THE OCCUPIED JAWLAN

AN ONLINE OPEN CURRICULUM

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Abstract

The paper discusses an online curriculum designed to foster a critical understanding of the occupied Jawlan (Golan Heights). Following the Israeli occupation of most of the Syrian Golan Heights in 1967, the remnant Jawlani population has lived with, and often resisted, enduring forms of domination. The online, bilingual curriculum offers a flexible platform for learning activities in university courses, community workshops and popular education events. It adopts a comparative lens to understand the historical geography of the Jawlani people in relation to other 'permanent minorities' created through colonial violence. It adopts the pedagogic idea of co-learning, framed as *mujaawarah* by the Palestinian educationalist, Munir Fasheh. This prioritises collaborative learning rooted in everyday life experiences.

Executive Summary

This paper presents an online curriculum designed to foster a critical understanding of the occupied Jawlan/Golan. Following the Israeli occupation of most of the Syrian Golan Heights in 1967, the remnant Jawlani (Arab) population has lived with, and often resisted, enduring forms of political, economic and cultural domination.

The curriculum is one outcome of a collaborative research project, 'Mapping Memories of Resistance: The Untold Story of the Occupation of the Golan Heights', documenting the experiences of Jawlanis, particularly since Israel's annexation of the territory in 1981. LSE, Birzeit University and Al-Marsad: Arab Human Rights Centre in the Golan Heights, have developed the bilingual curriculum as a flexible platform for learning activities in university courses, community workshops and popular education events. The course adopts a comparative lens to understand the historical geography of the Jawlani people in relation to other 'permanent minorities' created through colonial violence. It adopts the pedagogic idea of co-learning, framed as *mujaawarah* by the Palestinian educationalist, Munir Fasheh. This prioritises collaborative learning rooted in everyday life experiences, which for the Jawlanis invites dialogue about the conditions and effects of systemic discrimination.

الملخص التنفيذي

تقدم هذه الورقة منهاجًا رقميًا (عبر الانترنت) مصممًا لتعزيز الفهم النقدي حول الجولان المحتل. عقب الاحتلال الإسرائيلي لغالبية مرتفعات الجولان السوري عام ١٩٦٧، عاش بقية السكان الجولانيون العرب تحت هيمنة سياسية واقتصادية وثقافية التي قاوموها في كثير من الأحيان.

يعد هذا المنهاج أحد مخرجات مشروع البحث التشاركي «توثيق ذاكرة المقاومة: القصة الغير محكية لاحتلال مرتفعات الجولان». والذي فيه يتم توثيق تجربة الجولانيين، وبشكل خاص الفترة التي أعقبت الضم الإسرائيلي لمناطق الجولان عام ١٩٨١. قامت كل من جامعة LSE وجامعة بيرزيت والمرصد (مركز حقوق الإنسان في مرتفعات الجولان)، بتطوير منهج ثنائي اللغة كمنصة مرنة للتعليم ضمن مقررات تعليمية جامعية، وفي ورش عمل مجتمعية ومناسبات تعليمية شعبية. يتبنى المقرر الدراسي التوجه المقارن لفهم الجغرافية التاريخية للسكان الجولانيين من خلال مقاربتها بتجارب «الأقليات الدائمة» التي نشأت من خلال العنف الاستعماري. يتبنى المنهاج أفكارًا تربوية نقدية حول فكرة التعلم المشترك، والتي تتمثل بمفهوم «المجاورة» الذي وضعها التربوي الفلسطيني منير فاشة. وهذا يعطي الأولوية للتعلم التشاركي المتجذر في تجارب الحياة اليومية، والتي تدعو لإجراء حوار حول ظروف وآثار التمييز الممنهج من قبل الجولانيين.

Introduction

The occupied *Jawlan* (الجولان)/Golan is a Syrian territory occupied and ruled by Israel since the 1967 Arab–Israeli war. It comprises the western two-thirds (1200 square kilometres) of the Golan Heights. As a result of the 1967 war, 127,000 inhabitants (95 percent of the population in the occupied territory) fled or were expelled by the Israeli military, while depopulated Syrian villages were bulldozed. Only a small number of mostly Druze communities, living in the northern borderlands, were allowed to remain. This Jawlani population, now comprising almost 25,000 inhabitants, has undergone decades of political exclusion and economic de-development as a result of Israeli occupation. Ongoing settler colonisation has deepened Israeli control of land and resources, consolidated by the 1981 Golan Law which effectively annexed the territory, replacing military rule with Israeli civil jurisdiction and administration.[1]

The 1981 annexation sparked a Jawlani resistance movement deploying diverse forms of political opposition, including a general strike, known in Arabic as *aldrāb alkabir* (الاضراب الكبير), communal rejection of Israeli citizenship and, more recently, boycotts of Israeli local elections and protests against Israeli wind farm development.[2] This Jawlani struggle for self-determination has interacted with Palestinian and Syrian political practices, resulting in mutual influence. For example, Jawlanis have adopted, alongside Palestinians, the idea of *sumud* (صمود), meaning 'steadfastness', as a collective strategy of nonviolent resistance and benefited from legal advice on how to protect their lands from confiscation. This is most evident in the concerted expansion, over decades, of Jawlani orchards, as supported by agricultural cooperatives and collective water infrastructure – a land-based attachment is central to the reproduction of Jawlani political subjectivity.[3] However, the Jawlani uprising has received less popular and scholarly attention than the Palestinian liberation movement. Most of the mainstream Anglophone discourse on the Golan Heights has tended to analyse the region through the lens of international relations, geopolitics and security studies. This top-down colonial perspective bypasses the everyday annexation faced by Jawlanis, whose local voices are rarely listened to. It has also restricted pedagogic scope for learning in depth about the Jawlan, particularly teaching the historical geography of Jawlani lives and experiences.

This paper discusses an online curriculum designed to foster a critical understanding on the occupied Jawlan/Golan. The curriculum is one outcome of a research project, 'Mapping Memories of Resistance: The Untold Story of the Occupation of the Golan Heights', documenting Jawlani experiences of living with, and resisting, enduring forms of political, socio-economic and cultural domination. The project forms part of the Aca-

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[1] The UN Security Council declared the Golan Heights Law 'null and void and without international legal effect': UN Security Council Resolution 497. Available at: https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/RES/497(1981) (accessed 29 October 2021).

[2] Munir Fakher Eldin, 'Power, Politics and Community: Resistance Dynamics in the occupied Golan', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 49/1 (2019): 77–92. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2019.49.1.77 (accessed 29 October 2021).

[3] Michael Mason and Muna Dajani, 'A Political Ontology of Land: Rooting Syrian Identity in the occupied Golan Heights', *Antipode* 51/1 (2019): 187–206. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12412 (accessed 29 October 2021).

demic Collaboration with Arab Universities Programme, run by the LSE Middle East Centre and funded by the Emirates Foundation. Running from September 2018 to April 2021, the project was a collaboration between the Department of Geography and Environment at LSE, the Israeli Studies MA programme at Birzeit University in Palestine, and Al-Marsad Arab Human Rights Centre in the Golan Heights. Development of the online curriculum was led by Dr Omar Imseeh Tesdell in the Department of Geography at Birzeit University, with web design and construction undertaken by Mayar Alshibtini, Tayeb Akel and Jumanah Abbas. Alongside, and supporting the curriculum, are two other outputs from the collaboration project:

- the building of an online public database containing primary sources on the Jawlan since 1967, including archival material, interviews, posters, photographs and newspaper articles: see http://golan1982.info/en/about-us-3/

- the publication of a collaborative volume on politics and culture in the Jawlan since 1981, featuring contributions from Jawlani and Palestinian researchers, activists, artists and lawyers: see Muna Dajani, Munir Fakher Eldin and Michael Mason (eds) *The Untold Story of the Golan Heights: Occupation, Colonisation and Jawlani Resistance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022)

While initially designed as a master's level course for Birzeit University on the historical geography of the Jawlan since 1967, the draft curriculum has evolved into a wider online platform for teaching about, and with, the Jawlani people. Moreover, the curriculum adopts a comparative lens: to understand the experience of Jawlani communities in relation to other groups created as 'permanent minorities'[4] by settler colonial states – not just other non-Jewish populations subject to Israeli settler colonisation, as found in the Naqab, Galilee and occupied Palestinian territory,[5] but also other peoples across the world historically marginalised by the violent imprint of settler colonialism.[6] At the same time, these peoples survive, sharing lives and seeking forms of flourishing that are not simply integrative to the settler colony. We adopt, therefore, a pedagogic approach associated with critical and liberating dialogue, and in particular the idea of co-learning – *mujaawarah* (مجاورة) – developed by the Palestinian educationalist, Munir Fasheh.[7] As we note in Section III below, this invites collaborative learning rooted in the lived realities of a people, which for the Jawlani people means critical dialogue about the conditions and effects of systemic discrimination. In the next section (Section II), we first provide historical context to the occupation and settler colonisation of the Jawlan/Golan.

[4] Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2020).

[5] Muna Dajani, 'Thirsty Water Carriers: The Production of Uneven Waterscapes in Sahl al-Battuf', *Contemporary Levant* 5/2 (2020): 97–112. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/20581831.2020.1820147 (accessed 29 October 2021); Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917-2017* (New York: Macmillan, 2020); Emily McKee, *Dwelling in Conflict: Negev Landscapes and the Boundaries of Belonging* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[6] For example: Candace Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Futures: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai'i* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021); Mahmood Mamdani, 'Settler Colonialism: Then and Now', *Critical Inquiry* 41/3 (2015): 596–614. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1086/680088 (accessed 29 October 2021); Deborah A. Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Sovereignty, Witnessing, Repair* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

[7] See: http://mujaawarah.org/en/tag/munir-fasheh/ (accessed 29 October 2021).

II: Israel's Occupation and Settler Colonisation in the Jawlan

The Arab–Israeli War on 5–10 June 1967, commemorated annually both by Palestinians and Jawlanis as a 'setback' – *naksa* (النكسة), resulted in the displacement of one million Palestinians as Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; with 127,000 Syrians also displaced as Israel occupied the bulk of the Syrian Golan Heights on the last two days of the war (along with the Egyptian Sinai). An important precursor for the Israeli attack in the Golan was almost two decades of tension and clashes between Israel and Syria over demilitarised territory between the international border (delimited by British and French colonial powers in 1923) and the armistice line agreed between Syria and Israel in June 1949 following the 1948-49 Arab–Israeli War. It is accepted even by Israeli historians that, in contravention of the armistice agreement, Israeli actions from 1949 to take *de facto* control over most of the demilitarised zones, appropriate land and water resources, and initiate border clashes with Syria were instrumental in representing the Golan as a source of military threat to Israel.[8]

Shortly after the 1967 war, depopulated Syrian villages and farms were systematically demolished under the supervision of the Israel Land Administration. According to historical research by Al-Marsad – Arab Human Rights Centre in the Golan Heights, 169 villages and 171 farms were destroyed following the evacuation and forced displacement of Syrian residents.[9]

Israel decreed that the occupied Golan Heights was a closed military zone, with Military Order No. 57, issued in September 1967, banning those forcibly displaced from returning to their homes. Strict restrictions on movement and communication remained, with occasional family reunifications and visits at the discretion of military authorities.[10] The small remnant population of indigenous inhabitants at the end of June 1967 lived mostly in five Druze villages clustered in the northern foothills of Jabal al-Shaykh (Mount Hermon) and the Alawite village of Ghajar. One of the Druze villages, Shaita, was razed by the Israeli military in 1970, although the four other Druze villages – Majdal Shams, Masʿada, Buqʿatha and ʿEin Qiniya – survived, growing from a post-occupation population of 5,500 to their current population of 25,000 residents.

Israel's military occupation in the Golan Heights essentially employed the same techniques of coercive control and setter colonisation as within occupied Palestinian territory. This settler colonial regime executes a spatial Judaisation in which the control of land institutionalises differential social relations over property, citizenship, resource extraction

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[8] For example: Yigal Kipnis, *The Golan Heights: Political History, Settlement and Geography since 1949* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 18–51.

[9] Nazeh Brik, 'Map of Syrian villages and farms destroyed by Israel, and the Israeli settlements built in their place, in the occupied Syrian Golan', *Al-Marsad*, n.d. Available at: https://golan-marsad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Map-english-24.1-2.compressed.pdf (accessed 29 October 2021).

[10] Hannah Russell, 'Breaking Down the Fence: Addressing the Illegality of Family Separation in the occupied Syrian Golan', in Al-Marsad (ed.), *The Forgotten Occupation: Life in the Syrian Golan after 50 Years of Occupation* (Majdal Shams: Al-Marsad – Arab Human Rights Centre in the Golan Heights, 2018), pp. 28–37.

and cultural production.[11] The discriminatory consequences of this field of sovereign power are evident in the conflation of state interests with those of Jewish society. The extensive appropriation of land and other natural resources and other assets by state and para-statal agencies (e.g. the Jewish National Fund, the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Federation) violates the international humanitarian norm that an occupied population retains sovereignty over its natural resources.[12] For example, Military Order No. 120 of 1968 gave the Israeli state full ownership of water resources in the Golan Heights, which parallels Military Orders 92 (1967) and 158 (1967), giving Israeli military authorities complete control over the water resources of the West Bank and Gaza. In both occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories, numerous military and other legal orders were issued to confiscate lands declaring to be 'state land', including the use of Ottoman land law to seize land declared to be uncultivated for three years.[13] As this law was also used against Palestinian citizens of Israel, the remaining Jawlanis in the occupied Syrian Golan contacted friends and extended families living in Palestinian villages inside Israel, gathering advice on how to he protect of land and water resources from state confiscation.[14] This advice was instrumental in the coordinated reclamation of land and expansion of orchards, repeated as a mode community-led resistance after the effective annexation of the Golan Heights in 1981.[15]

Jewish settlement of the Golan Heights was initially used by Israel as means of holding onto captured Syrian territory until the negotiation of a peace treaty, though settlement-building accelerated and became more permanent after the 1973 Arab–Israeli War.[16] Under military rule (1967–81), the first Israeli settlements were defensively dispersed across occupied Syrian territory, encouraged by state support for Jewish settlements and infrastructure development, although the number of Jewish settlers fell short of settlement planning targets.[17] For both the Israeli state and the Jewish settlement movement, colonisation of the West Bank has historically been a greater priority, reflected in the much larger scale of settlement activity and the wholesale, unceasing oppression of Palestinians.[18] From December 1981, the unilateral move by Israel to enforce Israeli civil law and administration led to renewed interest in the settlement-led economic development

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[11] Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*, pp. 288–94.

[12] Michael Mason, 'The Application of Warfare Ecology to Belligerent Occupations' in G.E. Machlis et al. (eds), *Warfare Ecology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 155–73.

[13] Raja Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law: Israel and the West Bank* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1988), pp. 22–33.

[14] Muna Dajani, Alaa Iktash, Bassel Rizqallah and Diaa Ali Hroub, 'Palestine is Southern Syria: On Palestinian solidarity with Jawlani communities', *Palestine In-Between*, 2021, p. 2. Available at: https://palestineinbetween.com/Palestine-is-southern-Syria (accessed 29 October 2021).

[15] Mason and Dajani, 'A Political Ontology of Land', pp. 194–8.

[16] Kipnis, *The Golan Heights*, pp. 161–79; Moriel Ram, 'Colonial Conquests, Encampments, and the Politics of Normalization: The Case of the Golan Heights and Northern Cyprus', *Political Geography* 47 (July 2015), pp. 21–32.

[17] Kipnis, *The Golan Heights*, p. 144.

[18] For a comparison with the West Bank and Gaza, see: Neve Gordon and Moriel Ram, 'Ethnic Cleansing and the Formation of Settler Colonial Geographies', *Political Geography* 53 (2016), pp. 20–9. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.01.010 (accessed 29 October 2021).

in the Golan. Settlement expansion continued throughout the decades following annexation through investment in industrialised agriculture, tourism and industry, but it was to the detriment of the Jawlani local economy that was still agriculture focused, and which faced discrimination in access to land, water and markets. Following 2011, Israel also took advantage of the ongoing Syrian civil war and used the Jawlan as a base for arming rebel groups, bolstering the Jawlani divide by pushing for more Israelification policies like Israeli municipal elections and enlisting youth for civic service. US recognition in March 2019 of the occupied Golan Heights as sovereign Israeli territory encouraged government plans to deepen its social and economic integration within Israel. It also emboldened Benjamin Netanyahu to revive plans for the wholesale annexation of the Jordan Valley and other settlement complexes in the West Bank, formalising the 'facts on the ground' of incremental de facto annexation. This was articulated in the so-called Trump Peace Plan in January 2020, displaced at least in the medium-term by the normalisation agreements (the Abraham Accords) in September 2020 between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain.

Annexation of the Jordan Valley had first been suggested in the 1967 Allon Plan, which also proposed a Druze state in the occupied Golan Heights as a buffer territory between Israel, Syria and Jordan. Indeed, early in the occupation, unsuccessful efforts were made by the Israeli military administration to sell the buffer state proposal to a local Druze leader. It was nevertheless expected that, like the Druze communities in the Galilee, the Druze in the occupied Syrian Golan would over time acquiesce to Israeli rule. However, there was a tradition of resistance against colonial occupation, which included participation of the local population in the Druze-led revolt in 1925–6 under the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon: in June 1967 this uprising remained within living memory of older members of the population.[19] In 1982 the Syrians in the occupied Golan undertook a lengthy general strike and other protests in opposition to efforts to impose Israeli citizenship and civil authority. They succeeded in defining themselves in identity and travel documents as 'non-citizen residents' of Israel. In the face of the 'normalisation' of the occupation through subsequent decades of Israeli governance, the great majority of the local population continue to see themselves as 'Jawlani'. This is a relational identity – a dynamic hybrid of place-attachment, Syrian nationality, the Druze faith and/or secular ideas defined against its 'othering' by political Zionism. While there are internal differences, including over loyalty or not to the current Syrian state, Jawlani identity is consistently expressed as a struggle for self-determination against colonial domination.

In this anti-colonial struggle, the Jawlanis have forged political solidarity with the Palestinian liberation movement. This encompasses associations forged by Syria and Palestinian political prisoners in the 1970s to student solidarity networks in the 1980s and more recent coalitions. The Jawlanis have shared with the Palestinians the idea of *sumud* (صمود), meaning 'steadfastness', as a collective strategy for non-violent resistance. The concerted expansion, over decades, of Jawlani orchards, as supported by agricultural cooperatives and collective water infrastructure, mirrors Palestinian efforts through sumud to defend

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[19] Tayseer Mara'i and Usama R. Halabi, 'Life Under Occupation in the Golan Heights', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22/1 (1992): 78–93. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2537689 (accessed 29 October 2021).

their olive groves from dispossession and destruction. When practically possible, Palestinian merchants from Jenin, Nablus, Nazareth and Gaza have supporting the marketing of Jawlani agricultural crops.[20] The collective strategy of resistance is highlighted by the close alliance forged between Palestinians inside Israel who belonged to the Israeli Communist Party, political activists and figures in the West Bank and Gaza and leading women movements such as the Democratic Women Movement, led by prominent Palestinian figures.

Near Majdal Shams, the 'Shouting Hill' (*Talet al-sayhhat*, تلة الصيحات) – located on a United Nations-monitored 1974 Israel-Syria ceasefire line – has become an arena for large political gatherings of Jawlanis and Syrians. Since the 1980s thousands have converged on both sides to celebrate Syrian Independence Day (17 April) and the anniversary of the declaration of the 1982 Jawlani general strike (14 February); and also gathered to express solidarity with Palestinians on Land Day (30 March) and Nakba Day (15 May). In May 2011, as part of coordinated border demonstrations across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria commemorating Nakba Day, thousands of pro-Palestinian protestors from Syria massed on the Shouting Hill with several hundred climbing over the heavily fortified fence (many were injured and four were shot dead by Israeli soldiers).[21] The Jawlanis offered first aid and protection of the protestors in their homes and mediated with the army/border control to prevent their arrest.

III: The Pedagogy of Liberation as Co-Learning

The pedagogy of liberation as an educational philosophy has evolved along multiple, diverse paths since the publication, over 50 years ago, of Paulo Freire's seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.[22] Drawing on his practical experience of literacy learning amongst the rural poor in Brazil, Freire developed a critique of the failure of information-led learning (what he labels the 'banking' concept of education) to address the dehumanisation caused by social oppression – understood as a situation of structural violence. For Freire, the goal of education as a liberating, 'problem-posing' practice is to enable people, in dialogue with their teachers, to understand and reflect critically on their lived experience as it relates to wider social structures and relations of power. This dialogical learning promotes but does not guarantee deeper understanding, as the necessary cognitive change can only arise from those who come to see themselves as active subjects in their own lives and political circumstances. Furthermore, only when critical consciousness is combined with transformative political action is there, Freire claims, the prospect of a 'liberating praxis' in which people may regain their humanity and freedom. This means that acts of knowing, as enabled by a pedagogy of liberation, follow a dialogical movement from action to reflection to action: the constant unveiling of the reality of oppressive relations of power is

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[20] Dajani et al., 'Palestine is Southern Syria'.

[21] Majeda El Batsh, 'They Crossed Minefields, Golan Residents Marvel', *Middle East Online*, 17 May 2011. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20110808050113/http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=46168 (accessed 12 July 2021).

[22] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); James D. Kirylo (ed.), *Reinventing Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Contemporary Political Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

achieved through the dual growth of critical consciousness and political engagements to transform that reality.[23] Under colonial and settler colonial realities – typically structured to deny or normalise their social, economic and ecological inequalities – knowledge production and dissemination can serve as anti-colonial praxis by, for example, connecting pedagogic-methodological work with insurgent political practices.[24]

Reception of Freire's ideas has spread wider than the field of education, encompassing studies of culture, development, ethnicity, gender, politics, psychology, race and sexuality. In North America the 'critical pedagogy' tradition includes key anti-racist contributions relevant for anticolonial thinking and practice; for example, the arguments advanced by bell hooks for transgressive teaching. From Freire's emphasis on education as the practice of freedom, hooks finds conceptual tools for black people to contest white supremacist culture in the United States. This, she argues, is a decolonising process in which teaching unmasks the taken-for-granted categories of the colonising mind-set: the banking system of education fails to reveal the symbolic violence of that social reality.[25] Similarly, critical pedagogy allows a critique of Native American education policy, where federal administration and under-funding generates poor educational outcomes, including high drop-out rates and expulsions. The social and psychological alienation of Native Americans is reinforced by the inadequate teaching of their language and culture, even though research shows that awareness of indigenous culture is associated with improved prospects for young Native people.[26]

In Palestine, there are multiple examples of a pedagogy of liberation shaped by everyday contexts of oppression. For example, the Al-Quds Community Action Centre, established in 1999 as a non-profit community organisation connected to Al Quds University, empowers Palestinians in East Jerusalem to acquire social, economic and legal knowledge to defend themselves against systemic discrimination. During the First Intifada (1987–93) the 'flying university' approach was used by Birzeit University educators following the forced closure of the university by the Israeli army. Lecturers held classes in alternative locations, including outside the gates of the university. From their homes, Palestinian women also taught children when Israeli curfews shut down schools, while also playing key roles in local neighbourhood committees. These educational activities were integral to the general mobilisation against occupation and the active promotion of Palestinian liberation.[27]

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[23] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 52–4.

[24] Yara Hawari, Sharri Plonski and Eyal Weizman, 'Seeing Israel through Palestine: Knowledge production as anti-colonial praxis', *Settler Colonial Studies* 9/1, (2019): 155–75; Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analysis, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. 33–50.

[25] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), pp. 45–59.

[26] Lavonna L. Lovern and F.E. Knowles, *A Critical Pedagogy for Native American Education Policy: Habermas, Freire, and Emancipatory Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Rebecca Clarren, 'How America is failing Native American students', *The Nation*, 24 July 2017. Available at: https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/left-behind/ (accessed 8 April 2021).

[27] Najwa Silwadi and Peter Mayo, 'Pedagogy Under Siege in Palestine: Insights from Paulo Freire', *Holy Land Studies* 13/1 (2014): 71–87. Available at: https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/pdfplus/10.3366/hls.2014.0078 (accessed 29 October 2021); 'Birzeit University and the First Intifada', *Birzeit University*, 8

Post-colonial and colonial studies have laid bare the long history of racial and ethnic violence underpinning the development of the nation state and its extractivist settler colonial practices.[28] Israeli settler colonisation in the occupied West Bank and Jawlan/ Golan is not exceptional: its Zionist state-building model mirrors North American and South African settler regimes of dispossession and spatial segregation.[29] The foundational displacement of settler colonialism is an ontological uprooting of an ethno-geographic community wrenched from its material and symbolic attachments to land, and rendered as 'non-native' despite its historical presence in a territory.[30] It is significant that Munir Fasheh identifies 'rootedness' as the heart of deep learning by people about their locale, culture and collective memory. His use of the term *mujaawarah* conveys co-learning as mutual understanding within contexts of shared lives and experiences: following Freire, this requires 'horizontal' dialogue under relations of mutual trust. Fasheh thus associates *mujaawarah* with non-hierarchical forms of learning that may be facilitated by institutions, but which in essence are non-institutional gatherings of co-learners.[31]

This educational perspective treats learning as *collaborative*. It means learning as, firstly, rooted in respect for personal experiences as recounted in living rather than abstract language (e.g. the lived realities of people as expressed in narratives, conversations and cultural forms of expression); and, secondly, as developing a community of shared understanding, in dialogue with teachers, in a 'democracy of meaning'.[32] This is also a *compassionate pedagogy* in that it expects the expression of hospitality, generosity, dignity and respect to those learning together, which requires a particular sensitivity to those disadvantaged in conventional educational contexts.[33] Applied to those seeking collectively to comprehend a situation in which they experience oppression, this dialogical method of education invites what Freire terms 'investigation circles' to focus on particular themes that emerge from the ethnographic recording on lived experiences and forms of life.[34] Achieving a critical consciousness of the violent yet institutionalised nexus of (settler) colonial domination – from micro-aggressions and coercive inter-personal relations to political-economic oppression and systemic socio-ecological violence – involves a mutual exploration of the

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December 2018. Available at: https://www.birzeit.edu/ar/news/jm-byrzyt-wlntfd-lwl (accessed 20 April 2021).

[28] Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Winter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation*, pp. 1–21.

[29] Mamdani, 'Settler Colonialism'; Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*, pp. 277–97.

[30] Mason and Dajani, 'A Political Ontology of Land', p. 192.

[31] Mayssoun Sukarieh, 'Decolonizing Education, a View from Palestine: An interview with Munir Fasheh', *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 28/2 (2019): 186–99. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/0 9620214.2019.1601584 (accessed 29 October 2021).

[32] Munir Fasheh, 'My Vision', 2019. Available at: http://mujaawarah.org/en/my-vision/ (accessed 29 October 2021).

[33] Ibid. On compassionate pedagogy see Richard N. Hao, 'Critical Compassionate Pedagogy and the Teacher's Role in First-Generation Student Success', *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 127 (2011): 91–8; Abdullah Sahin, 'Education as Compassionate Transformation: The ethical heart of Islamic pedagogy' in: Paul Gibbs (ed.), *The Pedagogy of Compassion at the Heart of Higher Education* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2017), pp. 127–37.

[34] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 90–2.

causes of oppression. To assist co-learning on this, an important part of the curriculum on the occupied Jawlan/Golan is to understand settler colonialism in other historical and geographical contexts.

Asked in an interview how decolonisation through education can be achieved in colonial contexts, Fasheh draws a parallel between the colonial 'knowledge settlement' of the region that began with the founding in 1866 of the American University of Beirut, and the Israeli settlements that surround his home city of Ramallah. Both are seen as foreign occupations, imposing external systems of authority and uprooting vernacular ways of knowing and living. Their shared symbolic violence is the social reproduction of a dominant reality that erases self-expression and self-realisation for subordinate groups: 'the worst form of colonialism (deepest and least visible) is the occupation of an official language in place of living languages, whose meanings stem from people's actions, interactions, reflections, and efforts to make sense.'[35] This observation captures the epistemic violence that 'decolonial' indigenous and Black perspectives challenge, as they seek to delink from colonialist thinking associated with the racial-imperial categories and legacies of Euro-American modernity, including in postcolonial states.[36] However, as a political project, decolonisation in a settler colonial context must of course feature the *material* as well as the symbolic repatriation of land: this is arguably underplayed by framings of liberation pedagogy that focus on language and critical consciousness.[37]

Israeli education policies in the occupied Jawlan serve as a key instrument of state control over the Arab Druze population. Under military rule, local schools were incorporated into the Israeli education system, and teachers opposing the occupation were fired. Following the favoured minorities policy in Israel that legally differentiates the Druze from other Arabs, the new curriculum for Jawlanis featured such tailored subjects as Hebrew for Druze, Arabic for Druze, History for Druze, and Maths for Druze. It also comprised core studies of Zionism and the Israeli state, ignoring the Syrian culture and history of the Jawlani Druze.[38] Integration into Israel's Bagrut education system has deepened since annexation (when protesting teachers were again dismissed). For example, Amal Aun observes in the local use of Israeli geography textbooks the absence of any mention of occupation of the Golan Heights; instead, the area is represented as subject to the expan-

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[35] Sukarieh, 'Decolonizing Education', p. 188. See also hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, pp. 167–75, on the devaluation of black vernacular in the teaching of standard US English.

[36] Mai Abu Moghli and Laila Kadiwal, 'Decolonising the Curriculum Beyond the Surge: Conceptualisation, positionality and conduct', *London Review of Education* 19/1 (2021): 1–16. Available at: https://doi.org/10.14324/LRE.19.1.23 (accessed 29 October 2021).

[37] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1/1 (2012): 1–40: this criticism is made of Freire at pp. 19–22, though it seems to miss his claims about praxis.

[38] Bashar Tarabieh, 'Education, Control and Resistance in the Golan Heights', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (July–August 1995): 194–5. Available at: https://merip.org/1995/07/education-control-and-resistance-in-the-golan-heights/ (accessed 9 April 2021); Jumanah Abbas, 'Landscapes of Education in the Golan Heights', *Arab Urbanism*, 2020. Available at: https://www.araburbanism.com/magazine/landscapes-of-education (accessed 9 April 2021).

sion of Israeli territorial control following a defensive war in 1967.[39] Recent changes to Israeli constitutional law are likely to weaken the cultural and educational status even of the Israeli Druze. In 2018 the adoption by the Knesset of the 'Nation-State Law' (officially known as the 'Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People') affirmed that the Jewish people had a unique claim to national self-determination in the State of Israel and relegated Arabic from an official to a 'special status' language. This constitutional change provoked strong opposition from the Israeli Druze community, including serving and retired members of the Israeli military.[40]

Co-learning within a pedagogy of liberation invites the active participation of the people in the research on their concrete situation and in the educational programme at least partly shaped by that research.[41] Under the 'Mapping Memories of Resistance' collaboration project, this understanding motivated early development of the teaching material for a master's level course at Birzeit University on the historical geography of Jawlani life under Israeli occupation. Al-Marsad was a core partner in this work, participating in a project workshop at Birzeit University in April 2019, which included an educational tour of the Jawlan with briefings from Al-Marsad staff and a project design meeting in Majdal Shams at the organisation's head office. From the start of the programme, seven Birzeit University students (Palestinian and Jawlani) from the Israeli Studies MA programme were involved in selecting and carrying out interdisciplinary research projects on aspects of Jawlani community life since 1967. Their involvement and research training as co-investigators anchored the wider collaboration project, feeding into the each of the planned outputs – a research report (which evolved into a book project), the curriculum on the occupied Jawlan, and a website of primary sources. In August 2019 a project summer school at Birzeit University featured interactive lectures (in Arabic and English) with academics, activists and archivists designed to explore conceptual and methodological tools for researching the occupied Jawlan. While the Birzeit students received feedback on their research projects, the summer school was open to other Palestinian and Jawlani students, several of whom chose to join the collaboration programme and undertake their own research topics.

At the Birzeit University summer school in 2019 (Figure 1), students and academics heard testimonies from older members of the Jawlani community – recounting their post-annexation experiences of political mobilisation, the associational networks of Syrian and Palestinian political prisoners, and the marketing of Jawlani apples as communal solidarity – and also from a youth-led Jawlani panel reflecting on their understanding of identity, how the civil war in Syria is affecting political sentiment in the Jawlan, and their personal experiences of living under Israeli occupation. This systematic recording of first-person

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[39] Amal Aun, 'Israeli Education Policies as a Tool of Ethnic Manipulation of the Arab Druze: Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan', Master of Public Administration thesis, Cornell University, 2018. Available at: https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/57398 (accessed 15 February 2021).

[40] Adam Rasgon, 'Druze Revolt: Why a tiny, loyal community is so infuriated by nation-state law', *The Times of Israel*, 8 August 2018. Available at: https://www.timesofisrael.com/druze-revolt-why-a-tiny-loyal-community-is-so-infuriated-by-nation-state-law/ (accessed 15 February 2021).

[41] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 68–96.

perspectives, which covers also the ethnographic research undertaken from 2019–21 by project investigators (students and academics), has informed our creation of a hybrid archive on Jawlani resistance to occupation and annexation. Hybrid archives are 'non-official' processes of information retrieval and creation, of critical significance for peoples and communities who have faced cultural erasure by states or other actors.[42] The Jawlani archive is available as an interactive web resource – a legacy platform from the collaboration project, open to the posting of further content and serving also as a valuable didactic resource for the curriculum. As an active, ongoing project of collective authorship, controlled by the Jawlani community, it challenges official Israeli narratives on the Golan Heights, while at the same time sketching an alternative political imaginary.

Figure 1: Participants in the project summer school, Birzeit University, 23–26 August 2019

A pedagogy of liberation treats co-learning as an evolving process of shared understanding. For Freire, co-investigation between teachers and groups who are subject to oppression seeks to reach a critical understanding about the social conditions and effects of that domination.[43] It may be that the first stage of the investigation includes theoretical ideas suggested by teachers as relevant, which for the 'Mapping Memories of Resistance' research project featured concepts about the effects of settler colonisation on everyday life and the nature of Jawlani political resistance. However, these concepts are tested

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[42] Sune Haugbolle, 'Archival Activists and the Hybrid Archive of the Arab Left', in: Donatella Della Ratta, Kay Dickinson and Sune Haugbolle (eds), *The Arab Archive: Mediated Memories and Digital Flows* (Amsterdam: Institute of National Cultures, 2020), pp. 7–19. Available at: https://networkcultures.org/blog/publication/tod35-the-arab-archive-mediated-memories-and-digital-flows/ (accessed 11 April 2021); Mezna Qato, 'Forms of Retrieval: Social scale, citation and the archive on the Palestinian left', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51/2 (2019): 312–15. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743819000096 (accessed 29 October 2021).

[43] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 82.

('ground-truthing') by the careful empirical enquiries undertaken by project researchers. To capture the diverse life experiences of the Jawlani people, and build student research skills, the project commissioned a wide range of 'mini ethnographies' – thick descriptions of a specific Jawlani practice or event deemed to be politically and culturally significant. Chosen topics included the 1982 general strike (a collective reaction to annexation), the politics of Jawlani youth, solidarity networks between Palestinian and Jawlanis, Jawlani art, formal and informal educational activities in Israeli-controlled schools, water infrastructure and apples as markers of Jawlani identity, and campaigns against Israeli wind turbines. Methodologically, these topic studies surveyed different aspects of people's lived experience of occupation/annexation, as recorded in newspaper archives, photos, public art, oral histories, landscape mapping and other sources.

While valuable individually as research and didactic material, the compilation and comparison of these ethnographic vignettes, guided by academic investigators and community members, allows an open discussion about the totality of the relationship between the Jawlani people and the Israeli state. A pedagogy of liberation is problem-posing rather than simply describing forms of life, attempting to understand the causes of social conflicts and other pathologies experienced by people. Jawlanis suffering injustices in the face of Israel's considerable material and symbolic power may be expected to adopt pragmatic or fatalistic attitudes, which makes their widespread rejection of Israeli citizenship and protracted opposition to occupation a socio-political phenomenon in need of explanation. This does not assume a Jawlani consensus on political action or even identity – the 'Jawlani' identity is a dynamic hybrid of place-attachment, Syrian nationality, the Druze faith and secular ideas defined against its 'othering' by Zionist settler colonialism. In such a charged context 'indigeneity' becomes a category subject to critical reflection over its analytical and political value.[44] Co-learning between educators and an oppressed people about the historical awareness of that people is both a continual investigation of changing empirical circumstances and a freedom-seeking practical intervention.

Finally, we take a moment to reflect on what the late novelist, writer and political activist, Salman Natour (1949–2016) from Daliet al-Karmel, a village in the Upper Galilee, advocated for decades. Leading the solidarity and mobilisation work as a Secretary of the Golan Heights Solidarity Committee during the 1982 general strike, in addition to his political activism against the drafting of Israeli Druze to the army, Natour (Figure 2) is a landmark figure of the struggle against settler colonialism. Facing imprisonment and restriction of travel to the Golan during those years, he fervently fought alongside the Jawlanis, published many articles on the strike and always applauded their steadfastness and resilience. In February 2013, on the 31st anniversary of the commemoration of the general strike, Natour gave a speech in Majdal Shams about his experience of the 'Jawlan intifada',

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[44] On the conceptual value of indigeneity in settler colonial contexts see: Rana Barakat, 'Writing/Righting Palestine Studies: Settler colonialism, indigenous sovereignty and resisting the ghost(s) of history', *Settler Colonial Studies* 8/3 (2018): 349–363. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1300048 (accessed 29 October 2021); Lana Tatour, 'The Culturalisation of Indigeneity: The Palestinian-Bedouin of the Naqab and indigenous rights', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 23/10 (2019): 1569–1593. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2019.1609454 (accessed 29 October 2021).

exclaiming: 'the experience of the general strike in the Jawlan is worthy of being taught in universities across the world' as a noteworthy accomplishment that has a lot to teach disenfranchised communities everywhere.[45] These words of the late activist assure us that we are on the right path to decolonise, re-write our collective history and re-shape our future.

Figure 2: Salman Natour. Source: Wikipedia CC

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[45] Aiman Abu Jable, 'The intervention of the writer Salman Natour on the anniversary of the Golan Intifada', *Youtube*, 15 February 2015. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYf7pkQyBls (accessed 10 November 2021).

III. Online Syllabus

The Occupied Jawlan/Golan as a Unique Political, Cultural and Geographic Formation

An online open curriculum to learn and teach about the Jawlan prepared under the BZU-LSE collaboration project entitled: 'Mapping Memories of Resistance: The Untold Story of the Occupation of the Syrian Golan'

Link to the Arabic curriculum and English curriculum: http://golan1982.info/en/about-us-3/

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