# Palestine in 100 Objects: A Blueprint for an Investigative Chronicle

## Introduction: The Object as Witness

In an era defined by the overwhelming and often ephemeral nature of digital media, where images of conflict flicker across screens and are quickly replaced, the physical object provides a tangible anchor for truth. A spent tear gas canister, a key to a home that no longer stands, a fragment of a commercial drone—these are not silent artifacts. They are witnesses. Each object possesses a history, a manufacturing origin, a logistical supply chain, and a final, undeniable impact on a human life. This report outlines the framework for *Palestine in 100 Objects*, a book designed to dissect the modern Palestinian experience by treating these objects as primary evidence in a global investigation.

The project's methodology is twofold, creating a narrative structure that balances the mechanics of destruction with the powerful forces of life affirmation. The first half of the book will trace objects of violence and control backward, from the point of impact in Palestine to the corporate boardrooms, manufacturing plants, and investment funds that brought them into existence. This forensic approach aims to render visible the often-opaque international networks of commerce and capital that facilitate and profit from the occupation. The second half will reverse this trajectory, tracing objects of resilience and creativity forward. It will follow items like heirloom seeds, embroidery thread, and repurposed bicycles through their own "supply chains" of solidarity, cultural preservation, and innovative mutual aid.

This dual structure is intentional. It seeks to present a holistic narrative that moves beyond a purely victim-centric portrayal of Palestinians. By examining the tools of both oppression and steadfastness (*sumud*), the book will construct a comprehensive and nuanced mosaic of contemporary Palestine. Each object's story, presented in a modular 3-4 page format, will stand on its own as a piece of investigative journalism, making the content highly adaptable for serialization on digital platforms. Collectively, these 100 stories will serve as an unassailable record, grounded not in rhetoric, but in the irrefutable testimony of the objects themselves.

## Part I: The Architecture of Control

This section deconstructs the physical and digital infrastructure of occupation and control. The 25 objects selected are not exclusively weapons in the traditional sense; they are also the tools of management, segregation, surveillance, and dispossession. They represent the systematic effort to engineer a permanent state of control by manipulating space, information, and the built environment. From the armored bulldozer that reshapes the landscape to the cloud server that archives a population's private conversations, these objects reveal a calculated and deeply embedded architecture of power.

### Object 1: The Armored Bulldozer (Caterpillar D9)

The narrative of this object begins not with the machine, but with its aftermath. In the Tulkarem refugee camp in the West Bank, 62-year-old Abd al-Rahman Ajaj returned to find the house he shared with multiple families, a structure that held generations of memories and belongings, completely demolished. There was no warning.1 This act of sudden and total erasure was carried out by the primary instrument of demolition in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Caterpillar D9 armored bulldozer.2

The Caterpillar D9, a civilian construction vehicle, is transformed by the IDF into a formidable weapon. It is heavily armored and modified for military operations, often deployed when there is a perceived risk, such as when armed individuals are barricaded inside a structure or a building is suspected of being booby-trapped.2 The IDF justifies its use for a range of "precautionary" and "punitive" reasons, including counter-terrorism operations, clearing paths for armored vehicles, and implementing a tactic known as

*nohal sir lachatz* (the "pressure pot procedure"), where a house is demolished over militants who refuse to surrender.2 However, this official rationale is starkly contested. Human rights organizations and critics argue that the bulldozers are instruments of collective punishment, a war crime under international law, and a strategic tool for the Judaization of territory, used to annex Palestinian land for the construction of the Israeli West Bank barrier or to expand illegal settlements.2

The journey of this machine traces a direct line from a U.S. factory floor to the rubble of a Palestinian home. The bulldozers are manufactured by **Caterpillar Inc.**, a U.S.-based multinational corporation. Their delivery to the Israeli military is often facilitated by the United States government, a reality that led the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) to condemn the machines as "tools of destruction, dispossession, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid" and their provision as an act of U.S. complicity.3

The psychology behind the D9's deployment is revealed in the profile of Avraham Zarviv, a 53-year-old reserve IDF bulldozer operator. In an interview, Zarviv boasted of demolishing an average of 50 buildings per week in Gaza, likely totaling thousands over the course of the war. This public pride in destruction is made more surreal by the fact that Zarviv's own home, located in the illegal West Bank settlement of Beit El, has had an unenforced Israeli demolition order against it for 25 years.4 The normalization of the bulldozer as a weapon is so complete that its operator can quantify his work with the detachment of a factory manager, revealing a profound desensitization to the human cost of his actions. This transformation of a tool for building into a symbol of destruction demonstrates the blurring of lines between civilian and military infrastructure within the occupation. The machine's very presence in a West Bank refugee camp is a physical manifestation of U.S. foreign policy, corporate enterprise, and the ideology that drives the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian people.

### Object 12: The Cloud Server (Microsoft Azure)

This object is invisible, yet its impact is profoundly tangible. Its story begins with a common experience for a Palestinian in the West Bank: a private phone call is intercepted, transcribed, and archived. Months or years later, this stored data is used as a pretext for an arrest when, as one Israeli intelligence officer explained, there is no other "good enough reason" to do so.5 The physical repository for this vast archive of personal data is not a military bunker, but a customized, segregated section of

**Microsoft's Azure cloud platform**.5

A joint investigation by +972 Magazine and The Guardian revealed that Israel's elite signals intelligence agency, Unit 8200—roughly equivalent to the U.S. National Security Agency—had operationalized one of the world's largest and most intrusive mass surveillance projects on Microsoft's commercial cloud infrastructure.5 The scope of Israel's intelligence gathering on millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza had become so vast that it could no longer be stored on military servers alone. In a meeting in late 2021, the head of Unit 8200, Yossi Sariel, secured the personal support of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella to develop this customized Azure area, allowing the army's surveillance project to scale exponentially.5 This enabled Unit 8200 to expand its storage from the calls of tens of thousands of designated "suspects" to the communications of millions of ordinary Palestinians.5

This direct corporate involvement at the highest level stands in stark contrast to Microsoft's public statements. The company has repeatedly claimed to have "no evidence" that its technology was used to harm civilians in Gaza.6 Yet, intelligence sources confirmed that the cloud-based data has been used to plan lethal airstrikes and forms the basis for military operations and arrests.5 The revelations have sparked internal dissent, with a worker-led group named "No Azure for Apartheid" accusing the company of "complicity in genocide" and dismissing Microsoft's internal investigations as "stalling tactics".7

The use of a commercial cloud platform for military surveillance marks a significant evolution in the nature of occupation, shifting from the visible architecture of checkpoints and walls to an invisible, pervasive digital panopticon. While a bulldozer's destruction is immediate and undeniable, the harm from mass surveillance is insidious, creating a chilling effect on free expression, association, and the very concept of a private life. This is a digital occupation, harder to document and resist than its physical counterpart.

Furthermore, the financial trail behind this object reveals a deep and widespread complicity. Microsoft Corp. is a cornerstone of the global economy, and its largest institutional shareholders are the world's biggest asset managers: **The Vanguard Group, BlackRock, Inc., and State Street Corp**.8 These firms manage trillions of dollars in assets, primarily through index funds and ETFs that are the bedrock of countless individual retirement accounts, 401(k)s, and pension plans. This means that millions of ordinary people worldwide, through their passive investments, are financially connected to the very infrastructure that enables this mass surveillance program. This "complicity of the commons" raises profound ethical questions about the nature of modern investment, where the profits generated in global markets are inextricably linked to the violation of human rights in a place like the West Bank.

### Object 17: The Tear Gas Canister (Defense Technology/Safariland)

The story of this object is written in the bodies of its victims. It is the story of 15-year-old Ahmad Samir Harb Abu Habel, killed during the Great March of Return protests in Gaza when a tear gas canister fired by Israeli forces lodged in his head from a distance of 200 meters.11 It is the story of Wijdan Faris, a pregnant woman who died from inhalation after canisters were fired into the courtyard of her home, and of the more than 40 infants and elderly people who have died after being exposed to high concentrations of the gas in enclosed spaces.12

Tear gas is marketed as a "less-lethal" crowd control weapon, yet its chemical agents are banned for use in warfare under the Chemical Weapons Convention.13 Extensive documentation by human rights organizations like B'Tselem and Amnesty International reveals a pattern of lethal misuse by Israeli forces that transforms this "riot control agent" into a deadly projectile and a tool of punitive harassment. The pattern includes routinely firing the heavy metal canisters directly at protesters' heads and faces, often from close range, and deliberately deploying them in high concentrations inside homes, clinics, schools, and mosques—spaces from which vulnerable people cannot easily escape.11 This practice suggests a deliberate policy that goes far beyond dispersal, turning the weapon's function into one of targeted injury and collective punishment. The "less-lethal" label becomes a dangerous fallacy when the gap between its intended use and its actual deployment is measured in fatalities.

The supply chain for these weapons is a complex web of American and international corporations. Canisters found in the Occupied Territories have been traced to U.S. manufacturers such as **Federal Laboratories**, a company with a long history of supplying Israel that was eventually acquired by the British multinational defense conglomerate **BAE Systems**.15 Other prominent suppliers include

**Combined Systems, Inc.** and **Defense Technology**, a subsidiary of **Cadre Holdings (NYSE: CDRE)**, which operates under the well-known brand name **Safariland**.17 These products are imported into Israel by companies like HOS Technology R&D, which lists the Israeli military, police, and prison service among its clients.17

The financial network supporting this trade is equally complex. While Combined Systems is privately held—previously owned by private equity giant **The Carlyle Group** and now by **Point Lookout Capital Partners**—Cadre Holdings is a publicly traded company.20 Its top institutional investors include some of the largest names in finance:

**FMR LLC (Fidelity), BlackRock, and The Vanguard Group**.22 This corporate maze of parent companies, subsidiaries, private equity firms, and public institutional investors creates a system where accountability is deliberately obscured. A parent company like BAE Systems or an investment firm like BlackRock can profit from the sale of these weapons while maintaining a public distance from the on-the-ground consequences of their use, a key enabling factor in the poorly regulated and opaque global trade of "less-lethal" munitions.23

**Table 1.1: The Digital Occupation - Microsoft's Top Institutional Investors**

| Investor Name | Number of MSFT Shares Held (as of June 30, 2025) | Percentage of Ownership | Estimated Market Value ($1000s) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The Vanguard Group, Inc. | 705,077,786 | 9.49% | $366,760,312 |
| BlackRock, Inc. | 581,577,056 | 7.82% | $302,518,937 |
| State Street Corp. | 299,196,519 | 4.03% | $155,633,053 |
| FMR LLC (Fidelity) | 204,939,437 | 2.76% | $106,603,347 |
| Geode Capital Management, LLC | 179,001,751 | 2.41% | $93,111,341 |
| Data derived from public filings and reports.9 The Azure/Unit 8200 project was reportedly approved in late 2021.5 |  |  |  |  |

**Table 1.2: The Tear Gas Supply Chain**

| Product | Manufacturer | Parent Company / Holding Group | Top Institutional Investors (Public Companies) | Known Israeli Importer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tear Gas Canisters/Grenades | Defense Technology | Cadre Holdings (NYSE: CDRE) | FMR LLC, BlackRock, Inc., The Vanguard Group | HOS Technology R&D |
| Tear Gas Canisters/Grenades | Combined Systems, Inc. | Point Lookout Capital Partners (Private) | N/A (Privately Held) | Not specified |
| Tear Gas Canisters/Grenades | Federal Laboratories | BAE Systems PLC | Invesco, Capital Group, BlackRock, Vanguard | Not specified |
| Data compiled from reports by AFSC Investigate, B'Tselem, and public financial records.15 |  |  |  |  |  |

## Part II: The Weaponization of the Everyday

This section investigates a more insidious form of violence, where the mundane objects of daily life are repurposed as instruments of war and control. It explores how consumer goods, civilian infrastructure, and even human beings are co-opted and transformed into weapons. This process creates a deeply unsettling reality where nothing is neutral and the most ordinary object can become a threat. The weaponization of the everyday is a tactic that aims to dissolve the distinction between combatant and civilian, turning the entire social fabric into a potential battlefield and fostering a pervasive atmosphere of fear and suspicion.

### Object 26: The Commercial Drone (Autel EVO)

The chapter opens with the disarmingly casual testimony of an Israeli soldier, identified only as "S," who described his role in coordinating drone attacks in Gaza. "It's like a video game," he stated. "There's a crosshair in the middle of the screen... You're hundreds of meters away... Then you play with the joystick, see the target, and drop [a grenade]. And it's even kind of cool. Except this video game kills people".24 He recounted specific incidents, such as dropping a grenade on a child riding a bicycle from over a kilometer away, and later watching through the drone's camera as stray dogs consumed the uncollected corpses of those killed.25

The object at the center of this remote killing is the **Autel EVO drone**, a commercial product manufactured by the Chinese company Autel Robotics.25 Primarily designed for photography and available for purchase on platforms like Amazon for approximately $3,000, the drone is easily converted into a lethal weapon. With a simple, military-issued attachment known internally as an "iron ball," a standard hand grenade can be affixed to the drone and dropped on a target with the push of a button.26 This low-cost, accessible technology has become ubiquitous among Israeli military companies in Gaza.25

The use of cheap, off-the-shelf drones represents a significant shift in modern warfare, effectively democratizing lethal force. It decentralizes the power of aerial bombardment, moving it from highly trained pilots in multi-million dollar fighter jets to ordinary ground soldiers equipped with a joystick. This accessibility drastically lowers both the financial and psychological barriers to lethal action. Soldiers testified that the drones were used to "teach Palestinians, through blood, not to return" to evacuated areas, a mission carried out without the need for approval from a central strike command.26 The video game-like interface detaches the operator from the visceral reality of the act, eroding accountability and making killing easier and more frequent.

The corporate trail leads to **Autel Robotics**, based in Shenzhen, China.27 In response to investigations, the company expressed "strong shock and condemnation toward any action that leads to civilian casualties" and stated that military use is not the product's intended design or purpose.24 This highlights a critical dilemma of dual-use technology. A company can design and profit from the sale of a versatile product while disavowing all responsibility for its weaponization by the end-user. This creates a moral and legal gray area where accountability is diffused. The drone's components are sourced internationally, from countries like Vietnam, before being assembled in China and exported globally.27 In Israel, the demand is so high that IDF units have resorted to crowdfunding campaigns in Israel and the United States to purchase more of these drones, bypassing formal military procurement channels and further complicating the chain of responsibility.26 The company's investors, including firms like

**Citic Securities Investment, Fortune Capital, and Focustar Capital**, profit from these sales, regardless of the product's final application.29

### Object 31: The Human Being (as a "Human Shield")

This chapter begins with the stark testimony of a Palestinian man who stated that the only time he was unbound and un-blindfolded by his Israeli captors was when they used him as their human shield, forcing him to enter a building ahead of them to check for militants or explosives.31 It is also the story of Iman Amer, a woman from the Jenin refugee camp who was forced by soldiers to walk to a neighbor's house ahead of them during a raid.31 These accounts are not of isolated incidents but are evidence of a widespread and systematic practice.

The "object" in this case is the human being, repurposed as a disposable military tool. Testimonies from Israeli soldiers collected by organizations like Breaking the Silence, the Associated Press, and +972 Magazine reveal a practice some soldiers call the "mosquito procedure".32 It involves forcing detained and unarmed Palestinians to perform dangerous tasks to spare Israeli soldiers and even combat dogs from potential harm. These tasks include inspecting buildings and tunnels for explosives, knocking on doors of wanted persons, and removing suspicious objects.31 In some cases, these individuals, referred to as "mosquitoes," were also used to clean the houses where soldiers were staying.32

This practice is a flagrant violation of both international law and Israeli law. Israel's own Supreme Court explicitly outlawed the use of human shields in 2005.31 Despite this, testimonies from multiple active and former soldiers confirm that the practice "caught on like fire" during recent military operations because it was seen as a way to speed up missions, save ammunition, and reduce Israeli casualties. Crucially, soldiers stated that commanders were aware of and, in some cases, directly ordered the use of human shields, indicating tolerance and complicity at senior levels of the IDF.31

The use of a human being as a shield represents the ultimate form of objectification. It is a process that strips a person of their humanity, agency, and right to life, reducing them to their functional utility as a shield, a sensor, or a disposable tool. This act of profound dehumanization is the logical endpoint of an ideology that views an entire population as a threat to be managed, rather than as human beings with rights. If a person can be redefined as an object, their injury or death becomes a mere tactical consideration, not a moral transgression.

This documented reality creates a powerful contradiction with Israel's official narrative. The Israeli military has consistently and rightly condemned the use of human shields by armed groups like Hamas as a war crime.31 The extensive, multi-source evidence—including from Israeli soldiers themselves—that its own forces are systematically engaging in the very same practice exposes a deep hypocrisy. As one source from Breaking the Silence noted, "Israel rightly condemns Hamas for using civilians as human shields, but our own soldiers describe doing the very same".31 This chasm between public rhetoric intended for international consumption and the military's operational reality on the ground is a critical element in understanding the conflict's pervasive information war.

## Part III: The Objects of ***Sumud*** (Steadfastness)

This section marks a narrative pivot, shifting focus from the instruments of control and destruction to the objects that embody the Palestinian response: *sumud*. *Sumud* is a central concept in Palestinian culture, an Arabic word that translates to "steadfastness" or "perseverance." It is more than passive resilience; it is the art of living, surviving, and thriving on the land in spite of hardship, occupation, and a lack of resources.33 The 25 objects in this part are symbols and tools of this steadfastness. They represent the preservation of cultural heritage, an unbreakable connection to the land, and the daily acts of defiance that sustain a people's identity and will for liberation.

### Object 51: The Olive Sapling

The story of this object begins with a family in the West Bank village of al-Walaja, tending to an olive tree known as "Al-Badawi"—the Old One. Estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000 years old, this ancient tree, a living link to millennia of history, is now directly threatened by the construction of Israel's separation wall.34 This single tree's precarious existence encapsulates the dual nature of the olive in Palestine: it is both a sacred symbol of life and a primary target of destruction.

The olive tree is not merely a plant; it is woven into the fabric of Palestinian identity. Its branches are a universal symbol of peace, while the tree itself represents resilience, prosperity, and the deep, ancestral connection of Palestinians to their land.35 The tree's hardiness—its ability to survive drought, sub-zero temperatures, and even fire—mirrors the core tenets of

*sumud*.35 It is also a vital economic engine, with an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 families relying on the annual olive harvest for their income through the production of olive oil, table olives, and soap.35

This life-affirming nature is precisely why the olive tree has become a target. The systematic destruction of olive groves by Israeli forces and settlers is a documented and ongoing phenomenon. Since 1967, hundreds of thousands of trees have been uprooted, burned, or otherwise destroyed.34 According to the UN, in the first five months of 2023 alone, over 5,000 olive trees belonging to Palestinians in the West Bank were damaged.35 This is not random vandalism; it is a form of ecological warfare. It is an attack not just on the current generation's livelihood but on the very land and its capacity to sustain future generations. By destroying the groves, the perpetrators seek to sever the rooted connection between the people and their homeland, making the land unlivable and erasing the physical evidence of Palestinian history.

In the face of this destruction, the olive sapling emerges as a powerful object of defiance. The "supply chain" for this object is one of global solidarity and local action. Saplings are often donated by international activist groups and planted by local farming committees and families. The act of planting a new tree where an old one was destroyed is the ultimate expression of defiant hope. It is a declaration of intent to remain, to rebuild, and to wait for a future harvest. The olive tree is perhaps the most tangible embodiment of *sumud*. As one Palestinian artist described the concept, *sumud* is like an old olive tree with deep roots, its branches flexible enough to bend in the strong winds of occupation but too deeply rooted to ever be broken.33 The planting of a sapling is the physical performance of this political and cultural steadfastness.

### Object 65: The Embroidery Thread (Tatreez)

This object's story begins with a single strand of colored thread in the hands of a woman in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. She might be part of an organization like **INAASH (the Association for the Development of Palestinian Camps)**, founded in 1968 to empower refugee women who, along with their husbands, were forbidden by Lebanese law from working in many professions.36 For her, this thread is a tool for economic survival and cultural preservation.

The thread is the basic component of *tatreez*, the traditional art of Palestinian embroidery, a practice passed down through generations of women.35 Historically,

*tatreez* was a rich visual language. The intricate cross-stitch patterns, motifs, and even the color of the thread could signify a woman's village of origin, her marital status, and her social standing. For example, in central Palestine, a widow might stitch over her dress's red embroidery with blue thread, while Bedouin women in the south wore blue embroidery until marriage, after which they could wear red.36

The Nakba of 1948, the mass displacement of Palestinians, profoundly transformed this art form. As women from different villages were forced together in the crowded confines of refugee camps, they began to observe, share, and copy each other's distinct patterns. This cross-pollination of styles gave rise to a new, blended aesthetic—a *tatreez* that was at once "from nowhere and everywhere in Palestine".36 In this crucible of displacement,

*tatreez* evolved from a collection of local vernaculars into a unified, powerful symbol of a shared national identity.

Today, the thread's journey often continues through a modern "supply chain of empowerment." Social enterprises and fashion brands like the Palestinian-Israeli owned **Adish** and the online retailer **Sabayaa** work with women's cooperatives in the West Bank and refugee camps, connecting their intricate handiwork to a global market.37 This creates a vital source of income and economic independence for women in a context where opportunities are severely restricted. This gentle act of stitching becomes a form of economic resistance, countering dependency on aid by building sustainable livelihoods from within the community. The cultural and historical significance of this practice is so profound that in 2021, UNESCO added traditional Palestinian embroidery to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.35 The simple embroidery thread, therefore, is an object that stitches together the past and the future, preserving a rich heritage while weaving a new story of female empowerment and economic resilience.

## Part IV: The Tools of a New Generation

The final section of the book looks toward the future, focusing on 25 objects that represent the innovation, creativity, and modern forms of resistance being pioneered by a new generation of Palestinians. These are not just objects of survival but tools for building a different reality. They demonstrate how technology, art, and community organizing are being harnessed to circumvent the physical and digital barriers of occupation. From a para-cyclist's bicycle repurposed for aid delivery to a coder's laptop that serves as a portal to the global economy, these objects tell a story of agency, ingenuity, and an unyielding determination to define a future on their own terms.

### Object 76: The Bicycle (Gaza Sunbirds)

The story of this object begins with an act of violence intended to end a dream. Alaa al-Dali was a talented young cyclist from Gaza, training to represent Palestine at the 2018 Asian Games. While protesting for the right to leave the besieged strip to compete, his leg was shattered by a bullet from an Israeli sniper during the Great March of Return. The injury was so severe that his leg had to be amputated.39 For an athlete, this could have been the end. Instead, it was a beginning. With extraordinary resilience, al-Dali, along with fellow cyclist Karim Ali, founded the

**Gaza Sunbirds**, Palestine's first para-cycling team.39

The bicycle, a simple object of sport and leisure, was thus transformed. For the Sunbirds, it became a tool of rehabilitation and empowerment, a symbol that disability inflicted by conflict would not defeat them. The team grew, providing an outlet and a community for athletes who had sustained similar injuries from airstrikes or sniper fire.41 However, following the onset of the war in Gaza in October 2023, the bicycle was reimagined once again. As the formal humanitarian aid system struggled under a near-total blockade, the Sunbirds pivoted from sport to survival. They launched international fundraising campaigns and used their bicycles—uniquely suited for navigating rubble-strewn and fuel-starved streets—to become an agile, grassroots aid delivery network.39 Team members on the ground distributed essential supplies like food, water, and medicine directly to displaced and injured civilians, reaching areas inaccessible to larger vehicles.39

The "supply chain" for this work is one of decentralized, global mutual aid. Funds are raised from a community of cyclists and activists around the world and are channeled directly to the team in Gaza. This model of agile, community-led humanitarianism stands in stark contrast to the heavily restricted and often politicized formal aid channels, which aid groups accuse Israel of "weaponizing" by imposing onerous restrictions.43 The Sunbirds demonstrate the power of grassroots networks to circumvent these blockades and deliver help efficiently where it is most needed.

The story of the Gaza Sunbirds is a powerful narrative arc that moves from victimhood to agency. The sniper's bullet was an act of violence intended to disable and demoralize. The response—founding a para-cycling team and then transforming it into a humanitarian force—is an act of profound defiance. The object at the center of this transformation, the bicycle, becomes a symbol of mobility, freedom, and the power to reclaim one's future, turning a personal tragedy inflicted by the conflict into a powerful tool for community survival.

### Object 90: The Laptop (Gaza Sky Geeks)

The potential of this object is captured in the story of Mai Ubeid. A talented young woman from Gaza living with muscular dystrophy, Mai pursued her passion for technology. After completing an intensive coding bootcamp with **Gaza Sky Geeks (GSG)**, a tech hub and training center supported by Mercy Corps, she landed a coveted internship and then a full-time job as a developer with the United Nations.44 Her story embodied the dream that GSG offered to thousands of young Palestinians: that a laptop could be a portal out of the physical confines of the Gaza blockade, a tool to access the global digital economy, achieve financial independence, and transcend physical limitations.

This story of hope, however, is grounded by a devastating postscript. In November 2023, Mai Ubeid and her family were killed in an Israeli airstrike.44 Her life and death encapsulate both the immense promise and the tragic fragility of building a digital future in a war zone.

For a generation of Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, the laptop represents a strategy of "leapfrogging" the physical occupation. GSG, founded in 2011, created a "supply chain of knowledge," channeling expertise and funding from international partners like **Mercy Corps** and **Google** into Gaza.45 Through peer-led training, it equipped thousands of students with high-demand tech skills in coding, freelancing, and digital marketing, connecting them to a global network of mentors and remote employment opportunities.46 Graduates saw their average income increase by 100%, earning salaries that far surpassed regional averages and allowing them to support their families and inject capital into the local economy.46

This model represents a fundamental shift away from an economy dependent on international aid—which organizations like the social enterprise incubator **BuildPalestine** argue has often served to maintain an unjust status quo rather than foster liberation 48—towards building a self-sustaining, entrepreneurial ecosystem.48 The laptop is the primary means of production in this new, resilient economy. However, the tragic fate of Mai Ubeid serves as a brutal reminder of the limits of this digital escape. A virtual career offers no protection from physical violence. The virtual world is always hosted on a physical server, and the coder always lives in a physical home. The digital freedom it provides is ultimately contingent on physical survival, highlighting the precariousness of building a future under the constant threat of annihilation.

### Object 95: The Theatre Script (The Freedom Theatre)

In the heart of the Jenin refugee camp, one of the most volatile areas of the occupied West Bank, a young actor holds a script. They are rehearsing a play—perhaps *The Island*, a South African anti-apartheid piece about political prisoners, or an adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*—while outside the theatre doors, the sounds of an Israeli military raid echo through the narrow streets.50 This object, the theatre script, is far more than just text; it is a tool for what the company calls "cultural resistance".53

**The Freedom Theatre** was established in its current form in 2006 by Juliano Mer-Khamis, an Israeli actor and director, and Zakaria Zubeidi, a former militant leader from the camp. Its mission is to use art and popular culture as a catalyst for social change, providing a space for children and young adults to express themselves, process trauma, and imagine a different future.50 In a context where physical freedom is denied, the theatre creates a space for imaginative freedom. By staging plays that explore themes of occupation, liberation, and social critique, it allows both performers and audiences to analyze their reality and envision alternatives. This act of collective imagination is a potent form of psychological resistance against the dehumanization inherent in military occupation.

The power of this work is evidenced by the fact that the theatre itself has been a consistent target for Israeli forces. The original "Stone Theatre" was destroyed by an IDF bulldozer in 2002. Juliano Mer-Khamis was assassinated by a masked gunman outside the theatre in 2011. Its offices are regularly raided, its equipment destroyed, its posters defaced with Jewish symbols, and its members, including its artistic director and producer, are arrested and held in administrative detention.50

This sustained targeting reveals a critical truth: the Israeli authorities perceive this cultural expression not as benign entertainment, but as a genuine strategic threat to their control. A population that can tell its own story, critique its oppressors, and collectively imagine its own liberation is far more difficult to dominate. As one actor described the community's response to a performance held just after a major raid, residents came out onto their balconies and threw rice and candy on the performers "as a celebration of us in the middle of mourning".51 They were craving a symbol of their own victory and resilience. In this context, the theatre script is not an escape from reality, but a weapon for confronting it, a tool for asserting humanity in the face of violence, and a blueprint for keeping the dream of freedom alive.

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