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# The power of the Palestinian woman

Muna el-Kurd: a case study



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**Keywords:** online activism, Instagram, Palestinian women's activism, Palestinian youth, Palestinian resistance.

# Introduction

Ever since reading Lila Abu-Lughod's article "Do Muslim women really need saving?" in the first year of my bachelor, I have been intrigued by gender studies in the field of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies.<sup>1</sup> Abu-Lughod critiques the behaviour of the West when it comes to how the West perceives women in Middle Eastern countries and how the West acts upon these perceptions.<sup>2</sup> These perceptions and actions relate to how area studies have been influenced by imperialism and colonialism and are connected to two trends within gender studies. On the one hand, academia and research are changing with regard to its ideas about the influence of colonialism and race as scholars have pointed out how much of the existing research is intertwined with race. On the other hand, gender studies and feminist research show that incorporating gender within research is indispensable for thorough research. Within feminist research Third World feminism and intersectionality are discussed and traditional feminist theory is being critiqued as well. The research presented in this thesis joins the discussion of changing academia of which gender studies and intersectionality are part of.

Women in conflict situations are not a widely studied topic and are rarely written about in mass media. Whenever Middle Eastern women are mentioned, the news portrays them in ways Abu-Lughod mentions: helpless Muslim women who need to be saved by 'better-developed' countries.<sup>3</sup> Then, whenever conflicts are mentioned, the traditional view of the man as the soldier dominates, while his wife stays at home looking after the children and the house.<sup>4</sup> Lori Handrahan has shown the importance of women in conflict situations and peace keeping situations.<sup>5</sup> When I read her article, I was embarrassed how little I had thought of the roles of women in conflict, but I also felt inspired to contribute to research related to this. I wanted to combine my interest with a contribution about changing perceptions on women in the Middle East. I especially want to contribute to research on Palestinian women because of the weight of the Israel-Palestine conflict in recent years. In 2020, Israel once again executed illegal blockades, forcing hundreds of Palestinians out of their homes, and

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<sup>1</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783–90.

<sup>2</sup> Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"

<sup>3</sup> Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"

<sup>4</sup> Lori Handrahan, "Conflict, Gender, Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction," *Security Dialogue* 35, (December 2004): 429 – 445.

<sup>5</sup> Lori Handrahan, "Conflict, Gender, Ethnicity."

killing 31 Palestinians.<sup>6</sup> But particular for the year 2020 was the rise of pro-Palestinian activism throughout the world as a result of the rise in Black Lives Matter activism after the tragic killing of George Floyd.<sup>7</sup> Palestinian injustice was portrayed on social media through hashtags, videos, posts, and famous activists (e.g. sister and brother Muna and Mohammed el-Kurd).<sup>8</sup> Despite Covid-19 restrictions people were able to mobilize themselves and take part in demonstrations.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously in 2020 there was a media and social media outburst about how the People's Republic of China was mistreating, or abusing, the Uyghurs, the Turkic inhabitants in the Xinjiang province; another injustice taking place in which human rights were gravely violated. These examples of media and social media expressions illustrate how people throughout the world reacted to injustices taking place. Micaela Sahhar describes that activism as a new world-changing movement since the demonstrations of 2020: "a movement fighting against structural injustice became internationally visible."<sup>10</sup>

Within Palestine and the occupied territories, Max Saltman covers the contribution of young Palestinian activists in recent years, naming them "a new generation".<sup>11</sup>

Demonstrations in 2018 that surrounded the moving of the US Embassy to Jerusalem were organized by youth movements, as was the general strike May 18 of 2021, both moments of extensive activism.<sup>12</sup> The Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) issued a statement the day before the general strike of 2021 which was signed by multiple other international youth movements.<sup>13</sup>

Examples of young influential individuals are siblings Mohammed and Muna el-Kurd (23), Ahed Tamimi (21), and her cousin Janna Jihad (16). This research looks further into Muna el-Kurd and her activism in order to portray what young female activism can look like

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<sup>6</sup> "Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories 2020 Archives," Amnesty International, accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/report-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/>.

<sup>7</sup> Micaela Sahhar, "How Black Lives Matter is changing the conversation on Palestine," Published May 31, 2021, at the Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/how-black-lives-matter-is-changing-the-conversation-on-palestine-161429>.

<sup>8</sup> Sahhar, "How Black Lives Matter is changing the conversation on Palestine." For more information on Muna and Mohammed El-Kurd, check Sanya Mansoor, "Muna El-Kurd and Mohammed El-Kurd," published September 15, 2021, at Time, <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2021/6096098/muna-mohammed-el-kurd/>.

<sup>9</sup> Sahhar, "How Black Lives Matter," this article shows pictures of demonstrations that had been taking place in favor of Palestinian rights.

<sup>10</sup> Sahhar, "How Black Lives Matter."

<sup>11</sup> Max Saltman, "A New Generation of Palestinian Activists Have Arrived," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, vol. 40, issue 5, 87554917 (June 10 2021), <https://www.wrmea.org/waging-peace/a-new-generation-of-palestinian-activists-have-arrived.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Saltman, "A New Generation."

<sup>13</sup> "Statement for May 18 Global Day of Action." Palestinian Youth Movement, May 17, 2021. <https://palestinyouthmovement.com/may-18-strike>.

in online spaces. This will be done by studying the individual posts of El-Kurd's Instagram page and describing them thoroughly. There are not many (academic) articles on El-Kurd's activism, while she is an important activist in Palestinian resistance. For this reason, the research chooses to focus solely on her. The focus on an influential individual provides an in-depth view of what that individual's activism and its effect in today's digital age can look like.

### **Literature review**

As gender related research has become more and more common within academia, there is a respectful number of scholars of different disciplines writing on the subject. It is mostly discussed that there is a lack of feminist approach, that women as a topic are not included in many studies while the importance of incorporating women within research is pointed out to be of crucial importance.<sup>14</sup> Along with a focus on women, feminist scholars and scholars of gender studies mention how also a greater incorporation of people of the LGBTQ+ community should become part of the academic debate. Within the field of Middle Eastern studies, and perhaps other area studies, intersectionality and third world feminism have entered the debate. Nevertheless, obstacles remain. Look for instance at the history of Iranian women's political activism. It is known that Iranian women have been politically active in social movements since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but there is a lack of historical studies on this because women were not typically a research topic.<sup>15</sup> And still there is not enough research on Arab women's political activism.<sup>16</sup> As for studies about women's activism, there are many case studies related to countries, activist groups, or certain events.

Sophie Richter-Devroe wrote a book called *Women's Political Activism in Palestine: Peacebuilding, Resistance, and Survival* which consists of thorough fieldwork and interviews on women's political activism in Palestine.<sup>17</sup> Her research consists of a bottom-up approach and provides an in-depth study on women's political activism in the last 20 years. Richter-Devroe presents how deeply rooted their political activism can show the two main spaces in which activism can take place. The first being participation in public activism, the second

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<sup>14</sup> Lori Handrahan, "Conflict, Gender, Ethnicity."

<sup>15</sup> Emine Tutku Vardağlı, "International Tobacco Politics and the Question of Social Movements in the Middle East: A Comparative Analysis of Ottoman and Iranian Cases," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 4 (2014): 606–21, 10.1080/00263206.2014.904228.

<sup>16</sup> As Ahmed Al-Rawi, *Women's Activism and New Media in the Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020) argues.

<sup>17</sup> Sophie Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine: Peacebuilding, Resistance, and Survival* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

being activism that takes place in everyday life.<sup>18</sup> For this thesis, especially everyday activism is important. Additionally, Richter-Devroe's work provides evidence of the public and private spheres that Lori Handrahan mentions as being part of the debate of women in conflict situations.<sup>19</sup> This can also be found in other research concerning female activists in the Middle East, for instance in the book by Wanda Krause *Civil Society and Women Activists in the Middle East: Islamic and Secular Organizations in Egypt*.<sup>20</sup> Richter-Devroe shows the backwardness of the 'public man' and 'private woman' spheres through political activism of women in Palestine.<sup>21</sup> The woman merely being a caretaker, which is what is thought of the woman existing in the private sphere, is not a realistic one. Women take active part in social or political struggles. Nonetheless, a lack of research on this topic remains and thus maintains the idea of the woman in the private sphere.

Concerning Palestinian youth, Shaul Bartal and Asaf Maliach wrote an article in 2020 called "The Next Generation: Old and New Trends among the Youth in Palestinian Society".<sup>22</sup> According to them, these young Palestinians are an under-researched topic while there are about 1.37 million young Palestinians among 4.5 million Palestinians in total.<sup>23</sup> Their article is about family, marriage, education, (un)employment, economy, emigration abroad, health, and other smaller categories, all within Palestinian youth living in Palestinian territories.<sup>24</sup> The overarching theme of all the topics is the context of the political situation within the Palestinian territories as well as the occupation by Israel. Bartal and Maliach also show gendered statistics, meaning they refer to general statistics of youth as well as pointing out what percentage of female and what percentage of male youth are part of these statistics. This is especially useful when researching young Palestinian women or when looking for differences between young women and young men.

In their last paragraphs, Bartal and Maliach cover political and public activities among young Palestinians.<sup>25</sup> In particular, they are questioning why there is less political and public involvement in 2020 and the years before that.<sup>26</sup> To answer this question, they used interviews with several member of the PA, academia, and other important people who are familiar with

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<sup>18</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Lori Handrahan, "Conflict, Gender, Ethnicity."

<sup>20</sup> Krause, "Woman activists in the Middle East" in *Civil Society*.

<sup>21</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*.

<sup>22</sup> Shaul Bartal and Asaf Maliach, "The Next Generation: Old and New Trends among the Youth in Palestinian Society," *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 37-63, <https://doi.org/10.26351/JIMES/6-1/2>.

<sup>23</sup> Bartal and Maliach, "The Next Generation."

<sup>24</sup> Bartal and Maliach, "The Next Generation."

<sup>25</sup> Bartal and Maliach, "The Next Generation," 56-61.

<sup>26</sup> Bartal and Maliach, "The Next Generation," 56.



the involvement of young Palestinians in the political and public spheres.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Nāsir al-Lahām mentioned social media networks being a space used often by young people in order to express themselves.<sup>28</sup> Nāsir al-Dīn al-Shā’r too mentioned the Internet and social networks as being a much used space as there is the feeling of being able to express oneself freely, adding that this might be the reason for less presence in physical political and public spheres.<sup>29</sup>

Online activism of Palestinian women is studied by Iman Abu-Rub in her dissertation “Analyzing Palestinian Women’s Activism within the Online Counterpublic: A case study of #tweetyourthobe on Twitter”.<sup>30</sup> As the title suggests, her dissertation uses the Twitter campaign #tweetyourthobe as a case study with which she argues that an online movement such as this one can be just as effective as other movements.<sup>31</sup> Within theorizing women’s activism online, Abu-Rub talks about the public spheres that are created by the Internet, and more specific the counterpublic as being a part of multiple and contrary public spheres.<sup>32</sup> Abu-Rub defines counterpublic as social media platforms. Counterpublic combined with modern technology and the Internet community has enabled inclusiveness within free speech, Abu-Rub states.<sup>33</sup> The Internet is used as a safe space for women to express themselves, for Palestinian women this online community and counterpublic is as important to express themselves. While Palestinian women’s activism is a topic that has been studied multiple times, their online activism hasn’t been investigated much. Even though Abu-Rub’s dissertation is a welcome contribution to studies on Palestinian women’s online activism, her exact method is not useful for a social media platform like Instagram. Twitter mainly uses text messages which are sometimes accompanied by a photo or a video. Instagram uses photos or videos that are sometimes accompanied by a text message.

Gender-studies have been growing, and pro-Palestinian activism has been increasing internationally since 2020. There is existing research on Palestinian women’s activism, focussing on activism throughout Palestine’s history, focussing on the last 30 years, and focussing on more recent years and recent trends, such as the Internet and social media use. And the research is still growing. The research in this thesis questions the ways Palestinian women have shown their activism in nationalist Palestinian struggles. This will be done by

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<sup>27</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 56.

<sup>28</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 57.

<sup>29</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 59.

<sup>30</sup> Iman Abu-Rub, “*Analyzing Palestinian Women’s Activism within the Online Counterpublic: A Case study of #Tweetyourthobe on Twitter*,” (Thesis, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar, 2022), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2573015575?accountid=12045>.

<sup>31</sup> Abu-Rub, “Analyzing Palestinian Women’s Activism.”

<sup>32</sup> Abu-Rub, “Analyzing Palestinian Women’s Activism,” 20.

<sup>33</sup> Abu-Rub, “Analyzing Palestinian Women’s Activism,” 21.

thoroughly studying one activist: Muna el-Kurd. While she has been active for years, it surprised me how little about her as an activist is known. Looking, for example, to her brother Mohammad el-Kurd and “co-activist” Ahed Tamimi multiple publications can be found. Focussing on Muna el-Kurd as main research subject will provide another view into activism of the new generation Palestinian activists. The research will look into contemporary activism in online and physical spaces, with a focus on the online community because of its accessibility. The findings combined will provide an answer to the question: how have Palestinian female activists contributed to the Palestinian resistance in the digital age?

## **Methodology**

As this research touches many different areas, there are multiple approaches that prove to be suitable for use. Wanda Krause mentions in her book *Civil Society and Women Activists in the Middle East* how civil society is a fitting framework for studying women’s struggles and women’s activism because “It is within associations, groups and networks that resistance and initiatives take place to respond to or circumvent other or overriding power structures.”<sup>34</sup> But even though women’s activism is central to this research, the component of online activism is missing within the framework of civil society. Moreover, this research does not focus on women’s activism concerning women’s problems. It studies women’s participation within activism concerning the Palestinian struggle and with a focus on the online space.

As online spaces and social media have become undeniably part of people’s lives, the online world has also influenced the academic world in that social media have become part of research fields and methods. The big question now is how to apply existing methods to social media studies focusing on visual images, which according to Martin Hand is especially difficult in the context of qualitative research.<sup>35</sup> He found that many researchers focused more on user behaviour of the social medium than on the visual content of the posts.<sup>36</sup> Other researchers used large amounts of images posted online as their subject of study, thus focusing on quantitative methods.<sup>37</sup> Quantitative methods do present useful research, but qualitative analysis is more useful in studying intentions, perspectives, and attitudes within

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<sup>34</sup> Krause, “Woman activists in the Middle East,” *Civil Society*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Hand, “Visuality in Social Media: Researching Images, Circulations, and Practices,” in *The Sage Handbook of Social Media Research Methods* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2017), 216.

<sup>36</sup> Hand, “Visuality in Social Media,” 216.

<sup>37</sup> Hand, “Visuality in Social Media,” 216.

social media.<sup>38</sup> My research prefers to study the Instagram posts of one user during a certain period, with a focus on intentions, perspectives, and attitudes, therefore a qualitative approach is desired.

Hand suggests three methods for qualitative approaches studying images: content analysis, discourse analysis, and in-depth interviewing.<sup>39</sup> In-depth interviewing was not suitable for this research for two reasons. It could be difficult to decide who to interview: should one interview the person who published the images, who might have had certain expectations and motivations behind posting online? Or should one interview the followers, the ones who receive the images and interpret them? Interviewing both groups would no doubt provide a thorough research but there was not enough time for this approach in the context of this thesis. This brings us to discourse analysis, because in the framework of discourse analysis the study of images the focus is on both understanding the image and understanding how it is interpreted by the receivers.<sup>40</sup> According to Hand qualitative content analysis looks at 'latent content' as Hand states, which means it looks for underlying meanings of the content studied.<sup>41</sup> It makes use of subjective interpretations eventually leading to the identification of "categories, themes, or patterns which characterize the content being examined."<sup>42</sup>

The difficulty in studying images on social media is the sheer amount of images, how these differ from print images, and how to find contexts of interpretation.<sup>43</sup> This research considers the first problem by selecting a smaller number of images to study. My personal age could benefit the issues posed by the second problem. People from my generation have grown up with daily social media use from the age of 12 or 13. The analogue print image today does not have the same meaning as it does to people who have grown up with the analogue print image. Therefore I argue differentiating between the two is not as problematic as it would be for people who have studied analogue print images before. The issue of interpretation is something that every researcher comes across regardless the method. Craig M. Parker et al. mention that it is especially important for researchers to define their personal biases,

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<sup>38</sup> Craig M. Parker, Dilal Saundage, and Chia Yao Lee, "Can Qualitative Content Analysis Be Adapted for Use by Social Informaticians to Study Social Media Discourse? A Position Paper," AIS eLibrary (ACIS 2011 Proceedings, 2011), <http://aisel.aisnet.org/acis2011>.

<sup>39</sup> Hand, "Visuality in Social Media," 216.

<sup>40</sup> Rose in Hand, "Visuality in Social Media," 219.

<sup>41</sup> Hand, "Visuality in Social Media," 218.

<sup>42</sup> Parker, Saundage, and Lee, "Can Qualitative Content Analysis."

<sup>43</sup> Hand, "Visuality in Social Media," 216.

assumptions, and values within qualitative content analysis, as these personal aspects are crucial to the method.<sup>44</sup>

When studying the online community, virtual ethnography is another useful approach. Within virtual ethnography the online community is being studied as an actual cultural site.<sup>45</sup> Kayla Renée Wheeler used this approach when studying a microcelebrity duo who were active on YouTube.<sup>46</sup> Wheeler states how being familiar with the researched community is helpful to understand the research subject. Wheeler had become active on YouTube and therefore was accustomed to viewing and responding to videos. Her virtual ethnography consisted of studying the online space, including followers and comments. This approach is not suitable for the study about Muna el-Kurd's activism, as it is not the space that will be researched but the content. However, the ethical considerations Wheeler takes into account within her approach, are useful for this research. I have chosen to look at the online platform of Instagram, because I am most familiar with Instagram. Therefore, I can easily reproduce any information about the platform.

This research uses qualitative content analysis as explained by Martin Hand and Parker et al. The analysis consists of analysing regular posts and reels, as these are the most constant posts present on Instagram. The terminology will be carefully explained in chapter 3. As Muna el-Kurd's descriptions to her posts are in Arabic, translations are used for analysis. These translations will be provided in this research when necessary.

To provide a broad understanding on Palestinian women's activism in the digital age, this thesis starts with a chapter on the context of Palestinian women's activism. This chapter describes the history of Palestinian women's activism starting from early 20<sup>th</sup> century because this is when Palestinian women's activism was first documented. However, the context provided on early 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1987 will be brief. Chapter one's main goal is to provide a context of the political situation and women's activism from the First Intifada onwards. The focus of the second chapter is on the digital activism of Palestinian youth in Palestine because young people are the main users of digital tools. Within this context the main problems that young Palestinians are facing are explained. The third chapter focusses on Muna el-Kurd and her online activism. This chapter starts with an introduction about her which is followed by a description of recent events in which she has been participating. This will be done using news

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<sup>44</sup> Parker, Saundage, and Lee, "Can Qualitative Content Analysis."

<sup>45</sup> Kayla Wheeler, "The Ethics of Conducting Virtual Ethnography on Visual Platforms". *Fieldwork in Religion* 12, no. 2 (2018):163-78, <https://doi.org/10.1558/firn.35666>.

<sup>46</sup> Wheeler, "The Ethics of Conducting Virtual Ethnography," 164.

articles, as there are no other publications about Muna el-Kurd's journalism or activism. The chapter proceeds with an explanation on Instagram, which will be followed by the analysis of Instagram posts from El-Kurd's page. The total number of posts studied is 29, all being published from January 2022 until early June 2022. Eventually, using Muna el-Kurd as a case study, this qualitative content analysis on Palestinian women's activism will answer the question on how Palestinian female activists contribute to the Palestinian resistance in online spaces.

## Chapter 1

# Palestine and women's activism: a historical context

One could argue if a definition of 'general' female activism exists, as activism is influenced by time, area, and actors involved. Therefore, it is understandable that case studies are centred around certain periods, countries, activist groups, or events. Furthermore, because gendered research is a relatively new discipline, researching the history of women's activism can prove to be difficult as a result of the lack of sources. Studies show that women were active in social movements as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but there are usually not many details on this topic because of the lack of sources from this period.<sup>47</sup> This is also true for Palestinian activism. While research on Palestinian popular resistance has increased, research on women's contributions to resistance or politics are still lacking.<sup>48</sup>

This chapter describes the history of women's activism in Palestine since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and will focus on activism and the political landscape of Palestine from the First Intifada onwards. The first part mostly uses Ellen L. Fleischmann's book on Palestinian women's activism, as she one of the few scholars who have studied early women's activism in English. The history of Palestine and that of conflict with Israel, is extensive and complex. Having said that, this chapter does not aim to present an in-depth overview of Palestine's history. Instead it presents a context to both historical events and developments in women's resistance. The chapter provides a short contextual overview of the history of Palestine's struggle with Israel, alongside which women's participation will be presented. This is done in two sections. The first section illustrates Palestinian history from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the first accounts of women's participation were found, until roughly 1987 when the First Intifada took place. The second part focusses on Palestine from the First Intifada onwards and describes the Oslo Accords, the Second Intifada, and resistance up until the present day.

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<sup>47</sup> Tutku Vardağlı, "International Tobacco."

<sup>48</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 11.

## Palestine before 1987

### *The early years of women's activism in Palestine*

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was mostly the urban Palestinian elite who were occupied with the political issues of that time: Jewish colonialism, Turkish secularism, and Palestinian nationalism.<sup>49</sup> The first Palestinian women's association emerged in 1903 as a result of politicization and the introduction to foreign ideas from Christian migrants.<sup>50</sup> These associations were concerned with socioeconomic and political functions as well as issues regarding the First World War.<sup>51</sup> After the British occupation and the signing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 in agreement with the concept of the Jewish Homeland, however, women's associations' concerns shifted to Palestinian independence and ending Jewish migration.<sup>52</sup> From that moment on, women began participating in protests against British policies and the declaration.<sup>53</sup>

In the aftermath of the Wailing Wall riots of 1929 the first Palestinian Women's Movement was established.<sup>54</sup>

The movement was inaugurated on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October at the Palestine Arab Women's Congress.<sup>55</sup> The Palestine Arab Women's Congress motivated women throughout Palestine to organize movements themselves, unified women's association throughout the country, and kept ties with women's organizations in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria.<sup>56</sup> Their topics were the 'national problem', the spreading of Arabic culture through Palestine, and the encouragement of national trade and industry.<sup>57</sup> The movement consisted mostly of young Muslim and

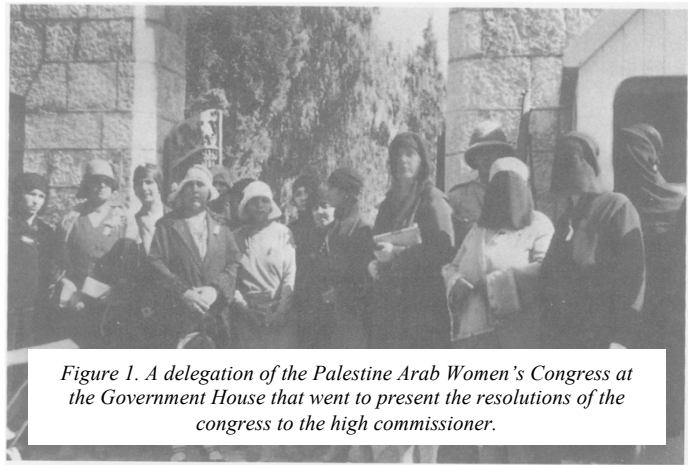


Figure 1. A delegation of the Palestine Arab Women's Congress at the Government House that went to present the resolutions of the congress to the high commissioner.

<sup>49</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 61.

<sup>50</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 44.

<sup>51</sup> Ellen L. Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1929-39," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2000.29.3.02p0054x>; Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 61.

<sup>52</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 17; Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 67.

<sup>53</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 17.

<sup>54</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 17-18.

<sup>55</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 18.

<sup>56</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 19.

<sup>57</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 19.

Christian women from the upper- and middle class, who, unlike the women from rural areas, had the ability to read and write and were able to spend their time on political issues.<sup>58</sup>

Over the years, the number of women's associations and movements with their own goals and views grew.<sup>59</sup> Activism took the form of protests and demonstrations, some even violent, that challenged existing views on women's role in society.<sup>60</sup> The press's enthusiasm was visible in how they represented the women's movement. They emphasized the progressiveness and modernity of the movement, and even compared them to men's movements to show the women's movement's success.<sup>61</sup>

### *1930s: The Arab Revolt*

In the 1920s, the situation in Palestine worsened. Jewish migration and exploitation progressed, and, because of poor British colonial involvement, Palestine was met with an economic depression.<sup>62</sup> In 1936, a general strike and multiple demonstrations throughout the country were issued by the Arab Higher Committee (the Palestinian leadership formed in the early 1930s), protesting the British and the Zionist settlers.<sup>63</sup> This marked the beginning of the Arab Revolt.<sup>64</sup> After three years of strikes, demonstrations, and attacks, the powerful British government was able to overpower the Palestinian rebellion in 1939.<sup>65</sup> The British arranged a White Paper in which Jewish immigration would become limited and the Balfour Declaration would be withdrawn.<sup>66</sup> However, because of the harsh living conditions Jews in Europe were facing, illegal immigration and expansion continued.<sup>67</sup>

During the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 only some of the British, Jewish, and Arab sources contained information about women.<sup>68</sup> Ellen L. Fleischmann wrote extensively about Palestinian women's participation in this time. In fact, she one of few scholars who published work on the emergence of women's activism in Palestine in English; many sources about this topic are in Arabic which could be the reason for a lack in information in English. She

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<sup>58</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 20-21.

<sup>59</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 22-24.

<sup>60</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 24.

<sup>61</sup> Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement," 24-27.

<sup>62</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 97-102.

<sup>63</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 105.

<sup>64</sup> Ellen L. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 116.

<sup>65</sup> Pappé, 105-107.

<sup>66</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 107.

<sup>67</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 107.

<sup>68</sup> Matthew Hughes, "Palestinian Collaboration with the British: The Peace Bands and the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-9," *Journal of Contemporary History* 83, (April 2019): 488.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009415572401>.



mentions how it was the national crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s that motivated women to act in more public manners.<sup>69</sup> The main concerns of the women's movement throughout the 1930s were the prisoners and detainees of the riots that had been taking place, and their families.<sup>70</sup> Women's participation in the nationalist movement during the Revolt had transformed, radicalized, and become more militant.<sup>71</sup> Their resistance took the form of helping the rebels by hiding them from the British, providing them with food, water, and information, and by motivating and instigating attacks.<sup>72</sup> Women also participated by fighting and defending themselves, and in some cases even joining in a military manner.<sup>73</sup> They furthermore joined demonstrations and strikes, organized secret meetings, and supported the wounded rebels.<sup>74</sup> Women's committees emerged in new places with which the women would demonstrate, distribute information or written protest, and raise money to fund the Revolt.<sup>75</sup>

#### *1940s: The Nakba*

The early 1940s were calm and the economy in Palestine improved.<sup>76</sup> For Palestinian Arab society, in the urban areas as well as in the villages and rural areas, culture and social life bloomed and Arab nationalism grew especially among the young generation Palestinians.<sup>77</sup> The Palestinian women's movement had become more institutionalised and more branches of the Arab Women Union (AWU), the new name of the Arab Women's Association, emerged.<sup>78</sup> Their concerns were less political than in the 1930s and now also involved cultural, social, educational, and economic issues.<sup>79</sup> During this time, multiple new organizations emerged concerning women's social as well as political issues.<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, the tensions between the Arab and Jewish population of the years before still lingered on.<sup>81</sup> Jewish immigration had continued illegally because the threat of the Nazis in Europe grew.<sup>82</sup> At the same time Jewish terrorism increased.<sup>83</sup> During this period American

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<sup>69</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 116.

<sup>70</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 120.

<sup>71</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 124.

<sup>72</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 125-126.

<sup>73</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 126.

<sup>74</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 128-129.

<sup>75</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 129.

<sup>76</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 176-177.

<sup>77</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 177.

<sup>78</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 189.

<sup>79</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 190.

<sup>80</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 192-198.

<sup>81</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 177.

<sup>82</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 177.

<sup>83</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 198.

influence became crucial. The US supported Zionist demands issuing the British to reverse some of the agreements that they made with the White Paper, such as Palestine becoming an independent state and the prohibition of land sales to the Jews.<sup>84</sup> In 1947 during a conference in London, the British assigned their 'Palestinian problem' to the United Nations.<sup>85</sup> National tensions increased and so did international intervention, creating an increasingly violent atmosphere.<sup>86</sup> On November 29 the United Nations voted on the partition of Palestine, with which the Palestinian population did not agree.<sup>87</sup> The Arab Higher Committee called for a general strike and the women's movement held large demonstrations.<sup>88</sup> Although women's participation in the form of demonstrations was important, their contribution in medical and financial situations was needed when the country's problems escalated and turned even more violent.<sup>89</sup> There were some women joining the fight physically themselves, but most of the time women's roles consisted of caring for the victims and their families.<sup>90</sup>

In 1948 the mandate of Palestine ended as did any realistic expectations of Palestine existing as an independent country.<sup>91</sup> The new Jewish state of Israel was established with the West Bank and Gaza as the areas controlled by Arabs.<sup>92</sup> The women's movement fragmented as a logical result of the fragmentation of the Palestinian population.<sup>93</sup> Palestine was no more; the *Nakba*, the 'catastrophe' as Palestinians called it, was now part of history.<sup>94</sup>

### *After the Nakba*

After the events of 1948, 160.000 Palestinian Arabs were able to stay in the area and almost a million had to flee to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, or Jordan.<sup>95</sup> A 'memoricide' took place from July 1949 to 1951 replacing the Palestinian Arab names of any places, in nature, cities, or villages, with Hebrew names.<sup>96</sup> Living conditions in refugee camps were harsh, as the camps were designed to be temporary with the idea of repatriation in mind.<sup>97</sup> These camps developed into small towns while the idea of temporary shelter was

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<sup>84</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 198.

<sup>85</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 199.

<sup>86</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 199.

<sup>87</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 201.

<sup>88</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 201.

<sup>89</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 202.

<sup>90</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 202.

<sup>91</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 202.

<sup>92</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 202.

<sup>93</sup> Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 202.

<sup>94</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 140.

<sup>95</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 141.

<sup>96</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 146.

<sup>97</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 142-147.

abandoned.<sup>98</sup> Israel was taking over more Palestinian villages and presented the expulsion of Palestinian homes as ‘natural justice’ and a logical ‘population exchange’, hinting that there was no need for a solution.<sup>99</sup> A Palestinian national movement resurfaced in the guise of political activity and social and cultural activity.<sup>100</sup> Soon, the refugee camps became highly politicized.<sup>101</sup>

Israel became highly politicized as well when other Arab countries started to interfere with Palestinian and Israeli politics.<sup>102</sup> The Suez Crisis of 1956, between Israel, Great Britain, France and Egypt, resulted in an even greater military involvement in Israeli society.<sup>103</sup> It also resulted in Palestinian resistance movements becoming more institutionalized and gaining the support of Egypt and Iraq.<sup>104</sup> Yet, living conditions in the refugee camps and the then newly Occupied Territories remained the same.<sup>105</sup>

Tensions between Arabs and Israelis lingered on in the 1960s.<sup>106</sup> In 1967, the Egyptian army in the Sinai Peninsula violated agreements between Egypt and Israel when they moved closer towards Israeli borders.<sup>107</sup> Israel responded to this by issuing an attack on June 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>108</sup> They were able to occupy the West Bank in a few days.<sup>109</sup> After six days, they added the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights to their control.<sup>110</sup> This event is known as the Six Day War and was another unfortunate event for Palestinian Arabs.

## **Palestine after 1987**

### *The First Intifada*

Since the occupation in 1967, Palestinians experienced ongoing economic exploitation, expropriation, and harassment which resulted in feelings of anger and hostility.<sup>111</sup> In the 1980s, several unsuccessful attempts to achieve peace took place between Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and Hezbollah regarding the Palestinian diaspora.<sup>112</sup> Then in 1987 the Palestinians

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<sup>98</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 142-147.

<sup>99</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 145.

<sup>100</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 147.

<sup>101</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 147.

<sup>102</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 160.

<sup>103</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 162-163.

<sup>104</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 163-164.

<sup>105</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 164-165.

<sup>106</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 184-185.

<sup>107</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 184.

<sup>108</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 185.

<sup>109</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 185.

<sup>110</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 186.

<sup>111</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 232.

<sup>112</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 228.

in the occupied territories, the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization), and Palestinian refugees united as they shared realistic desires to end the Israeli occupation.<sup>113</sup> This unification combined with the failed peace attempts created the context of an uprising.<sup>114</sup> This uprising took place in December 1987 under the name Intifada, literally translating to ‘shaking off’.<sup>115</sup>

The most active participants on the Palestinian side were people from rural areas, similar to the Arab Revolt in 1936-1939.<sup>116</sup> Their acts of resistance consisted of demonstrations, riots, and more violently stoning Israeli soldiers who were well armed and organized.<sup>117</sup> The motivation and inspiration to resist came from the distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, but also from the Palestinians living in Israel.<sup>118</sup> Sometimes joined by members of the Jewish left, the Palestinians in Israel also organized demonstrations and strikes, in which eventually Palestinians in the occupied territories participated too.<sup>119</sup> The Israeli army responded to the opposition with punishment in the form of demolition of houses, fencing around refugee camps, and abusing and torturing men from the refugee camps.<sup>120</sup>

Women’s participation and mobilization during the Intifada was higher than it had been before.<sup>121</sup> Women’s politicization started to increase in the 1970s through student organizations, but also through municipal elections when women were allowed to vote as well as to be elected.<sup>122</sup> After the International Women’s Day of 1978, women’s committees’ interest in both national and gender issues strengthened.<sup>123</sup> The organization of women’s activism in the beginning of the uprising was done by four women’s committees.<sup>124</sup> The women who joined were of all ages and came from the urban and rural areas and the refugee camps.<sup>125</sup> The activities they were concerned with were caring for the families of prisoners, like they did in the Arab Revolt, but also distributing leaflets, openly discussing politics, and

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<sup>113</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 228.

<sup>114</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 228.

<sup>115</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 228-232.

<sup>116</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 233.

<sup>117</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 233.

<sup>118</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 234.

<sup>119</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 234.

<sup>120</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 235.

<sup>121</sup> Joost R. Hiltermann, “The Women’s Movement during the Uprising,” *Journal of Palestine studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring, 1991): 48, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2537545>.

<sup>122</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 236.

<sup>123</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 237.

<sup>124</sup> Hiltermann, “The Women’s Movement during the Uprising,” 49.

<sup>125</sup> Hiltermann, “The Women’s Movement during the Uprising,” 49.

motivating people to participate in the resistance.<sup>126</sup> Additionally, they were publicly present by taking part in demonstrations, strikes, and riots.<sup>127</sup>

### *The Oslo Accords*

In 1988 the PLO produced the Declaration of Independence in Tunis, which mentioned concerns of Palestinian refugees, Jerusalem and the future Palestinian state as well as the division of Palestine being labelled a crime.<sup>128</sup> It furthermore mentioned the principle of equality between men and women for the first time.<sup>129</sup> In the late 1980s and early 1990s several diplomatic meetings and processes took place which discussed the Palestine question, including a peace conference in Madrid, with, again, hope for improvement.<sup>130</sup> In 1992 both Israel and the PLO were open to negotiations and compromise.<sup>131</sup> These negotiations were enacted in Oslo and written down in a document called the Declaration of Principles (DoP) which was signed in Washington at the White House.<sup>132</sup> The PLO had one main concern in the Oslo Accords, which was the establishment of an interim period in which Israel would transfer civil functions to the PLO and withdraw from Gaza and Jericho and eventually the remaining Palestinian areas.<sup>133</sup> Unfortunately these agreements were not fulfilled and by 1996 the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza had increased instead of decreased.<sup>134</sup> Besides this increase, Israel also violated the Oslo Accords by using violence against Palestinians at checkpoints at the borders between Palestinian and Israeli territory, thus rejecting the agreement of safe passage.<sup>135</sup>

After the Oslo Accords, the PLO established the Palestinian Authority (PA) that would become the official Palestinian leadership.<sup>136</sup> Key issues, such as the refugee problem, water rights, the status of Jerusalem, the future of Israeli settlements, and how much territory Israel would hand over, remained unanswered.<sup>137</sup> Instead, the PA worked on security, health,

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<sup>126</sup> Hiltermann, "The Women's Movement during the Uprising," 50.

<sup>127</sup> Maura K. James, "Women and the Intifadas: The Evolution of Palestinian Women's Organizations," *Strife Journal*, Issue 1 Hilary Term 2013 (March 2013): 20.

<sup>128</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 239.

<sup>129</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 239.

<sup>130</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 239-240.

<sup>131</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 241.

<sup>132</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 241.

<sup>133</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 241-242.

<sup>134</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 243.

<sup>135</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 244.

<sup>136</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 7.

<sup>137</sup> Lori Allen, "Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal during the Second Palestinian Intifada," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 3 (August 2008): 454-455. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20484513>.

education, social services, and tourism.<sup>138</sup> Women had hoped to be contributors of this period of state- and peacebuilding with which the PA was concerned.<sup>139</sup> They had fought for the national struggle and with this they had fought for, or their fighting had resulted in, more political power for women.<sup>140</sup> Despite their contribution in the First Intifada, the PA did not incorporate any female leaders into the new political agenda.<sup>141</sup> Without the support of the PA, women's resistance took on the form of everyday informal politics.<sup>142</sup> With their everyday political practices, these women contributed greatly to popular nonviolent resistance.<sup>143</sup> Popular resistance, as well as popular nonviolent resistance, however, shifted towards civil society building after the Oslo Accords.<sup>144</sup> Then, after the Oslo Accords turned out to have failed, popular nonviolent resistance started to become an anti-occupation strategy again.<sup>145</sup> Different than from the First Intifada's well-organized resistance, popular resistance in the late 1990s was unplanned and without proper leadership.<sup>146</sup> This fragmentation is a result of the ongoing Israeli policies of occupation, expansion, and expulsion.<sup>147</sup>

### *The Second Intifada*

In September 2000, the Second Intifada broke out as a result of the unsuccessful Oslo Accords and of the ongoing frustrations and humiliations Palestinians were facing daily for years on end.<sup>148</sup> The first protests happened in response to an armed visit to Temple Mount by Israeli forces where six unarmed protesters died.<sup>149</sup> The Second Intifada is therefore also referred to as the Al-Aqsa Intifada.<sup>150</sup> These protests were followed by a period of demonstrations and clashes mostly aimed at Israeli checkpoints, but intensified into a violent battle quickly.<sup>151</sup> Palestinian small fire arms were met with helicopter gunships, missiles, tank shells, and artillery attacking several PA installations and bombing neighbourhoods in Gaza

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<sup>138</sup> Lama Arda and Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, "Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood: The NGOization of Palestine," *Academy of Management Proceedings* 2019, no. 1 (2019): 8, <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2019.14609abstract>.

<sup>139</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 7.

<sup>140</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 7.

<sup>141</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 2.

<sup>142</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 65.

<sup>144</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 66.

<sup>145</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 66.

<sup>146</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 66.

<sup>147</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 66-67.

<sup>148</sup> Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, *Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict*, published by Lokayat (2014), 26, <https://lokyat.org.in/books/palestine.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup> Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, *Palestine, Israel*, 26-27.

<sup>150</sup> Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, *Palestine, Israel*, 28.

<sup>151</sup> Allen, "Getting by the Occupation," 455.

and the West Bank.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, Palestinian suicide attacks targeted Israeli civilians, settlers, and soldiers.<sup>153</sup> Suicide attacks have been used as a terror tactic, which according to Nada Matta and René Rojas is a tactic used within anti-occupation conflicts to “build effective capacity to impose otherwise unrealizable costs required to rebalance asymmetrical power relations.”<sup>154</sup> A total of 57 suicide bombings took place until late 2005 killing 491 civilians.<sup>155</sup> Hamas, being the main instigator behind the suicide attacks, stopped with the attacks because the costs of human loss were too great and the risks of internal friction became greater as well.<sup>156</sup> The ending of the Second Intifada is debatable. There are some who say the uprising ended in November 2004, when Yasser Arafat died, and others who state the Intifada went on until 2008.<sup>157</sup> As the suicide bombings stopped in 2005, and the terror tactic increased since 2004, one could also argue the Intifada ended in 2005.<sup>158</sup>

The Second Intifada differed from the First Intifada in 1987 in that it was much more militarised and violent. It also led to a decline in civil society.<sup>159</sup> In the First Intifada, resistance was something with which the whole community was engaged.<sup>160</sup> But as the Second Intifada was much more militarised, the fighting took place in more militarised situations and places, for instance at the border and at checkpoints.<sup>161</sup> This resulted in less participation by the wider community and thus lesser participation by women.<sup>162</sup> The decline in civil society is an overall result of the post-Oslo landscape in which political participation decreased and in which women’s position was marginalised.<sup>163</sup> The First Intifada showed that women’s political and economic grassroots organisations play a key role in civil society politics.<sup>164</sup> An absence of women’s political participation coincides with a decreasing civil society and an inadequate community.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Beinun and Lisa Hajjar, *Palestine, Israel*, 27.

<sup>153</sup> Allen, “Getting by the Occupation,” 455.

<sup>154</sup> Nada Matta and René Rojas, “The Second Intifada,” *European Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (April 2016): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003975616000035>.

<sup>155</sup> Matta and Rojas, “The Second Intifada,” 66.

<sup>156</sup> Matta and Rojas, “The Second Intifada,” 68.

<sup>157</sup> “Second Intifada,” Just Vision, <https://justvision.org/glossary/second-intifada>.

<sup>158</sup> Matta and Rojas, “The Second Intifada,” 70.

<sup>159</sup> James, “Women and the Intifadas,” 21.

<sup>160</sup> James, “Women and the Intifadas,” 21.

<sup>161</sup> James, “Women and the Intifadas,” 21.

<sup>162</sup> James, “Women and the Intifadas,” 21.

<sup>163</sup> James, “Women and the Intifadas,” 22.

<sup>164</sup> James, “Women and the Intifadas,” 22.

<sup>165</sup> James, “Women and the Intifadas,” 22.

### *Significant developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

In 2005, over the course of eight months, Jewish settlers living in the Gaza Strip were evicted by the Israeli government.<sup>166</sup> Israel had hoped the PA would take charge of the area quickly, but the PA were never included in the process of eviction and the takeover failed.<sup>167</sup> When the eviction was announced, Hamas, Fatah, and the Islamic Jihad tried to unite themselves to prepare for the takeover.<sup>168</sup> During the Second Intifada, tensions emerged between these factions, especially between Hamas, being the more radical faction, and Fatah, being the leading faction.<sup>169</sup> Israel responded to this attempt at unification by arresting multiple Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists, trying to provoke Hamas.<sup>170</sup> This plan worked and missiles were launched in the Western Negev, destroying several buildings.<sup>171</sup> Israel in turn responded with a series of operations.<sup>172</sup> The first one of these operations occurred in September 2005 and consisted of bombing large areas of the Gaza strip, resulting in many victims; it was called ‘First Rain’.<sup>173</sup>

In January 2006, the parliamentary elections held in the occupied territories were won by Hamas after which they took control of Gaza.<sup>174</sup> From then on, Gaza was under control of Hamas and the West Bank was under control of Fatah; both areas still fell under the PA, but there was a definite divide between the two.<sup>175</sup> But as Western powers did not recognize the newly established government because Hamas would not accept demands to follow up with the Oslo Accord agreements, internal clashes between Hamas and Fatah grew.<sup>176</sup> To balance the power between Fatah and Hamas, PA president Mahmoud Abbas appointed the head of Palestinian secret service, who was a Fatah member, to become responsible for the security forces.<sup>177</sup> Instead of balancing the situation, this worsened the internal conflict resulting in violent events occurring in 2007.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ilan Pappé, “The Consolidation of the Greater Israel Republic (2005–2020),” in *A History of Modern Palestine*, (Cambridge University Press, April 2022), 272.

<sup>167</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 272.

<sup>168</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 272.

<sup>169</sup> Arda and Banerjee, “Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood,” 9.

<sup>170</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 272.

<sup>171</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 272-273.

<sup>172</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 273.

<sup>173</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 273.

<sup>174</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 273.

<sup>175</sup> Arda and Banerjee, “Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood,” 9.

<sup>176</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 273-274.

<sup>177</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 274.

<sup>178</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 274.



After Israel had faced losses in the war with Lebanon in the summer of 2006, the Israeli army became more severe towards Gaza.<sup>179</sup> They issued a siege on the Gaza Strip in response to the earlier Hamas victory in winning the election and gaining control, to which Hamas responded with military operations.<sup>180</sup> Israel then began an operation called ‘Autumn Rain’ against Hamas.<sup>181</sup> Again, as with operation ‘First Rain’, Israel terrorized Gaza by sending in armed forces and blocking access.<sup>182</sup> The two operations combined resulted in 200 casualties on the Palestinian side and many lives displaced.<sup>183</sup>

In 2008, Israel again intensified control over the Gaza Strip resulting in shortages of basic needs, such as food, medicine, and shelter.<sup>184</sup> Hamas responded to these attacks by firing missiles to which Israel responded with operation ‘Cast Lead’.<sup>185</sup> They bombed and destroyed hospitals, schools, mosques, killing close to 1500 Palestinians, wounding thousands, and taking the homes of many more.<sup>186</sup>

In 2012, even though statehood was not realized, Palestine was recognized as a state by 70% of the UN members and was considered a ‘non-member observer state’ with which they would be able to participate in UN discussions and activities.<sup>187</sup> Still, Hamas and Fatah had not been able to form a unified government.<sup>188</sup> Israel was able to continue with sieges.<sup>189</sup> In 2014 Israel responded to Hamas attacks by a military air campaign, resulting in a conflict also referred to as the Gaza War.<sup>190</sup> In 2018, a ceasefire was issued with the help of the UN and Egypt.<sup>191</sup> During the Ramadan in 2021 (and again in 2022) clashes emerged when Israeli soldiers entered the Al-Aqsa mosque injuring many Palestinians.<sup>192</sup>

### *Resistance since the Oslo Accords*

There are several factors contributing to a decrease in popular resistance after the Oslo Accords. One of them being that the PA focussed on peace- and state-building instead of

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<sup>179</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 275-276.

<sup>180</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 276.

<sup>181</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 276.

<sup>182</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 67.

<sup>183</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 277.

<sup>184</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 279.

<sup>185</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 279-280.

<sup>186</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 279-280.

<sup>187</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 285.

<sup>188</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 285-286.

<sup>189</sup> Pappé, “The Consolidation,” 286.

<sup>190</sup> “Israel Profile - Timeline,” BBC News, BBC, April 9, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29123668>; Arda and Banerjee, “Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood,” 7.

<sup>191</sup> “16 Key Moments in the Israel-Palestine Conflict,” History Hit, May 14, 2021, <https://www.historyhit.com/key-moments-in-the-israel-palestine-conflict/>.

<sup>192</sup> “16 Key Moments in the Israel-Palestine Conflict.”

resistance. Additionally, protests and confrontations were discouraged by Israel's spatial control policies and sieges, restraining any movement of food, medicine, or people.<sup>193</sup> The risk of getting arrested or shot by Israeli soldiers had become too great.<sup>194</sup> It could be argued that the risks of getting arrested are less significant for participants who are international or for female participants.<sup>195</sup> Nonetheless it does not take away that the risk increases when there is not a proper leadership or unity in organizing popular resistance.<sup>196</sup> Additionally many Palestinians chose to focus on their personal lives as they are facing other daily struggles besides the occupation, such as economic problems.<sup>197</sup> Fighting for change on the long run proves difficult as people have lost their hope for peace and have become politically tired of ongoing violations.<sup>198</sup>

Still, popular resistance, especially popular nonviolent resistance, received support from the PA and from international agents.<sup>199</sup> From 2000 onwards, a process of professionalization occurred within nonviolent resistance, accompanied by increased promotion from internationally funded NGOs.<sup>200</sup> NGOs play important roles within global politics, but there is much criticism revolved around their work, including criticism by Palestinians.<sup>201</sup> There is an ongoing debate about popular, pragmatic resistance being more effective than nonviolent resistance, or vice versa.<sup>202</sup> Some say that nonviolent action will have no effect at all.<sup>203</sup> Palestinians relate 'nonviolence' to the NGO projects that are more focussed on their foreign agendas than they are on the Palestinian struggle, thus repressing the Palestinian resistance movement.<sup>204</sup> Others say that violence would only worsen the situation and that a violent approach contributes to assumptions of Palestinians being violent and radicalized.<sup>205</sup> Local NGO initiatives try to reframe the term 'nonviolent resistance' into a proactive and pragmatic strategy.<sup>206</sup>

Besides popular and nonviolent resistance, Palestinians also carry out everyday resistance. Everyday resistance can be related to the term *ṣumūd*, translating to perseverance,

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<sup>193</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 68.

<sup>194</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 68.

<sup>195</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 68.

<sup>196</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 69.

<sup>197</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 69.

<sup>198</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 65-69.

<sup>199</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 71.

<sup>200</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 71.

<sup>201</sup> Arda and Banerjee, "Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood," 3.

<sup>202</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 72.

<sup>203</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 72.

<sup>204</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 71, 74.

<sup>205</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 72, 74.

<sup>206</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 74.

which Richter-Devroe describes as “a proactive survival strategy resisting the material effects of Israeli settler colonialism through continuous daily ‘*amal* (work/action), and an ideational strategy of maintaining *amal* (hope), thus resisting the colonization of the mind.”<sup>207</sup> Different from popular resistance, *ṣumūd* is private, individual, and non-organized struggle and includes acts of survival strategies, cultural resistance, and social and ideational resistance.<sup>208</sup> Survival strategies consist of securing an income and choosing to keep living on Palestinian land; cultural resistance can be done by continuing with traditions, singing folkloric songs, and wearing traditional clothing; and social and ideational resistance is realized through keeping the community together and by maintaining the feeling of hope and a normal live.<sup>209</sup> *Ṣumūd* is often associated with women’s struggles, as certain acts are considered to be women’s tasks, such as family, loyalty, upholding the networks of community life.<sup>210</sup> Traditionally considered men’s tasks, such as maintaining and protecting the house, providing income, and defending their homeland from Israeli forces, are also carried out by women.<sup>211</sup> Despite these tasks, women’s work, their ‘*amal*, often goes unrecognized and is not considered in statistics, as the work is informal.<sup>212</sup> In the past decades, *ṣumūd* began to be defined as an everyday resistance in which people lived ‘normal’ lives and would be able to be happy despite the tragedies still occurring regularly.<sup>213</sup> This idea of living ‘normal’ lives and keeping the everyday joyful can also be obtained through the definition of *amal*, hope.<sup>214</sup> Both the materialistic work and the ideational hope combined forms a type of everyday resistance against the occupation.

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<sup>207</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 98.

<sup>208</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 99.

<sup>209</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 99.

<sup>210</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 99.

<sup>211</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 100.

<sup>212</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 105-107.

<sup>213</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 104.

<sup>214</sup> Richter-Devroe, *Women’s Political Activism in Palestine*, 115.

## Chapter 2

# Online activism and Palestinian youth

“The internet is the voice of the voiceless. Palestinians can now share their diaspora experiences through websites and chatrooms.”<sup>215</sup>

Since the emergence of the Internet, online and digital developments have moved at a fast rate. The Internet provides new ways of distributing information, new ways of spreading knowledge, new ways of contacting people, and new ways of connecting. These new ways of distributing, spreading, contacting, and connecting started through the use of email in the 1970s, but quickly developed into discussion systems around the 1980s.<sup>216</sup> Then Private internet service providers (ISPs) made internet accessible for almost everyone in the 1990s which increased the popularity of personal websites, discussion groups, chat boxes, and the first social networking websites emerged.<sup>217</sup> In the early 2000s new technology made interactive sharing of information possible, which led to the rise of social media networking sites and apps the world knows today.<sup>218</sup> But besides using the internet and social media for emailing, discussions, connecting to old friends, or finding new ones, the online space can also be used for activism and resistance.

Online activism is used as a means to mobilise and organize, to instigate and motivate, to distribute and gain (social) media coverage on a topic that is in need of coverage. This chapter explains what online activism is, how it is used and by who, and what its effects are within Palestinian resistance. Developments in online activism are coupled to important events of the past 30 years. As young people are the main users of social media today, this chapter will also shed light on Palestinian youth, the problems they are facing as young people, and their activism. The two topics will then be combined to provide an understanding of young people’s online activism in the context of the Palestinian struggle.

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<sup>215</sup> Sharif Kanaana, Miriyam Aouragh, “Virtual Reality From Below,” in *Palestine Online: Transnationalism, the Internet and the Construction of Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 1.

<sup>216</sup> K. Sajithra and Rajindra Patil, “Social Media – History and Components,” *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 7, no. 1 (2013): pp. 69-71, <https://doi.org/10.9790/487x-0716974>.

<sup>217</sup> Sajithra and Rajindra, “Social Media – History and Components,” 72.

<sup>218</sup> Sajithra and Rajindra, “Social Media – History and Components,” 72-73.

## **Palestinian online activism**

Online activism as a term is not new because we live in a world where almost anyone is familiar with the term online. However, we also make use of several synonyms creating clarity on one hand, but confusion on the other. To prevent any shortcomings to the term ‘online activism’, used in this research, a definition will be given. Online activism is a form of activism through the use of digital tools, meaning the Internet and online media.<sup>219</sup> Other terms used for online activism are digital activism and cyberactivism. The word ‘digital’ can be confusing as it refers to online space, electronic devices, and the technology behind online space and the devices.<sup>220</sup> Digital activism could then refer to activism taking place online or through digital devices. The term ‘cyber’ is often related to crime and security or the scientific realm.<sup>221</sup> As with the term digital, cyber seems to refer to the science and technology behind the Internet.<sup>222</sup> This research chooses to use ‘online’ activism, as it focusses on the online space in which activism is taking place and not the technology behind the space or the device used. Furthermore, the word online is used most often in everyday life and is therefore a more suitable word in studying everyday resistance, of which online activism and resistance are part of. This will be further explained in chapter three. In contexts where one can speak of clear resistance, terms such as digital resistance, online resistance, or cyber resistance may also be used.

Online activism emerged approximately at the same time the Internet became available to the wider public in the 1990s.<sup>223</sup> In Palestine the Internet became accessible in 1995 at a private launch.<sup>224</sup> Three years later, in 1998, the Palestinian Authority issued internet regulations, and another year later Palestinian news agency Wafa fully embraced the Internet.<sup>225</sup> Wafa’s incorporation of the Internet inspired other institutions and government departments to also welcome this new technology.<sup>226</sup> Despite some complications in internet

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<sup>219</sup> Marcela A. Fuentes, “Digital Activism,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., June 25, 2014), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/digital-activism>.

<sup>220</sup> “Digital Definition & Meaning,” Dictionary.com (Dictionary.com), accessed June 12, 2022, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/digital>.

<sup>221</sup> “Cyber Definition & Meaning,” Dictionary.com (Dictionary.com), accessed June 12, 2022, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/cyber>.

<sup>222</sup> “Cyber Definition & Meaning.”

<sup>223</sup> Fuentes, “Digital Activism.”

<sup>224</sup> Makram Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism: The Emerging Internet Culture and New Modes of Resistance,” *Policy Futures in Education* 5, no. 1 (2007): 19, <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2007.5.1.17>.

<sup>225</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 19.

<sup>226</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 19.

regulations as a result of the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Palestine obtained their own international internet domain in 2002 of which they secured ownership in 2005.<sup>227</sup>

Online activism fits in this brief history of the Internet in Palestine with relation to the Second Intifada, as the use of internet is one of the elements in which this uprising differed from earlier uprisings. Before the use of internet, Israel had been able to impose restrictions limiting Palestinian resistance. With the emergence of the Internet these restrictions could not be imposed, because the Internet was a new medium with much more freedom and without land borders.<sup>228</sup> Miriyam Aouragh explains how in anthropology the Internet is referred to as ‘cyberspace’, ‘online worlds’, or ‘internet communities’, because users refer to the Internet as ‘space’ being something territorial while it is in fact a social construct.<sup>229</sup> Therefore, there is the assumption that there is no longer a need for an actual nation-state as a space for identity, as the imagined identity can now be formed in online spaces.<sup>230</sup> Within the Palestinian diaspora this can be seen in the ways information is spread via the Internet. Aouragh mentions how historical images were sent that had not been distributed before or had not been seen by Palestinians outside of Palestine for a long time.<sup>231</sup> The spreading of images of the Second Intifada was especially significant for its global recognition. Examples of infamous pictures or videos distributed were the killing of Muhamed al-Dura, a Palestinian child, and the killings of Palestinian children by Israeli tanks in the Jenin market.<sup>232</sup> These images being distributed online can be seen as digital activism or digital resistance.

Makram Khoury-Machool found that internet use by Palestinians during the Second Intifada increased especially amongst young Palestinians.<sup>233</sup> He furthermore states that these young internet-users were the initiators of online resistance against Israel.<sup>234</sup> Online resistance took multiple forms. People distributed text, videos, picture messages, reports, files, press releases, and petitions.<sup>235</sup> They published personal diaries on blogs or via email, and responded to online publications (also referred to as ‘posts’ later in this research).<sup>236</sup> They tackled existing misconceptions and misinterpretations.<sup>237</sup> But through online activism, people were also able to organize meetings, demonstrations, or protests, as well as gather

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<sup>227</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 19.

<sup>228</sup> Miriyam Aouragh, “Cyber Intifada and Palestinian Identity,” *ISIM* Newsletter, 12, no. 1 (2003): 43.

<sup>229</sup> Aouragh, “Cyber Intifada and Palestinian Identity,” 42.

<sup>230</sup> Aouragh, “Cyber Intifada and Palestinian Identity,” 42.

<sup>231</sup> Aouragh, “Cyber Intifada and Palestinian Identity,” 42.

<sup>232</sup> Aouragh, “Cyber Intifada and Palestinian Identity,” 43.

<sup>233</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 17.

<sup>234</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 26.

<sup>235</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 26.

<sup>236</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 26.

<sup>237</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 26.

funds or request donations.<sup>238</sup> As the Internet is globally accessible, these messages were sent and received by family members, neighbours, friends, Palestinians, Arabs, and organisations throughout the world.<sup>239</sup>

Khoury-Machool describes the relation between the Internet and education and more importantly, the role universities have played in the political use of the Internet.<sup>240</sup> In the late 90s and in the early 2000s, Bir Zeit University developed several projects concerning Palestinian society in and outside of Palestine and the Occupied Territories and the refugee camps.<sup>241</sup> These projects contributed to a distribution of information about Palestine to areas outside of Palestine, resulting in an ‘interconnectedness’ of Palestinians worldwide.<sup>242</sup> This interconnectedness is not necessarily related to resistance, but is part of the Palestinian diaspora as the information spread concerns Palestinian culture, history, and identity.<sup>243</sup> Aouragh mentions the Across Borders Project (ABP) as an example of such interconnectedness projects. The ABP connects the different refugee camps by spreading knowledge of the refugee camps and the Palestinian community throughout the world.<sup>244</sup> More individually it was students who had developed ICT skills that were important in placing Palestine and the post-Oslo situation of Palestine on the global agenda.<sup>245</sup>

Online activism and the use of social media within the Palestinian resistance movement have given the movement certain possibilities that it would not have had without the Internet. Online activism is a relatively peaceful form of activism, it is inexpensive, and easily accessible. Besides resistance-like behaviour, the Internet has provided Palestinians with a platform to use their voice, to share their stories with other Palestinians over the world and being part of a “transnational community”, and to share their story with non-Palestinians.<sup>246</sup> There is also a downside. Mahmood Monshipouri and Theodore Prompichai use the term ‘weaponized social media’ three times in their article and while there might not have been a specific motive behind the use of the term, it could justly refer to a weaponised and not so peaceful side. They mention how movements whose approach might be more

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<sup>238</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 26.

<sup>239</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 26.

<sup>240</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 23.

<sup>241</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 23.

<sup>242</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 23.

<sup>243</sup> Aouragh, “Cyber Intifada and Palestinian Identity,” 42.

<sup>244</sup> Aouragh, “Cyber Intifada and Palestinian Identity,” 42-43.

<sup>245</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 22.

<sup>246</sup> Makram Khoury-Machool, “Cyber Resistance: Palestinian Youth and Emerging Internet Culture,” in *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*, ed. Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 119.

extremist or radical use the Internet as a platform as well.<sup>247</sup> While they might have the same goals as less radically motivated movements or activists, the way they execute their goals differ and that might negatively impact the overall resistance movement.<sup>248</sup> People might think that Palestinians are violent and radical, which is also a risk in the use of violent resistance Richter-Devroe mentions. Monshipouri and Prompichai furthermore mention how social media caused more violence and a rise in conflict besides solidarity.<sup>249</sup> This can be seen as a direct result from the promotion of violence and occasional expressions of antisemitism.<sup>250</sup> A third challenge can be found in internet surveillance that also proposes a form of weaponized social media.<sup>251</sup> Israel has created policies that censor political activism through social media which they regard as an act of terrorism.<sup>252</sup>

Monshipouri and Prompichai state the difficulty in concluding whether the Internet has had a positive or negative impact on the Palestinian resistance movement because there is proof of both positive and negative results.<sup>253</sup> One could however argue in favour of the positive side of the question. Social media has become an integral part of human life. While it is possible for people to live without it, younger generations grow up with social media from the earliest ages. Online activism in general has increased as well and Palestinian resistance is only one part of online resistance or online activism. There are countless organisations, groups, movements, and activists online who are all striving to make their voice heard. It is important for countries to create policies that protect their citizens from online terrorism, but this also leads to forms of censorship. The negative aspects of social media may be hard to get rid of, but social media and online activism are here to stay.

### **The Next Generation**

In 2021, Palestinian youth ranging from the age of 18 to 29 made up 22% of the Palestinian population, with 22.3% of young people in the West Bank and 21.8% in the Gaza Strip.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Mahmood Monshipouri and Theodore Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective: Palestinian Resistance via Social Media," *International Studies Journal* 14, no. 4 (Spring 2018): 50-51.

<sup>248</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 50-51.

<sup>249</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 51.

<sup>250</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 51-52.

<sup>251</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 52.

<sup>252</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 52.

<sup>253</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 52.

<sup>254</sup> "PCBS: The International Youth Day 12/08/2021," PCBS, August 11, 2021, <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4046>.



Despite the fact that 22% amounts to 1.16 million young men and women, they are an under-researched topic in modern-day academia according to Shaul Bartal and Asaf Maliach.<sup>255</sup> They refer to young Palestinians as the “Next Generation” in their research about developments taking place amongst young people in Palestine. Young Palestinians are often referred to as the new or the next generation of Palestinians. Max Saltman uses this term in his article “A New Generation of Palestinian Activists Have Arrived”.<sup>256</sup> He refers to a “New Generation” in relation to a hopeful statement by Palestinian writer Mariam Barghouti in which she mentions the impact the young new generation of Palestinians has had.<sup>257</sup>

Saltman’s article is about the events in Israel and Palestine in May of 2021. Israel attacked Muslims in the al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan, and expelled many Palestinians from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.<sup>258</sup> These events resulted in a wave of demonstrations.<sup>259</sup> Additionally, on May 18<sup>th</sup>, a general strike was issued which was organized and supported by several youth movements and led by several young activists.<sup>260</sup> Amjad Iraqi, one of Saltman’s interviewees, pointed out how these young activists had lived in an era of broken promises after the Oslo Accords.<sup>261</sup> Bartal and Maliach too mention the young Palestinians’ upbringing in a post-Oslo Accord society.<sup>262</sup> The young Palestinians were brought up under Palestinian Rule, the ruling authorities are Hamas in the Gaza Strip since 2006 and Fatah in the West Bank.<sup>263</sup> The split of Hamas and Fatah as ruling authorities resulted in the split in the Palestinian national movement and, according to Bartal and Maliach, put a stop to unity of Palestinian society.<sup>264</sup>

Palestinian youth participation has nevertheless played a crucial role in Palestinian society and Palestinian resistance through the establishment of youth leagues, youth movements, and student movements.<sup>265</sup> They have participated in protests and demonstrations through youth organizations or student organizations, through media distribution and communication, and through art. During the First Intifada, participation of young Palestinians

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<sup>255</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation.”

<sup>256</sup> Saltman, “A New Generation.”

<sup>257</sup> Saltman, “A New Generation.”

<sup>258</sup> Saltman, “A New Generation.”

<sup>259</sup> Saltman, “A New Generation.”

<sup>260</sup> Saltman, “A New Generation.”; “Statement for May 18 Global Day of Action.” Palestinian Youth Movement, May 17, 2021. <https://palestinyouthmovement.com/may-18-strike>.

<sup>261</sup> Saltman, “A New Generation.”

<sup>262</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 38.

<sup>263</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 38.

<sup>264</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 38.

<sup>265</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 22.

took the form of community work, demonstrations, and physical force.<sup>266</sup> When Israel issued restrictions on Palestinian press, young Palestinians turned to graffiti as a means of communication.<sup>267</sup> One significant graffiti work of the First Intifada is Handala, a refugee child character created by Naji Al-Ali.<sup>268</sup> During the Second Intifada, youth participation was significantly lower than during the First Intifada, which is mainly the result of the governance of the PA which was unsuccessful in mobilizing the youth.<sup>269</sup> Like many other Palestinians, the youth believed the nonviolent approach that the PA and international forces pursued would not be successful.<sup>270</sup> Young Palestinians did not feel they were taken seriously during the Second Intifada as the PA excluded them or used them as tools in the struggle.<sup>271</sup>



Figure 2. Handala

The internal conflict between Hamas and Fatah, preventing a unified Palestinian society as mentioned by Bartal and Maliach, also had an impact on youth participation and has become an important issue for movements to protest against. In 2010-2011, 304 nonviolent incidents took place consisting of demonstrations and marches protesting against two issues: the separation barrier between Hamas and Fatah and the settlement, expansion, and expropriation of Palestinian territory in the West bank.<sup>272</sup> These incidents were not solely a matter of youth resistance, but their presence within these resistance incidents increased.<sup>273</sup> Jacob Høigilt especially mentions the March 15 movement and the Independent Youth Movement (IYM).<sup>274</sup> The IYM has clear, but complex goals. Their resistance is against the split between the Hamas and Fatah governments and in favour of a unified representative for all Palestinians on the one hand, and on the other hand the IYM opposes any normalization with Israel for as long as the duration of the occupation.<sup>275</sup> This provides a challenge, as Høigilt mentions “it is easier to unite behind the “no occupation” slogan than under several slogans that kick in three directions at once.”<sup>276</sup> Hamas and Fatah have both responded to the

<sup>266</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 22.

<sup>267</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Palestinian Youth and Political Activism,” 22.

<sup>268</sup> Sanjay Asthana and Nishan Havandjian, “Graffiti Art, Digital Stories, and Social Media,” in *Palestinian Youth Media and the Pedagogies of Estrangement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 97.

<sup>269</sup> Jacob Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.13169/arabstudquar.35.4.0343>, 349.

<sup>270</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 349.

<sup>271</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 356.

<sup>272</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 351.

<sup>273</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 351-352.

<sup>274</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 353.

<sup>275</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 353.

<sup>276</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 353.

demonstrations against their leaderships by infiltrating the March 15 campaign and sometimes even using more violent measures by attacking demonstrators.<sup>277</sup> Høigilt compares the fragmentation occurring in the early 2000s to the fragmentation that the Palestinian national movement was experiencing in the 1980s prior to the First Intifada.<sup>278</sup> The movement itself is similar to the demonstrations of the 2010s organized by grassroots organizations, they are nonviolent, and protesting against the elite authorities as was the case in the First Intifada.<sup>279</sup> But Høigilt detects a “new mode of activism”.<sup>280</sup> Youth activists in the 2010s cooperated with Palestinian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon and other places, Palestinians living in Israel, and with the international solidarity movement.<sup>281</sup> The focus is thus not only on the West Bank and Gaza, but on the whole diaspora. The international solidarity movement is a Palestinian-led resistance movement in which volunteers are present in several ways to oppose the Israeli occupation non-violently.<sup>282</sup> The use of the Internet might have played a part in this, as it has provided people with low-cost forms of communication, mobilization, and the spread of information throughout the world.

While Høigilt found that youth resistance was growing, Bartal and Maliach found that Palestinian youth have become less publicly and politically involved. They used interviews with several Palestinians of a 2016 thesis of Najāh National University in Nablus to find the reasons behind their lack of involvement.<sup>283</sup> Youth activist ‘Abd al-Latīf Eshtaya mentioned the political heritage of Palestinian youth as a factor for their reduced involvement in Palestinian society, and especially for the lack of any new political approaches.<sup>284</sup> This opinion is supported by several other interviewees who mention that organizations, institutions, and parties are not interested in attracting young people because they would pose a challenge for the organization or would feel used as mere attendees at events.<sup>285</sup> There was one other interviewee who stated that the lack of youth participation could be ascribed to a lack of support during the demolishing Second Intifada, as young people and their families were let alone to suffer.<sup>286</sup> This also appears in Høigilt’s article in which he claims that young Palestinians did not feel they were included during the Second Intifada. Høigilt’s findings

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<sup>277</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 353.

<sup>278</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 351.

<sup>279</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 356.

<sup>280</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 356.

<sup>281</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 355-356.

<sup>282</sup> ISM Media Group, “About ISM,” International Solidarity Movement, June 23, 2005, <https://palsolidarity.org/about/>.

<sup>283</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 56.

<sup>284</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 57.

<sup>285</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 59.

<sup>286</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 61.

differ from some of interviews reproduced by Bartal and Maliach. According to youth activist and lecturer Amjad Hib al-Rīh, universities do not allow political or nationalist activities on campus resulting in students not developing an interest in political or public activism.<sup>287</sup> This is reflected in student councils, noticed young activist ‘Awad Mishal in the Student Council of Bir Zeit University.<sup>288</sup> Høigilt, however, mentions how several big universities cooperated with youth centres to increase political engagement, awareness, and empowerment, including Najāh National University, Bir Zeit University, and Al-Quds University.<sup>289</sup> Especially Bir Zeit University worked on projects that improve social and political engagement within Palestinian youth, according to Khoury-Machool.<sup>290</sup> Høigilt’s work is from 2013, the article by Khoury-Machool is from 2010, and the interviews from Bartal and Maliach’ research are from 2016, which explains the difference because the cooperation has changed in the years between the publications. But to find a reliable answer to why this difference exists, more research will be necessary.

Moreover, as has been mentioned by both Richter-Devroe and Høigilt, Bartal and Maliach found that several interviewees mentioned the political reality of Palestine and the split within the Palestinian leadership as the reason why young people felt frustrated and their lack of political participation.<sup>291</sup> Within the interview there was one person who found other internal reasons for the lack of participation. Political and youth activist Tāmī ‘Sām Rafīdī was the only one to bring up a cultural aspect of young people for not being involved in politics, namely the matter of salary and debt or student loans.<sup>292</sup> This relates to Richter-Devroe’s findings mentioned in chapter 1. According to her research, Palestinians tend to focus on their daily personal problems, such as economic problems relating to unemployment, salary, and debts. In spite of that, Richter-Devroe also mentions how dealing with ‘normal’ life can be part of the everyday resistance, *ṣumūd*. Interestingly, Høigilt and Bartal and Maliach did not present any fear of getting shot or getting arrested as reasons for not participating, while Richter-Devroe did.

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<sup>287</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 59-60.

<sup>288</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 57.

<sup>289</sup> Høigilt, “The Palestinian Spring That Was Not,” 352.

<sup>290</sup> Khoury-Machool, “Cyber Resistance,” 115-116.

<sup>291</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 60.

<sup>292</sup> Bartal and Maliach, “The Next Generation,” 60.

## Youth resistance online

Several scholars are of the opinion that youth participation within the Palestinian resistance movement has gone through several changes in the past decades. After the Oslo Accords, the PA was unable to mobilize and incorporate youth within resistance policies while young Palestinians began to lose trust. During the Second Intifada youth participation was especially low. The conflict between Hamas and Fatah further caused fragmentation within the whole of the Palestinian resistance movement, including women's movements and youth movements. Additionally, besides the occupation and the problems cause by the Palestinian leadership, Palestinians focused more on their 'smaller' daily economic struggles then on the question of joining resistance movements. Bartal and Maliach mention that some interviewees consider the Internet to be the cause of diminished youth participation, but what they fail to mention is that these interviewees hint at physical, 'offline' participation, while online participation is not considered.<sup>293</sup> Høigilt found that youth participation began to increase in the 2010s but the goals were different from youth movements before. On the one hand, their aims concerned the occupation, the settlements, and the normalization of Israel. On the other hand, youth resistance was aiming for a better unified Palestinian authority and an end to the struggle between Hamas and Fatah. Their impact went further than the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and reached refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and other parts of the world, as well as Palestinians living in Israel. So, what role has online activism played within youth resistance?

Monshipouri and Prompichai claim that social media caused an increase of youth activism.<sup>294</sup> Online space is easily accessible, inexpensive, and it allows the user anonymity if wanted.<sup>295</sup> It also gives youth the opportunity to communicate with each other when other means of communication, or if public spaces like schools and universities, are not available.<sup>296</sup> Khoury-Machool furthermore describes how resistance became less violent and more peaceful through internet use.<sup>297</sup> Palestinian youth therefore were able to use the Internet without endangering themselves or ending up in dangerous situation which they might get arrested.<sup>298</sup> Thus this aspect contributes to the nonviolent approach of resistance the post-Oslo authorities tried to implement.

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<sup>293</sup> Bartal and Maliach, "The Next Generation," 57-59

<sup>294</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 50.

<sup>295</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 50.

<sup>296</sup> Khoury-Machool, "Cyber Resistance," 119.

<sup>297</sup> Khoury-Machool, "Palestinian Youth and Political Activism," 27.

<sup>298</sup> Khoury-Machool, "Palestinian Youth and Political Activism," 25.

Online spaces have been used by citizen journalists, by artists, and other activists.<sup>299</sup> The use and effects can be measured by looking at numbers of followers, likes, shares, and comments. Monshipouri and Prompichai mention the 16-year-old journalist Janaa Jihad (also written as Janna) who started documenting daily life in Palestine when she was only 7 years old.<sup>300</sup> She used platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to publish her videos and currently has over 600.000 followers on Facebook.<sup>301</sup> Mohammed Assaf, who is an activist, musician, and rapper, used YouTube to publish a music video and song called *Dami Falasteeni*, *دمي فلسطيني*, translating to ‘my blood is Palestinian’.<sup>302</sup> This song is about claiming Palestine as the homeland for Palestinians and the version that has been published in 2020 currently has 10 million views on YouTube.<sup>303</sup> His song has also been used on other platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram. On TikTok, a social media platform that revolves around short videos and his song has been used for hundreds of thousands of times in short videos. The first screenshot shows the song uploaded by one TikTok-user and has been used in 338.700 videos. The second screenshot shows the same song uploaded by another TikTok-user; this sound is used 56.700 times. The third screenshot shows the sound uploaded by Mohammad Assaf himself on Instagram, this sound has been used 14.200 times in videos.



Figure 3. Screenshot 1

Screenshot 2

Screenshot 3

A moment in the Middle East and North Africa region in which social media played a significant role were the uprisings in 2011. Monshipouri and Prompichai state how these uprisings and social media use show proof of the effects online activism can have.<sup>304</sup> They add however, that there are actual people behind online activities that need some sort of motivation and mobilisation too.<sup>305</sup> Nevertheless these uprisings inspired online mobilization

<sup>299</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 50.

<sup>300</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 50.

<sup>301</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 50; Janaa Jihad (@jannajihad), general Facebook account page, <https://www.facebook.com/Janna.Jihad/>.

<sup>302</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 50.

<sup>303</sup> Mohammed Assaf (@mohamedassaf), "Dammi Falastini," music video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7LE-8QQG2Y>.

<sup>304</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 49.

<sup>305</sup> Monshipouri and Prompichai, "Digital Activism in Perspective," 49.

and organization of resistance movements by Palestinian youth between 2011 and 2013.<sup>306</sup> These movements consisted of demonstrations against the Hamas-Fatah split and protests against Israeli occupation and expansion; this coincides with the main issues Palestinian youth have been facing and been wanting to address.<sup>307</sup> In more recent years, online activism has been inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement that, especially in 2020, introduced many protests against injustices.<sup>308</sup> This introduced the hashtag #PalestinianLivesMatter that went viral.<sup>309</sup> Also the hashtag #SaveSheikhJarrah gained much attention.<sup>310</sup> The use of hashtags contributes to increased attention and growing awareness, as any post, albeit text, video, or photo, can be found under said hashtag. Furthermore, the use of short English slogans helps with the worldwide spread of online messages.<sup>311</sup> Through the use of hashtags, amongst other aspects of online activism, Palestinian activists continue to increase awareness for their cause.

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<sup>306</sup> Albana S. Dwonch, "Introduction," in *Palestinian Youth Activism in the Internet Age Online and Offline Social Networks after the Arab Spring: Online and Offline Social Networks After* (London: IB Tauris, 2019), 1.

<sup>307</sup> Dwonch, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>308</sup> Inès Gil, "Palestinians Are Using Online Activism to Forge a New Narrative," *Equal Times* (Equal Times, June 2, 2021), <https://www.equaltimes.org/palestinians-are-using-online?lang=en#.YqpCrC-Qm3V>.

<sup>309</sup> Gil, "Palestinians Are Using Online Activism."

<sup>310</sup> Sahhar, "How Black Lives Matter is changing the conversation on Palestine."

<sup>311</sup> Gil, "Palestinians Are Using Online Activism."

## Chapter 3

# Analysis: Muna el-Kurd on Instagram

The historical background of Palestine's political landscape has illustrated the ongoing struggle with the occupation and oppression by Israel, and it has presented women's resistance since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The situation after the Oslo Accords onwards was highlighted, as the developments from the Oslo Accords have greatly impacted, and still impact, Palestine's situation today. In the last 20 years online activism has increasingly become part of the Palestinian struggle. There has been an internal conflict going on as well. Clashes between the Palestinian leadership of Hamas and Fatah have had an impact on Palestinians' lives for the worse since 2006. Young Palestinians have shown their leading authorities and Israel that they are still active within the resistance movement for a better Palestine. Through online spaces, they have been able to organize and mobilize themselves into demonstrations and movements aiming for a change in Palestinian politics and a change regarding the Israeli occupation. Young people are referred to as the 'new' or 'next' generation because of their spirits and activism and with the rise of social media they have created much awareness towards Palestine. There are several influential young people who have gained much attention through the Internet. Janna Jihad has spread much awareness when she started sharing videos of her life in Palestine; Mohammed Assaf made a song that has gone viral on several social media platforms that brought attention to the Palestinian struggle; Ahed Tamimi became famous when she slapped an Israeli soldier after which she was detained;<sup>312</sup> Mohammed el-Kurd is a writer, poet, and activist, who together with his sister have been named one of the 100 Most Influential People of 2021 for their online resistance.<sup>313</sup>

This chapter concentrates on Muna el-Kurd's online presence on Instagram. Before an analysis takes place, I will present a brief description of El-Kurd's activism in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. This will be followed by an explanation on how Instagram works, presenting an understanding of how the analysis was made, to be followed by the analysis. This will be done by carefully looking at posts published online by El-Kurd from January to early June 2022.

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<sup>312</sup> Lisa Gleeson, "Ahed Tamimi: The Face of a New Intifada," *Green Left Weekly*, no. 1165 (January 2018): 15.

<sup>313</sup> Sanya Mansoor, "Muna El-Kurd and Mohammed El-Kurd Are on the 2021 time100 List," *Time* (Time, September 15, 2021), <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2021/6096098/muna-mohammed-el-kurd/>.



### **Muna el-Kurd: journalist and activist**

Muna el-Kurd is a journalist and activist born in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem in 1998.<sup>314</sup> She and her twin brother Mohammed have been active for several years. Through interviews and social media El-Kurd creates awareness for Palestinians and “challenged existing narratives about Palestinian resistance.”<sup>315</sup> She uses videos showing how Israeli forces use violence to oppress Palestinians, steering away from the assumption that only Palestinians use violent resistance.<sup>316</sup> She furthermore promotes nonviolent resistance through grassroot organization of protests and by spreading awareness.<sup>317</sup> El-Kurd’s activism is especially impactful in the forced home evictions that Palestinians are facing.<sup>318</sup> In January 2022, she went live on Instagram showing her followers what her family and other Palestinians are facing, but her video was taken down by Instagram.<sup>319</sup> This action by Instagram is an example of online censorship, while it also shows how influential her online presence is; she was able to continue with the live video shortly after it was first taken down.<sup>320</sup>

In 2009, El-Kurd and her family were forced by Israeli soldiers to abandon half their home due to a particular law.<sup>321</sup> This Law of Return gives Jewish people all over the world the right to immigrate to Israel and become Israeli citizens.<sup>322</sup> For many Palestinian families, this means they will be forced out of their houses because other people will be living in them under this law. In 2021, El-Kurd and her family received the demand to leave the rest of their home together with other Palestinians.<sup>323</sup> El-Kurd and Mohammed launched the hashtag #SaveSheikhJarrah which was picked up by several movements and many activists, spreading awareness about the house evictions and resulting in demonstrations.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> “Muna El-Kurd Biography,” Speakers Bureau, accessed June 15, 2022, <https://www.allamericanspeakers.com/celebritytalentbios/Muna+El-Kurd/449616>.

<sup>315</sup> Mansoor, “Muna El-Kurd and Mohammed El-Kurd.”

<sup>316</sup> Mansoor, “Muna El-Kurd and Mohammed El-Kurd.”

<sup>317</sup> Mansoor, “Muna El-Kurd and Mohammed El-Kurd.”

<sup>318</sup> Rahma Haggag, “Muna El Kurd: How a Journalist and Activist Is Taking Action against the Silencing of Palestinians,” Scoop Empire (Scoop Empire, January 21, 2022), <https://scoopempire.com/social-media-platforms-keeps-on-silencing-palestinians/>.

<sup>319</sup> Haggag, “Muna El Kurd.”

<sup>320</sup> Haggag, “Muna El Kurd.”

<sup>321</sup> “Muna El-Kurd Biography.”

<sup>322</sup> “Law Of Return,” Encyclopedia.com (Encyclopedia.com, 2018), <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/asia-and-africa/israeli-history/law-return>.

<sup>323</sup> “Muna El-Kurd Biography.”

<sup>324</sup> Gil, “Palestinians Are Using Online Activism.”

Besides the home evictions, frustrations rose between Israeli authorities and Palestinians in Jerusalem during the month of Ramadan. Israeli authorities had interrupted a gathering at the Al-Aqsa Mosque to speak about a Zionist holiday and after that had strengthened their authority in public spaces in the city.<sup>325</sup> The situation worsened when Israeli soldiers attacked people inside Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holiest night of Ramadan.<sup>326</sup> After this, rockets were fired into Israeli territory by Hamas militants.<sup>327</sup> At least 250 people died during the violent period that followed.<sup>328</sup> These events, combined with the situation concerning the house evictions resulted in several protests and demonstrations taking place to which some refer to as the ‘Unity Intifada’.<sup>329</sup> Both Muna and Mohammed were arrested because they were accused of participating in riots, although they were released shortly after.<sup>330</sup> Other people who have been protesting their forced home evictions also encountered attack and arrest.<sup>331</sup>

## Analysis

For this analysis, a qualitative content method was applied. This means that the researcher observes pictures, videos, and accompanying texts from January until the beginning of June in 2022. This period was chosen because it gives an accurate description of El-Kurd’s online presence since 2022. The total amount of Instagram posts studied is 29, of which several are photos, and several are videos. The analysis is done by describing what the researcher observes on the post. Whenever necessary, the description that El-Kurd has added to her post will be utilized to provide context, but the main focus of this analysis is the visual imagery. El-Kurd is a Palestinian young woman, and her communication is done in Arabic. Whenever necessary, text was translated to English. The challenge with translating lies in the Palestinian dialect, to which neither Instagram nor the researcher are familiar with. Another challenge lies with Arabic audio. The translation technology is not suitable for audio on Instagram, and the researcher does not have the expertise necessary for translating sounds. In future research, these challenges would be handled by cooperating with someone who is native Palestinian, or who has studied Palestinian Arabic, in order to obtain the best translation possible.

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<sup>325</sup> Yousef Munayyer, “When Palestine Shook,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50, no. 4 (November 22, 2021): 96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919x.2021.1975476>.

<sup>326</sup> Munayyer, “When Palestine Shook,” 96.

<sup>327</sup> Mansoor, “Muna and Mohammed El-Kurd.”

<sup>328</sup> Tom Bateman, “Israel Arrests Palestinian Activist Muna El-Kurd in East Jerusalem,” BBC News (BBC, June 6, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57376550>.

<sup>329</sup> Yousef Munayyer, “When Palestine Shook,” 96.

<sup>330</sup> Bateman, “Israel Arrests Palestinian Activist.”

<sup>331</sup> Haggag, “Muna El Kurd.”

## Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform in which sharing images and videos is the main activity.<sup>332</sup> Instagram started out as a photography-based platform but has now developed into a platform in which people share their lives through pictures and videos, some permanent, some temporary. The use of permanent and temporary here is questionable as Instagram provides its users to delete posts whenever they want, and simultaneously people are able to screenshot a picture with their smartphones and laptops, thus keeping a post forever in their personal archives. Instagram works through user pages that can be made public or made private. A user needs to follow another user if they want to see their posts regularly. The posts appear on the homepage, which is marked in the app by the logo of a house. The discover page allows users to look at posts that have been shared by users they don't necessarily follow. Hence the name 'discover' page. A user page shows all the posts the user has shared on their account. This is also referred to as the feed. Looking at a user's feed can often quickly tell who that person is and what type of images they post.

An Instagram post is the publication of the message. There are several post-formats on Instagram. The regular post is sharing a normal picture or video that shows up in your feed and on the follower's homepage; a video also shows up in the feed, but also in a separate folder where all videos are combined. Another post-format is reels, which is a video that can last up to 60 seconds. A reel can be shown in the person's feed, but it does not have to. Reels also circulate more easily on the discover page and therefor can acquire many views, likes, and comments. There is also the option of posting an Instagram-story. This is an image or a video one can post on their profile that stays there for 24 hours. Only if one chooses to save said 'story' in one of the 'highlights' on the Instagram profile, the story can be seen multiple



<sup>332</sup> "What Is Instagram?," Help center (Instagram), accessed June 15, 2022, [https://help.instagram.com/424737657584573/?helpref=uf\\_share](https://help.instagram.com/424737657584573/?helpref=uf_share).

times. A highlight is a special folder in which an Instagram user can save their stories. Highlights can be named and categorized. With regular posts and with reels there is the possibility to add a description and hashtags, and even alternative text for people who have a visual disability. The description is not necessary but may provide extra information about the image shared. Many people often add an inspirational quote, a funny quote, or emoticons in their description.








### *First observations*



The first step in studying Muna el-Kurd's Instagram posts is by looking at her profile page and her feed. El-Kurd, Instagram username @muna.kurd15, has 1.6 million followers and she has posted 218 messages on her Instagram page. The blue checkmark next to her username indicate that Instagram has verified El-Kurd's page as being her. Her biography is written in Arabic, only her name and other Instagram accounts mentioned are written in the Latin script. Instagram has a relatively good translation option which enables people to translate El-Kurd's Instagram biography to the language they have set for their own Instagram. Her choosing to write in Arabic could however suggest that El-Kurd wishes to reach mostly Arabic-speaking audiences, or it could be part of her resistance and her pride being Palestinian. El-Kurd's overall feed shows a variety of images. She has posted many pictures of her smiling, attending certain events or interviews, and of course pictures and videos of demonstrations, Palestinians, and Palestine. El-Kurd also uses the highlight option in which she has added many stories that she posted throughout the years.

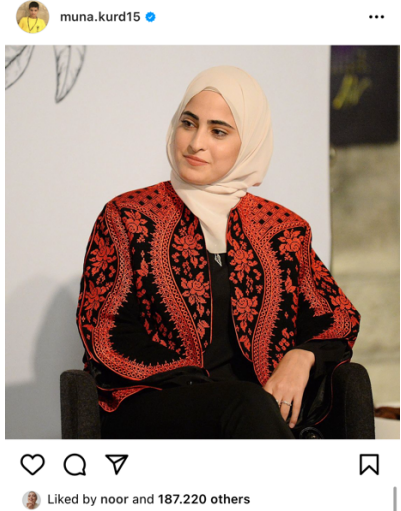
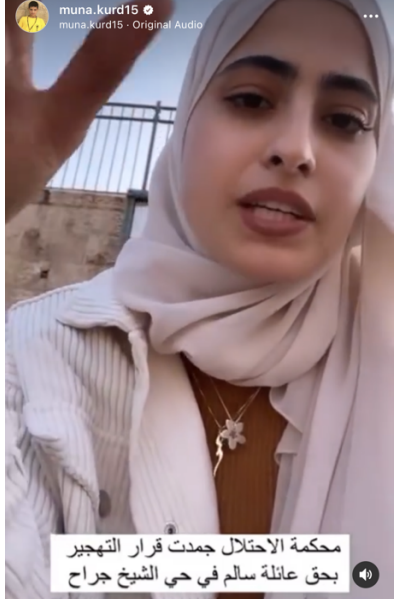

In presenting the Instagram posts studied, it should be added that on the original Instagram user page, the posts are placed in order of newest post at the top, oldest post at the bottom. This research, however, uses chronological order and starts with the oldest post, January 7<sup>th</sup>, and ends with the newest posts, June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Instagram posts Muna el-Kurd



Date	Researcher's description	Post
07-01-2022	<p>The post consists of two photos. El-Kurd is sitting in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood wearing a sweater that says 'فلسطين', 'Falastīn', 'Palestine'. The second photo shows the sweater clearer. On both photos are walls of the neighbourhood seen with graffiti art on them. This post is a collaboration with the page @habbar.prints, who are a Palestinian-based clothing brand. The sweater is one of their products.</p>	 <p>habbar.prints and muna.kurd15 حي الشيخ جراح - القدس</p> <p>Liked by muna.kurd15 and 72.434 others</p>
09-01-2022	<p>This post consists of a photo of El-Kurd sitting on a rock. She is smiling and protecting her eyes from the sun.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>138.367 likes</p>


<p>12-01-2022</p>	<p>A live video has been published in video format. El-Kurd has added an English description to her video herself, stating the topic of her video: the threatening of displacement of 300.000 Palestinians in the Negev. The video itself is mostly in Arabic, El-Kurd is joined by other activists, two of which also speak English. In the video, El-Kurd is wearing the sweater from @habbar.prints and she is wearing a necklace of the outline of Palestine as well. The video is 56 minutes long.</p>	
<p>13-01-2022</p>	<p>A live video has been published in video format. The video shows protesters chanting anti-occupation slogans. The video zoom into Israeli forces in a police car. The video is 7 minutes long.</p>	
<p>13-01-2022</p>	<p>The post consists of four photos. The first one shows a group of women posing under a beautiful sky. They are wearing the kufiyah over their hair and faces, El-Kurd could be one of these women. The second photo shows protesters walking, and one protester praying. In the background there are two cars on fire. The third photo shows protesters on horses riding down. On the other side of the field where they are, there</p>	




	<p>are assumed to be Israeli military on horses as well. The fourth photo shows El-Kurd posing with other female protesters. They are carrying signs with slogans written on them.</p>	
<p>24-01-2022</p>	<p>The post is a video in reels format. The video is shot in the car showing a tower-like statue with the Palestinian flag on top of it waving in the wind. The audio used in the video is a song called ‘موطني’, ‘<i>mawṭini</i>’, ‘my home’, by Murad Swaiti.</p>	
<p>27-01-2022</p>	<p>The post is a video in reels format. It shows a graffiti wall, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and streets and houses snow covered. People are shown having fun in the snow. The sound used is a song called ‘Sana an Sana’ by Fairouz.</p>	

<p>17-02-2022</p>	<p>The post shows a photo of El-Kurd wearing a Palestinian embroidered jacket or dress.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>Liked by noor and 187.220 others</p>
<p>22-02-2022</p>	<p>The post is a video in reels format. El-Kurd films herself talking.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>muna.kurd15 · Original Audio</p> <p>محكمة الاحتلال جمدت قرار التهجير بحق عائلة سالم في حي الشيخ جراح</p>
<p>26-02-2022</p>	<p>The post consists of seven photos. The first photo is of El-Kurd smiling while sitting in a tree. The next pictures shown are pictures of nature, the surroundings, and views of the area that El-Kurd was in. The last photo is again a picture of El-Kurd smiling and standing in a field. She is wearing a kufiyah as well.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>Liked by noor and 187.922 others</p>





<p>28-04-2022</p>	<p>El-Kurd is posing in front of the Al-Aqsa Mosque at night, she is smiling. This picture was shared around the time of Laylat al-Qadr, the holiest night of the month Ramadan.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15 المسجد الاقصى المبارك-القدس</p> <p>237.885 likes</p>
<p>02-05-2022</p>	<p>The post consists of three photos. The first photo is showing El-Kurd and her father standing in front of a flower bush. They are both smiling. The second photo shows both El-Kurd and her father smiling again in front of the flowers. The third photo shows El-Kurd posing in front of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. On this day was Eid al-Fitr, the celebration after the month of Ramadan.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>Liked by noor and 289.855 others</p>



<p>04-05-2022</p>	<p>The post is a video in reels format. The video starts with people walking towards the Al-Aqsa Mosque in celebration of Eid al-Fitr. There are men, women, and children. They are praying, talking, and smiling. Some women are wearing traditional Palestinian dresses. There are also some shots of people holding the Palestinian flag. The audio used for the video is a joyful song called ‘عيد سعيد’، ‘<i>īd-un sa īd</i>’, ‘happy Eid’ by Ali Magrebi.</p>	
<p>10-05-2022</p>	<p>The post is a video in reels format with the text written in it ‘مراد حر’، ‘<i>murād ḥurr</i>’, ‘Murad is free’, followed by two emoticons. Considering this sentence, the assumption is that the people filmed are Murad Attia and his mother who are reunited after Murad had spent time in prison; Murad Attia’s arrest will be further explained in the findings.</p>	

<p>10-05-2022</p>	<p>The post is a video in reels format showing Murad hugging people who are assumed to be his friends and family. El-Kurd is heard saying ‘<i>al-ḥamd-u li-llah</i>’, ‘thank god’, showing her happiness that Murad has returned to his home and his loved ones.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>158.204 views</p>
<p>10-05-2022</p>	<p>The post consists of two photos. The first one is a selfie by El-Kurd, she photographs herself and a group of people behind her, one of which is Murad. The other people could be his friends and family. The second photo shows the whole group including El-Kurd. They are all smiling.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>Liked by noor and 74.014 others</p>
<p>11-05-2022</p>	<p>A photo of a memorial artwork inside a mural is shown. It is unclear what the artwork consists of. It seems to be a piece of a Palestinian kufiyah<sup>333</sup> with a bandage placed on top of it which is stained with blood; the assumption is that this is Shireen Abu Akleh’s blood. Above the bandage and kufiyah is written ‘أنا شيرين أبو عاقلة’, ‘<i>anā shirīn ’abū ’āqleh</i>’, ‘I am Shireen Abu Akleh’. There is also text written underneath the kufiyah, but this handwriting is difficult to read for a non-</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>Liked by palestinianfeministcollective and 184.725 others</p>

<sup>333</sup> The kufiyah is a traditional Arab headdress that has become a symbol for Palestine.

	<p>native Arab speaker. The second photo in the post shows the overall mural of a bird with wings spread, its center being the memorial piece for Abu Akleh. The mural was already there before the memorial artwork was added to it.</p>	
<p>13-05-2022</p>	<p>A live video has been published in three parts. El-Kurd has written one description for all three videos, being ‘ جنازة الشهيدة ‘ شيرين أبو عاقلة’, <i>janāza al-shahīda shirīn ‘abū ‘āqleh</i>’, ‘the funeral of martyr Shireen Abu Akleh’. El-Kurd is heard speaking loudly while she is walking towards a gathering of people. It is unclear if this is still the route of the funeral. People are chanting, but it is not always clear what they are saying. Abu Akleh’s name is mentioned several times. The first video is 27 minutes long.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>245,772 views</p>
<p>13-05-2022</p>	<p>The second video is a continuation of the first video. El-Kurd is filming the crowds, some people are still heard chanting, but their chants are still unclear. El-Kurd mentions a couple of times that she is filming a live on Instagram. The Instagram page of ‘Eye On Palestine’, @eye.on.palestine, joined El-Kurd’s live video, but there is no visual; only the logo of Eye On Palestine is shown.<sup>334</sup> This video is 17 minutes long.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>93,608 views</p>

<sup>334</sup> Eye On Palestine is an activist Instagram page that raises awareness for the Palestinian oppression. They are an important Instagram page with 3 million followers and 32,200 posts.

<p>13-05-2022</p>	<p>The last video again shows a crowd of people chanting, playing music, and El-Kurd talking. This video is 9 minutes long.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>120.294 views</p>
<p>15-05-2022</p>	<p>This post consists of three pictures. The first photo shows El-Kurd standing beside a mural of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed on May 11. El-Kurd is wearing a t-shirt with a map of Palestine, and she is carrying a torch in her hand. Her look is serious and powerful. The second photo is a closeup of the mural of Abu Akleh. The third photo shows El-Kurd standing next to four other young people who are wearing the same t-shirts El-Kurd is wearing.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15</p> <p>148.954 likes</p>

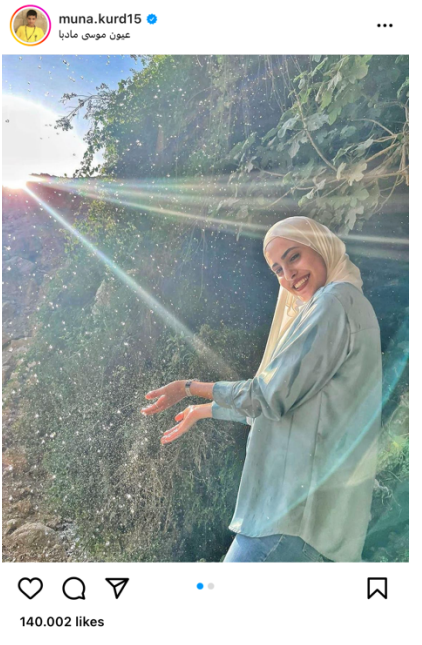
20-05-2022



A poem written by El-Kurd, called ‘أنا حي’ *‘anā hay sheikh jarrah,’* ‘I am the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.’



25-05-2022

A photograph showing El-Kurd standing in the sun in a nature site in Amman, Jordan, called ‘عيون موسى مادبا’ *‘ūn mūsā mādabā,’* ‘The Eyes of Moussa’ in Madaba. She is smiling.



<p>29-05-2022</p>	<p>A reel-video showing a Palestinian protest taking place in Jerusalem on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The video also shows Israeli forces in response to the protests. There is a song put under the video, but it is not clear what the title is and who sang it.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15 الموناء - الموناء</p> <p>@adnan_barq وجودنا لا مُحال منه</p>
<p>02-06-2022</p>	<p>El-Kurd is shown carrying a caricature drawing of herself made by an artist in Amman, Jordan. There are three other photos included in the post, and one video, showing the process of drawing the caricature. She is smiling.</p>	 <p>muna.kurd15 Amman, Jordan</p> <p>137.916 likes</p>

*Findings*

A total of 29 Instagram posts have been studied using a qualitative content analysis that contains several overlapping characteristics. 11 of these posts show El-Kurd smiling. 4 pictures show other people she documented smiling. There are 3 posts related to clashes in the Negev. There are 5 posts related to the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. There are three posts related to Murad Attia who returned from jail. A total of 5 posts shows people protesting. There are 6 posts related to nature, 5 of which are related to Palestinian areas. There is one post of a poem written by El-Kurd.

There are three events in need of further explanation. The first being the protests happening in the Negev. In January, Bedouins living in the Negev region protested against Israel taking over more of their land.<sup>335</sup> Already over 95% of the Bedouins' territory is occupied by Israeli forces.<sup>336</sup> El-Kurd shared three posts concerning the Negev region on January 12 and January 13. Then on May 10<sup>th</sup>, El-Kurd posted three videos of Murad Attia who had been detained for several months.<sup>337</sup> Attia was imprisoned for his participation in protests to protect the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood<sup>338</sup> The third event was the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on May 11.<sup>339</sup> El-Kurd dedicated 5 posts to Abu Akleh's passing. Israeli authorities claimed her death was caused by being in a combat area, but CNN claims to have found no evidence of crossfire taking place, hinting that Israeli military were the ones who fired the shot killing Abu Akleh.<sup>340</sup>

The most significant observation that can be made from El-Kurd's Instagram posts is that there is a balance between posts that immediately show El-Kurd's activism and that show her being a joyful 23-year-old woman posting her life on Instagram. There are several pictures of her smiling, of enjoying herself. She is shown together with her family or with friends and she is shown in several places doing leisure activities as well. Besides that, her posts show active engagement with resistance through videos of demonstrations and protests as well as showing Palestinian symbols or traditions.

Her online activism could be related to the everyday resistance mentioned by Richter-Devroe. Richter-Devroe related this everyday resistance to the term *ṣumūd* in which resistance was realized through daily actions, *amal*, and by maintaining a hopeful attitude, *amal*. The daily actions according to Richter-Devroe's findings concerned survival strategies, cultural resistance, and social and ideational resistance. In El-Kurd's Instagram posts, these acts are shown through her use of Palestinian symbols such as the flag, the kufiyah, and the traditional clothing that can be seen in two posts. The hopeful attitude is acquired through living 'normal' lives and being joyful. El-Kurd shows living 'normal' life by posting pictures of her with her friends, her walking through nature, and her having fun. In 2022 she also posted

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<sup>335</sup> Mohammad Al-Kassim, "Bedouins Protest Negev Forestation Project as Gov't Looks for Compromise (Video Report)," The Media Line (The Media Line, January 16, 2022), <https://themedialine.org/top-stories/bedouins-protest-negev-forestation-project-as-govt-looks-for-compromise/>.

<sup>336</sup> Al-Kassim, "Bedouins Protest Negev Forestation Project."

<sup>337</sup> Mohammed el-Kurd, "My Neighbor, Murad," *The Nation*, no. 2, 314 (New York, N.Y.): 12.

<sup>338</sup> El-Kurd, "My Neighbor, Murad," 12.

<sup>339</sup> Zeena Saifi et al., "New Evidence Suggests Shireen Abu Akleh Was Killed in Targeted Attack by Israeli Forces," CNN (Cable News Network, May 26, 2022), <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/24/middleeast/shireen-abu-akleh-jenin-killing-investigation-cmd-intl/index.html>.

<sup>340</sup> Saifi et al., "New Evidence."



herself attending a journalism event in Tunis and she posted an older picture of her graduating in 2021. Additionally, she posted a video of the Eid al-Fitr celebration in Jerusalem, showing not only her in her 'normal' habitat, but also showing other Palestinians having fun and celebrating their holiday. Furthermore, her living and staying in Palestine is part of the survival technique that is used in *ṣumūd*. The photos and videos El-Kurd shared of demonstrations, protests, and gatherings are furthermore part of her activism. They could be regarded as part of the 'amal strategies of *ṣumūd*. They also show her activism outside of the online space.

# Conclusion

Women's activism of roughly the last 150 years of Palestine history has taken many forms. When the threat of the British colonial government rose and Jewish migration intensified, so did Palestinian activism, for men and women. Before the First Intifada, women's participation mostly took the form of partaking in protests, demonstrations, and strikes, combined with hiding, helping, and funding the rebels, and motivating women to unite themselves in women's committees. In the First Intifada, women's activism played a key part in the overall uprising. Mostly after the Oslo Accords, popular resistance as well as nonviolent resistance became more accepted. Because the Second Intifada was increasingly more violent than the first one, popular resistance and civil society declined resulting in less participation by the whole community. In 2006 and 2007 internal clashes emerged between Hamas and Fatah, the two governing Palestinian authorities. These clashes furthermore worsened people's frustration with both the occupation and their governing authorities.

After the Oslo Accords, the PA centred around peace- and state-building. While resisting Israel was not their focus, they did support popular resistance, especially popular nonviolent resistance. Popular nonviolent resistance was acquired through NGOs who received much international support. The problem with the internationally funded NGOs was that they were not completely trusted by Palestinians. Instead of aiding the Palestinian struggle, NGOs were more focussed on their own foreign agendas. As a result, nonviolent resistance got a negative connotation. Local NGO initiatives tried to alter the connotation by reframing it as a proactive and pragmatic strategy. Another form of resistance can be found in the everyday. This is called *ṣumūd*. *Ṣumūd* is realized through daily actions concerning material effects, called *amal* (work/action), and through daily actions resisting the mind of colonization, called *amal* (hope). *Ṣumūd* can take many forms, one of which this research found is through online activism.

Online activism is a form of activism which uses online tools to mobilise, organize, and motivate people to resist and join in protests or demonstrations. It is also used for the distribution of information through which awareness is created. Within the Palestinian resistance movement, online activism takes several forms. Information about the Palestinian struggle and about Palestine as a country, its tradition, and its people, is distributed throughout the world. This creates a stronger shared feeling within the Palestinian diaspora, but also creates global recognition of the situation in Palestine. Online activism is especially used by

young Palestinians as a means of mobilisation and organization, but also to challenge the idea that Palestinians are the only ones using violence within the struggle. Youth participation has always been crucial to the Palestinian resistance movement and has been realized through universities, youth committees, and the Internet. For this reason, Palestinian youth nowadays are sometimes referred to as the new or next generation. The main objectives of Palestinian youth since the Second Intifada are resisting the Israeli occupation and expansion and demanding a unified Palestinian leadership.

Through a qualitative content analysis, this chapter analysed the Instagram page of one Palestinian youth activist: Muna el-Kurd. El-Kurd is a 23-year-old journalist and activist who used her online platform to create awareness about the Palestinian struggle. She also challenged the assumption that Palestinians are violent protesters by sharing footage of demonstrations. El-Kurd lives in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood and, together with other families from the neighbourhood, she has been resisting the forced house eviction by Israeli soldiers. Online she created awareness for these house evictions in Sheikh Jarrah, but she also points attention to other locations where Palestinians are forced to leave their house or their land, and other issues that Palestinians are experiencing. The analysis of this research focussed on her Instagram posts of 2022. Her Instagram posts consist of photos and videos showing demonstrations, protests, gatherings, and symbols of Palestine. But they also show El-Kurd smiling, enjoying time with her family and friends, in other words living a 'normal' life. El-Kurd's online presence on Instagram shows her *ṣumūd*, her everyday resistance, through posts in which a clear resistance is present, for instance the posts showing protests and gatherings. These posts are showing her *'amal*, her actions resisting material occupation. Her everyday resistance is also shown through the Palestinian symbols that are part of her posts, and moreover through the posts where she is smiling. The symbols and her smiling are part of the *'amal* aspect of *ṣumūd*, which is concerned with resisting the colonization of the mind.

How do these findings answer the question of how Palestinian female activists contribute to the Palestinian resistance in online spaces? The findings show that through online activism, El-Kurd is able to show her resistance, creating awareness and maintaining hope for an improved future for Palestinians. This is part of her *ṣumūd*, her steadfastness, her everyday resistance to the occupation. Everyday resistance is crucial to the Palestinian resistance, as it presents physical popular resistance, such as demonstrations, and personal resistance, such as being steadfast in living life in Palestine, and hope, which is crucial to activism. Moreover, this analysis shows a new type of activism which has remained under-

researched. A world without social media platforms is unimaginable today. Because of this, new types of activism have emerged and are here to stay. Future qualitative research about other activists present on social media platforms is desired to form a thorough understanding of activism and resistance in online spaces. El-Kurd's Instagram presence is only one way of showing how young female Palestinians contribute to the Palestinian resistance in online spaces. Nonetheless, it shows a new form of activism with a hopeful future for Palestine.

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# Appendix

Picture on the front page is obtained from the following website: The New Arab Staff & Agencies. “Palestinian Sheikh Jarrah Activists Muna El-Kurd Delivers Hard-Hitting Graduation Speech.” The New Arab. The New Arab, July 1, 2021.

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Figure 1 obtained from Fleischmann’s “The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1929-39.”

Figure 2 obtained from “Handala.” Stringfixer. <https://stringfixer.com/nl/Handala>.

Figure 3 obtained from personal archive, they are screenshots made on Instagram and TikTok.

The Instagram posts are screenshotted from the user page of Muna el-Kurd: El Kurd, Muna (muna.kurd15). General account page. Instagram.