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Buzz

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12 Posters That Narrate The Palestinian Story

Call it what you will –art or agitprop – no cause worth its name in the 20th century failed to produce political posters. Never confined to museums, such posters were plastered on walls and homes and often evoked a shared sense of (in justice, determination and destiny. And an effective poster packed a punch: using words and images widely understood among the audience, it could say so much with very little.



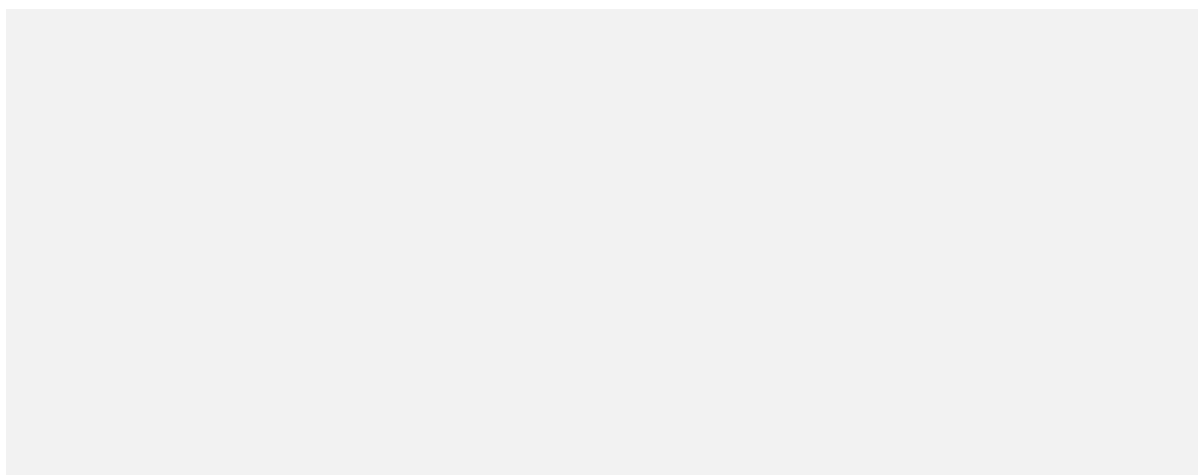
by **PalestineStudies**
Community Brand Publisher



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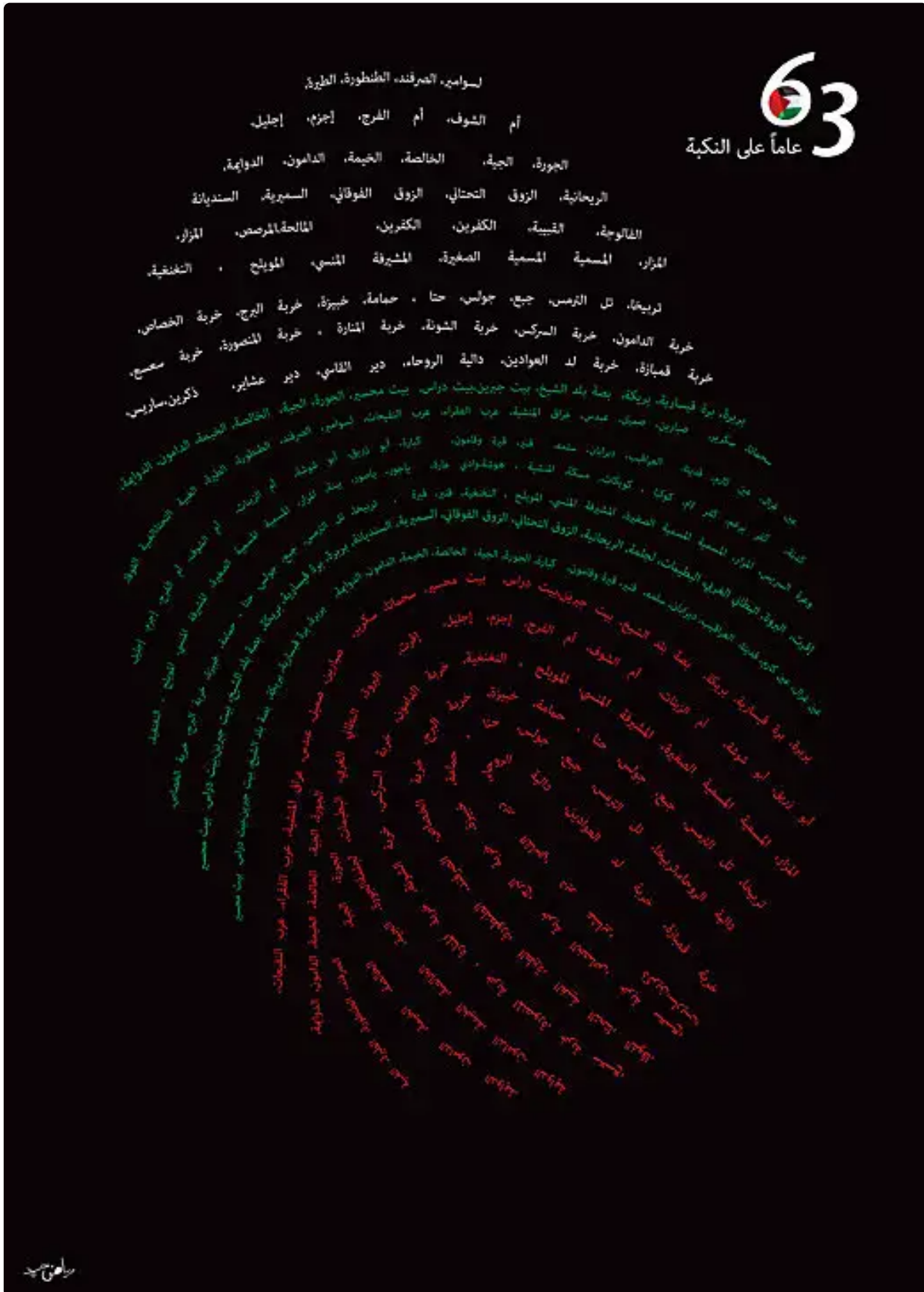
Nakba





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The defining moment in the modern Palestinian experience

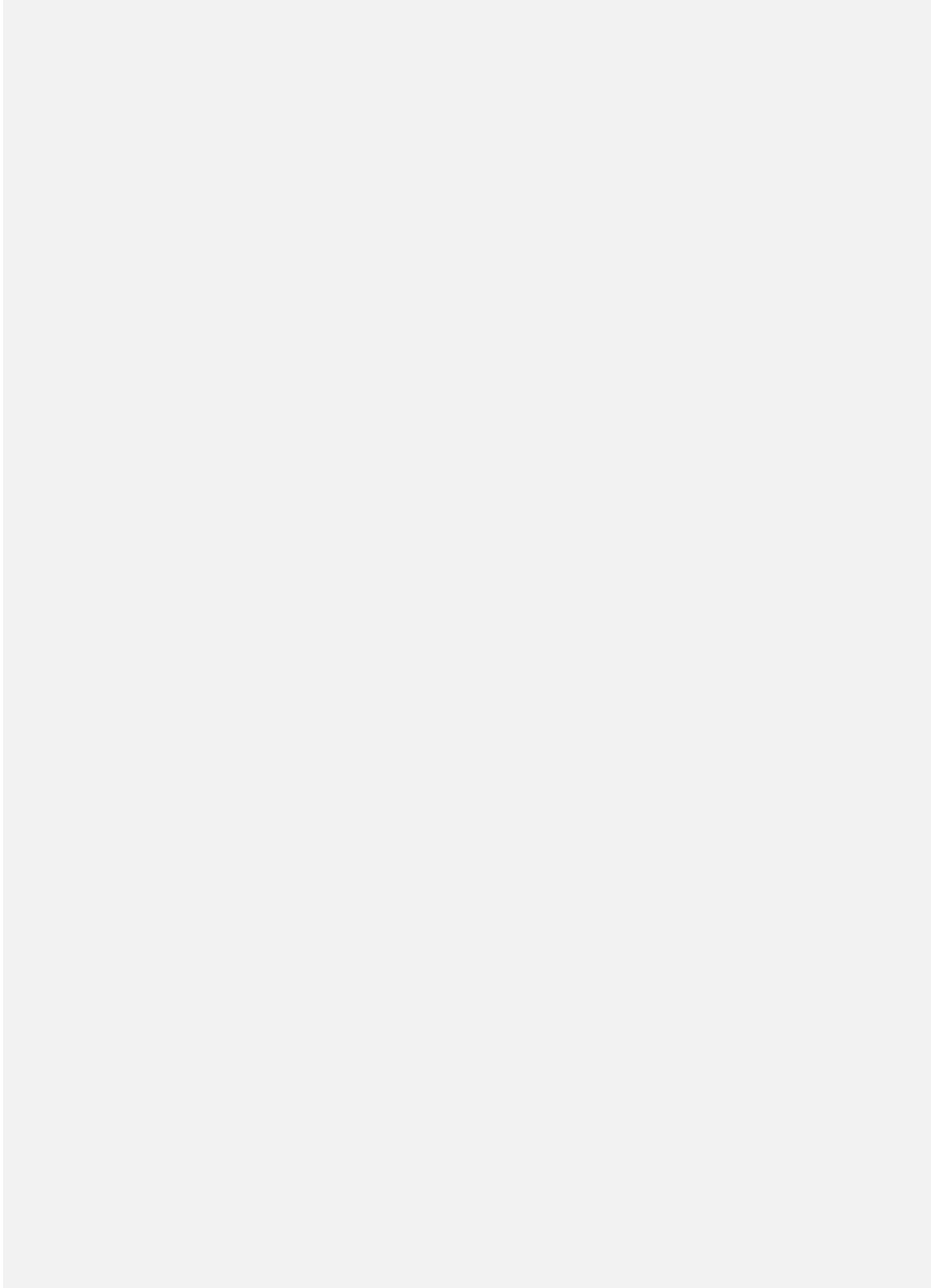
is the Nakba (The Catastrophe). The November 1947 United Nations partition plan recognized Zionist ambitions for a Jewish state and partitioned 55% of Palestine toward that end. At the time, Jewish land ownership accounted for no more than 7% and the Jewish population no more than a third. Between November 1947 and Israel's declaration of independence on May 14, 1948, (before the consequent entry of Arab armies into the war on May 15), Israel expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in a demographic pursuit of a Jewish majority. By the war's end, over 700,000 Palestinians were made refugees and Israel expanded its borders to 78% of Palestine while Jordan and Egypt conquered the rest. A Catastrophe for the Palestinians. For many Palestinians, a just resolution to the conflict must address the occupation of 1967 and the expulsion and dispossession of 1948; particularly the UN-recognized 'Right of Return' for refugees. The first poster was printed as part of a 1998 conference marking 50 years since the Nakba. The policy of expulsion and Israeli land grabs in the form of illegal settlements continues to this day on the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. The second poster was self-published by the artist Riyad Hamad in 2011. The fingerprint lists all the Palestinian villages razed to the ground or appropriated and renamed by Israel after the Nakba.

Read about [the Nakba from the eyes of a Palestinian teenager](#).

[Learn about the Palestinians before their diaspora.](#)

Read “The Reconquista of Palestine: From the 1947 United Nations Partition Resolution to the First Zionist Congress of 1897.”

A New Minority





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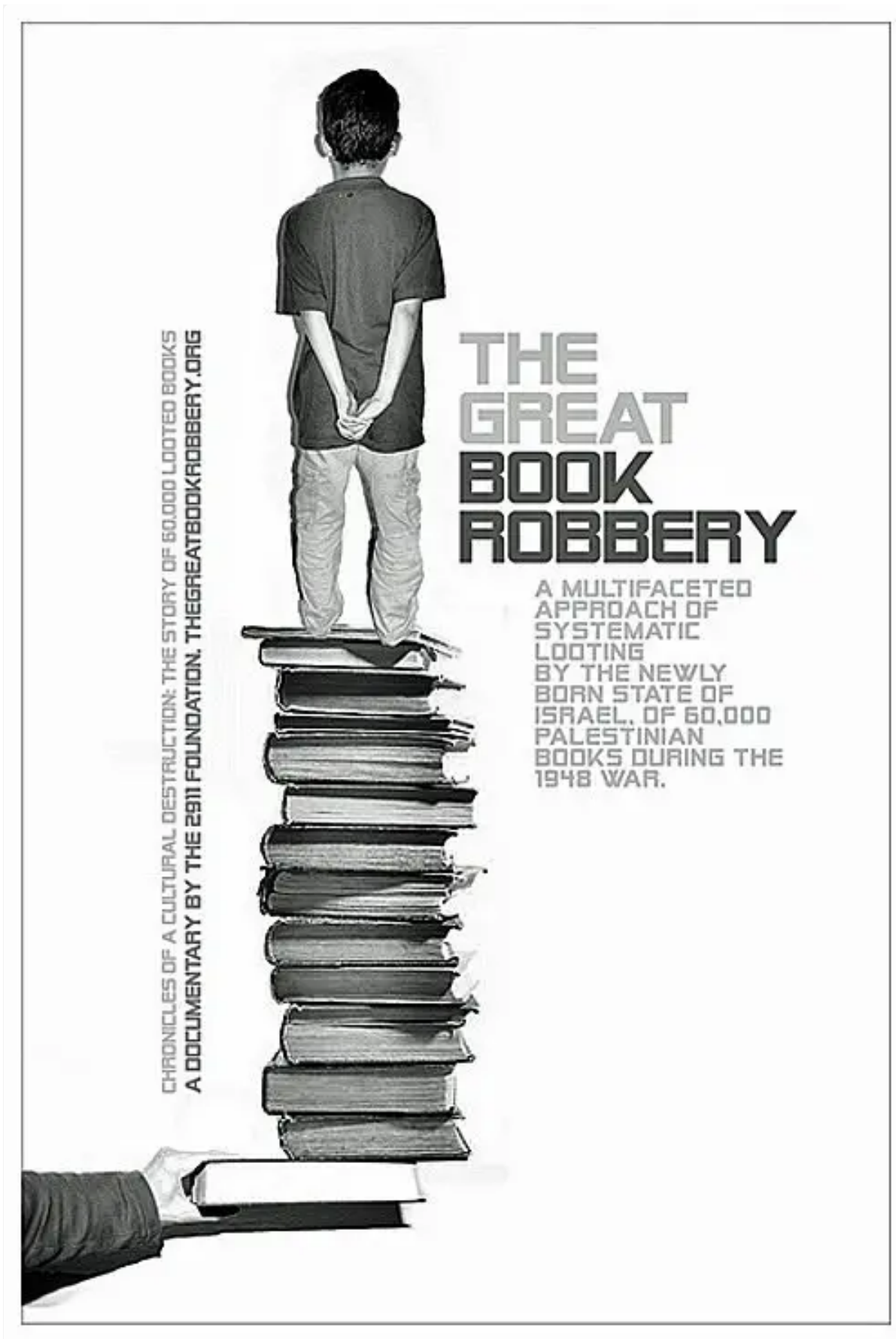
Although most Palestinians were expelled or forced to flee

their homes by Zionist forces, more than 100,000 found themselves a new minority in the Jewish state. These Palestinians lived under military rule until 1966 and faced restrictions on their movements and systematic land theft by the Israeli government and the attendant racism. References to Palestine and Palestinian connection to the land were proscribed by Israel as the state sought to undermine Palestinian nationalism. Part of that effort including campaigns to enlist Arab citizens as loyal Zionists committed to the Israeli state (a process that continues to this day without much success). The poster, in Hebrew and Arabic lettering, proclaims “Arab Pioneering Youth in Israel” and “Arab Avante Garde Youth in Israel,” respectively, and was printed in 1954. The blue and white are, of course, the colors of the displayed Israeli flag. Although the main figure is dressed in a common Palestinian garment, the Keffiyeh over his head, his image resembles that of a Jewish sage blowing the Shofar (horn). In this image, jointly produced by the leftist Jewish party Mapam and the socialist-Zionist youth group Hashomer Hatzair; the Arabs are presented as the idealistic and energetic Israelis so prominent in many Zionist posters. The poster may be an effort by left-wing groups to assimilate Arab citizens through the imposition of Zionist/Jewish tropes onto the image of “the Arab.”

Read the book [“To be an Arab in Israel”](#)

Read [“The Palestinians Seen through the Israeli Cultural Paradigm.”](#)

A Lost World



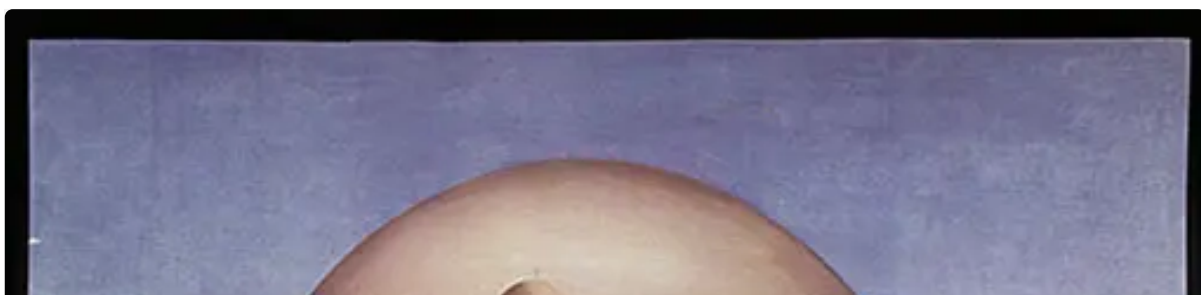
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Palestinians lost not only their homes and lands in the Nakba, but many of their worldly possessions as well, including thousands of books. And similar to how Palestinian homes and lands were appropriated by Israel and turned into Jewish housing and land, countless Palestinian libraries were deposited in the Israel National Library as “Abandoned Property.” Although the proclaimed pretext was to “salvage” the books from the destruction of the ongoing war, the same principle to land appropriation applied to books. That the Israeli Custodian of Absentees’ Property established after the war “was authorized to sell the land of absentees to official bodies for exclusive Jewish use clearly shows that the mission was not safeguard it on behalf of its lawful owners but to dispossess them of it,” as Gish Amit writes in his history on the Israeli appropriation of private Palestinian libraries in Jerusalem. The above image is the poster for the documentary [The Great Book Robbery](#) recounting the history.

Read Gish Amit’s [“Salvage or Plunder? Israel's ‘Collection’ of Private Palestinian Libraries in West Jerusalem.”](#)

Land Day





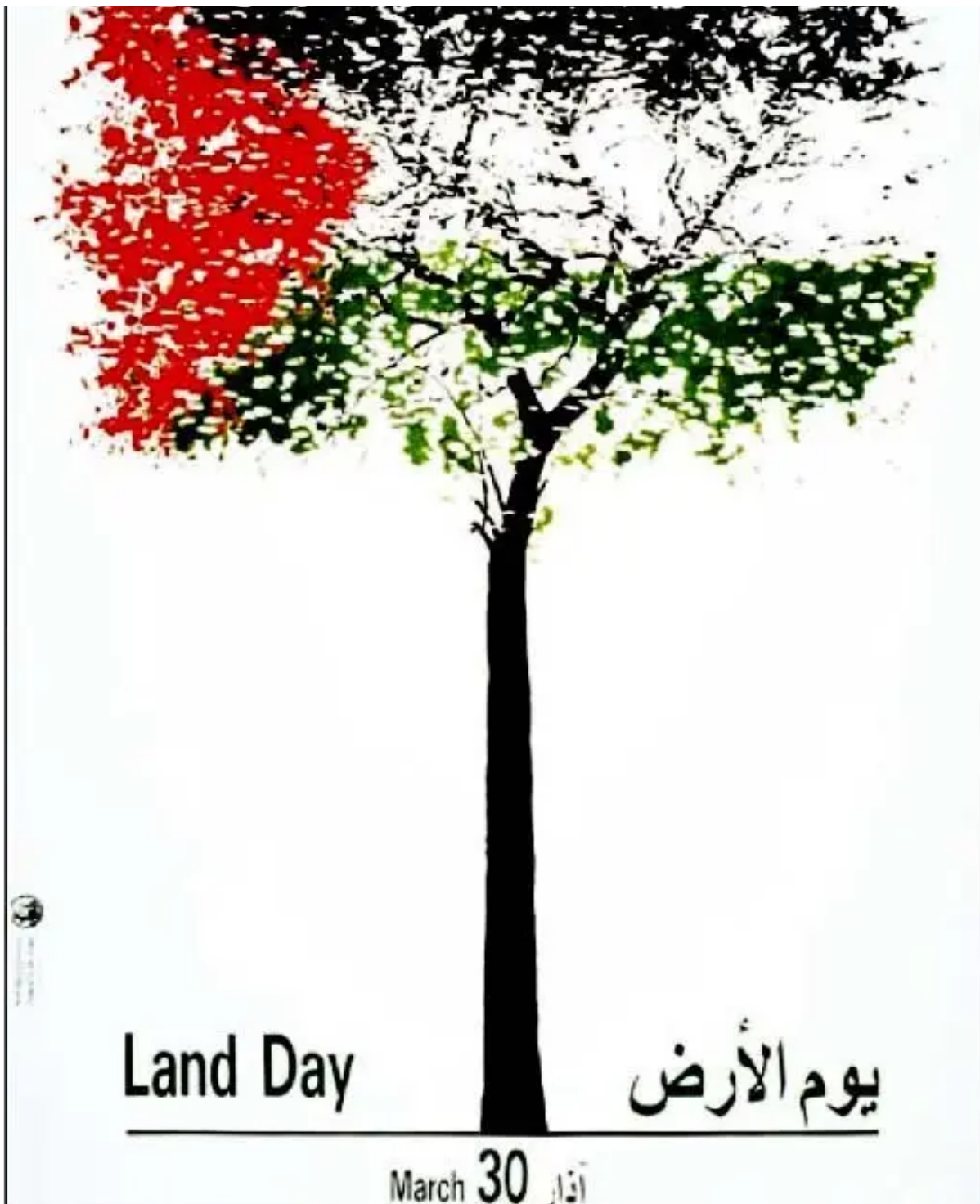
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Sliman Mansour is considered by many to be the doyen of contemporary Palestinian artists. Much of his work has explored the cultural idea of Sumud or Steadfastness, “part of a collective Palestinian consciousness of struggling for

and clinging to the land that goes back at least to the British Mandate time.” The poster “Camels of Hardship” illustrates a porter carrying the city of Jerusalem on his back. It’s a recreation of a 1973 painting that was mass reproduced after it struck a chord with many Palestinians. Mansour has pointed to the “element of heritage that is present in the old man and his costume” and the “symbolism of the Dome of the Rock and Jerusalem” to explain its popularity. The second one, also by Mansour, and the third poster, by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), are in support of [Land Day](#). On March 30, 1976, Palestinian citizens of Israel protested in opposition to another Israeli attempt to expropriate more Palestinian-owned land within Israel. Israeli police charged the demonstrations and killed 6 Arab civilians. Every year on 30 March, Palestinians within Israel commemorate Land Day in recognition of their struggle to maintain their ancestral lands in the face of settle-colonization.

Read about [Sumud](#).

Intifada (Uprising)






THE INTIFADA 89
الانتفاضة 89


library.yale.edu



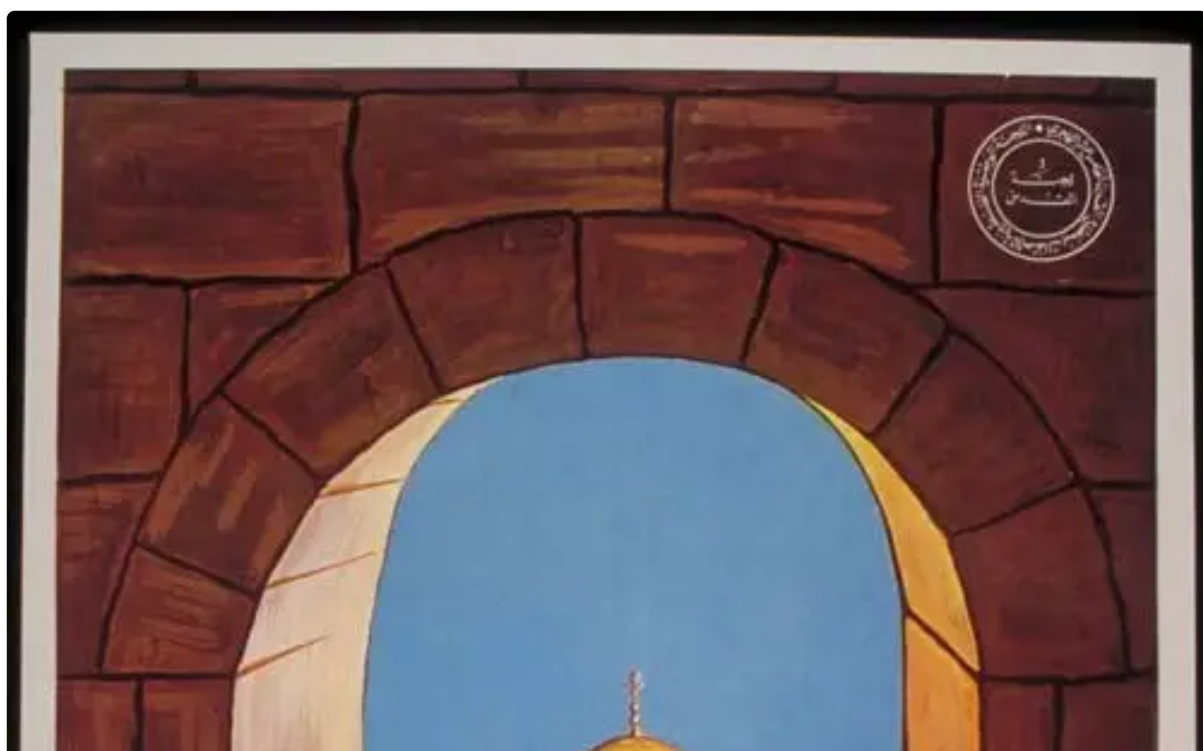
The First Intifada caught both the Israeli security establishment and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), at the time based in Tunisia, off guard. For Palestinians in the 1967 occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the method of resistance for two decades had been Sumud. But in late

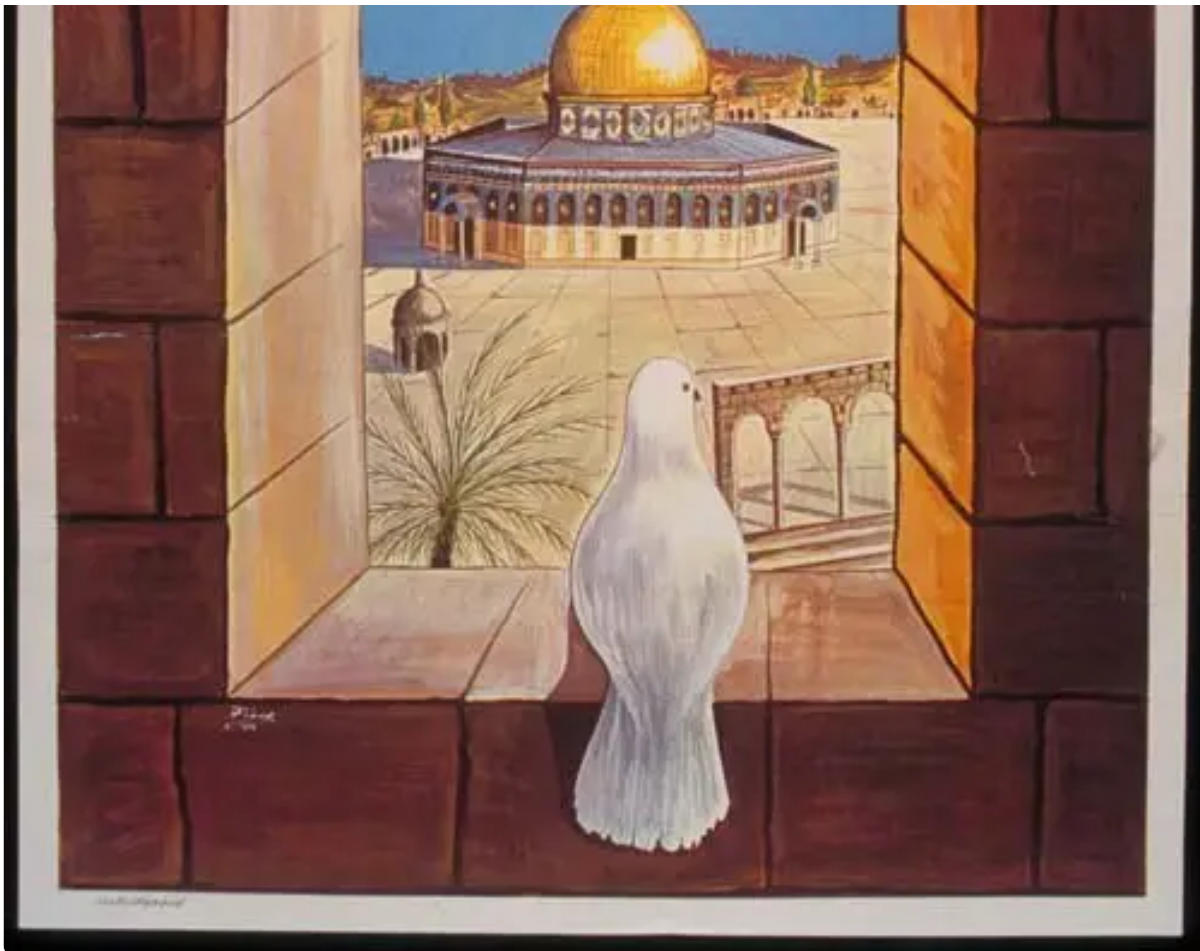
1987, frustration with the brutalities and injustices of Israeli occupation spontaneously erupted into a civilian-led uprising. Many of the demonstrations were headed by students and youth, a fact that did not restrain the Israeli army in seeking to crush the uprising through an official policy of “[broken bones](#)” voiced by then Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Between 1987 and the end of the uprising in 1993, over 1,000 Palestinians were killed by Israeli occupation forces, including 237 children. For Palestinian youth, the slingshot against Israeli tanks and armed occupation soldiers perfectly symbolized the determination of a new generation of Palestinian Davids against the Goliath of Israeli occupation.

Read more about the [First Intifada](#).

Read “[The Women's Movement during the Intifada](#).”

Jerusalem





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The earliest Muslims faced Jerusalem in their prayer, the Prophet Muhammad is said to have made his miraculous nocturnal journey to heaven from Jerusalem (mi'raj), and Muslims have sung Jerusalem's praises for centuries from the 13th century Damascene preacher Burhan al-Din al-Fazari ("The treasure of the world is Jerusalem...God directs his regard toward Jerusalem every morning, and showers upon its people His mercy and His benefits") to the 9th century ascetic Yazid b. Maysara ("Look at the House of God, how beautiful it is!") In the 8th century, caliphs from the Umayyad dynasty built the Dome of the Rock and the al Aqsa Mosque, which stand on the Noble Sanctuary or

Temple Mount (in Muslim and Jewish parlance, respectively) to this day. The earliest Christians were mostly Jerusalem converts from Judaism and after the destruction of the city in 70 AD, the Christian community returned to live in its ruins and over the centuries preserved the sites of Calvary and Resurrection. Christians have lived in the city since the time of Christ. For Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, this history conveys their unassailable right to Jerusalem alongside Israeli Jews. Since Israel's annexation of the eastern Arab half of the city after the 1967 War, however, the Israeli government has insisted that the Holy City is its "united" capital, emphasizing the history of Jewish kingdoms and the City of David. In that vein, Israel has built a chain of Jewish settlements around the eastern half to separate it from the would-be Palestinian state in the West Bank, settlements have been built within East Jerusalem as well, and thousands of Palestinian residents have had their residency permits revoked and face almost insurmountable obstacles toward constructing housing in their neighborhoods; all part of an effort to change the demographics of the city, already majority Jewish, and fully incorporate it into Israel "proper." But Palestinians remain undaunted: Jerusalem is no less their city and have declared that a shared capital, which recognizes Palestinian Christians and Muslims as sovereign in Jerusalem, is a prerequisite for any final peace deal. The Palestinian artist Yusuf Hammou designed this 1979 poster for an official Palestinian commission celebrating the 1500th anniversary of the Hejira (the journey of the first Muslims from Mecca to Medina in

Arabia); connecting Jerusalem to Islamic heritage and calling to mind another journey undertaken by the Prophet, the mi'raj.

To learn more about Jerusalem's past, present and trends for the future, check out the [Jerusalem Quarterly](#).

Stateless





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In the late 1960s, '70s, and early '80s, Palestinian militant organizations faced the reality of having to conduct their campaigns outside of the contested territory. After 1967, all of Mandatory Palestine was either internationally recognized as the State of Israel or Israeli occupied. Either way, Israel's formidable military power precluded Palestinian militant groups from establishing a base of operation within any territory controlled by Israel. The PLO used neighboring Jordan as a base, but conflict with the Jordanian King led the monarch to expel the PLO in the infamous 1970 Black September massacre of 10,000 Palestinians. The forced relocation to Lebanon increased already rising sectarian tension between that nation's Christians and Muslims. Right-wing, nationalist Lebanese Christian forces considered the Palestinians an existential threat to Lebanon's sovereignty as the PLO formed a state-within-a-state and an equal threat to Christian rule as the mostly Muslim Palestinians, if they were to become Lebanese citizens, would tip the demographic balance more decisively toward the Muslims. The outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 was partly due to right-wing Christian efforts to expel Palestinians from Lebanon. Christian militias targeted Palestinian refugee camps in the

eastern Christian half of Beirut. Tel al-Zaatar (The Hill of Thyme) camp, home to over 50,000 Palestinians, was besieged in spring 1976 by right-wing, Israeli-aligned militias. The camp was eventually overrun and all its residents expelled. At least 1,500 Palestinians were killed in the fighting. The Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote the poem Ahmad al-Zaatar about the camp's fall and the experience of statelessness, wandering from one place to the next at the mercy of hostile powers, which Tel al-Zaatar represents:

For two hands, of stone and of thyme

I dedicate this song. For Ahmad, forgotten between two butterflies

The clouds are gone and have left me homeless, and

The mountains have flung their mantles and concealed me

From the oozing old wound to the contours of the land I descend, and

The year marked the separation of the sea from the cities of ash, and

I was alone

Again alone

The PLO printed the poster in 1976 by the artist Ismail Shammout under the title "Tel al-Zaatar - Dignity In Grief."

Read "[Palestinian Refugee Camp Life in Lebanon.](#)"

Memory



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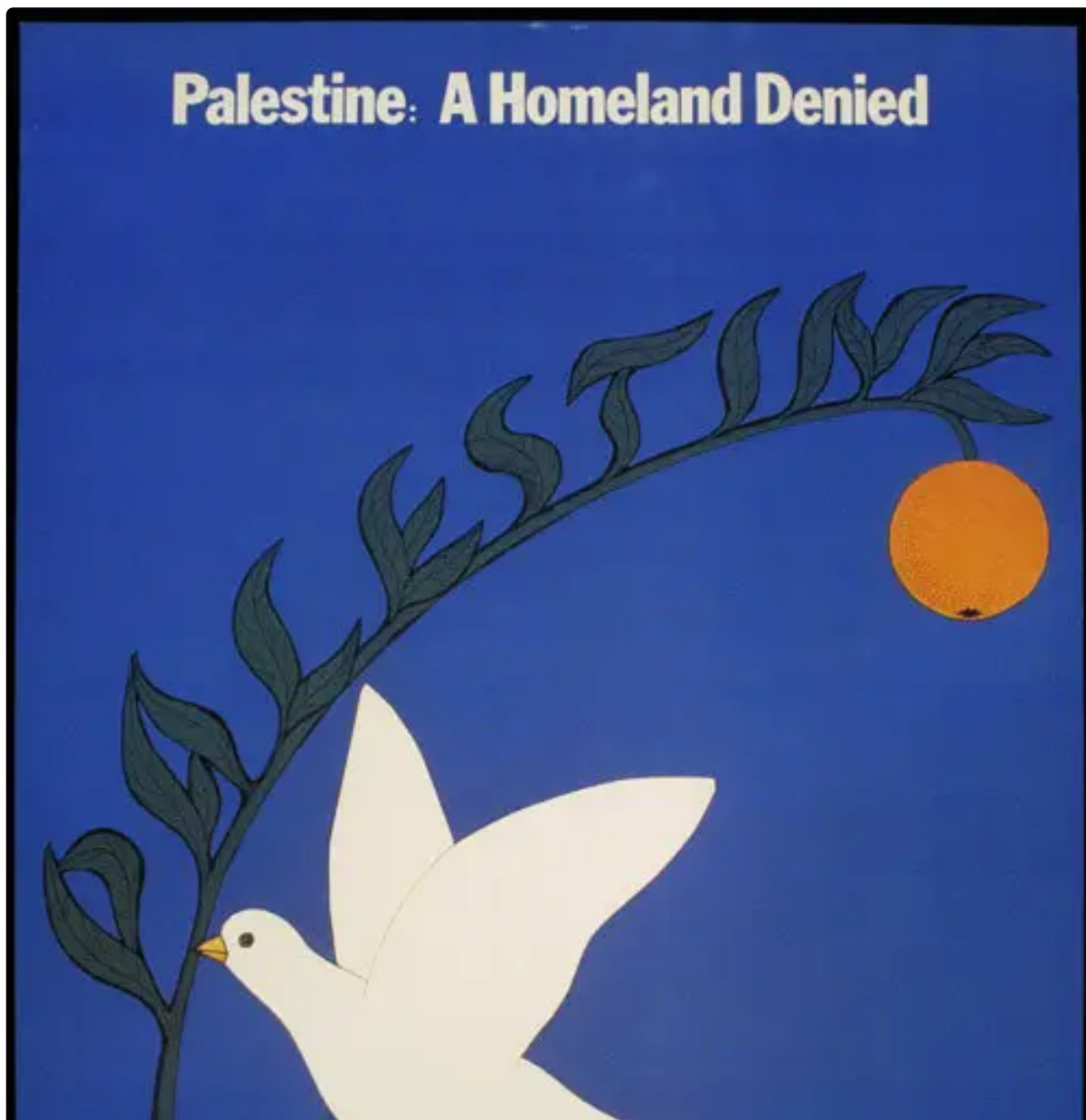
Beyond expulsion and exile, Palestinians continue to struggle against an effort to deny them claims to their very

land. Part of the Zionist narrative is that Palestine was “a land without a people for a people without a land,” and late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir infamously remarked, “There’s no such thing as a Palestinian people.” By denying a Palestinian people, Zionists sought to undercut any Palestinian claim to the land. In this narrative, Palestinians are just generic Arab squatters who can easily meet their needs elsewhere away from “the land of Israel.” Those Palestinians remaining on the land, in Israel and the occupied territories, bear witness to an unceasing campaign of dispossession. Israel continues to colonize Palestinian land through illegal settlements and reframes appropriated land in a narrative that emphasizes Jewish history to the exclusion of Christian and Muslim Palestinians. Hence the use of the Biblical Judea and Samaria in reference to the West Bank, [the appropriation of Arab villages names into Hebrew names](#), and plaques around historical sites that document only Jewish history; all in an effort to press Israeli claims while denying Palestinians the “permission to narrate” their own history, in the words of the late Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said. Thus the very act of [memory](#) is seen by Palestinians as an act of resistance against settle-colonialism. Many Palestinians take their children to villages from which they were expelled or to lands stolen from their families as one generation inspires the next to remain steadfast. The olive tree in the background serves as a symbol of Palestinian attachment to the land. Since 1967, Israel has uprooted over [800,000 olive trees belonging to Palestinians](#). The poster was designed by artist Irina Karkabi in 1999.

Read the definitive history of Israel's colonization of Palestine:: [All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948.](#)

Read [“History Erased: The IDF and the Post-1948 Destruction of Palestinian Monuments.”](#)

Justice





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All but one of these posters were found on the [Palestine Poster Project Archives](https://palestineposterproject.org), founded by Dan Walsh as a free and accessible tool for researchers, journalists and anyone interested in the history of Palestine. Walsh has amassed the largest collection of Palestine posters with over 10,000 and counting. What is remarkable about the archives is the extraordinary amount of posters produced not by Palestinians, but people in solidarity with the Palestinian cause from every corner of the world. One of Walsh's favorite posters was designed by a French artist for an exhibit bringing together dozens of artists under the title "Palestine: A Homeland Denied." For Walsh, the collection of international posters demonstrates how far and deeply the Palestinian cause resonates. In the Palestinian struggle, the "basic issue is about justice," says Walsh, "and since that resonates everywhere, we have artists from everywhere participating in creating today's Palestine posters."

Liberation Graphics: Interview with Dan Walsh of the Palestine P...



Institute for Palestine Studies

Institute for Palestine Studies interview with Dan Walsh.

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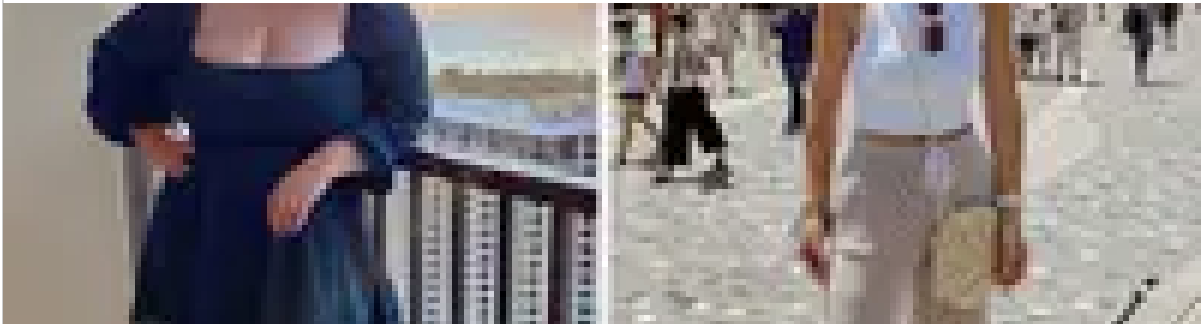
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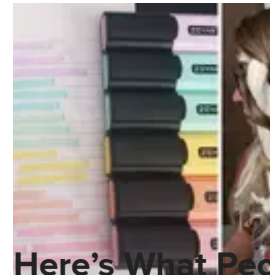
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