

WRITTEN REVOLUTION



VOLUME III
MAY 2024 //



SPECIAL STUDENT INTIFADA & PEOPLE'S GRADUATION EDITION



About Us

Written Revolution is a publication intended to allow the unempowered voices on campus to share their creative projects in a collective framework. Fundamentally, this publication platforms revolutionary thought on campus - we believe that writing and art are among the most powerful tools for conducting a revolution. We are aligned with the liberation of all oppressed peoples, with global indigenous rights movements, with people-oriented philosophies and practices, and with anti-capitalist sentiment. In particular, we hope to spotlight projects that engage with culture and community by producing radical shifts away from the hierarchical and individualistic.

We share essays, poems, sketches, cartoons, and many other forms of content in order to further the liberatory frame of mind. Written Revolution is open to those who support our cause, and our content submission is open to all MIT community members. We also summarize revolutionary actions and activities taken on campus to further the call to liberation, be it through student unions, grassroots movements and demonstrations, or large-scale organizing. We are here to encourage such collective action on our campus. We are the revolution, and we are writing our own history.

Get involved



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Photo by Ellie Montemayor



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WELCOME TO... THE PEOPLE'S GRADUATION

More than eight months have passed since the onset of the genocide in Gaza, sparking global outcry and mobilization in cities worldwide against this paramount crime. The People's Graduation Ceremony is not merely a celebration but a pivotal chapter in the student intifada ignited by Columbia University's Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). This movement galvanized the Gaza encampment wave across the United States, urging universities to sever ties with Israel.

The MIT Scientists Against Genocide Encampment (SAGE), initiated by the MIT Coalition Against Apartheid and the broader MIT Coalition for Palestine, symbolizes a robust stand against MIT's collaboration with the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Our acts of civil disobedience echo the courageous efforts of the civil rights movement's Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), championing a similar quest for justice.

Despite facing violence from faculty, peers, and an administration that has resorted to police brutality, we have remained unyielding. Our protest underscores a refusal to let violence undermine our demands to end MIT's war research for the Israeli military and its drone program with Israel. We demonstrate that violence will not silence our voice nor dictate our rights to shape our campus and community.

MIT's decision has led to the suspension of over 20 students, denial of graduation rights, and the looming threat of deportation for some. The People's Graduation serves as an act of defiance against institutional violence and a tribute to the resilience of Gaza's people. It's challenging to embrace celebration when the harrowing scenes of bombardment on Gaza and its universities linger in our memory. Yet, The People's Graduation places at its heart Gaza and the broader struggle for Palestinian Liberation. It celebrates the unwavering spirit of student activists across MIT and beyond, who continue to fight against the suppression of our voices. Inspired by Palestine, which teaches us life, we strive to embody these lessons, from our martyrs and our living in our continued and necessary pursuit of justice.

ENCAMPMENT LAUNCH



Photo by Prahlad Iyengar



Photo by Andres Salcedo

On April 21st, 2024, the MIT Coalition for Palestine launched the Scientists Against Genocide Encampment to bring attention to a central demand: cut ties with the Israeli Ministry of Defense. This followed after months of campaigning, including two undergraduate and graduate union ceasefire referendums. The lack of response from administration and the urgency of the demand to end research affiliation with the genocidal Zionist entity necessitated an escalation, and the MIT C4P followed in the footsteps of their comrades at Columbia University, Cal Poly Humboldt, UT Austin, Emerson, and elsewhere in the country to launch the Cambridge iteration of what became known as the Student Intifada. Upon its launch, the MIT SAGE organizers released the following statement.

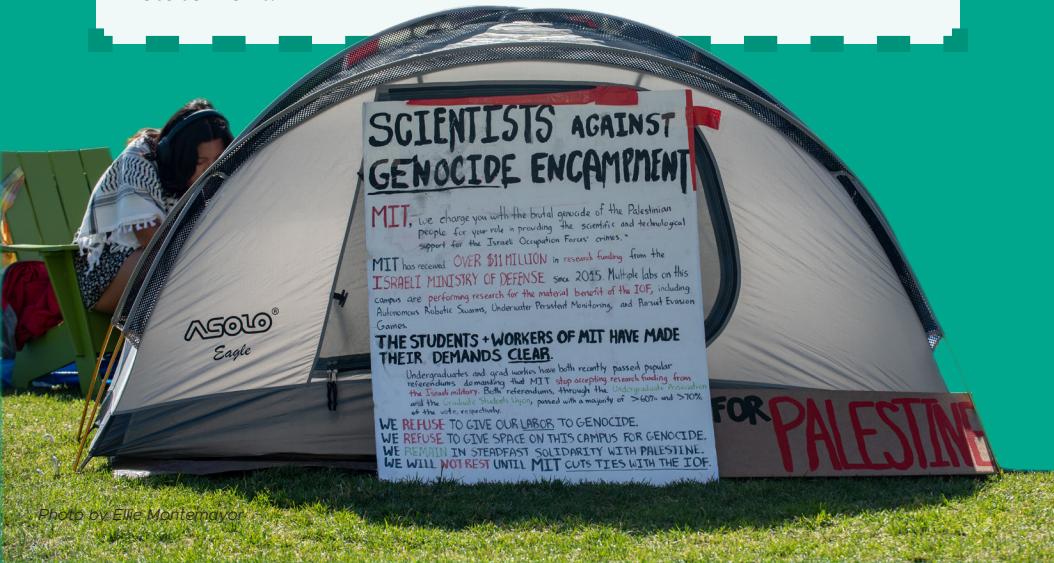


Photo by Ellie Montemayor

“We are over 6 months into the genocide in Gaza.”



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

We have let life go on, let business go on as usual, while a genocide has been broadcast to us for months. Meanwhile, MIT has received OVER \$11 MILLION in research funding from the Ministry of Defense of Israel since 2015. Multiple labs on this campus are performing sponsored research for the material benefit of the Israeli Occupation Forces. As recently as March 2024, such funding has been renewed.

It is **unconscionable**. It is **immoral**. It reflects a **gross disdain for human life and human dignity** that this institution, MIT, has chosen to embody.

To MIT, we charge you in the brutal genocide of the Palestinian people for your explicit role in providing scientific and technological support for the Israeli Occupation Forces' and their crimes. The students and workers of this campus have made our demands CLEAR. In the last month, undergraduates in the Undergraduate Association and grad workers in the Graduate Students Union PASSED referendums demanding that MIT stop accepting blood money from the Ministry of Defense of Israel, the same entity enacting the genocide in Gaza. We have shown that we are with the Palestinian people, and now is the time to act.

We are what make MIT the place that it is. They use our labor to advance their prestige. They use our student culture to improve their image. **We are so much stronger as a community**, and if you have ever wondered what YOU can do, this is it. The students of Columbia, Yale, Rutgers, and countless other schools, with the resilience of their Gaza solidarity encampments, have shown us what it means to resist the powers of our complicit institutions and fight collectively. Come support the encampment. Come now.



Photo by Ellie Montemayor



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

Ask yourself what it would take to compel us to act.

Then ask yourself if the tens of thousands of Palestinians killed in this genocide are enough for us to act.

Ask yourself what business this institution has to maintain ties with a genocidal state after **six months**.

Today, we say that we **refuse** to give our labor to genocide. We **refuse** to make space on this campus for genocide. **We will not rest** until MIT cuts research ties with the Israeli military.

Our people at MIT have shown that we stand in solidarity with our steadfast siblings in Palestine. We rebuke the complicity of our institution, and today, we take the next step together in fighting for what we believe in.



Photo by Sanju Mupparaju



Asian American
Initiative



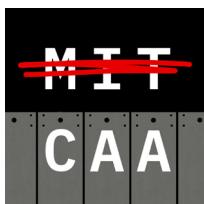
Arab Student
Organization



Black Students
Union



BGSA



Coalition Against
Apartheid



MIT Divest



MIT DUSP
Students For Palestine
Liberation



Faculty & Staff
For Palestine

The **MIT Coalition For Palestine (C4P)** was founded in October 2023 in response to the escalation of the genocide against the Palestinians waged by the occupation forces. Today, the C4P includes 14 student, staff, and faculty groups aligned toward Palestinian Liberation. The Scientists Against Genocide Encampment (SAGE) was launched as a C4P initiative to press forward our demand to cut MIT's research ties to the IOF. Each of these organizations contributed in their own way to the establishment, maintenance, programming, or organizing of SAGE. We are eternally grateful to be in Coalition with all of these activists for global liberation!



Graduates For
Palestine



Jews For
Ceasefire



Muslims For
Justice



Palestine@MIT



Reading For
Revolution



Written Revolution

DIASPORISM

A RADICAL VISION FOR JEWISH SELF-DETERMINATION

— By Isaac Gendler

One of the strongest members of the Coalition and one of the sponsor orgs for MIT SAGE is the Jews for Ceasefire (J4C). J4C serves both as a platform for anti-Zionist political activism as well as an affinity group for Jewish community members and allies who do not align with the political project of Zionism. J4C hosts biweekly Shabbat dinners, open to allies and those curious to learn more, complete with music, traditional food, and religious lessons framed with political context and centered around liberation. The first week of the encampment overlapped with the Jewish observance of Passover, so to share this unique custom with our encampment community, J4C organized a beautiful Seder dinner at the encampment. The pictures below highlight this event, and the piece below submitted by a J4C member emphasizes the extraordinary radical tradition of the Jewish Diaspora.



Photo submitted anonymously



“Draw the flags of your heritage.”



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

That was the question for my first assignment in eighth grade U.S. History. I was startled, to say the least. I knew that in 1911, my great-grandparents escaped to the U.S. from antisemitic pogroms in Ukraine. But my assignment was in 2011. The Maidan Revolution and Ukraine's reevaluation of its identity were still three years away, and in the view of global society, I was not considered a Ukrainian—just a Jew. In this world, a flag is your culture. Even though I had no family between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, I drew the Israeli flag, as that was the only flag that depicted the Star of David.

My community (and much of the rest of the world) told me that Israel was my homeland. The same community upheld Zionism—the belief that the Jewish right to self-determination depends on the existence of a nation-state with an exclusively Jewish identity—as the answer to our safety and survival as a people.

Years later, I learned of the Nakba, the violent colonial settlement and occupation, expulsion, and exclusion of the indigenous Palestinian popu-

lation on which Zionism rests. After rejecting Zionism, I began a deep search. What else could be the pillar of Jewish identity? How can we exercise self-determination as a people without a nation-state? Anti-Zionism alone could not solve these matters. Basing a group identity on fighting ethnonationalism is reactive and negative. I wanted something constructive, that looked toward a future to be created instead of a present to bemoan.

To quote the late Anarchist activist Aaron Bushnell (May his memory be a blessing):

“What I’m trying to say is, it’s so important to imagine a better world. Let your thoughts run wild with idealistic dreams of what the world should look like.”

Soon I found Diasporism.

Diasporism is rooted in the Jewish Labor Bund, an early 20th-century Eastern European Jewish political organization that fought for the rights of Jews and all oppressed peoples. In the Bund's view, culture was what bound Jews together, not a place or nation-state. Resultantly, the Bund was opposed to the creation of a separate state for Jews (or any ethnicity), seeing Zionism as a form of escapism from combatting the antisemitism and oppression that existed in the Russian empire. The Bund's mission was to make the world in which Jews lived safer, which could only be accomplished through collective organizing with non-Jewish society.

For me, Diasporism means taking the Bund's revolutionary spirit and imagining what a liberatory future would look like for Jews (and ev-



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

eryone). Diasporism allows us to affirm our Jewish identity as a positive, progressive force that can be the foundation for radical social action. Diasporism challenges the notion that any group should rely on a hegemonic nation-state to provide self-determination and survival. Who needs strictly defined borders and a homogeneous population when communities can create self-governance locally and develop mutually beneficial relationships with their diverse neighbors?

Diasporism can serve as a springboard for a larger Diasporic Jewish cultural revival. The vast number of expulsions, genocides, persecutions, and assimilations forced on Diasporic Jewish communities over the 20th century by hierarchical powers has led to a vast loss of our traditions. By reviving our many Jewish ethnic cultures, we can reconnect with and rebuild our identities, contributing to our autonomy and resistance. To this end, I've been learning how to play Klezmer music on the clarinet (a very useful skill for entertaining folks at Shabbat dinners), reading Ashkenazi history, and working on rebuilding Ukraine

since the genocidal, unjust Russian full-scale invasion. Today, many indigenous people are fighting for cultural autonomy and non-hierarchical ways of sharing the Earth as a form of resistance. Jewish traditions, like the Bund, have sought to nourish and preserve our people, pushing against the Western European idea that rights should be based on "ownership" of land. Now, we have an opportunity to learn from our



Photo by Sam Ihns

own history and pursue collective liberation in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples continually fighting for cultural autonomy and non-hierarchical ways of sharing the Earth.

To me, Diasporism is defined by the following principles:

Doikayt (*Yiddish, "hereness"*) — The home of the Jewish people is wherever they live, instead of a far-off land.

Autonomism — Jews should be able to curate cultural, religious, social, political, and economic autonomy wherever they live.

Collective Liberation — Recognition that the fight against antisemitism and all other hierarchical structures are intertwined, and that true liberation for all will only come when Jews and non-Jews work together to dismantle systems of oppression.

Anti-Authoritarianism — Opposition to hierarchical power structures in society, organizations, and human relations. Anti-Authoritarian thinking embraces respectful and egalitarian human social relations.

The story of the Jewish Diaspora is almost as old as the Jewish people itself. From the Babylonian Exile to Medieval Spain to the Pale of Settlement, Jews have had to live scattered amongst many nations. We've learned how to keep our traditions alive while contributing to the well-being of both Jewish and non-Jewish society and without being a dominant power. Even our traditional religion is built with Diaspora in mind—Rabbinic Judaism came as a reaction to the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem and the need to keep Jewish iden-

tity alive under dispersion. Temple services replaced prayers based on Babylonian exile-era practices, and oral Jewish law was written into the Talmud. Jewish people create home wherever we are, and will continue to do so, no matter what happens.

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (Z”l), the late founder of the modern Radical Diasporist movement, said: “Diasporism joins those who see borders as lines to cross. Who seek the memory or possibility or value of motion, fluidity, and multiple vision... I posit a Jewish identity that embraces diversity and resists a closed circle. My hope is to join a debate about home, diversity, and justice.” May we work to put Melanie’s theory in practice and do our part to heal the world.

Long live the Jewish Diaspora!



Photo by Sam Ihns



Photo by Sam Ihns



An Electoral Advertisement for the Jewish Labor Bund
in Kyiv, Ukraine 1917

FUEL FOR THE FIRE

CULINARY RESISTANCE

— By Ella Trumper
& Leon Hernandez



As the encampment routine became established, the community had to overcome many challenges. These included weather-proofing, gathering essential supplies, managing tasks and labor for maintaining the camp, and of course, procuring food to feed the people. In addressing all these challenges, the SAGE community is incredibly indebted to the broader Cambridge, Boston, and even regional and nationwide community for their support. Community support was essential, but initially haphazard - there would often be overlapping deliveries of food or supplies or times when nobody was available to bring food. This instability was precarious to the SAGE community - some members felt concerned that it would affect people's ability to remain at the camp. To address these issues, SAGE did what we knew how to do - we got organized. The campers set up a website for communicating updates to the public (mitsage.org) and coordinated community deliveries of food during mealtimes. The food delivery organization became so consistent that it had a tangible impact - even students unaffiliated with the encampment reported, e.g. through MIT Confessions, that SAGE had improved food security on campus. This is yet another testament to the power of community when it moves to act on love, and the lack of care exhibited by MIT toward its own students.

To integrate political and cultural education into this vital aspect of the camp, some food deliveries were turned into events, such as the Passover Seder. One such event was the flipping of maqlooba, a traditional Palestinian dish of rice, vegetables, and meat brought by Palestinians in the broader community. Attempts to rebrand maqlooba as an “israeli” dish are a microcosm of the occupation and ethnic cleansing, an attempt to erase Palestinian heritage; thus, cooking and appreciating maqlooba in its original and true Palestinian context is a microcosm of resistance mounted by the everyday anti-imperialist, an embodiment of the Intifada. The following two pieces analyze the culinary resistance of Palestinians against zionist appropriation.

ZA'ATAR

CULINARY EMBODIMENTS OF OCCUPATION AND RESISTANCE IN PALESTINE

— By Ella Trumper

In a particularly brisk October morning, I brave the long line weaving out of the door of Yafa Bakery & Café for one item – their safayeh with za'atar. The flatbread the small, vibrant pastry destination in Somerville bakes is delicious but is really a vessel for the za'atar on top of it, the star of the show. Securing my morning treat, I am reminded that the za'atar I enjoy, tangy, fragrant, and delectably simple, is laden with decades of complicated, tense conflict over land and the right to live.

The word “za’atar” has dual meaning; it refers to both a blend of spices consisting of herbs, sesame, and sumac, and also to the common Palestinian name of the plant used in za’atar spice, *Origanum syriacum* [1]. The wild herb provides the distinct nuttiness and sourness that is beloved in the spice blend. Za’atar spice also makes an appearance in Israeli cooking but is called by a different name - “ezov” or “biblical hyssop” [1]. Conflicting naming conventions is just the beginning of a fraught relationship over za’atar between Palestine and Israel.

In 1977, Israeli environmental authorities determined that wild za’atar was being overharvested and placed the herb on an endangered plant species list, banning its collection in Israel and the West Bank. Traditionally, Palestinians foraged for za’atar, and through this practice, formed bonds with the land and natural environment [2]. The ban, coupled with expanding Israeli settlements and control over the physical movement of Palestinians across land, mirrors the Israeli government’s control over Palestinians, and serves to further erase Palestinian presence and sense of belonging.

However, by engaging in culinary practices highlighting za’atar and the land it grows on, modern Palestinians push against Israeli oppression and create new imaginaries of a future for Palestine. I suggest that za’atar exposes these struggles and triumphs and serves as an embodiment of Palestinian oppression and resistance.

Za’atar is Palestinian Home

Smells of wild za’atar drifting on the wind is one way Palestinians recall and recognize their homeland [3]. In Palestine and Israel, wild za’atar can be discovered nestled in the hills and valleys of land untouched by construction and settlements, amongst limestone rocks and low-lying grasses, in addition to a plethora of other wild, edible plants [4]. The rhythm of the plant life and microenvironment in these areas are a time-capsule; it is a reminder of the ancient history of the land, a time in which agricultural industrialization was non-existent and foraging was the food-source. Although times have changed, foraging practices are still alive today for some Palestinians like Jumana Manna, a visual artist who addresses foraging in her work and also grew up taking foraging walks with her mother outside of Shu’fat, a town north of Jerusalem [4]. Manna recalls watching plants flower and die with the shifting seasons, the subtle variations in smells as a reflection of the changing plant life, and her own family’s culinary synchronization with the land around them. Through living in and with the natural environment, foraging served as “an intimate practice that strengthened [her] sense of belonging and connection to the landscape” [4]. The land becomes



Photo by Prahlad Iyengar

an entity to live in symbiosis with; the wild plants are a reminder of millennia-long Palestinian presence, each form of life, human and plant, supporting one another.

The relationship of the spice and plant to Palestinians is distinct due to the forced displacement of Palestinians from their homeland by the Israeli government. Indeed, in a 1986 interview, Edward Said, a Palestinian academic, addresses this through a description of a conversation he had with a Palestinian friend:

"In the morning we had breakfast, which included yogurt cheese with a special herb, za'atar. This combination probably exists all over the Arab world, and certainly in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. But my friend said: 'There, you see. It's a sign of a Palestinian home that it has za'atar in it'" [13].

Resisting attempted cultural silencing ne-

cessitates strengthening ties to traditions, culinary or otherwise. Consuming za'atar is a way to maintain Palestinian "home" and identity even as the homeland the spice comes from becomes increasingly distant. Foraging for za'atar functions as the site for such memory transfer across generations. The practice encodes vital epistemologies about "ways of seeing," "ways of finding", and "being" Palestinian [2]. However, these traditional frameworks are under threat as Israeli control tightens, more land is lost, and the narratives of Palestinian culinary tradition are rewritten and co-opted.

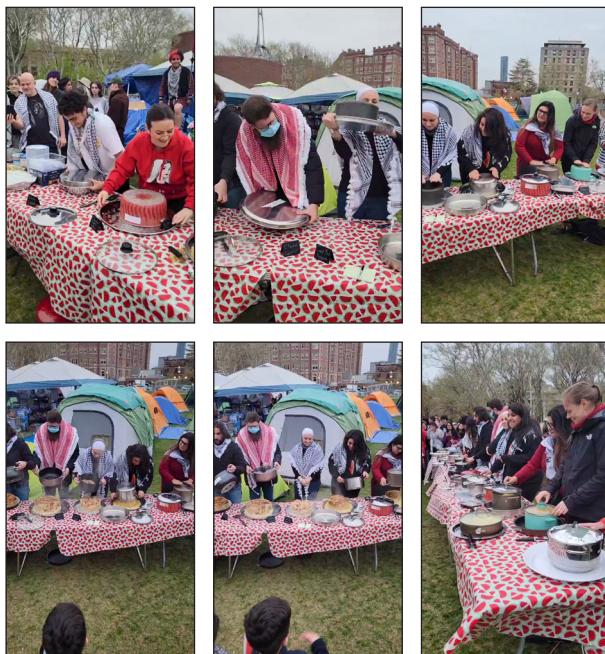
Culinary Appropriation & Israeli Identity

The formation of an Israeli cuisine, and therefore an Israeli identity, at the inception of the State of Israel in 1948 relied upon culinary appropriation and erasure of pre-existing Palestinian cuisine. Following the British endorsement of the Zionist project and establishment of the State, Palestine/Israel

experienced an influx of Central European Ashkenazi Jews and North African and Arabic Mizrahi Jews, among others [6]. Practically speaking, the poor economy and food resource availability in newly formed Israel drove immigrants to seek out Arab dishes that better fit the environmental conditions [5]. Additionally, in some cases, Jewish people wished to adopt Arabic cuisine to distance themselves from the foods of their countries of origin, which represented authoritarian control and oppression [7]. More subtly and deliberately, however, adoption of local and traditional Palestinian food-

“negation of exile” also creates an ideal Israel through assuming continuity from the pre-exilic period to the period of return, spanning millennia, allowing for claims of authenticity to the land [5]. In establishing the Zionist state, food becomes an important tool to realize Israeli identity, “including its collective memory, national psyche, and political aspirations” [7].

Israel laid claim to indigenous Palestinian cuisine by taking advantage of the population of Mihrazi Jews, whom they could bundle with other Arabs under the cate-



Video stills by Baltasar Dinis

ways served to further a Zionist worldview.

Jacob Bessen writes on “mechanisms of Zionist intelligibility” which he suggests include the “teleology of return” and the “negation of exile” [5]. During the infancy of the Jewish state, the aim of return was the creation of a unified and homogenous Jewish identity, based on the “Sabra Jew” that was “antithetical to exilic or diasporic Jews” [5]. The native born Sabra Jew represented progress towards an ideal Israel that asserted its right to exist by producing people of the land [3]. The mechanism of

gory of “Oriental” [8]. By this logic, the “appropriation [was] legitimate because both groups were ‘Oriental’ and as ‘Oriental Jews belonged to the Jewish people, [the cuisine] contained both the ability and mandate to become Israeli’” [5]. As the fruit of the land, food is rooted in land origins, biologically and symbolically imbuing its properties into consumers. Therefore, the possession, and subsequent redefinition, of ancient cuisine allows for the fabrication of an “Israeli” culinary heritage that tells a story of originality and authenticity; the Palestinian origins, meanings, and im-

portantly, the people, are lost. Palestinians are “rendered invisible,” validating and encouraging Israeli claims to food, land, and life in Palestine [6].

Banning Za’atar: Preservation or Suppression?

“Preservation” of nature is a key way for the Israeli government to enact power over Palestinians due to the intimacy between land, foraging, and food in Palestinian tradition. In practice, preservation efforts by the Israeli government work to legitimize colonization and suppress Palestinian cultural expression and physical mobility across the colonized land.

The 1977 ban on collecting wild za’atar is one such example. Citing over-harvesting and threat of extinction, but with no accompanying published studies proving these statements, za’atar was added to an endangered plant species list and foraging for the plant became punishable with fines and time in prison [4]. Following the ban, there was a growth in Israeli industry and infrastructure to cultivate za’atar to supplement the lost wild source. This ousting of Palestinians from the agricultural chain “contributed to the gradual erosion of traditional Palestinian rural practices and economic livelihood” [1].

The blame for the decline of za’atar was directed at Palestinians in particular, with Israeli scholars citing the “modernization of the Arab village” and invention of the fridge which encouraged Palestinians to “pick more than the amount needed for the season” as driving factors [9]. However, this assessment is largely unfounded and serves to divert critique away from the practices of the Israeli government that directly damage the natural environment. A botanist with a focus on za’atar, Nativ Dudai, explains in an interview that:

“No one talks about the fact that we, the Jewish [Israelis], destroy much more za’atar than the Arabs pick. Do you know how many great za’atar populations were uprooted by bulldozers? In Har Adar or Elyaqim interchange – locations with beautiful amounts of za’atar, and all of it is now gone. But the Arab? He picks five kilograms and gets a fine.” [10].

Expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and reconfiguration of nature serve to create a “nationalized landscape [mirroring] the state’s image” at the cost of the environment [4]. Traditional Palestinian foraging practices in contrast, are thoughtful of the environments they rely on and are rooted in regeneration. Rather than harming the plant, careful clipping of the tops of wild za’atar encourages growth and proliferation [4]. Banning za’atar and in the process framing Palestinians as destructors dismisses their deep knowledge and relationship with the natural land, and positions them such that their colonization is justified in an effort to “protect” the environment. The Israeli government’s project of “protection” produces a juxtaposition of “what is made extinct and what gets to live on;” za’atar lives while Palestinians are forgotten [4].

Fragmented Foraging, Fragmented Land

In the face of increasing Israeli encroachment and the ban on wild za’atar collection, Palestinians are still finding ways to forage. Through their experiences of fragmented foraging practices, the boundaries and blockades of the fragmented land of Palestine that restricts Palestinian movement are exposed [11]. Modern Palestine, especially the West Bank, is indeed fragmented into three areas: A, B, and C.

Area C in particular, which makes up 60% of the area in the West Bank and is under full Israeli control [2], highlights the ongoing “spaciocide,” a term coined by Sari Hanafi to describe the expulsion of Palestinians from their own land as a result of the rapid expansion of Israeli settlements [11]. The land of Area C is highly sought after by Palestinians because, compared to Area A and B, it retains the most native, untouched landscape, offering the best opportunities for foraging wild za’atar. Foraging here comes with high risks, however, due to increased surveillance and larger Israeli military presence [11]. The Israeli government also attempts to restrict foraging in Area C by sectioning off swaths of land for “nature reserves,” which in some cases, have just functioned to earmark plots for Israeli settlements [11]. Infrastructures like checkpoints and blocked roads prevent Palestinian mobility, and side effects of indus-

trialization, such as sewage run-off from settlements, render the land unusable for agriculture or foraging [2].

The struggle to forage for za'atar is synonymous with the struggle for Palestinian right to land. This is why “in Palestinian food talk, the land on which the food is grown is always highlighted because so much of their land itself has already been confiscated or is under threat” [2]. The words “local” and “foraged” take on poignant meaning when at any moment the land bearing the food could be seized or destroyed [2]. Plants like za'atar can be a tool to resist enforced land divides, symbolically and literally. The colonizer can restrict and take land from a people, but the seeds of wild plants can still spread beyond borders and boundaries, connecting a fragmented Palestinian land.

Za'atar as Resistance

There is great hope, resistance, and resilience within za'atar and its culinary traditions. Keenly aware of this, some agro-activists are realizing that national identity and cultural preservation is tightly bound to collective memory, which can be drawn from as a source of strength in resistance to oppression. Sharing foraged za'atar and other foods, and exchanging knowledge about Palestinian foodways, builds collective memory while simultaneously preserving ancient culinary knowledge. Importantly, these community experiences create spaces for people to imagine new futures for Palestine as they aim to celebrate the beauty and power of culinary tradition, rather than serve as a salvage practice to commemorate dying practices. With the roles of “host” or “guest” eclipsing that of “victim,” Palestinians are no longer constrained to the typecast of the suffering individual unable to rise against the control of the Israeli government [2]. This freedom is generative.

Eating and thinking with za'atar allows one to see that retaining and revitalizing culinary tradition allows for hope to “[sprout] from the ruins of occupation” [2]. In Meneley's analysis of “sprouting from ruins,” she draws upon Bettina Stoetzer's concept of ruderal ecology [11], which fittingly describes the potential for environments to grow and exist in otherwise hostile environ-

ments [2, 12]. Za'atar and other wild plants are one such example of ruderal ecology; their life amidst constant threats of eradication mirrors the same life of the Palestinian people, signaling promise for the future.

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PALESTINIAN CUISINE

GASTRONATIONALISM AS RESISTANCE

— By Leon Hernandez

Despite being such a small landmass, historic Palestine has held a vast range of microclimates, cultural and religious groups, and trading routes, resulting in an incredibly diverse regional cuisine. While port communities in Gaza City and Yaffa may eat sayadiyya (fried sea bass or guitarfish) daily, others farther inland in Khan Younis or Hebron may avoid seafood entirely, preferring instead ta-beekh bamia (okra stew). There are commonalities such as maqluba, which is relatively unique to the region of Palestine, but not many specific universals. Conversely, dishes like mulukhiyah, hummus and knafeh, which are claimed and celebrated by Palestinians, are ubiquitous throughout the Levant, North Africa, and the greater Arab World. These different dynamics make it difficult, and perhaps seemingly unnecessary, to identify a unified Palestinian cuisine; but in fact, cuisine is extremely consequential to the larger Palestinian national movement.

Gastronationalism is used to describe popular identification with the defined culinary history and practice of a nation and its people; it “signals the use of food production, distribution, and consumption to demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of national sentiments to produce and market food.” Though the term may suggest that a nation-state structure is required for the maintenance of a national identity and cuisine, Palestinian gastronational cultural and culinary cohesion certainly exists in the absence of a unified autonomous state, and is practiced by Palestinians under occupation and in exile. In the face of land and cultural disappropriation by the Israeli

state, the construction and continuous recreation of a cuisine unique to the Palestinian people acts as symbolic everyday resistance to the erasure of the indigenous population in the region.

Palestinians and Gastrocolonialism

Like other settler colonial projects, the political process of maintaining the Israeli state relies on the erasure, denial and appropriation of the Indigenous. Patrick Wolfe, a pioneering scholar in settler colonial, Indigenous and genocide studies, discusses how settler projects are established by installing a new, modern, and civilized culture in place of old, pre-modern, indigenous “habits”; the Indigenous, the non-White, the traditional and uncivilized are seen as easily and inconsequentially replaceable by the Colonizer. He defines a settler-colonial “logic of elimination,” which necessitates the Native’s elimination (culturally, existentially and otherwise) in order to establish the Modern. Just as the United States and Australia were established through the elimination, concentration and genocide of the Indigenous American and Aboriginal Australian peoples, Israel was established through the mass concentration and expulsion of Indigenous Palestinians from their land. Arab villages were emptied of their occupants through violence or intimidation, Jewish settlers were installed so the displaced couldn’t return, and the history of those villages before their resettlement was erased, notably through the renaming of Palestinian villages from Arabic to similar sounding Hebrew names. Resettlement and renaming exemplify an essential legitimizing element of eliminationism, the assimilation of indigenous history, society and

culture by the settler state. Culinarily, this dynamic is referred to as settler gastrocolonialism, the consumption and assimilation of the Native and their indigenous foodways by the settler state. Israeli cuisine is only as old as the Israeli nation-state, and its top-down construction has assimilated indigenous Arab meals, ingredients, cooking methods and agricultural techniques into its nationalist cultural representations. Israeli gastronationalism reflects the creation of a national culture and consciousness through settler colonialism and eliminationism. As such, the legitimization of Israeli national claim over assimilated indigenous cuisines necessarily reflects the delegitimation of Palestinian claims to land and statehood. Palestinian nationalism and resistance has coalesced in response to the colonial realities of Israel's establishment, and Palestinian gastronationalism is no different.

National cuisine is a ubiquitous form of everyday, banal nationalism, and is fundamental to a sense of national unity and the process of nation-building; people need to eat every day, and so will consume a piece of their nation every day. Especially in the postcolonial case, banal culinary nationalism helps to reinforce the newly forming state; but in the absence of a state, national cuisine can act as a form of banal nationalist resistance, and as a means of empowerment. Palestinian cuisine has been organically formed through nationalist struggle against Israeli colonialism and eliminationism, and symbolizes a unified collective, a whole, undivided, unbroken people. The narrative of Palestinian gastronationalism prevents the unchallenged appropriation of the Native by the Settler, and keeps increasingly fractured populations of Palestinians connected through the consumption and maintenance of a shared practice of care and identity.

Personal Expressions of Gastronationalism

To add to my theoretical framework for the importance of cuisine to the creation and maintenance of Palestinian culture and identity, I wanted to get a more

personal perspective on the symbolic meaning of gastronationalist sentiments to Palestinians. I chose to analyze 11 interviews with nine different chefs (two that have ever operated out of Israel or Palestine, three that have never been to Palestine, six that are banned from Israel and Palestine). From this analysis, I identified three major emotive themes around Palestinian gastronationalism: the search for meaning and connection in diaspora; the insistence on existence in the face of erasure; and a deep connection to the land that has been disrupted by occupation and exile.

Meaning and Meals in Diaspora

The first major theme was the search for meaning for those in the Palestinian diaspora. Every interviewee had some living memory of their family's expulsion from their ancestral homes. The largest expulsion, the 1948 Nakba (lit. catastrophe), is central to many narratives about Palestinian identity: "We became Palestinians the day we were severed from our country." Every chef was within one or two generations of their family's displacement, and all, including those that had never lived in or even been allowed to visit Palestine, felt a deep connection to their ancestry, and a feeling of "missing part to [their] identity." The emotional connection and comfort of food provides all these chefs with their strongest link to their identity. For those in exile or with no direct contact left with the actual land of Palestine, "food is sometimes one of the only things we still have." The comfort of home found in food transcends borders, and can transport people to a place they only hold in generational memory. Cuisine allows those in diaspora to connect themselves to their community, incorporating their inaccessible past and intangible national identity into their everyday lives.

The Audacity to Exist

The second major theme was that the simple proclamation of Palestinian culture and existence acts as a form of resistance. As chefs, the appropriation of historically Palestinian or generally Arab dishes and ingredients was perceived as

especially cruel, insulting and disrespectful, leaving many with a feeling of obligation to their people that they correct the record and reclaim their cuisine.

The naming and narrative of food is charged with meaning, including ownership, history and tradition, morality, and connection to the land, and it exists as a microcosm of the conflict between Israeli and Palestinian gastronationalisms. By calling giant couscous maftoul, one

Additionally, many of these chefs discussed their insistence on supporting local Palestinian producers and artisans whenever possible, in Palestine and abroad. Self-determination, though deprived in a concrete national sense, is practiced by seizing any opportunity at self-sufficiency in the face of occupation, even in the daily choice to buy from a familiar Palestinian farmer over the more widely accessible and consistent Israeli mass produce. The gastronationalist in-



Photo by Sanju Mupparaju

might be emphasizing the history and people of the region before the establishment of Israel; by calling it Israeli couscous, one may be invoking the ancient nation of Israel in relation to the modern Israeli nation-state. By calling falafel an Israeli national food, one is staking claim of a food that has historically been eaten throughout the Middle East for the modern nation-state of Israel. By calling maftoul, falafel, and other dishes as important Palestinian heritage foods, these chefs insist on the historic existence of their nation and people in the face of settler colonial eliminationism and assimilation.

stinct to support Palestinian over Israeli produce, which ostensibly come from the same source, perpetuates the existence of Palestinian trade, agriculture, and nation, and acts as a reciprocal performance of national identification and connection; “if we don’t support each other, who’s going to support us?”

Joy and Pain, Earth and Walls

The cuisine of Palestine is a diverse conglomeration of regional and familial traditions from pastoral, agricultural, seafaring, trading and nomadic people, all removed from their ways of life physically or socially through occupation, disen-

franchisement, and exile, by the founding of a nation on top of inhabited land. Consequently, the final major theme I observed was the intimate connections of these chefs to the seasons, the earth, and the living environment of Palestine. Reem Assil, despite living only in exile, holds a deep knowledge, appreciation, and care for the land: "I do think ... for Palestinians really the food is connected to the land, that's why the land is so important to us." Many Indigenous activists emphasize the connection of different marginalized indigenous communities around the world to the land their ancestors lived with; this emphasis not only asserts their history, but on a philosophical level, their right to the land, and the responsibility to the land neglected by settlers. Given their knowledge of and connection to the land, the segregation of these chefs from their foodways, their lack of access to ingredients, and the struggle of watching their land be stolen and abused is powerful. Seafood used to exist in Bethlehem's cuisine when Gaza was still accessible as a source of fish, "[but] with the construction of the segregation wall, with life being more limited by occupation, all of that just becomes non-realistic ... this occupation has changed the geography of produce." Because of the incredible disenfranchisement of Palestinians, food is essentially the only tangible reflection of their historical existence on the land of historic Palestine. "Our food is our last

frontier of existence... we don't have our land, we don't have our rights, ... [so] if you take away our cuisine, then maybe we didn't exist as a people, right?" When all that many Palestinians have left of their native ways of life is their food, their cuisine becomes a vital method of defiance and revolt. The formation of strong gastronationalism within a larger Palestinian nationalist movement comes as a result of the compounding violence, assimilation, humiliation and erasure coming from their occupiers.

Palestinian gastronationalism, the creation and maintenance of a Palestinian national cuisine and food culture, is an essential avenue of everyday resistance and the banal performance of the intangible national whole of Palestine for displaced, dispossessed, and discontented Palestinians. As long as Palestinians exist in Israel, Palestine, or in diaspora, they will continue to insist on and fight for their existence, and for the ability to freely return to the land their ancestors were displaced from. Palestinian nationalism was born from Israeli nationalism and colonization, and as such will always exist in opposition to it.

The chefs quoted/referenced are: Fadi Kattan, Sami Tamimi, Reem Kassis, Joudie Kalla, Haya Bishouty, Laila El-Haddad, the Bearded Bakers (Ameer and Joey El-Issa), Nasser Jaber, Reem Assil



Photo by Malek Ibrahim



Photo by Mani Mengiste

THE PEOPLE'S POETRY

— By Isa Liggans,
Layal Barakat,
Eesha Banerjee,
Prahlad Iyengar,
& Zehra Imam

The encampment gave space for us to express the depths of our emotion as we center Palestine and work toward global liberation. Equally essential as revolutionary rage, grief and love are tools which generate radical upheaval. When expressed fully, whether through fiery speech, through poignant art, or through inspiring action, these emotions catalyze the movement. The encampment hosted events to share poetry, to create artwork, to write collectively as a community - together, we learned to weave and shape our words around our core message of liberation. Below are some pieces of poetry from members of the encampment.



YOU WILL FACE MEN

— By Isa Liggans

Reality check

I'm mad, not upset
That my skin, brain, and faith makes up a
Triple threat
And all the talk about peace and dialogue
From the necks
Of the same so-called people that would
Rather I forget
I'm not surprised
But I can't say I'm not impressed
By the ignorance displayed by those who
Claim to be the best
While my ancestors built the places that their
Crooked leaders rest

But I guess

The situation is complex
When children die tonight and their parents
die next
For a crime of existence that I haven't heard
of yet
But apparently it's enough to put a country
under duress
White and blue flags
make my people pack their bags
While my country adds the red and
Says that things are just too bad
Bombs and missiles by the dozens
Killing wives, children, and husbands
They call us antisemitic
But when I checked
explosions don't ask if you're Jewish or Muslim

Puzzled

They speak of talk but then they bring the
muzzles
They say their hands are tied
But then I must be seeing double
Because if someone don't sign the checks
Then do buildings just fall to rubble?
If I don't open my mouth
Then will we all be in trouble?

Pause

I tighten my jaw as I stare into my screen
Children in their streets
protesting for something to eat
While the enemy holds lingerie as a trophy for
their defeat
And now they say that I'm the enemy?
It just makes me want to scream!

How much could I take
How much is at stake
I never wanted to believe my world
Could be this fake!

And who am I to trust
When my heart's about to bust
And those who smile in my face
Put my family under dust

They condemn me for acting up
When help won't come down
So when is enough enough

Or will you pretend you're profound

I'm astounded
Confounded
By your arrogance and pride

Must feel good with a couple billion dollars on
your side
And what blood won't wash
Then the propaganda hides
And it's lie on top of lie
If it was written in the sky
Then I wouldn't be surprised
If you were first to deny

But I decline
And that's fine
You know why?
I don't need you
I'm sick of plastic smiles
And diversity check see-though,
Policies and demands
"Best interest" commands
When you want to imprison the tongue and the
mind of a man
In his own land
Do you understand?

Nah,
Probably not
But you know what's real
You'll never beat a people of
Hasbunallah wa ni'mal wakil
Done deal.



Wait -
What do I hear?
Is it strength
Is it courage?
Is it resistance
and endurance?
To a land that's used education
As an ideological deterrent?

That asks me to die for a flag
That for me it never could,
Or to a leader that wouldn't want me dead?
-nah, they probably would
Cuz if they'd kill grandkids over seas
And their kids on their own soil
Why not make up some reason for us
And cook us all in the oil?

Hang us from the trees
Burn our houses to the ground
Sell our children up the river
But hey, they say they want us now

To build a new kind of nation
Vote for them to be in station
Make this country great again,
Yessuh, and report to which plantation?

Every inch that we gained
Was taken, never gave
Now I'm supposed to be ok
With genocide in my name?



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

Used and abused for centuries
Can't you see?

Now they wonder why I think
They'll turn the target back to me

Do their bidding while they're sitting
The cowardice masked with superiority
Now I see how on the front lines of our revolution
Was an enslaved minority

But don't let me spoil your fun
Your big machine guns
Killing families on the run
I guess it's a sport to some

But when the money comes
And you leave this world with none
Man, then who looks dumb -

Us with a heart
Or you without one?

They'd rather tell you
"Be yourself"
Than ever want to hear your voice

They'd rather
Put you at the table
Than ever let you make a choice

The same adults
You were trained to trust
Now put you into chains

Because it seems
they're too afraid
Of you growing any brains



We've got a population to pacify
And a name to maintain
And if you're not on the agenda
Then look out for the planes

Does it make you feel good?
Does it make you feel nice?
That you can kill 100s of people
All in one night?

At the push of a button
You can detonate a city, see
But, that's the questions they don't ask us in history

So now who do I trust?
Is it you?
Is it us?
Is it me who was lied to
So I'd believe it's such?

If I asked for honesty,
Then is that too much?
Do I feel a lack of sympathy,
Or is that part of growing up?



Untouched.
Unphased.
That's the American way.
Every battle has a win,
Every matter, a say.

For a mind so congested
When every word is contested
I'm really interested
How a little clarity
Brings my thoughts unarrested
Feels super sweet, and now I'm too invested
And maybe I'll continue on,
Now that I suggest it

I just opened up a page and the words started to spill
But how long have I felt this and never addressed it, still I,
Will I,
Will we,
Even survive?

Of course,
When you're supported by
the most high
Who was with me long before I
Could even realize
Now the strength that I feel
Makes me want to just fly...
The enemy is ahead,
And we don't know how long to travel
But if we can stick out a little longer

Then I know we'll win this battle

And around the world people of all kinds
Rise to our aid
In the days we're in the streets
And in the nights we go to pray

We're in the lobbies and the offices
The schools and the conferences
The parents and the children
The workers and some bosses, and
If you go online
We're in your feeds and your inboxes
Because when we stand this United,
Man, I wish they'd try to stop us

I feel strength
I feel power
This is our finest hour

Band together to take what's ours
While Allah's mercy showers

And just watch how mountains turn to molehills
And we climb the tallest towers

And they'll never outlast
because their cause isn't just
We stand for what's right
Which is like gold to their rust

And when they ask if it's our business,
Then yeah, say it's a must
And we won't stop until we've won
Or we're dust

Break our bones with your policy
Try to stall us with bureaucracy
Set fire to our names
And silence us with your "democracy"
Spit on us with hypocrisy
Cut us with ferocity
But what doesn't kill us makes us stronger
And are we stronger than you?
Obviously

So call your friends
And still your breath
Because we bring you the fight
You will face men
Who love death
As much as you love life

HANDS

Prahlad Iyengar —

One over another.

Wrung together.

Resting underneath a dimpled smile.

Pausing at the small of the back,
guiding softly toward the door.

Raised to the heavens.

Lingering on the deep teakwood coffin,
tapping one final refrain.

Joined in prayer.

Punching up toward the hovering thunderclouds.

Brushing through the hair of a lover.

Picking up and setting down.

Rubbing hard for warmth
on a cool spring night.

Intertwined gently on a pillow
pulsing ever more gently until dawn.

Shackled to a post, limp at the wrist,
waiting for reprieve.

Spread wide for an embrace.

Tucked into a lap,
tremoring with suppressed hope.

Clenched in anticipation.

Folded on the breast of the deceased,
each wrinkle a memory to be cherished.



Photo by Ellie Montemayor



Photo by Ellie Montemayor



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

HONEY

— Layal Barakat

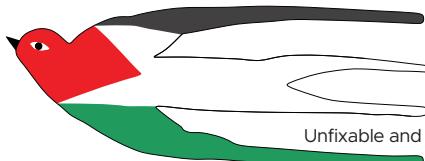
Institutions move on quietly,
Like honey slowly moving
to cover dips and curves on its surface
Before anyone notices.
But we notice.

Family and friends left behind to mourn
Pick up the pieces of life that once burned bright
We wait to see if they'll acknowledge the source of our
collective pain
But they blame nobody, they blame everybody,
anybody but the somebody that is the elephant in the
room



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

And the real-life supervillains murdering people without thought
are chalked up to made-up monsters under the bed
We must be imagining these horrors in our head
All the people shot and left for dead
Are just our imaginations
Are just our people
Are just who we are



Unfixable and inevitable and it's the same propaganda every day

Violence
is in the blood of the victims
they say

Resistance
is in the blood of the victims
we say



Pouring out of their wounds into the streets
Red footprints and dusty feet
Carry bodies to 6-foot-deep holes
Throw dirt onto people you used to know
And watch their bodies disappear into the earth
“Back where they came from”
Like moments ago when you watched their life leave,
their soul leave its worldly home



I've swallowed the rock in my throat
and all of the leaves around me are
trembling
the time has come I guess
for the indignation to pass from me to the
humid air
that wraps its arms around my shoulders
and pulls me home
there's nothing to cry about
I know that it will rain



Photo by Zehra Imam

EVERYWHERE I LOOK, I SEE [A FREE] PALESTINE

— Zehra Imam

Dear Falasteen,

Ever since I left your arms last summer, I have started to see you everywhere I go.
I feel your warm embrace in the eyes of students who stand steadfast, ready to protect you world wide.

I see the folds of your beauty in every keffiyeh worn on the shoulders of those who shoulder your pain with you.

Soon, I hope to return to you, and express my love in person but until then, even the skies I scan remind me of the white phosphorous of Rafah, the 34,000+ dead plus more under the rubble plus more dying of starvation plus more being targeted and killed in the West Bank plus more being punished for simply uttering the words 'Free Palestine.' I mean, how dare we, right?

Ya Falasteen, the word Nour means light, and it is the name of my friend, and since you know her, you know that she is light and that there are millions full of light just like her who reside within your womb, who deserve to live and dream and soar and bloom.

This is why we, too, have become the people of the camps.

Outside building 48 named Kresge at MIT, we set up our tents, hanging lamps Lifta, Jerusalem, Jenin, Deir Yassin, each village, each city, each town together on one vast lawn, resembling the beauty of your every crevice, the laughter and joy of every playground We bring in the memory of Hind Rajab, the ferocity and truth-telling of Bisan,

It means that the violence we see from afar lighting up your skies to take away life starts showing up in all its forms here, too. The skunkwater and teargas of Aida refugee camp makes its way to the shores of college campuses, too. The surveillance you face, we now face it too. The night raids that jolt each person from sleepless nights now jolt us, too.



Photo by Zehra Imam



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

On any given day, I hear helicopters and drones encircling us. I see Palestinian flags being flown at every corner. I sense calmness from every marshal and medic and member of our community who has shown up to offer help, and I am constantly inspired to become better, to be more expansive as we work together towards justice and liberation for you, and through it, for us all. The people of the camps remind me of the friends I made upon your landscapes because their work was rooted in pure and radical love.

No matter the unjust suspensions, no matter each eviction, no matter the violence of every arrest, we love you, ya Falasteen, we are here for you, and we will carry you to the cradles of justice as you find in all fullness your freedom



FIGHTING RACISM
THROUGH **COALITION**

Through the development of the encampment, our political and social goals developed with our newfound community. Thanks to the wonderful mental health work of the SAGE care team and the dual focus on political struggle and sustainability of the camp, we realized that our Coalition is based on radical love for one another. In setting that aspiration, we seek to dismantle all forms of hatred that attempt to divide our Coalition - in particular, the racist white supremacy which dominates so much of Western

**“ THERE ARE DECADES
WHERE NOTHING HAPPENS;
AND THERE ARE WEEKS
WHERE DECADES HAPPEN.**

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin



culture. Nowhere is this more apparent in America than in over-policing and the prison-industrial complex, which are historical extensions of the slave-catching networks of the nineteenth century. During the SAGE era, we saw a significant increase in police presence on campus, including cops with guns, digital and camera surveillance, profiling community members wearing keffiyehs, brutal arrests, and direct confrontations which exposed their racism. Thanks to our community's core value of safety, we were always able to keep ourselves safe; however, this trend indicates that MIT is more willing to invoke state violence than listen to its students. The week of May 6th saw the installation of a checkpoint and the subsequent uprising of the students to tear down MIT's apartheid fence; four instances of state troopers being brought to campus; a brutal set of arrests at the Stata garage for peaceful protest; and finally, on May 10th at 4 AM, the sweeping of the encampment and arrest of ten more peaceful students by nearly 200 state troopers, Cambridge PD, and MIT PD. The following pieces speak to policing and racism at home and abroad.

ANTIRACISM

... OR OPPRESSION

MIT MUST CHOOSE

— Black Graduate Students Association

Just after 5 p.m. on November 9th the MIT community bore witness to a scene that belongs in a dystopian fever dream, not a 21st century hall of learning. Dozens of MIT police officers stormed into Lobby 7, batons and pepper spray at the ready. Their target? A peaceful sit-in by students protesting the university's complicity in the genocide of Palestinians [1]. MIT police stood guard at all points of entry and barricaded the peaceful student demonstrators inside; even denying re-entry if students left Lobby 7 to access food, water or bathroom facilities. The next day, MIT police stood guard outside 10-250 [2] —where a pre-approved series of Palestine-related educational programming (documentary screenings, lectures, and teach-ins) was scheduled to take place—and barred anyone from entering.

This was not the first time MIT police have oppressed members of our community under the guise of “public safety”. From enduring a SWAT raid in dorms to having guns drawn at us in parking lots, Black and brown members of the MIT community have long faced pervasive racial profiling and interrogation ([3], see minutes 33:00 – 43:00). The present escalation of oppressive policing that is being used to target students, faculty, and staff protesting genocide is rooted in the MIT administration’s failure to listen to Black students who have long fought to address anti-Black racism at MIT. The university cannot plausibly create an anti-racist environment while continuing down this path; now, MIT must choose.

Empty Commitments to address anti-Black racism and public safety



Photo courtesy of The Tech

Nearly 4 years ago, students from the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) and the Black Student Union (BSU) released the petition to Support Black Lives (SBL) [4] at MIT. The murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd in the summer of 2020 seemingly illuminated the reality that violence and racism are inherent to policing itself [5] and that we must reimagine public safety in the U.S. The SBL petition was our way to bring this moment to MIT, and it was met with overwhelming support with over 5,000 individual signatures from students, staff, faculty, and others.

One of the primary goals of the SBL petition was to reduce the scale of policing on MIT’s campus and reallocate resources to build other structures better equipped to address certain public safety concerns. In July 2020, former President Reif ensured that MIT would respond to this historic moment by creating a working group to reimagine public safety. This working group, which was composed of students, faculty, administrators, and MIT police officers, made a number of recommendations [6]. One proposal, put forth in response to the MIT police department’s (MITPD) self-reported statistics that over 90% of calls for

service are non-violent concerns such as stolen bicycles, was to establish unarmed community service officers (CSOs) and/or clinicians, who would respond to routine calls and mental health crises. This would



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

have narrowed the scope of policing on our campus and prevented the current use of police force to surveil and intimidate MIT community members. The working group also recommended increased transparency on police policies and procedures, and a community advisory group to provide feedback regarding campus safety. None of these recommendations have been fully realized.

MIT's (in)actions show how little the Institute values the community members that devoted over a year of labor to the 'Re-imaging Public Safety' working group, and the Black and brown communities chronically and disproportionately impacted by policing. MIT's (in)actions reveal that the university's 2020 pledge to "address systemic racism at MIT" [7] was only opportunistic alignment during the momentary "trendiness" of antiracism. MIT's true values are revealed in the current moment, when the Institute is faced with a groundswell of justified anti-genocide protest.

MIT's Response to Peaceful Protest Against Israel's Genocide of Palestinians in Gaza

Over the past six months, students, staff, and faculty have raised alarms about the Institute's complicity in the maiming, death, displacement, and starvation of 2.2 million Palestinians in Gaza given MIT's direct and unique research ties to the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Rather than grappling with this serious issue, nearly 4 years after MIT's empty commitments to addressing sys-

temic racism and policing, the Institute has turned to using its police force to heighten the surveillance and intimidation of its own community members.

Without any attempt to gather broad community input, MIT has permanently stationed police officers in Lobby 7. These officers have reportedly conducted random and potentially racially motivated MIT ID checks that resemble racist Stop and Frisk laws [8]. Dozens of cameras have also been installed on campus (in Lobby 7, in front of 77 Massachusetts Avenue, and along the path to the student center) without notification to community members. Police officers have consistently been stationed outside all events organized by student groups aiming to educate the community about the ongoing Palestinian Genocide; resembling the racist policies that the Reimagining Public Safety group recommended [6] we discard. The Institute's emergency alert system is constantly misused to notify the community of peaceful demonstrations passing through Massachusetts Avenue. In short, the facade of addressing antiracism and reimagining public safety has come crashing down.

MIT Has A Choice To Make

The suppression of anti-genocide and anti-Zionism protest inherently relies on and reinscribes racist policies, procedures, and policing. This reliance on policing has cre-



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

ated fertile ground for the violent scenes we have witnessed at Columbia, NYU, USC, University of Texas at Austin [9], University of Minnesota, Emory [10], and in our own backyard at Emerson and Northeastern. If MIT is to seriously embrace its professed commitment to address systemic racism [11], MIT must abandon its carceral-sur-

veillance, policing, and punishment—stance and engage with members of the MIT community in good faith. This means reinstating the Coalition Against Apartheid, rescinding the racist and unprecedented protest policy, and avoiding further police escalation. It also means engaging with and honoring the MIT community's collective demands—to divest [12] from research and financial relationships with the Israeli military and publicly call for a ceasefire. Finally, to affect long-lasting anti-racist change, MIT must re-allocate MTPD's budget to develop evidence-based [13] structures proven to create real holistic safety.

We have laid out some steps on the path to anti-racist actions that MIT can take if antiracism, not oppression, is the value MIT wants to reflect. Every member of MIT's community has a choice in this matter and must decide to either let oppression permeate our culture or take anti-racist action to build a better world. Now, MIT must choose.

This piece is cross-published in the Faculty Newsletter and The Tech.

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People breaking through fencing that Police had erected around the Palestinian Solidarity encampment at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to join them in their protest. Beautiful.
- GH 2024

WHICH INDIA?

Rin Desikan —



India stands with the IOF, says Modi. He says this while sending masses of weapons to the IOF, second to only Russia in abundance; he says this while buying back weapons from the IOF; he says this while stoking fear in his citizens — we are both victims of Islamic terrorism.

Which India is standing with the IOF?

I was thirteen when I saw Modi elected. The other party is corrupt, I was told, by my very Hindu parents. This could be good.

I didn't really have time to hope, as he showed his true Islamophobic colors to me very quickly.

My childhood best friend was Pakistani, and we had been friends since before I knew anything, anything about the rift our friendship bridged. When I learned people of Pakistani descent weren't allowed in India, my first reaction was, why isn't B allowed? We were the same, we shared everything with each other, why couldn't she see my grandparents?

Learning more about the conflict did not change my opinion — rather, it filled me with rage towards Modi, and the people who were inflicting this hate. Didn't they see how much more we had in common with each other? How we had to stand together, to prevent white colonization and its aftereffects from taking over our culture?

India stands with the IOF, they say, and I remember my time in Hyderabad, a city with a huge Muslim population. Every time we went to visit them, we landed in the city on Eid. The city was alight with celebration as we drove into my grandfather's house. We went shopping for clothes, buying kurtas and shararas, and visited a small roadside shop to buy the best tea I have ever tasted, from a Muslim man who has been there, selling tea, for ages. There is magic in his Hyderabadi chai.

India stands with the IOF, Modi says, as the IOF calls Palestinians 'animals', as they call them 'children of the darkness', and I know our ancestors are screaming from their next life. Doesn't he remember that we were once the animals in the eyes of the British? Even if he doesn't, our forefathers and ancestors do remember. Violence has a memory.

India stands with the IOF, they say, and the right-wing Hindu nationalists in India take it as a call to arms. If the IOF is killing Muslims, why can't they? So they organize boycotts against Muslim-owned businesses. This is what they are empowering.

India stands with the IOF, they say, forgetting the violence that followed 9/11.

As if hate crimes differentiated between Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs — no, they tormented everyone with brown skin. Be careful, kannama, my mom would always tell me while we were at the airport. She never spoke about her experiences, but the fear ran through us all the same.

India stands with the IOF, they say, and we hear their implicit whispers. India is a Hindu state. India stands against Muslims.

So I ask again, which India is standing with the IOF?

Because it's certainly not the Muslims in India, numbering 204 million, who are also being called terrorists for just existing. The ones who have a vibrant and storied history in the land we share, who cannot be removed from the fabric of India, no matter how hard the BJP tries.

And it's not the rest of us, who see these atrocities being committed in the name of Hinduism, and can't live with it. The other ones whom Hindu nationalism has hurt. I look towards Ambedkarite teachings in times like these — if anyone knows about liberation from Hindu nationalism, it is the Dalit community. This is not the first time people have been murdered in the name of Hinduism.

It's not even my mom, or my grandmother, who are devout Hindu Brahmins. They may not grasp the depths of the institutional injustices, but even they see the murder of Muslims in India, of the Palestinian people, they know it goes against their Hindu values of non-violence and peace. I beg the rest of Hindutva India — if they can get it, so can you. Murdering children in mass is never, ever excused by religion.

The India I care about, the one in my heart, will always, always stand against violence, against the brutal murder of a nation (of brown people), against the Islamophobia that has taken over the world since. The India in my heart will always, always stand with the people of Palestine.



Photo by Ellie Montemayor



Photo by Andres Salcedo



Photo by Ellie Montemayor



Photo by Andres Salcedo



Photo by Ellie Montemayor



Photo by Andres Salcedo

PEOPLE'S GRADUATION CLASS NOTES

Though we had to say goodbye to the physical encampment, we will never lose the community we built. Though many members of our community will graduate from this institute this month, we will never lose the bonds of solidarity which made us such a formidable force on campus. The lessons we've learned together and the experience of sharing in the struggle, both with our labor and with our hearts, will remain with us as we go forward into our next steps. Some of our wonderful graduating class have written reflections and messages of solidarity and encouragement, which we present with honor in the following pages.

NADINE ZAZA

**MS & ME INTEGRATED DESIGN + MANAGEMENT
ENCAMPMENT CLASS OF 2024**

To my academic mentors and peers at MIT, especially those I stood alongside at the Scientist Against Genocide Encampment, your resilience in the face of immense suppression, suspensions, arrests, and dehumanization will forever propel me toward the unyielding truth we need in this world. I am profoundly grateful for your unwavering commitment to challenging and expanding my understanding of cultural preservation, identity development, and activism. Your guidance and encouragement have been crucial in navigating the complex landscape of education and heritage preservation, particularly within an institution that has yet to acknowledge the Genocide in Gaza. Thank you for your pivotal role in my journey. I am forever grateful for your principled and beautiful resolve in the face of state-sanctioned violence and institutional complicity.

Lastly, I thank all those in solidarity with Gaza and all oppressed communities around the world. Your commitment to justice, freedom, and equity motivates me to contribute to a world where every culture's potential can be fully realized, respected, and celebrated. May this MIT thesis serve as a beacon of hope and light in times of academic injustice and indifference to the suffering that pervades our world, particularly at MIT. Let us steadfastly protect our collective human narrative through academic expression and deepen our empathy for those we have silenced.

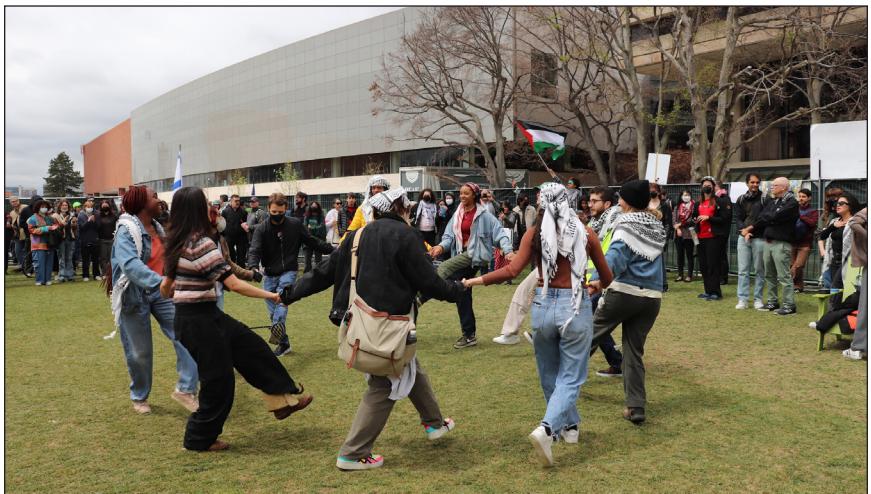


Photo by Sam Ihns

MALEK IBRAHIM

**MS MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
ENCAMPMENT CLASS OF 2024**

To the brave students, faculty, and staff that stood up for Gaza, even in the face of suspension, violent police arrests, and ridicule and provocation from counter-protestors, I will never forget the resilience and resolve you showed time and time again. Even after the university suppressed us and tried to silence us at every step, you all continued to come back stronger and organized so effectively. Truly, if your organization skills can be put towards research, I can only imagine the amazing contributions you all will have to your communities and humanity as a whole. I pray that all of us can continue to stand up for what's right, that we can continue to be guided towards the Truth, and that Justice can be brought for the children, men, women, and disabled peoples of Gaza, and all other parts of the world. I will always stand in solidarity with oppressed people, and as long as we are together nothing can stop us.

OMAR DAHLEH

**BS COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
ENCAMPMENT CLASS OF 2024**

To my brave brothers and sisters who I had the privilege of standing alongside throughout the Scientists Against Genocide Encampment,

Your courage and selflessness inspires me day in and day out. Your actions, from your refusal to yield and compromise even an inch on justice, to your toppling of the physical barriers erected to destroy our solidarity spaces, to your stand, back-straight and chin held high against the full might of the American police and its weapons, will be etched into my mind until my last days on this earth.

Though it is difficult to believe that our actions do cause ripples that move us towards a free Palestine, I can tell you that this Palestinian heart has never experienced this much hope for the future. I used to say it, but now I mean it: I can't wait to see you all in a free Palestine.

Most people believe that in the long run, humanity will improve for the better. They are often wrong in saying this. If they are true, it's only because of your hearts and voices that force this cruel world to bend towards justice. Thank you for being the siblings, parents, and unwavering resistance for a cause we thought to be orphan.

DEEPIKA RAMAN

S.M. TECHNOLOGY AND POLICY PROGRAM

CLASS OF 2024

Excerpt from Acknowledgment Page in Thesis: “Empowering Community Driven Determination of Values for Language Model Alignment”

My final thanks are owed to the Scientists Against Genocide Encampment at Kresge that made it possible to keep going at a time like this and served as the only site of moral reflection and courage on an otherwise stifling and complicit campus. Your solidarity and collective struggle provided the nourishment that sustained us through this final stretch- the kind of care only community can offer. Your dedication to liberation was an honor to witness and will serve as a lifelong inspiration.

CHRISTIAN CMEHIL-WARN

S.M. TECHNOLOGY AND POLICY PROGRAM,

S.M. ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING COMPUTER SCIENCE

CLASS OF 2024

We built something beautiful and powerful here. The admin can take down our tents, throw away our signs, and kick us off of campus. But they can never take away this experience from us. They can never take away the bonds we've built, the memories we've made, or the lessons we've learned. The encampment is over, but onward, our intifada fights for the liberation of Palestine, as we must. I'm excited to see what comes next from the liberationists here at MIT.

I am so honored to have played a small part in this encampment. I attended my first-ever Passover seder. I ate wonderful maqluba and learned how to (passably?) dabke. I witnessed brilliant people's acts of courage and savvy, all aligned with the goal of liberation. Even as many of us move on in life, the community that we have is something to be proud of and something to sustain. We are building something beautiful and powerful rooted in the liberation of all peoples.

Solidarity forever!

JESS COHEN

B.S. PHYSICS

CLASS OF 2024

I am so thankful, grateful, and full of love for everyone here and everyone who has been working towards liberation while also working towards getting our degrees. There is so much resilience and support here as a community and it's a beautiful model for the future. I feel uplifted and inspired every day seeing fellow comrades fight in the belly of the beast against oppressive structures. It is an honor to stand with you all and I hope to one day meet again in a free Palestine.

I keep in my heart, mind, and soul the people suffering under imperialism and occupation and I pledge to always be moving in a direction towards universal liberation. You are my compass and I promise to follow and support in any way possible wherever you lead. Free Palestine, Free Sudan, Free Congo, Free Haiti; liberation to the oppressed everywhere and power to the revolutionaries.

With love.

ISHITA BHIMAVARAPU

B.S. MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

CLASS OF 2024

"Love has never been a popular movement and no one's ever wanted really to be free. The world is held together, really it is, held together, by the love and the passion of a very few people." - James Baldwin

To the people at the encampment and everyone who has been organizing restlessly for years and months around Palestine and liberation, thank you for holding the world together. It is such a relief that no matter what the action is or how it plays out, there are people willing to take it because of their love for humanity. You've all inspired me to become a braver, better person and no degree could ever compete for the things that the encampment and its community have taught me. Love you all <3



Photo by Sam Ihns

HAJAR ALRIFAI

MS ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES

CLASS OF 2024

Our friends at the Funambulist once eloquently wrote, “Let’s face it, architecture is settler colonialism’s best friend.” From the destruction of homes and neighborhoods to the construction of apartheid walls, prison towers, and plantations, architecture has always been a key tool in the colonizers belt. MIT admin’s refusal to divest and its brutal repression of students only reminds us of the academic institution’s violent role in the architecture of oppression.

It is heavy to close this chapter in our education knowing that our peers and educators in Gaza have been robbed of this milestone. There are no universities left in Gaza. It is difficult to write about futures of any kind while a genocide is taking place in front of our eyes despite the ongoing outcry of the global majority, but if history has taught us anything, it is that the systems of oppression across the world are tentacles of the same beast, thus our struggle for liberation is also interlinked and collective.

Today I feel so much grief, but also gratitude. I’ve learned more about land, kinship, community, and emancipatory architecture in this encampment than I did in seven years of architecture school. This community showed the world what a liberated Palestine could look like. I will cherish and carry these lessons with me forever.

DAVID BERKINSKY

PHD IN CHEMISTRY

CLASS OF 2024

To my friends in the Coalition for Palestine, thank you for being a guiding light for good in this world, and for giving me hope in a time when it has been hard to feel hopeful. When I listen to all of you, coming from a wide variety of lived experiences, I know deep in my heart that we are on the right side of history. There is no amount of repression of our movement that will ever stop us from eliminating the complicity of our institutions in oppression of all people across the world. The Coalition for Palestine and the Scientists Against Genocide Encampment are powerful demonstrations of how our moral clarity and righteous anger turn into direct action.

I will forever feel the power that we wield as a collective. I will forever remember the looks on the MIT administrators' faces when they realized they have lost control. They know they cannot continue to uphold these crumbling, morally bankrupt institutions. They know this is a losing battle. The Coalition for Palestine and the people across the world, fighting against imperialist oppression, will never stop.

Thank you for being in such a loving and supporting community. I love you all. This is only the beginning!!!



Photo by Richard Solomon

DARSH GREWAL

B.S. MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

CLASS OF 2024

Thank you to my encampment family for being the silver lining we needed during the last 8 months. When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was losing faith in humanity, you gave me hope. When I was on the verge of tears for the children in Gaza, you gave me reasons to smile and laugh. When I was arrested, you bailed me out!



Photo by Prahlad Iyengar

The community we built here was the most loving, open, and proactive that I've seen at MIT. You don't normally make this many new close friends in April of your senior year, but I'm so glad I got to meet all of you.

Keep up the good fight!

DAUD SHAD

MASTER IN CITY PLANNING

CLASS OF 2024

I'm so inspired by the tireless activism and courage of my peers during this time. The Scientists Against Genocide Encampment was a remarkable statement of global solidarity and a place of genuine community building and care. I'm grateful to have witnessed some of the important conversations and actions that took place there. The encampment really stood as a beacon of hope within an institution that has failed its own basic values. The student movement remains undeterred by suppression and continues to provide MIT with clear ways to calibrate a moral compass.

Many thanks to all of the students and community members who have encouraged me to be more considerate, bold, and active in the pursuit of justice.

May we see a free Palestine.

Salam.

GABRIELLA MARTINI

MASTER IN CITY PLANNING
CLASS OF 2024

To Palestine. To all Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, to the 48ers, and to the many more Palestinians who live in diaspora: We will keep fighting for you. Through everything the MIT Coalition for Palestine has done this year, we have always kept all of you and the immense suffering being inflicted on Gaza at the forefront of our minds. Your insistence on your right to live with dignity is a reminder to all of us to keep fighting to stop the genocide and end the occupation, even when it seems the odds are against us. Please know that we will continue to stand in solidarity with you, even after those of us who graduate move on to new cities, schools, and jobs.

To my friends in the Coalition for Palestine and to many others who stood in solidarity with the Scientists Against Genocide Encampment for more than seventeen days: It has given me so much hope to see so many students using their power to try to move towards a kind of peace that one could describe as the “presence of justice”. I’ve spent much of this year with Martin Luther King Jr.’s Letter from a Birmingham Jail bouncing around in my head. I’ve been reflecting on the ways in which we have brought the “constructive nonviolent tension” that King described onto MIT’s campus this year. Everytime I have read Sally’s emails or listened to faculty bemoaning the disruptive nature of protests on campus, I have been reminded of King’s excoriation of “the white moderate, who is more devoted to order than to justice.” I have also been reminded of King’s insistence that “Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come.”

The resonance of King’s words is a reminder of the interconnectedness of the struggles for liberation fought by so many people around the world. In the face of so much struggle, I am immensely grateful for the family we created at the encampment and beyond. Like many of you, I have spent much of this year overwhelmed with grief. And yet, I can rarely remember feeling such collective determination.

To those who will still be on campus next year: I cannot wait to see you give MIT hell. I’ll be cheering you on from New York City. Just remember, that you, the people, have the power.

In solidarity and with overwhelming love and appreciation.

BIANCA LEPE

**PHD BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING
CLASS OF 2024**

Thank you to my fellow comrades in the MIT SAGE encampment - you have all inspired me and helped me be a braver person.

In the face of an Institution that upholds genocide, financially and through its research, we remember to form unconditional solidarity. Our community continually fights for empathy, justice, and the liberation of the oppressed.

I am proud and grateful to have participated in our encampment. The community we built was unparalleled. It was a place of learning, growth, joy, support, kinship, organization, and resistance. Thank you to the many folks who made this possible.

It has given me so much hope to see my friends, fellow students, and others who resist all forms of oppression - colonialism, imperialism, white supremacy. Let us make good trouble for as long as we live.

Free Sudan! Free Congo! Free Palestine! Free all oppressed people everywhere; no one is free until we are all free.

ASYA AIZMAN

**MASTER IN CITY PLANNING
CLASS OF 2024**

To the Coalition for Palestine, thank you for your bravery, your wisdom, your strength, your hope. May the walls of colonization and oppression crumble the world over as they did on May 6th.

Till collective liberation.



Photo by Prahlad Iyengar

AUSTIN COLE

MASTER IN CITY PLANNING & MBA

CLASS OF 2024

To Palestine; to the people of Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the occupied territories; to all Palestinians globally — your resistance, love and humanity has been a compass guiding me and many others in our struggle for liberation. Your sacrifice is incalculable and we will always remember. It is your right and the right of all oppressed peoples – from Haiti and the Congo to Mississippi and Sudan to Cuba and Puerto Rico – to resist.

To the Palestinian Resistance that has reignited a flame stretching across time and space from Gaza to MIT, toward global liberation. Your embers have spread to thousands of communities like our own, birthing the Coalition for Palestine, the Scientists Against Genocide Encampment, the student intifada. I thank you for the courage and hope that your resistance has gifted us all, for the community that your example has inspired.



Photo by Ellie Montemayor

And what a community this is! Comrades, friends, family — the SAGE inspires me so deeply and shows the world how to materialize revolutionary love and solidarity. Time and time again we witnessed the fascistic impulses of our society and institute try to destroy what became a beloved community to us and many others. While they deconstructed its physical form, they can never take away the connection, the power, the community that we built. Our collective action and spirit has held steadfast against countless attacks, and our struggle endures. That power now lives in and between each of us, and I will take each of you in my heart as the fight for liberation continues.

Hasta la victoria siempre.

NOUR MAALOUF

BS MECHANICAL ENGINEERING AND DESIGN

C4P CLASS OF 2024

To the encampment family,

Like all of you this past year, I have felt grief and helplessness like never before. The very same actions you are being suspended, evicted, and arrested for are what bring us inspiration and hope that justice will prevail. You created a space that felt safe even when surrounded by bad-intentioned agitators, cops, and administrators. You protected each other. They tried to barricade you in but your passion knows no limits.

At the encampment, it did not matter your age, affiliation, religion, or nationality. Only one thing mattered: your values and passion for the liberation of all oppressed peoples. What else matters when you know someone is selflessly sacrificing themselves for people half a world away?

I can't wait for the day we say we did it – when we reunite to celebrate in a free Palestine.

BILAL DAQQAH

M.ENG COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

CLASS OF 2024

There are not enough thanks or words to honor those who protested and stood against the world's unjust systems, risking everything they have. No words will ever give you the justice you deserve.

All I can tell you is one thing: even though you may have felt unheard by an administration that chose to turn a deaf ear, know this: my family and friends back in the West Bank watch and share your videos, join your livestreams, and witness you breaking down apartheid walls in Cambridge, confidently knowing that they, too, will one day tear down the walls that have kept them from ever seeing the river and the sea.

To my friends who faced suspension and could not graduate, you may have lost your degrees temporarily, but you have earned a higher degree of morality that the world's "greatest" leaders can only dream of achieving. Justice will prevail, and history will remember you as the brave souls who fought tirelessly for a Free Palestine.

Free Palestine till it's backwards.

GREY SARMIENTO

BS IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING / LEARNING MACHINES

CLASS OF 2024

To the Palestinian resistance,

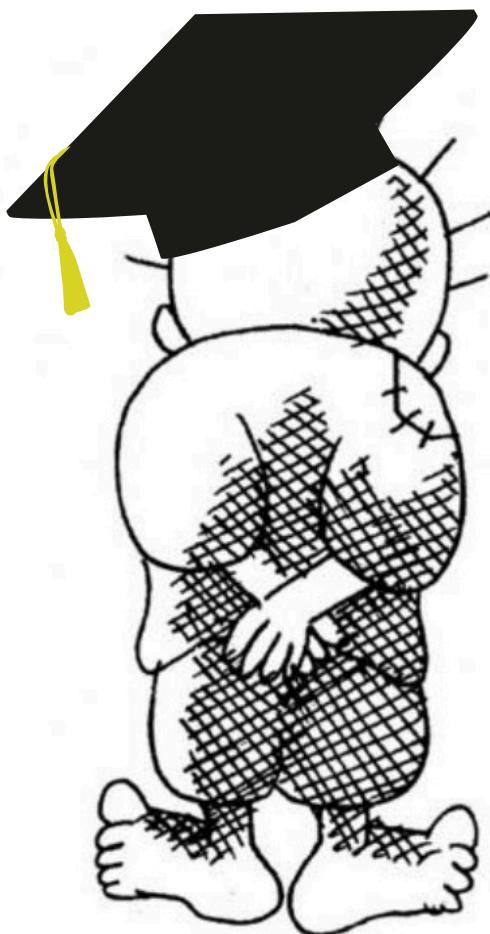
I know that any statement passed, speech made, or meeting held on the sanitized white flagstone of MIT's campus is not enough. Your fight is the fight. Your fundamental refusal to erasure drives our action, and we can only hope to learn from your fire. Although we are still doing the work of aligning ourselves better with what you need, the global student movement follows your lead. Your sacrifice and struggle is living in all of our minds.

The people I've met at the SAGE are some of the most incredible people I've gotten to know in my four years at MIT. It's hard to believe so much of my world could be changed by standing next to you for just a few weeks. Thank you isn't enough. I have learned so much from the way you organize, from your clarity of vision, from the endless love that flows into your selflessness, your rage, your grief, and your joy. Liberation is a muscle that must be practiced every day, and your strength has informed that practice for me in so many ways. Thank you for the dancing and the music, for the laughing and the food. Thank you for the late night talks and the moments of silence. You are the rock in the shoe of MIT's war machine. You are the soul of this institution. Although the tents on Kresge are gone, I imagine us as a net spreading wide to wherever we go next. You will come with me. Free Palestine!

Until liberation.



Art by Simon Radhakrishnan



Handala, created by Naji al-Ali in 1969, is a young refugee symbolizing Palestinian defiance. Depicted facing away, he vows to turn only when Palestine is free—a lasting emblem of resistance.

LONG LIVE THE STUDENT INTIFADA

PRODUCED AT MIT THIRD EDITION, MAY 2024 SPECIAL EDITION | PEOPLE'S GRADUATION

This publication is produced by
students for our community

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"I WANT TO ASSERT THAT I ONLY WRITE BECAUSE I WANT TO REMAIN STEADFAST AND STALWART IN CAPTIVITY. MY WRITING IS NOT A TESTAMENT TO MY LOVE OF POETIC LANGUAGE OR MY DESIRE TO BE PUBLISHED."

WALID DAQQA



عَلَى هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ مَا يَسْتَحِقُ الْحَيَاةُ