

Melting Palestinian consciousness and the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Re-reading Walid Daqqa's prison text

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Abstract

Introduction: “Melting consciousness” is a thorough exploration of Palestinian prisoners’ status, authored by Walid Daqqa As’aad Daqqa from within Israel’s Gilboa Prison. The book, stemming from Daqqa’s 25-year prison, goes deep into the psychological and spiritual targeting of prisoners, beyond the physical. It emphasises that the Israeli policies aim to reshape the Palestinian prisoners’ minds to align with an Israeli perspective, especially focusing on the resistant elite within prisons. This microcosmic study of prisoners’ lives offers a simplified yet clear understanding of the broader Palestinian societal context. *Method:* In the first part of the text, Daqqa’s book is widely summarise. In the second part, his predictions are analysed considering current events in the West Bank and Gaza. *Results:* The authors argue that the model described by Walid Daqqa is now being escalated to the whole Gaza, as already predicted by him. We argue that Walid Daqqa’s prison writings are strikingly prescient, theorising the deliberate moulding of Palestinian consciousness in prisoners in ways that anticipate core features of the current genocidal campaign in Gaza.

Keywords: Prisoners; Torture; Psychological War, Palestine, Israel

Introduction

Walid Daqqa was a Palestinian author and political figure born on July 18, 1961, in Baqa al-Gharbiyye. He became known for his activism and was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Daqqa was imprisoned for 38 years after being convicted of commanding a group that abducted and killed an Israeli soldier, a charge he denied. He obtained a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in political science and produced several works that highlight his suffering as a voice for prisoners and the Palestinian struggle (Daqqa, 2010). He died in custody while being denied medical attention for an oncological process (Rosas, 2024)

In his essay “Moulding Consciousness: Redefining Torture” (Daqqa, 2010), transcends personal memoir to become a profound critique of the concept of torture. The text was only available in Arabic. We would like to introduce the English translation of the book (see ‘Supplementary material’ for the full text), summarise the book, and discuss Waleed Daqqa’s

ideas in present-day Gaza, particularly in the aftermath of the October 7th 2023 acts of violence.

Summarising the text

*Melting Consciousness*¹ was written while the author was in prison. It was taken to the outside by those who could visit him. He never could see the whole text, and the dissimilar length and style of the sections reflect the enormous difficulties in composing it.

Waleed Daqqa opens his work with a reflection on the agony of suffering under conditions of oppression that defy expression. He argues that the inability to articulate pain not

1 The term Walid Daqqa uses is صَهْرُ الوعي (sahr al-wa’i). صهر literally means Melting (dissolving consciousness) although it has been sometimes translated as Moulding Consciousness. While melting refers to dissolving stable meanings, identities and anchors, moulding would be related to shaping beliefs, perceptions and norms into a desired pattern.

* The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Journal, the Publisher or the Editors

only isolates the oppressed from the world but can strip them of identity: “*You find yourself unable to articulate your anguish... or even to utter a comprehensible cry of pain*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 1). He contends that this muting of suffering is especially acute for Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, where torture is no longer physical but psychological and systemic.

He insists that contemporary forms of oppression are “modernised” and cloaked in human rights rhetoric, making them difficult to expose or define. Unlike classical torture, these new forms are diffused and embedded in the routine: “*It becomes your companion—your cellmate, the passing time...*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 2). The target is the prisoner’s mind and sense of self, not just their body.

Daqqa parallels the experience of prisoners with that of Palestinians outside prison, asserting that both live under a fragmented and controlling structure designed to reshape consciousness according to Israeli objectives. He criticises the inadequacy of traditional political frameworks to address these realities, arguing that Palestinian political thought is rooted in outdated paradigms that do not match the postmodern, “liquid” nature of contemporary Israeli repression (Daqqa, 2010, p. 2).

He concludes by stating that this work is not scientific research, but rather a memory-based appeal written from within the prison itself. It seeks to prompt political and intellectual clarity. “*This is primarily to show that what’s happening... is a comprehensive and scientifically planned program that aims to rebuild Palestinian consciousness*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 4). The responsibility to confront this lies with Palestinian political forces, not just human rights organisations.

Politicide

Waleed Daqqa contends that the Israeli system of control over Palestinians exceeds classical definitions of apartheid or occupation and instead resembles what he terms politicicide. He draws on the observations of a South African delegation, who found the segregation and restrictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to be more extreme and totalitarian than what they experienced under apartheid: not only are Palestinians separated from Israelis, but also from one another through the division of land into disconnected enclaves (Daqqa, 2010, p. 5).

The author argues that while racism underpins Israel’s actions, it is not the ultimate goal—it is a tool used to reshape Palestinian consciousness to fit the vision of a Jewish state. Citing Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe “Bogie” Ya’alon, Daqqa emphasises that the military’s aim since the Second Intifada has been the deliberate “*reshaping of consciousness*,” achieved through the fragmentation of Palestinian space and identity. What begins as physical repression—killings, demolitions, arrests—evolves

into a strategic campaign to erode the moral infrastructure of resistance, namely, the shared values and collective identity that held Palestinian society together during earlier struggles like the First Intifada (Daqqa, 2010, p. 5).

According to Daqqa, since 2004, Israel has implemented a scientifically informed, multi-layered system that operates politically, militarily, and economically to dismantle the idea of the Palestinian people without resorting to physical genocide. He frames this as a form of politicicide or political genocide, a strategy characterised by three primary tactics: (1) fragmenting Palestinian civil society into disorganised chaos; (2) maintaining endless negotiations while entrenching colonisation; and (3) attacking the social values that underpin collective identity, particularly targeting prisoners as symbols of unity (Daqqa, 2010, p. 7).

This system is compared to the dystopian surveillance state in Orwell’s 1984, where control extends into the thoughts and behaviours of individuals through pervasive monitoring—via cameras, drones, and digital surveillance tools. Daqqa believes this all-encompassing control enables Israel to shape Palestinian social, economic, and political life at minimal cost. He asserts that this is a modern, high-tech system of political annihilation unmatched since the Holocaust. However, its goal is not physical extermination but the erasure of cultural and civilizational identity (Daqqa, 2010, p. 8).

To conceptualise this form of oppression, the author proposes using the prison as a model. Israeli prisons are not just carceral institutions but testing grounds for techniques of control later applied to the entire occupied population. Drawing on theorists such as Foucault, Bauman, and Naomi Klein, Daqqa argues that trauma, surveillance, and psychological manipulation form the architecture of this political strategy (Daqqa, 2010, p. 10).

Panopticon

Waleed Daqqa introduces the Panopticon as a theoretical framework for understanding how Israeli prisons—and, by extension, the occupied Palestinian territories—function as systems of control. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, Daqqa argues that Israel employs a similar model of surveillance, not only within prisons but across the broader Palestinian landscape, reshaping society through mechanisms of control that are both real and symbolic (Daqqa, 2010, p. 10).

The author recalls Foucault’s description of the Panopticon as a circular structure with a central watchtower from which an unseen observer can monitor individuals confined in isolated, well-lit cells. This structure ensures maximal visibility of the detainees without reciprocal visibility of the observer. The

architecture is designed to produce a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power: “*They should never know if they are being observed at that moment, but they must be sure that they might always be under observation*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 11).

Daqqa stresses that the purpose of such surveillance is not merely to monitor but to internalise control. Prisoners become passive subjects who begin to discipline themselves, embodying the logic of the system. “*They are visible but cannot see. They are subjects of surveillance but never subjects of communication*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 11). The panoptic effect divides the population, isolates individuals, and renders collective agency impossible.

He emphasises that this model is not limited to prison infrastructure but is mirrored in the geopolitical organisation of the Occupied Territories. Israeli policy isolates Palestinian communities much like the isolated cells in the Panopticon. The illusion of constant surveillance—enabled by drones, cameras, and checkpoints—extends the architecture of the prison to entire cities and towns (Daqqa, 2010, p. 8).

Importantly, Daqqa suggests that this system does not require the constant application of force. Its success lies in its psychological impact: the awareness of potential observation induces self-regulation. As such, Israeli control becomes a self-sustaining apparatus—“*a machine to create and support power independently of the person who exercises it*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 11).

This framework, Daqqa contends, is essential for analysing contemporary torture and social destabilisation in Israeli prisons. The Panopticon exemplifies how power functions less through direct violence and more through engineered consciousness and isolation. Surveillance and separation thus operate as tools of political repression and cognitive colonisation, reshaping both the prisoner’s psyche and the collective Palestinian identity (Daqqa, 2010, p. 7).

The Doctrine of Shock

Waleed Daqqa draws from Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* to argue that the Israeli strategy toward Palestinian prisoners—and Palestinians more broadly—follows a logic of trauma-induced transformation. He begins by citing a CIA interrogation manual that describes a moment of mental paralysis in detainees after experiencing a catastrophic event. In that brief window, the prisoner becomes psychologically compliant and susceptible to influence: “*the detainee... is ready to be filled and compliant more than they were in the past*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 11).

Daqqa suggests that the doctrine of shock mimics this process at a mass scale. Just as torture aims to collapse an individual’s psychological defences, the shock doctrine seeks to

produce mass disorientation, rendering populations pliable. He references Naomi Klein’s analysis of the 9/11 attacks as a foundational shock that enabled the U.S. government to redefine national identity and introduce previously unthinkable narratives such as “clash of civilizations” and “Islamofascism” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 12).

Tracing the origins of the doctrine, Daqqa recounts CIA-funded experiments in the 1950s by Dr. Ewen Cameron, who subjected psychiatric patients to electric shocks, drug overdoses, and isolation to regress them psychologically to a pre-verbal, infant-like state. Cameron’s goal was not treatment but the creation of a mental blank slate, capable of being reprogrammed—a method later integrated into CIA interrogation protocols and military strategy (Daqqa, 2010, p. 12).

Daqqa points to global applications of this logic: from Pinochet’s Chile to U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the invasion of Iraq, the strategy of “shock and awe” aimed not only to defeat militarily but to erase societal structures, turning Iraqi society into a blank page upon which occupiers could inscribe a new order (Daqqa, 2010, p. 13).

He emphasizes that shock is not always military; it can emerge from economic collapse, natural disaster, or acts of terror. Like an individual prisoner overwhelmed in an interrogation room, societies in shock abandon values they would normally defend. Trauma becomes a means of disabling resistance and enforcing ideological submission (Daqqa, 2010, p. 13).

However, Daqqa underscores that shock is not an inescapable fate. Drawing from Klein’s examples, he notes how some nations—such as post-apartheid South Africa, Lebanon after the 2006 war, or Latin American countries—were able to eventually resist and reverse the effects of shock-induced neoliberalism. The possibility of resilience and recovery, he argues, remains open despite the engineered depth of trauma (Daqqa, 2010, p. 13).

In Daqqa’s view, this framework helps explain not just the individual experience of torture but the broader political strategy underlying Israeli repression of Palestinians: a scientifically calibrated attempt to erase resistance by manufacturing cognitive and societal disintegration (Daqqa, 2010, p. 35).

Hunger Strike as a Second Shock: Reshaping the Consciousness of the Prisoners

Waleed Daqqa examines the hunger strike of 2004 as a strategic turning point in the Israeli state’s broader effort to reshape the consciousness of Palestinian detainees. He situates the hunger strike within a broader context of military operations in Palestinian cities, arguing that the destruction caused by Israeli incursions went beyond targeting resistance fight-

ers—it aimed to instil terror and induce mass psychological shock. This “madness,” as some Palestinian analysts called it, was not irrational but rather a calculated tactic: “*Madness, as it turns out, was a strategy based on many logical calculations*” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 14).

The aim, Daqqa asserts, was to disorient Palestinian society, to break its moral infrastructure and make its members more susceptible to the internalisation of imposed values. Just as Dr. Ewen Cameron’s psychiatric experiments sought to erase individual identity through trauma to implant new behaviour, Israel’s strategy sought to “*erase the ideas and values that form the moral foundation of resistance*”. In place of national consciousness, the state sought to introduce pre-political, individualised identities that could be managed and manipulated (Daqqa, 2010, p. 15).

This was followed by the implementation of the Dayton Plan, which functioned like Cameron’s post-trauma “audio messages” to shape the perceptions of order among detainees and citizens. Concepts such as “rule of law” and “fighting corruption” replaced liberationist ideals like “resistance” and “freedom,” even though Palestinians remained under occupation. The redefinition of concepts was not inherently wrong, but Daqqa argues that their decontextualised presentation weakened the foundations of resistance and served the occupier’s agenda. (Daqqa, 2010, p. 16). Furthermore, he draws a parallel between Cameron’s use of isolation to break identity and the purpose of dividing the occupied land into isolated geographical areas, thereby undermining collective identity.

In prison, this transformation of values was paralleled through increasingly sophisticated administrative tactics. With over 11,000 detainees by 2004, the Israeli prison system faced a dilemma: suppress resistance by chaos (option one) or absorb detainees into traditional organisational frameworks (option two). Initially, the administration favoured the second approach—recognising the benefit of organised, disciplined prisoners. However, from late 2003, under the leadership of Yaakov Genot, this shifted dramatically (Daqqa, 2010, p. 17).

Genot, a Sharon confidant, was appointed to oversee the complete restructuring of the prison system. Backed by an increased budget and a centralised mandate, he standardised procedures, eliminated regional discretion, and launched a series of deliberate confrontations. One of these took place at Ashkelon prison, where physical force was used to provoke unrest and pave the way for a planned hunger strike—a tactic intended to become a second, controlled shock (Daqqa, 2010, p. 19).

The hunger strike was thus not an unanticipated protest, but a confrontation into which detainees were pushed. Daqqa notes that “*never in the history of Israeli prisons has the prison*

administration encouraged detainees to go on a hunger strike like it did in the months before the strike in August 2004” (Daqqa, 2010, p. 20). Genot’s strategy used modern group psychology, psychological warfare, and media manipulation as if preparing for a military campaign. Outside professionals designed the response plan, eliminating personal discretion for guards and creating a “*terrifyingly systematic repression strategy*” that extended across the entire prison network.

Five key measures were implemented in advance (Daqqa, 2010, p. 17-20):

- Widespread strip searches using dogs—considered impure in Islamic culture—to humiliate detainees and assault their dignity.
- Isolation of political leaders in prisons, not through solitary confinement but through structural reorganisation, in order to fragment leadership and disrupt prisoner solidarity.
- Installation of insulating glass in visitation rooms, severing the physical and emotional bond between prisoners and their families, which previously served as crucial psychological support.
- Unified administration under Genot, removing variability between facilities and ensuring complete top-down control of every aspect of prison life.
- Provocations and violence engineered to trigger unrest and channel it toward a strike that could be exploited for reprogramming.

Daqqa argues that the hunger strike became a second shock after the physical and societal trauma of the military incursions and mass arrests. While the prisoners initially attempted to negotiate and de-escalate, the administration refused all dialogue, making the hunger strike inevitable. Genot’s strategy was to use this moment of protest not as a crisis, but as an opportunity for *re-engineering consciousness* (Daqqa, 2010, p. 19).

Within this framework, prisons became laboratories for Israeli political experimentation. The same methods used to fragment and demobilise Palestinian leadership in the occupied territories—geographical isolation, bureaucratic entrapment, and ideological reframing—were mirrored within the prison walls. After the strike, entire sections were reorganised, and internal hierarchies reshaped to allow for the rise of new, more pliable leadership that would no longer represent the original values of the detainee movement (Daqqa, 2010, p. 18).

The result, Daqqa observes, is a prison environment that is “high materially” but “low spiritually”. Detainees may enjoy improved physical conditions, but they suffer a profound moral and psychological disorientation. As one prisoner put it: “*In the past, we were together; today, we are on our own*”. This sense of atomization, of shared meaning eroded, reflects the broader

Palestinian condition under occupation. The absence of visible torture paradoxically intensifies the suffering by making it difficult to name and resist (Daqqa, 2010, p. 18).

Ultimately, Daqqa contends that the hunger strike was transformed into an instrument of state strategy. Its goal was not to break the body, but to reset the mind. The reshaping of consciousness—both inside and outside prison—remains the core of Israeli policy. This summary sets the stage for a deeper analysis of the new methods of modern torture used to maintain this reconfiguration (Daqqa, 2010, p. 18).

Hunger strike: Tactical suppression and the attack on solidarity

Waleed Daqqa analyses how the Israeli prison administration implemented a methodical program of psychological pressure during the 2004 hunger strike—one that went beyond direct physical torture and aimed at dismantling collective consciousness among Palestinian detainees. While the most visible aspect of the strike was the prisoners' resilience and defiance, the systematic nature of repression revealed a strategic objective: to fracture the principle of solidarity that had long defined the National Detainee Movement.

Daqqa enumerates eight specific measures designed to break down morale and social cohesion. These included leaving lights on 24/7 to deprive prisoners of sleep, confiscating everyday comfort items like plastic water bottles and salt—essential for survival during hunger strikes—and broadcasting propaganda over loudspeakers to discredit the strike's leadership. Other techniques sought to humiliate strip searches using metal detectors and attack dogs, naked inspections under the pretext of security, and even daily barbecues held in front of fasting detainees to provoke psychological torment (Daqqa, 2010, p. 21).

Beyond the physical hardship, Daqqa emphasises that the goal was to destroy the psychological infrastructure that sustained collective resistance. Detainees were relocated frequently, disrupting long-standing support networks and undermining emotional resilience. *"The goal was to break the circle of acquaintances and friends... weakening the direct moral circle that provided psychological support for the detainee's resilience"* (Daqqa, 2010, p. 21).

This coordinated program of repression drew inspiration from past global experiences—particularly Latin America in the 1970s and U.S.-run detention sites like Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. Daqqa references testimonies from Argentina, where torture was not just used to extract information but to destroy core ideological commitments—most notably, the value of solidarity. Prisoners were pressured to betray their com-

rades not for intelligence, which the authorities often already had, but to break their identity as members of a collective (Daqqa, 2010, p. 22).

Similar strategies were deployed in Israeli prisons, particularly targeting religious identity and communal unity. The denial of contact with family, the prevention of legal visits, and the targeting of Islamic sensitivities during searches were meant to isolate detainees from their external and internal sources of psychological strength. These attacks, Daqqa asserts, were *"not merely expressions of anger or sadism,"* but deliberate, calculated interventions *"based on global experiences"* (Daqqa, 2010, p. 19) and adapted to the specific goals of Israeli prison policy.

The most vital target, Daqqa argues, was the principle of solidarity itself. *"Solidarity as a principle changed the detainees from a group of people and factions... into a force that prison guards couldn't prevent from staying united"* (Daqqa, 2010, p. 23). By eliminating solidarity, the prison system sought to dismantle the unifying values that enabled organised resistance, both inside and outside prison.

Following the hunger strike, a new policy direction emerged that would have been impossible without the psychological disintegration caused by the strike itself. The administration moved quickly to dismantle the representative structures of the National Detainee Movement, which had operated as a unified national entity. Rather than a centralised, coordinated decision to end the strike, prisons collapsed one by one in disorderly fashion. This chaos, Daqqa notes, was precisely the outcome Genot intended. As a former military figure, Genot understood that *"it's not enough to take over their positions... their defeat has to look as far as possible from organized withdrawal"* (Daqqa, 2010, p. 24).

The strike's formal failure to achieve material demands was less consequential, in Daqqa's view, than the symbolic collapse it produced. The breakdown of collective leadership, the loss of shared frameworks of action, and the erosion of national values constituted a far more profound and more lasting wound. *"Thus, the detainees became more prepared for the formation and implementation of the mind reshaping strategy"* (Daqqa, 2010, p. 24).

Daqqa argues that the hunger strike functioned not only as a protest but also—unintentionally—as the second stage in a state-led shock doctrine, following the mass arrests and incursions. This second shock enabled the dismantling of organisational and ideological infrastructures among detainees, clearing the way for the implantation of alternative narratives and individualised, depoliticised identities (Daqqa, 2010, p. 18).

In sum, the 2004 hunger strike was converted from a potential act of resistance into a mechanism of reengineering.

Through methods inspired by psychological warfare, cultural humiliation, and global repression models, the Israeli prison administration turned a mass protest into a rupture—weakening not the prisoners' bodies alone, but their collective capacity to think and act as a national force (Daqqa, 2010, p. 22).

Procedures after the Strike: Material Abundance as a Torture Tool

Waleed Daqqa argues that following the 2004 hunger strike, the Israeli prison system shifted toward a more insidious and psychological strategy of control: the use of material abundance as a tool of suppression. Rather than confronting collective resistance through direct violence, the prison administration opted to weaken solidarity and reshape detainee consciousness by offering comfort and fragmenting communal structures (Daqqa, 2010, p. 24).

The collective struggle that once characterised the detainees' movement was dismantled and replaced by a model of individualised demands. Post-strike, prisons were reorganised by region—dividing detainees from Jenin, Nablus, Jerusalem, and other areas—thus reinforcing local over national identities. The traditional representative committee system was dissolved, replaced by individual “section reps” selected by the administration, effectively turning spokespeople into intermediaries of control (Daqqa, 2010, p. 25).

Harsh punishments were imposed for any symbolic protest or possession of national imagery, such as photos of Palestinian leaders. Even religious sermons were policed, prohibited from addressing national themes. This repression extended to traditions that once reinforced cohesion—welcoming new detainees or collective prayer—and worked systematically to break down internal democratic structures through constant transfers of leadership figures (Daqqa, 2010, p. 26).

At the same time, detainees were encouraged to submit individual requests and were offered relatively high standards of material comfort—especially in terms of food purchases—through arrangements funded by the Palestinian Authority and international donors. Daqqa observes that Palestinian detainees may be the only political prisoners in the world receiving monthly stipends from a government ministry despite the absence of a sovereign state. These conditions, while superficially humane, serve to depoliticise detainees and shift their attention from national liberation to personal subsistence (Daqqa, 2010, p. 27).

Crucially, this abundance creates internal contradictions. Some detainees live in better material conditions than their families under siege in Gaza. This dissonance fosters alienation, disconnection from the struggle, and a sense of helplessness.

Over time, this becomes a form of learned helplessness that is passed from veteran prisoners to newcomers, reinforcing Israel's control even in the absence of visible repression (Daqqa, 2010, p. 29).

In this context, material abundance becomes not a form of compassion but a sophisticated mechanism of modern torture. Daqqa calls for a redefinition of torture that accounts for psychological erosion, manipulation, and the slow dismantling of political agency through comfort, rather than pain (Daqqa, 2010, p. 3).

Modern Control: Dangerous Value Manifestations in the Lives of Palestinian Detainees

In this final section, Waleed Daqqa offers a profound analysis of how the Israeli prison system uses the mechanisms of modernity—particularly the separation of time and space—to exercise a new, insidious form of control over Palestinian detainees. Drawing on sociological and philosophical frameworks, Daqqa argues that surveillance, bureaucratic distancing, and psychological engineering have replaced direct violence as the primary tools of domination, leading to a redefinition of torture itself.

He begins by asserting that in modern prisons, control is no longer exerted through physical presence or direct interaction, but through technological systems that enable total oversight. Cameras, electronic locks, and centralised monitoring systems allow one guard to control 120 detainees without ever appearing physically present. This transformation gives the illusion of autonomy: detainees now open and close their own cell doors, seemingly managing their own routines. However, this autonomy is an illusion. Control has merely become internalised and more effective. The guard, now just a screen operator, is dehumanised, and the detainee becomes an object rather than a subject in the eyes of the system (Daqqa, 2010, p. 32).

This shift, Daqqa explains, also enables the prison administration to implement its ideological agenda with surgical precision. Surveillance enables detailed control over detainees' time, dividing it into small, tightly regulated units—seven scheduled bathroom breaks, three daily security checks, and strictly assigned outdoor periods. The detainee's time is no longer their own; they cannot even plan a day as they please. This loss of agency fosters a psychological tension: a desire to preserve the symbolic “freedom” of opening one's own door coexists with the recognition that this action is a form of self-subjugation. (Daqqa, 2010, p. 34).

One of the most corrosive aspects of this system is the contradiction between the detainees' self-image as heroes of the resistance and the humiliating realities of prison life. The presence of young female guards overseeing hundreds of prisoners,

often from conservative communities where female authority over men is taboo, undermines traditional perceptions of masculinity and weakens prisoners' self-esteem. Simultaneously, literary and political narratives that once depicted prison as a site of valour and sacrifice now appear disconnected from the modern realities of electronic doors and bureaucratized repression. The figure of the torturer, once a symbol of brute force, now resembles a post office clerk. This dissonance weakens the detainees' capacity to frame their suffering in meaningful, mobilising terms (Daqqa, 2010, p. 34).

The cultural and intellectual consequences of this shift are dire. According to Daqqa, the prison system no longer targets the body—it targets the consciousness. The tools of repression now include restricting access to books, news, and ideas. Religious and trivial content is allowed, but political and academic material is banned. Arabic newspapers are censored, while Hebrew media and “moderate” Arab satellite channels are permitted. The isolation is not just physical; it is cognitive. Sections are segregated to prevent the exchange of experiences, information, or collective political awareness (Daqqa, 2010, p. 40).

Within this environment, geographic identity has replaced national identity. Once guided by ideological principles and political allegiance, the prison's internal structures now revolve around local affiliations—city, village, or refugee camp. Leaders are elected not by ideology or merit but by geography, and factions are subdivided accordingly. This shift has eroded the unifying values of the Palestinian resistance and turned formerly shameful affiliations into dominant organising principles. The prison administration actively engineers these dynamics, transferring detainees to bolster the influence of certain leaders and reinforcing geographic blocs (Daqqa, 2010, p. 37).

The consequences are evident in the daily lives of detainees. The city group now does morning exercise. Prisoners no longer engage in intellectual debates or collective reading; instead, some immerse themselves in body image, repetitive entertainment, or private university studies with individual motivations. This disengagement from national struggle is a direct product of the prison administration's strategic efforts to reshape consciousness (Daqqa, 2010, p. 39).

For Daqqa, the most alarming effect of these changes is the creation of learned helplessness. Material comfort—already analysed in a previous section—is instrumentalised as a form of psychological coercion. Detainees, fearing the loss of privileges, self-regulate and even police one another. They avoid protest not because of visible repression, but because deprivation now threatens their identity and fragile psychological stability. This results in a normalisation of submission, where resistance appears not only futile but socially disruptive. Over time, this pas-

sivity is passed to new detainees, becoming an inherited trait of self-restraint and detachment from collective politics (Daqqa, 2010, p. 34).

The culmination of this psychological reengineering became starkly evident during the Israeli war in Gaza. Historically, Palestinian detainees were known for their unwavering solidarity with international liberation movements. Nevertheless, during this war, detainees remained silent. There were no protests, hunger strikes, or symbolic gestures. For Daqqa, this was not a moral failure, but evidence of the depth of Israeli control. “*Detainees sat watching Arab satellite channels flooded with blood... doing less than any foreign solidarity activist*”. The administration was confident enough in its dominance to raise Israeli flags across the prison yards after the war—a move unthinkable in previous decades (Daqqa, 2010, p. 42).

Daqqa identifies this moment as emblematic of a broader crisis of identity and purpose. The contradiction between how detainees perceive themselves—as part of a resistance—and how they act—or fail to act—has become a profound source of psychological suffering. The internalisation of repression has led to an identity fracture that remains unaddressed by Palestinian political actors or human rights organisations. These institutions, he argues, fail to analyse these developments in depth, often treating violations as isolated rather than systemic. In doing so, they inadvertently reinforce the very framework of control they seek to challenge (Daqqa, 2010, p. 35).

The final and perhaps most dangerous consequence is the normalisation of intra-prison violence. With the collapse of ideological regulation and national faction cohesion, violence has become the default mechanism for conflict resolution. Once taboo, the use of sharp objects and aggression among prisoners is now common. Regional alliances—rather than political ideology—determine loyalty and safety. Detainees who might seek reform or resist this dynamic find themselves isolated or dependent on the very structures they hope to dismantle (Daqqa, 2010, p. 39).

In conclusion, Daqqa argues that the Israeli prison system has evolved into the largest and most methodical project in modern history aimed at reshaping the consciousness of a generation of resistance population. Through technological control, material incentives, cultural isolation, and psychological fragmentation, the prison administration has moved beyond managing prisoners—it now manages meaning itself. Suppose Palestinian detainees, as Daqqa suggests, are the vanguard of the national movement. In that case, the erosion of their collective identity represents not only a crisis of incarceration, but a crisis of nationhood. The legacy of this transformation, he warns, will extend far beyond the prison walls unless urgently

confronted with new theoretical tools, national awareness, and political imagination (Daqqa, 2010, p. 38).

An examination of the text in the context of the Gaza genocide.

In the second part of the paper, we provide a brief update and examine whether his predictions, written from prison, might shed light on conditions that could be characterised as a torturing environment/collective torture affecting the Palestinian population.

1. Panopticon: the all-seeing eye

According to Daqqa, to achieve the social (and thus, political) annihilation of the Palestinian people, the Israeli apparatus fragments Palestinian civil society into disorganised chaos. The geographical fragmentation used by the Israeli apparatus in the occupied territories is total, from hundreds of military checkpoints, hundreds of colonial settlements, the apartheid separation wall and apartheid roads in the West Bank, to the wall surrounding the Gaza Strip. In addition to the divisions into Areas A, B and C to transform the West Bank into 224 islands, or small ghettos, and cut off 62 per cent of its area (Weizman, 2007; UN-OCHA, 2020; Shamir, 2013).

Daqqa's invocation of the panopticon (Foucault, 1995) is not merely metaphorical and can be applied to Gaza and the West Bank in recent decades, where there is a small territory divided into small cells (like those in a prison), each controlled by an entrance (checkpoint or other) and permanently monitored by cameras, drones or other spatial surveillance systems, as numerous studies have documented and discussed over the last fifteen years (Peled, 2018; Ophir, Rosen-Zvi, 2020; B'Tselem, 2019; Dana, 2024; Amnesty International, 2023).

This mass electronic surveillance not only controls the movements of the population but also serves as a source of data, as vehicle registration numbers, individuals, crops, and trade are all monitored. Many of these systems also have built-in biometric recognition patterns (Zureik, 2020; Amnesty International, 2023; Talbot, 2020).

The widespread use of spyware on the computers or mobile devices of authorities, leaders, key figures or simply suspects (at the local but also international level) allows additional access to personal information, photos or conversations, without there being any clear international legislation on the matter (Bodoque, 2025 ; Gray, 2025). The underlying logic of this system, which could be described as Orwellian (McLachlan, 2020), is that the population is not only monitored but also aware that it is constantly being observed to encourage permanent self-con-

trol, foster mistrust even within families, and lead to demobilisation and, ultimately, submission (B'Tselem, 2019).

The significant development of biometric security measures currently being tested in Gaza is remarkable. According to media reports (The Cradle, 2024) supported by academic studies (Darcy, 2023), the Netanyahu government has approved a plan to establish concentration camps for the population of Gaza, with biometric control of access to food and medical aid, operated by private Israeli and American security companies. The technology would allow anyone to be identified and detained based on specific biometric parameters linked to intelligence databases (Darcy, 2023; Anfuso et al., 2025).

2.- The shock doctrine and how to convince the world of the necessity of violence.

Daqqa's most disturbing claim is that the Israeli prison system is a laboratory, designed not only to repress but to shape the future consciousness of the Palestinian resistance, following the principles developed by Klein in her now classic book on the Shock Doctrine (2009). In this regard, Naomi Klein herself has written about how her concepts are applicable to contemporary Palestine (Klein et al., 2012).

In line with Daqqa and Klein's analysis, Netanyahu has used the aggression of 7 October to take advantage of the state of shock to promote an extremist political agenda that would not be acceptable to the majority of the population under other circumstances, while avoiding internal accusations of corruption that were closing in on him and advancing his policy of exterminating the Palestinian people. The messages conveyed in the context of shock and confusion, and in the idea of reshaping the mind, are at least threefold: (1) " Hamas is to blame " and " Hamas must be eliminated ", deliberately confusing a political organisation with the population as a whole and establishing systems of collective punishment. (2) Israel only exercises " the right to self-defence " using the minimum necessary force and (3) dehumanises the Palestinian people. All together to counteract the proceedings before the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice, and the report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (2025), which refers to " crimes against humanity. of extermination, murder, gender-based persecution of Palestinian men and children, forced transfers, acts of torture and inhuman and cruel treatment " (Flores, 2024; Ajour, 2025; Austin, 2024).

When discussing the hunger strike in 2004, Daqqa describes how the Israeli apparatus used the protest as a turning point in the prisons, an opportunity to advance the plan to reshape the prisoners' consciousness (Daqqa, 2010, p. 19). Along the same lines, there has been extensive debate within

Israel (still ongoing) about whether this was actually a security failure or a calculated political decision, like Pearl Harbour (1941), pointing to a plausible combination of both (Segell, 2024). The objective would be to turn the surprise attack into an opportunity to change the entire Middle East and create a turning point for “the Palestine situation”.

3.- Tactical repression and attack on solidarity

Daqqa's book describes how prisons seek to attack forms of leadership, mutual support and solidarity by isolating individuals in an individual struggle for survival. In Gaza, since June 2025, Israel has agreed with the United States to contract the private services of the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GFH) for the distribution of humanitarian aid; a foundation that, according to numerous observers, has become a death trap (Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 2025), with more than 1,400 people killed while trying to obtain food, according to official United Nations sources, with degrading situations for the population seeking confrontation between families and clans in the struggle to obtain food (Al-Mughrabi & Khaled, 2025).

Despite this, there are no reports of signs of disunity among the population, but rather forms of mutual support and attempts at organisation by the various clans and traditional authorities (OCHA situation reports (2024-25)).² Furthermore, and with the caution that must be exercised when analysing data collected in wartime conditions, surveys indicate majority support for Hamas' strategy among the population in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (PSR, 2025).

4.- The normalisation of submission and cultural erasure

As a final phase, Daqqa argues that Israel created a situation of relative abundance in prisons that neutralised forms of resistance for fear of losing those few privileges. This can be seen in the situation in Gaza before 7 October, with the emergence of some shopping centres and a small middle class (Times of Israel, 2017). This has been swept away, for obvious reasons, by the current situation.

Final reflections

Daqqa tells us that Israel's goal is political genocide, and to achieve this, it seeks to shape the consciousness of the Palestinian people. It uses a scientifically developed plan based on fragmentation, surveillance, shock, repression, manipulation and submission, both inside and outside prisons.

Extending the analysis from the prison to Palestinian society reveals a fragmented Palestine (Gaza versus the West Bank), which is itself sub-fragmented, like a labyrinth of walls

controlled by the all-seeing eye. 7 October appears as a turning point for Israel, a state of collective shock that is being exploited to endorse a strategy of destruction – of the territory and the population – with no signs, for now, that this is leading to a reshaping of the collective consciousness of the Palestinian people in the direction desired by Israel authorities.

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