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“That things ‘just go on’ is the catastrophe,” Walter Benjamin wrote in his notes in 1939.

Human carnage is unfolding in the front of our eyes. How can we remain silent? Perhaps the 21st-century can only live up to its promise to be the age of decolonial reparations when the last vestiges of postcolonial apartheid conditions are no more. Palestine is a signifier for those vestiges, and this editorial is dedicated to saying a word or two about the situation currently unfolding in Gaza, Palestine. We recognize the danger of the manipulations of information warfare, social media partisanship, and blindly following the simplifications of old and new legacy institutions, for example, the New York Times and Fox News.

We also recognize the danger of making a caricature of the conflict between the military behemoth Israel and a massively outgunned Palestine. If material might always triumphed, Palestinians would have already been no more. Neither would the Jewish people who survived the Nazi regime and its many lesser incarnations in Europe. Nor would so many people around the world have shed the yoke of European colonialism.

Palestine nowadays is in the conscience of most well-fed media following practitioners of our disciplines, and so is Ukraine, but so too should be the ongoing disasters and conflicts in Congo, South Sudan, Yemen, and Kashmir. Not only those doing ethnographic fieldwork in these places. If this editorial is on Palestine, it is not because those other conflicts don’t matter. We write on Gaza to awaken the hearts and minds of the generally indifferent within the disciplines of Anthropology and Sociology to their complicity as the world burns.

A few years ago, we affirmed the ongoing commitment of *Ethnography* to contribute to the process of dismantling the colonial dynamics that our disciplines and methods have been informed by. In the face of the destruction in Palestine, we believe this implies an ethical and scholarly duty to, as Afreen Faridi (2023) puts it, break with “the quintessential colonial method – wait for a people to die, make a museum of their genocide, then set up departments of decoloniality over their mass graves.”

The question of Palestine has been well documented as one of ethnic cleansing and settler colonialism (see notably Abdo and Masalha, 2018; Hanafi, 2013; Jabary Salamanca et al., 2013; Khalidi, 2020; Makdisi, 2008, 2022; Pappé, 2006, 2017; Sa’di and Abu Lughod, 2007; Tatour, 2019). What the world is witnessing today, televised on screens of all kinds, is the decimation of Gaza, through some of the most intense bombing in the history of modern warfare, continued starvation and dehydration, the withholding of and attack on medical care, and massive displacement of a population trapped in what has been called an open-air prison.

For war crimes, mass murder, and crimes against humanity to be considered as a genocide, there needs to be genocidal *intent*—“acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” As we are writing these words, the evidence of genocidal intent on the side of the Israeli regime—and unfortunately this needs repeating: not the Jewish people!—is overwhelming. The Israeli Minister of Defense, Yoav Gallant, has qualified Palestinians as “human animals” in utter dehumanization which enables killing; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has cited the divine injunction to the utter destruction of Amalek (“Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys”); and Minister for Agriculture Avi Dichter has declared that the government is “rolling out the Gaza Nakba,” to name but a few of the statements by the highest officials. Calls to exterminate Palestinian people in general, and 2.2 million in Gaza in particular, have been heard throughout the public opinion in Israel, and beyond. This includes calls to “erase them all” and statements asserting that, in the words of retired Major General Giora Eiland, “the State of Israel has no choice but to turn Gaza into a place that is temporarily or permanently impossible to live in,” adding that “creating a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a necessary means to achieving the goal.” In the United States, we have heard former Ambassador to the United Nations and Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley say, “Finish them, Netanyahu”, while in a debate on a ceasefire resolution in the Florida State House, the republican law-maker Michelle Salzman answered the rhetorical and very real urgent question “How many [dead Palestinians] will be enough?” with “All of them.”

The Gaza Nakba is presented as a response to the Hamas attack of October 7th, the worst terror attack in Israel’s history, with an estimated death toll of 1200 and the taking of approximately 240 hostages. A matter to condemn, whatever one’s politics. The Hamas attack has shaken Israeli society and shattered the illusion of relatively safety from the kind of violence, including the taking of political prisoners (approximately 4500), that is part and parcel of daily life for Palestinians. The latter, also being a matter to condemn, whatever one’s politics.

Throughout history, the colonized have resorted to violence in their struggles against colonizers and impossible living conditions. Violence has been part of decolonization struggles—this is both an empirical fact as well as a matter of ethical concern, disagreement, and clashing visions on tactics of resistance within and beyond decolonization movements. In a moving piece written only days after the Hamas attack, the editor in chief of *Jewish Currents*, Arielle [Angel \(2023\)](#), commented: “People have repeated over and over again over the last few days that you ‘cannot tell Palestinians how to resist.’ To me, it seems there is a very literal dimension to this axiom: *They are not asking.*” It is possible to affirm *all life as sacred*, as our colleagues in Critical Geography do, while recognizing “that the violence of the oppressed is a response to the condition of their oppression.¹” With unfaltering commitment to non-violence, Omar [Barghouti \(2023\)](#) brings a comprehensive ethical vision to bear on the question of violence, which also leads to the verdict: “Those who have failed to condemn the original and ongoing violence of oppression have no moral standing to condemn illegal or immoral acts of violence committed by the oppressed.”

As we write, the Gaza Nakba amounts to more than 15,000 killed and 30,000 wounded, with more than 55,000 housing units destroyed and 160,000 partially damaged, and 1.7 million homeless. In the past days, we have witnessed images of IDF soldiers planting Israeli flags on Gaza beaches while colonial extraction continues: it is to be expected that at least part of Gaza will become Israeli settlements, while Israel has recently given new licenses to six companies, including BP, to explore gas fields off the coast of Gaza. At the same time, settler colonial violence in the West Bank has intensified.

So where does all of this leave us as scholars, and in particular scholars committed to the insights and knowledge that have emerged from the study of colonialism, which we have previously cited as knowledge that has begun and should continue to transform our practices of ethnography?

Earlier this year, and before the Gaza Nakba, the American Anthropology Association has decided, with 75% of the votes, to endorse the BDS campaign—the movement to boycott, divest, and sanction Israel until constitutional and real equality and freedom for Palestinians has been established. We express our hope that the professional bodies within Sociology have paid attention and will follow this non-violent course of action. With our own endorsement of the BDS call, we join our colleague Omar Barghouti in a relentless commitment to ethical action in the face of violence, which includes a scholarly engagement to understandings its roots in oppression and injustice. Let not silence be complicity... so that things don't just 'go on', and catastrophe (the literal meaning of both Shoah and Nakba) and genocide can be halted.

Sarah Bracke and Francio Guadeloupe

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Note

1. See the Palestine Statement of the International Critical Geographies Group <https://intcriticalgeographiesgroup.wordpress.com/>

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