



Israel in the ‘Occupied Territory’, Memory, and the Conundrum of ‘Sovereign Violence’ in Gaza

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Abstract

The last two decades of the 20th century saw the formation and proliferation of fundamentalist and extremist groupings within the Middle East such as the cases with both Hamas and Hezbollah respectively. Even though these movements are considered to differ greatly especially along Shia and Sunni ideological lines, I demonstrate in this paper that despite their significant differences, the Palestine-Israeli conflict has not only deepened and led to their respective formations but has largely assisted in shaping and perpetuating their seemingly common ideologies especially, anti-Zionism, and the resultant resistances thereafter. To this end, I make a brief attempt in this paper to articulate and discuss the Israeli invasion and the intifada, and their respective links to the formation of resistance. A case study of the Israeli occupation and idea of settler-colonialism will be highlighted towards comparing and contrasting the necropolitical strategies employed to withhold the ‘bodies’ of the colonized with the focal point being on the different conceptions of the notions of sovereignty and alternative sources of power evident in both Israel and Palestine today. The paper shows why Gazans are troubled with the catastrophic atrocities committed against them in the face of the silence from many Western countries. Finally, I also underscored the role played by the Israeli in fostering and perpetuating sovereign violence by aiding us understand such themes as necro politics, the politics of memory, elimination and “immigration policing seen as a hol(e)y war”, as well as the colonial management of death. The paper concludes that, by the very atrocious act of freezing, unlawful detentions, and even killing Palestinians, Israel’s necropower creates new variations of death that attempt to cancel Palestinians’ agency over their death and its rites, but at the same time, it produces new Palestinian agency over the dead bodies.

Keywords: *Sovereign Violence; Resistance; Hamas; Gaza; Israel; Palestine; Memory; Colonial Management; Alternative Sovereignties*

Introduction

From the moment of his inauguration as the Defense Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon immediately started making advance plans in what was generally referred to as the ‘huge scheme’ and aspiration to curtail the rise of any intransigents around Israeli borders which in effect, was to be seen as a crushing

blow to facilities owned by their ‘enemies’ located around both Lebanon and Palestine, in a deliberate ploy to destabilize those refugees from Palestine origins who were earlier sent there. The main idea here is to ensure the PLO foothold and or structure is destroyed without recovery so that, its very idea of a national liberation is crushed once and for all. The effect of such a crushing move, Avi Shlaim, the Israeli Historian observes, will definitely ensure “*The eventual dismantling of the PLO would shatter the pillar of their devotion and smooth the path of assimilation of their lands into Israel*” (Shlaim 2001:396).

As he demonstrates, the eventual annihilation of the PLO by the Israelis could not have come at a more opportune time since the PLO was also gaining momentum with a series of diplomatic maneuvers as many nations began seeing them as the legitimate representatives of the ‘colonized’ Palestine populace¹.

Besides, the future nation-state of Israel (as was evidently forecasted by Sharon and his cronies) had a singular objective; to ensure the successful establishment of a new political order by using their Christian allies as pawns in this entire enterprise². The resultant end-product, as envisioned by Sharon et al. is that the warming of relations with their Christian counterparts would automatically bring them to the negotiation table to strike a deal to grant Israel such an opportunity of a lifetime to rid its borders off its perceived enemies. Finally, Sharon also hoped that the dispersed population now would eventually be able to escape to nearby Jordan which will inure to Israel’s benefit by ridding the Zionist nation of this cancerous “*Palestinian problem*” once and for all (ibid).

The Israeli invasion and occupation of present-day nation state of Lebanon in the year 1982 (which was codenamed, *Operation Peace for Galilee*) is usually termed the brutal phase of Israeli aggression. Arguably, it started initially as an execution that was meant to clear the entire Galilee strip of perceived terrorists’ threats and guerilla moves against Israeli interests along the Northern Israeli border with Lebanon and to also pay a hefty retaliatory attack against those seen to have orchestrated the assassination attempt³ on the life of Israeli ambassador to the UK⁴, Shlomo Argov. Interestingly, all these came as a result of the fact that, there had not been any single reported case of Palestinian violence against Israeli for well over a year preceding the assassination attempt⁵. As such, Israel used this as a golden opportunity to just rid the borders of the Palestine conundrum once and for all. The resultant operation of Galilee came with it a huge casualty of about an underreported number of 40,000 Palestinian deaths, hundreds of thousands reported seriously incurring various degrees of sustained injuries with nearly half a million rendered homeless⁶ (Thomas 1999). The target of this particular operation as indicated above, was executed nicely by Israel as the *Peace for Galilee* to ensure the destruction of the PLO which was also the government representing the aspirations of the Palestinians, at large (in exile). The representative formal body itself was relocated in the mid 1970’s by its de facto leader at the time, Yasser Arafat after the Jordanian King, Hussein, cleared the entire country of the remnants of the PLO. This was also necessitated because Hussein’s government feared reprisal attacks and felt threatened by the PLO presence on his land⁷. What follows next was a complete annihilation of the PLO and with it, the idea of a liberation and aspirations for an independent nation-state was gone.

Sovereign Violence and the Question of Palestine

¹ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall-Israel and the Arab World*, 2001

² Ibid.

³ Jewish Virtual Library Archive Project see more at: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/shlomo-argov#google_vignette.

⁴ The Israeli Ambassador to the UK, Argov was reportedly shot in an assassination attempt on the 3rd of June 1982.

⁵ It should be noted that the attempt was not orchestrated by PLO. In fact, another reported liberation body claimed responsibility for the said act but, they were all boxed together and collectively called as one and as Begin exalted later, they are all one and same no matter what, we make no distinctions between all of them. They are all the same (see Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York, Norton & Company, 2001), 222).

⁶ Baylis Thomas, *How Israel Was Won: A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Boston, MA: Lexington Books, 1999). See more at: International Socialist Review, the 1982 Invasion of Lebanon <https://isreview.org/issues/50/Lebanon1982/>

⁷ Naseer Aruri "The PLO and the Jordan Option," Middle East Report 131 (March/ April 1985).

Those who are always and constantly reduced to ‘sovereign violence—fundamentally, with regards to the mundane occurrence and the assertion’ as Jeffrey Sacks laments in his article ‘*Palestine and Sovereign Violence*’, is worth mentioning in this case that, they are none but a considerable number of the broad population of the native Palestinians domiciled in the country, whether, when possible, all of their aspirations for the future and historical antecedents— are situated within the lifelessness of their middle age creed and sense of belief, repudiation, misplacements and deprivation.⁸ As Sacks argued earlier, what is clearly happening today in Gaza is without doubt a question of sovereignty. The Gaza-Israeli conflict could, should and ought to be seen as an exercise within the tenets of sovereignty and no mincing of words to overly emphasize and drive home the point about sovereignty that, indeed, it is purely a political venture which comes along with it a kind of instrumentalized mechanisms purposefully deployed for the ‘conception and uneven transmission of labels and tags regarding their demise⁹.’ Advancing this claim further, Sacks makes an interesting revelation regarding the entire Israeli system when he questioned the rationale and aim which Israel uses as a cover-up for such operations against the people of Gaza to be specific and Palestine in general. Sacks writes that;

As Israel’s devastating attack on Gaza in November 2012 continued, the country’s interior minister Eli Yishai explained of “Operation Pillar of Defense” that “the goal of the operation is to send Gaza back to the Middle Ages. Only then will Israel be calm for forty years.” Haaretz further reported, on the fourth day of the attack, and pointing to its proliferation, that “Officials in Gaza said forty-three Palestinians, nearly half of them civilians—including eight children—had been killed since Israel began its strikes.” “Operation Pillar of Defense,” and the destruction of life and lives it imparts, point to a sovereign violence imposed upon this Palestinian site. **This violence is not solely military, juridical, economic, and political—it is each of these**, and if however differently—but it is equally interpretive and historiographical, and it imparts itself with a singular lexicographical force. Why, I wish to ask, **does this event of violence, and this imparting of death and murder—and it is an event that points to and repeats others, in 1948, and earlier and later—compel a particular temporal designation? What legacies does the term “the Middle Ages” receive and repeat? What is at stake in “sending” Gaza “back” to another time—and to “the Middle Ages”?**¹⁰

Evidently, an easy reading of the above aptly noted lines by Sacks presupposes what is already known to us that, history is always replete with victors and vanquished and the connotations this comes along with is that, by invoking such terms as Middle Ages, Israel, so clearly, is repeatedly outlining its intent of occupation, domination, colonial project, colonizing hence, the sovereign violence.

In point of fact, just as Sa’ed Atshan and Katarina Galor also demonstrate in *The Moral Triangle* that, numerous people across the globe continue to grapple with the bigger issue of how the current impasse between ‘the two warring parties are carried over unto the global platform; in how many non-Muslim majority nations of Europe and the Western world grapple with their minority Muslim communities; how we ought to draw the thin red lines between anti-Semitism and Zionism and the kind of symbiotic relationship that exists between them; and how nations generally deemed and tagged with such liberal mindsets ought to come to terms with redefining the boundaries of freedoms related to speech and of association and most crucially, within the framework of the now-increasingly vigorous white supremacist groupings and right-wing populist parties in their own settings’. Surprisingly, many governments across the globe pay lip services or deaf ears to the most glaring of the issues as raised above by Atshan and Galor that, Israel has been given the pass and green light to continue with its destruction of Palestine as and when it desires.

They posit in their investigation situated in Berlin, of the issue by examining the triad connection among Israelites, Palestinians, and Germans. Their study set out with the query of German accountability

⁸ Jeffrey Sacks, *Palestine and Sovereign Violence*, p. 369

⁹ *Ibid.* p.368

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.368

and sense of obligation regarding the two conflicting nations under study and as they reveal, the Germans are as culpable as the Israelis are, since some do not actually see anything wrong with happenings in Palestine today. In arguing their thesis further, they lamented that, even though their provisional consideration is situated based on the current happenings, they are also consciously aware and do acknowledge that major episodes of yesteryears however uncomfortable those may be, such as those of the Nakba and Holocaust still linger in public discourses. Again, they posited in no uncertain terms that, notwithstanding the contention that their concentration and focus of study is situated in Berlin, the German Capital, they are also clearly aware and recognize their investigations have considerable connections not just for the Germans to be specific but, in part or as a whole, includes those of Israel and Palestine as well.”¹¹

Similarly, in a separate study by Suhad Daher Nashif published in 2021 entitled; *Colonial Management of Death: To be or not to be dead in Palestine*, the writer meticulously traces how the Israeli occupation also makes great use of the bodies of Palestinians to wreak havoc among families and prevents the collective Palestine actions to rally against them. Interestingly, as Nashif outlines later, the Palestinians conversely use those same bodies to rally around and build solidarity for their own ‘national collectivism.’ Nashif convincingly writes of how Israeli forces adopt what Mbembe defines as necropolitical to manage the Palestinian territory, bodies and families. The resultant resistance here and subsequent responses by the ‘colonized’ to the occupation in what Sacks terms as stemming from ‘sovereign violence’ is the antagonisms that we have come to note currently brewing with the two warring parties.

For Nashif therefore, as he tellingly articulates the growing concern that “necropolitics includes the colonizer’s management of the colonized grief and bereavement, and the decisions about how, when, where and with whom the colonized should die. That is, it is the power to manage the structure and process of ‘letting die’ and being dead”¹². Sadly, in an attempt to exert more brutality and violence and to silence the people of Palestine literally ‘living yet dead’, countless numbers of their deceased family members are being held to ransom by the Israeli forces either in refrigerators or police mortuaries. All these bodies, it must be overly emphasized, are the tolls killed by Israeli forces to assert their sovereign will and power and authority to extend total control over the colonized population of Palestine hence, the withholding of their bodies even in deaths. The return of this age-old practice especially since 2014, as Nashif demonstrates, is a grand strategy to prevent funeral services from being held for these fallen heroes no matter what.

The Israeli aim, Nashif writes, is “to prevent funerals from turning into protests that celebrate martyrdom and praise attacks against Israel. The fact that these decisions were made at a high level of the Israeli government indicates the governmentality of the colonial management of death, burial, and bereavement of the colonized. Governmentality here refers to Foucault’s concept of linking the governor to the biopolitical control of populations (Foucault, 1991).”¹³ Clearly, Nashif in privileging Foucault here tells us of the grave nature and deliberate intent by the Israeli forces to control the targeted population even in death.

In another captivating study by Feldman (2019) entitled the *Elimination Politics: Punishment and Imprisonment in Palestine*, we see same remnants and themes of sovereign violence, of imperial practices and of wiping out the entire natives to establish a political project: sovereignty. Feldman aptly engages with Wolfe’s disposition and writes that,

“Patrick Wolfe (2006: 388) has famously argued that the “elimination of the native” is a central aim of settler colonialism, and he further underscores that colonial invasion is a “structure rather than

¹¹ Atshan & Galor, *The Moral Triangle: Germans, Israelis, Palestinians*, Introduction, p1.

¹² Nashif, *Colonial Management of Death; To be or not to be dead in Palestine*, p. 945

¹³ Ibid. p.947

an event.” As he explains, elimination entails the dissolution of native societies and their replacement by a new colonial society. This replacement is sometimes accomplished through genocide, but it also occurs through a range of other techniques that destroy communities. Banishment (as described in the petition) and imprisonment have been key tactics for separating people from their homes and communities. In the case of colonial rule and anticolonial rebellion, of occupation and resistance to it, the prison and the imprisoned subject are at the center of a contest within politics. The struggle over elimination in Palestine has been ongoing for one hundred years. It has continued through multiple changes in governing and across territorial reconfigurations. The different tactics deployed against Palestinians over these decades are a product both of these changes and of the continuing Palestinian refusal to acquiesce to their elimination.’’¹⁴

As seen above already, intermittent violence and brutalities meted out to the Palestinians have taken numerous forms, theoretically and practically. The fact that they have survived all these atrocities directed against them, is enough prove that they have ‘endured’ it all and the changing narratives and strategies by the Israel simply means the project to completely eliminate their very existence is failing. But the fact still remains that, they have been seriously harmed and consciously targeted, and the brutality compelled by the ‘occupied sovereign state of Israel’ for Gazans to kowtow to what the Israeli government wants: an annihilation or the destruction of Hamas once and for all. Feldman continues to invite readers to the most thought-provoking when the author writes that;

“A double move has been central to this project — an attempt to deny or destroy Palestinian political community, while simultaneously identifying Palestinians as political actors, specifically as bad actors. This double move seeks to undermine Palestinian political capacity by disrupting connection and organizing, while still deploying the weapon of categorizing Palestinians, individually and collectively, as enemies — under labels such as insurgents, terrorists, and enemy combatants. Such efforts to simultaneously destroy and weaponize the political have not, though, succeeded in ending resistance to the settler-colonial project in Palestine.’’¹⁵

We see similar lines and sentiments been echoed by numerous writers about the glaring plight of those subjected to these inhumane practices under state as a result of a very systematic attempt in sovereign violence eventually culminating into necropolitical deaths. For an in-depth on such theoretical frameworks centering on the plights of many displaced population by the ‘sovereign’ who wields the ultimate authority or greater will in making that singular decision as to the state of exceptionality, on such states deemed as those requiring emergency measures and who lives/dies and how those deliberate strategies are employed on those populations deemed as ‘killable’ as such must be colonized, subjugated, oppressed or exterminated at all cost, (see more on these recurring themes and claims in; Jamie Allinson’s ‘*The Necropolitics of Drones*’; “‘*Letting die*’ by design: *Asylum seekers’ lived experience of postcolonial necropolitics*’ by Brenda K. Wilson, Alexis Burnstan, Cristina Calderon, and, Thomas J. Csordas; Robin Gabriel’s ‘*Coloniality and Necropolitics in the Age of COVID-19: The Question of Palestine*’; ‘*The Problem with Violence: Exceptionality and Sovereignty in the New World*’ by Thomas Deborah A.; as well as in that compelling discourse by J. Brent Crosson’s exposition on ‘*Immigration Policing as Holy War: Rings of Connection, Deadly Gaps, and State Loopholes in the Struggle for Asylum.*’)

Resistance & Antizionism

Hamas, as we have now come to know, is a Liberation movement or body, which was established right from the onslaught of the 1st Intifada which occurred in December of 1987. It must be aptly noted here that, they had earlier issued a communique which was the first of its kind ever by and from them showing glowing tributes to the kind of resistance employed, offering their support for the fighters, and

¹⁴ Ilana Feldman, *Elimination Politics: Punishment and Imprisonment in Palestine*, pp 562-563.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.564

going a step ahead to heavily chastise and rebuke the Zionists and their occupied settlements (Hroub 2000:36,265). The chosen identity of the new body was to be known and called Hamas, which stands for a kind of zeal in the Arabic language, and which connotes an element of a resistant movement.

Even though the charter stipulates that it was initially formed around early 1987, we need to go back in time over the last couple of years preceding the formal founding in order to capture vividly its overall emergence and rapid development because, the very essence of the movement itself initially came out of the Muslim Brotherhood as a necessity to represent its newly promulgated paramilitary wing. The mother umbrella body itself is the brotherhood found in Egypt.¹⁶”

To all intents and purposes, Hasan Al-Banna is usually credited as the founding father of the movement in 1928 “as a movement for education and reform of ‘heart and mind’¹⁷. Soon after its outdoorings however, it metamorphosed into something else and began to dabble in active political engagements and wanted a complete Islamic overhaul of the political structures and hierarchy in Egypt based on reforms¹⁸. From this development in the mid-1940s, they started active political campaigns and went on to commission their 1st -- ever Palestinian Branch which attracted a larger following sympathetic to their cause so much so that, “by the turn of the year in 1947, they had officially registered members numbering over 10, 000.00 who cut-across the different societal levels from the rich elite-ruling class, through the intelligentsia, to the lower class with well over around 38 newly inaugurated branches to their fold.¹⁹” (ibid). While Amal in the case of Hezbollah is a home-grown organization, the brotherhood in the case of Hamas is of Egyptian origin. Nonetheless, this could be considered as a point of similarity as they are both offshoot of a supposedly mother organization(s) and have unbreakable leanings with Iran and Egypt respectively.

Ideologies of Hamas and Hezbollah

Interestingly, despite differences in origins and orientations, Hezbollah and Hamas appear to share a common target in terms of their mission: **to resist Israel**. The initial aim, objective, and ideological foundation of both could be found in Hamas’ charter and Hezbollah’s open letter respectively.

Just like many liberation movements at the time such as al Sadr in the case of Hezbollah, for instance, an influential figure who was also responsible for the formation of what we call Hamas today, breaking away from the known PLO was Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. He was originally of Palestine origin, became a very great scholar, teacher, and an Islamic spiritual cleric, and eventually turned into an activist for the Palestinian cause. He engaged in many charity works both in what today we call the Gaza strip and West Bank respectively. Unfortunately, those two strategic locations were confiscated by the occupied Israeli forces in 1967. Thereafter, Yasin formed the Islamic center as a Muslim Brotherhood to help promote and spread the political activities of the Brotherhood in Gaza. Eventually, Hamas emerged as the local branch’s political wing, which emerged strongly after the very 1st intifada²⁰.

As I earlier pointed out, the Intifada could be regarded as the starting point and the last straw that broke the camel’s back with its attendant unintended consequences rightly seen as the major trigger (or motivation) for the emergence of fundamentalist and extremist groupings within the Middle East with both Hamas and Hezbollah, respectively. These movements to all intents and purposes, are considered to differ greatly especially along Shia and Sunni ideological lines but, seem to find commonalities and as events demonstrate, despite their significant differences, this Israeli occupation, sovereign violence and brutalities have not only perpetuated and culminated in the formations of such hardliners as both Hamas

¹⁶ Hroub, K. (2000). in *Hamas: Political Thought & Practice*.

¹⁷ Nusse, A. (1998). as he writes in the *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas*, (1998).

¹⁸ Nusse 1998:12-13

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ The now known popular anti-Israeli uprising and resistance been put by the people of Palestinian.

in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, but has largely assisted in shaping and perpetuating their seemingly common ideologies especially, anti-Zionism, and the resultant resistances thereafter. Besides, they both seem to be using Islamic doctrines, particularly the concept of *ummah*²¹ in their internal ideological formations and actions aimed at Israeli interests whatever the costs may be for them since they are, prior to this, condemned to the condition of the walking corpse in what Mbembe aptly refers to as the “(...) the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. Hence, *to kill or to allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty*, its fundamental attributes. To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power”²².

Indeed, as he demonstrates clearly, the above lines exemplify the lives of the Palestinians and I submit that, their conceptualizations of the notions of sovereignty and alternative sources of power evident in both Israel and Palestine is only but a mirage. Their lives typify the role played by Israel in fostering violence, in perpetuating sovereign violence by aiding us understand such themes as *necro politics, the politics of memory, elimination and ‘immigration policing seen as a hol(e)y’*, as well as the *colonial management of death*. Mbembe in engaging with Michel Foucault in his article convincingly argues regarding the case of displaced and dispossessed populations as in the case of Palestine by posing the ultimate questions that;

Is the notion of biopower sufficient to account for the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective? War, after all, is as much a means of achieving sovereignty as a way of exercising the right to kill. Imagining politics as a form of war, we must ask: What place is given to life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)? How are they inscribed in the order of power?²³

Engrossed by an attempt to offer genuine answers to the same questions posed above, Mbembe once again, engages with both Agamben and Hannah Arendt when he intimates that, “...the concept of the state of exception has been often discussed in relation to Nazism, totalitarianism, and the concentration/extermination camps. The death camps in particular have been interpreted variously as the central metaphor for sovereign and destructive violence and as the ultimate sign of the absolute power of the negative”²⁴.

Clearly, in the Palestinian case, Israel as a sovereign state uses terror to coerce and subject the people of Gaza into bare life; into the state of exception; with their lives viewed in the typical *homo sacer* sense as killable, disposable and could be exterminated with their bodies also regulated and denied befitting burials as earlier seen. By allocating more powers to the sovereign is to grant the sovereign the right to violations of its subjects. Since the sovereign has absolutely no regard whatsoever, there is no end in sight for limits to their political privileges. The kind of violence unleashed on the killable population eventually becomes the norm and this, we are witnesses to in the case of Israeli occupied lands of Palestinian people.

Again, For Bataille, as quoted by Mbembe, his idea and understanding of sovereignty defies one single connotation and claims therefore that it possesses various forms and types. But ultimately, as Mbembe demonstrates regarding Bataille’s treatises as the case may be that “(...) the indignation to agree or come to terms with the humbling reality especially of death that they assume would get unconditional

²¹ The Islamic doctrine that Muslims are one community or nation regardless of location, language, race, and so on.

²² J. A. Mbembe & Libby Meintjes, *Necropolitics*, Public Culture, Volume 15, Number 1, Winter 2003, pp. 11-40 (Article) Published by Duke University Press

²³ *Necropolitics*, p.12

²⁴ *Ibid.*

allegiance from their subjects.’’²⁵. This resultant unconditional potentate and suzerain sphere, Mbembe writes of Bataille as he argues, which I think if you permit me a little latitude to borrow from, the entire passage deserves quoting, “is the world in which the limit of death is done away with. Death is present in it, its presence defines that world of violence, but while death is present it is always there only to be negated, never for anything but that. The sovereign,” he concludes, “is he who is, as if death were not... He has no more regard for the limits of identity than he does for limits of death, or rather these limits are the same; he is the transgression of all such limits.²⁶” as he continues to advance further, “Since the natural domain of prohibitions includes death, among others (e.g., sexuality, filth, excrement), sovereignty requires “the strength to violate the prohibition against killing, although it’s true this will be under the conditions that customs define.” And contrary to subordination that is always rooted in necessity and the alleged need to avoid death, sovereignty definitely calls for the risk of death’’²⁷.

Palestinian notion of sovereignty, therefore, defers in so many respects. In one breath, ordinary people in and around Gaza have previously not welcomed the idea that Hamas uses same violence in reprisal attacks against Israel and are also very uncomfortable with being under Israeli occupation. The resulting vacuum that is created in Palestine is deeply at the core of the mandate of Hamas who want to be seen as the legitimate representatives of the people who stand for their collective liberation and leading the charge for seeking the aspiration of a future two state. Because Israeli is not one viewed as a legitimate source of sovereign power by the broad masses of the Gazan population, Hamas, to them, automatically comes in handy here to fill such power/sovereign gaps by legitimating power and authority to themselves and are constantly seeking validation, allegiance, and recognition. As a result, the ordinary people in Palestine are neither free from the ‘terror’ but welcoming state of Hamas nor are they save from the pangs of occupation, ‘immigration policing’ and sovereign violence by the Israelis.

Consequently, they are left with no better option but to choose from the lesser of the two evil and in this circumstance, they chose from one of their own; Hamas, since their lives are already classified as bare life in the Agamben terms as those of the state of exception. In sum, Mbembe writes that, he sees such colonies like those of Palestine as mere “zones in which war and disorder, internal and external figures of the political, stand side by side or alternate with each other. As such, the colonies are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of “civilization.” That colonies might be ruled over in absolute lawlessness stems from the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native’’²⁸. From the viewpoints by those occupiers, colonizers like Israel who are authoritatively seen as the victors and conquerors of the bare life of the people of Gaza who live in perpetual state of exception under constant Israeli surveillance, this normalized savagery for us, as Mbembe lays out is that, this ‘*barbarian encounters are just another type or kind of animality, an appallingly gruesome, extraneous living that is preposterously above ludicrous thinking*’²⁹.

By situating the examples even better for clarity, and to show how this relation has now culminated into a state of enmity between the two unequal warring states, he invokes on the Foucauldian school of thought to advance this argument further regarding events as they pertain within the political economy of biopower. Foucault, he attributed, posits unequivocally and lays claim to “*the sovereign right to kill (droit de glaive) and the mechanisms of biopower are inscribed in the way all modern states function; indeed, they can be seen as constitutive elements of state power in modernity. According to Foucault, the Nazi state was the most complete example of a state exercising the right to kill. This state, he claims, made the management, protection, and cultivation of life coextensive with the sovereign right*

²⁵ Ibid. p.16

²⁶ Necropolitics, p16.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. p.24

²⁹ Ibid.

to kill³⁰. Isn't it also ironic that, Israel uses this same tactic to subject the population by exercising this sovereign right to kill??

Conclusion

In the *Colonial Management of death, to be or not to be dead in Palestine*, Nashif writes of Mbembe that, "Colonial powers throughout history have managed the lives of the living by managing the fate of the dead and imposing new governmental rules on funerals and burials. Israel is one of the modern colonial powers that manages Palestinian deaths, and it should be understood as a "concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical" (Mbembe, 2003: 29). The interruption and denial of the right to even have access to their own dead bodies constitutes a kind of colonization in that, the occupier and colonizer in such state parading as the ultimate sovereign tries in no uncertain terms to shape narratives and control funerals, release of the dead bodies and eventual burial of the ones they themselves have even subjected to death, in fact, draws the Palestinians in a form of collective solidarity to fight and resist these tendencies. As such, the thesis is still maintained that the rise of such fundamentalist and or extremist bodies like Hamas could also largely in part be attributed to some of these tactics being employed on them. The more the occupying force of Israel tries to suppress them further, the more they rise up in arms to fiercely resist such overtures. Because their lives are already negated and have been classified as killable, bare, and disposable, the forces and state fail to completely exterminate them because they have a very spectacular way of remaining crucially important. As such, their lives have to or must constantly be negated again and again as espoused by Judith Butler.

As Wolfe (2006), Tamason (1980) and Fassin (2009) have also demonstrated in the exposition by Nashif, if settler colonialist state like Israel aims to eliminate the lives of the broad masses of the native populace, they do not just merely through their deaths alone but also, by eliminating everything associated with their deaths and that, for both the aggressor Israel and the aggrieved Palestine, the issue lies not just in mere dying as a passive event but of the concept of death itself. Such grounds as funeral could provide the perfect basis for political mobilization and collective solidarity which in and of itself again, becomes the bane and Achilles heels of the Israeli forces. As Tamason argues, the funeral itself serves as an amphitheater of a kind, a coliseum or hippodrome where their anguish, torment, torture, misery, sorrow, pain, suffering, agony, affliction, broken heartedness, and distress could be mobilized, exploited, and utilized via the channels of the ritual processions for the dead and turned into political capitals. As such, biopolitics and necropolitics should not be seen, for Fassin, as "*just about the kind of life that is prohibited and the disallowing of life (Fassin, 2009) but also about the kind of death that is prohibited and the disallowing of death. Holding this position enables Israel to negate death by postponing it through withholding dead bodies*"³¹.

Finally, the kind of necropolitics as advanced by both Mbembe and Nashif here is that the act of the Israeli sovereign isn't just about deciding who lives and who dies but, likewise, "(...) structure of the dead body's time-space and about its socio-political and biological death. The months and years of withholding the bodies are 'slow violence' that incorporates the dis/ allowing of biological changes, burial and grief, i.e. dis/allowing the nature and culture of death"³². By the very atrocious act of freezing, unlawful detentions, and even killing Palestinians, he argues, "Israel's necropower creates new variations of death that attempt to cancel Palestinians' agency over their death and its rites, but at the same time, it produces new Palestinian agency over the dead bodies. *The Palestinian use of death, the role played by the dead Palestinian body*, and the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians over the body are all expressions of the necropolitics managed by the colonized Palestinians. That is, necropolitics and the

³⁰ Necropolitics, p.17

³¹ Nashif, p. 958

³² Ibid.

management of death are not only exercised by the controlling power over the oppressed, but also vice versa (Leshem, 2013; Nashif, 2015).³³

To conclude, I argue in this brief piece that, at best, what constitutes the current happenings as the state of hostility and society of enmity between Israel and Palestinians or in this case, people of Gaza in general and the subsequent emergence of Hamas to be specific, could largely be attributed to the aggressive settler-colonial policies by Israel to control every facet of the Palestinian life and their attempt to crush it once and for all. The fact that the Palestinians are still hanging around despite all odds against them is testimony of the fact that, their lives qualify as an exception to the rule of the state of exception. They showed agency and resistance in the face of torture, constant surveillance, massive immigration policing, sovereign violence and denied ownership of even their dead bodies. The fact is that they persist and are still holding on to. In the face of all these by Israel, it has only increased their resolve, tenacity, perseverance, and can-do-spirits to continue to resist such imperial impositions. I will wrap up by invoking what Brenda K. et al ended with in their piece that, “We hope our (...) work can expand these conversations alongside policymakers and practitioners, contributing to the humanization of people who are otherwise dehumanized, and contravening the necropolitical forces depicted in our study.”

But, as J. Brent Crosson writes in his immigration policing article, “(...) Despite their necropolitical power, holes do not create an entirely striated, hierarchical space. Holes are also rings of connection and passageways, highlighting the creativity and agency of asylum seekers in forging dignity under extremely difficult conditions...”³⁴ the fact still remains that, unlike the asylum seekers that Crosson was alluding to above, the sad reality of the Palestinian example is one of limited option, of hopelessness, of grief, of lacking more agency but, one of resistance and dignity as they try to navigate through these catastrophic policies foisted upon them. The inquiry into the people of Gaza and the resultant sovereign violence is a very thorny issue across the globe currently. It goes without saying that, their struggles, I must emphasize, could be catapulted as a resistant struggle for their own liberation, self-determination and aspirations for statehood which have largely been manifested by different forms of brutal violence, colonialism, aggression, denial of memory, occupation, and resistance. The conundrum of this violence brings forth critically engaging issues regarding human rights/freedoms, their legitimate resistance, state accountability, impunity, decolonization and self-determination. They are as real as they are critical to their very existence.

I am forced to conclude with the same words in the beginning that, sovereign violence and the question of Palestine is indeed, a story of the making of resistance and in what Cecil Rhodes writes that, “So little done, so much to do.”.

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³³ Ibid, p.958

³⁴ J. Brent, Crosson, (2023), *Immigration Policing as Holey War: Rings of Connection, Deadly Gaps, and State Loopholes in the Struggle for Asylum*, p. 31. *Sociol Lens*. 2023; 36:31–43.

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