



From the Editors

AS MUCH OF THE WORLD BURNS, literally and figuratively, Palestinians continue to weather a multiplicity of crises. In an unprecedented show of unity, they rose up in May 2021 against Israel's occupation and settler-colonial regime in what has become known as the "Unity Intifada." Reshaping visions of unity and freedom, Palestinian acts of resistance transgressed the geographic divides of partition.

In the months since the uprising, obstacles to Palestinian liberation beyond the unrelenting pressure from Israel's settler-colonial regime have escalated. As the struggle to remain on the land persists from Sheikh Jarrah to Silwan in Jerusalem, Palestinians inside the West Bank revolted against the authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the wake of Nizar Banat's assassination on 24 June. His murder by PA security forces, and the subsequent repression of popular outrage, demonstrated once again that rather than serving its people, the PA pursues its own narrow interests and those of the colonial power and its foreign patrons.

Drawing on the police-state playbook of counterrevolutionary Arab regimes, the PA unleashed plainclothes thugs, brutally assaulted civilian demonstrators, targeted journalists covering the protests (and confiscated their equipment), threatened the relatives of dissidents, and singled out women protesters with slander. Since 8 August 2021, a sweeping campaign of arrests has focused on activists, academics, poets, intellectuals, and others critical of the ossified and corrupt PA leadership. Detainees were thrown into filthy, overcrowded jails without precautionary measures against the Covid-19 pandemic that is raging throughout Palestine—and when released, their jailers issued ominous warnings that much worse was in store if they continued to speak out. In a chaotic *fin de régime* atmosphere, parallel PA security services nurtured and trained by U.S., European, Arab, and Israeli military and security agencies competed to crush dissent, prevent public demonstrations, and intimidate the general public.

The obstacles to liberation have not come only from the quisling authority ushered in by the Oslo Accords. As people in Gaza slowly began to reassemble their lives from the rubble of repeated destruction in the aftermath of the latest Israeli bombing campaign, two reported cases of femicide took place. On 14 June, Istabraq Baraka, a seventeen-year-old from Khan Yunis, was beaten to death by her husband, Muhammad Abu Assi, after she advised her younger sister against marrying Abu Assi's brother and risking the violent treatment to which she herself was subject. The following day, Yusra al-Qayid, a forty-three-year-old woman from Sabra (also in Gaza) was killed by her brother, Mansour al-Qayid, over a disputed inheritance. In 2021 alone, five women have been reported killed, and twenty hospitalized, as a result of gender-based violence in the besieged territory.¹ There have been similar cases among Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the areas incorporated into Israel in 1948.

Generations of feminist scholars have taught us that settler colonialism and military occupation only amplify patriarchal violence, and specifically the killing of women with impunity, or femicide.² Although it is a global phenomenon, femicide is a central obstacle to Palestinian liberation, whose imperative lies in being free not only from Israeli settler colonialism and Palestinian authoritarianism but also from misogynistic and sexist social structures. As the history of Ireland, India, Algeria, and myriad others demonstrates, colonialism depends on

the collaborators it recruits from among the colonized, shaping them into entities like the PA or the Royal Irish Constabulary, to perpetuate and extend its control while exploiting and exacerbating sexism and misogyny to justify and strengthen its grip.

In addition to their ongoing resistance to the colonizing power, and amid the internal challenges posed by authoritarian and patriarchal violence, Palestinians, like people the world over, are facing the immense force of climate change. In August 2021, fires ravaged the mountainous terrain west of Jerusalem, burning twenty-five thousand dunums of forest to the ground. There for everyone to see among the carbonized and denuded hillsides were the intact remains of intricate terraces that Palestinian farmers had labored for generations to build and maintain in order to maximize the rocky terrain's arable potential and reduce soil erosion and water loss. Historians estimate that the terraces had existed for hundreds of years before the Israeli state's forestation program confiscated the land, planted pine forests, and erased the depopulated villages.³

The exposed terraces stand in silent testimony to those cultivators who tended, served, and lived from the land that Zionism claims exclusive control of. Such belonging to the land is fully alive in the minds not only of those old enough to remember the time before the Nakba but also of younger generations who did not experience Palestine before the cataclysm of 1948.

While the repression in the West Bank and the murders in Gaza are reminders of the multifaceted struggle that a people seeking to be free are waging, the intricate terracing that emerged on the blackened, naked hillsides west of Jerusalem reminds us of the abiding power of the people of Palestine. As this issue goes to press and six Palestinian political prisoners dug their way out of incarceration and to freedom—even if temporarily—with a spoon, Palestinians have taught us yet another lesson in the struggle for freedom.

Acknowledgment

We wish to retroactively make up for our failure in the printed version of *JPS* 198 to thank Louise Cainkar, who was the curator of that special issue, for her efforts in bringing together a distinguished group of authors to reflect on the Palestinian diaspora in North America (Turtle Island).

Rashid I. Khalidi
Sherene Seikaly

Endnotes

1. See Ma'an News Agency, "Maqtal fatat 19 'amann 'ala yad zawjiha bi-Khan Yunis" [19-year-old girl killed by her husband in Khan Yunis], Ma'an News, 14 June 2021, <https://www.maannews.net/news/2042674.html>; Ma'an News Agency, "Al-Sha'biyya tu'ib 'an qalaqiha min tanama dha-hirat al-'unf didd al-mar'at" [Popular Front expresses concern over the growing phenomenon of violence against women], Ma'an News, 17 June 2021, <https://www.maannews.net/news/2042965.html>; Nada Nabil (@NadanabilHRD), "In just 48 hours, the Gaza Strip registers another murder of a woman, beaten to death by her brother due to a family quarrel. Today, 43-year-old Yusra al-Qayid was killed, who will be the next victim?" [in Arabic], Twitter, 6 June 2021, 5:04 PM, <https://bit.ly/3DEskzW>.
2. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Suhad Daher-Nashif, "Femicide and Colonization: Between the Politics of Exclusion and the Culture of Control," *Violence against Women* 19, no. 3 (2013): pp. 291–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801213485548>.
3. Nahed Derbas, "Hara'iq al-Quds takshuf 'an jara'em al-Nakba wal-tat-hir al-'irqi lil qura al-muhajjara [Jerusalem fires uncover the crimes of the Nakba and of ethnic cleansing in depopulated villages], *Al-Arabi al-Jadid*, 19 August 2021, <https://bit.ly/3gymFl6>.