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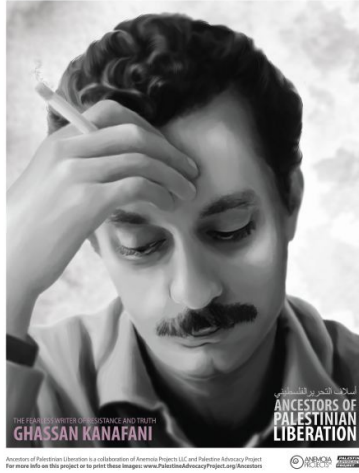
**ANCESTORS OF
PALESTINIAN
LIBERATION**

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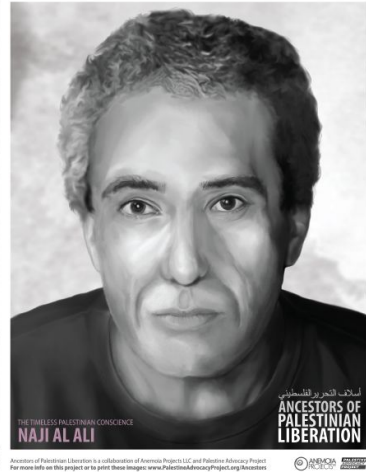
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ANCESTORS OF PALESTINIAN LIBERATION



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About this Project

***Ancestors of Palestinian Liberation* is a project aiming to uplift, learn from and celebrate the lives and work of Ancestors that have shaped the diverse and resilient fabric of Palestinian culture — past, present, and forthcoming.** In light of western attempts at historical erasure, this project serves as a tool to bring Palestinian names, faces, and histories into everyday spaces. Let us learn from the stories and voices of these Ancestors to further deepen our understanding of Palestinian contributions to our world today.

Ancestors features seven Palestinian social, cultural, and political icons: one individual for each of the decades that has passed since the *Nakba* (Catastrophe) of 1948. Each figure's biography briefly describes their connection to the *Nakba*, their life's work, and their enduring legacy. The project also provides a glossary of relevant terms and a list of resources for further learning towards a more holistic picture of the depth of their work.

**In the face of immense, long-term adversity and ongoing colonization,
Palestinian courage, brilliance, and creation persist:**

Fadwa Tuqan, *The Poet of Love and Pain*

Ghassan Kanafani, *The Fearless Writer of Resistance and Truth*

Naji Al Ali, *The Timeless Palestinian Conscience*

Mahmoud Darwish, *The Poet of the Palestinian Identity*

Rim Banna, *The Voice of Palestine*

Edward W. Said, *The Voice of Palestinian Self-Narration*

Razan Al Najjar, *The Angel of Mercy*

Fadwa Tuqan

THE POET OF LOVE AND PAIN (1917 - 2003)

*“Enough for Me
Enough for me to die on her earth
be buried in her
to melt and vanish into her soil
then sprout forth as a flower
played with by a child from my country.”*

Excerpt from “*Enough for Me*”
in *The Knight and the Horseman*, 1969



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Fadwa Tuqan

THE POET OF LOVE AND PAIN (1917 - 2003)

The poet Fadwa Tuqan witnessed so much. Born in 1917 in Palestine under British rule, she lived through Britain's issuance of the Balfour Declaration, the *Nakba* in 1948, the 1967 war and beginning of the Israeli occupation, the 1993 Oslo Accords and the formation of the Palestinian Authority, the initial construction of Israel's Apartheid Wall, and two *Intifadas*.

Born into a deeply conservative household in the city of Nablus, Fadwa rejected any customs she felt stifled her pursuit of knowledge. She learned to write poetry at an early age from her talented brother Ibrahim, a famous poet himself. Her early work reflects a pioneering bravery in its candid accounts of femininity, love, and emotion. After the 1967 war and Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, her poetry adopted a more overtly political tone, emphasizing anti-colonial resistance and the role of women in social protest. Israeli army general Moshe Dayan is known to have said that reading a poem by Tuqan was like facing 20 enemy commandos. [1]

In 2003, Tuqan died of natural causes in her hometown as it was under Israeli siege. Today, she is considered to be among the most distinguished figures of modern Arabic literature, an indomitable writer and poet who defied patriarchy, colonization, and occupation to give voice to Palestinian national loss and resistance.

Highlighted quote: *Enough for Me* from *The Knight and the Horseman*, 1969

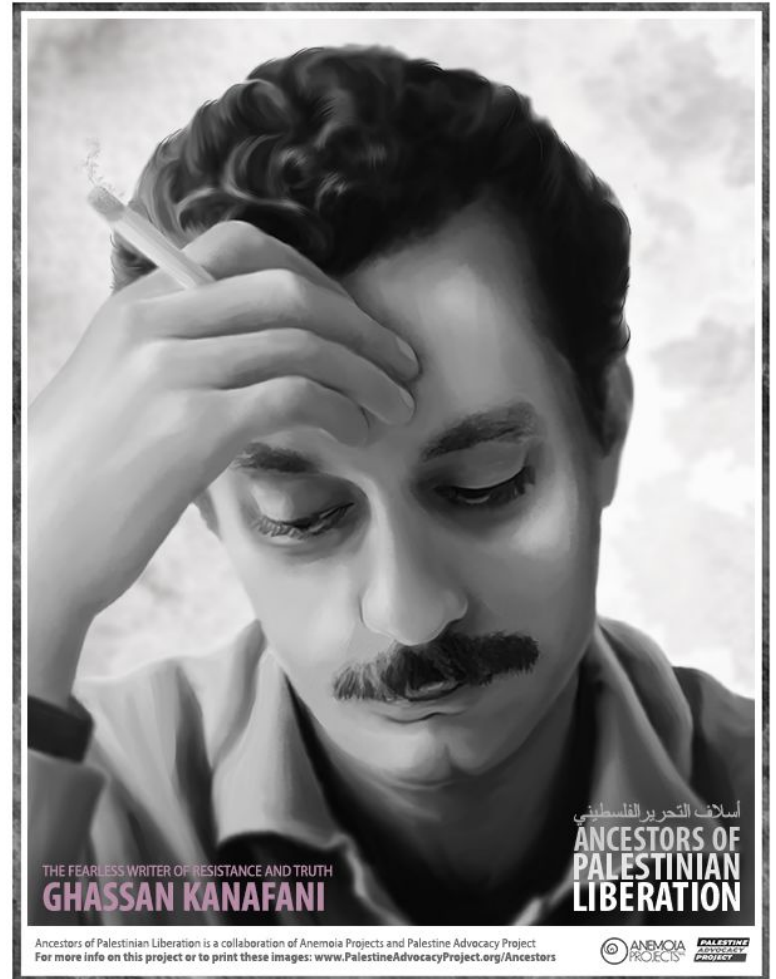
[1]: [Poet of the Palestinian Nation's Sense of Loss](#), *The Irish Times*, 2003

Ghassan Kanafani

THE FEARLESS WRITER OF RESISTANCE AND TRUTH (1936 - 1972)

We were heaped up there, withdrawn from our childhood, away from the land of oranges... 'oranges that died', an old farmer once told us, 'if watered by strange hands.'"

Excerpt from *The Land of Sad Oranges*, 1958



THE FEARLESS WRITER OF RESISTANCE AND TRUTH
GHASSAN KANAFANI

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Ghassan Kanafani

THE FEARLESS WRITER OF RESISTANCE AND TRUTH (1936 - 1972)

Ghassan Kanafani was a prolific Palestinian journalist and writer, an unapologetic speaker, and a pioneering cultural leader. Decades after his assassination at age 36 by the Israeli Mossad, Kanafani's writings continue to inspire, reclaiming the right of Palestinians to narrate for themselves their ongoing struggle for liberation.

Forced into exile by Zionist forces in 1948, Kanafani worked as an art teacher for Palestinian refugee children in Damascus, Syria. There he was inspired to write short stories to help his young students cope with their own dispossession. Among his most well known stories are *Men in the Sun* (1962) and *Returning to Haifa* (1969). Kanafani's writings broke with tradition, employing new literary styles to explore Palestinian statelessness and exile. He wrote everything from short stories to novels, plays to analytical studies, and boasted a massive body of journalistic work. In some ways, Kanafani seemed to live as though he knew his time was limited, writing constantly and publishing without respite.

He fearlessly spoke truth in the face of powerful, hostile governments, emphasizing the liberation of Palestinians as part and parcel of the liberation of all oppressed people across the world. Kanafani was never able to return to his homeland. His obituary in the Lebanon *Daily Star* called him "A commando who never fired a gun, whose weapon was a ball-point pen, and his arena the newspaper pages." [1]

Highlighted quote: *The Land of Sad Oranges*, Ghassan Kanafani, 1958

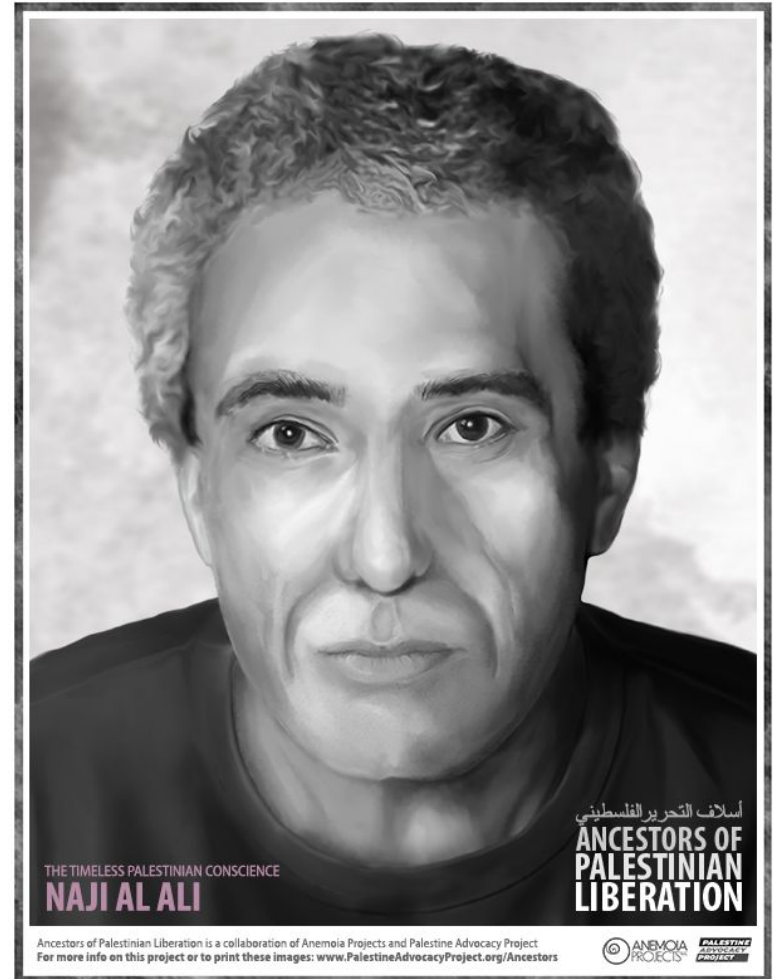
[1]: Profile: [Ghassan Kanafani \(1936-1972\)](#). Middle East Monitor. 2019

Naji Al Ali

THE TIMELESS PALESTINIAN CONSCIENCE (1938 - 1987)

“He [Handala] was the age I was when I had left Palestine and, in a sense, I am still that age today... He was the arrow of the compass, pointing steadily towards Palestine. Not just Palestine in geographical terms, but Palestine in its humanitarian sense — the symbol of a just cause...”

Al Ali told the Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour in 1985



Naji Al Ali

THE TIMELESS PALESTINIAN CONSCIENCE (1938 - 1987)

Naji Al Ali was a satirist, political cartoonist, and visual journalist. Forcefully displaced from his village of Al-Shajara in 1948, his family fled to Lebanon where they lived in a refugee camp. His drawings, which numbered approximately 40,000 over his lifetime, expressed solidarity with the poor and marginalized, criticizing the Israeli government, Arab regimes, and Palestinian politicians alike for their crimes and failures. "This man draws with human bones," *Time* magazine wrote of Al Ali, whose drawings were first published by Ghassan Kanafani in *Al Hurriyya* magazine. [1]

He developed a cast of characters, including Fatima the unyielding, ingenious Palestinian woman, and the Evil Man, a fat, bare-bottomed depiction of oppressive and corrupt forces. His most famous character is the ten-year-old boy named Handala after *Handhal*, a Palestinian bitter fruit with deep roots and that grows back when it is cut. Handala reflects Al Ali's experience as a child refugee: barefoot, destitute and deprived, but enduring. A representation of Palestinian agony and steadfastness, he appears with his back turned, looking towards his homeland. Handala remains frozen in time: ten years old until all displaced Palestinians are able to return home.

Al Ali lived as a refugee until his assassination in 1987. His unwavering integrity and work earned him the distinction of being "one of the best cartoonists since the 18th century." [2]

Highlighted quote: [*Revisiting the Great Palestinian Cartoonist Naji al-Ali 30 Years After his Assassination*](#). PRI.org

[1]: [Handala Will Age Again Soon](#), *Jadaliyya*, 2012

[2]: [Who killed Naji al-Ali](#), Palestine's most beloved artist? *The New Arab*, 2017

Mahmoud Darwish

THE POET OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY (1941-2008)

“I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a single word: Home.”

Excerpt from *I Belong There*, 1986



Mahmoud Darwish

THE POET OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY (1941-2008)

A cornerstone of Arabic literature, Mahmoud Darwish was a deeply beloved poet, author, and cultural icon. Expelled from his village of Al-Birweh in 1947, he soon returned to find that it had been destroyed, two Israeli settlements standing in its place. Over the course of his life, he lived as an exile in seven countries, as a refugee in his own homeland, and as a prisoner behind Israeli bars for resisting the colonization of his land through pen and paper. "Sometimes they arrest you while you are committing a dream," he wrote.[1] No stranger to Israel's silencing tactics, Darwish was even placed under house arrest when Palestinian demonstrators turned his poem "Identity Card" into a protest song.

Darwish's over 30 books of poetry speak of love, of exile and longing for homeland, of Palestinian resistance, and of the joy and pain of the common human experience. His writing has on multiple occasions sent Israeli society and politicians into uproar. "The Israelis do not want to teach students that there is a love story between an Arab poet and this land," Darwish said. "I just wish they'd read me to enjoy my poetry, not as a representative of the enemy." [2]

In 1996, Israel granted him permission to live in the Palestinian city of Ramallah. He passed away in 2008. A kind, polite man with a sharp wit and sense of humor, a humanist and poetic tour-de-force, Darwish will forever be remembered as the Palestinian National Poet.

Highlighted quote: Poem from *Unfortunately It Was Paradise*, Mahmoud Darwish, 2003

[1]: *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, Mahmoud Darwish 1973

[2] *A Love Story Between an Arab Poet and His Land*. An Interview With Mahmoud Darwish. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2002

Rim Banna

THE VOICE OF PALESTINE (1966-2018)

*“Oh root of my roots,
I will surely return,
so wait for me.*

*Wait for me in the cracks of the rocks
and the thorns In the olive blossoms,
in the color of the butterflies”*

Excerpt from *The Voice, the Fragrance and the Figure*, 2005



Rim Banna

THE VOICE OF PALESTINE (1966-2018)

Rim Banna was a fearless singer, lyricist and composer. She used her voice as a means of cultural self-assertion and a call for steadfast resistance to colonization. Born and raised a Palestinian citizen of Israel in the city of Nazareth, she was known for her modern interpretations of traditional Palestinian folk songs and poetry, reviving stories at risk of being lost due to Israeli erasure of her people's culture.

Banna's musical career began in the 1980s, her voice bringing hope to Palestinians in the occupied territories living under a relentless military campaign. By the 2000s she was known across the world by Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike as a cultural icon. First and foremost an artist led by principles, Banna denied numerous lucrative contract offers to work on projects that failed to acknowledge Israel's crimes against her people, refusing to compromise her commitment to uplifting the Palestinian struggle. Peace would not come at the expense of justice, no matter how profitable. Her album *April Blossoms* was dedicated to Palestinian children, and *The Mirrors of My Soul* was dedicated to all Palestinian Prisoners. Her music explored themes of love, childhood, homeland, freedom, and revolution.

Banna produced 13 albums. Though breast cancer claimed her life in 2018, the music she left behind continues the work of resistance, unstoppable by neither Apartheid Wall, military checkpoint, nor gun-toting soldier.

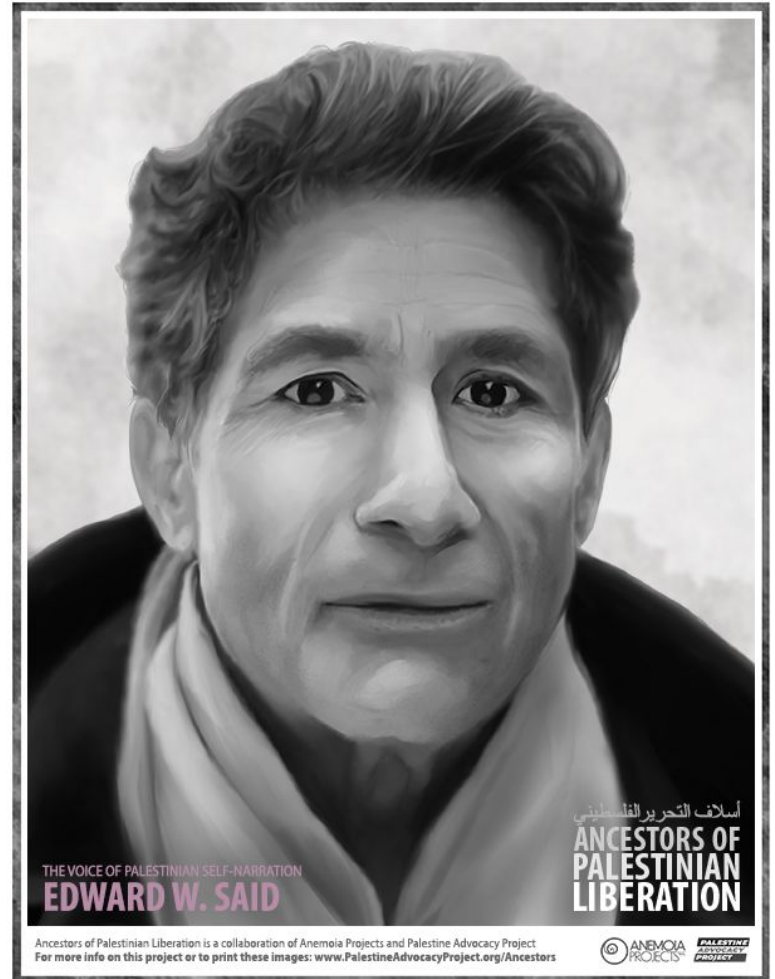
Highlighted quote: The Voice, the Fragrance and the Figure from Rim Banna's album *The Mirrors of my Soul*, 2005

Edward W. Said

THE VOICE OF PALESTINIAN SELF-NARRATION (1935-2003)

“Criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom.”

Excerpt from *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 1983



Edward W. Said

THE VOICE OF PALESTINIAN SELF-NARRATION (1935-2003)

Edward Said was a prolific scholar, activist, and public intellectual. Born in 1935 Jerusalem, Said left Palestine just before the *Nakba* and lived most of his life in the United States, eventually becoming a professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University.

His experience as a Palestinian in exile informed his belief that boundaries and barriers (invariably set by oppressors) must be crossed, that intellectuals must speak truth to power in service of justice. He questioned: who narrates stories of the marginalized, and why not the marginalized themselves? Said's ground-breaking book *Orientalism* (1978) and subsequent publications helped to create entirely new fields of study. This includes Postcolonialism, a school of thought that critiques European colonial control and violence, disempowers theories born of this control to generate knowledge about colonized peoples, and centers impacted peoples' voices in describing their own experiences and identities.

A relentless advocate for equal political and human rights for Palestinians, Said never shied away from criticizing the U.S. government's unconditional support for Israel, despite facing consequences in his personal and professional life. He condemned many U.S. endeavors in the Middle East and beyond, and indeed spent his last months vocally opposing President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq before passing away in 2003 after a twelve-year battle with leukemia.

Highlighted quote: *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Edward W. Said, 1983

Razan al Najjar

THE ANGEL OF MERCY (1997-2018)

*“We want to send our message to the world:
I’m an army to myself, and the sword to my army.
We have one goal, and that’s to rescue and
evacuate, and to send a message to the world,
that we — without weapons —
we can do anything.”*

Al Najjar told *the New York Times* in 2018



Razan al Najjar

THE ANGEL OF MERCY (1997-2018)

Razan Al Najjar was born and raised in Khan Yunis, Gaza, where her family has lived as refugees since the *Nakba*. In her 20 years of life, Al Najjar lived through three of Israel's deadly wars on Gaza. Vibrant, hopeful, generous, and tenacious, she dreamed of being a doctor.

Unfortunately, the Israeli blockade left her family unable to finance her aspirations, so she instead took courses in nursing. Al Najjar often worked 13-hour shifts, while providing pro bono medical services to the sick and injured whenever possible. She dismissed societal criticism for her work, responding that: "women are often judged, but society has to accept us. If they don't want to accept us by choice, they will be forced to accept us. Because we have more strength than any man." [1]

When Gaza's Great March of Return protests started in 2018, Al Najjar sold her jewelry and cell phone to buy medical supplies. She was the first woman to volunteer as a medic, treating demonstrators injured by Israeli soldiers, despite suffering injuries herself.

During a protest on June 1, 2018, an Israeli army sniper shot and killed Al Najjar as she carried out her medical duties. Even after her death, she continues to inspire bravery and strength of spirit, including in her own mother, who has since taken up the torch as a paramedic for the ongoing Great March of Return.

Highlighted quote: A Day, a Life: When a Medic was Killed in Gaza, Was it an Accident? *The New York Times*, 2018

[1]: [A Woman Dedicated to Saving Lives Loses Hers in Gaza Violence](#), *The New York Times*, 2018

Digging Deeper

This project is not only about recognizing these Ancestors,
but also about better understanding the context in which their work was born.

Key Terms

From the Ancestor's biographies

1967 War: The Six-Day War: Al-Naksa

In a pre-emptive strike, Israel attacked Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and over the course of six days occupied the Egyptian Sinai, the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Over 300,000 Palestinians were displaced (in many cases re-displaced). Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt, but retained control over the rest of the territories, immediately establishing Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and later in the Golan Heights.

Apartheid Wall

A 440-mile-long barrier constructed by Israel under the guise of security, 35% of which is still under construction. Two years after construction began in 2002, the International Court of Justice deemed the wall illegal and called for a halt to construction, as 85% of it is built or scheduled to be built within Palestinian lands in the West Bank rather than on the internationally-recognized 1967 border, cutting off Palestinians from their own land and restricting their freedom of movement.

Balfour Declaration

A 1917 declaration issued by British foreign secretary Lord Balfour promising "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," despite the fact that the land was already home to around three quarters of a million indigenous people, over 95% of whom were not Jewish.

Key Terms

Blockade of Gaza

A blockade is a means of preventing goods and/or people from entering or exiting a geographical area. Since 2006 Israel has imposed a blockade on the Gaza strip, putting itself in full control of all movement in and out of the area. It restricts goods such as construction materials and medicines from entering and exiting, as well as people — creating there what is essentially an open-air prison. This has negatively impacted almost all aspects of life for the two million Palestinians locked inside a strip of land only 25 miles long by 4 - 5 miles wide.

Exile

Exile is the state of being expelled from and/or prevented from returning to one's native land. In the words of Edward Said, exile "is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted."

Great March of Return

In March of 2018, Palestinians in Gaza began holding massive, daily demonstrations at the Israeli-imposed border, calling for Israel to respect their right to return home, as protected by international law. 85% of the two million Palestinians held in Gaza are refugees from other parts of Palestine. By the end of 2019, Israeli forces killed 214 protestors (including 46 children) and wounded over 36,000.

Key Terms

Handala

Handala is a cartoon figure of a ten-year-old Palestinian boy created by political cartoonist Naji Al Ali. Handala will remain ten-years old until Palestinians' right to return to their homeland is actualized. Handala is almost always seen with his back turned and his hands crossed behind his back as a symbol of his refusal to shake hands with those who make compromises on Palestinian rights.

Homeland

"I come from there and I have memories / Born as mortals are, I have a mother / And a house with many windows / I have brothers, friends / And a prison cell with a cold window-/ I learnt all the words and broke them up / To make a single word: Homeland"

-Mahmoud Darwish

Identification Cards

Israel uses a system of Identification Cards to control who has access to certain kinds of movement, services and rights. This system enables Israel to efficiently maintain a Jewish majority in its voters, as millions of Palestinians are assigned ID cards that prohibit them from voting in national Israeli elections. It is one of the fundamental practices that highlight the apartheid nature of the Israeli government.

Key Terms

Intifadas

Coming from an Arabic term meaning 'shaking off,' the word *intifada* is used to refer to Palestinian uprisings. There have been two major Palestinian *Intifadas* against ongoing Israeli colonization and occupation. The first is known by many as the '*Intifada* of the Stones' (1987-1993), and the second as the '*Al-Aqsa Intifada*' (2000-2005).

Mossad

The Mossad is the agency responsible for Israeli intelligence collection, covert operations, and counterterrorism. It operates independently from Israel's democratic institutions and is exempt from following the state's constitutional laws. It is the second-largest espionage agency in the Euro-American world after the United States' Central Intelligence Agency.

The Nakba

The Arabic word for 'Catastrophe,' the *Nakba* refers to the violent process of colonization carried out by Zionist militias in Palestine during 1948, leading to the foundation of the State of Israel. These militias destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages and forcefully displaced and expelled approximately 750,000 Palestinians. The *Nakba* is central to conversations about Palestinian liberation, as it is considered a foundational moment of systematic Palestinian erasure. Because of the *Nakba*, more than 5 million Palestinians are documented as refugees today, many of whom are waiting to return to their homeland.

Key Terms

The Occupation

The Occupation can be understood as a system of Israeli military rule under which Palestinians are denied civil, political and economic rights and subjected to systematic discrimination and denial of basic freedom and dignity. The Occupation covers Palestinian land seized by Israel during the 1967 War, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, as well as the Syrian Golan Heights (where the ancestrally Syrian, largely Druze population also lives under Israeli military rule).

Oslo Accords

A series of agreements reached during early 90s between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Initially lauded as a step toward peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the agreements instead gave birth to policies which have further entrenched Israeli occupation and advanced annexation of Palestinian land.

Palestinian Authority

Created as a result of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was to be a five-year, interim governing body with limited control over circumscribed areas of the occupied Palestinian territories. However, as subsequent negotiations between Israel and the PLO were never held, the PA remains the primary governing body of parts of the West Bank today. While some Palestinians adamantly support the PA, many consider it to be a tool of the Israeli government to oversee and legitimize the Occupation.

Key Terms

Palestinian Prisoners

The mass incarceration of Palestinians is so pervasive that almost all Palestinians have been or have had a loved one imprisoned. Palestinians from the occupied Palestinian territories are tried in Israeli military courts, where they are convicted at a rate greater than 99%. In these courts, military orders take precedence over Israeli and international law. Prisoners can be and are frequently held under Administrative Detention - a situation where they are not formally charged with anything, have no right to a trial, and can be held indefinitely.

Return; Right of Return

The Right of Return refers to the basic right for refugees to return to their homes and country of origin, as guaranteed by international law. The Government of Israel denies Palestinians this right, even refusing to allow many Palestinian refugees and their descendants to enter Israel for mere temporary visits. This stands in contrast to Israel's policy of encouraging all diasporic Jews to immigrate and become Israeli citizens, regardless of their ancestral geographic origins.

Key Terms

Settlements

Israeli settlements — or colonies — are civilian communities inhabited by Israeli citizens, almost exclusively Jewish, in the occupied Palestinian territories. They are illegal under international law. There are over 200 settlements across the West Bank, and over half are formally approved by the Israeli government, which offers financial incentives for Israeli citizens to settle there. Almost 500,000 Israelis live in these illegal West Bank settlements, with an additional 215,000 living illegally on occupied Palestinian land in East Jerusalem.

Steadfastness in English ; *Sumud* in Arabic

Sumud is an Arabic term for “steadfastness,” which is the quality of being determinedly unwavering. A culture of *sumud* is a cornerstone of the resilient nature of Palestinian resistance to long-term, ongoing colonialization.

UN Partition Plan

In 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181, which suggested dividing British-controlled Palestine into a Jewish state on 56% of the land and an Arab state on the remaining 44%, with Jerusalem as an international city. At this time, Jews — the vast majority of whom had immigrated during the past few decades — made up around $\frac{1}{3}$ of the population and owned less than 6% of the land. This plan was widely rejected by Palestinians.

Key Terms

Wars on Gaza (from the 21st Century)

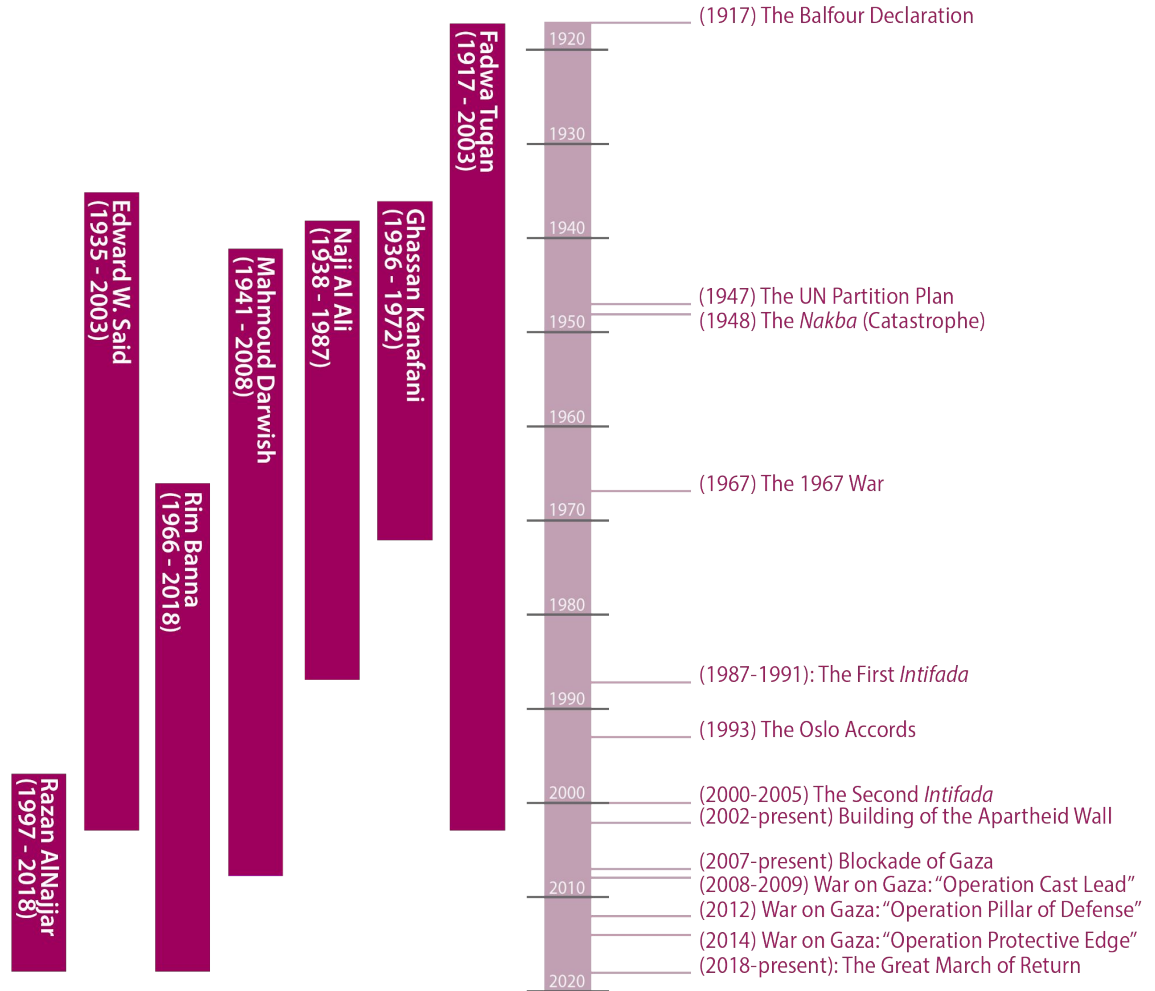
Although bombing and killing of Gazans by the Israeli government, often in the name of self-defense, is common and regularly committed, there have been three waves of massacres over the last decade. 2008-2009 'Operation Cast Lead', 2012 'Operation Pillar of Defense' and 2014 'Operation Protective Edge' resulted in the death of over 3,800 Palestinians (a quarter of whom were children), almost 18,000 Palestinians wounded, and countless homes destroyed. 89 Israelis were also killed across these three operations, most of whom were soldiers.

Zionist; Zionism

Zionism is an ideology seeking to establish a Jewish national homeland. The political Zionism we see prevalent today stems from the thinking of Theodor Herzl, who looked to histories of colonization, including in the Americas, as guides for creating such a homeland in the form of a state. A 'Zionist' refers to a person who follows the ideological thinking of Zionism.

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Timeline



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