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# Israeli Occupation of Palestine: The Effects of Space Monopolization

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# Israeli Occupation of Palestine: The Effects of Space Monopolization

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Submitted to the Urban Studies Program, Trinity College

Supervised by Garth Myers

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## **Abstract**

The Israeli occupation of Palestine is a century long feat resulting in the totalitarian control of Palestine's development, natural resources, and spatial representation. The heavily contested land between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea has resulted in the dispossession, destruction, and degradation of Palestine's infrastructure, political power, and national identity. The British established Israel Zionist State has closely worked with foreign allies to construct and maintain its power.

*Keywords: Palestine, Israel, space, colonization, water, natural resources, walls, geographical representation, building, development regulations*

## Preface

*[To a killer]*

*If you had looked into the face of your victim  
and thought carefully,  
you might have remembered your mother in the Gas Chamber,  
and freed yourself from the rifle's prejudice  
and changed your mind.  
Come now, this is no way to restore an identity;*

*-Mahmoud Darwish*

Human civilization has existed for an approximated two hundred thousand years. Hallmarked by language, science, and culture, humans have developed advanced societies that enable us to connect, create, and cohabitate with one another. Mankind, in a state which was previously recognized by primordial, individualistic human identity, was elevated as religion, governance and technology developed. Individuals unified into families which came together into communities which conjoined into nations. Collective identifies were built, orchestrated, and weaponized. Competing nations clashed over resources, ideology, and power. From the first civilization of Mesopotamia, in 539 BC, to the present world of 2020, massive civilizations have fallen and risen in a cyclical pattern of development and destruction.

Parallel to, but in direct opposition of, societal advancement, is a pattern of hostile human slaughter. Consequential of human evolution is the ability to annihilate entire nations, empires, and generations. Perhaps what is the darkest stain on humanity, is the one most inherent. The cyclical nature of societal development and destruction prove it to be an inevitable consequence of human advancement and its politics. Theologian John

Hick justifies this destruction by categorizing it essential for development, namely spiritual. An innate quality of humankind, destruction and development circle one another throughout history.

The politics surrounding a sharp sliver of land sitting between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea embody this dangerous cycle. The case of Palestine and Israel is one of rising and falling power-each entity vehemently staking ownership of the land. The Jewish people, once persecuted in the Holocaust horror, seek to establish the Israeli State. Israel, fueled by Zionist ideology, displace, dispossess, and destroy the Palestinian people. Human rights defender, Omar Barghouti states “It [Israel] has effectively succeeded in cynically exploiting the Nazi genocide... transforming the pain and guilt felt across the West into an almost invincible shield from censure and accountability”<sup>ii</sup>. Palestinians suffer at the colonial hand of Israel. Jewish Israelis, the previous victims of significant human atrocity now deal the destruction they once felt. Israel employs authoritarian tactics to dominate physical space by expelling Arabs, constructing barriers, monopolizing natural resources, and limiting infrastructural improvement-eliminating Palestinian agency and independence.

## Introduction

*All the birds that followed my palm  
to the door of the distant airport  
All the wheatfields  
All the prisons  
All the white tombstones  
All the barbed Boundaries  
All the waving handkerchiefs  
All the eyes  
were with me,  
But they dropped them from my passport<sup>iii</sup>  
-Mahmoud Darwish*

*This discourse is racist. This discourse is nationalistic.  
-Breaking the Silence<sup>iv</sup>*

The control of physical space is inherent in colonial occupation. By nature, the dispute of Palestine and Israel is rooted in claim to the physical land. Palestine's established existence and Israel's religious assertion clash violently as they both attempt to inhabit the sacred space. Within the past century, the indicators of colonization are unmistakably apparent. From forced Palestinian expulsion, illegal Jewish inhabitation, and unlawful possession of territory, Israel's history is coupled with Palestinian ethnic cleansing.

In its historical politics, Israel uses spatial regulations to inhibit Palestinian movement, deny natural resource access and cease structural development. Like any colonial force, its power stems from indigenous oppression, suffocation, and exploitation. The financial, spatial, and psychological strangulation of Palestinians is the consequence

of Israel. Here is a presentation of facts, illuminating the Palestinian narrative of persecution through space monopolization.

## The Palestinian and Israeli Conflict

### *Before 1948*

After World War 1 and in 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration. It was a public statement which pledged support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for Jewish people”<sup>v</sup>. The declaration effectively realized Zionist ideology-Jewish support of a national state in Palestine. At its core, the Zionist nation eradicates the hundreds of thousands already indigenous to the land: “the Zionist dream of uniting the diaspora in a Jewish state was by its very nature a colonial project”<sup>vi</sup>. In the words of Derek Gregory in the *Colonial Present*,

“the Zionists knew very well that Arabs lived on the land; they knew, too that they would not give up willingly. But - in another quintessentially colonial gesture - the ingenious population was reduced to the mute *object* of history, people who merely have things done to them, and never recognized as one of its active *subjects*”<sup>vii</sup>

The Balfour Declaration transferred control of the sliver of land from Palestine to now actualized Israel. In fairness, the Declaration also determined that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”<sup>viii</sup>. However, just three years later, Palestine was issued a Mandate from the League of Nations. Very plainly, the mandate insisted Palestine “was not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world”<sup>ix</sup>. The Mandate of Palestine required the government to “facilitate Jewish

immigration” and “encourage its settlement on the land”<sup>x</sup>. In a nation which was comprised of 90% Palestinian Arabs and less than 10% Jews, the declaration shifted favor to the minority population at the expense of the majority. Britain began to facilitate the influx of European Jews into Palestine tripling the Jewish population to ~27%<sup>xi</sup>. Thus, began the Israeli colonization of Palestine, aided by Britain.

Circumstances between the Arab Palestinians and incoming European Jews were taut with tension. Palestinians resisted the increasing Jewish immigration: “Arab farmers and laborers saw this as a creeping dispossession”<sup>xii</sup>. On the other side, Jewish immigrants were hostile and “formed armed militias so that their colonization of the land could proceed”<sup>xiii</sup>. Their initial presence in Palestine was characterized by “a triple imperative [of settlement, security, and sovereignty] that has shaped Zionist ideology ever since”<sup>xiv</sup>. In 1936, the resistance of Palestinians against Jewish immigrants, otherwise known as the Arab Revolt, came to head.

The British government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the unrest. Chaim Weizmann, who was president of the World Zionist Organization, determined the unrest to be necessary and a consequence of modernization. In his words, “the revolt was merely the old war of the desert against civilization”<sup>xv</sup>. His testimony equated Palestine to antiquity and Israel with modernity—a common stratagem used to legitimize the colonization and dispossession of Palestine. The British commissioners accepted his testimony and found no issue with the removal of Arabs from their land: “Palestine was ‘diseased’, they wrote... they recommended partition”<sup>xvi</sup>. This sentiment was echoed by the Jewish Agency who, while temporarily placated with 20% of Mandatory Palestine,

advocated for the eventual and complete removal of Arabs in the Zionist image of Israel. The Arab Higher Committee in Palestine was vehemently opposed to their removal and deemed it illegal as well as unfounded.

### *The Nakba of 1948 and After*

The Palestinian and Israeli impasse was politically stagnant and socially erupting in violence. To address the continued opposition to the Mandate, Britain devolved the question of the Palestine partition to the United Nations. Out of the 56 then-member states, 33 of them supported the partition. This included the “United States, the USSR, European member states; and Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa (all of



**Fig 1.** Palestinian loss of land and Israel’s claim to land from 1917 to 2020.  
Jan 29 2020, accessed May 5 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/trump-plan-propose-palestinian-territories-200129104420768.html>

them British dominions)”. 13 member states voted against the partition including Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia,

Syria, Turkey, and Yemen. 10 states abstained from the vote, including the United Kingdom xvii. In 1948, the partition was passed, and Palestine was geopolitically butchered along American, European, and Russian interests. The Jews, with a minority

population of 35%, was granted 56%, a majority, of the territory (see Fig. 1). The especially contested city of Jerusalem was placed under international regime. Palestinians, at a majority 65% of the population, was given 44% of the land.

The UN decision led to immediate violence. Guerilla attacks, blockaded roads, bombs, and murder of unarmed civilians were enacted by both Palestinians and Israelis. In April of 1948, Israel acted with illegal force; Jewish Irgun militia entered an Arab village and massacred 250 civilians. This began the Palestinian Nakba-the Arab ethnic cleansing of 1948. Jewish Haganah militia seized and destroyed Arab villages. 750,000 Palestinians were displaced or massacred by Israel's military. Israel violently annihilated over "400 Palestinian villages and built 160 Jewish settlements on land that had been illegally confiscated"<sup>xviii</sup>. While Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq invaded on behalf of Palestine, half of the Palestinian Arab population was expelled or slaughtered.

A majority of Palestinian Arabs fled the Israeli militarization before the intervention of Arab armies. This is a direct result of the "massacres of Palestinian villages, forced expulsions, and wholesale intimidation" of civilian Palestinians<sup>xix</sup>. Due to the illegal brutality enacted by Israeli military, Israel now controlled 78% of the territory, not the allocated 56%; they controlled 95% of arable land as well<sup>xx</sup>. Israel illegally expelled Palestinians and stole 22% of land not allocated to Palestine by the United Nations. Israeli propaganda was displayed in refuge countries making it impossible for Arabs to return home.

As for the Palestinians remaining in Israel dominated territory, they were labeled what is called "present absentees"<sup>xxi</sup>. This denied them the right to return to their towns

and villages to repossess their property. Instead, their belongings were collected by the state. Arab Palestinians were forced into an emerging Judeo ethno-state. They were stripped of their Arab identity and forcibly given Hebrew or Biblical names:

“Simply because they were not Jews, Palestinian refugees were excluded from entitlement to citizenship in the state of Israel under the 1952 Citizenship Law. They were ‘denationalized’ and turned into stateless refugees in violation of the law of state succession”<sup>xxii</sup>.

A humanitarian disaster was effectively created. When Swedish mediator, Count Bernadotte, was appointed to assess the situation he witnessed Palestinians who were forced into cramped, overcrowded living conditions and had scarce medical aid. His testimony advocated for the right for Palestinians to return to their homes<sup>xxiii</sup>. Despite Israeli promises of peace and settler withdrawal, Palestinians remain evicted and estranged from their homeland.

## Israeli Militarization

The remaining Palestinians who reside in Israel Proper, 78% illegal Israeli land, and the Palestinian territories, 22%, now face occupation from the dominant Zionist State of Israel. The warring demographics of Palestine and Israel struggle to coexist. The Israeli State employs force to maintain its control of Palestinian populations. Israel established a domestic coalition of army, navy, and air forces, known as the Israeli Defense Forces or IDF. IDF primarily enforce checkpoints, surveil civilian life and patrol Palestinian spaces.

Military service is compulsory for the Jewish population with the exception of a few subsets<sup>xxiv</sup>. Active duty requires a 32-month long service for men and 24-month period for females; compulsory reserve duty ranges to ages of 55 and 50, respectively<sup>xxv</sup>. During this time, force is directly geared to Palestine communities-civilian and otherwise. In *This is How We Fought in Gaza*, a compilation of testimonies from ex-IDF soldiers, the stories of Israeli force are illuminating:

“The rules of engagement are pretty identical: anything inside [the Gaza Strip] is a threat... if we don’t see someone waving a white flag, screaming, ‘I give up’... there’s authorization to... shoot to kill. Everything is dangerous; there were no special intelligence warnings...”<sup>xxvi</sup>

The disregard for Palestinian life is apparent. This disposition is collectively used when interacting with and occupying Palestinian spaces.

## *Jerusalem and Religious Spaces*

Religious differences between Palestinian Muslims and Israeli Jews is one of the most consequential. While there is a portion of Christian and other faith Palestinians, Muslims are the majority. The Zionist Jewish state imposed military regulation on Muslim religious spaces-enforced by IDF.

The geographical land between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea is a holy space, sacred to the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Worship is a common, prevalent practice done in both public and private venues. Generally, Israeli military are stationed at entrances and exits of every Islamic site. On Fridays, a spiritual day for Muslims, there is heightened presence and force of Israeli military. Israeli Defense Forces are equipped with loaded guns and allow entry at will-effectively controlling the Islamic spaces. The Muslims in Palestine struggle to practice their faith and perform basic tasks under the occupation.

The city of Jerusalem is highly significant for both Palestinians and Israelis, yet only Palestinian Arabs are subjected to military checkpoints, lockdowns, and denial of access. The third most holy Islamic site in the world is Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, a city which was placed under international regime in 1948 by the UN. Despite the city's international status, Israel placed the city under heavy militarization, removing religious access from Palestinians. The struggle for Jerusalem began during the Six Day War of 1967. Israel occupied Transjordan and effectively seized the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza and Golan Heights. At this point, Jordan was displaced from the West Bank region and Israel now controlled 100% of previously Mandated Palestine. Despite condemnation from the

UN, Israel claimed Jerusalem to be its capital. Consequentially, hundreds of Arab families were evicted from East Jerusalem; Israel built its first settlement in the city<sup>xxvii</sup>. This was illegal, inhumane, and highly contested; Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states “transfer of any part of a civilian population into territory occupied by a foreign power is expressly forbidden”, in respect to the Protection of Civilian Persons in the Time of War<sup>xxviii</sup>. To further condemn Israel’s claim to Jerusalem, the UN Security Council decisively passed Resolution 242 that reminded Israel of “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force,” and every state’s right to “live in peace with secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force”<sup>xxix</sup>. The UN was clear; Israel’s assertion, settlements, eviction of Palestinians, and military occupation of Jerusalem was illegal. Israel ignored the resolution, adamantly refusing to withdraw troops and revise its boundaries. They claimed that Gaza and West Bank were never apart of sovereign Egypt or Jordan which allowed Israel to become an administer of space rather than occupier. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva opposed that sentiment regardless if Jordan/Egypt possessed legitimate sovereign rights or not: “the paramount purposes are protecting the civilian population of an occupied territory and reserving paramount territorial changes... until settlement of conflict”<sup>xxx</sup>.

Life under Israel’s occupation was increasingly restricted. The Palestinian experience of Jerusalem was defined by permits, roadblocks and body searches. Palestinian identity was criminalized; freedom of expression and association was denied. IDF enforced Arab specific collective punishments such as “curfews, border closures, and house demolitions”<sup>xxxi</sup>. Palestinian Arabs were disproportionately targeted and

persecuted: “Israel’s was founded on brute force, repression and fear, collaboration and treachery, beatings and torture chambers, and daily intimidation, humiliation and manipulation”<sup>xxxii</sup>. The military occupation of Jerusalem was enforced all throughout Israel and the Palestinian territories. Israeli control of space was unwavering and Palestinian Arabs throughout were subject to the occupation-effectively denying them access to the religious and secular spaces their Israeli neighbors had easy access to.

### *Walls and Apartheid*

Oren Yiftachel in “Contradictions and Dialectics: Reshaping Political Space in Israel/Palestine. An Indirect Response to Lina Jamoul” discusses the contradictions in Israel’s domestic policy and international image which is rooted in Jewish ethnocracy and results in physical barriers enclosing Palestinian space. Central to Israel’s expansion over Palestine, is the dual face of international democracy and domestic authoritarianism. Since the 1948 occupation of Palestine, Israel has strategically excluded Palestinians in their political sovereignty, strangled them economically, and suffocated them spatially. It has intentionally projected a curated democratic image to the international community-one that actively excludes Palestinian political and ethical treatment. This allows Israel the international allowance to expand its colonial reach; evidenced by the 33 out of 56 United Nation states voting for the partition of Palestine and birth of Israel<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

The double-discourse has proven beneficial until the Oslo Accords in 1993. During peace talks, Israel promised to withdraw substantially and establish a Palestinian Authority. This was established under Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and when he was

assassinated, Benjamin Netanyahu was elected-a known right Nationalist. All previous promises for peace were halted. Instead of withdrawing, Israel built several new Jewish settlements and further imposed restrictions on Palestinian movement. In response to this violation of the Oslo Accords was the Al-Aqsa Intifada-a violent resistance movement in which over 4000 people died. Since then there have been few attempts at peace and all that have are underwhelming for Palestinians: “annex 10-15% of the West Bank in order to keep Jewish settlers in their place... its refusal to address its role in the 1948 Nakba, to resettle Palestinian refugees, or to allow Palestinian sovereignty over occupied Temple Mount”<sup>xxxiv</sup>. As the Palestinians continue to resist the increasing restrictions imposed, Israeli fear heightened: “given the depth of ethnocentric perception in Israel, and the fear still embedded in Jewish culture following a history of persecutions and Holocaust,... calls for the ‘liberation... of the entire Palestine and the return of refugees into Israel Proper”<sup>xxxv</sup>. The result was branding of the entire Palestinian population as “supporting terror” and political discussions shifted to the nationalistic right with the intention of transferring the Palestinians out of their homeland<sup>xxxvi</sup>.

This led to the construction of the separation barrier, which is a projected 298 mile, 60-100-meter-wide strip; 51,000 acres of land are being appropriated, cleared, or declared out of bounds for West Bank Palestinians <sup>xxxvii</sup>. The construction of a separation wall is Israel’s attempt at managing social and political tension. Presently, 90 miles have already been constructed in an attempt to physically constrain Palestinian development and symbolically contain Palestinian rights and identity. While it may improve Israeli security, an estimated “200,000 Palestinians will be cut off from their own lands and

livelihoods”<sup>xxxviii</sup>. The barriers force Palestinians into overcrowded, economically dependent ghettos. This indicates the “creeping apartheid” in which half of the population is constrained to 15% of land—a severe disproportion. The few autonomous regions of Palestine “lack real sovereignty, freedom of movement, military power, control over water and air, or contiguous territory”<sup>xxxix</sup>. Palestinians are now far from a one-state or two-state solution and are instead forced to live in an expanding apartheid, defined by increasingly constructed barriers.

## Cartographical Representation

The violent, intricate conflict between the opposing Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews stems from ownership of the land they both claim. An impassioned series of massacres and dispossessions, as well as political concessions, have taken place over the past century. Yair Wallach discusses the psychological implications of contrasting physical representations of space by both Palestine and Israel. Internationally, there are assessments of a two-state solution- a cohesive, neighboring experience. Almost idealistic, these peace plans are irreflective of the reality between Jews and Arabs. This is evidenced by the highly contradictory physical representation of space by either entity.

The nationalistic symbol of a map holds high significance for each respective side- revealing hidden collective narratives surrounding the space. Although both sides publicly declare willingness for peace, the unilateral representation on a map makes it increasingly clear the only option is complete removal of the other. This sentiment is visually represented by unilateral acknowledgment on Israeli or Palestinian maps. In the words of Wallach, “the mirror-maps of Israel/Palestine are often read as indications of maximalist territorial ambitions and hidden wishes to ‘wipe the other off the map’”<sup>xl</sup>.

Despite depicting the same physical land, with the exception of Israel’s assertion of Golan Heights, Gaza and Sinai Heights, Israel’s national map portrays the land without any evidence of Palestinian existence. The officially recognized Palestinian autonomous spaces are altogether erased from representation (See Fig. 2). The constantly occupied

territories are only portrayed with relabeled Hebrew names-showcasing a Zionist ethno-

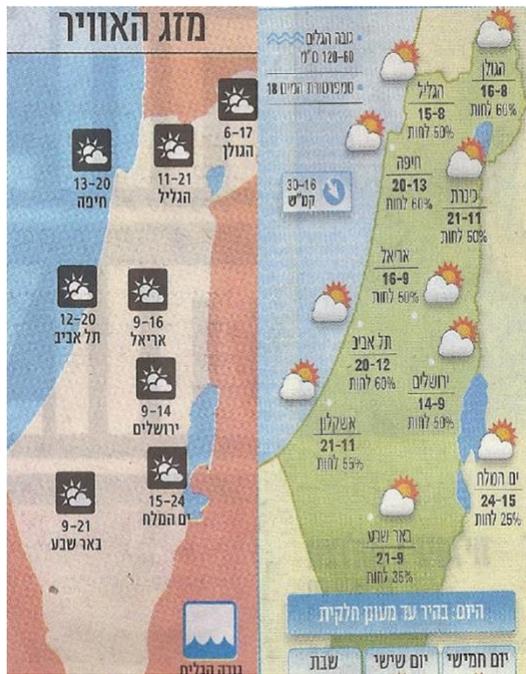


Fig 2. Israeli weather maps. Palestinian occupied territories are omitted from the map; Israeli settlements are included by name. Yair Wallach, 2011, *Trapped in mirror-images: The rhetoric of maps in Israel/Palestine*, May 5 2020

insidious and “an attempt to remove Palestine from the public mind” so much so that they were eventually removed<sup>xliii</sup>.

In similar fashion, Palestinians do not legitimize Israel on their national map. Palestinians have lost majority of their previously owned territory. They represent, perhaps with more significance, their collective identity through geographical and unilateral Palestine. It is worth noting that Palestinian representation without Israel has been met with significantly more scrutiny while Israeli maps have not and “certainly not from the US”<sup>xliiii</sup>. In the 1930s during the Arab Revolt against Jewish influx and British rule, Palestinian postage maps came to represent unity and national Palestinian identity. On the stamps, a map of Palestine was superimposed by the Dome of the Rock and Holy

Sepulcher (See Fig. 3). The image of the holiest sites in Islam and Christianity became almost sacred invoking religious and national claim to the land<sup>xliv</sup>.

This conflicting representation has been seen in history before; the coastal areas of northern Sri Lanka were disputed by Tamil separatists and Northern Ireland was contested by British Loyalists and Ireland Republicans<sup>xlv</sup>. The difference with the case of



Fig 3. 1968 Palestinian Commemoration Stamp

Yair Wallach, 2011, *Trapped in mirror-images: The rhetoric of maps in Israel/Palestine*, May 5 2020

Palestine/ Israel is a complete exclusion of the

other. Wallach describes this as a “geographic schizophrenia: two adversary and asymmetrical nation-selves inhabiting a single geo-body”<sup>xlvi</sup>. While Palestinians refuse to acknowledge foreign invaders to a space which they inhabited, Israel’s disregard is less comprehensible. It is questionable to exclude, from cartographical representation, the population of the land which was illegally seized<sup>xlvii</sup>. The frustration by Palestinians to maintain what they have ancestrally inherited is juxtaposed against Israel’s religious assertion. For Palestinians the displacement is a reality, but for Israelis it is only symbolic. Stemming from sanctified theology, “Israeli maps are ideological constructs, seeking to legitimate the Zionist project while hiding and denying the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians”<sup>xlviii</sup>. This devotional obsession is evidenced by a mother’s incisions onto her son’s flesh:

“I took a knife and began cutting here and there...Drops of blood began welling up in the river beds cutting across the country. The sight of the map of the Land of Israel amateurishly

sketched on my son's back gave me a frisson of delight [.] My

baby screamed in pain, but I stood firm [.] I contemplated the

carved up back: it was the map of the Land of Israel, nobody could mistake it" <sup>xlix</sup>.

It is perhaps no surprise the brutal actions taken against the Palestinians when such violence and desire plague modern Zionist ideology. Similarly, in the early 1920s, maps of Israel were revered as sanctified objects. In the case of the "Blue Box" map, purchased land by the Jewish National Fund was highlighted and effectively used in a propaganda campaign. Donations, to purchase Palestinian land, were collected in boxes and painted with national Zionist colors of blue and white. Millions of these boxes were distributed across Palestine and the Jewish diaspora in 1920. In Jewish education centers, the box came to represent land redemption and the map anchored Zionist sentiments.

Psychologically, the nationalistic maps create an eerie feeling of ostracization. When viewing at a map constructed by the other side, they view an unmistakable image of their home but with no representation of themselves. The cartography of each nation is powerfully rooted in cultural significance and political history. Wallach notes the importance of the map is often excluded from scholarship, overlooking "indications of maximalist territorial ambitions and hidden wishes to "wipe the other off the map"<sup>1</sup>. The representations by both Palestine and Israel reflect an almost Freudian slip-revealing the true nature of each entity<sup>li</sup>.

## Monopoly of Water Resources

Water, the very essence of life, is tightly controlled and disputed, similar to every other resource in the region. The power of water is not only to provide substance but to control agriculture markets, import and export ability, and state dependence. It's control is of utmost importance; whichever entity maintains water availability is afforded financial independence, prosperity and growth: "society shapes and is shaped by water, both materially and discursively, and water flows are embedded in all institutional and political processes"<sup>iii</sup>.

### *Water Dependence*

After the Balfour Declaration and Israel's realized state, it's interest in water was immediate. In a region which water is considered the most limited natural resource, Israel was invested in its control early on<sup>iii</sup>. In 1919, Chaim Weizmann, emphasized the importance of water within the region at the Paris Peace Conference: "It is therefore vital importance not only to secure all water resources already feeding the country, but also to be able to conserve and control them at their sources"<sup>liv</sup>. As early as the 1940s, Israel began manipulating water availability. Eventually, over 90% of the water available, in both Israel proper and the occupied territories, was appropriated by Israeli forces<sup>lv</sup>. Once in its control, Israel intentionally allowed access to Jewish citizens and not Palestinian Arabs.

By placing strict limits on drilling, and confiscating existing wells, Israel created a water monopoly: “Israel’s water policies are intended to make those precious resources available to Jewish settlers to the exclusion of indigenous Palestinians”<sup>lvi</sup>. For Palestinian Arabs, applying for a permit to drill water is a difficult and ill-fated process filled with disproportional discrimination. Permits for Jewish colonial settlements, on the other hand, were readily available: “no difficulty getting permits for generous quantities of water, often to the detriment of Arab villagers downstream or lower along aquifers”<sup>lvii</sup>. The prejudice against Palestinian Arabs was long-established and ingrained in Israeli policy. The disregard, and often contempt, for Palestinian life, was so pervasive that the very substance of life, water, was ripped away from their access. In 1978, the Israeli Water Company stated “water... is used exclusively by Israeli settlements and has not been made available to Palestinian farmers... no new irrigation wells were permitted [for] the Arab indigenous population”<sup>lviii</sup>. Israel created an effective monopoly on water and denied access to the Palestinian Arab population.

Israel’s grip on Palestinian territory and its rich water resource was unyielding. The Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1994 were yet another attempt at resource resolution in the region. Instead, Palestinians were forced into even worse conditions: “asymmetric power in the Oslo negotiations has ensured Israel’s domination over water allocation in Palestine”<sup>lix</sup>. The Accords divided West Bank into three administrative zones, known as A, B, and C<sup>lx</sup>. Area A, 18% of the region, was controlled entirely by the Palestinian Authority; Area B, 22%, of the region has Palestinian control of civilian life but Israeli control of security; Area C, 60% of West Bank, is under full Israeli control with the ability

to impose restrictions on the construction of water infrastructure and agricultural expansion<sup>lxvi</sup>. In 1995, Oslo II was established in attempt to reduce Israel's complete monopoly of water in the Palestinian territories. It insurmountably "failed to ensure efficient, equitable, and sustainable water management in the long term"<sup>lxvii</sup>. Additionally, an Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC) was established in attempt to justifiably allocate resources in the Palestinian territories. Israel maintained the power to veto and delay water related Palestinian projects-effectively rendering the entire JWC useless. The Agreement also allowed Israel to impose water quotas on Palestinian wells which, when compounded with previous well restrictions, made drilling practically impossible. Much criticism has been afforded to the Agreement labeling it as "dominion dressed up as cooperation"<sup>lxviii</sup>.

### *Contamination of Water*

Israel's monopoly on water is indisputable. Water availability to Palestinians is restricted entirely by Israel to the point that Palestinians are forced to live off of contaminated water - beyond the point of safe consumption. South African judge, Richard Goldstone, was appointed as head of a UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza conflict. When assessing natural resource availability, he stated "it is clear... that the destruction of food supply installations, water sanitation systems, concrete factories, and residential houses was the result of *deliberate and systematic* policy by Israeli armed forces"<sup>lxiv</sup>. The Israeli targetization of Gaza's water resulted in loss of human dignity and severe disregard for life. A 2009 report by Amnesty International assessed the quality of

water in the Gaza Strip. Pertaining to 90-95% of the water in Gaza, consumed by 1.5 million people, it was found to be “contaminated and unfit for human consumption”<sup>lxv</sup>. The report referenced the UN Environmental Programme which correlates the widespread contamination of Gaza’s water to increased nitrate levels far beyond the WHO accepted guideline. The levels of nitrate were so dangerous they “induc[ed] a potentially lethal blood disorder in young children and newborns called methemoglobinemia”<sup>lxvi</sup>. It is clear that Israel’s monopoly on water has harmful, and sometimes fatal, consequences to the Palestinian Arab population. The targeted and discriminatory access laws create fatal conditions, providing evidence of Israel systematic extermination of Palestinians.

## Building and Development Regulations

Within the past century of Israeli policy, urban planning restrictions have been essential to maintaining authority. The highly contested land is continually enforced through policy designed to inhibit the conservation and development of Palestinian infrastructure. In the history of colonization, ie. European and American, building and planning regulations were necessary to “develop the living conditions of and the socio-economic aspects of their own communities regardless of the native peoples’ needs”<sup>lxvii</sup>. Zionist Israel, funded by billions of American dollars<sup>lxviii</sup>, adapts similar developmental model. With the ultimate goal of “domination and socio-political control in the colonial regions”, urban planning regulations such as land use restrictions, zoning ordinances and building codes<sup>lxix</sup> were implemented. In 1950, after the Palestinian Nakba, Israel issued the “Absentee Property Law” transferring and appropriating “homes, lands, and businesses”<sup>lxx</sup>. Palestinian residences, which were not yet demolished, were then transferred to Jewish settlers.

What ensued in the succeeding decades was a series of aggressive confiscations and the establishment of a permit regime-the act of classifying “basic [land] rights into privileges that could be taken away without the revocation being considered a

violation”<sup>lxxi</sup>. A prejudicial, racist policy, it legalized the repossession of any land owned by Palestinians. The repossession was justified if it was

“...absentee property...property of a hostile state or agent... for public needs... to be part of nature reserves, requisitioning land for military needs... declaring land to be state property and/or helping Jewish citizens to purchase land on the free market”<sup>lxxii</sup>.

This policy excused the dispossession of Palestinian land for the benefit of Israel and its Jewish settlers. This is internationally illegal; the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated “systematic confiscation of Palestinian...property... and the transfer...to these agencies constitute an institutionalized form of discrimination...deny the use of these properties to [the] non-Jewish”<sup>lxxiii</sup>. Not only are Palestinian territories repossessed, but Jewish settlements are structurally built to surround Palestinian areas-geographically confining them and segregating the indigenous communities.

Development of Palestinian territory is entangled within the Israeli permit regime. In Area C, 60% of West Bank under Israel control, 99 plans for construction were submitted between 2006- 2012; only 3 were approved<sup>lxxiv</sup>. Any construction not approved by Israel is immediately demolished, “1,638 Palestinians structures were demolished”<sup>lxxv</sup>. If Palestinians builds, it is an effort to salvage their failing structures. Regardless, demolition continues, often without notice, in the early morning hours or late at night to reduce possible resistance. A testimony from an ex-IDF soldier describes the process of a demolition:

“you throw a grenade [before you enter]. It busts the walls, brings down the plaster and the paint. At some point you take over the house. Only a few minutes after we would finish taking over the houses, the area was ‘sterilized’; a sweep was conducted...”<sup>lxxvi</sup>.

This is an ignominious process forcing Palestinians to live in either crumbling, crowded buildings or demolished neighborhoods.

In a 2007 report from the UN Committee of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, it was determined that these restrictions primarily caused poverty and economic depression in West Bank<sup>lxxvii</sup>. It also confirmed there is a “severe shortage of housing for the Arab population and... Palestinians in Israel were disproportionately affected by house demolitions”<sup>lxxviii</sup>.

Justification for Israel’s strict Palestinian planning comes both from current planning legislature but leftover policy from the British mandate of the 1920s. For instance, Israel uses previous zoning regulations to falsely classify Palestinian villages as natural reserves. Under the British Mandate, this would allow for Israeli development in those areas. In village areas, especially, such as the Negev-Naqab, Arabs were more acutely affected: “living in unrecognized villages...residents did not receive any services such as water, electricity and sanitation, despite the fact that they paid taxes”<sup>lxxix</sup>. Palestinian unrecognized areas are appropriated and used to establish highways and Israeli settlements<sup>lxxx</sup>. In Jerusalem, 64,867 housing units were built for Jews; 38,500 were built on land expropriated from Palestinians<sup>lxxxi</sup>. In contrast, 8,890

(12%) homes were built for Palestinians. On the master plans, these are classified as “public use” - irreflexive of the blatant construction. Justification of Palestinian territory possession is outdated and inaccurate. It serves only as a thin veil for its systemic disregard for Palestinian life.

## Conclusion

Peace is the apology of the strong  
to the weak,  
agreeing strength lies in vision.  
Peace is the disarming of arms  
before beauty  
iron turns to rust when left out in the dew.  
Peace means a full and honest confession  
of what was done to the ghost of the murdered<sup>lxxxii</sup>

*-Mahmoud Darwish*

The history of Israel and Palestine is turbulent, taut with violence. Passions are inflamed on both sides and divisive lines were drawn over a century ago. From its actualization, Israel has forced its way into Palestine and then illegally seized control of the entire territory. With every year and every supposed peace talk, Israel commandeered incrementally more land until it controlled 100% of the previous Mandated Palestine. It was then transformed into Israel Proper and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It was a violent feat, one that not only expelled a quarter million Palestinians, but massacred villages, civilians, and children. Palestinian resistance was persistent and consistently met with disproportionate fatal force from the IDF. Once in control, Israel carefully

crafted the space to expel non-Israeli Arabs, monopolize water resources, restrict Palestinian movement, and limit infrastructural growth.

Many thousands continue to perish at the policies of Israel. The quality of life for Palestinians is significantly reduced and, for some areas, it is akin to an open-air prison. The tense military occupation severely limits, if not makes it impossible, for Palestinian growth and agency. The tight leash of Israel is such that 1.5 million Palestinians live in overcrowded, ghettos with failing infrastructure and contaminated water. The moral irony is that, within walking distance, illegal Jewish settlements are allowed to flourish and exist without impositions. The Jewish Israeli progress is orchestrated at the expense of Palestinians. After 1948, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, half of the Arab population was removed en masse. These Palestinians remain in occultation as refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iran and more.

Despite the onslaught of dispossession and oppression from not only Israel, but its well-endowed allies, Palestinians remain resilient and self-asserted<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. The displaced Palestinian people continue to endure much hardship yet unify in their oppression. Increasingly, awareness and governmental support offer allegiance to the Palestinian plight. What was once completely overlooked and ignored, is now resonating with many college students in America—a notable momentum in Israel's biggest state alliance. More significantly, the Iranian led Shia crescent of the Middle East is gaining traction against Israeli sentiment. In Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, expanding Shia populations prove to be steadily more powerful and anti-Israel<sup>lxxxiv</sup>. Additionally, the formation of the

National Unity government, a coalition of all major political parties in Palestine, and the revitalization of the Arab Peace Initiative offer hope for a new direction in the region<sup>lxxxv</sup>.

The future of Palestine and Israel remains uncertain, but the unshakeable Palestinian identity is a testament to the strength of their resistance and the reach of their plight. The Palestinians in Israel, as well as, the dispersed population remain resilient and unwavering. Already withstanding billions of dollars of targeted persecution, the Palestinian people need only break their spatial chains.

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