

---

# On Indigenous Solidarity: Deleuze and the Palestinians

**Barbara Glowczewski** French National Centre for  
Scientific Research (CNRS), Grenoble

---

## Abstract

Deleuze supported the Palestinian struggle for freedom from the 1970s until his death in 2003, denouncing their colonisation by Israel. His comparison of their struggle with the history of the Native American situation in the US was at the time both daring and popular among left-wing circles. This article discusses how Indigenous people today in North America, Australia or elsewhere in the world see the issue of Palestinian indigeneity. If many Indigenous people protest in solidarity and call for a boycott on Israel for the ongoing genocide in Gaza, others align with the 2024 Israeli government which denies a status of Indigeneity to Palestinians despite the millenary cohabitation of Palestinian tribes with Jewish tribes.

**Keywords:** Palestinians, First Australians, Indigenous international solidarity, indigeneity debates, sovereignty

Several texts of Deleuze insist on the fact that the creation of the State of Israel was a form of colonisation that did not need a workforce, but aimed to make the land an empty space:

Deleuze suggested that the state of Israel's actions were tantamount to 'genocide, but one in which physical extermination remains subordinated to geographical evacuation: being only Arabs in general, the surviving Palestinians must go and merge with the other Arabs' (1983: 31). Differing from common uses, Deleuze deployed the term 'genocide' to articulate the

*Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 19.2 (2025): 205–213

DOI: 10.3366/dlgs.2025.0593

© Edinburgh University Press

[www.eupublishing.com/dlgs](http://www.euppublishing.com/dlgs)

systematic colonial erasure of the history and geography of Palestine, and the displacement of the Palestinian people, more commonly referred to as ‘ethnic cleansing’ (see Gordon and Ram, 2016; Pappé, 2007).<sup>1</sup> (Medien 2019: 50)

In ‘The Indians of Palestine’, Deleuze makes an analogy between Palestinians and Native Americans. The French text refers to Native Americans as ‘Peaux-rouges’ – ‘Red-skins’ – an expression that in the 1970s was reclaimed by some French activists who in their actions against the various forms of oppression of the State, identified with the Indigenous struggle against the colonisation and repression of the US. It was then a way to reclaim a form of indigenisation and empathy with an Indigenous mode of resistance seen as a model against the State. Deleuze, with Guattari, criticised the State in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* published in France in the 1970s when both authors were very popular, more than they are in current French academia, despite their worldwide popularity and some of their analysis proving very useful for current issues. I was lucky to follow Deleuze’s seminar in 1976–7 and to exchange intensively with Guattari in the early 1980s. Two of our conversations (1983 and 1985) about my anthropological fieldwork work with the Warlpiri people of Central Australia were published in the first issue of *Chimères* (Guattari and Glowczewski 1987), a journal created by Deleuze and Guattari. The resonance between their philosophy of flows and desire and Australian Indigenous knowledge of totemic or Dreaming cosmocartography led to the English compilation of some of my writings (Glowczewski 2020). It is from that point of view that I will share here some ideas about the topicality of Deleuze’s parallel between Palestinians and Native Americans and the form of colonisation that aims at eradicating a population to take over their land, by displacement or massacre.

Taking a people on their own territory and making them work, exploiting them, in order to accumulate a surplus; that’s what is ordinarily called a colony. Now, on the contrary, it is a matter of emptying a territory of its people in order to make a leap forward, even if it means making them into a workforce elsewhere. The history of Zionism and Israel, like that of America, happened the second way: how to make an empty space, how to throw out a people? (Deleuze and Sanbar 1982: 26)

Nowadays, there are many expressions of solidarity between different Indigenous peoples across the world including in regard to Palestinians. On 27 October 2023 a petition called *Indigenous Solidarity with Palestine* was signed by 132 activists, artists and intellectuals, from different Native American peoples (Sioux, Cherokee,

Navajo, Ojibwe, Cree, Lakota), the Sámi people of Northern Europe, Māori from New Zealand, and First Australians including members of the Darumbal, Gunditjmarra, Yamatji, Dharug, Yuwin, Wiradjuri, Bundjalung, BirriGubba, Barkandji, Mirning, Larrakia and Tiwi peoples as well as Torres Strait Islanders. They ‘condemn Israel’s ongoing genocide against Palestinians’:

We support Palestinian liberation and their right as an oppressed people to resist colonialism and genocide.

We amplify the immediate demands of people in Gaza as the bare minimum, including:

1. An immediate ceasefire to halt more state-sanctioned Palestinian death, to allow for dignified burials for the deceased in overflowing morgues and under rubble and to prevent outbreaks of disease.
2. The urgent restoration of water, food, fuel, medical supplies, and humanitarian aid.
3. Immediate protection of medical facilities and reversing the illegal and inhumane evacuation orders for hospitals.
4. The facilitation of safe passage for casualties and critically ill individuals in need of medical treatment.
5. While the people of Gaza vehemently reject forced displacement, we insist on opening the crossings for those seeking to evacuate and permitting the entry of medical and rescue teams, along with their equipment.

And:

6. An end to all foreign military aid from the United States and Canada to Israel.

As Indigenous peoples, we condemn the increase in anti-Palestinian, anti-Islamic, and anti-Arab violence everywhere. We condemn the increase in anti-Indigenous violence everywhere. We condemn anti-Jewish violence everywhere. (The Red Nation; RPH Palestine)

On 7 November 2023, at the Port of Tacoma, a group of Salish people delayed the departure of a military ship believed to be carrying US weapons for Israel. Photographs showed warriors in traditional canoes, singing in their language. As reported by Luna Reyna in the *Underscore Native News*, she is ‘proud of her Little Shell Chippewa and Mexican heritage and is passionate about reporting that sheds light on colonial white supremacist systems of power’ (Reyna 2023). Despite many Indigenous people expressing their solidarity with the Palestinians, whom they recognize as Indigenous people of Palestine, some align with Israel and Jewish people who deny the status of indigeneity to the Palestinian people (*autochtones* in French). The issue at stake is



Figure 1. Jayne Christian, *Solidarity*, 2025, this is the second Solidarity piece made, the first remains in Australia. Materials: raffia grass bush dyed and synthetic dyed, wire, keffiyahs and fabric.

the refusal to recognise the legitimacy of Palestinians' claim to an ancestral belonging to Palestine as their land. When many First Nations of Canada have shown their support to Palestinians as Indigenous, one Native American warned the media against such a parallel. Similarly in New Zealand, when, on 8 November 2023, a street haka dance (Haka Pro-Palestine) by Māori families in Auckland was performed to 'Stop Genocide in Palestine', filmed to be spread worldwide on social networks, a counter haka (Haka Pro-Israel) showed Israeli flags in support of Israel only. In Australia, Indigenous people are also divided in their support for Palestinians, their relation to Israel and Jewish history, as well as to the recognition both of Palestinians and Jewish as Indigenous.

Some Indigenous Australian activists who have been struggling for civil and land rights since the 1970s have also continued to support the Palestinians. For instance, Gary Foley organised, with African-Australian scholar Suzannah Henty, a conference titled 'Black Palestinian Solidarity: Contesting Settler Nationalisms' at the University

of Melbourne where he taught in 2019. A report of the meeting in *Radical Philosophy* defined the Palestinian struggle:

as marked by capitalist structures of oppression in their imperialist, colonial, neo-colonial, nationalist and neo-liberal manifestations. The theoretical questions that underpinned the conference were: What forms of political action can be defined as decolonial practice? What might be a valid proposition for decolonisation when the structures of colonisation – such as land expropriation, incarceration and assimilation – are embedded in modern nation-state models? What is the praxis of intersectionality and solidarity? What is the role of increasingly corporate educational institutions in de-normalising oppression and occupation? This latter question was specifically addressed in Professor Rabab Abdulhadi's keynote lecture, which examined Zionist lobbying on campuses and her own experience as a target of it, which has involved detailed death threats. (Foley and Henty 2020)

The January 2022 Sydney Festival was boycotted by 130 artists, including thirty-five Indigenous Australians, who in 2021 had all signed, under the name 'Artists against Apartheid', their refusal of the massive sponsorship given by the Embassy of Israel (Boycott Sydney Festival 2022; Frater 2022; Burke 2022; Caust 2022; Galvin 2021; Staff 2022). These artists were opposed by the Indigenous Coalition for Israel, represented by Warren Mundine (a Liberal Party politician), who claimed that the Palestinians are not 'Indigenous' and that only the Jewish people could make that claim because the Arabs had arrived after them. This assertion denies the UN's recognition of the ancestry of many Bedouin tribes of Palestine, who are as old as its Jewish inhabitants and are still persecuted today by Israeli settlers. Many Palestinian scholars describe the history of the violence against these tribes, such as the Palestinian refugee in Australia and educator Noura Mansour in her essay 'Indigenous–Palestinian Networks Challenging Settler Colonialism in Australia' (Mansour 2023). She refers to Edward Said who advocated people's solidarity on all continents, after the Palestinians were massively attacked in 2003 and American pro-Palestinian activist Rachel Corrie was killed by an Israeli armoured bulldozer.<sup>2</sup> Since 2006, in Canberra, there has been an embassy called the General Palestine Delegation for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. An internal, downloadable thirteen-page report by Lauren Binnekamp titled *Indigenous Australian and Palestinian Experience: A Comparison* (2020) compares Palestinians' and Indigenous Australians' respective history and colonisation:

Both Israel and Australia have worked very hard to curate a particular image of democracy, multi-culturalism, and diversity. Israel has a positive reputation for being 'the only democracy in the Middle East' (75) and a

safe haven for the oppressed, and the Australian Human Rights Commission asserts that cultural diversity is ‘central to [Australian] national identity’ (76). This is purely tokenistic, as there is no genuine effort towards reconciliation or indigenous sovereignty in Israel or Australia. Indigenous peoples are demanding recognition of sovereignty, land rights, language rights, and cultural rights. Palestinians are also demanding freedom from occupation and the right to return. Symbolism is not one of their demands. By making Indigenous solidarity a priority, connections can be made, resilience built against legacies of trauma, counter-hegemonic sources of recognition formed, and ‘a power base for decolonisation’ will be strengthened.<sup>3</sup> (Binnekamp 2020)

On 9 September 2024 the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs displayed on its website statistics compiled by the Palestinian Ministry of Health: 41,272 Palestinians reported killed, in addition to 689 in the West Bank and approximately 1,000 in Israel, including people involved in the 7 October attack (Israeli authorities), and at least 95,551 reported injured; Israeli reported 1,200 nationals and foreign nationals killed and 5,432 injured (OCHA 2023).

Since the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel, the accusation of terrorism seems to banalise the response of Israel through its systematic extermination of the civil population in Gaza and its diasporas. It seems to give the green light to other nation-states, not only to continue business as usual and send weapons to Israel, but also to commit crimes against humanity in relation to their own Indigenous peoples, as China does with the Uyghurs, Indonesia with the Papuans, or France with the Kanaks in New Caledonia (Reyhan 2024; United Nations Office in Geneva 2024; Décodeurs 2024).<sup>4</sup>

In relation to Deleuze, I would agree with Medien’s analysis of Deleuze’s overlooked writings on Palestine:

In what ways is the evacuation of these texts from popular take-ups of Deleuze, in favour of what Alexander Weheliye has called a ‘quagmire of orthodox Deleuzianism, which insists on transforming Deleuze into a great thinker by reading him exclusively within the western European philosophical tradition’ (2014: 47), indicative of the ways in which colonial relations continue to determine the endeavours of contemporary Deleuzian social theory? And how might we think the silence surrounding Deleuze’s writings on Palestine as contributing to the ongoing methodological and social erasure of Palestinian life and history that Deleuze himself so forcibly critiques? (Medien 2019: 52)

An answer might be that since Deleuze’s death there has been a real political resurgence and strength demonstrated by Indigenous people across the world. Most of them have become minorities in the

nation-states that colonised them (Western or Eastern empires, and various dictatorships in South America or Africa), but many assert their sovereignty and have developed local and transnational strategies against multinational powers that destroy their lands through mining or industrial agriculture and animal farming. For instance, the Indigenous Australian legal victory that succeeded in invalidating the notion of *Terra Nullius*, erasing this term from the Constitution, is a world precedent that today inspires other Indigenous people like the French Native Americans of French Guiana who want to claim the same withdrawal of the *Terra Nullius* concept from the French Constitution. That in Australia the colonial legitimacy of *Terra Nullius* was successfully contested can help other Indigenous people to engage in international claims for justice, as the Native Americans of French Guiana or the Kanak people in New Caledonia are trying to do. In the US since the time American Indian reservations were first settled, the struggles of many Native Americans, like First Australians, led them to gain some rights and recognition through their continuous claims and resistance. The Standing Rock Protests in the US against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016, which was finally successful thanks to a series of Indigenous legal actions which stopped the pipeline from being constructed on their land in 2023, is an example of this. Since the Deleuzian analogy between Palestinians and US Native Americans, their respective current situations seem to have drifted apart.

In this context of international Indigenous politics, so long as Palestinians survive on their land, the concept of *Terra Nullius* cannot be claimed by the Israeli state even though, much like in Australia or America, a massive replacement of the population by colonisers has been achieved (Gresh 2023). Similarly, key terms which are currently rejected by some sceptics cannot continue to be so because of massive proofs testifying to their validity in the Palestinian context: ‘genocide’, ‘educide’, that is the destruction of all forms of education, schools, universities and libraries; ‘cosmocide’, destruction of a specific cosmos, that is an ecosystem with cultural values, such as growing olive trees, which have been systematically and violently uprooted by Jewish settlers in the self-defined colonies in the West Bank. Leaving any trace of a Palestinian way of life in the territories they inhabit or used to inhabit is to admit that Palestinians were there before the creation of the State of Israel after the Second World War. The agenda for some is to deny this fact. Despite arguments that philosophy and the human sciences must remain ‘objective’ and not become involved politically, our responsibility, as scholars, is precisely to follow in the footsteps of

Deleuze. He dared to support Palestinians as a people, grounded in a territory, even though so many have been violently deterritorialized. For Deleuze over two millennia of historical cohabitation between Jews and Palestinians could support a new becoming against genocide.

## Notes

1. Median analyses several of Deleuze's texts: Deleuze (1997 [1973]); Deleuze (1998 [1978]); Deleuze (1998 [1983]); Deleuze (1998 [1988]). She also quotes Gordon and Moriel (2016) and Pappé (2011).
2. See also INGWIA with report by Angela Godfrey-Goldstein, director of Jahalin Solidarity, a Palestinian organisation she founded to support the Bedouins Jahalin, displaced by the Israeli Occupation. She is a Rebuilding Alliance Peacemaker 2018. See also her essay 'High Hopes' (2018).
3. See also the work of Palestinian PhD student Jamal Nabulsi (2020) at the School of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Queensland, fellow of the Palestinian Museum and the Palestinian American Research Center.
4. In June, seven Kanak members of the Independent Party were sent to seven different prisons in metropolitan France, accused of complicity in the ongoing riots that led to eight young Kanaks as well as two policemen being shot. Two further Kanaks were imprisoned on 8 September 2024. See also the English translation of an online petition for Kanak justice: <https://www.change.org/p/non-%C3%A0-la-justice-coloniale-et-%C3%A0-la-r%C3%A9pression-en-kanaky-nouvelle-cal%C3%A9donie>

## References

- Binnekamp, Lauren (2020) *Indigenous Australian and Palestinian Experience: A Comparison*, Intern Policy Report, Embassy of the State of Palestine, <https://www.palestine-australia.com/assets/Uploads/Indigenous-Australian-and-Palestinian-Experience-A-Comparison.pdf>
- Boycott Sydney Festival (2022) <https://linktr.ee/boycottsydfest>
- Burke, Kelly (2022) 'Gene Simmons, Deborah Conway join opposition to Sydney festival boycott as more acts pull out', *The Guardian*, 7 January.
- Caust, Jo (2022) 'Sydney Festival boycott: When arts organisations accept donations, there is always a price to pay', *The Conversation*, 6 January.
- Décodeurs, Les (2024) 'New Caledonia: Six Questions to Understand the Current Crisis', *Le Monde* (17 May), [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2024/05/17/new-caledonia-six-questions-to-understand-the-current-crisis\\_6671770\\_8.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2024/05/17/new-caledonia-six-questions-to-understand-the-current-crisis_6671770_8.html)
- Deleuze, Gilles (1997 [1973]) *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1998 [1983]) 'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat', *Discourse*, 0:3, pp. 30–3.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1998 [1978]) 'The Troublemakers', *Discourse*, 20:3, pp. 23–4.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1998 [1988]) 'Wherever They Can See It'. *Discourse*, 20:3, pp. 34–5.
- Deleuze and Sanbar 1982 Deleuze, Gilles and Sanbar, Elias (1998 [1982]) 'The Indians of Palestine', *Discourse*, 20:3, pp. 25–9.
- Dilner, Rayhan (2024) 'Accueillir Xi Jinping est de complicité est une politique du génocide ouïgour', *Le Monde*, 6 May, [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/05/06/accueillir-xi-jinping-est-une-politique-de-complicite-du-genocide-ouigour\\_6231899\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/05/06/accueillir-xi-jinping-est-une-politique-de-complicite-du-genocide-ouigour_6231899_3210.html)



- Foley, Gary and Henty, Suzannah (2020) 'Black-Palestinian Solidarity Conference: Contesting Settler Nationalisms', *Radical Philosophy* 2:7 (Spring), pp. 126–9. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/conference-report/black-palestinian-solidarity-conference>
- Frater, Patrick (2022) 'Sydney Festival hit by claims of art-washing over Israel sponsorship', *Variety*, 7 January.
- Galvin, Nick (2021) High-profile figures join Sydney Festival boycott over Israeli funding, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 December.
- Glowczewski, Barbara (2020) *Indigenising Anthropology with Guattari and Deleuze*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Godfrey-Goldstein, Angela (2018) 'High Hopes', in Eóin Murray and James Mehigan (eds), *Defending Hope*, Dublin: Veritas, pp. 171–86.
- Gordon, Neve and Ram, Moriel (2016) 'Ethnic Cleansing and the Formation of Settler Colonial Geographies', *Political Geography*, 53, pp. 20–9.
- Gresh, Alain (2023) 'Israël-Palestine de la colonisation à l'apartheid, en ligne droite', *Orient XXI*, 2 May, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/israel-palestine-de-la-colonisation-a-l-apartheid-en-ligne-droite>, 6401
- Guattari, Félix and Glowczewski, Barbara (1987) 'Espaces de rêves (I). Les Warlpiri', *Chimères*, 1 (Spring), pp. 5–21.
- Haka pro-Palestine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZbqjcTYE-A>
- Haka pro-Israël: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/4uxPvrgoo1o>
- Mansour, Noura (2023) 'Indigenous–Palestinian Networks Challenging Settler Colonialism in Australia', *Near East Policy Forum*, 12 October.
- Median, Katherine (2019), 'Palestine in Deleuze', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36:5, pp. 49–70.
- Nabulsi, Jamal (2020) 'Reclaiming Palestinian Indigenous Sovereignty', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 52:2, pp. 24–42.
- OCHA United Nations Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Reported Impact Since October 2023' (2023) <https://www.ochaopt.org/>
- Pappé, Ilan (2011) *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- The Red Nation <https://therednation.org/author/trn-editors/>
- We go back in time only to come here right now, RPH Palestine Roundtable. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWHcgPj8abU>
- Reyna, Luna (2021) 'Native solidarity with Indigenous Palestinians helps delay U.S. Warship', *Underscore Native News*, 7 November 2023, <https://www.underscore.news/culture/native-solidarity-with-indigenous-palestinians-helps-delay-u-s-warship/#:~:text=Indigenous%20protesters%20helped%20delay%20a,homelands%20of%20the%20Puyallup%20Tribe>
- Staff, Ajn (2022) 'Sydney Festival pays price for Israeli sponsorship', *The Australian Jewish News*, 5 January, <https://www.australianjewishnews.com/sydney-festival-pays-price-for-israeli-sponsorship/>
- United Nations Office in Geneva (2024) <https://www.ungeneva.org/fr/news-media/meeting-summary/2024/03/examen-de-lindonesie-au-comite-des-droits-de-lhomme-la-reforme>