Introduction

> Violence creates violence, creates violence. In our society [Israel], violence is, in many ways, our bread and butter […] and that is a very good platform for violence to grow – you need an enemy, you need to fight someone, you need someone that will be the 'Other' – so anyone who is considered weak or un-powerful, is someone you can dominate, you can humiliate, you can use.
>
> (Livna, Israeli woman).

On a nondescript day in December 2015, so-called Checkpoint 56 in occupied Hebron had once again been closed by Israeli military order for unknown 'security reasons'. As an anti-occupation activist and researcher in the beleaguered Palestinian city, I had joined the Palestinians that pass daily through that checkpoint who had gathered, frustrated, angry, and exhausted from the repeated closure of the checkpoint that divides one Palestinian neighbourhood from another. Bored Israeli military conscripts guarded the locked turnstiles – the prison gates. One flicked a cigarette butt towards the Palestinian crowd as he monitored the everyday tedium of military occupation – disruption for disruption's sake.

I turned to Mahmood,[1] an elderly Palestinian man, who for more than forty years had daily walked his donkey from his home to the market to sell the milk he carried. Following from the Palestinian *Nakba* of 1948 (the forcible displacement of nearly 750,000 Palestinians from their homes amid the violent establishment of the Israeli state) to the 'Six-Day War', ending in Israel's annexation of West Bank and Gaza in 1967, Mahmood had lived through the many changing and harshening realities of Hebron. He had witnessed the ongoing influx of the ultra-Zionist hard right to the city – flanked and supported by the military might of the Israeli state – the massacre of twenty-nine Palestinian worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque[2] in 1994 by American-born Jewish settler Baruch

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[1] All names are pseudonyms in this book to protect the identity and confidentiality of those whose lives, experiences, and accounts are discussed.

[2] 'Cave of the Patriarchs' in Jewish terminology.

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Goldstein, and the subsequent closure of Shuhada Street by Israeli military order, severing the main artery of Palestinian life and livelihoods in Hebron. He had lived through the ensuing division of the city into Israeli and Palestinian-controlled zones in 1997, the multiplication of military checkpoints, endless closures, military patrols, and the intensification of physical violence against Palestinians since the second *intifada*, the 'uprising', at the turn of the millennium. As Patrick Wolfe (2006, 388) notes, settler colonialism is a 'structure, not an event', and the ever-heightening oppression, confinement, and military control that Mahmood has continually witnessed and experienced at the hands of the Israeli state is testament to that reality.

Mahmood was sitting by his donkey, head in hands, silently awaiting the end of this daily dose of disruption. Younger generations of Palestinian men were brooding, bristling, and muttering, and younger boys were casually kicking stones and empty tear-gas canisters back towards the checkpoint, before skittering off behind concrete barricades installed by the Israeli military for incursions into the Palestinian marketplace of *Bab iz Zaweyah*. As Palestinians trapped by the closed checkpoint became more frustrated, a familiar Zionist settler from the nearby Jewish settlement arrived, to goad those waiting and to film the daily entertainment of Palestinian misery in the occupied city.

Employed to observe, record, and document the maddening injustices of everyday life in Hebron, I also had my camera. One of the Israeli soldiers demanded that I turn it off. 'Why?', I asked, 'why is there a different rule for me, and a different rule for her?' I pointed at the settler, who was smiling, laughing, and filming from outside of the cage. 'This is just the way it is,' he stated, aptly summarising the enduring reality of Israel and Palestine, different (often incomprehensible) rules for different people. I continued to gripe and argue – an arrestable offence if I were Palestinian – and he looked me in the eye and whispered, 'Do you think I want to be doing this? Do you think I want to be *here*?', gesturing towards the familiar scene of growing calamity. And with that, he returned to his comrades in arms – conscripts of the Israeli regime – busy conducting their duties of daily debilitating Palestinian lives and livelihoods.

Later that month, I was called to another incident close to this same checkpoint, where one of the few remaining Palestinian houses on the tightly restricted Shuhada Street was being 'sealed for security reasons' by Israeli forces. A weeping elderly Palestinian woman looked on as her property was welded shut, on unfounded suspicion of a Molotov cocktail allegedly having been thrown from her roof towards the adjacent Jewish settlement – a settlement that is present in violation of international law. The same soldier arrived with his unit, laughing and joking, apparently

enjoying the fraternal camaraderie of deploying the arbitrary powers of military occupation, before taking to pushing and threatening the Palestinian onlookers resisting the theft of the woman's home. Amid the chaos, she eventually collapsed and was taken away in an ambulance. Israeli forces completed their mission, ultimately denying her access to her home and her possessions. More than seventy years have passed since the *Nakba* of 1948, and the forcible displacement of Palestinians from their homes continues in full force.

Through these processes of expulsion, whether they 'wanted' to be there or not, these soldiers were allegedly carrying out the stated mission of the Israeli Defence Forces, 'preserv[ing] the State of Israel, protect [ing] its independence, and foil[ing] attempts by its enemies to disrupt the normal life within [Israel]'.[3] And yet, they were on internationally recognised Palestinian land, undeniably disrupting the normal lives of Palestinians. As has long been central to the Zionist endeavour, they were thus entangled as militarised agents in an ongoing project of settler colonialism that 'operat[es] through a logic of elimination […] to erase indigenous presence on a specific territory' – through violence, humiliation, and military domination (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Ihmoud, and Dahir-Nashif 2014, 1).

And yet, these dynamics have become so entrenched across Palestine that, to some extent, they have become 'normal' (to repeat a phrase repeated by a handful of my Palestinian interlocutors). Within the moving parameters of 'ordinariness', therefore, 'the "is" and the "ought", the mundane and the frightening, the active and the passive' are simultaneously encompassed within the 'normalities' of living under an entrenched settler colonial regime and its daily machinations (Kelly 2008, 351). As hope and fear, adrenaline and boredom, oppression and resistance are so embedded within 'ordinary lives' lived amid ongoing colonial violence, the process of normalising what is abnormal meanwhile offers the prospect of navigating what appears insurmountable.

Violence thus 'ordinarily' lingers in the air, water, and lands of Israel and Palestine. Violence is in the ever-tightening stranglehold of military occupation, the aerial onslaughts and bombardments that maim and murder in the Gaza Strip, the ethnonationalist land and legal systems tantamount to apartheid, and the militarism and fear in hegemonic Israeli society that undergird and legitimise these systems of oppression. Violence is in the ever-present history of displacement, genocide, and ethnic cleansing, from the horrors of the Holocaust of World War II to

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[3] Israeli Defense Forces, Our Mission: www.idf.il/en/who-we-are/ [date accessed 28/09/20].

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the Palestinian *Nakba* – the 'catastrophe' – ongoing from 1948 to the present. Violence is in the cafés and parks of West Jerusalem or Tel Aviv that hide and obscure the erasure of Palestinian past and people, and the routine harassment and humiliation of Palestinians by Israeli forces and settlers in proximate spaces. In striking resonance with Livna in her reference to violence as the 'bread and butter' of Israeli society, Omar, a Palestinian man from East Jerusalem, also explained to me that 'We [Palestinians] are living and breathing this occupation … it is our daily bread.' Although distinct in their experience – as a Jewish woman and a Palestinian man – both Livna and Omar evoke the routine banality, the everyday constancy of violence as 'bread' across Israel and Palestine.

It is the gendered and sexual politics of this enduring violence that this book seeks to understand, with a comparative focus on masculinities across the sharply hierarchical divide of Israel and Palestine, through analysis of the 'ordinary lives' of 'ordinary people' within this context. Working from the premise that while gender shapes violence, violence also shapes gender (Goldstein 2001), I explore the ways in which masculinities shift and morph in this specific context of settler colonial violence, drawing on ethnographic observations gathered as an activist in Israeli-occupied Hebron, and empirical research undertaken with reservist and former conscripted Israeli combat and non-combat soldiers, and Palestinians occupied by this same military – in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron, specifically.[4] The soldiers in the above account weren't only 'doing' military occupation, they were also, significantly, 'doing gender', as were those Palestinians subjected to their military dominion, in their experience, negotiation of, and resistance to it. To my knowledge, there is no other published ethnographic study that explores the constitutive performance and negotiation of masculinised ideals across Israeli militarism and occupied Palestine. Despite the clear power hierarchies across these broad categories, I therefore explore masculinities here in connection, rather than in isolation, arguing that gendered identities, practices, and performances within this context are intertwined by that which simultaneously divides and separates them – what many human rights bodies have termed the apartheid politics of the Israeli state.[5]

Masculinities' connection to power and violence are frequently simplistically assumed; a somewhat schematic analysis of masculinities in Israel and Palestine would suggest that Israeli soldiers embody and enact hegemonic masculinity as they wield military power over the

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[4] As gender is a relational category, I included both men and women within this research.
[5] See Human Rights Watch (2021) and Amnesty International (2022) for discussion and analysis of Israel's apartheid system.

subordinated masculinities of colonised Palestinian men. While this certainly rings true in many ways, there are other more complex dynamics simultaneously at play within the context of colonisation and military occupation. Indeed, a myriad of complexities lie beneath this 'single story'. Masculinised hierarchies cannot be presumed as straightforward; like gender more broadly, masculinities are fluid and contextual, differently understood and enacted in different settings, while also shaped and reshaped through diverse forms of social interaction and power (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 2016). How are masculinities defined and redefined in the context of a military checkpoint, for example? Are there diverse meanings of manhood at play, and how are these embodied and contested? One cannot simply assert – as many do – that Palestinian men are 'emasculated' by the military occupation that violates them, nor that Israeli soldiers 'achieve' masculinity through deploying military power, as this suggests that masculinity is merely a fixed 'goal', a static 'entity' that can be won or lost. Rather, masculinities are dynamic, plural, and subjective – shifting and morphing in the face of overlapping realities of power, oppression, and resistance; return to the checkpoint, and from one standpoint the 'real man' may be the armed man – a disciplined subject adorned with the symbols of military might – whereas from another, 'manhood' may be found in the stoic reappropriation of suffering as a badge of honour. How are these competing registers of masculinities defined in relation? And what can this illuminate about interlocking systems of gendered and racialised oppression? Exploring precisely these dynamics, this book reveals a multiplicity of meanings and metaphors associated with 'manhood' at the intersections of settler colonialism, military occupation, and heteropatriarchy in this context, illustrating that masculinities, and their connection to violence, are in constant and subjective flux, cyclically legitimating and redefining one another in diverse and dynamic ways.

Untangling these threads, the chapters within this volume move from analysis of embodied compliance as a means of masculinisation within the Israeli military, to the simultaneous reformulation of notions of masculinised strength within colonised Palestine. I discuss the encompassing of emotionality in 'moralised' performances of military masculinities in Israel as conscripts navigate – and legitimate – the violence they have enacted, followed by exploration of rap music as a form of emotional expression among young Palestinian refugees living under an occupation administered by those same conscripts. I analyse the sexualisation of Israel's militarised settler colonialism and the archetypal masculinised 'hero' in this setting, arguing that, contrary to popular opinion, Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people is rooted in a colonial logic of

sexualised violence. Finally, I explore the lived experience of this dynamic from within occupied Palestine, analysing the gendered fabric of the colonised as directly and deliberately undone by the occupying forces – heightening the gendered vulnerability of both Palestinian men and women, with the latter navigating and resisting the double burdens of both colonialism and patriarchy. Through the lens of masculinities, the pages in this volume hence tell stories of compliance and resistance, of submission and subversion, of control and agency, at times contradictorily encapsulated within one life and narrative. In so doing, this study enriches knowledge of the Palestinian and Israeli contexts, and the gendered and sexual politics of settler colonialisms more broadly, further illuminating the evolving, fluid, and even contradictory nature of gender amid complex webs of power.

I.1   Israel and Palestine: Historicising the (Settler) Colonial Present

I return to my former reference to Patrick Wolfe (2006) to frame this discussion. As Wolfe (2006) emphasises, settler colonialism is a structure not an event, operating to effectively eliminate or assimilate an indigenous society on a specific territory, to pave the way for the cultural, judicial, and territorial sovereignty of a settler society in their place. Through ongoing processes of dispossession, therefore, Wolfe (2006, 388) observes the end goal of settler colonialism as 'destroy to replace' – quoting Theodor Herzl, the founding father of Zionism, who wrote, 'If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct.' Wolfe (2006, 388) continues as follows, 'settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions[, n]egatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies[, p]ositively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base' – as he puts it, 'settler colonisers come to stay'. Moving beyond the conceptualisation of colonialism as a bygone era to examine the *continuity* of settler colonialism as both a historical and *present* system of power, those who resist the epistemological and material realities of settler colonial violence explore the assemblages of policies, laws, symbols, narratives, and practices that perpetuate and normalise the repression, debilitation, or elimination of indigenous populations in settler colonial states – and the 'regimes of global governance that inherit, extend, and naturalise their power' (e.g. see Medien 2021; Morgensen 2011, 52; Puar 2015; 2017; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Ihmoud, and Dahir-Nashif 2014; Wolfe 2006).

Framing Israel and Palestine as a settler colonial context within this book – detailed discussion as to why to follow in this section – it is

therefore essential that I contextualise the current moment, undeniably shaped by an ever-present history of violence and ethnic cleansing, memorialisation of which is itself a key site of struggle (Gur-Ze'ev and Pappé 2003; Pappé and Hilal 2010, 168; Said 2000). While the history and present of anti-Semitism that undergirds the contemporary context is beyond the scope of this book, Palestinians, like other colonised peoples, have had their past and present dominated and decimated by external powers. Indeed Said (2000, 243) states that 'the greatest battle Palestinians have waged as a people has been over the right to a remembered presence'. Bearing this complexity in mind, this section cannot provide a comprehensive history, but it will serve to briefly locate and contextualise the research within this volume, simultaneously discussing the application of settler colonialism as a category of analysis within this research.

I begin, however, with a recent story. In October 2020, the British newspaper, the *Guardian,* reported a confrontation between members of the Israeli police force and attendees at a Jewish wedding in the West Bank settlement of Givat Ze'ev. Those at the wedding party were allegedly violating the rules of the national lockdown, imposed in a bid to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. While scenes of physical violence between state forces and the Orthodox Jewish wedding attendees circulated on social media, Israel's then interior minister, Aryeh Deri, demanded an investigation, tweeting that 'there is no reason in the world for police to break in with rifles in hand and harm people' (quoted by Holmes 2020). Cross the divide, and – according to the Israeli state – there is ample reason for state forces to break into homes and harm (Palestinian) people. Take Sheikh Jarrah, an ever-under-threat Palestinian neighbourhood in Jerusalem, in which expanding settlements visibly tell the story of ongoing displacement; in 2009, resident Palestinian families were forcibly evicted from a three-storey home in the neighbourhood as 'Israeli forces blew down the doors and threw children out to the streets', recalled Rasha Budeiri (quoted in Kunzl 2021), a witness from across the street – who also now faces the threat of eviction from her own family home in the continued expulsion of Palestinians (a process that triggered the escalation of physical violence across Israel and Palestine in May 2021, and the deadly Israeli assault on Gaza that followed). Adorned with Israeli flags and the statement (in Hebrew) 'And sons come back to their borders', the settlement now stands – surrounded by Israeli military personnel – as a symbol of the power of the Israeli regime to do precisely what Deri critiques, to invade a family home 'with rifles in hand and harm people.'

Indeed, the expansion and 'protection' of Israeli settlements – illegal under international law (see United Nations Security Council Resolution

446 concerning territories occupied by Israel) – are predicated on Israeli state forces, and their historical counterparts (pre-state Zionist paramilitary forces), raiding Palestinian homes, fully armed, with orders to arrest, evict, or even execute (Palestinian) people. Literature is littered with accounts and oral histories (Anziska 2019; Pappé 2007; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Yahya 2017), human rights bodies decry and condemn these realities (Amnesty International 2019; B'Tselem 2018), and critical news sources – from Israel, Palestine, and elsewhere – report that 'hardly a night goes by' without an 'always brutal' 'violent invasion of the home of a sleeping [Palestinian] family' (see Levy and Levac 2018) – the aftermath of which I have witnessed many times, often with a family member arrested by the occupying forces, a home left in total disarray, muddy footprints of military boots telling the story of invasive dominion. Consider Deri's condemnation and omissions, and the racialised grammar of settler colonialism becomes clear; native bodies are violable, whilst the settler society is to be valued and protected – violence against the former is permissible, normal even, whereas violence against the latter is reprehensible. Here, Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois' observation (2004, 2) that violence 'is in the eye of the beholder' is relevant; the formations of power and knowledge that mediate presentations of violence as legitimate or illegitimate, just or unjust, exceptional or banal, remarkable or invisible, are laid bare in the racial injustice of a settler colonial state.

   In this way, overlapping contours of power and knowledge mediate conceptions of Zionism as either a liberatory project – ostensibly offering members of the persecuted Jewish diaspora the promise of a safe homeland – or, 'an ideology and a political movement that subjects Palestine and Palestinians to structural and violent forms of dispossession, land appropriation, and erasure in the pursuit of a new Jewish state and society' (Salamanca et al. 2012, 1). Hence, while the violent establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 represents the most notable example of mass expulsion in the history of Israel and Palestine, two entirely different narratives reconstruct the events and outcome of this time: 14 May 1948 is celebrated as 'Israel's independence day' while 15 May 1948 is commemorated by Palestinians mourning the *Nakba* – the 'catastrophe' – during which nearly 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly evicted from their homes and more than 500 Palestinian villages were demolished amid a series of massacres enacted by Zionist militia groups (Kassem 2011; Pappé 2007; Pappé and Hilal 2010). The latter narrative, writes Rema Hammami (2010, 239), remains to this day a 'subalternised counter-narrative to the hegemonic Zionist narrative […] of national re-birth and political independence', standing 'openly in the

[Palestinian] national imaginary as an unhealed wound […] a resonant allegory with the existential present'.

While undeniably a significant rupture in the history of Israel and Palestine, the *Nakba*, however, was the *consolidation* of the Zionist goal for an ethnonationalist state on the territory – not the origin – while the same processes of dispossession and expulsion continue today (Wolfe 2012). Amid the burgeoning anti-Semitism of nineteenth-century Europe, Zionism was founded long before 1948 among a small collection of largely secular Jewish intelligentsia who sought to build a Jewish nation-state – conceived as a homeland to which the Jewish diaspora could return from exile (El-Haj 2002; Kimmerling 2005; Yiftachel 2006). From its onset, the binding of identity, historiography, and territory became the essence of the Zionist movement, as early Zionist thinkers reified the biblical conception of '*Eretz Yisrael*', asserting that the resurrection of Jewish history was only possible on this land – a land famously and falsely depicted as 'the land without a people, for a people without a land' (El-Haj 2002; Kimmerling 2005). As Jewish ethnonationalism so emerged, energies were dedicated to purchasing land, developing agriculture, building cities, settling colonies, and launching an international struggle for Jewish political sovereignty in the ostensibly 'empty' territory (Yiftachel 2006; Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004). Meanwhile, the terminology of colonisation and permanent settlement were central to the articulation of Zionism by its founding fathers; as Theodore Herzl appealed to British empire builder, Cecil Rhodes, in 1902, 'You are being invited to help make history […]; it doesn't involve Africa, but a piece of Asia Minor, not Englishmen but Jews. […] How, then, do I happen to turn to you, since this is an out-of-the-way matter for you? How indeed? Because it is something colonial' (quoted in Sabbagh-Khoury 2022, 47). Reflecting European imperial ambitions, self-projected racial superiority, and the sexualised logic of colonialism, the 'land without a people' was thus declared void of civilisation, culture, even flora and fauna, ripe for cultivation and penetration by the 'New (western, male) Jew' (Doumani 1992; Mosse 1992; Shadmi 2003) – a character to whom I shall return in later chapters.

It was under the British empire that the Zionist goal soon became viable, through the 1917 Balfour Declaration that promised to facilitate 'a national home for the Jewish people'. British colonisers so laid the groundwork for the ultimate erasure and expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian Arabs, Druze, Bedouin and, in different ways, pre-Zionist Jews – invisible in the Zionist imaginary of *terra nullius* – at the same time as they imposed 'inflexible sectarianism as a major organising principle'

of their system of colonial governance in mandate Palestine (Robson 2011, 1). As the genocidal realities of the Holocaust were then at play in Europe, the notion that Palestine could represent a safe homeland for the persecuted Jewish people offered a glimmer of hope to those who escaped the brutal massacre (Yiftachel 2006). The intense and undeniable need for refuge popularised the notion that a sovereign Jewish state was the redemptive solution to the murderous violence that European Jews were facing, and the colonisation of Palestine was thus presented as salvation from virulent persecution in Europe. As droves of traumatised Jews fled from the concentration camps and pogroms of Europe to colonised Palestine, the then-occupying British army regulated immigration, leading to resistance from emergent Zionist militia.

It was these same militia groups – later regularised as the Israeli Defence Forces – who amassed in strength to forcibly expel hundreds of thousands of Palestinians amid the violence of the *Nakba*. Between late 1947 and early 1949, three-quarters of a million Palestinians were driven into exile, their homes and villages destroyed or expropriated by settlers – the soon to be Jewish citizens of Israel. With the partition of Palestine approved by the United Nations General Assembly on 29 November 1947, 'the Jewish population – which two years earlier had constituted 26% of the population of Mandate Palestine and had owned around 7% of the total land – had seized 77% of the land and come to constitute 80% of the population' by the 1949 Armistice (Wolfe 2012, 133). The phrase 'planning as war by other means' then became increasingly pertinent as the expropriation of land and erasure of the Palestinian past continued through a political and legal system that privileged Jews over Palestinians, Druze, and Bedouin. Civil status became instantly stratified, codified in a number of basic laws, such as the 1950 Law of Return – entitling any Jew to immigrate to Israel – in stark contrast with the denial of that right for Palestinians to return to their homes (Dugard and Reynolds 2013; Yiftachel 2006). As a result, Palestinians became the largest refugee population in the world.

At the same time, it was legally prohibited for lands seized by the state of Israel and extraterritorial organisations – such as the Jewish National fund – to be bought or leased by 'non-Jews'; confiscated land could not therefore be sold back to Palestinians, but became part state-owned and part owned by the entire Jewish people (Falah 2005; Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004). For survivors, then, the '*Nakba* of 1948 not only severed Palestinians' connection with a territory named Palestine, but also with their history and identity. Almost overnight, they became known internationally as 'the Arab refugees' or 'the Arab minority in Israel' (Sayigh 2013, 55); those remaining within the new settler state of Israel were thus