

MANIFESTO: At the Intersection of Impact: Willful Refusal & Sumud

By Khadija Salim & Razzan Quran

Khadija: As two Palestinian women raised in different contexts of settler colonialism, we set the intention that this manifesto will serve as an invitation and a reckoning, to reexamine the narrative around Palestinian political prisoners, and to excavate life, in an economy of death.

Razzan: This talk is intended to be uncomfortable in as much as it is a generous offering, to learn from the unwavering commitment of Palestinian political prisoners, when change is the only constant.

With dissociation, multiplicity is broken and appears through fissures. Psychoanalytically, we are taught to work *with* time, from surface into the depths. If we read this through the hegemonic overlap between the imaginary and symbolic registers, Palestinians are fictional characters, who wreak superhuman harm. We are quantified in numbers, discrete; negated narrative, negated humanity. APA sponsored spaces are spun with “regulatory” dysfunction (e.g., APSas disinclination of Lara Sheehi). Instantaneously, hearing Palestine triggers “existential threat” and “dread” in the dominant other - dominant relative to psychoanalytic spheres. Many analysts utilize the “ghost” signifier to categorize a host of intrapsychic and intersubjective enmeshing experience(s) & meaning. In summoning Palestine, **the ghost is present in the shared now**. What was rigidly sequestered to private clinics and rooms, is now in open space, conjured spuriously. In this moment, speaking not only Palestinian, but Palestinian political prisoner, I feel the sharpness of the affectual density collapses all integration. Those who were curious, vibrant, and seeking, turn to distortion, denial, and splitting.

Khadija: We ask, *where is the wound and where are the fissures?* The Palestinian serves as the vehicle demarcated by mind, heart, body and spirit that became penetrated through its initial wound- the shaping of shifting imperial prowess from Europe to the U.S. marking the body of Eurocentric perception where all others are discarded, dissociated, and cut off. The rock through the vehicle’s windshield. The fissures, or fractured cracks, begin to slowly deepen and wear across the windshield, its line of vision, and over time, create somatic, psychological, intergenerational, institutional and relational implications.

Razzan: Often our killed lived plagued in rivers of hate and alienation - and weaved meaning from a place unbounded by hegemonic reason. political prisoners bring us into their creativity and dignity behind bars. Carcerality intends for them to be forgotten, *if* conjured to provide the disciplinary function of threat to what lays ahead if we were to pursue their path. As numbers we grow in the West our families bleed in the East. And Political prisoners hold this, and then mold it in the shape of defiance. This death bending at the level of witness & embodiment- we must speak it. We must conjure and glean in humility and gratitude at what is offered. The fear and shame, forgoes that we all benefit from doing so. We all benefit.

Khadija: We ask, *what pictures have Palestinian bodies captured- in and out of focus- with or without permission or surveillance?* The Palestinian body holds captive the historical trauma and epigenetic scars passed down through our biology, birthing cumulative and collective trauma

that dysregulates our nervous system and asks us as subjects to temper and readjust our focus- to reassess our meaning making of life and death.

Razzan: The death instinct as the norm for psychoanalytic innocence. What quiescence do you wish to return to? This stasis is draining you of blood. Where is your heartbeat? Can you sense a pulse? Who is the monster, when the implied setting is a zoo? The intentional systematic puncturing of the going-on-being, everything in the material is made to disrupt flow: checkpoints, walls, soldier raids, jeep raids, curfews, economic instability, flying checkpoints, closing roads to establish settlement roads.

Folks reduce and negate the interiority of my people, because the materiality and embodiment is so vivid, cruel, horrific - it is taken as phantasy. This is a psychoanalytic matter because psychoanalysis is the Language to grasp it through. It is. So, we have the tools, the room if you must, and the standstill: PALESTINIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE PSYCHOANALYSTS.

Khadija: With hunger strike the material body is stripped. "After two weeks, a person can experience dizziness, weakness, loss of coordination, and a low heart rate. Within the next week, he or she may suffer from vision loss or other neurological problems. After one month or after losing more than 18 percent body weight, there may be permanent damage to the body."

Razzan: They cleave allegory, depth, temporal and spatial play - amidst intended decay. Political prisoners are militant in how they bind against shattering- through their defiant willfulness, through sumud.

Khadija: This means, there is an unparalleled way of connection - beyond the primary secondary process schema. There is a hybridization that arises- the electron added to an outer radius alchemizing the intrapsychic helix. The imaginary weaves within the symbolic, and the Real is the epicenter for both.

Razzan: There have been and continue to be unruly and willful efforts to learn from "deviants" and "monsters". When reading the testimonies and narratives of Palestinian political prisoners, they reconstruct memory through every recall of their final physical moments within and amongst love: they link the kidnapping and horrific beating by soldiers to final moments with parents, a family, a home, a belonging rooted deeply in the fabric shared with others. The machinery of settler colonialism employs prolonged trauma exposure, to strike with precision, rendering the target(s) suspended in debilitation - a psychic vegetation - or in Schore's words a "right brain unconscious pathological dissociation". Yet, political prisoners show a different activation of the right brain unconscious ... it is employed as a state of defiance.

Khadija: We ask, *how can sumud and refusal contour rather than inform healing?*

Sumud as its core is an anchoring point that echoes "*we will prevail,*" despite the historical underpinnings and continued oppression and occupation. As Lena Meari shares, "sumud is a steadfastness that constitutes a Palestinian relational political-psycho-affective subjectivity. It becomes an indefinable force representing the possibility of political praxis outside the space of

normalized forms of politics.” It transcends the limitations of the framing of resilience in Western societies and clinicians are encouraged to bear witness to the individual and collective emergence of *sumud*, rather than attempting to operationalize it. *Sumud* creates a meaning making that we can ascribe to that allows us to draw on the labor and strength of our ancestors, community, and bear in mind future generations; it gives us a framework to enter a reparative place, to absorb the daily assaults, and to move with the spirit of radical hope and love. As former political prisoner “Bilal” (whose name has been changed) shared during our interview, “*Sumud* does not begin in torture, it doesn’t begin in the interrogation room. *Sumud* begins from the first minute, the first second you get taken. Because as an individual, a human, a Palestinian, you know you are being taken simply for your Palestinian-ness and not because you have done anything wrong. *Sumud* starts from knowing that dynamic...prison did not kill my spirit. ***Ma kattal roohi***. It enabled me to manage my time and I learned how to master my time. A lot of newcomers to the prison think, how am I going to kill my time? I changed the concept and told them, think of time as accompanying you, as your friend. Why would you want to kill it?” Here, *sumud* serves as a balm that massages through the layers of physical and psychological captivity, and builds an expansive state where we transcend the dyad of ‘doer and done to’ and work towards a psychological and collective liberation.

Razzan: Political prisoners are storytellers. They are free while imprisoned as a result of their relationality with this uncanny knowing. The pen is *kuffiyah*, and the ink is remembrance. Psychoanalysis must speak on Palestinian political prisoners because they show us the human potential and insistence on vibrancy amidst literal necropolitical maiming - in a literal cemented cube.

Khadija: Within the heritage of this discipline we learn: The colonized directs their aggression either inward, or outward. This involves an interpellation. You take on the oppressor’s fantasy that you are inferior in relation to their illusory superiority to be legible in a ‘master’s’ panopticon. Psychological refusal disrupts this pattern by equalizing power and transcending to a third space, as “Maryam” shares, “the psychological refusal is in knowing that they are my equal, not my superior. I am not lower than them. I am not less than them. We have that equation and understanding. That the person capturing me is another human. I am a person facing a person. A soldier is not a superior. I am their equal. Yes, they have taken my freedom. Yes, they have stolen my land and killed my people. But I am right here. They captured a strong person, a person who has sovereignty, a person who has dignity, so I do not feel inferior. With all the aesthetics of violence they are trying to project or impose on me, I am the strong one, ***ana qaweeha***, because they can never penetrate into my mind and undo this knowing.”

Razzan: Palestinian political prisoners are incisive: they teach us that bowing is a form of acquiescing and that to fight at all costs is the way towards burgeoning other ways of being. Six Palestinian political prisoners escaped the highest Israeli military security prison, using a spoon. They hollowed their beings to ardently and consistently dig with the only tool that feeds them: an unbending will. Walid Daqqa has been locked up in a high security Israeli prison for over 37 years. Walid Daqqa is an Israeli citizen with Palestinian flesh. Walid Daqqa is dying of cancer - held in a prison hospital - his titrated life is churned under the slow death machinery of settler colonial penitentiary. Walid Daqqa, smuggled his sperm out - his partner birthed Milad.

Khadija: Ahmad Manasra was 13 years old, when he was run over by an Israel jeep, limbs broken, lying in his cousin, Hasan's, blood. The Israeli supreme court altered its law - to allow for the persecution of a child as an adult. They labeled him- terrorist.
Ahmad is now 21 and has been locked in solitary confinement for over 9 months. Ahmad is diagnosed with schizophrenia - Ahmad's attempt to live is through his attempts to hold his life in his own hands: he has attempted to commit suicide for a reported 6 attempts.

And so we ask, *how do Palestinians turn wounds into scars?*

Khadija: Where is the wound?

Razzan: Walid Daqqa.

Khadija: Where is the scar?

Razzan: Milad.

Khadija: Where is the wound?

Razzan: Ahmad Manasra

Khadija: Where is the scar?

Razzan: Hasan Manasra

Khadija: What is transformed when a family calls for their beloved? As "Yazeed" shared with me, "I am a prisoner, and yes, my freedom was stolen, but true freedom is not just freedom of the body, but freedom of the spirit. I am in prison physically, but my spirit lives outside of the prison. The occupier stripped me from my community physically, but I am with them spiritually. They are present in my imagination, in my mind, in my speech, and I am present in their daily conversations and mind, so there is no separation between us."

Razzan: The land is the body, the body is the land, and the psyche is the breath, and the breath is the psyche. Palestine is the mother - Palestinian political prisoners hold mother in mind while self is separate - Palestinians stretch the symbolic into infinity - because the Real as the premise of initiation, there is a way in which the imaginary and embodied are imprinted - and this allows a continued holding even in the cruelest contexts.

Out of loss, develops an intrapsychic resource made possible through community. The tension that the political prisoner holds between presence and absence - this as the insistence on life, **the wound is beneath the scar, is what makes the scar, but so does the recursive and reiterative process of scarring.**

*Bolded sentences and words were read aloud by both speakers.

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