


Imagine a Free Palestine

A Thought Experiment About a Saturday March

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Imagine that you have witnessed four months of unrelenting genocide.

Imagine that the government you live under and pay taxes to is sponsoring and encouraging that genocide.

Imagine that all over the country, for four months, people have been engaging in brave protest and resistance to that genocide—blocking bridges, free-ways, train stations; disrupting meetings and political rallies of genocidaires; vandalizing the businesses of profiteers; getting arrested by the score; literally setting themselves on fire to make their protest seen, heard, and viscerally felt.

Imagine that, in that context, you organize a local protest against the genocide, and that it brings together hundreds—maybe even thousands—of people on a beautiful spring day in a public square next to one of the busiest intersections in the city.

Imagine that during that protest, you lead people in chants like “When people are occupied, resistance is justified!!” and “What do we want? Justice! And if we don’t get it? Shut it down! If we don’t get it? Shut it down!! If we don’t get it? SHUT! IT! DOWN!”

But imagine that the only thing you planned for that protest was to stand in a circle outside an empty government building to chant and listen to speeches.

Imagine that when you’ve decided to end the protest, you just leave everyone hanging after spending an hour and half firing them up about the horrors of the genocide unfolding on your collective watch.

Imagine that so many of the people who came to the protest really meant every word that they were chanting and are feeling deeply outraged, energized, and moved to do something—anything—more concrete and direct than just chanting at empty government buildings; to feel even an iota of agency and power amidst the ongoing slaughter that they were forced into complicity with; to even modestly shake the foundations of the business-as-usual that keeps the genocide going.

Imagine that these people are looking to you because you’ve assumed a position of leadership by calling the protest and providing the infrastructure for it; putting yourself up on the stage and controlling the microphone and leading the chants; organizing so-called “marshals” in yellow vests to police the protest.

Imagine that when all these people are looking to you, in this moment of anguish and outrage and movement and passion, you announce on your sound system that you “won’t be marching,” then shrug and tell everyone to “stay safe.”

And then imagine that you’ve named your organization the “solidarity” committee with the people being actively genocided.

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But imagine that, despite your best efforts, you are not actually in control.

Imagine that even though you’ve done nothing to create the space or invite the initiative and autonomy of other people, they start to find it in themselves and each other, organically and spontaneously—first just people grumbling privately, then people finding common desire with strangers, then people speaking up louder and louder.

Imagine that all those people compelled to action but abandoned by

the supposed leaders of the protest start moving and chanting together anyway, on their own, with no one in charge.

Imagine that a few of them bravely take the first unpermitted steps into the street, in front of impatient traffic, and are soon followed by dozens of others, and then hundreds.

Imagine that all these hundreds of people quickly find their footing and collective confidence to march through the streets together with no permit except the strength of their numbers and the steadfast of their resolve; that without direction or orders, the bicyclists all start blocking traffic at every intersection in a coordinated manner; that the people at the front of the march remember to periodically pause to make sure everyone stays together and no one is left behind; that debates about routes happen in real time and get resolved imperfectly but quickly and organically; that the megaphone gets passed around; that new relationships and affinities are formed.

Imagine that for over an hour all these people finally get to taste a little bit of their own power—a sweet reminder that we do not have to obey and comply, we do not have to wait and follow; that people and movements against colonialism and for self-determination can and should self-determine their path forward to liberation; that people and movements for autonomy can and should organize and act autonomously.

Imagine that at the end of this march, some absolute clowns in yellow vests still have the fucking nerve to try to order people to get on the sidewalk.

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Keep imagining.

Imagine next time.

Imagine that more people come to the protest with their own initiative and plans and courage and passion.

Imagine that people organize and strategize and coordinate and conspire with their friends and comrades and prepare to act strategically to actually disrupt the machinery of empire, capital, and genocide.


Imagine that people remember their experiences from that Saturday in March when they remembered to stop waiting and to take initiative and be brave and work together to act in the ways that they feel called to act in response to a horrendous genocide.

Imagine that people remember their experiences from the George Floyd uprisings, and that time when one of the other self-appointed “radical leaders” in the city decided to abandon the people they claim to lead by trying to cancel a Sunday rally at the last minute because they couldn’t control the rage and passion coursing through the streets, but the people turned out anyway, took over I-35, militantly defended that space and forced the police to retreat, and held the freeway until the police indiscriminately tear-gassed the entire protest.

Imagine that people study the many lessons from those George Floyd uprisings and the Ferguson/Baltimore uprisings, the movements against extraction and pipelines at places like Standing Rock, the antifascist mobilizations from Trump’s first term, the Occupy movement, the movement against the invasion of Iraq, and others, to help them create strategies that don’t repeat the mistakes and failures of the past.

Imagine a movement that is fierce and caring and diverse and horizontal and creative and combative and supportive and successful.


Imagine a free Palestine, and then, most importantly, fight to make it real.



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