

Lena Meari

*Sumud*: A Palestinian Philosophy  
of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons

Ibrahim (to the Shabak interrogator): Have you ever interrogated a table? I am a table now. Go interrogate a table. If it talks back to you, come to me and you'll find that I have become a mountain.

—Ibrahim El-Ra'ii, quoted in a handbook published by the Committee for the First Commemoration of the Martyr Ibrahim Mahmood El Ra'ii

While chained and tied in a distorted and extremely painful position in the closet, a very small cell used by the Shabak as a torture technique, I was walking around my city of Ramallah, accompanied by my comrades, family, and beloved. I was envisioning how I would be received by them when released without providing a confession.

—Marshud, a Palestinian-in-*sumud*

In order to be able to practice *sumud* in the interrogation, I considered death as a viable option. I imagined my death at numerous moments in the interrogation. This stiffened me and enabled my *sumud*.

—Ahmad Qatamesh, a Palestinian-in-*sumud*

**T**hese accounts were stated by Palestinian captives who were interrogated by the Israel Security Agency, known as the Shabak. They had been kept in prolonged isolation from the external world in

filthy narrow cells, severely kicked and beaten, constantly shackled in painful positions, and deprived of sleep, food, and other basic needs—the routine of Shabak’s interrogation techniques.<sup>1</sup> The interrogators offered to end their suffering if they provided a confession. Yet they practiced *sumud*—they refused to cooperate, they did not surrender, and they would not provide the interrogators with a confession. The term for “confession” in Arabic is *i’tiraf*, which has a double meaning: *i’tirafilla-*, “to confess to,” and *i’tiraf bi-*, “to acknowledge/recognize the other.” In this sense, by practicing *sumud* these Palestinians refused to confess to the interrogators and refused to recognize the interrogators and the embodied order of power that structures the colonial relation. Like other Palestinians-in-*sumud*, they continued to bear torture to protect their comrades, political organizations, communities, and the Palestinian revolution.

Turning oneself into a table and then into a mountain, into nonhuman objects, or imagining oneself surrounded by comrades and one’s beloved while isolated and chained in a small cell, or considering death as a viable option and having the ability to imagine oneself as dead in the interrogation encounter—these are examples of the infinite modes that create and are created by the practice of *sumud*. These examples reveal the constant movements of unmaking and remaking the self, the continuous process of desubjectivation that Palestinians generate through this practice.<sup>2</sup>

The Zionist settler colonial project, beginning in the late nineteenth century, to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine brought the destruction of the material and cultural forms of life already existent in Palestine.<sup>3</sup> This project culminated in 1948 with the occupation of Palestinian lands, which was the Palestinians’ main means of production, the destruction of Palestinian cities and villages, and the expulsion of 80 percent of Palestinians. In 1967 the Zionist colonial project extended to occupy the remaining parts of Palestine and to further employ colonial techniques to prevent any form of resistance. The mass imprisonment of Palestinians was one such technique that aimed to reinstate the colonial order and its power relations. Since 1967, over eight hundred thousand Palestinians, or approximately 20 percent of the total Palestinian population in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territory and 40 percent of Palestinian males, have been arrested and interrogated by Israel (Addameer 2014). Counting the families of Palestinian political captives shows that mass imprisonment has affected the intimate lives of the majority of Palestinians. The brutal experience of the large number of Palestinians in Israeli colonial prisons and interro-

gation centers constitutes a crucial part of recent Palestinian political history, representing both a formative political moment for those involved and standing more widely as a key trope through which the Palestinian experience of Israeli colonization is understood. Further, the interrogation encounter epitomizes the colonial relation between the Israeli colonizer and the Palestinian.

This article examines the Palestinian praxis of *sumud* in the interrogation and how *sumud* conceptualizes the interrogation encounter and broader colonial relations. Each interrogation is considered as a singular encounter but also as encoding the history of past, present, and future colonial encounters. The interrogation encounter can be analyzed from different perspectives; here I approach it from the perspective of *sumud* as discursively constructed and narrated by Palestinians who underwent interrogation between the late seventies and early nineties. Apart from the limitations of any specific perspective to comprehend the complexity and messiness of any ethnographic site, approaching the interrogation encounter from the perspective of *sumud* is characterized by reading the colonial power structure of the interrogation from the perspective of those who are subjected to it and at the same time are challenging and destabilizing its terms. This approach also explicates the ways that Palestinians immersed in anticolonial struggle construct Palestinian political history through their acts of narration. Following Allen Feldman's (1991: 2) approach to analyzing political violence in Northern Ireland, I propose that "the cultural construction of the political subject is tied to the cultural construction of history."

*Sumud*, translated roughly as "steadfastness," has no fixed meaning; it incarnates a multiplicity of significations and practices. It can only be approximated through an assemblage of the singular practices of Palestinians-in-*sumud*. In secretive, underground interrogation centers the Shabak interrogators have the power to control every detail of the interrogation setting and the techniques employed. Nevertheless, the practice of *sumud* destabilizes the colonial order and its power relations. This steadfastness constitutes a Palestinian relational political-psycho-affective subjectivity. It becomes an indefinable force representing the possibility of political praxis outside the space of normalized forms of politics. Under conditions of oppression it is a constant revolutionary becoming, opening up a possibility for an alternative regime of being, for an ethical-political relational selfhood. This form of becoming can be actualized in a praxis that escapes the liberal rational politics inherent in the colonial regime that aims to

subjugate the Palestinian within its fixed power structure and force the subjugated to recognize this structure and act in accordance with its terms. Thus *sumud* provides Palestinians with a possibility to defy the Israeli colonizers as well as Palestinians contained within the logic of colonial politics. In the face of the interrogation, a colonial site that embodies naked power and aims to fix the positions of the colonizer and the colonized, *sumud* becomes a “line of flight” for escaping the regulative forces of control.<sup>4</sup> This article approximates the potentialities of *sumud* and its actualization in the interrogation encounter. It also examines the subjective, ethical, and political implications of *sumud* practices. To do so, I follow Ludwig Wittgenstein’s (1953: 66) suggestion, “Don’t think but look!” This looking is carried out not by mere thoughtful generalizations but through the particular cases of those who are immersed and absorbed by *sumud* and consequently give *sumud* its life.

### **Situating *Sumud* in the Palestinian Colonial Context**

As a Palestinian anticolonial mode of being, *Sumud* has a life outside the cellars of the interrogation. This mode does not deny the violent power of the colonial order that penetrates and affects all aspects of Palestinians’ lives, past, present, and future; rather, it reflects a refusal to surrender to it. It is enabled through the material culture of resistance. Nevertheless, the immersion in *sumud* and the lives it takes open up the concept of resistance. In this sense, it continuously embraces new significations and manifestations that defy the fixation and control of its meaning. The notion is constantly invoked by Palestinians when referring to how they relate to *al-qadiya*, or the Palestinian cause. Palestinians who survived expulsion by Zionist forces in 1948 and were dispossessed of their lands during and after the 1948 Nakba refer to their survival as a manifestation of *sumud*. During the first Intifada in 1987, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip initiated microeconomic projects to boycott Israeli products, to support what they referred to as a *sumud* economy. During the second Intifada in 2000, Palestinians who had to cross military checkpoints on a daily basis viewed their crossing as a manifestation of *sumud*. Numerous Palestinian institutions and organizations throughout Palestine and in exile use the term in their names, and it appears in several Palestinian and Arab popular songs and poetry. *Sumud*, then, fills the air that Palestinians inhale. Rather than a means to an end, a denial of the coloniality of current life for the liberation of future life, it is a politi-

cal being/becoming and a continuous engagement with the flows and constraints of the colonial situation that endows Palestinians with forces to endure their lives, through and in opposition to, the fixed colonial terms and relations promoted by the colonizers and those Palestinians constrained by the terms of normalization with them. *Sumud* is a shifting series of significations and is thus never finished.

### ***Sumud* in the Interrogation Setting**

In a conversation I had with Riyad, a Palestinian-in-*sumud*, he narrated the following fragments of his experience in the interrogation:

In 1991 after six months of disappearance to avoid arrest, I went to visit my parents. The occupation forces came to arrest me and injured me while I tried to escape. As usual, beating and insulting began in the car. I was thinking about *sumud* then as I read texts such as *Falsafat al-muwajaha* [*The Philosophy of Confrontation*]. In the interrogation center I was constantly moving between the *shabah* [tying up in painful positions] and interrogation sessions. They used all the techniques . . . deprivation of food and sleep, the closet, the refrigerator, shaking. . . . They brought my father to the interrogation and threatened to bring my mother. Twelve interrogators interrogated me. . . . In each moment in the interrogation I was inventing strategies to practice *sumud*. I refer to *sumud* in the interrogation as the collective spirit, the belief in Palestine's just cause, sincerity and loyalty, sense of belonging, self-confidence, and nurturance of the self throughout a long period. During the long interrogation sessions and torture I thought of my *sumud* as defending my mother and the mothers of others. I was continually thinking about the martyrs and captives and the Palestinians-in-*sumud*. I thought about the martyr Ibrahim El-Ra'ii and constantly recited songs by the band Sabrin [a Palestinian band that played songs with revolutionary sentiments]. I was in love with a girl and thought that if I practice *sumud* I would deserve her love. For me, to practice *sumud* meant to exist.

Riyad had the idea of *sumud* in his mind before his arrest and interrogation. In each moment of his interrogation though, he engaged in the invention of strategies to practice *sumud*. These included the constant regeneration of his affective relations to his mother and the mothers of others and to his beloved. Riyad's web of relations included Palestinian martyrs and captives and all those who incarnate revolutionary sentiments. His political convictions were

enmeshed with his web of relations. Riyad's continuous inventions of forces for *sumud* also included the recitation of revolutionary songs.

Thus *sumud* as multiplied and creatively practiced in the interrogation operates through the refusal to cooperate with interrogators and refrain from providing a confession, despite the cruelty of physical/psychological torture deployed by the Shabak interrogators. *Sumud* relates to the arrest and interrogation as a space for continuing the struggle rather than ending it. The infrastructure for *sumud* is the Palestinian's body; the body is to bear the Shabak's torture in order to protect others. This steadfastness simultaneously involves the Palestinian's will and determination, the imagination, and a reorganization of the self and its relationality and connectivity. My goal is not to salvage the agency of the Palestinians by invoking their practices of *sumud*; rather, I am interested in the mode of subjectivity, the forms of politics, and the conception of the body that emerge out of this practice in the interrogation. *Sumud* is a possibility that is actualized in particular moments and rises up as a potentiality in others. It is materialized through a complex web of relations to the self, comrades, the revolutionary political organization, and the community, as well as the colonizer. Hence I approach the formations of colonial relations and Palestinian anticolonial subjectivity from the perspective of *sumud*. In so doing, I break with the dominant frameworks of history, politics, and the one-dimensional models of resistance, which focus on formal, fixed, and total structures, toward an engagement with the inventions, styles, and knowledges that emerge by engaging with social flows and networks rather than with totalities.<sup>5</sup>

I trace the genealogy of *sumud* by attending to the flows of its notional, textual, and social-cultural echoes, as well as its praxis in multiple interrogation encounters. It is inscribed within the cognitions, sensibilities, attachments, and practices of the Palestinians-in-*sumud*, not in a conventional archive. My interlocutors suggest that Palestinians-in-*sumud* recognize and express their victimhood and suffering of more than sixty years of colonial domination. Yet embedded in their cognition, practices, and basic affects is a sentiment that they are simultaneously victims and heroes, that their suffering is entangled with heroism.

'Ali Jaradat eloquently expresses this sentiment. From the time my interest in *sumud* in the interrogation began, numerous interlocutors mentioned Jaradat and suggested that I speak with him. However, he was constantly in and out of prison. Like many other Palestinian *munadilin* (strugglers), Jaradat spent many years in the Israeli colonial prison complex. He had several interrogation experiences in which he practiced *sumud*, subse-

quently; he was arrested in 1992 and sent directly to administrative detention without any interrogation. This form of captivity does not require conviction and is based solely on secretive Shabak material provided to Israeli military courts.<sup>6</sup> This technique is employed widely with Palestinians who do not cooperate with Shabak interrogators. That is, administrative detention is an Israeli legal act employed as a punishment for Palestinians-in-*sumud*. When I finally met Jaradat in 2010, he was struggling with what he perceived as the impossibility of any written text to capture the lively corporeal-sensual experiences of Palestinian captives and Palestinians-in-*sumud*. Any text, according to Jaradat, “remains as merely a cold paraphrasing relative to the scolding crawl of the real event in life as it is happening.” Subsequently, Jaradat thinks that one way to express the liveliness of the experience as it happens is to avoid generalizations and abstractions and follow the particularity of multiple singular occurrences. In the introduction of the text he was in the midst of writing when we met, he states:

More than half a million Palestinian youth have invested human efforts and enormous energies in the darkness of the prisons’ corridors and in fighting prison guards instead of putting this effort into education and studying at schools and universities. These efforts take away from productive work on the farm, in the factory, and in the workshop and [take young Palestinians] away from the intimacy of paternal, maternal, fraternal, marital, familial, friendly, and neighborly relations. These Palestinians voluntarily and willingly exerted all these human efforts and bled this lively pulse, not merely for the endurance and victory of their people’s just cause but also as a Palestinian contribution to the protection and maintenance of the human values of freedom and liberation. Underneath the collective patriotic experiences of the Palestinian youth dwell countless images of suffering and sensual, human heroism. Before describing this in the abstract as suffering and heroism, it constitutes a concrete corporeal life. And before describing it in general as a collective heroism and suffering, it is specific and singular; its heroes undertake these collective experiences with a unique and exceptional pulse. (Jaradat 2010)

Jaradat’s words provide a string of echoes for the mode of *sumud*. They approximate the oneness of suffering-heroism and allude to the articulation of the singular-collective mode of being. Suffering-heroism as expressed by Jaradat reflects a sentiment cultivated by Palestinian strugglers. This sentiment diverges from the well-established liberal humanist binary of victim versus agent. Talal Asad (2003: 79) captures this binary when he writes, in the context of agency and pain, that “there is a secular viewpoint held by

many (including anthropologists) that would have one accept that in the final analysis there are only two mutually exclusive options available: either an agent (representing and asserting himself or herself) or a victim (the passive object of chance or cruelty)." Further, the singular-collective mode that Jaradat conveys approximates the collective aspect of the Palestinians' singular experiences and is unfamiliar with the liberal glorification of the autonomous individual with clearly separated boundaries. In this sense, *heroes* or *icons*, the terms Palestinians use to refer to Palestinians-in-*sumud*, do not underpin the liberal subjective state of individual exceptionality; instead, it can be conceived through what Gilles Deleuze calls *mediators*. "Creation's all about mediators," says Deleuze (1997: 125); they can be people or things, real or imaginary—"it's a series." He continues:

If you're not in some series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own. . . .

. . . [Following Canadian filmmaker Pierre Perrault,] what we have to do is catch someone else "legending," "caught in the act of legending." Then a minority discourse, with one or many speakers, takes shape. . . . To catch someone in the act of legending is to catch the movement of constitution of a people. A people isn't something already there. A people, in a way, is what's missing. . . . Was there ever a Palestinian people? Israel says no. Of course there was, but that's not the point. The thing is, that once the Palestinians have been thrown out of their territory, then to the extent that they resist they enter the process of constituting a people. It corresponds exactly to what Perrault calls being caught in the act of legending. So, to the established fictions that are always rooted in a colonist's discourse, we oppose a minority discourse, with mediators. (Deleuze 1997: 125–26)

Palestinians are therefore constituted as they resist, as Jaradat and other interlocutors explain in what follows. Palestinians-in-*sumud* correspond to "being caught in the act of legending." These heroes-mediators are not individual heroes but a series; they embody others and others embody them.<sup>7</sup> Approximating the possibility of *sumud*, then, offers an alternative to hegemonic liberal modes of the individual autonomous subject that are dominant worldwide and also, recently, in colonial Palestine.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, by stating that Palestinians have undertaken efforts "not merely for the endurance and victory of their people's just cause but also as a Palestinian contribution to the protection and maintenance of the human values of freedom and lib-



eration,” Jaradat proposes that *sumud* as a particular liberating Palestinian mode of being encodes a liberational potential for humanity. Thus, in approaching *sumud* as a particular Palestinian mode of being, we can consider its potential to reflect a universal mode of “revolutionary becoming” that is concealed from preexisting hegemonic liberal conceptions of the universal and the human.

### Tracing the Emergence of *Sumud* in the Interrogation

My reading of texts and immersion in detailed interrogation encounters with my interlocutors suggest that *sumud* in the interrogation signifies the refusal to confess by refraining from disclosing information to Shabak interrogators, yet the paths to practicing *sumud* are as numerous as the Palestinians-in-*sumud*. *Sumud* was systematically mobilized in the late 1970s and widely practiced by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (and others) during the eighties and early nineties. The refusal to confess involves the flesh and blood of the Palestinian subjected to the harsh techniques the Shabak interrogators employ to extract confessions. I follow two interrelated trajectories of *sumud* in the interrogation: (1) the formal systematic effort undertaken by PFLP members to disseminate the notion/practice of *sumud* as an actual material possibility in the interrogation and (2) the life that *sumud* took on through the multiple practices embarked on by Palestinians-in-*sumud*. I approach *sumud* as simultaneously a political strategy initiated, developed, and employed predominantly by the PFLP and as a theoretical framework with vital implications for modes of subjectivity, forms of politics, and the epistemological status of the body.

As a theoretical frame, *sumud* signifies a revolutionary becoming. It is “revolutionary” in the sense of refusing to recognize and surrender to the power structures of colonialism and a “becoming” in the sense that it is a processional formation that is never finished or fixed. That is, *sumud* as a revolutionary becoming is not an essence within the identity of the *samed* (the one practicing *sumud*). Rather, it is a continuing process of reorganization of the revolutionary self that would be actualized in practice. Each practice of *sumud* in the interrogation is an actualization of the potentiality of the revolutionary becoming. It reflects moments of realized revolutionary being. Hence, as a revolutionary becoming, the constellation of *sumud* involves not only a specific organization of the affective familial, social, and comradely relations and an antagonistic colonial relation. It also involves a continuous reorganization of the heterogeneous components of the self.

By delving into the Palestinian political subjectivity cultivated through *sumud*, we can grasp the interconnection between modes of subjectivities and forms of politics. I suggest that the formation of revolutionary subjectivity, which is constantly engaged in restructuring the self in the context of not recognizing or surrendering to power structures through a connective relation to the community of strugglers and the community at large, opens up new conceptions of politics that involve relationality, imagination, and affects, in a way that destabilizes the rational conception of politics. *Sumud* as a mode of anticolonial revolutionary becoming is incommensurable with the liberal formations of subjectivities and politics that prevailed post-Oslo in Palestinian society in the mid-1990s. Many Palestinians perceive Oslo as a rupture with pre-Oslo Palestinian discourses, sensibilities, attachments, and modes of selfhood. In 'Adel Samarah's words, the post-Oslo era embodies a shift from "life is resistance" to "life is negotiations" ('Adel Samarah, pers. comm.). In a conversation with me, Suha conveyed the differences between the political culture of *sumud* and the post-Oslo liberal political culture:

The eighties and early nineties witnessed the rise of resistance and confrontation. The post-Oslo era witnessed fogginess in the terms of confrontation. Pro-Oslo Palestinians went out to put olive branches on the Israeli tanks. Dealing with the colonizers became natural, and coexistence and negotiations under occupation became prevalent. The terms of the confrontation shifted while the colonial conditions continued. The sense of collectivity has collapsed, and if a struggler were arrested, he would feel alone while others are living a normal life under occupation.

During the post-Oslo era, Palestinian society in the 1967 occupied territory witnessed the rise of new projects and institutions that reconfigured practices of political struggle. Led by the Palestinian Authority and some forces of civil society, these practices have increasingly centered more on legal reform—turning social-political activism into professional work through nongovernmental organizations (NGO-ization), which depends on foreign funding and its conditions;<sup>9</sup> the proliferation of discourses on human rights and international law; the replacement of the political project of "resisting the occupation" by the project of "establishing state institutions"; and the Palestinian Authority's neoliberal economic developmental plans. All these formations were saturated with liberal forms of politics and the process of reproduction of liberal individual sentiments and attachments. In the process, the active resistance to colonization was replaced with the founding of national

Palestinian laws and institutions. This change has signaled a shift from reorganizing the self toward struggling against the colonizing other to reforming the Palestinian self now bound to state law and institutions. This transformation's frames of reference, operations, and consequences differ from those of *sumud*. These liberal formations constitute the main vehicle for hindering Palestinians' anticolonial sentiments and practices and for containing Palestinians within the colonial-liberal structures and its form of political activism. *Sumud*, however, continues to haunt these liberal formations.

### The Politics of *Sumud*

The PFLP (1969) was established on December 11, 1967, as a revolutionary organization fighting against "any form of domination by imperialism, Zionism or the Arab bourgeoisie." In its 1969 platform, the PFLP situates the Palestinian struggle "as part of the whole Arab liberation movement and of the world liberation movement." It promotes a "revolutionary ideology" to overcome the weakness of the Palestinian guerrilla movement and its dependence on material help from the Arab bourgeoisie. Because "the national struggle reflects a class struggle," the PFLP believes that it must be led and "supported by the workers and peasants" and that the main field of struggle and its "decisive battle must be in Palestine." My intention in what follows is not to provide a historical account of the PFLP or to introduce its political ideology and organizational structure.<sup>10</sup> Instead, I turn my gaze to the details of *sumud* that its members promoted and practiced in interrogations. In so doing, I intend to invoke the centrality of the minute details, fragments, and particular practices that constitute the effect of the PFLP as a revolutionary political organization. To use Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's language (1987), I intend to invoke the particularity and multiplicity of "minor politics" and its relation to major/molar politics. Although *sumud* was instigated by members of the PFLP, within a formal totalizing and homogenous ideological and organizational structure, *sumud* in the interrogation had flows that exceeded the formal discourse and structure of the PFLP, resignifying its totality. The practice of *sumud* in the interrogation took on a life of its own and turned out to be productive of meanings, practices, and modes of relations and ethical-political selves. Assemblage of the multiple singular practices of *sumud* by members of the PFLP and others generated new forms of familial and social relations and connections that constituted the core of the political role assumed by the organization in a particular historical moment. Instead of conceiving of *sumud* through the political party, we need to reverse the order

and read the flourishing and demise of the role of the political party from the perspective of *sumud*. That is, the political possibilities of the PFLP as a Palestinian revolutionary movement were determined more by the *sumud* practices of PFLP members than by the party's political ideology. Without *sumud*, and the formations of familial and social relations its practice generated, the political party lost its historical role as a revolutionary movement.

An example of *sumud*'s reorganization of familial and social relations at large can be grasped through Myassar's narrative. Myassar is known to her acquaintances as very protective of her children, having witnessed her own mother and whole family visiting her brother who spent more than twenty years in prison. For that reason, she tried very hard to distance her own children from involvement in political activities that might put them at risk of being arrested. When her nineteen-year-old son, Anan, who without her knowledge became involved in political activities, was arrested in 1991, the family hired a lawyer, hoping to help him. The lawyer called Myassar to inform her that her son was under interrogation and that she had been given permission, finally, to meet with him. When the lawyer asked Myassar if she wanted her to relay a message to him, Myassar replied, "Tell him, 'Your mom says she prefers to hear the news of your death than of your confession.'" The lawyer, Myassar remembers, had cried when she heard this message, but she conveyed it to the son and came back to Myassar with his reply. "Don't worry mom," he said, "I am the product of your nurture." When I asked Myassar whether she was worried about the price he would have to pay to practice *sumud* and not confess, she replied: "I always tried to hinder my children from [participating in] risky political activities. But at the moment of his arrest, I felt that if he chose the path of struggle, he had to be up to its political-ethical demands. He has to practice *sumud* in order to protect himself and others. It is unethical to confess against other people, leading to their arrest and to their suffering and [that] of their families." Myassar herself embodies what she believes is the political-ethical position that her son should enact in the interrogation. She was willing to bear, with her son, the feeling of the torturous interrogation in order to protect the sons and daughters of other mothers. For Myassar and her son, *sumud* is conceived as part of their relation; further, it involves an ethical relation to other mothers and sons.

*Sumud* in the interrogation followed not from the articulation of an abstract idea but from active participation in practices of resistance, creating the term and its relationalities. That is, the subjectivity of *sumud* had been in the making through Palestinians' practices, exemplifying the point that "political agency is not given but achieved on the basis of practices that alter

the subject” (Feldman 1991: 1). Further, the politics of *sumud* engages multiple, minor practices of resistance, and the PFLP members’ intricate attention to this assemblage is what made it coherent, enabling the organization to play a crucial political role in areas of colonized Palestine during the late seventies to early nineties. The politics that emerged resonate with Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of politics, in which “singularity and collectivity are no longer at odds with each other . . . such a politics does not seek to regiment individuals according to a totalitarian system of norms, but to de-normalize and de-individualize through a multiplicity of new, collective arrangements against power. Its goal is the transformation of human relationships in a struggle against power. And it urges militant groups, as well as lone individuals, to analyze and fight against the effects of power that subjugate them” (Seem 1983: xxi). *Sumud* in the interrogation became a multiplicity of new collective arrangements and in the process of confronting colonialism changed human relationships.

*Sumud* in effect becomes everybody-in-*sumud*. *Sumud* takes on its real life in the assemblage of multiple singular practices and the reorganization of relationships. The practice of *sumud* constitutes the minor, or what Deleuze and Guattari define as “the process of deviation or deterritorialization of life” (Thoburn 2003: 7). *Sumud*, then, is an invention, a potential “creative and created becoming” (7).

### The Instigation of *Sumud* in the Interrogation

My exploration reveals no specific moment in which *sumud* emerged as a notion in the context of the interrogation, even if it was not yet actualized in practice. ‘Aisha Odeh, in her memoir *Ahlam bil hurriya (Dreams of Freedom)* (2007), writes about an interrogation that took place in 1969. Her account suggests that the notion of *sumud* as the refusal to cooperate with the interrogators was present in her mind throughout her interrogation. In a conversation I had with her, I asked, “When and how did you first attain the notion of *sumud* in the interrogation?” She replied:

I cannot specify when and how I attained the notion of *sumud*. The question of when I first thought of *sumud* is similar to asking when I began to eat or become interested in eating. I have no specific date or event to point to as a provocation for the notion of *sumud*. *Sumud* is entangled with the notion of *muqawamah* [resistance], not just in the sense of *sumud* in the face of the interrogator as he hits you, but also *sumud* in the sense of adhering to our rights by

practicing *sumud* in the face of Israel. I do not know how and from where this notion came to me, but there are some instigating factors, such as reading the memoir of Jamileh Bu H'ered [an Algerian woman brutally tortured by French colonizers during the Algerian revolution], or the writings of Frantz Fanon, or texts written by the political organization I was a part of, or attending to the interrogation experiences narrated by Palestinians I know. All these factors flow in the same direction. *Sumud* is related to one's respect for oneself and to one's belief that one's cause is a just cause that should not be defeated. It is the process of reorganizing myself in this direction.

Odeh expresses a continuity between *sumud* in the interrogation and the sentiment of *sumud* in a broader sense as reflected in local, regional-Arab, and worldwide spaces. She points out multiple flows for *sumud*. Living in a colonial context, Odeh attained the sentiment of *sumud* just as she attained interest in her basic needs. *Sumud* involves not only a confrontational relation to the interrogator and the colonial state but also an alternating relation within the self. *Sumud*, Odeh says, is intertwined with her respect for herself as a self that opposes colonization and refuses to be defeated by it. It is a process of continuous becoming, "a process of reorganizing" oneself. For Odeh, *sumud* emerges as an anticolonial mode of being influenced by reading texts and engaging in conversations and exchanges about anticolonial experiences. Her account suggests that the notion was floating in texts and experiences as an anticolonial sentiment long before the PFLP systematically appropriated it.

Conversations with other interlocutors also trace the sentiment of *sumud* in the interrogation within regional and worldwide revolutionary milieus and sensibilities. Wisam, whose biography is full of arrests, interrogations, and imprisonments since the late 1970s, explains that the experiences of Jordanian and Palestinian Communists and nationalists during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in al-Jafr prison constituted one source of regional inspiration for Palestinians. Al-Jafr prison was established in 1953, about 124 miles south of Jordan's capital, Amman. It was well known as a torture facility, a purpose it served until recent years. Other inspiration for the notion of *sumud* emerged out of reading revolutionary literary texts and being exposed to the struggles of revolutionists all over the world. One example frequently invoked is the struggle of revolutionist Ernesto Che Guevara, who when captured in Bolivia in 1967 challenged the Bolivian interrogators trained by the Central Intelligence Agency. These types of revolutionary encounters filled the Palestinian anticolonial revolutionary imagination.

*Sumud* in the interrogation, as a Palestinian actualized possibility, or *sumud* “with a Palestinian flavor,” as Jaradat puts it, began to grow systematically in the late seventies with an organized structure that promoted and mobilized it, actors that incarnated it, and supporting communities that embraced it. This specific appropriation of *sumud* evolved from the particular experiences of Palestinians in general and members of the PFLP in particular. In 1976, after two years of relentless efforts to establish a political-revolutionary organization in the occupied territories, numerous PFLP members were arrested and interrogated. Information they provided in confessions enabled the Shabak to defeat the organization by exposing and arresting its main leaders and cadres. According to Ahmad Qatamesh, an underground leader at the time, this experience as evaluated by a group of PFLP members revealed that

there is no escape from establishing theoretical-political-organizational-psychological roots that bring about the ability to confront the interrogation and practice *sumud* in order to enable a temporal space for building and accumulation. We had a historical sense of the necessity to build an organization that is able to resist and carry out a political role in resistance. A culture of defiance was prevailing; it encompassed a conviction that we are a revolutionary-socialist project confronting a capitalist project. We are a liberation-patriotic project confronting a Zionist-racist-imperialist project. The confrontation between these projects is radical, and there is no space for withdrawal or defeat.

Within the colonial condition in Palestine, Qatamesh asserts in our conversation, “there is no escape” from confronting the interrogation and practicing *sumud*. *Sumud* enables, in Qatamesh’s words, a temporal space to build a resistance movement capable of resisting colonization. The political role of an organization that is based on *sumud* is generating a process of colonial resistance. The interrogation encounter appears at the core of the inevitable predicament of the colonial encounter, and *sumud* emerges as the only way out of this situation. Qatamesh expresses a more general anticolonial inclination that prevailed among Palestinians in the late seventies. This group of comrades perceived their project as liberational, confronting a racist-colonial project. The nature of the encounter between these two projects is conceived as radically antagonistic, and this particular group had a “historical sense” that they had to carry on and endure a process to decolonize themselves and their “Palestine.” This realization has resonances with other decolonization processes as expressed by Fanon, who was invoked in my conversations with Qatamesh. Fanon (1963: 2) writes:

Decolonization is the encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation. . . .

Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. But such a creation cannot be attributed to a supernatural power: The “thing” colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation.

The resonances of Qatamesh’s and Fanon’s words reveal two main ideas. One is the reified polarity in the colonial situation, and the other is the centrality of the process of decolonization/liberation for the colonized. Colonialism has a material base, and in this sense it creates a reified polar reality that can be overcome through the process of decolonization. Qatamesh and many other Palestinians with whom I spoke define the colonial situation in Palestine as radical antagonism between two projects. On the colonial relation between the two poles as encoded in the interrogation encounter, Qatamesh says: “It is an antagonistic dialectical relationship. The Shabak accumulates knowledge and oppressive techniques, and the resistance accumulates knowledge and techniques or means of *sumud*.”

Jaradat, in an unpublished text, under a section titled “Lighting: (Them) and (Us),” writes: “Our logic is strange to them and their logic is strange to us. WE and THEM are two temporalities in one time. WE and THEM constitute opposites in a unity, WE are the time of the endeavor of the ‘freedom from’ prison and THEY are the time of the ‘freedom to’ prison.” The words of Jaradat, Qatamesh, and many other Palestinians assert and establish a colonial polarity that resonates with Fanon’s (1963: 10) assertion that the colonial situation is “characterized by the dichotomy it inflicts on the world.” The polarity that Jaradat, Qatamesh, and Fanon invoke does not work according to a simple apparent binary of colonists/colonized. It recognizes the complexities of the colonial condition and the colonial relations. However, at the core of colonialism as an existential material condition, particularly settler colonialism, Qatamesh, Jaradat, and Fanon identify a polarity that cannot be abolished without colonialism’s abolishment, which occurs through a decolonization process that explodes the reality of colonialism and the subject position of both the colonizers and the colonized as such. Thus decolonization involves the cultivation and regeneration of polarity and antagonism.



The complexities of colonial relations as reflected in the interrogation are apparent, as I'tiraf, a Palestinian-in-*sumud*, expresses: "The nature of the relation between the struggler and the interrogator is complex. At its core it is conflictive and antagonistic." Yet, as I'tiraf and others exclaim, to be able to practice *sumud*, the antagonistic core should be constantly regenerated throughout the interrogation. I'tiraf states:

One of the main interrogation techniques employed by interrogators works by blurring the conflictive-antagonistic core of the relation. The interrogator would tell the Palestinian to forget about all things related to the interrogation and would spend one week to ten days talking about personal, social, or general political issues. That is why I am referring to the relation between the Palestinian and the interrogator as a complicated relation with a conflictive core. During the whole period of the interrogation you experience and relate to the same interrogator or to various interrogators differently. In order to be able to practice *sumud*, in the most comforting moments of the interrogation, and with the nicest interrogator, the Palestinian should be cautious and extract the conflictive-antagonistic core of the relation.

The antagonism of the colonial relation should be constantly reproduced by the struggler in every moment of the interrogation.

The other resonance of Qatamesh and Fanon refers to the centrality of the "process of decolonization" in itself as liberational for the colonized. The actors involved in the process of decolonization are in a constant becoming. It is these historical moments of becoming, filled with the detailed actions and practices of resistance, that are liberating. In Deleuze and Guattari's sense, the process of deterritorialization is what is liberating: the process in itself and those involved in it constitute liberational overcoming and becoming. The "historical sense" that Qatamesh refers to is not teleological, as history is perceived by historicists. These historical moments evolve as interruptions to the continuity of the colonial condition. This conception supplies a unique experience with the past in which the Palestinian-in-*sumud* blasts the continuum of history. That is, the political praxis of *sumud*, which perceives the interrogation as a space of struggle, constitutes an interruption of the reified conception of the continuity of colonial history and its self-realization.

Further, the Palestinian-in-*sumud*, like Walter Benjamin's angel of history, does not see the past as a chain of events, but gazing on the catastrophe and the debris of Palestine and from the hopelessness of the Palestinians whose lives were ruined, the Palestinian recognizes a liberating,

awakening flash in the present. As Benjamin (1968: 255) suggests, “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ ([Leopold von] Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger.” *Sumud* in the interrogation, then, appears to Palestinians as a liberating hope that flashes at a moment of danger, as “a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past” (Benjamin 1968: 263).

In trying to reappropriate *sumud* in the context of the interrogation, Qatamesh explains that PFLP members became occupied with discussing and promoting the minute details of the notion of *sumud* as a political strategy and practical method to confront the interrogation conceived as a microcosm of the colonial encounter:

We began to systematically study worldwide and regional revolutionary experiences. We also discussed all the reports coming from prisons detailing the experiences of the members who practiced *sumud* and those who failed to practice *sumud*. . . . Subsequently, a kind of ethical convention was reached among us out of the conviction that history had positioned us in a particular place that we have to respond to by embracing its burdens. Afterward a process of mobilization of the notion of *sumud* in the interrogation began through the internal theoretical and organizational publications, and in the meetings where *sumud* became a central item of discussion.

*Sumud* in the interrogation becomes central within that historical moment. In the late seventies, the PFLP’s main means of promoting *sumud* in the interrogation were holding discussions in organizational meetings of all levels of the PFLP structure, distributing printed materials on *sumud* through its internal publications, and invoking and appraising regional and international symbols of the mode of *sumud* in the interrogation in its publications and meetings.

During this period, Palestinian local icons-mediators for *sumud* in the interrogation were few, as were local books addressing the particularity of Palestinian experiences in the interrogation. Those local icons and books had been continuously generated through the processional practices of *sumud*. In addition, numerous foreign books found by PFLP activists to be helpful in promoting *sumud* were circulated among members. The most widely disseminated was *Report from the Gallows*, first published in 1943 and written by Czech journalist Julius Fučík, an active member of the Communist Party and a leader in the anti-Nazi resistance. The book was translated into Arabic

under the title *Tahta a'wad al-mishnaqa* (*Under the Noose*).<sup>11</sup> Fučík was arrested by the Gestapo in Prague in 1942, three years after Nazi Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, in March 1939. Fučík was interrogated, tortured, sentenced to death, and executed in Berlin in 1943. The book, written on pieces of cigarette papers and smuggled by prison guards to his wife, includes accounts of his interrogation and his thoughts and practices in confronting his interrogators. It promotes the notion of the refusal to cooperate with interrogators and the refusal to confess. Many revolutionists around the world read the book.<sup>12</sup> Numerous ideas and quotations from *Under the Noose* are found in the first PFLP publications on *sumud* and in the first Palestinian book written about *sumud* in the interrogation.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the early eighties, *sumud* had become an actualized option in the interrogation, and many Palestinians were “caught in the act of leg- ending.” This actualization of *sumud* created a series of Palestinian local icons-mediators who incarnated *sumud* and whose practices of *sumud* promoted its practice in others. The late seventies to early eighties also witnessed the production of Palestinian texts on *sumud*. One of the most critical texts is *Falsafat al-muwajaha wara' al-qudban* (*The Philosophy of Confrontation behind Bars*).<sup>14</sup> In outlining the philosophy of *sumud*, it does not merely describe the interrogation or the techniques employed by the Shabak and the means for Palestinians to confront them; rather, it constitutes a critical flow for the process of promoting *sumud* in the interrogation and generating the *samed* self.

The theory of *sumud* as reflected and regenerated throughout *The Philosophy of Confrontation* embodies the collective Palestinian experience and the experiences of revolutionists worldwide. Mahmood Fanoon is the writer of the text, but he is not its author; he has no individual authority over it. That his name has never appeared in any published version of the book alludes to two central issues: first, that “secrecy” is at the core of the subjectivity of *sumud* and, second, that *sumud* cannot be captured through one individual but constantly embodies the entirety of those in *sumud*. The writing of the book took place in 1978 while Fanoon was incarcerated at al-Khalil prison. The written text was first distributed through the bodies of Palestinian political captives who swallowed the “capsules” on which it was copied and transported these to other spaces inside and outside the prison, where they then discharged them through their stool.<sup>15</sup> After being extracted from Palestinian bodies, the theory of *sumud* was then distributed by the PFLP’s popular “body,” which was, as Fanoon describes it, “the fastest publishing technology” (Mahmood Fanoon, pers. comm.). This popular political body

consists of the mass organizations of the PFLP, which include labor unions, women's committees, and student councils.<sup>16</sup> Thousands of people have read the book, and it has been reprinted several times. Like many other revolutionary texts in the context of clandestine activities in colonized Palestine, copies of this text were printed and distributed under different book covers and various titles because possession of the book became cause for arrest by the colonial authorities.

The underlying assumption of the theory of *sumud*, according to the book, is that every Palestinian, regardless of age, gender, ideology, education, health, or body shape, can practice it in the interrogation despite the brutal techniques employed by the Shabak interrogators. The text of *The Philosophy of Confrontation* invokes and simultaneously generates *sumud* as

the heroic position in front of the interrogators. This position simultaneously reflects and creates victory. It determines the consequences of the confrontation between the two poles of the conflict in favor of the struggler. This leads to the salvation of the one-in-*sumud* not merely as a person but as a struggler that protected his honor and his self from the clutches and tricks of the interrogators and protected his comrades, his organization and his people. . . . The one-in-*sumud* also thwarts—through his body, flesh, blood and will—the interrogators' and intelligence's plans, asserting his continuous struggle, defiance and sacrifice for others. Subsequently, the one-in-*sumud* equips himself and others with an undefeatable weapon.<sup>17</sup>

*Sumud*, in this sense, is an infinite creative process, a string of echoes that reflects and creates victory. Further, the *sumud* of one is the *sumud* of all. For the one-in-*sumud* constantly "equips himself and others with an undefeatable weapon." Underneath the skin of the one-in-*sumud* resides all those-in-*sumud*. In addition to these sentiments and sensibilities, the book details the interrogation techniques of the Shabak, their objectives, and how all these techniques can be defeated through incarnating *sumud*. The foundations for this incarnation, according to *The Philosophy of Confrontation*, are the internal struggle within the self to overcome moments of weakness and to liberate the self from the circle of individuality and self-interest—in which the interrogators attempt to captivate the Palestinian—toward the collective circle. The singular-collective self is at the core of the *samed* self, the one who sacrifices for others. Further, the confrontation in the interrogation is constituted throughout the text as a "war of wills." In considering the interrogation as such, Palestinian strugglers are redefining and destabilizing the material power relations prevalent in the interrogation encounter.

### From Textual to Social Networks

In Qatamesh's account, the group of people who were systematically involved in promoting *sumud* in the interrogation realized early on that reading texts that reflect and generate *sumud* is important but not sufficient to turn *sumud* into an actualized possibility in the interrogation. As Fanoon stated: "[We] realized that the actualization of *sumud* in the interrogation-encounter requires a process of cultivation; we lived in fear for a long time and in order to rise up from this fear we need a continuous process of cultivation. The issue is not educating and raising consciousness, but constant nurturing that reaches the houses and families" (Mahmood Fanoon, pers. comm.). What Fanoon conveys here is the process of unlearning that accompanies learning. *Sumud*, then, involves the undoing of colonial fear, meaning a process of engaging with desubjectivation. The undoing of fear should spread to the intimate spaces of the house and family. In the context of harsh colonial order, undoing fear involves, as Qatamesh reveals, reestablishing a new relationship with death, an event prevalent in the lives of Palestinians under colonial conditions:

Death, is not as it seems when it is uttered, a simple term; the willingness to die involves a theoretical, political and psychological texture, as well as practical experiences, emotional and social relations. Through all this, in time the struggler becomes willing of the option of death, the death that protects the homeland and the just cause. . . . Death is the highest stage and the last line that one can attain. When you are willing to die, you are definitely able to absorb all that is less than it. (Ahmed Qatamesh, pers. comm.)

The willingness of death that enables *sumud*, then, is not merely an ideological conviction; it is a specific texture of theoretical, political, and psychological organization of the self, enmeshed in practical experiences and affective social relationships. The relationships that constitute this self also have a specific organization, and they involve a complex web of familial, social, and political relations.

In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Elaine Scarry parallels physical pain and death. Both death and pain, she argues, "are the most intense forms of negation, the purest expressions of the anti-human, of annihilation, of total aversiveness, though one is an absence and the other a felt presence. . . . Regardless, then, of the context in which it occurs, physical pain always mimes death and the infliction of physical pain is always a mock execution (Scarry 1985: 31). Further, Scarry states, "As in

dying and death, so in serious pain the claims of the body utterly nullify the claims of the world" (33). Scarry declares that both pain and death are outside human intelligible experiences and activism. Both are forms of antisociality, antirelationality, and total annihilation. The conception of death as a negation is present in Western philosophy from Hegelianism to existentialism. For Hegel, the dialectic of self-other ends in either slavery or death, and slavery is conceived as a form of death (1977). Death as nothingness is also a prevalent idea in some strands of existentialist philosophy.

In the lived experiences of Palestinians-in-*sumud*, however, both pain and death are not just forms that motivate action, but they are themselves actions. Pain as well as death is constructed as a relational formation through the cultivation of *sumud*. Death, as Qatamesh asserts, is part of the subjectivity and politics of *sumud*. On the discursive level, the texts written about *sumud* engage with death as a viable option, as an option that opens up possibilities of action, not forecloses them. On the practical level, and through the practice of *sumud* in the interrogation, Palestinians have lived and acted through death. The death of Palestinians has further enacted the *sumud* of others. Many Palestinians have died in the interrogation, either under harsh torture or as a planned execution of those Palestinians who have become symbols of *sumud* and whom the Shabak does not know how to deal with.

The story of Ibrahim El-Ra'ii offers one example. El-Ra'ii was born in 1960 in the Palestinian city of Qalqilya. He was arrested for the first time in 1978, at the age of eighteen, and, because of the confessions of others, was sentenced to five years of imprisonment. In 1986 he was arrested again and interrogated under extremely harsh conditions for four months but did not provide a confession. He was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison. A few months after sentencing, he was called again for further interrogation and was tortured for five months. An appeal to the court by his lawyer stopped the interrogation, and he was put in solitary confinement. Eight months later, on April 11, 1988, the Israeli military governor reported to El-Ra'ii's family that he had committed suicide in his solitary cell in Ramleh prison. The family did not believe the story of the suicide and appealed, through the lawyer, to the court to investigate the death and allow an independent doctor chosen by the family to participate in the autopsy. The family accompanied the doctor to the autopsy center, but the doctor was told that only he would be allowed to see the face of the body. When he stated that he had a court order to participate in the autopsy, he was told that the "authorities" had decided to prevent his participation. On April 14, the body arrived at the cemetery, and with the cemetery and the entire city under military

siege, only fifteen members of the family were allowed to participate in the burial. When the family checked the body they saw that it bore signs of beatings on the rib cage, marks on the neck, blood behind the left ear, a broken jaw, and traces of beatings and swelling at the back side of the head and also that the body was not blue, thus casting doubt on the possibility of suicide by hanging.

Two weeks before his claimed suicide, El-Ra'ii's family had visited him under restrictive conditions in the attendance of Shabak guards. The family reported that he was in high spirits and was encouraging them to be resilient and steadfast. Two days before his presumed suicide his family received the following letter from him:

My beloved family, my lovely mother, passionate regards from my heart. I received your letter and, indeed, I read it almost every day as it encompasses immense meanings that motivate me and give me new powers each second I spend in my solitary cell. The poem that the comrades dedicated to me affects me deeply and mobilizes me to really be the *samed* [steadfast] hero. . . . I realize that my solitary confinement is meant to separate me socially and culturally. Yet their plans will fail. The increase of suffering and hardships will not stop me; it motivates me to continue. . . . My beloved, I wish for you to ask the lawyer to visit me as there are issues I need to discuss with her regarding my solitary confinement and my case.<sup>18</sup>

El-Ra'ii's family and comrades argue that someone who would write such a letter two months before his claimed suicide by the Shabak would not be thinking of committing suicide. They argue that the Shabak executed him because he practiced *sumud* and refused to confess despite being tortured and particularly because he had become a symbol of the *sumud* that cannot be defeated. Many of my interlocutors invoked the execution of El-Ra'ii in the Shabak interrogation cellars as motivating their own *sumud* in the interrogation. His example illustrates how death becomes a motivation for action and an action in and of itself. The position of death that Scarry identifies makes it impossible to make death intelligible or to conceive of it as a pregnant possibility in terms of communal attachments, affects, and future political openings.

Amin, a Palestinian-in-*sumud*, depicts the relation between death and the pained body and how they coconstruct each other:

During my brutal interrogation, death was present at all times. The interrogators were telling me that the only option I had was confession. One interrogator

claimed that he was the one who executed Ibrahim El-Ra'ii. He was employing El-Ra'ii, suggesting that I have two options, confession or death. I was thinking, they could kill the body but not the spirit. For me the spirit of the martyr Ibrahim El-Ra'ii was a motivation to further bear the painful interrogation and practice *sumud*. Martyrdom for me was an option. This has empowered me. Imagining my death as El-Ra'ii's for not providing a confession opened my possibilities, not ended them.

For Amin, martyrdom employed death with different meanings. Death in this sense was an opening, not annihilation. This mode of relation with death had motivated him to bear the pain of the interrogation. Imagining the option of death transformed his perception of pain. Anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo (2007) argues that a focus on the Islamic tradition poses questions to contemporary philosophical accounts such as Giorgio Agamben's on bare life. The concept of bare life reduces life to biological existence at the planetary level, in contrast to which Pandolfo (2007: 332) asks, "What becomes of 'bare life' when death is understood as 'awakening,' the beginning rather than the end, as is the case in Islam and in other religious traditions?" Death, as Palestinians-in-*sumud* illustrate, is understood as a new beginning within a revolutionary political tradition.

The spread of the notion of *sumud* did not stop at the boundaries of the circle of strugglers-in-*sumud*. It reached the broader community of Palestinians and engaged the social reality in a way that rearranged social relations and asserted the intertwinement of the political, the social, the familial, and the personal. This flow was initiated by members of the PFLP's mass organizations who invested in the process of generating appraisal within the community for *sumud* in the interrogation. Narratives of the Palestinians-in-*sumud* were spread out promptly and widely by the organization. The organization sent messages to parents appraising the *sumud* of their sons or daughters or to young women and men appraising the *sumud* of their partners. The ones who practiced *sumud* turned into heroic icons-mediators and were celebrated among the public. They would be welcomed with great respect and hallows of heroism. In that way, from ordinary people, new local icons emerged throughout the community; people from different social backgrounds, including those from marginalized classes and geographic areas, became heroes within the public imagination. These heroes were not mythical aliens but ordinary people.

Wisam tells that when he was in al-Khalil prison, the prisoners engaged in a series of sessions called *mawqif rafiq*, or "the position of a comrade." In



each session, one comrade would narrate for two hours his interrogation experience. This recounting included detailed correspondence with interrogators about what they asked, how the comrade responded, and what his tactics were for practicing (or not practicing) *sumud*. These sessions were critical, says Wisam: “The experiences of comrades in *sumud* illustrated to the others that the *samed* is not someone coming from Mars but an ordinary person who is sitting, eating, kidding, and farting like the others. The only difference is that he could stiffen himself and knew how to deal with the interrogators. If he could practice *sumud*, everyone could.” And more important “is that these sessions demonstrated that even if someone failed to practice *sumud* in a previous interrogation he can practice *sumud* in a successive one.” With the prevalence of such models, *sumud* has replaced wealth and familial ties as a determinant for peoples’ appreciation. Family members, friends, and significant others begin to encourage and endorse *sumud*. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, and wives tell their beloved at the moment of arrest, “Usmud” (Practice *sumud*). This word accompanies the interrogated Palestinian throughout the entirety of the interrogation experience.

Two months before eighteen-year-old Marshud was arrested in 1991, he had a conversation with his comrades about their interrogation experiences. “The experiences of Palestinians in the Shabak torture cellars” says Marshud,

have the potential to easily instigate horror in listeners. In me, though, these stories instigated a desire to be arrested in order to see if I could bear these terrifying techniques and practice *sumud*. This moment was not delayed, for the soldiers came to arrest me two months later. They brutally entered the house in huge numbers looking for me. . . . The soldiers grabbed me aggressively, and at that moment I felt terrified. At the door of our house, my brother Dahud looked me in the eyes and said calmly, “You will get out from the interrogation the same as you get in it [i.e., without saying anything].”

The words of Dahud, Marshud states, “were echoing in my head throughout the whole interrogation, while I was tied up for days, or while I was put in the ‘grave,’ a body-sized coffin-like cell used as a torture technique.” Dahud actually told Marshud, “Your secrets should remain within you.” And that’s exactly what happened. The interrogation became for Marshud a challenge he desired. He wanted this encounter in order to test himself and his ability for *sumud*. It was a political challenge involving a political responsibility toward himself, his comrades, and his family. The

political responsibility that Marshud felt was entwined with the intimacy of familial, particularly fraternal, relations. His example reveals how *sumud* turned from an ideological notion into a relational formation that involves familial and social ties, as well as a political-ethical responsibility to keep secrets.

What is a secret? asks Jacques Derrida. He writes: “Is there any worse violence than that which consists in calling for the response, demanding that one *give an account of everything*, and preferably *thematically*. Because this secret is not phenomenizable. Neither phenomenal nor noumenal. No more than religion, can philosophy, morality, politics or the law accept the unconditional respect of this secret” (1996: 20–21). The violence that consists of calling for a response and demanding that one give an account of everything has its particular significance within the Palestinian colonial context. Information, in the sense of giving an account of everything, is one of the main colonial technologies Israeli authorities use, particularly the Shabak, which feeds on information and keeps a broad database on Palestinians. Secrecy, a practice of *sumud*, opens up a possibility to escape the prevalent colonial “information” power technology. Secrecy is also constitutive of the *samed* self. The “right to secrets,” as Derrida (1996: 21) says, is intertwined with the responsibility to secrets. The responsibility to secrets is an ethical responsibility. It is a responsibility toward the collective that shares the secret. Secrets are constitutive of relationships and networks. Many Palestinians-in-*sumud* refer to their *sumud*, to refrain from cooperating with interrogators and answering their questions, and to the sensibility that their secrets are not their own. They share them with comrades, for whom they feel an ethical and political responsibility to protect.

*Sumud* and the responsibility to secrets engage intimate relations. Khamis and Hidaya first met as students at Birzeit University in the late eighties and became involved in an intimate relationship. In their very long emotional conversations on the nature of their feelings and their relationship and engagement, they also talked about what would bring their relationship to an end. “One of the issues that constituted a limit for us, that if one of us crossed would mean our relation would come to an end,” says Hidaya, “was confession in the interrogation.” “Confession, we felt, would lead to a sort of crack in our relationship. We conceived confession as betrayal.” This example reveals the ways that *sumud* has become the core of the ethical formation of Palestinian intimate relationships.

*Sumud* in this sense had continued to spread and reorganize intimate relationships within the Palestinian community. Familial and social rela-

tions were politicized throughout this process. Families felt deep pride for their daughters' and sons' *sumud* and felt ashamed by their confessions. That is, pride and honor were resignified within the political culture of *sumud*. The *sumud* of an interrogated Palestinian meant victory for the whole community and the confession became a defeat for all within *sumud*'s political culture. This process brought the whole community into the interrogation encounter. *Sumud* turned into a cultural-public ethic affecting many social-cultural aspects such as marriage. As Wisam explains, "In many locales, such as the villages of Ni'lin and 'Awarta, girls were insisting that their husbands should be the ones to practice *sumud*."

*Sumud* was not the only praxis in the interrogation. *Inhiyar* (break-down) and even *ta'amol* (collaboration) were additional practices. However, in the eighties and early nineties, the latter options resided within the political culture of *sumud*. Instead of destabilizing *sumud*, they were part of its imagination and generated its possibility. As Riyad, a Palestinian-in-*sumud* who was arrested, interrogated, and tortured in 1991, explains: "During the interrogation the interrogators showed me the confessions of twelve people against me. These confessions gave me more strength to practice *sumud* in order to avoid the state of those who *inharu* [broke down]."

### ***Sumud* and the Status of the "Pained" Body**

The practices of *sumud* reconceptualize the constructions of pain and body. As Wittgenstein (1953: 100) suggests, pain is a way of constituting the epistemological status of the body and its moral potentialities. Conceptions of pain contribute to the reorganization of the body. The practices of *sumud* generate a unique relation to pain and the body. In opposition to the conceptualization of pain as a private experience, Asad (2003: 81) suggests that pain has the potential for building relationships or can itself be a "public relationship." In this perception, pain has the potential to attach people to each other instead of separating them. In colonized Palestine, Palestinians as a community are subject to Israeli colonial techniques. Arrest, interrogation, and torture are daily ritualized experiences. In this context pain in general, and within the interrogation encounter in particular, constitutes the private experience as a public, collective, and shared experience, resignified by political meanings. Pain forms social networks and relates Palestinians to each other. The conditions of interrogation centers and the techniques employed by the Shabak are well known to Palestinians through the widely circulated stories of interrogated Palestinians. When a Palestinian is arrested, family, friends, and

comrades are aware of what he or she is expected to undergo, and they feel the pain even without his or her expressing it. The pain of the interrogated Palestinian is shared by others and forms their common reality. The family home of an arrested Palestinian is immediately filled with people who come to express support. The relationality constructed through pain in the Palestinian reality has the potential to reorganize the Palestinian body and its way of perceiving and inhabiting pain. The perception of pain as relational depicts pain beyond the individual body and opens up a possibility for imagining and constituting communities of pain. This conception has crucial ramifications for the restructuring and potentialities of the body of the Palestinian in the interrogation. Mahmoud states about his interrogation experience:

During my interrogation and when the interrogators were asking me to speak, I constantly felt and thought about my people. I was feeling the suffering of those who were expelled from their homes in 1948, the martyrs of the Palestinian revolution and the sorrows of their families, the pains of the imprisoned and their beloved. I was feeling the pain of the Palestinians enmeshed with my pain. I was not confronting the interrogators alone. I was part of all these people and they were part of me. That's what enabled me to bear all interrogation techniques and practice *sumud*.

Mahmoud's relation to his people is constituted through their shared experiences of pain. Razeq talks about the Shabak interrogation technique that aims to defy the sensibility and the immanent relationality expressed by Mahmoud and that enabled his own *sumud* and that of others:

One interrogation technique that is used widely by Shabak interrogators operates through eliciting and reinforcing separated individuality. Interrogators attempt to lead the Palestinian to seek individual salvation. They separate the Palestinian and intensify torture to exhaust the Palestinian body. In the interrogation session they would iterate Arabic proverbs that focus on individuality and self-interest, such as "Alf 'ain tibki wala 'ain immi tibki" [One thousand crying eyes but not those of my mother]. They would also suggest for the interrogated to think of himself and his interest and salvage himself from his state of misery.

This prevalent interrogation technique, which I learned about from many Palestinians, illustrates that the Shabak is aware of the relationality constitutive of Palestinians-in-*sumud* and its role in empowering their will and ability to bear pain. *Sumud*, by contrast, affects the possibilities of the body to bear torture and pain.

## Concluding Remarks

This article could be read as a reflection on a colonial encounter. The interrogation encounter is considered a condensation point for the colonial encounter between the Palestinians and the Israeli colonizers. The encounter is read from the perspective of *sumud*, an anticolonial revolutionary potentiality actualized through the assemblage of singular practices. The subject and its political agency are formed throughout the actual practices of *sumud* in the interrogation, and the politics of *sumud* emerges through these subjective formations.

## Notes

This article is based on my ethnographic research carried out between 2008 and 2010 for my PhD dissertation, titled “*Sumud*: A Philosophy of Confronting Interrogation.” The dissertation research was assisted by a fellowship from the International Dissertation Research Fellowship Program of the Social Science Research Council, The Wenner-Gren Foundation, and the Middle East Research Competition program. The writing of the dissertation was assisted by funds from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. The English translations of quotations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

- 1 For detailed accounts of Shabak’s techniques for interrogating Palestinians, see, e.g., al-Haq (1993); Public Committee against Torture in Israel (1990); B’Tselem (1991, 1998); and B’Tselem and HaMoked (2007).
- 2 In an excellent article titled “*Revolutionary Becomings*: Negritude’s Anti-humanist Humanism,” Valentine Moulard-Leonard (2005: 242) states, “In Foucauldian language, we could say that if the fixed social-historical formations responsible for the oppression . . . are but the effect of a particular process of subjectivation, then what is now needed is a process of desubjectivation.”
- 3 The project was instated in the Balfour Declaration issued on November 2, 1917. The declaration is a letter from colonial British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild that made public Britain’s support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- 4 I borrow the term from the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987). Lines of flight constitute creative and liberatory means available to escape regulative forces of control and domination. They are “flows of deterritorialization” that could be reterritorialized by the forces of control.
- 5 I am appropriating Nicholas Thoburn’s conception of politics. He reads the resonances between Deleuze’s minor politics and Marx’s critique of capitalist dynamic and “develops a politics that breaks with the dominant frameworks of post-Marxism and one-dimensional models of resistance towards a concern with the inventions, styles and knowledges that emerge through minority engagement with social flows and networks” (Thoburn 2003: i).
- 6 On administrative detention, see, e.g., Addameer (2010) and Pelleg-Sryck (2011).
- 7 The recent hunger strikes undertaken by Palestinians such as Khader Adnan (December 2011), Hana’ Shalaby (February 2012), and Samer Isawi (August 2012) can be perceived within this conception of mediators.

- 8 The Palestinian political culture shifted in the mid-1990s following the Oslo agreements. These shifts have included the gradual domination of liberal political, cultural, economic, and subjective formations.
- 9 On NGO-ization in Palestine, see Jad 2008 and Hammami 1995. Writing in 1995, two years after the Oslo Accords, Rema Hammami explores the historical-political context of the transformation of mass movement into an institutionalized NGO community. She describes the crisis of the Palestinian Left and the shift from mass-based voluntary organizations into more elite, professional, and politically autonomous institutions dependent on foreign funders with political conditionality and confined by the discourse of development. Islah Jad writes that the new discourse used by the new NGO elite discredited old forms of organization and co-opted popular organizations. For a critical account that captures the economic, political, and subjective aspects and implications of NGO-ization within the Palestinian settler colonial reality, see Samarah 2011.
- 10 For an excellent account on the PFLP's political ideology and organizational structure, see Qatamesh 2011.
- 11 The Arabic title is a translation from the Czech original, *Reportáž psaná na oprátce*, literally *Reports Written under the Noose*.
- 12 The Chilean poet and Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda dedicated a poem to Fučík in 1952.
- 13 The travel of Fučík's book to Palestine was no exception. At the time, many translated Marxist theoretical and literary texts traveled to Palestine and were read by Palestinians, particularly members of leftist organizations. An analysis of the travel of Marxist notions to Palestine through both texts and people and of how different Palestinian groups reappropriated and resignified Marxist notions is beyond the scope of this article. *Sumud* in the interrogation as promoted by PFLP members, though, illustrates the reappropriation of Marxist-revolutionary sentiments and their articulation with the Palestinian mode of *sumud*.
- 14 For an analysis of the text as a "textual representation of the rite of interrogation," see Nashif 2008: 99–130.
- 15 For details and analysis of the role of the capsule (*cabsulih*) as a communication channel used by Palestinian political captives, see Nashif (2008: 38–71).
- 16 Labor unions, women's committees, and student councils are part of the social-political grassroots bodies associated with the various political parties; their development dates to the late 1970s.
- 17 The copy of *The Philosophy of Confrontation behind Bars* quoted from here lacks publication data due to the clandestine distribution necessary in the colonial context.
- 18 The letter was signed by El-Ra'ii on April 8, 1988, two months before his claimed suicide. I found copies of this letter and another one in the archive of the Arab Studies Institute (originally located in Jerusalem but moved to Ramallah), which followed up on El-Ra'ii's case.

## References

- Addameer. 2010. *Administrative Detention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory between Law and Practice*. Jerusalem: Addameer.
- Addameer. 2014. "Background on Israeli Detention." [www.addameer.org/etemplate.php?id=290](http://www.addameer.org/etemplate.php?id=290) (accessed January 14, 2014).

- Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1968. "Thesis on the Philosophy of History." In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt and translated by Harry Zohn, 253–64. New York: Schocken Books.
- B'Tselem. 1991. *The Interrogation of Palestinians during the Intifada: Ill-Treatment, "Moderate Physical Pressure," or Torture?* Jerusalem: B'Tselem.
- B'Tselem. 1998. *Routine Torture: Interrogation Methods of the General Security Service*. Jerusalem: B'Tselem.
- B'Tselem and HaMoked. 2007. *Absolute Prohibition: The Torture and Ill-Treatment of Palestinian Detainees*. Jerusalem: B'Tselem and HaMoked.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 1997. *Negotiations, 1972–1990*. Translated by Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1983. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1996. "Passions: 'An Oblique Offering.'" In *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, edited by David Wood, 5–35. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove.
- Feldman, Allen. 1991. *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fučík, Julius. 1990. *Notes from the Gallows*. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith.
- Hammami, Rema. 1995. "NGOs: The Professionalisation of Politics." *Race and Class* 37, no. 2: 51–63.
- al-Haq. 1993. *Palestinian Victims of Torture Speak Out: Thirteen Accounts of Torture during Interrogation in Israeli Prisons*. Ramallah, Palestine: al-Haq.
- Hegel, Friedrich. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by Arnold V. Miller and John N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jad, Islah. 2008. *The Demobilization of Women's Movements: The Case of Palestine*. Toronto: Association for Women's Rights in Development.
- Jaradat, 'Ali. 2010. "Heroism and Suffering: Testimonies from the Palestinian Captivity's Memory." [In Arabic.] Unpublished manuscript.
- Moulard-Leonard, Valentine. 2005. "Revolutionary Becomings: Negritude's Anti-humanist Humanism." *Human Studies* 28, no. 3: 231–49.
- Nashif, Esmail. 2008. *Palestinian Political Prisoners: Identity and Community*. New York: Routledge.
- Odeh, 'Aisha. 2007. *Ahlam bil hurriya (Dreams of Freedom)*. Ramallah, Palestine: Muwatin, the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy.
- Pandolfo, Stefania. 2007. "'The Burning': Finitude and the Politico-theological Imagination of Illegal Migration." *Anthropological Theory* 7, no. 3: 329–63.
- Pelleg-Sryck, Tamar. 2011. "The Mysteries of Administrative Detention." In *Threat: Palestinian Political Prisoners in Israel*, edited by Abeer Baker and Anat Matar, 123–35. London: Pluto.
- PFLP. 1969. "Platform of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine." [pflp.ps/english/1969/12/platform-of-the-popular-front-for-the-liberation-of-palestine-1969](http://pflp.ps/english/1969/12/platform-of-the-popular-front-for-the-liberation-of-palestine-1969).

- Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI). 1990. *Moderate Physical Pressure: Interrogation Methods in Israel*. Jerusalem: PCATI.
- Qatamesh, Ahmad. 2011. *On Secret Revolutionary Organizations: The Case of the PFLP in the Occupied Territories, June 1967 to Oslo, 1993*. [In Arabic.] Ramallah, Palestine.
- Samarah, Adel. 2011. "Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society between Dispossession and Distortion of Role to Integration: The Dialectic of National Liberation and Social Construction." Paper presented at the Bethlehem University conference, June 3.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seem, Mark. 1983. Introduction to *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Thoburn, Nicholas. 2003. *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.