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Palestinian Children as Tools for 'Legalized' State Violence

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Indigenous children have always figured prominently in settler colonial state expansion and consolidation. This article analyses the implication of the lives, bodies and homes of Palestinian children in Israel's settler colonial project. Drawing on Joseph Pugliese's State Violence and the Execution of Law (2013), I analyze the ways in which Israeli law is deployed to enable and normalize Palestinian children's suffering, and propel the state's continued project of eliminating the native (e.g. Wolfe 2006). I present two major arguments: First, that Palestinian children living in the settler colonial conditions of the Palestinian home/land are increasingly targeted in the Israeli state's eliminatory violence. Second, that denying children from their childhood and humanity relegates them to a death zone, a position that not only denies their suffering, but also constructs them as always already terrorist others who should be disciplined and violated. I center these arguments around three case studies: the normalized practices of child arrest, using children as human shields, and the attack on Palestinian children's homes. The article concludes by explaining that although living in the death zone constructed by the Zionist state attempts to evict them from childhood and humanity, Palestinian children continue resisting the everydayness of their oppression, and refusing to accept their demonization.

Introduction

The first time I met Hala, in the summer of 2009, she was sitting in her mother's lap in an encampment outside her family home. Part of an ongoing policy of dispossession of Palestinians in Jerusalem and Judaisation of the city, the family had recently been evicted from the Sheikh-Jarrah home they had lived in for fifty-six years to make way for a family of Jewish settlers. Shrouded in Israeli legal proceedings and ambiguous bureaucracies, the eviction took place at 5:30 in the morning. Israeli soldiers broke down the windows and the door, terrorizing two-year-old Hala, her mother, father and four brothers, and began to throw their furniture and other belongings out into the street.

Now a rambunctious five-year-old, Hala's memory of the event is still clear. She recounts that morning and its aftermath to me while drawing a series of pictures on a notepad. Her voice is strong and raspy, peaking with emotion from time to time. She speaks slowly while concentrating on her drawing:

The soldiers arrived. Everyone was screaming, my brothers, my mother and father, and I was crying with all of them, holding onto my mother's training suit. My mother held both of us in her arms—my little brother under one arm and me under the other—and they dragged us out of the house ... then the settlers came.

'When the settlers kicked us out, we were living in the streets', Suheila, her mother interjects. The family set up a tent just outside the home from which they had just been evicted, and stayed there for six months, hoping that they would be able to return. 'We cooked in the street. We slept in the street. I kept my family in the street, exactly opposite of our house, hoping that the settlers would realize their crimes and give us back our house. But I guess they became more determined to humiliate us, to uproot us'.

'We bathed in the street; I was a little girl', Hala chimes in. She turns the page and begins a new drawing. At the top of the page, she sketches a large sun, with a smiling face. And beside it, a cloud, with raindrops falling all around. Underneath the rain, she begins to sketch the shape of a house. She divides the house into three spaces. On the right side, she draws several circles, and on the left side, a row of five hearts. In the center of the house, she sketches a door, and a large object.

'Can you tell us about the house you're drawing?'

'These are the lemons from the lemon tree', Hala says, while pointing to the circular shapes on the right side of the house. 'The fruits were my favorite part of the house', her mother interjects. Hala continues to describe the drawing, pointing to the left side. 'These are hearts— hearts that are filled with love. And here', she points to the center of the house, 'my swing set. I used to play with my little brother in the swing set. And now they have my swing set ... the settlers have taken everything from us'.

'I always dream of going back to the house, to play on my swing set. I am always upset at the settlers. Why did they take my swing set and the lemon tree?'

What is the meaning of the loss of home for a five-year-old girl? A lemon tree or a swing set perhaps; all of the every day objects and affective ties that provide a sense of safety and security. How can Hala comprehend the radical discontinuity of her own and her family's life and house? While her mother attempts to normalize family life in the aftermath of their eviction, the signs of loss and suffering persist,

infiltrating the intimate spaces of Hala's, her family's and community's every day. They are visible in her mother's harkening back to the lemon tree ('I wanted to pickle the olives, but couldn't bring myself to do it this year without a lemon from our lemon tree', she tells me with a heavy sigh), in her brother's inability to concentrate in school, in the extensive arrests and police records of each of her family members, and in her twenty-two-year old brother's inability to find work. They are visible in Hala's drawing and her story, as those defined as 'chosen people' have taken over her space, and the minute spaces of every day life, to the extent of infiltrating her dreams: 'I always dream that I am on my swing set playing and my mother is picking lemons from our tree to use it for her cooking'.

The voices and experiences of children are often silenced in scholarly analyses of war, relegated to the status of victims or casualties of larger socio-political conflicts. Children's ordeals and voices are further excluded in settler colonial contexts, where space, temporality and the life of the native, including children, are affected by the logic of elimination (Wolfe 2006; Veracini 2010). Little scholarly analysis centers on the use of children, and on children's political agency in such contexts—'the ways in which they are able to participate in and inform social practices' and the role of children as political tools who are used to further political agendas (Brocklehurst 2006, p.19). As I have argued in earlier work, centering analysis on the voices of children and their every day experiences in conflict zones—their losses, trauma, resistance and agency—is critical in deepening our understanding of complex processes of violence, militarization and political occupation. Moreover, their insights are an important window into larger collective and social traumas, the political economy of suffering in which they are embedded (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). Yet it is also critical that we understand the logic of violence that is specifically directed against the child in settler colonial contexts; when and how the attacks on children and the suffering of colonized children are used to maintain and/or promote political agendas. Under what conditions are children appropriated as political tools to further settler colonial needs and future plans? What is the price of operationalizing colonial logic through and over children's bodies and lives to further political agendas?

This article analyses the implication of the lives, bodies and homes of Palestinian children in Israel's settler colonial project. Drawing on Joseph Pugliese's *State Violence and the Execution of Law* (2013), I analyze the ways in which Israeli law is deployed to enable and normalize Palestinian children's suffering, and propel the state's continued project of eliminating the native (e.g. Wolfe 2006). As five-year-old Hala explained: 'They want us out (*barra*), they want us only '*barra*'. Hala's words require us to re-visit state violence, and examine the removal of children from their protective cocoons and natural family context and space, to spaces of constant and continuous evictions, for settler colonialism invasion is a structure that continues to shape the very intimate spheres of natives' every day life. I examine three particular case-studies—the use of child arrest, the use

of children as human shields and the use of children's homes, mainly the demolition and eviction of Palestinian children from their homes—to understand the ways in which the settler colonial state inscribes and enacts power in and through the bodies, the geographies, the psyche and lives of children. I argue that children in settler colonial contexts become contested political entities, and 'legalized' instruments for enacting state violence against them, their families and the larger indigenous communities of which they are a part. Moreover, I look to the gendered aspects of state violence against children, mainly when threatening mothers and fathers, and while threatening to arrest or physically injure children's loved ones. The militarization of children's spaces and lives transforms social relations, uniting, changing and in some cases fragmenting them. It creeps into the very intimate relationships with their parents, redefines parental roles, and destabilizes gender roles inside the family, and within the larger society.

I utilize an interlocking theoretical approach (e.g. Razack 2002, Smith 2006) which centers the normalization of structural oppression of Palestinians to examine the multiple dimensions of Israeli violence against children. By focusing on the interlocking systems of oppression, I point to two main factors. The first investigates the manner in which the settler colonial state's systems mutually constitute each other; that is, the militarization of state apparatuses such as the police and court systems, and how such militarization effects the discursive construction of criminalization and incrimination of the Palestinian child. Second, the interlocking approach requires that we pursue how the systems of domination operate at both the local and the intimate everyday level. Identifying the socio-legal, economic and psychological practices that produce hierarchies of oppression and domination are a window into Zionist/Israeli strategies and tactics of racialization.

By analyzing state violence through the intimate and everyday ordeals of Palestinian children, this paper argues that Israeli racism against Palestinians has become so institutionalized and normalized that legal and social reactions and regulations are orchestrated in a manner that portrays children's criminalization and suffering as natural. State violence and the suffering of the Palestinian child enhances Israel's settler colonial power, animates its Zionist project, and promotes its ideology of elimination. Yet the insistence of Palestinian children to challenge such violence by remembering and sharing their pain, to survive it and to speak back to state violence is a testament to their contestation of Israeli racial logics that posit them as non-human 'Others' and their incredible will to resist. As Hala explained, her mother confronted the settler's police and military officers; she faced them while holding her two babies in her arms to tell them 'these are my babies ... you can steal everything, but not my babies'. In recounting her mother's fierce struggle with the settlers and their 'security' personnel, who violated her rights to a home and uprooted her family, Hala narrated the continuous nature of the Nakba,ⁱ as well

as the resistance produced by the Palestinian family in defiance of their elimination.

Legalized Violence in the Israeli Settler Colony

Operating through a 'logic of elimination' (Wolfe 2006), settler colonialism seeks to eliminate the indigenous presence as a means of consolidating state claims to indigenous territory. The Israeli state's investment in consolidating claims to indigenous Palestinian territory, a project that is ongoing, positions the Palestinian as racialised 'Other' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, forthcoming) subject to a repertoire of governance strategies aimed at eliminating the Native presence. Regardless of their position in the West Bank, Gaza or within the national polity, the very body of the Palestinian subject is designated a security threat, a body that must be constantly in a state of disappearing (Smith 2010).

As part of his analysis of U.S. practices of detention and torture at Guantanamo Bay, Joseph Pugliese examines the existence of juvenile detention: 'At various stages, Guantanamo has imprisoned children, some as young as twelve years old ... WikiLeaks has released documents that evidence that at least 22 children have been imprisoned at Guantanamo' (2013, p. 108). He notes that the United States government justifies its defiance of international law by denying that prisoners are children, negating their access to special treatment accorded child prisoners under the UN Convention on Rights of the Child. Moreover, disregard of UN protocol is not exceptional if situated within a historical continuum of the U.S. criminal justice system's racialized punishment (2013, p. 108); those held captive at Guantanamo are excluded from the 'range of rights that constitute the legal category of the human subject' (2013, p. 107). Further, Pugliese contends that legalized acts of violence are based upon a biopolitical caesura, which marks its targets as non-human animals, a form of speciesism upon which contemporary racism is predicated. Finally, as he notes in an examination of the violence of the law, 'law, as deployed by the state, acts to legitimate the state's violent practices' (2013, p. 7), based on the understanding that 'the state's target subjects are, as the embodiment of ungovernable violence, at once anathema to and beyond law and thus outside of any ethical consideration' (2013, p. 17).

The Israeli state justifies its legalized violence against Palestinian children by constructing them as inherently 'criminal', 'terrorist' Others, 'security threats' to the national polity, and as Pugliese would argue, the embodiment of ungovernable violence. Yet their belonging to the indigenous presence amplifies and complicates such racialized positionality, designating them for spaces of elimination and eviction—spaces of death. While earlier phases of Zionism attacked, killed and displaced entire villages, townships and communities, there is an increase in attacks against children and youth and, as I would like to argue, they are now one of the main targets of the Israeli state. The

criminalization of Palestinian children increased during the 2nd Intifada, as they were portrayed as constituting a major political threat to the Israeli state, its military and the security of its citizens. As an Israeli military prosecutor stated, from an Israeli viewpoint 'every Palestinian child is considered to be a potential terrorist' (Sedley et al. 2012, p. 30). Such representation of the Palestinian child acts as a pretext for Israeli invasion of the intimate spaces of home and familial life. Beyond their individual suffering, the performativity of Israeli violence terrorizes the child's family and instills fear into the larger community the children belong to. Unable to protect the most vulnerable members of the family and the community, they are rendered helpless actors in the face of state and military power that is there to stay in their homes, spaces and land. Attacks on Palestinian children must then be analyzed as attacks on the Palestinian familial and community structure. Moreover, these expressions of violence powerfully underscore a perception of endless terror and war, and as such, legitimize endless state power; in this sense the discourse of perpetual war against the native Palestinian is kept alive.

To contextualize various dimensions of the Israeli state's legalized violence against Palestinian children, and the implication of such violence in the settler colonial project, I will turn to three crimes of the state: child arrest, the use of children as 'human shields' and finally, the attack on the child's home (or the eviction, demolition and uprooting of children and their families).

Since its occupation of the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967, Palestinians have been governed by Israeli military law and prosecuted in Israeli military courts.ⁱⁱ While Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are governed by Israeli domestic law, and hypothetically have more rights than their Palestinian community in other areas of the oPt,ⁱⁱⁱ they are provided an identity card but no citizenship; moreover, discriminatory application of Israeli domestic law privileges Jewish inhabitants over Palestinians. It is arguable that military logics and the security paradigm pervade Israeli domestic law, treating Palestinian subjects, regardless of their position as inherent security threats and the embodiment of ungovernable violence. The violence of colonial law is exemplified by the experiences of Palestinian children. Yet beyond the violence of the law itself, we must also attend to the larger socio-political implications of such violence in Israeli projects of settler colonial expansion.

Child Arrest

On July 9, 2013, seven soldiers and an officer arrested Wadi' Maswadeh, a five-year-old Palestinian boy, after he supposedly threw a stone near the 'Abed checkpoint in Al-Khalil (Hebron, Occupied West Bank). Community members at the scene attempted to intervene. Yet the child was forced, screaming and crying, into a military jeep with several soldiers and accompanied to his house. The child's mother refused to let the soldiers arrest and take her son into

custody. Yet the soldiers threatened that if the child's family did not cooperate, they would also arrest his father. A terrified and crying five-year-old Wadi' was then taken, along with his father Karam (who was handcuffed and blindfolded by military officials), through a series of military checkpoints and detained until finally they were handed over to Palestinian authorities, briefly questioned, and released.

Far from an exceptional case, Wadi' Maswadeh is one of approximately 700 Palestinian children arrested, interrogated and detained by Israeli military, police or security agents each year:

Ma'an News Agency—Israel border police detain 6-year-old in Hebron, 24 April 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTxJb-HLp70>

The majority of children arrested and prosecuted in Israeli military courts are accused of and charged with stone throwing, considered a serious legal offense in Israeli military law, carrying a maximum sentence of 10 to 20 years imprisonment. In the past 10 years, 'an estimated 7,000 children have been detained, interrogated, prosecuted and/or imprisoned within the Israeli military justice system—an average of two children each day' (UNICEF 2013).

The performativity of Israeli violence begins with the act of child arrest itself. The majority of arrests occur during what are described as 'terrifying' nighttime raids of the child's home by large groups of heavily armed soldiers. A 2012 report reveals that 60 percent of children are arrested from the family home between midnight and 5 am (DCI Palestine 2012, p. 21). As 15-year-old Hamza from Bethlehem testified:

At around 2:30 a.m., I was sleeping ... when I woke up to soldiers screaming through loud-speakers and saying: "Open up immediately". I looked out of the window and saw many military jeeps and soldiers with their lights focused on the house. ... When the soldiers saw me, they pointed their weapons at me. (2012, p. 24)

During arrests, soldiers typically wake up all of the child's family members, gather them outside of the house and inspect their identity cards. In some cases, the house is searched for several hours while family members are held in a separate room. In the majority of cases, at the time of arrest children and their family members are not informed of the reason for arrest; nor are they informed where the child is being taken for interrogation.

Following arrests, most children have their hands tied painfully behind their backs with plastic ties and are transferred to an interrogation facility. Defense for Children International reports that during transfer and interrogation, a high percentage of Palestinian children experience physical violence, verbal abuse and intimidation at the hands of Israeli military officials. Moreover, the majority of children are

interrogated without the presence of a parent or a lawyer and are not informed of their legal right to remain silent. Many are transferred to a facility within Israel, which deters the possibility for family visits, since most West Bank identity card holders cannot legally travel to Israel and have difficulty obtaining travel permits. Many children are coerced into signing a confession, or forced to sign documentation in Hebrew, a language the overwhelming majority does not understand. In discussing his interrogation, Abdullah, a fifteen-year-old boy from Osarin village stated that

The interrogator started shouting at me and accusing me of being a liar. He threatened to beat me. "I'll break your head if you don't confess", he said. "I'll put you in prison for a long time", he added. He kept shouting and threatening me for about an hour. Sometimes he would raise his hand to hit me. I became very scared of the interrogator, so I had to confess to throwing stones. (2012, p. 36)

The arrest, ill-treatment and in some cases, torture of Palestinian children held by the Israeli military detention system is 'widespread, systematic and institutionalized' (UNICEF 2013) and, as human rights agencies have noted, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Israel is a signatory. Israel's Youth Law affords minors special rights and protections such as being summoned prior to interrogation and allowing a family member to attend interrogation, yet this law only applies within Israel. East Jerusalem is considered to be annexed by Israel since 1967, and thus, the Youth Law should apply to Palestinian children who are residents of the city. Yet discriminatory application of civil law, which affords increased protection to Israeli Jews, ensures that while the legal processes differ, similar trends can be traced in the experiences of Palestinian children with child arrest, detention, interrogation and imprisonment throughout the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The treatment of Palestinian children evidences the manner in which 'neither the category of 'the human' nor the legal apparatus of 'human rights' will work to stop the [settler-colonial] state from deploying strategies of biopolitical violence when it chooses to exercise its power in order to secure and reproduce its positional superiority' (Pugliese 2013, p. 224). Israel's ability to exercise such violence through a militarized police and legal system—with impunity—is only possible because of the latent, but active political and economic support of the United States government. The violent nighttime raids into Palestinian houses, and the apprehension of children asleep in their beds—invasions of the most intimate spheres of every day life—graphically demonstrate how, 'the imperial right to open access of targeted territories and bodies overrides the so-called universalist status of the human rights apparatus' (2013, p. 225). The fact that Palestinian children are governed by military laws and brought before military courts while Israeli youth and settlers in the occupied territories are governed by a different set of legal norms, affording them special rights and protections, evidences the double-standard in application of the human rights framework. When geopolitically and

biopolitically situated in the Occupied Territories, United Nations Conventions such as the Rights of the Child can be, and actively are, overridden with total impunity. The biopolitical caesura, strikingly prominent here, renders Palestinian children as 'non-children' who fail to qualify as either children with special protections under international law in times of war and military occupation, or as human-rights-bearing subjects.

The treatment of Palestinian children as non-children is intimately connected to the Israeli discourse that positions them as inherent security threats that must be purged from the territory. After Israeli soldiers pulled her fifteen-year-old son, Muhammad, out of his bed in the middle of the night, Salma pleaded with one soldier to release him:

I told him that I would do anything to help my son. Then he got out of the jeep and told me that if I cleaned the street, he would leave my son with me and I could bring him to the police station the next day. I agreed, and for more than an hour I cleaned the street. When I told the soldier I was done, he looked at his friend and said something in Hebrew. I told him, "Don't say you're not going to release him. I beg you ... I am not an animal ... I am a mother with feelings". Then the other soldier told me that if our village would always look clean and we would be better and our kids wouldn't be terrorists, maybe we could be treated like human beings. (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005, p. 125)

The soldier's abuse of power, his theatricalized refusal to acknowledge Salma's concerns as a mother, and his negation of her son's humanity; as a child in need of his mother's protection, stripped the Palestinian family and community from the mere possibility of negotiating their existence through acceptable means. Palestinian parents, and their children were evicted from human spaces of negotiations, rendered entities living in dead ends and death zones—while alive.

Furthermore, we must situate such practices in a historical continuum of Israeli colonial violence, which has since the Nakba racialized the Palestinian people as 'Others' slated for elimination and attempted to strip them of their humanity. That child arrest practices are legally licensed offer a graphic and visible exercise of state violence, evidencing how laws enable the state and its agents to inflict violence in a 'legal', 'securitized' and 'rational' manner. Palestinian children have repeatedly testified to the theatricalization of their pain and suffering, as their suffering produces their bodies in pain when responding to the cruelty of the colonizer, signaled in the child's cries, screams, and terror. The arrests of five-year-old Wadi', 15-year-old Hamza and Abdullah attest to the violent inscription of state power onto the bodies and lives of Palestinian children normalized as part of the Israeli settler colonial project. The biopolitical caesura operative here: the pain of Palestinian children cannot be registered by the Israeli state as pain as such, precisely because the reduction of

Palestinian children to non-human animal status effectively eliminates the ethical issue of Palestinian bodies in pain: as non-human animals they can be assaulted and violated with impunity because they are mere animal carcasses—not human-rights-bearing legal subjects. The theatricalization of their pain also evidences the violent systems of objectification that work to render the Palestinian children as objects (carcasses) that merely emit pain, rather than (human) subjects who express pain. This violent process of rendering Palestinians into objects is further crystallized by the use of children as human shields. The utilization of Palestinians as ‘human shields’ that can be shot or wounded with impunity evidences the fact that, in the eyes of the Israeli state, they are shields first and their human status is merely nominal.

Children as Human Shields

In addition to widespread child arrest in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Israeli military has been known to utilize Palestinians as ‘human shields’, a practice considered a war crime under international law. On January 15, 2009, shortly before the end of Operation Cast Lead, a 22-day military assault on the Gaza strip which killed approximately 1,400 Palestinians, most of them civilians, Israeli military forces occupied a building in the Gaza City neighborhood of Taw-Al-Hawa. As the military searched the building, women and children were gathered in one room, and suitcases and bags placed in a separate room. In an indictment submitted 14 months later against two soldiers on the force, the event was described as follows:

When the soldiers feared there was an explosive device or a terrorist hiding in the room, a nine year-old boy, R.M., was ordered to open a number of bags and suitcases. After the child R.M. opened several bags and scattered their contents, and the defendants ascertained that there was nothing suspicious in them, the boy expressed his apprehension and was not able to open one of the bags. Then the defendants moved the child away from the bag and [Staff Sgt. G.A.] fired a shot at one of the bags. After the shooting the child was brought back to the room where his mother was waiting.^{iv}

In his court testimony, the child described the fear he felt when he was taken away from his mother and ordered to open the bags and suitcases. Terrified to the point that he wet his pants when taken out of the room and separated from his family, the nine-year old boy said he was hit on his face by soldiers and recalled how he felt when one of the soldiers shot the bag: ‘I was afraid they were going to kill me’.^v

At the end of the evidentiary trial in which the Military Prosecution accused the two soldiers of ‘exceeding authority to the point of risking life or health’, the defendants were accused of the offenses with which they were charged. Yet despite recognition that their ‘improper behavior’ contradicted international moral values expressed by the

Fourth Geneva Conventions, the two soldiers received minimal punishment—a three-month suspended prison sentence and demotion by a single rank, to the rank of sergeant. Human rights reports note that

When it comes to offenses by Israelis, the Israeli justice system makes no reference to punishing war crimes as such. When Israelis commit offenses that are considered war crimes (and such crimes may be committed either by civilians or members of the security forces), Israeli law includes no sanction that derives from the special severity attributed to such crimes by the family of nations. (Yesh-Din 2013, p. 11)

The Palestinian child emerges as the exemplary subject of Israeli state terror, brutalized through legalized procedures of the state's security and counter-terrorism paradigm. I would like to claim that the use of law to occupy and dispossess, or as Austin Sarat and Thomas Kearns note, the use of law 'to conquer' (Sarat & Kearns 1992), through the use of children, whether in child arrest, the use of children as human shields during military conflict and a continuum of other practices, the colonial state exercises its 'legalized' power to render them lawless, uncivilized, and terrorists. The Palestinian child is beyond the reach of ethical consideration and hence, the law. Yet at the same time that the Palestinian child marks the threshold of legal consideration, her suffering, inflicted within the spectrum of legality, is used to mobilize violence against the family, the community, and ultimately the continued appropriation of indigenous territory.

Pugliese explains that racism is imbricated with speciesism, which positions the target, in our case-study the child, outside the legal and ethical frame of rights-bearing persons. Such analysis is predicated on what Foucault termed 'the biological caesura', 'the death of the bad race ... something that will make life in general healthier and purer' (in Pugliese 2013, p. 130). The process of settler colonialism turns Palestinian children into subjects of the state's bio-political disciplinary erasure, and necropolitical regulation. It can also be said that the necropolitical regulation of the child also ensures that the Israeli nation is kept pure, beyond contamination. It is precisely through this logic that the Zionist enterprise legitimizes its conduct.

In the process of writing this article, the image of a child who was killed/murdered appeared in Israeli media. 'A Tractor Demolished a Building in the Naqab', the headline reads, 'The wall of a house fell and killed a ten-year-old child' (Shani & Shimoni 2013). The article tells us that a five-year-old Bedouin child from the Negev was injured, and his ten-year-old brother's death declared in Soroka hospital in Ber Sheva after the wall of a house fell on the children during its demolition. The reporters explain that the police are investigating the death of the child, and further question why the children were in the house during its demolition. The media, as well as the mode of reporting, namely the question of why the children were in the house, might be read as an orientalizing examination of the children's death

and injury. The story forced me to reckon with Israeli perceptions of Palestinian children, and the implications for such children in all the Israeli settlements that are presently colonizing various geographies of the Palestinian homeland—including those inside the boundaries of the Israeli state.

The reporting reveals few details about the death of the Palestinian child and the circumstances of his death, but leaves the reader wondering and asking questions such as: What was the child's name? What village was he from? Who drove the tractor that killed the child and injured his brother—was the killer a representative of the Israeli military, a private security company, or an independent contractor? Or was the child's family forced to demolish its own home? Was the house demolished to build a new Jewish settlement? Has the loss of a child's life during evictions to build new homes and buildings for settlers become such a very normal, everyday story that it's not worth reporting? Where are the child's parents and what happened to them? How are they mourning the loss of their son, and the injury of another? Who was this ten-year-old boy? Was he trying to tell us something? Did he laugh like other children, and smile and cry? Who were his friends and where did he like to play? Who and what did he love? What did he dream of for his future?

The discursive violence of the telling of this unnamed child's story removes the circumstances of his death from the structural conditions that enabled it. Unnamed, uncounted, unseen and unheard, even in death, the Palestinian child from the Naqab area is removed from his space of belonging.

The only information this article provides is that the police will investigate why the child was there during the demolition, as if the one who is being investigated is the ten-year-old child who was killed/murdered. As if the children's presence behind the walls interrupted the demolition from going smoothly. The child's death prevented silencing the demolition; had he not been killed, would we even know the demolition had taken place? He is merely an uncounted child—a present-absentee living in a death zone, who was at the wrong place at the wrong time. His death destabilizes the nature of death, in his and his community's death space, mainly since he belongs to one of the unrecognized villages in the Negev area; a village that the Israeli government decided to erase, so as to build new Israeli settlements.^{vi}

There is no mention that the child was from the village of Sawawin, one of many unrecognized (and therefore, illegal by Israeli law) Bedouin villages slated for elimination by Israeli authorities to make way for the establishment of new Jewish Israeli settlements in the Negev, a region inside the boundaries of the Israeli state. There is no mention that the death of this child and the injury of his little brother is a result of the harsh living conditions implemented by Israeli policies of non-recognition of the indigenous Bedouin Palestinians, policies

that force families to live without access to water, electricity, schools or other municipal services (provided to Israeli settlers), and the constant fear of home demolitions. There is no mention that the child's family was forced to 'choose' to demolish their own home, as many families are, in order to avoid police violence and the hefty fines home owners receive when the Israeli government provides the 'service' of home demolition after an order is proclaimed.

'Among the Arabs, one less child, one more child, why does it matter?' one of the article's commentator's wrote (Shani & Shimoni 2013). The biopolitical subtext apparent in the previous comment suggests that as Arabs are mere animals, they breed and reproduce and even when one of their progeny dies, this death or loss is greeted with cool indifference. As mere animal, it will simply be replaced by another; 'as fungible objects' they 'are infinitely replaceable and exchangeable' (Pugliese 2013, pp. 39-40). The argument here is that Arabs are positioned in master/slave, human/animal narratives that are deployed by Israel in order to legitimate the non-human status of Arabs, and why they need to be, and can be, treated outside of human-rights frameworks.

Reading the report and watching the nothingness of the reporting in the Israeli media, I was troubled by the erasure of children's humanity and right to safety, and the attempt to silence the structural violence embedded in the context of the life of Palestinian 'citizens' of the state of Israel. My immediate reaction questioned the tendency to orientalize the loss of the child's life, while turning the child's dead body into a dead human shield, to cover up the immorality and necro-ethics (Pugliese, 2010) of the colonial regime. But the child's voice and his brother's pain haunted me to problematize the very denial of his right to a voice, even in death.

Home Demolition and Eviction

Home demolition, the erasure of entire villages, and forced eviction of Palestinians inside the official borders of Israel and throughout the occupied Palestinian territories form yet another layer of Israeli violence that contribute to the continuum of violence shaping the lives of Palestinian children. Since 1967, approximately 25,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem (ICAHN 2012). Palestinians living under military occupation in the West Bank and residents of East Jerusalem are forced to build without official building permits, facing the constant risk of demolition and displacement at the same time that the Israeli government politically and financially supports the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements, and the growth of settler communities. Referring to the link between Israel's policy of home demolition and settlement expansion in East Jerusalem, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon noted:

Not only do policies and practices of zoning and planning make it virtually impossible for Palestinians to build to meet the natural growth of their communities, contrary to what is accorded to Israeli settler communities, but demolition of Palestinian structures built without permits is at times followed by building new or expanding existing Israeli settlements.

Such policies of dispossession and internal displacement are, according to an Israeli human rights organization

politically motivated and strategically informed. The goal is to sequester the 4 million residents of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza to small enclaves, thus effectively foreclosing any viable Palestinian state and ensuring Israeli control, and to allow for the expropriation of land, the ethnic displacement of Palestinians, and the Judaization of the Occupied West Bank. (ICAHN 2012)

Palestinians living under the constant threat of home demolition and eviction from their land and property suffer from the ramifications of legalized Israeli settler colonial dispossession. Israeli colonial law continues to shape and enable such practices. The Absentees' Property Law, for instance, a law that was enacted in 1950, has been the primary legal instrument used by the state to gain possession of land belonging to internal and external Palestinian refugees (Adalah 2013a). This and a prior 1970 law have been utilized as legal mechanisms for transferring property from Palestinian owners into the hands of Israeli Jews, resulting most recently in the forced eviction of Palestinians from neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. The string of forced evictions in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, of which Hala's family was a part, have been enabled by the urging of right-wing Israeli settler groups such as the 'Israel Land Fund', who cite a strict reading of a 1970 law that 'enables Jews, but not Palestinians, to reclaim property they left behind enemy lines in 1948' (Haaretz 2013).

The attack on the Palestinian home, whether through home demolition or forced eviction, is embedded in the settler colonial logic, for settlers are here to stay. It is an attack on the Palestinian family aimed at 'reducing the individual body by materially reducing the confines of that body, consigning it to an ever more limited area, time, and space; a mere death zone, where life is unbearable' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005, p. 122). Home demolitions and forced evictions, as evidenced in Hala's story of soldiers dragging her and her mother out of the house by the wrists at 5:30 in the morning, are enacted in a terrorizing manner that has lasting effects, and can be especially traumatizing for children. The meaning of the loss of Hala's home, and her nostalgia for her stolen house is not only invading her life, but her body too. In my work on housing demolitions, I found that out of almost 44 families I worked with, 11 children were found to suffer from child diabetes. The state's violence, and their eviction from home and/or the house's demolition caused a severe trauma to children. Many of them stopped trusting in their parents ability to protect them. While Hala believes

that her mother and father will always protect her and her siblings, in other cases, such as that of Rahaf, a 3-year-old child from Jerusalem that I worked with when conducting my study on housing demolition in Jerusalem (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005), the child believes that by 'allowing' the military to demolish her home, her parents failed to secure her life and safety.

Children live the pain the family goes through. Hala talks about the lemon tree, and her love of the fact that the lemon tree is still giving wonderful lemons, as Hala explained: 'The lemon tree keeps on giving more and more lemons, to tell me and my mom that she misses us. It gives lemons, while she knows that the settlers won't touch, eat or use its juices. So, it is giving more lemons, to call us to come back. You see, my mom and I visit the lemon tree a lot, and even apologize that we are not close to her, and ask her to take care of our house ... we visit and talk to her (the lemon tree) a lot'.

Hala's story sheds light upon the 'hyphenated existence' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009) that Palestinian children live in, between trauma and agency.

When one's home is demolished, one's self, identity and traumatic experience are chaotically mixed with each other creating a new psychological construct, a state of hyphenated existence. Living in the hyphen is being torn between the physical loss of the home and its traumatic effect, and the re-building of the demolished home with the power of collective hope. It is living the totality of death and birth, the reality of constant loss and the history that refuses to accept injustice but rather promotes actions that advance a better future (2009, p. 340).

Hala endures a sense of insecurity, where her home and her own bed are no longer safe spaces from the constant threat of Israeli violence, and at the same time constructs her own sense of power. To humanize the lemon tree, and to turn it into the security guard against the invaders, is only one example of the way settler colonialism changes and affects children's perception of the world, the home space, the trees, and the lemon. It reflects the way Hala, as many other children, turned the walls of their homes, lemon trees, even home rubbles, into humans who speak out against the state's oppression, while and when living in death zones.

Hala's speaking out and her mother's strength and resilience as a 'frontliner' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005, 2012) who faced the violence of the Israeli state, evidence the fact that at the same time that the domestic spaces of the home and the everyday life of Palestinians are invaded, Palestinian women continue to 'develop strategies that protect the domestic space, producing innovative, if hidden, transcripts that create counter-spaces of safety to rebuild (actually or metaphorically) the family home' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005, p. 113). Israel's attempts to fracture Palestinian families and communities by

attacking the child and the domestic sphere nevertheless 'engender agency and creative forms of resistance' (2005, p. 112).

Eliminatory Logic and the Entrapment of Palestinian Children

Children have always figured prominently in settler colonial state expansion and consolidation. State policies deliberately sought to separate indigenous children from their families and homes and assimilate them into white settler society by enrolment in residential schools, institutionalization in special homes and missions, or adoption by non-Aboriginal families (Fournier and Crey 1997, Jacobs 2009). Andrea Smith notes that forced assimilation and cultural genocide in such institutions as the boarding school system was often accompanied by widespread abuses of native children, including sexual abuse (2005). The violation of indigenous children has been linked to the disintegration of families and the larger indigenous communities of which they are a part (Fournier and Crey 1997). The mass abduction of indigenous children as an element of Australian Aboriginal policies, their forced 'transfer' and assimilation into settler society, has been found to be an act of genocide (e.g. Moses 2004).

The settler colonial logic of elimination in the Palestinian context has operated in diverse manners throughout different historical periods and resulted in continuous and acute fragmentation of the family and community. It has included ethnic cleansing, forced displacement, housing demolitions, incarcerations, and massacres such as the one in Al Sheikh in January 1948, Dir Yasin in April 1948, Dawaymeh in October 1948, Sharafat in February 1951, Kibya massacre in October 1953 and more. Settler violence has also occurred through 'incarceration, criminalization and institutionalization' in order to remove indigenous peoples 'from communities and territory' (Veracini 2010, p. 35). The settler colonial eliminatory policies inscribed on the bodies and lives of Palestinian children in the last 10 years reveals what I have defined elsewhere as a condition of being trapped, and living in a trap. The notion of 'trappedness', which I claim is central to theorizing the complex web of harassment, abuses and traumas against colonized Palestinians

is also the key to understanding the boundaries of racism as exclusion and inclusion, belonging and Otherization, power and powerlessness. The concept of 'trappedness' can aid our understanding of the ways in which the multiple forces and orders of power that produce violence intersect, and in turn re-produce exclusion and violence. (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2010, pp. 66-67)

I further explain that: 'I use the concept of 'trappedness' to understand the forces that are shaping an emerging order of power, but also an emerging resistance that empowers the colonized and the trapped' (2010, pp. 66-67). Situating Palestinians under such violence, and controlling their lives when and while living in a death zone, an unending trap, means, as I noted, to live in a space that is incoherent and lacking in any clear organizing principle (2001, p. 67). The

criminalization of Palestinian children and their position as unwanted entities situates them in a plurality of traps, subject to violence that operates in a mundane and everyday manner, infiltrating the most intimate spheres of the home and the bedroom.

In analyzing the implication of the Palestinian child in Israeli settler colonialism, I also borrow from Moses and claim that child arrest, the use of children as human shields, and destruction and eviction from the intimate spaces of home in Palestine are used as genocidal eliminatory tools, in removing indigenous children from their families, and propelling the eviction of their families and larger communities from their homes, property and lands. Such genocidal practices are enabled by raciality, which operates, as Denise Ferreira da Silva emphasizes in her work 'as an a priori within the state's biopolitical schemata in relation to who may be killed or left to die with impunity' (quoted in Pugliese 2013, p. 32).

The inscription of raciality on 'uncounted' bodies of the otherized, is also apparent in Pugliese's theorization of state violence, when drawing on Balibar's analysis:

if the so-called 'foundational violence' of state power is to exist (or appear foundational), it must not only be idealized or sacralized—that goes without saying—but also actually exercised and implemented at some points and times, in some visible 'zones' of the system. Once situated in these zones, we realize that, in many cases, we are at the extreme borders of cruelty. (Balibar quoted in Pugliese 2013, p. 7)

Palestinian children are in what could be theorized as 'visible zones of uncountedness', for as our three case studies reveal, Palestinian children and their suffering are visible to the world, but at the same time uncounted, due to their situatedness in zones of death. The use of children as human shields, their representation as inherently 'criminal' and 'terrorist' others, and their uncounted pain, loss and suffering, resonates with Pugliese's analyses on suffering. Drawing on Levinas, Pugliese explains suffering in the context of modern genocide, when he explains how the pain of the Other [in our case study, the child] is useless. The justification of the Palestinian child's pain by the state of Israel, through claims that it is merely 'protecting' and 'securing' the nation, must be seen as the source of immorality.

The inscription of state power on such 'no-bodies' in the Palestinian context, through violence, torture and killings, 'does not unleash an ethical crisis', as da Silva writes, 'because these persons' bodies and the territories they inhabit always-already signify violence' (2009, p. 213). To politicize and denaturalize the state's violence against children, one must explore the mode in which the legalized securitized constructions produce Palestinian children as always already criminal or terrorists. Uncovering the way children's bodies and lives are produced as always already terrorists, entails an interrogation of how they come to be known as such, within the Israeli systems of

domination and eviction. The Palestinian as racialized 'Other' marks the limits of Israeli 'justice', the Palestinian child exemplifying the impossibility of ethical-political consideration. The eviction of Palestinian children from childhood, from humanity to death zones when and while arrested, evacuated, and terrorized, plays a major role in telling the settler story of its fear from the colonized child, that is, the terrorist other. The story of every child as a terrorist sketches the limits of the death zone, and segregates between those that have the right to live and those that should die. This necropolitical power game facilitates the theft of land, life and safety by the Israeli settler. The child's body, as non-human entity, must be invaded, controlled and occupied by the settler state as a means of invading, controlling and occupying indigenous territory.

When analyzing the role of native children in settler colonial contexts and their structural racial position as 'no bodies', 'terrorists' and 'security threats', that have no place to stay, not even in their own homes; children become those who always-already signify violence. Their embodiment of violence situates them as 'out-laws' not merely in Pugliese's sense as beyond due process (2013), but further, as entities that must be evicted to allow the settlers to stay. Palestinian children serve as 'no bodies' with 'no legality' and at the same time, bodies that can be used as an instrument to evict an entire society, and push them, without physical 'blood-oriented' violence and massacres, to leave, to escape the constant suffering and the pain inflicted on young children, as in the case of Hala in Jerusalem, and Wadi' in Hebron.

As Brocklehurst argues, 'Children are conceptualized as embodiments or potential vessels of national security or strength, and also a conveniently mobile collective body that can be accessed and moved and controlled at will, for the benefit of the future of the governing state' (2006, p. 27). Palestinian children constitute approximately 50% of the Palestinian population (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2012) and thus play a central role in constructing the future of the Israeli settler colonial project. In attacking the Palestinian child, the settler colonial project enacts a form of sociocide. As I have argued earlier in my expansion of the analytical term femicide, this death zone is not only a physical death, but also living under the 'continual threat of being killed' (2003, p. 581). Through attacks on the child, her family and community are forced into zones of entrapment and death, as the carceral politics of Israeli military occupation invade the intimate spaces of the home and the bedroom, the 'bodies, time and space' of Palestinians (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2012, p. 10). To detangle the plurality of traps, one must not deny the power of the intimacy of the politics of everydayness. Situating Palestinian children in death zones might leave them alone to struggle and challenge a necropolitical schema surrounded by the multiplicity of colonial traps. This necropolitical game, the economy of life and death created by Israel's settler colonial project, is faced by a five year old girl who continues to draw a house filled with love and memories of her mother confronting the enforcers of colonial policy.

Conclusion

Situated in a violent political context, children's bodies, words, drawings and silences, cohere around questions of children's traumas and losses under the viciousness of settler colonialism. The structurally productive power that transposes and transcribes children as the Other that needs to be erased not only establishes relations between knowledge and unknowledge in settler colonial contexts, but also further assists us in challenging the impunity of state violence against children.

The arrest of five-year-old Wadi', the use of nine-year-old R.M. as a human shield in Gaza, and Hala's suffering and loss when evicted and displaced, illustrate the routine nature of violence inflicted against Palestinian children by Israeli authorities. Pugliese's *State Violence and the Execution of Law* allows a deeper understanding of Israel's ability to harness and circumvent local and international law when objectifying children as tools to cause suffering and inflict violence against the Palestinian native. State violence, whether legalized, rationalized, normalized and/or theatricalized (through the use of night raids and other scare tactics) illustrates a new front of violence that promotes fear of the Palestinian child as an inherently dangerous security threat. Violence inscribed over Palestinian children's living bodies not only situates them in the 'state of exception' and marks them as 'bare life' (e.g. Agamben). It gives Israeli soldiers, officials, and even citizens (as in the case of the settlers in Sheikh Jarah that evicted Hala's family), state sanction to make children the new targets of Zionist settler colonialism.

What I claim is that only by theorizing violence against Palestinian children, as bodies and subjects that can be violated, and as inhabiting spaces that must be invaded, controlled, and occupied, one can comprehend the magnitude of the racialized violence operating through the architecture and procedures of security, that gives Israel the power to situate Palestinians in zones of death. Situating Palestinian children as everywhere, and anywhere ever-threatening 'others', as inherent 'security-threats'—even as young as five years old—undermines any political ethics, or global sense of morality. Marking Palestinian children a priori as racialized others, as non-human animals, what Pugliese defines as 'racio-speciesism', establishes them as subjects that may be used, violated, and evicted through a well-articulated and even legalized procedure of security and counter terrorism.

In other words, situating Palestinian children outside spaces of exception, mobilized by Israel's 'counterterrorism' politics, constructs Israel's coercive and repressive conditions against children as normal operations of policing. Normalizing the use and abuse of children gives the Israeli military, police and other state agents the right to assault Palestinian children in any condition, even during everyday operations. The use of child arrest and other scare tactics to 'silence',

'collectively punish' or 'educate' Palestinian families and make them leave neighborhoods in Hebron or Occupied East Jerusalem, the 'house-arrest' for children along the line of racial profiling, and the attack on the Palestinian child's home and bedroom, emerge as a normative reaction of the state and its agents, that position the Palestinian children and their larger indigenous communities in a horizon of death (e.g. Da Silva 2009).

As Patrick Wolfe notes in 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', invasion is a structure, not an event (Wolfe 2006). The unspeakability of the continuous *Nakba* (catastrophe in Arabic) is lived as an intimate experience that continues to shape the everyday lives of Palestinians. Children and their families are disposable entities in the ongoing project of Israeli settler colonial expansion, and as Andrea Smith explains, should be in a constant state of disappearing (2010). Framed by legalized (formal and informal) colonial declarations of the monstrous-animal child, and in the face of the everydayness of violence, Palestinian children's ordeals are lived realities that yet remain unrecognizable as realities of trauma and violence in the context of Israeli colonial-settler state. Within such charged logics, Palestinian children are constantly portrayed as explosive terrorists erupting every possibility of life.

In my office, Hala finishes her drawing by writing her name, in Arabic, along with the names of her mother, her father, and each of her four brothers. At the top of the drawing, she writes '*Dar* (House)'. And beside it, she writes in English: 'I am Hala'.

In the drawing of her family home and the writing of her name, five-year-old Hala speaks back against the colonial declarations of the monstrous-animal child and her family, against their evictions, the invisibilization of their suffering, and against the elimination of the indigenous presence.

'I am Hala', she writes. And I exist.

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Notes

ⁱ The Nakba (catastrophe in Arabic) refers to the period where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were dispossessed to create the state of Israel. For more details, see Abu-Lughod & Sa'di, 2007.

ⁱⁱ Israeli settlers living in the same area are governed by Israeli civil law.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Palestinian territories or occupied Palestinian territories (OPT or oPt) comprise the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip.

^{iv} Indictment GFC/150/10, Military Prosecutor v. Staff Sgt. S.A. and Staff Sgt. G.A., submitted on March 11, 2010, quoted in Yesh Din Report 'War Crimes in Israeli Law and Court-Martial Rulings', July 2013 (Yesh Din 2013).

^v Judgment, GFC/150/10, Military Prosecutor v. Staff Sgt. S.A. and Staff Sgt. G.A., sections 5, 8. Testimony delivered October 3, 2010 (Yesh Din 2013).

^{vi} See the Praver Plan and other previous and current governmental decisions involving the erasure of Bedouin villages and their replacement with Israeli/Jewish settlements. For further details, see Adalah 2013b.

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