



PODCAST | POLITICS

2025 in Review: Palestine and the Fight for Liberation

By: Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network · December, 2025

The transcript below has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

Yara Hawari 0:00

Al-Shabaka's Rethinking Palestine Podcast produces content that not only speaks to the pivotal moment in the Palestinian struggle for liberation, but also challenges the hegemonic narratives that have allowed the continued settler colonization of Palestine. More recently, the genocide in Gaza to persist with impunity.

In our final episode of 2025, we've curated some of the most compelling sound bites from this year's episodes. Sound bites that illuminate the complexities of Palestinian politics, the global responses to the genocide, and the ongoing fight for justice.

From Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network. I am Yara Hawari, and this is Rethinking Palestine.

At the start of the year, we partnered with Mondoweiss to unpack unfolding political dynamics. In the first episode, I joined Yumna Patel, Mondoweiss's editor-in-chief to discuss the Palestinian Authority's invasion of Jenin during the January 2025 ceasefire in Gaza.

So for a long time, Jenin has occupied this very significant place in the hearts and minds of Palestinians. It's known for its resistance fighters, for its steadfastness. It



has seen some of the most brutal attacks by the Israeli regime, including the infamous Battle of Jenin in 2002, during the second Intifada, when the camp was invaded by Israeli soldiers and large parts were razed to the ground. I think 35% of the camp was destroyed and there were massacres. But there was also a resistance struggle that for many put up a heroic fight against these invaders. And so there is this collective narrative of Jenin being this historic site of resistance, but also a present site of resistance.

You know, especially as so many other urban hubs in the West Bank have been subdued. And so in a way, what the PA is doing now is not surprising. It's very symbolic that it's going after this particular area, and it's a very clear message that the PA will work hand in glove with the Israelis to quell armed and popular resistance. And it's also very much connected to what's happening in Gaza with the genocide. You know, the Israeli regime is really battling on all fronts to, once and for all, end the Palestinian armed resistance, which you know, most analysts will agree is an impossible feat. But they've recruited the PA to assist in that endeavor.

And I think it's even more of a blow to Palestinian morale, you know, at a time of genocide. When your so-called leadership has done very little to stop it. Rather, it's collaborating with the Israelis to put down resistance elsewhere so that on the one level, there's a very, you know, practical goal in mind, and that's to eradicate armed resistance. But there's also a goal of damaging the Palestinian morale at a time when it's already low.

Next, Al-Shabaka board member, Diana Buttu, joins Yumna to discuss ceasefire negotiations and so-called day after plans.

Diana Buttu 3:10

The whole thing is immoral. That's the problem, is that we were forced to be in a place where we're negotiating for our own survival. And if that's not perverse, I



don't know what is. And so you're asking like what is the most pressing, all of it is, every aspect of it. Because people need food, they need water, they need shelter, but life isn't just about food, water, and shelter. It's about being able to the people you see and people who you're around and the places you go and your education. And the Israelis have reduced life in Gaza even before October to down to the basics of whether you have food, shelter, water, and in the food, like it's all about just consuming. That's it.

And they never viewed Gaza as being a place other than these are animals that are in a cage equivalent, and we just need to feed them in order to keep them alive so that we can say that we kept them alive and gaslight them as well. The problem is that the world has accepted this. It's so dehumanizing that even the ways in which people are thinking is in this dehumanizing way of just making sure they have enough food, just making sure they have enough water, just making sure they have enough shelter. And all of that is necessary at the same time. But people are not thinking at the beyond, thinking bigger.

And the part that really bothers me, Yumna is why is it that Israel, the state that committed genocide, why did they get to decide anything?

Yara Hawari 4:48

In the final part of this collaborative series, Abdaljawad Omar joins Yumna to discuss intra-Palestinian politics.

Abdaljawad Omar 4:56

The PA has three fundamental things that it's trying its best to maintain. First, no unity. Because the PA, if it achieves unity with, you know, other parties and political formations in Palestine, it will have to change its entire political paradigm from one that adopts cooperation with Israel to one that at least goes down the road of defiance. Some sort of political confrontation with Israeli settler



colonialism, which the current elites of the PA do not want. So that's one element that they are seeking all the time to not actually have or move forward. Even when they speak to Hamas or Islamic Jihad or PFLP, they always find an excuse for why unity cannot be retained or achieved. Elections cannot be implemented. For instance, they would speak about Jerusalem and the elections being held in Jerusalem as an excuse. So the PA lives and survives on the disunity that we're seeing in Palestinian society. That's one element.

The second element is they see the danger arising from Israeli settler, fascist messianic groups led by people like Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, who see the PA even through its cooperation, security and otherwise, as an obstacle towards cleansing the land. And complacency on the part of the Israeli state that, you know, you have this PA that serves our security needs and economic and political needs when it comes to leading the Palestinian population in the West Bank. And they want to shake this ground. Remember that the revisionist powers that want to actually really change the paradigm are not necessarily always Palestinians who want or seek liberation and freedom, but are also powers like the Israeli right-wing settler movement that is the spearhead of the Zionist movement more broadly today.

So the element is that they have a danger emanating from there and they're also unwilling, or they also have a new challenge in the release of a lot of prisoners who are from the era of the second Intifada. Some of them are prisoners who have a different set of political beliefs who today are returning to their homes. Some have leadership roles. We can see figures like Marwan Barghouti also being released. So there's another challenge to this elite emanating from the return of voices from the past, even the past that is closely knitted to Fatah, that they also need to manage pretty well.

One of the decisions they took recently is to actually, as a gift to Trump and his ambassador, or Steven Witkoff, I think his name is, is to change the policy on the



payment of prisoners and martyrs in Palestine, which will cause a big uproar also, at least locally in the West Bank and other places. So this is the situation. They're presenting themselves as the ones that can be an alternative. They're incapable really of being an alternative because they're too weak. The more they go down the road of serving Israel and the US, the less legitimacy they have. At the same time, I think they're trying their best to maintain this equation. The only thing going for the PA right now is the fear that people have when it comes to Israel's violence and its ability to systematically kill and massacre people like we've seen for the past 15 months.

Yara Hawari 7:49

As the year progressed, we looked at how narratives played a vital role in the unfolding reality. Al-Shabaka's very own US policy fellow, Tariq Kenney-Shawa, discussed the global manufacturing of consent for the genocide in Gaza and what that means for accountability.

Tariq Kenney-Shawa 8:05

I think this is a really important case study in how genocide and ethnic cleansing is carried out in the 21st century. I think one of the biggest differences that separates genocide in the 1940s and fifties and sixties to today is that, you know, genocide has become a much more public process. Right. And you know, I think genocidal states or genocidal entities have to contend with the fact that their actions are gonna be telegraphed to the world for the world to see. And that's not to say that they're not gonna engage in genocidal acts, and that's not to say that they're gonna change their genocidal objectives. It just means that they have to do it in a different way, right? In a way that covers it up in some ways and makes it a little bit more gradual process that normalizes it as a whole. And I think they have to manufacture consent for it so that the public doesn't step in and call for intervention.



And I think that is one thing. And then the other thing that we're learning is how much public response it's gonna take to trigger intervention, right? At what point in the genocide are we going to get to before not only the public says this is enough, but until the point that they can influence the actions of actual policymakers. And I think that is a huge disconnect. That is the main disconnect.

Yara Hawari 9:27

We also addressed what the future holds for reconstruction and governance in Gaza. Policy member and architect Abdalrahman Kittana gave us a reconstruction narrative reality check by explaining that in the case of Gaza, reconstruction is not a neutral process of rebuilding, but rather one that has become a stage for geopolitical interests and domination.

Abdalrahman Kittana 9:49

So the ultimate objective and intent was to render Gaza uninhabitable to make life itself impossible in Gaza. So rebuilding Gaza, it is not merely about reconstructing buildings and infrastructure, it is about reconstructing life. In general, it's about reconstructing life itself. And this of course demands a fundamental rethinking of how human existence can be reestablished in these devastated spaces and cities. And this challenge, of course, extends far beyond the physical realm of reconstruction as a technical field.

From another angle, from a third angle, I think the reconstruction of Gaza became actually, or has become a matter of significant global political and geopolitical interest. As we see in the media, it is being used as a tool for political agendas or global political agendas that extend well beyond the humanitarian need to support the people and restore their destroyed cities. So reconstruction is being rudely and obviously weaponized now as a means for political control, making the process even more challenging. So in short, all of these things make the rebuilding of Gaza an immense challenge, a very great challenge, one that is far more



beyond and complex than the typical post-war reconstruction in other cases.

Yara Hawari 11:24

Similarly, Safa Joudeh, another policy member, explored the post-genocide governance landscape in Gaza, highlighting the increasing role of private security contractors and the dangers that come with it.

Safa Joudeh 11:36

In terms of what the situation will look like in Gaza the day after the war, and in terms of post-war governance, it seems through the arrangements that Israel is putting into place now that, you know, we're getting a view of what Israel's plans are for who will administer Gaza. There's been no substantial conversation towards planning for the post-war situation. Beyond the fact that it appears that Israel is not invested in reoccupying or retaking Gaza. It's unlikely that Hamas will be able to play a role in Gaza's governance. Even if Israel fails to destroy or disarm it, and Hamas continues to exist as a political organization, Hamas itself has announced that it's relinquishing control of post-war administering or governance of Gaza.

So Hamas is unlikely to be there. Israel has refused any sort of suggestion for the PA to assume the role of administering Gaza. And so it appears that there will be a void. And the question is, who will fill this void? And it seems like what Israel is doing is constructing a landscape of a number of concentration camps, which are ruled by Israel-backed armed gangs or militias that are being funded and supported and backed by Israel now to operate in Gaza. And the population's needs will be administered and met through these aid distribution points that Israel is setting up. Almost as a pilot for some sort of permanent arrangement in order to provide services for the remaining population.

So it's really a very worrying question about what will the post-war governance



landscape look like? And it requires attention and serious action if a disastrous and tragic situation like the one we are seeing now at present is to be avoided.

Yara Hawari 13:37

If you're enjoying this podcast, please visit our website, al-shabaka.org, where you'll find more Palestinian policy analysis and where you can join our mailing list and donate to support our work.

Solidarity efforts also took center stage this year in our analysis. Engy Sarhan joined us to provide a critical look at the solidarity efforts, particularly in the context of the global March to Gaza, an initiative that envisioned activists marching from Cairo to Rafah in order to break the siege.

Engy Sarhan 14:07

I agree with you that I don't think any of this is ill-intentioned, but I think it's a little bit misplaced and a little bit inconsiderate of the context. And I think what could be asked here just to make sure that the framing is correct, you know, the intention is in the right place. Is this going to do something that on the long run or like in the grand scheme of things can have an impact and change something? I think when we say Gaza is our moral compass, it's not really an empty slogan, and I think one can always ask, is the action that I'm doing centering the dignity of the Palestinians? If you don't have a clear answer to this, then I think you would require to revisit what you're doing and you keep revisiting until you have a clear answer on how this actually centers the dignity of the Palestinians, not the Palestinians in general.

But I think there's a responsibility in how we have to act and how we have to relate to Palestinians. And I think that the question of dignity becomes central to this. And I think secondary to this, or also next to this would be, will my action put someone else in danger if they don't have the same privileges as me? Like, again,



thinking of the ramifications. If I step foot in that square, what does this happen? Who else is affected? Are they affected positively or negatively? And it ends up being like a simple calculation of what's your input? What is the output? And then you start to see is it worth it or not worth it?

Yara Hawari 15:36

Meanwhile, Al-Shabaka policy member and PIPD co-director Inès Abdel Razek highlighted the limits of international state solidarity in the symbolic recognitions of the state of Palestine.

Inès Abdel Razek 15:48

The idea or the political measure of recognition is definitely a cop out, as you said, for Western countries and Israeli allies because the problem is that they present this as a bold move, right? The entire spin around this is that they present this as this very costly political measure that requires a lot of political courage, when in fact, absolutely not. It's a very symbolic move that changes absolutely nothing for the Israelis. And actually back when Spain and Ireland, you know, recognized Palestine, Israeli think tankers and analysts just said it like it's not going to change anything on the ground. Israel will not feel any cost after such decision.

So it is maintaining the very comfort zone that the diplomatic community, that the international community has been in, and that has led to this very moment to the very brink of extermination of our people in Gaza and to the genocide. And you know, we have to know that there is more than 140 countries now in the world. I think we're around 145 that do recognize Palestine. What has that changed? We're still here at the brink of extermination of our people and an existential threat to our existence on our land. So it's not like we don't have precedence. We haven't done this. And so I think, as Diana said, I think that very point of like the cop out, it gives Israeli allies to pretend that they're doing something when in fact they're just reinforcing the culture of impunity of Israel.



Is I think the main point because also I think it's important to understand how Israel operates. Israel uses, as Diana said also, negotiations, right? Like the negotiations, whether on ceasefire or the Oslo agreement, or now even on humanitarian aid, they use this strategy like they have a scorched earth strategy. They destroy everything. They take everything from us. Our homes, our land, they destroy everything. And then they will ask us to negotiate to get a crumb, you know, to basically get a breadcrumb from the entire resources, food that they have stolen from us. And then we're blamed for not accepting these breadcrumbs.

And so that's exactly what's happening now. They deceived the Europeans into some form of, you know, humanitarian scheme so that the Europeans had an excuse to say, okay, we'll not take accountability measures because they've agreed on a humanitarian scheme. So it's exactly the same pattern as they do always. They use this to control the agenda, to control time and space, to then further annex, further kill our people and further destroy. And so that tactic has been repeated over and over again. And with recognition, they've done the same. They portray outrage. They will expel an ambassador, recall an ambassador, say that this is diplomatic terrorism, and project outrage, when in fact they know it won't change anything. And so that outrage creates the sense in the international community that they have done something meaningful to basically upset Israel. It is really a sort of ballet on the political scene that is effectively shielding completely Israel from accountability and is making the countries escape their very legal responsibility as well.

Yara Hawari 19:05

This year, the European Legal Support Center joined our podcast twice, firstly with Amira Hala, and secondly with Agnese Valenti to share about the proscription and criminalization of Palestine solidarity in Europe, and the possibility for pushback and counter strategy.



Amira Hala 19:20

Since October 2023, but also since the ban on Palestine Action and other organizations in other countries, we've seen a surge in incidents being reported to us. And as you said, you're right, you know, the proscription and the securitization of Palestine solidarity groups have had a significant but also intentional chilling effect on the broader movement. Because ultimately what these, unlike what these governments claim, this is about suppressing resistance to genocide and criminalizing basic tactics of solidarity. This is about creating widespread confusion and fear amongst people.

And it's very clear to us. And you know, I hope it's clear to many others, and I think it is, that this is a tool to target the wider movement. That proscription is a tool to target the wider movement. It's not just about Palestine Action in Britain. It's not just about Samidoun in Germany, it's not just about La Rouge Palestine. And there have been, as you said, you know, many arrests connected to the proscription.

And so, for example, recently, I mean maybe last month or something like that, a protestor in Kent was threatened by armed police. So Kent in the UK was threatened by armed police for holding a sign that read Free Gaza. And officers were claiming that this phrase itself could be interpreted as support for the now proscribed Palestine Action. So you see that this ban is leveraged to suppress even basic expressions of support for Palestine. And already, as you said, the UK has seen hundreds of arrests since the proscription of Palestine Action. And these are people who are merely holding protest signs, reading I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action. They were taken in the hundreds by police in custody.

And so as I said, the primary goal of these bans is to intimidate the broader public and deter from participating in solidarity actions. And this widespread confusion about what the bans mean in practice is intentional. And like even recently, even before the proscription or the dissolution of La Rouge Palestine in France. So, you



know, it hasn't happened yet, but even just the discourse about banning it, Amnesty International, for example, has warned that this dissolution of groups like La Rouge Palestine in France would have a quote, deterrent effect on all individuals and organizations engaged in solidarity actions with the Palestinian people.

Agnese Valenti 21:55

Legal action as mentioned, can be sought only in limited situations. When it comes to collective pushback, we believe that it's necessary to heighten awareness regarding the de-funding and the de-risking strategies through monitoring, followed by targeted public outreach and advocacy, particularly given the low success rates in legal cases. So it's really important preemptive engagement and coordinated advocacy with donors and financial institutions.

At the moment, there is no structured or proactive unified group consistently engaged in day-to-day advocacy on Palestine in Europe, both with donors, but especially with financial institutions. In contrast, pro-Israel lobby groups are well organized and operate with a clear and strategic agenda. So the attempts at de-funding take place because the donors are pressured by pro-Israeli lobby groups as they are afraid of being named and shamed and/or to violate CFT and AML legislation.

Therefore, a long-term counter advocacy strategy by pro-Palestine groups should effectively take place, maybe like targeting one or two major donors or, for example, the European Commission. Long-term counter advocacy strategy is urgently needed that exposes the influence of pro-Israel media and lobbying efforts on risk assessments. And that pushes for genuine engagement with clients, which is completely lacking, as well as the adoption of a fair and case-by-case enhanced due diligence policies. And when I speak about exposing the role of pro-Israel lobby groups, in our opinion, and after three years of work on the de-funding



and the de-risking, and after three years of getting that behind the de-funding and the de-risking, there are the smear campaigns of pro-Israel lobby groups.

What we believe is that it's really important when building the advocacy strategy to take into account the exposure of the unreliability of the pro-Israel lobby groups and the unreliability of the evidence they rely upon.

Yara Hawari 24:11

There have been varying responses to the genocide by states across the globe. In Europe, Spain has been amongst the most critical of Israel's genocidal assault. Alys Estapé, spokesperson for the Solidarity Network against the occupation of Palestine in Spain unpacked for us the Spanish government's rhetoric and actions around the genocide in Gaza amid mass grassroots mobilization.

Alys Estapé 24:31

What's interesting to say is that what we're seeing on the streets, and we're seeing this from many, many different sectors of society, is that there's this full understanding that what happens in Palestine doesn't stay in Palestine and affects us all and how what we do matters and what we do can influence in stopping the Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people. So it's been very inspiring to see. In these last protests, seeing people coming from mobilizing from the education sector, from the health sector, from the firefighters like from many, many different groups, understanding that we all have a role to play from the dock workers. And it's understanding that Palestine is part and parcel of the world we all want, a freer world, a more just world.

So I think that understanding this can really help stop the far right because we're seeing that internationally speaking, Israel is more and more isolated. Israel is now mainly supported by the far-right forces at an international level and also in Spain. So understanding this and not seeing Palestine as something isolated, but



as part and parcel of this extremely colonialist, racist, capitalist, sexist world that we live in is contributing to stopping the far right from growing even more in Spain and hopefully elsewhere. So that's why our solidarity movements have to be profoundly anti-racist, profoundly anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist, feminist, understanding how all of these connections are made.

Yara Hawari 26:15

In our final episode of the year, international law expert and Al-Shabaka member Shahd Hammouri, reflected on international law in light of the latest UNSC resolution, endorsing Trump's plan for Gaza.

Shahd Hammouri 26:26

In international law, there is a battle, and it's actually a battle that is as old as the creation of the international legal system itself. So once states started to gain their independence, previously colonized states, they called for the reimagination of this system. And for example, you had George Abi-Saab in the Anglo-Iranian case say that we need a different philosophy of international law that is premised on the idea that international peace and security is only going forward if we have equality and if we rethink our perception of the world through understanding inter-relationships with each other.

On the other hand, you had this other philosophy of international law that is the mainstream one, that international peace and security is the status quo and upholding it as it is. And these two streams have been in conflict with each other for quite a long time. And what I call the people's international law was much more visible in the General Assembly, especially in the sixties and seventies when we had the UN declaration on Friendly Relations and the declaration ending colonization and whatnot.

And those people and those perspectives, the Global South perspectives as well as



important Arab names like George Abi-Saab and Mohammed Bedjaoui, were very much convinced that, you know, with the idea of justice and with the idea that this law is only useful if it's just, and they really pushed the boundaries of this law. George Abi-Saab, the reason actually why we have an official recognition of the right to resist.

But what happened is, ever since the end of the Cold War, because it's a unipolar world, it has become very difficult to use that platform in that space. Very institutionalized, very bureaucratic. And even those trying to contest it are civil society actors funded by the same actors that build this system. So the UN Security Council, when it comes in with a resolution like this that is in violation of the most basic principles of international law, right of return, reparation, self-determination. And the stabilization force, indeed, to me is a hostile occupying army. And most importantly in this is that the notion of coercion, which is very important for states of the Global South, ever since that era is completely overlooked.

And the idea that the Palestinian Authority didn't say yes until it was coerced. And it's not like the Palestinian Authority represents the Palestinian people, but nevertheless, all of these risks were taken away. So this ultimate contradiction between the UN Security Council where they're policing the world and where international law and peace and security is whatever the needs of the status quo are, creating this parallel what we call rules-based order in comparison to an actual logical law. So this move comes in really at the, like it agitates that contradiction to its core and really puts us back to the paradigm of, well international law is not going to save Palestine, but the question is whether or not Palestine will be the will be the last straw that breaks the system apart.

Yara Hawari 29:47

This year's episodes remind us that understanding Palestine today requires more



than following the headlines. It demands attention to politics on the ground, the global machinery of power, and the everyday resistance of Palestinians and their allies worldwide. Right now, Al-Shabaka is in the final stretch of our year-end fundraising campaign. While global attention shifts away from Palestine, our work continues providing the Palestinian-led analysis and strategy that the movement depends on. We are asking listeners to visit al-shabaka.org/donate and to make a contribution of any size. Your support sustains the infrastructure that turns solidarity into strategic action. That's al-shabaka.org/donate.

Thank you for joining us in 2025 and stay tuned for more critical perspectives in the coming year.

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