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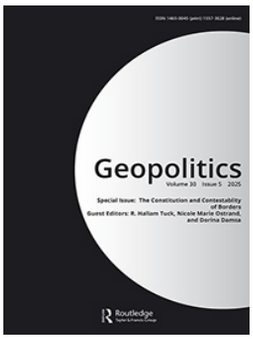

Geopolitics

ISSN: 1465-0045 (Print) 1557-3028 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/fgeo20

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To cite this article: Rafeef Ziadah, Christian Henderson, Omar Jabary Salamanca, Sharri Plonski, Charmaine Chua, Riya Al Sanah & Elia El Khazen (04 Jun 2025): Disruptive Geographies and the War on Gaza: Infrastructure and Global Solidarity, Geopolitics, DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2025.2510319

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2025.2510319

Published online: 04 Jun 2025.

GEOPOLITICS
https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2025.2510319

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Disruptive Geographies and the War on Gaza: Infrastructure and Global Solidarity

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ABSTRACT

This forum explores the geopolitics of infrastructure in the context of Israel's war on Gaza, situating the current genocide within longer histories of settler colonialism, spatial control, and transnational complicity. As homes, hospitals, and schools are reduced to rubble, this destruction is not only military, but infrastructural – an assault on the material conditions of Palestinian life. Infrastructure emerges here not as background, but as a primary mechanism of governance, dispossession, and colonial reordering. From roads and borders to electricity grids and telecommunications, the systems that organise everyday life in Gaza and the West Bank are also those that fragment space, enforce dependency, and suppress self-determination. Rather than viewing this destruction in isolation, contributors trace how it is sustained by regional and global circuits of capital, logistics, arms, and energy. Gaza's collapse is embedded in a broader political economy of militarism, where supply chains, defence industries, and financial infrastructures turn dispossession into profit. Yet, this forum also foregrounds counter-infrastructures and practices of resistance: from survival networks and subterranean spaces of refusal, to workers' strikes and transport disruptions that challenge the flows sustaining Israeli militarism. Together, these essays ask what it means to 'follow infrastructures' in a moment of mass atrocity – what such a method reveals about power, complicity, and potential rupture. The forum moves beyond documenting destruction to consider how infrastructure is both a tool of domination and a terrain of struggle. Across scales and contexts, it highlights how Palestinians resist infrastructural warfare and how international solidarity movements can intervene in the systems that enable it. In doing so, the forum contributes to a growing body of politically accountable scholarship, mapping not only how infrastructures sustain violence, but how they might be reimagined.

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The world has watched in real time, through media broadcasts and social media feeds, the relentless erasure of Palestinian life in Gaza: homes reduced to rubble, hospitals bombed, schools transformed into military targets, and Palestinians killed in what can only be described as an engineered process of disposability.[1] The severing of electricity, fuel, water, and sanitation systems underscores that this is not merely an attack on territory, but an assault on the very conditions of Palestinian survival. While it is difficult to look beyond the spectacle of dystopian destruction, it is crucial to situate this moment within the broader logics of settler-colonialism and geopolitical design (Hanieh 2024).[2]

As bombs reduce Gaza to ruins, Israeli and US leaders advance sanitised, futuristic visions of its reconstruction. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump have proposed transforming Gaza into a neoliberal experiment of free economic zones, regional infrastructure projects, and luxury coastal developments (Keath 2025; Wagner 2024). These narratives recast ethnic cleansing as pragmatic policy, turning Palestinian land, life, and history into commodities in a global marketplace. The targeting of infrastructure thus serves not only immediate goals of dispossession, but clears the way for a new spatial and economic order that forecloses Palestinian sovereignty.

Drawing on critical infrastructure and logistics studies (Belcher et al. 2020; Cowen 2014; Khalili 2021; Plonski 2022; Ziadah 2019), including Deobrah Cowen's call to 'follow the infrastructures', this forum examines the material systems that underpin and sustain Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza. We argue that Israel's settler-colonial domination has historically been enforced through the strategic management of infrastructures – roads, borders, electricity grids, water supplies, and bureaucratic means – systems that structure Palestinian life and function as instruments of control and displacement. Yet, within these landscapes of infrastructural violence, Palestinian counter-infrastructures, networks of survival and subversion, emerge as sites of refusal, challenging colonial control while sustaining life.

A methodological approach grounded in 'following infrastructures' reveals that the managed collapse of Gaza over decades is not merely a localised project but an international one, embedded in transnational networks of complicity (El-Shewy, Griffiths, and Jones 2024). The destruction of homes, schools, and essential services is inseparable from the global circuits of arms, energy, finance, and logistics that sustain and amplify the violence. This forum situates Gaza within this broader geopolitical architecture of power, capital, and imperial governance, tracing infrastructures across local, regional, and global scales to reveal how they function as conduits of both domination and, at times, disruption.

Finally, this forum contributes to ongoing interdisciplinary efforts (e.g., Agha et al. 2024; Dader et al. 2024; Paton 2025) to pursue politically

accountable scholarship, one that interrogates who benefits from these structures and considers how academic work might contest, rather than reproduce, these entanglements.

Infrastructure and Settler Colonial Logics

The Israeli settler-colonial project has, from its inception, relied on infrastructure as a key mechanism of expansion and control (Zureik 2015). Not merely a backdrop to military occupation, infrastructure itself has functioned as a tool of governance, organising Palestinian life while securing Israeli territorial dominance. Roads, water systems, electricity grids, and telecommunications networks do not operate as neutral technical systems; rather, they are central to the spatial and economic logics of settler colonialism, facilitating land seizure, economic dependency, and racialised control (Alatout 2006; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2020; Zeitoun 2008).

Following the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israeli planners sought to consolidate territorial control while minimising responsibility for the Palestinian population. The Allon Plan (1967–1970) laid the groundwork, envisioning a fragmented geography that enabled settler expansion while confining Palestinians to disconnected enclaves (Farsakh 2016).[3] This logic was later entrenched through the Oslo Accords (1993) and the Paris Economic Protocol (1994), which formalised a system of infrastructural control and economic dependency (Turner and Shweiki 2014). Though framed as a peace initiative, Oslo established a framework of limited Palestinian autonomy embedded within a wider structure of military occupation. Oslo's zoning regime, for example, divided the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, creating a patchwork of regulated spaces where Palestinian movement, trade, and development remained subject to Israeli oversight.[4] Palestinian political economists have described the result as a captive economy, in which Palestinian productive capacity was systematically dismantled while economic life became subordinated to Israeli security imperatives (Al-Botmeh and Kanafani 2006; Haddad 2016; Tartir, Dana, and Seidel 2021). In Gaza, Israel facilitated a model of remote management: Israeli forces redeployed from urban centres while maintaining control over borders, airspace, and population registries, transforming Gaza into an externally controlled enclave increasingly cut off from the West Bank (Bhungalia 2010; Li 2006).

This system of control is most evident in Israel's monopoly over border infrastructures, trade, and essential resources. Under Oslo, Israel retained full authority over Palestinian imports and exports, operationalising control through a web of border crossings. Restrictions on movement framed as security measures, extend to the regulation of essential goods, with 'dual-use' bans prohibiting critical materials such as medical equipment, construction supplies, and water purification

systems (Khalidi 2019). At the economic level, Israel collects customs revenue on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, routinely withholding funds as a means of political coercion (Elkhafif, Misyef, and Elagraa 2014).

Nowhere is this infrastructural weaponisation more evident than in the control of water and energy. Mekorot, Israel's national water company, monopolises Palestinian water resources, diverting supplies to settlements while rationing access to Palestinian communities, a system of hydro-apartheid in which settlers consume three to four times more water than Palestinians (Dajani 2017; Zeitoun 2008). Similarly, in the energy sector, nearly all electricity is imported from Israel, with restrictions on fuel, spare parts, and permits for development particularly in Area C, all reinforcing Israel's control. Efforts to build autonomous energy systems, like solar projects, are routinely obstructed, deepening dependency and fragmentation. In Gaza, prior to 2023 blackouts could last 18–20 hours per day, exacerbated by repeated Israeli attacks on its sole power plant in 2006, 2014, and 2021 (Salamanca 2011; World Bank Report 2017).

Beyond utilities, digital and logistical infrastructures further consolidate Israeli control over Palestinian life. Telecommunications networks are heavily restricted: Palestinians in the West Bank are denied access to advanced mobile technologies such as 4 G and 5 G, while Israeli settlers in the same areas enjoy full high-speed connectivity; in Gaza Israel has systematically destroyed the telecommunications sector (Hurani 2025; Tawil-Souri 2012). This technological asymmetry not only entrenches economic dependency, but also facilitates Israel's surveillance and control, embedding the occupation into the daily routines of communication and commerce. Road infrastructure further enforces spatial fragmentation – highways and bypass roads connect settlements while restricting Palestinian movement through a system of checkpoints and closures, turning even short trips into long, unpredictable journeys (Falah and Al-Nawaiseh 2024). These overlapping regimes of infrastructural control do not merely hinder development – they spatialise domination, financialise occupation, and ensure that the movement of goods, capital, and people is tightly regulated within a colonial matrix (Hanieh 2016).

Gaza represents the most extreme expression of this infrastructural violence. Since 2007, Israel has enforced a permanent state of infrastructural crisis, using its blockade to dismantle economic capacity and ensure total reliance on external aid. Strict limitations on construction materials, industrial equipment, and medical supplies have prevented any sustainable reconstruction, while periodic military assaults systematically target power grids, water facilities, and hospitals. Military destruction, and restrictions on repair materials have left the water system in total collapse. Electricity outages became routine, and reconstruction remains impossible due to severe material restrictions. This managed collapse ensured that Gaza

remains politically and economically incapacitated, a condition sustained not only through military force but through the deliberate orchestration of infrastructural deprivation.

The current genocidal assault on Gaza does not represent a rupture, but an escalation of this long-standing assault. What we are witnessing today is not merely destruction, but the culmination of a settler-colonial strategy that has, for decades, weaponised infrastructure to render Palestinian life impossible.

Global Circuits of Complicity

While much analysis of Israel's settler-colonial regime focuses on its actions in the occupied territories, its ability to sustain military dominance and infrastructural warfare is deeply embedded in transnational supply chains, weapons industries, and financial institutions that fund, arm, and legitimise its operations (Corry and Rose 2025; Dana 2024; Machold 2018). These circuits ensure that settler-colonial violence remains not only a localised project, but also a global enterprise, in which destruction generates new avenues for capital accumulation.

Following infrastructures provides a critical lens to uncover how various scales – local, regional, and global – are not only interconnected, but also mutually reinforcing in sustaining the settler-colonial project. At the regional scale, this is particularly evident in Egypt's management of Gaza's southern border. Egypt has maintained tight control over the Rafah crossing, often closing it or restricting movement, thereby reinforcing the broader Israeli-led siege and limiting the flow of people, goods, and humanitarian aid. Egypt's cooperation in managing Gaza's enclosure functions as an infrastructural extension of Israeli policy. Further, regional normalisation agreements, such as the Abraham Accords signed by the UAE and Bahrain with Israel in 2020, are not merely diplomatic shifts, but are tied to infrastructural and economic integration. These agreements have facilitated new trade corridors, investment initiatives, and technological partnerships that link Israel into Gulf and broader markets.

This regional entrenchment, however, is inseparable from the global infrastructures that underpin and amplify it. The same circuits that connect Israel to neighbouring regimes also link it to international arms markets, surveillance industries, and financial institutions that enable and profit from its military dominance. Palestine functions as both a testing ground for new military technologies and a hub for the export of counterinsurgency tactics (Khalili 2013). The bidirectional flow of military expertise, weapons, and capital underscores Israel's role as a key node in global militarism, where its military-industrial complex supplies surveillance technologies and weapons to states engaged in similar forms of repression and control (Essa 2023; Loewenstein 2024).

The United States remains Israel's largest military backer, providing $3.8 billion in annual military aid, much of which funds weapons procurement (Workers in Palestine 2025). This extends beyond direct arms sales to include technology transfers, co-development programmes, and joint research initiatives that enhance Israel's capacity for aerial bombardment and counterinsurgency warfare.[5] Major defence corporations play a pivotal role: for instance, Lockheed Martin supplies Israel with the F-16 and F-35 fighter jets, Boeing provides guided weapons, and Raytheon manufactures the Paveway guided system that is fitted onto bombs integral to its arsenal. Companies like Caterpillar repurpose equipment for the demolition of Palestinian homes. Meanwhile, European firms, including Germany's Rheinmetall, the UK's BAE Systems, and Italy's Leonardo, continue to supply components for drones, warplanes, and naval systems used in military operations against Palestinians.

Beyond arms transfers, Israel's military operations are sustained through global energy and financial infrastructures. The Israeli air force relies on jet fuel supplied by US oil conglomerates while multinational corporations, including BP and Chevron, profit from regional gas deals that bypass Palestinian sovereignty, embedding the occupation within a global extractive economy (Datadesk 2024; El-Khazen and Rose 2024). Major international banks finance weapons manufacturers that supply the Israeli military, funnelling resources into arms production and defence contracts (War on Want 2017). This financialisation of warfare ensures that military destruction is a profitable industry, where every assault on Palestinians fuels further investment and capital expansion.

These military supply chains are deliberately fragmented across multiple jurisdictions, making accountability diffuse and complicity difficult to trace. For example, 'there are 408 links in the supply chain for the F35', enabling manufacturers, investors, and state actors to obscure their direct role in settler-colonial violence (Workers in Palestine 2025). This structural dispersal of military production serves as an intentional mechanism of political insulation, allowing governments and corporations to evade legal scrutiny while continuing to supply weapons. The opacity of the global arms trade further compounds this lack of accountability (Belcher and Martin 2013). Military contracts are often shielded under national security exemptions, while subcontracting arrangements and intermediary transactions make it nearly impossible to establish direct responsibility between manufacturers, state actors, and the final deployment of weaponry.

In one example, the UK announced in September 2024 the suspension of 30 out of 350 arms export licences to Israel (House of Commons Library 2025). While framed as a commitment to arms export regulations, the UK's decision is only symbolic. It applies to a small fraction of licences and in practice, British-made components, used in F-35 fighter jets for example, continue to

reach Israel through multinational supply chains, bypassing the limited scope of the suspension (Stavrianakis 2024).

The destruction of Gaza's life-sustaining systems cannot be understood in isolation from these transnational infrastructures of complicity. Every bomb dropped on Gaza, every power station destroyed, and every hospital left without electricity is not just an outcome of Israeli policy, but of a deeply embedded global economy of militarism.

Disruption

Yet, this global connectivity also presents vulnerabilities. The same transnational networks that sustain Israel's military infrastructure, arms supply chains, and energy corridors also serve as potential points of disruption. Blockades, port disruptions, strikes, and slowdowns, particularly at critical nodes like transport hubs and arms manufacturing sites, can reverberate across scales, amplifying local activism and undermining the flows that fuel Israeli militarism. In this context, contributors to this forum were asked to reflect on the idea of 'infrastructural disruption' (Chua 2023; Danyluk 2023; Toscano 2014). Their reflections underscore that contemporary geopolitics is not merely shaped by state decisions, but is mediated through infrastructures that entangle power, complicity, and opposition across interconnected scales (Ziadah 2019). The urgency of this moment, therefore, lies not only in recognising how infrastructure is weaponised to facilitate dispossession, but also in understanding the transformative potential of solidarity movements to disrupt these flows (Chua and Bosworth 2023; Featherstone 2012; Pasternak and Dafnos 2018).

The contributions that follow show not only how infrastructure is weaponised within Israel's settler-colonial project, but also how Palestinians actively subvert and reconfigure these systems in conditions of extreme constraint. Henderson's article examines how Gaza is integrated into global aid and food trade supply chains, revealing how these circulations are marked by exploitation and profit extraction, perpetuating Gaza's economic subordination and leading to famine. Yet, Henderson also highlights Palestinian resistance through grassroots survival strategies. Jabary Salamanca's piece explores the underground as a site of anticolonial resistance, illustrating how tunnels, shelters, and symbolic spaces disrupt colonial power structures, offering a hidden geography of survival and defiance. Plonski's analysis of the US-engineered floating port for Gaza shows how this project, framed as a humanitarian 'solution' to Israel's blockade, ultimately reinforces Gaza's occupation and containment.

The forum also examines how internationally grassroots movements leverage their positions to disrupt the flows sustaining Israel's militarism. Activists, including dockworkers, truck drivers, and logistics workers, are challenging

the global networks that sustain Israeli violence. As Chua suggests in this forum however, disruption should not be seen as a one-off event. She urges us to think beyond episodic moments and instead focus on building durable, grassroots infrastructures that can sustain long-term internationalist struggle.

Al-Sanah's contribution underscores the critical role of Palestinian trade unions in calling for a halt to arms supplies to and from Israel. By disrupting the flow of arms from production sites to shipping ports, Al-Sanah argues, organisers can effectively slow global networks of arms that sustain the genocide. In a similar vein, El-Khazen's analysis of Jordanian truck drivers highlights their strategic position as pivotal actors in anti-normalisation movements. By leveraging their influence within regional logistics, they challenge the economic normalisation of Israel, particularly in the context of the Abraham Accords, thus complicating the narratives that seek to integrate Israel into the region (Dana 2023).

The contributions in this forum critically engage the circuits that sustain militarism and economic dependency, while also identifying their vulnerabilities to disruption, redirection, and subversion. In tracing these entanglements, we aim to move beyond merely documenting violence to illuminating pathways for collective action – towards a world where the disposability of Palestinian life is no longer a given.

Food as a Weapon in Gaza: Survival, Struggle and Strategy

Christian Henderson

In its campaign of genocide and counter-insurgency, Israel's use of food as a means to disrupt and erase life in Gaza has been explicit. The questions asked here are twofold. How will food be used as a future technique of control, and how are Palestinians in Gaza attempting to cope with these famine conditions? I propose that food will be a feature of the future phases of occupation and war in Gaza. The space will be reintegrated into the regional food commodities circuit by the nexus of aid and counter-insurgency operations, ensuring both subordination and profit. Palestinians in Gaza, however, resist. They are struggling to remain sovereign and survive starvation through grass roots charity and organisation. Apparent here is the binary between what Winona LaDuke and Deborah Cowen described as the settler colonial infrastructure of incarceration and death and an 'alimentary infrastructure – infrastructure that is life-giving in its design, finance, and effects' (2020, 245).

The genocidal intent of Israel's strategy in Gaza is manifest in its systematic destruction of the territory's food system since October 7, 2023. Trees, fields, greenhouses, fishing ports, a flour mill, poultry and livestock, bakeries, supermarkets, water treatment facilities have all been attacked. Satellite footage shows that the Israeli army has destroyed around

half of the strip's green land (Hussein and Haddad 2024). Gaza has been pushed into a state of famine, children are dying of starvation, newborn babies face a struggle to survive. This is a humanitarian crisis that is entirely politically constructed. Gaza is a relatively small space, it is surrounded by adequate road, port, and air infrastructure, and is occupied by a country that is food secure. In Gaza 2.2 million people are in extreme hunger, on the other side of the wire, Israelis have access to diverse and cheap food.[6] The destruction of Palestinian food sovereignty has been a long standing objective of the Zionist project. It is an outcome of Israel's settler colonial logic of 'maximum land and minimum Palestinians' (Young 2019). The majority of the Palestinians in Gaza are refugees from previous phases of ethnic cleansing in 1948. Rupture from their trees, fields, and villages that remain within historic Palestine is continual.

The Israeli authorities have consistently used food as a measure of control and governance throughout its 56 years of military occupation of Gaza.[7] Following the start of the blockade in 2007, this became particularly explicit. There were restrictions on the amount of food that could be imported; the Israeli authorities had a system of counting calories that could be imported and some foods were banned outright (Gisha 2012). Access to Israeli markets for agricultural producers was also sporadically stopped as a punitive measure.

Since October 2023, food and hunger has been fully weaponised by the Israeli regime. Aid distribution in Gaza has provided an opportunity for the Israeli military to kill large numbers of Palestinians. Since the start of the year there have been at least six incidents in which people who have assembled at distribution points have been attacked by the Israeli army, resulting in more than 150 dead and 1000s of injuries. The worst was the Flour Massacre which took place on 29 February, 2024 and resulted in 118 fatalities and 700 injuries (Cordall, Mhawish, and Nashed 2024).

Occupation forces have also used the transfer of aid as a means to sow chaos, encourage criminality and undermine the local authorities. The consistent attacks on the police force in Gaza has meant that aid deliveries have descended into unrest and food has been stolen and hoarded. The parachute drops of food, undertaken by the US, Jordan, France, the UAE and other states, have served a similar purpose; their random distribution tends to benefit the strongest and disadvantage the weakest. In doing so they disrupt communities and erode solidarity. According to one Palestinian whose son was killed in a fight over a parachute of food: 'These airdrops not only caused the death of my son, they also caused a lot of trouble and fighting among people as there isn't enough and everyone wants to take what they need. So someone with a gun or a knife will get the aid for himself and leave most people helpless' (Burke and Tantesh 2024)., The dropping of heavy pallets of food on areas in

which much of the population is sheltering in makeshift tents also shows a disregard for safety, and several people have been killed after parachutes have fallen on their shelters.

Basic needs provision is a counter-insurgency tool. With other international partners, Israel's administration of Gaza will endeavour to empower a 'technocratic' civil administration, and bypass Hamas and other groups. The marginalisation of the UN Refugee and Works Agency (UNRWA) is also a part of this objective. The Gaza pier project signalled the contours of this strategy (see, Sharri Polnski's piece in this forum). The $320 million project was largely portrayed as a failure (Reidy, 2024). The scheme experienced engineering failures and broke free of its mooring several times; given the high cost, the efficiency and effectiveness of the project is questionable. However, the project fulfilled other strategic objectives. The focus on the pier in US government communication was used to justify the closure of land borders and the cessation of food deliveries. It provided cover for genocide. According to two Palestinian scholars in Gaza: 'Though ostensibly a short-term humanitarian tool … the pier fits into Israeli plans to sideline its adversaries and deepen alliances, all while offering the US political cover for its continued complicity' (Al-Zurai'i and Al-Hafi 2024, 7).,

How are Palestinians coping with the state of famine that exists in Gaza? The intense level of destruction in Gaza has destroyed normal life. Families have been smashed apart, the economy has collapsed, education and health facilities have been obliterated, and the majority of residential housing has been destroyed. Gaza's food and agriculture production has not only been devastated, but the salaries required to buy food, and the kitchens used to prepare it have also been destroyed. In this void, what has emerged is what Munira Khayyat described as 'resistant ecologies'; forms of survival that allow life in war for those with 'no available exits' (Khayyat 2022, 7)

Based on reports, a type of survival economy has emerged in which people earn money from foraging, exchanging and selling. Cooking gas is now unavailable so people gather and sell wood, paper and plastic to use as fuel. People collect wild food such as birds and edible herbs for subsistence consumption or to sell in markets. Deprived of access to formal school, children often work to assist their families by making some money. In these circumstances, social reproduction of the household is highly time-consuming. Cooking, cleaning and washing all require far more time, if indeed they are possible at all. For example, water must be collected from delivery points which could be far away, and transporting takes time and energy.

Amid this suffering, charity has become an important means to provide food. Soup kitchens rely on charitable donations from abroad, funds that are transferred into Gaza. It's unclear how many of these operations function but each one can feed several hundred families a day. Often they are the only source of warm and cooked food for displaced families. One

example is Gaza Soup Kitchen, which was established by a family from Gaza with help from relatives living in the US. The project raised US $1.4 million on Go Fund Me and has several operations across the territory and on a daily basis feeds around 800 families (Go Fund Me 2024). These operations also perform a social role in other ways, they provide some structure and solidarity amid extreme turmoil. The provision of food is a means to maintain humanity amid deprivation; it is a way to express the principle of 'sumoud' (resilience in Arabic). One chef from Gaza who is displaced, Hamada Sho, has an Instagram clip of him cooking for displaced children. The video ended with the message: 'The Golden Sandwich, made 95% out of aid package contents, 5% with love and resilience' (Instagram 2024).[8]

Like the Nakba of 1948, the consequences of Israel's genocide in Gaza will be felt for generations. Malnutrition and its lifelong effects on physical and cognitive ability will be a part of this legacy. However, the worst effects of the famine can be resolved relatively easily. If the siege were lifted and sufficient aid was allowed to be distributed in Gaza, access to food could be improved quickly. The question is to what extent will Israel and its sponsors use this basic need as a tool to reorder society and curb self-determination?

Subterranean Returns: On Rival Geographies of the Underground

Omar Jabary Salamanca

In 2014, Palestinian theatre writer and director Amir Nizar Zuabi published a short story titled 'The Underground Ghetto City of Gaza'. Written during Israel's twelfth settler war against the besieged territory (Filiu 2014), the text imagines a subterranean world in which Palestinians take refuge from genocidal violence. 'All of Gaza has moved underground', the text begins, 'men, women and children, a great mass of people [. . .] We dug mirror images of the land above that we abandoned [. . .] We, who were attacked from the sky, from the sea, from the fields, who had one-ton bombs dropped on our heads in pointless rounds of killing, have turned our back on life [. . .] Having despaired of the world, of the fear, of the blood, the only refuge left to us was the earth. We buried ourselves alive' (Nizar Zuabi 2014).

In Nizar Zuabi's story, digging layers of time to build a concealed city becomes a monumental act of refusal. The underground features as a way to expose that *zone of interest*, where morality collapses to ease and perpetuate the banality of evil in the concentration camp. It also figures as a place of rebirth where the arduous, honeycomb-like perforation of the land is what eventually leads the world above to collapse so that people can rise to the surface to rebuild their homeland. Going underground, carving deep down in

the earth, this compelling tale announces a fugitive, decolonial and 'subterranean right of return'.

Responding to the forum's prompt, this intervention considers the underground as a critical terrain of disruption from below (Chua 2023). It posits that Palestinian subterranean worlds configure what Edward Said once called a *rival geography* (Said 1978), a concealed yet overt and precarious terrain of anticolonial resistance that messes with and unsettles the colonial ordering of things and the imperial world above ground. This contribution builds on recent scholarship that underlines the importance of the subsurface for decentring and reimagining everyday geopolitics (Squire and Dodds 2020). And it also responds to calls to subtend comparative, and historicised interpretations of spatial relations above and below the surface of the earth, while centring indigenous relations with territory shaped by imperatives of sovereignty, survival, and anti-colonialism (Bosworth 2024; Cohen 2022).

Palestinians are no strangers to subterranean worlds. Perhaps an obvious place to begin is the maze of tunnels that began sprawling beneath Southern Palestine after Israel's colonial occupation in 1967. The first tunnel is often recorded in Gaza city in the early 1970s as part of guerrilla and evasion operations led by Mohammed Mahmoud Al Aswad, aka the Guevara of Gaza, a leading figure of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Haddad 2018). Tunnelling gathered pace after the 1979 Camp David treaty between Israel and Egypt, particularly with the construction of a militarised buffer zone and a cross-border permit regime that tore communities, lands and homes apart along both sides of Palestine's frontier. Families dug tunnels under their homes spanning tens of metres to evade Israeli security forces, to maintain kinship bonds between relatives and friends, and to smuggle food, drugs, gold and weapons. Confronted with a repressive and incarceration regime, Palestinians' intimate knowledge of the soil and relations to the land laid the foundation for new modes of connectivity and future possibilities of liberation (Assali 2021).

Less known is the elaborate underground network which once connected West Beirut with the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra, Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh. Between the late 1970s and 1980s, tunnels served as civilian shelters from Israeli airstrikes, as bunkers for supplies and the leadership, and as pathways to ambush and raid enemy forces beyond the camps. For the camps' engineering committees, which included members of Fatah, the PFLP and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, building and maintaining underground tunnels was as essential as repairing and expanding water and energy infrastructures (Parkinson 2023). Tunnelling efforts were led by Ali Abu Tawq, a key figure in the supply network that supported underground guerrilla cells in Beirut and South Lebanon and who commanded Shatila's and Burj al-Barajneh's defences in the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Abu Tawq, with his experience and

training in tunnelling in the People's Republic of China and Vietnam, also helped construct the notorious earthworks under Beaufort Castle (Giannous 1991). Like Abu Tawq, many cadres and militants in the Palestinian Liberation Organisation partook on the subterranean, anticolonial lessons circulating from Vietnam, Korea and Algeria to Libya, South Africa and the US (Sayigh 1997). In times of revolution, the common winds of the underground travel fast (Scott 2018).

Carving subterranean spaces of resistance however was not just a military affair or a revolutionary duty. It was a profoundly gendered, collective and social practice. Atedal Hassan, a resident of Shatila, reminds us that 'Women supported the resistance by cooking, by baking during times of siege but we also were the main builders of the tunnels under Shatila' (Schuhrke 2023).[9] Having volunteered in tunnel construction with Abu Tawq, Hassan recalls how 'Tunnels were our pride, our creativity, a way to hide, but also a way to fight, a way to be more connected to the soil. Yes, it is not Palestine soil, but it is a reminder that we are fighting to regain Palestine and be embraced by its soil'. The joyful militancy and pride of the underground was also the cement of these *infrastructures of feeling* (Gilmore 2022). As she concludes, 'tunnels were places where we laughed, we lived, we worked together, we built, and we dreamed of building Palestine together when we are back. The tunnels were also a way to give the fingers to our enemies, telling them, we will always have a way to resist'.

With the emergence of Hamas and Hezbollah in the mid-1980s, tunnels grew in sophistication becoming a strategic military asset of anticolonial resistance and a lifeline in times of siege. Whether in Palestine or Lebanon, tunnels are today a major source of settler anxiety. Not just because they pose an effective challenge to the Israeli military-industrial complex and their expert crafted techno-fantasies of absolute control (Al-Bayyari 2024). Underground tunnels fundamentally disrupt that colonial order whereby indigenous geographies are made legible and calculable. One which as Fanon reminds us was fuelled by violent compartmentalisation and exclusion (Fanon 1963). Exhibiting ingenuity and prowess, the use of tunnels by the resistance has effectively changed the balance of power through incremental knowledge and material infrastructures that challenge Israel's air superiority, bending the local geography to their advantage (Abuamer 2024). Precarious as they are, these subterranean worlds effectively unsettle the territorial knowledge through which settler states assert their perceived sovereignty (Slesinger 2018).

The underground however need not be reduced to the realm of tunnels. The subsurface has been a central motif in Palestinian songs, literature, films, material culture as spiritual refuge, a space of evasion and a means to resist and disrupt the imperial dark tunnel that is the ongoing Nakba. As Said argued in Culture and Imperialism, the struggle over geography is not only about soldiers and cannons, but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings (1994). During

the British occupation of Palestine for instance, women developed a wordplay method known as *lmlolaah* to communicate encrypted messages to imprisoned Palestinian freedom fighters through folk songs. Chanted from behind prison walls, love songs like *Tarweedeh Shmaali*, Northern Song, announced a prompt liberation while conveying directions on how to escape (Abulebda 2024). This and other songs recently resurfaced to public consciousness after the escape of six Palestinian political prisoners from Gilboa's high security prison by digging a twenty-two-metre tunnel with a rusty spoon.

Resistance literature has also seen the underground emerge as a highly symbolic space. Novels like Emile Habiby's *The Pessoptimist*, Anton Shammas's *Arabesques*, and Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun*, use the cave as a spatial expression of post-1948 subjectivity and an 'underground homeland' in search for a lost Palestine of the past and the hope for a better future (Levy 2012). Similarly, films like Michel Khleifi's *Ma'loul Celebrates Its Destruction* or Kamal Jafari's *Port of Memory*, invoke the ghosts of the past by remembering and reclaiming Palestinian landscapes of genocidal erasure that continue to haunt the Israeli imagination. Likewise, underground material culture, from intifada pamphlets and communiques to revolutionary posters and journals, has been key in making visible the clandestine work of Palestinian political organisations in their efforts to build anti-imperialist solidarity constellations (Salamanca 2018).

Whether in Karameh, Shatila or Rafah, the underground has been historically central to Palestinian national liberation geographies that collapse space and time, reality and fantasy, theory and praxis. Going underground in a literal and figurative sense becomes a necessity in the face of imperial partition, land dispossession, ethnic cleansing, political persecution, carceral confinement, militarised surveillance, and genocidal war. Across time and space, the opacity of the underground provides cover for modes of sociality at risk, insulating precarious political infrastructures of survival and resistance. In this sense, rival geographies of the underground mean more than a space for evading settler capture or to shelter from imperial violence. They are places from which to build freedom out of accumulated subterranean knowledge, material practices, social histories and solidarity constellations. In becoming one with the land, living like a porcupine and fighting like a flea (Al-Araj 2018), Palestinian subterranean worlds are a lyrical testament to the indomitable spirit of a people bound to their land by the deepest of roots as they tirelessly prepare to break the surface once again.

Temporal Folds and Infrastructural Fixes – Gaza's Floating Pier

Sharri Plonski

In March 2024, the genocide in Gaza hit the 5 months-mark and an already unbearable death-toll inched past 31,000. Yet increasing international calls to

stem an exploding humanitarian crisis sat alongside unfazed commitments to refrain from disrupting Israel's attempts at 'total victory' against a trapped population. This inherent contradiction sparked the most convoluted of missions, in which a US-led international chain of actors committed to orchestrating a humanitarian 'maritime corridor' between Cyprus and Gaza, contingent on the installation of a temporary, floating pier moored to Gaza's beachfront. In this piece, I interrogate the blatant absurdity – and built-in failure – of the pier-project: a makeshift, techno-infrastructural fix for Israel's globally backed, long-term humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. Building on the forum's conceptualisation of 'disruptive geographies', I ask how the pier – whose lifespan constituted a total of 25 working days – participates in (as it sustains and obfuscates) the ongoing project to keep genocide/Israel in motion, and Palestine in stasis – ruptured, alienated and contained.

At the core of my intervention is a set of reflections on infrastructural time (Appel 2018) that stems from the pier's conflicting temporal story: a sudden spectacle, something built fast and from the outset, was never meant to last. Adjustable, (re)moveable and thus innately unstable, the pier was constructed out of a series of 'erector set-like' metal pieces, precariously assembled at sea and then dragged to shore (Ziezulewicz 2024). A technological pageant with little substance (cf. Koch 2019), the corridor doesn't offer much in the way of capacity. When it worked, 150–200 trucks a day could be ferried from Larnaca Port and driven across a 1600-foot gang-plank to a waiting cohort of UN relief workers, tasked with the distribution of their cargo. A cocktail of Cyprus-based logistics firms, EU and UAE funders, US military engineers and soldiers, a private US firm and multiple humanitarian organisations were contracted to make the corridor work, with the entire process overseen by Israel's 'Coordinator of Government Activities in the "Territories"' (COGAT). Like all corridors, the fantasy of flow and flexibility it projects, is hinged to dense infrastructural fixtures, immense political will and an endless chain of actors, to bypass volatile conditions that make the corridor seem necessary in the first place. So much effort for something meant to be rolled up and removed at a moment's notice, allegedly in response to unforeseeable shifts in security, resources and the urgency of human need. A stopgap, just in case.

Throughout the wealth of literature that shapes our thinking about infrastructure, durability is a focal point (Mitchell 2014). In material and affective terms, infrastructure is conceptualised as a forever-styled promise. That promise, tied to economic security, material progress and modern technology, ensures and makes possible 'the future', via the reconfiguration, disruption and displacement of spatial and social relations in the present. Cowen (2020), Chua (2023), Appel (2018) and Mitchell (2014), among others, all point to the increasing fetishisation of mega-infrastructure projects, as antidotes to the turbulence of financial markets and the inevitable uncertainties and instabilities they generate. Although, in a sense, this is nothing new, as large-scale

infrastructure projects have always been lightning rods for financial investment, and long-term asset security (Cowen 2020; Karuka 2019; Mitchell 2014). State-backed, secured and insured, these permanent and immovable sites promise long-term, protected yields and alternative revenue streams for investors; in essence offering an 'anticipatory' stake in a concrete, secure future (Chua 2023, 44). Thus, the temporariness of the pier in Gaza, speaks volumes.

First, it conceptualises the long-term containment, bombardment and destruction of lifeworlds in Gaza as somehow temporary, and even sudden. Deemed an emergency that began in October 2023, a quick fix is all that is needed until it ends (always imminent, just moments away). The ocean corridor is just such an intervention. One that is meant to conceal – and coalesce with – a much longer history of genocidal violence: To make 20 years of siege, 57 years of occupation, 76 years of expulsion, conquest and rupture disappear. Hamas' breach of the border-fences in October brought these layers of past and present containment into view. Israel has since sought to reseal this longer history, as it severs humanitarian access from all corners of Gaza. A temporary crisis, with the perfect temporary solution: a 'floating pier', 'a platform', 'a jetty', 'a ramp' – carefully labelled anything but a port, as words are a sensitive thing. A port might gesture towards the long-term, contradicting the intrinsic ephemerality of the humanitarian band-aid on offer and disrupting Israel's much more solid vision for Gaza (and Palestine more generally).

The temporal fold bundled into the pier also obfuscates the permanency and long-term damage of the genocide. In addition to the murder of tens of thousands of people, Israel has orchestrated the near-complete devastation of the coastal strip's economic, infrastructural and environmental landscape. Layers of rubble and debris constitute what is left of a previously dense, urban architecture. As Christian Henderson argues in his intervention in this forum, barren fields, overflowing sewage systems and poisoned air and water have made the future of farming, food security and the capacity to feed and thus sustain life impossible (Hussein and Haddad 2024). Mass graves, rampant disease, tent-cities, a starving population: It will take decades and billions of dollars to rehabilitate the Strip, to make it viable. The act of ruination, the damage – and the estimated 39 million tonnes of debris it had produced by July 2024 - *is* durable (Stoler 2008; UNEP 2024).

And so temporary fixes, like a floating port, are made to anticipate a non-future, in which Gazan infrastructure – and Gazan life – is also 'floating'. Unfixed and unrooted, Gaza and Gazans become removeable and replaceable. In their wake, another future can be imagined and made; one much more suited to fantasies of regional accumulation and circulation. A vision already on display via the 'From Crisis to Prosperity Plan' aka 'the Gaza 2035' transformation plan, released by Israel's Prime Minister's Office last May

(2024). The plan describes a four-staged programme in which first Hamas is dismantled, then humanitarian aid is channelled in, followed by a 'rebuilding' phase, in which 'modern cities' will emerge from the rubble and high-speed trains will connect a newly formed industrial hub to Saudi Arabia's Neom (Ravenscroft 2024). And finally – eventually, 1 day – there is the promise of self-governance, the light at the end of the tunnel. The plan is complete with an AI rendering of what this future looks like. While the fantasy is blatant in the CGI-generated, sci-fi spectacle being circulated, its material implications are certain: they are dreaming Gaza's future without Palestinians, while Israel's forever war on Palestine prepares the terrain in the present.

But let's be clear: This vision does not solely belong to Israel. Seeing past the 1000+ US soldier-engineers or the 320-million-dollar price tag – or even the more recent public spectacle of Donald Trump's Riviera Real Estate project for Gaza – an assemblage of international actors came together to hide their hand in technocratic solutions that centre Israeli security interests. An approach confirmed in the joint statement by the EU, Cyprus, UAE, the US and UK endorsing the maritime initiative in March (2024), and the financial, material, political and operational coordination and commitment that followed. As Rafeef Ziadah points out in the introduction to this forum: Genocide is a global enterprise.

This becomes more explicit as the supposedly temporary corridor has been sutured to wider humanitarian-militarist cartographies working to accumulate and circulate power, security, aid and commerce in the region (cf. Ziadah 2019). For a more precise window, we need only to follow the infrastructural breadcrumbs to an obscure (and opaque) private humanitarian security firm called Fogbow. The operational brainchild and curator of the pier project – which it called 'Blue Beach' – Fogbow (the 'ghost rainbow') is helmed by a parade of American high profile ex-military, ex-intelligence and ex-diplomatic officers with deep financial interests in the region. By multiple accounts – including by Cameron Hume, the executive director of Fogbow's funding arm, the 'Maritime Humanitarian Aid Foundation' – the project acts as a prospectus for the more financially viable and anticipatory possibilities of the re-construction and supply chain 'game' in Gaza (CSIS 2024).

The groundwork has already been laid. While the pier was still functioning, Fogbow organised multiple aid deliveries via the sea-route. At the same time, it was already promoting the construction of a new and improved removable pier to replace the now-defunct version; one seemingly more fit for purpose, amidst rough seas and ongoing governance disruptions (what we could call 'Blue Beach 2.0'). They claimed to be coordinating this with a long-line of UN agencies, government bodies, 'crowd management experts' and with financial backing from private sources as well as the UAE government; all with 'a green light from COGAT' (Le Masurier and Leimbach 2024). They were also allegedly in talks with Bashar al-Masri, the Palestinian billionaire and founding

investor of Rawabi in the West Bank, as well as financier of the Gaza Industrial Estate, (which sits alongside the original site of the pier) to take charge of storage and distribution of aid (*ibid*). Fogbow – and those who back them – clearly had and have their sights on a more durable future than an interim floating dock.

The temporary pier ultimately was exactly that: temporary. A fix that was easily washed away by rough seas and bad weather, it broke a part within weeks of its initial installation and after several failed attempts at repair, permanently dismantled in July (2024). But its durability continues, with the ever-present infrastructural vision that under-writes it: Gaza contained in temporal suspension, while other corridors secure the permanent flow of weapons, funding and supplies into Israel; all of which is promised over and over again, within days of global condemnation and horror at yet another school being bombed, another 100 or even 1000 people killed. The implications of which is a material, infrastructural futurity in which Israel is built for connection, and Palestine for disruption.

What was Internationalism?

Charmaine Chua

A transnational mass movement against Israel's genocide in Palestine has brought a renewed anti-war internationalism to the forefront of global politics. Though this revival of internationalism in the United States and other countries of the imperial core arose in response to ongoing state-sponsored support for Israeli violence, it also reflects a longer history in which the United States' bellicose foreign policy has developed hand in hand with domestic austerity politics over the last half century. Over the long run, the US state has laid bare that its priorities are driven not by the interests of working people, but by the pursuit of capital accumulation and military intervention to support those corporate interests, exacerbating inequalities both at home and abroad (Rana 2022). Even though Israel's genocide has compelled many to break from the liberal illusion of the United States as benevolent city upon a hill, what we mean by anti-imperial internationalism and how movements in the United States can effectively intervene are still open questions. This is no surprise; the last half century of US counterinsurgency has denuded the political and social bases of working-class power. While the most prominent tactics of internationalist action have been grounded in mass mobilisation models that seek infrastructural disruption at various 'chokepoints' of institutional power (from commencement lawns to congressional sit-ins), such public disruptions have struggled to translate powerful mass action into material gains (Gopalan 2024). Shifting from students and the streets to another centre of collective power – the labour movement – reveals an opposite conundrum. Although in

principle, withdrawals of arms factory, logistics, and dockside labour have the potential to shut the infrastructures of US empire at core sites of military and commercial flows, with some exceptions (National Labor Network for Ceasefire 2024; Walicek 2024), the US labour movement has largely separated domestic bread-and-butter issues from issues of concern over foreign war, and has a long history of support for Israel (Schuhrke 2023). How should movements for Palestinian liberation seek to deepen an internationalist infrastructure of solidarity with Palestine and its people, given the impasses associated with articulating the material interests of working class people in the contemporary US empire with broader concerns for global justice? Looking to the histories of anti-imperial working-class internationalism for lessons on rooting internationalism in material forms, I offer three key lessons.

First, cross-border solidarity movements have historically grounded their horizons of internationalism in material terms. In its longer history, internationalism was not simply an idea, analytical framework or structure of feeling, but a material praxis of solidarity. Popular imaginations of globalism began to emerge in the nineteenth century as migratory labour – from European mass migration to Asian indenture – increased with the invention of the steamship, making transoceanic connections and their international imaginaries a part of daily life in new industrial cities and plantations (Denning 2007). Active from 1864 to 1876, the First International, (otherwise known as the International Workingmen's Association) was founded to help the circulation and protection of their members as the geographical expansion of trade networks led to the cross-border employment of workers (Dogliani 2017). As proletarian struggle gathered force in the industrial capitals of Europe in the nineteenth century, anticolonial struggles toppled colonial economies, from slave uprisings across the Caribbean inspired by the Haitian revolution, to revolutions against the Spanish empire across Latin America (Carr 2012; Dalleo 2016), and Europe's 'proliferating encounters' with these assertions of subjectivity became cause for what Paul Gilroy has called a 'reciprocal humanism' (Gilroy 2017). Later, as Omar Jabary Salamanca notes in his contribution to this forum, when traditions of radical and revolutionary internationalism connected the dots of global struggles for freedom across the Third World, militants in the Palestinian Liberation Organization drew from the "subterranean, anticolonial lessons of Vietnam, Algeria, South Africa, and beyond (Salamanca, in this forum). Labor and anti-colonial internationalisms thus drew together internationalist consciousness with durable organisational forms, dovetailing the material demands of working class peoples with the changing shape of the nineteenth century economy and geopolitics.

Such histories of internationalism suggest that if as Heatherton (2021) has argued, 'the internationalization of capital produced a broad internationalist *consciousness* opposing linked forms of accumulation' (299, emphasis mine), it

also went beyond a shared sensibility. While the growth of internationalism required an expansion of the *imagination* of long-distance solidarity, new spaces of accumulation also produced new material needs, to which the organisation of cross-border working class institutions were a response. In this sense, effective internationalism drew on the reality of linked fates and needs. The wartime speed-up of production during the Korean War, for example, 'witnessed more strikes and strikers than any other comparable . . . time in American history' as workers grew concerned about rising injury rates (Preis in Zieger 1995, 295). During the Vietnam war, the Union of Concerned Scientists at MIT staged work stoppages protesting the use of science to deploy napalm and biological agents in Vietnam (King and Bernstein 2019). Likewise, University of California researchers are organising to divest from Department of Defense funding, pointing to how universities' ties to the military industrial complex shape workers' control over the fruits of their knowledge production (Kain and Sharif 2024). Such projects link into internationalist concerns by grounding them in material demands, demonstrating that fighting for themselves and fighting for others can be mutually reinforcing projects. Even as US and Israeli state and capital stitch together their 'global circuits of complicity' (Ziadah, in this forum), these histories remind us that infrastructures of anti-colonial and working-class internationalism are grounded beyond consciousness or sensibility towards material interventions as praxes of solidarity.

Second, although many popular mobilisations for Palestine have begun to target flows of capital and arms to Israel through arms factory, port, and energy blockades (Corry and Rose 2025), internationalist solidarity movements demonstrate that prioritising durable organisational infrastructure over episodic disruption is key to successful action. As Laleh Khalili (2021, 178) argues, strikes and workplace actions at docks on the Arabian Peninsula were distinguished by their 'weaving of . . . workplace protests into political demands'. Across the 1960s and 70s, dockworker demonstrations across the region placed the continued dispossession of Palestinians at the centre of their strikes (Khalili 2020, 180). Khalili argues that although casualisation makes durable protest in the Arabian peninsula challenging, successful strike actions at such ports relied on 'long lasting organizations' through which workers were able to sustain disruptions over the long run (Khalili, 2020; 188). Other examples of successful port boycotts draw similar conclusions about the links between durability and effective internationalism (Cole 2018).

Likewise, although the 2014 Block the Boat campaign against Israeli Zim shipping is often cited as a successful example of internationalist disruption, it is often overlooked that there were important variations in their success across different sites of struggle in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. This owed to the extent to which community activists were able to build solidarities with dockworkers in their city. The success of San Francisco's Block the Boat actions resulted not only from the presence of a large pro-Palestine

community in the bay area, but also because the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) placed a priority on building sustained relationships with ILWU Local 10 union members in Oakland (Arria 2021). Bridge builders – union members willing to mediate between their fellow workers and community organisations, and who are politically aligned against Zionism or American militarism – played crucial roles in the success of these blockades (Workers in Palestine 2023b). Because such pickets effectively ask workers to walk off the job and sacrifice their wages for their shift, durable efforts to build relationships of solidarity between unions and community are crucial. As Peter Olney, retired organising director of the ILWU noted, resentments can quickly crop up if longshore workers feel they are being 'used as an instrument rather than approached as allies' (Wong 2014). As Lara Kiswani, Executive Director of AROC likewise notes, 'we cannot really build a movement against all forms of oppression by discounting the struggle of workers' (Salehi 2014). In this way, the associational power of community organising cannot do without building the structural power of the shopfloor.

Finally, internationalist movements must centre Palestinians as the agents of their own liberation. Despite intending a politics of solidarity, internationalist movements in the United States and Europe can tend to portray Palestinians as suffering subjects rather than as workers, or collective actors with explicit strategies and theories of resistance (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2008, Tabar 2016). This absence of agency obscures histories of resistance led by Palestinian workers, from the mass mobilisation of Palestinian workers that led to a general strike during the first Intifada of 1987–1993; to the Palestinian doctors, truck drivers and civil defence workers who have persisted in rendering aid under bombs. Recentering histories of Palestinian agency also illuminates how the Israeli state has endeavoured to destroy the structural power of Palestinian workers. As Adam Hanieh (2002) has argued, during the first Intifada, more than 50 percent of the Palestinian workforce worked in Israel, giving them enough structural power to make their absenteeism 'traumatic' for the Israeli economy. In its aftermath, Israel began to reduce its dependence on Palestinian labour by substituting them with foreign migrant workers. By the second Intifada in 2000, only 20 percent of the Palestinian labour force worked in Israeli settlements (Hanieh 2002). These efforts had profound effect on political strategy in the second intifada: As Hanieh (2002), n.p.) argues, turning super-exploited labour into absolute surplus populations transformed 'the concept of strikes or other labor actions' into 'nonexistent categories, as strikes no longer had any real effect on the Israeli economy and only hurt Palestinian workers and their families'.

If the Israeli government and its allies have sought to decimate Palestinian labour because the structural power it held was so threatening to Israel's economy (Farsakh 2016); US and European internationalist movements might consider not relinquishing our own capacity to build

the durable organisational forms taken away from the Palestinian resistance. As Vincent Bevins has argued in *If We Burn* (2023), mass mobilisations are most successful when they build organisational infrastructures that can sustain long-term movements and provide strategic leverage points for intervention into the structures of imperial power. If incapacitating and demobilising the possibilities for a grounded mass struggle is a core objective of Israeli counterinsurgency, movements in the imperial core should not aim to repeat the forms in which Israel has so successfully dissipated the momentum of Palestinian resistance. With the need for strategic clarity in the long struggle for Palestinian liberation, it is more crucial than ever that we refine our understandings of what internationalism is, align material leverage with cross-border solidarities, and seek to build the durable forms of organisation large and strong enough to break the imperial circuits whose funding and weapons lubricate Israel's deathly war machine.

Disrupting the Arms Trade: A Palestinian Picket Line

Riya Al'Sanah

On 16 October 2023, the Palestinian labour movement called on their peers internationally to 'Stop Arming Israel'. Nineteen trade unions and worker associations from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, urged trade unionists and community organisers to engage in acts of 'disruption' to restrain Israel's war machine and resist Western states' unwavering support for Israel's genocide. Specifically, they urged workers in key positions within arms supply chains to refuse to build, transport, or handle weapons for Israel, and called for an end to military-linked research and funding (Workers in Palestine [WiP]).

With this call, Palestinian workers aimed to channel the mass street protests into strategic workplace organising, articulating concrete demands with direct material and geopolitical impact. In doing so, they challenged the tendency to engage Palestinians as a singular, homogeneous subject of struggle. Instead, organisers were urged to pay close attention to the specific conditions and organising efforts of Palestinian workers – those who labour to sustain life and protect their communities on the ground. This required recognising how their struggles are shaped by intersecting forces of settler colonialism, economic exploitation, fossil capitalism that upholds and intensifies these dynamics (Hanieh 2024).

In doing so, they aimed to steer activist energies beyond the narrow political demand for a ceasefire that had largely defined the solidarity movement up to that point. By highlighting the connection between Israel's genocide and global military supply chains, the call to 'Stop Arming Israel' positioned Palestinian workers within a broader landscape of transnational labour struggle. It opened space for building class-based, internationalist solidarities

grounded in shared material interests and the collective refusal to sustain structures of militarised oppression.

Below, I explore how the recent wave of rank-and-file trade union actions in response to this call has created space to imagine new forms of international solidarity rooted in worker-to-worker connections. I also examine how the effectiveness of these actions is closely tied to broader efforts to revitalise the labour movement. These reflections are based on experiences organising as part of Workers in Palestine (WiP) – a collective of Palestinian trade unionists and international supporters who have been mobilising around the Palestinian workers' call, grounded in the principles of rank-and-file, worker-to-worker solidarity.

A Palestinian Picket Line

The call to ground effective solidarity specifically in disrupting the arms supply chain emanated from Israel's fortified integration and reliance on global arms circuits. Historically, Western powers have invested heavily in bolstering Israel's military capabilities, through a lethal cocktail of diplomatic shielding, financial support, military collaborations and the direct supply of weaponry. This patronage is inextricably linked to Israel's role in protecting Western imperial interests in the oil-rich region (Hanieh 2024). Such collaborations are foundational to Israel's capacity to entrench its almost eight decades-long settler-colonial regime and sustain the ferocity of its current genocidal expression in Gaza.

Specifically, Israel has long been the recipient of lucrative military aid packages from the American government which has enshrined in law that it must maintain Israel's 'qualitative military edge' in the region (Congressional Research Service 2023, 2). Under the current trade agreement, valid from 2019 to 2028, the US will supply Israel with military aid worth $3.8 billion annually. Since October, the US allocated an additional $14.5 billion in military aid to Israel and granted it access to its military stockpile held in Israel (Klippentein 2023; Singh 2024).

The focus on the US, as Israel's largest military supplier (providing 69 per cent of its military imports between 2019 and 2023) and paramount imperial force in the region, is cogent (Sipri 2024). However, the perpetrators of Israel's annihilation campaign in Gaza are multiple (WiP 2023c). For example, Germany, Israel's second-largest supplier of major conventional weapons has expedited and expanded arms transfers to Israel since October 2023 (Forensis 2024). Similarly, despite the British government's announcement of the suspension of 30 arms export licences to Israel, these don't include licences relating to the F-35 fighter jet programme, 15 per cent of which are produced in the U.K (Campaign Against Arms Trade 2024). Similarly, the flow of weaponry, military components and expertise,

ammunition and services from multinational corporations based in the UK, France, Italy, Canada, Australia, Finland, Netherlands, Denmark, India and South Africa continues uninterrupted (WiP 2023c).

Israel's entanglement in global supply chains facilitates its position as a central pillar in global militarism, accounting for 3.1% of the international arms exports between 2020 and 2024 (Sipri 2025). This cultivated position is predicated on Palestinian subjugation, dispossession and ethnic cleansing, where captive Palestinians, the ecology and landscape serve as a testing ground and a marketing opportunity for Israel's Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) (Abdelnour 2023; Dana 2024; Leila 2024). Israeli capital's monetisation of the destruction of Palestinian life and life-sustaining infrastructure in Gaza is evident. In the first three-quarters of 2024, Israel's three major military companies – Elbit Systems, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries – responsible for 70% of the country's arms exports, saw a 25% increase in orders (Lieber 2025).

Palestinian Liberation is Union Business

The call put forward by Palestinian workers has already had an effect, with workers across multiple sectors organising powerful disruptions to Israel's supply chains in 2024. Dockworkers in Sweden, Barcelona, Italy and others engaged in work stoppages, called for a halt to the arms trade with Israel and in many cases blocked the movement of cargo onto Israeli-operated ships (Ziadah and Fox-Hodess 2023a). Likewise in Belgium and the UK, where aerospace, airport and shipping sector workers are refusing to handle arms destined for Israel or instilling new union policies to protect members refusing to work on Israeli-linked arms assembly lines (United Broad Left 2024; WiP 2023f). Significantly, in the United States, cross-sectoral rank-and-file organizing pressured seven national unions representing 6 million workers to affiliate with The National Labour Network for Ceasefire (NLNC) and call for 'immediately halt all military aid to Israel' (Leon 2024). While the Networks' initial demand centred around a call for a ceasefire, it expanded to incorporate the call to 'Stop Arming Israel' following a WiP coordinated meeting with Palestinian trade union representatives (NLNC 2024). Recently, CGT members at an STMicroelectronics factory in France engaged in a work stoppage against the company's provision of chips and semiconductors for the Israeli military (Stop Arming Israel France 2025).

Such actions show the potential of workers' solidarity against state intransigence. But their limited scale thus far reveals the 'gap between the unions we need and the ones we have' (Allinson 2022, 15). Since the defeats of the 1980s and 1990s, the international labour movement has been progressively immobilised and weakened by aggressive anti-labour and trade union laws and undemocratic union structures that deny a real voice to their members

(Scipes 2016). It has also been constrained by the hegemony of business trade unionism – which confines union struggles to so-called bread and butter issues and providing basic services to members. This has generally sidelined international solidarity as a core feature of trade union organising. Confronting these structural challenges, especially amidst ongoing genocide, is a difficult task. However, new organising efforts around Palestine are helping to revitalise unions and build stronger worker connections and engagement.

Palestine solidarity labour organising over the past two decades has been largely leadership-focused, centred around delegations, report writing, symbolic initiatives that give small funds to Palestinian unions, and non-actionable solidarity statements. Yet, increasingly, unions mobilised to end their pension investments and/or partnerships with companies complicit in Israel's crimes, or collaborated with community organisers to block Israeli ships from docking at a variety of international ports (Nastovski 2014). These actions did indeed mark a shift from symbolic gestures towards worker-led and transformative solidarity models. However, critical as these disruptions were, they often involved a small number of trade unionists and were called during specific moments of Israel's military attacks on Gaza (Ziadah and Fox-Hodess 2023b).

Rooting Disruptions in Workplaces

Given these opportunities and challenges, what new geographies of solidarity and disruption are emerging? How are organisers moving beyond temporary actions during moments of crisis to build lasting, transformative solidarity with Palestine?

Disrupting Israel's arms trade is paramount for sustaining Palestinian lives in the present and the future. Ultimately, however, Palestinian liberation depends on dismantling all structures which bolster Israel's settler-colonial regime at local, regional, and international levels. Thus, a grounded approach to labour organising must operate across multiple scales – ranging from workplaces to union structures – to build enduring solidarity that is deeply rooted in the everyday realities of Palestinian workers. The WiP call is grounded in a strategy of developing rank-and-file-driven, worker-to-worker solidarity practices.

But this work is neither straightforward nor free of contradictions. Building solidarity is not a natural or inevitable process, especially when the material interests of workers can appear misaligned. Many workers in arms-producing sectors are structurally positioned within economies that frame militarisation as a source of employment and national security. As a result, calls to disrupt military supply chains, even in the name of justice, can be met with resistance from union leaderships and rank-and-file members alike, particularly when alternative livelihoods are not visible or guaranteed. The organising logic of

bread-and-butter trade unionism – often tethered to racalised and nationlist frameworks – is easily aligned with state-driven military investment, particularly in arms production sectors. This presents a serious challenge for those attempting to build internationalist solidarity from below. While international calls to dismantle the global military-industrial complex highlight the need for demilitarisation, union bureaucracies in many contexts have welcomed rising defence budgets as guarantees of domestic job security in the face of austerity and industrial decline (Graham 2025). Governments, particularly in the Global North, have actively sold war economies to their populations not only through appeals to national security but also by positioning arms production as a pillar of employment and economic regeneration. In this environment, acts of labour refusal or anti-war organising can be cast as threats to workers' livelihoods, a framing that reveals the entrenched contradictions facing union members who may materially benefit from the very industries sustaining global imperial violence.

Workers in arms-producing industries are not inherently predisposed to recognise or connect with those on the receiving end of military violence, a connection that must be politically and materially built. As Rogaly (2024) demonstrates, the promise of stable employment in defence industries often masks long-term patterns of job loss, casualisation, and the transfer of value to multinational shareholders, rather than to workers themselves. Bridging this divide requires a deliberate political project: one that raises consciousness about the uneven and racialised geographies of war production, and insists that true job security cannot be built on the foundations of permanent war. It is within this contested terrain that worker-to-worker solidarity initiatives, such as those responding to the Palestinian trade union call, are beginning to forge new spaces of collective struggle that challenge both nationalist business unionism and the militarised status quo.

The political project of worker-to-worker solidarity must therefore grapple with these tensions head-on: not only by exposing how war economies benefit capital far more than workers, but also by fostering sustained political education and organizing that connects workers' struggles. It is through this difficult work that solidarity can be meaningfully built, not as a symbolic gesture, but as a transformative practice rooted in shared opposition to exploitation, dispossession, and racialised violence. This requires building from the ground up by establishing active networks of workers and trade unionists rooted in workplaces. For example, in the higher education sector, where military companies are 'incentivised to farm expertise and talent', unionised workers can 'intervene at the very beginning of the military supply chain' (Kain and Sharif 2024). Heeding the call from Palestine, UAW 4811 graduate workers at the University of California (UC), organised to disrupt this node in the military supply chain. Through one-on-one and small group conversations with colleagues in military-linked labs, along with education through public

statements, a network of informed and mobilised workers emerged (Kain and Sharif 2024). Such networks were a force mobilising for strike action following the prohibition of pro-Palestine speech and the university management-sanctioned police crackdown on student encampments demanding universities divest from the arms industry. This strike put disruption in the form of work stoppage at the centre of Palestine solidarity organising.

Such campaigns across multiple workplaces can become a platform for developing workers' capacities, consciousness, and confidence in taking solidarity action with Palestine and beyond. As Nastovski astutely observed (Nastovski 2021, 119), international solidarity organising 'can transform the workers involved', regardless of the immediate outcomes of a specific action. Building this solidarity is a gradual, difficult task however, that demands sustained engagement. It's about embedding internationalism within the fabric of everyday organising. As labour faces continued challenges in the form of austerity, casualisation, and anti-union policies, the work of building solidarity through contradiction becomes an essential strategy for revitalising the labour movement itself – one that can connect struggles across sectors, borders, and industries.

Truck Drivers at a Crossroads: On the Relevance of Trucking Communities to Regional and Global Anti-Normalization Movements

Elia El-Khazen

The Houthi-imposed sea blockade and Israel's unfolding genocide have led top global shipping companies like MSC, CMA CGM, Maersk, and Hapag-Lloyd, as well as BP, to temporarily suspend routes through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal (Jones 2024; Reuters 2024). In response, land-based logistics through Jordan have intensified. An alternative land route, although not acknowledged officially, helps to connect Gulf ports to 'Israel' via Jordan, positioning truck drivers as central actors in the region's (counter-) logistics infrastructures and potentially reshaping disruptive geographies.

As Chua and Bosworth (2023) note, blockades differ from strikes by targeting circulatory rather than production infrastructures. However, they caution against seeing blockades as inherently progressive, citing examples like the right-wing 'Freedom Convoy' (Sky News 2022). Instead, blockades should be seen as collective actions aimed at building power. Similarly, Sasha Davis argues that blockades can reshape political and social processes, not just disrupt logistics (Ersan 2024). Nowak (2022) highlights the need to understand the political and economic leverage of transport workers by embedding their struggles within long-term strategies and material constraints.

This intervention contributes to the forum's broader concern with how infrastructures have simultaneously fragmented the Palestinian landscape, but

also reassembled the Middle East through projects of economic integration and normalisation, such as the recent Abraham Accords (Dana 2023) and previous agreements between Israel, Egypt and Jordan. While much of this normalisation has been mediated through US sponsored high-level diplomatic and economic agreements, its implementation depends on logistical actors like truck drivers, who serve as the connective tissue of these regional infrastructures. By focusing on Jordanian truckers, positioned at the intersection of trade routes and everyday forms of labour precarity, this essay examines how global and regional circuits of normalisation are materially facilitated and how they may also become sites of friction, contestation and ultimately disruption. In doing so, it foregrounds the importance of situating logistical labour within broader geopolitical configurations, asking what kinds of political openings emerge when infrastructure becomes both a mechanism of imperial control and a terrain of resistance.

This intervention builds on Alberto Toscano's (2014) question about the political spaces coalescing around blockades as a form of contemporary struggle, asking whether the emerging anti-normalisation fervour in Jordan will inspire truck drivers to challenge their complicity in facilitating the 'just-in-time genocide' that supports Israeli colonialism. Normalisation, in this context, refers to the process by which political, economic, and social relations between Jordan and Israel are gradually normalised, legitimising Israel's colonial practices and effectively entrenching them into regional logistics and infrastructure.

The Alternative Land-Bridge

As a frontline state, Jordan has played a critical role in the 'alternative' logistical routes bypassing the Houthi blockade in the Red Sea. In December 2023, Israeli transportation company Trucknet Enterprise, in collaboration with Emirati-based Puretrans FZCO and DP World, established an 'alternative overland trade route' facilitating the transfer of goods from the Persian Gulf ports through Saudi Arabia and Jordan to Israel, circumventing disruptions along the Red Sea corridor. Hanan Fridman, Trucknet's founder, emphasised the importance of the Arab countries' cooperation in establishing this route (Wrobel 2023). Jordan has three border crossings with Israel: the King Hussein/Allenby Bridge, the Sheikh Hussein crossing, and the Wadi Araba/Yitzhak Rabin crossing. All have seen increased truck-based transportation, while port-based circulation in Aqaba and Eilat has declined. The land bridge continues a long history of normalisation between Israeli settler-colonialism and Arab authoritarianism as mutually supportive pillars in the region (Dana 2023).

Jordan has denied claims of opening a land bridge, with Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh insisting that transportation

arrangements remain unchanged for over 25 years (Junaidi 2024). However, freelance Palestinian-Jordanian journalist Hiba Abu Taha was arrested under Jordan's Cybercrimes Law for exposing the government's role in facilitating increased trade with Israel. Her investigative report revealed Jordanian companies' involvement in the transport of goods like food, clothing, cement, and marble to Israel. Anti-normalisation activists have protested, demanding that the Jordanian government open a humanitarian corridor to Gaza instead (Ersan 2024).

Truck Drivers and Anti-Normalisation

Jordan's truck drivers have become indispensable to the functioning of the alternative land bridge. Despite the strategic nature of their work, truck drivers have a history of mobilisation (Davis 2022), which could position them at the forefront of anti-normalisation struggles.

Jordan's logistical sector has nearly 20,000 trucks, 78% of which are privately owned (Jordan Times 2022a). In 2011, driven by the Arab uprisings and escalating labour protests, truck drivers in Aqaba went on strike to protest price hikes. This led to the formation of independent unions, breaking away from the state-affiliated General Federation of Jordan Trade Unions, and fostering solidarity with other workers. In 2018, container truck drivers struck again over disputes regarding cargo control, while in 2022, truck drivers launched a 17-day strike in response to a dramatic fuel price increase. The strike spread across the country, leading to widespread solidarity, but was ultimately crushed by the government and the General Federation of Jordan Trade Unions (Arab Weekly 2022; Jordan Times 2018; Kuttab 2022).

In 2011, buoyed by the Arab uprisings and the dramatic escalation of labour protests that year (Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics Studies 2011), several truck drivers in the Aqaba port went on strike and obstructed the offload of cargo ships in protest over draconian price fixes by the new Aqaba Port. This led to the formation of five independent trade unions – the Independent Trade Union for workers in Phosphate, workers in the Jordanian Electricity Company, workers in Printing Press, workers in Municipalities, and workers in Agriculture – and the initiation of a primordial milestone in breaking with the monopoly of the state-affiliated General Federation of Jordan Trade Unions. This important development was later extended to the Independent Trade Union of Public Transportation Drivers. This was a crucial catalyser of the next round of truck drivers strikes, in 2018, when container truck drivers paralysed Aqaba Port over 'the need to control and regulate the transport of individual container trucks, find solutions to loading quantity and restrict cargo companies from interfering with individual container trucks' businesses' (Jordan Times 2018).

This came to a head/watershed in 2022, when truck drivers, along with other independent transport unions, launched partial work stoppages and sit-ins in Jordan's impoverished southern provinces to demand that the government reduce fuel prices (Al Khalidi 2022). Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, the Jordanian regime steadily raised the price of both diesel fuel and kerosene. IMF-sponsored inflation meant that one litre of diesel almost doubled overnight in January 2022 from about 70 cents to $1.26 (Jordan Times 2022b). This double razor price increase exacerbated truck drivers' diminishing conditions, both at home and at work. The ensuing 17 day strike led to an unprecedented congestion in the port of Aqaba and pushed the country to the brink of civil disobedience (Arab Weekly 2022). The strike and the callousness of the Jordanian government also garnered sporadic strikes by bus, taxi and rideshare drivers in several provinces and prompted shops in the cities of Maan, Tafila and Karak to announce the closure of their businesses in solidarity (Kuttab 2022). Although truck drivers eventually lifted the strike due to the overwhelming repression by the Jordanian regime and the betrayal of the state-affiliated General Federation of Jordan Trade Unions, the potential for disruption from below by these strategic workers remains. The truck drivers' strike spread across the country and incited sporadic forms of solidarity in selected provinces. That said, its demands remained narrow, and were ultimately contained by a counter-revolution from above.

Despite the repression, truck drivers' potential for disruption remains. The alliance between settler-colonialism and Arab authoritarianism has increasingly affected truck drivers' lives. As images of violence in Gaza have mounted, some drivers have expressed growing awareness of their role in imperial logistics. This was exemplified by Maher Jazi, a Jordanian truck driver who, on September 9, 2024, killed three Israeli guards at the Jordan-West Bank border crossing. This incident underscores the increasing realisation among truck drivers of their role in enabling the ongoing genocide.

The experiences of truck driver strikes (Arcilla 2022; Savitzky and Cidell 2022) show that, by embracing their labour power, drivers can transcend narrow economic demands. They can challenge the ongoing genocide in Gaza and disrupt the normalisation of trade routes through Jordan, leveraging their strategic position to fight against 'just-in-time genocide'.

Notes

1. In January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a preliminary ruling in the case brought by South Africa, finding that Israel's actions could plausibly violate the Genocide Convention. See for full ruling https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203454.
2. The settler colonial paradigm in Palestine studies conceptualises the Israeli state as a project of territorial expansion and settlement that aims to assert permanent control over land while targeting the entirety of the Palestinian people – in the West Bank and

Gaza, those inside its borders who hold Israeli citizenship, and refugees in exile. For an overview, see Barakat (2018), Englert (2022), and special issue edited by Salamanca et al. (2012) in *Settler Colonial Studies*.

3. The Allon Plan, put forward by Israel's Labor Party minister Yigal Allon shortly after the 1967 war, laid the groundwork for a policy of de facto annexation and settlement expansion. It proposed Israeli control over roughly one-third of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and areas surrounding East Jerusalem, while relegating the remainder to a limited Palestinian 'entity'. The plan aimed to fragment Palestinian territorial contiguity through a network of settlements and roads, encircle Palestinian population centres and secure Israeli dominance over strategic highlands and borders.
4. The division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C stems from Oslo process arrangements. Area A includes urban Palestinian areas where the Palestinian Authority (PA) oversees civil affairs and policing. In Area B the PA handles civilian matters, but security is shared with Israel. Area C, which constitutes the largest portion of the West Bank, remains under full Israeli authority, including over planning, construction, and security.
5. For more information on the arms trade with Israel and the corporate connections noted in this paragraph, see: Who Profits details on corporate complicity in Israel's military-industrial complex at https://www.whoprofits.org. and Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT): Research on arms exports to Israel and complicity of weapons manufacturers https://caat.org.uk/facts-and-figures/israel.
6. Israel's level of food security ranks 24 out 113 countries in the Global Food Security Index 2022.
7. For more on the history of how the Israeli occupation has used food and agriculture as a means to control the Palestinian population please see (Gordon and Haddad 2024; Graham-Brown 1979; Panosetti and Roudart 2023; Tamari 1988)
8. The system of money transfers is fraught with problems. Sometimes websites such as Go Fund Me refuse to release funds, and taking cash supplies to communities in Gaza is difficult. See (Jones 2024)
9. Atedal Hassan, Shatila, July 21, 2023. Interviewed by Mayssoun Sukarieh.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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