AN ABOLITIONIST LIVEABILITY AGAINST STATE CARCERAL UNCHILDING AHMAD MANASRA'S LIFE-MAKING

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Abstract: This article will not look at the incarceration of Ahmad Manasra through the prism of state violence against him, but more specifically through his radical call for "life-making"—as an abolitionist liveability against state criminality. We join Ahmad in taking a critical stance towards the politics of life—and what Aysha Odeh and Robin Kelley refer to as "freedom dreams"—refuting the state's carceral network and the acceptance of the settler colonial necropolitical structure. In doing so, the article conceptualizes Ahmad Manasra's multiple modes of refusal as acts of defiance against the brutality of state "unchilding," arguing that his unending search for freedom are radical abolitionist cries that cannot be overlooked.

Keywords: abolitionism; liveability; child imprisonment; unchilding; settler colonialism.

Introduction

During a violent incident in Pisgat Ze'ev settlement north of Occupied East Jerusalem (OEJ) in October 2015, a 13-year-old boy, Ahmad Manasra, suffered a traumatic brain injury after being struck by an Israeli settler's car. In the same

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incident, his 15-year-old cousin, Hasan, was killed by the Israeli police. Accused of a knife attack in the illegal settlement, the state arrested Manasra as he bled—a move that violated the Israeli Youth Law (Adjudication, Punishment and Methods of Treatment)—1971/רעונה קוח (הטיפש, השינע יכרדו לופיט) התשל"א—1971. In an additional revision of the law, Ahmad was shackled to his hospital bed while he suffered from multiple wounds. Today, Ahmad, a young Palestinian, remains imprisoned as a result of the incident and is suffering from a serious deterioration of mental health. He has been kept in solitary confinement since February 2022. Ahmad's parents appealed to the Israeli court to release him because of his mental health condition, yet the Israeli court and the prison committee refused their appeal because Ahmad's case falls under Israel's "counterterrorism law." Thus, Ahmad could not be released and continues to suffer in solitary confinement with a declining mental health condition.

This article explores what can be learned from centring Ahmad Manasra's imprisoned voice and body and its forms of refusal as acts towards an abolitionist liveability against state policies of racial incarceration. The article exposes the way in which colonial racialization of Palestinian children—embodied and affective—comes into existence through numerous systems of colonial domination: the welfare, the legal, the correctional, and the medical. It also exposes how children, with the gifts and powers that come with childhood, not only dream with an imaginative freedom, but also walk affectively and actually towards decoloniality. It will expose colonial brutality by engaging with children's ordeals and acts while incarcerated, listening carefully to Ahmad Manasra's persistent demand for freedom and life without violence. To do so, we analyze three "spectacles of punishment" (Baldry et al. 2015; Carrabine 2012; Foucault 1995) relating to Ahmad Manasra's arrest, interrogation, and imprisonment. These three spectacles (in the form of photos and videos) were widely circulated in the Palestinian media and on social media and show horrific wounding and subjugation of the colonized by the colonizing power (e.g. Israeli police, settlers, interrogators, courts). The images beg multiple questions: what role do the colonized's acts of abolitionist liveability play in this spectacle? What meanings does "spectacle of punishment" carry for the public? And what does it indicate when such a spectacle is circulated by the colonized? Can it really result in decoloniality—what we call in our concluding remarks a "touch of freedom"?

Carcerality and Settler Colonial Unchilding

In recent decades, human rights organizations, activists, psychologists, and academics have become more concerned with the settler colonial politics of "unchilding." (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2019; Kovner and Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2016) Unchilding is a systematic attack against childhood. It is a policy that fully

disregards international health, children's rights, and legal standards. It involves targeting Palestinian children through systematic means, such as psychosocial wounding, arrest, and imprisonment in order to revoke childhood from children under settler colonial dispossession (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2019). The focus on the systematic unchilding of Palestinians is a product of increased state violence against Palestinian children, mainly since the 2014 children's Intifada in OEJ. Over the past decade, children's imprisonment rates have risen extensively in OEJ. In 2019, 640 minors were arrested in the city of Jerusalem—520 were Palestinian, 28 of whom were under the age of 14. Between January 2014 and August 2016, 1737 Palestinian minors, ages 12 to 17, were arrested (B'Tselem and HaMoked 2017).

The racialized carceral violence inflicted on Palestinian children and youth by the Israeli system, precipitated the arrest of young children from their homes, schools, and neighbourhoods. Their arrest violates not only international treaties, but also Israeli law (Kovner and Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2016). It is part and parcel of a *racialized* modality of psychological warfare (Sousa and Veronese 2022) against their psyches and the future welfare of an entire generation. Since Foucault (1995) argues that we cannot abolish the prison, as a ubiquitous institution, because our ways of thinking about and carrying out punishment will not allow it, we seek to understand how carceral unchilding is part of a larger disciplinary logic of settler colonialism. Prison itself is part of a "carceral network" that spreads throughout society, infiltrating and penetrating everywhere. So what does an incarcerated colonized child do with the carceral network of unchilding? How and in what ways can a Palestinian child living in militarized, settler colonial brutality speak back against incarceration?

Abolitionist feminism views prisons as a set of gendered, racial, and class relationships across and beyond the carceral space. The carceral space constitutes relationships and geographic practices through which state capacities of containment, displacement, and dispossession are put to work for racial capitalism (Domínguez 2022). Davis (2003, 2011) avers that prisons not only ensure discipline, but also serve as important repressive weapons (including psychological ones) in the hands of the state (Blagg 2007; Mathiesen 1986: 83), as prisons subordinate subjects to the will of the superior other (Davis 2011). In the southern United States during the Jim Crow Era, Black people were imprisoned under the Black Codes, which, as rearticulations of the Slave Codes, tended to racialize penality and link it closely with previous regimes of slavery. The penal system was literally the continuation of the slave system, which was no longer legal in the "free" world. Baldry, Carlton, and Cunneen (2015) argue that abolitionism extends beyond prisons and criminal justice; rather, it is concerned with attaining social change and freedom from inequalities and oppression that drive mass incarceration. As Davis (2003) asks: is racism so deeply entrenched in the institution of the

prison that it is not possible to eliminate one without eliminating the other? Similarly, we ask whether Israeli settler colonial carcerality, including child imprisonment, can be abolished without eliminating the regime that uses children as state political capital to further unchild the colonized.

Scholars maintain that child imprisonment has little or no evidential legitimacy as a form of punishment because it systematically damages children physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Further, it fails to prevent and/or reduce youth crime and imposes an extraordinary financial burden on the public purse (Goldson 2005; Hagell and Hazel 2001). Yet, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has estimated that more than 1 million children are behind bars around the world. Many are held in decrepit, abusive, and demeaning conditions, deprived of education, access to meaningful activities, and regular contact with the outside world (Bochenek 2016). Critical problematizing of child imprisonment—even questioning its fundamental legitimacy—has been overshadowed in recent times by substantial penal expansion and growth in the population of child prisoners (Goldson 2005). Goldson (2005) notes that the increasing numbers of incarcerated populations in the United States, has little, if anything, to do with the incidence or severity of crime; rather, it is the consequence of political posturing and "get-tough," "tough-on-crime," and "no-more-excuses" government agendas and policies. In the same manner, Israeli politicians and security specialists have called for criminalization of and cruel accountability for Palestinians who take part in "acts of violence and vandalism" in OEJ, including children, as a way to demonstrate Israeli colonial "sovereignty" in OEJ. As politicians did in the case of Ahmad Manasra, the same officials have even called for changing the laws in order to hold Palestinians in general and particularly children legally accountable (Koren 2019; Greenstein 2014; Bengvir 2022).

Kovner and Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2016) argue that Palestinian children in OEJ suffer from structural discrimination, which targets and criminalizes them based on their ethnicity, increasing the likelihood of their arrest and detention by Israeli police forces. Indeed, each year, Israel arrests, detains, and prosecutes in the military court system some 500 to 700 Palestinian children suspected of criminal offences in the occupied West Bank, according to Defense for Children International/Palestine Section (Bochenek 2016). Israel is the only country that automatically prosecutes children in military courts. In 2015, Human Rights Watch found that Israeli security forces used unnecessary force to arrest or detain Palestinian children as young as 11 in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and have choked, beaten, threatened, and interrogated children in custody without parents or lawyers present (Bochenek 2016).

Recent studies demonstrate how Palestinian children are deeply imbricated in the politics and power of the settler colonial and racialized state, which can justify

structural violence against them by defining them as "potential terrorists" and "security threats." (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016; Kovner and Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2016) By situating children in the genocidal structure embedded in a settler colonial regime, the Israeli state positions them in uncertain times, spaces, and conditions of aggression, stripping them of their humanity while evicting them to zones of death (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2016). Shalhoub-Kevorkian's (2019) use of unchilding describes racialized Israeli settler colonial policies that construct, direct, govern, and transform colonized children into dangerous, racialized others, thereby enabling their eviction from the realm of childhood itself. "Unchilding" aligns and operates with the twisted logic of necropolitics, whereby present and historical realities of who has died in the past, who gets to be born and live, and who is left to die now (actually or symbolically) are inscribed on children's living, maimed, and dead bodies—children who are always and already illegitimate non-subjects. Unchilding is obviously inscribed through the dehumanization, wounding and killing of the children of Gaza, their families and their communities, since the Great March of Return demonstrations (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2020) taking an extreme mode following the genocidal attack of October 7th, 2023.

Centring the Colonized: Methodological Notes

This article is guided by a feminist analysis of power, domination, and affects in relation to incarceration spectacles under military occupation. By positioning Ahmad's voice and body at the centre and following "grounded theory" and feminist methodology and epistemology, this research examines incarceration and punishment under settler colonial occupation based on Ahmad Manasra's own narration and visualization.

We also borrow from Salvadoran liberation psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994), who studies psychological atrocities in the context of suffering and exclusion as a result of injustices caused by colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and racial capitalism. Through critical reflection, liberation psychologists assist us in uncovering taken-for-granted beliefs that devalue the knowledge and experiences of the oppressed and excluded (Montero 2007). Liberation psychologists seek to amplify the cultural assets and strengths of disadvantaged communities and pursue freedom from hegemonic systems through conscientization and social action. In this process, the aim is to disrupt the modern, colonial, capitalist world system (Domínguez 2022). Eve Tuck (2009) conceptualizes the field as refusing damage-based narratives, concentrating instead on research that upholds and builds on the desires of oppressed peoples.

Drawing on Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2005) argument that portraits (photos and images) never tell a single story, the study undertakes an in-depth examination of portraits/spectacles in photos and videos that present complexities and hidden

meanings about wounding and coping. Keats (2010) contends that metaphoric photos broaden the capacity to construct one's reality and communicate one's experience. Largely overlooked in the past, visual materials are now being used more frequently for narrative and biographical research (Roberts 2011). We try to detect the psychosocial complexities of oppression, dismemberment, wounding, and trauma faced by the oppressed by examining these scenes/spectacles concerning Ahmad Manasra. In choosing Ahmad Manasra's voice and body as our centre, we seek to shed light on untouched spaces of criminalization and refusal and to map, read, and understand his intimate affects and embodiment. Simultaneously, we seek to reconceptualize how the oppressed live and cope when and while facing settler colonial atrocities. By invoking a local feminist qualitative approach (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015b), the paper aims to uncover details from Ahmad's photos about his intimate spaces—body, experience, and affects. The research looks at photos and still frames taken from three different scenes between 2015 and 2022: two from Ahmad's arrest and interrogation in 2015, and another from court proceedings in 2022. These scenes and photos were widely circulated in the media and on social media, reflecting the settler colonial state's power and domination over Ahmad's body, narrative, affects, futurity, and life. In addition, the article includes supplementary details about the narratives and contexts from previous interviews conducted with Ahmad's family in order to better understand and analyze the photos and still frames. Konstantinidou (2007) notes that it is necessary to specify how, to whom, and under what conditions the images would appear meaningful; that is, we must contextualize the photographer's "motivations" and her or his expected audience. Accordingly, we chose spectacles that each represent a different stage in Ahmad's experience of incarceration and punishment—namely, the moment of arrest, which focuses on domination vis-à-vis Ahmad's body; the interrogation, which focuses on domination of Ahmad's mind; and the court proceedings demanding Ahmad's freedom, which focus on the community/collective—that is, the body and the mind of the whole.

Additionally, each spectacle reflects how Ahmad survived the wounding and trauma of the settler colonial state and ways to deal with it. Feminist researchers studying conflict zones, including Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2010), emphasize the effects of hyper-visibilizing or invisibilizing those suffering from political violence. Therefore, we only used portraits that were publicly and broadly shared and circulated in the media and on social media.

Debunking Colonial Episteme: the Senses, the Mind, the Flesh

The racialized violence inflicted on Palestinian children by the Israeli state was conveyed graphically in the case of Ahmad Manasra in images of the 13-year-old being

arrested while bleeding, in violation of the law, after being struck by a car, which caused a traumatic brain injury. Such a scene, we argue, participates in the *production* of a criminalized, unchilded other. In this reality of criminalization, how do children interpret state violence against them as the unchilded, racial other? And how do they react? How can we interpret and analyze their embodied and psychological reactions?

To answer these questions, this section will explore Ahmad Manasra's reactions, concentrating on multiple modes of psychological response activated through sensory, bodily, and mental refusal, resistance, and abolition of state-structured oppression. It examines three scenes that present "spectacles of punishment" (Foucault 1995) and demonstrates visual practices of state power and the refusal of the oppressed. The first concerns the wounding of the racialized, unchilded body and the intimate sensorial spaces of refusal. In the second scene, we consider psychological violence—an intimate colonial ritual that aims at penetrating the mind and that is powerfully rejected by Ahmad when he insists on not remembering, asking his interrogator to open his head to check his memory. The third scene, taken from Ahmad's court appearance, demonstrates the collective body and mind's refusal to wait and accept dismemberment and incarceration, instead acting against an otherwise predetermined fate.

First Scene: the Senses—Ahmad Manasra Bleeding While Looking Back

<div dir="rtl">

على الحُلْمِ أن يرشد الحالمين
كما الوَحْيُ /
ثم تنهد: خُذْ بيدي أيها المستحيل!
وغاب كما تتمنَّى الأساطير /
لم ينتصر ليموت، ولم ينكسر ليعيش
خذ بيدينا معًا، أيها المستحيل!

</div>

The dream should guide the dreamers

as the revelation

Then he sighed: Take my hand, you impossible!

And he was absent as legends wish

He did not win to die, nor was he broken to live

Take our hands together, impossible!

(Darwish 2005: 31–32)

Image 1   Ahmad Manasra lying on the ground while bleeding.

Ahmad, a Palestinian, was born in 2002 in the Beit Hanina neighbourhood of OEJ. On 12 October 2015, when he was 13 years old, he was involved in a security incident in Pisgat Ze'ev, a settlement in OEJ. That day, Ahmad, a child, was with his cousin Hasan Manasra, age 15, who wanted to go to the mall to buy some computer games. On their way, they were accused of stabbing Israelis. As a result, security forces shot Hasan and killed him instantly, while Ahmad was hit by an Israeli settler's car and severely injured in the head.

As Image 1 above demonstrates, Ahmad, a Palestinian child, was lying on the ground bleeding for a while without any medical help, although an ambulance and medical staff were present at the scene. During that time Ahmad was assaulted and insulted by Israeli settlers who were shouting for him to be killed (for the more detailed spectacle, please see Al Jazeera Mubasher 2015). This spectacle, as a spectacle of punishment, was widely circulated in the media and on social media, including Israeli mainstream media, to put on display the state's sovereign power and its zero-tolerance policies vis-à-vis the bodies of those—even children—who

disobey it. The ultimate goal of circulating this spectacle was to ensure discipline and prevent Palestinians from acting against the settler colonial state. This goal is particularly evident as the spectacle was distributed during a period of escalation during the children's Intifada in OEJ.

The violent behaviour towards Ahmad enabled the Israeli settler colonial power, manifested in the settlers' and Israeli police's assault, to regain its mastery and control over the child other. Through this implementation of violence against Ahmad's body, the state gained power to rule over his mere existence, life, and death. Scholars insist that violence is inherent in settler colonial ideology, values, politics, laws, governance, hierarchies, and consciousness (Fanon 1967; Green and Ward 2004; Mbembe 2001; Wolfe 2006; Da Silva 2009; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a). In Palestine specifically, scholars argue that Israeli occupation forces operate under the same colonial logic of domination, using the guise of security threats and terrorism to employ excessive violence against Palestinians (Puar 2015; Sayigh 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015b). Green and Ward (2004) define "state crime" as the overlapping area between human rights violations and state organizational deviance, mediated by the degree of perceived legitimacy of the actions involved. Through its logics and systems of structured violence, Israeli state crime and political violence targets bodies through various technologies of governance (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a) and oppression (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2012, 2017a), including unchilding (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2019), as we see in the horrifying image of Ahmad.

However, by looking closely at the photo and examining Ahmad's body, we can identify other layers of analysis. The photo shows the violence written on Ahmad's body and his bodily wounds, yet Ahmad keeps his eyes open as he struggles with a brain injury and broken skull. Although Ahmad is trapped by the militarized space—injured, bleeding, barely breathing, and surrounded by armed Israeli police and security forces—he stares back assertively at the police officers, the settlers, and the cameras as he tries to move, straighten his bent legs, and stand up (see Al Jazeera Mubasher 2015 for the video). His staring eyes and mind, body language, and struggle to move reveal his insistence on refusing to be paralyzed and helpless. He refuses incapacitation, maintaining his ability to gaze and breathe amidst suffocation, while expressing his pain and moving slowly to unbend his body.

Ahmad later explained to his family, "I couldn't understand what was going on, what was happening to me. I kept my eyes open, asking, 'What just happened?' to tell them, 'What are you doing? Why brutality?'" His sister commented, "[w]hen shocked by the settlers and the police, he insisted on his liberty to look them straight in the eyes." Ahmad's and his sister's testimonies reflect what Fanon (1963) described as decolonization. Fanon argues that decolonization is an active process, whereby the colonized refuses passivity and insists on being active and

resisting (1963: 286). In the same manner, Palestinian scholars discuss the Palestinians' survival and resistance against Israeli colonial power through various psychological dynamics (Hammami 2015; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a, 2015b). Hammami (2015) explains how Palestinians refuse to accept suffering as the idiom for their lives and negotiate ontologies of suffering by building a survivable world in the present. To do so, they use modes of meaning-making that are rooted in a rich Palestinian discursive tradition of national survival and resistance. Otman (2020, 2022) posits that Palestinians who suffer the atrocities of militarization and have been stripped of their humanity and their mere right to live develop new and creative modes of life, liveability, and resistance, which they invent to overcome their loss, recreating their own anti-colonial psychosocial practices in private and in public.

Focusing on Ahmad's eyes, we see simultaneously that Ahmad carries the decolonizing and liberatory potentials of the child's body and soul—the immense capacity of his two provoking eyes posing many questions—and maintains the ability to see, confront, and abolish the colonizer's power, with his open eyes and his stare. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2017b) shows how the colonizer manipulates the senses, body, and time and converts them into a space of domination to maintain and produce the colonized child as a terrorist unchilded other. In particular, the settler colonial power controls what and how the colonized, racialized child sees, hears, speaks, smells, and senses in order to promote and enforce totalizing acts of bodily violence against the unchilded through the occupation of the colonized senses. The occupation of the senses represents the culmination of Israeli domination over Palestinian sensory and embodied experiences. Khanna (2020) argues that both colonial and revolutionary affect derive from the same emotive energy. According to her, the racialized subject's physiological response to colonial trauma—and therefore decoloniality—includes the body's intuitive, "gut" reactions and emotive responses. Applying this framework, Ahmad's portrait exhibits how he, the racialized child, resists through sensorial space, and how he uses his senses, his eyes, and his body to fight back, redirecting the viewer's gaze from top-down (the perspective of the colonizer) to bottom-up (the perspective of the colonized) (Hochberg 2015). Ahmad's competence in enacting liveability can be understood as refusing-while-bleeding-and-wounded. Ahmad's eyes abolish the power of the state by refusing to be disconnected from life, from seeing, knowing, and feeling. Ahmad's visual and bodily practice in opposing the making of the unchilded, racial other advances an image/scene of abolition. Keeping his eyes open elevates the power of seeing to another level: to that of staring and challenging and therefore, reshaping his eyes, senses, and body into a space of abolition. Ahmad's acts (whether conscious or unconscious) transform anew geographies of abolition (Gilmore 2017), insisting on his right to resist and live in his home/homeland.

Second Scene: the Mind—I Don't Remember [*Mish Midzhakkir*]

ال أنسى ولا أتذكَرُ

الغد... ربما أرجأتُ تفكيري عنه، غير

قصدٍ، ربما خبّأتُ خوفي من مالكِ الموتَ،

عن قصدٍ، لكي أحيا الهنيهة بين منزلتين:

حادثة الحياة وحادثة الموت المؤجل

I don't forget and I don't remember

Tomorrow. . .I may have postponed my thinking about it,

Unintentionally, maybe I hid my fear of the angel of death,

Intentionally, in order to live the moment between two positions:

The act of life and the act of deferred death.

(Darwish 2009: 22–25)

In January 2015, a ten-minute video of part of Ahmad Manasra's interrogation was leaked and broadly circulated in the media and on social media. The video shows an Israeli interrogator violently questioning and screaming loudly at 13-year-old Ahmad, trying to intimidate him with accusations of "attempt[ing] to assassinate. . .Israelis" and "helping the enemy while at war." (AlHadath 2015) The interrogator dictates to Ahmad the sequence and interpretation of his acts during the security incident in which he was involved, using CCTV footage from the site of the incident. The video exposes how Ahmad suffered during the violent interrogation. Ahmad, while being preyed upon by the interrogator's questioning and accusations, responds in a variety of ways: crying, remaining silent, hesitating, collapsing, shivering, desperately hitting his head, screaming, and sometimes speaking calmly. Yet, despite the suffering, confusion, and fear Ahmad experiences, he insists on his narrative, declaring:

I don't remember. I cannot remember. . .Take me to the doctor. . .Open my head and see. . .I am going insane. I swear I don't remember anything. I see myself in the video, but I don't remember. . .my head was injured. I cannot know. I don't understand. I don't remember.

For the more detailed scene, please see AlHadath (2015).

While studies on colonialism reveal that attacking children has always been a central part of colonial policies (Stoler 2006; Simpson 2016; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2019), this video shows how state political violence also involves torture, as well as

Image 2   The Israeli interrogator screaming at Ahmad.

Image 3   The Israeli interrogator accusing Ahmad Manasra of holding a knife.

detentions and arrests of the colonized (Pugliese 2013), to humiliate, inflict suffering, and extract information (Khalili 2008; Khalili and Schwedler 2010). At the core of the Israeli legal system lies the colonial logic of domination, which views the Indigenous child as the "dangerous other," thus creating violent policies of discrimination and criminalization against Palestinian children. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2019) calls this "unchilding." Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Odeh (2018) also examine how the Israeli legal system, as a racialized system, inscribes control and domination, through asymmetrical power relations, on the legal methods of penalizing children. Puar (2021) explores how torture of a group of people becomes justified when it is

Image 4   The Israeli interrogator screaming at Ahmad Manasra, "You are a liar."

formulated as an "exception" for the valorization of another population's life—that is, torture in the name of maximizing and optimizing life.

In the same manner, this scene of Ahmad's interrogation shows how the colonizer—that is, the interrogator—wields his power to dominate Ahmad's psyche, memory, and affects through violent shouting, haunting dictation of an imposed narrative, and traumatic incarceration. Fanon (1963) asserts that, in the colonial context, government agents speak the language of pure force—the policeman dominates and rules through his immediate authoritative presence and direct violent action towards the native and brings violence into the mind of the native. The interrogator tortures Ahmad by controlling his mind by violently imposing, redirecting, and recomposing Ahmad's narrative and memories. He insists on, asserts, and presses the ideology and narrative of "dangerous other" and frames Ahmad as a "born terrorist." (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Odeh 2018)

In addition, although Ahmad is a child, the scene shows how he was interrogated in the absence of his parents or his lawyers. Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Odeh (2018) note that once Palestinian boys are arrested, their parents are excluded from the proceedings altogether and are no longer considered parties to the process or persons entitled to protect their children. Thus, the Israeli settler colonial legal system transmutes the

Palestinian child into the "unchilded," "unfathered," and "unmothered" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2019) and further designates children like Ahmad as orphans (Otman 2020). The scenes presented above illustrate how the Israeli legal system amputated Ahmad from his family and childhood and dismembered not only his body, psyche, memory, and narrative, but also familial continuity, roots, and life. Nevertheless, Ahmad refused such silencing and dismemberment. He refused his criminalization and the interrogator's forceful acts aimed at invading his mind and memory.

Ahmad's scream—"I don't remember"—and his memory loss invite us to look deeper and examine their complex and hidden meanings. By insisting on not remembering, Ahmad demonstrates the complicated idea of coping with state violence. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2021) contends that in the context of ongoing settler colonial violence, it is necessary to critically examine the suffering and endurance of the traumatized, colonized child, examining the ways they pave new paths of liveability amidst state brutality. Burman (2019) notes that in such realities, children engage in their enduring, challenging situations and resist suffering while creating their own meaning-making. Although Ahmad is fearful, alone, and trapped in a highly securitized militarized space, he insists on his truth: that he does not remember. In doing so, Ahmad refuses to surrender to the violent dictation of an imposed narrative and the revocation of his own narrative and memory. He rejects the colonial state's criminal accusations of being a terrorist as well as its automatic criminalization and unchilding, insisting on a counter-narrative of defiance, humanization, and agency. Indeed, Fanon (1963) observes the Indigenous state of mind of fearlessness, which strangely resembles defiance. He notes the adolescent's refusal to compromise, tough will that rejects constraint, and persistent readiness to "risk their necks in order to have the last word." (1963: 82)

Palestinian scholars analyze Palestinians' survival and resistance against the colonial Israeli power through various psychological dynamics (Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Hammami 2015; Meari 2015). According to Meari (2015), *sumud* is a practice of resistance and in exercising *sumud*, the Palestinian voluntarily endures his suffering. Ahmad's *sumud* during the vicious and dismembering interrogation exemplifies how he repudiates colonial domination and preserves an abolitionist capacity to enact liveability and reject the occupation of his body, memory, mind, psyche, and family. Tomkins (2015) argues that the experience of oppression fuels the commitment to struggle and generates abolition, as the individual is not entirely helpless in dealing with a given situation. This process continually fortifies his skill in coping with oppression. Ajour (2021) uncovers how Palestinian prisoners turn their bodies into weapons against the violence inflicted by Israelis on both their bodies and their souls, by innovatively examining new forms of subjectivity, living, and thinking, refusing to be a victim of the colonial power, and instead enacting agency amidst dehumanization.

Third Scene: on Not Waiting—Connecting Dismembered collectives

أَنَا مِنْ هُنَاكَ. وَلِيَ ذِكْرَيَاتٌ. وُلِدْتُ كَمَا تُولَدُ النَّاسُ. لِي وَالِدَةٌ

وَبَيْتٌ كَثِيرُ النَّوَافِذِ. لِي إِخْوَةٌ. أَصْدِقَاءُ. وَسِجْنٌ بِنَافِذَةٍ بَارِدَةٍ

I'm from there. I have memories. I was born as people are born. I have a mother

And a house with many windows. I have brothers. friends. And imprisoned with a cold window.

(Darwish 1986: 13)

Image 5   Family, activists, and the press gather around Ahmad during his court appearance in April 2022.

In 2022, Ahmad's family and friends, Palestinian and international mental health professionals, political and social activists, and others launched the "Free Ahmad Manasra" (الحرية لأحمد مناصرة) campaign—a campaign that aims to end Ahmad's solitary confinement, which started in November 2020, and demands his freedom from prison based on his declining mental health. Ahmad, after seven years of imprisonment, developed serious mental health problems. His condition worsened as a result of the atrocities of incarceration, prolonged solitary confinement, and his head injury which was never properly treated. Above all, the severe traumatization of his arrest and the haunting interrogations, which were conducted without his parents or lawyers present, left injurious marks on his psyche—all of this in addition to the denial of Ahmad's right to a fair trial and an unjustifiably

exaggerated judicial decision in his case. Based on this, Ahmad's family, friends, and lawyers demanded his release from solitary confinement. However, the Parole Board (סירוסא ןיינעב םירורחש תדעו) declined their request and insisted on his incarceration. This policy of incarcerating Ahmad in a cell alone and away from the community of Palestinian prisoners bolsters the invisibility of Ahmad's punishment by hiding it in solitary confinement and making the punishment harder for Ahmad (Jacob et al. 2009). As such, Ahmad's solitary confinement is only an extension of the state's racially oppressive and dismembering policies against Ahmad as the "terrorized and unchilded other." Bargu (2010) defines the cell as a "double confinement" that involves a deeper form of punishment. The cell does not only suspend liberty but violates the basic human right to bodily and mental integrity. "Isolation in cellular prisons implie[s] the exercise of state power to break [the prisoner's] will and secure their submission through torture. Accepting to be put in the cells therefore mean[s] 'surrender': an exchange of human dignity for physical survival." (Bargu 2010: 247)

Studies on Palestinian prisoners detail how Israeli settler colonial policies of incarceration aim to punish Palestinian political prisoners and shatter their ordinary lives, unweave their social fabric, eradicate their political activism, subjugate their resistance, and annihilate their political identity (Ajour 2021; Nashif 2008). However, utilizing the Fanonian (1963) theory of "decolonization," which emphasizes the psychic trauma of racialization as a catalyst for collective revolution, Ajour (2021) illustrates how the body of the resisting Palestinian prisoner exceeds the individual body and becomes a collective body of struggle and a communally shared "body politic."

Image 5 above presents a scene from one of the court sessions held to discuss Ahmad's appeal demanding his release. The photo shows a gathering of journalists, family, friends, and other supporters around Ahmad. Once he entered the courtroom, all attention went directly to Ahmad to show solidarity and love, speak to him, salute him, film and take photos of him, and so on. Ahmad's parents said that the scene of people around him lifted his mood and his psychological condition for a long time. Ahmad's mother explained to him during one of her visits to the prison, "[y]ou are not alone. I wish you could see how many people support you. Your name is everywhere." She further explained, "[o]nce I told him this, he was so happy. He was relieved." (Ahmad's mother) Indeed, the campaign to free Ahmad has included legal proceedings, social media activities, hashtags, webinars, media coverage, academic and professional lectures, international diplomatic pressure, and more. Leaders of the abolitionist campaign (i.e. family and activists) have participated in every initiative to raise Ahmad's voice and to make his and his family's suffering heard locally and internationally. Ahmad's and his parents' voices were and still are present, loud, and heard through many different channels

demanding his rights to adequate medical care, to rescind solitary confinement, and to a dignified life. Khanna (2020) illustrates how the psychological trauma of colonial subjugation can generate collective liberation. The sheer insistence on humanizing Ahmad together with the hard, diversified, tireless, and lasting work of all involved reflects the power of the community—the collective—to refuse, to not remain silent, to not wait, and to not surrender to the Israeli oppressive apparatus, thus honouring Ahmad's ordeal communally and collectively.

Abolitionist approaches, such as the Ahmad campaign, produce effective strategies and solidarities (Sinha 2016). Baldry, Carlton, and Cunneen (2015) argue that abolitionism is ultimately concerned with attaining freedom from the inequalities and oppression that drive incarceration as the Indigenous demand the opening up of new spaces, development of new structures, and processes for political action. Indeed, Ahmad's family, friends, lawyers, mental health professionals, and activists all worked together as one collective body that rejected and challenged domination over Ahmad's mind and body by maintaining his narrative. Ahmad's narrative became a collective local and globalized narrative about abolishing the settler colonial one. Lawyers at the court, activists on social media, Ahmad's parents in the community, the local and international media, academics on webinars, and others forged their various platforms and channels to uphold Ahmad's refusing gaze and maintain his re-membered voice (in opposition to dismemberment), which tells the story of the dehumanized, colonized, dismembered, and unchilded. Ahmad's collective voice and demand for freedom exist to abolish the state's story of the "terrorist other" that justifies and legalizes his negation.

This collective and consistent work reveals how the Palestinian community (e.g. activists, friends, family) transforms the wound of the individual—Ahmad's wound—into the wound of the collective (Otman 2022). Martín-Baró (1994) asserts that political violence permeates not only the individual psyche, but also communities, their collective consciousnesses, and minds. Extreme political violence undermines trust and respect among individuals within families, neighbourhoods, and larger communities (Martín-Baró 1994). Therefore, "psychosocial dismemberment" refers to the suffering and rupture of both the individual and the collective consciousness and mind (Marshall 2014). The refusal to sever Ahmad from his collective body (i.e. his family, his community, and the Palestinian prisoners' society in Israeli prisons) by re-connecting him through various channels both inside and outside prison, locally and internationally, is an abolitionist and emancipatory collective act that intends to dismantle prison cell walls and technologies of settler colonial dismemberment. Rota (2019) states that collective abolition is motivated by the beliefs, motivations, goals, needs, and desires of abolitionists. The collective emancipatory action of the Ahmad campaign is meant to set Ahmad free and liberate him and the community from the different

technologies of incarceration. In doing so, the collective refused his criminalization, dehumanization, and unchilding as part of their collective emancipation, as Ahmad's case is not separate from the structural oppression of the Palestinian colonized body/collective. His trauma and wounding are the trauma of the whole. Emancipation of Ahmad requires a collective abolitionist campaign and dismantling of carceral structures that engineer the necropolitics of settler colonialism.

Touches of Freedom

The colonizer's public acts of unchilding Ahmad Manasra, a demonstration of authority and power to ensure discipline and compliance through torture and humiliation (Foucault 1995; Jacob et al. 2009) created a "spectacle of punishment"—a "ceremony of punishment." The visibility of his punishment was later suppressed and replaced with a hidden process, one that is rendered invisible to society but increasingly visible (and powerful) to those who witness this spectacle within the walls of the institution.

However, on 13 November 2022, Maysoon, Ahmad's mother, broke the state's ceremonial punishment and its carceral unchilding. Maysoon was attending her son's solitary confinement renewal session at the Bir al-Sab'a court. Interviewing Maysoon on the evening of 13 November, she explained:

> I asked the lawyer to beg the judge and allow me to hug my son, or at least touch his hand. I didn't touch him for seven years, and he is my son. He needs to feel my love, my worries, my care. I am his mother. But the judge refused. I then stood up, looked at the judge and started begging, "Let me just put my finger in that hole and touch his finger. Just let me squeeze my finger with my kiss through the hole." And he agreed but told me to wait. . .and I started thanking the judge. . .*toda* [thank you—in Hebrew], *toda*. . .and I touched his finger. He kissed my finger, and started shivering and shivering and I told him that I more than love and worry about him and that he is with us, with us all the time. I did touch his finger and he touched mine.

Abolition in the settler colony requires that we uphold such touches of freedom. Ahmad Manasra's mother, Ahmad, and the collective's desire to abolish prison by any means necessary resonates with the Fanonian argument which insists that "[t]he determination to fight for one's life which characterizes the native's reply to oppression are obviously good enough reasons for joining in the fight." (Fanon 1963: 139) Touches of freedom, apparent in Ahmad gazing at the colonizer, refusing carceral wounding, and screaming that he does "not remember" and in his mother's power to insert her finger through a militarized hole, are all technologies

of refusal and defiance. Touches of freedom challenge passive waiting: waiting for the judge to decide, the court to give its verdict, the lawyers to come to visit, the family to be able to reconnect, or the state to give its permission.

Ahmad—like many incarcerated unchilded Palestinians, whether sensually, imaginatively, bodily, or materially—calls on us to cultivate novel political discussions on liveability and freedom. Challenging carceral notions and practices, such as controlling childhood time(s), passive waiting, pain, and psychic wounding, fosters a touch of freedom. Manasra and the collective insistence on liberation through practices that collapse the occupier's cages are understood as political demands to abolish incarceration, and require the right to family love, a mother's hug, and more. Ahmad's articulations and calls require us to build abolitionist accountability networks to support and engage in the process of liberation against the state's incarceration.

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