

LIBRARIANS AND ARCHIVISTS TO PALESTINE

DS128.4

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CALL
NUMBER FOR "INTIFADA,"
CREATED THROUGH STRUGGLE
BY THE LIBRARIANS AT
BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY.**



August 2013

Hello all!

Welcome to our zine! This “sort of a punk rock travel diary” (as described by the zine expert among us) is one way we can share some of what we’ve seen, done, and thought about in Palestine. The delegation has ended, but the work has just begun. In this time of gathering our thoughts and moving forward, we figured we should step back and tell you a bit about who we are and how we came to be.

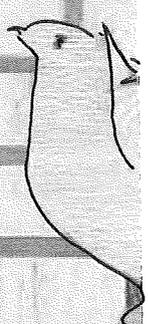
I’ve been leading delegations in Palestine for almost a decade, and I’ve been a librarian for one fifth of that time. So in spring of 2012, when I was getting ready to lead a different delegation, Jenna Freedman said to me, “How about a delegation of librarians?” It was one of those light bulb moments, one of those “Have-I-really-led-25-delegations-and-never-thought-of-this?” moments. And so, the delegation was born. I made a few initial connections in Palestine that summer, and soon after pulled together a team of planners – Jenna, Melissa Morrone, Mezna Qato and Vani Natarajan. Within a couple months, we had gathered a group from the US, Canada, Sweden, Trinidad & Tobago, and Palestine.

There were many things that excited me – and still do – about a delegation of librarians and archivists to Palestine. We can explore issues of access to information and cultural heritage, some of which are universal, some of which are common to colonial struggles, and some of which are unique to Palestine. We can share ideas and skills with our colleagues in Palestine, offering expertise and learning from theirs. We can enhance the reach of inspiring projects in Palestine and help educate folks where we come from about the challenges some of these projects face. We can have a unique voice in support of the Palestinian-led movement for boycott against Israeli apartheid.

This zine is only the beginning. It is a small slice of our experience in Palestine. As our network of librarians and archivists grows, you will hear more from us about some of the great work that is already happening in Palestine and ways you can help us keep up the connections we’ve fostered.

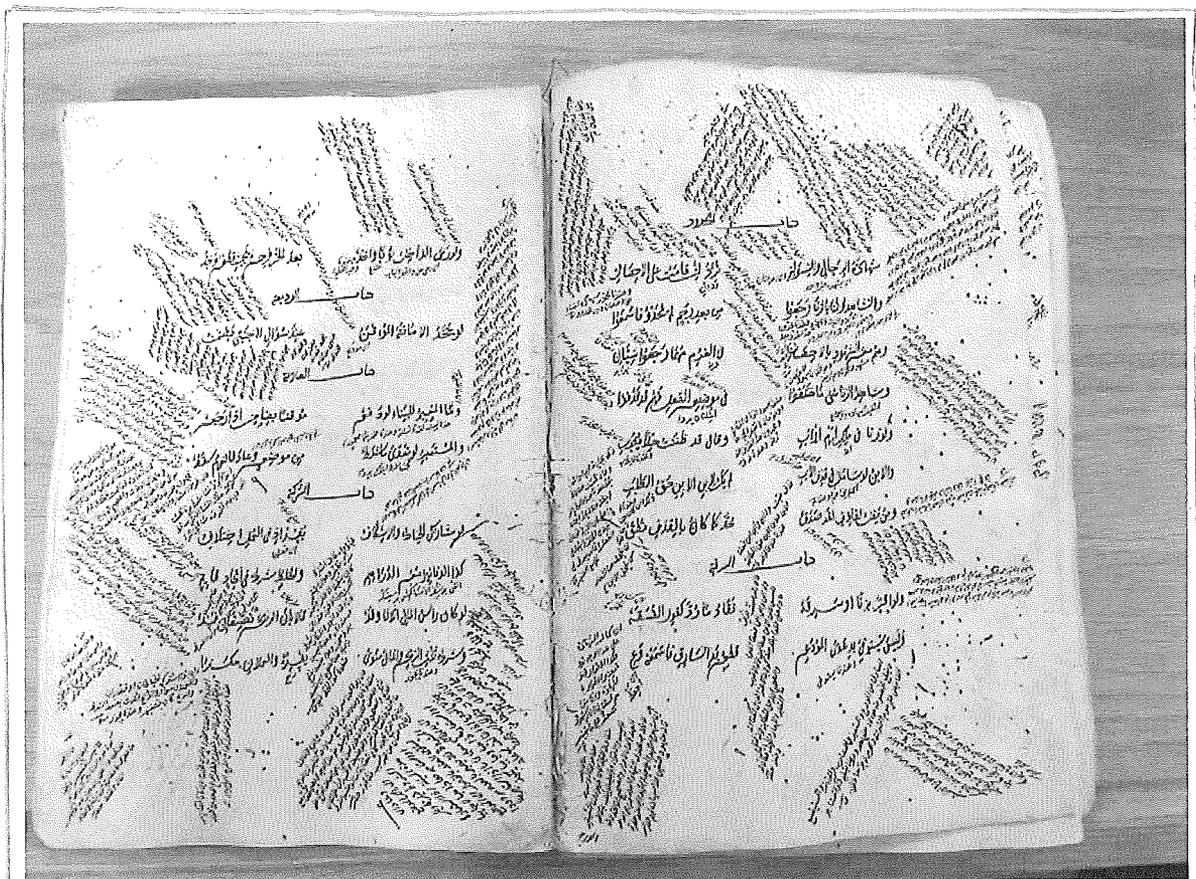
-Hannah Mermelstein, LAP delegation coordinator

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DAY 1 · JUNE 23 · JERUSALEM LIBRARIES



PHOTOGRAPH BY MOLLY FAIR, AVAILABLE FROM OUR FLICKR SET

The Khalidi Library, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, holds a trove of thousands of books and original manuscripts. We were shown prized materials of the collection including a gilded 400-year old Qur'an, a sixth-century poison and antidote book, and other books containing artistically rendered marginalia. The library was founded by Sheikh Mohamed Sun'allah Khalidi, a collector of rare books, to advance knowledge and culture in Arab society. It was opened to the public in 1900. The library continues to be operated by members of the Khalidi family, who have resisted numerous attempts by the Israeli government to seize the property, including an attempt to deem it "absentee property" in 1967.

**Interrogation at Israeli border station,
Aqaba – Eilat, June 22, 2013:**

Why are you coming from Jordan?

Who do you know in Jordan?

Why would your friend from Canada go to Jordan to find a job? You mean there are no jobs in Canada?

Have you been to Israel before? Why did you come to Israel?

Why didn't you land in Israel?

Did you pack your bags yourself?

Why do you have Arabic dictionaries? Do you speak Arabic? Why did you learn Arabic? Why didn't you choose another language like Chinese or French? Why Arabic? Where did you learn Arabic?

Why aren't you telling us the truth? What are you trying to hide from us?

Why do you have a shortwave radio? Is it to listen to local broadcasts?

Why do you have an umbrella?

Where did you buy your suitcases?

Why are you carrying fingernail polish?

And—after undergoing a strip search and having everything in my bag (including underwear and socks) combed over with a security wand (this after putting my suitcases initially through an x-ray machine), a process which took forty-five minutes:

Would you like us to help you re-pack your bags?

—Submitted by Blair Kuntz

Human Geography in Nablus, "Mountain of Fire"

Our second day of the delegation was spent in Nablus, the second largest city in the West Bank. Nablus was closed off for years after the 2002 IDF invasion and siege, which severely affected movement around other West Bank towns and cities as well. A psychological distance among these places lingers in people's minds.

Our first visit was to the Nablus Public Library, where the spine labels are color-coded and the Dewey Decimal call numbers are written by hand. Donated theses from students at Najah University are on the shelves, in addition to a general collection for all ages. An audio-vision room, complete with media viewing stations and a camera tripod, was being readied for opening. The library hosts well-attended public programs in their garden (the Algerian author Wasini Al-A'raj was coming that evening).

The library also includes a separate prison collection. Six thousand notebooks and books came from two area prisons that were evicted in 1995, post-Oslo. (Now Ofer is the only prison this side of the Green Line. The rest are in '48.) The prisoners' books have been repaired with bandages, carton scraps, and whatever else was available inside, and some were given new and incongruous covers from magazine pages. The librarians told us that many former prisoners come and ask to see their old books.

Just outside of Nablus is the Balata refugee camp, where we would be sleeping that night in the Yafa Cultural Center. Almost 30,000 people live on one square kilometer of land. The camp has very narrow alleys between the residential buildings. No sun comes into people's homes, and everyone can hear everyone else's business. Before we got a brief tour, we had lunch and heard from Mahmoud, the head of the Balata health unit. He described the terrible living conditions there, the heart disease and depression, and the resistance. "Now you can find news about everywhere, straight from the source. But you have to choose to see it," he said. "Tell the world what you saw."

Afterward, we went back into Nablus and got a walking tour with activist and lifelong Nablusi Beesan Ramadan. (She told me that she was visiting a family friend when the IDF invaded in 2002. They couldn't leave, and she spent about three weeks there in her pajamas.)

We passed Al-Maktaba al-Sha'biyyah (The People's Bookstore), which was packed with people waiting for Wasini Al-A'raj's afternoon appearance there. Beesan said that the store has been raided and closed many times for having prohibited books. In the old city, she pointed out the bullet holes still in the walls, the posters of martyrs still up. Nablus used to have many soap factories, but they were almost all closed and/or destroyed by the IDF on the accusation that people were making weapons there. We were going to go to one of the two remaining soap factories, but it was closed that day. Instead we went into a shop and bought spices and olive oil soap. Then we had what is possibly the best knafeh in the world.

That evening, we met and ate a decadent meal of northern Palestinian specialities at Al-Yasmeen Hotel with poet, geographer, and activist Saed Abu Hijleh. Around 1200 people in Nablus were killed during the intifadas, including Saed's mother in 2002. He talked about the longstanding local resistance to the occupation, and how being put into prison was often how people started organizing with each other. Prisoners' issues are an important site for connecting movements and building global solidarity, he told us, to nods of recognition.

Ten years ago, Saed's friend wrote an email newsletter about Nablus. The signoff was always, "The world is watching, yet has done nothing."

by Melissa Morrone



BALATA

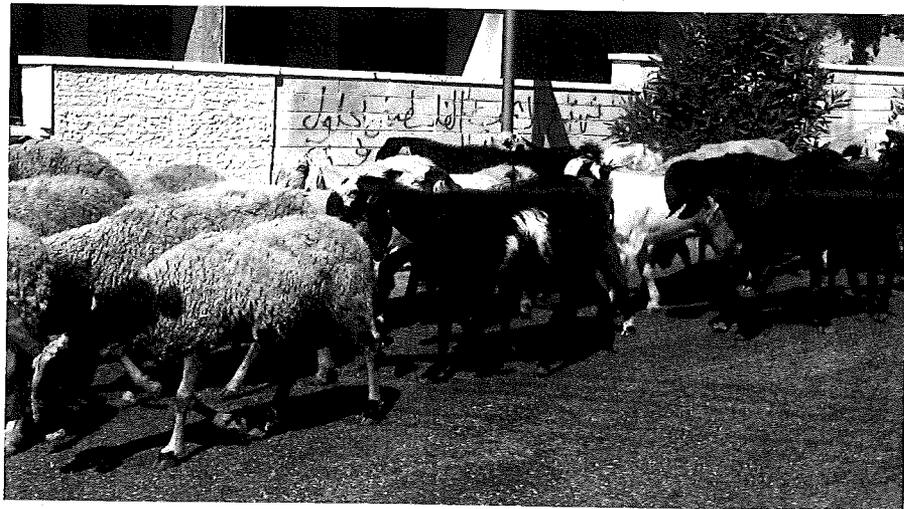
I'm not a huge reality TV fan, and although I'm vaguely aware of the show American Idol, I had no knowledge of its Middle East equivalent—Arab Idol. Turns out that the night I arrived in Jerusalem was the season finale, and a young Palestinian singer from Gaza—Mohammed Assaf—was crowned the winner. And people love this guy! I mean screaming, shouting, fireworks, folks flooding the streets in celebration-type love for this guy, because he's repping Palestine. About ten days later he's playing a concert in Ramallah, and the traffic is insane (likely even more crazy than it was a couple days before when John Kerry was in town). I'm hanging out with my friend Charlie from Chicago (who now lives in the West Bank) and all of a sudden a black jeep comes screaming straight at us from a side street, with four cops hanging out the windows making frantic “push back” motions with their arms. No sirens, no lights, just flailing arms in uniform. Behind the jeep are two all-black SUVs and a sleek town car, housing none other than Mohammed Assaf.

We barely survive that high point of traffic coordination only to get stuck in increasingly congested concentric circles of cars. Peeling off onto a side street, we barely get moving before a herd of goats almost runs us down. They're just padding their way down the center of the street, bumping into the car, and surrounding us on all sides. High-rise glass and sandstone luxury hotels are pushing up all around us while goats are nipping at our feet. Ramallah is a wild place.

Taking a break from fighting the traffic, we stop to get a sweet. Knafeh, actually—an amazing pastry-type snack which is a super-sweet semolina pizza with a layer of gooey and delicious cheese on the bottom. It's famously the best in Nablus, but you can find a pretty good slice in Ramallah, too. We were barely back on the road when we almost get plowed into by Assaf's ragtag entourage again!

I wasn't in Ramallah or the West Bank long enough to make any meaningful pronouncements about it, but there is something strangely compelling about a place that doubles as a small town and a giant construction site. It's hideously neoliberal, yet also so amazingly in motion, growing, changing, becoming something new every day. While seemingly trying to hide it, the growth also shines a spotlight on a parallel growth in economic inequality, which is of course laid on top of the astronomical inequities imposed on Palestine by Israel. —Josh MacPhee

(Photo on the left by Josh MacPhee, below by Che Gossett)





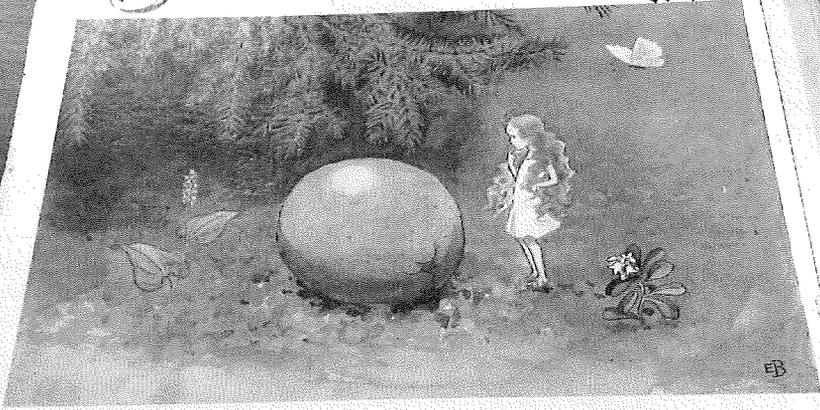
In June, Muhammad Assaf,
a Palestinian from GAZA
won the Arab Idol competition.
his song, Ali al-keffiyeh
(Raise your keffiyeh) could
be heard coming from cars
and homes and businesses
throughout our time in the
West Bank.

SOLAGGET/THE SUN-EGG

One early morning in Nazareth I was contemplating the photo I had taken of the Swedish book *Solägget* (*The Sun-egg*) by Elsa Beskow, in Arabic translation. I found the book in the Nablus Public Library, but I'm sure I could find it in every children's library in Palestine, among all the other Swedish children's books that are translated into Arabic and spread throughout Palestine thanks to well-meaning donors. Of course I'm happy to see these books, Sweden has a long and strong tradition in the field. Who doesn't know *Pippi Longstocking*? The children in Palestine know her, I'm sure of that. But during the delegation I kept asking myself where the beautiful and high quality children's books from the Arab world were to be seen? The Tamer Institute in Ramallah is doing a tremendous job both in publishing and distributing books to the Palestinian libraries, books by Palestinian authors and illustrators, but what about the children's literature from Lebanon, from UAE, Syria, Jordan and Egypt, books that I easily can buy for my library in Stockholm? Literature from the Arab world in general seems to be more or less impossible to get for the libraries in Palestine. Librarians we met told us about books ending up in quarantine at the border for up to a year, just to be sent back, never reaching the libraries at all. And if the books reach the library they'll have to pay for the time in quarantine. The situation for the children's libraries in Israel 48 seems to be even worse as they have difficulty just getting hold of books published by Tamer Institute in Ramallah! To even try to import books from Lebanon is unthinkable as that would be 'trading with enemy'.

I don't want to think that Swedish literature in Arabic for Palestinian children is better than nothing. I want the Palestinian children to have access to their own heritage, something that includes children's literature written and published in the whole Arab world. So, my happiness in seeing the book *Solägget* in the Nablus Public Library, turned in the next moment into a kind of sorrow because of all the books I couldn't see, books that I really would love to see there, books that I know exist but are out of reach for Palestinian children.

قصص الأطفال



تأليف ورسوم إلزا بسكوف

دار المنى

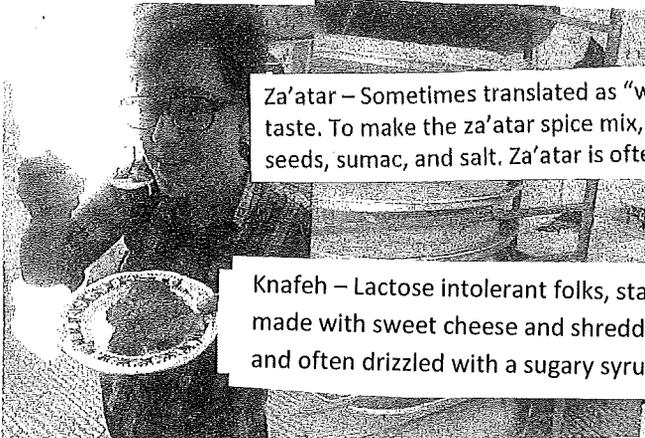
DAY 3 : JUNE 24 · BIRZEIT UNIV. + AL BIREH PUBLIC LIBRARY

Three days into the delegation and I am still without words. Everywhere we go this beautiful land is scarred with the evidence of occupation, suffocation, and violence. The rolling hills are pocked with crags and decorated with olive trees. Those hills, the bright blue sky, the proudly waving Palestinian flags seem dwarfed by the Wall, the settlements, the Israeli flags, the checkpoints, the army vehicles, the weaponry, the cameras. For me, this is hard to reconcile, to articulate despite the immense amount of reading and research I have done, personal stories I have heard, and documentaries I have watched. The actual gut feelings these sights elicit are so far inexpressible. The beauty and the horror. The idyllic and the obscene. The pride and the greed. The power and the resistance. Everywhere a contradiction. Even - especially - the fields and the trees are under siege, fighting for their very existence. The images I see while we travel sometimes distract me from the actual meetings because I must work so hard to understand what it is I have just witnessed before even hearing from the people themselves. But when the conversations start, I hear the human version of the stories the land told me as we drove. The stories are complex, nuanced, powerful, inspiring, and distressing. I think I need to wait to unpack the actual conversations we had at Birzeit University and Al Bireh Public Library because I cannot keep my eyes open. I must sleep. I have not slept more than 3 hours at a time since arriving five days ago except for night #2. Writing the emails home each night are my only processing time, and even there I find myself spitting out facts instead of talking about my experience. Hopefully we will get a little more rest soon or my head might explode with information, ideas, images, and gratitude - none of which I've had the words to write about. Perhaps tomorrow the words will flow. Salam.

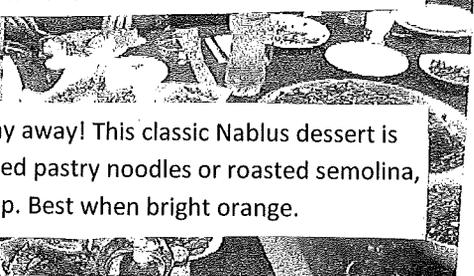


Photo: Meeting with the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) under a fig tree at the Khalil Sakakini Center in Ramallah. With IPS, Birzeit U., and other orgs, we discussed best practices and challenges of grassroots projects to archive social history in the absence of a national archive and with little access to much of Palestine's cultural heritage.

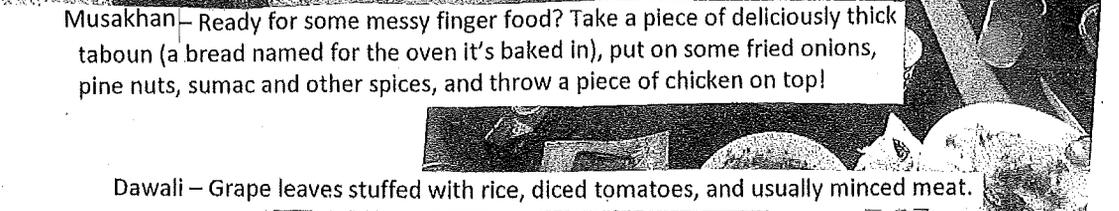
Some of the delicious (zaakil) foods we ate in Palestine



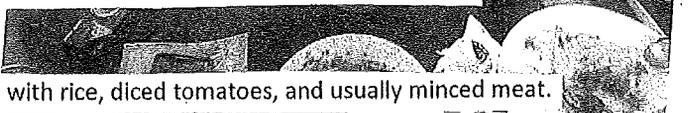
Za'atar – Sometimes translated as “wild thyme,” za'atar has its own unique taste. To make the za'atar spice mix, the plant is usually blended with sesame seeds, sumac, and salt. Za'atar is often eaten with bread and olive oil.



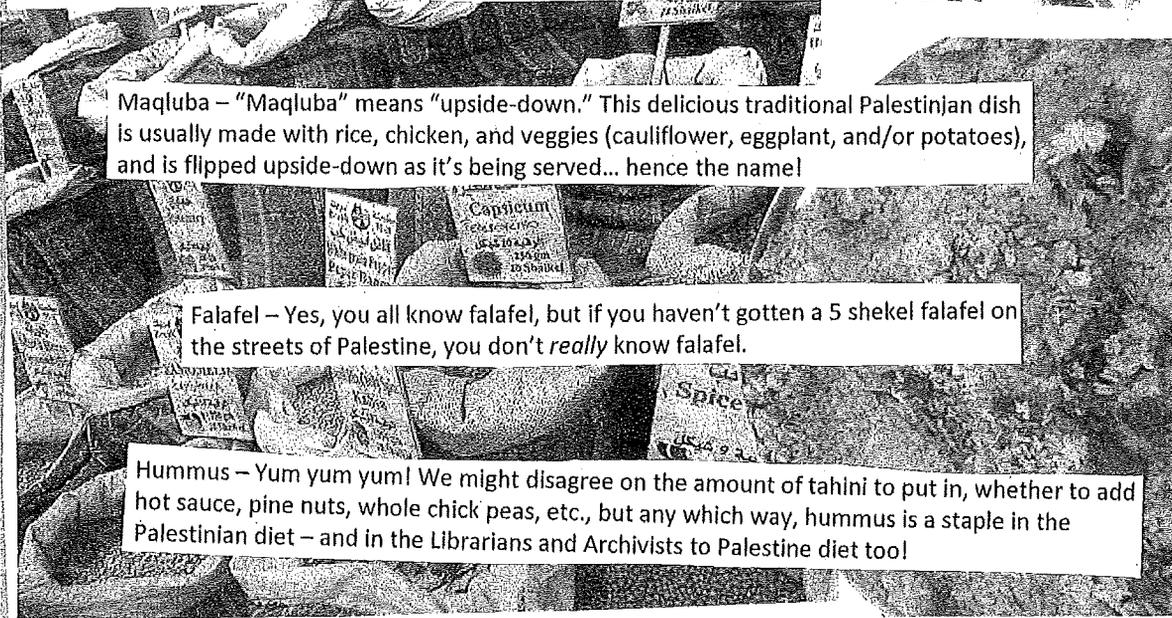
Knafeh – Lactose intolerant folks, stay away! This classic Nablus dessert is made with sweet cheese and shredded pastry noodles or roasted semolina, and often drizzled with a sugary syrup. Best when bright orange.



Musakhan – Ready for some messy finger food? Take a piece of deliciously thick taboun (a bread named for the oven it's baked in), put on some fried onions, pine nuts, sumac and other spices, and throw a piece of chicken on top!



Dawali – Grape leaves stuffed with rice, diced tomatoes, and usually minced meat.



Maqluba – “Maqluba” means “upside-down.” This delicious traditional Palestinian dish is usually made with rice, chicken, and veggies (cauliflower, eggplant, and/or potatoes), and is flipped upside-down as it's being served... hence the name!

Falafel – Yes, you all know falafel, but if you haven't gotten a 5 shekel falafel on the streets of Palestine, you don't *really* know falafel.

Hummus – Yum yum yum! We might disagree on the amount of tahini to put in, whether to add hot sauce, pine nuts, whole chick peas, etc., but any which way, hummus is a staple in the Palestinian diet – and in the Librarians and Archivists to Palestine diet too!

OFER MILITARY COURT

Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law and are therefore tried in military courts while Israelis are subject to civil law. Palestinians are often held without knowing their specific charges and for indefinite periods of time. Many young people, especially young boys, are charged with "crimes" such as throwing stones. Hundreds of minors are detained and imprisoned every year. All political activities in the occupied territories are considered illegal under Israeli law. In a culture where resistance is necessary for survival, every action taken to achieve and maintain Human Rights in the daily lives of Palestinians is criminalized by Israelis.

It is a 35 minute car ride from Al-Bireh to the entrance of the Ofer Military Camp. At the entrance, there is a turnstile, metal detectors (for people and belongings), and a processing point where passports are shown to Israeli officers then another turnstile. The military camp is a fenced-in open air complex surrounded by tall steel posts with barbed wire. Within the camp, one must travel via bus to the court which was about eight New York City blocks away from the camp entrance. The court area is comprised of about six trailers that serve as separate courtrooms in a fenced-in area. There is one trailer which serves as a waiting area near the fenced-in courtrooms. Unable to contain all waiting, many people wait nearby outside under the hot sun.

After getting off of the bus, I sat in in a covered waiting area with lockers. When my name was called, my passport was reviewed and I was told to place my belongings in a locker. I took only a pen, some paper and my locker key with me for the duration of my time at the court. I went through another turnstile, metal detector, and search by guards before going to the area near the waiting trailer with my companion standing out in the sun until the trial began. We went through a metal detector and then one final search before walking through the tall steel posts to the designated courtroom trailers.

This experience brought tears to my eyes and hurt my soul. I left feeling heavy, disturbed and angry. I became increasingly aware of the ways in which stripping people of their dignity is all too intrinsically woven into the practices of the prison industrial complex and its aims to not only dehumanize incarcerated people but their families, loved ones and anyone impacted by their imprisonment.

MEMORY - BEKEZELA

A 19 year old boy spoke fervently to his mother and brother in the trailer that served as a courtroom in Ofer trying to use the few minutes before facing the judge to communicate all that had passed since their last encounter.

It was July and he had not seen his mother since April.

The Israeli guard kept telling him and all of the other incarcerated young men no older than 22 to, "Lower your voices, be quiet." Not fluent in Arabic ... I could understand really clearly both the desperation and excitement that comes with not having seen your family for months, possibly longer for some of them; voices grasping at each other trying to extend the time.

They all insisted on trying to say hello, to catch up, to share smiles, to give updates on what might happen as they only had about seven to ten minutes while administrative details were discussed between the lawyers and judge.

All the families and inmates spoke loudly across the barrier between them in this small trailer which felt no bigger than the inside of 26ft U-Haul truck. There were four young men all in brown uniforms, with their hands and feet shackled sitting on the left hand side of the trailer, trying to speak to their relatives about two feet away. There were at least 10 relatives to these young men that came to see them at this trial.

The guard seemed personally offended that the young men were incessantly talking and not heeding his repeated warning to be quiet. She admonished the 19 year old young man that she would ask his mother to leave. He appeared annoyed by the guard, but did not want to show her or anyone else for that matter, that her threat bothered him and he continued to talk. His mother asked him to quiet down too. She wanted to be there at least to be in his presence. The risk of having to leave and not know what would happen was very real. She asked him to be quiet but he persisted.

The guard in an exasperated and condescending tone asked his mother and brother to leave. The young man, who seemed bold and relentless as some teenagers are, became silent suddenly as his mother and brother left the trailer. Everyone else fell silent as well. He swallowed and refused to cry though his eyes were filling up with tears.

He did not let them drop. He refused to let them drop. He tightened his jaw and just got quiet.

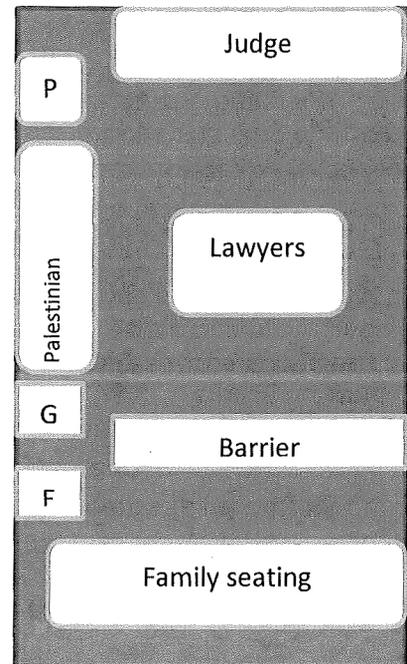
I had this disgusting feeling in the pit of my stomach watching the exchange. I was so angry with the guard. So angry at the insistence of making this family who had travelled for hours, and had not seen their son/brother in months, not knowing if he was safe or fed or beaten or crying or needing medical care, leave the trailer at her emotional whim. So angry that she, one woman, was empowered by a state system to further impact the life of a young man already in a fucked up situation.

After leaving the trailer, my companion and I went back out through the security turnstiles to get our passports and other belongings. There we spoke with the young man's mother and brother expressing our apologies for what had happened. She told us that he was upset and would not stop talking because he had just learned that his friend was shot by an Israeli settler. He was speaking openly about this in the court. He was in shackles, brazenly saying that he was angry about it and the guard wanted him to be quiet.

There was nothing more. She said that now she would have to wait until September to find out what will happen to her son. I felt sick.

The Courtroom/Trailer

- P Prisoner's Entrance
- G Guard
- E Entrance



MEMORY - ANOREA

We were waiting, along with 7 or 8 Palestinians, to be let through the first of several turnstiles. There seemed to be some commotion, with a couple of men going through the first turnstile to the passport/paper check area being made to wait, then others being called through etc. I could not understand what was happening, but it was clear that the Israeli guards (one young woman and one young man, no more than 19 years old) were giving these men a hard time. I asked the gentleman in front of me if he could explain what was happening. He proceeded to tell me that these two men were wanted by the Israeli military. They had thus far managed to evade the system. As a way to get the men to turn themselves in, soldiers had gone to their families homes the night before and kidnapped some of their family members (I believe it was their mother and brother). Their family members would not be released until the two men presented themselves at the military court.

The violent way in which they were forced to appear at the Ofer military court is just one of the many acts of violence these men and their families have experienced in their lives under Israeli occupation.

"The trouble is that once you see it, you can't unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing becomes as political an act as speaking out. There is no innocence. Either way, you're accountable." — Arundhati Roy

a page from *The ABCs of Occupation & Resistance*

Y

YAFFA YOUTH MOVEMENT:

An organization in the historic Palestinian city of Yaffa that mobilizes against illegal Israeli settlements and for Palestinian self-determination. In recent years, the state of Israel has targeted this group, attempting to prevent its members from publicly commemorating the Nakba*.

A: Apartheid | B: Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) | C: Checkpoints | D: Administrative Detention | E: Ewash, The Emergency Water Sanitation/Hygiene group | F: Friday Protests in Nabi Saleh | G: Jaza | H: Handala | I: Intifada | J: Judaization | K: Keys | L: Lajee Center | M: Mahmoud Darwish | N: Nakba | O: Omar Barghouti | P: Palestine Liberation Organization | Q: Al Qaws | R: Right of Return | S: Settlements | T: Torture | U: Unrecognized Villages | V: Veolia | W: The Wall | X: exile | Y: Yaffa Youth Movement | Z: Zochrot

* "The Catastrophe": the terror & displacement that Palestinians suffer(ed) as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

DAY 4 . JUNE 26 . YAFFA

DAY 5 · JUNE 27 · SAFFOURIEH

Poet Taha Muhammad Ali was born in Saffourieh, Palestine in 1931.

Saffourieh was leveled by Israeli artillery in July 1948, one of hundreds of villages to be ethnically cleansed. Internationally acclaimed, Ali's poetry was rooted in remembrance of his village and its loss, but also in a sense of survival and resistance. He died in 2011. Today, portraits of Ali grace these stones in the ruins of Saffourieh.

طه محمد علي

*We did not weep
when we were leaving—
for we had neither
time nor tears,
and there was no farewell.
We did not know
at the moment of parting
that it was a parting,
so where would our weeping
have come from?*

~ from There Was No Farewell



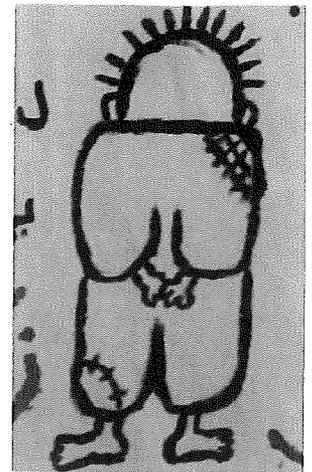
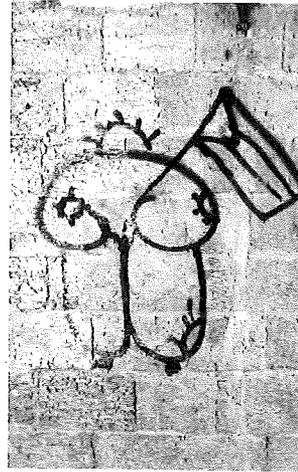
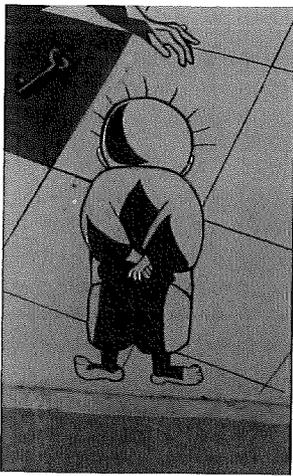
Throughout our travels in the West Bank we saw how Palestinians' freedom of movement is controlled and restricted by the Israeli government, the military, and through settler violence.

Palestinians are virtually imprisoned where they live.

I spotted kids flying kites from the rooftops of their homes, and watched the red, black, green and white colors soar above the checkpoints, the separation wall, and settlements on hilltops. I was struck that this childhood pastime was a creative act of resistance.

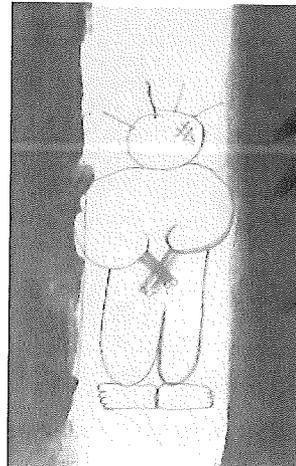
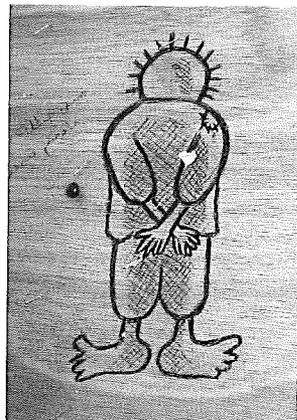
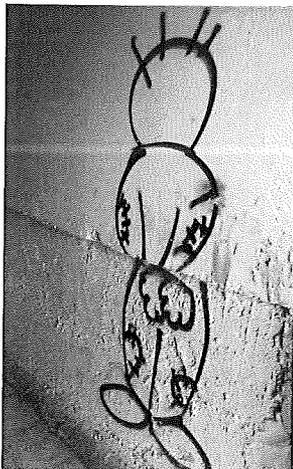
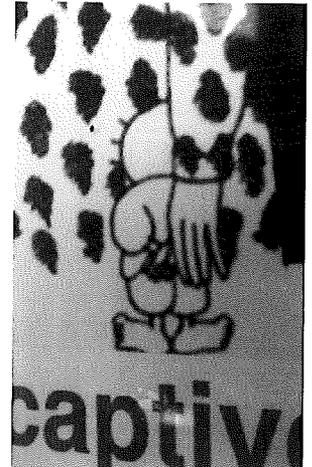
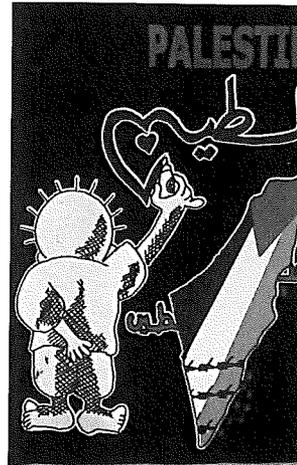
- Molly Fair

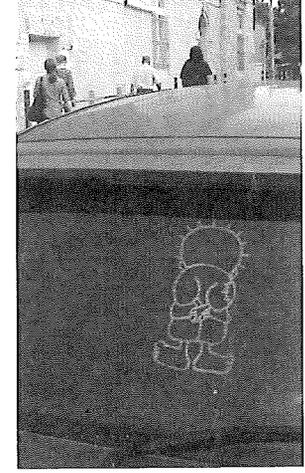
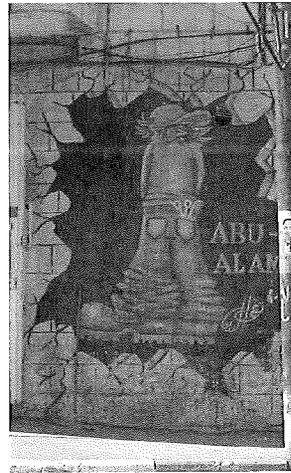
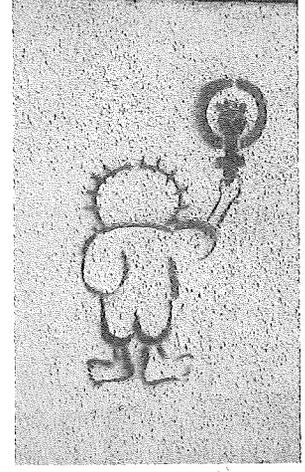
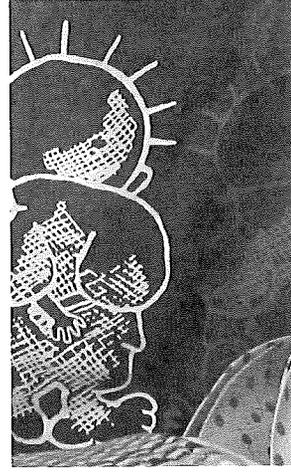
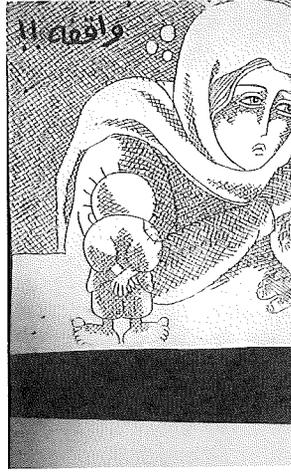
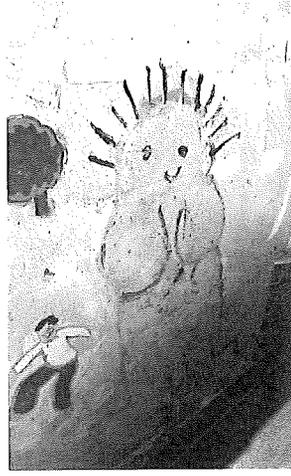
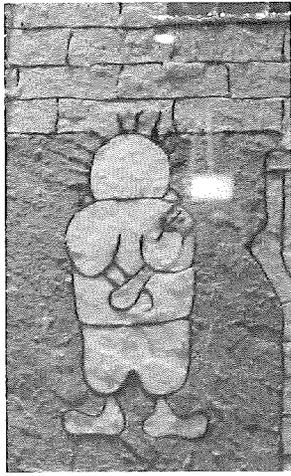




One of the most universally popular symbols we've seen here (second only to the Palestinian flag) is the cartoon image of Handala. He is a young Palestinian refugee, tattered and back-turned, refusing to grow-up until he can return to his homeland. He is seen as a symbol of popular defiance, and appears in graffiti, on t-shirts, key chains, car decals, and in shop windows. Handala was created by Naji al-Ali, a Palestinian cartoonist who was exiled in 1948 (at age 10), and murdered in 1987 by an unknown assailant at a time when Israel was on an assassination spree of the Palestinian Left.

—Josh MacPhee





The metal netting, woven with barbed wire, formed a strange canopy above our heads as we walked through the narrow streets of the Old City. Trash was strewn on top. This had been thrown by settlers living in the floors above, in an attempt to attack and intimidate Palestinians. In some cases, settlers have thrown bricks and poisonous acid, glass bottles.

Shuhada Street was once a thriving center of market and social life for Palestinians in Hebron. Today, Palestinians are not allowed to walk or drive on the street.

Israeli settlers, are allowed to go As we walk together on a Friday after-journalist Hisham



about the Open Shuhada Street Movement: Palestinians and international supporters gather regularly near the entrance to Shuhada St. and demand that it be opened to all.

on the other hand, anywhere.

through the Old City noon, Hebron based Sharabati tells us

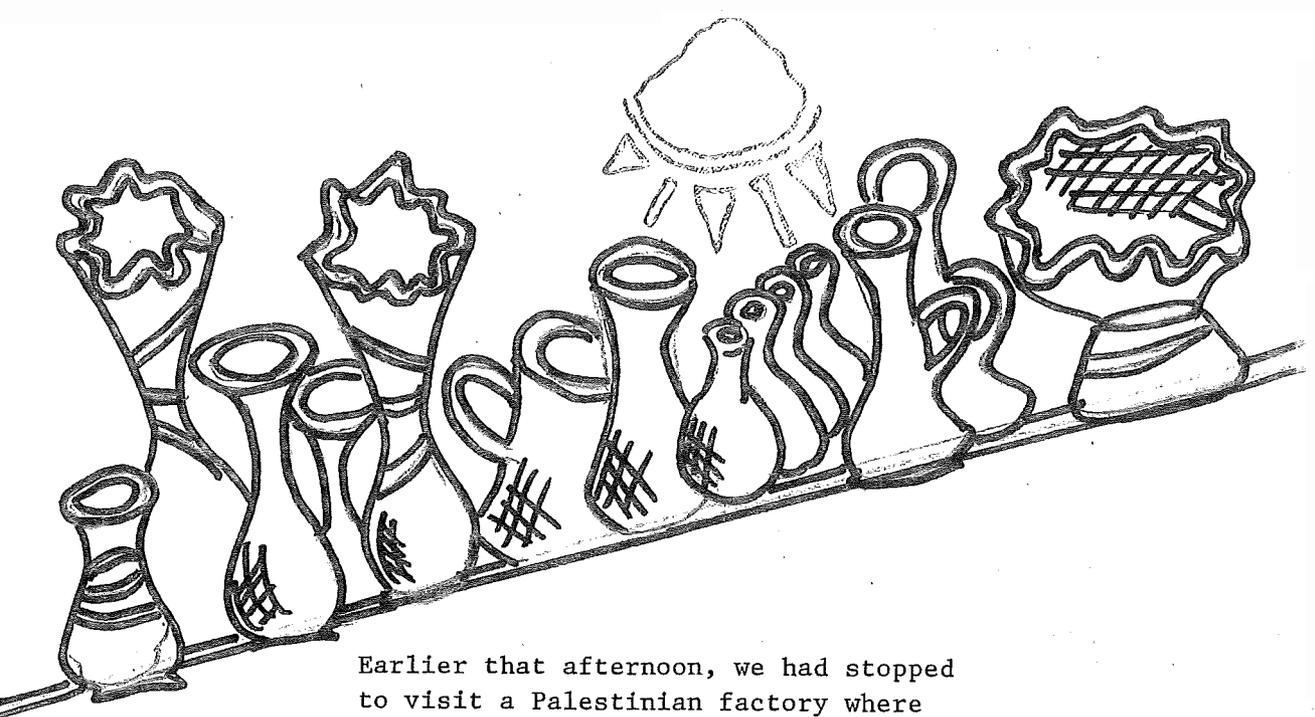


Muqawama resistance

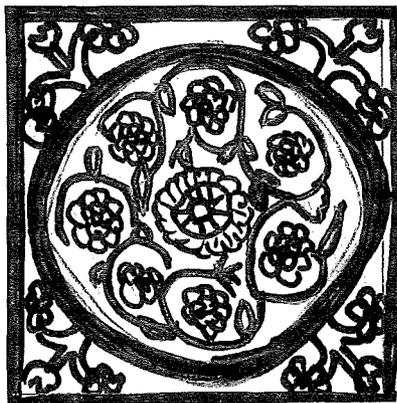
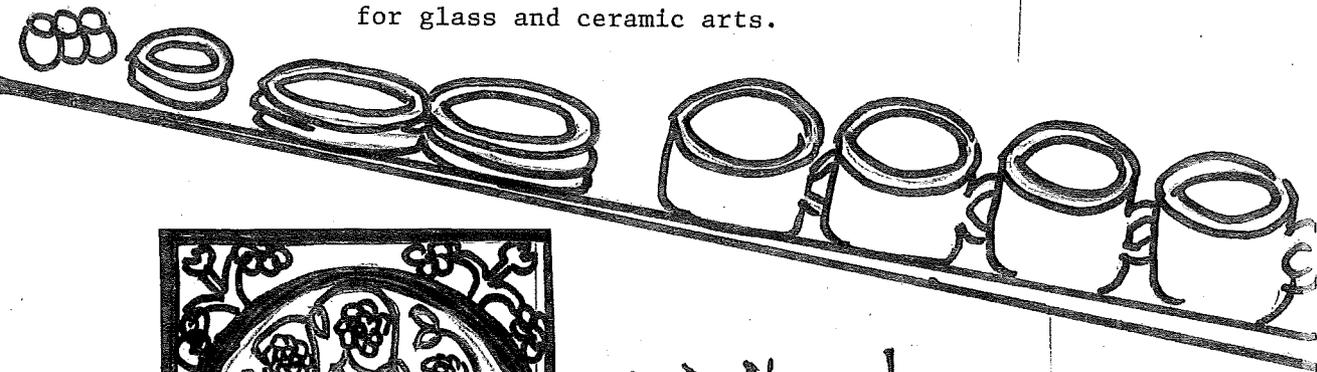
For more information, visit openshuhadastreet.org

We hear about a ten year old child arrested while walking home from mosque with his mother. He has been charged with "throwing stones." Hisham tells us that this child's parents will have to pay a large fee.

JUN 28 2013



Earlier that afternoon, we had stopped to visit a Palestinian factory where ceramics and glassworks made from recycled bottles are created and sold. The sun brought out the beautiful and intense colors of the glass: ocean blue, amber, red, and green. Hebron is well known for glass and ceramic arts.



زجاج الخليل
Zujaj Al-Khalil
Hebron glass

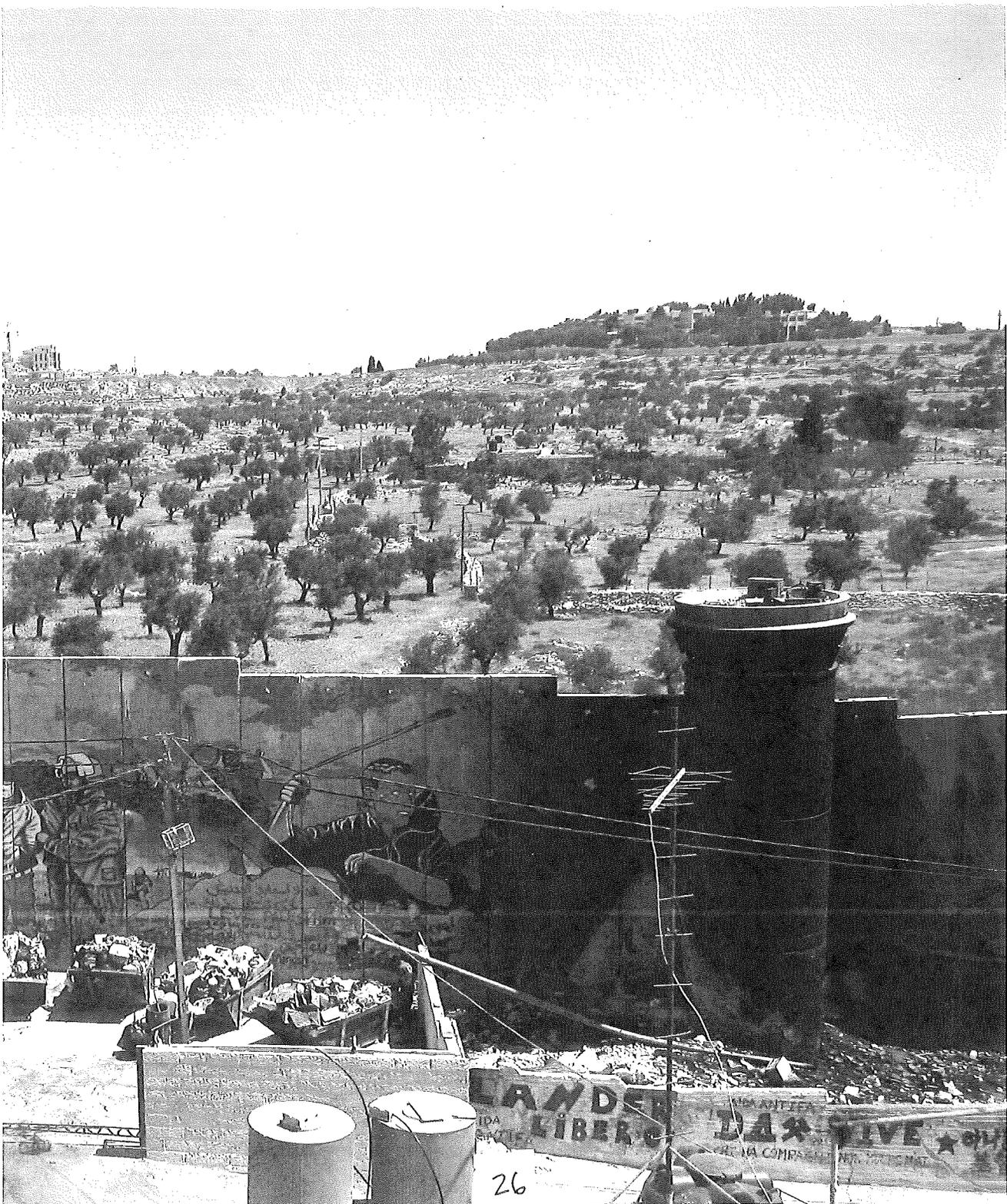
JUN 28 2013

This is the view of the Apartheid Wall and Israel from the Aida Refugee Camp just outside of Bethlehem. As you can see, the wall was intentionally built to separate the residents of the camp from their olive groves. Aida youth have figured out how

to light fires against the wall to soften in, and then hack at it with tools, eventually breaking small holes in the wall. Sometimes these small acts of resistance spark larger ones, like the complete torching of the security towers to the right.

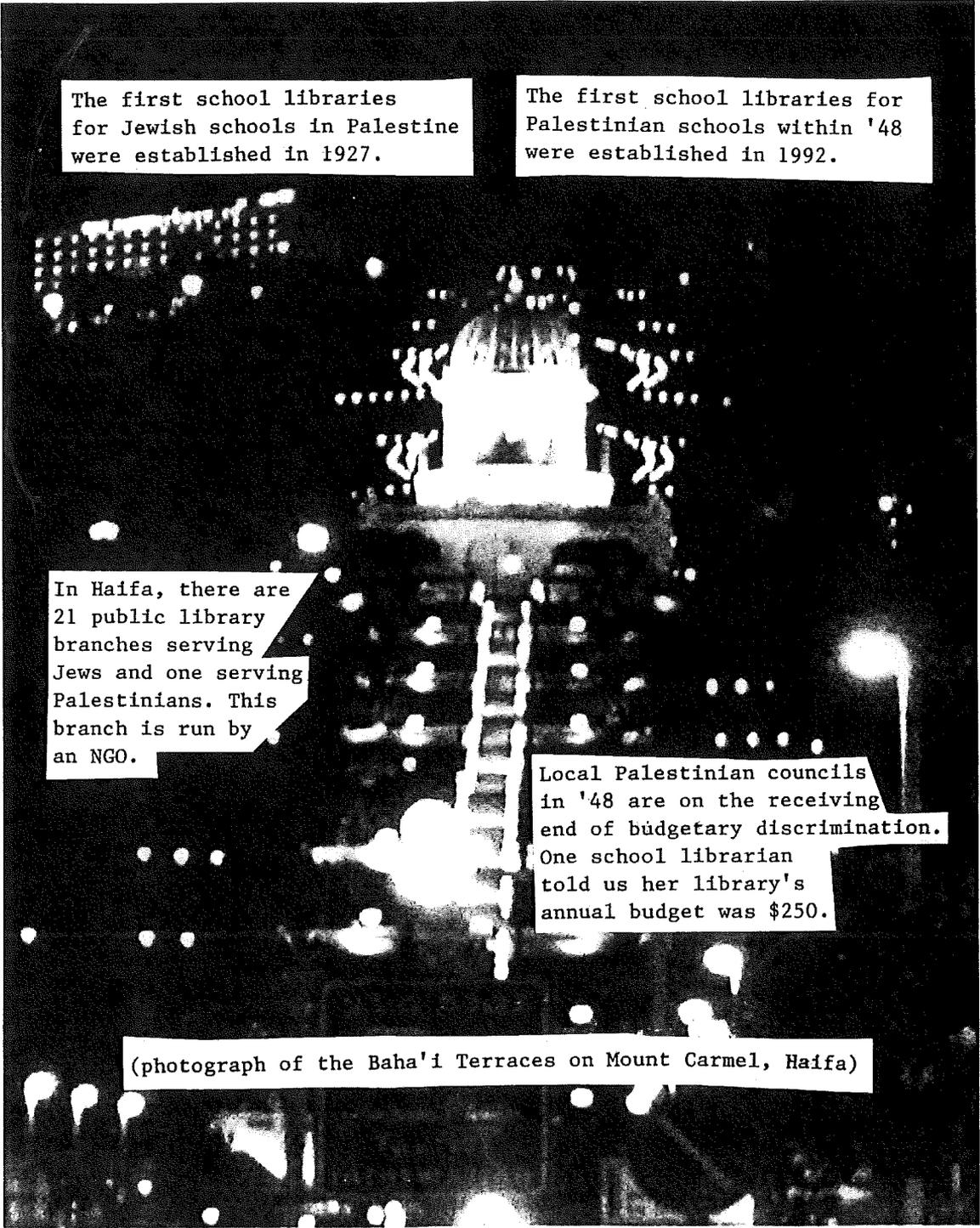
(Photo and text by Josh MacPhee)





26

LANDER
LIBER
DA
LIVE
COMPS



The first school libraries for Jewish schools in Palestine were established in 1927.

The first school libraries for Palestinian schools within '48 were established in 1992.

In Haifa, there are 21 public library branches serving Jews and one serving Palestinians. This branch is run by an NGO.

Local Palestinian councils in '48 are on the receiving end of budgetary discrimination. One school librarian told us her library's annual budget was \$250.

(photograph of the Baha'i Terraces on Mount Carmel, Haifa)

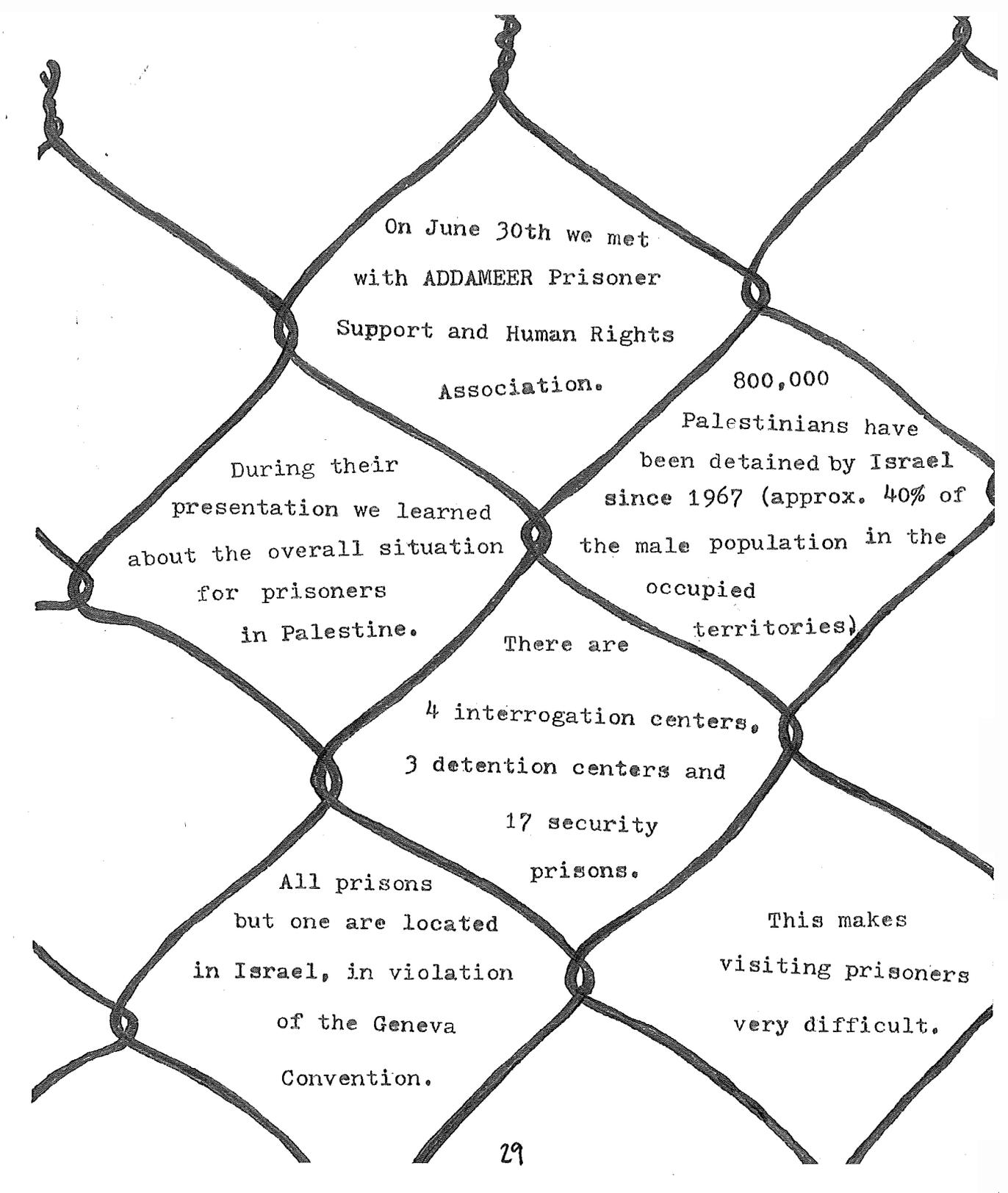
Every FRIDAY, PALESTINIANS
IN THE VILLAGE OF NABI SALLEH
STAGE A NON-VIOLENT
DEMONSTRATION. THESE
WEEKLY DEMONSTRATIONS
ARE MET WITH MILITARY
FORCE, AS VILLAGERS ARE
ATTACKED WITH TEAR GAS,
RUBBER BULLETS, AND
MORE. THE GAS CANISTERS
BELOW ARE JUST A FEW
OF THE THOUSANDS LAUNCHED INTO THIS VILLAGE



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FOR MORE INFO





On June 30th we met
with ADDAMEER Prisoner
Support and Human Rights
Association.

During their
presentation we learned
about the overall situation
for prisoners
in Palestine.

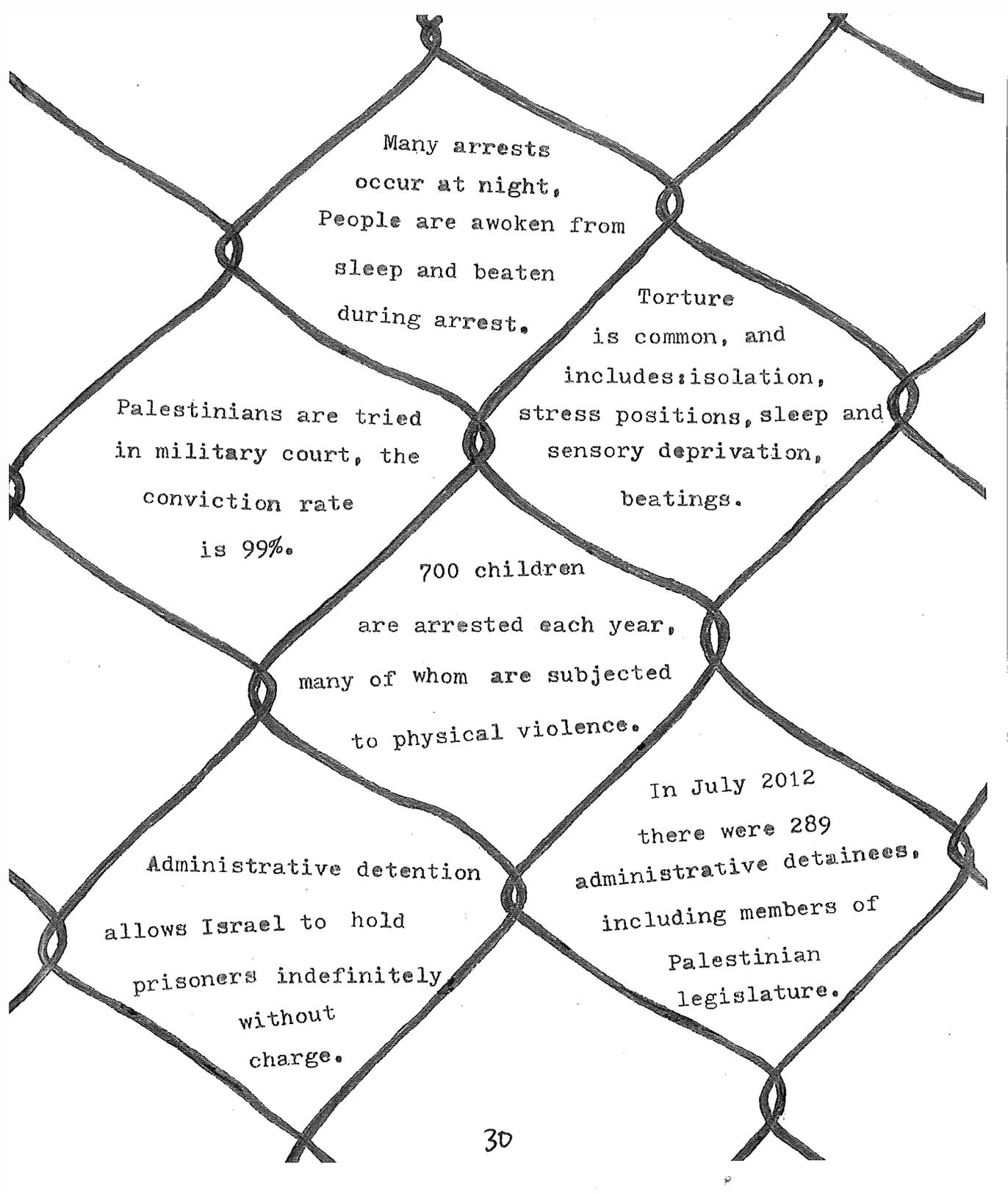
800,000
Palestinians have
been detained by Israel
since 1967 (approx. 40% of
the male population in the
occupied
territories).

There are

4 interrogation centers,
3 detention centers and
17 security
prisons.

All prisons
but one are located
in Israel, in violation
of the Geneva
Convention.

This makes
visiting prisoners
very difficult.



Many arrests
occur at night,
People are awoken from
sleep and beaten
during arrest.

Torture
is common, and
includes: isolation,
stress positions, sleep and
sensory deprivation,
beatings.

Palestinians are tried
in military court, the
conviction rate
is 99%.

700 children
are arrested each year,
many of whom are subjected
to physical violence.

Administrative detention
allows Israel to hold
prisoners indefinitely
without
charge.

In July 2012
there were 289
administrative detainees,
including members of
Palestinian
legislature.

**An excerpt from our post-delegation Solidarity Statement
(published on our website and on Mondoweiss, among other places):**

We are an independent group of librarians and archivists who traveled to Palestine from June 23 – July 4, 2013. We come from the US, Canada, Sweden, Trinidad & Tobago, and Palestine. We bore witness to the destruction and appropriation of information, and the myriad ways access is denied. We were inspired by the many organizations and individuals we visited who resist settler-colonialism in their daily lives. We connected with colleagues in libraries, archives, and related projects and institutions, in the hopes of gaining mutual benefit through information exchange and skill-sharing. We learned about the common and unique challenges we face—both in different parts of Palestine and in our home contexts. In all our travels and work, we respected the Palestinian civil society call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel and did not partner with any organization that violates this call. As librarians and archivists, as people who believe in access to information, we affirm that institutional academic and cultural boycotts are appropriate responses to curtailed freedoms and are effective tools for change.

Our group was small, our scope limited. We traveled only to Palestine, and only to parts of Palestine. We were not able to visit Palestinian communities in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, or elsewhere, and our trip was only the first step in creating a network of information workers. We were privileged to visit cities, villages, and refugee camps, and to meet with grassroots activists and institutional representatives. In the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and 1948 Palestine (Israel), we engaged with librarians and archivists about their projects and their struggles.

As we travelled we saw barriers to movement everywhere: walls, checkpoints, turnstiles, metal detectors, segregated roads, surveillance watchtowers, military patrols, security cameras, and settler militias. We saw communities devastated by criminalization and incarceration. We visited the rubble of villages that were destroyed in 1948, and we witnessed the ongoing Judaization of Palestinian communities through new housing developments, unequal provision of municipal services, and the Hebraization of place names. We saw new Israeli settlements hovering on hilltops above Palestinian villages, evidence of the forcible land grabs and displacement that Palestinians have been facing for decades. We met families that have struggled and suffered through egregious violence and yet work every day to secure education, opportunities, safety and a more just world for their children.

The erasure of Palestinian culture and history is a tactic of war and occupation, a means to further limit the self-determination of the Palestinian people. Yet the richness, beauty, and complexity of Palestinian existence was everywhere evident, in the historical and contemporary cultural material produced by writers, poets, journalists, artists, archivists and librarians, and in the histories passed down through stories and from person to person. We bore witness to a culture of resistance, which in all its myriad forms resoundingly refutes the notion that Palestine does not exist.

Our experiences in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and 1948 Palestine (Israel) were complex, challenging, beautiful and deeply meaningful. We met creative, committed, and courageous activists, visionaries, cultural workers, artists, librarians and archivists. Everywhere we went we witnessed the daily lived realities of occupation and colonialism, as well as ongoing resistance and the persistent quest for justice.



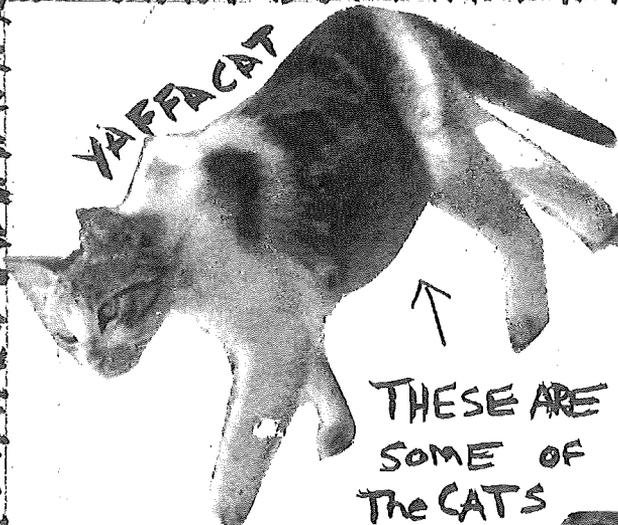
At a public forum in Ramallah, we shared ideas and asked for feedback about our observations.

While the delegation has ended, our work will continue. We will:

- *seek out and convene events in our home communities where we can share our knowledge about the effects of occupation and colonialism on libraries, archives, and Palestinian society
- *publish reports, articles, and zines that document the challenges faced—and the amazing work being done—by Palestinian information workers
- *develop an international network of information workers to facilitate skill-sharing, solidarity work, and community among librarians and archivists in Palestine and abroad
- *lobby national and international library and archival organizations to take tangible steps against the occupation and in support of Palestinian perspectives in information work
- *join Palestinians, Israelis, and international activists in campaigns for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israeli apartheid and colonialism.

We will continue to learn and adapt our strategies to changing realities and will engage in critical examinations of our own positions of privilege. Through these activities we will work to support access to information in and about Palestine and Palestinian self-determination.

YAFFA CAT



AIDA CAMP
(GRAFFITI)
CAT ↓



↑
THESE ARE
SOME OF
THE CATS
WE MET
↓

BALATA
CAMP CAT



SAFFOURIEH CAT



HAIFA CAT



PLACES WE'VE VISITED

The following is a list of some of the organizations we visited during our delegation.

Archives/Special Collections

Kenyon Institute (Jerusalem)
Dar Isaaf Nashashibi Library & Archive (Jerusalem)
Arab Studies Society - Orient House [closed by Israel and confiscated] (Jerusalem)
Prisoners Section, Nablus Public Library (Nablus)
Mada al-Carmel: Arab Center for Applied Social Research (Haifa)

Yasser Arafat Foundation (Ramallah)
Institute for Palestine Studies (Ramallah)
Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (Bethlehem)

Municipal Libraries

Nablus Public Library (Nablus)
Palestinian librarians in municipal and school libraries (Haifa)
Ramallah Public Library (Ramallah)
El-Bireh Public Library (El-Bireh)
Tulkarm Public Library (Tulkarm)

Family/Personal Libraries

Khalidi Family Library (Jerusalem)
Ansari Family Library (Jerusalem)
Budeiri Family Library (Jerusalem)

Academic Libraries/Archives

Birzeit University Libraries (Birzeit)
Birzeit Palestine Archive Project (Birzeit)
Al-Quds University Library (Abu Dis)
Al-Quds American Studies Department (Abu Dis)
Khaduri Library (Tulkarm)

Children's Libraries

Nablus Children Library (Nablus)
El-Bireh Public Library (El-Bireh)
Various grade school libraries (Bethlehem)

Museums

Palestinian Museum (Ramallah)
Return of Qastel Museum/Saffouriyah Association for Heritage and Return (Nazareth)
Abu Jihad Prisoners Museum and Archive (Abu Dis)

Cultural Centres

Madaa Center and Library (Silwan, Jerusalem)
Yafa Cultural Center (Balata Refugee Camp, Nablus)
Lajee Center (Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem)
Alrowwad Cultural & Theatre Society (Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem)
Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre (Ramallah)

Moving Image Collections/Media Centers/Publishers

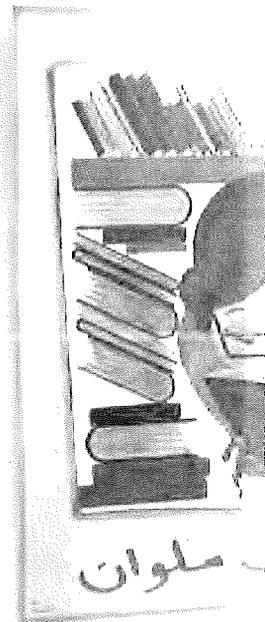
Wadi Hilweh Information Center (Jerusalem)
Tamer Institute for Community Education (Bethlehem/Ramallah)
Subversive Films (Ramallah)
Shashat (Ramallah)

Activist Groups/NGOs

Boycott from Within (Jerusalem)
Anarchists Against the Wall
Grassroots al-Quds (Jerusalem)
B'Tselem/The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (Jerusalem)
Zochrot (Tel-Aviv)
Yaffa Youth (Yaffa)
Tamimi Press (Nabi Saleh)
Addameer/Prisoner and Human Rights Association (Ramallah)
BDS National Committee and PACBI (Ramallah)
Al-Qaws (Ramallah)
EWASH (Ramallah)
Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (Ramallah)

Other Activities

Jonathan Cook walking tour, including of Saffourieh (Nazareth)
Walking tour with Tamer Nafar from DAM (Lyd)
Walking tour of Nablus's old city with Beesan Ramadan (Nablus)
Conversation with human geographer Sa'ed Abu-Hijleh (Nablus)
Walking tour of Yaffa with Sami Abu-Shehadeh (Yaffa)
Walking tour of Hebron with Hisham Sharabati (Hebron)



Who We Are

Amy Greer is a youth services public librarian, doctoral student, and community organizer who now incorporates Za'atar, sage tea, and maqluba into her regular diet since her return from Palestine.

Andrea Miller-Nesbitt is an academic librarian in Montreal, QC.

Bekezela Mguni is a reproductive justice activist. Independent librarian. Doula. Creative thinker. Poet. Candle-maker. Small axe. She is a proud queer Trinbagonian woman living in Pittsburgh.

Blair Kuntz is a proud red diaper baby who became a critic of Zionism after witnessing Israeli brutality first hand, first in Lebanon and then in Palestine.

Bronwen Densmore is a librarian, technologist, and artist who can operate a forklift and is eager to use any/all of her skills to help support an end to the occupation.

Ché Gossett is a black genderqueer and femme fabulous writer and activist. They are currently working on a biography of a queer of color AIDS activist, which is how they began their archival research. They are writing about prison abolition, black queer and/or trans resistance and solidarity with Palestine in a time of pinkwashing, anti-blackness and carceral regimes.

Elisabet Risberg is a librarian working with Arabic literature in Stockholm and who after the delegation would like to smuggle Arabic children's books to Palestinian libraries professionally.

Grace Life is a video archivist, human rights advocate, and mother of two who believes that *Tikkun Olam* obligates her to work to end the occupation.

Hannah Mermelstein is an activist and school librarian in Brooklyn who has yet to find a way to bring home from Palestine its service taxi system and vegetable trucks.

Jenna Freedman* has been a zine librarian since 2003, the same year she was added to the Jewish SHIT (Self-Hating or Israel-Threatening) List.

When he is not reading, writing, designing, studying, or hoarding books, **Josh MacPhee** helps run the Interference Archive in Brooklyn, NY.

Maggie Schreiner is an archivist and community organizer living in Brooklyn.

Melissa Morrone works in a public library in Brooklyn.

Mezna Qato writes about Palestinian history and is an organizer living between Chicago, Oxford, and Tulkarm. She lacks dabka skills.

Molly Fair is an archivist and artist living in Brooklyn, and new fan of Arab Idol winner Mohammad Assaf.

Rachel Mattson is a historian, an archivist, and another Jew against the occupation.

Sharon C. Smith* is an art and architectural historian specializing in the Middle East. She leads an academic research center dedicated to documenting architecture and urbanism in Muslim societies.

Vani Natarajan is an academic librarian, writer, and activist living in Brooklyn. One of her all-time favorite BDS activities involved singing and dancing to a rewritten Spice Girls song, inside a New York City Best Buy store, in protest of David Beckham's Motorola endorsement.

*Part of the group, but did not participate in the delegation.

WE recommend

non-fiction

Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation * Saree Makdisi
Sharon and My Mother In Law * Suad Amiry
The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine * Ilan Pappé
Prisoners Diaries * ed. Norma Hashim
Palestinian Walks * Raja Shehadeh

film

The Time That Remains * Elia Suleiman
Slingshot Hip Hop * Jackie Salloum
When I Saw You * Annemarie Jacir
The Great Book Robbery * Benny Brunner
Children of Shatila * Mai Masri

musicians

Kamilya Jubran
DAM
Shadia Mansour
Sabreen
Mohammad Assaf

poets

Suheir Hammad
Mahmoud Darwish
Taha Muhammad Ali
Rafeef Ziadah
Remi Kanazi

novels

Touch * Adania Shibli
Time of White Horses * Ibrahim Nasrallah
Men in the Sun * Ghassan Kanafani
Wild Thorns * Sahar Khalifeh
Mornings in Jenin * Susan Abulhawa

children's
books

The Boy and the Wall * Lajee Center youth, Aida Refugee Camp
Ghaddar the Ghoul and Other Palestinian Stories * Sonia Nimr
Where the Streets Had a Name * Randa Abdel-Fattah
Awwal Zahra Fi'l Ard * Zakaria Mohammed + Ahmed Al-Khaldy
Al Ta'Al-Marbouta Tateer * Ibtisam Barakat + Hosni Radwan

art
+ food

The Palestinian Kitchen * Madaa Creative Center, Silwan
A Child In Palestine: The Cartoons of Najji al-Ali
Palestinian Art 1850-2005 * Kamal Boullata
Gaza Kitchen * Laila el Haddad
Palestine * Joe Sacco

Thank you for reading this. To our Indiegogo donors, thank you for making this delegation a reality. To our Palestinian hosts, thank you for welcoming us into your work and your lives, and we look forward to continued work together.

This zine was created in New York City in August 2013, compiled by Jenna Freedman, Hannah Mermelstein and Vani Natarajan.

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Connect with us

Website (new one coming soon) <http://librarians2palestine.wordpress.com>

Announcements list <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/lapannounce>

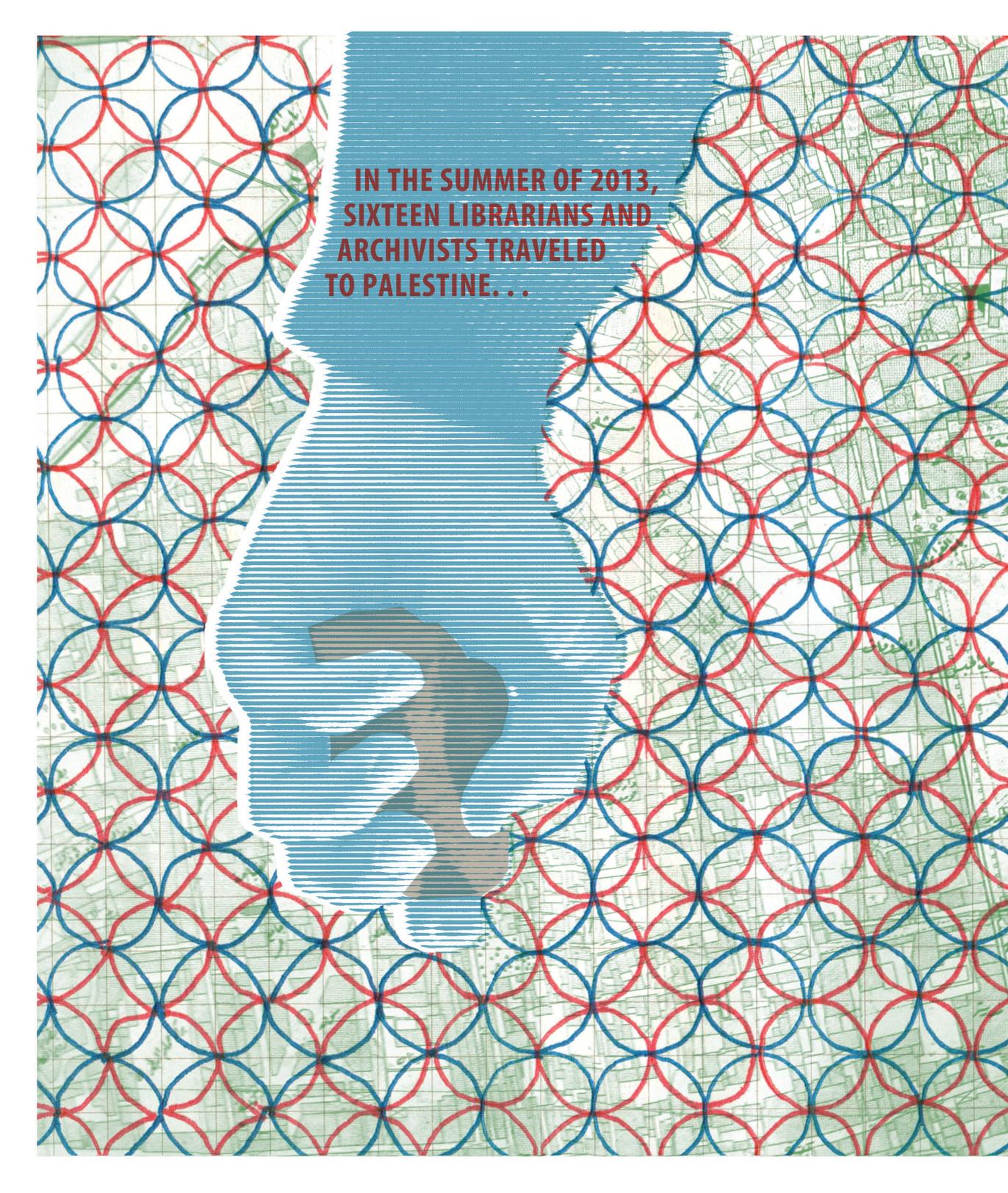
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**IN THE SUMMER OF 2013,
SIXTEEN LIBRARIANS AND
ARCHIVISTS TRAVELED
TO PALESTINE...**