Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Democratization and Government

THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY IN THE WEST BANK

THE THEATRICS OF WOEFUL STATECRAFT

Michelle Pace and Somdeep Sen

"The book brilliantly examines the crucial aporia into which the Palestinian struggle for national liberation has ended up: the inhibition of the establishment of a Palestinian state as a result of the very theatrical statehood machinery performed by the Palestinian Authority with the support of the international community. Reconstructing the post-Oslo attempts to create the new unachievable sovereign entity and carefully navigating the conflictual political emotions of the key characters in this tragedy, Pace and Sen offer a thoughtful and provocative gaze on one of the most complex cases of self-determination in contemporary history."

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"Michelle Pace and Somdeep Sen offer a rare evaluation of a subject that has long been unjustifiably ignored or hastily grouped under ostensibly more urgent contexts concerning Israeli 'security' and American foreign policy. The authors have provided a concise analysis of the Palestinian reality under the PA, one which is grounded in exhaustive research, backed by ethnographic evidence. It convincingly explains why various political actors, Palestinians and others, collude to promote the farce that the PA is in the process of achieving an independent Palestinian state. While keeping the Israeli, regional and international contexts in mind, Pace and Sen have successfully helped unshackle the study of Palestinian politics and the ongoing struggle for freedom from its compulsory marginalization."

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Sophie Richter-Devroe, *Hamad Bin Khalifa University*

The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank

The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank explores the manner in which the Palestinian Authority's performative acts affect and shape the lives and subjective identities of those in its vicinity in the occupied West Bank. The nature of Palestinians' statelessness has to contend with the rituals of statecraft that the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its Palestinian functionaries engage in. These rituals are also economically maintained by an international donor community and are vehemently challenged by Palestinian activists, antagonistic to the prevalence of the statist agenda in Palestine.

Conceptually, the understanding of the PA's 'theater of statecraft' is inspired by Judith Butler's conception of performativity as one that encompasses several repetitive and ritual performative acts. The authors explore what they refer to as the 'fuzzy state' (personified in the form and conduct of the PA) looks like for those living it, from the vantage point of PA institutions, NGOs, international representative offices, and activists. Methodologically, the book adopts an ethnographic approach, by way of interviews and observations in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank makes an important and long-due intervention by integrating performance studies and politics to suggest an understanding of the theatrics of woeful statecraft in Palestine. The book is an essential resource for students and scholars interested in the study of the state, International Relations and Politics, Palestine Studies, and the Middle East.

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Figure 0.1 Mural of Leila Khaled on the separation barrier/racial segregation wall near Bethlehem, June 2016.

Source: Photo courtesy of the authors Michelle Pace and Somdeep Sen.

The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank

The Theatrics of Woeful Statecraft

Michelle Pace and Somdeep Sen

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Prelude

On June 3, 2016 we met Sara,[1] a young Palestinian activist, at an up-market restaurant in Ramallah. We arrived about an hour ahead of time to prepare for what we expected to be an intriguing dialogue. Sara had initially been hesitant to meet us because our project focused on the Palestinian Authority (PA). She had asked a mutual acquaintance, a student at Birzeit University who had facilitated the initial communication between us, "Why do they care so much about the PA? Why not Israel?" Sara's apprehension was not uncommon in the field. Only earlier that week one of our Palestinian interviewees had expressed his concerns regarding our field (of) research and asked: "What is the point of talking about the Palestinian Authority? Why focus on *them*? The real problem is Israel. They are the ones responsible for our suffering. Why don't you focus on the occupation?" Even though we insisted that our sympathies remained with the Palestinian national cause and that studying the PA was merely a pretext for highlighting *another* avenue where the Palestinian national struggle is undermined by Israel's settler colonial enterprise, he remained unconvinced. Our mutual acquaintance from Birzeit University had assured Sara that we were 'good people' and so she agreed to meet us. That said, while preparing the questions for the interview, we were well-aware that our interviewee was likely to still harbor a suspicion that, in focusing on the PA, we were somehow ignoring the offences of the State of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt).

Expectedly, Sara arrived with an air of uncertainty. After exchanging pleasantries she sat down, and it was immediately apparent that she was still perplexed by the focus of our project. "Why," she asked, "are you asking about the Palestinian Authority?" Once again, we explained the purpose of our project. Unconvinced, Sara retorted: "But what are you trying to reveal? What are you trying to find out?" For the next 30 minutes we discussed our motivations and previous work, Sara's personal history and involvement in Palestinian activist circles and our mutual disdain for the manner in which the 'state-building agenda' had taken center-stage in the rhetoric of the international donor community in the occupied West Bank. Be it members of the international donor community active in the oPt, Palestinian non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, employees of the PA, or Palestinian activists like Sara – this was the usual length of time it took us in the field to address our interviewees' concerns

regarding our focus on the PA. Eventually, satisfied that our research was not in some way antagonistic to the Palestinian cause, she agreed to continue with the interview. Somdeep began by asking: "How have you experienced the Palestinian Authority in your everyday life?" She responded: "Ironically, these days we never encounter the [Israeli] occupation." She then lit a cigarette and, after a few puffs, the air in the room was heavy with smoke. Sara continued:

> For example, sometimes we organize a protest that starts at Birzeit [University] with the plan to walk towards an Israeli settlement. But before we reach the Israeli checkpoint, we are stopped by the Palestinian security forces and they don't let us through to get to the checkpoint.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

Michelle wondered: "What do you do in such a situation? Is there a violent confrontation?" She replied:

> Sometimes, but it is so frustrating. One time I just lost it. I sat in the middle of the road and started crying. I yelled at these Palestinian policemen: "Why are you doing this to us? You are our brothers!"
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

Michelle asked: "How did the police respond?" Sara said:

> They didn't respond. But for a Palestinian woman this is all a show. If Israeli soldiers are present during our protest, the Palestinian men push us to the front to show that Palestinian women are equal [to men]. But if we are confronted with Palestinian policemen, Palestinian men push us to the back because they don't want to seem weak in front of their Palestinian brothers.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

There was a lull in our conversation. We did not know how to respond because of the somewhat unexpected direness of the situation she depicted. Then again, Sara also remained silent; possibly waiting to see how we, as 'outsiders,' would respond after hearing about the depth of the crises under which Palestinian lives are buried. Eventually, Somdeep asked: "In your opinion, why do Palestinians working for the Palestinian Authority continue to do so? Surely, they understand that they are standing in between you and the occupation, both literally and figuratively?" She answered:

> Well, many have resigned to this fate. We, as a generation, are stuck with the Palestinian Authority. We feel no attachment to it. It does nothing for us. But it is there. It is there because for our parents' generation it is some sort of an achievement because eventually, they thought this would lead to the real state. They can see today that the Palestinian Authority has failed. But they are helpless and passive now, they have given up. Many of them

> are high-ranking members of the Palestinian Authority but they treat it just like a job and continue like pre-programmed robots.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

There are a multitude of ways in which Palestinian rights and aspirations have been denied by Israel's settler colonialism. But Sara's characterization reminds us that while the state in its sovereign form is often considered *the* foundational aspiration of the Palestinian national struggle, the imagined state also serves as a pretext for subverting Palestinian lives in the oPt. That is to say, the Oslo Accords, having (purportedly) established the PA as a mechanism for Palestinian self-governance, may have been celebrated as "the first step towards a Palestinian state." However, these accords only further relegated diaspora Palestinians to "permanent exile or refugee status" (Said 1993: 5) and, as was the case with Sara's parents' generation, the PA has thus far only served to undermine the Palestinian National Liberation Movement by 'robbing' it of the impetus to continue struggling for the national cause. The irony (and tragedy) here is that, to this day, the PA has persisted as an institution that acts like a state but concurrently undermines the Palestinian struggle for sovereign statehood. As it then, often theatrically, performs these two functions, in this book we explore the manner in which its performative acts affect and shape the lives and subjective identities of those in its vicinity in the occupied West Bank.

Note

1 This interviewee has been anonymized.

Acknowledgments

This book spans a significant part of our working life and reflects the impact of relationships extending far beyond our work. The work here is deeply personal. For Michelle it is a continuation of her commitment to the Palestinian cause that she first learned about as a child, listening to her grandfather narrating the tragedy that befell Palestinians as a consequence of the *Nakba* of 1948. For Somdeep Palestine remains at the core of a global struggle for indigenous rights and against a still colonial international order. That said, this book would not have been possible without the generous support we received through the course of the last two years. At the outset, we would like to thank the Carlsberg Foundation for its generous fieldwork grant that financed our trips to the West Bank as well as two workshops we organized in Copenhagen to discuss draft versions of this book. The Carlsberg Foundation was extremely flexible in accepting our requests for extensions, which in turn enabled us to have more time to nuance our arguments and, for Somdeep, to take his paternity leave. Discussants at our December 2017 and August 2018 workshops in Copenhagen have been great sources of intellectual enrichment. We are very grateful to Sara Roy, Derek Gregory, Lucia Sorbera, Nicola Pratt, Toufic Haddad, Haim Yacobi, Karim Barghouti, Ahmed Badawi, Sophie Richter-Devroe, Muhammad Shehada, Buthaina Shaheen, and Sofie Viborg. We are also greatly indebted to Nicola Perugini and Daniela Huber who were unable to attend one of our workshops but nonetheless spent an extensive amount of time reading and providing invaluable feedback on the draft manuscript. At the Department of Social Sciences and Business at Roskilde University we would like to thank our colleagues at the Global Political Sociology and the Globalization and Europeanization research groups for their critical and insightful comments on an early outline for our book proposal and draft version of our introductory chapter. Sincere thanks are owed to Morten Valbjørn, who acted as our Chair, and panel attendees at the tenth Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies held at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, September 2016 where we presented this book's research agenda. In Palestine, we would like to thank all our interviewees and friends who acted as 'gatekeepers' in the field for their assistance and willingness to speak about a challenging subject. In particular we would like to thank the former political prisoners we interviewed in the occupied West Bank who

courageously relayed to us their painful memories and experiences from the time they were incarcerated. The friendships we developed in the field and the resilience of our Palestinian interviewees will remain with us forever. We would also like to thank our translator in the West Bank as well as our interviewees in Brussels.

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1 The theatrics of the 'state'
An introduction

How are we to study a state populated by the stateless? This is often the underlying concern of academic discussions on the processes of state-building prevalent in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). From Walid Khalidi's (1992) documentation of the destruction of Palestinian villages in 1948 to the works of Israeli revisionists or 'new historians' (Flapan 1988; Pappé 2006; Shlaim 2009) who further confirmed the deliberate nature of the destruction of Palestinians' presence that occurred with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948[1] – the story of how Palestinians came to be stateless is well-documented. But, just as the search for the state has (expectedly) animated the aspirations of the Palestinian liberation struggle, so has it informed the writings of many of those 'looking in' from the outside, hoping for a solution to what is often termed as the 'Israeli–Palestinian conflict.'[2] Here, whether inspired by a Hobbesian conviction or by Fukuyama's 'imperative of state-building' (2004), these observers assume that the Palestinian state would guard against the 'anarchy' that characterizes the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Heller 1984; Robinson 1997; Rubin 1999).

For the purposes of this book, the puzzle for us is not 'why' the Palestinian state has not yet come to fruition. Undoubtedly, as we discuss later in this chapter, Israel's settler colonialism has ensured that Palestine (and Palestinians) lacks the sovereignty and territoriality that is necessary for a *real* Westphalian state. To this end, we are not entirely unconcerned with the *lack* of a Palestinian state. However, the nature of Palestinians' statelessness is also compelled to contend with the rituals of statecraft that the PA and its Palestinian functionaries engage in; rituals that are also economically maintained by an international donor community and are vehemently challenged by Palestinian activists antagonistic to the prevalence of the (donor-funded and supported) statist agenda in the oPt. Our primary concern here is therefore the manner in which these stakeholders, whether invested in or antagonistic to the PA, make sense of its statecraft while cognizant of the reality that the PA is in fact performing a state that does not exist.

In the context of the above-mentioned puzzle, we problematize the so-called Oslo peace process. The Oslo Accords never explicitly declared that the negotiations would result in the establishment of a Palestinian state. For one, the text of the agreements does not actually reference the 'Palestinian state' or the 'State

of Palestine.' At best, as the stated aim of the negotiations outlined in the opening pages of the 1993 agreement suggests, they intended to create an institutional basis for *interim* Palestinian self-governance, with the (ostensible) hope that negotiations in this interim period would eventually lead to a permanent solution to the conflict (UN Peacemaker 1993). Yet, we argue in this book that, while few expect a State of Palestine to result from the Oslo process, the vocabulary of statecraft written into Oslo-sponsored governance institutions (i.e., the PA) has also meant that the state, its bureaucracies, and rituals have, throughout the course of over two decades, socialized themselves into the conduct and political being-ness of those in its vicinity and under its direct control. Whether it is the PA bureaucrat, the Palestinian activist like Sara (see Prelude) antagonized by the PA, NGO workers who operate in the shadow of an often-authoritarian PA, or international stakeholders invested (politically and economically) in maintaining the institutions and bureaucracies of the PA – all these actors, we argue, are somehow participants in the theatrics of the PA.

One may wonder why would stateless Palestinians actively take part in the statecraft of the PA knowing well that this would not lead to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state? This participation could be considered a form of Laurent Berlant's 'cruel optimism' whereby what Palestinians desire is in fact a hindrance to Palestinians flourishing. This desire could relate to food, love, a good life or, as is the case in Palestine, 'a political project.' It is cruel because the object (the PA) that Palestinians are attached to – because it resembles what they desire (the state) – also impedes the achievement ultimately aspired for. Yet, this attachment exists not because those in question lack the agency to do any different but because, as Berlant adds, it is imbued with a sense of optimism as it brings one closer to "something that you cannot generate on your own" (2011: 1–2). In the same vein, our interviewees like the Palestinian functionaries of the PA participate in its theatrics not because they have resigned to the vocabulary of statecraft as mandated by the Oslo Accords. Instead, as we reveal in Chapter 3, they conjure their own reasoning for how participation in the theatrics of a state that does not exist somehow serves certain (political, professional, and personal) purposes in their lives. In the same vein, members of the international donor community operating in Palestine (see Chapter 2), Palestinian NGO workers (see Chapter 4), and Palestinian activists (in Chapter 5) also relay their own conception of the state-like theatrics of the PA. In this sense, it is not entirely surprising that our interviewees speak from the perspective of their own individual positionalities to relay their *own* views on the value and detriments of the theater of statecraft existent in the oPt; that is to say, different people, with different material interests, with different political positionalities, expectedly relate to the state in different ways. Yet, we see our contribution to the existent literature (see discussion below) not only in listing the varied ways in which our interviewees conceive the PA and its statecraft, but also in demonstrating *how* they reconcile the foundational 'problem' that despite its stylized performance of the absent state, there is an ever-withering expectation that the sovereign Palestinian state will soon arrive. To this effect, we identify key participants who,

either actively or reluctantly, enable the theatrical performance of Palestinian state-building. We then ask, what kind of norms (of state-building) are performed? What effect does this performance have on stateless Palestinians and other stakeholders who invest in the theatrical performance of the Palestinian state, knowing well that the State of Palestine is unlikely to 'arrive' in the near future? In the end, we question, what happens to the form and conduct of the Palestinian liberation struggle that aspires for the *real* state but remains burdened by the task of performing the state in its imitation form?

In answering these questions we, for one, hope to 'unpack' the matter-of-factness of the international donor-funded statist agenda prevalent in the oPt whereby (the aspired-for) state is imbued with an almost irrevocable 'goodness' and its acquirement is seen as an institutional marker of the resolution of the so-called 'conflict' in Israel–Palestine. According to this perspective the detriments of the statist agenda in the oPt are also not a reflection of a problem in its foundational logic but a technical matter, relating to a problem of implementing the appropriate mechanisms for state-building in the oPt. Instead, the way we tackle the state here serves to 'reveal' the violence written into an institution like the PA. Its *physical* violence, as we demonstrate in Chapter 5, manifests itself in the authoritarian manner in which the PA censures those critical of its presence in the oPt. Yet, its symbolic violence is evident in the way its presence 'splits' many of our stateless interviewees' subjective identities whereby they are compelled to participate in its state-like theatrics because (in Berlant's terms) this brings them closer to what they hope to ultimately secure. But, at the same time, they are compelled to contend with the realization that, in the end, what they desire will not arrive.

From a 'missing' state to the 'theatrical' state

When, in the July 1978 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Walid Khalidi deliberated the form of the sovereign Palestinian state, he himself entitled the endeavor "Thinking the Unthinkable." After all, at the time that Khalidi wrote this article, only three decades had passed since the establishment of the State of Israel and the Palestinian *Nakba*. And, only recently had political Zionism realized its aspiration of a Jewish state that, according to Theodor Herzl in *The Jewish State*, was meant to trigger the birth of "a wonderous generation of Jews" from the ashes of a history of persecution (1896: 68). The assumption was that the Palestinian 'problem' would simply disappear in the face of the 'rise' of the Maccabeans[3] (Herzl 1896: 68). This assumption draws from the settler colonial nature of the establishment of the State of Israel; one that is premised on the non-existence of Palestinians as a discernable *national* community (Lentin 2018; Lloyd 2012; Salamanca *et al.* 2012). While Khalidi then goes on to specify what the unthinkable Palestinian state would look like, he nonetheless admits that the assumption "in some quarters" was that, after each loss suffered by the Palestinian resistance movement, the "Palestinian component of the Arab–Israeli conflict [would] somehow disappear from the Middle Eastern scene" (1978: 685). Today, the

proposition of a State of Palestine is not as 'unthinkable.' After all, on November 29, 2012, the UN General Assembly effectively recognized the Palestinian state as a non-member observer state. Yet, it remains *unlikely* that the prevalent processes of state-building will result in a sovereign Palestinian state.

That it is unlikely that a Palestinian state will result from the ongoing state-building efforts or from the PA's statecraft has been amply discussed in the existent literature. The 'story' expectedly begins with the Oslo Accords, an agreement that left some of the most divisive issues of the conflict out of the framework of the negotiations. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the signing of the agreement, Camille Mansour already expressed his concern in regard to whether the agreement would indeed result in a sovereign Palestinian state. His hesitance stemmed from the precondition that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was required to put aside its 1988 declaration of Palestinian statehood in favor of an interim agreement that provided for only limited Palestinian self-governance, while still "under the overall control of Israel's military occupation [and] without any guarantee about the principles governing the permanent settlement" (Mansour 1993: 6). A year later, Ziad Abu-Amr, in his assessment of the Oslo Accords, recognized that the agreement laudably led to the first official recognition of Palestinian peoplehood and Palestinians' rights by Israel (1994: 76). Yet, he underlined that neither did the Accords recognize Israel's status as an occupier[4] nor did they, in any explicit or implicit manner, make "reference to the Palestinian right to self-determination or statehood" (Abu-Amr 1994: 78). This confirmed the now commonly held perception that the Oslo Accords and the Palestinian governance institutions (i.e., the PA) that resulted from them were never meant to bring about a sovereign State of Palestine (Bouris 2014; Gordon 2008; Milton-Edwards and Crooke 2004; Parsons 2012). A similar disenchantment prevailed following the establishment of the Palestinian security forces under the auspices of the Oslo process. With the Weberian ideal – namely, the ability to maintain monopoly over the use of legitimate violence in a territory – often seen as symbolic of a 'normal,' functioning state, the establishment of a Palestinian police and intelligence service was initially met with Palestinian optimism. Yet, this gave way to public disillusionment when it consumed a significant proportion of the monetary capital available to the PA, violated Palestinians' fundamental rights during the course of their everyday operations, became the means for censoring Fatah's (formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, now a Palestinian political party) political adversaries (Weinberger 1995: 22), and, more importantly, actively suppressed Palestinian activism against the Israeli occupation.

The Oslo Accords also failed to secure Palestinians' economic interests. While analyzing Palestinian economic life under occupation in 1987, Sara Roy wrote of the manner in which Israeli policies embroiled the Gaza Strip in a process of economic de-development that "undermined the ability of the Gaza economy to create the necessary infrastructure required for sustained economic growth" (1987: 83). In view of the economic downturn observed in the occupied Palestinian territories under the auspices of the Oslo Accords, Roy then revisited

the concept of 'de-development' and argued that the interim agreement did not mitigate the economic livelihood of Palestinians as it promised to and instead created new "economic hardship for the majority of Palestinians." Furthermore, she noted, since the onset of the Israeli occupation, the occupied Palestinian territories have never seen a period of more economic vulnerability than in the period following the signing of the Oslo Accords (Roy 1999: 68). In the end, Roy concludes that "peace must be predicated on dignity." However, she adds, "Oslo has never been that kind of peace" (1999: 79). Finally, exploring the legal-constitutional developments that have occurred as part of the Oslo process, Emilio Dabed also argued that the PA's legal framework is not meant to dismantle the colonial condition. It is in fact, Dabed insists, a reflection of the "colonial power relation" and, in giving a legal (and constitutional) basis for the existence of the PA, established what was in effect a form of indirect Israeli (colonial) rule (2014: 42–43). This form of indirect rule both reduces the costs of occupying Palestinian lands while also preventing the Palestinian liberation struggle from mobilizing in a way that could potentially dismantle the colonial order (Dabed 2014: 42–43).[5]

With these being the political, economic, and legal legacies of the Oslo process, it was hardly unexpected that Palestine and Palestinians, once again, erupted into another popular uprising – namely, the Second Intifada[6] (Hammami and Tamari 2001; Shlaim 2016). Subsequently, the academic works that have followed, with varying foci, have striven to elucidate that the Oslo process was indeed never meant to institute the kind of peace that the Palestinian liberation struggle aspired for. In her authoritative work *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (2006), Sara Roy once again detailed *why* the Oslo process failed and the manner in which a 'peace process,' once hailed for being a historic step in the resolution of the 'Israeli–Palestinian conflict,' did all but further buttress Israel's systematic denial of Palestinian rights and (national) aspirations. Critiquing the continued policy-oriented focus on processes of state-building, the contributions in Esra Bulut Aymat's anthology (2010) underlined the need to turn our focus on the occupying power's (i.e., Israel's) failure to adhere to international and European law. In her critique of the state-building paradigm sanctified by the Oslo Accords, Mandy Turner (2011) also emphasized that the interim administration (i.e., the PA) was just that, interim, and was never meant to transform into real Palestinian sovereignty. Turner argues, however, that the PA was also a means of cultivating the 'right' brand of Palestinian political elite who, as was the case with Egypt and Jordan, would be willing to negotiate peace with Israel (see also: Parsons 2010; Sen 2015a). With a focus on the European Union's (EU) engagement in the occupied Palestinian territories, Dimitris Bouris (2013) further politicizes state-building efforts in the oPt, arguing that it is not simply a technical project, but a politically-driven endeavor. He further details the manner in which the EU has played a role in anchoring Israel's occupation by maintaining its gaze largely on the processes of Palestinian institution-building. More recently in *Palestine Ltd: Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory* Toufic Haddad (2016) takes the Oslo Accords as

his benchmark to critically assess the political economy of peace-building and state-building mechanisms in the oPt. He reveals the ways in which international stakeholders, not least financial institutions and international donors, have progressively undermined the 'dream' of establishing a functional two-state solution and, in doing so, eroded the Palestinian national project.

These works, and many more, have comprehensively elucidated the ways in which the Oslo Accords, and its resultant PA, have served to undermine the Palestinian national struggle and its aspiration for a sovereign Palestinian state. In that sense, many of these authors have been correct in arguing that the Oslo Accords were never meant to result in lasting peace and that the PA was never designed to transform into a sovereign Palestinian state. Yet, the PA still exists. And while those in its vicinity do not expect the arrival of a sovereign state from its midst, the PA does not 'lose a step' while engaging in its statecraft. It is here that our book contributes to the existent discussion on state-building in Palestine (and its failings). Our concern is not so much about the PA's internal organizational structure or its internal politics as much as the effect it has, by way of its performative acts of statecraft, on those in its vicinity and under its direct control. Accordingly, we consider the PA to be akin to a theater of statecraft in the occupied Palestinian territories. And, just like any other theatrical performance, here too there are a multiplicity of actors who play their particular roles on stage. Some, like international donors and, not least, Israel, utilize the financial and political capital at their disposal and play a significant role in determining the script of this theater. This script articulates the central narrative of the overall theatrical performance, decides who is allowed to participate and details the 'do's' and 'don'ts' for the actors' performances.[7] Then there are the actors like a PA functionary who actively plays the role of a bureaucrat and ensures that, ostensibly, the PA reminds a global audience of the 'sovereign' Palestinian state. There are also those, like a Palestinian NGO worker, who would hesitate to actively participate in this performance. For such an individual working toward ending the Israeli occupation is paramount and, while aware that the sovereign Palestinian state is lacking, he/she would nonetheless pay 'lip service' to the authority of the PA in order to avoid censure. Finally, there are those who actively resist and disrupt this theater. Whether affiliated or non-affiliated politically, this cohort often includes activists like Sara (see Prelude) who would prefer to resist and disrupt the Israeli mechanisms of occupation in Palestine. Yet, they find that the PA disrupts their view of the 'real' enemy and distracts the Palestinian political landscape with a performance of statecraft that ultimately does little to establish Palestinian sovereignty. These individuals would categorically argue that they are *not* part of the theatrical performance of the state. Yet, as they often face the ire, especially of the PA's security forces – due to their insubordination to the PA's authority – they too find themselves becoming part of this theater; albeit, by being censored, as a personification of the PA's ability to practice public violence, much like a sovereign state would against its detractors. To be sure, whether they are willingly or begrudgingly part of this theatrical performance of statecraft, our interlocutors in the field are well-aware

that despite the seeming veracity of the PA's theater of statecraft, the sovereign Palestinian state will not appear. However, they somehow find themselves part and parcel of what is, in the end, a discordant reality. It would then seem that with the PA and its statecraft at the center of it all, the state is indeed the Rome that all the roads in Palestine lead to. Tragically, however, Rome does not exist but the roads to Rome do. In this book, we thus explore the stories of all those who tread these paths, knowing well that Rome will not appear at the end of their journey.

Theorizing the theater

To understand how the above-described theater of statecraft 'plays out' it is imperative to understand both the context in which it operates, and the consequent affect it has on the taxonomy of the theater itself. Contextually, Israel's settler colonialism lies in the background of the PA's theater of statecraft. This settler colonialism, while also animating Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, precedes the 1967 war and found its roots foundationally in the Zionist project in Palestine that dates back to the late nineteenth century (Lentin 2018: 6). To this end, the manner in which Israel was established and the deliberate nature of its elimination of Palestinians personified what Patrick Wolfe terms as the logic of elimination that animates the settler's conduct toward the native. This logic does indeed entail an urge to liquidate the indigenous. Wolfe considers this to be central to the negative dimensions of the settler colonial endeavor wherein "a new colonial society [is erected] on the expropriated land base" once owned by the native (Wolfe 2006: 388). Be it the *Nakba*, the massacres of Palestinians that have occurred during the course of successive conflicts between Israel and its Arab neighbors or the summary executions of Palestinian knife attackers between 2015–2016 – the tendency to 'liquidate' Palestinians animates Israel's past *and* present conduct (see also Sen *forthcoming*). Yet, seeing as remnants of the native (Palestinian) society have remained within the territorial expanses of the 'Holy Land,' the settler is not simply satiated by the physical (or biological) liquidation of Palestinians. It is equally concerned with liquidating the natives' native-ness or Palestinians' Palestinian-ness, seeing that a memory of being indigenous is what drives their rebellious conduct toward the settler. That is to say, the settler assumes that if Palestinians cannot (and do not) identify themselves *as* Palestinians they will consequently be unable to struggle for (or identify with) the *Palestinian* cause. The *lack* of Palestinian presence in Israeli national museums and many Israelis' insistence on calling Palestinians 'Arabs' demonstrate the tendency to erase the existence of a Palestinian nationhood (see also Sen *forthcoming*). However, for our purposes in this book, the question remains, how are we to conceive of the 'state' that operates under this brand of settler colonial rule?

Admittedly, the sovereign Palestinian state does not exist. Yet, the state is undoubtedly the inspiration for the conduct of the PA (Sen 2015b: 213). To this end, we hold that the 'state,' 'living' in the shadow of Israel's settler colonialism,

is a 'fuzzy state.' This is not to argue that the PA's institutions and bureaucracies lack clarity. As we go on to demonstrate in Chapter 2, the international donor community (through its monetary contributions) has ensured that the PA resembles a state – albeit, in the form 'idealized' by the donors themselves. Yet, this state is 'fuzzy' in the sense that it does not present any clarity in terms of how the PA (and its statecraft) 'fits' on the trajectory of the Palestinian national struggle or how it contributes to the acquirement of Palestinian sovereign statehood. Here, we stipulate that the PA *does not* contribute to Palestinians' national(ist) aspirations. Moreover, for the settler the 'fuzzy state' lack of clarity in terms of its ability to contribute to the natives' national aspirations further serves to deny Palestinians their Palestinian-ness. Yet, its 'fuzzy' nature also ensures that those in its vicinity or those under its rule are somehow able to inscribe their *own* meaning to the notion of the state and to rationalize their active or passive participation in its operations. As we go on to demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, the international diplomat, the employee of the PA, and the NGO worker all find their own varied reasons for their deference to the 'fuzzy state.' However, this too is in the service of the settler colonialist since the *lack* of a singular notion of the nature and purpose of the ('fuzzy') state also ensures that there lacks a singular notion of what the future sovereign Palestinian state should look like.

Finally, we contend that it is this 'fuzzy' nature of the Palestinian state that lends value to the conception of the PA as encompassing a theater of statecraft. Thus far we have used terms like 'theater,' theatrical,' 'performance,' and 'performative.' But this terminology is not used to insinuate a certain disingenuousness in the acts engaged in by those who participate in the performances of the PA's statecraft. Instead, we would argue that performance is a substantial political act that matters, even when (as is the case in Palestine) the performative acts are not expected to have the desired result. In this sense, our conception of the PA's 'theater of statecraft' is very much inspired by Judith Butler's conception of performativity that she conceives as not just a singular performative act or performance but one that encompasses several repetitive and ritual performative acts (Butler 1999: xv). Then, relating performativity to gender, she argues that the latter should not be understood as a stable identity but one that is generated and constituted through multiple stylized performative acts. Understood in this way, gender is not just constructed. It is continuously produced and performed through gestures, movements, and styles. In this sense, it is its performance that makes gender what it is rather than the performance being an outcome of a stable gender identity (Butler 1999: 179).

Just as gender is not pre-ordained, the fuzziness of the 'state' under settler colonialism also lends the PA's state-ness to be generated through performative acts as these acts cumulatively make up its theater of statecraft. The 'genuine' process of Palestinian state-building was long derailed during the interim period following the signing of the Oslo Accords. Yet, we contend that it is the continual maintenance of the theater of the PA's statecraft – through various stylized performative acts – that allows it to exist as an entity that is reminiscent of a

state (despite its intended 'fuzziness'). These performative acts include, for instance, the several layers of bureaucratic procedures we had to endure before we could tour the premises of a PA correctional facility in Jericho. The various national symbols, signs, flags as well as portraits of national figures like Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas are also stylized performative acts that accord the PA the (visual) qualities of the state. In the same vein, the very serious/professional/bureaucratic conduct of many of our interviewees who are PA employees are also some of the stylized performative acts that allow the PA to make the appearance of a state. The Palestinian activists we interviewed are antagonistic to the performative acts and stylized governance of the PA. On occasion they actively disrupt this performance. But they nonetheless become part and parcel of the theater when censored by the PA as they become objects of the theatrical performance of the PA's ability to censor the 'insubordinate' citizen. Finally, a European diplomat who remains committed to training the Palestinian Civil Police force also engages in a performance; that is, a performance of the EU's declared support that grants the (imagined) PA's statehood (international) legitimacy.

The role of performance in constituting meaning is however not a 'one-way' path. Just as the manner in which one performs a gender identity draws on pre-existing cultural norms, so also 'a script' only allows for performative acts that have been "going on before one arrived on the scene" (Butler 1988: 526). The PA is similarly generative as it too encompasses a certain script put in place during the Oslo Accords that has since then been continually furbished (financially and politically) by the international donor community. This script determines the norms of the performance of statehood and the manner in which the institutions and bureaucracies of the PA are meant to perform the theater of the state. In this sense, the relationship between the performance and that which is being performed is cyclical wherein the performance of statecraft constitutes meaning for the latter while that which is being performed also encompasses the norms of how it can be performed.

However, we ask, in performing the script, is a performer/actor convinced of what the script constitutes? Butler, for instance, claims that gender norms are never internalized, and the internalization claimed by the performer is only as deep as the surface. In this sense gender is above all an "imitation … at the heart" and therefore requires that this imitation is continually reproduced in a way that the performer of this gender identity is able to pretend that it is in fact original and proprietary (1999: 179). For this reason, such a performance is marked by a sense of anxiety. This anxiety, for one, is a result of the need to persistently perform such an identity. But it also results from a realization that the gender identity that is being performed can never be entirely attained. This of course starkly contrasts the "naturalness and originality" that the performer strives to achieve (Butler 1993: 125). There is certainly a similar sense of anxiety that accompanies the theatrical machinery of the PA, not least because of the 'fuzziness' of the state under Israel's settler colonial rule. None of our interviewees were entirely convinced of the script of state-building. There was a sense of

despair; not a frantic sense of distress but often an unsaid, muted awareness of the failings of the script. Yet, they were adamant in 'sticking' to it and persisted with the stylized performance of statecraft. Some, like the senior Palestinian police officers we interviewed (see Chapter 3), do so in the name of 'maintaining security and stability.' Others see their role performing the state that does not exist as one that is simply a means of survival. When asked why he chooses to posture like a public sector employee of a state that does not exist, a high-ranking official in the PA said to us: "I understand the importance of your research. But please remember I have a family which I have to feed. My job permits me to do that" (authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016). Still others seem to exude a sense of professional commitment to the theatrical machinery. When we asked another Palestinian bureaucrat employed in a PA ministry in Ramallah if he in fact believed in the value of the PA, he responded:

> Do we have any other choice? You have to remember that the problems of the PA are very personal for me. Yes, I work for the PA but my brother, a doctor, has been arrested by the police because he said something about Abbas on Facebook. He was in jail. They behaved very badly with him. Only recently he got out.

However, while recognizing the 'problem' of the PA, he added: "But this is the reality. It makes me sad, but I have to get on with my job. It is my professional duty" (authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016).

Here, much like in Butler's work, one could claim that many remain committed to the theatrical machinery because they realize that the state, as performed by the PA, is but a simulated entity. It is an imitation that requires perpetual stylized performances in order to give the impression that its norms have been internalized, when in reality the internalization is only as deep as the surface. That said, during our time in the field it became clear that the anxiety associated with this performance manifested through a multiplicity of emotions and we witnessed anger, frustration, and often a sense of helplessness. As a consequence, emotions featured prominently in our assessment of the various ways in which the theatrical machinery of the PA affects those in its vicinity. These emotions were present when Palestinian police officers expressed to us their anger at having to participate in this theatrical machinery. An EU official Somdeep interviewed in Ramallah was officially committed to politically and financially supporting the bureaucracies (and bureaucrats) of the PA. Yet, he also seemed burdened by a feeling of helplessness when, albeit 'off the record,' he acknowledged: "There are too many problems. Not sure if we can achieve anything here" (Somdeep Sen interview, Ramallah, June 2016). Finally, the emotions of an official at the Norwegian Representative Office in Jerusalem (see Chapter 2) were also at the fore when he cleared his table of all the paperwork as a way of gesturing his frustrations with the processes of state-building prevalent in the occupied Palestinian territories – processes that he, in his professional capacity, was meant to unequivocally support.

For our purposes in this book, the implications of these emotions are particularly significant. We ourselves make a distinct categorization of our interviewees as conglomerations of those either invested in or acrimonious to the existence of the PA. But, an eye on the emotions of our interviewees allows us to 'blur' this categorization by demonstrating that the anxiety of performing the state that does not exist, is felt by all. In a way, these emotions led us to nuance the subject positions of our interviewees as determined not just by their official 'job title,' uniform, or political affiliations. Instead, they are all 'split' individuals who struggle to reconcile the political condition that compels them to become (often, begrudgingly) participants in the performance while still aware that the script is – above all – an imitation that will never be internalized.

Ethnography of the 'theater of statecraft'

In our exploration of the PA's theater of statecraft we employed a methodological approach inspired by ethnography. We conducted fieldwork in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem in order to explore what the 'fuzzy state,' personified in the form and conduct of the PA, looks like for those living it, from the vantage point of PA institutions, NGOs, international representative offices, and activists. Further, we have focused on the theatrics of everyday statecraft through observations of daily (albeit) diverse practices of PA officials, NGO officials, international stakeholders, and Palestinian activists. In this regard, these ethnographic observations also served as the foundational basis for our participation in the field. The likes of Dewalt et al. (1998) consider participant observation to be central to the ethnographic endeavor. It is, for the authors, a means of gathering tacit knowledge about their interlocutors by living among them and "sharing their lives" (Dewalt et al. 1998: 291). Similarly, in his study of urban poverty, Bourgois emphasized that participant observation is ideally suited to capture the essence of the "lives of people who live on the margins of a society that is hostile to them" (1995: 13). Petray, as an activist researcher, also sees participation as a means of overcoming the difference between the researcher and the subject as well as a way of building a common identity (2012: 557). However, we consider it presumptuous to assume that, as non-Palestinian researchers living and working in Europe, we can simply enter the field, participate in the lives of our interlocutors, and *choose* to share a common identity on the basis of a four-month field stay – this, despite the fact that in preparing this book we have drawn on knowledge and a network of interlocutors that we have developed on the basis of our past field trips to Israel–Palestine. Such a presumption effaces the significant power differential that exists between the researcher and the researched as the former, being able to *choose* to enter and leave the field, occupies a relatively privileged position (Wolf 1996: 19). In fact, lamenting this differential, many of our Palestinian interviewees expressed a sense of fatigue having become research subjects for outsiders coming in and 'peeping' into their daily lives without changing anything. Instead, our relationship with our interviewees (and participation in their lives) was premised on a mutual

recognition of the *problematique* imbued in the persistence of the theatrical machinery of the PA.

With this premise (and recognition of the *problematique*) in place, the interview-setting was often defined by the open-ended and informal conversations between us as researchers and our interlocutors. It was this informality that led many of our interviewees – often on the sidelines of the interview – to demonstrate that they were indeed aware of the futility of their performance as they 'officially' remained committed to their mandated role in the PA's theater of statecraft. In a way, the interviews themselves became an elaborative expression of the performativity of the PA's theatrical machinery. As a consequence, on the basis of these interviews, we are able to share with our readers how the statehood of the PA is both performed and challenged by Palestinians, themselves living the theatrical machinery on a daily basis (whether these Palestinians work for the PA itself, in NGOs, or through activism) as well as by internationals (including diplomats, NGO, and aid workers, etc.) 'entrapped' in this theater. Of course, seen together, the peculiarity of the political condition in which the PA persists compels our interviewees to both perform its statecraft while cognizant of its futility. The PA is, after all, a 'fuzzy' entity. For this reason, it was important for us in the field to consider our interviewees' often anxious vacillations between performance and recognition of the futility of their performance as an important characteristic feature of their performativity as well; as important as their prescribed role in the theatrical machinery of the PA: It is what broadened our interviewees' role in the theater as more self-aware performers who are both mindful of the fallacies of the script while compelled to still perform their mandated role.

That said, while on occasion our interviewees were explicit in expressing this self-awareness, frequently it was in very subtle ways that they demonstrated that they were indeed mindful of the fallacies that underlie their performative acts. Thus, in the field, we observed not just what our interviewees said but also the manner in which they characterized their position (and positionality). The pauses, the silences, and the speechlessness, for said interviewees, said as much about their positionality as the words they uttered. Building on the work of Pace and Bilgic (2017), we recognize that these expressions/emotions are 'messy,' deeply affected by not just the individual positionality of the ones that evoke these emotions but also of those who witness them. Nonetheless, as Edkins (2003) and Hutchison (2016) demonstrate, emotions (often an outcome of a memory or experience of trauma) are also an effective tool for expressing that which cannot be expressed though the existing systems and syntaxes of languages. In this sense, while the root of the emotions is individualist, the silences, speechlessness, and pauses are universal expressions. It is then on the basis of this universality of silences that we have striven to characterize the manner in which our interviewees performed their positionality under the guise of the PA's theatrical machinery.

The 'missing' case of the Gaza Strip

In this book, while we often refer to state-building in the oPt in general, we are in fact (empirically) focused on the occupied West Bank. The absence of the Gaza Strip is a result of our inability to enter the coastal enclave because of the, more than a decade-long, Israeli siege. But, under a Hamas leadership, the Gaza Strip is also embroiled in another 'brand' of theater – namely, a theater of resistance. Hamas today struggles to reconcile between performing the role of a prototypical liberation faction *still* committed to an armed struggle against Israel (Sen 2017) and its role as a governing entity (Baconi 2018; Brenner 2017; Sen 2015b). To this end, the organization's functionaries, keen on maintaining Hamas' public persona as primarily a resistance organization,[8] attempt to write the ethos of resistance into all facets of its operational scope – often deeming activities that have little to do with an open confrontation with Israel, as acts of resistance contributing to the Palestinian liberation struggle. Therefore, in *this* theater in the Gaza Strip the ethos of resistance against Israel is everywhere and in everything (see also Sen *forthcoming*). The theater of resistance in Gaza is outside the scope of our discussions in this present book. However, the metaphor of a 'theatrical performance' could serve as a fruitful frame of analysis for future works that seek to theorize the manner in which the 'resistance agenda' diffuses through all facets of life in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Book outline

Driven to elaborate on the theatrics of statecraft prevalent under the guise of the PA in the West Bank, Chapter 2 explores the first cohort of actors, namely international stakeholders, who fund, perform, and legitimize the theatrical manner in which the PA performs its statehood. This chapter contextualizes the conduct of the international community by outlining the historical trajectory of international stakeholders' involvement in the institutions and maintenance of the theater of state-building in the occupied Palestinian territories. In this chapter, we also reveal a paradox. On the basis of interviews conducted with mainly European diplomats and bureaucrats, we demonstrate that our interviewees are deeply involved in writing and (financially and politically furbishing) the script that informs the theatrical performance of statecraft by the PA. Yet, these interviewees are in no way naïve in their assessment of the value of the state-building processes that they 'officially' fund and politically support. Many are cognizant of (and lament) the reality that these processes will most likely not result in a Palestinian state and that the PA is not the institutional precursor to the State of Palestine. We conclude, however, that international stakeholders insistently perform their role as funders of the PA's statehood because it allows them to cultivate a specific identity vis-à-vis their desired role in the Israeli–Palestinian 'conflict.'

Chapter 3 explores the manner in which paid functionaries of the PA contend with its stylized statecraft while well-aware of their own statelessness and the futility of their professional duties. The chapter begins by outlining the manner

in which the PA assumed the role of the largest (single) employer in the occupied Palestinian territories and, in doing so, acquired a dominant material presence in the lives of its employees and their dependents. Expectedly then, many of our interviewees were insistent in the way in which they touted their professional commitments as employees of the PA. At times our interviewees claimed that this commitment was in the service of the Palestinian cause. Others insisted that they were simply doing their job because, after all, what other choice did they have? Yet, in the end, they too revealed that their performance was anxiety-ridden as they acknowledged that they were aware that, despite acting as functionaries of a state, they will remain stateless and their stylized performative acts will not lead to the arrival of a Palestinian state. In this way, much like our international stakeholder interviewees, our interlocutors in this chapter also reveal an anxious performance – a performance that 'sticks' to its script while cognizant of the script's fallacies but nonetheless persists because without it the fallacies of that which is being performed will be revealed.

Chapter 4 explores a third cohort of actors who are part of the broader theater of statecraft in the West Bank – namely, members of Palestinian civil society organizations. The chapter begins by tracing the development of the Palestinian NGOs, before and after the establishment of the PA and demonstrates the manner in which these organizations – once a bastion of the Palestinian national struggle – were appropriated into the theater of statecraft in the occupied Palestinian territories. Our interviewees in this chapter are not as politically responsible as the international stakeholders in Chapter 2 who furbish the theatrical performance of statecraft in the occupied Palestinian territories, nor are they as materially invested as the PA functionaries discussed in Chapter 3. Many, as we go on to reveal, are openly critical of the politics and conduct of the PA. Yet, these employees of Palestinian NGOs nonetheless become part and parcel of the theater of statecraft whether they refrain from openly criticizing the PA or do so openly. Either way, their conduct is shaped by the theater as they defy the PA or stay mute in their criticism fearing retribution.

Chapter 5 explores the encounters of Palestinian activists, critical of the PA, with the theater of statecraft. To be sure, they are often the primary targets of the PA's censorious and authoritarian conduct. Therefore, we begin this chapter by describing the extent of the PA's censorious behavior toward those considered to be critical of its political mandate. We also argue that the implications of this 'brand' of conduct is explicated not just by the number of people beaten, detained, and tortured by the PA, publicly or in its prisons. Instead, we notice that by being victims of the PA's violence, Palestinian activists are also absorbed by the theater as they come to display the extent to which the PA (and its theatrics) enjoys political prominence in the occupied West Bank. Here, these activists' participation in the theater of statecraft is far more inadvertent than the cohort of actors discussed in the previous chapters. In fact, our interviewees were often active in their opposition to this theater. However, their opposition serves the PA (and its security forces) the opportunity to underline the primacy of the theater of statecraft in Palestine.

Our concluding chapter starts by summarizing the findings of this monograph. Subsequently, we argue that the state-building endeavor in Palestine rarely concerns itself with the *actual* securement of Palestinian rights. In effect, we hold that, whether in a discussion of the state or, for that matter, mainstream deliberations of the 'conflict,' Palestinians are often relegated to the sidelines of their own 'story.' We therefore propose that, in order to bring Palestine and Palestinians to the core of their own narrative, we need to pursue a justice-based approach to international engagement with Palestine wherein the concern is less with the establishment of an institution (like the state) and more with the securement of the Palestinians' right to have rights.

Notes

1 The process of establishing the State of Israel resulted in the forced expulsion of approximately 750,000 Palestinian Arabs. This exodus of Palestinians is known as the *Nakba* ('catastrophe' in Arabic) and, as Nur Masalha writes, marked a "turning point in the modern history of Palestine" as it represents the "traumatic rupture in the continuity of historical space and time in Palestinian history" (2012: 3).
2 We recognize that the term 'conflict' is misleading insofar that it insinuates that Israel and Palestinians "share equal responsibility for the situation." Accordingly, in *Global Palestine* (2012) John Collins rightly argues that Israel is not just the materially stronger party. Calling it a 'conflict' also obscures the reality that "Israel/Palestine is the site of an ongoing project of settler colonialism" that has instituted social, economic, and political structures that subsequently animate the relationship between Israeli Jews and Palestinians – a relationship that has thus far ensured that Palestinians remain stateless (Collins 2012: 20).
3 In historical terms this refers to the Jewish leader – Judas Maccabaeus – of a revolt (166–161 BC) against Seleucid oppression.
4 This specifically refers to Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank following the Six Day War of 1967.
5 We discuss the PA's censorious conduct toward Palestinian activism against Israel further in Chapter 5.
6 With the Second Intifada, a form of broad-based Palestinian popular uprising returned to the political landscape of Israel–Palestine. The First Intifada (1987–1993) was a reaction to two decades of the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The Oslo Accords were meant to address Palestinian national aspirations. In the end, as the Accords all but undermined the Palestinian liberation struggle, Palestinian popular uprising re-emerged as a means of communicating to the occupying force the continuing relevance of the Palestinian aspiration of sovereign statehood.
7 We go on to demonstrate later in this chapter that this script is very much in accordance with the foundational ethos of Israel's settler colonialism.
8 Not least, as a means of differentiating Hamas from other Palestinian factions (like Fatah) deemed by the organization as having renounced the Palestinian liberation struggle.

2 Palestine and the 'global' imperative of state-building

In February 2018, Michelle entered the European External Action Service (EEAS) building on the Schuman roundabout in the heart of the European Quarter of Brussels. She presented her passport at the reception and informed the receptionist that she had a meeting with Thomas,[1] Deputy Head of Division in charge of Israel, the occupied Palestinian territory, and the Middle East peace process. She was told to wait and after about 20 minutes Thomas appeared, warmly greeted her, and escorted her through the security checks. On their way to a meeting room, she thanked him for taking time to discuss the issues at the core of this book and informed him that they had a mutual acquaintance at the University of Amsterdam who, back in December 2017, had invited Thomas for a public lecture entitled "The EU and state-building in Palestine: EU policies and Palestinian perceptions." "I see, you are part of *that club*," said Thomas, alluding to the group of political science academics who work on the oPt. As they took the elevator and reached the meeting room, Michelle started by describing the overall focus of the project. When she said, "we are interested in how the EU has been and continues to be involved in the theatrical machinery of a Palestinian state," he laughed but soon after he said in a serious tone:

> We have a foreign affairs meeting next week. The key point is that six foreign ministers are coming together to discuss the issue of Jerusalem after Trump's statement. Federica Morgherini, *our club*, wants to discuss with Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki what we *can* do, what we *should* do and what we should *not* say vis-à-vis the US, Russia and other stakeholders. Our Director [Deputy Managing Director Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, EEAS] is in Kuwait and he is using this trip as a platform to ensure that all six will attend the informal lunch hosted by Federica. Of course, *we want to make the EU more relevant, more important in this issue*.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Brussels, February 2018 [our own emphasis])

By 'our club' Thomas meant the group of EU diplomats surrounding the High Representative at the EEAS.

What we find very interesting in our interviewee's description of the purpose of the foreign affairs meeting is that it did not turn out to be about what is problematic with President's Trump Middle East policy: In fact, the EU lacks the collective will to politically confront the US, to which it continues to be subordinated in spite of the US–EU disagreements and differences of political perspectives. The meeting is instead about what the EU ('We') can and should do and how the EU could best position itself in the wake of Trump's policies. This example of EU narcissism echoes our assertion in our introductory chapter that the (donor-funded) state-building mechanism prevalent in the oPt has little to do with securing Palestinians sovereign statehood or resolving the 'conflict,' let alone with Palestinian rights. It is far more self-referential, and a performative act geared at performing a particular identity of the EU and its involvement in the region. In fact, Thomas' reference to his and our respective clubs ironically acts as a good metaphor for identifying distinct actors involved in this performance, with their respective goals, whereby (according to him), each of us are members of a community that has its own code of conduct, priorities, and prescribed script meant to be performed.

The performances (through discourse and practice) that we trace here and in the rest of the chapters of this book among various actors are performances of Palestinian statehood.[2] But what sort of state is being performed in these acts? In this chapter we highlight that, through the liberal peace-building agenda, the two-state solution orthodoxy and the mainstream international 'good governance' agenda, the various international actors depicted here perform a particular kind of state: A technocratic and liberal one. This kind of statecraft, as our interviews show, is framed not as part of 'the political,' which would require linkages to the politics of Israel's settler colonialism, but rather as a profession, a job; a job that, according to Thomas, quoted above, pays very well.

In keeping with our theoretical framework described in our introductory chapter, here we employ Judith Butler's conception of performativity. For our purposes in this chapter it is particularly instructive to conceive of this concept in conjunction with Lene Hansen's claim that identity in international relations is (re-)produced by discursive enactments of foreign policy (2006: 19). For our case this means that the EU's identity in international relations engaged in the 'conflict' crystallizes through performative acts, acts that perform a particular identity: In opposition to the view that the EU's conduct is an outcome of a preordained identity. Like Hansen we argue that the identity of the EU as an institution is inscribed into its Middle East policy toward the so-framed 'Israeli–Palestinian conflict.' At the same time, and in turn, this said policy is further meant to furbish the EU's self-proclaimed identity. Therefore, while our interviewees quoted in this chapter stipulate that EU policy in this area is in fact about justice for Palestinians, we contend that this claim of justice is purely an act in the broader theatrical play through which the EU and its actors (diplomats and civil servants) perform their aspired-for role in this 'conflict.' For example, when EU officials represent the Palestinian issue in a particular way to a particular audience – academics in the case of the interview quoted above – this act

has little to do with the 'conflict' *per se* and more to do with performing (and reaffirming) what the EU is and does in the landscape of the 'conflict' at hand.

Expectedly, as with Butler's understanding that the performance of a particular gender identity is an anxious endeavor since the 'performer' is well-aware that this identity is not a given and finds meaning as a consequence of performative acts, so were many of our interviewees anxious in *their* performance. A former vice president of the European Parliament seemed well-aware that behind the EU's performative acts lies a political condition that systematically violates Palestinian rights. She noted: "Injustice of the Israeli occupation is so great that one cannot remain silent" (Michelle Pace interview, Brussels, February 2018). Similarly, an official at the Norwegian representation office in Ramallah, said:

> If people 'outside' knew, if they witnessed with their own eyes and lived, like me, what Palestinians experience every day, they will be transformed. You Michelle, as an academic, have a role to reveal this everyday Palestinian lived experience, to challenge the dominant script in this whole saga, by providing a different way of thinking about this gravest of injustices.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, October 2016)

As will be evident here our interviewees continue to perform in the theater, possibly because they know well that if they cease the performance, the fallacy of the identity they are performing will be revealed.

In this chapter we discuss the participation of Europe through a focus mainly on the EU and the non-EU member state Norway (due to its pertinent role in the Oslo Accords) as key members of the cohort of international stakeholders that participate in the theatrical machinery of the PA in the occupied Palestinian territories. Since the Oslo Accords, the international community endowed more than 24 billion dollars to "peace and/or state-building" projects in the oPt, with the EU being the main funding provider for the setting up of the PA's institutional infrastructure (Tartir 2014). Building on the understanding that the current mode of the EU's participation in the theatrical machinery of the PA is shaped by an elaborative past, we begin by detailing the historical trajectory of the manner in which the EU constituted its role in the Middle East in general and the 'Israeli–Palestinian conflict' more specifically. Subsequently, we draw on extensive interviews with European officials/officials representing European – and some international – diplomatic offices to demonstrate the manner in which this role continues to be ritually performed today, even though our interviewees are well-aware that this 'performance' is doing little to secure Palestinian rights and national aspirations.

How Europe's role in the theatrical machinery came to be

World War I had a profound impact on the Middle East and North Africa. With the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, European powers carved the region into mandates, protectorates, colonies, and spheres of influence. During the decades

between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, these European colonial powers – primarily England – decided the destiny of Palestinians and encouraged the Zionist movement to establish a Jewish homeland in the British Mandate of Palestine. To this end, one cannot explore the historical trajectory of Europe's involvement in the Palestine tragedy without first appreciating the deep and wide-ranging influence of European colonialism, particularly the British rule over Palestine that spanned between 1917 and 1948 (Margalit 2013).

At the heart of the Mandate (which was conferred on Britain by the League of Nations) lay a deep contradiction: Britain was entrusted with the task of preparing Palestine to be a national home for the Jews, without impairing the civil and religious rights of the indigenous 'Arab' people, as the Balfour Declaration declared in 1917. Between August 1929 and May 1936 relations between the Jews and 'Arabs' in Palestine broke down as the influx of Jews who had emigrated to Palestine increased. In an effort to end the violence, the British imposed restrictions on Jews. A temporary and uneasy truce occurred during the war when hostilities seemed to cease. During World War II many Jews fought for the Allies and the then new Labour government of Britain gave them hope that they would be given more rights in the area. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Holocaust in Europe, many throughout the world were sympathetic to the plight of the Jews. For the sake of the victims of the Holocaust, "Palestine became Israel" Arendt wrote in the early 1960s (1963: 417). However, neither the Jews nor the Arabs got what they expected from British rule in Palestine. The British military headquarters in Palestine were damaged by the Stern Gang and Irgun Zvai Leumi groups. For their part the British felt they could not control events in Palestine any longer, so they searched for a way out. When the newly formed United Nations proposed a partition plan for Palestine the British withdrew from the region on May 14, 1948 (Rogan and Shlaim 2001; Segev 2001; Shepherd 2000).

Alongside Europe's (and particularly, Britain's) involvement in the region as a colonial power, the trajectory of the 'Holy Land' was equally affected by European nationalisms and conceptualization of the nation-state. When covering the trial of Nazi SS Lieutenant Colonel and prominent architect of the holocaust Otto Adolf Eichmann (before a special tribunal of the Jerusalem District Court) for the *New Yorker* in 1961, Arendt warned that the Israel of the 1960s represented the potential danger of sliding down the slope toward a totalitarian regime. She argued that the European nation-state/national sovereignty model, adopted by the Jewish state, resulted in a state 'conquered' by the nation, "a state with a ruling homogenous population unified by common history, language, culture, memories and traditions; a state that marginalizes, discriminates and acts to the effective exclusion of ethnic minorities" (in Zertal 2007: 1128; see also Arendt 1968). In other words, a racial state brought about through the mobilization of state institutions and the ruling elite of the law and the entire legal system exclusively in the service of the nation, making the state an instrument of the nation (Arendt 1968; Lentin 2018; Zertal 2007).

The European Community (EC) came into being in 1957 but on the Middle East conflict it did not carve out a unique role for itself until the Venice Declaration

(European Council 1980). This was mainly because the US had been the key protagonist in the development of the Israel–Palestine saga up until then. Moreover, Egypt, and Israel had just signed a peace treaty in 1979 for which both Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin were awarded the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize. However, Europeans were concerned about growing tensions in the Middle East region[3] and thus deemed a comprehensive solution to the 'Israel–Arab conflict' a necessary and pressing matter. Consequently, a declaration was made by the nine-member states at the time. The declaration outlined the European policy on the Arab–Israeli conflict (in the aftermath of the 1979 Israel–Egypt peace treaty). Acting on the basis of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 242 and 338, the heads of state and ministers of foreign affairs called for a recognition of the right to existence and to security of all countries in the Middle East including Israel, as well as the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The declaration stressed the need for a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian 'problem,' including the issues of refugees and Jerusalem, in the context of *negotiations* comprising the PLO which would end the Israeli occupation that began with the 1967 Six Day War. It also cited Israeli settlements as a hinderance to the peace process, and called on Israel to refrain from unilateral actions in Jerusalem (European Council 1980). However, the declaration made no mention of the Palestinians' right to a sovereign state.

The theatrics of negotiations that were spurred in the Venice Declaration took on a heightened significance during the signing of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s. In fact there is an untold relationship between these and the theatrics of the PA as a state:

> The Palestinians [had] to relinquish not just 78% of their homeland, but also the land taken up by major Israeli settlements within the occupied territories. They [had] to give up sovereignty in large parts of occupied East Jerusalem, their future capital, and of the Old City that falls entirely within it. They [had] to agree that any peace treaty would not allow the return of most refugees to their homes.… They [had] to renounce all claims on Israel – including any demand for equal rights for its Palestinian citizens, who were more than one-fifth of the population. And in exchange they [got] a West Bank-Gaza state that Israeli prime ministers, from Yitzhak Rabin to Benjamin Netanyahu, described as a "state-minus" or "an entity which is less than a state."
>
> (Thrall 2018)

The performative aspects of the negotiations and their asymmetries were thus entwined with the theatrics of PA institutions and quasi-statehood.

Before this declaration, when European states mentioned the conflict at the UN, they referred to it as a refugee and humanitarian issue – a blatant denial of the crucial role that Europe, and specifically Britain, had played in the creation of the conflict. Having dropped the issue on the UN in 1947, Britain did not manage to bring the Mandate for Palestine to its political conclusion, namely,

the self-determination of Palestinians. Although France was Israel's main weapons supplier after its establishment it presented itself as having an active role to play in the conflict within the UN system. Other European states such as the Netherlands presented their role as supporters of UN peace efforts (see Huber *forthcoming*). In the context of the 1973 October war, the EC's nine-member states declared that a peace agreement had to be based on:

> 1) The inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force; 2) The need for Israel to end the territorial occupation which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967; 3) Respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; 4) Recognition that in the establishment of a just and lasting peace account must be taken of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.
>
> (European Council 1973: 2)

The EC did not, however, elaborate on what exactly these legitimate rights referred to. In 1977, the EC re-confirmed these four conditions by stipulating that

> a solution to the conflict will be possible only if the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to give effective expression to its national identity is translated into fact. This would take into account the need for a homeland for the Palestinian people.
>
> (Bulletin of the EC 6–1977: 62)

In spite of the series of 'peace' initiatives that were proposed from 1967 up until 1990, including the Camp David I "Framework for Peace in the Middle East," the Reagan Plan of September 1982, and other variations of these plans, it is notable that none of these initiatives gave any voice to the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people. The exception was the above-mentioned Venice Declaration which, resulting from a momentum built from Western European countries for a two-state solution, accepted the legitimacy of the PLO, and affirmed the illegality of the 1967 Israeli occupation of Arab territories as well as continued Israeli colonization of these territories. At the Madrid Peace Conference of October 30, 1991, as in earlier 'peace' initiatives, focus was placed solely on the Palestinians of the 1967 Israeli-occupied territories with a clear omission of a very important Palestinian constituency: Namely, the Palestinian refugee diaspora.[4] Israeli and American authorities stipulated that Palestinians from the territories could attend the conference, but only as part of a Jordanian–Palestinian delegation. Also, only Jordan was allowed to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Although the PLO and its Chairman Yasser Arafat were not recognized by the US and Israel as representatives of the Palestinian people, Arafat instructed the Jordanian–Palestinian delegation and insisted that Israel admit to being an occupying power and not, as Israeli

discourse dictated, an 'administrator' of the Palestinian territories. This was a very important point since such an admission of being an occupying power would mean that, when it eventually came to final status agreements, Israel would be responsible for withdrawing its forces from the territories. Moreover, it would be required to observe international conventions on occupation and recognize the legal inadmissibility of settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. The negotiations, however, came to a standstill when Israel refused to admit to its role as an occupying power (Hagopian in Trans Arab Research Institute [TARI], undated). This was the point when Norway offered secret channels to Arafat and the PLO, which in turn led to the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles, known as the Oslo Accords (Henriksen Waage 2005). Subsequently, Arafat was cornered. In order to be recognized as the negotiating partner, he had to drop his demand that Israel admit to its role as an occupying power.

The theatrical machinery was thus set in motion. Henriksen Waage (2007/2008) details how in early 2006 the 'Oslo files' pertaining to the backchannel negotiations that launched the Oslo Accords went missing. No trace of these files could be found in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo nor in the national archives. Henriksen Waage quotes Herstad (2006) who stipulated that the absence of filed documents represented a 'conspicuous violation' of Norway's laws on archiving, that a person who participates in a mediation process does so as a public person. Carefully crafted diplomatic tactics by the Israelis enticed the Norwegians to bid Israel's call through the carrot of branding Norway, and specifically Oslo, as the world's 'peace capital.' Mustafa Barghouti of the Palestinian National Initiative sums this up in a poignant way: "Oslo was the greatest idea Israel ever had. It let them continue the occupation without paying any of the costs" while Yasser Abed Rabbo of the PLO concluded: "We did what we were asked to do" (both quoted in Damen 2013). Through extensive in-depth interviews Henriksen Waage discovered that Norwegian facilitators had consistently sided and shared information with the Israelis while they pressured the Palestinians to renounce key facets of their demands at crucial moments. It was through this pressure that, during these backchannel negotiations, Palestinian positions progressively crumbled. In fact, Palestinians were not allowed to negotiate but to accept their own fate as handed down by the primary powerful occupying power: Israel. As Azarova points out, under the laws of occupation, final status issues must not be negotiated while still under occupation: "Relegating this process to the end of the occupation is meant to prevent the occupier from coercing local authorities into ceding territorial or other sovereign rights while under the gun" (2017: 3).

This explains why the term 'negotiations' is a misnomer for what the Oslo process really entailed. At a very basic level communication during negotiations involves a give-and-take dialogue and discussion between at least two parties. Moreover, communicative negotiations work to the degree that a wide variety of information is completely and thoroughly shared among the parties, and mutual understanding is reached. This is not to say negotiations take place between

'equal' negotiating parties. But, the very impulse behind negotiations is, at the end of day, to establish a relative sense of equality. However, this was not the character of the Oslo process. Norway accepted the norms of the Oslo process that in fact served to maintain Israel's political (and material) prominence, with Palestinians continuing to exist in the shadow of the occupying power. Why would Norway behave in this way? As already mentioned above Norway's involvement in the mother of all 'conflicts' branded the Nordic country as a great conflict mediator in the international peace industry (Pace 2018).

But while the 'negotiations' were far from a deliberation between 'equal' partners, the Oslo process nonetheless devised the script of the theater – one that had to be followed to the minutest of details. The Oslo Accords were officially based on UN Security Council Resolution 242, whose preamble refers to the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East in which every State in the area can live in security." However, crucial issues were completely ignored. These issues included the full withdrawal from Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, removal of settlements, restoration of resources to Palestinians in the territories, defined borders, and the outstanding UN General Assembly 194 (III) calling for the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and property, with full compensation for their lost income and sufferings. As Henriksen Waage notes, on May 4, 1994, Arafat and Rabin signed the so-called Gaza–Jericho Agreement. And, among other things, this agreement established the PA and opened the way for the return of both Arafat and the PLO to Gaza. Further, Waage adds, "with this agreement, the clock also started ticking on the five-year interim period." Final status negotiations were to start no later than May 1996 and by May 1999 the interim period had to be over – with a completed end result (Waage 2004: 168). During the Oslo negotiations, where economic questions were concerned, Israeli negotiators ensured that the economic partnership with the Palestinians was created at a minimal cost to the Israeli economy. Moreover, Palestinian self-rule areas were to remain in a single customs union with Israel and the PA could not establish its own currency (Waage 2004). The PA was thus designed and became the institutional vessel of all the norms for performance established by the Oslo Accords. Through the Oslo process, the PA ostensibly sought to work toward eventual independence by accentuating its autonomy and state-like characteristics. That it failed in its purported aspiration is self-evident today and consequently renders performative acts all the more critical in crystallizing the international, donor community's role in the landscape of the 'conflict' in Israel–Palestine.

The EU and its theatrical performance

When Michelle entered the office of the Norwegian official, she was interviewing at the Representative Office of Norway to the PA in Al Ram she was struck by the mountains of paperwork on his desk. When she introduced our project and our critical view of state-building in Palestine to Magne, an official at the

representative office, he said, with a huge sigh of relief, "thank goodness, for a change I can be myself." With that, he pushed aside all his paperwork on his desk with one huge sweep and said:

> We are frustrated. We should speak more loudly about what's happening on the ground. Even though we are not EU members, we and Switzerland are invited and take part in all EU and EU member states' meetings here. Officially, I believe in the two-state solution. Unofficially, there is absolutely no chance of that happening in my lifetime. Norway created the groundwork for the Palestinian statehood agenda. But we are stuck. We must take responsibility for what we created in 1993.…
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, October 2016)

This quote highlights the core themes of this chapter in general and of this section more specifically, namely those of European actors' performances of Palestinian statehood: Performative acts designed to perform a particular European identity and at performing what Europe's involvement in the 'conflict' should be and what it is about.

A 2012 Master's thesis submitted at the University of Oslo highlights how as the 'peace process' deteriorated Norwegian aid increased (Grevle 2012). Much like other donors, in 1993 Norway had devised a strategy that was premised on a linear progressive relationship between financial aid and the advancement of the said 'peace process.' The logic followed here was that if the Palestinians had their daily living conditions improved then this would create more trust between Palestinians and Israelis and in turn more security for all; thus laying the foundations for peace. In fact all international donors, but especially Norway, abided by the logic that if Palestinians experienced economic progress, then there will be peace. However, while on the one hand Palestinians faced the technical challenge of not having the appropriate mechanisms for receiving aid,[5] donors on their part were (and still remain) unwilling to challenge the Israeli settler colonial enterprise that undermines the political, economic, civil, and social rights of Palestinians. This reflects two things: First, the manner in which the logic of neo-liberalization animates the peace process (Haddad 2016) and second, the international community's way of (inadvertently) buttressing the Zionist script and settler colonial ideology as it fails to counter a political project (i.e., Israeli settler colonialism) that does not recognize the natives of Palestine as natives, leaving Palestinians to languish under the schemes of the settlers. In this way, rather than resolving the Palestinian issue the international 'community' became a key part of its construction as a Middle East/Arab–Israeli conflict and thereby complicit in the irresolution of the Palestinians' cause. Needless to say, it is actually the responsibility of the occupying power, not of the international donor community – which relieves Israel of a great financial burden – to take care of the occupied and ensure their rights are secured (*World Bulletin* 2016).

Norway, for its part, continues to pledge financial aid to the oPt even though other donors have grown reticent to offsetting the cost of the Israeli occupation.

As Robert, a counselor at the Representative Office of Canada in Ramallah, told Michelle, "Officially, we continue to support the building of institutions so that we can presumably lay the foundations for the PA to have the capacity to take over governance responsibilities of its people. The question is, to what avail?" (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, October 2016). Robert was critical of Norway's 'crusader diplomacy' in the Middle East peace process which he agreed had gained the small oil-rich country a lot of prestige and fame, in particular through the massive international media attention the Oslo Accords received. He also noted that through these accords, Norway established itself as a country with moral integrity and as a model conflict mediator firmly placing it on the highest levels of the international peace scene. The Oslo brand as the "capital of peace" thus became known throughout the world and Norway's primary 'export' commodity from then on became peace mediation (Pace 2018: 68). In this way, Robert's critical stance on Norway's and the international community's performative (and self-referential) acts in the Middle East conflict 'saga' confirms our earlier assertion in this chapter that the global imperative of state-building in the oPt has less to do with securing Palestinians' national aspiration and more about cultivating, for international stakeholders, a specific desired role in the Israeli–Palestinian 'conflict.'

Hence, in line with Hansen and Butler's reflections, also mentioned earlier in this chapter, when Norwegian officials represent the Norwegian role in the 'conflict' they also represent the Israeli–Palestinian issue to themselves. Who Norway is, what Norway represents in the Middle East play is deeply tied to Norway's historical trajectory, which cannot help but impact on how Norway looks at the conflict. It follows that Norwegian aid was a transitional contribution intended to economically underpin the political peace process. It was thus a politically self-serving strategy based on the discursive construction of a linear correlation between aid and peace (Grevle 2012). This further embedded not only Norway, but the rest of the international donor community, into the Oslo script. As Theo, a high-ranking official at the Representation of Denmark to the PA and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Ramallah, reflected during his interview with Michelle:

> We are not able to put forward a new paradigm as long as the Palestinian leadership don't renounce the Oslo agreement. As long as the Palestinians operate within the PA structure, we cannot do much. The question then becomes what do we replace the PA with? We have a problematic system now but what would come instead? It is very uncertain territory. Our criticism of Israel is based on rights and treatment of Palestinians. Israel has to be accountable for where they have responsibilities as the occupying power. We have to get outside the negotiations discourse.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, October 2016)

This acknowledgment of how international actors have been embedded in the theatrical performance of Palestinian state-building since the Oslo Accords was

also echoed in Michelle's interviews at the office of the Quartet in East Jerusalem. During one of the interviews, an official admitted:

> We witness weaknesses in the two-state solution every day here …. We see how the whole set up since Oslo harms the PA and Palestinian society in general. And on top of this we have a very strong perception amongst the Palestinians of the corruption practices embedded in PA institutions.… Meanwhile we have had to step back. We have been left with very little leverage. We urgently need a wake-up call. This is all really a fundamental challenge to the whole international community.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, East Jerusalem, October 2016)

This diagnosis reflects the downward trajectory since the signing of the Oslo Accords. The EU endorsed the idea of Palestinian statehood in the Berlin Declaration which included an explicit commitment to the creation of a Palestinian state and to the recognition of a Palestinian state, "when appropriate" (The Berlin Declaration 1999: 88). However, when the Second Intifada erupted in 2000, the Oslo Accords came to symbolize the decreased living standards for Palestinians that resulted during the interim period as opposed to being the harbinger of peace. And, while international donors continued with their aid to Palestinians, Israel continued with its policy of expansion (Le More 2008; Roy 1987; Roy 1999). In fact, Europe was, and still is, complicit in preventing the realization of the basic conditions for a Palestinian state (Pace 2018). The daily hesitancy of the EU to meaningfully challenge Israel's regime of occupation and settler colonization thus highlights crucial components of the theatrics that we analyze here. It is therefore too simplistic to consider the EU's mode of aid/governance of the Palestinian cause as generating fatigue and reproducing failure. If one takes into account the question of complicity, the view of the stage and its performers is different. Global development agencies have made it easy for the PA to raise a substantial proportion of its revenues from the international community and in the process making it less accountable to the people it is supposed to represent and under less pressure to maintain any decorum of popular legitimacy among occupied Palestinians. The PA, as a result of this dependency, has less of an incentive to cultivate and invest in effective public institutions, while substantial increases in aid inflows over a sustained period in the oPt have done little to spur the PA's institutional development (Mosse 2005; Moss et al. 2005).

As Amjad, a communication and information officer at the representative office of the EU/EEAS, expressed:

> I have been working for 18 years with many internationals here in Ramallah and East Jerusalem: USAID, UNDP, the US Consulate General in Jerusalem … to mention just a few. One thing I have noticed over these years: Settlements are growing and they are growing at a very fast pace. Just look into the numbers of Israeli settlements from Oslo until today. They have increased exponentially by six to ten times. This is the reality that Palestinians

> see every day. *All internationals* witness this every day. Palestinians are starting to despise the internationals. They represent everything that is wrong with our situation: the injustice in particular. They come here, spend a few years and then they leave. They don't change anything on the ground. The EU in particular cannot continue to invest in an industry that is making a loss every day.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, October 2016)

This echoes Daniela Huber's claim (*forthcoming*) that international stakeholders' emphasis on negotiations, believing "that an occupied people has to negotiate their statehood with the occupying power," grants "Israel a de-facto veto over such a state." This was possibly a deliberate and purposeful strategy on the part of the international 'community' to emphasize negotiations as a key component of their necessary performance. In 1999 the European Council in Berlin stated that:

> The European Union reaffirms the continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination including *the option* of a state and looks forward to the early fulfillment of this right. It appeals to the parties to strive in good faith for a *negotiated* solution on the basis of the existing agreements, without prejudice to this right, which is not subject to any veto. The European Union is convinced that the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of existing agreements and *through negotiations* would be the best guarantee of Israel's security and Israel's acceptance as an equal partner in the region. The European Union declares its readiness to consider the recognition of a Palestinian State in due course in accordance with the basic principles referred to above.
>
> (Berlin declaration, European Council, 1999 [our own emphasis])

While affirming the Palestinians' right to self-determination on the one hand, reference to the Palestinians' right to their own sovereign state is simply an option whose fulfillment depends on presumed negotiations between equal conflict partners; this, when it is more than evident that the power asymmetry is clearly on Israel's side. Thus, to date, all so-called peace initiatives based a potential solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on negotiations rather than the explicit need to secure Palestinian rights.

In 2002, the EU formed part of the (earlier mentioned) Middle East Quartet – the contact group established in collaboration with the US, Russia, and the UN to once again 'negotiate' peace between Israel and the Palestinians. When, in October 2016, Michelle met with Tim, a scholar and advisor to the Office of the Quartet Representative, he elaborated on the weaknesses the Quartet sees in the PA and the two-state solution which in turn "harm the Palestinian society in general." To that, Tim added:

> The President's office is the most corrupted institution in the PA. The Palestinian society's perception of corruption of the PA is very high. There is

> huge distrust in the PA within the Palestinian street. There is misuse of power from the Palestinian security forces themselves. When the President cannot take any criticism against him or his family, this leads to further weakening of the PA as an institution. We as an international community need a wake-up call – we have a fundamental challenge. When we 'threaten' the PA they do not take us seriously. We are left with very little by way of leverage. We are talking about the viability of the Palestinian system. As an international community we are not unified, we are not doing the right job. The international community believes this is a very fragile situation, we have to be careful. We are weak. Because we do not have an alternative. In our nation/state-building perspective we use Palestinian civil society organizations such as Al-Haq, Addameer, Miftah, etc., because the PA has an imperfect management system; so we support strong CSOs because the PA does not have service delivery competence. There is a tension here: we take the local NGOs as compensating mechanisms for the PA. We want to contribute to establish a Palestinian state as part of a long-term idea through a two-state negotiated solution.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, East Jerusalem, October 2016)

This dominant normative framing of the conflict, in terms of its roots, its solution, and its international governance, permeates the international community and explains why there is so much emphasis on 'good governance' in international aid efforts in the oPt. Similarly, when Michelle interviewed officials at the German representative office in Ramallah, one of her interviewees said:

> We want to have a realistic strategy. We must avoid being overly optimistic that we can manage everything here. We must support governance structures so that they can deliver. This is why our focus is on municipalities. We contribute to municipalities' funds to support programs that improve the livelihoods of people here. We have an incentive scheme: Those who deliver best will get more funding.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, October 2016)

Good governance is thus scripted as a safe activity for internationals to engage in. It pleases the US, does not anger Israel, and will do nothing to change the status quo or challenge Israeli control of the stateless and the rightless.

Michelle Pace's German Representative Office representative went on to explain how Germany is using its development cooperation program to help the Palestinian territories advance their social, economic, and political development. To this end, the German and Palestinian stakeholders have reportedly agreed on three priority areas which cover the key policy priorities of the Palestinian National Development Plan: Water/sanitation/waste management; sustainable economic growth/education/creation of jobs; institution/state-building; and civil society promotion (governance). In terms of per-capita contributions received, the oPt are one of the main recipients of German development cooperation

funding. To date, Germany has committed more than €1.1 billion for bilateral projects in the Palestinian territories and is thus currently one of the biggest donors there. Before the date of this interview (held in October 2016) 'negotiations' had last taken place in Ramallah in June 2016. On that occasion, Germany pledged €85.72 million for technical and financial cooperation. The German government implements this program in cooperation with a number of Palestinian partner institutions including the Ministry of Local Government and the Municipal Development and Lending Fund, as well as selected municipalities and civil society organizations (see also GIZ 2018). According to the said representative of the German Representative Office, the focus of German aid on municipalities has enabled some short-term sectoral improvements in the health and infrastructure sectors. Yet, there remains a fundamental structural deficiency in the focus on support for governance structures under a military occupation. International aid structures and systems for Palestinians are prevented from any real improvements due to the entrapment of the aid industry itself in the theatrical machinery behind the State of Palestine, the subject of Chapter 4. There we argue that the ritual, meager, EU and member states' responses and non-responses to the destruction of EU aid projects by the Israeli army in the occupied territory (EEAS 2017) are all part of the theatrical machinery.

During a United Nations General Assembly vote in 2012 Palestine was accorded non-Member Observer status in the UN. EU member states were split on the issue: 14 voted in favor, 12 abstained, and one voted against. Two years later, in a motion of the EP, recognition of a Palestinian state was made conditional on peace *talks* (Beaumont 2014). For us, this embodies both the extent to which internationals continue to prop up the State of Palestine and the extent to which internationals both accept the norms of the performance, yet remain entirely unconvinced of the same. To this end, this chapter has brought to light the extent of this embeddedness of internationals, in particular of Europeans, in the ongoing staged performance of a Palestinian state.

Conclusion

From the interviews we conducted with international representatives in the West Bank and East Jerusalem one clear common issue across the board emerged: A deep frustration with the status quo and the only hope among these officials lies in a change of the main script that has been dictating their work for decades. Before departing from these interviews Michelle was struck by the officials' desire to follow up on our project, and their strong recommendations to carry out similar research in Gaza. They also expressed their wish to see not only academic papers but also policy reports that can breathe some fresh air into an alternative agenda. Magne, the official at the Norwegian representative office said: "The academic community is the only force that can rock the boat here. You guys need to stir constructive inconvenience in this stalemate, this quagmire. A majority of civil society organizations are dependent on funding from the internationals" (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, October 2016).

This chapter has explored the historical trajectory of the international community's, particularly Europe's, participation in the theatrical machinery of the PA in the oPt, since the Balfour Declaration to date. By building on our understanding that the current mode of Europe's, and more specifically the EU's, participation in this performance is shaped by an elaborative past, we show how this community has established its role in the Middle East conflict. We have done this through a number of interviews with European officials and observations of how their role continues to be ritually performed up to this day. Having done this, we revealed a cyclical paradox in terms of how we conceptualize performativity (see our introductory chapter). On the one hand, we demonstrate here the extent to which the international community has been involved in writing and maintaining the performative state in the occupied Palestinian territories. The rhetorical commitments to a Palestinian state and Palestinian rights as well as funding of Palestinian institutions are meant to camouflage and replace more meaningful support for the rights of Palestinians and their cause. Yet, on the other hand, our interviewees reveal the extent of their disenchantment with the script and the performance of statecraft in Palestine. Thus, we have shown how EU officials and other European/international officials go through the motions of funding and supporting a Palestinian state because they have no alternative idea in place. This points to the fuzzy concept of a state that we highlight in this book and that our interviewees – whether international officials, PA employees, Palestinian activists, or civil society representatives – have to contend with in their day-to-day lives. This fuzziness, both in terms of a fiction and a force and its fictitiousness, far from abetting its forcefulness, buoys it (Lentin 2018).

Cumulatively, the above reflections represent what performativity is really all about: Our interviewees perform knowing very well that it is a hollow performance. Yet, they continue to perform because otherwise the fallacy of the performance will be revealed. What lies at the bottom of all this performativity is political cowardice and political self-interest, as they define it. In performing as they do, internationals discursively and materially continue to set limits for and block Palestinian self-determination under the banner of supporting peace and a Palestinian 'state.' In spite of implicit recognition from our interviewees that what they are doing actually undermines Palestinian self-determination – thus continuing the trajectory of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries European colonialism – it remains an unconvinced and anxiety-ridden performance. And, because it is anxiety-ridden, our Norwegian interviewee felt the need to sweep all the papers off his table.

Notes

1 All interviewees in Chapter 2 have been anonymized.
2 The authors made several attempts at securing interviews at USAID, the British Consulate, and the Department for International Development (UK) but we were not given a possibility.
3 In fact, the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty was condemned across the Arab world with Arafat declaring it a false peace that would not last. Egypt was suspended from the Arab League and Sadat was assassinated in 1981.

4 Palestinian citizens of Israel have been and are still considered a matter of Israeli domestic politics.
5 Norway was prepared to invest in the peace process by committing extensive aid to the Palestinians. But the aid did not reach its intended recipients, not least because the Palestinian apparatus to receive aid was not in place and the conditions set by donors for transparency and accountability were impossible for them to abide by because of lack of required regulatory institutions.

3 The Palestinian Authority and its 'anxious' functionaries

In early June 2016, Somdeep met with a public relations official at the European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support's (EUPOL COPPS) headquarters in Ramallah. Established in 2006 as part of the broader nexus of the EU's (state) institution-building initiatives in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), the official strategic objectives of the EUPOL COPPS mission are to strengthen and support legislative processes within the Palestinian criminal justice system, provide infrastructure, training, and equipment to the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP), develop the PCP's capacity to counter corruption, mainstream human rights and gender equality in the operations of the PCP and improve prosecution–police interaction (EUPOL COPPS 2017). The public relations official began the interview by saying: "We are a police training and justice institution-building mission." While recognizing the limitations of operating in a politically challenging environment, he insisted however that EUPOL COPPS had developed a 'trust relationship' with the PCP. He attributed the success of the mission and its ten-year longevity to it not imposing itself on Palestinians, adding: "If we had the approach of telling people 'you do this,' 'you do that,' most of the time this will result in people just pretending. That's why our approach is different here," (Somdeep Sen interview, Ramallah, June 2016). Further boasting of the mission's successes, he said:

> The Palestinian Civil Police is one of the most appreciated among the government institutions and better than the regional standards … we had a journalist visit recently who asked, "if they [Palestinians] would get a state, would they be able to deal with it?" I will just paraphrase what a senior officer of the Palestinian Civil Police said: "Give us a state, you will see. That's for the joke [*sic*] but what I want to say here is that criminality rates are fairly low … you don't have a lot of city crime or petty crime."
>
> (Somdeep Sen interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

In a sense, the encounter at the EUPOL COPPS's office in Ramallah was very much a theatrical affair – not unlike the theatrical nature of international (particularly EU) stakeholders' involvement in the oPt described in Chapter 2. During the interview the spokesperson was accompanied by two other European

police officers. They rarely spoke and only occasionally confirmed what the spokesperson said. Yet, sitting through the entire interview while wearing the uniforms of their respective national police force, they were presumably meant to represent the stately professionalism that the mission strives to introduce in the operations and conduct of the PCP. While touting the successes of EUPOL COPPS during its decade-long presence in Palestine, the spokesperson was sure to mention the trust-based relationship the mission shared with the PCP. This relationship, he argued, is what makes the Palestinian counterparts agreeable to the advices and recommendations of the mission. Finally, when he paraphrased the senior officer of the PCP, this anecdote was meant to communicate the extent to which the Palestinian state – at least, institutionally – was ready to come into being. However, while the spokesperson described the Palestinian officer's words 'give us a state, you will see' as a joke, he unsuspectingly brought into focus the irony of the mission of the EUPOL COPPS – that, in essence, it is preparing Palestinians for a state that is unlikely to arrive in the near future. After all, that is why when a Palestinian police officer *demands* the immediate establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state, it is seen as a joke. But, it is a Palestinian police officer who, as a functionary of an agency (civil police) of an institution (the PA) that performs the functions of a state, is compelled to contend with the tragedy that lies behind this 'joke' i.e., the tragedy of performing as a functionary of a state that does not exist. Accordingly, this chapter explores the lived experiences of another cohort of 'actors' involved in the theatrical performance of the state in the oPt – namely, employees of the PA. We begin by outlining the historical context for the way the PA assumed a formidable material presence in the lives of occupied Palestinians – not least as a source of employment. Subsequently, we explore the manner in which employees of the PA that we interviewed navigated both their *professional* commitment to performing as functionaries of a state as well as their *personal* cognizance that *that* very same state has not arrived and is unlikely to materialize any time soon.

The Palestinian Authority: A material presence

At a 2010 panel discussion on Palestinian state-building organized by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington DC, Howard Sumka of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) admitted that the PA, above all, remains an interim mechanism for governing Palestinian society. He went on to add that the PA has nonetheless taken on the role of simulating "what a Palestinian state would look like" and that it has assumed "the difficult task of state-building even without having all of the authorities a normal state would have." Sumka also acknowledged that the presence of an Israeli occupation complicates the tasks of the PA (Carnegie 2010). Today's PA, still an interim governing institution that simulates 'what a Palestinian state would look like,' enjoys a significant material presence in the oPt and in the lives of occupied Palestinians. This materiality is, of course, by design and financial investments furbishing the PA's material presence that began to flow into the oPt with the first donor

conference held in Washington DC in 1993 (Brynen 2000: 3). At the time, as Nigel Parsons reminds us, the financial contributions made by international donors were "one of the broadest and most ambitious of international aid efforts in history." In a way, "the scale and the sources" of international aid were indeed commendable (Parsons 2005: 39) because the Oslo Accords were celebrated at the time as a path to the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and as having 'set up' the institutional basis for Palestinian self-governance and eventual sovereign statehood. Oslo I or the *Declaration of Principles* on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed on September 13, 1993 was indeed just that – a declaration of foundational principles that would govern negotiations between the two parties. Most importantly, the stated aim of the negotiations was to establish an elected (Palestinian) institution for self-governance for a transitional period of five years with jurisdiction over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and with the eventual goal of a permanent settlement (UN Peacemaker 1993).

In 1994 the Gaza–Jericho Agreement was signed with the aim of instigating the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Gaza and Jericho and, more importantly for our purposes here, the transfer of civil responsibilities to the interim Palestinian governing entity, namely the PA. It was also agreed that the PA would take on "legislative and executive powers and responsibilities" as well as assume judicial functions. Furthermore, the agreement stipulated that the PA would have jurisdiction over departments and administrative units that would facilitate its functions as the interim governing authority (UNISPAL 1994). Oslo II was signed on September 28, 1995. Among other stipulations, the agreement divided the West Bank into areas A, B, and C, and granted the PA limited civilian and security-related responsibilities in areas A and B (UN Peacemaker 1995). At the time, with Oslo II marking the end of the "first stage of negotiations," significant changes *should* have taken place on the ground. Accordingly, historian Avi Shlaim recounts:

> It [Oslo II] provided for elections to a Palestinian Council, the transfer of legislative authority to this Council, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian centres of population … Oslo II marked the point of no return in the process of ending Israel's coercive control over the Palestinian people.
>
> (2016: 295)

In hindsight, one could question the extent to which *real* changes could have taken place with Israel steadfastly maintaining its military control over the oPt. That said, on November 4, 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli ultranationalist who was opposed to negotiating peace with the Palestinians. Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, lost to Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party in the 1996 Israeli general elections. The Likud government, led by Netanyahu, was "openly critical of the Oslo process." Moreover, it was resistant to withdrawing Israeli forces from the Palestinian territories and further "intensified Israeli settlement activity" (Brynen 2000: 4).

The dwindling hope that the PA would result in Palestinian statehood did not however lead to a ceasing of international investments into the interim governing entity. By 1998, the EU had already invested 400 million dollars along with 300 million dollars in loans from the Europe Investment Bank. During this period EU member states also invested 1.3 billion dollars on the basis of bilateral agreements and the World Bank had approved 228 million dollars in loans (Parsons 2005: 39). These investments allowed for the bureaucracies and institutions of the PA to simulate what the Palestinian state would look like. This urge to simulate a *real* state also persevered alongside subsequent protocols including the Hebron Protocol (1997), the Wye River Memorandum (1998), and the Sharm al Sheikh Understanding (1999) that "undercut the scope of transfer of territorial control" to the PA. Additionally, international donors focused on enhancing the PA's policing mechanisms in order to reduce "daily frictions between the Israeli occupation authorities and the Palestinian population" (Lia 2006: 271). In effect, this meant that the agencies within the PA's security apparatus were granted the task of intervening in the case of possible conflict between Israeli authorities and Palestinians as a way of limiting "possibilities for mobilizing and organizing popular protest and armed resistance" against Israel (Lia 2006: 271).

It is important to add here that the 'statist' agenda was already present in the conduct of the PLO in exile. In fact, seeing the PLO's attempt to centralize political leadership, the emergence of a distinct PLO political class and bureaucratic elite as well as its delivery of basic social services to its constituency, Yezid Sayigh deemed the organization to be a 'statist actor' – this, despite its lack of "sovereign authority over a distinct territory and population" (Sayigh 1997: ix–x). However, the Oslo process and its focus on enhancing the PA's ability to police the Palestinian population boded well for the likes of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (and his faction, Fatah) who was looking to further monopolize decision making within the PLO. Fatah's success in the 1996 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections meant that the faction sat at the helm of an institution, namely the PA, that was the "legally constituted governing authority" that administered (albeit) semi-autonomous areas in the West Bank and Gaza. Furthermore, it was able to dominate the bureaucracies of the PA with its recruited personnel and to develop a security apparatus that was populated by local and formerly exiled fighters, all of whom were "subordinate to and dependent on the authoritative leadership of Arafat" (Parsons 2005: 39).

This short history of the 'arrival' of the PA in the manner in which it exists today suffices to appreciate that the Palestinian state has not and will not arrive. In the title of his book, *A Police Force without a State*, Lia suggests that Palestinians are living in a situation where there is a police force but no state; the latter being a prerequisite for the former. Yet, the interview conducted by Somdeep at EUPOL COPPS in 2016 also demonstrates the extent to which the state (and its statecraft) – performed by way of the PA and irrespective of whether this performance leads to Palestinian sovereign statehood or not – has been sanctified in the *occupied* Palestinian territories. This is amply evident in

the way donors, observers and Palestinian stakeholders treat (state) institution-building in the oPt as a sacrosanct (and as an all-solving) endeavor. For instance, Mara Rudman, USAID's assistant administrator for the Middle East, speaking at a 2013 American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Policy Conference, boasted that the United States' investment in Palestinian institution-building efforts were not just a means of ensuring Palestinians had access to basic services. As the "leading provider of bilateral assistance" to Palestinians, she claimed, the United States was also assisting in building institutions that would be part of the "future state" (USAID 2013). This assertion contrasts with Michelle's private communication with a USAID representative who, in an email correspondence, noted that the USAID's programs in Palestine aim to solely assist "with improving the delivery of public services and supporting greater accountability of key government institutions [as well as] … people-to-people reconciliation activities in the areas of economic development, environment, health, education, sports, music, and information technology" (Email correspondence with Michelle Pace, 2016). This USAID representative therefore deemed it unnecessary to meet with Michelle as there was nothing about Palestinian state-building that USAID is involved in. Nonetheless, American investments in the 'future Palestinian state' serve as a public rallying cry, sanctifying this donor's activities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

This was also the case for the EUPOL COPPS discussed at the beginning of this chapter wherein, by claiming to be standing for reforming the Palestinian Civil Police force, EUPOL COPPS also aims to ensure that Palestinians are institutionally prepared to 'run' a sovereign Palestinian state. As we have already shown, the inherent paradox, idiosyncrasies, and fallacies underlying any aiding of state-building processes in the occupied Palestinian territories were palpable in the words of our interviewees in Chapter 2. However, important Palestinian stakeholders have also adopted the 'state-building agenda' as a political rallying cry. For example, in 2009 Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, ostensibly hoping to change the earlier discussed status of the PA as merely an intermediary between discontented Palestinians and Israeli authorities, embarked on a two-year process of state-building – a process premised on building (the State of Palestine) rather than liberating Palestine (Inbari and Diker 2009). Fayyad's 65-page proposal included the construction of an airport in the Jordan valley, railways linking Palestine to its neighbors, and the boosting of the Palestinian security forces. Fayyad's aspiration was to make the Palestinian state "a fact that cannot be ignored," with the hope that "if Palestinians build their own institutions, it would force Israel to decide whether it is serious about ending its [at the time] 42-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza" (Fayyad quoted in Ma'an 2009).

Responding to the Fayyad plan, former Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Samih Khalidi wrote that "statehood first" admittedly had a "superficially attractive ring to it" that would most likely find significant traction among international funding bodies and stakeholders. However, he argued, one cannot realistically believe that Fayyad's plan would succeed, considering that the PA is unable to exercise even the most elementary forms of statecraft: "it cannot independently trade on

the world market, decide who can enter its soil or deploy the smallest unit of its security services from one village to another; its leaders cannot even move without prior Israeli consent" (Khalidi 2009). Khalidi thus concluded: "In short, it [the PA] cannot freely exercise its authority over its citizens or territory in any meaningful manner" (2009). Despite the unlikely arrival of the Palestinian sovereign state by 2011, the Fayyad plan found support in some quarters. Hussein Ibish argued that such a plan persists (or, for that matter, needs to persist) because "building Palestinian institutions … will demonstrate [that] the Palestinians are effectively governing themselves, and building the practical framework for a state supported by an overwhelming international consensus" (2009). Similarly, and despite writing in 2011 (following the failure of Fayyad's two-year plan), Elizabeth Sellwood, a former advisor to the Foreign Affairs Committee at the House of Commons, insisted that building Palestinian institutions somehow gave the sense to stakeholders that, if granted the opportunity, Palestinians could in fact administer their own state. She wrote:

> Palestinian institutions matter because a Palestinian state would need to be robust from the moment of its creation. Israel will not consider military withdrawal from the territory it occupied in 1967 if doing so could lead to the kind of chaos that has characterized the birth of other new states.
>
> (Sellwood 2011)

For our purposes here, it is less of a concern whether the mechanisms of state-building and performance of statecraft exist (a) to allay Israeli fears of chaos resulting from the establishment of a Palestinian state, or (b) to demonstrate to the international community that Palestinians can indeed govern themselves, or (c) for Palestinians to simply be prepared for the eventual prospect of a sovereign Palestinian state. It is however far more important for us that the insistent presence of the theatrics of the state in the occupied territories results in the very idea of a Palestinian state (represented through the PA) having an immense material presence in the everyday lives of ordinary Palestinians. We argue that this presence is *particularly* significant in the lives of its functionaries, that is, salaried employees of the PA who are, in essence, *paid* to perform as representatives of an absent and fictitious Palestinian state. In mid-2012 a total of 192,000 people in the occupied Palestinian territories were employed by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and local governmental institutions and public sector employment has been increasing by an average of 5 percent every year since the establishment of the PNA. That said, in 2012 a public sector hiring cap of 3,000 per year was introduced (ETF 2014: 5). In 2016 the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) reported that approximately 21.6 percent of those in the labor market in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were employed in the public sector. To be sure, this number is not particularly high. Expectedly, a great proportion of those in the labor market are employed in the public sector in Gaza (34.6 percent) as the siege provides for very limited scope for private sector development, compared to the West Bank (15.4 percent). However, the West

Bank has also witnessed a sharp increase (33 percent) in the level of public sector employment between 2007 and 2013 (PCBS 2016).

A 2016 World Bank study further reported that certain sectors like the PA's security sector were significantly overstaffed (by international standards). For instance, the total wage bill of the PA's security services amounts to approximately 8 percent of its budget. Without the police and prison services, the remaining wage bill for the PA's paramilitary forces amounts to 5 percent of the total Palestinian GDP – a number significantly higher than the 2–2.5 percent of the total GDP that countries usually budget toward military spending. The public education sector is also overstaffed, and the West Bank has seen a 30 percent growth in personnel in this sector between 2011 and 2016. While this has been translated into smaller classes with fewer students per teacher, it has not led to better academic performance. Students from UNRWA schools that have larger classes have repeatedly "out-performed those from government schools in both math and science on standardized Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests conducted in 2003 and 2007" (World Bank 2016: 18). The Palestinian public health sector is also overstaffed, and the West Bank has seen a 59 percent increase in the number of health sector employees between 2007 and 2013. Administrative staff in the public health sector also "account for 35 percent of all public health staff in the West Bank and Gaza, which is very high by international standards" (World Bank 2016: 18). However, the most significant growth in employment has been in the PA's civil service. In the West Bank there was an overall 55 percent growth and 65 (out of 78) agencies of the civil service saw an increase in staffing (World Bank 2016: 19). Of these agencies, the Palestine Public Broadcasting Corporation, some ministries (Waqf and Religious Affairs, Social Affairs, Finance, Higher Education, Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, Public Works and Housing, Justice, Foreign Affairs and Transportation), the Palestinian Academy for Security Sciences, the West Bank Water Department, the Judiciary, the General Prosecutor, the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau, and the Office of the President) had the largest employment growth between 2006 and 2013 (World Bank 2016: 20).

Undoubtedly, as a source of employment, the public sector is filling a 'gap' in the Palestinian labor market where the private sector is significantly hindered in its growth (and as a potential source of employment) by the Israeli military occupation (UNCTAD 2016). The inability to move goods and services, the limited scope for investment, and the overall precarity of the political environment ensures that while the private sector remains a sought-after employer, it is nonetheless underdeveloped. In this way, the rising rates of public sector employment demonstrate that the 'state,' while non-existent, nonetheless 'fills' a material need for its employees as a means of living. This prominence of the public sector (as a source of income and employment) is however often considered unsustainable in the long run – especially since the wage bills are mostly funded by the international donor community. In 2018, as a means of rectifying this dependence on the public sector, the World Bank initiated two projects in the occupied Palestinian territories that are "aimed at boosting the digital economy and mobilizing resources for development

as sources of much needed opportunities, especially for young men and women." Marina West, the World Bank's country director for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, added: "The private sector is central to the socio-economic future of the West Bank and Gaza, a region currently suffering from limited job opportunities, particularly among youth and women" (World Bank 2018). Yet, as of now, a significant (if not, overwhelming) and growing proportion of the Palestinian population – one that includes PA functionaries *and* their families – are monetary beneficiaries of the PA. As we continue to deliberate below on the manner in which functionaries of the PA reconcile their own statelessness with their participation in the theatrics of statecraft, we showcase how it is this material need that the public sector fulfills and that partly informs our interviewees insistently maintaining their performance as functionaries of an absent state.

Palestinian Authority functionaries and their 'unconvinced' performance

"Dear Prof. Michelle. Nice to meet you today. Please be informed that the requested visit to Jericho the Jericho Correction and Rehabilitation Centre (CRC) has been approved on 8/6 at 10:00. Best Regards …" – with this email from Tareq Dawabsheh, the Deputy Head of the Chief of the PCP Secretariat, our visit to the CRC was officially scheduled. The CRC was established in 2011 by the PCP as the first modern correctional facility in the West Bank. It was funded by the Netherlands and built to be able to house 154 inmates, with male, female, and juvenile prisoners in separate sections. The operations of the correctional facility began with the arrival of 97 officers of the PCP's Correction and Rehabilitation Centers Department (CRCD). Staff of the Jericho CRC were trained on how to run a correctional facility in Jordan, where they reportedly were trained in "best human rights practices." Additionally, support for its operations was provided by the EUPOL COPPS, the US Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, and the United Nations Office of Project Services (EU COPPS 2011). Expectedly, the primary funding entity, the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah, monitors the activities and personnel turnover at the correctional facility. For instance, in 2013, 53 new staff members of the CRC in Jericho were trained by the CRCD in basic skills and (human rights-oriented) best practices with regard to the treatment of inmates in the correctional facility (UNODC 2013: 11). Despite such training initiatives, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights reported the case of 28-year-old Salah Jameel Saradih, who "died of an ailment he sustained while being in the center [in Jericho]" (PCHR 2014: 9). And, as we go on to demonstrate in Chapter 5, Palestinians (namely, activists) often face torture and violence while incarcerated in PA prisons. The PCP opened an investigation on the death of Salah Jameel Saradih but, at the time of writing this monograph, we could not find any further information on the matter.

That the CRC in Jericho was celebrated by the international donor community as the *only* modern rehabilitation and correctional facility makes it a marquee

initiative for the international community. As was evident in the previous chapter, our international stakeholder interviewees are quite cognizant of the reality that their political and economic investments in the theatrics of statecraft in the occupied Palestinian territories are doing little by way of leading to the establishment of a sovereign state. For that matter, statecraft and state-building become 'fuzzy' and intangible concepts, operating in the realm of the 'imagination,' especially when the material reality of the occupied Palestinian territories underlines the absence of the state. Yet, the CRC in Jericho was different. It was a material manifestation of a step toward a 'modern' penal/correctional system. Presumably, it was this marquee (and symbolic) importance of the correctional facility as a manifested 'step forward' toward the establishment of the future Palestinian state that has led the Netherlands Representative Office to closely monitor its functioning. In the same vein, for our purposes in this chapter, the facility in Jericho also provided for a *physical* stage on which the Palestinian personnel (namely the employed staff at the correctional facility) can perform their role as public sector functionaries. The script for their conduct is specified, not least during their training with the CRCD and the international agencies that assisted with the establishment (and functioning) of the correctional facility. More importantly, the mandate and limits of their performative role as state functionaries is also certain. Unlike outside the premises of the CRC in Jericho, where the Israel Defense Forces, in practice, exercises overall authority over the oPt and its residents, within this rehabilitation and correctional facility the (limits of) Palestinian authority were clear – it extends to as far as the walls of the prison and it has its mandate over the incarcerated population it houses. While walking outside the prison we wondered, how do the prison staff perform their role as public sector functionaries on this very well-defined stage (with its accompanying script) while well-aware that once outside the correctional facility they are functionaries of an absent state?

With this question in mind, on June 8, 2016 we drove toward the Jericho CRC. Once we arrived outside the prison, we were asked to wait in order for the security personnel to confirm that we indeed had permission to visit the prison facilities that day. As we waited outside, we watched a middle-aged man attempting to enter the prison, presumably to visit a family member. He was denied entry that day. Eventually, after approximately 20 minutes we entered the compound of the Jericho CRC. We were first brought into a small room with metal detectors and made to empty our pockets. We then handed our bags, wallets, and mobile phones to the staff who said that they would hold on to our belongings for the duration of the stay. It was then that we realized that we would not be allowed to take any pictures or record our conversation with the staff running the facility. We were then escorted through a narrow, caged pathway that ran parallel to an open yard used by inmates during their recreation time that led us to the offices of the administrating staff. Waiting for us was Colonel Qadri Sawafta. He welcomed us to his prison and then led us to his office. The interiors of his office were plush, well-decorated, and clearly meant to communicate that our interviewee was an important figure in these parts. The

walls were adorned with pictures of him shaking hands with foreign dignitaries – some were diplomats while others were representatives of European, Middle Eastern, and American elite police units. As we sat down on the couches arranged in front of Colonel Sawafta's desk, he said: "So, welcome to Palestine. What can we do for you?" Michelle said:

> Thank you for accepting our request to visit this prison. We met Lt. Col. Tareq Dawabsheh and mentioned to him that we wanted to visit a correctional facility in Palestine. He told us that visiting this facility in Jericho would be a good idea and approved our visit a couple of days ago. So, to begin with, we would like to walk around and see the prison facilities.
>
> (Authors' interview, Jericho, June 2016)

Sawafta responded: "I am happy to talk to you, but you cannot visit the prison. All the information you need I can provide you with, but it is impossible for you to visit the prison." Surprised, Michelle said: "But we came all the way here to visit the prison. We are researchers and we received an approval from Tareq Dawabsheh. He said we could visit." Sawafta folded his hands and leaned on the table. He was wearing a class ring, that we later learned he had received following a training program in the US. He appeared unconvinced. He said: "I have no permit for you. There is no way you can see anything today. It is impossible." Our 'negotiations' continued for some time and Sawafta eventually seemed to soften his stance. He made a few calls to Ramallah before instructing some of the staff to prepare for our visit to the women's section of the prison. We drank tea while the staff prepared and eventually, they were 'ready' for us.

We were accompanied by Sawafta and two junior officers as the tour began with the processing room – the place where new prisoners come first to be registered into the prison's records. Then we were taken to an adjacent room where prisoners are examined physically. This room was empty, without any furniture, devoid of any windows, and the walls had red stains on them. We wondered if it was indeed an examination room. Outside the room, on the wall was a list of rules and guidelines meant to be followed by the prison staff in order to ensure that the treatment of prisoners at the Jericho CRC was in accordance with international human rights law. The list was prepared by the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah. Our host stood in front of it and encouraged us to read the rules and guidelines that dictate his (and his staff's) conduct toward the incarcerated. Somdeep said: "This is a long list. A lot of things to think about." Sawafta replied: "Of course, but we are professionals." Sawafta and his colleagues then escorted us to a hallway that connects the male and female sections of the facility. We asked if we would be allowed to see the men's facilities and Sawafta refused. However, from a distance we could see the male prisoners looking at us through the small openings in the doors of their prison cells.

We then went out into the yard, walked across a green space and into a room designated for women prisoners where they had handicraft classes. When we walked into the room there were 15 women working with ceramic tiles, while

sitting around a large round table. Some of them smiled at us, while others hesitated to make eye contact. They were watched over by four female prison guards. The room had an anxiety-ridden and nervous energy – reminding us that what we were witnessing was a very scripted scene. The guards pretended to be 'on edge,' ready to severely censure the prisoners in case they misbehaved. The prisoners were nervous and seemed confused by the ('on edge') conduct of the prison guards, when all they were doing was quietly working. Sawafta and the junior officers literally (and figuratively) stood between us and the prisoners, seemingly to prevent us from disturbing the carefully choreographed performance that was unfolding in front of us. Seeing that the prisoners were working with sharp tools it was unlikely that they were violent criminals. Yet, when Somdeep asked Sawafta: "What kind of crimes have they committed?" He responded: "They are all murderers." Here, the scene of a *male* police officer, 'lording' over *female* Palestinian prisoners reminds us of the extent to which the state and state-building is deeply gendered. To be sure, as Spike Peterson writes, the role of gender is evident in the state's military and revolutionary conduct. Yet, as is also evident in the case of the PA, a state's quest for sovereign authority also results in a particularly gendered manner in which the state converses with its citizenry (Peterson 1992: 22). We however were not convinced that these prisoners were violent criminals. Yet we could do little to challenge him. Michelle tried to talk to one of the prisoners who seemed most eager to interact with us. This made Sawafta nervous and he tried to listen to what the prisoner said to us. Within a couple of minutes he decided that it was time to end the tour and we were led back to his office.

There were three other officers who worked at the PCP Secretariat in Ramallah waiting for us when we arrived back at Sawafta's office. We greeted each other and sat at a long meeting table as they prepared a PowerPoint presentation for us. The presentation listed the 'facts' and 'figures' about the prison, detailed the training regimen of its employed staff members, and touted its 'status' as the most 'modern' prison in Palestine. Afterwards, one of the present officers from Ramallah said:

> You can see that we are a modern facility. We have all the things that our prisoners need. We follow the law, we are very professional, and we are very well educated about human rights. All of us go through police training in foreign countries. We have been to the US, the Netherlands, Brussels, Jordan, and Egypt.
>
> (Authors' interview, Jericho, June 2016)

Aware of some of these 'facts' and 'figures' we were keen on knowing more about the difficulties faced by our interviewees. So Somdeep asked: "What would you say is the biggest challenge of operating this prison?" Sawafta replied: "The biggest problem is that we are the only prison like this in Palestine. We need more support from the EU and the US." Still keen on knowing how Sawafta and his colleagues reconciled their professional duties with their

personal reality that they are, after all, functionaries of an absent state, Somdeep asked (albeit, provocatively): "Sorry if this sounds rude. But why would you do this job? Isn't it frustrating to work as a police officer under occupation? Do you never feel, 'let's stop all this and *just* fight'?" Sawafta was not happy with this line of questioning. He sounded provoked when he said:

> Why do we do this? Because we are professionals. We have a job and we are just doing our jobs. We are paid to do this. We work for the Palestinian people and the people need security and we do our jobs.

One of Sawafta's colleagues from Ramallah said:

> No. But we understand what you are saying. I can tell you that this is not easy. We are not stupid people. We know what is happening around us. Very recently we were in Nablus responding to a public disturbance. We arrived there to solve the problem but suddenly we were told the Israeli army was coming and we could not be outside while they were there. So, we went inside a shop and waited.

Somdeep asked: "How did you feel?" He was quiet for a few seconds and responded:

> What do you think? We were angry, frustrated, and humiliated. This is Palestine and we are the Palestinian police. This is our job. But this is the reality here. We can't do much. We keep our head down and do our job.
>
> (Authors' interview, Jericho, June 2016)

This encounter takes us back to our theoretical frame introduced in the introductory chapter. French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir once said, "one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman" (2011: 212). These words prompted Judith Butler to argue that gender is hardly a stable identity that we perform. Rather, it is through performance or the "stylized repetition of acts" that a (gender) identity is formed (Butler 1988: 519). Similarly, through their stylized performance as prison administrators, the conduct of our interlocutors was also meant to communicate (to us) their identity as functionaries of a carceral institution – one that is meant to look like an extension of a sovereign state. Part of the performance was in the garb. Be it the uniforms, the class rings, the badges, or the pictures with foreign dignitaries. They are all meant to construct our interviewees' identity as functionaries of (an agency of) a state. By making us wait outside the prison, by taking away most of our possessions, by refusing to let us record the conversations at the prison, and while initially refusing to give us a tour, Sawafta attempted to communicate to us his sovereign authority over the premises of the correctional facility. It was unlikely that the prisoners working with ceramic tiles had committed violent crimes. In fact, we later came to know from our activist interviewees that they were most likely

political prisoners. However, by claiming that they were in fact murderers, Sawafta attempted to highlight that much like the warden of a 'normal' prison he too was keeping crime (and criminals) at bay. Finally, by claiming that he did his job irrespective of the Israeli military occupation because he was a professional, he further underlined his role as a *real*, legitimate state functionary.

Sadly, the prison's officers were not the only ones (from our interviewees) who engaged in this form of stylized performance. One of our first interviews for this book project was with a high-ranking official at the Interior Ministry of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah.[1] When we arrived at the ministry a grand entrance declaring 'State of Palestine' greeted us as we entered the building that housed the office of our interviewee. Through these props, we entered the stage of what was to be a stylized performance of the state. We were first made to sit in an adjacent office where an administrative officer (albeit, in a friendly tone) quizzed us about our project. Afterwards we were led to the room where our interviewee greeted us. As we sat down to begin our interview, our interviewee asked us: "Tell me about your project." Hearing that our work was focused on state-building, he replied:

> The research that you are doing is very valuable. The facts you find out will be very valuable for whoever reads about your research. In many places in the world people may not understand what is happening in Palestine. Maybe they have some knowledge that Palestinians are a people fighting for freedom. But not in details. Personally, studies like yours are preferable. They show what is really happening. I myself am pursuing a PhD in Tunisia and the title is "Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine."
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

As if the stately nature of the premises of the ministry was not confirmation enough, by emphasizing his preference for research that focuses on *the* state our interviewee made clear to us that *this* was a place where state(craft) was placed on a pedestal. Subsequently, he went on to insinuate that the PA, much like a 'normal' state, conducts itself in accordance with a plethora of international agreements and conventions:

> When we requested and demanded the international community to credit our status as a State of Palestine, we have been very aware of our obligations [including] international treaties and conventions. We have to be able to deal with human rights and other civil rights and we have to be committed to them. Palestine itself is approaching international organizations and we are trying to be members and signing agreements to be part of the international community. There are several committees that have been set up by the different ministries here to help us become members of the international community.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

At this juncture, referring to our permission to visit a Palestinian prison he added: "Like the prisons you want to see. We have a completely modern prison set up by the Dutch [in Jericho] and all of it is in agreement with international conventions" (authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016).

The stylized performance of statecraft was also evident during our interview with Colonel Khaled Sabateen at the PCP Secretariat in Ramallah. Much like the CRC in Jericho the uniformed personnel, the guns, and the police vehicles added to the ambience of another stage where the theatrics of the state were being performed. As we walked into the premises, and not unlike our experience in Jericho, we were made to wait as uniformed PCP personnel verified our credentials, checked our belongings for dangerous items, and consulted with their superior to ensure that we had an appointment with the Colonel. After a few minutes we were escorted to the office of Lieutenant Colonel Tareq Dawabsheh who would act as our translator. Then, after briefly discussing our project, Dawabsheh escorted us to Sabateen's office. At the onset of the interview Sabateen was keen to demonstrate that the PCP operates like a normal police force striving to ensure law and order in a society. In doing so, much like our interviewee at the Interior Ministry, he cited the support and training the PCP receives from international stakeholders. He said,

> It is not easy to become a Palestinian police officer. We get training from different international agencies. A lot of our training happens in Jordan, but we also have a very good relationship with EUPOL COPPS. They train many of our officers.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

Somdeep then asked: "But how do you police a society that is under occupation. Don't you face challenges with the Israeli military presence?" Sabateen responded: "Of course. But we are trained to do a job and our goal is to have safety and security for a society, so we can have a state." Keen on discussing the underlying irony (and tragedy) of policing the occupied, Michelle interjected: "Okay, but what would you say to those Palestinians who say we get enough of this policing from Israel. Why are you doing this?" In his answer Sabateen seemed to adamantly maintain the tone and vocabulary expected from a 'normal' police officer operating in a 'normal' state: "You mean the citizens say this? Well, people say a lot of things. But we have a job. We have to maintain safety here in this society. We cannot allow disturbances here" (authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016).

Of course, these stylized and insistent performances *as* public sector functionaries were not the entirety of the theatric statecraft we witnessed in Jericho, the Interior Ministry and the PCP headquarters. At the prison, Sawafta was well-versed in what his role entailed, and he largely maintained his performance as the administrator of the prison. However, his colleague revealed the anxiety that underlies such a performance. When forced to stay in the shop in Ramallah in order to avoid encountering the Israeli military, he was left angry, frustrated, and

humiliated. Moreover, the experience reminded him of the underlying fallacy of performing the role of a functionary of a state that is absent. Yet, despite this realization he resigned to this fallacy and simply did 'his job.' Of course, Butler reminds us, anxiety is written into the very essence of such a performance. In fact, engaging in stylized repetitive acts is the only way to materialize that which is being performed. That is to say, Sawafta's colleague may be well-aware that he was a functionary of an absent state. But, despite this, by simply doing 'his job' he hopes to 'solidify' his identity as a state functionary.

A similar anxiety was present during our conversation at the Interior Ministry. Outwardly our interviewee was keen on demonstrating that the State of Palestine was indeed attempting to function like a normal (internationally recognized) state. Yet, keen to understand how he operates as a state functionary under occupation, Somdeep asked: "What are some of the difficulties you face while trying to fulfill these international conventions? Clearly, it must be difficult doing these things while there is an occupation?" Our interviewee paused before responding:

> Now I will talk from a personal point of view. I am above all a Palestinian. I know the realities. I was brought up in this situation. I was a fighter and I was in Israeli prisons for ten years. So I completely understand the reality here. I am still fighting but I am fighting to build a Palestinian state. I am still part of the national struggle, but my struggle is doing my job. I am a professional. This is my job and so I have to do my work no matter the difficulties.

Still curious about how a functionary of a state that does not exist is able to continue performing the non-existent, Somdeep asked:

> I hear about professionalism and that this is your job, but this must be difficult. You hear stories about the Israeli army simply walking into Palestinian cities like Ramallah and Nablus. So, seeing the Israelis in *your* area must be difficult. What prevents you from giving up your job and just fighting Israel?

He responded:

> Of course we have these thoughts and it is difficult but that's why we are professionals. We don't let our emotions determine our actions. We work by logic. But everything has its limits. Even our logic has its limits. We are after all Palestinians. But we try not to have any confrontation with Israelis. This is part of our job, but we have limits to our patience as well.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

Finally, much like our interviewees in Jericho and the Interior Ministry, our interlocutors at the PCP secretariat also wavered between their professional

commitments and their political reality (as stateless Palestinians). Somdeep asked Khaled Sabateen: "How do you survive trying to act like the real police working towards building a real state while there is an occupation and Israel does what it pleases?" Michelle added:

> There are also international conventions and donors and you are expected to perform just like professionals of a sovereign state, no matter what happens. So when you are trained by the Europeans you are expected to act just like them, but you are operating in a very difficult context.

Sabateen responded:

> I can tell you that many times the Israeli soldiers do their patrols in our areas. What do we do? This is a very stressful situation and psychologically this is not easy. But we do our job as professionals.

Dawabsheh added:

> There is another situation. I am here but my family is in Duma. There my family has been attacked by settlers and burned alive.[2] Do you understand how difficult and frustrating this is? But we don't take revenge. We do this in a professional manner and make a case in the international criminal court. We have a lot of patience … life here is not easy. Occupation is ugly, and no one wants to live under occupation. I am 48 years old and I have always been under [Israeli] military rule. I have never practiced civilian life. Can you believe this? I feel free and as a human when I am in any country in the world. But when I am here, I feel not like a human. I am a second-rate citizen. This is strange. In your home you do not feel like a human.

With these emotionally charged words our interview came to a close. But as Dawabsheh walked us to the elevator, he seemed keen to say more. Then, just when we were about to enter the elevator, he said abruptly:

> People outside don't understand how we live here. They say, "you do this," "you do that."[3] Why don't you come and live like us. They are not suffering like we are. They say, "whatever you are doing is bullshit. The Palestinian Authority is no use. What are you doing here?" But they don't understand that we need safety and security. That is my mission. No one will be able to live here. That is what we are providing. But the young generation doesn't understand how much of an achievement the PA is.[4] When we were young, we participated in the First Intifada. At that time you couldn't raise the Palestinian flag. You saw a Palestinian flag and your hair would stand up. Now you can fly the flag so for my generation the PA is a big achievement and that's why we work like this.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

In sum, our interviewees, functionaries of a state that seems to be suspended indefinitely, confirm Judith Butler's conception of performativity. Their insistence on performing the role of the functionary reminds us of the extent to which the continuous performance (as a state employee) furbishes their identity *as* state functionaries. Yet, their cognizance of the overarching political reality that they are after all performing a state that does not exist also elucidates that performance of this sort is an anxiety-laden endeavor. Empirically, what also comes to the fore is the tragic nature of the performance such 'state' functionaries take on whereby they are, perpetually, compelled to waver between a professional commitment to an institution and its institutional logic (i.e., a state) while knowing well that this institution is absent. In referring to these performances as tragic we do not intend to efface the violence underpinning these functionaries' stylized performance. As we go on to demonstrate in Chapter 5, the theatrics of the state in the occupied Palestinian territories speak a language of violence that perforates the lives of many Palestinians. Nonetheless, the aspiration in this chapter has been to shed light on key 'actors' participating in the theatrical performance of the state in the occupied Palestinian territories – namely those salaried to 'act' as if the Palestinian state exists.

Conclusion

Mahmoud Abbas' speech at the seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 20, 2017 epitomized all the constituent elements of the theatrics of statecraft in the occupied West Bank that we have thus far been concerned with in this book. When invited to the podium he is referred to as the President of Palestine and is escorted to the stage in a ceremonial manner by members of the UN's protocol and liaison service – much like any other state(ly) figure. Members of the audience applaud as Abbas walks up to the stage, in seeming approval of his state(ly) status. Abbas then takes a seat, after which the Vice President of the General Assembly Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana officially invites him to address the assembly: "On behalf of the General Assembly I have the honor to welcome to the United Nations his Excellency the President of the State of Palestine and to invite him to address the assembly."[5] Until this point, we see confirmation of our assertions in Chapter 2 with regard to the expansive materiality of international 'investments' in the theatrics of statecraft in the occupied Palestinian territories. Moreover, the pomp and circumstance of the lead-up to Abbas' speech and the honorific designation granted to the Palestinian President, also confirms the insistent manner in which the theatrics of statecraft are prized (and sanctified) by international stakeholders, despite being unconvinced of their 'value' in the service of the Palestinian struggle for sovereign statehood.

Abbas also seems to be well-versed in the conduct expected of him as the *President* of the State of Palestine. The considered manner in which he walked on the stage while flanked by two members of protocol service, the still and stately way he waited to be officially invited to make his statement and in the

overall tone of his speech – Abbas maintained the impression that indeed he is the representative of a Palestinian state. In these mannerisms, he mirrors our deliberations in this chapter. We began by outlining not just a history of the establishment of the PA but the manner in which, not least by way of a significant proportion of the population employed in the public sector, it has assumed a dominant material presence in the lives of Palestinians; of those salaried functionaries of the PA. It follows that, just as Abbas (as a salaried PA functionary himself) is well-versed in the conduct expected of him as President, so too are the officials at the Ministry of Interior, the senior police officers in Ramallah, and the administrators of the prison facilities in Jericho versed in the script they need to follow and the vocabulary they must use in order to give the impression that they are professional 'functionaries' of a state entity. Yet, alongside their ostensibly convinced performance as state functionaries, we have also demonstrated in this chapter that our interviewees themselves remain, simultaneously, unconvinced. Moreover, after the formal parts of our interviews were coming to a close, they eventually acknowledged the anxiety-laden-ness of their performative acts seeing that their performance as state functionaries did little by way of materializing the sovereign Palestinian state. This recognition was also evident in Abbas' address to the General Assembly. In this address Abbas describes the Israeli occupation as a colonial endeavor, claims that the State of Israel never sincerely recognized Palestinian sovereign territoriality, and that the Israeli settlement campaign as well as Israel's contravention of international conventions have all hindered the arrival of a sovereign Palestinian state. That is to say, in his physical being and conduct Abbas may have performed like a stately figure. However, his words underlined the reality that Palestinians remained occupied and stateless.

In sum, Abbas and our interviewees mentioned in this chapter confirmed the performativity written into the Oslo-prescribed statecraft prevalent in the occupied Palestinian territories. As we argued in our introductory chapter, these performative acts are unconvinced and anxious in nature. Similarly, the PA functionaries mentioned in this chapter – while ostensibly sure-footed in their performance *as* functionaries – were anxious about revealing that they were stateless functionaries of a state that does not yet exist. Admittedly, our interviewees were far more cognizant of the fact that their performance of statecraft was after all *just* a performance than their international counterparts invested in maintaining the performance of the state. Many touted personal experiences and familial histories that were meant to demonstrate that they were not just aware of the *lack* of Palestinian sovereignty but were also committed to liberating Palestinians from the Israeli occupation. Yet, they continued to play the (anxious and unconvinced) role of the state functionaries. Chapter 4 describes the manner in which civil society organizations and their representatives participate in the theatrics of statecraft in the occupied Palestinian territories. By definition, as civil society/*non*-governmental entities, they are far less materially entangled in maintaining the performance of the state. However, as we will demonstrate, they somehow become key functionaries of the broader theater of statecraft despite not being salaried employees of the PA.

Notes

1 The Interior Ministry commands a certain prominent status within the Palestinian political landscape as an institution that monitors and, relevant for our discussions in Chapter 5, ritually censures Palestinian political activism that undermines the authority of the political elite at the helm of the PA. Moreover, the ministry grants civil society organizations, like those discussed in Chapter 4, the permission to operate in the Palestinian territories.
2 Here Tareq Dawabsheh was referring to the Duma arson attack that took place in late June 2015. For more see: www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/09/duma-arson-attack-palestinians-call-day-rage-150907120115393.html.
3 This seems to contradict the claims made by our interviewee at EUPOL COPPS who insisted that the Mission did not impose its will on the Palestinian Civil Police.
4 This confirms Sara's claim (in the Prelude) that there is a generation of Palestinians who considered the establishment of the PA to be a significant achievement.
5 Video and transcript of the Mahmoud Abbas' speech is available at: https://gadebate.un.org/en/72/palestine-state.

4 Operating in the shadow of the 'state'

The case of civil society organizations

> Al-Haq follows gradual steps of advocacy. We listen to victims of (PA) torture. We address the PA, that is, the relevant security body. If we receive no response, we try again. If we don't, then we go public. In some cases, we published videos.… It is complex to deal with PA violations of international conventions because we have a common enemy. We have to be very careful. We have a grave future ahead of us. All this affects the social fabric of Palestinian society … Palestinian people do not feel the presence of the PA except in severe situations: Imposition of taxes, torture, detention – Al-Haq representative.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

> In 2014, the PA signed the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CAT). Thus, the PA became responsible for fulfilling its obligations under the convention. NGOs can thus document and file cases of arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment during arrest as well as in Palestinian prisons, detention, and intelligence centers. These practices are in contravention with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as the Convention Against Torture. However, in recent years the PA has displayed an alarming lack of commitment and political will to implement the provisions of this convention. It goes with the political situation – Addameer representative.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

> The PA should protect its own people, but it has geographical jurisdiction only on maps. The Israeli forces can come in any (PA controlled) area any time they want – Defence for Children International.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

In this chapter, we shed light on some fundamental contradictions inherent in the everyday functions of the NGO community in the oPt, as captured in the quotes above. We therefore choose to foreground the voices of our Palestinian interviewees who are representatives of Palestinian NGOs that monitor the conduct of the PA, while at the same time report the atrocities of the Israeli colonial

occupation of the West Bank. As we have explained in Chapter 3, the Oslo Accords established the PA as a set of government institutions that, in the first instance, would act as such for a transitional period of five years with jurisdiction over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The PA has, however, persisted in its Oslo form up to this day with the resultant violent and authoritarian structures that we detailed in earlier parts of this book and which we expand on in Chapter 5. It is therefore not a representative government in the sense that it does not allow for the full freedom and independence of NGOs– the impact of which we will detail in this present chapter. Most of these Palestinian NGOs are not funded by the PA but rather by international donors as part of the theatrical machinery behind the staging of state-building efforts in the oPt. Moreover, NGOs in the oPt require the PA's Interior Ministry's approval and permission to operate as civil society organizations. It is for this reason that, in this present chapter, what we set out to highlight is the anxious relationship that NGO staff experience in their everyday encounters with the PA as the performative state of Palestine.

In order to contextualize the charged and challenging political environment that such organizations are forced to navigate in the oPt, we begin by providing a historical and political context of the development of the Palestinian NGO sector under occupation and the consequent NGO-ization of state-building efforts in the oPt. With this context in view, we draw on the voices of interviewees to impress how NGOs – as active or reluctant participants in the theatrics of the PA – enable the performance of Palestinian state-building and how their representatives (our interviewees) simultaneously reconcile the crushed expectation of the arrival of a sovereign Palestinian state. We focus our attention on a selected few Palestinian NGOs, namely Al-Haq, Addameer, and the Jerusalem Center for Women. We do so primarily because, as disclosed by our interviewee at the Office of the Quartet Representative in Chapter 2, these are some of the most prominent NGOs that the international donor community chooses to work with in their state-building efforts because of their 'service delivery competencies,' in lieu of the imperfect PA system. We are therefore interested in how these NGOs navigate the norms of the performance of statehood as scripted by the donor community.

In this way, we shed light on the norms of state-building that are performed by NGOs and the effect this performance has on stateless Palestinian NGO staff members who invest significantly in these performative acts knowing only too well that the presumed State is unlikely to materialize. Our focus on NGOs in this chapter is important because the non-profit sector in Palestine (excluding those parts of Jerusalem which were annexed by Israel in 1967) employs some 42,474 people working in different areas: 24,885 NGO workers are based in the West Bank (PCBS 2018). Not unlike our interlocutors in Chapter 3, Palestinian NGO workers we interviewed also displayed an anxious engagement with the theatrics of state-building in Palestine. They were, for one, caught in their professional responsibilities fulfilling the mandated tasks of the organization they are employed by. In these professional responsibilities they were of course considerably less invested than the PA functionaries we interviewed who were

salaried 'performers' of the state. Yet, faced with an often-censorious PA, they hesitate to undermine the theatrics of the state even though they are well-aware that this state is absent and unlikely to materialize in the near future. Our interviews thus capture the multiple functions that Palestinian NGOs have to perform as part of the theatrics of statecraft. On the one hand, they act as important vehicles through which the Palestinian nationalist movement continues to be demobilized. On the other hand, they act as agents that legitimize an (imagined) independent state which observes human rights and democratic principles.

NGOs in a stateless context

A consistent premise that runs throughout our book is that a Palestinian state does not exist. What we see through our discussions with our interviewees however is that there is an image of a state that is theatrically performed by multiple actors, be they the PA officials we discussed in Chapter 3, the NGO staff members in this chapter, or the political activists in Chapter 5. According to the focus of each of these chapters what we surmise is that those living and acting in the vicinity of this imagined state either consciously, inadvertently, or unwillingly end up performing the existence of a state that does not exist. Traditionally, one would expect that we need a state with a government to enable us to talk about and discuss *non-governmental* organizations. Yet, our core premise here is that, in keeping with a theater of statecraft, Palestinian NGOs are also, knowingly or unknowingly, part of a performance. By acting like NGOs they sustain the image of a Palestinian state that simply does not exist – just like the PA functionaries (in Chapter 3), who, in their conduct, perform the state that is not real and the international stakeholders (in Chapter 2) who, through their funding, maintain the institutional and bureaucratic structures of a state that is not there. Therefore, we keep our focus on NGOs even though there is no real Palestinian state that we can talk about because these NGOs too are part of the tragic theatrical performance that makes Palestine seem like a state that actually exists.

The making of the NGO industry in the oPt: A historical overview

The development of NGOS in Palestine can be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s when they arrived on the political arena as welfare associations and as "collective efforts to deliver, often free of charge, an array of relief and development services" (Sullivan 1996: 93). After Israel occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in 1967, these NGOs continued to develop as part of the popular (albeit, unarmed) resistance against the Israeli occupation. During the 1970s, in the occupied Palestinian territories, a large 'left' movement, with a non-factional spirit, and in the absence of a state, developed a practical framework and gave direction to the territories' civil society sector. The key ideology of this movement remained steadfastness as an active form of civil resistance

against the Israeli occupation. During a period when the PLO was in exile in Tunis, this movement held center-stage in the struggle for Palestinian liberation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At the time, Palestinian NGOs had extensive experience of the Tunis leadership's authoritarian nature which made it highly ineffective and bureaucratized: This in turn made the PLO fear independent initiatives. Especially in the 1980s, and the period preceding the establishment of the PA, civil society organizations were considered as crucial channels for popular participation. During this period, what added most to the credibility of these NGOs was that leaders of civil action were in direct contact with ordinary Palestinian people. At the start of the First Intifada in 1987 many Palestinians worked for these institutions on a voluntary basis, even supporting their activities through personal funds. Sadiq writes: "The images of neighborhood committees, popular education, cultivation of land, and free medical services are some of the most beautiful images in our memory when we think back to that period of continuous giving" (Sadiq 2012: n.p.). As a consequence, these civil society institutions played a leading role in national, political, and social work and particularly in mobilizing the masses toward the achievement of their national vision. At the same time these institutions have been performing a much-needed role of filling the gaps left by the government's service delivery system in healthcare, rehabilitation, preschool education, agriculture, and water (Jarrar 2005).

These institutions viewed the impending arrival of the PA and the scramble of donors to support and strengthen it with outright suspicion. In the wake of the Oslo Accords, what emerged from this crisis situation and the gap it left in the territories was what came to be called NGOs, around a notion of *civil society*. This was an ideological and institutional transformation in the Palestinian civil society mass movement that took place during the course of the 1990s: "[T]his sudden interest in civil society is propelled by the international agencies who, in their mass drive to 're-construct' the remainders of Palestine, have brought with them the 'good governance' development orthodoxy currently holding sway in Washington and Brussels" (Hammami 1995: 51). This entailed a systematic process through which Palestinian civil society was altered in the early 1990s and a large section of the pre-Oslo Accords mass-based movements were transmuted into disconnected groups of externally-funded NGOs (Dana 2015). This reflects what Arundhati Roy refers to as the NGO-ization of politics: In our case the NGO-ization of the international donor community's theatrics of state-building in the oPt. Roy speaks of the NGO-ization of resistance as one of three contemporary dangers that confront resistance movements globally. She emphasizes that although many NGOs continue to carry out valuable work, it is important to nuance the development of the NGO 'phenomenon' in a broader political context (Roy 2016). Just like in her native India, the Palestinian NGO sector exploded in the late 1980s and 1990s and coincided with the neo-liberal agenda of the international donor community's focus on 'state-building' in the oPt (see also Haddad 2016). Most large Palestinian NGOs were thus made financially dependent on and became patronized by international aid and development agencies with the backing of Western governments. 'Human rights' became one

of the key tracks of investment for the global aid industry in the oPt. As Lori Allen eloquently states, the overwhelming dependency of human rights organizations on international funding has created a "hegemony of a particular form of marketable human rights work that does not always support political activism or engagement" (Allen 2013: 109).

The international community thus made it possible for Palestinian NGOs to give the impression that they are filling the vacuum created by the imperfect Palestinian state(-in-the-making), or as our interviewee Tim at the Office of the Quartet Representative referred to it: "[T]he imperfect management system of the PA," (Michelle Pace interview, East Jerusalem, October 2016). And, in keeping with Roy's assertions, Palestinian NGOs therefore serve a material purpose in the international community's state-building theatrics. They help defuse political anger at the PA and the Israeli occupation (the latter to an extent) and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right i.e., their right to have rights as humans generally and as Palestinians specifically. In this way NGOs become the facilitators of the theatrics of statehood and act as buffers between the 'government' (in the shape of the PA) and the Palestinian people. But rather than being accountable to Palestinians they work among, NGOs are only accountable to their international funders.

In order to then fully comprehend this transformation of Palestinian civil society one has to take into account three interrelated factors, namely: (a) ideological neo-liberal globalization; (b) political factors, especially the Oslo process; and (c) financial factors, in particular the conditionality of international donors. The proliferation of NGOs in the oPt can be understood in a context of ongoing extension of neo-liberalism and the establishment of a globalized elite (Edwards and Hulme 1992; Hanafi and Tabar 2002: 31–36; Hann and Dunn 1996; Jad 2004; Petras 1997; Vivian 1994). Others, including Palestinian leftists and nationalists, view the West as colonial and corrupting, buying the loyalties of Palestinian elites. This reveals the contradictory functions and roles between past and present Palestinian civil society versions (Qassoum 2002). Moreover, by the 1990s, because of Israeli imposed university closures (Baramki 2009, many academics set up NGO 'shops' that targeted 'clients.' As a result, the internal contradictions grew within these organizations as they came to see themselves as development professionals rather than catalysts of community mobilization and political organization. Moreover, in August 1994, the (so-called) Ministry of Justice announced that all NGOs should register with the PNA, a policy aimed at keeping the main role of NGO institutions – that is to act as a check on the power of the PNA – under full control. In this way, the rise of NGOs in Palestine served to demobilize Palestinian civil society in a phase of national struggle (Jad 2007). Donors thus de-politicized NGOs in the oPt through the introduction of a language and vocabulary that assesses humanitarian problems faced by Palestinians as problems of development rather than looking at the occupation and the ensuing politics of resource (land, water, etc.) management and allocation in the occupied Palestinian territories (for more on this interpretation of development see Ferguson 1994).

As a consequence, the women's movement for instance was progressively depoliticized. As already mentioned, donors transformed civil society organizations into becoming accountable to overseas donors instead of local communities (Kuttab 2009). Palestinian women's movements had been highly politicized: they emerged in the first half of the twentieth century in the midst of increasing Western economic and political interventions. These movements were roughly split into two groups: The Islamic modernists and the secular nationalists. The former aimed to protect religion from different interpretations while emphasizing Islam's importance in women's and men's daily lives. The latter focused on the pathways toward freeing Palestine from colonial occupation and gaining independence for Palestinians. These movements thus provided a forum for women to actively participate in the struggle for independence while also fighting for their rights in the political, economic, and social fields (Jad 2007). A large Palestinian women's delegation attended the 'Women of the Orient' conference where they were able to highlight the violations of their national rights and their struggle against Zionism (Zu'aytir 1980). But his way of thinking and seeing national liberation and women's liberation as synonymous changed with the de-politicization and NGO-ization of the Palestinian civil society movement.

In the context of the oPt, NGOs (as the outcome and product of international interference in Palestinian affairs) are therefore perceived as having a negative impact on the development of the *real* Palestinian civil society. Palestinians have been witnessing the devastating destruction of their land by the increasingly hardline Israeli colonial policy which keeps holding back real development in Palestinian territories. Pressures by European and other donors increased on Palestinians to bring about more change under the infamous banner of a *new* development policy, captured in the 'good governance' parlance. The Oslo Accords increased this pressure even further through their emphasis on good governance and democratic values, even if the established PA had only limited self-governance rights. In fact donors created an interdependent relation between Oslo and the crisis in state formation that has ensued since in the oPt (Khan 2015).

Thus, the historical (albeit brief) trajectory of civil society development in Palestine *before* the First Intifada reveals that Palestinians sought to be self-reliant by developing their own paradigm for development that would ensure short-term survival and long-term improvements in their political, economic, and social lives (Pace 2013). Once the political leadership arrived in the oPt from Tunis, Palestinian civil society groups put more emphasis on the empowerment of local communities, the establishment of local and territory-wide institutional structures outside the governing body's control, and an emphasis on Palestinian priorities for development rather than reacting to externally generated projects (Pace 2013). Faced with the new PA's state-like apparatuses and its governmental infrastructure, civil society organizations attempted to remain independent. By doing so, they were marked as taking an opposing stance to it (Hammami 1995). This was true to an extent as a coalition of the now professionalized NGOs and left-wing factions opposed the Oslo Accords. In fact,

> the discussion of civil society (at the time) amounts to a discourse of defeat. It has become the central term through which a demoralised and demobilised grassroots movement has been coming to terms with its powerlessness in the face of the transformation of the once distant PLO into a local authoritarian reality.
>
> (Hammami 1995: 52)

The creation of the PA thus had an adverse impact on the structure and function of most civil society organizations, due in the main either to legal or financial pressure (Awad 2017). In fact, civil society in Palestine was unable to effectively resist the PA's control attempts, mostly because of its involvement in the national struggle and its over-politicization.

There was however an attempt by local NGOs post-Oslo to devise a strategy that would act as a democratic counterweight to the arrival of the PA at the oPt. The aim was initially to protect Palestine's 'well-developed civil society' during the period of 'state formation.' But sticking to the ideals behind this strategy was difficult for those organizations that openly opposed Oslo as they had their funding revoked by donors like the then EC, the British Overseas Development Aid, and to a lesser extent USAID. As a result, there was a drop of 40 percent in funding to civil society from the early 1990s up until the first few years following the signing of the Oslo Accords. And, it is from this period that we note the start of the theatrical performance by many Palestinian NGOs.

By zooming in on Palestinians working within the NGO industry and their anxiety-ridden performance (as civil society representatives) this chapter adds value to this rich debate through an emphasis on the performativity of statecraft. What we observe is that while opposing the imitation of state-building ('the state') these Palestinian NGO officials ('civil society') end up reiterating (rather than disrupting) the very same performance of the imagined state. In the following section we thereby trace Palestinian NGOs' inadvertent reiteration of the PA's theater of statecraft through voices of Palestinian employees of civil society operational in the occupied West Bank who we interviewed in May–June and October 2016.

NGO officials and their 'anxious' performance

In *Humanitarian Performance: From Disaster Tragedies to Spectacles of War* Thompson (2014) challenges the ways in which humanitarian enterprises are often considered as being above reproach. He calls for a critique of the humanitarian project through an acknowledgment that many who work in this industry are aware of the need to perform. Below, through our interviews with representatives of three prominent NGOs, we demonstrate the manner in which they navigate the PA's theatrics – either as resolute participants or as tortured individuals struggling to escape the theater of statecraft.

The strong but deeply frustrated community leader

> Women who are strong and active like me … our political leaders are afraid of us, because they do not want anyone like us who knocks her fist on the table or raises her voice about our rights. All the time they choose weak women just to show that they do include women – Fadwa, Jerusalem Centre for Women Chairwoman.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, East Jerusalem, October 2016)

The Jerusalem Centre for Women (JCW) was established in 1994 in East Jerusalem with the objective of advancing women's human rights and of promoting gender equality through the establishment of courses and workshops on capacity-building, leadership, skills training, legal rights, and international law. JCW programs further claim to aid Palestinian women in articulating and claiming their fundamental rights despite the limitations inherent in a patriarchal society such as that in the oPt. Among its core principles JCW holds that the ending of oppression and human rights violations against Palestinian women will also bring about an end to human rights violations perpetrated against Palestinian society at large. The empowerment of women, the enhancement of their capabilities as informed leaders, the fostering of gender equity, the advocacy of human rights, and the promotion of democratic principles are considered by JCW as crucial measures to ending the Israeli occupation and the creation of a solid foundation for just and lasting peace based upon equality to which every person is entitled. JCW also stands for the inherent dignity of all people and for a Palestinian society where individuals' opportunities are defined not by their gender, race, religion, or color but by their own personal ambition, potential, and inherent rights. JCW is a secular organization that respects and values all diversity. It further aims to train a new generation of young leaders dedicated to advancing women's rights and to creating a culture of human rights and democracy in a future Palestinian state.

On the October 25, 2016 Michelle met Fadwa a board member of JCW. Fadwa describes herself as a Palestinian civil society/development expert, with 30 years of experience in this field. She is also the head of the international relations department of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports (Palestine) and has served within the PLO for over 20 years, covering policy and development programs. She spoke about her background as a revolutionary person who later moved into the PLO's political circles and her now more recent move into the civil society sector after an engagement in the private sector. She was also very proud to share her three-page curriculum vitae detailing all these past experiences.

When Michelle introduced the purpose of our research Fadwa was quick to point out that "JCW has a long experience working with government and civil society and the private sector: All of them. They must do governance *inside* their institution to have strong ability for state-building," (Michelle Pace interview, Jerusalem, October 2016). Although her first words seem to assume the coming

of a state in the future her email signature clearly stipulates: Fadwa Alshaer, JCW Board Member, *State of Palestine*. This gives us an initial indication that for Fadwa the state is a real thing (as apparent in her email signature). Yet, through the course of the interview it became apparent that the state was also indeed one that is performed – almost, as if, it is through performative acts that, in reality, the non-existence of the state would be eclipsed. In a way, during the interview, Fadwa in fact acted on behalf of a state that is both present and absent at the same time. Following her initial positioning within the liberal view of civil society (based on the appropriate governance structures for state-building), she then moved on to emphasize the struggle for women's rights as a crucial component to achieve human rights for all Palestinians. She said:

> Just look at the composition of Fatah's Central Committee and Revolutionary Council members … they are almost all men! We need to build a model for civil social responsibility in Palestine rather than focus on international law. The PA has no authority in its supposed areas of control. Palestinians have absolutely no trust in the PA security forces. We have several weaknesses in our Palestinian governance structures. There is the internal struggle within Fatah itself. A lack of democratic representation, lack of elections, lack of clear political transition mechanisms.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Jerusalem, October 2016)

Fadwa is clearly embedded within the logic of the donor discourse emphasizing issues of governance, women's rights, and human rights. A disconnection thus emerges between her NGO positionality and that of Palestine's popular movement today (see more on this in Chapter 5). Palestinian NGO officials like Fadwa are compelled to operate within the pre-defined script consisting of mechanisms and structures of the aid industry. This is highly challenging for many Palestinian activists who view the neo-liberal frame within which Palestinian NGOs operate as contradictory to the Palestinians' struggle against the infrastructure of Oslo which brought about the PA and deepened the Israeli occupation.

Although Fadwa had a very critical position vis-à-vis the PA and even (after her interview) keenly introduced Michelle to other critical voices both within the PA itself and from other Palestinian and international NGOs, she was careful to point out how the PA finds itself in a very awkward situation, operating as the sole representative of the Palestinian people when in fact it is operating under a military occupation. At the same time, she also expressed her enthusiasm for bringing together Palestinian and Israeli women to fight the Israeli occupation. She eagerly described to Michelle the October 19, 2016 women's march through Jerusalem to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence, which saw thousands of Israeli and Palestinian women calling on the PM to reach a peace deal with the Palestinians.

> Together we demand that our leaders work with respect and courage towards a solution to the ongoing violent conflict, with the full participation

> of women in this process. Only an honorable political agreement will secure the future of our children and grandchildren.
>
> (Michelle Pace interview, Jerusalem, October 2016)

The morning before Michelle had to depart from East Jerusalem to catch her flight back to Denmark, Fadwa joined her for breakfast. "I really understand your project. I would like to keep in touch. But please understand that it is extremely hard to be in the situation we find ourselves in" (Michelle Pace interview, Jerusalem, October 2016). Fadwa may well be a reluctant participant in the theatrics of the PA and an indirect participant in the performance of Palestinian state-building yet she seems hopeful of a future with a sovereign Palestinian state even though deep down she knows this is very hard to come about.

The critically conscious and revolutionary visionaries

In 1979 a group of Palestinian lawyers established Al-Haq in response to the lack of human rights protection mechanisms in the oPt. It was the first human rights NGO to be founded in the Arab world. During its initial years in operation, Al-Haq focused on Israel's military and governmental structures imposed on the oPt. Its early studies, applying principles of international humanitarian law to Israel's colonization of the oPt, shaped the debate on what laws and regulations apply in these said territories. It is during this early period that Al-Haq also developed its own Legal Unit. In the context of the First Intifada, Al-Haq expanded its staff complement throughout the oPt to address the violations that resulted from the uprising. According to an Al-Haq official we interviewed, the establishment of the PA following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 lead to internal disagreements within Al-Haq as to how to respond to the new situation (authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016). Among other activities Al-Haq started to monitor the first PLC elections which were held in 1996, carried out legal analysis to ensure the inclusion of human rights standards in PA legislation, and provided training for the PA's "law enforcement officials" on fundamental human rights norms. But it was not until 2004 that Al-Haq was able to register as an NGO under the Palestinian NGO Law, No. 1 for the year 2000 (www.alhaq.org). During June 2007, following the 2006 election victory of Hamas and the ensuing and unprecedented factional fighting in the oPt, Al-Haq wrote to Fatah and Hamas leaderships and expressed serious concerns about violations of domestic and international law perpetrated by both sides (authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016). On June 14, 2007, President Mahmoud Abbas declared a state of emergency in the oPt and signed a presidential decree. This decree transferred all powers of criminal prosecution from the civil judiciary to the military judiciary. Effectively, what this decree did is to transform the situation in the oPt from a civil state of emergency to a military state of emergency. Al-Haq was quick to respond and published its position on the relevant legal issues arising from this situation.

A specific case in point was the death of Majd Abdel Aziz Barghouti, on February 22, 2008, aged 44, after having been detained for nine days by the

Palestinian General Intelligence Service (GIS): Al-Haq gathered information about his arrest and the detention procedures, and conducted preliminary investigations. Al-Haq then issued a statement claiming that the human rights organization had evidence indicating that GIS agents were mistreating and imposing inhuman and degrading conditions on detainees. Moreover, the organization noted that security and detention officers were ignoring or choosing to disregard the procedural rules relating to the apprehension and detention of suspects. It announced that such evidence showed a clear violation by members of the GIS of Palestinian law, which incorporates international human rights standards. Al-Haq also called upon the PLC's Monitoring and Public Freedoms Committee to open an investigation into the conditions of arrest and detention of individuals by members of the Palestinian security authorities, to implement an efficient monitoring system of the detention centers, and to investigate reasons behind the inaction of the Attorney-General in adequately carrying out such monitoring. As our interviewee quoted at the start of this chapter states, Al-Haq has since been monitoring any PA security services' violations of human rights and has even dared to go to the extent to publish videos of statements of Palestinians who were tortured when under PA forces' detention. Below, we quote to some length one such interview to shed light on the openly critical position of Al-Haq. The video is entitled "This is what happened to me"[1] (ellipses denote pauses and silence)

> I wish I could be as I was before …
> To walk on the street without fear …
> I wish I could walk on the street unafraid …
> I wish I could get back to my work …
> I don't feel my hand …
> I can't hold my neck straight up …
> I don't feel my foot.
> All the time, I feel like hot water is in my foot …
> I felt something running through my veins …
> I can't control my body at all …
> I can't work …
> I can hardly hold a glass of water.
> When I walk on the street, I feel that people are running after me and wanting to beat me.
> When my little cousin gets close to me and wants to give me something, I feel afraid.
> Why? (…….)
> At around 11.00 a.m. on Saturday 1 February 2014 someone called Muhannad called me.
> He introduced himself as Muhannad al Ju'beh from the Palestinian Investigations Unit in the city of Hebron.
> "You are charged with stealing a cellular telephone or using your SIM card on a stolen cellular telephone." He addressed me.

> "Nothing like that ever happened. I did not steal any cellular telephone." I replied.
> "You have to come to the Investigations Unit offices immediately," he said.
> "All right," … I answered.
> Immediately, I went to the Palestinian Investigations offices in Hebron city.
> I went to Muhannad.
> "I have not called you in here because of a stolen cellular telephone. I brought you here because you hacked a Facebook account." He started.
> I denied that.
> "Fine. I want to take you downstairs," he said.
> He took me downstairs to interrogation officers.
> The moment I entered, they started to beat me…
> "If Prophet Mohammed abandons the Islamic religion, you will abandon this case," an interrogation officer told me.
> "All this did not happen. There's nothing of this." He called someone called Kayed.
> "Lieutenant Kayed, come here. This is Osama ash Shawamreh." He took me and started to beat me, without inquiring about anything. 'Kayedd' grabbed my shoulders here, and put me down to the ground until I reached down to his shoes. He grabbed me and lifted me up. He tightened the handcuffs on my hands here and here behind my back. He punched me on the head here. He had a metal ring on his finger. When he beat me, he turned his ring on the side of his hand here. When he punched me, he turned the ring on his hand here. He punched me on my neck here, here and here. Sometimes, they pulled my arm up like this. They punched me on my arm here and there.
> One time I fell unconscious.
> I beseeched him: … "For God's sake. There is platinum on my leg. Don't hurt me."
> He dropped me to the ground and stood on my leg with all his weight.
> "Does your leg hurt you?" he asked me.
> At that moment, I was not fully conscious…. I could no longer see anything at all. When he slapped me on the head here, I felt that sparks went out of my eyes. I was so scared. I felt I would die when he strangled me here. He pushed me here until I was out of breath. When I fell to the ground, he started to punch me….

The former Palestinian detainee in the video reveals his clear resistance to the performance of the Oslo-mandated 'state.' This was also the case during Michelle's interview in June 2016 with Mr. al-Hassan,[2] the Al-Haq cameraman who recorded the video quoted above. When asked about his work at Al-Haq he demonstrated a deep sense of frustration, suspicion, and mistrust with regards to the conduct of the PA in the occupied West Bank. He insisted that there was a need to reveal what "they [the PA] are doing to their own brothers. Torture and other forms of abuse are commonly deployed by PA security structures to inflict physical and mental suffering for political opponents." Mr. al-Hassan then

added, "this is why I work for Al-Haq. And we need to do much, much more in this area to reveal these violations and inhuman practices" (Michelle Pace interview, Ramallah, June 2016).

During Michelle's visit to Mr. al-Hassan's office, which was a separate building from the main Al-Haq offices in Ramallah, the room was full of cigarette smoke from his chain smoking during this interview. Clearly affected by the tragic realities he encounters in his work, consequently believing that the 'truth' of the theatrical machinery has to be out in the open, Mr. al-Hassan embodies the performances of a subjective self which struggles to counteract the hegemony of the PA's violent control over the lives of those it claims to represent. It was a relative of Mr. al-Hassan who passed on his contact details to us. In this way NGO staff members (and activist relatives) keep up their performance of opposition because they fear being officially appropriated as part of the PA's theater of statecraft. Mr. al-Hassan is fully aware that human rights in the oPt cannot and will not be meaningfully enforced without a fundamental shift in the political reality of the PA's theatrics and an end to Israel's settler colonialism. Opposition to the PA is however not entirely an escape from the PA's theatrical machinery. In fact, the repetitive performativity of NGO staff is not unlike the repetitive nature of the performance of internationals donors (Chapter 2) and Palestinians working for the PA (Chapter 3) wherein all are immensely anxious about not being able to internalize their mandated subjectivity (role) in the PA theater. The PA bureaucrat fears that she/he will suddenly realize that she/he is not *really* a bureaucrat because there is no Palestinian state. And, in a similar way, NGO staff members who are vocally critical of the PA are aware of their precarious roles as representatives of civil society and their constant need to develop a synergy with the Palestinian population at large.

Acting as if …

Addameer (meaning conscience in Arabic) or the Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, was established in 1992 (just before the Oslo Accords), by a group of human rights activists. Addameer works to support Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli and Palestinian prisons. When we visited their offices in June 2016, the two representatives we interviewed from Addameer's Advocacy Unit detailed how their center offers free legal aid to political prisoners, advocates their rights at national and international levels, and works to end torture and other violations of prisoners' rights through monitoring, legal procedures, and solidarity campaigns. The performativity of the two Addameer representatives that we witnessed at first hand during our interview is for us imbued in the very logo of this NGO. In it 'Addameer' is written in barbed wire text design but there is also a dove in the background. An Addameer advocacy and lobbying coordinator explained the politics of the logo in the following manner:

> The core thesis of the logo is that the human spirit is able to overcome adversity or imprisonment. The bird here, therefore, represents the spirit and

> will of the Palestinian people. That the material oppression of the occupation seems all powerful, and totalizing, is simply an illusion that the Israelis seek to perpetuate. However, despite this, the Palestinian people will rise above.… This imagery has particular significance for the prisoners, considering their direct physical imprisonment.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

Similarly, when we were at their office the performance continued in the décor of the office space – not least through the posters of prisoners that were hung up. It was therefore not surprising that our conversation stayed within the broader premise of this imagery. Clearly, they were critical participants in the performance of the state. Yet, they seemed to think that criticizing Palestinians and their role in this performance was a useless endeavor. We recall how they immediately lost interest in our interview when we mentioned the PA. This was the point at which they stopped making eye contact with us and their responses to our questions were limited to the occasional 'yes,' and 'we understand.' Another significant aspect of our interview at Addameer was the extent to which our interviewees were willing to be active critics of Israeli actions but took a passive role when it came to the PA. This was especially evident when they, instead of themselves critiquing the PA, simply tried to direct us to others. One of our interviewees said,

> at the PA level we just represent Palestinians who are arrested for political reasons … but we can put you in contact with other NGOs which deal with these issues who are 'better suited' to answer your questions, such as the ICHR, DCIPS (Defense for Children International), Al-Haq and the NGO Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture."

While Mr. al-Hassan at Al-Haq exhibited a high level of nervousness during our encounter, we witnessed far more settled conduct of the Addameer representatives – as if, they were quite confident in their ability to stay within the 'script' of their mandated performance within the broader theater of statecraft. The two interviewees introduced us to the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) and explained how through this commission Addameer representatives are allowed to make visitations to Palestinian prisoners in PA detention centers and to act as observers of ICHR investigations. When we asked them what kind of charges these Palestinian prisoners face, they informed us that in the main charges have to do with incitement of hatred or money laundering. They assured us these prisoners were not detained for political reasons. They referred us to a database for the affidavits taken by the said prisoners: When Michelle later asked about this database and these affidavits at Al-Haq she was informed that such statements were usually taken under duress. The Addameer interviewees then shifted their focus to the general fatigue in the oPt with regard to donor funds flowing into state-building initiatives that neglect to address the larger issue of Israel's occupation. One of them said:

> We cannot just point our fingers at the PA. We must emphasize accountability of our European and other international donors. Of course, the PA created a clear alienation of Palestinian society with all their 'peace initiatives' without properly contextualizing the occupation and its daily consequences.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah, June 2016)

As the quote at the beginning of this chapter shows Addameer representatives were clearly more comfortable to put the blame of "the perpetual theatrical machinery" on the political situation, that is the Israeli occupation. These two representatives were dismissive, clearly not going beyond any red lines in the limits set by the NGO's bureaucratic structures when it comes to interviews with outsiders like us. During the said conversation, between the four of us, they carefully toed the line and stuck to the script that required them to maintain their focus on Palestinian prisoners' rights and Palestinians' human rights under *Israeli* military occupation, as opposed to the violations of the PA. Addameer symbolizes the banality of aid systems and their 'conceptual maps' which imagine the social field as divided into the political and civil society one (see Hanafi and Tabar 2003). Rather than re-articulating this social map, Addameer has internalized the Oslo conceptual vision. In so many ways our Addameer interviewees acted 'as if' the human rights industry could stop abuses outside of real, political, structural change (Allen 2013: 25).

Along a similar vein, the core foundations of JCW are built on the NGO-ization logic of international donors (Jad 2004) as well as on the development vocabulary embedded in external intervention in Palestinian civil society. This obliges Palestinian NGO representatives to cling even more to a rotten status quo. Even Al-Haq spokespeople, like their counterparts at JCW and Addameer, legitimize their own positions within the civil society sector in the oPt by keeping a check on the theatrics of the state.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have traced the changing structures and discourses of the Palestinian civil society movement before and after the establishment of the PNA in Ramallah in 1994. This genealogy coincides with the transformation of this movement in the context of a broad development trend and discourse that conceives of NGOs as a fundamental component for political, economic and social change in the oPt. We have highlighted how NGOs are limited in introducing genuine, comprehensive, and sustainable development and the social changes desired by the local Palestinian population. Seen together, it is through the narrated observations during fieldwork that we believe the theatrical machinery of the PA has serious effects on those that it is supposed to represent. We therefore conclude here that the PA not only shapes the conduct of those that are actively involved in the theatrical performance of statehood but also affects those that have an acrimonious relationship with it.

As we have shown here, through interviews with representatives of Palestinian NGOs, many are vocal in their antagonism toward the performative statecraft of the PA. Yet, we also argued that this seeming lack of 'attachment' does not preclude NGOs from also becoming figures in the theater that surrounds the quasi-state; albeit, the theater of opposition. Therefore, in this chapter we explored the manner in which those that are uninvested in the maintenance of the 'theatrical machinery' of the PA are nonetheless shaped by it. We now move on to Chapter 5 where we reflect on another group of Palestinians that are uninvested in the performance of statecraft, namely political activists. In this Chapter 4 our interviewees were somewhat wavering in revealing their role in the theater. But, as we shall see in the following chapter, our interviewees there present a staunch positionality as individuals antagonistic to the theater of statecraft.

Notes

1 Available at the following link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkuxqNSuOFU Last accessed on July 2, 2018.
2 This interviewee has been anonymized.

5 The 'state' and its unwilling 'subjects'

On June 10, 2018 almost 2,000 protestors gathered at al-Manara Square in central Ramallah in solidarity with those participating in the Great March of Return in the Gaza Strip. Protestors were also calling on PA President Mahmoud Abbas to lift sanctions on Gaza that included a 30 percent cut in the salaries of government employees and the forced retirement of a third of the PA employees in the besieged Palestinian coastal enclave. Protestors viewed these sanctions "as a tool in the siege of Gaza and a mechanism of collective punishment" (Hawari 2018). While the protests (on June 10) happened in the presence of Palestinian policemen and undercover security personnel, there was very little violence. Another protest was planned for June 13. This time around the PA announced a ban on all protests. On the day violence was rampant. Describing the scene at the protest, journalist Yara Hawari (2018) wrote:

> Prior to the protest, the streets of Ramallah were filled with police. Officers were placed in strategic locations in an obvious effort to intimidate activists. Soon after the protesters started to gather, armed with nothing but posters that read "Gaza unites us," security forces started to fire tear gas and throw stun grenades. Heavily armed police officers in riot gear also wielded batons and used tasers against unarmed protesters. By the end of the night, over 40 protesters had been arrested. Detained protesters suffered beatings in police vehicles and police stations. Most detainees were released promptly, but they sustained injuries.
>
> (Ibid. 2018)

As Hawari also acknowledged the PA has for years been suppressing political opposition. That the PA was swift to suppress this protest in the West Bank that was expressly critical of its participation in maintaining and worsening the siege of Gaza was therefore not surprising.

However, the manner in which the PA suppressed unarmed, peaceful protestors reminds us of the assessment of the PA's security forces made by a 14-year-old Palestinian boy Mohammed[1] who we met in the summer of 2016 during our fieldwork in Bethlehem. We had met Mohammed while interviewing his uncle, a well-known Palestinian activist and former resistance fighter said to be 'on the

run' from Israeli authorities. After the interview his uncle offered to drive us to the next interview in Beit Jala and Mohammed joined us. Seeing his familial influences we did not expect Mohammed to be particularly supportive of the PA's politics. However, as we drove past policemen, Somdeep asked Mohammed in jest: "Do the police ever bother you?" He replied: "Bother me? No. They are scared of me. They are scared of 5-year-old children with stones. They come with big guns, bulletproof jackets, and helmets instead of just talking to these kids." At this point a police vehicle drove recklessly past us and Mohammed said:

> You see this. This is the PA. There is no rule for them. Criminal. Mafia. Abbas, he is part of the mafia. He makes the rules and he breaks them. But if anyone else does anything wrong, they get punished badly. Abbas and his children have all the money and they own so much. They have investments in everything. Michelle said: "Just like dictators." Mohammed replied: "Exactly."
>
> (Authors' interview, Bethlehem, June 2016)

Expectedly, an authoritarian leadership begets the kind of political opposition seen during the protest in Ramallah and during our conversation with Mohammed on the way to Beit Jala. In this chapter, we are however concerned with the manner in which such political opposition persists alongside the theatrical performance of statecraft; a theatrical performance, it would seem, that was even apparent to a 14-year-old like Mohammed who mocked the PA policemen's garb and mode of conduct. Specifically, we draw on the voices of Palestinian activists we interviewed in the occupied West Bank who were expressly critical of the function and conduct of the Fatah-led PA. Their experience of being arrested, beaten, and tortured by the PA's security personnel, not unlike that of the former prisoner in the Al-Haq video discussed in Chapter 4, further confirms the authoritarian way in which the theater of statecraft is maintained by the PA. Yet, we argue that our interviewees' opposition to the PA does not necessarily render them uninvolved in the theatrical performance of the Palestinian state that does not exist. Albeit unwillingly, they also become key actors in the theatrics of the state as their opposition serves as an opportunity for the PA to impress on the dominance of the statist narrative and its monopoly over the right to use violence (albeit, in limited areas and at limited times). And, by censuring those opposed to its presumed authority, the PA is able to underline that irrespective of the unlikelihood of its arrival, the theatrical performance of the non-existent state must go on.

This chapter begins with an overview of the authoritarianism that often accompanies the PA's stylized, theatrical statecraft. As we go on to demonstrate, this authoritarianism manifests itself primarily through the PA's ritual suppression of political opposition and activism in the occupied West Bank. This, as we have already argued in Chapter 3, is in effect the current (donor community) mandated role of the PA. It is an institution that is now tasked to limit Palestinian

activism against the Israeli occupation. However, we view this authoritarianism through the perspective of its victims – namely, Palestinian activists. We begin by thickly describing, in the words of our activist interviewees, their experience of the PA's authoritarianism. We then deliberate *how* our interviewees' experience of public beatings, imprisonment, and torture become a part of the theater of statecraft – this, despite our interviewees' conscious opposition to the form and function of the PA in the occupied Palestinian territories. In the end we conclude that while Palestinian activists conceive themselves as positioned off the stage of the theater of statecraft, by being censored by the PA's security forces they are inadvertently absorbed into the PA's theatrics – in that, by being beaten and tortured while incarcerated, they serve as means for the PA to display its own (state-like) authority.

The PA and its stately authoritarianism: An overview

In March 2015 the central committee of the PLO decided to suspend security cooperation with Israel. In a statement the committee declared the halting of: "all forms of security coordination given Israel's systematic and ongoing non-compliance with its obligations under signed agreements, including its daily military raids throughout the State of Palestine, attacks against our civilians and properties" (quoted in Beaumont 2015). However, less than a year later Palestinian Intelligence Chief Majid Faraj reportedly confirmed that the security cooperation between Israel and the PA remained strong, as he boasted that Palestinian security agencies had successfully foiled approximately 200 Palestinian attacks on Israel (Khoury 2016). The notion of 'security coordination' has its roots in the Oslo process and, simply put, it entails "the sharing of intelligence between Israel and the Palestinian Authority" (Purkiss and Nafi 2015: 4). This is in line with our assertion in Chapters 2 and 3 that the ways in which the Oslo Accords were designed, what was supposed to be an early institutional manifestation of Palestinian self-governance (i.e., the PA) became, in fact, a mechanism for protecting Israel's security interests and undermining the Palestinian national struggle. During the proceedings at the Jerusalem District Court in regard to a damages suit filed against the PA by Israeli victims of Palestinian attacks in 2018, Director General of Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs Yossi Kuperwasser confirmed the existence of a privileged relationship: "The Israeli security forces cooperate blindly with their Palestinian counterparts." Then, criticizing the extent to which Israel is dependent on the PA to protect its security interests, Kuperwasser added:

> What happened to the Shin Bet [Israel's internal security service] officials is that they fell in love with the Palestinians with whom they were in contact. That is simply a mistake. Personally, I was in contact with the same people and was not confused. I knew exactly what their concessions were and weren't.
>
> (Quoted in Yahav 2018)

Of course, and relevant for our purposes in the chapter, what this 'security cooperation' achieves for Israeli authorities pales compared to the treatment that is meted out against Palestinians as a consequence of this 'cooperation.' Most significantly, as the *Al Jazeera*'s 'Palestine Papers' revealed, the cooperation has allowed Fatah to maintain its domination over its political rivals and the organization, with Israeli support, is insistent in its censuring of activists antagonistic to the PA, especially those affiliated with the Palestinian Islamist faction Hamas. This focus on Hamas was further evident in the following recording of a security meeting between Head of Israeli army civil administration in the West Bank Yoav Mordechai and PCP chief Hazem Atallah:

> YOAV MORDECHAI: How is your fight against 'civilian' Hamas: the officers, people in municipalities, etc. This is a serious threat.
> HAZEM ATALLAH: I don't work at the political level, but I agree we need to deal with this.
> YOAV MORDECHAI: Hamas needs to be declared illegal by your President. So far it is only the militants that are illegal.
> HAZEM ATALLAH: There is also the request for tear gas canisters. You previously gave us these back in 96.
> YOAV MORDECHAI: We gave some to you for Balata two weeks ago. What do you need them for?
> HAZEM ATALLAH: Riot control. We want to avoid a situation where the security agencies may be forced to fire on unarmed civilians.

In a similar vein, during a 2007 meeting with the then Belgian foreign minister Karel de Gucht, Erekat admitted: "I can't stand Hamas or their social programs." And, during a 2009 meeting with US officials, he said: "We invested time and effort and even killed our own people to maintain order and the rule of law" (quoted in Carlstrom 2011).

Here the mention of 'order' and 'rule of law' is not unlike the touting of 'human rights law' at the Jericho prison (in Chapter 3) in that they are mere euphemisms for a process that has resulted in severe violations of the Palestinians' civil liberties. Confirming this, one of our interlocutors, a Palestinian academic and political activist in the West Bank began the interview by saying:

> When you live here you will feel that all the PA does is maintain its rule over the West Bank. They can do whatever they want. I have been arrested, they have harassed me, they have destroyed my property. They are like gangsters. The PA's goons drive around at night and sometimes you can hear them shooting their guns. But we have to also talk about donors who pay for these goons. They are always focused on Hamas, but the behavior of these PA security services is very bad.
>
> (Authors' interview, Nablus, June 2016)

Michelle asked: "Have you tried to communicate these observations to any of the donors?" He said: "Yes. In fact, I have a letter that I have sent to European donors and no one has answered" (authors' interview, Nablus, June 2016). Our stay at his house was brief but before we left, he handed us a copy of the letter. It begins as follows:

> I have been exposed to several harmful and costly attacks from the side of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Intelligence targeted me in 1995, and hit me with four bullets, a preventive security officer burned my car in 2005, the gangsters of the Authority shot at my car in 2007 and it was severely damaged by around sixty bullets, and people from the intelligence burned my car completely in 2009. I have been imprisoned seven times by the Authority due to political reasons.

The letter then went on to describe two of his most recent stints in prison:

> The Palestinian Authority imprisoned me in 2009 under the allegation that I was distorting the image of a recruit in the Palestinian Intelligence, and another in the preventive security. I was imprisoned by the attorney general without any kind of evidence. After a year and a half of court sessions, I was acquitted.… In 2016, the authority arrested me because I criticized the head of the authority for violating the laws of the PLO and the Basic Law[2] of the authority itself. His term as president ended in 2009, but he is still there.

The letter ends with the following lines:

> You the Europeans are responsible for the repressive measures that the authority has been taking against me. Without your financial assistance, the authority wouldn't be able to crush its own people. Probably you need to know that I am an outspoken person. I am a fighter for freedom who suffered a lot from the actions of three parties: Jordan, Israel and the PA.
>
> (Copy of this letter passed on to us by our interviewee in Nablus)

Tallying to the violations of the PA, an April 2016 report prepared by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor (EURO-MED) similarly noted that statistically violations of the Fatah-led PA in the West Bank far exceeded those committed by the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip. In 2015 there were 1,274 documented cases of arbitrary detentions and 1,089 summons orders in the West Bank compared to 117 and 98 respectively in Hamas-ruled Gaza. Since Palestinian civilians consequently find themselves politically stifled by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities, the EURO-MED report was entitled "Strangulation twice" as Palestinians find themselves strangled "from all sides, including by parties that should be their champions" (EURO-MED 2016: 3). Violations against those arrested or detained by the PA's security forces reportedly begin

immediately after individuals are taken into custody and torture is rampant. The EURO-MED report, confirming the revelations of the detainee in Al-Haq's video "This is what happened to me" (see Chapter 4), noted, "Torture and other cruel treatment took various forms, including intense beatings with sticks or 'the lash,' kicks, slaps to the face, punches, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, death threats and verbal abuse" (EURO-MED 2016: 12). In February 2015 the Head of the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University, Omar Hasan El-Kiswani, was detained and subsequently tortured by PA security operatives. He was first "hung in a crucifixion position for more than 15 hours," (EURO-MED 2016: 13). Later he was forced to stand with his back against a ladder with his hands and legs tied and then beaten all over his body. Kiswani, in his testimony to EURO-MED, added that the interrogation "focused on the activities of the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University," (EURO-MED 2016: 13). Another member of Birzeit University's Islamic Bloc, Jihad Salim, was physically and verbally abused by PA officers. Salim was made to "stand in a stressful position for 12 hours" (EURO-MED 2016: 13) and was not permitted food and a visit to the toilet. His investigators were also interested in the activities of the Islamic Bloc. In another incident Laith Asaraf, a student at Hebron University was accused by the Palestinian intelligence services of money laundering. Later it was revealed that he too was arrested due to his political activism. Although Ashraf was eventually acquitted and released, he was also tortured. He was hit on his fingers and interrogators stomped on his bare toes (EURO-MED 2016: 12).

A growing number of PA detentions and arrests have also been in relation to social media posts. Media student at Birzeit University Baraa' El-Qadi was attacked on the street, taken away in an unknown car and beaten by goons said to be supporters of President Mahmoud Abbas. While being abducted El-Qadi was with his sister who was also beaten when she tried to prevent her brother from being taken away. Two weeks prior to this incident El-Qadi shared a post on Facebook critical of the President and had received several threats. Despite reporting these threats to the police they were not investigated (EURO-MED 2016: 12–13). In 2016 similar treatment of detainees were reported. After the Magistrate's Court of the PA extended five Palestinian detainees' stay in custody for additional investigation, Addameer, the Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association in the West Bank (see Chapter 4), confirmed that all the detained individuals "were subjected to different forms of ill-treatment, including sitting in stress positions (Shabah), sleep deprivation, continued interrogation, beating all over the body, insults and denial of using bathroom" (Addameer 2016). In its report on human rights violations in the oPt in 2017, *Human Rights Watch* (HRW) also documented widespread suppression and civil rights violations of activists, journalists, and opposition members detained by the PA's security forces. From a legislative perspective, the PA passed a cybercrime law that allowed the monitoring and control of online (political) activity and blocked 29 news websites affiliated with Hamas and Fatah factions critical of Mahmoud Abbas. More specifically, the HRW report cites the detention of human rights activist Issa Amro who was detained for seven days by PA authorities and adds

that the rampant prevalence of arbitrary arrests and torture violates the PA's obligations according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture that it ratified in 2014 (Human Rights Watch 2017). Somdeep mentioned these human rights violations of the Fatah leadership during an interview with a young spokesperson of Fatah who had earlier described himself as a "critical voice within the organization." His interviewee replied:

> I cannot deny any of this. It is true that when we meet Palestinian Authority officials, we should be respectful. But the way the PA acts today, all the violence towards Palestinians, it is sometimes difficult to tell who the bad guys are. Are the bad guys the occupation or is it the PA and Abbas?
>
> (Somdeep Sen interview, Jerusalem, May 2016)

On the basis of our discussion above, the authoritarian ways of the PA, buttressed amply by its security forces, may seem self-evident. In the section that follows, we then ask, how is it that those critical of this authoritarian PA live in its vicinity on a day-to-day basis? Moreover, with this 'brand' of state-building and its inherent violence personifying what the broader theatrics of the state constitutes in the oPt, we ask, how do these critical voices 'fit' on the stage where the non-existent Palestinian state is being performed?

PA's authoritarian statecraft and its discontents

It was in search of answers to the questions we raised above that we arrived in Nablus in June 2016 in order to interview two Palestinian activists affiliated with Hamas, who had spent time in a Palestinian prison. We began our interviews with the younger of the two former prisoners at a popular restaurant in the old city of Nablus. We had arrived early and saw a frail figure walking toward us. He introduced himself as Ahmed[3] and sat down at our table. He did not say much, except that he was happy to meet us. Seeing that Ahmed was very quiet we began our interview with Somdeep asking: "Can you tell us about your time in the PA prison?" He replied in a very slow but steady pace:

> Sure. I have been arrested six times by the Palestinian Authority and it is because of my political activism as part of the student council at the university. The last time I was arrested they came to my house, but I wasn't there, so they left a message with my sister that I have to report to the prison in Nablus. It was my sister's wedding at the time so after the wedding I went to the prison. They arrested me immediately and I was taken into an interrogation room where they asked me about my membership in the student council and said that if I didn't answer the interrogator's one question I would be in a lot of trouble. Unfortunately, he asked me about the activities in the student council and it is something that I couldn't say anything about.

At this point Ahmed paused because the server at the restaurant came to take our order. After he left, Michelle asked: "So what happened after you didn't answer the question?" He responded:

> I was immediately moved to a prison in Bethlehem. It's a small prison so international observers don't go there, and the PA can do what they want. In fact one of the officers there said: "people who come here either get lost or leave like a completely new person, like a newborn." I was then taken to a small cell that did not even have a bed. Afterwards I was interrogated. I was told to face the wall and was slapped four or maybe five times. They kept asking me about my political activities. Because it was Ramadan, they had to give me a break to pray. After prayers I had another session where they tied a cloth around my hands and then I was left hanging while they beat me. This beating went past midnight. Another time my hands were tied, and they put a cloth around my eyes and I was made to just sit on a chair for hours.

At this juncture Michelle asked: "Did you know any of the people torturing you?" Ahmed said:

> No. They only used nicknames for each other and I can't remember their faces. But there was this one guy who came from Gaza. Before the interrogation he said to me, "I am from Gaza. Four of my family members were killed by Hamas. I have come here especially for guys like you." Then he tied my hands and started beating me continuously with his fist. Then after a while they made me sit on one foot. After sitting like that for some time I couldn't do it anymore, so they started beating me again. Then, they hung me from the door and made me spread my legs and started beating me on the thigh. One time people from NGOs like the Red Cross and Al-Haq came but we were threatened and told that if we said anything we would be declared as spies for Israel and then treated much worse. So I kept quiet.

Somdeep asked: "How did such an experience affect you and your family?" Ahmed smiled and replied:

> It is funny you ask. If I'm in prison my parents don't worry that much. If I'm outside my parents are very worried because they are scared that I will be arrested. But if I'm in prison they know where I am. They are not happy about what will happen in prison. But they know what will happen, so there is not much they can do. For me personally, there is nothing much I can do. This is the situation. I have to live with it. I don't try to fight it. I just continue with my work as before. I am scared all the time. I know that they can take me into prison anytime. Maybe they are watching me now.
>
> (Authors' interview, Nablus, June 2016)

That the PA's security forces routinely violate the civil liberties of Palestinians is amply evident in the treatment of Ahmed in prison. Moreover, the PA's focus on his political activism confirms our earlier assessment of the PA's persistent efforts to maintain its sole leadership over political life in the West Bank and to censure any political opposition. Ahmed's experience is thus an embodiment of how statecraft in occupied Palestine is violently upheld. But while our observations point to the PA's authoritarian measures, Ahmed's experience further demonstrates the extent to which this (albeit, violent) statecraft is also stylized. This way of performing the state in a stylized manner is however different than the manner in which our PA interviewees in Chapter 3 performed the state. Much of *that* performance was in the garb of our interviewees, the physicality of the institutions where we conducted our interviews, and the ways in which our interviewees insistently maintained their commitments to performing as functionaries of a state (that is absent) in the name of professionalism. In comparison Ahmed's experience of statecraft was stylized in its open violence. The elaborate methods of torture, the persistent line of questioning, and the continuous insistence of the security officials that they had ultimate sovereign authority over Ahmed's body, fate, and life – these performative acts are meant to violently demonstrate to the activist that the logic, vocabulary, and manner of the PA's stately conduct reigned supreme in the West Bank.[4]

However, for us, Ahmed's recounting of his time in prison was not simply a display of the stylized violent statecraft of the PA. When we asked him how the experience had shaped his life a sense of deep anxiety came through his shared accounts with us, along with a feeling of resignation that surrounds his (and his family's) encounters with these violent performances of the state. Ahmed's parents were perpetually anxious in the everyday, worrying about whether their son would be arrested. Yet, when arrested they were not worried anymore; it was almost as if they had resigned to the violence that their son was expected to face in prison. Ahmed was also anxious. Following his six stints in prison he is anxious about being imprisoned again. He is worried that he is being followed and watched. And, more importantly, he is made anxious by the extent to which the PA is able to practice its sovereign authority over him (and his fate). He therefore lamented, "they can take me into prison anytime."

This anxious experience and consequent resignation to the stylized statecraft performed by the PA security functionaries was equally evident in the words of the other former prisoner, Sami,[5] who we met in Nablus that same afternoon. He walked into the restaurant approximately ten minutes after we finished our interview with Ahmed. At that time Ahmed was talking about his nephews and nieces. But as soon as Sami arrived Ahmed stopped talking. Sami was considerably older than Ahmed. He introduced himself to us and we decided to move to a bigger table. At this juncture, Sami and Ahmed decided to walk ahead of us and they began talking in a way that made it apparent to us that they knew each other. There was a familiarity with each other that they somehow did not want us to witness openly. Nonetheless, as we began our interview, Michelle noted: "It seems that you two know each other." They looked at each other and then Sami answered:

> Yes. We were in prison around the same time. I know what he went through and he knows my experience. We understand each other. We understand what we went through. We care about each other and we know how difficult it is to be back in society.

Ahmed left at this point. Somdeep then asked: "Since you know Ahmed, would you say that you had a similar experience in prison?" Sami replied:

> In a way. I have been arrested by both Palestinian and Israeli authorities. All of this is very difficult. They keep re-arresting you. First, I was arrested by the Israelis. You can imagine how this experience is. There is a lot of torture and beatings. After I was released, I was left alone by the PA for one and a half years. Sometimes the PA will wait for some time before they arrest you again because it looks bad on them if they arrest you right after the Israelis. But yes eventually I was in the Palestinian prison like Ahmed. I have to say that I was not physically beaten or tortured like Ahmed. I did see many people being tortured. It was difficult for me in a different way. After I was released from the Israeli prison I had decided to go to Mecca. It was an important experience for me. It looked like the PA knew about this and they arrested me just before I was supposed to travel. This was very personal for me. There was no pain on my body, but I felt very bad inside.

Sami lit his cigarette and paused for a few seconds. Through a cloud of smoke we could see that he was looking down at the floor. He then added:

> Yes. So this is a very difficult experience for us. We can be tortured by Israelis. That is something we expect. That's what the Israelis do. But when the Palestinians arrest you and torture you it is worse. You don't actually know the Palestinian person torturing you, but you feel like you are being hurt by someone who is your own people. So personally it is very painful in a Palestinian prison.
>
> (Authors' interview, Nablus, June 2016)

Many of our interviewees like Ahmed and Sami were hesitant to discuss the atrocities of the PA they had experienced while incarcerated at length. Nonetheless, they shared with us their pain of being tortured, beaten, or abused by one of their own. When Palestinian security forces prevented Palestinian activists from reaching an Israeli checkpoint, Sara (see Prelude) collapsed to the ground and cried. Being abandoned (in the national struggle) by one of her own she yelled: "Why are you doing this to us? You are our brothers?" Another young interviewee from Birzeit University said:

> I would definitely prefer to be in an Israeli prison. When it is your own people it is very difficult to deal with it. It is very hard to explain to yourself why this is happening.[6] You feel a lot worse when you are beaten by the PA.
>
> (Somdeep Sen interview, Bethlehem, May 2016)

Even our translator who sat through our interviews with Ahmed and Sami later asked Somdeep: "Tell me something. And I feel bad asking you this but after hearing them [Ahmed and Sami] do you think we have been lied to by our own people?" Taken aback, Somdeep said: "Maybe" (Somdeep Sen interview, Nablus, June 2016).

When Sami mentioned how hurt he was about being imprisoned by one of his own, Michelle asked: "Clearly this was a very difficult experience for you that still affects you. How have you dealt with this?" At first, in his response, Sami sounded tenacious in his words:

> As I said to you, in the prison I did not face any torture when I was there. But I did see others being tortured. So, when NGOs came to monitor the prison, I said to them that I wasn't tortured but others had been and that I had seen it. I even gave the Red Cross a signed statement.

However, our interviewee's tone was very different and inherently anxious soon after and, much like Ahmed, he also seemed to have resigned to a life (as the EURO-MED report described it) in which Palestinians are being 'twice strangulated.' He continued:

> Personally, I don't know what to do. I will continue to fight for what is right the way I have been doing but somehow this experience makes you feel much more like you are under occupation. I spent all this time in an Israeli prison and that is expected. But after my time in a Palestinian prison I just felt like I had lost so much time. You are in an Israeli prison because you are fighting for Palestine. But when you are in a Palestinian prison you feel like you have lost time. You made all these sacrifices but that is all lost. So you feel like giving up and you are helpless.

Thereafter, Sami displayed a sense of anxiety about leading a 'normal' life outside prison when he immediately stopped talking when the server came to clear our table. As soon as he left, Sami said:

> You are always wondering who is a spy? Or who is talking to the [PA] intelligence people. That's why outside prison I look for people like Ahmed because he knows my difficulties. He knows it is very difficult to have a normal life. You are too stressed. It is very difficult to be integrated back to normal life. You are scared of what will happen next.
>
> (Authors' interview, Nablus, June 2016)

Our final pertinent encounter took place on the campus of a reputed Palestinian university. The staff members of a research institute at the university negotiated an interview on our behalf with a left-wing student, Ashraf,[7] active in campus politics and known for being critical of the PA. Because he was someone who felt threatened by both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, we decided to have

the interview at one of the offices of the research institute, an environment where he felt safe. As soon as Ashraf entered the room, he seemed anxious. He greeted us nervously but sat quietly until we began the interview. As a way of initiating a conversation Michelle explained to him the broader context of our project. But when he realized that we were concerned with the politics of the PA he said:

> That's interesting. It is a sad situation we are living in where we continue to fight with each other. The PA here is fighting Hamas, harassing anyone that they don't like but there are some people who are really suffering, and we are doing nothing.

Michelle asked: "You say 'some people.' Who are you specifically referring to?" Ashraf replied: "Like people in Gaza. They are really suffering but the PA here, Mahmoud Abbas are doing nothing. We are losing focus. We are not thinking about the Palestinian national struggle anymore." Somdeep then asked: "During our time here we have heard a lot about the PA's violence against Palestinians, especially activists. Have you had any such experience?" Ashraf replied:

> This happens all the time. A few weeks ago we organized a protest against Beit El [an Israeli settlement near Ramallah]. We began walking from university. All the student parties were represented. We were chanting along the way and expected to be stopped by Israeli soldiers, maybe at a check-point. But the PA security forces were waiting for us. The problem is that students always publicize before they protest. People make Facebook posts where they announce the place and time of the protest so that others can join. That's how the police find out. Anyway, these policemen were waiting for us and of course they did not want us to go to the settlement and just blocked our way. The Fatah students went to talk to the police but suddenly they disappeared, and the police attacked all of us. They started kicking and punching us. No one was seriously hurt that day but sometimes the violence can be really bad.

At this point, Michelle asked: "Were you able to document any of this? Did you take any pictures?" Ashraf scoffed: "No. I don't have the time." Somdeep added: "Yes. But there are several human rights organizations that would record these things." Ashraf interjected: "What human rights are you talking about? Everyone talks about human rights, but we don't have any rights here." Michelle then asked: "How did you feel about being treated like this by the Palestinian police?" Ashraf paused before replying:

> Such experiences are never nice, but you have to deal with it. We have to tolerate it because it is Palestinians who are doing this. It feels bad, but I never talk to anyone about this. I keep it inside and try to forget. Because we are occupied. The main enemy is Israel, and this is not the time to

> criticize Palestinians. We have to focus on Israel. Everything else we just have to keep quiet and forget about it.
>
> (Authors' interview, Ramallah , June 2016)

That the experience of violence, abuse, and torture left our interviewees anxious may not be surprising. After all, such violations of Palestinians' civil rights are meant to communicate the PA's sovereign authority over the daily lives of the very people the PA represents. To this effect, as many of our interviewees – following their violent encounters with the PA – anxiously wondered if and when they would once again be arrested, tortured, or imprisoned, it would seem that the PA's violence served its intended purpose. What was however revealing was the extent to which our interviewees resigned to this reality that violence, abuse, and torture were (and will remain) the language in which the PA speaks. This is not to say that they consented to this mode of conduct and simply ceased the political activism that led them to be censured by the PA in the first place. Ahmed remained committed to his work despite being anxious of further PA harassments. Sami too was anxious about being spied on and was hurt that it was the *Palestinian* (and not Israeli) authorities who were violating his rights. However, he decided to keep fighting for what is right. Finally, Ashraf also maintained his 'focus' on Israel despite the violence he has faced at the hands of the PA police when attempting to confront the occupation authorities. Yet, they all resigned to the PA's violent conduct because the status quo seemed insurmountable, their experience left them wanting to simply 'give up' or that the time was not appropriate to criticize Palestinian authorities while Palestinians remained under Israeli occupation. Here, returning to our metaphor of the theatrical performance of statecraft, it would be problematic to somehow 'force' our interviewees in this chapter 'on stage.' After all, it was their insistent refusal to be part of the theatrics of the state that led them to be beaten, arrested, and tortured. However, we conjecture that they are nonetheless part of the broader theater. We do so because they exist, for one, as critics who question the very basis of this theatrical performance. Yet, as they resign to the reality that the PA will continue its censorious role in the oPt, they come to personify in their very being the manner in which the agenda of statecraft (as pursued by the PA) has been prioritized and maintained in such violent ways. In a sense, our interviewees in this chapter are canvasses displaying the foundational *problematique* underlying the theater of statecraft in the oPt. And, the violence, abuse, and torture they have faced personifies the violence, abuse, and torture that Palestine, as a whole, experiences under the guise of an insistent performance of statecraft in a place that is populated by the stateless.

Conclusion

On December 21, 2015, Ma'an News Agency released a video of armed Palestinian policemen ordering Israeli Border Police personnel to leave Beitunia, a town in the Ramallah and al-Bireh governorate in the West Bank. The news

agency reported that the Palestinian policemen "threatened to use their weapons" if the Israelis refused to leave. According to sources in the Palestinian security services, the Israeli Border Security forces were "chasing Palestinian schoolchildren in the area" when the Palestinian policemen arrived. The video ends with the Palestinian officers leading Israelis out of Beitunia, as residents of the Palestinian town "shouted their approval" (Ma'an 2015). Such acts of (seeming) insubordination were described by Israeli defense analyst Amos Harel as a 'nightmare' for Israeli authorities. Little over a month after this incident PA staff sergeant Ahmed Jaser Sukkari was shot dead after he fired his weapon at three Israeli soldiers (Ma'an 2016). Harel added: "It's still not certain that a new trend is emerging" that would undermine the "excellent security coordination with the PA" (Harel 2016). We now know that these acts of defiance by the PA's security personnel were anomalies and the 'excellent security coordination' has remained. Moreover, as we discussed earlier in this chapter, when the PA's forces in Ramallah brutally cracked down protests that were in solidarity with the Great March of Return in Gaza, the PA once again confirmed that it was a "good student of Israeli repression" (Verbeek 2018).

Our interviewees in Chapter 3 would most likely have justified the PA security forces' conduct in Ramallah in 2018 by arguing that they were 'professionals' and that by censuring the protestors they were simply performing their mandated professional duty of maintaining security and public order in the occupied Palestinian territories; all in the service of a future Palestinian state. Yet, in this chapter we discussed the experiences of Palestinians who have been the primary targets of these 'acts of professionalism' i.e., of Palestinian political activists, critical of the theatrics of state-building in the oPt. We began by providing a contextual background to the PA's censorious 'acts of professionalism.' Expanding on our discussion in Chapter 3 about the PA's role as an intermediary 'protecting' Israel from Palestinian activism against the occupation, we further described the extent of the PA's censorious professionalism reflected not least in the number of Palestinians detained arbitrarily, beaten, and tortured due to their political activism and criticism of the PA's politics in service of the occupier. Subsequently, we went on to describe our interviewees' experiences of the PA's censorious conduct. Be it the Palestinian academic, the former political prisoners, or the student activist – all our interviewees here confirm *how good* the PA is as a student of Israeli repression. However, we argued that our interviewees' experiences of imprisonment, violence, and torture also made them key figures (and one might say, actors) in the broader theatrical performance of statecraft in the oPt.

The manner in which our interviewees from this chapter participated in the theatrical performance of statecraft starkly contrasts that of the other actors discussed in this book. Unlike the international stakeholders discussed in Chapter 2, they were entirely uninvolved in the 'writing' and maintaining of the script of the theatrical performance that was put in place during the Oslo process. Neither are our activist interviewees paid to perform the state that does not exist, like the salaried functionaries (or employees) of the PA we discussed in Chapter 3 who

found themselves caught between fulfilling their professional commitment to performing the state and the awareness that such performances are unlikely to lead to a sovereign Palestinian state. Our interviewees in this chapter are also different from the civil society workers discussed in Chapter 4 who try to toe a fine line between being critical of the PA's conduct while reserving the most damning criticism for the occupation. Working for *non*-governmental institutions they remain *officially* uninvested in the stately theatrics of the PA. Nonetheless, in their bid to survive a politically treacherous environment their conduct is inadvertently shaped by the theater of statecraft. Our activist interviewees however were entirely opposed to this theater. We argue that they still become unwilling participants who, through the performative acts of being censured, and in their very being, become personifications of the (often, tyrannical) dominance of the theater of statecraft as the 'approved' (by local and global stakeholders) brand of political conduct in the oPt. And, in being opposed to the authority of the PA, they only go on to provide an opportunity for the PA's security forces to underline their role as guarantors of this mode of conduct.

Notes

1 This interviewee has been anonymized.
2 Refers to the proposed Palestinian constitution for the future State of Palestine.
3 This interviewee has been anonymized.
4 Many of our interviewees insisted that the PA's security personnel learned these torture methods from their Israeli counterparts, but that what they experienced in PA prisons were much worse torture techniques than those they had experienced in Israeli prisons.
5 This interviewee has been anonymized.
6 Ironically, the Al-Haq video discussed in Chapter 4 of the former Palestinian detainee describing his experience of being incarcerated in a PA prison was also entitled: "This is what happened to me."
7 This interviewee has been anonymized.

6 Conclusion

The May 20, 2017 cover story of *The Economist* was titled "Why Israel needs a Palestinian state." The cover of the issue displays the Star of David with a lock wrapped in the Palestinian flag, hanging from it. At the very outset one gets the sense that, for *The Economist*, the utility of the Palestinian state is conceived in regard to the needs of the State of Israel; after all, the title of the issue reads 'why *Israel* needs a Palestinian state' not 'why *Palestinians* need a Palestinian state.' Our inkling that *this* version of the Palestinian state (as conceived by *The Economist*) had little to do with Palestinian national aspirations was further confirmed in the email advertising the May 20 issue in which Editor-in-Chief Zanny Minto Beddoes wrote: "… Israel needs a Palestinian state – for the sake of its own democracy. Palestinians have grievously damaged their case through decades of violence, but occupation is turning Israeli politics towards ethno-religious chauvinism …" (*The Economist*). This is not to say that Palestinians were entirely absent. They made the occasional appearance through the course of the special report as the "un-enfranchised," as "weak and divided," in terms of their "irredentism" and suffering and in a discussion of "the failing startup state that is Palestine" (*The Economist* 2017: 3–8). That said, on the whole, Palestine and Palestinians were placed solely on the 'sidelines' of their own story in this issue.

It would of course be unfair to diminish the significance of an influential publication like *The Economist* choosing to publish a cover story critical of the Israeli occupation. However, that this criticism seemed to be levied not on account of Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination, but on account of what hindering the arrival of a Palestinian state does to the soul of Israeli society, is symptomatic of the wider status often accorded to Palestinians in mainstream discourses of the 'Israeli–Palestinian conflict.' The cover story further reads, "… it has become too easy for Israel[is] to forget that, just a short drive away, the grinding occupation of Palestinians has become all but permanent" (*The Economist* 2017: 6). It is our contention that for many observers Palestine and Palestinians do not matter. Palestinian aspirations, for instance, were hardly a matter of concern when the Jewish nation-state law was passed by the Knesset on July 19, 2018 by a tally of 62–55 votes, with two abstentions (Wootliff 2018). When the US opened the doors of its new embassy in Jerusalem on May 14, 2018

Palestinians were similarly 'absent' in the manner in which President Donald Trump viewed the 'conflict' (Farrell 2018). And, as Jared Kushner reportedly made efforts to strip Palestinians of their 'refugee status' and to dissolve the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the socio-economic struggles of Palestinians in exile and under occupation seemed to be immaterial (Times of Israel Staff 2018).

In the same way, it has been our main task in this book to reveal that the theater of statecraft prevalent in the occupied Palestinian territory does not concern itself with Palestinians' national aspirations either. Evidently, the PA was established as a mechanism for (interim) Palestinian self-governance. Yet, we argue, that 'fuzziness' of the image of the state it exudes is deliberate as it serves to obstruct any possibility of the PA contributing to Palestinian sovereign statehood. Moreover, without a clear path toward sovereignty, the PA further serves Israel's settler colonialism that aims to deny Palestinians their Palestinianness and their right to have rights. International stakeholders' political and economic investments in the mechanisms of state-building in the Palestinian territories are (albeit, official) meant to set up the institutional and bureaucratic materiality for the Palestinian state that would eventually and seemingly arrive. However, we demonstrated in Chapter 2 that these 'investments' have not provided any dividend by way of Palestinians assuming sovereign statehood. Instead, they served to help cultivate the identity and positionality of international stakeholders in a manner that coincides with their self-perception. In the case of Norway, for instance, this meant cultivating (and highlighting) its identity as a harbinger of liberal peace-building. EU officials – known as the payers rather than players in the "Middle East conflict" – perform their part as well in producing a fantasy of a technocratic state by way of investing in the PA institutions to create an illusion of a professional, modern, human rights respecting *state* in which they play a role that is an important performance for projecting a specific EU identity to specific audiences, namely the European public.

Our interviewees in Chapter 3, namely paid functionaries of the PA, are salaried (often through EU funding) to participate in the theater of statecraft. Some, like the official at the Interior Ministry, also rationalized their participation in the theater as an extension of their commitment to the Palestinian national cause – a cause that now, according to our interviewees, has been inscribed into the theatrics of the PA. Others provide a far more functional conception of their employment at the PA, insisting that it is just a job, a way of earning a salary. Yet, irrespective of the manner in which our interviewees rationalized their role as salaried employees of the PA, they too are cognizant of the reality that the PA is not meant to further the Palestinian national cause and that their stylized acts as participants in the PA's theater of statecraft will do little to rectify their statelessness. Moreover, the showcasing of human rights we experienced at the Jericho prison and the use of physical force by PA police and security agents undermine its own act. This violent cocktail mixed with corruption, ineptitude and the knowledge that state accountability – the core principle of human rights law – is difficult to apply in occupied Palestine blurs any notion of the Palestinian cause even further.

Palestinian civil society was once the bastion of the Palestinian national struggle. Admittedly, as we argue in Chapter 4, civil society organizations are not as invested in the PA's theater of statecraft as, say, the international stakeholders in Chapter 2 are. Neither are they paid to participate in the PA's theater of statecraft like our interviewees in Chapter 3, although they still depend heavily on the international donor community. However, employees of civil society organizations become a part and parcel of the theater of statecraft whether they, fearing retribution, refrain from openly criticizing the PA or do so openly. Either way, irrespective of how our interviewees choose to engage with the PA, they too are aware that the 'fuzzy state' as personified in the workings of the PA is *not* in the service of the Palestinian national struggle. It is for this reason that some of our interviewees in this chapter acted 'as if' the human rights industry could stop abuses outside of real, political, structural changes (in the Israeli settler colonial script and its violent practices). These interviews also revealed how the aid dependent civil society sector in the oPt feeds a particular elite who find it risky to take on more politicized projects (particularly those that direct focus on PA atrocities). In these acts, civil society employees perform the 'fuzzy state' in the shape of a harbinger of a human rights engine that spins and rolls out projects but does not end the occupation or its abuses, nor does it produce an accountable Palestinian government. However, against all odds, our interviewees continue to perform their role as human rights promoters, functioning as if they could somehow fulfill their ideals. And in so doing they create the perception that, as professional human rights employees, they deserve a sovereign democratic state. Finally, we demonstrated in Chapter 5 that Palestinian activists – in their very political positionality as critical to the presence and conduct of the PA – personify the claim that the purportedly *Palestinian* institution of self-governance (i.e., the PA) is not concerned with Palestine and Palestinians. Their antagonism toward the PA results in their performance of the unwanted, opposed version of the 'fuzzy state.' Moreover, as victims of the PA's coercive measures, they too become a means for the PA to display its authority over its (discontented) citizenry.

The non-existence of a sovereign, Palestinian state and the sheer lack of optimism with regards to the sovereign State of Palestine's imminent arrival may render it self-evident that today Palestine (and Palestinians) have been relegated to the periphery of their own story. However, we hold that it is critical to address, as we have done in this book so far, the extent to which Palestinian national aspirations are peripheral to the theater of *Palestinian* statecraft and the implications thereof. In this book, we have therefore striven to reveal the violence inherent in this theater of statecraft. We do recognize that the state and violence have a symbiotic relationship. Sociologist Charles Tilly argues that 'states make war and war makes states' (1993). This war making is equally directed toward its citizens. Calling state-making a form of organized crime, Tilly goes on to note how threats that a state purports to protect its citizens against are often fabricated or are "consequences of its own activities." For Tilly, therefore, the violence that a state claims to use to protect its citizens is in effect "a protection

racket" (Tilly 1985: 171). Despite its resemblance to a 'protection racket,' states eventually, freely, efficiently and, "on a larger scale" practice violence over sections of their own citizenry with the assent of large sections of the population (Tilly 1985: 173).

We view the violence inflicted by the PA over Palestinian activists (often in the name of maintaining 'security' and 'stability') through a Tillian form of violence perpetrated by the 'fuzzy state.' If there was a clear path to a future State of Palestine one could imagine that it would eventually freely practice violence on a large scale with the assent of its citizenry. However, with the sovereign State of Palestine not on the horizon of coming into being, in this book we reveal the violence of the statist agenda imposed and furbished by a multiplicity of stakeholders within and beyond Palestine. The violence of this agenda is not just material. It is further manifested in the insistence with which state-building efforts become the central orientating premises in the 'conflict' over the Holy Land, despite their self-evident inability to give rise to a sovereign Palestinian state. International stakeholders insist on politically and economically supporting the state-building efforts in the oPt without addressing the foundational political context (i.e., Israel's settler colonialism) that has thus far prevented the sovereign Palestinian state from arriving. For such 'investors' of the statist agenda in the oPt, the lack of a Palestinian state is not a political problem but a technocratic challenge; albeit, a technocratic challenge of establishing a state in a settler colonial context. In the same vein, the role of the statist agenda is also violent when viewed from the perspective of the PA's functionaries, NGO workers, or activists. None of them were particularly convinced that the PA's theatrics would result in a sovereign Palestinian state. Yet, be it as a consequence of its material importance to Palestinians (as the largest 'single' employer) or by the sheer threat of its ability to coerce, the PA forces itself onto the lives of those in its vicinity – this despite them being unconvinced of its value. What do all these theatrics do to the Palestinian national cause? We have argued that the theatrics of statecraft relegate the Palestinian national cause to the sidelines of the narrative, not unlike the May 2017 cover story in *The Economist*. The state, in its fuzziness, becomes a matter of technocracy and simply a concern for the establishment of its institutions and bureaucracies that in the end make the PA *look* like a state. Yet, what is lost in this technocratic focus are the fundamental Palestinian national aspirations. The attainment of these aspirations was meant to be personified in the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state as opposed to a state framed as a technocratic project and one that is placed outside the scope of the politics (of Israeli settler colonialism) that has rendered Palestinians a stateless and rightless population.

The question remains, what is then the path forward? Indeed, it would seem that the 'search' for the state, operationalized under the auspices of state-building mechanisms, whether in Palestine or beyond, operates under the assumption that state-building is the sole path forward: After all, 'if not state-building, what else?' Such an assumption draws on the conception of the state as key to keeping disorder at bay. This is evident, not least, in the manner in which Francis

Fukuyama insists that the failure to institute a strong state and robust processes of state-building gives root to poverty, AIDS, drug trafficking, and terrorism. Moreover, citing the tumultuous political developments during the 1990s in Somalia, Haiti, Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, he argued that it is the *lack* of a strong state that led to the proliferation of large-scale humanitarian and human rights crises (Fukuyama 2004: 17). In this context Susan Woodward adds that such perceptions of *why* the state is needed has become "… unexamined articles of faith fast, taken-for-granted slogans that required no analysis or justification" (2017: 67).

In a way, living in the shadow of the PA, occupied and colonized Palestinians also languish under such assumptions behind the imperative of state-building. The 'problem' however is that if the state (and state-building) is sanctified in this manner and the presumption is that disorder will prevail without it, it also securitizes the state in a way that justifies putting all else at bay. Fukuyama argues that democracy and democratic practices need to be enshrined into the state and its conduct. Yet, before all else, he insists that there must exist a state *first* (Fukuyama 2004; Fukuyama 2005). In the same vein, the fear of the devolution of Palestine into anarchy without a mechanism of state-building has led to the rise of a fuzzy notion of a Palestinian 'state' that exists for its own sake and operates under the assumption that without it there is not much else. Further, the way in which the international community enforces a human rights agenda as constitutive of Palestine's state-building process simply ignores the reality that those who are made to implement this human rights agenda have to endure in their everyday: Namely, a settler colonial enterprise that robs them of their right to have rights.

Specifically in Palestine, where the overarching political context is defined by a Palestinian liberation struggle that strives to dismantle the Israeli occupation, there may however just be an opportunity to rethink the manner in which the state (and not Palestinian rights and aspirations) has animated the international community's engagement with Palestine. This is not to argue that the state should entirely be expunged from our focus when deliberating Israel–Palestine. However, it is important to consider the state, from the perspective of the Palestinian national struggle, as simply the final institutional manifestation of the securement of Palestinian sovereign rights and national aspirations. In this sense, our focus needs to be sustained on the securement of these rights and aspirations, that is, a clear focus that is primarily concerned with justice for Palestinians. In effect, this would mean that local and international stakeholders would need to dispel the understanding of state-building as a means of preventing Palestinian life from devolving into anarchy. Moreover, the funding of state-building mechanisms and assessments of successes/failures of efforts to build a Palestinian state cannot be satiated by the mere fact that the presumed state in Palestine *looks* like a real state or seemingly maintains stability and security. Instead, stakeholders must assess the extent to which their investments in the oPt are in the service of the Palestinian struggle for liberation. In the opening pages of this book we argued that in Palestine the PA and its statecraft had become the

'Rome' that all roads lead to. The tragedy that unfolded in this book shows that Rome does not actually exist at the end of these roads. We sustain that, therefore, Palestinians' right to have rights and their liberation from settler colonialism can become that missing Rome. Finally, investments (monetary and political) should be focused on establishing the road that would lead to the securement of Palestinian rights and aspirations and counter the politics (that is, Israel's settler colonialism) that has thus far ensured Palestinians' statelessness.

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