The Palestinian People Are Already Free: The Forty-Second Newsletter (2023)



Malak Mattar (Palestine), *Last Painting Before the 2021 War*, 2021.

Dear friends,

Greetings from the desk of **Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research**.

This week, from 14–18 October, the **Dilemmas of Humanity** conference brought together political leaders,

activists, and organic intellectuals from around the world to discuss the central problems facing humanity today and strengthen proposals to address them. Gathered in Johannesburg (South Africa), participants watched in horror as Israel escalated its genocidal war against the Palestinian people. On 17 October, the eleventh consecutive day of its bombardment, Israel stunned the world by bombing the al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City, where thousands of civilians were receiving medical treatment and seeking shelter from the attacks. According to the initial estimate of Gaza's health ministry, over 500 people were killed, though that number is certain to rise in the coming days. One day before the massacre, the UN Security Council had the opportunity to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, which may have averted the hospital bombing. This resolution, however, was blocked by the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Japan.

During the opening session of the **Dilemmas of Humanity** conference, in the midst of what many have referred to as a second Nakba, Palestinian People's Party member Arwa Abu Hashhash gave an impassioned speech about the assault on her country. This week's newsletter contains her speech, which has been updated as of 18 October to reflect current figures and sources.



Malak Mattar (Palestine), *Olive Harvest*, 2019

Allow me to speak on behalf of the Palestinian delegation that was supposed to be among us now but was unable to attend because of the difficult circumstances and the suffocating blockade that the Palestinian people are currently enduring. At this moment, as I address you, the besieged people of Gaza and Palestine are facing a genocidal operation by the fascist Zionist occupation forces. For the twelfth consecutive day, the Israeli war machine continues to massacre Palestinians, resulting in the killing of children, women, youth, and the elderly. Since 7 October, more than 3,400 Palestinians, many of them children, have been martyred. Dozens of families have been completely wiped from the civil register after multiple generations were martyred, and there has been a horrific destruction of infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, mosques, churches, government buildings, and media houses. This has led to the displacement of over one million people in Gaza from their homes, along with a suffocating siege and an attempt to starve the more than two million inhabitants of the region by cutting off all food, medicine, fuel supplies, water, and electricity.

The genocide of the Palestinian people today has the unequivocal support of the imperialist powers of the world, primarily the United States and some allied Western countries. These countries are making a terrible yet futile attempt to re-define the essence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as an issue of terrorism, likening the Palestinian people and their resistance to ISIS and placing Hamas and the Palestinian people as a whole within what they call the 'War on Terror'. In their deliberate effort to establish this narrative, these powers first aim to legitimise the killings and daily crimes committed by Israel. They seek to blind the world to the truth behind the ongoing conflict and continue to ignore and evade the reality that the Palestinian cause is a matter of national liberation.



Malak Mattar (Palestine), *Mother Nature Embracing the Boy and His Horse*, 2023.

As we gather today from all over the world to discuss the crisis of the capitalist system – so that we can propose alternatives to overcome this system and formulate a socialist alternative – we are faced with one of the most fundamental tasks, which requires us to accurately identify the tools of this system. In order to understand the nature of the ongoing conflict in Palestine today, it is crucial to understand the Israeli occupation in the Arab and Maghreb region as a fundamental tool and an advanced military base that serves imperialists' interests in the region and ensures their control and hegemony. This is part of the battle of ideas that we have repeatedly emphasised in our ongoing work through Dilemmas of Humanity.

Israel, which did not exist 75 years ago, was established through one of the most violent acts of ethnic cleansing in modern history with the unwavering support of British imperialism at the time and later US imperialism alongside French and other European imperialist forces. As these imperialist powers sought to seize our region's resources and exploit its wealth, their interests converged with those of the Zionist movement, which proposed to address the issues of Jews in Europe by establishing the state of Israel and colonising Palestinian land, displacing its people.



Malak Mattar (Palestine), *Giving Birth in a Prison Cell*, 2022.

These imperialist forces, with the United States at the fore, have continued to support and justify the state of Israel's daily brutal aggression against Palestinians. This aggression includes stealing land, demolishing homes, building illegal settlements, and arresting, detaining, humiliating, and killing innocent young people, women, and the elderly in Palestine every day.

Israel, after seizing the majority of Palestine in 1948 and **displacing** nearly 800,000 Palestinians – the vast majority of the population at the time – [in an act of ethnic cleansing known as the Nakba] reoccupied what remained of historical Palestine by capturing the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. Since then, Israel has persistently violated all international agreements by building over 200 **illegal settlements**, each containing thousands of housing units where more than 700,000 settlers now reside. The construction of these settlements involves not only the seizure of thousands of acres of Palestinian land, depriving many Palestinians of their land and basic livelihoods, but also the separation of Palestinian cities and towns from each other, hindering the movement and mobility of Palestinians and undermining the possibility of establishing a contiguous state, even in the areas that the entire world recognises as Palestinian territory.

Moreover, Israel continues to **detain** more than 5,000 Palestinians, including 1,264 'administrative detainees' held without charge or trial – a practice prohibited by international law – as well as 170 children under the age of 16 and 30 women. More than 1,000 of these prisoners suffer from various **health conditions**, including 200 with chronic diseases, and face deliberate medical neglect by the Israeli prison authorities. This includes failing to provide necessary medications, denying essential surgical procedures, and keeping ill detainees in confinement rather than providing them with medical care in clinics or hospitals.



Malek Mattar (Palestine), *When Family Is the Only Shelter*, 2021.

Gaza, which Israel is subjecting to the most brutal genocide today using massive amounts of heavy explosives and internationally prohibited weapons, has been under a suffocating siege for over sixteen years. During this siege and blockade, Israel has launched more than six bloody wars, resulting in thousands of deaths, tens of thousands of wounded individuals, many of whom have permanent disabilities, and the displacement of so many families. Gaza has been turned into an open-air prison for two million Palestinians. Hundreds of homes, schools, universities, places of worship, and health centres have been shelled and destroyed, leading to a persistent crisis of displacement for Palestinians, most of whom were already refugees driven from their lands during the Nakba of 1948. Today, there is an explicit attempt by Israel to forcibly displace the residents of Gaza, which they do not conceal but express openly in various television broadcasts.

Faced with the consequences of the brutal colonisation that the Palestinian people have endured for over 75 years, Western imperialist and Zionist powers have propagated a multitude of falsehoods in order to justify their unwavering support [of Israel]. This ranges from portraying Palestinian land as 'a land without a people', attempting to depict the conflict between Palestinians and Israeli settlers as a religious struggle, and, most recently, framing the conflict as a war on terrorism.

Today, we have the fundamental task of dismantling this Western imperialist narrative and replacing it with the true story of the Palestinian people, their legitimate struggle, and their resistance for their liberation and rights.

Today, we are also engaged in another battle, the battle of emotions, which we have always emphasised in our work in the International Peoples' Assembly (IPA). In this battle, imperialist forces seek to strip humanity, including the Palestinian people, of its belief in the feasibility and potential of resistance and instead spread a discourse based on frustration and defeat. What happened on 7 October is an integral part of the Palestinian people's struggle over the past 75 years. Resistance against colonialism and occupation is a just human right that is protected by all international laws. Any attempt to portray what happened as an 'attack' or 'terrorism' is a cover-up for the terrorism of the occupying state and an attempt to legitimise it.



Malak Mattar (Palestine), *When Peace Dies, Embrace It. It Will Live Again*, 2019.

The Palestinian people today are in dire need of the widest possible solidarity from all free peoples. This call for solidarity is not made from a position of humanitarian or symbolic solidarity but is an integral part of our shared struggle. What is happening in Palestine today is not isolated from what is happening in India, Iraq, Haiti, Venezuela, Cuba, or elsewhere. The defeat of imperialist assaults in one region is a victory for all of us.

Allow me to thank all the social movements that are acting in solidarity with the Palestinian people and extend my thanks to the IPA, which has always embraced the cause of Palestine. It is true that the Israeli

killing machine continues to take Palestinian lives, but we believe that this will only strengthen our determination to continue resisting. Allow me to conclude with a quote from the Palestinian communist poet Muin Bseiso: 'Yes, we may die, but we will uproot death from our land'.

Victory to the resistance! Liberty and freedom to Palestine!



Heba Zagout (Palestine), *Jerusalem Is My City*, 2022.

We hope that this message from Arwa is both informative and inspirational. Much of the art in this newsletter is by the Palestinian artist **Malak Mattar**, who began painting at age 14 after a quarter of her neighbourhood was destroyed in an airstrike during Israel's 2014 war on Gaza. The last painting is by the Palestinian artist **Heba Zagout**, who, along with her two children, was killed on 13 October by Israeli airstrikes on Gaza. The terrible violence against the Palestinian people must stop now. Palestinians will be a free people. In fact, they are already free.

Warmly,

Vijay