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In 2017, I reported on a decolonial ethnographic study of the daily lives of olive farmers in Palestine (Simaan, 2017). The study asserted that olive farmers live under a form of occupational apartheid (Kronenberg & Pollard, 2005) created by systemic restrictions imposed on their daily occupations. These included restrictions on travel to and from olive groves and oil presses due to checkpoints and the separation wall, which obstruct communities from accessing their land, services, and other communities. They also included violence by state and non-state actors against people, trees, and land, including land confiscations, uprooting of trees, and attacks on farmers working their land (Simaan, 2017,

2018). This form of occupational apartheid is driven by an ideology of European style settler-colonialism—that is, Zionism—based on notions of othering and racial superiority (Bloom, 2020; Masalha, 2012; Said, 1978/2003). Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territories is implemented through policies that discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, limiting the daily lives of the Palestinian community while allowing the Jewish settler communities in the same geographical area to develop and prosper (B'TSELEM, 2021; Yiftachel, 2006.

In the face of this ethnically-based occupational apartheid, I showed that olive farmers had developed an 'occupational consciousness' (Ramugondo, 2015) that facilitated and gave a cultural, political, and philosophical underpinning to their resistance to these restrictions through making creative adaptations to their collective occupations (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015). This consciousness could be perceived in a unique vocabulary of everyday-forms-of-resistance particular to this community (Simaan, 2017, 2018), terms that came into being through farmers' socio-political awareness of the disparities between them and other groups in society (i.e., settlers) and that expressed a collection of principles for action (*Sutra, 'Awna* and *Sumud*) founded on connections to community, land, and heritage. These principles were expressed through subversive acts such as replanting of uprooted groves, reclaiming of confiscated land, and collaboration with groups of local and international allies to protect their land and everyday occupations.

In this commentary, I provide an update on this study as part of the *Journal of Occupational Science's* virtual anti-racism issue (Farias & Simaan, 2020), in which Simaan (2017) was republished. I offer some reflections on my understanding of systemic racism, and on some of the similarities between the situation in the USA and Palestine. I then reflect on ideas from both of those communities on how to tackle global systemic racism, including an update on how solidarity has been practised during 2020. I conclude with some thoughts about plans for continuing research among occupational communities in Palestine.

Ethnicity-based Oppression in Palestine and Global Racism

Following the killing of George Floyd and other African American civilians by the police in the USA, the spring and summer of 2020 saw demonstrators marching against racism in all corners of the world including in Palestine. Demonstrators were carrying slogans such as 'from Minneapolis to Palestine racism is a crime', and 'from Palestine to the USA, to the UK, racism kills' (AOC, 2020; Gawanmac, 2020). In this commentary, I will argue that multiple structures of inequality racialise Palestinians in ways similar to how other populations around the globe are racialised, specifically African Americans in the USA. My analysis will be based on indicators of racialisation against which scholars can assess if, and how, this process manifests in specific locales (Weiner, 2012). These empirical indicators that were discussed in critical race scholarship include: citizenships laws that pose barriers to certain populations' participation in society; state control of certain populations that result in their surveillance and containment by the authorities; external ascription and boundary permeability that result in the homogenization of a population while ignoring it's diversity; the criminalisation of groups; spatial segregation between the dominant and the racialised groups; structural socioeconomic inequalities between dominant groups and racialised groups; popular and political discourse and images representing racialised groups in ways that lead to their unfair treatment; daily interactions, experiences, and cognition that result in direct and indirect discrimination in work places or other spaces where the dominant group interacts with the racialised groups; international racialised relationships resulting from colonisation and imperialism that lead to exploiting and consuming racialised groups' resources; and anti-racist efforts to disrupt the racialisation and discrimination against certain groups in society.

All these conditions are present in the Palestinian context as UN and human rights organisations have pointed out (B'TSELEM, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2020; United

Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2020; Yesh Din, 2020). However, the occupational apartheid that olive farmers experience, which was observed in Simaan (2017) highlighted some of these indicators more than others, and these were: state control over their life, the geographical segregation between them and other Palestinians and settlers, the violent daily interactions with the military authorities and settlers, and the ongoing efforts by Palestinian farmers to resist this occupational apartheid.

These restrictions on olive farmers' daily lives are a manifestation of the historical and ongoing effects of systemic racism that stem from racially based ideology and practices implemented by a settler-colonial state. The means farmers employ to resist these restrictions are helpful examples of how communities struggle against the everyday effects of global systemic racism and the structures that facilitate it. My understanding of racism is grounded in the work of scholars of colour who view race as a socially constructed phenomenon, and racism as a systemic form of injustice that originates in historical and ongoing processes, such a slavery, colonialism, and ethnic and religious-based oppressions, such as against minorities, refugees, Palestinians, and Muslims in the West (Davis, 2016, 1981/2019; Du Bois, 1904/2007; Fanon, 1952/2008; Lorde, 2017). I understand racism to be "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied" (Lorde, 2017, p. 22). This definition is based on the experience of African Americans in the USA who suffer the consequences of an ideology of White supremacy that assumes that White Americans, or the White race, is superior over the Black race, which justifies discriminatory policies and attitudes. For example, the high incarceration rates of African American, or violence against them (Davies, 2016). This conceptualisation of race and racism also applies to the situation in Palestine, whereby state policy (e.g., segregation and restrictions of movement) is imposed on Palestinians but not on Israeli

citizens, and racist attitudes and violence are practised by settlers and soldiers against Palestinians, but not against Israeli citizens.

In *Freedom is a constant struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the foundations of a movement,* the African American scholar Angela Davis (2016) discussed how ethnicity-based oppression in Palestine is not dissimilar to racial injustice in the USA. She listed some similarities and connections between the effects of ethnic and race-based oppression on the daily lives of Black communities in the USA, and its effects on the daily lives of Palestinians, such as police and army brutality against unarmed civilians (Davis, 2016). For example, during the protests that erupted after the death of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black man, in Ferguson Missouri, officers who violently policed these protests were found to be trained by the Israeli police; another connection between the two situations is that tear gas used against Palestinians is made in the USA (Davis, 2016).

More recently, five days after the killing of George Floyd in the USA in May 2020, an unarmed Palestinian man with a learning disability named Iyad Al-Hallak was shot dead in Jerusalem by Israeli police (Aljazeera, 2020). The killing of unarmed civilians is a frequent occurrence in Palestine, joining other oppressive practices by the authorities, such as home demolitions, the kidnapping and arrest of minors, and the siege imposed on the population of Gaza (Human Rights Watch, 2020; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2020). These forms of racial violence are resisted by grassroot actions that Palestinians also share with African Americans through the practices of solidarity.

Transnational Solidarity and *'Awna*

Davis' (2016) experience in the Black liberation movement in the USA since the middle of the 20th century convinced her that grassroots activism was the most important element in constructing radical movements to fight those types of oppressions. Davis (2016) advocated for a global collective consciousness and a 'transnational solidarity' between anti-racist

movements that aimed to combat racial and ethnic-based oppression around the world. This means that international struggles such as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement can learn from, and cooperate with, the Palestinian struggle to decolonise their lands and community (Davis, 2016). In fact, this has happened when Palestinians were protesting with African Americans and others in Ferguson during the 2014-16 protests against police brutality; BLM members visited Palestine in 2016 to learn about the situation and meet communities and activists and express solidarity with them; and more recently the UK BLM came out in support of Palestinian rights to self-determination (Black Lives Matter UK, 2020; Jackson, 2016).

Sadly, these forms of solidarity, global consciousness, and movement building have faced some challenges in 2020. The occupational apartheid experienced by farmers is worsening in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the military occupation authorities have been hampering Palestinian efforts to contain it; and in the context of the latest Israeli government's plans to annex more Palestinian lands (Hernandez, 2020; Yesh Din, 2020). Land workers in Palestine reported that this year has seen more land being taken over by settlers, such as in Battir—a village with World Heritage status because of its ancient olive terraces and water collection systems that I frequently visited during my field work between 2013 and 2018; a settler claiming land to graze his herd has been intimidating locals and activists in the area (Abraham, 2020). Another example is Al Makhrour, a beautiful green *wadi* (valley) with some ancient olive terraces, which has seen a settler outpost constructed and Israeli flags raised claiming Palestinian-owned land.

This settler violence against people and land is done with the support of Israel's army and the state of Israel, which declared some of land state land, and with economic and structural aid provided by the Jewish National Fund—an international organisation that collects financial support from around the world to facilitate more colonisation of Palestinian land (Abraham,

2020). Locals I keep in touch with reported to me that they believe the intensity and aggressiveness of these acts are increasing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which international governments and groups are busy dealing with the consequences of this crisis in their own countries, and due to the annexation plans the Israeli government is committed to implement.

During this year's olive harvest season two human rights organisations, Oxfam and the West Bank Protection Consortium, reported that between October 1st and November 9th of 2020 at least 120 olive farmers have been violently attacked while harvesting their olive trees, and more than 1,475 olive trees have been vandalised (Premier Urgence Internationale, 2020). These same organisations reported that 84% of requests by farmers to access their lands in 2020 have been declined in the so called 'seam zone'—which includes 10% of the territories of the West Bank between the illegal separation wall and the Green Line (the armistice line separating the West Bank and Israel).

To resist this racial violence through their practice of *'Awna*, since the early 2000s Palestinian olive farmers have built a collective global consciousness and a transnational solidarity movement during what came to be known as the second *Intifada* (uprising). *'Awna* is a concept and practice based on farmers' sense of belonging to their land, people, and heritage. As a principle of action, *'Awna* leads to solidarity and collaborations with individuals and groups both locally and internationally that help maintain the occupation of olive farming in the context of settler-colonialism and military occupation.

About farmers' efforts to cooperate with Israeli and International partners, Abu Kamal, a participant in the olive growing study, told me:

> What helps us is the solidarity of people, especially those who come from abroad to take part in the olive picking; more than anything it is a symbolic act: the person who comes from America or Scandinavia, they might have never

> picked an olive from a tree before but they see how Palestinians live and work. A woman from Germany told me once, 'What you are doing here is above the ability of any human,' when I showed her the pictures of what the land was like before we worked on it, and considering the circumstances we live under, she was able to witness what we go through.
>
> (Simaan, 2018, p. 79)

In the olive harvest of 2020 there were none of the internationals visitors who often come and help with the harvest and witness the violence of the Israeli settlers and army, and in many circumstances prevent it, as settlers and soldiers may think twice before they attack farmers if an international person is witnessing their behaviour. These transnational solidarity activists also, as olive farmers told me, "come and see, and go and tell" (Simaan, 2018, p.17) about the situation in Palestine and help ignite more transnational solidarity.

Olive farmers, as shown in Simaan (2017), are creative occupational beings who are not prepared to passively wait for their oppression to end: they adapt and problem-solve. This year saw more collaborations with local and Israeli groups due to restrictions on international travel imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Hass, 2020; Husseini, 2020). Local volunteers from the West Bank travelled more than 70 km, risking roadblocks and violence from soldiers and settlers, to support olive growing families in the village of Burqa. They called their movement *Faz'aa*, a term that means standing together to safeguard and help communities in need of support (Husseini, 2020); more than 500 Israeli activists from groups such as Standing Together and Rabbis for Human Rights organised to support farmers pick olives on their threatened land in Burin, H'uwara, and other villages in the West Bank (Rabbi for Human Rights, 2020; Standing Together, 2020).

Solidarity and *'Awna* have adapted during these unprecedent global circumstances, when occupational apartheid has increased its grip on olive farmers and other Palestinian communities. Similar to the case in the USA that saw the BLM movement become a global movement against systemic racism, people in Palestine had to find ways to continue their struggle against the ethnicity-based violence against them, their lands, and their daily occupations. As a land worker in the West Bank of Palestine told me recently, referring to her trust in the resilience and resistance of the community and the occupation of working the land: "We have done this for thousands of years and will continue to do it."

Looking Ahead

My plan to conduct a follow-up research visit to the participants and setting of the olive growing study has been postponed due to the Coronavirus restrictions on traveling. However, I look forward to revisiting the villagers and farmers in the next year, to explore how they are doing now, and what the current situation can tell us about the constructs they helped formulate and develop, that is; occupational apartheid, occupational consciousness, collective occupation, and everyday-forms-of resistance.

I also hope to meet Palestinian shepherds to explore those concepts with them, and to witness their story and see what they can teach us about daily life under ethnicity-based occupational apartheid and the means they have developed to resist it. Perhaps, this occupational justice lens to researching daily lives in Palestine can help shed more light on how systemic racism, and resistance to it, compares with other global situations where racially and ethnicity-based oppression take place. For example, I would be interested to compare Palestinian communities' daily lives with Indigenous communities in North America, where the ideology of White supremacy and the practices of settler-colonialism have been leading to the

expropriation of land and limitation of traditional occupations that these communities relied on for thousands of years (Norgaard, 2019).

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