

Peace Process & Post-Olso Era

2000-TODAY

2000

The Second Intifada started as non-violent demonstrations and was rapidly militarized as Israel deployed its vast military arsenal throughout the territories to quash the protests. Some Palestinians, largely led by Hamas, carried out suicide bombings against civilians throughout Israel and against Israeli forces in the occupied territories. By the end of four years, the landscape of Israel's occupation had been reconfigured. Israel decided to withdraw its 4,000 illegal settlers from the Gaza Strip, who had settled in one of the most densely populated places on earth, where nearly two million Palestinians now reside. It focused its occupation on colonizing the West Bank, which was ideologically of greater importance to Israel's religious community. A separation wall was also built between Israel and the West Bank, allegedly to enhance Israel's security. Around 85% of this wall was built beyond the Green Line, effectively annexing Palestinian lands into Israel while severing off Arab neighbourhoods around Jerusalem to the other side of the wall. The separation wall gravely impeded Palestinian freedom of movement and livelihoods, and institutionalized systems of control, surveillance and fragmentation of Palestinians living under Israeli rule.

These measures were a continuation of efforts to ensure Israel's control over maximum territory without assuming any responsibility over the Palestinian inhabitants. The PA had become a body that governed Palestinians under Israel's rule, effectively reducing the cost of Israel's occupation. With rampant corruption and commitment to security coordination with Israel, loathed by the Palestinians, the PA became less an entity that was laying the foundations of a future state, and more an extension of the occupation. In 2006, Hamas was elected on a platform that promised to "reform and change" the PA and to end its subservience to the occupation.



A Palestinian Woman Crossing Through Israeli Qalandiya Checkpoint in the West Bank
Source: Photography by Mohammad Badarne

Hamas's election initiated a series of international measures aimed at isolating the movement, which was branded a terrorist organization. In 2007, international intervention and internal infighting resulted in a bloody conflagration that ruptured the Palestinian territories geographically and institutionally. The West Bank remained under the control of the PA while the Gaza Strip fell under Hamas's control.

2006-2007

The Gaza Strip under Hamas was designated a "hostile territory" by Israel. Both Israel and Egypt sealed their border crossings with Gaza and put in place a blockade - formalizing a system of containment that Israel had begun to put in place since the 1990s - thus preventing not just the movement of people but also essential goods and commodities in and out of Gaza. In response to these pressures, Hamas and other groups in Gaza intermittently fired rockets into Israel. Often breaking the ceasefires that were in place between, Israel carried out hugely destructive military assaults against the Gaza Strip every few years, including 2008-09, 2012 and 2014, a strategy it described as "mowing the lawn" that resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians, including children. Both the blockade and the repeated military assaults have been described by UN fact finding missions as collective punishment, war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.



Protests for Hamas



Members of Hamas Protesting the Palestinian Liberation Organization's concessions made in the PLO- Israel agreement, September 1993

2009-2014

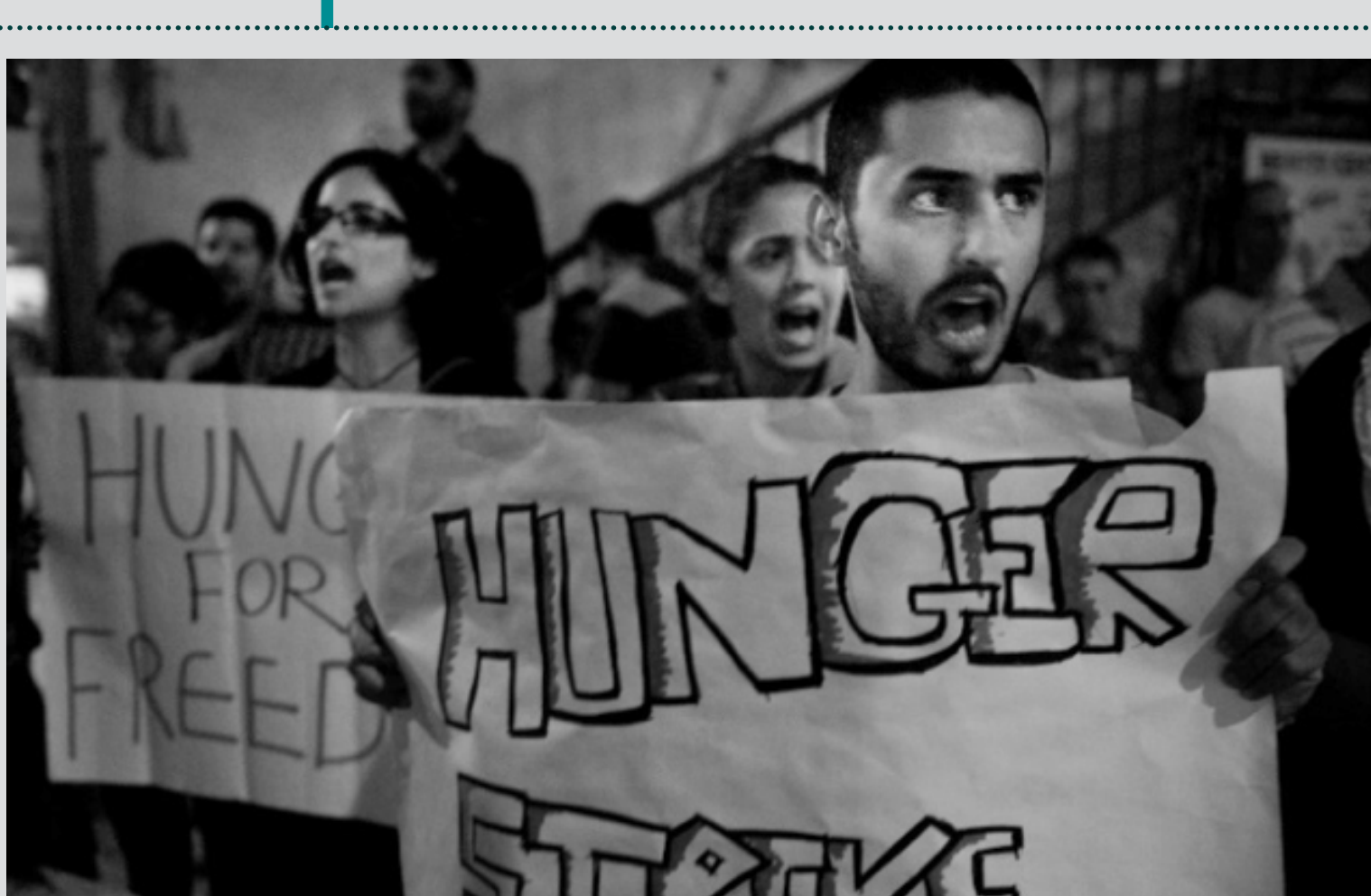
This remains the status quo. Israeli illegal settlement construction in the West Bank, together with bouts of violence, regular displacement and demolition of property continue, as does the blockade on Gaza and a divided political landscape in the Palestinian sphere. Refugees inside and outside the territories continue to live in dire conditions in temporary camps, often now with three generations living side by side.

TODAY

Despite sporadic gestures towards the peace process, there is currently broad agreement that negotiations under American mediation have failed. Palestinians are currently living in a post-Oslo period, a time of reckoning with the fact that the state-building aspirations inherent in the Oslo Accords have not secured Palestinian individual or collective rights. This is a moment of transition, where Palestinians must consider their next strategy for freedom, to put an end to the continuous colonization of their lands and their rights. However the Palestinian strategy develops, it must contend with the reality that there is currently a single power ruling over the entire land of historic Palestine, and that this power oversees two separate legal systems, one for Jews, another for non-Jews.

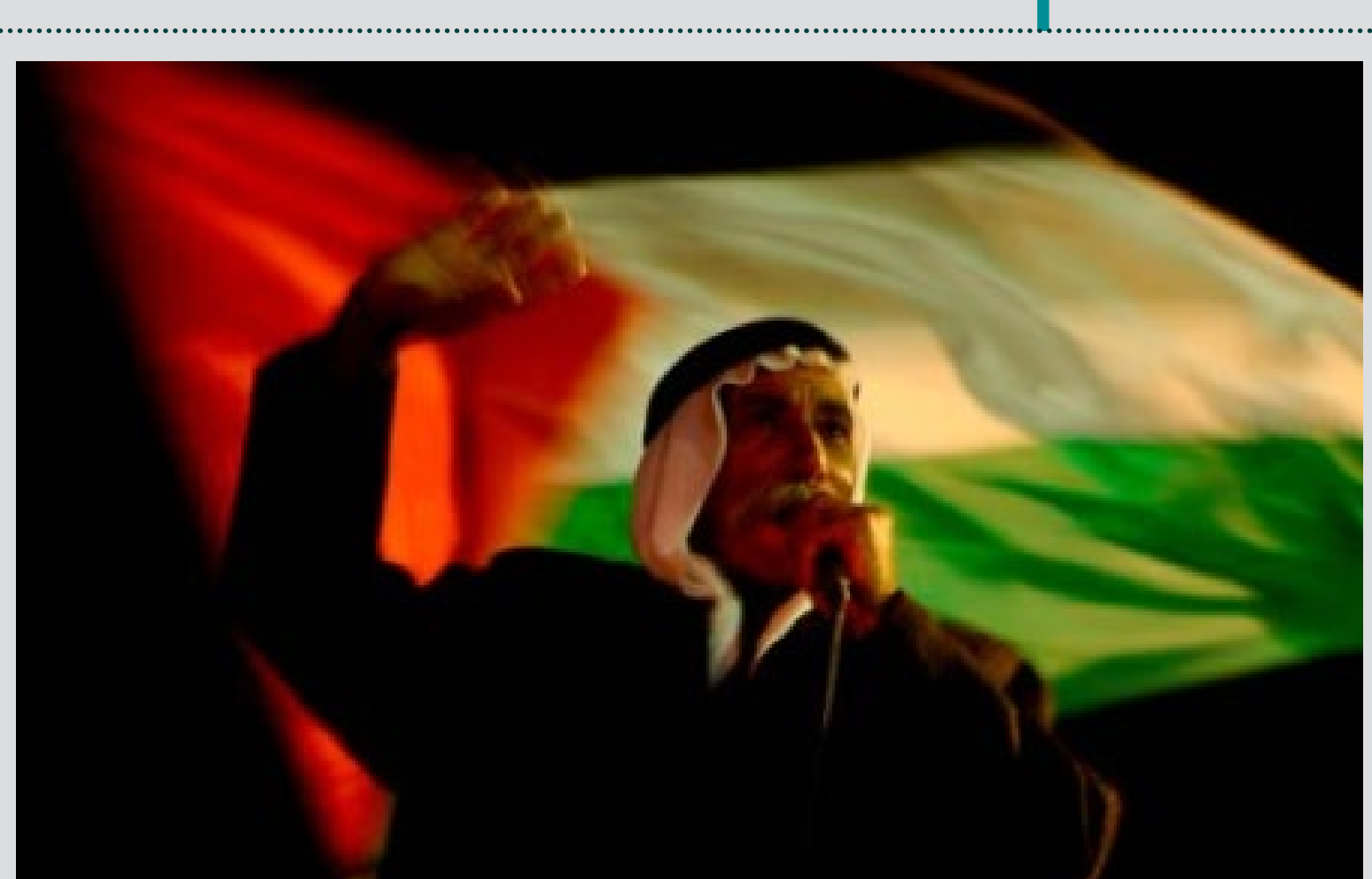


A Palestinian woman and child sitting outside their home in the Gaza Strip
Source: Photography by Hosam Salem



Palestinians protesting in the West Bank over Palestinian Political Prisoners. Source: Photography by Hosam Salem

And while the Palestinian leadership remains mired in ineffective talks, Palestinian civil society has been gathering force, launching the peaceful Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in 2005, leading popular protests across towns in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, and spearheading efforts aimed at bringing accountability to Israel in international courts. There is also a blossoming of Palestinian literature, culture, cooking and art today that expresses and nurtures Palestinian identity and strengthens the steadfast quest for freedom, justice, and equality.



Palestinians protesting in the West Bank over Palestinian Political Prisoners
Source: Photography by Mohammad Badarne