



CREATIVE RESISTANCE

"Please understand, the wall in Bil'in is not a security concern. It is just a way to confiscate more land, to build more settlements, to compress Palestine and to imprison us. This is a wall that separates families from one another and the farmer from his trees and water. In our protests, we use non-violence. We have a lot of ideas we put to use. We put ourselves in cages, barrels and concrete cylinders in front of the bulldozers. In 2007, after two and a half years, our legal team was awarded a decision from the Israeli High Court to demolish part of the wall and move it back five hundred meters. It was Bil'in's first success and the first time the wall has ever been changed at all. They didn't demolish it right away, though; it took four years for them to enforce the decision. But it's a victory for a small village that would have been trapped or destroyed by the wall." • Right after the Israelis occupied the West Bank in 1968, they began issuing orders very quickly. One of these laws said that Palestinians couldn't own milking cows. Of course, it's a racist law because a Jewish settler coming from Brooklyn can move to Bethlehem and own as many cows as he wants. In 1969, the people of Beit Sahour decided to disobey this particular order. They went and bought nine milking cows, plus one bull, from a Jewish kibbutz guy. Anyway, they brought these cows to town, and they had milk for the people of the town—until, of course, the military commander of Bethlehem discovered that they had these fugitive cows on the loose in Beit Sahour, providing this terroristic substance known as milk to the people of the town. So he came and said that we had to kill the cows or get rid of them in forty-eight hours. After forty-eight hours, he comes back to the same place—no cows. There was one old man there, and the commander asked, 'Where are the cows?' The old man said, 'I don't know anything about any cows; there were never any cows here.' So the commander starts a new Israeli military operation—"Operation Hunt Cow." And they went around town trying to find these fugitive cows. What happened is that the people of the town had taken the forty-eight hours to work out a system: they would hide the cows in their basements, caves or backyards between the dense trees, constantly moving them from place to place. The army continued to look for these cows for months, even with helicopters, but with no success. This is a great example of civil disobedience! The army eventually gave up on trying to find these cows, and the town continues to have milk." • "As a form of protest, we would bring a caravan [mobile home] to the wall that the Israeli government had built through our land. We'd bring a caravan every day, and at night the soldiers would take it. After buying multiple caravans and having them take each one, we asked the soldiers why they were taking them; after all, the settlers had built houses on our land. They said the settlers' homes were houses with windows, a ceiling and a door, so it was illegal to demolish them unless they had court approval. So, the next night, we built a little room with windows, a ceiling and a door. In the morning, they were shooting and yelling, and we told them, 'Stop! Stop! This is a room with a ceiling, windows and a door. You need a decision from the court to demolish it.' It took them six years before they could get approval to demolish it."

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE OCCUPATION

"The struggle for Palestine is a struggle against the occupation mentality among Palestinians. In order to make a change, one must adjust their frame of reference. The Jenin refugee camp is the norm. And the normal here is surreal. It's not healthy for any human being to live in this kind of environment. Normal here is a state of fear and suspicion—informants, arrests, Israeli agents. So how do you create space for alternative ideas that is also acceptable within the very narrow limits of the normal? François Hollande [the President of France since 2012] talks about what happens when the slave eventually starts to worship the master. And starts being what the master tells the slave to be. So if you tell somebody enough times that they are stupid, violent and a terrorist, then in the end they feel like they have no choice." • "Gaza is a case study in postmodern colonialism. You can see the personal impact of long-term aid dependence. People are becoming reliant. Everything Israel attempts to do policy-wise in Gaza is an experiment, whether it's building a wall or an electric fence around Gaza, weapons experimentation or psychological studies." • "I don't have the luxury of ignoring the occupation. My son was a correspondent for the Jerusalem Post, and he was shot by Jewish soldiers while filming. The governor of Jenin told me that there was a Jewish lady who wanted to visit me because she had also lost her son during the war. When she came to me, she spoke to me about her son, and I spoke to her about my son. I told her that there was a big difference between her son and mine: 'Your son was a soldier, but mine was working in peace; your son died holding a gun, and my son died holding a camera.'" • "To be honest, I really don't like to talk about the occupation and resistance. It leaves you physically and emotionally tired. Sometimes it's nice, when you are feeling emotionally balanced, to talk and fight, but I don't want to focus on it. We have to live it." • "We live in Hebron, and three months ago Israeli soldiers came here to our house at two o'clock in the morning. They made everyone stand up against the wall in the living room while they searched the house. Ever since that night, our seven year-old son is terrified when he sees the soldiers on the streets. As soon as he sees them, he runs home to his room."

GAZAN FOOD

"Being from Gaza and raised in different parts of the world because of the diaspora, including the [Persian] Gulf, food was always a way to identify ourselves as Palestinians. It helps to locate people where maps and dictionaries fail. Food brings us together and helps Palestinian refugees retain knowledge of their land. Their towns may no longer exist, but you can trace the history through the food. We use food as ghost archaeology." • "About sixty percent of the Gazan population is unable to feed their families more than once or twice a day. One of the standards on a Gazan table is a ground red chili paste called *filif mat'houn*. It's full of vitamin C and very nutritious. It's made out of red peppers that are very plentiful and, for the most part, pretty cheap. You can make a sandwich out of it, adding a little olive oil. It's a popular school lunch. Otherwise, you can make a sandwich out of very cheap, pretty nasty processed cheeses, which used to come by the boxful from Egypt when the tunnels were open." • "I don't buy into the concept we call 'hummus kum-ba-yah.' It's not as simple as, 'You like hummus; we like hummus; can't we all just get along?' People's rights are being taken away and restricted. Food is another frontier that Israelis are colonizing, sort of 'eating the Other,' if you will. The early Zionists came and accepted the food of the Other while rejecting the people it came from, rejecting Palestinians themselves and rejecting their rights to the land." • "In general, Gazan food is spicy, herby, lemony or sour, piquant, rich, ripe and fresh. Historically, Gaza was divided into two parts, between the coastal area and the inland area, and they weren't connected. You had the Canaanites and the Philistines: one living by the sea, and the other inland doing the farming. And Gaza was once the main port along the Mediterranean coast, which might explain how the dill and the dill seed came, as well as chili pepper. It was also a major stop on the spice road to the rest of the Middle East and the rest of Asia. There was a resting stop in old Gaza City where the caravans would stay for the night. This might explain where all the spices came from, including the peppers and the dill. The dill seed is hardly used anywhere else, so it's very unique to Gazan cuisine." • "Off the coast of Gaza, there's an Israeli naval blockade. Palestinians can only fish three nautical miles out. This allows for very little fishing and yields much smaller fish, as the larger fish are further out. This designated area of water is overfished and polluted (there's no sewage treatment in Gaza). Before Morsi [the Egyptian president 2012–13] was overthrown, the Palestinian fishermen were allowed to fish in some small Egyptian-controlled waters. More often, though, they would go out to sea, buy fish off the boats of their unrestricted Egyptian counterparts and re-sell the fish in Palestine. In the markets, the fish would be labeled 'tunnel fish' or 'fresh fish from Egypt.'"

HUMOR

"Palestinians are a very lighthearted people. They want to laugh! Arabic, in general, is a very playful language. There are many verbs and many directions you can take a sentence, so puns are huge and are sprinkled throughout Arabic literature. Poetry is also a very nuanced and important form. When my cousin has his friends over, they'll play cards and sometimes recite centuries-old lyrics, ballads and poetry that they've memorized. It's a way to keep their identity strong and culture alive." • "The girl asked her mom, 'I'm bored; what should I do?' The mom said, 'Go watch TV.' The girl said, 'But they cut the electricity.' The mom said, 'So, take a candle.'" • "One day, a young Palestinian guy comes up to an Israeli checkpoint and asks to be let through: 'I just need to go congratulate my cousin on his wedding day. I don't have to stay; I'll be back in one hour.' Of course, they argue with him. But one of the soldiers, for a joke, says: 'I'll let you go, with four conditions: First, give me your ID card; second, you come back in one hour; third, you must leave your shoes here; and last, you have to bring me back a cup of tea. And if you do all of that, you can come back.' So the young Palestinian accepts their conditions. He goes to the village, comes back exactly on time and gives the guard a cup of tea. He goes to retrieve his shoes, but the soldier has shit in his shoes. So, what can he do? He cleans his shoes, puts them on and starts to walk away from the soldier, who's laughing and sipping his tea. After some distance, he turns back and says, 'You know, we're not going to get anywhere if you keep shitting in our shoes and we keep pissing in your tea.'" • "There was a man named Joha (an old Arab folk figure) who agreed to sell his house to a family. The price was ridiculously low, but Joha had one condition: 'On one of the walls, there is a nail that I'm very attached to. You can use everything else, but I need to keep one thing in the house—my nail.' This seemed strange, but the price was so low, the family couldn't say no. They shook hands, and Joha took off for the market. Later, to the family's surprise, Joha returned with some cured meats and knocked on the door. 'I need to hang these from my nail,' he said. They allowed him in, and he hung his groceries. The next evening, when the family returned home, they found Joha's bed in their house with Joha sleeping in it. 'You must understand, I am so fond of the nail, I couldn't sleep without it!' And the day after, Joha brought over his whole family to see the nail, and they had a party that lasted all night. This went on for weeks until finally the family fled and just left the house to Joha."

CONFlict KITCHEN

The text on this wrapper is taken directly from interviews we conducted with Palestinians living in both Palestine and in the diaspora. Each section highlights the perspectives of multiple people.

CONFlict KITCHEN is a take-out restaurant that serves cuisine from countries with which the United States is in conflict. Our current version focuses on Palestinian food, culture and politics. The restaurant rotates identities in response to current geopolitical events. www.conflictkitchen.org

EDUCATION

"Palestinians value education highly. They view it as one of the main aspects of life that they can still control. They have one of the highest literacy rates of anywhere in the Middle East and now more university graduates than anywhere in the region. Unfortunately, there's a categorical ban on the movement of students from Gaza to the West Bank or Israel. Even if Gazan students were accepted to Birzeit University or a university in Tel Aviv, they are restricted from studying there." • "We're an educational and environmental farm in Palestine who work with children from the refugee camps around Bethlehem. We hold creative workshops and harvest camps where we teach the children the traditions of the fig, grape and olive harvests. In the long run, our vision here is to establish a vocational training center focusing on alternative energy, organic farming and recycling. I know it's a long way to go, but it's important to have a vision." • "I went to an all-Palestinian school in Nazareth, Israel, and they actively taught us that we were part of Israel. This seemed strange to me. Our geography teacher assigned us to follow the forecast, but when I did, I didn't hear about the weather in Nazareth. I asked my mom, 'How come Nazareth is not on the news?' And she said, 'Because it's not on the map.' She would answer me in these very vague ways, as though I would know when I grew up. And now I do."

ECONOMY

"Israel's policy on what goods are let into Gaza is somewhat dependent on what products are being overproduced in Israel. So whatever market is flooded in Israel, they dump the waste, including fruits and vegetables, into Gaza. I remember walking into a spice shop one time and seeing bags and bags of dried galangal root. And the shopkeeper said, 'I have no idea what it is, but the Israelis just gave us a huge shipment of it with the other spices I ordered.' I guess there had been a huge Thai food craze in Israel that year, and when it died down, they just dumped all the leftovers into Gaza." • "Last year, my partners and I had five hundred tons of dates ready to sell. They are ripe in the summertime, but you need to keep them frozen if you want to sell them all year. We went to the Palestinian Authority and asked for some freezers, but they said no. We ended up having to sell all our dates in-season and for too low a price. This year, I took out a loan from the bank and bought the freezers. Most people would call me crazy to do this! 'Why do you invest in Palestine? Why do you believe?' It's because we can do a lot as Palestinians, regardless of the occupation. We have everything we need: knowledge, college education, experience. If we expand this farm, we could solve unemployment in the Jordan valley. There are Palestinians farming dates for the Israeli settlements because they need a job. It's better that they can work for other Palestinians instead!" • "People always imagine that everyone in Gaza is starving. Some food is available, but it's a limited supply coming through commercial crossings or foreign aid agencies. It's the access-versus-availability paradigm, which leads to long-term aid dependence. It's a nuanced but very deliberate Israeli policy." • "Many people are familiar with the vast network of tunnels that exists underground between Egypt and Gaza, which, for the most part, has been shut down. For a long time, it was a throughway for all kinds of things: people, goods, information and everything you could imagine. It became a multimillion-dollar industry, which was taxed and regulated. Sometimes it was not to the benefit of the people living in Gaza, but they recognized it as a necessary thing to maintain some sort of economy."

ONE STATE OR TWO STATES

"As it stands, I don't think there will ever be two states. We are questioning land and borders when the real question is: why can't Israelis live with us? Jewish people have always lived in Palestine. But the concept of Zionism excludes Palestinians and Arabs. The only way to achieve real peace is for Israel to allow the people they kicked out in 1948 to return to their land and stop treating us as second-class citizens. No one's asking the Jews to leave. Jews have a long history of living in this part of the world and them returning here is not the problem. The problem is Israeli policy. Religion should not matter; there is no reason we shouldn't have a shared government. We must recognize that Jews can live side-by-side with Palestinians." • "We must respect each other and our right to differ. That's the only way we can live in peace. Jews want a Jewish country; Palestinians want a Palestinian country. What's going to happen if the Christians come back again and say, 'We want a Christian country'? I don't understand why we can't have a federal country like the U.S. It is a country of fifty states with citizens of every religion, all under one flag." • "Israel continues to postpone West Bank negotiations because the more time that passes, the more Israeli settlers will be moved into Zone C. The population of the settlers in Zone C will eventually match the number of Palestinians living inside of Israel. At this point, there will be no way to have a two-state solution without exchanging people. They will use these settlers as a negotiating card. Settlers will go back to Israel, and the Arabs and Christians in Israel will return to the West Bank. The goals of the Israeli government are to remove the right of Palestinians to return to Israel and get rid of the Arabs already living in Israel. That's their master plan." • "For 3,000 years of civilization, Palestine has been self-sufficient, multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual. We have always existed this way. There were times when leaders tried to make Palestine into a uniform country. But we were never all Jewish, all Christian or all Muslim. Never. 1,300 years ago, the Crusaders desperately tried to make this country Catholic, and they failed miserably. Even at the height of the Crusades, more than half the population was Muslim, Jewish, pagan or something else. Zionism is the most recent of these efforts, arriving in the late 19th century. The goal of Zionism is to create a purely Jewish state, and it also has failed miserably. Every day, the Israeli government demolishes Palestinian houses; every day they confiscate Palestinian land; everyday they try to make our lives miserable. Still, there are six million Palestinians here." • "I don't want anyone to have any illusions about Palestinians—that we are all such great guys because we are suffering. No, no! We are people, like Israelis, like Americans, like anybody else: you find idiots, smart people, rich people, poor people. So don't idealize us. And don't vilify us either. I don't want you to think I'm pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli. I'm not. I'm pro-human. End of story. Period. I don't identify with nationalities or group identities. This is nonsense. We can all live together."