The 'Palestine Question' Today: An Introduction

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Dependence

2016 | Fibreglass installation and a large wall print.

> Q: You have spent a lot of time studying this, obviously, as the head of Shin Bet, could you describe what is the reality for Palestinians here?
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> A: A life of people who dream about freedom and do not see it… whether we like it or not, we control the life of millions…
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> Q: If you were a Palestinian living in the West Bank and Gaza what would your views be of Israel?
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> A: I would fight against Israel in order to achieve my liberty…
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> Q: How would you fight? how dirty?
>
> A: I would do everything in order to achieve my liberty, and that's it…
>
> Q: […[W]hat can Israel do to protect itself?]
>
> A: You cannot deter a person or a group of people if they believe that they have nothing to lose. We Israelis, we shall have security only when they will have hope.
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> Ami Ayalon, Former Director, Internal Security Service, Shin Bet (ABC 2024)

On October 7, 2023, the world watched in shock as Palestinian armed groups breached the heavily fortified barriers surrounding the Gaza enclave, launching a bold and desperate attack that resulted in numerous Israeli soldiers and civilians being killed or taken hostage. The attack raised serious concerns regarding violations of international law and was met with widespread condemnation from the international community. A series of Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Foreign Ministers rushed to Israel in a show of solidarity, pledging support and stressing the importance of Israel's security, with little regard for the oppressive colonial reality of Israel's effective control over the Gaza Strip and the remaining occupied Palestinian territory.

Supported by Western imperial powers and driven by a quest for 'revenge,' Israel's response was swift and overwhelmingly destructive. Justifying its actions under the pretext of self-defence, the Israeli government declared war on Gaza, launching an unprecedented military assault on the small enclave and raising fears of a plausible risk of genocide (ICJ 2024). "There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel, everything is closed… We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly" (Levy 2024) were the chilling words of Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant as he announced a complete siege of the Gaza Strip. The military campaign featured relentless aerial bombardments, artillery fire, and ground invasion, destroying and levelling large swathes of Gaza, displacing hundreds of thousands of people, and resulting in the loss of countless lives, most of whom are women and children (OHCHR 2024). Hospitals, schools, mosques, churches, United Nations facilities, universities, and even designated humanitarian zones were not spared, as Israel insisted that such strikes were necessary to eliminate 'Hamas militants' who, according to the Israeli narrative, were using civilians as 'human shields' (Marsi 2023).

For close observers, the events of October 7 were not merely a sudden, isolated, or irrational outburst of 'barbaric' violence. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted, the attack "did not come out of a vacuum" (Guterres 2023), but was the tragic culmination of decades marked by desperation, hopelessness, and relentless oppression. Gaza, often described as the world's largest open-air prison—an expression first used by former British Prime Minister David Cameron and recently compared to the Warsaw Ghetto by Masha Gessen, a Russian-American Jewish intellectual (Gessen 2023) – has been under a suffocating Israeli siege for over 17 years. This blockade, compounded by 58 years of occupation and 77 years of forced displacement, has resulted in persistent, manufactured humanitarian crises described by the United Nations as "unprecedented" (OCHA 2018, 1). The situation was so dire that a UN report had already predicted Gaza would become unfit for human habitation as early as 2020 (UN 2012).

Equally, and contrary to populist narratives across mainstream media, the disproportionate militarised violence that Palestinians in Gaza have endured since October 7 is not simply about Hamas per se – as an armed or political group whose actions have imposed a cost on Israel. Rather, it reflects an ongoing ritual repeatedly performed by Israeli authorities with varying levels of intensity and alternating subjects occupying a category of perceived 'threat' to the settler-colonial regime from the nationalist-socialist to Islamist, violent and nonviolent resistance. Since the introduction of the 'separation plan' by Ariel Sharon's government in the early 2000s, Israel has periodically launched military operations against the Gaza enclave, a tactic colloquially referred to as 'mowing the grass' (Esposito 2009). This strategy, as Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir (2013, 68) explain, is a "patient military strategy of attrition designed primarily to debilitate enemy capabilities" through typically short, intense, and often large-scale military operations. As Norman Finkelstein elaborates, "that's the Israeli expression. You go in, and you kill a thousand people, destroy everything in sight…" (Finkelstein 2014), "periodic high-tech massacres" (Finkelstein 2024). The application of disproportionate force within this strategy is not intended to secure a long-term political resolution but rather to create a temporary deterrent effect to establish periods of relative calm (Inbar and Shamir 2013), maintain order (Feffer 2024), and assert control—a political framework par excellence designed to sustain the structures of power and domination.

While the use of this strategy has intensified since Israel withdrew its settlements from Gaza in 2005 and as Hamas took power in 2007, it clearly predates Hamas' rise to power. The shelling of Fatah and Palestinian Authority (PA) offices and security posts in the Gaza Strip in 2001, followed by Israel's first named military operations against Palestinian dissent—"Operation Colourful Journey" and "Operation Defensive Shield" in 2002, targeting Fatah's military wing, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the PA in the West Bank, respectively—marked

the initial explicit manifestations of the 'mowing the grass' strategy within the occupied territory (Esposito 2009; Butler 2009). These operations marked the first time since the 1967 war that Israel deployed helicopter gunships and naval vessels to shell Palestinian populated areas—a strategy that has long characterised Israel's operations against both non-violent and militarised Palestinian resistance in the diaspora such as the targeted assassination of Ghassan Kanafani, for instance, among others, and during both 1978 and 1982 Lebanon invasions and later against Hezbollah, epitomised in the 2006 'Dahiya Doctrine,' as well against the different regimes across the Middle East. As former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett once stated, "I tie this to Lebanon because Israel was there for many years and its time there was to mow the grass so that the enemy would not bloom" (Rubenstein 2018).

Recently, and increasingly since October 7, Israel has [re]applied this strategy to the West Bank to suppress Palestinian resistance in Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nablus, among other areas, refashioning the territory from an internal to an external settler-colonial frontier (Ophir and Azoulay 2012), akin to Gaza (Patel 2023). This refashioning has been accompanied by a gradual evolution in the associated forms of violence and rationalities governing the use of violence to repel Palestinian dissent, from 'law enforcement' measures to maintain 'law and order' towards a more militarised use of force in the name of 'self-defence.' What began as an aspiring "invisible occupation" (Gordon 2008, 48)—as a strategy of control—has gradually evolved into multiple forms of spectacular violence, "laboratory experiments" of horror (Li 2006, 39) manifested in "politics of verticality" (Weizmann 2023, 2007), a process of "creeping apartheid" (Yiftachel 2012, 95), and culminated in an increasingly militarised incursion of 'mowing the grass' strategy guided by a combination of security ideologies (Sa'di 2021), colonial legalities (Erakat 2020), and biblical claims (Masalha 2014) serving to legitimise the appropriation of land, control over Palestinian lives, and the systematic erasure of Palestinian presence. As a result, Palestinians are reduced to what Giorgio Agamben describes as _homo sacer_, a bare life that can be extinguished without legal consequences (Agamben 1998).

Underlying this strategy in the occupied territory, according to Inbar and Shamir, is a grim sense within the Israeli establishment that perpetual war is the only answer to Israel's 'conflict' with the Palestinians. This belief is driven by a perception that "ideologies cannot be defeated on the battlefield" and the belief that "the ethno-national, cultural, and religious gaps between Jews and Arabs are simply too large to allow for a strategy aiming for ending the conflict by persuading the opponents that peaceful coexistence is preferable" (Inbar and Shamir 2013, 71). David Weinberg of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security underscores this stance, noting that "there is no simple solution… [T]he most that Israel can do is [to] frequently 'mow the grass' to degrade capabilities" and create deterrence for extended periods of time. He likened it to "mowing your front lawn; this is constant, hard work. If you fail to do so,

weeds grow wild, and snakes begin to slither around the bush" (Weinberg 2021, 1). However, contrary to this perception, this strategy is rather driven by deeper, more entrenched motivations than a purely Zionist-centred analysis can reveal. This flawed, zero-sum Zionist perception echoes age-old colonial narratives in which native populations were depicted as 'animals,' 'sub-humans' or 'barbaric' incapable of rationality or moral worth, thus justifying their subjugation and the direct violence against them (Campbell 2019).

The use of militarised violence, whether rationalised as 'mowing the grass' or in its genocide- like form is neither an exceptional Israeli policy/practice nor the outcome of some recent reckoning but rather constitutes the latest articulation of the State of Israel's modes of operation against the Palestinians, and the manifestation of its settler colonial rationalities of government that can be traced back as early as the establishment of the state of Israel. It aligns well with Israel's prevailing strategy of 'managing the conflict' rather than resolving it (Segev 2024), a method that has consistently shaped its policies and actions in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territory—maintaining a permanent state of crisis without ever resolving the fundamental issues. In a sense, it represents Israel's desire to 'have the cake and eat it too'—demanding Palestinian complicity as it asserts its dominance, control, and authority over their land and their lives while violent repercussions await any form of dissent. Importantly, this approach exemplifies Israel's settler colonial "logic of elimination" (Wolfe 2006, 387) where structural and foundational violence is inherent, simply because "[T]erritoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (Wolfe 2006, 388). As Patrick Wolfe writes, "[W]hatever settlers may say—and they generally have a lot to say—the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, or civilization, etc.) but access to territory" (Wolfe 2006, 388). Under such logic, as Wolfe continues, paraphrasing Deborah Bird Rose, "to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home," let alone resist it!

Colonial legacies: Eliminating Palestinian presence

Indeed, the use of extreme violence to intimidate and suppress indigenous resistance and take over land is a common colonial tactic. Throughout colonial history, heavily militarised settler colonies often launched murderous campaigns against those who resisted colonial oppressions and expansion. In a striking parallel to Israel's practices against the Palestinians, these violent acts were consistently justified within the settler's own logic: dismissing any occurrence as trivial, or, if acknowledged, rationalising it as a necessity in the name of law and order, civilisation, divine right, or simply as self-defence.

For instance, during the period of Spanish colonialism in the Americas, Spain frequently justified its violent actions under the framework of self-defence and the defence of Christianity. The Spanish monarchy and its intellectual defenders, such as Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, argued that the conquest and subjugation of Indigenous peoples were necessary to defend Christian civilisation from what they considered barbarism, idolatry, and to quell possible resistance (de Sepúlveda 2023). Similarly, during the Frontier Wars between the Boers and the Xhosa, and later conflicts involving the British, both settler groups often invoked the notion of self-defence to justify their violent confrontations with Indigenous African populations. While these actions were framed as defensive measures to protect European farms and settlements from Indigenous attacks, they were frequently motivated by territorial expansion and the desire to control fertile lands. The Boers portrayed their actions as necessary responses to Xhosa incursions, even as they aggressively expanded into Indigenous territories (Laband 2020). Likewise, during the Anglo-Zulu War, the British framed their invasion of Zulu lands as a defensive war to protect their colony, although imperial ambitions to subdue the Zulu Kingdom and gain strategic advantage played a significant role. Indigenous African resistance, including that of the Xhosa and Zulu, was largely a reaction to settler encroachment on their land and sovereignty, countering the settlers' narrative of unprovoked violence (Laband 2020), which also characterise the narrative around Israel and Palestinian resistance.

Often, as Gapps (2018) has shown in his work on Australia's first colonised region, the Sydney basin, settler colonies' use of force frequently took the form of "elimination clearance operations" aimed at "driving the hostile natives across the mountains" and "clearing the country of them entirely" (Gapps 2018, 225). In the Colony of Victoria, as Ryan illustrates (Ryan 2010), massacres were a common tactic employed by settlers and agents of law and order to eliminate Aboriginal communities who contested British settler occupation of their land. These massacres were frequently justified as acts of retaliation or as pre-emptive strikes, driven by settlers' conviction of their entitlement to the "unfettered occupation of the land by virtue of their perceived… superiority to the Aborigines" (Ryan 2010, 262). In regions where large Indigenous communities remained, direct and structural violence was often employed to eliminate any form of resistance, subjugate the natives, and preserve colonial rule and power dynamics. This was evident in the French bombardment of Damascus in 1925 during the Great Syrian Revolution (Wright 1926), the violence and torture during the Battle of Algiers in 1956 (Branche 2007), and the suppression of the Mau Mau uprising against the British in Kenya in the 1950s, among others.

This historical pattern of colonial violence mirrors contemporary strategies employed in the settler colonial context of Israel-Palestine. From a settler-colonial perspective, the current military campaign in Gaza can be interpreted as a deliberate intensification aimed not only at suppressing resistance but also

at systematically eradicating Palestinian presence. The campaign goes beyond conventional military objectives to embody a process of elimination, seeking to render Gaza increasingly uninhabitable through methods that encompass direct fatal violence, destruction of infrastructure, and forced displacement. This escalation is neither a response to October 7 events nor simply driven by Netanyahu's 'personal' interest in prolonging the war, as some critiques may claim (Klein 2024). Instead, it reflects a broader political rationality within Israeli society and polity that leverages persistent Palestinian dissent against Zionist colonisation to reinforce its expansionist agenda. This rationality considers the 'right to colonise' (Perugini and Gordon 2015) as central to Zionist sovereignty, security and prosperity while employing a politics of denial (Cohen 2001) to perpetuate injustice. As Orit Strook, Minister of Settlements and National Missions, stated in March 2023, following the repeal of the 2005 Disengagement Law,

> [O]ur first step will be to legalise the *Homesh Yeshiva*, and then we will gradually renew the settlement project in the area... I believe that, at the end of the day, the sin of the disengagement will be reversed. We are in the midst of a process of a different national understanding. I don't know how many years it will take. Unfortunately, a return to the Gaza Strip will also involve many casualties, just as the departure from the Gaza Strip involved many casualties. But there is no doubt that at the end of the day, it is part of the Land of Israel, and the day will come when we will return to it. (Baroch 2023)

Strook's vision reflects a deeply entrenched colonial rationality that perceives the land of Israel as indivisible—the manifestation of the right to colonise. The [re]settlement of Gaza is framed not as a matter of strategic debate but as an inevitable step in the realisation of Israel's national destiny. This perspective underscores a settler colonial ideology that prioritises expansion and permanence, casting territorial reclamation as both a historical ratification and a manifestation of national fulfilment, irrespective of the human cost. Within this framework, the October 7 attack can be argued to have served as a catalyst to rally international public opinion and, importantly, to galvanise the Israeli public support of the significant 'sacrifice' deemed necessary to achieve this objective. This is not to suggest that it was all planned, but rather aligned with pre-existing strategic intentions. As Finkelstein noted, "[F]or those of you who know the history, the people of Gaza have always refused, in a quite militant way, to acquiesce to their fate of being born, living, and dying in a concentration camp. Now, because of October 7th, Israel envisaged, and you'll excuse the obvious analogy, 'it was time for the final solution to the Gaza Question'" (Finkelstein 2024). This sentiment is exemplified in Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech, where he framed the impending war on Gaza as "our second war of independence," describing the mission of "destroying the enemy above ground and below ground" as "the mission of our lives, the mission of my life" (PMO 2023). In line with this sentiment, it is not surprising to see a Minister and a Knesset Member describing the unfolding violence as a "second Nakba" in

the making (Middle East Monitor 2023) the "Gaza Nakba" (Rapoport 2024) in reference to the elimination clearance operation that facilitated the establishment of the State of Israel and Zionist sovereignty over a large part of Mandate Palestine in 1948. This language signals the strategic direction of the ongoing war on Gaza, framing it as a continuation of the historical trajectory set by the Nakba.

The operationalisation of the "Gaza Nakba" or the "final solution to the Gaza Question," as Finkelstein argues, falls on a spectrum involving a range of strategies and tactics oriented towards the ethnic cleansing of Gaza. Along this spectrum, Israel has instrumentalised humanitarian reasoning and the discourse of legality to justify the elimination of the Palestinians, underscoring the colonial legacies of international law. At one end of this spectrum, Finkelstein suggests, lies the aim to actively "sweep the entire population into the Egyptian Sinai," preventing any possibility of return (Finkelstein 2024). A document written by the Ministry of Intelligence recommended the expulsion of all 2.2 million Palestinians from Gaza, the establishment of tent cities in northern Sinai to absorb the expelled population, and a sterile zone extending several kilometres into Egypt to prevent any return, activity or residence near the Israeli border. The drafters of this document view this approach as an ideal solution, mainly as it is considered a common practice in times of war, aligns with Egypt's legal obligations under international law [to facilitate movement [of refugees] into Sinai] and could be marketed as crucial for safeguarding Palestinian lives during active combat. In the long term, this initiative is seen as an ideal measure that could gain international legitimacy since it includes efforts to resettle Palestinians in other countries, which is the main driver of this plan. To realise this objective, the document's drafters assert that it requires the determination of the political echelon in the face of international pressure, with a focus on rallying the support of the USA and pro-Israel countries for the initiative (Avraham 2023). Thus far, this objective has been constrained by geopolitical limitations, but with the [re]election of Donald Trump, anything may be possible.

At the mid-point on this spectrum lies the objective to "make Gaza uninhabitable" (Finkelstein 2024) as a strategy for ethnic cleansing. This approach manifested not only in urbicidal and domicide tactics – the deliberate and systematic destruction of living spaces (Azzouz 2023), but is further enforced by siege tactics reminiscent of medieval warfare, aimed at starving Palestinians into submission (The Generals Plan 2023). By making Gaza uninhabitable, the logic goes, Palestinians who remain will be left with no options but to leave, invoking an age-old strategy of "transfer," an idea as old as modern Zionism (Masalha 1992), manifested through forced displacement, the development of "internationally coordinated relocation programmes" and schemes promoting "voluntary emigration" (Isaac, 2023). In line with the Ministry of Intelligence document, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, proposed transferring

tens of thousands of Gazans to Europe, describing it as a "moral imperative – and opportunity – to demonstrate compassion" towards the people of Gaza. Danon frames this "transfer" as a pathway to "peace and stability in the Middle East" (Danon and Ben Barak 2023), deploying humanitarian language to recast forced displacement as a benevolent act. This twisted instrumentalisation of humanitarian law and human suffering reframes ethnic cleansing as a necessary response to a humanitarian crisis—an approach that conceals colonial interests under the guise of relief and safety. By co-opting the principles of humanitarian reason, this discourse legitimises displacement not as an imposition, but as a purportedly moral solution, distorting the foundational ethics of humanitarian law to serve the objectives of territorial control and demographic engineering.

At the other end of the spectrum, as Finkelstein adds, lies the continuation of "genocide without any elaboration and without any subtlety" (Finkelstein 2024). A defining feature of Israel's conduct since October 7, as highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, is the "de-civilization of Palestinians, a protected group under the Convention," combined with distortion of the laws of war to conceal genocidal intent (Albanese 2024, 14). The conflation between the Palestinians in Gaza and Hamas, whose elimination is one of the declared objectives of this war, and the frequent invocation of the 'human shields' narrative blurs the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate targets. This rhetoric invokes an old colonial rhetoric that divides between 'civilised' populations deemed worthy of protection and 'barbarians' positioned outside the law's protection, rendering Palestinian lives disposable within a coloniser colonised framework. As Vasuki Nesiah argues, "the colonized territory rendered all civilians as potential human shields merely by existing there. The colonizer/colonized distinction trumped the civilian/combatant distinction and exposed the radical instability of the principles defining the notion of human shield; the colonizer seldom thought he had reached the threshold of disproportionality in violence against the colonized" (Nesiah 2017, 323). This enduring colonial narrative highlights the importance of decoloniality (Mignolo 2020) as an analytical and deconstructive framework to liberate our realities from the grip of colonial legacies. The appropriation of international law to rationalise atrocities exposes, yet again, the deep-rooted colonial structures embedded within the legal frameworks and systems that govern the international order. This revelation underscores how much work remains to be done to genuinely decolonise this body of law, building humanism and humanities that counter the coloniality of human rights and establishing robust and equitable enforcement mechanisms.

Coloniality, territoriality, security, sovereignty

Most importantly, this spectacle of violence is geared towards the 'elimination' of the Palestine Question by both seeking the elimination of Palestinian presence [in Gaza for now], and forcing the [remaining] Palestinians into surrender, subordination, and acceptance of the colonial reality and associated power dynamics. As Avi Dichter, former head of Shin Bet and current Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, remarked in a recent interview, addressing Palestinians: "[S]upporting death will not bring you anything. If you do not believe that the Jewish presence here, between the Mediterranean and Jordan Valley, is forever, you are going to lose more than you have lost until now" (ABC 2024). Dichter's statement is directed not only at Palestinians in Gaza but also in the West Bank and within the Green Line, reflecting the underlying rationality of Israel's settler colonial mentality of government, a model deeply predicated on notions of superiority and exclusivity over the land. Most crucially, it makes one wonder about the nature of the solution that Israel envisages for the Palestinians and the nature of peace that it repeatedly reiterates it aspires to achieve without challenging the colonial present.

The election of Israel's extreme right-wing coalition government under Benjamin Netanyahu, which includes figures like Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich and amplifies a growing messianic rhetoric, has often been cited as a factor exacerbating the colonial reality in the Israel-Palestine. However, statements advocating for Zionist sovereignty from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, such as those made by Avi Dichter, reflect a longstanding view within Zionist leadership that predates the establishment of the state of Israel. Ironically, Dichter's stance might even be seen as a compromise compared to earlier Zionist aspirations. For instance, in 1918, Zionist leaders proposed that "a Jewish Palestine should include southern Lebanon up to the Litani River so that the Zionist state could 'control all water resources up to their sources'" (Slater 2021, 44). They also demanded that "the Jewish state's eastern boundary be extended east of the Jordan River to include all of Transjordan," with some proposals even including the Sinai Peninsula (Slater 2021, 44). Simha Flapan has documented how David Ben-Gurion's territorial ambitions were expansive, he frequently reminded his Arab interlocutors of the historic boundaries of Eretz Israel, advocating for these boundaries since 1918 and using biblical references to justify settlement on both sides of the Jordan River [In talks with Arab leaders in 1934-1936] (Slater 2021, 46).

Accordingly, the Yishuv's acceptance of the 1947 UN Partition Plan was always intended as a preliminary step toward Zionist sovereignty over all of Mandate Palestine. Ben-Gurion expressed this viewpoint in a letter to his son, stating, "[A] partial Jewish state is not the end, but only the beginning…" (Bar Zohar 1977) and emphasising that the Zionist aspirations could not be

contained by international agreements. Earlier, while clarifying his support for the 1937 Peel Commission partition recommendation, Ben Gurion elaborated "[T]he acceptance of partition does not commit us to renounce Transjordan; one does not demand from everybody to give up his vision. We shall accept a state in the boundaries fixed today, but the boundaries of Zionist aspiration are the concern of the Jewish people, and no external factor will be able to limit them" (quoted in Chomsky 1984, 161). This stance was evident in the Zionist leadership attitude, which despite accepting the Partition Plan, did not consider itself bound by its borders. This paved the way for the expansion of Zionist sovereignty over significant parts of the territory designated to the Arab State by 1949, as soon as the opportunity arose, including the extension of suffrage rights to the Palestinians within these areas, which was used as a strategy to expand Zionist control over these territories.

Ben-Gurion's ambitions did not end with the ceasefire agreements. Tom Segev and others have documented how Ben-Gurion viewed the Green Line as a provisional border, open to future adjustments (Segev 2019). Michael Bar-Zohar notes that Israeli archives and Ben-Gurion's diary contain abundant proof that he continued to secretly plan the next stage, in which he would achieve his territorial ambitions (Bar-Zohar 1977). Similarly, Livia Rokach found evidence that a major war against Egypt aimed at the territorial conquest of Gaza and the Sinai was on the Israeli leadership's agenda at least as early as the autumn of 1953 (Rokach 1980). The occupation of the remaining Palestinian territory in 1967—including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula—can thus be seen as the realisation of these expansionist ambitions, often justified through security ideologies, such as the notion of a 'preventative war' and the perceived need for a larger Israel to provide 'territorial depth' (Slater 2021).

This outlook reflects a sustained Israeli strategy that closely intertwines territorial ambition with security concerns, a perspective that has profoundly shaped Israeli policy towards the occupied Palestinian territory, creating a self-perpetuating cycle in which security measures serve to justify territorial expansion. As Jerome Slater argues, the expansionist aspirations of Zionist leadership and their security-defensive rationale are so deeply intertwined as to be "impossible to separate" (Slater 2021, 112). This blend of territorial ambition and security rationale continues to characterise Israel's approach to the occupied Palestinian territory, as reflected in the Likud Party's 1977 manifesto and the 2018 Basic Law: Israel Nation State of the Jewish People. The Likud Party Manifesto for the 1977 elections explicitly underscores this interplay, declaring that the Jewish people's right to the Land of Israel is "eternal and indisputable" and that sovereignty over the entire territory must remain exclusively Israeli: "Judea and Samaria will not be handed to any foreign administration; between the Sea and the Jordan there will be only Israeli sovereignty." Simultaneously, the manifesto warns that any "plan which relinquishes parts

of Western Eretz Israel… and leads to the establishment of a 'Palestinian State' jeopardizes the security of the Jewish population, endangers the existence of the State of Israel, and frustrates any prospect of peace."

This territorial, expansionist rationale is also clearly reflected in the 2018 Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People. The Basic Law declares the Land of Israel to be the historic homeland of the Jewish people, defining Israel as their exclusive nation-state while notably omitting specific borders. This ambiguity grants the state broad discretion in defining its geographic boundaries, which can undermine Palestinian self-determination. By emphasising the expansion and consolidation of Jewish settlements as a national value, the law implies that Israel's boundaries might extend beyond the 1948 borders (Saïd 2020). Similarly, figures like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have long asserted Israel's claim to the entire territory of Mandate Palestine, consistently denying any framing of Israel as an occupying force. Netanyahu has frequently stated, "The Jewish people are not occupiers in their own land—not in our eternal capital Jerusalem, not in the land of our ancestors in Judea and Samaria" (Magid, 2024). Recently, his coalition government passed a resolution rejecting the establishment of a Palestinian state all together, asserting that it would pose an "existential danger to Israel and its citizens, perpetuate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and destabilise the region" (Aljazeera 2024) closely aligned with the 1977 Likud manifesto. This perspective, which has long underpinned Israel's (un)declared position towards the Palestine Question, leaves no room for Palestinian sovereignty anywhere in the territory of Mandate Palestine beyond limited self-governance in disconnected enclaves, reminiscent of the Bantustans established under South Africa's Apartheid regime.

This approach does not only characterise Netanyahu, the Likud Party or their right-wing allies. It reflects a deeply rooted, long-term strategy by Israeli leadership that seeks not only the physical occupation of land but also a hegemonic control over the Palestinians, the narrative and historical memory of the region. For instance, also former Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, outlined a vision for a future agreement with the Palestinians that envisioned an "entity, less than a state" much similar to his predecessors. The Oslo Accords and what Rabin offered the Palestinians, according to Seth Anziska (2018), followed a template for a sub-sovereign Palestinian entity based on a blueprint introduced by Begin at Camp David fifteen years earlier, focused on limited Palestinian local autonomy rather than true self-determination and independence. The rejection of a Palestinian state and recent revival of interest in the autonomy plan among right-wing Israeli politicians underscores the deep imprint it continues to have on Israel's approach to the Palestinians (Anziska 2018, 13). Today, the primary disagreement among Zionist parties across the political spectrum is not over the principle of denying Palestinian statehood, which has a consensus amongst all Zionist parties, but rather over the scope

of this autonomy awarded to this sub-state entity — whether it should be narrowly defined or somewhat more expansive, which constitutes the main difference between Zionist left and Zionist right in Israel's political sphere.

Foundational work is still needed to determine whether, as Joel Singer—former Legal Adviser to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs—argues, Rabin "genuinely intended the Oslo version of autonomy to be a real transitory arrangement that would ultimately lead to the creation of a separate Palestinian political entity" (Singer 2019, 1). Regardless, as Joseph Massad contends, "the Oslo Accords were in effect the best expression of the century-old Berlin Conference's 'right' of the Palestinians 'to dispose of themselves' through ceding their 'hereditary' right to their 'soil' to a foreign power" (Massad 2018, 167). This perspective underscores a deep sense of injustice, viewing the Accords themselves as a symbolic continuation of colonial practices that displaced the Palestinians and stripped them of their land. While the Oslo Accords were framed as a peace process, Massad highlights how the agreements may have reinforced existing power imbalances rather than rectifying them (Massad 2018).

The latest attempt to revive the two-state solution following the collapse of the Oslo Accords is exemplified in former US President Donald Trump's "Deal of the Century," formally titled Peace to Prosperity (White House 2020). Widely criticised as heavily skewed in favour of Israeli interests, the plan largely dismisses Palestinian grievances. It avoids acknowledging the Palestinian experience of dispossession and loss, fails to mention the occupation, and legitimises Israeli settlements as permanent and non-negotiable. The plan also removes Jerusalem from negotiations, designating it as Israel's undivided capital, and dismisses the right of return for Palestinian refugees, disregarding longstanding United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. These issues, deemed pivotal in the Oslo negotiations, remain essential for any final agreement based on the 1967 borders. Instead, the plan prioritises Israeli security concerns, framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a matter of Israel's self-defence. It places much of the blame for Gaza's humanitarian crisis on "Hamas policies" and attributes broader Palestinian suffering to their own governance issues and violent resistance. By portraying Palestinians as corrupt, incapable of self-governance, and fostering a culture of violence and incitement, the plan reinforces the perception of them as a potential threat that requires control. Consequently, it offers Palestinians something less than a full-fledged state, instead proposing a semi-autonomous entity with limited sovereign powers. To achieve even this diminished form of statehood, Palestinians are required to recognise Israel as a Jewish state, renounce all forms of 'terrorism', address Israel's security concerns, and implement significant governance reforms. Only upon fulfilling these criteria would the United States consider supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state. This approach reflects a colonial logic of what Oliver Eberl describes as making peace with

so-called "'savage' or 'barbarian' peoples" (Eberl 2015, 219). Rather than treating Palestinians as equal partners, the Trump plan imposes strict conditions on them, denying their right to full self-determination and freedom. In doing so, it redefines peace as a colonial tool of control, where terms are dictated by the dominant power rather than negotiated between equals with mutual respect. This approach mirrors a "colonial peace," which seeks to pacify and manage a population rather than genuinely address their aspirations, subordinating Palestinian rights to a framework designed to secure the interests and authority of the occupying colonial power.

Co-opting antisemitism

The absence of a viable process that would lead to a workable settlement and just solution to the Palestine Question, combined with the multiple ongoing spectacles of violence and a state of perpetual war, has deepened Palestinian despair and loss of hope. The lack of accountability for Israel's violations of international law, coupled with the mere performative solidarity of the international community and the complicity of Arab States and Palestinian own leadership, has left Palestinians feeling they have little to lose from confronting Israel directly. After all, as Franz Fanon asserts, "[A]t the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the natives from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (Fanon 1963, 94). In recent decades, nearly every form of Palestinian action—whether violent, peaceful, diplomatic, or legal—has consistently been branded as antisemitism, 'terrorism' or a threat to national security by Israel and dismissed by Western powers as unilateral approaches that would undermine a potential 'negotiated settlement.' This broad-brush labelling has served to delegitimise Palestinian efforts across the board, whether they involve armed resistance, nonviolent protests, international legal petitions, or advocacy campaigns like Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS). This rhetorical strategy, used by successive Israeli governments, functions as a form of gaslighting (Abu Laban and Bakan 2022), wherein the Palestinian struggle for freedom is portrayed as the root cause of violence, while the deeper historical context of their struggle for self-determination is erased.

The co-opting of the language of terrorism by Israel is particularly revealing of deeper systemic issues. Rather than acknowledging the complexities of Palestinian grievances—rooted in dispossession, occupation, and systemic inequality—Israel has frequently framed any form of Palestinian political expression as a threat. For example, diplomatic efforts by the Palestinian Authority at the United Nations, aimed at securing statehood recognition or applying international law, have been labelled as 'diplomatic terrorism.' Similarly, legal challenges brought against Israel in international courts, particularly

concerning human rights violations, have been dismissed as 'legal terrorism' (Perugini and Gordon 2015). Even the nonviolent BDS movement, which advocates for boycotts, divestments, and sanctions against Israel in response to its treatment of Palestinians, has been condemned as 'antisemitism' intended to delegitimise Israel and deny its right to exist. These claims are often rendered redundant once examined in the context of the 1948 Palestinian struggle for a state of all its citizens, which Israel considers as a threat to state security. This is exemplified in Yuval Diskin, former Director of the General Security Service – Shin Bet, response to 1948 Palestinians Future Vision towards a state for all its citizens published in 2007, which considered their demand for equality and justice as a form of radicalisation that constitutes "a strategic danger to the state," emphasising the need to thwart any entity that seeks to challenge the Jewish and democratic character of the State of Israel, even with democratic means (Adalah 2008, 1). By framing the 1948 Palestinian quest for rights as a national security threat and various forms of nonviolent resistance as terrorism, Israel not only delegitimises Palestinian claims but also perpetuates a narrative that portrays Palestinians as inherently violent and unreasonable. This strategy reinforces stereotypes and hinders serious engagement with their demands.

Furthermore, the weaponisation of antisemitism has significantly impacted the Palestinian struggle, particularly efforts led by the BDS movement. Conflating legitimate criticism of Israeli policies with antisemitism seeks to delegitimise and discredit the movement and the broader Palestinian struggle for freedom. This tactic results in a chilling effect where accusations of antisemitism suppress voices advocating for Palestinian rights and create legal barriers against BDS activities, especially in countries that have enacted anti-BDS laws. This reframing of political opposition to Israeli occupation and apartheid as racial or religious hatred against the Jews diverts attention from the core issues of displacement, occupation, colonisation and human rights violations. Consequently, Palestinian voices are marginalised, and public discourse is skewed, making it challenging for activists to contest Israeli policies and mobilise global support for Palestinian liberation. This approach bears a striking resemblance to the tactics used by the Boers in South Africa, where the regime's longevity was bolstered by its effective use of symbolic politics centred on protection (Kaufman 2012). By invoking a narrative of constant threat and the victimization of Afrikaners, apartheid supporters exploited symbolic predispositions towards self-defence and dominance, ultimately convincing themselves of the regime's moral legitimacy (Kaufman 2012). In our case, the appropriation of the history of the Jewish people and suffering has not only convinced Zionists, but allowed the state of Israel to convince others of their regime's moral legitimacy. This created a paradox that allows the state to perpetrate and appropriate antisemitism to ensure its survival. The political influence of the Israel lobby and the historical guilt of Western leaders over the Holocaust has fostered a sense of impunity for Israel. Subsequently, the complacency of the

international community concerning Israel's treatment of the Palestinians has created a reality where the suffering of one group of people is prioritised over all others, where the mantra 'never again' is not about universal humanity but reserved only for those who qualify for its protection. This brings us back to the colonial world order we live in, where the dichotomy between the 'civilised' deemed worthy of protection and those not deserving of such protection continues to govern our everyday reality, thus emphasising the universality of the Palestine Question.

Decolonising the Palestine question

These cunning strategies utilised to rationalise and normalise the settler colonial rule do not imply that Israelis' fears are entirely unfounded. The history of the Jewish people, particularly the trauma of the Holocaust and Israel's founding narrative, framed around struggle for survival, combined with the conflation of the State of Israel with Judaism, and exacerbated by the complex dynamics of existing in a region where many perceive Israel as a foreign imposition, has ingrained a deep sense of vulnerability and insecurity within the Israeli psyche. At the same time, while fear can be a legitimate response to external threats, it is crucial to recognise how this fear is being appropriated and has come to function as a form of colonial governmentality, instrumentalised to advance colonial ambitions. Since its inception, the State of Israel has utilised the fear of annihilation to justify policies that expand its control over Palestinian lands and suppress Palestinian resistance. This appropriation of fear, and the Holocaust memory, served to rally both domestic and international support for policies that would otherwise be indefensible. In this context, Edward Said (1979, 1992) argued that Zionism's exclusive sovereignty creates a state of perpetual insecurity and exclusion, urging a rethinking of identity and coexistence beyond domination. Movements like Matzpen, a left-wing movement founded in Israel in the 1960s, have long argued that the Zionist project is inherently colonial and that settlement expansion is not just about security but is also a tool for perpetuating Zionist hegemony in the region. They called for the de-Zionisation of Israel – a process they believed was necessary to dismantle the exclusionary structures of the Zionist state and foster a just society. They argued that the liberation of both Palestinians and Jews is intrinsically linked and true peace and equality could only be achieved through a political framework that transcended Zionism and embraced bi-nationalism or socialism. In their views, Zionism, in its current form, binds Jews to a state that perpetuates violence and colonial domination, ultimately compromising the long-term security of both people (Bober 1972). Judith Butler also critiques the ways in which fear and insecurity have been instrumentalised to justify exclusionary and violent policies within the Zionist framework. Butler argues

that the insistence on a Jewish state, premised on the exclusion and marginalisation of Palestinians, transforms fear into a political doctrine that entrenches Jewish identity within a state of perpetual conflict and alienation. According to Butler, this approach, while ostensibly aimed at safeguarding Jewish identity, paradoxically traps Jews in an unending cycle of hostility and vulnerability. Butler suggests that breaking free from this cycle requires rethinking Jewish identity and security in ways that are not tied to exclusive territorial sovereignty or the marginalisation of others but are instead rooted in ethical cohabitation and mutual recognition. For Butler, addressing Israeli fear in a way that fosters lasting peace demands decoupling this fear from policies of domination and colonisation that have come to define the Zionist project. She argues that the true path to security lies not in the continued occupation and subjugation of Palestinians but in a radical transformation of the political, economic, and social structures sustaining the colonial reality. This vision calls for a reimagined Jewish identity that embraces existence over exclusion and shared security over territorial dominance (Butler 2012).

The Palestine Question, much like the historical Jewish Question, is deeply entrenched in the history of racism, colonialism and domination. While the Jewish Question was a racist construct that sought to exclude Jews from European society, the Palestine Question has emerged as a colonial dilemma, primarily concerned with reconciling the Zionist colonisation of Palestine with the inherent rights of its native inhabitants. Decolonising the Palestine question requires not only challenging the Zionist narrative but also deconstructing the colonial epistemes that underpin it. It requires recognition that the struggle is not just about territorial 'disputes' or statehood but about challenging a settler-colonial system that seeks to erase Palestinian presence, rights, and sovereignty. Decolonising Zionism means dismantling the power structures and ideologies that uphold the status quo and exploring new forms of political organisation that emphasise justice and equality for all people residing in the territory of Mandate Palestine. This process demands a fundamental rethinking of notions of security and freedom – of what it means to be secure and what it means to be free – recognising that the liberation of Palestinians from colonial oppression and the liberation of Jews from the cycle of fear are inherently linked endeavours.

A decolonised vision envisions a future where both Palestinians and Israelis live in equality, equity and dignity, where genuine security is derived from justice rather than domination. This requires a break from the zero-sum logic that has long defined Israeli policy and a move towards a politics of inclusion, recognition, redistribution and shared sovereignty. However, persuading the powerful to give up their privileges is one of the main challenges to realising a decolonial reality. The challenge of dismantling the privilege of the coloniser is contingent on realising the freedom of the oppressed. Fanon explains that colonial systems deeply entrench identities, creating a psychological

dependency where the coloniser clings to privilege as the core of their identity. This dependency not only sustains the coloniser's sense of superiority but also makes it profoundly difficult for the privileged to relinquish control, as it requires confronting the structures that underpin their sense of superiority (Fanon 1963). Echoing Fanon's critique of colonialism, Paulo Freire describes how the oppressor class internalises feelings of superiority, often resisting change because liberation threatens their self-worth and status (Freire 1970). Similarly, James Baldwin emphasises that the journey toward justice demands that those privileged by racial hierarchies confront their own internalised superiority—a deeply challenging process requiring a redefinition of self, separate from colonial or racial privilege (Baldwin 1963). Zionist privilege is rooted in a sense of superiority and exclusivity over the land, reinforced by the belief that Jewish claims to historic Palestine take precedence over those of the native Palestinian population. This ideology frames sovereignty as a right exclusive to Jewish Israelis, marginalising Palestinian claims to land, identity, and self-determination. This sense of privilege manifests in policies that aim to secure Jewish dominance, from settlement expansions to restrictions on Palestinian mobility, reinforcing a hierarchy that places Palestinians in a perpetual state of subordination. This exclusivity is not merely a product of individual bias but is embedded in legal, social, and political systems that maintain power asymmetries between Israelis and Palestinians. It is a structure that justifies continued control over Palestinian territories and erases Palestinian presence and rights in the narrative of the land's history.

The privileging of one group's rights over another's entrenches a system of domination that is deeply challenging to dismantle since it is intertwined with global colonial dynamics, sustained by ideological beliefs, geopolitical interests, and economic alliances rooted in settler-colonial entitlements. At its core, Zionist privilege draws on a colonial, nationalistic, self-preserving and messianic belief justifying exclusive land rights, positioning Israel as an exceptional state with a divine or historical mandate. This narrative is not unique to Israel but can be seen across varied settler colonial histories from the U.S. *manifest destiny*, an ideology asserting that Americans were chosen by God to expand across North America (Mountjoy 2009), to the Afrikaner Calvinist's use of divine narrative to cast themselves as chosen people, much like the Israelites, with a God-given right to rule the land and subjugate the Indigenous African populations (O'Donovan 2013). This narrative is also supported by Western powers, particularly the US, the former European colonial power and other post-colonial settler colonies, which regard Israel as a strategic partner in the Middle East, often under the pretext of shared 'civilisational' values. Just as colonial systems have legitimised territorial control and economic extraction globally, Zionist privilege operates within a framework that dehumanises Palestinian resistance, framing it as a threat to stability. This dynamic creates a climate of international complicity where economic, military, and political backing

perpetuates the occupation, erasure of Palestinian history, and suppression of indigenous rights. Dismantling Zionist privilege requires challenging these entrenched systems, rejecting ideologies of superiority, and embracing global solidarity that prioritises justice and the equitable rights of all peoples.

Accordingly, the struggle for Palestinian rights is intrinsically connected to the global fight against racism, colonialism, and oppression. It is about reimagining new forms of existence that are predicated on equity, dignity, and respect for all individuals. Decolonising the question of Palestine is an integral part of broader efforts to forge a world where freedom and peace are universally attainable. This transformation requires a fundamental rethinking of international relations and domestic politics, advocating for systemic changes that prioritise human rights and dismantle the architectures of colonial control. It also requires a shift from performative solidarity towards transformative solidarity – from symbolic gestures towards deeper, active commitment to dismantling the structures and systems perpetuating oppression. In recent years, and especially following the escalation of violence in Gaza, there has been a significant awakening and growing global awareness around Palestinian rights and the longstanding struggle for liberation. Public opinion, particularly across social media platforms and in the most recent students' demonstrations, has increasingly spotlighted Palestinian voices and highlighted their lived realities under occupation, dispossession, colonisation and systemic inequality. Grassroots movements, and international organisations, especially the discussions at the ICJ, and the arrest warrant issued against Netanyahu and Galant by the ICC have amplified calls for justice, while solidarity initiatives—often aligned with other global justice movements, such as Black Lives Matter and Indigenous rights campaigns—have drawn connections between the Palestinian struggle and broader anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles (Davis 2016). This shift has led to increased efforts among advocates, activists, and academics to reframe the conversation on Palestine from one of 'conflict' to one of human rights and liberation, emphasising the need to address the root causes of Palestinian suffering (Pappé, Dana, and Naser–Najjab 2024; Collins 2010). Despite the challenges, Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns, as well as advocacy for international accountability, have gained momentum, challenging institutions and governments to confront policies that sustain settler colonial domination and inequality. This recent wave of solidarity represents a shift from viewing the situation as an isolated issue to recognising it as part of a larger movement for decolonisation and universal human rights, as more people actively support Palestinian freedom, challenging the Zionist narrative. This is just a beginning, but it is where Palestinians draw their hopes for a better future where their right and humanity are fully recognised and respected.

About this edited book

This edited volume seeks to contribute to this broader project of decolonisation by bringing together diverse perspectives and critical examination of the Palestine Question. It seeks to challenge dominant narratives, highlight the resilience and agency of Palestinians, and explore new pathways for justice and liberation in the face of ongoing occupation and colonialism. The volume is divided into five sections that discuss the question of Palestine from multiple angles, including the question of refugees, the predicament of the PA, the settler colonial modes of Israeli control, the Palestinian cultural resistance and the international coalitions that are forming, shifting the international performative solidarity into transformative solidarity towards decolonisation and liberation.

Debating Palestine and the settler colonial regime

The first section, 'Debating Palestine and the Settler-Colonial Regime', critically examines the systemic structures and dynamics that sustain Zionist settler-colonial control and their far-reaching impact on Palestinian lives, governance, and sovereignty. By exploring the intersections of political economy, security coordination, legal frameworks, and historical narratives, this section reveals how mechanisms of economic dependency, political repression, and territorial expansion entrench colonial domination while undermining Palestinian self-determination. These chapters collectively shed light on the resilience and resistance of Palestinians navigating these oppressive systems, reframing their struggle as a pursuit of justice and liberation in the face of enduring colonial realities.

In "Profits over Palestine: Cronyism, Monopolies, and Patronage," Tareq Dana and Rami Salameh provide a critique of the political economy surrounding the PA, exposing the role of private business interests and foreign aid in sustaining a compromised leadership. They argue that the Oslo Accords facilitated a system of cronyism and monopolistic practices encouraged by both Israeli influence and international donors. This entanglement, they contend, has eroded the PA's capacity to represent Palestinian national interests, embedding economic dependency and fostering a system that prioritises the economic elite at the expense of broader Palestinian aspirations for liberation.

Alaa Tartir's "Three Decades and Counting: Assessing the Oslo Accords through a Security Lens" critiques the Oslo framework from a security perspective. Tartir argues that security coordination between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel, far from achieving peace, has become a tool of internal repression, deepening Palestinian fragmentation and oppression. By transforming the PA into a quasi-policing entity, this security arrangement subverts Palestinian self-determination, effectively aligning PA forces with Israeli security objectives rather than with Palestinian liberation.

In "Israel's Regime of (No)Torture: Legality, Impunity, and the Never-Ending Threat," Basil Abdelrazeq Farraj examines Israel's evolving methods of torture and control over Palestinians, particularly since the Second Intifada. Farraj argues that Israel has refined its practices to make torture more covert and legalistic, framing it in ways that maintain an appearance of legality while avoiding accountability. This shift, he explains, aims to depoliticise and subjugate Palestinians while granting Israeli authorities' impunity, reinforcing an apparatus of control that is both violent and structurally protected.

Atwa Jaber's "The Israeli Annexation of the Jordan Valley: A History of Settler-Colonial Expansion" investigates Israel's longstanding expansionist policies in the Jordan Valley. Jaber traces the roots of this annexationist agenda, illustrating how Israeli settlement policies continue to encroach on Palestinian land and livelihoods in a bid to further entrench Zionist control. The chapter situates the annexation as part of Israel's broader settler-colonial project, highlighting the ways in which this expansion has undermined Palestinian communities and intensified dispossession.

Finally, in "Suffrage Rights in a Settler Colony: 1948 Palestinians Between Loss of Sovereignty and *Sumud*," Ibrahim Saïd critically examines Israel's extension of voting rights to Palestinian citizens, often presented as a sign of democratic inclusion. Saïd challenges the notion that these rights reflect Israel's democratic nature, arguing instead that they serve as a colonial strategy of elimination that represents their loss of sovereignty, resulting in their exclusive inclusion and subjugation to the Zionist political project.

Hydropolitics and environmental policies

The second section,'Hydropolitics and Environmental Policies'. explores the critical intersections of environmental management, resource control, and colonial domination in Palestine under Israeli occupation. Through an analysis of water politics, environmental degradation, and the politics of nature, this section highlights how environmental policies are wielded as tools of settler-colonial control while also serving as spaces for Palestinian resilience and resistance. By examining Israel's strategic use of water and land resources to entrench separation and constrain Palestinian autonomy, the legal inadequacies in addressing environmental harm under military occupation, and the preservation of traditional farming practices amidst ecological transformation, the chapters collectively reveal the profound environmental dimensions of the Palestinian struggle for sovereignty, justice, and cultural survival.

In "The Fluid Spatial Dimensions of Israel's Settler Colonisation of Palestine: Hydropolitics in Wādī Fūkīn," Anita De Donato analyses the role of water politics in Israel's settler-colonial control over Palestine, focusing on the West Bank village of Wādī Fūkīn. Through examining Israeli water and urban

policies, De Donato reveals how Israel's strategic resource control reinforces separation policies and constrains Palestinian autonomy, questioning the PA's role in peacebuilding. She illustrates how daily Palestinian resistance strategies emerge within a fragmented system of spatial and resource management, ultimately showing that Palestinian struggles for sovereignty are continuously thwarted by Israel's entrenched mechanisms of control.

Maïs Qandeel's "The Palestinian Environment under Israeli Military Occupation: An International Humanitarian Law Perspective" provides a legal analysis of environmental degradation in the oPt under Israeli military control, focusing on issues like resource exploitation, land contamination, and waste management. Reviewing the applicable provisions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)—including the Hague Regulations, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and ENMOD—Qandeel examines how these rules are insufficient for effectively protecting the environment under military occupation. Additionally, she explores International Environmental Law (IEL) principles, such as those in the Rio Declaration and the Draft Covenant on Environment and Development, as complementary frameworks. Ultimately, Qandeel advocates for stricter international regulations to close regulatory gaps, highlighting the need for accountability mechanisms to address environmental harm and enforce state responsibility for damages in occupied territories.

Finally, in "Decarbonising Palestine: Politics of Nature and Weather in Local Historical Framing Knowledge," Mauro Van Akin examines the enduring link between Palestinian farming traditions and the politics of nature under Israeli occupation. It explores how Israel's nation-building has redefined "nature" through afforestation and land expropriation, erasing Palestinian cultural ties to the landscape. Van Aken highlights resilient Palestinian agricultural practices, particularly al-murba'nia—traditional weather knowledge—demonstrating its role in sustaining Palestinian identity and ecological resilience amidst occupation.

Refugees and diaspora

The third section, 'Refugees and Diaspora', delves into the enduring challenges facing Palestinian refugees and the diaspora, emphasising the legal, political, and social dimensions of displacement. This section highlights not only the systematic denial of refugees' rights but also the resilience and agency of Palestinian communities across different contexts, from Lebanon to Syria to Chile. Through diverse lenses, these chapters underscore the complexities of refugee identity, resilience, and activism while challenging the dominant narratives that often marginalise or depoliticise the Palestinian diaspora. This section underscores the need for international accountability and support, calling for a reframing of refugee rights that goes beyond humanitarian aid to embrace justice, agency, and the right to self-determination.

In "The Actuality of the Palestinian Refugee Question: An International Law Perspective," Francesca Albanese and Lex Takkenberg address the persistent denial of Palestinian refugees' internationally recognised rights, including the rights to return, restitution, and compensation. Despite these well-established principles under international law, the authors argue that political reluctance and systemic barriers have obstructed their realisation. Albanese and Takkenberg call for a paradigm shift, advocating a renewed commitment from the international community to resolve the refugee question, which has been in limbo for over 70 years. Their legal analysis calls for accountability and a revitalised approach that centres on justice for refugees rather than geopolitical compromises.

Jalal Al Husseini's "UNRWA: An Agency at the Crossroads of Humanitarian, Development, and Political Claims" examines the complex role of UNRWA in managing the needs of Palestinian refugees. Al Husseini provides a historical analysis of UNRWA's mandate, showing how the agency has attempted to balance humanitarian, developmental, and political demands. In the face of decreased international funding and shifting political agendas, Al Husseini reflects on the uncertain future of UNRWA, highlighting the tension between its humanitarian mission and the political constraints that shape its operations.

Sergio Bianchi, in his chapter "'We Want to Live in Dignity to Return': Palestinian NGOs and the Symbolic Representation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," explores how Palestinian NGOs in Lebanon use narratives of dignity to advocate for refugee rights. Bianchi demonstrates how these NGOs resist dominant representations imposed by political elites, instead framing dignity as a core element in the struggle for Palestinian rights and the right of return. This narrative not only challenges reductive stereotypes but also empowers refugees by framing their aspirations through a lens of agency and resilience.

Nell Gabiam's "Ordinary Agents: Palestinian Refugees as Providers of Care, Education, and Protection during the Syrian War" focuses on the lived experiences of Palestinian refugees in Syria. Gabiam highlights the agency of refugees who have taken on roles as providers of care, education, and protection amidst the turmoil of the Syrian conflict. Her work underscores how these refugees, despite facing displacement and violence, have stepped into roles traditionally held by aid organisations, showing resilience and solidarity within the community in times of crisis.

Finally, Nadia Silhi Chahin's chapter, "The Palestinian Community in Chile: Distant in Time and Space, yet Politically Close to Palestine," examines the unique role of the Palestinian diaspora in Chile. Chahin argues that this community has maintained a strong political and cultural connection to Palestine despite their geographical distance. Through active support for Palestinian rights and contributions to the global movement for justice, the Palestinian diaspora in Chile exemplifies the powerful role that diasporic communities can play in supporting and amplifying the struggle for liberation.

Cultural resistances

The fourth section, 'Cultural Resistances', explores the vital role of art, literature, and intellectual traditions in the Palestinian struggle for liberation, identity, and self-determination. Through diverse mediums, from storytelling and embroidery to graffiti and intellectual activism, these chapters reveal how cultural expressions serve as acts of resistance against the erasure of Palestine. They highlight the ways Palestinians preserve collective memory, reclaim narratives, and challenge dominant discourses, offering a profound testament to the enduring power of culture in confronting colonial oppression. This section underscores the transformative potential of imagination, creativity, and knowledge production as tools for resilience and liberation, while emphasising the inseparable link between cultural practices and the broader pursuit of justice and freedom.

Steve Sabella's chapter, "The Parachute Paradox," offers a profound reflection on the personal and collective experiences of Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Using powerful metaphors, Sabella delves into themes of identity, resilience, and imagination as tools of liberation. He highlights cultural resistance through Palestinian traditions like embroidery and emphasises the transformative power of art and storytelling in envisioning freedom. The chapter calls for global accountability and justice, asserting that true liberation begins with decolonising the imagination and fostering collective transformation.

In "The Catastrophe: Al-Nakba, in Palestinian Fictions," Wasim Dahmash explores the representation of the 1948 Nakba in Palestinian literature. Dahmash argues that these literary narratives are more than historical accounts—they are acts of cultural resistance that defy efforts to erase Palestinian history. By memorialising the Nakba through fiction, Palestinian writers not only preserve collective memory but also challenge hegemonic narratives that deny Palestinian displacement and suffering.

In "Filming Palestinian Graffiti, Engaging Science: Sharing Power and Authority on Knowledge Production," Tamara Abu Laban and Clémence Lehec investigate the significance of graffiti as a form of resistance in Deheisheh refugee camp. They illustrate how graffiti, as well as documentary filmmaking, become co-creative methods for generating knowledge and sharing experiences. By engaging directly with Palestinian refugees, the authors reveal how these artistic expressions serve as both a voice of defiance and a means of shaping narratives that resist dominant portrayals of Palestinian identity.

Mjriam Abu Samra and Luigi Achilli's "Reconnecting Intellectual Production and Activism: A Palestinian History" traces the historical and contemporary relationship between Palestinian intellectuals and the resistance movement. They argue that while the Oslo Accords ushered in a technocratic approach that distanced intellectual work from activism, a new generation of Palestinian scholars is seeking to reconnect the two, drawing inspiration from anti-colonial

and liberation frameworks. This reconnection signifies a return to intellectual production that is deeply rooted in activism, fostering a culture of resistance that speaks to the aspirations for Palestinian liberation.

Activism, solidarity and the struggle for Palestinian rights

The fifth and final section, 'Activism, Solidarity and the Struggle for Palestinian Rights', examines the complexities and contradictions surrounding international and internal solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, as well as the challenges facing movements that contest Zionist narratives and policies. The authors interrogate the racial, political, and democratic challenges faced by solidarity movements, illustrating how activism for Palestinian rights is frequently met with structural and ideological barriers. This section offers critical insights into how global and local activism engages with Palestinian rights, navigating the racial, political, and democratic hurdles that arise in the process. It emphasises the importance of sustained and nuanced solidarity that goes beyond symbolic gestures, challenging oppressive frameworks and advocating for transformative change that recognises Palestinian rights and self-determination.

Caitlin Procter's chapter, "'In Gaza there is no Tomorrow': Palestinian Youth Participation in Gaza's Great March of Return," brings an ethnographic perspective to youth-led resistance in Gaza. Through her analysis of the Great March of Return, Procter highlights the resilience and agency of Palestinian youth who have spearheaded nonviolent resistance despite facing severe repression. The Great March of Return serves as a powerful expression of Palestinian self-determination, underlining the role of youth in challenging Israeli policies and asserting their right to return.

In "Theory and Practice: Palestinian Youth Engagement in Frameworks of Struggle," authors Loubna Qutami, Omar Zahzah, Celine Qussiny, Nadya Tannous, and Ramah Awad examine how Palestinian youth in North America are developing a praxis that bridges theory and practice to support liberation. By engaging with anti-colonial, settler-colonial, apartheid, and racial oppression frameworks, they highlight the limitations of each when taken alone. Instead, they propose a layered, intersectional approach to activism that speaks to the broader movement for Palestinian national liberation. Their work underscores the need for a complex analysis that captures the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression faced by Palestinians, particularly in the diaspora.

In "Reading Alana Lentin: Race, Revenge and the Figure of the Palestinian in Contemporary Germany," Anna Younes draws on Alana Lentin's work to explore how racial dynamics in Germany intersect with the Palestinian struggle. Younes argues for the need to develop "racial literacy" to better understand the complex relationships between antisemitism, anti-Muslim racism, and the

Palestinian cause. This analysis reveals how dominant narratives in Europe often obscure or misrepresent Palestinian rights by conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism, thus side-lining Palestinian voices.

Birgit Althaler, Jorge Gajardo, Mary Honderich, Anne Spagnoli, and Roman Vonwill, in "A Political Analysis of BDS Campaign in Switzerland (2010-2020)," provide an overview of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Switzerland, examining the successes and challenges it has faced. They highlight efforts to criminalise the movement and conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism, which has posed significant obstacles. Despite these challenges, the chapter discusses how BDS Switzerland has managed to carve out spaces for solidarity, advocating for Palestinian rights within a restrictive political environment.

Ilan Pappé's "The BDS Movement in the United Kingdom: Back to Where it All Started" continues the examination of BDS, focusing on its impact within British civil society. Pappé discusses how, despite strong opposition from pro-Israel lobby groups and the British government, the movement has found consistent support among grassroots organisations. This chapter underscores the movement's resilience and ability to mobilise support for Palestinian rights, even in contexts where political opposition is intense.

Amro SadelDine's chapter, "What Does the Boycott Tell Us About Democracy?," critiques how the BDS movement exposes democratic contradictions in both the Global North and the Arab region. SadelDine highlights the disconnect between popular support for the boycott and governmental opposition, revealing how institutions often prioritise diplomatic and economic alliances over democratic principles. This chapter calls into question the democratic values of states that oppose popular movements advocating for Palestinian rights.

Finally, in "Solidarities from Within the Zionist System: Assessing Present-Day Israeli Activism for Palestinian Rights," Alice Baroni examines the role of Jewish-Israeli activists who support Palestinian rights from within Israel. Baroni explores the inherent challenges and contradictions these activists face as they attempt to navigate a system that opposes the very rights they champion. This chapter critically assesses both the limitations and the transformative potential of solidarity efforts that emerge from within Israeli society, shedding light on the internal complexities of supporting Palestinian rights in a fundamentally oppositional environment.

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