

Portland State University

PDXScholar

School of Social Work Faculty Publications and Presentations

School of Social Work

12-21-2021

Colonial Necrocapitalism, State Secrecy, and the Palestinian Freedom Tunnel

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Stephanie Wahab
Portland State University, wahabs@pdx.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/socwork_fac



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Citation Details

Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. & Wahab, S. (2021). [POST-PRINT] Colonial Necrocapitalism, State Secrecy, and the Palestinian Freedom Tunnel. *Social and Health Sciences*. Special Issue: Necrocapitalism and Psychic Violence, 19(2). <https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/SaHS/issue/view/426>

This Post-Print is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Social Work Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Colonial necrocapitalism, state secrecy and the Palestinian freedom tunnel

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

The Faculty of Law, The Hebrew
University of Jerusalem; Global Chair in
Law, Queen Mary University of London
nadera.kevorkian@mail.huji.ac.il

Stéphanie Wahab

Portland State University, School of
Social Work
wahabs@pdx.edu

Abstract

Secrecy and the use of “secret information” as capital in the hands of the state is mobilised by affective racialised machineries, cultivated on “security” grounds. Securitised secrecy is an assemblage of concealed operations juxtaposing various forms of invasions and dispossessions. It is a central strategy in the politico-economic life of the state to increase its scope of domination. Secrecy is used and abused to entrap and penetrate political subjects and entities. This article explores the necrocapitalist utilisation of secrecy embedded in the coloniser’s attempt to distort the mind of the colonised. Built from the voices of those affected by secrecy’s violent psychopolitical entrapment and penetrability, we expose the ways in which secrecy manufactures colonisers’ impunity and immunity. Further, we discuss the ruins that secrecy mislays, arguing as Fanon explained, that psychic ruins are common usage of colonial violence. In fact, Fanon (1963) argued that damaged personhood was central to the colonial order and its making. We conclude by insisting that ruins can also be sites of reflection and counteractions of life against the necrocapitalist violent machinery and ideology of the settler colonial state. Building on previous critical and decolonial theories, this essay argues that the coloniser’s yearning for destruction, coupled with the use of militarised “secret information”, constitutes colonial invisible criminalities to maim (Puar, 2015) and erase (Wolf, 2006). Militarised secrecy’s necrocapitalist assemblage takes us to one of the core dimensions of settler colonial ideology “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2003), that is, the elimination of the colonised, demolition of life and the psychic in which the colonialist “trades” and “sells” the machineries of elimination as combat proven. Examining secrecy and its eliminatory machineries exposes the colonialist’s brutality and the colonised’s unending capacity for resistance and the power of life. This essay hopes to expose the politics underpinning the way securitized secrecy is imagined, implemented and resisted.

Keywords: Secrecy, epistemic violence, refusal, settler colonial accumulation, affective colonization

Introduction

Even after they killed him, I mean after our son became a martyr...they kept invading our house in the middle of the night....claiming they possess secret information about him (the martyr son).....they arrested his brother and continued to claim they have secret information and his arrest is a matter of securitized crimes.....what they define as terrorism....I lost my temper....they killed him....want to kill us all, as long as they live...and their state continues to kill with their secrecy....(Ahmad, 54 years old, Jerusalem).

Ahmad's account reveals the obsession with secrecy, security and immunity in the settler colony. He testifies to the ways in which "secret information" is used to intensify the necropolitical (Mbembe, 2003) psychological warfare of the settler state and its systematic engagement in developing new modes of policing colonised others that move beyond Marx's primitive accumulation into what David Harvey (2003) termed "accumulation by dispossession".¹ Ahmad's narration reveals secrecy's power to accumulate dispossession and designate a more rigorous understanding of an ongoing process of dispossession. At the heart of this dispossession lies the anticipation to dominate via ongoing uprooting and dismemberment. From the home walls to walling land and life, and from the psychological to the social body, securitised secrecy reveals the relationality between necropenology and the "accumulation by dispossession" of the necrocapitalist regime of control. Necropenology "is a form of forced confinement of the living and dead colonised entities, in a frozen and freezing temporality and spatiality (confined to their dying presence). It is a form of carcerality masked by a structurally instituted racialised regime, authorised by a colonial legal system, and manifested through marking and conquering the flesh, body, and land. It is a fluid carcerality and an ever-changing penalty that produces an eliminatory social order" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2020b, p. 286). The necrocapitalist nature of necropenology in the settler colony (Lloyd & Wolfe, 2016) requires engagement with "accumulation by dispossession" and its psychosocial ramifications.

Ahmad concludes:

How else can they live....they can live only if they are killing us all....So, the new fashion claiming to possess secret information....secrets about the dead???? He is dead, no? They killed him???...But their psychological and political game of secrecy continues.....After all, it is their "security" (saying it sarcastically).

1 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 137–82. See also Glen Sean Coulthard's recent *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2014).

Thus, to critically analyse secrecy, we invoke necrocapitalism to illustrate a state's practices of accumulation, practices that "involve dispossession, death, torture, suicide, slavery, destruction of livelihoods, and the general management of violence" (Banerjee, 2008, p. 1548). To illustrate the necrocapitalist nature of the colonialist's militarised secret penetrabilities, we draw on empirical data collected from 32 Palestinians in Occupied East Jerusalem (OEJ) during 2019-2021, as well as from everyday lived experiences, observations and personal conversations with Palestinians living under occupation. Our Palestinian, indigenous, feminist epistemology guides our meaning-making process such that we position ourselves as co-constructors of knowledge with the individuals who shared personal narratives with us. Given the extremely sensitive nature of the participants' narratives, coupled with the potential risk that their disclosures pose to them by the state's security forces and governance, we've changed some details about their stories and locations, as well as (re)presented their voices with pseudonyms; moreover, all possible identifying details of the respondents have been deleted. A feminist ethic of care informed every step of the research, including our reflexive and collective meaning-making process. All who contributed to this research and manuscript identify as Palestinian, and all but one contributor live in Palestine. One contributor/author lives as part of the diaspora in the United States of America (USA). This paper discusses only a few of the themes we identified during the analysis.

What follows is a discussion on militarised secrecy, exposing its necrocapitalist and destructive yearnings, which are designed to dispossess and disorganise the colonised. We draw on a range of theoretical bodies of work, including but not limited to decolonial and anticolonial theories, critical race theory, post-structural feminism and psychoanalytic theory, to make meaning of the everyday, lived experiences of Palestinians living under settler colonialism's violent secrecy regime. The narratives offered in this essay are analysed with a focus on what we term "a trial to subjugate the colonised to affectual colonisation". We conclude with a discussion of the counterpolitics that decolonise secrecy.

We define "secrecy" as an assemblage of concealed operations, juxtaposing various forms of invasions and dispossessions. Secrecy, within the politico-economic life, constitutes a central strategy for increasing the scope of domination. Secrecy, used and abused by the state securitised apparatus, is skilled concealment of showing, owning or penetrating political subjects and entities. Secrecy, as Ahmad's narrative indicates, is a site of psychopolitical intimacies where forms of public/sovereign infiltration penetrate and intrude on social life, the body and the psyche. These intrusions facilitate the private/self-disciplining of bodies and affects that can result in physical and psychological death. Furthermore, secrecy is a mode of regulating access to knowledge, as well as a mode of constructing and maintaining individual, collective and national identities. Operating both affectively and politically (Davis & Manderson, 2014; Manderson et al., 2015; Taussig, 1999), secrecy carries the power to regulate social interactions and frame institutional practices with the mere promise of some unspecified knowledge, a mystery that sustains the theatre of the concealed.

Secrecy and “secret information” obtained violently by the state support, maintain and in some instances increase colonising power, enhancing a political monopoly within global capitalism. As Michael Taussig (1999) argues, the state’s use of secrecy and its revelation increases the power of secrecy. In the Palestinian context, secrecy’s domination facilitates Zionist logic and its policies of elimination (Abu-Laban et al., 2011; Sa’di, 2008; Tawil-Souri, 2016; Zureik, 2001). Secrecy also generates new articulations, a counterpolitics to take on a life against death, a life that is reproduced through a momentum within rhizomic networks in communities.

Impunity as immunity: Settler’s violence

To understand the significance of secrecy as a technology of settler colonial violence, an enactment of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988), we must understand that settler colonialism is intent and dependent on the erasure of the indigenous people (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2010). This erasure, in the context of Palestine, manifests through destruction, or at least attempts to destroy Palestinian land, culture, crops, resources, body, spirit and psyche.

Secrecy enacts the yearning for destruction of the colonised and it is cultivated and mobilised through the enhancement of exclusionary politics embedded within sacralised and securitised grounds. The month of September 2021 revealed various mobilisations of such yearning.

It was here in the old city of Jerusalem, from the window of my (NSK) house, during the Jewish holiday on 9 September 2021, that I saw a group of young Jewish settlers march past at midnight, chanting “*the people of Israel are alive, the people of Israel should not be afraid*”, “*death to the Arabs*” and “*may we erase the name Palestine*”. This happened as police escorted them along the edges of the streets for “safety” purposes. During this procession, “security” personnel invaded Palestinian homes in the neighborhood of Silwan in Occupied East Jerusalem (OEJ), attempting to “catch” children accused of security offences, namely stone throwing at settlers living in Palestinian neighborhoods. It is in the construction of both the burnt and dead other and the non-fearful sacred Jew that secrecy and security politics intersect to produce the exclusionary politics of colonial necrocapitalism. Describing how necrocapitalism is embedded in the coloniser’s yearning for destruction helps us to understand that when “they catch” the terrorist child with their surveillance, they simultaneously refrain from “catching” the sacred settler, instead mobilising the latter.

Amir shared his rage in the face of the settlers’ continued attacks on his small shop. When he complains to officials, even while using video footage of the attacks on his shop, the Israeli security respond with threats of secret information: “The Mukhabarat [intelligence apparatus] informed us you are hiding weapons.” The Mukhabarat carries secret information, always threatening with “secret information and data”. He explained, while crying:

I can't run my shop....a small shop here in the old city, when settlers steal from me, attack my kids, vandalize the area, spray on the wall "Mohammad is Dead"...all this is done under the surveillance cameras, and those settlers are never arrested, while my two sons, one is 14 and one is 12 were arrested over five times.....with the claim that the Mukhabarat informed me about my sons involvement with terrorism.....secret information, Mukhabarat, and terrorism is all we here....what about their crimes?

Another shop owner commented:

See, they burned alive a child...remember Mohammad Abu-Khadir? They burned an entire family in Douma.....burned them while asleep....what can I say....they stole our homeland...openly, developed surveillance devices, missiles and weapons.....killed, displaced and uprooted us.....with impunity.

Maybe if it weren't political or weren't the Aqsa, not closing a shop, one would be curious... But because it's related to something political, one is constantly afraid/fretful/frightened and even avoids thinking about it... I escape (bahrob) from thinking...but they return to us with their mukhabarat [intelligence]... They stole a homeland with their mukhabarat and the "secrecy" of their information...because whenever there's something that's political, they immediately come to clutch him and lock him/it up... whether it's yours or not yours (laughs)... It's never clear why, there's a lot of people who don't know why they're taken.

Amir's rage is directed equally at the settlers who attacked his shop and the Israeli security that refuse to validate or respond to his complaints, despite having video evidence. The oneness by which Amir analyses the violence inflicted by these joint forces reveals a form of racialised state violence, rooted in race thinking (Razack, 2008), where the Palestinian is excluded from protections of law and justice. This violation of the Palestinian's rights is represented not as violence but as "the law itself" (Razack, 2008). No wonder Amir's video evidence was dismissed! Race thinking functions to strip Palestinians bare of their legal rights, such that they can be annihilated with impunity. The threat of having secret information is constantly invoked by Israeli security to terrorise Palestinians. These threats function as a type of *affective demolition* (Joronen & Griffiths, 2019), facilitating anticipatory affective conditions. Through acts of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988), Israeli security deny the Palestinians access to legal and civil rights with threats of "secret information", casting them as impervious to their right to know, effectively erasing them as political subjects. This erasure lays the groundwork for all types of atrocities framed as legitimate measures to protect the lives of Israelis from "terrorists".

Nehal, a Palestinian psychotherapist, shared the following:

The recent events of the past years confirmed the state of paranoia, so this catastrophizing mode of thinking has gained validation, so in our head we're constantly on guard in expectation of the next blow.

Another Palestinian psychotherapist, Anan, states:

Also... people react in a hardhearted manner because they're always expecting the worse... People are constantly anticipating a catastrophe... Catastrophes rooted in "secret information" wreak havoc on one's spirit. Then they use our emotions as commodity and trade in us... and this can demolish one's spirit.

Within a necropolitical framework, the very existence of the Palestinian endangers the colonial state, and it follows that their death is necessary for the survival of the Israeli. Banerjee (2008, p. 1541) defines "necrocapitalism" as "contemporary forms of organizational accumulation that involve dispossession and the subjugation of life to the power of death". Necrocapitalism, operationalised through violent policing of Palestinians, goes beyond "subjugation of life to the power of death" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 39) by extending necropower as a means of accumulating capital and profit from the death (Banerjee, 2008). This is what David Harvey defines as "accumulation by dispossession", although the accumulated dispossession is not only from the living, their land, life and death, but also from their psyches. Thus, necrocapitalism and its exclusionary politics are central to understanding secrecy as security, whereby profit flows from visible and invisible violence, as well as the killing of the colonised, as a state of fear generates continuous insecurity, which in turn generates a demand for security goods (Green, 1999) within global capitalism.

As Shalhoub-Kevorkian has proposed in *Speaking Life* (2020a), Israel is one of the top arms exporters in the world. With the USA's consistent and inordinate financial allocation to Israel's military, the latter leads the world in border technology, military occupation and population control. The territories that Israel occupies are used not only to settle Jewish foreigners but also to turn land into showrooms for weaponry, technology and methods of domination and control. Israel commodifies its security practices within global capitalism and promotes them as goods to be sold to other regimes to be used on other oppressed populations (Graham, 2010). We agree with Laleh Khalili's suggestion that Palestine is a central node and "social laboratory" (Graham, 2010, p. 414) for the transmission of technologies of control and effective ruling practices between colonial metropolises and colonies. Israeli's economy is thus heavily dependent upon, and continuously sustained by, capitalising on the subjugation of Palestinians to these technologies of containment, power, incarceration and violence.

Following the argument that Israel's economy depends on the political and economic capital accumulated through its secrecy apparatus to control and erase Palestinians, the settler state reconstructs spaces like OEJ as spaces of death for Palestinians, where harassment, threats, interrogation and possible execution loom amidst everyday activities. The domination of every inch of space that the settler state can lay its hands on aims to sustain the military industrial maker. When industry stakeholders become implicated in moral controversies over their products, like global outrage over "security barriers" (Klein, 2007, p. 438), these corporations embrace negative publicity as free advertising (Klein, 2007, p. 439). In that sense, violence is endorsed within global

capitalism as a means of advertising Israel's military merchandise, and spaces like OEJ are turned into structurally operable and ideologically sustainable sites to "battle test" and "showcase" Israeli security products as modern, effective and combat-proven (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2020c).

The settlers' chants in the streets during September 2021 spoke of the state's violence: the violence that has military systems kill Gazan civilians without hesitation, with immunity and impunity, and without the need to fact-check targets since those they kill are Palestinian. The killing of Raed Jadallah during September 2020 is a prime example. Raed lit a cigarette to smoke while waiting for his son and friend and was shot dead because Israeli soldiers thought he was a suspect (Levy Libek, 2021). While the immunity, protection and encouragement of necroracist chanting and acting is not secret, its necrocapitalist power is. As Ahmad explained earlier, the economic game of the settler colonial regime of control is focused on killing. To better understand necrocapitalism in militarised zones, we lean on Green's (1999) suggestion to consider the negative market where secrecy as security is traded by building an everyday state of fear against the colonised – which is precisely what facilitated the execution of Raed. In the following section we develop our understanding of the political work of affects when secrecy functions as economy – what we call "a market of death".

Affective colonisation

Palestinians experience multiple forms of entrapment because of the occupation. To entrap the colonised, the settler colonial state coordinates across various ministries and entities to wage secret wars that it euphemises as economic, health, legal or intellectual attacks. It does this while claiming to be a liberal democracy. While this is no secret to Palestinians, the state uses its secrecy apparatus to keep Palestinians in a maze of bureaucracies inside an affective state of fear and anxiety – what we termed previously as "affective colonisation". Drawing together the "secret" work of complementary ministries and state agencies creates a powerful staging tool for the psychological warfare against Palestinians, as described by Farah, 29 years old, below:

There's no secrecy, your income in its entirety is known to them, what's coming in and what's going out is all laid bare Even during the Corona pandemic, my address in Kafr'Aqab is not registered on my ID, nor in the social security (agency) or the Interior (Ministry) or anywhere. Nothing. I mean, I've only recently settled here. When they called me from the ministry of health, someone called me on Whatsapp! He said: "Yeah, because you're in Kafr'Aqab you're out of phone service", hahaha, like, how? Hooww? I told him: "You're calling me in WhatsApp, how can I make sure you're from the ministry of health?" He replied: "You can be certain that I'm from the ministry of health because I was trying to call you and couldn't reach you, since your phone is out of service, surely you're in the area of Kafr'Aqab today then." But how did you know that I'm in Kafr'Aqab? Maybe they traced my car's identification number? I don't know...My car has Ituran (tracking service), yeah, I mean from the Ministry of Interior to the transportation ministry, to the ministry of health, to the ministry of

communication, to the Sharia court (they know if we get divorced, married, or give birth...) Let alone the police, and the soldiers... All of them use threats of secrecy and “secret information” to suffocate/smother us... and we, we have no privacy, neither secrets.

Farah offers evidence that the various ministries talk to each other to “swarm” (Kosek, 2010) Palestinians with fear, intimidation and anxiety. Swarming, a concept adapted from biology (biological swarms), has been adopted by a range of disciplines, including but not limited to architecture, philosophy, business and the military, as strategy to theorise the use of collective intelligence for the purpose of forming a single emergent intelligence (Kosek, 2010; Metcalf et al., 2006). According to Kosek (2006, p. 665), “military understandings of the swarm are not solely metaphoric, but make possible new assemblages of people and animals, new forms of social relations, and new technologies”. Wilcox (2017, p. 31) argues that “swarms are seen as an evolved stage of networked warfare. The idea behind the drive to harness the material capabilities of the swarm is that bees, ants, and such are not individually intelligent, but can exhibit much more complex behaviour collectively.” Consequently, swarming functions to create a material and psychological web of entrapment, resulting in affectual colonisation, whereby the detailed and intimate is sold as *combat proven* (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2020c) This accumulation through dispossession is sold as knowledge and expertise as a function of global capitalism where security is for sale (Grassiani, 2018; Musleh, 2018). This web of entrapment contributes to the affective conditions of demolition (psychological and material), feeding necrocapitalism’s accumulation through dispossession and subjugation.

Rawan shared with us similar concerns to Farah’s when talking about the small room in her house that she and her family closed off to build a cosier space. This process included several bureaucratic entrapments where “secret” information was used to “demolish” them psychologically, ending up in the actual demolition of the home. She explained:

But... when our house was small, okay? When there was a front yard of the house...Something like a tiny room, dad raised the ceiling and enclosed a part of the yard and it became a room, but they denied him a building permit, of course they wouldn’t give him a permit, but why? What’s the reason? To this day we don’t know the reason. He also was fined, and here he is, still paying for the state, but what’s the reason that prevented them from... the secret information, they can’t share it with us...[maybe the secret is that they gave the settlers all needed permits to build, renovate and expand a home in a Palestinian area?, maybe the plan is to Judaize our spaces? Displace and uproot us from here?]... and this room is basically part of my home and I only enclosed it and it resembles a room now...and above all the land is mine, what’s the reason you’re refusing to give me permit to build this room? None whatsoever. You feel humiliated... I mean, any action I would take will be restrained, as to why, you can never know... they keep you confused and entangled in the net of their mukhabarat.

(Tears filled Rawan’s eyes, yet she didn’t cry.) *Give me a reason to convince me...*

Confusion, rage also, you know how it is when something happens to you and you don't understand what it is, it builds up rage inside of you, it leaves you alone with the confusion inside your head. Dad already built the ceiling and paid for it, but they asked him to choose between demolishing what was already built, or paying the fine and the accumulating Arnona (property tax)... and it was very difficult, I mean dad was hospitalized because of this... he wasn't convinced that we should demolish and let all our efforts go in vain... so he filed a lawsuit against the housing department folks, for two years he and a lawyer grappled with them, during which he was forced to pay all the property taxes and the fines... Eventually we demolished it...while they also demolished us in "secrecy".

While Israeli legal-sociologist Yael Barda discusses the "bureaucracies of occupation" (2012), we extend her analyses to discuss the affectual politics of secrecy within such bureaucracies of occupation. Affects, we argue, are important capital in the hands of the state to oppress and control the mind of precarious others (Ahmed, 2014; Athanasiou, 2016). Rawan's experiences offer a prime example of what Joronen and Griffiths (2019, p. 5) refer to as "*affective demolitions*", namely the "embodied dimension of structural precarity induced by the occupation, and the affective conditions of Palestinians living with the continued threat of future demolition and the violence this produces". Similarly, Farah insists that everything is exposed to the authorities and all is done openly and invoked as "secret information" *against* Palestinians. Farah also highlights the confusion that results from the mishmash of ministries and other related state apparatuses that move beyond the economic security to Judaize land and life, while maintaining a racialised order. The state, we argue, needs "secrecy" to perpetuate a system of psychological terror that incarcerates bodies and minds.

The sense of entrapment mentioned by Zureik and our interviewees confines individuals and communities psychologically. Secrecy games used to entrap psychologically aren't simply weapons of the state's criminal policy; rather, they are explicitly political traps, central to the settler colonial attempt to reorder the Israeli polity and its Jewish sacredness while excluding the inferior profane resisters. Secrecy and its "security threat" ideology build the walls to incarcerate Palestinians psychologically. Using the Mukhabarat to confine land, bodies and minds provides the Mukhabarat with virtually unlimited powers to create a world of secrets that Farah defined as "living in a Mukhabarat state".

Samia, 24 years old, was arrested and kept in solitary confinement for one month. Her words and writings provide a glimpse into the intrapsychic effect of "secrecy" and the Mukhabarat's work during her interrogation. She talked about the Mukhabarat's brutality as they deprived her of water, sleep, light, darkness and sanitary pads, making her lose her sense of time, space, body, self and power. She shared:

I started raising doubt everything in my life... since the beginning... allegedly they're in possession of secret information that can be used to charge me... they arrested me... and tortured me... and during the interrogation I was lost... even lost from myself... my

life became... even the small events...my trip to my auntie, my meeting with colleagues and friends... my love... yes my love and marriage... all became a laboratory of their interrogations.

While speaking of her activism with youth in OEJ, Samia mentioned that their activism scared the Mukhabarat, so they “*fabricated secret information to make me lose my mind....and I did*”. She then paused and said, “*Isn’t that the best way to get rid of an entire nation...to turn them crazy?*” For Samia, the use of secrecy is central to managing the mind and life of Palestinians, as most of the state’s “operations” to “secure” Jewish citizens involves the exclusion of Palestinians. The invocation of secrecy becomes a major psychological burden, given the claim that its “operations” are responses to Palestinian violence. Secrecy becomes a site of fatal psychopolitical intrusions involving forms of public/sovereign infiltration, penetration and intrusion into social life, the body and psyche, raising the possible consequences for self-disciplining of affects that can result in physical and psychological death.

Samia became very sick with severe dissociative reactions that lasted for over nine months. When interviewed two years after her release from prison, she discussed the power of secrecy on her psychological abilities and the ways it blocked her inner powers and ability to absorb anything. At the end of the interview, she said:

They managed to fully paralyze me with their secret information’s, and lies.....and I feared everything in life, and mistrusted everybody....not because I feared their secret information....no....but because I feared for the safety of those I love....so, I stayed silent....I imprisoned my own fears....to safeguard my loved one’s.

Samia’s insights and analyses remind us of Fanon’s argument (1963, p.249):

“Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly.”

Samia asked, “*In reality, who am I?*” She explained her condition as both total loss, a kind of mind misplacement, and an advantage. When asked to explain more, she said:

Losing one’s mind from such state terror freed me psychologically from facing their atrocities.

Her words suggest that the “loss” of her mind allowed her to reside psychologically in a place where the brutality of the state’s secrecy apparatus could not penetrate, nor invade. It was her “freedom tunnel” away from and outside of the psychic carcerality of secrecy. Consequently, even in the face of the state’s psychological warfare, the deliberate attempts to stage Samia’s psychological annihilation failed, as she maintained the ability to conceptualise a freedom that lives in her.

We argued above that secrecy as a technology of settler colonial violence treats the psyche as an active war zone, a space of psychological warfare geared to impair the colonised and colonise them affectively. In describing the affective experience of psychological warfare, Salma (34 years old) uses the word "ruins" to reference a sense of a demolished self:

When I was released and arrived home from prison, I found myself... I mean psychologically... living in a world of doubts.... they threatened me with secret information... Once about my mother, another time about my brother and my teacher...they did not leave a safe place to trust...or call for when in need... I started living on ruins....I mean living on my demolished self... just like this... they destroyed my home... my inner home, deep from the inside... I felt deranged, disoriented, I was dumbfounded... everything was wrecked... I mean confused... Took me some time to rebuild myself and my spirits/psychology anew.

Stoler (2013, p. 347) theorises ruins largely as physical and material spaces:

"In its common usage, ruins are privileged sites of reflection—of pensive rumination. Portrayed as enchanted, desolate spaces, large-scale monumental structures abandoned and grown over, ruins provide a favored image of a vanished past, what is beyond repair and in decay, thrown into aesthetic relief by nature's tangled growth."

Salma's conceptualisation of a battered self (as a ruin), living in the ruins of her home, describes how ongoing settler colonial violence creates ruins as "privileged sites of reflection," psychic and material structures "beyond repair and in decay", (Stoler, 2013, p. 347). Stoler (2013) writes that the word "ruins" functions as both noun and verb. "Imperial projects are themselves processes of ongoing ruination, processes that bring ruin upon exerting material and social force in the present and through their presence." Much like Fanon wrote about the psychological and material "decay" that follows colonialism, Salma speaks to the affectual colonisation (e.g. Joronen & Griffiths, 2019) of the self, resulting from necrocapitalism's insatiable yearning and hunger to consume and amass.

While the people who spoke to the secrecy apparatus in this project lend support to Fanon's (1963) analysis that psychic distress can destroy people's bodies and distort their minds, creating ruins, a closer look at Salma's story leads us to consider the role of Palestinian refusal and *sumud*.

Freedom tunnels: Refusal – *Sumud*

Maram, an ex-political prisoner, explained her own mode of longing for freedom and resistance to oppression:

...even after a long interrogation session, with all the terror they imposed on me, no information about my family....my home....no water, no rest..... ...the threats of their

secret information...and with the immense exhaustion, I kept dreaming of being around my family, walking the old city's street with them, planting my home garden with Jasmin...yes...I even smelled the Jasmin flowers around my parents' house,...in that nasty small room...I did smell the Jasmin...that smell erased their "secret" threats...totally erased it.

Maram's reflection and her dreams of life, the beauty of her old city, her family activities, her dreams of planting flowers and the imagined joy of being with her family echo Fanon's theorising: "During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning" (1963, p. 15). Smelling jasmine was Maram's outlet against the interrogator's threats. For Fanon, dreaming-actions reveal the strong unabated desire for freedom, and Maram's enjoyment of jasmine amidst interrogations is imperative in salvaging a dignified self.

This same unabated desire for freedom, even at the risk of sacrificing one's physical security, can be observed daily by watching youth in an area packed with the state's secret services in Jerusalem. One of us (NSK) observed a group of children and youth while the Mukhabarat was searching for children to arrest them during a politically violent period involving the state's police, military, secret services and private security professionals. After more than two hours of the Israeli secret services' cruising the area and searching for children who threw stones at their military vehicles for the purpose of arresting them, a group of about 20 children and youth started chanting and singing loudly: "*Tell the Mukhabarat, we don't mind their arrests....*" In Arabic, this is a rhyming statement: "*Qulu Lal Mukhabarat...Ma Bit'himna el E'etiqalat.*" This group of youth not only exposed 'the secret' of the "secret apparatus" by telling the state's representatives, "*we know your secret, and that the 'secret services' are here*", but also insisted on expressing that they don't fear secrets. The strength of their chanting and singing broke the secrecy shackles, allowing the group to speak 'the secret' exposing the Mukhabarat. The temporal cathartic moment of chanting against the secret services serves the larger purpose of resisting the carcerality of secrecy. It first and foremost calls on the coloniser to recognise the colonised's refusal of colonial violence and it enables the colonised to show their defiant resistance to desperation. The youth's refusal to subordinate to state violence, even in the face of tremendous risk, echoes Fanon's writing about Black people's defiance against slavery: "For the Negro who works on a sugar plantation in Le Robert, there is only one solution: to fight. He will embark on this struggle, and he will pursue it, not as the result of a Marxist or idealistic analysis but quite simply because he cannot conceive of life otherwise than in the form of a battle against exploitation, misery, and hunger" (Fanon & Markmann, 1986, p. 224). According to Fanon (1963), in maintaining their dignity and morality, the colonised break the coloniser's "*spiraling violence*" (p. 9); thus the colonised are always ready to change their role "*from game to hunter*" (p. 16) in order to survive and resist. Maram's vivid recollection of the jasmine flower's image and scent and the youth's defiant chanting refuse the occupiers' domination through performances that disrupt the structures that render secrecy an acceptable routine of the state. These actions oppose

the settler colonial use of secrecy and its assumption that secret intimidation and fear might be easily internalised. Amid, one of the youth chanting defiantly, stood up and told the soldiers: “*You think your Mukhabarat is scaring uscome.....come.....how long is it going to take you to come?*” Amid sensed the tension among the soldiers and fear was apparent on his face. When he noticed that the security/military people were aiming to attack his house, he drew on a conviction of undefeatability to distract them as a means of preventing them from reaching his family’s home. Amid was pushed, arrested and beaten while his embodied refusal to accept state control revealed his affective and psychological power.

Similarly, Ahmad, a 14-year-old, spoke of his own mode of dealing with the threats and secrecy:

When they arrested me...the interrogator kept on telling me they have video footage showing me standing on my house roof, taking photos of soldiers, and pouring dirty water on them.....then he said, he collected all my phone calls to my friend Samer....and there I confessed of attacks against the soldiers that are blocking the entrance to my house....then he left me in the room, on that chair for another 3 hours, and it was so cold....and I got so tired....could not even look at him. When he came back, he started threatening again with his secretly collected information that can result in my father losing his job....and I was so outraged...I started shouting, screaming, hitting my head, pulling my hair.....screaming.....you are a liar...liar....I did not do tell Samer anything.....liar.....I don’t fear you.....you liar....I screamed maybe for 15 minutes until I passed out...yes...I fainted....did not sign a paper, nor admitted to anything I did not do....just screamed at his “secret” lies.

Ahmad’s refusal to submit to psychological warfare, expressed through his screaming and fainting, presents an affectual anticolonial counteraction against the penetrability of the systematic colonial violence. His body and mind resisted the securitised secrecy and its manipulative accumulative dispossession with what was available to him; his rage and inner-psychic refusal.

The youth’s chants against the soldiers in Jerusalem, Amid’s attempts to distract the soldiers from demolishing his house, Ahmad’s dramatized fainting, Maram’s use of her imagination to smell jasmine and the digging of “the freedom tunnel” in 2021 by six political prisoners all amount to acts of profound rage and refusal, creating material, psychological and imagined realities of decolonisation. Decolonisation implies the urgent need to challenge the colonial state thoroughly (Fanon, 1963). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018, p. 248) argues that knowledge is critical to decolonisation efforts through “ways of knowing and validating knowledge that aim to contribute to the refoundation of insurgent policies capable of efficiently confronting the current, insidious, and techno-savage articulations between capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy”.

Freedom from the necrocapitalist governance of affects, the psychological incapacitation of the ruins of secrecy and the colonised's refusal to be trapped by its swarming effect were on display for the world to witness when six Palestinian political prisoners dug, with spoons, a freedom tunnel during September 2021. The fact that the prisoners dug a hole for over a year, using a spoon or something even more primitive, to escape prison for only a short period of time before being recaptured attests to their refusal of domination in the most profound way. Their secret tunnel spoke of their yearning for freedom from the coloniser's penetration, invasion and incapacitation. Keeping their freedom tunnel secret revealed many things, among them their agential power even while incarcerated. These acts enhance the fact that the colonised, whether incarcerated inside prison walls or outside of them, carry a desire, a yearning for freedom amidst necrocapitalism's dependence on secrecy. The prisoners' digging of the tunnel while incarcerated constitutes an act of counter-secrecy and expresses a refusal to remain docile. Furthermore, the publication of the prisoners' escape via the freedom tunnel undermined the Israeli combat-proven technology of surveillance and its reputation for sophisticated tracking. Protesting against the settler state's securitised secrecy and its glocal necrocapitalism, the prisoners dug a tunnel to uproot their carcerality.

Conclusion

Secrecy always functions as an underlying rationale for political projects: a psychological war here, an exclusion and dissemination of mistrust there; an eviction here, a child arrest or political arrest there; a penetration and fragmentation here and a demolition, killing, or partial "solution" there. Secrecy plays a foundational role within settler colonial violence because it swarms into the lives of those defined as "security threats," as "internal" enemies that must be eliminated. Utilising secret information as a security measure suggests that the colonised's life – their intimate, personal and collective domains and their daily routines– is turned into penetrable, politicised zones for accumulating dispossession. Utilising secrecy and activating its swarming effect authorise the settler state to invade spheres of intrapsychic well-being, sexuality, friendship, family connectivity and communal collectivity. Secrecy's underpinning logic and its security discourse unveil the nature of the political war in the settler colony. It reveals the inherent idea of annihilations by other means, creating new political behaviours and reality. Secret wars are not there to end the war but, rather, to pacify global and local politics and to allow settler colonialism to conduct a war while denying its existence, because it is a "secret."

Secrecy is granted an existential apparatus such that the exclusion of the colonised as feared other is insufficient. Secrecy is about psychological demoralisation and annihilation, socioeconomic control. Secrecy has become a dominant trope in settler colonial politics, imposing obviousness on issues (Althusser, 1971) and a firm erasure of the humanity of the colonised. Its focus is the killing of the colonised as rooted in the logic of elimination. Secrecy politics carries existential weight because of the meanings

brought to the political – a political system built on the exclusion and fear of the enemy. Fear is a key feature of fascism (Adorno, 1998; Neocleous, 1997; Neumann, 1953). Secrecy's fear factor allows the development of a mythical security to become the only measure of political judgement. Hence, secrecy is the great necrocapitalist politic. It needs no justification for its existence since it is always and forever regarded as a state necessity, mainly since the “enemy” is still alive.

Critiquing secrecy is part of the decolonial installation that builds the conditions for refusal. The challenge is political and analytical. We must recognise how the wounding effects of secrecy, its duration, moments of exposure and brutality further ruin the colonised's mind and life. And it is from those same ruins and against necrocapitalist brutality that freedom tunnels are unlocked and carcerality is uprooted.

We wish to thank Nada Yasin and Asrar Kayyal for their assistance, and attentive engagement in preparing the manuscript.

Bios

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a Professor and a Palestinian feminist, is the Lawrence D. Biele Chair in Law at the Faculty of Law-Institute of Criminology and the School of Social Work and Public Welfare at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Global Chair in Law- Queen Mary University of London. Her research focuses on trauma, state crimes and criminology, surveillance, gender violence, law and society and genocide studies. She is the author of numerous academic articles and books among them “Militarization and Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: The Palestinian Case Study” published in 2010; “Security Theology, Surveillance and the Politics of Fear”, published in 2015; “Incarcerated Childhood and the Politics of Unchilding”, published in 2019; all by Cambridge University Press. She also co-edited two books, the latest entitled: “When Politics are Sacralized: Comparative Perspectives on Religious Claims and Nationalism”, CUP 2021, and is completing another one with Lila Abu-Lughod and Rema Hammami entitled: *The Cunning of Gender Based Violence*”, to be published with Duke University Press.

Stéphanie Wahab is a Professor at Portland State University's School of Social Work. Her body of work, rooted in critical, post structural and feminist studies centers structural violence related to social inequality, sex work and intimate partner violence. She teaches courses focused on social justice, philosophies of science, qualitative inquiry, and intimate partner violence. She is a co-editor of *Feminisms in Social Work Research: Promise and possibilities for justice based knowledge* with Routledge.

References

- Abu-Laban, Y., Lyon, D., & Zureik, E. (2011). *Surveillance and control in Israel/Palestine: Population, territory and power*. Routledge.
- Adorno, T. (1998). The meaning of working through the past. In T. Adorno (Ed.), *Critical models: Interventions and catchwords* (pp. 89-103) (H. W. Pickford, Trans.). Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1959).
- Ahmed, S. (2014). *The cultural politics of emotion* (NED-New edition, 2). Edinburgh University Press.
- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In L. Althusser (Ed), *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (pp. 127-186) (B. Brewster, Trans.). New Left Books.
- Athanasίου, A. (2016). Nonsovereign agonism (or, beyond affirmation versus vulnerability). In J. Butler, Z. Gambetti & L. Sabsay (Eds.), *Vulnerability in Resistance* (pp. 256-277). Duke University Press.
- Banerjee, S.B. (2008). Necrocapitalism. *Organization Studies*, 29, 1541-1563.
- Davis, M., & Manderson, L. (2014). *Disclosure in health and illness*. Routledge.
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2018). *The end of the cognitive empire*. Duke University Press.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press.
- Fanon, F., & Markmann, C. L. (1986). *Black skin, white masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- Graham, S. (2010). Laboratories of war: United States–Israeli collaboration in urban war and securitization. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 17(1), 35-51.
- Grassiani, E. (2018). Between security and military identities: The case of Israeli security experts. *Security Dialogue*, 49(1-2), 83-95.
- Green, L. (1999). *Fear as a way of life: Mayan widows in rural Guatemala*. Columbia University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine*. Metropolitan Books.
- Kosek, J. (2010). Ecologies of empire: On the new uses of the honeybee. *Cultural Anthropology*, 25, 650-678.

- Joronen, M., & Griffiths, M. (2019). The affective politics of precarity: Home demolitions in occupied Palestine. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 37(3), 561-576.
- Levi Libek, G. A. (2021, September 10). Raed Jadallah lit a cigarette, then the soldiers shot him and let him die. *Haaretz*. Retrieved from https://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/twilightzone/.premium.HIGHLIGHT-1.10196442?utm_source=Push_Notification&utm_medium=web_push&utm_campaign=General
- Lloyd, D., & Wolfe, P. (2016). Settler colonial logics and the neoliberal regime. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 6(2), 109-118.
- Manderson, L., Davis, M., Colwell, C., & Tanja Ahlin, T. (2015). On secrecy, disclosure, the public, and the private in anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 56(12), 183-190.
- Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1). Duke University Press.
- Metcalf, L., Askay, D., Rosenberg, A., & Louis, B. (2019). Keeping humans in the loop: Pooling knowledge through artificial swarm intelligence to improve business decision making. *California Management Review*, 61(4), 84-109.
- Musleh, A.H. (2018). Designing in Real-Time: An Introduction to Weapons Design in the Settler-Colonial Present of Palestine, *Design and Culture*, 10(1), 33-54.
- Neocleous, M. (1997). *Fascism*. Open University Press.
- Neumann, F.L. (1953). The concept of political freedom. *Columbia Law Review*, 53(7), 901-935.
- Puar, J.K. (2015). The 'right' to maim: Disablement and inhumanist biopolitics in Palestine. *Borderlands*, 14(1), 1-27.
- Razack, S.H. (2008). *Casting out: Race and the eviction of Muslims from Western law and politics*. University of Toronto Press.
- Sa'di, A.H. (2008). Remembering *al-nakba* in a time of amnesia: On silence, dislocation and time. *Interventions*, 10(3): 381-399.
- Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2020a). Speaking life, speaking death: Jerusalemite children confronting Israel's technologies of violence. In S. Walklate, K. Fitz-Gibbon, J. McCulloch, J.M. Maher (Eds.), *The Emerald handbook of feminism, criminology and social change* (pp. 253-270).
- Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2020b). Necropenology: Conquering new bodies, psychics, and territories in East Jerusalem. *Identities* 27(3), 285-301.
- Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2020c). Gun to body: Mental health against unchilding. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 17(17), 126- 145.

- Spivak, G.C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In N. Carry & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271-313). University of Illinois Press.
- Stoler, L. (2013). *Imperial debris: On ruins and ruinations*. Duke University Press.
- Taussig, M.T. (1999). *Defacement: Public secrecy and the labor of the negative*. Stanford University Press.
- Tawil-Souri, H. (2016). Surveillance sublime: The security state in Jerusalem. *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, 68, 56-65.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1-31.
- Veracini, L. (2010). *Settler colonialism: A theoretical overview*. Palgrave.
- Wilcox, L. (2017). Drones, swarms, and becoming-insect: Feminist utopias and posthuman politics. *Feminist Review*, 116(1), 25-45.
- Yael, B. (2012). *The bureaucracy of the occupation: The permit regime in the West Bank 2000-2006*. Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers.
- Zureik, E. (2001). Constructing Palestine through surveillance practices. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 28(2), 205-227.