

Treball Final de Màster

Displaced Into the Unknown

Textual Accounts of the Unbearable

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*If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself—
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale*

**Refaat Alaleer,
Ghaza, December 2023**

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Abstract

Contents

English

This research and the work I developed based on it explores the relations between the genocide currently taking place in Gaza, writing text and the other. The evidence of the unbearable should ideologically set the limits of what societies regard as ethical while writing and speech are more accessible ways to encounter the unbearable pain of others. Because of the disturbing nature of photographs and recordings of violence, destruction and death, I decided to open the archive of the accounts of the unbearable I gathered in the past 8 months only in the form of text and speech. The proposal is a visual and discursive provocation to a desensitized West having to decide what to become in front of a dehumanized other, the Palestinian.

Catalan

Aquesta investigació i el treball en que hi vaig desenvolupar exploren les relacions entre el genocidi que actualment està tenint lloc a Gaza, l'escriptura i l'altre. L'evidència del que és insuportable hauria de fixar ideològicament els límits del que les societats consideren ètic mentre que l'escriptura i el discurs són maneres més accessibles d'enfrontar el dolor insuportable dels altres. A causa de la seva naturalesa pertorbadora de les fotografies i vídeos de violència, destrucció i mort, vaig decidir obrir l'arxiu dels relats del que és insuportable que vaig recopilar en els últims 8 mesos només en forma de text i discurs. La proposta és una provocació visual i discursiva a un Occident dessensibilitzat que ha de decidir què esdevenir davant d'un altre deshumanitzat, el palestí.

Thesis statement

In this research I explored the relations between my text-based creative practice and different accounts of the unbearable atrocities of the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Accounts of the unbearable: The other – Text – Art

Objectives:

1. Challenging human desensitization through text.
2. Investigating writing as an expression of the unbearable.

Keywords:

Text – Speech – Art – Unbearable – Desensitization – Politics – War – Gaza

Introduction

Writing and producing art in times of political turmoil and specially during the unfolding of armed conflicts can often result in attempts to recollect, express and represent the dehumanizing forces generating the unbearable pain of others. While we witness for the first time in history a live-streamed genocide, social media and news agencies in the 'West' are censoring not only graphic content from Gaza but also all voices and opinions going against what seems to be the only acceptable line of thought: unquestionable and blind support for Israel and its genocidal acts against Palestinians. The aim of this thesis is exploring the relations between writing, the other and the current geopolitical situation in the Middle East.

Desensitization of public opinion and economical blackmailing serves the 'West' to maintain colonial rule against the 'Global South'. The evidence of the unbearable is evidence of failure, of deception and of a profound crisis of humanity's values. The limits of what is considered bearable make up an obscure space that 'Western' politicians use to act, manipulate, tame and suppress freedom. Anyone who is not aligned or expresses dissent is subject to false accusations of antisemitism.

Antisemitism is an etymologically problematic word itself; it refers to people of Semite origin, which includes Arabs and Jews alike. It is not a coincidence the word was first used in Germany to refer to discriminatory acts against Jewish communities.

The unbearable projects us into a paradoxical world of otherness in which ultimately, we are all guilty.



Before staging his suicide setting his body on fire as an extreme act of protest against genocide in front of the Israeli embassy in Washington D.C., U.S. airman Aaron Bushnell stated: **"This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal"**.

Methodology

Practice, research, documentation.

The research and project proposed in the following pages are the results of several months of documentation and creative practice running as parallel activities. Research and practice have influenced and often annihilated one another in my attempts to fix political speech, journalistic reports, images, court rulings and personal accounts as textual content. Obsessive reading, the rewriting of traces but also capturing screenshots from a volatile, heavily censored digital environment are among the activities I go through on a daily basis.

This conflict has deeply affected my thoughts to the point where I had to use my practice as a way to fix those burdening accounts and at the same time escape their content through the meditative states of mind provoked by calligraphic writing. In this panorama of fake news, misinformation, psychological warfare, paradoxical accusations, repression, shifting sources and political masks falling off, I felt the necessity, the urge for writing in different forms. In the past months I could not but gather texts about those facts, concepts, moments, actions and statements I deemed politically relevant, dear to my heart, heartbreaking...

I have been searching for my evidence from the outside of Gaza, from Europe and from Lebanon. In addition to research methodologies belonging to single, specific disciplines, I have searched for my own evidence from outside sources; mainstream journalism, design, art and visual theory. On some regards I simply searched as an outraged human being. It was never about objectifying pain, I was rather moved by the fear of forgetting, of falling into provocations, extensive chains of fake news, hate speech. It was most of all about not looking away. Following my intuition I soon realized I had built an archive of unbearable accounts in no time.

'This problem is unlike any other problem' is one of those 36 accounts I have fixed through calligraphy on a bedsheet. It describes the Palestinian cause; it highlights its uniqueness. But what is it that really makes it unique? Haven't we seen enough violence since the first Nakba?

What makes the Palestinian cause unique is not to be looked for in the nature of the oppressed but in its oppressors, which are immensely more powerful. The uniqueness of the cause comes from the history of the oppressor. The oppressor can act above the law with no need to justify any discrimination, violence or war crimes. Everything is allowed and ideologically justified by the shadows of the holocaust. The Palestinian has no voice in an endless diabolic process where Europe is still washing its hands from Jewish blood while allowing Zionists to massacre, oppress, occupy, settle and colonize.

Watching the unbearable every single day for months and then switching off my brain to go back to my privileged, comfortable life in Europe was simply not enough. To a certain degree I would not have felt true to myself if I had also remained silent like 'Western' institutions and media while on the other side of the Mediterranean – the part I *also* come from – a genocide is taking place. I felt the duty of leaving a record of the unbearable, a trace, a memory. Mine, from the outside.

I cannot avoid mentioning I was educated as a graphic designer in Beirut and my process cannot depart from the visual and verbal analysis of graphic content, typography, signs, speech and more broadly the analysis of political warfare in the Middle Eastern context.

During my years in Beirut, I got acquainted to work and research under circumstances that are unusual for citizens of the so-called 'Developed World'. During the 17th October Revolution in Lebanon in 2019, we quickly understood many communication channels were censored by the authorities and by a government that took more than 2 weeks to resign while protests were raging in the whole country and blocking all main roads.

Our revolution failed and the country sank into one of its darkest periods since the Civil War (1975 – 1990). But what we have inherited from the October 17th Revolution is a solid, miraculously non-sectarian web of intellectuals, journalists, artists, activists which paradoxically constitute a more reliable source of information than most official channels. The instability and censorship of social media, the obscuring and filtering of information by 'Western' authorities regarding Gaza are all too familiar for anyone coming from the Middle East.

This research would not have been possible without the material gathered and shared by members of my community back in Beirut since October 2023. In the following pages some images lack proper academic referencing. This time, on this matter, I took the freedom of not disregarding material just because of the intractability of sources. If on the one hand fact checking is obviously problematic in times of war, on the other I was interested in capturing as many different voices as possible in this digital dialogue around the facts unfolding in Palestine. And anyway, if sovereign states stop funding UNRWA for fake and unverified allegations of the agency being infiltrated by terrorism, I do not see the point of limiting my use of sources only to what is considered formally reliable.

In the past months we have often heard the expression '**nothing matters anymore**' and it seems now a tweet on X or an Instagram post have replaced reality, facts, court trials. Mediatic war still has the power to annihilate individuals, groups and institutions alike, so easy.



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International Court of Justice

Law court

The International Court of Justice, also called the World Court, is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. It settles disputes between states in accordance with international law and gives advisory opinions on international legal issues. [Wikipedia](#)

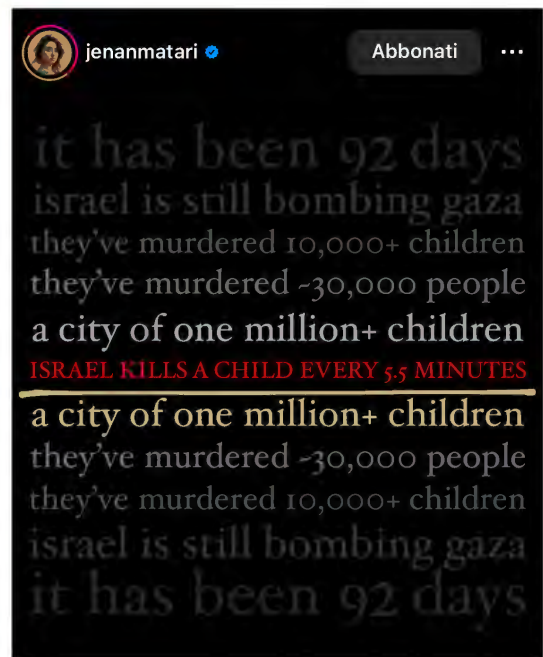
Coordinates: 52°05'11.8"N 4°17'43.8"E / 52.086611°N 4.295500°E

Established: 1945 (PCIJ dissolved in 1946)

Judge term length: 9 years

Screenshot taken in January while looking for the live-streaming of the International Court of Justice hearings in South Africa's case against Israel for intent of genocidal acts against the people of Gaza. The website was showing plenty of aid trucks entering into Ghaza together with other false information about the conflict in a desperate attempt to redirect Israel's narrative of its conduct.

In the following sections I analyze the context and processes that led me to give graphic body, to physically write down some accounts of our dehumanized reality.



The Context

Colonial Politics, Extremisms

Following Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, the world has been powerlessly witnessing the systematic massacre of civilians in Gaza. After decades of silence where Western affiliated media have essentially neglected covering Israel's ongoing colonial politics, the spotlight of public opinion is once again on Palestine.

Financially and ideologically supported by the United States of America and its allies, Israel's apartheid regime has been denying essential rights to Palestinians in Gaza and in the occupied West Bank. Israel is portrayed by Western media as the only democracy in the region but it has been systematically breaching international law and ignoring ALL United Nations resolutions since 1948 as well as the recent rulings by the International Court of Justice. As a result, Islamic resistance groups and terrorist organizations have progressively gained consensus and power among the oppressed and the helpless ever since the 1980s. Considering the status quo of the situation in the Middle East and the impunity of Israeli's crimes, extremism and terrorism are obviously set to grow and intensify in the times to come.

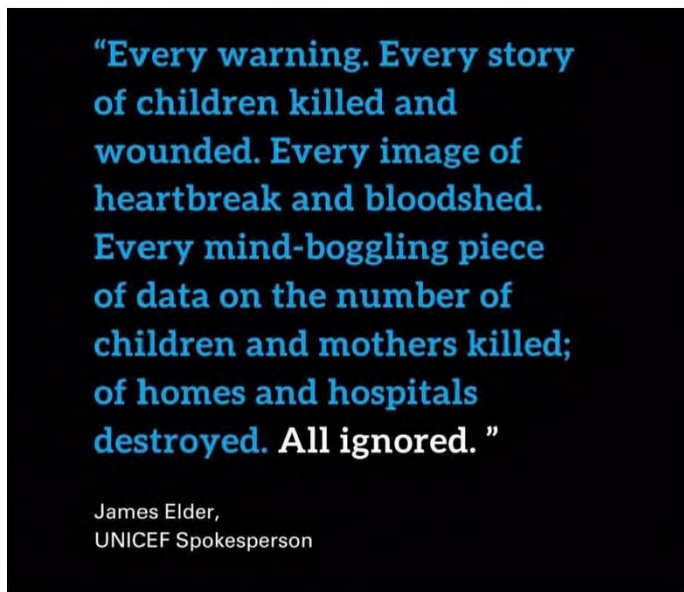
After more than 6 months of ongoing slaughter marked by multiple vetoes by the United States and UK delegations, on 25 March 2024, the United Nations Security Council passed a binding resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire. After bombing the Iranian embassy in Damascus, war criminal (as stated in the International Criminal Court arrest request of May 2024) and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has once again disregarded the resolution and is now carpet bombing the totality of Gaza while planning the ground invasion of Rafah where displaced Palestinians sought shelter as suggested by the institutionalized terrorist Israeli Defense Forces. From a report by the UN Security Council:

Seventy-five per cent of the population — 1.7 million people — has been forcibly displaced within Gaza, many of them up to four or five times, including because of repeated evacuation instructions from the Israel Defense Forces. In the past two weeks, more than 800,000 people have been displaced from Rafah into other areas of Gaza, she said, emphasizing unequivocally that those forcibly displaced must be guaranteed the right to voluntarily return, as international law demands. (*Speakers in Security Council Urge Israel to Stop Military Incursions Into Rafah | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 2024*)

Numerous videos have shown IDF soldiers insulting fleeing Palestinians while walking to newly designated 'safe' zones every time. Despite the fact that all Israel's allies stated clearly that Israel's actions would lead to a humanitarian catastrophe and would not eradicate Hamas in any case, no one seems to be human enough to put an end to the massacre.



Even if for a moment we admit that Israel is the only democracy in the region and we consider democracy as the only form of state that perpetrates good, we are the daily witnesses of destruction, of IDF soldiers laughing while taking innocent people's lives away or demolishing schools, hospitals and entire neighborhoods. How can such images not produce an unprecedented feeling of shock and distrust for the Israeli state and NATO? How did we get to this paradoxical inversion of roles where the heirs of the holocaust's survivors have now not only become the perpetrators of the same atrocities but at the same time are also showcasing their crimes with pride? How is it that most countries react to fake news released by the government of Israel without any fact checking whatsoever? The unveiling of a system drenched in latent hypocrisy and systematic lying should feel unbearable to all people as it marks the beginning of a new era of terrorism fighting institutionalized terrorism.



The seemingly endless instability in the Middle East is an aftermath of the former imperialist rules over the region (Ottoman, British and French) and multiple subsequent direct and indirect military interventions of the United States of America and its allies. When formal empires fell, recessed or collapsed, after both World Wars, deals and treaties regarding the distribution of land and the establishment (or not) of new independent states were decided by the Western powers following the divide and rule policy signed by ignorant –or financially interested– individuals who disregarded the ethnical and religious composition and distribution of the peoples of the region.

This genocide already took the lives of more than 37 000 Palestinians and is affecting millions of civilians across different countries beyond the occupied Palestinian territories. The situation in Lebanon is precarious and tragic. As stated by UNHCR,

Lebanon faces its worst socioeconomic crisis in decades. It hosts the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide. The Government estimates 1.5 million Syrian refugees and 13,715 refugees of other nationalities. 90% of Syrian refugees are living in extreme poverty. The highest concentration of refugees is found in the Bekaa region.
(Lebanon | UNHCR, n.d.)

Besides the disastrous economic and political void left by the collapse of our banking system in 2019 and the Beirut port blast of 2020, there are more than 70,000 displaced Lebanese within the country because of the armed Islamic resistance group Hezbollah's offensive against Israel as a response to their onslaught in Gaza. In addition to this, 1.5 million Syrian refugees are displaced in Lebanon since the recent Syrian Civil War. They are kept in Lebanon thanks to European funds. In a country where the government does not even provide electricity anymore, we host the greater number of foreign refugees in relation to our population in the world.

The president of Cyprus has lobbied the EU intensely to obtain this funding for Lebanon. Close to the Lebanese coast, the island has seen an influx of Syrian refugees since the outbreak of violence on the Israeli-Lebanese border, echoing the war in the Gaza Strip. Between January and mid-April, more than 3,000 people attempted to cross from Lebanon by sea, compared with 54 over the same period in 2023, according to the UNHCR. (Sallon & Jacqu , 2024)

I do not know what will be of Gaza and of Palestine in the short or long term but what does look clear is that Europe's role in the Mediterranean has to drastically change from playing the role of a dumb, headless extension of U.S. Foreign policy.

On the West: the Mediterranean has lost its meaning.

If at first it seemed Western institutions were not responsive to Israel's offence and slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, it has been even more shocking to acknowledge that ambiguous silence and complicity was actually staged, planned.

A predetermined attitude, a strategy that went quickly beyond applying restrictions on freedom of speech and expression censoring news and digital content. We have seen police arresting students and professors, dismantling pro-Palestinian camps on university campuses all over the USA, Canada and Europe in what seems to have become a war on peace. In early December, a journalist named Marco Vizzardelli was stopped, identified and investigated by the Italian secret services for screaming "Long live antifascist Italy" at La Scala theater of Milan right after the national anthem played (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2023).

Sipario.

History and data have already shown that collective punishment against a population only produces more revenge acts, instability and terrorism. And it is of course economically convenient for the West to keep the Middle East instable and poor. It is also economically convenient that Arab lives remain less valuable – or irrelevant – than the ones of others for the sake of white, 'Western' suprematism. The 'civilized West' has finally got the chance to test a whole new range of weapons in the Ukrainian and Palestinian conflicts.

We have long been dehumanized.

Art and censorship, now and then

Western societies believe in the hegemony of their cultures which are propagated by their governments through economic means and the political power they exercise over their own and other societies. Censorship has always been the ultimate tool for shaping and directing cultural production. But history tells us censorship is necessarily today more than ever inherent to sick, decadent or fake democracies (Western countries) and totalitarian regimes (North Korea, Iran, China) alike. In the past months the difference between democratic and totalitarian countries looks blurred like never before. Many would argue in the 'West' we still live within democratic contexts but the annihilation of any debate on when and how waging or supporting wars proves the exact opposite point. We live in the illusion that democracy ends when laws are abolished but maybe we fail thinking about totalitarianism as a kind of regime that starts when laws are simply disregarded, merely neglected.

It is of interest here to compare two cases of censorship within the cultural industry of the United States of America, specifically in the field of visual arts. The first case is the cancellation of Samia Halaby's retrospective at The Eskenazi Museum of Art at the Indiana University in Bloomington just a few months ago and another show that was censored in our recent past, photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's cancelled exhibition *The Perfect Moment* at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1989.

Samia Halaby is a Palestinian-American abstract artist and a graduate of the Indiana University. Halaby's alma mater was supposed to host her retrospective exhibition in January 2024 but the show was cancelled by the board of trustees over "safety concerns" (Democracy Now, 2024). This is mainly because of her statements on social media condemning Israel's indiscriminate bombardments of Gaza. In a recent interview at Democracy Now, Halaby stated she received little justification for the cancellation of her exhibition. According to Indiana University the exhibition risked to "result in violence" (2024).

Among Samia's works, the two paintings here proposed are of the very few which titles reflect ties with themes that in a Zionist perspective are problematic. One is titled *Worldwide Intifadah* (i.e. a global disobedience against the occupier) while the second painting is titled *Our Beautiful Land of Palestine Stolen in the Night of History*. Once again, if we agree democracies are based on the rule of law and the relations between countries are regulated by international law, we necessarily have to acknowledge Palestinian land was stolen and occupied by Israel. I conclude not only her work but also her very presence in the United States is the result of Zionism. Based on these facts it is compelling to note here how abstract art has suddenly acquired the power to generate violence in 21st Century America.



Samia Halaby, 1989, *Worldwide Intifadah*.

Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/11/arts/design/indiana-university-samia-halaby-exhibition-canceled.html>)



Samia Halaby, 2016, *Our Beautiful Land of Palestine Stolen in the Night of History*.

Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/11/arts/design/indiana-university-samia-halaby-exhibition-canceled.html>)

In *Free Exchange* a publication gathering dialogues between Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke (1995), the latter recollects ideas about the cancellation of Robert Mapplethorp's exhibition *The perfect moment* in 1989 and ties it with the political climate in the United States at that time. After conservative Senator Jesse Helms expressed his concerns over how the National Endowment for the Arts (public funds for artists) was sponsoring what he and other conservatives defined as degenerate art, the United States Congress passed a bill to limit the funds only to State-approved 'artistic' productions. Iconic is in this regard one of Haacke's works regarding Senator Helms and its concerning political contradictions: *Helmsborough Country*, an installation highlighting the mechanisms of the global art market and the unethical companies sponsoring political campaigns and art foundations alike.



Hans Haacke, 1990, *Helmsboro Country* (unfolded)

Retrieved from: <https://www.paulacoopergallery.com/exhibitions/hans-haacke#tab:slideshow;slide:1>

Haacke reports that during the vernissage of Mapplethorp's show the police irrupted and evacuated the gallery. With no doubt for any of the Jesse Helms of our time the subjects of Mapplethorp's photographs would still be controversial, unworthy and sick as white suprematism rejects and discriminate not only other political views, ethnicities, cultures and religions but also sexual acts involving same sex individuals.

Despite the fact the two episodes took place 30 years apart, it is interesting to reflect on how the most recent of the two shows was cancelled due to the very subject of the exhibition, i.e. homoerotic and pornographic photography representing sexual fetishes while Halaby's show was cancelled beforehand simply because of the ethnic origin of the artist and her rejection of an armed conflict in her native land.

Some people in the 'developed world' might still live with the illusion that in the past decades we experienced progress and improvements in our freedom of speech and expression. Today more than ever it appears clear and deeply alarming that we have been living in the illusion of an always greater freedom of expression.



Protest of the cancellation of Robert Mapplethorpe's *The Perfect Moment*, June 30, 1989, Washington, D.C. (Frank Herrera). Originally published in GWToday, June 10, 2019. By Ruth Steinhardt.

Retrieved from: <https://corcoran.gwu.edu/61389-explores-canceled-mapplethorpe-exhibition-30-years-later>

War, Otherness, Art

The total dehumanization of Palestinians and the images of this massacre led me to build up a coping mechanism based on writing as a reaction, a response generated by means of my own tools and creative practice. Seventy-six years on from the first Nakba, I started pondering about the role of art, memory and disinformation in armed conflicts. Do we really have to go through cycles of violence and destruction over and over just because we are who we are? Is the coexistence of different religious groups in the same land really at the core of our instability? Modern and medieval Middle Eastern history could prove all these points are not necessarily at the core of the problem. We do not seem to be able to learn from our past, or maybe our ruling classes never intended to act according to principles aiming at preserving the life and dignity of all those who are perceived as an other.

Since October 2023, I have often heard the expression 'nothing matters anymore' which captures and condenses the above-mentioned issues but also the fact that international law and war law have been completely disregarded by Israel in its offensive on Gaza. The war on terror knows no boundaries but evil is relative. Evil is logic, it stains our collective memory. Why would we forgive the ones who caused harm to us or to our community? **Forgiveness is an irrational act** but maybe it is about time we assume the irrational of today should be regarded as the rational of the future. It is time we stop blaming Hamas and other resistance groups for reacting to violence with more violence against occupying forces. We as 'Westerners' should maybe start looking into our past and historical responsibility. It is about time we too start considering ourselves simply as others.

If it is true we cannot learn from our past in a historical sense, what is the role of art in relation to conflicts and violence? Can we really learn anything from it, can artworks make us better human beings? A work of art always contains the memory of an act, being it visual, verbal, ideological, conceptual, factual, procedural... But can these different accounts, the accounts art conveys save the future versions of ourselves from prejudice and violence? Can the memory of pain inherent in such works spare the generations to come to go through the same agonies again? How do we save us from ourselves, how do we deal with rage and revenge that has sedimented for generations? What will we tell to the thousands of orphans who gathered the scattered flesh of their siblings and parents among the wreckage of their previous lives? Unfortunately, pain does not vanish in thin air.

In *Sculpting in Time* Russian film director Tarkovsky provides us with the helpless image of mankind being unable to learn from its past while he proposes art can only function as the occasion for experiencing empathy or – at least – otherness; in his words:

It is obvious that art cannot teach anyone anything, since in four thousand years humanity has learnt nothing at all. We should long ago have become angels had we been capable of paying attention to the experience of art, and allowing ourselves to be changed in accordance with the ideals it expresses. Art only has the capacity, through shock and catharsis, to make the human soul receptive to good. It's ridiculous to imagine that people can be taught to be good... Art can only give food – a jolt – the occasion – for psychological experience. (Tarkovsky, 1987, p.50)

Despite Tarkovsky's sadly objective historical view on the relation between art, ethics and evil, we could name countless works of art dealing with the brutality of war; the devastating aftermath of violence and its effects on collective memory. Historical distance always makes it easier to talk about particular conflicts. Accounts of the Lebanese Civil War for example took some ten years to appear on display in art galleries, cinemas, documentaries.

Although the documentation I gathered in these months includes photographs of the atrocities perpetrated by the Israeli army, I decided to limit their use as proposing photographic evidence of trauma and death is ethically problematic. And along the process, purely textual accounts ended up functioning as 'photographs' of the reality of war, of hate speech and of political propaganda anyway.

Visually speaking, our first instinct when we are faced with the unbearable –especially in the form of photographs– is 'not to look'. In "Regarding the Pain of Others", an essay on war photography and its technical evolution along many conflicts of the past two centuries, Susan Sontag argues: "Shock can become familiar. Shock can wear off. Even if it doesn't one can *not* look. People have means to defend themselves against what is upsetting" (Sontag, 2003, p. 71). In the same section of her essay, she also deals with the problem of public opinion's desensitization in Western countries:

It is often asserted that 'the West' has increasingly come to see war itself as a spectacle. Reports of the death of reality – like the death of reason, the death of the intellectual, the death of serious literature – seem to have been accepted without much reflection by many who are attempting to understand what feels wrong, or empty, or ideologically triumphant in contemporary politics and culture. (Sontag, 2003, p. 71)

Accessing information and studies about the historical roots of the Palestinian cause can be complex and time consuming for most people in the 'West'. But besides the rights and wrongs of all sides implicated here, we cannot deny the same graphic content I have been collecting during these past months which has virtually reached everyone with access to the internet on the planet. What made this conflict different from all others is the concentration of Gaza's population in an open-air prison with no exit from which hell has been unleashed on and on for months. Less than ten years after Sontag published her book on war photography, the Civil War in Syria began, highlighting how, in Sontag's words:

Newer technology provides a nonstop feed: as many images of disaster and atrocity as we can make time to look at. [...] Flooded with images of the sort that once used to shock and arouse indignation, we are losing our capacity to react. (Sontag, 2003, p. 94)

During the unfolding of the conflict in Syria, we witnessed the heavy contrast between personal accounts of protestors, rebels and martyrs, filmed and uploaded on social media with personal smartphones against the broadcasting of dictator Bashar El-Assad's 'official' narrative in high definition. The Syrian conflict did not receive much mediatic coverage in the 'West' as it was mostly considered as a war where Arab and Kurdish blood was shed. I was surprised at the time Russia's bombing of hospitals and schools practically went unnoticed in the 'West'. Today, considering the facts of Gaza nothing of this sort surprises me any longer. Our history is a history of double standards.

Pixelated revolution by Rabih Mroué is a performative artwork where the Lebanese artist visually analyses these videos over and over not only showing such a contrast but also because as the artist stated in an interview at MoMA, "Repetition gives us the opportunity and the possibility to think about the material in a different way; to examine it with a forensic approach" (Mroué, 2023).

Perhaps artworks do not really have the power to change our collective views and ethics but more and more artists feel the duty of covering those mediatic and ethical gaps the ruling classes of most countries, mainstream or politically correct journalists, official communication channels, and of course weapon industry lobbies do not want or allow us to know and talk about. Silences that taste like innocent blood.

As we have previously seen, photographs and videos of death, violence and suffering bare the problematic aspect of creating a feeling of rejection and desensitization in the viewer. But other forms of artistic representation partially escape those issues bringing us closer to the unbearable. One of the most effective of these practices are definitely illustration and drawing which allow to raise awareness and bring us closer to the matter at stake without undermining completely the sense of safety in the viewer.

Journalist and comics artist Joe Sacco has for instance created several publications in the form of comics about the still ongoing Palestinian struggle some twenty years ago, bridging the burdening journalistic evidence he collected during his trips to the West Bank and Gaza.

More recently, during a short stay in Beirut during April 2024, I had the chance to reconnect with my professor Jana Traboulsi who has recently exposed together with Mazen Kerbaj their latest illustrative works about the genocide in Gaza in an exhibition entitled *Don't Stop Drawing: Visual Diaries of Solidarity with Gaza* at P21 Gallery in London. The exhibition gathers several artworks previously posted on their Instagram pages about different phases of the Israeli offensive and their atrocities.

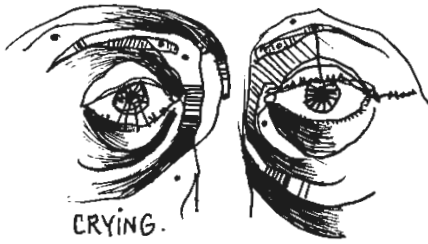
Traboulsi working from Beirut and Kerbaj working from Berlin do bring to light the conflict and its ethical and political consequences on Palestinians but also on all societies closer to 'Westerners'. For this reason, their work speaks English too. The discourse is once again directed to citizens of countries where dissent can still function as a form of influencing politics and limiting the perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity by ruling classes across the globe.




Their art and art in general do not have the power to save anyone from a systematic, diabolic plan to ethnically cleanse a land from its people. For that purpose, we thought international law should be sufficient but as it is obviously not the case, we continue our war on terrorism and on institutionalized terrorism raising a scream of anger up in the sky after facing the pain of the other.

And then we let our practice 'speak' in the hope it will reach, provoke, change.

Artworks by Jana Traboulsi:

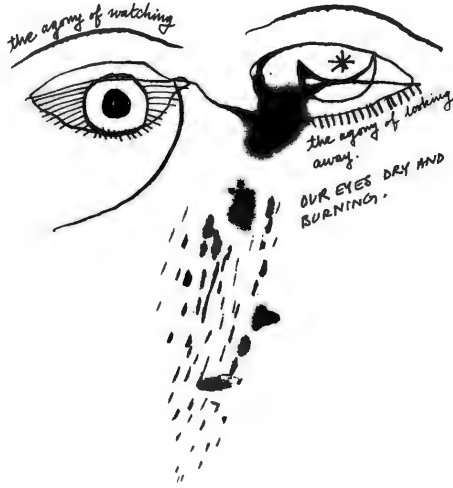
WATCHING. LIKING. SHARING. COMMENTING.



our  
 open, looking
 at their  
 closed. their
  closed,
 keeping our
  open.

the more
 you flatten
 the more
 we will rise

jana.traboulsi

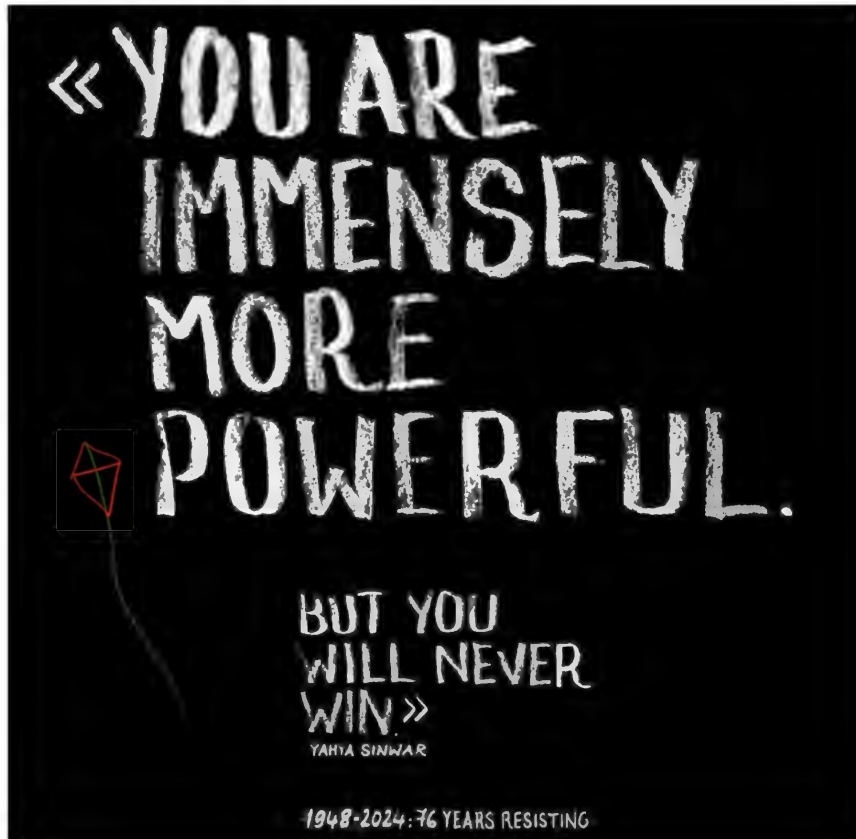


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jana.traboulsi

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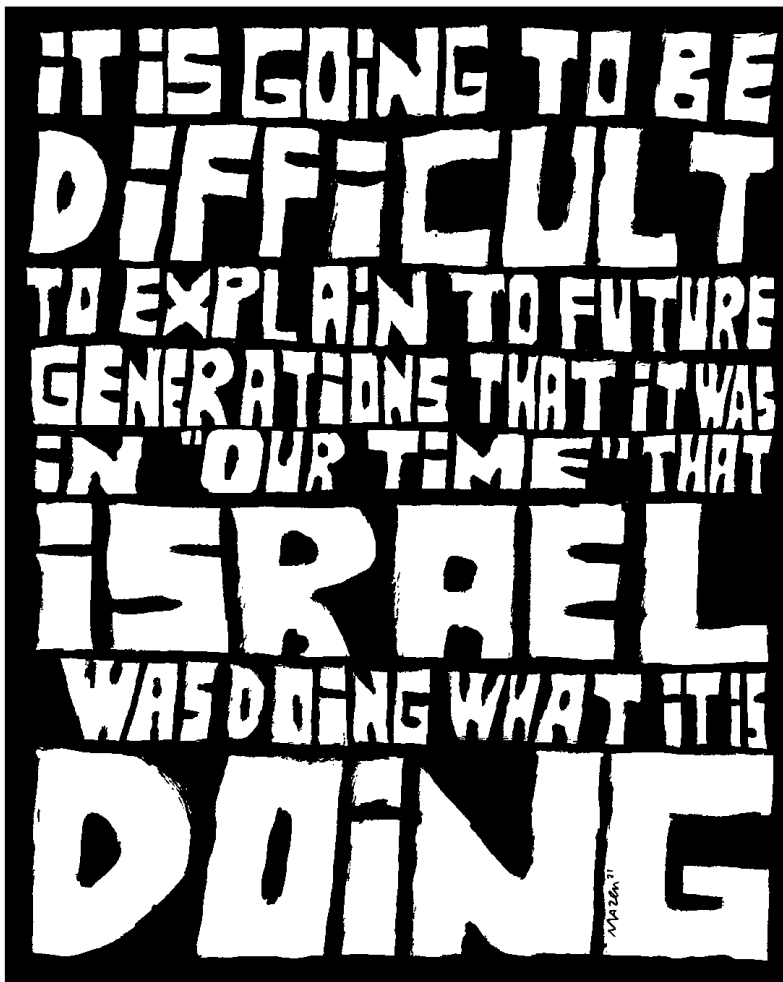
Dear Germany,
you can't act
fascist
to prove you are
no longer
fascist



Artworks by Mazen Kerbaj:



mazenkerbaj

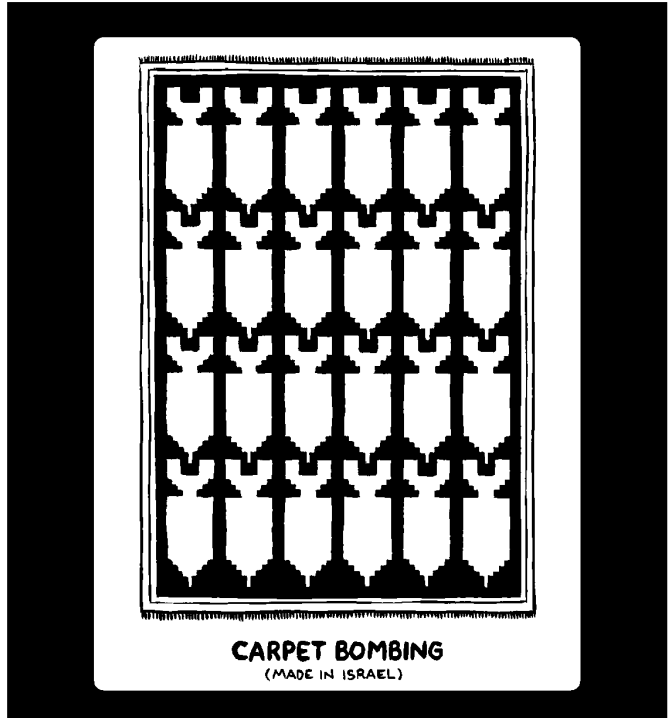
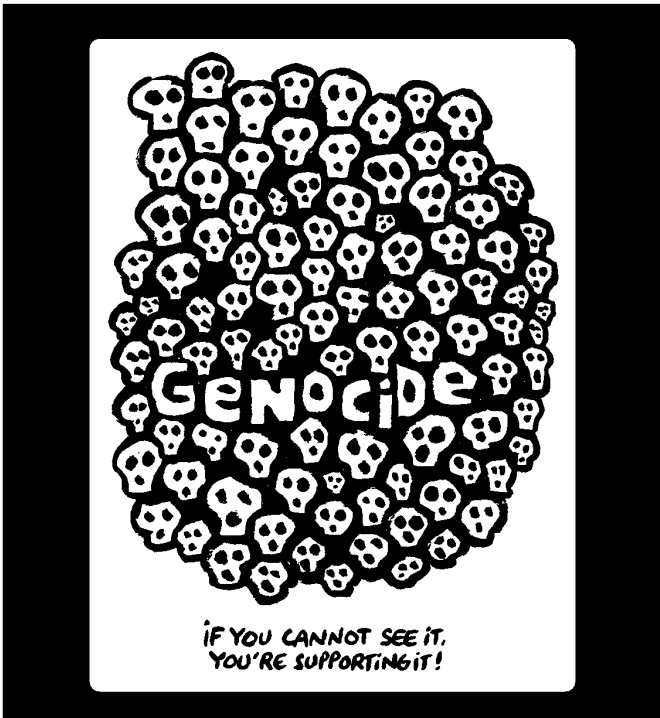


@mazenkerbaj

mazenkerbaj



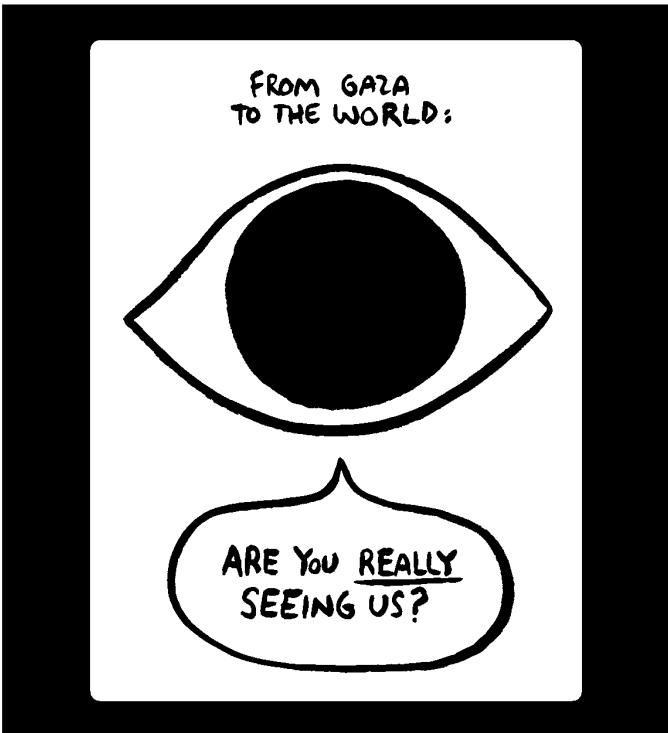
mazenkerbaj



mazenkerbaj



mazenkerbaj





mu_han_nad



- Why do I look so closely at the images?
 - Because the images are not generic: they depict human beings and each one is absolutely unique; they are all specific and individual ... THIS death and THIS pain.

- Why do I describe them?
 - Because vision betrays the unique and the individual, casting it into molds and general patterns; to write the image in words is not only to “force seeing” but it is to inscribe a record.


- What is the record of?
 - The unbearable end of a human life that snaps shut on one end of the camera and strikes me like an arrow in the heart on the other end. I am capturing this relationship I have developed with the dead I have been looking at.

The other: Desensitization


Why do I look?

Muhannad (they/them) are an Instagram activist based in Beirut who have been describing photographs and videos about this genocide with a meticulous forensic approach. Transcribing visual information from photographs and footage into textual posts for months now, Muhannad are also trying to express their antizionist theories making graphically disturbing content more accessible to the ones who do not want to look or as they sometimes say, simply cannot. When I could not finish seeing a video because of my own visual saturation, Muhannad's became my eyes. They do challenge human desensitization through text effectively and as Sontag said, "Photographs objectify: they turn an event or person into something that can be possessed" (Sontag, 2003, p. 70). Sontag warns about war photography becoming a commodity in Western societies, and because of its nature of commodity, it can be totally disregarded. We feel entitled to ignore anything on the market that is uninteresting or unsettles, upsets, disrupts and so on.

Photographs tend to transform, whatever their subject; and as an image something may be beautiful – or terrifying, or unbearable, or quite bearable – as it is not in real life. Transforming is what art does, but photography that bears witness to the calamitous and the reprehensible is much criticized if it seems 'aesthetic'; that is too much like art." (Sontag, 2003, p. 66)

 mu_han_nad

...

 mu_han_nad

...

Today I saw human remains on an orange stretcher. In fact all that remained were the blackened bones. It appeared that this human being was once alive on the stretcher, that they were wounded so badly that they remained there, languishing until they died. And then the flesh moldered and fell away or was consumed by maggots and worms, by mangy cats and rabid dogs. This human not only died on a stretcher where they were denied the help that they needed to survive, but they were left to decompose out in the open; even the dead have stories in Gaza.

Today I saw hungry and exhausted men dig through mud and filth, sifting the muck in their wary hands, all in the slim hope of finding their loved ones somewhere below. They dug up limbs and withered bones; they happened upon bodies whole with zip-tied arms, and even dead children whose corpses were still preserved in the mud, their hands reaching out with fragile fingers. I saw these men look at these vestiges of their loved ones, these shredded remains of the people they once knew. A compulsion drove these men to dig and dig, to find and to gather—but what comfort could finding someone there ever bring? How many more crimes will come to dwarf the ones that came before? Is there no end to this hell?



mu_han_nad

...

Today I saw a pair of baby shoes. They were white and doused in crimson blood. The laces were still tied.



mu_han_nad

...

Netanyahu banked on the idea that by provoking Iran enough, he would get his apocalyptic war; but Netanyahu failed to realize that nations with things to lose (ie nations without sugar daddy nations) are not nearly as passionate and idiotic as orientalist settlers think they are. In reality, it's Israel and the USA that have shown themselves to be the ruthless criminals plaguing international peace. Since Oct. 7, no one has been more predictable and predictably IRRATIONAL than the west.



mu_han_nad

...

Gaza has long been referred to as a laboratory, for weapons and surveillance technology, a place for Israel to sharpen its tools before selling them to tyrants around the world; but in the last 6 months Gaza has become a testing ground for streamlined genocide: a place for Israel to hone, package, and soon export this 'crime of crimes' with unbelievable swiftness. And WE have all been witness to this "experiment", peering into the lab from our screens. — Or are we ourselves a part of this experiment, proof of the utter meaninglessness of public opinion?



mu_han_nad

...

Edward Said wrote that the Palestinian is all too familiar with irony. This is because when you are at the bottom of the pecking order, when absolutely everything and everyone else is valued above you, that is precisely when the unimaginable comes to pass every time. To be Palestinian is to never be surprised by the surprising. It is to inhabit the unthinkable.

Ceasefires are
anti-semitic.

@mu_han_nad

Today I found my son's head, ten
days after finding his body.

I am now carrying it to his grave,
my heart pounding with joy.

Today I can give him a complete death.

Today I can weep for him as I should.

@sultanabutair and @tadhgickeycml

Shaheed

شهيد

Why does Meta remove content containing the word 'shaheed'?

Meta's current content moderation policy considers that the term "shaheed" is used as "praise" when it is mentioned in relation to organisations which have been included on its Dangerous Organizations and Individuals (DOI) list.

The top tier of this list includes what it terms "hate organisations; criminal organisations, including those designated by the United States government". According to Meta, these are individuals and organisations which are deemed to be engaging in "serious offline harm".

Meta's oversight board urges Facebook, Instagram to lift ban on 'shaheed'

The advisory board has told Meta the ban on the word, meaning 'martyr', restricts free expression and is unnecessary.

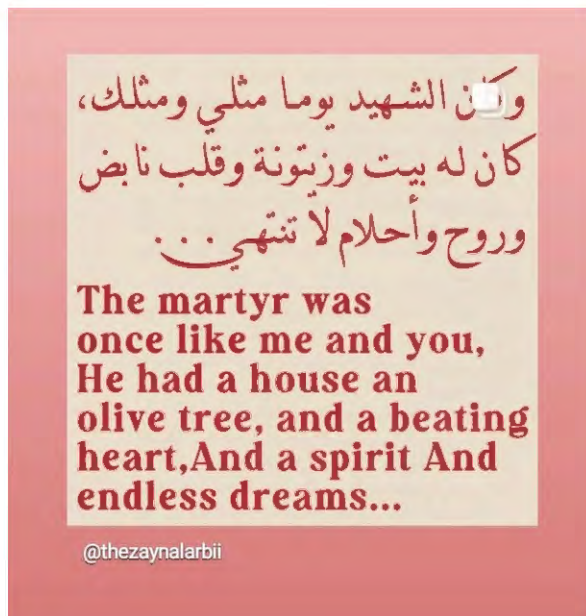
TEST

Martyrdom Censored

During the past eight months Israel has accused any person, institution or country who questioned its conduct during the invasion and destruction of Gaza of supporting terrorism. While writing the first version of this section on Tuesday 2 April 2024, I came to know that Meta has been removing content on Instagram and Facebook where the word 'shaheed', Arabic for 'martyr' is present. The company claims the term relates to a number of hostile terrorist organizations adverse to the West and specifically to the United States of America's government.

Consider, for instance, how the label "terrorist" has so frequently been indiscriminately thrown at Palestinians, from small children to poets, such that American commentators and Israeli officials can unabashedly dismiss via these terms the entire population of Gaza as deserving of death. For migrants vilified as rapists and drug smugglers or Black people called thugs in order to rationalise xenophobic violence and racist policing, for example, such practices are very familiar. (Reinhart, 2024)

Social media platforms have been systematically trying to obscure and censor content published by institutions and private users denouncing the illegal and terrorist acts of Israel against Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and Iranians. The massive number of images and statements published in these months could not be entirely filtered and many users in the Arab World are systematically using transliteration of Arabic into Latin letters and mixing it with punctuation and symbols to avoid censorship and get their messages pass through content moderators. But this is also happening with languages using the Latin alphabet. In texts written in English after February 2024, IDF has been systematically spelled IOF on social media posts. Given the facts of the conflict, it appeared clearer and clearer that the conduct of the Israeli Defense Forces is better described as Occupation forces rather than merely defensive ones. Also, the narrow proportions of letters O and D in a commonly used Instagram font makes IDF and IOF look quite alike. Israel is often spelled 'Israhell' etc. The language of propaganda merged with attempts of censorship have basically originated a whole new lexicon of resistance.



P\$yc0p@ths m@ni@c\$



**VICTORY: ZERO
RESIDENTS
IN GAZA.**

Banners posted in Israeli cities (2023)

VISUALIZING **PALESTINE**

SOURCES bit.ly/vp-genocide

OCT 2023



On Speech

Institutionalized terrorism

Tim Becker, the lawyer who defended Israel in the case brought to the International Court of Justice by South Africa in January 2024:

We live at a time when words are cheap, in an age of social media and identity politics the temptation to reach for the most outrageous term, to vilify and demonize has become for many irresistible. But if there is a place where words should still matter, where truth should still matter, it is surely a court of law. (SABC News, 2024)

This section contains some reports of statements by Israeli members of parliament, of its government's ministers and its military officials as well as accounts of their aftermath and their effects on Zionists living in the 'West'. Rather than being extensive and commenting on their genocidal, terroristic statements and threats, I decided to just include them as they appeared on news agencies and social media.

In October, Tally Gotliv, Member of the Israeli Knesset, urged the government to not break the siege on Gaza because it gave them leverage to bribe and recruit collaborators. Speaking in the Knesset she said "Without hunger and thirst among the Gaza population, we will not be able to recruit collaborators, we will not be able to recruit intelligence, we will not be able to bribe people with food, with drink, with medicine, in order to achieve intelligence. (Middle East Eye, 2024)




In May 2024, when the USA put on hold a shipment of high precision missiles for Israel, subhuman Gotliv took the stage again stating if they were not going to receive precise missiles then even better as they will destroy and kill more. On her social media accounts, she also called for nuking Gaza on several occasions, speaking about Doomsday, annihilation and so on.

Hopefully, international tribunals will one day serve justice and condemn the way they used their political power to direct and influence people and their army to perpetrate crimes against humanity.

Hate speech is self-explanatory. Truth lives.






“

THERE WILL BE NO ELECTRICITY, NO FOOD, NO FUEL... WE ARE FIGHTING HUMAN ANIMALS AND WE ARE ACTING ACCORDINGLY.

Yoav Gallant, **Israeli Minister of Defense** (2023)

VISUALIZING PALESTINE SOURCES bit.ly/vp-genocide OCT 2023 © 1 1 1 1



“

WE'LL TURN THEM INTO RUBBLE... I'M TELLING THE PEOPLE OF GAZA: GET OUT OF THERE NOW, BECAUSE WE'RE ABOUT TO ACT EVERYWHERE WITH ALL OUR FORCE.

Benjamin Netanyahu, **Israeli Prime Minister** (2023)

VISUALIZING PALESTINE SOURCES bit.ly/vp-genocide OCT 2023 © 1 1 1 1




“

RIGHT NOW, ONE GOAL: NAKBA! A NAKBA THAT WILL OVERSHADOW THE NAKBA OF 48. NAKBA IN GAZA AND NAKBA TO ANYONE WHO DARES TO JOIN!

Ariel Kallner, **Member of Israeli Knesset** (2023)

VISUALIZING PALESTINE SOURCES bit.ly/vp-genocide OCT 2023 © 1 1 1 1



“

IT IS AN ENTIRE NATION OUT THERE THAT IS RESPONSIBLE.

Isaac Herzog, **Israeli President** (2023)

VISUALIZING PALESTINE SOURCES bit.ly/vp-genocide OCT 2023 © 1 1 1 1



“

THE EMPHASIS IS ON DAMAGE AND NOT ON ACCURACY.

Daniel Hagari, **Israeli army spokesperson** (2023)

VISUALIZING PALESTINE SOURCES bit.ly/vp-genocide OCT 2023 © 1 1 1 1



“

THE ONLY THING THAT NEEDS TO ENTER GAZA ARE HUNDREDS OF TONS OF EXPLOSIVES FROM THE AIR FORCE, NOT AN OUNCE OF HUMANITARIAN AID.

Itamar Ben Gvir, **Israeli Minister of National Security** (2023)

VISUALIZING PALESTINE SOURCES bit.ly/vp-genocide OCT 2023 © 1 1 1 1

US sitting Senator Lindsey Graham suggests that Gaza should be nuked by the occupation so that the war can end on national TV.



SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM
SOUTH CAROLINA

19,1 MILA

bombing Hiroshima Nagasaki 3.608

wearthepeace 6.306

0:41

THIS IS ZIONISM

Remi Kanazi

THIS is Zionism: Israel settlers destroying aid meant for Gaza. This is what Palestinians have dealt with for 75 years. Burnt down villages. Chopped down olive trees. Destroyed homes. Firebombed hospitals & schools The natives painted as barbaric as settlers terrorize from Gaza to Nablus to Jerusalem to Haifa.



jewishvoiceforpeace

aljazeeraenglish United States


WAR ON GAZA



Hamas condemns US senator's suggestion that Israel nuke Gaza

Suppressed News.

The dystopian reality we live in. #Eurovision2024



0:20

blockout.2022 and everydaypalestine

On Writing

About protest, violence, trace

If on the one hand public opinion can still react with dissent and protest, on the other we have been seeing the effects of a live-streamed genocide for months now with virtually no real action taken by any government to safeguard the lives of innocent people with the exception of South Africa's case against Israel brought to the International Court of Justice in January 2024. In this upside-down reality we are living we witness instead the systematic censorship and the propagation of fake news by – once? – democratic states.

The movements that originated in the late '60s as a reaction to the Vietnam war constitute an important precedent in a time where the narrative of Western politics was challenged on a global scale mainly by anti-establishment leftist groups and university students. The scenario looks similar today under many aspects although –sadly– the instantaneous circulation of images and information does not seem to have impacted on the slow timing of juridical proceedings nor provoked more prompt –and I would add here, humane– political reactions.

In "Writing the Event", a section of *The Rustle of Language*, Roland Barthes analyses how the protests and movements of '68 initially originated through broadcasted speech. In that historical moment governments could easily manipulate all that was published in printed newspapers. Barthes reports that it was not through printed media students and protestors would access information about Vietnam but rather through independent peripheral radios which were participating in what Barthes defines as 'writing the event'. The author interposes this transitory process from facts to originate speech which then is turned into writing:

"Wild" speech, based on "invention," consequently encountering quite naturally the "finds" of form, rhetorical shortcuts, the delights of formula, in short felicity of expression; very close to writing, this discourse (which affected public opinion intensely) logically assumed the form of inscription; its natural dimension was the wall, fundamental site of collective writing. (Barthes, 1986, p. 151)

أحَقّاً كَانَ عَلَيْنَا
 أَنْ نَمُوتَ لِنُثَبِّتَ لَكُمْ
 إِنَّا نَسْتَحِقُّ أَنْ نَعِيشَ؟

**We really had to
 die to prove to you
 that we deserve
 to live?**

@wearthepeace

Writings that express condemnation and dissent during times of intense political debate first appear on walls and propaganda posters. In the past months, while attending protests in support of Gaza in Barcelona, I noticed how many wall-writings were actually created during the protests themselves. Compared to the poster-like signs carried and displayed during protests, wall-writings were always more resolute, violent, outrageous. "Fuck Israel" or "Israel genocida" are among the most common in my neighborhood. The authors of such writings have the privilege to condemn, insult and disappear. Their act grants them the last word – provided they do not get caught – but condemnations, insults and accusations are also expressions of a dead end in any discourse. For this reason, their verbal content ends up not being perceived as an ultimate truth: its extremely syncretical formulation eludes its conceptual purpose. Such writings often refer to abstract entities and ideas (death, a state, freedom, terrorism etc.) and if on the one hand this abstraction makes us all guilty (for the idea) and responsible (for marking property), on the other it also annihilates the discourse, becoming just a 'sign' of the political climate. The concepts they express work as 'metaphors' for the totality of a subject, they resume complex chains of facts.

Wall-writing is the first of a society's responses to the unbearable, a reaction to the 'nothing matters anymore' slogan I previously mentioned. It is the first physical materialization of pain and dissent. The concepts it expresses work as 'metaphors' for the totality of a subject, they bare a subversive charge and often affirm principles of identity. As a first response to violence, Barthes describes this form of writing as violent itself:

Writing (if we no longer identify it with style or with literature) is itself violent. It is, in fact, the violence of writing that separates it from speech, reveals the force of inscription in it, the weight of an irreversible trace. (Barthes, 1986, p. 153)

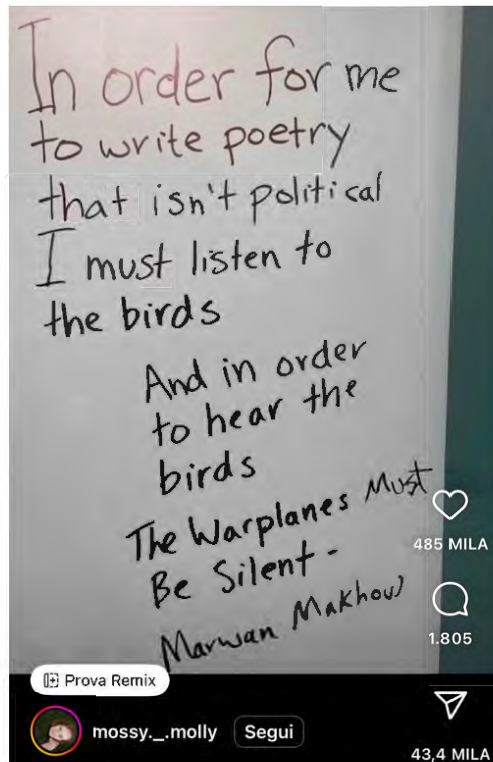
History cannot be written as a violent monologue and expected to be regarded as truthful. To be credible, to depart from being a narrative, after being written speech, the event Barthes describes must also be capable of originating a series of discourses with the ultimate objective of changing the status quo. It should rather originate another discourse starting from the discourse that participated in its extremely synthetic formulation. Perhaps that is the only way for a discourse to become politically relevant.

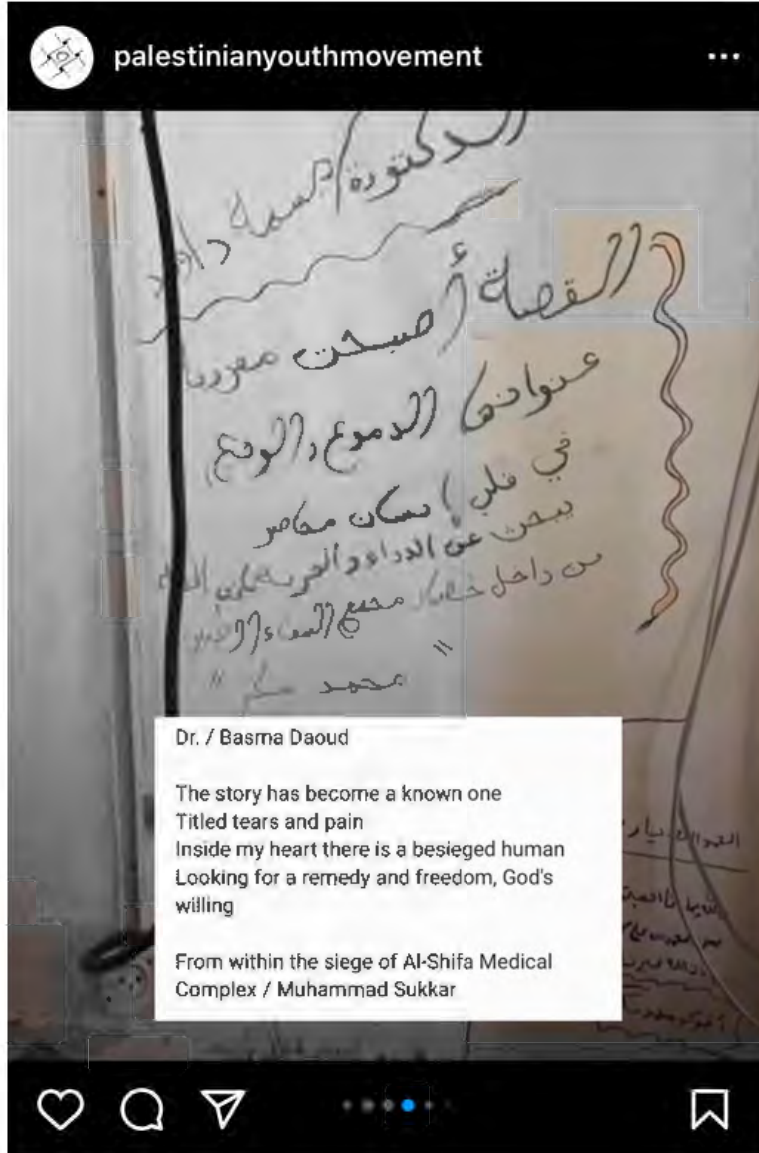
The writings on protest signs differ from these first wall-inscriptions responses to the unbearable on a number of levels. The author/s of such writings are also volatile but they are definitely more traceable than the authors of wall-writings. Protest signs are also often signed by individuals or collectives of activists, they do provoke and they do condense political discourse into slogans but they are primarily made to receive mediatic coverage during protests.

Both these kinds of writings share the aspect they are acts of resistance, their creation can define who we are, what we believe in and stand for facing the unbearable pain of others. But writing can also set the limits of what a human being can possibly endure and go through. To define the kind of society, of humanity we want to live in we necessarily need to establish the limits of the bearable as a defining act, as an affirmation of identity.

One of the darkest moments of this genocide was the siege and total destruction of Al-Shifa Hospital. After the IDF tortured and killed patients and medical staff alike leaving the hospital in wrecks and mass graves all around it, on the walls of the building writings of a totally different nature were found: expressions of their authors' will of leaving one last trace before imminent death.

I decided to include a few of them here.





Dr. / Basma Daoud

The story has become a known one
 Titled tears and pain
 Inside my heart there is a besieged human
 Looking for a remedy and freedom, God's willing

From within the siege of Al-Shifa Medical Complex / Muhammad Sukkar



“Those that died survive, and those that survive die a thousand times”

من مات نجا ومن نجا مات ألف مرة

170 يوم ❤️

@mariambarghouti

The truest message left on the walls of al-Shifa Hospital:

“We have passed through all the filthy paths but have not been sullied like you.

This enemy is the epitome of the trash produced by successive human civilizations, but it is also the stupidest ever. They have planted vengeance in every home and neighborhood, in every seed that has yet to be born. The wound will remain open, but today's wound is not death. We do not die, O filth of humanity!”

يوسف فارس



٩ س

أصبح عبارة كتبت على أحد جدران مستشفى الشفاء: "لقد عبرنا كل الطرق القذرة ولم نتسخ معلكم". هذا العدو، هو خلاصة ما أنتجته الحضارات البشرية المتعاقبة من قمامة، لكنه أيضاً، الأغبى على الإطلاق، لقد وزعوا النار على كل بيت وحارة، كل نطفة لم تخلق بعد، سيبقى الجرح مفتوحاً، لكن جرح هذا الزمان ليس احتضار، نحن لا نموت يا حفالة البشر

@yusuf.faris

Project Proposal

Conceptual axis, process and formal aspects

In the initial phase of this research, I conducted a brief investigation on the kind of texts that should be primarily responsible for regulating the limits of what societies regard as bearable: constitutional and international law. The real paradox of our time consists in disregarding all documents and norms created during the XX Century and during the last few decades while yet another genocide is unfolding in front of our eyes. Israel for instance does not even have a written constitution indicating its fundamental objectives and its territorial limits.

If we admit official documents and laws were disregarded to follow colonial plans at the point of systematically perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity, then we necessarily have to acknowledge those writings and texts are today devoid of any political relevance.

My work reflects these aspects as it appears to be an impossible protest sign where the spatial layout of text is manipulated, disregarded and neglected mirroring reality through an unfinished open composition. What we are left with is text functioning merely as a voice, as a tool to graphically register the unbearable.

Calligraphy differs from typographic, mechanically reproduced letterforms because its imperfections more evidently display that someone, a human other, was there and decided to leave a mark. Calligraphy is essentially the trace, the result of an act; it has an inherent performative aspect that today more than ever leads us into considerations about the time we dedicate to the task of writing itself. When we depart from machine made text, from typography, the reader has necessarily to face the trace of another human. My calligraphic practice is itself evidence of trace, it is an act performed in what can be defined as a moment of recollection. It was for me a way to silence all accounts and dignify one of them at the time. The result is a provocation to the sense of safety we usually get from reading a given text.

We are today used to consume images in such a fast way that the associations of typography and image has recently more often assumed fast, short text combinations, slogan-like communication. This seems to be the only effective way to propagate ideas as the average attention span of human beings has dramatically dropped, reduced to the bone by the overuse of technology and instant communication for trivial purposes. My work aims at visualizing grief for the sake of sensitization.

Why do I write?

The work here proposed initially originated as a reaction, as a form of emotional outlet for the constant feed of unbearable accounts coming from Gaza and their digital echoes. The main challenge was turning this sort of calligraphic venting into something else, into something that could challenge, a provocation to the desensitized eye. In different moments during these months, I wondered about using text in Arabic as a sign to let the reader contextualize my work faster. Besides the fact I did not want to fall into any form of orientalism, I also had to acknowledge that my message, the obscured sum of all the accounts I selected and edited, were in fact directed to the West. While experiencing the visualization of a written discourse with a dehumanized, powerless, unreachable other, the reader is faced by a barely legible text which before verbal communication first says: 'Look at me' and not 'read me'.

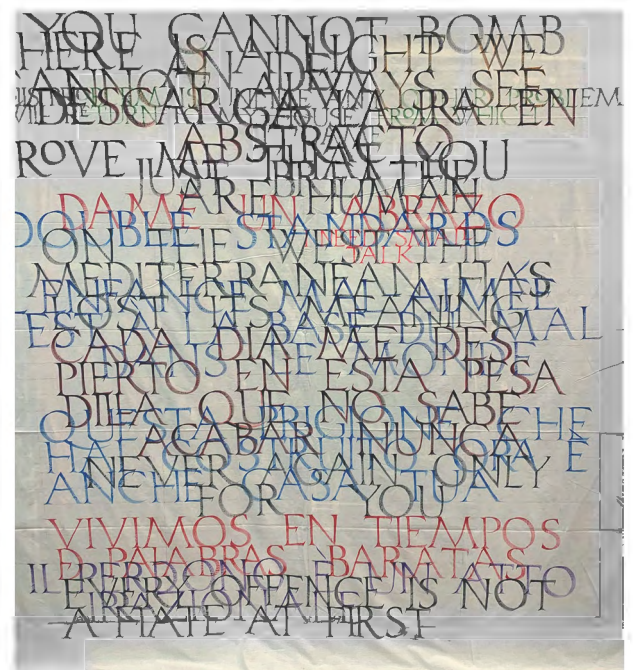
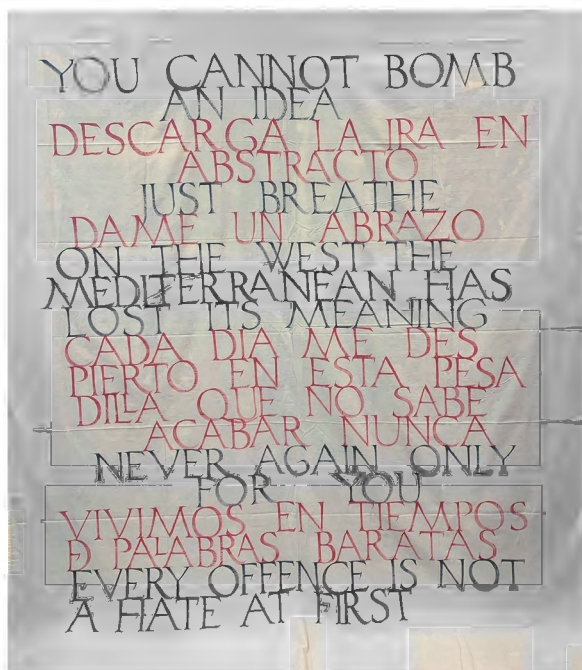
Of course, and by no means one can be persuaded to read something which is not meant to be read, but the paradox of texts is that we question their aesthetic form only when something in them is not working. The workings of functional texts directly take us into the realm of verbal communication and the analysis of content. But what signals the incommunicability and the presence of an author is the text not being functional. Expressing dissent through acts of protest or through text-based art undeniably adopt different visual and verbal languages. Although my work echoes with verbal content also coming from protests and graffiti writings, the textual aesthetics of this work differs from the previously discussed accounts of the unbearable because of a number of cultural aspects and design decisions I instinctively took since I started this work in December 2023.

The author resurrects from the oblivion of functional text when something looks off, when the text stops working. An effective metaphor to understand such mechanism is a passage of *Il Fu Mattia Pascal* by Italian writer Luigi Pirandello where an object pierces the roof of a puppet theater show representing the Odyssey. Suddenly all puppets stop fighting and instinctively look above their heads in the realization of being part of a representation of reality rather than a constituent part of it.

The meaning of words has the tendency to overshadow their aesthetic composition and the materiality of letters until we cannot read. The limits of legibility here also mirror the limits of what is bearable to the eye. Unfortunately, we are never able to look if we do not want to and if we do not look there is virtually no chance we are going to reflect on a specific subject. Perhaps this is the very root, the true cause of the historical repetition and perpetration of evil we are constantly going through or inflicting on others in different parts of the world.

Not seeing is indeed more comfortable. In the past months I even came to question my research and I often thought about giving up as there is something close to masochism in allowing these accounts of the unbearable into your sight and into your mind for too long, let alone crafting a new message with them.

The most problematic aspect of this condensed visualization of accounts is that its form defeats an effective and functional propagation of their verbal content. As the end of the research approached, I started looking for closure, for an effective way to turn this form of writing as a coping mechanism in an edited overall account capable of saying something else, of going further than wall-writings and protestors signs in challenging the widespread desensitization on the topic. But despite much thought, I realized I was seeking closure for a work dealing with a conflict which indeed has not come to an end. Initially I thought I would only stop writing after an effective ceasefire would take place but I then came to realize it made more sense leaving the discourse open, unfinished, undefined.

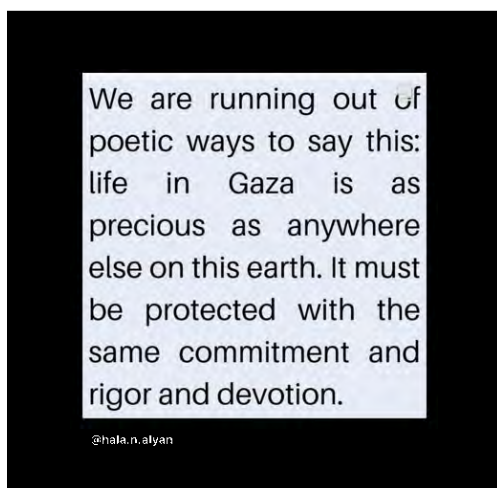


I WILL RETURN TO YOU
 I FEEL GUILTY FOR
 DON'T BATTLE
 HIS NAME
 VIVA ITALIA ANTI-EA
 VICARIA
 NOBLEST
 QUILL EAST
 HANE
 ANE

Why do I record?

The last addition to this work was the inclusion of a voice recorder left on a marble block set on the floor in front of the bedsheet I accumulated the accounts on. The recorder functions as a tool to unfold the content of the condensed and barely legible text in several ways through sound and speech. If at the beginning of the research I thought I could not write poetry as an expressive tool to describe this dark chapter of our history, I then realized everything I needed, the conceptual guidelines for poetic expression were all already there, on the bedsheet. The written accounts thus started looking like an intricate textual map of what I truly regarded as important.

In the initial phases of the project, I in fact often repeated I just needed those accounts to be there, even if reading them was difficult and eventually the accumulation could obscure them all. The creative block I experienced in these months came mainly from the fear of writing poems that could echo hate speech. It is easy to hate when your heart is filled with terror and sorrow.



The work proposed then came to represent two separate and yet interdependent moments: the act of writing and visually registering the unbearable through calligraphy and the act of recording, making the source of my discourse truly available to the audience. Sound does not bare the graphic violence Barthes talks about in relation to text nor the ethical implications of war photography introduced by Sontag but it nevertheless works as an account. I decided to use a small recorder because it creates a more intimate relation with recorded accounts, with that 'other' we do not want to see.

We just need to push play.



Conclusions

Remarks

Seeing and hearing accounts of the unbearable pain of others finally came together in an overall expression of grief. Yesterday, June 10th 2024 the United Nations Security Council passed another ceasefire resolution, this time proposed by the United States of America which assured Israel will agree on. The genocide of Gaza still endures while I write these concluding remarks but perhaps, we will soon be able to see the light at the end of this tunnel. I hope.

In an interview with Al-Jazeera by anthropologist Eric Reinhart, the latter reports how writer and professor Viet Thanh Nguyen stresses on the importance of expanding and sharing grief collectively:

As the writer Viet Thanh Nguyen has noted, “otherness and its history demands grief.” Our ethical challenge in the face of colonial violence and its legacies is to expand grief, “to make it ever more capacious, rather than reducing it to a singular sorrow. Capacious grief acknowledges that the trauma of the other is neither singular nor unique – that there are other others out there with whom we can share the burden. Perhaps only by expanding our grief may we be able to leave our trauma behind. In sharing our burden ... of otherness, we might also transform that burden into a gift. (Reinhart, 2024)



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