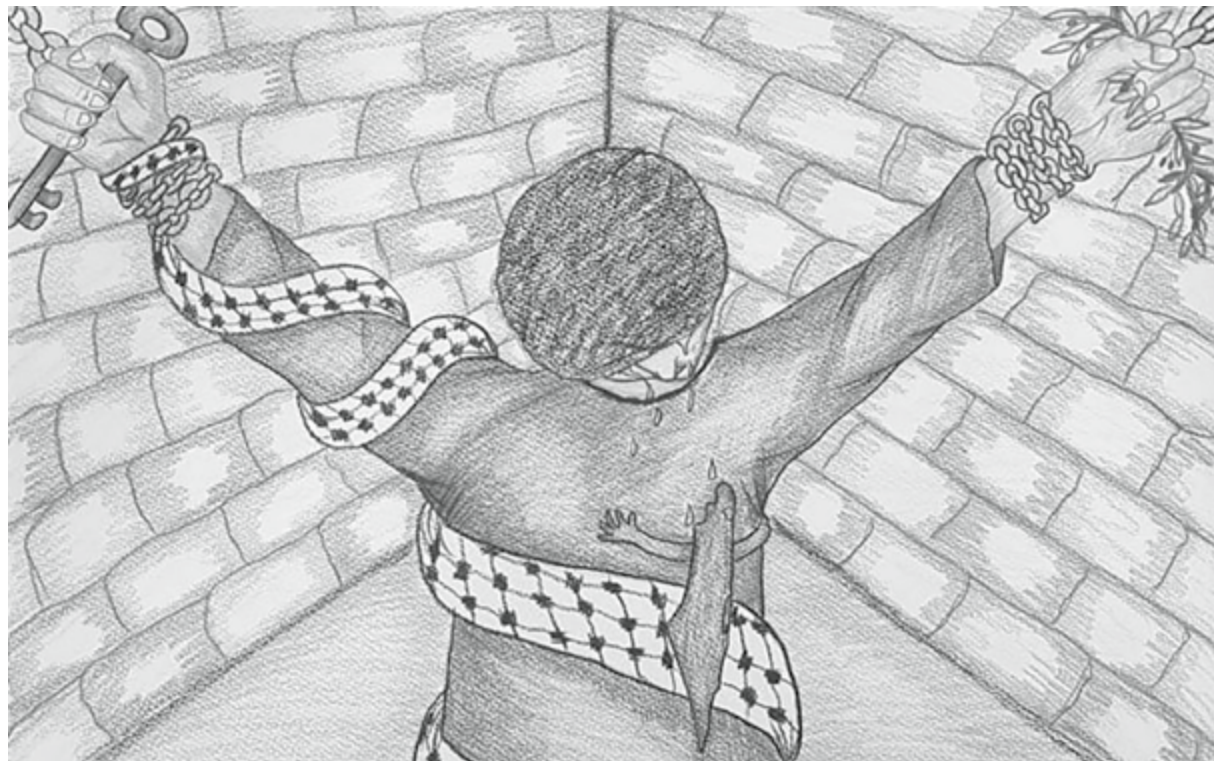
The prisoner was 28 years old at the time of this incident. I still have no idea what ended up happening to him, whether he was released, killed, or if he is still detained. The chemicals from

There are more than 84 documented cases of Palestinian prisoners who were killed in Israeli prisons without any consequences.

As a lawyer, I have lost all hope. I do not believe that the Israeli court system can bring any justice to Palestinian prisoners, especially those from Gaza. There are also Syrian and Lebanese prisoners who are currently experiencing the same abuse and torture in Israeli prisons.

I urge the international community, the International Court of Justice, international criminal courts, and the free people of the world to apply pressure to their governments. Israel has taken advantage of the war on Iran to further isolate Palestinian prisoners, banning them from leaving their cells and barring them completely from any lawyer visits.

What Palestinian prisoners are subjected to does not exist anywhere else



Drawing of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons by a student in Marj Na’ja School in Jericho.

there, the fight to find these torture camps started and legal institutions appealed to the higher court to inquire about the details and locations of these camps. Later, Israel confirmed turning military training camps into detention camps for the women, men, elderly, and children from Gaza, most infamously Sde Teiman torture camp located in Al-Naqab.

It is important to note that Sde Teiman is still standing, in addition to other military detention camps. I was one of the first to visit this detention camp when I visited Mohammad Arrab, a detained journalist from Gaza who worked for an Arabic TV channel and who is still detained.

During my 40-minute visit, he described torture and abuse. This visit was one the hardest for me personally that still affects me mentally to this day. His testimony described how prisoners are handcuffed and blindfolded for months on end. Without exaggeration. Even more terrifying and concerning were the testimonies of sexual abuse and rape and how Israel has used medical neglect as a tool of oppression and abuse.

Arrab shared with me in a visit in June 2024 that Israeli guards raped an elderly man from Gaza, in Sde

the fire extinguisher entered his body. And again, this incident was filmed. According to my visit with Arrab, the prisoner completely lost his mind after this traumatic incident.

Some prisoners had both hands and feet shackled with metal cuffs for months, until the metal started to eat away at their skin and reveal bones. Instead of providing medical treatment to these prisoners, military guards and doctors amputate their limbs. These amputations happen without any anesthesia, in a clinic known as “the butcher shop.” Any prisoner who shows signs of pain is tortured even more. You are not allowed to be in pain, you are not allowed to cry. All while blindfolded, unable to see what is happening to you, from amputation to rape and torture.

I have not been able to erase these scenes from my mind. Prisoners smell blood all day from the crimes of torture, amputation, and rape of their fellow prisoners. Recently, in front of the world and without any accountability, Israel closed the documented case of military soldiers raping a Palestinian prisoner. This gives the green light to Israeli soldiers to continue raping, abusing, and executing Palestinian prisoners without any consequences.

in the world. We, as lawyers, are the same as their families. We worry about the prisoners’ conditions and well-being. We worry that prisoners will be abused and killed in prison and that there will be no accountability. The message from prisoners today is: “Save us from death, we live in graves, save us from this mass graveyard. We no longer want freedom, we simply want to live with dignity and to not be tortured, abused, and raped.”

From a legal perspective there are two paths available for us to stop the war against the prisoners. The first path is to appeal to international courts. And the other path is a mass-based, popular path.

It is now time to redress the cause of more than 10,000 isolated, civilian, innocent prisoners held without any charges or formal accusations and without proper trial. It is time for the entire world to mobilize in order to bring an end to the war against these prisoners.

Khaled Mahajna, a Palestinian lawyer and human rights defender with the Commission of Detainees Affairs, gave this testimony during a March 16, 2026 webinar with the Palestinian Youth Movement.

A FREEZE THAT NEVER THAWS

By
THE PALESTINIAN
YOUTH MOVEMENT

“The most precious person in your heart, the one you love the most, is now far away in a cold place, beyond our reach, in the hands of the oppressors,” Randa Musa said in an interview with Free Palestine TV in her home in November 2024.

She sat upright on an upholstered chair, an image of her late husband, the martyr Sheikh Khader Adnan, hanging above her head. In it, the Sheikh is pictured in an embrace with his young children. Photos like this line the walls and tables, as if to fill the house with his image in place of his presence.

Adnan, even in death, remains a beloved figure whose name is pronounced with pride in homes across Palestine. He was a baker in his hometown of Arraba, a sheikh and pillar of the community, and a resistance leader who organized demonstrations and advocated for prisoners long before he became one himself.

When Musa married Adnan in 2005, she knew that even the intimate and sacred parts of their relationship, meant for only the two of them, would be invaded by the occupier. He told her, “We won’t live a life like normal people do.” Indeed, 40 days after their wedding ceremony, occupation forces arrested Adnan. He spent two years and eight months in prison, the first of his five imprisonments.

Renowned for hunger strikes that had previously won him his freedom, the Sheikh spent the final three months of his life using his body to protest his detention without trial. He was martyred on May 2, 2023, 87 days into a hunger strike during which he refused supplements, food, and medical treatment. After his martyrdom, the Zionist state withheld his body, the same body that he once wielded in defiance of his jailers. His remains lie somewhere out of reach, in a refrigerator or an unmarked grave.

The youngest and most vulnerable members of the grieving family are in denial. Musa and Adnan’s youngest children are convinced that he is still alive and in prison. “He’s pretending to be dead,” they say, “but my father will come back.”

A War on Martyrs’ Bodies

Musa’s sorrow reverberates in the hearts of thousands of wives, husbands, parents, and children of martyrs across Palestine. The Zionist occupation routinely withholds the bodies of those it kills and imprisons, a practice that can be traced back to their British benefactors who imposed Regulation 133(3), permitting the occupying army to incarcerate the bodies of Palestinian prisoners indefinitely. This policy was later adopted wholesale by the courts. The bodies of nearly 800 Palestinians murdered by the Zionist state are currently held captive by the occupation.

For the families of these martyrs, the reminder that their loved ones are held in cold storage boxes somewhere lingers like a freeze that never thaws.

“As long as I was married to the Sheikh, and even before that, I was never cold,” Musa said. “Since the moment of the Sheikh’s martyrdom, I never felt warmth again, no matter how many layers I put on at night. There is an unbearable pain within me.” She described how each symbol of the cold — the winter months, the refrigerator in her house — remind her only of the condition of her husband’s body, frozen beyond her reach. “The winter, which we once looked forward to, is no longer something we embrace, as it mostly reminds us of our pain, suffering, and the loss of our beloved ones and the place they lie in.”

To add to the torment of the withholding of bodies, consistent evidence has emerged of the occupation harvesting the organs of the Palestinians it kills. Dr. Ghassan Abu Sittah report-

ed to Al Jazeera that when the occupation returned stolen bodies to hospitals in Gaza, they came back altered, with hearts, lungs, or kidneys removed, with professional incisions and suturing in their place. This is Zionism in its most grotesque and fundamental form: murder, theft, and desecration of Palestinians to keep the settler colony alive.

Resistance in Life and Death

Sheikh Khader Adnan wished to be buried in a simple gravesite next to his father. The earth in that plot of land remains unbroken, not yet able to welcome his body to its final resting place.

The theft of prisoners’ bodies is a unique form of psychological torture that renders the mourning process a never-ending task.

“Every person longs to bury their loved ones in a place they can visit, to look at them one last time, to move past the stage of denial,” Musa said.

In Islam, a swift burial is an essential part of the funeral and grieving process. In a Janazah, the body is washed, wrapped in white cloth, prayed over, and then carried by loved ones from the mosque to the deceased’s final resting place. Burial itself is an act of devotion. Grave visits are love notes between this world and the hereafter. Depriving martyrs’ families of this ritual is a crude bludgeon of collective punishment.

Instead of lying eternally beside their families and neighbors, these prisoners’ bodies are stacked in hospital freezers or buried in the infamous “Cemeteries of Numbers,” where hundreds of Palestinian graves are labeled with digits that only the occupation can decode.

Burial itself is an act of devotion. Grave visits are love notes between this world and the hereafter

This practice is meant to deprive families of the pride that comes with martyrdom — a price for liberation held in the highest regard in Palestinian society. For Palestinians, martyrs and their bodies are meant to be carried, cared for, and returned to the ground, which yearns for its rightful people. The occupation withholds, catalogues, and instrumentalizes the martyr and his body, reducing him to a bargaining chip in negotiations, a tool of pressure and a means of exacting control over the living.

Just as millions of Palestinians know that we will one day return to our rightful land, the ground beside Sheikh Khader’s father’s grave knows it will one day receive him.

This family’s devastation illustrates the Palestinian condition of imprisonment under occupation, in death just as in life. The perpetual violence of genocide prevents proper mourning and yet, the names of martyrs are uttered with honor, their stories told with fervor and reverence, and their sacrifice consistently, effectively, and inevitably defeats the occupation.

“Don’t let the occupation spoil the pride of martyrdom by withholding bodies,” Musa commanded. She called on us to follow in the legacy of Sheikh Adnan’s wishes: to honor the martyrs while maintaining our focus on living prisoners.

In our resistance we must fight for the return of every body to its rightful burial, and the release of every prisoner to their home. Our work will not cease, and the freeze will not thaw, until we reunite with all of our prisoners in a liberated Palestine.



Children of Gaza, 2004. Photo by Abed Khatib.

Against the Clock

Forging victory from what is meant to defeat you

By
HUSSAM SHAHEEN

Time, and the language of time in prison literature, is the same as it is everywhere if we adopt the “clock” as its only measure. In captivity, time loses its numerical value; it becomes a feeling, a deep awareness of the self and of the other. It weighs heavier upon the prisoner’s shoulders due to the multiplicity of small and large responsibilities that constantly change, as a result of the continuous confrontation with the occupier. This article addresses the possibilities of transcendence in prisoner literature and attempts to answer the persistent question of temporality in prison, and how time manifests in the life and writing of a Palestinian prisoners. It relies on personal experience as primary material to shed light on the temporal dualities experienced by Palestinian prisoners as they continue their individual and collective struggle for liberation before prison, in prison, and after prison.

It is true that time in life is a philosophical category that may intersect in one way or another with time in literature, which itself fragments into multiple categories of time (astronomical, historical, psychological, physical, philosophical...). With the succession of civilizations, time came to be confined to the triad of past, present, and future, meaning that it lies on a horizontal plane. In other words, human beings determine their tempo-spatial position from their present, which they live and feel, and they return with their memory to the past, while the future for them is an unseen time that humans, from poets to princes, place in the third rank. Since the

beginning of the twentieth century, time has moved beyond its own problematic, as it does not exist except through human experience.

When we think about the duality of time and place, we become certain that colonialism always seeks to freeze time in the lives of its victims, and we Palestinians are no exception. The exception is that Zionist colonialism has sought, and continues to seek, to freeze Palestinian time in order to achieve the equation of Judaization and Israelization. If we take the prisoners as a model, we find that Zionist colonialism works relentlessly to freeze time in our lives in order

Occupied time can only be ruptured through revolution, and revolution requires a liberatory national movement

to transform it, and us, into a heavy burden on our world, our people, and our cause. From a profound understanding of this very point, many prisoners have persistently dug an intellectual and literary tunnel with their pens, through which they liberate prison time from the

grip of the occupation and present to the world a vision of Palestinian steadfastness by declaring sovereignty over time as an inevitable step toward achieving sovereignty over the land.

If we fail to grasp the nature of this conflict, the will, burdened by political conditions that prevent us from making history, will remain constrained, allowing our adversary to impose upon us their own narrative. For occupied time can only be ruptured through revolution, and revolution requires a liberatory national movement capable of leading and directing it. So what happens when occupied time shatters between the hands of competing organizations who struggle over its illusions? In this context, literary and cultural production inside prison is a victory for the prisoner, his people, and his cause. It is a declaration of his sovereignty over the time stolen from him, just as the cry of every newborn who comes into life from the womb of every Palestinian fighter, who turned her womb into a revolutionary base for launching toward a better future; every newborn conceived through the smuggling of sperm, just as the prisoner Walid Daqqa fathered his daughter Milad from his wife Sana’ Saleh.

How could it be otherwise when the prison is an extremely narrow space? Imagine, for example, that you live with about one hundred and twenty prisoners in the cell block, whose area is slightly more or less than three hundred square meters, and that you remain in the same cell for many years with at least five other prisoners, inside a rectangle seven meters long and three meters wide. Figuratively, this is your entire house (it contains the bedroom, the kitchen



Freed Palestinian prisoners arrive at Khan Yunis, Gaza, October 13, 2025.

and its tools, the dining table, the living room, the bathroom, the shower, the chairs and table, the belongings of all its residents, cupboards, the sink, the trash bin, and the clothesline...). Your private space, therefore, does not exceed two square meters, and you must carry out your life, all social, human, and organizational activities in this space without

infringing upon others.

To succeed in doing this, and to overcome all forms of conflict and crisis that may occur between people, especially when they are crowded into such a narrow space, prisoners must rely on shared values and internal understandings. Such is a victory over the place designed to defeat you, even if the jailer

ultimately retains the upper hand.

Thus the most mature form of victory for prisoners lies in employing time in their favor by declaring sovereignty over it, obviating the jailer’s domination through continuous rebellion and confrontation. Despite the physical price and harm they endure, they feel the ecstasy of freedom.

NO MORALITY BUT CLASS MORALITY

Ahmad Qatamesh on the path of collective struggle

By
AHMAD QATAMESH

Ahmad Qatamesh is a Palestinian academic and writer. Accused by Israel of leading the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine inside occupied Palestine, he was imprisoned without trial from 1992 to 1998, the longest such detention of its time. During his incarceration, Qatamesh delivered lectures from memory to fellow prisoners on questions confronting the Palestinian liberation movement. With the help of his comrades, he developed, transcribed, and edited these talks — more than 20 in total — into what became the book *Interventions for Formulating the Alternative*.

Qatamesh conceived the project as a way to rebuild revolutionary thought and conviction at a time when the Oslo Accords and the fall of the Soviet Union had put the movement for Palestinian liberation on its back foot. While rooted in the concerns of that period, the book reaches beyond its immediate political context to grapple with the broader intellectual and philosophical dilemmas faced by political organizations and liberation movements.

The People’s Center for Palestine is preparing an English translation of the book, scheduled for publication in Spring 2027. Visit pcpalestine.org to sign up for the center’s newsletter and receive updates on the release date. This excerpt has been edited for length.

— The People’s Center for Palestine

The Left and Morals

Maybe some of you have read about the life of Dzerzhinsky, the distinguished Polish revolutionary who lived undercover for many years. During that time, he got married (with no “hullabaloo”) to his comrade and partner in an underground printing press. She had his child while he underwent a difficult period of detention in Tsarist prisons, where tuberculosis, typhoid, and other chronic illnesses were rampant. It was that same man who founded the KGB, the Soviet secret police agency. What interests me here is pointing out something he said during a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the course of heated discussions with Kamenev and Zinoviev: two members of the Politburo who in general represented the right-wing of the party. He declared: “You know of my strength [...] because I give my all.” He was actually working an average of 18 hours a day so that on most nights his room in the Kremlin was lit until the crack of dawn — until one day he collapsed dead in the Kremlin corridors, utterly exhausted.

Some of you have also read or heard about the quest undertaken by the martyr Abdul Qadir al-Husayni, when he visited Damascus and other places in order to procure weapons. When he was failed by the Arabs, he returned to Palestine and waged the Battle of al-Qastal, during which he was martyred, declaring in one of his letters: “Our people will continue to rebel, generation after generation until Palestine’s liberation.”

Maybe you have heard about the martyrdom of Abu Amal, member of the PFLP central committee who waged the 1976 steadfast battle in the Tal al-Za’atar refugee camp: the battle where a cup of water for children and families [might as well have been] a cup of blood, that is life [itself], for many of the besieged. Abu Amal continued to resist and to boost the morale of the fighters and those besieged by the fascist Phalangist militia until his last breath.



Buses carrying Palestinians released from Israeli occupation prisons arrive outside Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis, Gaza, October 13, 2025.

The examples are countless, and one can read them off a list that extends from here to China [...] so how can we understand the morals of all these people and what their incentives are to join the struggle to the very end and sacrifice everything, even their families and their lives? We of the Left are armed with great moral values, and this is what I hope to address in my talk today. [...]

It has become clear that thought, any thought, is a reflection of the social reality [...] that is, the historical stage carries fragments that have not disappeared from the past, in addition to the conditions of the present. [...] This is the state of leftist morality, a morality stemming from reality and of course this includes that which is constructive in the ethics of predecessor philosophies. So what are the most important cornerstones of leftist morality? What have they contributed to moral science?

The class dimension of reality has been revealed. Capital has its own greedy and selfish moral code, waging wars of aggression for the sake of profit

The class dimension of morality has been revealed. [...] Capital has its own greedy and selfish moral code, to the extent of waging wars of aggression for the sake of profit. This is most evident in colonial wars waged by capitalist monopoly against peoples. On the other hand is the morality of the workers, peasants, the poor, and the oppressed peoples that rebel against exploitation and pil-

laging and are armed with the spirit of struggle, sacrifice, uniformity, etc. Fidel Castro summed this issue up when he said “Capital has its morality and we have ours” that sets us apart from others. That is, revolutionary work requires toughness, sumud, the acquisition of the skills of struggle, and not surrendering [...] so these values become moral values, whereas betrayal, lying, and fragmenting the collective serve the enemy.

The historical dimension of morality has been revealed, for every period has its moral code [...] In a society of riqq or bondage, where the master class ruled and owned the slave class, the moral law allowed the master to sell or kill the slave, as it did ownership of the slave’s wife and children; the slave was forced to submit to that, obey the operative moral law, and accept the whip and physical punishment from the master. We notice this in the societies that have not eradicated the last remnants of slavery from within, such as in Mauritania and multiple African tribes; racial discrimination in America and other places as an extension of white supremacy.

The dialectics of morality has been revealed [...] it is not rigid, not unmoving but always moving. The new in it incorporates and adds to the positive aspects of the past, and many of the morals of the past end and are replaced by the new. So it goes.

The materialist basis of morality has been revealed [...] for morality is intertwined with its reality, [both] a product and reflection thereof. Before the homeland was subjected to invasion and aggression, the moral value of defending the homeland had not emerged. Before economic relations based on private property were formed, moral values that considered transgressions against the property of others as theft to be punished by law had not arisen.

To make a long story short, the more the material reality of humanity develops and becomes more complex, the more concomitant moral values arise and diversify. Leftist moral values are rich and varied per the richness and variety of life; they are derived from life itself and its most important pillars:

Firstly, love of the homeland and all that it entails of meanings and memories; love for one’s people and dedication to the elevation of the homeland, the freedom and progress of the people, protecting them from dangers, and resisting their aggressors. Love of the homeland manifests in countless forms; the Palestinian revolutionary struggle over the decades has been nothing other than an expression of that national sentiment, accompanied by sacrifices, achievements, and endeavors at all levels. Were it not for this love, we would not have observed anything of the sort. The same applies to the exemplary Vietnamese people, or the Soviet peoples, or the Lebanese people.

Secondly, love of work and its mastery, for civilization and all that it entails of economic, cultural, and civil development is the result of the people’s rational will: that is, a result of their work. Dedication in work and precision in performance are key moral values, whether that work is physical or mental, political or civil, etc. [This includes] the workers who master their work and utilize their energies to be more effective; the doctors and nurses who keep late hours tending to the citizens’ health, ensuring their health facilities are top-notch, saving many people; the dedicated university academic, who squeezes out the essence of their knowledge into the minds of their students among which emerge administrators, filmmakers, and the engineer; the active trade unionist who organizes the worker and leads them in their union struggles, bettering their wages and bolstering their self-confidence, and so on.

Thirdly, love of order and organization. This is a moral characteristic of great importance, as it moves the masses from spontaneity and disarray to structure and the activation of energies — whether that organization is union-related, technical, creative, professional, or political, and what it entails of organizational aspects such as discipline, punctuality, the integration of components, cooperation, and systems. Organization multiplies the power of the people tenfold, for without a people

organized in the ways of industrial life, industry is inconceivable; without a people organized politically, you cannot envision a revolution; without a people organized into an army, you cannot picture the capability to defend the soil and dignity of the homeland; without a creative framework, the careers of writers, illustrators and filmmakers falter. The loftiest form of organization is the revolutionary party that leads the masses in all fields. The Left calls for the right to organize and for pluralism, thereby unleashing the energies of the people, and it does not hesitate in the tireless struggle to claim this right.

Comradeship is a protective shield that safeguards the revolutionary collective

Fourthly, developing the conflicts of rebellion, struggle, and revolution against injustices, whether they be national oppression, class exploitation, male chauvinism against women, political repression of the people, religious persecution of minorities, or any other form of injustice. The Left is in revolt against everything; it is armed with a revolutionary methodology, works to change human society and steer it towards being truly humanitarian and free from the persecution of one human being by another.

Fifthly, the dedication of collectivism as the antithesis of selfishness and individualism, for the primary goal is the best interests of the collective and the people. The primary system is the collective system, formulated by the collective itself. The goals, whether political, developmental, or moral, take precedence; any contradictions that emerge within the collective, whether between

the part and the whole, the minority and the majority, or between the lower and higher [ranks], are addressed; they are resolved based on the laws governing the collective and its dialectics. When an individual’s concerns are instead solely limited to their own interests and causes, this leads to them committing acts that violate the rights of others. The revolutionary collective provides every opportunity for the talents of individuals, just as it protects and defends the rights of individuals. Indeed, the most prominent political and intellectual figures were born and molded within leftist frameworks, even when they were deprived of education. The innovative writer Hanna Mina did not attend school; Stalin was only educated to the fourth grade; Georgi Dimitrov, leader of the Bulgarian revolution, was a worker; most of the Soviet generals in World War II were workers and peasants by origin, as is the Vietnamese leadership, and so on. Leftist morality encourages initiative [...] and many individual proposals and opinions became public policies.

Sixthly, continuous renewal and keeping abreast of changes, for standing still in one place means falling behind on life’s changes; meanwhile the Left emphasizes its vanguard role, for it stands at the forefront and responds to development in all its form. Complete misery befalls any [political] leaning that ceases to evolve and renew itself.

Seventhly, intimate comradeship, mutual support, joint fighting for the sake of common goals, the warmth of human connection between comrades in the same trench, and comradeship towards the toilers and the people. For comradeship means sacrifice, fellowship, support, friendship, forbearance, and avoiding flip-flopping. It is a strong bond and a protective shield that safeguards the revolutionary collective under all circumstances.

Eighthly, honesty; decisiveness; avoiding lying, hypocrisy, and abuse of power; integrity, honor, chivalry, and concern regarding people’s feelings and needs, and helping them by all means possible. The Left calls for a practical spirit, swift implementation, avoidance of negligence, laziness, and stagnation, as it does firmness, integrity, and constancy on just principles.

Ninthly, peace, for the Left is peaceful by nature and abhors resorting to force and authoritarianism, just as it abhors war. In its pursuit of justice, however, it is compelled to confront the violence and subjugation of the forces of oppression, including colonialism and capitalist exploitation. Resolving confrontational and non-confrontational contradictions by means capable of resolution for the sake of a humanitarian society living in true fraternity: without masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited, the well-off and the hungry.

Tenthly, democracy, for the Left is democratic and believes in the slogan “let one hundred flowers bloom,” that is, let the people express themselves. In a democratic framework, the Left believes in equality, the right to choose, and freedom, whether of the people or man or woman. The Left prides itself on its morals and distinguishes itself from others in this regard. Leftist morals alone are consistent in their logic of striving for human freedom and their liberation both from all forms of enslavement and of their emotions from all fears and terror. These morals do not restrict their mind nor suppress their humanity except within the rules they make to serve them. Humanity and their happiness is of the utmost value, to which everything is made subservient.

Sumud: On the New Front Lines in the West Bank

Fridays on Tel al-Baten follow a routine. After the noon prayer, hundreds of Palestinian men begin to gather on the hill. Small groups of scouts clamor up the hill and run back down to report what they've seen to the mayor and local elders.

Tel al-Baten overlooks the small Palestinian village of Sinjil, which is a crucial junction connecting Ramallah and Jerusalem to Nablus and the northern occupied West Bank. Even though much of the mountainous region lies in Area A, which is ostensibly controlled by the Palestinian Authority, a group of Zionist settlers calling themselves the "Hilltop Youth" have established an outpost there, in violation of an Israeli court order, from which they terrorize Sinjil and its farmlands.

The settlers camp at the peak of Tel al-Baten. Every Friday, the Palestinians come to protest, and every Friday the settlers charge. In mid-January, I joined them.

Before the climb up to Tel al-Baten, Sinjil mayor Dr. Motaz Tafsha instructed the young men to engage the settlers only if they attacked first. Wearing a camouflage patterned hoodie and a gray baseball cap, he told them: "We protect our homes, never attacking. We only fight defensively."

A group of five or six boys, clad in Adidas track suits, balaclavas, and hoodies pulled tight around their faces, led the way with the confidence of experienced men.

The mayor ordered the boys to form makeshift barricades with boulders and rocks.

A Palestinian teen started a fire, which burned clear in the brush behind the road. The settlers came as anticipated, jumping out of a silver sedan — one that local Palestinians had come to associate with unarmed teenage settlers. The sound of a settler's fireworks drove some of us for cover as others threw rocks at them. They threw rocks back.

The settlers shouted at us in Hebrew. The Palestinians who understood shouted back: "Ben-Gvir is a mother-fucker!" Despite the volume of rocks thrown, not a single person on either side was hit. One of the men from Sinjil juggled a stick with around a dozen fireworks attached to its end towards the settlers and fired at them. The smell of gunpowder clogged the damp air.

Before anybody could land a punch, a Jeep appeared on the horizon. The people of Sinjil knew: The settler who drove this Jeep was armed and dangerous. The mayor shouted for retreat and in an instant everybody sprinted down the mountain. To the west, the Tel Aviv skyline glimmered in the sunlight.



A novel defense network

The part of the mountain where the men were killed is part of Area A under the 1993 Oslo Accords. The Palestinian Authority controls internal security and civil affairs in Area A. In Area B, it controls only civil affairs, and Israel controls security. In Area C, Israeli Occupation Forces have full control.

Yet it was Israeli authorities that argued to remove the settlers and their outposts in August of 2025, after a petition by Palestinians. An Israeli division commander wrote that "lawbreakers" had illegally opened roads and occupied Palestinian homes. Months later, the outpost remains, settler attacks continue, and Sinjalis cannot access their land without the threat of violence.

This is the situation Sinjil finds itself in. Even under Palestinian control, it is Israeli troops who patrol with guns and a petition to the Israeli court that locals cling to for their rights.

In response to the continued presence of settlers, the villagers of Sinjil have organized a novel defense network in the area. Opposite the settler outpost atop Tel al-Baten, Sinjalis set up a security station in the form of a tent. Inside the tent, a few dozen men sit around a handmade stovepipe brewing coffee and talking. Some of them are young, joining the contingent straight from school or work. Others are older, huddled heads of black and white kuffiyehs, and drink their coffee quietly. A no-mans-land, strewn with animal bones, boulders, and shouk, is the only thing that separates the Palestinian camp from the settlers.

Every few minutes, one of the men leaves the smokey atmosphere of the tent to brave the cold. Standing atop

piles of coffee grounds and hundreds of empty energy drink cans, he traces the ridge with a high-powered flashlight, looking for changes in the landscape of rocks, abandoned structures, and rows of olive trees.

Oftentimes, a green laser crosses perpendicularly to the beams, signs that some of the men in Jiljilyya, to the southwest of Sinjil, are keeping watch too. An orange blinking light on the hill across from us confirms that something is going on, but the men in the tent aren't concerned. They press back into their outworn chairs and await the presence of Israeli soldiers on the hill: "Ahlan wa sahlan."

Since they set up their night watch in spring, this group, who call themselves "the protectors of the land," have men at the ready in the tent, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They spend the nights checking the ridge-line to make sure settlers, emboldened by the cover of darkness, aren't pushing an attack. The settlers call themselves "the monsters of the mountain," but one of the watchers says "they're more like rabbits." Since the tent has gone up, the watchers have been able to successfully deter further attacks on the southern area of Sinjil.

Sometimes settlers will try to sneak up to the tent, but the men reassure me that hundreds of Sinjalis assemble within moments of a warning text going out and the settlers retreat before they can do any damage. After months of studying their enemy, the watchers can identify exactly which settler is which and if they pose a serious threat just based on the color of their cars. Violence in the occupied West Bank is extremely intimate.

A village fights alone

I arrived in Sinjil in mid-January. The 20-mile drive from Ramallah took three hours because of traffic and Israeli checkpoints. The village rises steeply among rolling hills, boxed in by a 15-foot-tall security fence of razor wire and surrounded by illegal settlements. The tight grouping of mostly ancient homes are built on terraces that date back millennia.

Since October 7th, settler violence has escalated in Sinjil and across the occupied West Bank, but the conditions for the village's dispossession were established long ago.

In the decade that followed the end of the Second Intifada in 2005, the then-nascent Palestinian Authority, which administers Area A and has civil control over it, and the Israeli military dismantled most political organizations in the occupied West Bank, relegating political activities to the few remaining spaces authority could not reach, like Telegram channels and universities.

Contemporary resistance on the ground in the occupied West Bank has transformed from a coordinated militant struggle where local offices had national partners to call for support, assistance and reinforcements, into a delicate balancing act by small municipalities, which defend themselves in near isolation against waves of settler attacks. Push too hard and severely injure or kill a settler, and your village will be sieged or destroyed. Don't push at all and your

village will be enveloped into the ever-growing network of settlements encroaching on Palestinian land.

Sinjil finds itself defending its land in a time of severely weakened armed resistance and political formations as well as the relentless escalation of settler violence and land grabs.

Since spring 2025, settlers have razed and occupied dozens of homes around the southern neighborhoods of Sinjil. Their menacing presence on Tel al-Baten has prevented Sinjalawis, many of whom are farmers, from working their land. One of the village's best-known restaurants has begun serving its hummus dry; Settler attacks prevented farmers from pressing sufficient oil from the recent olive harvest.

The violence in Sinjil peaked on July 11, 2025. During the weekly protest after Friday prayer, around a dozen armed settlers confronted the protesters, who were joined by several foreign activists, atop Tel al-Baten. Settlers encircled and beat them with sticks and rocks, before other settlers on four wheelers chased the group, forcing it to split up. In the chaos, Mohammed Shalabi and Saif al-Din Muslat followed a trail deeper into the hills, rather than one back down to Sinjil.

Shalabi's body was found under an olive tree, shot dead. A few miles away, al-Din was found, barely alive. He was pronounced dead that evening at a hospital in Ramallah.



This group, who call themselves 'the protectors of the land,' have men at the ready in the tent, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The settlers call themselves 'the monsters of the mountain,' but one of the watchers says 'they're more like rabbits'

The days bleed together

Back at the base of Tel al-Baten in January, IOF Jeeps approached. The settlers called them even after the Palestinians of Sinjil retreated down the mountain. Only a dozen of us remained outside the tent when the soldiers jumped out of their Jeeps and charged their assault rifles in metallic sync.

The leader of the patrol walked down the line of Palestinians and pointed at four teenagers, seemingly at random.

The boys were made to put their hands on the hood of the soldiers' cars and spread their feet wide as instructed. Soldiers patted them down and placed their items — cigarettes, phones, lighters, prayer beads — on top of the car.

One of the Palestinian men yelled at the main soldier, David, in Hebrew. He waved a stack of papers in the air: The Israeli court order that forbids settlement on this land.

After a short back and forth the soldiers released the four boys and drove off.

Next Friday, it will happen again. The settlers will charge, the Palestinians will fight back, soldiers will detain, court orders will be waved around. The sons of Sinjil, armed with rocks, binoculars, cameras and the strength that comes with having no choice, will risk murder, beatings, and imprisonment to defend their land.



Images at the Edge of the World

Reclaiming what was taken but never captured

By
MAHDI AWADA

As the author of this text, I find myself in a real predicament. I present these images of resistance fighters, taken by an Israeli army drone during the last war on Lebanon and attempt to transfer the “located” image to a new context. How is this possible? The answer lies in the following question: Where did the gaze look? This leads us to another question: Where does the gaze choose to look? I believe the answer to this question is the key to a renewed understanding of the place of the image within memory, culture, and history.

I am sharing this text in the hopes of reconsidering the role of these images in two places at once: within my mind and within the cultural scene. I also write this text in the hopes of redirecting these images, or rather of redirecting their purpose. Perhaps I can guide them toward a new horizon, stimulating the reader’s gaze and posing questions that deviate from the usual instinctive reactions (sympathy for the victim, glorification of the hero) and aim for something deeper.

These images and videos were captured by Israeli army drones as they tracked resistance fighters seconds or minutes before targeting them in the Majdal Selim area of southern Lebanon. The purpose of transferring the footage from the scene to the screen is, in

principle, to humiliate these fighters, their families, and their supporters. The drone tracks, the camera films, the operator presses the button, and the fighter falls. The enemy releases the video, and the family and friends identify the location, the fighter, and the context.

These images expose what the enemy tries to conceal — they become a tool of resistance, an opportunity to generate new possibilities

What is then the outcome of this incident, which only “occurred” after the video’s release? Since the goal is humiliation, it is expected that, upon reaching the viewer, the consumption of these images will generate feelings of sadness, frustration, and despair. The resistance fighter is, after all, killed

at the end of the scene. Therefore, the culture these images seek to cultivate is one of humiliation and submission, fostering a defeated public opinion that is floundering, submissive, and ready to capitulate to and normalize relations with the enemy.

But what the Israelis didn’t expect was that this incident would produce something entirely different. The fighter’s family, comrades, and admirers widely circulated the images, re-encoding them with a sense of love and pride. Sharing the images with the foreword “With all pride and honor...” it was as if each of them established their own military communiqué. My interest here lies in how an individual consumes and shares an image that is entirely manipulated and fabricated by an enemy.

My curiosity grows: How can this image — this single snapshot of a lone human being facing the lens of a drone belonging to the world’s most lethal and sophisticated killing machine — evade, escape, maneuver, and break free from attempts to target and subdue it?

Once again, it seems that Israel is failing in the most complex battle: controlling and dominating the narrative and the image. What, then, is it missing to achieve this objective? Let us ask once again: Where did the gaze look? For the enemy, the gaze lingered in one place, the fighter’s geographical location, using the most advanced technologies to impose a one-sided position. Here, geographical location represents the position of dominance,

surveillance, and the ability to kill.

But the gaze of the observer on the side of the resistance looked in the same place as the drone’s lens. What did it see? It saw a fighter maneuvering, laboring, and defying the machine that controls all space from the sky. What else did it see? It saw that the fighter did not kneel, did not beg, did not surrender. This leads us to another question: Where does the gaze choose to look? Where the gaze chooses to look is based on the context of the viewer. If the viewer is particular about their choices, their background, they will clearly see what is invisible within the specific framework imposed by the publisher of the video: the enemy. It becomes clear that the video is of a resistance fighter maneuvering, laboring, and defying the machine — advancing, not retreating.

This symmetry between the viewer’s vision and intellectual background is what allowed the image editing process to succeed. The gaze chose to look from an undefeated stance.

We see editing here in two places simultaneously: in the technical manipulation of the image (editing or cutting) and in the editing of meaning and symbolism. That is, controlling the discourse does not only come from the enemy’s control of the image as raw material captured by their lens and disseminated by their channels alone; it requires controlling the archive of the viewers — the community that receives the material, reorganizes it, then reproduces and disseminates it. Once this scene settled in

the collective memory of the resistance’s audience, it began to be interpreted through their own lexicon. These images, intended as proof of Israel’s military achievement, transformed into a human and political icon of Lebanese resistance ingrained in the collective memory.

Once again, it seems that Israel is failing in the most complex battle: controlling the narrative and the image

Through this editing these images expose what the enemy tries to conceal. They become a tool of resistance, an opportunity to generate new possibilities for vision and critique.

I return to the question from which this text departs: How can a culture of resistance be produced in spite of the lexicon imposed by these images? I refuse to ignore these images, deny their existence, consume them silently, or even

seek safe visual havens to shelter in until further notice. These images demand a counteraction beyond being confined to a passive context. The gaze can choose where to look and the editing process — that is, the image re-encoded by viewers — now gives me a way to address this dilemma and propose a counter-artistic mechanism. These images have secured a central place in history and culture, not as evidence of a political or military event, but as raw visual material that reveals a predicament in collective perception and confirms that aesthetics do not belong to the image itself, but to the intellectual framework from which these images are interpreted.

So, for these reasons, something else happened. Look closely, look carefully — these images are now ours; these are our images. We can even argue that Israel didn’t possess these images in the first place. How can these images conceal themselves, escape, maneuver, take refuge, and liberate themselves from attempts to target and subjugate them? They are merely images of a lone human being facing the lens of a drone belonging to the world’s most lethal killing machine. No, they are not just images. And they are not tools for argumentation within a debate confined to the binary of victory or defeat. They are an opportunity to show what the enemy is trying to hide, to confront the enemy by spreading a culture it seeks to obliterate.

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AN IMPERIAL WAR AGAINST IRANIAN CIVILIZATION ITSELF

By
IRANIANS UNITED
FOR PALESTINE

Over two hundred children and their teachers were beginning their week at Shajareh Tayyebah girls’ elementary school in the southern Iranian city of Minab on February 28 when an American Tomahawk missile struck. The principal gathered the surviving children into the prayer room and began calling their parents. Then came a second strike, directly targeting this refuge. According to eyewitness accounts verified by satellite analysis, a third strike followed. The attack was a “triple tap” — three consecutive strikes designed to maximize casualties as bystanders and emergency workers rush to help victims of the previous strikes. Most of the 175 murdered that day were children between the ages of 7 and 12.

In the hours after the strike, President Trump said that “freedom for the Iranian people” was a primary aim of the war. Reza Pahlavi, the son of the former dictator of Iran and the leader of the far-right movement, celebrated the attacks as “the help that the United States President had promised.”

More than a month of mass casualties and unrelenting attacks on civilian infrastructure, Trump’s explicit threats of genocide in the last few days confirm what we already knew: the US and Israel’s illegal and unprovoked aggression has never had anything to do with “helping” Iranians. It is a war on the Iranian people, Iranian sovereignty, and Iranian civilization itself.

In just the first thirty days of the war, the US and Israel have bombed residential buildings, schools, hospitals, critical energy and water infrastructure, historical heritage sites, civilian airports, roads, bridges, factories, universities, sports arenas, and Red Crescent facilities. More than 3,500 Iranians have been murdered. 3.2 million people remain internally displaced. The attacks have damaged over 87,000 civilian locations, including 61,000 homes, 275 medical centers, and nearly 500 schools. According to the Iranian Ministry of Education, over 243 students have been killed, some of preschool age.

On March 8, Israel bombed oil depots in northern Tehran; the resulting fires pumped untold quantities of toxic hydrocarbon compounds, sulphur, and nitrogen oxides into the air. A thick black haze loomed over Tehran the next day, as soot coated the city and acid rain formed in the clouds. Observers said that, “The sun did not rise

over Tehran” that morning. Trump’s rhetoric crossed into explicit threats of genocidal annihilation against the very Iranian people he had claimed to help. “A whole civilization,” wrote Trump, “will die tonight, never to be brought back again.”

The current stage of escalation reflects a new phase of imperialism in the region. In his March 2 press briefing, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth summed up the American approach: “No stupid rules of engagement, no nation-building quagmire, no democracy-building exercise, no politically correct wars.” Gone is the pretense that America fights benevolent wars in the name of humanitarian intervention and international law. Instead, Netanyahu and Trump, along with their cabinets of sycophants, make open calls for land theft, looting, and barbaric violence. The imperial order has aligned in a naked grab to control oil, with the bloody petrodollar securing US hegemony by suffocating sovereign development and self-determination in the region.

If Secretary Hegseth’s genocidal screed helps set the record straight on America’s longstanding ploy to cloak imperial theft and deadly intervention in the language of spreading democracy and freedom, Senator Lindsey Graham’s enthusiastic endorsement of the war makes clear its real aims. While the world watched horrified as apocalyptic plumes of smoke smothered the sky over Tehran, Graham took to social media to criticize Israel for attacking oil infrastructure he hopes the US will soon appropriate. In language reminiscent of 19th century European colonialism, he told Fox News viewers that “When this regime goes down, we’re gonna have a new Mid-East, we’re gonna make a ton of money...Venezuela and Iran have 31 percent of the world’s oil reserves. We’re gonna have a partnership with 31 percent of the known reserves.”

This so-called dawn of a “new mid-East” rests on US efforts to demilitarize and de-develop all opposition to its expanding settler-colony of Israel, with renewed genocidal bombardment of Lebanon and Gaza, and continued frontier violence in the West Bank. The role being played by the complicit and normalizing Arab states in the Gulf is an indication of what US imperialism hopes to inflict on the rest of the Arab-Iranian region: to lay down all weapons in the face of an expansionist settler-colony, to open the door to capitalist extraction, and to become a site open to any and all penetration by US-Israeli military bases.

Over the last decade, the US-Israeli media apparatus has been carefully



Iranians protest the US attacks, Tehran, Iran, June 22, 2025. Photo by Majid Asgaripour.

activating a subset of Iranian diaspora, who are today being weaponized in service of this war. Trump used them to connect the war to January’s protests in Iran; the domestic struggles of Iranians are cynically invoked as justification for murdering Iranians.

It is essential for Iranians to raise their voices, both from within Iran and in the diaspora, and set the record straight on what the past month has made clear to all. We must resist narratives of “Persian” exceptionalism rampant in our communities in order to recognize the unity of struggle throughout West Asia. The current aggression against Iran is just one node in a decades-long war. Its aim is not only to shatter Iranian society, but also weaken resistance to imperialism in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and across the region, opening new frontiers for the decaying American empire and enabling Israel to realize its Messianic fantasies of dominance.

Iranians recognize that the single greatest obstacle to their freedom, development, and self-determination, and to that of all people of the region

is this imperial war of aggression. Just as they have for centuries, Iranians are resisting, heroically defending their land and their futures. The steadfastness and spirit of resistance that has kept Iranian civilization living and thriving for millennia came to the fore

their power plants in order to protect them. In these final hours, Iranian musician and dissident Ali Ghamasari sat alone right in front of a power plant under threat of bombardment, and played the tār, a testament to the resilience of an ancient culture in the face of anni-

is a Betrayal of Islam.”

As Iranians inside Iran stand strong, those of us residing in the imperial core have a moral obligation to them to do everything in our power to stop the bombs from dropping on their heads, and to continue resisting the decades-long campaign of imperial aggression — be it in the form of war, sanctions, assassinations, infiltration, or any other form of intervention.

We, Iranians of differing political views and of all walks of life living in the diaspora, refuse to play the role of collaborators in the destruction of our homeland and our people, and affirm our solidarity with our siblings inside Iran against our common enemies. We recognize that the spectacle of an overwhelmingly pro-war and pro-imperial Iranian diaspora is a manufactured myth, designed to impose silence on those millions of Iranians who are now globalizing the defense of their people.

It is our compatriots’ right to determine their own future; it is our responsibility to make sure they have a chance to do so, free from the malign influences of empire.

As Iranians inside Iran stand strong, those of us residing in the imperial core have a moral obligation to do everything in our power to stop the bombs from dropping on their heads

in moving scenes in the final hours before Trump’s genocidal deadline. In response to the threat to destroy all of Iran’s energy infrastructure, Iranians gathered together and, showing bravery that inspired people around the world, formed human chains around

hilation. Many Iranians are also recognizing the urgency of unity across the region. In the aftermath of the so-called “ceasefire,” the fate of which remains unknown, thousands of Iranians gathered in Enghelab Square in Tehran chanting: “A ceasefire without Lebanon



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