

*Intervention*

**It's been 164 Days and a Long Century:  
Notes on Genocide, Solidarity, and Liberation**

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**A String of Words to Speak the Unspeakable**

How does one write in the midst of an ongoing genocide? When the contours of Palestine are being redrawn in blood, and when unconscionable images of starving, injured, and dead children, women, and men have become our daily breakfast? How do we register the indignities, dehumanisation, and sadism being unleashed on the Palestinian people? Where does one begin to chronicle the cumulative calculus of 164 days of genocide compounded by the invisibilised cruelties of a long century of Zionist settler colonialism and imperial capture? What is our task as scholar-activists, as human beings, when we become witnesses and thus unwilling accomplices to the ravaging of an ancient people and geography that has stood tall for generations as a cradle of civilisation? And what in turn does the long struggle for Palestine offer to critical geographies of erasure, transnational solidarity, and liberation?

Perhaps no language, no cartography, no record is capable of tracking, conveying, mapping, archiving the ongoing lived reality of this devastation. No written intervention, no matter how earnestly penned, can grasp, contain, or abrogate the manifold scales of violence, the shameless saturnalia of mass murder, callous barbarism, and flagrant fabrication of falsehoods that saturate our days. We sometimes wonder if genocide, the crime of crimes, bears any explanation at all. As we grapple with the reality and reach for answers in the epochal lineages, calculated destructions, and indignities lodged in the imaginaries and materialities of settler colonialism and racial capitalism, we are forced to confront the limits of language and scholarship. The horrors, intimacies, and scales of genocidal violence exceed imagination and description, they escape analytical capture.

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Despite the seeming futility we must continue to write, speak, and organise against the mounting savagery. As Nicki Kattoura (2024) recently wrote: “How else did Zionists convince the world of the Palestinian as subhuman but with a string of words? How else did the movement for Palestine grow beyond any measure without the words and actions of Palestinians and her comrades?” In what follows we hope that our string of words can become a kite, a sign of life in a sky ablaze with indiscriminate, coldblooded bombardments. Or, at least, offer some stepping stones to navigate, confront, and surpass the limits and strictures of ahistorical accounts, arid legal language, scholarly epistemicide, transnational complicities, and the geographies of bodily and spatial erasure we are all witnessing, livestreamed by its victims, in the Gaza Strip and across Palestine.

### **Gaza and the Continuum of Elimination and Resistance**

The Gaza Strip is an Israeli invention. Its creation as a separate territory was the product of the 1948 ethnic cleansing of large parts of historical Palestine by Jewish settler militias, in collusion with British and other imperial powers. During the Nakba, the catastrophe, entire communities in central and southern Palestine were expelled from their lands and pushed into the Strip, their homes and villages burned and destroyed to prevent their return and clear the path for the Israeli settler state. Enclosed by a new colonial border, the Gaza Strip became, from one day to the next, home to more than 200,000 refugees. A district of 28,000 square kilometres was reduced to a mere 365 square kilometres and its population tripled. Refugees came from Bir alSabe', Al-Ramleh, Yaffa, Al-Quds, Al-Khaleel, and from villages and tribal lands surrounding the Strip, where Israel gradually established the colonies of Sderot, Kfar Azza, Kisufim, Be'eri, Erez, Nahal Oz (Issa 2023). Palestinians can still see their lands and ruined homes through the barbed-wire fences that cut through space and time, sequestering them into a hyper militarised concentration camp that today is home to two million refugees. It is from this carceral geography, where everyone and everything is tightly surveilled and managed, that on 7 October 2023, the inmates broke through the prison walls to give visibility to their plight as they symbolically returned to their historic homelands. The prison is now an extermination camp from which incessant plumes of smoke billow and curl across the landscape.

To grapple with the elimination logics of settler colonial capitalism is to contend with its entrenched historical geographies, political and material conditions, and, equally important, its

effacements and refusals. In the refugee camps of Jabaliya, Khan Yunis, Rafah, Al-Maghazi, Al-Bureij, Al-Shati' and Al-Nussayrat, elders older than the State of Israel continue to pass on lived stories of dispossession and erasure to their children and grandchildren. They recount the atrocities endured during the Nakba, including torture, rape, and massacres perpetrated by the Haganah, the Irgun, and Lehi, the Zionist paramilitary militias that became the Israeli army. They narrate how they were chased from their homes and found shelter in and around Gaza City, in private homes, schools, mosques, churches, hospitals, but also in huts, caves, orange groves, and sand dunes. Like today, refugees filled available sidewalks, vacant lots, public markets, and barnyards with only the sky as shelter. They recall Jewish settlers poisoning the water supply by injecting typhoid and dysentery viruses into wells. They tell of tens of children dying daily of starvation and of the spread of diseases like malaria, rickets, diphtheria, and scurvy. Despite the ethnic cleansing operations, Palestinians repeatedly returned to their homes in what then, de facto, became Israel. Clinging to their inalienable right to return and classified as “infiltrators” on their own lands, they went back to collect possessions and unharvested crops, to attend herds, and lay claim to their ancestral homelands. A resistance of sheer bodily presence against enforced expulsion, absence, and attempted erasure.<sup>2</sup>

Palestinians also remember the brutal Israeli invasion and the massacres in Khan Yunis and Rafah in 1956 (Masalha 1996). How Golda Meir’s Labor government then, like Netanyahu’s Likud and Kahanist coalition today, declared the Gaza Strip an integral part of the Land of Israel and pressed for the bulk of Palestinian refugees to be transferred to Egypt. They recall how in 1967 during the Naksa, the setback, 45,000 people were again forcibly displaced while more than 10,000 residents who were abroad, visiting or studying, were not allowed to return. They curse the 1969 fake labour scheme devised by Israel to displace 60,000 Palestinians to the Paraguayan dictatorship of Stroessner in exchange for 33 dollars per worker (Assali 2023). They recount how, during the early 1970s, the Israeli army under Ariel Sharon invaded the Strip and redesigned the urban fabric of refugee camps by using explosives and bulldozers to establish Jewish colonies in their midst. The brutal operation resulted in the destruction of 2,000 homes, yet another wave of displacement for 16,000 refugees, and the deportation of 12,000 to detention camps in the Sinai desert (Roy 1987). At this time, the Strip was sealed off with an 85 kilometre ring fence that prefigured the ongoing brutal siege imposed in the aftermath of Hamas’ democratic election victory in 2006. It was also Sharon

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<sup>2</sup> For histories of the Nakba, see Filiu (2014), Masalha (1997), Pappé (2007) and Sa'di and Abu-Lughod (2007).

who in 1982 chased the Palestinian refugees out of Lebanon, and personally supervised the 43-hour massacre of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp in Beirut. A gruesome milestone that left more than 3,000 Palestinian refugees and Lebanese Shia riddled with bullets and slashed with machetes in the alleys and homes of the camp (Genet 1983). Massacres, dehumanisation, destruction, and dispersion is the only Zionist grammar Palestinians have ever known.

Elders however also share stories of kinship, generosity, care, and resistance. They recall the social infrastructures they put in place to deal with the dire material conditions of the Nakba, when 750,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed and more than 400 villages, towns, and cities were razed to the ground across Palestine (Khalidi 1992). Before the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) was established in 1949, Gaza residents opened their homes, women's clubs and midwives provided personnel for milk distribution, and doctors offered medical assistance. Everyone organised collectively to donate money, provide food, water, blankets, clothing, and medical assistance. Some refugees volunteered to become teachers using sand as blackboards for their lessons while others appointed bakers to establish camp bakeries (Cheal 1988). In the midst of a genocide, the fabric of life needed to be reinvented everyday to cope with the urgency of the moment. Palestinians also speak of armed struggle in Gaza and how, with Egyptian support, they carried out military raids of the growing Israeli settlements bordering the Strip. Between 1949 until 1956, more than 3,000 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli military, police, and civilians along the newly fabricated borders. Nobody has forgotten either the low-intensity insurgency or the revolutionary moment that ensued after the Israeli annexation of the Gaza Strip in 1967. This indigenous anticolonial response continued through the 1987 Intifada, the 2018 year-long protests of the Great March of Return, and onwards into the current moment. For as long as it has been colonised, Gaza has been a bastion of Palestinian resistance, an unflinching crucible of national liberation (Sayigh 1997).

This long continuum of elimination and defiant struggle is passed on from generation to generation. While the vast majority of Israelis live in dragooned denial about the horrific violence required to chase people from the homes and lands they now inhabit as haunted citadels, Palestinians survive and endure through remembrance, resistance, and reconstruction. Against settler attempts to erase and disavow their grounded indigenous existence, Palestinian storytelling and oral histories function as a powerful archive that sustains a sense of sanity amidst repeated ruination. As Palestinian historical archives continue to be looted, burnt, and desecrated, these oral and written

parables recollect histories of dispossession and endurance disavowed by Western collective memory and scholarship (Sayigh 2008). The narratives are a collectively recovered ground from which to reassert legitimate rights and just claims to life, land, and freedom. In these accounts there is trauma and horror but also joy and humour to navigate with dignity the heavily mined terrains of colonial time and space. Amidst the dust and thick layered condensations of hubris and ruin, it is hard to appreciate that Gaza was historically a central trade passage of the Via Maris between Africa and Asia, a cosmopolitan city and prosperous market with deep ties to its hinterland, a place of coexistence for Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities, and a fertile land guarded, shepherded, cultivated, and blooming because of the steadfastness and patience of its Palestinian people (El-Sakka 2018). It is precisely this rich history, humanising cosmopolitan legacy, and unswerving Palestinian refusal to give up on life that threatens the core of Zionist Jewish supremacy.

### **When Masks Fall**

The Genocide Convention was approved by the United Nations in December 1948, three years after the liberation of the last Nazi concentration camp and seven months after the establishment of the State of Israel. As the convention was being finalised, Israel was still busy expelling the last residents of the southern cities of Isdud and Al-Majdal to the Gaza Strip and forcing the Bedouin residents of the Al-Naqab region to flee. By that point, 13,000 Palestinians had been killed, more than 77 percent of their lands seized, and 90 percent displaced within and outside of Palestine (Khalidi 2020). Disregarding these realities, the genocide convention was based on the narrow view that Nazism, and what we now call the Holocaust, was a singular historical event. This detached view of the Holocaust, Raz Segal and Luigi Daniele (2024) argue, meant the new Jewish State of Israel came to be understood as exceptional, blurring its own settler colonial nature and drawing a heavy curtain over its imperial origins and violent foundations. After the defeat of Germany in World War II, it seemed inconceivable that Jewish communities of Europe who had suffered Hitler's genocide could ever become perpetrators of those same criminal violations of another people. The Genocide Convention thereby created a historiographical rupture between the Nazi Holocaust and its preceding and ongoing centuries-long colonial prototypes. This severance of the Shoah from the death-dealing, maiming dispossessions of European imperial conquests and slavery was no accident. In his iconic *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire (2000: 36) pointedly remarks that until Europeans became victims of Nazism, "they were its accomplices ... shut their eyes to it, legitimized

it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples”. In other words, fascism was colonialism turned inwards. The fact that it was enshrined as exceptional in the law and collective memory was a way to obfuscate and diminish the very violence exercised by Europeans across their vast empires of colonies. The foundation of the State of Israel and the approval of the Genocide Convention thus marks a fundamental moment of imperial erasure that has now come back to haunt Zionism and the European racism that gave it birth.

Indeed, as the clerk of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) called the audience to rise on the morning of 11 January 2024, skipped beats were felt in the hearts of the many who understand that the State of Israel is founded on the ashes of another people, a historical injustice. As the 17 judges of the court took their seats in the dramatic aura of authority and solemnity at the Hague’s Peace Palace, its stained-glass windows and large chandeliers shimmered with propitious anticipation. Shortly thereafter the South African legal team, proudly draped in the colours of their post-Apartheid flag, began to lay out their painstakingly meticulous case against the State of Israel for the crime of genocide. In a breathtaking progression of hard evidence, lawyers linked historical realities from the century-old colonisation of Palestine, to gruesome acts perpetrated by Israel in the Gaza Strip today (UN 2024). With forensic diligence, South African lawyers unravelled a trajectory of calculated Israeli encroachments to reveal a pattern of conduct that is a textbook case of genocidal intent. It was in this historic moment that the Zionist lie of exceptional victimhood collapsed, as did the shaky credibility of generations of its gatekeepers who have sought to invisibilise their own colonial genocides across centuries of European hegemony before the Shoah.

Adila Hassim, advocate of the High Court of South Africa, passionately recounted, blow by blow, the series of genocidal acts committed, recorded, and celebrated by Israeli officials and soldiers in the Gaza Strip since 8 October. The relentless killings, mass graves, bodily and mental harms, hundreds of multigenerational families wiped off the registry with no remaining survivors, and civilians arrested, blindfolded, forced to undress, loaded into trucks and taken for black-site interrogations and torture, were all entered into the public record. Hassim also reprised, for the court, the agonising conditions of life imposed on Palestinians in the wake of their mass displacements into cramped conditions while Israeli soldiers joyfully filmed themselves blowing up homes, universities, mosques and churches, historic buildings and squares, and other essential infrastructures. A litany of violence aimed at making Palestinian return to their homes in camps, villages, and cities practically impossible. The most recent round of obliteration, she noted, is not new. It is an intensification of a

prior pattern of Israeli demolitions and forced removals that have now compounded into a liquidating genocide. In closing, Hassin drew the court's attention to the devastating generational and gendered impacts of Israel's targeted decimation of the health sector. She pointed to the denial of essential medical care and kits for the nearly 200 women delivering babies each day, all calculated to prevent Palestinian births and effectively disrupt social and biological reproduction. South Africa's submission placed the persistent Israeli annihilation of the Gaza Strip and Palestine in full view of the world.

All that was solid is melting into air as the fraying masks of modern imperialism dissolve to reveal the profound enduring complicities underwriting Israel's settler colonialism. Just one day after the ICJ recognised the plausibility of the genocide in Gaza, white settler states, old European powers and their compradors brazenly closed ranks behind Israel by cutting all financial contributions to UNRWA. This attempt to distract public attention from the court proceedings and Israel's ongoing bloodbath openly defied the ICJ's emergency order to restore access to aid for Gaza. Western powers are effectively burying the Palestinian right to return by crippling the very organisation created in the aftermath of the Nakba to redress the consequences of the ethnic cleansing they enabled in the first place (Feldman and Ticktin 2010). UNRWA is the most viable and experienced aid organisation operating in the Gaza Strip and refugee camps across Palestine and the Middle East. Attacks on this organisation are nothing short of a coordinated global assault on a critical social infrastructure when the entire population of the Strip faces crisis levels of hunger, starvation, dehydration, and disease. The Israeli army's systematic attacks on aid workers, food trucks, storage sites, and desperate civilians seeking aid in subsequent "flour massacres" are yet another nail in the coffin. Gaza is in a state of famine because of Israel's policy of starvation and Western states' perennial connivance with Zionist ethnic cleansing. Crumbs of food being spectacularly air dropped into the sea only attest to the image-cleansing depravities of their entanglement. Their collective fuelling and whitewashing of the Zionist bloodbath, minimising of mounting Palestinian death tolls, injury, and starvation counts, alongside the persistent US sabotage of UN Security Council ceasefire resolutions and refusal to concretely force an immediate and permanent ceasefire, further underscore European and American settler affinities and direct participation in the present genocide.

Despite the colonial nature of international law (Anghie 2007), the limits of the Genocide Convention and international law (Moses 2021; Wolfe 2006), and the court's refusal to call for a ceasefire, the fact that the State of Israel stands accused of genocide by the Republic of South Africa

in a world court is deeply significant. With her heroic legacy of resistance to settler colonialism and apartheid, South Africa's solidarity with Palestine has broken through Zionism's shield of impunity and innocence. Israel has never been this fully disrobed. Even under the most charitable lens, Israel's Holocaust alibi as victim apologia for its perpetual elimination of Palestine cannot hold. As in previous historical moments of extreme Israeli violence, we face the spine-chilling reality that it takes this scale of horror to crack the encrusted armour of racist imaginaries. Whether left, liberal, or conservative, an enduring pact of coloniser justifications and obfuscations has made Israel a primary European beacon and outpost in the Middle East. Against this, South Africa's criminal charges are spearheading a larger decolonial force gaining strength to confront the genocide as an endemic feature of the racist historical pathways of the capitalist world system. The Global South is emerging from the periphery to put colonial violence on trial using the colonisers' own rhetoric, robes, and rules of justice. The ICJ genocide case, parallel ICJ hearings on the illegality of Israel's occupation, and ongoing International Criminal Court investigations into Israeli violations of international law and humanitarian conventions, together with the global outcry for a free, fully restored, decolonised Palestine are exposing the systematic inhumanities of Israel's settler colonial apartheid and military occupation. By putting imperial violence on trial, South Africa and formerly colonised countries of the Global South are mounting a muscular refusal of the ghostly and monstrous living legacies, masquerades, and modalities of Empires, old and new.

The genocide case against Israel confirms the common foundations of Zionism and Euro-American colonisation. It also recentres Palestine as a paragon of today's struggles for true decolonisation through and against the forever imperial wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from Turtle Island and Abya Yala to Africa and Asia. It is no coincidence that South Africa along with Namibia, Ireland, Algeria, Cuba, Indonesia, and Mexico, who all fought fierce national liberation independence wars, are turning world courts into a global public tribunal on Israel as an exemplary embodiment of the immutable violent legacies of colonial oppression. Memories of their own protracted struggles against imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and experiences of racism, exploitation, and elimination along the global colour line link these struggles and spark their solidarity. Their shared past is infused with a deep sense of sisterhood with the Palestinian revolutionary movement which actively engaged, aligned with, and concretely supported Third World decolonisation movements in Africa, Asia, and the Americas through the Palestine Liberation Organisation (Chamberlin 2012; Lubin 2014; Nassar 2020). As South Africa's foreign minister



Naledi Pandor put it recently, it was, and remains, an unconditional, international solidarity informed by a shared sense that being human means we must care about each other's problems. Much has changed since the independence wars and internationalist solidarity of the past century, but Fanon's (2002) important warnings about the pitfalls of the national consciousness remain prescient. Palestinians together with indigenous, Black people, workers, feminist, abolitionist, and climate justice resistance movements are becoming a critical wedge against rising ultra-right nationalist forces around the world. Together, our struggles hold the promises and dreams of the unfinished struggle for full, worldwide liberation from the imperatives of colonial annihilation and fascism.

### **Liberatory Geographies in the Time of Monsters**

We are in a time of exceptional clarity. Too many scholars, artists, activists, journalists, non-profit professionals, and politicians of all persuasions have revealed a weak-kneed faint-heartedness in the face of the unfolding horror. Acquiescence ranges from instinctive insistence on Israeli impunity, dismissal of historical context, and refusal to recognise the ongoing genocide, to intellectualised rationalisations of the slaughter. The result is a deafening silence and unwillingness to extend solidarity to Palestinians, faculty, artists, workers, students, and colleagues being sanctioned, deplatformed, defunded, or fired for speaking out. In Europe, Germany has been at the forefront of criminalising critics of Israel with a virulence pushed to the point of absurdity. More than a holocaust hangover, their sanctification of Israel is a *raison d'être* of the German state. Anyone who dares critique Israel's genocidal occupation and declare support for Palestinian liberation, even Jews, are being attacked, muzzled, and penalised under false charges of antisemitism (Al-Taher and Youne 2023). Around the world police repression and legal persecution are becoming a new normal for quelling everything Palestinian. In the harsh light of coloniality, the genocidal incitement and narrative that position the devastation of the Gaza Strip as a just war against Hamas are falling to pieces. Farcical claims of impartial neutrality by corporate, political, and military elites and their academic, cultural, and media minions are more than specious fictions. They are clear evidence of their enmeshment in Orientalist Islamophobia, liberal duplicity, and capitalist greed. In these accounts only Palestinians who present as perfect, passive victims are worthy of human consideration and support. These normative distortions actively deepen the dehumanisation of Palestinians and pave the way for a sanitised and unaccountable normalisation of Israel's brutality.

It bears reminding that all peoples struggling for sovereignty, physical and cultural survival, territorial integrity, and liberation from colonial and foreign domination have a legal right to resist by all means necessary. This includes armed struggle (UN 1982). Tarring anticolonial liberation struggles with the terrorist brush criminalises legitimate political actors and resistance forces, suspends their fundamental rights, and outlaws their fight for rightful recovery of liberty, land, and life. In the national liberation wars of the long 20<sup>th</sup> century, indigenous people, witnesses, and critics were not expected to condemn or mourn the deaths of their marauding occupiers and settlers. In Vietnam, the Dutch Indies, Algeria, or South Africa the terrors of imperialism and colonisation were clearly understood as the principal cause of decolonial warfare and its casualties. Life is precious; however, demands for recognition of the suffering of enslavers, colonisers, and genociders cast perpetrators as victims and debase all forms of resistance as irredeemable evil. The 7 October Al-Aqsa Flood operation was not an anomaly; it was a coordinated armed Palestinian response to an escalation of Israeli colonial violence, from the river to the sea. On top of a well documented 17-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, recent years have seen a ceaseless rise of political executions, administrative detentions, torture, land annexations, and displacement, infrastructure and home demolitions, settler attacks, and proliferating mobility controls. This organised abandonment and rapid intensification of systematic suppression of indigenous existence and self-determination created the material conditions that led a large coalition of Palestinian armed and political factions to come together to break the siege. Despite Israel's overwhelming firepower and remorseless bravado, it is not achieving its stated objectives. Palestinian guerillas are ferociously defending against military incursions and reoccupation of key areas of northern Gaza. In the north where Israel is launching attacks on Lebanon and Syria, territories it still occupies and regularly bombs, local armed militias are maintaining a steadfast resistance. In Iraq imperialist military bases and weapons supplies are under attack. In the Gulf of Aden, US and UK ships headed to Israel are being targeted by Yemini resistance groups halting shipments to Israel and disrupting global supply chains in solidarity with the people of Gaza. History has taught us that sometimes, despite overwhelming odds, the shrewd, strategic tenacity of freedom fighters can stop wars and sometimes even win against the formidable weaponry of the powerful.

Our rage at the ongoing horrors is tempered by the glimmers of hope radiating from an unflagging resistance rising out of the rubble in Palestine and catching fire in the massive mobilisations of millions across the globe. Locally, regionally, and globally, across distance and

difference, political coalitions are rekindling the lineages of radical politics and carving out fresh contours of liberatory geographies. Palestinians from the river to the sea and throughout the diaspora are showing the world that a sheer unbending dignified will to live is their paramount, unbeatable weapon in this struggle. Arab, African, Asian, and American streets are flooded with Palestinian flags and mass marches pressing their countries to stand up for Palestine. People around the world are up in arms and making thunderous calls for ceasefire, a permanent end to Israel's settler colonial and apartheid regime, and a free Palestine. Unions are blocking ports, workers are laying down tools, barricading doors to munitions plants. Across denominations residents are obstructing roadways and airports and breaking the imperial logistical pathways of Israeli genocide. A disciplined cadre of activists are mounting direct actions against weapons industries to erode, expose, and debilitate the framework of Israel's military-industrial complex. Students, researchers, and teachers unions are winning divestment campaigns, passing boycott resolutions, refusing platforms to apologists and allies of Israel's genocidal policies, and calling on administrations, corporations, and nonprofits to sever all ties with the State of Israel. Artists are speaking out, boycotting cultural events, and calling out institutions that outlaw and extinguish expressions of support for Palestine. Jewish people are breaking from Israel's genocide and colonial occupation in unprecedented numbers, standing up against Zionism and forming new political alliances within and beyond their communities. Indigenous people, Black, migrant rights and environmental activists are on the frontlines of Palestine solidarity interventions. Palestinian youth movements and anti-Islamophobia organisations are leading the charge. The emerging coalitions are a radical amalgam of disparate movements centring the Palestinian fightback as inseparable from their own liberation work. The people's tribunal of the streets today, aflame with grief and rage, is taking on the established order and firmly refusing to be a party to genocide. Their collective chant, "In our millions, in our billions, we are all Palestinians!", says it all.

No matter how much time passes, the scars of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip will be forever etched into the landscapes, lives, hearts and minds of Palestinians and the world. There are no words, figures, or images that can convey the catastrophic irreparable loss represented in each and every life being vanished under the weight of such targeted, callous hatred. Bakers, masons, farmers, engineers, students, electricians, teachers, doctors, nurses, archivists, librarians, care workers, every single one of them, like the mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, cousins, neighbours, are absolutely irreplaceable. Their expunged lives leave a craterous vacuum of pain and incommensurable absence

(see Death Panel 2022). The Palestinian social body is also taking heavy losses. The decimation of social, educational, and cultural institutions that hold the memories, histories, knowledge productions, and dreams of the Palestinian people amounts to a calculated epistemicide (Wind 2024). A wilful attempt to exterminate the possibilities of a collective past, present, and future. Zionism, however, is not all about elimination for elimination's sake. For settlers have always been profoundly dependent on extracting and extinguishing indigenous land and life to reproduce themselves in service of a twisted national imaginary. Palestinians, as before, are steadfastly holding the line against the unfathomable proportions of the current erasures.

Palestine is tragically paradigmatic of the death drives visibly sweeping across the planet. The perilous and precarious times we have all been experiencing, watching, studying, parsing, and writing about in recent decades are manifesting into new pinnacles of monstrosity in the Gaza Strip and Palestine. Imperial geographies of disposability, curtailments of rights, forever wars, and banal evil bureaucratic repressions are spilling across national and regional borders fused with multiple modes of militarised policing and right-wing authoritarianism. No single disciplinary or analytical logic can elucidate the historically layered encrustations of this moment. As scholar-activists our challenge is to think beyond the gated divisions, fragmented insights, and alienated individualism of intellectual and everyday life. It is our duty to remake radical knowledge into a working democratic discussion that can serve as a conceptual scaffolding for the cries of liberation and mutinous disruptions of the many generations of activists taking to the streets. We are being called to rethink and extend our analysis of imperial logics, colonial racial capitalism, and indigenous land struggles into a more capacious and relational frame. Reweaving the productions and reproductions of capitalist, territorial, and corporeal value into an expanded systemic totality that spotlights its perennial dependence on devaluing violence and ruination is an urgent and necessarily collective task. One that requires us to make a pronounced break from the false promise of ivory tower academic conventions.

To stand with Palestine today is to stand against old and new depredations reformulating into the revanchist tide of populist misogyny, racism, heteronormativity, and cutthroat capitalism taking state power in and across the globe. Anticipating a European fascist takeover in the 1930s, Gramsci (1971: 276) wrote that “the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear”. We are in the Gramscian interregnum and the monsters are here. The high price being paid by Palestinians today can only be remoulded into a visionary portal

for a new world if we, the scholars, activists, writers, artists, workers, caregivers, people of the world break the cycle of comprador collusion and complicity and stand on the right side of history in the long struggle ahead. Through their perseverance, Palestinians are challenging the world to drop the normative oscillating binary that caricatures them as either “human animals” or pitiable objects. The story of Palestine and its diverse determined people unfolds as a long treacherous quest for the basic right to live in the fullness of their landed cultural and social dignity. This history is also a methodology for liberation. Palestinians are not heroes, saints, nor victims, but as flawed, fierce, fragile, and fabulous as the rest of us. They deserve our deepest respect. As they navigate a genocidal nightmare and teach the world to revalue life and freedom, they seek not charity, but the most genuine practical, human, and heartfelt solidarity we can muster. Against the ravages of our time our indestructible unity can make life possible for all. From the river to the sea Palestine will be free.

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