



PODCAST | POLITICS

Reflections on the Current Moment in Palestine with Makdisi Street

By: Yara Hawari · September, 2024

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

Yara Hawari 0:00

All the advocacy efforts that haven't happened randomly. This has happened as a result of Palestinian-led organizing in Palestine and in the diaspora. So I think it's really important to take stock of that and to remember that we're seeing massive solidarity, but we're seeing it in such an organized way because Palestinians refuse to be beaten. We refuse to be erased from our land, but also from the world's consciousness. And I think that's really a testament to that.

The following podcast was recorded in collaboration with the Makdisi Street podcast co-hosted by Saree, Ussama and Karim Makdisi. In it, we discuss the ongoing genocide in Gaza, intra-Palestinian and Israeli politics and more.

Karim Makdisi 0:50

There are major demonstrations taking place today in Israel and labor union



strikes and this follows of course the deaths of six or the uncovering of six hostages that were taken captives that were taken and discovered and I'm wondering, how do you see this? How is it being covered? Is there something that is something new in Israeli politics all these kinds of major demonstrations or is this just the kind of continuation of something that we've been seeing over the past several months where it's not so much about what's going on in Gaza about the genocide about anything else, but purely a very kind of intra Israeli kind of politics and anti-Netanyahu pro that type thing.

So how do you see what's going on today?

Yara Hawari 1:40

I think before I go into that, the demonstrations and the sort of intro to Israeli politics, I think it's really important that we take stock of what's happened over the last 12 months of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, and the figures, the death toll and those figures are only the bodies have been confirmed and identified. We're looking at 42,000 people. There are many more under the rubble, unlikely to be found until the bombing stops. And I think many actually won't be found at all. And those have been killed directly in bombings or shootings.

Many others have died from other causes, the other symptoms related to the genocide. I'm sure you all remember that Lancet article that came out. The Lancet being of course, one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world, it estimated that the figure is more like at least 180,000 killed.

And that includes people who've died from starvation, lack of medical treatment, contaminated water, et cetera. And now we have a polio outbreak confirmed in Gaza. So the numbers will only rise and beyond the human cost of this genocide, the infrastructure in Gaza has been completely obliterated, and something like 90 percent of homes have been destroyed or deemed uninhabitable.



Most of the roads have been destroyed, all the hospitals, schools, and universities. It's the first time since the Nakba that schools and universities will not open this month in Gaza. And I think all of this really speaks to the longevity of this genocide. Even when there's a ceasefire, if there's a ceasefire, it's going to take years to clear away the rubble to rebuild.

I think modest estimates are at least a decade. just for the rubble, just to get rid of the rubble. So, we're looking at an entire generation of young people who will have their education dreams stalled and possibly destroyed people who've had their businesses and homes destroyed that they built with their life savings.

So this is something, as you all know, is going to have really long-lasting effects into the future. And I think that's a crucial part of the story and something that's sometimes lost in the call for a ceasefire. Certainly, a ceasefire is needed to stop the immediate death and destruction, but the death and destruction will continue long after this ceasefire is achieved. The reason I'm talking about that is that it provides the sort of background to what has been happening the last few days in Tel Aviv and within the Israeli regime we've seen massive protests, perhaps the largest since the genocide started.

And this was, of course, following the discovery of the bodies of six Israeli hostages in a tunnel in Gaza. There are Israeli analysts who are suggesting that this indicates that we're either going to have a ceasefire by the end of the week or the Israeli government will fall by the end of the week.

And to be honest, I'm not sure about either of those and I think we have to be really clear about something, the hundreds of thousands of people marching in Tel Aviv right now, they're demanding a ceasefire deal and the resignation of Netanyahu, their prime minister, not in protest of the genocide, not in protest of the destruction that I just outlined.

They're doing so in protest of how the genocide has been carried out. So in other



words, they haven't achieved the military victory that they set out to achieve, which is eliminating Hamas and the hostages. Many of the hostages have not been returned home. The tens of thousands of murdered Palestinians don't even register on their radar.

And I think certainly for me, that's not surprising. I don't have high expectations from the Israeli public. We saw there were quite a few polls over the last 11 months, but one in particular stood out to me. And that was, I think it was at the end of last year, it was published, it asked Jewish Israelis about the war, about the genocide. And the vast majority said that the Israeli army was not doing enough in Gaza. So what we see really is that there is bipartisan support for the genocide. But I think what we're seeing or what Israel is sort of asking or talking about is how that genocide is conducted and who leads them.

So that's really sort of what's the central tenet of these demonstrations.

Saree Makdisi 6:14

Yeah. Thank you for that. One of the things that's striking about the genocide now, as you're saying, is that insofar as there's dissent inside the Israeli state or the Israeli polity, it's very clear that there's no dissent about the genocide itself.

Right? I mean, as you're saying this, we know there's almost if not unanimity, there's certainly solidarity among Israelis about either the need for the genocide or total indifference as to what's happening in Gaza itself. The concern is more about the Israeli prisoners being held in Gaza and sort of Israeli internal political differences.

So one thing that's striking about this genocide compared to other episodes going back, well, let's, if not to 1948, then at least in our collective memory, maybe not yours, but my brother's and ours. 1982, for example, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, there were protests inside, in Tel Aviv, against the war.



Not against the conduct of the war per se, but really against the war altogether, right? In other previous Israeli bombardments of Gaza, for example, I remember those, it was either 2008, 2009, or maybe 2014, there was that letter published by Israeli pilots who said we're not going to be doing this anymore, and so on, right?

So there has in the past been a certain, not much, but a certain degree of Israeli dissent about violence against Palestinians. This time, that's all gone, right?

There's, it seems that the Israeli polity has shifted to a far more genocidal mindset than even 2008, 2009, 2014, 1982, 2006, name the episode you want.

So something seems to have shifted in their mindset that has made the Israelis much more murderous as a kind of state project. So I want to just pause on that question. In other words, as you're saying too, when there's an argument among Israelis themselves between labor and Likud, between the so-called opposition, it's not like the opposition isn't any better from a Palestinian perspective than the ruling party.

They're all basically in agreement about what to do with Palestinians, right? So let's just think through it a little bit more. What does it mean that there is such unanimity among them with respect to Palestine and Palestinians, which is different from previous such moments, although there's no really comparable moment, but even in whatever terms we could compare this particular moment to 2014 or 2008, 2009 and so forth.

What do you make of that, of this increasing murderousness of the Israeli collective?

Yara Hawari 8:47

I know I wasn't alive in 1982, but I'm not sure that I fully prescribed to that assessment of the Israeli psyche, that they've become more of a murderous society. This was a regime that was founded on the murder and the looting of an



entire society.

I think it comes in ebbs and flows. I don't think it's a sort of a straight line going up. Israelis are becoming more and more violent in terms of their attitudes toward Palestinians. And I think, when you talk about the dissent with violence or how Israelis sometimes in the past have dissented, I think the question is never about whether violence should be used.

It's the extent of the violence used. I think it's fair to say that across the Israeli political spectrum, there is agreement that violence should be used against Palestinians. It's about where that violence is used, which communities will suffer, which tactics, and which tools of oppression.

And I think we see this even with the sort of the more so-called liberal Israelis. We've seen certain points in history where certain groups of liberal Israelis have had a turning point. So we saw this during the second intifada, where many in the Israeli peace camp, so-called peace camp, suddenly turned away from it because they thought that Palestinians for resorting to armed resistance were ungrateful and undeserving of human rights.

And they became even more sort of ardent in their, they became more sure about the oppression of Palestinians. And we're seeing that again, we're seeing sort of liberal, so-called liberal Israelis once again say, how dare Gazans resist their oppression? This is what they deserve.

I think I don't fully agree with that assessment. I think a settler colonial society that's founded on the ashes of another society in this case, Palestine, will always inevitably be violent.

Ussama Makdisi 10:50

We agree that this is a settler colonial society and there's a sort of a logic of elimination in a settler colonial society. It's an index and a relationship to



resistance. Every time native populations or indigenous populations resist their oppression, they're met with extraordinary violence and so 2006, for example, was a prelude to what happened in Gaza.

The Dahye doctrine is a prelude to what happened to Gaza. Gaza then shows us what the future is in terms of how much violence and killing and mass murder and genocide is going to be acceptable to society. And the question really is, are you surprised, Yara, by the way, Western societies, liberal societies and governments, in particular, have not only tolerated, but have actually condoned and accepted and enabled this genocide, which is just so shocking to so many people around the world, or do you see there's, I mean, so Israeli society you're saying is totally on board in terms of the violence directed at the natives, which is true. But what about Western societies more generally, do you see there's a shift or not a shift or is it more shocking or more appalling than previous episodes? And just to link this to another level, are you surprised by the British, by the US, by the French, etc.?

Yara Hawari 12:19

By the British and the US, not so much. I think, yeah, look, I think the notable aspects of this genocide, something perhaps unprecedented, is that it has been live streamed, that it has been covered so extensively by the very people that this genocide is being perpetrated against.

And so I think for many people, the images that just hundreds of thousands or even millions of images and hours of footage and the live streaming all testament to the horrors that are occurring in Gaza. I think for many people, the shock is that with all of this, how can we not have more opposition, by opposition

I mean, there have been massive grassroots mobilizations. I'm talking right now about, sort of state opposition, third-party opposition. How can we not have people hold their hands up and say we don't condone this and it looks really bad, at least for them, they could say, that even if they don't value Palestinian lives,



which we know they don't value Palestinian lives, they could say this looks really bad on us to have an ally doing this so brazenly.

And I think for many of these politicians, and I'm not giving them the benefit of the doubt, but I think it's also uncharted territories for them. They have an ally that they have supported for decades since the very existence of the state of Israel.

And they have really premised their foreign policies, certainly in the Middle East on this state, for them to come out and condone what Israel is doing to challenge the policies, I mean

it has serious repercussions. It's not just coming out and saying Israel, you're doing a bad thing. It has much more serious repercussions on foreign policy for decades to come. I think that really hammers home the point that whatever happens in Palestine and Gaza doesn't happen in a vacuum.

This is connected to so much more. It's connected to the wider foreign policies in the Middle East. It's connected to the arms trade. It's connected so much more. So there's a lot riding on this. So it's not easy for them to come out and say it because it undermines their own democracies as well and in their countries undermines their own politics.

Ussama Makdisi 14:50

Yeah, right. Can you specify what repercussions you're talking about? And when you say repercussions, what do you mean?

Yara Hawari 14:56

Well, I think one of the serious repercussions of the genocide is going to have in the future is on the international legal regime.

What does it mean to have an international legal regime when people are not held accountable, right? So there are plenty of mechanisms within international



law that actually could have brought about a ceasefire in the first week of the genocide but third states are actively choosing not to invoke those mechanisms.

They're choosing to ignore their third-state responsibilities. So that's going to have a repercussion, a serious repercussion, on the international legal regime moving forward. What does it mean if we're only applying this regime, which so many Western countries have held so dear to their hearts?

What does it mean when they're applying it to one group of people and not to another? I think also in terms of the region. I think this is going to have repercussions, maybe not in the short term, but certainly in the medium to long term, the populations of the Middle East have seen how these countries have behaved towards the Palestinian people who are facing genocide, and I don't think they're going to stay quiet for a long time.

Karim Makdisi 16:02

Yeah, I have a couple of questions. The first, since you're based in Palestine, I assume that you're meeting with a lot of these NGOs, potentially a lot of delegations that come or not.

Do you get an impression from at least some of the Westerners that they are aware of what's going on, the ones that are kind of coming to the area as opposed to the capitals and the kind of the official statements behind the scenes and lunches and dinners? Do they acknowledge or are they taking positions sort of like the Germans seem to do or others that that they are fully serious about their official positions?

And it's not just well we need to do it, we have domestic concerns, we have to et cetera, but we actually know what's going on. I'm curious about that because we often get this when people come to Lebanon and have some discussions with them. Sometimes there's a difference, like they understand, they come and say we



know what's going on, but we can't do anything about it.

During the genocide now, is this something that's taking place? And also kind of, I think it's connected as well. We hear from the United States and from European capitals that there seems to be a distinction between the West Bank, which I want to talk about in a little bit. And so it's like, okay we were turning a blind eye to genocide,

go ahead, do what you want. But when something happens, it was like, there's at least this kind of formal note or formal protest. Or, they say something, the Americans even kind of do this symbolic sanction on these individual settler types. Do you see that there is a distinction in this in this sense and why?

Yara Hawari 17:33

Perhaps I'll address your question in reverse.

There is a distinction between how people, the international community, including NGOs, diplomats, and politicians, respond to Gaza as opposed to how they respond to the West Bank. We know that there is deep dehumanization of the Palestinian people, and it's not like the responses to the West Bank are particularly phenomenal.

But when it comes to Gaza, it seems like it's a different playbook entirely. I mean, the dehumanization is so deep that we don't even see an ounce of humanity afforded to them by this community. And I'm speaking in general terms, but it's from my experience. And then to your second point, I have not been meeting in the last 11 months with that many people.

I think a lot of internationals have not been coming to Palestine. It's also a choice of mine not to, but just from past experience, it's incredibly infuriating when internationals, and again, I'm talking about people who work for NGOs, they will admit in private that the occupation is horrific.



They will talk about Israel with disdain. They will say how awful it is to have to deal with them and how terrible the situation is for Palestinians. But in public, they won't say these things because they're concerned, either for their organizations, their funding, et cetera, or their own personal positions.

And that's been the case for decades. And people who've been working in the field much longer than me will tell you the same, that they'll have a great meeting with someone in private, and they'll come out of that meeting feeling elated. And then it's a different story when they see the public statements or public actions from these internationals.

So there is certainly that disconnect between what is said in private and what's said in public.

Ussama Makdasi 19:25

So, Yara, on this point then, therefore, a couple of questions come out from what you've just said about the NGOs and the liberal NGOs and also Israeli society more broadly that you described, what is the point given this kind of analysis, given what you've been saying?

Is there any point in appealing or depending on or engaging with this kind of NGOs or Israeli society more broadly? I mean, Israeli Jewish society specifically more broadly. So what is the efficacy or point of appealing to them? If what you're saying holds true, can you flesh that out for us a little bit more, please?

Yara Hawari 20:15

I'll separate those two out. So I think with the international community and it's such a broad term, but I think many of the listeners will know sort of broadly speaking who we're referring to, but we will always have allies in that community. There will always be people coming to Palestine who are coming so because they generally support the struggle and the right for Palestinians to have their freedom



and sovereignty.

And so I think it's always worth engaging with well-intentioned people, who have the right politics. I think it's not a question about whether we give up entirely in that arena. I think it's more a question of how much energy we spend. And I think for so long, especially since the Oslo Accords and the NGOization of Palestinian civil society, we've put too many eggs in that basket.

We have spent time and energy on these people, on these organizations, and we haven't seen tangible outcomes from it. And I think we have neglected, for example, our allies and our brothers and sisters in the global South. I think there has been such a large focus on these Western groups and entities.

And that's not to say that we should abandon them because there are allies in these spaces. But it's really about shifting our energies and doing a reassessment of where we spend our time, our advocacy efforts and our time in building alliances. As for Israeli society, I mean, the poll I stated earlier where the majority of Israeli society thinks that the Israeli army hasn't gone far enough in Gaza, I think really sums it up. I think it's really difficult to advocate or to appeal to such an audience. And I think there are people better suited to do it than Palestinians. I don't think it should be the responsibility of Palestinians to engage in that kind of work.

I think it should be the responsibility of Jewish allies to engage with those people. Also importantly, there is a consensus among Palestinian civil society at the grassroots against normalization with Israelis and Israeli entities that refuse to recognize Palestinian fundamental rights and very much support that consensus and so do many Palestinian organizations and individuals.

Saree Makdisi 22:37

on this point I mean, I think we're largely in agreement with you in the sense that



no matter what we say about Israeli society in the past, I think that there were cracks of dissent at different moments that are just gone now. There's no question about that, and in that sense, I think you're right that what we're talking about here at a kind of collective social level shows that there's very little to be gained in trying to negotiate with these people or to try to explain to them genocide is wrong.

It seems kind of hopeless to me, right? It seems to me, a society in which 90 percent of the people support the genocide in effect, which is what those polls pretty consistently show. A society that has also leveled calls, for example, for the destruction of Lebanon and things like that. That's a society that needs to feel not just international kind of attempts at dialogue, but also it should feel international isolation, collectively, right, which is, of course, that's the whole point of the BDS boycotts, divestments, and sanctions campaign is to isolate Israeli society in the way that South African society, settler, apartheid society was once isolated to make them feel, if this is how you're going to behave, this will be the result, not trying to appeal to your conscience, right.

Because I don't know what vestiges of conscience remain collectively in that society, but rather to say, okay, you do this, this is going to be the consequence. You will be cut off from international events, international sporting events, the UN, international organizations, and so on.

So it seems to me that that's pretty clear that there was always the need for a boycott campaign and a sanctions campaign, but what we're seeing now boosts the necessity of that much more clearly than ever before in that sense.

Karim Makdisi 24:45

I mean, I want to go back a little bit to the question that I sort of started a little bit with the question of the intra-Israeli kind of politics. I think this question of overwhelming Jewish Israeli support for the genocide. I think for me, in any case,



that if there was any shred of doubt about things, I think for me now, this is very clear that you have to consider that the whole society there with individuals aside, of course, there are always some individuals, but that this is a war by the entire society

against the Palestinians. There's no longer in a sense this for me. I mean, maybe I'm in a different position I live in a different country in this case where this question of trying to form allies in Palestine seems to me to be extraordinarily difficult, even conceptually at this point, like it's very difficult to even find allies again outside of certain individuals.

And then you have on top of that when the US secretary of state shows up a few days after October 7 and says, I'm here as a Jewish person, rather than as the US foreign minister or the secretary of state.

There must be a sense among Palestinians of what resistance looks like. So you've got the resistance, you have sort of Hamas as the military resistance, which has its role. Then you have other forms of resistance through civil society, through all the policy networks, through what's called nonviolent movements.

Where are we now with this? Where is Palestinian society in trying to imagine a post-genocide society? It was genocide kind of politics at this point. I'm not talking about The Palestinian Authority or the Palestinian Liberation Movement (PLO). I would like to talk about it a little bit. Is something going on in the society itself?

Does that space still exist? Will the kind of politics be renewed and taken much more viscerally in a sense, or is this a major setback to all those initiatives, all those networks that were built, all those kinds of allies that were being counted upon?

What's the sense inside Palestine on this?

Yara Hawari 26:56



I can't speak to or about Gaza as someone who is not in Gaza, has never been to Gaza, but I think elsewhere in Palestine, I mean, all of Palestinian civil society, the grassroots has always had this phenomenal ability to rebuild, to bounce back in the face of massive adversity.

I know what we're seeing today is unprecedented in many ways, but if you look at what happened during the Nakba in 1948, our entire society, all our institutions, all our communities, and all our various different groups, and political parties were obliterated from the land of Palestine, or for the majority of the land of Palestine.

And quite phenomenally, it was able to bounce back. And so I do believe that we will come back from this as a people. I think it's very difficult to say this amidst the genocide, which is ongoing from a position of immense privilege as someone who is not currently under Israeli bombardment.

So I do believe in that. I do think Palestinian civil society and the grassroots and activists are continuing to mobilize. And I think sometimes it's a bit difficult to see amidst all the horrors. But they haven't gone away. And we're seeing all the advocacy efforts, all the mobilization efforts around the world, that hasn't happened randomly.

This has happened as a result of Palestinian-led organizing in Palestine and in the diaspora. So I think it's really important to take stock of that and to remember that we're seeing massive solidarity, but we're seeing it in such an organized way because Palestinians refuse to be beaten.

We refuse to be erased from our land, but also from the world's consciousness. And I think that's a testament to that. And I don't say this to sort of romanticize the current moment we're in either, because of course, at the same time, many Palestinian political organizing has taken a huge hit.

Not just since the beginning of the genocide, but also since the 2021 unity Intifada,



there was a concerted effort to disrupt and destroy the leadership of that moment. And the disruption was successful in many ways. The results of that disruption were played out in the West Bank, where there has been an inability to mass mobilize against the genocide.

I don't want to romanticize the situation, but I also don't want to be defeatist about it because I do really believe in the ability of the Palestinian people to come back from such horrible catastrophes.

Saree Makdisi 2956

Yara, even though all of our attention has been focused on Gaza because of the genocide there as there's been a lot of things going on in the West Bank as well, on a somewhat, it is definitely, it's a slower pace than in Gaza, but it's nevertheless, it's been ticking along.

And I think at this point, the Israelis have killed 900 or a thousand people so far in the West Bank. So it's a smaller scale than Gaza, but nevertheless, it's there, it's been present, it's ticking up. But in the past. I don't know, two weeks or so? A pretty marked acceleration in terms of the violence Israelis are inflicting in the West Bank.

The increasing use, for example, of helicopter gunships or drones or fighter aircraft to bomb people in Jenin and other parts of the north, especially the northern part of the West Bank. The use of what they call evacuation orders in parts of the West Bank, which are, of course, similar to the ones they've used in Gaza.

And the ramping up of the genocidal rhetoric of the Smotriches and Ben Gevirs and so forth, and all that's happening, from your sense of what a West Bank perspective might look like, what do you think the sense is? If the genocide now turns in a full way to the West Bank, where does that leave Palestinian society in the West Bank?



I mean, for example, among other things, you made the point that the genocide in Gaza doesn't just involve killing people, it also involves massive and lasting, maybe even permanent damage to infrastructure. So when we see those videos of the Israeli armory entering Jenin or Tulkarem, places like that in the West Bank, those horrible caterpillar bulldozers of theirs have those incredible hooks at the back with which they, use just to dig up, to churn up the asphalt in the streets, which serves zero military function, it's a gratuitous kind of damage to sewer networks and the roads, it's just purely gratuitous.

What do people think about this escalation of the West Bank that's happening recently and the possibility that this could be the next phase of the genocide in Gaza?

Yara Hawari 31:56

Do you know what the Israeli army is calling this operation in the West Bank? They're calling it Operation Summer Camps. The reason they're calling it Operation Summer Camps, of course, is because the focus is on the refugee camps in the northern West Bank, where there tends to be more armed resistance. This is the largest invasion of the West Bank since 2002. I think it's a lot of the things we're seeing in Jenin. But I'm very reminiscent of what's been happening in, at least in the early days of the genocide in Gaza.

The cities have been placed under blockade, and the entrances and exits are being blocked. There are checkpoints everywhere. There are limited food and medical supplies. The Israelis are going into people's homes, kicking them out, and in some cases, blowing up the houses. They've invaded medical facilities, and they've been preventing ambulances from reaching the injured.

We've even seen footage of Palestinians leaving their homes, waving white flags. And we've heard from journalists on the ground as well, that they're being shot at, they're being threatened. I don't think there's a sort of international journalist



presence on the ground in these areas. And Jenin, of course, is a place where a Palestinian journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, was killed in 2022.

Jenin and these places are no strangers to invasion, to military raids. The whole of the West Bank is under occupation, but in particular, in the Northern parts of the West Bank, they've been really subjected to a lot of brutality over the last few decades, and the pretext is always the same.

It's the same everywhere that the Israelis are going after the armed resistance. It's a pretext that we saw, and we continue to see the Israeli regime use in Gaza. So, it's an escalation just on a sheer scale. The number of soldiers have been deployed, the use of airstrikes, as you mentioned, and It's been even more worrying to see how the Israelis are talking about this, how Israeli officials are talking about this.

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. 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. So it's fewer Palestinians for more land. And I think the scary thing is that Israelis, the Israeli army, and the Israeli regime now see 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.

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 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 Ascalan, 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 gas lighting for over seven and a half decades.

Ussama Makdisi 36:23

On that point of gaslighting, you raised several really important points. Well, there's two questions there. One is the West Bank specifically, and the PA, the Palestinian Authority. One of the most striking aspects of the genocide of the last year has been the total absence of any kind of statements or any kind of effective statements or let alone actions by the PA, which, of course, acts like a collaborating authority to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

How do you explain the endurance of the PA in the West Bank, given the genocide and given what the Israelis are doing in the West Bank, which, of course, is ethnic cleansing as you're suggesting? That's exactly what the plan has always been and that's what the plan will continue to be. So that's one question. What about the



PA? How do you read the PA's response? Why do people still put up with the PA given how overt the collaboration is? Is it that they have no choice?

Is it that people are so fragmented that they don't have the ability to mobilize against the PA? What explains the endurance of this absolutely wretched collaborationist authority in Ramallah is question number one. Question number two takes us back to a point you raised earlier, which is given the official Western support for the genocide or the inaction of the international community, as you say, to prevent the genocide, how does one isolate Israel without appealing to Western society, since Israel depends on the Western societies and Western governments?

So, how do you isolate this or put leverage on them without appealing to Western society? These are two separate questions. One is going back to what you said earlier, but the other one, the more immediate question is the PA and the West Bank, given the situation there.

Yara Hawari 37:58

I think if there were a global nuclear war, the last people standing would be the PA.

That's how it feels at this point. I think the PA has, since the beginning of the genocide, been functioning, at least on an operational level, as it is supposed to. And by that I mean it continues to oppress and suppress Palestinian political opposition and resistance to occupation.

There has been some rhetoric with regard to standing with our people because there hasn't been any action. And there are things that they can do, even if limited, but worse than inaction, they've been suppressing Palestinian solidarity with Gaza. And I think not many people are aware of this but since the beginning of the genocide.



There have been demonstrations in support of our brothers and sisters in Gaza and Janine. Many other areas in Haifa, in Nazareth, but these have often been, and just talking about the West Bank. Now, these have often been repressed by PA security forces.

So just to give you an example, the night of, the bombing of the hospital, which I think was in mid-October, there was a spontaneous demonstration in Ramallah, and I think this was the first time that the Israeli army bombed a hospital in Gaza. Now, of course, we're at a stage where they've bombed every hospital in Gaza. But the PA security forces brutally shut down this protest. And they killed a protester.

They ran him over with one of their armored jeeps, funded with thanks, of course, to the international community. Another example is just a few days ago, during the invasion of the northern West Bank, during that horribly named Operation Summer Camps, the PA security forces went into the old city of Nablus, and they took down the tarpaulins, the plastic covers that residents had put up in the old city to avoid the Israeli surveillance drones.

They continue to work hand in hand on the security coordination, and there's always this rhetoric about Abbas or other PA ministers threatening to end the security coordination, but it never actually happens. They never go through with it. And that's because the, PA's existence is premised on that security coordination.

I don't know if you saw when Abbas and a delegation of PA officials were invited to Turkey to address the parliament in Ankara. In his speech, Abbas made this grand statement that he'd be going to Gaza in the near future, even if it cost him his life.

This was met with a standing applause from Erdogan and his cronies. From most Palestinians, it was met with ridicule. I mean, there was a whole series of memes and jokes online, because how exactly is Abbas, 90 years old next year, how is he going to go to Gaza? A besieged territory, which is under massive bombardment,



and is facing an ongoing genocide.

It was revealed shortly after that, the man in charge of the security coordination between the PA and the Israeli regime had submitted a written request to the Israelis to allow Abbas and various others to go to Gaza. And apparently they also appealed to the Americans to facilitate this.

I don't think there's been a response, but we know realistically this won't and it can't happen. He is not going to get a warm welcome in Gaza and I think probably the Americans and the Israelis would have been concerned about his safety there. I think it tells you everything you need to know about who's calling the shots.

Abbas not only has to apply for permission from the Israelis to leave the West Bank, but he also has to coordinate with them when he travels between cities, which doesn't happen much anyway these days. But I think it highlights some crucial things such as that the PA has become redundant.

It doesn't have any power and it's not playing any kind of role in what's happening in Gaza in terms of working towards stopping the genocide. And there have been some lip service like efforts at national unity, the national unity agreement signed between Fatah, the ruling party of the PA, and Hamas counterparts in Beijing. It was brokered by the Chinese. But this national unity agreement was only about very broad principles, and it was a win for Fatah. They could say, oh you know, we did something.

Ussama Makdisi 42:34

Well, my question then is given your knowledge of the situation in the West Bank, why do people put up, I mean, maybe it's a naive question, but why given the, why do they put up with the situation?

They put up with the situation for decades. How can it be that Abbas, given how overt the collaboration is? How disgraceful what's going on in terms of the overt



sort of systematic genocide taking place in Gaza, in full view, as you said, live streamed, every Palestinian in the West Bank, outside the West Bank, in the world can see what's going on.

And there are no filters to this, people can see this. How can it be that Abbas and company are still there? To even call the shots or to pretend to call the shots. Why isn't there an uprising against, I mean, maybe this is again a naive question. Why isn't there more resistance to this? Absolutely a naked collaborationist authority.

Yara Hawari 43:30

I think there are several facets, to this. You know, the PA has worked hard for a couple of decades now at suppressing Palestinian political opposition on all different levels, right? They have worked hand in hand with the Israeli regime to, in hundreds, if not thousands, of potential political leaders and actual political leaders across, the Palestinian political spectrum.

So, you know, and just A fact that it's nearly impossible to register a new Palestinian political party with the interior ministry, actually, is. It's something that you can't do. It's a very stifled space that Palestinians are having, you know, to operate in politically. But I think importantly the world's powers, the Israelis, the Americans, the EU to a large extent, don't have an interest in seeing the Palestinian Authority being toppled.

In fact, their interest is to keep the Palestinian Authority in place because the PA is what stabilizes the situation in the West Bank. It prevents an uprising from occurring. It prevents any kind of opposition to the status quo. So really, the PA has these massive backers. And of course, I want to clarify as well, you know, I'm talking about the PA.

As a structure, the PA is also the largest employer in the West Bank. It employs a third of something like a third of people in the West Bank because, you know, civil



servants and whatnot. So when I'm talking about the PA in broad terms, I'm talking about the structure and I'm talking about the people at the top.

I'm not talking about the average employee. It's a very complex situation where you have essentially what is a native in force of a colonial entity that's being propped up by the world's powers, and you have a people that in many ways are held hostage to this. Entity because they rely on it for their livelihood.

So it's a very complex situation, but it's something that Palestinians are deeply aware of. I mean, the average Palestinian will tell you if we want to see an end to occupation, we have to. We have to deal with the PA first, we have to clean up our own house first. And that's, you know, it's something that Palestinians are deeply, deeply cognizant of.

Karim Makdisi 45:45

Just following on this, as we begin to wrap up, there is, I mean, you know, we, we see, at least I saw a couple of polls that showed that Hamas has increased in popularity even in the West Bank. This brings the question of what liberation means now in Palestine for Palestinians. So, you know, on the one hand, we have what is this armed resistance and what's been going on as an option now, as it is in Lebanon, as it has been in various countries in the region now.

And on the other hand, you have this. So we talked about the Palestinian Authority. I'm not sure there's, there's much more to discuss that because I think we all agree, and pretty much everybody agrees that it's simply this kind of collaborationist institution.

We've talked to people like Hanan Ashrawi and Diana Buttu and others about possibilities of say PLO reform, PLO being the only organization that has, in theory anyway, all the different constituents of all Palestinians inside, outside refugee camps in the diaspora, everywhere is that option finished?



Realistically, is there still a way out of this intra-Palestinian politics? Is to reform the PLO, maybe bring Hamas into it go from there, this kind of thing, or does liberation now look like the fighting against the Palestinian Authority and moving towards a different form of resistance, either the form that Hamas has pushed for or some other kind of hybrid form? Something where it's no longer a question of negotiating and institutional things but some other form. what does it look like?

Yara Hawari 47:22

That's a really good question and I'm I'm not sure that I will be able to fully answer it. I'm from a generation of Palestinians that's often referred to as the Oslo generation. We grew up under the consequences of Oslo. I was in Palestine when the PLO returned to Palestine and suffered the the consequences as a result of the signing of those, those accords.

I think people of my generation and perhaps those younger are less wedded to the PLO as an entity or less committed to the PLO as an entity, as an entity to represent Palestinian people as an entity that will lead us to liberation. At the same time, I don't dismiss the importance that the PLO still has for a lot of people of other generations.

So it's a difficult one. I'm not a reformist. I generally don't believe in reform, but I also recognize the significance of the PLO as an entity for so many people, but I'm not holding on to it. For me on a personal level. It's not something that I necessarily hold on to.

I think it's very unlikely that we will see the kind of PLO reform that is needed for full liberation, to be very honest with you. I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. We can have new entities, we can have new leadership structures and models. And I think that's okay. I don't think we're in that position right now, though, to think about that.



It's a big question. I don't know if Palestinians are in the place to think about that. I know lots of Palestinians are talking about leadership. There are lots of behind-the-scenes discussions about sort of not only the day after in Gaza but also about what the Palestinian leadership looks like moving forward.

But unfortunately, from my experience and what I've heard of these conversations, there's nothing new in them. It's a recycling of old leadership models, and it's recycling of the old leaders. So it's it's a big question. Maybe one that I'll need to think on some more before I sort of provide a more extensive answer.

Saree Makdisi 49:33

Yeah, of course, that's fair. And you're right that the question of the PLO is partly a generational question. So people in our generation, there's a certain kind of nostalgia to it and we want to be wary of nostalgia, not fall into the trap of nostalgia. But the PLO does have something that the PA doesn't have, which is, as Karim alluded to earlier, which is its international presence.

It has a seat in the UN, it has embassies around the world, and it has more recognition around the world than the Israeli state does. So there's a lot there that at least in theory could be mobilized for, not necessarily to do what it used to do, in fact, not to do what it used to do, but rather, for example, in part of what I see as an important part of the next phase towards liberation is the massive ramping up of the BDS program, an international network such as the one the PLO still possesses.

And international leverage, it would be a useful component to the struggle, although I'm aware that we shouldn't fall for misplaced nostalgia for how things used to be, et cetera. I'm not saying we should go back. If anything, maybe we should look forward, to see, to anticipate the ways in which the, the PLO could at least theoretically be reformed in order to.



To bring about leverage. To use its international presence, its international networks, its international presence in various international organizations, including the UN. Yes, of course, as you said earlier, those haven't yielded very much yet. But nevertheless, that's one area where surely we need to focus the struggle as well, right?

Yara Hawari 51:27

I think perhaps I wasn't thinking so much about the international dimension, which I should have been. It is undeniable that the PLO is the one that maintains our presence in all these institutions. But there is another international dimension and that's of the the grassroots diaspora.

All of the massive mobilizations we've seen around the world haven't been as a result of the PLO. It's been as a result of various different Palestinian groups and communities who've been working for decades. So it's not really and I'm not saying this to pit one against the other. I do think the generational issue is a big one.

I think also in terms of just thinking about Palestinians in Palestine, the PLO is largely irrelevant to them. I mean, if you ask the average person on the street under the age of 30, what the PLO is, they might not know how to respond to that.

I think that's really critical when we're talking about the issue of the PLO, I think we do need to factor that in. And as I said before, I don't have a clear answer on this. I think it's such an unprecedented moment in our story and our struggle that it's difficult to think clearly about these issues. I do recognize what you said and think it's something that we're going to have to grapple with.

Saree Makdisi 53:00

Just as a quick follow up on that, just imagine, just hypothetically or theoretically, I know it's, we're not in a place right now to imagine much beyond the immediate



present, but we do need to, at some point we need to do that, right?

But imagine the presence of the PLO throwing itself like the PLO has. assiduously avoided, and Fatah and so forth, have assiduously avoided engaging in the question of BDS. They don't, they just don't,, if anything, they don't approve of it or they don't talk about it. Imagine the PLO throwing its weight behind a global BDS program.

Imagine the PLO, various PLO ambassadors going to the Olympic Committee or FIFA or whatever, or using the more leverage that they have, at least in theory they have, right, towards this global, in other words, there are ways to imagine at least theoretically a common cause being made between grassroots civil organizing, all the civil society organizations that issued the BDS call in 2005 or whenever it was, working with the PLO, theoretically, yes, and you're right, of course, there's these generational things that we have to ask about. And of course, the PLO lost its way as of Oslo, the PLO lost its way clearly.

Yara Hawari 54:05

Just to add to that, there is a difference again, between PLO official statements and individuals in the PLO, entities within the PLO. I think there is such a broad spectrum of opinions and ultimately the one that wins out, in terms of what's put down on paper, and what's said in official statements is the one that's supported by Abbas and his faction. That just speaks to how much the PLO has been subsumed by the PA, Abbas, and Fatah.

We all know that the PLO has a very broad spectrum of opinions. I wouldn't say that the PLO is necessarily against BDS. But what I would say is that. In terms of the official line, they are beholden to the PA. If the PLO comes out and supports the BDS movement in its official statements, that will have repercussions on the PA, the funding, and the donors who might decide to cut money to certain ministries and the PA.



So the problem is that it has been subsumed and it's beyond time for that sort of entanglement between the PA and PLO to be untangled. The question is if that unentanglement can happen. And whilst the PA exists, I don't think it can, and whilst the PA exists, I don't think we're going to see a return to a revolutionary PLO, one that represents truly its people in its entirety.

Ussama Makdisi 55:45

I think that there's no other organization that can represent or has represented the entirety other than the PLO, and you're right, it has been subsumed by the PA. In the phase in the, as you call it, the Oslo phase and what we're living now, but that doesn't mean that there isn't a possible.

I mean, there has to be thinking about other futures. And also just as a note of caution, although I agree with almost everything you've said is the idea of grassroots organization alone. You can have grassroots mobilization that can just rise in an extraordinary mobilization, genuine passion, genuine conviction, and courage, but then dissipate once the moment is over. That's why there's ultimately something called leadership.

Unfortunately, now the leadership is completely co opted and fragmented. The question is, can we imagine, or is there an imagination for something different in the future that can actually represent the reality of the Palestinian people in all its diversity, in all its fragmentations and unify this.

Other than the PA, something maybe, whatever it is, there has to be something that can speak to the Palestinian reality in its existence, not just in the West Bank, which is what the PA does, but across the world.

Yara Hawari 57:06

I agree with you. I think there has to be political leadership. I think one of the problems for the Palestinian people is that there isn't that space in Palestine for



that leadership. And so it has in many ways sort of retreated from civil society spaces to grassroots spaces. So we do need that political leadership. I hundred percent agree with you on that.

I think just on that point about sort of grassroots movements rising up and then dissipating. I think that's the very nature of grassroots groups, but I would say, and just speaking from my experience in Palestine, is that a lot of these movements and moments and spaces amongst the grassroots, they're not new people, they're people, they're the same leaders, they're the same people organizing, trying to carve out and forge new spaces in an incredibly repressive, politically repressive environment.

So the question I think is, as you pointed out, how do we imagine a new political landscape for Palestinians, one that includes leadership? I think people are beginning to do that. They have done that in the past. I do think now is the time to do it. I recognize that for a lot of people just surviving the ever-deteriorating present is taking priority, but that means for Palestinians who are in positions where they can do that, that that's the work that we have to do.

Karim Makdisi 58:33

I think to wrap up, just to sum, I want to correct, it's not necessarily leadership, it's institutions. These are connected, but it's the institutions themselves that are normally what would create a sustainability, so to speak. You take certain moments of crisis, et cetera, but then you build institutions from it.

This is why one of the most insidious parts of Oslo was the creation of the PA because you are creating an institution that is beholden to the Oslo process and therefore by definition to the occupation and to the Americans and to the Israelis and to all of that. And once you create an institution, it's extremely difficult to move it aside because you have an institution.



Then you have a bureaucracy, which means you create jobs, which means you create services. And then because nothing else is going on, you have a large number of people that are working and therefore whole families that are dependent on this and then, you know, donors come in and then, if you don't do this, then the donors withdraw their money on other kinds of projects.

So, the institution is the most insidious part or one of the most insidious parts of the whole Oslo process. What I'm left thinking here, Yara, and this is really for all of us, is this issue of saying, we started by talking about this, this unbelievable genocide that's taking place in Gaza.

It's rendering Gaza uninhabitable, at least as of now. We see in the West Bank, there's this beginning of a continuation or an intensification of invasion and annexation. I think we should remember that Netanyahu came in on a policy or a platform of wanting to annex the West Bank or large parts of the West Bank.

So this kind of invasion, annexation, and ethnic cleansing, we are all kind of agreeing that this is not going to stop. The genocide in Gaza may or may not stop at a certain point. There may or may not be a ceasefire today, tomorrow, next week, next month. But the ethnic cleansing there in the post-genocide part will continue in the guise of humanitarianism.

On the other hand, we're seeing it now in the West Bank and Jerusalem and other places. So if this is going to be the way it's going to be for years, And then we kind of think, well, in these extraordinary moments, how can we think about building institutions? How can we think about mobilizing in terms of politics?

How does one get around this? How does one kind of, move on from this where you're not constantly building or simply reacting in this thing? So on the one hand, you have, as I was saying, you have resistance movements that come up and these are responding to particular moments.



Then building it into political gains. This is where there seems to have been an absence for a very, very long time. Even pre-genocide, okay, it's occupation, etc. But even in moments when there was at least a little bit of time to kind of build something. It didn't seem to be because the Palestinian Authority was so effective in its roots, at least within the West Bank, while Gaza so effectively isolated from the West Bank, let alone from the diaspora and other areas. So it's not a question, but I think that's something that we need to be thinking about; how to think about politics and liberation politics. That is both resistance on the one hand, but at the same time, trying to come up with something that unifies the various, not just factions, but kind of various elements within the Palestinian polity itself, various constituents to which the BDS is a part of, but it has to be as part of a larger political strategy.

So it's one thing for the BDS to be something that mobilizes people in the West within a certain kind of politics that makes sense in the West, but then connecting it to the material movements, the resistance movements, the liberation movements that are taking place on the ground and the institution building.

This is where the big disconnect has been for obvious reasons. It's not easy. I'm not saying it's easy, it's extraordinarily difficult and the occupation has been extraordinarily successful at that level in the sense of the Palestinian Authority at the head of this. So yeah, it's not really a question, but just something to kind of think about.

I guess these are just questions to think about. Anyway, so if there's nothing else, I mean, there's always other things, but I think we need to wrap here. Thank you so much, Yara, for joining us in this discussion. And again, opening up all these questions that we're all going to try to grapple with in the days and weeks and kind of years ahead. So thank you very much.

1:03:26



Al-Shabaka

The Palestinian Policy Network

Thanks for having me. Bye.

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