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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: Palestinian mobilisations against Israel's settler colonial violence

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/S: FEDERICA STAGNI; PIETRO STEFANINI

LINGUE/LANGUAGES: Inglese/English & Italiano/Italian

PANEL: Open

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

Palestine is experiencing a particular phase in its history, a period among the most difficult since the two crises, or ruptures, of the 1948 *Nakba* (catastrophe) and 1967 *Naksa* (setback). Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are administered under a mix of direct and indirect Israeli colonial rule. The inhumane siege of Gaza confines over two million people, the majority refugees, to carceral conditions, dependence on international aid and continual military violence. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Israeli regime furthers the settler colonial project by subjecting Palestinians to ethnic cleansing in order to make way for Zionist settlements. Since their assimilation as citizens of Israel, 1948 Palestinians have been subjugated by an apartheid system that holds them to second-class status. In recent years, the Syrian conflict as well as the ongoing threats to UNRWA's funding have brought Palestinian refugees living in the diaspora, and denied by Israel their right of return, to face further violence, displacement and insecurities.

The absence of a unified Palestinian political leadership that can effectively respond to these historical and ongoing crises and that can reflect the aspirations of the population is ever more evident. As Tariq Dana recently noted, "Palestinian factionalism has destroyed the national movement" (2020). The current impasse among the political leadership is largely a result of the Oslo Accords, which produced the Palestinian Authority (PA) and effectively outsourced features of the Israeli occupation, with the support of international donor. Many Palestinians, especially the youth, consider the PA as no longer able to represent the people's struggle for freedom. This discrepancy was made clear by the summer 2021 protests, inside and outside historic Palestine, after the brutal killing of Palestinian activist Nizar Banat by the PA security forces. However, this protest and the other mobilisations that emerged also showed the strength of grassroots Palestinian movements.

In May 2021, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem's Sheik Jarrah neighbourhood managed to draw international attention to their decades-long struggle against settlers aiming to evict and dispossess them from their homes. These spontaneous mobilisations from below, until then largely ignored by international media and governments, operated outside of political parties but had huge political significance. They ignited an uprising that seemingly cut across the geographical borders that Israel imposes to divide and rule. The mobilisation of 1948 Palestinians in Israel in the summer of 2021, known as the 'Unity Intifada', had a powerful impact at multiple levels (Tatour 2021). In Gaza, despite the heavy price paid by Palestinians due to Israel's disproportionate and punitive attacks, there is continual support for resistance in all available forms to achieve liberation (Abu Artema 2021). This latest uprising spread like wildfire to all areas of historical Palestine and has seemingly re-ignited a real sense of national unity.

Not to be ignored is also the important role in these recent uprisings of the new generation born after the Second Intifada and Oslo Accords, who with the demise of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) did not experience the level of sustained and organised political struggle by national institutions that characterised the Palestinian revolution in the 1960s. Yet, the continuous deterioration of national structures under an increasingly violent and repressive Israeli regime has certainly not defeated nor pacified this new generation. At the same time, we should also be mindful of new conceptualisations of Palestinian freedom, which seek to move beyond the idea of just freedom from colonial oppression to notions that account for liberation from all oppressive structures (the slogan of the new Palestinian feminist movement *Tal'at* sums up well this point: “there will be no free Palestine without free women”).

This panel considers the relationship between resistance and violence in the ongoing crises produced by Israel’s settler colonial domination of Palestine. With this call for papers, we are therefore looking for contributions that aim to explore new and old Palestinian forms of anti-colonial resistance and mobilisation. At the same time, we invite explorations of social movements that try to overcome the colonial divide imposed by Israel through methods that aim to overcome Palestinians’ fragmentation. The papers might explore movements’ genesis, life, successes and failures, and disengagement. This call invites contributions on the history, implications and legacies of the latest mobilisations among Palestinians inside Israel, under military occupation and in the diaspora. We’re interested in contributions that further knowledge on non-violent and violent techniques of mobilisation, such as protests, boycotts, legal accountability, armed struggle, sabotage, direct action, hunger strikes and resistance to the Israeli prison system. We’re also open to contributions that help shed further light on the role of solidarity in the Palestinian struggle for liberation. We welcome appraisals on the strategies, potentials and limitations of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement not only in the global North but also in the global South.

This panel seeks to bring together scholarship from a range of disciplines such as politics, history, anthropology, geography, sociology and law. We invite contributions that attempt to privilege Palestinian and Indigenous theorisations of mobilisation; that are mindful of Palestine/Israel’s entanglement with imperial and capitalist systems; and that pay attention to questions of race, class and gender. In situating the Palestinian struggle as one against Israeli settler colonialism, we also invite contributions that seek to further deconstruct the operation of state violence and power. In doing so we welcome papers that build on the settler colonial frame as an interpretative method of analysis developed by Palestinians in 1960s (Sayeh 1965; Jabbour 1970; Hilal 1976) and its contemporary re-emergence as an academic subfield (Salamanca et al 2012; Barakat 2017; Hawari, Plonski, Weizmann 2019).

Works cited

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PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I – SHORT BIO OF PROPONENTS

Federica Stagni is a PhD candidate in Political Science and Sociology at Scuola Normale Superiore supervised by Donatella della Porta e Lorenzo Bosi. Her thesis title is "Making coalition under occupation: solidarity across divides". Her research interests are Theories of Political Protests and Social Movements in Israeli and Palestine. Federica holds a Bachelor's degree in International and Diplomatic Sciences at the University of Bologna and a Master's degree in European and International Studies at the School of International Studies of Trento. She worked as a research associate for ACLED where she was part of the West African conflicts research group.

Pietro Stefanini is a PhD student and the recipient of a Politics and International Relations scholarship at the University of Edinburgh. His PhD project explores the relationship between humanitarianism and settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel. He published a peer-reviewed article on Palestinian anti-colonial resistance in the journal *Partecipazione e Conflitto* (2021) and has contributed a chapter on the politics of post-conflict reconstruction in the edited book *Open Gaza: Architectures of Hope* (2021). Pietro is the editor of the book *UNRWA at 70: Palestinian Refugees in Context* (2020).

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