



# ‘Pinkwashing:’

The Politics of LGBTQ Rights in  
Israel/Palestine

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**Figure 1 (Cover photo):** The anarcho-queer collective Mashpritzot holds a 'die-in' at the 2013 Tel Aviv Pride Parade to protest against 'pinkwashing.'  
Source: <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/exposing-israels-pinkwashing/>

## Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) What is ‘pinkwashing?’ .....	4
(b) What are the consequences of ‘pinkwashing?’ .....	6
(c) The context surrounding ‘pinkwashing’ .....	7
(d) The existing literature .....	8
(e) This research .....	9
<b>Chapter 1: A Review of the Existing Literature.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Methodology .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Examining the Evidence on ‘Pinkwashing’.....</b>	<b>22</b>
3(a) Portraying Israeli society as pro-LGBTQ to gain support among liberal foreigners .....	23
3(b) The gap between propaganda and experience .....	24
3(b)(i) <i>The Israeli state’s attitude towards LGBTQ rights</i> .....	25
3(b)(ii) <i>Israeli society’s attitude towards LGBTQ rights</i> .....	27
3(b)(iii) <i>Israel as a safe haven for LGBTQ Palestinians</i> .....	28
3(c) Portraying Palestinian society as anti-LGBTQ to justify the occupation .....	30
<b>Chapter 4: The Complicity of the Israeli LGBTQ Community .....</b>	<b>36</b>
4(a) Portraying Israeli society as pro-LGBTQ to gain support among liberal foreigners .....	37
4(b) Portraying Palestinian society as anti-LGBTQ to justify the occupation.....	38
4(c) Israeli LGBTQ organisations’ interventions in Palestinian society .....	40
4(d) Perpetuating the exclusionary logic of Israeli society and refusing to condemn the occupation .....	41
4(d)(i) <i>The status quo</i> .....	42
4(d)(ii) <i>Exclusion of Palestinians from the Israeli LGBTQ community</i> .....	42
4(d)(iii) <i>The demographics and priorities of the Israeli LGBTQ community</i> .....	43
4(d)(iv) <i>Separation of LGBTQ rights from Palestinian rights</i> .....	45
4(d)(v) <i>Merging gay pride with national pride</i> .....	46
4(e) Signs of change? .....	47

<b>Chapter 5: ‘Pinkwashing’ Abroad .....</b>	<b>50</b>
5(a) The United States and Canada as the primary ‘pinkwashing’ arenas .....	50
5(b) The impact of ‘pinkwashing’ abroad on ordinary Israelis and Palestinians .....	54
5(c) Palestinians’ views on American and Canadian anti-‘pinkwashing’ protests .....	55
<b>Chapter 6: Palestinian Society .....</b>	<b>58</b>
6(a) Being LGBTQ in the Palestinian territories.....	58
6(b) The role of the occupation .....	60
6(c) LGBTQ Palestinians’ views on ‘pinkwashing’ .....	61
6(d) LGBTQ Palestinians’ alternative ideology .....	63
6(e) Developing a unique, Palestinian LGBTQ identity.....	65
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>72</b>

## Introduction

Just as I began to research this thesis in January 2016, controversy surrounding an event at the Creating Change conference in Chicago threw the debate on 'pinkwashing' into sharp relief. The United States' (US) National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Task Force was due to host a reception in conjunction with two LGBTQ organisations associated with Israel – A Wider Bridge and Jerusalem Open House. However, the event was cancelled by the conference organisers after complaints that it was a 'pinkwashing' propaganda exercise. A few days later, after allegations of "censorship,"<sup>1</sup> the organisers reversed their decision. When it took place on January 22, the reception was disrupted by hundreds of protestors, and the aftermath has been characterised by claims and counter-claims of racism, bigotry, and suppression of free speech, by groups in both the US and Israel/Palestine. These events have the hallmarks of a debate that has been raging for over a decade about 'pinkwashing,' the allegation that the Israeli state and its allies portray Israel as a beacon of tolerance towards LGBTQ people in order to detract from, and even justify, the Israeli state's violations of Palestinian human and civil rights and its occupation of their land.

### (a) What is 'pinkwashing?'

There are two aspects to 'pinkwashing.' First, because the Israeli state realises that many left-wing people in Israel and abroad oppose its treatment of Palestinians, it tries to win them over through other means, namely by publicising its positive treatment of LGBTQ people. This helps to foster financial and ideological support from sources such as the United States. Anti-'pinkwashing' protestors allege that this use of LGBTQ rights is cynical, because the Israeli state and its allies do not show a genuine commitment to LGBTQ rights in their other actions. Second, the Israeli state and its allies portray Palestinian society as hostile towards LGBTQ people in order to make Palestinian society seem backward and dangerously intolerant. This is then used to justify interventions in Palestinian society, and the oppression of Palestinians in both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

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<sup>1</sup> "American LGBTQ group cancels event with Israelis, later backtracks," *The Times of Israel*, January 19, 2016, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/american-lgbtq-group-cancels-event-with-israelis-later-backtracks/>



A well-documented example of 'pinkwashing' is an advert taken out in *The New York Times* in 2014, which stated: "HAMAS, ISIS and Iran kill gays like me," and implored its audience to support Israel as "the only country in the Middle East where I can live without fear."<sup>2</sup> The advert's funders, 'This World: Values Network' and 'StandWithUs,' are dedicated to "promoting and defending the state of Israel"<sup>3</sup> and telling "the story of Israel's achievements" around the world.<sup>4</sup> The advert was printed shortly after the Israel-Gaza conflict, in which Israeli state forces seeking to combat Hamas destroyed more than 20,000 homes and killed over 2,000 Palestinians, most of whom were civilians.<sup>5</sup> The attempt to draw attention to Hamas's alleged anti-LGBTQ activity is an attempt to justify the Israeli state's actions towards the people of Gaza. It also draws attention to the Israeli state's more tolerant attitude towards LGBTQ people, diverting attention away from its intolerant attitude towards any signs of resistance from Palestinians, as can be seen by the death toll in Gaza. Finally, it ignores the fact that the LGBTQ people who are most likely to be persecuted by groups such as Hamas – Palestinians and other Arabs – would be highly unlikely to be able to "live without fear" in Israel, because the Israeli state has a policy of not allowing them to seek asylum.<sup>6</sup> Even Palestinians who are citizens of Israel face discrimination there. Further evidence of the advert being a cynical use of LGBTQ rights to promote Israeli state actions is the fact that StandWithUs has collaborated closely with homophobic individuals such as Pastor John Hagee, who blamed Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans's Gay Pride Parade.<sup>7</sup> In 2009, StandWithUs board member David Brummer was also accused of making homophobic comments against critic Richard Silverstein.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, "Our *New York Times* Ad Condemning Hamas and Iran's Treatment of Homosexuals," December 23, 2014, accessed January 30, 2016, <https://shmuley.com/2014/12/23/our-new-york-times-ad-condemning-hamas-and-irans-treatment-of-homosexuals/>

<sup>3</sup> "Home," This World: Values Network, accessed May 11, 2016, <https://worldvalues.us/>

<sup>4</sup> "About Us," StandWithUs, accessed May 11, 2016, <https://www.standwithus.com/aboutus/>

<sup>5</sup> Lizzie Dearden, "Israel-Gaza conflict: 50-day war by numbers," *Independent*, August 27, 2014, accessed February 5, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-gaza-conflict-50-day-war-by-numbers-9693310.html>

<sup>6</sup> Michael Kagan and Anat Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel*, Tel Aviv University, April 2008

<sup>7</sup> *Pinkwashing Exposed: Seattle Fights Back*, directed by Dean Spade. United States: 13th Avenue Productions, 2015

<sup>8</sup> Richard Silverstein, "Seattle StandWithUs Leader Accuses Me of Being 'Deranged,' a 'Fraud,' 'Fascinated' With Gay Porn, Urges 'Spanking,'" *Tikun Olam*, August 4, 2009, accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.richardsilverstein.com/2009/08/04/seattle-stand-with-us-leader-accuses-me-of-being-deranged-a-fraud-fascinated-with-gay-porn-urges-i-be-spanked/>

## **(b) What are the consequences of ‘pinkwashing?’**

‘Pinkwashing’ is opposed by activists in the Palestinian territories and abroad for five main reasons. First, its portrayals of Israeli and Palestinian society’s attitudes towards LGBTQ people are misleading. Israeli society and the Israeli government are not as tolerant towards LGBTQ people as the Israeli state projects, and Palestinian society is not as intolerant towards LGBTQ people as the Israeli state implies. Second, by portraying Israeli society as having achieved LGBTQ equality, the Israeli state harms those LGBTQ Israelis who are still suffering from oppression, and who are calling for change within their society, because it makes their potential supporters believe they are demanding a level of equality that already exists. Third, by turning international attention towards LGBTQ rights in Israel, the Israeli state is diverting attention away from violations of Palestinian human and civil rights, thus allowing them to continue largely unchallenged by the international community. These violations include holding 700 Palestinians without charge or trial;<sup>9</sup> collective punishment against the people of Gaza;<sup>10</sup> summary executions;<sup>11</sup> and the use of excessive force against peaceful Palestinian protestors.<sup>12</sup> Fourth, by portraying Palestinian society as intolerant towards LGBTQ people, the Israeli state is reframing the crisis as an ideological war between two societies, masking the reality of a stronger power occupying a weaker power. It justifies the occupation of the West Bank by portraying it as necessary in order to protect a society that respects human rights from a society that harbours dangerous religious intolerance. It thereby perpetuates and justifies a status quo in which Palestinians are subject to frequent violations of their human and civil rights. Fifth, by implying that an LGBTQ identity is incompatible with Palestinian society, the Israeli state and its allies hinder the development of a unique, Palestinian LGBTQ identity. This is because they perpetuate the association within Palestinian society between homosexuality and foreign influences, and imply that an Israeli or Western conception of LGBTQ identity is the only valid one.

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<sup>9</sup> “Statistics,” Addameer, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.addameer.org/statistics>

<sup>10</sup> “Israel/Palestine,” Human Rights Watch, accessed May 17, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/israel/palestine>

<sup>11</sup> “Israel/Palestine: Summary Execution of Wounded Palestinian,” Human Rights Watch, March 25, 2016, accessed May 17, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/26/israel/palestine-summary-execution-wounded-palestinian>

<sup>12</sup> “Israel Must Allow Palestinians to Protest in Peace,” *Haaretz*, January 4, 2011, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-must-allow-palestinians-to-protest-in-peace-1.335091>

### (c) The context surrounding 'pinkwashing'

There has been undoubtedly significant progress towards LGBTQ equality in Israel over the past few decades. The first major change in the status quo came when Israel's 'Sodomy Law,' which banned same-sex sexual acts, was repealed by the Knesset in 1988.<sup>13</sup> This sparked a growing awareness of LGBTQ people in Israel, and a growing confidence amongst the members of the LGBTQ community in asserting their rights. For example, when in 1996 President Weizman made homophobic comments in public, the LGBTQ community vociferously protested, and the Israeli media provided a forum for them to spread their message.<sup>14</sup> Since then, LGBTQ individuals have won various rights through legal precedents in local and national courts, such as the right for lesbians to legally adopt their partners' children.<sup>15</sup> However, attempts to set these rights down in legislation have so far been met with failure.

Palestinian Israelis have been able to benefit from this progress in varying degrees. Whilst their inclusion in Jewish-dominated LGBTQ rights groups such as HaAguda has been sporadic at best, groups such as Al Qaws formed in the early 2000s to provide a separate voice and space for LGBTQ Palestinian Israelis. However, they are currently based in locations such as Jerusalem and Haifa, which are inaccessible to many Palestinians living in the West Bank due to restrictions placed on their movement by the Israeli state. Whilst homosexual acts are not illegal in the West Bank as they are in Gaza,<sup>16</sup> many LGBTQ people there live in fear of being socially ostracised, attacked and even killed if their sexual orientation becomes widely known.<sup>17</sup> Despite this, an "underground community" of LGBTQ people has developed, aided from afar by groups such as Al Qaws and Aswat.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lee Walzer, *Between Sodom and Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today's Changing Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), ix

<sup>14</sup> Walzer, *Between Sodom and Eden.*, 14

<sup>15</sup> Hilary Leila Krieger, "Court: Lesbians can adopt partner's kids," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 13, 2006, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Court-Lesbians-can-adopt-partners-kids>

<sup>16</sup> Aengus Carroll and Lucas Paoli Itaborahy, *State-Sponsored Homophobia: A World Survey of Laws: criminalisation, protection and recognition of same-sex love* (ILGA: 2015), accessed January 30, 2016, [http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA\\_State\\_Sponsored\\_Homophobia\\_2015.pdf](http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2015.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Michael Kagan and Anat Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel*, Tel Aviv University, April 2008; Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype; Haneen Maikey (Director, Al Qaws) in *Shunned*, directed by Igal Hecht, Israel: Chutzpa Productions Inc., 2015

<sup>18</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype



The backdrop to all of this is the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has been going on for over half a century, and continues to this day with intermittent outbursts of violence between the Jewish and Palestinian communities. Since 1967, Israel has occupied the whole of the West Bank, and has been building Jewish settlements there, which are illegal under international law.<sup>19</sup> Whoever is to blame for the failure to find a solution to the conflict, both communities now live in an environment characterised by attacks and counter-attacks, and subsequently by fear and an obsession with security.

#### **(d) The existing literature**

Scholars Jasbir Puar, Jason Ritchie, and Sarah Schulman have produced some of the most ground breaking work on issues surrounding 'pinkwashing.' 'Pinkwashing' has often been described as an example of Jasbir Puar's concept of 'homonationalism,' which she defines as the "process by which certain forms of gay and lesbian sexuality are folded into the national body as the Muslim/Arab Other is cast as perversely queer."<sup>20</sup> In the context of Israel/Palestine, the concept of 'homonationalism' has been used to explain the way in which the Israeli state co-opts the LGBTQ community into its project of nation-building, and thereby into the process of excluding Palestinians and portraying them as 'backward.' Jason Ritchie, on the other hand, is critical of attempts to extrapolate the theory of 'homonationalism' beyond its original US context, emphasising the importance of local factors.<sup>21</sup> However, his work draws attention to similar issues as Puar's by highlighting the way in which Israeli society hinders the development of a unique Palestinian gay identity by requiring Palestinians to reject their 'Palestinianness' to gain entry into the "safe space" of the Israeli LGBTQ community.<sup>22</sup> Those who fail to do so are relegated to an arena of victimhood, invisibility and death.<sup>23</sup> Finally, Sarah Schulman claims that the Israeli state has launched a campaign called "Re-Brand Israel," which has included extensive advertising, aimed at whitewashing

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<sup>19</sup> "Treaties, States Parties and Commentaries," International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed May 12, 2016, <https://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/c525816bde96b7fd41256739003e636a/77068f12b8857c4dc12563cd0051bdb0?OpenDocument>

<sup>20</sup> Jasbir Puar, "Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking About the Sexual Politics of Israel," *Feminist Legal Studies*, 19(2011): 133-142, 133

<sup>21</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel-Palestine: The Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary," *Antipode* 47(2015): 616-634, 621

<sup>22</sup> Ritchie, "Pinkwashing," 628

<sup>23</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian" in *Queer Necropolitics* edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Routledge, 2014)

its image internationally and constructing itself as the only safe place for LGBTQ people in the Middle East, in contrast with a portrayal of Palestine as an unsafe and violent place for homosexuals.<sup>24</sup>

For this thesis I will also be drawing on literature from broader bodies of work in areas such as Orientalism and queer theory. Puar, Ritchie and Schulman's theories are reminiscent of Edward Said's descriptions of Orientalism as a discourse used to exercise power over the Orient,<sup>25</sup> and Zachary Lockman's argument that Orientalist scholarship has been used to justify and inform the colonisation of Middle Eastern countries.<sup>26</sup> But it will be interesting to explore the fact that, as Joseph Boone explains, 'the Arabs' were traditionally portrayed as perverse because of their *tolerance* towards homosexuality,<sup>27</sup> whereas the Israeli state's 'pinkwashing' appears to be aimed at using Palestinian society's *intolerance* of homosexuality in order to justify its domination of that society. Also interesting is the way that some LGBTQ Palestinians speak of their own society as 'primitive' in terms of its attitudes to homosexuality.<sup>28</sup> These issues tie into Joseph Massad's criticisms of the 'Gay International,' which perceives intolerance towards homosexuality in Arab and Muslim societies and attempts to impose its own solutions.<sup>29</sup> This thesis will put forward strong evidence that Palestinian LGBTQ people feel that Israeli and other foreign LGBTQ people have tried to impose their own versions of LGBTQ identity and liberation on Palestinian society. All these works will be discussed further in the literature review and other sections of this thesis.

### **(e) This research**

As someone who has campaigned for LGBTQ rights in the UK for several years, I was drawn to the topic of 'pinkwashing' because of the fascinating combination and juxtaposition of LGBTQ rights and occupation. My thesis seeks to build on the small but highly insightful body of literature that has developed surrounding 'pinkwashing.' It seeks to explore allegations of 'pinkwashing,' focusing particularly on Palestinian LGBTQ people's perspectives on them – specifically Palestinians living in

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<sup>24</sup> Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)

<sup>25</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 3

<sup>26</sup> Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 3

<sup>27</sup> Joseph A. Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014)

<sup>28</sup> Interviewee Adel in *Shunned*, directed by Igal Hecht, Israel: Chutzpa Productions Inc., 2015

<sup>29</sup> Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007)

East Jerusalem and the West Bank. It aims to consider whether LGBTQ Palestinians think 'pinkwashing' is taking place, and if so, will explore how this affects them. Further questions include, how do LGBTQ Palestinians portray their own lives and society, and how does this differ from the Israeli state's portrayal? What do LGBTQ Palestinians think about international involvement in 'pinkwashing' and the critique of 'pinkwashing?' It is worth noting that although I use 'LGBTQ' as an overarching term, I acknowledge the fact that many Palestinians who have sex and relationships with people of the same sex do not identify as 'lesbian,' 'gay,' 'bisexual' or 'queer.'

I have chosen to focus mainly on Palestinians' perspectives because they are both the source of some of the main accusations of 'pinkwashing' and the people who would suffer the most from its existence. However, I did not want to focus solely on one side of the debate. This thesis also explores questions regarding Jewish and Druze Israeli perspectives on allegations of 'pinkwashing.' Do they think 'pinkwashing' is taking place, and if so, what impact do they think it has on Druze, Jewish and Palestinian LGBTQ people in Israel/Palestine? Do they believe Israel is a safe haven for all kinds of LGBTQ people, regardless of race, nationality, gender, economic background or sexual orientation?

In order to answer these questions, I have gathered evidence from a mixture of primary and secondary sources. My first interviews – with two Jewish Israelis and a Palestinian – were carried out via Skype in January 2016. Visiting Israel/Palestine in March 2016, I conducted further interviews in English with a Palestinian living in the West Bank and Druze and Jewish Israelis living in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Since then, I have asked follow-up questions of my participants by email and Facebook Messenger. My interviewees were found through a combination of personal contacts and my requests for help from organisations such as Human Rights Watch. I do not argue that their views are representative of Palestinian or Israeli LGBTQ people in general, merely that they provide an extremely useful snapshot of some of the issues concerning the members of these communities. I have changed my interviewees' names and all other identifying characteristics in this text to ensure their safety and privacy. As well as conducting my own interviews, I have used quotations from interviews with Israeli and Palestinian LGBTQ people conducted by researchers such as Jason

Ritchie<sup>30</sup> and Sarah Schulman.<sup>31</sup> The research and analysis outlined in the work of these and other scholars provides an additional source of evidence. Furthermore, I read and analysed dozens of articles from the Palestinian, Israeli, British, US and Canadian media, and studied a number of films and documentaries on the topic of LGBTQ people in Israel/Palestine. I spoke directly to representatives from campaign organisations such as Jerusalem Open House and Aswat, and collected material from their websites and Facebook pages.

On the basis of this evidence, I argue that the Israeli state and its allies do engage in 'pinkwashing.' They try to portray Israel as a beacon for gay rights, and Palestinian society as intolerant towards LGBTQ people, in order to detract from, and justify, their violation of Palestinians' human and civil rights and the occupation of their land. Furthermore, the main Israeli LGBTQ organisations, with which a large proportion of the Jewish LGBTQ population of Israel engage, are complicit in 'pinkwashing' because they link their gay pride to their national pride, and fail to challenge the status quo in which they operate, a status quo in which Palestinians are oppressed. 'Pinkwashing' is harmful to LGBTQ Israelis because it undermines their calls for progress towards LGBTQ equality within Israeli society, and perpetuates the inequalities that exist within the foundations of that society. 'Pinkwashing' harms Palestinians because it justifies and perpetuates their oppression by the Israeli state and elements of Israeli society. It is also harmful to LGBTQ Palestinians because it hinders the development of a unique, Palestinian LGBTQ identity.

This research is important because it provides strong evidence of Palestinian LGBTQ people's own views on their situation within Palestinian society and the broader political situation. As well as raising awareness of the injustices perpetuated by the Israeli state and its appropriation of LGBTQ rights in the service of oppression, it seeks to highlight that although international pressure is needed to encourage Israel to moderate its actions and seek a solution to the conflict, international interference in Palestinian society is neither wanted nor needed. In the words of Haneen Maikey, Director of Al Qaws, LGBTQ Palestinians are "capable of dealing with their own issues."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel-Palestine: The Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary," *Antipode* 47(2015): 616-634

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)

<sup>32</sup> Haneen Maikey, interview by Candidate No. 64931., published in "The Politics of Sexuality in Palestine/Israel." (MSc diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015)

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Having set the scene in the introduction, in Chapter 1 I conduct a more detailed review of the literature on this topic, analysing its key lessons and identifying gaps that need be addressed. After outlining my research methodology in Chapter 2, I present the results of my research, with each chapter from 3 to 6 addressing one of the main themes that emerged. Chapter 3 provides evidence of 'pinkwashing' and its harmful effects on Israelis and Palestinians. Chapter 4 addresses the role of the Israeli LGBTQ community, while Chapter 5 discusses the role of the international community. In Chapter 6, I outline my findings about Palestinian society's attitudes towards LGBTQ people, and Palestinians' views on 'pinkwashing' and anti-'pinkwashing' protests. Finally, I outline the conclusions emanating from my research.

## Chapter 1: A Review of the Existing Literature

There is a relatively small body of literature concerning LGBTQ people in Israel/Palestine, and an even smaller number of books and articles mention 'pinkwashing' itself. However, some relevant insight can be gained from a broader body of work on homosexuality in the Middle East and in different societies around the world. In this section, I will analyse some of the key texts on these topics, identifying what can be learned from them, and what questions remain unaddressed. I will then take some of those questions forward and answer them in my research.

Sarah Schulman's 2012 work, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*,<sup>33</sup> is the only book that addresses 'pinkwashing' directly and in detail. It is extremely useful in providing strong evidence for the phenomenon. Not only have non-Israeli organisations such as StandWithUs stated their intention to campaign to "improve Israel's image through the gay community in Israel,"<sup>34</sup> but Israeli government officials have also stated that efforts to inform Europeans and Americans about the Israeli gay community were "an important part of its work to highlight this country's support of human rights... in a population that tends to judge Israeli harshly, solely on its treatment of Palestinians."<sup>35</sup> According to Schulman, the Israeli Foreign Ministry has subsequently spent millions of shekels on projects such as a bid to host the International Gay Pride Parade in 2012.<sup>36</sup>

Many other scholars argue that the mainstream Israeli LGBTQ movement is complicit in 'pinkwashing' because of its role in the oppression of Palestinians and its failure to challenge the occupation. For example, Gil Hochberg argues that the "embrace" of the LGBTQ community by the Israeli state came "at the price of national conformity."<sup>37</sup> In other words, the Israeli state supported the LGBTQ rights movement insofar as the latter became a strong advocate of Israeli nationalism and the occupation. Rebecca Stein elaborates on this idea, maintaining that LGBTQ people are accepted by the Israeli state as long as they assimilate into the heteronormative system, and do not question or

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<sup>33</sup> Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)

<sup>34</sup> Schulman, *Israel/Palestine*, 182

<sup>35</sup> Schulman, *Israel/Palestine*, 180

<sup>36</sup> Schulman, *Israel/Palestine*, 183

<sup>37</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, "Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 493-516, 494



try to subvert the dominant structures within Israeli society, which give priority to Ashkenazi men, and exclude 'others' such as women, Mizrahi Jews, and Palestinians.<sup>38</sup> According to scholars such as Alison Solomon, Israeli society emphasises masculinity because its Zionist founders were keen to combat historic allegations of effeminacy by anti-Semites.<sup>39</sup> The Israeli LGBTQ movement adheres to these norms by campaigning for equal entry into masculine institutions such as the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and heterosexual institutions such as marriage and reproduction.

Scott Morgensen adds that having established its own 'heteronormativity,' the Israeli state then "racialised and sexualized Palestinians as premodern by linking them to perversion and to a barbaric heteropatriarchy that the modern heteronormative Israeli society supersedes."<sup>40</sup> This is one aspect of 'pinkwashing' – portraying Palestine as barbaric in order to justify its occupation by Israel. This is linked to Jasbir Puar's concept of 'homonationalism,' whereby certain homosexuals are accepted by the state as long as they conform to its existing norms and aid its project of branding racial others 'terrorists.'<sup>41</sup> The LGBTQ people who accept this offer aid the 'war on terrorism' by condemning the 'homophobia' of Islamic societies and promoting their own society as the epitome of liberalism and equality.<sup>42</sup> In quoting these theories, I do not seek to portray Israeli society as monolithically heteronormative any more than I agree with portraying Palestinian society as monolithically homophobic. Scholars such as Solomon and Morgensen have merely identified the mainstream norms promoted by the Israeli state and adopted and reproduced by the majority of Israeli society. I shed further light on the nature of the Israeli LGBTQ community in my research by speaking to Jewish and Druze members of that community.

As Stein and other scholars have shown, the majority of people in the Israeli LGBTQ movement, led by organisations such as HaAguda, have chosen to accept the arrangement whereby they are tolerated within the national community, so long as they agree not to challenge its underlying

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<sup>38</sup> Rebecca L. Stein, "Explosive: Scenes from Israel's Queer Occupation," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 517-536, 518

<sup>39</sup> Alison Solomon, "Viva La Diva Citizenship: Post-Zionism and Gay Rights," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, edited by Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003)

<sup>40</sup> Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Queer Settler Colonialism in Canada and Israel: Articulating Two-Spirit and Palestinian Queer Critiques," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2(2012): 167-190, 176

<sup>41</sup> Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

<sup>42</sup> Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 11-24

structure, including the occupation of the Palestinian territories. For example, when a former Israeli Palestinian Member of the Knesset (MK) asked to speak at a memorial ceremony for two youths killed at an LGBTQ centre in 2009, the LGBTQ group that was organising the event refused. A spokesperson for that group (the Tel Aviv Aguda) said: "We didn't want [him] to make any connection between our memorial ceremony and the occupation. Our event was dedicated to the member of two young people whose death was brought about due to sexual preferences, and this has nothing to do with [things like] the occupation."<sup>43</sup> Scholars such as Ritchie have similarly noted the claim among many Jewish Israeli LGBTQ people that issues surrounding the occupation and Palestinians must be avoided, because they are too 'political.'<sup>44</sup> I have also come across these claims in my research, with some representatives of Israeli LGBTQ organisations refusing to speak to me on these grounds. One of the consequences of this adherence to mainstream values by the Israeli LGBTQ community is that if Palestinians wish to stand a chance of being included, they too must adopt the norms of Israeli society. Speaking at a roundtable, Haneen Maikey, Director of Al Qaws, describes how many Palestinian LGBTQ people living in cities such as Tel Aviv try to hide their Arab identity, for example by changing their names and speaking Hebrew.<sup>45</sup>

The literature also discusses the way in which the Israeli state, with the aid of the mainstream LGBTQ community, portrays Palestinian society as 'backward' in order to justify its occupation of the Palestinian territories. Just as Edward Said described the domination of societies through reference to their essentially inferior nature,<sup>46</sup> so Jason Ritchie argues that "gay and lesbian Israelis (and their liberal allies) circulate images of queer Palestinian suffering that justify all manner of violence against Palestinians as a result, not of the exclusionary logic of Israeli nationalism or the racist practices of the state, but the 'backward' and 'inferior' essence of Palestinians."<sup>47</sup> However, Ritchie fails to elaborate on his critique of this viewpoint by describing the diversity of Palestinian society or highlighting examples of LGBTQ Palestinians who have been able to remain within the Palestinian

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<sup>43</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, "Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 493-516, 495

<sup>44</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel-Palestine: The Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary," *Antipode* 47(2015): 616-634, 626

<sup>45</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, Haneen Maikey, Rima, Samira Saraya, "No Pride in Occupation: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 599-610, 603

<sup>46</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003)

<sup>47</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian" in *Queer Necropolitics* edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 113

territories without giving up either their sexuality or their Palestinian identity. I explore these points in my research.

In contrast to the mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community, both the non-mainstream Israeli and the Palestinian LGBTQ community emphasise the links between the struggle for gay rights and the struggle for liberation from other kinds of oppression, including the occupation of the Palestinian territories. Their discourses draw heavily from the feminist idea of women's liberation being part of a fight against all kinds of oppression, and a campaign to change the fundamental structures of society.<sup>48</sup> The Palestinian LGBTQ rights movement also champions the development of a unique Palestinian queer identity. They argue that the unique social, cultural economic and political circumstances in which LGBTQ Palestinians grow up produce specific challenges, priorities and concerns. Rauda Morcos, Co-Founder of Aswat, and Haneen Maikey told Jason Ritchie that the concepts of 'coming out' (divulging one's sexuality) and 'visibility' do not apply to Palestinians in the same way as they do to Israelis, Europeans and Americans, for example, because of the taboo on speaking about sexuality in Palestinian society.<sup>49</sup> The idea of 'coming out' would therefore not necessarily be a key part of Palestinian LGBTQ identity. In my research I reveal more about how LGBTQ Palestinians view their own identities.

I also address something that is almost completely ignored in the literature, namely the positive side of being an LGBTQ Palestinian. Rare accounts, such as in the documentary *Shunned*, indicate that some Palestinians are able to be open about their sexuality with certain friends and family members, and attend events organised by Al Qaws, for example.<sup>50</sup> Yet otherwise comprehensive accounts of the lives of LGBTQ people in Palestine and the wider Middle East, such as Brian Whitaker's *Unspeakable Love*,<sup>51</sup> whilst listing numerous examples of abuse suffered by LGBTQ people, are largely silent on any positive experiences they may have.

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<sup>48</sup> Haya Shalom, "The Story of CLaF: The Community of Lesbian Feminists," in *Sappho in the Holy Land: Lesbian Existence and Dilemmas in Contemporary Israel* edited by Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and Erella Shadmi (New York: SUNY Press, 2005), 43; Gil Z. Hochberg, Haneen Maikey, Rima, Samira Saraya, "No Pride in Occupation: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 599-610, 609

<sup>49</sup> Jason Ritchie, "How do you say "Come out of the closet" in Arabic?: Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 557-575, 568-9

<sup>50</sup> *Shunned*, directed by Igal Hecht, Israel: Chutzpa Productions Inc., 2015

<sup>51</sup> Brian Whitaker, *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2006)

In the account of his discussion with Maikey and Morcos about developing a Palestinian LGBTQ identity, Ritchie states that they “described their interactions with queer Western and Israeli journalists and activists in uniformly negative terms.”<sup>52</sup> They expressed a desire for foreign activists to “Leave us alone.”<sup>53</sup> This supports Joseph Massad’s claim that international gay rights organisations’ attempts to ‘save’ Middle Eastern LGBTQ people are “*correctly* perceived as part of Western encroachment on Arab and Muslim cultures.”<sup>54</sup> However, the quotes that Ritchie obtained from Palestinian activists such as Maikey and Morcos contrast starkly with Schulman’s description of Maikey and Aswat representative Ghadir Shafie participating enthusiastically in a tour of the US, and praising Schulman for bringing them together with a variety of activist groups and individuals.<sup>55</sup> Schulman’s reference to the ‘Queer International’ in her title of course reminds us of Massad’s ‘Gay International,’ whom he accuses of imposing a Western conception of sexuality onto Middle Eastern societies as part of its colonial mission.<sup>56</sup> Yet despite the mention of this term in her title, Schulman does not acknowledge in the text of her work that her actions could be construed as forcing Western concepts on Palestinians. In my research, I will investigate how Palestinians reconcile their desire to be left alone to develop their own identity with their desire to combat ‘pinkwashing’ and champion their cause around the world. I will uncover what they think of campaigners in the US and Canada taking up the campaign against ‘pinkwashing’ in their name. Morgensen adds an interesting dimension to this question by highlighting the colonial-settler nature of the Canadian and American states, and argues that North American queers will be complicit in ‘pinkwashing’ until they question the colonial nature of their own states.<sup>57</sup> By undermining their own state’s settler-colonialism, they will in turn be weakening the foundations of Israeli settler-colonialism.

In sum, the literature on issues surrounding ‘pinkwashing’ focuses on the role of the Israeli state and mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community in portraying Israel as a haven for gay rights and Palestine as haven for intolerance, without engaging in the politics of the occupation. Less attention is paid to the experiences of Palestinian LGBTQ people, particularly those living in the Palestinian

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<sup>52</sup> Jason Ritchie, "How do you say "Come out of the closet" in Arabic?: Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 557-575, 568

<sup>53</sup> Ritchie, "Come out of the closet," 569

<sup>54</sup> Joseph Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World", *Public Culture* 14(2002): 361-385, 375

<sup>55</sup> Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)

<sup>56</sup> Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire,"

<sup>57</sup> Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Queer Settler Colonialism in Canada and Israel: Articulating Two-Spirit and Palestinian Queer Critiques," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2(2012):167-190, 187

territories. My research aims to begin rectifying this imbalance by focusing on the experiences of LGBTQ Palestinians and their views on 'pinkwashing.'

## Chapter 2: Methodology

If 'pinkwashing' is occurring, Palestinian LGBTQ people living in the West Bank will be some of the most affected by it, and will also be best placed to prove or disprove its allegations about Palestinian society. For this reason, the views of LGBTQ Palestinians are central to this thesis. When starting this research, I aimed to interview up to ten LGBTQ Palestinians. I contacted groups such as Aswat and Al Qaws to ask if they could facilitate interviews between myself and any of their staff or members. However, it transpired that Al Qaws and Aswat no longer connect researchers to the Palestinian LGBTQ community. Eventually, a representative of Human Rights Watch who previously worked in Israel/Palestine put me in touch with three LGBTQ Palestinians. Two of these people – a man and a woman – replied. Their helpfulness, knowledge and eloquence proved invaluable. Unfortunately, however, these were the only LGBTQ Palestinians I was able to interview. Nonetheless, I have been able to gather evidence of other LGBTQ Palestinians' opinions from sources such as media articles and documentary films.

Because I wanted to investigate the attitudes of Israeli as well as Palestinian society towards LGBTQ people, I also contacted non-Palestinian LGBTQ rights groups in Israel in my search for interviewees. I was thus able to secure an interview with a Jewish Israeli lesbian, and a gay Jewish man who works at Jerusalem Open House (JOH), an organisation that provides services to both Jewish and Palestinian LGBTQ people in Jerusalem. Interviews with three more Israeli gay men – two of whom are Druze and one of whom is Jewish – were arranged through a friend at Leiden University. By interviewing a small number of people from the relevant social groups, and spending time in their social environment, I have conducted a 'mini-ethnography' that allows me to make a strong argument for how LGBTQ Israelis and Palestinians view their social world.<sup>58</sup> My research is nonetheless limited by the fact that I was not able to interview any Palestinian citizens of Israel or any transgender people, and the fact that my interviewees were all from educated, middle-class backgrounds.

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<sup>58</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 454



I gathered my participants' views through semi-structured interviews, whereby I had a set of topics that I wanted to cover, but the conversation was free to vary.<sup>59</sup> I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews for four main reasons. First, because of the relatively open-ended nature of my research, and broad nature of my research questions, I wanted the interviewees to feel that they could raise any relevant topics that they felt were important, rather than being constrained to answering specific questions. Second, and related to this, the small number of participants made the research unsuited to structured interviews with closed questions, which would have provided quantitative conclusions about the views of LGBTQ Palestinians. Instead, the results of my semi-structured interviews with a small number of participants provide a detailed snapshot of the views of those individuals. Third, because of the sensitive nature of the issues being discussed – for example sexuality, race, and occupation – I believed my participants would be most comfortable, and most willing to divulge important information, in an interview that felt like a relaxed conversation between equals. As Ann Oakley explains, “the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship.”<sup>60</sup> For this reason, I also invited the interviewees to ask me questions about myself and my research, which were usually along the lines of “Are you gay and/or Jewish?” and “What are your conclusions going to be?”, and which I answered as frankly as possible. Fourth, aside from seeing this equal relationship as most conducive to obtaining useful information, it also seemed most ethically appropriate when engaging with individuals who are vulnerable to exploitation and oppression by virtue of their ethno-religious background and their sexuality.

The interviews were recorded, with the permission of the participants, and then transcribed. In order to maintain the safety and privacy of my interviewees, I have given them pseudonyms in this thesis, and changed or excluded any identifying characteristics. The exception is Tom Canning, Director of Development at JOH, who was willing to be named. In summary, I interviewed the following seven people, listed in chronological order:

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<sup>59</sup> Fiona Fylan, “Semi-structured interviewing” in *A Handbook of Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology* edited by Jeremy Miles and Paul Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65

<sup>60</sup> Ann Oakley, “Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms,” in *Doing Feminist Research* edited by Helen Roberts (London: Routledge, 1981), 41

- **Tom Canning** – Director of Development at Jerusalem Open House (JOH). Informal discussion on Skype on January 4, 2016, followed by interview at JOH's head office in Jerusalem on March 12, 2016.
- **Miriam** – a Jewish lesbian LGBTQ rights activist living in Tel Aviv. Interview conducted by telephone on January 20, 2016.
- **Noor** – a bisexual Palestinian living in Ramallah. Interview conducted via Skype on January 28, 2016.
- **Wassim, Rahim and Yossi** – two gay Druze men and a gay Jewish man who are friends living in Tel Aviv. Interviewed together at Wassim and Rahim's apartment in Tel Aviv on March 10, 2016.
- **Saleh** – a gay Palestinian man who works for a Palestinian human rights organisation. Interviewed in Ramallah on March 15, 2016.

I have supplemented the evidence gained from my interviews with information and analysis provided by others who have conducted similar, interview-based research. For example, I was not able to speak to Haneen Maikey, Director of Al Qaws, myself. However, an MA thesis from the London School of Economics (LSE) includes a detailed account of an interview with Maikey on the subject of 'pinkwashing',<sup>61</sup> and further interviews with her and other Palestinian LGBTQ rights activists are available on YouTube<sup>62</sup> and in documentaries such as *Shunned*.<sup>63</sup> Media articles are also a significant source of evidence about views on 'pinkwashing' and related topics.<sup>64</sup> In Chapters 3 to 6, I explore the evidence collected during my field research, analysing its implications for my research questions and the theories put forward in the literature.

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<sup>61</sup> Candidate No. 64931. "The Politics of Sexuality in Palestine/Israel." (MSc diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015)

<sup>62</sup> For example: "Haneen Maikey on homonationalism in Israel," Youtube, 2010, accessed on April 2, 2016, <https://youtu.be/5WV7PPCR1Qk>

<sup>63</sup> *Shunned*, directed by Igal Hecht, Israel: Chutzpa Productions Inc., 2015

<sup>64</sup> For example: Ali Abunimah, "Protest shuts down Israel lobby group at Chicago LGBTQ conference," *The Electronic Intifada*, January 23, 2016, accessed January 24, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/protest-shuts-down-israel-lobby-group-chicago-lgbtq-conference>

### **Chapter 3: Examining the Evidence on ‘pinkwashing’**

During my research, I encountered convincing evidence that the phenomenon that pro-Palestinian activists describe as ‘pinkwashing’ is taking place. Namely, the Israeli state exaggerates Israel’s progress towards LGBTQ equality (favourable and non-discriminatory treatment concerning LGBTQ people), and Palestinian society’s lack of progress towards LGBTQ equality, in order to detract from Israeli violations of Palestinian rights and justify the occupation of the Palestinian territories. The Israeli state is assisted in ‘pinkwashing’ by pro-Israeli American and Canadian organisations such as StandWithUs, and by LGBTQ organisations within Israel such as HaAguda.

‘Pinkwashing’ harms ordinary Israelis and Palestinians in three main ways. First, by claiming that the LGBTQ community are attaining equality within Israeli society (which is not the case), the Israeli state inhibits Israeli LGBTQ people from achieving change within their society towards better, non-discriminatory treatment, by causing complacency amongst potential supporters at home and abroad. Second, ‘pinkwashing’ allows the injustices perpetrated by the Israeli state against the Palestinians to continue, by detracting from its violations of Palestinian rights and justifying the occupation by portraying Palestinian society as dangerously intolerant. Third, by creating the impression that it is impossible to be gay in Palestine, and trying to subsume LGBTQ Palestinians into Israeli society, the Israeli state and its allies ensure that many Palestinians continue to associate homosexuality with foreign influences, and hinder the development of a unique, Palestinian LGBTQ identity.

This chapter sets out the evidence that the Israeli state and its allies portray Israeli society as homogenously tolerant towards LGBTQ people, and Palestinian society as homogenously intolerant towards LGBTQ people, in order to detract from Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights and justify the occupation. Not only are the Israeli state’s portrayals of Israeli and Palestinian society misleading, but they are also harmful to the members of both those societies in ways that are outlined below.

### 3(a) Portraying Israeli society as pro-LGBTQ to gain support among liberal foreigners

The Israeli state has conducted an organised campaign to use 'Gay Israel'<sup>65</sup> to create a more positive image of the state within the international community and foster better international relations. The operation began in 2005, when the Israeli Foreign Ministry launched 'Brand Israel,' a marketing strategy aimed at changing Israel's image from "a place of fighting and religion" to "relevant and modern."<sup>66</sup> Pro-Palestinian activists argue that the campaign was launched as a reaction to the emergence of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) initiative, which began to increase awareness and opposition amongst the public across Europe, the US and Canada concerning Israel's oppression of the Palestinians.<sup>67</sup>

In 2006, the role of gay rights was made explicit in this campaign, when a Foreign Ministry official told the *Jerusalem Post* that "efforts to let European and American liberals know about the gay community in Israel were an important part of its work to highlight this country's support of human rights and to underscore its diversity in a population that tends to judge Israel harshly solely on its treatment of Palestinians."<sup>68</sup> In 2010, the authorities allocated NIS 500,000 to a marketing budget aimed at attracting gay tourism to Tel Aviv.<sup>69</sup> A senior official in the Foreign Ministry commented: "The project has many advantages in that it can reach young and liberal audiences with which Israel usually has a severe image problem."<sup>70</sup> These examples highlight the Israeli state's conscious use of LGBTQ rights to detract from negativity stemming from its treatment of Palestinians, in order to create more positive perceptions of Israel among previously unconvinced members of the international community.

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<sup>65</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, "Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2006, accessed January 2, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Foreign-Ministry-promoting-Gay-Israel>

<sup>66</sup> Nathaniel Popper, "Israel aims to improve its gay image," *The Forward*, October 14, 2005, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://forward.com/news/2070/israel-aims-to-improve-its-public-image/>

<sup>67</sup> *Pinkwashing Exposed: Seattle Fights Back*, directed by Dean Spade. United States: 13th Avenue Productions, 2015

<sup>68</sup> Lazaroff, "Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel"

<sup>69</sup> Yedioth Ahronoth, "Tel Aviv wants to host international gay pride parade," *Ynet News*, March 1, 2010, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3853295,00.html>

<sup>70</sup> Ahronoth, "Tel Aviv wants to host international gay pride parade"

## Where In The Middle East Can Gay Officers Serve Their Country?



**Only in Israel**

In a democracy, positions of leadership and political office are open to all citizens, no matter their race, religion, or sexual orientation.

The Israeli Declaration of Independence guarantees all citizens freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, culture, and equal access to holy sites.

**Support Democracy. Support Israel.**



**Figure 2:** An advert published by Blue Star PR in San Francisco on behalf of the Israeli government. It implies that because gay officers can serve in the Israeli military, Israel is a democracy worthy of Americans' support. Its launch in one of the world's 'gay capitals' assumes that LGBTQ people care about LGBTQ issues to the expense of other issues, such as Palestinian rights.

Source:

<https://queersagainstapartheid.org/gayisrael/>

### 3(b) The gap between propaganda and experience

The Israeli state and its allies' portrayal of Israel in relation to LGBTQ rights differs from the experience of LGBTQ Israelis in three important ways. First, as opposed to acting as a champion for LGBTQ rights, the Israeli government has blocked all attempts to enshrine LGBTQ equality in law since 1988,<sup>71</sup> and has allowed violations of LGBTQ rights to be perpetrated by the authorities. Second, rather than demonstrating tolerance towards sexual diversity, elements of Israeli society manifest severe intolerance towards LGBTQ people. Third, Israel is not a safe haven for LGBTQ Palestinians, as it does not allow them to seek asylum, even when they face death if they return to the Palestinian territories. The Israeli state's attempt to portray Israel as a beacon for gay rights is therefore misleading, and is perpetuated for political reasons. I explore each of these aspects in further detail below, and explain their implications for ordinary Israelis and Palestinians of all sexual orientations.

<sup>71</sup> Lee Walzer, *Between Sodom and Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today's Changing Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), ix

### **3(b)(i) The Israeli state's attitude towards LGBTQ rights**

The Israeli state's claim to be the champion of 'Gay Israel' is misleading, because the Israeli government has not made significant efforts to ensure the progress of LGBTQ rights since the 1988 repeal of the 'Sodomy Law,' which banned same-sex acts.<sup>72</sup> In 2005 a dichotomy began to emerge between propaganda and reality, and this continues to be reflected in recent events. In March 2016, the Israeli Tourism Ministry's LGBTQ marketing campaign earned it an award from Expedia,<sup>73</sup> one of the world's most popular travel booking websites.<sup>74</sup> Shortly afterwards, however, a raft of legislation proposed by the opposition, aimed at ensuring equality and protection for LGBTQ people in areas such as inheritance, civil unions and 'conversion therapy,' was voted down by the Members of the Knesset (MKs) from the ruling coalition parties, leading the bills to be dropped.<sup>75</sup> As a result, parents can still force young gay Israelis into undergoing therapy that attempts to change their sexuality,<sup>76</sup> despite the fact that this practice has been condemned as unnecessary, ineffective and dangerous by leading medical and mental health associations around the world.<sup>77</sup> The juxtaposition of the Israeli government's LGBTQ tourism marketing campaign and its refusal to legislate for LGBTQ equality highlight its cynical use of LGBTQ rights in order to improve its image abroad. In her April 2016 article on 'pinkwashing,' Yael Marom drew attention to the contrast between the Israeli state's rhetoric and its failure to act in order to bring about LGBTQ equality:

It will take more than a few coats of rainbow paint to cover up the crimes that have been committed against the LGBTQ community in Israel. It will take more than a few layers of paint to hide: the three transgender Israelis who took their own lives last year; the LGBTQ rights bills that never make it into law; the absurdly low budgets for LGBTQ community organizations and campaigns; that "conversion therapy" is still legal; homophobic statements from members of Knesset and prominent rabbis. It will take more than a few layers of paint to hide the fact that "homo" and "lesbian" are still pejorative curse words in our enlightened

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<sup>72</sup> Lee Walzer, *Between Sodom and Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today's Changing Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), ix

<sup>73</sup> "Israel's Tourism Ministry wins Expedia award for 'innovative LGBT campaign,'" *i24News*, March 12, 2016, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/society/105952-160312-israel-s-tourism-ministry-wins-expedia-award-for-innovative-lgbt-campaign>

<sup>74</sup> In 2013 the website had over 60 million unique visitors per month and gross bookings US\$39.4 billion. Samantha Nielson, "Online travel giant Expedia's must-know overview from investors," *Market Realist*, April 30, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://marketrealist.com/2014/04/must-know-investor-overview-expedia/>

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Lis, "Knesset Scraps Bills for LGBT Community After Marking Gay Rights Day," *Haaretz*, February 25, 2016, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-1.705338>; Marissa Newman, "Day after marking LGBT rights, Knesset nixes 5 gender equality bills," *The Times of Israel*, February 24, 2016, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/day-after-marking-lgbt-rights-knesset-nixes-5-gender-equality-bills>

<sup>76</sup> Newman, "Day after marking LGBT rights"

<sup>77</sup> "#BornPerfect: The Facts About Conversion Therapy," National Centre for Lesbian Rights, <http://www.nclrights.org/bornperfect-the-facts-about-conversion-therapy/>



nation; or the fact that we cannot marry here. It cannot hide the teens who are forced to run away from home to shelters. And it cannot hide the murders. The murders.<sup>78</sup>

Not only has the Israeli government failed to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination through legislation, but the Israeli authorities also actively violate the rights of LGBTQ people. For example, during the same period that the Israeli government began championing 'Gay Israel,' the Jerusalem authorities banned the city's gay pride march, due to protest from Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious leaders.<sup>79</sup> The authority thus violated LGBTQ people's freedom of peaceful assembly.<sup>80</sup> These events call into question the state's claims about Israel's "support of human rights,"<sup>81</sup> and highlights how the Israeli state suppresses calls for change from within the LGBTQ community. When the march eventually took place after a ruling by the Supreme Court, three participants were stabbed by a religious zealot during violent clashes between the marchers and ultra-Orthodox protestors.<sup>82</sup> This is evidence that Israeli is far from being a safe haven for LGBTQ people.

All my Israeli interviewees were sceptical of the allegation that the Israeli state engages in 'pinkwashing.' On the contrary, Miriam argued that the Israeli government's lack of action in granting LGBTQ people the rights they are asking for, such as equal marriage, shows that it does not intend to use LGBTQ rights to gain support abroad.<sup>83</sup> If the Israeli state wanted to use its tolerance towards LGBTQ people as evidence of its democratic nature, she claimed, it would implement more legislation to enshrine that tolerance in law.<sup>84</sup> However, as can be seen from the events described above, the lack of legislative protections for LGBTQ people does *not* prevent the Israeli government from attempting to promote Israel as a gay-friendly country abroad. In fact, the gap between propaganda and reality serves the state's interests. Promoting itself as an oasis of tolerance towards LGBTQ people, without legislating to ensure LGBTQ equality, enables the Israeli state to attract income and improve its standing abroad without invoking the wrath of powerful religious contingents at home.

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<sup>78</sup> Yael Marom, "Did the Israeli government just admit to 'pinkwashing?'" *+972 Magazine*, April 19, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://972mag.com/did-the-israeli-government-just-admit-to-pinkwashing/118691/>

<sup>79</sup> "Jerusalem bans gay pride parade," *BBC News*, June 24, 2005, accessed April 5, 2016, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4618465.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4618465.stm)

<sup>80</sup> "The Universal Declaration on Human Rights," United Nations, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

<sup>81</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, "Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2006, accessed January 2, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Foreign-Ministry-promoting-Gay-Israel>

<sup>82</sup> Doron Sheffer and Efrat Weiss, "Violence erupts at Gay Pride Parade," *Ynet News*, June 30, 2005, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3106491,00.html>

<sup>83</sup> Miriam, interview by Grace Weaver, January 20, 2016, Skype

<sup>84</sup> Miriam, interview

Attempts to improve the situation of LGBTQ people within Israeli society are seen by many religious groups and individuals as a 'provocation,' leading them to block legislation, protest in the streets, and in rare cases even to carry out violent attacks on LGBTQ individuals.<sup>85</sup>

### **3(b)(ii) Israeli society's attitude towards LGBTQ rights**

It is true that some LGBTQ Israelis experience a high level of tolerance within Israeli society towards their sexuality, but others encounter ignorance, discrimination and hostility. As one would expect, the Israeli state propaganda only focuses on positive stories of LGBTQ people, therefore it centres most promotion campaigns on Tel Aviv, to avoid the fact that outside Tel Aviv, attitudes towards LGBTQ people are much less tolerant than inside the city. This is illustrated by an extract from my conversation with Rahim, Wassim and Yossi:

**Wassim:** But I want to say that the gay community here [in Tel Aviv] is different than the gay community in Haifa...

**Rahim:** Or in Jerusalem.

**Grace:** How is it different?...

**Yossi:** Jerusalem is more boring. Tel Aviv is more open, and everyone in that community is very tolerant and we can live here easier than in Jerusalem, because in Jerusalem it's a very, um-

**Rahim:** The culture is very conservative.

**Yossi:** So it's very different – you'll feel it when you're there.

**Grace:** So gay people there, they have their places, but they're-?

**Yossi:** Hiding. I'm just kidding! Not really hiding, but, you don't feel it like here.

**Rahim:** Haifa also, it's a smaller city, and not everyone is accepting. Here in Tel Aviv, everyone- I think, like, ninety percent of the people that live here accept. But there is also a lot of ignorance about gays around the country. Like if you go to a small town, or small city, they will look at you like you're different – you will feel it. That's basically this country. You know, if you want to see modern things and people that have, you know, cool people, and people that have a lot of ideas, you will see them here, in Tel Aviv.<sup>86</sup>

These young men clearly believed that Tel Aviv was unique in its high level of tolerance towards LGBTQ people. Similarly, Tom Canning reported that with regards to societal attitudes, services, and feelings of safety among LGBTQ people, Tel Aviv was very high compared to "other

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Kaplan, "Jerusalem's Gay Pride Parade Attack Underscores Tensions Between Israel's Anti-LGBT Religious Leaders And Secular Israelis," *International Business Times*, August 3, 2015, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/jerusalem-gay-pride-parade-attack-underscores-tensions-between-israels-anti-lgbt-2036657>

<sup>86</sup> Rahim, Wassim and Yossi, interview by Grace Weaver, March 10, 2016, Tel Aviv, Israel

Western countries,” whereas outside of Tel Aviv, the situation is “very bad” and “way below par.”<sup>87</sup>

The views of Rahim, Wassim, Yossi and Tom Canning indicate that by making Tel Aviv the centre of its ‘Gay Israel’ campaign, the Israeli state is using Tel Aviv as a synonym for Israeli society as a whole. This is a problem because the Israeli state is not supporting – and is sometimes suppressing – LGBTQ Israelis who are calling for change within their society, and reducing their prospects of finding support for this amongst the international community.



**Figure 3:** Advert for ‘Gay Israel’ taken from a website run by the Israeli Tourism Ministry and the Israeli National LGBT Taskforce (HaAguda). *The Electronic Intifada* criticised the advert because the map fails to show the distinction between the State of Israel on the one hand and the Palestinian territories and the Golan on the other hand.

Source: <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/asa-winstanley/pinkwashing-and-israeli-ads-wipe->

### **3(b)(iii) Israel as a safe haven for LGBTQ Palestinians**

Around the start of the Israeli state’s ‘pinkwashing’ campaign in 2006, Mark Hamel, then head of HaAguda, told *The Jerusalem Post* that during his state-sponsored tour of Europe and the US, he was speaking about “Israel’s efforts to help Gay Palestinians who are persecuted in the West Bank.”<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Tom Canning (Director of Development, Jerusalem Open House), interview by Grace Weaver, March 13, 2016, Jerusalem Open House, HaSoreg Street 2, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>88</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, “Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel,” *Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2006, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Foreign-Ministry-promoting-Gay-Israel>

He went on to claim that “Israeli is the only country that is trying to help them.”<sup>89</sup> However, far from “helping” LGBTQ Palestinians, the Israeli state actually denies them the right to seek asylum in Israel, and deports them back to the Palestinian territories if it finds them living illegally.<sup>90</sup> This violates Israel’s obligations under the United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.<sup>91</sup> These conventions lay down the principle of *non-refoulement*: a prohibition on forcing foreigners to return to territories where they would be in danger.<sup>92</sup> The Israeli High Court has ruled that this *non-refoulement* principle is recognised in Israel as part of the right to life enshrined in the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty.<sup>93</sup> Yet the Israeli state does not allow Palestinians to seek asylum in Israel because, it says, “due to the ongoing conflict, every Palestinian poses a security risk, which can’t be removed by individual screening.”<sup>94</sup> The state even refuses to provide temporary legal status for LGBTQ Palestinians whilst non-governmental organisations such as the Refugee Rights Clinic at Tel Aviv University attempt to find resettlement for them abroad.<sup>95</sup>

The Israeli state and its allies’ implication that Israel is a safe haven for LGBTQ Palestinians is therefore misleading, and is made with the intention of improving Israel’s image abroad and portraying Palestinian society as “barbaric.”<sup>96</sup> The Israeli state and its allies use the stories of Palestinians such as A, who was beaten and submerged in sewage by people claiming to be Palestinian Authority policemen, to portray itself as “a place that respects human rights”<sup>97</sup> in contrast to the Palestinian Authority, while in fact violating these individuals’ rights under international and Israeli law by allowing them to be sent back to territories where they are in danger of continued persecution.<sup>98</sup> This does not only harm those LGBTQ Palestinians who are exploited through the use of their suffering, and who are deported back to the Palestinian territories. It also hinders the efforts of organisations such as the Refugee Rights Clinic to find placements for LGBTQ Palestinians abroad

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<sup>89</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, “Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel”

<sup>90</sup> Michael Kagan and Anat Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel*, Tel Aviv University, April 2008, 7

<sup>91</sup> Kagan and Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run*, 23

<sup>92</sup> Kagan and Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run*, 23

<sup>93</sup> Kagan and Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run*, 23

<sup>94</sup> Kagan and Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run*, 44

<sup>95</sup> Kagan and Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run*, 21

<sup>96</sup> Kagan and Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run*, 5

<sup>97</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, “Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel”

<sup>98</sup> Kagan and Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run*, 23

and to change the situation for these individuals in Israel, because it perpetuates the idea that LGBTQ Palestinians can already find refuge in Israel. Furthermore, by using stories of persecution of LGBTQ Palestinians within the Palestinian territories to imply that the whole of Palestinian society is dangerously intolerant towards homosexuality, the Israeli state and its allies justify human rights violations against Palestinians such as the refusal to allow them to seek asylum, and the occupation of their land, on the grounds that “every Palestinian poses a security risk.”<sup>99</sup>

### **3(c) Portraying Palestinian society as anti-LGBTQ to justify the occupation**

Besides falsely portraying Israeli society as homogenously tolerant towards LGBTQ people, ‘pinkwashing’ involves portraying Palestinian society as intolerant towards LGBTQ people, in order to justify the occupation. This is not the first time that a government seeking to occupy a country to exploit its resources has used evidence of the ‘backwardness’ of that society – i.e. its lack of progress in areas such as industry, education, and minority rights – in order to justify its colonialist interventions.<sup>100</sup> During the Victorian era, the British government argued that Egyptian society’s ‘degradation of women’ demonstrated that Egyptian men were ‘inferior’ to British men.<sup>101</sup> This justified the British occupation of Egypt as a paternalistic intervention for the ‘good’ of Egyptian society, because the British would ‘liberate’ Egyptian women and educate its men in their proper treatment.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, the Israeli state and its allies use the mistreatment of some LGBTQ Palestinians by other Palestinians as justification for its intervention in Palestinian society and the occupation of Palestinian land.

The Israeli state has occupied the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967.<sup>103</sup> Through this occupation, the Israeli state has gained land for its settlers, and resources for its economy.<sup>104</sup> The Israeli government justified the 1967 invasion of the Palestinian

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<sup>99</sup> Michael Kagan and Anat Ben-Dor, *Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel*, Tel Aviv University, April 2008, 44

<sup>100</sup> Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 3

<sup>101</sup> Leila Ahmed, “The Discourse of the Veil,” in *Women and Gender in Islam* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992) 144-168

<sup>102</sup> Ahmed, “The Discourse of the Veil”

<sup>103</sup> Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (California: University of California Press, 2008), 1

<sup>104</sup> Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, xix

territories in terms of the security threat posed by the Palestinians and their Arab neighbours,<sup>105</sup> and the occupation continues to be explained in those terms. The occupation is also defended in terms of the benefits provided to Palestinian society, such as the claim that with the help of Israel, Palestinian agriculture has been “advanced and modernized beyond recognition”.<sup>106</sup> ‘Pinkwashing’ can be seen as part of the Israeli state’s attempts to portray Palestinian society as dangerous, and to justify intervention in that society in terms of the benefits it brings the Palestinians themselves. It is also an attempt to portray the relationship between Israel and Palestine as an ideological conflict rather than as a stronger power seizing control of a weaker power.<sup>107</sup>

Evidence of intolerance towards LGBTQ people in Middle Eastern countries has been used by several states around the world to help justify military intervention in those societies as part of the “war on terror.” Jasbir Puar highlights how after the September 11 attacks, many American LGBTQ activists supported the invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>108</sup> They believed that interventions such as this were needed to protect “American values” such as tolerance towards LGBTQ people, and to “liberate” LGBTQ people in the Middle East.<sup>109</sup> Islam is portrayed as a static and monolithic entity that remains consistently intolerant towards homosexuality, and Middle Eastern societies are portrayed as being centred around this religion.<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, the Israeli state and its allies (which include some Israeli LGBTQ organisations) justify the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories in terms of (a) neutralising the threat from Palestinians, who are portrayed as homogenously intolerant towards LGBTQ people due to a dogmatic commitment to Islam, and (b) liberating LGBTQ Palestinians. My interviewee Saleh believes that ‘pinkwashing’ is part of an attempt to portray Palestinian society as ‘backward’ because it implies that Palestinians are essentially intolerant of homosexuality. He said that Israeli propaganda implies that “even if you’re secular, you always stick to these... savage ideas of religion.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (California: University of California Press, 2008), 5

<sup>106</sup> Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, 8

<sup>107</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, “Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 493-516, 501

<sup>108</sup> Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 43

<sup>109</sup> Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 43

<sup>110</sup> Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 13

<sup>111</sup> Saleh, interview by Grace Weaver, March 15, 2016, Ramallah, Palestinian territories

In fact, evidence of the widespread view that Palestinian society contains dangerous, intolerant religious strands emerged during my interviews with Israelis. For example, when asked about the Israeli state's actions towards with the Palestinians, Rahim stated that "we're defending our country. Because you don't want to walk across the street now in Tel Aviv and get stabbed by someone because you're an Israeli... it's about you have a different religion, you're not Muslim, so yes, you should die."<sup>112</sup> Thus the Palestinian "savage ideas of religion"<sup>113</sup> are portrayed as a threat to Israeli society. As Jason Ritchie argues, stories about Palestinian homophobia validate "the collective nightmares of Israeli national security, which is forever haunted by the bogeyman of the intolerant Palestinian terrorist."<sup>114</sup> Ritchie goes on to explain that stories of victimised Palestinian queers "seeking refuge" in a gay-friendly Israel are used to justify the occupation, arguing that the intervention in Palestinian society has become necessary "as a result...of the 'backward' and 'inferior' essence of Palestinian culture," which leaves Israel as the sole protector of LGBTQ Palestinians.<sup>115</sup>

I noted in the introduction how the advert published by Israeli state ally StandWithUs<sup>116</sup> is an example of LGBTQ rights being used as a tool to justify the killing of civilians in Gaza.<sup>117</sup> The advert states that " Hamas, ISIS and Iran kill gays like me," and immediately follows this with the claim that "if I lived in Gaza or Israel's neighboring states, I would be thrown in jail, mutilated or killed."<sup>118</sup> This associates the whole of Arab society with the extreme religious intolerance of groups such as Hamas and ISIS, while inflating their relationship with Iran. StandWithUs further argues that "you can't really be gay in the Palestinian territories."<sup>119</sup> Not only are these claims misleading – they are also harmful to Palestinians. If the international audience can be convinced that the majority of Palestinian society

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<sup>112</sup> Rahim, interview by Grace Weaver, March 10, 2016, Tel Aviv, Israel

<sup>113</sup> Saleh, interview by Grace Weaver, March 15, 2016, Ramallah, Palestinian territories

<sup>114</sup> Jason Ritchie, "How do you say "Come out of the closet" in Arabic?: Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 557-575, 560

<sup>115</sup> Ritchie, "Come out of the closet," 560

<sup>116</sup> Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, "Our *New York Times* Ad Condemning Hamas and Iran's Treatment of Homosexuals," December 23, 2014, accessed January 30, 2016, <https://shmuley.com/2014/12/23/our-new-york-times-ad-condemning-hamas-and-irans-treatment-of-homosexuals/>

<sup>117</sup> Lizzie Dearden, "Israel-Gaza conflict: 50-day war by numbers," *Independent*, August 27, 2014, accessed February 5, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-gaza-conflict-50-day-war-by-numbers-9693310.html>

<sup>118</sup> Boteach, "Our *New York Times* Ad"

<sup>119</sup> Mel Bezalel, "Gay pride being used to promote Israel abroad," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 7, 2009, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Gay-pride-being-used-to-promote-Israel-abroad>



agrees with Hamas, for example, they are less likely to criticise violence against non-Hamas Palestinians, hundreds of whom were killed in the assault on Gaza in 2014.<sup>120</sup>

**Hamas, ISIS and Iran kill gays like me.**

My name is Rennie Remy. I'm a gay American. And I support Israel.

If I lived in Gaza or Israel's neighboring states, I would be thrown in jail, tortured, or killed.

I thought I am not Jewish, Israel is the only country in the Middle East where I can live without fear. I am free to adopt children, serve openly in the military, advocate for my community's rights and be accepted as a human being.

I visited Israel and marched with thousands of people from around the globe in Jerusalem's Gay Pride parade, and all were treated with dignity. The freedom I experienced made me feel at home.

I don't why I'm appalled that so many in the Western world – including the media, Hollywood, and well-known human rights activists – feel to hold terrorist organizations like Hamas and autocratic governments like Iran accountable for their persecution of LGBT communities.

How do you do decency?

Hamas calls homosexuals subhuman, accusing us of engaging in a "filthy practice" that is punishable by death.

It's not an empty threat. Gay Palestinians have been tortured and killed. I don't why many gay Palestinian men risk their lives to cross the border and seek refuge in Israel.

If I lived in Iran, or under "Islamic" ideological control, LGBT citizens would be seeking my picture.

Not in the jail, but hanging from a cross in a public square. That's a regular practice against gay men by the Iranian regime.

The only way for gays to avoid persecution in Iran is to undergo a forced sex change operation.

To those who recognized Israel while pretending to care about human rights yet remain silent about the oppression and violence Hamas, Iran and other Middle East countries inflict on the gay community.

Shame on you. You are letting them murder us, literally. Your misguided actions ensure that LGBT people in the Middle East continue to live in hiding under constant threat of violent death.

It's time to hold oppressive dictators and religious fanatics accountable for their homophobic and violent agendas against LGBT communities.

As a nation that respects the rights and humanity of every citizen, Israel is a model for the rest of the region. Speak up for Israel. You don't have to be Jewish to love the only democracy in the Middle East.

Join the fight for justice and human rights in the Middle East at [shmuley.com](http://shmuley.com), [thisworld.com](http://thisworld.com) and [StandWithUs.com](http://StandWithUs.com).

**In Israel, I am free.**

THE JEWISH PEOPLE, INCLUDING ME, DO NOT SUPPORT THE POLICY OF THIS WORLD: THE VALUES NETWORK, LEADER OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND ISRAELI CRISIS AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

SHMULEY  
THIS WORLD  
StandWithUs

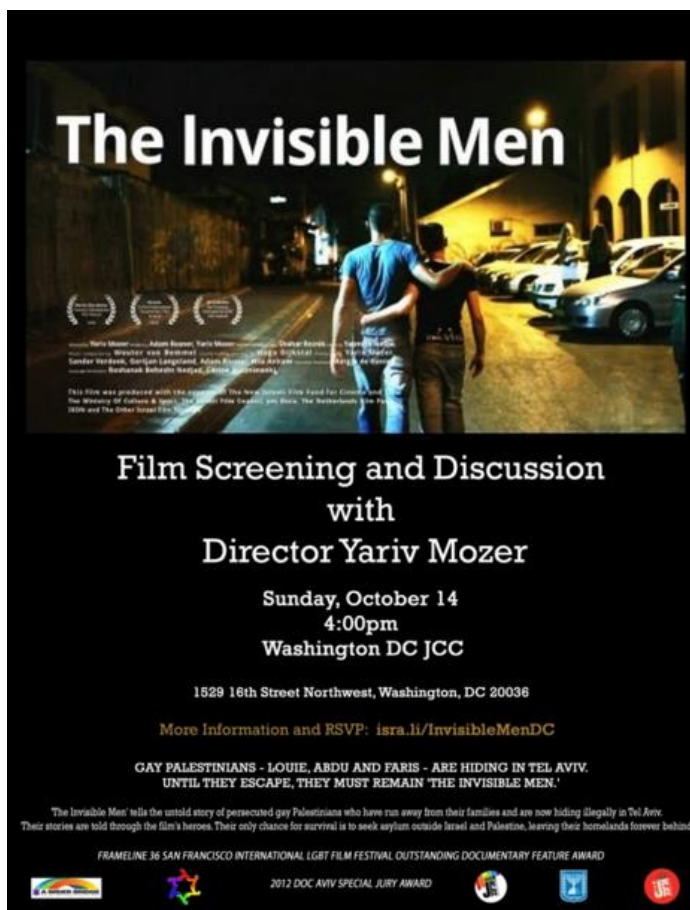
**Figure 4:** Advert taken out in the *New York Times* in 2014 by StandWithUs and This World: Values Network.  
Source:  
<https://shmuley.com/2014/12/23/our-new-york-times-ad-condemning-hamas-and-irans-treatment-of-homosexuals/>

Another example of an attempt by the Israeli state and its allies to exaggerate stories of Palestinian persecution of LGBTQ people is the documentary film, *The Invisible Men*.<sup>121</sup> The film's US tour was sponsored by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the pro-Israeli American LGBTQ organisation, A Wider Bridge.<sup>122</sup> It tells the "untold story" of three gay Palestinians who have fled their families and are now hiding in Israel because of torture and death threats by their families and the

<sup>120</sup> Lizzie Dearden, "Israel-Gaza conflict: 50-day war by numbers," *Independent*, August 27, 2014, accessed February 5, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-gaza-conflict-50-day-war-by-numbers-9693310.html>  
<sup>121</sup> Sigal Samuel, "'The Invisible Men' Accused of Pinkwashing," *The Daily Beast*, November 12, 2012, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/12/the-invisible-men-accused-of-pinkwashing.html>  
<sup>122</sup> "Screenings: US Tour," *The Invisible Men* website, accessed May 4, 2016, <http://www.theinvisiblemenfilm.com/#!us-tour/c1v8z>



Palestinian security forces.<sup>123</sup> The film presents a misleading, one-sided view of both Palestinian and Israeli society – the former as homogenously intolerant towards LGBTQ people, the latter as uniformly tolerant towards LGBTQ people. *The Invisible Men* promotes the idea that Israeli intervention in Palestinian society is required to protect innocent individuals from harm. For example, the main character, Louie, is physically abused by his father for being gay, and is rescued by the promise of asylum from “a Western savior.”<sup>124</sup> This is harmful for LGBTQ Palestinians because it promotes the idea that an LGBTQ identity is incompatible with a Palestinian identity. This hinders the development of a Palestinian LGBTQ identity, and reinforces the idea amongst heterosexual and cisgender Palestinians that homosexuality is a manifestation of foreign elements, rather than LGBTQ people being an integral part of Palestinian society. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.



**Figure 5:** Poster for a screening of *The Invisible Men* in Washington DC, published by the pro-Israeli American LGBTQ organisation, A Wider Bridge. Source: <http://awiderbridge.org/the-invisible-men-and-director-yariv-mozer-at-washington-dc-jcc/>

<sup>123</sup> “About,” *The Invisible Men* website, accessed May 4, 2016, <http://www.theinvisiblemenfilm.com/#!/about/c10fk>

<sup>124</sup> Jeffrey Ingold, “Israel and the Pink Dollar: Deconstructing the settler homonationalist discourse embedded in Israeli-LGBT-propaganda films represented by “The Invisible Men,”” *Pols 443: Gender and Globalization*, April 9, 2013, accessed April 6, 2016, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jeffreyingold>

In conclusion, the Israeli state and its allies, such as StandWithUS, portray Israeli society as homogenously tolerant towards LGBTQ people in order to improve Israel's image among people who would otherwise criticise it for its treatment of Palestinians. This is misleading because the Israeli state does not champion LGBTQ rights at home in the way it claims to abroad, and because significant elements of intolerance towards LGBTQ people still exist within Israeli society. Presenting an exaggeratedly positive picture of LGBTQ rights in Israel harms LGBTQ Israelis because it undermines their calls for change. The Israeli state and its allies also portray Palestinian society as homogenously prejudiced against LGBTQ people, thereby harming Palestinians' attempts to campaign against the injustice they suffer at the hands of the Israeli state.

## Chapter 4: The Complicity of the Israeli LGBTQ Community

Scholars who have examined LGBTQ issues in Israel and the Palestine territories, such as Gil Hochberg<sup>125</sup> and Rebecca Stein,<sup>126</sup> argue that the mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community is complicit in 'pinkwashing' for four main reasons. First, it aids the Israeli state in presenting an exaggeratedly positive image of Israeli society's attitudes towards LGBTQ people, in order to gain support and funding for Israel from abroad. Second, it helps the Israeli state to justify its occupation of the West Bank by perpetuating the discourse of LGBTQ Palestinians as 'victims,' who are persecuted by their own authorities and would therefore be safer in Israel. Third, despite claiming to provide refuge to these Palestinians,<sup>127</sup> the Israeli LGBTQ community generally remains inaccessible to anyone who does not conform to its particular norms, set by the Ashkenazi males who dominate it. Fourth, as a result of this group's dominance and the LGBTQ community's collaborative relationship with the Israeli state, the mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community has refused to challenge the racist and heteronormative status quo within society, opting to campaign for equal rights within heterosexual institutions such as marriage, and choosing to ignore any connections between the oppression of Israeli LGBTQ people within Israel society and the oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities.

In this section of my thesis, I examine these points closely in light of my research, which ultimately supports the claim made by scholars such as Hochberg<sup>128</sup> that the Israeli LGBTQ community are complicit in the attempt to use LGBTQ issues to gain support for the Israeli state and its occupation of the West Bank. This is harmful for LGBTQ Israelis because it undermines attempts to improve their rights within Israeli society. It is harmful to Palestinians within Israel and the Palestinian territories because it allows their rights to continue to be violated, and hinders the development of their society towards a more tolerant attitude concerning LGBTQ people.

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<sup>125</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, "Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 493-516

<sup>126</sup> Rebecca L. Stein, "Explosive: Scenes from Israel's Queer Occupation," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 517-536, 518

<sup>127</sup> Jason Ritchie, "How do you say 'Come out of the closet' in Arabic?: Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 557-575, 559

<sup>128</sup> Hochberg, "Introduction"

#### 4(a) Portraying Israeli society as pro-LGBTQ to gain support among liberal foreigners

There is evidence that the Israeli LGBTQ community is complicit in presenting a falsely positive image of the Israeli government and society's attitudes towards LGBTQ people. In the previous chapter, I cited a media article in which the Israeli Foreign Ministry stated its intention to publicise 'Gay Israel,' in order to challenge an image of Israel as an oppressive regime, based on its treatment of Palestinians. In the same article, Michael Hamel, then head of HaAguda, the Israeli National LGBT Taskforce, is quoted as saying: "We are working very closely with them."<sup>129</sup> This close working relationship is demonstrated by the fact that he was speaking to the newspaper from California – the latest destination in his Israeli government-sponsored tour of Europe, the US and Canada, aimed at convincing liberals that Israel respects human rights because it respects LGBTQ rights.<sup>130</sup> "We come and we say Israel is not exactly the monster you thought it was," Hamel explained.<sup>131</sup>

Both of the Jewish Israeli LGBTQ activists I interviewed have participated in trips to Europe and the US funded by the Israeli state and its allies such as A Wider Bridge, aimed at publicising the Israeli LGBTQ community. Miriam was keen to emphasise that Israel is "good" and "really accepting" towards LGBTQ people.<sup>132</sup> She told me that in her talks abroad, she tells the story of coming to terms with her sexuality and living openly as a lesbian, despite growing up in a traditional, religious Jewish community.<sup>133</sup> This fits with the Israeli state's aim of changing Israel's image from "a place of fighting and religion" to "relevant and modern,"<sup>134</sup> because it implies that religious beliefs are becoming increasingly compatible with homosexuality. However, it does not represent the reality for all Jewish Israelis from religious backgrounds, many of whom are forced to hide their sexuality and marry someone of the opposite sex.<sup>135</sup> The voices of these people are largely ignored in the Israeli state's political messaging, which is harmful for those seeking change.

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<sup>129</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, "Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2006, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Foreign-Ministry-promoting-Gay-Israel>

<sup>130</sup> Lazaroff, "Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel"

<sup>131</sup> Lazaroff, "Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel"

<sup>132</sup> Miriam, interview by Grace Weaver, January 20, 2016, Skype

<sup>133</sup> Miriam, interview

<sup>134</sup> Nathaniel Popper, "Israel aims to improve its gay image," *The Forward*, October 14, 2005, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://forward.com/news/2070/israel-aims-to-improve-its-public-image/>

<sup>135</sup> Lee Walzer, *Between Sodom and Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today's Changing Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 108

Tom Canning was keen to disassociate himself and his organisation, JOH, from alleged attempts by the Israeli state to present a uniformly positive image of Israeli society. He said JOH is “very conscious of presenting a complex picture of Israeli society.”<sup>136</sup> He went on:

You know, we’re riddled with contradictions, and diversity, and there is not one picture of being LGBT in Israel or being Palestinian and LGBT. There are people in Jerusalem who suffer from extreme discrimination and oppression, on the hands of Israeli society and on the hands of Israeli government. There are Palestinians within our community who suffer from discrimination on account of their ethnic, religious identity. That’s not something that I try to hide – that’s something that I feel needs to change, and we speak about that openly everywhere.

At the event in Chicago, where he was prevented from speaking by anti-‘pinkwashing’ protestors, Canning was planning on criticising the Israeli authorities for their lack of cooperation in the wake of the stabbings at Jerusalem Pride March 2015, and “the violence and racism that our Palestinian members of the community suffer from in Jerusalem.”<sup>137</sup> However, in discussing Palestinian rights at all, JOH is an exception amongst Israeli LGBTQ organisations. Furthermore, whilst criticising the state in some respects, JOH is also cooperating with the Israeli state, for example by seeking state funding and, crucially in relation to ‘pinkwashing,’ by not condemning the occupation of the Palestinian territories.<sup>138</sup> It also allies itself with A Wider Bridge, an organisation accused of ‘pinkwashing’ because it aims to promote a positive image of Israel in relation to LGBTQ rights through methods such as promoting LGBTQ films funded by the Israeli government.<sup>139</sup>

#### **4(b) Portraying Palestinian society as anti-LGBTQ to justify the occupation**

There is clear evidence that the Israeli LGBTQ community perpetuates a discourse in which Palestinian society is portrayed as underdeveloped, by publicising stories of LGBTQ Palestinians being persecuted within the Palestinian territories. This is ‘pinkwashing.’ As discussed in the previous section, this aids the Israeli state in justifying its occupation of those territories and its interventions in Palestinian society, because it presents intolerant Palestinians as a threat to their own people as well as Israelis. On Hamel’s tour of Europe and North America, he spoke about “Israel’s

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<sup>136</sup> Tom Canning (Director of Development, Jerusalem Open House), interview by Grace Weaver, March 13, 2016, Jerusalem Open House, HaSoreg Street 2, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>137</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>138</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>139</sup> Dean Spade, “Creating Change: Pinkwashing ICE, Pinkwashing Israel,” DeanSpade.net, January 15, 2016, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.deanspade.net/2016/01/15/creating-change-pinkwashing-ice-pinkwashing-israel/>

efforts to help Gay Palestinians who are persecuted in the West Bank. In some instances they have been killed and tortured.”<sup>140</sup> The claims made by activists such as Hamel on their trips abroad are based on evidence provided by individuals they identify as experts, such as Shaul Ganon. In an interview with Jason Ritchie in 2008, when he was a HaAguda activist, Ganon blamed LGBTQ Palestinians’ inability to “come out of the closet” on “trenchant Islamic homophobia” and the lack of secularism in “Arab culture.”<sup>141</sup> The myth that Islam plays a central part in all Palestinians’ lives is harmful to all Palestinians because it helps to justify Israel’s occupation of Palestinian society based on the idea that religion and intolerance are pervasive within Palestinian society. This allows the Israeli state and its allies to perpetuate the idea that the Israeli-Palestinian ‘conflict’ is a clash between ‘Judeo-Christian values’ such as liberalism and secularism versus an ‘Islamic mentality’ of patriarchy and religious fundamentalism, rather than a stronger power occupying a weaker power to gain its land and resources.<sup>142</sup> This enables the Israeli state to portray the ‘conflict’ as justified, natural and irresolvable.<sup>143</sup>

This one-dimensional view of LGBTQ issues in the Palestinian territories was echoed by my Israeli interviewees. For example, Rahim, Wassim, and Yossi seemed to be under the impression that all Palestinian LGBTQ people fear for their lives:

**Grace:** What’s your perception of what it’s like to be gay in Palestine?

**Yossi:** It’s more difficult than here I think.

**Wassim:** It’s more difficult, a lot, because people can *die* there like that.

**Yossi:** They’re more primitive and they don’t accept being gay like we’re accepting this here in Tel Aviv, so they think they have a lot of... it’s very difficult to be gay in the West Bank. And I think also that, I hear stories that they kill them. So it’s a very, very bad thing to be gay there.

**Grace:** So worse than the more conservative parts of Israel?

**Rahim:** It’s a lot worse.

**Yossi:** A lot worse.

**Rahim:** Because here no one’s going to kill you because you’re gay. There, it’s a legitimate thing to kill someone because he’s gay, or because he’s a Jew, or because he’s different.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, “Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel,” *Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2006, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Foreign-Ministry-promoting-Gay-Israel>

<sup>141</sup> Jason Ritchie, “Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian” in *Queer Necropolitics* edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 118

<sup>142</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, “Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 493-516, 501

<sup>143</sup> Hochberg, “Introduction,” 502

<sup>144</sup> Rahim, Wassim and Yossi, interview by Grace Weaver, March 10, 2016, Tel Aviv, Israel

They did not refer to ever having met an LGBTQ Palestinian who told them this, but instead cited the documentary film, *The Invisible Men* – which as previously discussed was made by a Jewish Israeli with funding from the Israeli state – as a source of evidence.

#### **4(c) Israeli LGBTQ organisations' interventions in Palestinian society**

Through 'pinkwashing,' the Israeli state and its allies promote a vision of Palestinian society as characterised by religiosity and intolerance. According to LGBTQ Palestinians, such views can sometimes lead Israeli activists to intervene in Palestinian society, with the aim of improving the lives of LGBTQ Palestinians. My interviewee Saleh said "most Israeli NGOs do that."<sup>145</sup> For example, the 'Palestinian Project' at HaAguda seeks to "collect more information on homophobia and violence" in Palestinian communities and tackle the perceived problem that LGBTQ Palestinians are "mainly closeted because of the Arab community's traditionally conservative stance on LGBT persons."<sup>146</sup> Through this project, HaAguda encourages LGBTQ Palestinians to reach out to the Israeli group in order for it to suggest solutions to the challenges they face. LGBTQ Palestinian activists such as Haneen Maikey and Ghadir Shafie argue that such interventions actually hinder the development of LGBTQ rights in Palestinian society. Shafie wrote in an article for *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research*:

Israelis wanting to "educate" Palestinians about gay rights ensures that sexuality education is only delivered condescendingly by non-Palestinians to Palestinians, ignoring cultural, language, and other particularities. The propaganda aspect of pinkwashing deems Palestinians not "civilized" enough to understand, let alone respect, "gay" rights, while at the same time depriving them access to equal resources and opportunities. For "gay" Palestinians, "coming out" in this environment restricts their sexual identities to the Israeli Jewish understanding of LGBT, even if and when the parameters of such a narrow spectrum do not apply to their local contexts.<sup>147</sup>

This echoes the argument above that Israeli attempts to 'save' LGBTQ Palestinians hinders the development of an LGBTQ Palestinian identity, because they try to make LGBTQ Palestinians conform to an Israeli conception of LGBTQ identity. For example, Ritchie describes how Ganon, working for HaAguda, aimed to help Palestinian men who have sex with men to develop a properly

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<sup>145</sup> Saleh, Facebook message to Grace Weaver, May 9, 2016

<sup>146</sup> "The Aguda," A Wider Bridge, accessed May 23, 2016, <http://awiderbridge.org/the-agudah/>

<sup>147</sup> Ghadir Shafie, "Pinkwashing: Israel's International Strategy and Internal Agenda," *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 1(2015): 83-86, 85

'gay' identity, even though this might not actually be compatible with their culture and personal preferences.<sup>148</sup> My interviewee Noor also argued that these interventions, if they try to get people to be more open about their homosexuality, can result in a backlash in a society that where to talk about sexuality of any kind is taboo.<sup>149</sup> This reinforces one of Joseph Massad's arguments – that the 'Gay International' harms LGBTQ people in Middle Eastern societies by forcing (a Western conception of) 'gay rights' onto the agenda as part of its colonial mission.<sup>150</sup> This leaves people within Middle Eastern societies with the choice of either opposing gay rights – thereby stirring up hatred that was previously not acted upon – or accepting gay rights in the form put forward by the 'Gay International.'<sup>151</sup> Either option is harmful towards LGBTQ people within those societies, because they are either subject to hatred or forced to conform to a Western conception of LGBTQ rights and identity. My Palestinian interviewees believe that both these effects can be observed in Palestinian society as a result of intervention by Israeli and other foreign LGBTQ rights organisations.

#### **4(d) Perpetuating the exclusionary logic of Israeli society and refusing to condemn the occupation**

During my research, I encountered evidence that significant sections of the Israeli LGBTQ community, represented by organisations such as HaAguda, are complicit in 'pinkwashing' because they perpetuate the idea that LGBTQ rights can be separated from Palestinian rights. The mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community therefore strengthens the Israeli state's claim that because it supports LGBTQ rights, its respect for human rights is somehow proven, despite its violations of Palestinian rights. However, on the contrary, many scholars – such as Judith Butler<sup>152</sup> and Amalia Ziv<sup>153</sup> – suggest that a state does not respect human rights until it acknowledges the equality of *all* its citizens, including Palestinian citizens of Israel. Therefore, there can be no LGBTQ equality until there is Palestinian equality.

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<sup>148</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian" in *Queer Necropolitics* edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 120

<sup>149</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>150</sup> Joseph Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World," *Public Culture* 14(2002): 361-385, 374

<sup>151</sup> Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire," 374

<sup>152</sup> Judith Butler, "You Will Not Be Alone," *The Nation*, April 14, 2010, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.thenation.com/article/you-will-not-be-alone/>

<sup>153</sup> Amalia Ziv, "Performative Politics in Israeli Queer Anti-Occupation Activism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 537-556



#### **4(d)(i) The status quo**

The Israeli state violates Palestinian rights by enacting and implementing laws in a way that discriminates between Jewish and Palestinians citizens in Israel. Human Rights Watch reported in 2008, for example, that the state implements punitive measures (such as forced evictions and home demolitions) in response to planning law violations disproportionately against Palestinian Arab Bedouins compared to Jewish Israelis.<sup>154</sup> This discriminatory attitude is absorbed and perpetuated by many institutions, groups and individuals across Israeli society. For example, in 2013 a television investigation revealed that Israeli banks had a secret policy of rejecting Palestinian customers who tried to transfer their accounts to a branch in a Jewish community.<sup>155</sup> It is not only Palestinian citizens who experience discrimination within Israel – it also effects groups such as Mizrahi Jews (those of Middle Eastern descent, for example Jews from Morocco),<sup>156</sup> Ethiopian Jews,<sup>157</sup> and women of all ethno-religious backgrounds.<sup>158</sup> This has led many to complain that Israeli society gives priority to the needs and preferences of Ashkenazi Jewish men – those of white European descent.<sup>159</sup>

#### **4(d)(ii) Exclusion of Palestinians from the Israeli LGBTQ community**

Although Jewish Israeli LGBTQ activists often tell international audiences that they “help Gay Palestinians who are persecuted in the West Bank,”<sup>160</sup> several scholars have argued that in reality, these Palestinians often also face discrimination within the Israeli LGBTQ community, forcing them to renounce their Palestinian identity if they wish to be accepted. Ritchie explains that while “queer Israeli space is popularly represented as an idyllic oasis of tolerance and diversity, as queer Palestinians traverse that space they encounter a never-ending set of roadblocks and obstacles,

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<sup>154</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Off the Map: Land and Housing Rights Violations in Israel's Unrecognized Bedouin Villages*, 2008, 1

<sup>155</sup> Jonathan Cook, “Racism and Institutionalised Discrimination: How Israeli Apartheid is Coming Unstuck,” *Global Research*, June 21, 2013, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/racism-and-institutionalised-discrimination-how-israeli-apartheid-is-coming-unstuck/5339890>

<sup>156</sup> Eva Illouz, “Israel's Politics of Discrimination,” *Haaretz*, April 25, 2012, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-s-politics-of-discrimination-1.426528>

<sup>157</sup> Danny Adeno Abebe, “Does anyone care about Israel's institutionalized racism?” *Ynet News*, April 29, 2015, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-4651555.00.html>

<sup>158</sup> Catrina Stewart, “Sexism and the state of Israel,” *The Independent*, January 10, 2012, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/sexism-and-the-state-of-israel-6287448.html>

<sup>159</sup> Eva Illouz, “Israel's Politics of Discrimination”

<sup>160</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, “Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel,” *Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2006, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Foreign-Ministry-promoting-Gay-Israel>

“checkpoints” where queer Israelis inspect and regulate the flow of queer Palestinian bodies.”<sup>161</sup> Only those Palestinians who act in a way that conforms to the mainstream Jewish Israeli LGBTQ communities idea of ‘normal’ – for example by speaking Hebrew and wearing military symbols – are permitted to cross these ‘checkpoints’ and enter the Israeli LGBTQ community.

My research lends support to Ritchie’s argument. Talking about his experiences in the mainly Jewish LGBTQ community of Tel Aviv, Rahim said that because he has an Arabic name, “every single person” follows up the question “What is your name?” with “What is your religion?”.<sup>162</sup> When he replies that he is Druze, some men respond that they will not date someone who is not Jewish.<sup>163</sup> Although he was keen to emphasise that not all men respond in this way, the fact that every single one asks “What is your religion?” after hearing his name does give credence to Ritchie’s claim that “individuals draw on discourses of identity to evaluate subtle markers of queerness, Israeliness, and Palestinianness and determine who does – or does not – belong in a given space,”<sup>164</sup> although in this case the markers are of Jewishness and non-Jewishness. Rahim’s experience implies that the Israeli LGBTQ community is also perpetuating the racist status quo within Israeli society.

#### **4(d)(iii) The demographics and priorities of the Israeli LGBTQ community**

Scholars such as Jason Ritchie<sup>165</sup> and Sarah Schulman<sup>166</sup> argue that Ashkenazi men dominate the Israeli LGBTQ community, and their interests are served by the occupation in Palestine and inequality in Israel. The Israeli LGBTQ community therefore focuses its energy on campaigning for the issues that matter to Ashkenazi men, such as being able to ‘come out’ and have equal marriage rights to heterosexual couples, rather than challenging these elements of the status quo. Ritchie argues that campaigning is only appropriate in the discourse of liberal Israeli gay activism if it “shies away from ‘transformative’ demands” in favour of priorities such as “visibility and recognition, that aim to [correct] inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying

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<sup>161</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel-Palestine: The Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary," *Antipode* 47(2015): 616-634, 624

<sup>162</sup> Rahim, interview by Grace Weaver, March 10, 2016, Tel Aviv, Israel

<sup>163</sup> Rahim, interview

<sup>164</sup> Ritchie, "Pinkwashing," 624

<sup>165</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian" in *Queer Necropolitics* edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 115

<sup>166</sup> Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 68-9

framework that generates them' (Fraser 1997: 23).<sup>167</sup> He continues: "This 'depolicitization' of Israeli gay activism – which continues to be dominated by Ashkenazi men and has been harshly criticised by women, Mizrahim, and other marginalized Israelis – is arguably a function of the privileged status of its leaders, who can afford to avoid the 'political' concerns of less privileged groups."<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the "entrenched, widespread representations of Palestinians as *the* common enemy of Israeli Jews" give LGBTQ Israelis an incentive to ignore the "the conflict," so that they can "ensure their proper place in the nation" and avoid losing support and funding from powerful actors who support the occupation. The refusal to link LGBTQ rights with Palestinian rights is condemned by many as 'pinkwashing,' because it aids the Israeli state's attempt to claim that it respects human rights because it grants LGBTQ rights, even though it violates Palestinian rights.

There is some evidence to support Ritchie's claim that the Israeli LGBTQ community is dominated by Ashkenazi men, and that this is reflected in its priorities. For example, the boards of the major LGBTQ organisations, such as HaAguda and JOH, are predominantly made up of Ashkenazi Jews. My Jewish Israeli interviewee Miriam said: "The LGBT community, we suffer from the same inequalities as the heterosexual community."<sup>169</sup> For example, she likened the lack of women in leadership positions in business (part of what she called the "heterosexual community") to the lack of women in the LGBTQ wings of political parties.<sup>170</sup> It is also true that many in the Israeli LGBTQ community seem to prioritise issues such as same-sex marriage over more radical demands such as questioning the value of marriage itself. Rahim and Yossi, for example, cited "having the same rights as straight guys" with regards to marriage and adoption as the main changes they want to see in Israel.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Jason Ritchie, "Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian" in *Queer Necropolitics* edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 115

<sup>168</sup> Ritchie, "Black Skin Splits," 115

<sup>169</sup> Miriam, interview by Grace Weaver, January 20, 2016, Skype

<sup>170</sup> Miriam, interview

<sup>171</sup> Rahim and Yossi, interview by Grace Weaver, March 10, 2016, Tel Aviv, Israel

#### **4(d)(iv) Separation of LGBTQ rights from Palestinian rights**

Evidence that the mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community separates LGBTQ rights from Palestinian rights, and refuses to condemn the violation of Palestinian rights under the occupation, is widespread. This mainstream LGBTQ community is represented by organisations such as HaAguda and JOH. The representatives of these organisations often explicitly refuse to allow Palestinians to link the oppression of LGBTQ people within Israeli society to the oppression of Palestinians within Israel and the Palestinian territories. For example, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, HaAguda refused to let a Palestinian Israeli former Member of the Knesset (MK) speak at a memorial ceremony for youths killed at an LGBTQ centre because: “We didn’t want [him] to make any connection between our memorial ceremony and the occupation. Our event was dedicated to the memory of two young people whose death was brought about due to sexual preferences, and this has nothing to do with [things like] the occupation.”<sup>172</sup> This ignores the fact that the Palestinian question is a key part of the context to such events, because it causes inequality and violence to be entrenched in Israeli society. For Palestinians, and LGBTQ Palestinians in particular, prejudice and violence on the basis of ethno-religious background is closely linked to prejudice and violence on the basis of other factors, including sexuality and gender.

From my interviews with Tom Canning, Director of Development at JOH, it seems that this organisation aims to address the symptoms of the inequities within Israeli society, without challenging the structures that underpin them. For example, JOH campaigns to address discrimination against individuals in the provision of HIV services on the basis of both sexuality and ethno-religious background,<sup>173</sup> but does not challenge the fact that because it is a Jewish state, Israel is not a state of all its citizens in the way that a truly democratic state should be.<sup>174</sup> Contrary to this approach, Palestinian LGBTQ organisations such as Al Qaws, as well a minority of Israeli LGBTQ organisations and individuals, argue that LGBTQ equality will only be achieved once Israeli society recognises the equal rights of all its citizens, including Palestinians. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

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<sup>172</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, “Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 493-516, 495

<sup>173</sup> Tom Canning (Director of Development, Jerusalem Open House), interview by Grace Weaver, March 13, 2016, Jerusalem Open House, HaSoreg Street 2, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>174</sup> Ben White, “In Israel, racism is the law,” *Al Jazeera*, February 25, 2016, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/02/israel-racism-law-160224111623370.html>

#### **4(d)(v) Merging gay pride with national pride**

The mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community has allowed gay pride to become closely linked to national pride. In Israel, the state co-opts the LGBTQ community into its project of nation-building, and thereby into the process of excluding Palestinians and portraying them as 'backward.' The state gains the support of the majority of LGBTQ voters by granting them concessions such as membership of national institutions such as the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), whilst neutralising the threat that they might challenge the underlying, unequal structures of state and society. The mainstream LGBTQ community benefits because it no longer feels excluded from key national institutions such as the military. The state profits because it gains the backing of the LGBTQ community for policies such as the occupation of the West Bank and discrimination against Palestinians within Israeli society. Israel has thus become an example of Jasbir Puar's concept of 'homonationalism,' which she defines as the "process by which certain forms of gay and lesbian sexuality are folded into the national body as the Muslim/Arab Other is cast as perversely queer."<sup>175</sup>

At LGBTQ events, gay pride is consistently linked to pride in the Israeli nation and society. Speakers at the first ever Tel Aviv Pride in 1997 spoke of the event as reflecting "something in Israeli society" – "freedom" and "tolerance."<sup>176</sup> Similarly, at the memorial event following the murder of two teenagers at an LGBTQ centre in Tel Aviv, speakers condemned the homophobic violence as "anti-Israeli" and said it "does not reflect the Israeli society."<sup>177</sup> Haneen Maikey later told Gil Hochberg:

The whole frame of this event was patriotic. With the singing of the anthem, the waving of the Israeli flag, and the Israelis all being sad together, it excludes us, by definition. Our presence there would have damaged the nice picture of everybody united in [national] sorrow.

As Maikey's comments indicate, the event – orchestrated by the Israeli state and LGBTQ community leaders – served to promote gay pride as an element of national pride, based on an idea of the Israeli nation that includes Jewish LGBTQ people but excludes Palestinian LGBTQ people.

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<sup>175</sup> Jasbir Puar, "Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking About the Sexual Politics of Israel," *Feminist Legal Studies*, 19(2011): 133-142, 133

<sup>176</sup> Lee Walzer, *Between Sodom and Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today's Changing Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 22

<sup>177</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, "Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(2010): 493-516, 494



**Figure 6:** An LGBTQ flag and an Israeli national flag side-by-side at the memorial event for two teenagers killed at an LGBTQ centre in Tel Aviv, 2009.

Source:

[http://failedmessiah.typepad.com/failed\\_messiahcom/2009/08/gay-memorial-gets-grenade-threats-haredi-soldier-arrested-789.html](http://failedmessiah.typepad.com/failed_messiahcom/2009/08/gay-memorial-gets-grenade-threats-haredi-soldier-arrested-789.html)

#### 4(e) Signs of change?

In April 2016 a rift suddenly seemed to emerge between the Israeli LGBTQ community and the state. The division was sparked by an announcement that the Tourism Ministry was allocating NIS 11 million towards promoting the 2016 Tel Aviv Pride Parade overseas, including several million to be spent on painting a plane in rainbow colours.<sup>178</sup> Israeli LGBTQ activists protested against the fact that this marketing budget represented over 10 times the combined yearly budget of all LGBTQ organisations in Israel, and threatened to hold a huge demonstration instead of the Pride festival.<sup>179</sup> A number of prominent LGBTQ individuals spoke out in the media, calling on the LGBTQ community to stop allowing the state to “profit at its expense” and “lie to everyone that LGBTQ people have it good here.”<sup>180</sup> Imri Kalman, Co-Chair of HaAguda, criticised the Israeli government’s record on LGBTQ rights, and condemned its failure to meet the LGBTQ community’s demands for an increased budget, saying “we got in return a painted plane.”<sup>181</sup> Yael Marom said it was “time to stop dancing to the tune

<sup>178</sup> Yael Marom, “Did the Israeli government just admit to ‘pinkwashing?’” *+972 Magazine*, April 19, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://972mag.com/did-the-israeli-government-just-admit-to-pinkwashing/118691/>

<sup>179</sup> Yael Marom, “Did the Israeli government just admit to ‘pinkwashing?’”

<sup>180</sup> Liam Hoare, “Why Israel’s \$2.9M Rainbow Plane Is a Joke – and You Don’t Have to Be a BDS Fan To Say So,” *Forward*, April 26, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://forward.com/opinion/339334/why-israels-29m-rainbow-plane-is-a-joke-an/>

<sup>181</sup> Stuart Winer, “Gay groups irked at Tourism Ministry spin on pride parade,” *The Times of Israel*, April 17, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/gay-groups-irked-at-tourism-ministry-spin-on-pride-parade/>

of hasbara,<sup>182</sup> meaning that the LGBTQ community should stop collaborating with the Israeli state's efforts to promote a positive image of Israel abroad.<sup>183</sup> The Israeli government's response appears to have been to cut the international promotion budget, rather than increase the money given to LGBTQ organisations.<sup>184</sup>



**Figure 7:** A Tourism Ministry drawing of the plane it planned to decorate for the Tel Aviv Pride Parade 2016.

Source: <http://972mag.com/did-the-israeli-government-just-admit-to-pinkwashing/118691/>

These events may seem to indicate a parting of ways between the Israeli state and the Israeli LGBTQ community, with the latter ceasing to be complicit in 'pinkwashing,' but I believe this impression is only partially correct. The protests do appear to mark a decrease in the LGBTQ community's willingness to portray Israeli as a haven for gay rights, as shown by Kalman's remarks in the media.<sup>185</sup> However, the protest against the sum allocated to promoting the Parade abroad does not appear to have gathered momentum among the majority of the LGBTQ community. There was no

<sup>182</sup> Yael Marom, "Did the Israeli government just admit to 'pinkwashing?'" *+972 Magazine*, April 19, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://972mag.com/did-the-israeli-government-just-admit-to-pinkwashing/118691/>

<sup>183</sup> Noam Sheizaf, "Hasbara: Why does the world fail to understand us?" *+972 Magazine*, November 13, 2011, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://972mag.com/hasbara-why-does-the-world-fail-to-understand-us/27551/>

<sup>184</sup> Yael Marom, "Did the Israeli government just admit to 'pinkwashing?'"

<sup>185</sup> Stuart Winer, "Gay groups irked at Tourism Ministry spin on pride parade," *The Times of Israel*, April 17, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/gay-groups-irked-at-tourism-ministry-spin-on-pride-parade/>

word of a protest after the April incident, and Tel Aviv Pride Parade went ahead as normal on June 3, 2016.<sup>186</sup>

Moreover, these events do not appear to have brought an end to the mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community's silence on issues surrounding Palestinian rights. Where the response mentioned 'pinkwashing,' it was overwhelmingly in relation to the Israeli state's attempts to use LGBTQ rights to improve its image abroad and attract tourism, rather than to detract from its violations of Palestinian rights or justify the occupation. One article stated explicitly that you do not have to support the Palestinian cause in order to call the rainbow-painted plane a "joke," indicating a continued determination among LGBTQ Israelis to separate issues of LGBTQ rights from Palestinian rights.<sup>187</sup> By failing to link LGBTQ rights with Palestinian rights and condemn the occupation, the mainstream LGBTQ community perpetuates the idea behind 'pinkwashing' that you can respect LGBTQ rights, or human rights in general, without respecting Palestinian rights.

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<sup>186</sup> Asaf Zagrizak, "Tens of thousands attend Pride Parade in Tel Aviv," *Ynet News*, June 3, 2016, accessed June 30, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4811482,00.html>

<sup>187</sup> Liam Hoare, "Why Israel's \$2.9M Rainbow Plane Is a Joke – and You Don't Have to Be a BDS Fan To Say So," *Forward*, April 26, 2016, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://forward.com/opinion/339334/why-israels-29m-rainbow-plane-is-a-joke-an/>



## Chapter 5: 'Pinkwashing' Abroad

The majority of 'pinkwashing' campaigns are targeted at international audiences, particularly in the United States (US) and Canada, because the Israeli state perceives these countries to be fertile grounds for attracting tourism and obtaining political and financial support for its policies, including the occupation of the West Bank. The US and Canada have also witnessed some of the biggest anti-'pinkwashing' protests (the opponents of 'pinkwashing' sometimes refer to their opposition activities as 'pinkwatching'). This raises two important questions. First, does 'pinkwashing' affect ordinary Israelis and Palestinians, or is the fight between the 'pinkwashers' and the 'pinkwatchers' simply a fight between different groups of Americans and Canadians? Second, what do LGBTQ Palestinians think about those claiming to be protesting against 'pinkwashing' on their behalf? Do they welcome their solidarity, or see them as another group of foreigners attempting to portray LGBTQ Palestinians as victims and interfere in Palestinian affairs? The evidence collected during my research, outlined below, indicates that 'pinkwashing' affects ordinary Israelis and Palestinians, and that Palestinians disagree on whether American and Canadian anti-'pinkwashing' protestors are helping or harming Palestinian society.

### 5(a) The United States and Canada as the primary 'pinkwashing' arenas

As outlined in the previous two chapters, 'pinkwashing' began in 2006, when the Israeli Foreign Ministry and HaAguda began a tour of the US and Canada aimed at changing Israel's image in those countries.<sup>188</sup> This marketing strategy has been developed and expanded since then. In December 2014, the Consulate General of Israel to the Mid-Atlantic Region signed an agreement with Ceisler Media and Issue Advocacy (CMIA), whereby the firm would be paid \$7,500 per month to develop a "positive image" of Israel among "target audiences" including "regional LGBT organisations."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, "Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2006, accessed January 2, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Foreign-Ministry-promoting-Gay-Israel>

<sup>189</sup> "Exhibit A to Registration Statement Pursuant to the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended," The United States Department of Justice, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.fara.gov/docs/6266-Exhibit-AB-20141219-1.pdf>

Since the 'Brand Israel' strategy began, the Israeli state has provided funding to a number of major cultural and political events in the US and Canada, often resulting in conflict between the organisers of those events and anti-'pinkwashing' protestors. The first major event occurred in 2009, when Israel's brand management office, which had been established by the Foreign Minister in 2007, secured a 'Spotlight Tel Aviv' programme at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).<sup>190</sup> This led the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) to call on filmmakers and audiences to boycott the Spotlight,<sup>191</sup> a call that was taken up by thousands of protestors.<sup>192</sup> PACBI argued that TIFF's celebration of Tel Aviv's 'diversity' could only be seen by Palestinians and their supporters as "an act of complicity in whitewashing Israel's war crimes and other grave violations of international law."<sup>193</sup> Although TIFF is not specifically an LGBTQ event, it was a milestone in the Israeli government's wider campaign to use evidence of Tel Aviv's tolerant and liberal atmosphere to win the support of liberal Canadians and Americans. Since then, similar controversies have arisen at LGBTQ cultural events in cities such as San Francisco,<sup>194</sup> Seattle,<sup>195</sup> and Vancouver.<sup>196</sup>

In 2012, queer and pro-Palestinian activists in Seattle succeeded in stopping an event scheduled by the city's LGBT Commission that would have provided a platform for Israeli LGBTQ leaders to speak about gay rights in Israel. Stefanie Fox, Director of Organizing at the Jewish Voice for Peace in Seattle, argued that to have a conversation about LGBTQ rights in Israel without mentioning the occupation is to imply that the situation in Israel is "totally normal."<sup>197</sup> She maintained

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<sup>190</sup> Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 180-1

<sup>191</sup> PACBI, "Toronto film festival protested for Tel Aviv spotlight," *The Electronic Intifada*, August 31, 2009, accessed April 15, 2015, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/toronto-film-festival-protested-tel-aviv-spotlight/984>

<sup>192</sup> "No Celebration of Occupation: 1,500 Artists and Writers Sign Letter Protesting Toronto Film Festival Decision to Spotlight Tel Aviv," *Democracy Now!*, September 14, 2009, accessed April 15, 2015, [http://www.democracynow.org/2009/9/14/no\\_celebration\\_of\\_occupation\\_1\\_500](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/9/14/no_celebration_of_occupation_1_500)

<sup>193</sup> PACBI, "Toronto film festival"

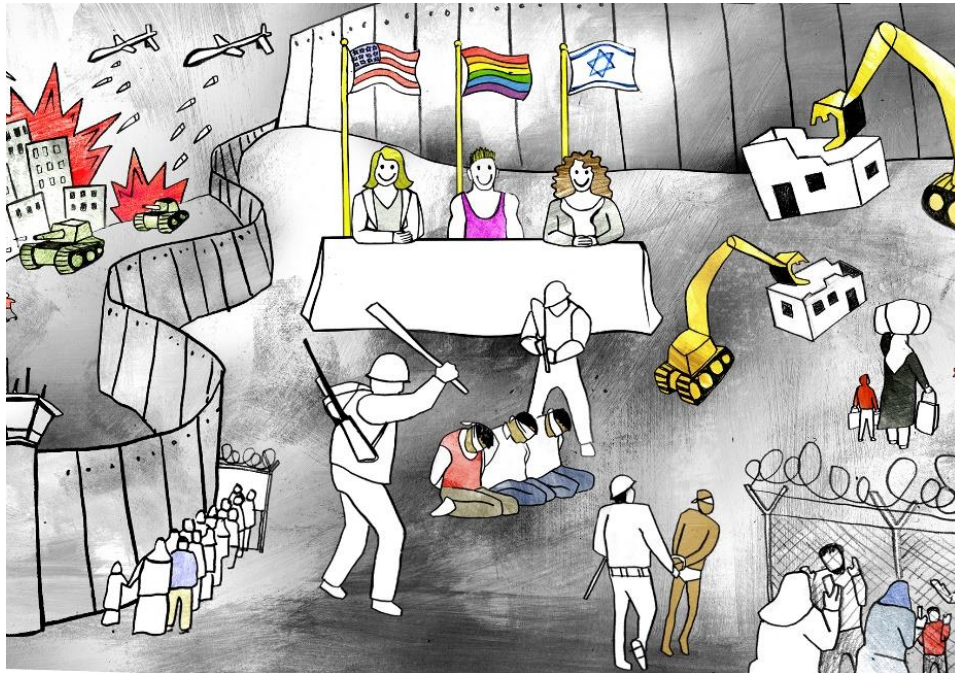
<sup>194</sup> Sarah Irving, "San Francisco gay film fest to challenge pinkwashing of Israel's crimes," *The Electronic Intifada*, January 25, 2015, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/sarah-irving/san-francisco-gay-film-fest-challenge-pinkwashing-israels-crimes>

<sup>195</sup> Sarah Irving, "A battle in Seattle: outing the truth behind Israel's gay-friendly spin," *The Electronic Intifada*, September 15, 2015, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/battle-seattle-outing-truth-behind-israels-gay-friendly-spin/14839>

<sup>196</sup> Sarah Irving, "Vancouver Queer Film Festival fails to resolve Israel pinkwashing charges," *The Electronic Intifada*, July 27, 2015, accessed April 15, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/sarah-irving/vancouver-queer-film-festival-fails-resolve-israel-pinkwashing-charges>

<sup>197</sup> *Pinkwashing Exposed: Seattle Fights Back*, directed by Dean Spade. United States: 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Productions, 2015

that “for us in Seattle to say we want to have a conversation about Israel that completely normalises these very oppressive dynamics is a very dangerous thing, and an irresponsible thing for us to do.”<sup>198</sup>



**Figure 8:** Sketch produced by pro-Palestinian queer activists in Seattle to depict the absurdity of discussing LGBTQ rights in Israel/Palestine without mentioning the occupation.

Source: <https://pinkwashingexposed.net/2015/05/06/watch-pinkwashing-exposed-seattle-fights-back/>

The most recent ‘pinkwashing’ furore occurred in relation to the Creating Change conference, hosted by the US National LGBT Taskforce in Chicago in January 2016. The schedule included a reception hosted by A Wider Bridge, a “pro-Israel organization that builds bridges between Israelis and LGBTQ North Americans and allies,”<sup>199</sup> at which Tom Canning and Sarah Kala-Meir from Jerusalem Open House (JOH) would be speaking. Groups such as Black Lives Matter Chicago, the Gay Liberation Network and Tarab-NYC objected to the inclusion of A Wider Bridge on the grounds that it “partners with the Israeli Consulate and the right wing Israel advocacy organization Stand With Us to put on pinkwashing events...to “pinkwash” Israel’s complicity in violating Palestinian human rights.”<sup>200</sup> In response to this campaign, the National LGBT Taskforce decided to cancel the event,

<sup>198</sup> *Pinkwashing Exposed: Seattle Fights Back*, directed by Dean Spade. United States: 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Productions, 2015

<sup>199</sup> “About,” A Wider Bridge, accessed May 4, 2016, <http://awiderbridge.org/about/>

<sup>200</sup> “#CancelPinkwashing: No Room For Pinkwashing at Creating Change,” Al Qaws’s Facebook page, accessed May 4, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/events/170607083302401/>

saying they were “concerned about the possibility of this reception becoming intensely divisive rather than a casual and fun social event.”<sup>201</sup>

JOH then launched a petition calling on the Taskforce to “uphold its inclusive values” and reinstate the event.<sup>202</sup> A Wider Bridge accused its critics of being “anti-Israel extremists,” guilty of “censorship.”<sup>203</sup> The Taskforce reinstated the event, but the reception came to an abrupt end when it was stormed by anti-‘pinkwashing’ protestors. These protestors were later accused of anti-Semitism, for example because they chanted “Palestine will be free from the river to the sea.”<sup>204</sup> Others said that this was just an example of critics of “a Jewish ethnocratic state that treats Jews differently than its other inhabitants” being falsely labelled as anti-Semitic.<sup>205</sup> Meanwhile, Palestinian activists criticised the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and StandWithUs for claiming that the protestors had disrupted a Jewish prayer service rather than “a reception held for Israel lobby groups.”<sup>206</sup>



**Figure 9:** Al Qaws Facebook post sharing *The Electronic Intifada*'s article on allegations about the protestors.

Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/AlQawsorg/>

<sup>201</sup> Michael K. Lavers, “LGBT group cancels conference reception with Israeli activists,” *Washington Blade*, January 18, 2016, accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2016/01/18/lgbt-group-cancels-conference-reception-with-israeli-activists/#sthash.uLyKUUjJ.dpuf>

<sup>202</sup> “Call on the National LGBTQ Task Force to Uphold its Inclusive Values,” Change.org, accessed May 4, 2016, <https://www.change.org/p/the-national-lgbtq-task-force-call-on-the-national-lgbtq-task-force-to-uphold-its-inclusive-values>

<sup>203</sup> “American LGBTQ group cancels event with Israelis, later backtracks,” *The Times of Israel*, January 19, 2016, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/american-lgbtq-group-cancels-event-with-israelis-later-backtracks/>

<sup>204</sup> Dorgham Abusalim, “Anti-Zionist protest at LGBTQ conference was smeared as anti-Semitic,” *Mondoweiss*, February 7, 2016, accessed April 16, 2016, <http://mondoweiss.net/2016/02/anti-zionist-protest-at-lgbtq-conference-was-smeared-as-anti-semitic/>

<sup>205</sup> Abusalim, “Anti-Zionist protest”

<sup>206</sup> Ali Abunimah, “Israel advocates falsely claim Chicago LGBTQ protest disrupted Jewish prayers,” *The Electronic Intifada*, January 26, 2016, accessed January 27, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/israel-advocates-falsely-claim-chicago-lgbtq-protest-disrupted-jewish-prayers>

## 5(b) The impact of 'pinkwashing' abroad on ordinary Israelis and Palestinians

Tom Canning, who was due to speak at the reception in Chicago on behalf of JOH, argues that 'pinkwashing' is something that interests American institutions and activists alone, and that "for the regular – at least for Israelis – 'pinkwashing' is a non-issue, it's seen as ridiculous."<sup>207</sup> He cited the fact that during the run-up to the reception in Chicago, all the discussions took place between American organisations alone: the anti-'pinkwashing' campaign groups, the National LGBT Taskforce, and A Wider Bridge (an American organisation).<sup>208</sup> At no point did the Taskforce speak to the Israelis (Canning and Kala-Meir) who were due to speak at the reception, which Canning found "very annoying."<sup>209</sup> He was frustrated by the fact that the protestors did not, in his opinion, understand JOH's work, and refused to participate in a dialogue session prior to the reception where he would have the chance to explain his attempts to combat racism within Israeli society.<sup>210</sup> He also noted that none of those involved – the Taskforce, A Wider Bridge, and the protestors – seemed to realise that when the protestors stormed the reception, he and his colleague were afraid for their lives, because it triggered traumatic memories of the homophobic stabbing incident at Jerusalem Pride March in 2015, which they both witnessed.<sup>211</sup> He concluded our discussion by saying:

I think this over-focusing on LGBT rights within the conflict is focusing on peanuts, on the small things. I don't think the occupation is going to get stronger or going to get weaker because of LGBT rights, or because of 'pinkwashing.' I think 'pinkwashing' is a distraction, for LGBT activists that have to deal with it constantly, and for people who are trying to stop violations of human rights against Palestinian people. It is not the main issue. And it's being over-emphasised I think because it translates well abroad – it's an issue people can relate to when they don't know a lot about the situation in Israel, or in Palestine, and therefore it's being exploited by people outside of the LGBT community. So I think it would benefit all of us if it was an issue that we recognised its... lack of importance.<sup>212</sup>

However, there are problems with three of Canning's points. First, he argues that 'pinkwashing' is a non-issue for ordinary Israelis, but goes on to say "it's seen as ridiculous,"<sup>213</sup> which is not the same thing. For example, my Israeli interviewee Miriam did not seem to have heard of the term 'pinkwashing,' which might indicate that it was a "non-issue" for her, if it were not for the fact that

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<sup>207</sup> Tom Canning (Director of Development, Jerusalem Open House), interview by Grace Weaver, March 13, 2016, Jerusalem Open House, HaSoreg Street 2, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>208</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>209</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>210</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>211</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>212</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>213</sup> Canning, interview

once I explained what it was, she went on to argue for about 10 minutes how “ridiculous” she thought such accusations were.<sup>214</sup> This indicates that ‘pinkwashing’ was actually quite an important subject for her (albeit not using the newly-coined term). Second, Canning’s caveat, “at least for Israelis,”<sup>215</sup> acknowledges that ‘pinkwashing’ is actually something that concerns a significant number of Palestinians. For example, my Palestinian interviewee Noor is not active in any LGBTQ or anti-occupation campaigns, yet she still believes categorically that the Israeli state uses LGBTQ issues to improve its international image and justify the occupation of the Palestinian territories.<sup>216</sup> As explained in the previous two chapters of this thesis, ‘pinkwashing’ harms ordinary Palestinians by attempting to justify the occupation. It is therefore unsurprising that Palestinians care about this issue. The Israeli and Palestinian media’s interest in the Chicago debate further highlights the relevance of these issues to Israelis and Palestinians. Third, by arguing that LGBTQ rights have nothing to do with the occupation, Canning implies that the Israeli state’s violations of Palestinian human rights can be separated from the discourse perpetuated by LGBTQ organisations such as HaAguda. Yet as outlined in the previous chapter, through actions such as refusing to denounce the occupation, and publicising accounts of Palestinian persecution of LGBTQ people, organisations such as JOH and HaAguda are perpetuating the discourse that allows violations of Palestinian rights to continue.

### **5(c) Palestinians’ views on American and Canadian anti-‘pinkwashing’ protests**

Accounts of Palestinian LGBTQ activists such as Rauda Morcos wishing foreign groups would “leave us alone”<sup>217</sup> seem to contrast with Sarah Schulman’s description of Haneen Maikay and Ghadir Shafie participating enthusiastically in a tour of the US, and praising Schulman for bringing them together with a variety of activist groups and individuals.<sup>218</sup> I was therefore interested to hear my Palestinian interviewees’ views on anti-‘pinkwashing’ protestors in the US and Canada. As explained in the previous chapter, my interviewee Noor believed passionately that foreign

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<sup>214</sup> Miriam, interview by Grace Weaver, January 20, 2016, Skype

<sup>215</sup> Tom Canning (Director of Development, Jerusalem Open House), interview by Grace Weaver, March 13, 2016, Jerusalem Open House, HaSoreg Street 2, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>216</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>217</sup> Jason Ritchie, “How do you say “Come out of the closet” in Arabic?: Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 557-575, 569

<sup>218</sup> Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)



interventions in Palestinian society have “the exact opposite” effect to what was intended, because they are not based on a true understanding of that society.<sup>219</sup> She argued that whatever has worked for LGBTQ people, women and other oppressed groups in parts of the world other than the Middle East would not work in Palestine, and nor do the Palestinians want it to work – they want to develop their own solutions to their own problems.<sup>220</sup> For example, as discussed above, visibility and openness about their sexuality may not be a priority for LGBTQ Palestinians, because sex and sexuality are considered private matters within their society.<sup>221</sup> My other Palestinian interviewee, Saleh, agreed with this assessment of foreign intervention in Palestinian society.<sup>222</sup> He said that foreign organisations always exuded a sense of superiority over Palestinian activists, even though in reality they lacked an understanding of the context in which those activists worked.<sup>223</sup>

However, Noor and Saleh disagreed as to whether they felt anti-‘pinkwashing’ protestors in the US and Canada are trying to intervene in Palestinian society or not. Noor stated categorically: “I believe that foreigners protesting for a social matter in Palestine or any other country that does not match their social standards is a form of orientalism and we’ve had enough of that.”<sup>224</sup> She believes anti-‘pinkwashing’ protestors are trying to change Israeli and Palestinian society, thinking that they know better than Israelis or Palestinians what is required to improve the situation there. Saleh, on the other hand, believed that anti-‘pinkwashing’ protestors are not trying to intervene in Israeli and Palestinian society, but are instead expressing solidarity with the Palestinians in their struggle against the occupation.<sup>225</sup> He said:

If you believe the LGBT community in Palestine should have their own self-determination and ways of liberation, it doesn’t conflict with you being in solidarity with them and whatever they decide, and also in solidarity with them in terms of their oppression from the occupation, and their ways of fighting for liberation. So I admire their work, and also I think it’s really important.<sup>226</sup>

So, although both these individuals agree that ‘pinkwashing’ is taking place, and that it harms the Palestinians, they disagree on whether people outside of Palestine should be involved in

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<sup>219</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>220</sup> Noor, interview

<sup>221</sup> Haneen Maikey (Director, Al Qaws) in *Shunned*, directed by Igal Hecht, Israel: Chutzpa Productions Inc., 2015

<sup>222</sup> Saleh, interview by Grace Weaver, March 15, 2016, Ramallah, Palestinian territories

<sup>223</sup> Saleh, interview

<sup>224</sup> Noor, email to Grace Weaver, April 19, 2016

<sup>225</sup> Saleh, interview

<sup>226</sup> Saleh, interview

combating 'pinkwashing.' For those LGBTQ Palestinians who approve of anti-'pinkwashing' protests abroad, 'pinkwashing' is harmful because it portrays their society as dangerously intolerant, thus justifying the occupation of the Palestinian territories, and diverts international attention away from the Israeli state's abuses of Palestinian human rights. For those LGBTQ Palestinians who do not approve of anti-'pinkwashing' protestors, 'pinkwashing' is harmful in this sense, but additionally in the sense that it attracts unwanted international intervention into Palestinian society, hindering its development with regards to equal rights. Anti-'pinkwashing' protestors should be mindful that their actions may be construed in this way, and should work closely with Palestinian representatives to ensure that their messages are compatible with the aims of both anti-occupation and LGBTQ rights activists within Palestinian society.

In conclusion, the US and Canada are the main arenas in which 'pinkwashing' campaigns, and debates about 'pinkwashing,' are played out. However, the main people actually harmed by 'pinkwashing' are LGBTQ Palestinians, whose stories are exploited by the Israeli state in order to justify the continued oppression of the Palestinians within Israel and the Palestinian territories.



## Chapter 6: Palestinian Society

The Israeli state and its allies, including some Israeli LGBTQ organisations, argue that Palestinian society is completely intolerant towards LGBTQ people, and that there is no LGBTQ community in the Palestinian territories.<sup>227</sup> My research indicates that, although it is difficult to be LGBTQ in the Palestinian territories, there is a large community of LGBTQ people in the West Bank. Many LGBTQ Palestinians are able to be open about their sexuality to certain members of their family and friends, and are able to conduct same-sex relationships, without experiencing discrimination or harassment. Furthermore, some LGBTQ Palestinians believe that the occupation is part of the reason why it remains so difficult to be gay in the Palestinian territories, and that 'pinkwashing' helps that occupation to continue. This is because the occupation restricts Palestinian society's ability to develop in areas such as LGBTQ rights. 'Pinkwashing' campaigns then use evidence of that under-development as justification for the occupation.

### 6(a) Being LGBTQ in the Palestinian territories

Chapter 3 discussed how the Israeli state and its allies, such as StandWithUs, promote the idea that "you can't really be gay in the Palestinian territories"<sup>228</sup> because the danger of persecution is too great. The Israeli state implies that LGBTQ Palestinians must either flee the Palestinian territories to find refuge in Israel, pretend to be heterosexual, or face death. My interviews with two LGBTQ Palestinians, both of whom live in the Palestinian territories, as well as evidence from other sources such as documentary films, indicate that these implications are misleading, and are being perpetuated in order to justify the Israeli state's oppression of Palestinians within both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

My interviewee Saleh was particularly positive about his experience of being LGBTQ within the Palestinian territories. He said:

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<sup>227</sup> Mel Bezalel, "Gay pride being used to promote Israel abroad," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 7, 2009, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Gay-pride-being-used-to-promote-Israel-abroad>

<sup>228</sup> Bezalel, "Gay pride"

I think I'm living my life here perfectly. I have some friends who are LGBT. I'm open to some other friends who are not... I don't think honestly it's as bad as people think... And I think there is – at least among my circle of friends – even some family members, even my brothers, my sisters, they're very accepting... I've never heard of anyone being killed for being homosexual. Probably some of them are harassed. But, I mean, you will be shocked – some people are like, openly gay on Facebook, even on the streets, and nothing really happens to them... So I'm happy with it.<sup>229</sup>

Saleh was clearly aware of external constructions about his life and sexuality, in particular the Israeli state's implications about Palestinian society's attitude towards LGBTQ people, and was keen to counter them. His own personal experience showed that he had gained all the acceptance he needed from the people surrounding him, although he believed that certain elements within Palestinian society remain hostile towards LGBTQ people.<sup>230</sup>

My other Palestinian interviewee, Noor, was more critical of Palestinian society, but still alluded to the existence of “a very large community of homosexuals” within the Palestinian territories.<sup>231</sup> Contrary to Saleh's belief that people could be openly gay without repercussions, Noor believed that a lot of LGBTQ people were “very, very scared” of ruining their reputations or even losing their lives.<sup>232</sup> For this reason, she said, she would describe it as “an underground community,” the members of which interact through secret events organised by Al Qaws and Aswat, and through word of mouth.<sup>233</sup> For example, Noor once spoke about her sexuality to a professor at her university who seemed relatively liberal, and when another student came to the professor with similar issues, the professor introduced the two women to each other.<sup>234</sup> Noor wants other young LGBTQ Palestinians know that “there's other people like you” out there – she said they are always surprised by the size of the community once they gain access to it.<sup>235</sup> This shows that the implication by the Israeli state and its allies that it is impossible to be gay in the Palestinian territories is misleading, and is perpetuated with the political aim of justifying the occupation of the Palestinian territories on the basis that it is a site of dangerous religious intolerance (as argued in Chapters 3 and 4).

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<sup>229</sup> Saleh, interview by Grace Weaver, March 15, 2016, Ramallah, Palestinian territories

<sup>230</sup> Saleh, interview

<sup>231</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>232</sup> Noor, interview

<sup>233</sup> Noor, interview

<sup>234</sup> Noor, interview

<sup>235</sup> Noor, interview

## 6(b) The role of the occupation

Whilst Noor highlighted the existence of an LGBTQ community in the Palestinian territories, she also said that many people within that community feel that it is dangerous to be open about their sexuality and their membership of that community.<sup>236</sup> She believes this is because of the religiously and culturally conservative nature of Palestinian society.<sup>237</sup> Whilst this context is far from unique, some LGBTQ Palestinians believe that their society's progress towards a more tolerant attitude is hindered by the Israeli occupation. In a roundtable organised by *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Haneen Maikey, Director of Al Qaws, explained that "the unique social, historical, and political situation of Palestinians – the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza and decades of discrimination against Palestinians in Israel – has created real obstacles for advancing respect for sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society, which has not had the same opportunities to grow and evolve as many other societies have."<sup>238</sup> Her fellow activist from Aswat, Samira Saraya, agreed, saying that a "society that experiences war on a daily basis and that fights for its survival... is by definition a "sick society" that needs to have the freedom and autonomy from which it can begin to heal."<sup>239</sup>

Saraya also argued that the Israeli occupation is used by some liberal Palestinians as an excuse not to specifically campaign for gender and sexual rights, saying that they had to settle the issue of the occupation first.<sup>240</sup> Noor echoed this when she said that the occupation can only be tackled in combination with combating inequalities within Palestinian society itself. She said: "if we get to a point where our social structure is completely deconstructed and constructed again... *then* you can say that "ok, so the society's functioning really well," so then comes [opposing] the occupation."<sup>241</sup> This shows that although these activists believe the occupation is a significant obstacle to progress towards LGBTQ rights in Palestinian society, this does not mean that they believe liberation from the occupation should be prioritised over LGBTQ equality. Indeed, some LGBTQ Palestinians argue that

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<sup>236</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>237</sup> Noor, interview

<sup>238</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, Haneen Maikey, Rima, and Samira Saraya, "No Pride in Occupation: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 599-610, 601

<sup>239</sup> Hochberg et al., "No Pride in Occupation," 601

<sup>240</sup> Hochberg et al., "No Pride in Occupation," 602

<sup>241</sup> Noor, interview

the fight for sexual and gender equality is part and parcel for the fight for an equal and autonomous relationship with the Israelis.

In her article for *Kohl*, Ghadir Shafie, Co-Director of Aswat, argues the Israeli state not only hinders progress towards LGBTQ equality *indirectly*, as implied by Maikey and Saraya, but also *directly* intervenes to prevent groups such as Aswat from tackling sexual rights issues within Palestinian society.<sup>242</sup> Shafie states that “the [Israeli] Ministry of Education has been determinedly sabotaging all efforts made by Aswat – Palestinian Gay Women to provide professionals and service providers with training courses and study days on sexual rights and politics.”<sup>243</sup> Instead, she writes, the Israeli government prefers to send Israeli organisations into Palestinian communities to “educate” Palestinians about LGBTQ rights.<sup>244</sup> Shafie believes that this is part of the Israeli state’s attempt to “alienate the “gay” Palestinian from their community, neutralize their potentially radical politics in favour of a bourgeois and domesticated “gay” identity, and thereby limit possibilities for radical change and mobilization in Palestinian societies.”<sup>245</sup> Thus the occupation directly, as well as indirectly, hinders the progress of Palestinian society in developing its own version of LGBTQ rights and equality. The Israeli state can then exploit the under-development of Palestinian society that it has helped to maintain by using it as evidence that continued intervention into that society is needed for the ‘good’ of LGBTQ and other Palestinians.

### **6(c) LGBTQ Palestinians’ views on ‘pinkwashing’**

Many LGBTQ Palestinians believe that ‘pinkwashing’ is taking place. Both my Palestinian interviewees believe beyond doubt that the Israeli government uses LGBTQ rights as a tool in justifying the occupation and improving its image abroad. Noor said that the Israeli state uses methods such as promoting Tel Aviv as a gay travel destination and publicising Israel as a refuge for persecuted LGBTQ Palestinians in order to portray Israel as “the only liberated, most-open minded country in the Middle East” and portray Palestinians, and Arabs and Muslims in general, as

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<sup>242</sup> Ghadir Shafie, “Pinkwashing: Israel’s International Strategy and Internal Agenda,” *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 1(2015): 83-86

<sup>243</sup> Shafie, “Pinkwashing,” 85

<sup>244</sup> Shafie, “Pinkwashing,” 85

<sup>245</sup> Shafie, “Pinkwashing,” 85

dangerously intolerant.<sup>246</sup> The LGBTQ Palestinian author of an MA thesis entitled “The Politics of Sexuality in Israel/Palestine” argues that “at the national level Palestinian queers have been fighting against social injustice and internal oppression, and in the meantime, at the international level, they have been challenging the Israeli narrative that portrays them as passive victims of their exceptionally homophobic society.”<sup>247</sup> Rather than speaking of LGBTQ Palestinians as victims of ‘pinkwashing,’ the author emphasises their role in challenging the oppressive nature of the Israeli state, and in fighting for more progressive attitudes towards sexuality and gender within both Israeli and Palestinian society.<sup>248</sup>

On behalf of such individuals, the Palestinian LGBTQ rights groups, Al Qaws and Aswat, campaign vociferously against ‘pinkwashing.’ In response to the cancellation of the reception at the Creating Change conference, Al Qaws wrote:

The refusal to engage with Zionist propaganda about “LGBT life in Israel” is a moral stand that Creating Change and others should take, as a show of solidarity and support with the Palestinian Struggle, and as a crucial position against Israeli colonialism and apartheid. While the lives of Palestinian LGBT persons are commodified, dismissed and erased in the pinkwashing discourse, Zionist LGBT groups continue to escalate their pinkwashing, this time branding themselves as “progressive” and “liberal” LGBT groups to cover their complicity with the colonization of Palestine.<sup>249</sup>

Al Qaws believes that the attempt to portray Israeli society as tolerant of LGBTQ people, and to portray Palestinian society as intolerant towards LGBTQ people, perpetuates the occupation of the Palestinian territories, which they equate to “apartheid” – a policy of segregation and political and economic discrimination on the basis of race.<sup>250</sup> They believe that ‘pinkwashing’ is extremely harmful to the Palestinians because it uses the stories of LGBTQ Palestinians persecuted by groups such as Hamas to justify the occupation, which in turn harms those same LGBTQ Palestinians by hindering the development of their society towards a more progressive view of LGBTQ issues.

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<sup>246</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>247</sup> Candidate No. 64931. “The Politics of Sexuality in Palestine/Israel.” (MSc diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015), 27

<sup>248</sup> Candidate No. 64931. “The Politics of Sexuality in Palestine/Israel,” 27

<sup>249</sup> Al Qaws’s Facebook page, January 19, 2016, accessed May 3, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/AlQawsorg/>

<sup>250</sup> “Apartheid,” Merriam-Webster, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apartheid>

## 6(d) LGBTQ Palestinians' alternative ideology

LGBTQ Palestinian groups accuse the Israeli state and its allies of falsely separating LGBTQ rights from Palestinian rights. In contrast, these groups argue that there can be no LGBTQ equality without Palestinian equality, because either a society is based on the equality of all its citizens, or it is not. Thus they believe that in campaigning for LGBTQ equality without challenging the underlying inequalities within Israeli society, Israeli LGBTQ groups are doomed to fail. Groups such as Al Qaws have an ideology that links racial, sexual and gender equality. Al Qaws' website states:

Al Qaws' radical social change vision is firmly built on anti-colonial and queer-feminist values. We seek to overturn the existing oppressive and exclusive social and political structures that not only harm marginalized groups, such as gender and sexual minorities, but also prevent broad social justice. Our mission is holistic, rather than single-issue, and as such brings an innovative approach to global and regional gender and sexual advocacy work.<sup>251</sup>

The adoption of this holistic approach by Al Qaws may partly be a reflection of the fact that different aspects of LGBTQ Palestinians' identities – such as race, religion and sexuality – have combined to produce unique situations of oppression. This is a manifestation of what Kimberlé Crenshaw calls 'intersectionality,' whereby an individual or group is oppressed by virtue of multiple aspects of their identity, such as class, gender and race.<sup>252</sup> According to Crenshaw, interventions to lift this kind of oppression must tackle all its sources in order to be effective.<sup>253</sup> In the case of LGBTQ Palestinians, this means that they must campaign for a society based on equality for all – regardless of sexuality, gender or ethno-religious background – in order to alleviate the combined effects of homophobia, sexism and ethno-religious discrimination.

Despite not sharing the Palestinians' experiences of occupation, a number of LGBTQ Israelis share the view that the struggle for LGBTQ rights is linked to the fight for Palestinian rights. Many of these individuals participated in the now-obsolete group, Black Laundry, during the early 2000s.<sup>254</sup>

One of Black Laundry's leaflets argued:

The oppression of minorities inside Israel is a product of the same racism, the same chauvinism, and the same militarism that sustain the oppression and the occupation of the

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<sup>251</sup> "About Us," Al Qaws, <http://alqaws.org/about-us>

<sup>252</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43(1991): 1241-1299, 1244

<sup>253</sup> Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"

<sup>254</sup> Amalia Ziv, "Performative Politics in Israeli Queer Anti-Occupation Activism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(2010): 537-556

Palestinian people. There can be no genuine freedom in an occupying society. In a militaristic society there is no room for the other and the underprivileged: lesbians, gay men, transsexuals, labor immigrants, women, Mizrachim, Arabs, Palestinians, the poor, the disabled, and others.<sup>255</sup>

Thus Black Laundry argued that because the mainstream Israeli LGBTQ community supported institutions such as the IDF by vying for equal treatment within them, the community was perpetuating the entrenched inequality within Israeli society, and harming not only Palestinians, but its own LGBTQ constituents, in the process. Black Laundry disbanded not because there was no longer a need for an LGBTQ voice against the occupation, but because such views have become increasingly rare and marginalised amongst the Israeli LGBTQ community as the community is increasingly co-opted by the Israeli state.<sup>256</sup> Thus the groups who campaigned for radical political and societal change in previous years mostly either disbanded, such as in the case of Black Laundry, or began to campaign solely on LGBTQ issues, such as in the case of the Community of Lesbian Feminists (CLaF).<sup>257</sup> There are still some small groups who speak out against 'pinkwashing,' such as Mashpritzot, which held a 'die-in' at the 2013 Tel Aviv Pride Parade to protest against the heteronormative priorities of the Tel Aviv LGBT Centre and its complicity in perpetuating the occupation.<sup>258</sup> There are also a small number of LGBTQ individuals who are prominent campaigners against the occupation, such as Hagai El-Ad, who is executive director of the Israeli human rights organisation, B'Tselem.<sup>259</sup> When I put this to my interviewee Tom Canning, Director of Development at Jerusalem Open House, he agreed that LGBTQ organisations had become much less radical and critical of the state and society in recent years.<sup>260</sup> He also explained that left-wing critics of the state, particularly those who campaign for 'peace' with the Palestinians, have been targeted by hate

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<sup>255</sup> Amalia Ziv, "Performative Politics in Israeli Queer Anti-Occupation Activism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(2010): 537-556, 541

<sup>256</sup> I contacted former members of Black Laundry to ask for their views on the role and demise of the organisation, but did not receive any replies

<sup>257</sup> Haya Shalom, "The Story of CLaF: The Community of Lesbian Feminists" in *Sappho in the Holy Land: Lesbian Existence and Dilemmas in Contemporary Israel* edited by Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and Erella Shadmi (New York: SUNY Press, 2005)

<sup>258</sup> Toshio Meronek, "Exposing Israel's 'pinkwashing,'" *Waging Nonviolence*, June 23, 2014, accessed May 18, 2016, <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/exposing-israels-pinkwashing/>

<sup>259</sup> "Hagai El-Ad," *Haaretz* website, accessed May 18, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/writers/hagai-el-ad-1.290364>

<sup>260</sup> Tom Canning (Director of Development, Jerusalem Open House), interview by Grace Weaver, March 13, 2016, Jerusalem Open House, HaSoreg Street 2, Jerusalem, Israel

campaigns that branded them 'traitors.'<sup>261</sup> This is the result of a move towards a more right-wing and hardline position on the issue of Palestine in Israeli politics and society, he said.<sup>262</sup>

### **6(e) Developing a unique, Palestinian LGBTQ identity**

By claiming that LGBTQ Palestinians are only able to live freely within *Israeli* society, the Israeli state and its allies are perpetuating the idea that an LGBTQ identity is incompatible with full membership of Palestinian society, and therefore hindering the development of a Palestinian LGBTQ identity.

Homosexuality has traditionally been associated with foreign influences by many Palestinians for three main reasons. First, at least since the Second Intifada began in 2000, the Israeli state has regularly used knowledge of a Palestinian's homosexuality as a way to blackmail him or her into collaborating with the Israeli security services.<sup>263</sup> This has led to a perception among many Palestinians that if you are LGBTQ, then you are inevitably a traitor to your own people.<sup>264</sup> Second, this built on an existing perception (at least in recent decades) amongst many Palestinians – and indeed many Arabs and Muslims around the world – that homosexuality is an “un-Islamic, Western perversion.”<sup>265</sup> For example, Noor described how, when she first started to realise that she was attracted to women, she tried to deny her feelings, and sought forgiveness from God for what she saw at the time as sinful desires.<sup>266</sup> It took her a while before she began to believe that God had made certain people differently, and that the Islamic scriptures could be interpreted in ways more tolerant of homosexuality.<sup>267</sup> Third, those Palestinians who attempt to integrate into Israeli society are forced to reject their Palestinian identity, for example by speaking Hebrew and changing their names. In her article for *Kohl*, Ghadir Shafie describes how because of this, she “started associating lesbianism with

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<sup>261</sup> Tom Canning (Director of Development, Jerusalem Open House), interview by Grace Weaver, March 13, 2016, Jerusalem Open House, HaSoreg Street 2, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>262</sup> Canning, interview

<sup>263</sup> Candidate No. 64931. "The Politics of Sexuality in Palestine/Israel." (MSc diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015), 11

<sup>264</sup> Brian Whitaker, *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2006), 37

<sup>265</sup> Whitaker, *Unspeakable Love*, 9

<sup>266</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>267</sup> Noor, interview



“Jewishness,” or even “Zionism,” in opposition to being Palestinian.”<sup>268</sup> She continues: “It took me years to be able to reconcile my same-sex desires and my Palestinian-ness.”<sup>269</sup> She believes those Jewish Israelis who welcomed her into their community in Tel Aviv on the condition that she conform to a Jewish Israeli idea of same-sex identity actually set her back in this endeavour.<sup>270</sup> Haneen Maikey tells a similar story, of LGBTQ Palestinian friends who went to live in Tel Aviv, hoping to “finally be free.”<sup>271</sup> She said that once they arrived, they found that “in order to be integrated into the LGBTQ community they needed to hide their Arab identity, to change their name and to create stories about where they came from.”<sup>272</sup> A scenario such as this is depicted in Eytan Fox’s 2006 film, *The Bubble*.<sup>273</sup> The film’s gay Palestinian protagonist, Ashraf, disguises himself as a Jew in order to blend into his Jewish boyfriend’s social circle in Tel Aviv.<sup>274</sup> His boyfriend’s flatmate is a warning of how he would be treated if he was open about his identity – the flatmate associates Palestinians almost exclusively with suicide bombers.<sup>275</sup>

The Israeli state and its allies make three claims that perpetuate the idea that an LGBTQ identity is incompatible with full membership of Palestinian society. First, they claim that it is impossible to be LGBTQ in the Palestinian territories, because Palestinians kill gay people.<sup>276</sup> Second, they claim that most LGBTQ Palestinians seek refuge within Israeli society, rejecting their Palestinian background.<sup>277</sup> Third, they make it impossible for LGBTQ Palestinians to participate within Israeli society without rejecting their Palestinian identity and adopting the semblance of a Jewish Israeli identity.<sup>278</sup> In their interventions in Palestinian society, such as HaAguda’s ‘Palestinian Project,’<sup>279</sup> foreign LGBTQ rights groups have also tried to impose their own conceptions of LGBTQ

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<sup>268</sup> Ghadir Shafie, “Pinkwashing: Israel’s International Strategy and Internal Agenda,” *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 1(2015): 83-86, 84

<sup>269</sup> Shafie, “Pinkwashing,” 84

<sup>270</sup> Shafie, “Pinkwashing,” 84

<sup>271</sup> Gil Z. Hochberg, Haneen Maikey, Rima, Samira Saraya, “No Pride in Occupation: A Roundtable Discussion,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 599-610, 603

<sup>272</sup> Hochberg et al., “No Pride in Occupation,” 603

<sup>273</sup> *The Bubble*, directed by Eytan Fox, 2006

<sup>274</sup> *The Bubble*, directed by Eytan Fox, 2006

<sup>275</sup> *The Bubble*, directed by Eytan Fox, 2006

<sup>276</sup> For example: Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, “Our *New York Times* Ad Condemning Hamas and Iran’s Treatment of Homosexuals,” December 23, 2014, accessed January 30, 2016, <https://shmuley.com/2014/12/23/our-new-york-times-ad-condemning-hamas-and-irans-treatment-of-homosexuals/>

<sup>277</sup> For example: “For Homosexual Palestinians, Israel is Their Best Shot at Safety,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, December 25, 2003, accessed January 19, 2016, <http://www.jta.org/2003/12/25/archive/for-homosexual-palestinians-israel-is-their-best-shot-at-safety>

<sup>278</sup> Hochberg et al., “No Pride in Occupation,” 603

<sup>279</sup> “The Aguda,” *A Wider Bridge*, accessed May 23, 2016, <http://awiderbridge.org/the-agudah/>

identity, based on Western ideas and experiences, on LGBTQ Palestinians.<sup>280</sup> My Palestinian interviewees explained that aspects of a Western LGBTQ identity such as 'coming out' and an identification with the rainbow flag have no resonance for them because they have little meaning within their cultural context.<sup>281</sup> The result of this intervention is to reinforce the idea amongst both non-LGBTQ and LGBTQ Palestinians that an LGBTQ identity is incompatible with Palestinian society, resulting in continued intolerance of homosexuality amongst non-LGBTQ Palestinians, and an identity crisis amongst many LGBTQ Palestinians.

Many LGBTQ Palestinians speak of their desire to be left alone to develop their own identity, unique to their own culture and experiences. When I questioned my interviewees on what this identity might look like, they were uncertain. Noor said that her identity would reflect different aspects of her situation, such as the fact that she grew up in Gaza, that she is a woman, and that she is bisexual.<sup>282</sup> This echoes the intersectionality of the campaigns of groups such as Al Qaws, reflecting the fact that different aspects of their members' identities have combined to produce unique conditions of oppression.<sup>283</sup> Noor said that because of the difficult place from which they were starting, it would take a long time – “at least three generations” – for LGBTQ Palestinians to develop a community identity and make that community an acceptable part of Palestinian society.<sup>284</sup> Saleh was most clear about certain aspects of a “Western” gay identity that he did *not* identify with, for example the rainbow flag and gay pride marches.<sup>285</sup> Furthermore, he expressed a desire to respect “the norms of society,” such as not discussing your sexuality, although he acknowledged that other LGBTQ Palestinians may wish to be more visible and open about their sexuality.<sup>286</sup>

In sum, interviews with LGBTQ Palestinians show that there is an LGBTQ community within the Palestinian territories. Many members of this community believe that their society is being labelled as homophobic by the Israeli state and its allies in order to justify the occupation of the

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<sup>280</sup> Ghadir Shafie, “Pinkwashing: Israel's International Strategy and Internal Agenda,” *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 1(2015): 83-86, 85

<sup>281</sup> Saleh, interview by Grace Weaver, March 15, 2016, Ramallah, Palestinian territories; Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>282</sup> Noor, interview by Grace Weaver, January 28, 2016, Skype

<sup>283</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43(1991): 1241-1299, 1245

<sup>284</sup> Noor, interview

<sup>285</sup> Saleh, interview

<sup>286</sup> Saleh, interview

Palestinian territories. They believe that not only does 'pinkwashing' harm Palestinians by allowing the occupation to continue, but its implication that you cannot be gay and Palestinian also hinders the development of a unique, Palestinian LGBTQ identity.

## Conclusion

From the protests in January at the Creating Change conference, to the controversy in April surrounding Tel Aviv Pride Parade, 'pinkwashing' has been prominent in public debate during 2016. Even organisations traditionally complicit in 'pinkwashing,' such as HaAguda, are now beginning to question the Israeli state's use of LGBTQ issues to improve its image abroad. The more 'pinkwashing' is debated, the more one hopes that the targets of the Israeli propaganda will begin to question (a) the state's portrayal of Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards LGBTQ people, and (b) its reasons for manipulating the truth. However, left-wing critics of the Israeli state's policies on Palestine have increasingly come under attack within Israeli society<sup>287</sup> as the political consensus moves towards the right.<sup>288</sup> It therefore seems unlikely that many within Israel will speak out any time soon against the Israeli state's attempt to detract from violations of Palestinian human rights and justify the occupation.

This paper confirms the allegations of anti-'pinkwashing' protestors that the Israeli state and its allies portray Israeli society as homogenously tolerant towards LGBTQ people, and Palestinian society as homogenously intolerant towards LGBTQ people. They do this in order to detract from the Israeli state's violations of Palestinian human and civil rights and its oppression of Palestinians via the occupation. The Israeli LGBTQ community is complicit in this because of its acceptance of the assumption that LGBTQ equality can be achieved in a society that is not based on the equality of all its citizens, including Palestinians. The Israeli LGBTQ community also assists the state in the exclusion of Palestinians as a dangerously intolerant 'other.'

Although the majority of 'pinkwashing' campaigns are played out in the US and Canada, my interviews, and research conducted by others, show that 'pinkwashing' harms ordinary Israelis and Palestinians of all genders and sexualities. By implying that LGBTQ equality has already been

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<sup>287</sup> Mairav Zonszein, "Netanyahu has taken Israel's crackdown on Jewish dissent to a new low," *The Guardian*, January 26, 2016, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/26/netanyahu-shapiro-israel-crackdown-dissent>

<sup>288</sup> Isabel Kershner, "Debate Over Role of 'People's Army' in Israel Reflects Wider Fissures," *The New York Times*, May 29, 2016, accessed May 30, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/world/middleeast/israel-idf-netanyahu-lieberman-yaalon.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/world/middleeast/israel-idf-netanyahu-lieberman-yaalon.html?_r=0)

achieved in Israel, the Israeli state and its allies harm the efforts of those Israeli LGBTQ people seeking change within their society, because they are less likely to gain support from the international community. By exploiting the stories of LGBTQ Palestinians persecuted by groups within the Palestinian territories to imply that Palestinian society is dangerously intolerant, 'pinkwashing' harms Palestinians by justifying and perpetuating an occupation that oppresses them and entails frequent violations of their human and civil rights. This occupation harms LGBTQ people and the whole of Palestinian society by impeding its development towards a more progressive attitude concerning gender and sexuality. This occurs indirectly, for example restrictions on freedom of movement prevent can LGBTQ people from attending meetings in other cities, but the Israeli government also directly intervenes in the work of Palestinian LGBTQ rights groups, for example by blocking their efforts to improve education in Palestinian schools on gender and sexuality. Furthermore, by implying that an LGBTQ identity is incompatible with Palestinian society, the Israeli state and its allies perpetuate the association in the minds of many Palestinians between homosexuality and foreign influences. This implication, and the interventions of Israeli and other foreign LGBTQ organisations into Palestinian society, hinder the development of a unique, Palestinian LGBTQ identity.

Palestinian LGBTQ organisations and a small number of groups and individuals within the international and Israeli LGBTQ community have set out an alternative viewpoint on the relationship between LGBTQ rights and Palestinian rights. They show us the links between oppression based on sexuality and oppression based on other characteristics such as ethnicity, religion and gender. They set out a vision of a society based on the equality of all its citizens, and maintain that only such a society can provide the equality that LGBTQ people so desperately desire. Every day that these links go unacknowledged amongst the mainstream LGBTQ community in Israel and abroad, the oppression of Palestinians becomes more entrenched, and the prospects for both Palestinian and LGBTQ equality within Israel/Palestine become more remote.

## List of figures

**Figure 1 (Cover photo):** The anarcho-queer collective Mashpritzot holds a ‘die-in’ at the 2013 Tel Aviv Pride Parade to protest against ‘pinkwashing.’

Source: <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/exposing-israels-pinkwashing/>

**Figure 2:** An advert published by Blue Star PR in San Fransisco on behalf of the Israeli government. It implies that because gay officers can serve in the Israeli military, Israel is a democracy worthy of Americans’ support. Its launch in one of the world’s ‘gay capitals’ assumes that LGBTQ people care about LGBTQ issues to the expense of other issues, such as Palestinian rights.

Source: <https://queersagainstapartheid.org/gayisrael/>

**Figure 3:** Advert for “Gay Israel” taken from a website run by the Israeli Tourism Ministry and the Israeli National LGBT Taskforce (HaAguda). *The Electronic Intifada* criticised the advert because the map fails to show the distinction between the State of Israel on the one hand and the Palestinian territories and the Golan on the other hand.

Source: <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/asa-winstanley/pinkwashing-and-israeli-ads-wipe-palestine-map>

**Figure 4:** Advert taken out in the *New York Times* in 2014 by StandWithUs and This World: Values Network.

Source: <https://shmuley.com/2014/12/23/our-new-york-times-ad-condemning-amas-and-irans-treatment-of-homosexuals/>

**Figure 5:** Poster for a screening of *The Invisible Men* in Washington DC, published by the pro-Israeli American LGBTQ organisation, A Wider Bridge.

Source: <http://awiderbridge.org/the-invisible-men-and-director-yariv-mozer-at-washington-dc-jcc/>

**Figure 6:** An LGBTQ flag and an Israeli national flag side-by-side at the memorial event for two teenagers killed at an LGBTQ centre in Tel Aviv, 2009.

Source: [http://failedmessiah.typepad.com/failed\\_messiahcom/2009/08/gay-memorial-gets-grenade-threats-haredi-soldier-arrested-789.html](http://failedmessiah.typepad.com/failed_messiahcom/2009/08/gay-memorial-gets-grenade-threats-haredi-soldier-arrested-789.html)

**Figure 7:** A Tourism Ministry drawing of the plane it planned to decorate for the Tel Aviv Pride Parade 2016.

Source: <http://972mag.com/did-the-israeli-government-just-admit-to-pinkwashing/118691/>

**Figure 8:** Sketch produced by pro-Palestinian queer activists in Seattle to depict the absurdity of discussing LGBTQ rights in Israel/Palestine without mentioning the occupation.

Source: <https://pinkwashingexposed.net/2015/05/06/watch-pinkwashing-exposed-seattle-fights-back/>

**Figure 9:** Al Qaws Facebook post sharing *The Electronic Intifada*’s article on allegations about the protestors.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/AlQawsorg/>

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