



PODCAST | POLITICS

# Palestine in 2024: A Year of Israeli Impunity & Genocide

By: Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network · December, 2024

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

**Yara Hawari 0:00**

In our final podcast episode of the year, we have put together some of the best soundbites from all the episodes in 2024. This year continues to be one of unfathomable loss and devastation as the genocide rages on in Gaza. At Al-Shabaka, we have tried to analyze and produce content that not only speaks to this pivotal moment in the Palestinian struggle for liberation, but also challenges the hegemonic narratives that have contributed to this mass slaughter and Israeli regime impunity.

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

At the very start of the year, we spoke with Elham Fakhro, a research fellow at Exeter University's Centre for Gulf Studies and an associate fellow with the Chatham House MENA program, on the Arab world and how it's responded to the genocide and how overwhelmingly the peoples of the region continue to stand with the Palestinian people.

**Elham Fakhro 1:02**

There's been massive support for the Palestinians across the entire region and I



think that's quantifiable in three ways. We've seen popular protests across the Arab world, particularly as you noted, in the countries where protests are more or less allowed. The numbers that we've seen coming out onto the streets in places like Jordan, Egypt, even Morocco, and Yemen, haven't been seen since I would say the Iraq War protests shook the region in 2003 and during the Second Intifada.

So there's huge, huge popular mass support for the Palestinians in Arab cities. We've also seen a revival of the boycott movement, a lot of support for BDS right now, particularly targeting the brands that support the occupation, that support the settlements in particular. We've seen Starbucks targeted, McDonald's, and even lesser-known brands like Caribou Coffee.

People do their research. Caribou, for example, operates in the settlements and people have targeted them as a result. So it's an expansive boycott movement. Even Joe and the Juice, which is not a usual target for these movements, has also been targeted for boycotts in cases like Bahrain.

So people on social media are raising awareness of this. They're educating themselves when access to this information just isn't available on usual media networks and on the mainstream media. And we're also seeing evidence of this support just in polling data that's been coming out in the past few weeks.

So, for example, a recent poll from the Washington Institute in Washington, D.C. found that 96 percent of Saudis now oppose normalization with Israel. This is a jump from previous numbers. Another released by the Doha Institute found that 97 percent of Arabs experience psychological stress from the conflict in Gaza.

People are deeply, deeply affected by the devastation and the genocide that they're seeing play out on a day-to-day basis. And I think it's interesting — I'll just anecdotally point out in my own experience, that social media is flooded with images from Gaza, and it has been every single day for the past three months.



People aren't letting up. You might expect there to be fatigue but there isn't. People are determined to keep the awareness going and to keep the pressure going as much as they can.

### **Yara Hawari 3:17**

This stands in direct contrast to most of the Arab regimes who by and large have been complicit in the genocide and/or have failed to use any leverage they might have to disrupt it.

Abdullah Al-Arian, Assistant Professor of History at Georgetown University in Qatar, and Al-Shabaka Policy Analyst, explains this disparity.

### **Abdullah Al-Arian 3:32**

If you told someone even just a few years ago or a decade ago or more the idea is that the military capabilities of Arab states would be mobilized in support of an Israeli genocidal operation, the genocidal war that has been unleashed on Palestinians, people would say, no, that's a bridge too far. That's not something that Arab regimes could ever dream of doing let alone actually putting into practice, and yet that's exactly what we've seen in terms of the mobilization of various Arab forces as a means of shielding Israel in the midst of its genocidal atrocities in Gaza, in the West Bank, by protecting them from any retaliatory strikes.

If you told people just a decade ago that while the population of Gaza is being starved in the worst starvation policy and siege that we've seen in modern times, and yet the Arab states would be rerouting trade goods, and food for Israelis, I think people would have been shocked and would have said, no, that that could never happen, right?

Despite everything we know about these regimes, this would be something too far. And I think that has been quite shocking for a lot of people. I mean, we know, for



instance, that Egypt has maintained its role in the siege of Gaza for going on two decades now. And yet what we're seeing now I think signals a kind of a drastic escalation, just given the severity of the humanitarian toll that this has all taken on Palestinians, to see that Arab states are only reacting to continue to invest in a regional security relationship that they believe is going to serve their interests.

And again, the interests, not of the people, but the interest of these regimes, that this is the only thing that is keeping them essentially in power is this relationship. And so they're willing to do everything in that regard, even if it means dooming the people of Palestine to these horrific conditions.

I think that has been, for many people, a surprise despite everything we know, as I said, and despite all of that history, but seeing it kind of devolve to this level, I think, has been unnerving. And I think what this speaks to is one fact, which is, I don't think that we've ever seen this much of a disparity, a gap between where the Arab populations are and where their leaders are.

## **Yara Hawari 5:55**

Beyond the region, we have seen massive grassroots mobilization against the genocide. In the US earlier this year, campuses were awash with encampments and continuous demonstrations. Samer Alatout, Al-Shabaka Policy Analyst and professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was assaulted and detained by police at the encampment on his campus.

He came on the podcast to share some important historical context of American student political mobilization.

## **Samer Alatout 6:17**

There is a long history of student activism, and almost always, those student activist movements have been brutalized by police force and police violence, and almost always, they effected change.



So, while they are ongoing, they are faced with violence, and then within a decade or so, they seem to be succeeding in changing the discourse around, for example, the Vietnam War or civil rights or apartheid South Africa. They seem to have changed the discourses around those and you end up with a tidal kind of wave of change in general, right?

Not only at the university level. And so usually when people talk about student movements in the US people are often proud of those movements, of course, in hindsight. So, for example, the university here, the university chancellor in the 1980s apologized for how the university dealt with the students during the Civil Rights era.

So they issued an official apology for how they brutalized the students in the 1960s and 70s. They recognized that later on, but at the time that these movements happened, there was a lot of brutalization.

## **Yara Hawari 7:44**

A crucial aspect of the genocide in Gaza has been the Israeli regime's disinformation apparatus, which has been used to normalize and legitimize violence against Palestinians on a barbaric scale.

Al-Shabaka's US Policy Fellow, Tariq Kenney-Shawa, explained in detail how this is done.

## **Tariq Kenney-Shawa 8:02**

Israel recognized that the only way to get away with carrying out genocide in Gaza is by effectively controlling the information environment and deploying narratives that ultimately delegitimize Palestinians and justify their murder, their wholesale murder.

There are several tactics Israelis have used to these ends, but for ease of



explanation, we can kind of divide Israel's disinformation strategy into three overarching prongs. The first is exaggerating the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups, painting civilian targets as military targets, and discrediting and delegitimizing Palestinian voices and narratives to artificially create a fog of war to deter international intervention.

And all of these are ultimately designed to justify genocide. So what does that look like in practice? We'll go through one, two, and three. So when it comes to the actions of Hamas on October 7th, we've seen Israeli officials make horrific false claims. Just one example is the false claim that Hamas beheaded 40 babies.

And of course, claims like these have been rapidly debunked, but not before they spread like wildfire and not before they're repeated at levels as high up as, for example, the president of the United States. And it's clear what Israel is trying to achieve here. They want to paint Hamas, and in turn paint Palestinians as a whole, as brutal and violent, essentially deserving of whatever Israel does next.

Once that foundation is laid, once those ideas are planted in people's minds, they become a point of reference, regardless of their veracity, regardless of whether they're debunked, and they always are debunked. So that leads us to the next prong, the next tactic, which argues that Palestinian civilians, those who have never taken part in any form of armed resistance, are legitimate military targets.

This is the claim that Hamas uses civilian infrastructure for military purposes or uses civilians as human shields. And that justifies somehow the killing of civilians. A great example of this that we saw over the last couple of months is the case of Al-Shifa Hospital, which has come to represent a microcosm of Israel's unprecedented assault on Gaza's entire healthcare system.

**Yara Hawari 10:12**

The facts and figures of the genocide have been well documented and



disseminated, but perhaps the less known aspect is the journey that survivors of the genocide made to reach Egypt. Ali, a Palestinian humanitarian aid worker from Gaza now in Cairo, described for us the agonizing and uncertain process of getting out of Gaza prior to May 2024 when the Rafah crossing was taken over by Israeli regime forces.

## **Ali 10:34**

From November to early December, those who managed to escape to Cairo had to come up with over \$12,000 per person, even for the kids. And here's the kicker, there are no guarantees. This money often went to coordinators who scammed families out of their money. Some people even paid extra, hoping it would speed things up, only to end up on a list connected to Egyptian nationalities.

But on the other hand, by mid-January, things shifted a bit with the Hala Company coming back. They charged a person \$5,000 over 16 years old. And for the kids, \$2,500. While it seemed more organized, it was still messy. There are a thousand registering daily, but only 300 to 350 names get approved each day because of the Israeli restrictions and security checks.

This journey is full of uncertainty and fear. Once you're registered, there is no turning back, and you wait, like 20 to 30 days, holding your breath, hoping your name will get approval. Tragically, some people don't survive the war long enough to see their name coming up.

Physically, the trip is brutal. Imagine having almost nothing, crossing dangerous, bombarded areas at Rafah crossing. After you finally get to the Palestinian side, you are stuck waiting four to eight hours on the Egyptian side under harsh conditions. You cannot move around or ask questions. And if you ask many times, you get shouted at.

Some refugees had to walk over 10 kilometers from northern Gaza to the crossing,



exhausted and in need of rest. This journey is a testament to the resilience and strength of the human spirit.

## **Yara Hawari 13:00**

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The horror in Gaza has not been happening in a vacuum. As the Israeli regime continues to bombard Gaza, less than 100 kilometers away in the West Bank, annexation, land theft, and settler and soldier violence continue at an alarming pace. Al-Shabaka's Palestine Policy Fellow, Fathi Nimer, explains how this is part and parcel of the larger Zionist project.

## **Fathi Nimer 13:35**

The plans for the West Bank can't be seen in separation from the plans of the Gaza Strip. I mean, even from the beginning of the war, people were talking about pushing the people, the Palestinians of Gaza out into Sinai and reestablishing settlements again. This is not different at all from what's happening in the West Bank and what they are planning for the West Bank or what they would like to happen in the West Bank, expanding more settlements, and kicking out more Palestinians.

This is all part of the same struggle. It's part of the same colonization efforts. We can't look at it separately from what's going on, even in Jerusalem or even within the 1948 territories, it's all connected. I think one of the biggest successes really of the occupation of 1967 is that it has tried to reinforce this kind of segmentation of Palestinian society and to kind of make this a fact of life and a natural part, rather than it being something imposed on us very recently.

## **Yara Hawari 14:29**



In a joint episode with the Makdisi Street podcast, I elaborated on this further.

We heard the Israeli foreign minister, Israel Katz, say that this would be a war for everything. And that it would include, as you mentioned, the so-called temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents from the West Bank.

And we know that that language is code for ethnic cleansing. I mean, it's not particularly good code, but that's what they mean when they say it. And Palestinians know that this is not separate from what's happening in Gaza.

Israelis use different tactics for different communities. But the end goal is always the same. In Gaza, they're committing genocide. In the West Bank, we've seen over decades, this incremental use of forced displacement, of incarceration, of colonization. And the end goal is to squeeze as many Palestinians into even less and less land.

It's fewer Palestinians for more land. And I think the scary thing is that the Israeli army, the Israeli regime now sees this as an opportunity. They see that they've gotten away with killing tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza and obliterating Gaza, and they have yet to face any consequences from the international community.

Yes, we had the ICJ come out and say that there are plausible acts of genocide, but it hasn't resulted in any kind of sanctions. And, on the contrary, they've been rewarded. They've been rewarded for their actions in Gaza with continuing diplomatic relations, with increased arms sales.

This is a prime opportunity for them to launch something a lot more serious in the West Bank because if they do, they'll get away with it. And I think it's something that a lot of Palestinians are fearing, but I think it's also something that we've always known. We've always known that they're not going to stop at Tel Aviv, they're not going to stop at Ashkelon, they're not going to stop at Yafa and Haifa.



The end goal has always been the whole of Palestine and we've known that all along and I think we've been gaslit for so long by the international community with the sort of promotion of the facade of the two states and the respect for international law. And that's what it's been. It's been consistent gaslighting for over seven and a half decades.

In July of 2024, the UK elected the Labour Party into government and foreign policy platforms were unsurprisingly a major talking point during the campaigns. Whilst the major parties continued to follow a line that would ensure continued complicity with the Israeli regime's genocidal actions, it was quite clear that Gaza had united a wide cross-section of British society.

Sara Hussein, Director of the British Palestinian Committee and Al-Shabaka Policy Analyst, explained this to us.

**Sara Hussein 17:15**

I think that's exactly right. And what you're pointing to there is something that has happened despite a really difficult environment. There's a dynamic that we've been seeing playing out through the elections and beyond.

Attempts, particularly by the previous government, elements of the mainstream media, to stir up real divisions in the UK, to kind of frame or try and make Palestine a sectarian issue, a Muslim issue, a matter of Muslim-Jewish communal tensions and sort of stoke these kinds of culture wars. When actually what we've seen, as you've said, is we know in reality and what we've seen has been quite the opposite.

Palestine has been a singularly unifying issue. We've seen that in the hundreds and thousands of people taking to the streets every week, week in, week out over the past nine months. And people from all communities, struggles, walks of life, and that's been reflected also then, as we're speaking now, in the election, in terms of



the election of not only the independents, the Greens, but also the narrowing Labour margins of victory in very many constituencies that have gone less reported, but very important to take note of.

So Palestine really, people are seeing, people understand that Palestine is not a singular issue. It's an issue of our collective humanity. It's an issue that unites people and brings people together because they see the injustice and recognize that.

### **Yara Hawari 18:31**

Across the short stretch of sea from the UK, in Ireland, solidarity with the Palestinian struggle has a long history.

Whilst there are many similarities between the Irish struggle for freedom and that of the Palestinian one, there are also problematic attempts to copy Irish peace and reconciliation efforts in Palestine. Brendan Browne, Interdisciplinary Scholar at Trinity College Dublin, explained why this continues to be a harmful practice.

### **Brendan Browne 18:59**

Who in their right mind is going to say that peacebuilding is problematic? You come across as some kind of lunatic if you say that, but you're weaponizing peacebuilding when you try and impose it upon people without addressing lots of the structural issues in the room.

In our own context in the North of Ireland as well, we have made great attempts at engaging in sort of people-to-people type projects on the ground in Belfast. You know, I was a product of these projects, but whereas in the sort of eighties and nineties, they didn't really work as well because the wider political reality wasn't addressed. The wider structural problems weren't being addressed. We were just being brought together to sort of talk to each other and assume that that would be enough to trickle down and build peace.



What's happening, and as you've pointed to, is that people are bringing that model of contact theory, people-to-people processes, as you've written about yourself, Yara, in the past, and bringing them into the Palestine context and saying, look, if you only talk to each other, things like this will get better in the future, without actually saying, well, no, we need to radically look at the way society is structured here. We need to look at the militarized nature of Israeli society. We need to look at the rights that you enjoy and that I don't enjoy.

So I do think it's really important, and the last point I would make on that, and maybe this is a bit cynical, is that it's become quite a big business, it's a big industry. Exporting the peace process from Northern Ireland has seen a proliferation of NGOs who've made this their modus operandi and exported it to other conflict zones, not just Palestine, by the way, but to other spaces. And I think when you do that, you flatten power dynamics in a way that is deeply, deeply problematic, and I really wish people would stop doing it.

## **Yara Hawari 20:56**

In November, we also saw elections in the US, and Americans voted for Donald J. Trump for a second term. Al-Shabaka's US Policy Fellow, Tariq Kenney-Shawa, explained what might be in store with this incoming administration.

## **Tariq Kenney-Shawa 21:08**

What we should expect is essentially just a closer relationship with Israel and one that's a lot more unapologetic. But we also need to recognize that Trump is known to be unpredictable and he's known to be a lot more transactional and self-interested than Biden. So where Biden was kind of a self-avowed Zionist, he was a proud Zionist and he made sacrifices, or what he saw as sacrifices, for what he believed to be Israel's self-interest and Israel's defense. I don't see Trump doing the same thing or taking the same approach.



So, for example, where Biden was willing to deploy US troops and assets to come to Israel's defense, there's a question as to whether Trump would do the same because he might see that as violating his America First principles, or making it more difficult for him to achieve his wider goals of, for example, expanding the Abraham Accords, and reaching an agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia. So where Biden was willing to sacrifice US and regional interests for the defense of Israel, Trump might not be as willing to do so.

That's where we might start to see some differences in how the two administrations interact with Israel directly. But then it's also extremely important to consider the fact that Trump is going to be surrounding himself with some of the most bloodthirsty neocon war hawks in US history. So these are people like Brian Hook, Marco Rubio, Mike Huckabee, and Jared Kushner, who all will attempt to drag Trump into more confrontational US foreign policy in the Middle East.

They'll have no reservations about deploying US forces and assets. I think that'll come into conflict a lot with Trump's America First approach and Trump's reluctance to actually spend money and actually devote resources to these conflicts.

But in many ways, I think the more concerning fact is the people that Trump surrounds himself with. And these are the people who will go to bat for any wider regional war and definitely try to drag the administration in with it.

## **Yara Hawari 23:21**

In our penultimate episode of the year, Al-Shabaka board president Tareq Baconi sums up this moment for the Palestinian struggle and offers some reflections for moving forward.

## **Tareq Baconi 23:29**

Strategically and politically, I think the Palestinian movement is immense today.



It's bigger than it has been for a long time. And I think we now have global support and grassroots power and allies and solidarities in ways that would have been unimaginable this time last year.

At the same time, I think we need to be more strategic in terms of how we push this popular power forward. How do we develop political power? How are we able to engage with questions of international law, with foreign policy towards Global South actors, with questions around global governance?

These are strategic questions and not coincidentally, by design, our leadership, our revolutionary leadership of the past of the sixties and seventies has been co-opted and emptied of content, and imprisoned and exiled and executed. We need to rebuild that. We're coming out of three, four decades of the narrowing out of our revolutionary potential as Palestinians, our institutional power to sort of carry out a decolonial agenda.

We need to rebuild that. I think foreign interests and certainly Western hegemony will try to reassert a paradigm that certainly does not center on Palestinians or Palestinian rights.

So the question for me today is, how do we think about this moment post-October 7th, this moment of genocide? How do we think about it as a way of resuscitating our revolutionary legacy, of going back into our roots and bringing out a political project, a decolonial project that's not about going back to the past because there's no going back, but it's rather about how do we think about decolonization and revolutionary politics today in this day and age, thinking about all of these global challenges?

And I think that's our most urgent task to date.

**Yara Hawari 25:29**

Thank you for listening to our end-of-year podcast. Each month we have strived to



bring you the most cutting-edge analysis from Palestinian experts and this episode has showcased some of the very best bits. At Al-Shabaka we have been devastated and horrified by the genocide in Gaza that has been ongoing for over 14 months.

We have also been moved by the unwavering support around the world for the Palestinian struggle amidst one of our darkest moments in history. Many challenges lie ahead and we know that the path will not be easy, but we as an organization recommit ourselves to Palestinian liberation and the struggle for a better and just world.

If you want to support our work, please visit our website where you can find out more about how to do so.

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