POLICY FOCUS | POLITICS

Grounding the Current Moment: An Al-Shabaka Syllabus

By: Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network · October, 2023

Introduction

On October 7th, 2023, Hamas's armed wing led the Al-Aqsa Flood, a guerilla operation where fighters broke through the Gaza barrier, seized Israeli settlements, killed an estimated 1,300 Israelis, and took an additional 200 hostage. The Israeli regime subsequently embarked on what is now its deadliest assault on Gaza. While the government pledged to wipe out Hamas, it has exacted a campaign of mass collective punishment and ethnic cleansing, murdering thousands of Palestinians and displacing over one million.

As much of the world struggles to make sense of this devastation, Palestinians speaking out continue to be dehumanized and silenced in an effort to quash testimonies that challenge the dominant discourse. To counter this strategy, Al-Shabaka has compiled a collection of its past works that may serve to ground readers in the wider context of this current moment. Together, these publications, webinars, and podcasts speak to the many layers that form the foundation of this point of rupture. They offer possibilities for new ways both to understand the past and present, as well as to envision a radically different future.

The Roots of the Palestinian Struggle

It is impossible to discuss, let alone fully understand and analyze, the developments of October 2023 without recognizing their inextricable connection to the root causes of Palestinian struggle. To assess Hamas's October 7th operation and the Israeli regime's subsequent response in isolation is to ignore over 75 years of colonial violence and the horrific consequences born out of these decades of oppression and attempted erasure. The following publications from our members serve as a grounding for the current moment, reminding readers that recent atrocities are the by-product of Israel's settler colonial project, military occupation, and system of apartheid from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

- **Using Indigeneity in the Struggle for Palestinian Liberation**
  by Ahmad Amara, Yara Hawari (August 2019)
- **Beyond South Africa: Understanding Israeli Apartheid**
  by Samer Abdelnour (April 2013)
- **Beyond the Apartheid Analogy: Time to Reframe Our Palestinian Struggle**
  by Irene Calis (January 2015)
- **Rethinking Our Definition of Apartheid: Not Just a Political Regime**
  by Haidar Eid, Andy Clarno (August 2017)
- **Oslo: Replacing Liberation with Economic Neo-Colonialism**
  by Khalil Nakhleh (April 2014)
- **Ongoing Nakba: Sheikh Jarrah, Gaza, and**

Historic Palestine
with Aseel Albajeh and Saleh Hijazi (May 2021). *This video is available in English only.*

- **70 Years of Nakba: Where Can Palestinians Go from Here?**
by Amal Ahmad, Irene Calis, Haidar Eid, Razi Nabulse on (May 2018)

Gaza: The World's Largest Open-Air Prison

Much of the world's mainstream media coverage would have audiences believe that Gaza is a state entirely independent from, and often at war with, Israel. In reality, the besieged territory–no bigger than the city of Las Vegas though roughly three times more populous–has been subject to a brutal blockade since 2007 and decades of colonial occupation before that. While Palestinians in Gaza are subject to some of the cruelest conditions enforced by the Israeli regime, it is imperative to recall that Gaza is not a disparate land but rather an integral part of greater Palestine. The small sampling of works below reinforce this point and recall that Palestinians in Gaza are a people shaped by refugeehood, survival, and continued steadfastness.

- **What Forces Shape the Palestinians of Gaza?**
by Randa Farah (September 2014)
- **Gaza: The Enduring Siege**
by Haidar Eid (July 2010)
- **Gaza: Stuck in the Status Quo**
with Tareq Baconi and Yasmeen El Khoudary (July 2019). *This video is available in English only.*
- **Gaza Between Occupation, Division, and**

COVID-19: Confronting Total Collapse
by Ali Abdel-Wahab (January 2021)

- **Back to the Future: The Great March of Return**
by Haidar Eid (July 2018)

Understanding Hamas

Hamas, a movement with both political and military wings, was founded in 1987 amid the First Intifada. The party won the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, leading to a violent confrontation with Fatah. Since 2007, governance of the West Bank and Gaza has been divided between Fatah and Hamas, respectively. While Hamas's guerilla operation on October 7th, 2023, drew widespread attention and outcry, the movement's history and core objectives continue to be obscured. This collection of Al-Shabaka publications examines the inner-workings of Hamas, its nationalistic ambitions, and the geopolitical dynamics that continue to shape its strategy.

- **Hamas: Dismantling the Dilemmas of Governance and Resistance**
by Belal Shobaki (September 2021)
- **Hamas and the Problem of Leadership and Resistance**
with Jehad Abusalim and Belal Shobaki (September 2021). *This video is available in Arabic only.*
- **Reconstituting the PLO: Any Place for Hamas and Islamic Jihad?**
by Belal Shobaki (September 2022)
- **Why It's Dangerous to Conflate Hamas and**

Daesh
by Belal Shobaki (February 2016)

- **Allying Against Iran: Repercussions for Palestine**
by Diana Buttu, Osamah Khalil, Mouin Rabbani (August 2018)

Wrestling with Resistance

Which forms of resistance to settler colonialism are legitimate and under what conditions? Who gets to determine the boundaries of legitimacy? For decades, Palestinians have wrestled with questions surrounding the tactics and efficacy of resistance strategies in the struggle for liberation. Though many intracommunal debates on the subject persist, one truth is glaringly clear: no matter the method, Palestinian resistance will be quelled through intimidation, criminalization, and explicit violence. For over a decade, Al-Shabaka analysts have grappled with this topic; the works below present a glimpse into the continuous, nuanced discussion taking place within the Palestinian community.

- **Debating Forms of Resistance**
by Sam Bahour, Rana Barakat, Mary Nazzal-Batayneh, Oroub el-Abed, Nadia Hijab, Victor Kashkoush, Anis Kassim, Osamah Khalil, Mouin Rabbani (April 2011)
- **Debating Palestine: Representation, Resistance, and Liberation**
by Rabab Abdulhadi (April 2012)
- **BDS: Discussing Difficult Issues in a Fast-Growing Movement**
by Omar Barghouti (June 2016)

- **Dis-participation as a Palestinian Strategy?**
by Haidar Eid (December 2013)
- **From Jenin to Gaza to Nablus: Palestinian Resistance Under Attack**
with Ibrahim Fraihat and Mariam Barghouti (August 2022). *This episode of Rethinking Palestine is available in English only.*

Expanding the Palestinian Imaginary

Facing a constant process of erasure, where both their past and futures are denied, Palestinians find themselves struggling to imagine beyond the colonial present. The Zionist settler colonial project seeks to control Palestinian temporal and spatial boundaries in order to limit possibilities for liberation. Moments of rupture, where physical borders are broken through, likewise contribute to the breaking of psychological barriers for colonized peoples. The below works seek to expand beyond the colonial limitations placed on Palestinian futures and create space for envisioning a world radically different from the present.

- **Radical Futures: When Palestinians Imagine**
by Yara Hawari (March 2020)
- **Reframing Palestinian Return**
by Ahmad Barclay, Dena Qaddumi (November 2012)
- **Political Agency for Palestinian Return**
by Ahmad Barclay, Randa Farah, Jamil Hilal, Ingrid Jaradat Gassner, Jaber Suleiman, Dena Qaddumi (July 2013)
- **Maps, Technology, and Decolonial Spatial Practices in Palestine**
by Zena Agha (January 2020)

- **Mapping Palestine: Decolonizing Spatial Practices**
  with Zena Agha and Ahmad Barclay (January 2020). *This video is available in English only.*

Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network, is an independent, non-profit organization. Al-Shabaka convenes a multidisciplinary, global network of Palestinian analysts to produce critical policy analysis and collectively imagine a new policymaking paradigm for Palestine and Palestinians worldwide.

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