



Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask

Hawai'i & Palestine

a brief summary of solidarities in a common struggle

*Onipa'a March
January 17, 2024*

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& presented by Hawai'i's Rise For Palestine Coalition & SFJP



Ghassan Kanafani

131 years since the illegitimate overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, we are witnessing another genocide made possible by the imperialist forces of Europe and the United States. Palestine had been subject to waves of Zionist settlers before the forcible and illegal seizure of their land, when in 1948 Israel declares itself a state without any formal ratification or agreement. That year was the beginning the ongoing Nakba or “catastrophe,” where 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their home by Israeli occupation forces. Years of arduous struggle and displacement later, the Gaza Strip in Palestine was forecasted to be “unlivable by 2020” by UN health analysts. Over 75 years of ruthless occupation by the U.S. funded colonizing Zionist entity had made inevitable the Palestinian resistance, a movement which has been mischaracterized by American propaganda as a horde of “terrorists.” Determined not to be annihilated quietly as the U.S. and Israel intended, factions of the resistance put Palestine and its escalating plight in the world spotlight instead by doing what the Zionist entity swore was impossible: breaking through, for the first time in their lives, the heavily militarized border wall around besieged Gaza which cuts off the refugee population from the world in their own illegally occupied indigenous land. This wall keeps Palestinians in Gaza trapped in place and robbed of any human rights, while Israel claims complete control over all movement in or out of the Gaza Strip, and constraining supplies to the lowest amount of caloric food allotments per person before it can be considered mass starvation, as designated by the World Health Organization. The resistance sought to obtain the only currency left that the Zionist entity will barter with: Israeli settlers. In that crucial hour, the longstanding practice of exchanging a few Israeli prisoners-of-war for a usually larger number of the vast population of kidnapped Palestinians was revived to force negotiations which are repeatedly rejected by the Israeli state. This latest act on October 7th was used as a justification to launch a full-scale extermination rampage by Israel to complete the genocide that was always the goal of the occupation.

Through the Zionist settler entity of the state of Israel which European and American imperialists have installed in Palestine, and funded by U.S. tax money at around 3.8 Billion dollars each year (including 13 million of Hawai'i taxpayer dollars) Palestinians are being brutally starved, carpet bombed, ethnically cleansed, kidnapped, and genocided while they livestream this nightmare to the world. In 100 days Israel has altered what is considered allowable in warfare by targeting and bombing with impunity: hospitals, mosques, churches, schools, agricultural hubs, power plants, residential neighborhoods, with the most precise and advanced technology available in the modern world provided directly by the United States. At the time of this writing: every single hospital in Gaza has been bombed. 101 journalists have been killed. Over 24 thousand civilians were murdered, at least 70% of which are women and children. 61 thousand more are severely injured, with the context that Israel has completely collapsed the health system in Gaza, leaving only 6 remaining ambulances to service 2 million people being massacred daily, most hospitals destroyed or deprived of power and fuel by the Israeli offensive forces, with painkillers and antiseptic having run out weeks ago. Families carry the remaining dismembered body parts of their loved ones in plastic bags. Women are forced to give birth without anesthesia. Pets and animals for weeks without food or water have only corpses to feed on. More than 8 thousand people are reported missing, likely dead or slowly dying trapped, crushed, and starving under the rubble of their former homes. All face dehydration, starvation, and the rapid spread of disease without the aid of health services. It is the most rapidly escalated genocide of our era.

Nearly all U.S. congressional representatives maintain that this genocide should continue due to the American mandate that Israel remain installed in the region. Its geopolitical advantages, American corporate defense contracts, and access to control of the extraction of the region's natural resources are prioritized over Palestinian lives, environmental damage, the stability of international law, and basic moral clarity. President Joe Biden remains the single highest paid politician by AIPAC, the largest Zionist bipartisan pro-Israel lobby. Every congressional representative of Hawai'i has accepted thousands of dollars from AIPAC, and most have taken campaign donations from defense contractor manufacturers like Lockheed Martin who profit from war and directly provide Israel with weapons to further the genocide and occupation. Despite pressing concerns such as the need to test water due to repeated Navy PFA and fuel spills into Oahu's aquifers and coasts, or to house and rehabilitate Kanaka and kama'aina displaced from the Lahaina disaster, the U.S. political figures of Hawai'i instead tow the imperialist party line by insisting on the fiction that these millions of dollars in funding “must” remain allocated to massacre and displace civilians in Palestine for “our protection” instead of critical local needs.



Kanaka 'Ōiwi scholar and organizer Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask writes in *From a Native Daughter*, "...land is inherent to the people; it is like our bodies and our parents. The people cannot exist without the land, and the land cannot exist without the people." This deep connection to the 'Āina speaks to the profound relationship the land and water has to the spiritual and cultural health of the lāhui, and also the material reality that if the land is not allowed to flourish in a liberated relational reciprocity, no life is possible for humans.

Palestinian writer and resistance leader Ghassan Kanafani also understands the liberation and self-determination as equivalent in importance as life. In a famous interview he recaps just some of the atrocities suffered by the Palestinians under occupation and his interviewer, not contesting the litany of humanitarian crimes but remaining unmoved, replies "they are better that way than dead though." Kanafani responds, "Maybe to *you*, but to us, it's not. To us, to liberate our country, to have dignity, to have respect, to have our mere human rights, is something as essential as life itself."

Hawai'i does not require similarity with Palestine to be in solidarity with Palestinians. Still, there are parallels worth taking to heart in order to strengthen our awareness of the pilina of struggles in Hawai'i and Palestine, and how they are connected to a larger shared struggle. The situation in Palestine is vastly distinct from Hawai'i and pointing out these similarities is not meant to conflate them. Rather, these connections between occupied land and peoples remind us that **none of us are free until all of us are free.**

Occupation

Hawai'i understands firsthand a form of U.S. occupation, and how the land and kama'aina are being exploited for the benefit of the U.S. empire.

Palestine has been under a brutal seige and subject to the Zionist entity's over 75 year illegal occupation, losing more of their land each year, as attacks, kidnappings, and ethnic cleansing continue without accountability from the international justice system. Their reality exposes the failures of the very systems of rights and law.

Aloha 'Āina / Land back

Anyone in the lāhui who inherits the na'auao to practice aloha 'āina enters into a lifelong process that is meant to sustain through many generations. Facing imperialist capitalism, we see the fatal dangers of overdevelopment, water redirection, ignoring the kapu of aquifers, and the wide-ranging effect of destroying native ecosystems.

Palestinians have long held a similar conception to lāhui, stating that anyone who spoke Arabic, was responsible for their neighbors, and took care of the land was considered Palestinian. The defense and love for the land is a central part of how Palestinians understand their identity. Today in a time of climate catastrophe largely driven by imperialist war, Palestinians are on the frontlines of what it means to radically love the land that sustains us.

Right of return

Many Hawaiians experience the effects of colonialism as an overwhelming force driving kanaka off island, whether by wildfires in Lahaina caused by preventable conditions brought on by the tourism industry, or capitalist forces pricing kanaka and kama'aina out of paradise. Forcibly denied the Right of Return to their indigenous land by the Zionist entity, Palestinians forced into diaspora await the end of Israel's settler occupation to be allowed back to their home, when *from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.*

Indigenous land stewards

Kanaka 'Ōiwi, as the historic indigenous people of these islands, have cultivated and practiced a care for the land as an ancestor and integral part of life, not as a resource to be pillaged. Through indigenous stewardship Hawaiians carry on the declaration that the life and sovereignty of the 'Āina is perpetuated in pono, doing right by the land and its people, and through resistance to the forces that would harm it.

Palestinians have tended the land, rivers, and shore of Palestine long before Zionism as an ideology was ever created in Europe. The olive trees are cared for as family, in contrast to settlers who routinely destroy the life of the land. The resistance to occupation is an expression of land stewardship.

Demilitarization

The U.S. has created a primary warmaking client in the Zionist entity of Israel which is now the fourth highest military power in the world due to U.S. funding. It actively tests weapons on civilians in Palestine, setting horrific implications for global safety in terms of both the conduct of war and the wide reaching environmental impact of these weapons.

Dr. Trask points out, "Hawai'i is the most militarized of America's colonial possessions in the Pacific, rendering it a likely target in time of war." Aside from being made an unwilling target, Hawai'i suffers 'āina abuse and seizures of growing severity, from the desecration on Kaho'olawe to the gallons of fuel from years of spills that remain in the filtration rock of Oahu's aquifers.