

READING PALESTINE



A tiny curriculum compiled by

ALTERNATIVE
WORKING
ASSEMBLY

Recorded at GOOD TIMES BAD TIMES

March 19, 2022
ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK
Rotterdam

DOSSIERS & LETTERS

[01] ALTERNATIVE WORKING ASSEMBLY

*Wild and Consensual Demands Towards WdKA
Regarding Palestine and Political Double Standards
2021*

[02] UTRECHT IN SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

*Demands to Utrecht University
2021*

[03] WdKA OFFICE FOR INCLUSIVITY

*Statement Regarding the Removal of the
Solidarity Banner for Palestine
2021*

[04] EUC COLLXCTIVE

*Dear Universities, Practice What You Teach
2021*

[05] GRADUATE GENDER PROGRAMME

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

*Palestine Solidarity Statement
2021*

[06] RICHARD MCNEIL-WILLSON


*SOAS ICOP Policy Briefings
"Pro-Palestine Activism and Prevent"
2021*

[07] ERASMUS SCHOOL OF COLOR

EUC COLLXCTIVE

ALTERNATIVE WORKING ASSEMBLY

*Collective Response to Selective Solidarity
with Ukraine and Palestine
2022*



ARTICLES, ESSAYS, & INTERVIEWS

[08] MARIA NADOTTI

Jadaliyya Magazine

"What is Happening in Palestine?"

An Interview with Ariella Aisha Azoulay"

2021

[09] DECOLONIZING ARCHITECTURE ART RESEARCH

Permanent Temporariness

"Interlude I: On the Border | ALESSANDRO PETTI |

On the Border Between Palestine and Israel | August 2022"

2018

[10] LANA TATOUR

Overland Magazine

"Why calling Israel an apartheid state is not enough"

2021

[11] ANGELA DAVIS ET AL

The Case for Sanctions Against Israel

"Justice for Palestine: A Call to Action from

Indigenous and Women-of-Color Feminists"

2012

[12] LISA TARAKI AND MARK LEVINE

The Case for Sanctions Against Israel

"Why Boycott Israel?"

2012

[13] DECOLONIZING ARCHITECTURE ART RESEARCH

Permanent Temporariness

"Interlude IV: Campus in Camps: A University in Exile |

ALESSANDRO PETTI | Dheisheh Refugee Camp | June 11, 2013"

2018

[14] HIND AWWAD

The Case for Sanctions Against Israel

"Six Years of BDS: Success!"

2012

[15] DECOLONIZING ARCHITECTURE ART RESEARCH

Permanent Temporariness "Decolonization |

In conversation with OKWUI ENWEZOR | London | 2014"

2018

STORIES

[16] GHASSAN KANAFANI

The Land of Sad Oranges

1958

[17] MAHMOUD DARWISH

In the Presence of Absence

2011

[18] FADY JOUDAH

LA Review of Books

"My Palestinian Poem that 'The New Yorker'
Wouldn't Publish"

2021





ALTERNATIVE WORKING ASSEMBLY

#1



WILD

AND



CONSENSUAL

DEMANDS

TOWARDS

WdKAs

REGARDING



PALESTINE



AND



POLITICAL



DOUBLE

STANDARDS

CLAIMER

This document, the series of discussions that preceded it, and the unpaid collective labor behind it are not a replacement for the inclusive and public conversations the institution should be organizing. It is the labor of the institution to facilitate mindful dialogue with its constituents in order to shape school policy according to needs shared by staff and students—especially those most marginalized. We would like to say that we refuse to do this work for the institution, but by gathering these demands at a public assembly (01 June 2021) and digesting them in this document, we have already allowed the institution to shirk its responsibility.

Because we have found the institution's response to what transpired between 13 May– 11 June 2021 (see Timeline) lacking in many ways, we have taken on the burden of education, as well as those of organization, circulation, and emotion. This has been taxing. We understand that our exhaustion may be part of the institution's strategy.

We do not sign these demands with our names because we understand that coming forward may mark us as “unpleasant” and precarize our permanence within the school. We exercise our right to opacity and reject criticism on the fact that we wish to remain not so much anonymous as under the protection of collective authorship. Critiques on this decision are often born of privilege. It is easy to demand transparency from a position of safety.

This is the framework we claim.

SITUATIONER

The following document presents the process and results of the call to action of the Alternative Working Assembly (AWA) .

AWA is a loosely organized group of students and staff that came together in 01 June 2021 after a series of events related to protests in solidarity with Palestine. AWA wanted to address and take action on:

- a) double standards within the school regarding the right of its constituent body to democratic and legally protected expression; and
- b) the dissonance of being asked to engage with a decolonial curriculum without this task being taken on by the institution as an integral practice.

A public assembly (AWA #1) was organized as a response to a series of meetings proposed by the management of WdKA to address anger—coming from teachers and students, and a network of sympathy outside of the academy—after the repeated removal of pro-Palestine banners from public and private institutional spaces. These meetings, announced by email on 21 May 2021 to the entire school body of Willem de Kooning Academy (WdKA) and Piet Zwart Institute (PZI)

EMAIL SUBJECT LINE:

Message from Dean and
Management Team,

proposed a form of “dialogue” built to contain and repress. In the course of a single day (27 May 2021), three 30-minute sessions were offered between 17.00–19.00 hrs. The dean and the educational managers would be present during these sessions, which could only accommodate a maximum of twelve people. Many at the institution thought that this was not public dialogue meant for institutional self-reflection. It was perceived as a form of damage control. (Since these meetings: silence. No concrete course of action has been announced nor have any updates followed.)

The demands collected during AWA #1—and the way in which they were gathered—prototyped an alternative to the WdKA management’s censorship and double standards. We could not accept the usual platitudes: “These things take time,” “It’s complicated,” “Our hands are tied.” These statements ring hollow. It can be done. It’s really not that complicated. And maybe the wrong hands are on the wheel.

These demands invite public scrutiny, once again, on the systemic culture of double standards and false politicality that allows this hypocrisy to thrive in the first place. This is an urgent call for accountability not just towards Willem de Kooning Academy, Piet Zwart Institute, and Hogeschool Rotterdam. These concerns stain many academic institutions in the Netherlands. In the words of researcher [Silvio Lorusso](#): *“A double bind is in place: in several academies, the educational level prizes the political to the extent that nothing can escape it; while the managerial level is blind to it, or even actively against it when it goes beyond “content”, that is, when it is truly political.”*

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 13 May Free Palestine banner hung on the fire escape of Karel Doormanhof building by PZI Fine Arts students.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- 15 May School asks the students to remove the *Free Palestine* banner. A meeting between the dean and PZI Fine Arts students is scheduled to discuss the matter after weekend.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- 17 May Before the scheduled meeting at 14.00 hrs, the banner is forcibly removed by the school. Students then reject the dean's meeting offer, but after some negotiation, finally agree to speak with him. Students emerge unsatisfied with the reasons offered for the banner's removal.
[INSTAGRAM](#) (PZI STUDENT)
[INSTAGRAM](#) (TEACHER GROUP)

WdKA official statement published.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
[WdKA WEBSITE](#)
- 18 May PZI Fine Arts student statement published.
*Solidarity Statement with Palestine and
Condemnation of the Banner Removal*
[INSTAGRAM](#)
[NEWS ARTICLE](#)

- 18 May (cont...) Students hang the banner up again. It is immediately taken down.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- Petition issued by anonymous WdKA staff.
Double Standards on Free Palestine Banner
[LINK](#)
- 19 May Anonymous protest posters affixed to the pillars outside of WdKA Blaak building entrance.
Stop Ethnic Cleansing, Free Palestine
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- 20 May Statement by some students and staff of Erasmus University Rotterdam, Erasmus University College (EUC), WdKA and PZI.
Dear Universities, Practice What You Teach
[SHARED DOC](#)
- 21 May Email from WdKA announcing in-person meetings with management and dean.
[PDF COPY](#)
- Removal of small Palestine flags hung inside of a student's private studio, on the windows, at PZI Karel Doormanhof building. According to the student, she is told that if she insisted on hanging them again, security would deny her access to the studio and call the police.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- 25 May WdKA dean's personal statement sent by email to the school body.
Communiqué / Reaction and Reflection
[PDF COPY](#)

- 25 May (cont...) EUC students hang banners in solidarity with PZI protest. These were also removed.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- 26 May WdKA Office for Inclusivity (04i) statement published on MyWdKA.nl.
Statement regarding the Removal of the Solidarity Banner for Palestine
[INSTAGRAM REPOST](#)
- Stop Ethnic Cleansing, Free Palestine* posters on the pillars outside of Blaak school building covered by other posters.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- 28 May Statement issued by the teaching staff of PZI Fine Arts.
[INSTAGRAM](#)
- 31 May *Students for Justice in Palestine* protest walk from EUC—WdKA—PZI Karel Doormanhof. Solidarity signs left on the windows of the building are immediately removed by security.
[ANNOUNCEMENT](#)
[PROTEST DOCUMENTATION](#) (PZI Student)
[PROTEST DOCUMENTATION](#) (Teacher Group)
[SIGNS BEING REMOVED](#)
- 1 June Alternative Working Assembly #1 (AWA) takes place. Organized by staff and students of WdKA, it is open to the public during the guest speaker portion and closed to WdKA staff and students only during the *Consensual (Demand) Writing Workshop*.
[ANNOUNCEMENT](#)
[PUBLIC AWA TALKS](#)

2 June

This is not a watermelon banner put up on the staircase of Karel Doormanhof building. It is removed on the same day.

[INSTAGRAM](#)

3-11 June

Holding Palestine protest initiated by PZI Fine Arts students, coordinated by [Diana al Halabi](#). Students decide to physically hold the banner instead of attaching it to the fire escape. Staff and students from WdKA and Erasmus University College, along with extra-institutional allies, volunteer to hold the banner in hour-long shifts for one week. Amongst other activities, these protesters hold reading groups, provide food and drinks, and build makeshift “comfort architecture” —assembled and dismantled every day, without damage to the building—to keep things generative and comfortable. The fire escape becomes a transdisciplinary and cross-institutional classroom.

[DAY 1](#) — Thursday, 3 June

[DAY 2](#) — Friday, 4 June

Security approaches protesters to [negotiate](#).

[DAY 3](#) — Monday, 7 June

[DAY 4](#) — Tuesday, 8 June

Security attempts to [seize banner](#). Students resist peacefully but are threatened with “problems.”

[DAY 5](#) — Wednesday, 9 June

[DAY 6](#) — Thursday, 10 June

[DAY 7](#) — Friday, 11 June

*RESULTS
OF
ALTERNATIVE
WORKING
ASSEMBLY*

*LIST
OF
DEMANDS*

NOTE FROM THE COLLECTIVE EDITORS

The consensual demands put together by the staff and students who attended AWA #1 have been edited for concision and clarity. Care has been taken to preserve tone as much as possible.

The “wild” list of non-consensual demands has largely been left untouched to preserve the spirit in which they were written.

This is not an academic paper but rather the voice of a constituency.

We present these demands to the WdKA management through the school’ s Office for Inclusivity (O4i), who have agreed to act as stewards for the negotiation and implementation process.

*CONSENSUAL
DEMANDS*

*O.
REGARDING
PALESTINE*

*WE
DEMAND*

...

0.1 That WdKA and Jeroen Chabot issue a formal and public apology for the removal of the *Free Palestine* banner on 17 May 2021, hung by students of PZI a few days prior.

0.2 No censorship in school spaces, virtual or physical, should be imposed on expressing solidarity with Palestine. Students should not be intimidated by security, staff, or managers in the name of the institutional enforcement of this so-called neutrality towards Palestine.

0.3 Transparency about institutional ties with the state of Israel in terms of financial contributions and cultural connections or otherwise, followed immediately by clear actions to boycott, divest, and sanction (BDS).

0.4 That WdKA retract and apologize for the official statement it put out on 17 May 2021. In this retraction, it must endorse and recirculate the [Utrecht Gender Studies Department statement](#) regarding this issue as well as the [statement written by the WdKA Office for Inclusivity](#). If it is to uphold the calls in its curriculum for decolonization, WdKA should condemn Israel's de-facto annexation of Palestine, calling it by its name: a settler-colonial state of apartheid.

0.5 That WdKA push Hogeschool Rotterdam to take a clear stance against Israeli settler-colonial apartheid in Palestine and endorse BDS policy.

*CONSENSUAL
DEMANDS
(cont...)*

*1.
REGARDING
TRANSPARENCY*

*WE
DEMAND*

...

1.1 That all major policy decisions—such as but not limited to curricular changes and appointment of management—are made with consent of the student and staff body.

1.2 That information regarding organizational structures and policies of the school—such as but not limited to position hierarchies (clear organigram), decision-making procedures, and trajectories of working with security officers—be stated in concise, well-crafted language (both Dutch and English), easily accessible to students and staff.

1.3 That the identity of the board members and their financial ties to other institutions, organizations be made publicly available.

1.4 Financial transparency about the full budget allocations, including regular assemblies to actively involve students and teachers on decision-making regarding expenditure.

*CONSENSUAL
DEMANDS
(cont...)*

*2.
REGARDING
DOUBLE
STANDARDS*

*WE
DEMAND
...*

2.1 Public acknowledgement that educational spaces are not and cannot be “neutral” . We condemn the instrumentalizing claim to neutrality. This results in double standards.

2.2 Active decolonization of the curriculum in a concrete form. This means structural support and implementation, especially in support of work already being done by some teachers and students. This includes:

- a) a clear policy on Islamophobia and all other forms of institutionalized racism;*
- b) a genocide memorial, to acknowledge that these changes have been enacted in response to the settler-colonial violence against Palestine;*
- c) inviting other educational and cultural institutions to a national conversation about these issues; and*
- d) concrete financial and administrative support and advancement to faculty doing decolonial work within the school.*

We also demand that existing support for decolonial work (and the teachers/students leading it) not be retracted at the institution’ s political convenience.

2.3. Commitment to true and concrete diversity work and to a safe structure of care—administratively, financially, and otherwise—for the entire school body including students, faculty, and support staff. We demand these supports be executed at once and continue in the long-term.

*CONSENSUAL
DEMANDS
(cont...)*

3.
*REGARDING
SUPPORT*

*WE
DEMAND*

...

3.1 Facilitation of a democratically elected WdKA Student Union with a permanent space, funding, and a bank account.

3.2 Expansion funding and sufficient hours for the Office for Inclusivity, in line with the EDI advisory report (equity, diversity, and inclusion) they have written for the school.

3.3 Public recognition and financial support for the extra-curricular work being done by independent student and staff groups (such as SPIN, AWA, WdKASUx) to collectively better the institution in critical ways.

3.4 Provision of material and legal support to cover tuition and living costs for students from Non-EU countries who need it, such as but not limited to affordable housing, paid work opportunities, scholarships.

3.5 Free and open space to democratically express ourselves and our political positions outside of hate speech.

3.6 Creation of safer opportunities for dialogue for staff, students, and faculty, on our terms, wherein upper management listen to demands made and issues raised.

NON- CONSENSUAL DEMANDS

WILD LIST

The following list of demands is not consensual. This means that they are shared by a number of people who joined the AWA session but not necessarily everyone. This list comprises all the “wild” demands that came up and were documented in each group of the *Consensual (Demand) Writing Workshop*. These demands—framed initially as needs and concerns—were distilled, step by step, into the primary, consensual list you just read. Consensus was built by consolidating small discussion cells into successively larger ones until the group came together as a whole. See Appendix B for the method.

These wild demands are published in acknowledgement of the fact that processes of consensus do not necessarily come up with the “best” ideas. Consensus decisions represent what a group can agree on, not necessarily the most ground-breaking or effective course of action. A process of consensus must also pay attention to the call of the wild.

GROUP 1

1. There should be a student union with power (at Rietveld students and teachers have the same power); this would already give students more of a reassuring feeling. It can go beyond what the dean/management established. – what would be a more formal student union?
2. Socio-political union with direct relation to and who is respected by the management; it addresses double standards.
3. Financial and beneficial transparency
4. Standing behind ~~(geopolitical?)~~—neutrality should not be tolerated [I think it is more than geopolitical neutrality]
5. **Solidarity:** a collaborative curriculum must enable solidarity—how can you decolonise if you don't practice it—standing behind ~~(geopolitical?)~~—neutrality should not be tolerated
6. Where is the 'official' rule on having to be neutral
7. Have an idea of social justice, behind what is considered “equality” and “inclusion”

Transparency on whether the institution aligns with its ethics.

Visualization of funding and structure.

When students and staff have meetings the setting is not hostile
(IS THIS WHAT YOU MEAN?)
the setting cannot be hostile for sure

Office for Inclusivity EDI report: management should take its advice seriously (as well as more individual contributions of students) and WdKA should provide a clear response to all points addressed in 04i report, what they will do to fix its issues and , on the other hand, what inhibits them from fixing all of them

Acknowledging that objectivity does not exist.

Management needs to change.

Or communication style needs to change.

Only responding when there is media backlash.

GROUP 2

1. Student union

- To constitute a WdKA official student union (with a bank account).
- anchor in the institution
- Demand permanent space for WdKA Student union.

2. All policies (should be stated in writing) are available to read and share.

3. Transparency

- transparent model of decision-making and financial budget
- involving the existing different groups active in the academy when speaking out for the institute
- urge for a more democratic process in decision-making

4. Change WdKA policy stopping students from voicing individual and collective opinions that do not contain hate speak or encourage hate against people

--> Change WdKA policy on geopolitical statements so individual and collective opinions can be stated outspokenly, still not containing hate speech or encourage hate against people

5. WdKA to call on Government of the Netherlands to pass motion calling Israel out as an Apartheid State

6. Funding created for displaced people to study for free

7. Do essential effort to bring concepts as “post-colonialism” and “hacking” into practice—they are not just subjects that can be taught within a term with objective kind of deliverables to be handed in individually

--> actively foster a space for critical thinking and radical political praxis

8. Take out creating pioneer from WdKA advertisement

10. ~~Stating that objectivity doesn't exist, all actions are subjective and to continue on that:~~ Art and design is not something universal. Contemporary art is not the universal way of making art
--> asking as well to contextualize the political position of “Willem de Kooning” on abstract expressionism and contemporary art

GROUP 3

1. Make institutional decision-making processes more transparent
 2. More involvement of students and teachers in decision-making e.g., through monthly assemblies
 3. Offer financial (and legal) support to Non-EU students
 4. Facilitate physical spaces for students/student collectives and unions to come together and voice their needs
 5. Take political stance and don't hide behind a facade of neutrality, openly discuss history and 'role' of institutions
 6. Offer possibility to invite a guest lecturers from Non-EU countries
 7. Facilitate dialogue with other (educational) institutions
 8. Protect and acknowledge the right of the students for democratic expression (this should exclude racism and other forms of discrimination/hate speech)
 9. Support teachers in their decolonial/anticolonial work (that is already being asked from them) and facilitate structural change
 10. No teacher should lose their job nor should any student be impeded from graduation for participating in actions of institutional critique
 11. The dean should be elected, not appointed
- Important decisions taken by the WdKA management should be done in conversation with the Ethics board, the Office for Inclusivity, a self-assigned board of teachers, student unions
 - WdKA provides material support for the collective assemblies to continue happening
 - WdKA provides material support to cover tuition and living costs for students from countries formerly colonised by NL
 - Public communication of WdKA is done in collaboration with student unions, self-assigned board of teachers
 - Spreadsheet transparency on expenditures within the academy

GROUP 4

1. Demand transparency, like public regular assemblies, in the form of paid trips, inviting guests, lobbying, make it public
2. Safe spaces provided by the school for students to create socio-political gatherings
3. A student run cafeteria and cooking as a practice: using Palestinian products, supporting indigenous products
4. Adding other national days, like the United Nations Palestine Day, in the calendar
5. Clear policy with regard to Islamophobia
6. Stop the banalization of violence
7. Involve the frontline and student body, union, collectives in decision making

GROUP 5

1. Support*

- + (who gets to decide where politics starts and stops—they say they support us— but they can intervene and block), space and resources for learning and enacting a decolonial curriculum— end double standards, coherence between practice and discourse, infrastructure and curriculum
- + Transparency on policies and structures of the school (Who checks on who, who is in a position of power to take decisions, for example, who gives demands to the security guards? and so on). who are the board members and their histories (financial? interests/ties)?
- + Open space freedom of speech to all democratically express ourselves outside of hate speech.

2. DEMAND

- + Lowering tuition fees or scholarships for low income/non-European students using the "institutional fat"
- + Financial transparency as mandatory, institutional fat made transparent and redistributed.
- + Transparency when it comes to ties with Israel in terms of financial contributions, cultural connections leading to clear actions, sanctions and divestment.
- + Transparency: publicly stating if the institution has any ties with Israel and Endorse BDS policy. Endorse the Utrecht University statement. We also demand the school to push Hogeschool Rotterdam and the larger body of the institution to take a stance.

3. More diverse tutors, for understanding of different cultures before the feedback— respect the underprivileged students/tutors with more care

GROUP 6

1. NEED

To be listened to. Creating a space to listen.

2. DEMAND

- i) Institutional fat made transparent and redistributed
- ii) Transparency when it comes to ties with Israel in terms of financial contributions & cultural connections, sanctions, divestment.

3. DEMAND

Lowering tuition fees or scholarships for low income/non-European students using the "institutional fat"

4. DEMAND

Student-Teacher Union setup and facilitated, who have access to legal advice. How to make it independent? Keeping autonomy/anonymity to create a collective body.

5. NEED

Strike-ins, in the spirit of care work strikes,

6. NEED

Keep the curriculum, dump the assessment criteria.

7. NEED

Coherence between practice and discourse, end double standards.

GROUP 7

1. Open space to share resources/be heard, students, teachers and management
2. Regular assembly
Organizing regular General Assemblies that engages all people in the school which is a moment to make decisions/brief/communicate. We demand these assemblies to be radicalized and be a means for change. Decisions be made in the process, not behind the scenes and announced later.
3. Transparency in policies and structure of decision-making
4. Students and tutors vote for the dean
5. Take into account the materials and waste within the curriculum
6. Transparency --> who makes the decisions? what investments are made?
7. Decolonisation of the curriculum
8. Have a banner day where everyone hangs their banners on the wall with no censorship at all.
9. Have Jeroen Chabot apologize publicly
10. Have a complex and nuanced discussion about safety. We demand that the safety of all people in the institution is provided and secured; spatially, physically, and mentally.
11. A system of community accountability of the use of terms and language in official communiques that represent the institution
12. Apologize publicly about the state-like policing happening to students of PZI and WdKA and the censoring of their solidarity banner with Palestine
13. Agree to implement a way of working across different groups in the institution, a manner of power-sharing where students and teachers are co-stewards of the institution.
14. Acknowledging the presence of multiple student groups, unions, and political groups such as WdKA student union x. the political expression of unionized students is a right of freedom.

GROUP 8

1. Address top-down management hierarchy, dismantle that and include student/teacher union in decision process.
2. Staff to have contracts that allow more stability (2/4 years of temporary contracts, etc.)
3. Students and teaching staff to be involved in selection of management
4. Involve always the existing working groups to listen and learn to understand before you state something

APPENDIX

A. COMMS

I. AWA Call to Action

II. AWA Invitation

B. METHODOLOGY

Consensual (Demand)

Writing Workshop

C. CASE STUDY

Demands to Utrecht

University by *Utrecht*

Students in Solidarity

with Palestine

D. PRESS

External perspectives
and coverage

APPENDIX

A

COMMS

I.

AWA

Call

to

Action

Alternative Working Assembly Announcement
SAVE THE DATE: 1 June, Tuesday. 17h

This call to action is a refusal of WdKA's invitation to fragmented, closed-circle discussions about the censorship of student protests in solidarity with Palestine this week. We hereby announce on-going plans for an independent and alternative working assembly for addressing the larger issue of double standards in WdKA/PZI/HR. Save the date, stay tuned for details.

REFUSAL/PROPOSAL

We, a loosely organized body of students and staff:

REFUSE the management' s invitation to fragmented and top-down "dialogue" . It is impossible to have meaningful conversation about these complex issues in a mere 3 sessions of 30 minutes with only 12 people in a room. Dialogue that intends to build community requires patience, time, labor, transparency for keeping power accountable, and opacity for the vulnerable. There are no comfortable shortcuts.

PROPOSE the formation of an alternative working assembly to come up with a set of demands towards the school. We are in discussion with invested students, staff, and external advisors to prototype an efficient, accountable, and open-as-possible format. By Friday, May 28, we commit to providing clear information on how to witness and/or participate in this alternative working assembly.

CLAIMER

This is not a move against the Israeli people or Israeli students in the school. This assembly wants to address and take action on a) double standards within the school regarding the right of its constituent body to democratic and legally protected expression; and b) the dissonance of being asked to engage with a decolonial curriculum without this task being taken on by the institution as whole.

It is the labor of the institution to organize and facilitate mindful dialogue with its constituent body. This dialogue should not just be a steam valve for pacification, tokenizing politically desirable discourse without any concrete outcome. These dialogues should instead represent a (much larger) process that begins with gathering qualitative baseline data. School policy should be shaped in acknowledgement of the needs and agency of students and staff. We *refuse* to do this work for the institution. What we *can* do is set our boundaries. By making our needs clear, we give the institution the opportunity to reformulate their proposition for dialogue and meet us where we stand.

This is the framework we claim.

APPENDIX A

COMMS
(cont...)

II.

AWA

Invitation

We, a loosely organized group of students and staff, had very, very long hours of conversations to discuss the format of this Alternative Working Assembly (AWA). By consensus, we have decided to offer two imperfect modes of attending the AWA: participant and witness mode. The full AWA shall be conducted with a limited group of participants (max. 100) on a video call, and the first half of the proceedings shall be streamed live on YouTube for anyone to witness. We do not aim to mirror WdKA management's chain-of-command strategy wherein disagreement is suppressed for the sake of keeping up appearances. We welcome instead the possibility for productive dissent, generous disagreement, and nuanced discussion. This is a working assembly. It requires our collective labor.

MODES OF ATTENDANCE

PARTICIPANT MODE

Video Call

Link distributed privately

The link to enter the AWA video call will be distributed through active student groups and teacher networks. Due to technical limitations and as a measure against trolling, we can accommodate a maximum of 100 participants who are free to remain opaque if they wish (camera off, using nickname, etc.). This space is being set up on the basis of mutual respect. No hate speech or verbal aggression will be tolerated.

WITNESS MODE

Live Stream

Link released publicly on Instagram

The first half of the proceedings will be live-streamed on YouTube to the general public, as we

value transparency and accessibility. Witnesses may join the conversation via chat function, which shall be monitored by AWA participants to include, as much as possible, voices from the stream. A link to watch shall be provided 1 hour before AWA begins.

TRANSPARENT (PUBLIC) PROGRAM: 1h 30m

(GUEST) SPEAKERS: 35m

(UNMODERATED) DISCUSSION: 45m

OPAQUE (PRIVATE) PROGRAM: 2h

CONSENSUAL (DEMAND) WRITING WORKSHOP
WORKLIST

- 1) Prototype and demonstrate forms of assembly, dialogue, and consensus-building that challenge institutional hierarchies.
- 2) Collectively write a set of demands to address double standards in WdKA' s curriculum and policies.

APPENDIX B

METHODOLOGY

*Consensual
(Demand)
Writing
Workshop*

ORGANISATIONAL STEPS

1. Each individual will write down a list of 5 or 4 demands (depending on the number of the attendees) before the start.
2. Then the individual will pair up in making a bigger group of 2, 3, or 4 people to make a (consensual) collective list together of 4 or 5 demands.
3. Groups will then pair up to make bigger groups and make another (consensual) collective list.
4. This will go on until there is one big group left which will arrive at a final (consensual) list for the whole room.

DIAGRAM

DO' s and DONT' s

For moderators and participants

- 0) Each group should volunteer a secretary to log the demands/needs/concerns that arise in each conversation. Keep a log of all your demands, specifying which ones are consensual (supported by the whole group) and which ones are non-consensual (specific to a person/s).
- 1) All members should be heard. Introvert and extrovert people should find a balance in participating and giving each other room to express themselves. Consensus works only with engagement of all.

2) All ideas should be heard and tolerated.

++ Regardless of which demands are agreed upon by consensus, we should keep a log of all ideas that did not make consensus. All ideas are valid.

++ After something has been written by a particular group, the wording should not be changed, as much as possible (except for minor corrections of syntax and spelling). Respect the work that came before you.

3) Groups smaller than 15 people are unmoderated and self-regulating. In groups larger than 15 people, you must ask permission to speak by raising your hand with the Zoom function. Asking for permission to speak helps a lot but is not advised for groups under 15.

4) Moderators are not there to give opinions but rather to observe/facilitate/amplify discussion. The groups bigger than 15 people will be moderated by AWA volunteers. Here, the moderator should not participate in the discussion by giving opinions. They will encourage people to talk (sometimes this happens by asking questions) & gently silence the ones who take more time than others.

5) MODERATOR TIP: Putting the words of another in your mouth to address disagreement.

++ One way to understand: Randomly ask members what was just said before allowing them to speak, in case they are opposing somebody else or cutting somebody's speech. This brings empathy to a rival view.

++ Another way to understand: When there is conflict, ask members to repeat the words of the person whose opinion is contrary to theirs (randomly, regardless of which view was correct in your opinion.) If the person who is against something speaks out loud the words they *think* they are disagreeing with, this is an opportunity to create empathy and increase comprehension of where the disagreement is coming from.

6) Moderators must name/call out acts of aggression, if any.

7) Moderators will constantly manage time and make sure everyone is heard.

APPENDIX C

CASE STUDY

Utrecht Students in Solidarity with Palestine

Demands to Utrecht University

The Global North has been complicit in the 73 years of ethnic cleansing and genocide occurring in Palestine by the settler state of Israel. This compliance has taken place through financial support, vetoing resolutions (both EU and UN) critical of Israel, and very importantly reshaping the dialogue around these atrocities, making it seem like an equal conflict rather than the one-sided colonization it is. Based on our research as well as testimonies of student's lived experiences, systemic prejudice and support of this false narrative is embedded in many educational institutes. As students, staff, and alumni, we demand acknowledgement and accountability followed by necessary action by Utrecht University and University College Utrecht to denounce any such practices.

1. Utrecht University maintains an organisational culture in which quality takes precedence over quantity.
2. Within Utrecht University, the onus is on all staff, students, and other stakeholders in teaching and research to uphold scrupulous academic standards and integrity.
3. All research and all study programmes within Utrecht University (Bachelor's/Master's/PhD) focus on the importance of scrupulousness and integrity.

The aforementioned are quoted from the *Code of Conduct for Scrupulous Academic Practice and Integrity at Utrecht University*. Throughout this document it can be seen that these standards have not been met. Taking into account these core values that UU claims to uphold, the following demands must be considered with utmost seriousness. They should be followed by rigorous action in order to disengage the University from discriminatory practices and cease association with bodies that contribute to the violation of Palestinian human rights.

Areas of necessary improvement can be broken into the following categories

- I. Academic Responsibility
- II. Academic Boycott
- III. Divestment

I. ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

The University environment has been hostile against members perceived to have an “Arab identity” . This leads to Islamophobic micro- and macro-aggressions, and racial and ethnic insensitivity, as is reflected in the curriculum and the academic discourse that takes place in classrooms. To tackle this systemic issue:

- ★ We demand that the University take definitive steps to acknowledge the incredibly discriminatory Niqab ban on campus, and account for the harm done to past, present, and future students.
- ★ We demand that more non-western teachers, educators, and guest lecturers of colour be included in the teaching faculty and critically review the curriculum. This applies to all courses, with an emphasis on those that concern issues in the Global South, and in this context specifically the SWANA region. This is also an invaluable way for the University to realise its goal of increased diversity and a decolonized curriculum.
- ★ We demand that more colonial studies courses be introduced into the curriculum that actively dismantle the colonial narrative prevalent among the UCU and UU academia.
- ★ We demand that courses that are focused on Arabic and “Arab” culture (*Arabic Language and Culture* course – UCHUMARA11) or discuss them marginally, be radically modified. As exemplified by the case of UCHUMARA11, these changes should target features of the course such as the literature assigned to students, the format of the course, and importantly, the quality of teaching.
 - The current Orientalist viewpoint panders solely to a western audience and perpetuates problematic stereotypes (examples cited in the attached letter). In addition to being unethical, this practice has poor academic standards.
 - A course design that does not solely present its cultural content in relation to the West.

- Course content that includes a critical and historical approach to culture, which takes into account the power dynamics between the West and the rest of the world, colonisation, and systemic racism. Neglecting the integral role politics and history play, especially in the context of present institutions of power dynamics and racism, leads to a one-dimensional and incomplete understanding of the culture of the SWANA region.
- Instructors with a cultural background that aligns with the language they teach—most importantly, in the context of non-Indo-European languages—is very important.
- Course companions that refrain from stereotyping and instead provide the resources to prevent it.

★ We demand that the course *History and Politics of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* – UCINTHIS32 either be discontinued or undergo a fundamental restructuring.

- The title of the course itself is misleading, painting the Arab people and countries as a monolith. The title also does not recognise the apartheid and colonisation occurring on Indigenous Palestinian land.
- The course describes the USA as a “leading mediator in the peace process” in the aforementioned “conflict”, which is factually inaccurate. The USA is explicitly biased, supporting Israel disproportionately in terms of close military relations, financial aid, and blocking 53 UN resolutions against Israel.
- A student describes their experience in the course as exemplifying Eurocentric hegemony. They were prohibited from using the term “colonialism” in a class centred around an apartheid state. The class “rejects academic terminology complicit in the reproduction of settler colonial language” and makes use of the unfair power dynamics in favour of a

European professor to undermine students' (especially students of colour) contribution to discussions.

- In such an "objective" course, the discussions and literature it includes are disrespectful and even dehumanizing to Palestinian students, whose lived experiences are being devalued and questioned.

★ We demand that the University establish mandatory workshops for teachers and set higher academic standards for the curriculum and class discussions.

- There is a significant lack of separation made between the concepts of the Middle East, Islam, and the Arab people in classroom discussions. These concepts are distinct. Not recognising this confirms existing prejudices and engages in a narrative that paints all Arab people as a homogenous "other" .
- Instructors must be prepared to enable a nuanced and sensitive representation of the cultures they are teaching. It shouldn't be the role of students to do that, such as in the case of UCHUMARA11, but rather a requirement of the teacher to show cultural and racial sensitivity.

★ We demand that the demands made in this letter be taken in collaboration with those made by the UCU Anti-Racism Action. Both of these seek to hold the University and UCU accountable to the standards of intersectionality, ethics, and transparency they claim.

II. ACADEMIC BOYCOTT

Recognising the need for freedom in research but also ethical responsibility of the University as a research institution:

- ★ We demand that the University stop engaging in research activities that could have direct military effects via programs such as the collaboration with Technion university in the Phonsi project.
 - The Phonsi project works on quantum dot technology specifically used for nanophotonics, which has broad military applications, from tracking to surveillance.
 - Specifically, they may contribute to cockpit technology, surveillance technology, and 'security programs'.
 - <https://www.ugent.be/en/research/research-ugent/eu-trackrecord/h2020/msca-h2020/msca-itn-phonsi.htm>
- ★ We demand the University be mindful of the partnerships it chooses to engage in, especially when its repercussions may be used in military action against Palestinians or may result in their active displacement.
- ★ We demand the University halt its active collaboration with Israeli universities, such as the current exchange programs in Hebrew university of Jerusalem, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, University of Haifa, recognising that:
 - These universities are willing and persisting accomplices of the occupation, settler-colonialism, and apartheid by developing weapons systems through research as well as developing literature used to rationalise ethnic cleansing and extra-judicial killings.
 - For example, Technion, with whom University Utrecht has collaborated, develops drone technology and bulldozers that are used to demolish Palestinian homes. Tel Aviv University was responsible for the

“Dahiya doctrine” which supports disproportionate use of force against Palestine.

- Technion further played a role in constructing and surveilling Israel’s illegal wall, and Hebrew University, with which UU has an internship program, has student accommodation in illegal Israeli settlements as well as having confiscated land in East Jerusalem.
- Students who go on such exchange programs are encouraged to visit occupied lands, with no in-depth understanding or sensitivity to the violence that takes place in those regions (as seen in published student experiences on the website).
- Israeli universities also institutionally discriminate against Palestinian students. Anti-Arab and Islamophobic dialogue by Israeli academics is commonplace and not met with any reaction.
- Israeli universities also support and justify suppression of Palestinian education.
- <https://palestina-komitee.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Technologie-en-onderdrukking-def.pdf>

III. DIVESTMENT

With regard to current funding of complicit bodies by the University:

★ We recognise the strategy of Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions (BDS) for Palestinian freedom, defined as:

- BOYCOTTS involve withdrawing support from Israel's apartheid regime; complicit Israeli sporting, cultural, and academic institutions; and from all Israeli and international companies engaged in violations of Palestinian human rights.
- DIVESTMENT campaigns urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds, and universities to withdraw investments from the State of Israel and all Israeli and international companies that sustain Israeli apartheid.
- SANCTION campaigns pressure governments to fulfil their legal obligations to end Israeli apartheid and not aid or assist its maintenance. Sanctions may include banning business with illegal Israeli settlements, ending military trade and free-trade agreements, as well as suspending Israel's membership in international forums such as UN bodies and FIFA.

From the official BDS website

★ We recognise the importance of economic sanctions such as those proposed by BDS, given the request of Palestinian civil society organisations and the success of the method in the South African Anti-Apartheid movement.

★ We reiterate that BDS is a means to pressure Israel to comply with international law and should not be conflated with making a political statement. The steps outlined below aim to position the University as non-complicit in its funding with the on-going apartheid and ethnic cleansing occurring in occupied Palestinian territories.

- ★ We demand that hereinafter the University not buy products or acquire services from companies like G4S, Eden Springs, HP, Coca-Cola, and Nestlé, which participate in Israeli violations of international law.
 - The companies the University chooses to fund should be responsibly reviewed by the University itself.
 - Multiple UN documents detail human rights and international law violations breached by these companies, and the University should feel accountable for reviewing what it chooses to fund by purchasing products from certain companies similar to those mentioned above.
 - For example, vending machines throughout the University currently supply products from Coca-Cola, Nestlé, and PepsiCo.
- ★ We demand the University to cease any contracts with such companies that run on a monthly basis as well as any long-term contracts with these companies once the contracts have expired.
- ★ We strongly suggest that the university transition from the use of ABN AMRO, which invests in Israeli Big Data companies.

STATEMENT REGARDING THE REMOVAL OF THE SOLIDARITY BANNER FOR PALESTINE

“Until we are all free, we are none of us free.”

— Emma Lazarus

In the past weeks, we have been approached by several students and staff members with the question of what our position is on the violence inflicted on the Palestinian people by the settler colonial state of Israel and whether we endorse the position of neutrality that is being held by the management of WdKA and led to the removal of the banner. We have been asked repeatedly how we can be committed to decolonization, social justice and community care if we do not speak out against these injustices – rightfully so. Our short answer is: No, we do not endorse their views and decision to remove the banner. Below we will explain why.

First of all, we want to clarify that we as the Office for Inclusivity (in short: O4i) are not part of the management of WdKA; we operate independently as an Office and can therefore also take positions that differ from those of the management. This Office was called into being after continuous protests and calls for inclusivity from grassroots student collectives and individual students and staff members within and outside WdKA. Structural and institutional change is something that does not come without collective sacrifice and shared responsibility; we continue to collaborate closely with (former) students and staff who made our jobs possible and who are still advising us, and in dire need of whatever support the Office can offer them since WdKA is sadly a very unsafe place for many.

On top of providing support to marginalized students and staff, our main tasks remain to critically research the state of equity, diversity and inclusion at WdKA while also advising management on how to embed this Office within WdKA's existing framework. The result of our labour will be an independent advisory report that is due in July 2021. Rest assured, the O4i will stay at WdKA. Management has already made this very clear in individual meetings we have had so far, but also during the General Assembly where many teachers were present. Whether we as individuals,

Alfie and Ali, will stay is yet to be decided but the O4i as an important entity to ensure inclusivity at WdKA stays.

With all of this being said, as the O4i, we have always been committed to social justice and freedom for marginalized people – not only at WdKA, not only in the Netherlands, but around the world. We stand in solidarity with all marginalized and oppressed peoples everywhere. It is therefore only natural for us to also stand in solidarity with the Palestinians. We strongly condemn the ethnic cleansing of and colonial violence against the Palestinian people. We urge everybody to educate themselves and learn more about grassroots organisations in Palestine and their resistance against settler colonialism. Find ways of speaking up and taking actions that work for you. Activism is not a one size fits all and should always be sustainable.

Learn more about Palestine here:

IG accounts (trigger warning: graphic content of death, violence): [@eye.on.palestine](#) [@letstalkpalestine](#) [@boycott.divestment.sanctions](#) [@mohammedelkurd](#) [@muna.kurd15](#)

Books: [Fayez A. Sayegh – Zionist Colonialism in Palestine](#)

[Angela Y. Davis – Freedom is A Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine and the Foundations of A Movement](#)

Reading lists: [Palestine: A Masterlist](#)

[20 Books to Educate Yourself on Palestine](#)

[Free Palestine! A Readinglist](#)

We want to emphasize that we as the O4i are here for the entire WdKA community. May it be clear that we stand against all forms of oppression, which includes anti-Jewish racism. Our denunciation of the violence towards the Palestinians, is directly aimed at the settler colonial state of Israel that is responsible for human rights violations, occupation and apartheid against Palestinians. One should condemn all these atrocities, without equating anti-colonialism to anti-Jewish racism. We strongly encourage students and staff to educate themselves about these important distinctions.

In our efforts to work towards community care in an intersectional way, we do not get to pick and choose where to align when it comes to situations of injustices or to even think about opting for positions of neutrality in a racist and colonial world. The personal is always political, and the same thing can be said for education and art, as primary vessels for political theory and praxis. As community workers with a scholar-activist background, we remain close to our hearts and politics in whatever jobs we hold, and we wish light and ancestral strength to all Palestinian people.

In solidarity, #FreePalestine,

Alfrida (Alfie) Martis & Ali Şahin – Office for Inclusivity, WdKA

Dear Universities, Practice What You Teach

In 1990, a number of Dutch universities and researchers took a principled stand in reaction to the crimes committed by the apartheid regime and the resulting hindrance on the freedoms of Black South Africans. Today, as a result of decades of increasingly discriminatory government policy, the Israeli government forcibly segregates Palestinians, preventing them from living and traveling, placing limitations on their formal political rights, and also informally engaging in collective punishment, punitive arrests, indefinite detention of children. As the academic freedom to even discuss the rights of Palestinians is an ongoing concern at universities worldwide, standing up in solidarity with Palestine and supporting the call for BDS as students and staff become all the more important. We as students and staff members from Erasmus University Rotterdam, Erasmus University College, Willem de Kooning Academy and Piet Zwart Institute have therefore joined forces to urge our institutions to take an active stance towards a free Palestine and condemn the ongoing violence committed by Israel against Palestinians.

The Israeli assaults are present-day manifestations of a colonial project that dehumanizes and devalues Palestinian lives in order to 'justify' Israeli domination and violence. The formation and sustenance of the Israeli state cannot be seen as mutually exclusive from the necessary exploitation and expropriation of Palestinian peoples and land. Moreover, the sustenance of European and North-American capital accumulation cannot be seen as mutually exclusive from the formation and sustenance of the state of Israel. We have seen with Mark Rutte's support for Israel that an explicit denial of the rights of Palestinian peoples is supported by violent institutions that carry with it a colonial legacy. With international as well as Israeli law, we see how legal institutions serve to justify the eviction of Palestinians from homes in Sheikh Jarrah. After all, we must not forget that the academic institutions that the Netherlands prides itself on have taken active part in the politics of justification of violence as well.

Our institutions present themselves as critical and internationally oriented; as institutions that train us to recognize how injustices come into being and are reproduced. Specifically, these institutions offer and market courses that engage with postcolonial and decolonial theory, equipping students with tools to analyze and understand settler colonialism and its present-day manifestations. Our institutions claim to make 'positive societal impact' by training us how to understand our own position in society and how we can contribute to tackling injustices.

We are writing to you today, standing on the shoulders of many activists, scholars and communities who have been urging for years to put words into action and condemn the violence perpetrated by the Israeli government directed at the Palestinian people. We demand that our institutions **practice what they teach** and do their part to further the well-being of Palestinian people, who have the same rights to life and stability that are guaranteed to all people through international law.

We demand our institutions to not partake in discourses of impartiality, 'both-sides' discourse, and similar techniques, rather we want to work together to ensure the freedom of international debate and research by removing obstacles that prevent Palestinians from fully taking part due to ongoing attacks on their physical and mental well-being. Claiming to not take a side, to remain silent, to remain 'politically neutral', has the effect of sustaining the status quo. **Under these circumstances in which so many have lost their lives, their loved ones, their homes, there is no**

room for apparent neutrality nor empty commitments. There must be radical solidarity; solidarity that goes beyond verbal support but manifests itself in active support of life-affirming policies.

Our demands:

1. We urge our educational institutions to release a statement:
 - Condemning the theft of Palestinian land and homes, including those in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan;
 - Condemning the attacks on worshippers at the Al-Aqsa mosque;
 - Condemning the massacre of civilians and destruction of critical infrastructure in Gaza;
 - Calling for an end to the occupation of Palestine as well as an end to the Siege of Gaza;
2. We urge our institutions to take the following course of actions:
 - Calling for Erasmus University to pressure and lobby for the Algemeen Burgerlijk Pensioenfonds to end their 219,70 million investment in Israeli companies;
 - Cutting all institutional ties with Israeli universities including the discontinuation of exchange programs;
 - Ensuring the academic freedom - which the university prides itself for - of students through showing active commitment to decolonizing the curriculum;
 - Ensure the academic freedom of students and staff both online and offline by taking steps to protect staff from threats and attacks related to research and teaching on these crucial contemporary debates.

Know that while you stay silent, we will not. We expect the universities to support our call for active solidarity with the Palestinian people. In this manner, the institutions that we are all part of can stay true to their intended and communicated values. 'Critical world citizens', 'critical thinking', 'positive societal impact', and 'creating pioneers' should not remain mere marketing rhetoric, rather it should lead to genuine accountability towards global injustices.

Palestine Solidarity Statement

Lifting our voices for Palestinian freedom will never be anything but an embracement of love and justice for all.

ANGELA DAVIS

If the olive trees knew the hands that planted them, their oil would become tears.

MAHMOUD DARWISH

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

DESMOND TUTU

14/05/2021

Updated 19/05/2021

We, in the Dutch, European, and International academic and cultural sectors, condemn the brutal Israeli assaults against Palestinians and stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people who are rising up against seven decades of Israeli [settler colonial](#) violence. The last week, yet again, witnessed further Palestinian death and dispossession at the hands of the Israeli state; from violent attempts to force out Palestinian inhabitants of Sheikh Jarrah, to the brutal suppression and arrest of [protestors](#), and the horrifying aerial assault over Gaza. As we write, Gaza, the most densely populated besieged Palestinian enclave, is being heavily bombed by Israeli military from the air and the sea. So far, over 220 Palestinians, including 62 children, were killed and hundreds injured by Israel. The death-toll is increasing by the second, as the world watches and reports on the events in the language of “conflict” and “clashes”. Decades of Palestinian dispossession from land and life, ethnic cleansing, and ecological devastation committed by the Israeli settler colonial state cannot be reduced to ‘a conflict’. We reject this supposedly objective and neutral terminology used in describing these practices of ethnic cleansing. As scholars, activists, and artists committed to social justice, decolonial, anti-racist, LGBTQ, and feminist politics, we cannot and refuse to look away from Palestine. We acknowledge and contest the long histories of colonial and [settler colonial](#) violence, and the role of Europe and North America in establishing, supporting, and maintaining the Israeli colonial occupation of Palestine. At a time when public and scholarly critiques of Israel in US and European universities are being [silenced by the charge of anti-semitism](#), we firmly stand by our responsibility to speak out against such grave human rights and environmental violations against Palestinians. This comes from the conviction that a political critique of Israeli [apartheid](#) and settler colonial state violence cannot and should not be conflated with the racist speech of anti-semitism.

We commend the people of Palestine all over historic Palestine for their steadfastness and determination to affirm life in the face of such senseless violence.

We urge other academic programmes and departments in the Netherlands, Europe, and internationally, as well as cultural organisations, museums, and activist collectives, to join us in signing this statement to condemn the ongoing Israeli state violence and take collective action to express solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for life in dignity.

–This letter was initiated by the Graduate Gender Programme at Utrecht University.

Over the past couple of days, numerous higher educational institutions — from universities to university colleges, to universities of applied sciences — have issued statements of support and solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We think it is great that educational institutions are making their support and solidarity public to their students and staff. We also think it is great that they offer resources and possibilities of postponing deadlines to students and staff that are affected by the war in Ukraine. These are the kind of care-centred approaches to education we would *always* like to see.

At the same time, we cannot look past the selective solidarity, hypocrisy and racism of educational institutions that have previously claimed neutrality. To illustrate, a year ago, during the brutal bombing of Gaza and the continued dispossession and displacement of Palestinians from their homes, various student and staff collectives, and individuals, asked these same institutions for a public (endorsing of a) statement in support of Palestine. We were met with answers such as: “we cannot issue a statement in support of Palestine, because then we would have to issue statements in support of everything that is happening in the world” or just bluntly “no.” In 2020 a Palestinian student’s flag was confiscated by campus security. A year later, several banners dropped at EUC, WDKA, and the Piet Zwart Institute were taken down for expressing political statements on university buildings because institutions “cannot give the impression that we take sides”¹, which is not a paraphrased excerpt, but a direct quote from staff representing the above-mentioned institutions.

Currently, around the EUR campus, there are several flags and banners that express the university’s solidarity with Ukrainian scholars and students. Simultaneously, WDKA students are encouraged to attend a student-organized workshop to make banners in support of Ukraine: highlighting that the university can indeed promote these kinds of student initiatives. The same attitude was not taken towards students who voiced their solidarity with Palestine. Instead, they were directed to sources that could “offer participants insights about some of the historical and contemporary complexities that are often overlooked in the media”² so that they could “prepare” for a discussion in which they experienced continuous silencing. Palestinian students who could not focus on their course work because of the brutality, viciousness and nefariousness done unto the people of Palestine would have to go to extra lengths to prove that they indeed were not in the right mindset to hand in a paper on time.

These are clearly double standards. Double standards we have seen from media coverage on refuge and refugees to various railway companies offering free transport and countries opening up their borders to Ukrainian refugees, to our own universities extending their support and solidarity to the people of Ukraine. None of these aforementioned things were **ever** offered to refugees from the Global South. Nor have these universities **ever** extended their support and solidarity to countries from the Global South. **We cannot but conclude that these extensions of grace, humanity, civility, care, and love are extremely racialized.**

We stand with the people of Ukraine, as we have stood with the people of Palestine, the people of Yemen, the people of Afghanistan, the people of Somalia. We stand with all those facing the

¹ G. Jacobs (email sent to the EUC student body, May, 26, 2021)

² ECLAS (email sent to the student body, June 29, 2021)

brutality of war and the devastation of death, dispossession and displacement which accompanies it.

We will hold the university accountable. Their response sets a clear precedent that the university is capable of issuing statements of solidarity and support and that it is capable of having a care-centred approach towards students and staff. We ask the university to keep that same energy and to not (re)produce selective, racialized solidarity and support. **Solidarity should not be dependent on people's proximities to whiteness and Europeanness.**

With all this in mind, we reiterate our demands "which can be summarized as a set of questions that we expect the institution, with all its concentrated power and resources, to be able to answer"³ and we urge institution(s) to reflect on their hypocrisy and double standards and extend the solidarity they offer white, European bodies to **all** individuals.

Reiteration of demands:

- How will the institution practice what it exalts us to teach?
- What is the institution's stance on censorship?
- What is the board's criteria for silencing some voices and amplifying others?
- Is the institution concerned that this double standard could directly impact the future of the education of our students?
- How committed is the institution to ensuring a safe and accountable space for (pedagogical) discussion and action, for both students and staff?
- How will the institution match the labor of its frontline?
- Is the institution brave enough to do the work it requires of its students (and teachers), term after term?
- How will the institution involve its constituency in decisions that affect the way they are able to show up for the work that needs to be done?
- Is the institution ready to unlearn its faulty structures?

Here are some links which can serve as reminders to previous student and staff attempts at reaching out to the institution:

<https://www.erasmusmagazine.nl/en/2021/06/09/dear-eur-action-still-demanded-ii/>

<https://www.dub.uu.nl/en/opinion/utrecht-university-cut-ties-israeli-universities>

<https://networkcultures.org/entreprenariat/notes-on-the-wdkas-pro-palestine-resistance-banner-removal/>

<https://soundcloud.com/euc-collxctive/collxctive-podcast-v2>

<https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/double-standards-on-free-palestine-banner-at>

Signed,
Alternative Working Assembly, EUC Collxctive and Erasmus School of Colour

³ Taken from statement issued last year by stydents at WDKA and Piet Zwart Institue (May 2021)

Pro-Palestine Activism and Prevent

by Dr Richard McNeil-Willson (Research Associate at [Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies](#) & Researcher for the [Directorate General of Migration and Home Affairs, the European Commission](#))
(29 June 2021)

The Government is confusing legitimate political activism with the supposed threat of ‘extremism’. This has been seen in recent reports of British school children being referred under the Prevent Counter-Terrorism Strategy for pro-Palestine activism. If schools are to create democratic citizens, such activism should be regarded as **a legitimate expression of political engagement and not ‘extremism’**. Current approaches which involve the implementation or threat of Prevent are weakening **democratic rights and Freedom of Speech**. Under international law many Israeli settlements are illegal, so protesting against them is not a sign of ‘radicalisation’ or ‘extremism’, rather it is a sign of healthy democratic engagement.

Despite the illegal actions of the Israeli Government, including the forced expulsion of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah and the bombing of Gaza in May 2021, **activism in support of Palestinian rights has faced criticism by the UK Government and has been threatened and derailed by the Prevent Counter-Terrorism Programme.**

Groups such as [Palestine in Schools](#) and the [Islamophobia Response Unit](#) have recorded **hundreds of instances** of pro-Palestinian activism being mistaken for [‘extremism’ or antisemitism](#). [Muslim Engagement and Development](#) (MEND) alone reported over 146 instances, with 40% leading to a verbal or physical reprimand, 17% to detention, 2% to suspension, 12% to exclusion 2% to the police being called; and 1% to a Prevent referral. The most common forms of activism punished were the wearing of Palestinian emblems such as the flag or the keffiyeh (30%), and the expression of vocal support for Palestine (23%). **School students have been told that displaying the Palestinian flag equates to support of terrorism** – one educator comparing it to a swastika whilst others used discriminatory language against Muslim students. Individual cases include a 15-year-old being sent to isolation for **wearing a Palestinian scarf**, a student being cautioned for **wearing a ‘Free Palestine’ badge**, a 14 year-old being physically abused by staff, and a 5 year-old removed from class for questioning; others faced Islamophobic language.

These and [other examples](#) of students or [activists](#) being framed as ‘extremists’ take place in the context of UK counterterror legislation that **disproportionately targets Muslim activism**. In particular, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (‘Prevent Duty’) places legal requirements on public bodies and educators to identify early signs of ‘radicalisation’; resulting in the traumatic referral of children who have done no more than express a legitimate political opinion. This is facilitated by the fact that Prevent’s notion of ‘extremism’ is ill-defined and vague, and therefore targets [many forms of democratic activism](#). The resultant **shutting down of legitimate protest can promote rather than prevent political violence: undermining democratic rights can legitimate violent alternatives.**

To challenge this threat to our democracy, there must be **a truly independent review of Prevent** that works with community groups, academics and minority communities who are concerned by the expanding scope of counter-extremism. **The language of Prevent and counter-extremism frames activism as a threat rather than an essential part of an active democracy; as such it must be removed to ensure that legitimate political engagement can be encouraged and facilitated in schools and society.**

Visit <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/cop/> and [@SOASICOP](#) for further briefings. If you would like a personal briefing or clarification on any of the issues raised here, please contact the author at richard@mcneilwillson.eu. Do contact Professor Alison Scott-Baumann and her team for further briefings and access to other experts as150@soas.ac.uk

The views expressed in SOAS ICOP Briefings are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of SOAS.



Photo of a Palestinian child from Linda Sarsour's Instagram account (@lsarsour)

[The following interview was conducted for the Italian publication Doppiozero on 21 May 2021. Click [here](#) to read the interview in Italian.]

Maria Nadotti (MN): What exactly is happening in Palestine? Western media, prisoners of a “prudent,” and to say the least, obsolete interpretative scheme, repeat clichés that do not shed light on the present or the future.

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (AAA): There are better commentators than me on the situation, mainly Palestinians, among them Lana Tatour, Noura Erakat or Salman Abu Sitta. Palestinians are rebelling against the Zionist colonialism all over Palestine. They are struggling against the same oppressive and lethal colonial mechanisms by which they have been dispossessed and ruled for decades. What makes this moment different is the support Palestinians are receiving globally. This support illustrates cracks in the Israeli propaganda machine that for years imposed the terms with which its regime of violence could be discussed, namely with terms such as “two sides” or “conflict.” From 1948,

Palestinians have struggled for their freedom and return to Palestine, and their requests now reiterate the same ones they put forward since they were expelled from their country and targeted by the violence of the Zionist state. The global support Palestinians are receiving now testifies to the way people around the world oppose their leaders' continued support of the Zionist state. These were the Zionists who colonized Palestine, but we should not forget the support they received from different imperial powers, who were interested in pitting Zionists—at the time they were mainly European Jews—against the Arab and Muslim world.

MN: Is this perhaps the umpteenth chapter of a colonial-style conflict, in which, despite everything, the colonized does not give in and even allows itself not to give up defense in its entirety?

AAA: The colonized never gave up. For decades, millions of Palestinian refugees continued to transmit to their descendants their attachment to Palestine and their adherence to their Palestinian identity. Contrary to the expectations of colonizers everywhere, that the elders will die and the youth will forget, millions of Palestinians all over the world did not give in nor up.

MN: In which way, in your opinion, does the ongoing Palestinian uprising differ from the first and second Intifada, which began in 1987 and 2000 respectively, both following acts of provocation similar to those that triggered the current uprising?

AAA: Imperial imaginary and the violent technology of the archive lure us to participate in the fragmentation of any anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggle. Many were interested and invested in depicting Palestinian resistance, as if it started in 1987. Palestinian resistance, however, started in 1948, with the recurrent attempts of tens of thousands of Palestinians to return to their homes. Israel waged war against them, called them "infiltrators," executed them at the border, and gained international support to "defend" "its" "borders." I put each of these terms deliberately in quotation marks, to oppose the spatial and temporal imperial dividing lines implied in them, as they define the right of the imperial state to defend itself and the borders it imposed against Palestinians in order to keep them outside of their homeland. The scope and breadth of the current wave of resistance has spread a decolonial hope, but there is no reason to dissociate it from its previous manifestations during the last seventy-three years.

MN: Which will be the effects and repercussions of this uprising and what is happening, both in the Palestinian and Israeli camps? The political leaderships of both countries appear to be in agony, bypassed from the ground in both Israel and Gaza and the Occupied Territories.

AAA: Let me start by reminding you that there are not two countries; there are colonized and colonizers. The colonized understand their situation and struggle accordingly, guided by reparative justice. The colonizers are in a permanent state of denial, justifying their genocidal violence and

structural dispossession of Palestinians with invented narratives about their precariousness vis-à-vis those whom they attack and dispossess. In the settlers' colony, Jewish children are raised to believe that they are "Israelis," without knowing that this identity is part of a regime of violence against Palestinians, used by the regime that bestowed it on them. This is why, in response to Palestinians' resistance against the colonizers, the majority of the Jewish citizens of the state—for decades captives of the settlers' education and media system that generate and diffuse organized lies about the organized crime of the plunder of Palestine—are not taking to the streets like everywhere else in the world, to express support of Palestinians who are under attack. As being "Israeli" means existing in order to deny Palestinians' their right to return, I stopped recognizing myself in the Israeli identity assigned to me at birth, and I reclaimed the identity of my ancestors in Palestine—Palestinian Jews. As a Palestinian Jew, there are no longer doubts what is the meaning of the current situation—a settler colonial regime that uses growing scale of violence to reproduce itself.

MN: In the current uprising there is a brand-new element: the solidarity of the Palestinians who live in Israel and who are citizens of the Jewish State. How do you interpret their revolt? Has their firm reaction to what is happening in Gaza and the Occupied West Bank have any chance to modify the current political balance?

AAA: This is not a new element. Palestinians never believed in the way that the Israeli state aimed to fragment them and bestow different identities on them. It is not easy to resist the organized violence of a colonial state, but even when Palestinians did not overtly resist, it does not mean they gave in or up. Before they took to the streets against the genocidal attack on Gaza, they protested against the eviction of families from Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem and against the invasion to al-Aqsa mosque.

MN: The so-called two-state solution is now absolutely impractical. Yet, in Europe and the United States, there are those who continue to support it, perhaps in order not to get out of the impasse and let things go on with the usual ferocity. What is your position in this regard today and what do you foresee for the future?

AAA: The "two states solution" has its origins in European imperial thinking and modes of ruling colonized peoples, namely through partition. Since the very beginning of the British mandate in Palestine (mandate being another imperial technology), the British crafted plans to partition Palestine and to "offer" to the Zionists lands that they were not in a capacity to offer since it did not belong to them. Even though the Zionist state emerged out of such a partition resolution, the reality created on the ground in seventy-three years of colonization is that of a one state condition. Supporting the "two states solution" means mainly one thing: stealing more time, life, lands and hopes from Palestinians. Palestine does not need more imperial solutions, surely not another vision of fragmentation. Palestinians are asking to be free. Palestine should be free from the colonizing regime. With every brutal attack on Gaza, like the current one, it is hard not to see in the Zionists the French colonizers in Algeria. While Algeria and France were territorially separated, what people tend not to understand

regarding Palestine is that Palestine and Israel exist in the same territorial unit. Hence, to continue speaking about partitioning this unit into two states is keeping the imperial deception alive.

MN: You are currently living in the US. How do you feel about the foreign policy of the President Biden with regard to Palestine and Israel? Is there a "new" mood in the country with respect to the Middle Eastern scenario?

AAA: No. In Europe and in the US people do not understand the extent to which Biden's support of the right of the Zionist state to defend itself is lethal. This imperial statement against Palestinians was used by the Israeli government as an unrestricted permission to exercise genocidal violence. People should be reminded that Gaza is the biggest open-air prison in the world and, as Salman Abu-Sitta wrote: "To bombard two million people in 360 km² by air, land, and sea is Genocide."

Interlude I

ON THE BORDER | ALESSANDRO PETTI

ON THE BORDER BETWEEN JORDAN AND PALESTINE-ISRAEL

| AUGUST 2002

By the time we get to Amman, in Jordan, it's the middle of the night. Illuminated signs revolve in the desert blackness, randomly lighting up the parched land along the road leading from the airport to the house where we'll be spending the night. The glittering lights of exclusive nightclubs shine in the distance. We wake up early in the morning. A hard day of waiting and sun lies before us.

In order to come to Palestine with my wife Sandi and her parents, Anwar and Monira (all three with Palestinian passports), I decided to cross the border with them, over what Jordanians call the King Hussein Bridge and Israelis refer to as the Allenby Bridge, instead of taking the easy route via Tel Aviv, which is barred to Palestinians.

There are three border crossings between Jordan and Palestine: the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge is the closest one to Jerusalem. It's built on the lowest ground in the area, at the same level as the Dead Sea. During the trip, the heat rises and the air pressure drops; our ears pop and we begin to sweat as our bodies attempt to compensate. The taxi that has ventured into this inhospitable land is an old Mercedes with a dozen seats, dilapidated on any terrain.

We are on the Jordanian side of the border. In silence, we get out of the vehicle. Sandi and her parents walk off a few meters ahead toward the entry point reserved to Palestinians.

Left on my own, my defenses naturally go up and my attention is more alert. A young man takes my luggage from me and I automatically follow him. I wouldn't know where else to go, and there aren't any signs with information written in a language I can decipher. The boy, around eighteen years old, takes me in front of a baggage track and sets the suitcases down on the rollers. He turns around, looks at me, and then leaves. It doesn't take a genius to understand that my next stop is some seats set in the shade, out of the merciless August sun. A few minutes later I hear a voice behind me. I follow it and find myself at passport control. Everything's in order.

After five minutes, I'm already in the no man's land. A ribbon of asphalt, fenced along the edges, with signs warning of landmines. Up ahead, there's the Israeli checkpoint. Two young men with rifles dressed in camouflage make us get out of the bus and inspect it from top to bottom. A short time later they make us get on the bus again, but we only drive a few meters. Another checkpoint.

The Israeli flag flutters on top of the only hill rising out of the dry plateau. We're stopped for another half hour. I don't know why or what we're waiting for. All of a sudden, a barrier lifts up and we're free to pass over the Israeli border. A surreal expanse of green spreads out in front of our eyes: palm trees and flower beds. Welcome to Israel.

The border is not a line. It is a space with depth to it. The materials it's made out of are the same as the ones in cities, just used differently. Here, for example, a retaining wall made out of reinforced concrete serves as a barricade.

Inside the border, the rules are few but essential. All flows are strictly monitored and controlled. The border is a machine that tears apart everything that crosses it into separate, classifiable elements, only to put them back together again one way or another when they exit. This applies to people, too, not just objects.

When I get off the bus, I'm greeted by some young soldiers who look like American teenagers, with low-slung pants and baggy t-shirts. A female soldier comes up to me and asks me where I'm heading. "To Bethlehem," I answer. "Follow me, please," she says.

They take me out of the "normal" line. I sit down and wait for the security staff. Another female soldier starts questioning me: where am I headed? Whose house am I going to? When will I be coming back? Where's my luggage? The same questions asked in different ways for half an hour.

When the interrogation finishes, another soldier shows me into a dressing room. Very courteously, he asks me to undress. He checks every single piece of my clothing, then goes out, taking my shoes with him. I am back in the place where I started, only shoeless. Two hours have already gone by since we got to the border and I wonder just how long we are going to have to stay here.

They take me into another room and ask me to open up my suitcases that are arranged on steel tables, like meat in a butcher's shop, easy to clean. Seated, I wait for every single thing I own to be inspected.

Truth be told, I was prepared for this treatment so I take it calmly, even when they tell me that my personal belongings may now be repacked after their vivisection. It's the same feeling you get when you come home to find that a burglar has dropped by in your absence. You feel violated: your dirty laundry, your agenda lying open, everything

has been touched by other hands, the hands of complete strangers. I try not to lose my humanity, and with great calm and dignity I fold everything as if I am about to take my leave from a Grand Hotel. I will my gestures into slow motion, trying to be as refined as possible in spite of the anatomical theater I've wandered into.

This particular procedure is reserved for Palestinians and anyone who has contact with them.

My clothes are now back in my suitcase. I think I've finally finished, but where's my passport? They tell me I have to pick it up in an office near the exit: this is where I'm told to fill in yet another form, and I'm asked the same questions.

Four hours to cross the border. The border is not a line: you can't cross it by stepping over it.

Once I'm over the border, the heat clutches at my throat and the light is blinding. We bargain with a taxi driver over the fare for the trip. The discussion goes on longer than expected because there are problems reaching Bethlehem. To get there, you first have to pass through Jerusalem. That would be the easiest route in theory, but Palestinians are not authorized to go there. The taxi driver doesn't want to risk any of the rural routes because there might be roadblocks on them. We agree on a relay arrangement: the first taxi will take us as far as the outskirts of Jerusalem, and from there we'll have to get ourselves another ride.

Along the road, we come across colonies and Bedouin tents. Two opposite ways of using the territory: one sedentary, one nomadic. The settlements are fenced in by walls whose foundations are dug into the ground, while the Bedouin tents are perched on the surface of the land. Immobility versus motion. Controlled borders versus freedom of movement.

At 2:30 p.m. we're on the outskirts of Jerusalem. At 3 p.m., curfew starts. We have to hurry. Yet another checkpoint. We get out of the taxi in the middle of a line of vehicles packed tightly together. We jump into a new taxi that turns around and goes back for a bit over the same road we just arrived on.

I'm starting to give up on the idea of ever making it, when the genius of self-organization suddenly comes into play. Whenever a new checkpoint is set up by the Israelis, Palestinian taxi drivers respond by planning a new road to get around it. They pool their money together to lease a tractor and clear a few hundred meters with it: voilà, a new passage that circumvents the checkpoint. The soldiers know about it, but these are the crazy rules of the game and the Palestinians are forced to abide by them. The taxi driver who's taking us on this part of the drive is a refugee; he risks receiving a fine that he wouldn't be able to pay and being arrested, but what can he do about it? It's the only way he has to get by.

After a long series of twists and turns, we finally make it to the gates of Bethlehem. We get out of the car to find the entire family there to greet us. Our marriage, which had taken place a few weeks earlier in Rome, is celebrated in the family courtyard with singing and dancing. My thoughts turn for a second to the courtyards of Italy, lit by the blue glow of televisions, and to the same TV news story broadcast every year, about the mid-August exodus and counter-exodus and the bad weather that's ruining everybody's summer holidays.

ON THE BORDER BETWEEN PALESTINE-ISRAEL AND JORDAN

| AUGUST 2006

Tala, our daughter, was born in Bethlehem on a beautiful spring morning in the month of February. She was birthed in a clinic built with funds from the Japanese government and tended by a Palestinian nurse who spoke perfect Neapolitan, learned during a long stay in Naples where he had studied.

After the first few days spent rejoicing her arrival, we find ourselves faced with a dilemma: How is Tala going to be able to cross the border and get out of the Occupied Territories? How will the border machine work on her, with a Palestinian mother and an Italian father? If Tala leaves Bethlehem as an "Italian," she'll only be able to come back as a tourist; if she leaves Bethlehem as a "Palestinian," she'll be treated as such by the Israeli army, meaning she won't be able to move freely around the Occupied Territories and Israel.

The border machine is an interactive architecture. It changes depending on the citizenship of the person who crosses through it. As a prototype of biopolitical architecture, maybe in its purest form, it becomes more or less porous depending on the nation it belongs to. It constructs and deconstructs itself depending on the relationship that each individual has with the state, a regulating device that mediates between birth and nationhood.

By being Italian and Palestinian, Tala puts the pre-established spatial and political order into crisis, revealing the fiction of national belonging and all the politics that stem from it. The mere thought of having to face with her the device that awaits us on the Jordanian border, the only entry and exit point for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, is deeply disturbing to me. The idea of being forcibly stripped bare by the border machine makes almost any certainty you have about your rights and existence falter.

We hire the usual group taxi, a dilapidated yellow Mercedes. Concerns about the trip are magnified by the sense of uncertainty. How many times have I heard it said that the real problem is not knowing what the rules are? At the beginning, I always used to say, "There must be someone who decides what you can and can't do!" Then I discovered that this void is a form of government.

Take the roads, for example. The Israeli army can decide for security reasons to blockade a given part of a road used on a daily basis by thousands of Palestinians. The blockade is enforced by deploying patrols, roadblocks, and barriers. After a few months, even though the roadblocks have been removed, the Palestinians—fearful of running up against soldiers and being arrested—choose not to use the road anymore, thus leaving it to the exclusive use of the colonists.

This is what differentiates the rule of Israel in the Occupied Territories from South African apartheid. The separation here is not crudely imposed by “Whites Only” signs, but rather by a much more sophisticated system ensuring that the prohibitions will be internalized. You will never find signs saying “Forbidden for Palestinians—Reserved for Tourists and Colonists” along the roads used exclusively by them. The regime of prohibitions is implemented by verbal orders given by Israeli military officers who control a given area of the territory. Palestinians found on a road they are prohibited to use or for which they lack the required permit risk being put into jail or having their vehicle confiscated. This is why Palestinians are forced to use group transportation vehicles that shuttle between one checkpoint and another.

The border machine is not located on state lines; rather, it acts on the boundaries of Palestinian cities and villages.

To increase our chances of being able to cross the border into Jordan, which is only open a few hours a day, we set out from Bethlehem at 4:30 in the morning. Luckily, Tala is sleeping. We get through the first checkpoint, called “the container”, without any particular problems. I’m the only Westerner in the bus, one of the few Westerners to take the roads reserved for Palestinians. The soldiers at the checkpoints have often asked me, “What the fuck are you doing here?” And I’ve always answered, “It’s a long story, actually...” To save themselves the boredom, they almost always let me through.

Having come as far as Abu Dis, I’m beginning to think that this is a charmed trip with a remarkable lack of snags, when we suddenly come up against a mobile checkpoint. They stop us and tell us that we can’t pass this way. The passengers start to get upset. They start shouting, waving airplane tickets departing from Amman airport. The soldiers pretend they don’t hear. There’s no point in arguing.

Tense and irritated, the taxi driver turns the car around and after a few meters sets off down a back road through the countryside. Tala wakes up: the car is rocking a little too violently to be mistaken for a cradle. I hold her baby seat against my chest as tightly as I can. We cut across a field of ancient olive trees. After a short while, we’re back on the main road, with the soldiers behind us grinning from the checkpoint.

The road starts to go downhill and we gaze out the windows onto the hills of the Dead Sea, dotted by colonies and Bedouin camps. My thoughts turn toward the nomadic city designed by Constant. I tell myself that its tragic dimension, rarely discussed,

takes concrete form in this place. I have always thought of Constant's *New Babylon* as a dystopia: the vision of a world in collapse, in constant conflict, not so much between nomads and sedentary peoples as between different conceptions of nomadism.

As I look out the car window, I recognize the encampments and the new colonies. Lost in my thoughts, I fail to notice that, instead of driving straight toward the Jordanian border, the taxi has detoured and is entering into Jericho. Suddenly, I find myself facing the border, but it was a different one than the one I had crossed four years previously.

The first time I arrived here from Jordan, I met with the Jordanian police and then with the Israeli forces, assisted by a Palestinian police unit. Now, the Palestinians have been moved away from the official border and have set up a sham one—a border for a non-existent state—on a piece of land measuring 45 by 150 meters.

A barrier appears in front of our vehicle. We get out of the taxi and climb onto a bus that stops again after a few meters. Some Palestinian policemen climb on to check documents and luggage. The bus starts, and stops again a few meters later. They make us get off. Despite having the sensation that, throughout all of this, we were getting somewhere, we pick up our suitcases from practically the same spot where we began.

The Palestinian border is like a service station that leads nowhere. I'm flooded with a feeling of overwhelming sadness. The idea of Palestinian sovereignty appears to have achieved its final form in this place: a sovereignty exercised over a miniscule plot of land inside of which all procedures are complied with for a border crossing into nowhere. The real border is five miles away. I'm flabbergasted: the police and the people in transit diligently recite their parts in this puppet theater. Everybody knows that it's make-believe, but no one objects to it.

Back in the bus, we leave for the real border, this time presided over solely by Israelis. As an Italian citizen in a taxi, I could have reached the border directly. Sandi and Tala, as Palestinians, had no way of avoiding this farce.

The trip from Bethlehem to Amman—less than 125 miles—normally takes more than eight hours. The puppet-theater border crossing has radically disheartened me. The day will come, I say to myself, when the Palestinians will climb out of their rundown buses, their overcrowded, stuffy group vans, and with a resigned but peaceful expression, say to the Israelis: "Fine, you win. This cannot be the dream of a Palestinian state that we have nurtured for so many years. We don't want a fake state, a sham border. We simply want to live and move around freely like you. We give up on our state. We just want our rights."

After hours of waiting to be able to enter the border zone, the moment comes to show our documents. Many Westerners with privileged passports do not understand the anxiety of people who are faced with the potential of being sent back. The Palestinian

travel document is once again the paroxysmal expression of this control device. It's a travel document, not a passport, and it doesn't even specify a nationality. I've seen policemen at the airport stare at it with puzzled expressions and ask, "What the heck is this?" Whoever thought up this document didn't have the courage to write the word "Palestinian" in the box for "Nationality." The adjective "Palestinian" is becoming like the adjective "Jewish": a lot of people are too scared to even pronounce it. Bad consciences.

Even though Tala is registered on my passport, for the Israelis and Palestinians, she's Palestinian, so she has to follow the same route as Sandi, a different one from mine. I don't object to this, I just ask the Israeli soldier to allow me to go with them, to let me follow the procedure reserved to Palestinians. I want to give up my Westerner privileges, air conditioning, cleanliness, and cold drinks, in order to accompany my family into the crowded buildings and hallways reserved for Palestinians.

The soldier informs me that this will not be possible and that I have to stick to the procedures for tourists. A confused jumble of questions comes to my mind. By accepting this treatment, to what extent do I make myself an accomplice to this madness? Why do all the things I've read not come to my aid, preventing me from going crazy with rage? To stop myself from dehumanizing the soldiers standing before me, I imagine that Nadav, Eyal, Ravit, Runit, and many other Israeli friends of mine might very well be disguised behind their uniforms and rifles. All I know is that I give in and, dazed, watch Sandi and Tala walk away from me.

I enter into the area for non-Palestinians. Air conditioning and Bermuda shorts. I feel ashamed of myself for giving up and accepting this privileged treatment. Me, here, with the tourists and them, over there, hoping not to be sent home. Stunned, I obey the orders issued to me: pay here, open there, get up here, go there, step down, step up, sit down...

After a few hours, I cross the bridge. I'm in Jordan. I immediately start looking for the Palestinian exit, but it's not easy to find. The building is built in such a way as to prevent human traffic flows from ever meeting up, like in hospitals, where areas and routes for healthy people and patients are kept rigorously separated. Breathlessly, I search among lazy Jordanian policemen and sweaty tourists for the door connecting the area reserved to Palestinians with the area for everyone else. I finally find the door, and before opening it, I feel like Jim Carrey in *The Truman Show* when he discovers the hidden door in the painted blue skyscape that may eject him into the real world.

THIS TEXT IS AN EDITED EXCERPT FROM | ALESSANDRO PETTI, *ARCIPELAGHI E ENCLAVE* (MILAN: BRUNO MONDADORI, 2007).

[www.middleeasteye.net /opinion/why-calling-israel-apartheid-state-not-enough](http://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/why-calling-israel-apartheid-state-not-enough)

Why calling Israel an apartheid state is not enough

Lana Tatour : 7-9 minutes

B'Tselem, a leading human rights group in Israel, recently released [a report](#) concluding that Israel is an apartheid state, with a regime of Jewish supremacy stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

The report found that Israel meets the definition of apartheid [under international law](#), which defines apartheid as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them”.

The report received widespread international media attention and was described as a “[watershed](#)” moment. But it was only a watershed moment for B'Tselem, which was using the term “apartheid” for the first time in its three-decade history, and for an international community that is so infatuated with Israeli voices. For Palestinians, none of this is new.

Dominating Palestinians

B'Tselem is not the first human rights group to call Israel an apartheid regime. In 2009, Palestinian and South African scholars published a [comprehensive report](#) that determined Israel was committing the crime of apartheid. Two Palestinian human rights organisations, Adalah and Al-Haq, were part of this initiative.

Two former UN special rapporteurs on human rights in Palestine reached a similar conclusion. In 2007, John Dugard [determined](#) that “elements of the occupation constitute forms of colonialism and of apartheid”. And, a few years ago, Richard Falk co-authored a [report](#) finding that Israel has established “an [apartheid](#) regime that oppresses and dominates the [Palestinian people](#) as a whole”. The UN secretary-general was quick to distance himself from the report, [ordering its removal](#) from the UN website.

The conversation emerging in liberal circuits around apartheid and Palestine fails to recognise settler-colonialism as the overarching structure of the Israeli state

Typical of western racism, Israelis are deemed more reliable and esteemed, and their contributions more valid than those of Palestinians who experience apartheid, colonisation and occupation every day.

Still, the B'Tselem report is a welcome development. As academic Rafeef Ziadah [points out](#), it comes “in the face of an orchestrated silencing campaign, which attempts to foreclose debate before it even begins. In this sense, it is relevant that an Israeli human rights organisation has stated what Palestinians have been arguing for years”.

While the use of the apartheid framework in relation to Israel is not new, it is gaining momentum amid the one-state reality. While the occupation paradigm is built on the false assumption of temporariness and sustains a distinction between 1948 and 1967 territories, the apartheid framework recognises that Israel is the effective governing power between the river and the sea, where it enacts a racialised regime.

Crime against humanity

Under international law, [apartheid](#) is a crime against humanity - and the evidence clearly shows that Israel is an apartheid state. Throughout the territory between the river and the sea, its political and legal systems are all geared towards ensuring Jewish racial supremacy and domination. Amid the [Covid-19](#) pandemic, Israel [refused to vaccinate](#) the millions of Palestinians who live under its control, while vaccinating Israelis, including [Jewish settlers](#), in the occupied West Bank.

But Palestine cannot be understood merely in terms of apartheid, as this offers only a limited and partial understanding of the situation. Israel is a settler-colonial state that is practising both apartheid and permanent occupation.



An Israeli soldier guards a checkpoint at the main entrance of al-Fawwar camp for Palestinian refugees on 9 July 2020 (AFP)

The conversation emerging in liberal circuits around apartheid and Palestine fails to recognise settler-colonialism as the overarching structure of the Israeli state. We have seen such dynamics in [Peter Beinart's](#) recent call for one binational state, in which apartheid is acknowledged, but not Zionist/Israeli settler-colonialism.

Racial domination is treated as a standalone feature of the Israeli state, disconnected from the settler-colonial enterprise in Palestine. Even when apartheid is acknowledged, there is no reckoning with Zionism as a racial ideology and movement.

B'Tselem's report is a perfect example of this new approach, which is coming to the forefront of liberal progressive critiques of Israel. The report does not mention colonisation or settler-colonialism even once. Paradoxically, one of B'Tselem's board members [commented](#): "Change of any kind begins with a proper reading of the reality that one seeks to alter; to look at that reality with open eyes, and to call it by its name."

Apparently, to B'Tselem, settler-colonialism is not part of this reality.

Limited understanding

The use of apartheid as a sole framework is in line with increasing attempts to limit the understanding of the question of Palestine to rigid legal categories. International law is important, and it should be leveraged to our advantage. But it would be dangerous to let international law alone guide our understanding of the reality in Palestine or the nature of our political claims. The question of Palestine is a political issue, not merely a legal issue.



Israel is losing the fight to obscure its apartheid character

[Read More »](#)

True, settler-colonialism is not illegal under international law - but this is not a reason to stake our understanding of Palestine on international law alone. By confining ourselves to international law, we risk talking only about racial domination and ignoring colonial domination. We need to talk about both, and we need to recognise that racial domination and Israeli apartheid are part of, and inseparable from, settler-colonial domination.

This is not to say that we should abandon the apartheid framework, but rather that we should be cautious of liberal readings of Israeli apartheid. Palestinians were using the apartheid analogy long before it became a crime against humanity. Comparing Palestine with apartheid South Africa has a long, radical history that predates the "recent" discovery of apartheid by some Israelis. Palestinians saw South Africa, like Palestine, as a racial, settler-colonial state, and themselves as part of a larger anti-colonial, anti-imperial and anti-racist global movement.

Palestinians have been offering political and intellectual analyses on the question of Palestine for decades. But even when Palestinians use apartheid as a framework for

analysis, it does not come at the expense of the settler-colonial framework; it supplements it.

Dismantling settler-colonialism

Israeli organisations, scholars and activists are not - and should not be - the arbiters of what Israel is and is not, or what the solution should be. The erasure of settler-colonialism in the conversation on Israeli apartheid risks displacing decolonisation in favour of liberal projects of equality. It configures Palestine as a liberal question, rather than a colonial one.

Decolonisation is not [a metaphor](#) or a buzzword thrown around easily. While it may not be easily defined, decolonisation is certainly not a synonym for liberal projects of equality, even as it is increasingly being co-opted as such. Unlike liberal equality, decolonisation demands the dismantling of settler-colonialism, its institutions and its logics. Our freedom depends on it.

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Middle East Eye.

THE CASE FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL

EDITED BY AUDREA LIM

FEATURING

OMAR BARGHOUTI
JOHN BERGER
NEVE GORDON
KEN LOACH

NAOMI KLEIN
ILAN PAPPE
SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK
AND MANY OTHERS...



CONTENTS

PART I ISRAEL/PALESTINE

~~1 Mustafa Barghouthi, "Freedom in Our Lifetime"~~

~~2 Jonathan Pollak, "Ni'lin Like Soweto"~~

~~3 Slavoj Žižek, "What Goes On When Nothing Goes On?"~~

PART II THE BOYCOTT MOVEMENT

~~4 BDS Movement Call~~

~~5 Omar Barghouti, "The Cultural Boycott: Israel vs. South Africa"~~

~~6 Merav Amir and Dalit Baum, "Economic Activism Against the Occupation: Working from Within"~~

~~7 Nada Elia, "The Brain of the Monster"~~

~~8 Joel Beinin, "North American Colleges and Universities and BDS"~~

~~9 Hind Awwad, "Six Years of BDS: Success!"~~

~~10 Noura Erakat, "BDS in the USA, 2001–2010"~~

PART III INTERSECTIONS

~~11 Ronald Kasrils, "Sour Oranges and Sweet Taste of Freedom"~~

~~12 David Lloyd and Laura Pulido, "In the Long Shadow of the Settler: On Israeli and US Colonialisms"~~

~~13 Haneen Maikay, "The History and Contemporary State of Palestinian Sexual Liberation Struggle"~~

~~14 Marc Ellis, "After the Holocaust and Israel: Can the Prophetic Heal Two Martyred Peoples?"~~

~~15 Jamal Khader, "A Moment of Truth: A Document of Christian Palestinians Calling for BDS"~~

~~16 Ran Greenstein, "Israel/Palestine and the Apartheid Analogy: Critics, Apologists and Strategic Lessons"~~

~~17 Angela Davis et al., "Justice for Palestine: A Call to Action from Indigenous and Women of Color Feminists"~~

~~PART IV CASE FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL~~

~~18 Lisa Taraki and Mark LeVine, "Why Boycott Israel?"~~

~~19 Naomi Klein, "Israel: Boycott, Divest, Sanction"~~

~~20 Ilan Pappé, "The Boycott Will Work: An Israeli Perspective"~~

~~21 John Berger, "Why a Boycott"~~

~~22 Neve Gordon, "Boycott Israel"~~

~~23 Michael Warschawski, "Yes to BDS! An Answer to Uri Avnery"~~

~~24 Ken Loach, Rebecca O'Brien and Paul Laverty, "Looking for Eric, Melbourne Festival, and the Cultural Boycott"~~

~~25 Ra'anan Alexandrowicz and Rebecca Vilkomerson, "An Effective Way of Supporting the Struggle"~~

~~26 Omar Barghouti, "Lighting a Torch Within: Anti-colonial Israeli Support for BDS"~~

~~Chronology~~

~~Resources~~

~~Acknowledgments~~

~~Contributors~~

17 JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE: A CALL TO ACTION FROM INDIGENOUS AND WOMEN-OF-COLOR FEMINISTS

Between June 14 and 23, 2011, a delegation of eleven scholars, activists, and artists visited occupied Palestine. As indigenous and women-of-color feminists involved in multiple social justice struggles, we sought to affirm our association with the growing international movement for a free Palestine. We wanted to see for ourselves the conditions under which Palestinian people live and struggle against what we can now confidently name as the Israeli project of apartheid and ethnic cleansing. Each and every one of us—including those members of our delegation who grew up in the Jim Crow South, in apartheid South Africa, and on Indian reservations in the US—was shocked by what we saw. In this statement we describe some of our experiences and issue an urgent call to others who share our commitment to racial justice, equality, and freedom.

During our short stay in Palestine, we met with academics, students, youth, leaders of civic organizations, elected officials, trade unionists, political leaders, artists, and civil society activists, as well as residents of refugee camps and villages that have recently been attacked by Israeli soldiers and settlers. Everyone we encountered—in Nablus, Awarta, Balata, Jerusalem, Hebron, Dheisheh, Bethlehem, Birzeit, Ramallah, Umm el-Fahem, and Haifa—asked us to tell the truth about life under occupation and about their unwavering commitment to a free Palestine. We were deeply impressed by people's insistence on the linkages between the movement for a free Palestine and struggles for justice throughout the world; as Martin Luther King Jr. insisted throughout his life, "Justice is indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Traveling by bus throughout the country, we saw vast numbers of Israeli settlements ominously perched in the hills, bearing witness to the systematic confiscation of Palestinian land in flagrant violation of international law and UN resolutions. We met with refugees across the country whose families had been evicted from their homes by Zionist forces, their land confiscated, their villages and olive groves razed. As a consequence of this ongoing displacement, Palestinians comprise the largest refugee population in the world (over five million), the majority living within a hundred kilometers of their natal homes, villages, and farmlands. In defiance of UN Resolution 194, Israel has an active policy of opposing the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their ancestral homes and lands, on the grounds that they are not entitled to exercise the Israeli Law of Return, which is reserved for Jews.

In Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in eastern occupied Jerusalem, we met an 88-year-old woman who was forcibly evicted in the middle of the night; she watched as the Israeli military moved settlers into her house a mere two hours later. Now living in the small back rooms of what was once her large family residence, she defiantly asserted that neither Israel's courts nor its military could ever force her from her home. In the city of Hebron, we were stunned by the conspicuous presence of Israeli soldiers, who maintain veritable conditions of apartheid for the city's Palestinian population of almost 200,000, as against its 700 Jewish settlers. We passed several Israeli checkpoints designed to control Palestinian

movement on West Bank roads and along the Green Line. Throughout our stay, we met Palestinians who, because of Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and plans to remove its native population, have been denied entry to the holy city. We spoke to a man who lives ten minutes away from Jerusalem, but who has not been able to enter the city for twenty-seven years. The Israeli government thus continues to wage a demographic war for Jewish dominance over the Palestinian population.

We were never able to escape the jarring sight of the ubiquitous apartheid wall, which stands in contempt of international law and human rights principles. Constructed of 25-foot-high concrete slabs, electrified cyclone fencing, and winding razor wire, it almost completely encloses the West Bank, and extends well east of the Green Line marking Israel's pre-1967 borders. It snakes its way through ancient olive groves, destroying the beauty of the landscape, dividing communities and families, severing farmers from their fields, and depriving them of their livelihood. In Abu Dis, the wall cuts across the campus of al-Quds University, through the soccer field. In Qalqilya, we saw massive gates built to control the entry and access of Palestinians to their lands and homes, including a gated corridor through which Palestinians with increasingly rare Israeli-issued permits are processed as they enter Israel for work, sustaining the very state that has displaced them. Palestinian children are forced through similar corridors, lining up for hours twice each day to attend school. As one Palestinian colleague put it, "Occupied Palestine is the largest prison in the world."

An extensive prison system bolsters the occupation and suppresses resistance. Everywhere we went, we met people who had either been imprisoned themselves or had relatives who had been incarcerated. Of the 20,000 Palestinians locked inside Israeli prisons, at least 8,000 are political prisoners, and more than 300 are children. In Jerusalem, we met with members of the Palestinian Legislative Council who are being protected from arrest by the International Committee of the Red Cross. In Umm el-Fahem, we met with an Islamist leader just after his release from prison, and heard a riveting account of his experience on the Mavi Marmara and the 2010 Gaza Flotilla. The criminalization of their political activity, and that of the many Palestinians we met, was a constant and harrowing theme.

We also came to understand how overt repression is buttressed by deceptive representations of the State of Israel as the most developed social democracy in the region. As feminists, we deplore the Israeli practice of "pinkwashing"—the state's use of ostensible support for gender and sexual equality to dress up its occupation. In Palestine, we consistently found evidence and analyses of a more substantive approach to an indivisible justice. In Nablus, we met the president and the leadership of the Arab Feminist Union and several other women's groups, who spoke about the role and struggles of Palestinian women on several fronts. We visited one of the oldest women's empowerment centers in Palestine, In'ash al-Usra, and learned about various income-generating cultural projects. We also spoke with Palestinian Queers for BDS, young organizers who frame the struggle for gender and sexual justice as part and parcel of a comprehensive framework for self-determination and liberation. Feminist colleagues at Birzeit University, An-Najah University, and Mada al-Carmel spoke to us about the organic linkage of anticolonial resistance with gender and sexual equality, as well as about the transformative role Palestinian institutions of higher education play in these struggles.

We were continually inspired by the deep and abiding spirit of resistance in the stories people told us; in the murals inside buildings such as Ibdah Center in Dheisheh Refugee Camp; in slogans painted on the apartheid wall in Qalqilya, Bethlehem, and Abu Dis; in the education of young children;

and in the commitment to emancipatory knowledge-production. At our meeting with the Boycott National Committee—an umbrella alliance of over 200 Palestinian civil society organizations, including the General Union of Palestinian Women, the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, and the Palestinian Network of NGOs—we were humbled by their appeal: “We are not asking you for heroic action or to form freedom brigades. We are simply asking you not to be complicit in perpetuating the crimes of the Israeli state.”

Therefore, we unequivocally endorse the BDS campaign. The purpose of this campaign is to pressure Israeli state-sponsored institutions to adhere to international law, basic human rights, and democratic principles as a condition for just and equitable social relations. We reject the argument that to criticize the State of Israel is anti-Semitic. We stand with Palestinians, an increasing number of Jews, and other human rights activists all over the world in condemning the flagrant injustices of the Israeli occupation.

We call upon all of our academic and activist colleagues in the US and elsewhere to join us by endorsing the BDS campaign and by working to end US financial support, at \$8.2 million daily, for the Israeli state and its occupation. We call upon all people of conscience to engage in serious dialogue about Palestine, and to acknowledge connections between the Palestinian cause and other struggles for justice. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Angela Y. Davis

Rabab Abdulhadi

Ayoka Chenzira

Gina Dent

Melissa Garcia

Anna Romina Guevarra

Beverly Guy-Sheftall

Premilla Nadasen

Barbara Ransby

Chandra Talpade Mohanty

Waziyatawin

18 WHY BOYCOTT ISRAEL?

Lisa Taraki and Mark LeVine

Mark LeVine: What is the “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions” movement, and how is it related to the academic and cultural boycott movement? How have both evolved in the past few years in terms of their goals and methods?

Lisa Taraki: The BDS movement can be summed up as the struggle against Israeli colonization, occupation, and apartheid. BDS is a rights-based strategy to be pursued until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and complies with the requirements of international law.

Within this framework, the academic and cultural boycott of Israel has gained considerable ground in the seven years since the launching of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) in 2004. The goals of the academic and cultural boycott call, like the aims of the Palestinian Civil Society Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions issued in 2005, have remained consistent: to end the colonization of Palestinian lands occupied in 1967; to ensure full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel and end the system of racial discrimination; and to realize the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

The logic of the BDS movement has also remained consistent. The basic logic of BDS is the logic of pressure—not diplomacy, persuasion, or dialogue. Diplomacy as a strategy for achieving Palestinian rights has proved futile, due to the protection and immunity Israel enjoys from hegemonic world powers and those in their orbit.

Second, the logic of persuasion has also shown its bankruptcy, since no amount of “education” of Israelis about the horrors of occupation and other forms of oppression seems to have turned the tide. Dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis, which remains very popular among Israeli liberals and Western foundations and governments that fund the activities, has also failed miserably. Dialogue is often framed in terms of “two sides to the story,” in the sense that each side must understand the pain, anguish, and suffering of the other, and accept the narrative of the other.

This presents the “two sides” as if they were equally culpable, and deliberately avoids acknowledgment of the basic colonizer–colonized relationship. Dialogue does not promote change, but rather reinforces the status quo, and in fact is mainly in the interest of the Israeli side of the dialogue, since it makes Israelis feel that they are doing something, while in fact they are not. The logic of BDS is the logic of pressure. And that pressure has been amplifying.

The Palestinian-led academic and cultural boycott is an institutional boycott; that is, it does not target individual scholars or artists. This point has also remained the same since the inception of the BDS movement. Yet it is important to state here that all Israeli universities and virtually the entire spectrum of Israeli cultural institutions are complicit in the state’s policies, and are thereby legitimate targets of

the boycott. Guidelines and criteria for boycott, however, have been elaborated since the founding of the movement, as more experience is gained on the ground, and in response to requests for guidance from conscientious academics and cultural workers wishing to respect the Palestinian boycott call. PACBI in particular expends a great deal of effort guiding and advising international solidarity activists. Consistency is achieved through adhering to the guidelines developed by PACBI, in cooperation with other elements in the Palestinian BDS movement.

World-renowned public intellectuals, academics, writers, artists, musicians, and other cultural workers have now endorsed the academic and cultural boycott call; their names are too many to note here, but the interested reader can consult the PACBI website. In addition, several campaigns for academic and cultural boycott have been established around the world: in the UK, the US, France, Pakistan, Lebanon, Germany, Norway, India, Spain, South Africa, and Australia, and many other countries. The newly established European Platform for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (EPACBI) is an important coordinating body in Europe.

The lethal Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip in the winter of 2008–09 and the murder of Turkish solidarity activists aboard the Mavi Marmara in May 2010 served as further catalysts in the tremendous spread of BDS actions around the world, which include cancellations of artistic performances in Israel, protests against complicit Israeli institutions' performances abroad (such as the past and current protests around performances by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra), and many more creative forms of protest and boycott of Israeli and Brand Israel projects and institutions.

ML: The Israelis have recently passed a so-called “anti-Boycott law,” which opens Israelis who support any form of boycott, even if it's limited to settlement products, to significant civil penalties and lawsuits to force them to stop their actions. Can you comment on this whole discourse, especially the commentary in the Israeli press critical of it, claiming it represents a move against democracy, towards fascism, and similar responses which seem to suggest these are unprecedented measures?

LT: The Palestinian BDS movement is encouraged by the adoption of the logic of BDS, and boycott in particular, by sections of the Israeli left, and feels it has been vindicated in its argument that pressure—and not persuasion—is the best way to make Israelis realize that the system of occupation, apartheid, and colonialism must end. Having said this, I must note that there are at least two disturbing aspects to the new surge of activity surrounding the new anti-boycott law passed by the Israeli Knesset recently.

First, the boycott being defended by leftist and liberal Israelis targets institutions (such as the University Center of Samaria and the cultural center in Ariel) and products of the Israeli colonies in the West Bank only. This boycott, then, is silent on the complicity of all mainstream Israeli institutions—and indeed many industries, such as the weapons industry—in maintaining and legitimizing the structures of oppression.

Second, this boycott is often cast in terms of “saving Israeli democracy.” It is thus an Israel-centered discourse and project, and its point of reference is neither Palestinian rights as stipulated by international law nor an acknowledgment that they are heeding the call of the Palestinians. One outstanding exception is the Israeli group Boycott from Within, which explicitly endorses the Palestinian BDS call and considers it the basic point of reference for its agenda of activism—such as urging artists and musicians not to perform in Israel, supporting a military embargo of Israel, advocating for different

divestment campaigns, and many other activities that target all complicit Israeli institutions. Other Israeli groups, such as the Coalition of Women for Peace, ICAHD, and others have also endorsed the Palestinian BDS call publicly.

ML: What is your impression of what happened with the latest Gaza flotilla [in July 2011]? Some commentators have argued that the “successful” use of supposedly “nonviolent” strategies by the government of Israel to put pressure on other governments to stop the flotilla before it got anywhere near Gaza represents a defeat for the rising tide of nonviolent resistance, showing that the Israelis have learned the lessons and are now able to beat the activists at their own game.

LT: I don’t agree with that assessment at all. I think the main aim of the flotillas, which has been to highlight, resist, and protest Israel’s illegal siege of the Gaza Strip, has been realized, despite Israeli efforts to [bring] extreme pressure [to bear] against governments to prevent the vessels from sailing. The ridiculous Israeli response to the [July 2011] “Welcome to Palestine” campaign did more to publicize the campaign than would otherwise have happened.

You are right to frame the flotilla movement as a part of the international movement to isolate, expose, and place pressure upon Israel to respect international law and end its system of colonization, occupation, and apartheid. That this movement—still in its early stages—has achieved world recognition is attested to by the state of disarray in official Israeli and Zionist circles. Already, several conferences and strategy papers have been launched in Israel and abroad to counter what is being marketed as the “delegitimization threat.” If BDS, the annual and growing Israeli Apartheid Week events, and other resistance actions such as the waves of flotillas are mere nuisances, I doubt that so much effort would be invested merely out of an “academic” interest in them. Strong-arm tactics with some governments may have prevented the flotillas from reaching Gaza, but the strength of the BDS movement—and other solidarity actions—is that they are built on people’s initiatives. [These] cannot be easily suppressed, despite intimidation, legal threats and lawsuits, and other silencing tactics.

ML: In the BDS literature, there is a critique of those, like myself, who argue that anyone who wants to join BDS for Palestine should also adopt similar actions vis-à-vis other countries involved in massive systematic oppression and/or occupation (China, India, the US, to cite the most obvious examples), and that the need to think systemically is not merely an ethical imperative but a strategic one as well. Your response, when we last met in Ramallah, was that this strategy is utopian, that Palestinians have enough trouble getting people to engage in BDS merely against Israel, and that enlarging it would be untenable.

Can you explain how BDS can become more effective without thinking of joining with other movements against oppression and occupation that might call for a similar campaign?

LT: The BDS movement does operate with a conceptual framework, of course. This includes an analysis of global and regional power relations. BDS is predicated on the fact that the collusion of the hegemonic or major world powers of the so-called “international community” with Israeli impunity is the single most important factor that enables Israel to continue flouting international law. The hegemonic powers not only shield Israel from censure; they have also often turned a blind eye to grievous offences committed by their allies—but only when it serves their own interests. The inconsistency of US and European foreign policy is not something I need to stress, I believe. Plenty of

rogue regimes continue to oppress and suppress their citizenry without international censure, as we all know.

What is important to note, however, is that when an oppressed people decide to appeal to the world to help them achieve self-determination and freedom through boycotts and other pressure mechanisms, as the vast majority of Palestinian civil society has done, then the response of all conscientious people would usually be to respect that appeal directly and immediately. It certainly was the case in South Africa. I don't think anyone had the temerity to suggest, during the anti-apartheid struggle in that country, that the existence of a full-throttle anti-imperialist movement would be the precondition for supporting the boycotts called for by the oppressed in South Africa, or that a boycott of the US, the UK, and indeed Israel, was the only principled course of action to take. That would have been a recipe for paralysis.

Israel, unlike many other oppressive states, enjoys the full support of the hegemonic powers, as I have noted. Precisely because of this, since there is no other impetus for change, it is incumbent upon forces that support justice to heed the Palestinian call. If there were a robust BDS movement in China or in Morocco today urging a boycott of the existing regimes, then certainly it would be an obligation to respect the call of the oppressed.

ML: It seems increasing numbers of diaspora and Israeli Jews are supporting BDS, at least in principle—although, as you [suggested], what they imagine BDS is and what it actually means can differ significantly. How is the growing support impacting the success of BDS? Do you think it is penetrating more into Israeli society? And have you seen any changes in the way the Israeli government deals with nonviolent protest in the last year or so, given the increasing success of the movement?

LT: My comments concerning the Israeli boycott of the colonies in the West Bank are relevant in this context as well. I think most Israelis are very far from becoming convinced that BDS is an effective strategy for radical change of the status quo, and that is because Israeli society has no incentive to change the status quo. Only pressure, in the form of various BDS measures, can move the Israeli body politic. That is the logic of BDS, after all. As for the treatment of protests by the Israeli government and military, it's obvious that they are continuing to reassess their on-the-ground tactics in the face of the continuing escalation of protests, both by Palestinians and international and Israeli supporters. The use of force has been a constant for several decades now, and is nothing new. During the first Intifada, which was a form of civil resistance and disobedience, the response of the Israeli military was deadly and violent, just as it is today. The language of force will not be abandoned. That is the logic of a colonial power, after all.

ML: Can you elaborate a bit more on what the initiators of the BDS movement mean when they describe institutions, or artists and academics, who “serve Brand Israel.” What is Brand Israel, and whose interests does it serve?

LT: Brand Israel is a worldwide campaign launched in 2005 by some agencies of the Israeli government and major pro-Israel groups internationally, primarily in the US. It's a diffuse and diverse effort, but the main idea behind it is to portray and promote Israel as a normal country for tourism, youth culture, enjoyment of the fine arts, sports, and all other “normal” and “civilized” pursuits. Public relations firms have played an important role in crafting the Israeli brand. In addition, Israeli consulates and embassies, as well as Jewish and Zionist organizations (such as Hillel in the US), are actively involved

in promoting Israeli art, scientific accomplishments, and other “achievements” abroad. The modernity, diversity, and vitality of Israel are stressed in Brand Israel promotional activities.

I may add that the Israeli writer Yitzhak Laor has uncovered evidence of official Israeli sponsorship of Brand Israel–type activities, and with a price tag attached; in an article published in 2008, he revealed that any Israeli artist or cultural worker accepting financial support from the Israeli Foreign Ministry for exhibiting or showcasing his or her work abroad was obligated to sign a contract stipulating that he or she “undertakes to act faithfully, responsibly and tirelessly to provide the Ministry with the highest professional services. The service provider is aware that the purpose of ordering services from him is to promote the policy interests of the State of Israel via culture and art, including contributing to creating a positive image for Israel.”

What this reveals, then, is that, in light of the bad press Israel has been receiving in past years, it has been deemed necessary to make sure that artists and other cultural workers—perhaps because of their reputation as idiosyncratic or even eccentric—know what is expected of them when they accept state funding of their tours abroad. They are supposed to act as “cultural ambassadors” for Israel, which, in large part, is to become apologists for Israeli policies and practices that oppress the Palestinians.

ML: In terms of the academic boycott, if I have a student who needs to come to Israel to develop her or his Hebrew in order to better understand the dynamics of the occupation and can only afford to do this through various programs such as Erasmus or Education Abroad Programs that involved affiliation with Israeli universities, or wants to do research at Israeli archives on the country’s history that require students to be affiliated to Israeli universities to obtain research clearance, what is the official position of PACBI towards this?

LT: The PACBI guidelines for the implementation of the academic boycott, which apply to international academics and students, are clear: any interaction with Israeli universities, regardless of the content or form (studying there, accessing archives, giving a course, attending a conference, conducting research) violates the academic boycott if such an interaction entails official contact with the institution.

This can include accepting an invitation to attend a conference, registering for a course, accepting employment or agreeing to conduct seminars, or conducting research in affiliation with such institutions. While using a university facility such as a library does not strictly violate the boycott, doing so in the framework of affiliation with the university would.

Institutional study abroad schemes, research activity conducted in the framework of institutional cooperation agreements—such as the various EU-funded programs, including Erasmus Mundus—violate the boycott. Regarding the study of Hebrew, I think that the international options for pursuing that are very wide indeed; most universities in the West offer Hebrew instruction.

In general, conscientious scholars and students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the logic and aims of the boycott and to abide by its spirit if situations other than the ones noted above are encountered. Since Palestinians—including academics and their representative body, the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Employees—have called for an academic boycott, it becomes a responsibility of conscientious academics and students considering visiting the area for research or

study purposes to become familiar with the context, which includes thinking seriously about the meaning of their affiliation with Israeli universities in light of the boycott call.

ML: Critics might say that this response is explicitly putting politics—however worthy—ahead of the advance of scholarship. For historians, for example, it is impossible to produce new knowledge without accessing archives. For student historians, their degree depends on their access to archives. If the archives are controlled by the state, then does the mere fact of using them mean complicity with the state?

LT: This is not putting politics above scholarship; it is about applying ethical principles to the practice of scholarship. No scholarly activity takes place in a vacuum, and every scholar must consider the consequences of his or her research strategies when pursuing scholarly activity. State control of some archives does not necessarily preclude using them, as I noted earlier; usually, it is enough to prove one's academic credentials to gain access to them. It is the same as using Israeli medical facilities or any other public service. The main issue is institutional affiliation.

ML: Are there any lessons from the so-called Arab Spring, or from other mass mobilizations globally against oppression in the past year or two, that can inform and even help the BDS movement and Palestinian resistance more broadly? Do the events of the last eight months give you hope, or is the situation in Palestine different enough—being at once a colonial situation and an internal struggle for democracy within both Israeli and Palestinian societies—that these other mass mobilizations can't really help beyond inspiring Palestinians to stay the course?

LT: The revolutionary spirit that has ignited the Arab world will no doubt make the question of Palestine more urgent than before, both in those countries that have begun the process of revolutionary transformation and those in which struggles for freedom and democracy are still unfolding. Once there are free and unrigged elections for new parliaments in Egypt and Tunisia, as well as other Arab countries, the new parliaments will have to be sensitive to the views of the people—unlike the situation that has hitherto prevailed.

It is well known that Palestine is an Arab question, and that includes widespread rejection of Israel's destructive role in the region. The forces of counterrevolution may try to combat popular sentiment, and there will be continuous contestation and ongoing struggles, but the policies of Arab countries will not be the same now that the revolutionary spirit has taken hold of the imagination of the Arab people.

ML: How do you think the sudden rise of the protest movement in Israel for "social justice" will impact the BDS movement and Palestinian resistance to the occupation more broadly? Especially with the likely coincidence of renewed protests in Israel next month [in September 2011] and a major Palestinian push for statehood at the UN, is there a space for Palestinians to make a significant intervention in the protest discourse inside Israel that helps reshape it towards broader ends? And if so, what role would BDS play in this?

LT: From all indications, the protest movement in Israel has nothing to say about justice for Palestinians, either as citizens or as occupied people. The Palestinian BDS movement does not address the Israeli public directly in order to persuade it or to appeal to its sense of justice. That is not the logic

of BDS. It is up to Israeli political forces to make that connection and to influence their public. We expect that pro-BDS Israelis, however small their numbers might be, will be taking this up within their society.

Interlude IV

CAMPUS IN CAMPS: A UNIVERSITY IN EXILE | ALESSANDRO PETTI | *Dheisheh*

Refugee Camp | JUNE 11, 2013

Refugee camps are usually constituted of tents and shelters. They are designed for quick and easy assembly in order to respond to emergencies. A temporary form of architecture, they are not built to last. Although the establishment of refugee camps is rhetorically justified by humanitarian intent and technocratic design discourse, they remain an essentially political issue. Whether they serve temporarily or become more permanent is ultimately not decided by the humanitarian bodies tasked with managing and controlling them, but rather by political conflicts. The prolonged exceptional temporariness of refugee camps could paradoxically create the condition for their transformation: from a pure humanitarian space to an active political space, as the embodiment and expression of the right of return.

The over ten million refugees currently registered worldwide by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), and the five million Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), in some sixty camps across the Middle East give only a partial idea of a widespread phenomenon. The radical economic and social transformations currently being experienced throughout the world have produced a proliferation of the “camp condition”—that is, a space suspended from the surrounding legal, social, and political order.

There are now innumerable places in suspension in megalopolises around the world, where internally displaced people and new immigrants take refuge. Whether they are camps that precede or follow wars, encampments set up after natural catastrophes, or refugee camps, they often become places where people are born and die waiting to go home. At the same time, the camp condition has opened a new horizon of political and social configurations, and new ways of understanding the relation between population, space, and territory. The permanent temporariness of refugee camps has produced spatio-political configurations that call into question the very idea of the nation state. And despite the fact that the “camp form” has been used as a tool for regulating the “excess of its political dimension,” the camp as an exceptional space could also be seen as a counter-site for emerging political practices and a new form of urbanism.

THE CAMP AS A SITE OF DISCIPLINE AND CONTROL

Although states and non-governmental organizations have been, and still are, actively conceiving and managing camps, we are just beginning to understand how the camp form has problematized the very idea of a city as a functional political community and democratic space. If a citizen's political identity is played out in the public space of the city, what is found in the camp is its inverse: here, citizens are stripped of their political rights. In this sense, the camp represents a sort of anti-city, a constitutive void of a political order. But what effect does this anti-city have on the public and political space of the city as such? If the city has historically represented the place where the rights of citizens are recognized—often by keeping one part of the population outside its walls—the invention of the camp is a new mechanism of exclusion.

The camp system goes beyond the inclusion—exclusion dichotomy that defines relations between citizens and non-citizens, mediated as they are by the borders of nation states. The camp, in fact, excludes through inclusion. As such, it marks the degradation of conventional political organizational systems. Camps are desperate attempts to preserve an outdated political order through constructing a space of suspension, within which to confine all those who “do not belong.”

The space of the camp is no longer “inside” or “outside.” Rather, it represents a sort of third area, a place in suspension where an increasing number of individuals excluded from the polis are shut away. Here, spatial segregation takes on an added dimension, becoming strict confinement under armed surveillance. Once within, one's life is always at stake. The “camp” signals the breakdown of any political relationship between territory and people. It has, in turn, become the form of localization for those who do not belong.

The camp is a “space in suspension,” a place in limbo, held within the “normal” spatial and social order of a territory. These spaces in suspension, usually summoned into being by security concerns, become powerful forms of social and spatial control. They emerge every time the relationship between the population and its territory enters a state of crisis. They first made their appearance in the colonial context as temporary measure for controlling local populations, and later reemerged in Europe at a time when the imperial spatial order was collapsing.

Camps are again becoming visible today, as the connection between territory, state, and citizenship has once more entered into crisis due to the disintegrative effects of migrations and the globalization of economies and communications. Called for as an exceptional means of preserving the established order—as a measure required to deal with temporary, short term geopolitical crises (migrations, wars, terrorism)—these spaces often transform into relatively permanent expressions of political ideology and power.

THE CAMP AS A SITE OF POLITICAL INVENTION

Palestinian refugee camps, first appearing after the Nakba in 1948, were conceived of as an emergency response to the expulsion of nearly the entire Palestinian population by Jewish militias. The first pictures of these camps, in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, showed small villages made of tents, arranged according to the same regular grids used for military encampments. As the years passed, and no political solution was found for the plight of displaced Palestinians, tents were substituted with basic shelters in an attempt to respond to the growing needs of the camp population without undermining the temporary condition of the camp, and therefore the right to return. However, with a growing population, conditions in the camps worsened.

The precariousness and temporariness of the camp structure was not simply a technical problem, but also the material-symbolic embodiment of the principle that its inhabitants should be allowed to return as soon as possible to their place of origin. Israel refuses the internationally recognized right of return of Palestinian refugees. For this reason, Palestinian refugee camps have become a magnetic force field in which competing and unequally matched political entities—the host states, international governmental and non-governmental agencies, and the refugees themselves—attempt to exercise influence. Every single banal act, from building a roof to opening a new street, becomes a political statement concerning the right of return. Nothing in the camp can be considered without political implications.

During the 1990s and within the framework of the Oslo peace process, which subsequently led to the creation of an interim Palestinian Authority, the right of return became marginalized under the pressure of successive Israeli governments, which have never acknowledged Israel's responsibility in the Nakba. At the same time, the withdrawal of the Israeli army from most Palestinian urban areas created the conditions for some West Bank camps to become relatively autonomous and independent socio-political communities. For decades, the political discourse around the right of return, and the associated imperative to stagnate living conditions imposed by the Palestinian political leadership to reaffirm the camp's ephemerality, forced refugees to live in appalling conditions.

From 1948/49 to the present day, official political discourse has sought to prohibit any development in, or formalization of, refugee camps. The fear is that any transformation of the camps would bring about an integration of the refugee community with the local environment, and thus sacrifice the political motivation for the right of return. This discourse was also based on the assumption that as long as refugees were living in such conditions, their suffering would pressure the international community to enact their right to return. Thus, any improvement to camp infrastructure and housing was seen as a direct erosion of the right of return.

Today, this imperative is being reconsidered. It is argued that improved living conditions in refugee camps do not necessarily conflict with the right to return. No longer a simple recipient of humanitarian intervention, the refugee is seen as an active political subject, constituted by their participation in the development of autonomous governance for the camp. Refugees are re-inventing social and political practices that improve their everyday life. The refugee camp has been transformed from a marginalized holding area to an interconnected center of social and political life.

A UNIVERSITY IN EXILE

In 2012, in an effort to intervene in such unstable and socially and politically charged urbanity of exile, Campus in Camps was founded as a means to address the numerous spatial and social concerns that have arisen over the more than sixty years of existence of Palestinian refugee camps. It originated from of a collective, cumulative thought aimed at bringing together theory and action, learning in a contextual environment, and project-based interventions. The desire for such a program matured in an ongoing dialogue started in 2007 between the UNRWA Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program and refugee camp communities of the southern West Bank. From this ongoing dialogue, an urgency emerged to explore and produce new forms of representation of camps and refugees, beyond the static and traditional symbols of passivity and poverty.

Campus in Camps engaged young participants in a two-year program dealing with new forms of visual and cultural representations of refugee camps after more than sixty years of displacement. The aim was to provide young motivated Palestinian refugees who were interested in engaging their community with the intellectual space and necessary infrastructure to facilitate these debates and translate them into practical community-driven projects that would incarnate representational practices and make them visible in the camps. The group of participants in the program was picked via a three-month-long process of personal interviews, consultations with the community, and public announcements in newspapers and mosques. There was no real selection of participants. Instead, a series of meetings allowed us and the applicants to understand if we shared an interest in embarking on such an experimental project.

Campus in Camps does not follow or propose itself as a model, but rather as public space in formation. *Al jame3ah* translates to English as "university," but its literal meaning is a place for assembly: a public space. Campus in Camps is part of a long path that had stations in the schools of Khalil Al Sakakini, where grades and punishment for students were abolished and walks and music were considered a form of knowledge, and the informal and clandestine learning environment established during the First Intifada in which people learned from each other and in context.

Qussay Abu Aker, Alaa Al Homouz, Saleh Khannah, Ahmad Al Lahham, Aysar Al Saifi, Bisan Al Jaffarri, Nedaa Hamouz, Naba' Al Assi, Isshaq Al Barbary, Ayat Al Turshan, and Murad Odeh are the embodiment of Campus in Camps. A central role in activating the Campus in Camps project has been played by the project activators: Brave New Alps, Matteo Guidi, Giuliana Racco, Sara Pellegrini, and Diego Segatto. Sara and Diego in particular contributed majorly at different moments of the program. Great inspiration derived from dialogue and active engagement with Michel Agier, Ilana Feldman, Tareq Hamam, Ruba Saleh, Khaldun Bshara, Thomas Keenan, Ayman Khalifa, and Munir Fasheh. The Campus in Camps team consisted of Yasser Hemadan, Tamara Abu Laban, Ala Juma, and Dena Qaddumi, without whom the program could not have existed.

The first year of Campus in Camps was focused on establishing a common language and approach. This was achieved through education cycles, seminars, lectures, and the publication of a *Collective Dictionary*. The first months of the program were dedicated to what we called unlearning; a process of healing from pre-packaged, alienating knowledge that is not linked with life. Munir Fasheh was an amazing source of inspiration during this phase. We invited professors from Al Quds Bard (AQB) and outside guests for lectures and seminars. Based on these first encounters, participants, together with the project team, discussed inviting guests for a cycle, a set of bi-weekly meetings for a minimum of one month. Decisions were based on the guests' relevance in relation to the interests of the group. For this reason, the structure of Campus in Camps was constantly reshaped to accommodate the interests and subjects born from the interactions between the participants and the social context at large.

Sandi Hilal offered a cycle based on Camp Improvement Projects, in which she established the base and the network for participants' initiatives in the camps. Tareq Hamman held a cycle in International Law and Human Rights, which culminated with the participation of the Campus in Camps participants in official government meetings about Palestinian refugees. Wilfried Graf and Gudrun Kramer's cycle acquainted participants with the conflict transformation approach. Vivien Sansour's cycle explored the relationship between agricultural practices, food production, and political power. Ayman Khalifah introduced the concepts of culture and representation. Fellows from AQB offered a series of intensive English workshops with the aim of bolstering project participants' critical inquiry in English. Daniel McKenzie in particular overviewed all the different and mutating needs of the group. Arabic tutoring was offered by Tala Abu Rahme, Samih Faraj, and Ayman Khalifah. Fellows from AQB also offered English classes for young students in the camps during the summer of 2012. During the summer of 2013, Linda Quiquívix led a two-month seminar in which students from AQB, Campus in Camps, and interested youths from the camps learned about the Zapatista Movement.

Parallel to these cycles, Campus in Camps organized a series of public lectures and seminars open to all students from Al Quds University and other universities in

Bethlehem. Over the course of the first year, more than a dozen seminars and lectures were held that gave the participants exposure to experts in a variety of fields. These areas of interest included citizenship, refugee studies, humanitarianism, gender, mapping, and research methodologies. Many of these events were open to the public and were the mechanism to connect with members of the camp community as well as university students. Our guests included Beatrice Catanzaro, Basel Abbas, Ruanne Abourhame, Wilfried Graf, Tariq Dana, Felicity D. Scott, Mohammed Jabali, Moukhtar Kocache, Hanan Toukan, Shadi Chaleshtoori, Jeffrey Champlin, Manuel Herz, C. K. Raju, Fernando Rampérez, Emilio Dabed, and Samer Abdelnour. The first year culminated in an open public presentation over the course of two days in which more than one hundred people from the local community participated.¹

During the event *The Collective Dictionary*, a series of publications containing definitions of concepts considered fundamental for the understanding of the contemporary condition of Palestinian refugee camps, was presented. Written reflections on personal experiences, interviews, excursions, and photographic investigations constitute the starting point for the formulation of more structured thoughts, which serve to explore each term. Multiple participants developed each publication, suggesting a new form of collective learning and knowledge production.

During the second year, more emphasis was placed on the kind of knowledge that emerges from actions. Gatherings, walks, events, and urban actions were meant to engage more directly with the camp condition. What was at stake in these interventions was the possibility for the participants to realize projects in the camps without normalizing their exceptional conditions and without blending them into the surrounding cities. After sixty-five years of exile, the camp is no longer made up of tents. The prolonged exceptional temporariness of this site has paradoxically created the condition for its transformation: from a pure humanitarian space to an active political space, it has become an embodiment and an expression of the right of return. The initiatives bear the names of this urbanity of exile: the garden, the pathways, the municipality, the suburb, the pool, the stadium, the square, the unbuilt, and the bridge. The very existence of these common places within refugee camps suggests new spatial and social formations beyond the idea of the camp as a site of marginalization, poverty, and political subjugation.

1. On this occasion a sort of informal academic committee was established, comprised of Sari Hanafi, Michael Buroway, Gudrun Kramer, Sandi Hilal, Muhammed Jabali, Munir Fasheh, Tariq Dana, Aaron Cezar, Thomas Keenan, Shuruq Harb, Umar Al Ghubari, Khaldun Bshara, Jawad Al Mahal, and Ayman Kalifah.

HOUSE OF WISDOM | MUNIR FASHEH

The word for university in Arabic is *jame3ah*, which literally means a “gathering place” that brings together people within real, rich, and pluralistic environment that helps them learn and do things, in freedom, honesty, and with enthusiasm. In this sense, *jame3ah* is much closer in meaning to “multiversity” than to “university.” This is what the sixteen young men and women and I experienced at the House of Wisdom within Campus in Camps.

The 1970s and the First Intifada were the most significant periods of my life. They provided me with convictions that I consider crucial in modern life. One conviction is: there is no substitute for small groups, formed in as many places as possible by their own initiative, outside an institutional framework, in order to decide what they want and can do—something that is meaningful, useful, rooted, and contextual. Replacing local, self-formed initiatives is destructive to human communities. (Yet in our quest along this path, we should not go to the other extreme in the sense of trying to replace every other form of organization.)

My first experience along these lines was the voluntary work movement which I started with some friends in 1971. My second experience, also in the 1970s, was encouraging students in schools to form math and science clubs which revolved around questions that they had and wanted to pursue. My third experience along this path was creating a course at Birzeit University in 1979 where every student or group of students tried to notice patterns, regularities, etc, and make sense out of them. My next experiment was encouraging the formation of groups in every possible place within the Reading and Expression campaign at the Tamer Institute for Community Education, which I established in 1989 during the First Intifada when Israel closed all schools for four years. That was followed by the Qalb el-Umour project within the Arab Education Forum.

My dream today is to have *jame3ah* (or better, a “house of wisdom”) in as many camps and villages in Palestine as possible, where around ten people who are rooted in their community form a lively group and choose words, construct meanings, form visions, and create useful, rooted knowledge through actions in their communities, in harmony with pluralism and well-being. It is crucial to stress that what we do at Dheisheh is not a new model or a shift in paradigm but a different vision whose core is wisdom. Vision requires attentiveness to what is around. For me, a vision consists of three main components: how we see reality; how we perceive our place and role in it; and the values we agree not to violate in our actions. The only aspect of vision which all in the group need to adhere to are its values. Saying that everyone has full autonomy in one’s place does not mean each works in isolation, but rather in constant interaction, with no one having authority over another. People interact in freedom, with honesty, and respect.

Adopting Imam Ali's statement that the worth of a person is what they *yuhseen* (which in Arabic means what they do well, beautifully, usefully, respectfully, and comes from within) as a guiding principle, these "houses of wisdom" guarantee every person has worth and is able to learn. This means that there are no failures, and that our worthiness comes from our relations to our surroundings, and not from abstract, arbitrary numbers. This way we reclaim both learning as a biological ability and our relations and actions as a source of our worth. Perceiving every person as co-author of meanings is a basic and ongoing conviction within the vision.

When I first went to Dheisheh and met participants at Campus in Camps, I looked for a core idea which could host the richness embedded in Dheisheh and other participating camps. I quickly realized that idea of *mujawaara* can serve this purpose and be the core theme. It embodied many aspects of wisdom: well-being, social fabric, honesty, freedom, justice, equality, and saying what one means and meaning what one says—where there is no competition or evaluation. The main aspects that characterized *mujawaara* were: using it as the medium for learning; reclaiming *al 3afiah* (well-being) as a "measure" and a core value governing one's thinking, expressions, relationships, and actions; stitching together the socio-cultural-intellectual-spiritual-economic fabric in society and with nature; and perceiving every person as a source and co-author of meaning and understanding.

As a medium for learning, *mujawaara* is radically different from institutional learning. *Mujawaara* cannot happen at the individual level only; it always involves communal learning. When asked about the subjects that participants in Campus in Camps study, I say "the subject of study is their lives, in the contexts in which they live, and sharpening their characters, where knowledge becomes part of the person's lifestyle." *Mujawaara* is an integral part of life, where people reflect and converse about actions and experiences, in light of wisdoms that have been part of communities throughout history. Communal freedom to learn cannot happen with fear; it can only happen with trust, confidence, honesty, and mutual nurturing among people who are ready to listen, with full attentiveness, to one another.

When we embarked on Campus in Camps, we knew we were embarking on an experiment—a different vision—in learning, not only in relation to content and style but also in relation to medium, values, meanings, convictions, and perceptions which necessitated looking for radically new terms. We knew we were sailing in uncharted seas. However, what was wonderful about that journey was the "discovery" that we were sailing towards home, towards ourselves, our culture, and planting the seeds of our knowledge in our own soils. We did not start with readymade knowledge and then try to apply it in the camps but, rather, we searched for words, meanings, and understandings that stemmed from the reality in which participants live. This led us to explore the difference and relationship between search and research. Moreover, every participant was responsible for explaining the meaning of words they used, through experiences, stories, events, or mental images. *The Collective Dictionary* is a manifestation of that.

9 SIX YEARS OF BDS: SUCCESS!

Hind Awwad

As the world watched the Arab Spring, many Palestinians saw traces of Palestine's revolution, particularly of the first Intifada—the popular uprising of 1987—and in the beautiful spirit of the young revolutionaries. The fall of the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt was celebrated in Palestinian households not only because it promised a return of Arab resistance, a constant dimension of the Palestinian cause but hijacked by the dictatorships for so many years, but also because it was a reminder that Palestine continues to bring people together: those struggling in many places around the world against injustice of all kinds.

As we continue to watch the revolutions unfold—from Wall Street to Madrid, from London to Seattle—we can see Palestine in every Tahrir Square. The Egyptian spring is partly a result of the previous regime's heavy complicity in maintaining Israeli occupation and colonization; the Egyptian student mobilizations in solidarity with Palestine during the second Intifada, in 2000, were important precursors to January 2011. The injustice resulting from Israel's occupation, colonization, and enforcement of apartheid is heavily linked with corporate greed, environmental degradation, education cuts, and privatization of healthcare that are today being protested in North America and Europe. The channeling each year of billions in US tax dollars away from education, healthcare reform, and social services at home, to support Israel's military machine, has linked the struggle for Palestinian rights with the causes of equality and social justice in the US and elsewhere. The BDS movement has provided a way for us to break our collective chains.

In 2005, one year after the International Court of Justice had ruled that Israel's wall, built on occupied Palestinian territory, was illegal—and inspired by the South African anti-apartheid struggle—a majority of Palestinian civil society called upon people of conscience all over the world to impose broad BDS initiatives against Israel.

The comprehensive rights-based approach of the call for BDS is perhaps its most important attribute. This is exemplified by the three demands that it makes: for an end to the occupation and return to the pre-1967 boundaries; for recognition of the fundamental human rights of Palestinian citizens; and for the right of Palestinian refugees to return. These demands address the injustice done to all Palestinian people, and do not reduce Israel's oppression to occupation. Twenty years of the sham "peace process" have given the false impression—often dominant even today—that the Palestinian people are only those in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and that Israel's occupation is its only form of oppression of Palestinians. This has marginalized the majority of the Palestinian people—those inside Israel and in the diaspora—and their rights; and it has allowed Israel to get away, unquestioned, with its more severe and legally problematic forms of oppression. The BDS movement has worked on changing the discourse addressing Palestinian rights to include the rights of *all* Palestinians. The movement has called for an end to Israel's multi-tiered system of oppression,

comprising occupation, colonization, and apartheid—the latter including systematic legal discrimination against Palestinians in Israel, and a sixty-three-year-old denial of Palestinian refugees’ right of return.

Setting the record straight on Palestinian rights—and reinserting both Palestinian citizens of Israel and, crucially, Palestinian refugees, at the center of the debate—could not have been achieved without a strong Palestinian leadership. The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), established in April 2008, has emerged as the principal anchor of and reference for the global BDS movement. The BNC, the broadest Palestinian civil society coalition, is made up of the largest coalitions, networks, and unions of Palestinian citizens of Israel and refugees, as well as of those living in the West Bank and Gaza. The BNC has consistently provided a strong and unified Palestinian voice, and continues to lead and guide the global BDS movement, while fully respecting the principle of context sensitivity—the idea that the call for BDS should be implemented in each community in a way that suits the particular circumstances in the local environment, as decided by local activists.

Over the past six years, BDS has provided the most effective vehicle of solidarity with the Palestinian people and a successful way of challenging Israeli impunity. The victories the BDS campaign has achieved have exceeded all expectations for such a young movement, even when compared with South Africa’s BDS campaign. In particular, the campaign has grown rapidly in the wake of the 2008–09 Israeli massacre in Gaza and the attack on the Freedom Flotilla. The movement has now expanded far beyond the confines of a traditional solidarity movement to include active and dedicated participation from trade unions, faith groups, mainstream NGOs, and political parties. A quick review of some of the largest and most successful campaigns reveals this growth.

One of the most successful BDS campaigns is that against Veolia, a French multinational involved in developing the Jerusalem Light Rail (JLR), an illegal tramway linking Jerusalem with illegal Israeli settlements, and cementing Israel’s hold on occupied territory, in addition to Israel’s involvement in a variety of waste and transport infrastructure services for illegal settlements. The French multinational has been successfully targeted all over the world, but especially in Europe. In Stockholm, a civil society campaign led to Veolia losing out on a €3.5 billion contract for the operation of the city’s metro system. The determined and internationally coordinated campaign against Veolia has led to its loss of contracts totaling more than €5 billion in France, England, Wales, Ireland, and Australia combined. In late 2010, Veolia and Alstom, another French multinational involved in the JLR, announced that they would sell their shares in the operating consortium. The fact that both Veolia and Alstom are being replaced by Israeli companies with little experience, rather than by well-known international companies that would be more qualified to take their place, can only be seen as a success for the campaign: no international companies are willing to become targets of our highly effective and visible movement. The BDS movement is showing corporate supporters of Israeli apartheid that there is a price to pay for their active complicity. The campaigns against Veolia and Alstom will continue until they cease to be complicit, and provide appropriate reparations.

Churches in the UK, Sweden, the US, and beyond are investigating and implementing their own BDS campaigns, largely in response to the Kairos document—a document prepared by prominent Palestinian leaders calling on churches around the world “to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.” Kairos Palestine unambiguously endorses BDS as one of the key nonviolent forms of solidarity that international faith-based organizations are urged to adopt: “We see boycott and disinvestment as tools of justice, peace and security.”¹

Trade unions have historically been at the forefront of struggles against injustice, particularly that against South African apartheid. Trade unions in South Africa, France, Belgium, Ireland, Sweden, Italy, Australia, Canada, Brazil, India, Norway, and elsewhere have recently adopted aspects of the BDS campaign. In the UK, the Trades Union Congress, representing seven million workers, is about to embark on activities to educate its entire membership about the necessity of boycotting Israeli apartheid. The trade union congresses of South Africa, Ireland, Scotland, and Brazil, and many individual unions around the world are in the process of severing links with the racist Histadrut labor federation. Just days after Israel's attack on the Freedom Flotilla in May 2010, the Swedish Dockworkers Union, heeding the Palestinian trade union movement's call to block Israeli ships, blocked five hundred tons of cargo coming from Israel. They were joined by the heroic action on the part of ILWU Local 10's dockworkers in Oakland, California, who blocked an Israeli ship from docking for twenty-four hours, and by dockworkers in South Africa, India, Turkey, and beyond. The CUT—the largest and most important trade union in Brazil, representing over 20 million workers, has recently endorsed BDS as the basis for its solidarity activism, and is working on a program to spread BDS among its membership. Labor-led sanctions within the BDS framework have become the leading form of solidarity with the Palestinian people within the international trade union network.

The academic boycott—arguably the most challenging of all forms of boycott—has widely spread the debate on the entrenched complicity of Israeli academic institutions in planning, justifying, and perpetuating the state's colonial and apartheid policies, including its war crimes in Gaza, Jerusalem, and beyond. The May 2010 Congress of the British University and College Union (UCU) made history by voting to boycott the Ariel University Center of Samaria (AUCS), an Israeli colony-college in occupied Palestinian territory, and to sever all relations with Histadrut, the racist Israeli labor body that is a key pillar of the Israeli state's apartheid policies. University workers in the Canadian Union of Public Employees passed a motion calling for an academic boycott of Israel in February 2009. Academics also vowed to pressure their institutions to sever financial relationships with Israel. Recently, the University of Johannesburg made history by severing links with the University of Ben-Gurion, becoming the first university in the world to sever links with an Israeli academic institution. Students in the US, the UK, and elsewhere have organized campaigns for the boycott of Israeli products, and for divestment from companies profiting from Israel's occupation. In the wake of Israel's attack on Gaza in January 2009, students in thirty-three college campuses in the UK "occupied" parts of their campus demanding, among other things, divestment from Israeli companies and companies profiting from the occupation. In February 2009, Hampshire College in the US became the first to divest from companies complicit in Israel's occupation, just as it had been the first in the US to divest from apartheid South Africa. In 2010, students at UC Berkeley worked on a well-organized and publicized divestment campaign, winning support from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Naomi Klein, Judith Butler, Hedy Epstein, and other notable figures. Jewish Voice for Peace has organized a campaign calling on pension giant TIAA-CREF to divest from five companies supporting the occupation. Their campaign has been endorsed by a number of organizations and student groups across the US.

Creative consumer boycott campaigns have provided an excellent way to engage wider sectors of the general public in the BDS movement. Code Pink's "Stolen Beauty" campaign targeting Ahava, an Israeli cosmetics company manufacturing its products in a settlement, has been successful in convincing a number of retailers to drop Ahava in the US, Canada, and the UK. The campaign has spread to Canada, Australia, and parts of Europe as a result of its creative protests and use of social media. In France, a

large coalition of more than a hundred NGOs and five political parties has organized a campaign for the boycott of Agrexco, Israel's largest exporter of agricultural produce. Agrexco has been targeted with popular boycotts, blockades, demonstrations, and direct action throughout Europe. In Italy and the UK, campaigners took direct action pressuring supermarkets to drop the Agrexco brand. In September 2011, Agrexco was ordered into liquidation.

As with South Africa, sanctions by governments and official bodies have been implemented only after boycott and divestment have become widespread at the grassroots level. In the six short years of the Palestinian BDS campaign, we have witnessed a number of government actions in the form of sanctions. To name a few, an Israeli academic team from Ariel College was excluded from a prestigious competition on sustainable architecture organized by the Spanish Government in 2009, because the college is located in a settlement in the West Bank. The Norwegian government's pension fund, the third-largest in the world, divested from Elbit Systems in 2009 at the recommendation of the ethical council, due to the company's involvement in supplying Israel's illegal wall with security appliances, and the Israeli army with drones. A year later, the Norwegian government's pension fund divested from two other Israeli companies as a result of their activities in the settlements. Deutsche Bahn, a government-owned German railway operator, has ceased its involvement with the Israeli A1 rail project, which cuts through the occupied West Bank.

Perhaps the most visible form of BDS action is in the realm of cultural boycotts. Far from being "above politics," Israeli cultural institutions play a key role in the "Brand Israel" campaign of the Israeli foreign ministry, boosting the state's image and whitewashing its colonial policies and war crimes. A growing number of cultural superstars have joined the cultural boycott of Israel and are refusing to provide cultural cover for Israeli apartheid. Artists that have canceled concerts and events in Israel include, among others, Gil Scott-Heron, Elvis Costello, the Pixies, Mike Leigh, Klaxons, and Gorillaz Sound System. Most significantly, Hollywood superstars Meg Ryan and Dustin Hoffman canceled their attendance at the 2010 Jerusalem Film Festival following the attack on the Freedom Flotilla. In addition, cultural figures such as John Berger, Roger Waters, Ken Loach, Judith Butler, Naomi Klein, the Yes Men, Sarah Schulman, Aharon Shabtai, Udi Aloni, John Greyson, Adrienne Rich, and John Williams have explicitly supported the Palestinian cultural boycott of Israel. A number of cultural figures have also refused to participate in Israel's official cultural events for political reasons, including Augusto Boal, Roger Waters, André Brink, Vincenzo Consolo, and Nigel Kennedy; and cultural figures such as Bono, Björk, Jean-Luc Godard, Snoop Dogg, and others have declined offers to take part in events in Israel—or have agreed but then canceled without giving explicit political reasons.

Another measure of success for the global BDS movement can be gauged from Israeli reactions to the BDS campaign. In July 2011, the Israeli Knesset passed a law that essentially criminalizes boycotts of Israel, as well as individuals and organizations calling for them. The Reut Institute, a prominent Israeli think tank, has categorized the BDS campaign as a "strategic threat" that could turn into an existential threat. Furthermore, key Israeli politicians have issued alarmist statements about the growth of the BDS movement and the isolation of Israel. After Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to the US Congress in May 2011, he spoke with Knesset member Binyamin "Fuad" Ben-Eliezer. "Listen, Bibi," growled Ben-Eliezer, "I congratulate you on your hug from Congress, but it will not take us off the path to confrontation. Our situation in Europe is very bad. President Obama said everything we wanted him to say ... As a former industry and trade minister, I tell you: The markets are closing. We will suffer a devastating economic blow."

President Shimon Peres has also voiced fear that Israel might be subjected to economic boycotts and sanctions. “There’s no need for boycotts,” he said. “It would suffice for ports in Europe or Canada to stop unloading Israeli merchandise. It’s already beginning.”

Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Barak has also chimed in on the subject. “There are elements in the world, quite powerful, in various countries, including friendly ones, in trade unions, [among] academics, consumers, green political parties,” he warned, “and this impetus has culminated in a broad movement called BDS ... which is what was done with South Africa.”

Since its initiation, the BDS movement has expanded and achieved effectiveness far beyond what was originally imagined to be possible in just over six years. The call of the movement is increasingly being answered by mainstream and powerful actors. Cultural superstars, global financial institutions, major trade unions, faith groups, political parties, governments, and individuals of conscience of every kind—all are beginning to take action. Our global movement has in fact begun to isolate Israel.

17 JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE: A CALL TO ACTION FROM INDIGENOUS AND WOMEN-OF-COLOR FEMINISTS

Between June 14 and 23, 2011, a delegation of eleven scholars, activists, and artists visited occupied Palestine. As indigenous and women-of-color feminists involved in multiple social justice struggles, we sought to affirm our association with the growing international movement for a free Palestine. We wanted to see for ourselves the conditions under which Palestinian people live and struggle against what we can now confidently name as the Israeli project of apartheid and ethnic cleansing. Each and every one of us—including those members of our delegation who grew up in the Jim Crow South, in apartheid South Africa, and on Indian reservations in the US—was shocked by what we saw. In this statement we describe some of our experiences and issue an urgent call to others who share our commitment to racial justice, equality, and freedom.

During our short stay in Palestine, we met with academics, students, youth, leaders of civic organizations, elected officials, trade unionists, political leaders, artists, and civil society activists, as well as residents of refugee camps and villages that have recently been attacked by Israeli soldiers and settlers. Everyone we encountered—in Nablus, Awarta, Balata, Jerusalem, Hebron, Dheisheh, Bethlehem, Birzeit, Ramallah, Umm el-Fahem, and Haifa—asked us to tell the truth about life under occupation and about their unwavering commitment to a free Palestine. We were deeply impressed by people's insistence on the linkages between the movement for a free Palestine and struggles for justice throughout the world; as Martin Luther King Jr. insisted throughout his life, "Justice is indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Traveling by bus throughout the country, we saw vast numbers of Israeli settlements ominously perched in the hills, bearing witness to the systematic confiscation of Palestinian land in flagrant violation of international law and UN resolutions. We met with refugees across the country whose families had been evicted from their homes by Zionist forces, their land confiscated, their villages and olive groves razed. As a consequence of this ongoing displacement, Palestinians comprise the largest refugee population in the world (over five million), the majority living within a hundred kilometers of their natal homes, villages, and farmlands. In defiance of UN Resolution 194, Israel has an active policy of opposing the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their ancestral homes and lands, on the grounds that they are not entitled to exercise the Israeli Law of Return, which is reserved for Jews.

In Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in eastern occupied Jerusalem, we met an 88-year-old woman who was forcibly evicted in the middle of the night; she watched as the Israeli military moved settlers into her house a mere two hours later. Now living in the small back rooms of what was once her large family residence, she defiantly asserted that neither Israel's courts nor its military could ever force her from her home. In the city of Hebron, we were stunned by the conspicuous presence of Israeli soldiers, who maintain veritable conditions of apartheid for the city's Palestinian population of almost 200,000, as against its 700 Jewish settlers. We passed several Israeli checkpoints designed to control Palestinian

movement on West Bank roads and along the Green Line. Throughout our stay, we met Palestinians who, because of Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and plans to remove its native population, have been denied entry to the holy city. We spoke to a man who lives ten minutes away from Jerusalem, but who has not been able to enter the city for twenty-seven years. The Israeli government thus continues to wage a demographic war for Jewish dominance over the Palestinian population.

We were never able to escape the jarring sight of the ubiquitous apartheid wall, which stands in contempt of international law and human rights principles. Constructed of 25-foot-high concrete slabs, electrified cyclone fencing, and winding razor wire, it almost completely encloses the West Bank, and extends well east of the Green Line marking Israel's pre-1967 borders. It snakes its way through ancient olive groves, destroying the beauty of the landscape, dividing communities and families, severing farmers from their fields, and depriving them of their livelihood. In Abu Dis, the wall cuts across the campus of al-Quds University, through the soccer field. In Qalqilya, we saw massive gates built to control the entry and access of Palestinians to their lands and homes, including a gated corridor through which Palestinians with increasingly rare Israeli-issued permits are processed as they enter Israel for work, sustaining the very state that has displaced them. Palestinian children are forced through similar corridors, lining up for hours twice each day to attend school. As one Palestinian colleague put it, "Occupied Palestine is the largest prison in the world."

An extensive prison system bolsters the occupation and suppresses resistance. Everywhere we went, we met people who had either been imprisoned themselves or had relatives who had been incarcerated. Of the 20,000 Palestinians locked inside Israeli prisons, at least 8,000 are political prisoners, and more than 300 are children. In Jerusalem, we met with members of the Palestinian Legislative Council who are being protected from arrest by the International Committee of the Red Cross. In Umm el-Fahem, we met with an Islamist leader just after his release from prison, and heard a riveting account of his experience on the Mavi Marmara and the 2010 Gaza Flotilla. The criminalization of their political activity, and that of the many Palestinians we met, was a constant and harrowing theme.

We also came to understand how overt repression is buttressed by deceptive representations of the State of Israel as the most developed social democracy in the region. As feminists, we deplore the Israeli practice of "pinkwashing"—the state's use of ostensible support for gender and sexual equality to dress up its occupation. In Palestine, we consistently found evidence and analyses of a more substantive approach to an indivisible justice. In Nablus, we met the president and the leadership of the Arab Feminist Union and several other women's groups, who spoke about the role and struggles of Palestinian women on several fronts. We visited one of the oldest women's empowerment centers in Palestine, In'ash al-Usra, and learned about various income-generating cultural projects. We also spoke with Palestinian Queers for BDS, young organizers who frame the struggle for gender and sexual justice as part and parcel of a comprehensive framework for self-determination and liberation. Feminist colleagues at Birzeit University, An-Najah University, and Mada al-Carmel spoke to us about the organic linkage of anticolonial resistance with gender and sexual equality, as well as about the transformative role Palestinian institutions of higher education play in these struggles.

We were continually inspired by the deep and abiding spirit of resistance in the stories people told us; in the murals inside buildings such as Ibdah Center in Dheisheh Refugee Camp; in slogans painted on the apartheid wall in Qalqilya, Bethlehem, and Abu Dis; in the education of young children;

and in the commitment to emancipatory knowledge-production. At our meeting with the Boycott National Committee—an umbrella alliance of over 200 Palestinian civil society organizations, including the General Union of Palestinian Women, the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, and the Palestinian Network of NGOs—we were humbled by their appeal: “We are not asking you for heroic action or to form freedom brigades. We are simply asking you not to be complicit in perpetuating the crimes of the Israeli state.”

Therefore, we unequivocally endorse the BDS campaign. The purpose of this campaign is to pressure Israeli state-sponsored institutions to adhere to international law, basic human rights, and democratic principles as a condition for just and equitable social relations. We reject the argument that to criticize the State of Israel is anti-Semitic. We stand with Palestinians, an increasing number of Jews, and other human rights activists all over the world in condemning the flagrant injustices of the Israeli occupation.

We call upon all of our academic and activist colleagues in the US and elsewhere to join us by endorsing the BDS campaign and by working to end US financial support, at \$8.2 million daily, for the Israeli state and its occupation. We call upon all people of conscience to engage in serious dialogue about Palestine, and to acknowledge connections between the Palestinian cause and other struggles for justice. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Angela Y. Davis

Rabab Abdulhadi

Ayoka Chenzira

Gina Dent

Melissa Garcia

Anna Romina Guevarra

Beverly Guy-Sheftall

Premilla Nadasen

Barbara Ransby

Chandra Talpade Mohanty

Waziyatawin

18 WHY BOYCOTT ISRAEL?

Lisa Taraki and Mark LeVine

Mark LeVine: What is the “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions” movement, and how is it related to the academic and cultural boycott movement? How have both evolved in the past few years in terms of their goals and methods?

Lisa Taraki: The BDS movement can be summed up as the struggle against Israeli colonization, occupation, and apartheid. BDS is a rights-based strategy to be pursued until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and complies with the requirements of international law.

Within this framework, the academic and cultural boycott of Israel has gained considerable ground in the seven years since the launching of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) in 2004. The goals of the academic and cultural boycott call, like the aims of the Palestinian Civil Society Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions issued in 2005, have remained consistent: to end the colonization of Palestinian lands occupied in 1967; to ensure full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel and end the system of racial discrimination; and to realize the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

The logic of the BDS movement has also remained consistent. The basic logic of BDS is the logic of pressure—not diplomacy, persuasion, or dialogue. Diplomacy as a strategy for achieving Palestinian rights has proved futile, due to the protection and immunity Israel enjoys from hegemonic world powers and those in their orbit.

Second, the logic of persuasion has also shown its bankruptcy, since no amount of “education” of Israelis about the horrors of occupation and other forms of oppression seems to have turned the tide. Dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis, which remains very popular among Israeli liberals and Western foundations and governments that fund the activities, has also failed miserably. Dialogue is often framed in terms of “two sides to the story,” in the sense that each side must understand the pain, anguish, and suffering of the other, and accept the narrative of the other.

This presents the “two sides” as if they were equally culpable, and deliberately avoids acknowledgment of the basic colonizer–colonized relationship. Dialogue does not promote change, but rather reinforces the status quo, and in fact is mainly in the interest of the Israeli side of the dialogue, since it makes Israelis feel that they are doing something, while in fact they are not. The logic of BDS is the logic of pressure. And that pressure has been amplifying.

The Palestinian-led academic and cultural boycott is an institutional boycott; that is, it does not target individual scholars or artists. This point has also remained the same since the inception of the BDS movement. Yet it is important to state here that all Israeli universities and virtually the entire spectrum of Israeli cultural institutions are complicit in the state’s policies, and are thereby legitimate targets of

the boycott. Guidelines and criteria for boycott, however, have been elaborated since the founding of the movement, as more experience is gained on the ground, and in response to requests for guidance from conscientious academics and cultural workers wishing to respect the Palestinian boycott call. PACBI in particular expends a great deal of effort guiding and advising international solidarity activists. Consistency is achieved through adhering to the guidelines developed by PACBI, in cooperation with other elements in the Palestinian BDS movement.

World-renowned public intellectuals, academics, writers, artists, musicians, and other cultural workers have now endorsed the academic and cultural boycott call; their names are too many to note here, but the interested reader can consult the PACBI website. In addition, several campaigns for academic and cultural boycott have been established around the world: in the UK, the US, France, Pakistan, Lebanon, Germany, Norway, India, Spain, South Africa, and Australia, and many other countries. The newly established European Platform for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (EPACBI) is an important coordinating body in Europe.

The lethal Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip in the winter of 2008–09 and the murder of Turkish solidarity activists aboard the Mavi Marmara in May 2010 served as further catalysts in the tremendous spread of BDS actions around the world, which include cancellations of artistic performances in Israel, protests against complicit Israeli institutions' performances abroad (such as the past and current protests around performances by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra), and many more creative forms of protest and boycott of Israeli and Brand Israel projects and institutions.

ML: The Israelis have recently passed a so-called “anti-Boycott law,” which opens Israelis who support any form of boycott, even if it's limited to settlement products, to significant civil penalties and lawsuits to force them to stop their actions. Can you comment on this whole discourse, especially the commentary in the Israeli press critical of it, claiming it represents a move against democracy, towards fascism, and similar responses which seem to suggest these are unprecedented measures?

LT: The Palestinian BDS movement is encouraged by the adoption of the logic of BDS, and boycott in particular, by sections of the Israeli left, and feels it has been vindicated in its argument that pressure—and not persuasion—is the best way to make Israelis realize that the system of occupation, apartheid, and colonialism must end. Having said this, I must note that there are at least two disturbing aspects to the new surge of activity surrounding the new anti-boycott law passed by the Israeli Knesset recently.

First, the boycott being defended by leftist and liberal Israelis targets institutions (such as the University Center of Samaria and the cultural center in Ariel) and products of the Israeli colonies in the West Bank only. This boycott, then, is silent on the complicity of all mainstream Israeli institutions—and indeed many industries, such as the weapons industry—in maintaining and legitimizing the structures of oppression.

Second, this boycott is often cast in terms of “saving Israeli democracy.” It is thus an Israel-centered discourse and project, and its point of reference is neither Palestinian rights as stipulated by international law nor an acknowledgment that they are heeding the call of the Palestinians. One outstanding exception is the Israeli group Boycott from Within, which explicitly endorses the Palestinian BDS call and considers it the basic point of reference for its agenda of activism—such as urging artists and musicians not to perform in Israel, supporting a military embargo of Israel, advocating for different

divestment campaigns, and many other activities that target all complicit Israeli institutions. Other Israeli groups, such as the Coalition of Women for Peace, ICAHD, and others have also endorsed the Palestinian BDS call publicly.

ML: What is your impression of what happened with the latest Gaza flotilla [in July 2011]? Some commentators have argued that the “successful” use of supposedly “nonviolent” strategies by the government of Israel to put pressure on other governments to stop the flotilla before it got anywhere near Gaza represents a defeat for the rising tide of nonviolent resistance, showing that the Israelis have learned the lessons and are now able to beat the activists at their own game.

LT: I don’t agree with that assessment at all. I think the main aim of the flotillas, which has been to highlight, resist, and protest Israel’s illegal siege of the Gaza Strip, has been realized, despite Israeli efforts to [bring] extreme pressure [to bear] against governments to prevent the vessels from sailing. The ridiculous Israeli response to the [July 2011] “Welcome to Palestine” campaign did more to publicize the campaign than would otherwise have happened.

You are right to frame the flotilla movement as a part of the international movement to isolate, expose, and place pressure upon Israel to respect international law and end its system of colonization, occupation, and apartheid. That this movement—still in its early stages—has achieved world recognition is attested to by the state of disarray in official Israeli and Zionist circles. Already, several conferences and strategy papers have been launched in Israel and abroad to counter what is being marketed as the “delegitimization threat.” If BDS, the annual and growing Israeli Apartheid Week events, and other resistance actions such as the waves of flotillas are mere nuisances, I doubt that so much effort would be invested merely out of an “academic” interest in them. Strong-arm tactics with some governments may have prevented the flotillas from reaching Gaza, but the strength of the BDS movement—and other solidarity actions—is that they are built on people’s initiatives. [These] cannot be easily suppressed, despite intimidation, legal threats and lawsuits, and other silencing tactics.

ML: In the BDS literature, there is a critique of those, like myself, who argue that anyone who wants to join BDS for Palestine should also adopt similar actions vis-à-vis other countries involved in massive systematic oppression and/or occupation (China, India, the US, to cite the most obvious examples), and that the need to think systemically is not merely an ethical imperative but a strategic one as well. Your response, when we last met in Ramallah, was that this strategy is utopian, that Palestinians have enough trouble getting people to engage in BDS merely against Israel, and that enlarging it would be untenable.

Can you explain how BDS can become more effective without thinking of joining with other movements against oppression and occupation that might call for a similar campaign?

LT: The BDS movement does operate with a conceptual framework, of course. This includes an analysis of global and regional power relations. BDS is predicated on the fact that the collusion of the hegemonic or major world powers of the so-called “international community” with Israeli impunity is the single most important factor that enables Israel to continue flouting international law. The hegemonic powers not only shield Israel from censure; they have also often turned a blind eye to grievous offences committed by their allies—but only when it serves their own interests. The inconsistency of US and European foreign policy is not something I need to stress, I believe. Plenty of

rogue regimes continue to oppress and suppress their citizenry without international censure, as we all know.

What is important to note, however, is that when an oppressed people decide to appeal to the world to help them achieve self-determination and freedom through boycotts and other pressure mechanisms, as the vast majority of Palestinian civil society has done, then the response of all conscientious people would usually be to respect that appeal directly and immediately. It certainly was the case in South Africa. I don't think anyone had the temerity to suggest, during the anti-apartheid struggle in that country, that the existence of a full-throttle anti-imperialist movement would be the precondition for supporting the boycotts called for by the oppressed in South Africa, or that a boycott of the US, the UK, and indeed Israel, was the only principled course of action to take. That would have been a recipe for paralysis.

Israel, unlike many other oppressive states, enjoys the full support of the hegemonic powers, as I have noted. Precisely because of this, since there is no other impetus for change, it is incumbent upon forces that support justice to heed the Palestinian call. If there were a robust BDS movement in China or in Morocco today urging a boycott of the existing regimes, then certainly it would be an obligation to respect the call of the oppressed.

ML: It seems increasing numbers of diaspora and Israeli Jews are supporting BDS, at least in principle—although, as you [suggested], what they imagine BDS is and what it actually means can differ significantly. How is the growing support impacting the success of BDS? Do you think it is penetrating more into Israeli society? And have you seen any changes in the way the Israeli government deals with nonviolent protest in the last year or so, given the increasing success of the movement?

LT: My comments concerning the Israeli boycott of the colonies in the West Bank are relevant in this context as well. I think most Israelis are very far from becoming convinced that BDS is an effective strategy for radical change of the status quo, and that is because Israeli society has no incentive to change the status quo. Only pressure, in the form of various BDS measures, can move the Israeli body politic. That is the logic of BDS, after all. As for the treatment of protests by the Israeli government and military, it's obvious that they are continuing to reassess their on-the-ground tactics in the face of the continuing escalation of protests, both by Palestinians and international and Israeli supporters. The use of force has been a constant for several decades now, and is nothing new. During the first Intifada, which was a form of civil resistance and disobedience, the response of the Israeli military was deadly and violent, just as it is today. The language of force will not be abandoned. That is the logic of a colonial power, after all.

ML: Can you elaborate a bit more on what the initiators of the BDS movement mean when they describe institutions, or artists and academics, who “serve Brand Israel.” What is Brand Israel, and whose interests does it serve?

LT: Brand Israel is a worldwide campaign launched in 2005 by some agencies of the Israeli government and major pro-Israel groups internationally, primarily in the US. It's a diffuse and diverse effort, but the main idea behind it is to portray and promote Israel as a normal country for tourism, youth culture, enjoyment of the fine arts, sports, and all other “normal” and “civilized” pursuits. Public relations firms have played an important role in crafting the Israeli brand. In addition, Israeli consulates and embassies, as well as Jewish and Zionist organizations (such as Hillel in the US), are actively involved

in promoting Israeli art, scientific accomplishments, and other “achievements” abroad. The modernity, diversity, and vitality of Israel are stressed in Brand Israel promotional activities.

I may add that the Israeli writer Yitzhak Laor has uncovered evidence of official Israeli sponsorship of Brand Israel–type activities, and with a price tag attached; in an article published in 2008, he revealed that any Israeli artist or cultural worker accepting financial support from the Israeli Foreign Ministry for exhibiting or showcasing his or her work abroad was obligated to sign a contract stipulating that he or she “undertakes to act faithfully, responsibly and tirelessly to provide the Ministry with the highest professional services. The service provider is aware that the purpose of ordering services from him is to promote the policy interests of the State of Israel via culture and art, including contributing to creating a positive image for Israel.”

What this reveals, then, is that, in light of the bad press Israel has been receiving in past years, it has been deemed necessary to make sure that artists and other cultural workers—perhaps because of their reputation as idiosyncratic or even eccentric—know what is expected of them when they accept state funding of their tours abroad. They are supposed to act as “cultural ambassadors” for Israel, which, in large part, is to become apologists for Israeli policies and practices that oppress the Palestinians.

ML: In terms of the academic boycott, if I have a student who needs to come to Israel to develop her or his Hebrew in order to better understand the dynamics of the occupation and can only afford to do this through various programs such as Erasmus or Education Abroad Programs that involved affiliation with Israeli universities, or wants to do research at Israeli archives on the country’s history that require students to be affiliated to Israeli universities to obtain research clearance, what is the official position of PACBI towards this?

LT: The PACBI guidelines for the implementation of the academic boycott, which apply to international academics and students, are clear: any interaction with Israeli universities, regardless of the content or form (studying there, accessing archives, giving a course, attending a conference, conducting research) violates the academic boycott if such an interaction entails official contact with the institution.

This can include accepting an invitation to attend a conference, registering for a course, accepting employment or agreeing to conduct seminars, or conducting research in affiliation with such institutions. While using a university facility such as a library does not strictly violate the boycott, doing so in the framework of affiliation with the university would.

Institutional study abroad schemes, research activity conducted in the framework of institutional cooperation agreements—such as the various EU-funded programs, including Erasmus Mundus—violate the boycott. Regarding the study of Hebrew, I think that the international options for pursuing that are very wide indeed; most universities in the West offer Hebrew instruction.

In general, conscientious scholars and students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the logic and aims of the boycott and to abide by its spirit if situations other than the ones noted above are encountered. Since Palestinians—including academics and their representative body, the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Employees—have called for an academic boycott, it becomes a responsibility of conscientious academics and students considering visiting the area for research or

study purposes to become familiar with the context, which includes thinking seriously about the meaning of their affiliation with Israeli universities in light of the boycott call.

ML: Critics might say that this response is explicitly putting politics—however worthy—ahead of the advance of scholarship. For historians, for example, it is impossible to produce new knowledge without accessing archives. For student historians, their degree depends on their access to archives. If the archives are controlled by the state, then does the mere fact of using them mean complicity with the state?

LT: This is not putting politics above scholarship; it is about applying ethical principles to the practice of scholarship. No scholarly activity takes place in a vacuum, and every scholar must consider the consequences of his or her research strategies when pursuing scholarly activity. State control of some archives does not necessarily preclude using them, as I noted earlier; usually, it is enough to prove one's academic credentials to gain access to them. It is the same as using Israeli medical facilities or any other public service. The main issue is institutional affiliation.

ML: Are there any lessons from the so-called Arab Spring, or from other mass mobilizations globally against oppression in the past year or two, that can inform and even help the BDS movement and Palestinian resistance more broadly? Do the events of the last eight months give you hope, or is the situation in Palestine different enough—being at once a colonial situation and an internal struggle for democracy within both Israeli and Palestinian societies—that these other mass mobilizations can't really help beyond inspiring Palestinians to stay the course?

LT: The revolutionary spirit that has ignited the Arab world will no doubt make the question of Palestine more urgent than before, both in those countries that have begun the process of revolutionary transformation and those in which struggles for freedom and democracy are still unfolding. Once there are free and unrigged elections for new parliaments in Egypt and Tunisia, as well as other Arab countries, the new parliaments will have to be sensitive to the views of the people—unlike the situation that has hitherto prevailed.

It is well known that Palestine is an Arab question, and that includes widespread rejection of Israel's destructive role in the region. The forces of counterrevolution may try to combat popular sentiment, and there will be continuous contestation and ongoing struggles, but the policies of Arab countries will not be the same now that the revolutionary spirit has taken hold of the imagination of the Arab people.

ML: How do you think the sudden rise of the protest movement in Israel for "social justice" will impact the BDS movement and Palestinian resistance to the occupation more broadly? Especially with the likely coincidence of renewed protests in Israel next month [in September 2011] and a major Palestinian push for statehood at the UN, is there a space for Palestinians to make a significant intervention in the protest discourse inside Israel that helps reshape it towards broader ends? And if so, what role would BDS play in this?

LT: From all indications, the protest movement in Israel has nothing to say about justice for Palestinians, either as citizens or as occupied people. The Palestinian BDS movement does not address the Israeli public directly in order to persuade it or to appeal to its sense of justice. That is not the logic

of BDS. It is up to Israeli political forces to make that connection and to influence their public. We expect that pro-BDS Israelis, however small their numbers might be, will be taking this up within their society.

DECOLONIZATION | IN CONVERSATION WITH OKWUI ENWEZOR | *London* | 2014

OKWUI ENWEZOR Your conception of decolonization strikes me as paradoxical on the one hand, and curious on the other. In the first instance, it appears paradoxical to want to decolonize Palestinian architecture, that is, if we accept the historical argument that the architectures of the landscape of Israel and Palestine have always been entangled, to the extent that it is impossible to disentangle their individual, unique structural languages. If my assumption bears any relation to the facts of spatial practice in the area, what in your view constitutes the colonial architecture in which you aim to intervene? I am also curious about the apologetic tone you adopt in the usage of the term “decolonization,” which you deem to be problematic and fraught with historical problems. What makes the term decolonization problematic in the contemporary context?

DAAR In order to engage with your challenges, we’d like to trace a trajectory of the terms you are enquiring about, and then deal with the ways in which these have become operative concepts in our work. In the afterword to the first Hebrew edition of Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ella Shohat commented on the “inverse way” in which postcolonial literature entered Palestinian-Israeli discourse. In the early 1990s, several articles by Gayatri Spivak were translated into Hebrew. These were followed by the work of Homi Bhabha, and only much later, that of Edward Said. Finally, it was only at the start of the Second Intifada that translations of Frantz Fanon became available. This can be seen as shorthand for how the academic environment of the Oslo years engaged with a robust postcolonial discourse, yet one that did not rest on anti-colonial struggles. Translated into Arabic, however, Fanon’s book was often found on the bodies of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) fighters throughout the 1970s.

We seem to be living through a kind of postcolonial colonization. On the one hand, the discourse of the 1990s was saturated with terms such as proximity, hybridity, neighborliness, all without sufficiently engaging with the colonial reality of Zionism, or what Derek Gregory called “the colonial present.” On the other hand, the type of control held by the Palestinian Authority simulates a kind of quasi-state attitude, all the while being under Israeli control. It is also apparent that the present technologies of domination are themselves post-structural, networked, and multilayered more than ever before. What we are dealing with is not only blatant exclusion and separation, but a regime that madly juxtaposes freedom and domination, autonomy and control, law and lawlessness, access and separation, liberalism and occupation. In this mixture, there is a central place for liberal technologies of moderation—humanitarianism, international law, human rights—to become abused forms of government/governance. In the West Bank, apparatuses from industrial zones, through to the flow-modulation of checkpoints and the path of the wall, are physically engineered according to the proportionality mechanism, in which “well-being” is part of the logic of control.

As such, it is meaningful to insist on colonization as the frame of reference, and on the term decolonization as the necessary practice. There is nothing apologetic in our treatment of the term decolonization. But we do think that it needs to be updated in so far as contemporary colonial practices are different from those of the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, our ultimate aim is to learn to do other things, with what we call "the future archaeology of colonization."

OE What seems to be missing, however, is what I consider precisely to be the several registers of address that bear directly on the notion of spatial practice, namely terms such as "distance," "proximity," and "neighborliness." How does a critical architectural program, whether pragmatic or speculative, invent new lexicons for dwelling next to, or theories of adjacency, to deal with the unspeakable other, be they Palestinian or Israeli?

DAAR Aesthetically, in this regard, there is much grey area. Israel began building in and around Jerusalem in the second half of 1967. Israeli and international architects rushed to build these occupied parts of Jerusalem, professing a yet-unclear "return to history," and abandoning abstract, modern practices in exchange for feelings of "locality and place"—a certain "dwelling" rather than "living." Local, Arab architecture became the main reference for imitation in the framing of Zionist architecture as a so-called local and native practice. Conversely, many Palestinian buildings reflected a desire for the kind of luxury that appeared in settlement homes. Today, you can see an entirely new Arab town, Rawabi, located north of Ramallah, built in a very similar fashion to an Israeli settlement. In fact, one of the reasons for this similarity is brutally practical: it was Arab construction workers who build the settlements, keep the plans, and use them in public and private projects for Palestinians!

Although they may superficially look alike, it is the infrastructure, the networks of transport, the flow of commodities, provisions, water, electricity, gas—in short, the invisible networks of power—that charge these building with their performative capacity. Thus, it is not so much in the houses themselves, but in the systems that weave them together, that the difference is both made and perceived.

We think that questions of togetherness and the like should be made meaningful through the terms of a joint struggle against a present system of inequality and control; terms that then become the condition for dealing with the issue of neighborliness and proximity. The idea of a struggle today has various forms, many of which are based on building institutional frameworks that unite pedagogy with activism and architectural work, much as we have tried to do. Amira Hass has suggested that these joint platforms set up to fight the injustice of colonization will become the political platforms of the future. It is not by chance that our practice is based in Beit Sahour, which has been, and still is, a nodal point for several left-wing political movements and practices.

The Land of Sad Oranges

By Ghassan Kanafani

Translated with an introduction by [Nejmeh Khalil-Habib](#).

Introduction

Ghassan Kanafani was born in Akka, Palestine, in 1936. He died when an explosive device planted by an Israeli operative, detonated under his car on July 8th, 1972. His wife Annie, a Danish national, described the event as such: “...*We used to go shopping together every Saturday morning, on that day he accompanied his niece Lamees. A few minutes after they left, I heard the sound of a huge explosion. I ran but only saw remanence of our exploded small car. Lamees was a few meters away from the spot, but I could not find Ghassan. I hoped to find him injured, but I only found his left leg. I was devastated, and our son Fayez, started knocking his head against the wall. Little Layla was crying: Baba...Baba...I gathered his remains, the Beiruti escorted him to his last resting place at the Shuhada Cemetery where he was buried next to Lamees who loved him and died with him.*”¹

Kanafani is a prominent literary figure in Arabic Literature. His works were translated to many different languages. During his short life he enriched the Arabic library by contributing a valuable collection of writings, varying from novel to short story to literary research and political essays. “The Land of the Sad Orange” is one of his early stories. It depicts the impact of deracination on the Palestinians after Israeli forces took over their country in 1948. In this story Kanafani mixes artistic reality with history. Though the story tells the suffering of a middle-class family, it is exemplary of the experience of thousands of displaced families, who suffered the humiliation of leaving their country and living in poverty, following the 1948 defeat of the Arab armies and the creation of the state of Israel.

The Land of Sad Orange

When we left Yaffa to Akka, I felt no agony. It was like going from a city to another for a holiday. For several days, nothing painful happened. I was happy because this move gave me a nice break from school.

Things started to look differently when Akka was attacked.

That night was hard on you and me.

The women were praying, men were bitter and silent. You and me and all the kids our age didn't understand what was going on. But that night we started to gather the threads of the story. When the Israeli soldiers left, after threatening and swearing, a big van stopped in front of our home, and few things (mainly beds and blankets) were thrown into it. I was standing with my back against the wall of the old house, when I saw your mother rise up into the van, then your aunt, followed by the little ones. Your father picked you up and threw you over the furniture, in the same way, he lifted me over his head and threw me in the iron box at the top of the van. There was your brother, Riad, sitting in silence. Before having myself settled properly, the car started moving and Akka started to fade little by little, through the ascending, zigzag road that led to Ra'ss-

Ennakoura.²

The sky was cloudy, a touch of cold air chilled my body. Riad sat calmly with his legs propped on top of the box, his back resting against the furniture, staring at the sky. I was sitting in silence, holding my knees by my arms and putting my chin between my legs...All along the way there were orange groves. A sense of fear and anxiety spread over everyone. The car moved with difficulty over the wet soil, and from a distance, we heard the sound of gun shots as if bidding us farewell.

When *Ra'ss-Ennakoura* appeared, the car stopped. The women came down from among the belongings and went to a farmer who was squatting in front of a basket of oranges. They picked up the oranges, and we heard them lamenting. At that moment I realised that oranges are something precious, and that they are dear to our hearts. The women bought the fruits and went back to the car. Your father stretched out his arm, took an orange, stared at it silently, then burst into tears, just like a miserable, little child.

In *Ra'ss-Ennakoura*, our car stopped among many other cars. The men gave up their guns to the police officers who were there for that reason. When our turn came, the table was full of hand and machine guns and I watched the long line of cars enter Lebanon, leaving long behind them the land of orange. I started wailing. Your mother was still looking in silence at the oranges. In your father's eyes were the reflection of all the orange trees he had left behind for the Israelis, all the clean orange trees he had planted one by one, glittered in his face. He failed to stop the tears that filled up in his eyes, when he came to face the head police officer.

When we reached Saida³, in the afternoon, we became refugees.

.....
The road absorbed us among many other things. Your father suddenly became older than before, he looked as if he hadn't sleep for a long time. He was standing among the belongings, which were thrown over the side of the road. I knew if I were to say any word he would explode in my face: "Damn your father! Damn you!" These two swears were clear on his face. Even I, who was brought up in a catholic conservative school, at that moment, doubted that God wanted to make his people happy. I doubted that God could hear and see everything. All the paintings that show God loving the children and smiling at them looked like a lie, among other lies told by people who build conservative schools for which they can charge extra fees. I was sure that the God we knew in Palestine, left Her as well, and that He was refugee somewhere in this world, and that He was incapable of solving his own problems, and that we, the refugees, who are sitting on the footpath, were waiting for a new destiny to find us a solution. We were responsible to find a solution ourselves. We were responsible for finding a roof over our heads. The pain struck the head of the naive young boy.

Night was awful, and the dark started to fall, bit by bit. I was frightened...thinking that I am going to spend the night on the pavement filled my spirit with dreadful nightmares. No one was there to calm me down. I couldn't find any person to turn to. Your father's rigid silence raised more fear in my heart, and the oranges in your mother's hand ignited fire in my chest. Everyone was silent, everyone was looking at the black road, hoping that some solution would materialize from around the corner and take us to a certain shelter. Then destiny came. It came in the form of your uncle, who had arrived in town a few days earlier. He was our destiny.

Your uncle wasn't a man of real values, and when he found himself on the road, he

became more savage. He went to a house where a Jewish family lived, opened the door, threw the content of the room away and cried to their face: "Go to Palestine". For sure they didn't go to Palestine, but, intimidated by his frustration and anger, they went to another room leaving him to enjoy a roof and a floor.

Your uncle led us to that room; we were heaped with his family and his belongings. We slept on the floor and were covered by the men's coats, In the morning, when we woke up, the men were still sitting on the chairs. The tragedy started to penetrate through our bodies...all our bodies.

We didn't stay in Saida long, just three days. Your uncle's room wasn't wide enough even for half of us. Your mother asked your father either to find himself a job or to return to the oranges. Your father exploded in her face. His voice was trembling with rage. Then our family problems began. The happy, strong-bonded family we had once been was left behind along with the orange groves, the old house, and the martyrs.

I didn't know from where your father got the money. I knew that he had sold your mother's jewelry, which he had bought her once, to make her happy and proud of him. But the jewelry wasn't enough to solve our problems, other resources were needed. Had your father borrowed any money? Had he sold any belongings that he brought with him without telling us? I couldn't tell. But I still remember that we moved to a certain suburb of Saida, and there, your father sat on the high rock and smiled for the first time. He was waiting for the 15th of May to return with the victorious armies.

The 15th of May came after a bitter period of time. Exactly, at twelve o'clock he nudged me with his foot while I was still sleeping, and said in a voice thundering with great expectation: get up, go see the Arab armies⁴ entering Palestine. I woke up in a frenzy and we ran bare footed, all along the hills, in the middle of the night, till we reached the street which was a full kilometre away from the village. All of us youngsters, and the elderly, ran breathlessly like idiots. We saw the lights of the cars beaming from a distance, travelling towards *Ra'ss-Ennakoura*.

When we reached the main street, we felt the cold, but your father's crazy shouting made us forget about everything. He started to run after the cars like a small boy. He waved at them. He shouted in a broken voice until he went out of breath, but he kept running after the cars like a small child. We ran beside him, shouting like him, as the admirable soldiers looked toward us from under their helmets with silence and stiffness. We were all breathless, though your father kept running in spite of his fifty years. He was throwing cigarettes to the soldiers. He kept running and we kept following like a small herd of goats.

The procession of cars vanished suddenly and we returned home, tired and breathless. Your father became silent and speechless. When a passing car flashed its lights at his face, tears were spread all over his cheeks.

After that day, life passed slowly. We were deceived by announcements and by the bitter truth. Grimness started to invade our faces. Your father found it difficult to talk about Palestine or the happy days in his orange groves, or his houses.

We were the walls of his tragedy and cunning enough to know the meaning behind his early morning shouting: "go to the hill and never come back before noon." We knew that he wanted to distract us from asking for breakfast.

Things began to deteriorate. Any simple issue was enough to ignite your father's anger. When one of us asked him something, he would jump as if electrocuted and then scan us with his eyes. A damned idea festered in his mind. He stood up suddenly, as if he'd just found a solution to his dilemma. Out of feeling that he was strong enough to put an end to his tragedy, and out of the horror one feels taking a disastrous action, he started talking nonsense. He started turning left and right, as if looking for something we couldn't see. Then he jumped up on a box which we brought with us from Akka. He emptied its contents in a hysterical, frightening way. As if led by her maternal intuition, your mother must have grasped what was going in his mind. Suddenly, she started to push us away from the house and asked us to run to the hill.

Against her will, we stuck our faces to the window, and stuck our little ears to its wooden frame. Frightened, we heard your father saying: I will kill them and kill myself. I want to finish it. I want to....I want...

We started peeping through the cracks of the door, we saw your father splayed on the ground, breathing heavily, gnawing his teeth. Your mother was watching him from a distance. Her face was full of horror.

At First, I didn't understand what was going on. I remember that the moment I saw a black pistol by his side, I started running as fast as I could, as if escaping a Phantom which had appeared suddenly. I ran away from the house, toward the hills. The further I ran from the house, the further I felt myself moving away from my childhood. I started to realise that our lives will never be the same: things were no longer as simple as they once were, and life was no longer something you eagerly looked forward to. The situation had reached the point of having a shot to the head as the only thing a father could offer his children. So from now and on, we had to watch our step, behave ourselves, keep quiet when father speaks about his problems. We wouldn't ask for food no matter how hungry we got, we will show obedience by shaking our heads and smiling when he shouts: "go to hills and don't come back till noon."

Your father was still there shaking with fever that evening, long after the darkness had spread over the house. Your mother sat beside him. Our eyes glistened like cats' eyes in the dark. Our lips were sealed as if they were never opened, as if they were remnants of an old injury.

We were heaped up there, withdrawn from our childhood, away from the land of oranges...oranges that died, an old farmer once told us, if watered by strange hands. Your father was still sick, thrown down on his bed, and your mother was gnawing tragic tears that never left her eyes. I snuck into the room, an outcast. I saw your father's face quiver with broken rage, and I saw, at the same time, that black pistol on the low table. Near it was orange.

The orange was wrinkled and dry.

XVI

. . . .

A long time elapses between exiting and entering, which allows you to bid farewell to exile with appropriate melancholy. But you did not understand why tears lurked beneath the surface of words, and then rose and overflowed at the Tunis theater when you bid your farewell to Tunisia and to those returning to the back corner of the homeland. The ones leaving the realm of myth for the narrow confines of reality. A certain hope drips from a horizon heavy with the steam of summer over a pain whose side effects no one noticed. Perhaps the joy of a new adventure, the adventure of rediscovering the Promised Land, is what made the returnees forget to praise Carthage with words in keeping with its hospitality and its sea.

Returning, we are returning, without a lofty anthem or a bold banner. At times it seemed as if we were sneaking through a hole in the wall, and at others as if we were celebrating our entrance through a wide gate into an aptly named prison of our national chaos. The migrants are returning and the returnees are migrating. And in the midst of it, a certain joy is brought about by the necessary forgetfulness of the circumstances that govern words. When symbols, names, and words become separated from what they represent: like return, independence, state, peace, sovereignty, red carpet, ministry, presidency. Words that point to the thing from a distance, but neither express it nor resemble it. As if identity, craving completeness, were imbued with a wish it thought had already been fulfilled.

A silent contest with the self is postponed by the joy of coming full circle upon the waves of the sea, which this time is our sea. The returnee's imagination grasps only too well the singularity of beautiful images, which atone for the sin of obligatory and semi-obligatory departure. And that alone is recompense enough for our exodus. We will see our sun rise from the east, not from the direction of exile. Our fruits squeeze the sensual from the intellectual:

The apple is biting the form without being punished for acquiring knowledge.

The pear is a perfectly formed breast, no bigger or smaller than the palm of a hand.

The grape is sugar calling out: Press me in your mouth or keep me in jars.

The apricot is the return of longing to its pale origin.

The orange is a thought that glows in the dark and can be devoured anytime.

The fig is the parting of the lips by two fingers to receive the erotic sense all at once.

The prickly pear is the virgin's defense of her treasure.

The cherry trims the distance between the desire of eyes and the passion of lips.

The quince is a woman teasing a man, leaving a bitter aftertaste in the mouth of the disappointed.

The mango is saliva flowing for palpable ecstasy.

The strawberry is a small kernel of a color neither red nor not-red, bespeaking the scandal of similitude.

The mulberry, black or the color of sweetness, is the memory of a first kiss.

Pomegranates are rubies hiding in allusion.

Whenever the returnee approaches the stage of return, he becomes its frame, but this does not stop emotions from flowing. A coy heroism dismounts without a horse and becomes part of the ordinary receiving the ordinary. You will kiss the earth, embrace tree trunks, and utter sacrosanct words from the rhetoric of the victor or the prisoner. A rhetoric shaped by exile to better the living conditions of limbo, and to announce the good tidings protecting the collective heart from harm. Whenever the returnee approaches the land of great dreams, his eyes well up and his stride becomes halting, lest he stumble on his path of sand. He looks back and bids farewell to a heroism whose rituals he obeyed with a soldier's discipline. A heroism now eclipsed by his desire for a nap under a grapevine.

Has the journey ended or begun? Has he come closer to the place, or has the place departed from his imagination? The older returnee is prone to making comparisons, perplexed as to whether he should prefer the imagined over the real. As for the one born in exile and reared on the beautiful attributes of exile's antithesis, he might be let down by a paradise created especially for him, composed of words he soaked up and reduced to stereotypes that would guide him to difference. He inherited memory from a family that feared forgetfulness, upon which the others had wagered. He inherited memory from the steady refrain of anthems glorifying folklore and the rifle, which eventually became an identity when the "homeland" was born far away from its land. The homeland was born in exile. Paradise was born from the hell of absence.

And you, you were not with them. You spent as many years in exile as you did in the homeland. You did not understand why you cried in the theater in

Tunis and why the audience also cried, as if struck by the contagion of tears. Tears are contagious, like yawns. Was it because you were not with them, or was it because you were the one who formulated the declaration of the wished-for state while knowing that this state was still nothing more than a literary text? And you felt that the gate through which the returnees were stepping led neither to independence nor a state. It is true that the occupation has left the bedroom, but it is still sitting comfortably in the living room and in all the other rooms. It controls the water faucet, the electricity switch, and the blueness of the sea. Is this not somewhat positive? Is this not better than nothing? You split in two: One says yes, and one says no. But why all this false celebratory clamor that drugs the world with images?

You were glued to the TV and assumed a neutral stance in the presence of a dilemma that erected a wall between the mind and the heart. The mind says: It is a false and failed play. The heart asks: How can I survive the magic of its *mise-en-scène*? The grass is green, the weather is ideal for a picnic, and the master of the world is handsome. The two sworn enemies approach and shake hands: one reluctantly, the other with cheerful confidence. The carefully selected audience applauds a juncture in history on the lawn of the White House. But the language you hear brings your heart back to its senses: No, this is not my language. Where is the eloquence of the victim recalling his long suffering in the face of the misery of the moment when enemy looks enemy in the eye and shakes his hand insistently? Where are the voices of those murdered, old and recent, demanding an apology, not only from the murderer, but from history as well? Where will meaning go when opposites meet? Where is the scream from a surgical procedure where the past is severed from the present in the adventurous march toward an uncertain tomorrow? And where is my language?

Is this why your personal response was the poetic defense of narrative and memory? So you set to paper the echoes of an individual and collective biography and wondered: *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* For what can a poet do before history's bulldozer but guard the spring and trees, visible and invisible, by the old roads? And protect language from receding

from metaphorical precision and from being emptied of the voices of victims calling for their share of tomorrow's memory on that land over which a struggle is being waged. A struggle for what lies beyond the power of weapons: the power of words.

The poison-tipped questions were shot at you: What will you write without exile? What will you write without the occupation? Exile is existence. The existing occupation is what hinders the efficacy of the imagination. I will write better. But why are such questions never put to poets from other countries? Is it because slavery is the precondition for Palestinian creativity, or is it that freedom is not in sync with our rhythms? What does it mean for a Palestinian to be a poet and what does it mean for a poet to be Palestinian? In the first instance: it is to be the product of history, to exist in language. In the second: to be a victim of history and triumph through language. But both are one and the same and cannot be divided or entwined.

Gaza and Jericho first. And if you behave yourselves, they will not be the last. Finally you traveled to Gaza. You had never seen it. You wrote for and about it as it presented itself: a fort besieged by sea, palm trees, invaders, and sycamores. A fort that never falls. Gaza is pride taking pride in its name, unceasingly provoked by the world's silence before its long siege. On the long road from Cairo, on the sands of the Sinai, you were unable to turn your fluctuating feelings into clear words. Words were too disobedient to leave the heart and reach the tongue, like the Russian "L," which rises from the belly and stops at the roof of the mouth.

You asked the driver: Where is Ma'īn Basīsū? Why did he not come with me? He reminded you that he now slept in a sand ditch outside of Cairo. They couldn't find a place for him in Gaza. You muttered: We were looking for a home and now we are looking for a grave. Ah, had he waited just a bit! Had he not traveled to London and not put the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door of his hotel room, he would have been my host in Gaza today. Gaza is his private property and his personal poetic kingdom. Without him Gaza will seem so impoverished!

Sunset in al-‘Arīsh was slow. The sun’s rays take their time embracing the palm fronds. You contemplate the color of fire slowly descending from them to adorn the sea’s undulations as they give in to an eternal dalliance. They greet us with a damp summer breeze as if fanned by the wing of a charitable angel. When will we reach Gaza? You asked your friend, who was busy with the embers of his hookah. He said: When night falls? You said: I want to see it with all my senses. He smiled: The homeland is more beautiful at night. Take in the sunset of the al-‘Arīsh now, because you will not see the sea there the way that you see it here. The sea there is colonized. He repeated: The homeland is more beautiful at night, so go slowly, go slowly! You put your note- and hope-book in your handbag and shut your emotions inside. What do you feel? Yasir asked you. You said: The long road has drained me of all feelings and expectations. I don’t feel a thing or expect anything now. He said: All the better!

We entered, or snuck into, Gaza in the dark. I let you walk ahead of me and carried your imagination for you, because you would be incapable of mending it if it were to crash on hard reality. I saw you averting your face from the eager cameras mounted to capture the ecstasy of the returnees and to record the words prepared for an invective against exile. You said: I came, and did not arrive. I came, and did not return. You did not lie to anyone, or to yourself. This was not a time for celebration. Gaza has yet to repair itself. The destruction left by the military occupation shook you to your core. If you do not dream of what lies ahead, the sea will run away from the fishermen in your language. That night, chopped up by checkpoints, settlements, and watchtowers, one needed a new geographical method to recognize the borders between one footstep and the next and between what is prohibited and permitted, not unlike to the challenge of distinguishing between what is vague and what is clear in the Oslo Accords.

At the end of the night you can only sleep with the help of a sleeping pill. When you wake up, you need some time to be convinced that you are in Gaza, which you then describe as “the city of misery and might.” Late in the sultry morning you go together with some returning friends to visit the camps. It is hard to walk in the alleys, and your own cleanliness and access

to water shames you. You do not believe, and never did, that these holding tanks of misery are a necessary step toward immortalizing or affirming the right of return. But you remember what you really should forget: the world's conscience. You vilify theories of progress and the teleology of history, which might take humanity back to the Stone Age. To keep some perspective, you deprive yourself of the serum of optimism and zeal and instead take a pill for high blood pressure. You say: If I think of anything else, I will have to throw my conscience to the cats.

You wonder: What kind of a linguistic or legal wunderkind could formulate a peace treaty and good neighborliness between a palace and a shack, between a guard and a prisoner?

You walk down the alleys ashamed of everything: your ironed shirts, the aesthetics of poetry, the abstractness of music, and a passport that allows you to travel the world. You are stabbed by a pain in your consciousness. And you return to a Gaza that looks down on its refugee camps and its refugees, and seems apprehensive of the returnees. You do not know which Gaza you are in, and you say:

I came, but did not arrive.

I came, but did not return!

XVII

.

On the coastal road, your heart leaps ahead of you like a hunting dog. You did not sleep even though you were dreaming of flying low like a partridge. You know that no peak remains high forever. Time has the effect of a chisel on stone. Places might move if infatuation were allowed to rage the way it wants to and reduce you to a feather, just as you are now on this coastal road that points north like an arrow. Is north still in its rightful place, with its dual identity of mountain and sea?

You have not slept well since you arrived in Ramallah from Amman two days ago. You stood at the Allenby Bridge like an esteemed prisoner among soldiers who were eyeing you with intense curiosity while waiting for further orders from another security apparatus to ascertain that you are indeed you, not an other who repossessed your body and assumed your identity so he might experience this humiliation and write poems about dodging a shadow.

They were not entirely wrong, because on this bridge no one is who he was just a moment before: eager for his rendezvous with the land of small and tall tales, folded up onto himself like a cabbage or an unpeeled onion. There the soldier, be it male or female, will peel him unceremoniously. Because they possess the right to do with him as they wish: Take off your shoes! Take off your watch! Undo your belt! Take off your glasses and walk through the

metal detector! The machine beeps, you do it again, and it beeps again. You are frisked and they find the source of the beeping. It is your superb ink pen. They take it apart and find only black ink: Next time, take the pen out of your pocket! So you say: Next time I will not carry this kind of pen.

There, on the bridge, which no longer has a river beneath it because the sources of its waters had been plundered, the dream becomes frugal, the country's image pales, and you are not you. You approach Jericho, real, not mythical, Jericho. Palm trees line both sides of the road and your eyes look for the famous Flower of Jericho, but you cannot find it. Nor do you find traces of the myth that had grown tedious from having been so frequently narrated and doubted by historians. But Jericho is right here in Jericho. You ascend the Mount of Temptation to a tiny monastery carved in the rock face. Here, Satan came to Christ when he fasted for forty days and forty nights until hunger overcame him.

The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor and said to him, "All of this I will give you, if you will fall to your knees and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil let him be and suddenly angels came and ministered to him.

You sit in a nearby café and cannot drink the coffee because of the flies competing with you for it. Unceasing, impertinent flies. And you recall an enduring question: Why did God create flies?

Scattered mounds of earth left in the wake of an earthquake stirred by God's wrath. Sand dunes that shot up hastily and chaotically like mushrooms. You imagine that eternity made an impromptu visit to inspect the traces of fear that lie in the present moment gazing at the abyss where a spiral staircase had once been. Did life find its way here after having escaped from the Dead Sea? Anemones emerge from the desolation, their tiny red corollas growing out of gray and black stones. A bit of mist and light suffice for life to overpower nothingness. A bit of hope and time suffice for you to cross

the mountain trails of myth; you were spared the fate of your ancestors. So borrow the wisdom of the anemones and say: Nothingness does not concern me, even if death besieges me.

If they ask you about the power of poetry, say: Grass is not as fragile as we might perceive. It never breaks, since it hides its modest shadow in the earth's secret. Grass growing on rocks has the inimitability of words revealed from the unknown, without clamor or bells. Grass is a spontaneous prophecy without a prophet, except its drought-resistant color. Grass is the traveler surviving the ugliness of the scene and an army besieging the road to the possible. Grass is the fluent poetry of intuition; easy, yet inaccessible, and inaccessible, yet easy. It is language coming closer to meaning, and meaning bound to the hospitality of hope.

If they ask you: Do you scoop from the sea or do you chisel in stone? Say: Nothing cuts into stone except water. If they ask you about the struggle between poetry and death, look at the grass and speak truthfully: No poetry can defeat death when they meet, but it postpones it. It postpones it until a necessary stretch of time has elapsed. Singing can be put to the test during a long concert, until the song is over and the singer falls into the hands of a sniper behind the door. Perhaps no one will notice the singer's death as long as the song has become communal and is sung throughout the night. During this hiatus, fresh singers imagine that death has been sleeping. Without death noticing, they wake up to anemones welcoming them, like the openings of unfinished Canaanite poems abandoned by deer shepherds busy chasing wolves and jackals.

On the coastal road running north you empty your heart of its excess cargo so it can be filled with gifts of the place: trees, fragrances, the songs of nightingales, musical scores, and agonies. All that remains of heaven's features in your mind is your last turn, on the stone stairwell, to a half-open window through which you caught a glimpse of the sea and the sunset, then sank into a solitude: *The sun and I are intimate friends. Deprived of walking the street at night, meaning might appeal to me or it might not. But I am addicted to the rhythm of songs.*

The wind of longing blows to your right, from the orange groves, and to your left, from the sea salt. A fog, approaching the chambers of your heart from the north, makes it difficult for memory to distinguish what is private from what is public. You fear for the present stifled by the hegemony of the past and fear for the past from the absurdity of the present. You do not know where to stand at this crossroads. Are you what you were, or what you are now? You fear you will forget tomorrow while mired in the question: In which time do I live?

Confusion arises between the tourist's curiosity, the visitor's sadness, and the returnee's joy, diverting you from what you are feeling. Three decades of the self's absence from its roots turns the place itself into an orphan, and the self into a wandering piece of land. The song might swell, but the singer's heart is pierced, and so his errors are multiplied. One of his errors was to bid farewell to what he saw, seeing only the beauty of a mirage promising hope. What can you do when you reach Mount Carmel except ask: Why did you come down from the mountain? Your ever-perplexed self offers only the vaguest of responses: to learn how to walk on unfamiliar roads.

On the magical coastal road there are shades of your past and a tolerant sort of beauty that absolves the absent of all sins, like a painting oblivious to who is absent or present within it. The morning is clean, springy, like an apricot, sunny and flowing. Your heart takes in the scene that rushes from azure to green through the windowpane of the car speeding to a meeting that turns into its opposite. Quite a meeting with room for only one seat: either you, or Emile Habiby, who rushed over to settle his score with you – with a life bearing no resemblance to real life except in the way it has survived the traps of myth set by a skilled hunter. He resisted thanks to his laughter and by ridiculing both the cunning of the hunter and the trickery of the grouse. He coined the expression “the pessoptimist” in order to find his freedom, which was locked in two states: he is neither himself nor his other. He is stricken by a condition that can only be expressed through laughter. But he defends his perplexity and doubt with a certitude that does not sprout from doubt. There exists a contradiction between his literary work and his

public persona that can only be resolved by the reader with a bias toward literature's truthfulness and the priority of the text over its margins. He said, ridiculing himself: I used to have a hen that laid golden eggs, so I ate it. He knew the power of sarcasm so well that it would wound him when he became its target. The sarcastic have no defense against sarcasm. He would use your own words against you whenever you were not of one mind. As he was making the preparations for his own funeral, however, and staking his claim to his share of immortality, he implored you, as if composing a will, to agree to a filmed conversation with him where you used to live on 'Abbās Street.

When you said to him: O Abu Salam, how can I get to Haifa from Ramallah when this state, so heavily armed with prohibitions, stands between us? He said: I will do everything in my power to get a permit allowing you to visit the Galilee for two days. But do not be late, because death has left me very little time. In the evening they delivered the good news that you would be able to travel to Haifa in the morning. That night you saw two roosters dueling before the camera, feathers flying in the air. At three in the morning they woke you to tell you that Emile Habiby had not been able to wait. He had departed this life. You travel to Nazareth to take part in the funeral and the memorial service. Emile Habiby asked that it be written on his tombstone: "Staying in Haifa."

On the coastal road you wondered: What if I had stayed in Haifa? What if I had stayed anywhere? What if I had? What if I hadn't? You avoid reaching the conclusion: Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. All of a sudden, a light rain falls and drenches your soul, and the butterflies. Mist and light. Butterflies flutter low on the coastal road. Butterflies are scattered thoughts and feelings flying through the air.

HOME > ESSAYS

My Palestinian Poem that “The New Yorker” Wouldn’t Publish

June 7, 2021 • By Fady Joudah



Remove

You who remove me from my house
are blind to your past
which never leaves you,
yet you’re no mole
to smell and sense what’s being done
to me now by you.
Now, dilatory, attritional so that the past
is climate change and not a massacre,
so that the present never ends.
But I’m closer to you than you are to yourself
and this, my enemy friend,
is the definition of distance.
Oh don’t be indignant,
watch the video, I’ll send you the link
in which you cleanse me item after limb
thrown into the street to march where

“In May 2021 the poems I wrote came to me, and I received them — in Bergsonian *durée*, between ruptured continuity and continuous rupture, similar to the replication of two DNA strands running in opposite directions. I was reproducing life.”

Fady Joudah

Fady Joudah's most recent poetry collections are *Footnotes in the Order of Disappearance* and *Tethered to Stars*, both from Milkweed Editions. He is also the author of the poetry collections *Alight* and *Textu*, both released by Copper Canyon Press. He is the recipient of the Griffin International Poetry Prize in 2013 and is a Guggenheim fellow in poetry.

LARB CONTRIBUTOR

my catastrophe in the present
 is still not the size of your past:
 is this the wall
 you throw your dice against?
 I'm speaking etymologically, I'm okay
 with the scales tipping your way,
 I'm not into that, I have a heart that rots,
 resists, and hopes, I have genes,
 like yours, that don't subscribe
 to the damage pyramid.
 You who remove me from my house
 have also evicted my parents
 and their parents from theirs.
 How is the view from my window?
 How does my salt taste?
 Shall I condemn myself a little
 for you to forgive yourself
 in my body? Oh how you love my body,
 my body, my house.

In May 2021, during yet another round of Palestinian uprising against Israeli apartheid and its colonial war machine, the days felt more like years. Their energy carried in them an all-too-familiar, recurrent collective trauma that Palestinians have lived and passed down since the dispossessing creation of Israel in 1948. During the recent revolt, the intensity of survival again sharpened in Palestinians, a hyperacute awareness of a world at wits' end. The ecstasy of being alive grew immense with grief, horror, and also moral clarity in the form of love for the world, its possibilities of justice, of coexistence and empathy. In my 50 years of life, I have experienced these tumultuous traumas too many times. They are one shape that the collective gathering of Palestinians takes, and through which we experience our impending dissolution — to see what pieces of us we can salvage, shelve in memory, store in soul, lest there be less of us the next time we get together for another round of trauma. We sit at the shore of an acid sea lapping our being. The air we breathe is toxic. Even the wet sand corrodes our flesh. And yet we love, and love is, in the first place, common decency, and common decency is hard work. We carve light through impenetrable darkness. We, in the words of Gazan poet Hosam Maarouf, “manufacture spare hearts/ in case we lose the hearts each of us has.”

Three days into this Palestinian uprising I realized I had not spoken with my parents. I was avoidant, concerned that they were reliving anguish in ways I can't fully know, even if throughout my life I'd witnessed and continue to share numerous Palestinian tragedies alongside them. I did not grow up in a refugee camp nor did I experience war or occupation. My world was not cleansed out of me quite as theirs was. My world is not in perpetual unraveling and maiming as that of millions of Palestinians within historic Palestine (Gaza, the West Bank, Israel) and other places. My father was born in Isdud/Ashdod in 1934, a village then. In 1948 my mother was in her mother's belly as the latter marched on foot to a refugee camp in Gaza. My parents' childhood was torn. And they watched their parents die broken, expelled. The cycle repeats for an inordinate number of Palestinians, in the flesh.

✎

“The silken compassion toward Palestinians in mainstream English thinks the language of the oppressed is brilliant mostly when it teaches us about surviving massacres and enduring the degradation of checkpoints.”

For the past few years I have rarely “submitted” my work to publications and mostly responded to editors who solicited my work. I live Palestine in English. But in my heart Palestine is Arabic. And Palestine in Arabic does not need to explain itself. Despite setbacks, disasters, revolving conspiracies against it, Palestine in Arabic is self-possessed. It is exterior to English yet born internationalist and shall remain so — neither thinking it is the center of the world nor surrendering to the imperial center as the primary source of its future liberation. Palestine

in Arabic is where the overwhelming sacrifice is made. Palestine in Arabic dreams, lives in and with more than 15 hundred years of literary, intellectual, and ecumenical traditions, belongs to 10 thousand years before that. History does not end for Palestine in Arabic.

Had *The New Yorker* accepted “Remove,” would I have written this essay? In the first place, the odds were stacked against their acceptance. When it comes to Palestine and Palestinian voices, *The New Yorker*, as a major American magazine of record, follows similar patterns as those of other publications. There are certain clarities that, when articulated by a Palestinian in America, are difficult to swallow in places that disseminate knowledge in the United States. The question above also presumes the need to obey the hand that feeds. The tokenization of Palestinians is not necessarily a new American phenomenon vis-à-vis minorities. In fact, tokenization is considered a step forward on the road to inclusion of suppressed voices. The point here is larger than *The New Yorker* and me. It addresses an immense history of curtailing and snuffing Palestine in English — through a “disciplinary communications apparatus” that “exists in the West both for overlooking most of the basic things that might present Israel in a bad light, and for punishing those who try to tell the truth” (Edward Said). In the best-case scenario, it is mostly non-Palestinians and, indeed, non-Arab or Muslim Americans, who utter clarities on the Palestinian question, even if Palestinians arrive at those same thoughts in the cradle. This essay has been writing itself way before a poem was rejected or another hellfire singed Palestinian souls.

In May 2021, as a Palestinian living in English, I watched the new horror sequel against Palestinians in historic Palestine. I found myself writing poem after poem — writing in the moment but not for the moment. I’ve long been aware of the crushing weight that reduces Palestine in English to a product with limited features, a perverse irony that revolves around the violence that Israel and the United States, culture and system, launch against Palestinians. This sickening delimitation mimics physical entrapment. The silken compassion toward Palestinians in mainstream English thinks the language of the oppressed is brilliant mostly when it teaches us about surviving massacres and enduring the degradation of checkpoints.

And yet it is undeniable that the condition of Palestinians within historic Palestine is that of a wartime prison. Their writings can’t but write through that prison. Those windows through which Palestinians see the outside world are not only small but also barred. And the Palestinian gaze registers the largeness of the outside — its anemones and garlic, its Instagram and ice cream — through fresh and dried Palestinian blood on those barred windows. Ahlam Bsharat, who lives in Ramallah, begins her recent poem “How I Kill Soldiers” as follows:

Colonial soldiers,
what have they been doing
to my poetry all these years
when I could have easily killed them
in my poems
as they have killed my family
outside poetry?

Poetry was my chance
to settle the score with killers,
but I let them age outdoors,
and I want them to know decay
in their lives, their faces to wrinkle,
their smiles to thin out,
and their weapons to hunch over.

Like so many Palestinian writers, Ahlam Bsharat is writing to herself in the future, not just to herself now. Her now is responding to letters that have reached her from a human past. Think of the compassionate yet resolute language of many survivors of great suffering in history, their dignified reconciliation with their oppressors. And decades from now, those of us who will reread her words will think again. But my choice of excerpt does disservice to her work. To

reach English, Palestine passes through a corrupting prism, and is often received as ethnography. For some readers this positionality mobilizes solidarity. For others it confines Palestinians to the framework of benevolence toward the pulverized. We watch, as we've been watching for decades, Palestinian lives and culture being liquidated and choked, in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, then argue about the ethics of our tolerance, certain that we can control the nuclear button that might activate Palestinian annihilation. "It happened gradually," some genocide survivors have taught us, "before it happened all at once." And yet, if it happens, we'll have what to remember Palestinians by.

Enter Palestine in "original" English. The overlap zone with Palestine in Arabic is not small, but the empathy field in English is malnourished. Questions of audience further dilute Palestine in the domestic affairs of empire. As subject of foreign policy and as local newcomer, not yet a bona fide American, Palestine in English is doubly distanced. Still, many Palestinian Americans forge ahead and expand our moral and political imagination. "I tried / confessing the number / of days I have / wanted love more // than history," says Zaina Alsous in her astonishing book *A Theory of Birds*. And what is love if not an echo. Alsous communes with justice in America. Her unforgettable art reclaims land from real estate, nature from nation state: "Could you understand love as a wooded absence," she asks and clarifies: "When I say *home*, I mean origin as a transitive verb": "He who kills bees kills public housing."

⌘

"There are so many gates to unlock that each time one gate is opened or abandoned so that Palestine can speak in English, it feels like a humanist triumph or a revolutionary breakthrough."

Palestine in English navigates the gatekeeping English imposes on Palestine, and on itself with regards to Palestine. Gatekeeping is not just for poetry, memoirs, or novels. It affects op-eds all over the United States. The bullying surveillance in academia is endemic. Holding anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab sentiments that range between subtlety and flagrance is a career move. And since hunting Palestinians in the open is seemingly vicious in a democracy like the United States, a whispering campaign is the next best option, and ghosting them is often the honorable choice. Not infrequently the ghosting is internalized by Anglophone Arabs and Muslims who simply stop trying to keep Palestine visible, expressible. But if anyone wants to come out into the light a little, they must comply with normalized stipulations that placate hierarchical structures, editorial controls, and fact-checking rigor, which may or may not apply equally to all writers on Palestine. No wonder Bartleby killed himself.

There are so many gates to unlock that each time one gate is opened or abandoned so that Palestine can speak in English, it feels like a humanist triumph or a revolutionary breakthrough. Some Jewish Americans, softly Zionist or avowedly non-Zionist, struggle to come to terms with their privileged positions. The power dynamic they hold over Palestinian narration and presence in English is staggering. A Jewish American writer or editor who starts out with pro-Palestinian sentiments may go on to secure a powerful career through which they dominate Palestinian voices in English, no matter how progressive and fortified their pro-Palestinian stance may be. The conversation is, by and large, about American Jewry and Zionism, an internal debate in which Palestinians are most often represented, if at all, by a non-Palestinian representative.

But if the Palestinian question in particular raises another issue, that of "the victim's victim," then another question arises: what is the statute of limitations on the status of victimhood, especially for a victim turned victimizer?

In May 2021 the poems I wrote came to me, and I received them — in Bergsonian *durée*, between ruptured continuity and continuous rupture, similar to the replication of two DNA strands running in opposite directions. I was reproducing life. I chose to publish the first of those poems on Twitter. It would've been a wasted breath to seek an American publication with reasonable readership that would publish the poem instantly, what with all the procedural rigidity and time constraints in place. "If Rockets Didn't Fly" was in conversation with the language oppressors of any creed, anywhere, at any time weave to blame their victims. Victims,

.Palestinian or not, should not seek to attain the moral high ground in order to be granted their rights. “If Rockets Didn’t Fly” speaks in a child’s tongue, punctuated with sharp departures into the carnage of “balance.” One function of “surplus repression” (in Herbert Marcuse’s sense) is to ruin its victims then demand their conformity to their ruin as condition to grant them more rights, more pleasure. I even considered “And the Rockets’ Red Glare” as a title for my poem.

But if the Palestinian question in particular raises another issue, that of “the victim’s victim,” then another question arises: what is the statute of limitations on the status of victimhood, especially for a victim turned victimizer? Palestinians are not on this earth to atone for the centuries-long unspeakable crimes against the Jewish people in the West. Palestinians also refuse to be erased as victim and, in turn, metamorphosed as indefinite monster lying in wait to replicate those Western crimes. Fear has become sacred, an article in a constitution that seems heartbreakingly intent on turning the persecuted into executioner or, at least, testing those limits. To what end? What will it be evidence of or justification for? In a recent poem, Palestinian writer Maya Abu-Alhayyat, who lives in Jerusalem, expands on this. “Fear” personified speaks. “I am therefore /they point their rifles at me.” Here’s part of the poem:

You’re looking
straight into my eyes so that I may
dispatch teenagers to the army
and shape their future.
Here I am armed on street corners,
inside tanks, on the roofs,
staring into space, omnipresent, constantly working,
dispossessing slumber from its lids,
causing panic, caprice, unintended murder.
Can you address me
with reason, without it all falling apart,
your adages, myths, and creeds?

Who among us does not know fear as a tyrannical, domineering, destructive force in self and others? Maya Abu-Alhayyat’s poem is compassionate, generous in portraying state violence as “unintended,” and offers guidance, mostly to the powerful: to reduce their stare into fear’s eyes, to re-examine their sense of exclusivity, to refuse eternity or singularity in fear. Palestinians would rather not risk their own lives to affirm their life. Israelis and Zionist Americans don’t need to dominate Palestinian lives to affirm Israeli lives.

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 can’t be uncoupled from the barbaric trauma that European colonialism inflicted throughout Africa, a colonialism that imposed political identity on others through invented racial, ethnic, and cultural demarcations. In fact, European colonialism could not conceive of others in the world as anything but divisible, severable, or erasable (into a new cohesion), since this was the primary mode by which nation states in Europe were founded. To see Hutus in Rwanda as victims (of savage European practices) who turned killers against Tutsis (who were also colonized) is crucial and inescapable. To see Tutsi reprisals (against Hutus after the genocide) erupt into large scale atrocities in the Congo neither diminishes the original genocide nor absolves Tutsi perpetrators of war crimes. And neither event consigns European responsibility to a remote past, especially since their pernicious meddling in Africa continues.

Victims anywhere, anytime are capable of becoming killers. And a killer should be called a killer, even if leniency or compassion is extended, though not at the expense of allowing further killings, especially when incessantly directed at the same victim. Mahmoud Darwish says it more simply: “No / victim kills another, / there’s in the story / a victim and a killer.”

Science to date has not demonstrated biological evidence for a hierarchy of suffering. No one should wait for this discovery. At micro and macro levels, we know trauma in the body is real. Collective trauma is no less real. But seeking justice should not lead to supremacy. If our age is **bound to a mathematics of ethics, or to an ethics of triage, and then let’s do the Palestinian math,**

lay blame on whomever it falls, and remember, again as Darwish reminds us, that “the house murdered is also mass murder [...] In each thing there’s a being that aches.”

⌘

“Whenever a new Palestinian name is introduced into mainstream American culture, it feels like a passport has been stamped.”

In his obituary of Mahmoud Darwish, the late Uri Avnery tells of their first meeting, probably in the late 1960s. The Palestinian poet Rashid Hussain was present. It’s not clear from Avnery’s text which poet spoke this, but Avnery vividly remembers a question in the form of a statement: “The Germans killed six million Jews, and barely six years later you made peace with them. But with us, the Jews refuse to make peace.”

There’s a deep humanism here. It goes to the heart of identity formation as a product of political history. As with Israelis, many Jewish Americans resist opening up to the plain yet stark reality that their identity formation has grown inseparable from Palestinian identity — and many more find it unthinkable or abhorrent. Within the United States, we see how identity relations unfold between Black and white Americans. Many whites can no longer reject that their sense of self is, in no small part, dependent on and informed by the vision and experience of Black Americans (among others). W. E. B. Dubois’s “double consciousness” does not only apply to oppressed minorities who have to contend with the realm and cartography their tormentor imposes on their souls. An oppressor, especially when in effective dialogue with their conscience, must come to terms with their own double consciousness vis-à-vis their victim. It is a common decency that the disproportionately powerful owe to themselves and, above all, to those nearly powerless others within their sphere of devastation. More Jewish Americans should endeavor to see themselves “through the revelation of the other world,” the Palestinian world. Some already do, of course.

To enter this reversal of “double consciousness,” a flipped processing of submission, requires a deliberate effort to abandon certain notions of self, intellectual and spiritual. So far, mention of Palestine and Palestinians in the United States is largely contained within signed petitions and repetitive quotes of a couple of “giant” or relatable hip Palestinians (whose intellect is rarely meaningfully addressed, nor their aesthetic truly encountered as equal). Whenever a new Palestinian name is introduced into mainstream American culture, it feels like a passport has been stamped.

⌘

“Now I was asking major publications to swiftly publish more Palestinian poetry since we were, yet again, in the midst of another Palestinian death.”

Publishing my poems of May 2021 was not my aspiration. But after their materialization, I stood facing the tone-deaf sea, the “internalized fear of institutional repercussion,” as more than one acclaimed poet told me, and the outright banal regulation of impermissible, undomesticated Palestinian voices in American culture. I reached out to several prominent US and UK publications and did not mince my words. These were Palestinian days, I wrote, and I was sharing my work with request for prompt reply and, if the work is accepted, prompt publication, because it is meaningful to honor common decency as an act free of fear. To a handful of editors I sent a batch of poems. To another set of editors I sent only one poem each. I was not interested in the “submission” process. Besides, in 2008, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books* had quickly published my translations of Mahmoud Darwish poems upon his death. Now I was asking major publications to swiftly publish more Palestinian poetry since we were, yet again, in the midst of another Palestinian death, a condition to which they seemed generous in the past.

At *The New Yorker*, I managed, through the top, to get the poem into the proper hands. The rejection followed.

⌘

“He may have never written or spoken the words Palestine or Palestinians during his life, but another poem of his, ‘Semite,’ leaves the door ajar for his intention.”

In 1975, after a visit to Jerusalem, George Oppen wrote his much-talked about poem “Disasters.” It ends with: “The caves / of the hidden / people,” which echo for me the caves that some Palestinians inhabited for centuries, and not an exclusive reference to Hebrew inhabitants of Judean hills. For others the caves might invoke Plato or the Sleepers of Ephesus. To embrace the Palestinian possibility, however, one needs to acknowledge, be open to, Palestinian presence in the land, mindful of Palestinian narratives of “the caves,” and trust that Oppen’s heart was not blind to Palestinians, even if he struggled with that articulation. He may have never written or spoken the words Palestine or Palestinians during his life, but another poem of his, “Semite,” leaves the door ajar for his intention.

I am a lover of his “Semite.” I remain mesmerized by how it includes me, a Palestinian, even if I don’t wholeheartedly subscribe to scriptural constructions of identity. And Oppen was certainly aware that identity on the whole is a mutable construction. Are Canaanites sons of Ham? Are they disappeared? Are Philistines Indo-Europeans? As I said, I hail from Isdud/Ashdod, which was ruled by Philistines, a people whom Milton mentions in his *Paradise Lost*. But according to a flexible Abrahamic monotheism, my trinity is complete when I am also a Semite.

In Oppen’s “Semite” I quickly lose myself, open to Oppen’s heart seeing and speaking with me through numerous mirrors: “what art and anti-art to lead us by the sharpness / of its definitions [...] my distances neither Roman / nor barbarian.” And later when he says, “think also of the children/ the guards laughing [...] the pride/ of the warrior laughing so the hangman / comes to all dinners.” Many may dismiss my reading and keep theirs centered on Jewish history and suffering, but my heart kisses Oppen’s heart and presses on so that by the end of the poem we are one, “and one / is I.”

π

“It is indecent that Palestinians must show their identification cards of good will. This manipulative aggression is all the worse since countless Americans have to prove nothing of the sort toward Palestinians.”

Reading “Remove” through pre-fixed modes of reception limits the experience of many readers. “Remove” does not name names because names sometimes come with canned responses that leave little room for an expansive engagement with the world. It is indecent that a Palestinian has to prove their capacity to love Jewish people or vice versa. It is indecent that Palestinians must show their identification cards of good will. This manipulative aggression is all the worse since countless Americans have to prove nothing of the sort toward Palestinians. How unimaginable it is for so many of us in the West, in 2021, to know the suffering that millions of Palestinians know on a daily basis and have known for generations? And yet each human heart is always one beat away from embracing empathy.

Again, my point isn’t about *The New Yorker*. I doubt, for example, that *The Atlantic* would have behaved differently. Nor should anyone be fooled by the recent incremental generosity of *The New York Times* in including Palestinian voices that are still drowning in Zionist waters on its pages (a visual metaphor the Palestinian-British filmmaker Farah Nabulsi captures brilliantly in her short poetic piece [*Oceans of Injustice*](#)).

A parallel story occurred with *The Guardian*. I sent the poem below, “If Stones Were Slingshots,” and got a quick rejection. The poem was my continued conversation with “If Rockets Didn’t Fly.” A Yemeni or Syrian civilian in active resistance to tyranny, in pursuit of survival, might identify with “Slingshots,” its pained sculpture of myth and negative mysticism, an ekphrasis of an authorless visual document “where God is to be found in a world abandoned by God” (György Lukács). Perhaps if the poem had been written by a Syrian American, let’s say, it might have been more instantly taken up. It might suddenly read clearer in English. To include Arabs in the list of monsters against humanity is much easier than to

include them as equals in great suffering with other people across time and place. It is unimaginable that Israel is a perpetrator of state violence in the same league as, or worse than, that of the Syrian regime against its people or of the Saudi brutalization of Yemen with US and UK approval and weapons. As a moral imperative, Palestine in English is fiercely resisted. It is effaced by ethnoreligious, racial, and nationalist politics that obfuscate its clarity. But for people who return their minds to their hearts, after a grueling, probing odyssey, Palestine in English communicates, in its many styles, the human condition within the civilizational brand of the nation state.

If Stones Were Slingshots

I have seen the brimstones of the crushed,
besieged, and mutilated rise up in the air,
there on the left bottom corner of your screen,
you might miss their meagre illumination,
like fireflies, their sluggish altitude,
since on the right side
the hand of God has already lit up the sky
with giant fireballs
to swallow the embers
released by the denizens
of the hell he keeps them in. God,
it's not your fault, your right hand
does not comprehend what your left doeth,
and you don't like to be bothered
in your eternal big bang.
Goliath has not left the building
alone. I'm not waiting for David
or Ulysses. My light is not for jarring.

The *Times Literary Supplement* declined to look at my poems before two months. Other editors did not respond. Yet others were more accommodating. Not all is lost. However, a sweeping majority of Palestinian American writers were not approached for texts (or unmanacled op-ed pieces) by editors. And hardly an editor asked the writers about their loved ones during the painful days of May 2021. Instead, Palestinians watched as Trevor Noah fumbled his lucidity, as John Oliver uttered "war crimes," and as everyone tossed disclaimers like confetti as if the audience needed reminding that in our best moments we do not wish death or suffering even for our tormentors. And then Raoul Peck's *Exterminate All the Brutes* fails to mention Palestine except when he tells us, "It's complicated."

✠

"To accept as equal another's political humanity is inseparable from accepting their imaginative and intellectual one as equal. Or to echo Kafka and Darwish in one breath: there is no people who are smaller than their poem."

The question of Palestine is integral to any progressive conversation about American (and Western) valuation of self. Palestine keeps us honest and is a vital cog in our compass toward greater liberation from surplus repression. When Nelson Mandela said, "South Africa will not be free until Palestine is free" (echoing other Black thinkers and activists), he wasn't consigning Palestine to the status of metaphor. Leaders of Black Lives Matter, with their magnificent embrace of Palestine, are not in it for sloganeering. Native activists in the mainland and Hawaii do not ask Palestinians for rites of passage into the world of great suffering. And here I recall another memory. Years ago at a literary festival I shared the stage with a white South African writer who'd been active during the anti-apartheid movement there. Where is Black South African literature after all these years? I later asked in private. The anti-apartheid author's reply was this: "You won't like my answer. But the truth is their writing isn't that good." Who knows, I might think the same if I'd come across it. But I think I'd examine the possibility that another's language may free me from some of "me" in marvelous and

indispensable ways. For example, encountering the work of the Aboriginal Australian poet, Lionel Fogarty, was a remarkable gift for me. To accept as equal another's political humanity is inseparable from accepting their imaginative and intellectual one as equal. Or to echo Kafka and Darwish in one breath: there is no people who are smaller than their poem.

Where is the unpoliced reading and critical reception of Palestinian literature and scholarship in English? How might our American imagination grow if and when we're surrounded by writings on the genius of Ghassan Kanafani, essays on Mahmoud Darwish, Huzama Habayeb, Zaina Alsous, Ahmad Almallah, and others — essays that repeat and repeat just as they do for countless American and European authors who are never quenched by the river of eternal recurrence? Or is this a nationalist question of knowing one's place and waiting one's turn? As the critic Hosam Aboul-Ela wrote, "cultural discourse in the United States has engendered a milieu of nationalist sentiment within postnationalist cultural expression." This morbid contradiction slips into another manifestation of exceptionalism. But for a belief in a different prospect, one need only listen to how Angela Davis speaks of the mutual exchange of heart and mind between Palestinians and Blacks. She has removed herself from the temptation of moral meritocracy and political hierarchy and insists on sharing the same space with Palestinian and other voices. And there's always the poetry of June Jordan.

"The fact remains that an overwhelming number of American writers don't want to touch Palestine or Palestinians with a 10-foot pole. Can one read what one is afraid to feel?"

London Review of Books, *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and numerous other trendsetter publications, art and literary magazines included, if and when they feature Palestinian or pro-Palestinian writing, do so with a cloak of custodianship and tactical box-checking. Inclusivity in American systems comes with the price of domestication. And if you're still wondering whether this essay is about increasing "personal access," then understand that the risks most Palestinians take when they speak this way in 2021 are more serious than apple pie. Let's not list examples of literary accolades, publication histories, and prizes awarded to Palestinians or Arabs, this stunted marker of representative democracy. The fact remains that an overwhelming number of American writers don't want to touch Palestine or Palestinians with a 10-foot pole. Can one read what one is afraid to feel? Hands need to be extended with humility — not guilt, pity, or virtue posturing — and chests need to be vulnerable for Palestine in English.

So, how might "Remove" be read in "peacetime"? Or if its author were not Palestinian or did not declare himself one? For it is a poem that speaks of what spares no person or people on earth — from the days of nomadic existence, to the Plebeians, and through ages of conquest, displacement, purging, the heartless gentrification in modern cities, the eviction of the poor during pandemics, economic collapse, eminent domain, or unchecked avarice. There is no I and no you anymore than there is one self in each body. Neuroscience confirms what mystics knew centuries, if not millennia, ago: that the self is multiple in the mind, and that its most wondrous desire is to attain oneness, knowing that this oneness is fleeting. Because to experience it once may just be more than enough for so many to never let go of its truth. Or it is as Maya Abu-Alhayyat says in "You Can't":

They will fall in the end,
those who say you can't.
It'll be age or boredom that overtakes them,
or lack of imagination.
Sooner or later, all leaves fall to the ground.
You can be the last leaf.
You can convince the universe
that you pose no threat
to the tree's life.

