Destruction, Colonialism, and Capital: Genocidal Perspectives on Palestine

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The discourse surrounding Palestine has deep historical roots, dating back to the arrival of the first Jewish settler in 1881 (Masalha, 2012, p. 43). When Israel established itself as a state on Palestinian land in 1948, causing substantial destruction and harm to native Palestinian people (Holman, 2023), various perspectives emerged. There have been intense debates between those arguing the 1948 Nakba should be labelled a genocide (for example Shaw, 2010), whereas others argue it does not meet the parameters to be defined as such (for example Auron, 2013). The events of October 7th, 2023, where Palestinian actions prompted a heightened wave of Israeli violence (Salhani, 2023), have drawn international scrutiny. While many view the levels of violence and destruction enacted on Palestine as genocidal (Adel and Gallagher, 2023), debates persist, as some question the validity of such claims (Pollard, 2024).

In this essay, I assert that Israeli treatment of Palestinians in general qualifies as genocidal, transcending isolated incidents such as the Nakba or events post-October 7th. To unravel the complexities, I first draw on insights from scholars such as Auron (2013), Pappé (2006), and Shaw (2010) to scrutinise different views between those who do not constitute the Nakba as a genocide, and those who do. Additionally, I delve into the nuanced distinctions between 'ethnic cleansing' and genocide, then consider Raphael Lemkin's (1944) seminal work on conceptualising genocide as a form of destruction with social and cultural aspects at its centre. With this broader definition, I aim to draw attention to the continuity of the genocide Palestinians have experienced throughout decades.

Further contextualising Palestine within a settler colonial paradigm, I use Wolfe's (2006) concept of the 'logic of elimination,' which drives what he terms 'structural genocide.' Adopting theoretical frameworks from Lemkin (1944) and Claudia Card (2012), I attempt to dissect the many layers of genocidal harm inflicted upon Palestinians throughout history. This includes not only physical violence, but also analysis of Card's (2012, p. 237) concept of the 'social death' experienced by the people targeted by genocide, as many scholars and legal figures overlook this important product of genocide. I also consider more nuanced ideas of intent behind genocide, exploring how motivation for genocide in Palestine is in part driven by the pursuit of capital gain (Short, 2014), for both Israel and other international powers.

I advocate for an expanded understanding of genocide, transcending its simplified equation to mass killings, as has been common in the general genocidal discourse concerning Palestine. Narrow definitions risk facilitating denial and allowing continuation of such atrocities, as is evident in Palestine's historical trajectory of unjust treatment without intervention, where the many forms of ongoing destruction often go unrecognised. Recognising and addressing the genocidal destruction in Palestine, I contend, serves as a crucial step toward its resolution.

'**Nakba—Not Genocide**'

The conversation surrounding genocide in relation to Palestine frequently centres on pivotal moments marked by heightened physical violence. Scholars often scrutinise events like the Nakba of 1948 through a genocidal lens, leading to varied interpretations regarding its classification as genocide, as seen from scholars such as Auron (2013), Pappé (2006), and Shaw (2010). The term 'Nakba,' translating to 'catastrophe,' refers to the forceful

expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their land, when Israel unlawfully annexed 78% of historic Palestine (Haddad, 2022). Within legal contexts, the most dominant definition of genocide is from the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (henceforth UN Convention), which states:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 78, p. 277

Yair Auron (2013), an Israeli scholar specialising in Holocaust and genocide studies, sticks closely to this definition in his analysis of the Nakba, proclaiming to do so for simplicity's sake. Auron contends that the Nakba does not align with the criteria for genocide. His arguments are distinctly outlined: initially, he challenges the notion that the Israeli expulsion of Palestinians qualifies as genocide, asserting that it was the 'Israeli Arabs' who initiated hostilities after 'rejecting various options for compromise' (Auron, 2016, p. 10). He also argues that although there was 'name-calling and condescension' toward Palestinians, there was no 'racist' ideology (ibid., p. 10). Furthermore, he contends that in 1948, Israel did not have superiority of power, as is common for the perpetrators of genocide; he asserts that this is clear from the roughly equal damages to both sides, with the deaths of 8000 Arabs, and 6500 Jews (ibid., p. 10). In fact, he argues that in proportion more Jews died, as they made up a smaller population who struggled valiantly for their 'survival' as a state (ibid., p. 9). Finally, he asserts that Israel had 'no intent to destroy' Palestinians, indicating 'the Israelis sought to expel the Arabs in several regions of Israel, but not to kill them' (ibid., p. 9). In his view, this does not meet the necessary requirements for a genocide, and instead means it was an 'ethnic cleansing' (ibid., p. 12).

However, the self-professed simplicity of Auron's analysis is also its downfall. Despite his criticism of actions from both sides, his overall analysis comes across as narrow and decontextualised. If Auron is so adamant in sticking solidly to the UN Convention definition, then half of his main points are tangential to its requirements of genocide, at best. When observing the UN Convention definition above, questions of who made the first attack, or balances of power, are not explicitly set out as necessary conditions for quantifying genocide. Aside from their irrelevance in the space of Auron's confined framework, his arguments for these points are rife with historical omissions. The assertion that Palestinians began the war (Auron, 2013, p. 10) deserves historical context, which Zoe Holman (2023) covers well; Palestinians lived peacefully on their land for generations, and Palestine's population consisted of 87% Muslims in the late 1800s. Zionist aspirations to create an exclusively Jewish homeland, however, grew continuously, due to religious ties to the land (ibid.). The 1917 Balfour Declaration pledged British support for this: they began to facilitate rising migration of Jews to Palestine, with no recognition of indigenous Palestinian rights (ibid.). In 1947, when Britain ended its occupation of Palestine and handed governance to the UN, the UN 'adopted a resolution recommending division into Jewish and Arab states, with 56 percent allocated to the former' (ibid.). Within this context, it is unsurprising that this 'resolution' was met by opposition and resistance from Palestinians. Israel followed through with devastating force, taking 22% more land than the UN had allowed (ibid.). Auron's omission of this all-important historical context is at best, unfair, and at worst, dishonest.

In discussing racist ideology, Auron takes a discernibly cherry-picking approach. The UN definition of genocide does not necessitate racism, a point even acknowledged by the author (Auron, 2013, p. 10). Auron's essay repeatedly categorises Palestinians as a cohesive group, accepting this as fact, as he focuses on the question of whether they faced genocide. Thus, the absence of explicit racial discrimination does not negate the underlying issue of targeted harm to this group. Furthermore, Wolfe's insights (2006, p. 387) emphasise that race operates as a social construct; historical instances of European genocides demonstrate that race is not a fixed category, but rather constructed through targeted actions as justification for mistreatment. For example, Wolfe (2006, p. 388) notes that 'Black people were racialized as slaves; slavery constituted their blackness.' Auron's reliance on an apparent lack of racism to bolster his argument against labelling the situation as genocide lacks persuasive force.

In regard to Auron's assertion that Israel was lacking in superior power; this is yet another decontextualised and surface-level approach. Ilan Pappé (2006) explores how the Nakba constituted an 'ethnic cleansing' in far more depth; as Pappé extensively documents, the events surrounding the Nakba were neither spontaneous nor balanced in terms of power dynamics. The meticulous planning for the systematic expulsion of Palestinians, evidenced by military plans like the Village Files and Plan Dalet being composed since 1940, indicate a premeditated strategy by Zionist leadership (Pappé, 2006, p. 10). Kahlidi (2020, p. 44) also details in depth the extensive support the Zionist movement received from the British, including military training and supply of arms. Such comprehensive planning and outside support undeniably gave Israel substantial advantage, challenging Auron's assertions about power dynamics.

Auron's most relevant point in terms of the UN definition is that of intent. The centralising of intent in the question of genocide has been problematised in itself by numerous critical scholars (for example: Shaw, 2010; Wise, 2017), but this is something I will revisit in depth in the final section of this essay. Auron (2013, p. 9) posits, 'On the Israeli side, there was no intention to destroy in whole or in part any ethnic, religious, national, or race group'. His interpretation narrowly equates 'destroy' with 'kill,' a limited understanding that even the UN Convention does not strictly define. Pappé's (2006, pp. 6-16) research makes clear that 'destroying' can encompass actions beyond just killing, as evidenced by orders from Zionist leadership involving deliberate destruction such as burning villages and placing mines in the rubble, to ensure Palestinians could never return to their homes. Various non-physical forms of destruction are also left unacknowledged by Auron; I will attempt to highlight these in the coming sections of this essay. Ultimately, Auron (2013, p. 12) remains steadfast in his assertion based on UN Convention framework, classifying the Nakba as an 'ethnic cleansing' rather than genocide, arguing that this is more suitable as the Israelis aimed to 'expel' Palestinians, but not to kill them. In the next section, I will explore why 'ethnic cleansing' is also an unsuitable label, and how the label of genocide is far more accurate to describe the Nakba.

Nakba—'Ethnic Cleansing' or Genocide?

Another genocide scholar, Martin Shaw (2010, p. 16) offers a nuanced critique of the term 'ethnic cleansing,' cautioning against its oversimplification. He argues that pigeonholing genocide as 'mass murder' limits its multifaceted nature (ibid., p. 16), as can be seen in Auron's approach. Shaw further highlights the intricate relationship between 'ethnic cleansing' and genocide, referencing Naimark's assertion that forced deportation during an 'ethnic cleansing' inevitably entails violence, blurring the lines between the two concepts to the point that a distinction may be 'unreal' (ibid., p. 16). The practice of a forced displacement labelled an 'ethnic cleansing' can quickly become genocidal. This view explains how both Pappé (2006) and Auron (2013) argue to constitute the Palestinian Nakba as an 'ethnic cleansing', but in further analyses, Pappé also refers to the extended Palestine situation as an 'incremental genocide' (Pappé, 2014). Shaw (2010, p. 15) rejects the use of 'ethnic cleansing' in full, finding the language of 'cleansing' problematic, and the potential weaponisation of it in support of 'the political interest of Western governments and the UN in avoiding the recognition of genocide' (in the final section, I will explore these interests deeper).

In direct contrast to Auron, Shaw (2010, p. 19) contends that the Nakba was genocidal, dismissing the use of 'ethnic cleansing'. He focuses on analysing this through the perspective of the 'genocidal mentality' rooted in Eastern European nationalist ideologies, a context he sees as crucial to the formation of Zionism (ibid., p. 10). Illuminating how normalised it had become, Shaw points out the many cases in which European countries would displace indigenous populations, while claiming the land as their own national state (ibid., p. 10). Removal strategies were framed as benevolent, often euphemised as 'voluntary transfers' or 'exchanges' to obscure the brutal realities (ibid., p. 10). Israel clearly adopted this 'transfer' mindset; Palestinian historian Nur Masalha (1997, p. x, quoted in Shaw, 2010, p. 11) points out how Israel spread the false idea that Palestinians lacked deep ties to the specific land and could be assisted by a 'humanitarian' approach to facilitate their departure from the 'Land of Israel'. Shaw argues for a broader definition of genocide beyond the narrow implications of the UN Convention; despite the absence of exceptional murderousness, Shaw (2010, p. 11) contends that the systematic destruction and displacement of 750,000 Palestinians in 1948 are enough to categorise the Nakba as genocidal, challenging conventional interpretations.

While Shaw's analysis offers a more nuanced perspective, it still presents limitations when classifying the entire situation in Palestine as genocide. Both Shaw's and Auron's analyses predominantly centre on the Nakba, thereby narrowing a complex, multi-decade scenario to a short timeframe (it is fair to note that Shaw acknowledges the need for analysis beyond the Nakba, but leaves this to specialists in the area: see Shaw, 2010, p. 17). It is imperative to acknowledge the ongoing destruction of Arab society in Palestine, from past to present. Furthermore, Shaw's (2010, p. 3) exploration, while referencing broader definitions and Raphael Lemkin's original conceptualisation of genocide, does not delve deeply into dimensions such as cultural genocide, and Auron's analysis fails to mention this at all. I will now delve deeper into more expansive understandings of genocide, accounting for the Palestinian experience under Israeli oppression beyond restricted timeframes, and analysing how Lemkin's original conceptualisation can help us recognise more than just overt physical harm. I aim to look at a larger range of the important and harmful elements of destruction that constitute genocide.

Genocide and Colonialism

Narrow definitions of genocide can be harmful, as they may prohibit atrocities from being recognised as genocidal, as seen in Auron's argument. A broader definition is in order; in fact, Raphael Lemkin, the scholar who originally coined the term, thought of genocide in terms far beyond mass murder alone (Wise, 2023). In his work 'Axis Rule in Occupied Europe', Lemkin (1944, p. 79) wrote:

Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.

To Lemkin, genocide was a 'technique of occupation that has socio-cultural destruction at its core' (Wise, 2023, p. 1). Lemkin campaigned tirelessly to have genocide recognised as an international crime, and was eventually rewarded for his efforts with the production of the UN Convention (Rashed and Short, 2016, p. 1143). However, reflecting as I have above on the UN definition reveals its narrower and more constrained nature, in comparison to Lemkin's original conceptualisation of genocide. Colonial states involved in the drafting process became concerned about potential prosecution for mistreatment of Indigenous populations within their territories, and pushed for the exclusion of 'cultural genocide' (Wise, 2023, p. 1). This omission has drawn substantial criticism, particularly for its resulting emphasis on physical destruction, which thereby distorts Lemkin's comprehensive understanding of genocide (Rashed and Short, 2016, p. 1145). Additionally, the strict criteria for establishing 'intent' within this definition have also been questioned (Shaw, 2010, p. 18), a topic further elaborated upon in the final section of this essay. Recognising the colonial underpinnings of the UN definition is crucial; its inherent narrowness obstructs the recognition of various genocidal manifestations, such as the many occurring in Palestine, which include different forms of destruction beyond singular episodes of physical violence.

Lemkin (1944, quoted in Rashed and Short, 2016, p. 1144) recognised the connection between colonialism and genocide, describing genocide as 'intrinsically colonial'. Patrick Wolfe (2006) further explores this relationship through his analysis of settler colonialism. Wolfe (2006, p. 388) defines settler colonialism as a process in which the native population is broken down, to be replaced by a new society of settlers, driven by what he terms the 'logic of elimination'—the propensity to displace indigenous populations in order to gain more land or territory. Importantly, Wolfe notes that while settler colonialism and genocide can exist independently, they often converge; this concurs with Shaw's (2010, p. 16) earlier point that 'forced deportation' usually cannot occur without violence that often becomes genocidal. The case of Palestine sits perfectly into settler colonial framework, as I will expand on subsequently, with Israel as the colonisers perpetrating forced displacement and destruction to the point of genocide.

Wolfe (2006, p. 388) posits that settler colonialism is a 'structure not an event', and therefore when the 'logic of elimination' manifests as genocide, it should be called 'structural genocide'—this 'captures the embedding of elimination across changing policies and institutions in settler societies while avoiding problematic ideas of 'lesser genocides' (ibid., p. 402). He emphasises that events of increased violence should be seen as an 'intensification' of the settler colonial endeavour and its associated genocidal elements (ibid., p. 403). Therefore, it is essential to

undertake a thorough analysis that is not restricted only to specific intensifications such as the Nakba. Instead, every moment, beginning from the arrival of the first Jewish settlers in 1881 (Masalha, 2012, quoted in Rashed and Short, 2016, p. 1154), remains relevant. Moving forward, I will explore the genocidal manifestations evident in various Israeli policies over time, also extending beyond simply physical violence.

Forms of Destruction Throughout the Occupation of Palestine

Rashed and Short (2016) offer a rich analysis that effectively positions Palestine within the framework of settler colonialism. They use Wolfe's (2006, p. 388) notion of the 'logic of elimination' described above; as a settler-colonial entity, Israel sought to disregard Palestinian native land rights by asserting that the land was uninhabited, as shown by the famous phrase 'a land without a people for a people without a land' (Zangwill, 1901, quoted in Rashed and Short, 2016, p. 1148). This was used to claim Palestine as an unowned land free for the taking. Rashed and Short (2016, p. 1146) refer to the most 'context relevant' of Lemkin's eight techniques of genocide (specifically: political, cultural, economic and physical) to evaluate the situation in Palestine, a framework I will now explore further, referencing both Short and Rashed's insights and additional sources to draw out the genocidal techniques being used in Palestine.

Using Lemkin's framework, we can first look to physical techniques of genocide. The situation following October 7th 2023 starkly highlights aspects of the most documented genocide in history. On October 7th, Hamas (the Palestinian group governing Gaza), 'launched a surprise attack on army outposts and surrounding villages in southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,200 Israeli and foreign nationals, mostly civilians' (Salhani, 2023). Following this, Israel imposed a full blockade on Gaza, and began a bombing campaign that has become the 'most lethal since UN began documenting fatalities in 2004-2005' (Barghouti, 2023). The sheer destruction caused in Gaza has compelled much of the UN Convention panel, despite its narrower definition, to recognise the ongoing assault as genocide (United Nations Chair Summary, 2023). At a panel discussion on the 12 December 2023, multiple speakers recognised that the current situation fulfils the legal criteria—both intent and actions—to classify the events as genocide (ibid.). For intent, they pointed to numerous declarations by Israeli leaders since October 7th, including President Isaac Herzog, indicating an unmistakable 'intent to destroy Palestinians' by calling them 'human animals' and casting the entire population as 'enemies' (ibid.). This incites genocide by legitimising every Palestinian civilian as a military target (ibid.). The resulting evidence of genocidal acts are distressingly clear; the relentless bombings and military offensives enacted by Israel on Gaza have resulted in a staggering toll: over 23,000 Palestinian fatalities between October 7th and January 11th, including over 9,000 children (Al Jazeera, 2023).

Lemkin's definition of physical techniques of genocide encompasses not only physical harm in terms of mass killing, but also the deliberate restriction of food and endangerment of health (Moses, 2010, p. 35). This definition resonates with the current situation in Gaza. As Al Jazeera reports, while the Gaza Strip has faced a blockade for 16 years, the situation deteriorated drastically after the Hamas attack on October 7th (Kusovac, 2023). Israel ceased all supplies to Gaza, including essential resources like water and electricity (ibid.). On the 9th October, Yoav Gallant, the Israeli Defence Minister, explicitly stated, 'We are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. No electricity, no food, no water, no gas—it's all closed' (Gallant, 2023, quoted in Elejla, 2023). A recent report from the World Food Programme draws attention to the severity of the situation, indicating that the entire 2 million population of Gaza faces acute food insecurity (Awad, 2023). Deliberate starvation of all the people of Gaza clearly constitutes genocide.

While the immediate tragedies of physical harm are well-deserving of attention and outrage, Raphael Lemkin's concept of 'cultural genocide' is often overlooked. Claudia Card (2012) also offers a nuanced perspective on the harms caused by genocide besides the physical. She challenges the categorisation of 'cultural genocide' as distinct, contending that genocide inherently encompasses cultural destruction; hence, the distinct term 'cultural genocide' is redundant (ibid., p. 238). Card's concept of 'social death' provides a useful framework for analysis, which she defines as the loss of the 'relationships, contemporary and intergenerational, that create contexts and identities that give meaning and shape to our lives'—whether these are personal relationships, or those 'mediated by social institutions' (ibid., p. 237). She says that 'the intentional production of social death in a people or community is the central evil of genocide', focusing on harm inflicted upon individuals as group members (ibid., p. 237). Wise (2017, p. 840) further underscores that viewing genocide through the lens of 'social death' aids our understanding of the expansive forms

of harm that come with genocide; most importantly, we are able to centre the experience and agency of the victim.

Short and Rashed's (2016) application of Lemkin's techniques to the situation in Palestine show a cumulative effect of social death. They illuminate long standing economic challenges plaguing Gaza, including staggering levels of unemployment and persistently high poverty rates (Rashed and Short, 2016, p. 1149). This economic distress has been caused and exacerbated by the ongoing siege since 2007, marked by restrictions put in place by Israel, as Gazans are extremely limited in their movement outside Gaza and are obstructed from following their normal practices or properly pursuing work outside Gaza (ibid.). The prolonged economic strain has eroded the social fabric of Gazan society—Ramy, a Palestinian student, said; 'I feel people were happier before the siege, they had better social ties. They had the money to afford to go to visit relatives and friends and bring gifts but now I don't think people can afford this and that affects their social ties' (quoted in Nijim, 2023, p. 185). Such deprivation following the siege doesn't merely reflect economic hardship; it signifies a profound cultural and communal disintegration—essentially, social death. This production of social death through economic devastation has been intentional; leaked diplomatic cables reveal Israeli officials planning to keep Gaza's economy teetering on the 'brink of collapse without quite pushing it over the edge'—therefore rendering it genocidal in nature (Wikileaks, quoted in Rashed and Short, 2016, p. 1158)

Mohammed Nijim (2023) delves deeper into the intimate Palestinian experience, shedding light on the profound ramifications of displacement from their ancestral lands. He describes how the land was intrinsically woven into Palestinian culture and traditions, emphasising how its loss fundamentally altered their way of life and furthered the notion of 'social death' inflicted upon Palestinians by Israel (ibid., p. 171). Echoing this sentiment, Nesrine Malik (2023) underscores the deep-rooted connection individuals share with their homeland. She highlights elements such as culture, art, literature, and memories that shape identity and foster a sense of belonging (ibid.). Malik draws attention to the distressing obliteration of cultural and historical landmarks that connected to life-long memories and Palestinian traditions, noting that 'more than 100 heritage sites in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed,' including Gaza's oldest mosque, the Omari mosque (ibid.). This underscores an intentional effort to dismantle the foundational aspects of Palestinian existence.

Lemkin's framework identifies the deliberate targeting of intellectuals as a distinct technique, calling it 'social' destruction (Moses, 2012, p. 34). Malik (2023) highlights the harrowing loss within Gaza's intellectual community, noting the tragic deaths of numerous academics and the intentional persecution of journalists, with a staggering toll exceeding 80 deaths at the time of writing. The loss of intellectuals, journalists, as well as historians, writers, artists and more is devastating, disappearing the people who record and preserve Palestinian culture. Malik observes that as these pillars of society are systematically erased, 'no matter how many Gazans survive, there is, over time, less and less to bind them together into a valid whole' (ibid.). Such actions 'void the architecture of belonging' (ibid.), culminating in Card's social death. 'This is what it would look like', writes Malik, 'to erase a people' (ibid.).

Complexities of Intent and the Pursuit of Capital

As highlighted earlier, the emphasis on intent as the definitive characteristic of genocide, often viewed as its most reprehensible aspect, has faced significant critique (Shaw, 2010; Wise, 2017; Short and Rashed, 2016). My focus in the above sections has mainly been on various other elements indicative of genocide, aligning with the view that too much of a concentration on intent 'obscures the perspectives and experiences of victims' (Wise, 2017, p. 839). Furthermore, in the face of an ongoing atrocity, debates about clarifying intent should be seen as secondary to the goal of halting the genocide. Nevertheless, Wise (2017, p. 842) underscores that the move to decentralise intent from discussions about genocide doesn't diminish its importance, but rather cautions against adopting 'simplistic and decontextualised conceptions of intent'. This resonates with Martin Shaw's observation that many perspectives on genocide tend to assume an 'uncomplicated nexus between perpetrator intentions and outcomes' (Shaw, quoted in Wise, 2017, p. 842). Shaw asserts expectation of such clear professions of intent is both 'historically and sociologically flawed' (Shaw, 2010, p. 17).

Previously, I discussed some examples of what many are now calling clear expressions of genocidal intent from Israel. However, room must also be made to explore less obvious forms of intent. Short and Crook (Crook and Short,

2017) point out that there may be multiple motivations behind genocidal actions, which I argue is the case with Palestine. They make a compelling argument suggesting that intent can be invested in societal structure itself, instead of stemming clearly from a specific agent (ibid., p. 312). Drawing from Tony Barta (1987), they make the case that rather than viewing genocide solely as driven by a state or entity, structural factors should be taken into account (Crook and Short, 2017). This perspective acknowledges the 'remorseless pressures of destruction inherent in the very nature of the society' (Barta, 1987, p. 240).

In the context of a settler colonial expansion, Damien Short (2014, p. 831) makes the connection that the driving force of settler colonial expansion is rooted in the 'logic of elimination'—as explained before, this refers to Wolfe's (2006) idea of the drive to expel natives in order to gain access to land and territory. In turn, Short asserts that this is driven by 'global capitalism' (2014, p. 831)—the constant growth imperatives built into the capitalist system drive the colonial need to constantly expand in pursuit of capital-generating land and resources. Interestingly, in 1999, British Gas discovered that Gaza is extremely rich in natural resources; $4.592 billion rich in natural gas just off the Gazan coast, to be precise (Ingalla, 2023). These gas reserves are legally in Palestinian territory, however Israel has consistently obstructed the Palestinian access, claiming it as their own (ibid.). Amid the intensifications of violence in Gaza since October 7th, Israel has quietly bestowed 12 new gas exploration licences to companies including BP, solidifying their path to accumulating profit from rightfully Palestinian resources (Rabinovitch and Scheer, 2023).

Understanding the capitalist motivations embedded within the international system provides clarity in terms of the reluctance of certain nations to intervene in the genocide. This can be applied in the case of the US; while it must be acknowledged their long-standing support of Israel is motivated by a complex range of factors, from cultural and to strategic ties (Roberts, 2021), the profitability of the alliance is certainly of major significance. Despite widespread calls for a ceasefire, the US has consistently vetoed such proposals in the UN, attempting to block recognition of the situation as genocide (Al Jazeera, 2023). This stance can be attributed, at least in part, to the US's lucrative relationship with Israel; Israel is the top recipient of US foreign military aid, receiving 55% of total allocations, as reported by the Security Assistance Monitor (Ingalla, 2023). Additionally, from 1950 to 2020, 83% of Israel's imported weapons came from the US (ibid.). Notably, following recent Israeli military actions, major US arms producers like Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin saw an 8% and 11% increase in their share prices, respectively (ibid.). This merely scratches the surface; a myriad of global corporations, from BP gas to American arms manufacturers, stand to profit from Israeli violence and occupation of Palestine (ibid.). The complex web of vested interests perpetuating, and blocking recognition of, the Palestinian genocide must not be dismissed.

Conclusion

While the above analysis aims to shed light on the many types of destruction caused by Israel's actions against Gaza, it is important to note that this by no means encapsulates the full extent of Israel's transgressions. Social media platforms like Instagram, despite their limitations of often keeping users in echo chambers of similar opinion, have become crucial in illuminating the truth of events in Gaza to the public. This has revealed the discrepancies with legacy media's perspectives (The New Humanitarian, 2023), and has sparked protests across the world as people call for a ceasefire, and recognition of the conflict as a genocide.

Historically, international bodies like the UN have failed to recognise the suffering of the people of Palestine (Said, 1992, p. 285), hiding behind the narrow parameters of the UN Convention definition. Yet, recent acknowledgments, albeit delayed, by speakers from organisations like the UN who recognise the genocide, signal a shifting tide. On the 11th January 2024, South Africa brought a case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of subjecting Palestinians in Gaza to genocide (Aljazeera, *South Africa's Genocide Case Against Israel*, 2023). The case has drawn attention from all over the world, detailing Israel's many violations of international law (ibid.), and gives hope that the ICJ will take the steps towards ending Israel's oppression of Palestinians.

In conclusion, this essay makes the case for recognising Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians as an ongoing structural genocide, driven by settler-colonial 'logic of elimination' (Wolfe, 2006). After analysing debates over labelling intensified violence like the Nakba as a genocide, I argue for a broader conceptualisation beyond short timeframes, and an alignment with Lemkin's original ideas. Beyond physical destruction, the erosion of Palestinian

society through techniques such as economic deprivation, cultural destruction and the targeting of intellectuals amounts to the 'social death' that Claudia Card (2010) argues is the most significant harm of genocide. While overt genocidal intent from Israeli leadership was presented, the capitalist motivations behind endless resource accumulation were also explored, highlighting Israel's aim to appropriate Palestinian gas. This perspective also sheds light on the reluctance of nations like the US to intervene in the conflict, due to their own profit interests. Ultimately, this essay underscores the need to acknowledge the continuity of diverse injustices enacted upon Palestinians over decades. Only by broadening our understanding of genocide and recognising the full scale of destruction can the world take action to halt it.

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