



JERUSALEM'S SEPARATION WALL AND GLOBAL MESSAGE BOARD: GRAFFITI, MURALS,
AND THE ART OF SUMUD

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**JERUSALEM'S SEPARATION WALL AND GLOBAL
MESSAGE BOARD:
GRAFFITI, MURALS, AND THE ART OF *SUMUD***

By Craig Larkin

All this graffiti that you see on the wall, even when it's not political,
is not an act of adjustment. It's an act of resistance!

Shopkeeper from East Jerusalem, 9 February 2011

Israel's "security fence" (*geder ha-hafrada*) or Palestine's "apartheid wall" (*jidat al-fasl al-'unsuri*)¹ currently covers 708 kilometers, annexes 9.4 percent of the West Bank, integrates eighty Israeli settlements, and separates about fifty-five thousand Palestinian Jerusalemites from their kin in East Jerusalem. The barrier's construction continues to provoke a wide range of resistance discourses, international protests, and solidarity campaigns.² A plethora of scholarship and media coverage has sought to challenge the wall's legality,³ highlighting its associated human rights violations through the obstruction of access to jobs, public services, education, and family. Other reports turn attention to the effects of dispossession and territorial fragmentation on

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Palestinian communities and a future Palestinian state.⁴ Academic critiques have firmly situated the wall within broader theories of state power, violence, and securitization. Such studies employ Foucauldian concepts of “biopower” or “biopolitics” as a means of understanding population control. They also draw on Agamben’s notion of the dystopic “state of exception,” in which a sovereign power invokes the need for security to justify the suspension of law, political rights, and, ultimately, “bare life” itself.⁵

While Palestinian popular resistance to the wall has taken multiple forms and engaged various strategies, it is largely characterized by local responses to the wall’s incremental progress. Such responses have included mass protests, weekly marches, sit-ins obstructing Israeli bulldozers, the dismantling of sections of the barrier, formal legal petitions, and advocacy campaigns. Against the backdrop of a weakened Palestinian Authority (PA) and continuing Fatah-Hamas infighting, this “Intifada of the Fence”⁶ has relied on the formation of local popular committees, the involvement of Israeli left-wing activists—mainly Anarchists Against the Wall (AAW) and Ta’ayush—and the coordination of the grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (AAWC or “Stop the Wall”).⁷ The AAWC has emerged as one of the leading catalysts for wall resistance, facilitating the work of fifty-four popular committees, and coordinating national action days and weekly demonstrations in villages such as Bil’in, Ni’lin, Budrus, and al-Ma’sara.⁸

While these acts of resistance are helping to forge new spaces and patterns for civil disobedience and activist partnerships, their impact on Palestinian Jerusalemite communities already cut off by the wall is far less clear.⁹ In what ways do such popular campaigns inspire, overlap with, or at times replace local activism? The failure to physically divert or stop the wall’s construction around East Jerusalem has arguably increased “creative resistance strategies” such as putting graffiti, protest art, and commercial advertising on the wall. These oppositional practices employ the wall as both a site of public contention and as a space to be reclaimed through text, image, and discursive narrative. Indeed, the wall has emerged as a dynamic canvas for multilayered local and international visual art, expressing marginalized voices, political criticism, social protest, and global solidarity through graffiti tags, slogans, murals, and posters. Through such diverse interventions, protesters invoke humor, hope, and irony in order to help Palestinians adapt

and survive.¹⁰ It is important, however, to question whether such practices may inadvertently reify the wall's presence and permanence, and equally, whether they encourage Western graffiti artists and international peace activists to further the physical and discursive colonization of Palestinian space.

In this article, I will examine the relevance and efficacy of wall protest art as an expression of everyday resistance or *sumud* within Palestinian Jerusalemite society. *Sumud* is generally translated as “steadfastness” or “rootedness” and is interpreted as a conventional form of nonviolent resistance or resilience. While wall graffiti has sparked a new wave of media interest, more attention is directed by media producers to the murals of international street artists and the slogans of peace activists and “conflict” tourists.¹¹ This article departs from this analysis and explores less-studied Palestinian graffiti (in both Arabic and English) and wall interventions as a dynamic mode of resistance. These works must be socially and historically situated, as they elicit multiple readings and target a variety of different audiences: local neighborhoods, Palestinian society, the Israeli state, and international civil society.¹² The distinctions between Palestinian and international wall interventions are often blurred, since local voices may be part of an international project and foreign artists may rely on local collaboration. These groups' themes and narratives also diverge, however. By examining the production of graffiti and protest art and its local and global reception, it is possible to delineate a more nuanced and multilayered account of Palestinian encounters with the wall.

Moreover, wall art and graffiti provide useful lenses through which to examine the changing modes and limits of Palestinian resistance and to connect it to wider mechanisms and everyday practices that rely on what Michel de Certeau has called “dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity.”¹³ Conceptual ambiguity surrounds resistance, traditionally understood as public, collective, symbolic, and politically oriented expressions of dissent but increasingly inclusive of everyday, hidden, subaltern acts. Palestinian *sumud* is no exception. Echoing James Scott's notion of “infrapolitics of the poor,”¹⁴ Palestinians apply *sumud* to a variety of settings. These range from cultural resistance (the maintenance of traditions, poetry, dance, and dress) to economic resilience (farming agricultural land, harvesting olives, and other micro-enterprises) and ideational resistance (maintaining a sense of hope, endurance, and normalcy).¹⁵ Some Palestinians embrace

sumud as a pragmatic third way between “submissive capitulation...and blind, consuming hate.”¹⁶ Some critique it for representing a “fatalistic passive resistance.”¹⁷ Others extol its adaptive capacity in being rooted and yet “resisting immobility, the locking down of one’s community.”¹⁸ *Sumud* embodies all the tensions and contradictions of polyvalent strategies of everyday Palestinian survival.

Protest art and wall graffiti are certainly one expression of *sumud*, or what literary scholar Tahrir Hamdi calls “creative resistance.” Hamdi writes that *sumud* “entails writing, drawing, *documenting* the Palestinian narrative, [and] creatively shaping a Palestinian experience that would be meaningful to the storyteller and his or her audience, and which would enable a mass witnessing of that experience, thus keeping the idea of Palestine alive.”¹⁹ The visual interventions on the separation wall both internally narrate the “Palestinian experience” and externally bear global witness to the “idea of Palestine.” The iconic visual emblems of Palestinian *sumud* exist alongside debates over the future trajectories of Palestinian resistance. My intention here is not to make *sumud* an even more nebulous concept, but to deconstruct its sacralization and examine its complex interplay with networks of power relations, for as Foucault reminds us, “resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.”²⁰

This article emerges from four years of ethnographic research and site observations carried out along various sections of the wall around greater Jerusalem between 2009 and 2012. The newly segregated suburbs of Abu Dis, al-Ram, al-‘Izariyya, Shu‘fat camp, and Bethlehem on which I focus reflect diverse urban realities, shaped by population shifts, commercial collapse, and new social challenges. The research involved comprehensive photographic documentation of the sites and over fifty ethnographic interviews with Palestinians affected by the wall: shop owners, community leaders, students, civil activists, and others. Interviewees were aged between sixteen and seventy years old and included thirty-two males and twenty females from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds. Methodological tools varied as interviews sometimes morphed into personal tours of wall sites, leading to informal group discussions and debates on the nature of artistic interventions. After a brief overview of the construction and demographic impact of the wall in the Jerusalem suburbs, I will analyze wall interventions ranging from protest art to political slogans to commercial advertising.

Remaking Jerusalem

While the Israeli government has justified the creation of the separation wall around East Jerusalem as a “temporary defensive shield”²¹ in the wake of a series of Palestinian suicide bombings, the wall also concretizes Israel’s expansive greater metropolitan vision.²² Beginning work in 2002, Israelis have constructed in six phases a wall now extending over 142 kilometers in length. Its serpentine route envelops the West Bank Israeli settlements of Giv’at and Pisgat Ze’ev, Ma’ale Adumim, Gilo, and Gush Etzion (referred to as “the Jerusalem Envelope”) while simultaneously severing the Palestinian neighborhoods of Bayt Hanina, al-Ram, al-’Izariyya, and Abu Dis from East Jerusalem. At certain points, the wall encircles entire Arab communities such as Bir Nabala and al-Walaja.²³ The collective result is the separation of East Jerusalem from its surrounding Arab hinterland, and the creation of Palestinian enclaves and exclaves fragmented by roads, buffer zones, and walled military checkpoints.²⁴

The final outcome is not the separation of two ethno-national communities, but what Israeli criminologist Alina Korn has referred to as the “ghettoization” of Palestinian communities, imprisoned in marginal spaces:

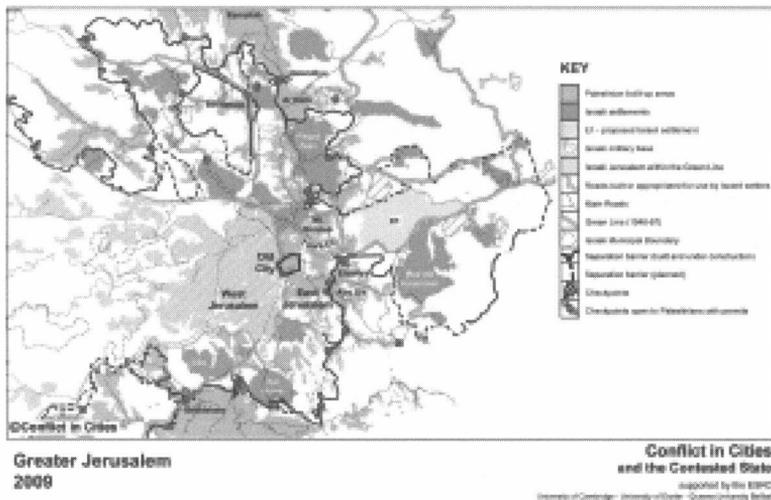


Figure 1: Map of Greater Jerusalem and the separation wall Image courtesy of Conflict in Cities and the Contested State: Everyday Life and the Possibilities for Transformation of Conflict in Belfast, Jerusalem, and Other Divided Cities (CinC).

Palestinians are often “inside,” trapped in their enclaves and separated from other areas or from their lands. Sometimes they are “outside,” west of the enclosed area, where their land is trapped within it. Yet at other times they are confined in an isolated territory, surrounded by fences on three sides—a space which is neither “outside” [n]or “inside.”²⁵

The territorial marginalization of Palestinian Jerusalemites is matched by their precarious legal status. Since Israel’s *de jure* annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Palestinian inhabitants of the city have been conferred “permanent residency” status but not citizenship. Instead they are provided with Jerusalem ID cards that entitle them to live, travel, and work in Israel and receive social services and health insurance benefits. Yet the “permanent residency” of these two hundred and fifty-three thousand Palestinian inhabitants is a misnomer. The status is not automatically conferred to the holder’s children or spouse and the Israeli authorities can rescind it based on failure to prove that Jerusalem is the “center of life.” In the last forty years Israeli authorities have revoked fourteen thousand Jerusalem identification cards and annulled more than half (fifty-eight percent) of them since the construction of the wall.²⁶

Although humanitarian groups have documented the daily disruptions that the wall inflicts on Palestinians, three significant demographic trends stand out. The first unintended consequence of the wall is that the Israeli attempt to drive East Jerusalemites out of the city has actually resulted in a mass influx of Palestinians into East Jerusalem and the Old City. Desperate to reside in Israeli-controlled Jerusalem and safeguard their Israeli-issued Jerusalem IDs, Palestinians have relocated households and extended families to Jerusalem *en masse*. An estimated thirty to fifty thousand residents²⁷ from surrounding neighborhoods such as al-Tur, al-Ram, and Dahiyat al-Barid moved into the city, exacerbating overcrowding and leading to inflated prices, increased illegal building, and stressing the already thinly stretched and underfunded services.²⁸

The second consequence of the wall is the creation of what we can call “dead spaces,” “gray zones,” and suspended enclaves. The route of the wall broke up a number of Jerusalem suburbs, cutting off Palestinian communities from their historic links and commercial ties with Jerusalem, and virtually draining them of life. The wall’s closure of access roads, shops,

and businesses and its devaluation of land and property have transformed the previously prosperous metropolitan hubs of al-Ram, Abu Dis, and al-'Izariyya into isolated ghettos. In al-Ram, 730 of 1,650 commercial properties closed in 2006. In Bir Nabala, fifty percent of shops have closed and 600 apartments now sit empty.²⁹ The price of a *dunum* (roughly nine hundred square meters) of land in Abu Dis has decreased from eighty thousand to forty thousand US dollars.³⁰

By refusing to build the wall along the 1967 borders, Israel has also intentionally generated “gray zones,” or Palestinian neighborhoods that were formerly part of the Israeli-controlled Jerusalem municipality but have now been excluded by the wall. The Israeli government has abandoned these zones, which are not formally incorporated under PA jurisdiction.³¹ These marginal urban districts—Kufr 'Aqab, Shu'fat refugee camp, Semiramis, and 'Anata—contain over 55,000 inhabitants and are still rapidly expanding. Despite a severe lack of public services, Palestinians are attracted to the cheaper living expenses, fewer planning restrictions, and the possibility of unofficial family unification that enables Jerusalem ID holders and West Bank spouses to live together.³² Yet the lack of regulation and state control is exacerbating social problems such as increased unemployment, domestic violence, drug abuse, and clan-based violence. According to Nasser Jubran, a member of 'Anata's residential council, “There is no control here, not by Israel and not by the Palestinian Authority. There's no master. This is going to hit Israel like a boomerang, because Hamas might take advantage of this vacuum and establish a strong base here and take over the neighborhoods.”³³

Conversely, the wall has also helped create a number of enclaves, entrapping 2,500 inhabitants from sixteen West Bank communities on the Israeli side of the barrier. These residents do not hold Jerusalem IDs or have any legal right to live within the municipal boundaries. A regime of special permits severely restricts and regulates their movement, prospects of work, and access to services. Permits are required to go to school, sell produce, harvest fields, attend hospitals, visit relatives, and worship at holy sites.

The third overarching consequence of the wall around Jerusalem is that it is slowly emerging as a permanent border. It is an unusual border, however, as it only applies to certain segments of society. For Jewish Israeli settlers, the border is circumvented through bypass roads and unmanned checkpoints, thereby allowing Israel to extend its rule and sovereign power

in the West Bank.³⁴ Nevertheless, the wall is creating a lasting territorial divide between East Jerusalem and the West Bank. It delimits Palestinian Jerusalemite expansion and facilitates the larger Israeli goal of driving out Palestinians from Jerusalem through an array of discriminatory policies. These include house demolitions, confiscation of IDs, settlement expansion, and heritage and green zoning envisioned in the “2020 Jerusalem Master Plan.”³⁵ These policies have exacerbated a commercial and cultural drift from Jerusalem to Ramallah by Palestinian businesses and civil society organizations that feel the increasing pressure of the Israeli restrictions. The wall has not established internationally recognized Israeli-Palestinian national borders. Nonetheless, it is clearly an Israeli attempt to weaken the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem and to undermine any future claim to the city.

Popular resistance to the construction of the wall in East Jerusalem is disjointed and uncoordinated. Initial protests in the form of “freedom marches,” solidarity parades, and communal vigils in al-Ram and Abu Dis in the summer of 2004 soon dissipated under harsh Israeli retaliation and through the lack of PA support. An evolving network of grassroots resistance emerged instead in the rural West Bank villages affected by the route of the wall—Budrus, Bil’in, Ni’lin, al-Ma’sara, and Jayyous—gradually developing into the “Stop the Wall” movement. For Palestinian Jerusalemites, resistance focused on navigating shrinking urban spaces distorted by concrete barriers and checkpoints, breaching holes in the wall, and performing the tasks of daily life within the city. The risk of losing Jerusalem IDs and being left without any citizenship inhibited Palestinians from organizing political opposition and direct confrontations with Israeli authorities. While Palestinians engage in this “individual” *sumud*, they also increasingly recognize the importance of engaging an international audience. As a middle-aged Jerusalemite political activist now turned political tour guide informed me, “The battle against the occupation has shifted from committees to media sites. The images of the wall often speak louder than politicians’ voices.”³⁶

The Art of Resistance

While the separation wall has allowed Israeli authorities to “extend and reproduce domination and reinscribe it in space,”³⁷ it has simultaneously

become the world's largest canvas for oppositional protest art, global critique, and local resistance. Ever-changing graffiti, murals, posters, installations, and street art at urban intersections and militarized checkpoints along the wall seek to challenge Israeli hegemony and reclaim Palestinian space, presence, and subaltern voices. According to William Parry, a British freelance journalist and photographer, "The wall has become an enormous visual petition, an ephemeral forum, a pictorial rant and reprimand, calling for resistance, justice, freedom and solidarity, and a plea for understanding and humanity."³⁸

A text on the wall bisecting the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Bayt Hanina and al-Ram asserts that "Silence is Complicity," while spray-painted graffiti in Abu Dis declares that "words are now our new weapons." For Palestinian artist Husni Radwan, writing on the wall entails a "transmission of power and challenge" revealing "a state of rebellion against the occupation."³⁹ Sharif Sarhan, a professional photographer and artist from Gaza, stressed that a "drawing on the wall plays a major role in resisting the occupation, where foreign and Palestinian artists use new and innovative ways to confront the occupation."⁴⁰

There exists a rich heritage of Palestinian resistance art from the 1960s liberation work of artists such as Isma'il Shammout, Sulayman Mansur, and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Muzayyin who fused the themes of loss, exile, and political activism with post-intifada art tackling suffering, and occupation.⁴¹ Such artists merge the traditional visual icons of land (soil, olive trees, and cactus) and people (the *fellah*, the fighter, and the female figure) with contemporary abstraction, deconstruction, and the search for new representative forms. In her book *Palestinian Art*, Israeli art historian Gannit Ankori identifies this as "Dis-Orientalism," the process by which "contemporary Palestinian art frequently reflects the hybrid identities of the artists and their 'fluid' positions in an interstitial space between their oriental matrix and the dominant culture of the West."⁴² Palestinian activist and dance director Omar Barghouti highlights more explicitly Palestinian art's "decolonizing" function as a cultural struggle for emancipation against the Israeli occupation, and a "self-therapy and expansion of the 'free zone' in our collective mind, where progressive transformation can thrive."⁴³

Such liberatory and self-reflexive tropes rarely appear in the narratives of Palestinians with homes and properties facing or encircled by the

path of the wall. Their responses to Palestinian wall art are certainly more ambivalent and their formulation of resistance more pragmatic. As twenty-three year old al-Quds University graduate Jamil, living in what he calls the “al-Ram ghetto” explains, “Graffiti is not a solution but sometimes it is the only way to be heard, to cry out, shout, dream, fight back!”⁴⁴ Painting on the wall also provides a limited escape or release. It is an attempt to project an alternative image or message of hope in a situation of total despair. A nine-meter wall surrounds the Anastas family’s home and shop, which is situated in a residential block adjacent to Rachel’s tomb on the (formerly) main Hebron-Jerusalem road in Bethlehem. The colorful graffiti on the wall surrounding them depicts an image of a dove with olive branch and the text “Anastas want peace.”⁴⁵ The owners of the Rock Company, a well-established Bethlehem jewelry store also flanked by the wall, have painted an idyllic beach scene at the back of their commercial property. They dematerialize the wall and present a parallel yet illusionary reality.⁴⁶

Yet very few Palestinian Jerusalemites appeared convinced of the oppositional value or potential of wall graffiti and protest art. They leveled their most prominent criticism at the irrelevance of the visual messages in stark juxtaposition to the wall’s immutability. Artistic paintings of cracks, fissures, doors, and windows that offer glimpses into alternative worlds (real or imaginary) cannot subvert the wall’s concrete reality. For some, they reveal instead the weakness and impotence of Palestinian resistance. As one local resident from Abu Dis explains:

It’s not the graffiti that matters to me. It is the wall that has been affecting my life ever since it was constructed.... What can graffiti do about our situation over here? Our rights in this country are gone. No one cares. My family owned a shop in Abu Dis, but we had to rent another in al-‘Izariyya because of the wall.⁴⁷

Jerusalemites also direct criticism at Western artists and international activists whose protest artwork monopolizes global media and scholarly discussion. The wall in Bethlehem has become almost sacralized as a “place of pilgrimage” for graffiti artists, activists, and tourists who pay homage to the iconic murals or add their own paintings, graffiti, and messages of resistance.⁴⁸ Its popularization owes much to the interventions or “art attacks” of British graffiti artist Banksy. Since 2005, Banksy’s satirical

paintings and trips to Palestine have helped generate increasing media coverage and publicity. His exhibition “Santa’s Ghetto” (2007) encouraged other international artists such as Blu, Paul Insect, and Sam3 to paint on the wall, and the resulting media exposure raised almost one million dollars for local Palestinian charities.

Despite these attempts to demonstrate international solidarity with the Palestinian people, locals have received these interventions with considerable ambivalence. Locals have effaced or covered paintings that offended people’s sensibilities, such as rats with slingshots and a donkey producing an ID for an Israeli soldier. Shrewd businessmen have sold others to foreign investors.⁴⁹ In other cases, Palestinians have reinscribed or “Palestinized” wall art. As one local youth explains: “Someone bricked up the window Banksy painted on the wall. Maybe they didn’t like his work, or the idea of a beautiful landscape. For me, the issue is not about rejecting the view but whether it’s the right time to imagine it.”⁵⁰

Palestinian critics see such interventions as further eroding their sovereignty over their space.⁵¹ Some accuse artists of beautifying the wall and creating artistic tourism that actually helps legitimate its presence. Others worry that such murals do not actually challenge Israeli authority.⁵² For example, Bethlehem residents have recently been critical of two interven-



Figure 2: Banksy’s bricked up panorama, Bethlehem. Image from September 2010, courtesy of CinC.

tions by French and German street artists. In “Face2Face,” artists JR and Marco pasted enlarged photographic portraits of Israelis and Palestinians with similar professions facing each other on the wall. The artists’ intention was “to show that beyond what separates them, Israelis and Palestinians are enough alike to be able to understand one another.”⁵³ Yet for Hani, a frustrated mechanic and father of three living close to the wall, these photos mean nothing: “Of course we are similar, but we do not have the same rights or the same lives.”⁵⁴ The second piece, a mural by street artist Captain Borderline, displays a chained dove of peace alongside Israeli (Jewish) and Palestinian figures pointing accusatory fingers and espousing “hate and fear” discourses, while an Eastern mystical cross-legged guru is poised to cut the bonds and “Release 4 Peace.” The sardonic response of twenty-one year old Bethlehem University student Muna reflects the mood of many: “Perhaps that’s the answer. We need more Eastern gurus and less politicians, and then we [will] arrive at peace.”⁵⁵

While the highly publicized work of graffiti artists such as Banksy, Blu, and Sam3 engage a global audience and provide a subversive snapshot of local realities, they may in some ways obscure the complexity of everyday Palestinian responses to the wall. For Hani and Muna, the issue is not about understanding or reconciling with the Israeli “other,” but defying the occupation and maintaining family networks beyond the wall. Resistance is not simply about global justice discourses but about everyday concerns and uncomfortable compromises. As a twenty-three year old computer science graduate from al-‘Izariyya confides:

The wall leaves us with impossible choices: to move our home, to rent one room for a family of five, to lie to the municipal authorities, to borrow.... Do you know how many Jerusalemites are in debt?... You hear stories of Palestinian workers who help place the concrete barriers in the ground and then they take out spray cans and write “Down with the Wall” and “The Wall Must Fall.” How can this be? I suppose survival is still the main thing. Money matters.⁵⁶

Not all residents critical of Israeli power and PA powerlessness demonstrate such resignation. Palestinian wall murals offer dynamic readings and reflections on grassroots initiatives such as the solidarity campaign for Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli jails titled “We Can’t Live, So We Are

Waiting for Death.” Stenciled images of Khadr ‘Adnan—a hunger striker whose sixty-six day fast helped mobilize protests outside Ofer prison and throughout the West Bank—appear at various locations along the wall. In al-Ram, one tag simply reads “We Are All Khadr ‘Adnan” echoing the chants of solidarity demonstrations in Ramallah, Jenin, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Gaza in February 2012.⁵⁷

Wall murals also reflect wider regional movements. An interesting example is the more recent attempt to incorporate Palestinian resistance within the unfolding events of the Arab revolts or uprisings. A local Palestinian artist, working under the pseudonym Vince Seven (VIN7) painted a revolutionary battle scene depicting a future storming of the separation wall and the triumphant exaltation of the Palestinian national flag on the wall in Bethlehem.⁵⁸

Emulating French painter Eugene Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*, the local liberators are cloaked in the emblems of Palestinian struggle: the rural *jalabiyya*, the checked keffiyeh, the catapult, gun, and keys of former homes. The caption, “Revolution[s] have started here...and will continue



Figure 3: Revolutionary Palestinian mural by Vin7, Bethlehem.
Image from March 2012, courtesy of CinC.

until...” is an attempt to interpret the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya as both inheritors of the Palestinian revolutionary legacy and simultaneously as harbingers of a future Palestinian liberation. The same artist has also created a nostalgic iconic image of Palestinian fighter Leila Khalid, a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) member, infamous for her involvement in plane hijackings and resistance activities. Khalid is immortalized as a youthful activist in military fatigues, adorned with an AK-47, a checkered keffiyeh, and a bullet ring. Amidst the multiple slogans of peace, freedom, and liberty, this is a local reminder of the importance of armed Palestinian resistance, captured in the tagline “Don’t Forget the Struggle.”

Yet at the same time Palestinian wall art can also provoke and challenge traditional interpretations and genres, for example Majd ‘Abd al-Hamid’s “Declaration of Independence,” a deconstruction of Mahmoud Darwish’s 1998 Palestinian “Letter of Independence.” Stenciled over a 130-foot portion of the wall in al-Ram, the jumbled, fragmented Arabic letters encourage multiple readings and diverse interpretations, but they ultimately point toward an incoherent and disjointed Palestinian future.⁵⁹



Figure 4: Leila Khalid mural, Bethlehem. Image from March 2012, courtesy of CinC, March 2012.

Make Peace, Not Walls: The Politics of Wall Graffiti

I will turn now to further exploring these dissenting Palestinian voices and narratives often found in the less-studied parts of the wall. Julie Peteet's insightful exploration of graffiti in East Jerusalem during the first intifada underscores three key features.⁶⁰ First and foremost, Palestinian graffiti was an oppositional practice—a public act of defiance, civil disobedience, and



Figure 5: Majd Abdul Hamid's "Declaration of Independence," al-Ram. Image from June 2010, courtesy of CinC.

resistance that challenged Israel's supremacy. Second, graffiti emerged as a crucial medium for internal communication in a climate of censure and surveillance. It became a way to organize protests, strikes, and rallies; to affirm allegiances; to warn against collaboration; and finally, to demarcate political boundaries. Thirdly, graffiti helped create an arena of public debate, or what Nancy Frazer terms "counterpublics," in which multiple and contradictory subaltern Palestinian voices contest and engage with a local populace.⁶¹ As Peteet astutely summarizes, "Graffiti [as cultural artifacts] were a critical component of a complex and diffuse attempt to overthrow hierarchy." For Palestinians, Peteet continues, "graffiti simultaneously affirmed community and resistance, debated tradition, envisioned competing futures, indexed historical events and processes and inscribed memory."⁶²

Writing on the wall continues to be an act of defiance, it still serves as a medium of communication, and it contributes to a dynamic public discourse. Both artists and viewers, however, live in a changed political context with emergent globalizing forces. There are three ways in which the current situation is notably different from that during the first intifada. First, the wall has created a *de facto* (although shifting) Israel-Palestinian border; consequently, the Israeli military does not care much about graffiti on the Palestinian side. During the first intifada, Israel used fines, imprisonment, and forced local youth to erase graffiti. Now there is less intervention. Some artists have been especially defiant in spraying graffiti near armed checkpoints, security towers, and gates with a military presence. Some artists now include with their graffiti personal tags, names, and even telephone numbers. This growing transparency may be a sign of new communal boldness perhaps evidenced in recent Palestinian graffiti decorating sites in West Jerusalem.⁶³

Secondly, graffiti is no longer a significant medium of organizing or mobilizing communal Palestinian resistance. The emergence of new technologies allows for greater connectivity and the evolution of cyber-resistance—what some have termed an "electronic intifada." Palestinians not only inscribe their messages of resistance on physical sites, but they increasingly digitize and transmit them globally. Palestinian protests and forms of communal resistance are now often organized, recorded, and transmitted to local and global audiences through websites, blogs, Twitter feeds, email updates, social network sites, and YouTube clips. The wall becomes a repository for graffiti cyber links and public forums of debate and discourse.⁶⁴ One

website, for example, offers viewers a virtual Israeli-Palestinian separation wall they may “tag” and “bomb” with graffiti and protest art.⁶⁵

Finally, and most significantly, groups like the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) and similar activist networks have increasingly globalized the Palestinian conflict. Such groups are committed to bringing the power of global solidarity to the on-the-ground struggle against Israeli colonization under the mantra, “We Are All Palestinians.”⁶⁶ As one wall graffiti message attests, “Palestine (not Nokia) connects people.” Global activism and indigenously responses have converged and even blurred together in the struggle to free Palestine of Israeli occupation. John Collins, a scholar of global studies, explains this reciprocal phenomenon as “Global Palestine—a Palestine that is globalised and a globe that is becoming Palestinized.” Collins situates Palestine at the center (symbolically and physically) of wider neocolonial processes of securitization, occupation, and acceleration—the ability to “control the strategic acceleration and deceleration of violence and change.”⁶⁷ Yet amidst the desire to raise international support and bring global pressure to bear on Israel either politically or economically, it is important not to lose sight of the specificity and local agency of the Palestinian struggle.

It is perhaps best to observe the subtle tension of this last point in the contrasting themes and emphases that distinguish international graffiti interventions on the wall from that of local Palestinian graffiti. Pacifist slogans, idioms, and human rights declarations may offer solidarity but do they fundamentally challenge Israeli occupation?

The two major sites of international wall graffiti are at the Jerusalem side of the Abu Dis and al-‘Izariyya divide (formerly Jerusalem-Jericho road) and on the exterior side of the Bethlehem wall. The first site, one of the earliest sections of the wall constructed in Jerusalem in 2003 and the most visible vista from the Old City, was the initial scene of solidarity marches. It continues to be a stopping point for tourists and activists on “wall tours.” A variety of Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental organizations and tourist companies (a mixture of peace activists and commercial entrepreneurs) currently run approximately nine organized wall tours in East Jerusalem. Tours vary dramatically: some are free, while others cost as much as thirty-five dollars. Some involve local Palestinians from East Jerusalem; other guides merely narrate the indigenous experience. But almost all of them stop at this section of the wall. The inscriptions are mostly in

English offering messages of solidarity: “Scotland/Ireland/Seattle supports Palestine,” “Mancs against Tanks,” and “Algeria is with Palestine, Freedom *inshallah*” (in Arabic); as well as critical commentaries: “Wall of War + Shame = Wailing Wall.”

The wall in Bethlehem, undoubtedly the most popular site of “conflict tourism,” inspires a cacophony of global interventions with many murals focusing on forms of escape: ladders, escalators, windows, cracks and fissures, and segments of the wall falling like dominos. Palestinian wall paintings in the less visited suburbs of al-Ram, Shu‘fat, and al-‘Izariyya mainly rely on the traditional emblems of *sumud*: the rooted olive tree, the sacred al-Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock, the former keys of destroyed homes, the stone-throwing youth, and Naji al-‘Ali’s rejected but defiant refugee child, Handala.⁶⁸

There is a noticeable divergence in wall graffiti content depending on the language of the script. English graffiti tends to evoke human rights discourses and international peace slogans, such as Mahatma Gandhi’s “An Eye for an Eye Makes the World Blind,” Nelson Mandela’s “Only Free Men Can Negotiate,” and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Injustice Anywhere Is a Threat to Justice Everywhere.” Yet reposts in Arabic often localize the struggle, with references to Palestinian poets and writers such as Mahmoud Darwish and Ghassan Kananafi, colloquial proverbs such as “Arabic is closer to the truth,” and defiant declarations such as Yasir Arafat’s statement “Jerusalem is ours; deal with it whether you like it or not.” This trend may appear as a simple binary between international/English and local/Arabic voices. Yet there is a cultural hybridity and linguistic fluidity born of the wall’s role as a global message board. English is increasingly the “language of protest” for those seeking to address Israel, the United States, and the international community.

Nevertheless, distinctions in wall interventions are also apparent. There is a Western propensity to conflate the wall with the wider Palestinian struggle, historical experience, and broader concerns. At the same time, such interventions conceptualize wall resistance as part of a larger global struggle for freedom, therefore diminishing the local Palestinian voice. In Bethlehem, graffiti decries: “Israel, Have You Become the Evil You Deplored?” and “Israel, Is This What You Want to Be Remembered By?” and “Shame on You; Where Is Your Humanity?” and “The Oppressed Became the Oppressor.” There are

also those inscriptions that are more mocking in tone: “Here Is a Wall at Which to Weep” and “The Only Democracy in the Middle East.” Murals such as Ron English’s *Pardon Our Oppression* and images of Israeli soldiers made of money satirize US financial and military complicity. Graffiti texts affirm the notion that “American Money = Israeli Apartheid” or that “It’s Really Amazing What \$7 Million Per Day From My Government Can Do.”

Palestinian Arabic graffiti that address an Israeli audience do not appeal to its humanity or moral responsibility but rather condemn the legacy of brutal military occupation. A recurrent Arabic slogan found on the wall around al-Ram and al-‘Izariyya states “Take Your Share of Our Blood and Leave.” Defiance and resistance often flows through the rhetorical discourses of Palestinian politics. Texts on the wall include: “Fatah is Everywhere/Fatah is the Key to Resistance,” “ Hamas: the Glory and Honor of Our Dear Martyrs and the Healing of Those Who are Injured” and “DFLP (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine): Remembering All the Efforts and Resistance Against the Occupation and the Apartheid Wall.” Sprayed Palestinian political slogans and party emblems often affirm neighborhood allegiances and territorial boundaries—demarcating geographical spheres of influence for Fatah, Hamas, and the DFLP. Yet other graffiti tags reveal complexities and strains within contemporary Palestinian politics. Some graffiti in al-Ram is forthright in both its critique of the current PA leadership —“Is this the government you elected?”— and its demand for Fatah and Hamas reconciliation —“Yes to National Unity.” Other Arabic tags condemn peace negotiations —“No to Negotiations with the Continuation of Occupation and Judaization Procedures”— and call for a new uprising: “Yalla, Yalla, Intifada.”⁶⁹

Alongside celebratory and critical political slogans, Palestinian graffiti also reflects on the Nakba (the 1948 “Catastrophe”), refugees, the right of return, and the centrality of Jerusalem to a future Palestinian state. At the Abu Dis/al-‘Izariyya junction, Arabic graffiti commemorates the sixty-first anniversary of the Nakba, listing the names of destroyed villages (such as ‘Ayn Karam and Dayr Yasin). It also includes the refrains “Remember the National Refugees,” “We Will Be Back One Day,” and “The Right of Return Is a Holy Right and It Can’t Be Given Up.” Images of Jerusalem, depicted as the archetypal Arab city, or the sacred “al-Quds” housing the al-Aqsa Mosque utilize various artistic styles but each offer the same resolute message:

“Jerusalem is ours forever,” “We are not going to leave you, Jerusalem,” and simply “Return.”⁷⁰ Similar to the walls encircling many Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, the wall is a visual memorial repository. It is a place to inscribe and commemorate loss and survival, to inform the world of the Palestinian story, and to remind future generations of their historical narrative.

Arabic wall graffiti also highlights immediate and contemporary struggles that touch the everyday lives of Palestinian Jerusalemites. One such emotive issue is the ongoing battle to protect the neighborhood of Silwan against Israeli settler encroachment through El’ad’s “City of David” heritage park.⁷¹ “Free Palestine” slogans have been coupled with “Free Silwan” tags. Attention is also given to liberating political prisoners, the plight of hunger strikers (such as Khadr ‘Adnan), stopping house demolitions, ending peace



Figure 6: Al-Aqsa, Arafat and DFLP flags in ‘Izariyya.
Image from May 2010, courtesy of CinC.

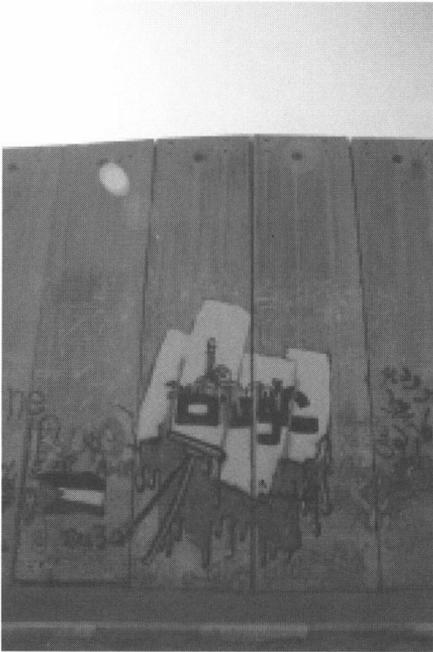


Figure 7: “Return” in al-‘Izariyya/
Abu Dis. Image from May 2010,
courtesy of CinC, May 2010.

negotiations, and joining the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. A section of the wall in al-Ram targets the construction of the Jerusalem light railway and its sponsorship at the hands of the French multinational Veolia. The long-delayed railway project (2002–11) has aroused continued controversy over its route that links East Jerusalem settlements (French Hill and Pisget Ze’ev) to the urban center, sparking legal suits, and divestment pressure from Palestinian civil society organizations. The graffiti implores, “Help Us Out, No More Illegal Investment in East Jerusalem Light Railway; Stop Veolia”; and “Veolia is Building the Newest Palestinian Railway. Not Meant for Palestinians, and Built on Stolen Land. Derailing the Peace Process and Leading Us Nowhere.” The BDS campaign’s international pressure finally led to a pyrrhic Palestinian victory, with Veolia selling its shares to the Israeli transport cooperative Egged in October 2010. The project was fully operative in 2012, however, and there are plans to extend the fourteen-kilometer track to over twenty-two kilometers including Neve Ya’akov in the north and to Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in the southeast as part of the larger Jerusalem municipal “Master Plan 2020.”

Graffiti supporting the BDS campaign comes from both local and international activists reflecting the global nature of the movement. Here again, ambivalence on global civil society partnerships and the implicit power relations that underlie them are evident. One graffiti text defiantly echoes Aboriginal Australian activist Lilla Watson, "If You Have Come Here to Help Me, You are Wasting Your Time. But If You Have Come Because Your Liberation is Bound Up with Mine, Then Let us Work Together." Other Palestinian graffiti tags directly challenge Western ignorance--"Foreigner You Know Shoah...But Why Don't Know Nakba?" Others gently mock conflict tourism: "Don't Worry, Take Photos." A barbed graffiti message in Abu Dis, employing a hybrid of Arabic and English, questions whether activists are writing on the right side of the wall: "Oh Foreigners, We Need to Bring Our Protest Graffiti to the Other Side of the Wall." Sami, a forty-year-old shopkeeper in Bethlehem comments on these differing perspectives: "It is good that foreign tourists come to support the local people, but often they write what is in their heads [and] not exactly the thoughts of local Palestinians. They want the wall to fall, but they don't understand the details of occupation. They fail to see the wider picture."⁷²

Wall for Sale: Economic Resistance

The wall continues to impose an incalculable economic drain on Palestinian Jerusalemites. At the same time, it has also led to incredible ingenuity, adaptability, and responsiveness. Observers have documented these forms of everyday resistance, such as the creation of dynamic micro-networks of "checkpoint" vendors, porters, and transport systems (buses and taxis). Adapting to the struggles of Palestinian daily movement, various entrepreneurs have created what some have dubbed "Qalandiya Duty Free," named after a Palestinian village near a wall crossing between Jerusalem and Ramallah.⁷³

Another increasingly visible and creative means of visually subverting the wall is its use as a space for commercial advertising, both for local businesses and global marketing. In the districts of al-Ram and al-'Izariyya (formerly thriving Palestinian commercial centers on main routes into central Jerusalem), the effects of the wall are profound. Only fifteen percent of al-Ram's original inhabitants currently reside within the district, and al-'Izariyya has witnessed a steady migration to East Jerusalem and

Ramallah. At the same time, lower rents have encouraged the return of some commercial life and with it an observable increase in the use of the wall to post advertisements, announce sales, or promote shops and businesses. Advertising in these districts has taken multiple forms. Shop owners, car wash services, and supermarkets whose properties directly face the wall use hand-sprayed messages to promote their products and prices. In certain places, the wall has become a notice board to promote local services such as renting construction equipment, the provision of gas, and wedding catering through the posting of names and mobile numbers. Finally, commercial signs, posters, banners, and billboards advertising beauty salons, graphic designers, furniture shops, musical concerts, and restaurants are fixed and bracketed at busy junctions along the wall.

Residents have varied responses and reactions to this phenomenon, revealing subtle differences in perspectives on the wall, the continuing Israeli occupation, and the PA. One shopkeeper in al-'Izariyya observes a shift in the communal attitude from initial defiance to tacit acceptance: "At the beginning, slogans were about resistance and defying Israel. Then people started to use it like any other wall. They put up political posters, death notices, and advertisements. It feels wrong to have messages like 'The



Figure 8: Commercial advertisements on the wall in al-Ram.
Image from March 2010, courtesy of CinC, March 2012.

Wall Must Fall' next to taxi numbers, but I suppose life has to go on."⁷⁴ A political activist originally from Ramallah stresses that the most important point is surviving the wall, therefore all tactics and strategies are permissible: "Advertising [on the wall] is only a natural response. How can we say this is right or wrong? It doesn't matter about positions; it's about the reality of life. The wall is there, and people use it for everyday functions. Nothing remains static."⁷⁵

Other residents are keen to interpret all inscriptions on the wall whether political, social, or commercial as oppositional practice. As supermarket owner Amir explains: "All this graffiti that you see on the wall—even when it's not political, it is not an act of adjustment. It's an act of resistance."⁷⁶ In Bethlehem, the owner of the Bahamas Seafood restaurant, George Hasbun, concurs. The wall stands just yards from his restaurant, and he uses it to advertise his menu, project World Cup football matches, and promote his new souvenir shop, The Wall Gallery. His promotional shop placard, fixed to a wall opposite it, reads: "Lifeless and Concrete Stands the Wall--But the Wall Gallery Shines with Soul." As Hasbun explains:

Customers come to our restaurant as a way of challenging the wall. They liked the idea of putting a menu on the wall and using humor to defeat it.... We put up a screen to show the World Cup. Many local people came to watch the games. Perhaps we will do that again and show something else on the wall.⁷⁷

A further extension of such commercial "resistance" strategies or conflict tourism trends is the opening of a "Banksy Shop" adjacent to the Bethlehem wall. The shop sells a range of Banksy wall art transposed onto posters, T-shirts, refrigerator magnets, and olive woodcarvings.

Mustafa, the shop owner, points out: "I'm not sure Banksy knows about our shop, but I'm sure he would support it." The shop stocks wall art memorabilia and organizes Banksy graffiti tours, which incorporate a visit to the 'Aida or Dahaysha refugee camp and a discussion on local Palestinian challenges.⁷⁸ According to Mustafa, the shop is both an act of economic resistance and a reflection of the wall's growing political significance:

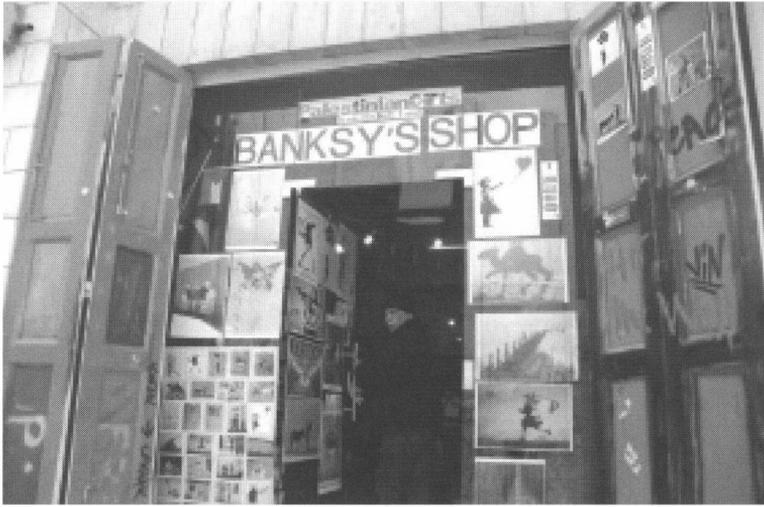


Figure 9: Banksy's unofficial shop, Bethlehem. Image from March 2012, courtesy of CinC.

We realized there was an opportunity to make a living from the wall. It has taken so much from us; we must find new ways of surviving... We are selling Banksy as this is what foreign tourists want. It's what they come to look at.... The Wall has become an important place to make political points. Where were else can you be heard these days?⁷⁹

The Wall Gallery and Banksy Shop are undeniably creative and entrepreneurial responses to the Wall. For some Palestinians, they represent legitimate strategies of economic resistance; yet others view them as crude and kitsch commodification of the wall driven by the demands of “conflict tourists.” Spurgeon Thompson, writing on Northern Ireland’s “Troubles Tourism” warns of the dangers of “selling” conflict, which often leads to “the reduction of politics to visual commodities, the glance that consumes rather than investigates, the camera that collects rather than critiques...and the culture stripped of its social and political meanings.”⁸⁰ Indeed, many Palestinian residents remain wary of tourist practices that normalize the wall, reify its presence, and enable commercial exploitation. Ahmad, a print shop owner in al-Ram, is critical of what he perceives to be local apathy. “People go on living, without thinking about the future,” he comments. Ahmad points to government corruption: “There needs to be an intifada against the PA, negotiating with Israel and building their little kingdoms.”⁸¹ He is also critical of the wall’s commercialization:

It angers me to see advertisements and personal numbers; are we turning this into a public noticeboard? And then foreign activists come and write slogans. That long one [referring to the longest letter in the world⁸²] apparently took one month and cost 12,000 euros. For what exactly? What is the point of it? No one even reads what it says! People are poor here. Why not spend the money on schools, infrastructure, [and] hospitals?⁸³

Finally, the wall has also become an iconic global message board for international greetings, solidarity support, and worldwide advertising. It provides a striking symbolic backdrop for endorsing websites (such as Australian Jewelers Support Palestine: ejeweller.com.au), publicizing humanitarian blogs (including *This Wall is a Symbol of Human Failure: Lifeisbrutallyunfair.com*), and promoting international events (such as the Toronto Palestinian Film Festival in November 2008). Foreign and international activists have sprayed many of these graffiti tags. Almost two thousand, however, are the work of the joint Dutch-Palestinian non-governmental organization "Sendmeamessage." This collaborative initiative was created in 2005 to enable anyone to post a message on the wall via an Internet site. The "You Pay, We Spray" project entailed a thirty euro donation used to support grassroots charities and involved Palestinian volunteers spraying the electronically received personal messages on the wall and then sending the recipient three digital images of the graffiti. According to one of its founders, Faris 'Aruri, the focus of the project was "marketing Palestine globally to present the Palestinian struggle to the world using creative and new forms."⁸⁴

The content of the messages range from the political to the banal: critiques of Israeli occupation, marriage proposals, subversive humor ("Nipping over the Wall; Do You Want Anything from the Red Shop?"), peace slogans, birthday greetings, and expressions of commercial solidarity (such as "Hookahs, Not Bazookas," the tag of a Californian café Casbahcafé). Some may question whether this is marketing the Palestinian struggle globally or simply providing space for international voices to inscribe their own meaning on the wall and thus sanitizing the occupation. The project has stirred much debate and controversy, with some residents critiquing the obscure and irrelevant interventions and others voicing objections over its

financing. Yet for ‘Aruri (one of the “You Pay, We Spray” project founders, mentioned above) the project was never a commercial enterprise. “We are activists, not commercial entrepreneurs,” he comments. Instead, the focus, he argues, was on “creating global media exposure and stirring internal debate.” He explains further:

Look, we still have critiques. There are too many café intellectuals and activists in Palestine, but what do they actually do or achieve? This is a form of resistance, but the main goal is opening up public opinion.

Liberation movements have many different strands and colors; we are looking for creative and new forms. People particularly among the youth are frustrated and disillusioned with Palestinian leaders and politics; they repeat the same thing and no one listens. Our project got a two-page spread on *Time* magazine. When was the last time any Palestinian leader got such coverage?⁸⁵

‘Aruri’s analysis of resistance reveals a growing youthful disenchantment with Palestinian activism and political actors and a concerted emphasis on raising international awareness and building solidarity links through global media. Wall graffiti takes key Palestinian debates from cafés and offices to public streets, communities, and international media. For many Jerusalemites, this form of resistance remains the only viable option, given how vulnerable they are to the Israeli state and the PA and to the inertia of Palestinian politics.

A recent twist on this form of activism is the Sumud Story House. The Arab Education Institute (AEI) in Bethlehem leads this collaborative initiative, which posts Palestinian women’s stories on the wall. Personal accounts of *sumud* emerge from community gatherings. These are translated into individual English posters sponsored by international beneficiaries and then posted as part of a living “Wall Museum.” One of the thirty current posters in this series reads:

I am a dying woman

All my life was in Jerusalem! I was there daily. I worked there at a school as a volunteer, and all my friends live there. I used to belong to the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and was a volunteer there...I rented a flat but was not allowed to stay because I do not have a Jerusalem ID card. Now I cannot go to Jerusalem; the Wall separates me from my

church, from my life. We are imprisoned here in Bethlehem. All my relationships with Jerusalem are dead. I am a dying woman.

Antoinette from Bethlehem

Supported by Martin Kofflard, Rotterdam, Netherlands.⁸⁶

While this project focuses on using the wall as a global medium, it projects Palestinian voices and struggles rather than international interventions. The objective is not merely media exposure. In the words of the AEI website, such events and projects “are an activation of social space and by their adjacency to the wall (in fact the wall becomes a ‘stage’), they underline the contrasts between community life versus the message of suffocation and fragmentation emitted by the wall.”⁸⁷ This project perhaps uses the wall as a local stage, but the exclusive use of English suggests the intended audience remains international. One participant admitted that the posters are “my letter to the world.” But she also said, “I don’t think the world is listening.”⁸⁸

Conclusion: Between Resistance and *Sumud*

The wall is perhaps Israel’s most costly political venture, both in terms of financial expenditure (around 1.5 to two billion dollars) and in the negative international publicity it has generated. It has evoked historical images of South African apartheid and emerged as the defining icon for Israel’s ongoing occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people. Visual images of wall graffiti and protest art have become a symbol of local resistance and a medium for projecting global struggles against colonialism, exploitation, and capitalist greed. Palestinian Jerusalemites treat wall graffiti with ambivalence and indifference. While some laud its importance in globalizing the Palestinian cause, others warn of the danger of losing their distinct voice. Some dismiss graffiti tags, posters, and advertisements as trivializing and normalizing the monstrous concrete intrusion. Disillusioned youth point to the graffiti’s importance in expressing their existence and venting their anger.

Wall artists attest to the paradoxical predicaments of Palestinians and the different audiences they hope to address. The local commercial advertisements reflect the struggle to maintain a viable livelihood in fractured neighborhoods, while the English-language protest murals and slogans point to a growing belief that only international awareness, solidarity, and global

pressure will influence Israel's current policies. What emerges from the cacophony of opinions is a deeper debate over the very nature and limitations of resistance within Jerusalem. Few Jerusalem ID holders currently believe there is any prospect for meaningful political opposition in the city or that there is an appetite for popular resistance. Instead, they prefer to emphasize the importance of personal *sumud*, remaining steadfast and persistent in the face of difficult circumstances. As Rami, a fifty-year old shop owner from Shaykh Jarrah, explains:

When the wall was being built in Jerusalem, we went over to protests in Abu Dis and al-Ram. We thought maybe we could change something. But now we feel defeated. There is no point [in] going to these protests, we have too much to lose... What does resistance mean these days? I'll tell you what it means—survival. Being willing to stay and not leave for Ramallah or another country—that's the greatest act of resistance (*sumud*) for East Jerusalemites.⁸⁹

For Rami, the concept of *sumud* is particularly relevant to the daily Jerusalemite struggle to survive and exist within the city.⁹⁰ Birzeit professor Mazin Qumsiyeh explicates *sumud* as simply “hanging on to what remains and doing all the mundane tasks of trying to live (survive) in what remains of Palestine when it has been made crystal clear in words and deeds that we are not welcome on our lands.”⁹¹

Such a conceptualization of *sumud* may be broad enough to allow all Palestinians to feel engaged in resistance: “To exist is to resist.” Just how malleable, however, can the application of *sumud* be within the context of Jerusalem? Should it be applied to Palestinian communities who have lost faith with the PA or even the national project and who instead are striving for equal civil rights and public services from the Israeli municipal authorities? A November 2010 Petcher Middle East Poll of nineteen East Jerusalem neighborhoods found that in a theoretical two-state solution, only thirty percent would choose Palestinian citizenship, while thirty-five percent would prefer Israeli citizenship, and a similar number would be undecided.⁹² These figures may attest to a number of trends: the disorientation of East Jerusalemites, the failure of the peace process and the dissipation of PA credibility, and the latent Jerusalemite fear of losing access to their city, the holy sites, and Israeli social benefits. Importantly, the poll also indicates

a swing away from an exclusively politically and nationally framed solution to a new emphasis on pursuing civil rights within the Israeli system. Presently, Palestinian Jerusalemites may be more concerned with their standard of living than with the state in which they live. In the words of Amira, a twenty-year-old student activist:

The whole struggle is about freedom and rights. The PLO's support of the two-state solution is foundational; yet the aspirations of individuals are not fully contained within such a manifesto. They want peace, prosperity, freedom, [and] civil rights. They are not so concerned with the national burden [or] the return of refugees; their focus is on their own needs and interests—the issue has become individualized.⁹³

Such sentiments resonate with the controversial proposals of Palestinian intellectual Sari Nusseibeh in his latest book, *What Is a Palestinian State Worth?* In the book Nusseibeh suggests that East Jerusalem may be an interim model for a broader Palestinian solution in which Israel is forced to confer on Palestinians full “civil [and human rights], though not the political rights of citizenship.”⁹⁴ Nusseibeh’s is a provocative premise—that Palestinians may be willing to accept “second-class citizenship” over their current occupied status or a “future make-believe Palestinian state.”⁹⁵ In his urban critique of East Jerusalem, Al-Quds University professor ‘Umar Yusuf is hesitant to suggest a shift towards “normalization” but instead posits the idea of a “normalization of resistance.” He suggests that Palestinians within Jerusalem have been forced to adapt, modify, and rethink their spaces of activity and their opportunities, with everyday urban concerns of housing, education, and commerce becoming the new arenas for civil resistance against the Israeli authorities. “The essence of Palestinian *sumud* has been resistance by existence; improving living conditions is becoming a vital necessity for a vibrant Palestinian presence in Jerusalem and a crucial milestone for the aspirations towards a Palestinian capital.”⁹⁶ Such varying interpretations cannot detract from the overriding fact that Palestinian Jerusalemites are being forced to find new ways and creative strategies to challenge Israeli hegemony over the city.

ENDNOTES

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- 1 The contestation of the structure is matched by its disputed nomenclature. See Richard Rogers and Anat Ben-David, "Coming to Terms: A Conflict Analysis of the Usage, in Official and Unofficial Sources of 'Security Fence,' Apartheid Wall,' and Other Terms for the Structure Between Israel and the Palestinian Territories," *Media, War & Conflict* 3 (August 2010), 202-229. I will use both the descriptive terms "wall" and "barrier" to reflect the changing manifestations of the structure, evidenced by its multilayered network of eight meter-high concrete slab walls in urban areas and a combination of barbed-wire security fences, automated sensing devices, patrol roads, observation towers, checkpoints, and barrier gates in the remaining sections.
- 2 Figures taken from UN-OCHA "Map of the West Bank Barrier Route" 7 July 2011 and "Barrier Route Projections" 7 July 2010, http://issuu.com/ochaopt/docs/ocha_opt_route_projection_july_2010 and International Peace and Cooperation Center (IPCC), *The Wall Fragmenting the Palestinian Fabric in Jerusalem*, 2007.
- 3 International Court of Justice, Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004:

The construction of the Wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated régime, are contrary to international law. Israel is under an obligation to terminate its breaches of international law [and] cease forthwith the works of construction of the Wall being built in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, [and] dismantle forthwith the structure therein situated, and to repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto.
- 4 A selection of such work include NGO reports: UN-OCHA, East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns (March 2011); *A Wall in Jerusalem: Obstacles to Human Rights in the Holy City* (B'Tselem 2006); Y. Lein, and A Cohen-Lifshitz, *Under the Guise of Security* (Bimkom and B'Tselem, 2005); I. Habib, *A Wall in its Midst: The Separation Barrier and its Impact on the Right to Health and on Palestinian Hospitals in East Jerusalem* (Tel Aviv: Physicians for Human Rights, 2005); *A Wall on the Green Line?* (Alternative Information Centre, 2004) and academic writings: R. D. Brooks, *The Wall: Fragmenting the Palestinian Fabric in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: International Peace and Cooperation Centre, 2007); R. Dolphin, *The West Bank Wall: Unmaking Palestine* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).
- 5 For a deeper theoretical critique of Foucauldian and Agambenian analysis of power within the Israeli-Palestinian context, see Ronit Lentin, ed., *Thinking Palestine* (London: Zed Books, 2008); Philip Misselwitz and Tim Rieniets, *City of Collision: Jerusalem and the Principles of Conflict Urbanism* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006) and Michael Sorkin, *Against the Wall: Israel's Barrier to Peace* (New York: The New Press, 2005).
- 6 Uri Ayalon, Public speech in Manchester, 7 June 2004.
- 7 The Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (AAWC) initially started in October 2002 as a loose network of Palestinian NGOs, while its main website Stop the Wall (<http://stopthewall.org/>) was introduced in August 2003. According to the website the AAWC is a "coalition of Palestinian non-governmental organizations and popular

- committees that mobilize and coordinate efforts on local, national, and international levels. These efforts are focused upon stopping and dismantling the Apartheid Wall, and resisting Israeli occupation and colonization.”
- 8 30 March is Land Day, and the International Week against the Apartheid Wall is 9-16 November.
- 9 Polly Pallister-Wilkins, “Radical Ground: Israeli and Palestinian Activists and Joint Protest Against the Wall,” *Social Movement Studies* 8 (2009), 393-407.
- 10 Lori Allen proposes a concept of “getting by” in relation to how Palestinian communities have normalized violence as part of the necessities for their everyday survival under Israeli occupation. Lori Allen, “Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal during the Second Palestinian Intifada,” *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (2008), 453-87.
- 11 See William Parry, *Against the Wall: The Art of Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2010) and David Hanauer, “The Discursive Construction of the Separation Wall at Abu Dis: Graffiti as Political Discourse,” *Journal of Language and Politics* 10, no. 3 (2011), 301-321.
- 12 My research takes its lead from Julie Peteet’s excellent analysis of Palestinian graffiti during the first intifada. See “The Writing on the Walls: The Graffiti of the Intifada,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1996), 139-59.
- 13 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press), xiv.
- 14 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); *Ideology and the New Social Movements* (London: Routledge, 1990); “The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups,” in *The Post-Development Reader*, eds. Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (London: Zed Books, 2006).
- 15 Sophie Richter-Devroe, “Palestinian Women’s Everyday Resistance: Between Normality and Normalisation,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 12 (2011), 33.
- 16 Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), 38.
- 17 Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 197.
- 18 Rema Hammami, “On the Importance of Thugs: The Moral Economy of a Checkpoint,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 6 (2004), 18.
- 19 Tahrir Hamdi, “Bearing Witness in Palestinian Resistance Literature,” *Race and Class* 52, no. 3, 40-1.
- 20 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 95.
- 21 See the official Israeli government website which claims the fence will “not establish a border of any kind; annex any Palestinian lands to Israel; change the legal status of any Palestinians; prevent Palestinians from going about their daily lives or create permanent facts on the ground,” <http://securityfence.mfa.gov.il/mfm/web/main/Document.asp?SubjectID=45392&MissionID=45187&LanguageID=0&StatusID=3&DocumentID=-1> (accessed 22 July 2010).
- 22 Ray Dolphin, “The Wall in Jerusalem: Military Conquest by Architectural Means,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 26 (2006), 11-29.
- 23 The initial phase included two ten-kilometer sections to the north (Ofer base to Qalandiya checkpoint) and south (Ra’s Bayt Jala to Dayr Salah village) of East Jerusalem. The following phases have sought to connect these sections. For a more detailed account, see Nasrallah and Khamaisi’s IPCC three-part series *Jerusalem on the Map* (International Peace and Cooperation Center, Jerusalem, 2003) *Jerusalem on the Map* II, 2005; *Jerusalem on the Map* III, 2007.
- 24 Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

- 25 Alina Korn, "The Ghettoization of the Palestinians," in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. R. Lentin (London: Zed Books, 2008), 123.
- 26 Sources: UN-OCHA East Jerusalem Key Humanitarian concerns (December 2011) and B'Tselem report quoting Israeli Ministry of Interior figures, see www.btselem.org/english/jerusalem/Revocation_Statistics.asp (Accessed 1 January 2011).
- 27 The exact figures are difficult to substantiate, but this estimate range is based on a number of different sources: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, "2011 Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook" (JIIS, 2011); International Peace and Cooperation Center, "Jerusalem on the Map III" (International Peace and Cooperation Center, Jerusalem, 2007), and Bennett Zimmerman et al "Jerusalem 2050 and Beyond" (Jerusalem: The American-Israel Demographic Research Group [AIDRG] 2007).
- 28 Despite housing thirty-three percent of the city's residents, East Jerusalem is allocated just twelve percent of the municipal budget. A recent EU report in December 2008 suggested that as little as five to ten percent of Jerusalem municipal budget is spent in Palestinian East Jerusalem. See Rory McCarthy's article in the *Guardian*, "Israel Is Annexing East Jerusalem, Says EU," 7 March 2009.
- 29 See UN-OCHA, East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns, Special Focus, March 2011, 76-77.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 See statement by Yakir Segev, holder of the East Jerusalem Portfolio in the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality, in which he declared that, "The Jerusalem municipality has no hand in managing these neighborhoods.... The State of Israel has given up, [the neighborhoods] are outside the jurisdiction of the state, and certainly the municipality. For all practical purposes, they are Ramallah." Quoted by Nir Hasson, "Jerusalem Official: Areas East of the Fence Not Part of the City," *Haaretz*, 8 January 2010.
- 32 For a more detailed exploration on the emergence of these "gray zones" and the long-term problems associated with them, see Al-Haq's 2010 Executive Summary, "Redrawing Occupied East Jerusalem."
- 33 Elior Levy, "No Man's Land in East Jerusalem: Chaos Reigns Supreme," *Ynet News*, 22 January 2011, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4017005,00.html>.
- 34 Merav Amir, "On the Border of Indeterminacy: The Separation Wall in East Jerusalem," *Geopolitics* 16 (2011), 774.
- 35 In the past ten years, the Jerusalem Municipality has demolished 756 homes, and approximately 3,800 people—over 1.5 percent of the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem—are now homeless. These figures are based on statistics from the Jerusalem Municipality provided by B'Tselem (1998–2004), http://www.btselem.org/english/Planning_and_Building/East_Jerusalem_Statistics.asp, and ICAHD (2004–08), <http://www.icahd.org/eng/docs/East%20Jerusalem%20-%202004-08.pdf>.
- 36 Personal interview, 13 June 2010.
- 37 Azoulay and Ophir, "The Monster's Tail," 21.
- 38 Parry, *Against the Wall*, 10.
- 39 This quote is taken from Amineh Ziyara's article, "An Innovative Way to Resist the Occupation: The Apartheid Wall Is the Longest Art Gallery," *al-Resalah Net*, 11 February 2010, <http://www.alresalah.ps/en/?action=showdetail&seid=7321>.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 See Samia Halaby, *Liberation Art of Palestine: Palestinian Painting and Sculpture in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century* (New York: HTTB Publishing, 2001) and Kamal Boutalla, *Palestinian Art: From 1850 to Present* (London: Saqi Press, 2009).

- 42 Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 21.
- 43 Omar Barghouti, "On Dance, Identity, and War," *al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 June 2002.
- 44 Personal interview, 18 September 2010.
- 45 The Anastas family home has now been converted into a guesthouse aptly named the Walled-In Holy Star Guesthouse.
- 46 In certain places, Israel has also utilized art work in an attempt to normalize or obscure the stark reminder of division—painting surreal suspended bridges on Road 440 to Tel Aviv, for example, or idealizing the landscape of Bayt Safafa, partially hidden from view by the wall close to the Gilo settlement, as a picturesque scene, but without the Palestinian villages.
- 47 Personal interview, 15 September 2010.
- 48 Graffiti wall tours are now offered alongside the traditional religious sites of Manger Square, the Church of the Nativity, and the Shepherds' Fields.
- 49 Banksy's *Stop and Search* and *Wet Dog* murals were purchased and transported (weighing almost six tons) from Bethlehem in 2010 by international art dealers Stephan Keszler and Robin Barton. They were revealed amidst much controversy in an exhibition at the Keszler Gallery in the Hamptons, near New York, in August 2011. See Anny Shaw, "Off the Wall: Banksy Murals Move from West Bank to Miami," *Art Newspaper* 240, November 2012.
- 50 Personal interview, July 2010
- 51 See Amahl Bishara, "Covering the Barrier in Bethlehem: The Production of Sympathy and the Reproduction of Difference," in *The Anthropology of News and Journalism: Global Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth Bird (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 54-70.
- 52 Ashley Bowen, "Bomb the Wall: Graffiti as Resistance in Palestine" (2008), Oxtoby essay prize, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University.
- 53 See website: <http://face2faceproject.com/>
- 54 Personal interview, 14 June 2010.
- 55 Personal interview, 8 February 2011.
- 56 Personal interview, 10 February 2011.
- 57 Haggai Mattar, "Protests Spread in Solidarity with Khader Adnan's Hunger Strike," +972, 13 February 2012, <http://972mag.com/khader-adnans-life-at-risk-as-hunger-strike-enters-58th-day/35297/>.
- 58 Vince Seven's identity remains somewhat uncertain and opaque. In a conversation I had with a number of residents, some claimed that he was a Palestinian artist, while others believed him to be of French-Arab descent.
- 59 Daniel Estrin, "West Bank Security Barrier Draws Artists and Advertisers," *Forward*, 3 September 2010.
- 60 Peteet, "The Writing on the Walls," 143.
- 61 Nancy Frazer, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* no.25/26 (1990), 55-60.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 140-1.
- 63 In recent months, Palestinian Jerusalemite graffiti artists are becoming bolder and targeting sites in West Jerusalem. An underground group has sprayed intifada and revolt slogans and stencils of images of historical Palestine. As the official statement—This is Palestine—explains, "Until there are masses marching, the streets can send a message in another way, and we're using a stencil and spray paint to do it. One image at a time, we are aiming to break the fear and lack of motivation of our Palestinian people and call them to rise." <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/palestinian-artists-strike-jerusalem-streets-again-message-occupiers-and-our>.
- 64 The "Art of Resistance" Facebook page claims:
Our aim in this page is NOT to make the wall look nicer, nor is it to normalize its existence. The aim is to bring more attention to the Separation, segregation and apartheid Wall built

- by the State of Israel/ on private occupied/stolen Palestinian land. Graffiti is just a medium to reach our aim in targeting the international community specially the grass roots, since art and Graffiti is a global language. The art of Resistance is just one of the many kinds of popular resistance against the occupation. THE WALL WILL FALL, and all of us will witness this happening soon.
- 65 See Vandal Squad–Graffiti Studio: <http://shual.vandalsquad.com/graffitiView.php?id=7358479&returnpage=archiveView>.
- 66 John Collins, “Global Palestine: A Collision for Our Time,” *Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 16, no.1 (2007), 3.
- 67 John Collins, *Global Palestine* (Hurst: London, 2011), x and 83.
- 68 The character of Handala—a ten year old, barefooted Palestinian refugee, with his back to the viewer and his hands firmly clasped behind his back—was first created by Naji al-Ali, for the Kuwaiti *al-Siyasa* newspaper in 1969. In al-Ali’s words, he remains an iconic symbol of Palestinian identity and defiance. “He is an icon that stands to watch me from slipping. And his hands behind his back are a symbol of rejection of all the present negative tides in our region.”
- 69 The first slogan is a DFLP tag found in al-‘Izariyya, and the second tag calling for a third intifada was located on the wall in Bayt Hanina.
- 70 Al-Aqsa has a long history as a sacred Muslim holy site and as a pan-Arab political symbol. Some commentators trace its modern politicization to the former mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husayni’s efforts to restore and beautify the mosque and Haram al-Sharif compound and transform it into a Palestinian nationalist emblem. The contemporary importance of al-Aqsa mosque as a symbol of Palestinian resistance and defiance is reflected by the rising profile of Shaykh Ra’id Salah’s Islamic Movement (Northern Branch) within Jerusalem and their “Al-Aqsa Is in Danger” campaign. See Craig Larkin and Michael Dumper, “In Defense of Al-Aqsa: The Islamic Movement Inside Israel and the Battle for Jerusalem,” *Middle East Journal* 66, no. 1 (2012), 30-51; Wendy Pullan, Max Sternberg, Lefkos Kyriacou, Craig Larkin, and Mick Dumper, *The Struggle for Jerusalem’s Holy Places* (Routledge: London, 2013).
- 71 Wendy Pullan and Max Gwiazda, “City of David’: Urban Design and Frontier Heritage,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 39 (2009) 29-37.
- 72 Personal interview, 5 June 2010.
- 73 See Rema Hammami, “Qalandiya: Jerusalem’s Tora Bora and the Frontiers of Global Inequality,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 41 (2010), 29-51. Another consequence in marginal communities such as al-‘Izariyya, now isolated and divorced from easy access to Jerusalem, is the increase in selling goods and services to the nearby Israeli settlement of Ma’ale Adumim. Palestinian mechanic shops and supermarkets in close proximity to the settlement have shop titles and advertisements in Hebrew and Arabic. Despite the wider Palestinian boycott of settlement products, economic integration is less clear, evidenced also by the Israeli sign at the entrance to al-‘Izariyya, which warns, “It is prohibited to hand over or deliver vehicles for repairs to the Palestinian Authority.”
- 74 Personal interview, 8 February 2011.
- 75 Personal interview, 9 February 2011.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Personal interview, 7 February 2011.
- 78 <http://www.muradtours.com/Pages/BanksyTour.aspx>.
- 79 Personal interview, 13 March 2012.
- 80 Spurgeon Thompson, “The Commodification of Culture and Decolonisation in Northern Ireland,” *Irish Studies Review* 7, no. 1 (1999) 53-63, 62.
- 81 Personal interview, 9 February 2011.
- 82 The longest message is a quote taken from a South African human rights activist, Fred Isaac, in response to a visit to Palestine. The solidarity message runs almost 3,000 meters

- long and was painted by Sendamessage.nl.
- 83 Personal interview, 8 February 2011.
- 84 Personal interview, 9 February 2011.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Quote taken directly from the wall poster.
- 87 See Arab Education Institute's website: http://www.aeicenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=93&Itemid=165.
- 88 Personal interview, 12 March 2012.
- 89 Personal interview, 5 June 2010.
- 90 This may be also referred to as the power of habitation. As John Collins explains, What we have seen during the years of Israeli occupation, and especially during the second intifada and the campaign against the Wall, is an increasing determination on the part of ordinary Palestinians to use what is, in effect, the primary power at their disposal, namely, the near-ontological power of habitation..... As Israel wages "war on the milieu," more and more Palestinians have found themselves camped in their houses and in their fields, among their trees, refusing to leave even as Israeli troops advance in their tanks and D-9 Caterpillar bulldozers. In doing so they establish links with the many global movements that have prioritized the notion of "counter-habitation"—that is, by insisting on their right as human beings to inhabit streets, abandoned buildings, and other public spaces. (*Global Palestine*, 16)
- 91 Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine*, 235.
- 92 The poll, taken in November 2010, was conducted by a local Palestinian NGO—the Palestinian Centre for Public Opinion—and was widely cited in the press and international media.
- 93 Personal interview, 9 February 2011.
- 94 Sari Nusseibeh, *What Is a Palestinian State Worth?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 14.
- 95 Ibid., 144-7.
- 96 Omar Yousef, "Jerusalem: Palestinian Space, Behaviours, and Attitudes," *Palestine-Israeli Journal* 17 (2011), 52.