

Supplementary material: Waleed Nimr Daqqa

Melting consciousness, or the redefinition of torture.

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Introduction

There is nothing more harrowing or agonizing than for a person to endure the torment of oppression and suffering without being able to describe it, identify its cause, or trace its source. It is the feeling of helplessness, the loss of human dignity, when uncertainty and oppression converge, making it seem as though not only has the world abandoned you, but your very language has betrayed you. You find yourself unable to articulate your anguish, to name it, or even to utter a comprehensible cry of pain—an “Ah!” that the free might grasp and comprehend. A cry capable of piercing through the murky fog of media and politics, to secure your cause, as a prisoner, a reasonable place on the agendas of politicians and journalists, and to garner the attention of human rights organizations. At times, you are compelled for the sake of media necessities, to simplify the complexity of your suffering, rendering it so trivial that it seems unworthy of concern. At other times, you resort to exaggeration, making it all too easy for your oppressor to discredit your claims as false. Thus, your isolation from the world is reinforced, leaving you to endure your pain alone. You stand at a crossroads: either relinquish your identity entirely, becoming nothing more than an object in the hands of your jailer, or transform yourself into a subject of inquiry, tasked with redefining torture and its causes. A task that is far from simple. To be both the observer and the observed, the tortured and the one who reports the torture—to be the scene and the witness, the details, and the abstraction simultaneously.

The Palestinian detainee in Israeli occupation prisons experiences a profound sense of helplessness, stemming from the difficulty of describing the oppressive conditions they have endured since the onset of the current uprising. Oppression and torture have become complex and modernized, aligned with the rhetoric of human rights, requiring specialized efforts by human rights organizations to uncover violations. These violations are often portrayed by the Israeli judiciary and media as

exceptions to an otherwise consistent commitment to human and prisoners' rights.

Modern oppression is subtle and hidden, often presented as a response to human rights. It's an oppression without a clear image, impossible to identify with a single scene. It's a collection of small, isolated actions and thousands of details that, on their own, don't appear to be tools of torture—unless we understand the bigger picture and the logic behind this system. It's similar to exploitation in the free market economy under globalization, which is always justified as necessary to boost economic growth. This kind of exploitation has no clear face, country, or specific address for the exploiter. Its tentacles spread like an octopus, reaching every corner of the world and every detail of your life. You, the exploited, may be a worker or consumer, but at the same time, you might own shares in the very monopoly that exploits you. In this way, the lines between the exploiter and the exploited blur, making it almost impossible to define or understand exploitation in modern production systems and the global free market.

The oppression and torture in Israeli prisons are different from the forms of torture described in global prison literature. There's no real deprivation of food or medicine, and you won't find prisoners being deprived of sunlight or buried underground. Prisoners aren't chained to heavy metal blocks all day long, as described in many narratives. In the postmodern era, the target is no longer the body, but the soul and the mind. What we face here is not what Fucik described under fascism in his book *Notes from the Gallows*, nor is it like the prison in *The Glistening Summit* by Tahar Ben Jelloun, or what Malika Oufkir described about Moroccan prisons. We aren't in “Abu Zabal,” or even “Abu Ghraib” or “Guantanamo,” in terms of living conditions. In all these prisons, you know your torturer and the methods used, and you have a clear sense of physical torture. But in Israeli prisons, the torture is much more subtle and, in its “civilized” form, it transforms your senses and mind into tools of daily suffering. It comes quietly, usually without using a baton or making noise. It becomes your companion—your cellmate, the passing time, the small yard, and the relatively available material resources.

Prisons, while the focus of this study, are not the only place where people experience the loss of the ability to make sense of their reality, the feeling of helplessness, and powerlessness. This situation is not unique to prisoners—it's a general Palestinian condition. The circumstances of Palestinian citizens often mir-

ror those of the prisoners, not only in terms of repression but also in the way they are isolated in separate geographical areas, much like how prisoners are kept apart in different sections or cells with no connection except for the will of the guards. There is a deeper similarity between the two situations in terms of the ultimate goal of the oppression in both cases.

The goal that we claim Israel is trying to achieve is to reshape people according to an Israeli vision, by melting their consciousness, especially the consciousness of the resistance elite in the prisons. Therefore, studying the lives of prisoners, which reflect the lives of citizens in the occupied territories, can simplify and clarify the overall Palestinian situation for a better understanding of the larger Palestinian scene.

The resemblance between the small prison and the larger prison in the Palestinian context doesn't end here. There's also a similarity in the misreading and the traditional approaches that fail to uplift the Palestinian cause, just as they fail to uplift the cause of prisoners. The models present in Palestinian political literature in confronting the occupation, or in analysing its policies, are still conventional and largely drawn from the literature of post-World War II liberation movements and their experiences, shaped during the Cold War, and in a different civilizational context than what we face today. Just as prison literature no longer reflects the current reality of prisons, political literature and its assumptions are incapable of addressing the current political reality. While Palestinians have been facing a situation for over 51 years where the occupier derives its ideas, theories, and repressive tools from a postmodern civilizational context, or as Bauman calls it "liquid modernity"¹, Palestinian political forces seem unable to diagnose their reality. They are unable to offer interpretations or solutions that could mobilize the masses, or at the very least, give them a sense of certainty—even if that certainty comes in the form of an explanation for their disasters.

These Palestinian tools and definitions in liberation have fallen behind reality, making them tools of oppression and tor-

ture. They lead us to a dead end despite the sacrifices every single time. It is like we are facing a nuclear war with just a sword. What we see in reality or what seems to see due to this helplessness, is also like a war from history books like the Battle of the Trench or the Battle of Uhud, where the gap between the tools we have to change our reality and the reality itself becomes vast, like the space between history and the future.

This is the situation of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, which is the subject of the study. They are experiencing something that doesn't exist, while they are unable to describe the reality. They are facing a torture they cannot describe how it looks or where its coming from. We don't claim that we're offering a comprehensive explanation or a complete definition of torture through these papers. It's a mere call for help to do something before it's too late. The task of revealing what's happening in the prisons and clarifying it to the public, within the framework of a new definition of torture, is the responsibility of human rights committees and detainee committees. But before everything, it is the national faction and Palestinian political forces' mission. The issue at hand is not a matter of rights or humanity, but primarily a political one.

These papers are not scientific research; they were written in prison, where there are no serious resources to depend on, therefore we focus on our memory when discussing what happens in the enclaves Israel built. Especially since we're locked and isolated from the world for almost quarter a decade. This is primarily to show that what's happening in the small prisons is not just the detention and isolation of detainees who are seen as a security threat to Israel, but a comprehensive and scientifically planned program that aims to rebuild Palestinian consciousness.

The success or failure of this plan depends primarily on our ability to uncover it and address its often embarrassing details, without self-deception or falsehoods. What's needed is clarity and honesty, along with scientific research, not a rhetorical speech praising the prisoners, their struggles, and sacrifices. Research that answers the questions and concerns we hope to raise in these papers.

Walid/Jalbou prison
Late July 2009

Politicide.

Less than people.. according to physical genocide

The south African delegation that visited Palestine² was astonished by the scale and nature of Israel's actions of a totalitarian

1 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2007), pp. 2–7. Bauman divides modernity into two phases: "solid modernity" and "liquid modernity," rejecting the common distinction between "modernity" and "postmodernity." He argues that these terms falsely suggest a complete rupture between the two stages, whereas he sees them as interconnected and engaged in an ongoing dialogue. This definition provides a deeper understanding of the post-Oslo occupation. Direct occupation represents the phase of solid modernity, whereas today's occupation reflects the liquid phase—an occupation that, in our view, is totalitarian in nature.

2 Published article + an article in *Haaretz* written by Amira Hass or Gideon Levy

nature imposed on the Palestinians, which they described as far in excess of what South African Governments had done at the Apartheid stage. At the worst stage of the apartheid, there were no specific streets for white and black people, as they were in the occupied territories, where there are streets only for Arabs and others for Jews. The apartheid in South Africa wasn't as totalitarian and demanding as the one created by the occupation. There were places where black and white people met all the time. This South African delegation has become increasingly astonished and bewildered and has rendered the term "apartheid" incapable of characterizing and defining the Palestinian situation under occupation, which separates not only Palestinians from Israelis, but Palestinians themselves. As is known, Israel has divided the occupied territories into little isolated areas that turned the residents' lives into hell.

This study argues that the difference in the ultimate goal that the Israeli government has been trying to achieve since the second year of the Intifada, compared to what the South African government wanted through apartheid, is what makes Israeli actions so extensive, deep, and fully controlling of Palestinian citizens' lives. The goal isn't just segregation between Palestinians and Israelis, but rather, racism is a tool used to achieve the main goal, which is to reshape Palestinian consciousness in a way that fits the project of the Jewish state. In this context, racism isn't the kind of wild, unreasonable racism represented by the settlers, but rather an organized racism backed by the entire Israeli establishment, with its logic and legal and moral justifications.

Israel has realized that the real problem isn't with the official Palestinian leadership and negotiator, but with the Palestinian people who refuse the Israeli vision for a solution. They show readiness to resist, which makes the support for all Palestinian resistance faction never ending.

The former Israeli Chief of Staff, "Bogie Ya'alon," clearly stated on more than one occasion during his military service in the Intifada that there was a need to "reshape Palestinian consciousness"³ – and that the military plans of his army were aimed at achieving that. Therefore, the division of the occupied lands into isolated areas should be understood in this Israeli context. It is part of the plan to reshape consciousness.

While the division is presented as a security measure aimed at preventing the movement of armed fighters, blocking connections between different Palestinian areas, transporting equipment and combat experience, or reaching the heart of Israel, and this is indeed one of its goals, at its core, it is a racist

tool to reshape Palestinian consciousness, which is the main goal set by Chief of Staff Ya'alon for his army.

At first, the Israeli establishment focused on the process of "reshaping consciousness" by making the idea of resistance costly, through demolitions, killings, and widespread destruction. It has become crystal clear today that the scale of killing, destruction, and damage to facilities and farms, which the military establishment was tasked with carrying out, along with the wide-scale arrests of Palestinian citizens, exceeds Israel's security needs. Israeli leaders realized that relying solely on military force, in the absence of a real political horizon, would backfire. The daily deaths of dozens of unarmed civilians made death easier to bear than witnessing scenes of death around the clock every day. This constant killing pushed dozens of young people to join the resistance as martyrs, finding in it a form of salvation that carried honor and dignity⁴.

Any resistance needs both physical and moral infrastructure. The Israeli army, through its actions targeting the physical infrastructure of the resistance, aimed to reach the point of "reshaping consciousness." More precisely, they sought to reassess the tools and methods used to reach this goal.

If targeting the physical infrastructure of the resistance wasn't enough to make a breakthrough in Palestinian public consciousness through accumulating decisive force in a short period—by killing, destroying, and flooding the scene with blood—it became necessary to add new components to the targeting process, which they believed could achieve the hoped-for breakthrough in "reshaping Palestinian consciousness."

The new components targeted were the elements of the moral infrastructure of the resistance. When we talk about "moral infrastructure," we specifically mean the set of shared values that embody the idea of one people in everyday life. It is impossible, even unthinkable, for a group of people to unite their energies and abilities, and become a collective, without having a goal or a set of shared objectives for most of its members. And it is completely impossible for such goals to form without shared values that provide a moral and value-based bond to organize the lives of the group's members, which in turn transforms them from individuals into a unified people.

The sense of solidarity and social support among all Palestinian groups, classes, and regions, which was most clearly visi-

3 His statement in Israeli newspaper

4 Through a survey conducted among prisoners who attempted but failed to carry out martyrdom operations, it was revealed that the vast majority attributed their motivation to the occupation's practices and the killings they witnessed, particularly the killing of children. As a result, they all indicated that they felt as if they were merely waiting for their turn to die. They preferred, instead, to choose the timing and manner of their own death.

ble during the first Intifada, was the direct, living, and material embodiment of the idea of one people with a shared fate, hopes, and goals. When we refer to the Israeli targeting of the moral infrastructure of the Palestinians to reshape their consciousness, we mean specifically targeting these daily, both small and large, manifestations. This includes the organized and spontaneous, individual, and collective, scattered, and concentrated activities and actions that express a psychological and moral structure that makes steadfastness in the face of the Israeli military machine possible. This steadfastness wasn't just passive and receptive; it also fostered positive, proactive resilience.

In this study, we think that Israel has achieved a scientific, comprehensive, and dangerous system since 2004, that relies on the most modern theories in human engineering and group psychology to reshape Palestinian consciousness by dismantling its shared values. We are facing a group of harmonious systems and levels: political, military, and economic where reshaping consciousness is one of its main goals. This Israeli system embodies politicicide. Even though we are aware of how problematic it is to use such definition for the Palestinian case, we believe that the systems set by Israel are very intimidating in their scientific and rational approach and closely resemble cases known as political genocide⁵. These include plans, programs, and positions that may appear to an observer as chaos, inconsistency, and contradictions in Israeli policy, but it is an organized chaos aimed at the following:

1. Dismantling economic and cultural Palestinian organizations, and civil society associations, not a complete dismantling or destruction, but rather keeping them disorganized and in a state of controlled chaos.
2. Constant political negotiations and creating the illusion that a solution is within reach and right around the corner, and at the same time creating and establishing facts on the ground through colonization, so the situation remains unsolved and more stagnant.
3. Breaking down the infrastructure of the concept of 'the people' by attacking the values that unite the Palestinian people, especially the forces and groups that uphold and defend these values, such as the prisoners who are the vanguard of the struggle. This way, the Palestinian people become less than a people, but survive physical extermination.

The most dangerous aspect of this system is that it is hard for the average citizen to fully understand, especially since it is divided into isolated scenes where the citizen only sees specific parts. Meanwhile, the occupation observes, monitors, and com-

prehends the entire Palestinian scene with minimal resources, time, and cost. This comprehensive surveillance and control over Palestinian lives would not have been possible without the significant advancements in information technology, communication tools, and electronic monitoring. Even at a glance, it is easy to notice that Palestinians live under a totalitarian system imposed by Israel, resembling George Orwell's description of 'Big Brother' in his novel 1984. Like 'Big Brother,' this authority monitors not only behavior and actions but also the thoughts and opinions in people's minds. Israel watches and controls the Palestinian citizen's life entirely, just like "Big Brother" through surveillance cameras spread all over cities like Jerusalem, or by monitoring Palestinian cities with drones and satellites, or by monitoring cell phones, fax machines and computers.

This holistic control enables it to intervene in the social and economic processes and political orientations of an entire society. This is in addition to its control over barriers on the entrances and exits of cities and governorates. In this sense, Israel's political extermination against the Palestinian people is a modernist project with the theories and tools that it uses. It is legitimate in our belief that no other people in history have faced a similar level of technique, accuracy and comprehensiveness, except the genocide-Holocaust that they faced in the Second World War by Nazism.

Although it's difficult to fully understand this system, it can be simplified and its components and complexities can be understood by comparing the prison model, which is the focus of our research, with what is happening in the occupied territories. There is a similarity between the actions of the occupation there and what happens in Israeli prisons, which are places where policies targeting the morale and social situation of Palestinians are tested.

The similarity between prisons and the camps in the occupied territories may help in solving the conceptual problem of describing the Palestinian situation. Sometimes it is described as apartheid, other times as a ghetto. But the reality goes beyond these descriptions, and decisions based on them are often confusing. They may describe parts of the Palestinian situation, but they can't capture the full reality. For example, the separation between Palestinians cannot be described as apartheid. Also, the camps for Palestinians are not temporary ghettos where they are gathered before a "final solution."⁵ Instead, they are the final solution. And the goal of this solution is not physical extermination but, if you will, cultural and civilizational destruction. In general, the term "occupation" is no

5 "The Final Solution" refers to the term used by the Nazis for their plan of the mass extermination of Jews in Europe after gathering them into ghettos during World War II.

longer enough, nor is the term “settler-colonial occupation,” to describe the full depth and nature of the situation, especially after Oslo.

All of these descriptions lead to a policy and reveal greater Israeli objectives than all of them. We are facing a political annihilation. The aim of this study is to demonstrate its vehicles through the prison model, dismantle its elements and thus re-configure them through a theoretical framework that provides us with the possibility to detect order and harmony in the full range of details of Israeli policy.

What provides us with such a theoretical framework, is what Michelle Foucault wrote in his book *Discipline and Punish, the Birth of Prison*, about the Panopticon system of circular imprisonment for an offence⁶, and Zigmont Puyment’s more profound understanding of the post-modern and post-modern era. Naomi Klein’s writing on the doctrine of trauma provides us with a clear picture of what relates to mass brainwashing, its scientific and theoretical source, and its practical uses in stabilizing economic policies and systems in favor of American interests in some countries that have experienced trauma.

Before we focus on prisons as a model of brainwashing or destabilizing all-encompassing national values that represent the saying of the people among Palestinian prisoners, as well as throughout Palestinian society - we offer two quick definitions of the inclusion as presented by Foucault, and the doctrine of trauma as exposed by Naomi Klein, as basic tools that we will use in our analysis of recent forms of torture in Israeli prisons.

What is included? How is it applied in Israeli prisons as a control tool? And what is the doctrine of trauma? Where does the shock start in Palestinians’ lives and where is it not over?

Panopticon:

The importance of using this prison model comes from what Michel Foucault developed and studied about understanding modern power and its use in surveillance and control.

If what Israel has built as camps for Palestinians in the occupied territories are large prisons, and what it tries to apply to prisoners inside smaller prisons is an extension of the same policy, then it’s natural and useful to study them using such theoretical tools. The “Panopticon” is the structural, geometric image of this model of control and surveillance that Israel carries out, not just for security and its needs, but to reshape people by controlling them completely, watching every detail of their lives, or creating the illusion of constant surveillance for every Palestinian citizen.

Foucault describes Bentham’s Panopticon as a round building with a watchtower in the center. Inside this tower, there are wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring.

The side building is divided into isolated rooms. Each one stretches the full length of the building, and each room has two windows: one on the inside, matching the windows of the tower, and one that opens to the outside, allowing light to pass through the room from one side to the other. At this point, it’s enough to place an observer in the central tower, and in each room, a madman, a patient, a worker, or a prisoner is confined, depending on the nature of the institution for which this building was created. Due to the opposite light, the small shadows inside the rooms at the edges can be seen from the tower, clearly reflected in the light. The more cages there are, the more it resembles small stages where each individual is completely alone and always observed.

Foucault describes the Panopticon as reflecting the three functions of a cell: confinement, deprivation of light, and concealment. However, it retains only the first function, while the other two are removed. The strong light and the observer’s gaze trap more than the shadow that ultimately protects. Vision.⁷

What such a system primarily allows is to avoid treating the prisoners (or the masses) as one large human group by dividing them. Each person is locked in place, silent, and is seen face-to-face by the observer. But the side walls prevent any connection between them and their companions. They are visible but cannot see. They are subjects of surveillance but never subjects of communication. They are bodies, passive recipients, but never active selves.

The lack of visibility is what guarantees the system. If the detainees are prisoners, there is no fear of a conspiracy, a mass escape attempt, or a plan for confrontation. The main effect of the Panopticon is to suggest to the detainees that there is a constant, ongoing state of permanent surveillance over them, ensuring the automatic function of power, making the surveillance continuous in its effects and impact on the detainees, even if it is intermittent and not always active in its actual practice. This means that there is no need for authority to be physically present in a complete form to carry out its actions. This geometric system is a machine to create and support power independently of the person who exercises it, to the extent that the detainees themselves become carriers of this power, exercising it on themselves. Bentham established the principle that power must be visible but not tangible, visible in the sense that the shadow of the central high tower should always be in front of the prisoners’ eyes, where they are monitored in an intangi-

6 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Beirut: Center for National Development, 1990), p. 210.

7 Same source p. 210

ble way. They should never know if they are being observed at that moment, but they must be sure that they might always be under observation.

The Doctrine of Shock:

In one of the guidance booklets issued by the CIA for its interrogators, which discusses methods of extracting information from prisoners during interrogation, the following paragraph appears: "There is a very brief moment that the prisoner goes through during which their mind is frozen, in a state similar to psychological paralysis. This happens as a result of a catastrophic or near-catastrophic experience that shatters the prisoner's world, their self-image, and their understanding of themselves in this world... An experienced interrogator can diagnose this situation immediately and knows that the source (the detainee) is ready to be filled and compliant more than they were in the past."⁸

The doctrine of shock that we are briefly presenting here perfectly and precisely mimics this experience. What torture seeks to achieve with individuals in interrogation rooms, the doctrine of shock seeks to achieve on a large-scale mass level. In her book *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein⁹ wrote that one of the most prominent examples of mass-scale shock is the shock of September 11th. For millions of people, specifically Americans, it represented an event that "shattered their familiar world," leaving them open to a phase of losing a sense of space and time. It made the individual unable to recognize their own identity and became deeply connected and withdrawn. This situation was skillfully exploited by the Bush administration.

People found themselves living in what resembled a zero year. They became a blank page upon which the U.S. administration could write new words and concepts it desired, such as "clash of civilizations," "axis of evil," "Islamofascism," and so on¹⁰.

The doctrine of shock didn't initially develop as a trial-and-error experience in the interrogation chambers; it began as experiments on patients in a psychiatric institute by academics at an American university. In the 1950s, the CIA funded strange experiments by a Canadian doctor on his psychiatric patients at the "Allon" Institute at the University of Michigan under his leadership as the head of the institute. This doctor, named Ewan Cameron, kept his patients in a state of anesthesia and complete isolation from their surroundings. He then subjected them to electric shocks and gave them large doses of various drugs, which worsened their psychological state, returning

them to a period of infancy or even before they were able to speak.

This deterioration in the state of disease was in fact a sign of success. The doctor didn't want to treat his patients, but to have them be reborn again as he published in many articles. He believed that he could penetrate his patients' brains and instill the desired behaviors and concepts through making them lose their sense of time and place, erasing their memories and perceptions of themselves, and erasing what they've learned throughout their lives about themselves, their surrounding area and turning them into a white board. In other words, he wanted to brainwash his patients and turn them into different people psychologically and mentally.¹¹

The results of this experiment were used in different ways and levels, starting from drafting guidance and pamphlets for C.I.A. detectives on how to extract confessions from prisoners. The doctrine of shock was used to interrogate the political opponent prisoners. Naomi Klein points out that in many countries like Chile during the Pinochet era, Bolivia, and Latin American countries in general, extending to prisoners of war in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo, and the U.S. secret prisons spread across the world since September 11th. These results were also used in military theory where the American strategy for the invasion of Iraq was formulated based on it, known as "shock and awe." The goal was not just to achieve military objectives in occupying Iraq, but to transform it as a society into something resembling an infant. Just as the effect of shock was seen on individuals in Dr. Ewan Cameron's experiment, leading to their submissiveness and readiness to learn, in other words, turning Iraqi society into a primitive, pre-national society—a blank slate upon which the American occupier could write and inscribe whatever it wished. Shock, by its nature, disables the ability to think logically, thus nullifying the capacity to resist the will of the occupier. However, to ensure that no future possibility of resistance re-emerges under occupation and to prevent the restoration of logical thinking, and thus the idea of resistance, it is necessary to completely destroy all existing possibilities, systems, and concepts. The greater and more comprehensive the destruction, the deeper the shock, turning the individual or group into a pure blank slate.

The shock, as Klein clarifies in her writing, is not necessarily a war initiated against a country¹² to reshape it, just like what

8 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (Tel Aviv: Al-Andalus, 2009), pp. 72–82.

9 Same source p. 82

10 Same source p. 92

11 D. Ewan Cameron, J.G. Lohrenz and K. A. Handcock, "The Depatterning Treatment of Schizophrenia," *comprehensive psychiatry* 3, no.2 (1962):67

12 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (Tel Aviv: Al-Andalus, 2009), p. 92.

happened in Iraq. The shock can be achieved through various ways like a military coup, a terrorist attack, economy crisis, or a natural disaster like a tsunami. These events and disasters can soften entire societies just like psychological torture in an interrogation room. Just like a scared prisoner is ready to confess on his friends, or deny his beliefs in a moment where he can't think because of the shock. Trauma stricken communities are more likely to give up their principles, which under any other circumstances, they never would have.

Those who adhered to the doctrine of shock believed that they could reshape communities like individuals according to their own interests and goals. Their theory was used to generalize and impose economic systems in many countries. Whether it be Latin America countries in the seventies, or in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as South Africa after abolishing the apartheid system, and trying to impose market economies and privatize Lebanon at the Paris conference after the shock of the second Lebanon war in summer 2006. Latin America countries were able to free themselves of the shock and its economic effects after almost 72 years. Lebanon and its resistance were also able to reject the conditions of western countries and World Bank through rebuilding it with its capabilities. Therefore, the shock is not an inevitable fate, and there's always a way to escaping it and breaking free from the clutches of what is being planned for countries under the grip of shock, whether it is war or a natural disaster.¹³

Hunger Strike as a second shock...

Reshaping the consciousness of the prisoners.

When Israel constantly bombed Palestinian cities and residential buildings with F16 airplanes and the Apache, and stormed the densely populated neighborhoods with its tanks and entered every alley and street in Nablus, Jenin, and Ramallah, demolishing homes with its massive D9 bulldozers, crushing them on their inhabitants. The purpose was never to chase and eradicate the small groups of fighters who had a Kalashnikov at most, with no experience or military training.

Security, specifically the security of its heavily armed and fortified soldiers behind an arsenal of weapons and iron, was a direct and field-related reason that could explain such intense use of fire, violence, and destruction. However, it does not explain the main goal that Israel aimed to achieve through this destruction, which often continued even after the battles had ended.

The main goal is to create a state of extreme fright amidst Palestinians, and making them think that Israel, with all its

military and political leadership, has lost its mind; that there was no law capable of controlling it. This was accompanied by Israeli officials' statements that support this belief. These statements had a purposeful media response to achieve this goal. On the other hand, statements by Palestinian leaders and political analysts were published demanding the military wings for the factions to stop making excuses to Sharon and his government to keep killing and destroying randomly.

These positions and analyses were based on two assumptions; the first is that this Israeli government really went crazy, so we shouldn't give 'this crazy Sharon what he wants.' As if we are not talking about a state with interests and goals that are guided by logic. 'Madness,' as it turns out, was a strategy based on many logical calculations. The second assumption is that the Israeli goal of destruction was to stop the armed operations of the resistance factions. These factions have announced several times that they would stop operations and give space for negotiation, but Israel responded with assassinations and more killing. One of the most notable examples was the calm that was declared before the assassination of Raed Al-Karmi, the leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Tulkarm. This shows that the military actions carried out by the Israeli army are not related to whether or not resistance groups stop their operations. Israel started its war with this excuse, but its attacks continue even if Palestinian armed actions stop, or as they call it, eliminating the "infrastructure of terrorism."

Israel, as its leaders repeatedly said, wanted to "make the Palestinians pay a high price," aiming to create a shock that would shape the Palestinian mindset. After hitting the "moral infrastructure" of the resistance, Sharon and his government believed that their vision for a solution could work. They thought that the main issue with Palestinians was their high hopes and ambitions, so they needed to lower these expectations, which challenged the strength of Israel's army. Sharon believed this was linked to the Oslo Accords, which he had opposed from the start. Just like the shock in Dr. Cameron's experiments, which wasn't meant to treat his patients but to rebuild them by erasing their memories and planting new ones through repeated audio messages¹⁵, Israel also wanted to create a shock in the minds and hearts of Palestinians. However, their main goal wasn't just to stop the armed Palestinian groups by making resistance costly, but to erase the ideas and values that form the moral foundation of the resistance. The first of these is the idea of the people and national values that protect the struggle and the fighters, replacing them with pre-national values that are easier to deal with. In other words, Israel wanted the destruction and killing to create a shock that would make it harder for Palestinian society and its elites to think logically

13 Same source p. 538 - 544

and balance things, making it easier to carry out brainwashing without resistance. At the very least, they wanted to introduce ideas and values that would empty the existing frameworks of its resistance content.

To achieve this goal, Israel didn't just rely on destruction and killing, but followed it with a series of steps and actions, starting with dividing the occupied land into isolated areas and ending with its approval, or even push, for the Dayton plan. This closely matches the stages of shock therapy in the "Olon" Institute at the University of Michigan. After "bombarding" his patients' minds with drugs and electric shocks, Dr. Cameron isolated them from the outside world in solitary confinement, and disabled their senses by covering their ears, eyes, and hands so they would lose their sense of time and place¹⁶, making them unable to identify their own identity. This is exactly the purpose of dividing the occupied land into isolated areas in the context of shaping awareness. In this state, Palestinians are unable to see or follow the full national picture. They become consumed by the worries and details of the part of the land they live in, and over time, they stop thinking of themselves as a whole community. Then comes the stage of "playing recorded audio messages,"¹⁷ or implanting new ideas, which is what the Dayton plan does. The danger here of this plan, in our view, isn't its security aftermath, but rather the values it teaches hundreds of young people who are recruited into the security forces. These young people are supposed to be the backbone of any liberation movement in its struggle against the occupier. Just as "revolution" was replaced with "authority," "struggle" in training these young people has been replaced with "rule of law," and "resistance" with maintaining security and preventing "weapon chaos." These concepts have been introduced to parts of Palestinian society due to serious mistakes made during the intifada.

Today, former comrades in the struggle are no longer just political opponents but have become enemies as part of an ideological and cultural mobilization process. At best, the slogan "fighting corruption" has taken a prominent place in political discourse instead of "freedom and independence"—a slogan that should be championed by parties in countries that have long achieved independence, not in a country still under occupation.

No sane person opposes the "rule of law" or even the fights against "armed chaos." However, these slogans and others like them are not presented within the discourse of a liberation movement fighting against occupation as part of its strategy and program. Instead, they are used to overshadow it and to sideline the values that should naturally stem from it, as it is supposed to be the defining theme of this stage.

In any case, this study is not meant to evaluate the success or failure of the shock doctrine and its impact in the occupied territories—this is a subject that deserves serious research by scholars and experts beyond our own limited circumstances in captivity. Rather, our goal is to highlight the general atmosphere or more precisely, the state of widespread shock under which efforts continue to apply this doctrine to prisoners. In prisons, its implementation differs only in scale, as it aims to reshape the consciousness of more than eleven thousand Palestinian prisoners, whom Israel has labeled as the solid core of the Intifada.

Groups of detainees arrived daily in waves, sometimes by dozens, making the prisons overcrowded. It was easy to notice the confusion and bewilderment on the prisoners' faces, but it wasn't enough for the prison administration to control the thousands coming in. To the officers in charge, having this many prisoners is a danger that should be contained and controlled as soon as possible. Transferring a mass of rebellious and resistant individuals into prison meant potentially bringing the Intifada inside unless absolute control was established. Faced with this challenge, the prison security apparatus had two options:

First option: preventing detainees from catching their breath by creating a state of unrest through frequent transfers between prisons. This would stop them from forming into a structured group with shared rules and order, making it harder to predict their future actions and movements. Without such organization, the prison administration could maintain tighter control over them.

Second option: enabling the detainees' movement to absorb this number of detainees and integrating them into their organizational framework. This would mean that the new detainees would adhere to the accumulated traditions that regulate relations with the prison authorities. As a result, the prison administration would benefit in two ways: first, it would minimize unexpected actions or surprises, and second, it would be dealing with a well-organized body—one that could become a source of resistance and morale-boosting for the prisoners, inspiring both their people and political leadership outside.

The prison administration kept dealing with detainees according to the second option until the end of 2003 and mid-2004, when it was ready to implement the first option, letting go of traditions and frameworks that regulated the detainees' lives, but at the same time regulated their relationship with their jailor, and worked to replace the value-based content of these frameworks, or part of it, was dismantled, while other parts were broken down, as we will see later.

This phase was accompanied by an Israeli discussion about the need to create an alternative leadership and a “Palestinian partner” with whom a solution could be reached. This was also reflected inside the prisons, where efforts were made to form an alternative leadership for the detainees by separating and isolating key faction leaders into two designated sections. Although isolation had long been used as a punitive measure, this time it was different. Instead of solitary confinement, as in the past, except for a few cases, large numbers of detainees from the first and second ranks of leadership were separated. This approach ensured that their isolation was not time-limited, as solitary confinement legally requires. The goal was not just to punish the prisoners but to create a leadership vacuum, allowing the emergence of new leadership while enabling direct intervention in the internal dynamics among the prisoners.

The prisons embodied a lab where Israeli politics are tested, therefore the procedures in the occupied lands are often in line with these procedures in prison.

The influential Palestinian leadership that rejected Israeli dictates was isolated in the Palestinian cities and prevented from moving freely. Some were even subjected to isolation like solitary confinement in prisons. Large areas were separated into isolated zones after large-scale incursions that followed the shock, a similar step took place in prisons after the 2004 hunger strike. Detainees were separated into isolated sections after the hunger strike and its effects created the required shock. Each section in the prison was separated from the Detainees’ movement to implement something like Dayton’s plan and having a similar impact on the values inside the prison. All of this was part of a broader plan to reshape consciousness, which remains the main goal of most measures inside and outside the prisons.

Israeli prisons and Palestinian detainees, or what we used to call the “National Detainee Movement,” are no longer the same as they were before Yaakov Genot took over as the prison director. Veteran detainees describe the current situation as “high materially” but “low spiritually” at the same time. This description is not due to nostalgia that older generations or elderly detainees might feel, longing for a bygone past. Detainees are not an exception to this rule of nostalgia, especially when it comes to their lives in prison, particularly for those who have spent a quarter of a century or more in detention. Rather, this description reflects the relatively high material achievements, yet it also highlights the degradation left by the negative impact on their morale and values. One detainee described the moral state of prisoners despite their material comfort in a simple way: “In the past, we were together; today, we are on our own.” This statement sums up the overall Palestinian scene. However, the contradiction between relatively good living conditions

and the Detainees’ feeling of moral decline stems primarily from their inability to define the oppression they face, as it does not come in direct, physical forms. Consequently, they struggle to identify ways and means to confront it.

Before diving into the measures Israel took inside the prisons and analyzing them to understand the nature of modern torture, its methods, and ways to confront it, it is necessary to briefly present some prerequisites that were essential for the Sharon government to make the plan for reshaping Detainees’ consciousness a practical and comprehensive reality, as will become evident later. These measures had to be implemented to the finest details of a detainee’s life within a short time frame, aligning with the plan to reshape Palestinian consciousness, which also includes other tasks for the Israeli state’s apparatus, as we will summarize in three main points. The following actions were taken:

First: An extremist figure like Yaakov Genot was appointed at the top of the prison leadership structure. Genot was appointed to this position in mid-2003 and received direct support from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, with whom he had a longstanding personal relationship dating back to when Sharon was his commander in the 101 Paratroopers Battalion. This old relationship with Sharon helped overcome any bureaucratic or administrative obstacles that could have hindered the restructuring and reorganization of the prison administration to fit its new mission, which went beyond merely holding detainees. Sharon granted him complete discretion in determining and implementing his policies. Additionally, an increased budget allowed Genot to equip the old prisons with modern technology and systems, enabling him and his officers to tighten control over the minute details of prisoners’ lives. It also allowed for the construction of new prisons to accommodate thousands of new detainees, either already arrested by the Israeli army or planned to be arrested as part of the broader plan for reshaping Palestinian consciousness.

Second: Genot unified the policy within the prison administration and its discipline, from the lowest-ranking officer to the highest official. It became completely clear that there was a single “maestro,” leader, and decision-maker. There was no longer any variation in how decisions were implemented from one prison to another. If any differences did exist, they were intentional, part of a plan and strategy. Spontaneity and individual discretion were no longer allowed; the margin of freedom previously available to regional or prison directors had been completely narrowed.

Third: from the moment Genot took office, he worked to provoke confrontations with the prisoners at multiple locations. The first of these confrontations took place at Ashkelon prison,

where force was used, including gas and batons. This clash resulted in numerous injuries, and several prisoners had to be transferred for treatment to external hospitals. Following this incident, a series of measures were taken that, in hindsight, appear to have been pre-planned rather than a mere incident aimed at pushing prisoners toward an open-ended hunger strike. It later became clear that Genot had prepared all the necessary conditions for the hunger strike to become a turning point in the lives of the detainees, one that could be exploited for the policy that would follow. In other words, he wanted the strike to become a second, powerful shock (after the shock of incursions and arrests), followed by a process of reprogramming and brainwashing.

Fourth: The prison administration began implementing a widespread policy of strip searches on prisoners, using both physical and psychological violence. Dogs were used during searches of prisoners' bodies and belongings, with the intent to humiliate and attack their religious sensitivities. In Islamic culture, dogs are considered impure, and their use in this context was meant to evoke the need for purification. The dogs were also used to instill fear during the transport of detainees between prisons. This policy had profound psychological and moral effects on the detainees, serving as one of the main reasons that pushed them toward the open-ended hunger strike to stop the daily humiliation and degradation of their dignity.¹⁴

Fifth: The installation of insulating glass in the visitation rooms was completed to ensure separation between the detainee and their family. Detainees could no longer physically touch their families—wives and children. Their interaction was limited to hearing each other.¹⁵ However, the more significant goal was to cut off any connection with their families, especially before the hunger strike. The prison administration was aware that installing the glass would lead prisoners to refuse visits. This was part of the strategy to isolate them from their most important social circle, which provides emotional and moral support. For a prisoner, the visit and meeting with their family help restore their psychological balance, self-esteem, and ability to continue resisting.

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. Having undertaken all of its aforementioned actions and having completed its preparations to confront the strike. The National Detainee Movement

tried to lessen the blow of this vicious attack, especially that most detainees were newly arrested. They tried to respond and cooperate with the administration's new policy, keeping their dignity and in return lessening the pressure and repression measures that target human dignity and religious feelings. The prisoners sent many messages, but the prison director completely refused them. So, the hunger strike became their only way out.

Genot spent the whole year preparing and gathering all possible means to break this strike in modern ways that leave the detainees in a state of shock. These were methods the detainees' movement had never faced before in their many past strikes. The most significant part of these methods was their reliance on modern psychological theories, group psychology, and psychological and media warfare just as if they were preparing to confront a massive army rather than helpless detainees whose only weapon was their empty stomachs. For this purpose, professionals, and specialists from outside the prison system were recruited. They designed a detailed plan down to the smallest action of the last prison guard on duty. Nothing was left to chance or personal judgment—not for any guard, not even for the prison director.

It became clear that we were facing a terrifyingly systematic repression strategy stretching from Gilboa Prison in the north to Nafha in the south.

These procedures by the prison administration against the detainees was followed by political support of the highest levels in the Israeli government. The minister in charge of prisons—the Minister of Internal Security, Tzachi Hanegbi—stated that the hunger-striking prisoners could die, as he had no intention of meeting their demands¹⁶.

These procedures, which alone does not indicate the presence of extraordinary and unbearable torture, formed a force that exerts psychological and nervous pressure, even though the most prominent scene is one of defiance and resilience. Among these measures, we mention the following:

1. Leaving the lights on in the room all day and night, to exhaust the detainees by depriving them from sleep.
2. Confiscating everything from the detainees no matter how simple, that might make them more comfortable like pillows, or plastic bottles and cups that are used to fill water and leaving them by the bed so that the detainee doesn't have to walk to get water, and to prevent any act of solidarity between the prisoners, such as sharing water using these bottles and cups with those who struggle to get up and

14 Strip searches and violations of religious sentiments were recurring methods in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, particularly the use of dogs. See Naomi Klein, *ibid.*, p. 136.

15 This phase parallels the sensory deprivation stage in shock experiments after isolating the subject. Its goal is to single out the prisoners for reprogramming and weaken their resistance.

16 News published in Israeli newspaper.

drink on their own after their bodies have been exhausted by hunger.

3. Salt was confiscated from detainees, which they used to take during the strike so that the health damage caused by hunger doesn't turn to disability or chronic health issues. The prison administration obtained an unprecedented judicial decision from the High Court of Justice, allowing the confiscation of salt. They also confiscated cigarettes from the detainees. This method was used for the first time as a tool of pressure against the hunger-striking detainees.
4. Creating a state of tension and unrest by removing detainees from their rooms under the guise of searching for «prohibited items», even though the rooms have been cleared from everything except for a mattress for each detainee. Detainees were constantly moved between rooms and sections, and sometimes twice a day. In addition to the physical exhaustion caused by the detainee's movement during the strike, the goal was to break the circle of acquaintances and friends that had formed over the years of imprisonment. This, in turn, weakened the direct moral circle that provided psychological support for the detainee's resilience.
5. Playing loudspeaker announcements to the prisoners and distributing leaflets aimed at weakening the detainee's conviction in the strike and its leadership. For example, they broadcasted that the strike was a step pushed by Hamas to serve special political agendas, rather than to achieve any of the strike's demands. They also spread rumors, such as claiming that the Fatah leader so-and-so had broken his hunger strike and eaten.
6. Holding daily barbecue parties for the police and some criminal prisoners in the prison yard, eating in front of the hunger-striking detainees in a provocative manner. A room was designated in each section to accommodate criminal prisoners whose task was to cook and eat, while blasting loud and disturbing music to the detainees' day and night.
7. During the transfer of detainees between prisons, or in cases where a hunger-striking detainee was sent to the hospital or prison clinic due to a deterioration in their health, violence and electric shock devices were used to force them to walk quickly. This device is originally used to make cows move. Additionally, a metal detector (magnetometer) was used to search the prisoners while they were completely naked, under the pretext of looking for sharp objects hidden on their bodies.
8. Prohibiting lawyers from visiting detainees and contacting them during the strike, and that is to have complete control and isolation from the outside world. This was done to prevent any news from leaking about solidarity

campaigns and public sit-ins supporting the strike, so that such information would not serve as a moral boost to strengthen their resilience.

The prison administration adapted and adjusted its procedures during the hunger strike to align with developments in each prison, even in each section of a single prison. The steps were calculated; they were not merely an expression of anger or sadism practiced on the prisoners for the sake of torturing them and causing them harm. As later revealed, the prison administration's actions were based on global experiences, such as those of the American intelligence agencies and their counterparts in Latin American regimes during the 1970s. This was reflected both in the methods used to suppress the strike and the primary objectives targeted by this repression. Prisoners who were arrested and tortured in Argentina's prisons by the ruling military junta testified before "truth commissions" that they faced a system whose sole purpose was not only to extract information from them but also to force them to betray a fundamental principle. Investigators discovered that this principle was a crucial part of their leftist beliefs and a guiding force for their political behavior: the principle of solidarity and empathy for others. Once their tormentors recognized the importance of this principle to the prisoners, they made it their target to eliminate it through shock therapy. On the surface, the goal of the interrogation was to obtain information that was mostly already in the possession of security agencies. However, their real aim was for the prisoner to betray their comrades. They were interested in the act of betrayal itself to destroy solidarity as a principle¹⁷. In secret prisons or those directly managed by the United States like Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib, the goal was to break the prisoners and destroy their personalities and psychological well-being by using Islam and religious beliefs against the Muslim prisoners. In the testimonies of prisoners who were detained in these prisons, two main forms of torture repeatedly appeared: stripping them of their clothes and harassing prisoners while they performed their religious rituals¹⁸.

Palestinian detainees were stripped of their clothes before and after the hunger strike, as it was a major cause in their decision to strike. But most of the procedures aiming to oppress the detainees targeted the state of solidarity and the values of collective national action. This solidarity, which had developed

17 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (Tel Aviv: Al-Andalus, 2009), p. 135.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 136. During the hunger strike, there were abuses of the prisoners' religious sentiments, such as tearing the Qur'ans, throwing them on the ground or into toilets, but these did not become widespread and remained isolated incidents.

over decades of Palestinian struggle. The detainee was the most important link that the prison guards focused on breaking, not only to end the hunger strike but also to eliminate the concept of collective action in any future strikes¹⁹. Solidarity as a principle changed the detainees from a group of people and faction with different beliefs and ideologies to a force that prison guards, despite the circumstances, couldn't prevent it from staying united with its people and other liberation movements.

It was impossible to implement the new policy followed by the prison administration after the strike immediately, without the strike and its results causing a complete shock that made detainees more susceptible to compliance with what was planned for them within the framework of a mind reshape strategy. In the detainees' minds and collective awareness, there were concepts that overall carried the meaning of collective action and represented the values of shared national struggle. Therefore, it was necessary to strike at the heart of these shared concepts and values, aiming to dismantle their committees and representative frameworks in their national form, so that they would no longer remain as a single national entity of detainees.

The hunger strike failed to achieve its goals, but the most significant failure that will leave its marks on the detainees' lives for years, is the success of the prison administration in dismantling the striking prisons and sections one by one to stop the strike, not in an organized manner with a unified leadership decision, a collective step, and simultaneous action across all prisons as the strike began, but rather individually and chaotically, isolated from the plan and the agreement. The prisons manager was completely aware, as an ex-military, that in order to ensure your enemies' forces don't come back to the battlefield again after retreating for a short time, it's not enough to take over their positions and force them back, but their defeat has to look as far as possible from organized withdrawal or a decision made by central leadership. In fact, the end of the hunger strike resembled chaos more than an organized retreat. Through this, Genot achieved the total collapse of the leadership hierarchy built over years, along with a system of values that had transformed the soldiers from individuals into combat units. Thus, the detainees became more prepared for the formation and implementation of the mind reshaping strategy.

Procedures after the strike...

Material abundance as a torture tool:

The collective struggle of detainees has been turned into individual cases, and Israel's actions in the occupied territories have privatized the Palestinian national cause. For example, the detainees from Nablus are now asking for more visitors and longer visiting times. Similarly, the struggle of Nablus residents has also become focused on their specific needs, like opening checkpoints or other local demands. The suffering of Palestinians, like that of Palestinian detainees, has been broken down into smaller issues that individuals deal with—whether as a citizen or a detainee—based on their geographic area. They are unable to see the full picture because their view is limited by direct actions like the wall and checkpoints, or by how the occupation controls their time, subjecting them to daily burdens and constant oppression.

To achieve full control and monitoring of detainees after the hunger strike, as part of the "awareness blending" plan, the Israeli prison authorities used a method called "exposure-model" through a series of measures. They took advantage of the detainees' frustration and disappointment from the hunger strike and its results, with the goal of reinforcing, expanding, and deepening the sense of hopelessness among the detainees. However, the most important aspect was exploiting the extreme frustration with the leadership and the collapse of the national and factional organizational structures. This allowed the authorities to weaken the idea of collective action and struggle, shaking the foundations of shared national values.

After the strike, some important changes were made:

1. Separation of sections within prisons: Prisons were divided into smaller groups based on geographical areas. For example, "Gilboa" prison now holds detainees from the northern West Bank, like from Nablus to Jenin. It also has two sections for detainees with Israeli ID cards, one for people from Jerusalem and another for Palestinians from inside Israel. This change is said to help detainees by making visits easier for their families since the prisons are closer to their homes. However, this division is not random. Detainees are placed in separate sections based on where they are from, like a separate section for detainees from Jenin city, another for those from the Jenin camp, and so on. This system makes it easier for the prison to control the detainees by focusing on their local identities instead of their national ones, which leads to more division among them.
2. Ending the detainees' representative committee: Before, each prison had a committee of representatives from the detainees. These representatives were chosen by the

¹⁹ Yakov Genot, the prison director, repeatedly told the prisoners before and during the hunger strike that he would ensure it would be the last strike they ever experience, stating that there would be no strikes after it and that they should forget it as a method entirely.

detainees to speak with the prison officials about the detainees' needs and issues. This system was created after many struggles by the detainees. Now, the detainees have individual representatives for each section, chosen by the prison management. These representatives meet with officials one by one, not as a group. The representative can only raise issues related to their section or area. These are mostly individual demands, and at the same time, the representative is also required to pass on warnings and rules from the prison management to the detainees. This has stripped the true national meaning from the detainees' representation, making it more like the role of a "capo"²⁰ rather than a real representative. This is different from the previous dialogue committee, which was focused on presenting collective demands for all detainees, or even larger concerns for the entire detainee movement across all locations.

3. Harsh punishments are imposed on detainees if they take any kind of protest action, even small or symbolic ones, like refusing a meal to protest something, especially if the authorities think the detainees are right. This is done to prevent the idea of collective struggle or solidarity from gaining strength again, like it was before the hunger strike.
4. No collective events are allowed, such as mourning a death, welcoming a new detainee, or saying goodbye to a detainee being released. While the prison authorities still allow detainees to pray on Fridays as part of their religious practices, the sermon can only focus on religious matters like halal and haram. If the sermon touches on broader topics, like the Palestinian situation or mentions of Palestine, this is considered expressing an opinion, which is not allowed.
5. Severe punishments are imposed on detainees who are found with pictures of Palestinian leaders or martyrs, even if those pictures are just hidden in an album. These punishments include solitary confinement, bans on family visits, and fines. Often, the photos are taken from Israeli newspapers, and the images may be kept by a friend or relative. The issue is not just about preventing opinions or incitement but also about controlling what the detainee believes or thinks. For example, a picture of a leader like Yasser Arafat in an album relates to what the detainee feels or believes about what this leader represents in terms of a national cause.

6. Over decades of detention, the detainees' movement has built organizational traditions to help them handle internal conflicts and their struggle against the prison authorities. They have developed a system of collective leadership and elections within each faction, always aiming to strengthen democracy. These traditions are written in regulations that govern relations between factions and ensure transparency with regular reports. However, after the hunger strike, the prison authorities tried to disrupt this system by transferring detainee leaders around frequently, making it harder for detainees to keep their democratic practices strong, and preventing the experience from being shared with new detainees. The committees and frameworks that remained were emptied of their meaning and became a burden.
7. The prison management deepened the individual connection system with the detainees by allowing them to submit personal requests. Detainees' requests are rarely made or handled collectively, and when they are, it's for minor, unimportant issues. This has made many solutions personal, related only to the individual and their specific situation. As a result, there are differences in the conditions and treatment of detainees by the prison management. This also gives the prison management another tool to manipulate and control, creating false divisions between individuals and groups from different areas. At the same time, collective punishments are used when there are individual violations. The aim of this approach is to shift the pressure and control towards the individual who broke the rules, turning them into a tool to control their fellow detainees and making them act like authority figures instead of the prison guards.

The goal of all these actions is to turn the Palestinian detainee from an active individual with their own personality and beliefs into a passive subject who depends mainly on material needs given by the prison authorities. These needs gradually become the center of their life and daily focus, especially when any other concern or interest becomes difficult in the closed world of prison. Additionally, the prison management provides detainees with more facilities and even creates needs for them to buy food, much more than what is given to Israeli detainees, who usually have living conditions better than those of Palestinian detainees, except for the food²¹. It's as if the prison management tells the Palestinian detainees, "Eat and drink and fo-

20 It is the term used for the person chosen by the Germans during World War II from among the Jewish ghetto inhabitants to act as a liaison between them and the rest of the population. These individuals often cooperated with the German forces to relay information and locations of secret hideouts, in exchange for material privileges and, at times, to avoid being deported to the extermination camps like the others.

21 Detainees are allowed, in addition to the prison food, to purchase 2.5 kilograms of vegetables and fruits per detainee per month. This is in addition to the same amount of chicken, meat, and fish.

cus on these needs, but don't think about your reality, yourself, your future, or the future of your fellow detainees."

Michel Foucault explains that in a system of control and surveillance, a prison cell only serves its basic function—imprisonment—and removes its other functions, such as deprivation of light and hiding. For us, in Israeli prisons, the material comfort provided to detainees, like food and other necessities, acts as a trap²². This comfort becomes a tool of torture on one hand, while on the other hand, Israel presents it as a response to human rights concerns, trying to show its occupation as a just one to the outside world.

We believe that Palestinian detainees are the only detainees in the history of liberation movements who regularly receive monthly allowances to cover their prison expenses²³. They are paid like any other government employees in the Palestinian Authority²⁴. We seem to be the only detainees from all national liberation movements who have a "ministry" in a government that has no state.

What's strange about these payments is that Israel, which is always tracking and chasing funds it claims support "terrorism," doesn't do the same with the large budget it allocates to the detainees. It does not show the same level of scrutiny or serious opposition, which raises questions about the true role and purpose of these payments, their effect, and their impact on the detainees and their struggle.

The amount spent on detainees currently in prisons, including the monthly allowances and canteen purchases, reaches nearly 10 million dollars per month. This is a huge sum by Palestinian standards.

The problem isn't in providing financial support to the families of the detainees or ensuring they have a decent life. There's no issue with providing detainees with some material resources. However, when half of the money spent goes directly to the detainees inside the prisons, we are essentially funding their detention and making it profitable for Israel. Israeli companies supply food and cleaning materials for the detainees under an agreement with the Palestinian Ministry of Detainee Affairs. Everything the detainees consume; they buy at their own expense. The prison management only provides small amounts of these materials, and now, the cost of holding Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons is being paid by the Palestinian Authority,

which receives special budgets from the European Union and other donor countries for this purpose²⁵.

Israel has been relieved of the financial burden of holding and occupying Palestinians, including the consequences of its policies against the detainees²⁶. The Palestinian Authority, in addition to covering the fines imposed on the detainees, also covers the needs of detainees from Gaza, even when their families are banned from visiting them. This means Israel avoids international responsibility for its actions (such as preventing families from Gaza from visiting detainees, which began before the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit), even though it is violating international law by detaining people from occupied territories and transferring them to Israel.

What is happening is the opposite. Israel has been able to detain as many Palestinian detainees as possible at the lowest political and financial cost. Israel uses the material resources provided to the detainees, mostly funded by the European Union, to present itself as an occupier running a "civilized" occupation. This situation also reduces the chance of uprisings or serious clashes between the detainees and the guards, as the relative material comfort "puts out" the reasons for direct confrontation.

The Palestinian detainee, who once had no interest except for national struggle and the liberation of his country, has now become like any other member of a sector in the Palestinian Authority, such as government employees, with personal financial demands and interests. In this environment, along with other factors, a psychological and educational dynamic is created that leads the detainee to easily shift from national liberation struggle to more personal or demand-based struggles. However, in this case, their struggle might not be directed against the occupation or its prison management, but rather against the Palestinian Authority itself, as their "employer." In other words, we are voluntarily funding an Israeli project to shift detainees from focusing on national liberation to focusing on personal demands.

This aligns with Israel's broader goal of weakening the values that unite the detainees, which are based on the idea of the Palestinian people's national struggle.

The material conditions that detainees live in create a social and psychological distortion for them. Some detainees

22 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Beirut: Center for National Development, 1990), p. 210.

23 Each detainee receives a monthly allowance of 500 shekels from the Palestinian Authority to cover their expenses in prison.

24 The salaries that prisoners receive from the Authority range between 1,500 shekels and 6,000 shekels per month.

25 See the report from the Ministry of Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners Affairs in the Palestinian Authority, published in *Al-Quds* newspaper, Issue 14378, p. 21.

26 Fines imposed by Israeli courts on prisoners reached, in one of the Palestinian Authority's payments, up to two million shekels, according to the report published in *Al-Quds* (same source as before).

live in much better material conditions than many families in the occupied territories. In fact, detainees live at a material level that is far higher than what families in Gaza experience under the siege. This creates psychological tension due to the contradiction between what the detainee experiences and what they know about their people's reality. It also creates confusion about their role as part of a nation struggling for freedom. This distortion becomes deeper and more complicated when it exists in an environment where ideas about the relativity of values and ethics are promoted. The average detainee becomes confused and no longer understands where prison ends and freedom begins, especially when they compare the isolated areas inside the Israeli prisons with the separated zones outside.

When this situation is combined with a plan and policy aimed at isolating and individualizing detainees, and breaking everything that could turn them into a group—such as shared ideas, beliefs, and struggles—through severe punishment, the possibility of using their material abundance to raise their national awareness and strengthen their sense of belonging becomes very difficult. As we explained, it is not provided purely out of goodwill.

The fear of losing their material abundance in the face of deprivation turned that abundance into a tool for supporting the authority that controls them, without the need for the prison officers to enforce it directly. Over time, the detainees themselves became the enforcers of authority over each other, to avoid losing their material comforts. Even when the actual threat to their material gains isn't present, this sense of powerlessness becomes ingrained in the detainees, especially for those who are new to the experience. This situation creates a cycle of learned helplessness, which continues even if the actual threat of losing material benefits disappears.

In a closed environment like prison, this sense of helplessness is passed on to new detainees, making it a hereditary condition that ensures the continuation of control even when the direct presence of authority is absent.

The prison administration only weakened the detainees' organizational structures and emptied them of their meaning, using material abundance and relatively good living conditions as tools for self-regulation. While they provided a certain form of organized life, this "generosity" by Israel is more like a trap. It's a thin line between structured life and submission. This abundance acts as a "light" that covers up the real deprivation and prevents attention from being drawn to it by human rights organizations.

The state of helplessness among detainees became obvious in recent years when they made rare attempts at collective ac-

tion. They resorted to the same methods and solutions they had used in the past, based on an outdated perception of their reality—one in which their bodies were targeted through direct physical punishment.

Their suffering is real, but their understanding of what causes their suffering is not accurate. They tend to see their reality as "nails" and look for "hammers" as solutions. The more they suffer, the stronger their desire to explain it, which leads to exaggeration. Soon, they realize the truth, which deepens their suffering and isolation.

The detainee's body is no longer the target of punishment, and physical deprivation and starvation are no longer the main tools of torture. Instead, their spirit and mind are targeted. Material abundance has become a form of modern-day torture. Thus, it is essential to redefine torture and oppression in this modern context and understand its complex forms. The detainee is trapped between the fixed time and space inside the prison, and the rapidly changing world outside, where time is moving at the speed of technology.

The changes in the reality of space, civilization, and people that took place over the course of a year of imprisonment twenty years ago are far less significant compared to the changes that occur within a year in today's era. What a detainee loses in connection with their reality outside of prison within just a few months becomes catastrophic, causing them to lose touch with civilization, people, their values, and social relationships.

In just a few years of imprisonment, they are transformed into someone who is considered backward compared to the reality outside. This gap quickly disconnects the Palestinian detainee from their reality, a state that is exploited by the occupation and its systems, including the prison administration, to solidify and deepen this disconnection. This serves to isolate the detainee completely from any national project or collective thinking, pushing them into total alienation—either renouncing the struggle entirely or, at best, becoming a burden on their people and national cause.

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

The essence of modernity lies in humanity's ability to separate time from place. The history of modernity began when humans developed technology that increasingly enabled them to achieve this separation and gain control. When the speed of movement from one physical space to another reached the speed of an electron, the concept and form of control changed from what we previously knew. In the past, controlling people required controlling their physical location. However, modernity, which separated time from place, made it possible to control people simply

by controlling their time²⁷. This form of control has significant implications for the lives of prisoners, their self-perception, and their understanding of themselves. It also affects the behavior of prison guards and their perception of themselves and their roles within a bureaucratic system like prison administration.

Control in Israeli occupation prisons is no longer exercised directly through prison guards who were physically present in the prison yard, opening and closing doors. Unlike in the past, there is no longer daily and intense interaction between detainees and guards—except in rare cases that serve to reinforce the rule of their physical absence while ensuring their presence is felt through modern mechanisms and technologies. The central watchtower, or its shadow in Bentham's panopticon system, has been replaced by surveillance cameras installed in every corner of the prison. The traditional locks that required the guard's physical presence to open them manually have been replaced by an electronic opening and closing system. Today, a single officer in the control room is enough to oversee a section housing 120 detainees. This system creates the illusion that detainees manage their own lives and affairs independently—or so it may seem to an outside observer. In fact, even the detainees themselves may believe in this illusion, as they physically close their own cell doors after receiving an electronic signal from the guard in the control room allowing them to open or close them.

This situation has not transferred control from the guard to the detainees, nor has it lessened it—though it may appear more acceptable. On the contrary, it has transformed control from a visible form, with a clear and identifiable source that could be “deceived,” “negotiated with,” or “humanized,” into a highly regulated, monitored, and extreme form of control. The human element, the guard, is no longer influenced by persuasion strategies, as they too are under constant surveillance, which has stripped them of spontaneity and social skills, turning their actions into mechanical and automatic processes. This technological distance created by surveillance systems has made the guard even harsher, as they no longer interact with a person but rather with an object displayed on a screen. This has diminished the detainees' individual skills, making their social intelligence unnecessary and practically irrelevant. The relationship between detainee and guard now operates within an entirely new framework, one that no longer allows detainees to use or influence their environment through traditional means.

The technology of surveillance and electronic control in Israeli prisons has allowed for the reallocation of vast amounts of

human resources, which were redirected to new prisons opened to accommodate thousands of new detainees. The ease of using modern control methods has also enabled the recruitment of guards with physical disabilities or weaker physical constitutions—individuals who would not have been qualified for service in the past. Additionally, it has allowed for the inclusion of female guards, in line with Israel's liberal discourse on gender equality. As a result, women now participate alongside men in the suppression and “reformation” of Palestinians, contributing to the process of “taming” them.

The series of contradictions created by this reality in the prisons, along with the ability to exert complete and total control over the greatest number of detainees in the shortest possible time, has made the implementation of a plan to “melt” the consciousness of these Palestinian fighters a practical possibility. The contradiction between the physical absence of the guard and his actual presence as the controller of the detainee's life has created a mental dissonance within the detainee. This dissonance exists between what he truly perceives and feels in terms of oppression and control over his life, and the reality he presents of a relative independence in managing his own life.

Modern prisons, in general, do not merely imprison and control the body; they control the detainee's time. The detainee's time is no longer his own, and he cannot organize his day according to a schedule he sets for himself. He no longer spends his time in the cell freely managing his time, away from the intervention and control of the guard. Instead, his time is controlled by the guard, who divides it into units in such a way that the detainee cannot act according to his own desires and needs. In addition to being allowed to go to the outdoor yard only at specific times decided by the guard, detainees in Israeli prisons are forced to leave their cells three times a day for security inspections. They must also use the bathroom seven different times during the day, spending one hour each time. Three of these visits occur during the security inspection times, while the other four take place during prisoner counts to ensure the correct number of detainees. This strict schedule leaves detainees unable to plan or begin their day freely.

The contradiction between the detainee being deprived of freedom and locked in his cell, and the fact that he opens and closes the door himself according to this new reality in the prisons, creates a state of tension and mental dissonance. This is due to the desire to preserve the “achievement” of opening the door and feeling a sense of control, on one hand, while on the other, this control is illusory, leading him into a psychological and moral trap of domestication. It is a situation where detainees are “given” the opportunity and the constraints to bind themselves by their own hands. The Palestinian detain-

27 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2007), pp. 101–106.

ee is aware of his identity and has built a self-image as a hero confronting the occupation, becoming a source of anxiety for its security forces. However, this same detainee experiences a profound contradiction between this self-perception and the reality that his guard, who controls his life, is a young woman no older than twenty, overseeing a section of 120 detainees. This contradiction becomes even more intense and has a serious psychological impact on the detainees, especially when considering that most detainees come from a society where female authority over men is viewed as a humiliation and a degradation of their masculinity. This, in turn, negatively affects their self-esteem in general and their sense of self-worth in their ability to change their reality.

The contradictions in a detainee's life under modern control systems do not end at the prison gates and walls. The way prison is portrayed in literature, poetry, and the media especially in the Arab media, which is based on an older era that no longer reflects the reality of prisons today. Although today's reality is harsher in many ways, the traditional image of the brutal prison guard in literature does not match the reality of a young female guard in her twenties. The image of the guard has changed; now, they look and dress more like an employee in a post office or a bank. This shift has made it difficult to use the same old literary and poetic language to describe suffering and oppression without either distorting the truth or exaggerating it.

There is now a pressing need for better tools to explain and analyze modern, complex forms of torture—perhaps tools borrowed from sociology and philosophy.

The contradictions Palestinian detainees experience—combined with material abundance as a form of psychological torture, as previously discussed, and the political contradictions that have emerged since Oslo, especially after the outbreak of the Second Intifada—leave them searching for new interpretations and concepts that can give them clarity about the true source of their suffering. However, in the absence of a committed, scientifically grounded explanation aligned with the national cause, they become vulnerable to Israeli narratives aimed at undermining their shared values and facilitating the reshaping of their consciousness. Prison authorities fully understand these contradictions and fully exploit them.

It is truly unfortunate that human rights organizations and prisoner advocacy groups—particularly Palestinian ones—still fail to provide a serious scientific analysis of these Israeli practices. Instead, they often view them as isolated incidents with no legal or political framework connecting them. By accepting the status quo and dealing with these violations as separate events, these organizations inadvertently reinforce the very

mechanisms they seek to challenge. At best, they publish reports on these practices without offering any real explanation. There seems to be no attempt to think outside the existing frameworks or challenge the established narratives.

Therefore, detainees have not been able to break free from the psychological defence mechanisms that have emerged among them in response to these contradictions. These mechanisms, developed to cope with the severe disconnect between their perceived reality and the reality imposed on them, create an illusion of balance that ultimately leads to denial. These coping strategies include illness, deception, exaggeration, self-aggrandizement, and distortion of reality. This is evident in the reports and testimonies presented to human rights organizations and in media portrayals that often overstate the situation, inadvertently distorting the image of these fighters and limiting their ability to confront their reality. This, in turn, hinders human rights organizations from effectively advocating for their cause. The effects of the Israeli policy have become more prominent and dangerous over the past two years in the prisons, as well as on the detainees' lives and their internal relations and dynamics. The greatest danger lies in their refusal to acknowledge these psychological and social transformations. For personal and practical reasons, many prefer to ignore or deny these issues, as fully confronting them would require facing difficult truths and making uncomfortable choices.

The denial and the preference of detainees to go along with the ease of life inside the prison are themselves products of the psychological re-engineering that detainees are subjected to as part of the plan to reshape their consciousness. The most alarming aspect of these changes is that they affect the very core of Palestinian resistance. Detainees are not just individuals—they are the vanguard of the Palestinian people and the spearhead of its struggle. If their collective values are targeted by taming and internalizing pre-nationalist values, then the very idea of a unified Palestinian people is at risk. Since detainees represent the frontline defenders of this idea, the long-term consequences of these Israeli policies could be devastating for the Palestinian struggle.

The prison administration has communicated with national committees, and elected leadership committees, or section representatives as mentioned before, but it changed these frameworks have been transformed into pre-national frameworks with their content. This transformation was achieved through detailed interventions, such as systematically transferring detainees between prisons. For example, to strengthen a certain candidate from Jenin, the administration transferred detainees from Jenin to his section to secure his election, since each section functions as a single electoral unit. As a result,

members of a specific faction in each section are now primarily from the same geographical area, like Jenin. This shift has altered the dynamics of internal relationships within factions. Instead of being governed by internal regulations, these relationships are now shaped by primary affiliations such as local ties, blood relations, and regional identity. Moreover, conflicts between factions are no longer driven by political disagreements or ideological differences. Today, it is common to see members of Hamas and Fatah from Nablus aligning against members of Hamas and Fatah from Jenin²⁸. Geography and local identity have become the primary organizing principles within the prison. This shift has gone so far that factions are no longer the main providers of security and dignity for detainees—it is now their people. Each city or region has a designated leader (a mukhtar) who the faction maintains its influence over detainees from that specific area.

These values did not exist in prisons until the mid-1990s. In the past, they were considered shameful and actively rejected that anyone who tried to promote them was socially isolated and marginalized. However, once individuals who embraced these values gained power, they became the dominant norms of the time. Now, anyone who tries to think or act outside this framework is fought against and excluded as a rebel against the “authority.” This is done using the only recognized form of legitimacy—the authority of the faction, which is now built on geography and local affiliations.

This power comes from two sides. First, the prison administration helps by moving detainees between prisons in a way that benefits those in control—bringing their friends close and sending their opponents away. Some section leaders have even become like prison guards. Second, the Palestinian Authority also gives them power. They control the money, help with family problems, and manage the salaries of detainees. Because of this, the Palestinian Authority, whether they mean to or not, is helping to break the unity of the detainees.

The prison administration keeps each faction in separate rooms within the same prison section. However, inside each faction, detainees are now grouped mostly by city, refugee camp, or region, which is very different from the past. Before the Oslo Accords, national factions strongly rejected this kind of division. They even banned brothers from staying in the same room to strengthen national unity and political connections instead of blood ties or hometown loyalty. At that time, mix-

ing people from different places was a principle, while forming small regional groups was strictly forbidden. Every faction had rules against it. But today, things have changed. The financial support from the Palestinian Authority is also organized by geography, and detainees help each other based on their city or region. Even morning exercise, which was once a shared activity, is now divided by location with each group jogging separately in the limited space.

Yes, we are aware that these details might mean nothing for people outside the walls, but anyone who doesn't grasp their psychological and educational impact on individuals living in a closed institution like a prison where such practices are carried out daily and intensively for years, mostly on young men in their twenties—cannot truly understand Israel's project of reshaping and subduing these fighters in the smallest of ways. Today, Israeli prisons function as massive institutions designed to crush an entire Palestinian generation. In fact, they are the largest operation in history aimed at reprogramming the consciousness of a generation of resistance fighters.

This situation, as we describe it, does not mean that prisoners have simply accepted it and become complacent. But at the same time, it is not a case of outright resistance and rejection either—mainly because the issue is not fully understood or diagnosed. Among those who seek change, there is a sense of confusion and a general feeling of frustration over their inability to explain the erosion of values and morale, despite the material conditions being relatively stable. Many of the new prisoners experience intense psychological and emotional strain as they struggle with the gap between their idealized, or at least positive perception of prison life and resistance, and the reality they encounter, which contradicts those expectations. This tension often leads them to release their frustration through acts of violence—not against the prison guards, who are not physically or directly present in their daily reality, but against each other. In this new prison dynamic, “the other” is no longer the jailer—it becomes the prisoner from a different city or refugee camp.

After factional mechanisms and regulations lost their authority in resolving disputes, violence and the use of sharp objects became widespread across many prisons. What was once strictly forbidden in prison life for years—where anyone resorting to or threatening violence would be expelled from their faction—has now become a tool for settling conflicts and a new way of regulating internal relationships.

The violence that has become a tool for resolving conflicts and structuring relationships has contributed to the resurgence of primary affiliations, reinforcing local and geographic loyalties. Even those detainees who wish to change this reality find themselves trapped within a self-perpetuating cycle. As local

28 Even the struggle outside the walls took on this geographic nature. Notice how prisoner committees were formed for each region or city, raising only pictures of their own prisoners during protests, and speaking only about issues related to them, with no coordination whatsoever between these committees.

affiliations have become the only source of security and protection in this environment, they offer detainees a sense of certainty—where protection and the values tied to it are the only things within their reach, both physically and mentally.

The psychological tension and contradictions that detainees experience do not always or necessarily lead them to violence as an outlet. Some have instead withdrawn from political engagement, focusing on interests that help them avoid internal conflicts and mental strain. There has been a noticeable rise in detainees obsessively dedicating themselves to physical fitness, spending most of their time exercising. Others immerse themselves in television programs that, at best, are completely detached from politics and national concerns. Overall, the Palestinian detainee is no longer the avid reader and literary producer he once was. Study circles, ideological discussions, and intellectual debates are no longer defining features of the prison vanguard. In fact, most of this group no longer reads or seeks answers to the national questions and challenges facing our people—only a small minority still tries to keep the embers alive. While more detainees are enrolling in university programs (such as Open University of Israel), their motivation is largely personal—focused on self-improvement and prospects after release—rather than a commitment to collective national aspirations. It is, in a way, an escape from reality, though perhaps a preferable one compared to other forms of disengagement. However, the knowledge and academic studies acquired by these detainees are rarely used to serve the collective, especially when accompanied by a reluctance to engage with the issues of their faction and the concerns of the detainee movement.

As part of the strategy to dominate the minds and consciousness of the detainees, and to prevent any flow of information that might disrupt the process of reshaping their awareness, the prison administration in recent years has restricted the types of books detainees are allowed to bring in through their families. Only religious and worship books or some novels are permitted, while scientific research, political, and social studies are banned under the justification of being “incitement materials.” Recently, the books being read most frequently are those about fortune-telling, dream interpretation, or trivia (general knowledge) tests. This trend, if anything, highlights the extent of the distortion that has affected the culture within the detainee movement. This Palestinian vanguard, which should have been the most politically aware and conscious, is instead caught in a troubling decline.

To disrupt the awareness and culture of the detainees, the prison administration has banned the entry of Arabic newspapers, including those published in 1948 territories, especially political and factional newspapers like *Al-Fassl Al-Maqal*,

Al-Itihad, and *Sawt Al-Haq*. The only exception is *Al-Quds*, which reaches detainees weeks after it is published. In contrast, detainees are allowed to read Hebrew newspapers that arrive daily. As for radio stations, only Israeli stations are permitted, while access to Arab satellite channels is limited, with *Al-Jazeera* being specifically blocked. The channels that are allowed are those considered to adhere to the “moderate Arab” line.

The prison administration did not stop at imposing such cultural restrictions to prevent any outside influence from reaching the detainees. It also made sure that no parts of the bigger picture would leak into detainees from neighbouring sections within the same prison. This was to prevent them from piecing together fragments of information into a complete picture that could lead them to understand the broader context and the situation they were living through. The sections are isolated from each other, each functioning as an independent prison, and the administration is keen to maintain this complete separation.

The distribution of Palestinian detainees across prisons is organized according to major geographic divisions—South, Centre, North—and within each prison, as we mentioned earlier, they are further divided into smaller sections based on city, village, or refugee camp. The prison administration ensures strict separation between these areas and strengthens the isolation between sections within a single prison. This systematic isolation serves to limit the flow of information and experiences between detainees. More importantly, it turns the intelligence officers into the sole source of news and information for the detainees. This grants these officers a powerful tool for control—spreading rumours, fuelling contradictions, and exacerbating conflicts between sections, often along regional or geographic lines, such as between detainees from Nablus and the Balata Refugee Camp, or from Jenin and the Jenin Refugee Camp.

This strategy aims to strengthen and fuel loyalties based on these divisions, replacing allegiance to the homeland with loyalty to the region, so that geographic identity takes the place of a broader national identity. The strict separation between sections, combined with the natural hunger and constant thirst for information among detainees—who are always trying to understand their place, time, and surrounding circumstances in isolation—turns the power of the jailer into an amplified force, which is then used to shape the consciousness of the detainees.

The military takeover by Hamas in the Gaza Strip has added new complexities and entanglements, making the task of reshaping awareness in the prisons—if not outside them as well—both possible and a project ready for implementation. This event provided a great opportunity and a rich source of

material for intelligence officers in the prisons, who used it to spread news and information that fuelled conflicts and dismantled any national concept or collective value among the detainees, undermining their unity as resistance fighters.

The most notable manifestation of this event in the lives of the detainees was the physical and psychological clashes between detainees from the two conflicting factions in Gaza, which fortunately remained limited in number, some of which were intentionally instigated by intelligence officers. However, these events were enough to exaggerate the security dimension and use them as a pretext to implement the decision to separate detainees from Islamic factions and Fatah detainees, particularly in prisons in the southern region. This policy was supported by a few unstable individuals. On the other hand, one of the key “fruits” of this Israeli policy—and one of its most evident outcomes—was the extent of control over the prisons and the level of “self-discipline” among the detainees, which was unseen during the internal conflicts and the military resolution in Gaza. This was reflected in the silence that accompanied the war on Gaza—an absolute and total silence across all the prisons. During the war, detainees sat in front of TV screens, watching Arab satellite channels flooded with blood (at this point, Al-Jazeera was allowed). They behaved in a way that was less active than any Arab citizen or foreign solidarity activist with the Palestinian people. The detainees did nothing to protest or show solidarity, and the prison administration even arrogantly requested that the events not be mentioned in Friday sermons to avoid “inciting” the detainees.

This silence came from the Palestinian national movement within the prisons, which had always, throughout its history, taken steps of protest and solidarity with any struggle or liberation movement in the world. In the past, prisoners would show creativity in their forms of protest, simply because Kurdish fighters were on hunger strike in Turkish prisons, or in solidarity with Nelson Mandela and members of the African National Congress in the racist prisons of South Africa. Yet, they found themselves powerless, unable to issue a stance or take a single protest or symbolic action during the entire course of the war on Gaza.

This state of paralysis is not being highlighted here to shame the detainees or even to reproach them. That is not the point, nor is it the context of this discussion. Rather, it serves to emphasize the extent of Israel’s control over the detainees in a tangible way. Through a set of policies, measures, and restrictions, a process of reshaping consciousness is being carried out—where

each individual policy may not seem significant on its own, but together, they form something far greater than the sum of their parts. These prisons function as factories, whose mission is to reshape and mold the awareness of an entire generation.

The reality inside the prisons—with all its complexities, the scale of targeting, and the modern scientific efforts applied to it—combined with the political crises and complications on the Palestinian scene, made it nearly impossible for detainees to break free from this state of paralysis on their own. Their reaction during the war on Gaza was not a failure of will but a reflection of the overwhelming conditions imposed upon them.

Anyways, the real danger does not lie in that specific moment or in the lack of action during the war on Gaza. The real danger is in the internal conflict and contradictions that every detainee experiences—an internal struggle that the war only intensified and sharpened. It is the conflict between how a detainee perceives themselves and their role in the struggle versus the unsettling reality of not seeing that perception reflected in their actions. No one can currently measure the full psychological and emotional toll of this contradiction, nor can they assess the long-term impact of the detainees’ diminished self-worth on the future of the national struggle. However, what we can already feel today is the immense suffering caused by this form of psychological torment.

It wasn’t a coincidence that the prison administration raised the Israeli flag all over the prison yards after the war on Gaza. This was a move we believe they would not have taken under different circumstances—unless they were fully aware of the extent of paralysis and distortion that had afflicted the detainees, just as it had impacted their political and national factions, both secular and Islamic.

When we talk about torture and the need to redefine it, we must include these subtle, indirect policies and systems that aim to infiltrate individual thought—a creeping, gradual, and systematic brainwashing process. This is not just about controlling detainees physically; it is about reengineering the political collective, interfering in social dynamics, and taking control over both the process and its outcomes.

The ambition of former Prison Commissioner Yaakov Ganot perfectly encapsulated this objective. In 2006, after Gideon Ezra took over as Minister of Internal Security, Ganot addressed him in the courtyard of Gilboa Prison, speaking within earshot of the detainees:

“Rest assured... you can be confident that I will make them (the detainees) raise the Israeli flag and sing Hatikvah.”