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Remapping History, Indigenous
Resilience, and an Ongoing Nakba
– A digitalized Case Study from
Occupied Jerusalem

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Patterns are recurring in their very individual own shapes and forms resembling the same core. Resembled also through the various labels and systems of how we try to understand the world, history, politics and the continuities. How we make sense of the world and how everything is in the end related to each other. It just depends on the scope, context and perspective one takes and the way we understand and think about these recurring patterns.

Growing up in a context where we are always reminded to not forget the past and to learn from the past, so that no future human right's atrocities happen, is also a context that has to continuously remap its own history, or at least, have an awareness about it. Having the ability to get to know a glimpse of a different context of reality in this world and being able to get to know how Palestine is understood through the indigenous Palestinians lens was a very enriching and unforgettable experience.

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank the people without whom it would not be possible to write this thesis. You know exactly who you are. For their trust and time to share their painful history and ongoing suffering under the ongoing occupation. As a person who grew up in Germany, and has believed in human rights and equality since childhood, it is important to me to overcome the patriarchal-eurocentric image that results from our previous handling of history and to help the people who have been deprived of the voice and all the means of their own history to be heard aloud.

We are always in the right place, at the right time.

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ABSTRACT

Understanding settler colonialism within a Palestinian narrative and from an indigenous standpoint is guided by the vision that there is more than just one worldview. Applying indigenous standpoint theory in settler colonial contexts, is a method to free the researched individual from conditions of society, power dominations and the restrictions of the established social order and to convey indigenous voices in the face of repressive ideologies and measures of the settler colonial system. In 2023, the elimination of indigenous spaces is also translated to the digital sphere. However, spaces for self-awareness and collective memory challenge Israel's settler colonial rule, and so does the digital space. Attempting to map an ongoing Nakba as narrated through individual efforts, by exploring the resilience of indigenous Palestinian sumud from the standpoint of the people enduring an ongoing Nakba in Occupied Jerusalem. In attempting to discover the truth about what is actually going on, on the ground, and to understand if the use of social media has become a means for Palestinians to digitalize an ongoing Nakba sumud and raise awareness about their own experienced ethnic cleansing in East Jerusalem, this thesis will explore individual content creation through the Instagram account of the Gaith-Sub Laban family (@freenorashome), that was displaced from their home in the Old City of Jerusalem after a legal fight lasting for over 45 years. The understanding and mapping of the context was enhanced by semi-structured interviews and recordings of oral accounts conducted with Palestinians on the street, an NGO (7amleh) and residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Occupied Jerusalem. This thesis was written in an attempt to remap the way in which the context in Palestine is understood, to undo denial of the truth and to highlight a continuity, which reflects daily on the ground.

INTRODUCTION

There is also the hard issue of remapping the way in which these conflicts are understood, especially by the victors, but also by the victims and by the rest of the world, so as to undo this cruel denial. This may be as difficult to achieve as the resolution of the political issues themselves, so deeply embedded is this stubborn denial of the national trauma of the Armenians, the Kurds, and the Palestinians in the national narratives of several of the powerful and successful nation-states of the Middle East. – Rashid Khalidi¹

Wanting to understand the current realities in the world, one has to ask themselves: why are things the way they are? In order for us to understand we have to uncover our own socialization, upbringing, education and socialized worldview. History, as it is known publicly or taught within the education systems tends to be written by the victorious and dominant parties gaining control of the dominant writing of historical events in history. As history tends to always repeat itself again and again, remapping the ways, in which current realities are understood – by ordinary people, by victors and victims of historical atrocities and their descendants – is an essential tool in critically understanding the current state of the world and to then obtain a framework of truth, justice and freedom for all.

The denial to critically understand current realities oftentimes comes from privilege and a position of power of having a privilege to denial. When the question about Palestine is raised, it often comes disguised within a Zionist framework. Historical denialism of the Nakba, as a *stubborn* denial of the national trauma of Palestinians, has been widely publicized and has its lasting implications until today.

The frame, in which the Nakba denial persists, is rooted in the application of a Western/ European lens and understanding of *Antisemitism* and *Orientalism* on the context on the ground. In order to safeguard the Israeli state's perception of its own democracy, as a peace-loving country, that has no choice but to defend itself, the status quo is framed as a biblical, millennium old conflict, that has always been going on, or set in relation to the atrocities of World War II and the genocide committed against the European Jews. The Nakba Denial reflects within the denial of the multiple reports by different human rights organizations attesting apartheid to the realities of the Israeli regime. This denial or refusal to critically engage with attested realities does not give room for an essential reflective moment of current affair, but is in turn used to reaffirm legitimacy and democracy claims. Turning the conversation oftentimes from apartheid

¹ *Time for Reparations: A Global Perspective* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021). P.171

to claims about antisemitism. Through the lens of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, any political discussion about Israeli legitimacy is immediately silenced.

In this worldview, the question “Are you a Zionist?”, is oftentimes interpreted to be a cover question asking about the State of Israel’s right to exist. It’s also a worldview that generally equates questions about legitimacy, to a question of existence and in turn, to the support of genocide.

If one argues that the current grounds for its existence as well as the existing formation of the state may not be legitimate, that is taken to be a genocidal position. So, a political discussion on what constitutes the legitimating grounds for any state in that region is immediately silenced because to ask after the question of legitimacy (without knowing in advance how it will be answered) is taken not as an essential reflective moment for any democratic polity but rather as a dissimulated wish to see a given population annihilated.

Obviously, no thoughtful discussion about legitimacy can take place under such conditions.

Further, given that Zionism has become equivalent to claims of Jewish sovereignty over lands formerly owned and inhabited by Palestinians, a better question might be: what form of polity could be regarded as legitimate for lands that are currently inhabited by Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, and by Palestinians living under occupation, and are no longer inhabited by hundreds of thousands Palestinians who were dispossessed of their lands through a systematic and recurrent pattern of land confiscation that is part of the ongoing project of settler colonialism?²

This circumstance is not holding a space for thoughtful discussions about the legitimacy of any state anywhere, and is oftentimes used as a tool to deflect from historical facts, while disseminating a truth, divergent from the realities on the ground.

Settler colonialism, as a larger conquest movement, grew out of European history and out of a European supremacy mindset, rooted within a discriminatory treatment and understanding of indigenous people by white European powers. Settler colonialism or settler colonial projects, are not a singular historical event but present as a structure, whose essence lays within the monopolization and control of space. They are characterized through an initial settler-colonial invasion, which transforms to an ongoing elimination and erosion of native structures and population. Settler colonialism is never complete, continuously shrinking spaces for the indigenous. Seeing shrinking spaces as a form of elimination, is understanding elimination as a key component in settler colonialism. This elimination of an indigenous native community can come in various forms and may be referred to as ethnic cleansing in certain contexts. To monopolize and control space, land appropriation, demographic control and the narrative

² Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). P.19.

around the politics are crucial for the settler colonial endeavor. It manifests through the displacement of the indigenous native population and a replacement with settlers and in cultural acts of erasure, for instance, through appropriating culture and eliminating natives from the traces of history and memory within the frame of historical denialism. Another crucial element of settler colonialism is maintenance of the colonized space and to make sure the indigenous will not return. This elimination is structurally done through assimilation, the control of knowledge production and history writing, and a narrative of reframing history. In this regard, founding mythologies are often applied to generate legitimacy of the existence of the settler colonial entity.

Settler colonialism has adapted over time and is always evolving, presenting in various different formations in different contexts. The methods of elimination and ethnic cleansing accordingly differ within every context. Still, native elimination is a pattern of repression that persists until today. The way settler colonialism currently presents in Palestine is through an incremental process of gradually reducing physical and social spaces for Palestinians to exist, Palestinian voices to be heard, Palestinian perspectives to be encountered and historical facts and injustices to be acknowledged. Through the Israeli state maintaining power within space, Palestinians are subjected to more and more limitations every day.

The Palestinian example is not to be understood as exceptional but rather as a mirror image of a global system of power imbalance that has been enshrined through European, western and white supremacy in the world. This system is resembling all over the world in different shapes and forms. The historical injustices in Palestine go back to questions about self-determination and unresolved consequences coming from World War I.

A disciplinary communications apparatus exists in the West both for overlooking most of the basic things that might present Israel in a bad light, and for punishing those who try to tell the truth. How many people know the kind of thing suggested by the following incident – namely, the maintenance in Israel of a rigid distinction between privileged Jew and underprivileged Palestinian. – Edward Said³

Native exclusion normalized in discussion about citizenship rights has been widely recorded in academia. Binary divides, settler versus native, civilized vs savage, or in the case of Palestine civilian vs terrorist, are fueled by Western supremacist thought and racist ideologies not acknowledging indigenous perspectives.

³ Edward Said, “Permission to Narrate,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 3 (1984): 27–48, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536688>. P.30

Western and European Colonialism and Imperialism has overlooked indigenous standpoints on various occasions, for example within Eurocentric knowledge production. A Eurocentric worldview accompanied by orientalism determined whose knowledge, opinion and perspective is legitimate, resulting in indigenous standpoints oftentimes perceived as inferior within the dominant ideological frame. Obtaining this dominant frame leads to the elimination of indigenous voices through suppression, silencing and purposeful absence. This absence and the confining of Palestinian voices is reminiscent of the elimination of the Palestinian individual and collective body from space, land and time. It resembles the way Zionist settler colonialism functions on the land and beyond. The complicity of the global community in producing scholarship, spreading narratives, upholding worldviews, and feeding the propaganda machinery led to a historical continuity and ongoing consequences on the ground. Concurrently, it led to the unequal distribution of knowledge around the globe, leaving many individuals who were socialized within the ideological framework of the West without a clue about other realities in the world.

Understanding settler colonialism within a Palestinian narrative and from an indigenous standpoint is guided by the vision that there is more than just one worldview. Applying indigenous standpoint theory in settler colonial contexts, is a method to free the researched individual from conditions of society, power dominations and the restrictions of the established social order and to convey their voices in the face of repressive ideologies of and measures taken by the settler colonial system. Understanding Palestine from an indigenous perspective and standpoint is crucial, because the examination of settler colonialism oftentimes leads to a Zionist centered perspective and narrative that ignores Palestinian voices. Understanding the meaning of elimination of space within the settler colonial frame, means focusing on indigenous voices and perspectives from the indigenous side. Therefore, the settler colonial frame, if used as a method of analysis, must relate to indigeneity and indigenous sovereignty. In this regard, the recognition of rights and returning of native lands are crucial points of discussion, while maintaining the standpoint of a fight for fundamental human rights and self-determination.

Purposely elevating Palestinian indigenous experiences and voices as active makers of Palestinian history, creates an indigenous understanding and reading of settler colonialism. It claims a space for Palestinian voices and an understanding of Palestinian endurance, resistance and liberation, self-determination, national sovereignty which in turn challenges settler colonial frameworks.

In 2023, the elimination of indigenous spaces is also translated to the digital sphere for example through the digital divide and repressive digital mechanisms such as monitoring or shadow-banning. However, spaces for self-awareness and collective memory pose a challenge to Israel's settler colonial rule, and so does the digital space.⁴

In 2023 the digital world seemingly intertwines with on the ground realities. In order for someone who is not free to move or, in any way made immobile by outer circumstances, digital ethnography presents a key tool to understanding behavior related to and within digital contexts. Social media as a space for activism has proved to be an interesting scope of research in the Palestinian Case. As the digital space is rapidly evolving, there is also no sole solution on how to conduct digital ethnography – It is an ever changing and new field of research and study.⁵

Examining selected posts and the way Palestinians present their resistance to an ongoing Nakba, in and beyond the digital space, is an attempt to remap history by gaining an understanding for the indigenous standpoint and the perspectives of a group subjected to an ongoing colonial reality. In light of the silencing and censoring of Palestinian voices on the ground and in the digital realm, it is important to let the people narrate their own accounts. I want to explore how digital ethnography and standpoint theory applied to the digital sphere and offline spaces, may present a bottom-up approach and valid lens in understanding quite literally the point of “where someone is coming from”. Despite repressive measures, Palestinians in Occupied Jerusalem draw attention to the realities of their lives, breaking narrative barriers imposed on them, to show a glimpse of their realities facing an ongoing Nakba, reaching out to people through the digital space. In their form as individual citizen journalists, digital storytellers, and political activists, they show a form of fluid anti-colonial resistance. This thesis is interested in exploring

⁴ 7amleh, “The Attacks on Palestinian Digital Rights Progress Report, May 6-19, 2021,” n.d.; 7amleh, “Hashtag Palestine 2022: 7amleh Restored a Third of the Deleted Palestinian Content from Social Media Platforms,” accessed August 27, 2023, <https://7amleh.org/2023/02/02/hashtag-palestine-1119-palestinian-digital-rights-violations-during-the-year-2022>; Kristen Alff, “Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession,” *The Conversation*, June 14, 2021, <http://theconversation.com/property-disputes-in-israel-come-with-a-complicated-back-story-and-tend-to-end-with-palestinian-dispossession-161250>; Edward W. Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims,” *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979): 7–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466405>; Rana Barakat, “Writing/Righting Palestine Studies: Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Sovereignty and Resisting the Ghost(s) of History,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 349–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1300048>; Fayez Sayegh, “Zionist Colonialism in Palestine (1965),” *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 2012): 206–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648833>; Haim Yacobi and Mansour Nasasra, eds., *Routledge Handbook on Middle East Cities* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020)P.109-110; Rosemary Sayigh, “Silenced Suffering,” *Borderlands* 14, no. 1 (May 1, 2015), <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&issn=14470810&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA458263301&sid=googleScholar&linkaccess=abs> P.8; *Time for Reparations* P.172; Dennis Foley, “Indigenous Epistemology and Indigenous Standpoint Theory,” *Social Alternatives*, Summer 2003.

⁵ Alexandra Georgakopoulou and Tereza Spilioti, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication*, First published in paperback, Routledge Handbooks in Applied Linguistics (London New York: Routledge, 2020). P. 55-59.

and mapping an ongoing Nakba as narrated through individual efforts, by exploring the resilience of indigenous Palestinian sumud from the standpoint of the people enduring an ongoing Nakba in Occupied Jerusalem. To discover the truth about what is actually going on, on the ground and to understand if the use of social media has become a means for Palestinians to digitalize an ongoing Nakba sumud and raise awareness about their own experienced ethnic cleansing in East Jerusalem. In this regard, this thesis will explore individual content creation through the Instagram account of the Gaith-Sub Laban family (@freenorashome), that was displaced from their home in the Old City of Jerusalem after a legal fight lasting for over 45 years. The understanding and mapping of the context was enhanced by semi-structured interviews and recordings of oral accounts conducted with Palestinians on the street, an NGO (7amleh) and residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Occupied Jerusalem. This thesis was written in an attempt to remap the way in which the context in Palestine is understood, to undo denial of the truth and to highlight a continuity, which reflects daily on the ground.

Mapping a History of Displacement

To understand the history of ethnic cleansing and the erasure of Palestinians, it is essential to revisit the broader geopolitical, economic, social, and historical context of the 19th century in Europe and the Ottoman Empire and to understand the emergence of Zionism as a Jewish nationalist ideology in Europe within this context, to highlight the correlation between the Zionist narrative of erasure and the expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine, which is ongoing until today.

For centuries, Palestine has occupied a significant position in European imagination and geopolitical aspirations. In a time of emerging European nationalism, antisemitism, and colonialism, Jews in Europe faced political expulsions, massacres, and antisemitic sentiments for centuries. In this setting, a specific form of contemporary political Zionism emerged as a Jewish nationalist movement that advocated for establishing a Jewish nation-state in historic Palestine. Leading to the first Jewish Zionist settlement movement's emerging in 1882. Working alongside political and military means the Zionist movement, and later, Israel created a legal system to acquire property and lands from indigenous Palestinians.⁶

In the 19th century and 20th century, Palestine, under Ottoman rule, experienced a period of significant change and development. The Ottoman Tanzimat reforms, brought about under European influence, encouraged capitalism and contributed to growth in cities like Jerusalem and Jaffa, making them thriving commercial centers. During this time, the region exported products such as grains, cotton, soap, and religious gifts while importing textiles and goods from India and the Netherlands. It was a time of transition as the Palestinian society embraced globalization, and Palestinian cities were adept at keeping up with global trends through trade. European influence in the region grew through railway construction, which became a significant tool of imperialist political and economic expansionism and penetration of the region. A notable milestone was the construction of the Jerusalem train station in 1900. The transport infrastructure in Palestine improved, linking Jerusalem with other cities such as Jaffa, Haifa, Damascus, Gaza, and Cairo. Jaffa emerged as a productive industrial city and vital port until Haifa eventually overtook it in importance due to the arrival of the Hejaz railway,

⁶ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine" (Bethlehem, West Bank Palestine, 2005); Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012)P. 18,25-26; Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 3 (1984): 27–48, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536688> P.31-32; Edward W. Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979): 7–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466405>. Beshara B. Doumani, "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (1992): 5–28, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2537216>.P.6-9.

extending from Damascus to Medina in Saudi Arabia, passing through Haifa. Investments flowed across Palestine, with merchants from Nablus, Hebron, Jerusalem, and Gaza contributing to economic expansion.⁷

In Ottoman times, private land ownership was rather uncommon, most lands remained state-owned. However, during the Tanzimat era, the *Ottoman Land Code* (OLC) of 1858 established five distinct categories of land holdings for the registration of property rights and new taxation procedures, selling the right to use property land to Levantine peasants or companies, while also recognizing Palestinians as owners of various types of properties.⁸

At the end of the 19th century, less than 5% of the total population of Palestine was Jewish. When in 1897, the First Zionist Congress called for collective land purchases in Palestine. Zionists envisioned to build a state for the Jewish people, using biblical narratives in justifying the appropriation of Palestinian lands. Often associated with the Zionist movement is the portrayal of Palestine as empty or under the control of absentee landlords, disregarding the presence of the indigenous population.⁹

From the onset of Zionist settlement endeavors in Palestine, the process of acquiring land faced challenges, including the multiple ownership claims and the opposition of Ottoman authorities to sell land to Zionists for settlement purposes.¹⁰ To counteract the limitations on the ground, several key elements contributed to the Zionist land acquisition during this time. One element to mention here is the political lobbying of foreign governments, such as Britain, by the World Zionist Organization, as well as receiving financial support from Jewish communities worldwide, mainly from the US.¹¹ Within Palestine, the early Zionist strategy comprised land, labor, and proactive defense by offense. Zionists utilized various legal strategies to acquire land. One notable avenue was the Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1902 in Vienna. The JNF, aimed to acquire land for Jewish settlement in the most fertile areas of Ottoman Palestine. The JNF purchased land and established settlements and agricultural communities, or Kibbutzim,

⁷ Doumani, "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine" P.6-9; Murat Özyüksel, *The Hejaz Railway and the Ottoman Empire: Modernity, Industrialisation and Ottoman Decline*, Library of Ottoman Studies 39 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014). P.4 ; 33-50.

⁸ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 13. Palestinian Arabs often sought to evade increased taxation and registered property in the name of more prominent landowners, Absentee Landlords, residing outside of Palestine.

⁹ Diana Allan, ed., *Voices of the Nakba: A Living History of Palestine*, trans. Hoda Adra et al. (Pluto Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1z7kgqb> P.1-2; Salman H. Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (32 Store Street Stratford, London, E15 1PU: Palestine Land Society, 2010) P.3-4; Edward W. Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979): 7–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466405>. P. 8-10.

¹⁰ Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession."

¹¹ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 13-14.

adhering to the principle of *Jewish labor only* and the principle of *inalienability*, ensuring that the acquired land could only be owned by Jewish people and could not be sold or leased to non-Jews. This strategy aimed to secure the land's Jewish character in perpetuity.¹² As Zionist settlements grew in 1907, guard units were established to defend existing settlements. These units eventually evolved into the Zionist paramilitary force Haganah in the 1920s, which was instrumental in acquiring lands to expand Zionist-controlled territories and displacing the Palestinian population. The Haganah is just one example of a paramilitary force that after the declaration of the Israeli state merged into the Israeli Army.¹³

The trajectory of Zionist influence took a significant turn during World War I. During World War I, the British planned to secure the geographical region of Palestine due to its geopolitical significance and proximity to the Suez Canal and to exert more political influence in the region. The British favored the Zionist movement as a partner in a strategic colonial order. During World War I, significant funds were raised to aid the struggling Zionist-Jewish community in Palestine and support further colonization efforts. Herbert Samuel, a prominent Zionist British politician, suggested in 1915 that Palestine could be a home for the Jewish people, although he advised against the immediate establishment of a Jewish state.¹⁴ In this context, the secret French-British *Sykes-Picot* deal of 1916, planning on the division of the Ottoman state into French and British colonial entities following World War I., and *Balfour Declaration* of 1917 marked a pivotal moment. The Balfour Declaration expressed British support for a Jewish national state in Palestine, while simultaneously undermining the national rights and aspirations of the Arab majority population.¹⁵

As the Ottoman government diverted resources away from Palestine during World War I, the local population faced impoverishment and famine. Levantine families holding land rights in Palestine, capitalized on this situation, manipulating land records further complicating ownership patterns. Simultaneously, the Zionist movement was able to purchase land from some of these absentee landlords. These private transactions were deeply intertwined with the

¹² Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 13-16.

¹³ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.16.

¹⁴ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, P.13-14; Salman H. Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (32 Store Street Stratford, London, E15 1PU: Palestine Land Society, 2010). P.2-3

¹⁵ Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; Diana Allan, ed., *Voices of the Nakba: A Living History of Palestine*, trans. Hoda Adra et al. (Pluto Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1z7kgqb>. P. 1; *Time for Reparations: A Global Perspective* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021). p. 174; 179; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 15.

broader Zionist goal of land acquisition and the establishment of more Jewish settlements in Palestine. Zionist companies and organizations saw a dramatic increase in land purchases, soaring from 218,000 dunams in 1900 to 557,000 dunams in 1922. This accounted for approximately 2.0-2.8% of Palestine's total land area.¹⁶ The emergence of Zionism, the initial influx of Jewish colonial settlers and the sale of lands by Levantine absentee landlords are key events that contributed to the dismantlement of Palestinian life in Palestine starting in the late 19th century.¹⁷

In 1919, Palestine's demographic composition consisted of indigenous Palestinian Arabs, who accounted for around 90% of the total population.¹⁸ However, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Britain represented by Balfour and a Zionist delegation. The delegation led by Chaim Weizmann presented a map of Palestine to be allocated as a Jewish homeland. After the end of World War I, the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, incorporating the Balfour Declaration, solidified British control over the region. British politicians were not willing to answer to the national demands of the Palestinian people and refused to recognize them as a national people deserving rights. Thus, diminishing Palestinians to a group of sects, while simultaneously treating the Jewish Agency as representatives of a national movement.¹⁹ Subsequently, in the 1920s the first British High Commissioner for Palestine, the Zionist Herbert Samuel, was appointed, which was another factor contributing to tensions between Zionist settlers and Palestinians intensifying. During this period, the Jewish Agency (JA) played a pivotal role, overseeing various Zionist objectives, including land purchases, development, labor, and defense.²⁰

The period from 1920 to 1948 marked a period of increased Zionist settlement and British alignment with the Zionist movement in an interplay of political, economic, and legal factors, which allowed for further developments in the dispossession of Palestinian lands. British officials and courts often disregarded Palestinian ownership claims dating back to the Ottoman empire in favor of Zionist organizations, painting an example of the legal and political vulnerability of the Palestinian population in the face of changing demographics, political

¹⁶ Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 14; 23.

¹⁷ Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; Allan, *Voices of the Nakba*. P.1.

¹⁸ Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (Zed Book, 2012). P. 53.

¹⁹ Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966*. P.4-6.

²⁰ Abu-Sitta P.4-6; Allan, *Voices of the Nakba, P.I; Time for Reparations P.174; 179*; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.16.

interests, and power dynamics at play. Despite being indigenous, Palestinians understood themselves as marginalized in their own land.²¹

The rising tensions contributed to different strikes, protests, demonstrations, and various non-violent forms of resisting the appropriation of lands and the opposition to the Balfour Declaration. Palestinian opposition to imperialist and colonialist influence, notably to the revolt of 1936-1939, targeted the British and increased Zionist presence in Palestine. Civil unrest erupted, and in a matter of days shops and factories were closed, and the port of Jaffa shut down. The British, who wanted to control the situation, subjected Palestinians to violent suppressive and collective punishment measures. The violence was targeting properties as well as people. Looting, killing, massacres, violent expulsions and the burning of land, crops and olive trees, and house demolitions are some of the recorded British tactics to answer to Palestinian resilience. The British aimed at disarming the Palestinian population subjecting them to strip searches, night village raids, not allowing the carrying of weapons. Simultaneously, the British were arming Zionist settlers and cases of active training collaboration between British forces and Zionist paramilitary groups such as the Haganah were recorded. This led to the dismantling of the effectiveness of Palestinian armed anti-colonial struggle, leaving Palestinians without arms to defend themselves admits an increasing hostile environment.²²

In the 1930s, under British influence, plans for partition and resettlement of Arabs were considered. Multiple partition plans were proposed, including the favored option of dividing Palestine into a British Mandate, a Jewish state, and an Arab state.²³ In the aftermath of the Revolt, the British government aimed at decelerating Zionist settlement progression and influence. In this regard, the *Land Transfer Regulations* of 1940 divided Palestine into “A”, “B”, and “C” zones, prohibiting land transfers to Jews in Zones “A” and “B”, except as specified by law or approved by the High Commissioner. Against a heightened hostile

²¹ Alff, “Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession”; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, “Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine.” P. 23; 39-40.

²² BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, “Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine” P.16; Charles W. Anderson, “State Formation from Below and the Great Revolt in Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn 2017 P.30-41; Matthew Hughes, “From Law and Order to Pacification: Britain’s Suppression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Winter 2010. P.15;18-19.

²³ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, “Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine”; “PNGO and PHROC: The Imminent Threat Forcible Transfer of Ghaith-Sub Laban Family, an International Crime and Ongoing Nakba,” June 25, 2023, <https://www.addameer.org/ar/node/5079>; Rosemary Sayigh, “Silenced Suffering,” *Borderlands* 14, no. 1 (May 1, 2015), <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&issn=14470810&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA458263301&sid=googleScholar&linkaccess=abs>. P. 6.

environment for Jews in Europe Jewish and Zionist organizations sought to bring more settlers to Palestine. Through the exploitation of loopholes, the Jewish Agency acquired over 45,000 dunums of land in Zone 'A', between 1940 and 1946, a significant increase from the previous period.²⁴ Concurrently, despite compromising less than one-third of the population and owning less than six percent of the land, Zionist leaders, the Jewish Agency, and the Zionist World Organization gained support and lobbied their cause for a Jewish state internationally, condemning British limits to Jewish immigration in Palestine, for example, in the US. In the years leading up to 1947, Zionist forces started mobilizing, arming settlers and producing their own weapons, equipped and trained by the British Mandate's forces. In the years leading up to the end of the Mandate, Zionist militias, such as the Stern or Irgun, conducted numerous attacks, bombings, and killings targeting the British and Palestinian population and properties.²⁵

In February 1947, after 30 years of Mandate, Britain announced the decision to refer the situation in Palestine to the United Nations. The 1947 U.N. Partition Plan for Palestine decided on the division of the mandate area into two states, a Jewish and an Arab one, not regarding the wish for self-determination of the indigenous group living on the land. The Partition Plan was followed by increased Zionist military action between 1947 and 1949 and led to a range of significant events that unfolded as the Nakba, meaning *catastrophe*. The case of Jaffa serves as a prominent example of the ethnic cleansing and violent depopulation by Zionist forces happening before the establishment of the Israeli State. During Mandate times, Jaffa was a thriving commercial center and the largest city in historic Palestine, with a population of approximately 120,000 residents. Starting in March 1948, the Haganah and other Zionist militias initiated a siege on the city, followed by the city's total occupation and almost complete depopulation by May 14th 1948. The approximately only 4,000 Palestinian inhabitants remaining in the city were subjected to heavy military measures, ghettoization, and dispossession in subsequent years. The ethnic cleansing and depopulation of Jaffa accounts for 15% of the total amount of Palestinian refugees in 1948.²⁶

²⁴ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 25.

²⁵ Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; "PNGO and PHROC"; Sayigh, "Silenced Suffering" P.6; Allan, *Voices of the Nakba P.1; Time for Reparations P.174:180*; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine" P. 22-26; 39-40; 150; Salman H. Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (32 Store Street Stratford, London, E15 1PU: Palestine Land Society, 2010). P. 4-6.

²⁶ Allan, *Voices of the Nakba, P.1*; Bassam SalahAldeen, "Israeli Apartheid – The Legacy of the Ongoing Nakba at 75 - Mwatana for Human Rights," May 15, 2023, <https://mwatana.org/en/nakba/>; *Time for Reparations, P.174; 180*; Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine", P.22; 30; 34-35;

During the events of the 1948 Nakba, Zionist militias used a variety of direct and indirect mechanisms for the depopulation of Palestinian towns and villages. The well recorded use of shelling, lethal chemical and biological agents, mass expulsions, property damages, massacres, such as the Deir Yassin massacre, among other divide and conquer tactics, resulted in a majority of Palestinians fleeing the area before the declaration of the Israeli state.²⁷ The State of Israel was declared on May 14th 1948, establishing the Zionist movement's success, manifesting on the ground through a pattern of decades-long strategic land acquisition, dispossession, and the use of force to ethnically cleanse areas formally inhabited by Palestinians.²⁸ By 1949 Israel seized control in 78% of Mandate Palestine having demolished and depopulated around 531 towns and villages. By this time over 800,000 Palestinians had to flee or were expelled from their homes.²⁹ The forced displacement of Palestinians was a pivotal strategy for the Zionist colonial conquest in asserting territorial claims, enabling Israel to establish itself as a Jewish State. Despite international law's recognition of Palestinian refugees' rights, such as affirmed in the UN General Assembly *Resolution 194* of 1948 that emphasizing refugees' return to their homes, restitution of property, compensation and peaceful coexistence, Palestinian rights remain largely unimplemented. Legal provisions have not been realized, though reaffirmed over a hundred times.³⁰

In the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the Israeli state, military rule, rooted in British Mandatory regulations, and amended British Laws were enacted to continue further confiscation of Palestinian property. This was made possible through the 1950 *Absentee's Property Law*, which declared every Palestinian who was forced outside the territory of Palestine before September 1948, an *absentee*. Internally displaced Palestinians residing in the newly found Israeli state were also subjected to this law making them *present absentees*. Through this law the Israeli state transfers the control over an *absentee's* property to the *Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property*. Thus, appropriating the assets of Palestinian refugees and displaced individuals and legalizing the dispossession of Palestinians. Up until this day,

Salman H. Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (32 Store Street Stratford, London, E15 1PU: Palestine Land Society, 2010) P.5-7; "Palestine's Ongoing Nakba," *Al Majdal Quarterly Magazine of BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights*, Autumn / Winter 2009 2008. P.8-10.

²⁷ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.30, 34-35.

²⁸ Sayigh, "Silenced Suffering". P. 6; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 27-28; 39-40.

²⁹ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 30.

³⁰ "Palestine's Ongoing Nakba" P. 5-6; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 30-40

Palestinians are challenging these laws, while the Supreme Court's interpretation of the law is mainly favoring Israeli interests.³¹ The disregard of Palestinian claims and the hinderance of their rights shows a historical continuity that is ongoing since Mandate times.

Other legal efforts, such as the *1953 Land Acquisition Law*, the *Israeli Land Laws* of the 1960s, or the *2009 Land Laws Reform*, set the legal framework to further forcefully transfer Palestinians from their properties, prohibit their legal compensation, or acceptance of their ownership claims. Historically, this policy of land confiscation, followed by legal administration and incorporation into the state, while disregarding the ownership claims and rights of Palestinians, further enshrines the settler colonial realities on the ground from their onset until today.³² By today, Israel enacted at least 30 laws to justify confiscating Palestinian land, with Israeli-appropriated Palestinian houses standing as a testament to a cycle of disregarding Palestinian rights, leading to a spatial and social fragmentation of Palestinian society and leaving them increasingly without a space.³³

In settler-colonial contexts, settlers aim for the monopoly of control of the land and space. Indigenous spaces are shrinking and vanishing while settlers rearrange, artificially modify, and create spaces. A phenomenon intricately connected to the broader context of ethnic cleansing. In Palestine, the erasure went beyond physical displacement, encompassing a continuous, systematic de-Arabization effort to suppress, deny, and eliminate traces of Palestinian historical presence and existence. The Palestinian existence has been denied and erased through various overt and subtle means, from eradicating Palestinian names to archaeological manipulation, land appropriation, and assimilation to controlling knowledge production, educational institutions, and appropriating cultural elements. Cultural erasure of geographical names, replacing Arabic names with Hebrew one's lead to the erasure of Palestine from maps and history books. Biased knowledge production in the education system in Israel shows the denial of the Nakba, through a depiction of an empty uncultivated land, a peace-loving Israeli people and the negative and violent portrayal of Palestinians as terrorists, in Israeli textbooks.

³¹ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine" P.39-43; P.150; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Denial of Palestinian Use and Access to Land: Summary of Israeli Law and Policies" P.5-7; "East Jerusalem Evictions: The Sub Laban Family's Story," Middle East Eye, accessed July 24, 2023, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/east-jerusalem-evictions-sub-laban-familys-story>; SalahAldeen, "Israeli Apartheid – The Legacy of the Ongoing Nakba at 75 - Mwatana for Human Rights"; "Absentees' Property Law - Adalah," accessed June 16, 2022, <https://www.adalah.org/en/law/view/538>.

³² BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Denial of Palestinian Use and Access to Land: Summary of Israeli Law and Policies." P.7.

³³ *Time for Reparations. P. 174; 180*; Allan, *Voices of the Nakba. P. 1*; Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 22.

Influenced by Orientalism, Zionists justified the appropriation of Palestinian lands using biblical narratives, overshadowing indigenous oral accounts. Palestinian eyewitnesses of the Nakba are often discredited and their reliability undermined, even though they have been disclosing the violent ways of their expulsion for many years and through different channels – interviews, photographs, and oral recollections of events. The denial of the Nakba atrocities has been enshrined in Israeli law. It is accompanied by the denial of the right of return for Palestinian refugees, which serves to keep control over the demographics in historical Palestine. To this day, the Nakba has not been subject to legal prosecution or redress, leaving Palestinians systematically deprived of their entitlement to repatriation. Within a year, historical Palestine was expunged from Western awareness through combined efforts by Western media, European politicians, and Zionist/ Israeli support groups the state of Israel was enabled to displace the existence of Palestine. The Nakba denial and the Zionist historical narrative that persisted since 1948 safeguard Israel’s autonomy and its claims of democracy. The narrative maintains dominance by suppressing the Palestinian perspective in politics, education, publishing, and media, impeding the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and justice. It influences narratives in Western media, education, and academia and fosters the display of anti-Palestinian stances. The limited accessibility of written Arab works in Western countries, the neglect of information, the discrediting of Palestinian sources, and the reinforcement of unequal representation and harmful stereotyping have directly and indirectly contributed to Palestinian suppression and an ongoing Nakba. Israeli politicians such as Golda Meir have questioned Palestinian existence as a national group on multiple accounts and disclosed the political motivations behind campaigns to minimize Palestinian presence in the geographical area. This rhetoric continues today, with the Israeli Government questioning Palestinians’ right to exist on the land.³⁴

Israel institutionalized racial discrimination through laws like the 1950 *Law of Return* and the 1952 *Citizenship Law*, which grant exclusive immigration and citizenship rights to Jews, while denying Palestinians the same rights. The legal system prioritizes nationalization and Judaization of the land and, through the enactment of a multitude of laws, systematically and

³⁴ Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London ; New York: Zed Books, 2012) P.51; Said, “Permission to Narrate” P.29-32; 36-38; 44-45; 47-48; Seth Anziska, “Special Document File: The Erasure of The Nakba in Israel’s Archives,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 49, no. 1 (November 1, 2019): 64–76, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2019.49.1.64>, P. 67; Sayigh, “Silenced Suffering” P.2; 5-6; 8-9; *Time for Reparations P. 180-182*; Elias Khoury, “Rethinking the Nakba,” *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 2 (2012): 250–66, <https://doi.org/10.1086/662741>; Yacobi and Nasasra, *Routledge Handbook on Middle East Cities, P.109-110*; “Israeli Minister Says ‘no Such Thing’ as Palestinian People,” *Reuters*, March 20, 2023, sec. Middle East, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-minister-says-no-such-thing-palestinian-people-2023-03-20/>.

legally established demographic dominance on the ground.³⁵ Many scholars, academics, historians, and CSOs have deemed Israeli domestic laws discriminatory and see them as a means to establish and sustain Israel's settler-colonial apartheid regime.³⁶ Achille Mbembe understands the denial of Palestinian roots, dispossessions, and eradication of all resilient expressions of Palestinian peoplehood, as a representation of a broader historical pattern of European colonialism that gains legitimacy through negating indigenous claims and assimilating local discourses.³⁷

The deliberate efforts to obliterate traces of Palestinian existence, both physically and narratively, exemplify a systematic erasure of Palestinian history and presence. This erasure is not confined to the past but extends to the present. In current times as well to the digital sphere, where narratives are manipulated, suppressed, or controlled. This erasure of digital narratives parallels the erasure of the physical and historical presence, creating a multi-faceted effort to further control, silence and marginalize the indigenous Palestinian perspective and people. This digital erasure is exemplified by biased media coverage, digital censorship, shadow-banning, and the distortion of historical records, all of which contribute to perpetuating a dominant narrative that serves the interest of those seeking to maintain power and control.³⁸

Frequent incursions, instances of further displacements, an increase in settler activities and a judiciary overhaul by an ultra-right-wing Israeli Administration, further entrenched the suppression of the Palestinian population in 2023. In current times Palestinian digital community, academia and researches often denote the Nakba as *mustamirra*, as an ongoing everyday continuity and manifestation of settler colonialism.³⁹

The context mapping shows Zionism has deeply intertwined demographics, land property, and historical denialism. Demographics and their connection to land and property constitute a

³⁵ SalahAldeen, "Israeli Apartheid – The Legacy of the Ongoing Nakba at 75 - Mwatana for Human Rights"; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.56.

³⁶ "PNGO and PHROC."

³⁷ Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Duke University Press*, 2003.

³⁸ Said, "Permission to Narrate" P.29-30; 38; 47-48; *Time for Reparations P.180-182*; Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba P.51*; Sayigh, "Silenced Suffering" P. 5-6;9; Allan, *Voices of the Nakba, P.1-2*; SalahAldeen, "Israeli Apartheid – The Legacy of the Ongoing Nakba at 75 - Mwatana for Human Rights"; 7amleh, "Hashtag Palestine 2022: 7amleh Restored a Third of the Deleted Palestinian Content from Social Media Platforms," accessed August 27, 2023, <https://7amleh.org/2023/02/02/hashtag-palestine-1119-palestinian-digital-rights-violations-during-the-year-2022>; 7amleh, "The Attacks on Palestinian Digital Rights Progress Report, May 6-19, 2021," n.d.; 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, August 14, 2023.

³⁹ Alff, "Property Disputes in Israel Come with a Complicated Back Story – and Tend to End with Palestinian Dispossession"; SalahAldeen, "Israeli Apartheid – The Legacy of the Ongoing Nakba at 75 - Mwatana for Human Rights"; "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In," *Middle East Monitor* (blog), July 11, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230711-palestinian-sub-laban-family-evicted-from-jerusalem-home-as-settlers-move-in/>; Allan, *Voices of the Nakba P.1-2*; Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*. P.54.

critical component of Zionist politics, while simultaneously, another crucial part revolves around the narrative of the politics and everyone involved – the narrators and the Other*s. Reflecting a pattern of repression and the maintenance of a colonial grip on the land and the resilience of the indigenous population that persisted throughout the last 75 years.

The Case of Occupied East Jerusalem

Further, Israel, the Occupying Power is obliged to maintain the laws in force status quo ante bellum and is prohibited from interceding into the civil life of the occupied population, without grounds of absolute military necessity, or for the benefit of the protected occupied population [...] It is worth noting that the tenancy status, as a private property right, is afforded significant protection and is immune from confiscation in the context of military occupation.⁴⁰

Jerusalem has been inhabited by various groups of people with various affiliations and backgrounds encompassing a long multifaceted and rich history of political, social, religious and cultural dynamics. It has also been a site of conquest, conflict, and political manipulation for thousands of years. During Ottoman times, Jerusalem was a thriving trade hub, famous for its archives and home to most Palestinian intellectuals.⁴¹

The more recent history of housing rights in East Jerusalem is marked by a complex interplay of displacement, settlement activities, and legal struggles. At the time of the 1947 United Nations *Partition Plan*, approximately 40% of the property in Jerusalem was owned by Palestinians. The Partition Plan envisioned Jerusalem as a more or less independent international entity under supervision. However, the 1948 war led to the division of Jerusalem in East and West, through an armistice deal between Israel and Jordan. Around 50,000 Palestinians from Western Jerusalem and surrounding villages were forced to leave and their return refused. In East Jerusalem, properties were placed under the authority of the Jordanian government. The UNWRA and Jordan collaborated to provide housing at a nominal cost for expelled Palestinian families in East Jerusalem.⁴²

Multiple master plans for Jerusalem, the first predating 1967, historically show the Israeli government's expansionist goals. After the 1967 War, which resulted in another wave of

⁴⁰ "PNGO and PHROC."

⁴¹ Doumani, "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine." P.8, 16, 20-22.

⁴² BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Denial of Palestinian Use and Access to Land: Summary of Israeli Law and Policies" P.22-23; Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966*. P.6-9; 88-90.

Palestinian expulsions, Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem and laid sovereignty claims over Jerusalem. Subsequently, the Israeli state extended its jurisdiction, administration, and application of Israeli Civil Laws, disguising measures of prolonged ethnic cleansing as humanitarian and urban planning initiatives. The seizure of land in East Jerusalem is made possible by Israeli implementations of discriminatory laws such as the *Absentee Property Law*, transferring property ownership to Israel's General Custodian. Moreover, the establishment of an intricate system of zoning and planning, which led to land usage restrictions and massive land expropriations, leaves Palestinian communities hardly any room to develop. As an occupied territory, East Jerusalem is protected by International Law. Consequently, forced displacement, destruction of private property, and discrimination based on ethnicity are prohibited by International Law. Article 23(g) of the *Hague Regulations* prohibits an occupying power from seizing or destroying an enemy's property. Moreover, Articles 53 and 59 of the *Fourth Geneva Convention* prohibit the transfer of a settler population into occupied territory, the establishment of settlements, and the destruction of private property.⁴³ The immediate aftermath of the 1967 occupation efforts to forge a solid Jewish identity in Jerusalem and the expansion of the Jewish Quarter saw mass home demolitions. For instance, parts of the Moroccan Quarter of the Old City were demolished to build the Western Wall Plaza.⁴⁴ Abu Ramadan, a resident of Sheikh Jarrah, gives an example of how the state's effort to change the former makeup of the city and its historical image becomes visible in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem.

This is East Jerusalem here. The municipality of Jerusalem takes many lands around us. Now they make parking spots here, but there won't be parking spots here after some years. They will build buildings, not for the Arabs.

They depend on the Absentee Property Law. Yes. If an Arab or a Palestinian person is outside the country, the government will take the land to make it their property.⁴⁵

The *Administrative Matters Law*, enacted in 1970, enables Jewish individuals and associations to lay claim to property and land ownership predating the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, while denying equivalent rights to Palestinians. This is an example of systematic

⁴³ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights P.23-25; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory |, "The Case of Sheikh Jarrah | October 2010," October 11, 2010, <http://www.ochaopt.org/content/case-sheikh-jarrah-october-2010>; "PNGO and PHROC"; Khoury, "Rethinking the Nakba" P.256; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.55; 124

⁴⁴ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine" P. 127; 131-135; 142; 148; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Denial of Palestinian Use and Access to Land: Summary of Israeli Law and Policies." P.22-24.

⁴⁵ Abu Ramadan, Interview with Abu Ramadan - Sheikh Jarrah, August 16, 2023.

discrimination that underscores the broader challenges Palestinians in East Jerusalem are subjected to today. Focused on developing economic enterprises and promoting Israeli organizations and government ministries in Jerusalem, the annexation of Jerusalem as the utterly united capital of Israel, was formally legalized under the *Jerusalem Basic Law* in 1980. The UN Security Council *Resolutions 252, 476 and 478* condemned this decision. They considered any legislative or administrative action carried out by Israel to alter the status of Jerusalem without legal effect, invalid and in violation of International Law.⁴⁶

Traces of the border, formally recognizing the presence of an Eastern Jerusalem entity not belonging to an Israeli state, were removed and new buildings were erected, which made the annexation visible on the ground. Families in Sheikh Jarrah are certain that these measures were taken by the Israeli government to hinder the implementation of Security Council resolutions:

This line is in front of my house is the border, the Israeli State was working to delete the traces of the borders to remove it. So, they built this Israeli Insurance Association Society, and these big hotels and these buildings here. Why? Because they want to delete, to destroy the traces of the borders, to make it difficult to carry out the decisions of the Security Council Number 252 which considers this Part of Jerusalem as Occupied Territory⁴⁷

The absence of an international legal framework for the Oslo negotiations, allowed Israel to secure agreements that accelerated Israeli control over Jerusalem and its surrounding areas, legitimizing the status of Jewish settlements and disregarding the rights of Palestinian refugees. In subsequent years plans for the expansion of existing settlements and the creation of new settlements through the means of relocating Jewish settlements into Arab neighborhoods were implemented.⁴⁸ Successive Israeli Master Plans for Jerusalem, such as the Jerusalem Master Plan 2020 or the Jerusalem Master Plan 2030, envision further acquiring lands and property and controlling the city's demographic makeup while maintaining the goal of a Jewish majority.⁴⁹ The Israeli legal system, housing restriction, and land expropriation have been instrumental in achieving the objective of total control over Jerusalem's land area and

⁴⁶ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights P.23-25; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory |, "The Case of Sheikh Jarrah | October 2010," October 11, 2010, <http://www.ochaopt.org/content/case-sheikh-jarrah-october-2010>; "PNGO and PHROC"; Khoury, "Rethinking the Nakba" P.256; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.55; 124

⁴⁷ Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah, August 16, 2023.

⁴⁸ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.131; 142

⁴⁹ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Denial of Palestinian Use and Access to Land: Summary of Israeli Law and Policies." P.28.

demographics.⁵⁰ There have been no Palestinian communities established since 1967. As of the year 2002, Palestinians living in East Jerusalem had been legally restricted to living or building on around 8% of their pre-1967 Jerusalem properties.⁵¹ Israel's efforts to maintain a demographic balance in favor of Jews have resulted in disparities in housing development, leading to Palestinians facing severe restrictions, while Jewish communities are heavily subsidized. The aforementioned hardships led Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to move to other parts of the West Bank in search of more living space. Simultaneously, this places them at risk of losing their municipality residence status. Stringent criteria and regulations relating to residence permits are not applied similarly to Jewish Israelis. They are used by the Israeli state as a tool to exert demographic control by revoking Palestinians of their residence status.⁵² In the context of East Jerusalem, the Israeli government's support of continuous settler colonial land appropriation and erasure activities, contributing to the fragmentation of Palestinian neighborhoods, have long been evident in the form of house demolitions or forcible displacement of Palestinian families. Through the use of the Israeli legal system as well as by violent means, settlement groups have played a significant role in acquiring property and displacing Palestinians from their homes in favor of Jewish settlements, forging links between Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.⁵³ A manifestation of historical continuity of settlers linking the use of force and their privilege in the legal system to expel indigenous people becomes evident in the prominent example of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem. Sheikh Jarrah lies at the East and West Jerusalem border and is home to between 40 and 50 Palestinian families who have been refugees since 1948. Living under Jordanian authority between 1948 and 1967, the neighborhood was occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. After 1967, the Israeli state transferred the property ownership in the neighborhood through multiple legal avenues to the Israeli General Custodian, claiming that the land was owned by Jewish families before 1948. The Israeli state now considers the families' tenants and started pressing them by gradually increasing the rent to evict them from their houses despite them being refugees.⁵⁴ Already in the 1970s, Zionist settlers and settlement organizations such as Ateret Cohanim asserted their biblical right to the land and had the goal of replacing

⁵⁰ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P. 125-127.

⁵¹ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. P. 127-128

⁵² BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. P. 125-128.

⁵³ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine" P.131-135; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory |, "The Case of Sheikh Jarrah | October 2010."

⁵⁴ Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah.

Palestinians with Jewish settlers. These settler organizations started working alongside the government, filing lawsuits against Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah. This oftentimes led to yearlong legal proceedings between the families and the Israeli Settlers and State. Due to their experiences within the Israeli legal system, residents of Sheikh Jarrah voiced their disbelief in the state's idea of justice.

The Israeli government uses laws but no justice. There is no justice. Now, they want to take or retake these small houses for the Jewish families claiming they lived here before 1948. At the same time, they prevent us from retaking our homes in Jerusalem or Jaffa or Haifa. For example, I live here with my family. I lived here with my mother and father, who passed away, and I still live here now with my family and the settlers want my house. Look, this house is all we have. All our family members are in these houses. I was born here in this house and my children were born here in this house, my mother before, and we have a lot of memories and they come and want to take it. most of them are coming from Europe. They come from Europe, US or from Asia, from everywhere yesterday and today they tell me this is my land. [...] They prevent us to retake these properties. At the same time, they want to take also these poor houses from us. We pay, or as our families, about six or \$700 monthly, which is high but we do not have other options if we leave to other areas to rent in Beit Hanina or Shuafat they will take it for Jewish settlers.⁵⁵

In Sheikh Jarrah, settlers come from other illegal settlements in the West Bank and from all over the world. Connections between US donors and Israeli settlement organizations, such as Ateret Cohanim, are evident and have been documented for years. At the same time, the US is the only country not regarding the settlements as illegal under international law. Moreover, Settlement groups have also acquired significant amounts of property through the help of the *Israel Land Administration*.⁵⁶ The profoundly entrenched structural violence Palestinians endure within the Israeli legal system may be exemplified through Israeli courts consistently favoring settlers, despite families of Sheikh Jarrah providing evidence of property rights aligned with the Jordan and UNRWA agreement.⁵⁷ In the words of Abu Omar: “Since 1948, the Israeli government has been using two scales. One, against us as Arabs or Palestinians who have rights in their lands and the other on behalf of the Jewish settlers.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Families of Sheikh Jarrah.

⁵⁶ BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, “Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine”; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory |, “The Case of Sheikh Jarrah | October 2010.”

⁵⁷ “East Jerusalem Evictions”; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory |, “The Case of Sheikh Jarrah | October 2010”; @freenorashome, “Instagram Page @freenorashome,” n.d. Post #8, 09.06.2023.

⁵⁸ Abu Omar, Interview with Abu Omar - Sheikh Jarrah, August 16, 2023.

The Land seizure by settler organizations supported by the Israeli legal system and abided by the Israeli forces is perceived as another manifestation of Jewish dominance. According to OCHA, Israeli settler groups employ various tactics to seize control of land and property, disregarding Palestinian rights and confronting Palestinian refugees with the prospect of a subsequent displacement occurring. Settler actions are often backed by the Israeli government or institutions and involve attempts to evict Palestinian residents forcibly. Forced evictions, along with house demolitions ordered by the Jerusalem municipality are a common cause of displacement in East Jerusalem. In 2009 alone, around 380 Palestinians, including over 90 children, were forcibly displaced.⁵⁹ Interviewees subjected to Israeli state and settler violence do not believe in Israel's claim of democracy but do not have the political, legal or financial means to counteract the state's policies.⁶⁰ Abu Ramadan elaborates on his views, sharing his very personal story of settler violence experienced by him and his son, who was arrested during settler attacks in Sheikh Jarrah:

They tell you they are democratic, "democratic, democratic" but this is a big lie. There is no justice in Israel. Look see the cameras here? You see this big building? There is a camera there, there is a camera up there is a camera. Yes. On the main road, there is a camera, but the camera is for us. Not for Jewish settlers. Last year, it was a war big war here in the street. The settlers attacked us and our house from three sides with stones and shot. The police came, they saw the settlers and didn't talk to them. The police told me, stay in your house, stay in your house. What is this "Stay in your house"?? It's my house. I will protect my home. The police did not stop the settlers. My son went on the top of the house and threw stones back at the settlers. Of course, defending your house is normal. The police then tell my son to come down and that they want to talk to him. When my son went down, the police arrested and took him. The judge asked him, why he threw stones. So, the lawyers showed the videos of the settlers attacking and throwing stones. He told the judge that's why. The judge saw the videos and then said, the settlers made a mistake but why did my son make the same mistake? The lawyer told the judge that it's our house and the settlers threw stones on our house, and that he is defending his house and the police saw all of this and did nothing. So, the judge decided to give my son only four years in prison. Four years for throwing stones, but he was standing here to protect his house from the settlers. Four years in jail for nothing but the Israeli settler that killed, Qusai, a Palestinian in Burqa. He goes out from the court after a few days. Yeah. But, if you protect your house, you make a mistake. This is why I don't trust them.⁶¹

⁵⁹ "PNGO and PHROC"; Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory |, "The Case of Sheikh Jarrah | October 2010."

⁶⁰ "East Jerusalem Evictions"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome."

⁶¹ Abu Ramadan, Interview with Abu Ramadan - Sheikh Jarrah.

In numerous cases, settlers, abided by the Israeli Army and Police Forces, have resorted to direct harassment, intimidation, and violence to cause Palestinians to leave their homes.⁶²

We are suffering, always suffering from the Jewish settlers and the policemen. One, one day, I, we were sitting here and Omar was here. All of us. All of us. Not the young people, but the old people here, all of us here sitting, drinking coffee at night. The police stopped here with the black car and told us, we have one minute to leave the tent. As soon as we stood up, the policemen threw a bomb [blend grenade] at us. Believe me, you can see all this here.⁶³

[...]

Once the settlers came and attacked a citizen standing in front of his house with an iron stick. He had a big bruise on his head. It was dangerous. He went to the hospital for two weeks.⁶⁴

[...]

We do not have a problem with the Jews Christians or Muslims, but these Jewish settlers, are always provoking. They provoke the (Palestinian) families who live here and create problems and the Israeli government or soldiers or policemen protect them. (..) There is coordination between the settlers and between the policemen.⁶⁵

Families in Sheikh Jarrah assert their right to live peacefully among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, defying the claim that their conflict is of a religious nature. Their experience of the states and settler organizations' complicity through daily provocations and violence is clear. In 2023, settlement activities are at a high, receiving the backing of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, with the current ultra-right-wing government openly admitting the state's policy of displacing Palestinians with Jews in East Jerusalem."⁶⁶ In Sheikh Jarrah, Itamar Ben-Gvir is known for actively participating in the continuity of the violent ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem:

There is a member of a big settler organization here. Now he is a member of the Knesset, the parliament, called Ben-Gvir. He is now the minister of national security. Two years ago, he built a tent here in Sheikh Jarrah and made it his extra office to provoke us. He was coming here with guards, carrying weapons and guns, and sometimes with dogs. To frighten the kids and the people here.⁶⁷

[...]

This Ben-Gvir, he told us no you do not belong here. He told us, we don't belong anywhere. Every time he's coming, he tells us: "Go to Syria. Go to Syria." To Syria? Why go to Syria? He comes from Iraq, so why doesn't he go to Iraq again?⁶⁸

⁶² BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine." P.131; 142

⁶³ Abu Ramadan, Interview with Abu Ramadan - Sheikh Jarrah.

⁶⁴ Abu Omar, Interview with Abu Omar - Sheikh Jarrah.

⁶⁵ Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah.

⁶⁶ "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In."

⁶⁷ Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah.

⁶⁸ Abu Ramadan, Interview with Abu Ramadan - Sheikh Jarrah.

Currently, up to half of Palestinian homes don't have the necessary permits, which are routinely denied to them by Israel's Land Registry."⁶⁹ Between January 2009 and August 2020, Israeli authorities displaced 2462 people by demolishing 1360 structures over a lack of building permits, while 199 Palestinian homes and an estimated of 877 individuals faced eviction cases and were at risk of displacement in 2019 alone.⁷⁰

In 2023, the case of the eviction of the Ghaith-Sub Laban Family from the Old City of East Jerusalem highlighted another case indicating a broader pattern of organized and targeted aggression against Palestinian civilians and ongoing colonial ethnic cleansing efforts.⁷¹

In short, the situation in East Jerusalem from the occupation in 1967 until now is characterized by the existence of an intertwined network of discriminatory policies, legal battles and settlement activities, mostly favoring the Israeli government's strategies to maintain a Jewish demographic majority. It has led to a continuity of forced displacement and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. The legal mechanisms employed by Israel, combined with settlement expansion, have created a reality of irreversible Israeli control over the city, significantly affecting the Palestinian population's rights. The Israeli laws mentioned provide the legal basis of what is often called Israeli apartheid.⁷²

⁶⁹ "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In"; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory |, "The Case of Sheikh Jarrah | October 2010"; "PNGO and PHROC"; Jessica Buxbaum, "Sub Laban Family: Israel's Battle for Jerusalem's Old City," <https://www.newarab.com/>, July 25, 2023, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/sub-laban-family-israels-battle-jerusalems-old-city>.

⁷⁰ "PNGO and PHROC"; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, "Denial of Palestinian Use and Access to Land: Summary of Israeli Law and Policies." P.30.

⁷¹ "PNGO and PHROC."

⁷² SalahAldeen, "Israeli Apartheid – The Legacy of the Ongoing Nakba at 75 - Mwatana for Human Rights."

The Gaith-Sub Laban Family

In the early morning of 11 July 2023, Nora Gaith, 68, and her husband, Mustafa Sub Laban, 72, were displaced from their home in the Aqabat Al-Khalidiya neighborhood in the occupied Old City of Jerusalem. Israeli forces stormed and seized the family home, forcefully removing Mustafa Sub Laban and detaining six Israeli solidarity activists. Mustafa Sub Laban was given two minutes to collect his medicine and a few items while the furniture and personal belongings remained inside the buildings. Directly after the initial displacement, Israeli settlers occupied the property under the protection of Israeli forces. Videos showed Ahmad Sub Laban carrying a small tree out of his home.⁷³ The displacement was widely condemned by multiple local and international actors, such as the Arab League, UN officials, politicians, CSOs or NGOs, as well as individual actors, such as Instagram influencers, solidarity activists or friends of the family.⁷⁴ To understand the context of the July 13th 2023 event, it is essential to map the displacement history and the prolonged legal battle of the Gaith-Sub Laban family. This mapping and reconstruction of events was done through digital ethnography efforts, specifically by exploring the Instagram account of the family, which they started in June 2023.

After the initial displacement of the Ghaith-Sub Laban Family from West Jerusalem during the 1948 events, the family was granted protected lease rights and started renting the house in the Aqabat Al-Khalidiya neighborhood in 1953 from the Jordanian Government. In the aftermath of Israel's illegal occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli General Custodian took ownership of the Ghaith-Sub Laban house. Subsequently, Israeli authorities started attempts to legally evict the family, sparking a decades-long struggle against attempts to remove and replace them with Jewish settlers. These attempts involved several Israeli governmental bodies, including the General Custodian of Public Property, the Jerusalem municipality and others, including the Israeli Antiquities Department or the Social Security Institute.⁷⁵ In 1975, the General Custodian implemented a rent increase and initiated eviction

⁷³ "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In"; Buxbaum, "Sub Laban Family"; "Israeli Settlers Seize Sub Laban Family House in Jerusalem's Old City," Wafa Agency, accessed July 23, 2023, <https://wafa.ps/Pages/Details/136715>; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #12, 10.06.2023; Post #38, 20.07.2023

⁷⁴ "PNGO and PHROC"; "Arab League Condemns Israel's Seizure of Sub Laban Family Home in Jerusalem," *Middle East Monitor* (blog), July 12, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230712-arab-league-condemns-israels-seizure-of-sub-laban-family-home-in-jerusalem/>; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome."

⁷⁵ "Israeli Settlers Seize Sub Laban Family House in Jerusalem's Old City"; "PNGO and PHROC"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #12, 10.06.2023; Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023

proceedings against the family based on allegations of failed payment obligations. The family successfully negotiated a mutually acceptable agreement, upholding their contractual obligation to continue making payments at the initially agreed-upon sum.⁷⁶

During the latter part of the 1970s and the 1980s, the family experienced a temporary displacement from their residence. However, it was not until 2000 that they were granted permission to return to their house after a series of court actions.⁷⁷

In 2010 eviction threats resurged when the Galetzia Trust, a settler organization intending Jewish immigration from southeastern Poland and western Ukraine, claimed ownership of the Gaith-Sub Laban house. The Galetzia Trust has links to the settler organizations Ateret Cohanim and Atara L'yoshna, that are part of a coalition of settlement organizations founded in 1979. These settler organizations operate under various corporate entity and trust names and are oftentimes acting as plaintiffs in several legal actions to evict Palestinians living in the Muslim Quarter. In the Gaith-Sub Laban case, Israeli courts decided in favor of the settler association and transferred the land's ownership without notifying the family.⁷⁸ In subsequent years, the Galetzia Trust initiated legal proceedings to compel the removal of the family and in September 2014, a judge affiliated with the settler community approved the petition based on the argument that the family's protected tenant status had been revoked. Additionally, there were two violent eviction endeavors carried out by settlers in the first months of 2015.⁷⁹

Numerous court orders that almost forced the family out of their home followed, back then, Ahmad Sub Laban mentioned the impact of the year-long legal battle on him and his family:

Imagine a family where the parents are all the time going to the Israeli court, where they're putting all their money to a lawyer just to protect their property, [...] I remember when I was young, my parents would always be going to the court. It was awful, all the time. And now, I am doing the same.⁸⁰

For years settlers surrounded the Gaith-Sub Laban family and started to seize the upper part of the building and the surrounding housing units. In December 2016, the Israeli High Court rendered a decision in response to an appeal, affirming that the Ghaith-Sub Laban family's parents, Nora and Mustafa, were granted the right to remain in their home as tenants under the protection of the law for an extended duration of 10 years. However, the court banned Nora's

⁷⁶ Buxbaum, "Sub Laban Family"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #39, 20.07.2023.

⁷⁷ "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In"; "PNGO and PHROC"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023, Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023.

⁷⁸ Buxbaum, "Sub Laban Family"; "PNGO and PHROC"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023, Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023.

⁷⁹ "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In"; "PNGO and PHROC"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023, Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023.

⁸⁰ "East Jerusalem Evictions."

children and grandchildren, Raafat, Ahmed, his wife and children, and their sister, from living with their parents to counteract the family's claim of the right to protection as third-generation residents.⁸¹

Then, in 2018, the decision to evict the family was issued. The family has since endured daily harassment by illegal settlers and the Israeli police.⁸² The Galetzia Trust commenced a legal lawsuit against the Ghaith-Sub Laban family on 27th January 2019, using the 2016 High Court judgment, allowing them to launch further proceedings after two years. Eventually this led to the termination of the families protected tenancy status.⁸³ The court's primary allegation against the Gaith-Sub Laban family pertains to their intermittent residence occupancy, using the 1970s implemented *Administrative Matters Law*, exclusively granting (Israeli) Jews the right to assert ownership claims to land and property purportedly belonging to Jews in the eastern sector of Jerusalem before 1948, as the legal basis for the eviction of the Gaith-Sub Laban.⁸⁴ According to Mohammed Dahleh, the family's legal representative, the critical issue is that the acquisition of the property, regardless of alleged Jewish ownership, occurs while Palestinian properties in the western part of the city are subject to the Absentee Property Law. Palestinians owned these properties before 1948, yet they cannot return to them.⁸⁵

As mentioned before, many scholars, academics, historians, and CSOs have deemed Israeli domestic laws discriminatory and see them as a means to establish and sustain Israel's settler-colonial apartheid regime⁸⁶, this stance is again becoming apparent in the contextualization of the eviction of the Gaith-Sub Laban's.

An eviction order was issued for June 11 whereby the Israeli police could forcibly remove the Ghaith-Sub Laban family from their home in the Muslim Quarter. The settler group behind the eviction proceedings filed another request for an eviction order with a flexible implementation date, which typically spans a two-week period. On June 19th Israeli authorities approved new dates for the forced displacement of the Ghaith-Sub Laban family and settler takeover of their home. The forced eviction of Nora and her husband was scheduled anytime between June 28th

⁸¹ "Israeli Settlers Seize Sub Laban Family House in Jerusalem's Old City"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023

⁸² "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023, Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023.

⁸³ "PNGO and PHROC"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023

⁸⁴ "East Jerusalem Evictions"; "PNGO and PHROC"; Buxbaum, "Sub Laban Family"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023, Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023.

⁸⁵ "East Jerusalem Evictions."

⁸⁶ "PNGO and PHROC."

to July 13th 2023.⁸⁷ On June 25th, 2023, The Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO) and the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC), Palestinian civil society and rights groups, released a statement strongly criticizing Israel's actions aimed at displacing the family, characterizing it as a forcible transfer that falls under the purview of both war crimes and crimes against humanity as defined by the Rome Statute.⁸⁸ The statement also called the decision to forcefully relocate the Ghaith-Sub Laban family as a manifestation of the Palestinian Nakba, situating it in the broader context of an ongoing colonization objective, which aims at replacing Palestinians with Israeli settlers.⁸⁹

On July 13th, 2023, after over 45 years of protracted legal struggle to stay in the property, Nora Ghaith-Sub Laban was displaced from the property on which she who was born, raised, married, and gave birth to her children.⁹⁰ The Case of the Gaith-Sub Laban family is closing an ongoing cycle of prolonged colonial dispossession of indigenous people in Palestine that has been recorded, talked about and brought to light on many occasions for over 100 years.

⁸⁷ “Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In”; “Israeli Settlers Seize Sub Laban Family House in Jerusalem’s Old City”; “PNGO and PHROC”; @freenorashome, “Instagram Page @freenorashome.” Post #20, 16.06.2023; Post #22, 19.06.2023.

⁸⁸ Al Jazeera Staff, “Israel Expels Sub Labans from Their Home in Jerusalem’s Old City,” accessed July 23, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/11/israel-expels-sub-labans-from-their-home-in-jeruselems-old-city>; “PNGO and PHROC.”

⁸⁹ “PNGO and PHROC.”

⁹⁰ Silwanic, “Pictures - Evacuation of the Ghaith /Sub Laban Family from Its Home in the Old City of Jerusalem,” accessed July 24, 2023, <https://www.silwanic.net/article/news/79008>; “Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In”; @freenorashome, “Instagram Page @freenorashome.” Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023, Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023; Post #38, 19.07.2023; Post #39, 20.07.2023.

Mapping Indigenous Resilience

Indigenous resistance and resilience in Palestine has a long history spanning over decades in the struggle for autonomy and self-determination. During the 1936-39 Revolt, the most significant uprising against colonial rule in the 30 years of British Mandate, the anti-colonial resistance had taken various forms, from grassroots initiatives to organized political movements and the formation of armed resistance groups. Poetry and art produced during this time often included an anti-colonial and resistance stance. Poets, such as Nuh Ibrahim, conveyed the message of the resistance. Ibrahim broadcasted the revolt to farmers and villagers through his poetry using everyday language. Anti-colonial cartoons widely circulated as a response to the events of the 1936-39 revolt, conveyed sarcastic messages and analysis of socio-economic and political issues of the time. From the onset of European settler colonial presence in Palestine and in the face of attempts to remove and replace the indigenous population forcibly, the indigenous resistance in Palestine aimed at preserving the fundamental human rights of Palestinian people and the struggle for self-determination.⁹¹ According to the common legal opinion within International Law, Palestinians have a right to self-determination and the right to resist their occupation by all available means.⁹²

In this section, the context of the resilience to Zionist ethnic cleansing efforts will be explored, focusing on sumud as an everyday activism concept to counteract and show resilience in the face of state efforts of ethnic cleansing. I will explore how these everyday acts combine action on the ground with digitalized ones in 2023, situating them within the context of Palestinian anti-colonial resilience in trying to stay on the land.

In Palestine, the expression “To exist is to resist” is widely known. Existing to resist can mean many different things in different contexts but is commonly understood to be “an everyday thing” intrinsically linked to the core of being.⁹³ Everyday resistance in the Palestinian case is oftentimes referred to as Sumud, a concept introduced in the 1980s by Raja Shehadeh. Sumud means resilience and steadfastness in Palestinian life under occupation, it is a mode of existence that encapsulates the determination of Palestinians to remain on their land, despite the

⁹¹ Doumani, “Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine” P.10-12; Hughes, “From Law and Order to Pacification: Britain’s Suppression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39” P.18-19; Anderson, “State Formation from Below and the Great Revolt in Palestine” P.41; Sandy Sufian, “Anatomy of the 1936-39 Revolt: Images of the Body in Political Cartoons of Mandatory Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Winter 2008, P.24; 28-30; Samih Shabeeb, “Poetry of Rebellion The Life, Verse and Death of Nuh Ibrahim during the 1936-39 Revolt,” *Jerusalem Quarterly*, Winter 2006. P. 65-67.

⁹² Doumani, “Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine” P.10-12; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, “Forced Population Transfer P.11-12: The Case of Palestine - Suppression of Resistance,” December 2016 P.11-12; Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims.”

⁹³ Palestinian Youth in Palestine, Palestinian Youth in Palestine, August 10, 2023.

challenges posed by the occupation, settlements, land confiscation, and home demolitions. It serves as a conceptual framework to convey Palestinian humanity to the global community and is closely aligned with the concept of resilience. Shehadeh's book published everyday experiences, demonstrating how Palestinians maintained their dignity despite humiliation and oppression. Throughout time, various interpretations of Sumud have emerged, underpinning diverse forms of violent and non-violent resistance. In this regard, it was considered a strategic concept of resilience under colonial conditions and debated among Palestinian scholars.⁹⁴ Sumud describes keeping close links to Palestinian heritage and soil. To be Palestinian means to live with the knowledge of Palestinian culture and history, to have an attachment to the land and the memories of it, and to carry them to the next generations. Even though the Palestinian experience encompasses injustices, struggle and hardship, sumud is not determined by pain or victimization but expressed by various means and ways, such as cultural production. A part of showing sumud is not letting the occupation kill the joy of life and not forgetting the ability to laugh, or to appreciate traditional crafts, or architecture, as tools to resist Zionist oppression. Sumud aims at the preservation of one's humanity and showing compassion, while standing firm and resilient against a politics of erasure. It reflects a belief in a better future – and may be understood as a means of progressing towards a just future, while rejecting the unequal dynamics perpetuated by Israeli occupation. Its significance lies in upholding fundamental human values such as justice, compassion, and freedom. Sumud can also mean an act of keeping a sense of community and an environment of solidarity, a hope alive in testing times, by sharing life stories. In general, acts of sumud encompass a broad range of actions. These are, for instance, a sense of cultural appreciation for Palestinian culture, efforts to cultivate land, rebuild demolished houses, and sustain cultural practices to assert Palestinian presence. It emphasizes the significance of everyday acts of defiance against occupation and to disrupt the status quo imposed by Israeli colonialism.⁹⁵ As ethnic cleansing efforts take the shape of land dispossession and a narrative based on racist stereotypes and historical denialism, sumud is a hybrid concept that combines active, passive, loud, and silent forms of being. In 2023, sumud, as a form of everyday acts of indigenous resilience, forms a connective link between the collective and the individual, and digital and on-the-ground acts. Understanding sumud as a resilience form counteracting ethnic cleansing is understanding the hybrid and fluid form of this type of activism.

⁹⁴ "To Exist Is To Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday," Institute for Palestine Studies, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/165375>. P.87-89;91.

⁹⁵ "To Exist Is To Resist." P. 91-92; 94-96.

After the Nakba, Palestinian oral history and eyewitness reports originating from the lives of ordinary Palestinians were recorded. These accounts introduced alternative standpoints to attempts at erasing Palestinian presence in Palestine and challenged prevailing Israeli narratives of an empty land, asserting the Zionist dismantling of Palestinian society. These narratives served as a repository of cultural legacy, spotlighting personal determination and strength amid coerced expulsion and ethnic cleansing. The act of narrating counteracts historical censorship, dissemination of misinformation, and omission of rights by highlighting Palestinian entitlement to repatriation and the right of self-determination.⁹⁶ The act of narrating stories, documenting personal encounters to convey reality, and the provision of firsthand accounts that go beyond biased, fragmented coverages is a form of resilience expression that persists until today. In his article *Permission to Narrate*, Edward Said recounted how he urged Palestinians during the Beirut siege to document their personal encounters. Said recognized that personal accounts depict the agency and resilience of individuals and serve as evidence to show a counternarrative to erasure while creating a more inclusive historiography under challenging circumstances.⁹⁷ Creating and upholding a counternarrative as a form of sumud, everyday activism, and mere existing, is crucial when confronted with an ongoing propaganda machinery that aims at erasing, delegitimizing, and discrediting an indigenous narrative. During the late 1970s and early 1990s, Edward Said's work shed light on the dehumanizing aspects of colonialism and cultural dominance and a Western double standard in academia and media production toward the colonial presence of Zionism in Palestine.⁹⁸ The Zionist Nakba denial and erasure stance accompanied by international academia and media bias has caused a 75-year-long struggle for Palestinian representation, translated today to the digital domain mainly through stereotyped portrayals of Palestinians as terrorists or victims of violence and oppression. This double-standard was well noticed among Palestinians when the armed conflict in Ukraine erupted in 2022.

I remember, when Russia invaded Ukraine there were many TikTok videos for example, actually depicting Palestinians throwing Molotov. In one of the cases there was a Palestinian girl who was throwing a Molotov. But because she is blonde and has the blue eyes, it was easy to take this video and say it's a Ukrainian girl throwing one. I guess it was a Ukrainian page or something, and the video got hundreds of thousands of love reactions and millions of reviews. But just change it and say, it's actually a Palestinian then it becomes terrorism. But you know, in this context, in social media, people see this contrast now. No

⁹⁶ Sayigh, "Silenced Suffering" P.3; Allan, *Voices of the Nakba*. P.1-2.

⁹⁷ Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba* P.50; Said, "Permission to Narrate." P.27-28; 38.

⁹⁸ Said, "Permission to Narrate." P.34-35.

one, no matter wherever you are, now, you can see the different approach and the bias social media changed things⁹⁹

Terrorism is one concept used by the Israeli state and its allies to shift responsibility for atrocities onto Palestinians while simultaneously using the concept of sovereignty and self-defense to be shielded from being labeled as a perpetrator of terrorism, regardless of the Israeli state involvement in actions resulting in the loss of civilian lives.¹⁰⁰

75 years, we have suffered, and nobody cares. We see what happened in Ukraine. All the world, and also, we are with Ukraine. We don't like war, but why is Ukraine's treatment so different than ours? It has just been two years, but all the world is there to support it, but we are suffering here for 75 years. I want to tell you something. The Palestinian people are kind people. They're not like the Israelis are talking about us - we are not terrorists. Abu Omar told you before we do not have a problem with you being our neighbor, no problem, but to be my neighbor and wanting to take my house? This is a big problem. If somebody comes to take your house, what will you do? Of course, you will fight for it. This is normal.¹⁰¹

International media coverage since the second intifada mainly portrays a narrative of Palestinian aggression as a disruption of peace. Also, it depicts a cycle of violence involving both sides, with Israel having to defend itself and respond to an ongoing Palestinian terrorist and antisemitic aggression, framing realities on the ground as a thousand yearlong religious conflict. Media coverage exhibited disparities in representation, with Israelis often dominating the discourse. In international media, Palestinians are often denied the opportunity to voice their opinions and are represented by Israeli figures, directly impacting the general public's opinions.¹⁰² This continues until today and confines the Palestinian narrative in a first step to responding to claims made about them. Palestinians are left to assert their right to fundamental human rights and freedom of expression while counteracting Western/ European bias:

I meet with many European representatives, journalists [...] in many cases, there are many people and researchers who consider or think that indigenous people cannot speak because they want us to speak what they want to hear. Recently, I met with a French journalist, and he was, telling me what I should or shouldn't do and say. For example, in a political context, he said: "you shouldn't have voted for an Islamist group" I told him, I myself oppose religious ideologies generally. Still, you can't tell me what to do or say. He said "you need to cooperate with Israelis and you need another president." Yeah. But we know that this president is not for us. He's part of the occupation system. Okay. But you can't tell me what to do and not to do. [...] If you say something or you express other opinions than what they want to hear they say, "okay you did not say this"

⁹⁹ 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

¹⁰⁰ *Time for Reparations*. P.181.

¹⁰¹ Abu Ramadan, Interview with Abu Ramadan - Sheikh Jarrah.

¹⁰² Miriyam Aouragh, "Everyday Resistance on the Internet: The Palestinian Context," *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 1, no. 2 (November 26, 2008): 109–30, https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr.1.2.109_1. P. 7; 11; 18-19.

or “by saying this you will not be able to convince the international community.” You need to be aware of the situation because otherwise you as a researcher will not get it.¹⁰³

In the context of counteracting the global media and academic discourse, sumud is also about addressing the nature of settler colonialism and the narrative of erasure and ethnic cleansing. When talking to Palestinians today, many confirm their knowledge about the bias with multiple personal stories to share. However, bringing the focus back to the core of what the realities are about has an impact.

It is not a matter of Jew or Muslim, it's a matter of Rights. Basically, for me, I don't care whatever religion or ethnicity you are. It's a matter of rights. This is the reality. So, anyone who has the option to say something in this world. Should do it. Posting and speaking about Palestine has impact. And this is we need to keep up faith and hope, because sometimes even us, as organizations, as activists, sometimes we will reach a point in which, you feel disappointed, or you feel as if nothing works. And, at the same time, you can't sit down in your home and do nothing. So even if the change is very slow, still, we can see it over the past few years. We can see it and with simple tools and with some solidarity together, we can go on. So, I deeply hope for a future where we can actually really take the human rights for what they are. By the name of it and not by, I don't know, pretending. Yeah. Political definitions of human rights that just translate to colonial tactics. Even you sometimes you might not maybe resonate with maybe, for example, my thoughts, but the idea is that each one has the right, at least to defend himself, or themselves and to express what they feel this is. This is the basic.¹⁰⁴

Palestinians have been confined to defend themselves and their positions by addressing their own ethnic cleansing within a framework imposed onto them by the settler colonial entities, responsible for their ethnic cleansing. To counteract stereotypical claims revolving around them, they have invited tourists to Palestine to see and experience the realities on the ground, conveying their message without words. By representing Palestinian voices and counteracting misinformation and stereotypes, the aim is also to reach outside the local scope of action.¹⁰⁵

We bring people, European parliamentarians, activists, we bring them to Palestine and organize a tour. And many of them are Pro Israel. When they come here, they see stuff, they see what's going on the ground. They return to their countries and are aware of how things are and what is going on. Because they see it themselves. I guess this is effective and good when people see for themselves. But now you can do this through social media, to show people what's going on. And in many cases, they can't deny it. They can't deny it. Unless, if you have, the mentality or ideology that, Palestinians should

¹⁰³ 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

¹⁰⁴ 7amleh.

¹⁰⁵ “To Exist Is To Resist” P.89; Aouragh, “Everyday Resistance on the Internet.” P.2;8-9.

not have rights or that they're not humans. you know? But otherwise, any good like logical person. Would say it's obvious.¹⁰⁶

In digital times, everyday activism and notions of sumud were translated to the digital space and social media. Social media, understood as, a social online space for exchange and an area, which grants decentralized access to knowledge production and content sharing, gave a space to Palestinians to exchange ideas, mobilize and to virtually overcome barriers imposed on them through the occupation. Websites such as the *Palestine Monitor* and *The Electronic Intifada* emerged to challenge anti-Palestinian narratives and misconceptions, while *Palestine Remembered* became a virtual space to preserve cultural memory, focusing on humanizing the Palestinian people and disseminating the historical Palestinian narrative.¹⁰⁷ First-person accounts shared on various platforms sought to counter biased and dehumanizing mainstream media distortions and portrayals of Palestinians as terrorist. Instead aiming to reach global audiences by humanizing Palestinian experiences by linguistic means and creative outputs. Many Palestinians voiced their resilience by publishing their personal diaries on everyday life encounters that highlighted individual observations of the absurdity of life under occupation, while upholding fundamental human values.¹⁰⁸

From the mid-2000s to the present, activism continued its hybrid development, with a notable shift towards social media platforms. Palestinian solidarity organizations and digital activism played crucial roles in raising awareness, garnering support and disseminating a bottom-up perspective despite Israeli surveillance efforts.¹⁰⁹

In the Palestinian context, under occupation or, apartheid, under geographical isolation we need to understand that, Palestinians are constrained in Palestine and outside, in the digital space. And digital tools have more impact in such context. A context has much more, significance and importance because, you are here and you see how things are complicated, you know, we have Israeli policies, Israeli, system and oppression under it.

The country is not open for us, we cannot move freely. For example, we cannot go to Palestinian cities and Israelis and Palestinians from Gaza cannot come here. And we cannot go to other places. Palestinian movements, Palestinian activists, any Palestinian would like to build a movement to mobilize, to work something and cannot do this on the ground. It's very complicated. Several, events have been organized before. But unfortunately, at the end, everything fails due to the complicated situation. So this is why digital space, was maybe the last resort and the only resort for, Palestinian movements. And this is why we see now, many activists, journalists and organizations even us, NGOs or human rights organizations, we use digital tools, heavily, to reach the world because, in

¹⁰⁶ 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

¹⁰⁷ Aouragh, "Everyday Resistance on the Internet." P.2; 6-7; 9;14.

¹⁰⁸ Aouragh P.2;8-9; "To Exist Is To Resist." P.89.

¹⁰⁹ Aouragh, "Everyday Resistance on the Internet." P.8-9.

addition to the whole idea of resources, finances, and everything. It's a good, a good tool in addition to all the restrictions that we have on the ground.¹¹⁰

The prevalence of social media in news sharing, for example through livestreams, changed the traditional roles of recipient and producer. It allowed individuals to become active news producers through citizen journalism, eyewitness reports, and recordings.¹¹¹ The recreation of real-time events through recordings from multiple angles, and the ability of directly sharing this content with followers give a learning opportunity to the viewer to understand the realities on the ground from an own perspective. The internet's role evolved from addressing issues of immobility and occupation to enhancing global visibility and disseminating political messages. Social media enabled participatory activism and counter-narratives to Zionist dominance, whereas social media platforms have been bridging the gap between activists on the ground and those in the diaspora. Hashtags are being used, and international solidarity events and news are circulating quickly. Social media allowed the creative output of digital anti-colonial resilience. Youth in Palestine engage in resilience by using social media to share their knowledge, create awareness and show Palestinian life, reaching far beyond their own community.¹¹²

The activism surrounding the Sheikh Jarrah movement in 2021 showcased the power of hybrid and especially digital activism, rallying global attention to the ongoing forced displacement of Palestinians while providing context to reality in a fluid and digital form of *sumud*. The impact of the Sheikh Jarrah movement in 2021 in the words of the residents of Sheikh Jarrah:

Many people have solidarity with the Palestinians, and Palestinians come here when they see these videos, and also the media and the public come here. Channels like Al-Jazeera or other Arabic channels and other foreign channels, come here. A lot has progressed, but there are still problems. There is more solidarity. I tell you, we have young people here, who are very good at social media and they can make the name of Sheikh Jarrah internationally known. This is very good. There is more solidarity. In Sheikh Jarrah, in Jerusalem, in Palestine. There is more solidarity because the people now know the truth. Israel before only lied and lied. Everybody believed the lies, but now no. With social media, people can see reality through videos now. We have everything, every video here, when they shoot, when they throw stones when they broke the cars, everything we documented. [...]

One day Al Jazeera came here to interview someone popular from here. Muna El-Kurd. They ask her if everybody is suffering here in Jerusalem, then why is

¹¹⁰ 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

¹¹¹ Albana S. Dwonch, *Palestinian Youth Activism in the Internet Age Online and Offline Social Networks after the Arab Spring* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2021); Rola Khalid Yousef, "Palestinian Youth Engagement with Online Political Contents Shared by Citizen Journalists—The Case of Save Sheikh Jarrah," *CyberOrient* 16, no. 2 (December 2022): 32–64, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cyo2.28>. P.34.

¹¹² Dwonch, *Palestinian Youth Activism in the Internet Age Online and Offline Social Networks after the Arab Spring*; Yousef, "Palestinian Youth Engagement with Online Political Contents Shared by Citizen Journalists—The Case of Save Sheikh Jarrah." P.35.

Sheikh Jarrah more known? She told them: I do a good job and we work well in social media.¹¹³

Activism that combines on the ground action with social media activism is seen as a potential tool to generate international awareness, solidarity and support. Moreover, the use of social media and smart phones to document assaults, attacks and other forms of human right's violations to create evidence is perceived of utmost importance and functions as well to spread news on a local level.

A lot of social media? Of course. When there are difficulties or problems here, when there are at attacks, we share videos or pictures and information. We have groups on WhatsApp, and on Facebook, we have a page for Sheikh Jarrah where we spread the problems.¹¹⁴

Every Friday, Sheikh Jarrah's residents protest alongside solidarity movements, composed of Jewish, Arab, and foreign solidarity activists, carrying Palestinian flags to protest the ongoing ethnic cleansing in their neighborhood. At the same time, a settler group, carrying Israeli flags, has been coming for 15 years to counterprotest and provoke the weekly demonstration.

Every Friday, there is a huge settler group coming carrying Israeli flags. On the other side to provoke the demonstration. And the policemen and Israeli soldiers protect the settlers. Because they have a permission for this demonstration, for this reason, for about 15 years. When they shout the settlers, what do they shout? They shout "We want the death, Death for Arabs, we don't need Arabs to stay here. It is our land."

But we, what do we shout? We say that we want peace. We want to live peacefully here. We don't want to repeat the Nakba. We left our home there because we were afraid for our kids and our families, and we left, but we shall not repeat. We shall not leave this area because we don't have any other option. Where should we go?¹¹⁵

Suspected to ongoing settler colonial violence, Palestinian inhabitants of Sheikh Jarrah actively need to protect their properties and cars daily, staying in close vicinity to their homes to protect their properties if needed. They are mainly depending on themselves and have a strong sense of community, holding on to their ties through on and offline means.

Social media has a basic role in resistance. Everyone uses it here. The new generation, I tell you, the new generation, the Israeli state has problems with the new generation. They are more active, and stronger. They are not afraid of anything. Yeah, because I see my son, he is coming to the court laughing and always smiling. He was arrested and he smiled. They, took him 29 days in administrative detention.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah.

¹¹⁴ Families of Sheikh Jarrah.

¹¹⁵ Abu Omar, Interview with Abu Omar - Sheikh Jarrah.

¹¹⁶ Abu Ramadan, Interview with Abu Ramadan - Sheikh Jarrah.

The younger generation of Sheikh Jarrah residents is especially determined to express their resilience through various means. Laughing, smiling, and preserving their own humanity while being detained, standing firm against a system of erasure politics. Mohammad El-Kurd, a prominent figure and poet from the neighborhood, dedicated his debut poetry collection *Rifqa*, to his grandmother, an iconic activist and well-known person in Jerusalem. In a context, where everything is political, cultural production in form of poetry, has had a long history within Palestinian understanding of self-determination.¹¹⁷

Even though displaced from their original village and oftentimes facing mobility restrictions, Palestinians, if possible, travel to their places of origin. This is done to see the traces of their houses and to raise their children and grandchildren with awareness of the ethnic cleansing that happened to their families in 1948.

I am from a village called Lifta. Lifta is, now replaced, it is called now with (Mei Neftoach) settlement and central Bus Station. Yeah, the central Bus Station. We go there every year. Twice or three times just to see our buildings, our properties there, there are still traces of the houses there. We go there to let our kids and our children and grandchildren see the land of mothers and fathers and grandfathers.¹¹⁸

By remaining close ties to their roots, they establish a close bond for themselves and their family members, maintaining their *sumud* and connection to the land and a new form of collective memory work.

Digital occupation emerged as a byproduct of digital activism in Palestine. Palestinian online activists are being surveilled and infrastructure is attacked. The Israeli state and affiliated propaganda organizations have been increasing their digital efforts to silence, harass, threaten and to disseminate misinformation and influence global policies.¹¹⁹

In this regard, the Sheikh Jarrah movement was also significant for gaining more insights into the makeup of the digital sphere revolving around social media activism. Palestinians are confronted with various forms of persecution and infringements against their digital rights from several sources. 7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of social media collected concrete evidence and proof about digital discrimination of Palestinians and their narrative as well as content over moderation regarding Palestinian content, activism and the Arabic language during May 2021¹²⁰. 7amleh is an NGO that monitors and documents efforts at digital

¹¹⁷ Mohammed El-Kurd and Aja Monet, *Rifqa* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2021).

¹¹⁸ Abu Omar, Interview with Abu Omar - Sheikh Jarrah.

¹¹⁹ Aouragh P.2;7-9; 18-19; “To Exist Is To Resist.” 89.

¹²⁰ 7amleh, “The Attacks on Palestinian Digital Rights Progress Report, May 6-19, 2021”; 7amleh, “Hashtag Palestine 2022”; 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

ensorship and repression, raises awareness through the publishing of awareness reports, educates through research, and facilitates training sessions, describing their role in enabling the digital presence and affirmation of Palestinian digital rights as follows:

Anyone here and especially maybe, abroad outside Palestine who is active for the Palestinian cause. They are being attacked. They are being smeared. So, we hold many training sessions, to enable people to work and to protect themselves online. Teaching them how to evade the censorship and all types of tools. In addition to that, we say, if you are being censored or smeared or something, we have the tools to protect you if you are hacked. We provide technical support. We are trusted partners with META, TikTok Twitter, with YouTube. So, we try to help and to protect, to retrieve accounts, to remove content attacks against civil society, organizational activists. In the work that we do, we advocate and try to push big Tech companies to change policies so they give more space to Palestinian voices. We document hundreds of thousands of Israeli content inciting hate and violence against Palestinians.¹²¹

The limitations of the digital sphere and, accordingly, the infringement of digital rights became apparent during this period. Social Media platforms allowed for wider reach, but also subjected users to removal of content, surveillance and censorship on both ends. Until today, this interplay, oftentimes a cat-and-mouse game, between Palestinians and Israeli forces prevail. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authorities target activists and journalists on social media for prosecution. There have been several instances in which activists have been sent to imprisonment due to expressing their dissatisfaction and viewpoints using digital means. Currently a crackdown on Palestinian activists is becoming more apparent.¹²²

Despite the attempt at digital control by the occupying power and the autonomous authority, the dissemination of news and the distribution of visual media capturing the daily life of people in occupied territories can be achieved quickly through the use of a smartphone and access to the Internet. Despite challenges from Israeli authorities and the Palestinian leadership, the internet continues to serve as a powerful tool for Palestinian activists to raise awareness, challenge biased media, and foster global solidarity. Youth engagement in political activities serves as a form of resistance against occupation, creating awareness and sparking change within their societies. Palestinian resistance efforts are ongoing and continue to evolve in response to changing circumstances. Grassroots activism, digital activism and mobilization,

¹²¹ 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

¹²² "Israel Arrested 410 Palestinians for Social Media Activity in 2022, Report Says," *Middle East Monitor* (blog), January 5, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230105-israel-arrested-410-palestinians-for-social-media-activity-in-2022-report-says/>; "Israel's Persecution of Palestinian Social-Media Activists Slammed by Rights Groups," Arab News, January 8, 2023, <https://arab.news/9g646>; Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah; 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

political organizing, and international advocacy all contribute to the ongoing anti-colonial struggle against ethnic cleansing and for Palestinian people's rights, dignity, and sovereignty.

About the resistance, of course, we will stay. We will stay. We will never leave. We are right here and we will never leave. never, I tell you, we never give up. What happened to our fathers and to our grandfathers will not happen to us. We will fight. Yeah. A Peaceful, peaceful resistance.

We, as I told you, all of us here will stay in this neighborhood because this is our country, our land. It is not for settlers, not for someone who came from the outside..

We shall not repeat the Nakba as our fathers and grandfathers who lived from their villages. we shall not again repeat this, we should not be made refugees again. No more refugees.

We will stay here, all of us.

All citizens of Palestinians will stay.

In 1948 many people were forced to leave under weapons, under attacking. But here in the 1967 war, more people stayed in their lands and homes. They didn't repeat the Nakba.

But we will not give up. We are here. We can't be refugees again.

Again, it can't be. So, we shall stay in our houses here and our land at the same time.¹²³

Indigenous resilience is more often characterized through fluid on-the-ground action connected to the digital in the highly globalized times of 2023, which helps to amplify lived realities and influence the dominant patterns of narrative framing in a multilayered counteraction to expulsion. Using strategies using community outreach and legal strategies. Despite the challenges and dispossessions they faced, Palestinians continued to assert their rights and resist displacement. Protests, strikes, as well as, organized resistance efforts were carried out to defend their lands and homes. These acts of resilience demonstrate the Palestinians determination to preserve their heritage on the land.

¹²³ Families of Sheikh Jarrah, Interview with Families of Sheikh Jarrah.

Exploring Indigenous Resilience in East Jerusalem through the lens of social media: The Gaith-Sub-Laban Family

The actions of resistance by Palestinians and their allies will become increasingly vital in the months and years to come¹²⁴

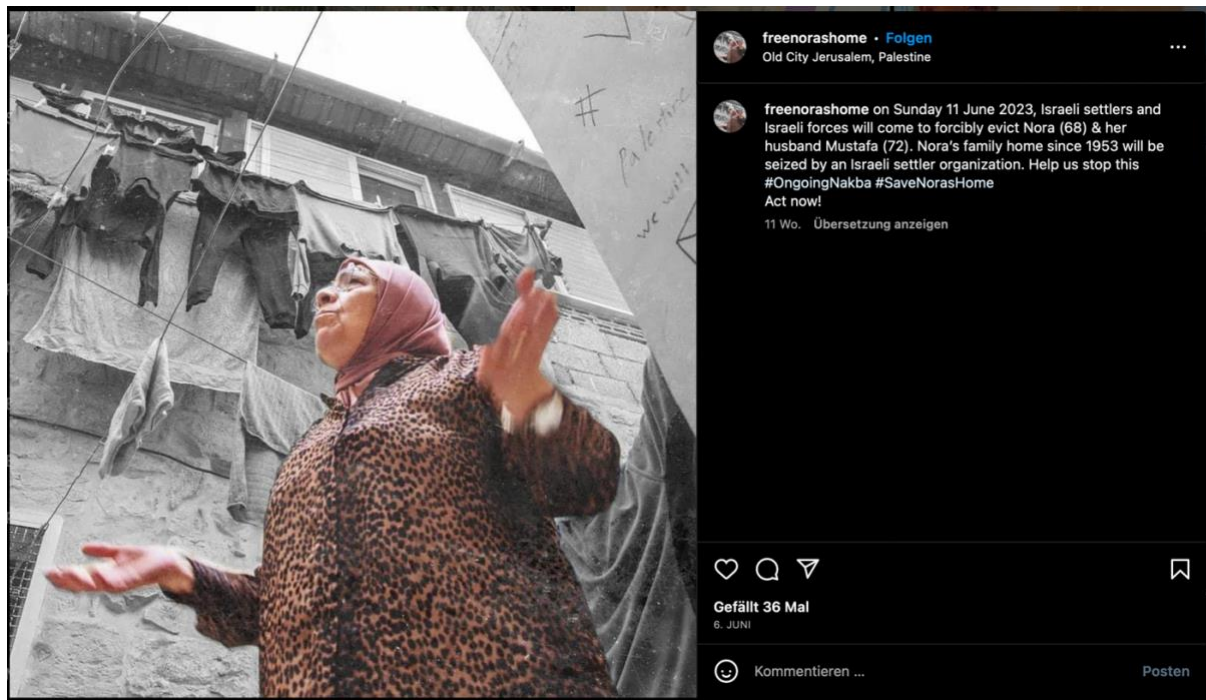
To explore the activism around the displacement case of the Gaith-Sub Laban family, I will explore the Instagram page @freenorashome to highlight how Nora and her family were counteracting their dispossession and narrating their personal story of ethnic cleansing using their Instagram page as a space for sumud, creating a real-time window into the lived experiences of indigenous people trying to stay on their land. Leading up to the forced displacement, the Gaith-Sub Laban Family has actively opposed repeated lawsuits, and harassment by Israeli authorities and settler organizations through legal means and through being active on the ground and in the digital space.¹²⁵ Through sharing pictures, videos and their words through caption, it becomes possible to see their activism as a closely knit picture of the family's daily realities. Keeping daily updates on their Instagram account created the possibility for observers, and in fact, everyone who has access to the digital sphere, to follow the displacement of the Gaith-Sub Labans' in real time. The family shared their perspective and standpoint over the course of over a month prior to their displacement, highlighting the time before their eviction, the eviction itself and the aftermath.

The main focus of exploration concerns the first phase of posts related to the time before the eviction, marked by legal proceedings and the determination to actively stay on the land, gaining awareness and solidarity and to make their voices heard. Post 1, dated 06.06.2023, until Post 11, dated 09.06.2023, highlight the call for the protest as well as the protest from multiple angles.¹²⁶ In their first post, the family is starting a call for protest in both Arabic and Hebrew. A picture of Nora is seen with the caption: "on Sunday, 11 June 2023, Israeli settlers and Israeli forces will come to forcibly evict Nora (68) & her husband Mustafa (72). Nora's family home since 1953 will be seized by an Israeli settler organization. Help us stop this #OngoingNakba #SaveNorasHome Act now!".

¹²⁴ "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In."

¹²⁵ @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome."

¹²⁶ @freenorashome. Post #8, 09.07.2023; Post #12, 10.10.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023, Post #23, 20.06.2023; Post #29, 23.06.2023;



Videos of the protests in front of Nora’s home on June 8th, 2023, are posted. In the videos settlers are seen in a confrontation with protesters and the Israeli forces coming to end the protest, detaining protesters in front of the house. This event was filmed and posted from multiple angles. Activism leading up to the eviction was characterized by advocating on multiple levels, within the digital sphere, through legal channels and on the ground. Weekly protests, asking for the international community to influence the Israeli government and asking for international solidarity, sharing live stories, sharing parts of life. Thus, humanizing their experience of uncertainty, fear, hope and solidarity, while closely communicating the ongoing legal proceedings. But also, to actively stand in front of their house and educate tourists on the street about the family’s ongoing legal fight against their displacement. The family showed their resilience and *sumud* through multiple avenues claiming their Palestinian identity loud and proud, through showing flags, making noise on the streets and online.¹²⁷

Advocating in their own cause, the family, through the output of their Instagram account, assessed their own reality within a broader Palestinian as well as anti-colonial and anti-Apartheid struggle.¹²⁸ This can be exemplified in a video post from June 10th, 2023, produced by the group Free Jerusalem (@free_jlm). The video summarizes the case of Nora and asks for

¹²⁷ @freenorashome. Post #23 20.06.2023.

¹²⁸ @freenorashome. For example Post #12 10.06.2023.

solidarity activists and people to come forward and support the family in their fight against the looming displacement. The transcript of the content of the video reads as follows:

„Starting on Sunday, June 11th the Sub Laban Family will be in imminent danger of eviction!“

Cut to an interview with Nora: „I’ve lived in this house my entire life. My father passed away in this house. My mother passed away in this house. All my life and all of my memories are in this house.“

The Sub Laban family has lived in the Old City of Jerusalem since they leased the house from the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property in the early 1950’s. After the 1967 occupation, the Israeli General Custodian took over the house, and since then, the family has been under constant threat of eviction and settler takeover. The eviction is based on alleged Jewish ownership of the property before 1948 while hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who lost their homes in 1948 are denied the same right to reclaim property. The Sub Laban family is the last Palestinian family in the building. All other apartments have been seized by settlers as part of the efforts to „Judaize“ East Jerusalem.

Cut to an interview with Nora: The Palestinian people were displaced in ’48, displaced in ’67 and this is the third displacement. “

In 2018 after Nora moved in temporarily with her children to receive medical care the Israeli court decided her brief absence justified revoking her protected tenant status and ordered the eviction of her family“

Cut to an interview with Nora: „Now they made a decision that on June 11, 2023 we will be evicted. They think this house is stones. It is not stones. It is my memories and my life. I ask the world to stand in solidarity with me, to visit, see my home, see how I live. I hope the international community will pressure the Israeli government. No occupation of foreign lands lasts forever. The occupation will end. We will return to the houses, to the lands, and everything that was taken from us will return to us.

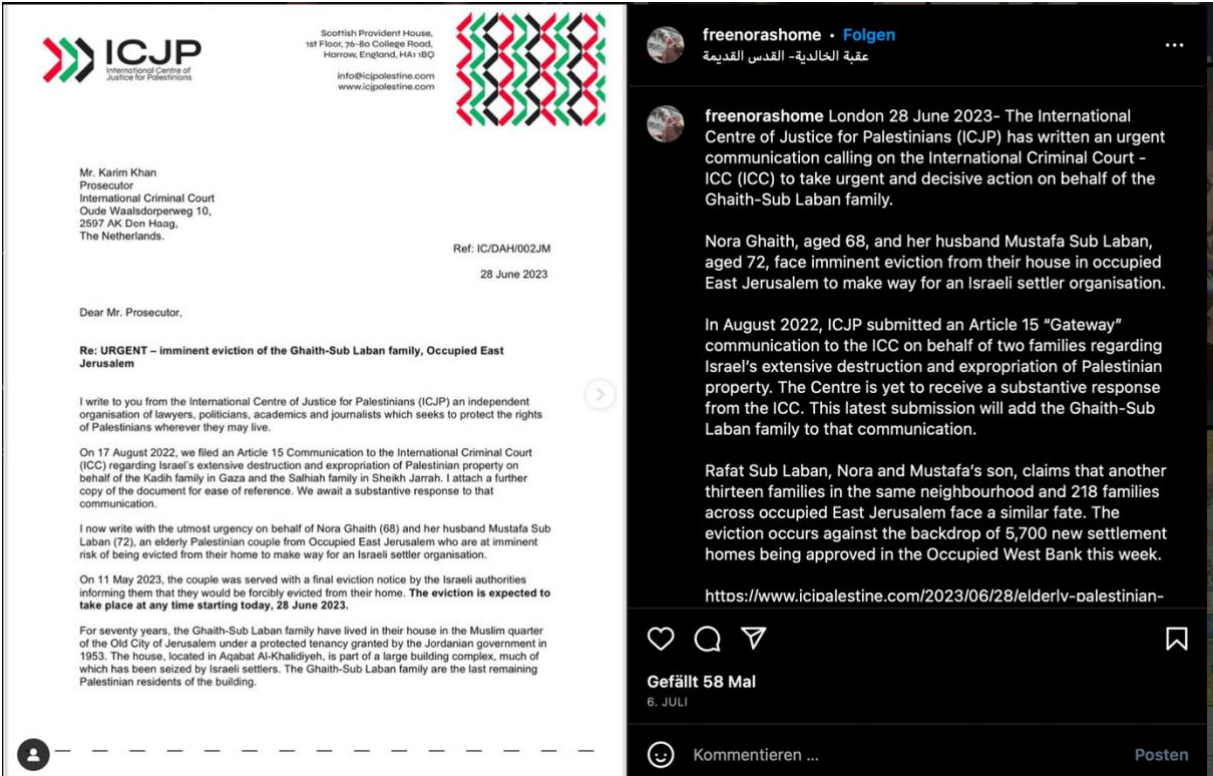
Caption: If the international community doesn’t take substantive action soon to stop this brutal system of oppression and creeping colonial expansion in Palestine, our people will slowly perish, get pushed into cantons, or out of all historical Palestine. Act now. It’s time for sanctions and real action. Apartheid in South Africa didn’t fall from itself. It took both action of South African Aboriginal communities and members of the international community admitting reality for what it is, and no longer tolerating and justifying the actions of the bully.¹²⁹

The video spreads awareness and highlights an ongoing Nakba and the threat of eviction for the very specific case of the Gaith-Sub Laban family. The family addressed the international community, as well as the family’s digital community, and asked for an understanding and lobbying for their case. They appeal to the community to understand the Palestinian context within a colonial and apartheid framework to accurately understand their ongoing reality. Through the content posted on the Instagram account @freenorashome, the Gaith-Sub Laban family explicitly highlight the context of their long legal battle to keep their house, stretching

¹²⁹ @freenorashome. Post #12, 10.06.2023.

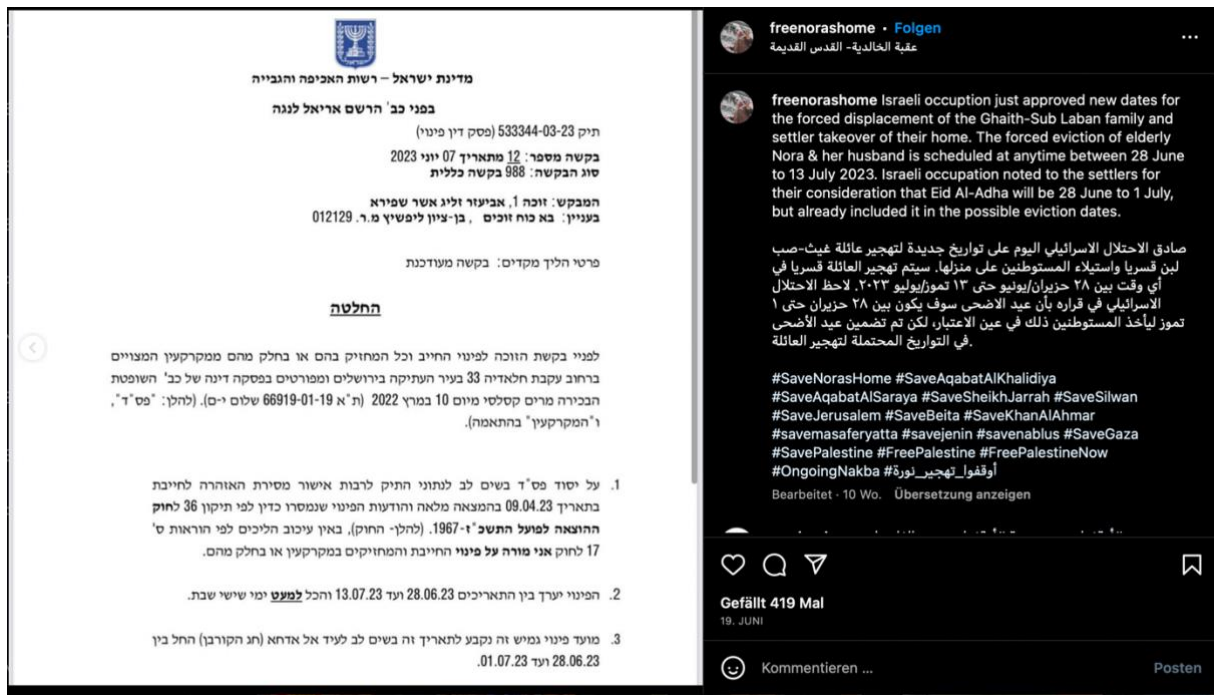
for over 47 years. They set their example within a broader expansionist scheme of a settler colonial entity and a prolonged ethnic cleansing that currently targets their family while also targeting others in the same community simultaneously. By putting their awareness about how their legal battle evolves, they refuse the claims made by the Israeli state, depicting their legal case as a property dispute. In the video, Nora repeatedly appeals to humanity and empathy by explaining the importance of the house and the significance of the memories the space holds for her.

In a similar vein, Post #23, 20.06.2023, Post #26, 21.06.2023, or Post #31, 06.07.2023, also show calls for the end of ethnic cleansing and calls for refugee’s rights to return to the properties owned in 1948. Through this, the Instagram page @freenorashome creates a digital evidence timeline of their own displacement while calling for their voices to be heard and their rights as refugees to be upheld.



Post #31, 06.07.2023 updates about the local, as well as, international legal procedures concerning the family and shows the families activism efforts in connecting to human rights organizations, taking on their case on the global level. The International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) for instance, has written an urgent “communication calling on the

International Criminal Court - ICC (ICC) to take urgent and decisive action on behalf of the Ghaith-Sub Laban family.”¹³⁰

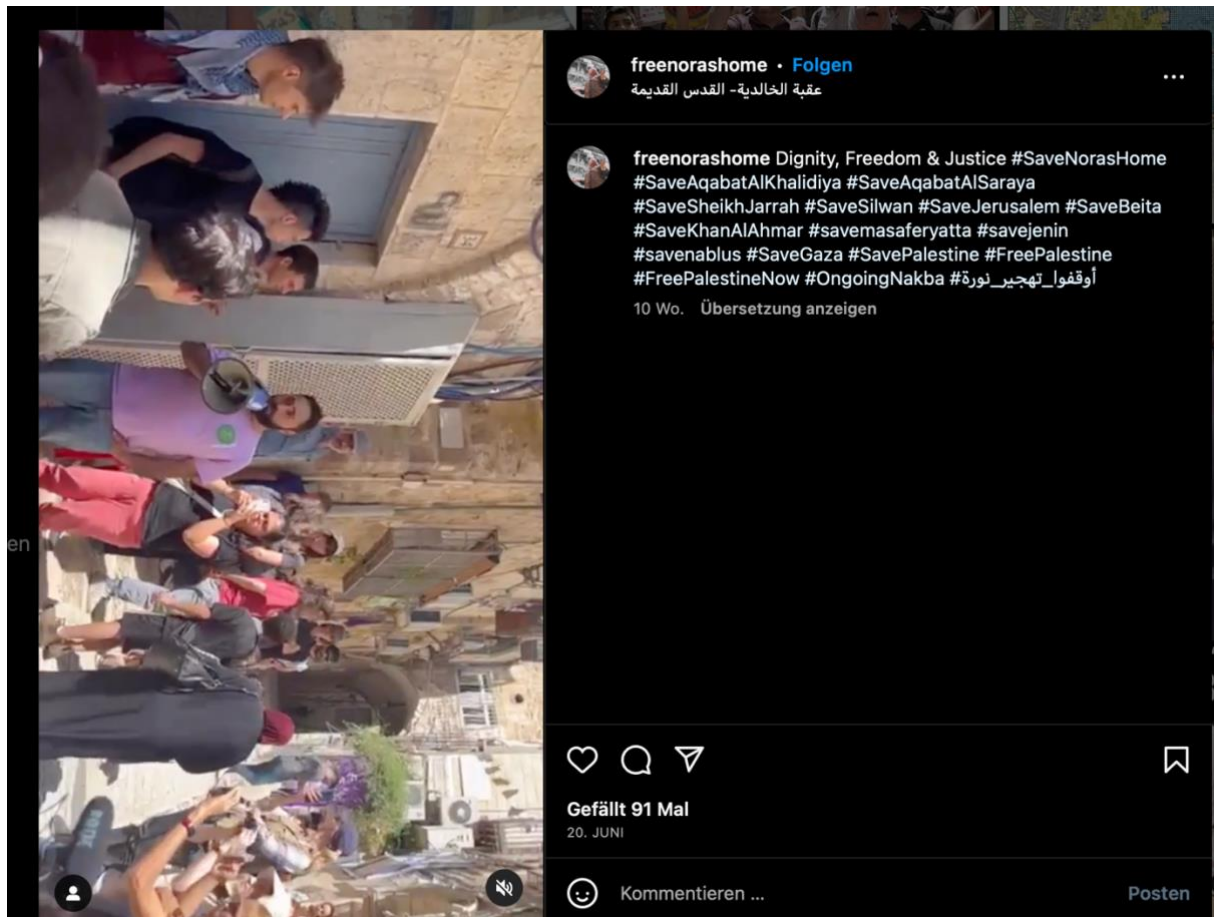


Post #22, 19.06.2023, shows the eviction notice by the Israeli state providing the viewer of the content with detailed information about how the eviction will take place and what the family’s understanding and knowledge of the situation is.¹³¹ Through their posts, they appeal to their followers' common sense and humanity in joining them actively on the streets, being vocal in their own countries, if outside of Palestine, or fighting for their fundamental human rights through education, spreading awareness, and showing solidarity work in the form of translation, thus spreading the family’s story to different countries through the digital sphere. Additionally, the content is being produced in multiple languages, Arabic, English, and Hebrew, with a core message of an anti-colonial stance with a call for an international solidarity movement to end the ongoing Apartheid realities and establish the Palestinian people's human rights in the global sphere. Their standpoint reflects the idea that Israel is subjecting Palestinians to daily war crimes and a mindless oppression that has been taking place for 75 years while maintaining the façade of a democracy. This façade is upheld through a 75-yearlong Nakba denial, although the dispossession of Palestinians and erasure of their narrative is a continuous event that happens every day. Through their Instagram account, the family contextualizes a system behind their

¹³⁰ @freenorashome. Post #31, 06.07.2023

¹³¹ @freenorashome. Post #22, 19.06.2023.

own ethnic cleansing, which, facilitated by the Israeli authorities, security forces & Israeli courts in collusion with Israeli settler groups, is actively working to displace Palestinians out of the Old City, Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah and other neighborhoods to replace them with Jewish settlers. The Gaith-Sub Laban's defy the dominant Israeli government's claim that these evictions are private property disputes to which the state isn't a party, despite the clear evidence of Israeli authorities and courts working hand in hand with settlers to forcibly displace Palestinians. In short, the family's standpoint summarized is stance against colonialism, occupation, racism, and apartheid and a call for an end to the ongoing realities of forced evictions in occupied territory while affirming Palestinian rights to dignity, freedom, and justice.¹³²



In the regard of reframing of the dominant narrative, incorporating the context of their situation with an unbiased but anti-colonial approach, the family explicitly bases humanity and logical thinking at the core of their activism. Addressing journalists, diplomats, activists, and the

¹³² @freenorashome. Post #8, 09.06.2023; Post #9, 09.06.2023; Post #10, 09.06.2023; Post #14, 12.06.2023; Post #16, 13.06.2023; Post #17, 13.06.2023, Post #24, 20.06.2023; Post #25, 20.06.2023

general public and combining individuals from all backgrounds and places, they not make any difference between people, focusing on the right to exist and co-exist, as a Palestinian, Israeli, Muslims, Christians, Jew or foreigners. Through this they break down the claim of the Israeli narrative, which combines Palestinian backwardness, terrorism and Nakba denial to frame the realities on the ground as a millennium old conflict of religious nature.

To counteract digital restrictions and spread their word, they asked people to share their content, use their preferred hashtags and show solidarity by digitally exposing the truth in multiple posts, such as Post #25, 20.06.2023, Post #27, 21.06.2023, Post #28, 21.06.2023 (Arabic), or Post #29, 23.06.2023.¹³³

Help us save Nora's home & neighborhood in the Muslim Quarter of occupied Jerusalem's Old City from being seized by Israeli occupation & its settlers. From Jerusalem's Old City, to Silwan & Sheikh Jarrah, to Khan Al-Ahmar, Masafer Yatta, to Nablus & Jenin. All across historical Palestine, Israel is displacing, oppressing, killing & maiming Palestinians. It's been doing it for 75 years with no consequences.

THIS VIOLENT & RACIST COLONIAL APARTHEID REGIME MUST FALL We need help translating to other languages, sharing updates with the press and social medial influencers. Any help with advocacy & campaigning efforts are also welcome. Help amplify our voice & let the world know what's happening. Connect us with politicians, allies & friends, from all faiths & all over the world. Our struggle is a united front against racism, hate & oppression.¹³⁴

Other content ties the family's history to Jerusalem dating back to Ottoman times. They talk about their family's history before, during and after the Nakba to assert their own claims over their belonging to the city. They situate their own imminent displacement within the broader setting of the history of over 100 years of settler colonialism and Palestinian ethnic cleansing. The Gaith-Sub Laban's refuse to be silent victims and vow to make their voices heard, being very vocal about their version of Palestinian sumud.

We, the grandchildren of Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalili - Sub Laban, Mufti of Jerusalem for the Shafi'i school during the Ottoman rule, died in Jerusalem in 1734 and buried within the walls of Al-Aqsa Compound. We're also the grandchildren of Areefih & Jamil Ghaith, who got married in west Jerusalem villages in 1945 and were displaced during the Nakba of 1948. Today Israel is working to forcibly evict elderly Nora Ghaith (68) & Mustafa Al-Khalili (73) from the home Nora's family rented from Jordan after being displaced during the Nakba.

Both Nora's and Mustafa's families, as well as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, had their property & towns confiscated/demolished by Israel and its settlers in 1948 & 1967, and now they claim ownership of the family's home in occupied Jerusalem's Old City, and want to displace by force our elderly

¹³³ @freenorashome. Post #1 06.06.2023; Post #2 06.06.2023; Post #30, 06.07.2023

¹³⁴ @freenorashome. Post #25, 20.06.2023

parents, after they banned us in 2016 from living with them by order of the Israeli High Court of INJUSTICE that made it grounds to evict our parents if we or their grandchildren continued to live with them! We tell them: GIVE US AND OUR PEOPLE BACK WHAT'S OURS, ALLOW OUR DISPLACED PEOPLE TO RETURN FROM THEIR REFUGE, THEN COME CLAIM WHAT YOU ALLEGE IS YOURS. We refuse to be a silent victim and & easy prey for the Israeli occupation. Our cause is just. This is our city & neighborhood. We will continue our peaceful struggle & human rights campaigning until the end of the occupation, and ending the daily displacement & killing of Palestinians & stop the #OngoingNakba.¹³⁵

Multiple posts on the Instagram page highlight an understanding of the multiple divides and conquer tactics related to the narrative framing implemented by the Israeli state and its allies. Multiple posts, such as Post #18, 13.06.2023, Post #21, 16.06.2023, or Post #32 08.07.2023, therefore highlight the family's understanding of these tactics and their understanding of community and solidarity, showing them standing, sitting and advocating for their cause with support by a variety of actors from different backgrounds.



The Gaith-Sub Laban's post pictures of them standing next to Jewish solidarity activists, holding hands and signs that read „Jewish + Arab Men refuse to be enemies“ captioning their post “Brothers & sisters in humanity, united in their struggle against racism, oppression, occupation & apartheid. United we stand till this brutal settler colonial regime is dismantled.”¹³⁶ Similar pictures show them together with religious entities such as the Neturei Kara Jewish

¹³⁵ @freenorashome. Post #29, 23.06.2023 – English version. The Arabic version was posted in Post #28, 21.06.2023.

¹³⁶ @freenorashome. Post #32, 08.07.2023.

Community, or the World Council of Churches, imagining a time when Jews, Muslims and Christians coexisted peacefully in Jerusalem and Palestine.

Our friends from the Neturei Karta Jewish community visited the Ghaith-Sub Laban family. They expressed outrage at what Israeli authorities & settlers have been doing to Nora & her family over the past 47 years. We talked about a time when in Jerusalem & all of Palestine, Jews, Muslims & Christians lived side by side as brothers & sisters in humanity & peace. Today, we stand united against oppression, injustice & Zionism's racist colonial endeavor in Palestine over the past eight decades. Together we make a call for dignity, freedom & justice for all. Nobody is free, until we're all free.¹³⁷

Through this, they reaffirm their support to and by other religious entities, framing their standpoint as a fight against Zionism as a racist colonial endeavor in Palestine and not as an ethnic or religious conflict rooted in antisemitism or hate but in the fight for justice and rights.



Post #18, which shows Nora in her living room with activists and members of the World Council of Churches, includes a message directly addressed to Israel, Benyamin Netanyahu and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

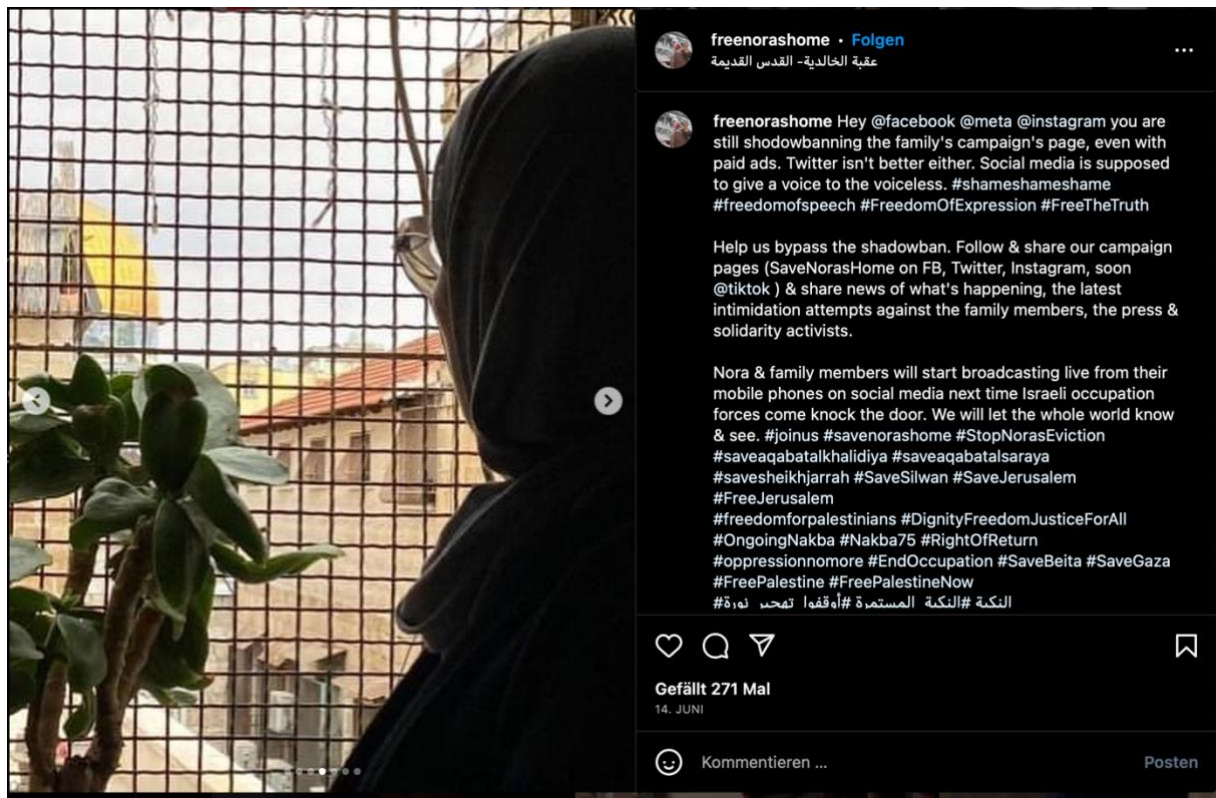
Our message to Israel, Israelis, @b.netanyahu, @itamarbengvir : Oppression, Hate & Violence will only yield more Hate & Violence & perpetuate conflict. It's time to do better, hold a mirror, self reflect on Israel's legacy the past 75 years. We can either fight for this land for the next 100 years, or learn how to do better for our childrens' and grandchildrens' sake. There is no other way forward towards resolving this historical injustice without ceasing all the violence, dispossession, displacement, killing & incarceration as a prerequisite for any

¹³⁷ @freenorashome. Such as the caption of Post #21, 16.06.2023.

meaningful talks. Then proceed with recognition, return, humanity, dignity & freedom for all.¹³⁸

For the family the conflict is not about religion but about core human rights and imagining a more just and peaceful future, always returning to the core anti-colonial stance in their affirmation of their sumud and standpoint.

The Gaith-Sub Laban Family is also aware of the context in which their hybrid work is done. In the Palestinian case the digital sphere oftentimes relates to digital discrimination and digital divide. Given the inherent differences between Israeli propaganda, international media channels, and official Palestinian state media, it is of utmost importance for Palestinians to confidently advocate for their cause and counter efforts to distort factual information.



In the caption of one of their posts, dated 14.06.2023, the directly address META, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. “Hey @facebook @meta @instagram you are still shadow banning the family's campaign's page, even with paid ads. Twitter isn't better either. Social media is supposed to give a voice to the voiceless. #shameshameshame #freedomofspeech #FreedomOfExpression #FreeTheTruth”¹³⁹ To counteract the shadow-banning they explicitly

¹³⁸ @freenorashome. Post #18, 13.06.2023

¹³⁹ @freenorashome. Post #19, 14.06.2023.

ask their followers to repost and share their content, which is a useful tool in counteracting online discrimination.

Help us bypass the shadow ban. Follow & share our campaign pages (SaveNorasHome on FB, Twitter, Instagram, soon @tiktok) & share news of what's happening, the latest intimidation attempts against the family members, the press & solidarity activists. Nora & family members will start broadcasting live from their mobile phones on social media next time Israeli occupation forces come knock the door. We will let the whole world know & see¹⁴⁰

The media and social media bias is well-known and directly targeted here through the caption. Again, on the ground and digital sphere interlink with each other. Asking the community, on the ground and in the digital space, to take their own personal spaces to help the voice of Nora to reach others. The family uses live broadcasting tools to show violence directly when it is happening and, through this, creates citizen journalism. In cases of political oppression and no freedom of speech, in which Israeli legislations are criminalizing the filming of human rights violations perpetrated by Israeli forces, Palestinians took it upon themselves to film and share citizen journalist accounts to their social media platforms, reaching thousands of people outside of Palestine – describing in different languages what was happening. Since 2021, the Palestinian diaspora also increasingly produced social media accounts and content to voice Palestinian realities. In light of the success of the Sheikh Jarrah movement in broadcasting lived experiences of dispossession and threat of displacement, there is more digital discrimination that Palestinians are facing. This was moreover proofed in different reports by 7amleh, the NGO fighting for Palestinian digital rights.¹⁴¹

The Gaith-Sub Laban's do not shy away from providing their followers with an in-depth experience of their realities and the suppression they experience. The family reports to their Instagram page's followers changes to their case, posting official legal documents, maps, and pictures to visualize every development in their case, creating a sort of live ticker to keep their followers in the loop and constantly updated about the current state of affairs.

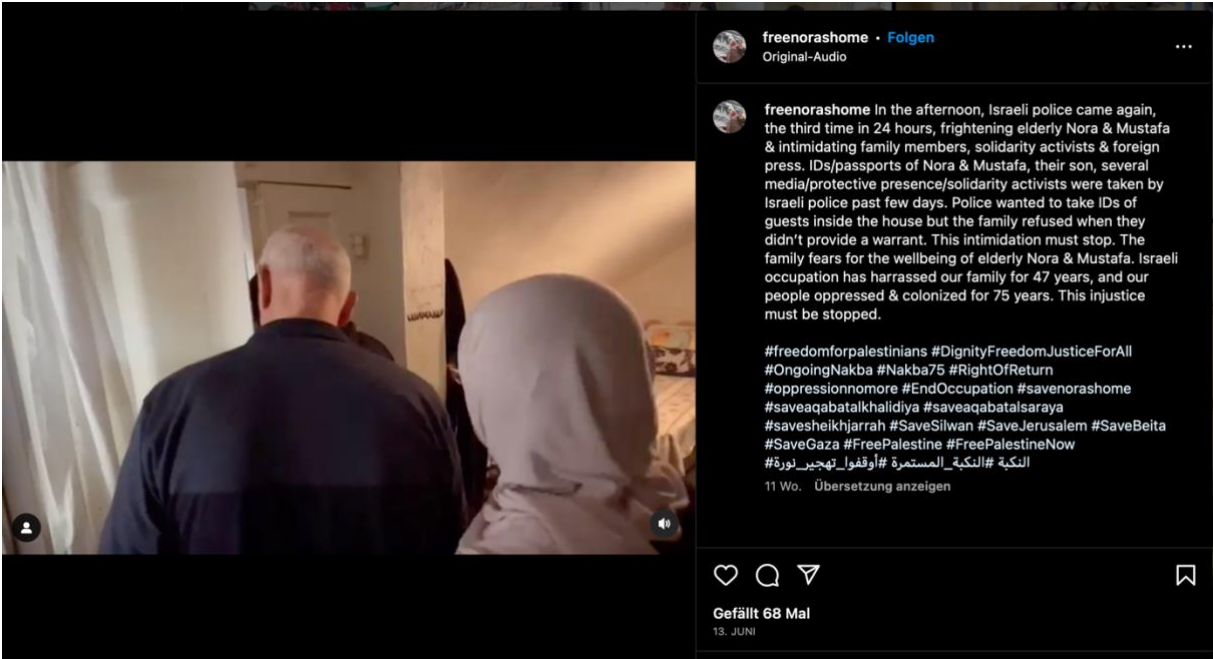
The Instagram account also sheds light on the ongoing harassment by Israeli settlers accompanied by Israeli authorities and officials.¹⁴² Video content leading up to the displacement of the family highlighted footage of the protest from different angles, giving an insight into the realities on the ground. Through examining the video content of the protest, the complicity

¹⁴⁰ @freenorashome. Post #19, 14.06.2023.

¹⁴¹ 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media; 7amleh, "Hashtag Palestine 2022"; 7amleh, Interview with a spokesperson of 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

¹⁴² @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome." Post #4, 08.06.2023; Post #5, 09.06.2023; Post #6, 09.06.2023; Post #7, 09.06.2023; Post #8, 09.06.2023; Post #9, 09.06.2023; Post #10, 09.06.2023; Post #11, 09.06.2023

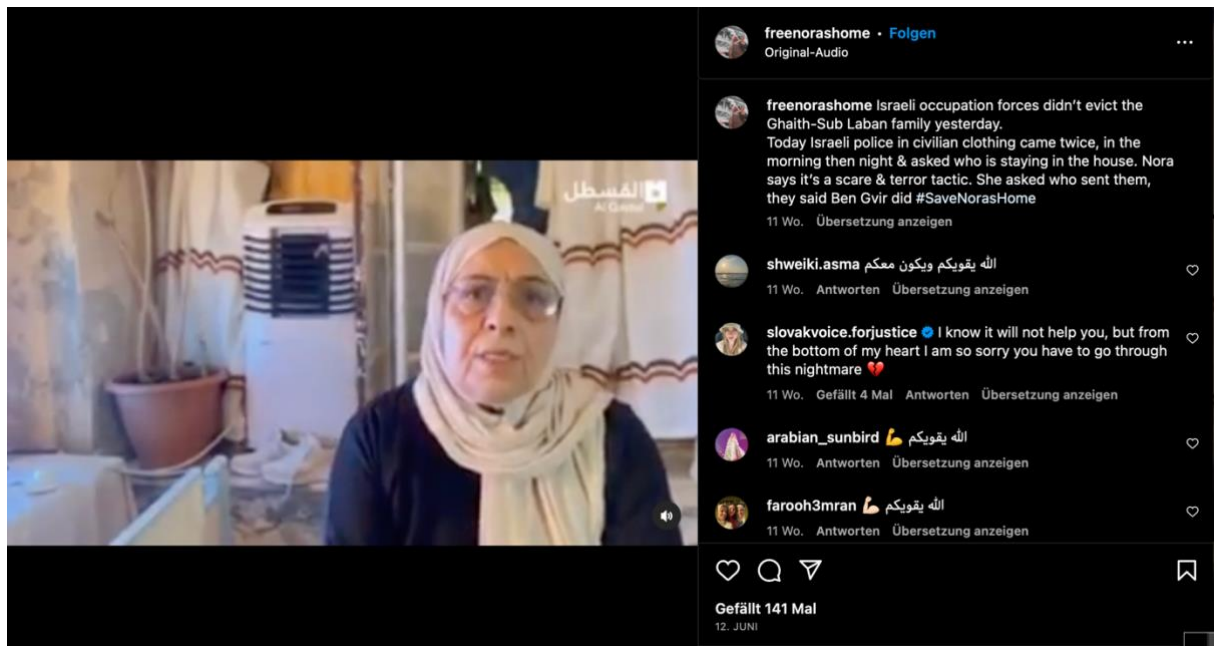
between Israeli forces and settler groups becomes apparent. Settler, such as Eli Attal, involved in the eviction lawsuit against the Ghaith-Sub Laban’s and against other families in the same neighborhood, came to crash the protest and harass the family and solidarity activists for holding Palestinian flags. In other videos posted on June 9th. Jewish settlers are seen telling the family that the entire neighborhood will be Jewish in the future, expanding the Jewish Quarter.



Prior to the eviction, Israeli authorities tried to intimidate solidarity activists and supporters of the family through arrests, ID controls, and other forms of measures, that is often described as psychological warfare. Post #4, 08.06.2023; Post #5, 09.06.2023; Post #6, 09.06.2023; Post #7, 09.06.2023; Post #8, 09.06.2023; Post #9, 09.06.2023; Post #10, 09.06.2023; Post #11, 09.06.2023 highlight this reality through the provision of pictures and video content and statements by the Nora and other family members, in which they recount the intimidation tactics by Israeli police. Prior to the displacement, police arrested everyone carrying a Palestinian flag in front of the house, checked IDs, and showed their presence on the family's property.

The Israeli authorities waited to communicate a precise date for the eviction. A looming but imminent forced displacement caused severe psychological distress for the family. The days leading up to the displacement, activists remained with the family around the clock, as police in civilian clothing and private security guards came to the Gaith-Sub Laban home multiple times, saying Ben-Gvir sent them to control IDs. The family maintains the standpoint that, this

is another manifestation of Ben-Gvir and Netanyahu’s war on “Palestinian identity and [a] symbol of [a] stolen & occupied homeland.”¹⁴³



Through live streaming events or filming incidents and posting them as they happen, each individual at the scene can take up the role of a live reporter working individually. The collective effort of providing content shot from different angles and posting this type of content on Instagram using “umbrella” hashtags such as #savenorashome or linking the page @freenorashome in their content allows the virtual follower to explore realities on the ground from a multiangled perspective, and through that to reach one’s own conclusion. Through the families combined and hybrid activism, the viewer receives an opportunity and invitation to understand the family's standpoint from a close distance. Reposting original content allows followers to stay informed on a specific topic and to map through online content individually and to create their own understanding, categories, or classifications of the realities on the ground.

¹⁴³ @freenorashome. Post #24, 20.06.2023.



The Gaith-Sub Laban family eviction was a highly digitalized event producing live streams and videos from all angles, showing the timeline of the eviction and the emotional reactions of the family. Videos circulated on Instagram and were widely shared among solidarity activists, digital storytellers, and media companies from the MENA region. Remaining loud about their experience, family members are shown crying at the loss of their home, carrying a small tree as the only thing they take from the house. In one of the widely shared videos, Nora is seen crying out to settlers affirming her *sumud*,

God is greater than you, this government, this occupation, and colonization. Palestine will return to us. [...] This is my home, and I will return to it. Today it is a prisoner, but it will be free one day, and Jerusalem is Palestinian and Arab, and taking the house today will not change this fact.¹⁴⁴

In other videos and interviews, Nora and her sons are seen and heard, shedding light on their family story and connecting their personal experience and standpoint to the broader Palestinian experience in exposing the system Israel implements on Palestinians.

It's the full system, it's the courts, the municipality all of the government bodies working to make your life hell, to create a coercive environment, to just force you to leave, make you want to give up and leave. [...] It's a third displacement from our lands and our homes. This is a criminal occupation, a criminal colonization. 47 years I've spent in the courts. I'm not weak, just upset. They are stealing everything inside of you, your past and your memories. It is not just bricks; they steal what's inside of you. My home is captive. And one day it will be free. [...] The settlers and the Israeli government, the criminal government of

¹⁴⁴ Silwanic, "Pictures - Evacuation of the Ghaith /Sub Laban Family from Its Home in the Old City of Jerusalem"; "Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In"; @freenorashome, "Instagram Page @freenorashome."

Ben-Gvir, which has been committing crimes against us in Jenin, in Huwwara – and they have killed everywhere, in Silwan, in Sheikh Jarrah.¹⁴⁵

These accounts serve as an eyewitness tool, which enables a first-hand perspective on how the eviction took place and how emotional the loss of the house and all the belongings are for the Gaith-Sub Laban family. In the following days, videos that were posted on the Instagram page showed Israeli settlers, who had previously taken control of the Gaith-Sub Laban residence, removing the family's furniture from the premises. Concurrently, the Gaith-Sub Laban family and a group of activists assembled outside the residence to engage into a protest which led to the detention of Raafat Sub Laban and his later prevention of entering Jerusalem's Old Town for the following 10 days.¹⁴⁶



After the displacement the family, their Instagram account upheld the pattern of closely knit information sharing about their daily experiences with the Israeli authority and their legal state of affairs of their case. Overall, the Instagram user is receiving almost daily updates on the situation via posts, and story updates. These little glimpses into the family's life make up a big picture of a pattern. It portrays the happenings on the ground from different angles and can be re-posted and shared. Citizen journalism from a very transparent, though, private family manner was made public to show what is happening in real time. This documentation is required to refute claims and may possibly be used as evidence in future court cases.

¹⁴⁵ “Palestinian Sub Laban Family Evicted from Jerusalem Home as Settlers Move In”; @freenorashome, “Instagram Page @freenorashome.”

¹⁴⁶ Buxbaum, “Sub Laban Family”; @freenorashome, “Instagram Page @freenorashome.”



On July 23rd 2023, following their eviction and the clearance of their furniture from the property, the family set up a living room on the street and held their personal Nakba Exhibition in front of the seized house. The family also participated in sharing cultural production, such as a Graffiti painted on the walls of Jerusalem or Rap music, that address their forced eviction. The art is shared with the overall message that they will continue to resist and stand firm until the ongoing Nakba stops.

Following their displacement, the Israeli state imposed the payment for the eviction onto the family, that in return lobbied within their digital community to help secure the payment, putting their fight in a very vulnerable light.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ @freenorashome, “Instagram Page @freenorashome.”



Prior to the eviction, 33 posts were made on the Instagram account @freenorashome highlighting resilience and sumud. The family was transparently communicating legal proceedings, spreading their narrative through video content production and close allyship with a multitude of different actors ranging from religious figures to solidarity activists, professionals in the humanitarian sector, UN officials and a multitude of people active within the digital sphere and especially through Instagram as well as on the ground. The family showed their fluid sumud and resilience through claiming their Palestinian identity loud and proud, through showing flags, making noise on the streets, talking to tourists and making people aware of their situation uncovering the structural bias and historical denialism of the Israeli narrative. The family tightly documented and shared their life leading up to their displacement and the aftermath through their Instagram account, highlighting their own narrative, colonial violence and how it translates to all aspects of life and how digital media production steps in, in an incremental approach of reclaiming physical and social space to existence and the maintaining of being Palestinian in Palestine. Thus, connecting their own experience to a long history of Palestinian indigenous resilience, which in the year 2023 is at times highly digitalized and connects digital and offline realities.

Reflections and Conclusion

When examining Palestine, it is essential to understand the framework in which Palestine exists in 2023. The history of Zionist dispossession and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, starting over 100 years ago, has been confirmed throughout time. The ongoing Nakba today, here applied to the case of the Gaith-Sub Laban family, presents in a subtle form and manifests through the ongoing and arbitrary forced displacement, prolonged process of expulsion and annexation, demolition of houses, and imprisonment of people, an ongoing psychological war on Palestinians, aimed at making Palestinians leave their home country behind. The ongoing erasure of Palestine and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians has been examined through an interplay of a narrative framework and a legal framework, which is, directly and indirectly, being upheld by the bias of certain parts of the international community, public opinion, media, academia, content, and knowledge production. In the digital space, it manifests through digital repression, which can, in an increasing amount of cases, lead to offline consequences.

Resistance toward ethnic cleansing has a long history in Palestine. Since the advent of the Internet, various forms of resistance have developed. In recent years, a shift towards online activism, as well as, hybrid forms of activism impacted the outreach of Palestinian activists in documenting and exposing an ongoing Nakba and generating solidarity. Although social media has its limitations, it is still a powerful tool to carry the Palestinian perspective and experienced realities to an international audience, thus potentially expanding its reach and furthermore having the potential to create global awareness of current events and the dissemination of this information. Thus, social media can be understood as a push and pull tool that can be used for activism, generating a glimpse into the lives of different individuals. Social media moreover gives the viewer and observer the power to see and witness the realities on the ground in real-time and from different perspectives.

The work of citizen journalists and their specific and individual storytelling can be understood as a form of mixed and hybrid activism that aims at educating, raising awareness and using their voices online and offline to show their personal suffering. The Gaith-Sub Laban case serves as an example for the collective overall suffering of Palestinians, being deprived of their right of self-determination. It is an ongoing continuity of the nakba - an everyday process that state institutions and complicit actors try to prevent the global public from seeing. In the digital times, this is being done through content moderation tactics, the work of the Israeli lobby, and state-sponsored media organizations, which claim an unbiased knowledge production but, in rare cases, actually produce news or knowledge with unbiased semantics and language. This

digital barrier is installed and kept in place by governments, complicit companies, media houses, and journalists, but also through the individual unwillingness to face realities and to be interested in stepping out of their own comfort zone of privilege.

The barrier, though, is increasingly being broken open. This became evident in 2021 when Sheikh Jarrah was a topic in mainstream media, and worldwide solidarity with the Palestinian people arose concurrently. Citizens documented their very personal daily encounters with settler colonial entities and were able to share these glimpses of reality with the world, making them accessible within seconds. The Case of the displacement of the Gaith-Sub Laban family uncovered the duality of an ongoing historical erasure by producing a real-time and live coverage of their own prolonged Nakba, setting it within the context of over 100 years of colonial displacement in Palestine. The content produced by the family is material used for educational, informative, and awareness-spreading purposes. Their work now amounts to a digital archive, showing human rights violations and crimes that could potentially be used in a future lawsuit before international courts. Sumud, in the case of the Gaith-Sub Laban family, reflects an activism that creates a connective link between individual and collective awareness and shared experiences, influenced and shaped by on-the-ground and digital factors. The continuity of an ongoing duality, the fight between oppressed and oppressor, colonizer and colonized, a settler-colonial entity and an indigenous group, is a fight for self-determination, the truth, and a fight for space— in every sense of the word.

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