June 2018

Representation of Settler Colonial Violence in Palestine, A Thesis in support of the multi-media exhibition Choreographies of Resistance

Rehab Nazzal

The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor
Mahon, Patrick
The University of Western Ontario

Co-Supervisor
Robertson, Kirsty
The University of Western Ontario

Co-Supervisor
Sliwinski, Sharon
The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Art and Visual Culture

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

Recommended Citation
https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/5390

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact tadam@uwo.ca, wlswadmin@uwo.ca.
Abstract

This project-based dissertation emerges from my engagement with theories of representation, settler colonialism, and genocide, as well as involvement with direct engagement through embodied experience of the Palestinian reality in the colonized West Bank during 2015–2017. The artworks and written components of this project seek to represent shards of the multilayered Western-Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine through a focus on the struggle and resilience of the Palestinian people and the endurance of their land. Land seizing as the aim of settler colonialism and the colonized bodies as sites of oppression and sites of resistance are central to the various works of the exhibition and the textual analysis. The dissertation is built on the assertion that the Western-Zionist venture in Palestine amounts to an incremental genocide that targets the existence of the Palestinian people, their material culture, and their land. It also asserts that the right of the Palestinians to resist colonial violence is a legitimate right enshrined in international law and connected to the struggle of colonized and oppressed people around the world. My experience and what I observed and documented in the West Bank (particularly in the Palestinian city of Bethlehem)—represented in this project—resembles Palestinian resilience, sumud (steadfastness), and resistance in the face of a century of Zionist dispossession and military oppression. Representing Zionist settler colonial violence from within is hindered by continued violence on the ground in Palestine, dominant colonial narratives, suppression and misrepresentation of the colonized peoples’ resistance, as well as by the limitations of representational forms. Obstacles that I have faced while working on this project included denial of entry to the blockaded Gaza, restrictions of movement and access to sites, information, and material, as well as intimidation, injury, and life threats.
Dedicated to my children
Rana, Khalid, and Zeid
And to the memory of my brother Khalid
Acknowledgments

I would first like to acknowledge the peoples and history of the traditional territory on which Western University stands, and respect longstanding relationships with the three First Nations groups of this land and place in southwestern Ontario. The Attawandaran (Neutral) peoples once settled this region alongside the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee peoples, and used this land as their traditional beaver hunting grounds. The three other longstanding Indigenous groups of this geographic region are: the Anishinaabe Peoples (also referred to as the Three Fires Confederacy, including the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatami Nations); the Haudenosaunee Peoples (also known as the Iroquoian Peoples or Six Nations including Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscorora); and, the Leni-Lunaape Peoples (also referred to as Delaware and/or Munsee). The three First Nations communities in closest proximity to this university are: the Chippewa of the Thames First Nation (Anishinaabe); the Oneida Nation of the Thames (Haudenosaunee); and the Munsee-Delaware Nation (Leni-Lunaape).

The above reflects Western University’s stated land acknowledgement as indicated by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). I wish to personally express my gratitude to the Indigenous people of this land where I conducted my study and work, who have inhabited and protected Turtle Island for thousands of years. I would also like to strongly encourage Western University to fully commit to decolonization and the restoration of the rights of First Nations people.

I am grateful to many individuals who supported me as I researched and realized both the studio and written components of this dissertation. The list of people I want to thank is very long starting with my children Rana, Khalid, and Zeid. I am indebted to the support of
my supervising committee, Kirsty Robertson, Patrick Mahon, and Sharon Sliwinski. I am grateful for the support and solidarity of my fellow colleagues and faculty members as well as the Canadian artist and activist communities, whose defence of my right to freedom of expression is exemplary for artists and academics involved in social justice.

I am grateful to the Ottawa Public Art Program and the city of Ottawa staff for their tremendous effort defending my exhibition Invisible at the Karsh-Masson Gallery, and for their engagement with the public on issues of significance. I am also grateful to curator Diana Nemiroff for emphasizing the role of critical art in the public sphere. My thanks goes to Stefan St-Laurent, director of Axeneo7 Gallery, and to DAIMON staff for their support during my residency there as I realized, produced, installed, and exhibited Choreographies of Resistance. I am also grateful to McIntosh Gallery director James Patten and staff for their tremendous support and effort during the exhibit of Choreographies of Resistance at Western University and for defending my right of freedom of expression in the face of Zionist pressure group attacks. I am thankful to Anna Khimasia and Jeff O’Brien for writing essays for the exhibition brochure, to Andrea Fitzpatrick, Lorraine Gilbert, and Bill Skidmore for inviting me to lecture at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa. I am grateful to the London Ontario Media Art Association for organizing “Mediation on Art and Activism” with artist Jamelie Hassan.

I am grateful to editor Timothy Pearson for his tremendous editorial work and support, I am also thankful to Blake Fitzpatrick for inviting me to publish a photo essay from this dissertation in the Critical Topographies Conference publication, and to the Media Arts Network of Ontario for offering me the opportunity to publish one of the chapters of this dissertation under the editorship of Deanna Bowen.
I am fortunate to have had the support and friendship of London-based artist Jamelie Hassan. My gratitude also goes to curators Christine Conley, Vicky Moufawad-Paul, Jayne Wilkinson, and Ellyn Walker, and to artists and friends Jayce Salloum, Andrea Fatima, Yael, Rebecca Garrett, John Greyson, Elaine McIlwraith, Randa Farah, and David Heap, as well as many other friends.

I am grateful for the support I have received in Palestine from Dar Al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, the community centres in Dheisheh and Aida Refugee camps, and the many organizations and individuals I interviewed and met with across Palestine from 2015 to 2017.

I am appreciative of the financial support of the Western University Visual Arts Department and Faculty of Arts and Humanities for their support of my field research, as well as to the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for granting me doctoral awards throughout my program of study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certificate of Examination

Abstract
Dedication
Acknowledgements
Introduction

## CHAPTER ONE: The Olive Tree, The Land, and The Palestinian Struggle
Against Settler Colonialism
Growing Up in the Land of Olives
The First Nakba, 1940s
The Second Nakba, 1960s
Manifestation of Israel’s Settler-Colonial Genocide: The Case of the Cremisan Valley

## CHAPTER TWO: Choreographies of Resistance
Choreography as a Critical Thinking Tool
Choreographies of Resistance and Settler Colonialism
2015 Uprising: Account from Bethlehem
Choreographies of Resistance and the Palestinian *Sumud*
Choreographies of Resistance Installation
Photography as an Act of Resistance
Embedded and Embodied Photography

## CHAPTER THREE: Critical Art, Censorship, and Freedom of Expression
Art and Freedom of Expression
Israeli-Zionist Attempts to Censor the Exhibition *Invisible*
Israeli-Zionist attempts to Censor *Choreographies of Resistance*

...
INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2015 I undertook a field research journey to colonized Palestine intending to examine the effects of Israel’s unmanned aerial vehicles on the Palestinian population, particularly in Gaza, through firsthand experience. Upon my arrival in the West Bank through Jordan, I was prevented from entering Gaza, which has been under a devastating blockade imposed by Israel’s occupation authorities since 2006. While I waited in the West Bank some shocking events took place that affected the direction of my research. Right after my arrival in August 2015, I witnessed some of the most agonizing examples of land seizure that included uprooting and lynching of thousand-year-old olive trees in the Bethlehem region for the purpose of expanding illegal Jewish colonies, roads, and the Israeli Apartheid Wall. Shortly after that, at the beginning of October 2015, a third Palestinian Intifada erupted. Palestinians took to the streets in almost every city, village, and refugee camp in the West Bank as well as in Gaza.

Under these conditions, my research evolved in ways dictated by the events unfolding around me, events that revealed the gap between abstract knowledge of settler colonial violence and the lived reality of those who endure it everyday. My research turned from the air to the ground, to the daily struggles of Palestinians against settler colonialism, Apartheid, and military occupation. It turned to the experiences of the Palestinians who are ghettoized between concrete walls, illegal Jewish colonies, and military and surveillance structures—watchtowers and checkpoints—that cut through Palestinian communities, suffocate people’s lives, and subject them to daily suffering in what can only be described as open-air prisons. It became clear that Israel’s military aerial and ground power function together to enforce the dispossession and expulsion of Indigenous Palestinians, seize their land, and suppress their resistance. Further, Israel often tests its military machinery on the Palestinians: the Gaza
Strip is used to test land, marine, and aerial weapons, and the West Bank to test “crowd control” weapons and methods, as well as surveillance techniques.

My experience of on-the-ground settler colonial violence soon transformed from that of a researcher-observer to that of a targeted subject. On December 11, 2015, I was intentionally shot with a live bullet by an Israeli sniper while standing alone in a sheltered corner recording a military ‘Skunk’ truck that was spraying lab-made sewage onto Palestinian houses, hotels, and shops in the city of Bethlehem. The .22 calibre bullet shot from an American-made Ruger rifle entered and exited my leg. The ambulance and paramedics who rushed to aid me were then attacked with heavy rounds of teargas, an act that constitutes a grave violation of the Geneva Convention. The .22 calibre rifle is widely used by Israel’s occupation forces and has killed and injured a great number of Palestinians during the current Intifada, previous Intifadas, and in the weekly protests held in many Palestinian villages and towns since 2005.2

My injury was not an isolated case. Palestinian and international photographers and reporters regularly encounter intentional violence from Israel’s occupation forces. In my case, Israel’s forces targeted the operator of a camera who was recording the spraying of Palestinian homes with an Israeli-invented substance with an awful and unbearable smell.3 Targeting photographers aims to suppress the truth about violations of human rights and conceal the crimes regularly committed by occupation forces. Such violations, if they were

---

1 A Skunk is an Israeli-invented weapon consisting of a yellow, horrible-smelling liquid sprayed by water canon on Palestinian protesters and their residences.
known, would contrast Israeli narratives of victimhood and “self defence.” My injury was just one of the 15,710 injuries recorded between October 1, 2015 and February 2016 according to information I obtained from the Palestinian ministry of health.⁴ Within the same period, Israel killed 170 Palestinians including 35 children and eight women.⁵ In the city of Bethlehem I attended the funeral of 14-year-old Ahmad Abd Al-Rahman from the Aida refugee camp, shot by an Israeli sniper stationed in a watchtower while sitting in front of his school (October 4, 2015). I also witnessed the shooting of two protesters, Mo'taz Zawahiri, 29 (October 13, 2015) and Srour Ahmad Abu Srour, 21 (January 12, 2016) who both died immediately as a result of bullets that pierced their hearts. These two young men were among a crowd of people protesting the occupation and its forces’ invasion of the city of Bethlehem.

In addition to shooting protesters, Israeli forces regularly raid cities, villages, and refugee camps, especially at night, inflicting panic and fear, and arresting men, women, and children. Between October 2015 and February 2016, the occupation forces arrested 2,700 people, bringing the current total number of Palestinian political prisoners close to 9,000, including over 300 children.⁶ It is not only the loss of human life and suffering but also the ransoms imposed by the occupation forces on the families of those who participate in protests or are active on social media that leads to further impoverishment.

While the Palestinian struggle has gone on for decades, their encounter with genocide is largely absent from Western media, scholarship, and the arts. This absence has three main effects. The first and most obvious effect is that the colonization of Palestine and attacks against the Palestinian people continue. The second and perhaps less noted effect is

---

⁴ This information is available in Arabic on the Ministry’s website: http://www.moh.ps/index/ArticleView/ArticleId/3108/Language/ar
the occlusion of the role that resistance and solidarity play in overcoming colonialism and militarism. The third effect is that Israel’s violations of international law and humanitarian law have become exemplary for oppressive regimes across the world.

For an example, we might look to extrajudicial assassination, which only became a concern for Western scholars and artists after the September 11, 2001 attacks even though Israel has been assassinating Palestinian leaders and intellectuals at least since the 1970s both inside occupied Palestine and across the world, including in countries such as Britain, France, Italy, and Greece. Since at least 2004, Israel has used military drones to target civilians, including children, a fact largely overlooked in the work of scholars and artists despite confirmed reports and data released by Palestinian and international human rights organizations, including Al Mazen Human Rights Center, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. Gilles Deleuze, one of the few scholars who foresaw the consequences of silence towards Israel’s violence against the Palestinians, warned in the 1970s that, “Israel is establishing a model of repression that will be converted for other countries, adapted by other countries.”

Adaptation of Israel’s methods of aggression is apparent in extrajudicial assassinations carried out during US-led wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Somalia, as well as in Western employment of Israeli methods and devices of torture used for decades against Palestinian political prisoners. Adaptation is also evident in the testing of

---


9 Democracy Now, “A Torturer’s Confession: Former Abu Ghraib Interrogator Speaks Out,” April 7, 2016, https://www.democracynow.org/2016/4/7/a_torturer_s_confession_former_abu. The testimony of former US soldier Eric Fair about his *Consequence: A Memoir*, reveals how Israeli torturers trained US soldiers to use a device called the “Palestinian Chair” to “break prisoners mentally and physically.” This is an example of the dissemination of Israel’s “tested” aggression.
lethal and crowd control weapons on Palestinians and then marketing these weapons to oppressive regimes.\textsuperscript{10}

By the end of my field research journey, I had gathered an archive of rich documentary material that attests not only to the daily suffering of the Palestinian people but also to their defiance to one of the most militarized and oppressive colonial powers of our times. This project-based dissertation emerged from my experiences. Its chief argument is that distant and abstract knowledge of settler colonial violence is not only removed from the actual reality on the ground but also contributes to enforce colonial oppression, which amounts to measured genocide against indigenous populations. The four interlinked essays in this dissertation emphasize the significance of engaging with the realities of struggling populations, as well as the urgency of field research in the humanities, particularly the art field.

The dissertation integrates theoretical and field research with studio production. The theoretical framework that contextualizes the artwork and written component is based upon a range of scholarship including histories and theories of settler colonialism and revolution, genocide and surveillance studies, sound studies, as well as contemporary art practices pertaining to the violence of war and colonialism and the challenges political art faces when it engages the public in issues pertaining to the global struggle for decolonization, justice, equality, dignity, and the rights of indigenous populations. Importantly, this project is informed by my experience as a Palestinian artist whose life has been affected by multiple forms of Israel’s colonial oppression.

\textsuperscript{10} See the Yotam Feldman documentary, \textit{The Lab} (Gum Films, 2013), which reveals the link between Israel’s military campaigns against the Palestinians, its arms industry, and the global arms market.
The dissertation is structured in four separate yet connected chapters. Chapter One examines the ongoing Israeli genocide against the Palestinians as manifested in subsequent Nakbas (catastrophes) resulting in the uprooting of over half the Palestinian population, seizing their land and properties, and continuous destruction or appropriation of their material culture. This chapter is based on my experience witnessing Israel’s occupation forces seizing the Cremisan Valley in the Palestinian Christian town of Beit Jala in Bethlehem district and depriving its residents of their land that constitutes a major source of life. Chapter Two focuses on the multimedia project *Choreographies of Resistance* to illuminate the context and concepts of the various works in the installation and the strategies of their realization and display. Chapter Three focuses on the decades-long effort of Zionist pressure groups in Canada to censor the Palestinian narrative through suppression of freedom of expression and Palestine rights. In this chapter I recount my experience facing attacks on and attempts to censor two of my exhibitions, *Invisible* (2014) in Ottawa, and *Choreographies of Resistance* (2017) in London, Ontario. Chapter Four examines the effect of Israel’s sound weapons and the noise of military machinery on the Palestinian population, with a focus on the occupation forces’ oppressive military operations in Palestinian residential areas under the cover of darkness.
CHAPTER ONE: The Olive Tree, The Land, and The Palestinian Struggle Against Settler-Colonialism

Our losses are between two and eight a day.
And ten are wounded.
Twenty homes are gone.
Forty olive groves destroyed,
in addition to the structural damage
afflicting the veins of the poem, the play,
and the unfinished painting.

Mahmoud Darwish, A State of Siege, 2002

This chapter presents a visual, historical, and analytical account of the Israeli settler-colonial encroachment into Palestine. Based on my experience, and adopting a settler-colonial theoretical framework focused on studies of genocide and the tradition of documentary photography, I provide a participant-based analysis and visual documentation of Israel's colonization and destruction of Palestinian land and uprooting of its ancient olive trees.

Palestinian scholar Fayez Sayegh defines the European Jewish venture in Palestine as settler colonialism, realized through an alliance between British Imperialism and the Zionist movement. Zionist settler colonialism “took the combined form of forcible dispossession of the indigenous population, their expulsion from their own country, the

---

implantation of an alien sovereignty on their soil.” Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe, adopting a similar understanding, associates settler colonialism with genocide by characterizing it as a “structure”, rather than a one time event, that aims at eliminating Indigenous people in order to seize their land.  

In this essay I suggest that the continued Zionist confiscation of Palestinian land, the uprooting of the Palestinian population, and the destruction of their material culture, constitutes an incremental genocide. I will establish that the expulsion of over a million Palestinians from their homes during the two Nakbas (catastrophes) in the 1940s and 1960s, confining survivors to concentration zones, inflicting a blockade against Gaza over the past decade, the ongoing seizures of West Bank land, and destruction of the olive trees that constitute a major source of Palestinian livelihoods and a symbol of their rootedness in the land, amount to genocide. Finally, I conclude by shedding light on the sumud (steadfastness or steadfast perseverance) of the Palestinians in the face of one of the longest active settler colonialisms in modern times. The photographs in this chapter, which I mainly recorded during field research in the West Bank between 2015 and 2017, provide an historical record as well as evidence of Israel’s atrocities. In Palestine, photographers, reporters, and citizens’ lenses regularly capture what constitute severe violations of human and environmental rights, and often war crimes such as the case of the shooting of a wounded Palestinian by Israeli soldiers in the city of Al-Khalil. 

---


4 Citizen Imad Abu-Shamsiyeh from Hebron captured the execution of a wounded Palestinian, Abd Al-Fatah Al-Sharif. The photo reveals what amounts to a war crime, which forced the Israeli army to arrest the soldier. See Lizzie Dearden, “Hebron Shooting: Footage Shows ‘settler kicking knife towards Palestinian man's body’ After Soldier Killed Him,” *The Independent*, June 3, 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-
Photographers and reporters encounter intentional violence by Israel’s occupation forces (IOF) and are killed, injured, imprisoned, and threatened for documenting IOF actions. In 2015 alone there were 599 Israeli violations of media freedom. Between October 2015 and February 2016, tens of photographers and reporters were injured and/or arrested by Israeli occupation forces, including 14 women. Israeli forces regard cameras as weapons; their fear of photography reflects a fear of revealing the truth and overturning the carefully constructed image of victimhood that surrounds and justifies the continued oppression of Palestinians and the colonization of Palestine. I have encountered soldiers’ attempts to confiscate my cameras, have been held for interrogation at checkpoints for holding a camera, and was intentionally shot in the leg by a sniper for photographing the occupation forces’ crimes.

The photographs in this essay are linked to a project titled *Walking Under Occupation* (2005), which I began when I visited Palestine in 2005 after being denied my right of return by Israeli authorities for over twenty years. I returned to my home and family as a visitor with an Israeli visa. When I entered the country through the Israeli-controlled border crossing between Jordan and the West Bank I was shocked by what I saw and remain so to this day. My shock was caused by the destruction I witnessed in my country in comparison with how it

---


7 After I left Palestine to pursue my studies at Damascus University in 1980, I was denied return by Israel after finishing my degree. According to the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), between 1967 and 1994, Israel stripped over 100,000 residents of Gaza and some 140,000 residents of the West Bank of their residency rights, many of them students or young professionals working abroad who were barred from ever returning. PASSIA, “Israeli Occupation,” http://passia.org/media/filer_public/97/62/9762ddc5-ad9a-4fde-a65d-29884aa6d96c/factsheet_israeli_occupation.pdf.
had been before I left in 1980. The suffocation of Palestinian lives, the destruction of the landscape, and the proliferation of settlement colonies, military, and surveillance structures have transformed the country into colonized zones that combine European settler colonialism with contemporary methods and technologies of control. I spent a month walking across Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps, and through the battered landscape. The simple act of walking in a colonized land is unlike walking in any other place. It reveals the trauma that the land and its people endure. Walking immerses the body in the surrounding environment; it involves all the human senses at once. One’s heartbeat changes according to memories of place and levels of danger, as well as to the knowledge of what the eyes reveal: a watchtower, armed soldiers and settlers, signs and markers on the land demarcating the colonized from the colonizer, the Indigenous from the foreign. The walker is overloaded with conflicting feelings of peace and turbulence. The soundscape too is loaded with contradictions: indigenous trees, plants, birds, insects, and the wind contrast with military air machines, firing zones, crowded refugee camps…and one’s own footsteps. The contrast between typical Palestinian towns dotted with olive trees and the fortified, illegal Israeli colonies protected by military structures reveals the destructive characteristic of Israel’s settler-colonial project in Palestine. Just some of the manifestations that Walking revealed in 2015-2017 included segregated roads, firing zones, concrete walls, barbed wire, segregation signs, permanent and temporary checkpoints, watchtowers everywhere, and construction cranes and bulldozers razing the hills for quarry stones or constructing colonies. These scars on the land that mark the country’s inhabitants, topography, and history suffocate everyday life. Walking trails through olive groves in the Palestinian hills of

---

Bethlehem or Jerusalem are disappearing, replaced by colonies, “buffer zones,” “firing zones,” “seam zones,” or settlers’ leisure zone.

A Palestinian road through the downtown of the vibrant city of Hebron is seized and closed to Palestinians, with some 500 settlers colonizing the centre of a city that is home to 260,000 Palestinians. Thousand-year-old Palestinian olive trees are “beheaded,” burned, uprooted, stolen, sold, or transplanted into Jewish colonies by Israel’s forces and armed settlers. Documenting life under colonial rule plays a tremendous role in preserving history and culture. Recording colonial crimes not only captures evidence of daily human and nature rights abuses but also protects collective memory. It helps millions of victims overcome their trauma, and most importantly, helps the colonized in their *sumud* and resistance.
Documentary media constitute a significant source for searching for truth. Of course “documents do not speak unless someone asks them to verify, that is, to make true, some hypothesis. Therefore there is an interdependence among facts, documents, and questions.” Image and sound recording equipment do not invent, they capture what exists in front them. There cannot be a photograph without a referent—the thing that is photographed.

**Growing up in the Land of Olives**

I was born and grew up in the Jenin area of northern Palestine in the midst of orange orchards and olive groves. My family comes from the town of Qabatia on the outskirts of Jenin, where houses are interspersed among old olive trees. Between Jenin and Qabatia we used to have a *bustan* (farm) planted mainly with orange and lemon trees, but also with pear, pomegranates, figs, and tout (perry) trees. We had a well for irrigating the orange orchards. My family’s oranges supplied the local market and were often exported to Jordan and Syria. There, on the bustan where we used to spend every summer, my understanding of and relationship to the land, its soil, plants, and herbs, developed.

After Israel’s 1967 invasion of the West Bank and Gaza, the borders of Palestine were sealed entirely, refugees barred from return, and its surviving inhabitants were disconnected from the outside world. It was the beginning of a long imprisonment in our own space. Israel began a systematic destruction of the economy, starting with the agricultural sector, by gradually dominating the local market, flooding it with cheap Israeli products. The effect on farmers and their lands was devastating. Many abandoned their farms and became workers in Israel. My family had no choice but to cut down our orange orchards as the local market was controlled by the occupation and we were no longer free to export any products. The oranges had nowhere to go but to fall on the ground and rot. After a few years, prices
for Israeli products increased greatly, but by then it was too late to replant the orange trees
due to their dependence on water, which was now controlled by the occupying power. Israel
found olive production not so easy to control due to olive trees’ reliance on rainwater, the low
cost of tending the trees, and the ability to store the oil for long periods, unlike other fruits
and vegetables. Over the years, my father planted hundreds of olive trees with his hands,
and cared for hundreds of others passed on to us by our ancestors. Some of these trees are
estimated to be more than a thousand years old. These ancient trees look like living
monuments in their magnitude. They are silent witnesses to the passing of time and events
in that land.

In the 1970s, my family developed a significant innovation in olive saplings, producing
tens of thousands of new trees. For Palestinians, olive trees signify connection to and
rootedness in the land. They signify life’s continuity beyond human mortality. Olive trees’
ability to survive the harshest weather conditions, including drought and poor soil, and their
ability to grow in the mountains and wadis (valleys), indicates their resilience. An olive tree
takes at least ten years to start giving fruit. Palestinians regard them as their children, care
for them with love until they mature and become independent, but never abandon them.
When olive trees reach 80 or 90-years-old, the length of an average human life, their growth
slows greatly, but their fruit is not affected by the passing of time.
Olive tree cultivation originated in the Mediterranean region alongside the first human settlements between 11,000 and 7,000 BC.9 It is believed that the oldest olive tree in the world is located in Al Walaji village in Bethlehem district. In May 2017, I visited the old tree, named Al-Badawi (the Nomad), which, according to Palestinian and Japanese experts, is over 4000-years-old. Al-Badawi looks like a whole family of trees combined into one; the layers of its trunk reflect centuries of continual growth. The experience of looking, walking around, and sitting under Al-Badawi is unique and incomparable to any other experience. Al-Badawi is a living, precious monument.

---

Palestinians’ relationship with and activities on the land are essential to their livelihood, survival, and culture. Historically, agriculture constituted a major economic sector in Palestine. At the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of Palestinians were *fellahaeen* (farmers) involved mainly in citrus and olive production, vegetables, as well as grains such as wheat, chickpeas, beans, and sesame. At the turn of the twentieth century, Palestinian olive and citrus products were among the most developed and advanced in the region, which attracted workers from as far away as North Africa. Developed in the mid-nineteenth century by Palestinian farmers, Jaffa oranges were Palestine’s brand in the Arab world and
Europe. Agriculture not only provided a sustainable economy in Palestine but also supplied other Arab countries with various products.

Land is life, and agriculture and water are essential to human survival. In colonized Palestine, Israel not only targets the land but also controls the water and its distribution, including Palestinian access to a variety of natural water resources. The three sources of water in the country, the Jordan River, the Coastal Aquifer, and the Mountain Aquifer, which is located beneath the West Bank, are controlled by Israel. It extracts 89 per cent of the water from the West Bank Mountain Aquifer to provide water to over 500,000 Israeli settlers, who use six times more water than almost three million Palestinians in the West Bank. Palestinian communities receive water once every two to three weeks during the summer. Only rainwater and spring water is available for field irrigation. The occupying forces that control even the digging of wells and the building of reservoirs often issue demolition orders to any construction relevant to water. Additionally armed settlers violently attack Palestinians in the West Bank and attempt to confiscate natural water sources such as the ongoing struggle of Nabi Salih village to protect its springs. The occupying forces often declare portions of land that includes water springs as military “closed zone,” which deprives Palestinians access to these sites.

Another tragedy the Palestinians face related to water and land is the pollution of Palestinian land with settler wastewater. Settlements on the hilltops often release their sewage onto Palestinian villages and fields below. In 2008 I visited the village of Salem in

---

Nablus district. The stench of raw sewage pouring from a nearby settlement was unbearable. In Bethlehem district, settlers’ wastewater is regularly released into the fields of the Palestinian villages of Wadi Fukin and Nahalin from the Jewish settlement of Beitar Illit, leading to contaminated crops and soil.

The indigenous landscape of Palestine that has survived Israel’s colonization is dotted with olive trees and stone terraces. According to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, 48 per cent of the land of the West Bank and Gaza that depends on rainwater is planted with olive trees. These trees contribute up to 25 per cent of the total Palestinian agricultural income.\(^{12}\) Currently, much of the olive production is for local consumption with a small amount exported mainly to Jordan and recently to the international market through borders controlled by the occupying power.

**The First Nakba (Catastrophe)**

While colonized countries throughout the world were gaining their independence from European colonialism and beginning a journey to recovery in the mid-twentieth century, Palestine was stricken by a new settler-colonial project. This project was planned during the First World War in 1917 with the sponsorship of Britain, which facilitated Jewish migration to Palestine. Instead of gaining independence from British colonial rule, in 1948 Palestine was divided by the UN General Assembly’s Resolution 181, known as the Partition Plan. The Partition Plan carved Palestine into three parts: 42 per cent of the land for a Palestinian state for Muslim and Christian Arabs; 56 per cent of the land for a Jewish state; and the

remainder—the city of Jerusalem—placed under international governance. The General Assembly of the United Nations issued this partition of Palestine without Palestinian consent or any knowledge of conditions on the ground, including the demographic structure of the country. “Despite Britain’s pro-Zionist policies and the presence of a growing Jewish minority, Palestine was still very much an Arab country by the end of the British Mandate. Almost all of the cultivated land in Palestine was held by the indigenous population—only 5.8 per cent was in Jewish ownership.” Almost immediately, Palestine was devastated by the Nakba—the massacre or mass expulsion of over half the Palestinian population (800,000), not only those resident in lands designated for a Jewish state but far beyond that too. Zionist settler groups equipped with European weapons and a prepared ethnic cleansing plan (Plan Dalet) colonized 79 per cent of the country. Before the War of 1948, Palestinians owned about 87.5 per cent of the total area of Palestine (26,323 km²), while Jews owned 6.6 per cent of the total lands, the remaining 5.9 per cent was “state land” as classified by the British Mandate. Before ending its colonial rule in Palestine, Britain contributed to the Nakba that wrecked the country and its inhabitants, “sometimes assist[ing] in other, more direct, ways in the ethnic cleansing, by providing the Jewish leadership with ownership deeds and other vital data.”

Quickly, the newly established state of Israel took steps to “legalize” the land seizures. Immediately following the Nakba, it razed over 530 Palestinian villages, towns, and

---

14 Ibid. 60
urban areas, uprooted millions of olive trees, and planted pine forests over their ruins. Discriminatory laws issued by the new state denied expelled Palestinians their right to return while welcoming Jews regardless of their nationality. The infamous Fallow Lands Regulations (1948) enabled the state to forcibly seize the lands of Palestinians expelled during the Nakba by declaring their lands “closed zones” and barring Palestinian landowners from reaching these lands, which were then deemed fallow. The state then “legally” seized the land and reallocated it to its agencies. Hundreds of thousands of donums (a donum equals 1000 square meters) of Palestinian land were transferred to Jewish settlers. The Absentee Property Law of 1948, based on the framework of the Fallow Lands Law, was used to secure the permanent reallocation of Palestinian lands to unrestricted Jewish-Israeli ownership. Explicitly colonial and discriminatory, this law authorized Israel to confiscate the land of “the present absentees,” those Palestinians who were not present in their normal place of residence between November 29, 1947 and September 1, 1948. The designation “present absentees” referred to internally displaced persons. Some of these “present absentees” were living in tents within view of their villages, but were denied the right to return, along with hundreds-of-thousands of others who fled to Gaza, the West Bank, and the surrounding Arab countries (two thirds of the Gaza population are Nakba refugees). This denial defied UN Resolution 194 concerning the Nakba refugees’ right of return issued in the same year (1948):

Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that

---

compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.\textsuperscript{20}

The village of Ein Hud in Haifa region in north Palestine, for example, was forcibly depopulated in 1948. Its surviving residents were prevented from returning to their homes although they were living in tents less than two kilometers away. In the 1950s, Romanian artist Marcel Janco turned the village into an “artists colony.” The village was renamed “Ein Hod” by the Israeli naming committee, a slight change in the name meant to claim indigineity for the new settlers. In June 2016, I visited Ein Hud. The first thing I noticed upon entering the village were the contradictions between a typically indigenous Palestinian village, with its arched stone houses, olive, fig, and pomegranate trees, and herbs, and the new “public art” of “Ein Hod,” located at the entrance to and throughout the village, such as nude metal sculptures disconnected from and foreign to the landscape and village architecture. The houses in the village had been transformed into artists’ studios and residences, the mosque turned into a bar and restaurant, and the horse stable converted into a gallery. The experience of walking though the village brought back the sense of terror that the residents must have felt when they were forced to leave their houses, and when survivors were denied their right of return. Some of the houses in this village belong to Palestinian refugees from the Abu Elheja family in Jenin’s refugee camp. While walking in the village, I encountered European and American artists-in-residence who were ignorant of the village’s tragedy, which raises ethical and moral questions about artmaking in colonized sites. When speaking

\textsuperscript{20} United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, December 11, 1948, see United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)
to a Palestinian artist from the Haifa region about the village, she explained how this “artist colony” welcomes artists from around the world but forbids Palestinian artists.

Similar to Ein Hud, the village of Lifta, located on the outskirts of Jerusalem, offers another concealed story of depopulated villages. I visited Lifta in May 2016 and in April 2017. It looks like a ghost town now, haunted by the lives that existed peacefully there before they were stricken by the catastrophe. It was home to around 3000 Palestinians.

Social life in Lifta revolved around a small shopping center, which included a club and two coffee houses. It attracted Jerusalemites as well, as no doubt it would today were it still there. One of the coffee houses was the target of the Haganah [Zionist
terror group] when it attacked on 28 December 1947. Armed with machine guns the Jews sprayed the coffee house, while members of the Stern Gang stopped a bus nearby and began firing into it randomly.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Part of the depopulated village of Lifta, May 2016}
\end{figure}

The survivors of Lifta, designated by Israel as “present absentee[s],” now live in Jerusalem, in the refugee camps of the West Bank, and in the global diaspora. Lifta’s exquisite, carefully designed villas and stone houses indicate the wealth the villagers enjoyed before its depopulation. Walking along its roads and among its empty houses was haunting; only the sound of silence could be heard. The indigenous trees and plants, which were spared uprooting, dominate the village: pomegranate, almond, fig, cactuses. As well, different herbs have grown and extended inside the houses, crawled into the walls, and reached the ceilings—new trees grow in the cracks of the village’s stone houses. Lifta

\textsuperscript{21} Pappe, \textit{The Ethnic Cleansing}, 142.
stands as a witness to the genocide that displaced its population, destroying their social unity, and dispersing them across the world. It also stands as a testament to the destruction of the Palestinian landscape; its surviving flora contrasts with the surrounding pine forests and highways of foreign settlers.

According to scholar Nur Masalha, Israel seized at least “five million acres of Palestinian land” in 1948.\textsuperscript{22} Between 1949 and the early 1990s, Israel issued more than thirty laws to further legalize and legitimize its seizure of privately-owned Palestinian lands.\textsuperscript{23} Unlike colonialism that targets natural resources, labour, and markets, “settler colonialism destroys to replace;” it eliminates the indigenous population in order to make room for settlers. Settler colonialism destroys indigenous culture and brings foreign settlers “to stay.”\textsuperscript{24} The destructive plan of Zionism is expressed in the manifesto/novel of its founding father, Theodor Herzl, who wrote, “If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct.”\textsuperscript{25} This “substitution” through uprooting humans and their agriculture is further expressed in the testimony of the deputy-mayor of West Jerusalem Meron Benvenisti (1971–1978): “As a member of a pioneering youth movement, I myself ‘made the desert bloom’ by uprooting the ancient olive trees of Al-Bassa to clear the ground for a banana grove, as required by the ‘planned farming’ principles of my kibbutz, Rosh Haniqra.”\textsuperscript{26} The Al-Bassa that Benvenisti refers to was a regional commercial centre and one of the most developed villages in the district of Akka, north Palestine. Covering some 20,000 donums of hills and plains, Al-Bassa was home to 3,000 Christian and Muslim

---

\textsuperscript{22} Nur Masalha, “The Palestinian Nakba,” 91
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid. 90.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid: 338.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
Palestinians. On May 14, 1948, the Zionist terror group Haganah attacked the town. Many of its residents took refuge in the local church, but an unknown number were shot and killed. The entire population of the village was forced by machine gun to leave their homes; many are still refugees in Lebanon to this day. Some survivors of Al-Bassa are currently living in Canada. Toronto resident, Samia Sbiet, who was a child when she was expelled from Al-Bassa, describes what happened:

The memories of Al-Bassa can never be forgotten, it is a beautiful land but the Zionists forced us out of it. They forced us to leave because every night they used to shoot at us. Every night. I had very young siblings, and my mother couldn't sleep at night because she feared for our lives. One night she said to my father: if one of our children is killed what will we have gained? I don't want olives, figs, and grapes. I want my children to stay alive. He said to her we would go for a month and come back. For this reason we left Al-Bassa and we didn't take anything with us. We thought we would come back from Lebanon after one month. Now we have been exiled from Palestine for fifty-five years. The Zionists really made us suffer. People wouldn't dare step outside of their homes because of the constant shooting. For this reason we fled to Lebanon.

---

28 Vicky Moufawad-Paul, Remembering the Dismembered Record, 20 min, 2015, V-Tape, Toronto.
Seizing land by legalizing a system of landownership is one of the most common features of settler colonialism. Various justifications, including claims of acquisition from the native population, divine promise, and others, frame the theft and crimes associated with it in a way that attracts new settlers, as Wolfe notes. “Whatever settlers may say—and they generally have a lot to say—the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element.”

---

The Second Nakba

Like other settler colonial systems, territorial expansion in Palestine had no limit. Israel’s second major genocidal episode took place when it invaded the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. This second Nakba was less devastating than the 1948 catastrophe. Despite the military horrors, including the use of airpower, the majority of West Bank and Gaza residents remained in their homeland. As my father announced when the residents of our town wanted to flee: “we are not leaving, if we have to die, let us die in our homeland.” Nonetheless, the 1967 invasion resulted in the displacement of an additional 300,000 Palestinians and a new phase of land seizing and transfer to the Israeli state and Jewish National Fund. Israel expropriated an additional 849,000 donums (849 km²), over half of which was owned by Palestinians displaced by the invasion, thus affirming Israel’s settler colonialism as a “structural genocide” not a one time “event.” Patrick Wolfe explains:

Despite Zionism’s chronic addiction to territorial expansion, Israel’s borders do not preclude the option of removal (in this connection, it is hardly surprising that a nation that has driven so many of its original inhabitants into the sand should express an abiding fear of itself being driven into the sea). As the logic of elimination has taken on a variety of forms in other settler-colonial situations, so, in Israel, the continuing tendency to Palestinian expulsion has not been limited to the unelaborated exercise of force.³⁰

One of the most violent acts of the 1967 occupation was the depopulation and destruction of the three West Bank villages of Imwas, Yalu, and Beit Nuba. In June 1967,

Israel’s occupation forces attacked the three villages, forced their 10,000 residents to leave their homes, and demolished the buildings over the heads of sixteen elderly people who couldn’t leave. The razed villages and their adjacent lands were then seized by the state of Israel and the Jewish National Fund of Canada (a charitable Canadian organization), thus revealing the extent of the Zionist settler-colonial project and the complicity of Western states in the enterprise. On the destroyed and confiscated site a recreational park called “Canada Park” was established by the Canadian charitable organization and financed by Canadians. The names and titles of ‘donors’ are inscribed on the stones of the destroyed houses of the village, including names of politicians from across the country. The residents of the villages and their descendants remain refugees to this day, scattered throughout many refugee camps, but mainly the Baqaa camp in Jordan.31

The site of the three destroyed villages, Imwas, Yalu, and Beit Nuba, 2009

The establishment of “Canada Park” over the ruins of Palestinian homes in the West Bank violates international law including UN resolutions demanding Israel’s withdrawal form the West Bank and Gaza. “Canada Park” not only reveals the complicity of Canada in the settler colonial project in Palestine but also discloses a characteristic of settler colonialism both in Canada and in Palestine: the dispossession of indigenous populations as the sovereign state claims ownership of the land while casting the original owners as mere users or occupants.

Anishinaabe Indigenous scholar and curator Wanda Nanibush articulates this colonial claim to indigenous land when she explains, “the land I own as an Anishinaabe indigenous is held in ‘trust’ by the Canadian government, which makes me a refugee in my own homeland.” In Canada, indigenous people retain rights to just 2 per cent of their land, while in Palestine the Palestinians are currently confined to just 13 per cent of their land, despite the fact that the Palestinian Christian and Muslim population is almost equal in number to the Jewish population. In a visit to Palestine, Nanibush empathized with the Palestinian experience as she exclaimed in her presentation to the Art and Resistance Conference in Bethlehem: “What I am witnessing in Palestine is not about religion, but rather it is about land.” Nanibush observed the conditions in the country the moment she entered along a segregated road designated only for Israelis, arriving in the ghetto of Bethlehem, where the population is concentrated into the ancient city and three crowded refugee camps, all surrounded by concrete walls, watchtowers, and Jewish colonies.

---


33 The Art and Resistance Conference, Dar Al-Kalima University of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem, May 2016.

The expulsion of the Palestinian population, the seizure of their land, and the concentration of survivors into open-air prisons reflect four Zionist settler-colonial genocidal tendencies that echo European settler colonial genocides elsewhere. The first genocidal tendency is evident in the Zionist denial of the existence of the Palestinians. Zionism’s political program represents Palestine as a “land without people for people without land,” and “a desert that awaits settlers to bloom.” This narrative, which is similar to the European notion of the Americas as “virgin,” uninhabited land, dominated Western public discourse for decades before it collapsed as a result of Palestinian persistence and defiance. A second genocidal tendency is evident in episodes of invasion and land seizure, depopulation, and the expulsion of indigenous Palestinians in the 1940s, 1960s, 1980s, and 2000s, and in the current, less visible displacement of communities and the demolishing of thousands of homes. A third tendency of the Zionist settlers is to self-proclaim sovereign “dominion” over and therefore entitlement to the land. “The distinction between dominion and occupancy illuminates the settler-colonial project’s reliance on the elimination of native societies,” writes Patrick Wolfe. Similar to European settlers of the Americas who perceive Indigenous people as occupants entitled only to use the land for hunting and gathering, Zionist settlers of Palestine view the Palestinians as occupants of a Biblical land granted to the Jews by the divine. Zionism understands history as having stood still for over two thousand years, denying processes of human interaction, migration, and religious conversion. The fourth tendency of settler colonialism is to “destroy to replace,” uproot to replant, as manifested in

35 Zionism is a colonial, racist ideology. Its political program, which arose in the late 19th century in Europe, advocates the establishment of a national homeland of the Jewish people in Palestine. Implementing Zionism’s political program was/is carried out with sponsorship and military support of Western powers. For further readings on Zionism and colonialism see Ilan Pappe, “Zionism as colonialism: A comparative view of diluted colonialism in Asia and Africa,” South Atlantic Quarterly, 107. 4 (2008), 611-633.
37 Ibid., 391.
the displacement of Palestinians by foreign settlers, uprooting their indigenous trees, and replanting European forests over their ruins.

Under these conditions, the Palestinians who survived the Nakbas have continued their resistance and sumud (steadfastness) despite unending attempts at their annihilation, including attempts to impose a (collaborative) leadership to counter the Palestinian Liberation Organization. For example, in 1976 Israel attempted to enforce a leadership system called “villages committees.”\textsuperscript{38} In 1987 the first Intifada erupted—the Stone Intifada—during which the entire Palestinian population, old and young, men and women, rural and urban, refugees and non-refugees, rich and poor, united to take to the streets equipped with stones. That uprising paralyzed the heavily armed Israeli occupation forces and their artillery. The Stone Intifada lasted six years and ended in 1993 with the Oslo Accord between the Palestinian Liberation Organization leadership and Israel, and established the Palestinian Authority (PA). Israel withdrew its forces from populated areas and in 2005 dismantled colonies in Gaza and withdrew its forces from the crowded Strip to the borders, in effect transforming Gaza into an open-air prison controlled from the sea, air, and land. As a result of the Oslo agreement, the financial cost of the occupation was transferred onto the occupied population, releasing the state of Israel from its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Western donors states instead covered the occupation expenses through the PA. As a condition for financial assistance, the PA had to suppress the Palestinian resistance and guarantee Israel’s security through what is called “security coordination.” The grip of the colonizers became tighter as Palestinian living conditions deteriorated, and a new elite of rich Palestinian capitalists associated with the PA emerged

\textsuperscript{38} The Villages Linkages or Committees consisted of Palestinian figures tied to the Jordanian regime, appointed by the occupation authorizes, such as Mustafa Dodeen from Al Khalil district. This appointed leadership was rejected and the whole Israeli attempt to impose it failed.
and developed intersecting interests with the colonizers. These conditions led to the eruption of the second Intifada in 2000 and Israel’s invasion of the West Bank, which resulted in bloody massacres in the Jenin refugee camp and the old city of Nablus in 2001, as well as the siege of the PLO chairman Yasser Arafat in his headquarter in Ramallah, and the brutal siege of the Nativity church in Bethlehem.

The Oslo Accord had a disastrous effect on Palestinians. It fragmented the West Bank into three zones, A, B, and C. Area A includes the densely populated areas under the Palestinian Authority. Area B is constituted out of the residential and commercial districts of the West Bank supposedly under shared Israeli and PA administration. And Area C is under complete Israeli control. Area C is increasingly off-limits to Palestinians, who need permits from Israel to access their farms, build new structures, redevelop existing ones, or even install solar systems. Again these permits are rarely issued. While seizing land and concentrating Palestinian populations within increasingly diminishing space, Israel continues to build and expand Jewish-only settlements. According to various sources, the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank has reached over 700,000, and the number of settlements has increased to 247 as of May 2015. 39

The severe effect of settlement activities on Palestinians and their land prompted the UN Security Council to adopt resolution 2334 (2016), which “Reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law

and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.”

Manifestation of Israel’s Settler-Colonial Genocide: Seizing the Cremisan Valley in Bethlehem Region

[T]he tree is the source of the problem. It’s not just an incidental thing like [it is] in the Bible. Here, the tree is not only a symbol of the Arab’s occupation of the land, but it is also the central means through which they carry out this occupation. […] It’s not like the tree is the enemy’s property, in which case the Bible tells you not to uproot it because it has nothing to do with the fight. Here it has everything to do with it. The tree is the enemy soldier. Like children, their trees look so naïve, as if they can’t harm anyone. But like [their] children, several years later they turn into a ticking bomb.41

An interview with the Zionist settler chief inspector David Kishik, 2006

The olive tree as a source of livelihood and signifier of the rootedness and perseverance of the Palestinians in their homeland was targeted by the colonial Zionist-European project in Palestine from the very beginning. Uprooting trees served (and continues to serve) the mandate of the Jewish state and Jewish National Fund and their representation of Palestine as uninhabited desert. During the Nakba, millions of olive trees were wiped out across the

country, as Meron Benvenisti described above. The uprooting of olive trees has intensified since the 1967 second Nakba. The Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ) estimates that 2.5 million trees have been uprooted since 1967, one third of which were olive trees and the remaining consisting of other types of fruit trees, including around 34,000 palm trees.\footnote{The Palestinian Ministry of National Economy in Cooperation with the Applied Research Institute–Jerusalem (ARIJ), “The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” 31, http://www.mne.gov.ps/pdf/EconomiccostsofoccupationforPalestine.pdf.} This slaughter of olive trees intensified between 2007 and 2011 when attacks by settlers increased 315 per cent. \footnote{The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, MIFTAH, “Olive Trees, More than Just a Tree in Palestine,” July 13, 2017, http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=25491&CategoryId=4.} Between 2010 and 2015, settlers vandalized over 50,000 olive trees and saplings.\footnote{Ibid.} According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in January 2015 settlers “uprooted or vandalized around 5,600 trees across the West Bank.”\footnote{United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “West Bank: Largest Number of trees Recorded Vandalized by Israeli settlers in a Single Incident since 2005,” January 31, 2015, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-largest-number-trees-recorded-vandalized-israeli-settlers-single-incident-2005.} This number constituted “60 per cent of all trees uprooted or vandalized in the whole of 2014.”\footnote{Ibid.} Settlers from illegal settlements and outposts in the West Bank torch trees, break or cut down the branches of old trees, uproot newly planted trees, and “poison the trees by drilling their trunks.”\footnote{Yesh Din, Data sheet, October 2015, http://files.yesh-din.org/userfiles/Datasheet_English_Oct%202015.pdf.} The Israeli legal system is complicit in this violence. Out of “260 complaints regarding vandalism of Palestinian-owned trees filed in the past ten years, only six indictments have been served, with a zero conviction rate.”\footnote{Ibid.} In Gaza, the security “buffer-zone” that extends 600 meters beyond the 1967 Green Line encompasses up to 30 per cent of agricultural land. UNOCHA figures indicate that 7,300 donums of land with olive trees
located along the Israeli wall at the borders with Gaza have been destroyed during Israeli military operations.\(^49\)

Bethlehem governorate is located in the central West Bank about 10 km south of Jerusalem. It consists of three historic cities, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahour, another nine municipalities, three Nakba refugee camps (Dheisheh, Aida, and Al Azzeh), and 38 rural and urban towns and villages. The total population of Bethlehem governorate in 2016 according to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics was 221,000. It covers an area of 660 km\(^2\), of which Israel controls 87 per cent. Bethlehem region faced Israeli colonization immediately after the 1967 occupation when the notorious settlement of Gosh Azion was established only

four months after the invasion, and since then settler colonial encroachment has not stopped.

On August 17, 2015, I witnessed the lynching of olive trees in Bethlehem region. That day the residents of the predominantly Christian town of Beit Jala in the district of Bethlehem, home to 15,000 people, woke up to the sound of bulldozers uprooting ancient olive trees in their last remaining agricultural and recreational land—the Cremisan Valley. Soldiers with armed vehicles and bulldozers began marking and numbering the trees, cutting branches (ironically, the olive branch is a symbol of peace), and bulldozing trunks. The purpose was to create a buffer zone and construct a section of the Apartheid Wall. The Valley has been a target of annexation for many years. Blueprints for Israel's Apartheid Wall show the Cremisan Valley on the Israeli side. The targeted land, which constitutes 3000 donums, is privately owned by 58 Palestinian families from Beit Jala as well as by the Salesian Sisters' Convent and School and the Salesian Monastery and Cellars. These landowners have challenged Israel’s plan to confiscate their land in the Israeli high court. The court proceedings reveal the actual aim of the confiscation—to connect the Gilo colony, built on over 2,700 donums of Bethlehem land, with the Har Gilo colony, also built illegally in 1968 on confiscated land.

A few months earlier, in April 2015, the Israeli high court ordered the state to reroute the Wall to ensure the “connectivity” of Bethlehem’s community with the convent and monastery.\(^{50}\) Despite the ruling, state bulldozers invaded and began destroying the site and

---

\(^{50}\) According to the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), since June 1967 the Israeli occupation authorities have expropriated some 79 per cent of West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) territory. PASSIA, “Report on Land Confiscation,” http://www.passia.org/media/filer_public/7c/00/7c005e51-840d-4eaf-a910-23e5d8c01793/settlements-wall.pdf

\(^{50}\) Interview with Issa Alshatleh, August 20, 2015.
uprooting tens of ancient olive trees. While Israeli bulldozers, soldiers armed with machine guns, teargas grenades, and sound bombs, and military vehicles equipped with teargas launchers, stood on one side, on the other stood enraged protesters, including the landowners, clergymen, and community leaders. First, the settlers cut off branches, then, after tying the trunks to a bulldozer, they uprooted the trees.

Witnessing the lynching of ancient olive trees was painful and shocking. Centuries-old trees are being brutally attacked with settler colonial military machinery for the purpose of territorial expansion and capitalist greed. Extermination of the colonized people is extending here in front of my eyes into the slaughter of olive trees that sustain human life itself. My use of the terms ‘lynching’ and ‘slaughter’ to describe the uprooting of Palestinian olive trees is deliberate in order to suggest that genocidal acts also include other living things. My
experience implies rethinking our perception of the rights of nature, including of fruit trees, and the need to create agency for these living monuments.

I was torn apart both by the desperation of the landowners, who were prevented from protecting their trees by armed soldiers, and the helplessness of the majestic trees themselves. The Nakbas had been brought into the present. Did these foreign, armed settlers understand that killing a Palestinian olive tree is tantamount to cultural genocide? As I watched the destruction of the land and massacre of the olive trees I spoke with some of the landowners.

Protesters tearing down a gate installed by the occupying forces to designate their land as a “closed zone”.

The slaughter of these trees “began without warning or notification,” said landowner Issa Alshatleh:
Our neighbours notified us early this morning that Israeli bulldozers are uprooting our olive trees. We were outraged and rushed to the land but were denied access to it. Israeli soldiers told us that our land has been declared a ‘closed zone.’ This land is a source of livelihood for my family and my brothers’ families; they are depriving our six families of the olive trees our ancestors have planted. It is criminal.\textsuperscript{51}

Another elderly protester leaning on his cane on the side of the road, avoiding teargas that could have killed him as he suffers from asthma, helplessly watched the uprooting of his olive trees. He exclaimed, “I am told by the Israeli police to get a permit from their civil administration to enter my own olive grove.” He pointed to his land across the street.

\textsuperscript{56} Interview with Issa Alshatleh, August 20, 2015.
After the destruction began in the Cremisan Valley on August 17, the landowners in Beit Jala appealed to the occupation high court for a second time. In January 2016, the court rejected the landowners appeal and ruled for the continued building of the Apartheid Wall on their land. The court’s ruling states, “a buffer zone is needed to protect Israel’s citizens.” In this case, the “buffer zone” consists of a 30 to 100-metre-wide trench along an eight-meter-high concrete Wall. Landowners were promised two openings in the Wall, a gate for people from the school and monastery to access their land, and a second one for farmers to access their olive and fruit orchards.

Olive trees branches cut and trashed just before the harvest season, Beit Jala, September 2015

---

The decision of the Israeli high court, an institution that is part of the settler-colonial system, which refers to settlers living in colonies built on confiscated West Bank land as “Israel’s citizens,” violates international law on many levels, including the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which states: “an occupier may not forcibly deport protected persons, or deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into occupied territory” (Art. 49). It also violates the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling of July 2004 that affirmed that the Wall “is contrary to international law,” and, “Israel accordingly has the obligation to cease forthwith the works of construction of the Wall being built by it in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem.” 53

By confiscating 3000 donums of the Cremisan Valley, mostly planted with olive and fruit trees, Israel not only deprives the residents of Bethlehem of their farmland, livelihood, and last remaining recreational site, but also entirely isolates Bethlehem from its sister city, Jerusalem. The section of the Wall that passes through the Valley, completed in 2017, makes landowners foreigners to their own farms. They need “permits” from the state of Israel to access their land through military gates guarded by soldiers who control when they open and close. They also need a permit to visit relatives on the other side of the Wall. Palestinians throughout the West Bank whose land between the Wall and the 1967 Green Line has been annexed can only approach those lands through gates. Currently, “there are 85 agricultural gates along the length of the completed [Wall]. Of these, only nine open daily and the majority (63) only open for few weeks during the annual olive harvest.” 54 Not unlike during the siege of Gaza, some West Bank communities, like the city of Qalqilya, are entirely walled and gated, and their residents depend on the occupying authority’s permits to exit or

54 Ibid.
enter their city or reach their farms. Permits are not easy to obtain. According to UN sources, 42 per cent of applications for permits to access olive groves behind the Wall were denied in 2011 and 39 per cent in 2010.

A gate built through the Apartheid Wall

If a family member is politically active and/or has been detained during a protest, for example, everyone in that family might be denied permits. This separation of people from their land, from each other, and from their religious places in Jerusalem under a system of permits “seeks to break its victims not simply by shooting and killing them but by grinding them down with mundane details—permits, rules, quotas, rations, curfews, and so on—for

---

this is an occupation that turns everyday existence into (at best) little more than a nightmare of mundane details.”

If these acts of shattering communities, murdering tens-of-thousands, dispersing millions into refugee camps, confining survivors to isolated zones under military rule, concentrating millions in open-air prisons, and seizing land and uprooting hundreds-of-thousands of olive and fruit trees do not constitute genocide, then what is genocide? The Polish thinker Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term "genocide" in 1944, writes, “genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group: the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization of the area by the oppressor’s own nationals.” This definition specifies genocide as the killing of a national group’s individual members (physical genocide) or undermining a group’s way of life (cultural genocide). It thus encompasses not only European genocides—of the Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and disabled—but also the structural and ongoing dispossession and elimination of indigenous Americans and Australians, and of course Palestinians. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was created in 1948 after the horror of WWII to prevent genocide and to hold accountable those who commit acts “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, including: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical death.”

---

destruction in whole or in part; and (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group."⁵⁹

Although not every genocide involves settler-colonialism (the Holocaust and Rwandan genocides, for example), the genocidal tendency of settler colonialism is evident in this definition.⁶⁰ This tendency was and remains manifest in Palestine through the Zionist uprooting of Palestinians and the continued destruction of their lives, which includes various old and new settler colonial means of elimination, including those similar to European empire-building acts, and also South Africa’s ghettoization and starvation of the black population. This combination of different practices reflects what Wolfe calls the unevenness of genocidal tendencies. “Even in sites of wholesale expropriation such as Australia or North America, settler colonialism’s genocidal outcomes have not manifested evenly across time and space.”⁶¹ But in Palestine as Martin Shaw explains, genocide and its relation to colonialism are “essential considerations in any discussion of the Israel-Palestine case.”⁶² Examining the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and its applicability to Israel’s acts, including the execution of Palestinians, causing serious bodily and mental harm to hundreds-of-thousands of displaced Palestinians, confinement of millions between walled zones and prisons, torture of hundreds-of-thousands of prisoners, inflicting severe conditions of life by, for example, calculating the number of calories of food that Palestinians under siege in Gaza are allowed, among other practices, reveals the genocidal character of Israel’s settler colonialism. These practices are sometimes visible and immense, such as in the Nakbas, but at other times are all but invisible, such as the current

⁶¹ Ibid., 387.
displacement of the residents of Silwan neighbourhood in Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and the Negev region. Machine guns, which Lemkin refers to as a last resort, were and are used by Zionists as a first resort against Palestinian civilians who have no army or military arsenal. The massacres that preceded and succeeded 1948 in Deir Yassin, Kafr Qasim, Qibia, Tantura, Sabra and Shatilla, Jenin, Gaza, and tens of other places are genocidal acts. Unlike a onetime atrocity, these genocidal acts have been committed incrementally over the past seventy years to devastating effect on generations of Palestinians colonized, entrapped, or scattered in refugees camps and diaspora across the world.

In this chapter I presented a visual, historical, and analytical account of the Israeli settler-colonial encroachment into Palestine. Within a settler-colonial theoretical framework, through engaging with studies of genocide, and based on my experience, I provided a participant-based analysis and visual documentation of Israel's colonization and destruction of lives, material, culture, and land.
CHAPTER TWO: Choreographies of Resistance

Choreography as a Critical “Thinking Tool”

Choreography is commonly associated with composing or arranging bodily movement and the positions of dancers on a stage, but it is really about bodies (corporeally) inhabiting space. Thus, choreography “offers a non-conventional thinking tool about bodies, places, spaces as well as of matter and discourses,”¹ and figures in an emerging interest in bodily movement and expanding research on refugees, forced migration and displacement, mobile workers, and social dissent and civil protests. “Choreographic revision”² in fields such as historiography, visual arts, and psychoanalysis, is a rethinking of the body and its affects and its effects in relation to others. This focus on choreography as a critical, historical, socio-political, and cultural tool marks a departure from treatments of the body as a “mute and abstract concept.”³ It also departs from the division between vulnerability and resistance; in fact, it emphasizes Judith Butler’s assertion of the connection between vulnerability and resistance.⁴ As a thinking device, choreography offers new perspectives for understanding bodies struggling against objectification by colonizers, capitalists, and oppressors, who desire to expand their power, territories, military arsenals, wealth, and/or profits.

Through its focus on the body being with and relating to others, choreography is concerned with bodily movements and relations. As a critical tool, then, it offers an

³ Ibid, x.
understanding of resistance to bodily subjectification and objectification, whether it is the body of the woman, the colonized, the slave, worker, prisoner, displaced person, or refugee, or even the social body as a whole. Understanding human motion, senses, and emotions as bodily semiotics can free rigid Eurocentric thought about society formation, power relations, histories, and cultures. Choreographer and scholar Susan Foster writes:

Bodies...develop choreographies of signs through which they discourse: they run (or lurch, or bound, or feint, or meander...) from premise to conclusion; they turn (or pivot, or twist...) through the process of reasoning; they confer with (or rub up against, or bump into...) one another in narrating their own physical fate.\(^5\)

Therefore, our being as social creatures is dictated by our relations with, effects on, and is affected by each other or by interdependency, as Judith Butler asserts.\(^6\) Choreographies of resistance, unlike inquiries into bodily subjection and disciplining that deal with bodies as statistics or data, are concerned with the actual experiences of movement of colonized, struggling, surviving, and enduring bodies. They are concerned with what Frantz Fanon describes as people’s movement forward to decolonization—“to put an end to the static period begun by colonization, and to make history.”\(^7\) They are concerned with bodies facing enclosure, incarceration and torture, execution, visible and invisible means of control, dispossession, and elimination.

This chapter concerns the strategies colonized Palestinian bodies adopt in their effort to survive and decolonize. It deals with Palestinian bodies as sites of oppression as well as

\(^5\) Ibid., x.
\(^7\) Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 68.
sites of resistance. It examines the Palestinian sumud and various creative means of resistance as they transpire through past and present Intifadas (uprisings) within the context of the global struggle for social justice. It establishes the context for the exhibition, Choreographies of Resistance, elucidating the concepts that underline the making and displaying of its various works. Bodily endurance against weaponry and systems of oppression is central to the discussion and the artworks. Both the artworks and the arguments that intersect with them are based on my grounded experience in colonized Palestine during field research I conducted in the West Bank in 2015–2016.

Choreographies of Resistance and Settler Colonialism

The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called in question if the Native decides to put an end to the history of colonization—the history of pillage—and to bring into existence the history of the nation—the history of decolonization.

Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, 50

Resistance is a natural response to oppression. Resistance against colonial powers takes various forms including armed struggle, protests and rallies, hunger strikes, civil disobedience, boycotts, and sumud (steadfastness). Crowd protests are one of the most visible forms of resistance and social dissent. Crowd “is a relational category that only takes on existence in opposition to those who stand counter-posed to it.”⁸ Protests have the potential to disrupt and “taunt” controlling powers, to reclaim state-dominated spaces, and to

---

impose new policies.⁹ Protests demonstrate the potential of crowd power to overturn scripted mechanisms of control, fragmentation, and the individuation of society’s members. In a protest site where crowds congregate, “new collective identities are shaped: drawing them into visibility is a crucial political task.”¹⁰ As unscripted choreographies, protests claim public space and collectively challenge power. Protesting bodies overturn silence, passivity, and submission, imposing change by necessity.

In a colonized country, however, protests are different as settler colonial power targets the existence of the colonized people in order to claim their place. Unlike class struggle, in which human life is the engine that keeps the exploitative capitalist system running, obliterating life is the aim of settler colonial power. In forms of resistance within capitalist sovereign states “there is a sense in which rulers and crowd needed each other, watched each other, performed theatre and counter theatre to each other’s auditorium, moderated each other’s political behaviour.”¹¹ But in contemporary settler colonial contexts the equation between colonized and colonizer differs. While colonized people aspire to liberty and freedom, the colonizer aims at destroying and replacing the colonized people, seizing their land, claiming their properties and culture, and making them disappear through violent means, including genocide. Colonial violence is absolute and boundless; it is not subject to legal and institutional rules.¹² In a contemporary settler colonial setting, “the disciplinary, the biopolitical, and the necropolitical work hand in hand.”¹³ A civil legal system that holds armed colonizers accountable for their actions—whether soldiers in uniform or armed settlers—is absent. The colonial system that rules colonized people is a military system that denies not

---

⁹ ibid., 457.
¹³ Ibid., 27.
only a person’s right to express opposition but also, in many cases, the right to life—the existence of the colonized is targeted.

In Palestine, where Zionist settler colonialism is active, “freedom is given to local military commanders to use their discretion as to when and whom to shoot…. Invisible killing is added to outright executions.” Any acts of defiance including protests are criminalized, termed rebellious, violent acts and security threats by the colonizing power. Participating in or organizing a protest can result in execution, imprisonment, and torture, or being labeled and added to targeted “wanted lists” or “security lists.” While “wanted lists” include those targeted for execution by snipers, assassination mobs, or armed drones, “security lists” are closely connected to the permit system that governs Palestinians’ mobility within their own space and beyond, and regulates their access to life essentials such as jobs, health centres, schools, visiting relatives in another city, building or renovating homes in Jerusalem and what is called Area C, or accessing their farms behind the Israeli Apartheid Wall. Protesting, especially stone throwing in youth protests, is the most common conviction in Israel’s colonial legal system. Fines are levied to further inflict suffering on the families of protesters. Protests occur across the colonized country, mainly where military occupation forces and settlers are present and violently engaged in oppressive acts such as seizing land, night raids, demolishing homes, or uprooting olive trees. They also occur around hundreds of checkpoints, by the Apartheid Wall gates, often called “gates of hell,” by watchtowers, and

14 Ibid., 30.
15 Area C covers almost 60 per cent of the West Bank and is under complete administrative, military, and judicial Israeli control. It was designated as such in the peace process between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel in 1993.
inside refugee camps when military forces invade. In summary, protests erupt where colonial aggression visibly operates.

Tactics and forms of resistance are determined to a large degree by Israel's fragmentation of Palestinian land and society into separately confined and administered units controlled by different sets of Israeli administrative and legal rules. Over the past seventy years, the Zionist Israeli project has fragmented and segregated the Palestinian social body, which before 1948 was integrated and inclusive of Muslims, Christians, and Jews who lived side-by-side in peace, into two faith-based groups: Christians and Muslim in an increasingly diminishing space; and Jewish-Israelis into a space expanding through theft and dispossession. In an effort to separate Palestinians from each other and from the land they inhabit, the Zionist project has shattered the Palestinian social body into five parts: East Jerusalem, north and south West Bank, Gaza, refugees, and Nakba survivors who defied uprooting in 1948, often called 48 Palestinians. Israel’s “legal system” rules these five groups and imposes certain definitions on each: Jerusalem residents mainly have “residency” status rather than citizenship, and constantly suffer visible and invisible forms of ethnic cleaning; the north and south West Bank populations are cut from each other, from Jerusalem and Gaza, and from the outside world, and are controlled directly by military legal, court, and permit systems that administer everyday life; Gaza is a concentration camp controlled from the air, sea, and land; refugees who are scattered in 39 refugee camps across the colonized land and the surrounding Arab countries, (now constitute over 7million) are considered non-citizens and denied their right of return to their homes and properties; 1948 Palestinians have Israeli citizenship, but are discriminated against through scripted and unscripted laws and
practices that govern everything from whom they marry to where they live.\textsuperscript{17} Zionist, settler colonial systems of land seizure and population control in the West Bank and Gaza have incrementally resulted in the concentration of Palestinian populations in isolated urban centres taking up minimal land. This entrapment maximizes colonial control over Palestinians’ mobility, limits their economic opportunities, increases poverty, and results in reduced responsibility for the colonizing power towards the colonized population by evading international laws, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. Darryl Li draws attention to Israel’s implementation of the Gaza enclosure in the West Bank through creating several separate areas isolated from each other.\textsuperscript{18}

Before fragmentation and ghettoizing, disarming the Palestinian population was one of the first steps the Zionists implemented after colonizing Palestine and establishing the state of Israel, stripping the population of any means of self-defence. Imposing lengthy curfews on towns and villages, conducting house-to-house searches, and recruiting informers to gather information, were the primary means of confiscating arms, regardless of how primitive they were. Possession of arms remains forbidden and criminalized under Israeli law for Palestinians, but not for Israeli-Jews. Any Israeli-Jew can possess arms. In the West Bank, for example, not only do heavily armed occupation forces manifest this “right to possess arms” but also settlers, not in uniform, terrorize Palestinians with rifles and guns (a short walk in downtown Jerusalem or Hebron reveals this terror). Military training camps recently opened for tourists from around the world to learn how to fire on dummies representing


Palestinians. While Israel strips Palestinians of any means of self-defence, Western powers supply Israel with unlimited weapons, including submarines and jet fighters. With its “sovereign” power over colonized land and the limitless support of western powers, Israel has developed an arms industry that is regarded as one of the most powerful in the world. The new death and surveillance technologies it invents proliferate across the world’s arms market.

Under the colonial conditions that continue to mark Palestinian life, *sumud* and resistance become necessities for survival, despite the varying degrees of suffering in each of the Palestinian social body parts. Forms of resistance, which never ceases, have evolved over the years. Countrywide popular revolutions and civil disobedience against British colonialism in the 1920s and 1930s transformed under Zionist colonial power into armed and peaceful forms of resistance. In refugee camps, particularly in surrounding Arab countries where a margin of freedom was possible, armed, political, and social struggle and community building were central for uprooted and expelled Palestinians. The establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1960s, and the universal recognition of it as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people was a major achievement. In the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza (before Israeli forces withdrew from its centre to its borders in 2015), popular uprisings continue to be the most common form of resistance. In Israel, Palestinians who constitute almost 25 per cent of the population but experience “civil” forms of repression have adopted creative means of resistance to cope with the direct effects of the Nakba, and to maintain their culture and identity. Cultural resistance

---


20 See Yotam Feldman’s documentary film, *The Lab* (2013), which reveals the scope of Israel’s arms industries and the use of Palestine as a lab for testing new weapons before release to the global arms market.
in this part of Palestinian society is inspiring: through creative cultural production in literature, poetry, history, art, and film their *sumud* and survival flourish. Resistance to settler colonialism inherently aims at liberty, decolonization, and the restoration of rights. There are echoes of this across the world, whereby indigenous people refuse to be obliterated, and their persistence in maintaining their humanity and relationships to their land is arguably the most moral and actual civil and humanistic form of resistance. The fact that Euro-Zionist colonization of Palestine occurred in the twentieth century, a time when settler colonialism was fading away and no longer considered “normal” elsewhere, and a universal human rights framework and laws of regulating wars were created after the Second World War, makes the Palestinian cause distinct. Within this context of settler colonial military violence, which defies international law, colonized bodies are often in a constant state of inventing strategies of mobility, connectivity, and self-defence. Under these conditions and limitations, political action evolves visibly and invisibly. Protests and public assemblies define the most visible forms of defiance in the daily lives of Palestinians. By targeting Palestinian public spaces, the colonial power not only attempts to deprive Palestinian bodies of the infrastructure of assembly but also draws a clear racial line between Jews and non-Jews, privileging the first at the expense of the second while imposing military law on one group and civil law on the other.

Palestinian resistance began soon after the British colonization of Palestine and its declaration of support for the Zionist project in 1917 and continues a century later. The Palestinian scholar Fayes Sayegh recounts the early history of Palestinian resilience:

Declarations of opposition, however important as an expression of national will, were not the only means of resistance to which the people of Palestine had
Palestinian Arabs were engaged in a life-and-death battle with the British garrison as well as with the Zionist colonists. Uprisings in 1921, 1929, and 1933, and by a country-wide rebellion in 1936, which was renewed in 1937 and lasted until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. At the height of the famous rebellion of 1936, the people of Palestine launched a devastating civil disobedience movement, coupled with a countrywide strike which lasted for 174 days (perhaps the longest national strike in history).  

Sayegh’s historiography of Palestinian resistance is an assertion of the “truth,” which is hidden in the past “thing, of what was formerly seen, heard, experienced, learned,” as Paul Ricoeur proclaims. Uprisings, civil disobedience, boycotts, and hunger strikes continue as means of resistance into the present day. The best known manifestations of popular resistance are the three major uprisings that have occurred since the invasion and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967: the first Intifada known as the “Stone Intifada” (1987–1993), the Al Aqsa Intifada (2000–2006), which followed former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem; and the current ongoing Intifada (2015–). Alongside these major uprisings, and since 2006, protests have become regular occurrences in many locations. For example, in the West Bank villages of Bil’in, Ni’lin, Nabi Saleh, and Kufr Qadoum, protests are organized weekly after the colonial state declared portions of the land of these villages “closed zones” for the purpose of building Jewish colonies and the Apartheid Wall. Declaring areas “closed zones” has been a common

---


Israeli means of annexing Palestinian land and properties since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.²³

The following example from my hometown of Jenin illuminates the link between dispossession, displacement, urban military campaigns, and resistance. The Jenin refugee camp offers an example of the many layers of settler colonial oppression over the past decades, which include the targeting of civilian urban centres. The homes and properties of the refugees in Jenin’s camp were first seized by the Jewish state during the Nakba. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) established the camp in 1953. Then in 1967 with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Jenin’s camp, like the other refugee camps were colonized for the second time, but this time Palestinians defied displacement. The camps in fact became centres for resisting the occupation. In April 2002 during the first Intifada—the Stone Revolution—the camp was attacked by Israeli ground and air forces for thirteen days resulting in mass killing and the devastation of property.²⁴ While the occupation forces denied journalists and human rights organizations access to the camp, Israel’s bulldozers “levelled over four hundred houses irrespective of whether there were people inside, in the centre of the camp and severely damaged hundreds of other houses.”²⁵ During the invasion at least 500 Palestinians were killed, “the smell of death filled the city and the camp for days,” my sister Shorouq, who resides in Jenin, testified.

²³ See Chapter One
²⁴ The Stone Intifada erupted in 1987 across Palestine, where the entire population took to the streets, unarmed, to confront armed Israeli forces with stones. It continued until 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel, which established the Palestinian Authority.
The United Nations established a fact-finding mission but was denied entry to the country by Israel, raising more questions about the extent of the crimes committed in the camp.\footnote{26}

The documentary *Jenin-Jenin* (2002) by Palestinian filmmaker Mohammad Bakri reveals the devastation that the refugees and their camp endured during Israel’s invasion and siege. After the “military operation” ended, the UNRWA stepped in to rebuild the camp. Palestinian scholar Linda Tabar, who carried out field research in the camp, describes how negotiations between the UNRWA and representatives of the surviving and displaced refugees concerning the agency’s reconstruction plan lasted six months. The UNRWA’s proposed plan facilitated occupation forces access to and control over the camp, which was a matter of great concern to the refugees. During the negotiations an Israeli sniper assassinated the project manager, Ian Hook, on November 22, 2002.\footnote{27} While refugees demanded the preservation of the old structure of the camp, UNRWA, insisted on “modernizing” it. The camp’s narrow roads had constituted an obstacle to the armoured vehicles of invading occupation forces. After the lengthy negotiations the UNRWA’s “modern” proposal was implemented despite the refugees’ rejection, allowing for wider roads that enable Israeli vehicles to enter the camp freely. As one of the camp’s residents whose house was demolished during the invasion testified: “Now the safety is afforded for the army…each six houses are surrounded by roads. The army jeeps surround the houses from all sides.”\footnote{28}

Thus, the UN’s new architectural plan allows for suffocation and control.

Other methods of colonial destruction and oppression operate similarly. Scholar Laleh Khalili draws a comparison between British and Israeli colonial suppression of the

\footnote{26} The fact-finding mission that was denied entrance to Palestine consisted of former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, and former head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Cornelio Sommaruga.

\footnote{27} Tabar, "Memory, Agency, Counter-Narrative," 51.

\footnote{28} Ibid., 55.
Palestinians in the same city of Jenin in 1939 and in 2002.\textsuperscript{29} The testimonies she documents reveal striking similarities between respective colonial methods of population control and destruction of urban spaces. An architecture of control is one of the most visible practices of the Zionist project in Palestine, manifested mainly through the colonizing of hilltops in the West Bank and the building of Jewish colonies with military and surveillance functions, which overlook Palestinian cities and towns.\textsuperscript{30} Such systematic control of space maximizes restrictions on the Palestinians freedom of movement leading to further suppression of their resistance. A constant diminishing of space, the exposure and surveillance of bodies, and an infrastructure that facilitates military power and settler violence all required new tactics of resistance, including building a counter infrastructure. Such counter infrastructure includes alternative roads in the West Bank to maintain mobility and connectivity and underground tunnels in Gaza for smuggling life necessities into the besieged Gaza Strip.

\textbf{2015 Uprising: Account from Bethlehem}

At the beginning of October 2015, the third major Intifada since 1967 exploded in at least 65 locations across Palestine. It is the first that I have witnessed directly, encountering with my own body its daily events. In Bethlehem district, protests had already begun three months earlier in response to Israel’s confiscation of 3000 donums of land and the uprooting of ancient olive trees (see Chapter One). From the olive trees site, protests moved to the northern part of Bethlehem. The protest site was located on the Jerusalem-Bethlehem Road in the commercial district. On the right side of the street are located the prestigious Jacir

\textsuperscript{29} Laleh Khalili, "The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies," \textit{International Journal of Middle East Studies} 42.3 (2010): 413.
Hotel and the confined Aida refugee camp. On the left side are the St Joseph Modern Hotel and the crowded Azzeh refugee camp. Thus, two contrasting architectures exist in the same space of struggle. The Bethlehem-Jerusalem Road, which connects Bethlehem to its sister city Jerusalem, was closed permanently by Israel’s Apartheid wall in 2002.

In addition, Ibn Rabah Mosque, Rachel’s Tomb (a religious site for all faiths), and several Palestinian homes and shops were seized and isolated behind the wall along with

---

31 Jacir Hotel is a palace built in 1916 by a wealthy Palestinian and his sons who worked in the finance and banking field. The hotel was turned into a prison, a military school, occupation headquarters, and then, after 1993, the Palestinians reclaimed it from Israel. It is located right next to the Israeli Apartheid Wall and overlooks the Aida refugee camp built after the 1947/48 Nakba. The camp covers less than one third of a square kilometer.
some of the city’s olive orchards. Aida refugee camp is now entirely walled off, its residents
deprived not only of land, but also of space to breath and walk, even for their children to play.
Watchtowers overlook the city, as well as the Azzeh and Aida camps in North Bethlehem.
The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) typically invade the city and the refugee camps through
two large metal gates installed in the Wall.

It was here, at Al Qubbeh (Rachel’s Tomb)—once a sacred place now transformed
into a site of control and colonial oppression—that the uprising started in the city of
Bethlehem in October 2015. Viewing photographs of uprisings does not compare to being in
the midst of one. Watching civilians equipped with stones, slings, and slingshots face armed
forces, armoured vehicles, and drones with their bodies, is shocking and infuriating. Protests
attract people from all walks of life, regularly disrupt daily life in the city, stopping traffic and
changing the function of the streets. At the protest site, protesters reclaim their freedom, and
with their bodies they break the chains of their entrapment, if only temporarily. Camaraderie
and unity characterize the crowd; they all face the same fate and the same vulnerability to the
armed forces’ weapons. Unlike public assemblies and crowds elsewhere, in Palestine
protests are pronouncements of rights, denunciations of injustice, declarations of defiance, and
rejections of oppression and dispossession. Protesters know well that they might be killed or
injured but always keep moving forward towards the manifestations of occupying power.

One example that illuminates the difference between public assemblies or street
actions in a colonized country and elsewhere is the case of Nabi Saleh village. The village is
located 20 km northwest of Ramallah and has a population of less than a thousand residents.
The occupation forces seized the hilltop across from the village in the 1970s and established
the illegal Jewish colony of Halamish there. The colonial power’s tendency towards
expansion is regularly manifested in settler attempts to seize more land in Nabi Saleh, which
leads to constant struggle. Since 2009 the village has been organizing protests every week. Children are born and grow up in the midst of protests. Resistance is part of their daily life activities. Every week the villagers assemble under the oldest tree in the centre of the village, sometimes accompanied by members of the international solidarity movement, and march to the land that is subject to seizure. There Israeli soldiers, stationed to protect settlers, pronounce the village’s land and water sources a “closed zone” to prevent villagers from approaching their land. Protesters are regularly faced with attacks by all forms of weapons including live ammunition. Loss of life, injuries, and imprisonment are regular occurrences in the village. Continuity and persistence, then, characterize Palestinian protests. Seventeen-year-old Ahed Tamimi, a resident of Nabi Saleh, represents how protests become a way of life and a means of survival, rather than a festive, carnivalesque, or state-authorized one-time reactive action. Children grow into adults in the midst of activism and resistance. For example Ahed lost her uncle when he was shot by Israeli soldiers during one of the regular protests; her mother and father both have been arrested multiple times; her brother was beaten and his hand broken; her cousin was shot in the head which resulted in removing part of his skull. In 2018, young Ahed was arrested for slapping a soldier who intruded into her family’s house less than a week after shooting her cousin.

Repeated observation of the suppression of Palestinian protesters reveals how soldiers act in ideologically and militarily scripted ways. Framing the military invasion and colonization as “self defense” (hence the name Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)) supports news reports that portray the oppressor and colonizer as a victim. Scripted actions among Israeli occupation soldiers include incapacitating, arresting, and infiltrating protesters, attacking them with lethal and “less lethal" weapons, and/or “shoot to kill." There is no place that exposes the colonizer-colonized power relationship more than the protest site; the visible
disparity of power reveals a major characteristic of contemporary colonial state violence—armies versus civilians in urban places.

At the protest site, resistance involves the fifth generation of Palestinians to struggle for their liberty and rights. Choreographing their resistance, the youth create meaning by disrupting the colonial script that dominates, controls, and confines their bodies and controls the place they inhabit. At the protest site, Western liberal economic policies forced onto Palestinians by “donor” states, and channelled through the politically corrupt Palestinian Authority meant to crush resistance and assimilate Palestinian society into the global consumption market, are exposed and rejected. US “gifts” to Israel rain down over the heads of protesters and into civilian homes, spreading poison throughout the city. They litter the
streets with the shells of US Combined System Inc. weapons, and infiltrate the bodies of young Palestinians, killing and crippling them. At the protest site, “crowd control weapons” haunt Palestinians bodies with blinding teargas, deafening sound bombs, and an awful smelling liquid—the Israeli invented smell weapon the “skunk”.

At the protest site, colonial ideologies are revealed on television screens and through Western journalists’ reports and images, the Zionist narrative recited through mainstream media. At such a site, protests transform into live performances, where dissenting bodies communicate their rage, anger, and aspirations through their bodies. Protesters tirelessly act and improvise—their bodies turn, swing, run, jump, and sling stones—connecting the social body, displaying its rejection of submission. Stones, hand-made olive wood slingshots, and hand-woven slings are ostensible performance props that announce and deliver messages of defiance to the colonizing power. At the same site, cheerful moments energize the atmosphere when the protesters join hands and dance the Palestinian dabkeh, stomping there feet while holding their hands, to the tune of revolutionary Palestinian songs. These improvised performances demonstrate that art, culture, and politics cannot be separated. Perhaps protesters invite performance artists elsewhere to step into public spaces and engage society and its concerns. At the protest site, protesters pick up teargas grenades and sling them back on the occupying forces. In response to these gestures of defiance, this practice, it is thought, has in fact forced the occupation power to import or manufacture teargas canisters that release fire along with chemical gas. Protesters now wear fire resistant gloves and continue to sling the new teargas containers back, unwavering in their apparent fearlessness.

---

32 Dabkeh is a traditional Palestinian group dance practiced in the greater Syria region (Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan). It is usually performed at weddings and other social events. Recently, professional dance groups have maintained this traditional cultural practice.
Bodies as sites of colonial oppression manifest inside Israeli prisons, especially in interrogation centres where prisoners, stripped of all their rights as humans, are tortured physically and psychologically. Interrogation soldiers threaten to arrest, torture, and rape prisoners’ families in front of them, especially children, in order to recruit them as informants for the occupation. In prison, the body as a site of colonial repression is most evident. Colonial brutality revealed in the military court system not only disregards the humanity of prisoners, including children, but also denies basic rights, supposedly assured by international conventions and laws.\footnote{See the documentary \textit{Stone Cold Justice}, 2014, about Israel’s torture of Palestinian children, \url{https://vimeo.com/86575949}.} There are many documentaries and films about these
prisoners. One powerful film that examines the trauma caused by Israeli torture methods, which haunt prisoners even after their release, is Raed Antonia’s prize-winning documentary *Ghost Hunting* (2017). The director and actors of the film have all experienced Israeli prisons as a result of their involvement in the resistance movement. The film reconstructs an “Israeli prison” as a setting, and each prisoner relives his experience of interrogation and torture in a visceral way.

Palestinian children who have encountered imprisonment express the effects of those encounters at the protest site, as a coping mechanism—they loudly use the same offensive language used against them while they were being interrogated in Israel’s prisons. A protester explains: “When we are arrested, Israeli interrogators use vulgar language, they should experience its affect and how it sounds.”

Imprisoned Palestinian bodies often encounter solitary confinement and brutal sentences that extend beyond the life expectancy of a human. Imprisonment of Palestinians is a systematic practice of the state of Israel. It is estimated that since the Nakba approximately one million Palestinian men, women, and children have been detained at least once, under Israeli military orders. At least one member of almost every Palestinian family has experienced prison, including under the British Administrative Detention law, which Israel translates into the practice of indefinite imprisonment in six-month renewable increments.

Such violations of international law extend to the location of prisons. There are five interrogation centres and twelve military detention camps inside the state of Israel, contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention, and two prisons and one camp located in the West Bank. Because Palestinians’ movements, especially between Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel, are

---

controlled by the permit system, a large number of prisoners are deprived of family visits. By sentencing Palestine political prisoners to multiple life sentences, Israel even retains the corpses of prisoners who die or are killed inside prison, thus preventing their families from burying them. The corpses of these prisoners exist only as numbers in the colonial state’s records, without their families’ knowledge of their locations. I attended one of the regular protests of families in Bethlehem, demanding the return of their children’s dead bodies. “Depriving our sons to rest in peace is torture to the dead and to the living,” Azhar Abu Srur, the mother of Abd Alhameed Abu Srur, whose corpse is held by the occupying forces said to me in June, 2016.

The legacy of Palestinian political prisoners’ resistance has had an effect on the Palestinian struggle in general. Creative means of prisoner survival include transforming prisons into universities and organizing the confined collective body of the “prisoners society,” to regulate communication and build solidarity between prisoners and with the larger society beyond the prison walls. In their quest for freedom, prisoners organize hunger strikes to improve their conditions and demand freedom. Demands for what might seem simple to anyone on the outside, such as warm blankets or mattresses thicker than two inches, cost prisoners long days of collective hunger. The right to education, family visits, and to hug their children are among the humanitarian demands prisoners have achieved through hunger and the pain experienced by their incarcerated bodies. Hunger as a form of defiance has become known as “empty stomach resistance.” When 1,500 prisoners declared a hunger strike in April 2016, leader Marwan Barghouti wrote from his cell in Hadarim prison, reflecting on Israel's oppression of Palestinian political prisoners:
Decades of experience have proved that Israel’s inhumane system of colonial and military occupation aims to break the spirit of prisoners and the nation to which they belong, by inflicting suffering on their bodies, separating them from their families and communities, using humiliating measures to compel subjugation. In spite of such treatment, we will not surrender to it…. What is it with the arrogance of the occupier and the oppressor and their backers that makes them deaf to this simple truth: Our chains will be broken before we are, because it is human nature to heed the call for freedom regardless of the cost.  

---

**Palestinian Sumud**

Experiencing settler colonial violence is laden with pain and suffering as well as with *sumud* and resistance. Representing such conditions is hindered by obstructions and limitations including the limitations of representational forms. The bodily experience exposes the rhetoric of “civility” that seeks to render invisible the horrifying methods and techniques of control in settler colonial ventures. For example, European models of control and segregation, such as the panoptic system, the confinement of Jews in segregated camps in WWII, and the Berlin Wall, are all reproduced in colonized Palestine, yet rarely is a connection drawn between them. A parallel between the ongoing siege of Gaza, now in its eleventh year, and the racial segregation of Jews in Europe, is often ignored by Western scholars. The much-theorized panoptic system as physical structure or as a paradigm of control proliferates in Palestinian

---

35 Marwan Barghouti, “Why We Are on Hunger Strike in Israel’s Prisons,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2017. Barghouti has been imprisoned for the past 15 years; he was sentenced to five life sentences and 40 years for taking a leading role in the Palestinian resistance movement.
lives and spaces, yet is overlooked by Western scholars.\textsuperscript{36} The daily experience of Palestinians requires contending with electronic "identities", the permit system, and manned and unmanned surveillance. It is not only the manifestation of oppression that is visible in Palestine but also, by contrast, tactics and strategies of steadfastness and resilience, including the creative forms of resistance that connect the Palestinian struggle with the global struggle against colonialism, racism, exploitation, destruction of the environment, and the unprecedented centralizing of wealth in the hands of a few at the expense of impoverishing the majority. One globally expanding form of Palestinian resistance is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) campaign. Inspired by the South African anti-Apartheid movement and initiated in 2005 by 170 Palestinian civil organizations, the BDS is directed to world citizenry to pressure Israel to comply with international law and end its colonization, Apartheid, and denial of refugees' right of return. As a democratic, non-violent campaign, the BDS perceives solidarity between world citizens as everyone's responsibility; it empowers not only the Palestinians but also all oppressed citizens of the world. While the colonial state of Israel has declared a war against the BDS, and many Western governments and institutions have carried on this war, the achievements of the BDS campaign has been expanding without limits across the cultural and academic fields and through grassroots organizations across the world.

With all the challenges Palestinians face in the colonized country, including the increasing incarceration of Palestinian bodies in actual prisons and open-air prisons, and with the targeting of global solidarity movements by Zionist-Western networks, resistance has not

weakened. Invented coping and survival mechanisms culminated in the eruption of the Third Intifada in 2015. The social body, once again, collectively confronts the settler colonial militarized forces and their brutal practices. My encounter with the first year of this Intifada resulted in the exhibition *Choreographies of Resistance*.

**Choreographies of Resistance Installation**

*Choreographies of Resistance* included the following works: *Through the Mask* (video, 4 minutes); *Bodies in Motion* (stop-motion animation, 2:30 minutes); *Meteorites* (animation, 2 minutes); *Photophobia* (seven photographs, 48x34 inches each, mounted on metal dibond); *Drones* (300 hand-made wooden slingshots); *Soundscape of Bethlehem* (sound installation, 6 minutes); *Resistance Dance* (seven life-size vinyl prints); and *Resistance Portraits* (a photo-book that includes 89 photographs, 13x11 inches each); as well as stones and found objects from protests sites in Bethlehem. *Choreographies of Resistance* was realized materially during a residency at Ottawa/Gatineau’s Axeneo7 Gallery, and exhibited there in March-April 2017 before a modified version was exhibited at Western University’s McIntosh Gallery in July 2017.

This multimedia exhibition was made and presented from my critical and subjective position as a colonized artist. My subjectivity as a member of a colonized and suffering body is grounded in this project. Experiencing and gathering visual and sonic material, creating, communicating with the public, exhibiting, and writing are all intertwined and relevant to the struggle of Palestinians on the ground. This project, which emerged from firsthand experience, best articulates Frantz Fanon’s vision of the native artist: the “Native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in
the first place its realities."\(^{37}\) Being privileged with multiple perspectives, being here and there, in both Canada and Palestine, determines the logic that motivates the creation and presentation of my work. Critically representing the Palestinian struggle in Canada, a refuge for a considerable minority of Palestinians, mainly Nakba refugees, is challenging. The major challenge relates to the unending Zionist effort to silence or censor the Palestinian voice and narrative. But public openness to and support for experience-based knowledge is encouraging, as I discuss in Chapter Three. Within this environment, critical art such as mine effectively contributes not only to disrupting but also to changing the discourse on Palestine/Israel in North America.

Installation view, *Resistance Portraits*, projected on suspended *Drones*, Axeneo7 Gallery, Quebec

\(^{37}\) Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 224.
Choreographies of Resistance builds on my longstanding practice of using mainly new media (sound, photography, and video) to provoke thinking about the link between representation and systems of visibility, whether in the press, scholarship, or the arts. This approach translates into adopting aesthetic choices that disrupt the image and its projection and presentation. These choices often include masking, obscuring, combining, or juxtaposing images from multiple resources. Other formal choices include muting the sound of films, or keeping the sound but omitting the image, manipulating sequence speeds, activating still images through animation, using multilayered images, and omitting distracting context and focusing on human bodies to create a link or draw a connection between image and viewer and between past and present. I also use sound as a form of expression and regard it as a medium capable of conveying knowledge and/or distinct aesthetic experience, arguably in a way that is more powerful and immediate than visual forms of representation.

Attempting to render visible the invisible or restricted aspects of settler colonial violence, I use traces of documentary images to raise questions and bring suppressed narratives to the fore. Representing the ongoing Palestinian struggle necessitates understanding and scrutinizing not only the present but also the past. As Paul Ricoeur asserts, “document, trace and question” constitute “the tripod base of historical knowledge.”

Whether in the history of art or a people’s history, raising questions is essential for disrupting the status quo and reclaiming subaltern voices, contesting dominant and exclusionary representations, and opening space for change and for new experiences and knowledge.

---

38 Ricoeur, Memory, History, Forgetting, 177.
In *Choreographies of Resistance* I negotiated concepts and experimented with process, form, and exhibition choices. Conceptually, mythology, history, objects, and subjects intertwine, from the David versus Goliath story and the legacy of a century of popular revolution, to concentration on the individual protestor’s bodily movement. I interrogated the photographic image, isolated figures, animated still photos, and recreated symbols of resistance. I transferred aspects of the streets and soundscape of Palestine into the gallery space. The scars that a difficult yearlong experience left on me affected the aesthetic decisions I employed in the various artworks.

The first month after my arrival in Canada was uneasy; it felt as if I had moved from one planet to another. There were no longer the sounds of crowds, ambulance sirens, drones, and fighter jets. Silence then disruption—any noise would trigger recent memories of shooting. I began to carve slingshots, work that seemed to have a therapeutic affect, providing a way of coping with my experience, which included my injury and witnessing the shooting and killing of two young men. I titled the work *Drones* in reference to the irony of the conditions I left behind. It was the first work I completed and it helped me move on to work with the material I had gathered during the research period.

One of the hand-carved wooden slingshots in *Drones*
For a contemporary artist, not only are decisions about the making of artworks important but also the display and juxtaposition of various works together becomes significant for engaging, communicating, and conveying experience. Engaging viewers’ senses and bodies in an immersive experience can result in overturning expectations. Representations of the suffering body that potentially call for sympathy are thus replaced in my work by defiant bodies that dance their resistance, opening space for hope and the potential for change, not only in Palestine but also in Canada. In this exhibition, the images of non-Westerns’ rights to self-defence and freedom, often called “terrorism” in mainstream media and images of colonial terror as “self defence” are inverted.

Disrupting and shifting conventional ways of seeing and perceiving by connecting various sonic and visual elements opens a broad critical field. In displaying elements of the theatre of resistance within the gallery space, viewers experience different modes of seeing, listening, moving, or needing to “freeze” in front of a photograph. Traces of objects and signs of resistance and oppression signify bodies that resist and allude to the residues of machines that kill and inflict pain.\textsuperscript{39} Achille Mbembe’s reflection on the endurance of the oppressed and colonized Palestinian body that can lead to killing ones own self and others reveals how death is a form of release, it is “as a moment of vision—vision of the freedom not yet come. Death in the present is the mediator of redemption. Far from being an encounter with a limit, boundary, or barrier, it is experienced as a release from terror and bondage.”\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{40} Mbembe and Meintjes, “Necropolitics,” 39.
Photography as an Act of Resistance

The photographic works in the exhibition, although varying in their presentation, all function as “visualizations from within”—from the point view of the oppressed, from the participant-photographer’s field of vision, asserting proximity with and belonging to the represented bodies. The works Resistance Portraits, Bodies in Motion, and Resistance Dance differ in their form of presentation and sequencing, although all are based on photographic work produced at protest sites.

Black Smoke, White Stone, October 2015, Bethlehem

The above photograph appears in various guises throughout the exhibition: silhouetted as a stop motion animation, printed life-size and pasted on the gallery’s wall, and in the photography book. This photograph represents a typical masked Palestinian young man
slinging stones at Israeli occupation forces. Through close observation, a deeper analysis of the gestures of the body in action—a body breaking through everyday routine and restriction, is revealed. Also revealed is a long history and culture of Palestinian defiance and popular revolution. Throwing stones at oppressors and invaders has historical, mythological, and symbolic resonance in Palestine. At the mythological level, the image resembles the well-known story of David versus Goliath, the boy who faced and defeated the giant, armed Philistine with his sling and stone. Historically, Alexander the Great was confronted by Palestinian stone-throwers when he laid siege to the city of Gaza in the fourth century BCE.\(^{41}\) This image of historical and symbolic resistance is even more apparent in Palestine’s recent history when popular resistance provided the prominent means of challenging the British-Zionist colonial project in the country. Elderly Palestinians who experienced Britain’s colonial rule as children often recall confronting British soldiers with stones, as well as the collective punishment their families endured as a result. The children and grandchildren of those who resisted Britain’s colonial rule continue their defiance of the new invasion and colonization of the country today. Stones of course cannot defeat tanks or machine guns; their power lies in their symbolic value as signifiers of persistence and resistance to colonial repression. David versus Goliath, stone versus tank; both are expressed in Palestinian culture and art, in music, visual art, and poetry. In his *O Those Who Pass Between Fleeting Words*, the poet Mahmoud Darwish writes:

> From you the sword—from us the blood
> From you steel and fire—from us our flesh

\(^{41}\) Anne Marie Oliver and Paul F. Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs’ Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12.
From you yet another tank—from us stones
From you tear gas—from us rain
Above us, as above you, are sky and air
So take your share of our blood—and be gone
Go to a dancing party—and be gone
As for us, we have to water the martyrs’ flowers
As for us, we have to live as we see fit.

The *Resistance Portraits* photography book includes images of youth slinging stones. These photographs signify contemporary colonial violence, in which civilian bodies face heavy war machinery in urban places. The analogy of David and Goliath persists in our times despite the unimaginable development and spread of weapons and control technologies, including nuclear weapons and remote killing. Drawing a parallel between Palestinian youth and the David and Goliath story intertwines fiction and reality in the twenty-first century, in the same geographical place—Palestine.

Photographs of resistance differ from photographs of suffering. According to John Berger, the former are “moments of agony cropped from a specific context, discontinues with all other moments. They exist by themselves.” Indeed, photographs of suffering selected by news media, whether of Palestinians, Iraqis, Syrians, Black Americans, or Indigenous people in Canada, are rarely presented in context. Images of suffering removed from their social and political context can result in “habituating” images of violence. While images of suffering can be arresting, without context they only generate despair or indignation, according to Berger. While despair produces little effect, indignation might provoke a humanitarian action, but the

---

action may not engage with the cause of the suffering and can often contribute to its perpetuation. Context, however, offers a chance to intervene in the political system that creates the suffering the image depicts. The disconnection between cause and effect in most images of suffering dilutes responsibility and accountability, because the image “accuses nobody and everybody.”

This “masking of atrocities,” especially by news media, contributes to depoliticizing the public. Furthermore, the media not only depoliticizes the public in this way but also creates a hierarchy of suffering by treating victims differently. The “hierarchy of suffering” is a concept Walter Mignolo suggests in his theorizing of bare lives and dispensable lives—the lives of slaves and the lives of World War II concentration camps. Furthermore, in Frames of War, Judith Butler articulates how some lives do not count as lives. While the media representations often present selective, ideologically framed images of the Palestinians, the photographs in this exhibition focus less on suffering and more on defiance. Nonetheless, they “can only gesture towards what cannot be seen, felt, or understood outside of the frame,” within the everyday struggle in colonized Palestine.

Clearly the photographic work in Choreographies of Resistance is about resisting bodies rather than about victimized bodies. It represents the new Palestinian generation that has grown up in the period of a disastrous “peace process.” It is about bodies refusing to succumb to pain. The photographs in the exhibition do not draw a visual parallel between the Gaza and Warsaw ghettos. They do not depict execution or destruction, which marks the daily lives of Palestinians, not because photographs of suffering can “deaden conscience”

43Ibid., 39.
44Ibid.
as Susan Sontag claims, or habituate violence as John Berger asserts, but rather because these photographs represent popular revolution in defiance of the atrocities of colonization and military power. They represent attitudes of determination rather than pleading for viewers’ hopelessness. They also represent “the right to narrate” in a world saturated by exclusion and silence; they narrate a reality I have experienced directly as a Palestinian over an extended period of time, not as a fleeting privileged artist/photographer. There is no doubt that images of atrocities can inform, create awareness, and document events, but photographs of resistance can invite change. They can ignite inspiration and solidarity; provoke the potential to think about the mechanisms of control beyond the photograph’s subject. The effect of photographs of protest is contagious and humanistic at the same time.

A young woman slinging stone, Bethlehem, November 2015.

The photography book, *Portraits of Resistance*, includes 89 photographs of individuals and groups of young men and women using slings and slingshots—to sling stones. In some images the protest site with its power dynamic is visible. Weapons of crowd control and stones proliferate in the street. All the images were photographed through the lens of an insider who relates to and understands what drives the youth to position themselves face-to-face with death. The images are removed from the realm of sensational news making. While photographing, I was torn by emotion and constantly concerned that the young men and women would end up in Israel's prisons, crippled or killed by snipers, or listed as “wanted.” A conscious process of zooming in on individuals and zooming out on the collective expresses the relationality at the site of protest, where at once the entire crowd becomes a single body. These are neither staged portraits nor the result of photojournalistic acts seeking dramatic and violent moments. They are photos of specific people in a specific place at a specific moment in history—the 2015 uprising in the Palestinian city of Bethlehem—manifested through my witnessing-participating lens and body. There is no “civil contract” between protesters and me as a photographer; we are both targets of the colonial military system that governs our space and our lives.\(^5\) There is no exploitation of the vulnerability of the colonized. Interpretation of these photographs depends on many factors, including the viewer’s objective level of knowledge about the Palestinian struggle, and also a formalist reading of the works. Toronto-based documentary filmmaker Rebecca Garret for example states, “There is nothing violent or sensational here, instead, an intimacy and care

---

\(^5\) See Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract* (New York: Zone Books, 2008). She argues that denial of colonized-colonizer power relations builds assumption based on the interrogation room or the vulnerability of traumatized individuals who submit to photographers’ lenses.
and gentle witnessing. In the place of fear of the other we feel an encompassing, generative love: a relation of affirmation and hope.\(^{51}\)

On the other hand, the non-representational photography series *Photophobia* can be situated within a different photographic genre—art photography. The series consists of seven photographic prints, 48x36 inches each except one, *Untitled*, 50x48 inches, all mounted on metal dibond. *Photophobia* offers broad and open conceptual readings and interpretations. These images create an abstraction of visibility/invisibility in a context of colonial/state violence. Its images reveal only shadows and traces of individuals’ bodies captured by the camera’s lens in the midst of the blinding teargas smoke.

*Photophobia* photography series #1, 36x48 inches, mounted on dibond

---

\(^{51}\) Rebecca Garrett’s response, communicated directly, about her experience of the exhibition at the McIntosh Gallery, July 2017.
Like photographs depicting motion that the eyes cannot see, these photographs represent what eyes cannot see as a result of blinding teargas. The photographs were mainly taken after hundreds of teargas canisters were fired on protesters by military launchers mounted on military vehicles. *Photophobia*’s images can be situated in a universal setting—protesters’ defiance against forces of suppression: on Canadian Indigenous reserves, in Ferguson or Standing Rock in the US, in Tahrir Square in Cairo, or in Athens, Greece, or in any other place where social and environmental justice struggles are taking place at this time. Tools used to control and suppress crowds with blinding chemical gas are intended to inflict pain, fear, and panic. But at the same time they reflect oppressive and colonial powers’ fears of the crowd, which like a tide can topple tyrannical and mighty military powers, as history has taught us. The development of what is called “crowd control weapons,” the constant addition of new types to state arsenals, including sonic, light, and smell weapons, rubber coated steel bullets, and sponge and rubber headed grenades, reveal the threat from the masses to colonial and oppressive powers. Such new weaponry inflicts new forms of invisible suffering, at the same time its developers and users evade the global public eye and legal accountability, if there is any. Although crowd control weapons kill and maim, most injure without blood or physical wounds. The psychological effect of these weapons takes much longer to heal than the physical injuries. There is no doubt that the effect of such weapons on civilians is deep and under-researched. Further inquiry is needed.
Stun grenade

New type of sound weapon, explodes when fired

Metal bullet coated with rubber

Rubber bullet, often breaks bones

Common teargas grenade

Teargas canisters, shot from close range
New type of teargas weapon, releases fire

New type of teargas without brand

Live bullets including .22 calibre, collected from the streets if Bethlehem

An Israeli soldier with both lethal and control weapons

**Embedded Photography**

The largest photograph in the *Photophobia* series, *untitled*, 50x36 inches, stands out in the exhibition for its scale, contrasting colours, and content. It depicts the field of vision of an embedded photographer, and is intended as a commentary on embedded photojournalism.

I photographed this image when I joined local and international photographers and reporters at the protest site in Bethlehem. I experienced firsthand the field of vision shared by photographers embedded among soldiers. We were all shooting—photographs or bullets. Protesters on the other side had created a black screen of smoke to block the soldiers’ vision
and protect themselves from sniper bullets by setting car tires on fire. This black screen prevented not only the soldiers from seeing the protesters but also the reporters from photographing them. The protesters in this photograph are invisible.

In the embedded reporting system, first created by the US during its wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, a limited number of reporters are stationed with military units. The system then decides what reporters can photograph and how. The embedded reporting system thus openly and successfully links political, military, and media power together—within what is often called the government-military-media complex. Participating reporters and photographers have to comply with army guidelines, including not reporting on or photographing certain subject categories outlined by commanders at the front. The program
succeeds in alienating journalists from their subjects and results in the control of the media. The embedded photographers’ field of vision, which is the most important aspect of their work, is restricted. A soldier’s firing range becomes the same as a photographer’s shooting range, and the targeted subjects are the same. The sense of power of the heavily armed soldier transmits to the embedded photographer. The “enemy” is the same for both, and a fundamental principal of photojournalism—objectivity—is lost. By joining photojournalists with soldiers, the state and armed forces’ crimes against civilians go unchecked. Only citizen reporting or whistle blowers can reveal even a fraction of these crimes, for example, through Wikileaks revelations. Testimonials of anonymous embedded photographers revealed in a study prepared by Shahira Fahmy and Thomas J. Johnson and published in 2007 elucidate the deception of embedded reporting and its differences from independent or unilateral reporting:

Embedded journalists were inside military units looking out, while unilateral were outside looking in.\textsuperscript{52}

Embeds were in the middle of battles as they were being fought.... You’re in life or death situations with other people, it’s impossible not to relate to them. That makes stories inherently slanted toward the troops.\textsuperscript{53}

The unilateral were able to convey the human tragedy element far more accurately. They did not have any pressures to send a story which would not be well accepted by


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 10.
or give ‘bad publicity’ to troops which they were sharing intimate time and space with over the weeks of the war.\textsuperscript{54}

Embedded journalists lost their objective angle towards the war. After a time of living with soldiers, they developed bonds with their units. When a unit was fired upon, the story said: We were fired upon, instead of: unit X was fired upon. In battle the journalist hoped for the victory of his unit because his own life and safety relied on it.\textsuperscript{55}

![Soldiers and embedded photographers’ field of vision](image)

Although the violence of the occupation is constant, it was at the protest site that the embedded system crystalized in my experience. The majority of international reporters and

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 11.
photographers align themselves with occupation soldiers. Soldiers with their weapons and protective gear and photographers with their tripods, cameras, helmets, and vests are on one side, and on the other side are unprotected and unarmed protesters. In *untitled*, protesters disrupt the system of vision control by setting fires and creating a smokescreen between themselves and the soldiers. After experiencing firsthand what it feels like and how it looks to be an embedded photographer I repositioned myself with the protesting crowd and the results are the other photographs in the series *Photophobia*. My field of vision and perception have changed with the change of my position. I became a participant and thus a target along with other protesters; my body integrated with the protesters’ bodies and shared their vulnerability. I became situated outside the visual circle drawn by the occupying power’s oppressive system for controlling what photographers see and shoot in ways that serve its objectives.

Related to *Portraits of Resistance*, *Bodies in Motion* consists of hundreds of images of individual protesters, digitally converted into silhouettes on a unifying white background. The video sets in motion the still images through animated sequences in which bodily gestures create their own language. Every few seconds, a black and white photograph punctuates the screen, connecting the real with the symbolic. This work deals with the logic of bodily movement, focuses on the kinaesthetic or performative act of slingling stones, and the relationship between the individuals and the collective body. The unifying symbolic gestures that marks the Palestinian uprisings that have occurred every decade or so is represented in this work, alluding to peoples’ rebelliousness despite the disproportionate power dynamics.
Resistance Dance consists of seven life-size vinyl silhouettes representing the steps of stone slinging by a Palestinian boy: rotating the sling side ways, upwards, twisting the body, swinging and extending the body, slinging, rotating, and balancing afterward. The installation also includes stones, bullet shells, and rubber coated steel bullets gathered from the protest site in Bethlehem, spread throughout the gallery space. The shadow of the Palestinian David is recalled life-sized. Gallery visitors’ bodies integrate with these silhouettes fixed on the walls of the gallery, not only through looking but also through walking on what resembles the protest site, as well as through listening to sound emanating from a sound work installed in the same space. One visitor in London, Ontario, observed: “when scanning with my eyes through the displayed sequence of images, the illusion of motion happens, a zoetrope effect.” Unlike Bodies in Motion where viewers are fixed in front of a screen watching moving images and moving figures, these fixed images seem to be activated and
set in motion by viewers’ own movements and imaginations. Unlike the affect of photographs of agony, these images do not generate feelings of sorrow.

*Soundscape of Bethlehem* consists of multi-track field recordings, different types of teargas grenades and canisters, and expended teargas powder—all gathered from the protest site in Bethlehem. The sound was recorded over an extended period in various locations and at different times in the city. The sonic collage includes the following sounds: clashes with soldiers while uprooting olive trees, F-16 fighter jets and drones, church prayers and the bells of the Church of the Nativity, a popular song of Good Friday by the renowned Lebanese singer Furious, usually played during holidays across the city, and other ambient
sounds. This collage represents the contrasting sounds that exist in colonized space controlled by military power.

_Soundscape of Bethlehem_ engages gallery visitors in the experience of a distant place through their sense of hearing. It also brings to light sensations and experiences as a basis for understanding sound as a form of representation. Reactions triggered by sound such as panic, fear, skin chills, tears, as well as pleasure, are universal. They constitute a sonic language. This sonic language affects not only humans but also other creatures. The sound of military violence perhaps is difficult for news media to frame ideologically. Seeing, on the other hand, is socially constructed, whether seeing an artwork, a photograph, or directly seeing other humans and creatures.

Installing both _Soundscape of Bethlehem_ and _Resistance Dance_ together results in a layered encounter through two different but related works. Walking and stepping over stones and bullets while listening to the soundscape can bring an additional sense of being in two places at once.

_Meteorites_, animation, and 2:00 min (still frame).
Stones and remnants of live ammunition and crowd control weapons saturate sites of protests providing yet more signifiers and physical evidence of the power disparity between the colonized and colonizer. Stones are in constant motion, crossing the space between protesters and soldiers. The stones used by protesters are usually moved from their original places in surrounding fields or stone terraces, then back again after the protest ends. This motion of stones inspired the making of the video Meteorites, which consists of images of stones selected from actual pictures of the streets I photographed during protests. Hundreds of images of stones are activated through digital animation; they are given life and projected on a wall evoking the Israeli Apartheid Wall. The circular rotation and fleeting passage of stones in Meteorites resemble the passing of meteors through space and their impact on the earth. In North American indigenous cultures, rocks “are animate…repositories of experience. Some say they are animated by human desire, by anthropomorphic projection.” Stones in Palestine have mythological, cultural, historical, and economic significance. Stone terraces in olive orchards protect trees from soil erosion and clean the soil. Stone quarries, also known as “white petroleum,” are a major sector of the Palestinian economy—rocks are excavated and shaped into various products, including building stones, cement, and gravel, among others. Stone houses are typical in Palestine, they endure natural disasters, endure time, and survive fire, though not Israel’s bombs and bulldozers. This mute object is a witness to centuries of struggle and peace, to rising, passing, and falling empires. These mute objects were spread in one of the gallery spaces, while Meteorites was projected onto a wall constructed to resemble Israel’s Apartheid Wall.

---

Installation view, Meteorites projected on a constructed wall inside the gallery and Drones on the ground.

The final component of Choreographies of Resistance is Through the Mask, video, 4 minutes. It is composed of several moments of violent and massive teargas attacks, dominated by the sounds of Israeli teargas launchers, called “Venom” developed by US Combined System Inc., firing hundreds of canisters, protesters suffocation and coughing, ambulance sirens, and my own breathing. Through the Mask is exhibited in an entirely enclosed space inside the gallery and viewed through an opening made of the same gasmask I used to record the footage. The gasmask is placed through the wall of the enclosed space. Viewing the image in such a distant and restricted way raises questions about what is missing from the image and discourses of settler-colonial violence and power—
distant, yet the smell and sound of the experience infiltrate viewers’ senses shaking colonial representations of violence.

Installation view, *Through the Mask*, McIntosh Gallery, 2017
CHAPTER THREE: Critical Art, Censorship, and Freedom of Expression

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

Article 19, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Article 1. (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Article 27, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Critical art or political art often plays a significant role in disrupting the status quo by challenging systems and structures of power. It can revise and counter the dominant histories of the "victors," engage with and confront socio-political conditions, and foresee a just world. Critical art has the potential, through its various forms and interventions, to connect, inspire, generate debate, and move people to action. Often the formal strategies that political art use "ensure the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perceptual shock caused, conversely, by the uncanny, by that which resists signification." ¹ The protection of freedom of expression as a universal right by the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights signifies the place that cultural production occupies in society.

In this essay I will examine the efforts of Israel and Zionist political pressure groups in Canada to suppress freedom of expression regarding Palestinian narratives and rights. Based mainly on my own experiences, on media reports, and art and culture scholarship, I argue that interference in the cultural field by Israeli and Zionist political pressure groups constitutes a threat to academic freedom and freedom of expression in Canada and beyond, and contributes to delegitimizing and possibly criminalizing debates on significant social justice issues. I also address the link between the Zionist suppression of the Palestinian narrative and Israel’s use of the cultural domain to conceal violations of international and humanitarian law in Palestine. Finally, I recount my experience as a Palestinian-Canadian artist facing attacks on, and attempts to censor, my artworks in two incidents; the first, my exhibition *Invisible* at Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa in 2014, and the second, my exhibition *Choreographies of Resistance*, exhibited at the McIntosh Gallery at Western University in London, Ontario, in 2017.

**Art and Freedom of Expression**

If freedom of expression is about the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, and the right to participate in cultural life, then censorship is about suppressing these same rights. Attempts to dominate public discourse and legitimize certain voices while consigning others to silence constitutes the aim of censorship.\(^2\) It is linked to the direct exercise of state coercion to enforce ideology under the pretext of protecting society’s values.

---

History has taught us that suppression of freedom of expression restricts and criminalizes critical thinking and enforces self-censorship. One of the most memorable examples of suppression of the arts is the Nazi censorship of what it defined as “degenerate art.” The National Socialist (Nazi) regime recognized the significant role that art and culture play in society and made dominance over them a priority through restructuring, centralizing, and using art institutions to enforce its racist and nationalist ideology.³ Hitler “formulated his own ideas about the role of race in art and the role of art in society” based on the “art and race” theory developed in 1928 by Paul Schultze-Naumburg, who associated “aesthetic artistic styles with the racial characteristics of artists.”⁴ Under Hitler’s leadership, new institutions were created to implement the Nazi ideology, including departments for radio, theatre, film, and literature, which together created a “monopoly on ideology.”⁵ The regime set new criteria for what was considered acceptable German art and what was regarded as degenerate. True German art, according to the new Nazi standards, was that which expresses “the collective soul and identity of the German race,” art that is nationalist, understandable, endeavoured to be eternal, and void of criticism of society; in sum, art that represents the “good, the beautiful, as well as health” from the point-of-view of the dominant regime.⁶ Art subjects promoted by the Nazis included women as mothers (family values), the female nude (beauty), landscape (motherland), and heroism (patriotism and war).

On the other hand, modern art, including art created by Jewish, Communist, and foreign artists, was designated as degenerate. Artists and art educators, curators and critics associated with Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, and Dada, were labelled

⁴Ibid., 85.
⁶Ibid., 84.
degenerate artists. They were expelled from their positions in public art institutions, universities, and schools, and were deprived of jobs, funds, and exhibitions. Modern art was removed from public museums, including paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, and books.\textsuperscript{7} Many artists left the country. Others who remained exiled in their own country, worked secretly on their art or in various jobs to support themselves. The Nazi defamation of Modern artists did not end there, but took the form of public degradation. In 1937 the regime organized two simultaneous exhibitions: the first in Munich titled \textit{Degenerate Art} included artworks by “degenerate artists” removed from public art institutions. The works were installed and labeled chaotically to humiliate the artists who had created them. The exhibition was organized by category, each representing certain aspects of “degenerate art,” including artistic anarchy, depictions of the struggle of the working class, and portrayals of soldiers as murderers or victims. The exhibition included works by Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, Emile Nodle, and other prominent twentieth-century artists. The show was widely publicized and toured the country. At the same time, a second exhibition, approved by Nazi leaders as “true German art,” was presented in an “academic style” and dealt with subjects of “heroism and duty.”\textsuperscript{8} The purpose of these contrasting exhibitions was to “educate” the public about what it is in “degenerate” art that insults “pure” German art as well as society’s values and morals.

Over the late twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century, censorship has extended beyond state power. With the increasing privatization of public services under neoliberal policies, private groups and corporations have gained noticeable power over the

cultural field through philanthropy and sponsorship. The reliance of art institutions on private funding—even partly—appears to legitimize interference in their programming and activities. Although states set the rules “of publically acceptable discourse, of who can speak and what can be said,” private groups in their association with states have obtained the power to impose their own standards and ideologies. Some subjects that are implicitly suppressed by regimes and political pressure groups in Canada include: military activities, police violations, Indigenous rights, and, of course, Palestine human rights advocacy and criticism of Israel.

While most political pressure groups identify with a specific state, Zionist groups in Canada identify with two states, Israel and Canada.

The Zionist effort to suppress the Palestinian narrative is based on the political program of Zionism that denies the existence of the Palestinian people and their rights and relies on a divine promise. Most importantly, it denies the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe), Palestinian refugees’ right of return, and the ongoing colonization and ethnic cleansing of Palestine. This long-standing denial and suppression, however, has intensified immensely in North America over the past two decades. The conditions created by the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US, especially the “war on terror,” have been exploited by the state of Israel, which associates the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and liberation with “terrorism,” and paints Israel’s settler-colonization with a “self-defence” brush. Additionally, the position of Israel as a colonial militarized state, an expert in producing and testing weapons, and implementing surveillance and closure and control technologies and methods, gives it advantages in the global shift toward securitized and enclosed states, as the “war on

——

terror” has become the driving force behind continued wars in the Arab World and devastating refugee crises.¹⁰

Increasing global awareness of the Palestinian struggle—in particular, Palestinian civil society’s call for the world citizenry to boycott the state of Israel until it complies with international law¹¹—have resulted in challenging the “victim” image that has framed the state of Israel for decades in Western public discourse. Of course, Israel’s “victim” image was an outcome of the Zionist movement’s deployment of the horrors of the Nazi genocide against the Jews, and its continued attempt to conflate Zionism with Judaism and criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.¹² The portrayal of this occupying colonial power as a victim began to lose ground, however, after repeated massacres and military campaigns against Palestinian civilians in refugee camps (Sabra and Shatilla, Jenin and Nablus, in the West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip). The intensification of Israel’s colonization of Palestine over the last two decades and its three devastating, genocidal attacks on Gaza (2008/09, 2012, 2014) are indefensible acts of colonial violence that have destabilized the Israeli-Zionist narrative.

Responding to growing support for Palestinians rights and increasing global awareness of its settler-colonial practices, the state of Israel, rather than bringing the conflict to a close, began to establish and fund a network of Zionist “watching” organizations, such as Campus Watch, NGO Monitor, UN Watch, and others. The mission of these groups is to monitor public discourse on Palestine/Israel and suppress the Palestinian narrative, often by carrying out campaigns of threats, false accusations, smears, and vilification, and by lobbying politicians

---


and private institutions to deny employment and funds to groups and individuals involved in Palestine human rights advocacy, including Palestinian, Jewish, and international scholars, artists, and activists.

In their joint work, scholars Yasmeen Abu Laban and Abigail Bakan suggest that surveillance of public discourse on Palestine/Israel in Canada, particularly under Steven Harper’s Conservative government (2006–2015), “resulted in a new and distinct pattern of surveillance, or watching, of words, loyalty, and organizations according to asserted political views regarding the Israel/Palestine conflict.”¹³ This pattern, they assert, is aligned with Israel’s surveillance practices against the Palestinians in colonized Palestine. Analyses of Israeli Apartheid, the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS), support for Palestinian rights expressed in the United Nations’ various organizations, on university campuses, in media reports, and in Palestinian cultural activities, are among the most “watched” and targeted activities. This surveillance has resulted in “unprecedented interventions on the part of the national state vis-à-vis NGOs, as well as arms-length agencies.”¹⁴ Examples of such interventions include: ending decades long federal funding of the Canadian Arab Federation’s (CAF) language programs for new immigrants in Toronto because of a statement by its president that offended then minister of immigration Jason Kenny (2009); ending funding of CAIROS after 35 years of international human rights and ecology advocacy for allegedly supporting BDS (2011);¹⁵ targeting and scrutinizing the Canadian Rights and Democracy organization for grant applications by two Palestinian human rights groups, Al Haq and Al Mezan, and the Israeli group B’Tselem (2010); attempts

---

¹⁴ Ibid., 321.
¹⁵ CAIROS (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives) is the social justice organization for eleven Canadian churches and religious organizations.
to terminate International Development Research Centre (IDRC) grants for two social projects by Haifa-based Mada Al-Carmel Arab Centre (2010); and interference in Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funding for the conference “Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace” for including activists speakers (2009). A common objective of all of these campaigns is evidently to delegitimize organizations that support Palestinian human rights and deprive them of public funds based on false allegations such as being “pro-terrorism” and/or “anti-Semitic.” Perhaps the most disturbing example of state pressure for suppression of freedom of speech is the recent Canadian Parliament vote to support a Conservative motion to “condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction] movement, both here at home and abroad” (2016).

Other more recent attacks by Zionist pressure groups in Canada include targeting Western University law professor Michael Lynk after the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed him in March 2016 as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Israel’s UN Watch and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) lobbied the Canadian government to pressure the UN to withdraw Lynk’s appointment based on allegations of subjectivity and “one-sidedness.” Lynk, whose appointment is independent, disinterested, and unpaid, publicly responded: "My allegiance is to international law, to human-rights law.” The effort to terminate Lynk’s appointment failed, but the smear campaign against him continued. In July 2017, Lynk was attacked once again by the same pressure groups for a presentation he delivered in Baku, Azerbaijan, at the

International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem—Leveraging International Law and UN Resolutions. The Zionist lobby demanded that Western University “cease and desist” any support provided to professor Lynk.\(^{19}\) The university, as well as academic and legal communities across the country, supported Lynk and condemned the Zionist interference, pressure, and threats to academic freedom.\(^{20}\)

Zionist groups also recently targeted the Palestinian-Canadian Nadia Shofani, a teacher with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board in the Toronto area. For a full year, Shofani endured vicious attacks by B’nai Brith Canada, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, and the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center–Canada. She was accused of supporting “terrorism” for delivering a speech during a Palestinian solidarity event in Toronto in the summer of 2016. Shoufani was suspended and interrogated by her school board, and smeared by Zionist groups and the Canadian mainstream media. Her integrity and well-being were jeopardized by unfounded allegations. After a year of struggle, Shoufani was reinstated in her position. Liz Stuart, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association, stated: “Earlier this year Ms. Shoufani’s case came before the Ontario College of Teachers and she was found not to be in breach of the professional conduct expected of a teacher.”\(^{21}\) Stuart, whose union defended Shoufani, added, “A teacher should never have to worry that their professional reputation will be attacked in an effort to prevent them from exercising their


\(^{21}\) Ali Abunimah, “Canadian Teacher Wins Against Israel Lobby Effort to have her Fired,” Electronic Intifada, September 18, 2017.
right to free expression…. Despite this, we remain incredibly disappointed that her professional integrity was publicly called into question without due process having occurred."22 Not only has the freedom of expression of educators been targeted but also students’ access to knowledge pertaining to Palestine has been delimited. For example, in 2006, the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) demanded that the Ontario Library Association withdraw Canadian author Deborah Ellis’s book, *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*, from the school board’s library shelves. The book was “among 20 books selected by librarians for the Silver Birch award, which is decided by the votes of students in Grades 4 to 6.”23 Despite PEN Canada and the Writers' Union accusing the CJC of censorship, the Toronto District School Board withdrew the book and restricted access to students in Grade 7 or higher. Several school boards in Ontario followed suit by refusing to stock the book, restricting access, or discouraging its use.24 In a similar but failed attempt in Britain, Zionist groups pressured the publisher of the award-winning author Elizabeth Laird's children’s book *A Little Piece of Ground* to withdraw the book. The book depicts the experience of a Palestinian boy from the West Bank.25

Such suppressions of freedom of expression pertaining to Palestinian human rights are an extension of more aggressive forms in occupied Palestine. Palestinian artists regularly experience invasions of their studios during uprisings and endless restrictions on their movements within the occupied homeland and beyond. In an example of the degree to which Israeli colonial rule can suppress the Palestinian right to freedom of expression, occupation forces prohibited Palestinian artists in the West Bank from using the colours of the

22 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
Palestinian flag in their paintings during the first Intifada. Control over the curriculum taught in schools and post-secondary institutions, imprisonment of students, and invasions of universities and schools were regular occurrences during the first and second Intifadas. After the 1993 “peace” process and Oslo Accords, this war on Palestinian culture transformed into a total isolation of Palestinian artists from each other and from their institutions. The population of Gaza is now essentially locked in a prison, denied movement to Jerusalem, the West Bank, or the outside world. Likewise, artists in the West Bank can’t reach Jerusalem, multiple checkpoints divide the West Bank itself, and many are prevented from travelling outside the country. Within the state of Israel, Israeli politicians do not hide the policy of suppression and censorship of the Palestinian narrative and culture. The Israeli minister of culture and sports, Miri Regev, has stated (2015), “if it is necessary to censor, I will censor,” and “I will not lend a hand to damaging the image of the state and Israel Defense Forces soldiers.” Under Regev’s leadership, funding for A Parallel Time, a play by the Palestinian Al-Midan theatre in Haifa, was cut. Israel’s minister of education, Naphtali Bennett, “ordered a re-evaluation of whether the play should remain among those available to school children through the national “culture basket’." In 2014, the Israeli government demanded the return of funding from the Palestinian director Suha Arraf for her film Villa Touma, because she acknowledged her film as Palestinian. In response, Arraf changed the country of production to “stateless.” In Jerusalem, Palestinian theatres face pressure and closure from heavy Israeli taxes, which Palestinians cannot afford.

---

The censorship of Palestinian culture and voices is not limited to the colonized country but also extends to Western countries including the US. Although it is not the concern of this essay, the experiences of American-Palestinian academics and artists such as Samia Halaby, Steven Salaita, and Rabab Abd Al Hadi are worth mentioning. They have faced threats, intimidation, smears, dismissal from teaching positions, and the deprivation of funding and opportunities for exhibiting their artworks. These circumstances not only reveal how academic freedom and freedom of expression is threatened by the ideologies of private funders of universities and art institutions, but also have generated public outrage and resistance. The book, *We Will Not be Silenced: The Academic Repression of Israel's Critics*, edited by William I. Robinson and Maryam S. Griffin (2017), presents testimonies of the alarming erosion of freedom of expression pertaining to Palestinians rights in the US. The publication also exposes the tactics Zionist groups use to silence critics of Israel and advocates of social justice, not only in the US but also in Canada.

In Canada, before September 11, 2001, suppression of the Palestinian narrative was invisible in the public sphere. In the cultural field, renowned Canadian artist, Jamelie Hassan, a second generation Lebanese-Canadian, recalls her experience:

Mentioning the word “Palestine” by artists was an issue that puts artists on the defensive side. When a solo exhibition of my work was presented at Museum London (at the time it was called the London Regional Art Gallery) in 1984, Brenda Wallace, the gallery director, was pressured by the board of trustees and by some collectors to cancel my exhibition. Although she did not cancel the show, she did lose her job due to her independent position on many social issues. I personally was attacked by the *Globe and Mail* art critic John Bentley Mays, who
had not seen the show, for my “anti-Zionist” politics, even though my exhibit did not have any work that addressed the Palestine/Israel issue. Subsequently, after several artists came forward to support my work, Mays was forced to readdress his position after seeing the exhibition.²⁹

Hassan and Wallace were attacked because of their beliefs and commitments to social justice. Of course, there are many other undocumented and untold stories of people throughout the country who faced intimidation because of their identity or thoughts on injustices taking place in Palestine.

One of the first attacks on freedom of artistic expression in Canada right after 9/11 occurred when the director of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (now Canadian Museum of History), Victor Rabinovitch, attempted to censor the show The Lands Within Me: Expressions by Canadian Artists of Arab Origin, an exhibition of 26 Arab-Canadian artists. The show, which took Syrian-Canadian curator Aida Kaouk five years to organize, was scheduled to open on October 18, 2001. Rabinovitch, in a subjective decision, postponed the exhibition on the grounds that it lacked “context.” The decision was made without consultation with or the knowledge of the exhibiting artists. An advocacy campaign organized by the exhibiting artists, including Rawi Hage and Jayce Salloum, drew media attention and resulted in the intervention of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien during a parliamentary session, which forced the museum to reverse its decision. Although the show opened as originally scheduled on October 18, what followed was disturbing. After one week, the museum cancelled the position of curator Aida Kaouk after ten years of employment, and the Canadian Jewish Federation and B’nai Brith launched an attack against the installation of

second-generation Lebanese-Canadian, Vancouver-based artist Jayce Salloum, calling for its removal. Salloum’s installation represented Palestinian, Lebanese, and Yugoslavian experiences, and included testimony from a Lebanese woman, Soha Bechara, about her experience in the notorious Khayyam Prison operated by Israel in South Lebanon. The Zionist groups called Salloum’s work an “inappropriate one-sided promotion of hostility and divisiveness.” “Salloum's video is not cultural, it is political.”30 His work, these groups claimed, “presents a narrow biased political agenda,” and contains “political propaganda.” They declared that Canada could not afford to allow “the promotion of hatred under the guise of tolerance.” 31

Responding to these accusations Salloum wrote:

In the current climate of suppression and repression of any debate and dissention, discursive activities such that art can be, may be one of the few domains left for us to express unpopular ideas, resistance, and the complexities of our lives and the lives of those we choose to identify with…. We have struggled for this space to call our own and it is one that we can still use to champion difference, to provide a heterogeneous engagement with the social and political realities around us, and to facilitate a means of contemplation that can counter the imposition of consent.32

The cancellation of curator Aida Kaouk’s employment contract (she was later transferred to another position), and the cancelation of the Middle Eastern and Southeast

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
Asia programs at the Museum of Civilization were alarming acts. The attempt to censor Salloum’s critical work—one of 26 artists—triggered public debate about freedom of expression and lobby groups’ interference in public institutions. Media theorist and curator Laura Marks wrote,

It is a gloomy situation when people feel they must ask why Canada should care about oppression and self-determination in other countries. While Canada’s immigration and human rights policies seem ever more sensitive to the needs of global corporations, dissident art like Salloum’s insists that Canadian-ness involves the responsibility to facilitate the global flow of humans, rather than of capital.  

Attacks on Palestine solidarity and the Palestinian narrative have recently transformed into a cultural war. Princeton University professor emeritus of international law Richard Folk, whose knowledge of conditions in Palestine is based on his work as UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories from 2008 to 2014, considers the ongoing suppression of debate on Palestine/Israel a cultural war of aggression. Effectively, this war, which is funded by some of the most powerful supporters of Israel, such as Sheldon Adelson, the billionaire casino magnate, threatens free speech beyond Palestine/Israel. This war is accompanied by campaigns of “branding” the image of Israel to divert attention

from its violations and non-compliance with international law. Israel presents itself through various international cultural platforms as a democratic and culturally vibrant state, concealing not only the history of ongoing colonization but also systematic discrimination against Palestinians—the Nakba survivors who hold Israeli citizenship. In an example of “branding” that received international media attention in 2009, Israel’s embassy in Canada partnered with the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) to feature a celebratory “Spotlight on Tel Aviv.” The Israeli consul general in Toronto, Amir Gissin, framed TIFF as “a test market for the Israeli Brand.” This “branding test” was met by protests from artists and filmmakers including many participants at TIFF. Over 1500 internationals, and over sixty Palestinian and Israeli artists, including Elia Suleiman and Udi Aloni, signed a letter accusing TIFF of sanitizing Israel’s occupation. This partnership, according to the “Toronto Declaration,” issued by artists, was a colonial rewriting of the city of Tel Aviv’s history, which stands on the ruins of the Palestinian city of Jaffa. Such branding conceals facts about the horror of ethnic cleansing Jaffa endured during the Nakba. Israeli historian Ilan Pappe offers a glimpse of what that city endured:

The Greater Jaffa area included twenty-four villages and seventeen mosques; today one mosque survives, but not one of the villages is left standing…. Its entire population of 50,000 was expelled with the ‘help’ of British mediation, meaning that their flight was less chaotic than in Haifa. Still, there were scenes reminiscent of the horrors that took place in the northern harbor of Haifa: people were literally pushed into the sea when the crowds tried to board the far-too-

36 The Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah) lists over 50 discriminatory laws against Palestinians citizen of Israel. See https://www.adalah.org/en/law/index.
small fishing boats that would take them to Gaza, while Jewish troops shot over their heads to hasten their expulsion.37

In response to TIFF’s “celebration” of Tel Aviv, Canadian filmmaker John Greyson withdrew his film and instead offered it online. While critical artists are slandered for engaging in peaceful boycott, the Israel-Zionist lobby—opposed to advocating for an end to Israel’s colonization and military occupation—continues to contribute to maintaining a colonial racist system that fragments Palestine with hundreds of checkpoints and open-air prisons, imposes martial law to imprison thousands including children, continues to seize land, demolish homes, and destroy the Palestinian landscape, and denies millions of refugees their right of return.

**Israeli-Zionist Attempts to Censor the Exhibition *Invisible***

In this section I recount my experience facing the Israeli-Zionist pressure groups that attempted to censor my exhibition *Invisible*. My intention is to provide a precise documentation of what happened in order to contextualize my experience within the broader struggle against the silencing of Palestinian narratives outlined above, and the suppression of the rights of countless numbers of artists and academics across the world whose work deals with human rights and the violence of colonialism and war. Additionally, I believe that sharing my experience will help further reveal the rhetoric and tactics that Zionist groups use to censor art and research pertaining to Palestine.

---

Military Exercise in the Negev Prison, 7min, 2014, still frame.

The works in the multimedia installation *Invisible* represented the largely silenced and obscured narratives of human rights violations in occupied Palestine, particularly Israel's extra-judicial assassination of Palestinian intellectuals, leaders, and activists, the abuse of thousands of Palestinian political prisoners, and the suppression of peaceful protests against Israel's occupation and colonization of Palestinian land. The exhibition included four videos and an installation of photographic prints.

*Frames from the Negev Prison*, 2,000 photographic prints (4x4 inches each), and *Military Exercise in the Negev Prison*, sound, 7min. depict Israel’s horrifying treatment of Palestinian political prisoners in the Negev prison. Negev or Ktsi’ot prison is one of twenty prisons and interrogation centres located inside the state of Israel where Palestinian political
prisoners from the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and other parts of the country are imprisoned. Located in the southern desert of the country, Negev prison is one of the largest prisons, where thousands of Palestinians are held, a great number without charge, trial, or access to legal rights, family visits, health, or education services. *Frames from the Negev Prison* and *Military Exercise in the Negev Prison* are based on highly censored footage recorded by soldiers and obtained by court order of a military training exercise carried out in the Negev prison after midnight on a day in 2007 by one of Israel's elite military units while prisoners were asleep.

---

The training exercise, which according to court documents was aimed at “raising the confidence of the prison guards,” resulted in the murder of prisoner Mohamed Al-Ashqar and the injury of dozens of others. *Frames from the Negev Prison* consists of one thousand images captured from the censored footage, resized into squares and printed alongside another one thousand blank black squares. These prints were exhibited on the gallery wall to create a wall reminiscent of Israel’s Apartheid Wall, which was built with American funds in Palestinian territories, resulting in seized land, the confinement of entire communities, and the separation of Palestinians from each other and from their farm land and jobs. The sound-text video *Military Exercise in the Negev Prison* consists of the sound of the prison invasion and a translated text of the exchange between prisoners and soldiers. It was displayed in an enclosed black space within the gallery. The third work, a four-minute video called *Bil’in* (2010), is based on footage I recorded while participating in a protest in the village of Bil’in in Ramallah region, against the seizure of 70 per cent of its land for Israel’s Apartheid Wall. Sound again dominates, this time recordings of teargas being fired and protesters running and coughing. The image I created for this video represents the effect of teargas on protesters’ vision.

*Target* (2012), is a four-minute video based on photographs of Palestinian intellectuals and leaders who were extra-judicially assassinated by Israel in multiple locations, including Europe, the Arab world, and occupied Palestine. The last video, *Mourning* (2012), is a four-minute video based on footage from my brother’s funeral in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria in 1986. My brother, Khalid, was extra-judicially assassinated in Athens by Israel’s secret agency, Mossad, in 1986, at the age of 38. The agents who killed him entered Greece with fake documents and then fled the country after their murderous operation. They have never been brought to justice. This record of his funeral, and the public protest that followed
his assassination, was kept intact in my family’s archive for twenty-five years. In 2011, I broke the silence of the trauma caused by his loss and by Israel’s refusal to allow his body to be buried at home. The result is the silent video *Mourning*, which shows the outraged crowd, including my parents, siblings, brother’s partner, and his two children. I employed similar formal strategies in the production and display of this video and *Target*.

Video still, *Target*, 4min, 2012

Two weeks after the opening of *Invisible* at Karsh-Masson Gallery on May 8, 2014, the Israeli ambassador along with Zionist interest groups attacked the show in an attempt to censor it. These attacks diverted attention from the critical content of the artworks, notably, the illegal occupation and settler-colonialism in Palestine. A campaign of smears and threats began with a closed meeting between the Israeli ambassador to Canada, Rafael Barak, and the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson. After the meeting the ambassador attacked the exhibition,
claiming “this is not an exhibition that is very candid...it’s something that hides here a message that is very difficult for me, as Israeli ambassador, to accept. It’s a message that is glorifying terrorism.” I was shocked by these allegations, which not only violated my right of freedom of expression but also made me feel as though the Israeli occupation, which has shattered and is still shattering so many lives, had extended to Canada. It brought back difficult memories of my life under occupation, when I first heard the word “terrorism” as a child in the late 1960s, broadcast through an Israel radio station operated by the Israeli occupation authorities shortly after the 1967 invasion of the West Bank and Gaza, and directed to the Palestinians, in Arabic. The radio station frequently used the words “terrorism” and “terrorists” to describe the Palestinian resistance movement and its members, including my teenage brother, who cut the phone lines to the Israeli occupation headquarters in our town, and was imprisoned and tortured for this act of “terrorism.” After September 11, 2001, the terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” would again enter and dominate Western media and public discourses.

Soon after the ambassador’s attack on the exhibition, the Israeli embassy issued a statement with the same accusations and tagging the assassinated Palestinian intellectuals and leaders whose images appeared on the cover of the exhibition’s brochure as “terrorists.” The attacks spiralled to include the Jewish Federation of Ottawa (JFO) and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affair (CIJA). Both groups used attack language reflective not only of denial but also of the colonizer orientalist, who views the colonized as less human. Framing Israel as a victim of the people it is colonizing, these groups attacked the exhibition and also the

city of Ottawa, the public art program that operates Karsh-Masson Gallery, and the Ontario Arts Council for funding the exhibition. They demanded that the mayor close down the exhibition and called for restrictions on the gallery’s art selection process to prevent artworks such as mine from being shown to the public in the future. Such a demand was unprecedented in the history of the gallery, and raised serious questions about the extent to which pressure groups will go to suppress narratives with which they disagree.

The mayor, however, defended my rights, based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In his reply to Andrea Freedman, the president of JFO, Mayor Jim Watson wrote:

[T]he city has never, in over twenty years of hosting independently juried exhibits, shut down an art exhibit…. It is my duty to ensure that the law of the land is upheld by the City. In this spirit, I cannot participate in any way, shape or form in the violation of an individual’s fundamental Charter rights…any attempts by the City to remove the works from the exhibit would constitute an infringement on the Artist’s right to freedom of expression.40

Deputy city manager Steve Kanellakos also responded after being bombarded by the media emphasizing that nothing in the show violated Canadian law and that disliking or disagreeing with any artwork is not unusual. “Art, by its nature, is going to be controversial, depending on your point of view,” he said.41 Kanellakos revealed that the city had “received two emailed

40 Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson’s letter to the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, May 23, 2014, see Appendix II.
complaints, as well as the opinion voiced by Israel’s ambassador to Canada, Rafael Barak.”

He confirmed that the show would not be closed, asking, “Who gives me the right, or anybody the right, to pull an artist’s work if it’s not breaching some law of the land?”

The City placed a disclaimer in the gallery indicating that an independent professional art jury selected the exhibition and that the views in the show did not represent the city. However, the mayor did call for a review of the arms-length art selection process at the gallery. The process has not changed as of the writing this paper.

Despite the city’s refusal to submit to pressure to close down the exhibition, the campaign of intimidation and accusations intensified and continued for several weeks. Politicians in the Conservative federal government soon got involved. The minister of state for democratic reform, Pierre Poilievre, who claimed that he had seen the exhibition, condemned it in the Canadian Parliament. “Mr. Speaker, I recently saw the exhibit that celebrates notorious terrorists…. As a minister for the National Capital Region and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I condemn this appalling celebration of terrorism in the strongest of terms.”

For a minister of “democratic reform” to denounce the democratic right of a Canadian citizen ensured by the Canadian Constitution raises serious questions about what is “democracy”. His statement is not surprising, however, considering the Conservative Party under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper had shifted Canada’s decades-long foreign policy, which adhered at least “by appearance” to international law pertaining to the Palestine-Israel, to blind and unconditional support for Israel. This shift was evident in intensified collaboration between Canada and Israel at many levels including trade, security, 

\footnote{42 Ibid.}

\footnote{43 Ibid.}

and military agreements.\footnote{For example, the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (see \url{http://international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/israel/fta-ale/background-contexte.aspx?lang=eng}; and the Canada-Israel strategic partnership (see, \url{http://www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/canada_israel_MOU-prot_ent_canada_israel.aspx?lang=eng}).} All of this came at a time when the rule of law and the traditions of upholding human rights in Canada itself were deteriorating.\footnote{Some examples of deteriorating civil liberties and human rights in Canada, particularly under the previous Conservative government, include the approval of Bill C-51, which allows the state to detain “terrorism” suspects based on secret evidence; the cases of Maher Arrar, Abdullah Almalki, Ahmad El Maati, and Muayyed Nureddin, who were imprisoned and tortured in Syria and Egypt based on false information provided to the US authorities and to authoritative regimes in their countries of origin; and, most disturbingly, the case of the child Omar Khadr, who was held and tortured in Guantanamo Bay prison and abandoned by the Canadian government.}

Among the more vicious attacks on *Invisible* came from the Canadian Senate where Conservative Senator Linda Frum delivered an inflammatory speech on June 4, 2014 attacking the exhibition. The same day, a segment of that speech was published in the *National Post* newspaper under the headline: “A Shameful Tribute to Terror, Masquerading as ‘Art’ in Ottawa.” Senator Frum, who claimed she had seen the exhibition, made unfounded accusations entirely removed from the field of art as well as from any historical and political context, portraying an occupying power that has been illegally dispossessing the Palestinian population for decades as a victim:

I know I speak on behalf of all decent and peace-loving Canadians who abhor terror as a means to obtain political ends. For the citizens of Ottawa, this exhibit is a particular travesty since their tax dollars are being used to glorify the murder of innocent civilians…. The mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, and his city councillors claim to be powerless to confront this despicable rebuke of Canadian values. They
have cast themselves in the roles of defenders of freedom of speech, rather than as enablers of hate.\textsuperscript{47}

From her position in the Canadian Senate, Frum, rather than defend a Canadian citizen’s fundamental right of freedom of expression against foreign interference, blindly repeated the Zionist allegations, provoking indignation and hate, and further denied the fact that Israel is a colonizing power that violates international and humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{48}

Israel’s ambassador, Zionist pressure groups, and Canadian Conservative politicians’ attacks on \textit{Invisible} were reported by Canada’s mainstream news media including the \textit{National Post}, \textit{Ottawa Citizen}, \textit{CBC}, \textit{Montreal Gazette}, \textit{Maclean’s Magazine}, and \textit{Al-Quds}, as well as international outlets. For the most part, the Canadian news media coverage adopted the Zionist narrative, thus spreading Israeli misinformation and intensifying the campaign of intimidation and threats. The city provided me with protection and secured the exhibition after receiving threats. A disturbing piece of propaganda appeared on June 14 when a full-page ad was published in the \textit{Ottawa Citizen} condemning the exhibition and the City of Ottawa for not shutting it down, and demanding that the city prevent future exhibitions such as mine from being exhibited. The ad read: “The city must never again promote such exhibits, and it must condemn the terrorism this display seeks to sanitize.” Several groups such as the Canadian Coalition Against Terror (C-CAT), the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, and Terrorism and Security Experts of Canada, sponsored the ad. C-


\textsuperscript{48} The United Nations Security Council and General Assembly have adopted hundreds of resolutions demanding an end to Israel’s illegal acts, including the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, confirming refugees’ right of return, end of land seizures and the building settlements, an end to house demolitions and the disproportionate use of military power, an end to deportations, imprisonment, and torture including of children, and an end to collective punishment, among other countless demands and condemnations.
CAT’s website displayed a message from then Prime Minister Stephen Harper encouraging debate about “terrorism”: “I commend C-CAT for encouraging a substantive dialogue on terrorism. You have…galvanized divergent groups across the country to unite against those that seek to undermine the cohesiveness of Canadian Society.”

These attacks also generated tremendous support and expressions of outrage against such a flagrant interference in an art exhibition. Numerous organizations and community members condemned the Israeli-Zionist-Conservative intrusion on the freedom of expression, including Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJME), Independent Jewish Voices (IJV), Vancouver-based Seriously Free Speech, and Faculty 4 Palestine, among others. Independent Jewish Voices pointed out in a public statement that the Israel lobby’s tactics intend to:

Deliberately mislead the public and take attention away from the content of the exhibit itself…. This is a familiar tactic of Israel lobby groups in Canada and worldwide. Increasingly fearful of the growing tide of international support for Palestinian human rights, they attempt to silence and even to criminalize this principled support…. We reject the bullying tactics of the Israeli state and its lobby groups such as CIJA and the Jewish Federation.49

Ottawa City Hall received countless letters of support warning of the Zionist threat to the Canadian constitution and the interference of the Israeli ambassador in a local art exhibition, and questioning the taboo of criticizing the Israeli state for its settler-colonial

practices and crimes. Over 120 Canadian and international visual, media arts, and cultural organizations and individuals issued an open letter to the Ottawa mayor and Deputy City Manager. In it, they commended the mayor for protecting “Canadian values of freedom of artistic expression,” and expressed their concerns about the “Israeli Embassy’s attack on these democratic values,” and about the threat to “the long standing tradition of arms length funding and arms length adjudication developed over many years through the public sector.” And they urged the mayor to protect the independence and transparency of the art selection process. In another open letter to mayor Jim Watson and to deputy city manager Steve Kanellakos, 258 organizations and individuals expressed similar concerns about the Zionist lobby’s effort to silence the Palestinian narrative. The signatories noted that the attempt at censorship comes at a particularly sensitive time as the Israeli lobby has stepped up its specific and coordinated activities in Canada. This reactionary move is grounded in specious lies about the work on view at Karsh-Masson Gallery as well as the realities on the ground in Palestine. Nazzal’s work has been targeted precisely because it bridges the gap left by the Israeli barrage of dis-information…. Nazzal, in the tradition of artists who take up the call for social justice, provides a window on her real, grounded experience through her art…. The transparent attempts to silence Rehab Nazzal echo attempts made throughout history to silence the truth when it challenges power.

Despite the outrage in art and activist communities, over a matter of weeks, claims that my artworks endorsed "terrorism" escalated in intensity. I was first accused of "glorifying terrorism," then of "celebrating terrorism," and finally of "memorializing terror." This misrepresentation, smear campaign, and vilification of my work was staggering. For, if the intention of my works was to shed light on the terror that the Palestinians encounter by illegal colonial military occupation, and on Israel’s non-compliance with international law (including extra-judicial assassinations), how, I wondered, did the work amount to a "celebration, memorialization, or glorification of terror"?

In response to these attacks, I called for a public debate along with the Karsh-Masson gallery. The Ottawa Public Art Program that operates the gallery organized an artist talk on June 1 moderated by curator Diana Nemiroff, at Ottawa’s St. Brigid’s Centre for the Arts. The attendance was overwhelming and the discussion was illuminating. Individual Zionists were present and attempted to disrupt the event without success.52 Ottawa photographer Justin Wannocott described the event as “one of the most diverse art events he had ever attended in the city.” The “controversy” around the exhibition had mobilized people, including those who had little or no interest in contemporary art.53 The Zionist intimidations and false accusations had transformed the exhibition into a “discursive event” about the role of art that went beyond what the art in question depicted, and it stimulated debates about censorship and the suppression of public discourse on the Palestinian struggle for freedom, equality, and rights.

---

52 Marie-Danielle Smith, “Palestinian Artist Rehab Nazzal Talks to Crowd about Controversial Exhibit, Artistic Freedom,” *Ottawa Citizen*, June, 1, 2014.
In an article titled “Is ‘Terrorism’ Glorified in Art Exhibit in Ottawa City Hall?” the Ottawa Citizen’s art critic Peter Simpson reminded us that, “art by its nature is subjective.” After experiencing the exhibition, Simpson concluded, “What I don’t see is a celebration of terrorism, nor any call for more people to die.”54 In Canadian Art magazine, Diana Nemiroff illuminated the difference between political speech and critical art, and warned of the danger of politicians deciding what art Canadians can or cannot see. She emphasized that the public sphere in a democratic society should encompass diverse views. On separating art from politics, Nemiroff reminded readers of the 1982 Applebaum-Hebert Report that stated:

Government serves the social need for order, predictability and control—seeking consensus, establishing norms, and offering uniformity of treatment. Cultural activity, by contrast, thrives on spontaneity and accepts diversity, discord and dissent as natural conditions—and withers if it is legislated or directed.… The cultural sphere, embracing as it does artistic and intellectual activity, has as one of its central functions the critical scrutiny of all other spheres including the political. On this score it cannot be subordinated to the others.55

To exclude the Palestinian experience and deny Canadians the right to be informed of this experience were apparently the aims of those who wished to censor Invisible. In addition to violating the right to self-representation, such attempts infringed on the right to mourn and commemorate. Ottawa writer Michelle Wienroth articulates how our collective memories of atrocities cannot be bounded indefinitely by dominant political powers:

---

If there are clear victors and losers, the latter's grief can never be annulled by a sense of retributive justice. War binds the defeated to the recollection of unspeakable tragedy, so unspeakable that it is often silenced by public discourse. Still, in spite of such suppression, collective memory resurfaces in the interstices of aesthetic culture. In art and music, in theatre and dance, the story of war's victims is revived.  

According to Weinroth, the artist, the exhibition, and what it represents, including the collective trauma of the Nakba, were subjected not only to attempted censorship but also to interrogation. The hostile Zionist outcries sought to capture my voice in the cage of a false narrative, a narrative that intruded on my exhibit and haunted it with the watchful eyes of colonial occupation. Indeed, the accusations levelled at my work reflected an extraordinary measure of oppression and denial—the denial of a horrific truth about the Palestinian struggle: the Palestinian people, with no army, locked up in open-air prisons, and facing one of the most militarized Western settler-colonial states in the world, are subjected to daily assaults and trauma.

Throughout this experience, my encounter with the Canadian mainstream media revealed a troubling trend now dominating Western media. The image of the “Arab,” including Palestinians, as “terrorist” rather than freedom fighters is pervasive, and has even intensified since September 11, 2001. What my experience revealed, not surprisingly, was the media’s interest in “terrorism” accusations. Reporters, with the exception of a few, recited the Israeli

---

ambassador’s allegation. Many centred their questions on whether my brother, extra-judicially assassinated in Athens by Israel, was a “terrorist.” I tried to draw a distinction between freedom fighters and terrorists, and between colonized peoples’ right to self-defence against settler-colonial oppression, but with no success. I tried to convey the example of freedom fighter Nelson Mandela, who was perceived for decades as a terrorist during the South African struggle for freedom, but again with no result. Very few reporters grasped the danger of political interference in the arts and the threat to freedom of expression. I succeeded only in publishing a short piece in the Ottawa Citizen, which was juxtaposed with a Zionist article, presumably intending to achieve “objectivity” in an inherently unbalanced situation.  

My experience with National Post chief editor Jonathan Kay was most disturbing; a discreet censorship of my voice. The National Post ran two pieces on the subject of my exhibit, in which I was the person under attack. I submitted an opinion editorial responding to Senator Linda Frum’s piece published in June. In an email exchange, Kay wrote on June 13: “The problem is that your piece contains language and claims—such as the notion that Israel engages in state terrorism...that will immediately cause readers to regard it as a species of fanatical, anti-Zionist propaganda.” Kay here refers to information included in my article, which was based on scholarly works by both Palestinian and Israeli historians, regarding the Nakba, and on reports by various UN organizations. As a condition of publication, Kay proposed to radically modify the article—he cut out key areas, added his view, and recast it to suit his political ideology, distorting the meaning I sought to convey. In my response to him I wrote: “you colonized my message and redesigned it to suit your stance...you have

58 See email correspondence with Jonathan Kay, Appendix I.
subjected my submission to serious interrogation and constraint.” I refused to sign my name to the article and withdrew my submission.

This experience left me questioning Canadian media professionalism, impartiality, and the role of editors in blocking certain views and disseminating others. It also illuminated the false functioning of an open editorial, which is supposed to provide the public with views that are not necessarily held by the newspaper’s editors. Similar to politician Linda Frum’s claims to represent all “decent” Canadians, Jonathan Kay effectively claimed to speak on behalf of all readers while controlling op-ed space designated for diverse views.

Some news outlets claimed that I had declined to respond to their questions, which was not true, while others never responded to my request to make my voice heard. After these rejections, I felt that my views and work had been slandered by repeated accusations, and that my efforts at self-defence were continually shut down. Nevertheless, the attempt to censor Invisible failed. In seeking to remove the exhibition from the public's eye, the pro-Israel lobby ultimately raised its profile, giving it exceptional visibility, a prominence that extended well beyond Ottawa and indeed beyond Canada. The exhibition withstood weeks of relentless assault. Its presence at Ottawa’s Karsh-Masson Gallery left a legacy—the message that art cannot be circumscribed by colonial state power or by political pressure groups, and that significant art is indispensable, especially in times of injustice. It confirmed that art offers a rich field of debate where challenging questions are asked and where suppressed issues are brought to light.

Attempts to Censor Choreographies of Resistance Exhibition

The multimedia exhibition Choreographies of Resistance was displayed at Western University’s McIntosh Gallery in July 2017. The works in the exhibition were based on field
research I carried out in Palestine in 2015–2016. Using visual and sonic material, the works addressed Palestinian popular resistance to Israel’s settler-colonialism, providing an alternative representation of the Palestinian struggle for freedom, self-determination, and right of return. (See previous chapter for a description of the exhibition.) Here, I focus on the attempt to censor the exhibition.

I had not anticipated an attack on *Choreographies of Resistance*, given the exhibition had already been shown in Axeneo7 Gallery in Gatineau/Ottawa a few months earlier (March–April). Additionally, the earlier assault on *Invisible* had generated a wide public protest against Israeli-Zionist interference that, according to many, had backfired. But once again, I found myself on the defensive for representing my experience and what I have encountered and witnessed in Palestine. Again I had to defend my right to freedom of expression against my oppressors and their lobby groups. This pattern of assault raises questions about why Palestinian self-representation is perceived in Western countries as controversial, and why Western Zionist political pressure groups continue to flagrantly attack any form of debate about Palestine/Israel.

Two days after *Choreographies of Resistance* opened on July 8, 2017, Zionist lobby groups attacked the exhibition using rhetoric similar to that previously used to attack *Invisible*. The assaults were mainly led by the following Zionist groups: B’nai Brith, Hillel Ontario, Stand With Us, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, and the American publication *Algemeiner*.59 In a statement titled “B’nai Brith Canada Condemns Federal Funding for Anti-Israel Exhibit” (July 10, 2017), the group claimed that the exhibition “glorifies the actions of Palestinian protesters, including stone-throwers who promote violence under the guise of resistance.” It

accused Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), which funded my doctoral research, of supporting “one-sided projects.” Similarly, *Algemeiner*, which, according to its website, “serves as a valiant media voice addressing the most compelling issues of our time, with vision, integrity and moral clarity,” published a provocative article titled “Jewish, Zionist Groups Call for Canadian University to Take Down Art Exhibition Created by Sister of Palestinian Terrorist” (July 12, 2017).

The smear campaigns focused on my research funding, my right to exhibit my work, and on my family associations. These are well-established tactics that oppressive powers use against artists whose work does not meet their own criteria. The attacks on my funding and right to exhibit my work deny that social research is about the creation of knowledge that is diverse in form and purpose. One of the purposes of critical research as a generator of knowledge is to liberate discourse on controversial issues from the dominant view. When rooted in reliable research and documentation, social research aims at “facilitating a critique of social reality, emancipating people…and thus liberating them from oppressive and exploitative social structures.”

The Zionist pressure groups calling on SSHRC to impose restrictions on the production of and access to diverse knowledge not only reflect ignorance of the principles of social research but also a blatant call for censorship of research subjects relevant to Palestine. It is apparent that Zionist lobby groups want to conceal the unspeakable and indefensible violations in Palestine, including crimes committed on a daily basis. Indeed, what I have witnessed amounts to war crimes such as the seizure of land, murder of protesters, imprisonment and torture of children, attacks on ambulances, evictions

---

of families from their homes in Jerusalem, and the daily torture of Palestinians downtown in the city of Hebron.\textsuperscript{61}

Attacks by political interest groups on freedom of expression and academic freedom not only target Palestinians but also contribute to delegitimizing the struggle of Indigenous people against the long history of settler-colonialism in Canada. It is not surprising that B’nai Brith’s president objected to the exhibition pamphlet’s reference to similarities between settler colonial practices against indigenous peoples in both Canada and Palestine—“there is a reference to Canada…presenting both Israel and Canada as occupying nations.”\textsuperscript{62} The pamphlet also included a symbolic acknowledgment of the land I was then living on (“Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Atawandaron peoples. Western University recognizes the significant historical and contemporary contribution of all the Original Peoples of Turtle Island to the development of Canada”). Such acknowledgment is a first step towards recognizing and resolving the injustices Indigenous people have endured for centuries. Perhaps, in parallel, B’nai Brith’s CEO fears recognition of the Nakba and Palestinian refugees’ right of return as first steps towards justice in Palestine/Israel.

With the support of my advisory committee, my lawyer, Dimitri Lascaris, activist and artist communities, human rights groups, and the McIntosh Gallery, Western University did not succumb to the Zionist pressure. In one of the letters sent to the gallery and university administration, Thomas Woodley, president of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle


\textsuperscript{62} Choreographies of Resistance, exhibition brochure.
East (CJPME), stressed the significant role art plays in countering dominant narratives and breaking prejudices. He wrote:

Such exhibits are essential for the Canadian public to be exposed to alternative global narratives and viewpoints. In Canada and the West, because of historical and cultural biases, certain viewpoints dominate, and others rarely heard. Hosting exhibits like that of Ms. Nazzal help Canadians get out of their bubble, and see life and world events differently.

In a letter to Western president Amit Chakma and vice-president (academic) Janice Deakin (July 17), I wrote:

I appeal to you in your capacity as President and Provost and Vice-President Academic of Western University, and I ask that you publicly defend my right to exhibit my work without the interference from pressure groups, whether internal or external to the university. To be clear, I do not ask that you engage in political controversy. I ask rather that you fulfill your academic duty and responsibility as President and Provost and Vice-President Academic: 1. By publicly upholding and guaranteeing my academic freedom. 2. By publicly reaffirming my academic integrity. 3. By guaranteeing my physical and personal safety as a graduate student at Western University. In defending the legitimacy and integrity of my academic performance (most notably my exhibition), you will defend not only SSHRC's academic legitimacy and integrity, but also that of Western University itself. This, I believe, will be in everyone's interest.
Although the attack was public, Western University’s president and vice-president were reluctant to issue a public response, and instead responded directly to the groups and individuals that had protested or supported the exhibition. The office of the president and provost responded to my letter (18/7/2017):

Please know that we have been responding directly and accordingly to any critics and supporters of your exhibition who have written to us to express their views. We have taken these opportunities to highlight the rigorous academic process through which your artwork and scholarship has been vetted; to underline the principle of academic freedom which is core to our institution; and to emphasize Western’s commitment to maintaining a safe and respectful learning and work environment in which all students, staff and faculty can aspire to excellence and success.

Indeed, academic freedom and freedom of expression should be protected, and art and academic works should generate debate and engage the public on various socio-political issues, not only local but also global. Human rights violations should be everyone’s concern.

My experience with these two exhibitions is not dissimilar to the intimidation, assault, deprivation of jobs and funding, personal attacks, media assaults, and vilifications of work that numerous well-known, but mostly unknown, individuals, including academics, artists, and activists, have faced. I am one of a great number of Palestinians who have had to defend their right to share their experience and express their narrative. Paradoxically, however, despite all efforts to suppress our narrative, the more intense the attacks become, the more
visible our struggle becomes and the more such attacks raise questions, create awareness, and generate support and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle across the world.

Art and culture embody the collective experiences of people, defy erasure, and survive human atrocities and oppression regardless of attempts to eliminate, destroy, appropriate, or censor. Expressions of people’s experiences and their collective memories emerge in creative ways. Attempts to censor or to use the arts for political propaganda are fleeting, even if they temporarily appear to succeed, and often end with regime change and shifts in power as with the Nazis. Derogatory rhetoric used to create controversy, infuse and inflame discrimination, and conceal injustices generally fails regardless of the effort and resources used. Art and culture overpower oppression.

Zionist attempts to suppress Palestinian freedom of expression are not disconnected from the objectives of the seller colonial project that targets Palestinian life, land, culture and narrative.
CHAPTER FOUR: Sound of Settler Colonial Violence

Examinations of settler colonial violence and wars often rely on visual and textual documents and disregard sound as a source of knowledge, a means of expression, and a field of affect. This disregard exists despite our awareness of the effect of sound, particularly the psychological effect of the noise of war machinery on humans and other living creatures since the invention and deployment of aerial war machinery. In recent years, however, studies of sound have gained considerable attention among scholars and artists alike, bringing attention to the significance of all the human senses and an end to the dominance of the sense of vision.

Conceptualizing sound and studying its physiological and psychological effects were of great interest to Medieval Arab philosophers and sound/music theorists, including Al Fiarabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Al-Kindi, among others. These philosophers researched sources and types of sound, described sound’s immersive characteristics, and emphasized the role of experience and sense perception in understanding and theorizing sound. Al-Farabi considered sense perception (ihsas) a necessity, without which conceptualizing sound remains incomplete. He culminated his practice of music and study of musical instruments in the first music studies book, *Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*, The Great Book of Music). Al Farabi asserts that sound “comprehension can be attained by the senses in two

---

1 Abu Nasr al-Farabi (ca. 872–ca. 950) was one of the greatest Arab philosophers. He wrote on logic, psychology, metaphysics, and political philosophy. As a music theorist, he discussed the therapeutic effects of music on the human soul. He also wrote on the origin and interpretation of dreams. Ibn Sina (Abu Ail Al-Husayn Ibn Abe Allah Ibn Sina, (980-1037)) was one of the most famous and influential Arab Muslim philosophers-scientists of the medieval Islamic world, known for his significant contributions to the field of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine in addition to his study of language, voice, and sound. Al Kindi- Abu Yusuf Ya’qub Ibn Ishaq As-Sabbah al-Kindi, (801–873) was a Muslim Arab philosopher, mathematician, and musician. He was the first theoretician of music in the Arab-Islamic world. He is known to have written fifteen treatises on music theory and was the first to explore the therapeutic affect of music.

2 Yaron Klein, "Musical Instruments as Objects of Meaning in Classical Arabic Poetry and Philosophy" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009), 160.
ways”: hearing “either directly from nature (bi-tabi’a) or using the mediation of artificial instrument or objects (bi-sind’a).”

These methods produce two types of sound: “natural” sounds including speech, and “unnatural” sounds produced by human-made instruments. Some unnatural sounds he compared to “medicines” and others to “poisons.” Healing sounds mainly relate to music, which originates with singing, while poisonous sounds are unbearable, deafening, and toxic, such as those originating from weapons used in battle. Among deafening sounds he includes “cymbals (jalddjil) used in battle by the kings of ancient Egypt, and instruments used by the kings of Rome (mulilk Rumiyya) and the sound-producing soldiers (musawwitQri) of the Persian kings.” While healing sounds can relax, intensify, or ease emotions and ignite the imagination (takhyoll) and comprehension (tafahum) of the world, poisonous sounds are tormenting and difficult to tolerate. Not only humans are affected by sound but, according to Al-Kindi, animals too respond to sound produced by human-made instruments. In his investigations, Al-Kindi found that different animal species respond differently to the sounds produced by different musical instruments. For example, “when dolphins and alligators hear music played by a wind instrument (zamr) or the sound of a horn (buq) they become overjoyed. Bees, horses, peacocks, nightingales and gazelles react similarly to music.”

In his book أسباب حدوث الحروف (Asbab Hodouth Al Horouf), philosopher and physician Ibn Sina describes sound as vibrations transmitted through waves, long and short—what we identify today as low and high frequencies. The vibration of sound waves are what give sound its immersive characteristic. Being a physician, Ibn Sina combined the study of the

---

3 Ibid., 196.
4 Ibid., 154.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 124.
7 دراسة فيسولوجيا الأصوات عند ابن سينا من خلال كتابه “أسباب حدوث الحروف” 1.10 (2010).
physical anatomy of the human organs relevant to voice and pronunciation with sounds made by body parts interacting, for example clapping, and distinguished these from artificial sounds created through the body’s interaction with objects and nature. In his study of the relationship of humans to the sonic environment (acoustic ecology), Ibn Sina emphasized the need to listen. This emphasis on listening is of great significance in contemporary sound studies. In this way, John Cage’s disruption of sound-music, and Murray Schafer’s concept of soundscape and deafness caused by modernism, might be said to bridge a gap of centuries during which the sense of hearing and the significance of listening were ignored.

This brief chapter focuses on what Al Farabi identifies as poisonous sound (al-aswat al-musimma), and what contemporary sound scholars term “sound toxicity, or sound pollution.” Poisonous and toxic sounds are those unbearable, deafening sounds often generated by dominant powers, whether by industrial machinery or weaponry. Based largely on my own experiences, I examine sound as it relates to creating sound works that deal with the effects of violent sounds on civilians, the torturous sound of contemporary war machinery, and the relationship of memory to sound.

The sense of hearing has gained prominence in recent decades in the fields of history and anthropology, and much more significantly, in the field of the arts. Canadian scholar Murray Schafer’s study of soundscape—all sounds in a given sonic environment—signalled a growing interest in the sense of hearing and lack of listening in Western culture and helped to bring attention to other human senses as sources of knowledge and means of expression. Critical listening and the examination of sound open the possibilities for challenging the

---

dominance of the sense of vision in Western cultural studies. Schaffer distinguished between sound and noise. For him noise and power are associated, which is why noise can go on for a long time without being questioned, from God’s power manifested in churches and their bells, to capitalist power manifested in Industrial machinery. Noise, then, as Arab philosophers had defined it in the tenth century, is the unbearable sound.

While Shaffer considers the noise of modernism a pollution of the soundscape, some decades earlier, the Futurists in the *Art of Noises* misconceived progress and glorified industrial and war machinery as a response to the “dead end sensorium of classical music and bourgeois aesthetics.” Since the First World War, new sounds have appeared and others have disappeared or been suppressed, resulting in rapid changes to the soundscape. Our hearing sensitivity, especially to natural sound, has been overpowered by the constant addition of new technologies. This is true also in instances of conflict. Over the past two decades, a number of important studies have emerged, focusing on acoustic weapons, as well as the sound of contemporary weapons, including military drones. In *Sonic Warfare* Steve Goodman uses a philosophical and historical lens to explore the “sonic dimension of the ecology of fear,” examining the use of sound as a weapon to inflict pain, panic, and dread. Goodman explores the use of infrasound and ultrasound, the first causing shock, fear, pain, and possibly deafness, and the second—inaudible to the human ear—penetrating the

---

human body and causing extreme pain, nausea, and in some cases internal bleeding.\textsuperscript{13}

U.S. forces stationed in Europe during the Second World War first tested sound as a weapon using sirens to terrorize and cause panic and deception, and deploying artists “in the fabrication of camouflage and fake inflatable equipment, and sound and radio engineers using equipment pioneered at Bell Labs.”\textsuperscript{14} During the Vietnam War the U.S. Air Force used pre-recorded ghostly sounds to terrorize the Viet Cong. More recently, in 2001 the U.S. Army Research Laboratory “invented a nonlethal vortex ring generator, designed to target individuals with a series of flash, impact, and concussion pulses at frequencies near the resonance of human body parts, forcing evacuation from the zone of disturbance.”\textsuperscript{15}

Currently, U.S. forces in Iraq and Israeli occupation forces in Palestine used sonic weaponry widely. Among these weapons were long-range acoustic devises (LRADs), which emit piercing blasts of sound that disable and disperse crowds. LRADs are also used to combat social dissent in Western countries. During the G20 protests in Toronto (2010) the Canadian Civil Liberties Association objected to the use of LRADs, or “sound cannons”, and demanded a restriction on their use by the Toronto and Ontario Provincial Police forces, referring to them as weapons.\textsuperscript{16} Israeli occupation forces frequently use stun grenades, produced by U.S. Combined Systems Inc., against the Palestinian population. One of the most damaging sonic weapons is the sonic boom which Israeli air force jets use, “breaking the sound barrier at low altitude, sending shockwaves across the territory, often at night…causing widespread fear, include[ing] miscarriages and traumatiz[ing] children.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} Goodman, \textit{Sonic Warfare}, xix–12.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 109.
My interest in sound began with an unbearable experience with an Israeli night-time military invasion in 2006 while I was visiting Palestine. It was my children’s’ first visit to their family and country of origin and their first encounter with overt settler-colonial violence. We flew from Canada to Jordan and from there took land transportation to the West Bank. In a stretch of less than two kilometers between Jordan and the West Bank border, we spent several hours being passed from Jordanian to Israeli buses, and were checked, searched, and lined up at the Allenby Bridge. More buses took us through multiple Israeli checkpoints, turning a trip that without such obstacles would take less than two hours into a twelve-hour ordeal. On our first night in Palestine, we woke up shortly after 1 a.m. to the sound of an explosion that seemed to shake the entire neighbourhood. My son and I were terrified and disoriented. My mother, who had lived her entire life under military occupation and colonial rule, and was familiar with weapon noises, explained that the source of this noise was a sound bomb. Then, rapid shooting erupted from different directions and different types of guns, and the sound of pounding on the metal doors of houses could be heard. It was very close and we felt as though we were trapped in a trench, unable to move or see what was going on. Fear, panic, and the darkness of the unknown engulfed us. We did not know what was happening, if somebody had been killed or arrested, or whose house was being raided. Sound without image relayed the violent act. We could not turn the lights on for fear of snipers, my mother warned. In the midst of this situation, my video camera recorded what it could in the dark.

---

18 Israeli colonial forces destroyed Palestinian airports during the two Nakbas, and since then we have had to travel through surrounding countries, mainly Jordan and Egypt, to get home.
Several weeks later, reviewing what I had recorded that night, I was shocked, not because the screen was almost blank and the only images captured were of flickering light from the street and stars in the sky, but because of the dreadful effect of the recorded sound. Unlike photographs of a traumatic event, recorded sound produces a physiological and psychological effect similar to those of the event itself. While a photograph is cropped from an event by the limits of the photographer’s field of vision and the direction of the camera lens, an audio recording captures sound from all directions. Additionally, recorded sound does not require light like photography does. Whether captured by a sound recorder or camcorder, audio is precise and non-selective.

Listening to the recorded sound of the military invasion transferred me back to that night at home. I re-experienced a past event that I had wanted to forget. Listening to a recording of violent sound has an unpredictable effect: it penetrates the body and mind with
an effect similar to the original encounter—with panic and fear. While forgetting unbearable experiences is a textbook strategy of survival, sound re-enforces memories of past events and brings them back to life. Documentary audio evidence of a traumatic experience recalls the details without omission.

Out of this experience, the video *A Night at Home* (4min, 2009) emerged. It mainly includes sounds of shooting, as well as whispering between my son, my mother, and me. My son is asking questions that I as a parent am unable to answer. Neither was my mother able to answer my questions. The image of mother and child is represented sonically in this video. Upon its first screening at the Mayfair Theatre in Ottawa, the video had a shocking effect on viewers who expected sound and image, and not an almost blank screen with sound dominating the theatre. Deafening and shocking sound filled the space, immersing viewers in someone else’s experience through universal feelings of fear and panic. While in the theatre viewers were fixed to their seats listening to the unavoidable sounds, in the gallery the experience is different. There, sound is limited and directional. Viewers can turn away and leave the gallery space, just as they might close their eyes to an image of an atrocity. Although the experience is different in both the theatre and the gallery, *A Night at Home* awakened viewers’ to military violence and other forms of violent sounds.

The impact of listening to violent sound is not reduced by the passing of time. The effect does not fade with multiple listening in the way that familiarity with an image dulls its visual force. Sound maintains its physiological and psychological impact with each new hearing.

Listening to the sounds of past traumatic experience seems to not only activate memories of an unbearable experience but also to enforce and authenticate those memories for those who experienced the violent sound, triggering listeners’ memories of violent
experiences. This is unlike photography, which replaces memory, as both photography critic Roland Barthes and theorist Geoffrey Batchen assert. “Photography makes memory possible, but at the cost of its erasure,” writes Batchen.\(^{19}\) “Not only is the photograph never, in essence, a memory,” says Roland Barthes, “but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory.”\(^{20}\) If the memory of a difficult experience neglects details or buries them in the unconscious, listening to sound can recall them, making forgetting or manipulating details impossible. The effect of listening to violent sound defies forgetting and becomes a memory-enforcer. While listening helps to uncover buried memories, healing and coping is connected with ending exposure to violent sound. Repetitive exposure can lead to irreversible physiological and psychological harm, including hearing loss and trauma.

**Colonial Noise and Night Invasions**

The noise of both military occupation and war affects targeted and besieged civilian populations psychologically and physiologically. Unlike war, however, which is carried out between two fighting armies and ends at some point, settler-colonial military invasion targets indigenous populations and their land and lasts for long periods. The 130-year French colonization of Algeria and the ongoing colonization of Palestine, now seven decades old, are cases in point. Israeli scholar Ariella Azoulay’s examination of the concept of war from the point-of-view of Israeli military generals reveals the difference between operations of war and military occupation. In her interview with Shlomo Gazit, the chief of “Israel Defense Forces” (IDF) intelligence, Gazit asserts that, “the IDF has an order of battle, not an order of war.”\(^{21}\)

---


Military campaigns, according to such a view, combine large and small actions, in invisible and visible forms, whether a 51-day genocidal campaign against Gaza or the bombing of Gaza tunnels that buries and kills Palestinian resisters and civilians, or a drone assassination of individuals in the colonized home country, or the daily suppression of protests and night invasions. The effects of colonial military operations are multilayered and extend beyond one-time occurrences. The Israeli occupation not only concerns the daily struggle of Palestinian civilians but also—as has become clear in recent years—Israel uses Palestine as a test field for war machinery and technology, and surveillance and oppression methods, including lethal weapons and weapons for crowd control.

Israel’s occupation forces’ use of noise dates back to the Nakba when Zionist militias used loudspeakers, in addition to explosives planted in homes and garages, or opened fire above crowds, to inflict fear and panic and force Palestinians to leave their homes. The violent sounds Palestinians regularly encounter include bombing, invasions, house demolitions, bulldozing and uprooting of olive trees, torture of prisoners, military training exercises, noise emanating from crowd control weapons, and now also drone noise. While repetitive exposure to these noises is devastating, experiencing them at night can be even more traumatizing, especially for children.

Night-time incursions into Palestinian communities are a common Israeli practice as old as the Zionist colonial project. This tactic is intended to shock civilians in their sleep and avoid crowd power as well as reporters and photographers who might capture evidence of human rights violations. Darkness provides the occupation forces with cover to commit crimes without considerations of accountability. Under the cover of darkness, and in the

---

absence of light, soldiers’ intrusions into civilians’ homes and bedrooms are rarely documented. While recording images is conditioned by light, recording sound is not bound by light or its absence. However, sound recordings hold less credibility as evidence in legal contexts than images, which raises questions about the need to reconsider sound as evidence in courts of law. Doing so might help to put an end to violations carried out in the dark.

Examples of violations carried out at night are numerous. On October 29, 2015, I experienced another disturbing and shocking night invasion in the Bethlehem region when occupation forces broadcast a message to the residents of the Aida refugee camp. A soldier in a military jeep emerged from an Apartheid Wall gate into the camp and shouted the following through a loudspeaker:

Aida Camp residents, we are the occupation army, if you continue to throw stones, we will continue to fire gas at you until you all die; the children, the adults, the elderly. We will not leave any one of you alive. We have arrested one of you, he is with us now, we will slaughter him in front of you if you keep throwing stones and don’t go to your homes. If you don’t stop throwing stones, we will gas you, your brothers, your kids, your families, everyone until you all die. You better listen and go home.

As shocking as this message was, it was also the first time many of Bethlehem residents had heard the occupation forces refer to themselves as such. Usually they identify themselves as Israeli “defense” forces, or IDF.
In a recent shocking revelation following international outrage at the arrest of 16-year-old Ahed Tamimi for slapping an Israeli soldier in the front yard of her house following the shooting of her 15-year-old cousin, who was left in a coma, mainstream Israeli journalist Ben Caspit revealed a well known practice of the Israeli forces. He wrote in Hebrew, "In the case of the girls, we should exact a price at some other opportunity, in the dark, without witnesses and cameras." This blatant expression of Israel's tendency to commit crimes away from reporters' eyes reveals the Israeli attempt to control the media and craft and disseminate its narrative regarding its colonization and military occupation.

Abstract Knowledge of Drones Attacks and Noise

Considering that lethal and "less lethal" weapons including sonic weapons are produced by Western states and endured mainly by non-Western populations, examinations of their effects by mainstream scholars and artists remain largely informed by abstract knowledge far removed from the actual experiences of civilians on the ground. When civilian encounters with military violence are addressed it is mostly in juxtaposition to the experiences of the soldiers who operate the war machines. Without grounded experience, understandings of drone warfare and its effect on the body and mind of those who endure it remain incomplete. Experience-based knowledge is profoundly significant for understanding how drones function, how they affect civilians, and therefore how to put an end to their militarized use.

The deployment of drones in military operations represents an addition to the existing destructive arms arsenal on our planet. Operated from a distance and equipped with high resolution and infrared cameras and missiles, military drones aim to reduce the physical

---

losses of invaders and maximize those of the targeted population. Although drone cameras can capture high-resolution images, projected to operating room monitors stationed a long way away, they cannot capture the sounds of strikes and their immediate effects, nor can they capture the sounds of targeted populations. Nasser Hussein points out that the muteness of a drone’s footage renders geographies and people as a “ghostly world, in which the figures seem unalive, even before they are killed.”24 This view echoes Judith Butler’s articulation of how some lives are non-grievable even before they are killed, because they are not counted as lives.25 These ghost images are usually preceded or accompanied by ideological framing through discourses of the “war on terror” or “self-defence,” which strips targeted communities entirely of their humanity.

While the images that drones transmit to operating stations are mute, the persistent buzzing of the drones themselves sends waves across the aerial space of targeted communities. This continuous buzzing, known in Palestine as zannaneh, is not only aggravating but also a signifier of possible bombing or assassination. This white noise is felt not only in the atmosphere but also in the living spaces of targeted communities. Drones in Palestine disrupt television transmissions received mainly through satellite, breaking and destabilizing them. In my interview with Gaza artist Maha Al Dayeh in November of 2015, she related how her two young children identify the presence of a drone through the broken image of the cartoons they watch. “When they hear any sound, they close their ears and eyes,” she added. The noise of drones, states Gaza based researcher Atef Abu Saif, has a traumatic effect on Palestinian society in Gaza, especially children who associate that noise

with Israeli bombing.\textsuperscript{26} The trauma inflicted on children in Gaza raises a moral question in our deaf world.

Most scholarship pertaining to drone warfare concerns US drone warfare and often excludes Israel’s long history of drone assassinations and surveillance against Palestinians. Such scholarship not only excludes Israeli warfare and the use of Palestine as a testing field for its operations but also disregards socio-political and historical contexts of such war. It is evident that the majority of scholarship and arts focus on, and sometime shows fascination with the technological aspects of drones. Some scholars entirely remove the human factor and agency, speculating instead on an era dominated by robots that entirely control human lives. According to Derek Gregory, preoccupation with the “technical object” in many critical responses to drones, and ignoring the “wider dispositions and propensities” is “both an analytical and a political mistake.”\textsuperscript{27} Paul Virilio, for example, speculates that contemporary war is “nothing more than autonomy, automation of the war machine, which is virtually undetectable smart weapons.”\textsuperscript{28} Further, he suggests that contemporary war machinery creates “total disintegration,” removing the human factor and the agency of targeted populations, and thus disregards the social struggle factor in resisting war and militarization.\textsuperscript{29} From speculation about autonomous war to its representation, James Der Derian suggests that new technologies and media make the reality of war and its representation a single thing. For Der Derian, “entertainment and gaming become integrated with actual killing and warring.”\textsuperscript{30} The technical examination of war machines and drone

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 73.
warfare evident in these texts enforces a discourse that justifies violence rather than mobilizing efforts to end it in all its forms. Such engagement with drone warfare and military machine helps disempower social forces and their role in social struggle, and helps disseminate state propaganda about domination and control of populations, disregarding the fact that resistance marks our human history. From the perspective of the populations who suffer injustices and military and colonial violence, this scholarship paints them as subjects without agencies or a will to resist.

On the other hand some artists are occupied by concerns relevant to drone technology and/or the drone operator’s experience. Among artists who have recently gained a great deal of attention for their work on drones are Omer Fast, Ari Folmen, Trevor Paglen, and James Bridle. Omer Fast’s film 5000 Feet is the Best (30 min, 2011), shot in Las Vegas, is based on the artist’s interview with an operator of a US Predator drone who was involved in carrying out multiple strikes against Afghani people. Many critics have interpreted Fast’s work as an indictment of drone warfare, while others such as Liz Kotz believe that Fast’s work “articulates a deeply sympathetic portrait of the drone pilot…. Fast himself clearly feels a strong responsibility to and even a kind of identification with these pilots whose stories he has endeavoured to tell.”

Placing soldiers and warriors at the centre of contemporary artwork and scholarship, however, has the effect of dehumanizing victims of colonial and state violence. Sympathy is granted to fighters rather than to their victims, thus normalizing military violence and risking the glorification of war and military violence.

---

Addressing drone warriors within the arts is linked to an increasing number of practicing artists who themselves are soldiers or ex-soldiers.\textsuperscript{32} For example, there has been a surge in films made by Israeli soldiers about their experience in Israel’s wars, particularly in Lebanon, such as Nurit Kedar’s \textit{Wasted} (2006), Joseph Cedar’s \textit{Beaufort} (2007), and Samuel Maoz’s \textit{Lebanon} (2009), in addition to the internationally acclaimed \textit{Waltz with Bashir} (Ari Folman, 2008). Each of these works, according to Yosef Raz, is “less concerned with the history of the First Lebanon War, and more with the private and subjective experiences and memories of the soldiers who fought in it.”\textsuperscript{33} Folman’s \textit{Waltz and Bashir} stands out for the prestigious awards it has received from international festivals for animated fiction and non-fiction film. The film is about Folman’s own trauma resulting from his participation as an Israeli soldier in the 1982 Sabra and Shatilla massacre perpetrated against Palestinian refugees by the Lebanese phalanges under the protection of Israel’s forces led by then defence minister Ariel Sharon. The film, which is “exposed as possessing several traits common to the archetypical classical Hollywood narrative, including coherence, linearity, and cause and effect,”\textsuperscript{34} raises questions about the morals and ethics of contemporary art institutions and organizations in the current global power structure. Joseph Kraemer called this a “betrayal of the history and essence of the massacre [Sabra and Shaital].”\textsuperscript{35} The victims of the massacre are absent from the film. Their trauma entirely omitted, they “remain invisible figures, hardly pictured except in long shot, their voices and faces distant, obscure,

\begin{itemize}
  \item[34] Joseph A. Kraemer, “\textit{Waltz with Bashir} (2008): Trauma and Representation in the Animated Documentary,” \textit{Journal of Film and Video} 67.3 (Fall 2015): 63.
  \item[35] Ibid., 65.
\end{itemize}
Waltz With Bashir is exemplary of a trend that places soldiers and their trauma at the centre of artworks depicting Israel’s wars against the Palestinians and Lebanon, and US-led Western wars in the Arab World.

In addition to representing the warrior’s trauma, drone vision is of great interest to artists such as James Bridle. The abstractions, which Bridle creates for example in Dronestagram (2012–2015), by extracting “mute” GPS maps of targeted places reproduce maps of bombed landscapes. Bridle writes that his intent is to inform the public about the secret operations of drones. But I believe his abstract, distant, and muted representations fail to engage the public on the plight of the people being bombed. Similarly, Trevor Paglen’s work, often referenced as a response to drone warfare, shows little concern with the effects of drones on their victims. One of Paglen’s photographic works reveals the secret locations of US military bases rather than where weapons from these bases are deployed and the devastating effect they have on targeted populations.

These examples assert a disengagement from the actual experience of populations that endure drones and their attacks. They raise questions about whether and how normalizing military violence and glorifying of soldiers’ experiences has penetrated into critical art. The intrusion of the soldier’s experience into critical art threatens to remove boundaries with Hollywood’s film industry. One example of a Hollywood film that glorifies violence is American Sniper (2014), which generates sympathy for a soldier who clearly committed war crimes.

36 Ibid., 66.
During the genocidal attack on Gaza in 2014, and with the assistance of Palestinian activists living there, I recorded through a live stream hours of the noise made by Israeli military drones as they hovered over the heads of Palestinians. The sound was aggravating even from a distance. In the months that followed the destruction of Gaza, I made the sound work *Drones Over Gaza* (sound, 4min, 2015). This work interprets the sonic environments of overlooked Israeli drone violence in Palestine. It brings to life moments in the daily struggle of a people under siege while also countering abstract and distant examinations of drones’ effects on civilian populations.

By sonically depicting the torturous noise of drones in colonized Palestine, and using electronic communications to record their noise from a distance, I challenged the exclusion of
the state of Israel from criticism by many concerned researchers and artists who have been vocal about U.S. drone use for extrajudicial assassinations in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya, Iraq, and Syria. The neglect of Palestinian human rights organizations’ accounts of Israeli drone use in assassinations of Palestinians since 2004 is staggering. Only in 2009, when a Human Rights Watch report detailed an Israeli drone attack that killed two children playing on a rooftop, did Israel’s intentional targeting of Palestinian civilians become public, challenging the occupation forces’ false claims of self-defence. In 2015, Corporate Watch released its report *Gaza: Life Beneath the Drones*, detailing the horrors of the testing and use of drones and shedding light on traumatic civilian experiences. The report includes data showing the increasing Israeli deployment of drones in Palestine. For example, 840 people out of a total of 2230 killed in the 2014 attack on Gaza, including 500 children, died as a result of drone attacks.\(^{37}\)

The poisonous sound of drones, or what Susan Schuppli calls “the sonic threat,” makes the daily lives of those who encounter them torturous.\(^{38}\) While people can shut their eyes, they cannot shut their ears to the immersive sound. Meanwhile, indifference to the torture of others leads to “global deafness,” and military and colonial activities continue to result in more killing while keeping the arms industry active and increasingly profitable. Although many undesirable noises need to be combated, the noise of aerial machinery is one of the most threatening to our planet, along with noise caused by disregarding the law through what Giorgio Agamben calls the “paradigm of security” that is becoming the “normal technique of government.”\(^{39}\)

---

Sound and Memory of Disasters

In 2017 I explored sound in relation to memory in the sound installation called *Haifa Then and Now*, part of a group exhibition titled *Silence, Pressure, Noise* curated by Victoria Moufawad-Paul at Western’s University McIntosh Gallery. The work consists of 200 life jackets and a 10-minute field recording from Haifa Port. Sea wave sounds emanate from several speakers installed inside the life vests spread chaotically throughout the gallery space. *Haifa Then and Now* questions whether seawater can preserve the memory of refugees who escape the horror of war and colonial violence; whether the water holds the memory of their fears, tears, screams, and cries; whether it preserves the memory of human bodies drawn into it and lost. The work commemorates Haifa’s 72,000 Palestinian refugees who were forced to flee their homes during the Nakba through the city’s port, and draws a connection between ongoing refugee crises and the largest and oldest refugee problem of modern times—the Palestinian refugee catastrophe.

In June 2016 I visited the city of Haifa. When I arrived at the Port, the seashore was empty; the only sound I could hear was of the waves. I spent a few hours there until darkness enveloped the city and its harbour. I had spent that morning in the overcrowded refugee camp of Dheisheh in Bethlehem where over 15,000 Palestinian refugees live in less than a square kilometers. The contrast between my encounters that day was staggering. Dheisheh camp refugees are part of the 800,000 Palestinians uprooted from their homeland during the 1947–48 Nakba. Many Dheisheh refugees were among those thousands driven to the sea by Zionist colonial forces. Their trauma extends from the fact that Israel deprives them of their right to return to their homes located just a few kilometers away but also that they are prohibited from visiting their homes without individual permits, which Israel rarely issues.
Located on the Carmel Mount facing the Mediterranean Sea, Haifa was by the end of the nineteenth century one of the most important and vibrant commercial and cultural centres in north Palestine and a major port of trade. At the turn of the twentieth century, the population of the city was 20,000 (96 per cent Muslim and Christian and 4 per cent Jewish). Haifa’s population grew during the British mandate from 24,634 in 1922 to 140,000 by 1945 (53 per cent Palestinian and 47 per cent Jewish). This dramatic shift in demographic structure resulted from the British sponsored Zionist project of colonial settlement after the First World War.

Both Palestinian and Israeli historians describe the 1947 terror inflicted on the city of Haifa after the United Nations General Assembly Partition Plan, which divided Palestine into two states—one for Jews and the other for Palestinian Christians and Muslims. The Partition Resolution designated the city of Haifa part of the Jewish state. One day following the partition resolution, the Zionist settler terror groups Irgun and Haganah subjected the Palestinian population of the city to a campaign of siege, intimidation, and terror in order to force them to leave. Haganah orders on 21 April 1947 were “to kill any Arab you encounter...set on fire all flammable objects...and force open doors with explosives.”

They rolled barrels full of explosives, and huge steel balls, down into the Arab residential areas, and poured oil mixed with fuel down the roads, which they then ignited. The moment panic-stricken Palestinian residents came running out of their homes to try to extinguish these rivers of fire, they were sprayed by machine-gun fire...the Haganah brought cars to Palestinian garages to be

---

repaired, loaded with explosives and detonating devices, and so wreaked death and chaos.  

Haifa Port, where the sound for this work was recorded, saw thousands of Palestinians flee their homes in horror.

The boats in the port “were soon filled with living cargo. The overcrowding in them was horrible. Many turned over and sank with all their passengers. The shock and terror were such that, without packing any of their belongings or even knowing what they were doing, people began leaving en masse. In panic they headed towards the port where they hoped to find a ship or a boat to take them away from the city. As soon as they had fled, Jewish troops broke into and looted their houses.

An Arab survivor and reporter described the scene as follows: “Men stepped on their friends and women on their own children. After the expulsion of over 72,000 Palestinians, only 3,566 Palestinians remained in their city. The terror against the Palestinian population put an end to a peaceful coexistence in the mixed city of Haifa.

In this essay I examined what Al Farabi terms “poisonous” sounds, those unnatural sounds generated by human-made war machinery and contemporary sonic weapons. Haifa Then and Now, Drones Over Gaza, and A Night at Home examine sound and its effects on

41 Ibid., 127.
those who encounter it, and the relationship between sound and memory. Based on experiencing and experimenting with sound, I attempted in these works to raise questions about the effects of unbearable noise on bodies and minds as well as bring attention to the link between sound and memories of difficult experiences. The increasing use of sound by colonial and oppressive powers as a weapon to inflict pain, panic, and fear on entire populations, particularly under the cover of darkness, has a devastating effect especially on children, no less harming than visible forms of military violence. Aggressive powers’ use of weapons with invisible effects such as sonic weapons seems to be connected to a global awareness of human rights and attempts to avoid accountability to International law. Given the increasing use of sound as a weapon, artists, scholars, and activists have a responsibility to study sound and its effects on targeted populations in order to end global deafness to the use of poisonous and toxic sounds, and to hold accountable states and corporations that produce, use, and legitimize the targeting of the human senses.


VISUAL DOSSIER

Included in this dossier are works that were created and/or exhibited during my program of study from 2014 to 2018.

Links to *Choreographies of Resistance* Installation at both Axeneo7 Gallery and the McIntosh Gallery are available at Vimeo: [https://vimeo.com/249472499](https://vimeo.com/249472499); [https://vimeo.com/249000918](https://vimeo.com/249000918)

*Choreographies of Resistance*

*Photophobia*, photography series #3, 36x48 inches
Photophobia, photography series #1, 36x48 inches

Photophobia, photography series #2, 36x48 inches
Photophobia, photography series #4, 36x48 inches

Photophobia, photography series #5, 36x48 inches
Photophobia, photography series #6, 36x48 inches

Video still, Bodies in Motion, 3 min, 2017
Video still, *Through the Mask*, 4min, 201

*Resistance Dance*, life-size vinyl prints, stones, bullets shells, and rubber coated steel bullets.
Drones, 300 hand-made wooden slingshots, 2017
Invisible, 2014, is a multi-video, photography, and sound installation that challenges perceptions of absent and silenced narratives of human rights violations in colonized Palestine. The works in the exhibition represent Israel's extrajudicial assassinations of Palestinian leaders, intellectuals, and activists inside the colonized country and across the world, the indiscriminate imprisonment and abuse of tens-of-thousands of Palestinians, and the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations. In this exhibition I employed archival documents and found and directly recorded images to express the invisibility of various aspects of the colonial oppression Palestinians face in their struggle for liberty, justice, equality and the right of return.
Frames from the Negev Prison, 2000 prints, 4x4 inch each, 2014.

Frames from the Negev Prison, Detail.
To all prisoners: come out or we will shoot you.


Video still, *Bil’in*, 4min, 2012
Drones Over Gaza, sound, 4min, 2015

Drones over Gaza, 4min, 2015, is a sound work based on field recordings of Israeli military drones operating in the airspace over occupied Gaza. The work interprets the sonic environments of war and colonial violence through the widespread use of unmanned aerial vehicles in a rapidly increasing number of countries. During the genocidal attack on Gaza in the summer of 2014, I recorded the noise of Israel’s military drones hovering over Gaza through a live stream with the assistance of Palestinian activists living in the Strip. The work intends to crop moments of the daily life of civilian populations struggling under siege and colonial violence, as well as to counter abstract and distant examinations of drones and their effect on civilian populations.
Haifa Then and Now

10 minute field recording of waves at Haifa Port and 200 life jackets
Installation view, McIntosh Gallery, Nov 2017–Jan 2018

For description of the work see Chapter Four.
Walking Under Occupation (2005–)

Walking Downtown Al-Khalil, 2008

Walking Under Occupation (2005–) is a photography project that began after my return from Canada to Palestine and after being exiled and denied my right of return for over twenty years. I began walking across Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps, and through the tormented landscape. The work examines what walking can reveal and how it can affect the body when one’s senses are all in a state of alert.
A Boy and a Soldier, digital photograph, 2008

A Gun and a Toy, digital photograph, 2008
Walking downtown Al-Khalil series, digital photograph, 2010
APPENDIX I

The following is my correspondence with the chief editor of the National Post Jonathan Kay:

From: R NazzaL
Sent: Friday, June 13, 2014 10:46 AM
To: Kay, Jonathan (National Post)
Subject: OP-ED piece

Hello Mr. Jonathan,

Please find attached an Op-Ed I wrote in response to Senator Linda Frum's piece, published in The National Post last week, regarding my art exhibition at Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa City Hall. During the past two weeks, more than one piece of news was published in The National Post against my exhibition. While other media outlets approached me and have given me a voice, I was disappointed that no attempts from The National Post have been made to contact me, at least to have my comments or response, in accordance with objective and balanced reporting.

I hope my voice will be given a space in The National Post to defend myself and my art.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Rehab Nazzal

The attached letter:

Rehab Nazzal: Political Art and Freedom of Expression

I read Ms. Frum’s article in the National Post with shock and dismay. It reflects misinformation and false allegations against my exhibition, “Invisible,” currently on display at the Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa. It makes claims that need to be challenged. Judging from her piece, I wonder if Ms. Frum has visited the exhibition and seen the artworks?

In response, I wish to pose three questions. Firstly, is the definition of art to be determined by politicians and their political views? Secondly, how much does Ms. Frum know about the suffering of the Palestinian people who have been expelled from their ancestral homes and from their land, and who have been subjected to the longest and most brutal military occupation in our recent history? Thirdly, do Palestinian casualties have names and families; are they humans in Ms. Frum’s view; do they deserve the justice Ms. Frum purports to defend?
Senator Frum’s opening sentence accords very well with the statements made by the ambassador of the state of Israel, for it repeats his false accusations about my exhibition. Instead of reiterating allegations intended to divert attention from the continued illegal occupation and human rights violations of the Palestinian population in occupied Palestine, I expected a member of the Senate, such as Ms. Frum, to defend a Canadian citizen’s right of expression. Instead of attacking my exhibition, I expected an official rebuttal to this interference by a representative of a foreign state in a Canadian city’s jurisdiction. In fact, Canadian cultural policy warns against this state interference in art: “The well-being of society is threatened if the state intrudes into the cultural realm in ways that subordinate the role and purposes of the latter to the role and purposes of government itself – or any other spheres of activity.” In a similar vein, art history has taught us that state censorship of an artist’s critical work is associated with authoritarian regimes.

Everyone has the right to judge art, but who has the ability to define and evaluate it with professional expertise? I assume from Ms. Frum’s article that she has not grasped the critical and formal significance of the artworks in my exhibition; if she had, she would not have written her article with such inflammatory language. In fact I wonder in what way her article serves the justice she claims to defend -- unless her perception of justice differs from the one enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I invite Ms. Frum to visit the exhibition where she will see that there is no “glorification of terrorism” but rather a condemnation of the terror carried out by occupying forces. Here is a brief sketch of the exhibition. There are four videos and 1700 photographs -- the only photographic prints in the show. A portion of these prints appeared in Ms. Frum’s article. These prints and one of the videos are about the Israeli special forces’ abuse of the Palestinian political prisoners in the Negev prison (located in Israel), during an exercise carried out after midnight, while the prisoners were asleep. The source footage of these two works was aired in the Israeli media and shown to the Israeli public in April 2011. If the Israeli occupation of Palestine is openly criticized inside Israel, in Canada that is scarcely the case; critical commentary, even in the form of an artistic representation, is subjected to relentless assaults.

Another video is about my experience in the village of Bil’in where Palestinians were physically attacked by the occupation army during a peaceful protest against Israel’s confiscation of village land. Ms. Frum can research the plight of the village of Bil’in; it might give her an idea of how the Palestinian land is continually subjected to confiscation for the purpose of building only Jewish-settlements and a wall of annexation.

The third video is based on footage of the funeral of my brother who was extra-judicially assassinated in Athens in 1986; his dead body, riddled with countless bullets, was denied by the occupation forces the right to be buried in our hometown.

The fourth video has over 127 images and traces of leaders, artists and activists who were assassinated across the world, killed inside their homes under the occupation, or allowed to die in prison. The images in this video are based on photographs of posters I captured from the streets of the West Bank, and on found images. Like the Israeli embassy, Ms. Frum chose to focus exclusively on a few of these flashing images. In doing so, she has eclipsed their context and cast them as portraits of evil. This is a flagrant misrepresentation of my exhibit and a clear denial of the horrendous evils imposed on Palestinians by the Israeli occupation.
Human loss is a tragedy, whether Israeli or Palestinian. If I wanted to list the names of the Palestinian civilians killed by the occupation forces, I would need several months to work on that alone, and would need The National Post to list the Palestinian casualties over a period of a whole year. Should we start with the Nakba (800,000 expulsions, and 9,000 prisoners perished), Deir Yassin massacre (over 250 including women and children) and Kufr Qasim (48 deaths, including 6 women and 23 children), or the events of 1953 Qibia massacre (69 dead including 48 children and women), 1967 victims, or the 1982 massacre of Sabra and Shatilla (3000 dead), or the 2002 Jenin massacre (70 dead), or the 2008/9 war on Gaza, where White Phosphorus munitions and Flechette missiles were used on civilians and hospitals. Entire families were wiped out, with a total loss of around 1,400 Palestinians lives including 430 children and 17 Israelis, four of whom killed by friendly fire. For information on the scope of loss, destruction and violations of International law by Israel, I advise Ms. Frum to read the United Nations Human Rights Council Report on the war on Gaza, which may enlighten her about this bloody situation. (See link: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf)

During the past 67 years, every single Palestinian has suffered in one way or another from Israel’s aggression, colonialism, and occupation of Palestine, including the imprisonment of 800,000 of the Palestinians. I reserve the right to express my history and memory through my art, and Ms. Frum reserves the right to like it or hate it, but she has no right to suppress my voice and accuse me of “memorizing terror”.

Sincerely,

Rehab Nazzal”

***

On 2014-06-13,
at 2:08 PM,
Kay, Jonathan (National Post) wrote:

Thanks. Unfortunately, I cannot publish this.

Best, Jon

***

From: R Nazzal
Sent: Friday, June 13, 2014 3:42 PM
To: Kay, Jonathan (National Post)
Subject: Re: OP-ED piece

Would you, at least, give me a reason for that, and discuss with me any other options.

Tank you,

Rehab

***
On 2014-06-13, at 4:06 PM,
Kay, Jonathan (National Post) wrote:

The problem is that your piece contains language and claims — such as the notion that Israel engages in state terrorism, or that the whole history of Israel is predicated on the malevolent annihilation of Palestinians — that will immediately cause readers to regard it as a species of fanatical, anti-Zionist propaganda. You won't convince anyone. You'll just be proving Linda's case.
I could run this this if you stayed away from the broad claims about Israel being an evil colonial state, and stuck to a more factual, less emotional style of argumentation.

Best, Jon

***

From: R NazzaL
Subject: Re: OP-ED piece
Date: 13 June, 2014 5:27:20 PM EDT
To: "Kay, Jonathan (National Post)"

Thank you for writing back. Don't you think Ms.Linda has used language with claims about my exhibition that she should not use and made claims that she should not make? Unlike Ms. Linda, I provided facts from credible sources such as the UN report on Gaza (the use of White Phosphorus and other munitions), information from the Israeli Historian Illan Pappe's book, The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, (9000 prisoners perished, and 800,000 expelled), UN fact finding missions, and my own experience of witnessing the brutality of Israeli's army. You now can listen to the voices of soldiers who served in the West Bank and Gaza, in "Breaking the Silence".

Mr. Jonathan, what can you call the Nakba? What can you call the settlement in the West Bank? Are they colonies or not, what can the continued confiscations of Palestinian land be called? Colonialism or not? How about the Wall? Over 12% of the West Bank is annexed by it.

I still believe that we live in a democratic country and we all deserve a chance to voice our opinions, and in my case to respond to attacks and misinformation on me and my artworks.

Thank you,
Rehab
***

Hello Mr. Jonathan,

Considering that I reserve the right to defend myself and my art, and considering that I am writing this piece as a response to Mr. Linda Frum, who was given a space in the National Post, to voice her opinion, and considering that it is not my intention to impose my view on the readers, I have reviewed my text and made some changes, in hope it is given the right to be published.
Thank you,
Rehab

The following modified piece was attached:

**Political Art and Freedom of Expression**
Rehab Nazzal


I read Ms. Frum’s article in the National Post with shock and dismay. It is misinformed, and makes erroneous allegations against my exhibition, “Invisible,” which is currently on display at the Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa. Judging from her piece, I have to wonder if Ms. Frum has visited the exhibition and seen the artworks.

Senator Frum's framework conforms with the views recently expressed by the ambassador of Israel, and she repeats his false accusations. Questioning the merit of my artwork is certainly Ms. Frum’s right, but not her expertise. We can assume from her article that she has not grasped the critical and formal significance of my work. Recognizing and evaluating the artistic merit of critical work such as mine, I believe, does not belong within the purview of politicians. Canadian cultural policy warns against political interference in the arts: “The well-being of society is threatened if the state intrudes into the cultural realm in ways that subordinate the role and purposes of the latter to the role and purposes of government itself...”. What we expect from a member of the Canadian Senate is a defense of the right of expression of Canadian citizens, not a call to ban an exhibit because she or he disagrees with it. State censorship of critical artworks is associated with authoritarian regimes.

I invite Ms. Frum to visit the exhibition where she will see that there is no “glorification of terrorism” but rather a condemnation of terrorizing actions carried out by Israeli forces. Here is a brief sketch of the exhibition: There are four videos and 1700 photographs -- the only photographic prints in the show. A portion of these prints appeared in a photo above Ms. Frum’s article. These prints and one of the videos are about the Israeli special forces’ abuse of Palestinian political prisoners in the Negev prison (located in Israel), during a military exercise carried out after midnight, while the prisoners were asleep. The source footage of these two works was aired in the Israeli media and shown to the Israeli public in April 2011. The Israeli occupation of Palestine is openly criticized inside Israel. In Canada that is not always the case; critical commentary regarding Israel, even in the form of an artistic representation, is often subjected to relentless assaults.

Another video is about my experience in the village of Bil‘in where Palestinians were physically attacked during a peaceful protest against Israel’s confiscation of villager’s land. Ms. Frum can easily find details about this weekly event and the reality of displacing a population for the purpose of building illegal Jewish-only settlements and to install the annexation Wall.
The third video is based on footage of the funeral of my brother who was extra-judicially assassinated in Athens in 1986; his dead body, riddled with bullets, was prevented from being buried in our hometown.

The fourth video has over 127 images and traces of leaders, artists and activists who were assassinated across the world, killed inside their homes, or allowed to die in prison. The images in this video are based on photographs of posters I captured from the streets of the West Bank, and on found images. Like the Israeli Ambassador, Ms. Frum chose to focus exclusively on a few of these flashing images. In doing so, she has eclipsed their context and recast them as portraits of evil. This is a flagrant misrepresentation of my exhibit and of my intent.

Let’s be clear. Human loss is a tragedy, whether it be in Israeli or Palestinian lives. If I were to list the names of the Palestinian civilians killed, as did Senator Frum for Israeli children, I would need several months to gather their names. I would need a year’s worth of National Post pages to list the Palestinian casualties, from the Nakba in 1948, to the 2008-9 war on Gaza, (when 1,400 Palestinians lives were lost, including 430 children, primarily from cluster and white phosphorus bomb detonations. Seventeen Israelis were also killed in that conflict). My advice to Ms. Frum is that she at least read the United Nations Human Rights Council Report on the war on Gaza.*

During the past 67 years, every Palestinian has suffered in one way or another from the Israeli occupation, including by the imprisonment of over one quarter of the Palestinian population. Therefore, I reserve the right to express my history and my memory through my art. Ms. Frum has the option to like it or hate it, but she has no right to suppress my voice, nor to wrongly accuse me of “memorializing terror”.

*See link: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf

***

From: "Kay, Jonathan (National Post)"
Subject: Here's an edited verson
Date: 14 June, 2014 12:01:30 PM EDT
To: R NazzaL

Here's an edited verson
I made some changes. In particular, we need to mention why the Israelis killed your brother

By Rehab Nazzal


I read Ms. Frum's article with dismay. I believe it misrepresents my exhibition, “Invisible,” which is currently on display at the Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa. Judging from her piece,
I have to wonder if Ms. Frum has visited the exhibition and seen the artworks.

Evaluating the artistic merit of critical work such as mine, I believe, does not belong within the purview of politicians. Canadian cultural policy warns against political interference in the arts. As the Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee concluded in 1982, “The well-being of society is threatened if the state intrudes into the cultural realm in ways that subordinate the role and purposes of the latter to the role and purposes of government itself.”

What we should expect from a member of the Canadian Senate is a defense of the right of expression of Canadian citizens, not a call to ban an exhibit because she or he disagrees with it. State censorship of critical artworks is associated with authoritarian regimes. I invite Ms. Frum to visit the exhibition, where she will see that there is no “glorification of terrorism,” but rather a condemnation of terrorizing actions — as I would describe them — carried out by Israeli forces.

Here is a brief sketch of the exhibition: There are four videos and 1,700 photographs. A portion of these photos were used to illustrate Ms. Frum’s article. These prints and one of the videos document the Israeli army’s treatment of Palestinian political prisoners in the Negev prison (located in Israel), during a military exercise carried out after midnight, while the prisoners were asleep. The source footage of these two works was aired in the Israeli media and shown to the Israeli public in April, 2011. The Israeli occupation of Palestine is openly criticized inside Israel. In Canada, that is not always the case; critical commentary regarding Israel, even in the form of an artistic representation, often is subjected to harsh criticism.

Another video is about my experience in the village of Bil’in, where Palestinians were physically attacked during a peaceful protest against Israel’s confiscation of villagers’ land. Ms. Frum easily can find details about this weekly protest and the reality of displacing a population for the purpose of building Jewish-only settlements and “to install its security fence, which I call an Annexation Wall.”

The third video is based on footage of the funeral of my brother, “who admittedly had been a leading member of a group that conducted deadly attacks against Israeli civilians.” He was extra-judicially assassinated in Athens in 1986; his dead body, riddled with bullets, was prevented from being buried in our hometown.

The fourth video has over 127 images and traces of leaders, artists and activists who were assassinated across the world, killed inside their homes, or allowed to die in prison. The images in this video are based on photographs of posters I captured from the streets of the West Bank, and on found images. Ms. Frum chose to focus exclusively on a few of these flashing images that “relate to known terrorists”. This is a flagrant misrepresentation of my exhibit and of my intent.

Let’s be clear. Human loss is a tragedy, whether it be in Israeli or Palestinian lives. If I were to list the names of the Palestinian civilians killed, as did Senator Frum for Israeli children, I would need several months to gather their names. I would need a year’s worth of National
Post pages to list the Palestinian casualties, from the events of 1948, to the 2008-9 war in Gaza, (when over 1,000 Palestinians lives were lost, including hundreds of children, some from cluster and white phosphorus bomb detonations).

During the past 67 years, every Palestinian has suffered in one way or another from the Israeli occupation. As a Palestinian Canadian, I reserve the right to express my history and my memory through my art. Ms. Frum has the option to like it or hate it, but she has no right to suppress my voice, nor to wrongly accuse me of "memorializing terror".

***

From: R NazzaL
Subject: Re: Here's an edited version
Date: 14 June, 2014 11:32:21 PM EDT
To: "Kay, Jonathan (National Post)"

Mr. Kay,

I looked over your revised version of my text and noted that you made numerous changes, most of which categorically contradict the message I intended to put forth. I cannot, therefore, endorse your edits and insertions. Not only have you excised a large portion of my piece, including the questions I posed at the start, and on which the whole text was built, you also added your own information to the text and distorted the meaning I sought to convey. The result is a text that is riddled with gaps and contradictions. Any careful reader would quickly detect its inconsistencies. More seriously, your revisions have colonized my message and redesigned it to suit your stance. I find such a journalistic practice both intrusive and unethical.

There is also a serious problem of denial here. You have eclipsed my reference to the Nakba, as if it were an event to be hushed. Yet, this glaring episode in history is an established fact. Seven million refugees now carry the pain and trauma of their parents’ expulsion from their homes and land. There are numerous sources that support this. As for the annexation wall, that designation is not my coinage; it is widely and consensually used.

I am also struck that you deleted my reference to the ambassador of the state of Israel. His comments, after all, represent the first attempt to censor my work and the beginning of the attacks on me and my work since late May. I suspect that the aim of his intervention was to divert attention from the plight of the Palestinian prisoners, 126 of whom are currently dying in a hunger strike. These men are protesting against their detention, since they have been incarcerated without trial or charge under what is called "administrative detention".

You have subjected my submission to serious interrogation and constraint. Is this common journalistic practice? I wonder whether you intervened similarly in the case of Ms. Frum. I wonder whether you questioned the content of her text. I wonder whether you deleted or added material to her senate speech. I suspect not. So where is the balance in all this? As I see it, an open editorial should afford the public an opportunity to express views that are not necessarily those upheld by the newspaper’s editors, but are both topical and of great
significance. Insofar as The National Post ran two pieces on the subject of my exhibit, and insofar as I am the person under attack, I should have been granted the right to respond and express my opinion freely, without conditions and prescriptions, and without the type of the censorship you have displayed in editing my text.

But since you chose to take liberties, to recast and represent my message in accordance with your political views – views diametrically opposed to my own, I must withdraw my piece from The National Post. Indeed, I prefer to retain my dignity and go elsewhere.

Thank you for your time,
Rehab Nazzal
Appendix II

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson’s letter to the Jewish Federation of Ottawa:

May 23, 2014

Mrs. Andrea Freedman
President & CEO
Jewish Federation of Ottawa

Dear Mrs. Freedman,

I would like to thank you for contacting my office last week to express your organization's concerns about the current temporary exhibit in the Karsh-Masson Gallery by artist Rehab Nazzal. You raised some important questions, and my office and City staff have undertaken to consider your concerns with the highest level of diligence and seriousness. This letter is long, in part, because I want to be sure to provide you with a comprehensive response.

Before responding directly to the matters you raise, I want you to know that, as part of our collective efforts, Serge Arpin, my Chief of Staff, initiated a very constructive dialogue with the Jewish Federation of Ottawa and other community leaders on your concerns.

With respect to your main request, namely that the City of Ottawa shut down the exhibit currently running in the Karsh-Masson Gallery, we asked staff about the potential to take this action. Staff has advised that the City has never, in over twenty years of hosting independently juried exhibits, shut down an art exhibit. Over 150 exhibits have been hosted in the Karsh-Masson Gallery over that period of time.

Legal staff has further advised that cancelling this exhibit would, in all likelihood, violate the “fundamental rights” guaranteed to all Canadians by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – our Constitution and lead to a legal action that would, in all likelihood, result in the exhibit taking place at a later date.

I believe in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is my duty to ensure that the law of the land is upheld by the City. In this spirit, I cannot participate in any way, shape or form in the violation of an individual's fundamental Charter rights.
For your information, our staff's advice is excerpted below:

In Canada, any municipality's actions are subject to the Constitution of Canada, which includes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 2(b) of the Charter protects an individual's "fundamental rights" including the "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression". The Supreme Court of Canada has repeatedly confirmed that this fundamental freedom extends to many types of expressive activities - including both political and artistic expression - even where the contents may be provocative, offensive, or disturbing to some.

The Supreme Court has also found that an individual's right to freely express themselves in a public place is central to a free and democratic society. The Court summarized its position as follows:

Among the most fundamental rights possessed by Canadians is freedom of expression. It makes possible our liberty, our creativity and our democracy. It does this by protecting not only "good" and popular expression, but also unpopular or even offensive expression. The right to freedom of expression rests on the conviction that the best route to truth, individual flourishing and peaceful coexistence in a heterogeneous society in which people hold divergent and conflicting beliefs lies in the free flow of ideas and images. If we do not like an idea or an image, we are free to argue against it or simply turn away. But absent some constitutionally adequate justification, we cannot forbid a person from expressing it.

In this case, the artwork and the Artist herself benefit from the Charter protection of freedom of expression. Therefore, any attempt by the City to remove the works from the exhibit would constitute an infringement on the Artist's right to freedom of expression. I am also of the opinion that if the exhibit is removed, it will likely result in a challenge of the City's action. Such a challenge would likely result in the exhibit re-opening at some date in the future. Staff, therefore, will not be cancelling the exhibit.

That being said, I understand that you told my office that you felt that the presence of this exhibit in a public space meant that the City was either involved in the selection of the exhibiting artists or somehow endorsing the content of exhibits. I can assure you that this is not the case. Consistent with best practices, exhibits that run in City galleries, including the Karsh-Masson gallery, are chosen by an independent panel of professional artists who are completely at arm's length from elected officials and staff. In fact, there is no interaction whatsoever with elected officials at any time in the jury process.
However, given that some viewers may perceive an informal City endorsement, we have moved to issue a disclaimer clarifying that the opinions presented are the artist’s alone and not the City’s. The disclaimer appears at the entrance to the Gallery, on the Karsh-Masson webpage and on various brochures. I have attached a copy of this generic disclaimer for your information. This practice will now be implemented for all exhibits. Further, I have asked staff to formally review the policy for exhibits in the Karsh-Masson Gallery, which will be done in the context of staff’s broader review of the City’s public art policies which is currently underway.

Although neither elected officials nor staff has a role in selecting the art in our public spaces, we did review information about this artist before responding to your letter.

As you are aware, agencies and governments that support the arts in Canada do provide funding and promotional support to artists – even to controversial ones. This particular artist has received funding support from the Ontario Arts Council and from the Karsh-Masson Gallery. The artist has also exhibited works in other public spaces in Canada, including at the Art Gallery of Mississauga and has had a documentary shown at the National Archives of Canada.

As you can imagine, various public bodies provide some level of support to hundreds and thousands of artists over a number of years. But providing some level of support, such as space, funding or promotional support is understood by most Canadians as not endorsing the artist’s viewpoint. I agree that the disclaimer makes that clear and I thank you for bringing about this change in the City’s processes.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to convey to you unequivocally that I denounce terrorism and acts of political violence in all their forms. I believe that political change can and should be affected through non-violent political action.

I thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention. I hope you know that my office and City staff recognize the seriousness of the issues you raised and that we reviewed your requests and questions in that light.

Sincerely,

Jim Watson, Mayor
City of Ottawa
EDUCATION

Dissertation: *Representation of Settler Colonial Violence in Palestine*, in support of the multimedia exhibition, *Choreographies of Resistance*.
Committee: Patrick Mahon (Advisor), Sharon Sliwinski, and Kirsty Robertson.
Doctoral Award: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Center of Canada (SSRHC), 2015-2018.

Master of Fine Arts (MFA), Documentary Media Program, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada, 2010-2012.
Thesis: *Ongoing Struggle*, in support of the exhibition *At Home*.
Supervisor: Blake Fitzpatrick.
Scholarship: Ontario Graduate Scholarship, Ryerson University Scholarship.

Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA), University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, 2004–2007.

Bachelor of Economics (BA), Damascus University, Syria, 1985.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS


*Choreographies of Resistance*, AXENEO7 Gallery, Gatineau, Quebec, Canada, 2017.

*Drones Over Gaza*, Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, Toronto Image Festival, Toronto, Canada, 2015.


At Home, photography-video installation, Image Art School, Ryerson University, Second Annual Social Justice Week, Toronto, Canada, 2012.

At Home, multi-channel video installation, CONTACT Photography Festival, IMA Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 2012.


Walking Under Occupation, photography-sound installation, Annual Juried Contemporary Art Exhibition, Ottawa School of Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada, 2008.

Stop Sign, photography-sound installation, Visual Arts Department, Ottawa University, 2007.

Online photography exhibition, Moratoire sur le mot ordinaire” at ‘remue.net’, 2007.


TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

A Refusal of Images with Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, A Space Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 2012.

In Solidarity community project and installation with Malinda Francis, A Space Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 2017.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND SCREENINGS

Bodies in Motion video in Redacting Bodies, Images Festival, Toronto, 2018.

I believe in Living, United Art Society, Calgary, Alberta, 2018.


The Last Picture Show, SAW Gallery, Ottawa, Canada, 2017.


#saltandwater, OR Gallery, Vancouver, British Colombia, Canada, 2015.

V Tape Special, DAZIBAO, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2015.

Sound Art, War and the Arab World, SKOL, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2015.

Cross Sections, interdisciplinary art exhibition, Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre (MLC), Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada, 2014.


Power Play, a two-year online streaming commission of A Night at Home video, SAW Video Centre for the Media Art in partnership with Creative City Network of Canada, Ottawa, Canada, 2013.

Rebels with A Cause Film Festival, York University, 2013.

HOME, Stories from Here and There, The Latcham Gallery, Stouffville, Canada, 2013.


Madrid-Palestine Film Festival, Spanish Institute of Art, Madrid, Spain, 2013.


Create This Revolution, Gallery 101, Ottawa, Canada, 2013.

Uncanny, Art Gallery of Mississauga, Mississauga, Canada, 2013.

Toronto-Palestine Film Festival, Screening of Dima, short documentary, Toronto, 2012.

International Durzfilmtage Oberhausen, Screening of Bil’in video, Germany, 2012.

One World Film Festival, Screening of Bil’in video, Ottawa, Canada, 2011.

Third Annual International Yellowknife Film Festival, screening of A Night at Home video, Northwest Territories, Canada, 2010.

SAW Video Center for the Media Arts, Mayfair Theatre, screening of A Night at Home, Ottawa, Canada, 2010.

Heart and Soul, group photography exhibition and publication, Gordon Framing Gallery, Ottawa, 2010.
Montreal-Palestine Film Festival, Screening of A Night at Home video, Cinémathèque, Québécoise Montréal, Quebec, Canada, 2009.

Fourth International Digital Art Mini-Print Exhibition, Le Centre d'artistes Voix Visuelle, Ottawa, Canada. 2009.


Ottawa School of Art Instructors Exhibition, Ottawa, Canada, 2008.

Art Against War, Cube Gallery, Ottawa, Canada, 2006.

Gallery 115, University of Ottawa, Painting works, Ottawa, 2005.

Ottawa School of Art Gallery, Painting works, Canada, 2003.

Ottawa School of Art Gallery, Print works, Ottawa, Canada, 2002.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Assistant professor, Dar Al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem, Palestine, (Jan 2018–).

Instructor, Digital Photography (VAS 2246A), Western University, London, ON, Canada, 2016.

Assistant professor, Dar Al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem, Palestine, 2015–2016.

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Drawing Exploration, Western University, Canada, 2014–2020.

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Media Art (Sound, Video and Photography) Western University, Canada. 2014–2015.

Graduate Teaching Assistance Media Art (Sound, Video and Photography), Western University, Canada. 2013–2014.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Disaster Images, Image Arts School, Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, 2011.

Instructor, Drawing and Photography courses, Ottawa School of Art, Ottawa, Canada, 2007–2010.

Teaching Assistant, Art and Gender, Visual Arts Department, University of Ottawa, 2005–2006.


ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

“The Olive Tree, the Land and the Palestinian Struggle against Settler Colonialism,” Tranascandadas Conference, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, 2017.


The First Art and Resistance International Conference, organizer, Dar Al-Kalima University of Art and Culture, Bethlehem, Palestine, 2016.

“Canada Park” Critical Topography Symposium, May 20–22, Ryerson and Trent Universities, Peterborough and Toronto, Canada, 2017

Art and Resistance, Artist Talk, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, 2015.


"Reclaiming Memory and History” in the panel "Performativity Under Fire: Embodiment in Contemporary Middle Eastern Art," Universities Art Association of Canada Annual Conference (UAAC), Concordia University, Montreal, 2012.

SELECTED CONFERENCES, LECTURES, PANEL PRESENTATIONS


“Settler Colonialism in Palestine.” Presenter. Waterloo University, Canada, 2016.


Presentation of artworks, Dar Al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem, Palestine, 2015.

Ryerson University Documentary Media Program, invited lecturer, Toronto, Canada, 2015.

“A Dead Sea.” Public Presentation. OR Gallery, Vancouver, British Colombia, Canada, 2015.


Several artist talks, diverse groups, Karsh-Masson Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada, 2014.

Curator-Artist public dialogue with curator Diana Nemiroff, St. Bridges Centre for the Arts, Ottawa, 2014.

PhD research presentation, Ryerson University and University of British Colombia graduate students, Ryerson University, Toronto, 2014.


Guest Artist, 29th Baie-Saint Paul International Contemporary Art Symposium, Quebec, Canada, 2011.


“Walking Under Occupation.” Artist Talk, Ottawa School of Art Gallery.


JURIES

Jury member, Ismail Shamout Award, Dar Al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Palestine 2018.

Jury member, Visual Arts Awards, Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG), Toronto, 2017

Jury member, South Asian Video Art Centre (SAVAC)’s annual experimental film & video screening program, Monitor 9, Toronto, Canada, 2012.

Jury member, 51 Annual Exhibition, Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, Toronto, Canada, 2012.

PUBLICATIONS, REVIEWS, CATALOGUES


“Khan, Nashwa, Making Art from Life in Palestine,” *Hyperallergic.com*.


Al Falastiniyah Television, interview, (Arabic), September, 2014.


Rohde, Christopher, “Power Play,” online essay, SAW Video Center for the Media Art, 2013.


**AWARDS AND HONOURS**

Western University Graduate Research Excellence Scholarship, 2016–17.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Center PhD Scholarship, 2015–2018.

Robert Hathaway Ontario Graduate Scholarship, Western University, 2015 (declined).

Western Faculty of Arts and Humanities Research Fund, 2015.

Canada Council for the Arts Travel Grant, 2015.

Western University Travel Grant, 2014.

Western University Graduate Research Scholarship, 2014.

Ontario Graduate Scholarship, 2014–2015.

Western University Provost’s Entrance Scholarship, 2013.

Ontario Art Council Media Project Grant, 2013.

Western University Graduate Research Scholarship, 2013.


Ontario Art Council Exhibition Assistance Grant, 2012.

Social Justice Award, Documentary Media, Ryerson University, Toronto, 2011.

Ontario Graduate Fellowship, 2010 and 2011.

Ryerson University Graduate Scholarship, 2010.
Cultural Production Fund, SAW Video Center for the Media Arts, 2010.
City of Ottawa Arts Funding Program Grant, Ottawa, 2010.
BFA, Magna Cum Laude, Ottawa University, 2007.
Edmund and Isobel Ryan Visual Arts Award in Photography, University of Ottawa, 2007.
Ottawa School of Art Award, 2002.