

# Palestine Unbound

Published each issue, this section strives to capture the tenor and content of popular conversations related to the Palestinians and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which are held on dynamic platforms unbound by traditional media. Therefore, items presented in this section are from a variety of sources and have been selected because they either have gone viral or represent a significant cultural moment or trend. A version of Palestine Unbound is also published on *Palestine Square* ([palestinesquare.com](http://palestinesquare.com)), a blog of the Institute for Palestine Studies.

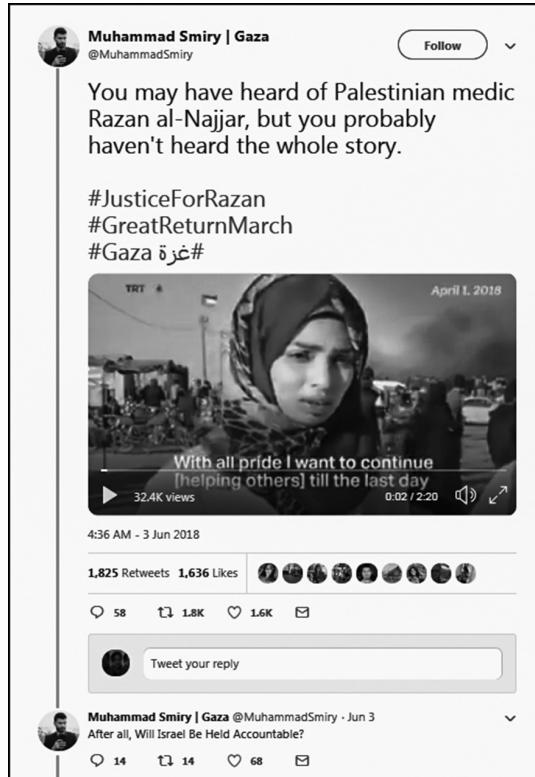
## This Quarter's Topics

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## #GreatReturnMarch

*10 August was the twentieth consecutive Friday that Palestinians in Gaza demonstrated peacefully near the border fence with Israel in the Great March of Return. Israeli snipers continued to target civilian participants indiscriminately and as of 15 August, at least 166 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed, with another 18,000 injured. Through the course of the summer, event organizers and human rights defenders from Gaza and beyond continued to use the #GreatReturnMarch hashtag (#maseerat\_alawda\_alkubra in Arabic) on social media to provide updates about the situation on the ground.*

*As was common last quarter, the hashtag was often accompanied by images of the dead and wounded. By far, the most widely shared images on social media this summer were of twenty-one-year-old paramedic Razan al-Najjar, who was killed by an Israeli soldier on 1 June as she was attempting to evacuate a wounded protester. Social media users condemned the Israeli snipers for targeting*



Users on social media commemorate the death of Razan al-Najjar. (3 June, Twitter)

*a medical volunteer, who could clearly be identified as such by her white coat. Depictions of al-Najjar in commemoration of her death were shared widely, often accompanied by the hashtag #JusticeforRazan, or simply #RazanalNajjar.*

*Images and videos of celebration and resiliency also circulated this summer. The most popular of which included footage of Gazans performing the dabka, a traditional Palestinian dance, with smoke and tear gas visible in the background. In their commitment to continuing protests until Israel lifts the siege of Gaza, demonstrators perform the dabka and engage in other forms of collective activity to maintain feelings of solidarity and optimism.*

*Similarly, Palestinians outside of Gaza displayed solidarity with Gaza. In Haifa, following the unveiling of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, thousands of Palestinians launched protests under the slogans “From Haifa to Gaza: United by Blood and a Shared Destiny” and “Gaza All the Way, Until the Day of Return.” The former sparked the #FromHaifatoGaza hashtag on social media, which was acknowledged with the reciprocal hashtag #FromGazatoHaifa.*

*After Israeli police violently suppressed the first demonstration on 18 May, social media users employed the hashtag to share videos of violent arrests and other forms of police brutality from the demonstration. A week later, Adalah, a civil rights organization representing Palestinian citizens of Israel, filed a formal complaint on behalf of the twenty-one Palestinians arrested at the 18 May protest, alleging that they were subjected to torture while in custody. Not to be deterred, Haifa hosted major protests throughout June and July, with turnouts that ranged from several dozen to a few hundred. Activists in Haifa expressed hope that these demonstrations would help build greater national unity between Palestinians who have been physically separated by the Israeli occupation.*

 **yoram** @bhyoram · 6/3/18  
Yesterday #Haifa showed clearly that police brutality will not stop us from standing with #Gaza .  
#FromHaifaToGaza #FromGazaToHaifa

Despite the threat from Israeli police, protesters in Haifa continue to demonstrate their solidarity with Gaza. (3 June, Twitter)



This cartoon by Carlos Latuff highlights the significance of the solidarity demonstrations in Haifa. (26 May, Twitter)

## #LifttheSanctions

On 12 June, Palestinians in the West Bank began protesting the recent salary cuts leveled by the Palestinian Authority (PA) against Gazan civil servants, and the PA's policy of security coordination with Israel. In early May, the PA slashed the salaries of its employees in Gaza significantly. This unannounced salary cut came only a year after 30–70 percent cuts by the PA in the Strip. (See *Update on Conflict and Diplomacy* in JPS 47 [4] for more on the salary cuts.) The further cuts came amid the Great March of Return in Gaza, as Palestinians protested the Israeli siege, unemployment, and living conditions, among other things. The June demonstrations became the first major demonstrations in the West Bank related to the Great March of Return, and the hashtag #LifttheSanctions (#arfa3w\_al3oqubat in Arabic) quickly went viral as participants sought to raise awareness on social media.

The PA was caught off guard by the scale of the protests, which several hundred Palestinians were estimated to have participated in. Organized by the group End the Sanctions, a wide intersection of people from Ramallah and Nablus participated, including physicians, journalists, teachers, and students. PA Security Forces used tear gas and stun grenades to disperse the peaceful demonstrators. In addition to protesting the salary cuts, demonstrators protested the PA's security coordination with Israel and connected the security forces' brutal policing tactics to its funding and training by the United States. (For more on the history of the PA Security Forces, see "Criminalizing Resistance," by Alaa Tartir, in JPS 46 [2].) Critics on social media likened PA methods to the crackdown tactics used by Israel against demonstrators in Haifa.

Meanwhile, the PA called for a counterdemonstration the following day. According to Middle East Eye, a group of PA supporters in Fatah hats attended the demonstration on 13 June, antagonizing the PA's critics as security forces looked on. Some protesters reported and recorded incidents of men in Fatah hats harassing or using physical force against demonstrators, leading some to suspect that they were undercover PA Security Force officers. However, the PA's attempt to stifle public dissent failed, as several hundred Palestinians in the West Bank continued to organize against sanctions and security cooperation into July.

## #ThankYouIreland

The Irish Senate made history on 11 July when it endorsed the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018. Written by Independent senator Frances Black, the bill would outlaw the importation or sale of products made in Israeli settlements. If the bill becomes law, Ireland will be the first European country to enact such a ban. While the European Union enforced



رنا نزال  
@zaytouni\_rana

Today in Ramallah, the #liftthesanctions movement protesting PA sanctions on Gaza was stopped by a wall of riot police @liftthesanctio1 #ارفعوا\_العقوبات

Activists on Twitter are quick to condemn the PA Security Forces for intimidating demonstrators in Ramallah. (21 July, Twitter)

*a regulation in 2015 prohibiting products made in settlements from being labeled Made in Israel, it did not ban the products themselves.*

*In the weeks leading up to its passage, the bill faced significant opposition: First the Irish government, led by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, delayed the original vote. Then the Irish government denounced the motion and followed suit with a threat to vote against it. Following its passage in the Senate, Israel's Foreign Ministry summoned the Irish ambassador to Israel to protest the motion's passage.*

*The day of the vote, Senator Black published an op-ed in the Irish Times explaining the illegality of Israeli settlements, and by extension, the consumer products originating in them. "There is a clear hypocrisy here," Black wrote. "How can we condemn the settlements as 'unambiguously illegal,' as theft of land and resources, but happily buy the proceeds of this crime?" She also connected the issue of settlement products to the international boycott of South African goods during apartheid. "Ultimately, Ireland was willing to show leadership on that issue—to make the case internationally and chart a path for others to follow. The same applies today: we have the legal capacity to pursue this, if the political will is there."*

*After the vote, there was a significant increase in the number of Irish/Palestinian solidarity posts as activists took to social media to express their gratitude toward Ireland, with some using the hashtag #ThankYouIreland. Many of the posts celebrated the decades-long relationship between Ireland and Palestine, which originated when the Provisional Irish Republican Army (Provisional IRA) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization began cooperating in the 1970s.*

## #FreeDareen

*On 31 July, two days after the release of teen activist Ahed Tamimi from Israeli prison, poet Dareen Tatour, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, was sentenced to five months imprisonment by the Nazareth District Court for incitement of violence. (For more on Tamimi, see Palestine Unbound and Update on Conflict and Diplomacy in JPS 47 [3].) The sentencing was based on a series of activist posts Tatour made to Facebook and YouTube in October 2015. Among them was the poem "Resist, my people, resist them," which has since been shared widely by her supporters.*



Social media users show their gratitude toward Ireland. (13 July, Twitter)



An illustration of the smiling poet in support of her right to free speech. (10 August, Twitter)

Tatour was first arrested in October 2015 and spent a few months in prison before being placed under house arrest in January 2016. Her arrest came at the peak of the habba (the surge of Palestinian resistance, random attacks, and protests that began in Jerusalem in July 2015). (See *Update on Conflict and Diplomacy in JPS 45 [2–4]*.) Her initial arrest gained international media attention, and her conviction of “incitement to terrorism” and “support for terrorist organizations” on 3 May inspired widespread outrage from all corners of the social media sphere, including the literature and human rights giant PEN International. The president of the organization, Jennifer Clement, condemned the conviction: “Dareen Tatour has been convicted for doing what writers do every day—we use our words to peacefully challenge injustice.”

In the aftermath of Tatour’s 31 July sentencing, supporters took to social media to repost her poetry and protest the suppression of free speech in Israel. Posts often included the trending hashtags #FreeDareen and #PoetryIsNotACrime.