Graduate School of Development Studies

Visual Arts and Creative Direct Action in Palestine:

Exploring Artistic Resistance and *Sumud* on The Separation Wall

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List of Acronyms

AAO	Artists Against Occupation
BDS	Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions
EZLN	Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
ICESC	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IJC	International Court of Justice
MECA	Middle East Children Alliance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PLA	Palestinian League of Artist
PACBI	Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Abstract

This study is an exploratory study of visual arts on the Separation Wall, as a non-violent form of resistance in the context of the Occupation of Palestine. The study treats the visual arts of resistance as an example of creative rights claims by and about Palestinian self-determination. Although the main focus of this study is on the period since the Second Intifada (2000-2003), this is placed in its historical context of the history of political art in Palestine. The key contemporary Palestinian and international artists whose work is considered include Steve Sabella, Majed Abdel Hamid, J.R. and Marco among others. Interviews were conducted with most of the artists whose work was analysed. To analyse the visual images, compositional, visual and contextual analysis were combined. One key debate has been the controversial uses (and abuses) of the Separation Wall itself, as a contested public space. The tension between de-territorialised Palestinians and the re-territorialised territory is another theme that arises. Finally, visual arts on the Wall can no longer be considered as art of exclusively Palestinian resistance, it is unavoidably mediated through efforts to obtain international attention for the Palestinian cause.

Relevance to Development Studies

Art and politics may be important to include in legal approaches to human rights, which in turn play a critical role in international development realities. Legal traditional ways to realise human rights through administrative actions, legal claims, remain important. This study shows that other forms of rights claims can be understood as equally important as claims to self-determination and exercising the 'right to resistance', in this case through visual arts on the Separation Wall that has been built around Palestine and has come to symbolise the oppression of Israeli Occupation.

Keywords

Palestine, Visual Arts, Non-violent Resistance, Self-Determination, *Sumud*

Chapter 1
Introduction

Palestinian Artists may live in different places today, but they meet through their art as individual voices in a chorus […] Israel's Separation Wall and its military checkpoints have entered into their art as their language continues to cross barriers between exile and memory, identity and gender, displacement and fragmentation […] together their work gives body to an art of resistance that never ceases to inspire hope (Boullata, 2009: 36)

1.1 Art Production as an Act of 'Sumud' and Creative Resistance

The continuity of artistic production in the context of Israeli Occupation is quite remarkable and is something this study seeks to document and understand. The current Palestinian context is one of little progress in self-determination and continued occupation by Israel. I argue in this study that certain continued vital visual arts expressions can be viewed as a form of resistance to the Occupation. In this light, the Palestinian concept of '*sumud*', which means an every-day form of resistance is a useful starting point for understanding the role of visual arts historically and in a contemporary setting. Do non-Palestinian artists see themselves as 'resisting the Occupation'? We will explore the ambiguity of this for international, Palestinian and Israeli visual artists. Visual arts are a means of building knowledge and a powerful tool for social change, and the importance of the visual arts for this research lies in their use as a non-violent weapon.

In this study, the question is raised as to whether using visual art on the Separation Wall could be defined as going beyond protest, and could be defined as a form of 'civil disobedience', by Palestinians and other artists on behalf of Palestinian self-determination. We adopt the basic typology from Rigby (1995) to discern whether the wall art could be defined as an example of 'direct action' in the spirit of civil disobedience. If non-violent action range from protest and persuasion, to non-cooperation, and can include disruptive forms of intervention, the last two closer to civil disobedience (Sharpe 2005). Drawing on Rigby (1995), the three elements (i) conventional or

unconventional (ii) defiance and (iii) risk of sanctions could be identified in the visual artistic actions we will explore. These issues will be relevant when analysing the significance of the selected visual art works. The question will be returned to in Chapters 4 and 5.

Just as Palestinians can resist occupation and be in solidarity with others who struggle against unjust situations so too can the 'global civil society' in principle resists alongside Palestinians in their pursuit of self-determination. This means that non-Palestinian artists can also be seen as activists – alongside Palestinians – against the oppression of the Occupation. One of the strategies to resist occupation is by performing 'creative resistance' through visual arts expressions on the wall. Barghouti (2011: 160) refers to 'artistic resistance' in relation to artistic work done in support of the BDS global movement. In the case of international artists, their direct actions on the Separation Wall, can be seen as third party interventions to a conflict. It is less clear whether non-Palestinian artists share the nation-building goals of local Palestinian artists. In the middle, come Israeli artists, of whom we consider one more. Figure 1.1 is an example of the types of images that will be analysed in chapters 4 and 5. It is a mural produced by members of the *Zapatista* movement in Mexico, who visited the West Bank:

Figure 1.1: EZLN, *To Exist is to Resist*, 2004

Source: http://desertpeace.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/to-exist-is-to-resist.jpg

1.2   Problem Statement

This research is concerned with how the visual arts produced by Palestinian artists in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and non-Palestinian visual artists globally, which seek to support the rights of the Palestinian population, are used as a strategy to resist the occupation. It is an exploratory study; in particular, visual arts are seen as a vehicle for expressing the rights claims of civil society and especially of those normally excluded from decision-making, by revealing different narratives than the mainstream representations (Norman 2009: 251). In this context, this research is about resistance to occupation through peaceful means. Some discourses represent Palestinian populations as either violent, 'evil terrorists' or 'victimized peasant'; both stereotypes extract the Palestinians from the field of social action and cultural production (Ankori 2006: 15). Said (1988: 24) expresses the effects of this representation and stereotypes by saying that: the Israeli state was possible because 'they had already won the political battle for Palestine in the international world in which ideas, representations, rhetoric, and images were at issue'.

More specifically, from this perspective, visual arts can have the property of bringing about transformative change in a society by raising public awareness of a particular situation; in this case the Occupation and related human rights abuses Palestinians suffer on daily bases. I have explored the use of art in the Palestinian context as a non-violent form of resistance, which gives a voice to the artists and by the same token the people. I have focussed on visual arts as 'culture not only as a right to be enjoyed by all people, but also, in the Palestinian case, as a weapon against the encroaching despair gnawing at the spirit, as a way of breaking through the siege' (Laïdi-Hanieh 2006: 31). A Palestinian context, where there is an overwhelmingly one-sided dominant-subordinate relations.

1.3   Research Objectives and Questions

The objective of the research is to explore and present the images and ideas of artists, many of them also political activists, as they are represented on the Wall that divides Palestinian and Israeli-controlled territories. 'Wall studies' and its

aims are still under discussion (Isaac 2011: 155). It is a new area of research, and this means the focus of this paper is quite broad. One of the aims of Wall studies is 'linking research and field actions by activists with human rights practitioners' (Ibid). Artistic work from the Wall is the main case study and the focus on the visual arts can be justified in this way. Wall art is already well documented in books and Internet. The images are widely available. What has not been done is to take this visual material and link it with wider rights struggles. It is suggested that in the dialogues between local and global artists, around this single space of the Separation Wall, much rich insight can be gained into how non-violent resistance can link with the 'national' right of self-determination of Palestinians. The study considers how a selected number of images on the Wall represent ideas about resistance to occupation as a specific form of oppression. It also explores how a broader Palestinian and wider regional and international public, through various forms of media dissemination, views this work in relation to the national cause of self-determination.

Question:

How do the visual arts on the Separation Wall express the resistance against the Occupation?

Sub-questions:

How have the visual arts engaged with political oppression historically within the Palestinian context?

What kinds of debates have there been about art on the Separation Wall?

How do these debates reflect different understandings of the politics of Palestinians' resistance to the Occupation?

1.4 Relevance and Justification

When studying resistance in the Palestine-Israel context, we find that there is a fair amount of literature, which focuses in the armed forms of resistance against the Occupation. The use of non-violence is as Bröning (2011: 132) states 'the forgotten resistance', even though the non-violent resistance to the

Occupation is in fact the most used form by the majority of the population, there are less studies regarding non-violent forms of resistance, nevertheless it has been present since the 30's decade and parallel to other forms of resistance (Awad 1984: 22).

A focus on media and culture has also been largely secondary in the literature of the Palestinian – Israeli conflict (Tawil-Souri 2011: 648). This study aims to contribute to this literature and explore what other images and voices can be revealed when paying close attention to art as part of the culture of Palestine and as a form of non-violent resistance. 'Visual art plays a pivotal role in the chronicling of socio-political change, perhaps most of all in times of conflict' (Ankori 2006: 47). 'When power differentials are so extreme and entrenched that they are literally not noticed, the accompanying oppression typically involves removing the voice and perspective of the oppressed' (d'Estree in Norman 2009: 254). Art is a way to listen straight to these voices.

The wall has been chosen because of its physical and symbolic presence and importance as a site of occupation, and daily rights denials. The Wall is significant, since it is a shared canvas for visual artists that is highly fluid and involves directly and indirectly forms of dialogue between local Palestinian artists and others. The Wall as a 'gallery' is a collective effort, but also a nationalist and international one. The tensions and collaborations inherent in this shared project are a central focus in the study.

The central focus is on a form of resistance by peaceful means, which uses visual arts culture and new technologies to disseminate the claims that can be seen as 'resistance' against the oppression of the Occupation on the Separation Wall. The study does not aim to measure the impact of these pieces of art in a particular community or society, it does not measure increment in rights awareness either, instead tries to explore the claims that are done, what stereotypes are addressed, what dialogues between the local and the global can be reveal.

1.5   Methodology

This is an exploratory study on visual arts as a form of resistance. I have taken in this research therefore an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on cultural studies, human rights and social movement's literature as well as art history. 'The multidisciplinary attention to human rights in the humanities and social sciences today explores the exchanges between political, legal, and ethical discourses on human rights and cultural texts including literature, the visual and performing arts, film, and popular culture' (Condourioutis 2010: 212). I have used qualitative methods and collected primary and secondary data around this topic.

Primary Data Collection

I have conducted semi-structured interviews, face-to-face as well as mediated through Internet. The sample was selected by snowball method. Interviews were conducted with the producers of the art pieces themselves when available. This was a challenge for the project since it was not possible to do fieldwork in and around the Separation Wall in Palestine mainly due to security and professional reasons that imposed time constraints. These constraints were partially overcome by the availability of local Dutch activist and artists and the use of Internet when having to interview residents in Palestine. All interviews were recorded. A total of 10 interviews were conducted and informed consent was signed. [1]

When I spoke with the artists the main debate concerned the nature of their artistic production. For lawyers the main concern was with human rights. In a sense the work of Omar Barghouti, has proven invaluable as one of the few academics concerned with linking human rights discourses with the arts in the Palestinian context.

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[1] See Appendix I for a complete lists of interviewees.

Secondary Data Collection

The selected visual arts works for analysis include: graffiti, photography, land art, video and mural painting. Regarding the selection criteria of the visual works, since I have not been physically in Palestine, I relied on the pre-selection done by the authors of the books I have been consulting.[2] The selection criteria were: First, the content was not unethical either in the messages convey or the images, followed by the internationally acknowledged high quality of the works and the availability of the artists and finally that the content of the messages was political. Some of the works were part of broader projects that help elucidate the aims behind the images, the targeted audiences and contextualise the works in absence of interview with the author.

Visual Data Analysis

Visual data analysis was applied to consider the artistic expressions. The starting point to the analysis is Hall's (1997a: 15) definition of representation: 'representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchange between members of a culture. It involves the use of language, sings and images which stand for or represent things'. According to his view there is no one meaning in an image; there are only approaches, since an image is not in a vacuum there are therefore no truths waiting to be revealed and hidden inside an image but instead images can be linked to their wider context and interpreted accordingly differently in time and as well as by different persons (Hall 1997a: 9). In essence, images are always subject to 'contested and competing meanings and interpretations' (Ibid).

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[2] The Separation Wall is well documented in Internet mostly by anonymous photographers. Two books were mainly consulted: Parry, W. (2010) Against the Wall: The Art of Resistance in Palestine, Pluto Press: London and Krohn, Z. & J. Lagerweij (2010) Concrete Messages: Street Art on the Israeli-Palestinian Separation Barrier, Dokument Press.

The methodological framework proposed by Rose (2001: 32) was adopted, accordingly, visual interpretations take place at three sites: the production of the image, the image itself and the audience and each site on the same turn has three modalities, technological, compositional and social. According to the same author, a critical approach to interpreting visual images entails three elements: (i) giving images an importance that is not abridged to their social context, but includes it; (ii) thinking about the social conditions and effects of visual objects and (iii) paying attention to the researcher's own visual interpretation (Rose 2001: 15-16). These definitions have their methodological implications. The decision was made in this study to start with a 'compositional interpretation'. However, since this method tends to concentrate on the image itself and has been criticized for not giving enough attention to the artistic and social practices of visual imagery (Rose 2001: 53), a more contextualised interpretation also follows. We consider therefore both the compositions themselves and the social practices that surround them including the context. It is the same when we watch a movie at home compared with seeing it in a public cinema (Rose 2001: 26); the influence of context on visual images is perhaps more apparent in a public social setting. By being aware of the setting in which visual art images are produced and 'exhibited' on the Wall in Palestine, reactions of different audiences – both local and international – helps to keep a reflexive awareness of the limitations of one's own interpretation, important as this also is.

1.6   Structure of the Study

In the next Chapter 2, the theoretical debates and main concepts will be presented. In Chapter 3, sub-question two will be addressed: How have the visual arts engaged with oppression historically, within the Palestinian context? Chapter 3 aims to help the reader understand how culture and therefore the visual arts have acquired a resistance dimension in Palestine historically, by looking at art and history. Chapters 4 and 5 will then present a series of visual images from the Separation Wall, and analyse each of these in turn. Although the boundaries are fluid between what can be defined as 'local' and 'international', for conceptual clarity Chapter 4 deals mainly with local

expressions of resistance in visual arts on the Wall, whilst Chapter 5 focuses on the international and also Israeli visual arts of resistance on the Wall. Finally Chapter 6 will be dedicated to the conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

Chapter 2   Key Conceptual Debates

2.1   Creative Resistance and Artistic Resistance in Palestine

The term 'creative resistance' has been used with two meanings. On one hand it refers to a way of being specially inventive or original in order to resist the occupation. This is what Norman refers to when she states that 'Palestinians have had to develop other creative nonviolent strategies to influence the Israeli public and government, and have shifted much of their activism to target the international community rather than Israeli society' (Norman 2010: 12). Also Eidelman (2010: 102) refers to the 'creative way of resistance' and 'artistic and theatrical strategies' in his accounts of the artistic resistance campaign against the Wall in Bil'in. In this sense not only creativity is taken into account but also the fact of using art as a weapon. Hamdi (2011: 40-41) gives us a definition of creative resistance: '[it] entails writing, drawing, documenting the Palestinian narrative, creatively shaping a Palestinian experience that would be meaningful to the storyteller and his or her audience, and which would enable mass witnessing of that experience…'. This mass witnessing is what Kurasawa (2009: 26) calls 'the globalisation of bearing witness'. Fictional art works are also witness to atrocities, images and narratives can travel as 'a globalizing mode of ethico-political labour', a form of art that seeks to denounce human rights abuses, and to transform reality and fracture it (Kurasawa 2009: 94).

Just as Palestinians can resist occupation and be in solidarity with other unjust situations and conflicts internationally, so too 'global civil society' can in principle resist alongside Palestinians in their pursuit of self-determination. One of the strategies to do this is by performing 'creative resistance'. Barghouti (2009: 55) refers to this as 'artistic resistance', he uses the term in relation to artistic expressions of Australian artists in Australia that were supporting the global campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel (BDS). For Barghouti (2006) art is also a suitable tool to counter stereotypes imposed on the Palestinian population as well as a tool to create solidarity with the

Palestinian cause. Eidelman (2011: 102) describes the causes of emergence and the reasons for using 'creative resistance' in the same terms: to call public and media attention, violence decrease by using costumes or art in a highly militarised context, to attract internally more participants and to create a change of perception of the Palestinian struggle.

Hamdi (2011), Eidelman (2011) and Barghouti (2002) understand artistic or creative resistance as a strategy that uses art as a weapon. but Barghouti goes a step further: the arts have an added function that is not only resistance to occupation but a self-centred, healing and liberating function. It is 'the de-colonising' and reconstruction of the mind: 'Palestinians cannot afford not to integrate cultural rehabilitation and identity reformulation into their overall battle of reconstruction and struggle for emancipation…Cultural expression…serves a dual purpose: self-therapy and expansion of the "free zone" in our collective mind, where progressive transformation can thrive' (Barghouti 2002)[3].

We will be referring to both 'creative resistance' and 'artistic resistance' indistinctively and as a strategy that uses art as a weapon. Eidelman (2011: 103) calls 'creative direct action' the performing symbolic acts that use art with the aim to show the devastation that causes the wall. We will adopt this concept of 'creative direct action' and adapt it to the context of the visual arts on the Separation Wall.

2.2   Palestinian Art as Non-violent Resistance?

Van Teeffelen (2006) has attempted to map different strategies of nonviolent actions present in Palestine today (Symbolic performances and demonstrations, active non-violent resistance, communication actions, building, planting and solidarity projects). In his typology he mentions expressly painting on the Wall under symbolic acts, while this would be the case, never the less, I would not agree of taken then out of the communication actions or the exclusive

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[3] See: http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/590/fe1.htm. Accessed 25 November 2011

conceptualisation of sit-ins and human shields as 'active', giving the connotation of active only to these acts.

What is Palestinian art as defined in this study? Is it simply art, which Palestinians make in Palestine, or does it also include the art made by non-Palestinian artists for example on the Separation Wall? What of the visual arts by Palestinians living in and working in the Diaspora? How should we understand the resistance dimension of visual art made by international artists in Palestine? All these questions are profoundly political since they are attached to questions of collective identity, narrative and the question regarding who defines both Palestinian culture and the 'art of resistance' in a context of occupation. This raises the question of whether Palestinian artists are those born in Palestine or if they also include those of Palestinian descent or even those who identify with the Palestinians (Sabella 2011: 85). In a more inclusive interpretation of 'resistance art' both Palestinian and those who use Palestinian experience as themes in their work might be eligible for the label of 'Palestinian resistance artists' (adapting the ideas of Sabella in Ibid). This inclusive approach takes into consideration all the artists that feel a strong attachment to the Palestinian experience and cause. Although in this case, Suleiman Mansour suggests using the term 'art of Palestine' rather than 'Palestinian artists' (in Sabella 2011: 85). In this sense, pieces of visual art created on the Separation Wall, even by non-Palestinian artists can be seen as part of the 'art of resistance Palestine' in this study.

As this study is concerned to look at the visual arts as a form of non-violent resistance, the way we analyse the visual images we have selected needs to be carefully designed and planned, according to the specific context in Palestine today, under Israeli Occupation.

2.3 Non-violence, Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Disobedience

The term non-violence has two main meanings: according to the first, non-violence is a philosophy, Ghandi and Luther King were both devoted to philosophical non-violence; what they regarded as a 'way of life, a belief system that permeates all action' (Nojeim 2004: 25-27). The second meaning refers to non-violence as a strategy, in this sense it is a pragmatic choice that not necessary informs all aspects of a person's life, it is action based (Nojeim 2004: 28). Non-violence is also referred to as 'nonviolent action' that can form the foundation of civil resistance (Norman 2010: 8). Furthermore, Dudouet (2008: 6-8) proposes a complementary approach to both sub-schools; a combination of the two sub-theories, the 'principled approach', mostly associated to the work of Gandhi and the 'pragmatic approach', whose main proponent is Sharp, would only benefit and strengthen each other. Indeed persons who profess non-violence as a philosophy also resort to strategies of non-violence as a tool to achieve their goals; Ghandi and King were using both approaches but not all their adepts had non-violence as principle in their lives (Nojeim 2004: 28).

Sharp (2005: 18) in his work mentions about two hundred methods that jointly constitute what he defines as 'non-violent direct action', non-violent weapons including different forms of individual and collective strategies. Visual arts are included in the category of Protest and Persuasion (Sharp, 2005: 53). All these methods can be classified in three main categories.[4]

Sharp (2005) has a bottom up approach to power, accordingly, the power resides in the backing of the society:

> 'The social view of power sees rulers or other command systems, despite appearances, to be dependent on the population's goodwill, decisions, and support. As such, power rises continually from many parts of the society. Political power is therefore fragile' (Sharp 2005: 28).

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[4] See table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Methods and categories of Nonviolent Action

Non-violence = Non-violent direct action		
Protest and persuasion	**Noncooperation**	**Nonviolent intervention**
These are forms of activity in which the practitioners are expressing opinions by symbolic actions, to show their support or disapproval of an action, a policy, a group, or a government	Non-cooperation, which may take social, economic, and political forms. In these methods, the people refuse to continue usual forms of cooperation or to initiate new cooperation…by its nature is more disruptive of the established relationships and the operating system than are the methods of nonviolent protest and persuasion	The methods actively disrupt the normal operation of policies or the system by deliberate interference, either psychologically, physically, socially, economically, or politically
Communications with a wider audience: 7. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols (written, painted, drawn, printed, gestures, spoken, or mimicked)	Social noncooperation: 63. Social disobedience (of social customs or rules)	Political intervention: 196. Civil disobedience of "neutral" laws
Symbolic public acts 18. Displays of flags and symbolic colors 26. Paint as protest	Political noncooperation 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws	
Source: Sharp, G. (2005) Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential (excerpts), Boston: Extending Horizons Books, Porter Sargent Publishers, accessed 16 November 2011 http://www.aeinstein.org/selfLiberation.html		

Source: Author's Creation, based on Sharp (2005: 51-65)

How can third parties to a conflict affect any result of it or the process itself? According to Rigby (1995), the Galtung concept of the 'Chain of Non-violence' is applicable: 'nonviolent interventionary action might touch the conscience of one or more parties to the conflict, acting as a catalyst to effect changes in the outlook and stance of others, so eventually the impact of the original action might reverberate along the links in a chain leading to political elites and key policy-maker' (cited in Rigby 1995: 456). In this sense, non-violent resistance against power in a conflict can also come from individuals, collectives and NGOs that are third parties or not directly involved in the conflict, but that seek to influence the result or course of it (Rigby 1995: 453-456). At this respect Rigby has produced a basic typology of 'intervention actions', he differentiates them according to three main criteria (ibid):

- 1. Geographical location: on-site or off-site, depending on physical presence in the conflict territory.
- 2. Style: There can be the distinction made between 'nonviolent direct action' and 'conventional political action'. According to: unconventionality, element of defiance and risk of sanctions. In line

with the civil disobedience school, the unconventionality would be seen in connection with the political and cultural context. Rigby distinguished between the act of demonstration in London versus marching on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the latter would be unconventional;

- 3. Short term goals: protest, support and solidarity, humanitarian relief and conflict resolution.

Thus protesting through graffiti in any EU capital could be seen as a conventional political action, but when done on the Separation Wall it takes a different dimension due to the specific context in which it is done. This would qualify the action as an act of artistic resistance and a 'creative direct action' in the spirit of civil disobedience.

For the purposes of this study and in line with the works of Thoreau, Gandhi and King 'civil disobedience is the violation of a domestic law to protest unjustness of specific laws or of an entire legal or political regime' (Megret 2008: 5). Civil Disobedience is considered part of nonviolent resistance, the main differentiation with mere protest being the fact violation of laws because it considers them essentially unjust (Ibid). It will be further discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

2.4   The Right of Self-Determination

The right of self-determination is a legal principle of international law that forms part of customary international law and a human right included in Article 1 of both 1966 International Covenants, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), stating: 'All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (Algan 2004: 143, Rosas 2001: 111-113). It started to be established in the context of de-colonisation but today is widely accepted that the right also concerns peoples under 'foreign or alien domination' (Algan 2004: 143, Cassese 1995: 59). The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has made clear that it is a right *'erga omnes',* drawing on it previous jurisprudence according to the East Timor and Barcelona Traction cases 'the right of peoples to self-determination, as it evolved from the Charter

and from the United Nations practice, has an *erga omnes* charater' accordingly 'in view of the importance of the rights involved, all states can be held to have a legal interest in their protection' (ICJ 2004: 199).

There can be distinguish two aspects: the external 'the right of people to be free from outside interference and intervention' and the internal 'the right of people against their own government' which has implied a 'right to resistance against tyranny and oppression' (Rosas 2001: 111-112).

2.5   *Sumud*: A Everyday Form of Palestinian Resistance

Sumud or *sumoud*, genuine Palestinian concept, is generally translated as steadfastness; the term has a very important role in Palestinian civil resistance and society and it certainly supports and compliments the non-violence strategic direct actions that are taking place today (Norman 2010: 58). As a strategy it arises after the Occupation and was defined as the effort to continue life even in a hostile situation of oppression and occupation 'Palestinians exhibit *sumud* in their daily lives as they perform what would amount to normal everyday tasks in other places' (Sabawi as cited in Bröning 2011: 135). According to Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian scholar of non-violence, '*sumud* meant a third way between on the one hand accepting the occupation and on the other hand opting for a violent struggle' (cited in van Teeffelen 2006).

The concept has different categories; '*static sumud*' is associated with the land and the determination to stay in it; the belonging to it (Farsoun & Landis 1990: 28). This static category evolves to what is later called '*resistance sumud*' (*sumud muqawim*), a more active form that combine this ideology with activism, creating alternative institutions in order to resists and self-empower not only of the individuals but the society at large with the aim to destabilize the occupation (Ibid). This meaning it is nearer to non-violence resistance, in where civil disobedience acts of the first intifada were complemented with efforts to create alternative institutions or independent polity by the establishment of cultural institutions and trade unions among others (Bröning 2011: 136).

Visual art gave form to *Sumud* and transformed the humiliation of living under repressive occupation into pride. The paintings of Mansour can be regarded as icons of *sumud*: the olive tree, the land and the peasant will always be representations of the Palestinian identity in an attempt to depict the bond of the native with the land (Ankori 2006: 74-75).[5]

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[5] See Appendix II: Visual Sumud Representations.

Chapter 3   Palestinian Resistance and Art: Placing the Separation Wall in its National Context

3.1   Introduction

This chapter is aimed at understanding how resistance has been articulated through art historically in Palestine. Rather than a complete overview of Palestinian art, the present chapter concentrates on the resistance art and explains how the arts get the role of creative resistance in Palestine.

In fact, the artist undertook the task of identity building and cultural memory preservation in pursue of the not disappearing of its people culture and historical past (Barghouti 2002; Boullata 2009: 103; Gandolfo 2010: 50; Hamdi 2011: 23); he/she can be seen also as an activist in cultural institutions building (Yaqub 2008: 113). Because many of the cultural institutions undertake these endeavours as well they are also actors of creative resistance. Many consider that their function is to participate in nation building and achieving political aims such as exposing Palestinian culture, the siege and the Palestinian experience (Yaqub 2008: 113-114), as well as in building knowledge as a peaceful weapon and empowerment (Hourani 2007).

3.2   Bering Witness to the Nakba and the Naksa

The Palestinian art is intimately connected to the experiences of their history of dispossession, exile, oppression and occupation. The artist undertakes as part of his role the preservation of the history and identity of his people - including the national identity. He acts as a first hand witness to the events that have taken place in his land since 1948 to the present day- more specially the liberation art movement of artists after the 1960s in which 'liberation artists felt entitled and obligated to invoke qadiyyah (political cause) […] the associated pain and loss, elements of Palestinian folklore, Arab art history and geographic points of the Palestinian landscape' (Gandolfo 2011: 54).

The Jordanian and Lebanese refugee camps hosted the most ancient group of artist operating as Palestinians. The memory of the entire people is evocated by the work of certain artists whose work became icons of resistance. While some eyewitnesses would depict very crude and vivid images of the Nakba and the refugee experience, others would nonetheless depict the idealised lost paradise in more naïve styles. Emblematic of this time are the works of Ismail Shammout, Sliman Mansour, Ibrahim Ghannam and Naji Al Ali (Ankori 2006; Yacub 2008).[6] Whilst in the past, visual and other artists might express themselves more 'collectively' in relation to the national cause and against the Occupation, after the first intifada this seems to have changed. Artists started to adopt more noticeably individual expressions, which did not necessarily depict the national cause in a collective way but explored their own inner individual experiences, and interpretations of the 'Palestinian cause', it was at this point that visual art in Palestine started to become more successful, more widely known and more interesting to analyse (Sabella, personal interview, 12/09/2011, Skype).

From 1948 and in reaction to the Occupation we can identify a register of symbolic meanings in the visual arts that are linked to represent national identity and that will be repeated incessantly: the fellah (the peasant), the cactus, the soil, the olive tree, the woman body, all standing for the meaning of the people and the lost land (Gandolfo 2010: 49).

3.3   Contemporary Resistance Art: Preserving the Collective Memory and Identity

Culture (including visual arts) has been much suppressed as a consequence of the Occupation. Examples of this suppression are the immediate closure of the departments of culture in Palestinian universities after 1967 (Fadda 2006) and the 'Politics of Dispossession' described by Said cited in Hamdi (2011: 40) in his work of the same name where he asserts, 'unless you go on and telling it, it will just drop and disappear…it is strange that no narrative of Palestinian

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[6] See Appendix III: Icons of Resistance.

history has ever been institutionalized in a definitive master work'. He recalls the shipment of the Palestine Research Centre in Beirut to Tel Aviv during the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982 (ibid). In addition, according to Tawil-Souri (2011: 470) although Zionist measures to subdue Palestinian culture are the most severe, also the Israeli state, Orientalism and Islam phobia in the diaspora, corruption in the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Arab governments hosting Palestinian refugees contribute to this oppression. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that Palestinian art history is almost totally absent in the historiography of art (Ankori 2006: 15). Art exhibitions containing the Palestinian narrative get censored up until today, recent example is "A Child's View from Gaza", a children art exhibition censored in the United States after pressure on the board of directors of the museum that was going to host the exhibition (MECA 2011).

Against this context, the Palestinian artist takes the role of a storyteller telling the story of his people in danger of being appropriated "since the 'Zionist story' depends on the erasing of 'Palestinian History'" (Boullata 2009: 9). It is not until recently that the visual arts have got more attention, since the oral and auditory arts have a more prominent role in the Arab culture in general, with poetry being the highest form of self-expression (Boullata 2009: 28). The renowned masters of these oral productions like the poet Mahmoud Darwish inspire the visual arts. For example in the Separation Wall, we will analyse a land art that is the deconstruction of the declaration of independence by Darwish.

There are several obstacles to find a continuation line in the existing art movement prior to 1948: the Nakba, the looting of considerable part of its production after the instauration of Israel and the subsequent occupation in 1967 and that there was not a written art history of Palestinian art (Boullata 2009: 26-27). Nevertheless, despite these difficulties that fragment the art itself, it is memory that keeps this art together, it does not matter where Palestinians live, they assert their identity and by that exercise cultural resistance (Boullata 2009: 103).

The art movement in Palestine has been working as a solidarity field affiliating itself with some non-violent movements and collectives, like for example Artists against Occupation (AAO), the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), Artists against the Occupation and the New Vision artists group which uses only local materials and boycott the rest (Gandolfo 2011: 57-62).

3.4   The Role of the Cultural Institutions

Palestinian art field according to Ben Zvi (2006: 5) is characterised by a separation of geographic loci of the artists, as well as the absence of Palestinian institutions of teaching art and the lack of historical museums. Nevertheless, the first intifada and the hope for peace gave a special energy to the art scene, there has been an increase in the number of the cultural institutions ever since (Gandolfo 201: 56), mainly in the form of foundations or NGO's and mostly depending on foreign funds. These organisations have undertaken in part the tasks of the preservation and archive of the heritage as well as the production of knowledge. The opening of the International Art Academy is an example of this change.

The Palestinian League of Artist (PLA) was formed in 1973. Its creation marks a shift in the importance of the visual arts in Palestine, less valued socially than the pre-existing oral traditions (Boullata 2009: 292). With the aid of the PLA exhibitions were done in public spaces that were seen as 'emblematic of a collective national identity and crucibles of defiant resistance' (Boullata 2004: 72). In this context as is the case presently, cultural institutions are playing the role of activists, by preserving the arts and cultural heritage from being destroyed or appropriated and giving voice to the artist, as well as serving as hub in a network for Palestinian culture research (Mikdadi, personal interview, 23/09/2011, Skype). There are various examples of this activist role: the creation in 1992 of the first visual arts centre Al-Wasit gallery, the A.M Qattan Foundation for Contemporary Art in 1998 and the International Art Academy in Ramallah in 2007. Among these, only the A.M Qattan foundation is funded totally by a private Palestinian source. It presents itself as

an ambassador of the Palestinian culture giving other countries the possibility to get to know it as well as serving as a bridge between Palestinians in the occupied territories and the diaspora (A.M Qattan Foundation Website).

The creation of the International Art Academy Palestine is a bottom up effort in institution building led by the artists as well. 'The Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art - PACA, which is a non-profit Palestinian NOG working in the sector of contemporary arts education, was specifically founded in June 2004 to pursue the project of establishing an academy of arts in Palestine' (Fadda 2006). The Palestinian Art Academy describes itself as '[…]an initiative that is anchored in Palestine and aims to maintain collective memory, history and identity through its education programs and activities. Our mission is also to be a creative hub for international students and artists, via our exchange programs, visiting lecturers, activities and projects' (International Academy of Art Palestine Website). The institution praises the importance of the artist work as part of its social responsibility.

3.5   Concluding Remarks

From this account, we can notice a 'shift' in the mentality and expressions of Palestinian artists during the past decades (Ankori 2006: 55). In the past, one of the main problems was the way in which Palestinian national visual arts and its symbols had been instrumentalised to feed stereotypes of the Palestinian as terrorist (Said cited in Ankori 2006: 52). Although indeed these moving iconic figures could reinforce ideas of the Palestinians as either passive victims or violent, such images can also be seen as a testimony of the atrocities committed and human rights abuses of Palestinian people.[7]   Fictional works are also witness to such atrocities, images and narratives that travel as a form of art that seeks to denounce human rights abuses, and to transform reality and fracture it, 'a globalizing mode of ethico-political labour' (Kurasawa 2009: 94). The artists moved by their social responsibility have been performing creative

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[7] See Appendix III: Icons of Resistance.

resistance. Sometimes expressed against the Occupation and the consequences of its 'politics of dispossession' (Said cited in Hamdi 2011: 40), sometimes against the images that have been imposed on them by the mass media and some other forms of social oppression.

Chapter 4   The Wall as a 'Giant Platform'[8]

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter and the following chapter constitute the core of my
analysis and aim to explain how creative resistance is exercised by Palestinians,
Israeli citizens and internationals third party to the conflict. They present the
different messages conveyed and views on the use of the Separation Wall as a
platform for visual artists. A selected number of visual images, produced by
Palestinian artists, will be analysed in the present chapter, through combining
content and contextual analysis as explain in the Chapter 1. I explore how
these images express the right of resistance to oppression of foreign
occupation – understood as a recognised element of the right to self-
determination (Rosas 2001: 114, Cassese 1995: 90). Abdel Hamid explains that
in his view, the visual arts express forms of resistance both to the Occupation
itself, to its wider economic and social consequences:

> '…of course is resisting while working…but the biggest challenge is not just
> to resist the occupation but the consequences of being occupied…and
> become victimized…you consider yourself as a victim, as art has portrayed it,
> literature has portrayed it, and daily activities… it is important that the
> resistance is not only about the occupation but the psychological
> consequences of being occupied because….you enter in a very problematic
> area...as in the pedagogy of the oppressed' (Abdel Hamid personal interview,
> 27/08/2011, Skype).

He clearly also refers to the 'free zone' of healing and liberating the mind that
Barghouti (2002)[9] also alludes when talking about cultural expression: '…[it]
serves a dual purpose: self-therapy and expansion of the "free zone" in our
collective mind, where progressive transformation can thrive'.

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[8] Expression borrowed from Steve Sabella statement: 'the function of art today is
multilayered. Palestinian artists could use the wall as a giant platform to address the
world and influence its perception. Ignoring it legitimizes it' (Krohn & Lagerweij
2010: p. 60)

[9] See: http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/590/fe1.htm. Accessed 25 November 2011

As this statement makes clear, we cannot avoid discussing the issue of the Separation Wall, which itself forms both the 'canvas' and the context of the visual art that will be analysed. In relation to this, the use made of the Wall by artists means that today the Wall can also be understood as a 'global public space' that holds different visual expressions of resistance to occupation as well as resistance against the Wall itself.

4.2   The Separation Wall

The Separation Wall is the most material and visible sign of the Israeli Occupation. The construction works started in 2002, although the Israeli government had already spoken to build such structure in 1990 (Hams & Ferry 2008: 176). In 2004 the Wall was declared by the ICJ contrary to the 4th Geneva Convention and in breach of the right of Self-determination of Palestinian people (ICJ 2004: 115-122). Already the UN General Assembly resolution ES-10/13 in 2003 stated that the initiation of the construction would entail 'the de facto annexation of large areas of territory' (UNGA 2003 ES-10/13). The latest report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reveals the 60.8% of the barrier is already constructed and when completed 85% of its route will be inside the West Bank and not along the 1949 Armistice line (Green Line) doubling its size (UNOCHA 2011: 3-5).[10]

The wall is property of the State of Israel and it costs to Israel 4 million dollars a mile (Hams & Ferry 2008: 178); it was not intended to be a canvas for creative expression this can be regarded as illicit use. According to Human Rights Watch Pacific protesters around the Wall have been strongly repressed and some of the nonviolent protesters are now being prosecuted (HRW 2011). The impact of the Wall devastates (and 'protects') not only the spaces around it but also the social fabric of Palestine, mainly through:

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[10] See Appendix V: Map Separation Wall.

'the confiscation of land, the destruction of visual perspective, the closure
of enclaves, the denial of privacy, the destruction of landscape and the
systematic control of Palestinian places of memories and social meaning'
(Hanifi in Isaac, 2011: 153).

The interesting concept of 'spacio-cide', helps describe the context of the Wall
historically (Ibid). Actions against the Wall could be regarded as a claim to self-
determination being the Wall one obstacle to its realisation.

4.3 Deconstructing the Occupied Nation: Majd Abdel Hamid 'Land Art'

Majd Abdel Hamid is a young Palestinian artist born in Damascus and working
in Ramallah. He studied art in the Art Academy Palestine as well as in the in
Malmo Art Academy in Sweden. He was finalist for the M.A Qattan
Foundation young artist prize of 2008 and 2010, and has been a residing artist
in la *Cite Internationale des Arts* in Paris during 2009. He has exhibited extensively
and internationally.[11] His work expresses a strong concern with the social
responsibility of the artists and he obviously recognises the serious implications
of images and their possible effects. He stresses the danger of falling into
identification with victimised identities and suggests that this can prove self-
destructive to an art of resistance, and might even undermine possibilities for
future self-determination. In his words:

'…the biggest challenge is not just to resist the occupation but the
consequences of being occupied…and that is really to become victimized…to
develop a self-fractious mechanism where you consider yourself as a victim,
and art has portrayed it, literature has portrayed it, and daily activities… it is
important that the resistance is not only about the occupation but the
psychological consequences of being occupied because….this is the role of
the artist, and theorist and intellectuals to make sure the mind does not sleep
into there because that [destroys] …dreams and hope you have for any
future, you should not relay only in being a victim…is not only about the
occupation…you are people…a nation [with] culture except of the very
unfortunate fact that we are under occupation…culture and art is resistance at
all levels, is not only resisting the Israelis is also self-inclined…is…about

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[11] http://www.artmajeur.com/index.php?go=user_pages/display_all&login=majd88.
Accessed 25 November 2011

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freedom, about making your own choices' (Abdel Hamid personal interview, 27/08/2011, Skype)

Adbel Hamid's work 'Declaration of Independence' (Figure 4.1) is a work individually designed but collectively executed along the Separation Wall in West Bank across an area of 14 metres by 2 metres (Artmejeur Website). As the name of the piece suggests, this 'declaration of independence', which he views as part of the genre known as 'land art' (rather than graffiti which it resembles), involves the artist and other participants claiming the territory of the nation and at the same time expressing their rejection of the particular 'landscape' they also use as a canvas, the Separation Wall itself.

Figure 4.1: Majed Abdel Hamid, *Declaration of Independence: Land art*, 2010

Source: http://www.artmajeur.com/index.php?go=user_pages/display_all&login=majd88

This particular piece creates awareness in the viewer about the existence of the Wall and the Occupation and aims to impede the normalisation and avoid it blending into the landscape. The Declaration is therefore against acceptance and 'normalisation' of non-independence and a claim for self-determination.

This work also visually and literally deconstructs the declaration of independence by Mahmoud Darwish. The artist counted the words, then the letters and then transferred the exact same number of letters randomly onto the Wall. In an abstract language, the Arab speaker can identify the individual

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letters but cannot make any sense of it. In this sense a 'parallel world' is established in which the absurdity and illegibility of the language on the piece of wall expresses the inexistence and inexpressibility of an independent Palestinian nation state which has yet to exist:

> '...there is a Palestinian declaration of independence, [and] as a document [it] is beautifully written by Mahmood Darwish, [it] was printed by the European Union…and people were reading it…I was thinking about it and I was thinking on deconstructing it, the language of it, the letters…really to deconstruct it and putting [it] in a space that really contradicts with the document... it does not make any sense, it is not making any sense, beautiful, but as a document [it] is inexistent almost…' (Abdel Hamid personal interview, 27/08/2011, Skype)

The fact that the artist uses the work of Darwish should not be overlooked because until his death in 2008, Darwish himself was regarded as the 'national poet' (Assadi & Sawafta 2009) and the resistance poet *par excellence* of Palestine (Hamdi 2011:35). The absence of legible words in this piece is a direct invitation to consider the lyrical language of the declaration and is also an invitation to critically re-read and evaluate the content of the original document. Therefore, implicitly, the piece is also a condemnation of the impediments to the realisation of the right to self-determination expressed in the original declaration as follows:

> '…Despite the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian Arab people resulting in their dispersion and depriving them of their right to self-determination, following upon U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish, yet it is this Resolution that still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty…' (Translation into English from Darwish 1988)

In 'Declaration of Independence' we have three key elements that are commonly of importance for a social constructivist approach to national identity: language, territory and a historical past that is being referred to (Ankori 2010: 55). The language involved is deconstructed on the surface of the Wall, as we see, and the territory or 'land' alluded to in the piece by the artist is the land divided by occupation. The historical past is embodied in the reference to the work and legacy of Darwish himself, who is seen as a witness

to the Nakba and the Palestinian experience following occupation (Hamdi 2011: 31).

This artist sees the wall as a 'blank canvas': a magnetic space for street artists and others (Abdel Hamid quoted in Estrin 2010). Contrary to other graffiti art, however, which are mainly near highly visual checkpoints and roadways this piece was executed in a hidden portion of the wall. In line with the 'land art' genre, this art is normally at hidden spaces in natural (or in this case semi-natural) locations. In this case, the location is a remote location, which tells us it was mainly directed towards the Palestinian local community:

> '…I carefully chose the location…not a famous spot…a lot of workers sleep there… there is not much traffic there…I chose it because of that reason, I wanted to have it there and not saying what it was…' (Abdel Hamid personal interview, 27/08/2011, Skype)

The piece has a hybrid character, as he uses the Arabic language as a kind of 'domestic tool' – as the artist puts it - on a piece of architecture that is very alien. In a very different form, the artist departs from traditional calligraphy or Kufic decorations that are usually rounded and decorative motifs found in Islamic and Arabic architecture. Choosing a non-figurative form, and breaking up the Arabic language, making it 'cubist', the artist also creates in viewers a certain distant from the piece as well as identification with non-figurative art typical of Islamic art. The artist wants us to distance ourselves from the emotions engaging rather the thoughts and intellectual responses of the viewers. Abdel Hamid chooses a monochromatic hue – an absence of colour - with letters printed boldly in black. This gives a sense of sobriety and solemnity to the work, as well as a visually 'modern' appearance. The piece also incorporates the black signs of smoke, reminiscences of the camp-fires of workers, which seem to add dramatic ambiance to the piece. If one imagines oneself in front of the work, there is little atmospheric perspective and facing this work on the Wall might create a sense of alienation and even confusion, exacerbated by the huge dimensions of the wall itself. The viewer becomes almost lost in the midst of chaos of letters and there is a sense of disorientation conveyed in the piece.

As mentioned already, the genre Abdel Hamid chooses is 'land art', the work also has been described as graffiti but since the author consciously applies the term land art, it is worth asking why. In land art, the landscape and the work of art are viewed as essentially linked to the place where they are found and for this artist the medium is also the message. The artist wants to 'hide' his art so as to create a debate within the place where the art is situated, first and foremost.

> '[M]y work is usually about combining things and putting out questions…I jump between ideas…' (Abdel Hamid personal interview, 27/08/2011, Skype)

Actions such as mural painting and Wall graffiti are examples of *sumud* conveyed by local community that resist the wall (Isaac 2011: 155). Sovereignty, self-determination and call for independence are central ideas in this work. This artist in this work first constructs and then de-constructs the idea of the Palestinian nation, as a 'dis-orientalised'[12] and imagined space, through images that 'pick apart' the idea of self-determination, constructed so carefully through international law, and through towering figures like Darwish himself.

4.4 Anonymous Resistance: Martyred Palestine

National identity is often personified in the case of Palestinian national discourses; it is most often equated with the body of a woman rather than a man. The idea of a homeland as a person thus involves gendering the nation;

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[12] In Ankori in 'Palestine Art' (2007), p. 21: "This term with its deliberate phonetic and semantic ambiguities, denotes a profound indebtedness to Edward Said's theoretical insights concerning the Western construction of an imaginary orient…include the suggestion that the creation and study of Palestinian art entail the dismantling of an exclusively Western perspective or 'scopic regime' and the alternative, self-empowerment of oriental artists…also alludes to literal …'loss of the orient' ..grounded in history…linked to the traumatic events of 1948…Moreover the displacements and uprooting that dominate the post Nakba Palestinian experience are often translated by artists into visual images or spatial installations that convey a sharp and composite sense of disorientation…Finall y…Palestinian art frequently reflects the hybrid identities of the artists and their 'fluid' position. between their oriental matrix and the dominant culture of the west".
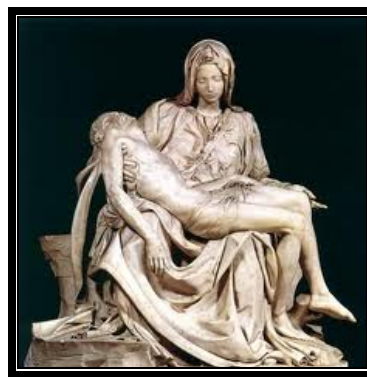
Palestine then is most often represented as 'the mother-land, the beloved-land and the virgin-land' (Sherwell 2003: 124). In Figure 4.2 we see that the three mentioned representations are all intertwined in a single image: the allusion to being a mother and being a virgin (the way the woman is seated reminds us of representations of the Virgin Mary holding her child). As depicted by western Christian iconography the woman is the mother of a martyr and a beloved; as the graffiti reads 'stop killing by sons, husbands, brothers, fathers'; the victims are also gendered as male. The 'nationalised' pietá is also often seen in canvases of the first intifada (Ankori 2006: 80).

Figure 4.2: Anonymous, *Palestinian in Pietá*, Qalandiya, 2009

Source:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/54853721@N03/5082338440/in/photostream

Figure 4.3: Michel Angelo Buonarroti, *Pietá*, San Pietro Basilica, 1500

Source: http://berto-meister.blogspot.com/search?q=pieta

Exact date and author of production of this work are unknown, a common characteristic of much street art, and often on the Separation Wall as well. It would have been interesting to know who created this image but not knowing does not adversely affect the possibility of analysing its meaning. The work takes the standpoint of a local Palestinian, whether a Palestinian makes it originally or not. We have here a mixed genre between mural painting and graffiti art, which is posted in a very visible, busy and transited area between Qalandiya village, the refugee camp, Ramallah and Jerusalem, a popular area for many graffiti artists. We do not know the circumstances of the execution of the work, and it could be either an individual or a group work. What is interesting in this case, however, is its changing aspect over time. The work (as

with many other works on the Separation Wall) is shaped and reshaped over time, and this process has driven certain authors to assert that the Wall in itself is a collective effort in the visual art of resistance (Parsberg 2006). Through making, and then adding to images such as this one, different actors, including artists but also others, want to convey different messages. Sometimes what they add is in line with the original message and sometimes works to undermine, or reinterpret the original image, as with local Palestinian responses to Banksy's works.[13]

The image represents a 'Palestinian Pietá', where a covered woman with a dead body in her arms, appeals to the viewer for compassion. The image is a direct allusion to the figure of the Virgin Mary in pietás from the Renaissance onwards, popular in Western art history. The painting seems to be quite aware of this iconography, and distinctly shares an unavoidable resemblance with – among others - Michelangelo's Buonarroti pietá, where the figure of the mother and her dead son, seem to express the sublime suffering so important for Christian faith (figure 4.3). Art historians note that what was novel about Michelangelo's pietá is how young the Virgin Mary looks. This was to emphasise that there was no doubt about the 'purity' of the virgin as a young woman (Giuliani 1995). What is interesting is this recycling of imagery associated with a tiny minority of the Palestinian population and perhaps its relevance to the nation as a whole, as a form of resistance. In the image of woman in much Palestinian art: '…[the] colonizers' sexualised image of the Arab women found its reply in images of purity such as the uncontaminated figure of the…virgin in Palestinian nationalism' (Sherwell 2003: 124). This is certainly apparent in this anonymous visual image, located at a highly visible part of the Wall.

The viewer's immediate attention is drawn to the colour red in the middle of the picture that contrasts with the dark colours chosen to execute the rest of the painting. The dead son, brother, or father is wearing a Kufiya,

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[13] See Sub-section 5.5.

an icon of Palestinian masculinity, and this reinforces the message that he is a martyr for the nation. In the nationalist discourse blood has a special meaning, 'the martyr's blood gives birth to an authentic nation, represented as fertilising the earth, the blood would spread through the land a give birth to the homeland liberated from the Occupation (Sherwell 2003: 140-143), in this interpretation 'the liberation of the land as result of male agency' (Sherwell 2003: 137).

Figure 4.4: Anonymous, *Palestinian in Pietá*, Qalandiya, 2010

Source: http://rememberpalestine.blogspot.com/2008/10/stop-killing.html

In this second recycled version (figure 4.4) of the work, someone has painted green tears on Mary's face, bringing the four colours of the Palestinian flag into the image, which has now been reconfirmed as a symbol of resistance and the nation.

The audience of the image includes non-Arabic speakers. This can be deducted from the inscription above the body images; artists know that their works are often photographed and thus the chosen language is frequently English. We know little about the reception by different local, Israeli or international audiences, but with the passing of time and with minor modifications (rather than painting over or destruction) of this work, we can

infer that the image does not appear entirely 'alien' to local people and has been in a sense 'vernacularised' into a Palestinian pietá.

This kind of pieta seems to be recurrent on the Separation Wall. At figure 4.5 we see a very different version of a pietá that brings in a direct visual quote to the international dimension of the entire conflict- making allusions to the implication of the international western community in holding hostage some of the fundamental rights of Palestinians like the right of refugees to return. In essence the statue of liberty is holding Handala, the representation of the Palestine refugees and identity at her arms.

Figure 4.5: Anonymous, *Liberty in Tears*, n.d.

Source: http://bordercrossings2010.blogspot.com/2011/07/to-see-or-not-to-see.html

4.5 Resisting Occupation from the 'Other Side' of the Separation Wall: Photographic Work of Steve Sabella

Steve Sabella is a Palestinian artist from Jerusalem; he is holder between others of the Special mention Award (2002) by the M.A Qattan Foundation in Ramallah and the Ellen Auerbach Award (2008) given by the Berlin Akademie der Kunsteworkedas. He was commissioned artist for the inauguration of MATHAF (Arab Museum of Modern Art) in Doha, his work has trigger media

attention including several films and documentaries.[14] He was the official photographer of many human rights NGOs and UN organisations, including OXFAM, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNWRA or UNDP, he lead this scene for 10 years. In his art there are two clearly defined paths, the first one is as mentioned, his work as the official photographer of most of the Palestinian Human Rights organisations and as the second and parallel to the first, he was producing a more intimate connected form of art that is based in his life personal experiences; since 2007 he focus on his art life and hardly takes any commission from any human rights or any other organisation, but he did help to change the perception of Palestinians in the mainstream media (Sabella, personal interview, 12/09/2011, Skype). He actively resisted the stereotyped images of Palestinians and knew exactly how or what techniques to apply, sometimes critic, sometimes positive and sometimes humoristic, he portrayed a different face of the Palestinians and Palestine:

> 'I portray Palestine in a very positive way […] it is the way I also saw Palestine through my eyes […] Where here I was consciously aware of what I am doing was important as a form of resistance to show Palestine in a different way, so different in the way Israel portrays it and the way the so called western world portrays it. And here yes consciously I was given a differ image of Palestine. (Sabella, personal interview, 12/09/2011, Skype)

Regarding the intentionality of the author, most Palestinian artists do a distinction between art that is more expressively politically engaged against the occupation and art that is based on their own personal life intimate experience. Nevertheless, although they create from an individual stand point, the life experiences of Palestinian individuals are immersed in the occupation and many of their works relate to the experiences of the occupation itself and its consequences or how do they experience to be a Palestinian either in exile, in Israel or in the OPT; so it is no surprise the assertion of Said when stating that 'there is no necessary contradiction between aesthetic merit and political themes…specifically the Palestinian case, aesthetics and politics are intertwined' (in Tawil-Souri 2011:472) . In addition, visual images have their

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[14] See: http://stevesabella.com/biography.html. Accessed 25 November 2011

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own effects, and lately the intentionality of the author is given little attention, in part because images have to be seen in connection with other images, and this can be seen as having more weight than the authors thoughts (Rose 2001: 23), so some of these more intimate works can also be interpreted by different audiences as against the Palestinian occupation even when that was not the political intention of the author or the author does not see his art as political or human rights related. Some of these images can also end up being co-opted by nationalist or other discourses.

The images in this subsection were part of a wider project carried out in 2007 called Challenging Walls. The project defines itself as an art-peace project and a call for co-existence started by Walkscreen: Ruthe Zuntz, Michael Reitz in collaboration with Anat Moshe-Ostrower, a generation of artists who have had the experience of growing up and living in an environment of wall divided societies who had experienced first-hand living with Separation Walls (Challenging Walls Website). Between their activities was the design of an installation that projected images of people in their normal life in both sides of the Separation Wall in Abu-Dis, East Jerusalem and showed in the 2007 Jerusalem film festival (Ibid).

Sabella was not talking on human rights terms and he does not see his work touching on human rights expressly, but his intention is in fact creating awareness on a local grievance (illegality of the Separation Wall symbol of occupation) and he wishes triggering the opinion of the oppressor:

> 'I cannot liberate Jerusalem or Palestine but I can work on the subconscious and try to move people a little bit. I don't believe that art changes the reality but it is important not just aesthetically but conceptually because it identifies social problems' (Sabella, personal interview, 12/09/2011, Skype)

For Sabella by using 'images that challenge stereotypes and trigger the imagination' (cited in Krohn & Lagerweij 2010: 60), he wanted to challenge the

idea that Israelis have on what Palestinians look like, how they are, Israelis were the target audience:

> 'The Holy Land has been occupied by many nations […] By my work on the wall I might not be able to liberate Jerusalem or Palestine, but I was hoping that my images would work on the sub-consciousness of the Israelis. They were my target audience' (Sabella in Krohn & Lagerweij 2010: 59-60)

He seams in search for the 'right to dignity', stressing that Palestinians exists and are human beings, not simple numbers:

> 'I would want something inside them to be affected, something that will cause them to understand that there are people on the other side who are living in a totally different world […] People have become desensitized to the killing of dozens. Palestinians are not statistics. They are people' (Sabella cited in Yudilovitch, M. 2007)

Figure 4.6: Sabella, *Palestinian Girls*, 2007

Source: http://challengingwalls.eu/content/conflict_4/theorist/index_7.html

In figure 4.6 we see a crowed street with smiling Palestinian girls wearing uniforms, the uniforms tell us that they are at the exit of school, hinting us that these girls are in the way to be educated members of society and by that empowered girls, driving us away from the vulnerable images associated with Palestinian youth. The author deliberately chooses the innocence of children to

contrast it with the violent images spread in the media about Palestinian youth, which triggers a sort of general state of fear in the 'other':

'I was hoping that my images would make the spectator raise questions that are directly related to the fear which led in the first place to the construction of the wall' (Sabella at Krohn & Lagerweij 2010: 60).

There are two depths in the photography separated by a car, a neat front row of girls, and a second blurred image of girls in a crowded street. The author wants us to focus on this first row of girls, some of the girls wear items considered in the context of a school and society symbols of social status, like earrings, hairpieces and branded bag packs, driving us also away from the image of extreme poverty that is spread through the images of Palestinian for example the Refugees images spread in the media.

The shoot is suggesting spontaneity and the coincidence of being there by the artists. The photographer uses a frontal and close shoot, in order to get us closer to the subjects portrayed and by that makes the spectator to identify with the subject, the 'other' at the other side of the wall. The artist wanted to convey images that are self-representations reclaiming their agency: 'we can represent ourselves' (Sabella, personal interview, 12/09/2011, Skype)

Most of the girls have a direct look to the objective, in this way a sense of conversation or communication between the girls and the viewer is established. By the domination of colour blue and the brightness of the sun, the photography transmits positivism, the colour blue is normally associated with the sky and freedom, the same freedom the author wants for his people, the freedom from a wall, freedom from the Occupation: 'Through my art, I wanted the spectator to question [the wall] need and existence…hopefully some people will have realized that the source was the occupation and conquest control of the life of millions of Palestinians' (Sabella at Krohn & Lagerweij 2010: 59).

In figure 4.7 the artists adopted a perspective low point of view, this might represent the way a child see the world (Rose 2001; 52), the author looks for the identification of the viewer with the subject portrayed, immediately transporting the viewer to his/her childhood. Another possibility is that the

image has been shoot to be seen from its 8 metres screen where it is originally projected, it has been shoot to be seen from a lower point. Some authors argue that when special perspective is arrange in photography to look up to the subject portrayed, they convey certain sense of inferiority to the spectator, when in contrary the sight needs to look up it conveys power (Kress and Leeuwen as cited in Rose 2001: 44).

Figure 4.7: Sabella, *Palestinian Boys*, 2007

Source: http://challengingwalls.eu/content/conflict_4/theorist/index_7.html

Children are being seen here as 'pillars of the nation' (Cheney 2007). In these children he is embodying the entire future and present nation, the face of the Palestinian he is willing to convey to us, the face we do not normally see either in the news, art galleries or the museums.

In Figure 4.8, we could also recognise the form of motherland, she stands strong on her feet and surrounded by rocks and a wooden carved door in her traditional clothes. In the identity formation, in the 'them' versus 'us', normally the us is left to the realm of the home, making women symbols of national identity inside the protection of the home (Sherwell 2003: 127, Yuval-Davis 1997: 78). The mother is also the sublime icon of *sumud* (Hammami 1997: 168). The author shows an image that would oppose the image spread of the victimised woman.

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Figure 4.8: Sabella, *Palestinian Lady*, 2007

Sabella has chosen actively a 'counter-representational strategy' to fight stereotypes of Palestinian people, to substitute a range of negative dominant stereotypes by positive images (Hall 1997b: 272). Stereotyping is a representational practice, according to Hall is '[to] reduce people to few simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fix by nature…stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference' ' (Hall 1997b: 257). It then divides the world between the normal and deviant and is more often when there exist unbalanced situations of power, 'it classify people according to the norm and construct the excluded as 'the other' (Hall 1997b: 258-259). The strategy Sabella has chosen is a way to celebrate difference but a problem is that some times images do not get rid of the negative connotations only adding a new stereotype (Hall 1997b: 272-275). In this case the images were so different that Sabella claims they had actually some impact.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

We can distinguish two aspects of these expressions, one is the action of execution of the works itself and the other is the content of the messages they want to spread. The creative act in itself by local artists can be seen as an act of 'creative resistance' as well as an action of defiant *sumud*. Isaac (2011: 155) in a

comment summarising the conference 'Sumud and the Wall' sates that 'sumud can be expressed in community activities which defy the wall…examples are the Wall graffiti and murals…non-violent actions near the wall and film projects on the wall'. The continuity of the artistic production in a context of continuous occupation is in itself a form of everyday resistance or *sumud*. The artist in this context can be seen as an activist against the occupation. The acts would be on-site creative direct actions. And if we apply the test of Rigby (1995) to know how direct actions can be unconventional in the spirit of civil disobedience these acts are: a.) Defiant, their aim is to challenge and claim at the same time land and freedom, they claim independence and self-determination; b.) Unconventional, the methods used and taking into consideration the context, they go further than a conventional political action of graffiti with its intrinsic protest element, but to create art in public property of the Israeli government, (even if this property is illegal) has an element of illegality that could regard these acts as civil disobedience. Also all these art expressions are against the military orders that instruct the construction of the wall and against the entire occupation system; c.) Risk sanctions, taking into account the policy of considering insurgent previous peaceful acts of demonstrations near the wall, no one can assure these artists that they would not be sanctioned, especially in the highly militarised areas of the Wall.

The visual analysis of these images convey us different messages and concerns, while in its form some are more explicit against the wall as a symbol of the occupation, others are more subtitle in the form they communicate that message. Nevertheless, they seem concerned with the image of Palestine and Palestinians outside Palestine and how they have been portrayed historically through Orientalised images and more recently in the mass media through stereotypes. According to Bishara (2009: 8) after the first Intifada and even more after the Oslo accords, Palestinians in the OPT, realised of the significance of their figure in the West and the role that Europe and the United States had to play in the future of a State, so they try to persuade their public opinion. Art is also aimed at Israeli audiences, Norman (2010: 12) explains, that 'demonstrations are hardly noticed in Israel, strikes affect only

Palestinians…sitting at internal check points are seen only by other Palestinian travellers, thus Palestinians have had to develop other creative nonviolent strategies to influence the Israeli public and government'.

Chapter 5 Transnational Visual Arts and the Palestinian Cause

5.1 Introduction

By analysing a selected number of images, this chapter explores and considers how international artistic interventions on the Wall can be best understood. By considering what sort of debates have been generated around these expressions, this chapter aims to explore and analyse the debates, the visual art and to link these with the key concepts, resistance, self-determination and *sumud* and how relevant these can be for international expressions. The previous and current chapters are divided between 'local' and 'international' visual artists in order to be able to identify what is distinctive, if anything, about how visual art is being used on the Separation Wall. The visual images are considered in relation to wider claims for Palestinian national self-determination, and nation building. Distinguishing between Palestinian and international artists does not really express the fluidity of the images themselves, and of the process of making the art images. Thus the Palestinian/international distinction is far from clear-cut. What is sometimes a local voice can be expressed to a much wider collective audience, or be part of an international project. What is international can also only be executed with local collaboration, support and participation even in its most individual appearance. This is therefore important to bear in mind, when considering these two chapters.

In this context it is not rare to find expressions that cover for example global social movements in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Some examples include frequent expressions of support for the BDS global campaign and calls through visual images for peace and reconciliation. Due to the scope and main focus of this paper, the last two will not be discussed.[15]

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[15] See examples in Appendix IV.

5.2 Project or Artistic Resistance?: The 'Send a Message' Campaign

Figure 5.1 shows a part of what is said to be the longest single piece of graffiti on the Separation Wall. Its entire content is a letter sent by Farid Esack to the Palestinian people in 2009 through internet via a media campaign called 'Send a Message', initiated through collaboration between a Dutch artist and Palestinian artists.

Figure 5.1: Faris Arouri et al, Farid Essack Open Letter to the Palestinians, 2009

Source : http://www.palestinemonitor.org/spip/spip.php?article935

Farid Esack is a peace activist from South Africa, a champion of gender equality and former anti-apartheid campaigner. He is also a well-regarded academic who teaches at several universities, including Harvard. The Dutch artist, Justus van Oel, in an interview, referred to this work as a 'project' which took the form of a media campaign and was perceived as art (van Oel personal interview, 16/09/2011, the Hague). As he said, the messages involved were both political and personal.

This contrasted with how the local Palestinian artists on the same project viewed the work. Their perspectives, found in on-line interviews in the press, referred to the campaign as a form of artistic resistance. The project itself did not originally include the letter, which was then sponsored through public

donations, to become part of the larger work.[16] Funds from the execution of this part of the work were donated to a youth centre in Bir Zeit. Receiving a letter from such a well-known personality, who described the Palestinian situation in relation to South Africa's experience, as 'apartheid', became a means to extend the 'project' to a wider public and international audience, although it was already quite well known.

Thus, the meanings of a work of visual art can be contested even when artists continue to collaborate. While van Oel viewed this work on the Palestinian Wall as a 'project', and more or less part of a business-oriented and marketing-oriented logic, the other artists inside the same project, Yusef Njim, Faris Arouri, see the same 'campaign' as less a project than a form of resistance:

> 'Spray-painting on the wall is a peaceful way for Palestinians to protest the barrier…You're not only defying the existence of the wall, but you're also showing the international community our refusal, first of all, to such a structure…Also, it's an attempt to humanize the Palestinian society in the eyes of the world, showing that the Palestinians are not just militants who are violently resisting occupation' (Arouri in Gray 2009)

Although this visual work started out of solidarity with the situation Palestinians are living in, it was more than solidarity only, and according to van Oel also intellectual effort, the professional media and business planning were involved. He honestly acknowledged his relatively weak identification with the Palestinian cause of self-determination, having nonetheless successfully collaborated in the visual art campaign. For him, resistance:

> '…is their role, that is not my role. I am not a member of the resistance… solidarity was the starting point of the project but then also planning, IQ and business came in. I have clear ideas on how I want to work professionally… Spam was my big fear; that it would destroy the project…' (van Oel personal interview, 16/09/2011, The Hague).

As one of the Palestinian counterpart artists, Arouri stated in an interview with *Time* magazine: 'To resist something, sometimes you have to interact with it' (as quoted in McGirck 2009). In this case, there was extensive participation

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[16] See Appendix VI for the full text of letter.

in the project by the local population from the initial stages of the design of the project to the material execution of the graffiti. Perhaps because of their engagement, van Oel claimed that local audiences received the project in a very positive way.

> '[the reception of the] Palestinian Community was excellent. Everyone knew about the project. After 500 messages 5 meters each, you are noticed and discussed about…as far as I know our partners there had no problems, [even at times of elections]…A taxi driver said 'at least they have not forgotten about us'. Keeping hope alive...to inspire people [was the aim]' (van Oel personal interview, 16/09/2011, the Hague).

Local Palestinians thus may indeed look at their artistic actions on the Wall, in very different ways from those whose connection take place from the international context. The 'project', in a more connected sense, is viewed as part of the grounded reality of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience, against the occupation.

5.3 Humour and Cultural Sensitivity: Resisting Art?

Projects like the one in figure 5.2 have been more criticized locally, even accused of occupying 'key spaces of discourse with indiscernible and even unpopular messages' (Bishara 2009: 13). This monopolisation of the space would not be possible without the role of the mass media in disseminating the images, which tends to provide global attention, perhaps especially for the international works on the Separation Wall of famous artists. In some images, reproduced in books, we see the graffiti being devalued, for example in one recent volume on Wall art, where youth graffiti was described as 'scribbling', and this was juxtaposed with the opinion that the international works of visual art were 'major pieces of art' (Krohn & Lagerweij 2010: 7). This lack of attention to local expressions on the Wall, has sometimes discouraged otherwise successful artists, like Samir Harb himself, from using the Wall as a canvas. As an architect, artist and art-based researcher, it was surprising that this artist expressed reluctance to use the Wall to express his resistance against

occupation (Samir Harb, personal interview, 28/08/2011, Skype).[17] The contrast was made between Samir, as a local artist, who would not be followed around by the media, in the way that someone like Banksy, with an international profile, might be.

Figure 5.2: JR & Marco, *Face2Face*, 2007

JR and Marco are two visual artists who are known for their work with social justice edge. Together they produced the images that form the basis for the Face2Face project (Figure 5.2). JR works include actions in Sierra Leone, Favelas in Brazil, in Kibera slum in Kenya.[18] He is regarded at times as 'artivist' or 'actist' (Face2Face Project Website). An 'artivist' is defined as '…(artist + activist) uses her artistic talents to fight and struggle against injustice and oppression by any medium necessary. The artivist merges commitment to freedom and justice with the pen, the lens, the brush, the voice, the body, and the imagination. The artivist knows that to make an observation is to have an obligation' (Asante in make.artivism.co.nz). JR received the prestigious 2011

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[17] See for a sample of his work: http://apexart.org/exhibitions/gottesmantouq.htm. Accessed 25 November 2011

TED prize (Olin-Ammentorp 2010: 13).[19] This work is on the Wall, in Abu-Dis in East Jerusalem, and on the Israeli side as well as on other buildings in the streets at both sides of the wall.

This is also a good example of how images have their own effect, quite apart from the meanings or intentions of visual artists themselves. This is where context, and an understanding of context, is all-important to make a work of art part of the 'art of resistance'. Any well-meaning intentions the artists might have had in mind seem not to have worked very well locally in this case contrasting with the successes had internationally. For many local Palestinians, the images were regarded as non-sensitive or not having an understanding of the situation on the ground:

> 'This issue is not about similarity in appearances. All people have basic similarities in appearance. This problem is much deeper than that, and it is about the occupation' (Social worker in Bishara 2009: 13)

> 'The person who does this doesn't understand [the situation]…' (Former prisoner in Bishara 2009: 13)

While sometimes the exact aim of the artist as we have seen is create a discussion or a dialogue in the community, sometimes this falls into a gap of misunderstanding. It is not that deliberately 'culturally insensitive' images were used, as can be the case with some work of Banksy (Parry 2010: 15). However, the expectation that 'just talking' or 'seeing our similarities with the 'other'', will be enough to bring peace has been criticised (Bishara 2009: 13). The lack of explanation and clarity for the population raises questions about what the project's aims really are, and whether they are based on respect, solidarity or paternalistic superiority (Ibid). Barghouti (2005)[20] has called this type of artistic collaboration the 'normalisation of the coexistence' or to aim at the

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[18] See: http://www.jr-art.net/. Accessed 25 November 2011
[19] See: http://blog.ted.com/2010/10/19/announcing-the-2011-ted-prize-winner-jr/. Accessed 25 November 2011

consciousness of the oppressed instead the sources of oppression: In this situations '[t]he conflict is thus reduced to a psychological gap that needs to be bridged, a visceral tribal hatred that needs to be treated. The inescapable implication is that all that is needed is to accumulate enough of such collaborations eventually to overcome the bitterness embedded in conflict'.

5.4 Israeli Interventions

Visual art expressions on the Israeli side of the Separation Wall are less often found, and according to Parry are almost non-existent (2011). This could be – quite simply - because there is more support for the Wall on the Israeli side (Olin-Ammentorp 2010: 14). One form of art that is used on the Israeli side, which is not considered here, since it cannot be understood as art of resistance, is bucolic (and uninhabited) paintings of countryside, painted on the Israeli side of the wall, to disguise it in the landscape, and prevent it being an 'eyesore' for those on the Israeli side (Eidelman 2011: 97-98). Even so, there is also creative resistance done by Israeli citizens on the Palestinian side of the Wall. I here present two examples. These images involve creative direct actions by Israeli citizens and can therefore be regarded as non-violent forms of resistance to the Wall and the wider occupation, expressing a sense of cooperation and perhaps solidarity with Palestinians.

'Artists without Walls' is an Israeli and Palestinian collective of artists that is against the occupation and are committed to non-violence and creative actions (Artists without Walls website, Eidelman 2011: 109).[21] Figures 5.3 and 5.4 belong to a project in which the Separation Wall in Abu Dis was used to simultaneously let the opposite side of the wall see what was happening on the other side, by video streaming. According to them, the use of the Wall as a screen on which to project artistic images would have implied accepting the

[20] See: http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/morality_2853.jsp.
Accessed 25 November 2011
[21] See: http://www.osaarchivum.org/galeria/the_divide/chapter19.html.

usefulness (even symbolically) of the wall. For this reason, it was decided to make the visual work highly interactive and visible through screens on each side, where people on either side could communicate (Eidelman 2011: 108).

Figure 5.3: Artists without Walls, Video Streaming, Abu Dis, 2004

Source:
http://www.osaarchivum.org/galeria/the_divide/chapter19.html

Figure 5.4: Artists without Walls, Installation, Abu Dis, 2004

Source:
http://www.osaarchivum.org/galeria/the_divide/chapter19.html

Israeli interventions in the West Bank by individual citizens like the artist 'Know Hope' in Bethlehem are less common (figure 5.5). This could be because Israeli citizens are strongly discouraged by the Israeli government from visiting the OPT and have only restricted legal access to these areas.

Know Hope, known as Israeli artist, describes his aim in the following terms:

> '…I document what I am going through, because of what my surroundings are going through…to create a moment with the viewer [and] show that we are there… I think that documenting time is actually relevant to art on the wall, because empires rise and empires fall and the wall won't be there forever. And while it's there we might as well converse, we might as well show that we are there too and that we're as much part of the existence of this time as anything else' (Know Hope in Krohn & Lagerweij 2010: 51)

This artist's work seems what Kurasawa (2009: 107) has described as 'the labour of bearing witness' to distant suffering as a transnational practice, documenting history. In the piece the flag and national anthem is a heart, intended to call attention to human universal feelings. From his adopted name, the artist is also conveying that he wants to spread a message of 'Hope'. His

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work often is a bout freedom of expression and social justice.[22] In the Palestinian context, given the location of his work inside the West Bank, the very existence of such work, by someone who claims to be an Israeli citizen, can be regarded as holding out some hope of a Palestinian future without the Wall and without the Occupation.

Figure 5.5: Know Hope, *This is our Messy Anthem*, 2007

5.5 Defiant *Sumud* or Beautification?

The use of the wall as a canvas started discussions about what it really entails to use it, and 'Palestinians…have debated whether to decorate the wall as a coping strategy or an act of defiant *sumud*, or let it stand unadorned as monumental evidence of the injustice perpetrated against then' (Yaqub 2008: 125). The debate became very animated in 2005, when British street artist Banksy posted his first works. The discussion in this context centred on whether there were other, preferable ways to use the wall for artistic expression

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[22] See his latest work in the Gambia in the project Wide open Walls: http://www.wideopenwalls.co.za/know-hope/. Accessed 25 November 2011

by the local population. Perhaps, this was what led the artist to go back in 2007 and have his annual graffiti artist meeting in Bethlehem, an action that he called 'Santa's Ghetto', this time in collaboration with Palestinian artists. Although Banksy's work has proven controversial among Palestinians living behind the Wall themselves, not all Banksy's works have been negatively received. Some of his works have been welcomed and have even became icons of resistance against Israeli Occupation, taken on by those who are actively involved in national struggles for Palestinian self-determination. Perhaps the best-known examples are two versions of the same image of a girl holding (helium) balloons (see Figures 5.6 and 5.7).

Figure 5.6: Banksy, Balloon Debate, Ramallah, 2005

Source: http://www.perthnow.com.au/travel/gallery-fn3017vw-1225879954609?page=29

Figure 5.6 is of classic stencil graffiti, clearly protesting the very existence and the height of the wall. The artist 'plays' with the title of the work, as a 'balloon debate' is a debate in which decision-making skills and values are tested for the participants – usually university or high school students. The premise is that a hot-air balloon can hold only a certain weight and that everyone has to state their case as strongly as possible in order to be allowed to stay inside. In this case, the balloons are undebatable, however, they are literally lifting the girl over the wall. Since both sides are fighting for the acknowledgment of the audience, the game referred to in the title also implies that Palestine is in trouble; by analogy Banksy is comparing the Palestine-Israeli conflict with a hot-air balloon about to fall or a sinking balloon. The work alludes to the physical and mental imprisonment the population suffers, the absence of freedom of movement, and the symbolic violence the wall represents. It also expresses the quest for an image to represent Palestinian ideals of freedom and national self-determination. This girl is a shadow; in the absence of her physical body she can be viewed as an allusion to the metaphorical 'body' of Palestine, a young nation with nothing to lift it.

Figure 5.7: Banksy, Balloon Debate, Ramallah, 2005. Picture, 2008.

In this version of the image it seems the local discourse has appropriated the image and a Palestinian flag as wing of a bird (symbol of freedom) offers more balloons to the girl, regarding her as a sister in the cause of national self-determination. In the nationalist discourse, where inhabitants of the land are regarded as its genuine inhabitants and belonging to the 'imagined community', this means they are all assumed to be born from the same motherland (Sherwell 2003: 130). The 'sister' in the image implies that at least some local artists regard the young girl, as represented, as family. The majority of Palestinian artists that were personally interviewed spoke in favour of all artists – Palestinian, Israeli or international - making use of the Separation Wall as a 'global space', in the words of Abdel Hamid (Personal Interview, 27/08/2011, Skype). He suggests that a 'global space' is one that everyone should be allowed to use, even for local commercial purposes; he gives a prominent role to freedom of expression in the national struggle to resist occupation:

> '…[when] international artist like Banksy and other graffiti artists started using the wall …it started a big discussion around the wall between Palestinian artists, shall we use it or not use it? Is it ethical? Is it part of accepting its existence to use it? …I have a strong opinion about it, because as part of the psychology of Palestinian people we own the wall…you have the authority to tell people what you can do there and not do there, this is something a bit problematic, is not about property, is not for Palestinians to control what to put there or what or why… everyone should be able to use it…it should be…universal…' (Abdel Hamid, Personal Interview, 27/08/2011, Skype).

In the same interview, the artist also recognised that 'sharing' the Wall as a public space poses problems as: "There is a visual language gap" between local and some international artists (ibid.). Images are to be interpreted by different audiences in different manners also depending on the context, space, time and aesthetic norms of a place (Millie 2008: 388-390). What for some would entail acts of resistance, for others were mere vandalism or even personal insults. Many graffiti work done by Banksy is modified today or removed from their location (Parry 2010).

5.6 The International Solidarity Movement and Wall Art

Just as Palestinians can resist occupation and be in solidarity with other unjust situations and conflicts internationally, so too 'global civil society' can in principle resists alongside Palestinians in their pursuit of self-determination. One of the strategies to do this is by performing 'creative resistance' through visual arts expressions on the wall. Another name for this is what Omar Barghouti (2011: 160) has called this 'artistic resistance' in reference to artistic work done in Australia in support of the BDS global movement. Only one of the artists interviewed clearly articulates his view on the question of creative resistance as part of global justice and solidarity intervention:

> '…we need to discuss ourselves and also [remember]….that Palestine is not the centre of the universe…we are a small country and we need to know we are part of a global injustice system…[it] is a universal fight…you are part of it…you need to be in solidarity with Congo, Haiti, the Arab revolutions, with anyone who is suffering from injustice because that is how you protect yourself, not to sleep into this victimised identity…like this you identify with other people...the Palestinian flag is everywhere and is not only about Palestinians anymore…' (Abdel Hamid Personal Interview, 27/08/2011, Skype).

The *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional* (EZLN) has also produced a mural on the Separation Wall (See figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8: EZLN, *To Exist is to Resist*, 2004

From what can be seen in the image, the creators of the mural are acquainted with the iconography of Palestinian art and its symbols of national identity. The *sabra*s or pickle pear cacti at the bottom are also symbols of the Palestinian motherland and strength. The *sabra* is often used to represent the landscape that remains after all was desolate after 1948 and it grows in the hardest conditions being a symbol of steadfastness and resistance (Parry 2010: 187). The symbol has a history of being associated with the land in Palestinian iconography (Gandolfo 2010: 57). The kufiya headscarf is the dominant element in this painting and it is clear that the Mexican EZLN regard the person portrayed as a native Palestinian inhabitant who is fighting for national self-determination. What is very clearly expressed in this painting is the solidarity of the EZLN as representing 'indigenous' Mexicans with the 'indigenous' Palestinians' resistance to Israeli Occupation and their commitment to the national cause.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

The debate on if make the wall beautiful or not assumed that art is always beautiful, but '[w]ho said that art was always about aesthetics and beauty?…Art could be ugly…An artist can be an activist, trying to give the world a new truth' (Sabella in Kalman 2006). The transnational visual examples here included are acts of artistic resistance and creative direct actions. Some like the EZLN are in solidarity with the Palestinian cause of resistance against the oppression of the occupation. Any of them could have never been possible without a level of participation and cooperation of the local community. It is this aspect what regards these actions as acts of creative resistance beyond an aesthetic exercise, what 'raised the political and ethical elements of [an] action' (Eidelman 2011: 109). While participation is an important element, the intention of the actors also count, in this regard there some 'projects' in which the local counterpart feels is exercising resistance against occupation while the international 'partner' sees as professional business. It would have been interesting to have evidence of the persons that participated in the 'send a

message' campaign via Internet. Virtual resistance could apply at times, advocacy back at their country or support to resistance in solidarity could be the aims, depending on the identification of the subject with the Palestinian cause or not. The Israeli intervention, that crosses to the West bank illegally can be regarded as an act of creative resistance to the system of occupation and the policies that its own government creates and at the same time in solidarity with the Palestinian cause for self-determination.

For Sauders (2011: 16), professor at Washington University, who has documented 85% of the art on the Wall from July to September 2009, the generalised use by international artists of the Separation Wall has popularised it as the global site of solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and not without side effects:

> '…the barrier constitutes an act of territorialization by Israel as well as a concomitant act of deterritorialization for Palestinians…when we consider the function of graffiti…the messages and murals not only challenge Israeli policies and practices in the West Bank, Gaza strip and East Jerusalem, but they also reterritorialize the space as global forum' (Ibid).

Even on the basis of a small sample of Palestinian and international visual art work on the Separation Wall, in this study, it seems important not to over-generalise, whether about positive solidarity, or in relation to the inappropriateness of international art for the Palestinian context. We should instead regard them, as we have tried to do in this study, on a case-by-case basis. The criteria that we adopted to establish how closely international artists collaborated with Palestinian resistance artists, centre on notions of solidarity, and local appropriation of their images, as with some work of Banksy.

Chapter 6 Final Reflections and Conclusions

When I engaged in this research I wanted to better understand 'alterative' or 'unconventional' ways to claim human rights. Being a lawyer and being familiar with some judicial systems, I wanted to understand other ways than the classic direct claim in a courtroom. I also wanted to know what could the citizens do when the same institutions that are to be protecting them are the ones that are actually not complying with the law, or worse when they are the ones oppressing them. When I first learnt about the types of creative actions that we have been analysing, they got my curiosity and I wanted to look beyond their aesthetic value and understand their meaning. In a globalised world like the one we live in, distant suffering is not that distant anymore. What can the 'citizen' do when not even diplomatic paths aren't offering solutions? In fact, the process I have been going through along the study has fostered my curiosity in 'creative activism', 'artistic resistance' and 'artivism' as alternative ways to denounce injustice.

In this study, I started by considering the concept of nonviolence and embraced the perspective of the strategic nonviolence school. I adopted partially the Sharpian theory of 'non-violent direct action' as a suitable theory to explore situations of asymmetric power relations, like the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict. I see artistic and creative resistance as sub theories in line with this strategic approach since both are defined in terms of art as a strategy and a weapon. Because no exact proposed method by Sharp could fully capture the entire dimension and complexity of the acts performed on the Wall, I proceeded my exploration basing myself on and adapting from Rigby's (1995) classification of third party nonviolent direct interventions in Palestine.

Through the present paper I argue the following: Palestinian artists in Occupied Palestinian Territory, in the diaspora and cultural institutions have historically taken the task of identity building and cultural memory preservation in pursue of the not disappearing of cultural and historical past (Barghouti 2002; Boullata 2009: 103). Palestinian artists founded many cultural institutions in bottom up efforts, what can qualify them as activists in cultural institution

building (Yaqub 2008: 113). This last fact can be seen as active *sumud* and not only artistic resistance, since active *summud* has the element of being steadfast, but also building alternative institutions (Chapter 3). The continuity of the artistic production in a context of continuous occupation, I argue, is in itself a form of everyday resistance or *sumud* as well as 'artistic' or 'creative' resistance in what refers to local Palestinian expressions on the Wall (Chapter 4). Although Palestinians, Israelis and International artists, all have different roles in respect to the Occupation, Israeli and International can also intervene in the conflict by performing 'creative direct actions'. Messages of resistance support, third party advocacy and solidarity from Israeli and international artists are some of the aims behind these actions (Chapter 5).

Coming back to the formulation of the research questions*:*

How do the visual arts on the Separation Wall express the resistance to the Occupation?

Visual art in the forms of graffiti, mural painting, photographic projections and video are just some of the mediums used to perform 'artistic resistance' and convey messages of resistance to occupation and self-determination by local Palestinian artists as well as to convey messages of resistance support and solidarity by Israeli and international artists. Similarly to the first intifada, graffiti on the Wall remains a form of visual resistance in itself (Peteet 1996: 155). The messages conveyed are a kind of dialogue, not only aimed to the immediate region but also to a 'global civil society'. This is a main difference with much graffiti displayed during the first intifada (1987-1991), which were more a form of internal communication (Steinberg & Olivier 1994: 3) and helped to organise the struggle rather than to express it globally. Artists called by their social responsibility, have been performing creative resistance against the occupation and supporting the self-determination movement. Some times this resistance is expressed very directly, like in the EZLN image, sometimes it is more subtle, like the work of Sabella. Other times it is more directly expressed against the Separation Wall.

How have the visual arts historically engaged with political oppression, within the Palestinian context?

Whilst in the past visual Palestinian artists might have expressed themselves more 'collectively' in relation to the national cause and against the occupation, after the second intifada this seems to have changed. Artists started to adopt more noticeably individual expressions, which did not necessarily depict the national cause in a collective way, but explored their own inner individual experiences, and interpretations of the 'Palestinian cause' (Sabella, personal interview, 12/09/2011, Skype; Ankori 2006).

What kinds of debates have there been around art on the Separation Wall? How do these debates reflect different understandings of the politics of Palestinians' resistance to the Occupation?

The use of the wall as a canvas gave rise to debates about what it really entails to use it and 'Palestinians…have debated whether to decorate the wall as a coping strategy or an act of defiant *sumud*, or let it stand unadorned as monumental evidence of the injustice perpetrated against then' (Yaqub 2008: 125). The use made of the Wall by artists means that today the Wall can also be understood as a 'global public space' that holds different visual expressions of resistance to occupation as well as to the Wall itself. While the aim of the artist is sometimes to create a discussion, a dialogue or a debate between the communities, his art sometimes falls into a gap of misunderstanding.

The mass media cover international art projects more extensively than local works. This has led, leading some authors to affirm that they are monopolising internal tools, like for example graffiti, which traditionally have been used for internal discussion and organisation of the political life (Bishara 2009: 12). However, the expectation that 'just talking' or 'seeing our similarities with the 'other", will be enough to bring peace has been criticised (Bishara 2009: 13; Barghouti 2005).

Palestinian/international distinction is far from clear-cut. What is sometimes a local voice can be expressed to a much wider collective audience, or be part of an international project. What is international can also only be executed with local collaboration, support and participation. Due to its scope this study does not aim to generalise, but instead proposes to see these creative direct actions in a case-by-case bases.

In terms of deducting from the wall the wider political debates around it, this can not be deducted from the study as the data could be biased since the wall seems to be used predominantly by young street artists (Olin-Ammentorp 2010: 14) and I would add predominantly male. More research is needed regarding this aspect.

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Appendices

Appendix I   List of Interviewees

Nr.	Name	Title/Position	Interview type	Date	Location
01	Toleen Touq	Artist - Activist - Art Curator of 'We Have Woven the Motherlands with Nets of Iron'	Internet Mediated/ Semi-structured	27/07/2011	Skype
02	Annelyes de Vet	Artist - Graphic Designer - Author of 'The Subjective Atlas of Palestine'	Face to face / Semi-structured	03/08/2011	Brussels
03	Ingrid Rollema	Visual Artist - former director of the Vrije Academie Den Haag. Author of 'Gegoten Lod'	Face to face / Semi-structured	15/08/2011	The Hague
04	Majd Abdel Hamid	Artist	Internet Mediated/ Semi-structured	27/08/2011	Skype
05	Samir Harb	Architect - Art-based Researcher - 'We Have Woven the Motherlands with Nets of Iron'	Internet Mediated/ Semi-structured	28/08/2011	Skype
06	Steve Sabella	Artist - Photographer - 'Challenging Walls' participant	Internet Mediated/ Semi-structured	12/09/2011	Skype
07	Johan Justus van Oel	Artist/ Consultant - Designer of 'Send a Message' Global Campaign	Face to face / Semi-structured	16/09/2011	The Hague
08	Salwa Mikdadi	Head of Arts & Culture of the Emirates Foundation, Curator of 53rd Venice Biennale 2009	Internet Mediated/ Semi-structured	23/09/2011	Skype
09	Anonym	Human Rights Lawyer	Face to face / Semi-structured	30/09/2011	The Hague
10	Federica Basttistelli	Human Rights Lawyer / Academic. Co-author of "*L'arte come re-esistenza*" (Art as Re-existence) - Alternative Information Centre/ Consultant Consorzio Italiano di Solidarieta (ICS)	Face to face / Semi-structured	21/10/2011	The Hague

Appendix II   Sumud Visual Representations

Figure II.1: Sliman Mansour, *An Orange Grove*, 1979
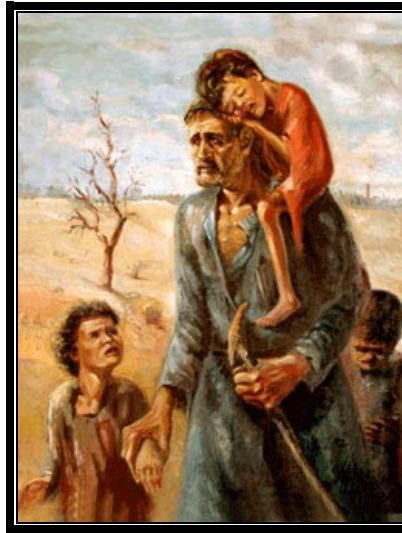
Figure II.2: Sliman Mansour, *Olive Pickers*, 1984

Appendix III Icons of Resistance

Figure III.1: Sliman Mansour, *Jamal al-Mohamel* (Camel of Hardship), 1973
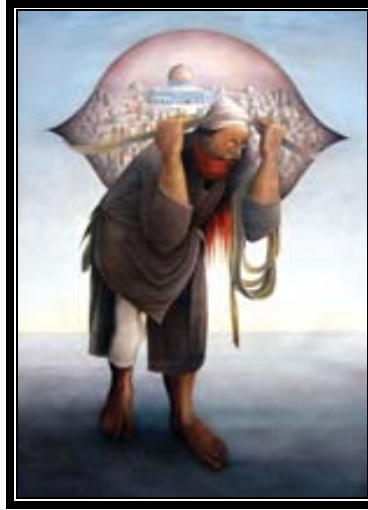
Source: http://www.thisweekinpalestine.com/details.php?catid=10&id=3413&edid=194.
Accessed 25 November 2011

Figure III.2: Ismail Shammout, *Where to?*, 1953

Source: http://imeu.net/news/article002033.shtml. Accessed 25 November 2011

Figure III.3: Burhan Karkutly, *Yes to Palestine*, 192

Figure III.4: Naji Al Ali, *Self-Portrait*, n.d.
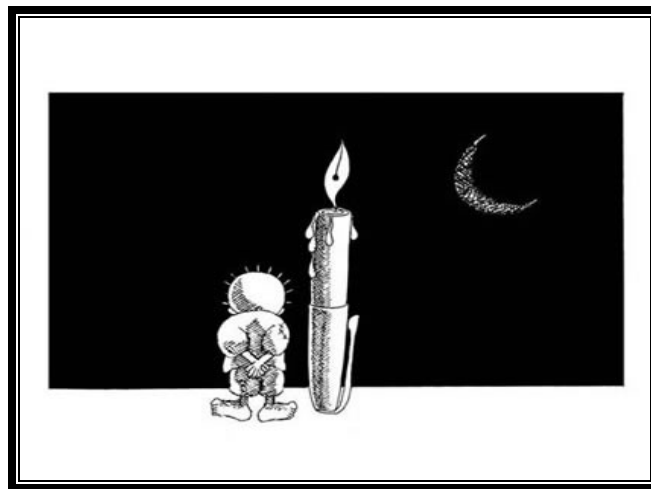
Appendix IV Images BDS Support & Peace

Figure IV.1: Anonymous, *Boycott Veolia*, 2008

Figure IV.2: Anonymous, *Five Fingers of the Same Hand*, n.d.

Appendix V   "Map Separation Wall"

Map V.1
"Separation Wall 2011"
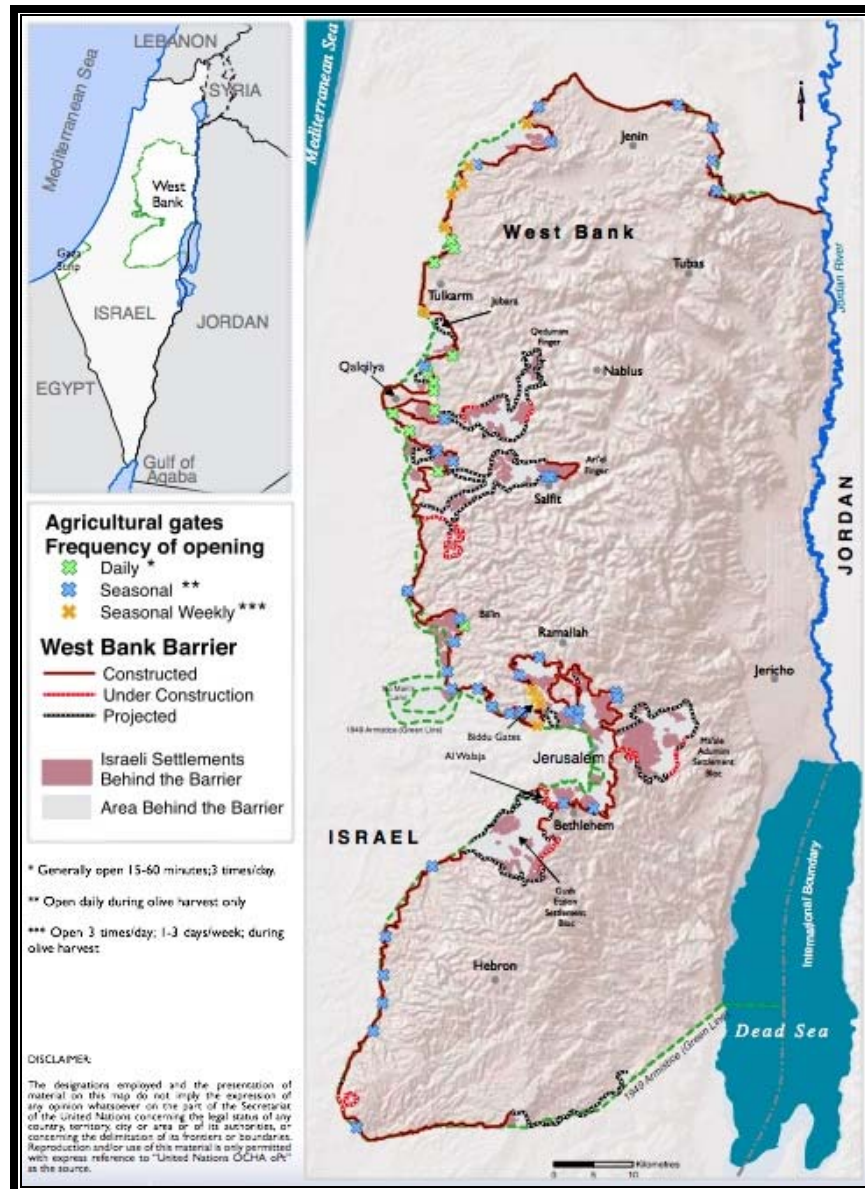
Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) (2011) 'Barrier Update, Seven years after the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Barrier: The Impact of the Barrier in the Jerusalem Area'. Accessed 25 November 2011

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Appendix VI   Full Text Farid Essack Letter to the Palestinian People

"My dear Palestinian brothers and sisters, I have come to your land and I have recognized shades of my own. My land was once one where some people imagined that they could build their security on the insecurity of others. They claimed that their lighter skin and European origins gave them the right to dispossess those of a darker skin who lived in the land for thousands of years. I come from a land where a group of people, the Afrikaners, were genuinely hurt by the British. The British despised them and placed many of them into concentration camps. Nearly a sixth of their population perished.

Then the Afrikaners said, "Never again!". And they meant that never again will harm come unto them with no regard to how their own humanity was tied to that of others. In their hurt they developed an understanding of being's God chosen people destined to inhabit a Promised Land. And thus they occupied the land, other people's land, and they built their security on the insecurity of black people. Later they united with the children of their former enemies -- now called "the English". The new allies, known simply as "whites", pitted themselves against the blacks who were forced to pay the terrible price of dispossession, exploitation and marginalization as a result of a combination of white racism, Afrikaner fears and ideas of chosenness. And, of course, there was the ancient crime of simple greed. I come from Apartheid South Africa.

Arriving in your land, the land of Palestine, the sense of deja vu is inescapable. I am struck by the similarities. In some ways, all of us are the children of our histories. Yet, we may also choose to be struck by the stories of others. Perhaps this ability is what is called morality. We cannot always act upon what we see but we always have the freedom to see and to be moved. I come from a land where people braved onslaughts of bulldozers, bullets, machine guns, and teargas for the sake of freedom. We resisted at a time when it was not fashionable. And now that we have been liberated everyone declares that they were always on our side. It's a bit like Europe after the Second World War. During the war only a few people resisted. After the war not a single supporter of the Nazis could be found and the vast majority claimed that they always supported the resistance to the Nazis.

I am astonished at how ordinarily decent people whose hearts are otherwise "in the right place" beat about the bush when it comes to Israel and the dispossession and suffering of the Palestinians. And now I wonder about the nature of "decency." Do "objectivity," "moderation," and seeing "both sides" not have limits? Is moderation in matters of clear injustice really a virtue? Do both parties deserve an "equal hearing" in a situation of domestic violence -- wherein a woman is beaten up by a male who was abused by his father some time ago -- because "he," too, is a "victim?"

We call upon the world to act now against the dispossession of the Palestinians. We must end the daily humiliation at checkpoints, the disgrace of an Apartheid Wall that cuts people off from their land, livelihood, and history, and act against the torture, detention without trial, and targeted killings of those who dare to resist. Our humanity demands that we who recognize evil in its own time act against it even when it is "unsexy" to do so. Such recognition and action truly benefits our higher selves. We act in the face of oppression, dispossession, or occupation so that our own humanity may not be diminished by our silence when some part of the human family is being demeaned. If something lessens your worth as a human being, then it lessens mine as well. To act in your defense is really to act in defense of my "self" -- whether my higher present self or my vulnerable future self.

Morality is about the capacity to be moved by interests beyond one's own ethnic group, religious community, or nation. When one's view of the world and dealings with others are entirely shaped by self-centredness -- whether in the name of religion, survival, security, or ethnicity -- then it is really only a matter of time before one also becomes a victim. While invoking "real life" or realpolitik as values themselves, human beings mostly act in their own self-interest even as they seek to deploy a more ethically based logic in doing so. Thus, while it is oil or strategic advantage that you are after, you may invoke the principle of spreading democracy, or you may justify your exploitation of slavery with the comforting rationalization that the black victims of the system might have died of starvation if they had been left in Africa. Being truly human - a mensch - is something different. It is about the capacity to transcend narrow interests and to understand how a deepening of humanness is linked to the good of others. When apartness is elevated to dogma and ideology, when apartness is enforced through the law and its agencies, this is called Apartheid. When certain people are privileged simply because they are born in certain ethnic group and use these privileges to dispossess and discriminate others then this is called Apartheid. Regardless of how genuine the trauma that gave birth to it and regardless of the religious depth of the exclusivist beliefs underpinning it all, it is called Apartheid. How we respond to our own trauma and to the indifference or culpability of the world never justifies traumatizing others or an indifference to theirs. Apartness then not only becomes a foundation for ignorance of the other with whom one shares a common space. It also becomes a basis for denying the suffering and humiliation that the other undergoes.

We do not deny the trauma that the oppressors experienced at any stage in their individual or collective lives; we simply reject the notion that others should become victims as a result of it. We reject the manipulation of that suffering for expansionist political and territorial purposes. We resent having to pay the price of dispossession because an imperialist power requires a reliable ally in this part of the world.

As South Africans, speaking up about the life or death for the Palestinian people is also about salvaging our own dream of a moral society that will not

be complicit in the suffering of other people. There are, of course, other instances of oppression, dispossession, and marginalization in the world. Yet, none of these are as immediately recognizable to us who lived under, survived, and overcame Apartheid. Indeed, for those of us who lived under South African Apartheid and fought for liberation from it and everything that it represented, Palestine reflects in many ways the unfinished business of our own struggle.

Thus I and numerous others who were involved in the struggle against Apartheid have come here and we have witnessed a place that in some ways reminds us of what we have suffered through. Archbishop Desmond Tutu is of course correct when he speaks about how witnessing the conditions of the Palestinians "reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa....I say why are our memories so short? Have our Jewish sisters and brothers forgotten their humiliation?" But yet in more ways than one, here in your land, we are seeing something far more brutal, relentless and inhuman than what we have ever seen under Apartheid. In some ways, my brothers and sisters, I am embarrassed that you have to resort to using a word that was earlier on used specifically for our situation in order to draw attention to yours.

White South Africa did of course seek to control Blacks. However it never tried to deny Black people their very existences or to wish them away completely as we see here. We have not experienced military occupation without any rights for the occupied. We were spared the barbaric and diverse forms of collective punishment in the forms of house demolitions, the destruction of orchards belonging to relatives of suspected freedom fighters, or the physical transfer of these relatives themselves. South Africa's apartheid courts never legitimized torture. White South Africans were never given a carte blanche to humiliate Black South Africans, as the Settlers here seem to have. The craziest Apartheid zealots would never have dreamt of something as macabre as this Wall. The Apartheid police never used kids as shields in any of their operations. Nor did the apartheid army ever use gunships and bombs against largely civilian targets. In South Africa the Whites were a stable community and after
centuries simply had to come to terms with Black people. (Even if it were only because of their economic dependence on Black people.) The Zionist idea of Israel as the place for the ingathering for all the Jews - old and new, converts, reverts and reborn is a deeply problematic one. In such a case there is no sense of compulsion to reach out to your neighbour. The idea seems to be to get rid of the old neighbours - ethnic cleansing - and to bring in new ones all the time.

We as South Africans resisting Apartheid understood the invaluable role of international solidarity in ending centuries of oppression. Today we have no choice but to make our contribution to the struggle of the Palestinians for freedom. We do so with the full awareness that your freedom will also contribute to the freedom of many Jews to be fully human in the same way that the end of Apartheid also signalled the liberation of White people in South Africa. At the height of our own liberation struggle, we never ceased to remind our people that our struggle for liberation is also for the liberation of white

people. Apartheid diminished the humanity of White people in the same way that gender injustice diminishes the humanity of males. The humanity of the oppressor is reclaimed through liberation and Israel is no exception in this regard. At public rallies during the South African liberation struggle the public speaker of the occasion would often call out: "An injury to one?!" and the crowd would respond: "Is an injury to all!"

We understood that in a rather limited way at that time. Perhaps we are destined to always understand this in a limited way. What we do know is that an injury to the Palestinian people is an injury to all. An injury inflicted on others invariably comes back to haunt the aggressors; it is not possible to tear at another's skin and not to have one's own humanity simultaneously diminished in the process. In the face of this monstrosity, the Apartheid Wall, we offer an alternative: Solidarity with the people of Palestine. We pledge our determination to walk with you in your struggle to overcome separation, to conquer injustice and to put end to greed, division and exploitation.

We have seen our yesterday's oppressed -- both in Apartheid South Africa and in Israel today -- can become today's oppressors. Thus we stand by you in your vision to create a society wherein everyone, regardless of their ethnicity, or religion shall be equal and live in freedom.

We continue to draw strength from the words of Nelson Mandela, the father of our nation and hero of the Palestinian people. In 1964 he was found guilty on charges of treason and faced the death penalty. He turned to the judges and said: "I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Farid Esack, 2009" (in Justice for Palestine website 2009)

Source: http://justiceforpalestine.org/farid-esack-open-letter-to-the-palestinian-people#more-1509