

Cruelties of Occupation and Indignities of Dispossession: Advancing Palestinian Narrative as a Decolonial Praxis in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

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Abstract—The proposed study explores the ways in which Abulhawa uses fiction to humanize the Palestinian condition of dispossession and displacement thus advancing the Palestinian perspective of the conflict. Analysing the important role of narratives in decolonizing the colonial imaginaries for example “Palestinians do not exist”, or “they are savages or terrorists”, it contends that, for Abulhawa, retrieving the Palestinian narrative is a fundamental praxis for seeking decolonization and to end dehumanization and exclusion. Reclaiming native narrative of the conflict will enable Palestinians to affirm their existence and propel their struggle against settler colonialism. The study will be done with the help of the analysis of Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*.

Index Terms—dispossession, settler-colonialism, apartheid, praxis, decolonization

I. INTRODUCTION

Our stories are making of the milieu we live in. Each society has developed a way of telling the story of its own. These stories are an outlet of the needs and desires, hopes and despairs as well as travails and insecurities of the society they stem from. They shape our understanding of the way of the world and the people around us. They drive our curiosity to know, to thrill, to love, to resist and to reimagine. Everybody has the right to tell his/her own story.

Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, is a poignant narrative of dislodged, dispossessed, and dehumanized Palestinians navigating four generations of the struggle of the Abulheja family through love, war, death, destruction, dispossession, and desolation inflicted by one of the most intractable conflicts of our lifetime; the Israel-Palestine conflict. This is a brilliant effort on the part of Abulhawa to deconstruct the Western narrative of the conflict manipulated to serve the interests of the oppressor and to provide a native narrative of the same often underrepresented and left out of the larger conversation. She flips the narrative that prosecutes victims and use the power of language in service of oppressed, providing an alternative perspective on the conflict. She uses counter storytelling as a decolonial praxis to resist the colonial representation of Palestinian people and their identity. “Stories contribute at once to the (re)production of a particular genre of humanity and of its spaces of subaltern, decolonial resistance” (Glynn & Cupples, 2022, p. 16). In a similar stance Sium and Ritskes (2013) argue that “Stories not only serve to reproduce native traditions and knowledge production, but they also work against the colonial epistemic frame to reproduce possibilities and spaces of resistance” (p. 13).

Abulhawa has taken a less conciliatory tone against the unblushing repression of the Palestinians and their forced expulsion from their lands raising fundamental questions of human right, dignity, and freedom in occupied Palestine. The structural violence perpetrated at Palestinians reveals the colonial and apartheid tendency of Israel. The violence against Palestinians is persistent, carried on daily basis and largely supported by impunity and silence surrounding it. The toll of this perpetual conflict is both physical and psychological with its consequent displacement and destruction of native Palestinian life. This has been subject of much political and academic scrutiny. The proposed research focuses on the fictional representation of the conflict with a special focus on *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa. The study investigates into the following questions pertaining to the conflict.

- How does Abulhawa portray the conflict?
- What role do narratives play in decolonizing the colonial imaginaries?
- What are the ways in which she uses fiction to humanize the Palestinian conditions of dispossession and displacement?
- Does the forceful expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland evince the colonial tendency of Israel?
- Why according to Abulhawa reclaiming a native narrative of the conflict is so important?

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The Present study will be conceptualized using theories of settler colonialism and apartheid which have increasingly been used in relation to Israel and Palestine. While the former works on the logic of elimination of the indigenous people, the later on the logic of segregation and separation. Their mechanism of working may be different they are hegemonic in scope and discriminatory at core. The study will draw inferences from these two concepts to better understand the conflict. The present study will be done with the help of the analysis of Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* with an emphasis on counter-storytelling as a decolonial praxis or praxis of liberation.

III. DISCUSSION

There has been a great deal of critical and political writing devoted to the conflict. The proposed study is an attempt at a fictional representation of the same with a special focus on *Mornings in Jenin*. This work of Abulhawa provides useful insights into the perpetual conflict and has been explored from various angles.

Ayman Abu-Shomar in *Unreconciled Strivings of 'Exilic Consciousness': Critical Praxis of Resistance in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin* (2019) explores how discourses of diaspora and exilic consciousness serve as resistance practice against Israeli power structures. Iman Aly El Sayed Raslan's *Trauma and resistance in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin* (2017) examines the concept of trauma, narrative memory, and the process of overcoming trauma. The author emphasizes that how trauma can be healed by engaging with narrative memory. *The Burden of the Past: Memories, Resistance and Existence in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin and Hala Alyan's Salt Houses* (2021) by Wael Salam calls remembering as a defying strategy for Palestinians against Israeli occupation and the affirmation of their Palestinian identity. Salam proposes memory as a creative form of resistance. Ayman Abu-Somar in *Diasporic Reconciliations of Politics, Love and Trauma: Susan Abulhawa's Quest for Identity in Mornings in Jenin* (2015) probes into the 'epistemology of diaspora' which he calls the intersections between diaspora, displacement of identity and identity creation. *Strangers in My Home: The Quest for Identity in Mornings in Jenin* (2014) by Abdulrahman Al-ma'amari, Noraini Md Yusof, Ravichandran Vengadasamy foregrounds the significance of memory in identity construction. Khaled Abkar Alkodimi's *New Perspectives in the Israel-Palestine Conflict: Righting the Wrong through metaphor in Mornings in Jenin* (2019) is a study of Abulhawa's use of metaphor to expose the reality of Israeli occupation. The study highlights Abulhawa's use of language that exposes the brutality of Israeli occupation that leads to the radicalization of Palestinians. *Constructing the Palestinian Nation Via Narration and Attachment in Mornings in Jenin: A Postcolonial Perspective* (2020) by Majeed Abjel Ferhood and Lajiman Janoory offers a postcolonial critique of the novel. Inferring from Bhabha's theory of nation and narration, the study emphasizes the decisive role novel can play in nation building.

Mornings in Jenin intimately portrays the oppression of Palestine raising important questions on Palestinians' right to life, liberty, dignity, and justice. The novel forces us to think on how it feels to be removed from your land, to be dispossessed and dislodged. How it feels when your life is priced out as collateral damage? The catastrophe of Palestine is the collective failure of East and West. The book revolves around the traumatic experiences of the Abulheja family which covers a broad timeline of events starting from the pre-Nakba days to the occurrence of Nakba, when the family is forced to leave their ancestral home in Ein Hod by Zionist militia who want to get rid of the indigenous population from the land, continuing through the second Nakba (the 1967 war) and the Lebanon war of 1982 covering the Sabra and Shatila massacre, and concluding with 2002 Israeli massacre at the Jenin refugee camp. The book bears witness to a life of constant loss and grieving but at the same a never-ending hope of returning to the land. The following quote beautifully captures this sad reality of Palestinian people.

The old folks of Ein Hod would die refugees in the camp, bequeathing to their heirs the large iron keys of their ancestral homes, the crumbling land registers issued by the Ottomans, the deed from the British mandate, their memories and love of the land, and the dauntless will not to leave the spirit of forty generations trapped beneath the subversion of thieves. (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 35)

It gives a sense of the ongoing Palestinian struggle as well as the social, psychological, and cultural dimensions of the Palestinian cause. Originally called 'The Scar of David' the novel follows the Abulheja family from living in an olive farming village of Ein Hod to ending up in the Jenin refugee camp where we trail the journey of Amal who is born in the refugee camp and knows nothing other than life in the refugee camp. Abulhawa skilfully employs language to blend the personal tragedy with the political one. She in a deeply moving way opens our eyes to Israeli oppression, occupation and settler-colonization demonstrated through coerced expulsion of Palestinian families from their homes and intermittent killing of Palestinians. This violence against Palestinians is tied to their larger condition of unfreedom sustained by Israel and its allies. Speaking against the continued persecution of Palestinians Abulhawa (2010) states:

How is it that a man cannot walk onto his own property, visit the grave of his wife, eat the fruits of forty generation of his ancestor's toil, without moral consequence? Somehow that raw question has not previously penetrated the consciousness of the refugees who had become confused in the rank of eternity of waiting, pining at abstract international resolutions, resistance, and struggle. But the basic axiom of their condition sprang to the surface as they lowered Yehya's body into the ground, and night brought them no sleep. The next

morning, the refugees rose from their agitation to the realization that they were slowly being erased from the world, from its history and from its future. (p. 48)

This work of Abulhawa is a powerful count-narrative to the Israeli grand narrative that “Palestine is a land without people,” that “Palestinians simply do not exist.” The novel opens in the village of Ein Hod during the early November 1941, the harvest season in Palestine. The village is a fertile Mediterranean landscape that lives on figs and olives. The Abulheja family is a Muslim family that is rooted in the land and derives bodily and spiritual nourishment from the nature. The following passage is a testimony of their deep connection with the land.

Those people don't know a damn thing about olives. They are lily-skinned foreigners with no attachment to the land. If they had sense of the land then the land would compel in them a love for the olives, Yehya said, staring at the palms that had caressed those majestic, beloved trees only hours earlier. Age-dappled and rough, his farmer's hands were infused with the melanin truths of those hills. (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 46)

The impending Zionist occupation of their land looms large from the very start, threatening to destroy their lives and their removal from their land, culture, and history. In 1948, their nightmare turns into reality as the inhabitants of Ein Hod among many other people across Palestine are forced by Israeli soldiers to flee their land that they had cultivated for years and seek refuge in Jenin. The Nakba, as this event is called, is just the start of the Palestinians' suffering and having historical hindsight, their hope to return to their land is poignant. Years of uprootedness, loss, torture, war, and oppression await these Palestinians who hope, pray, love and dare to live in spite of having no basic human rights, no help from the West, and no guarantee that they will find strength to live through another day or another death. Their stories unfold through the eyes of the youngest siblings, Amal.

The story flows seamlessly from great grandparents to great grandchildren and focusing on the life of Amal, a child of the refugee camp in Jenin. The book follows the journey of Abulheja family amid love, loss, fear, hatred, pain, and the longing to return to their lost home. The story unfolds through the eyes of Amal who finds her way out of the refugee camp to the United States, only to come back years after, to find a husband and become a mother. The story of Amal is part of a larger one, that of her family and Palestine between the years 1941 and 2003. It covers four generations of displacement, of horror, of humiliation, of love, of loss, of endless waiting, of fortitude and hope. The witness of unparalleled times in history, Amal remains a beacon of hope for those who need to be seen and heard and understood. Through the powerful character of Amal, Abulhawa explores the legacy of dispossession across continents and generations and helps us to understand the pain and the human suffering as a result of that dispossession which is seen as a process of negation of a whole nation -their land, history, culture, and identity. “Framing Palestine as a colonial question is essential to understanding the peculiarity of the Palestinian condition” (Omar, 2021).

With *Mornings in Jenin* and *Amal*, Abulhawa gives an unapologetic and unflinching voice to the Palestinian cause both through educating and expanding our understanding about a complex international conflict. The story of Amal is that of light, hope, and resilience into the depths of the darkness, oppression, displacement, and despair. We empathize and mourn with her as her family faces tragedy after tragedy. And at times it is hard to empathize with her when she leaves her roots behind and starts a sanitized life in Philadelphia. She whitewashes her identity and severs most ties from past. It seems almost a betrayal. Till she is called back to be part of her brother's family and starts her life as a Palestinian. The novel takes us on a rollercoaster ride, sometimes moving swiftly, and other times, slowing us down to share the viscerally raw and searing pain of the characters.

The novel depicts the colonial and apartheid underpinnings of Israel which manifest in insistent daily horrors and humiliations of Palestinians. “Palestinians are a living demonstration of what colonialism looks like” (Omar, 2021). The book helps us to understand the rights that Palestinian people are brutally denied, their fight for justice and for their land. The story shifts between the perspectives of different characters, and at times skims over many years navigating life through life and death, love and loss, the bonds of friendship and futility of war. With horror and tragedy their contrast companions, the resilience of each of the characters is truly remarkable. The novel does see not only the depth of tragedies that befell Palestine and Palestinians but in all the loss and destruction, Palestinians are capable of love and longing. We are with the characters during their deepest moments of sadness, love, hope, and tragedy. It is a testament to their spirit, their faith, and their resilience.

The constant dehumanization of Palestinians, their continuous harassment and their extermination from their own homes shows the colonial and apartheid underpinnings of Israel with its consequent displacement and destruction of the indigenous Palestinian population. Through the novel Abulhawa exposes the grim realities of the daily lives of Palestinians without right or without recourse; alien in their own homeland.

But in our camp, his story was everyone's story, single tale of dispossession, of being stripped to the bones of one's humanity, of being thrown like garbage into refugee camps unfit for rats. Left without rights, home, or nation while the world turned away to watch or cheer the jubilation of the usurpers proclaiming a new state, they called Israel. (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 78)

This denial and disregard of the Palestinians and ceaseless appropriation of their land is seen as a systematic and continuous violation of their basic human as well as civil rights which has to do with the structural conditions of apartheid and settler-colonialism. Hegemonic in scope, settler-colonialism perpetuates the liquidation and repression of indigenous population and culture through normalizing the occupation of the native land and resources. Its multi-layered forms of oppression make settler-colonialists believe that they are chosen people with a moral superiority that

are natural and inevitable. This intersectionality of settler-colonialism perpetuates a system of power that continues to destroy native lives, cultures, and histories. In other words, settler-colonialism is a system that works by the very 'logic of elimination' of the indigenous. As defined by Wolfe (2006):

Settler-colonialism is a structure not an event which strives for the dissolution of native societies and erasure of indigeneity. Territoriality is settler-colonialism's specific, irreducible element. Settler society requires the practical elimination of the natives in order to establish themselves on their territory. In sum, settler-colonialism is an inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates with a range of agencies with a view to eliminating indigenous societies. (pp. 388-393)

Settler-colonialism is as a power structure that believes in systematic erasure of native societies from the land through genocide, assimilation and other means replacing them with settlers from around the world as the new rightful inhabitants of those lands. Cultural and historical erasure is an essential strategy in settler colonialism (Uma, 2021).

Apartheid can most commonly be defined as a policy or system of segregation, subjugation, separation, discrimination, and persecution of groups of people by virtue of their identity. With definitions provided in (Apartheid Convention and Rome Statute), this systematic discrimination, repression and persecution on racial, ethnic, political, and economic grounds is recognized as one of the most odious crimes committed against humanity. It comes from the Dutch Afrikaans language meaning separation and segregation. It was a way supremacist ideology conceived by the descendants of Dutch colonists and South Africa. However, the concept emerged in the early 1930. It was not formalized as a political, social, and legal reality until 1948 ironically, the same year Israel was created whereas, Zionism which is another form of racism and racial discrimination was formalized as a political, social, and legal reality

The term 'apartheid' has increasingly been used in relation to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Whereas, South Africa's National Party implemented apartheid through colour bar; a hierarchal social stratification system based on race Israel has far more elaborate mechanism that restricts the movement of people and goods. There are hundreds of check points making life hell for Palestinians trying to get from one Palestinian town to another. Some Palestinians are given permits to enter the 1948 territory as a cheap labour and if they overstay their permit allotment, they are imprisoned. The daily commute alone is a horror show of humiliation. There is nowhere for Palestinians to be in Palestine where their bodies, spirits and dignity are not molested by Israeli soldiers. In Gaza where two million human beings are locked in a tiny enclave Israel prevents students from studying in universities abroad, prevents the sick from seeking medical care outside Gaza, prevents anyone from taking a simple vacation. There are families who have not seen their children, parents or siblings in decades even though they are only a few miles away from one another.

Israel's obsession with religious and racial purity is expressed in multitude of absurd laws. Since Israel first conquered Palestine in 1948, it has expelled 80% of the indigenous population putting those remaining under military control instituting a legal system that is designed to oppress those Palestinians and keep them as inferiors. Some of those laws are; *The Law of Return*: expressly bars the indigenous non-Jewish people who were expelled in 1948 and 1967 to return to their homes while on the other hand entitles every Jew with the right to become an Israeli citizen no matter where they come from. *The Nakba Law*: is invoked to penalize any institution that commemorates the expulsion of native Palestinians. *The Anti-boycott Law*: provides to take legal action against anyone who calls for the boycott of Israel or its illegal settlements. *The Admission Committee Law*: is enforced to prevent non-Jewish population from living in Jewish communities. *The Nation State Law*: states that the right to exercise self-determination is exclusive to the Jewish people relegating indigenous Palestinian Christians and Muslims as subjects with no right to self-determination. This law established Hebrew as the official language downgrading Arabic; the language spoken by the indigenous population for centuries. The law also establishes Jewish settlements as national value, mandating state resources for the expansion of illegal Jewish only colonies built on confiscated lands. *The Amendment to the Citizenship Law*: stipulates that a Palestinian who marries to an Israeli citizen cannot live as a couple in Israel. The Palestinian spouse can neither gain citizenship nor residency. The Palestinians in Jerusalem who do not have citizenship but residence status in Israel likewise cannot live with their spouses in Jerusalem and they are frequently forced to choose between keeping their family or losing their right to live in their own Jerusalem homes.

Israel's discriminatory rule over Palestinians such as its continued settlement and appropriation of the native land and its enforced segregation of the indigenous population living in Gaza and the West Bank by limiting their political power, restricting their movement, subjecting them to draconian military law and denying them the right to self-determination is tantamount to apartheid and settler-colonialism. This institutional discrimination against Palestinians and a range of inhuman acts perpetrated by Israel reminds us of apartheid. From the beginning of their control over the land, Israel has worked tirelessly to get rid of the indigenous population slowly replacing them with imported Jews from around the world. The home demolitions, the daily theft of the land, water, and properties. The uprooting, cutting, and burning of trees. The night raids and systematic terrorizing of children. The destruction and demolition of several archaeological sites and antiquities. All this, has been a premeditated strategy adopted by Israel to wipe out an entire civilization from the land to make way for an exclusive Jewish State "Not only in its socio-political structure but also in its ethnic composition" (Pappe, 2006, p. 15).

This idea of exclusivity is misleading and dangerous. It has been and still is the driver of many of the heinous crimes committed in human history. It brings paranoia and xenophobia. It reduces us to our narrow identities and gives rise to

apathy and mutual distrust which sometimes end in violent clashes between communities. The vision of Jewish exclusivity is not an exception. The entire world is a witness to the death, destruction and butchery of millions of Palestinians perpetrated in the name of establishing a purely Jewish state. The history of Israel is one of militarism, repression, depredation, and control. To many, it's been recognized a global force of violence, terror, pillage, paranoia, surveillance, suppression, war, and destruction. The protracted dispossession and dehumanization of Palestinians and lack of any moral equivalency for what they have endured says a lot about the criminal reality of Israel despite its claim to be the only democracy in the Middle East. The severity of conditions Palestinians are exposed to and the extent of brutality they are subjected to make Israel one of the most brutal tyrannies on earth. Further, the refusal to recognize Israel's role and responsibility of orchestrating these crimes will obscure this problem and entrench its domination over the native population. According to a report provided by HRW (2021):

More than 2,000 civilians have been killed in military operations launched by the Israeli army in Gaza since 2008, including deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian structures. Additionally, Israeli forces have regularly opened fire on Palestinian protesters and others who have not posed a threat to life near the fence separating Gaza and Israel, killing 214 protesters in 2018 and 2019 alone.

This excessive and disproportionate use of force is a decade-long pattern of exercising control over Palestinians. The Palestinians have been subjected to brutal forms of violence, including torture, persecution, periodic killings, and forceful expulsion. From home demolitions, arrests, and air raids to physical violence- attacks on Palestinians have been a daily reality. These heinous acts of violence are often described as 'mowing the lawn', as if Palestinians are toxic weeds that need to be removed. Most ironically, these brutal actions by Israel against Palestinians are often justified. The scale of atrocities perpetrated by Israel's brutally oppressive militia on the Palestinians makes them one of the most persecuted communities in the world. This is clearly an act of ethnic cleansing, which is considered a crime against humanity under international law. The popular definition of ethnic cleansing includes the systematic elimination of one group from a given territory by another group based on religious, ethnic, and national identity. It may also be driven by ideological considerations. Such an act involves violence and extermination as its method and is often abetted by military operations. Defined as a crime against humanity ethnic cleansing entails the forced expulsion of the indigenous population with the purpose of homogenizing them. Ethnic cleansing has also been associated with nationalism, national struggle, and the creation of a new nation state.

This mirrors exactly what happened in Palestine in 1948, 1967, 2002 and that is still continuing today. The dispossession of Palestinians and the methods used by Israel to enforce eviction may typically be associated with the acts of ethnic cleansing. The methods of cleansing used by Israel include; massacre of the indigenous population, destruction of villages followed by coerced expulsion and illegal occupation. These coercive measures are coalesced with incremental development of policy-making that systematically discriminates against Palestinians resulting into a comprehensive ethnic cleansing plan. The ultimate goal of such a plan was to dispossess Palestinians that would pave the way for an exclusive Jewish State. This makes Israel an apartheid and colonial system ordained to establish Jewish supremacy.

Since its origin to today a significant amount of work has been produced on the conflict delving into different dynamics of the same. *Mornings in Jenin* is an attempt at fictional representation of the on-going problem between Israel and Palestine. Centred around the narrative of occupation, oppression, resistance, and liberation this work of Abulhawa provides a local understanding of the conflict. Exiled from their ancient village that is their lifeblood and forced into a refugee camp in Jenin, the novel recounts struggle of Abulheja family to build their world. This occupation deprives them of their land, their roots, their dignity, their freedom leaving them in a state of uncertainty; uncertainty of belonging, never knowing when you will return to the land and see your loved ones. It is to live a life at edge of uncertainties, being pawned in a larger political game.

Mornings in Jenin is a story of love, loss, deprivation, and resilience not just of a family but of an entire community who despite being pushed into a precarious situation are capable of building back. The book is an attempt to lay bare the horrific injustices Palestinians have endured and continue to endure. The novel moves through many political events, countries, and decades. It is an epic Palestinian story that spans the struggle for independence, for human rights, for freedom, and dignity.

Regarded to be the first English language novel *Mornings in Jenin* tries to give a humanized version of the conflict. The Palestinian narrative until recently has mostly been told by people other than Palestinians. They are not allowed to have their own narrative and if somehow their narrative contradicts the prevailing narrative, then it must be inaccurate, it must be propaganda. As mentioned by Pappe and Hilal (2010):

In the field of knowledge production, again specially in the West, the situation is even more perplexing. Here the two sides are often portrayed as not equally responsible or accountable for the conflict, but what is stressed then is intransigence not on the part of the Zionists but of the Palestinians. The corollary of this was that for decades academic efforts by Palestinians were ridiculed as sheer propaganda, while those produced by the Israeli academic establishment passed for scholarly and professional representations of local reality. (pp. 6-7)

When Europeans conquered Palestine and turned it Israel the narrative was that it was a land without people. "A key mechanism of colonial hegemony has been the repression of local representations of history and identity and forms of cognitive violence associated with their replacement by imposing colonial understandings" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 217).

It really has taken a generation of Palestinians to delegitimize this narrative and to be able to narrate their story in their own voice. There is now a crop of new Palestinian writers, artists and activists that are confronting and destructing that old Western narrative of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. For them, presenting their story in authentic Palestinian voice is a form of resistance to narratives of dominance and is no less effective than that produced by the dominant group. “This strategy works in the interest of decolonization to the extent that it affirms the sanity and humanity of people in marginalized spaces” (Adams et al., 2015, p. 219).

This new generation of writers, activists and artists is shifting the discourse around the conflict by centring it to political and academic discussions and by retelling the stories of deprivation that does not only educate us on the subject but also enable us to look at it from a marginalized perspective. These stories give an alternative view of the ongoing political situation in Palestine and how it impacts everyday life of the Palestinian people. One profound impact of the conflict has been the growing radicalization of Palestinians. The following excerpt from the novel best highlights this issue.

The Israeli occupation has pushed us to the extremes of our emotions at a very young age, until we cannot feel anything but extremes. The roots of our grief are so deeply lost that death comes to live with us like a family member who escapes you and makes you happy, but who is still one of the family. Our anger is an anger that Westerners cannot understand. (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 193)

Palestinians do still exist in this landscape of wound that is amplified with every new massacre, every new seizure, every new attack. They are living under constant closures, seizures, and bombings. There is a spiritual, cultural, and familial deprivation but at the heart there is rebellion, resistance, and hope.

Abulhawa centres the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice. She does a fantastic work of educating us about life under occupation that peels away layers of political positioning to reveal the dark and festering inner layers of Israeli colonial violence. This work of Abulhawa is an impassioned plea to recognize the Israeli apartheid and the plight of Palestinians, who are stripped bare of their basic human rights and persecuted for simply existing as a Palestinian. Although it is a work of fiction, the dispossession and destruction that echoes throughout the novel is the lived reality for millions of Palestinians who are still living this story. They are an abused, humiliated and violated society across the board living with indignity of not having a home, of being discarded and disowned while the world watches.

The persistence of this problem and absence of any viable alternative to it speaks to the failure of the East and the West. There are hundreds of UN resolutions condemning Israel and calling on to respect International Law. But Israel has been held above the law. They have been able to commit war crimes with impunity which questions the efficacy of these laws to deliver any meaningful change. *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* (2019) by Noura Erakat, gives valuable insights into the geopolitical structures that sustain Palestinian oppression. The book offers a comprehensive but sceptical analysis of the role of law in the pursuit of Palestinian cause. She propounds two reasons to doubt the efficacy of international law to get the best of geopolitical realities and further the Palestinian cause.

One reason is that it is a derivative of a colonial order therefore, reifies rather than overturn an asymmetry of rights and duties among international actors. The other is that it lacks a global sovereign, thereby politicizing enforcement by leaving it to the discretion of states to decide when, how, and whom, to punish. This indeterminacy and susceptibility of law to strategic deployment and competing interpretive models suggests it can be used as a tool against the least powerful but is impotent when it comes to regulating the behaviour of the most powerful ones. (Erakat, 2019, p. 6)

For the law to be efficient there has to be a political and legal framework put in place that can regulate its meaning and application. As mentioned by Erakat (2019), “Think of the law as like the sail of a boat. The sail, or the law, guarantees motion but not direction. Legal work together with a political mobilization, by individuals, organizations, and states, is the wind that determines direction” (p. 11). The intention of the researcher is not to offer any kind of solution or to evolve any legal framework as there are many people who have already engaged this question. Researcher’s argument here is that there has to be a situation that respects Palestinians, that is based on universal human dignity and equality under law.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study foregrounds the Palestinian narrative of the conflict to be used as a decolonial praxis that will carve out a political space for the Palestinians by centring their experiences and struggles under the deadly Israeli occupation. To recognize that Palestinians are the indigenous population of the land in every sense of the word; culturally, historically, genetically, legally and Israel is a settler colonial master is an integral part of this decolonial praxis. Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* shares Palestinian narrative in an unapologetic way. It is a multigenerational novel that spans some of the major events in Palestinian history often underreported in foreign media. By doing so Abulhawa brings the Palestinian voice from periphery to the centre. This also results in the realization of the fact that to be able to tell your story means to have an agency over your own life. And that is quintessential for seeking decolonization. Reclaiming native narrative is instrumental in the indigenous anticolonial struggle. Because not to be able to tell your story is to be denied of a perspective and ultimately to be dehumanized. Abulhawa uses fiction to rehumanize Palestinians who have been dehumanized by Israeli colonizers.

Told from the perspective of Amal, the book speaks about the ongoing subjugation of Palestinian people and their struggle under Israeli occupation; a view that does not get much exposure in the West. It breaks your heart, depress you and makes you question humanity. *Mornings in Jenin* weaves light and hope into the depths of darkness, oppression, and despair faced by those still living this story in the occupied territories today. The novel in span of the Palestinian experience as the author purports, can be a path to decolonization. Abulhawa has done a remarkable job of humanizing the Palestinian condition of dispossession and displacement. She through her work, nudges a conversation around Palestinian literature, culture, resistance, and liberation. She brings to light the horrific injustices Palestine and its people have been facing for decades and also showcases their rich culture. She reflects on the human dimension of the conflict. It is not only about oppression but a deep level of humiliation that Israel imposes on Palestinians which has affected Palestinian society in some profound ways. One such instance is the emasculation of men. This results into all kinds of domestic dysfunction that has dismantled Palestinian society. We cannot overlook the psychological tolls the conflict has taken. In Gaza for example, 98.6% children exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Israel should also be blamed for spiritual, cultural, historical, and familial deprivation of the Palestinians that is just a condition of exile.

The narrative shows that there will always be a shadow of pain carried by Palestinians and all indigenous people who have lost their land to brutal colonization. They will always carry the weight of history because it is embedded into their collective consciousness. But there is still a lot of hope that if the two sides just get together and stop fighting and talk, everything will be alright. Narrated from a Palestinian voice this work of Abulhawa decolonizes the hegemonic colonial imaginaries that construct Palestinians and forces us to reconsider the existing problem by advancing Palestinian perspective on the same. Abulhawa espouses that assertion of narrative through art is a way of affirming one's reality. Her retrieval of the native narrative of the conflict is a decolonial praxis for countering the dominant discourse that legitimizes the occupation and dehumanizes the local population.

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