

# **The Revolt in Haifa**

**An Eyewitness Report**

CrimethInc.

May 29, 2021

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During the last month, a popular uprising has sprung up across the land in Palestine and refugee communities abroad. It broke out in Jerusalem, spread to Palestinian villages, towns and neighborhoods in “48 Palestine” (i.e., so-called Israel), and eventually the West Bank, Gaza, refugee camps in nearby countries, and Israeli consulates everywhere. For the first time in decades, the Palestinians showed that not only do they still exist, they are unified and willing to resist, despite all of Israel’s attempts to divide them and crush their spirit. The first days of the revolt were led by the Palestinians of 48, those in the territories occupied in 1948. They sometimes also called “Israeli Arabs” and hold Israeli citizenship. The protests were held in many Arab and mixed cities across so-called Israel; I’ll talk especially about Haifa, the city where I live and witness the events as they unfold.

This article will be divided into a few parts. It’s crucial for me to give some background on the current situation, as well as some history of 48 Palestinians and the resistance so far to Israeli apartheid and occupation. I can only give a quick summary, I’m not an expert or historian and enough material already exists on the subject. To understand the Palestinian issue, I highly suggest the book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* by Ilan Pappé, an excellent report on the Nakba of 1948 and how the Zionist state came to be. After the background, I present eyewitness reports on the events in my city, Haifa, and also some other points of resistance, the fascist counter-insurrection, the repression, and other important events occurring during the month. To conclude, I’ll share some thoughts on the current situation. At the end: a field guide to Israeli fascism! Fun stuff! Stick around.

## Background

The best place to start taking about 48 Palestine and Palestine in general is the *Nakba* (“catastrophe” in Arabic), in which Zionist occupation militias invaded the land in 1948, destroyed villages, massacred the local population, and caused mass expulsion and displacement, leading to one of the biggest refugee crises in history. About 700,000 people left the land, never able to return. Many of them are still aspiring to return to their or their ancestors’ homeland. Not far away from where I live in Haifa, in a road leading from the Hadar neighborhood to downtown, the attack on Arabic Haifa began. Zionist militants rolled explosive barrels down the road to bomb Arab neighborhoods. The steep geography of the city was to their advantage, as from up in the hills, they could attack the Arab neighborhoods located below.

Only recently, as I started to really learn the untold history of this city, did I find out all the horror stories. In the Zionist indoctrination in school, you are only taught about the brave “liberation wars” Jewish men fought against the terror; sometimes you are even taught that this land was completely empty. I learned about the massacre in the oil refinery factory, that after the Palmah, a Zionist militia, threw a bomb at an Arab worker gathering outside, killing six people and injured 42, the workers stormed the building and killed 39 of their fellow Jewish workers. Haifa was always a working-class city with a strong workers’ solidarity, even in the toughest times, and this aggression damaged severely that relationship. In an act of revenge, Palmah militants invaded nearby villages—Balad al-Sheikh and Hawasa—and massacred more than 60 people. I learned about the bombardment and the Zionist terror in Arab neighborhoods, especially Wadi Salib, Wadi Nisnas, Halisa and the whole downtown area. I learned about how when people gathered in the port to evacuate from the city, Zionist militias on mountain slopes

overlooking the crowd bombard the area, causing panic and chaos, in order to make sure that the people leaving wouldn't have second thoughts about coming back.

About 61,000 Palestinians left the city. Some left temporarily, hoping to come back when the situation had calmed down, only to realize that there were new borders, and they would never be able to return to their homes. The 4000 Palestinians that were able to remain in Haifa despite the ethnic cleansing campaign were concentrated in the Wadi Nisnas neighborhood, a Palestinian neighborhood in Haifa to this day. This ghettoization was necessary to establish the Jewish city.

The absentee property law, one of the first laws of the newly born state, enabled the state to declare the land and homes of the refugees who fled to nearby "hostile" countries to be state property, and many of those neighborhoods were occupied by newly arrived Jewish immigrants—like Wadi Salib in Haifa, which became populated by Moroccan Jews. In the first years of the state, martial law was imposed on the Palestinian population that survived the Nakba. Military rule enabled the state to impose curfews, confiscation of property, demolition of buildings, expulsion of residents, expropriation of land, and restriction of movement. The point was to colonize the land as much as possible, maximizing the Jewish settlements and restricting the Palestinians. Martial law ended in 1966, and a year later, in 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. The West Bank and Gaza Strip, unlike the territories occupied in 1948, never officially became part of Israel, and their occupation was supposed to be "temporary" until a future agreement was reached between Israel and a Palestinian leadership. Military rule was established in these territories, and many Jewish settlements were built, some of them populated by the most extreme racist fringes of the Israeli far right.

The history of resistance amongst 48 Palestinians is characterized by annual commemoration of events signifying moments of Palestinian collective courage and resilience. Other than the Nakba day, commemorated every year in May 15, one such event is Land Day. In March 30, 1976, the Palestinians of Galilee and the Negev rose up against a plan of land expropriation by Israel intended to promote the Judaization of Galilee and steal land from Palestinians. A general strike was announced, and riots occurred across many towns and villages in both 48 and 67 Palestine. The police couldn't handle the events and the army went in. Six protesters were killed, three of them in the town of Sakhnin. Ever since then, the event is commemorated annually with marches and events across Palestine.

Another important sequence in the history of popular resistance is known as the October 2000 events. During the second intifada, the protests that started in Umm al-Fahm spread to many cities across the land, with massive riots and fierce fighting against police forces. In Wadi Arra, Nazareth, Haifa, Jaffa, the Galilee, the Negev, and many other Arab and mixed villages and cities, protesters blocked roads, threw Molotov cocktails and stones, and attacked police stations. That was one of the many times that Palestinians showed unity, with the Palestinians of 48 and 67 fighting together, as one people, despite all the attempts of Israelization and division. But there was also a massive mobilization in reaction. Mobs of Israeli Jews rioted in Jewish and mixed cities, attacking Palestinians and Palestinian businesses. Twelve Palestinians were killed during the events, and one Israeli Jew. Despite investigations, no one was ever punished for the killings, and all the cases against the police officers who were suspected of the killings were closed.

After October 2000, many of the youths in 48 Palestine turned to crime, and weapons begun to appear in Arab villages, towns, and neighborhoods. The issue of criminal activity is very painful and destructive in 48 Palestine; it is literally killing the society from the inside. In 2020, 113 Palestinians were killed in gang-related activity; criminal organizations have literally taken over

towns and villages. Just a few months ago, there were protests against violence in Arab towns, and some of them were attacked by police. A huge number of weapons are located in Palestinian towns, and it seems that the state is completely happy about it. They will intervene as soon as Jews are threatened and make it into a terrorist situation, but they allow the Arabs to kill each other. Many youths without a future and nowhere to go are turning to crime, and the criminal lifestyle has become some kind of subculture. The issue of weapons will play a big part in the current uprising.

This year, in Jaffa, on April 18, 2021, a rabbi and a manager of a Jewish yeshiva were attacked by local Palestinians. This yeshiva is what's known in Israel as a "Torah nucleus"—these are groups of settlers and right-wing activists, usually from the West Bank, who are coming to Palestinian neighborhoods and mixed cities in order to establish synagogues and yeshivas and build Jewish communities as a colonization and Judaization campaign in the area. It's important to mention that the yeshiva was built in Ajami, one of the last remaining Palestinian neighborhoods in Jaffa. The history of the Palestinians in Jaffa, like anywhere else in Palestine, is a story of dispossession and exclusion, and in Jaffa, this was coupled with gentrification and crime. The media presented the event as a senseless attack against a Jewish rabbi; riots broke out in which local Palestinians attacked the police and defended their neighborhoods.

In order to understand the current explosion, one must understand the importance of Jerusalem to the Palestinian collective consciousness. The city is a massive stronghold of resistance, seen as a place to defend at all costs. Many mass uprisings have broken out in Jerusalem, including the second intifada, which broke out after Ariel Sharon, then the minister of defense, visited the Al-Aqsa compound, which was seen as a serious provocation.

To understand Jerusalem is to understand a big part of the Zionist mentality and the Palestinian resistance. After the occupation in 1948, the city was divided into the western part, under Israeli control, and an eastern part, under Jordanian control. After the occupation of 1967, the city "reunited," and the Palestinians received permanent residency. The "reunification" of Jerusalem is celebrated annually in Israel; the Hebrew date of the occupation is a national holiday, marked by a "flag parade" in which many Israelis march from the city center and right-wing participants enter the Muslim quarter of the old city, waving flags and shouting racist slogans, under full police protection.

Jerusalem is a laboratory for apartheid and settler colonialism. The Palestinian neighborhoods in the eastern part of town are completely neglected. Refugee camps inhabited by those who fled in 1948 and are forbidden to return to their original homes are located near poor Arab neighborhoods and Jewish settlements, surrounded by walls. These are dense, poverty-stricken ghettos; some parts aren't even connected to the sewage system. Construction permits are almost never given to Arabs, so most construction is illegal. In the midst of all this, there are racist Israeli settlers with a clear plan to Judaize East Jerusalem and make it like the West.

The Al-Aqsa compound, or the Temple Mount, is one of the most explosive regions in the world. The mosque, one of the holiest places in Islam, is a stronghold of resistance, a national symbol, and an area of ethnic tension. After Israeli police decided to put barriers at Bab al'Amud, one of the entrances, and to restrict the number of worshippers to 10,000, riots broke out, with many of the protesters attacking police, setting streets on fire, and damaging security cameras. The barriers were eventually removed. At the same time, a few Palestinians uploaded TikTok videos with a nationalistic character showing them attacking Jews in the city, and far-right mobs were organized to attack Palestinians in the market and the city center. Lehava, a far-right fascist

organization, led a racist march from the city center to Bab al'Amud, chanting "Death to Arabs," and were blocked by police near their destination. Riot cops entered Al-Aqsa mosque on May 9 and 10, and in the intense riots that broke out, at least 12 cops and more than 215 people were injured.

In Sheikh Jarrah, a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem, Israeli settlers have been trying to Judaize the area and evict the Palestinians for more than a decade. Extremist Jewish settlements exist in other Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, like Silwan and Abu Tor, where they are completely protected by Israeli police and armed thugs. Religious and nationalist settler organizations, backed by wealthy donors from abroad, mainly American Jews, are engaging in legal battles against Palestinian communities and property via the Israeli judicial system.

Sheikh Jarrah is a very old neighborhood in Jerusalem, dating to the 12th century. During the 1950s, while the area was under the control of Jordan, the Jordanian government housed Palestinian refugees there who had fled from the 1948 occupation and Nakba. The current dispute began in 2001, when Israeli settlers broke inside a sealed section of the Al-Kurd family's house and refused to leave, arguing that the house was once owned by Jews. The Jerusalem District Court ruled in their favor. The court ruling was based on an Ottoman-era bill of sale, the authenticity of which was challenged in 2009 on the grounds that the building had only been rented to the Sephardi Community Committee, the Jewish group that allegedly owned the property. Moreover, the Palestinian families and their supporters maintained that the Ottoman documents that Israel's Supreme Court had validated were in fact forgeries. The Al-Kurds were evicted in 2008.

In August 2009, the al-Hanoun and al-Ghawi families were evicted from two homes in Sheikh Jarrah and Jewish families moved in, based on a Supreme Court ruling that the property was owned by Jews. This provoked outrage from all over the world. During 2010, weekly demonstrations were held in the neighborhood by Israeli left-wing activists and local Palestinians. The global reaction and the struggle were able to prevent further evictions until 2017, when another Palestinian family was evicted—the Shamasna family. During the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, the Israeli courts ruled that eight families, roughly 500 people, are to be evicted. The verdict has been appealed, and the legal hearing has been postponed several times due to the riots occurring in the neighborhood and international pressure.

The ground was ripe for insurrection.

## **Timeline of the Revolt**

This timeline will concentrate mainly on events in Haifa, but will mention important events in other cities that were central to the current uprising, including Jerusalem/Al-Quds, Lydd, Akko, Jaffa, and Ramle. Some events will be missing. I'm not a journalist; this might not be perfect, but these are the events as I experienced them. As I'm writing this, the situation has "calmed down," but events are still occurring, Gaza is a living hell, fascists are still attacking people in small groups, and state repression campaigns are ongoing.

### **May 9**

As I approached the German Colony, a big crowd had already gathered to protest the latest invasion of Al-Aqsa and the planned evictions in Sheikh Jarrah. The German Colony is a big

neighborhood in the middle of the city, in proximity to Wadi Nisnas, that got its name from being a German Templers settlement during the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. It became a kind of Bohemian center for many Palestinian youths in the north of Israel, with many restaurants, cafés, and clubs. The main street, which used to be called Carmel Boulevard and is now called “Ben Gurion” Boulevard, leads to the Bahai temple, and the square in the middle of it, known by Palestinians as Ha’asir square, is a regular site for pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The HIRAK, which literally means “movement” in Arabic, is a decentralized movement of local cells that resemble the model of affinity groups. Different HIRAK groups are active in many towns and coordinate with each other. HIRAK Haifa called the people to gather at 8 pm, and a few hundred people answered the call.

As we moved from the square to the road in order to block it, police rushed to the front to make a line in order to prevent us from marching. People turned back and started marching to the other side instead, which made the police run to the other side as well, and then people quickly turned again and started marching in the intended direction. The cops eventually made lines on both sides to kettle the demonstrators. The Shabab were clearly visible—the Palestinian youth, known as the more militant resistance. The atmosphere was very tense; people stood in front of the police line, waving flags and singing songs. Some protesters tried to push through police line and were violently arrested. The situation became even tenser as people started to shout slurs at the police and to give them the finger. Then things became chaotic.

As the stun grenades were fired directly toward the crowd and people ran to take cover, the sounds of bombing could be heard from miles away. The yards of restaurants became a place to take shelter, and stones and empty bottles were thrown at the cops. A trash bin was set on fire. Fifteen people were arrested that day. For me, it was war zone, but it was only a taste of what was to come in the following days.

At the same time, in Nazareth, a similar protest was taking place in front of a police station. Tires were burned to serve as barricades, and clashes with cops led to a few arrests.

## **May 10**

I arrived late at the German Colony that day, when the riot was near its end, but I did see the Shabab taking over Carmel Boulevard, throwing stones and setting burning barricades in nearby streets. Fifteen arrests had already been made. At the same time, I learned that throughout the country, the situation had escalated, beginning to resemble a mass popular uprising.

It was Jerusalem day, the national day celebrating the occupation of the eastern part of town in 1967 and the so-called “reunification” of the city, and the annual flag parade was supposed to march from the city center in the west through the old city in the east, during the riots in Bab al’Amud and Sheikh Jarrah, and the police invasion of Al-Aqsa. The city completely exploded. Hundreds rioted in the Al-Aqsa compound. Lynching attempts took place [in this region, the word “lynching” describes a group of people beating up one person, sometimes killing them, otherwise severely injuring them]. Around 5 pm, Hamas announced from Gaza that Israel had one hour to evict all cops from Al-Aqsa and Sheikh Jarrah. As the hour passed, at 6:02 pm, sirens were heard in Jerusalem, and rockets were fired from Gaza toward the city. Participants in the flag parade ran for cover. The police, in contrast to recent years, announced that entering the old city will be forbidden, and blocked marchers trying to enter.

In response to the shooting, Israel announced a military operation in Gaza, and military airplanes began to bomb the Gaza Strip, causing mass destruction, killing, and displacement. Hamas in return launched rockets at Israeli cities, chiefly causing damage to buildings, but also a few deaths.

In Lod, also known among Palestinians as Al-Lydd, a historically Palestinian, now mixed city in the center, not far away from Tel Aviv, the situation reached the scale of full-blown ethnic riots. Palestinians set fires to cars, synagogues, municipal buildings, and a military preparatory school. During the riots, a Palestinian was shot dead by a Jewish resident. Riots occurred also outside the hospital. In the nearby Ramle, synagogues and a graveyard were also burned, stores were looted, and stones and fireworks were fired toward cops and random people. While it's very hard to justify some of the actions of the Shabab, and they unfortunately had a clearly nationalistic and religious character, it's important to mention that a lot of the synagogues that were damaged at the beginning were those of the right-wing Torah nucleus cells, with a clear mission to Judaize mixed cities. It's also important to understand the context in the cities of Lydd and Ramle, and how ghettoized the segregated Palestinian communities are there.

Riots also took place in Jaffa, with protesters throwing stones and firing fireworks at police, and all across the north, in Galilee and the Negev. More than 100 people were arrested, and police stations were burned.

## **May 11**

The fascist reaction began. As Jewish and Arab left-wing activists gathered for a non-violent peace demonstration at the UNESCO Square at the German Colony leading to the Bahai Temple, far-right protesters gathered in front of them, shouting "Death to Arabs!" and accusing them of being traitors. Police separated the two groups. Down the street, at Ha'asir square, Palestinians had already gathered and the energy was high. One Shabab youth climbed the pole of a street-light to raise a Palestinian flag. Riot police brought horses and a water cannon to deal with the protesters. The stun grenades, as usual, came out of nowhere, and the neighborhood turned into a war zone.

Some restaurants and businesses in the area opened their doors in solidarity to people fleeing the cops. The Shabab fought bravely against the police that night. Dozens of trash bins were burned, streets were barricaded, and for a few hours, the police lost control. Allenby Street leading to Wadi Nisnas was literally on fire. Wadi Nisnas itself was fully barricaded, and Shabab youth stood on the square leading from the German Colony, guarding against police invasion. It felt like a liberated territory, a temporary autonomous zone, in which the state had to retreat, if only for the night. The tear gas clouds were definitely felt, but people held their ground.

In the main street of the German Colony, the police allowed right-wing fascists to march through, shouting racist slurs, under heavy protection. In the video documenting the incident, cops are shown chasing a demonstrator and violently breaking into a house in a nearby street.

In Lydd, during the funeral of the Palestinian killed the previous day by a Jewish resident, the riots continued, and a cop was injured by a stone thrown at him. More cars and synagogues were damaged, and a few Jewish residents were evacuated in fear of violence. Border patrol entered the city, and there was talk about bringing the army in. A civil emergency was declared, giving more authority to the police and security agencies.

Israeli riot police in Lydd.



Right-wing protesters came to the city. In Ramle, Palestinians burned parts of the local market. At the same time, fascist mobs mobilized to come to the city, with leading figures like Itamar Ben-Gvir and the Kahanist far-right organization Lehava [for an explanation of Kahanism, see the appendix]. The fascists attacked people suspected of being Arabs, lynched an Arab driver, threw stones at Arab cars, and tried to enter a Palestinian neighborhood. In Akko, Palestinians rioted in the old city, burning local businesses and a police station.

## **May 12**

Fascists gathered in Kiryat Eliezer, a mostly Jewish neighborhood near the German Colony, to march to Wadi Nisnas and attack Palestinians. They were there as a part of a nationwide anti-Palestinian mobilization. Far-right Telegram and WhatsApp groups appeared, urging people to bring knuckle-dusters, knives, baseball bats, and other “cold weapons,” and to prepare for battle. A call went out for people to gather in Wadi Nisnas to help defend the neighborhood, and youth gathered at the entrances from the early afternoon. Police blocked the fascists from reaching Wadi Nisnas, but they caused damage to businesses owned by Arabs on their way, attacked Palestinian drivers and passers, damaged cars, threw stones at Arab homes, and shouted racist slurs. The police attacked the people gathered in Wadi Nisnas with tear gas and stun grenades. It was impossible to reach the neighborhood, as I arrived too late and the whole area was completely blocked by riot police. Clashes also erupted at the German Colony, as had become a daily occurrence.

In Bat Yam, a fascist mob that tried to reach Jaffa rioted, smashing the windows of a business owned by an Arab and brutally lynching an Arab driver, which was caught on live television.

In Lydd, a curfew was announced starting at 8 pm; no one was allowed to enter the city or go out of his or her house. Despite this, massive numbers of far-right gangs, some of them settlers from the West Bank, came to the city and were allowed to walk around freely and attack Palestinians. Palestinians who gathered at the local mosque were attacked by riot police, border patrol, and fascists. Gunfights were reported throughout the night between settlers and Palestinians.

A cop was shot and injured in Ramle. Fascist anti-Arab mobs and attacks also took place in Hadera, Natanya, and some other Jewish cities. Three Israelis were lynched by Palestinians in Akko.

## **May 13**

Groups of Shabab in the German Colony, downtown, Wadi Nisnas, and Hadar threw stones and Molotov cocktails, smashed banks and businesses, erected barricades, fought the police, and damaged streetlight poles, traffic lights, and busses. An elderly Israeli woman was injured from stones thrown at a bus. At the same time, people were now gathering daily at the courthouse to wait for arrestees to be released.

In Lydd, the curfew continued for another night, and street fights between police, Palestinians, and fascist mobs ensued. Settlers burned down an Arab store, while Palestinians burned a truck and a community center. An Israeli was stabbed. Gun fights between Palestinians and settlers were reported. The riots also continued in Ramle.

These were pretty much the main days of the events. During the following days, the riots largely died out. Protests and attacks continued on a smaller scale. Attention was largely directed

at rockets flying towards Israeli cities and the massacre in Gaza. I touched on the main events in 48 Palestine, but barely mentioned the Negev and Galilee, which bravely resisted the state as well, the parallel uprising in the West Bank, and protests by Palestinian refugees at Israeli borders in Lebanon and Jordan and embassies and consulates everywhere.

The following days were characterized by heavy repression, conducted by the police and the infamous Shin Bet, the Israeli security agency. Cops raided people's homes, looking for anyone involved in rioting or even in organized protests. They raided the homes of members of HIRAK Haifa and made arrests, as people were thinking about how to commemorate the upcoming Nakba day on May 15.

On Nakba day, a big protest took place in Sakhnin, ending peacefully. The fascist mobs continued as well, but after this point, they all went underground. Some Arab houses in Haifa were marked, causing some residents to leave the city in fear. For some, this was reminiscent of the practices during the Nakba—causing fear and panic among the indigenous population to make them leave.

## **May 14**

Palestinians were forming autonomous self-defense committees. From a statement released on Facebook by Khulud Khamis, a Palestinian from Haifa:

This morning (Friday 14, May 2021), I woke up to the news that 38 Palestinian youth were arrested during the night in Haifa. Some of them were minors, who were interrogated without parental accompaniment, while others with injuries were denied medical care. Lawyers from Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, had been waiting all night to meet with them, but as of that morning, they were denied the opportunity to provide any legal consultation.

These last few days have been almost surreal in Haifa. I have never witnessed anything like this happening in my beloved city. For the second night in a row, about 200 Jewish settler extremists, calling themselves “The Citizens’ Army,” have stormed Palestinian neighborhoods in Haifa. They are armed with bats and other weapons, many of them with military training background, and are highly organized. In the afternoon, small groups are seen entering buildings and marking with a red marker doors belonging to Palestinian residents. They have vandalized dozens of cars, attacked Palestinians in the streets, and attempted to break into the homes of Palestinians. Similar attacks have been carried out in other mixed cities, such as Lydd, Akka, Jerusalem.

Palestinian neighborhood and community representatives met yesterday to discuss protection tactics, because we have seen how the police not only hasn't intervened to stop these attacks, they have enabled them and backed them. Instead of stopping the settlers' attacks, the police attacked Palestinian protesters whose only crime was defending their homes.

After the first night, where we witnessed the lack of police action, some Israeli allies met with both the Mayor of Haifa and with the police. They basically told them there is nothing they can do.

We are not protected in our homes, towns, and cities, the violence is only escalating, Gaza is being attacked, children, women, and men are being killed, residents of Sheikh Jarrah are still facing forced expulsion, and the world remains silent, turning a blind eye.

The Israeli media is of course successfully portraying the Palestinian citizens as the instigators and hooligans in this equation, while almost completely ignoring the extremist settlers' attacks. This only plays into the hands of Netanyahu, who has repeatedly failed to form a government following the four elections held during the last year and a half. As the situation stands right now, he has yet again a big chance of forming a government.

Palestinian citizens in Yaffa, Akka, Haifa, Lydd, and other places are forming self-protection committees. Lawyers, physicians, psychologists, and people to patrol our neighborhoods to protect us from the vicious attacks we are witnessing these past few days (my own testimony from what has happened in Haifa is in my previous post.

We are calling for immediate international intervention to stop this madness. We have been left to fend for ourselves, completely unprotected. Act now.

And on a more personal note:

Friends who are speaking up, protesting, taking action, resisting: you are on the right side of justice.

"Friends" who are silent: your silence is deafening.

And don't you dare ask me what you can do or tell me that you feel helpless and there's nothing you can do. There's always something you can do. If you are ignorant of what is happening, educate yourself and start taking action. This is on you. You cannot say I didn't know.

## **May 18**

A general strike was announced in 48 Palestine. In Haifa, during the day, many events were held in Wadi Nisnas to celebrate Palestinian culture, including songs, live shows, drawings and activities for children. At 6 pm, a protest was called in Hadar, on the road leading to Wadi Nisnas. Heavy riot police came prepared. As people begun marching, the police quickly blocked the road, preventing them from marching. People sang songs and celebrated in the street instead. Despite the tension, the gathering ended peacefully.

In the evening, a Palestinian near the German Colony reported that right-wing racists had marked his building, thrown stones and Molotov cocktails, and shouted racist slurs, then ran away.

In Jerusalem, during a demonstration supporting the general strike, police attacked people in Bab Al'Amud and riots occurred in Sheikh Jarrah.

## May 19

In Umm al-Fahm, Mohammad Kiwan, a 17-year-old Palestinian, injured during the protests the previous week, was declared dead. Riots erupted at the entrance to the city.

## May 20-23

On **May 21**, a ceasefire was announced between Israel and Hamas, ending twelve days of military operations in Gaza and rocket launchings. During riots in Jerusalem, police once again entered the Al-Aqsa compound, repeating the provocation that had escalated the situation in the first place.

The state initiated an intense oppressive campaign intended to terrorize those dared to resist. About 2000 people were arrested. On the night of **May 23**, Israeli police announced operation “Law and Order,” aiming to arrest 500 people in 48 hours, in addition to approximately 1500 people who had already been arrested. In raids across the land, people were arrested on charges ranging from giving the finger to a cop<sup>1</sup> and online posts to and rioting. Arrests still continue to this day.

## The Youth Move Forward

The Palestinians feel betrayed and abandoned by the world. People only remember them when there’s an ongoing genocidal campaign, and even then, everybody is busy talking about how “complicated” the situation is. I’m not sure if they have anyone to trust, including their own “leadership.”

The Shabab, the youth fighting in the streets, the kids erecting barricades against the police and setting trash bins on fire, are completely alienated from any form of political force; they work in small informal groups, and many of them don’t give a fuck about politics at all. They come from the far edges of Palestinian society in 48, the direct consequence of the Zionist attempt to reduce this society to internal chaos. They are gangsters, drug dealers, outlaws of any kind, youth without a future from the poorest villages, towns, and neighborhoods of 48 Palestine, the lumpenproletariat, and—the most important thing—they are completely uncontrollable. The traditional politics of organizations, political parties, respectable religious leaders, and NGOs means nothing to them.

The new generation in Palestine has nothing left to lose. Even according to Israel’s infamous Shin Bet, they really are ungovernable. Whenever a riot or an uprising gets out of control, the authorities and security agencies look for “responsible” adults, respected “community leaders” to pacify the situation. But when you invest so much power in breaking a society from the inside to such an extent, you create an enemy that you can’t negotiate with, because he has zero fear of you and nothing to rely on or hope for. There is no going back to normal.

And they are being completely vilified. The media propaganda machine treats them as nothing but criminals, terrorists, savages, bloodthirsty pogromists, and they don’t get to have a voice. The riots are presented as nothing more than an outburst of violent anger from some hooligans, with the idea that our police force, intelligence agencies, and prison system will deal with them. It looks as though everybody decided to continue to push them as low as possible, to sweep them

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<sup>1</sup> Israeli police are very sensitive.

under the rug, to treat them as nothing more than monstrous murderers until the next outburst. Zionist apartheid is also a class system, and they hate poor Palestinians the most.

The uprising is also, of course, a form of class warfare, beyond the regular scope of ethnic conflict. I've read somewhere that during the first intifada, in its early days, many of the youth who revolted in Gaza and beyond weren't very political and most of the attacks were directed against richer Palestinians. This goes way back to the great Arab revolt of 1936, when many of the attacks involved the Falahis, the peasant population of Palestine, acting against the urban elite. This dimension of the class struggle within Palestinian society is always erased from history, in favor of a more simplified ethnic conflict of Arabs against Jews.

This class struggle is always pushed aside once the big parties, the militarist factions, manage to take over; the first intifada, for example, was shut down by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It was quickly transformed from a popular mass struggle to a top-down controlled opposition in the hands of a few corrupted bureaucrats. As we all know, once the militias and the professional revolutionaries take over, the people become spectators in their own "liberation," and the mass popular appeal of the resistance is lost. The PLO and Fatah crushed the intifada in order to get the Oslo accords going, which divided the West Bank into small cantons and introduced the so-called Palestinian Authority. Fatah became the de facto long arm of Israel and the occupation, managing the apartheid from within. A similar (though not identical) process is taking place now with Hamas, in my opinion.

While I was composing this, the focus shifted completely to rockets striking Israeli cities from Gaza. Nine people in Israel died from Hamas rockets—including Palestinians, like in the village of Dahamash near Ramle. A few Hamas rockets reached as far as the West Bank. Rockets also came from Lebanon. The protests largely waned, and we don't see large riots anymore. One can't help but feel that Hamas and the militarist factions interrupted the birth of a popular, mass movement in the streets, in the inner cities of the occupation, which could have been capable of creating real damage to the stability of the state.

We can clearly see who benefits from this. The anarchy within Israeli cities is over, and Israel can sell the same old story to the world about us fighting Islamist jihadist terrorists who are shooting rockets at our cities. It's a much more convenient story, and much easier to deal with. Perhaps the strategy of weakening the secular revolutionary Marxist fronts of the 1980s and strengthening Hamas has paid off. Reactionary ideologies are easier to control, and whenever needed, they can take over the struggle and kill mass movements.

In this system, everybody plays his part. The left does what the left always, historically, does in times of social upheaval: try to pacify the resistance and absorb its energy in order to direct it towards more "acceptable" (i.e., ineffective) terrain. The same old outdated tactics, boring predictable demonstrations, "non-violent" nonsense, and empty talks about shallow "co-existence," peace, and democracy. There's nothing really to expect from what's left of the Israeli Jewish left, but even the Arab political parties have proved to be completely disconnected from what's happening in the streets.

The communist "radical leftist" Hadash party from the Joint Arab List and the Ra'am party both got into the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) in the elections of March 23. They urged people to protest lawfully and refrain from violence. No wonder the youth are completely alienated from them. For 48 Palestinians, the Arab parties in the Knesset are the same thing that the Fatah and the PA are for 67 (West Bank) Palestinians: another face of the occupation, sellouts, collaborators, conflict managers, a tool of pacification for the regime. Just like Syriza in Greece or Podemos in

Spain, they appear in mass movements to appropriate the language and the energy of the people revolting in order to channel all of it back into acting within the system—and of course, in the moment of truth, they will completely betray people. I doubt they have any credibility left now.

It has almost become cliché to mention this, but the problem of the Palestinians is not just the far-right assholes, but Zionism. Israeli racist mobs are the direct consequence of a country established on deeply racist roots—a settler colonial project built on the ruins of villages and the driving away of the indigenous population, of a Jewish supremacist state—at the expense of everyone else. Israel is probably one of the worst examples of a nation state as a way of solving things for oppressed people. It's a lot easier for Israelis to get disgusted by far-right hooligans attacking a Palestinian, while the IDF's genocidal campaign in Gaza (let alone the violent birth of this state) either goes unquestioned or is completely accepted. The IDF is the "people's army," and it is putting the platform of "Death to Arabs" into practice more efficiently than any grassroots fascist ever could.

Right now, the Gaza Strip is completely in ruins. Military airplanes drop bombs on clinics, a media tower fell down, entire neighborhoods are erased. The situation is unbearable. As I'm writing this, about 250 people have been killed and thousands are displaced. Gaza has been under siege since 2007; it was a hell on earth before the current massacre, the biggest open prison on earth, and now it has reached a situation of human catastrophe. This is mainstream Zionism, not the extremist edges.

We hear a lot of talk about "co-existence" lately, especially in mixed cities like Haifa—about how the riots have damaged the "co-existence" between Jews and Arabs. This is a myth. This co-existence is a coded way to describe living under Jewish supremacy, implying that the Palestinians should keep quiet and erase themselves in order to fit in. The Israeli population that celebrated "Independence Day" just a month earlier will never see that as a provocation in a historically Palestinian city that suffered one of the most brutal attacks during the Nakba—but if Palestinians dare to show that they exist, they will pay severely. Co-existence is a counter-insurgency operation.

It's hard to predict what will happen next. The Shabab fought bravely against the police and liberated some territories, temporary autonomous zones in which the state wasn't present for just one night and you could walk freely, beyond clouds of tear gas, and imagine a different reality. But they should not be free from criticism. Many of the attacks had a nationalistic character, and they did some things that are hard to defend. Attacking synagogues, busses, and random people wasn't the best approach to the situation. What we desperately need right now is a joint insurrection, co-resistance, involving Jews and Arabs and all the people of this land, against all the authorities that keep us down and prevent us from seeing each other as fellow human beings. In the spaces of revolt, we must create autonomous liberated territories in which we could construct new ways of seeing each other and the world around us—to reinvent living, sharing a space as equals.

Unfortunately, for the time being, this is a fantasy. Too much blood has been spilled for people to trust each other. You can feel the tension everywhere—we live together in this city, but invisible mental borders divide us constantly.

The situation in the so-called United States inspires me. The George Floyd rebellion was a real, diverse insurrection. Black and white working people found each other in the streets and fought together against the system that exploits them. I've even heard that the first guy who set fire to the police precinct in Minneapolis was a white dude. This is a huge improvement for a place like

the United States, and the conditions are now ripe for a multi-racial revolt of people fighting as one.

So everything is possible, I guess. But it's hard to remain hopeful. It feels like we have a long way to go. Still, some people are not waiting. Connections are being formed every second under the daily apartheid reality, and visible and invisible borders are being smashed as we speak. It's also important to note that we don't have much time—in view of climate crisis and the worsening ecological situation, future intifadas will be fought for resources, clean water, and breathable air, as much as for land.

I'll finish with a quote from *Palestine, Mon Amour* by Alfredo M. Bonnano:

There is no prospect of peace in sight. The ideal solution, at least as far as all those who have the freedom of peoples at heart can see, would be generalized insurrection. In other words, an intifada starting from the Israeli people that is capable of destroying the institutions that govern them and of proposing peace based on collaboration and mutual respect to the Palestinian people directly, without intermediaries. But for the time being, this perspective is only a dream. We must prepare for the worst.

## Appendix: A Beginners' Field Guide to Israeli Fascism

Much like the American and European far right, Israeli fascists became much more decentralized over the last few years, going from big organizations to informal organizing, mainly online and via apps like Telegram. Many of the mobs and mobilizations to attack Palestinians during the revolts don't have names, or else the names changed constantly, as they went underground once they were exposed. I will still mention the big and well-known organizations, as they continue to be a force in mobilizations, spreading the propaganda of hate and serving as a gateway to more underground ways of organizing. I think it's important for people abroad to be familiar with Israeli far-right groups, organizations, symbols, and ideologies, because they operate in Jewish communities everywhere. It's a good way to keep our communities safe and to provide protection and solidarity to local Palestinians and refugees.

**Kahanism**—An extremist Jewish ideology named after rabbi Meir Kahane, an American rabbi active in Israel mainly during the 1980s, and a leading figure in the country's far-right politics. He proposed to expel mainly Arabs and all other non-Jews from Israel in order to “purify” the land and establish an halacha (Jewish law) monarchy under the biblical greater Israel borders. Under his political party, Kach, he proposed racist laws that were reminiscent of the Nuremberg Laws until the party was outlawed in 1985 for racism. Kahane was eventually assassinated in New York City by an Egyptian-American, but his thought and ideology are still alive in today's Israel and getting stronger.

Kahanist factions exist in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, especially among the extremist settlers of Hebron and Kiryat Arba, and they have been associated with numerous terrorist attacks and violent campaigns against Palestinians. Some (in)famous Kahanists include Baruch Goldstein, who opened fire on Muslim worshipers in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron in 1994, killing 29 people. Kahanist terrorists and militias continue to commit violent acts against Palestinians in the West Bank, Israel, and abroad. Kahanist organizations around the world include the Jewish Defense League and the Jewish Task Force.

**Lehava**—A large Kahanist organization. The Hebrew acronym of “for the prevention of assimilation in the holy land.” Known for targeting mixed relationships, especially between Jewish women and Arab men, for sending thugs to threaten and attack Palestinians dating Jews, and for attacking Palestinians in the streets of Jerusalem. Many of the leading figures live in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Lehava organized the racist “Death to Arabs” march from West to East Jerusalem on April 22, and many of the mobs looking for Palestinians in Jerusalem to attack in the days leading to the escalation are connected to the organization. They have some chapters abroad.

**Otzma Yehudit**—A Kahanist, ultra-nationalist far-right political party. Many of its members are students and followers of rabbi Meir Kahane. This party usually fails to enter the Knesset during elections, but one of its leading members, Itamar Ben-Gvir, entered the Knesset during the last election, while running with the Religious Zionist List. Ben Gvir contributed his own part to the escalation by putting his “office” in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and taking part in mobilizing lynch mobs in Ramle.

**Hilltop Youth**—A religious and nationalist subculture of settler youth in the West Bank. Nicknamed after their habit of constructing outposts on top of the West Bank hills. It involves some Kahanists, some other kinds of religious fundamentalism and ultra-nationalism, all violent and dangerous. Some extremely violent terrorist undergrounds have emerged from these groups, such as the Bat Ayin underground, which tried to bomb a Palestinian girl’s school in East Jerusalem. Hilltop Youth settlers were seen during the current mobilization of fascist mobs, especially in Lydd, where they were armed and attacking Palestinians alongside police, despite the “curfew.”

**Im Tirzu**—A more secular Neo-Zionist fascist organization, built around student cells on university campuses. Im Tirzu focuses on ultra-nationalist activity, Nakba denial, and defamation and legal campaigns against leftists, refugees, migrants, and human rights organizations. After they sued a Facebook group for calling them fascists, Israeli court said that they do “point to certain similarities to fascism.” So they are fascist even by the account of the Israeli justice system, which is quite an achievement.



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The following is an anonymous submission from Occupied Palestine, documenting and discussing the events of the past month in Haifa, Jerusalem, and the surrounding area. For some background on anarchism in the region, you could consult our earlier interview on the subject.

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