Colonial States' Complicity in Furthering Shrinking Spaces for Solidarity with Palestine

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Introduction

For over a century, colonial states have manipulated the people and the land of Palestine, for their own gain - against the Palestinian people's will, and at the expense of their inalienable rights to self-determination and return. All States that have supported the Israeli colonial-apartheid enterprise, through manipulation and marginalization of the Palestinian people's rights, are complicit in Israeli crimes, including the denial of a peremptory norm of international law: the right to self-determination. From the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate, to the United Nations' Partition Plan, the Oslo Accords, and the Deal of the Century, to the even more recent deals to exploit Palestinian natural resources or the proposed plans for the management of the Gaza Strip, among others, western colonial states have consistently endorsed and advanced Israel's colonial agenda.

Disabling Palestinian civil society has been employed by Israel as one of its repression tactics. Many western states have also utilized various tools to enable Israel's strategy of incapacitating Palestinian civil society, and to silence those in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for liberation and self-determination. The repression against the Palestine solidarity movement and advocacy for Palestinian rights did not start with the ongoing Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip. Rather, it is an acceleration of a trend observed for many decades, impacting Palestinian rights advocates inside and outside Palestine.

To describe this wave of restrictions on political struggle, civil society organizations (CSOs) have used the term "shrinking spaces." It designates the actions taken by states and their agents against opposing voices, in order to limit the spaces they can use to convey and amplify their message. These policies of shrinking spaces target both physical

platforms (the street, educational facilities, cultural venues), and non-physical platforms (for instance censorship of social media accounts, manipulation of funding agreements, delegitimization of dissenting voices through defamation campaigns).

The current movement of solidarity with Palestine within universities, in the US but also in European countries, and the repression they are facing, can be analyzed as the culmination of such policies of shrinking spaces. The fact that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu himself, along with the White House, have called for students' protests and encampments to be shut down, nevertheless shows their impact and confirms academia's power to bring about change, and its capacity to put pressure on governments.

This paper will focus on western colonial states' involvement in shrinking the space to defend and promote Palestinian rights. Part I analyzes their complicity in upholding Israel's silencing strategies within Palestine, while Part II highlights some of the policies those same western colonial states implement in their own domestic affairs to shrink the various types of spaces available for Palestinian rights advocates.

Part I: Colonial States' Involvement in Shrinking Spaces inside Palestine

It is estimated that 117 of 197 countries are assessed to have "severe civic restrictions," indicating that the issue of shrinking spaces is a global one, as civil society worldwide has become the target of measures deliberately aimed at constraining its work. In Palestine, shrinking spaces have a particular relevance and urgency, given the colonial context in which Palestinian civil society organizations (CSOs) operate.

Colonial manipulation of the people and the land of Palestine has been exerted through the imposition of **political conditions in funding agreements**. Using the pretext of combating anti-Semitism or terrorism, colonial states have imposed conditions designed to erase the Palestinian reality, criminalize and silence resistance to the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime, and prevent the documentation, for accountability purposes, of its system of control, colonial domination and oppression over the Palestinian people.

A. Israeli-Led Campaign Against Unrwa

Strategically led by Israel, attacks against UNRWA - the only agency mandated by UN Resolution 302 (1949) to carry out direct relief and works programs for Palestine refugees - has long been endorsed by colonial allies, i.e. USA, EU and others. As a result of continuous smear campaigns, funding agreements have imposed securitization policies and attempted to restrict the eligibility of Palestinian refugees to receive services, in violation of UNRWA's mandate, international law and humanitarian principles. Although Israeli allegations against the Agency, claiming that it supports terrorism or anti-Semitism, have consistently been debunked, they have led to the Agency's chronic

funding crisis and impacted its capacity, credibility and legitimacy, thus serving Israel's goal to eliminate UNRWA and with it, the Palestinian refugee issue.

B. Israeli-Led Campaign against Palestinian Civil Society

The Israeli colonial-apartheid regime and its proxy organizations have orchestrated similar **campaigns of delegitimization towards Palestinian civil society organizations**, also resorting to unfounded accusations of support for terrorism or anti-Semitism. These delegitimization actions are aimed at the erasure of Palestinian civil society organizations, via the destruction of their reputation and thereby, of their financial resources. Indeed, CSO play a major role in the struggle for self-determination and in resisting Israel's colonial oppression. Palestinian CSOs work to oppose Israel's system of domination over the Palestinian people, by empowering Palestinian rights-holders, building resilience, exposing the nature of the colonial-apartheid regime's policies, and pursuing accountability. Therefore, the targets of delegitimization and defunding campaigns are those Palestinian CSOs that promote a rights-based approach in pursuit of Palestinian self-determination, because they present a threat to the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime and its founding racist Zionist ideology.

Successive Israeli governments have therefore lobbied the international donor community to impose **unacceptable and politically-motivated funding conditions** on Palestinian CSOs, **constraining their work** to certain subject matters (such as forbidding the term Nakba or its commemoration, prohibiting activities supporting the right to return), to defined geographical areas, and/or specific groups and forcing them to abide by the donor terminology and methodology. For example, CSOs and projects that support the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS), as a legitimate form of resistance, increasingly find themselves

rejected for funding. This policy **indicates donors' acceptance of Israel's criminalization of BDS**, ignoring the reaffirmation of many domestic and regional courts that boycott is a legitimate form of expression, protected by freedom of speech.

Delegitimization campaigns, against Palestinian CSOs that offer effective and accurate criticism of Israeli crimes, have thus resulted in the international donor community's imposition of conditional clauses in their funding contracts. While it is not unusual in the non-profit sector to impose conditions when issuing funds, these highly restrictive conditions essentially and deliberately ignore the legal and political context of Palestine, punish political engagement, criminalize Palestinian resistance and contradict international law. Indeed, the **EU policy, following the US approach, designates the majority of Palestinian political parties as terrorist entities, and places them on the EU-sanctions list. This demonstrates that Israeli and European policies work in tandem to marginalize Palestinian rights and de-politicize Palestinian civil society's work**. By negating the rights of Palestinians, and further decontextualizing the Palestinian struggle for liberation, it is not surprising that the issue of Palestine and the Palestinian people is oftentimes reduced to a humanitarian problem.

While for many years Israel has shut down Palestinian CSOs based on alleged political affiliation**, recent changes in the policies of international** donors have prompted an even more profound suppression of Palestinian civil society. As a result of these changes, **Palestinian organizations struggle to receive international support and protection.** Israel's designation of 6 Palestinian human rights organizations as "terrorist entities", followed by raids and forceful closures of their offices, reflects the **emboldening effect that restrictive policies and practices of the international donor community,** especially those of the EU and its member states, have had on Israel's suppression of Palestinian civil society.

Though officially rejected by the EU and many of its member states, the terror designation has had a significant impact on the 6 designated Palestinian organizations, with a general reduction of their existing and future funding, which resulted in significant decrease in their staff, some of whom experienced arbitrary detention and Israeli-imposed travel restrictions. While no evidence was presented by Israel to substantiate its allegations, and despite US intelligence's inability to corroborate them, **several EU member states have withdrawn their funding to these organizations.**

The years of abuse of global counter-terrorism regulations have paved the way for the recent **announcements of funding suspension by several European donors and the EU itself**. Most recently, in the wake of the 7 October 2023 operations, several European states, namely Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland, as well as the European Commission, have taken measures to suspend or review their funding to Palestinian civil society organizations due to unfounded allegations of support to "terrorist organizations."

To date, there has never been any credible evidence that the EU or any of its member-state funding has been misused. This has been proven by multiple cases of investigations on humanitarian aid or on civil society funding. Yet, **Palestinian civil society has consistently been subjected to a higher and disproportionate degree of scrutiny** by international donors, aid being rigorously reviewed by donors on a regular basis. One of the "reasons" provided for halting or reviewing funding for Palestinian CSOs include unsubstantiated concerns that grants could be indirectly diverted to Palestinian resistance. Another false justification was that the work of civil society organizations, documenting and denouncing human rights violations and crimes committed by the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime, amounted to antisemitism and to incitement to violence against Israel.

The **conditionalization of aid by the international donor community**, without proper consideration of the specific political context in which its recipient/partner organizations operate, inevitably results in the lack of legal protections, and the shrinking of civic space. **The EU, as an influential actor in the region**, and as one of the most significant financial supporters of Palestinian CSOs, is therefore **failing to uphold its international human rights obligations and those of its member states**. Rather than working to support Palestinians in the pursuit of their rights, the EU has instead made itself complicit in Israel's efforts to oppress Palestinian CSOs, by adopting granting policies and practices that contribute to shrinking civic spaces. Such actions by the EU further reinforce the current imbalance of powers and enable the colonial-apartheid regime imposed by Israel.

Part II: Colonial States' Involvement in Shrinking Spaces outside Palestine

Admist the clear complicity of many western colonial states in the Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip, and the outrageous intended failure of the international community to impose a life-saving immediate and unconditional ceasefire, the role of international solidarity for Palestine and public pressure is extremely vital. As such, it is necessary to ensure that those in solidarity with Palestine are protected and have the space to express their solidarity.

Despite states' international obligations to prevent genocide, and UN experts' statements stressing the necessity to protect and enable human rights defenders' work, especially in the context of genocide in the Gaza Strip, western colonial states continue to implement repressive mechanisms, stifling and cracking down on advocates for Palestine.

The mechanisms - demonstrated in the following section - used by states to stifle and outlaw solidarity include, but are not limited to:

- Governments' **abuse of the police power** to ban and disrupt demonstrations, arrest protesters, and control terminology, prohibiting the use of liberation and solidarity symbols (such as the Palestinian flag, kufiyah, embroidery, etc.) and slogans like "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free"
- Governments' **abuse of the judiciary** to equate international solidarity with support for terrorism and to endorse the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism - which conflates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism
- **Manipulation of citizenship acquisition procedures**, revocation of refugee status and other rights

- **Repression in the academic and cultural sectors**
- **Manipulation of the press** to maintain the traditional media's bias
- **Imposition of the two-state solution**
- **Undermining of international institutions**

A. Colonial Powers' Abuse Of State Police

Although the right to protest is considered fundamental in Europe - with demonstrations as an indicator of a healthy democratic system - several countries such as Germany, France, and Austria, among others, are violating that right by banning demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

A recent report published by the European Civic Forum in April 2024 drew attention to this alarming pattern of restrictions, as at least **12 EU member states have taken disproportionate measures, including the pre-emptive ban of protests**, justified with apparent risk to "public order" and "security." Such cases have been documented in Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Sweden. In several member states, the courts overturned the bans on protests. The crackdown also included the use of excessive force in at least 7 member states, including pepper spray, deployment of police dogs, physical aggression, and kettling tactics, fostering a climate of fear, and violating international human rights standards.

The French authorities, for instance, have imposed severe **restrictions against those in solidarity with Palestinians**. French Interior Minister even decreed a total ban on demonstrations at first, stating that "pro-Palestinian demonstrations must be prohibited because they are likely to generate disturbances to the public order." Later

challenged at the highest administrative French court (Conseil d'Etat/ State Council) on the basis that it **contradicts freedom of expression**, the judges ruled that the pre-emptive ban was illegal, and that local government representatives will make decisions on a "case-by-case basis." Yet, in the span of one week, from 12 to 19 October, the French Police imposed 827 fines on protestors and journalists covering the demonstrations, and conducted 43 arrests of protesters in solidarity with Palestine. This was not the first time civil liberties were restricted to suppress solidarity with Palestine. In 2021, as Israel pummeled Gaza and unleashed violence on Palestinians protesting the evictions and forced displacement of Sheikh Jarrah's residents in Jerusalem, the French state banned pro-Palestine protests. More recently, in March 2024, Rima Hassan, a French-Palestinian candidate on the EU election list for the French left political party La France Insoumise, was summoned by the police for "apology for terrorism," following several complaints by Organisation Juive Européenne, a pro-Israeli lobby group.

Between 7 October and 19 November 2023, German authorities prohibited over 99 Palestine solidarity demonstrations. In addition, a ban was imposed on carrying **Palestinian flags** and many Palestine solidarity demonstrators were temporarily detained and questioned, because they were holding signs that condemned the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Both France and Germany have also arbitrarily denied entry to British-Palestinian surgeon Ghassan Abu Sitta, who was invited to speak about the Israeli ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip and its effects on the healthcare system. The International Centre of Justice for Palestine (ICJP) and the European Legal Support Centre (ELSC) challenged the ban and successfully overturned the Schengen-wide travel ban imposed by Germany.

In the United Kingdom, 9 people were arrested in December 2023 for displaying a banner that read "Globalize the **intifada**" on a building in central London. Police said the arrests had been carried out under the

Public Order Act, which prohibits the display of "any written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting" if the intention, or likely consequence, is to stir up racial hatred. Undeniably, this kind of policy has the detrimental, though intended, effect to demonize solidarity activism with Palestine, and is not new. In 2014, a school boy was referred to counterterrorism police by his teachers for wearing a "Free Palestine" badge, and distributing leaflets that condemned the Israeli attacks against Gaza.

Therefore, control over solidarity, via **censorship and the imposition of a colonial terminology**, is not only imposed by the international donor community on Palestinian CSOs. It also emanates from public authorities outside Palestine, to silence Palestinian rights advocates in their respective countries. The UK Labour Party suspended Member of Parliament Andy Mc Donald for using the phrase "between the river and the sea" in a speech at a demonstration supporting Palestinian rights. Home Secretary Suella Braverman described the latter as "hate marches," and the phrase as an indication of a violent desire for the elimination of Israel.

Other states, such as Austria and the Czech Republic, have banned the slogan "**From the River to the Sea**," on the basis that it is "provocative and exclusionary" for the former, and would be punishable as "terrorist propaganda" for the latter. The German Interior Ministry also criminalized this statement, declaring it to implicitly support the destruction of Israel, though later on two domestic courts ruled that "Stop the genocide in Gaza" and "From the River to the Sea" were lawful slogans, **protected by the right to freedom of expression**.

In the US, the House of Representatives' Resolution 894 of December 2023 condemned the slogan "From the River to the Sea Palestine will be free," and described it as a "rallying cry for the eradication of the State of Israel and the Jewish people."

However, this slogan symbolizes the Palestinian people's unified struggle for liberation from the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime (which extends from the river to the sea and beyond), to fulfill their rights to self-determination and return, on all of historic Palestine; which lies from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. It reaffirms the Palestinian people's rejection of the internationally imposed two-state solution, which, to this day, has not been realized and continues to deny their inalienable rights. It is a call to put an end to Israel's system of domination over the Palestinian people and their national homeland, and ensure that their inalienable rights to self-determination and return are realized. Preventing demonstrations aimed towards such a goal is a clear indication of western states' efforts to uphold Israel's colonial agenda in their own domestic affairs. It also violates their obligations to support peoples' struggle for self-determination and liberation from colonial domination.

B. Colonial Powers Abusing the Judiciary (Conflation Anti-Zionism/Anti-Semitism, Criminalization of BDS)

Purposely used as one of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime's main strategies, the manipulative conflation between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism was encouraged in many western countries, such as the US, Germany, France, or Austria. This was done through the **criminalization of the BDS movement,** despite its recognition by the European Court of Human Rights as a valid and protected form of expression. For instance, the UK Parliament introduced an Anti-BDS Law criminalizing any acts of boycotting, divesting and sanctioning Israel for its crimes, instead associating the Palestinian struggle for liberation with terrorism, and criminalizing actions in solidarity with Palestine.

In Germany, the Bundestag passed a resolution entitled "Resisting the BDS Movement with Determination - Combating Anti-Semitism," in 2019, which led UN Special Procedure mandate-holders to send a

joint communication expressing their concerns about the motion. The UN experts noted that "the **motion sets a worrying trend of unduly limiting the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and of association** in its call for governmental bodies, as well as German states, cities and municipalities and other public actors, to refuse financial support, premises or facilities to projects or events organized by the BDS movement or by groups pursuing its aims. Accordingly, the **motion unduly interferes with the right of people in Germany to engage in political speech**, namely, to express support for the BDS movement."

Furthermore, the conflation between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is facilitated by the endorsement of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, despite being heavily criticized by leading anti-Semitism experts, scholars of Jewish studies and the Holocaust, as well as free speech and anti-racism experts. Indeed, the majority of the "contemporary examples of anti-Semitism" given by the IHRA to support their definition are in fact related to Israel, and not to actual anti-Semitism, hence drafted to obstruct any form of criticism of Israel, as well as to enhance its impunity.

In the US, the House of Representatives' Resolution 894, passed in December 2023, "clearly and firmly states that anti-Zionism is antisemitism" and further characterized the protesters in solidarity with Palestine demanding a ceasefire as "rioters'," alleging that they chant "hateful and vile language amplifying anti-Semitic themes."

Colonial states have therefore been **targeting Palestinian voices**, resorting to **defamatory actions** and attempts to associate and **conflate terrorism, extremism and anti-Semitism with Palestine solidarity** activism.

C. Colonial Powers' Abuse of Citizenship and Immigration Procedures

The conflation between solidarity with Palestine and support for terrorism and anti-Semitism has also been used to **blackmail vulnerable individuals**, such as asylum seekers and refugees in some European countries, forcing them to choose between their principled support for Palestine and their legal situation in the host country. The **case of Germany** illustrates exactly such intimidation techniques.

The German's Bundestag has been discussing **two draft laws that aim at making citizenship conditional on recognizing Israel's right to exist**, and imposing harsher penalties for alleged anti-Semitic expression. These can be further used as means to ban support for Palestinian rights and ban criticism of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime. In addition, such federal draft laws would change the criminal code on "combating anti-Semitism, terror, hatred and incitement," deport or end "the residence, and prevent the naturalization of "anti-Semitic" foreigners." **If approved, not only will an alleged "anti-Semitic crime" result in expulsion of the alleged perpetrator,** but it will also result in a conviction leading to "a prison sentence of at least six months and to the **denial or loss of humanitarian protection** in Germany."

For example, since July 2023, a Palestinian refugee from Syria risks losing his refugee status, and being banned from work and travel, because Germany claimed his activism for Palestine with Samidoun, a German-Palestinians advocacy group, makes him an "extremist." Although Germany has not been able to prove such allegations, Berlin used the Israeli designation of Samidoun as a terrorist group and a "direct offshoot of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)," because it organized "anti-Israel demonstrations and campaigns." Once again, **colonial states blindly and completely rely on Israeli unfounded allegations to continue their crackdown on civil society**.

There are unfortunately many more instances of Germany's manipulation of the law to unduly target Palestinian individuals and supporters. In a citizenship application, a Palestinian living in Germany was for example asked about their opinions on the Middle East conflict: "Due to the fact that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples do not [have] a peaceful co-existence, with regard to Israel's special relationship with Germany, I would like to ask you where you stand on this. Please give a short written statement."

Finally, two Palestinian brothers in medical school are facing deportation after their request to extend their visas was denied. German authorities explained this denial with their participation in events held by PalMed (a humanitarian organization of medical professionals), in conferences organized by the Palestinian Return Centre, as well as their social media posts. In a very contradictory manner, one brother was told that being a long-term member of PalMed was evidence of opposing the liberal democratic order, and showed sympathy for Hamas. The other, however, was told that membership in PalMed could not be used as evidence of support for Hamas. Despite this antipodal analysis of membership with PalMed, both brothers are facing deportation; **demonstrating Germany's willingness to silence Palestinian voices, even when it means resorting to erratic and inconsistent justifications**.

According to a lawyer specialized in this field, courts are likely to override these unfounded allegations made by security and migration agencies. However, it will take years and will cause major difficulties to the individuals accused, such as deportation, prohibitions to work, and other infringements on civil liberties. Further, such reprisals against individuals speaking out for Palestinian rights have the intended goal and effect of deterring others from expressing their solidarity with Palestine.

D. Colonial Powers' Repression in the Academic and Cultural Sectors

Repression against Palestinian solidarity does not only take place within the scope of civil society spaces and domestic affairs departments, by means of demonstration bans or harder immigration procedures, it is also embedded in many other sectors, such as the educational or cultural fields.

At the level of secondary education, incidents of repression can be seen through **manipulation of the domestic education curriculum, as well as through the imposition of bans on Palestinian symbols in schools.** For instance, Berlin Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family, sent a letter to all Berlin school authorities and supervisors ordering them to ban students from wearing kufiyah, and other Palestinian symbols or slogans, such as "Free Palestine." School authorities were asked to notify the police of any violations of this ban, and in at least one instance, a school director was suspended for refusing to comply.

The fact that Germany's education system has been pushing the Israeli colonial narrative, hostile to Palestinian identity and history, can be dated back to decades ago. For example, the bilateral German-Israeli Textbook Commission, established in 1970, was revived in 2010 to review German textbooks. Considered "shortfalls," images of Israeli soldiers pointing weapons at Palestinians, imposing barricades, and guarding checkpoints were edited because "they tend to present Palestinians as victims and Israelis as the perpetrators" and "Israel usually comes out badly." Additionally, a motion claiming to confront anti-Semitic narratives within the educational framework, was passed in February 2024. In reality, it advocates for the use of a brochure titled "The Myth of Israel #1948" in secondary schools of Berlin's neighborhood Neukolln, known for its Arab and Turk populations, which denies the existence of the Nakba in 1948, among other **distortions of historical facts**.

At the university level, an increasing number of restrictions on campuses, targeting student activists, teachers or the curriculum itself, was reported in the US and in Europe. In June 2023, the European Legal Support Center (ELSC) published a **report detailing the adverse effects of adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, as its use engendered the cancellation of events on Palestine**, as well as the subjection of staff and students to investigations and, in some cases, disciplinary hearings.

The increasing number of encampments on American universities' campuses, to demand an end to complicity in Israel's international crimes, and the repression they face, illustrate further the shrinking of spaces for Palestinian rights activists in western colonial states. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Irene Khan, stated that "the way academic freedom in the United States is being restricted is infringing on people's rights to protest over the on-going war and occupation." According to Khan, the campus-wide crackdown on students protesting Israel's colonial-apartheid regime puts the question of freedom of expression worldwide in the spotlight, as "**the Gaza crisis is truly becoming a global crisis of freedom of expression**." Once more, both university administrations and police forces, with the support of the US administration, have utilized the conflation of criticism of Israeli policies or defense of Palestinian rights with anti-Semitism, in order to suppress the movement's call for an end to complicity.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Netanyahu himself, along with the White House, have called for these protests to be shut down, indicating their recognition and fear of the potential influence, impact, and power student movements have to bring about change. So, it comes as no surprise that suppressive measures have been used to demonize these actions and those implementing them. Unfounded and dubious allegations that the encampments are illegal, anti-Semitic, violent and unsafe, have led to

the forceful dismantlement of the majority of university encampments, with the participants being arrested or threatened with arrests, and potentially facing "criminal" charges, besides being administratively sanctioned. It must be reiterated that **what is happening globally across university campuses is not criminal, anti-Semitic or inciting violence and hatred**, but rather the expression of the will of the masses opposing and rejecting colonial domination, oppression and complicity.

It is worth noting how **opposition to criticism of Israel** has not been on the grounds that such criticism is factually inaccurate, but **merely because it upsets or generates division**. For instance, Stella Maris, the rector at St. Andrews University, UK, faced calls to either apologize or resign, because she referred to Israel's policies as genocidal and amounting to apartheid. Her detractors accused her of "creating division and fostering hate," and the university's response was to acknowledge "distress and anger" caused to "pro-Israel students" by her statements.

Repression of free speech on Palestine in universities is very similar to the restrictions endured by Palestinian civil society organizations (see Part I), in the sense that it relies on political blackmail through conditional funding. **Donors have effectively threatened to withdraw funds to universities which do not adhere to Israeli talking points**, encouraged by the Israeli government itself, which openly supports and discusses this tactic in the Israeli press. Indeed, an Israeli newspaper reported that the Israeli Foreign and the Diaspora Affairs ministries "have formulated an action plan aimed at inflicting economic and employment consequences" in the hope that "students will struggle to find employment in the US, and will pay a significant economic price for their conduct." Hence, the Chair of the World Zionist Organization has called for Jewish donors to stop funding academic institutions that "promote hatred of Jews on their territory", an odd formulation that confirms that this crackdown on academic freedom is more about Israel than about actual anti-Semitism. Hedge fund manager William Ackman also demanded that Harvard University publish lists of

students who are members of Palestine solidarity groups to ensure he and others do not "inadvertently hire any of their members." The Citadel CEO, Kenneth Griffin, who donated $300 million to Harvard in 2023, similarly required that the university "denounce its students who are criticizing Israel."

These incidents of repression illustrate the **importance of publicly-funded education to prevent wealthy individuals and donors from purchasing repression of speech and solidarity**. According to the Times Higher Education, US higher education institutions are now having an "unprecedented moment of reflection on how dependent they have become on the need to obey private funders."

The French authorities, believing support for Palestine is an American import, a trend for students to jump on, have followed the US repressive approach. Refusing to see that it is the genocide in Gaza that is pushing people to action, police violently cleared protest camps at Sciences Po, the Sorbonne, and other universities; while students reported being threatened with suspensions. Further, Île-de-France regional president Valérie Pécresse decided to withdraw Sciences Po's funding.

Finally, in the **art sector**, individuals speaking out for Palestine, whether in cultural events or on their social media publications, also face various restrictions and forms of repression. This includes but is not limited to: smear campaigns against individuals and groups, online de-platforming, withdrawal of use of venues, cancellations of events, and revoking of invitations. In Germany alone, **139 cases of cultural repressions** (October 7th- January 31st) were documented. In December 2023, the Berlin Senate Cultural Administration even attempted to condition funding to the signature of an "antisemitism clause", which used the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, though mounting pressure from artists and cultural workers compelled the Senate to drop the clause one month after its introduction.

E. Colonial Manipulation of the Western Press

The Israeli genocidal war against Gaza since October 2023 has exposed once again the biased stance **taken by the global Western press**. The Israeli colonial-apartheid regime has imposed direct censorship on foreign journalists, using a memo order banning media agencies from reporting "without the prior approval of its propaganda unit and controlling the subjects they are allowed to address while covering its aggression against the Gaza Strip." The new Israeli law that permits the banning of foreign news networks, including Al Jazeera, shows that an additional step has been taken to achieve Israel's strategy of controlling the narrative and silencing journalists. The direct targeting of journalists is also part of this silencing strategy, with the Gaza Strip accounting for 75 percent of the journalists killed in 2023. As of 26 April 2024, the Committee to Protect Journalists has documented 97 journalists and media workers killed, 16 injured, 4 missing and 25 arrested, as well as multiple assaults, threats, cyberattacks, censorship, and killings of family members.

Furthermore, a study revealed in 2011 that, in the UK, "Israelis are quoted and speak in interviews over twice as much as Palestinians, and there are major differences in the language used" in respective situations. More recently, the Center for Media Monitoring analyzed around 180,000 video clips from 7 UK broadcasters and 3 international broadcasters, as well as about 26,000 news articles from 28 British media websites, to **assess whether or not the public was informed responsibly**. In line with the 2011 findings, the study concluded that **"Israeli narratives, voices and grievances were favored over Palestinian voices, narratives and grievances in the coverage**." It also exposed various Islamophobic aspects of the coverage, for instance in framing protests and support of Palestine and Palestinians as inherently dangerous and analogous to "a terror threat" because of the presence of Muslim individuals among them. Such practices, akin to racial profiling, have been exposed in the framework of the adoption

of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, which "can be used to police an expanded variety of racialized figures, by making suspect adherence to the anti-racist tradition of anti-Zionism […] in some marginalized communities and leftist movements in Europe."

Further, the study determined that many news outlets have opted to solely present the Israeli colonial perspective, often with significant flaws in basic fact-checking and verification. This is confirmed by the recent scandals that occurred after journalists from the New York Times and CNN **published misleading and factually incorrect reports** on sexual violence committed on 7 October by Hamas members, "relying on non-credible witnesses with undisclosed ties to the Israeli government." The alleged systematic sexual violence these papers claimed to have exposed is used to justify Israeli violations of all the rules and principles of every branch of international law, and is one example of the demonization of Palestinians at the hands of traditional media. In contrast, the report by UN experts on human rights violations against Palestinian women and girls in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank has received little western press coverage. Worse, the few newspapers that relayed the information seem to be more interested in the "credibility of the claims" than in the claims themselves, contrary to the way they handled the allegations of sexual violence against Israeli women.

Social media platforms are not exempt from western censorship and manipulation of content related to Palestine. Indeed, a recent paper entitled "Youtube's Impact on Palestinian Digital Rights during the War on Gaza" concluded that YouTube's community guidelines do not protect freedom of expression, and actually hinder the sharing of information about Palestinians lives. Another analysis came to a similar conclusion with respect to Instagram and Facebook, drawing attention to Meta's systemic censorship of Palestine content.

Dehumanization is a necessary step in the commission of colonization,

apartheid and genocide. Such unprofessional and unethical journalism participates in the dehumanization of Palestinians, and has enabled and further maintained the ongoing colonial domination of the Palestinian people and the killing of thousands of Palestinians.

F. Colonial Powers' Obsession with the Two-State Solution

Western colonial powers' blind, unrealistic, but unwavering support, for the so-called "two-state solution," has allowed the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime to prosper. **Their insistence to impose such rhetoric, approach and strategy on the Palestinian people, in contradiction with their right to self-determination, has been exposed for years, but remains unchanged**. Based on this two-state solution framework, the donor community of western states for instance imposes conditions on Palestinian organizations that violate the principles of international law and Palestinian rights. Further, these conditions completely disregard the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime's wider system and the reality on the ground. The two-state approach, which is based on the pre-1967 borders, enables donors to restrict grants and projects to certain geographical areas, or specific groups; reinforcing Israeli fragmentation of Palestinian land, people and identity. **The two-state solution therefore shapes funding agreements and support to Palestinian civil society in a way that is completely at odds with the reality on the ground.**

The clear opposition to a Palestinian State, recently expressed by the current Israeli Prime Minister, with the backing of Israeli Knesset members, did not impact western states' continuous and uncritical promotion of the two-state solution. On the contrary, the US recently vetoed a widely-backed resolution that would have paved the way for full UN membership for Palestine, while ironically stating that this veto does not reflect opposition to Palestinian statehood.

This absurd, unreasonable and hypocritical support for a not-feasible, nor desired solution, has enabled Israel's expansion of its colonial enterprise, continuously and strategically increasing the number of colonies and colonizers in what the international community persists in calling the "occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)," although the West Bank is being in fact colonized, and arguably de facto annexed. **Years of emphasis on the two-state solution, as a frame for the final solution, have actually prevailed over the Palestinian people's rights**, and been used as a bargaining chip to bring Palestinians in line with colonial agendas. In addition to fragmenting the Palestinian land, it has also been manipulated to fragment the Palestinian people, excluding Palestinians outside of the "jurisdiction" of the Palestinian Authority, especially those living in exile, or in 1948 Palestine. Palestinians with Israeli citizenship effectively face a plethora of institutionalized discriminatory laws, policies and practices. In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime plans for the day after its genocidal war, with the support of its colonial allies, in a joint and deliberate attempt to continue to deny the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Nevertheless, Palestinians, wherever they reside, are the only holders of the right to self-determination, which comprises defining the future of Palestine, including the Gaza Strip.

G. Delegitimization Campaigns against International Institutions

States, UN bodies and international organizations critical of Israeli colonial policies are also silenced by Israeli strategies of repression. Indeed, UN agencies (UNRWA, OCHA, OHCHR), but also UN Special Procedures' mandates holders, such as the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory Occupied since 1967, as well as UN Commission of Inquiry, and international judicial mechanisms like the ICJ and the ICC, have all been the targets of

Israeli-led attacks, aimed at silencing their criticism and calls for an end to Israel's impunity.

Examples of these Israeli strategies of repression can be found in the consistent denial of entry to all the Special Rapporteurs on the oPt since 2008, and to other Special Rapporteurs such as the Special Rapporteurs on Torture and other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. More recently, and in the midst of an imminent famine, Israel blocked the Commissioner-General of UNRWA from entering Gaza, and has refused to grant visas or access to other UN and international organizations' workers, such as the employees of OHCHR or Human Rights Watch. **Instead of punishing Israel for obstructing international organizations' work,** western colonial states have actually supported the activation of a maritime humanitarian corridor – completely ignoring the existence of the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza, and the 6 other land checkpoints between 1948 Palestine and Gaza.

Further, the US withdrawal from UNESCO after Palestine was admitted as a member-state illustrates how Israeli defamation campaigns against the UN led its main ally to follow suit. The continuous boycott, by most western states, of Item 7 ("Human rights Situation in Palestine and other Occupied Arab Territories") at the Human Rights Council, exemplifies further the effect of Israeli delegitimization campaigns on international institutions. Moreover, it **perpetuates impunity** for the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime's violations, and the **double standards** western states are willing to hold to shield it from accountability.

Not only do these actions constitute **blatant assault on the UN**, and the proper functioning of its mechanisms, they also **encourage other states' defiance towards UN institutions**, using baseless Israeli arguments of "incompetence, anti-Semitism, or biased" organizations. As a result, these institutions have been unable and unwilling to prevent the genocide and ongoing mass forced displacement perpetrated by the

Israeli colonial-apartheid regime in the Gaza Strip, with the financial, military and diplomatic support of western colonial states. **Such unwillingness and incapacity to act is jeopardizing the credibility of international law itself**, not only with respect to its application to the Palestinian case, but in general **as the applicable legal framework in today's world order**, and is calling into **question the legitimacy of the UN** as a competent and credible system to enforce it.

Conclusion

The engineering and imposition of shrinking spaces by the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime, in its repression of Palestinian resistance, is no different than other colonial enterprises throughout history. A core feature of colonialism is that the colonized population is prevented from enjoying the same liberties enjoyed by the colonizing society. Calls for freedom and self-determination, or even for the very right of a colonized people to exist, are construed by the colonial regime as existential threats.

The colonizer thus strategically plans and works to delegitimize, silence, criminalize and violently repress the voices articulating the claims to legitimate resistance in pursuit of self-determination. Israel's attacks on Palestinian civil society should be understood as yet another example of this colonial logic. By suppressing Palestinian CSOs' work, along with that of human rights defenders, Israel seeks to further entrench the colonial-apartheid reality it has created, and to quash any and all effective opposition to such a reality.

Colonial states have consistently endorsed and advanced Israel's colonial agenda. They have been **exerting their foreign domination and manipulating international platforms**, such as the League of Nations and the UN, to make decisions for and about the Palestinian people. As such, their machinations over the last century constitute complicity in the Ongoing Nakba against the Palestinian people. Not only do their decisions and actions contradict international law, as they completely ignore the Palestinian people's inalienable rights to self-determination and return, they are also designed to embolden, protect and provide impunity for their ally - the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime.

Further, **the current *carte blanche* they have given to Israel in its genocidal war against the Gaza Strip has rendered them not only complicit of its international crimes**, but also active agents of the genocide, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of the Palestinian people.

Despite states' international obligations to prevent genocide, and UN experts' statements stressing the necessity to protect and enable human rights defenders' work, especially in the context of genocide in the Gaza Strip, western colonial states continue to implement repressive mechanisms, stifling and cracking down on advocates for Palestine.