

Martyr bodies in the media:

Human rights, aesthetics, and the politics of immediation in the Palestinian intifada

ABSTRACT

The growth of the human rights regime in the Palestinian occupied territories during the last two decades and the spread of visual media have had an extreme effect on the nature of Palestinian politics and society. They have transformed the way Palestinians represent themselves to each other and to the international community, whereby appeals to human rights help to constitute a human subject with certain kinds of rights that are seen to arise not from a political status but from the state of (human) nature. In this article, I explore the "politics of immediation" at work during the second Palestinian intifada, which began in 2000, to explain why social actors mobilize representations of people in states of acute physical and emotional distress as part of their political projects. [*human rights, Palestine, aesthetics, intifada, media, affect*]

I first learned of Dr. Khalil Suleiman's death when it was announced from mosque loudspeakers during an Israeli invasion of the West Bank town of Jenin in March 2002.¹ I had met Dr. Suleiman just weeks before, in his capacity as head of the Palestinian Red Crescent in Jenin.² He was killed when an Israeli missile hit the ambulance in which he was traveling to retrieve those wounded during the invasion.

The encounter I had a few months later with Khader, Dr. Suleiman's replacement at the Red Crescent, was typical of the kinds of political and personal interactions that have become the background rhythm of everyday life in Palestine.³ It illustrates something of how notions of humanity and human rights were invoked in everyday discourse throughout the second Palestinian intifada.

Under the bored watch of a CPR dummy propped in a chair next to me, I sat across from Khader and listened. Throughout his tirade against Israeli aggression and the international community that let it happen, he railed against the unbelievable injustice of it all. His laments echoed the desperate interrogation "Where are human rights?!" that Palestinians so often iterate in the local and international media, during interactions with interlocking anthropologists, and through chance encounters with tourists.

Then Khader pulled out an envelope of photos. After warning me that I had to be strong to look at the pictures, he showed me a Polaroid shot of the remains of the doctor. Resembling something that might have been pulled from the ashes of Pompeii, the barest indication of a human outline could be made out in the image of a charred, blackened torso. "There! *That* is Dr. Suleiman!" he said.

As I flipped through the stack of grisly photos of other Palestinian casualties, Khader said, "I want these pictures, of the clashes, from the hospitals, to go to the world. So they know who is killed, who kills. These pictures would affect everyone. People are people no matter what their nationality, gender, race. The person who cares about humanity, it would affect them, and they could judge." In Khader's view, I was being given irrefutable proof of injustice. Clear evidence. Let the world see, and it will do *something*.

Such representations of Palestinian life and death under Israeli occupation tell of Palestinians' humanity and history. Palestinians' insistence on their humanity is symptomatic of a particular political moment in which contenders for political rights vie for standing in what has been called a "global meritocracy of suffering" (Bob 2002). This contest, which uses visual proof of damaged bodies and images of human suffering as primary tools, remains central to Palestinian nationalist representations. Through a focus on bodies and the blood, guts, and flesh to which so many are reduced by Israeli violence, the physical common denominators all human beings share are thrust before the world's eyes. Palestinians are staging claims to a humanity shared in common with the international community and, therefore, to their status as deserving of human rights. They are condemning Israeli immorality and, simultaneously, proclaiming the righteous nature of their own victimization. Their argument hinges on what counts as proof of suffering and on the presumed connections between suffering and political entitlement.

Khader's appeal exemplifies the form of political subject that became prominent during the second intifada: the sympathy-deserving suffering human. Through human rights reports, local and international news media, daily conversation, and interactions with visiting foreigners, representations of suffering circulated throughout the occupied Palestinian territories and transnationally to validate this rights-bearing suffering subject position. Such representations are promulgated across the political spectrum—from the unofficial Hamas website (the Palestinian Information Center; <http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/en/default.aspx>), which decries the suffering of Palestinian political prisoners and posts statements by human rights NGOs, to PA President Mahmoud Abbas's repeated pleas to the United States to help end Palestinians' suffering.⁴ These themes also appear in the work of human rights groups across the geographical divides that carve up the occupied territories, from Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights in the Gaza Strip to Al-Haq and DCI-PS in the West Bank, as well as through television and press coverage.⁵ The question is why visual media and affective discourse are figured to have a special capacity to communicate this abstracted idea of objective "humanity" in particularly poignant and authentic ways. Why, specifically, do social actors mobilize visions of people in states of acute physical and emotional distress as part of their political projects?

In this article, I elaborate three entwined elements of the puzzle: human rights, visibility, and affect. Common to each of these aspects of Palestinian political and social life is an ideal of "immediation." Although human rights (an ideology, language, and system of institutions), visibility (a sensory perception, aesthetic system, and range of image objects produced and circulated in large part by broadcast

media), and affect (a way of feeling, experiencing, and reacting to experiences) are distinct dimensions, together they make up a "politics of immediation" (Mazzarella 2006).⁶ Immediation is the necessarily covert denial of mediation that occurs in the formal properties of institutions and social interactions that aspire to give access to an authentic experience and truth (also see Mazzarella 2004:357). The logic behind the visual and affective representations of Palestinian suffering that human rights NGOs, Palestinian media, politicians, and unaffiliated people produce depends on the idea of "a social essence (vital and/or cultural) that is autonomous of and prior to social processes" (Mazzarella in press) and on the belief that having unmediated access to that presocial essence is possible.

Locally, in a context in which hobbled political parties have ceded dominance to a news-mediated public sphere, aesthetic conventions privileging the aspiration for (an always unattainable) immediate affect are all that remain. The PA's incompetence and demise have left a political vacuum in their wake.⁷ Palestinian reliance on the international community for aid has not prevented the humanitarian situation from sinking to its lowest levels since 1967 (Amnesty International UK et al. 2008). Repeated calls for an international force to protect Palestinian civilians have long gone unanswered.⁸ From the Road Map and Annapolis to the Geneva and Arab Initiatives, attempts to push for resolution to the conflict by the United States and EU states have been feeble or unheeded. As the mediating structures, people, and stances that are actually necessary for enacting change are marginalized or at loggerheads, both locally and globally, the immediacy of pain—and sympathy for it—has become a weak core of politics.

Palestinians in the occupied territories are deprived "of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective," as Hannah Arendt (1973:296) writes about the situation of those denied their human rights, that is, the stateless. She continues, "They are deprived, not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think what they please, but of the right to opinion" (Arendt 1973:296).⁹ Yet Palestinians continue their efforts to prove the justice of their cause and the dignity of their people and to act and express their opinions. The symbolic messenger and voice through which these calls for recognition are made is shrouded by suffering.

Although Palestinians are in a unique historical situation, the political mobilization of their suffering shares much in common with numerous other cases. As Susan Sontag has pointed out, the "species of rhetoric" (2003:6) that images of war and suffering express has a long history—at least since the early 20th century. Suffering and the wounded bodies sometimes produced as its bloody relics have been politically mobilized in many places marred by political violence. From imagined Kalistan (Axel 2001) to occupied Iraq, Northern Ireland (Aretxaga 1997),

and India (Srivatsan 2000)—where the postpartum scars of Partition still chafe and inflame—gruesome images of suffering are mobilized to shock political systems into change, to incite civil intercessions, and to justify plangent demands for cosmopolitan sympathy, diplomatic attention, or military intervention (also see Klima 2002; Kolar-Panov 1997).

Like the people who seek designation as Chernobyl radiation “sufferers” to receive state compensation (Petryna 2002), the paperless immigrants to France who try to prove they are ill so that they are allowed to stay in the country (Ticktin 2006), and other refugees whose bodies are “made to speak” to humanitarian workers (Malkki 1996:384), Palestinians too present their wounded bodies to governing authorities and international observers—both official and not—in an attempt to seek relief. For these extralegal groups, and for those for whom the meaning, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship are in transition and indefinite, a notion of the universality of biological life grounds efforts to secure economic survival and forge political community.

That suffering brings people together, mediates their political discourse, shapes their strategies, and colors their understanding of the world and their place in it as individuals and nations has been a concern of social theory since before Adam Smith.¹⁰ My goal in this article is to lay out the specific contingencies of a particular moment in Palestinian history, to demonstrate how suffering—as an experience, a reference point, a form of subjectivity, a base of symbolic, visual, and discursive representation—has come to permeate Palestinian political discourse and social relations, and the political and social effects of that saturation.

The ethnography on which this analysis is based focuses on the West Bank during the first few years of the second intifada (2000–03) but reflects institutions and trends evident throughout the occupied territories through the present. Although the wide infiltration of the human rights regime into many other political conflicts may explain some of their similarities with the Palestinian case, the degree to which suffering and the politics of immediation have come center-stage in the occupied territories can only be explained by local conditions. The significance of suffering and immediating forms of its representation are not totally new in Palestinian history, but they gained new prominence during the second intifada through Palestinians’ use of their own media, which they had controlled since 1993, and through the increased visibility and advocacy role of human rights NGOs, whose numbers had skyrocketed in the 1990s. These factors are key to understanding the way Palestinians represent themselves to each other and to the international community, whereby appeals to human rights constitute a particular kind of subject whose rights are seen to arise not from a political status but from the state of (human) nature. And although the politics of immediation that I outline here was a significant phenomenon during

the first few years of the intifada, it has not obviated other modalities of political practice and representation, including armed resistance and nonviolent demonstrations. This article elucidates the politics of immediation as one notable dynamic understood as part of a broader picture.

In what follows, I first demonstrate how the ideological bases of human rights depend on an affect-laden conception of humanity. This aspect of the immediation process is crucial for understanding the particular ways in which the notion of human rights has come to saturate Palestinian daily life and political claim making and, more specifically, the centrality of emotion and affective experience to them. I then move to a discussion of Palestinian visual media and its aesthetic logics. I conclude by raising questions about the nature of Palestinian politics during the second intifada. The representation of damaged bodies as locus of proof and sentiment—and the particular relationship forged between proof and emotion—raises further questions about how a reconstructed humanism is put into the service of an anti-colonial struggle forced to speak itself through the universalizing idiom of violated human rights.

What is the human in human rights?

Human rights, a normative framework that is global in scope and multiply constituted through social practice, is articulated in its most basic form through a variety of international declarations and conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The basic subject of human rights is the individual, typically conceived of as the human that is inherently equal to others in rights and dignity.¹¹ The Convention against Torture states, for example, “In accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” It is in recognition “that those rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person” that torture is forbidden. The notion of “the rights of man” thus “make[s] natural life appear as the source and bearer of rights” (Ranciere 2004:300).

Human rights NGOs are central producers of the moral discourse by which Palestinians seek to legitimize their struggle for national independence, and they are a key locus whereby suffering and victimization get elaborated and integrated into Palestinian politics. “Human rights ideology” (Henken 2000) is a cornerstone of global civil society and a key idiom through which stateless groups and the disadvantaged seek redress across the globe, and, as the rest of this article demonstrates, it is of acute importance for Palestinians, in particular.

Although the international human rights system is a vast and complex set of people and practices and its

multifarious origins and effects hard to trace, two things are undeniable: The philosophical precepts of human rights, especially as outlined in the UDHR, but also manifest in related covenants, are humanist and universalist and are based on presuppositions that all humans possess human rights equally.¹² In addition, it is clear that “human rights,” a complex of concepts and practices, has become increasingly visible and voluble in Palestine since the first human rights NGO was established in the West Bank in 1979.

The human and human nature in human rights covenants

The abstraction, objectification, and foundationalism of human rights humanism are produced in a variety of ways, which together contribute to the production of the impression of immediation. First, human rights documents themselves announce a select portion of their own philosophical foundations and intended pragmatic effects (while obscuring others). The UDHR declares that the rights it outlines are based in “the inherent dignity . . . of all members of the human family.”¹³

Human rights conventions avoid giving an account of the messy, sometimes conflicting people and perspectives that have gone into their production. The pronouncement of the “recognition” (and, later in the UDHR text, the reaffirmation) of shared values and goals in a convention signed by state representatives pragmatically effects a discursive unity and effaces the actual discord that occurs in the practice of establishing and enforcing principles.¹⁴

In addition, many accounts of human rights written from philosophical, legal, and social-theory perspectives provide normative statements about what rights “are” and “should be.” Embedded within these descriptions are further expressions of the ideological precepts and self-understanding of “the human rights system.” For example, Jack Donnelly, a frequent contributor to this discourse, baldly states several “truths” about what human rights are: “Human rights are, literally, the rights that one has simply because one is a human being. . . . They are also *inalienable* rights. . . . And they are *universal* rights, in the sense that today we consider all members of the species *Homo sapiens* ‘human beings,’ and thus holders of human rights” (2003:10).¹⁵

Even scholarship about the historical development of human rights standards often assumes much of the humanism that it seeks to explain. This is an important aspect of the dynamic of human rights immediation. In part because a great deal of this scholarship is explicitly written “to promote human rights as an integral aspect of global politics and law” (Falk 2000:1), analysis depends on teleological assumptions and on the belief that human rights are an intrinsic and necessarily positive development, whether brought on by globalization (Falk 2000:2), instigated by basic hu-

man morality (Levy and Sznajder 2004:145, 147), or created by the new level of “awareness about suffering” raised by the plight of victims of war (Lauren 2000:2). Accounts of the “sheer magnitude and brutality” (Lauren 2000:145; also see Falk 2000:58) of human rights violations during WWII imply that these events, in and of themselves, incited a “natural” outrage, prompting a humanitarian sensibility and shock that was “impossible to ignore” (Lauren 2000:182) and that necessarily led to actions promoting human rights.¹⁶ This, however, leaves unexamined the philosophical tenets underlying the faith in properly enlightened humanistic avoidance of brutality (Asad 1997). In both human rights documents and discourse about them, these humanist tendencies and emotions are presented as being unmediated by cultural and semantic systems.

The growth of Palestinian human rights organizations

Many observers have commented on the remarkable burgeoning of human rights NGOs in the occupied territories, especially during the 1990s (Hammami 1995; Hanafi and Tabar 2002). Palestinian nationalist aspirations have long been shaped by international humanitarian, human rights, and other legal formations (see, e.g., Feldman 2007). Palestinians have been in dialogue with an international audience, as embodied in the League of Nations, the United Nations, and “international public opinion” as well as in the “Arab and Muslim world” for over a century, and the print and broadcast news media has been a platform for their performance and proclamation on an international stage since the early 1900s.¹⁷

But the trend toward greater involvement in the human rights economy as a sector of employment, and on human rights discourse, more generally, has been on the steepest rise during the past 20 years. Until the United States, Israel, and European states placed a financial blockade on the PA after Hamas won the majority of parliamentary seats in the January 2006 Palestinian elections, the occupied territories had seen the “highest levels of multilateral per capita foreign aid in the world at about US\$300 per year” (Le More 2005:984; also see Lasensky and Grace 2006; World Bank 2004). Although the majority of that aid has gone to humanitarian assistance, a significant portion funds the approximately thirty human rights organizations (HROs) operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (which is an area roughly the size of the U.S. state of Delaware). In 1999, a report by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator (UNSCO) gave an account of donor money showing that 16.7 percent of these funds were devoted to human rights and development projects, approximately \$21 million going specifically to human rights.¹⁸ Another report estimates that the international donor community has given approximately \$1.5–2 billion in support of Palestinian civil society

organizations, in general, over the last decade (Sidoti and Daibes-Murad 2004:37).¹⁹ Although exact yearly figures are not available, it is clear that significant amounts are dedicated to human rights NGOs. Slightly fewer than a third of the organizations surveyed in a donor-commissioned study were established before 1990, while just over a third were established in a mushrooming of NGOs during the first half of the 1990s, when the Oslo Peace Process was negotiated (Sidoti and Daibes-Murad 2004:26).

Palestinian-run human rights NGOs are involved in a variety of projects. Their activities are often centered on gathering statistical data and writing reports about human rights violations. They also fulfill a pedagogical role, offering workshops to instruct people about the rights due them according to international law and providing legal aid for those brought before Israeli courts (or held in administrative detention with no chance of a trial). As international advocates, they press foreign governments to implement the international humanitarian laws, human rights laws, and advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice that would curtail Israeli occupation activities,²⁰ and they host journalists and foreign delegations, including state officials and representatives of international political and legal organizations, guiding them on tours to give them firsthand, eyewitness understanding of life under occupation.²¹

Human rights, understood as an assemblage of institutions, workers, and discourse, infuses the ways in which Palestinians from all walks of life—from politicians and representatives of civil society to militants and random victims of violations—speak and relate to foreigners and to each other. As the following sections make clear, HROs and human rights language saturated public discourse during the early years of the second intifada. This trend has a longer trajectory. After the first intifada began in 1987, Palestinians “discovered” human rights as the ideal language through which to make their voices heard internationally (Giacaman 2000:10). According to George Giacaman, a Palestinian political scientist, human rights was considered “a common language that connects Palestinians to the world outside” (2000:10). The popularization of human rights was also “evident in the ways people were expressing their political demands and aspirations for peace” (Hajjar 2001:27). The first intifada was, in part, an effort to demonstrate to the world Palestinians’ brutalized existence in a David and Goliath battle, and it had accustomed many people to explaining their situation to the world that had come to hear them (Collins 2004).

Human rights categories, images, and discursive representations have helped structure public discourse even more since the second intifada began. It peppers the everyday talk of ordinary people and frames many aspects of local and international debate about the intifada and its strategies. For example, the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO) issues a weekly insert that

covers NGO and human rights affairs in one of the local news dailies. Talk shows featuring members of civil society and human rights experts of various specialties are regular elements of television programming. The heightened state of siege and objective increase in number and kinds of human rights violations during the second intifada only intensified this trend. Human rights informs how Palestinians see themselves, how they create solidarities internationally and locally, and how they forge channels through which to mobilize forms of support, to empathize, and to provide national pedagogy. Even the ratification of the UDHR is marked as a national holiday in the official Palestinian calendar. Thus, the philosophical assumptions of human rights have become part of the everyday assumptions of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Palestinian politics and human rights

There is a close resonance between the conceptual-ideological concerns that were at the core of what generated the human rights regime and the manner in which HROs in Palestine function today.²² The original standards of human rights rest on a basic assumption of universal humanity. They “retain the essential presupposition of any natural rights theory, the assumption that these fundamental moral rights exist independently of any social institution or code of conventional morality and, therefore, are not artificial or ‘man-made’” (Wellman 1998). Despite the many differences of opinion, approach, and background of those who helped draft the UDHR, there was general agreement on the importance of asserting the shared humanist premise of the declaration, through affirming “one common human nature and the fundamental unity of the human race” (Glendon 2002:38–39).

The traumas of WWII, the establishment of the category of “crimes against humanity,” and the human rights system meant to prevent those crimes have accorded new valence to notions of humanity, to notions of moral community, to political shame and suffering, and, especially, as Paul Rabinow (1999) observes, to notions of dignity. The drafters of the UDHR proclaimed the document to be a reaction to (and aimed at preventing further) “barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind,” such as those “assaults on human dignity” that were carried out during WWII (Glendon 2002:xvi).²³

It is precisely this quality of dignified—and, therefore, rights-deserving—“humanness” that Palestinians living under occupation feel they have to prove to the world. It is the same quality that brings them together as a nation, specifically, as a nation of sufferers. Palestinian organizations, whose missions are crafted within the framework of the UDHR and subsequent declarations and instruments that followed from it, in turn, focus their arguments most basically on how the Israeli occupation violates Palestinians’

rights to life and dignity—and, ultimately, their very humanity.

Such ideals of humanity and dignity are woven into Palestinian human rights work in a variety of ways. One is the explicit reference that human rights reports make to these principles as they are articulated in human rights conventions. Although the work of Palestinian HROs is varied, as are the motivations of the individuals who work in them, their missions are guided by an identifiable set of principles laid out in these human rights standards. DCI-PS, as one example, was established to promote children's rights as articulated in the CRC.²⁴ The CRC is the reference point for all work that this HRO does, from publishing reports to organizing awareness campaigns.

In one statement, posted on its website before the outbreak of the second intifada, DCI-PS attempted to call attention to Israel's arrest campaign, which resulted in twice the number of Palestinian children incarcerated for anti-occupation activities in 1999 than in 1998. The statement refers to several conventions, including Article 37 of the CRC, which

asserts that "every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the *inherent dignity of the human person*." . . . In contrast, however, Palestinian children arrested, detained, and/or imprisoned by the Israeli Military Authorities routinely face violations of their rights, as provided in the CRC, the UN Convention Against Torture, the Fourth Geneva Convention and other international conventions. [emphasis added]

DCI-PS may be somewhat unusual among HROs in that it consistently and unequivocally makes connections between the violations of Palestinians' human rights and the political causes and consequences of those violations. The above statement concludes with the observation that, "if peaceful co-existence is ever to exist between Palestinians and Israelis, then the environment of terror which affects Palestinian children's lives must be abolished through promoting and respecting the rights of the child." This is not to imply that, in general, HROs in Palestine only focus on bodies and suffering. NGOs other than DCI-PS sometimes tell a fuller history of occupation as a political system. DCI-PS, like other human rights NGOs, does more than write reports and produce representations of Palestinian suffering. It offers a variety of services, from free legal counseling to crisis intervention projects for traumatized children. Staff are involved in helping to draft relevant human rights documents, and they lobby international diplomats and submit official testimony to UN representatives.

But the visceral and affective aspects of human rights representation are often emphasized. The killing of seven immediate relatives of a Palestinian girl, who were hit by Israeli shelling on a northern Gaza Strip beach on June 9,

2006, turned the girl, ten-year-old Huda Ghalia, into an icon of suffering. Her story and the image of her crying next to her dead family were distributed through numerous HRO press releases and became the centerpiece of a human rights poster that asked, "What are you going to do against the Israeli occupation, which killed my family in cold blood and left me alone?"²⁵ Such modes of immediation dominate the ways in which Palestinians represent their plight to each other and to internationals.

Multiple forces mitigate the overt political implications of human rights. Although guided by principles articulated in a range of human rights instruments, human rights work is also restricted by international donors, who often try to avoid engaging in "political" projects. In one instance, a nonprofit organization rejected taking part in a joint project with DCI-PS that would have entailed working with children to write about the situation of child prisoners held in Israeli jails because it was "too political." In this case, the organization rejected a rights-based project that focused on children's empowerment and the rights of children deprived of their liberty, a project that accorded with its own mission. Despite such obstacles, some believe that HROs do perform useful political and social functions. According to one DCI-PS staff member, people are still working toward building a better Left, suggesting that the work of NGOs and their staff is part of this process. The details of how this is to happen, and toward what specific ends, remain fuzzy.²⁶

From the beginning of their arrival on the scene, HROs have been criticized, within Palestine and beyond, in part for their role in depoliticizing understandings of the conflict and its effects on Palestinian society. Al-Haq, established in 1979 (originally named Law in the Service of Man), was the first HRO in Palestine.²⁷ Through its work, which was initially focused on legal research rather than human rights monitoring, Al-Haq emphasized universal standards of international law and denied the relevance of politics to human rights (Hajjar 2001; Rabbani 1994).²⁸

But this approach was taken precisely to avoid the accusation of bias and inaccuracy that this early human rights work, which was inherently critical of Israel, was sure to provoke. Although the political goal of ending the occupation and its abuses was a clear motivation behind this work, the appearance of making only an objective appeal to, and application of, international law constituted by abstract principles and objective rules had to be maintained. Human rights workers held up the law as a pristine framework, even while they recognized that the law could not and did not exist externally to realities on the ground. In an effort to avoid the possible charge by Israelis and foreign donors that human rights means were being put to political ends, Palestinian human rights work was corralled into a narrow focus of, as Rabbani put it, "micro-violations" and narrow reference to the law.

Since the early days of the development of HROs in Palestine, the clearly political role of human rights and NGOs in general has become more readily admitted. Peter Bauck, of the Norwegian government's development agency, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), stated explicitly that development policy in European countries is part of those governments' foreign policy, and NGO funding is increasingly recognized as, and wielded as, a tool of foreign policy work (Hanafi and Tabar 2002).²⁹ International human rights NGOs are continuously scorned and rebuked for "taking sides" in the Arab-Israeli conflict by those hailing from a variety of positions sympathetic to either Palestinians or Israelis.

And even in that thicket of diatribe and deliberation, claims to impartial and universal standards still underwrite the discussion.³⁰ As the realities of ideologically motivated and often hidebound debate reach a fever pitch, crowding out the possibility of reasoned argument and concession, partisans and participants of all stripes reach with a "will to transparency" (Mazzarella 2006:500) for the politics of im-mediation as yet another concealed weapon in the contest.

This analysis of "making human rights in the vernacular" (Merry 2006:49) is not, then, an argument about the depoliticizing effects of human rights, humanitarianism, and their aesthetics of affect.³¹ The "politics of im-mediation" is political precisely because it is an aspect of attempts to persuade, to contest power, and to assert legitimacy (of identity, of presence, and of peoplehood). Although notions of, and appeals for, Universal Justice, Fairness, Liberty, or Sovereignty are underlying principles and aspirations behind the demands that Palestinians make, and they are explicit terms of reference in other forms and moments of political argument, in the register of claim making at the center of my discussion here—one register among many—these concepts are supplanted by human(ist), emotional appeals for sympathy and solidarity. Immediation is presented as apolitical and relies on this framing for its power. This need to deny its own politics, paradoxically, may block the more effective use of political mechanisms and institutions.

I make an analytical distinction between, on the one hand, politics occurring in a register wherein demands such as respect for democracy, representative government, and constitutional procedures are reference points and, on the other hand, politics that occurs in a sublimated form through nebulous efforts to evoke empathy for suffering. Although, in practice, these political realms are intertwined and function in parallel, entailed in this conceptual cleavage is a difference in how the political subject is represented in each mode. The distinction that Arendt makes between the subject of civil rights versus the subject of human rights is relevant here. The subject of the first mode is intimately linked to state, territory, and a historically delineated people, whereas the latter is deterritorialized, "massified,"

historically unspecified, reliant on invocations of a baseline humanity on a global scale, and associated with supra-state institutions (Ranciere 2004:302). In contrast to Arendt, who describes these modes in exclusive terms, I contend that the politics of immediation is a particular approach to making political claims that foregrounds natural life as the ground of a particular set of rights.³² Although it does not rule out other approaches in parallel, the naturalization of rights within human rights discourse obfuscates the mechanisms of sovereign states through which rights actually are secured.³³

Affect

Palestinian human rights representatives place a heavy stress on sharing the experience of Palestinian suffering with foreign visitors, on opening channels through which foreigners can identify and empathize with Palestinians. That the pedagogic and performative are in a symbiotic relationship is clearly illustrated in Huda's explanation of what DCI-PS hoped to achieve when it sent an 11-year-old girl from the Jenin refugee camp on a visit to the UN in Geneva:

There is a communication difficulty. So we found ourselves as an organization able to deliver the voice of the Palestinian society, to give eyewitness accounts of what has happened, the Israeli crimes that have occurred on the ground. . . . Why we chose a girl: first of all, she saw the facts. . . . The crime by itself, and the pictures that came out of what happened in Jenin, nobody could possibly see them without getting goose bumps. Nobody could see them without becoming sad. . . . You send numbers and fact about these crimes, and then a child comes along, eleven-years-old. She has seen crimes, lived through crimes. Her father was killed. She saw her father killed before her eyes. And she says, "I saw these crimes with my eyes." This gives a kind of credibility.

In every aspect of its work, DCI-PS crafts the means by which Palestinians are to be documented. As humans deserving emotional sympathy, they perform their message, and, as fact-bearing witnesses, they explain their objective realities.

An impromptu lecture offered by Im Hussein, a survivor of the April 2002 invasion of the Jenin refugee camp, with whom I spoke while touring the camp with volunteers from a local women's development NGO, demonstrates how exhibitions of wounded bodies are also presented as an index of others' responsibility and low moral standing. In the midst of discussing how her son was killed, she showed me the scars on her legs from wounds sustained when a missile hit her house three months earlier. We sat in

an undamaged room of her house. As she rolled up the leg of her trousers, she wailed,

I swear that while I was sleeping a rocket hit the house and all the glass of the window was broken and fell over the bed! I will show you my leg that was injured by a piece of glass during that accident, and I will show it to all Arabs. I felt pain in my leg and when I looked at it later on, I found the cut and found that it was bleeding. . . . Could you imagine the feeling while the building was falling over our heads? It is not human behavior. We are human beings and we aren't animals or cows to be dealt with in this way. . . . It still hurts me until today, though it happened three months and twelve days ago. . . . I still wonder what [Ariel] Sharon wants from us.

She exhibited her wounded leg, thick and dotted with muted purple bruises and scarring gashes, as proof of the inhumane brutality to which she was subject. This paradoxical form of self-objectification constitutes a kind of political subjectivity conducted by "man as the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion" (Agamben 1998:11).³⁴ The subject is not simply a passive physicality produced by a modern form of sovereignty but one that actively produces a mode of conscious, articulate, albeit disorganized, political discourse.

Such messages are directed at diverse local, regional, and international audiences. Im Hussein was making her case to me as much as to the Arab leaders who ignored her people's plight. These leaders were the object of scorn and a source of disappointment for many Palestinians. Jamal, another Jenin resident, clarified the local dimension of this dynamic in his explanation of why he visited the refugee camp directly after it was destroyed. He was an unemployed, poor, politically inactive but concerned young man. He told me he "went right away to see everything," to witness the events with his own eyes. It was necessary to have a personal recollection "to tell their children, so they don't forget." Seeing it with one's own eyes makes more of an impact than just hearing the stories, he explained. It was important for him to see the blood. "Why is it important to tell your [notional] children and future generations about this?" I asked. Why is it important not to forget? "So we can get our land back" was his reply. The exact mechanism tying together the power of witnessing visceral suffering, remembering it, and realizing a political outcome was unarticulated, because the relationship was, in this man's rendering, unmediated. It was not, however, figured to be any less compelling as a result.

Whether by the PA, by NGOs, or through encounters between visitors and locals, the power of the biopolitical is now being wielded by those subjected to it. Bodies, the obsessive objects of modern state knowledge, as states infiltrate and produce subjects through the regulation of phy-

siological functions and designations (Foucault 1995), become the means by which Palestinians make the simple point, here graphically and with jarring effect, that the occupation does have ultimate control over all their lives and deaths. Bare life has been politicized through this moral condemnation, just as it wavers on the threshold between the human and the inhuman, where it "becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it" (Enns 2004, quoting Agamben 1998:9).

When DCI-PS is not bringing Palestinians to foreigners, it is bringing foreigners to Palestinians. During such interactions, the sensual experience of shared suffering provides the environment in which appeals for action are brought to bear. During a tour of Hebron in April of 2001, Rashid, a social worker with DCI-PS guided a group of internationals to a house that had caught on fire the night before during an Israeli attack. Eight other foreigners and I trampled over the broken glass, edged past burned walls, and moved through a huge empty space where the corner of a room used to be, evidence of a missile that had crashed through it. The structure was now mostly rubble.³⁵ Two in this group were members of Doctors Without Borders. Delegations such as these usually comprise any number of Europeans and Americans—journalists, artists, students, and curious foreigners or those coming to show solidarity or "see for themselves."

Neighborhood men, women, and children were milling about, hunting salvageable items from the wreckage. When we first arrived at the house, children were carrying out the recovered items, and they continued doing so throughout our visit. Two were carrying drawers of silverware from the house, the unmelted shiny metal held out in front of them like some sacred offering in reverse, that little bit that the deities had spared. At least ten children had been living in that building, which had housed several related families. The missiles had torn through large chunks of the house during the day, and after the families evacuated, the house was targeted again and set ablaze that night. The mess still smelled of smoke.

We were accompanied on this "witnessing" tour by the men of the family, which is usually how these visits go. The men, with their ironic commentary and polite demeanors, sprinkled their narration of the events with the shrugging words of self-comfort, "What can we do?" They did not ask who we were and seemed to barely register Rashid's introduction of himself. They knew the drill. They lived through some catastrophe, and foreigners came to have a look. Their attitude was similar to that of most people I visited with such delegations. Telling one's story was routine.

As this particular encounter came to a close, our entourage filed past stony, glowering women who now had the task of caring for their families in the midst of their move to temporary living quarters. We were exiting out the front

door of the ruined house when a young man from the family came trotting up behind us to say that a woman was crying and needed Rashid's counseling.

Before we could return to the house, a large, red-faced woman emerged, screaming, "Where is the world's conscience?!" she called out. "Who can do this to families?!" she cried. "I haven't slept! There is no security!" She was desperate, her emotions unruly. The outrage in her words of exhortation, lament, and lambaste flummoxed the small knot of foreigners. Her outstretched, upturned arms punctuated her diatribe, making her bulky frame even more formidable. Those who spoke no Arabic stared in perplexed worry as the woman continued, "Where are human rights and international law? Shame on you, shame on you." "You people, write! Write! Please, tell our story!" She was not angry at us, only reminding us of our responsibility. That was what we were there for: to tell Palestinians' story of sleeplessness and insecurity. Calling out to us, figuring us to be some representative fraction of some universe in which morals made a difference, she asked again, "Where is the world's conscience that they can let this happen?!" She sustained her dialogue with vehemence, her face glazed with a sweaty sheen of heated exhaustion.

The spontaneous appeal to international law and the world's "conscience" in the woman's tirade shows how deeply these hazy addressees have infused Palestinian society and how eager people are to engage them. One of the visitors from Doctors Without Borders remarked that all a foreign visitor has to do is walk down the street and Palestinians will call out an invitation to talk about whatever has been going on. And, although most people I asked said they did not believe that telling their stories to journalists, researchers, or visitors would really make much of a difference, they did so anyway because there was little else they could do.³⁶

During my fieldwork in the first few years of the second intifada, foreign visitors were regularly ushered through funerals and taken to visit families of martyrs—to witness and to feel the Palestinians' plight.³⁷ From one funeral, I was taken to the place where a young man had been shot dead by Israeli soldiers as he was throwing stones. My guides, members of Fateh, focused on my emotional response to this scene, my distress, my shocked reactions to the streak of dried blood where the man had been shot and carried away. They emphasized that I had emotionally connected with their tragedies, that I had "lived through," and to some degree "experienced" their situation.

The right to engage in armed resistance against occupation is largely unacceptable as a tactic or public talking point in the United States and Israel. The possibility, indeed actuality, of extreme brutality doled out with impulsiveness and impunity (see Human Rights Watch 2005) is too far beyond the imagination of most who do not live under occupation, those who cling to an ideal of civilization that was

only ever an ideal (Bauman 1989), or those who hold on to the long-propagated myth that Israel has the most moral army on earth. Palestinians, those grasping for some way to disrupt this divide between lived experience and ingrained presumptions, evade those intricate and entrenched structures of perception through practices of immediation.

For purposes of analysis, one can identify two levels of immediation at play in affective and experience-based encounters. First, the orchestration of emotionally charged interchanges creates (or can create) an actual visceral-affective sharing—or compassion. The Romantic German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder portrayed the intersubjectivity of affect in a way that resonates with these empathic human rights exchanges. He writes specifically of sympathy (or what one would call "empathy"),³⁸ as a "mechanics of suffering" in which the "sensitive chords are strung in harmony with those of others . . . [whose] souls vibrate in unison" (Herder 1966:96). Similar assumptions about connection and identification are embedded in the ethnographic encounters described above. In Herder's theory (of emotion, language, and the social), as in the Palestinian destruction tours, interlocutors are beseeched to allow the normal intermediating membranes of body, individuality, and rational contemplation to dissolve.

Emotions of sympathy and sadness, whether shared through destruction tours, government documentation, or oral or written testimony, both attest to and are used to create national and international connections. It was the experience of emotional conversion or sympathetic connection that would encourage me—and other foreigners like me—to understand more clearly the situation in which Palestinians lived, the depth of its effects, and, ultimately, who was responsible for it.

There has been plenty of debate within Palestinian society about the appropriateness and usefulness of circulating images of suffering. A conversation with several social workers on staff as martyr family counselors at the Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development, an NGO in Ramallah, illustrated these tensions clearly. Whereas some objected to what was seen as an excessive display of violence that might harm children, one young social worker disagreed. He insisted that "there was a need that the media illustrate what is going on to the world because we were in need of international political support that could be achieved only through the media. On the local level, it was necessary to create solidarity among people. There was a need to illustrate what is going on. This is why the media kept showing the horrible scenes."³⁹

A second level of immediation simultaneously at work occurs in the visual surround of these interactions. Touring scenes of destruction, seeing the bloody detritus of a murder, and looking at the photographs of charred human remains are presented as an impetus to action. According to this physics—in which seeing pain causes feeling, the

pricking of conscience, and doing—vision contains a compelling potential.

Visuality

The turmoil and political incoherence that characterized the period of the second intifada is part of what gave Palestinian television its force. As the occupation caused geographic separation, social isolation, and an inchoate political scene, broadcast-mediated communication and solidarity were at a premium.⁴⁰ There was an emotional pedagogy in images of death, shaping and responding to a particular emotional and visual logic, aesthetic appreciation, and ethical rationale combined in the service of particular political ends and aspirations. Television and other visual media were, paradoxically, the mediating devices that most intensively propagated the immediacies of affective intimacy, of suffering humanity and its just sympathies.

The Palestinian broadcast media came into official existence with the arrival of the PA in 1993, just seven years prior to the outbreak of the second intifada.⁴¹ There are now more than 50 Palestinian TV and radio stations, both private and government owned (Ayyash 2002:35, 38),⁴² a very large number for a population of only about 3.5 million.

The morning radio news broadcasts always started with a list of people martyred the previous day, proceeding town by town, announcing the names and ages of those killed, where they were from, and how they were killed. As Ayman, a local TV director in Ramallah explained, “We began with [the news of martyrs], because the human is the most important subject. The martyr is more important than a destroyed house. The martyr is the peak of the news.” During this tumultuous period, television news became a centerpiece of daily life for most Palestinians.⁴³ TV became an instrument of extended solidarity and support and was consciously cultivated as such by media professionals.⁴⁴ Radwan Abu Ayyash, director of Palestine TV, wrote that maintaining “the social network and unity of Palestinian society” is one of the media’s goals (2002:32).⁴⁵ People sought the news, watched it, read it, and discussed it almost compulsively.

Families gathered around their televisions for regular and breaking news broadcasts; friends called one another to be reassured when they learned of particularly violent events in their hometown. TV broadcasters were also part of information-sharing networks in the context of the intifada’s dangerous daily events. As their form of “public service announcement,” local TV stations posted warnings to viewers or called for blood donations at local hospitals.⁴⁶ Al-Jazeera was also a staple in most homes, offering continuous live updates throughout the uprising.⁴⁷ The Palestinian correspondents became minor celebrities, and the news coverage was sympathetic to the Palestinian position, highlighting people’s experiences of victimization. Unlike the

first intifada, which was not so militarized and involved the larger public, including the elderly and the young, women as well as men, during the second intifada most Palestinians felt sidelined as spectators. The media became more fundamental to the sustenance of the Palestinian nation.

The public that did come together was produced out of acts of witnessing and emotional participation. In Palestine, under conditions of violent siege, such traumatic tracks of social convergence did help people survive but did not lead to much more. TV was part of what Arvind Rajagopal describes as “the politicization of aesthetics,” in which not only is the field of politics enlarged, insofar as more have access to knowledge of events and public discussions about it, but also, because of the “lowering [of] the cost of admission at the same time” (2001:101; cf. Benjamin 1968), audiences can sacrifice less for this access and feel that their viewing is a substitute for action and that they are somehow involved (Jad 2002).

The mediated public sphere was what Palestinians had in the place of a coherent national project. The TV news—as well as people’s endless discussions of it—not only offered practical information but also gave a structured mode of understanding this period of intensified disruption. The intifada had a profound effect on people’s sense of space and time, primarily by disrupting it. Numerous checkpoints throughout the West Bank, many of which appeared and disappeared randomly and unannounced, made most journeys unpredictable and much longer than they had been before the intifada began (see N. 40). Daily conversation was often woven around discussions about the difficulty of the roads and the extent of the checkpoints. Political processes were also fragmented. Beyond the fact that Palestinian Legislative Council members were unable to meet in one place, most people felt that their leaders were ineffectual, that the intifada was proceeding haphazardly, that there was no strategy (also see Sayigh 2001). Why and how people watched TV with such obsessive constancy during the intifada was, in part, a result of pervasive conditions of physical and political immobility, conditions that intensified during the uprising.⁴⁸

Beyond the transmission of breaking news, it was specifically the imagery of death that became a central component of the media’s representational palette. Such imagery worked on two registers: First, by bringing the chaos and emergency close up, the TV conveyed a sense of emotional charge to local viewers. Second, the aesthetic style of the representations indicates an attempt to prove their brutalized “reality”—to Palestinians and to anyone else who could see them.

Scenes from the direct aftermath of an attack were often broadcast, showing crowds, usually of men and boys, jostling through the wreckage or frantically trying to recover a body, hands digging through rubble. One of the most discussed and repeatedly broadcast of such gruesome

deaths was that of Iman Hijo. On May 8, 2001, this four-month-old Palestinian girl was killed when Israeli forces shelled the Gaza Strip.⁴⁹ That evening Palestinian TV news showed her swaddled figure, only her pale face visible, laid out on a metal hospital table. Just one small, deep purple wound indicated the entry point of the fragment that killed her. In the sterile hospital setting, a man's torso in a white lab coat was also visible in the camera frame, his gloved hands lifting the baby's shoulders to expose the gaping wound in her back, a portion of which was torn out. Blood spilled onto the table from the wound. This difficult close-up was replayed again and again.

Through the reproductive medium of television, Iman's case and the images associated with her death became common knowledge. Her face appeared frequently in the days after her death, and since then, it has appeared several times a day on PTV, incorporated into the introductory and closing theme of the PA news and broadcast across the occupied territories. Nestled among views of Al-Aqsa, an Israeli Apache helicopter firing a missile, a boy throwing stones, children crying, and mothers weeping, Iman's dead face is interpolated into a collage of prototypical intifada scenes. She has come to symbolize for Palestinians the indiscriminate brutality of the Israeli occupation and the innocence of its Palestinian victims.

What kind of political work do these and other images of suffering perform? To understand how certain kinds of image-induced experience are figured to produce certain kinds of knowledge as a means to politics, one must uncover the implicit aesthetic ideology that underpins them. It is important to understand aesthetics in this context not as the study of art or the judgment of beauty but as that area of philosophy that emerged as a "discourse of the body" (Eagleton 1990). This usage is closer to the original Greek notion of "aisthesis," or sense experience (MacDougall 1999:5), which referred to the immediacy of reactions to images, unaffected by rules or self-interest, something that emerged out of shared sensibilities, not a product of rational calculations.⁵⁰

It is this earlier notion of aesthetics that can help one grasp what was communicated through the television coverage of intifada deaths and how this coverage, which was often intent on getting as close to the materiality of death as possible, was thought to communicate. Media images presented an unrelenting physical intimacy with death. They foregrounded the visceral as an entrée to affect.⁵¹ The rawness of these bodies, the emphasis on their destroyed physiology, was shown in a form that accentuated that rawness. And the affective environment of these images—families weeping, friends lamenting—exclaimed the poignancy of the grim reality in an equally intense register. The crowds that always gathered around any emergency were amplified through the news media's expansive audience, offering

the viewer the visual perspective of one who was right there, within photographable distance of the victim.

I talked with a cameraman about why the media aired such bloody images. He said they had to show the "reality, so people will see the suffering, what the Israelis do." Another camera operator talked about the necessity of conveying the "facts" through pictures that let "all the people know what is right and what is wrong." He considered himself merely a conduit who, "without commentary," presented the image, and, he said, "the picture itself speaks."

As part of the coverage of Iman Hijo's death, her father was shown sobbing, as he implored, "Where are human rights?" In response, the brutality of Iman's death was figured to speak for itself.

Television coverage of martyrs' families was extensive. Local Palestinian television and radio programs regularly broadcast lengthy interviews with martyr families. These emotional exchanges brought TV viewers in a variety of audiences into contact with the intimate details of the families' lives.

During Ramadan in 2001, Watan TV, an independent Ramallah station, broadcast a program on martyr families.⁵² Each segment featured a family that had lost a member during the previous year of the uprising. The news director at the station said the goal was to show how the martyr's family, "received, humanly, the news of the martyrdom of their son." He said the program producers "tried to take from the family some of the details of the moments that preceded the process of martyrdom. To remember human situations."

Throughout the segments, the camera focused on lengthy, silent close-ups of the family members crying, as well as frequent shots of photographs and posters of the martyr. The viewer was brought into the intimate space and emotional texture of the family through the interviewer's questions. Each question probed into the banal details of the martyr's habits, the heroic or simply congenial traits of his personality, the strength of relations between the martyr and his family members. "What kind of food did he like?" the interviewer gently asked the sobbing mother of Ghassan Awaysah. "What did you feel when you heard he was martyred?" She inquired of other members, "How was your relationship with him as a sister?" "What is Ramadan like without him?" The camera dwelled on the emotional reactions to the questions, as the interviewer sat silently while the respondents wept and struggled to regain their composure.

The grief, sadness, loss, and emotion that filled each 35-minute segment together formed another way of presenting the family's shared subjective reality. Without compunction, the camera observed family members and lingered on their agitation, producing the emotions as raw, spontaneous, personal. The traditionally dressed young woman who interviewed the family stood as a national(ist) prompt for these emotions, she and the camera the channel

through which those in the viewing community were drawn into collectively felt sentiment.⁵³

Local and regional TV programs such as these were a staple of everyday life. A local TV news director explained to me that his station's intifada coverage "had the effect of people *feeling* the tragedy, the calamity, the broken-heartedness." And in this regard, there was little to distinguish private stations from those more explicitly affiliated with political parties or the PA. Among media professionals, the discourse of objectivity, immediate access to reality, to truth, and the importance of the affective inducement thought to inhere within these stories and images blended seamlessly into conversation about professional and national duty, which was, in short, to "preserve the true picture of what happens in the Palestinian land . . . so that the world sees what happens here."⁵⁴

This emphasis on immediation and vision's special access to truth relates to long-held beliefs about the nature of vision that are as much at work in Palestinian practices as they are in some Western-based philosophy. Vision is a sense that can "mask the multiple forms of perceptual experience" (Rajagopal 2001:98)—the actual ambiguities, excesses, and subjective and often divergent emotions that images, in fact, provoke. Many political practitioners, public relations experts, and social critics seem to agree that vision is the sense that can propel subjects most forcefully into a state of affective intensity. The feelings incited by vision are assumed to have a momentum that is somehow presubjective (if not presocial). The ethnographic material presented here reveals a philosophy of vision that understands this sense as one that can produce an effect that is outside the rational constraints of individual will and intentionality (cf. Mazzarella in press). Seeing can mean believing in an unmediated, direct connection with the reality being observed.

The philosophy of vision that is implicit in the politics of immediation dominating Palestinian human rights and media practice is close to the one that emerges in the critiques of objectifying ocularcentrism propounded by Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.⁵⁵ In opposition to an "epistemology based on a subjective self reflecting on an objective world exterior to it" (Levin 1993:12, quoting Jay), which was the target of much postwar philosophy, these thinkers sought to regain "the experience of the intertwining of subject and object" (Jay 1993:145). Unlike the Heideggerian negative valuation of the modern "age of the world picture" that is reiterated by many contemporary media analysts, the philosophy of vision articulated by these French thinkers and evident in Palestinian discourse and practice bespeaks a more hopeful notion of vision (perhaps desperately so). Palestinians echo the idealistic humanism of human rights, in which natural, spontaneous, sympathetic connections are made on the basis of shared humanity.

"Merleau-Ponty," writes Jay, "emphasized the potential for communication . . . evident on the prereflective level of perception . . . the experience of perception" not fractured by mind-body dualism that constitutes "the body as object and the cogito as rational subject" (1993:164–165). For Merleau-Ponty, as for Palestinians, "the very bodily experience of being at once viewer and viewed" was necessary for producing intersubjective, prereflexive, sympathetic understanding, through what Merleau-Ponty would call "television, [which] meant a kind of transcendence of the isolated subject and a sympathetic entry into the subjectivity of others" (Jay 1993:168).

Visceral images create a sense of immediacy through the joining of emotion and objectivity, which occurs formally through realist, photographic images, as well as through affect-laden narrations and displays of destroyed bodies. Both the visual and affective dimensions of these displays are nondiscursive. They are sensual, as opposed to cognitive, forms of communication. Although senses and sensibilities are cultural and cultivated, they are presented as being unmediated by the social. What is more, bodies are figured as a natural touchstone, a spark for shared experience, a bedrock of truth and authentic experience (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; cf. Mazzarella 2004).

Although many academics in the last quarter of the 20th century may have rejected any notion of the body existing prior to social and semiotic categories (of gender, sex, or skin color), it is exactly this conception of the presocial body—and, therefore, of the body that exists before or outside of social divisions—that Palestinians strive to hold on to. Theirs is an effort at creating intersubjectivity, conveying the force of the blow, and insisting on the humanity they share with their interlocutors. With the bodies of the martyred dead and injured, they show that they belong to the same sympathy-deserving category of the human.

This notion of the body as being anterior to the social and, therefore, as superseding social prejudice, of the body as that which spontaneously experiences instinctual aversions, is central to aesthetic theory. This conception of the body helped define "the aesthetic" as that which brackets "one's own . . . prejudices in the name of a common, general humanity . . . subduing its self-regard to a community of sensibility with others" (Eagleton 1990:39). The body is the material through which a sense of immediacy is cultivated. It is the ground of affect, and both visual media and human rights work in Palestine elevate it as such.

The positive valuation of aesthetic experiences occurs most intently in those historical moments in which the atomization of individuals comes to be perceived as a problem (Shusterman 1997). In other places and times, philosophers proposed that aesthetic experiences could offer an immediacy of understanding and holistic perception as a panacea for the alienation of senses,⁵⁶ as a social respite from the cold materialism of the market. Philosophers

submit various configurations of aesthetic experience as means to produce social ties when political structures are most in flux.

So what might Palestinians' recourse to these affective, sense-laden interactions be in response to? From what does their drive to prove an unmediated, unvarnished truth stem? Since the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel and the dispersal of some 750,000 Palestinians, those dispossessed of their homes have had a precarious existence within the nation-state framework (see Blecher 2005). Since the 1967 occupation, Palestinians of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem have been stateless persons, living as "outlaw[s] by definition" (Arendt 1973:283) within a regime of military orders designed to criminalize their national existence (Hajjar 2005). Without a national government, they have no institution to guarantee their minimum human rights (Arendt 1973:292); the so-called rights of man are "unenforceable . . . [for those] who were no longer citizens of any sovereign state" (1973:293). Statelessness means not only being without a representative authority but also being deprived of international legitimacy and having no guaranteed means of fighting for that legitimacy. Even if the right to resist occupation is enshrined in international law, the guarantee of that right is likewise subject to state powers, which, in this case, are dominated by Israeli and U.S. interests.

Moreover, many observers do not trust the Palestinian word (and image). Palestinians are regularly decried for their cynical political machinations, for their incitement. Everyone from children to suicide bombers is charged—especially in the Israeli and U.S. press—with being manipulated militants, passive pawns in the hands of unfeeling mothers and wily terrorist cells willing to sacrifice innocent children, distraught women, and depressed teenagers for their own factional ends. Palestinians know they are suspect, their knowledge discounted, their experiences excluded. They feel alienated and isolated, unheard and distrusted on the world stage. And their modes of argumentation are in part a reaction to that.

Perhaps most significantly, the politics of immediation has taken root because of Palestine's specific history and its relationship with Israel, a state whose existence its leaders justified as a refuge for suffering Jews, and because of Palestine's reliance on the international community.⁵⁷ Palestinians must subvert the long history of prejudice in the West that has turned them into, as Edward Said put it, "a synonym for trouble—rootless, mindless, gratuitous trouble" (1992:7). Palestinians have yet to find a "socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain, and circulate" the facts of their situation (Said 1992:254).

As human rights has become the assumed horizon of Palestinians' appeals, sustaining their imagination of an "international community" to be addressed, the politics of immediation has taken root. Arendt long ago ques-

tioned the notion that being human is enough to be assured of human rights, but the struggle to prove humanity on the basis of that very assumption persists, as does the faith, however shaken, in an international audience motivated by a moral conscience. Potential political trajectories are obscured when feelings in the moment are the focus. And questions remain about what the future holds when political interaction revolves around the production of immediacy.

Notes

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1. The fieldwork on which this article is based was carried out during the first two years of the second intifada—between November 2000 and January 2003—and during the summer of 2003. My research, based in Ramallah and covering the West Bank and, to some extent, the Gaza Strip, consisted of extensive periods of work with human rights NGOs, including Defense for Children International-Palestine Section (DCI-PS), the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (LAW), and Lajee Center, and interviewing the staff of these and other NGOs. In addition, I lived with families in Jenin and 'Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, spent a great deal of time involved in martyr commemorative activities, and interviewed Palestinian media professionals.

The second intifada, or uprising against Israeli occupation, began in September 2000. The first intifada (1987–93) was a period of renewed, energetic effort to force the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem to an end and consisted primarily of popular civil disobedience. As many have observed, the second intifada, which began seven years after the 1993 establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), has been an uprising against the Israeli occupation and against the ineffective rule of the PA. The second uprising began as a series of protests, which included demonstrations by people from all walks of life and youth throwing rocks at Israeli checkpoints. The confrontations

became increasingly militarized, with Palestinian militants regularly exchanging gunfire with, and becoming the targets of assassination by, the Israeli army. For a summary of the status of these various factions during the first three years of the intifada, see reports by the International Crisis Group (ICG; 2004a, 2004b, 2004c) and Graham Usher (2000). For a genealogy of Palestinian armed struggle, see Sayigh 1997. See Allen 2002a for an account of Palestinian positions regarding violence and nonviolent resistance to occupation.

2. The Red Crescent is the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross.
3. I use pseudonyms in referring to all interlocutors.
4. For examples of Hamas's participation in discourses of suffering and human rights, see Palestinian Information Center 2006a, 2006b, 2008. For an analysis of Hamas's incorporation of human rights in its political discourse, see Allen 2007. For parallel examples from the Fateh perspective, see Mahmoud Abbas's inaugural speech to the Palestinian Legislative Council (2003) and United States Department of State 2008.
5. As just two of countless examples of how prominent the language and imagery of suffering is, see Al-Mezan Center's (2004) description of a documentary on "the suffering of children under siege" and a report on the suffering of residents of the Al-Muwasay region of Gaza (Al-Mezan Center 2005).
6. Two intertwined dimensions of affect must be considered: on the one hand, an account of the embodied, nondiscursive "domain of intensity" (Massumi 2002:28), which is both an internal state and an external, bodily disposition (Hunt and Jacob 2001:496), and, on the other hand, the process whereby affect becomes emotion through the semiotic mediations that name and evaluate such states and dispositions (Massumi 2002; Mazzarella 2003).
7. As political analyst Yezid Sayigh has noted, there has been "systemic, probably irreversible collapse—'state failure'—in the Palestinian Authority" (2007:8), which the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip has by no means remedied, even if Hamas has partially consolidated authority in that slice of land (ICG 2008). For one take on the political imbrication of Gaza and the West Bank, see Malley and Miller 2007. For reflections on the waning power of the PA during the second intifada and Palestinians' reactions to it, see Abdul Hadi 2004, Allen 2006, Sayigh 2001, and Shikaki 2002.
8. The emergence of Hamas as a political force, and, now, head of the government, has instilled another, distinctly pragmatic voice into political discourse (see Hroub 2006; Mishal and Sela 2000). Hamas's ideology and the role the politics of representation and affect play in the party's activities—topics that deserve specific analysis—lie outside the scope of this article. It is worth noting, however, that the party's fall 2005 electoral platform, the Electoral Platform for Change and Reform, emphasizes the "duty to reform the Palestinian reality and *alleviate the suffering* of our people" (Hroub 2006:8, emphasis added).
9. For an excellent discussion of the ways in which Palestinian citizens of Israel are being shunted into a similar condition of "anomie," see Blecher 2005:703.
10. For a more recent philosophical engagement, see Boltanski 1999.
11. For a related discussion of what notion of "human" undergirds human rights assumptions, see Asad 2003 and Ranciere 2004.
12. For one account of the history of human rights that highlights the multiple and sometimes discordant people and notions that have been entangled in what are, in fact, many formulations of human rights standards, see Simpson 2001.
13. Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) asserts that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." For the full text

of the CRC, see UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1996–2002.

14. For accounts of some of these contentions, see Mazower 2004 and Waltz 2004.
15. Although Donnelly correctly recognizes that the idea of human rights is like "all other moral and political ideas and practices" in that it is based on foundational arguments that are contentious and vulnerable, he dismisses this as "irrelevant," something "we should not place more weight on . . . than it deserves" (2003:20–21). Also see Falk 2000:14–17.
16. Some scholars consider the heartfelt appeals "on behalf of humanity" that rights activists and even diplomats have deployed to mobilize governments (e.g., Power 2003:10, 14) as partly explaining the recent rise of human rights discourse. Another history of human rights that relies on a problematic understanding of the necessary relationship between emotion, empathy, and human rights is Hunt 2007. For a more neutral history of human rights, see Mazower 2004 and Cmiel 2004.
17. Useful histories documenting this early period of Palestinian nationalism and its engagements on a world stage are Fleischmann 2003 and Matthews 2006.
18. UNSCO was established in June 1994, following the signing of the Oslo Accord, with the goal of facilitating UN involvement in the transition process. In 1999, UNSCO's mandate was reconfigured into the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority to enhance UN development assistance. See UNSCO 2008.
19. According to one survey of Palestinian human rights organizations (which included only partial information on a portion of existing human rights NGOs), the annual income of these organizations ranges from approximately \$300,000 to well over \$1 million: "Of the 19 whose income was identified, ten received less than a half million US dollars in the relevant year and only five more than a million US dollars" (Sidoti and Daibes-Murad 2004:27). Considering that, according to an IMF report released in October 2006, the PA government budget shrank to around \$500 million after the aid embargo, human rights work receives a relatively high level of support.
20. See, for example, Al-Haq's 2006 press release describing its efforts, in cooperation with a British public interest firm, to secure the implementation of the "July 2004 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion that found Israel's construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) to be contrary to international law."
21. Many NGOs indicate that legal advice and representation for victims of human rights abuses is the top priority for their organizations, but advocacy and awareness raising, sectors of activity most relevant to the current discussion, "are constant components, under-currents, in the work of many organisations whose top priorities might be elsewhere" (Sidoti and Daibes-Murad 2004:26–27).
22. Significant aspects of this history are related in Glendon 2002, Power 2003, and Simpson 2001. For an account written during the era in which international human rights documents were being developed, see Lewis 1942.
23. This declaration is a historical document, emerging at a "point where three streams in the history of Western civilization converge—the theory of natural law and natural rights, the development of international law, and the introduction of bills of rights into the constitutional law of the several nations" (Wellman 1998), and these philosophical bases and assumptions still inform how the declaration and subsequent human rights instruments are utilized and understood.

24. I was a volunteer in the Ramallah office of DCI-PS for approximately one year, starting in November 2000. I contributed to various publications, including an annual report and press releases, spent time in the organization's Hebron office, attended workshops, and accompanied DCI-PS fieldworkers on their research. In addition to this daily participant-observation, I conducted formal and informal interviews with DCI-PS staff members.

25. See Palestine Online Store 2003–06. For more on the story, see McGreal 2006.

26. Some DCI-PS staff and board members were affiliated with a particular political party, but it was never made clear to me if the link between NGO and party went any further. It is generally understood that some NGOs in the occupied territories have informal links to political parties and primarily, if not exclusively, hire individuals affiliated with those parties. The Palestinian Communist party, the People's Party, dissolved into NGOs, with the party's leaders becoming NGO heads. Some women's rights and development NGOs had a similar genesis. During the first intifada, Palestinian political factions were outlawed by the military occupation, and many of their social-development and party-recruitment activities were carried out through affiliated grassroots organizations that were better able to elude repression by Israeli authorities. Without according sufficient weight to this context of occupation and military rule in the West Bank, Iris Jean-Klein's discussion of such committees (and other programs designed to educate foreigners about the Palestinian situation) describes them as dissembling in front of their foreign observers, as they denied their party connections "even when directly asked and pressed on the matter" (2002:58). The necessarily covert nature of Palestinian political activism during the first intifada was a radically distinct dynamic from the one I describe as the politics of immediation in this article. A more directly relevant discussion of the relative political efficacy of NGOs compared with social movements is offered by Islah Jad, who points out that the Palestinian women's committees that were branches of political parties during the first intifada worked through and sustained mass bases, whereas NGOs "cannot sustain and expand a constituency; or tackle issues related to social, political or economic rights on a macro or national level" (2004:39) because of the structural impediments caused by their financial dependency on Western donors. For more on the history of the link between politics and civil society organizations in Palestine, see Hammami 1995, 2000; Hiltermann 1991; and Allen 2005:ch. 6.

27. Mou'in Rabbani, an early employee of the NGO, contends that Al-Haq's emphasis on strict human rights standards and an ideology of scientific objectivity "translated into an emphasis on micro-violations to the detriment of [conveying] the bigger picture or engaging with questions specifically of national rights" (1994).

28. For more on problems in human rights and good governance projects in the occupied territories, see Sidoti and Daibes-Murad 2004.

29. For a discussion of development aid as part of Cold War foreign policy, see Rieff 2002:103.

30. For examples of this back and forth, see Kahlen and Foxsohn 2005 and Steinberg 2005.

31. Palestinians are by no means unique in articulating themselves through the language of rights. For more on the ways in which local groups actively define their human rights agendas and utilize human rights institutions and legitimizing discourses in their political activities and strategic interactions with state agencies and international actors, see Cowan et al. 2001, Goodale 2006, Merry 1998, and Tate 2007. These are only a few examples of a growing body of work on "the social life of rights" (Wilson 2006:78). For related arguments about the depoliticizing effects of human rights, see Brown 2004 and Ferguson 1994.

32. I wish to express my thanks to an anonymous reviewer and Ajantha Subramian for helping me clarify these distinctions.

33. It is the anthropologist's task to understand how political change happens and is thwarted, to point to the ideologies and institutions that cause people to mistake humanitarian help and sympathy for political solution—not to bring readers closer to the suffering of victims but to explain why the victims maintain the belief that this would help. Mark Goodale (2006) offers further useful suggestions regarding the skeptical and engaged stances of anthropologists doing ethnography of human rights.

34. As such, the process parallels the "structural aporias" of humanitarianism identified by Didier Fassin (in press). He draws attention to a series of contradictions: between the principles of egalitarian shared humanity on which humanitarian work rests and the actual inequalities between victims and saviors, and between members of humanitarian organizations defined in higher moral terms and local workers who are expendable.

35. The majority of house demolitions have occurred in Gaza. For reports, see United Nations 2004, Human Rights Watch 2004, and B'Tselem n.d.

36. On the marginalization of most Palestinians from organized politics as well as from participation in the intifada, see Allen 2006 and Hammami and Tamari 2001.

37. *Martyr (al-shahid)* is the term most Palestinians use to refer to anyone who is deemed to have died as a result of the occupation—both Christian and Muslim—not just combatants and suicide bombers. Martyrs are people who were killed at the hands of Israeli soldiers or settlers or those who died because they were prevented access to medical care by curfews or checkpoints. Suicide bombings, in particular, have not been a central feature of Palestinian media or other nationalist representations during the second intifada. The phenomenon and how it is discussed within Palestinian society does intersect in some ways with the questions about the representation of suffering that I consider in this article. For example, suicide bombings are understood by some as an attempt to impose an immediate understanding of the Palestinians' suffering. However, the reasons for these attacks are many and complicated, as are the internal and international debates about them (see Allen 2002a, 2002b; Asad 2007; Hammami and Tamari 2001; Hasso 2005; Pape 2005), and cannot be treated here.

38. For discussions of sympathy and empathy as object and methodology of post-Enlightenment social science, see Moyn 2006.

39. For more on this field of debate, see Allen 2006.

40. As of late December 2003, there were 735 roadblocks in the West Bank, according to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) 2006. For more reports, see Machsom Watch n.d. For reports on restrictions on freedom of movement and the economic and social effects of checkpoints, see B'Tselem n.d. and OCHA 2007.

41. The Voice of Palestine (VOP) was the Palestinian radio station in exile that began broadcasting during the 1960s. President Yasser Arafat issued a decree (no. 40506) establishing the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) on July 6, 1993. The first VOP broadcast from Palestinian autonomous territory was from Jericho on July 2, 1994, and PTV began experimental transmission in June 1994 in the same city (Ayyash 2002:27, 78). Until then, the Israeli occupation had forbidden any Palestinian radio or television stations, and most Palestinians watched Jordanian or Israeli TV (Batrawi 2001:2, 4). Palestinians entered the field of journalism in higher numbers during the first intifada, when foreign journalists depended heavily on the assistance of local stringers and fixers (Kuttab 1993:140) as guides.

42. Almost every Palestinian home has a television set (Batrawi 2001, citing a 1999 UNICEF study). Walid Batrawi reports there are

31 private television stations. The first was established in Nablus in 1994. Most private stations rely on revenues from commercials and some on NGO funding (Batrawi 2001:6, 10). Amal Jamal provides a critical assessment of the Palestinian media, reporting that, before the intifada, the eight radio and 27 local cable TV stations in PA jurisdiction areas were "private enterprises whose main aim seems to be entertainment for the purpose of making money," and adding that "they do allow diverse political, cultural, and social opinions to be expressed and to influence the public sphere" (2000:49). According to Batrawi, the PA allowed such a profusion of private stations "to set facts on the ground in terms of occupying as much television frequencies as possible" (2001:21).

43. Palestinian TV news viewers who could afford it also watched Arab satellite channels, including Al-Jazeera. Their programs, including news coverage as well as talk shows and even game shows, dedicated a great deal of airtime to events in Palestine. They were also a means by which regional solidarity with the Palestinians was reflected and created. Here I attend mainly to local media and its specifically national(ist) intentions and effects. For more on the interaction between Palestinian and international media, see Bishara 2008.

44. For a firsthand account of this kind of solidarity work by a Palestinian radio station during the intifada, see Abdelhadi 2004 and Batrawi 2001:27. Prior to the intifada, locally produced TV mainly offered talk shows and entertainment rather than news (Batrawi 2001:9).

45. At the time I interviewed him, Ayyash was a self-defined Fateh activist, Arafat loyalist, and former head of the Arab Journalists' Association (Jamal 2000:49).

46. For more on the relationship of the media to a community in crisis, see Abdelhadi 2004 and Batrawi 2001.

47. During the first years of the second intifada, Al-Jazeera news was very similar in content to that produced by local stations (albeit of much higher production quality). Most of those involved in producing coverage of Palestine at the network were themselves Palestinians. However, Al-Jazeera has taken a different tone since the split of the West Bank from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2007, when the latter came under the rule of Hamas after fratricidal struggles over power with Fateh, the long-time ruling party that holds official control of the PA. According to some who were sympathetic to Fateh, Al-Jazeera became more of a mouthpiece for Hamas, an opinion formed in part because the station interviewed Hamas politicians and covered events in the Gaza Strip with much greater regularity than the PA-controlled Palestinian television station did.

48. By way of comparison, consider Benedict Anderson's description of how the form of the media is the driving force behind the community-producing magic of newspapers and novels. For him, the novel and the newspaper have "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (1991:25), one that traverses a temporally coincident plane and moves along in rhythmic time, punctuated by the anticipated serial convergences of a national public. In Palestine, it was specifically the repeated news of suffering, death, and destruction that constituted the thread tying temporal and geographic areas together. The question Anderson asks about why people willingly "die for such limited imagining" (1991:7) of the national community is, thus, transformed into a question of how dying and suffering make the nation. The point here is simply to emphasize that the form and content of the media are equally important.

49. For a report on the deaths of Iman Hijo and other Palestinian children, see DCI-PS 2001.

50. It was this sense of the concept that dominated the discussion of "aesthetic experience" when it emerged out of 17th- and

18th-century British empiricism. It only later became isolated from mainstream epistemology and ontology (Townsend 1987:287). For more on this concept, see Eagleton 1990, Townsend 1987, Stolnitz 1961, and Paxman 1992-93.

51. Here I am drawing on Brian Massumi's (2002:66) efforts to find a cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to the body.

52. Founded in 1996, Watan began as one of the activities of the Safad Advertising Company and was supported by four NGOs. It also had an unofficial association with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). It was originally directed by Omar Nazzal, who said the goal of the station was to "establish a democratic, independent and courageous station" (Ayyash 2002:94-95). The station has changed hands and become affiliated with Mustafa Barghouthi's NGO, the Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute (HDIP). Similar programs were aired on other stations as well.

53. See Starrett 2003 for an analysis of how newspaper photographs of dramatic and emotional images produce popular sentiment in the context of struggle between the Egyptian state and Islamic opposition groups.

54. There was extensive debate among media professionals, social workers, and the broader public over the appropriateness of showing gruesome and emotional images. For accounts, see Allen 2005:ch. 5 and Batrawi 2001:29.

55. This discussion is based largely in a reading of Martin Jay's (1993) interpretations of these philosophers.

56. For more on the relationship of sensory alienation, aesthetics, and politics, see Srivatsan 2000:46-47, Benjamin 1968, Held 1980:88, Buck-Morss 1997, and Eagleton 1990:36. David Paxman describes Francis Hutcheson's aesthetics as a "model of 'knowing' without knowledge" and as a bridge "between the richness of the human response to life-as-lived and a scientific model of knowledge that had not been able to represent that response" (1992-93:286). Hutcheson figures aesthetic responses as a "class of immediate, natural response [as] the foundation for our attraction to good" (Paxman 1992-93:295).

57. See, for example, the testimony provided on behalf of the Zionist movement to the United States Congress (1922).

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