

# Settler Colonialism, Academic Repression, and International Solidarity

NACCS Passes a Resolution In Defense of Palestinian Academic and in Support of Academic Freedom

## A 21st Century Settler-Colonial Garrison in the Middle East

Seventy years ago, the state of Israel was founded in direct contestation to human dignity. Its goal, apparent in deed and obfuscated by [hasbra](#), is to [settle as much Palestinian land with as few Palestinians as possible as it establishes a religious ethno-state](#). In order to reach this goal, this nation-state has subsequently engaged in a settler-colonial project that is - at once - spatial, material, and ideological.

Through this project of settler-colonialism, the state of Israel strategically claims land in a zero-sum game. Israeli civil society and its state grabs land to strengthen its own material & ecological position, while simultaneously taking those resources off the table for Palestinians. This, in turn, weakens the material position of Palestinians and, subsequently, compromises their very existence and reproduction.

This state does not operate alone, as it is the product of a wicked solidarity from above and to the right. In addition to the British occupation of the Levant, and the role of the United Nations in founding this state, this project is emboldened by a senior partner in this settler-colonial venture - one that provides direct financial support (most recently, to the tune of [\\$3.8 billion a year](#)), and [political cover](#) in the terrain of international politics. This is a collaboration between nation-states that believe themselves to be uniquely destined, yet tragically aggrieved by the darker peoples of the world. Both the [senior](#) and [junior](#) partner in this collaboration have - in their own time, place, and manner - translated these vanities into their own respective projects of settler-colonialism. They do so to impose regimes of accumulation and dispossession masqueraded by the disturbingly thin negligee of modernity's purported highest values. In turn, they [exchange strategies of repression](#) to manage dispossession and dissent in their respective backyards. And, in times of crisis, these two-nation states have translated the combination of such vanities and paranoias into the most barbarous offensives in the name of ostensible self-defense. The barbarism of this joint venture made itself apparent yet again on May 14th, 2018.

# A March, a Massacre, and a Move

Palestinian civil society in Gaza - from various political parties and community organizations - launched a six-week civil disobedience campaign titled the "[Great March of Return](#)". This campaign was launched in 2018 on the 30th of March, recognized as [Land Day](#) by Palestinian liberation struggles, whereby people commemorate a 1976 rebellion by Palestinians within Israel, in contestation of what was *then* the most recent incident within the first three decades of Israeli land-grabs and disenfranchisement. The goal of the campaign was to march on the separation fence erected by Israel, a fence which quarantines 1.9 million Palestinians into the 225 square mile Gaza Strip, a [veritable open-air prison](#). [70% of Gazans are refugees](#) whose families were expelled during the 1948 displacement of Palestinians immediately following the founding of the state of Israel, and they are literally within walking distance from the very towns that their families were forcibly removed from. The desire to leave Gaza is exacerbated by the dire conditions Gazans face, conditions produced by an Israeli blockade and multiple, vicious military operations by a first-rate military force against a quarantined people without a military - all of which have [decimated Gaza](#). As a result, various international agencies deemed that Gaza is [already unlivable](#). Organizers planned to culminate this six-week campaign on May 15th, the day of the [Nakba](#), the great catastrophe, when Israel forcibly displaced 750,000 Palestinians from their homes immediately following its founding in 1948. And so, the Great March of Return is a direct-action campaign of civil disobedience designed to undo the Nakba and the subsequent assaults on humanity committed in the 7 decades since then, by organizing efforts to leave the dire, open-air prison conditions produced by the state of Israel in Gaza, and to manifest the right to return.

The power of the few from above and to the right is always in reaction to that which is exercised by the many, from below, and to the left. Moreover, the potency of movement from below ratchets up the fatal nature of reaction. On May 14th, the Israeli Defense Force reacted to this march of civilians with teargas, dropped by drones, and with military snipers firing live ammunition designed to maximize damage to its victims. 58 Palestinians were killed; 8 of them children, one of which was an 8 month-old baby [who died due to asphyxiation](#) induced by Israeli tear gas. Another [2,700 were injured](#), nearly half of which were harmed by live ammunition. IDF sniper fire struck doctors, paramedics, journalists, and photographers - all with highly visible uniforms clearly indicating their roles. This resulted in the deadliest day for Palestinians in Gaza since Operation Protective Edge in 2014, which killed more than 2,300 Palestinians, and left 17,000 injured.

The IDF sniper fire overwhelmed doctors working in hospitals that were already under-resourced by the Israeli blockade in Gaza, many of which face less than a week of fuel reserves. Reports state that people are arriving with [fist-size exit wounds](#) and bones pulverized by the savage ammunition fired by IDF snipers. [Doctors Without Borders \(MSF\) reports](#) that medical staff worked around the clock to tend to the wounded, often operating on two to three people in the same room, if not the hallways. MSF also reports that many people will remain

with life-long injuries. One correspondante [stated](#) that the IDF is creating a new generation of disabled persons; whereas once Israel broke the arms of Palestinians throwing rocks during the Intifadas, now they shoot the legs of Palestinians marching to honor the right to return.

This massacre evoked reactions around the world. Ann Coulter, an ideologue working to sediment far-right ideas onto the common sense of US public opinion, was stirred [by the IDF's use of snipers shooting live ammunition](#) and publicly asked if the US could do the same against immigrants from the Global South at the US-Mexico border. While the wicked were inspired, this massacre generated condemnation from a spectrum of actors in geopolitics. From the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, and Queen Rania of Jordan, to the decadent heads of state in Europe who, as a disclaimer, reassured their fidelity to Israel's "security interests" (including France's Macron, Germany's Merkel, and a handful of British officials), to even Turkey's Tayyip Erdogan and Saudi Arabia - they all [publicly expressed concern](#) over Israel's use of violent and deadly force against a civilian demonstration. Indeed, the UN Security Council called for an independent investigation into the deaths of these 58 Palestinians (which was, nonetheless, [shot down by the US using its veto power as cover fire](#) to protect Israel from UN critique, as it has done consistently). Turkey and South Africa, in an act of dissent against this murder of civilians, [recalled their ambassadors to Israel](#). Ultimately, the inhumane actions the state of Israel must take in order to displace, if not destroy, Palestinians further undermines Israel's legitimacy as human rights violations continually pierce through their carefully manicured veneer.

This offense on human life & dignity took place the same day that a ceremony commemorated the relocation of the US embassy [from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem](#) in an effort to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Since 1947, when the UN recommended a two-state solution, the UN designated the city of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum*, a city with no affiliation to either nation. Since then, the city was to be addressed in the final stages of increasingly fantastical negotiation, given the significance of the city to an elusive Palestinian state (East Jerusalem was designated to be the capital of Palestine), and its religious significance to the Abrahamic faiths. The Trump Administration, in it's arrogant and brash manner, tossed all of this aside, and capitulated to the desires of [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) and [the largest Trump donor, Sheldon Adelson](#). These brash political moves generated resistance, as this led to [128 countries to vote on a resolution calling the US to reverse the move](#) back in December of 2017.

## Academic Repression through Settler Colonial Strategies

Just as the state of Israel operates to claim more land and criminally displace Palestinians, so too is it waging a project of settler-colonial trench warfare in the terrain of ideas, [specifically within the austere hallways of US universities](#). The state of Israel, and the organic intellectuals

who defend its Zionist project, are undertaking this assault within the US academy in an effort to protect its legitimacy from critique due its own excesses and abuses.

As such, student- and scholar-activists alike must endure the weaponization of university bureaucracies, an already bloodied and blunt tool of repression, once merited & erudite critiques of the state of Israel for human rights violations are disingenuously disfigured by allegations of anti-semitism. To this, along with the use of campaigns to slander the names of activist students and faculty, we must now add the use of lawsuits and courts, which have been weaponized as well, to bleed the precious time and resources of already over-worked, under-funded academic programs, faculty, and students as they must fight mendacious lawsuits.

Disingenuous as these allegations and mendacious as these lawsuits are, the ultimate goal is to force people - who, from within the US academy, challenge the legitimacy of the Zionist project - to lock horns with well-resourced ideological shock troops, trigger the bleeding of limited resources, and to ultimately force the capitulation or elimination of people who place human life & dignity over the legitimacy of an untenable project. The same strategies of isolation, defamation, and exhaustion applied to the Palestinian territories to create an taxing & toxic environment are being applied to Palestinian academics and their similarly aligned colleagues & comrades. Thus, as the state of Israel's contrived legitimacy becomes increasingly precarious, this settler-colonial project is applying its zero-sum strategies of accumulation, exhaustion, and dispossession within the academy, in an effort to claim more ideological terrain within the US academy, and displace dissenting intellectuals.

## Academic Repression at SFSU

The persecution of a Palestinian scholar-activist who works at San Francisco State University - Dr. Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi - by Zionist, right-wing forces is exemplary of this broader Zionist encroachment in the US academy. This broader tendency is taking place acutely at SFSU in three particular ways:

- A frivolous lawsuit that smeared the reputation of Dr. Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi, the College of Ethnic Studies, and SFSU, and which jeopardizes the academic freedom of critical scholar-activists. Please note: this lawsuit has now been rejected twice by federal judge, and has been submitted for a third time.
- Posters that defame Palestinian faculty, students, and alumni of SFSU, specifically those engaged in scholarship and/or activism in support of Palestinian freedom struggles. This has been principally undertaken by the right-wing groups, Horowitz Center and the Canary Mission.
- An email, dated February 23rd, from President Leslie Wong to the entire SFSU campus declaring that "Zionists are welcome on our campus", which 1) unnecessarily singled out proponents of one particular belief for unique treatment; 2) ignored how Zionists have consistently harassed faculty and students, encroaching on their respective ability to

work and study at SFSU; 3) implicitly encouraged Zionists to continue to harass and defame Palestinian scholars, students, and their allies.

The lawsuit must be understood in relationship to the reactionary group that filed it. The Lawfare Project is self-described as “the legal arm of the pro-Israel community”, and one of their ostensible goals is to prohibit and punish the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against the state of Israel. This lawsuit, and the persistent antagonism of Dr. Abdulhadi, is part of a broader strategy to silence merited criticisms of Israel and/or warranted advocacy for Palestinian rights by deliberately conflating the aforementioned with anti-semitism.

Anti-semitism, like all variants of racism, must be combatted through solidarity. However, this duplicitous allegation is part of strategy that unfairly links all Jewish identities and communities with the state of Israel, while erasing Jewish and Israeli persons and communities that actively oppose the state of Israel for violating human rights and international law. This strategy also unfairly equates Palestinian advocacy as anti-semitism. Ultimately, these disingenuous accusations of anti-semitism are deployed to defend a project of settler-colonialism by silencing warranted criticisms thereof.

At stake with this lawsuit are the gains made within the university by social movements - the College of Ethnic Studies won by the Third World Liberation Front, and various branches of Ethnic Studies. Moreover, these antagonisms threaten to jeopardize the academic freedom needed by scholar-activists whose scholarship critiques domination and advances movements for social justice. A capitulation to this lawsuit would undermine critical scholarship, all while setting a dangerous precedent, whereby outside groups can pressure universities into undermining the professoriate and student-bodies.

For more on this case, please click this link to find a compilation of links to reports, analyses, and op-eds on the case: <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2018/05/17/18809271.php>

## International Solidarity from Below and to the Left

Nopales are a cactus originally from South America, a staple of Mexican cuisine, and which have spread throughout the mediterranean regions of the world through the circuits of this brutal world-system forged through the transatlantic extraction and exploitation of the peoples and lands of the Global South. Ironically enough, it is through the circuits of racial capitalism that brought this plant to the darker peoples of the world, those beyond Latin America. Nopales are rather beautiful. They are a resilient plant that produces flowers, fruit, and vital nutrition even in the most austere of conditions. They have been planted to protect villages against offensives, and, in the summer heat, they produce fruit that known as “tunas” in Mexico, and “sabr” in Palestine. They are a powerful symbol. They remind us that, even in the toughest conditions around the world, we can always make and defend life.

Peoples of the Third and Fourth Worlds are standing in solidarity with Palestinians. This is in part because we can see the same strategies of repression practiced against Palestinians

subsequently practiced against us, and vice-versa - from the [companies building border walls](#) and technology in Palestine and the US-Mexico border, to collaboration between the repressive governments of [Mexico](#) and [Central America](#) learning from Israeli military repression of Palestinians to impose violence upon the contemporary Indigenous, African, mestizo, and otherwise insurgent peoples of Mesoamerica, [the Israeli training of US law enforcement agencies](#) and officers who, in turn, practice militarized counterinsurgency tactics against the negatively racialized, working-class, activist, and otherwise deemed non-normative peoples within the US.

We also stand in solidarity because we fight common repressors with similar strategies. As insurgent Black communities, washing teargas from their eyes can attest to: [we learn from and are inspired by Palestinians deploying strategies against and beyond Zionism](#). Indeed, the inverse is true, which is evident in [images](#) of Zapata appearing next to Abd al Kader al Husseini, [Muhammad Ali](#) and [Che Guevara](#) visiting Palestinian territories separately, SNCC's Kwame Ture's analysis of white supremacy and Zionism, and, now, the [international project of boycott, divestment, and sanctions](#) (BDS) learned from the struggle against apartheid mounted out of Azania.

## Inter-National Solidarity in the Academy

Life springs out places where the ['ologist](#) believes it cannot. In 2005, a coalition of unions, associations, and campaigns in Palestinian civil society called upon international civil society to join [a campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against the state of Israel](#) until that state ended its occupation of and colonization of Arab lands, dismantled the wall, recognized the rights of Arab-Palestinians as citizens of Israel, and honored the right of Palestinian refugees to return. This provided yet another, more robust opportunity for the Third and Fourth world peoples to take solidarity actions in support of Palestinian liberation.

In 2015, the National Association for Chicana & Chicano Studies (NACCS) joined a growing group of academic associations in the US and beyond who answered the call from Palestinian civil society to support the BDS campaign. This was accomplished when the Lesbian BI Mujeres Trans (BLMT) Caucus within NACCS [proposed a resolution](#) that would pass, whereby NACCS would endorse and honor the boycott of Israeli academic institutions.

Just like NACCS responded to call to support the BDS campaign in 2015, so too has NACCS taken action in solidarity with Palestinian struggle, in defense of academic freedom, in support of Ethnic Studies, and against right-wing assaults against social movements, student-activists, and scholar-activists. This was made apparent in April of 2018 when the NACCS Board passed a resolution, which originated from the Indigenous Caucus, and which calls on San Francisco State University and the California State University system to mount a defense of Dr. Abdulhadi, academic freedom and the freedom of speech, as well as to take a stand against these

antagonisms which ultimately intend to insulate the untenable machinations of Zionism from warranted and necessary critique.

To read this resolution, click this link:

<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2018/05/17/18809272.php>

In passing this resolution, NACCS joins the the broad base of groups who have [issued multiple public statements, open letters, and resolutions](#) in support of Prof. Abdulhadi and academic freedom. This includes people inside and outside of the university, across geographies, and across racial and ethnic lines; from academic associations across the globe, various Jewish communities, labor unions, to professional associations. These are the fruits we bear and share with one another; these are the defense we produce to protect each other.

To access a compilation of these statements from various organizations and associations in civil society, please click this link: <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2018/05/17/18809273.php>

## Show & Prove

We all bear fruit in some of the most hostile spaces produced within racial capitalism, and we know our ability to transcend this place is to be found in each other. This resolution is but one small step in a larger journey for us all to get free. Those from above weave wicked tales as they wag their fingers at us, telling us not to protest, and, instead, to capitulate to this place because, afterall, the path to freedom is through entrepreneurialism, picking the right investments & consumer items, etc. Yet, our lived experiences puncture through this ideological mystification. Entrepreneurialism fools people into pursuing sisyphian tasks in effort to dig our way out of precarity. The increasingly cost of living following the neoliberal turn consumed any possibility of “disposable income”; and, besides, whatever loose change we may have at our disposal will only make us the most petit investors in the bloody exploitation of labor and land in the Third World. Besides, how on Earth can a child in Gaza free themselves and others with these tools? And so, we are under no illusions about these sales pitches; they are strategies to strip us of our assets while caging us within this place to be toyed with before we become prey.

Our pathways to freedom are the broader strategies of movement and solidarity. Through movement and solidarity, we, the darker peoples of the world, can tie down the giants that afflict us and, more importantly, build a path to the world we deserve to live in. Movement & solidarity are broader currents that can be channeled through different tools - some traditional tools, others new. Traditional tools of popular movement and solidarity, like the workers union, are under siege, and, as such, we must shore this tool up as its being dulled by deindustrialization, austerity, laws, and litigation. Indeed, deploying it in the service of not just negotiations with management at the point of production, but in the service of other struggles in the spaces of reproduction and politics. We must also take our various cultural and professional associations in civil society and mobilize them to take a stand in the service of popular struggles for justice and liberation. Some associations, like NACCS, have the distinction of emerging out of struggle,

and its constituents consistently and deliberately deploy its capacities & resources towards those ends. Yet, other, seemingly apolitical associations are there, with the potential to be activated and mobilized to do the right thing. Other associations - formal and informal - are waiting to be formed and mobilized just the same.

This essay is a time check, a brief sketch describing the current moment, the current conjuncture, in Palestine and in the US academy. It is also an invitation. People are fighting and, as a result, they are dying. Our lives and visions of freedom are at stake. Austerity & ideology beckon us to ignore the bloodshed in Gaza go back to business as usual, and, yet, we know that'll only keep us in this place. We must instead ignore the devil's vicious lies and dangerous rumors as we activate what tools we have at our disposal to lay down the bricks that will form our defenses against assaults like the recent massacre in Gaza and the attacks in US universities, but, more importantly, build our path beyond this place. What defenses can you sow? What fruits can you harvest?

Until and as we all get free.

Aho. Axé. C/S.