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**The Politics of Agency: Boycotts and Protests  
as Expressions of Dissent in the Post-October  
7.**

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Requirements for the master's degree in  
Literature and Civilization.

**Candidates:**

**Chahinaz KHARCHI**

**Samah BAALI**

**Supervised by:**

**Dr. Youcef BENNAA**

**Board of Examiners**

Mrs. ....	University of M'sila	Chairperson
Mr. Youcef BENNAA	University of M'sila	Supervisor
Mr. ....	University of M'sila	Examiner

## **Declaration of Originality**

**We, Chahinaz Kharchi and Samah Baali**, declare that the work and ideas presented in this thesis are entirely our own and have not been previously submitted to any other institution or university to obtain a degree.

We affirm that all the information in this thesis has been gathered and presented by Academic standards and ethical guidelines. Furthermore, we confirm that all sources and materials not originally produced by us have been properly cited and acknowledged.

This work has been completed at the University of M'sila, Algeria.

### **Signature**

**Ms. Chahinaz KHARCHI**



**Ms. Samah BAALI**



## **Dedication**

**To my Mother**, the heart of our home, my role model, and my greatest strength. Your silence, support, duas, and belief in me made this possible. This is for you, first and always.

**To my Father**, May Allah have Mercy on your soul and grant you, Janet Alfirdaus.

Your values still guide me. You are always in my duas.

**To my Family**, Masoud, Imene, Wafa, Seddik, Mohammed, Douaa, Aunt Warda, and Rakha.

Your love, advice, and encouragement have been my comfort and strength. Thank you for always being there.

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**And finally, myself**, for the resilience, dedication, and strength it took to reach this point I owe it to the version of me who never gave up.

**Samah**

With deepest gratitude, I dedicate this work to **me** and to the philosopher in me, whose thirst for knowledge knows no end; to my mother, **Rahma Hadji**, the silent strength behind every step; to my lovely siblings, **Nizar** and **Aya**; to my godfather, **JoJo**; to my life partner, **Mr. S**; to my dear friend **Samah**, whose intelligence, kindness, and radiant soul make her a shining presence in my life; to my friends, **Bouchra**, **Nouha**, and the **Marwas**, whose camaraderie means the world.

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## **Abstract**

The events of October 7 have changed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, refocusing attention on the unresolved issues about violence and resistance. In response, people from various backgrounds took action, protesting in the streets, calling for boycotts, and turning to social media to make their voices heard. These actions show that power does not belong to governments, presidents, or official institutions; instead, ordinary people, those without formal authority, can also shape politics through actions like protests, boycotts, and other forms of resistance. To achieve this goal, the research incorporates a range of theoretical perspectives, including Charles Tilly's theory of social movements, Judith Butler's notion of grievability, James C. Scott's concept of everyday resistance, and Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding framework. This study looks at how people show political resistance through public protest, boycotts, and online activism. It focuses on how digital platforms like Twitter, Instagram, etc., help bring attention to voices that are usually ignored, particularly those supporting Palestine. Moreover, it also analyzes how Western governments and media often claim to support free speech but respond differently when people speak out for Palestine, which shows a double standard in how freedom of expression is applied. This research claims that while protest, boycotts, and digital activism contribute substantially to public awareness, they often confront systemic obstacles that restrict their capacity to bring about significant political change. The concluding statement further offers projections on the future paths of political agency, evolving resistance methods, and the shifting impact of media and activism in responding to global injustices.

**Keywords:** October 7, Political Agency, Israeli Palestinian conflict, boycotts, Protests.

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## General Introduction

*“When we are silent, we are still afraid. So, it is better to speak, remembering we were never meant to survive. “*

— *Audre Lorde*

*“Action is the only remedy to indifference: the most insidious danger of all. “*

— *Elie Wiesel*

History teaches us that moments of rupture are not only sites of loss and grief, but they also often carry within them the seeds of awakening. In the wake of collective tragedy, Humans often turn not only to mourning, but to resistance. When the weight of injustice becomes overwhelming and silent pain can no longer be contained, even the simplest actions, holding a sign, refusing a product, or posting a statement, become politically charged. In moments of crisis, resistance ceases to be optional for the oppressed; it becomes imperative. In the aftermath of October 7th, the world witnessed more than a geopolitical confrontation; it saw a powerful wave of global expression, defiance, and the assertion of human agency by those historically silenced. Through protests, boycotts, and digital dissent, individuals and communities around the world reclaimed the political space they were so often denied. These actions, while at times symbolic, embodied a challenge to dominant narratives, expressed solidarity, and spoke when others would silence them. In doing so, the oppressed not only refused to be victims, but they also asserted themselves as active political subjects.

Today's social and political movements go beyond physical countries and borders. They are formed and spread through the internet, expressed visually in images and videos, and heavily influenced by how people around the world interpret and judge them. In this changing environment, protests and boycotts are more than mere tactics to express a viewpoint; they have become ways to tell stories, to take back control of history, and to insist that marginalized voices and experiences are acknowledged and recognized. They bridge the physical and the digital, the collective and the intimate. From university campuses in the U.S. to streets in Berlin, Paris, Amman, and Cape Town, the call for Palestinian liberation post-October 7 became a clear test for global conscience and a battlefield of ideology.

One group that emerged at the center of this ideological struggle was those who sought to speak for Palestine, despite a global climate that increasingly criminalized such speech. In recent events, many people, including students, artists, and academics, were punished or silenced for supporting Palestine. Some were watched, banned from platforms, or falsely accused of antisemitism just for speaking. In this environment, protests and boycotts became more than just political strategies; they have become ways for people to reclaim their voices. Like the Black Lives Matter movement opposed dominant ideas about justice and violence, pro-Palestinian activists demanded the right to share their version of history and suffering. These actions represent a form of political agency that challenges those in power who try to control which stories are heard, which lives are grieved, and what truths are accepted, by studying these forms of resistance after October 7, this research shows that oppressed people are not only fighting for freedom but also for recognition and the right to speak.

## **Statement of the problem**

What is apparent is that Palestinian expressions of political agency, whether through protests, boycotts, or digital activism, are often either framed as illegitimate or violent by dominant state and media narratives or uncritically romanticized in some activist circles. Furthermore, much of the current literature fails to account for the contemporary dynamics of visibility, repression, and media framing following the events of October 7. While many studies have explored resistance in traditional contexts, there is a notable gap in analyzing how agency is expressed and contested in the digital age under conditions of intensified global censorship and surveillance. To address this critical gap, this study seeks to investigate the evolving nature of Palestinian resistance in the aftermath of October 7, with a particular focus on how subaltern voices navigate repression, claim political space, and challenge dominant discourses through both physical and symbolic acts. The aim is to offer a more nuanced understanding of political agency, one that accounts for context, media representation, and evolving strategies of dissent.

## **Research Questions**

This study attempts to answer the following main question: How is Palestinian political agency constructed and contested through protest, boycotts, and digital activism following the events of October, and what does this reveal about resistance under conditions of repression and media framing? This question will be answered by introducing these sub-questions: What strategies of protest, boycott, and digital resistance have been employed by Palestinians and their supporters after October 7? How do these forms of political expression interact with, challenge, or become limited by dominant media and state narratives? And to what extent do these acts of resistance reshape or complicate established views of political agencies within systems of censorship and suppression?

## **Aims and Objectives**

In light of this, this research explores how Palestinians have expressed political resistance after the events of October 7th. This study looks at how acts of resistance challenge power, fight censorship, and attempt to gain visibility in a world where dominant forces often try to silence and discredit them. The study combines insights from different areas of study, from Arendt's notion of public action and Butler's concept of grievability, to Scott's idea of everyday resistance and Hall's media theory. In the end, the study argues that these acts of resistance are powerful and meaningful, but their impact is limited by global power structures, which ultimately decide which voices are amplified and which ones are ignored.

## **Literature review**

Political agencies refer to the ability of people or groups to act and make a difference in political life. This includes influencing decisions, holding leaders responsible, and fighting for change. It is just about government or politicians; it also includes everyday people, community groups, and marginalized individuals who fight against unfair systems and dominant stories about power (European Commission). These movements often reframe what counts as "political," pushing the boundaries of legitimacy and power. A key foundational view of political agencies is presented by Hannah Arendt. She argues that political agency is not just about having the ability to act; it is also about being visible and active in public spaces. In her book *Human Condition* (1958), she explains that real political agency means being able to be present in public, speak and participate in conversations, and work together with others to shape the world we live in. This idea is especially important for marginalized groups, like Palestinians, whose political voices are often ignored or silenced. Building on Arendt's ideas

about political agency, Judith Butler expands the concepts by focusing on how society decides which lives matter enough to be mourned and recognized, what she calls “grievability.” In her book *Frames of War* (2009), Butler explains that when certain groups’ suffering is ignored or excluded from public empathy and mourning, those groups are effectively denied political voice and legitimacy. Butler’s theory helps analyze whose lives are seen as worthy of mourning and how the world talks about resistance and violence after the events of October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Adding depth to this analysis, Charles Tilly’s theory of social movements adds another layer to understanding Palestinian political resistance, especially after the events of October 7<sup>th</sup>. According to Tilly, resistance is the product of cumulative historical processes; that is, when Palestinians and their allies protest or organize boycotts, it is part of a strategic effort shaped by history and context. The protests are not isolated; they come from years of injustice, failed diplomacy, and ongoing occupation. (1978)

To balance this structural interpretation, James C. Scott’s in his book *Weapons of the Weak*, argues that resistance does not come in the form of big, public protests. Sometimes, it is in small, hidden acts. Such as refusing to cooperate, spreading counter narratives in private, or subtly undermining authority, these are what he calls “hidden transcripts.” Although these actions may seem minor, Scott argues they present real political agency; they challenge authority not with confrontation, but with persistence and subversion from below. Scott’s framework shows that resistance is not about mass protests; it is about how people survive, subvert, and challenge power in small, meaningful ways that are often overlooked.

Additionally, according to Kimberli Crenshaw’s theory of Intersectionality, the multiple forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and class, intersect and create unique experiences of marginalization, which means, political agency is not uniform. An individual’s ability to

participate in resistance, and how resistance is received, is shaped by overlapping identities, like being a woman, a refugee, poor, or from an ethnic or religious background.

The media's role in defining and resisting political agency is essential to consider. Robert Entman's framing theory (1993) suggests that the media not only report facts, it also selectively emphasize certain aspects of a story. For Instance, the same event as October 7th can be framed as terrorism by some media, and as resistance by others, these frames influence how audiences understand the motivations and legitimacy of the actors involved, that is, considering whether someone is seen as a freedom fight or criminal depends heavily on how they are framed in the media.

Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding (1973) offers an additional insight, showing that when media creators produce messages (encoding), they have a particular meaning or intention behind them. However, when audiences receive these messages, they interpret or decode them in different ways. Some people might accept the intended meaning completely, others might question or partially agree with it, and some might reject it entirely or reinterpret it in their own way.

Building on the rich body of literature surrounding political agencies and resistance, this dissertation uses several theories to build on existing research about political agency and resistance. It combines ideas from political theory, social movement analysis, power studies, intersectionality, and media and cultural theory.

At its core, this study draws on Hannah Arendt's conception of political agency which emphasized that political agency is not merely about acting, but is about being visible in public, and working together with others, for marginalized groups like Palestinians, this means struggling to be seen and heard in public spaces not only physically but symbolically in media

Butler's concepts of grievability which is about whose lives and losses society recognizes as important and worthy of mourning some group's suffering are ignored or denied which affects whether their political voice is heard. This framework helps explain how a lack of recognition can limit a group's ability to act politically. Tilly's Social Movement Theory looks at resistance as a strategic, organized effort, not just spontaneous protests, and how movements use political opportunities, gather resources, and exploit divisions among elites to advance their goals. In addition to Michel Foucault, who argues that power is not held only by governments or leaders but is spread throughout society and embedded in everyday institutions and discourse. Together with Tilly's theory, James C. Scott's analysis of everyday resistance focuses on how oppressed groups resist through everyday acts that are hidden from those in power, and how these acts, though not always visible, are powerful forms of political agency. Moreover, Crenshaw's framework shows how different identities like race, class, gender, and nationality overlap to shape how people experience oppression and resistance. Finally, Entman's Framing theory explains how the media selectively highlights certain aspects of events to shape how the public understands them. Supporting this theory is Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, which shows that the media sends a message, audiences do not always receive it the way it was intended, and people might accept, reject, or interpret media messages based on their perspectives.

## **Methodology**

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to study how political agency is expressed through protests, boycotts, and online activism after the events of October 7th.

This approach focuses on understanding meanings, finding patterns, and placing political expressions in context. The study draws upon a combination of media analysis and case studies by carefully examining media coverage, social media discussions, major figures' statements, and recorded acts of resistance. The primary source of data will be televised reports covering protests or statements, social media posts (tweets, Instagram posts) by activists, protestors, or observers, protest slogans, Official statements from activists' groups or governments, and videos and recordings of protest and public demonstration. Moreover, Secondary sources include academic articles or books analyzing the October 7 events and subsequent resistance, media studies that critique how news outlets frame political resistance, and theoretical works. In addition, commentaries or opinions reflect the impact of protests and media narratives.

## **Motivation of the study**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of political agency as a response to global injustice, particularly in the digital age. This research contributes to this field by examining how protests and boycotts serve as tools of resistance in the wake of October 7. Although the United States is widely regarded as the house of free speech, recent censorship of pro-Palestinian voices reveals a troubling double standard. By analyzing acts of dissent in this context, the study explores how marginalized communities challenge dominant narratives and assert their right to be heard.

## **Plan of the Research**

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is entitled “Historical and Political Roots of the Conflict: Tracing the Road to October 7th.” This chapter explores the origins and evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, establishing the historical and political context necessary to understand the conditions that led to the eruption of the October 7 attacks. It traces key turning points including the rise of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, the 1948 Nakba, the 1967 Six-Day War, the First and Second Intifadas, and the Oslo Accords. The chapter also introduces the theoretical framework of political agency by drawing on thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Charles Tilly to explain how agency emerges under conditions of colonization and structural violence. This background lays the foundation for analyzing October 7 not as an isolated event but as a culmination of decades of resistance, dispossession, and contested sovereignty.

The second chapter is entitled “October 7th: A Flashpoint in the Struggle for Political Voice.” It presents an in-depth analysis of the global wave of protests, boycotts, and digital activism that followed the events of October 7. The chapter draws on theories of political agency, symbolic resistance, and ideological framing to examine how marginalized voices asserted their presence despite widespread attempts at censorship and delegitimization. Special attention is given to media framing, using Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding theory and Robert Entman’s framing theory to investigate how pro-Palestinian protests were depicted in mainstream Western media. The chapter also analyzes the criminalization of boycotts in countries like the United States and France and the rise of double standards in free speech discourse. The works of Judith Butler, James C. Scott, and Edward Said are used to explore the politics of visibility, voice, and solidarity under repression.

The third chapter is entitled “Resistance in Transition: Boycotts, Digital Dissent, and the Future of Political Agency”. This chapter explores how the nature of resistance is evolving in

the post-October 7 era. It analyzes boycotts as tools of both economic and symbolic power, while also exploring their geopolitical consequences and the global backlash they have triggered. The chapter then examines digital activism as a new frontier of political engagement, focusing on algorithmic suppression, surveillance, and the role of social media platforms in shaping visibility. Drawing on Foucault's theories of surveillance and Butler's work on performativity, it also considers how agency is performed and suppressed in digital spaces. The final section of the chapter presents possible future scenarios, reflecting on how political agency may continue to develop under tightening ideological control and expanding global solidarity networks.

**CHAPTER ONE :**

**Framing Resistance: Political Agency,  
Grievability, and the Palestinian Struggle.**

# **CHAPTER ONE: Framing Resistance: Political Agency, Grievability, and the Palestinian Struggle.**

## **Introduction**

The origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began due to competing claims to the same land, and over the past century, it has been made worse by wars, forced displacements, and repeated failures to reach a lasting peace, resulting in deeply rooted anger and unresolved issues. This chapter offers a historical account that traces the origins and developments of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over time. It begins by examining the emergence of Zionist and Palestinian nationalist movements, both of which laid competing claims to the land of historic Palestine. It then explores major historical milestones that shaped the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Including the Nakba 1948, the 1967 Six Day War and the First and Second Intifadas, drawing on historical records and political theory including: Hannah Arendt's concept of political action in the public sphere, Butler's theory of grievability, Tilly's insights on social mobilization, Foucault's understanding of power and spatial control, and Scott's notion of everyday resistance. This chapter explores how the current state of the conflict is not a product of recent events but the cumulative result of broken promises, colonial legacies, and asymmetrical power structures that have informed how Palestinians understand and express justice, identity, and resistance today. The final section focuses on the lead-up to the events of October 7th, integrating Crenshaw's intersectionality and media theories from Entman and Hall to show how experiences and representations of agency differ across identities and are mediated through discourse and power.

## 1. The Birth of Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism in a Divided Land

During the late 1800s, two powerful ideologies or political movements began to emerge. Zionism and Palestinian nationalism. Both movements claimed the same piece of land, historic Palestine. These movements originated from distinct historical circumstances but shared similar territorial goals, setting the stage for a long-lasting conflict (Gelvin, 2014; Khalidi, 2020)

In *A History of Zionism*, Walter Laqueur argues that Jews were trying to integrate into mainstream society through emancipation and assimilation. However, these efforts mostly failed; Jews were still discriminated against, even in places where they were given legal rights. Particularly amid rising antisemitism and exclusionary European nationalism. According to Laqueur, Zionism was not merely a reaction to antisemitism but a quest for national dignity and self-determination (Laqueur, 1972)

The movement gained significant momentum after the Russian pogroms attacked Jewish communities, especially in Russia during the 1880s. These attacks involved murder, looting, and destruction, often with government indifference or support. The pogroms shocked many Jews, making it clear that they were not safe in Europe, even if they attempted to integrate or assimilate. Consequently, many Jews lost hope in equal citizenship and began to believe that the only real safety would come from having their own country. (Gilbert, 2008)

State, Herzl, often regarded as the father of modern political Zionism, framed in his 1896 pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) "the Jewish Question"; the problem of how Jews could live safely and freely in non-Jewish societies as something that could only be solved by creating a sovereign Jewish state: "*The Jews who will it shall achieve their State*" and "*We are a people, one people*" (Herzl, 1896) Herzl believed that if Jews united and truly desired a

state, they could make it happen through collective action. Ultimately, Herzl's ideas galvanized Jewish communities and led to waves of immigration to Palestine, which at the time was under Ottoman rule and populated mainly by Arabs. As more Jews settled there to establish a Jewish homeland, tensions rose with the Arab population, who also viewed Palestine as their land (Herzl, 1896).

Through Arendt's lens, Zionism (especially in its early stages) can be understood as a way for Jews long excluded and persecuted in Europe to reclaim political voice and existence. However, according to Ilan Pappé, a prominent Israeli historian. While Zionism empowered Jews to assert themselves, it occurred within a colonial framework. Early Zionists saw Palestine as empty or underdeveloped, ignoring the fact that it was already inhabited by Palestinian Arabs. Pappé calls Zionism a "settler colonial movement"; it involves displacing native populations to create a new homeland. Thus, while Jews were gaining political power, this came at the expense of Palestinian political existence. (Pappé, 2006).

Meanwhile, Palestinian nationalism emerged largely in response to growing Jewish immigration and land purchases in historic Palestine. Initially, Palestinian identity was part of a broader Arab nationalist movement, a shared sense of Arab unity against colonialism and foreign domination. However, as Jewish settlement expanded, Palestinians increasingly sought to assert their own distinct national identity and political autonomy (Khalidi, 1997).

In *Palestinian Identity*, Rashid Khalidi argues that Palestinian nationalism was not simply created as a reaction to Zionism, but rather it was already developing, and Zionism accelerated and intensified it. Palestinian resistance was a claim to indigenous rights over the land and not just opposition to foreign control (Khalidi, 1997). Moreover, Edward Said in *The Question of Palestine* situates the Palestinian struggle within the context of anti-colonial resistance. He describes Zionism as a settler-colonial project supported by imperial powers, framing

Palestinian nationalism as a resistance against colonial domination. Ilan Pappé in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* stresses that Zionism was not a liberation movement for Jews but also a movement of dispossession for Palestinians (Pappé, 2006)

## **2. The Nakba: Historical Injustice and Ungrieved Lives**

The term Nakba refers to the 1948 displacement of approximately 700.000 Palestinians during the creation of the state of Israel. This is not only viewed as a historical event but also analyzed through frameworks such as settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing, particularly by Ilan Pappé. He argues that the displacement was not accidental or -side-effect of war, but a deliberate, premeditated effort to create a Jewish majority state. (Pappé, 2006).

Additionally, Edward Said's Postcolonial analysis sees Zionism not just as a rationalist project, but as one aligned with European colonialism, empowered by imperial powers (Said, 1979). Beyond the physical displacement, the Nakba inflicted a profound psychological and cultural trauma. Trauma theorist Cathy Caruth emphasizes that trauma "*does not simply serve as a record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned*". Caruth asserts that Nakba is not only historical; it has lasting emotional and psychological effects, inherited across generations. As such, Mahmoud Abbas described the Nakba as "*the original sin of the Israeli occupation,*" a defining moment that continues to haunt Palestinian memory and national consciousness (Abbas, 2008). Similarly, Yasser Arafat declared that the Nakba is "*not just a chapter of history; it is the continuation of our struggle for justice*" (Arafat, 2000).

Maurice Halbach's concept of collective memory emphasizes that our memories are formed and preserved within the context of social groups, rather than in isolation (Halbwachs,

1992). This is evident in the way Palestinians preserve the memory of the Nakba through public rituals like Nakba Day on May 15, oral storytelling, and symbolic acts (such as keys to lost homes and maps of pre-1948 Palestine) (Khalili, 2007).

### **3. 1967 War: Crisis, Occupation, and Hegemonic Struggles**

Following the defeat of Arab armies in earlier confrontations with Israel, Arab nationalism grew stronger, especially under the leadership of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser became a prominent figure in the Arab world, promoting unity and resistance against what he viewed as Western imperialism and Zionist expansion. His rhetoric calls for the destruction of Israel. Though often symbolic of Arab defiance, it was seen by Israel as a serious and immediate threat to its existence (Shlaim, 2000)

In this climate of rising hostility, Israel interpreted Nasser's actions, such as the blockade of the Straits of Tiran and the mobilization of Egyptian troops in Sinai, as acts of war. Believing that waiting would leave it vulnerable, Israel decided to strike preemptively. On June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967, it launched Operation Focus. A surprise aerial assault that destroyed much of the Egyptian Air Force while it was still on the ground, securing air superiority and paving the way for swift victories against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria (Gelvin, 2005)

Even though the 1957 Six-Day War lasted less than a week, it changed the course of Middle Eastern history. Israel quickly gained control of several important areas: the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. These rapid military victories greatly increased Israel's territory and placed millions of Palestinians under its control. As a result, many more Palestinians were

displaced from their homes, worsening the existing refugee crisis and increasing anger and resistance among the Palestinian population (History.com Editors, 2018)

The Arab states responded with the Khartoum Resolution in August 1967, declaring “*no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with it.*” This led to increased tensions and a long period of no progress. Internationally, the war was a turning point in the Cold War context, drawing deeper involvement from the United States and the Soviet Union, each supporting opposing sides and competing for power in the region. In response to the occupation of Arab territories, the United Nations passed Resolution 242, which called for Israel’s withdrawal from territories occupied in the conflict in exchange for peace and recognition, while this resolution became the foundation for later peace negotiations, its ambiguous language, especially around the extent of withdrawal, made it a source of persistent point of contention and geopolitical strain (Shlaim, 2000).

#### **4. The Intifadas: Agency, Resistance, and Political Voice**

The First Intifada, which began on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1987, constituted a major turning point in the dynamics of the Israeli Palestinian struggle. The uprising started after an Israeli military vehicle accidentally hit and killed several Palestinian people in Gaza. This strategic event provoked widespread anger, which started as localized protests and quickly escalated into a mass grassroots uprising across both Gaza and the West Bank, targeting the Israeli occupation through strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, and civil disobedience. Unlike earlier, more militarized resistance, the First Intifada was largely civilian-led, involving youth, women, and community networks. This shifted global perceptions of the Palestinians, from being seen

mainly as refugees or terrorists to being understood as a people under occupation demanding their rights (Smith, 2010)

The Israeli forces responded harshly to rock-throwing crowds of young men with beatings, curfews, mass arrests, and even lethal force. Despite this repression, the Palestinian uprising showed remarkable resilience and did not collapse. Instead, grassroots community committees formed throughout Gaza and the West Bank. These groups played a significant role in organizing the resistance. They helped coordinate protests, maintain morale, and provide essential services to keep communities functioning despite the harsh conditions. The Palestinians also used civil disobedience tactics such as strikes, boycotts, and refusal to pay taxes as nonviolent forms of resistance. These tactics aimed to disrupt the normal functioning of the occupation without provoking overwhelming military retaliation. This approach aligns with the political theory of James C Scott, who coined the term “everyday resistance. “This concept shows how oppressed groups often resist dominant powers not only through large, dramatic actions but also through small, subtle, and often covert acts that are safer and still meaningful.

In this context of the First Intifada, Palestinian civil disobedience reflects this kind of “everyday resistance” Through many small, strategic acts, like strikes or tax refusal. Palestinians collectively undermined Israeli control and sustained a powerful resistance movement that originated from the public (Scott,1985)

The First Intifada fits Tilly`s model where the three main conditions are present: Political opportunity, organizational capacity, and collective identity. Although it appeared spontaneous, it was preceded by years of localized protests and civil mobilization across occupied territories. This preexisting groundwork gave Palestinians the organizational strength needed to quickly coordinate widespread resistance through grassroots committees,

neighborhood networks, and communication systems. From a political opportunity perspective, the broader context of weakening the Arab regimes, shifting Cold War dynamics, and rising Palestinian frustration created a moment where resistance seemed possible and potentially effective. Palestinians used this window to launch sustained protests that were difficult for Israel to suppress. As Antonio Gramsci noted, “*The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born* “. Gramsci’s quote captures the essence of what Palestinians were experiencing during the Intifada. The “old “refers to the entrenched Israeli occupation and the Ineffective responses of the traditional Arab leadership, while the “new “is the emergence of a grassroots, popular resistance movement aimed at achieving self-determination. The Intifada was born in this “interregnum “, a period of instability and uncertainty where existing structures were being challenged, but new political realities had not yet solidified. In this transition, resistance took on new forms. Mass mobilization, civil disobedience, and local coordination, which were not part of previous centralized nationalist strategies (Khalidi, 1997)

For the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the First Intifada was a major change: Palestinians living under direct Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza were no longer willing to wait passively for liberation led from abroad. A new generation of grassroots leaders arose. Ideologically aligned with the PLO but operationally independent, taking charge of resistance efforts on the ground. This shift can be meaningfully understood through Frantz Fanon's anti-colonial theory, which asserts that the colonized achieve psychological liberation and reclaim their agency through active resistance. Fanon emphasizes that revolt is not only a political necessity but also a deeply personal and collective assertion of dignity and humanity (The Wretched of the Earth, 1961). In this light, the Intifada represented a breakthrough in political consciousness, where self -self-emancipation became central to the Palestinian struggle.

Meanwhile, an important parallel development occurs within the Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, leading to the establishment of Hamas on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1987. By February 1988, Hamas had formally aligned with the Brotherhood and, in August of the year, issued its founding charter. Although Hamas operated independently of the PLO, it cooperated with the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) to some extent, issuing separate communiques and organizing its striking days, thereby contributing to the broader resistance effort while maintaining ideological distinction (Mishal & Sela, 2000)

The declaration of an independent Palestinian state by the Palestine National Council on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1988, shifted the political strategy of the PLO. By referencing UN General Assembly Resolution 181 and accepting UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the PLO signaled its willingness to pursue a two-state solution through diplomatic means. This move was further reinforced by Yasir Arafat's public renunciation of terrorism on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1988, which opened the door for the United States to begin formal dialogue with the PLO. There was a major diplomatic breakthrough at the time. However, this newly emerging diplomatic channel proved fragile. In June 1990, the U.S suspended talks following a failed guerrilla operation against Israel conducted by the Palestinian Liberation Front, a group supported by Iraq. Despite the operation being isolated and not directly linked to the PLO's central leadership, it was amplified politically and, in the media, leading to a breakdown in the fragile diplomatic process. This turn of events exemplifies what Robert Entman calls the "power of framing": *"To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text"*. By highlighting the attack and framing it as representative of broader Palestinian intentions, political actors and media outlets effectively reshaped public perception (Milton-Edwards & Farrell, 2010).

The First Intifada marked not only a grassroots uprising but also a major diplomatic turning point. It revealed the extent of Palestinian loyalty to the PLO, especially among those in the West Bank and Gaza. This public and widespread support pressured Jordan's King Hussein to formally renounce Jordan's administrative claims over the West Bank on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1988, effectively acknowledging the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (Smith, 2010)

## **5. The Second Intifada: Roots of Disillusionment and Escalation**

The outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000 was the result of long-term structural and political grievances, despite initial hopes raised by the Oslo Accords, from 1993 to 2000 Palestinians faced increasing restrictions on movement, worsening economic conditions, and the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements, which deepened the sense of occupation rather than easing it. These deteriorating conditions created widespread disillusionment and frustration, making the eruption of violence almost inevitable. As Pearlman argues, *"The second Intifada was not the spontaneous product of individual decisions but rather the culmination of years of growing Palestinian frustration during the Oslo peace Process"* (Pearlman 24)

Beyond individual psychological explanations, Charles Tilly's theory of contentious politics offers a comprehensive view of social and political factors of the Second Intifada. Tilly explains that *"contention arises when ordinary people join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents"* (Tilly and Tarrow 4). From this perspective, the Second Intifada is more than mere chaos or disorder, but a structured and collective response by Palestinians confronting a political system they perceive as unjust and inflexible. This form of organized contention reflects ongoing resistance within the asymmetrical power dynamics of the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict. Moreover, the failure of the 2000 Camp David Summit further intensified Palestinian skepticism toward diplomacy, reinforcing the belief that negotiations only perpetuated existing inequalities. Both Palestinian and Israeli leaders engaged in strategic calculations, where the threat or use of force was seen to improve their respective bargaining positions. As Robert Pape asserts, “*suicide terrorism and other forms of political violence are often employed as rational strategies designed to achieve specific political goals*” (Pape 4).

The events of October 7, 2023, did not occur spontaneously but emerged because of decades of unresolved political issues. On that day, Hamas carried out a highly coordinated and deadly attack on southern Israel, resulting in the deaths of over 1.100 people and the taking of hostages. This attack prompted Israel to declare war and initiate a large-scale military operation on the Gaza Strip (Beaumont; Al Jazeera). Although the scale and brutality of the attack were unprecedented, its underlying causes were deeply rooted in the long history of the conflict. These include the unresolved trauma of the 1948 Nakba, which led to massive Palestinian displacement and loss, the ongoing fragmentation of Palestinian political identity, the Israeli-imposed siege of Gaza since 2007, and the repeated failures of international diplomacy to produce a lasting and just resolution (Pappé; Khalidi). Thus, October 7 represents a historical reckoning, a powerful moment when the long-ignored grievances and suffering of Palestinians under occupation forcefully re-entered global awareness.

Postcolonial scholars like Edward Said have emphasized historical injustices, such as the Nakba, resisting being ignored or buried without consequences. Said famously asserted, “*until the Palestinians are given their due as a people with a history, identity, and rights, peace will remain a mirage*” (Said 181).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began by situating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within its historical and political context, emphasizing the rise of competing nationalist movements in the late nineteenth century. By exploring foundational moments such as the emergence of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, it established the ideological and territorial roots of the rivalry. It then Key turning points, including the 1948 Nakba, the 1967 Six-Day War, and the First and Second Intifadas were analyzed not only as historical ruptures, but also as moments where collective memory, identity, and resistance were forged.

Drawing on a broad theoretical framework, the chapter employed Arendt's notion of political action, Butler's theory of grievability, Tilly's insights on social mobilization, Foucault's understanding of power and spatial control, and Scott's concept of everyday resistance to reveal the complex dynamics of occupation and rebellion. The chapter concluded with an analysis of events leading up to October 7, framed as a historical reckoning shaped by prolonged injustice, exclusion, and the erosion of hope. This sets the stage for the next chapter's deeper examination of how contemporary expressions of resistance and agency are mediated through identity, discourse, and power.

## **CHAPTER TWO :**

### **October 7th: A Flashpoint in the Struggle for Political Voice.**

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### **Introduction**

The events of October 7 precipitated a torrent of political responses and discussions worldwide, challenging long-standing narratives about resistance, violence, and legitimacy. In times of conflict and unrest, acts of defiance are more than just emotional reactions; they become conscious and intentional expressions of political agency, and a way for individuals and communities to assert their will against powerful structures. This chapter examines how acts of defiance following October 7 have been framed, understood, and contested, bringing to light the interconnectedness of political action and public narrative.

### **6. Protests and Boycotts as Expressions of Political Agency**

In the wake of the October 7 attacks and the escalating conflict in Gaza, protests and boycott campaigns emerged worldwide, showing how ordinary individuals have reclaimed their political voice through collective acts of resistance. In cities such as London, Paris, New York, and Kuala Lumpur, hundreds of thousands gathered in protest to condemn civilian casualties, call for ceasefires, and show solidarity with either Palestinians or Israelis. These demonstrations, frequently organized by grassroots movements and civil society groups, exemplify what Charles Tilly (2006) describes as "repertoires of contention," organized methods of public expression designed to challenge those in power. In addition to the street protests, economic boycotts became a significant form of resistance, with global campaigns encouraging consumers to avoid brands associated with the conflict, including McDonald's,

Puma, and Starbucks. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanction (BDS) movement has started resonating with people, seeking to put economic and moral pressure on companies and governments that support or benefit from Israeli policies against Palestinians (BDS Movement, 2023). However, these expressions of agency faced resistance and repression in several countries. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (2023) reported instances of protest bans, police violence, and arrests, particularly in France, Germany, and Egypt, framing the protests as threats to public order. These conflicts show the debated legitimacy of political agency: who gets to voice their concerns, and under what circumstances. As Judith Butler suggests in *Precarious Life*, politics becomes visible when lives are mourned publicly (2004). In this sense, both protests and boycotts assert political subjectivity. There are ways for people, especially the marginalized, to speak, reclaim space, and challenge which voices, lives, and narratives are recognized in public discourse.

These global protests demonstrate the varied ideological foundations upon which collective political agency can be constructed. Some people protested because they were against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. They were responding to decades of settlement building military control, and saw the protest to demand justice and freedom for Palestinians (Finkelstein, 2018). On the other hand, some people and governments focus on fighting terrorism. They supported Israel's military response to the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks, viewing it as a matter of national security. This view often downplays Palestinian suffering and treats the conflict as a fight against terrorism instead of recognizing it as a long-standing political struggle (Klein, 2023).

Symbolic expressions, such as flags, keffiyehs, placards, chants, and slogans like "Free Palestine", "Ceasefire Now", and "Bring Them Home" are used in protests to express political views and build unity among people. By using these symbols and gestures, protestors feel

connected and the larger cause. They also help streets and squares into places where alternative voices can be heard, especially when the mainstream media ignores or misrepresents them.

At the same time, people started boycotting companies deliberately, because they believed these companies were involved in or supported the violence. Brands like McDonald`s, Starbucks, Puma, and Hewlett-Packard (HP) became key targets for consumer resistance due to their suspected link to the Israeli government or military. These boycotts were planned and organized by groups like the BDS movement, which aims to stop worldwide support for Israel`s treatment of Palestinians (BDS Movement, 2023). The movement has helped turn people`s anger into organized protests, encouraging many groups such as students, workers, artists, and scholars to join efforts to pressure companies economically (Pappe, 2021). These efforts are a form of peaceful and nonviolent way of protesting. They match what James C. Scott calls ``everyday resistance, where marginalized groups engage in small, quiet actions to challenge dominant power structures (Scott,1985). In this sense, choosing not to support companies becomes a political act.

Additionally, Social media platforms play a key role in political engagements, enabling individuals around the world to express their concerns, organize actions, and challenge prevailing narratives. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have worked as spaces for sharing stories, supporting activist groups, and elevating voices that are often ignored by mainstream media. After October 7, social media not only facilitated discussions about what happened, but also provided a space for people to fight and feel in control again, despite the violence and unfairness. That is, social media was key in guiding how the world responded, helping people organize boycotts and protests (Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020).

Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter became essential tools for political expression, particularly among young people. Protest content spread quickly online, allowing

individuals who were not physically participating in the protest to engage in global conversations around the world about the conflict. Since young people are often more skilled at using social media, they use it effectively to inform others, tell their own stories, and engage in action. TikTok, for instance, became a hub for short videos, some showing protests, others sharing emotions, which helped viewers understand the human side of the conflict, offering a different story than what the mainstream media showed. Moreover, Instagram stories and posts, along with Twitter threads, were used to share urgent messages and support calls for peace and amplify voices advocating for ceasefires or solidarity with Palestinian or Israeli civilians. The youth-led nature of these efforts showed the significance of social media in connecting people across countries, transforming social media into a frontline for activism. (Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020)

## **7. Hashtag Activism and Its Role in Shaping Discourse**

Hashtags such as #FreePalestine and #StandWithIsrael quickly became popular online, providing people with a way to show support, spread awareness, and shape how others talked about the conflict. Using hashtags has become a powerful way to resist or support causes online, allowing individuals from all over the world to engage in political movements. By linking personal posts to larger political causes, these hashtags promoted a sense of solidarity across countries. Besides showing support or disagreements, hashtags help create alternative narratives that question how mainstream media explains events. For instance, #FreePalestine became a powerful call for those against Israeli military actions, while #StandWithIsrael was used by those who saw Israel's actions as self-defense. These hashtags affect what people think, fuel debates about fairness and safety, and give a voice to groups that are often ignored in places where protests are restricted and heavily surveilled (Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020).

The digital realm has increasingly become an important space for political action, particularly for those in regions where direct action is hindered by government control, censorship, or distance from centers of power. After the events of October 7<sup>th</sup>, individuals and movements turned to social media for activism when on-the-ground protests were not possible due to restrictions, threats, or other challenges. Social media became a key tool for planning and spreading protest messages, especially in places where governments banned protests or limited access to the internet. In these cases, the digital realm helped individuals express their political power and overcome traditional obstacles to political participation. In places like Gaza, where movement is restricted, social media presents an alternative platform for speaking and organizing global support. Additionally, digital platforms offer a level of anonymity that hides people from government surveillance, particularly in countries with strict control. This anonymity enables activists to work without fear of retaliation. In this way, digital space expands the ways people can take political action and gives a fair chance to those who are unable to join street protests. To sum up, social media has become essential for maintaining political agencies, especially where physical resistance is restricted (Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020).

## **8. The U.S Double Standards: Repeating the Logic of Silencing**

In the United States, the right to protest is protected by the Constitution and is seen as a key part of what makes the country democratic. Historically, major protests, from the Civil Rights Movement to the Women`s March and Black Lives Matter, have played a central role in shaping the nation`s politics and culture. The US has long claimed to strongly support freedom of speech. However, the events following October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, have exposed the

contradiction in how protests are treated, especially when they confront powerful political interests. While protests aligned with mainstream narratives, such as support for Ukraine or climate action, are accepted or praised, those expressing support with Palestine or criticizing Israel are often seen as threatening. These demonstrations have faced censorship, legal consequences, and social stigma. As journalist Glenn Greenwald aptly observed, “*Free speech is only meaningful if it protects the speech we dislike and the speech that challenges power. Otherwise, it is just permission*” (Greenwald). This double standard reveals a selective application of free speech, suggesting that the U.S. commitment to democratic values is not absolute.

This selective tolerance of dissent, however, is not without precedent. It reflects a common pattern seen before in American politics, particularly evident after the 9/11 attacks. Just as pro-Palestinian voices are currently delegitimized, Muslim, Arab, and anti-war voices were aggressively silenced in the post 9/11 climate (Bayoumi; Kumar). Expressions of dissent that criticized U.S. policies or the War on Terror were often called unpatriotic or even threats. What emerged was not merely a security response, but a discursive strategy. A logic of silencing that casts speaking as a threat to national cohesion (Klein), by drawing on this historical paradigm. Clear that the current repression of political agency post-October 7<sup>th</sup> is part of a recurring structure in which groups claim ownership of grief, limit who can speak, and prevent others from acting politically.

## **9. Deconstructing the October 7 Crisis**

Following the Hamas-led attacks on October 7<sup>th</sup>, widespread speculation emerged, with Iran quickly being suspected of supporting or planning the operation. Iran has a well-established history of supporting groups like Hamas and Hezbollah with financial and military assistance. However, early U.S. intelligence reports suggested the situation might not be so

straightforward, officials reported that there were no solid evidence linking Iran to the planning or authorization of the attack, and some accounts suggested that Iran`s top leaders were unaware of the details about when or how the attack would happen (Barnes and Goldman; Elgindy; U.S. Department of State).

The accusation remained in public discussion, hiding the underlying local motives behind the attack and instead framing it as an extension of Iran`s wider goals in the region. This limited viewpoint, which casts Palestinian resistance as a mere instrument of Tehran, works to distract from the long history of Israel's occupation, blockades, and land loss. According to Jabaliya, Israeli leaders and Western news often describe Hamas and others as tools of Iran, which takes attention away from the actual political concerns (Jadaliyya, 2023). Similarly, scholars argue that such a view sidelines Palestinian history and daily struggles, turning the conversation into a debate about Middle East power politics rather than the real issues of occupation and resistance (Alternative Narrative of Palestinian Resistance 2017).

The situation became complicated because of the notable failure of Israeli intelligence agencies, particularly Mossad and Shin Bet, to detect or prevent the attack. These agencies are known globally for being highly advanced, and they usually take pride in their strong monitoring system, especially in the Gaza Strip. Not seeing this attack reveal deeper problems, such as bad planning, overreliance on surveillance technology, and a false sense of security or laziness in the system. Some analysts noted that Israeli intelligence misjudged Hamas`s intention, wrongly assuming the group was too fragmented to pose a serious threat (Kober). At the same time, Israel`s internal political problems and focus on domestic issues may have made its security forces less alert or more careless overall. Whether this mistake was a case of intelligence failure or a deeper systemic flaw, it gave Israeli leaders a chance to present the attack as a major threat to the country`s survival. By calling the attack an existential threat, the

government could justify a strong military reaction and silence criticism, both within Israel and internationally.

In the U.S, powerful groups like AIPAC have pushed a strong security-focused view that supports Israel. AIPAC has shaped American laws and politics in ways that reduce public criticism of Israel, and they have framed support for Palestinians as antisemitism (Mearsheimer and Walt; Greenberg). After the Hamas-led attacks on October 7, AIPAC increased efforts to portray pro-Palestinian protests and economic boycotts as threatening or harmful. This pressure has helped pass laws against the BDS movement, crack down on student groups, and create media stories that have blurred the line between supporting Palestine and spreading hate. Because of this, individuals who speak out for Palestinian rights may lose their jobs, have their reputations damaged, or feel excluded socially, even though the U.S claims to protect free speech and democracy (Feldman; Jewish Voice for Peace).

## **10. Before October 7: Protest as a Civic Virtue**

Before October 7, protests were widely understood in the U.S as a significant part of what it means to take part in democracy, expressing opinions, pushing for change, and holding leaders accountable. Activism was viewed not just as a civic duty but as a key avenue for societal transformation. The climate justice movement provides a notable example. Activists, many of them young people, have taken bold actions, such as refusing to leave certain areas, blocking roads or buildings, and breaking certain laws peacefully, to urge the government and corporations to respond to the climate crisis. Groups like Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future (led by Greta Thunberg) made their presence by directly interfering with fossil fuel infrastructure and daily operations, forcing people to notice their message. These protests were met with varying levels of public support, especially progressive groups supported them, and

their ideas gained traction in universities and policymaking arenas. Greta Thunberg`s powerful speeches and strong voice online helped convey how urgent climate action is, and people generally saw her actions as morally justified because she was demanding justice for future generations. Thunberg emphasized the need for immediate action, stating: *“I want to act as if the house is on fire, because it is,* “urging the world to take action (2019). Even though the protest disrupted normal life, they were widely accepted because the cause of protecting the Earth was seen as morally clear and urgent. Despite occasional backlashes from industries and conservative figures, climate activists were still widely allowed to speak and share their views in the public sphere.

In a similar vein, Black Lives Matter (BLM) was a major protest movement before October 7. It began in response to the killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by a police officer in 2020. The murder was captured on video and widely shared, causing widespread anger and leading to mass protests calling for justice and an end to police brutality. These protests, which took place in cities across the U.S. and around the world, brought millions into the streets. BLM activists argued that “Black Lives Matter “was not only a call for justice for Floyd but also a demand to challenge and eliminate deep-rooted racism in U.S. systems like policing, education, housing, and healthcare. Media outlets, though sometimes criticized the protests, generally acknowledged that the protesters had valid reasons and serious concerns. Corporate America and public figures, including athletes and politicians, expressed public support for BLM. Moreover, the movement left visible marks such as murals and led some governments to implement reforms, especially related to policing and racial equality. President Obama, a key figure in U.S politics, framed the protests as a reflection of American values: `what we saw in the streets, particularly with younger people, was a powerful statement about what is best in us as a country` (Vanity Fair Editors, 2020). Similarly, Protests supporting Ukraine were seen as morally right and in line with democratic values. These rallies displayed the Ukrainian flag and

were portrayed in media and public discourse as support for Ukraine, which was viewed as a victim of aggression by Russia. These protests were warmly received not only by the American public but also by left and right in the U.S political spectrum. Major institutions in the U.S, including the government, media, and celebrities, supported these protests, interpreting them as a stand for democracy and global justice. Politicians like President Biden and key European leaders made vocal statements in support of the Ukrainian resistance. Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House at the time, declared: “*We are with Ukraine in their fight for freedom, democracy, and sovereignty.*” As Ukraine’s plight was viewed as an authoritarian act, supporting Ukraine became symbolic of protecting democracy itself. These movements also benefited from the alignment with common values that most people, especially in the West, agreed with. The mainstream media played an important role in amplifying these movements, giving activists attention and a chance to influence public opinion. Even in the face of disruptive violence, these protests were seen as an expression of civic virtue.

## **11. After October 7: Protest as Threat**

Unlike previous protest movements, the wave of pro-Palestinian protests was immediately attacked through government crackdowns, media smears, and actions by schools and institutions. Students who peacefully supported Palestinians or demanded an end to the violence were punished, doxed, blacklisted, and in some cases suspended or expelled. Professors who criticized Israel’s actions faced public campaigns for their dismissal. Furthermore, entire campus chapters of organizations like Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) were banned under the pretext of promoting violence and antisemitism, even when their messages often echoed with global human rights organizations. Within just a few weeks, the national conversation moved from defending freedom of expression to justifying limits on

speech, especially when it concerned Palestine. Observers noticed the clear double standard: when Ukrainians resisted invasion, they were praised; however, when Palestinians called for resistance, even through peaceful means, they were often seen as extremists. In response to these protests, new legislation was introduced that specifically restricted Palestinian advocacy, and anyone who criticized Israel was frequently labeled as supporting terrorism. As a result of all this repression and labeling, it became dangerous or demanding for people, especially public figures or students, to show support for ordinary Palestinians suffering in Gaza.

## **12. The Rise of Censorship and Cancel Culture**

Censorship and cancel culture became prominent features of the public response. When people show support for Palestinians, they often face efforts to silence or punish them. These efforts took the form of censorship and cancel culture. Across online platforms, university campuses, and within professional and artistic communities, individuals and organizations critical of Israeli policies were silenced, losing their platforms to speak, or subjected to public condemnation. People who posted content criticizing the Israeli military actions or who talked about the suffering in Gaza found their posts deleted, their accounts secretly limited, or even banned completely from social media. Although these measures were often justified as efforts to combat hate speech or misinformation, critics contend that the rules were applied unfairly, mostly suppressing those who supported Palestinians. Because of this censorship, many people accuse social media companies and other institutions of being biased and violating the right to free speech (Paul, 2024).

This trend moved beyond online spaces into real-world consequences, with artists, scholars, public figures, and even humanitarian organizations facing backlash for voicing support for Palestine. Such expressions often resulted in losing their jobs, becoming targets of

coordinated harassment on the internet. Two well-known examples are Susan Sarandon lost her agency's support after publicly supporting Palestine, and Gigi Hadid received strong negative reactions online for posting about Gaza's suffering (BBC News, 2023). In academia, Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi, a Palestinian American professor at San Francisco State University, has faced efforts demanding her dismissal due to her activism (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2024).

Meanwhile, the Toronto Palestine Film Festival focused on Palestine lost financial backers because of the political forces pressuring sponsors (Toronto Star, 2024). Even simple supportive actions, such as a social media post by actress Emma Watson, were met with harsh criticism from Israeli government representatives. A high-profile example is a Microsoft employee being fired after she publicly accused the company of helping Israel's military through AI and defense deals, which she claimed contributed to genocide (Al Jazeera, 2025).

The situation also revealed the role of algorithmic bias, combined with the interests of corporations and government, that influence how people see and understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by controlling what information gets visibility. According to Framing theory, media outlets and platforms do not merely reflect reality; they actively select and present certain information while excluding others, guiding public perception. Social media algorithms tend to reduce the visibility of posts related to Palestinian resistance, which affects how many people learn about or understand that perspective. By choosing to hide or downplay certain content, algorithms act as gatekeepers that block alternative views and stories from marginalized people, reinforcing dominant perspectives. (Paul, 2024; The Intercept, 2023)

Meanwhile, governments reportedly pressured social media companies to censor speech that opposed their official positions, which further suppressed Palestinian voices and painted their resistance negatively. Together, these algorithmic and political influences caused the

public to have a skewed, incomplete understanding of the conflict, reducing open discussion and silencing opposing opinions. Media coverage often depicted Palestinians not as people suffering oppression, but instead as the attackers, labeling their efforts as extreme or opposed to Western values. As philosopher Noam Chomsky has argued: “*The media are a system of communication that serves the interests of the powerful*” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

### **13. The Protest Decoded: What the Media Hears When Palestine Speaks**

The divergent readings of interpreting pro-Palestinian protests have real-world effects, influencing not only media coverage but also government actions and public opinion. Following October 7, the dominant narratives encoded support for Palestine as extremism. These actions align with what Hall would identify as the operationalization of dominant culture codes: when protests are framed as radical or threatening, it justifies a government crackdown in the name of public safety. Hall states: “*Dominant ideologies, by definition, represent the interests of powerful groups. They form the basis of the way we understand the world and our place in it*” (Hall, Encoding/Decoding, 1973). By portraying these protests as dangerous, powerful governments or institutions can justify silencing them as necessary for national security, even if the real goal is to protect political interests. On the other hand, alternative interpretations view these protests as a democratic, rightful, and morally justified struggle to gain attention. They mostly appear on independent or activists’ platforms rather than mainstream media. Hall’s framework of encoding /decoding shows how media outlets encode protest and shape them by certain ideologies, influencing how audiences understand them. He explains: “*An oppositional reading allows the viewer to decode the message differently, seeing the deeper, often hidden, truths that dominant narratives ignore*” (Hall, Encoding/Decoding, 1973). Unlike the prevailing perspectives, these alternative interpretations emphasize human

rights and justice. However, these justice-focused views rarely reach a wide audience because dominant institutions control most of the media and shape public perception (Hall, 1973). The sharp difference in how pro-Palestinian protests are interpreted as either legitimate or threatening exposes deep divisions in the U.S political thinking. These divisions shape those whose opinions are heard, whose pain is recognized as real, and whose actions are ignored or silenced. As Hall notes: *“The process of representation is not about `reflecting` the world but about making the world intelligible in a particular way, by organizing and making sense of it* (Hall, Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, 1997).

#### **14. Boycotts and the Subversive Force of Non-Participation**

Following the events of October 7, boycotts have increasingly become more visible, emerging as a powerful and yet controversial form of resistance. In contrast to protests, which are limited and happen at specific times and places, boycotts represent a sustained form of opposition that challenges both economic systems and symbolic associations. Whether through the refusal to support certain big companies such as Starbucks, McDonald`s, and Puma, or through academic and cultural boycotts, like refusing to work with Israeli universities or attend Israeli cultural events. These actions are deliberate to stop participating in the economic or cultural systems that are linked to oppression. This is how people turn their economic behavior into the form of a protest or a political statement. (Barghouti)

Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of boycotts. Some are part of the official BDS campaign, while others are started by local groups or individuals. This trend shows that people are finding new ways to engage in politics, not just through voting or protesting, but through their choice as consumers. Boycotts offer a way for individuals who might not have access to public demonstrations or formal political channels to take part in

meaningful resistance. Drawing on James C. Scott's concept of everyday resistance as developed in *Weapons of the Weak*, these boycotts are small and quiet, but still powerful symbols of protest, especially when done collectively. By directing attention toward companies believed to support or profit from Israel's state actions, these boycotts articulate a clear moral judgment. In addition to the fact that boycotts expose the companies that claim neutrality and yet are involved in or benefit from oppressive systems, which challenge the idea that capitalism is separate from politics and ethics. Thus, this act of economic refusal becomes a form of ethical intervention, forcing systems to face public judgment and answer for their role in injustice. In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler emphasizes that resistance becomes powerful and dangerous to those in power when it questions who is seen as a real victim. In this context of Palestine, boycotts challenge the dominant idea that only some lives matter, while others are ignored. This undermines the dominant narrative and exposes bias and injustice in how violence and suffering are represented (Butler, 2004)

Nonetheless, the rise of the boycott has unsurprisingly provoked critical responses and countermeasures. In countries like the U.S, Germany, and France, governments have passed laws against boycotts, especially those connected to the BDS movement, to suppress these kinds of protests. Many of these laws treat criticism of Zionism as if it were the same as antisemitism. This makes economic protests like boycotts seem illegal or morally wrong, even though they are aimed at a political issue, not a religion. (Palestine Legal; Human Rights Watch). This strong reaction to the boycott raises questions about: how far can a boycott go in making political change? To what extent can individual or collective economic decisions impact global world politics? Is boycotting enough to stop deep, long-standing systems of violence, or could it be taken over by brands pretending to care, only to look good? Yet despite these limitations, the global wave of boycotts has successfully opened conversations about complicity, ethics, and power. It has been shown that even under conditions of censorship,

surveillance, and political repression, agency finds expression in acts as seemingly mundane as shopping or refusing to buy (Chomsky and Herman).

Regionally, in countries like Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt, where governments have formed peaceful relations with Israel, boycotts from the public have challenged those decisions, making leaders explain why they chose to align with Israel. Activist groups and political parties, especially Islamist parties, have leveraged boycott campaigns to criticize normalization and reposition themselves as champions of Palestinian rights (Yousef Munayyer; Al Jazeera; Pappé). In contrast, countries such as Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey have supported the Palestinian cause openly; they have allowed and encouraged boycotts as a way to show moral leadership on the global stage (Middle East Monitor; Mahathir Mohamad; Erdoğan).

Finally, the geopolitical impact of boycotts reaches the international economic relations. International companies perceived to be supporting or gaining from Israeli policies have experienced financial setbacks, reputational harm, and pressure from investors. For example, McDonald's in the Middle East publicly separated itself from the Israeli McDonald's and attempted to show they were not involved, mainly because their sales dropped significantly. Similarly, Starbucks faced significant financial repercussions due to consumer boycotts related to its perceived support for Israel. The company experienced a \$11 billion decline in its market value. This massive economic loss shows that when consumers organize and act together, they can seriously affect giant global companies, proving that boycott movements can be powerful tools for pressure (Stewart, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter commences by identifying the events of October 7 as a significant turning point that reawakened enduring conflicts and triggered widespread political engagement around the world. By investigating acts of protest, boycott movements, and digital activism, it emphasizes how individuals, grassroots organizations, and marginalized groups demonstrated political agency in response to violence, surveillance, and the suppression of alternative narratives.

Drawing on a diverse body of theory, including Charles Tilly's "repertoires of contention," Judith Butler's notion of grievability, James C. Scott's everyday resistance, and Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model. Special attention was given to the role of social media and digital spaces in expanding or constraining political voice, as well as the ideological double standards governing free speech, particularly within Western democracies.

Moreover, the chapter explained how boycotts have become a strategic form of economic resistance, extending the struggle beyond physical protests into the realms of consumer ethics and global diplomacy. These acts, often met with backlash and criminalization, nonetheless reveal the evolving nature of agency under conditions of censorship and state repression.

By bringing these elements together, the chapter established a foundation for the next phase of analysis: a more in-depth theoretical and forward-looking exploration of how the resistance strategies discussed particularly boycotts and protest may develop over time. The upcoming chapter will examine emerging trends, geopolitical implications, and possible future directions of political agency in the aftermath of October 7.

**CHAPTER THREE :**  
**Predictions and Analysis of Palestinian Political**  
**Agency Post-October 7.**

## **CHAPTER THREE: Predictions and Analysis of Palestinian Political Agency Post-October 7.**

### **Introduction**

Boycotts have long been a core strategy in Palestinian resistance, with the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement serving as a prominent example of nonviolent collective action. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's idea of Political "appearance" in the public sphere, boycotts offer a means for Palestinians to assert political presence when formal institutions fail to represent them (Arendt 199).

The events of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, reinvigorated boycott campaigns, expanding their scope but also triggering heightened repression from state actors. Alberto Melucci's theory of "new social movement" "highlights how boycotts operate beyond economics, functioning as powerful symbolic acts that express collective identity and dissent under structural exclusion (Melucci 89). Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic capital further explain how boycotts delegitimize brands linked to the Israeli state, thereby diminishing their social and moral standing (Bourdieu 248).

The tangible impact of these campaigns is evident: Puma lost over €100 million in 2024 following BDS-led pressure over its sponsorship ties. In response, governments increased legal restrictions on boycotts, as seen in the UK legislation and anti-BDS laws across 35 U.S. states (Human Rights Watch). This repression reflects Charles Tilly's "repression circle", wherein states evolve to shield themselves from social contention (Tilly 5). Yet repression often sparks innovation: activists adopt James Scott's "invisible resistance" tactics, including discreet supply chain disruptions and anonymized purchasing to evade retaliation (Scott 33).

Legal challenges, such as those by the European Legal Support Center invoking freedom of expression under EU human rights law, represent another front of resistance. A form of Arendtian political appearance through institutional channels (“ELSC Report”). Looking ahead, boycott strategies may diversify to target lesser-known corporations involved in Israel’s military-industrial complex and explore decentralized economic actions like crypto-based embargoes. Ultimately, the boycott movement embodies a dual dynamic: they are both a visible act of denunciation and a covert form of disruption. As Judith Butler reminds us, “*Resistance takes place when the conditions for appearance are denied*” (Frames 46).

## **15. Boycotts as Global Counter-Power**

Boycotts are not new to Palestinian resistance. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement has long operated as a form of nonviolent resistance grounded in what Arendt would describe as collective action in the public sphere, a way to “appear” politically where institutional politics fails (Arendt 199). But the October 7 events have created a renewed wave of boycott energy, pushing the tactic into new terrains and encountering intensified repression. Drawing from Melucci’s theory of “new social movements,” boycotts function not merely as economic levers but as symbolic gestures of dissent and identity formation (Melucci 89). They signal collective agency under conditions where traditional forms of political participation are structurally denied. Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital is equally apt: the more a brand’s association with the Israeli state is delegitimized, the more its moral and social currency is eroded (Bourdieu 248). The impact has been tangible. In 2024, Puma suffered over €100 million in losses after global BDS campaigns targeted its sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (BDS Movement). Meanwhile, state actors escalated their countermeasures. In 2024, the UK introduced legislation restricting public bodies from participating in boycotts,

mirroring the 35 U.S. states that had already passed anti-BDS laws (Human Rights Watch). Asi's clampdown reveals the structural constraints that Tilly describes as the "repression cycle" in movement evolution when state institutions adapt to insulate themselves from contention (Tilly 5). Yet repression also provokes tactical innovation. Activists are increasingly pivoting to what Scott might term "invisible resistance": supply-chain disruption, consumer obfuscation, and the use of anonymized purchasing data to avoid corporate retaliation (Scott 33). Legal tools are also being weaponized as counter-power. The European Legal Support Center has launched multiple legal challenges, framing anti-boycott laws as infringements on freedom of expression under EU human rights law ("ELSC Report"). In this way, legal strategy becomes a form of Arendtian appearance, a way for civil society to reclaim public space through institutional challenge. Strategically, the future of boycotts may lie in "tactical diversification" targeting lesser-known corporations embedded in Israel's military-industrial apparatus (e.g., HP, Siemens) and exploring decentralized economic actions such as crypto-based trade embargoes. What emerges is a dual dynamic: the boycott as an act of visibility and denunciation, and as a covert form of disruption. As Butler reminds us, "*Resistance takes place when the conditions for appearance are denied*" (Frames 46). Boycotts, then, are not just expressions of outrage; they are technologies of political legibility.

## **16. Intersectionality Reshaping Movement Leadership**

Palestinian resistance is not a singular struggle but a polyphonic insurgency where gender, sexuality, race, and class intersect under occupation. Intersectionality, as conceptualized by Kimberle Crenshaw, functions not only as a descriptive tool but as a political framework revealing how layered oppressions shape both vulnerability and agency (Crenshaw 1242). Post -October 7, this framework has gained urgency, as Palestinian resistance increasingly centers marginalized voices, especially Queer, feminist, and transnational actors.

Maria Lugones's concept of "world-traveling" theorizes how Palestinian women activists navigate overlapping systems of colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and nationalism (Lugones 748). Their resistance confronts both the settler-colonial state and internal hierarchies that have historically marginalized them. Groups like Tal3at and Aswat embody this dual struggle, insisting that liberation must address both occupation and gendered/sexual oppression. The intersectional turn in the Palestinian leadership is powerful because it refuses to separate political from intimate realms, and nation from global struggles. As bell hooks reminds us, "The struggle is also about the way we live our lives", about the meaning we give to freedom (hooks 119). The future of Palestinian resistance may depend less on charismatic leaders and more on dispersed, intersectional networks of care, resistance, and epistemic defiance.

## **17. Protest Criminalization and Narrative Warfare**

In the wake of October 7, the protest itself has become a site of contestation, not only physically but discursively. States are deploying increasingly sophisticated tools of repression, legal, algorithmic, and semantic, to neutralize dissent. Giorgio Agamben's theory of the state of exception provides a chilling framework: when democratic norms are suspended under the guise of security, protest becomes criminalized, and political subjects are rendered "bare life," exposed, rightless, killable (Agamben 2). Across Germany, France, the UK, and the U.S., Palestinian solidarity demonstrations have faced mass surveillance, campus crackdowns, and sudden revocations of civil liberties.

In Germany, public funding was withdrawn from organizations for merely expressing support for BDS (Greenwald). U.S. universities activated predictive policing software and student monitoring systems in coordination with federal agencies, an extension of what Shoshana Zuboff calls "surveillance capitalism," where dissent becomes data to be neutralized (Zuboff 163).

The function of repression, however, is not only to police bodies but to police meaning. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's propaganda model remains relevant here: mass media frame protests through elite interests, portraying Palestinian resistance as violent, irrational, or foreign (Herman and Chomsky 30). This delegitimization is part of what Judith Butler identifies as the "grievability gap": some lives are mournable, some protests legible, others are not (Butler 37). Protesters have responded by reshaping narrative terrains. Slogans like "Ceasefire Now" and "From the River to the Sea" have been reclaimed through explainers, visual campaigns, and counter-hashtags. Digital activists now dissect framing in real time, reappropriating terms like "terrorism" and "self-defense" to expose discursive double standards. Zaynep Tufekci's analysis of networked protest is particularly relevant: decentralized digital public can generate counter frames faster than institutional actors can suppress them (Tufekci 143). Yet criminalization extends beyond the street; it infiltrates academic, media, and digital platforms. Scholars are being deplatformed for expressing pro-Palestine views, while journalists face shadow-banning on platforms like Instagram and YouTube (Digital Rights Watch).

These mechanisms of control mirror Foucault's concept of biological governance, where populations are managed through discourse, surveillance, and the disciplining of speech (Foucault 94). To resist, activists are crafting what James C. Scott would call public transcripts of defiance that cloak "hidden transcripts" of resistance within the language of universal justice, linking Palestinian liberation with Indigenous rights, racial justice, and climate activism (Scott 4).

This narrative scaffolding builds moral coalitions across disparate movements, enabling broader legitimacy and resilience. Strategically, the future lies in narrative insurgency: training activists in media literacy, cultivating multilingual content ecosystems, and building independent platforms that resist algorithmic erasure. Here, framing is not a side issue; it is the

terrain of struggle itself. As Stuart Hall argued, “*Politics is work on Language*” (Hall 229). In an age where meaning is contested in real time and visibility is mediated by algorithms, the ability to shape discourse becomes a form of political power. The battle is not only over land and bodies but over narratives, signs, and frames, over who gets to speak, be heard, and define the terms of justice.

### **18. Symbolic Gains vs. Structural Stagnation**

Despite a noticeable discursive shift in global discourse where “apartheid”, “genocide”, and “ethnic cleansing” have entered mainstream media coverage, the material conditions for Palestinians remain largely unaltered. This paradox, wherein symbolic recognition expands while structural realities stagnate, embodies Gayatri Spivak’s warning that the subaltern may “speak,” but not necessarily be heard in ways that alter power (Spivak 282). Edward Said’s insight is instructive: “*liberation is not just about land, but the power to narrate*” (Said 29). Yet narrative power without structural traction risks becoming spectacle, what Frantz Fanon condemned as “national consciousness reduced to elite performance” (Fanon 161). Palestinians may achieve representational visibility in art, journalism, and academic discourse, yet face escalating siege, settlement, and statelessness on the ground. This disconnect is not accidental; it is a function of what Foucault would identify as biopolitical containment: the state tolerates certain forms of dissent that pose no material threat to its architecture (Foucault 95). Performative gestures (UN resolutions, celebrity statements, token acknowledgments) are permitted precisely because they do not interfere with necropolitical regimes of control (Mbembe 16). Empirically, this contradiction is evident. While *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* have adopted language previously relegated to fringe media, “occupation,” “apartheid,” “war crimes,” arms deals, settlement expansions, and digital censorship have simultaneously intensified (Sullivan). Symbolic victories, then, serve as both morale boosts

and pacifying mechanisms. Yet, within this terrain, new resistance logics are emerging. The Tent Intifada in Gaza is an organic, leaderless protest movement relying on physical encampments, mutual aid, and alternative media that embodies James C. Scott's concept of intralogistics: grassroots survival practices that evade co-optation (Abu-Remaileh). These tactics sidestep the NGO-ized frameworks of international recognition and instead build "sovereignty without statehood". Similarly, digital archiving projects like Decolonize Palestine and Palestine Open Maps represent a reconfiguration of resistance as epistemic warfare. When maps are redrawn, when names are restored, when memories are digitized, a kind of structural presence is reclaimed which Jacques Rancière would frame as a reorganization of "the distribution of the sensible" (Rancière 12).

Financial autonomy also constitutes a vital arena. As traditional aid flows are restricted by donor conditionalities, Palestinian activists and diaspora members are turning to crypto-based humanitarian platforms, like "Crypto Aid for Gaza," which bypass international financial systems (Tlaib). These tools do not replace sovereignty but gesture toward micro-resistances capable of sustaining life amid siege. Strategically, the challenge lies in ensuring that symbolic gains are not mistaken for structural transformation. This requires dual action: converting cultural capital into policy change and building horizontal infrastructures that bypass institutional gatekeeping. As bell hooks reminds us, "*Representation is the 'hot issue 'in terms of the connection between race and cultural production, but we must remember representation is only the beginning*" (Hooks 73). Symbolic recognition can inspire, but without a redistributive mechanism, it risks devolving into aesthetic politics. The future of resistance, then, lies in linking the visible to the material, so that to appear politically is not only to be seen, but to matter.

## 19. The Rise of “Resistance Art” as Counter-Hegemony

In the context of shrinking civic spaces and algorithmic censorship, resistance has increasingly migrated to the domain of cultural production. Art, music, and literature are not peripheral to political struggle; they are, as Jacques Rancière argues, constitutive of it. They reconfigure “the distribution of the sensible,” making visible that which is otherwise rendered invisible or illegible within dominant regimes of meaning (Rancière 12). Palestinian resistance art post-October 7 has not simply narrated; paint has challenged the architecture of silence. Artists like Malak Mattar have turned to NFTs to distribute their work without relying on platforms prone to censorship, simultaneously funding humanitarian aid and bypassing financial surveillance (Mattar). This decentralization of artistic resistance echoes what Shoshana Zuboff describes as a rebellion against surveillance capitalism, not only by escaping datafication but by creating autonomous circulations of meaning and value (Zuboff 167). Bell Hooks reminds us that art is not just expression; it is a “space of possibility” (hooks 73). In Gaza, this possibility has materialized in the form of underground exhibitions, mobile murals, and poetry readings in shelters. These acts, while seemingly small, are what James Scott would call “hidden transcripts,” the cultural underside of rebellion that resists not only external colonization but internal despair (Scott 4). Musicians like DAM have infused hip-hop with decolonial politics, reaching transnational audiences despite digital throttling. Their lyrics defy both Zionist narratives and the sanitized liberal discourse that frames Palestinians only as victims (DAM). Similarly, Mosab Abu Toha’s poetry, especially after his detention and torture, embodies what Butler describes as “grievable life turned into resistance text” (Butler 39). These forms of resistance are not immune to co-optation. International festivals, academic institutions, and art biennales increasingly embrace Palestinian artists while avoiding their politics. This recalls Fanon’s warning about the bourgeoisie’s tendency to domesticate national culture into safe consumption (Fanon 170). The challenge, then, is to protect cultural resistance

from becoming symbolic alibis for structural inertia. Still, the persistence of resistance art asserts that to narrate, to depict, to perform is itself a political claim. In the face of what Achille Mbembe calls “necropolitical erasure,” where entire populations are rendered killable and forgettable, resistance art operates as a form of archival insurgency (Mbembe 22). Whether it is a defiant dabke performance in Sheikh Jarrah, an animation project in Haifa, or a digital zine from the diaspora, Palestinian cultural production increasingly refuses to separate aesthetics from struggle. As Spivak notes, the subaltern can speak, but in art, they may also sing, paint, and rewrite (Spivak 308). The strategic implication is clear: resistance must not only organize, protest, and litigate, it must imagine. Cultural production, then, is not a supplement to struggle; it is one of its most radical frontiers.

## **Conclusion**

The future of Palestinian political agency is unfolding in a terrain shaped by overlapping architectures of control: juridical, algorithmic, discursive, and militarized. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, these conditions are not met with passive endurance. They are sites of contestation, rearticulation, and strategic imagination. Across six predictions, we have seen how resistance is mutating, not disappearing. From economic non-cooperation to encrypted activism, from intersectional leadership to narrative warfare, from cultural defiance to the aesthetics of survival, Palestinian agency continues to subvert the limits imposed upon it. This evolution embodies what Arendt calls “the miracle of action,” the capacity to begin anew in the face of systemic foreclosure (Arendt 178). Digital activism, while mediated by surveillance capitalism (Zuboff), has birthed new publics and solidarities. Protest, though criminalized and reframed as violence (Herman and Chomsky), has generated discourses of universal justice and transnational liberation. Cultural production, while vulnerable to commodification (Fanon), has refused to decouple art from struggle, imagination from survival. At stake is not merely the

political status of Palestine but what Butler calls the “grievability of life” itself, who is permitted to appear, to narrate, and to resist (Butler *Frames* 36). In this sense, the Palestinian struggle is no longer solely territorial; it is epistemic, symbolic, and ontological. As Spivak would assert, the power to “speak” is inseparable from the structures that allow one to be heard (Spivak 284). This is why the fight over narratives, hashtags, images, and frames is not secondary; it is foundational. Agency, therefore, must be understood as a layered phenomenon. It is expressed not only in uprisings and declarations but also in silence, satire, subversion, and song. As Scott reminds us, hidden transcripts often precede public rupture (Scott 5). And as Rancière argues, reordering the visible is itself an act of dissensus (Rancière 13). The post-October 7 moment has clarified that repression is intensifying, but so too is creativity. Whether through boycotts that reshape global economies or poetry that resurrects buried griefs, the Palestinian political imaginary remains, defiantly, alive. In the words of Edward Said, “liberation is not just about land, but the power to narrate” (Said 29). That power, fragmented, encrypted, censored, yet persistent, is precisely what this chapter has traced. The coming years will test the resilience of this narrative sovereignty, but they will also illuminate its generative potential.

## **General Conclusion**

This research aimed to investigate the evolving dynamics of political agency as manifested in Palestinian resistance in the aftermath of the events of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. It examined the emergence of protests, boycotts, and digital activism as significant acts of resistance and political self-expression within a context characterized by systemic repression, censorship, and biased media representation. Guided by conceptual frameworks drawing on the works of thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Judith Butler, James C. Scott, Stuart Hall, and

Charles Tilly, this study emphasizes that political power is not exclusively held by governments or formal institutions but can also be exercised by ordinary individuals through acts of dissent, resistance and solidarity.

The first chapter looked at how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began and developed, situating the events of October 7 within the larger picture of long-standing issues like the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, dispossession, and ongoing ideological struggle. Drawing on theories of political agency, grievability, and colonial discourse. It framed Palestinian resistance not as random violence or emotional reaction. Instead, it is a well-rooted and intentional form of political action.

The second chapter analyzed October 7 as a flashpoint and a significant turning point that restructured how protest and resistance are expressed and perceived globally. It examined the physical and digital forms of resistance, focusing on the conflict between voices demanding justice and institutions attempting to silence them. Interpreted through dominant media frames and selective ideological applications, the chapter showed how pro-Palestinian activism was often criminalized, even as other forms of protest were celebrated, arguing that while such acts effectively raise awareness and contest dominant narratives, they frequently encounter structural constraints that limit their capacity to make a change.

Therefore, this research concluded that after the events of October 7, acts of resistance like protests, boycotts, and online activism have helped marginalized groups, especially Palestinians, express their political voice. These actions are significant for reclaiming some power that dominates the global stage. In this context, political agency is not about winning or creating massive and immediate changes. Instead, it is about continuing the fight to be noticed, heard, and taken seriously in a world where individuals are not treated equally or seen as legitimate.

This research does not come without limitations. It did not include direct interviews or personal stories from protesters or activists. It also relied mostly on media and online sources, which do not always capture how people truly feel or why they act. More personal perspectives could have added richness and detail to the analysis.

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## Abstract in Arabic

أعدت أحداث السابع من أكتوبر رسم ملامح الصراع الفلسطيني الإسرائيلي، وأعدت إلى الواجهة أسئلة قديمة عن العنف والمقاومة، لكنها هذه المرة جاءت وسط ضحيج عالمي غير مسبوق. تفاعلت شعوب من شتى الخلفيات مع هذه التحولات؛ فخرجت في احتجاجات، أطلقت دعوات للمقاطعة، وعبرت عن مواقفها عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، مؤكدة أن السياسة لم تعد حكراً على الحكومات والسلطات، بل صارت أيضاً من أدوات الناس العاديين. تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تستكشف كيف تعبر هذه الأفعال عن صوت سياسي جديد، خصوصاً لدى الفئات المهمشة التي كثيراً ما تُقصى من الروايات المهيمنة. ومن أجل فهم أعمق، تستند الدراسة إلى مجموعة من الأطر النظرية، منها: نظرية الحركات الاجتماعية عند تشارلز تيلي، ومفهوم "قابلية الحزن" كما طرحه جوديث بتلر ونظرية "المقاومة اليومية" لجيمس سي. سكوت، إلى جانب نموذج التفسير وفك التفسير لستيوارت هول. تتبع الدراسة كيف تتجلى الممارسة السياسية عبر التظاهر، والمقاطعة، والنشاط الرقمي، مع تسليط الضوء على دور المنصات الرقمية في تضخيم أصوات الفئات المهمشة، ومساءلة المعايير المزدوجة في حرية التعبير، خصوصاً في تعاطي الخطاب الغربي مع الحركات الداعمة لفلسطين. كما تتناول الدراسة الأبعاد الرمزية للمقاومة، بدءاً من الوسوم (الهاشتاغات) ووصولاً إلى حملات المقاطعة، في محاولة لتقييم مدى قدرتها على زعزعة البنى السلطوية، أو ما إذا كانت قابلة للاحتواء والتفريغ من مضامينها. وتُظهر النتائج أن هذه الأشكال من المقاومة رغم أثرها في رفع الوعي وإثارة الجدل، غالباً ما تصطدم بعقبات بنيوية تحدّ من قدرتها على إحداث تغيير ملموس. تقدّم الدراسة رؤى مستقبلية حول تطوّر وتحولات أساليب المقاومة، والدور المتغير للإعلام والنشاط الرقمي في ظل واقع عالمي يتسم بعدم المساواة وتضييق الحريات

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