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Mohammed Abu-Khdeir and the Politics of Racial Terror in Occupied Jerusalem

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The 2014 murder of the Palestinian child Mohammed Abu-Khdeir by Israeli Jewish settlers sparked the largest wave of Palestinian social protest in Jerusalem since the second intifada. Drawing on ethnographic research, this paper investigates the murder as a symbolic political act of terror rather than an isolated act of violence, analyzing the relationship between state and extra-judicial forms of terror, and locating the event within an ongoing structure of Israeli settler colonial dispossession. Moreover, the paper examines gendered and sexual discourses that arose during the 'genocidal moment' that gave way to Abu-Khdeir's murder and circulated in its aftermath, as a window on the imbrication of racial and sexual logics animating Israel's logic of native elimination and its project of settler colonial expansion. Finally, the paper examines Israel's contradictory indictment of Abu-Khdeir's killers and attempts to appropriate Palestinian suffering, which labor towards the performance of Israeli power as liberal, democratic, and multicultural, vacating the state from responsibility and accountability, and absolving it from an ongoing structure of terror it perpetrates daily against the Palestinian people.

In the early hours of July 2, 2014, sixteen-year-old Palestinian Mohammed Abu-Khdeir was standing in front of his family home, across the street from the mosque in the Shuafat neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem, awaiting the fajr (dawn) prayer. Three Israeli Jewish settler youth approached him and asked for directions to Tel Aviv. They dragged him into their car, where they beat and tortured Mohammed, drove him West to the Jerusalem forest, and burned his body.

On the first evening after his body is identified, a group of women gathers at the family home for the 'azah, a collective mourning. Black coffee is served, without sugar. A solemn silence surrounds the space, in stark contrast to the incessant shooting of rubber bullets and sound bombs fired from the opposite end of the street by Israeli security forces assembled to suppress the impending Palestinian rebellion. Young men are gathering again in the streets outside, after breaking fast observed for the holy month of Ramadan. Their faces are masked with kufiyyehs or whatever clothing they can find. One of them climbs to the top floor of the family home and hangs a Palestinian flag from the window.

On the day of the funeral, death hangs in the humid summer air as word spreads the autopsy's revelations that soot has been discovered in Mohammed's lungs, evidence he was still alive when his body was set on fire. His attackers filled his lungs with gasoline and burned him alive. Thousands of Palestinians have gathered in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Shuafat to bury the dead. Many have traveled from as far north as Haifa, or from the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, disregarding the occupation forces' restrictions on Palestinian movement. Awaiting the release of his body by Israeli authorities, the moment he will no longer belong merely to his family, but to the Palestinian nation—martyr of the dawn, they call him—an elderly woman leans over and whispers in my ear: 'Do you smell that? The smell of gasoline ... It has been following me since we heard the news ... sometimes I feel myself choking, unable to breathe, as if it were my own lungs filled with gasoline'. She pauses for a few moments. 'They burned us all when they burned Mohammed'.¹

For many Palestinians, the kidnapping, torture and burning alive of Mohammed, a Palestinian child, was a haunting (Gordon 1997). It conjured not only the phantom of the Palestinian Nakbaⁱⁱ, which infuses the everyday lives of Palestinians as historical event, embodied memory and continuous structure of dispossession (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014; Wolfe 2006). Echoing David Marriot, one might also say that the dead Mohammed Abu-Khdeir was—is—an emblem of what it means to see oneself through the eyes of the Jewish colonizers (2004, p. 22).

It is perhaps because Mohammed's murder evoked such a visceral, painful realization that this would be the spark to ignite the largest wave of Palestinian social protest in Jerusalem since the second intifada. A confrontation that initially began in Shuafat, with Palestinian demonstrators burning and destroying the Jerusalem light-rail station near the site of Mohammed's kidnapping—a project the government had earlier hailed as a symbol of 'progress' and a 'united city', yet for Palestinians, was one of the most visible symbols of Israeli colonization—quickly spread across Palestinian neighborhoods throughout occupied Jerusalem and beyond.

In this paper, I take Mohammed's murder as an event from which to pose the following questions: In the frontier space of occupied Jerusalem,ⁱⁱⁱ how do ordinary members of 'settler society' (Veracini 2006) come to participate in acts of political terror against the Palestinian native? How do race, gender, sexuality and other interstices energize each other in these extra-judicial eruptions of political terror, and what does the inscription of violence and suffering on the Palestinian body enable Jewish subjects to achieve? Finally, how might we explain the Israeli state's (seemingly contradictory) condemnation of such acts in the Jewish public sphere, at the same time that it engages in the biopolitical and necropolitical management of Palestinian life?

I consider how we might understand the murder of Mohammed Abu-Khdeir as a gendered and sexualized inscription of racial terror on the colonized body, a window on the gendered regimes of violence embedded in processes of Israeli settler colonial expansion in the borderlands of occupied Jerusalem. I mobilize the term borderlands to disrupt normalizing notions of the Israeli settler colonial nation and nation-state (e.g. Anzaldúa 1987), the imaginative geographies embedded in the quotidian production of racial subjectivities, and the colonial order of the city. The very imposition of the geopolitical division of Jerusalem into 'East' and 'West' in the Zionist imaginary—a division first enforced during the 1948 Nakba, when native Palestinians were massacred or forced to flee their homes and properties in what is now considered West Jerusalem (Tamari 1999)—itself marks the material force of such imaginaries, with each space acquiring a racialized common sense linked to Orientalist concepts of civilized and uncivilized, law and lawlessness, and haunted by longer histories of colonial violence.

Within this context, I analyze Mohammed's killing as a symbolic political act of terror (e.g. Feldman 1991) rather than an isolated act of violence. In doing so, I draw attention to the imbrication of state and extra-judicial forms of terror against the Palestinian native, and consider Jerusalem to be a border city that comes to form a symbolic and territorial manifestation of the larger settler colonial project. If that is the case, Mohammed was not murdered in a random act of 'revenge' by a few 'extremist' Jewish youth, but because he symbolizes a particular social group—the Palestinian people—a people slated for collective erasure, elimination and death by the Israeli settler colonial project. Here, I attempt to identify not only how injury to the flesh takes on an extra-corporeal meaning and comes to signify injury to the Palestinian collective, but how too, it functions as a form of historical citation of earlier violence.

I also consider the Israeli state's attempts to 'steal the pain' of the Abu-Khdeir family in the aftermath of their son's murder (e.g. Razack 2007, Hartman 1997). At the same time that the state enacted a devastating campaign of terror against the occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, launching a new assault on the

occupied Gaza strip that would kill 2,251 Palestinians, the state indicted three Jewish Israeli youth for the murder of Abu-Khdeir. Moreover, the state proposed acknowledging Mohammed as a 'victim of terrorism', the first time a Palestinian would be formally recognized as such in a national memorial by the Ministry of Defense. In examining this contradictory move, I hope to shed light on the ways in which attempts to appropriate Palestinian suffering labors in the performance of Israeli power as liberal, democratic, and multicultural, the rational arbiter of law and justice. By prosecuting the perpetrators of this particular crime (or at least providing the illusion of such), and naming it as an act of 'terrorism', an aberration of violence by a few Jewish extremists, the settler colonial state distances itself from the act and absolves itself from an ongoing structure of violence and terror it perpetrates daily against the Palestinian people, vacating the state from responsibility and accountability.

Throughout this paper I suggest that sexuality plays a formative role in racializing Palestinians as inherently criminal, terrorist others who can be tortured, evicted and killed with impunity, a construction that mediates the production of Jewish Israeli settler identity as coterminous with the Western (white) subject. I begin the paper by introducing the socio-political context in which the murder took place, including the creation of a 'genocidal moment' (Moses 2004) in the summer of 2014, against the backdrop of a collapsed Palestinian unity agreement, kidnapping and murder of three settler youth in the occupied West Bank, and Israel's most recent military assault on the occupied Gaza Strip. I analyze the ways in which Israeli leadership's public calls for revenge against the Palestinian people as collective enemy, energized by a discourse of colonial sexual violence, reinforced a visceral racial imaginary that emboldened members of Israeli settler society to take part in an intensified moment of 'native elimination' (Wolfe 2006). Next, I analyze the propaganda circulated by Israeli police and media and subsequently, Israeli settler society which portrayed Mohammed's murder as an 'honor killing', blaming the victim's family for the death of their son. Drawing on a feminist analysis of Orientalism (Yegenoglu 1998), I highlight the underlying gendered and sexualized logics of Israeli settler colonial violence and the production of colonial identities. Further, I argue for reading the inscription of racial terror on the colonized body through Hortense Spiller's concept of the 'pornotrope' (1987) to analyze the imbrication of racial and sexual logics animating the Israeli settler colonial enterprise, and the symbolic order of humanity embedded in the Israeli juridical-political order. Finally, I examine the State of Israel's indictment to reveal the colonial state's narrative of the crime, and attempts to appropriate Palestinian suffering and pain by adding Abu-Khdeir's name to an official state memorial of victims of terrorism despite the family's protestation (Alfred 2015).

In writing through this historical moment, a moment of terror and death, as witness to its unfolding and its aftermath, it is imperative to question whether it is possible for the writer to revisit such a scene without reinscribing and 'replicating the grammar of violence'

(Hartman 2008, p. 4) to which it belongs. I do not wish to contribute to the sort of voyeurism that has accompanied the hypervisibility of certain acts of violence committed against Palestinian bodies, or the ways in which such events become spectacles that circulate in a way that absolves the consumer of responsibility to the Palestinian people, feeling that the ubiquitousness of such violence is in some way, inevitable. In my positionality as a first generation Palestinian-American anthropologist, I am compelled to investigate this particular scene of terror, striving to shed light on a history of the present that illuminates 'the intimacy of our experience with the lives of the dead, to write our now as it is interrupted by this past, and to imagine a *free state*', not as a time before the Nakba or the ongoing structure of settler colonial terror, but rather as 'the anticipated future of this writing' (ibid). In an era in which, once again, Israeli Jewish lynch mobs' presence on the Jerusalem streets has become more prevalent, in which extra-legal attacks, executions, and calls for 'death to Arabs' have become more visible and acceptable in the public sphere, it is imperative that scholars interrogate the 'dead-in-life place' (Holland 2000, p. 180) that Palestinians occupy in the Israeli settler colonial imaginary and the civil life of the Jewish polis. Indeed, the urgency of such times requires that we unveil colonial sites of death as a way to better understand possibilities for Palestinian life.

Occupied Jerusalem: The Making of a Colonial City

Israel's settler colonial project is grounded in its Zionist ideology, which from the outset aspired to create an ethnically defined nation state for the Jewish people in Palestine, an objective 'essentially incompatible' with the continued presence of Palestine's indigenous population (Sayegh 1965, p. 5). According to Sayegh, the project of establishing a racially exclusive settler entity on Palestinian territory has required an ongoing project of 'racial elimination'—the destruction and erasure—of Palestine's indigenous Arab presence (ibid. p. 27). Settler invasion is thus 'a structure, not an event', and the drive towards native 'elimination' is an 'organizing principle' of settler-colonial society (Wolfe 2006, p. 388). As Shalhoub-Kevorkian reminds us, this structure of indigenous dispossession is accomplished through a variety of means—social, political, economic, cultural and legal, penetrating the minute and intimate details of everyday life—and does not necessarily require the native's physical annihilation (2015a).

Israel's policies in Jerusalem today must be viewed within this historical context of an ongoing structure of settler colonial dispossession: the drive to expand and consolidate settler claims to indigenous territory, and subsequently eliminate the Palestinian presence. A cornerstone of this structure of dispossession has been the nationalization of Judaism enshrined in Israeli law, which ensures that Jewishness, as an extension of European whiteness, is a property that ascribes privileges to those who belong (Erakat 2015). Palestinians can be 'juridical citizens of the State but never members

of the nation' (ibid. p. 86). Thus, while the value of Jewish nationality is entrenched in a series of laws that provide access to land, housing, employment, education, and more, Palestinians are excluded from such benefits as a matter of law (ibid.).

When Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, the state extended domestic law into the newly occupied territory. Since then, the Israeli state has deliberately changed the demographic composition of the city through large-scale and state-sponsored settlement of the Jewish-Israeli civilian population and a policy of forced transfer^{iv} targeting the city's indigenous Palestinian inhabitants. According to Israel's former head of 'Arab Affairs' in Jerusalem, Israeli leadership, fearing their position in Jerusalem was unstable in the eyes of the international community in 1967, adopted two basic principles for solidifying control over a 'unified capital': First, to 'rapidly increase the Jewish population' in East Jerusalem. Second, to 'hinder growth of the Arab population and to force Arab residents to make their homes elsewhere' (Cheshin et al. 1999, p. 10). In other words, Israel's primary objective, clearly announced by its leadership, is the permanent eviction and erasure of native Palestinians from the city, while simultaneously 'Judaizing' the city in order to occupy and solidify control over a 'unified capital' for the Jewish state. The biopolitical calculus of this objective is expressed in an official policy of 'demographic balance', which mandates a ratio of 28% Palestinians and 72% Jewish Israelis as a policy objective in Jerusalem (Shragai 2010).

Israeli leadership has sought to carry out its policy of 'demographic balance' through a complex machinery of violence, surveillance and control (see Zureik et al. 2011). When Israel unlawfully annexed East Jerusalem in 1967, indigenous Palestinians were not granted citizenship, but rather 'permanent residency'. This status, usually granted to foreigners on long-term stay in Israel, effectively situated Palestinians as immigrants or invaders in their own native lands. Unlike citizenship, permanent residency can be revoked at any time, does not allow the unconditional right to stay, reunite with relatives, is not automatically passed on to children, and does not entail the right to vote in national elections (see Halabi 2012). Israel closely monitors Palestinian Jerusalemites' residency status, dictating they must supply continuous evidence that Jerusalem is their 'center of life'—a policy that requires them to provide documents such as home ownership papers or rental agreements, electricity, water and tax bills, salary documents, certification of children's school registration, and more—in order to maintain their status and that of their families (B'Tselem 2013). Since 1967, Israel has revoked the Jerusalem residency status of at least 14,416 Palestinians, removing them from the population registry and abolishing their right to return under Israeli law (ACRI 2015).

For those willing and able to adhere to the rigid demands required to maintain their residency status, Israel's development policies in

occupied East Jerusalem present yet another set of obstacles. Israeli authorities have systematically imposed restrictions on Palestinian development. 35% of East Jerusalem land has been expropriated for Israeli settlement construction (OCHA 2014). Palestinians are limited to building on 13% of East Jerusalem land, are systematically denied building permits (94% of Palestinian housing permits are rejected), and thus forced to build 'illegally', leading to the frequent risk of home demolition by Israeli authorities. Since 1967, Israeli authorities have demolished at least 2,000 Palestinian houses in occupied East Jerusalem (ibid). At the same time, the state's strategic disinvestment from the schools, municipal services (such as sewage, water, and garbage), roads and other infrastructure in occupied East Jerusalem has made Palestinian life in the city all the more vulnerable. 75.4% of Palestinian Jerusalemites currently live below the poverty line, a status that has increased with the construction of the apartheid wall, which cut off several Jerusalem neighborhoods from other parts of the city, and has further severed economic, social, cultural and religious ties, weakening access to education, healthcare, right to worship, and more (ACRI 2015). Palestinians frequently seek legal redress through appeals to Israeli courts, yet find only temporary or partial relief, as a result of their inferior legal status and rights 'firmly enshrined in the [the state's] discriminatory legal framework' (CCPRJ et al. 2014, p. 13).

The result of such policies is a racialized divide of the colonial city: the ghettoization and neglect of Palestinian enclaves spread across the boundaries of occupied East Jerusalem—suffocated by poverty, punctuated by illegal Israeli settlements, and fragmented by the apartheid wall—disenfranchised zones characterized by the colonizer as plagued by 'lawlessness' and 'criminality', subject to constant surveillance and militarized policing. In short, the relegation of Palestinians to zones of abandonment and disproportionate vulnerability to eviction and death, in stark contrast to the Western region of the city—nearly exclusively Jewish, with the exception of Palestinian laborers, whose residents have access to land and housing, employment, educational opportunities, an abundance of municipal resources (clean streets, clean water, transportation, garbage collection, public parks and recreational facilities)—a population of citizens with the right to vote in national elections, protection of the law, safe and secure livelihoods and futures.

The mundane, everyday exercise of settler colonial dispossession not only organizes the colonial order of the city, but also produces Palestinian life as disposable and creates the conditions for its physical elimination. Indeed, it is against this backdrop that a rapid escalation of tensions occurred in the summer of 2014, a period to which I now turn.

The Creation of a ‘Genocidal Moment’

Following the June 12th disappearance of three Israeli settler youth in the occupied West Bank, Israeli Security Forces (ISF) launched a widespread military campaign throughout the occupied West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, deemed ‘Operation Brothers Keeper’, that included military invasions, night raids, property destruction, mass arrests and detention, targeted killings, and more. The assault was mounted in the aftermath of the collapse of a recently-brokered unity agreement between Palestinian political factions Fatah and Hamas. In addition to the military operation, Israeli government officials further inflamed tensions by blaming Hamas for the youth’s kidnapping (an accusation Hamas repeatedly denied), framing an international narrative around Israel’s need to defend itself in the face of Palestinian terrorism.

The bodies of the three settler youth were discovered on the morning of June 30th in the Palestinian town of Halhul, near the northern entrance to Al-Khalil (Hebron) in the occupied West Bank. Hours after the discovery, Israeli security forces implemented a full military closure of the town, invading homes and destroying property. They proceeded to detonate explosives inside the family homes of the suspects,^v Marwan Qawasmeh and Amer Abu Eische, announcing the re-institution of a policy of punitive home demolitions against the families of Palestinians accused of terrorism. Both suspects would be extra-judicially killed the following month (Al-Haq 2014).

That day, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu announced at a cabinet meeting, and took to twitter, writing: ‘They were abducted and murdered in cold blood by human animals’, referring to the Palestinian suspects. ‘Hamas is responsible and Hamas will pay’, (AFP 2014) he added, accusing Hamas for the murders and calling for ‘vengeance’ (Weiss 2014). Later, in his speech during the funeral for the three murdered settler youth, Netanyahu declared: ‘A deep and wide moral abyss separates us from our enemies. They sanctify death while we sanctify life. They sanctify cruelty while we sanctify compassion’ (ibid.).

Netanyahu’s words situated Israel as the bearer of a superior civilization and moral values, framing Palestinians as animalistic, pre-modern, racialized Others. Moreover, his comments situated the entire Palestinian people as a collective enemy deserving collective punishment. His calls for revenge did not fall on deaf ears; lawmakers were soon to follow. Knesset member Ayelet Shaked—who was recently appointed Justice Minister in Netanyahu’s new government (Norton 2015)—posted a statement on her facebook page, gaining thousands of likes and shares:

The Palestinian people has declared war on us, and we must respond with war ... It is not a war against terror, and not a war against extremists, and not even a war against the Palestinian Authority. These too are forms of avoiding reality. This is a war

between two people. Who is the enemy? The Palestinian people.
(Abunimah 2014)

Throughout the rapid escalation of unfolding events, Israeli discourses of sexual violence permeated the public sphere, gaining increased visibility and acceptance. Israeli Knesset member Shaked, who publicly referred to the Palestinian people as a collective enemy, called for the murder of Palestinian women as the mothers of 'human snakes' (terrorists) (ibid. 2014), and Israeli 'scholar' Mordechai Kedar of Bar Ilan University remarked on public radio: 'the only deterrent for ... those who kidnapped the [Israeli] children and killed them, the only way to deter them is their knowledge that either their sister or their mother will be raped if they are caught ... this is the culture of the Middle East' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al. 2014). Palestinian 'terrorism', his remarks suggested, could only be deterred by raping Palestinian women.

Israeli settler society was quick to respond to public officials' calls for revenge and war against the Palestinian people. An image circulated widely across social media, of a veiled woman labeled 'Gaza', naked from the waist down, holding a message: 'Bibi, finish inside this time! Signed, citizens in favor of a ground assault'. That day, mobs of Jewish youth took to the streets of West Jerusalem, armed with weapons, chanting 'Death to Arabs' among other racist slogans and assaulting Palestinian workers (Hasson 2014). Among them were members of Lehava, a racist anti-miscegenation group that would rise in prominence over the next several months, whose members wore T-shirts emblazoned with the face of Meir Kahane, and distributed propaganda warning Arab men to stay away from Jewish women.

In *Genocide and Settler Society*, Dirk Moses argues that in colonial contexts, genocide is a dynamic process that has the potential to be released in 'circumstances of crisis' (2004, p. 33). Flashpoints of exterminatory violence released by colonial agents and social hysteria among settler communities on the frontier, what Moses terms 'genocidal moments' (ibid. p. 34), reveal not only the complex relationship between settler communities and the state in its various forms, but also the deep structure of settler society. Shalhoub-Kevorkian has argued that the Israeli settler colonial project is energized by a structure of genocidal dispossession, a structure predicated on a racial schema that evicts Palestinians from the realm of the human, relegating them to zones of non-being and death (2015b).

What interests me here is not only the creation of a genocidal moment that gave way to Mohammed's murder, one that further evidences Israel's structure of genocidal dispossession, but also the resurgence of a discourse of colonial sexual violence in conjunction with the creation of this genocidal moment. Feminist scholars have long analyzed the connections between sexual violence and colonial domination, as the logic of colonial sexual violence establishes a link

between the inherent violability of native bodies and native lands (see Smith 2005, p. 12; Deer 2004; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). Colonizers have, as Sherene Razack explains, attempted to establish claims to ownership of native lands and conquest of its inhabitants both through the rape of native women and the feminization of native men (2005, p. 343).

Zionism's orientalist logics have historically propelled on the one hand, an equation of Palestinian land and the female body, framing the Palestinian body as an inherently 'rapeable' body (or the personification of the Palestinian collective as a single rape-able woman) and on the other, a feminization of the colonized man or pathologization of his masculinity. These processes are illustrated through histories of sexual violence against native Palestinians since the Nakba, where Zionist military forces strategically used the rape or threat of female sexual abuse to continuously humiliate and emasculate Palestinian men, quell attempts at organized resistance and facilitate the fragmentation and destruction of Palestinian society (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009, p. 15). While violence against Palestinian women's bodies and sexuality have been mobilized by the Zionist state to strengthen indigenous patriarchal structures and aid in the eviction of Palestinians from their land, male Palestinian bodies have been targeted for different forms of abuse, such as ritualized forms of public beatings by military forces aimed at humiliation and punishment (Peteet 1994, Kassem 2009, p. 150).

While discourses of sexual violence against Palestinian women circulating in conjunction with calls for revenge and war against the Palestinian people must be analyzed in terms of a historical legacy of colonial sexual violence since the Nakba (see Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al. 2014), the resurgence of such discourses at this particular moment suggests that the Israeli structure of genocidal dispossession is animated by a logic of colonial sexual violence, an indication of the extent to which the racial is expressed through the sexual. Thus, in analyzing the settler colonizer's drive towards 'racial elimination' (Sayegh 1965, p. 27) of the Palestinian native, we must attend to the imbrication of the racial and the sexual—the role of sexual logics in producing the Palestinian as racialized Other that may be attacked or killed with impunity, and confined to zones of social abandonment or death.

It is thus that on the eve of Mohammed's murder, various agents of the colonial state, with their rhetoric of 'revenge' against a collective 'Arab enemy', further cultivated an anti-Arab hysteria among Jewish settler communities; a sexualized racial hysteria that pathologized and reified Palestinian 'culture', transposing the Palestinian body and land, and empowering Jewish citizens to take matters of exterminatory violence into their own hands. This was indeed a 'genocidal moment', a moment in which the illusions propagated by the Israeli state of peaceful coexistence within a multicultural democracy, and Jerusalem as a 'united capital', were dispelled—a moment where the deadly

structure of settler colonialism, with its sexualized racial logic of native elimination, were vigorously driven to the fore.

Invoking the ‘Honor Crime’: Gender, Culture and Orientalism

Merely hours after Netanyahu and others issued public calls for ‘revenge’, on July 1st, a group of Jewish settlers attempted to kidnap 9-year-old Musa Zalloum in the Beit Hanina neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem. They grabbed Musa by the throat, beat his mother and pushed her to the ground as she fought them off. Her cries for help alerted local residents, causing the attackers to flee. The Zalloum family called Israeli police to report the attempted kidnapping, but police did not respond (Hasson & Levinson 2014).

The following morning, in the early hours of July 2nd, the same group of settler youth would return—this time, to the nearby Shuafat neighborhood—searching for another potential Palestinian victim.

Immediately after learning their son had been kidnapped by a group of settlers, Mohammed’s parents attempted to obtain help from Israeli police. Yet instead of investigating the kidnappers, Mohammed’s parents themselves were met with accusations and criminal investigation. Israeli police and media initially framed the kidnapping and murder as an internal family affair, an ‘honor killing’ sparked by the supposed discovery that Mohammed was a homosexual (Goldman 2014). The rumors of homophobia as the motive for his murder spread quickly across social media, along with claims the victim was a known member of the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance, an Israeli Jerusalem-based LGBTQ organization that had supposedly released a statement about his death. The executive director of Open House soon issued a denial, stating that the boy was unknown to the organization, and the statement that was spread in the organization’s name was forged. Nevertheless, photographs of Mohammed were circulated online along with the caption: ‘The Arabs killed him for being gay’ (Gross 2014).

Mohammed’s family explained to me that three youth had witnessed his kidnapping as it occurred that morning: ‘They heard him screaming [as the settlers pulled him into the car] and tried to follow him, but couldn’t. They came to the family house and told us what happened to Mohammed’. Mohammed’s father, Hussein Abu-Khdeir, continued:

We called the police. They didn’t do anything. They came. Instead of following the car which kidnapped him—because my child had his telephone they could have followed him through the telephone, as it was working for the first hour—the police were in the area until 5 o’clock checking on the [surveillance] cameras. They didn’t follow the car. Around 5 or 6 [in the morning] they took me to interrogation and kept me there until 11. They were asking me: Who are your enemies? What happened? ... I told them “what are you talking about, what enemies? It’s clear on the cameras that he was

kidnapped". So the police asked me "how do you know they are Jewish?" I told them it's very clear, it's on the camera ... They took the camera of our neighbors. ... They took the film ... they ruined the films and gave us back the films and they were not working, so that we could not make use of the evidence on the film. So all we have is what we managed to get from one camera [one that the authorities failed to confiscate]. The pictures were very clear and it was very clear, those who kidnapped my son. If it hadn't been for the camera, nobody would know what happened to my son. They could have found any other excuse.

Mohammed's father explained that Israeli police were unresponsive when the family called in to report their son had been kidnapped. Instead, police initially implicated the Abu-Khdeir family in Mohammed's disappearance (Silverstein 2014). Moreover, Israeli authorities confiscated surveillance footage from video cameras stationed throughout the area that identified Mohammed's attackers. Instead of using surveillance footage to investigate the kidnapping, and following the car, acts that could have saved his life, authorities continued to investigate the Abu-Khdeir family.

I was in the Maskobiyya detention center until 3 o'clock [on July 3rd]. Then they told us that they found a burned body, but they didn't know whose body it was. I asked them to show me a picture, and they refused. Then they told me they needed to take DNA samples from me and his mother to see if it was our son ... Inside the maskobiyya detention center, they took our DNA for examination. At 11 pm they informed our lawyer that the burned body was that of my son. So the Israeli police tried to say it was a family problem, an internal problem between the family ... but because we have the film from the camera, they can't change the facts. After a few days, they declared that they caught those that committed the crime. But they said they weren't 100% sure ... Eventually, those caught confessed that they committed the crime. But if they had wanted, they could have caught them within five minutes. In the street, there were at least 20 cameras [taking CCTV footage] for the light-rail, which took pictures of everything happening. But the police told us these cameras were not working. If somebody [a Palestinian] throws stones they find out very quickly and catch them. But when these Jewish settlers committed the crime, they claim the cameras were not working.^{vi}

Mohammed's father reiterated his claim that critical evidence, surveillance footage of the crime that would have immediately identified Mohammed's attackers and possibly saved the boy's life, was confiscated and destroyed by police. Police claimed the said cameras were not working. Yet the family was able to obtain one surveillance tape that police had mistakenly failed to confiscate, film it with their phone camera, and distribute the video via social media. This video is the only remaining evidence of Mohammed's kidnapping by Jewish settlers.

The pathologizing account framing Mohammed's murder as a result of inherent homophobia and violence among Arab communities

mobilized Orientalist depictions of a sexually backward, uncivilized Palestinian 'other' in relation to a civilized Israeli Jewish self and polis.^{vii} Scholars and activists have referred to this discourse as 'pinkwashing', an Israeli strategy to depict Israel as a modern, liberal democracy signified by its support of LGBT rights in order to conceal ongoing violations of Palestinian human rights. The accusation that Mohammed was a homosexual, and as a result, murdered by his family to protect their 'honor', places the blame squarely on indigenous Palestinians themselves (and their 'backward Arab culture'). Such a discourse helps to establish social and racial hierarchies anchored in cultural 'truths' (Razack 2005, p. 349).

Israeli police's grave, corrupt mishandling of the Abu-Khdeir case, and their attempt, along with Israeli media, to displace the blame for Mohammed's murder onto the Abu-Khdeir family not only demonstrates a deep investment in exculpating the perpetrators and the state from responsibility or accountability, but also reveals the extent to which a gendered and sexualized Orientalist ideology saturates the Israeli settler colonial imaginary. In her feminist analysis of Orientalism, Meyda Yegenoglu explains that 'discourses of cultural and sexual difference are powerfully mapped onto each other' (1998, p. 10). The construction of the Western subject 'requires another term or condition from which the subject distinguishes itself' (ibid, p. 5), and this distinction is built upon representations of sexual difference. As she further explains,

representations of the Orient are interwoven by sexual imageries, unconscious fantasies, desires, fears and dreams. In other words, the question of sexuality cannot be treated as a regional one; it governs and structures the subject's every relation with the other ... Orientalist construction of the Orient is the Western subject's means of securing an identity for itself mediated by the other (ibid, p. 26).

Figuring Palestinians through Orientalist terms—inherently violent, sexually deviant, morally corrupt, and uncivilized—renders them responsible for the conditions of violence in which they are supposed to live, and thus, relieves the settler colonial state of accountability for its historical and contemporary violence against native people. Ironically, in the Israeli settler colonial imaginary, Palestinian men as Muslim men have come to occupy a space similar to that of Jewish men in the European racial imaginary of a previous era, 'embodying at once a dangerous hypermasculinity and a mutilated deviation from proper manhood' (Bhattacharyya 2008, p. 89). Yet the Oriental 'other' is not merely an individual, but collective marking. The fantasy of the Orient as feminine, seductive, and dangerous might be taken as a praxis of heteropatriarchal masculinity, inasmuch as it demonstrates the inherently heterosexual masculine position the sovereign occupies vis-à-vis its sexually deviant cultural Other.

From depictions of the Palestinian male as sexual predator and rapist of the Jewish woman, inherently violent and oppressive against the

Palestinian woman, homophobic and uncivilized, terrorist Other, sexual discourses circulate not only as a reflection of settler society's cultural imaginary distinguishing native from settler, but also to actively construct racial difference. Pathologizing accounts of 'Arab sexuality' in the context of Israeli settler colonialism serves to mark and establish who is Jewish, with all the properties such a marking entails, and who is criminal, racial other slated for elimination and erasure.

I have argued here that the propaganda circulated by Israeli police and media that Mohammed was killed by his own family because he was a homosexual is evidence that Orientalist discourses of sexual difference marked on the native body labor in racializing the Palestinian as he or she who may be evicted, tortured or killed with impunity; the Jewish subject's means of securing a gendered sense of racial superiority mediated by the Palestinian Other. Yet equally critical is the question of what the inscription of violence and suffering on the Palestinian body enables the Jewish subject to achieve.

Hortense Spillers' conceptualization of the 'pornotrope' (1987), the articulation of violence and sexuality, is illuminating here. In her analysis of racial slavery, Spillers argues that torture and other forms of political terror—the severing, wounding, burning, and dismemberment of the black body—is a profoundly gendered process that culturally 'unmakes' the body and its gender, severing the body from its desire, and in doing so, evicting it from the realm of the human (ibid. p. 67). For Spillers, pornotrope is the conduit for transformation from human to non-human, subject to slave, in the rendering of body to flesh. The idea of pornotrope, then, must be understood as 'conceptually igniting the im/potential libidinal currents that slumber in all acts of political domination' (Weheliye 2008, p. 75). It is precisely this sphere where 'political brutality bleeds into sexuality' (ibid.) that paradigmatically shapes the symbolic order of the human. If pornotrope, as a lasting legacy of slavery's afterlife, has been a vehicle for evicting racialized others from the realm of the human, it must also be recognized for its productive capacity, as a vehicle for the modern Western production of the white liberal subject as coterminous with the human.

While Abu Khdeir's murder was not a spectacular display of violence that led to a scopical consumption of the scene of the injured body in the same sense as that captured by Spillers' conceptualization (indeed, there are critical differences in those scenes of subjection embedded in the contexts of racial slavery and settler colonialism), I want to suggest that this murder be understood as a sexualized inscription of racial terror on the colonized body, rendering the colonized body to flesh, and evicting it from the coordinates of the human.^{viii} At the same time, it produces the human/Settler as the consumer of such disfiguring and spectacular forms of terror, who reap the visceral, libidinal satisfaction of devouring the non-human other through scopical pleasure at native intimacy with death. Through

participation in rituals of terror against native Palestinian bodies, the Jewish settler instantiates himself not only as racially superior, but also claims control of colonized territory. The ungendered Palestinian body thus becomes a symbol of Israeli territorial domination; that is, the inscription of racial terror over the Palestinian body is a symbolic exercise of settler colonial power aimed at securing dominance over native territory.

The State's Narrative: Performing Democracy and Stealing the Pain of Others

On Thursday, July 17, 2014, three suspects were indicted for the murder of Mohammed Abu-Khdeir. An examination of the State of Israel's indictment of the three Jewish Israelis accused of committing the murder reveals a complex and contradictory narrative.^{ix} Before outlining the charges, in the 'General Part' of the Indictment, Uri Korev, attorney and Department Director of the Jerusalem District Attorney's Office (Criminal) describes the psychological state of the perpetrators, specifying that

... Defendant 1 has been treated with psychiatric drugs for several years. Among other things, the defendant suffers from OCD. (State of Israel 2014, p. 1)

Defendant 2 is a yeshiva student.

Defendant 3 studied at a yeshiva until shortly before 2014 ... Recently, Defendant 3 stopped working and intended to return to yeshiva. Defendant 3 suffers from OCD and takes psychiatric drugs to treat the condition. (State of Israel 2014, p. 2)

Thus, even before outlining the counts the perpetrators are charged with, the Israeli state stresses two points: First, that two out of three of the perpetrators suffer from some form of mental illness, and take psychiatric drugs. Second, that two out of three perpetrators are yeshiva students, and thus, informed by religious ideology. In doing so, the state both sets the stage for a defense of the perpetrators that might involve claims to mental illness or insanity and at the same time, frames the perpetrators as members of an ultra-religious segment of Israeli society, in distinction from the state's liberal democratic brand of Judaism.^x

In the first count of the indictment, the state confirms that the murder of Mohammed Abu-Khdeir was carried out as an act of revenge for the murder of the three Israeli settler youth, characterized as a 'manhunt' (State of Israel, 2014, p. 2):

... [A]fter they learned that the bodies of the abducted youths had been found, Defendant 1 told Defendant 2 that they had to carry out a revenge attack against Arabs, and Defendant 2 agreed.

Defendants 1 and 2 planned to physically attack Arabs, and at a certain stage they planned to assault and abduct an Arab. (ibid. p. 3)

The state describes the perpetrators' first failed attempt at kidnapping a Palestinian child in occupied East Jerusalem, in which they subsequently attempted to set fire to Palestinian property. Next, the state describes the perpetrators' plan to carry out another 'act of revenge against Arabs' in response to the murder of the 'abducted Jewish youths' (State of Israel, p. 5). It is telling that throughout the indictment, the state uses the term 'Arabs' to refer to Palestinians, evidence of the deep embeddedness of Zionist discourse in the state's ideology, which erases the historical presence and identity of the Palestinian people. Moreover, by characterizing the three murdered settler youth merely as 'abducted youths', the state erases the fact that the youth are illegal settlers living on stolen Palestinian land, silently condoning the presence of Jewish settlers throughout the occupied Palestinian Territories. In describing the defendants' attempt to locate another Palestinian victim to abduct, the indictment continues:

The defendants drove to the eastern section of Jerusalem, their aim being to find a victim to carry out their scheme. For three hours, the defendants tried to find a weak potential victim, a person they could abduct and overcome his resistance ...

Here, the indictment points to Israeli Jewish common sense of the racialized order of the colonial city, where the 'eastern section of Jerusalem' is a place inhabited by Palestinians, a population deserving collective punishment and revenge. Israeli Jewish settlers' unfettered mobility, their freedom of movement in and out of this space, from the 'safe' space of West Jerusalem or any number of illegal settlements to the 'dangerous' geographies of East Jerusalem itself marks a form of racial privilege.

After several failed attempts to abduct Palestinian children throughout the evening, the perpetrators noticed Mohammad Abu-Khdeir, who was standing alone outside his family home, just outside the mosque, awaiting the dawn prayer around 3:45 am.

Defendants 2 and 3 got out of the Honda and went over to the victim. To make sure that the victim was 'Arab' and to approach him, Defendants 2 and 3 asked him how to get to the Damascus Gate and to Tel Aviv. The victim started to respond when he suddenly became suspicious of them. The victim stood up and tried to call his friend. At this point, Defendant 3 hit the victim. The victim began to cry out and Defendants 2 and 3 forcibly pulled him toward the Honda, with Defendant 3 using his hand to cover the victim's mouth.

Defendant 3 got into the back seat of the Honda, pulling the victim—who was being held, his mouth covered, by Defendant 2—behind him. The victim tried to resist with all his force, and put his

foot outside the door, preventing the defendants from closing it. Defendants 2 and 3 struggled with the victim while Defendant 1 began to drive away ... (ibid p. 7)

After beating and torturing Mohammed profusely while in the vehicle, the group arrived in the Jerusalem forest.

Defendant 2 pulled the victim's body out of the Honda and Defendant 2 also got out of the Honda.

Defendant 1 stood next to the unconscious victim and kicked him three times while saying "this is for Eyal", "this is for Gil-Ad", this is for "Naftali", referring to the abducted youths.

After that, Defendant 1 told Defendant 2 that they had to burn the victim, so that the victim "will not attack them" and to destroy evidence that might connect them to the act.

Defendants 1 and 2 poured petrol from the bottles onto the body of the victim, who was unconscious at the time. After that, Defendant 1 set the victim's body on fire with a lighter. The action caused a big fire and burned the victim to death while he was unconscious. (State of Israel, p. 9)

As the indictment explains, the perpetrators feared Mohammed—at this point, despite his unconscious state—would 'attack them'. After describing the perpetrators' attempts to 'clean up' the scene of the crime, disposing of the murder weapons and cleaning the car, the indictment concludes:

In the acts described above, the defendants caused the death of a person with premeditation. The defendants decided to put Muhammad Abu Khdeir to death and killed him in cold blood, without any instigation on his part preceding the act ... (ibid. p. 10)

The indictment thus accuses the perpetrators of killing Mohammed 'in cold blood', while at the same time providing the basis for a plea to insanity. In fact, preliminary court proceedings indicate that the main perpetrator, Yosef Haim Ben-David, a 29-year-old settler from the Adam settlement of the occupied West Bank and 'ringleader' of the kidnapping and murder of Abu-Khdeir, is expected to submit an insanity plea (Deger 2014).

In addition to the Israeli state's contradictory narrative as portrayed in the indictment, the very act of attempting to bring the murder of Abu-Khdeir to 'justice' through the judicial system reveals one of the founding paradoxes of the Israeli settler colonial state: the simultaneous performance of rational arbiter of justice and thus, liberal, multicultural democracy, and the continuous eviction, erasure, dispossession and elimination of the Palestinian people by a multiplicity of means. Importantly, during the very period when the state prepares to prosecute the three 'defendants' for the murder of Mohammed Abu-Khdeir, the state itself is engaged not only in

terrorizing the Abu-Khdeir family and committing countless crimes against Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem, but is also waging a military assault on the occupied Gaza strip, indiscriminately killing civilians and mounting unprecedented destruction.

I have previously argued that the Jewish settler establishes himself as racially superior through the inscription of sexualized racial terror on the colonized body. Yet it is not merely during the act of terror itself that the Palestinian body becomes the 'performative ground of justice' (Guidotti-Hernandez 2011, p. 54). We return to the scene of the crime again. This time, the Palestinian body is hailed in order to resurrect the 'conscience' of the Israeli Jewish polity. That is, the Palestinian body becomes the territory on which the Jewish state transforms itself into a liberal, multicultural democracy—upon which the Jewish national conscience is rehabilitated, resurrected—to reestablish its humanity. This conscience is cemented, in the Abu-Khdeir case, with Israel's official recognition of Mohammed's murder as an 'act of terrorism', and the inscription of his name on an official Israeli memorial for victims of terrorism mounted by the Israeli Ministry of Defense in April of this year, an act for which Mohammed's parents were not even consulted, and which they fiercely rejected (Alfred 2015).

If settler colonial power is 'predicated not only on the control and expropriation of the living, but also of the dead' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014, p. 26), one aspect of such control is over the memory of the dead, and the pain and suffering of the community. In 'Stealing the Pain of Others' (2007), Sherene Razack suggests that the very act of witnessing the Other's pain serves to further dehumanize them, and to reinstall the witness as morally superior in relation to the Other. She builds on Saidiya Hartman's analysis of the white philosopher John Rankin, who describes the evils of slavery in a letter to his slaveholding brother (1997). Hartman contends that Rankin, a white witness to the spectacle of the slave's suffering, can only make such suffering visible by 'making the other's suffering one's own', an intimacy with the other's pain so easily invoked such that it obliterates the Other, obscuring Rankin's own complicity in creating such pain (1997, p. 19). Building on Hartman's intervention, Razack underscores the ways in which the theft of pain is 'an act supported by a racial logic and underpinned by a material system of white privilege' (2007, p. 389). She continues: 'We rely on the spectacle of such [racially Othered suffering] bodies to forge a national and white consciousness' (ibid. 391).

Thus, it is my contention that just as Mohammed's killers relied on the spectacle of his murder to forge a gendered sense of racial superiority and claims to Palestinian territory, the Israeli state cements a national, white Jewish consciousness/conscience through its benevolent recognition of the pain and suffering of the Palestinian Other—distancing the state from the 'exceptional' violent acts of a few mentally ill, religious fundamentalists and vacating the state from

responsibility and accountability. Through recognizing—or rather, attempting to steal the pain and suffering of the Abu-Khdeir family, enacting a facile intimacy with the Palestinian Other, the Jewish nation performs the fantasy of liberal, multicultural democracy, and disguises the reality that the crimes that Israel (both state and settler society) commits against the Palestinian daily, of which the murder of Mohammed Abu-Khdeir is a prime example, are not an aberration from the Zionist state, but rather the very foundation of its existence.

Conclusion

The period of June, from the time of Mohammed's murder, to September 2014 was marked by an elevated campaign of repression of Palestinian communities throughout the occupied West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, that involved more than 1,400 raids on Palestinian homes and properties, and the arrest of more than 2,050 Palestinians, including children (HRC 2015). In the second half of 2014 alone, Palestinian communities experienced the largest surge in arrests and detentions since the second intifada. 1,184 Palestinians, including 406 children, were arrested in occupied East Jerusalem for 'involvement in demonstrations and public disorder' (ACRI 2015). The same period witnessed a stark rise in killings and injuries of Palestinians by Israeli security forces. Israeli security forces killed 36 Palestinians, including 11 children, and injured more than 3,100 (OCHA, Addameer, cited in HRC 2015, p. 17).^x

Organized vigilante-style 'tag-mechir' (pricetag) attacks were launched on Palestinians' bodies, their property and their land—the walls in Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem were sprayed with graffiti reading 'Revenge' and 'Arabs Out'; attempted kidnappings of more Palestinian children by Jewish settlers left mothers and children confined even more to their homes, living in fear; Palestinian workers in West Jerusalem were assaulted at their places of work; Palestinians in the Old City and other 'mixed' areas were stabbed by settlers; workplaces employing 'Arabs' were pressured to fire Palestinian workers; and worshippers were attacked by settlers and security forces in the Al Aqsa mosque compound, or denied access to the holy site entirely during the holy month of Ramadan.

Months after Mohammed's murder, the terrorizing conditions of everyday life in occupied Jerusalem had not evaporated. I returned to the Abu-Khdeir family home to visit with his parents. It was November, and the burned out tram station across the street was a reminder of the rebellion that had begun in July. Israeli security forces in teams of three, clad in military uniform with weapons slung over their shoulders, were still positioned on every street corner throughout the neighborhood for miles. Shopowners complained their business had declined due to the military's intimidating presence. Parents described their children being stopped and asked to open their backpacks on the way to school for randomized 'security checks', and fearing that the levels of arrests in the area had not declined. As we sat on the

veranda drinking tea, Mohammed's mother showed me her son's birds—a pair of yellow birds he had purchased just days before he had been kidnapped. His father Hussein, lamenting the continued military presence in the neighborhood, and reflecting on the motivations for Mohammed's murder, said:

When they kidnapped my son, they took him to Deir Yassin ... the forest at Deir Yassin. They burned him there. Deir Yassin is a village that was depopulated in 1948 and the Irgun [Zionist paramilitary forces] committed a massacre there, killing men, women and children ... they took him there to remind us what they did to us in 1948 and of the people of Deir Yassin. In spite of that, we will be staying here. We will not leave this land, whatever they do.^{xii}

Mohammed's father's words are a reminder of the need to locate the exercise of terror against the Palestinian native within a historical structure of settler colonial violence. That the killers chose to murder Mohammed in a space so haunted by the phantom of the Palestinian Nakba—to ritualistically 'return him to his proper place' as a form of historical citation of earlier colonial violence—is further evidence of the symbolic nature of their crime; not only a symbolic act of 'revenge' against the Palestinian people, but a political act of terror intended to terrify Palestinians, viscerally remind them of their suffering, and drive native Palestinians from occupied Jerusalem. Indeed, the Zionist attack on Mohammed's body is deeply intertwined with the attack on the collective body—a process of fragmentation and dismemberment of the Palestinian social body inherent in the settler colonial project's aim of native elimination.

Yet 'the social networks surrounding death and dying', writes Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 'create new bridges of solidarity, reconstruct the everydayness of suffering and establish innovative spaces of sharing, caring, and hoping' (2014, p. 25). Despite the Israeli state and settler society's attempts to obscure the conditions of Mohammed's murder and obstruct a pursuit of justice, the burning alive of Mohammed, which Palestinians throughout the homeland experienced viscerally as an embodied memory of the continuous Nakba, reawakened a broader 'politics of refusal' (Simpson 2014), uniting Palestinian communities and opening space for life amidst the death zones of settler colonial violence in occupied Jerusalem.

Understanding Mohammed's kidnapping, torture and burning alive as a symbolic act of political terror by members of a colonial settler society rather than an isolated act of violence, a 'hate crime' by a few Jewish extremists, enables us to locate the inscription of violence and suffering on the colonized body in the structural foundations of the Israeli settler colonial state. That his murder by members of settler society was enabled by Israeli leadership's calls for revenge against the Palestinian people as collective enemy, a genocidal moment revealing the racial schema formative of the Jewish state and the cultural imaginaries of settler identity—one that relegates Palestinian

natives to spaces of disposability and death, facilitating their elimination and permanent replacement by the Jewish settler polity—is further evidence of the imbrication of state violence and extra-judicial killing.

Israel's project of settler colonization, which has, from its inception, established a racialized divide between Jewish settler and Palestinian native, cannot be understood apart from gendered and sexual logics that have been deeply imbricated with Zionism's racial ideology since the Nakba. The gendered and sexual discourses, and libidinal currents that have energized the violent racialization inherent in this genocidal moment, I have argued, not only labor in evicting Palestinian natives from the category of the human, but also in producing settler humanity, anchored in a gendered sense of racial superiority; a construction that asserts dominance not only over the Palestinian body, but also the territory of the colonized. To reckon with this particular history of racial terror and processes of colonial identity formation challenge us to investigate the connections between settler colonial contexts across space and time, and within a global racial contract.

Portraying Mohammed as a victim of 'pathological individuals', the state's indictment proves to be yet another mode of appropriating Palestinian suffering to de-criminalize and victimize the murderers themselves. Both the prosecution and state recognition of Mohammed as a victim of 'terrorism' are yet another performance of the fantasy of liberal, multicultural democracy, attempts to situate the murder as an aberration by a few Jewish extremists and remove the Israeli state from accountability for its ongoing crimes against the Palestinian people.

Consequently, justice for Mohammed cannot be achieved through redress to the colonial legal system alone. For how can a state founded on a genocidal structure of elimination of the Palestinian people, one that traffics in the continued dehumanization, terror and eviction of natives from their homeland, provide any semblance of justice? Legal mechanisms embedded in the settler colonial structure of violence do not address the structure of colonial violence itself (see Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015b, p. 9). Therefore, seeking justice for Mohammed requires that we historicize his murder within a structure of settler colonial violence since the Nakba and hold not only the individual perpetrators, but also the settler colonial state accountable

Israel's most recent wave of violent repression in occupied Jerusalem and beyond, the suffocating, everyday life conditions imposed on the Palestinian people guided by a settler colonial logic of elimination, and a political climate of terror where those publicly calling for the murder of Palestinians as collective enemy have been rewarded with appointments to even greater positions of state power guarantee that tensions will only continue to escalate, that violent acts against Palestinian natives by both state and settler society will continue to be

committed with impunity. To end racial terror against the Palestinian native in Jerusalem and throughout historic Palestine requires a political solution that confronts the foundational terror of the settler colonial state. Perhaps the seeds of a new political imaginary may be found in the uprising sparked by Mohammed's murder, informal practices of resistance that gesture towards a reinvigorated politics of refusal, opening space for decolonization.

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Notes

ⁱ The author's fieldnotes, Shuafat, occupied East Jerusalem, July 2014.

ⁱⁱ The Nakba, catastrophe in Arabic, is the period in 1948 when hundreds of thousands of indigenous Palestinians were killed or forced into exile, leaving behind their land, homes and villages, which were occupied or destroyed by Zionist militias in the formation of the Israeli state. (See Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 2007)

ⁱⁱⁱ Throughout this paper I use the term 'occupied Jerusalem' rather than 'occupied East Jerusalem' and/or 'West' Jerusalem to trouble Israel's claims to Jerusalem as its 'unified capital' and to mark the history of Zionist ethnic cleansing that shapes the lived reality of the colonial present in the city. I use 'East' and 'West' Jerusalem only when necessary to spatially demarcate specific acts or policies under consideration.

^{iv} For a detailed analysis of the concept of 'transfer' in Zionist political thought, see Masalha, N 1992.

^v It is important to note that Qawasmeh and Abu-Eishe were just that—suspects—accused of a crime but without any form of due process falling within the boundaries of established 'law'. Rather, they, their families, and their entire community were collectively punished based on the mere accusation of this crime.

^{vi} Interview conducted by the researcher in Shuafat, occupied East Jerusalem, 2014.

^{vii} As Goldberg has emphasized, the racial configuration of the Jewish state was articulated through early Zionist thinkers' orientalist ideology that framed

the Jewish people as bearers of European civilization to an otherwise culturally backward region and people (2009, p. 109). Through an assertion of Zionism, 'the non-white Jewish victims of anti-Semitism could assert a bridge from non-whiteness to whiteness, identifying with European global hegemony, Orientalism, and colonial settlement of coveted Third World lands (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2008: 646).'

^{viii} In drawing on Spillers' theorization, I do not wish to collapse histories of racial terror against black and native bodies. Following the interventions of black feminists who have centered the gendered and sexual formations of the racial state, it is my contention that the libidinal economies of anti-blackness, or slavery's afterlife, inflect and shape not only the technologies of political terror animating the grammar of racial antagonisms, but also the symbolic order of humanity embedded in the Israeli juridical-political order, theorization I expound in my forthcoming dissertation.

^{ix} The author would like to acknowledge that an analysis of this indictment was first presented in connection to the murder of Abu-Khdeir as a case study in 'violence against children' in settler colonial contexts in an unpublished paper presented by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian in Sarajevo in October 2014, entitled 'Violated Palestinian Childhood and the Logic of Violence'. Prof. Shalhoub-Kevorkian was generous enough to share her personal English translation of the indictment with the author.

^x A more detailed analysis of the fusion of religious claims and nationalism, and the ways in which this contradictory fusion plays out in the indictment for Abu-Khdeir's murder is presented in Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014 (unpublished).

^{xi} During the same period, the Israeli government launched a military assault against the occupied Gaza Strip. 'Operation Protective Edge', a 51-day assault that wreaked 'an unprecedented level of destruction' on the occupied Gaza Strip, would claim the lives of 2,251 Palestinians, including 1,462 Palestinian civilians, of whom 299 were women and 551 children, and injuring 11,231 Palestinians, including 3,540 women and 3,436 children, 10 percent of whom suffered permanent disability as a result (HRC 2015, p. 6). An additional 1,500 Palestinian children were orphaned.

^{xii} Interview conducted by the researcher in Shuafat, occupied East Jerusalem, 2014.

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