

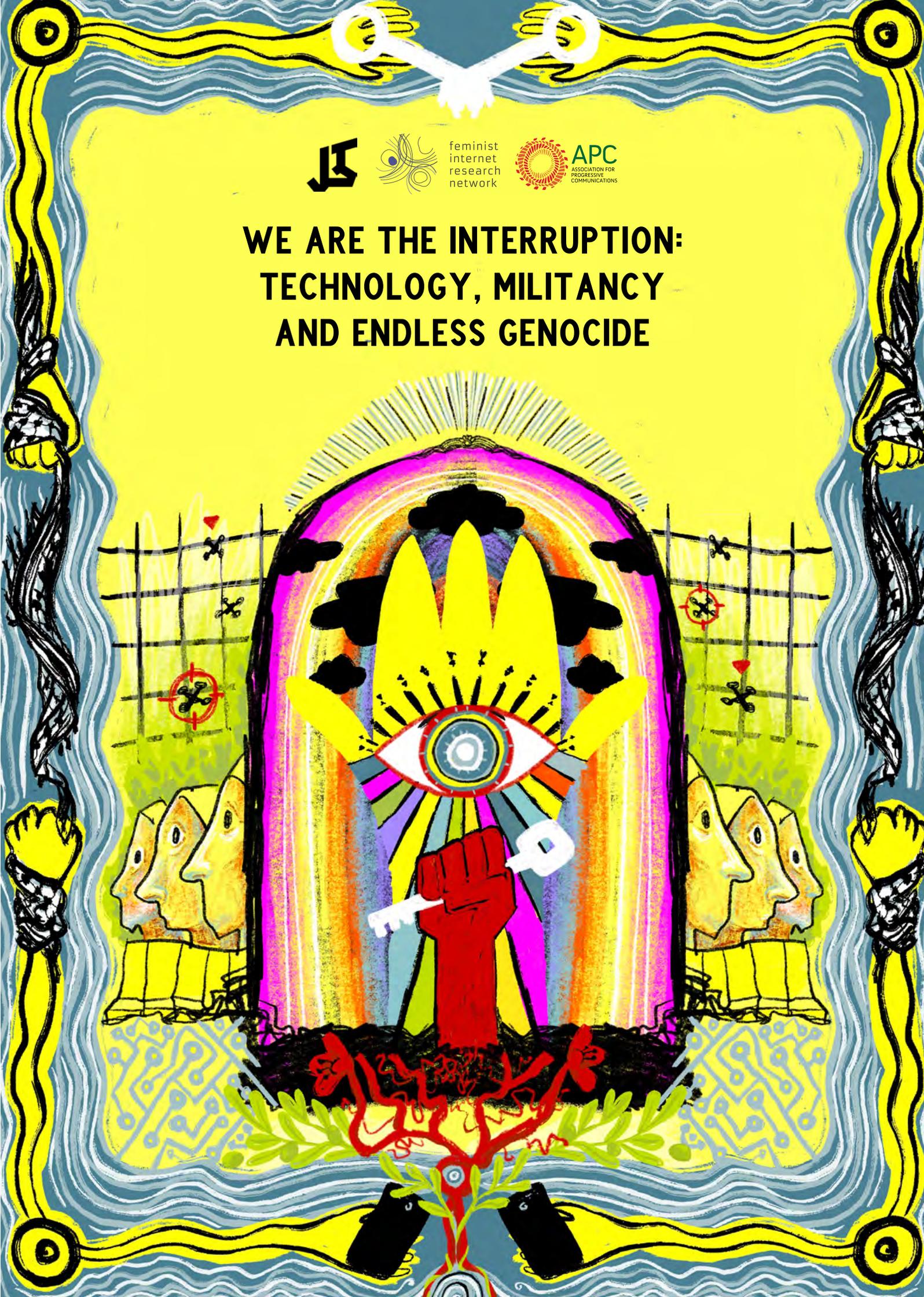


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COMMUNICATIONS

# WE ARE THE INTERRUPTION: TECHNOLOGY, MILITANCY AND ENDLESS GENOCIDE



We are the interruption:  
Technology, militancy  
and endless genocide

***We are the interruption: Technology, militancy and endless genocide***

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The Feminist Internet Research Network (FIRN) is a network of researchers, activists and practitioners from Global South countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. FIRN focuses on the making of a feminist internet, seeing this as critical to bringing about transformation in gendered structures of power that exist online and offline and to capture fully the fluidity of these spaces and our experiences with them. Members of the network undertake data-driven research that provides substantial evidence to drive change in policy and law, and in the discourse around internet rights.

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We are forever indebted to the work of Makan, 7amleh, Visualizing Palestine, AlQaws and other revolutionary Palestinian groups. Throughout the years, their frameworks have made it possible to think at the intersection of anti-colonialism, queerness and technology.

May you continue to show the way in a liberated Palestine.



Dear reader,

We write this piece, primarily, as an act of defiance against the presumed helplessness of us ordinary folk in the face of an unfolding genocide.

We came together, as Kohl, as Makan,<sup>1</sup> as a hive of people who carry Palestine in our flesh, blood, hearts, or as an arch to the world – a political abode – to write about genocidal technologies and anti-colonial queer feminism. Little did we know that what seemed like a straightforward exercise was about to turn into an impossible task.

At no point did we ignore or circumvent the genocidal spectre that is looming over us all; we were haunted by the genocide in Gaza to the extent that we lost most, if not all, affinity with the world around us, including well-familiar spaces and faces. And yet, as deep as this haunting went, none of us bore the physical burden of the genocide, and we were troubled by what that meant in terms of writing about it. Despite our intimate proximity to it, in blood, in heart, in digital existence, we remained alienated from it by virtue of the colonial project, which forces us to watch on the margins.

Second, we quickly realised that language – those very same words and structures used by colonial powers to justify our loved ones' annihilation – was unbearable to so many of us. Injustice demands a language that conventional politics cannot express nor fight, so we sat with our failure to invent a new way to organise writing and being. We embraced each other's inability at times, and refusal at other times, to write. We reorganised the writing process, dividing the labour differently, like bees in a hive.

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1. Set up and led by members of the Palestinian diaspora, Makan provides transformative education aimed at strengthening the movement for Palestinian liberation, contextualising Palestine within the broader framework of social justice and global liberation movements. <https://www.makan.org.uk>

Like millions around the world, our love for Palestine is a glitch-y kind of love, seeing that most of us have never been to Palestine, including Palestinians among us. This affective glitch insists on a different kind of future despite the growing cruelty of the zionist expansionist settler colonial project. We recognise Palestine's affective and transnational coordinates, beyond conventional maps and political rhetoric, where millions around the world find an anchoring point to fight and mobilise against globally-interconnected industrial scale warfare, land theft, environmental destruction, settler colonialism, racism, or hyper-capitalism.

Our piece is messy, sometimes on purpose, sometimes unintentionally, in a disturbing echo of the world we live in today. We let ourselves be guided by mess precisely to stand against the violences that the presumed neatness of geographical bordering produces: nationalisms, militaries, identities, passports, visas, restrictions, exclusion, racism, good and bad others, benefits-stealing migrants, etc.

We write this piece, ultimately, for anyone who is haunted. We race together not against time, but against injustice, with collective anger as our pedagogy. We forage untold lived stories from every corner of the globe and the internet. We cross-pollinate each other's histories of injustice across time and space. We weave our stories together into a final work which we hope will resonate with you, dear reader, and with all those whose lives and futures have been destroyed by genocide.

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# On genocide(s)



We are doing a disservice to ourselves in not remembering that genocides are quite common; they are and have been successful. This is the really terrifying thing: genocides are not that exceptional. They happen and they succeed. If anything, Palestine is exceptional in that there is still a movement that has garnered global refusal. Even if it's not effective refusal, refusal is still a stance that I think is exceptional by itself, no matter its outcome. We should therefore act and think with how it links to other genocides past and present, in Sudan, Bangladesh, the United States, and everywhere. We're just talking about the things that are on our minds and hearts, right?

– Maya M

## Picturing the landscape

The ongoing slaughter of Palestinians by Israel has become widely known as the first genocide to be streamed in 4K resolution. Yet, zionists and their imperialist allies continue to debate whether “genocide” is the appropriate term to be applied to the case of Gaza. The semantic games and rhetoric of detached political theorists in western institutions only add legitimacy to this incongruous debate, especially that many of their academic careers are built on the blood of Indigenous peoples, from North America to Palestine, in yet another instance of institutional “collateral damage”.

But what if the debate on what constitutes a genocide didn't matter to us? What if we chose to not make it matter? Who decides the thresholds above and below which a particular violence is tantamount to a genocide? What if ordinary folk, like us, were to define it? Which words would appear and in which order? Which gestures, and feelings, too? And could such an exercise help sustain life and sanity?

As contributors to this work, we come from myriad places and experiences: we have been targeted by zionists who called us “anti-semites.” We have had to deal with hostile institutions, state surveillance, and arrests. We have had students complain about our so-called “anti-zionist bias.” We have had imperial feminists accuse us of not giving a F\* about Israeli women. We have lost funding, income and jobs. Above all, we have had our hearts broken over and over again as we continue to watch the genocide unfold in real time, wondering what else we could possibly do to “just make it stop” (Maya M).

What if we disrupted the geography of this conversation, and looked away from western states of so-called “human rights” and institutions of so-called objective knowledge? What if we detached ourselves from imperial feminism,<sup>2</sup> which has historically let us down, and is now instrumentalising gender-based violence

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2. Also known as white feminism, or as Sophie Lewis calls it, “enemy feminisms” (2025).

to justify and condone genocide? What if we considered the cunning of gender violence, which prevents us from “naming and exposing the gender violence that sits at the very core of the colonial project?”<sup>3</sup> What if we stopped attempting to build a movement with or expect solidarity from white feminists? What if we didn’t want to converse with zionism and imperialism; what if we refused to engage with these parameters because we refuse for the terms of the struggle to already be set for us, by the enemies of liberation?

Instead, we sat together. Frequently. Remotely, as diasporic migrants or migrants born in exile who somewhat end up wherever they are, do. And we talked. A lot. About politics, our feelings, our intellectual and artistic paralysis, and our hopes and aspirations. In these frequent get-togethers, our feelings of cynicism, despair, and disgust (at western hypocrisy) collided with our duty “to narrate”<sup>4</sup> the continuum of settler colonial violence. To remind each other, and the world, that genocides are always successful. That Gaza’s is not an exception, but a continuation of settler colonialism’s pattern of occupying, displacing, eliminating, dividing and ruling.

## **Why does technology matter?**

The diasporic existence imposed upon many of us meant that witnessing the genocide, living it in the flesh, and attempting to make sense of a world order where such horrors are possible, all took place digitally. We often stopped being able to tell where the boundaries of our selves stopped, and where those of the massacres shown on our phones and devices stopped. And yet, despite the physical proximity brought about by technology, we were literally consuming images and footage of a genocide from the comfort of our homes. It is this late-stage feature of the colonial project – the forced disassociation and exile from our people and our land – that made this paradox unbearable: we are still in the race against time to stop the genocide, and yet we are far away, on the “outside,” yielding our affects and attachments as our weapons against helplessness. So we experienced a fragmented type of embodiment imposed upon us by both technology and affect. If there ever was a time where the online merged with our physical existence, becoming bones and blood and flesh, that time is now. Our material geographies often faded, became surreal, in a process of political and collective derealisation. We longed for home and the land, and the longing was so pressing that it became the only reality across digital connectivities. Our hybrid selves,<sup>5</sup> both flesh and machine, dreamed of liberation until despair.

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3. Thank you, Sarah Ihmoud (2024).  
4. Thank you, Edward Said (1984).  
5. Thank you, Donna Haraway (1985).

In times of genocide – that is to say, in the seemingly ever-lasting timeline of empire – the intersection of technology and gender mirrors the dystopia of “business as usual” when our people face the actual physical burden of genocide. The same technology that allows us to sit in circles and grieve together, as queer anti-colonial feminists (if these terms can still withstand today’s times), is used to diffuse images of occupation soldiers raiding Palestinian homes and dressing in Palestinian women’s lingerie, in broadcast sexual humiliation compounded with the systemic destruction and death the coloniser brings about. The same technology that allows us to think of life otherwise and attempt to organise across gender and sexuality lines is used to manipulate public opinion and portray one of the most ruthless settler colonies in history as bringing about gay liberation. Remember, for instance, the rainbow flag that was brandished by an IOF soldier in a completely razed area of Gaza. The same technology that allows us to attempt to protest, issuing statements and articles for which we are censored, defunded, and criminalised, is lauded as prowess and technological advancement when in the hands of empire, in its use of AI to coordinate chilling attacks and assassinations. Remember for instance the coordinated pagers attack in Lebanon, or the “Lavender” and “Where’s Daddy?” AI systems that target militants in their homes.

Digital technologies of warfare have become the arena in which colonial forces use the tactics of gaslighting, which is one of the core elements of gendered violence, to deny Palestinians their own annihilation. They have also used mass dissemination and sensational media in order to fabricate lies (“beheaded babies in oven” and “systematic mass rapes” being only some of them)<sup>6</sup> and portray Palestinians as barbaric, homophobic, and dangerous threats that deserve to be slaughtered en masse.

And so, our relationship with the digital sphere is akin to our relationship with the world: fraught with gender-based violence because it is fraught with colonial violence, the brunt of which we bear with our bodies and existence in the world – physically as well as digitally. This reality has come to increasingly inform our work by what we term death-as-method,<sup>7</sup> which is, in the literal sense, the death of method as we know it, when “method” in research has proven to be a colonial tool that considers our deaths as less tragic, our lives as more disposable, in the grand scheme of imperial expansion. In the case of Palestine, for instance, history, from an imperial standpoint, began on 7 October 2023, with the long history of the gradual erasure of Palestine completely glossed over. In terms of our collective thinking process, we willingly let go of our presumed supremacy over nature, and technology, in order to sustain human life against the compounded genocides and ecocides we are collectively facing.

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6. Thank you, Nada Elia (2024).

7. Sabiha Allouche and Ghiwa Sayegh (2025).

## A litany<sup>8</sup> of methodological claims

We wanted to address genocide as a universal continuum of settler colonialism through its imbrications with technology and gender, specifically because settler colonialism is a very present occurrence in this day and age, rather than something that is confined to history books and expert texts or reads. To do so, we draw on a series of thought circles, organised alongside Makan, conducted remotely, and attended by about 15 anti-zionist scholars and activists, most of whom were queer Palestinians and Lebanese, dispersed across the world. We invited people with uneven proximity to violence, with experience and expertise, including digital forensics, anti-colonial design, as well as students and junior and senior scholars. Our idea was to create participatory research: the framework and theory would be developed collectively, while groups of two or three people would each be responsible for a section or chapter according to their respective interests.

It was easy to get people to come together online (our hive), as the space was greatly needed. Yet, every time we tried to transpose the thinking process to paper so we could start to collectively write, the process would fall through. The impossibility of transitioning to a written format of organising thought was very telling of the moment we lived in and through in 2024: we were collectively exhausted, we had lost purpose in the work that we do, and we no longer had words to describe the horrors that we continue to witness. The urgency and crisis mode of last year made us unable to reflect on that emotional stage of grief. It was as if, to quote Rola, “everything we were, everything we did, everything we knew before October 7 no longer counts.”

This brought us to the question: what is method under annihilation? How can we reflect on lived horrors that are ongoing? And in holding together one’s methodologies and modes of being, what is needed to communicate and document when everything we know has been blown apart by genocide?

We ended up organising one final circle in early June 2025, one year after the methodology we had devised fell through, and after the colonial state had expanded its aggression to Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iran. The discussion was recorded and brought us “full circle”, as we could see the landscape and intentions of the colonial expansion with crisp, painful clarity. The different themes that were insisted upon by the author-participants (our foragers), namely limitations, violence and militancy, form the three main pillars of this research.

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8. Thank you, Audre Lorde, for “A Litany for Survival” (1978).

It was apparent to us, from the start, that what was needed was a total rupture with academic conventions of research as we know them – a complete de-linking from the form, tone, language and structure of scholarly speak. Such is the magnitude of our collective failure to call out a genocide for what it is, in spite of the vast scholarship that exists on it!

After all, the failure of our initial methodology was a collective refusal to use the same language as our colonisers (and by language, we mean here a system of organisation that disciplines the thought before it disciplines the speech). We intend, therefore, to test the limits of language in conveying an affective understanding of genocide, not to add to the existing debate on genocide (we couldn't care less about that), or expose the latter for its insidious workings (we already know that), but to insist on our refusal to be rendered dis-affected as simple observers.

There will be no literature review in this work. We engage with the existing scholarly literature as an afterthought, not as a starting point. We rely less on the expertise of the detached scholars whose flesh has never experienced the horror of warfare, be it materially, biologically, mentally or emotionally, to prioritise the inter-personal and trans-Indigenous affects that a genocide produces. The literature we base ourselves in is our trans-Indigeneity: a cluster of collectives and individuals forcibly dispersed by the workings of coloniality and united by their innate knowledge of forced modernisation, extractivist capitalism and settler colonialism.

Not only is death our “life's quiet companion”;<sup>9</sup> our trans-Indigeneity also means that we experience uprootedness differently, often through sensorial framings, by being removed from the flesh. Nothing can ever compare to the physical burden of carrying the genocide on the ground, but one of the colonial project's cruellest and inevitable realities is to let us live as simple observers, as outsiders to our own televised annihilation. This specific kind of colonial mechanism, which separates the shahed (witness) from the shaheed (martyr), debilitates us as political agents: even when we speak, we find ourselves confined to a specific model for speaking that cannot convey the magnitude of mass slaughter and colonial expansion, and where feelings are treated as suspicious and unscholarly.

Therefore, we give the finger to academic conventions by insisting on collective labour and co-authoring because we despise the institutional exigencies of pinning us against each other and reducing our work to immediately measurable criteria. By writing collectively in fragmented discussions and unfinished trains of thought across space and time, we take a load off each other when the killing

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9. Thank you, Greg Lehmann (1996).

becomes unbearable, when loved ones are stuck under rubble, and complicit institutions insist on depoliticised writing.

And to go back full circle methodologically, by asking what form research can take in times of genocide, we are asking again the question of “What is genocide?” It is unbearable, for all of us who have taken part in this work, to continue pandering to the same institutions that are celebrating our loved ones’ deaths. In our search for something more radical than feminist and queer theorists’ critique of Eurocentric fixations with “truth” and “objectivity”, we understand genocide to have torn through the futility of academic form, which disciplines the mind and the tongue, in favour of colonial knowledge, where annihilation can be rationalised and treated as objectively “good”. Our refusal of this reality can only lead to a refusal of its form. We find refuge in a methodology of affect; we are sustained by poetics<sup>10</sup> when words are too weak to break the dehumanisation of Palestinians and peoples under genocide, and the desensitisation of a world that is watching it happen in real time.

*Our homeland turns into a story that in reality we can't have – we don't have it but it can turn into poems, into poetry, into literature... so our homeland turns into a story that we love, and we love our homeland because of the story we love. Israel wants to sever this relationship. Literature attaches us back to Palestine, so in my imagination, in my thinking... literature contributes to creating realities, making the impossible sound possible in real life again.<sup>11</sup>*

In this work, we are bound by the monumental – and somewhat contradictory – task to write research that breaks the codes and limits of research. To do justice to our community, we are committed to parting ways with the conventional forms of “objective” knowledge, and to experimenting with new ways of writing together, “for the future” (Sarah) – even if the “polished” version of these fragments was assembled by Ghiwa and Sabiha (our weavers). In “On limitations” and “On violence,” we weave together academic works and poetics, often messily, but always with the intention of disrupting form as we know it.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, and written with Sarona and Aimee (our pollinators), “On militancy” is a manifesto, a call to action, a love letter to all those trying to make sense of and resist genocide, wherever they may be. This is not a method of care only, but one that is committed to a future that is different from the destructive colonial one we are shown today.

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10. Thank you, Audre Lorde, for “Poetry Is Not a Luxury” (1984).

11. Thank you, Refaat Alareer (2021).

12. Thank you, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, for the methodology in *Undrowned* (2020).

# On limitations



Today, my body was a TV'd massacre.  
Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into  
sound-bites and word limits.  
Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound-bites and word  
limits filled enough with statistics to counter measured response.  
And I perfected my English and I learned my UN resolutions.  
But still, he asked me, Ms. Ziadah, don't you think that everything would be  
resolved if you would just stop teaching so much hatred to your children?  
– Rafeef Ziadah

During the making of this work, we kept hitting walls – sometimes hitting the same wall over and over again – so much that walls became the only method possible.<sup>13</sup> Walls that carry so much bloody history must fall; and yet, they remain (the genocide is still ongoing); and yet, we are left with the frustrating realisation that all we can do is scratch at the surface. At many moments during the process, we felt that the limitations exceeded our mental and physical capacity because the magnitude of what has been, and still is, going on, exceeds it. In other words, to come up against walls is to also confront our own limitations. For decades now, we were fed NGOised notions of “policy change”, “impact evaluation”, “positive attitudes towards...” We were taught to position ourselves and speak in disciplined tongues and draft research reports, to show that we were good and grateful migrant scholars, that we deserved that job, that promotion, that recognition. We were fed the line that if only we could have more power over discourse, if only we could have a say on what is circulated online, if only we could have our piece of the pie in terms of digital infrastructure and technological advancements, then things could and would be different.

*And no sound-bite, no sound-bite I come up with, no matter how good my English gets, no sound-bite, no sound-bite, no sound-bite, no sound-bite will bring them back to life.*<sup>14</sup>

But no UN resolution, no advocacy work, no policy change, no algorithm, no amount of online posts, no technological breakthrough could have prepared us for this: 20 months on, the genocide is still ongoing and we have not been able to stop it yet. It is in this moment of mass-scale failure and indifference towards human life, that we came to doubt the promise of change that has long animated our own feminist thought.

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13. Thank you, Sara Ahmed, for the analogy of brick walls in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017).

14. Thank you, Rafeef Ziadah (2011).

## The concept of positionality

One wonders: what does it mean “to live in ecological and social proximity to death?”<sup>15</sup> The answer to this question depends on who the dead are, where they are located, and whether they are deemed grievable. Settlers and white sovereign citizens in other geographies are allowed to say their goodbyes, be buried with family and friends, rest in peace, and be remembered. In contrast, genocidal settlers continue to violate Palestinians’ bodies in death, preventing them from finding their dead under the rubble, disrupting funeral rituals, and uprooting Palestinian cemeteries throughout the occupied territory to replace them with settlements and hypermodern infrastructure. In Gaza today, the “luxury of death” is not measured by dignified burials anymore, but by whether one dies “with a full body.”<sup>16</sup>

We start at the point of rupture, which is to say, our moment of failure to come to terms with positionality: what does it even mean to position one’s self in a time of genocide?

In classic feminist theorising, knowledge production is always understood in relation to the author’s positionality. That is, their situatedness – broadly speaking – is enabled and limited by a convergence of contrarian power dynamics, some more oppressive/privileging than others. This has direct implications on the very motivations behind their writing. In other words, positionality informs and is informed by questions such as, what is being prioritised when conducting research? Whose voice is amplified and whose is neglected? How does the non-inclusion of marginalised voices serve to reinforce theoretical debates at the expense of material lives?

But beyond a classic understanding of positionality, even one that sees it as favourable, we must “add equal parts of these [contradictory] considerations:”<sup>17</sup>

That positionality, as expressed by Rola, is still viewed negatively by the champions of “objectivity” – the very same champions who rationalise, on social media and talk shows, the extent to which the mass murder and starvation of Palestinians is acceptable.

That to die with a full body is in and of itself a position of power in the world; that Palestinians are marked for killing because of their Palestinianness.

---

15. Thank you, Marietta Radomska, Tara Mehrabi and Nina Lykke (2020).

16. Thank you, Mariam Mohammed Al Khateeb (2024).

17. Thank you, adrienne maree brown, for “Spell for Grief or Letting Go” (2014).

That the so-called cover of anonymity and freedom of speech of the internet is not afforded to Palestinians and anti-zionist activists, who are doxxed and surveilled and exposed by media and state apparatuses alike.

That the diasporic condition of Palestinians since the Nakba in 1948 and until today – with different comforts around the Arabic language, different proximities to religion, and different reach of armed struggle, according to Sarona – can only bring about a fragmented positionality.

That the position from which Palestine is addressed is not finite nor resolved; as encapsulated by Jumana, it “is not static but constantly shifts with changing circumstances.”

That the theories (or tools) at our disposal “refuse to speak to our localities,” as Maya Z remarks; that language itself serves as “a tool for coercing resistance.”

So, to borrow from Sarona, let us “lean into that tension.”

What the online/offline continuum teaches us is that existing in two supposedly opposite realms at once is not a contradiction: our flesh can find its way to the machine in the same way that the machine can pulverise our flesh. The material conditions that shape our lives in a physical sense do not exist outside the digital industrial complex, whose infrastructure is indissociable from military warfare (currently known as the military-digital complex). In the same vein, we can at once perform a kind of fragmented positionality that responds to our immediate environment/audience and the latest geopolitical happenings, which we are choosing to call “strategic positionality”, without losing sight of a global positionality that transcends identity politics. If anything, these two positions do not simply co-exist in uncomfortable contradiction; they are necessary as long as the very utterance of Palestinianness is still contested. To speak in that tongue is to turn our back to the western monopoly of discourse, towards a different genealogy of genocide, from Sudan to Bangladesh to Yemen. Far from exceptionalising Palestine, Palestinianness and the urgency of the moment (or strategic positionality) are our anchor towards a global monumental struggle (our identitarian-transcending battle) – one that is anti-zionist, anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and abolitionist.

## Questioning the relevance of theory and technology

From Audre Lorde's poems and essays, to Saidiya Hartman's critical use of fabulation,<sup>18</sup> to Aimee Bahng's migrant (read speculative) futures,<sup>19</sup> feminists from the Global South have insisted for decades that our methods of work are not merely a case study (or a case in point) to a white theorist's premise, but a corpus – a system of thought and affect to decipher the world. Palestinians have challenged the provincialisation of their knowledge;<sup>20</sup> and as many have claimed in protests and online platforms over the past 20 months, it is Palestine that teaches us about the world. Yet, the "race for theory"<sup>21</sup> is more murderous than ever: we are no longer simply told that the parameters of theory have changed the moment we undertake a theoretical endeavour; we are treated as direct threats to the realm of theory itself, of which we are being purged. This is evident in the ways in which our region is incessantly spoken about by military, security, and strategy experts, and rarely, if ever, allowed to speak. Instead, we have been reduced to a readily available laboratory for testing "high" Euro-American theorising<sup>22</sup> and novel weaponry,<sup>23</sup> resulting in states that permanently fail geopolitically and intellectually.

And so, we reflected long and hard on the f/utility of theory. Maya M ponders the impact, if any, of the relentless work that feminist scholars from the Global South have been invested in for decades. "Did it just not matter?" she laments. In a similar vein, Sarona probes the limits of "anti-colonial queer feminist framework beyond a mere critique of white colonial feminism" by pointing out "the disintegration of the function of language, in both Arabic and English, in challenging genocidal structures." It is the shared reality of the uselessness of language that could explain the proliferation of "self-loathing" among us and our anti-zionist allies for not being able to stop the genocide.

This self-loathing is strongly expressed by Sabiha who shares how "fed up" she has become with theory:

I recently read something along the lines of "theory ends when war begins." I'm also fed up with the shape, form, and contours of theory. I tell you, queer theory [her bread and butter] increasingly resembles creative f\*\*\*\*\* writing than actual engaged politics. And I'm sick and tired of it. But maybe it also means that we should be doing more poetics and less politics.

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18. Thank you, Saidiya Hartman (2019).  
19. Thank you, Aimee Bahng (2018).  
20. Thank you, Nour Abu-Assab and Nof Nasser-Eddin (2019).  
21. Thank you, Barbara Christian (1987).  
22. Thank you, Maya Mikdashi and Jasbir Puar (2016).  
23. Thank you, Antony Loewenstein (2023).

On the other hand, Ghiwa questions Sabiha's binarisation of politics and poetics whilst positing language as an effective vehicle for channelling anti-genocidal politics:

I don't necessarily see poetics and politics, or resistance and theory, as a mutually exclusive binary [...] Rather, we are being taught theory and politics in a form that perpetuates the logics and discourse of genocide and of imperial and colonial expansion. And so in a lot of ways it's become not viable for a lot of us.

This doesn't mean that we "desert theory nor politics." Rather, they add:

We transform them by engaging in different ways of doing resistance, including creative writing and poetics. What we are witnessing is a strong rejection of the tools used by the occupation and its imperial allies and that is pushing us to not want to engage with these forms at all anymore.

Poetics and politics, in this sense, become interchangeable. Poetics are a vehicle through which we preserve our ability to become political narrators. Through them, we speak and act as counter-discourse and counter-aesthetics to academic conventions. In other words, we become narrators with an urgency, with "extremely pressing personal needs,"<sup>24</sup> which is to say, extremely pressing collective needs. In many ways, "heart is where the battle is,"<sup>25</sup> even as we struggle to manifest it.

The interrogations and discomforts surrounding theory in a time of genocide mirror those surrounding technology, in that coding and calculus too are logics of organising the world, in thought and in affect. The question of who can theorise could be translated as who can "technologise," in innovation and use.<sup>26</sup> Israel's barbaric use of technologies of mass killing has propelled it, in the colonial mind, to the status of a pioneer that's opened up unimaginable possibilities for a terrifying future. In contrast, Palestinians and their means of resistance are portrayed as belonging to the past – another form of digital annihilation,<sup>27</sup> another threat to be purged.

In the traditional western sense, theory has always been lauded as a form of neutral "observation" that is at a physical, emotional and psychic distance from that which is observed (often, the colonised or the enslaved). For decades,

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24. Hamad Butt presented his exhibition titled "Apprehensions" at the Whitechapel Gallery, from 4 June to 7 September 2025. One of the quotes of the exhibition read, "The poetical too easily comforts... I believe I essentially remain what I've always been – a narrator, but one with extremely pressing personal needs." <https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/hamad-butt-apprehensions/>

25. Thank you, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, who was interviewed by Quintin Hoare, Malcolm Imrie, and Jenny Bourne for the preface of the same title in *Communities of Resistance* (1990).

26. Thank you, Sara Ahmed (2019).

27. Thank you, Sarona Abuaker (2020).

people like us tried to reproduce this distance by providing more evidence, more facts, more means of verification, while the coloniser/imperialist dabbled in speculation, imagination and creative exercises, because their “realness”, their humanity, were never in question.<sup>28</sup> Before the internet was this widespread, many who survived genocides around the world chose to be living witnesses, keeping the memory alive often through storytelling and oral transmission. Today, and given the diasporic condition of displacement under settler colonialism, we bear witness to the livestreamed extermination of our loved ones, through technology, from afar. What happens when we are forced to watch because we refuse to look away?

In the English language, the divide between martyr and witness is already engrained: while “witness” is evidence-based and reminiscent of the law, “martyr” refuses a kind of innocence that is a prerequisite for witnessing.<sup>29</sup> For Lina Mounzer, to witness in English is a passive word. She explains:

In Arabic, the root of the verb, to witness, is sh-h-d. [...] From “to witness,” we get shahed, the one who witnesses; mashhad, the spectacle or the scene, but also shaheed, martyr; istishhad, to be martyred, to die for a cause. As if the act of bearing witness, followed to the end of one of its branches, snaps under the weight of what is seen, and you fall to your death. As if to die for a cause in Arabic is to bear witness to something until it annihilates the self.<sup>30</sup>

There is a clinical, almost depraved coldness – a voyeuristic mindfuck – to volunteer oneself to “observe” subjects one is actively distancing oneself from. Therefore, the forced separation between witness (shahed) and martyr (shaheed), engrained in an imperial conception of the world, is a colonial separation. The intimate relationalities between shahed and shaheed are too obvious to explain when it comes to our trans-Indigeneities, and our long history of bearing witness to the martyrdom of our own. In Gaza, a shahed who tells the world of their own extermination is one missile, one bullet away from becoming shaheed – the genocidal colonial occupation targets and massacres journalists like Anas Al-Sharif and poets like Refaat Alareer. In the case of those who, like many of us, are exiled from the land and made to watch our loved ones’ deaths behind screens, it is this form of intimacy that is perversely targeted by settler genocide. The shahed/shaheed as a relational form of resistance is blown apart, not only by enforcing a physical distance between the shahed and the shaheed, but also by demanding an affective distance with the vacuous promise that the annihilation might one day stop. We are therefore kept in the illusion that the

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28. Thank you, Julie-Yara Atz (2025).

29. Thank you, Lisa Jones, for the conversation and brilliant reflections.

30. Thank you, Lina Mounzer (2016).

genocide is happening “outside” of us (and in a sense, it is), that we are mere “observers” (and in a sense, we are), that our flesh has been spared (and in a sense, it has), that our words will amount to nothing unless we discipline and sanitise them (and in a sense, they haven’t, in either case).

But if flesh is the “zero degree of conceptualization”;<sup>31</sup>

if we are “both flesh and machine”;

if “our flesh can find its way to the machine in the same way that the machine can pulverise our flesh;”

if the battle is the heart;

then technology and theory can only extend into one another –

to give up on one is to give up on the other.

If the battle is the heart;

then no matter how removed; no matter how exiled; no matter how disciplined;  
no matter how multiple the screens it sits behind are,

our flesh knows to dream in other languages;  
it knows to invoke ancestral knowledge  
and bear witness in our stead.

## **The transformation of theory and technology into organising:<sup>32</sup> A note on paralysis**

The extractivist “eco-apartheid”, or the combination of ecocide and genocide that has been stripping Gaza to the bone, takes root in capitalist and colonial systems under which annihilation feels inescapable.<sup>33</sup> When confronted with the unimaginable scale of these atrocities, theory and technology, no matter how queer, decolonial, or non-linear, feel obsolete.

Maya M relates how academic explorations of the genocide within a biopolitical framework, a pretty standard happenence a mere five years ago, makes her feel “disgusted” nowadays. She adds that this moment might be our “opportunity to let go of things. Not ascribe to them, not make them better, not refine them; just let them go.”

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31. Thank you, Hortense J. Spillers (1987).

32. Thank you, Audre Lorde, for “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” (1984).

33. Thank you, Vijay Kolinjivadi and Asmaa Ashraf (2024).

How do we not give up on theory and technology, all while letting them go?

If we are to believe our own framework of death-as-method;

if death no longer equates the sociological doom and gloom of the death drive;

if death and the beyond become the anti-imperial outpost from which we speak, think, and live otherworldly;

if death is the last outpost from which we “write ourselves into existence;”

then we might reformulate our question as:

Is the death of theory and technology as we know them, the end of theory and technology?

The answer might lie in Maya M’s caution against separating theory from action. Not only is organising a form of theorising, but it becomes even more so when we think about theory as “forms of description and as forms of putting a framework for action and organising,” as she explains.

What these reflections on the transformation of theory (and technology) into action and organising tell us, is that the link between theory and technology on the one hand, and organising on the other hand, is fragmented, complex, contradictory, at times impossible, but always undeniably present. Have we not exhausted all the methods under the sun, to bring about this transformation? And yet, the genocide is still ongoing; and yet, we helplessly watch the obliteration of our loved ones and homelands in real time. It is when we look at our limitations, individual and collective, in the face – it is when we do what we do best and it still is not enough – that the sinking feeling of paralysis nests itself somewhere, across the stomach and the chest.

Within academia, our situatedness within a system that simultaneously praises “decolonising curricula” whilst going after students’ anti-zionist encampments meant that some of us spent innumerable hours adapting our anti-zionist work and teaching to the language of our institutions. Ad hoc risk assessment skills for all events related to Palestine became the norm. At times, we were being asked to sign on to specific declarations, such as agreeing with the IHRA definition of anti-semitism prior to partaking in conferences. This new normal of surveillance inevitably leads to questioning one’s entire legacy and dedication to knowledge production in the first place. That we are “transformed into docile creatures” because our “theories fail to speak to our localities,” as Maya Z laments, is the function and aim of the institution of knowledge, which is colonial at its core. It

is this function and aim, compounded with the impossibility of imagining life as something other than fragmented and torn apart under genocide, that neutralise our potential for organising, even as we engage in counter-institutional<sup>34</sup> work.

From outside of institutions, Myra reflected on the “feelings of guilt” that paralysis produces and the latter’s effect on “various fields, including creative projects.” For Myra, who is at once an artist, illustrator and scholar, organising is not simply a question of doing; rather, it is about “getting people to do things.” It is important to reflect here on the precarity in which knowledge producers who are stationed outside of higher education find themselves. For instance, artists’ work has and remains crucial for social research, and many a scholar relies on artists’ work as data ready to be mined for their next research paper. At the same time, we expect artists to be disproportionately at the ready with thought-provoking material aimed at making us look inwardly.

It is the same paralysis in theory and in the fields. When we hit a wall in an illustration project, the answer is paralysis. Let’s not move. You don’t move.

We don’t move. And I know it’s a claim that is anti-methodological.

– Myra M

The death of theory and technology as we know them only reflects the collapse of our known paradigms for life itself. With the real-time proliferation of the “colonial frontier” of the occupied land, the binary logic of endless colonial expansion vs. endless death for Palestinians is reminiscent of that feeling of doom that has prompted so many before us to think it “easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”<sup>35</sup> As long as colonial expansion and capitalism perdure, we can only think about the current world order, not as a moment, but as one of endless genocide. In the context of Palestine, the genocide has been ongoing since the Nakba in 1948, and we have witnessed its accelerated intensification in Gaza since 7 October 2023. Across geographies and histories, colonial expansion relies on the material conditions produced by endless genocide, upon which it grounds its policies of extermination, displacement, land theft and capitalist exploitation.

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34. Thank you, Sara Ahmed (2021).

35. Thank you, Mark Fisher (2009).

To this we say:

The myth of endless colonial expansion is only contingent upon an endless supply of resources and perpetually disposable human beings.<sup>36</sup>

No world in which we can survive exists beyond that frontier.

When all we hear about is how deep into the crust of the earth that precision bunker-buster bomb can penetrate; how many technologically innovative methods of suffocation, pulverisation, coordinated attacks, starvation, and precision- and indiscriminate-targeting the occupiers can devise and test out in the open; how inconsequential our deaths are in the realm of public discourse; of course we feel helpless; of course we feel docile.

Our use of theory and technology will always be limited – not against the endlessness of colonial expansion, but because of it.

But in an accelerationist world of high-tech mass-slaughter, paralysis might be the only sensible response, and our only salvation.

We ourselves are limited, because we refuse to be limitless.

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36. Thank you, Antony Loewenstein (2023).

# On violence



Imagine living in a few hundred square metres of hyper-surveilled, no-exit land. Imagine that everything you do, including your “biometric data, call records, location data, and social network connections like WhatsApp contacts or Facebook friends,” is processed into an AI system designed by your captors. Imagine that the system gives you a “threat rating” from 1 to 100 on their social scoring system. “Every phone call you make, every friendship you build, and every shop you visit can push your score up or down.” If your “rating rises above a certain threshold,” you are added to an imminent kill list. Your every movement is under scrutiny; every choice you make can bring you one step closer to being flagged for automated killing. And if you hit that score, an officer will decide on your gender based on the sound of your voice and will okay your killing accordingly. Imagine that your captors eventually run out of targets to kill, so they remedy it by lowering the threshold of killable threats.<sup>37</sup> Imagine that even if you lived in complete isolation, you will one day be marked for killing, too.

This is not the sketch of a science-fiction novel. It is very much the daily reality of Palestinians who live under the rule of Israel’s automation of genocide – a rule that can only be described as a futuricide.<sup>38</sup> The occupation does not only invade physically, but digitally as well, to the point where the feeling of omnipresence of the coloniser becomes a weapon of control.<sup>39</sup> Systems like Lavender and Where’s Daddy? are designed to automate killing indiscriminately; that includes non-combatants who are close to emergency sites (like journalists, firefighters, medics, etc.), and the family of militants who share the same home when the “target” is “eliminated.” It is chilling to ascertain that “[occupation] officers understood that civilian casualties were a feature of the killing machine, not a bug.”<sup>40</sup> In Gaza today, it has become impossible to differentiate between militants, non-combatants and those whose death is classified as “collateral damage.” In other words, everyone in Gaza is a target; and whether they hold weapons or not, as per the AI of warfare, everyone in Gaza is a potential resistance fighter.

Gaza has come to be known as the laboratory of the technology of warfare, but the experiments that are being conducted are not an isolated incident. Across the occupied territory, “a sprawling network of weaponised surveillance and repression [...] dominates Palestinian lives,” in the form of spyware, surveillance camera, military checkpoints, biometric data, facial recognition, and other genocidal technologies in the making.<sup>41</sup> In a sick sense, the occupation is

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37. Thank you, Visualizing Palestine, for the Stop Killer AI website (2024). <https://stopkiller.ai/>

38. Thank you, Ameera Kawash, interviewed by Donatella Della Ratta (2024).

39. Thank you, Petra Molnar (2024).

40. <https://stopkiller.ai/>

showcasing its automation of mass slaughter as cutting edge, to then transform its technology of surveillance and warfare into a commodity that is marketed and exported to the rest of the world.

The violence of the coloniser is always seen as legitimate, as restrained and precise, as justifiably self-defending; the violence of the colonised, that is to say resistance from below, is always condemned as barbaric, chaotic, and in need of being civilised by the bomb.<sup>42</sup> Who and under which circumstances one is labelled “terrorist” is an invitation to intellectually query the inconsistency of imperial policies and the failures of the so-called “international community” on the matter, on the one hand, and to reflect on the collective implications of labelling anti-genocidal endeavours as “terrorist”.

But decolonising AI “requires a reaction against the philosophy of ‘universal computing’” and towards localised approaches.<sup>43</sup> We will therefore put on pause the otherwise-endless listing of atrocities committed by the occupation, and queer our gaze by turning it, as per our initial premise, from the sky to the ground – from the drone to the trench. We reorient our gaze by considering Palestinians, and ourselves, not as passive recipients of the technology of warfare, but as lifemakers whose resistance and survival, or *sumūd*, exceed conventional and scholarly understandings, despite the deployment of these technologies.

Not targets, but potential bugs.

a threat – a glitch in their system.

## **They’re everywhere, we’re everything**

Unsurprisingly, our circles were not as concerned with the morality-ridden rhetoric and debates of when and if armed resistance is legitimate, the cornerstone of detached legal theorists and political scientists. Here, morality becomes a slippery slope: who decides what is moral and what is not? And, crucially, how do morality contestations reiterate the latter as barbaric, ignorant, or in need of civilising (read bombing or incarcerating)? In other words, the physical violence of the occupation, even when it comes to technological warfare and genocide, is always-already accompanied by discursive and epistemic rationalising. How a particular violence is framed and applied is but one step along a timeline of historic and systemic binary ordering, including us/them, good/bad, terrorist/civilised, Muslim/Arab, to name a few.

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41. <https://stopkiller.ai/>

42. Thank you, Elsa Dorlin (2020).

43. Thank you, Ameera Kawash (2024).

At times, our reflections on violence echoed neo-colonial securitisation interventions, notably how the orientalist west/non-west<sup>44</sup> binary constructs a dichotomy of armed resistance vs. terrorism. Presica pondered the use of armed resistance as a “reaction” to the killing of loved ones by the Israeli army, and others raised concerns about the arbitrary ways in which state institutions abuse and re-abuse the meanings of terrorism. At worst, Sabiha speculated: “What’s next? Will anyone reading Frantz Fanon be labelled a terrorist? Arrested by ICE? Disappeared?” It has been the case in South Africa for decades, where a fictitious “white genocide” narrative is now officially adopted by the US administration. The persecution and purging of intellectuals from our peripheries is not only reflective of authoritarian governance and failed statehood, but also of their function as imperial powers’ cost-effective solution for outsourcing their dirty politics of repressing anti-colonial work. In the context of our region, the complicity of Arab regimes with the occupation can be epitomised by Egypt’s closing of its borders to Palestinians and its detention of some of the Soumoud convoy’s travellers.<sup>45</sup> Jordan, where more than half the population is Palestinian, witnessed the largest arrest campaign since its “democratic transition” in 1989, with hundreds of anti-zionist activists, both online and offline, detained.<sup>46</sup> In Bahrain, dozens of youths were arrested at protests, interrogated without legal representation, imprisoned and beaten.<sup>47</sup> In the UAE, scores of people were arrested, imprisoned, fined and deported for expressing their support for Palestine online.<sup>48</sup> Both Bahrain and the UAE normalised relations with the occupation in 2020. In Morocco, activists calling for the boycott of Carrefour, a French brand complicit in Israel’s occupation of Palestine, were detained and interrogated for “organising and participating in an undeclared demonstration” during a peaceful sit-in,<sup>49</sup> and in Tunisia, several oppositional figures, notably leftist anti-imperial activists, were arrested over posts on a social media page they were allegedly not involved in, three of whom under “terrorism charges.”<sup>50</sup> During Assad’s dictatorship in Syria, and despite the regime’s so-called support for the Palestinian cause, Palestinian refugees who partook in the demonstrations against the regime were among the most impacted, notably in the Yarmouk camp. Assad’s historically contradictory stance amounts to soumoud-washing, which is the co-optation by the authoritarian state of the Palestinian struggle in its war against its people.<sup>51</sup> Not only did all these regimes cite security reasons or concern for public order to justify their complicity with the occupation; they shamelessly use regional organising against the genocide as a vehicle for clamping down on government opposition.

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44. We use west and non-west in broad terms whilst appreciating the transnational and post-border dimension within each.

45. <https://www.newarab.com/news/gaza-convoy-rolls-despite-egypts-warnings-mass-deportation>

46. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/jordan-authorities-have-arrested-hundreds-crackdown-pro-palestine-protests>

47. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/22/bahrain-repression-pro-palestine-protests>

48. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/22/bahrain-repression-pro-palestine-protests>

49. <https://menarights.org/en/case/taib-madmad-soufiane-el-mansouri-radouane-er-rifai-abdelmajid-chhaiba-abdel-ilah-benabde>

50. <https://www.newarab.com/news/tunisia-sentences-pro-palestine-leftist-jail-extremism>

51. Thank you, Nayrouz Abu Hatoum and Razan Ghazzawi (2023).

Jumana linked our collective “paralysis” to the disproportionality between the feeling of “immediacy” that the genocide produces on the one hand, and the time-consuming nature of the non-violent forms of resistance that inform much of our work on the other. After all, in the long-term, the pacifist and obedient citizen, under the guise of “protection from,” quietly fuels the ever-growing potential of state authoritarianism. The recent proscribing of Palestine Action in the UK as a terrorist group, on par with Al-Qaeda, is a case in point. With the “good citizen’s” daily normalisation of AI softwares and applications, which ends up legitimising “more extreme and military employment of these technologies,”<sup>52</sup> Presica lamented the limitations of armed resistance itself in the light of the “technological warfare” that “restricts guerrilla warfare.”

Echoing Frantz Fanon’s writing on anti-colonial violence,<sup>53</sup> she continued:

I don’t see any other solution than armed resistance, and to include education in the form of a small book that a resistance fighter can carry in their pocket and that is written in a language that is for the masses and by the masses. But I don’t see any means, any tools we can use that do not include actual violence.

Maya M asked whether she could push us toward an experiment on effectiveness:

Part of what we also have to grapple with, and it’s extremely difficult, is the question of the actual effectiveness of armed resistance. We shouldn’t assume that by virtue of it being armed, it is automatically effective. Of course, effectiveness is not the same as having the right to armed resistance and being in the right. So what do we mean by effectiveness, in terms of liberation at this moment? What is most troubling to me, what literally keeps me up at night, is the realisation that all forms of resistance have proven ineffective [to stop the genocide]. It’s not like some are effective and the others aren’t and we have to choose the effective one. In a genocidal moment, nothing is effective. That’s the kind of hole that we’re in.

In order to understand this moment, and the structural ineffectiveness of resistance today, Maya Z historicises armed resistance in Palestine and the region: its leftist, and particularly communist, iterations, which were quite prolific in the decades following the Nakba, were considerably weakened by state and regional politics, as well as by the same global mechanisms that are dismissing armed resistance today. According to Maya Z, armed resistance’s “full potential has not materialised yet;” what we know of armed resistance in the context of

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52. Thank you, Ameera Kawash (2024).

53. Thank you, Frantz Fanon (1961).

Palestine is a particular/stereotypical one that necessarily links armed struggle to a religious (read Islamic) framing. But, in par with a Fanonian approach to anti-colonial liberation, she reiterates that “armed resistance is never something in and of itself. [...] It is part and parcel [and] a continuation of actual organisation, a continuation of an ideology, and a continuation of a collectively cemented positionality.”

To talk of a yet-to-be-fulfilled potential for resistance might very well be where this experiment takes us. Jumana was paradoxically soothed to hear Maya M's point about everything being ineffective. “If nothing is effective,” she explains, then “everything is effective.” It is not, then, a question of effectiveness, but a question of time.

And if nothing changes, then everything must change.<sup>54</sup>

And if nothing works, then everything can work.

## **A different genealogy of resistance**

To draw a map to a different genealogy of resistance, we must engage with a sociology of the trace “to attenuate the distance between empirically social worlds and those things that are not easily found through methodologies that attempt to empirically account for social reality.”<sup>55</sup> We must trace our own temporality of resistance, against the seeming timelessness of genocide, compounded by its new-found use of colonial AI in technological warfare.

In order to do so, let us remember our starting point, in the words of Maya M:

We are doing a disservice to ourselves in not remembering that genocides are quite common; they are and have been successful.

It is “the symbiosis of enemy feminisms, US imperialism, and zionism,” which together produce “a sexed and gendered occupation for the genocidal economy of waste,” that we must resist with our “Global-South-led revolutionary queer feminist theory and praxis.”<sup>56</sup> After all, the grim gendering of who is considered a “threat” and who is considered “collateral damage” tells you all you need to know about the so-called “progressiveness” of the occupation. But if any and all resistance across history has been demonised, stifled, and annihilated, then whatever form our resistance takes, it will be deemed as violent by the colonisers and their allies. This is our cemented positionality, as suggested by Maya Z – a strategic one that is the kind of feminism we want to see today.

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54. Thank you, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, for *Change Everything* (2024).

55. Thank you, Herman Gray and Macarena Gómez-Barris, for the sociology of the trace (2010), as cited in Ronak K. Kapadia's *Insurgent Aesthetics* (2019).

56. Thank you, Walaa Alqaisiya, for *Decolonial Queering in Palestine* (2022) and the teach-in at South Feminist Futures (2025).

It is this map to organising otherwise that we call “strategic temporality” – a ritual, a summoning, a séance, spiritual and material at once, that heeds the call of all resistance to genocides, across time and geographies.

Maya M recalls her ancestors in North America, who were intentionally starved to get them to physically move. Once they arrived at their first site of displacement, the American government told them to travel further west, to California, for food:

And they refused. They walked back to their land in the winter in what is now the Midwest. 20% of the entire tribe died of starvation and exposure. And now they live on their unseeded land on a reservation. Even this form of defeat is almost a miracle, that they lived and that they were not forcibly moved out west.

*Look at them, how they sink their teeth*

*In my side*

*Wolfing down my blossoms and sweet scents.*

*They killed my spring in its entirety*

*Stole my very life from the world*

*Unleashed the season of sleeplessness.*

– Dareen Tatour<sup>57</sup>

The stance of refusal regardless of immediate effectiveness is an epistemic point of convergence where myriad South political grievances find an anchoring point. And yet, as Jumana remarks, while the people of Sudan show an unwavering solidarity with Palestine, a lot of people (herself included) “don’t know as much about what they’re going through as they do about us.” The same goes for Yemen, Bangladesh, and many other Global South geographies towards which we must show “reciprocal solidarity” so we might have a chance to organise, in order to break through the limitlessness of genocide – and stretching ourselves towards the timelessness of our common struggle.

To organise across “strategic temporality,” and to resist anyway, to resist always, regardless of effectiveness, is to push one’s vulnerability to the limits. Our archiving becomes a denaturalisation of the murderous colonial knowledge embodied by the drone – a sort of “body-reflexive practice”<sup>58</sup> that we enact through the flesh and the machine. By writing our paralysis into the digital archive, we are pre-empting future retrospective amazements at how

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57. Thank you, Dareen Tatour, for the poem “A Female Cry” (2018).

a televised genocide was allowed to persist for this long. We are also putting into practice our own form of resistance, even as material circumstances render some anti-genocidal actions more, or less noisy than others.

And I perfected my English and I learned my UN resolutions.  
But still, he asked me, Ms. Ziadah, don't you think that everything would be resolved if you would just stop teaching so much hatred to your children?

To qualify Palestinian resistance as a "culture of death" is to be complicit with the mass destruction and wide-scale violence perpetrated by the genocidal colonial occupation. But colonial (and state-sanctioned) violence and annihilation are what is collectively killing us and making life unbearable; resistance to them, even when enacted through carnal death, once again refuses death as a finality. Therefore, we recognise in the act of resistance and its afterlife, a site for potentiality and lifemaking, where the narratives, histories and life stories of those who have to contend with annihilation are preserved/live on. As murdered Palestinian poet Refaat Alareer wrote,

### **If I must die, you must live to tell my story<sup>59</sup>**

*I've also felt the sense of paralysis, especially over the last several months since the starvation campaign accelerated. Before that I was feeling much more able to write and I was really thinking with the theory that's emerging on the ground in the everyday embodied actions of women in particular, to survive genocide as a form of theory-making itself.*

*I have found myself much more grounded in story and the value of listening. Obviously there is no right way, for those of us who are in the space of academia there's a big feeling of paralysis in some ways and ineffectiveness in other ways. But we are using the tools that we have with discourse with narrative which I think is a really important front of anti-colonial work right now.*

*The conversation of armed resistance, not armed resistance, we're all working in a multiplicity of ways right now. We all have different roles to play in the struggle from where we're situated. And we're all utilising the gifts that we have in service of our people's liberation in different ways. This last couple of years has really been a journey for me in figuring out what is my role to play and how I can enhance that craft that I can offer to movement right now. For me, that has been working with story, working with ethnography, uplifting people's stories, and working in the space of narrative. Whether or not it's effective, I can't let myself fall into that because that itself is too paralysing for me. It's like a trap that doesn't allow me to do the work. It takes away*

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58. Thank you, Robert W Connell (1994).

59. Thank you, Refaat Alareer, for the poem "If I must die" (2023).

*from the energy that is needed to do the work. There's a piece I'm still writing about hunger, about starvation and the Palestinian womb. I can't find the will to finish it, in part because it's based on the stories of women who are pregnant and who are giving birth right, amidst starvation, and what that does to the intergenerationality of our life.*

Maya M: So, can I ask you a question? We have been talking about how all the s\*\*\* that we've been doing has meant nothing. We thought we were doing things and they did nothing. Do you feel like you're writing for the future when you write?

Yes. Very much so.

Maya M: Okay, this is very helpful in that it might help me get over my own "I don't give a s\*\*\* about writing anymore." That's definitely a political act, because we're assuming a future.

*A lot of the time I'm like that too. I tell myself, "What does it even matter if I do any of this s\*\*\*?" It doesn't feel like it matters. And yet I know that it's vital. Because it's part of our responsibility in ushering the future that we are still trying to hold on to into being. I mean, I'm not like uplifting myself in that saviour way, especially in the colonial feminist way of stealing people's stories, but of course what I'm doing is meant for the present and the future. I find myself no longer writing for a western audience, or to convince anybody of anything, or to even appeal to this "human rights," as in telling people's stories in order to fight for justice for them. It's just for us. It's just for us, so that we continue to hold on to a record of our life, of our vitality, of our presence. Creating that historical memory and record is a very Palestinian-rooted practice, from the British colonial period to this day, and a feminist one at that.*

*I once visited a class on third world feminism in a university; I was talking about the Palestinian Feminist Collective and organising, and saying things like, "how do we as feminists work to better interrupt the genocide." And this young scholar was like, "that's interesting because part of what I'm grappling with is that we are the interruption. We don't need to interrupt anything because we ourselves are the interruption."*

So we are the interruption.

What does it mean to grow into that space?

– Sarah

# On militancy: reshuffling



Have you watched someone die today?

Are you forced to sell your labour to survive while your home and people are being annihilated?

Did you sleep on a full stomach yesterday?

Do you have words to describe the images you are seeing out of Palestine?

Now that you are witnessing a genocide unfold in real time on your screens, has it changed the architecture of your life?

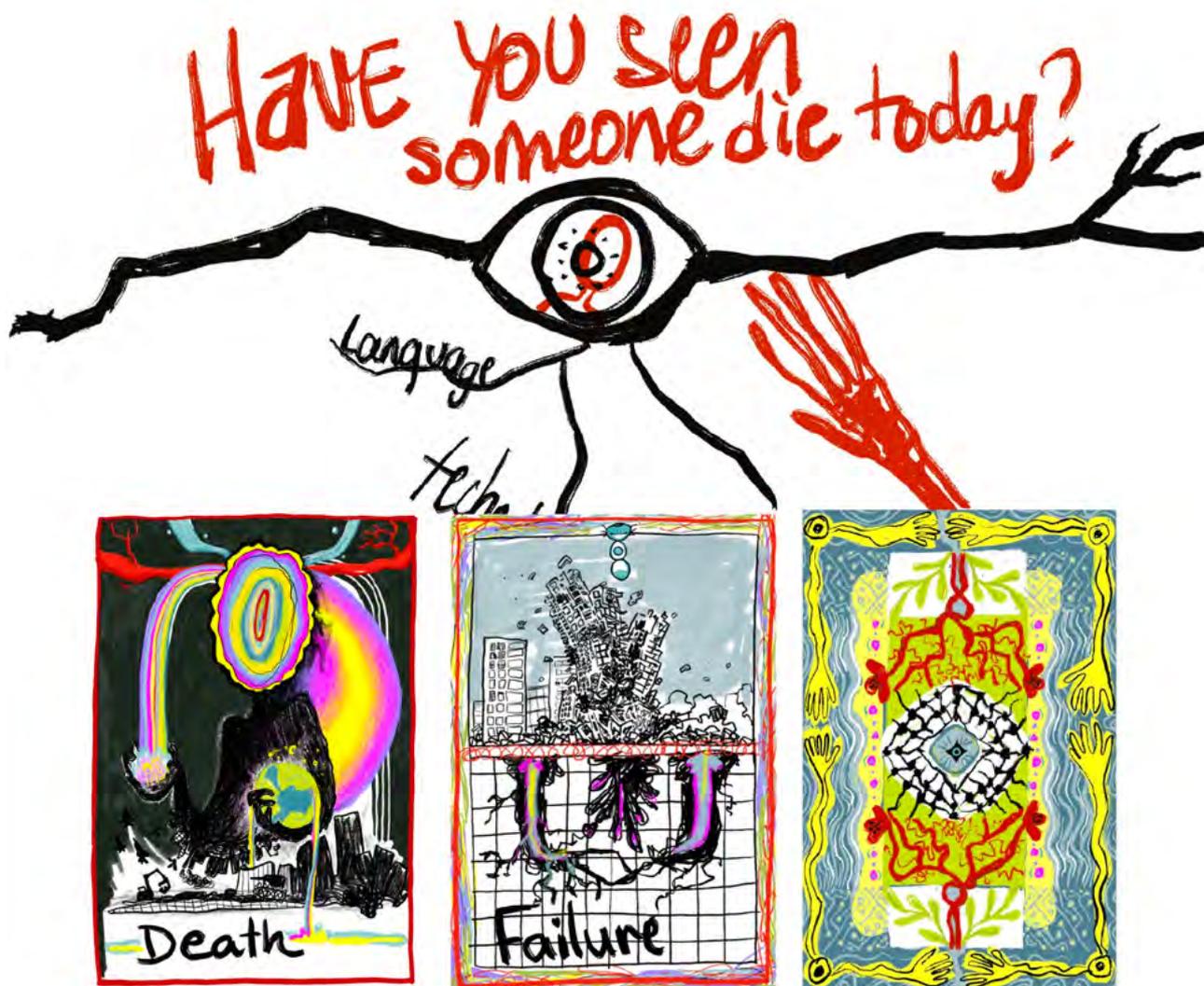
Can you debunk fake news and colonial logic in the midst of the digital onslaught of data?

Is your heart breaking?

Have you found purpose in the small things, such as organising?

When was the last time you did something for Palestine for the first time?

Do you still dream (of an anti-colonial future)?



"All organizing is science fiction"  
- Walidah Imarisha (2015)

Genocides work in reverse. Conventionally speaking, genocides are communicated to us posthumously, after annihilation – or rather, when the genocidal forces announce that we are in the post-annihilation phase. Whether broadcast in real time or not, endless genocide persists despite the language of ceasefire, “peace” talks and colonial platitudes.

As a collective of folx who are deeply connected to Palestine and its anti-colonial aspirations, we develop this guide for navigating the normalisation of genocidal warfare, wherever it may take place. Our project is dubious of the dominant language used to deal with genocides, be it the very field of humanitarian law or anti-colonial writing itself. In fact, we are increasingly frustrated at our collective perception of the inadequacy of anti-colonial works when they remain confined to sanitised and peaceful (read colonial) institutional spaces that regulate their funding, dissemination, and teaching.

When at our lowest point, we pondered: does anything we do matter at all, when babies get beheaded on a daily basis? When is knowledge deemed relevant? And can the language at our disposal ever be adequate in relaying not only the magnitude of the violence we witness, but the normalised silence around it? We have no definitive answer to these interrogations.

As our project progressed, however messy and at times incoherent our conversations got, we never lost track of Palestine. Today, we view them as a form of theory-making, of enacting theory, of doing. The extreme alienation we felt from the rest of the world, as outside witnesses to a genocide happening to our own, is a specific type of colonial aggression that merits its own documentation. Additionally, we are not joining forces with armed struggle ourselves by being on the frontlines and going to battle. We are not attempting to dismantle, with our bodies, the machine that is allowing the genocide to happen.

After months of grappling through the innumerable limitations we faced, we came to understand, and cherish, the affective core of militant work. Militancy is not a single definition, but an assemblage of bodies, ideas, and things that come together to commit in life as in death – a way of life. An assemblage may appear cohesive on the surface but what truly holds it together is an invisible kind of labour and contrarian affects that work around the clock to sustain it.

In what follows, we relate the five stages of militancy “from the periphery” that we identified throughout the project. In its form, we combine illustrations that ask (what we hope are) disruptive questions with a deck of tarot cards, in order to poke holes at the colonial language we have been stuck with. Sit with a question that speaks to you today – let it guide you into choosing cards. From the cards presented to you, you can pick one at random, or select a specific one that resonates with you most. If you do the former, you will end up with a tarot

spread. If you do the latter, you will end up with a mindmap. Repeat the process until you have at least five cards drawn. Spend time with the illustrations and the cards, alone, with friends, or with colleagues. Complete them with your own praxis, let them sit with you, reflect on them, pass them on.



Sketches of how we imagine the tarot to look like.

This chapter looks to a future interrupted. It re-imagines the language of genocide by centring the affects and relationality of the living, with those who bear the responsibility to narrate it. We forage for anti-colonial stories everywhere. We pollinate every space we come across with Palestine. We distance ourselves from the inadequate tools we have been trained in. We let our stories simmer, ferment, and decay so that a new political economy of life is allowed to flourish. Most importantly, it is by embracing inefficiency that we attempt to change everything, at least at the scale of research and writing, which are our militant praxis. The colonial mind has always considered research to be a more noble form than localised forms of knowledge, despite its proven inefficiency. It is to shake theory, and research, at the core that we bring tarot and spiritual practices to militancy itself, so that research and militancy can be transformed.

And if it all sounds like science fiction, that's because it is. In fact, this is exactly how we find ourselves at the mercy of genocidal AI today. Decades of flirting with the limits of the virtual, under the pretext of bettering our lives and for entertainment purposes, have led us to technofeudalism,<sup>60</sup> a system where tech companies de facto function like modern feudal lords. A handful of faceless corporations have replaced our community centres, our local shops and our human relations. The datafication of our world economy's commodities and bodies allows for outrageous levels of speculation, to the extent that housing and eating, two basic necessities, have become financialised. At worst, lethal autonomous warfare, where AI is capable of thinking independently and making life and death decisions, is in the making and has been already tested in Gaza. AI giants Google, Microsoft, and Amazon have substantial contracts with the Israeli military who relies on their cloud computing systems. More and more states rely on the data mining work of Palantir for surveilling migrants and conducting facial recognition. AI reproduces itself on already highly gendered, classed, and sexist pre-existing data. The future of AI is white and elitist, an extension of the status quo, but faster, better, cheaper for its generators.

The questions we ask ourselves as activists and educators have changed: which knowledge/s is/are being scraped from AI systems? We don't know who's using that knowledge, we don't know where it's being stored, and we don't know what's going to be done with the forms of knowledge that go against these imperialist timelines. Past images of genocide evoke the burning of books; what is the equivalent of book-burning in this day and age?

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60. Thank you, Yanis Varoufakis (2024).

A genocide is ephemeral. We archive it in its minute details, not as witnesses but as shahed, for fear that its truth be taken from us. It is not only the erasure and active annihilation in real time, but the documentation of that erasure that is under threat. Ultimately, we answer Anas Al-Sharif,<sup>61</sup> who entrusted us with Palestine's "oppressed young children who were not given the chance to dream or live in safety and peace, whose pure bodies were crushed by thousands of tons of Israeli bombs and missiles, torn apart, their remains scattered on the walls."

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61. Thank you, Anas Jamal Al-Sharif, for your last words (2025).

## I – SUIT OF AFFECTS

### Anger

If this card was drawn to you, it is probably speaking to the yet-to-be expressed anger inside of you. You are angry, as we all are, at the extent to which the myth of Israel as a beacon of democracy has been allowed to multiply unchecked, indefinitely. You are angry at nation-states, which is to say, security states, that prioritise certain sufferings over others, treating us as disposable. You are angry at ad hoc legislation that equates anti-genocide protest with terrorism. You are angry at the increasingly debilitating economy that sucks every ounce of our humanity towards enriching faceless corporations and colonial expansion.

We want to ask you, how long has it taken you to come to anger? When did you realise that your rage runs as deep as your grief? That anger is the motor of your dissent? And what can you do with it, without taming it like police states and the proponents of “non-violent communication” do?



## **Vulnerability**

You feel vulnerable, but you are not a victim. Holding on to this distinction is not easy; after all, the construction of certain bodies as vulnerable has historically served to reiterate a strong/weak binary in global politics, whereby the “stronger side” kills, annihilates, displaces and massacres in the name of “bringing democracy.” There is vulnerability in exposing yourself, in looking for community, in insisting on carrying on despite how pointless our actions might seem in the face of genocide.

We want you to consider vulnerability, not as a necessary evil, but for its ability to produce permeable selves where we allow ourselves to access each other’s traumas and hopes. Success stories in our neoliberal age are extractivist ones, and the good fortune of some is predicated upon the precarity of others. It is vulnerability, then, that forms the building block of an anti-colonial joint struggle.

## **Disorientation**

Do you feel lost? Do you no longer know where you are going? Has your sense of orientation failed you? Good. We will spare you the “not all those who wander are lost” inspirational quote. Instead, we ask you to consider a different cartography: bordering regimes everywhere pin us against each other to the extent that we become lost, unrecognisable to each other. And how could you not be? How could you still hold on to being orientated, when you are pointed and ushered towards genocides and accelerationist futures? So of course you are lost; of course you are disorientated; of course you are looking for (and failing to find) other possible paths.

We want you to remember that in your erring, you are looking for Palestine, a destination that cannot be pointed to, or contained on a map. We cannot afford to stop searching.

## **Imagination/speculation**

What are imagination and speculation doing in a suit of affects? Imagination is a muscle; in order to exercise it, we need to be moved deeply, not by optimism or hope, but by our resolve to imagine differently than the coloniser. Instead of imagining the violence of the coloniser, we “imagine instead.”

Futures, failure, defeat, all coalesce and work together to try and stifle our abilities to imagine otherwise. Imagination is not an afterthought for organising and mobilising – it is the air we breathe to imagine how we can be treated, how we can live, in different ways. Moving between different parts of the world without being subjected to data harvesting or border violence. Accessing clean

water, at all times. No longer being imprisoned, by walls or borders. The end of exploitation of all living things.

And you, what do you imagine yourself doing in Palestine? Imagine instead...

- Driving across all of Palestine without having to go through checkpoints
- Swimming in the sea of Gaza
- Palestinians from the West Bank, Jerusalem, '48, Gaza Strip, and exile meeting in any part of Palestine at their choosing
- Palestinians collectively grieving the ongoing Nakba without fear or criminalisation

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### **What are you feeling today?**

Name it, feel it, journal about it, against desensitisation to violence and our collective dehumanisation.

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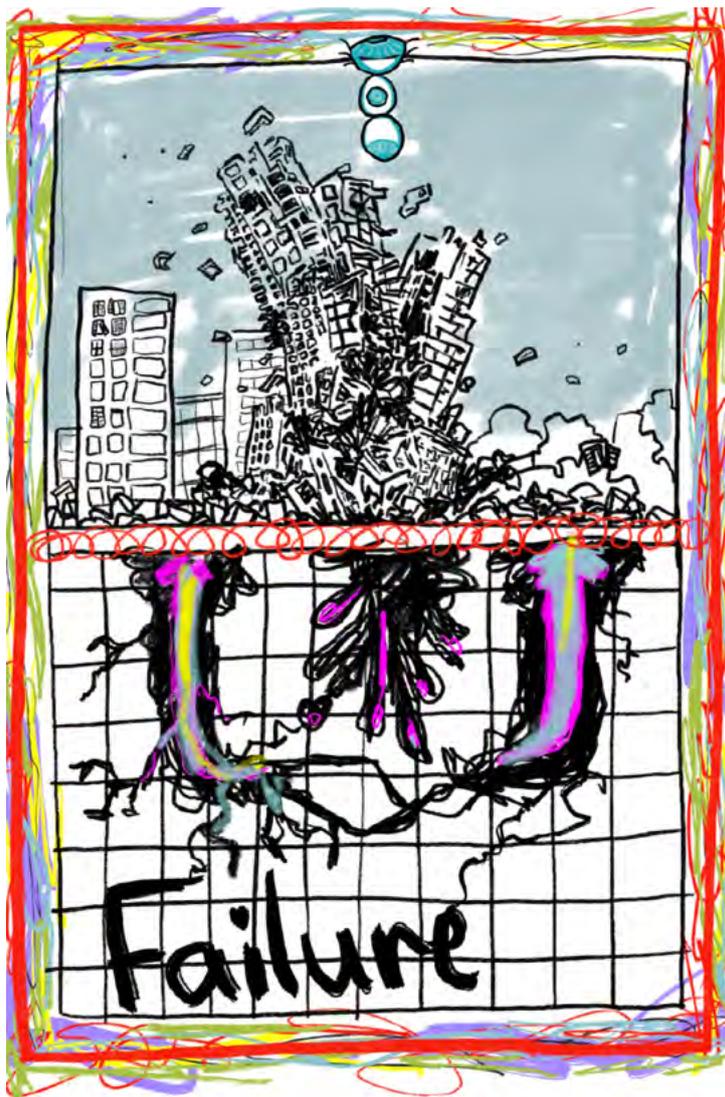
## II – SUIT OF STATES

### Failure

The genocide is still ongoing; nothing we did or said made it stop. You are here, swimming in a state of failure, like we all are.

Would it help if we told you that our collective failure to stop the genocide is a reflection of the extent to which the structures that support the genocide have been allowed to proliferate? If you are asking yourself how to succeed, we want you to consider that success, in settler colonialist and capitalist terms, is the removal of Indigenous communities to be replaced with a settler class. Success, according to these logics, occurs when weapons are created and tested on the Indigenous, stock prices go up, and money is made.

Instead, we invite you to choose to pour yourself into building new frameworks – ones that liberate our thoughts and practices and guide us to life-affirming institutions.



## **Political defeat**

You are here because you see defeat, clear as day, and it scares you – as it scares us. We never believed that our liberation would come from authoritarian states, but to see the failure on mass-level from multiple states in our region, is daunting. These are dark times not only of further annihilation, but of further neoliberalisation and normalisation with the occupation.

Defeat is a card of illusion. It makes you think that it is a timeless state, and you might find yourself quite lonely in how you experience it. Defeat is personal; it cuts to the bone, drops into the gut, shatters the heart and splits the mind. So where do you go when in a state of defeat?

We want to remind you that you have been here before – we have been here before. We have been defeated again, and again, and again throughout history, and yet, we are still resisting. Defeat is not the place where the story ends. It is a call to action. We invite you to resist turning inwards, and turn towards other agitators, so we can grow into becoming the interruption.

## Death

When settler colonialism reaches its final stages, death comes in multiple states:

- The physical death of the Indigenous people under genocide
- The death of the land and all living things that hold significance to our roots (such as the olive trees)
- The banning of memorials and public manifestations of remembrance
- The death of storytelling (only last week, five journalists were murdered in one tent in Gaza)
- The death of grieving processes (withholding of Palestinians' bodies by the occupation)
- The death/theft of time (the erasure of Palestinian history and the theft of its future)

If you pulled the card of death, what are you facing? Death is the most natural thing to experience – everyone alive at some point must expand into it. It is not the decay of the flesh that you must fear, for death in resistance can beckon life. Instead, this card is a warning against the ways in which settler colonialism distorts the natural process, exploiting death as a weapon facilitated by technologies of mass slaughter – a colonial finality.



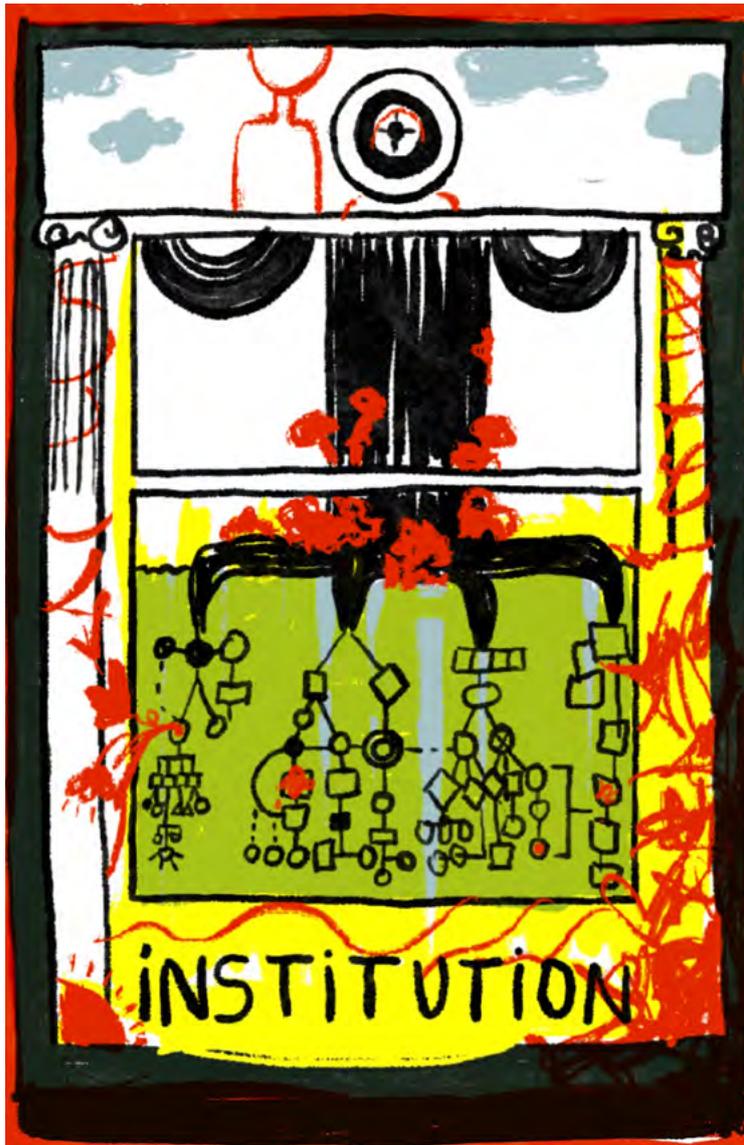


### III – SUIT OF TOOLS

#### Institutions

You have landed here by design, you are probably weighed down by the institutions you work for and that are complicit with the genocide. You are at once afraid of being fired, and of spending your life giving your waged labour away to structures that are killing your loved ones. You keep yourself and what you say in check in your workplace and on social media. At this point, you probably feel that your job is useless, that everything you have ever done, written, and worked towards amounts to nothing.

We want you to remember that organising from within your workplace is not about making your workplace's politics more palatable or hoping for immediate, significant change within it. It is about putting a set of events into motion that will make institutions' colonial projects more difficult. It is about practising a different kind of life, and by doing so, finding your hive.



## Language

If you have pulled this card, you cannot find the words to describe the immense loss and devastation you are witnessing. After all, language is a system of organising speech, and this system has managed to make a genocide justifiable. Language is also genocidal forces playing sounds of crying children from drones, to lure Palestinians out of their homes – and kill them. No wonder, then, there is a shortage of language. You want it to go to hell, and yet you keep falling into it over and over again.

We want you to know that it is okay if you do not come up with an entirely new language right here, right now. But after you have swum in failure, you can go back to language's simplest, rawest forms. You can invoke poetics, storytelling, card readings, sounds and silence. You can say, "this is the language we still need" until we have the language we need.



## Technology

It is through technology that you are reading those words. It is through technology, too, that you have spent every single day of the past 22 months glued to your phone, watching in helpless horror the genocide unfold. You are not one of those who can afford to just “take a break” from the news. So you watched from behind a screen – a witness forced to observe your own demise from the outside – the ways in which technology and AI automated the annihilation of your land and loved ones, the ways in which they became a laboratory where superpowers tested their latest weapons. And you cannot help but notice that the seemingly endless future of tech and AI mirrors that of colonial expansion. At times, you resent it; at others, you wish to beat them at their own game.

We want you to remember that technology is a living, breathing tool. You can make it your own, not by trying to reproduce the accelerationist logic of AI and data coding, but by willingly losing supremacy over it – by accepting your limitations as the only politically-sound standpoint.

## Magic

They have stolen, occupied, destroyed, displaced and killed. Palestine is still alive, in our many places of exile, but also in how it has become a symbol of resistance for so many people in their intersecting struggles across the world. The magic of Palestine resides in your attachment to, and the visions you have of, a place you probably have never been to and probably never will.

We find that tapping into our collective potential for magic is often about embracing vulnerability, and doing things that we never thought we could do. We want you to take a moment to recall: when was the last time you did something for the first time?

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## Which tool in your arsenal have you mostly used?

Name it, polish it, journal about it, so you remember the ways in which you have transformed its use, from that of the Master, into something revolutionary.

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## **IV – SUIT OF BUILDERS**

### **Hive**

If you have been to a protest for Palestine, you have probably heard the chant that echoes Ghassan Kanafani's words: "In our thousands, in our millions, we are all Palestinians." You find yourself making community with those you grieve and organise alongside you. You might not come from the same background or live similar lives, but an invisible thread binds you to the collective – and the mess you create together orientates you towards your anti-zionist goals.

If this sense of belonging escapes rationalisation, you have found your hive. A political hive is not an enclosed structure; it is a coming together of people, whose different roles, functions, projects, and aspirations make for a monumental pool of resources that are waiting to be woven.

### **Foragers**

In a world characterised by fast economies that routinely discard and dispose of both humans and non-humans, we embrace waste as a fertile ground where stories of history's abject-others are allowed to flourish: stories of low pay, immobility, land theft, forced castration, pollution, drought, forced displacement, and warfare experimentation.

So what does a forager do? You deliberately forage for these counter-stories across the four corners of the wild, like other beings do with provisions. You do so to empower the collective to push back against the apparent coherence of our world, largely enabled by a political economy that racialises and hierarchises bodies. If you are a forager, you know of and dabble in resonance. Geographically and temporally disconnected histories come alive thanks to the visceral relationality you produce. You are a story-teller, who allows the rest of the hive to excavate the long-term implications of historical injustices across several temporalities and spaces.

### **Pollinators**

Did you know that pollinating is a by-product of the foraging work that bees do? Did you also know that some plants must be hand-pollinated? This is precisely what anti-colonial work calls for. The colonial genocide hurts not only Palestine. It hurts all of us. Pollinating is different from foraging, in that it intentionally places a foraged story not in the hive, but out in the world, so that something else germinates.

If you are a pollinator, you connect the genocide in Palestine to all genocides, across space and time. You incorporate stories from Palestine at every turn and opportunity, disrupting “important” meetings and press conferences. You take space; you make noise; you deliberately start something entirely different, somewhere entirely different. Before you know it, your pollination will bear its fruit. A new voice. A new charter. A new working group. A new blog. A new vision. A new language.

## **Weavers**

A lot of imperial and colonial architecture’s pressure points are based around the allocation of labour along the chain of supply of weaponry: from the design stage taking place in fanciful offices in the Global North, to the extraction of natural resources from distant Indigenous lands, back to their manufacturing, to their shipping via air and maritime routes.

Hello, weaver! You have a talent for thinking outside that chain of labour. You can weave the forged stories in new ways, in order to develop a counter-language capable of 1. reflecting the intersection of historical injustices and 2. sustaining itself across multiple spaces, be they formal, informal, or grassroots. As a weaver, you are troubled with how to connect multiple nodes of oppression without erasing different, but rest assured: where different is not prioritised for identitarian ends, you can start preparing the ground for a fuller picture on a grander scale – one that is necessary for transnational solidarity work. By weaving differently, you poke holes in the foundations of imperial and colonial architecture.

## **Which other role have you taken in the hive?**

Name it, describe it, journal about it, so you might find others who have the same disruptive talents as you do.

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## V – SUIT OF TOMORROWS

### **Future**

In times of genocide, the card of the future is often met with skeptical rejection. What future can we even talk about when people are being mass slaughtered? With the seemingly endless future of technology, colonial invasion and genocide, it can be tempting to abandon any notion of a future altogether.

This card is here to remind you that the future is not yet foreclosed. All of the work we do now is in steadfastness for a different future from the one we are told is inevitable: a world where the very few are able to live on this planet (or another) stealing resources, labour, and the lives of everything on earth.

We therefore invite you to keep asking yourself, even when a tomorrow seems impossible: What can you do, from where you are, with what you have, to create a future that we all need? How can you resist and interrupt the colonial/capitalist futuricide?

### **Land/return**

What do you do when your entire street is food-deprived, and every garden and source of life in it has been looted or exterminated? Imagine being starved, as a vicious feature of colonial expansion, so you either die or are forced out of your land. An alien occupier appropriates it, rebuilds it, then charges you a fee, if, not when, you re-enter it. It has happened before. It is happening now. And it will happen again.

Did you know that, before this famine, Gaza was under a strict calorie count imposed by Israel, which limits the type and amount of food allowed in? Here's another question for you: did you sleep on a full stomach yesterday? Even if you didn't, chances are you will recover as soon as you have your next meal, unlike Palestinians in Gaza. It so happens that our bodies, once starved, require weeks of slow food re-introduction, so they don't go into shock. We want you to hold on to that thought.

### **Interruption/glitch**

If you are here, congratulations! You have accepted your limitations. You have conceded defeat. You have embraced your/our failure. You now know that limitations, defeat and failure are far from being timeless. No more pretences; you are ready to become what you have always been: the interruption. You are the glitch to the AI system. You are the bug in the code, the cockroach that tethers itself to the underbelly of the earth, ready to infest a colonial dream. You

no longer hope for reform, effectiveness, or even sympathy from those who are wishing destruction upon you. You understand that your role is one of small, daily acts of sabotage, until liberation.

You are now part of an ever-growing community of agitators. Welcome!

## **Cycle of militancy**

We learn from histories below that resistance comes in all forms and changes shape in response to the changing political landscapes. We inherit these stories and histories and they shape our contemporary understandings of what is possible. When we choose to engage with multiple forms of steadfastness, we understand that the work we have is long-term.

If you are here, you have pulled the card of all cards. After all, the cards in a deck only come to symbolise the tides of life. You are now being asked to consider them all. You understand that anti-colonial future-making is not linear. We therefore invite you to learn from other people's past and present experiences of resistance, steadfastness, defeat, failure, and future-making. Treat militancy as a cycle of life – invite it to your table, give it the attention and grace it requires to swell and burst boundaries.

## **What's in a tomorrow for you?**

Name what you want to see in the world, and how you want to see it. Name a future; make it concrete by turning it into language.

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