

**QUEER VOICES FROM THE FIGHT FOR
PALESTINIAN LIBERATION**

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november 2023

A LIBERATORY DEMAND FROM QUEERS IN PALESTINE

November 9, 2023

We write this as workers, students, farmers, parents – as Palestinians, as queer Palestinians. We write this not because our queerness exceptionalizes our positions but because, in the same way, we have been othered as queers, we are now facing patriarchal colonial tactics that seek to further alienate us as queer Palestinians. To gather our words and energies requires an enormous effort. We are sickened that amidst these moments of spectacular brutality and carnage projected onto Palestinian bodies, including rape, torture, mutilation, and maiming, we are diverted from grieving and organizing to make a demand.

Since October 7th, we have been witnessing an accelerated genocide unfolding in the Gaza Strip and in all parts of Palestine, blatantly and publicly declared on numerous occasions by Israeli governmental and military figures. The brutality and lethal magnitude of the atrocities committed by the Israeli state and its supporters produce increasingly harrowing conditions for those who remain alive in Palestine, every day, everywhere. This brutality has been sustained through the continued economic, military, diplomatic, and political support of world leaders historically and presently. We note, document, and narrate the hundreds of catastrophic massacres for the past 75 years at the hands of the annihilatory wrath of the Zionist regime; from Deir Yassin to the Tantura Massacre (1948) upon which Israel's foundation is based, to the Kafr Qassem Massacre (1956) to Sabra and Shatila (1982), and this is just to name a few. There is no possibility of any liberatory political and social movement to achieve life and dignity if it is aligned with the genocidal death machine of Israel. Israel is founded on blood and is sustained through blood.

During these times, and in line with its long-standing exploitation of liberal identity politics, Israel has been weaponizing queer bodies to counter any support for Palestine and any critique of its settler-colonial project. Israelis (politicians, organizations, and “civilians”) have been mobilizing colonial dichotomies such as “civilized” and “barbaric,” “human” and “animal,” and other dehumanizing binaries as a discourse that legitimizes the attacks on Palestinians. Within this settler-colonial rhetoric, Israel seeks to garner and mobilize support from Western governments and liberal societies by portraying itself as a nation that respects freedom, diversity, and human rights, that is fighting a “monstrous” and oppressive society, illuminated clearly through the declaration of the Prime Minister of Israel “There is a struggle between the children of light and children of darkness, between humanity and law of the jungle.”

While these blatantly racist genocidal declarations take the stage, activists in Palestine and internationally are being silenced, harassed, detained, criminalized, workers fired from their jobs, and students suspended from universities. International feminist and queer activists, in solidarity with Palestine, are facing attacks and harassment by Zionists under the premise

that those who support Palestine will be “raped” and “beheaded” by Palestinians for merely being women and queers. Yet more often than not, rape and death are what Zionists wish upon queers and women who stand in solidarity with Palestine. Zionist fantasies of brutalized bodies do not surprise us, for we have experienced the reality of their manifestation on our skin and spirit. Yet they never cease to accelerate in their explicit vehemence. It becomes evermore absurd when such framings are constructed against Palestinian society, in light of countless testimonies, reports, and documentations of sexual violence Palestinians have been facing throughout Israel’s 75 years of military occupation. From the thousands of Palestinian prisoners, men and women, who are subject to sexual torture and rape since Israel’s inception to this very day, to daily and escalating settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, to Israeli “civilians” filming themselves torturing kidnapped Palestinians as a TikTok trend, and the most recent harrowing footage published on social media platforms by Israeli soldiers which document the lengths of torture and sexual abuse soldiers and settlers inflict on our bodies regardless of their sexual orientation and gender – all forms of violence, including sexual violence are systematically and structurally part of Zionist domination over Palestinian life. And yet Israeli society continues to weaponize queerness for the purposes of justifying war and colonial repression, as if their bombs, apartheid walls, guns, knives, and bulldozers are selective of who they harm based on sexuality and gender.

We refuse the instrumentalization of our queerness, our bodies, and the violence we face as queer people to demonize and dehumanize our communities, especially in service of imperial and genocidal acts. We refuse that Palestinian sexuality and Palestinian attitudes towards diverse sexualities become parameters for assigning humanity to any colonized society. We deserve life because we are human, with the multitude of our imperfections, and not because of our proximity to colonial modes of liberal humanity. We refuse colonial and imperialist tactics that seek to alienate us from our society and alienate our society from us, on the basis of our queerness. We are fighting interconnected systems of oppression, including patriarchy and capitalism, and our dreams of autonomy, community, and liberation are inherently tied to our desire for self-determination. No queer liberation can be achieved with settler-colonization, and no queer solidarity can be fostered if it stands blind to the racialized, capitalist, fascist, and imperial structures that dominate us.

We call on queer and feminist activists and groups around the world to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their resistance to displacement, land theft, and ethnic cleansing and their struggle for the liberation of their lands and futures from Zionist settler-colonialism. This call cannot be answered only by sharing statements and signing letters but by an active engagement with decolonial and liberatory struggles in Palestine and around the globe. Our unequivocal demands are as follows:

- Reject Israeli funding, refuse collaborations with all Israeli institutions, and join the BDS movement.
- Strike: Silently or publicly, refuse that your exploited labor be used for the silencing of Palestine activism or the funding, support, and endorsement of military settler colonization and genocide.
- Do what anti-colonial queers have done for decades, reclaim the narrative, and set the terms of the conversation, this time about Palestine. What is happening in Palestine is **Genocide**. Israel is a **Settler-Colony**. Palestinians are a **Militarily Occupied and Colonized Society**. Under international law, Israel **Does Not** have the right to “defend” itself against the population it occupies, while Palestinians **Have** the right to **Resist** their occupation. Demanding **Ceasefire** is the first step in holding Israel accountable for its crimes against humanity. We must also demand to break the siege on Gaza and the dismantlement of the Zionist settler-colony.
- Contact your local representatives to pressure them into defunding the genocide, ending their military, diplomatic, and political support with Israel. Speak up against the ongoing and complicit criminalization of solidarity with Palestine and the colonial and Islamophobic projection of European Antisemitism on Palestinian and racialized voices, as we are witnessing particularly in France, the UK, the US, and Germany.
- Shut down main streets. Organize a sit-in in your local central station. Interrupt the flow of commerce. Complacency is a choice.

We, queer Palestinians, are an integral part of our society, and we are informing you: from the heavily militarized alleys of Jerusalem to Huwara’s scorched lands, to Jaffa’s surveilled streets and cutting across Gaza’s besieging walls, from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

Visit queersinpalestine.noblogs.org for the full list of signatories and translations.

GAY TRAVEL

(or Music Makes the People Come Together)

Kyle Carrero Lopez

The gays want to know how B's trip
to the settler colony went.

He says: What can I say?
It was a lot like the settler colony

where I live, but with a great desert flair.
Street life was fabulous over there.

The city's rainbow flags were a school
of fish—plentiful, sly,

slick in their sidewinds,
a shield of gills turned one large gill.

B slid through security checkpoint
after security checkpoint,

each playing a different era of Madonna.
All over town, men held each other's hands

and not-hands and smiled, sun-licked
on high-rises, far from thoughts

of where they were or how or who
was below. Parties every night.

At the club, B met a twunk
in a harness who would shout things like

We're so lucky to be alive—as in: under
the molly under the red lights

under the ceiling
under the missile defense system

and not Over There, where, like smog,
gay hate hugs the air.

But this one queer kept trying to interject.
There's queers on the fringes too, he'd start,

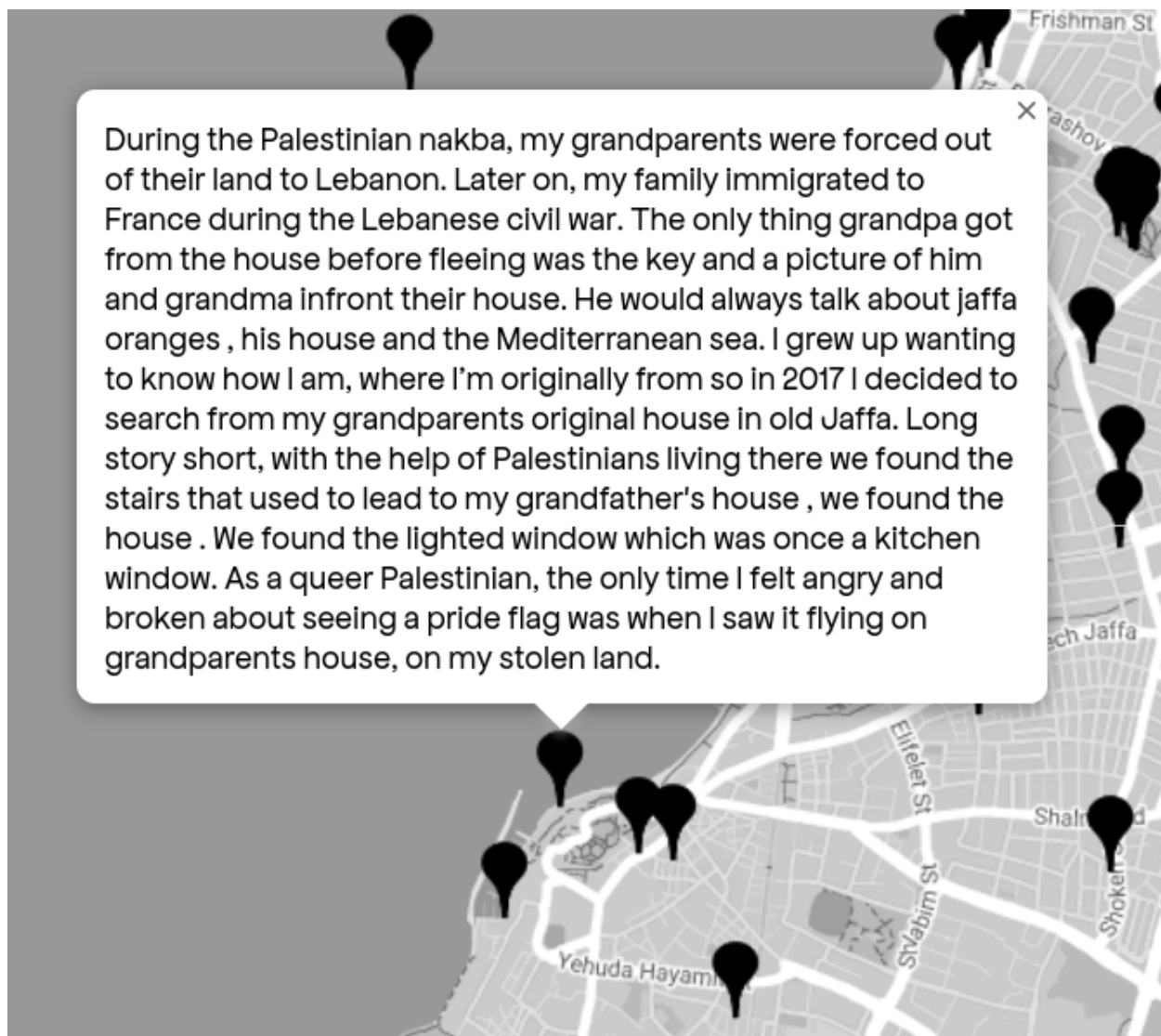
queers teargassed, queers shot
in self-proclaimed self-defense

while club queers choose which tank,
which cross-body bag to wear.

And each time he'd begin to speak,
the EDM would just keep playing

louder and louder,
almost like the DJ was doing it on purpose.

Source: jewishcurrents.org/gay-travel-or-music-makes-the-people-come-together



BEYOND PROPAGANDA: PINKWASHING AS COLONIAL VIOLENCE

alQaws: for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society
October 18, 2020

Over a decade ago, Palestinian activists adopted the term “**pinkwashing**” to describe how the Israeli state and its supporters use the language of gay and trans rights to direct international attention away from the oppression of Palestinians. Israeli travel guides and promotional videos advertise Tel Aviv beaches as a gay-friendly getaway destination—and hide the reality that tourist partygoers are dancing atop the ruins of ethnically cleansed Palestinian villages. The open inclusion of gay officers in the Israeli occupation army is used as proof of liberal forward-mindedness, but for Palestinians the sexuality of the soldier at a checkpoint makes little difference. They all wield the same guns, wear the same boots, and maintain the same colonial regime.

Pinkwashing emerged as part of an ongoing international propaganda effort, which aims to rebrand Israel as a liberal and “modern” state in the face of the growing Palestine solidarity movement. By promoting cities like Tel Aviv as gay tourism destinations, Israel’s foreign ministry seeks to win the support of queer communities across the world and prevent international connections with the Palestinian struggle. Crucially, the promotion of “gay-friendly Israel” depends on presenting Palestinians (and Arabs more generally) as the exact opposite: sexually regressive and therefore undeserving of solidarity. These stereotypes draw on the long history of efforts to demonize Palestinian narratives and resistance using political strategies anchored in anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia.

The early years of anti-pinkwashing activism focused on identifying and combating efforts to hide the reality of Israeli colonialism and apartheid behind a smokescreen of queer-friendliness. However, as anti-pinkwashing campaigns and theories progressed, activists in alQaws realized that the term “propaganda” could not capture the true scope of pinkwashing. While pinkwashing often appears to the world as a global marketing strategy, it is ultimately an expression of Israel’s deeper gender and sexual politics and the ideological foundations of Zionism.

Pinkwashing is the symptom, settler-colonialism is the root sickness. Recognizing pinkwashing as colonial violence can help us understand how Israel divides, oppresses, and erases Palestinians on the basis of gender and sexuality.

Israeli settler-colonialism works by breaking apart and eliminating Palestinian communities, whether through the military violence of occupation and siege, the legal regimes of apartheid, or the denial of refugees’ right of return. Yet it also divides Palestinians internally and psychologically, in the personal realms of self-perception and collective identification. In order to understand the

nature of this struggle, we also have to understand ourselves, and how colonization impacts our inner lives.

Pinkwashing pushes the racist idea that sexual and gender diversity are unnatural and foreign to Palestinian society. When this idea is internalized within Palestinian communities, it alienates queer and gender non-conforming Palestinians and isolates them as a social group. These compounding social pressures tell queer Palestinians that they must give up on some part of their identity or experience: we can either be queer and not accepted as a Palestinian, or we can be Palestinian and not accepted as queer. The destructive effects of internalized pinkwashing reverberate throughout Palestinian communities, strengthening myths that associate queer Palestinians with Israeli collaborators or Westernized native informants and propagating feelings of hopelessness that narrow our political imaginaries.

Pinkwashing is also a disempowering framework: if gender and sexual oppression are an essential part of what it means to be Palestinian, then there is no way to challenge or change it. At no point can queer Palestinians be regarded as radical agents of transformation within our own society. Instead, pinkwashing compels queer Palestinians to interpret their experiences and pain through the lens of victimhood and powerlessness, which contributes to the broader disempowerment and suppression of all Palestinians under colonial domination.

When queer Palestinians are spoken about by Israel's defenders, it is only to paint a portrait of individual victimization that reinforces a binary between Palestinian backwardness and Israeli progressiveness. These portrayals suggest that Palestinian society suffers from pathological homophobia, and that no dissenting voices could ever survive for long within it. Pinkwashing tells queer Palestinians that personal (and never collective) liberation can only be found by escaping from their communities and running into their colonizer's arms. The pervasive myth of Palestinians finding "queer refuge" in Israeli cities flies in the face of the actual policies of the colonial state, which are premised on the exclusion and destruction of Palestinians—queer, trans, or otherwise. The fantasy of Israeli humanitarianism falls apart as soon as the colonial situation is taken into account. There is no "pink door" in the apartheid wall.

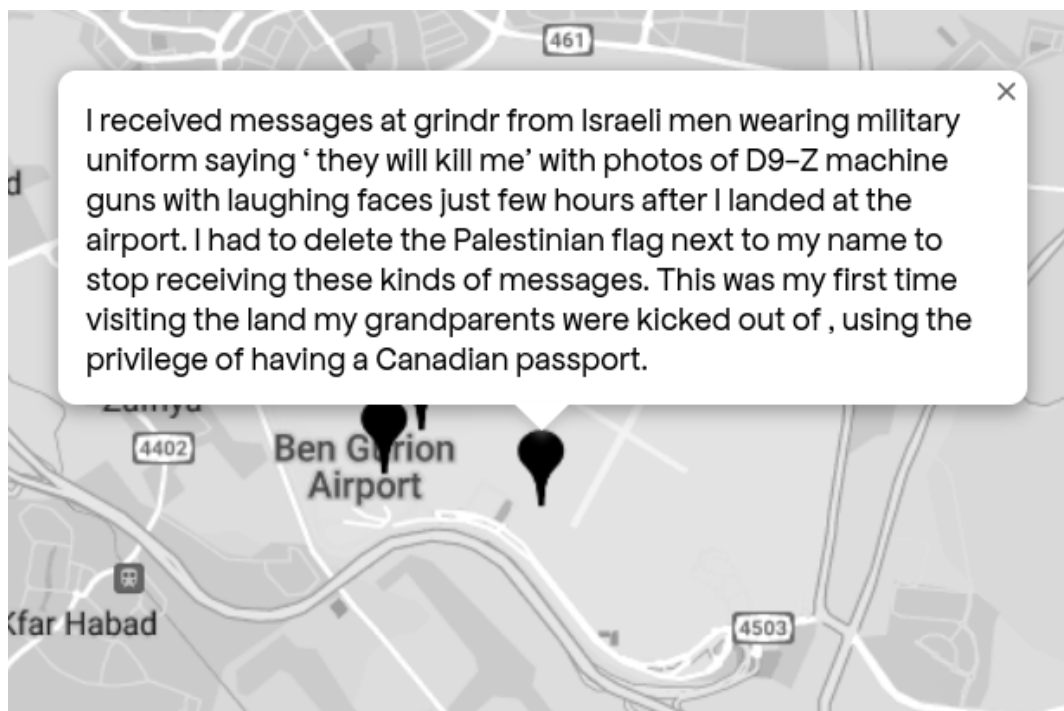
Yet "Israeli savior" myths persist, in spite of their obvious contradictions, because pinkwashing works tirelessly to erase the presence of its most formidable opponent: a Palestinian queer movement that uncompromisingly merges the fight against colonialism with the fight against patriarchal and capitalist oppression, and which views itself as an integral part of Palestinian society and the anti-colonial struggle. The systematic erasure of progressive and politicized queer voices serves the interests of the colonial power and its narrative.

AlQaws places emphasis on pinkwashing as colonial violence in order to uncover Israel's deeper sexual and gender politics. By rejecting colonial

fragmentation and refusing to allow a wedge to be driven between the self and society, we are able to combat our exclusion and claim a place for ourselves in our communities and in our struggle. **In alQaws' work, Palestinian queerness is not simply an identity, but a radical approach to political mobilization and decolonization.**

What does this mean for international solidarity activists and for Palestinians organizing in the diaspora? **This document was conceived in the hopes of reorienting anti-pinkwashing work to center queer Palestinian voices and incorporate approaches that have developed throughout two decades of grassroots organizing in Palestine.** In activist circles based in the Global North, pinkwashing has largely been regarded as a propaganda strategy and fought through campaign-based anti-pinkwashing initiatives. Drawing on the analysis of pinkwashing as colonial violence will not only allow activists to better combat instances of Israeli propaganda, but will situate pinkwashing within its broader settler-colonial context and allow us to make connections to other forms of colonialism and gendered/sexual oppression. Anti-pinkwashing work is conducted in the spirit of internationalism and anti-imperialism, but we also hope for this resource to live in dynamic local organizing, and evolve according to the context it is read and used in.

Source: www.alqaws.org/articles/Beyond-Propaganda-Pinkwashing-as-Colonial-Violence



PRIDE MONTH IS ISOLATING FOR ME AS SILENCE ABOUT VIOLENCE IN PALESTINE CONTINUES

Yazan Zahzah
June 28, 2021

Pep radiates from the screen. I feel twinges of fatigue and annoyance when first seeing the surge of rainbow advertisements. It is Pride month again. As a trans Palestinian whose family was violently displaced from Palestine and Lebanon due to Zionist militarization, Pride is isolating, especially with the silence surrounding ongoing violence in Palestine. It is within the margins I am displaced to that I find home: Palestine is the epitome of placelessness and the beating heart of worldwide struggle. It is the most queer.

Pride is celebrated every June and originated in 1969 with the Stonewall Riots. It commemorates the legacy of people like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson: Latinx and Black leaders who synthesized radical queer politics, addressing intersections of race, immigration, gender, class and national struggle. Rampant transphobia, racism, xenophobia and classism guided by White, cisgender, middle-class gay men whitewashed this rhetoric of its potential and shaped the movement into what many see today: shallow aspirations for structural assimilation.

In United States popular culture, feminism and LGBT rhetoric promote figures like Gloria Steinem and Harvey Milk. While they are influential figures, two flaws exist with this glorification.

One, it presumes that U.S. “democratic” infrastructures are the only ones that could allow oppressed communities to fight for justice, often co-opting centuries of Indigenous, Black and Global South ideologies predating U.S. political frameworks.

Secondly, it exceptionalizes and absolves the structures culpable in the very violence that many of us are responding to.

While the U.S. claims to affirm women and LGBTQ people, it is selective which people it affirms. Following the 2016 Pulse shooting, rainbow police cars flooded parades, stoking transgender anxiety around police. A Palestinian woman, Noor Salman, was imprisoned for years despite her repeated testimony that she was a survivor of domestic violence. Pulse also catalyzed Countering Violent Extremism, a counterterrorism program utilizing social services to surveil and obstruct Muslim political dissidence.

Thus, while George W. Bush launched the war on terror, it was “post-racist” icon Barack Obama who expanded it. Though Joe Biden was elected by Muslims to dismantle the program’s successor, he pumped it full of funding and supported its third rebranding.

Similarly, in Israel and the U.S., progressive ideologies are imbued with deceptive layers, often called “pinkwashing.” They have used feminist and

LGBTQ narratives to invade Gaza and Afghanistan. I am not “proud” when progress is quantified by Zionist militarization.

Uzi Even is an overlooked example of how homonationalism is foundational to Israel. Even has been a nuclear researcher integral to Israeli national security for decades. Hailed as a gay icon, his “successful” fight for “gay rights” in Israel was to secure the inclusion of LGBTQ personnel in the military, which was legitimized by his indispensable role in national intelligence.

Likewise, Kristin Beck, is portrayed as a trans role model. A longtime SEAL with extensive intel, whether it is “progress” or her militaristic patriotism that makes her legitimate is still unclear. For example, Beck has condemned the actions of trans whistleblower Chelsea Manning for being unpatriotic, revealing that trans acceptance is conditional.

Pride month falls on the heels of Nakba — a climax of depraved massacres and destruction of hundreds of villages, displacing approximately 800,000 Palestinians from Palestine in 1948. It also coincides with the commemoration of Naksa — the annual day of commemoration for the Palestinian people of the displacement that accompanied Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War in 1967 when Arab forces and the Palestinian resistance challenged Zionist militarization of Palestine, and 600,000 additional Palestinian refugees were created. The 1967 war paved the way for Israel to become a global power, influencing the world’s political and economic agenda. Israel leads the weapons market with a history of collaborations from the South African government at the height of apartheid as well as Pinochet in Chile.

This year, the 73rd commemoration of Nakba landed the same week as Eid, the holiday that closes the holy month of Ramadan. While Ramadan is supposed to be a time to rekindle spiritual connectivity, this year Eid’s festivity was undercut by the solemn intensity of ongoing repression in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, the Al Aqsa Mosque and Gaza.

Israel is falsely known as a beacon in a region void of rights. From its supposed feminism to its “LGBTQ friendly” tourism, Israel’s reliance on militarization, repression and racism receives sparse attention.

As a queer Arab, I drown between ads beckoning me to purchase gay sodas while swallowing domestic Zionist repression masked as progress. This correlation is not a contradiction: Their “Pride” is built upon the repression and exploitation of others. And so I find place in the placelessness, the movements we have paved to liberate our lands and ourselves.

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[www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/commentary/story/2021-06-28/
opinion-trans-palestinian-pride-month-isolation](http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/commentary/story/2021-06-28/opinion-trans-palestinian-pride-month-isolation)

FURTHER READING

Palestine as a Queer Struggle

uscpr.org/activist-resource/grassroots-advocacy-toolkit/palestine-as-a-queer-struggle/

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: Say No to Pinkwashing

bdsmovement.net/pinkwashing

What is pinkwashing?

shado-mag.com/know/what-is-pinkwashing/

Decolonize Palestine

decolonizepalestine.com

Palestinian Feminist Collective's action toolkit

palestinianfeministcollective.org/all-out-for-palestine/

Solidarity with Palestine - A Radical Black Feminist Mandate: A Reading List

www.blackwomenradicals.com/blog-feed/black-feminist-perspectives-on-palestine-a-reading-list

A Palestinian trans woman's story peels away Israel's pinkwashing veil

www.972mag.com/trans-lgbtq-palestinian-israel-pinkwashing/

All Out for Palestine: Against Queer Silence and Complicity

www.midnightsunmag.ca/all-out-for-palestine-against-queer-silence-and-complicity/

The queer Israeli youth taking a stand against pinkwashing

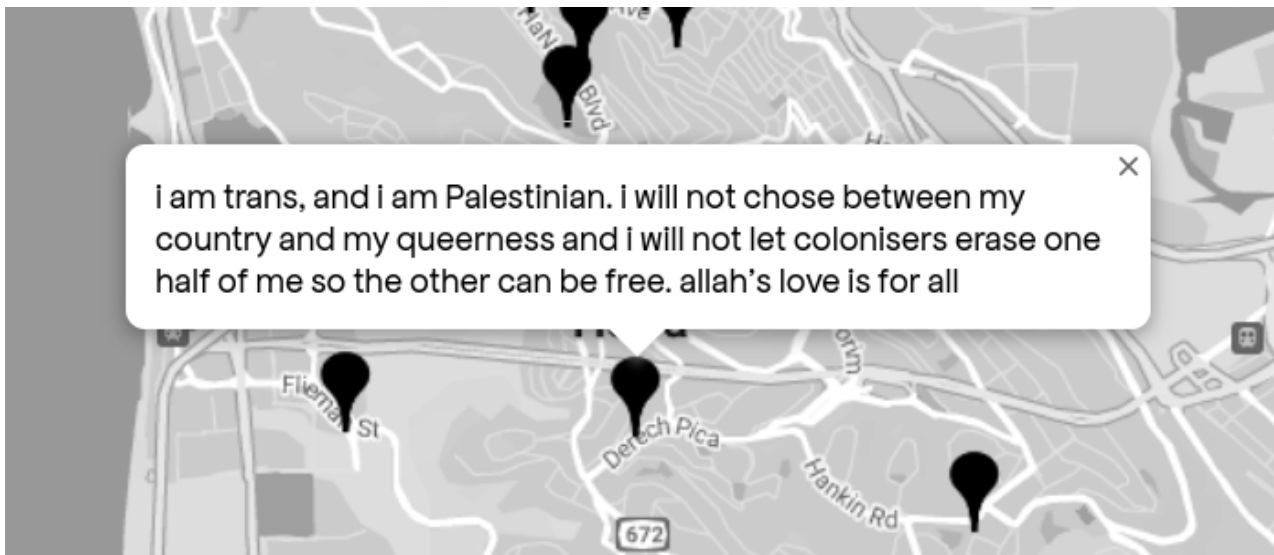
www.972mag.com/queer-israeli-youth-pinkwashing-palestinians/

Queers speak out: Why do I support Palestine?

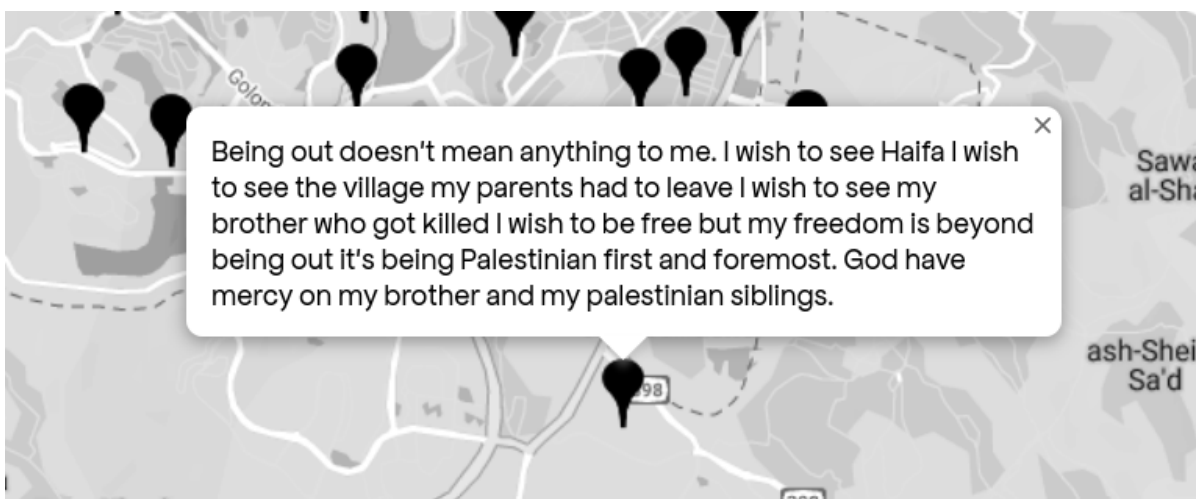
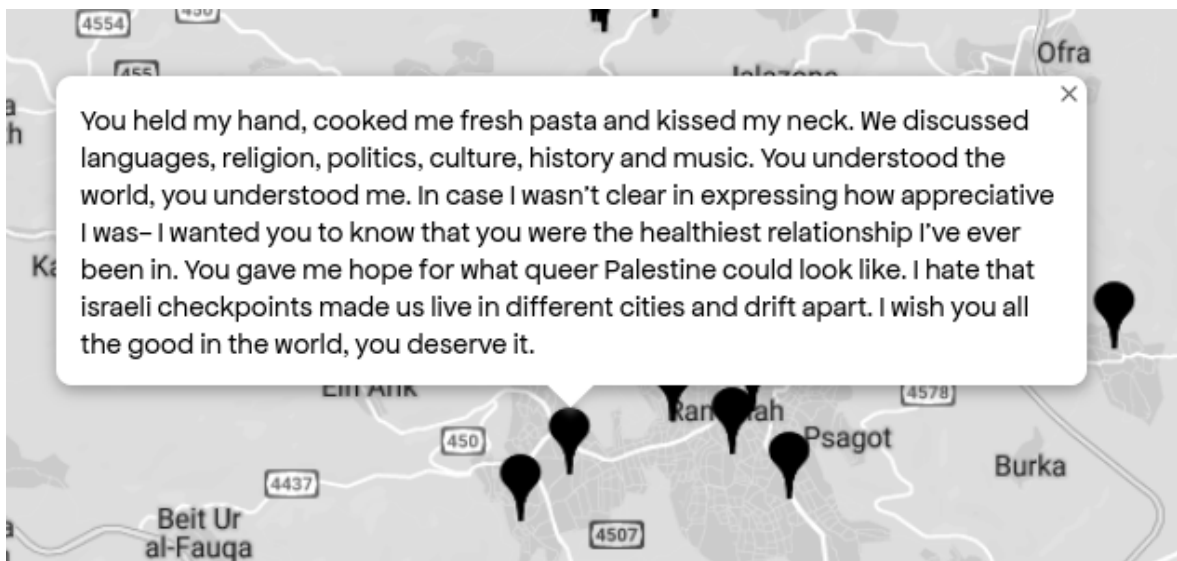
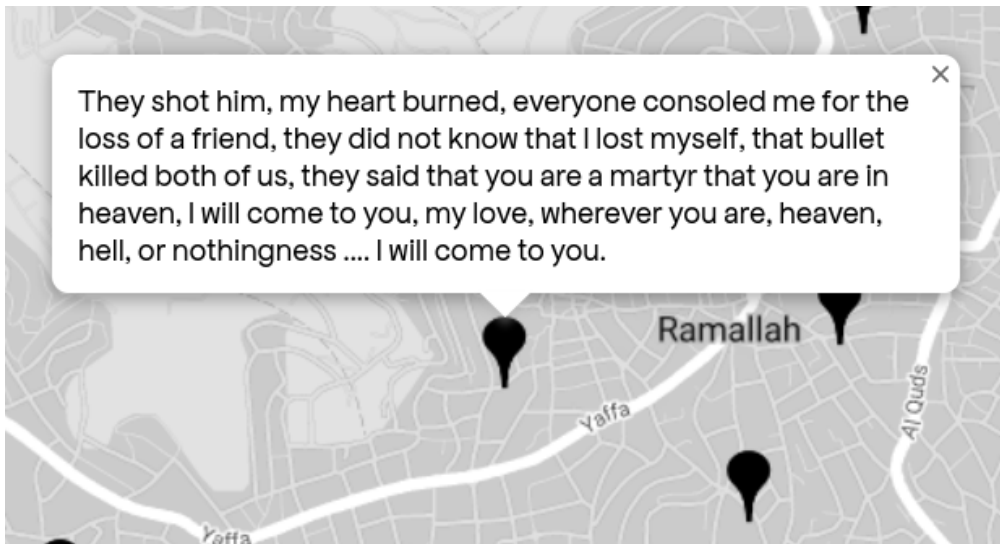
en.velvele.net/2023/11/02/queers-speak-out-why-i-support-palestine/

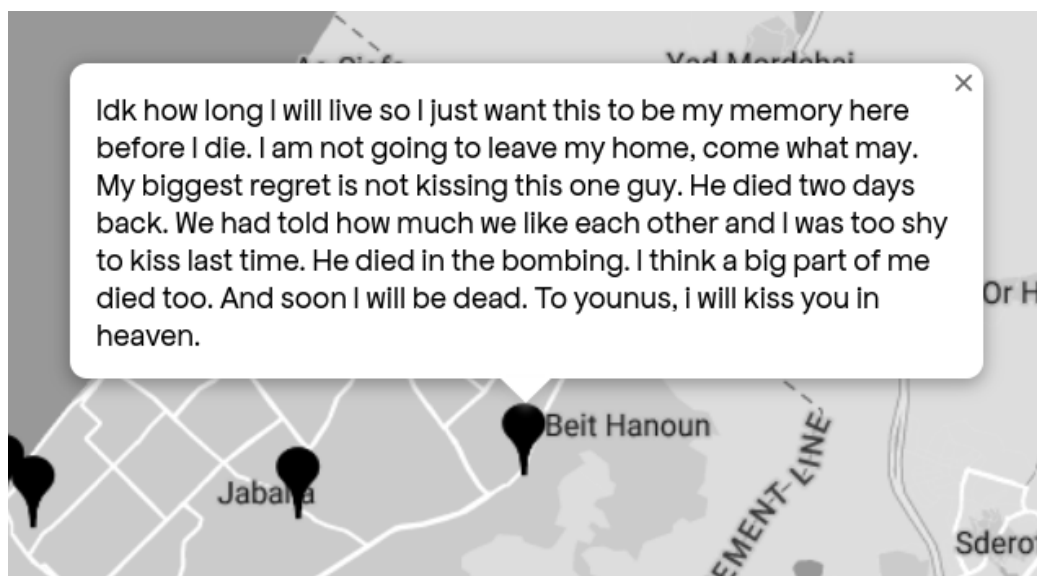
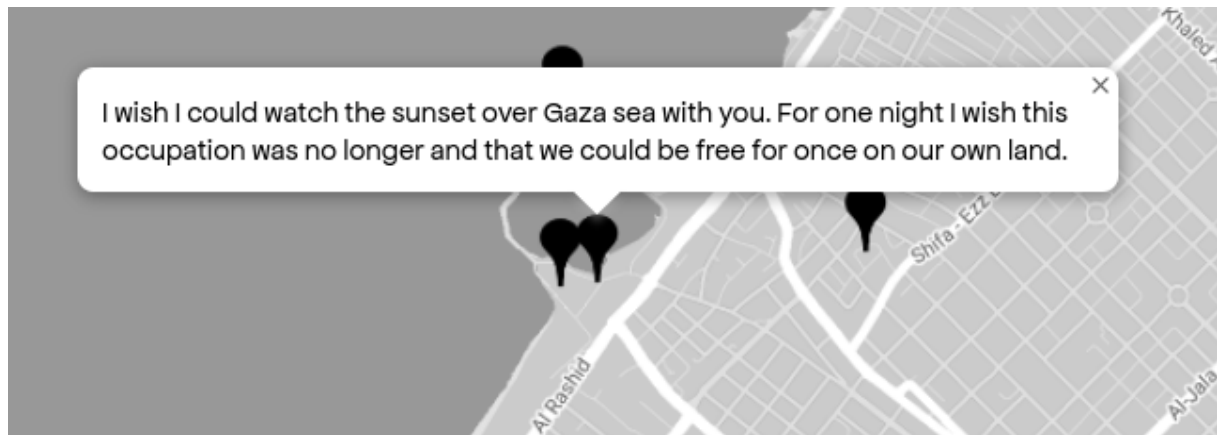
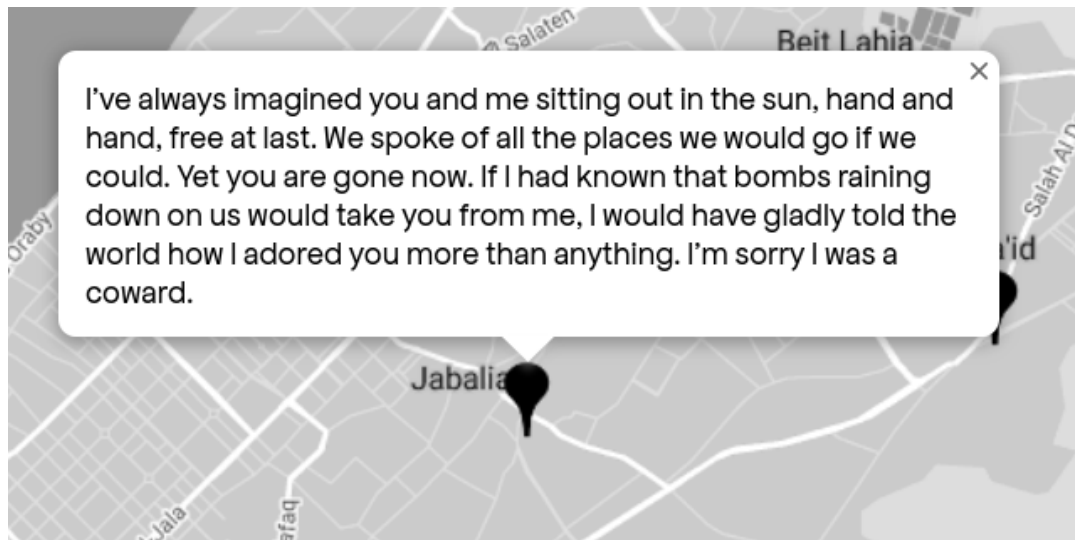
#NoPrideInApartheid Toolkit

uscpr.org/NoPrideInApartheid



The location-tagged stories featured here are anonymous submissions to Queering the Map (queeringthemap.com), a collaborative project of "digitally archiving LGBTQ2IA+ experience in relation to physical space."





MOVING TOWARDS HOME

June Jordan

"Where is Abu Fadi," she wailed.

"Who will bring me my loved one?"

- *The New York Times*, 9/20/82

I do not wish to speak about the bulldozer and the
red dirt
not quite covering all of the arms and legs
Nor do I wish to speak about the nightlong screams
that reached
the observation posts where soldiers lounged about
Nor do I wish to speak about the woman who shoved her baby
into the stranger's hands before she was led away
Nor do I wish to speak about the father whose sons
were shot
through the head while they slit his own throat before
the eyes
of his wife
Nor do I wish to speak about the army that lit continuous
flares into the darkness so that others could see
the backs of their victims lined against the wall
Nor do I wish to speak about the piled up bodies and
the stench
that will not float
Nor do I wish to speak about the nurse again and
again raped
before they murdered her on the hospital floor
Nor do I wish to speak about the rattling bullets that
did not
halt on that keening trajectory
Nor do I wish to speak about the pounding on the
doors and
the breaking of windows and the hauling of families into
the world of the dead
I do not wish to speak about the bulldozer and the
red dirt
not quite covering all of the arms and legs
because I do not wish to speak about unspeakable events
that must follow from those who dare
"to purify" a people

those who dare

"to exterminate" a people

those who dare

to describe human beings as "beasts with two legs"

those who dare

"to mop up"

"to tighten the noose"

"to step up the military pressure"

“to ring around” civilian streets with tanks
those who dare
to close the universities
to abolish the press
to kill the elected representatives
of the people who refuse to be purified
those are the ones from whom we must redeem
the words of our beginning

because I need to speak about home
I need to speak about living room
where the land is not bullied and beaten into
a tombstone
I need to speak about living room
where the talk will take place in my language
I need to speak about living room
where my children will grow without horror
I need to speak about living room where the men
of my family between the ages of six and sixty-five
are not
marched into a roundup that leads to the grave
I need to talk about living room
where I can sit without grief without wailing aloud
for my loved ones
where I must not ask where is Abu Fadi
because he will be there beside me
I need to talk about living room
because I need to talk about home

I was born a Black woman
and now
I am become a Palestinian
against the relentless laughter of evil
there is less and less living room
and where are my loved ones?
It is time to make our way home.

