Living in Death: The New Dystopian Reality of Israeli Settler Colonialism in Gaza

Isabela Agostinelli dos Santos*
Reginaldo Mattar Nasser**
Bruno Huberman***

Abstract: The contemporary case of settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel generates debates about the different types of violence – physical, territorial, and mental – experienced by the Palestinians. For more than 15 years, the Gaza Strip has been under blockade and isolated from the other Palestinian territories and the world. This reality has led to interpretations of Gaza as a laboratory, where remote-controlled weapons and the limits of human survival are tested. This makes Gazans use expressions such as 'slow death' or 'living death' to describe their lives. This article analyses six short stories from the science fiction book '*Palestine +100: Stories from a century after the Nakba*' (2019) to investigate how the Israeli settler colonialism impacts Palestinian fictional production on Gaza. We argue that the persistence of the Nakba in the Palestinian present through continued expulsions, destruction and assassinations by Israel has made life an everyday dystopia. Furthermore, it made Palestinians' imaginations regarding their future no longer utopian dreams of liberation, but dystopian and cyclical nightmares of confinement and death. Living eternally in the nightmare, as observed in Palestinian artistic productions, works as a colonial counterrevolutionary strategy. In this bleak reality, Gazans are left with the alternative of 'living in death.'

Keywords: Dystopia; Gaza Strip; Palestinian science fiction; death; utopia.

Introduction

The Nakba, an Arabic word that means catastrophe, can be understood as the main watershed in the history of the Palestinian people. For Nur Masalha (1992: 14), it is a

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*   San Tiago Dantas (São Paulo State University, University of Campinas and Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo), São Paulo – SP, Brazil; isagostinelli@hotmail.com. ORCiD 0000-0001-9209-2683.

**   Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP), São Paulo – SP, Brazil; reginaldonasser@gmail.com. ORCiD 0000-0001-5674-4197.

***   Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP), São Paulo – SP, Brazil; bruno.huberman@gmail.com. ORCiD 0000-0002-2898-9231.

permanent trauma in the 'Palestinian psyche' at the individual and national level, and it has echoed in all Palestinian political and cultural manifestations since then.

From 1947 to January 1949, Zionist forces expelled at least 750 000 Palestinians out of a total population of 1.9 M, occupied over 78% of historic Palestine, destroyed some 530 villages and towns, and caused the deaths of 15 000 Palestinians (Pappé 2006). However, the Nakba cannot be seen as the beginning, much less as the end of a long historical process of expropriation and expulsion of the Palestinian population that, in reality, began at the end of the 19th century and continues until today. But, for the Zionists, 14 May 1948, when the State of Israel was officially created, is considered the moment when the utopia of creating a 'Jewish homeland' in Palestine was realized. The intellectual origins of Zionism, as a nationalist political ideology, appeared at the end of the 19th century in Eastern Europe due to anti-Semitic persecution. The utopian visions in the literature of the founders of Zionism imagined an ideal place as a solution to the Jewish problem in Europe and described this place in modern and realistic terms, but always resorting to messianism (Dayan-Herzbrun 2012).

The word utopia is derived from Greek and has a double meaning: it can be understood as a 'nowhere place' and a 'good place.' Utopianism is the idealized projection of an imaginary society onto time and space, which aims at an objective that can scarcely be concretized. Dystopia is a term used to describe a utopian society in which things have gone wrong, but both - utopias and dystopias - share science fiction characteristics. They are designed for the future and are, at the same time, mutually dependent and complementary forms (Bagchi 2012).

Aiming to build political projects in a land of utopias seems paradoxical, since such a place only exists outside of time and space. However, imagination and practice, utopian or dystopian, interact in a complex way between the real and the possible, dream and reality, spaces and temporalities. What constitutes a utopia for some can materialize in a dystopian form for others, as was the creation of the State of Israel: a utopia for the Zionists and a dystopia for the Palestinians (Bagchi 2012: 4-5).

Since the beginning of the 16th century, Western utopian narratives began to reflect and influence the process of exploring territories in the New World. For the settlers, expectations of building a better life led them to opt for uncharted territories where new economic and political institutions could be assembled regardless of the prior presence of native communities. Colonized spaces were seen as empty places, or as places inhabited by 'backward peoples' who did not make proper use of the land. This allowed for the experimentation of a new social order that resulted in the expropriation of the natives from their lands and the exploitation through forced labour of racially subaltern populations. The 'settlers' utopia has always been accompanied by a real dystopia for the native inhabitants (Sargent 2010).

This doctrine, prevalent in the Zionist utopian literature during the process of colonization of Palestine, relies on some peculiar characteristics for the justification of expropriation through ethnic-national arguments, for example, by resorting to a kind of birthright, belonging exclusively to the Jewish people, over the 'Land of Israel' (Svirsky 2010).

In order to articulate the future and the past, several cultural representations were put together by Zionist utopianism to mobilize the Jewish population around a historical undertaking: to bring about the rebirth of an ancient Palestine that was lost in time. These images and perceptions resulted in one of the most cited slogans that best characterizes the Zionist motivation: 'a land without a people for a people without land' (Hochberg 2020; Masalha 1992).

Since its inception more than a century ago, the greatest challenge faced by the Zionist project to create a state for the Jewish people in the eastern Mediterranean has been: how to deal with non-Jewish natives? A first hypothesis, in line with the democratic ideals of Zionism, would be to embrace political equality between Palestinians and Jews - an option that is soon discarded as it would mischaracterize the existence of a State with a Jewish demographic preponderance. How was the Zionist movement going to turn Palestine into a 'Jewish' state if the majority of its inhabitants were Palestinians? Massive Jewish immigration, in the medium and long term, could be an alternative. Nevertheless, how could a truly 'Jewish' policy be established in the presence of a disaffected Arab minority whose birthrate was much higher than that of the Jews? How to remove non-Jews from Palestine and remain a democratic state? (Li 2008).

These considerations by Zionist leaders regarding the relationship between demography and occupation of spaces in Palestine are at the heart of the foundation of the State of Israel and populate the minds and imagination of several generations. One of the maxims of Israeli strategists is 'First, maximize the number of Arabs on the minimal amount of land, and second, maximize control over the Arabs while minimizing any apparent responsibility for them' (Li 2008).

Not surprisingly, this has been the guiding principle of Israeli policies towards the Gaza Strip, a territory of 365 km2 that is home to more than 2 million Palestinians, 70% of them refugees or descendants of those expelled in 1948. Since then, Gaza has been considered a demographic problem by the Zionist leaders, to the point that the Israeli geostrategist and demographer Aron Soffer warned, in 1989, of the 'demographic bomb' that was Gaza and the danger it represented for the future of a purely Jewish State. Soffer was one of the architects of the disengagement plan from Gaza, implemented in 2005 and which consisted of the withdrawal of all Israeli settlements from the region, giving the impression of Palestinian autonomy, but which guaranteed the continuation of border control and airspace in the hands of Israel (de Crousaz 2005).

Unlike the West Bank, which is subject to the expansion of Israeli settlements and is internally fragmented, or East Jerusalem, which is experiencing contradictory processes of dispossession and neoliberal integration, Gaza is best described as an open-air prison. All these territories coexist with different degrees of dystopian reality. However, because of its *sui generis* situation, Gaza expresses 'the outcome of processes of land consolidation and demographic isolation that began in what is now Israel and continue apace in the rest of historic Palestine' (Baconi 2020: 8). Added to the process that Sara Roy (1999) calls de-development, that is, the progressive and systematic incapacitation of the Palestinian economy through the expropriation of economic resources and socio-spatial isolation,

Gaza is currently seen as a laboratory where advances in control and surveillance technologies are tested, along with the limits of human survival (Dana 2020; Li 2006).

The post-disengagement reality in Gaza, therefore, more closely resembles a dystopia, which in recent years has provided the perfect backdrop for Palestinian futuristic science fiction, as is the case with the first literary work of its kind published by Palestinians, *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba*. The book is a collection of twelve stories by Palestinian writers who imagine Palestine in 2048, one hundred years after the Nakba. Six of the stories feature Gaza as the central scenario of the contradictions between living life according to a digital image of Palestine and continuing the struggle for national liberation and reconquest of the land, passing through themes such as the weakening of resistance and the condition of 'death in life' that many Palestinians face. The editor of the collection, Basma Ghalayini (2019: 7), explains why the science fiction genre has never been so popular among Palestinian authors: 'it is a luxury, to which Palestinians haven't felt they can afford to escape.'

Our main objective in this article is to understand the relationships between utopias and dystopias present in the book *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba,* placing it in the historical context of the Israeli colonization process in Gaza and demonstrating how material practices affect Palestinians' representations of their past, present and future. We hope to contribute to the literature that reflects on the political correlations between different Palestinian fictions throughout history, particularly the bibliography that has discussed the increase in Palestinian dystopian productions in recent years. We intend to reveal the connection between the deepening of the dystopian reality in the material life of Palestinians in Gaza, as well as the appearance of artistic productions that see the Nakba no longer as a milestone in the heroic resistance towards liberation but as a tipping point in the destruction of Palestinian society and lives that runs through the present and invariably occupies the dystopian future that Palestinians envision for themselves.

We argue that the persistence of the Nakba in the present-day lives of Palestinians through continued expulsions, destruction and assassinations by the State of Israel has made life under occupation an everyday dystopia. Moreover, it has increasingly affected how Palestinians imagine their future, turning utopian dreams of liberation into dystopian and cyclical nightmares of confinement and death. Dreaming of liberation is fundamental for revolutionary actions by colonized people towards self-determination. Fanon (2005: 69) reminds us that the dreams of the colonized are always corporeal, muscular, aggressive and of action. Dreams serve as a counterpoint to the daily limitations imposed by the colonizers. The eternal nightmare that has come to increasingly inhabit Palestinian artistic productions functions as a counterrevolutionary strategy of the colonizers. In this bleak reality, Palestinians are left with one alternative: to resign themselves to a life of death or 'to live while dying.' Hopelessness has grown among those living in Gaza, translating into the escapism from death and the virtual world seen in some stories from *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba*. However, dystopias also reveal that Palestinians continue to imagine their future selves resisting despite the difficulties of the present.

This article analyses six short stories from the book *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba* to investigate how the dystopian reality of Gaza, interspersed with military actions, blockades, arrests and deaths, as well as the different forms of resistance of the Palestinian population, inspires dystopian fictional works about the future of Gaza and the Palestinians in 2048, when the Nakba turns a hundred years old. We intend to investigate how the 'infrastructural violence' of Israeli settler colonialism (Salamanca 2011; Winter 2016), which suffocates everyday life in Gaza, becomes fodder for the dreams and imaginations of Palestinian authors.

The article is structured as follows: the second section discusses the importance of the Nakba as a watershed in the Palestinian experience and identity, in addition to establishing an overview of the recent artistic and literary production of Palestinians in the genre of science fiction. The third section is dedicated to the analysis of chapters from *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba* that have Gaza as the central scenario and is divided into three thematic axes that permeate the texts and reveal the limbos in which Gaza Palestinians live, both in fiction and in reality: (i) death and life, (ii) material reality and virtual reality, (iii) dystopia and utopia. Finally, we draw some considerations about the possibilities of hope and imagination for the future in Palestine in the face of limits imposed by Israeli settler colonialism.

Palestinian artistic representations: from utopia to dystopia

Literature fulfilled the role of reverberating the anti-colonial struggle and Palestinian resistance against the erasure of popular memories promoted by Zionist representations of the events of 1948 that became the hegemonic view — Nakba for Palestinians and national liberation for Israelis (Masalha 2012). During the decades following the Palestinian exodus, the Israeli version of the facts prevailed as the true one, recounting the flight of Palestinians as a natural response to the war that began with the end of the British Mandate (1918-1948) and mistakes made by Palestinian leaders. According to this version, Israelis bear no direct responsibility for the destruction of Palestinian society and the dispersal of its population. Israel's military forces would only have acted defensively in response to the declaration of war by the Arab countries (Transjordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq). As Israeli President Chaim Weizman famously, though somewhat cynically, declared, the Palestinian exodus had been a 'miracle' (Masalha 2012).

This hegemonic Israeli narrative was accepted internationally for decades despite Palestinian efforts to counteract it through fictional and non-fictional publications and mobilizations in various political spheres. The main interruption of the official memory of the events of 1948 occurred upon the declassification of Israeli documents containing evidence of the Zionist military's intent to expel the native population. These records made it possible for some Israeli historians to revise the founding myths of the State, which caused severe fractures in the Israeli identity (Masalha 2012). In other words, it was only when the settlers took interest in the Palestinian narrative that it began to have a voice. However, Israeli historians who studied the documents had different interpretations regarding the intentionality of the Zionist leaders in the expulsion of the

Palestinians. Ilan Pappé (2006) was the only one to adopt a version that more closely resembled that of the Palestinians precisely because he relied on native oral history to build the argument that ethnic cleansing had taken place in 1948.

The power to represent is central to the political and economic goals of colonial states, which makes the struggle for self-representation a fundamental field of action for the anti-colonial movement for national liberation (Said 1995; 2003). According to Edward Said (1995: 11, our translation), 'the power to narrate, or to prevent other narratives from forming or emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between the two.' Throughout history, there have been countless Israeli efforts to erase or hide the memory built by Palestinians, including materially. For example, in January 2019, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved an amendment that allowed documents from state agencies to remain classified for seventy to ninety years (Hazkani 2019).

The Palestinian national identity was forged through several phenomena, such as belonging to Muslim, Arab and Ottoman identity and resistance to Zionist settler colonialization (Khalidi 2010). The Nakba was a historical process that rebuilt Palestinian identity through fragmentation. From then on, Palestinians began to live different experiences of belonging to the Palestinian nation. For example, the relationship with the Palestinian territory and the way of life therein were elements central to the original construction of the Palestinian identity. That is, their material experience of the land constituted the Palestinian people beyond religious and ethnic identities. Early Palestinian poetry narrated precisely the relationship between the people and the land. Texts in magazines published by members of the Palestinian intellectual elites, particularly those who were against the sale of land to the Zionists and denounced the expulsion of peasants, were fundamental for the circulation of ideas that built the imagined Palestinian community (Mir 2013).

The Nakba split this people between those who remained in the territory and those who went into exile. Among those who stayed, there was a split between those who came to live under Israeli authority and those who remained under Arab leadership in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. There was also a generational split between those who lived in pre-Nakba Palestine and experienced the expulsion process and those who came after the catastrophe. Belonging to the land began to be passed from generation to generation, not only through material experience in the territory, but also through memories and accounts (Mir 2013).

The hardships of life in exile and the hope of returning were the main themes that marked Palestinian literary production after the Nakba, particularly that of refugee authors. Return was seen as inevitable and imminent, not only among ordinary people but also among officials of pan-Arabist nations and Palestinian artists. Inspired by the national liberation movements in Algeria, Egypt and Vietnam, the Palestinian struggle became part of the third-worldist and pan-Arabist struggle that aspired to build a new global order (Saʿdi 2015). Even the Palestinians who lived under Israeli authority nurtured a hope of return and cultivated resilience in the face of the military regime imposed by

the settlers between 1948 and 1966 (Saʿdi 2015). In 'Here We Shall Stay,' Tawfīq Zayyād (cited in Saʿdi 2015: 222) narrates the resistance of the Palestinians:

> In Lidda, in Ramla, in the Galilee,
> we shall remain,
> guard the shade of the fig
> and olive trees,
> ferment rebellion in our children
> as yeast in the dough.

In 'He Was a Child That Day,' Ghassan Kanafani, a Palestinian refugee writer in Lebanon, tells the story of a trip on a bus that travels through the cities of Acre, Haifa and the surrounding villages at the beginning of the Nakba. Most of the tale describes social relations between Palestinians, such as sharing a sandwich or a woman looking for a wife for her son, as well as political issues, such as lawyers investigating land ownership and peasants discussing the harvest and recent atrocities (Yaqub 2012). The author depicts the landscape from house to house as if we were watching a movie. At a checkpoint, the bus is stopped by a Zionist militia. The men are forced to exit the vehicle and are assassinated. The only Palestinian child in the vehicle is forced to flee. The young man then embarks on a journey with a confidence and sense of agency that point to the vigour of the armed struggle Palestinians were waging at the time of the tale's publication in 1969. Despite the violence that ended a pre-1948 utopian society, the young man carries the memory of this life into a vision of the future for which he will fight (Yaqub 2012).

Utopia has always played a key role in post/anti-colonial literatures. It forms a vision of the future in the imagination of the natives that can give strength to resistance. The anticipation of a free, decolonized future is vital to the transformation that colonized society must undergo to emancipate itself. The utopian is always founded on a critique of the present, expanding the horizon of possibilities of social change in the face of a disappointing reality. Furthermore, utopia can only exist via a memory operating to connect the past with the future by way of the present (Ashcroft 2021).

However, this utopia of return was also ambiguously represented in the contrast between dream and reality. In the type of literature depicting Palestinians' real or imaginary return to their homeland, feelings of sadness and loneliness are common. In 'Returning to Haifa,' Kanafani narrates the fictional return of a Palestinian couple to Haifa, where they were forced to leave their son behind during the Nakba. Their house is now inhabited by a Jewish woman who disapproves of what was done to the Palestinians in Nakba. The son, raised by Israelis, serves in the Israeli army and rejects his Palestinian identity. The difficulty of facing reality made many Palestinian refugees reject the really existing society in Palestine instead of engaging with its changes and with the Palestinians who continued to live in their homeland (Saʿdi 2015).

After the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 and the subsequent defeats of the Palestinian guerrilla movement in Jordan in 1969 and later in Lebanon in 1982, pessimism about the present and the future began to take over Palestinian literature.

Instead of an imminent return, the suffering of living outside their homeland and under Arab authorities that constantly pursued them became part of the refugees' trajectory. Mahmoud Darwish wrote a poem in which the Palestinian experience of exile can only lead to more exile, an endless cyclical story (Saʿdi 2015: 239). Being constantly on the move as wandering subjects has become a characteristic of the Palestinians, as revealed by the many stories of trajectories, departures, arrivals or cycles (Yaqub 2012). Omnipresent death in the Nakba continued to haunt Palestinians even in exile. In 'Men in the Sun', from 1963, Kanafani tells the story of three Palestinian refugees who flee poverty and oppression in Lebanon only to end up dying on the way to Kuwait in search of work.

In the 2000s, Palestinian cinema began to portray the occupation's daily interruptions of Palestinian roads in what became known as 'roadblock movies.' Although some have happy endings, demonstrating the Palestinians' capacity to overcome the blockades and reach their destination, others feature cyclical narratives that confine Palestinians to the brutal and humiliating daily life of the occupation without beginning or end. The films of the 2000s, in general, do not aim to bring hope to the Palestinians, as did the utopian works of the guerrilla era, but reflect the co-option and destruction of the Palestinian movement. This narrowing of the political horizon made it possible for dystopia to become more prevalent in literary representations (Yaqub 2012).

The film 'Ford Transit' (2003), by Hany Abu-Assad, tells the story of Rajai, a van driver who connects different locations in the West Bank separated by checkpoints, walls and settlements. The economy he integrates, however, is often illegal, with vegetables and even CDs being trafficked between Jerusalem and other locations in the West Bank. Along the way, the van passes through dirt roads, filthy alleys and building rubble in an attempt to deviate from checkpoints (Yaqub 2012). The film ends with Rajai walking away from the van to seek help after the vehicle breaks down. Though unresolved, the story presents the journey of someone who perseveres despite the dystopia of his everyday life.

In the audiovisual arts, Larissa Sansour has stood out for producing science fiction that portrays a dystopian future for Palestinians. Sansour's work imagines a dystopian horizon that does not necessarily feature the pessimism typical of dystopias (Gennari 2021). In 'In the Future, They Ate From the Finest Porcelain', Sansour and Søren Lind portray an apocalyptic scenario in which a Palestinian resistance movement is able to manipulate artifacts that alter the political situation in their favour in the future. According to Gennari (2021: 17, our translation), Palestinian fiction recovers 'the possibility not only of imagining a future in which Palestine actually exists but of proposing other perspectives for understanding time and space, denouncing the impossibility of its existence in the present time.'

Therefore, we understand that Palestinian daily life, permeated by checkpoints, walls, murders, imprisonments, extreme poverty and political leaders unable to envision a horizon beyond the neoliberal consumer society, inspires a dystopian art. The dystopian present limits the capacity for imagination of Palestinian artistic production, making

pessimistic dystopias an increasingly present theme in Palestinian works. The direct parallel between this contemporary reality and the Nakba can be found in the work of Alaa Abu Asad, who juxtaposes in a set of images the villages emptied in 1948 and the new buildings in Ramallah, still empty because of real estate speculation (Marusek 2020: 18).

The Nakba has always been a reference point for Palestinian authors, but the interpretation of its meaning has changed throughout history. In the early years, the Nakba generation was accused of being cowardly and irresponsible, but with the advance of armed guerrilla warfare, it came to be seen as an anti-colonial resistance; the defeat in 1948 would have occurred not due to lack of popular resistance, but due to a broad combination of factors (Saʿdi 2015). After the Oslo process (1993-1995) and the Second Intifada (2000-2006), representations of the Nakba take on an increasingly tragic form. According to Galvão (2019: 83, our translation), they come to reflect 'the Palestinian trauma that is reiterated on a daily basis by the difficulties of their everyday lives.' The Nakba is, on the one hand, a symbol of resistance, but, on the other hand, it is also

> The undeniable manifestation of a repetitive cycle of misfortune and defeat from which Palestinians cannot seem to escape and into which they are drawn again and again. The memory of the Nakba, therefore, has this curious characteristic of denoting presence and absence at the same time, and mobilizing affections in these two directions as it incorporates memories that are repeated and accumulated. (Galvão 2019: 83, our translation)

Palestinians' claim that they would be living a 'continuous Nakba' expresses the popular transformation in the perception around the catastrophe of 1948 in which Palestinians would be trapped in time and space. This perception among ordinary Palestinians and artists denotes the structural logic of the process of colonization by settlement, which characterizes the presence of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel in the relationship with the Palestinian people and its territory.

Settler colonialism can be understood as the process of aiming to build the Zionist nation by destroying the native Palestinian society. This destruction occurs from a continuous, structural and always unfinished process of dispossession of Palestinians through expulsion, destruction of their homes and villages, genocide, mass incarceration, confinement in Bantustans and symbolic erasure of their national identity (Wolfe 2006). In the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), particularly in the Gaza Strip, the colonial process materializes in an even more brutal and cruel way through blockades, walls and bombings that constitute the necropolitics that looms over the territory and its population. The catastrophe of the Nakba is tragically reiterated in the day-to-day destruction and homelessness suffered by Palestinians in Gaza. Some authors even point to the calculated engineering of a situation 'on the brink of catastrophe' (Azoulay and Ophir 2012).

The heavy defeats suffered by Palestinians since Oslo deepened artists' pessimism about their reality and their future, making dystopia a more familiar, recurring theme. In

this way, it is revealing that the collection *Palestine +100: Stories from a century after the Nakba* has the Nakba as a reference and Gaza as a locus to narrate several dystopian stories that imagine the future of Palestinians from the end of the 2010s. As Marusek notes (2020: 20), Palestinian art that feature dystopian representations still projects a future for its people, even if it is a murky one. This is because dystopia, although fundamentally opposed to utopia, is part of the same project of criticizing the present to imagine the future.

Gaza in *Palestine +100*: dystopia or reality?

In the post-disengagement Gaza Strip, that is, after the Israeli settlements were dismantled by Israel in 2005, many inhabitants have characterized everyday life as a slow death: 'The closure is like dying a slow death,' says Ramadan Bari, a Palestinian from Gaza (PCHR 2013). Although the spectacular nature of the bombings rightly draws attention during military operations in Gaza, everyday life is marked by the effects, often lethal, of Israeli policies restricting the movement of people and products, as well as the remote control of the operation of resources and infrastructure such as water, electricity, agriculture, fishing and industry (Salamanca 2011; Winter 2016). In this sense, death is not spectacular but 'atmospheric': it haunts Palestinians in Gaza in many ways – political, social and, as we noted in *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba*, imaginative.

A very illustrative example is food insecurity, which currently affects 64% of the population of Gaza (WFP 2022). In 2012, the food restriction policy that had been in place in Gaza since 2007 was revealed due to Israel's Freedom of Information Act. The Red Lines Policy determined how many calories a Gaza inhabitant should consume to avoid becoming malnourished or dying of hunger: an adult should consume 2,500 calories a day, and a child should consume 1550 calories. This led to calculating the amount of food that could enter Gaza and, consequently, the number of trucks allowed to enter the region. With the justification of national security, some items were prohibited, such as apricots, plums, grapes and avocados, which were considered inadmissible luxuries (Gross and Feldman 2015).

Israeli authorities claim that the food policy ended in 2010. However, mobility-restriction policies remain responsible for the lack of access to adequate food in Gaza and the impossibility of leaving the region to seek jobs or even treatment for chronic diseases. Between 2008 and 2021, 839 cancer patients died in Gaza waiting for permission to leave (Fayyad 2022). The situation is aggravated by the dual-use policy, which prohibits importing several essential products for rebuilding Gaza's infrastructure and for the proper functioning of sectors such as agriculture and hospitals. Banned products include pesticides, fertilizers, x-ray machines, communication equipment, cement, asphalt and wooden boards (Gisha 2022b).

Therefore, by maintaining control of Gaza's space, population and resources, Israel exercises an occupation without occupiers in the territory (Winter 2016). An occupation, after all, is not limited to the expropriation of land but involves a regime of population

control (Amir 2021: 2). As the focus of power is less on the physical presence and more on the control of the infrastructure, it is possible to say that Israel exercises a necropolitical regime in Gaza, as characterized by Mbembe (2003). That is, a systematic and orchestrated production of death based on the destruction of the social and urban infrastructure network.

Faced with this dystopian colonial reality, Palestinians in Gaza have lived through multiple limbos, as represented in *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba*. In order to analyse them, this section is organized around three axes: the limbos between (i) death and life, (ii) virtual and material reality, and (iii) dystopia and utopia.

Death and life

The opening chapter of the *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba* collection, Saleem Haddad's 'Song of the Birds' (2019), revolves around the theme of life and death. It was written in memory of Mohanned Younis (1994-2017), a Palestinian from Gaza who committed suicide. The story follows 14-year-old Aya, who suffers the trauma of losing her older brother Ziad to suicide. The siblings, who grew up under the blockade, never knowing freedom, illustrate the current conditions in which Gaza's youth live. In June 2022, a study of 488 young people from Gaza revealed that 80% have mental health problems and 55% have already thought about suicide (Humaid 2020). Currently, 69% of the inhabitants are under 30, and more than half of the population is under 18 (Gisha 2022b). In other words, 50% of the population grew up under blockade, unable to transit to other parts of Palestine or the world.

The story begins at sea as Aya goes for a swim. As the story unfolds, the character experiences a series of moments of mental confusion. Here it is interesting to note the symbology of the sea: the Gaza Strip is the only Palestinian territory with access to the sea, and many Palestinians go to the beach to experience some sense of freedom. In times of water and electricity cuts, some natives resort to the sea to cool off or forget about their problems. For fisherman Rami al-Habil, 'The sea is the only way to breathe in Gaza' (Morris and Balousha 2017). However, the State of Israel controls the number of nautical miles that Palestinians in Gaza can travel, which impacts both fishing and the lives of fishermen. From 2010 to 2017, there were 976 shooting incidents off the coast of Gaza (Gisha 2018). Thus, although the sea provides a welcome break from the 'open-air prison,' accessing it beyond the limits imposed by colonial power can be fatal.

It is at sea that, for the first time, Aya questions whether she is awake or dreaming. She is swimming in the calm blue waters, listening to the song of the birds, which stops when she dips her head. Suddenly, Aya notices a putrid smell. Pieces of garbage wrap around her body, and the water becomes a green slime. She also sees that the large hotels and restaurants on the beachfront have given way to destroyed buildings, surrounded by bomb smoke (Haddad, S. 2019: 13). Although this scene appears in a work of dystopian fiction, it can also be found in the 'real Gaza': in 2018, 75% of the region's beaches were polluted as a result of dumping 100 000 L of sewage into the sea each day, due to electricity cuts and policies restricting the entry of dual-use goods used to rebuild water and

sewage treatment plants. Consequently, seawater became unsuitable for bathing, and those who ventured to swim contracted diseases such as cholera, polio and giardiasis (OCHA 2018).

When Aya emerges from the sea, she sees three dead children's bodies and faints. Helped by her father, she is taken to a doctor, who applies some biotherapeutic stress-relief tape. Aya tells her father that she was thinking about Ziad before passing out. The doctor attributes Aya's breakdown to the trauma of losing her brother (Haddad, S. 2019: 15). Far from just being fiction, trauma and other psychological illnesses affect a third of Palestinians in Gaza, especially young people – in 2021, 90% of the 530 respondents in a survey by Euro-Med Monitor revealed to have some type of mental suffering (Ahmed 2021; Osman 2021). Psychiatrist Samah Jabr (2019) points out that the most common diagnosis is post-traumatic stress syndrome. However, the prefix 'post' hardly applies since the trauma of Palestinians living in Gaza under blockade resurfaces daily.

On another occasion, Aya asks Ziad if he really died. Ziad replies that, in her world, 'death isn't really dying. In a way, I guess it's more like waking up' (Haddad, S. 2019: 17). Later, Aya dreams of Ziad again, and he reveals to her that the life she is living is a farce: the occupation is not over, all that has changed are the technologies of control and subjugation (Haddad, S. 2019: 20). As proof that Aya, in fact, lives in a digital image of Palestine, Ziad asks her to pay attention to the song of the birds, its repetitive pattern a confirmation that there is nothing natural about the life she is living.

In one scene, Aya questions whether Ziad's suicide was the right choice to get out of the simulation. At this moment, Ziad is in a wheelchair, with his legs amputated. This is a reference to what Puar (2015) calls the right to mutilate, an Israeli policy of deliberately and systematically producing a series of disabilities in Palestinian bodies and spaces. A recurrent example is shooting Palestinian demonstrators in the arms and legs so that they amputate these limbs and, consequently, are unable to engage in public demonstrations. Puar (2015) argues that 'shooting to disable' is a counterinsurgency tactic, albeit flawed, since Palestinians like Ziad keep resisting despite being mutilated. More than that, the right to mutilate means leaving power imprinted on the body of the colonized.

In the short story 'Song of the Birds', the Gaza Strip is a deathscape where reality and dystopia mix and the Nakba continues to materialize through what Pace and Yacobi (2021) call slow violence, a phenomenon which deprives the inhabitants of possibilities of being, transforming their lives into 'non-lives.' Like Aya, the inhabitants of Gaza live in a state of uncertainty between a suspended present, a past that is not over and a future that cannot be imagined outside the shackles of colonization (Amir 2021), in such a way that life has been transformed into an 'everyday non-life', a 'not yet arrived death' (Pace and Yacobi 2021: 1223).

Trauma, numbness and death also play a central role in Rawan Yaghi's 'Commonplace' (2019). The protagonist, Adam, is a young Palestinian from Gaza who sells sedatives to the local population scarred by the drone bombs that are dropped on the region daily. Adam's clients' need for sedatives are 'a product of their location and the things they'd witnessed in this wretched place' (Yaghi 2019: 140). In addition to the bombings,

constant surveillance leaves the inhabitants in a perpetual state of fear, impacting their mental health.

Like Aya, Adam grieves over the loss of his sister, Rahaf, who was killed by a drone when he was 14. Rahaf had entered the 'no soul area' to fetch empty cans to trade for some potatoes, an allusion to the poverty and food insecurity facing Palestinians in Gaza. In 'Commonplace', the 'no soul area' is a space that Palestinians cannot enter, much like the real 'no-go area,' a stretch of land 300m from the border of the Gaza Strip with Israel. Between 2010 and 2017, 161 Palestinians died, and more than 3,000 were injured by Israeli forces simply for being in the *no-go area* (Gisha 2018). In January 2009, during Operation Cast Lead, leaflets containing a message that could have come from a work of fiction was distributed to Gazans 'warning' them not to enter the no-go area:

> To the residents of the Strip: The IDF repeats its warning about coming within 300m of the border fence. Anyone who comes close to the fence exposes himself to danger, as the IDF will take all necessary steps to keep them away, including, when necessary, the use of live fire. Those who warn are pardoned! The leadership of the IDF. (Pereira 2014: 23)

Both the 'no soul area' and the 'no-go area' are deathscapes in which Israeli forces kill anyone who dares to cross. And that's exactly what Adam does: burdened by the hopelessness of a living-death, he enters the no soul area knowing that he will be hit by Israeli drones and die. In the dystopian reality of Gaza, suicides like this have become a part of everyday life in the Palestinian community (Helm 2018).

The death-life theme also appears in Majd Kayyal's 'N' (2019). In a wistful tone, N's father, a middle-aged Palestinian from Gaza, reflects on how, in post-war Palestine, the deal that created a virtual parallel Palestine resulted in people taking refuge in the vast library of virtual realities to escape the present in which Gaza was obliterated. Consequently, streets that once teemed with Palestinian resistance are now empty and people seem to have withdrawn into themselves. Here, the symbology of cold and heat draws attention: N's father points out that the cold empties the streets, while heat fills the people who sit on their sofas and connect to virtual reality devices, entering a state of calm (Kayyal 2019: 50). It is as if the only possible life were virtual, and it is precisely this clash between virtual reality and material reality that guides the text, also appearing in other chapters of *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba*.

Material reality, virtual reality

In 'N,' when Gaza turns into a 'hi-tech scientific apartheid' (Kayyal 2019: 60), virtual reality becomes a refuge and sometimes an obsession for those who still live in the enclave. People can access a variety of virtual realities, including those from the past, such as Egypt in the early 20th century. However, Virtual Reality (VR) directors eliminate some facts or political figures, such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, a great leader of pan-Arabism (Kayyal 2019: 51). Thus, freedom, memory and history in the virtual world continue to

be controlled by the colonial power. This virtual life, therefore, has no past or memory – it is a life suspended in virtual reality, which bothers N's father, whose generation is perhaps the last to remember Nakba. Nevertheless, this is the preferable life for N and the other young Palestinians who were born after the 'Agreement.' The text mentions this agreement several times but does not specify its name or date of signature. N's father is emphatic in attributing the success of virtual reality to social and individual isolation:

> These VRs, for all their different versions and brands, would never have worked without one key element: the isolation of the person inside the machine, their total anonymity, the complete abandonment of their memory. [...] Complete isolation is the secret to eliminating the present. Isolating from the other, isolating from the self, isolation from existence. (Kayyal 2019: 52)

Thus, separation and isolation continue to exist in the VR, which in Kayyal's story (2019) represents the socio-spatial isolation that Gaza has endured since the 1990s and which has intensified in the post-disengagement. In 1991, in the context of the First Intifada, Israel revoked the 'general permit,' which guaranteed Palestinians free passage between the West Bank and Gaza. From then on, a complex permissions system was inaugurated with very specific and restricted criteria.1 In 1993, the closure policy was implemented, which closed the Israeli market to workers from Gaza as a counter-terrorist measure and, consequently, increased the unemployment rate in the region (Roy 1999). These were some of the first measures that, over the years, intensified the physical, social and economic separation of the OPT, impacting mainly Palestinian families (Bashi and Diamond 2015). Already in the 2000s, the separation of Gaza was consolidated, resulting in what some authors call 'enclavisation' (Falah 2005), transforming Gaza into a segregated space, with a weakening of social and economic interflows. The notion of enclave, however, is not attributed only to Gaza. According to Baconi (2020: 2), the internal fragmentation of the West Bank, institutionalized by Oslo, transforms that region into a conglomerate of urban enclaves whose borders are militarily controlled by Israel, a process he calls 'Gazafication.'

Similar to the Deal of the Century proposed by former US President Donald Trump in 2020, which provided for the creation of a Palestinian State with its 168 enclaves connected by technologically advanced infrastructure (Baconi 2020: 2), the story of Ahmed Masoud (2019), 'Application 39', is set in a Palestine divided into hundreds of city-states. Forced to become 'independent republics' after the collapse of the Oslo Accords in 2025, these city-states are not autonomous – their borders, roads and airspace remain controlled by Israel (Masoud 2019: 111). To circumvent the control, the Palestinians built a high-tech network of tunnel-elevators interconnecting the city-states. In the story, these tunnels are a continuation of those initially dug by Hamas, which actually happened: these real-life tunnels were meant to 'break' the Gaza siege and transport various products, from basic foodstuffs to vehicles and weapons (Pelham 2012).

In 2040, two young people from the city-state of Gaza, Ismael and Rayyad, hack the Olympic committee system and register Gaza as a candidate to host the 39th edition of

the Summer Olympics, which will take place in 2048. Surprisingly, the registration is approved. The Gaza authorities discover that this was a joke by the young people and are worried that the other Palestinian authorities and the Israelis will break the 2030 peace agreement since they were not consulted. Israel, in fact, is particularly bothered, as Tel Aviv had been applying for years to host the Olympics and was never accepted (Masoud 2019: 121).

In yet another example of Israeli remote control and surveillance, a robot drone spies on Ishmael and Rayyad, but it malfunctions and crashes. The young men take advantage of the situation and hack the robot to extract information that could be valuable to the Gaza authorities. They discover that the Israelis are planning to attack Gaza to cancel the Olympics, with the support of the Palestinian president of the city-state of Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip. The president has not forgiven Gaza for its entry into the Olympics and has cut off diplomatic relations with the republic and closed the tunnels that connected them (Masoud 2019: 121). With access to the telephones of all inhabitants, the president of the city-state of Gaza sends a message to everyone, calling for a peaceful demonstration that rejects any kind of war and reinforces solidarity among Palestinians (Masoud 2019: 127). Dubbed the March for Peace, the demonstration gathers half the city. However, an Israeli drone intervenes, accusing the President of Gaza of breaking 'Article 48A of the 2026 Peace Accord' and declaring his arrest. In a spontaneous act of rebellion, the president kicks the robot drone, which shoots at the president and kills him. Soon after, several other drones appear and open fire on the population, turning the demonstration into a bloodbath (Masoud 2019: 130).

The March for Peace recalls the Marches of Return. These weekly, fundamentally peaceful demonstrations took place on the Gaza-Israel border from 2018 to mid-2020 and demanded the right of return and an end to the Gaza blockade. As usual, the protests were repressed by Israeli forces, who even took the opportunity to test new weapons, such as tear gas drones, expanding bullets and rifles. With this, Gaza becomes a laboratory and a showcase for the technological innovations of the lucrative Israeli arms industry (Dana 2020). Until April 2020, 214 died, and more than 36,000 were injured in the Marches of Return, while one Israeli soldier was killed and seven were wounded (UN 2020). Although it reproduces the daily massacres suffered by the inhabitants of Gaza, 'Application 39' illustrates a less pessimistic dystopian future. Rather than the escapism of death, Palestinians Ishmael and Rayyad continue to creatively subvert the Israeli occupation by making Gaza host the Olympic Games, much like the real-life fire kites that thwart drone action.

Still on the theme of Palestinian separation and the permanence of resistance in this chaotic, dystopian future, in 'Digital Nation,' by Emad el-Din Aysha, after a virus infects the entire digital system of Israel, a virtual version of Palestine is created, constituting 'the world's first virtual government' (Aysha 2019: 85). On the eve of the centenary of the Nakba, in a Palestine transformed into a 'series of fragmented banana republics' (Aysha 2019: 76), a Palestinian hacker invades all virtual reality devices in Israel and gradually begins to 're-Arabize' the country: Hebrew names are replaced by pre-Nakba Arabic names in virtual tourist guides, eBooks, atlases and GPSs (Aysha 2019: 84). The

character Asa Shomer, director of Shabak, the Israeli security agency, even praises the virus, after all, 'Who needs to "liberate" Palestine if you can convert Israel into Palestine? You wouldn't even need to build a new world, just repaint the existing one' (Aysha 2019: 82). With the slogan 'It's time to come home,' this virtual resistance gives Palestinians a unified government, with a digital sea where they can swim freely, and contracts with foreigners to finance the water and energy sectors, agribusiness and tourism. However, this 'digital comeback' is revealed to be yet another farce, since, back in material reality, Palestine remains under occupation and devoid of any real emancipation. Just like in reality, Palestinian resistance is permeated by contradictions that prevent it from achieving national liberation (Haddad, T. 2016).

Similarly, in 'Song of the Birds,' Ziad does not support the simulation in which Aya and her parents live, as this 'digital right of return' is just another control technology that does not end the occupation and only serves to pacify the Palestinian resistance. For Ziad, this digital reality means that they are now 'at the frontier of a new form of colonization,' which means that young people need 'to develop new forms of resistance' (Haddad, S. 2019: 23). Ziad defies the Israeli attempt to undermine resistance by mutilating Palestinian bodies and declares what seem to be his last words to Aya: 'My body is crippled but my mind is free. And I'm going to keep fighting until I'm completely free: body, mind and soul' (Haddad, S. 2019: 26). In this way, Ziad rejects fraudulent solutions to Palestinian liberation. If, in the text of Haddad, S. (2019), this solution is represented by digital Palestine, in the 'real Gaza' the fraudulent solution to liberation is precisely the Israeli disengagement, which never signified the autonomy of Gaza, but the continuation of the occupation by remote control, facilitated by technological advances (Salamanca 2011).

Dystopia and utopia

> Who among us has a soul invaded by death chasing him in the wandering streets
> and you're not afraid?!
> We all fear the afterlife
> because we weren't even saved from the first one.
> What salvation are you talking about?
> If I am suspended in the narrowness of space extended into infinity,
> I reach out and grab the dust of spirit and the shards of my being
> and when I perk up my ears at the window of salvation
> the words die in the silence of the scream.
> (Ahmad 2022: 93, our translation)

In this excerpt from 'Salvation is not real,' Gazan poet Ilina Ahmad (2022: 92) expresses her disillusionment with the liberation of Palestine. Her words represent an inevitable abandonment of utopia in the face of the dystopian limitations of life in Gaza under Israeli rule. In this poem and other texts of *Palestine +100: Stories from a century*

after the Nakba, the limbo between dystopia and utopia can be identified through the tensions between hope and hopelessness experienced by the characters, especially those marked by intergenerational differences.

In 'Song of the Birds' and 'N,' generational differences regarding the memory of the Nakba and collective trauma are explicit. N's father's generation seems to be the last to remember the Nakba, as Article 7 of the post-war agreement - the only article children are required to memorize in schools - lays down a waiver prohibiting commemorations of past events:

> Both parties shall refrain from commemorating the hostilities that occurred between them, or any part thereof. This shall include commemorations of a direct and/or symbolic nature, as well as commemorations of celebration and/or mourning. (Kayyad 2019: 56)

In other words, it is forbidden to publicly and politically mourn those who died during the 'hostilities' between Palestinians and Israelis. It is a policy of forgetting History, of intentional amnesia, as Krishna (2001) would say, to erase the past whose memory of the Nakba and belonging to the land are central to resistance – at least for N's father's generation, unlike his son's.

This relationship is reversed in 'Song of the Birds,' where Aya and Ziad's parents and the other adults of their generation spend most of their time sleeping or in a state of apathy. In that story, the generation that suffered trauma of the Nakba has already lost hope for the dystopia it inhabits. For Ziad's parents, memories return more readily, unlike the generation that was born in the simulation (Haddad, S. 2019: 23). Ziad complains to Aya that his generation is 'just another generation imprisoned by our parents' nostalgia' (Haddad, S. 2019: 20), somehow understanding the importance of the Nakba, but seeking new forms of resistance to counter the technological advancement of colonization. Unlike the father, who, in an example of hopelessness and abandonment of the *sumud,* tells Aya that 'home is simply a matter of changing your perspective' (Haddad, S. 2019: 25), Ziad does not accept the fraudulent solution of a digital Palestine, defending the importance of the relationship to the land for a real liberation of Palestine. Thus, Ziad personifies a call for resistance, a way to recover the hope that his parents' generation seems to have lost.

On the other hand, in 'Commonplace,' Adam's death represents a common affliction of Palestinian youth in Gaza: hopelessness. In a sense, death also manifests itself in the possibilities of imagining the future, of creating new forms of Palestinian resistance. At one point, Adam recalls that several times he had 'one of those dreams where you try to walk each step of your plan, but each step frustratingly takes you no nearer to where you want to be, until you wake up in panic' (Yaghi 2019: 144). Indeed, what marks this generation is frustration with the present and the impossibility of imagining an emancipated future. Hence, the death of utopia sets the tone for Yaghi's (2019) text, and the memory that haunts Adam is not only the collective memory of the Nakba but also the trauma of losing his sister and still living in Gaza, which is bombed daily by the drones.

In *A History of False Hope: Investigative Commissions in Palestine*, Allen (2021) demonstrates how the dozens of international investigative commissions into the Palestine/Israel Question never actually brought peace or justice to Palestinians but instead institutionalized Israeli colonization by failing to challenge colonial power. Therefore, for Allen (2021: 246), the role played by International Law in the Palestine/Israel Question is that of a producer of false hope. Similarly, Joronen et al (2021: 277) attest that international 'solutions' to the issue, such as the Partition Plan for Palestine (1947) and the Oslo Accords (1993-95), are a geopolitical performance that ultimately ends up normalizing colonial violence. Oslo, in particular, marked the loss of faith in the false promises of the two-state solution. Recent hopes for Palestinian resistance in a transnational dimension have come in the form of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a way to get out of the framework of liberal internationalism and act on the material, mainly economic, bases that sustain Israeli settler colonialism.

In 'Application 39,' the Palestinian utopia grows ever larger. In Masoud's story (2019), as it is in reality, it is almost unimaginable for Gaza to host an international mega-event. In 2048, although Israel still controls Gaza's borders, the hi-tech tunnels interconnecting the hundreds of Palestinian city-states are the maximum possible resistance to the socio-spatial separation that affects the Palestinian territories. Hosting the Olympics would be a way of uniting the Palestinians and 'opening' Gaza to the world, as Ismael thought: 'After a century of being cut off from the world, now, suddenly, the world was going to come to them' (Masoud 2019: 120). However, the attempt ends in tragedy and death after the Israelis join the President of Rafah to attack Gaza. Thus, utopia lasts only briefly, and the reality of remote control-induced violence and death-in-life soon returns.

The most direct form of resistance to Israeli colonial domination is chronicled in 'Digital Nation,' where a virtual Palestinian government is formed by overriding all Israeli virtual reality devices with the help of a virus. Here, rather than being a laboratory for testing the most advanced technologies of the Israeli arms industry, Gaza becomes a launching pad, a model that will be replicated throughout Palestine, complete with 'an army, a taxation system, plans for local elections, even embassies around the world' (Aysha 2019: 86). In this digital nation, people are happy, healthy, always hoping for a better future, regardless of how 'good' the present already is. This utopia, therefore, is seen as dangerous: 'Utopia was a dangerous thing. It had to be stamped out. Hope was contagious. Hope was "calculating" and *calculable*' (Aysha 2019: 79, original emphasis). That is why numbness, apathy and hopelessness are crucial to undermining the possibilities of imagining the future and liberating Palestine, as we saw in 'Commonplace,' 'Song of the Birds' and 'N.'

Final considerations

> Everything here dies, everything but the dead.
> (Abuqamar 2022: 15, our translation)

The 23-year-old from Gaza, Hazem Al Jauni, remarks that the Israeli blockade prevents him from even dreaming: 'The dreams I had while at school are fading in the face of a reality I cannot control' (Al Jauni, cited in Gisha 2022a). The reality beyond his control is that which is made of high unemployment rates, food insecurity, Israeli military operations every two or three years, destruction of infrastructure, etc. The possibility of imagining a utopian future of liberation, as we have seen, is the first condition required to enable the emancipation of the colonized. By eternally confining the Palestinians to the Nakba catastrophe of 1948 and reenacting it on a daily basis, the Israelis advance in their objective of pacifying the natives, that is, removing their ability to resist.

As Bagchi (2012) observed, although utopia and dystopia are constructed as paradoxes, these should never be divorced from the material conditions in which they were imagined, whether in a historical, economic, political or literary context. In this sense, we intended to show that the Palestinians' awareness of paradoxes and contradictions permeates the entire dialectical historical process of domination and resistance in the struggle for the decolonization of Palestine.

As we can see, in both science fiction Palestine and real Palestine, the possibilities of imagining the future are 'weaponized, captured, governmentalized, doomed, promised, restricted, and denied, not only to ensure the future of Israel's colonial project but also to produce various forms of direct and indirect control of Palestinian spaces, bodies, and everyday engagements' (Joronen et al 2021: 278).

However, Palestinians in Gaza continue to resist the occupation in a variety of ways: building solar panels to reduce dependence on electricity, building community water reservoirs, raising fish in artificial ponds to overcome restrictions on access to the sea, cultivating land in the 'no-go areas' despite the threats of death, merchants forgiving those who went into debt to buy food, dehydrating food to preserve it longer, engaging in digital entrepreneurship, (re)building houses from the rubble left by military operations, among many other constructive actions. Although insufficient to break the siege of Gaza, these temporary solutions reveal the strength of Palestinian solidarity, resistance to domination, and the constant search for a dignified life. Whether in the real dystopia of the present or the fictional dystopia of the future, resistance remains a central feature of Palestinian national identity that does not dissolve easily.

Survival and solidarity represent the hope of the Palestinians of Gaza, this small region which Shomer from 'Digital Nation' characterizes as a 'stubborn little detention camp […] full of proud hotheads that refused to sink into the sea' (Aysha 2019: 85), echoing the statement, in 1992, by then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin: 'I wish the Gaza Strip would sink into the water' (Parks 1992). Much like the historically proven resilience of Palestinians since the Nakba, the Gaza Strip refuses to sink into the sea and

disappear. For this reason, it symbolizes the strength of Palestinian resistance and the physical presence in the territory that keeps the anti-colonial struggle for liberation and a dignified life alive. It is the real that can inspire Palestinian conceptions of a new utopia, even if these sometimes end up as dystopian manifestations.

Notes

1   According to the list published by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT 2022), some criteria for applying to enter Israel from Gaza are: (i) health needs; (ii) finance and employment; (iii) foreigners and international organizations; (iv) travel for various needs, which includes visiting a prisoner, legal needs, family reunification, embassy interviews, attending a funeral or wedding, among others. All requests are carefully analyzed by COGAT and may or may not be approved, always based on the argument of Israeli national security.

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About the authors

Isabela Agostinelli dos Santos holds a PhD in International Relations from the Interinstitutional Graduate Program "San Tiago Dantas" (São Paulo State University, University of Campinas and Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo), with a scholarship provided by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). She holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). Her research interests include International Relations Theory, Colonialism and Post-Colonialism, Death Studies, Middle East and Palestine Studies. Her PhD thesis focused on the daily and infrastructural violence experienced by Palestinians from Gaza Strip. Isabela is also a researcher of PUC-SP's Research Group on International Conflicts (GECI) and at a postdoctoral researcher at the National Institute of Science and Technology for United States Studies (INCT-INEU).

Reginaldo Mattar Nasser is Associate Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), Professor in the Interinstitutional Graduate Program in International Relations "San Tiago Dantas" (São Paulo State University, University of Campinas and Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo), leader of PUC-SP's Research Group on International Conflicts (GECI) and a researcher at the National Institute of Science and Technology for United States Studies (INCT-INEU). Reginaldo's research interests include International Conflicts, Middle East Studies, US Foreign Policy, Colonialism and Post-Colonialism.

Bruno Huberman holds a PhD in International Relations from the Interinstitutional Graduate Program "San Tiago Dantas" (São Paulo State University, University of Campinas and Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo). He is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at the same institution. Bruno is a Professor of International Relations at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), vice-leader of PUC-SP's Research Group on International Conflicts (GECI) and a researcher at the National Institute of Science and Technology for United States Studies (INCT-INEU). His research interests include Colonialism, Racism and Capitalism, with emphasis on the studies of Palestine/Israel, Neoliberalism, Urban Spaces, Middle East Geopolitics, US and Brazilian Foreign Policy for the Middle East.

Viver-morrendo: a nova realidade distópica do colonialismo por povoamento israelense em Gaza

Resumo: O caso contemporâneo de colonialismo por povoamento em Palestina/Israel gera debates sobre os diferentes tipos de violência – física, territorial e mental – sofridos pelos palestinos. Por mais de 15 anos, a Faixa de Gaza tem estado sob bloqueio e isolada dos outros territórios palestinos e do mundo. Essa realidade levou a interpretações de Gaza como um laboratório, onde armas controladas remotamente e os limites da sobrevivência humana são testados. Isso faz com que os moradores de Gaza usem expressões como 'morte lenta' ou 'morte em vida' para descrever suas vidas. Este artigo analisa seis contos do livro de ficção científica 'Palestine +100: Stories from a century after the Nakba' (2019) para investigar como o colonialismo israelense impacta a produção ficcional palestina sobre Gaza. Argumentamos que a persistência da Nakba por meio de expulsões, destruições e assassinatos por Israel tornou a vida uma distopia cotidiana. Ademais, fez com que a imaginação dos palestinos em relação ao futuro não fosse mais sonhos utópicos de libertação, mas pesadelos distópicos e cíclicos de confinamento e morte. Viver eternamente no pesadelo, como observado nas produções artísticas palestinas, funciona como uma estratégia colonial contrarrevolucionária. Nessa realidade sombria, os moradores de Gaza têm a alternativa de 'viver morrendo'.

Palavras-chave: Distopia; faixa de Gaza; ficção científica palestina; morte; utopia.