



**University of
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**Palestinian Solidarity on Social Media: The Distribution of
Images of Occupation on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram
by Advocacy Organisations**

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Abstract

This study investigated the use of social media by international Palestinian advocacy organisations for the distribution of still and moving images that documented interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians. There were four research questions: RQ1: What are the visual frames present in the still and moving images of interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians? RQ2: How does the text caption interact with the image? RQ3: How were the affordances of social media platforms leveraged by the advocacy organisations to amplify visual content? RQ4: What do the responses by social media users show about the potential for using social media to build affective solidarity for the Palestinian cause? A cross-platform approach was taken, with data collected from the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts of eleven organisations that posted on these platforms in English for an international audience. Images, text captions and responses (likes, shares and comments) were collected, and a quantitative and qualitative analysis was carried out to understand the types of images that were posted, the ways that the organisations used the features of social media platforms to share images, and the public response to images. Images were found to depict both physical and non-physical violence against Palestinians and were posted with text captions that situated these acts within a settler-colonial context. Overall, the majority of social media users across all three platforms were supportive of the cause and expressed agreement with claims being made by the organisations, although a minority disputed them. The study builds upon research into digital image activism and shows how images recorded by those witnessing state violence can be used as part of the social media strategy of advocacy organisations to build solidarity and support for the cause in distant, international publics.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation draws a great level of international attention as a long-standing, unresolved and violent conflict of repression and struggle. Since the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 and the mass forced displacement of Palestinians from their land (the Nakba), and the subsequent military occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza from 1967, there has been a strong resistance by the Palestinian people and their supporters against a settler-colonial regime that seeks to erase them. While for some, defining Israel as a settler-colonial regime might seem contentious, this thesis adopts this as a widely used interpretative framework, congruent with previous research (Abdulhadi & Olwan, 2015; Busbridge, 2018; Shihade, 2012; Veracini, 2007, 2013; Wolfe, 1999; Zureik, 2020). Israeli settler-colonial occupation manifests in many different forms of violence against Palestinians, from physical state violence, restriction of movement, creeping settlements, and property confiscation (Dana, 2017; Meade, 2011; Seidel, 2016; Siegfried, 2020).

A central part of the Palestinian resistance to Israeli oppression is the struggle for representation. The recognition of the powerlessness experienced through lack of control over self-representation was expressed in Edward Said's 1978 work; he argued that the denial of self-representation of Palestinians was deeply embedded in Western prejudice, not just of Palestinians, but the othering of Arabs and Muslims (p.xiv). The representation of Palestine and Palestinians in Western mainstream media¹ (MSM) propagates the denial of self-representation and lends support for Zionist narratives of Palestine as an empty land, and the people of Palestine as a violent threat to Zionist ambitions. The media, therefore, as a site of othering, can also be the site of the struggle for self-presentation, with Ashcroft (2004) arguing that the transformation can come through the communication of images of the reality of Palestinian experiences, not just images of despair, violence and victimisation but a "valid cultural reality" (p.120).

The late Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh wrote in 2016 (translated in 2022) that "the media frequently go beyond merely transmitting the news and attempt to influence public opinion" and this extends beyond Israeli media to Western mainstream media (MSM) whose portrayals of Palestinian resistance and Israeli oppression contribute to Western public's understanding of and beliefs about the cause. Western mainstream media, particularly in the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US), have long been criticised for their misrepresentation of Palestinians, bias towards Israeli narratives and a lack of Palestinian perspectives (Ackerman, 2001; Noakes & Wilkins, 2016; Philo & Berry, 2011, 2004; Richardson

¹ Editorial driven organisations producing news within the structure of legacy media (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019; Frischlich et al., 2020; Holt et al., 2019)

& Barkho, 2009; Wu et al., 2002). Furthermore, there is a tendency to report a narrative of a 'cycle-of-violence' between two opponents, omitting the settler-colonial context and its resulting fundamental power imbalance (Philo & Berry, 2004; Richardson & Barkho, 2009; Wilkins, 2002). The majority of reporting on Palestine in the MSM tends to take place during periods of high intensity armed conflict, whilst ongoing structural and systematic oppression rarely receives attention (Saba, 2021). As a result of this coverage, the general public typically perceive the issue of Israel/Palestine as a conflict between two sides over land and security and have little knowledge of the historical context and structures of occupation. Therefore, transformation of Palestinian representation needs to occur in Western public discourse (Ashcroft, 2004) in order to gain international support for and solidarity with the Palestinian resistance movement. While Ashcroft (2004) advocates for the need for Palestinian voices and images on legacy media platforms such as television, the rapid transformation of the media landscape through the rise of digital media technology and social media platforms has vastly increased opportunities for self-representation through direct communication with distant audiences, bypassing the need for mediation through MSM (Barassi, 2018; Godin & Doná, 2016; Lundby, 2008).

Social media, generally defined as software that is centred around user-generated content that enables people to gather, communicate and share information (Boyd, 2007; S. J. Jackson et al., 2020; van Dijck, 2013a), affords new opportunities for resistance and activism, such as disrupting mainstream media narratives, building communities, and mobilising people to take action. There has been much research exploring how the affordances of social media have been leveraged by activists and social movements, from the uprisings in Arab countries in the early 2010s (Elshahed, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012) to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement (Cox, 2017; Ince et al., 2017; Mundt et al., 2018; Tillery, 2019). In social movements such as these, images have been shown to play an important role in communicating information to national and international audiences, continuing a long tradition of images being used for producing empathy and solidarity with victims.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The overall aim of this research was to examine the ways in which Palestinian solidarity organisations used social media platforms Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to distribute images that documented interactions between Palestinians and members of the Israeli security forces as part of their advocacy efforts to raise awareness and create visibility of Palestinian oppression under Israeli occupation.

To fulfil this aim, the following four research questions were presented:

RQ1: What are the visual frames present in the still and moving images of interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians?

RQ2: How does the text caption interact with the image?

RQ3: How were the affordances of social media platforms leveraged by the advocacy organisations to amplify visual content?

RQ4: What do the responses by social media users show about the potential for using social media to build affective solidarity for the Palestinian cause?

1.3 Structure of thesis

This thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter introduces the study by situating the research within the context of international advocacy and activism in Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. This is followed by chapter two in which a literature review of relevant research is presented. It first discusses the context of Palestinian resistance within the framework of Israel's settler-colonial occupation and strategies of resistance and solidarity by both Palestinians and non-Palestinian supporters. With images being central to the Palestinian solidarity movement and the main focus of the research questions of this study, the next section of the chapter turns to images and their role in activism efforts, looking specifically at witnessing and how the recording and sharing of images of abuse of power and oppression can be used to seek accountability as well as driving solidarity efforts within distant audiences. Image sharing has been transformed through the rise of social media platforms through which users create and share visual content to a wide, international audience and the following section examines the affordances of social media platforms for activism, particularly the potential for increasing visibility of a cause and supporting the formation of affective publics that can be mobilised to take action. I also critically consider the role of social media and how the affordances that can be leveraged by activists can also be taken advantage of by those in positions of power for surveillance and censorship, as well as the constraints of using commercial platforms for advocacy.

Chapter 3 describes in detail the methodology of this study. I start by providing a statement of researcher positionality including situating myself and this research within the Palestinian solidarity movement and within the context of British universities in which the research was carried out. The next section explains the process of data collection and the way that the study was designed and realised as a mixed method, cross-platform study. The decisions that were made concerning data collection are explained. Section 3.4 explains the data analysis process and both the quantitative and qualitative analyses that were carried out on the different types of data. Finally, 3.5 presents a discussion of the ethical issues that were necessary to consider and provides my ethical stance on the research.

In chapter 4, a description of the social media posts is provided in order to give an overview of the data that was collected and analysed. This consists of a summary of the posts according to platform, organisation and type of image (photo and video) and a summary of the visual content of the images; how violence, structures of occupation and resistance were depicted within the still and moving images. I also describe the visual representation of Palestinian victims and Israeli perpetrators of the occupation's violence. In section 4.4, the text captions

that were posted alongside the images are described. Finally, the responses to the images in the form of likes, shares and comments are described in section 4.5. In this section, I aim to provide a quantitative overview of these measures of engagement across the platforms and organisations.

In the following four chapters, a detailed discussion of the images is presented, considering the ways in which Israeli occupation is framed visually in the still and moving images posted by the organisations. Chapter 5 focuses on the representation of violence, both physical and non-physical in the interactions between security forces and Palestinians. This chapter proposes how the images of violence can challenge mainstream, pro-Israeli narratives that seek to shape the discussion around Palestine/Israel as being that of a state defending itself from aggressive Palestinian terrorists and state violence as necessary for self-defence. Images of Palestinian men, women and children being brutalised by armed soldiers and scenes of family homes being demolished disrupts this narrative, shifting instead to one in which Palestinians are victims of Israeli occupation. Chapter 4 then turns to the visual structures of occupation present in the images, in particular the checkpoints that serve as a means of controlling and restricting Palestinian movement. I argue that these images reinforce the message of the advocacy organisations of Israel being an occupation that oppresses and denies Palestinians their human rights. Chapter 7 then explores the most common type of interaction depicted in the images – that of Palestinians being arrested by Israeli security forces and the prevalence of images of children being arrested. In chapter 8, I then consider how images posted by the organisations do not only portray Palestinians as victims but as actively resisting the occupation through protests and confrontation of security forces.

Chapter 9 then turns to the captions of the images in order to examine the interactions between the visual content and its text companion. With almost all of the images being posted with a text caption, this section aims to show how text was used to support the visual message through conveying additional information, verification of claims and situating the interaction depicted within the context of a settler-colonial occupation. This interaction of the two mediums, I argue, serves to reinforce and consolidate the message that was being distributed by the advocacy organisations.

In the next two chapters, the focus shifts to the affordances of the social media platforms being used to distribute the images. Chapter 10 considers how the features of social media platforms, specifically hashtags, mentions and retweeting/sharing can be used to increase visibility of content but also critically evaluates how successful this is within this context. In chapter 11, I consider how affordances can be used to promote networked mobilisation of social media users who view the content in terms of encouraging people to take action for the cause.

In chapter 12, I discuss the responses of social media users to the posts and what they tell us about the potential for such images for promoting affective solidarity which is a driving force of a social movement where people come together for a shared cause. Solidarity, it has been

argued, is central to the Palestinian resistance movement which seeks to build transnational support amongst international audiences who are not directly impacted by the Israeli occupation. In this chapter, I follow the potential process of a social media user from an emotional response to an image of suffering to supporting and agreeing with the claims being made about that image and the cause of the suffering (occupation) to solidarity. The Palestinian cause, I conclude, can be furthered through the distribution of images on social media platforms which make visible Israeli occupation and its victims which may then support accountability through international channels from outside of Israel. Finally, chapter 10 concludes the thesis.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of relevant literature. It has been divided into four sections, the first providing a context to Palestinian activism, the second discussing image activism, the third social media activism and finally, the fourth bringing these together to explore the ways in which images shared on social media can promote affective solidarity for a cause. In the literature that is cited in this chapter, I have aimed to include both Palestinian and non-Palestinian scholars as part of the process of critical self-reflexivity in which I considered which sources of knowledge I used to form the basis of the literature review.

2.2 Context: Resistance to Occupation

The issue of Palestine, specifically the ongoing Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation and the struggle for self-determination and the right to return to their land, is a matter of continued international contention. Amongst Palestinians, their supporters and many outside observers and researchers, the state of Israel is recognised to be a settler-colonial project based upon the elimination of the indigenous (Palestinian) population and their replacement with Israeli settlers (Abdulhadi & Olwan, 2015; Busbridge, 2018; Joronen, 2017; Shihade, 2012; Veracini, 2010, 2013; Zureik, 2020). Israel has established pervasive systems of oppression and violence that impact upon all aspects of the lives of Palestinians, not only those who are living in Israel, but those in the occupied territories of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, and those displaced during the *Nakba* and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and ongoing ethnic cleansing². These structures are now internationally recognised as contributing to a system of apartheid by leading human rights organisations Human Rights Watch (2021), B'Tselem (2021) and Amnesty International (2022). These reports reflected what Palestinians have been telling the world for decades.

Although Israel's system of apartheid manifests itself in different ways and on different levels in the various areas under its control, it is consistent in its purpose of oppressing and dominating Palestinians. It is these conditions that have mobilised Palestinians and their supporters to take action to resist erasure and oppression. Resistance is met with state violence to suppress mobilisation. By labelling indigenous resistance as terrorism, the racialised threat of terrorism maintains support for Israeli state violence which renders all Palestinians as a threat, and therefore, a target (Chiniara Charrett, 2021). State violence manifests itself through both physical and non-physical forms of violence with periods of high intensity military operations on Palestinian territories alongside structural violence that impacts all aspects of Palestinian

² Ethnic cleansing is 'a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas' (United Nations, 1994). It is widely acknowledged that Israel's policies constitute ethnic cleansing (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015; Pappé, 2006)

life. In this section of the literature review, the context of Palestinian resistance to occupation will be presented, first with a brief historical background to Israeli occupation, followed by the ways in which state violence manifests in both physical and non-physical violence and finally, the ways in which Palestinians resist occupation on the ground and how they seek the support and solidarity of the international communities.

2.2.1 Historical Background

The geographical region of Palestine is situated in the Levant in the Middle East, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The current official State of Palestine as recognised by the UN since 1988, officially consists of two areas of land, one being Gaza which is a coastal strip of land bordering the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt, the other being the West Bank which borders Jordan. These two pieces of land are separated by the State of Israel and have been under military occupation by Israel since 1967 (Hajjar, 2001; Seidel, 2016). The region has great significance for three of the world's major religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and is home to important holy sites including the Church of the Nativity, the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Western ("wailing") wall (Hulme, 2006; E. Said, 1989; Wolffsohn, 2021). The land is also situated in a highly strategic location for trade between Europe, Asia and Africa and has a long history of colonisation (Krämer, 2011). From 1516, the land was under the control of the Ottoman Empire until the First World War, when, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Britain assumed control of the land through the signing of the Sykes Picot Accord with France. This agreement saw the colonial powers at the time splitting up the Ottoman land between themselves to consolidate European influence over the region (Al-Sahlawi & Noreng, 2013; Bali, 2016; Barr, 2012) and has had a long-lasting impact on the region that continues to this day (Anghie, 2016; Kurşun, 2019). This period of time was known as the British Mandate and laid the groundwork for the future state of Israel (Shihade, 2012).

Zionist ambitions for a Jewish state were realised when the Balfour Declaration was signed in 1917 by the British government, which declared the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" (Balfour, 1917). In the decades following this, there was a massive influx of Jewish immigrants who settled within Palestine, changing the demographic of the land, and building friction between the Arab Palestinians and the Jewish settlers (Bregman, 2003). Growing tensions over the land led to the proposal of the 1947 Partition Plan which would divide the land between Arab Palestinians and Jewish settlers, however this plan was rejected by the British government, Palestinian leadership, and neighbouring Arab governments at the time (Ben-Dror, 2007; Khalidi, 2009; Moshe, 2002). Despite these objections, the state of Israel was declared in 1948, marking the culmination of Zionist ambitions. At this time, around 85% of the native Palestinians who were living on the land that would become Israel were forcibly displaced and became refugees, either internally or in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, in what became known as the

*Nakba*³. These displaced Palestinians and their descendants continue to struggle to return and reclaim their homes to this day. Meanwhile, those who remained found themselves a minority in their own land and part of a state that was inherently anti-Palestinian (Shihade, 2012). Palestinians who live within the West Bank and Gaza have been under Israeli military occupation from 1967 following what was supposed to be a temporary security measure in response to the Israeli-Arab war but quickly became a permanent reality for those living in these areas, creating what has been described as the world's largest open-air prison (Peteet, 2005; Williams & Ball, 2014). These areas, therefore, are called the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs).

For as long as there has been occupation of their land, Palestinians have been resisting efforts to erase them, with resistance taking many forms, both organised and spontaneous. As acts of everyday resistance, they challenge the land confiscations, organise politically, engage in protests, and connect with and maintain a strong national identity. Palestinian life is characterised by *sumud* – steadfastness - and everyday struggle against occupation (Hammad & Tribe, 2021; Rijke & van Teeffelen, 2014; Ryan, 2015). At certain points in time, resistance has been consolidated at a greater scale of participation and these are widely known as the *Intifadas*⁴. The First Intifada from 1987-1993 saw widespread nonviolent and disruptive mobilisation against the Israeli occupation in protest against security operations, settlement policies and control over basic resources such as water (Alimi et al., 2006). This was followed by another mass mobilisation in 2000, sparked by Palestinian demonstrations against the controversial visit by then Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon to the Haram al-Sharif Mosque. The subsequent excessive use of force against protesters by Israeli security forces led to the Second Intifada (Schulze, 2013). Israel's response to the uprisings was brutal, believing that protests could be crushed with a show of force which escalated the violence and led to a high number of Palestinian casualties (Pressman, 2003). A series of military operations in Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021 have seen air strikes and ground invasions that have claimed the lives of Palestinian civilians, whilst ongoing blockades have worsened living conditions for the roughly two million people living there (Brück et al., 2019; Etkes & Zimring, 2015). Seemingly without imminent resolution, Palestinians continue to live in shrinking and increasingly fragmented territories overseen by the Israeli military occupation. Their lives are marked by state violence in many different forms, both physical and non-physical, and persistent resistance.

During the past 30 years there have been attempts made by third parties to intervene and negotiate peace and an end to violence. Notably, the Oslo Peace Process was established in response to the First Intifada which saw the Declaration of Principles signed by the government of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation⁵ (PLO) in 1993, and the Cairo Agreement the following year which resulted in Israeli authorities transferring civic

³ Arabic word that can be roughly translated as catastrophe

⁴ Arabic word for uprising or shaking off

⁵ The governing body at the time

responsibilities and functions in the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinian Authority⁶ (PA). Despite international efforts, interventions have not brought about peace nor addressed the underlying settler colonial occupation. In fact, some argue that Western efforts to bring about peace that emphasise governance, neoliberalism and security do more to support Israeli colonisation and control than the Palestinian right to return and self-determination (Turner, 2015). The persistent refusal by Western interveners to address the fundamental power asymmetry between the two parties along with a focus on a two-state solution (even when this appears to be no longer possible) have hindered efforts to make meaningful progress (Ben-Porat, 2008; Turner, 2011). Despite these failings, Atallah (2021) maintains that future resolution would rely on the international community to intervene, while stipulating that this cannot happen without reassessing the assumptions underpinning the process so far and acknowledging the power imbalance between Israel and Palestine.

The current study is concerned with the two-year period between January 2019 and January 2021. In this period of time, there were a number of significant shifts in the ways that international third parties address the issue of Palestine. Then US president Donald Trump's Peace Plan in 2020 marked a departure from the singular focus on a two-state solution to a stance in line with Israel's plan for one state with isolated enclaves of Palestinians (Kilani et al., 2020; Pillar, 2019). Meanwhile, a number of Arab states normalised relations with Israel around this time (Bahrain and UAE in September 2020, and Sudan and Morocco in late 2020). These deals, named the Abraham Accords, aimed to promote peace and security within the region and restrict pending Israeli settlement expansions (Dazi-Héni, 2020; Guzansky & Marshall, 2020; Zweiri, 2020). They also, however, marked a shift in policy towards Israel by Arab states that were previously opposed to such relations that would legitimise the regime. Furthermore, these deals appeared to be at odds with the opinion of the general public of these countries, who, in the most recent Arab Opinion Index survey were overwhelmingly against normalisation⁷.

While these events appeared to be shifting public opinion in favour of Israel, in the same period of time there have been advances in pro-Palestinian narratives. Significantly, the publication of reports by leading human rights organisations B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch in 2021 declared Israel to be committing the crime of apartheid. In January 2021, B'Tselem, an Israeli organisation stated that the Israeli regime's systematic oppression of Palestinians met the criteria to be considered apartheid. Apartheid is defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as "inhumane acts...committed in the context of an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime." (1998, p.4). B'Tselem pointed to the fragmentation of Palestinian territory in the West Bank and Gaza, creeping Israeli settlements and policies of discrimination against Palestinians and Arab-Israelis. Shortly after, Human Rights Watch published their own report that also concluded that

⁶ The governing administrative body with partial control over the West Bank and Gaza at the time

⁷ <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-2019-2020-arab-opinion-index-main-results-in-brief/>

Israel's policies and actions met the criteria for apartheid. A third report by one of the largest international human rights organisations, Amnesty International, was published in February 2022 and this also ruled that Israel was committing apartheid in the OPTs and inside its borders. This report acknowledged land seizures, unlawful killings and violence, forcible transfer, restrictions of movement and the denial of self-determination as abuses carried out by Israel against Palestinians that contributed to this conclusion. These reports represented a growing awareness of Palestinian perspectives in mainstream discourse.

In recent years, there has been growing international awareness of and support for Palestinians (Ross, 2021). Significantly, there was an outpouring of internal and international solidarity in May 2021 in response to the threat of eviction of 28 families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. These evictions marked the culmination of decades of attempts to displace these families and move Israeli settlers into the neighbourhood. The escalation in April 2021, driven in part by powerful international real estate organisations including El-Ad and Nahakat Shimon resulted in numerous court hearings ruling in favour of the settlers; evidence, activists argue, of an apartheid legal system that serves the interests of Israel and shuts out Palestinians, while maintaining an illusion of legitimacy and democracy (Hawari, 2021). They further argue that the case of the Sheikh Jarrah evictions embodies Israel's systematic policies of land grabbing and ethnic cleansing, whilst Israel portrays it as a legal dispute of real estate between individuals (Frantzman, 2021). United by the plight of the Sheikh Jarrah residents, thousands of Palestinians across the West Bank, Gaza and Israel participated in protests along with a general strike on 18 May (Ross, 2021). Around the world, labour unions, academics, musicians, and organisations declared their support for Palestinians and in many cases, intentions to boycott Israeli products in response to the situation. Protests were held worldwide in solidarity with the families of Sheikh Jarrah and in support for the Palestinian cause more generally. This show of support and international mobilisation transpired following years of action and organisation of the Palestinian solidarity movement. This movement consisted of a transnational advocacy network of organisations united by solidarity-orientated collective action for the Palestinian cause (Abu-Ayyash, 2015). The solidarity movement sought to and continues to raise awareness and mobilise people internationally to stand in support of Palestinians and hold Israel to account for its occupation and oppression.

2.2.2 Israeli State Violence

For people living under occupation and prolonged conflict, as Palestinians do, lives are marked by conditions of relentless violence (Bar-Tal, 2011; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2006). This takes the form of physical violence carried out by Israeli security forces, in which harm is caused to the body through direct physical damage such as beating, shooting and violent restraints, as well as other, non-physical forms of violence such as structural and cultural violence. From 2000 to 2021, there have been at least 10,300 Palestinians, including at least 2,300 children, killed according to the Israel-Palestine Timeline which aims to report all Palestinian and Israeli deaths "by someone from the other side". Many Palestinian deaths were caused by military

interventions on Gaza, such as the 2014 attack on Gaza which claimed the lives of around two thousand Palestinians, and the ten days of Israeli airstrikes in May 2021, which, according to the UN resulted in 256 Palestinian casualties⁸. Between 2000 and 2021, a number of high-profile deaths of Palestinian children by Israeli forces have been captured on camera by journalists, for example, in 2000, an international journalist captured images of 12-year-old Mohammad al-Durra being shot and killed by Israeli soldiers as he sheltered with his father (Campbell, 2004; El-ibiary, 2010; Stein, 2021). The images were widely shared internationally as visual evidence of state violence and damaged Israel's international reputation (Stein, 2021). Furthermore, in 2014, images that documented the killing of four Palestinian boys as they played on a beach in Gaza were similarly widely shared (Berents, 2019; Dyer & Georgis, 2017). The Israeli soldiers claimed that they fired the missiles at militant targets and that they attacked the boys for a second time as they ran away because they mistook them for militants (Human Rights Watch, 2014), claims that were disputed by witnesses. These two sets of images became iconic visual symbols of the human cost of Israeli state violence.

Israeli security forces frequently use disproportionate violence against Palestinians, causing the deaths of 4,868 Palestinians between 2000 and 2017 (B'TSelem, 2017⁹) and many more injuries. Israeli extrajudicial killing of Palestinian suspects has been extensively documented, showing how security forces are quick to use lethal force without non-lethal de-escalation tactics, even in situations where a suspect poses no threat (Omer-man, 2017). Palestinians, including young children, who have been detained by Israeli security forces face physical violence in custody (Falah, 2008; Medien, 2021). All of this is justified as legitimate state violence through the promotion of a narrative that portrays Israel as the victim of Palestinian terrorism (Halabi et al., 2021). In this way, Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation is framed as terrorism, therefore making all Palestinians potential threats to Israel so the use of physical violence against them is justified in the name of national security (Chiniara Charrett, 2021). Even when there is evidence that Israeli soldiers have acted unlawfully in killing or injuring Palestinians, a culture of impunity means that it is unlikely for Palestinians to get justice. In 2011, Palestinian Mustafa Tamimi was killed when soldiers fired at him from close range, raising questions about the excessive and dangerous use of force. Human rights groups argued that the video evidence that documented the killing showed the soldier responsible acting outside of the military's own regulations, but despite this, no legal action was taken against the soldier (Cohen, 2013; Mann, 2019).

In the international arena, Israel defines these acts as being in self-defence, exploiting narratives of a just war to legitimise acts of state violence (Flint & Falah, 2004; Simonsen, 2019). Furthermore, Israel gains support from Western governments by framing the conflict, not only as Israelis versus Palestinians but of a civilised democracy versus barbaric terrorists, drawing upon the racialised association of terrorism with Arabs and Muslims that has become widespread (Kumar, 2020). These narratives have been enthusiastically repeated by many

⁸ Response to the Escalation in the OPT Situation Report No. 1, 2021

⁹ https://www.btselem.org/publications/summaries/201703_getting_off_scot_free

Western mainstream media outlets, framing Israeli military operations as necessary for security and state violence against Palestinians as self-defence (Saba, 2021). In a study of US newspaper coverage of Israel and Palestine from 1967 to 2017, Siddiqui and Zaheer (2018) showed how the word "terror" was used almost three times as often as the word "occupation" (p.13).

Alongside physical harm, state violence also includes non-physical, structural forms of violence (Haddad, 2019; Tanous, 2022). It is, therefore, necessary to consider violence in this context as a broad concept that incorporates physical, psychological, structural, collective and individual violence (De Haan, 2008). Structural violence has been defined as "avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs" (Galtung, 1969, p.168), that is, the social processes entrenched within the structures, institutions and policies that give preference to certain groups of people and prevent others from meeting their needs, resulting in unequal opportunities and social inequalities (Parsons, 2007; Tanous, 2022). This form of violence is a critical part of the consolidation of power of the state of Israel over Palestinians. In the following sections, two main forms of structural violence will be discussed.

2.2.2.1 Property violence

One of the main ways that Israel inflicts structural violence against Palestinians is through property violence, which is also referred to as habitational violence (Siegfried, 2020), spacio-cide (Hanafi, 2009) and urbicide (Graham, 2008; Ramadan, 2009). Property violence in this context can be viewed as a system of urban planning policies, permits, zoning, demolition, and settlement building that consolidates Israeli power through the precarisation and compartmentalisation of Palestinian life (Joronen, 2019). As a settler-colonial occupying force, Israel is built upon land taken from Palestinians who have been forcibly displaced. Land confiscation continues to this day, with Israeli settlements creeping further into the West Bank, despite being illegal under international law, with the effect of fragmenting Palestinian territory into increasingly isolated pockets of land. Alongside the taking of Palestinian land, an urban planning system works to prevent Palestinian neighbourhood expansion by making it almost impossible to get planning permission for property extensions and new developments. This has created a cycle of unauthorised building and administrative demolition (Meade, 2011; Siegfried, 2020). Furthermore, property demolition has been used as a form of collective punishment since 1967 and has led to an estimated 25,000 homes being destroyed (Siegfried, 2020). Whether property demolition is punitive or administrative, it causes significant trauma to Palestinian families who are affected and has a collective impact on national identity (Marey-Sarwan, 2020; Meade, 2011; Siegfried, 2020).

2.2.2.2 Restriction of Movement

Another form of structural violence against Palestinians is the restriction of movement within and between the OPTs. This is typically through checkpoints that serve as barriers regulating the movement of Palestinians, creating restrictions on access and the isolation of Palestinian territory. Checkpoints started off as temporary security measures but over time have become

permanent and normalised fixtures of Palestinian life (Mansbach, 2009; Rijke, 2021). In recent years, some of the bigger checkpoints have become terminals, which are larger and are reinforced with technology that presents the appearance of a legitimate border crossing between independent states. This 'façade of legitimacy' conceals and normalises Israel's control and rule (Kotef & Amir, 2015, p. 982).

Checkpoints are part of the Israeli strategy of land fragmentation and unpredictability that also includes land barriers, roadblocks, and home raids, all of which serve to destabilise Palestinian time and space (Parsons & Salter, 2008; Weizman, 2012). As of 2022, 176 checkpoints were recorded by B'Tselem¹⁰. This included terminals, crossing points in the Separation Barrier between Israel and the West Bank, watchtowers and checkpoints, concrete blocks and roadblocks, and may be staffed intermittently or at all times by the military, border police or private security companies. Some of these block access to areas and neighbourhoods for all Palestinians, some allow access only for certain families who are residents with entry permits; some allow vehicle access, others are pedestrian only. These different forms of checkpoints serve as the main point of contact between Palestinians and Israeli security forces and can be considered as the "geographic manifestations of Israeli control over Palestinian life" (Tawil-Souri, 2011, p.13). Their existence is a symbol of oppression and control and a site at which the asymmetry between the occupying force and the occupied people is clear to see (Longo et al., 2014; Razack, 2011). Not only are they a concrete manifestation of structural violence, but they have very real impacts on the everyday life of Palestinians. Checkpoints cause significant anxiety in those that rely on crossing through to Israel from the OPTs to get to a place of work, they make travel difficult and time consuming and create a sense of powerlessness due to the ambiguity of opening hours and changing rules that make access uncertain (Griffiths & Repo, 2018, 2020).

2.2.3 Resistance and Solidarity

Israeli occupation and subsequent state violence are met with acts of resistance by Palestinians who are driven by a determination to not be erased (Hammad & Tribe, 2021; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015; Rijke & van Teeffelen, 2014; Ryan, 2015). Resistance can be defined as an act of opposition against power (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004) and can take many forms. In the context of Palestine, this ranges from physical aggression including armed protests and rebellions, to artistic forms of resistance such as poetry and art. In 2005, the BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) movement was launched by Palestinian civil society organisations with the goal of ending Israeli occupation, securing equal rights for Palestinians in Israel and gaining the right for Palestinian refugees to return. The movement sought to build upon the success of the boycott of apartheid South Africa to use boycott as a nonviolent form of resistance. The movement is part of international solidarity efforts (L. Allen, 2018), discussed in

¹⁰ The number of checkpoints is not fixed, this has been taken from B'Tselem's list available at https://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/checkpoints_and_forbidden_roads?msclkid=f291d68dbd7911ecb5e099eb9a350e8b

section 2.2.3.2 below. The development of recent technology has further added new strategies to the repertoires of contention of Palestinian activists, with the internet providing new outlets and opportunities for Palestinians and their supporters to reach an audience.

2.2.3.1 Online Palestinian Resistance

For Palestinians living under occupation in the OPTs, the internet “authorized a space to narrate the experience of suffering and struggle; but also, to mobilize local and transnational activism and help structure political agency from below” (Aouragh, 2008, p.127). It offers a way of overcoming the physical immobility from Israeli restrictions and connects Palestinian people living in isolated territories as well as those who are displaced (Aouragh, 2011). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Palestinians within the OPTs are active social media users, with Facebook being the most popular platform according to research carried out by Ipoke (*Social Media Report in Palestine*, 2020). This is despite the restriction and surveillance of their internet use by Israel (discussed in detail in section 2.4.6 below). Social media can be used within Palestine to coordinate people who may be isolated by Israeli restrictions and to organise protests and other forms of activism (Wulf et al., 2013). Furthermore, Palestinians can use social media to directly communicate with the diaspora and international audiences to share information about their experiences of occupation (Li & Prasad, 2018; Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014; Wulf et al., 2013). In this way, social media can serve as a bridge between Palestinians and international audiences to advocate for their cause (Etling et al., 2010; Lynch, 2007).

During periods of high intensity military operations, social media has been found to be critical for disseminating information from the OPTs to international audiences. In the 2008 military operation Cast Iron which saw Gaza subjected to air attacks and ground invasions, social media was used by Gazans as a means of sharing information about what was happening and presenting their own perspectives when these were lacking in the western mainstream media (El Zein & Abusalem, 2015; Najjar, 2010). By the time the 2012 Operation Pillar of Defence was launched on Gaza, social media was used strategically by both the Palestinian political organisation Hamas and the Israeli military to attempt to influence public opinion and gain support for their side, making it arguably one of the first times that social media specifically was used to influence public opinion during a military conflict (Borger, 2012; Zeitzoff, 2018). Despite having drastically less resources, Hamas was able to compete in the battle for information against a specialised interactive media unit created by Israel to produce social media content, showing how these participatory media could be used by a militarily weaker side to challenge a more powerful enemy (Zeitzoff, 2017). Furthermore, social media was shown to influence public opinion and the operations on the ground, for example Zeitzoff (2018) found that both Israel and Hamas were receptive to shifts in public opinion, with reductions in physical violence when there was increased support for the other side on Twitter.

Palestinians have been found to use social media platforms to communicate with the outside world about their experiences and seek international support, with ordinary civilians emerging

as prominent voices online. Monshipouri et al. (2018) describe an example of what they call “digital resistance” (p.48) of a Palestinian girl, Janaa Jihad, who used Facebook and YouTube to share her experiences of life under occupation and the everyday systematic oppression. This digital resistance has been important in challenging the power asymmetry between Israel and Palestinians, with the struggle over visibility in the media arguably as important as the physical struggle on the ground (Wolfsfeld, 2008). It was Palestinian social media users who helped to bring the 2021 Sheikh Jarrah evictions to the public attention, with twins Mohammed and Muna El-Kurd, whose home was under threat, emerging as leading voices by sharing information (often in English), calling out mainstream media coverage and calling people to take action (Saba, 2021). By posting in English, Palestinians were able to reach a global audience and build international solidarity which contributed to the mobilisation of people in countries around the world coming out to protest.

2.2.3.2 International Palestinian Solidarity

Outside of Palestine, there is widespread international support and solidarity for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and liberation from occupation. Solidarity can be thought of as a sense of people coming together with a collective identity based around a common cause; it can be a political principle, a moral obligation or a collective sentiment that brings people together around a shared conviction. Solidarity can be defined as a relationship that “emerges when people share political goals and ideals and are willing to collectively and reciprocally shoulder the burdens that pursuing such goals might entail” (Tava, 2021, p.2). Building upon Arendt (1990)’s conceptualisation of solidarity as a response to human suffering, Tava (2021) further argues that it is the negative emotions that come from reactions to seeing suffering and injustice that provide the groundwork for solidarity to emerge. Solidarity is central to a social movement as it is what brings people to the cause and guides activist action through a sense of responsibility (McDonald, 2002). Furthermore, political solidarity occurs when people come together to take action for a cause that does not directly impact them personally (Subašić et al., 2008).

In the context of international solidarity with the Palestinian people and cause, Ogg (2021) considers how there are four components: empathy with distant people, reciprocity in supporting other oppressed people, bearing witness as a moral imperative, and a political commitment to Palestinian liberation. Solidarity in this context is driven by grassroots organisations and individuals who support the cause for example high profile celebrities and political figures professing support, as well as advocacy organisations and NGOs. International solidarity with Palestinians is frequently found between other indigenous people living under settler colonialism, for example Native Americans (Salaita, 2016), people in Northern Ireland (Arar, 2017), Black Americans (Moffett, 2018) and Kashmiris in India-occupied Kashmir (Osuri & Zia, 2020; Zia, 2020). David Palumbo-Liu (2014) discusses the solidarity between Palestinians and Black Americans built on shared experiences, a history of displacement, systematic injustice, state violence and lack of access to justice. This historic solidarity was brought to the foreground in 2014 during the protests in Ferguson, Missouri over the police killing of Michael

Brown and the attack on Gaza that took place at the same time. It was Palestinian activists who reached out and shared information on how protesters in the US could deal with tear gas, after having experienced its use by Israeli forces previously (Davis, 2016). Then, in 2015, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement put out a formal statement of support for Palestinians. On social media, hashtags such as #BlackPalestinianSolidarity and #PalestinianLivesMatter illustrated this solidarity (Seidel, 2016).

The Palestinian solidarity movement, therefore, is a transnational advocacy network made up of organisations and people sharing a conviction in the Palestinian cause and a commitment to liberation (Abu-Ayyash, 2015). Within this movement, international activists take action through sharing information, raising awareness and lobbying for action from their own government (Abu-Ayyash, 2015; Li & Prasad, 2018; Nashif & Fatafta, 2017). International solidarity has been found to peak during periods of high intensity violence such as the military operations in Gaza and the Intifadas, with solidarity efforts becoming more organised and structured since the early 2000s when Palestinian advocacy became a central part of global discourse on human rights. Following the call for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel in 2005, a coherent and concrete response was presented for international supporters that provided a framework for organising solidarity responses (L. Allen, 2018; Awad, 2021; Sharoni et al., 2015). The BDS movement is a grassroots initiative from Palestinian civil society organisations. Inspired by the boycott of South African apartheid, the movement began in 2005 by calling for the boycott of Israeli products, divestment from investing in Israeli companies, and international sanctions, with the overall aim of pressuring Israel to comply with international law (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009; McMahon, 2014). The boycott extends also to companies and institutions that are complicit in the Israeli occupation. BDS is seen as an effective way to challenge Israeli occupation from outside of Palestine by moving the issue away from international politics to transnational non-state actors, particularly international solidarity organisations and individuals who are presented with a meaningful form of action that they can take to show solidarity and support the cause (L. Allen, 2018; Baumgart-Ochse, 2017). Furthermore, new media technology has made it easier to create connections and networks between international solidarity groups and Palestinians, facilitating the emergence of digital networks where information is shared and action is coordinated (Loddo, 2005).

Within the United Kingdom, there are many different Palestinian advocacy organisations that are part of the wider international solidarity movement. They may have different beliefs about how to practice solidarity and the most effective ways of taking action but share the same goals of raising awareness, advocating for Palestinian rights and lobbying the UK government to sanction Israel and hold it to account by the standards of international laws (Loddo, 2005). Activities of these organisations focus on ongoing campaigns to raise awareness generally of Palestine and campaigns in response to emergent events (Abu-Ayyash, 2015). The biggest UK-based solidarity group is Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), an organisation established in 1982 whose aim is "securing Palestinian human rights" (PSC, 2021). The group works towards this goal through offline and online action, including picketing and petitioning and using social

media to share information, present Palestinian narratives and connect with others. Part of the strategies used by these organisations is sharing images that convey information about the reality of Palestinian experiences under Israeli occupation.

2.3 Images for activism

An image can be defined as a visual representation of a subject that provides a likeness and documents a scene, these representations can be still images (photo) or moving images (video). Images have long been a driving force behind political mobilisation and social movements, and it was arguably images that were critical in the global movement to define and defend universal human rights, as it was seeing physical images of real human oppression that led to the concept of absolute human rights, rather than abstract philosophical discussions (Sliwinski, 2011). The image saturated world of 2023 produces and shares visual content at a rate inconceivable at the time of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 yet there remains a belief in the potential of images to contribute to political and social change. Within Palestinian resistance and solidarity movements, there is a long-standing belief in the power and value of images to bear witness to occupation and Israeli violence (Faulkner, 2018). Images are crucial in that they create visibility of the Palestinian people and, according to Said, (2006, p.2) “the whole history of the Palestinian struggle has to do with the desire to be visible”.

2.3.1 Witnessing

Recording images is a form of witnessing, where witnessing can be defined as the act of reporting on the actuality of events by those who were there for those who were not there (Allan, 2013; Frosh & Pinchevski, 2008). Witnessing is a “complex communicative practice” that “raises questions of truth and experience, presence and absence, death and pain, seeing and staying and trustworthiness of perception – in short fundamental questions of communication” (Peters, 2001, p.707). Furthermore, Peters (2001) differentiates between the passive form of witnessing as seeing, and the active form of sharing the experience with others. Building upon Peters’ (2001) work, Tait (2011, p.1227) conceptualises bearing witness as an active form of both looking and telling, which calls to the viewer to share responsibility. Images, as opposed to verbal or written testimony, perhaps are the most convincing form of evidence produced by witnesses (Mirzoeff, 2006). It is, therefore, not surprising that images are a critical part of advocacy and activism efforts to create visibility and raise awareness of a cause. Still and moving images can be used to make conflicts, humanitarian crises and human rights abuses visible that advocacy groups seek to raise awareness of, bringing news of distant places to audiences (D. Campbell, 2004).

Witnessing can be a form of resistance and political struggle (Ristovska, 2016). This can be either as an accidental and spontaneous act or a more deliberate and strategic effort as part of a wider social movement or cause (Atton, 2009). Citizens who engage in witnessing by recording and sharing their experiences can use this to challenge mainstream narratives and

report on unreported events (Mislán & Shaban, 2019). For example, during the Egyptian uprising of 2011, activists on social media shared images as visual evidence of state violence and injustice that were absent from the Egyptian media, allowing this information to become available internationally (Khamis et al., 2012; Khamis & Vaughn, 2012). Harnessing this activist potential for witnessing, the advocacy organisation WITNESS with their slogan “see it, film it, change it”, was formed, based upon the fundamental belief that visibility of injustice would lead to public awareness which would lead to action (Gregory, 2010). This organisation provides equipment and training to human rights activists and citizens around the world to capture and share visual evidence of human rights violations which can then potentially be used to hold those responsible to account. As Peter Gabriel, the founder of WITNESS, explains, “a camera at the right time at the right place can be more powerful than tanks and guns...we are watching so they can no longer keep their deeds hidden” (as cited in). In a similar way, and of particular relevance to the present study, the Israeli human rights organisation B’Tselem was established for the purpose of documenting and archiving visual evidence of Palestinian suffering as a result of Israeli occupation and state violence, with the aim of using this alongside other forms of evidence within the legal arena to hold the Israeli regime to account (R. Stein, 2021).

Digital media has significantly transformed the ability to bear witness by changing how we record and share images (Allan, 2013). Connective witnessing is a term coined by Mortensen (2015) that encompasses the act of recording and sharing testimony on connective platforms such as social media. It is these platforms, he argues, that reconfigure and transform the relationship between the individual witness and the collective, making the act of connective witnessing fundamentally participatory and reflective. Connective witnessing is inherently participatory because there of widespread availability of camera phones and access to the internet and anyone, anywhere, with these tools can be a witness and can be part of the process of understanding witness testimony. In this way, connective witnessing provides opportunities for marginalised voices that would not typically be visible in the MSM to be heard. This can be particularly important in situations where narratives are tightly controlled by the MSM and/or states. For instance, during the Iraq war, Western media reporting was challenged by alternative voices of ordinary Iraqi citizens such as Salem Pax who harnessed connective witnessing to share his experiences in a blog. The content he produced challenged the often dehumanising and othering depictions of Iraqis in Western mainstream media and offered audiences other perspectives on the war outside of the MSM (Bakir, 2010). Furthermore, in places with limited journalistic freedoms, citizen witnessing can be used to document and share concerns about the government, demand accountability of those in power and provide platforms for sharing information and for facilitating public debate on issues (Luo & Harrison, 2019; Mpofu, 2016; Mutsvairo & Salgado, 2022).

During times of conflict and violence, connective witnessing can have a powerful impact on getting information out to international audiences. For example, citizen journalism was found to be critically important during the violence that followed the Kenyan 2008 election (Ajao &

Wielenga, 2017). Furthermore, the Syrian civil war was mostly reported on by citizen witnesses who were trained and supported by a network of professionals outside of the country (Al-Ghazzi, 2014; Johnston, 2017; M. Wall & el Zahed, 2015), leading to the war being called the most “socially mediated civil conflict” (Lynch et al., 2014, p.5) and the first YouTube war (Koettl, 2014). Within this context, Wall and El Zahed (2015) describe the alternative system of information that emerged as a “pop up news ecology” that was driven by a need for alternative sources of information and was supported by the existing infrastructure of social media platforms such as YouTube that allowed low cost set up and rapid dissemination of content. Despite the vast quantity of information that was produced and shared by Syrian citizens that documented the war and invited viewers to recognise and take action of their suffering, social media users who viewed this content often did not accept this. Instead they were found to question the authenticity of testimony and witnesses and their motives, othered the witnesses and challenged their representations or dismissed their suffering as an unfortunate collateral damage, for which they did not feel compelled to take action (Davidjants, 2022). This represents the shift from the “existential struggle of the witness to the assessment of the authenticity, meaning, and significance of eyewitness images” (Mortensen, 2015, p.1398). Trust has become the main challenge of the witness; they must gain the trust of the audience for there to be a discussion and meaningful interpretation of the testimony (Ashuri & Pinchevski, 2009, p.141). With greater visibility of distant suffering through connective witnessing, these issues have become more prominent than ever, and the challenge becomes how to most effectively encourage the audience to feel a moral responsibility to the suffering of distant people.

2.3.2 Accountability

Witnessing in the sense of recording images can be important for accountability. This could be a deliberate act of recording those in positions of power in order to monitor their behaviour (Bock, 2016; Newell, 2019). Through the act of recording and sharing images, this can create visibility and transparency of authority, which can therefore increase accountability by making those in power aware that their actions can be monitored, and they can be held accountable for any abuse of this power (Bakir, 2010; Bradshaw, 2013). The ability for citizens to record and distribute images that document interactions between authority figures and the public, as a form of visual evidence, has significantly increased with advances in technology, in particular the widespread availability of smartphones. It is this that Thompson (2005) and Goldsmith (2010) argue has created a new visibility in which the potential for those in positions of power to act with impunity has been reduced. Recording, Bock (2016) concludes, has the potential to promote greater transparency and accountability in society.

This type of recording of those in power has been termed *sousveillance* and can be defined as the act of recording and sharing images of those in positions of authority by those who are not (Mann et al., 2003). This concept was developed by Steve Mann, based upon his research into wearable technology, who saw this technology as empowering ordinary citizens to record their

experiences. Wearable technology such as a camera installed onto a pair of glasses or integrated into a jacket for the user to wear could be used for lifelogging; the practice of capturing the users' everyday experiences (Dodge & Kitchin, 2007; Gurrin et al., 2014; Lidon et al., 2017). With developments in technology, smartphones with cameras have become an integral part of modern life allowing users to record and share with ease. When the recording is for personal purposes, Mann defined this as personal *sousveillance*, however where there is a political or legal motivation, this is known as hierarchical *sousveillance* (Mann et al., 2003). Mann envisioned the developments in technology having the potential to enable ordinary citizens to challenge the ubiquitous surveillance they are subjected to by the state and corporations, as it allows them to "observe those in authority" (Mann et al., 2003, p. 332). In fact, the word *sousveillance* itself reflects this position in relation to surveillance, as the term was created from the French word *sous*, meaning below, as opposed to *sur*, meaning above. With surveillance being defined as the "focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for the purposes of influence, management, protection or direction" (Lyon, 2007, p.14), it inevitably installs a power imbalance between those watching and those who are being watched (Fernback, 2013; Koskela, 2004). *Sousveillance* can disrupt this power imbalance, as Mann et al. (2003) argued that "one way to challenge surveillance...is to resituate these technologies of control on individuals, offering panoptic technologies to help them observe those in authority" (p.332).

The Panopticon is widely used as a model of surveillance, developed by Jeremy Bentham in 1787 as a model for prisons in which a system of monitoring prisoners without them knowing whether or not they are being watched at any given time exists. The prisoners therefore behave as though they are being constantly observed while the watchers can watch without themselves being seen (Foucault, 1977, as cited in Mann et al., 2003). This type of observation as a means for surveillance and therefore control, has been transformed with technological advances such as CCTV, biometric and geolocation data, that mean that extensive surveillance apparatuses are in place across the world, with citizens under increasing surveillance and unable to escape the constant gaze of the government (Lyon, 2007, p.25). With this in mind, *sousveillance* has been theorised as a form of countersurveillance (Borradaile & Reeves, 2020; Bradshaw, 2013), as the practice can disrupt the power asymmetry created through surveillance by reducing the dominance of powerful institutions to capture and share information and can be an activist strategy to promote social and political change (Monahan, 2006, p.515). Surveillance and *sousveillance* within a society can each increase or decrease but not necessarily at the expense of each other (S. Mann, 2004) in what has been described as a *veillance plane*, which is an eight-point compass demonstrates how both surveillance and *sousveillance* could be increased or decreased by the actions of citizens or those in power, for example adding CCTV or more people recording on their phones. This is what Ganascia (2010) calls, the *generalised sousveillance society*, in which both *sousveillance* and surveillance co-exist.

Arguably, there are few regimes around the world that engage in surveillance to the extent that Israel does (Tawil-Souri, 2016). Israel has developed a unique, omnipresent and multi-layered surveillance structure that is imposed both on the territory it controls and beyond, involving normalised surveillance of Israeli Jews, exclusionary surveillance of Palestinians in the OPTs and globalised surveillance extended beyond its borders (Handel & Dayan, 2017). In this context, Lyon's (2007) definition of surveillance is manifested, as surveillance serves as a tool to protect Israeli Jews while managing and controlling Palestinians in a way that seeks to demonstrate their "inability to be included" (Handel & Dayan, 2017, p.473). This surveillance assemblage has its origins in British colonisation of the land, with some of the tools deployed by the British empire to monitor the population being adapted and used to this day, for instance a dependence on collecting intelligence on the ground through a network of police, intelligence agents and informants (Tawil-Souri, 2012). Alongside these traditional and low-tech forms of surveillance, Israel has embraced technological advances, deploying high-tech tools such as drones, x-ray machines and smart CCTV cameras. In 2017, smart CCTV cameras were installed at the gates of the mosque of Haram al-Sharif and met with strong opposition by Palestinians to the infringement of privacy at this place of worship (Volinz, 2018). Furthermore, there has also been heavy investment by Israel into the surveillance of communication, in what Tawil-Souri (2012) refers to as the digital occupation. Phone calls, messages and social media postings are monitored by Israeli surveillance agencies, not just of Palestinians within the occupied territories, but also the wider diaspora. Therefore, Palestinians may turn to sousveillance as a means to counter this surveillance and the extreme power imbalance between themselves and Israel, although they might not consider it as sousveillance. Sousveillance can be an effective way to challenge and disrupt a power imbalance as it only requires a mobile phone to record, and internet access to upload images, and according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2019), 93% of Palestinian households own one or more mobile phone and around 65% with internet access (although this was much lower in Gaza compared to the West Bank).

To date, there are few studies that have looked at the way sousveillance can be used as a tactic by Palestinian activists to monitor Israeli soldiers and uncover and make misconduct visible, with two notable studies finding evidence of this practice by Palestinian activists. Volinz (2018) investigated how the high-tech surveillance can be countered by mobile phone sousveillance at Haram al-Sharif and found both Palestinian activists and international observers deliberately recorded images of encounters between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians, with this footage being shared internationally. These images were typically accompanied by messaging that framed the interactions as violations of sacred Palestinian space, seemingly with the purpose of building international support for the Palestinian cause. Outside of this site, Swed (2020) found evidence that activists were using sousveillance at West Bank checkpoints as a way of monitoring and documenting the actions of Israeli soldiers. Swed argued that the effectiveness depended on the extent to which the actions of the activists were perceived to challenge the soldiers' sense of order. When activists who were recording got in the way of the soldiers' work or demanded that they go against procedures, recording was

unproductive, but when it was carried out in a way that did not conflict with regulations, there was a more positive impact. At the same time, Swed (2020) found no evidence that the soldiers were self-disciplining as a result of the presence of cameras and activists and sousveillance did little to address the fundamental structural violence of the checkpoints themselves.

Palestinian citizens may also engage in sousveillance (although they may not define recording as this) on a more ad hoc basis, as they are compelled to record events that they witness. These recordings are shared, typically online, with Palestinians taking on the role of a citizen journalist by reporting, sharing and analysing information (Bowman & Willis, 2003; Lievrouw, 2011). Despite restrictions of internet access (Tawil-Souri, 2012), Palestinians, particularly young people, are motivated to engage with political and social issues online (Zayyan & Carter, 2009) and reach out to international audiences and the dispersed Palestinian diaspora. In the 2008 Gaza assault, it was citizens who took on the role of journalists by sharing information at a time when professional journalists had limited access on the ground. A crowd sourcing platform *Ushahidi* was established that was used by both citizen journalists and reporters to share information from the conflict zone in close to real time. It was also at this time that Al Jazeera started to use citizen journalism alongside traditional reporting, suggesting an emerging interconnection between citizen journalism and mainstream media and the emergence of the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2017).

Mann's theory of sousveillance adds another dimension to panoptic theories of surveillance, however it has been argued that so far, the visibility status of the surveiller and sousveiller has not been taken into account and that race should be considered as another dimension as "sousveillance is not race-neutral. Our theories should not be either" (Ross, 2020, p.312). While one who surveils is protected by their power status, one who engages in sousveillance makes themselves visible and may put themselves at risk of retaliation by those in positions of power (Browne, 2015; K. Ross, 2020). Steve Mann himself has recently (2020) acknowledged that sousveillance does not always have the effect of empowering and protecting the vulnerable but can have negative consequences. Furthermore, although there is a potential for countersurveillance to uncover misconduct (Bayerl & Stoykov, 2014) and mobilise people to take action against abuse of power (Hermida & Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018), it can have a negative impact on activists and citizens and lead to a spiral of surveillance and violence against activists (Wall & Linnemann, 2014; Wilson & Serisier, 2010).

The impact of images depends on the reach of content, the size of the network that it is distributed through and how it is received by the public. Reception of content that claims to show police or security forces' misconduct can depend on the narratives of legitimacy of the state and police in that context (Mann & Ferenbok, 2013). The viewers may not necessarily agree with the claims that are being made through the content. Reilly (2015) showed how the majority of comments on YouTube videos depicting police clashes with members of the public in Bristol, England, did not agree that this was evidence of police brutality and in fact criticised the behaviour of the crowd of protesters. In a further study of footage posted to YouTube that was used to make claims of police brutality against protesters in Belfast, Northern Ireland, a

similar trend was found in the comments section, with only a minority of commenters expressing support for the protesters and agreeing with the claims being made (Reilly, 2020). In both of these cases, most of the commenters who responded to the videos disagreed with and disputed the narrative presented by the activists and refuted the claims being made, in particular, they directly rebutted attempts by those who posted the videos to delegitimise the actions of the police.

2.3.3 Images and Affect

Visual content can serve many purposes, including focusing public attention on an issue or cause, expressing collective identity (Blaagaard, 2019; Poulakidakos et al., 2020), framing events and issues, persuading audiences of the legitimacy of a cause (Krause & Bucy, 2018) and engaging the public to take action (Adi et al., 2018; Pedwell, 2017). The power of images comes from their ability to elicit sympathy and support for victims by depicting and conveying affect in a way that is different from text, evoking an emotional response in the viewer (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015; Lilleker, 2019; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Thus, advocacy organisations can strategically use images as a way to simplify a complicated humanitarian situation to influence the public's perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards their cause (Gillespie et al., 2010; O'Loughlin, 2011; Yarchi, 2016). A key strategy of international NGOs and activist groups is the circulation of visual content that depicts the suffering of Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Sharing images opens up opportunities through which international audiences can identify, empathise and build solidarity with the Palestinian people. From the early days of international NGOs operating in the OPT, images that show the effects, sometimes fatal, of physical violence on Palestinian bodies have been strategically and deliberately targeted at international audiences (Allen, 2009). Furthermore, new technology has created opportunities for Palestinians themselves to bear witness to their own oppression and share this to international audiences without the need for mediation. For Palestinians, there is a sense of "moral and political imperative to bear witness" to occupation and Israeli violence (Faulkner, 2018, p.87). At the same time, Mirzoeff (2006) argues that Palestinian testimonies are also driven by a "demand imposed on Palestinians from both human rights NGOs and the global media to provide visual proof and eyewitness accounts of their suffering and hardship" (p. 30).

Images that show experiences of suffering can evoke sympathy, empathy, sadness and anger (Hurtado-Parrado et al., 2020; Iyer et al., 2014; Shoshani & Slone, 2008), and these emotions may lead to people taking action to try to change the conditions that contributed to the oppression, injustice and suffering. Therefore, images can be considered as a tool for political messaging. Within conflicts, images can be used to appeal to emotion rather than intellectual reasoning, to control public perception and legitimise or delegitimise political violence (Caverley & Krupnikov, 2017; Williams, 2003). While the interpretation of images is ultimately determined by the viewer, the meaning making process is influenced by many decisions and

factors that occurred before the image reaches the viewer, this includes the choices made by the photographer, the production of the image and the way it is presented.

The decisions made by the photographer, both intentional and inadvertently, impact how the viewer makes sense of the image (Bleiker, 2018). The camera angle, the distance the subject is from the lens, whether they are looking into the camera and whether their emotional expressions are captured are all factors that contribute to promoting or reducing closeness between the subject of the image and the viewer. The people depicted in the image can affect their impact. When an image presents a specific, identified individual, viewers are more likely to respond emotionally, according to the "identifiable victim effect", first proposed by Schelling (1968) (see also Lee & Feeley, 2016; Slovic, 2010). Furthermore, some victims are more likely to have an impact than others. Images of children, for example, as victims are perhaps one of the most powerful types of images for promoting strong emotional reactions in the audience as children being the most vulnerable members of society and often lacking political agency, especially when depicted in still as opposed to moving images (Durham, 2018). Certain images of children come to represent conflicts or humanitarian crises, for example, the iconic image of Phan Thi Kim Phuc running from a napalm attack in 1972 became a symbol of the horror of the Vietnam war and communicated the human cost of the war to the American public, arguably in a way that text narratives could not (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003).

The individual characteristics of the viewer also affect how they construct meaning of an image. This includes individual factors such as race, class, age and gender as well as their pre-existing beliefs and knowledge, and social and cultural norms and values (Bleiker, 2018; Mendelson, 2015). Furthermore, it is well established that the way that the image is presented may have an effect on the ways that images are made sense of, for example, text that accompanies images can act as a tool that directs the viewer to interpret them in a certain way (Aiello, 2006; Ownby, 2021). As a result of all of these factors, the same image can be understood in different ways by different viewers, which means that there can be debates over the 'truth'. In this way, an image represents more than only that which is depicted in the shot itself (Hansen & Machin, 2013, p.154).

As images of suffering and oppression document and capture something that has occurred, they encourage the viewer to not just look at it, but to engage critically and ethically about the suffering that is depicted (Linfield, 2013). The viewer engages in moral spectatorship when confronted by an image of distant suffering (Boltanski, 1999) whether this is through the mainstream media or social media. Images that present visual evidence of the suffering of distant victims can evoke a strong emotional reaction in those who were not there to witness it in person but are exposed to this through photography. Such images can promote sympathy with the victims and empathy which can lead to solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2006; Gaber, 2007; Nikunen, 2018). Solidarity emerges from negative emotions that come from seeing the injustice of others' suffering (Tava, 2021) and is one of the key driving forces of a social movement that brings people together and guides collective action (McDonald, 2002). It is political solidarity that brings people together to take action for a cause or issue that does not

directly impact them (Subašić et al., 2008). Images evoke “discourses of shared emotions, highlighting the collective dimension of affective meaning making” (Nikunen, 2016, p.22). Individual emotional reactions to images can become collective emotions, which are in themselves inherently political (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2014). These collective, or shared emotions can create social bonds and connections between people, build communities that go beyond geographical borders, and transnational solidarity (Fattah & Fierke, 2009; Schlag, 2018) and this is what Sara Ahmed (2004; 2013) calls the affective economy. She argues that the process of aligning individual emotions to a group creates and maintains communities and relationships between people who are not necessarily in the same physical proximity to each other (Ahmed, 2004).

In 2015 the now-iconic image of three-year-old Alan Kurdi lying face down on a Turkish beach, having drowned crossing the sea as a refugee, became a widely shared symbol of the human cost of the Syrian refugee crisis and promoted solidarity with Syrian refugees, particularly in European countries (Mortensen & Trenz, 2016; Prøitz, 2018; Thomas et al., 2018). Social media users engaged in moral spectatorship of this image in three ways, according to Mortensen and Trenz (2016) who studied responses to the image on Reddit discussion forums, as emotional, critical or reflective observers and commenters. The authors concluded that the discussions were evidence of a transnational public sphere in which emotions are shared and responsibility is assigned, helping to build communities of otherwise unconnected users.

2.4 Affordances of Social Media for Activism

Social media has certainly provided opportunities for both local and international Palestinian activism (Aouragh, 2008; Etling et al., 2010; Lynch, 2007) as it has done for other forms of activism and social movements. Since its launch in the early 2000s, social media has emerged as an important site for activism where social movements such as the Palestinian solidarity movement operate. A number of high-profile social movements such as the 2010 uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, Spain’s Indignados movement in 2011, and the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011, were considered among the first instances of digitally mediated collective action, as social media platforms were used by participants to share information, organise and mobilise. These movements opened up opportunities for a new body of scholarly work on digital activism (also referred to as online activism, social media activism and hashtag activism although digital activism “describes best the current language discourse around the new technologies.” (Özkula, 2021, p.65)). A general definition of digital activism is the “political participation, activities and protests organized in digital networks” (Karatzogianni, 2015, p.1). These activities may include advocacy, recruitment, organisation, direct action and documentation (Özkula, 2021).

2.4.1 Defining Social Media and Affordances

According to Hootsuite and We Are Social (2022), there were 4.6 billion people using social media in 2022, a number that continues to rise each year. As a general definition, social media

can be considered as software centred around user-generated content that enables people to gather, communicate and share information (boyd, 2007; van Dijck, 2013). What separates social media from other forms of digitally mediated communication is the ability to create a user profile, connect to other users and share content with these contacts (boyd & Ellison, 2007). These functions, and the affordances that they offer, provide opportunities for activists to further their cause. Affordances refer to the actual and perceived properties of something that influence how it is used (Gibson, 1979, as cited in Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Haider, 2016; Jones, 2003). Affordances are different across different social media platforms, as each platform has its own set of logics, functions and style; this is what Gibbs et al. (2015) call the platform vernacular. Although some of these affordances are not limited to one platform, for example, the hashtag is a common function across multiple different platforms, the platform vernacular is uniquely shaped by the design of the platform as well as the ways it is used. This relationship between the platform and the user is key to understanding affordances as it is not just the technology but the users' practices that determine the potential outcomes (J. L. Davis & Chouinard, 2016; Evans et al., 2017). By considering the affordances of social media platforms, this provides a useful structure for analysing the ways in which social media can be used (Bucher & Helmond, 2017), in this case by Palestinian solidarity organisations and the opportunities and limitations of social media for Palestinian activism.

In this study, the focus was on three social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram which represent three of the most popular platforms worldwide. Facebook continues to be the most popular social media platform globally, with around 2.79 billion monthly active users worldwide at the start of 2022 (Meta Platforms, 2022). Facebook is a social networking platform based around making mutual connections between users and sharing content. Instagram, which is owned by Meta (the rebranding of Facebook), has around 1.3 billion worldwide users (Insider Intelligence, 2022) and is a photo and video sharing application that enables users to create a profile, follow other users and post photo and video content. Finally, Twitter has around 436 million active monthly users (We Are Social, 2022), and is a microblogging platform in which users connect with other users and post short posts (tweets).

2.4.2 A Short History of Social Media Activism

When social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter launched and became popularised in the early 2000s, there was initially optimism about how these platforms could be tools for liberation that empower citizens to resist and mobilise against oppressive governments, as a consequence of the transformative potential to enable connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) and rapid mass communication (Bennett, 2003; Shirky, 2008; Treré, 2015; van Dijck, 2013b). Researchers pointed to the ways that social media platforms were part of collective action during the 2010 uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt (Armstrong, 2015; Frangonikolopoulos, 2012; Tudoroiu, 2014), Spain's Indignados movement in 2011 (Anduiza et al., 2014), the Occupy Wall Street movement (Gerbaudo, 2017; Theocharis et al., 2015), among others, as evidence of the mobilising potential of social media.

Some of the key arguments that have been presented in support of the mobilising potential of social media are that these platforms have transformed activist communication, particularly the speed and ease of content creation and distribution, afforded new opportunities for closing the distance between distant publics and added new practices to the repertoire of contention that activists have at their disposal. However, digital media critics argued for a more critical perspective of social media activism; that the weak social ties that are intrinsic to social media communication are insufficient for motivating people to take action that requires risk (Gladwell, 2011). Furthermore, others argued that the role of social media in social movements such as the Arab Spring has been over-emphasised and analysis failed to take into account the structural, social and cultural context in which these social movements occur. At the same time, the use of social media poses risks and challenges for activists, from state surveillance and censorship to misinformation, which can undermine democracy and entrench authoritarian control (Morozov, 2012; Morozov, 2009). The same platforms that are adopted by activists are also at the disposal of authoritarian governments seeking to shut these movements down (Kargar & Rauchfleisch, 2019; K. E. Pearce, 2015). Such technologically deterministic views (both positive and negative) arguably overestimate the role of social media in society (Fuchs, 2012, 2013b; Özkula, 2021a) and have now given way to a more critical understanding of the relationship between social media and society in which the effects of technology are both enabling and constraining social movements and activism.

Much social media research on activism now considers how the affordances of platforms are leveraged by activists as part of their repertoire of contention which involves both offline and online strategies. Research has shown how the affordances of social media platforms can enable self-expression and mobilisation for a cause (Hautea et al., 2021; Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019; Thorson et al., 2016; Xiong et al., 2019) through facilitating information sharing, awareness raising, organisation for offline action, community building and lobbying decision makers. Recent research that looked at the motivations and uses of social media by advocacy organisations identified four key uses of social media for these groups, they were: networked information and awareness, networked community, networked mobilisation, and networked lobbying (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020). Different platforms and their specific affordances offer different opportunities for each of these, for example, the authors argue that Facebook can be used for the first three purposes, while Twitter is more effective for networked lobbying in which activists directly engage publicly with decision makers.

2.4.3 The Affordance of Visibility

One of the main affordances of social media platforms is visibility (boyd, 2020; Treem & Leonardi, 2013). The affordance of visibility refers to how information can be easily found on platforms by other users and the ability to distribute information rapidly on a large scale is essential for a social movement to gain support (Castells, 2008; Thompson, 2005). Activists can seek to leverage the affordances of social media platforms to maximise the visibility of their cause, with certain features of platforms enhancing visibility. The hashtag function, for instance, is a

means of enhancing visibility by making posts searchable (Small, 2011) while the ability to share/retweet posts enable information to be circulated rapidly within networks (Wang et al., 2016; Wang & Zhou, 2021; Weeks et al., 2017).

For Palestinian activists and their supporters, one of the main purposes of using social media platforms is to promote visibility of the Palestinian cause and Israeli occupation by producing and sharing information to keep international audiences informed about the situation and raise awareness (Guo & Saxton, 2018; Li & Prasad, 2018; Najjar, 2010; Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014). Social media facilitates communication and collaboration across geographical borders which means that activists in Palestine are able to work with solidarity activists around the world for shared goals such as raising awareness and influencing public perception (Li & Prasad, 2018; Nashif & Fatafta, 2017). This is consistent with research of other social movements which has shown how social media platforms have been used for information sharing and raising awareness of a cause in a range of different contexts, for example during the Egyptian and Tunisian protests (Khamis et al., 2012; Khamis & Vaughn, 2012; Lynch, 2011), the Gezi Park protests in Turkey (Ogan & Varol, 2017) and the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan (Tsatsou, 2018). In these cases, social media was found to be used to share information locally and globally, to increase visibility of the movement and to push social or political issues to the forefront of public awareness.

A number of studies have shown how advocacy organisations use social media for information sharing purposes, for example Guo & Saxton (2014) found that most messages posted by organisations on Twitter were informational in that they contained information about the group's activities, news and facts about their cause and links to further information. This finding was consistent with other studies on the use of social media by advocacy groups (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009; Jansen et al., 2009; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). It also reflects findings from research carried out by Abu-Ayyash (2015) on the use of Twitter by UK-based Palestinian solidarity organisations during the 2014 assault on Gaza. The primary use of Twitter by these organisations was to share information with their online audience, in particular sharing stories and experiences of Gazans. At the same time, research has also shown that advocacy organisations are not using social media as effectively as they could and are failing to reach and engage with young people, with most young people who are politically involved engaging with social media content outside of these formal organisations (Elliott & Earl, 2018).

2.4.3.1 Hashtags Enhance Visibility

Hashtags afford opportunities to increase visibility of a cause because, by adding a hashtag to a post, it becomes searchable (Small, 2011). The hashtag function, available on multiple social media platforms, is a searchable tag consisting of the hash (#) symbol and a word or short phrase. The function was proposed for Twitter in 2007 by Chris Messina as a way for "improving contextualization, content filtering and exploratory serendipity within Twitter" (Messina, as cited in Bruns & Burgess, 2011, p.2). This allows for informal channels of

communication to develop around topics rather than needing people to be a part of a formal group. Hashtags create a shorthand that becomes easy to recognise and recalls the broader concerns of a social movement. Within a word or short phrase, a schema is created that recalls experiences and claims, past and present and packages it into an easily reproducible form (Jackson et al., 2020, p.199). These hashtags can be used by other social media users to create a trending topic, which draws attention to the cause in a wider audience of social media users (Recuero & Araújo, 2012).

One of the first examples of hashtags being used to coordinate information around an issue was during the 2007 San Diego wildfires where key hashtags such as #SanDiegoFire were used to manage information and provide updates (Jung et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2008). In the years following this, the use of hashtags became widespread, and the function was integrated into other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Through hashtags being used by otherwise unconnected users to discuss an issue or event, ad hoc publics emerge around hashtags as and when needed, affording opportunities to coordinate discussion with large numbers of people who may not be connected in any other way (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). These ad hoc publics are what Bruns and Burgess (2015) define as "hashtag publics" (p.14). For activism, hashtags can be used to bring people together around a social or political issue. Hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter, #BringBackOurGirls, #StopGamerGate, and #OccupyWallStreet all have been used to communicate action and objections that can be used by social media users to express agreement with the cause, raise awareness and share information.

Hashtag activism is defined as the strategic use of hashtags to make "political contentions about identity politics that advocate for social change, identity redefinition, and political inclusion" (Jackson et al., 2020, p.xxviii). Hashtag activism occurs when a large number of social media posts with a shared hashtag that makes a certain social or political claim are posted by individual users who are connected through a common hashtag (Yang, 2016). The subsequent accumulation of content with a common theme creates a strong shared narrative which can be powerful for driving a social movement forward. #BlackLivesMatter, for example, recalls a whole history of racial bias and police brutality that has created the conditions for the necessity of asserting the statement Black lives matter. In this way, hashtags can be semiotic tools to provide context as framing devices to posts. They can help the audience to understand how to make sense of a post and serve as a guide to interpretation, helping to close the contextual distance that exists between the person who posts the content and the viewer of it (Scott, 2015). Therefore, hashtags can be quick guides to understanding the meaning behind a post and alleviate the inevitable difficulty of understanding the context on social media when the person who posts is distanced from their audience.

Within the context of the Palestinian solidarity movement, there have been relatively few studies that have looked at prominent hashtags used by activists on social media, with a few notable exceptions. Siapera (2014) carried out research into #Palestine tweets between 15 and 20 March 2011 and found that this hashtag was utilised by a range of different users, from

news organisations to activists and individuals, and that the tweets were informational (providing news and updates or organising activist events) or supportive in nature. It can, however, be hard to draw conclusions from this slice of Twitter activity and the findings are limited by the short period of time of data collection. A similar finding, however, emerged from a study carried out by Siapera et al. (2015) which showed how the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack was used during Operation Protective Edge which saw Gaza under fire by Israeli military operations in July and August 2014. Of all of the tweets that had this hashtag, only a small proportion of these were original tweets, with the majority being retweets. Analysis of the tweets themselves found that most were informational and supportive, confirming the findings of the previous study. Further supporting these results, analysis of #GazaUnderAttack on Twitter showed how the phrase was used to express the victimhood of Palestinian people and was used in informational, supportive and personal tweets by social media users who came together around a shared belief and identification with the victimhood of Palestinians (Hassan & Elaiza, 2016). While these studies provide some insight into the hashtags that are used by Palestinians and their supporters on social media, there is no research to date that has looked at how hashtags can be utilised by Palestinian advocacy organisations to contribute to online discussions and publicise their content to an audience beyond their immediate supporters.

2.4.3.2 Making Alternative Narratives Visible

One of the ways that social media has changed activist communication is that advocacy organisations can share information directly with the public without the need for mainstream media coverage (Weeks et al., 2017). Traditionally, the mainstream media would determine which issues the public and political elite prioritise and respond to, in what is known as agenda setting (Langer & Gruber, 2021; van Aelst & Walgrave, 2016). However, the internet and social media platforms have arguably disrupted the dominance of mainstream media as an information source and led to the emergence of the hybrid media system. This is defined as the dynamic interaction between older and newer media logic (Chadwick, 2017).

In the hybrid media system, which characterises the contemporary political communication environment, there are many dynamic flows of information coming from both old and newer media sources, both elite and non-elite actors (Chadwick, 2017; Treré, 2018). Crucially, in this system, there is no single source of information but rather multiple streams of information that provide many different accounts and narratives (Powers, 2016; Wright, 2015). Social media platforms offer alternative pathways to attention, in particular new peer-to-peer pathways which enable citizens to share information with others without the need to be mediated through mainstream media (Tufekci, 2013). Social media, therefore, can be used by activists to directly distribute information about their cause, which can spread rapidly through social networks. This offers opportunities for advocacy organisations to present their own content, giving them greater control over their image (Pajnik, 2015). Furthermore, social media can be used to present and amplify marginalised voices that may be overlooked in mainstream media reporting and offer alternative points of view and perspectives (Guo & Saxton, 2018; Lovejoy &

Saxton, 2012; Tufekci, 2013), although not all voices are amplified or listened to on social media.

This ability to present alternative narratives and perspectives can be particularly useful for Palestinian activists who seek to challenge Western mainstream media pro-Israeli bias. It has been established that Western media reporting on Israel and Palestine tends to be biased towards the Israeli framing of events, for example, by focusing on Israeli narratives of self defence and security, while ignoring the context of settler-colonial occupation (Saba, 2021). This pro-Israeli bias has been found in US media (Ackerman, 2001; Siddiqui & Zaheer, 2018; Wilkins, 2002) and UK media (Philo & Berry, 2011, 2004; Richardson & Barkho, 2009). In their study of reporting on Palestine in US newspapers, Siddiqui and Zaheer (2018) showed how Israeli sources were quoted much more often than Palestinian ones. They also showed how the word "occupation" has decreased between 1967 and 2017, which, the authors argued, contributed to the normalisation of the Israeli occupation in international discourse. Similarly, Philo and Berry (2011) found that the UK's British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reporting tended to frame discussions in terms of a cycle of violence, as opposed to occupation, and Richardson and Barkho (2009) showed how BBC reporting avoided terms like "Zionism" and "colonialism". Palestinian activists may directly challenge this mainstream media bias, for example, in a study of UK and Irish solidarity groups' use of Twitter during the 2014 military assault on Gaza, Abu-Ayyash (2015) found that posts explicitly criticised the mainstream media for its coverage of the events and portrayals of Palestinians. Similarly, during the 2021 Sheikh Jarrah protests and assault on Gaza, the mainstream media was heavily criticised by activists on social media in particular for the use of language such as "clashes" which reinforced the cycle of violence narrative, and the different ways that Israeli and Palestinian deaths were reported (Saba, 2021).

While social media may challenge the dominance of mainstream media and offer opportunities for alternative information sources, legacy media remains an important source of information for the general public. Langer and Gruber (2021) found that although both old and new media played a role in providing multiple paths of attention with information about the 2018 Windrush scandal in the UK, it was the mainstream media that was critical for initiating awareness of and sustaining attention on the issue. For a social movement to have a significant impact on public opinion, there remains a need for mainstream media approval and circulation of their content to create visibility (Bakir, 2010; Matheson & Allan, 2009; Reilly, 2020). However, there is evidence that traditional media is influenced by content on social media. In this way, activists are able to shape a conversation through the distribution of content on social media, which then gets picked up by mainstream media (Zeitsoff, 2017). For example, in the case of the Black Lives Matter movement, Freelon et al. (2017) found that tweets related to the Black Lives Matter movement predicted mainstream media coverage of the movement and issues of police brutality and racism, suggesting that agenda setting could be influenced by activist social media use.

Informal learning may take place through the sharing of information on social media. Twitter in particular has been identified as a space for informal, unplanned participatory learning in the contexts of Occupy Wall Street, BLM and LGBTQ activism (Fox & Ralston, 2016; Freelon et al., 2017; Gleason, 2013), although this is not always the case (Ashwell & Reilly, 2022). In the case of BLM, Freelon et al. (2017) showed how Twitter and #BlackLivesMatter was used to facilitate large scale informal learning about racialised police brutality amongst conservatives who previously had not acknowledged that police killings were unjust. There was a shift in attitudes within conservatives who came to accept that Eric Garner and Walter Scott may have been killed unjustly based upon analysis of the video footage of the men's deaths. Many did not, however, agree with wider claims of structural racism and White Supremacy which were core to the BLM movement.

Furthermore, activists can use social media to not just share information but to actively shape the discourse around an issue. They may strategically frame information in a certain way to build support for their cause and to influence public opinion, with the intention of mobilising people to take action. The #MeToo movement, which was largely organised through social media, shifted the public consciousness of the issue of sexual harassment from an individual issue to a structural issue (Mendes et al., 2018), while the Black Lives Matter movement shaped public discussions around race and police brutality in the US and showed how the use of language around such issues mattered (Carney, 2016). In the case of Palestine, advocacy groups often deliberately use language such as colonisation, occupation, apartheid and ethnic cleansing on informational social media posts to shape the narrative and frame Israel as a colonising, occupying force (Abu-Ayyash, 2015). They also may frame information in a way that focuses on human rights and humanitarian narratives, a decision which may appeal to the general public who may find it easier to accept, however risks depoliticising Palestinian advocacy by removing or playing down the context of settler-colonialism and impacting the ways in which the public understands the issue (Abu-Ayyash, 2015, p.15).

2.4.4 The Development of Affective Publics

The online communities that emerge on social media from the interaction between the technology, its affordances and the users are called "networked publics" (boyd, 2010, p.39). According to boyd (2009; 2010), networked publics are distinct from other, offline and unmediated publics in four ways: persistence, searchability, replicability and invisible audiences. First, interactions between social media users are persistent in that they are recorded, and this means that conversations can be asynchronous rather than in real time. Second, content is searchable, third, it is replicable as content is copied by users over and over again, and finally, content is shared to an "invisible audience" as the creator cannot know for sure who will see and engage with their content. These four features that define networked publics shape the ways in which people engage and interact on social media platforms. Networked publics on social media can be connected and mobilised through "mediated feelings of connectedness" based upon shared sentiments, emotions and affect that spread

across networks allowing for so called “affective publics” to develop (Papacharissi, 2015, p.5). Affective publics can be defined as “networked publics that are mobilized and connected, identified, and potentially disconnected through expressions of sentiment” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 311). The theory of affective publics refined the concept of networked public, and while it was based upon studies of the revolutions in the MENA region in the early 2010s, it remains a useful framework for examining the affective potential of social media and has been extended to examinations of the role of the digital infrastructure of social media platforms in not only facilitating but producing viral campaigns (Dawson, 2020; Hautea et al., 2021; Ural, 2021).

The emotional affordances of social media refer to the capabilities of the platforms to both amplify and restrict emotions in the interaction between the technology and the user (Bareither, 2019). The circulation of content on social media can increase the emotional intensity of images or narratives being shared. The repetition of emotive expressions across social networks can facilitate connections and support the formation of online communities even when social media users are not in close physical proximity to each other (Döveling et al., 2018; Ferrara & Yang, 2015; Papailias, 2016). Users share emotional cues and responses which support community formation and user alignment through the emotional identification with these communities. This what Döveling et al. (2018, p.2) call digital affect cultures which are characterised by emotional alignment that supports a sense of belonging. People can come together in response to highly emotive events, to share solidarity and compassion for those affected, for example in the aftermath of terrorist attacks (Döveling et al., 2018; Finseraas & Listhaug, 2013).

Shared emotions and affective connections between people are important parts of social movements, as it can be the emotional response to injustices that build solidarity and support for a cause (Benski et al., 2013). Psychological research has shown how empathy, anger, moral outrage and efficacy (the belief in the ability to bring about change) are predictors of solidarity-based action (Thomas & McGarty, 2009; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Empathy, which is defined as seeing other peoples’ perspectives, specifically feeling concerned for their wellbeing, has been associated with pro-social and humanitarian behaviour, while anger (specifically moral outrage that is directed at the systems and structures of injustice) has been linked to collective action for social and political justice and change (Batson et al., 2007; Fernando et al., 2014; Pagano & Huo, 2007; Selvanathan et al., 2020). Within the context of solidarity-based activism for Palestinians, moral outrage and sympathy have both been found to be motivators of collective action (Atshan & Moore, 2014; Saab et al., 2015; Zia, 2020), although such responses do not often lead to action.

2.4.4.1 Hashtags Contribute to Affective publics

Hashtags may act as the means by which affective publics (as discussed in the previous section) can assemble and can contribute to the stream of information around an issue or movement (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011; Bruns et al., 2016; Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Papacharissi, 2013; Zulli & Zulli, 2020). A hashtag can be used by dispersed individuals to share their own

content that reflects their own stories and experiences of an issue. These personalised stories are connected through shared symbols and hashtags, creating an online stream of activity that shapes discourse, for example, the affective publics that formed on Twitter around the Black Lives Matter movement were driven by personal expressions, with hashtags such as #IfTheyGunnedMeDown and #ICantBreathe framing individual posts (Blevins et al., 2019). During social movements, these affective publics that emerge around hashtags can sustain a movement and create an online parallel to that which is happening on the ground. For example, analysis of tweets using the hashtag #egypt during the resignation of President Mubarak during the Egyptian revolution of 2011 identified that most tweets were individual retellings of the news along with personal affective responses and this stream of tweets was able to maintain momentum even when little was happening offline (Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

For digital activism, affective publics can emerge from individual personal stories around a common issue by using shared symbols and hashtags, as was shown in Hautea et al. (2021)'s study of climate activism on TikTok. Analysis of TikTok videos showed how content was posted by non-expert users, particularly young people, that shared affective messages raising awareness of climate change and building momentum that could become offline activism (p.12). In her research on the use of hashtag #Palestine, Siapera (2014) showed how tweets were often highly emotive and expressed the affective dimension of events, echoing findings from studies of #egypt (Papacharissi, 2016; Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Similarly, there was an affective dimension to the tweets posted with #GazaUnderAttack with the main sentiments being sadness, anger and pride (Hassan & Elaiza, 2016; Siapera et al., 2015).

Affective publics have potential to disrupt "dominant political narratives by presenting underrepresented viewpoints" (Papacharissi, 2016, p.19). This is because the focus is on individuals telling their own stories in their own way, linking them together with shared visual symbols, sounds or hashtags and this means that the conversation around an issue shifts from factual to where the meaning of the event is internalised, as can be seen with the content shared with the hashtags #IfTheyGunnedMeDown and #ICantBreathe (Blevins et al., 2019). The affordances of the platforms to facilitate affective storytelling enables new ways of sharing information where news stories are not just factual but incorporate personal and emotional components. These stories can maintain a social movement's presence online by creating a steady stream of individual content (Papacharissi, 2016). Affective attachments between social media users can produce a sense of community which may lead to the formation of actual communities that can be mobilised for a cause. However, they may instead cause social media users to remain in a state of "engaged passivity" (Papacharissi, 2015, p.12), where they are spectators to the issue rather than mobilised to take action (Dean, 2010). While affective publics may not actually be mobilised for collective action, they can disrupt mainstream narratives through individualised storytelling and also maintain a sense of continuity of a movement online, even when there is little action, creating what (Papacharissi, 2016, p.317) called an "online home" for a movement.

2.4.4.2 Non-Linguistic Expression of Affect

Social media also supports the expression of affect through non-linguistic forms of communication, including images, GIFS, stickers and emojis (Herring & Dainas, 2017). Emojis in particular, are a non-verbal form of communication of emotion through resemblance to objects and facial expressions and represent the most frequent form of non-verbal communication online, for example, around half of Instagram posts contain emojis (Dimson, 2015). Within written comments, emojis are used intentionally for certain communicative purposes (Döring & Pöschl, 2009). While typically used to express emotional responses (Crystal, 2006), they may also serve other functions including tone modification, riffing, action and narrative sequence (Herring & Dainas, 2017, p.2185). During times of crisis, emojis can be used to express sympathy and solidarity with those affected, for example during the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, emojis such as the prayer hands, faces showing sadness, hearts, and the French flag were used in Facebook posts (Duncombe, 2020; Highfield & Leaver, 2016; Santhanam et al., 2018). Flags can be used to show solidarity with people from a distance, for example in the Paris terrorist attack, the French flag was the most common emoji used to express support for those impacted (Santhanam et al., 2018). Meanwhile, in the context of expressing support with Palestinians, the Palestinian flag emoji was found to be used to visually express solidarity on TikTok during the Sheikh Jarrah crisis of 2021 (Abbas et al., 2022).

2.4.5 Networked Mobilisation

Networked publics that emerge on social media can be mobilised to take action for a cause in what Figenschou and Fredheim (2020) call networked mobilisation. The affordances of social media offer opportunities but also challenges for mobilisation and political participation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Tufekci, 2017) and social media's role in mobilisation has been widely debated, with a number of key meta-analyses finding an overall positive relationship between the use of the internet and social media and offline political participation such as protest (Boulianne, 2009, 2015; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Piatak & Mikkelsen, 2021). Furthermore, high profile social movements have been linked to social media, including the so-called Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter, in which social media was used alongside offline tactics to mobilise and maintain participation in the movement (Shirky, 2008; Soriano, 2013).

The affordances of social media make platforms well suited for the creation of networked and affective publics which bring together dispersed people around a shared cause who can then be mobilised in the form of offline action (Gerbaudo & Treré, 2015). This is what Gerbaudo (2021) calls the social funnel, a two-step process by which crowds form online around a common interest and then make the shift to offline advocacy. This offline advocacy action can be organised and initiated by advocacy organisations and is based upon the repertoires that they have at their disposal, and beliefs about what forms of action are most effective. Some of the ways that advocacy organisations use social media to call people to take action include encouraging users to share their content to spread awareness (Seelig et al., 2019), create their

own content to join a conversation (Gal et al., 2016) and signing petitions (Carlson, 2019; Chadwick & Dennis, 2017; Strange, 2011). For Palestinian organisations, activists have been found to use their social media accounts to encourage participation in offline demonstrations and solidarity events and encourage the boycott of Israeli products and companies associated with Israeli occupation through the framework of the BDS movement (Abu-Ayyash, 2015; Hitchcock, 2016; Monshipouri et al., 2018).

While there is potential for social media platforms to encourage collective action for a cause, some researchers have argued that it instead promotes slacktivism which is defined as a form of participation that encourages small, low-cost token acts of support for a cause such as liking or sharing a post while not taking more meaningful action (Morozov, 2012; Morozov, 2009). This may be detrimental to other forms of activism as low-cost online actions may lead to citizens feeling as though they have contributed to the cause (Lee & Hsieh, 2013). Furthermore, research has shown how social media users often engage in so-called performative activism on social media, which is more about the appearance of caring about a cause rather than taking the necessary actions to learn about an issue (Gleeson & Turner, 2019; Kalina, 2020). Wellman (2022) points out an example of performative allyship in which social media users posted black squares on Instagram with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter to show support for the Black Lives Matter movement. This action was criticised for flooding the hashtag with these black squares and making it difficult to find information (which was one of the key uses of the hashtag by activists). Ultimately, Wellman (p.2) argues that this campaign was not helpful as an act of solidarity. In contrast to these forms of performative solidarity, within the Palestinian movement, a number of concrete ways of supporting the cause have been presented including the BDS campaign (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009). The slacktivism critique has, however, been defended, as the small acts of engagement have been found to promote future action for the cause (Bode, 2017; Foster et al., 2019). Tufekci (2012) argued that clicktivism promotes participation and symbolic action which can be useful for a social movement in terms of visibility and publicity if not offline action.

2.4.6 Digital Surveillance and Censorship

While activists may be able to make use of the affordances of social media for resisting authoritarian regimes and power structures, these affordances can also be used by these regimes for surveillance, control and suppression of political participation (Morozov, 2012; Pearce, 2015). Therefore, social media activism risks making activists more vulnerable to state surveillance. For Palestinian activism, internet use is characterised by Israeli surveillance and control (Aouragh, 2011). Israel carries out digital surveillance of Palestinians and activists (Lentin, 2017; Tawil-Souri, 2012) and Palestinians have been arrested by Israeli forces on the basis of their social media content (Khalaf et al., 2017; Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014). Palestinians are aware of this surveillance, and it affects the content that they post about Israel and Palestine (de Vries & Majlaton, 2021).

The relationship between social media corporations, particularly Meta (which owns Facebook and Instagram) and Israel have been criticised by activists. There are claims that Facebook's moderation process is biased in favour of Israel, and activists and journalists in Palestine have found their content censored and removed (Aouragh, 2016; Nashif & Fatafta, 2017). According to Sa'di (2021), there are two main causes of the restriction of Palestinian social media use. The first of which is the Cyber Unit, a legal framework designed to remove anti-Israel content from platforms and the second is the recruitment of Israeli officers to positions in social media companies. In 2015, Israel established the Cyber Unit with the purpose of seeking out and flagging content that was critical of Israel, with most of the content identified being removed by Facebook and Israel has developed legal frameworks to prosecute those who share anti-Israel content. Together these factors disadvantage Palestinians and Palestinian activism on social media platforms. During the Sheikh Jarrah protests in 2021, Palestinian activists claimed that their content was limited in its reach and a large quantity of pro-Palestinian content was removed, suggesting that social media platforms were restricting this type of content (Almehdar, 2021). This was initially dismissed as a technical error by the representatives of the platforms, claims which were questionable when situated within the context of mounting evidence of biased policies of social media platforms (Alimardani & Elswah, 2021).

It is not just the Palestinians themselves but also international solidarity activists that are at risk of surveillance and negative consequences for their online activism. In the US, students engaged in pro-Palestinian activism have been monitored and targeted (Abraham, 2014; Salaita, 2015). For example, Steven Salaita was removed from his position at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as a result of tweets criticising Israel during the 2014 Gaza attack (Hitchcock, 2016). Furthermore, the issue of content moderation has been identified more generally as an issue for other activists outside of the context of Palestinian activism. In 2017, YouTube's content moderation algorithm automatically removed many channels and thousands of videos that were used by Syrian activists to document and share human rights abuses during the Syrian war, raising questions about the extent to which commercial platforms could be spaces for activism (Alimardani & Elswah, 2021; Jaloud et al., 2019).

Activists must be aware that their use of corporate platforms such as Facebook and YouTube come with risks. Visibility on social media is constrained by the technical design of the platform and commercial interests of the corporation behind it. Algorithms are increasingly utilised, not only for content moderation purposes, but also for determining what content is seen, and what is not (Roberts, 2019). Etter and Albu (2021) show how algorithms have introduced new constraints for organising social movements, namely, that they can create an overload of information by flooding users' feeds with content and make it difficult to find the information they need, secondly, that they can cause the audience to miss relevant information if it is not deemed to be trending and finally, the risk of disinformation, particularly due to bots that can hijack a hashtag and obscure the original meaning. Bots have been identified to be active on Twitter in the Syrian conflict (Abokhodair et al., 2015), natural disasters (Khaund et al., 2018) and on the Black Lives Matter hashtag (Freelon et al., 2020). Meanwhile, business models of the

platforms may clash with activist goals, which can mean that content can be taken down if it is deemed as against the interests of the corporations (West, 2017; Youmans & York, 2012).

While technology can be used by activists to counter and challenge power structures, the same technology is ultimately embedded in and reflects existing social structures of exploitation, capitalism and oppression (Büchi & Hargittai, 2022; W. Chen & Wellman, 2007; Fuchs, 2013a). This is something that activists must acknowledge and contend with when adopting social media tactics as part of their repertoire. After all, it is the same technology that activists use for liberation purposes that are used by authorities for digital surveillance, propaganda and repression from above (Stein, 2012). Despite knowledge of extensive data surveillance and monitoring, there is increasingly a sense of surveillance realism as people accept their data being collected and used as part of the social order (Dencik, 2019; Dencik & Cable, 2017; Reyes, 2020).

2.5 Affective Solidarity through Images on Social Media

2.5.1 The Amplification of Affective Solidarity

Building upon the work by Boltanski (1999), researchers such as Chouliaraki, (2006), Mortensen and Trenz, (2016) and Silverstone (2006) have shown how social media has changed moral spectatorship, for example due to its open and fluid nature that enables the formation of ad hoc, affective publics around shared concerns for an issue or cause. Social media offers an alternative space for distant witnessing of suffering than MSM and this can change how the audience react and respond to such images. Mortensen and Trenz (2016) identify four key differences between social media and MSM witnessing. First, the audience is confronted by the image in a more immediate way on social media due to the personal nature of communication, second, that social media is participatory and there is a sense of requiring the viewer to respond publicly and contribute to the collective interpretative work that makes sense of the image, and third, that responses are public and this means that there is a performative aspect of observing, in that other users can see how the viewer responds. Finally, the authors argue, the possibility of taking action to deal with the conditions that caused suffering becomes more real on social media as users engage and encourage others to engage in connective action, united by their shared concern.

Images play an important role in the development of affective publics on social media platforms. The circulation of images depicting suffering and violence, and individual users' responses to these through liking, sharing and commenting, circulates collective affect (van Dijck, 2013a). Studies have shown how these collective emotional responses to images of suffering are shared through comments on social media platforms. For example, in an analysis of YouTube videos that showed scenes of the Syrian war in 2015-2016 and their corresponding comments posted by individual users, Chatterje-Doody and Crilley (2019) and Crilley and Chatterje-Doody (2020) found that the majority of responses to the videos were emotional expressions rather than neutral comments, with social media users expressing emotional

investment in the conflict, in particular, their beliefs about the legitimacy of the courses of action taken by the major actors. Furthermore, these responses were found to be anchored in the ways that the identities of those actors were portrayed visually (2019, p.175). This is what Solomon (2014) calls affective investment, which he defined as “anchoring forces that bind subjects to their identities and particular kinds of discourses” (p.729).

Such digital witnessing can work to humanise distant victims (Mansbach, 2015, p.1) that is, to give them a voice and agency, and invite viewers to support those suffering in solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2006, 2015). This is the premise of the Israeli activist organisation Checkpoint Watch, which protests against Israeli checkpoints. Activists observe and document experiences of Palestinians interacting with Israeli security forces at checkpoints and share the images with the Israeli public with the intention of supporting the audience to identify with the Palestinians and humanise them, to oppose the dehumanisation of Palestinians as an abstract enemy (Kotef & Amir, 2015). The affective solidarity that is built from seeing images of the suffering of others can support political engagement and mobilisation (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2014; Eslen-Ziya et al., 2019; Gould, 2013; Ransan-Cooper et al., 2018).

2.5.2 The illusion of visibility

The expectations of those recording and sharing images may be to evoke empathy and solidarity which leads to mobilisation; however, this is rarely realised. While images have potential to evoke emotions which can become affective solidarity and the mobilisation of people for a cause, more often than not, being exposed to information about injustice does not lead people to take action and people remain passive consumers of this content without being moved to change. This can cause disillusionment in those who work to witness, record and relay this information to the general public (Dawes, 2007). Despite the huge quantity of images recorded by eyewitnesses in Palestine attesting to the occupation and state violence, there is little evidence that there has been any real political impact for Palestinians in terms of changing their situation and ending occupation (Faulkner, 2018; Hochberg, Gil, 2015).

This has been documented in many different contexts. When the images taken by US soldiers evidencing the abuse and torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib were released to the public, the visibility did little for accountability of those responsible and holding the government to account (Bakir, 2010; Mirzoeff, 2006). The Syrian war was one of the first conflicts in which the widespread availability of mobile phones meant that much was recorded and shared on social media. This, along with the restricted access for journalists meant that much of the war was seen by the international public through social media platforms such as YouTube where citizen journalists distributed amateur videos documenting the horrors of war (Meis, 2017). Despite the mass circulation of such images, there was frustration that it did not lead to the mobilisation of outraged publics to demand accountability and justice for the human rights abuses that were made visible (Doucet, 2018). Some scholars have argued that while witnessing mediated through a mobile phone may close the physical distance between the victim and the viewer, but instead creates a different kind of distance that reduces the

audiences' sense of responsibility to take action (Allan et al., 2007; Chouliaraki, 2015; Ong, 2014).

Even iconic images, including those in which there is an identifiable victim, may not produce the desired impact. While the circulation of the image of Alan Kurdi was followed by public support for and solidarity with Syrian refugees and shifts in public policy (Bozdog & Smets, 2017; Prøitz, 2018; L. G. E. Smith et al., 2018; Vis, F., & Goriunova, 2015), a similar image of another young victim of the Syrian war – Omran Daqneesh who was photographed sitting covered in dust in the back of ambulance, generated compassion but little action. In their analysis of the two images and the response to them, Sajir and Aouragh (2019) suggested that the difference in response to the two images could be explained by the extent to which the photos promoted solidarity. The image of Omran Daqneesh did not have the same effect as the image of Alan Kurdi, despite being similarly emotional and distributed through the same channels. The authors suggest that without narratives rooted in grassroots activism, reactions may become “thin solidarities” based on pity rather than solidarity that can produce mobilisation (p.568).

Visibility does not necessarily lead to solidarity, as the public do not respond in the same way to all human suffering. Butler, (2009) argues that some lives are considered to be more worthy of grieving than others and gives the example of Palestinian children killed by Israeli security forces during military operations and shows how these deaths are seen as acceptable collateral damage by reducing them from children to military instruments used by Palestinian militants as human shields. When people are dehumanised, they may become less likely to be viewed as grievable, for example, Hodge (2015) and Markham & Cover (2018) showed how the dehumanising frames that were used to portray refugees in Western MSM affected the ways that the public responded to news of death and suffering.

Susan Sontag (2003) argued that it was compassion fatigue that could explain why seeing so many images of suffering did not in fact lead to action. Compassion fatigue can be defined as the sense of powerlessness and helplessness experienced when faced with an overwhelming number of images of human pain and suffering and not having ways to stop it (Moeller, 2006; Sontag, 2003). This could explain why the potential for visual evidence to lead to accountability is rarely achieved. This may be particularly true within the image-saturated media environment in which images are shared today. Social media platforms serve up a constant stream of images, with many of these depicting different crises around the world with many different calls to action. This stream of visual content can become exhausting and lead to a sense of detachment and apathy as social media users feel unable to do anything. Furthermore, viewers can become desensitised to images of suffering, making it more difficult for images to breakthrough and mobilise the public. It has been argued that the massive availability of conflict and war images on a scale never seen before, has resulted in people losing the capability to respond to these types of images (Giroux, 2012). Hochberg (2015) argued that the sheer amount of Palestinian witnessing may be doing more harm than good, as “the problem regarding the visibility of Palestinian suffering is no longer that we are unable to see it [...] but

rather that it has become almost the only thing we see" (Hochberg 2015, pp. 119–120). In these ways, the potential for images to move and mobilise distant audiences is rarely realised.

Perhaps, instead, it is the belief in the power of images itself that is overstated (D. Campbell, 2020). In her later work, Sontag (2003) presented arguments against compassion fatigue and Hoskins (2020) argued that such a theory assumes that there is a direct relationship between image, knowledge, compassion and action, and our expectation of this relationship is overestimated because it assumes that there was a critical mass of compassion-based action there to begin with that can be removed with an overload of images. Images of suffering may not lead to action because images "do not contain useful knowledge about suffering" (Rentschler, 2004, p.300). Images might be insufficient to lead to feelings of accountability and responsibility. Building upon this, Durham (2018) advocates for the need for reflexivity for both photojournalists and citizen journalists to engage with the subjects of their photographs, being aware of the power structures in which photos are taken and distributed, including issues of vulnerability and objectification. Doing so, he argues, would enable information to be shared through images in a way that would promote, not just empathy, but responsibility which ultimately could lead people to take action to bring about social or political change.

2.5.3 Text Shapes Interpretation of Images

It has been argued that images alone are not sufficient to mobilise people because images do not contain useful information that builds empathy and solidarity that lead to feelings of responsibility and may drive them to take action, and that narratives can be more effective (Rentschler, 2004). Sajir and Aouragh (2019) have argued that narratives are important for building solidarity with distant victims to encourage mobilisation as opposed to passive spectatorship. Similarly, Sontag (2005) claimed that context is crucial for the interpretation of images and that the narrative can be more effective than an image for mobilisation. Without proper context, there may be a risk of images depoliticising the suffering of others by reducing complex conditions to simplistic visual frames, and this can reduce the capacity of the viewer to take action (Campbell, 2004; Schlag, 2018). On their own, images provide a glimpse of events (Zelizer, 2002) and are unlikely to be able to capture and communicate the full context. Text narratives are important to guide the process of interpretation of an image by the viewer, allowing the audience to categorise and realise how the image should be understood (Campbell, 2005, p.7).

On social media, as is the case with traditional media, images are rarely posted by themselves but alongside text that provides additional information and guides the meaning making process (Brantner et al., 2011), for example, an image in a newspaper is used to illustrate a written report and an image on Instagram is typically accompanied by a written caption. Mitchell (2013) discussed the ways in which the relationship between text and image is realised; an image and text may be merged together, separate but connected, or separate and conflicting. The text that is presented with an image can confirm or conflict with the image and this can affect the interpretation of the image, as the interaction between the two influences

the interpretation process (Unsworth & Cléirigh, 2009). Images are able to communicate information to the viewer in a different way than text, however, they may need context and framing to be able to understand what is being communicated (Griffin, 2008; Zelizer, 2004).

Research suggests that the text used alongside images has an impact on the way in which the image is understood and guides the viewers' opinion (Jaramillo-Dent & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2021; Kedra, 2017; Müller et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2015), although this is not always the case (Livingston et al., 2020; Tiggemann et al., 2020; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018). Therefore, Fisher (2011, p.156) argued that "real journalism is committed when the facts are gathered, fashioned into a clear narrative and explained in the proper contextual framework as part of a larger conversation". The integration of images into a consistent narrative and framework is also important for citizen journalism and digital witnessing, as images and testimony become powerful when combined with context and a strong narrative (Gregory, 2006).

The affordances of social media offer a range of ways for context and narrative to be added to an image. The function to share a text caption with an image is typical across all platforms where users can post images. Research into social media marketing suggests that images with text captions on Instagram receive more engagement than images without text (Jaakonmäki et al., 2017). Furthermore, captions do not need to be lengthy, with hashtags (as short phrases and words) being useful for providing context when added to images (Hitlin & Holcomb, 2015) as expressions of text that may serve as rhetorical devices that "guide the process of 'uptake' for readers or listeners enabling them to categorize, to understand how a symbolic act is to be framed" (Campbell, 2005, p.7).

2.6 Conclusion

The literature that has been reviewed and discussed in this chapter has shown the importance of images within solidarity movements and how the affordances of social media have changed the ways in which images are distributed for these purposes. A central motivating principle for sharing images of human suffering is the notion that they will evoke emotional responses of empathy within distant audiences, which can build affective solidarity and can lead to mobilisation to take action to change the structures and conditions of inequality and oppression. Images have traditionally been central to the international Palestinian solidarity movement as a way for Palestinians to challenge and counter Israeli efforts to erase them (Faulkner, 2018; Hochberg, 2015), and social media platforms offer new opportunities for sharing images directly with international audiences (Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014; Zeitoff 2018; Abu-Ayyash, 2018). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the use of social media by such organisations for the distribution of still and moving images as part of their activism efforts. Subsequently, the following research questions were presented:

RQ1: What are the visual frames present in the still and moving images of interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians?

RQ2: How does the text caption interact with the image?

RQ3: How were the affordances of social media platforms leveraged by the advocacy organisations to amplify visual content?

RQ4: What do the responses by social media users show about the potential for using social media to build affective solidarity for the Palestinian cause?

3 Methodology

3.1 Positionality

Positionality can be defined as the worldview of the researcher and their position in relation to the research that affects the decisions made about methods, procedures and interpretation results (Darwin Holmes, 2020; Lin, 2015; Manohar et al., 2019; Rowe, 2014; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Reflecting on your positionality is to acknowledge how you are situated within existing hierarchies of power and knowledge and how the researcher's identity is positioned in regard to the research. This is a key part of reflexive research practice (Amoureux & Steele, 2015; Berger, 2015), with reflexivity being defined as actively recognising and reflecting on how you as the researcher have impacted on the research question, methodology, analysis and interpretation of data (Mason-Bish, 2019; Pillow, 2003). The aim of this positionality statement is to make clear my position as a researcher and acknowledge how this has influenced this research study to provide greater transparency to the reader (Sukumar & Metoyer, 2010; Sybing, 2022; Tracy, 2010).

3.1.1 Researcher positionality

Research is not value free. In the same way that people interpret the world in different ways, results of research are a product of interpretation by the researcher (Corlett & Mavin, 2018; Sybing, 2022). This interpretation will undoubtedly be influenced by my (as the researcher) worldview, beliefs and experiences and individual factors such as gender, race, age, social class and geography. I must acknowledge my status as a white, British woman with no personal ties to Palestine means that I am somewhat removed from the context of study, making me a so-called outsider (as opposed to an insider who is a member of the group being studied (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017; Kanuha, 2000)). While much has been debated on the benefits and drawbacks of an insider or outsider researcher, this relationship between researcher and subjects may be more usefully thought of in terms of the relationship and engagement with the group being observed (Adler & Adler, 2011; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Mercer, 2007). Drawing on this categorisation, I consider myself to be a peripheral member of the group, the group being the Palestinian solidarity movement, as someone who is sympathetic with the cause, supportive of the values of the organisations and activists and has previously engaged in activist activities. There are arguably advantages of being an active member who is fully immersed in these activist organisations as opposed to someone who is more on the outside, however, I have reflected on the limitations of my experience and knowledge as part of the research process. My proximity to the subject of research meant that I had a certain level of familiarity which proved useful for interpreting the meaning of comments left on social media posts by users who were part of the solidarity movement, for example, references to historical events or people. However, I also recognise that there could

have been references that I would have missed a full understanding of, as someone who was not fully immersed in the movement.

I found the concept of empathetic neutrality too resonant with my positionality in this study. Empathetic neutrality, according to Ormston et al. (2014) is striving to reduce bias and remain objective in the collection and analysis of data, while acknowledging and accepting the fact that there is ultimately no neutral or objective knowledge (p.201). In this sense, while I did not aim to be neutral with my positionality regarding Palestine and instead sought to be deliberately de-colonial in my interpretation and reporting of this research, I did aim for reducing bias in the methodology I took and the research process itself. This systematic approach is detailed in sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 below.

3.1.2 Situated within the Palestinian decolonial struggle

There are growing calls for the decolonialisation of research, (Moyo, 2020), whereby knowledge and epistemology of knowledge are reconsidered, Euro-American ideas and concerns are de-centred and alternative epistemologies are brought forward (Grosfoguel, 2012; Mignolo, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This means, in part, the acknowledgement that research and knowledge is not apolitical and neutral (Denzin et al., 2006; L. T. Smith, 2012) and that the modern forms of knowledge production are intrinsically tied to imperialism and colonialism. Research is a tool that has been and continues to be used for reinforcing colonial structures through 'othering' of groups of people (L. T. Smith, 2012). With this in mind, it becomes hugely important to consider my positionality as a researcher and how it relates to this study, being someone in a colonial country, carrying out research within a western university with its epistemological norms.

The researcher becomes an interpretative authority during the process of research, particularly when interpreting and reporting results, therefore, there is a need to interrogate the expertise of the researcher, their reasons for doing such research and who benefits from it (Smith 2012). Throughout the reflexive process during this study, I had to keep in mind my motivations for carrying out this piece of research. For this, I was inspired by the work of Al-Hardan (2014) to consider the need to align myself as a researcher with resistance and struggle of the Palestinian people within the academic realm, which was the main area in which I was able to contribute.

3.1.3 Situated within UK Universities

Particularly when carrying out research on a contentious subject as is the case with Palestinian activism, it becomes critically important to self-reflect on positionality and interpretation. Not only is this important to consider how pre-existing beliefs about this issue would influence the research study and interpretation of findings, but also to consider how this research fits within a wider context of the UK academia. The discussion around academic freedom and academic boycott is highly relevant in the context of Israel/Palestine where an increasing number of

academics have faced backlash, loss of positions and accusations of antisemitism due to their critique of Israel's settler colonialism including violation of human rights and international law (Abu-Saad, 2008; Maira, 2021). Not only is there a direct censorship of criticism of Israel but an indirect restriction, particularly in the UK academia, through a demand for so called balance when discussing Israel/Palestine. In reality, this means "balancing" discussions of the reality of occupation for Palestinians with a denial that there is an occupation. This subsequently feeds into Israeli narratives that somehow both sides are equally responsible and have equal power; a view that is incompatible with a settler-colonial context.

Furthermore, there are other complexities when conducting research about Palestine within a Western higher education context where conversations can be censored due to the norms of what is acceptable especially what language is acceptable and what can be considered radical (Snounu, 2021). Language in this context is important – terms like *conflict*, *self-defence* and *clashes*, which may appear neutral have been used to justify Israeli discrimination and violence against Palestinians. Therefore, it was necessary for me to reflect on the language I used throughout, relying on the terminology that was used by the advocacy organisations themselves such as occupation, colonisation and apartheid which are contentious terms but are widely accepted, not just amongst activists but with Palestinian and non-Palestinian scholars (Abdulhadi & Olwan, 2015; Busbridge, 2018; Shihade, 2012; Veracini, 2007; Wolfe, 1999; Zureik, 2020) and international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (who both agree Israeli policies and actions meet the criteria for apartheid, but stop short of declaring it a settler-colonial state).

3.2 Methods

The methodology is the structure or framework that provides the explanation, justification and evaluation of the methods (research actions) themselves (Kaplan, 1964, as cited in R. L. Jackson et al., 2007). The framework provides the strategy for formulating, articulating, analysing and evaluating the methods used in the study (Carter & Little, 2007). The methodology for this study was a mixed methods case study design. This study collected and analysed both quantitative and qualitative data, making it a mixed methods study. Quantitative data is data that comes in a numerical form, while qualitative data is non-numerical. The value of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods is that it allows for flexibility in more interdisciplinary and dynamic research (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, care must be taken to ensure rigorous methods are adopted to collect both types of data and there should be integration of the two datasets in the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). The integration of data facilitates triangulation which is the combination of numerous methods to answer the same research question. Doing so aims to reduce the bias or weakness of any individual method alone. By gathering different types of data about the same phenomenon, it can be possible to obtain a more complete and complex understanding of the subject. Therefore, the two goals of mixed methods research are confirmation (the convergence of

findings) and comprehension (a more detailed understanding) (Thurmond, 2001). This would lead to increased confidence in the results of the study (Dunning et al., 2008) .

A review of social media studies found that qualitative approaches were most often taken with methods such as interviews and focus groups used to understand behaviour and experiences of using social media (Snelson, 2016). Other studies have taken a quantitative approach, typically involving the collection and analysis of large quantities of social media data using Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) as software to access data from websites. There is, however, a lack of studies which combine both types of data analysis. This study aims to address this issue by conducting a mixed-methods study in which qualitative data in the form of images, text captions and comments are collected alongside quantitative data that relates to the metadata about the social media posts such as the number of likes, shares and comments.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Choice of Social Media Platforms

Rather than focusing on one social media platform, this study takes a cross-platform approach in which data is collected and analysed from multiple platforms and comparisons can be made between the platforms. This acknowledges that there are many social media platforms and that users are increasingly active at the same time on more than one platform (Madianou & Miller, 2013; Tandoc et al., 2019). It means that differences between platform affordances can be taken into account, therefore potentially reducing platform bias and that it is possible to compare how content may be different depending on the particulars of the platform. It also means that the research can compare how responses might be different across different platforms.

Content, then, is reproduced across different platforms (Zelenkauskaitė, 2017) through a process of remediation that closes the distance between producer and consumer as users take content and reproduce and repost it (Jenkins & Plasencia, 2017). As people move between platforms, they recognise that there are differences in the affordances of platforms that facilitate different forms of communication. Platforms have different features and functions that affect what can be done on them, how they are used by users, the needs that they fulfil and the impact of the content (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021; Papacharissi, 2009). Each platform, therefore, has its own platform vernacular which is a set of logics and grammar that is unique to that platform (Gibbs et al., 2015). These differences may be built into the software (Bogost & Montfort, 2009) but may also emerge based upon how they are used by users.

Some features are shared, such as the ability to like and share a post, and some functions are available on multiple platforms such as hashtags. As people use different sites, the grammar from one can migrate to another organically. Yet even when the same functions exist across platforms, they may have different outcomes as the meaning making processes and practices of use are different, providing different user experiences (Karapanos et al., 2016). Furthermore,

differences in the users' expectations and the audiences that they imagine their content will reach (French & Bazarova, 2017) will create different experiences and outcomes. Much previous social media research has taken a single-platform approach that collects and analyses data from one platform only (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021). Furthermore, much research has focused on Twitter, perhaps due to its easy accessibility (Özkula et al., 2020; 2022). This tendency for single-platform studies might be due to the popularity of using an application programming interface (API) for data collection. As each API is specific to each social media platform, this may have contributed to the so-called platformisation of research (W. Pearce et al., 2020). It is therefore more difficult to collect data from multiple platforms for analysis. There are few tools available for the collection of data across platforms. As a result of the disproportionate focus on Twitter, and single platform studies, there may be a bias in terms of the generalisability of findings (Ruppert, 2013).

In this study, the decision to carry out cross-platform research was deliberate, based upon the assumption that advocacy groups were active on multiple platforms simultaneously. Preliminary investigation of the use of social media by Palestinian advocacy organisations found that most organisations that were active on social media had an account on more than one platform, therefore, this was a valid and useful approach for the study of these particular groups. Furthermore, within the context of online Palestinian advocacy activity, not much is known about how different platforms are used by activist organisations, therefore it makes sense to not limit the scope of the study to one platform, but rather be guided by the platforms that are being used by the organisations. As discussed above, a cross-platform social media approach is less common than a single platform approach, therefore, this study will provide a methodological contribution to social media research. Adopting a cross-platform approach in this study facilitated the study of a phenomenon and how it is affected by different platform vernaculars, therefore, providing greater insight not only into the social phenomenon under investigation but also the medium (Pearce et al., 2020). This meant that there was greater opportunity for analysing and understanding the way that social media data reflects behaviour as well as the structures of the platforms themselves.

Three social media platforms were selected for analysis, these were Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These were selected based on preliminary investigation which indicated that these were the three most popular platforms within the context of Palestinian advocacy organisations. Other platforms were occasionally used, for example, SnapChat, Flickr and YouTube, however, very few organisations of interest used these, so it was decided to limit the focus of the study to the three platforms mentioned above. It was not surprising that these three platforms were mainly used as these are three of the most popular platforms in terms of the number of active users. Facebook continues to be the most popular social media platform globally, with around 2.7 billion monthly active users worldwide, Instagram has around 1.3 billion monthly active users worldwide and Twitter has around 436 million monthly active users worldwide (Statista, 2022). Furthermore, these three platforms have English as the

predominant language, and this was an important consideration as the focus of the study was on international solidarity. While Arabic is the primary language for Palestinians, English is typically used to reach international (principally Western) audiences.

In acknowledging that differences exist between the structure and affordances of different social media platforms, Burgess and Matamoros-Fernández (2016) suggest that when cross-platform work is carried out, researchers must take care that they are comparing the same phenomenon over multiple platforms. This presents challenges as data objects cannot necessarily be collapsed across platforms. For example, reposting and liking are common functionalities on many social media sites but have different influences on behaviour (Pearce et al., 2020). Similarly, hashtags which migrated from Twitter to other sites such as Facebook and Instagram, are used far more liberally on Instagram than Twitter and serve different functions (as discussed in section 2.5.2). Therefore, these cannot be treated the same (Rogers, 2017).

Cross-platform research aims to address the limitations of single platform studies with the potential to provide more insight and a more complete understanding, but there are limitations and challenges that come with the added complexity. There are practical issues to consider and issues of validity (Jordan, 2018). One of the main practical considerations when conducting cross-platform research is how to link users across platforms. There are few tools that exist that automatically identify and link users on different platforms and most tools are designed for collecting data from one platform. Therefore, much of the cross-platform research has taken a manual approach or asked users to self-identify themselves across accounts (Hall et al., 2018). Challenges are presented in tracking the same users across platforms, unless this information is available. In this case, the same users were able to be identified easily as the organisations provided links on their website to their various social media accounts and therefore, this did not represent a challenge for this specific study.

3.3.2 Choice of Accounts

Many social media studies use hashtags as a way of collecting data around a certain topic or event, however, in this study, data was collected based upon accounts of social media users, in this case, the Palestinian advocacy organisations. This meant that data could be compared across platforms, whereas collecting data based on a common hashtag risks providing a distorted view of a topic across platforms as it has been established that hashtags are used differently on different platforms (Garrett & Resnick, 2011). Furthermore, collecting data based on selected accounts was more appropriate for the specific aim of the study which was to understand how advocacy organisations used social media to distribute images. It was more practical to collect data in this way as it was difficult to identify a hashtag used consistently by the organisations. A third reason for selecting this approach was that data was collected over a two-year period and accounts are more static over time than hashtags which are more transitory and may emerge and trend for brief periods of time before declining. For the Palestinian solidarity movement on social media, there is no specific hashtag that is used consistently (in contrast to movements such as BLM). Finally, the focus of the study was not on

a specific high-profile event or period of time which is well suited to a hashtag approach but rather sought to explore the continuous, routine advocacy work carried out by these organisations.

As the focus was on the social media accounts of Palestinian advocacy organisations, selecting the organisations for inclusion was an important methodological decision. This was an iterative process that took place before the data collection phase. A snowball sampling method (T. P. Johnson, 2014; Noy, 2008) was used to identify potential organisations. The starting point for the snowball sampling was Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) which is a leading Palestine activist organisation based in the UK. On their website, a list of other UK based solidarity organisations was used as an entry point (<https://www.palestinecampaign.org/uk-based-charities-campaign-organisations/>). The list was filtered to only include organisations that were focused on Palestine, which meant that those that supported the Palestinian cause as one of many other causes were removed. Organisations without Facebook and Twitter accounts were also removed as these were the primary platforms of interest, along with Instagram. From this list, other similar accounts were identified based upon the contacts of these organisations (for full list, see Appendix 2). While initially the focus was on UK-based organisations, the inclusion criteria were widened as part of the snowball sampling method to include any international organisations advocating on behalf of the Palestinian issue that posted in English on Facebook and Twitter and, optionally, Instagram. It was important to focus on those organisations that posted in English as this is the language most often used to reach international audiences.

While the refined list of organisations started out with twenty-seven different organisations with accounts on these three platforms, many of these did not post images that met the selection criteria (discussed in detail in section 3.3.3 below) so these were discounted from the analysis. By the end of the data collection process, there were eleven organisations, all of which had relevant posts on Twitter and Facebook accounts and most, although not all, also had relevant posts on Instagram. These organisations represented a range of different types of groups that were part of the international Palestinian solidarity movement and included religious and humanitarian groups, single-issue and more general organisations. The selected organisations were:

- B'Tselem,
- Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS),
- Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT).
- Electronic Intifada (EI),
- Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA),
- International Solidarity Movement (ISM),
- Palestine Return Centre (PRC),
- Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC),
- PalObserver,

- Sabeel Kairos,
- Stop the Wall,

A brief description of each of these organisations is presented below with links to the social media accounts that were used and the number of followers on each account, with these numbers being correct as of May 2022.

B'Tselem (www.btselem.org) is an Israel-based organisation with the aim of "documenting Israeli violations of Palestinians' human rights in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip" (B'Tselem, 2020). Their work involves sharing eyewitness accounts, video footage and reports on what is happening in the occupied territories. The aims of the organisation also encompass working to end the occupation. This organisation has run a Facebook account since 2009 with around 122k followers (www.facebook.com/btselem), and a Twitter account since 2010 with around 106k followers (www.twitter.com/btselem) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/btselem) accounts. They also have an Instagram account (<https://www.instagram.com/btselem/>) with 20.1k followers.

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement (www.bdsmovement.net) is a "Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality." (BDS, 2020). It is based on the principle of international boycotts, divestments and sanctions, inspired by South African anti-apartheid movements, as a way of putting international pressure on Israel to comply with international law. Launched in 2005 following Palestinian calls for boycotting Israel and made up of many global activist groups and organisations, it is now an international movement. Since 2010, BDS has had an account on Facebook and currently has around 210k followers (www.facebook.com/BDSNationalCommittee/). Since 2009, BDS has had an account on Twitter and currently has around 229k followers (www.twitter.com/bdsmovement). Only since 2021 has BDS had an Instagram account, and this was outside of the time period of data collection so it was not included in this study.

Christian Peacemaker Teams (www.cpt.org) initially rooted within Quaker values, aims to protect human rights, support nonviolent actions working to confront violence and lethal conflict. On their website, they say they support "spiritually-centred peace-making, creative public witness, nonviolent direct action" (CPT, 2021). They have had a Facebook account since 2010 which currently has around 15k followers (www.facebook.com/cptpalestine) and a Twitter account since 2009 with around 2,800 followers (www.twitter.com/cptpalestine).

Electronic intifada (www.electronicintifada.net) is an "independent online news publication and educational resource focusing on Palestine, its people, politics, culture and place in the world" (EI, 2020). Founded in 2001 by Ali Abunimah, Arjan El Fassed, Laurie King, and Nigel Parry in Chicago, USA, it now is an award-winning platform that publishes content relating to Palestine from writers, activists inside and outside of Palestine. The organisation has run a Facebook account since 2011 and currently has around 360k followers

(www.facebook.com/electronicintifada), a Twitter account since 2007 with 154k followers (www.twitter.com/intifada) and an Instagram account with 33k followers (www.instagram.com/electronicintifada), all of which were analysed. It also has a YouTube account (www.youtube.com/user/electronicIntifada).

Friends of Al-Aqsa (www.foa.org.uk) was set up in 1997 and is a "UK based non-profit making NGO concerned with defending the human rights of Palestinians and protecting the sacred al-Aqsa Sanctuary in Jerusalem" (FOA, 2020). FOA has an account on Facebook which was set up in 2009 and as of 2021 has around 540k followers (www.facebook.com/foapeaceinpalestine), an account on Twitter which was also set up in 2009 and has 32.9k followers (www.twitter.com/friendsofalaqsa), an account on Instagram which was set up in 2013 and has 62.5k followers (www.instagram.com/friendsofalaqsa) and Snapchat (www.snapchat.com/add/friendsofalaqsa). As Snapchat was not part of the scope of the study, this was not included in data collection however the other three platforms were.

International Solidarity Movement (ISM) (www.palsolidarity.org), established in 2001, defines itself as a "Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting the long-entrenched and systematic oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian population, using non-violent, direct-action methods and principles". (ISM, 2020). A fundamental principle of ISM is international participation as a means for resisting Israeli occupation, as ISM believes that this can lead to more accurate mainstream media reporting; witnessing the reality on the ground; "we see, we hear, and we are with you". ISM works through direct action with Palestinians and the documentation to "provide a real means of evidence for accountability to the police and courts" (ISM, 2020). ISM has branches in European countries such as Sweden, Italy and the UK as well as Canada, USA and South Korea. In terms of social media, ISM has an account on Twitter since 2008 which currently has around 70k followers (www.twitter.com/ismpalestine), Facebook since 2009 which, as of 2022, has around 250k followers (www.facebook.com/ismpalestine), Instagram which has 3,200 followers (www.instagram.com/ismpalestine), Flickr, YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/ISMMediaOffice) and Tumblr.

Palestine Observer has run a Facebook account since 2015 and currently has around 31k followers (www.facebook.com/PalestineObserver) account with the aim of "Keeping our audience updated about the situation in Palestine." (PalObserver, 2020). The Twitter account (@PalObserver) was suspended following data collection, for allegedly breaching the terms of Twitter, however the data collected was retained for analysis.

Palestine Return Centre (www.prc.org.uk) was established in 1996 and is a UK-based "independent, non-partisan, organisation committed to advocating for Palestinian refugees" (PRC, 2020) with the focus on the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their historical homes. The organisation aims to "mobilise support for the Palestinian cause in the UK and overseas" (PRC, 2020). This organisation has run a Facebook account since 2011 and currently

has around 34k followers (www.facebook.com/returncentre), a Twitter account since 2010 with around 4.7k followers (www.twitter.com/prclondon) and an Instagram account with around 1,300 followers (www.instagram.com/returncentre/). All three accounts were included in this analysis.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign (www.palestinecampaign.org) is the largest UK based organisation dedicated to campaigning for Palestinian rights. Facebook (www.facebook.com/palestinesolidarityuk), Twitter (www.twitter.com/pscupdates) and Instagram (www.instagram.com/palestinesolidarityuk/) accounts belonging to the main PSC organisation were analysed. The Facebook account was set up in 2010 and currently has around 468k followers, the Twitter account was set up in 2009 and currently has around 57k followers and the Instagram account was set up in 2018, with around 36k followers as of 2021. As well as the main account, local PSC groups have been established and also run social media accounts, for example, Brighton and Hove PSC, Exeter PSC, Manchester PSC. Those local accounts that had social media accounts were considered for analysis but no content that met the inclusion criteria was identified, therefore they were not included in the analysis.

Sabeel Kairos (www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk) describes itself as “small and energetic advocacy based human rights Christian charity promoting a just peace in Israel and Palestine”. This is a UK based organisation that has had a Facebook account since 2011 and currently has around 1,400 followers (www.facebook.com/SabeelKairos) and a Twitter account since 2011 with around 960 followers (www.twitter.com/SabeelKairos), From both accounts, data was collected and analysed.

Stop the Wall (www.stophthewall.org) is the “main national grassroots body mobilizing and organizing the collective efforts against the Apartheid Wall” (Stop the Wall, 2020). This organisation is based in the occupied territories and focuses on international outreach work. The aim of this organisation is to stop and remove the Israeli West Bank wall and return land, with compensation, that was used for the construction of the barrier. Stop the Wall has an account on Facebook which was established in 2015 and as of 2021 has around 6,200 followers (www.facebook.com/stop.the.wall.campaign), an account on Twitter which was set up in 2009 and had 11.6k followers as of 2021 (www.twitter.com/stophthewall) and Flickr. As Flickr was not part of the scope of the study, this was not included, however data was collected from both Twitter and Facebook.

The organisations had different numbers of followers on each of the platforms that they had accounts on. Almost all had more followers on Facebook than Twitter, with the exception of BDS and Stop The Wall.

Table 1. Number of Followers (as of May 2022) According to Each Organisation and Platform

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM
B'TSELEM	122,000	106,000	20,100
BDS	210,000	229,000	N/A
CPT	15,800	2,800	4,271
EI	359,000	154,000	33,200
FOA	540,000	32,900	62,500
ISM	249,000	70,000	2,800
PALOBSERVER	31,000	-	N/A
PRC	34,000	4,700	1,300
PSC	468,000	57,000	36,200
SABEEL-KAIROS	1,400	1,000	N/A
STW	6,200	11,400	N/A

3.3.3 Inclusion Criteria for Posts

The data that was collected represented a sub-set of all of the posts on each of the organisation's social media account. Rather than collecting all posts, this study collected specific types of posts that were relevant for answering the research questions. Specifically, this was posts that included at least one image or video that documented an interaction between members of the Israeli security forces and Palestinians. The inclusion criteria were designed to be clear and specific to minimise subjectivity over the scope of the study. After applying these inclusion criteria to posts, some of the organisations initially identified were discarded from analysis as they were not found to post any relevant images. Some organisations posted only images of their activist work within the UK, others only posted images that documented the aid work that they were doing in Palestine, therefore images only showed Palestinians and not security forces.

3.3.4 The Process of Data Collection

The process of data collection was carried out by the researcher between May 2020 and January 2021. The decision was made to collect data manually from each social media platform as opposed to using an API or third-party tool. Although using an API or third-party tool would mean that a large quantity of data could be collected automatically and quickly, it requires the researcher to predefine the rules of what data should be collected. As the inclusion criteria for posts were based upon the content of images, this was not possible to do automatically and required human judgement. Manual data collection is more time consuming, however it provides greater flexibility in the data that is collected. This approach was more appropriate for collecting the data needed to answer the research questions. Rather

than collecting all the posts and filtering them for relevance, the manual approach meant that only the relevant data was collected, and this was considered to be more ethical, following ethical guidelines of data minimisation that require only the data that is necessary should be collected (ICO, 2021). Furthermore, visual social media data collection lends itself to manual approaches rather than automated and has been used previously to collect images from social media platforms (Aiello & Parry, 2020; Y. Chen et al., 2021; Makhortykh & Sydorova, 2017). Additionally, manual data collection from social media allows for the researcher to engage with the content in a more naturalistic way that better reflects the way that the user intended the content to be experienced when it was posted, providing greater insight and understanding of the data.

The data collection process therefore followed the subsequent steps. For each account, each post on each platform was reviewed in turn to make a decision about whether the post contained an image or video and then whether the content of the image met the inclusion criteria. This was fairly unambiguous with little subjectivity in the decision of if the image should be included as, for the majority of images, it was immediately obvious whether the image showed at least one member of Israeli security forces and at least one Palestinian. Those that did include these were included for analysis. Each post was entered into a spreadsheet and allocated a unique ID following the format <platform>-<ID> where <platform> is FB (Facebook), T (Twitter) or IN (Instagram) and <ID> is a sequential number. The metadata of the post was manually collected and entered into the spreadsheet, as shown in Table 2 below. The image (or a screenshot of a frame of the video) was downloaded and the file was named using the post's ID number. This was to ensure that there was an archive of the data, to protect the data in case posts were removed during the data analysis process.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved different methods of analysis for the different types of data that were collected. There were two parts of analysis; first there was the analysis of the post and its image, discussed in section 3.4.1 which involved a quantitative analysis of the content of the image and the post, and qualitative analysis of the image and the text caption. Secondly there was the analysis of the responses (likes, shares and comments) and again, this involved quantitative and qualitative analysis, discussed in section 3.4.2.

3.4.1 Analysis of Image and Post

3.4.1.1 Quantitative Analysis

A descriptive quantitative analysis of the posts that were collected was carried out in order to gain an overview of the distribution of image posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This enabled comparisons to be made between platforms and accounts. This analysis was complemented by the qualitative analysis, with the aim of supporting the findings and

bringing greater insight. The analysis was carried out in Microsoft Excel and pivot tables were used for cross tabulation.

For the text captions, the number of words was calculated using the formula tool in Microsoft Excel to automate the calculation. The formula used was $=\text{LEN}(\text{TRIM}(H2))-\text{LEN}(\text{SUBSTITUTE}(H2," ",""))+1$ (where H2 is the cell that contains the text caption). Once these had been calculated, comparisons could be made between platforms and accounts and a histogram was produced to visualise this. Excel formulas were also used to automatically extract hyperlinks ($=\text{MID}(H2,\text{FIND}("www.",H2)+1,10)$) and mentions of other users ($=\text{MID}(H2,\text{FIND}("@",H2)+1,10)$) from the captions.

The locations of the posts were analysed using the programming language R. The names of locations were standardised, the latitude and longitude were gathered by searching for each place on Google Maps and entering the coordinates into the data frame in R. This was then used to make a visualisation of the locations. The analysis of locations was used to build up a picture of the types of images and interactions within them that were being shared by the organisations, as part of RQ1.

3.4.1.2 Qualitative Analysis

The visual content analysis focused on three key areas: the security forces, the Palestinians and the nature of the interaction (see Table 2) This approach was designed specifically for this study as the aim was to analysis the Israeli security forces and Palestinians in the images. For each image, the number of members of the security forces, the type of uniform that was worn, the types of weapons that were visible and the presence of any surveillance structures was identified and categorised and entered into the spreadsheet. The number of Palestinians, their profile (age and gender) and their role were identified. If there were any other people shown recording the scene, either members of the press, activists or bystanders, this was recorded. The interaction between the security forces and the Palestinians was analysed. Analysis and the development of the coding system to identify the sub of each theme was an iterative process that was guided by the images themselves and the types of interaction that were identified in the images collected. The categories that developed were physical violence, property violence, restriction of movement, arrest, protests and interaction with the camera.

Table 2. Summary of the Data collected from Images

THEME	FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
SECURITY FORCES	UNIFORM	Presence of uniforms
	WEAPONS	Presence of weapons
	SURVEILLANCE	Presence of surveillance
PALESTINIANS	NUMBER	Number of security forces
	PROFILE	Adult/child
	ROLE	What are they doing? E.g., protesting/walking
	NUMBER	How many Palestinians
INTERACTION	SOUSVEILLANCE	Presence of recording
	TYPE	Type of interaction between forces and public e.g., aggressive, passive
	LOCATION	Rural/urban
	PHYSICAL VIOLENCE	Presence of physical violence
	PROPERTY VIOLENCE	Presence of violence towards property
	RESTRICTION	Presence of a form of restriction e.g., checkpoint
	ARREST	Presence of an arrest
	CHILD ARREST	Child being arrested
	PROTEST	People protesting
	INTERACTION WITH CAMERA	Do the subjects interact with the camera?
PRODUCTION	SOURCE	Who filmed the footage (if known)
	SUBTITLES	Presence of subtitles
	AUDIO	Is there live audio?
	CAPTION SUPERIMPOSED	Caption superimposed on image/video

The text captions that were posted with the images were also analysed. A qualitative analysis of the captions was carried out (see Table 3) to identify the key themes that were present in them. Hyperlinks were extracted from the captions in order to analyse the links. These links were analysed using R studio and a network diagram was produced to visualise the links between the different organisations and external organisations. Hashtags were also extracted from the captions to identify the hashtags that were used by the organisations and identify the most frequent ones that were used.

Table 3. Summary of the Data collected about captions

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
CAPTION	The text caption
WORD COUNT	Number of words
THEME/ISSUE	main issue
LINK	Any hyperlink in the caption
@	Any mention of another user in the caption

3.4.2 Response Analysis

3.4.2.1 Quantitative Analysis

There were three numeric attributes that measured quantitatively the responses of social media users to the posts, these were likes, comments and shares. A descriptive quantitative analysis of these measures was carried out using Microsoft Excel. For each of the quantitative measures of engagement (likes, comments and shares), data was cross tabulated according to account and platform to understand the distribution of responses across different accounts and platforms. For all of the quantitative measures, the data was asymmetric and not normally distributed so summarising the data using the usual mean average was not appropriate. Therefore, the median number of likes, shares and comments were calculated along with the interquartile range to quantitatively compare different types of images. Statistical tests were not relevant given the focus of the studies and that the study was not aiming to be generalizable (not a representative study).

3.4.2.2 Qualitative Analysis

A qualitative content analysis of the comments was carried out, with the key features that were analysed shown in Table 4. The type of engagement with the post was identified as either relevant (the comment is directly relevant to the content of the image or text caption) or general (the comment is general and not directly relevant to the content of the post). Language that was used to refer to either the security forces or Israelis was extracted from the comment and the language that was used to refer to the Palestinians was extracted. The views expressed in the comments were coded according to the sentiment that they expressed. These were anti-Israel if the comment expressed a negative view about Israel as a whole or anti-Palestine if the comment expressed a negative sentiment about Palestine in general. They could be pro-Israel if they expressed a general positive sentiment about Israel as a whole or pro-Palestine if they expressed a general positive sentiment about Palestine, such as calls to free Palestine. Other comments were more specific and referred to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), either in a positive or negative way (anti-IDF and pro-IDF). Comments that expressed a negative sentiment towards a political figure such as Benjamin Netanyahu (Israeli prime minister at the time of data collection) or group such as Hamas (governing authority of Gaza strip at the time of data collection) were also included, as were those that expressed a positive or negative opinion about the organisation such as B'Tselem. Finally, there were some

comments that expressed opinions about the individuals who were depicted in the image, either the individual soldiers or the Palestinians, either condemning or supporting their actions.

Table 4. *Summary of the Data Collected from Comments*

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
POST ID	Post reference number
COMMENT	The comment
THEME/ISSUE	Main issue e.g., illegal settlement/checkpoints
ENGAGEMENT	Relevant or general
LANGUAGE FOR ISRAELIS	What language is used to refer to Israelis?
LANGUAGE FOR PALESTINIANS	What language is used to refer to Palestinians?
VIEWS	Pro-Israel/pro-Palestine
EMOTIONAL RESPONSE	Expression of emotion e.g., sad, angry

From the text of each comment, any hashtags were extracted and the number of times that each unique hashtag was used within the comments was calculated to identify the most common hashtags used by the social media users in the comments.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This section presents the ethical considerations and decisions that were made in designing and conducting this study. Ethical approval from the University of Sheffield was obtained prior to commencing data collection (see appendix 1). An ethical stance was developed based upon the University’s ethical policies, in particular The University of Sheffield Research Ethics Policy Note no. 14 and also drew upon the most recent iteration of guidelines from the Association of Internet Researcher (AOIR) and the British Psychological Association as well as other relevant social media research. The study involved data from users of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and the University of Sheffield’s ethical research policy takes the stance that social media users are considered human participants and their data is personally identifiable under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), therefore, care must be taken to ensure ethical compliance when gathering and analysing social media data.

This research adopted and adhered to the University of Sheffield’s framework for ethical research which in turn is adapted from Townsend and Wallace (2016). The University of Sheffield Research Ethics Policy Note no. 14 provides the basis for most decisions made for the current study. As this policy defines social media users as human participants and the data as personally identifiable data under the GDPR, these were two assumptions that were held when considering ethical issues. Furthermore, there were a number of issues specific to social media research that needed to be taken into consideration, these issues included the terms of

condition of the platforms, the difference between private and public data, the anonymisation of data and the risk of harm. Each of these will be discussed in turn in the following section.

It was important to be aware of the terms and conditions of the social media platform from which the data was collected to ensure that the research complies with the terms and conditions of the platform. As this research was cross-platform, this meant becoming familiar and keeping up to date with the specific terms and conditions of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Furthermore, having accepted that the data falls under the GDPR definition of personally identifiable data, the researcher had to ensure that the research complies with the regulations. The legal basis for collecting and processing personal data was established as in the public interest as research carried out within a university. To protect the data, personally identifiable information was not collected such as names and usernames, following guidance from previous relevant studies (Reilly & Trevisan, 2016; Trevisan & Reilly, 2014). The research design complied with the principle of minimisation (ICO, 2021) that states that only the data that is necessary for the purposes of the research should be collected.

The second consideration related to whether social media data should be considered as private or public and this is a key debate within social media research. The British Psychological Society (2013) suggests that it should be the users' perception of the publicness of their posts that determines whether and how they can be collected and analysed. There is, arguably, a difference between posts on a private Facebook page where members have to be approved before joining and tweets tagged on Twitter with popular hashtag, which would be seen by anyone who searches for the hashtag. Judgements about the public or private nature of the data must be made taking into account the context of the data. In this case, data was considered public as it was posted by public organisations and therefore, consent was not needed. This decision was based upon guidelines from the British Psychological Association (2021) which state that "where it is reasonable to argue that there is likely no perception and/or expectation of privacy.... use of research data without gaining valid consent may be justifiable" (Oates, 2021, p.9). The current opinion within social media research is that publicly posted data has implicit consent (Jordan, 2018).

A distinction must be made between the posts published by the organisations and the comments left by members of the public on these posts in terms of anonymisation and the reporting of results. While there was considered no need to anonymise the posts from the organisations, the decision was made to completely anonymise the comments by not collecting usernames. Furthermore, when reporting findings, the public comments would only be reported in aggregation and paraphrased where necessary (A. Markham & Buchanan, 2012; Trevisan & Reilly, 2014) while the posts created by the organisations could be quoted and attributed to the organisations (Reilly & Trevisan, 2016; Trevisan & Reilly, 2014; AOIR, 2019). This is related to the issue of anonymisation which is particularly relevant to social media research where participants are typically unaware that their data is being collected and analysed. The guidance from the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Policy Note no. 14 states that only strictly necessary identifiable data should be collected, identifiable information

such as usernames should be replaced as soon as possible and that quotes should be paraphrased while retaining the meaning (due to the risk of re-identification when using quotes). As discussed above, these guidelines were adhered to in regard to the posts left by members of the public, however, although all reasonable steps were taken throughout the research process, it is important to acknowledge that no social media research can fully guarantee the anonymity of the social media users whose data was used.

A final ethical issue to consider in regard to the participants was the potential for harm. Decisions about the potential risk were made taking into account the vulnerability of participants and the sensitivity of the data (The University of Sheffield Research Ethics Policy Note no. 14). The Palestinian cause is a contentious and fairly sensitive issue; therefore, anonymity and data management became even more important due to the potential for hate speech and trolling on these posts. As well as the steps taken to anonymise the data, as described above, the data was stored in a secure location on the University of Sheffield's drive and will be deleted when it is no longer needed. Together, these measures were designed to protect participants from potential harm.

The use of multiple platforms may increase ethical issues and bring up unique issues. With the merging of more data, the risk of breaching confidentiality is higher as combining data from different sources does make it easier to identify an individual. This may be less problematic due to the fact that the focus would be on organisations rather than private individuals and they made publicly available their social media accounts. The linking of the same users across different platforms was not deemed to be an ethical issue in this case.

The collection of visual data presented a number of ethical challenges. As visual cross-platform research has so far received less attention, there were no clear guidelines to follow. Therefore, it was necessary to consider different approaches taken by other researchers and take measures that were consistent with the social media research ethics policy that the research worked within. For example, when it comes to the issue of whether to include the images that were analysed within publications, some researchers have chosen to include them, and others have not. In this case, the position was taken to not include the images themselves within this thesis.

In addition to considerations about the risk to participants, the needs and self-care of the researcher should be part of the research plan (S. Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). When researchers engage in emotionally demanding research, such as studies of violence, this can have a negative impact on wellbeing. This study involved me spending a great deal of time viewing and analysing images that depicted violence, oppression and suffering and therefore, strategies were needed to support and protect my wellbeing. Some of these strategies involved writing reflections in a journal, debriefing with peers (Rager, 2005) and taking regular breaks during the process. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I ensured that I took regular breaks to avoid being overwhelmed by the large number of images of violence.

4 Description of posts

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the social media posts, images and responses collected and analysed. Section 4.2 gives a summary of the posts according to platform, organisation and type of image (photo and video), then section 4.3 gives a summary of the visual content of the images; how interactions that involved violence, structures of occupation and resistance were depicted within the still and moving images and how the victims and perpetrators were represented. In section 4.4, the text captions that were posted alongside the images are summarised. Finally, the responses to the images in the form of likes, shares and comments are described in section 4.5 with a quantitative overview of these measures of engagement across the platforms and organisations.

4.2 Summary of posts

4.2.1 Number of Posts over time

In total, 740 posts were collected from the organisation’s Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts. This consisted of 170 video posts and 570 photo posts. Posts were collected over a two-year period between January 2019 and January 2021. As shown in Figure 1, there were more posts in 2020 than 2019. PRC and ISM in particular, shared a high number of posts in 2020. Overall, September 2020 was the month in which the highest number of posts were shared, and this corresponded to the ‘normalisation deals’ between Israel and some Middle Eastern countries including the UAE and Bahrain as well as the release of a statement by PSC, signed by over 20 organisations, condemning Israel’s plans to annex the West Bank¹¹.

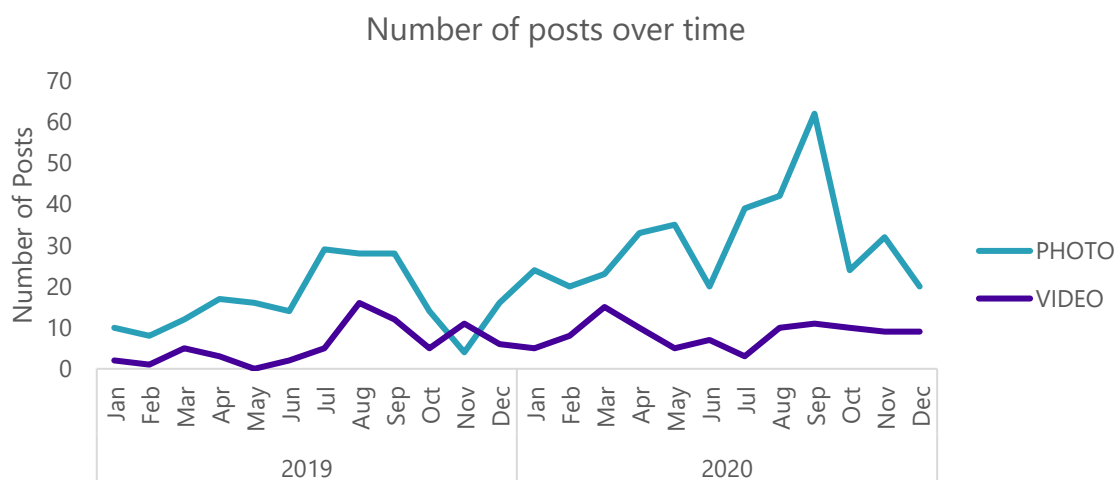


Figure 1. Number of posts over time collected from all organisations and platforms

¹¹ [Annexation-Statement-11th-September-2020-2.pdf \(palestinecampaign.org\)](#)

4.2.2 Number of Posts by platform and organisation

Three social media platforms were included in the analysis: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. All of the organisations had accounts on Facebook and Twitter, however, not all of them had Instagram accounts at the time of data collection. Those that did not were BDS, PalObserver, Sabeel-Kairos and Stop the Wall. The highest number of posts were collected from Facebook and the fewest number of posts were collected from Instagram, partly because there were fewer organisations with accounts on this platform. Furthermore, the number of posts was not consistent across the organisations and platforms (Table 5 **Table 5**) as some of the groups were found to have posted a large number of posts, for example ISM and PRC, while others were found to have posted a smaller number of relevant posts, for example PSC and Sabeel-Kairos. During the data collection stage, the Twitter account of PalObserver was suspended for “violating the terms of service” according to Twitter. This meant that data from this account was only collected up to 29/05/20.

Table 5. Number of posts According to Platform and Organisation

	PHOTO			VIDEO		
	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
BDS	10		13	1		2
B'TSELEM	4	2	1	17	1	27
CPT	15	6	6	3	2	2
ELECTRONIC INTIFADA	24	42	12	0	0	0
FOA	22	22	6	5	7	17
ISM	56	25	52	4	15	32
PALOBSERVER	40		9	17		1
PRC	56	28	54	7	0	3
PSC	3	1	6	0	0	0
SABEEL-KAIROS	11		4	0		0
STOP THE WALL	20		20	3		4
TOTAL	261	126	183	57	25	88

4.2.3 Still and Moving Images

Across all 740 posts, 170 posts containing video and 570 posts with still images (photos) were analysed. There were more images than posts because the social media platforms Twitter, Facebook and Instagram all enable more than one image to be posted within a post.

In total, there were 610 still images that documented interactions between Palestinians and Israeli security forces collected and analysed from the accounts of the eleven organisations. As can be seen in Table 5 above, there was a difference between the number of photos collected from each organisation, with PRC and ISM having the greatest number of photos on each platform, while PSC and B'Tselem had the lowest number of photos across the platforms. The

highest number of photos came from Facebook, while the fewest were from Instagram. This was partly attributable to the fact that four of the organisations (BDS, PalObserver, Sabeel-Kairos and Stop the Wall) did not have Instagram accounts at the time of data collection. At the same time, comparing those organisations that did have Instagram accounts revealed that most, apart from Electronic Intifada, had fewer images on Instagram than the other two platforms.

In total, there were 250 videos that showed interactions between Palestinians and Israeli security forces collected and analysed from the accounts. Not every organisation posted video content on their account; out of the eleven organisations, three organisations (EI, PSC and Sabeel-Kairos) did not post any video content on any of their accounts. Within the eight organisations that did post video content, there were differences in the number of videos posted. Some organisations such as B'Tselem and ISM posted a large number of videos, while others such as BDS and Stop the Wall posted a much smaller number. B'Tselem was the only organisation that posted more video content than photo content. The fewest number of videos was collected and analysed from Instagram, as discussed above, this was partly due to the fact that some organisations did not have Instagram accounts.

4.2.4 Number of Images per post

In total, 740 posts from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were analysed, with 570 photo posts and 170 video posts. As there could be more than one image in a post, this meant that the total number of images collected and analysed was higher than the number of posts; there were 610 photos posted within the 570 posts and there were 250 video clips within the 170 posts. Table 6 presents an overview of the number of posts that contained multiple images and shows that the majority of posts were found to have one photo or video. Twenty-four posts consisted of two photos, five had three photos and two had four photos. These posts typically were images of the same incident, such as an arrest or demolition, or were photos that depicted a shared theme such as physical violence or checkpoints.

Table 6. *Number of images per post*

NUMBER OF IMAGES IN POST	PHOTO		VIDEO	
	Posts	Images	Posts	Images
1	539	539	137	137
2	24	48	14	28
3	5	15	12	48
4	2	8	2	8
5				
6			2	12
7			1	7
11			2	22
	570 posts	610 images	170 posts	250 images

Of the video posts, 81% were a single video clip, with the remaining 33 posts being a video that consisted of a number of different video clips (video compilation). These were all posted by FOA and B'Tselem and were typically based on a certain theme, such as home demolitions (FB-034 and T-091), settlements (T-067) and checkpoints (FB-037 and I-011). Other compilations were multiple clips of the same incident, or related incidents, such as FB-321 in which three video clips documented the police operation in al-'Esawiyah that led to the death of Muhammad 'Abeid and then the assault by police on the Palestinian man who went to the hospital to collect his body. Similarly, T-510 (13/12/20), was made up of three clips that documented the confiscation and demolition of Palestinian homes in Ras 'Ein al-'Auja and Palestinians confronting soldiers.

4.2.5 Repetition of Images across platforms/organisations

Some of the images were posted more than once in different posts. There were 220 photos, and 115 videos that were only ever used once, but there were 151 photos, and 57 videos which were posted multiple times in different posts. There was one photo which was seen in 7 different posts (see Table 7). Overall, of the 610 photos collected there were 371 unique images, and of the 250 videos, 172 were unique. 133 (88%) of the reused photos and 120 (88%) of the reused videos were posted more than once by the same organisation, either on the same platform, or a different platform. Most of these were posted on multiple platforms, for example the photo posted in FB-114 was also posted to Instagram by Electronic Intifada (I-078 and I-093). Less often, the same image was posted by the same organisation on the same platform, for example, the image in FB-045 was also posted on Facebook by FOA in FB-042. There were 18 photos and 15 videos that were posted more than once but by a different organisation. For example, the photo in FB-114, which depicted a young boy being detained by soldiers, was posted by both Electronic Intifada and Pal Observer (FB-188).

Table 7. Summary of the Number of Images that were repeated across platforms/accounts

NUMBER OF TIMES IMAGE REPEATED	PHOTO		VIDEO	
	Images	Total	Images	Total
1	220	220	115	115
2	96	192	44	88
3	38	114	8	24
4	7	28	3	12
5	5	25	1	5
6	4	24	1	6
7	1	7		
TOTAL	371	610	172	250

4.2.6 Edited Images

4.2.6.1 Text Annotation on Photos

Almost none of the photos that were analysed were edited, however there were 17 images out of the total 610 photos (3%) that were edited in a way that overlaid text. One of these images that was posted by BDS on both their Twitter and Facebook accounts showed a female soldier checking the ID of a Palestinian woman who had her hands raised against a wall. Next to her, a male soldier holding a gun stared into the camera. This image had been edited with white text on a black background to the left of the photo that said “apartheid is a crime against humanity. It is defined as inhumane acts committed in the context of an institutionalised regime of domination and systematic oppression by one racial group against another. Israel's rule over Palestinians fits the bill.” This same form of editing where text was placed next to a photo was found in T-169 (BDS, 25/03/20). This image showed a soldier kneeling on the head of a man on the ground, holding his arms down, and had the text “Israel and the U.S. share repression tactics targeting immigrants, refugees, people of colour, and LGBT+ people” on a black background above the image. The image had also been edited to include another photograph that showed US police assaulting a Black man. The other way that text was added to photos was to put the source of the image on top of the image and this was the case for six images overall, five being posted by BDS and one by Stop The Wall. It was not possible to determine whether this text was added by the photographer or the organisation.

4.2.6.2 Video Subtitles

45 videos (19%) were collected that had English subtitles. With subtitles in English, this suggested that videos were being prepared specifically for an international, English-speaking audience. Almost all of these videos were posted by B'Tselem and FOA. Around half of the videos posted by B'Tselem (52%) included English subtitles and were typically videos that documented an interaction between an individual Palestinian and member of the Israeli security forces which meant that the communication between the two was able to be understood by an international audience. These subtitles gave a voice to the victims of property violence and enabled them to ‘speak’ to international English-speaking audiences. For example, T-514 (29/10/20) had subtitles on an interaction between a Palestinian woman and a soldier. The woman was holding a young child and she said, “where will my son go? Leave my home for my son. Where will my son sleep?” while the soldier grabbed her arm and pushed her away. In another video posted by B'Tselem, part of the interaction between a woman and soldiers was subtitled in both English and Hebrew – “why to demolish it?”. The rest of the interaction which documented the demolition of a property, was not subtitled, just this phrase. Another B'Tselem video with partial subtitles was T-512 (30/11/20), which documented soldiers shooting a Palestinian man. In this video, it was the people behind the camera that were recorded shouting at the soldiers and the phrase “Don’t shoot, Tzahi! Stop” was subtitled.

Another video posted by B'Tselem was recorded inside a hospital, in which police officers assaulted a man. There was a lot of shouting, but the man’s speech had been translated and he

said, "I'm okay, mom. Calm down." A woman's voice was heard and translated saying "don't be scared, Yedidya, I'm here with you." The police officer grabbed the man in a headlock, and the woman said, "guys, you're on camera. You should watch it, you're on camera," at which point the police officer released the man and walked away. As part of this video, another clip showed police officers interrogating a man inside the hospital, asking him where an injured Palestinian was. In this case, the words of both the Palestinian and the officer were translated into English, giving both sides of the conversation. The officer said, "if you stir up people against the police, I'll arrest you" and the man replied, "I'm not stirring anyone up." The officer then said "I said I'll do what I have to, so that I find [injured]. Everything is legal, if you're concealing wounded here, you're doing illegal stuff".

FOA was also found to frequently post subtitles on the videos that they shared on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram with 27% of the videos posted by FOA having English subtitles. These were videos that showed children being arrested by soldiers and the subtitles translated what was being said by the adults trying to stop the arrest. For example, in T-083 (01/02/20) which showed a young boy being detained by soldiers, a Palestinian man said "this is a child. I will not let you take him". In a second clip that was part of this video, a soldier held two young boys, and a woman said "look how scared they are. They will die between your hands". Another video posted by FOA across both Facebook and Instagram showed men crammed into a queue at a checkpoint where a man looked straight into the camera and said, "look at us! What do you see? What can we do?" (I-003, I-007, I-015 and T-070).

By adding English subtitles onto the videos where conversations were in Arabic and Hebrew, the organisations were packaging these in a way that made them easy for international audiences to consume and understand what was being shown. They served to give a voice to the Palestinians depicted in the images, however, this was not done by all of the organisations. Furthermore, when subtitles were added, only certain parts of speech were subtitled, meaning that a non-Arabic speaker would not be able to understand the entire interaction, only the part that the organisation deemed important.

4.2.7 Location of Images

More than half (61% of photo posts and 74% of video posts) contained information about the location that the image was taken at. This included posts that contained a tagged location, which was a function available on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as posts that included a location within the text caption. As Figure 2 shows, images were recorded from locations all over the West Bank with many coming from cities including Jerusalem, Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron. Fewer images were recorded and shared from Gaza.

Locations where images were taken

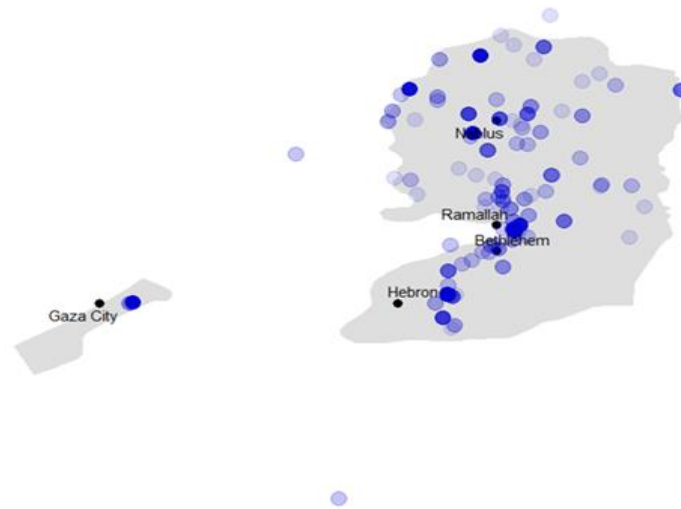


Figure 2. Location of Images (where available)

4.3 Overview of Images and their content

4.3.1 Interactions

The images collected and analysed from the organisations across the three social media platforms documented interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians and one of the most common types of interaction was that which involved the use of actual physical violence against the Palestinian. Around a quarter (26%) of photos and around half (46%) of video showed direct physical violence. This typically took the form of violence against an individual, for example being beaten by a soldier, but also against groups of Palestinians, typically the use of tear gas. It was rare to find acts of fatal violence depicted in the images, although there were some examples of this as well as images that showed the aftermath of fatal acts of violence. While not all of the images documented actual physical violence, in every image collected and analysed that showed an interaction of some nature between the security forces and Palestinians, the threat of violence was present. Other forms of violence were also shown in the images, specifically acts of property violence in which Palestinian property was demolished or raided by Israeli security forces. Of the still images, 11% and of the video, 16% documented some form of property violence, most often demolishing Palestinian homes.

A common interaction between Israeli security forces and Palestinians took place at a checkpoint or roadblock and these were present in 9% of photo and 8% of video. These images depicted the visual structures of Israeli occupation in its manifestation through the many checkpoints and roadblocks, both permanent and temporary set up throughout and between the occupied Palestinian territories to restrict and control the movement of Palestinians. Another type of restriction that was documented in the images was that of Israeli forces stopping and searching or checking IDs of Palestinians in the street. This type of interaction was found in 4% of photo and 3% of videos. 22% of photos and 4% of video

documented interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians taking place at a protest. These images showed active protest against the occupation while most depicted the security forces as being present but not actively responding. A small minority of protest images showed physical violence against the protesters.

4.3.2 Representation of Security forces

All of the images contained at least one member of the Israeli security forces and Palestinian. Israelis were typically IDF soldiers in green uniforms with weapons although some police officers in grey uniforms were depicted. Most often, these were young men, however some female IDF soldiers were shown. The visual similarity of the uniforms created a sense of these forces as a whole as opposed to individuals. On the other hand, the Palestinians represented in the images were men, women and children, documenting the entire range of the population. Most often, Palestinian men were shown in the images interacting with the security forces but there were also women, children and elderly Palestinians in the images. All of these were shown as victims of Israeli occupation and violence, with some of the images depicting individual acts of resistance such as confronting soldiers.

With regards to the way that Israeli security forces were depicted in the images, their uniforms made them easily identifiable; IDF soldiers wore olive green uniforms, often with a helmet and vest and Israeli police wore grey shirts and trousers and sometimes also vests. Their other main identifying feature was the weapons they carried with soldiers shown holding machine guns and police officers pictured carrying handguns. In almost all of the images analysed, machine guns were visible but, in many images, there were other weapons, including pistols, batons, tear gas cannisters, grenades and aerial drones, creating a visual representation of the constant threat of physical violence. Typically, the security forces depicted were young Israeli men, but images did occasionally depict female soldiers and police officers.

In almost all of the videos collected and analysed, the Israeli security forces did not appear to be bothered by the presence of the camera that was recording them. However, there were eleven videos that showed soldiers being hostile towards the camera or trying to prevent filming. These were posted by CPT, B'Tselem and ISM. Some were posted across all three platforms, whereas others were only found on one of the platforms.

T-364 (B'Tselem, 12/04/2020) documented soldiers approaching the person recording and explicitly telling them to stop filming and threatening them with arrest for not complying. The conversation between the soldier and the person recording was subtitled in English. When the person responded that he was filming on behalf of B'Tselem, the soldier demanded that he stop filming and move away. The cameraman then told him that he had permission to film and that he was staying away from the soldiers, but the soldier shouted for others to come over, threatened the man with arrest and told the other soldiers to "grab him". The video stopped abruptly after this. The caption did not explain what happened in the video to provoke such behaviour by the soldiers. In another clip, also posted by B'Tselem (FB-316, 19/04/19), the

person recording was also stopped from recording by a soldier. In this clip, recorded inside a house, soldiers wearing blue protective suits and face shields, with a large dog, came into a living room where the person was recording. One of the soldiers noticed the filming and came towards the person recording, gesturing for them to stop and then the video ended. This video was also posted on Twitter two days later by B'Tselem (T-360).

Two videos posted by CPT also showed soldiers trying to prevent people from filming them. In FB-201 (CPT, 07/03/20), a person holding a camera was approached by a soldier who talked to him in English and said he wanted to see the pictures. The person with the camera asked him why and said, "I haven't done anything. What have I done?" but the soldier kept demanding to see. Some context to this encounter was provided in the caption which explained that CPT activists were at the checkpoint to monitor the treatment of Palestinians when a soldier approached them and demanded to see what they had taken on their camera. In the caption, CPT claimed that the soldiers wanted to hide what they were doing because they knew it was wrong. In another video, CPT activists recorded Israeli soldiers reacting to their presence and being recorded (T-388, 12/12/19). This video was recorded at a checkpoint, and it showed numerous soldiers walking in and out of a small building. One of them came out and pointed at the camera, motioned for them to stop filming and then charged at the camera. The person recording moved away but continued recording. When the camera returned focus to the checkpoint, soldiers emerged from the building with a young woman in handcuffs and took her through the gate. A young soldier looked at the camera and tried to get the attention of the other soldiers. The caption that was posted with the video detailed the date and location of the arrest and stated that CPT activists were monitoring the actions of security forces. This video and the same caption were also posted to CPT's Facebook (FB-302) and Instagram (I-159) accounts on the same day.

Only one still image (I-032, FOA, 23/07/2019) showed soldiers attempting to hide their identity from the camera. In this image, a boy was pictured praying in the road in front of a row of soldiers in full uniform and holding riot shields, the soldiers had their hands up in front of their faces in what appeared to be an effort to shield their identity. Overall, these videos and photo were exceptional, as most of the time, soldiers were not seen responding to the presence of the camera.

4.3.3 Palestinians

Palestinians were framed as victims of Israeli occupation in the images depicting the interactions between them and Israeli security forces. The images showed the whole range of the Palestinian population, from infants to young men and women, to the elderly.

As can be seen in Figure 3, men were most often shown in the images, appearing in 57% of all images while women were less likely to be shown, appearing in 16% of images. Elderly Palestinians were present in only 10% of all photos. After men, children and teenagers were

the most likely to be shown in images, with around a quarter of all images (27%) depicting Palestinian children or teenagers interacting with the Israeli security forces.

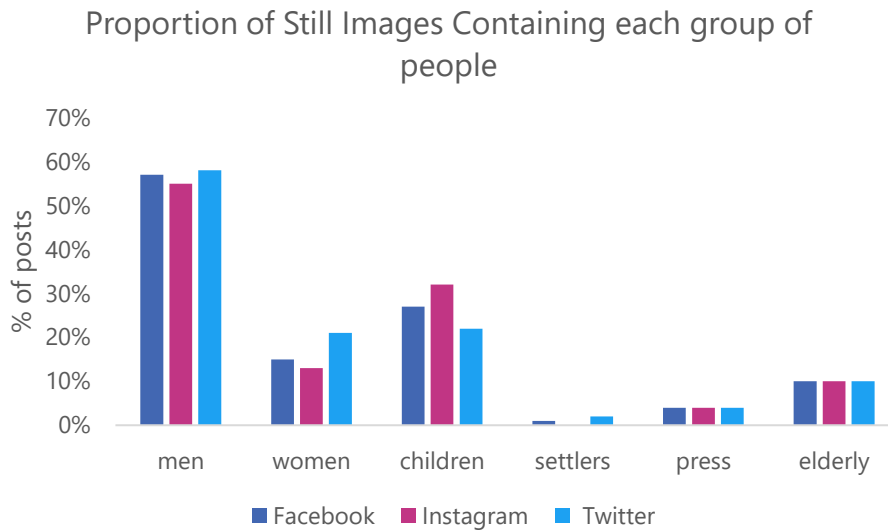


Figure 3. Proportion of still images containing each group of people

Although children were frequently present in the images, some of the organisations were less likely to post children than others. Although children appeared in around 30% of the videos posted by BDS, of all of the photos collected and analysed from BDS’s Facebook, Twitter and Instagram account, none were found to contain Palestinian children (see Figure 4). Other organisations were much more likely to post images of children, for example around 60% of the photos posted by Sabeel-Kairos, CPT and B’Tselem showed children as victims of Israeli occupation.

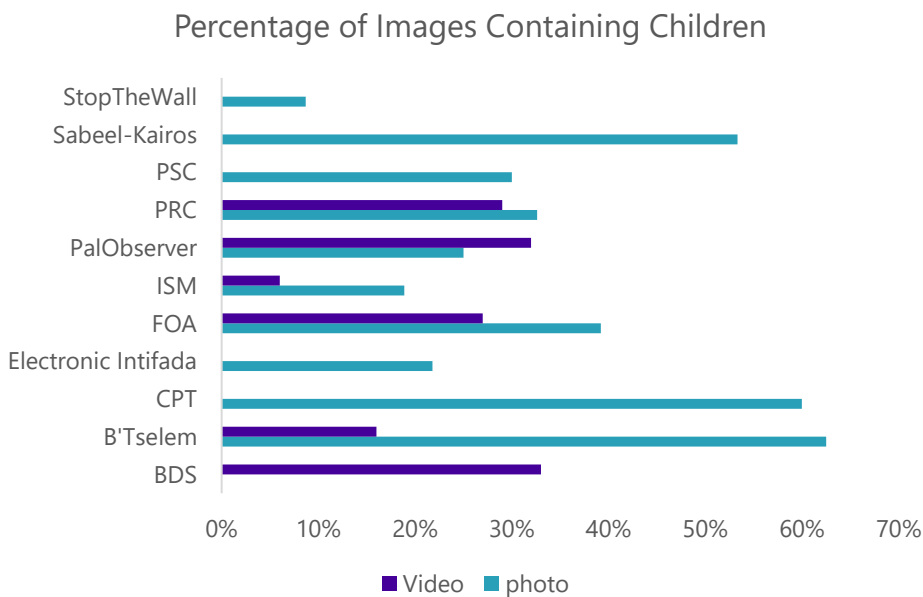


Figure 4. Proportion of Images Showing Children according to Organisation

4.4 Overview of Captions

Almost all (96%) of the images were posted alongside a text caption that provided information about the scene depicted in the image, framed it and assigned responsibility for the suffering shown to Israeli settler-colonial occupation. Captions were also used to call the viewer to emphasise and feel solidarity with the Palestinian people and the cause and provided tangible ways in which they could show their support.

4.4.1 Length of captions (number of words)

The length of the captions of the posts ranged from two words to 1021 words with the most being under 50 words long (see Figure 5). It was unusual to find extremely long captions posted with the images and the majority (81%) were between one and 60 words.

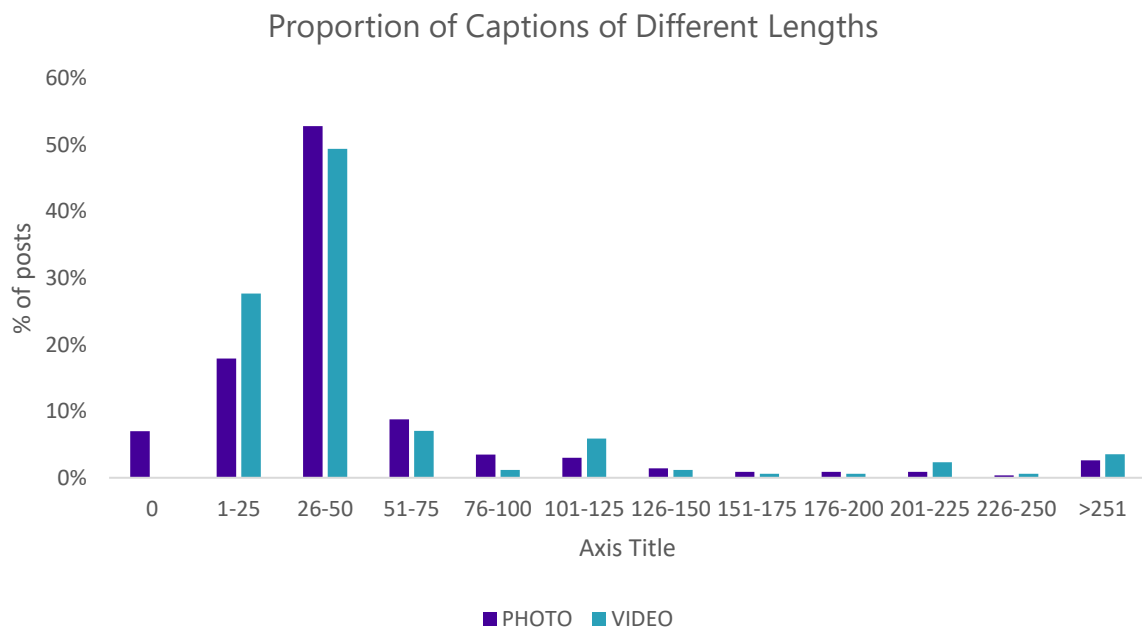


Figure 5. Length of captions (number of words)

The shortest caption was posted on T-087 (FOA, 09/01/20), a video post that showed clips of physical violence by security forces and said, “Imagine this...#Nakba”. The longest caption was posted on a video shared by B’Tselem (FB-321, 28/07/19) and described raids on the al-’Esawiyah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. It described in detail an incident on June 27 in which young men started throwing stones and firecrackers at the soldiers and soldiers responded by shooting at them, leading to a man sustaining fatal injuries. It also claimed that when another resident came to collect his body, he was beaten by officers and that his body was only released under strict conditions for his funeral, including that no Palestinian flags would be raised during it. The caption also claimed that in the days following the funeral, “police and neighbourhood residents clashed daily” and described some of these encounters.

The caption ended by claiming that all of this is evidence of the Israeli policy of “making life in the city unbearable for Palestinians, so that they will leave, ostensibly of their own will”.

4.4.2 Captions Across the Platforms

The length of the captions was one of the main differences between the posts on the three platforms. Longer captions (over 50 words) were only found on Instagram and Facebook and not Twitter. This reflected a key difference between the affordances of the three platforms, as Twitter limits the number of characters in a post, whilst there is no limit on the number of words in a Facebook or Instagram post. Furthermore, Facebook was the only platform in which images were found to have been posted without any text caption, with around 13% of posts on Facebook having no caption.

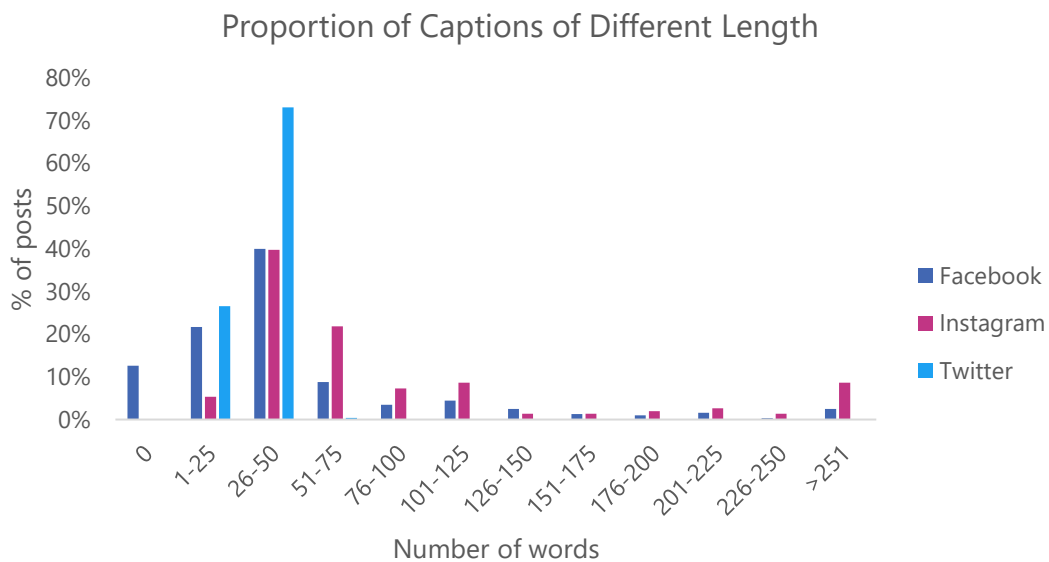


Figure 6. Length of captions by platform (number of words)

4.4.3 Hyperlinks in Captions

Overall, the captions of 36% of photo posts and 25% of video posts contained a hyperlink. The use of hyperlinks varied between the platforms, with a higher proportion of photo and video posts on Twitter containing links (see Figure 7).

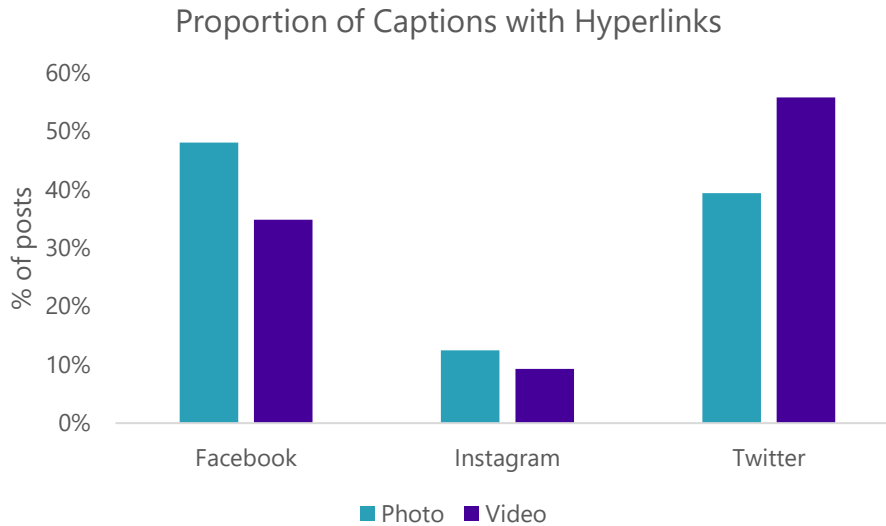


Figure 7. Hyperlinks in the posts by platform

These hyperlinks were links to the organisation’s own website or blog, another organisation’s website or a news article. These links created a network of interactions between the organisations that were the subject of this study and other relevant organisations such as War on Want, Middle East Eye, IMEMC and Kumi Now.

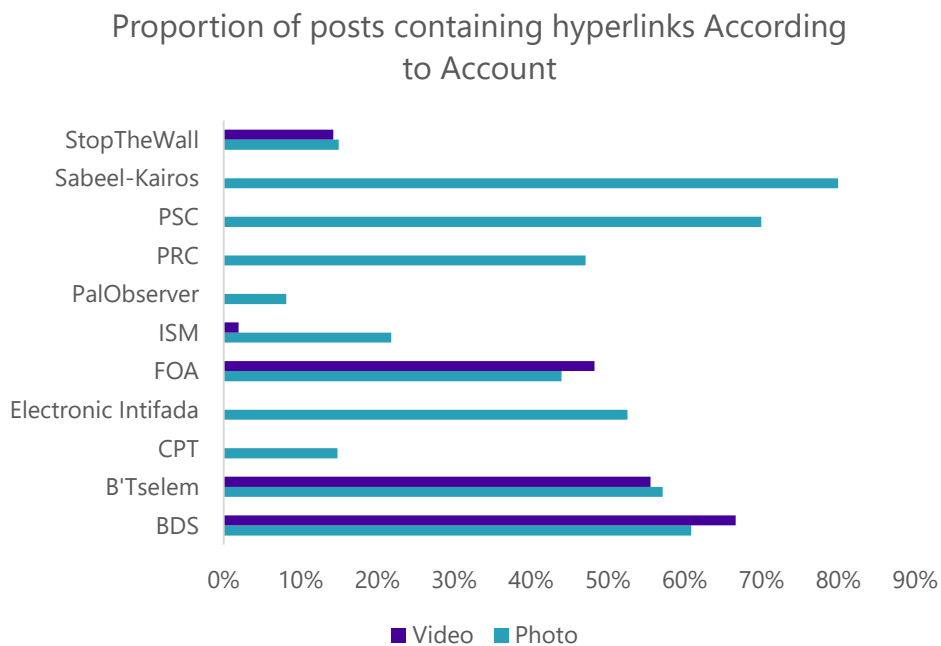


Figure 8. Percentage of posts containing hyperlinks

Some organisations often used hyperlinks in their captions (for example B'Tselem, FOA, PRC, Sabeel Kairos) whereas others did not use them as frequently, as shown in Figure 8. There were also differences observed between the organisations in terms of who they linked to. Although all organisations used at least one link, some were much more varied in the types of sites that they linked to. While FOA, B'Tselem and Electronic Intifada only linked to content on their own

websites, ISM and BDS both linked to a wide variety of sources (see Figure 9) This figure shows the network of links between different organisations. The eleven organisations that were the subject of study were highlighted in green and other external organisations were highlighted in red.

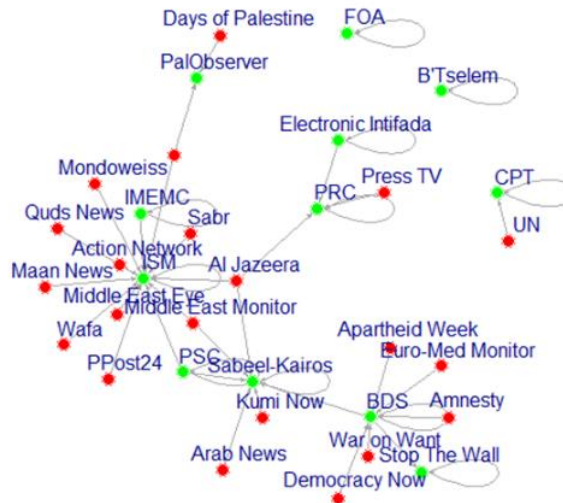


Figure 9. Organisations and the links between them based on hyperlinks

4.4.4 Tagging other Users

Another function of the social media platforms that the organisations made use of in the captions of their posts was the mention (@) function. The tagging function means that another social media user is tagged within the post, this notifies the user and creates a clickable link so that others can visit their profile. Within the captions that were analysed from the organisations in this study, the use of the tagging function was inconsistent and, overall, it was rarely used. As Figure 10 shows, posts on Instagram were the most likely to include the @ function, with this being present in 25% of photo and 12% of video posts on this platform. This was much higher than the proportion on Facebook, where none of the photo posts and 2% of video posts contained a mention of another user and also higher than the proportion of posts on Twitter.

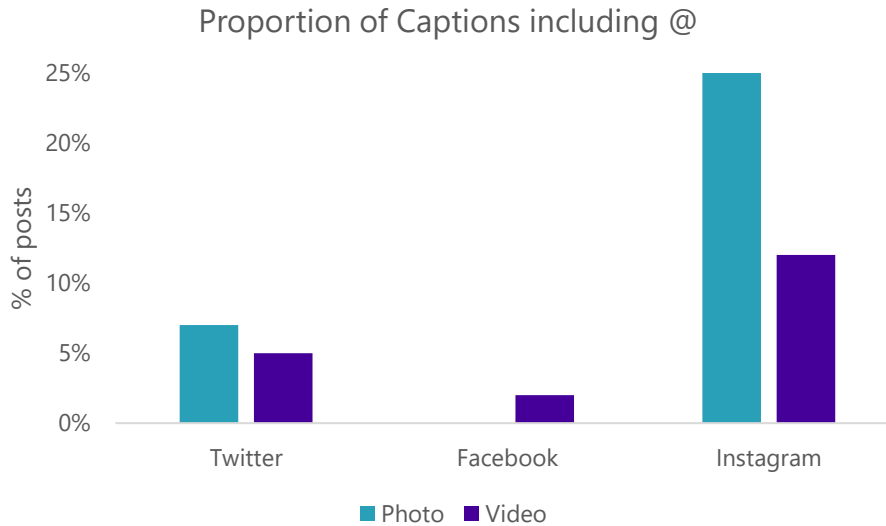


Figure 10. Proportion of Captions including @

Furthermore, the use of the function was inconsistent across the different organisations, as can be seen in Figure 11. Some of the organisations frequently tagged another user in their posts, for example around 80% of Sabeel-Kairos' photo posts included the @ function, whereas others rarely did this.

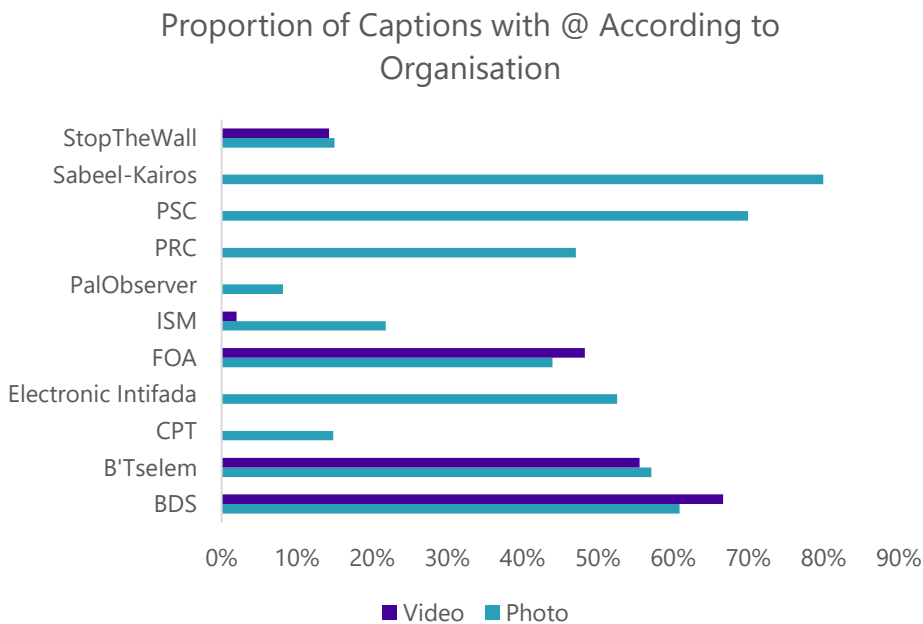


Figure 11. Proportion of Posts including @ according to Account

The users being tagged were typically organisations that were to be boycotted, for example HP, Caterpillar and HSBC as part of the BDS campaign to avoid companies that were associated with the Israeli occupation. Other tags were to politicians, for example the British foreign secretary at the time Dominic Raab or media outlets such as Aljazeera. One of the

organisations, Electronic Intifada, typically used this function to tag the photographer of the image in the caption, for example: "Photo by @oren_ziv".

4.5 Overview of likes, shares, comments

Three ways in which social media users could engage with the posts were able to be collected and analysed, these were liking, sharing and commenting on the post. A quantitative analysis of these three measures of engagement was carried out along with a qualitative content analysis of the comments to gain greater understanding of how social media users were responding to the posts distributed by the organisations.

4.5.1 Likes

4.5.1.1 Photo

Of all the posts that were collected and analysed across the three platforms and the eleven organisations, the number of likes received by the posts ranged from zero to 1878 per post. There were differences observed between the three platforms, as seen in Figure 12 below. The Facebook posts were the least likely to receive any likes, with 18% of all the Facebook posts collected and analysed from the accounts of the organisations having no likes, compared to only 4% of Instagram and 6% of Twitter posts. Instagram posts were the most likely to receive a high number of likes on individual posts, with 27% of Instagram posts receiving more than 200 likes.

In terms of the number of likes, there was more engagement from social media users on images that contained non-physical forms of violence (property and restriction of movement) than those with physical violence. Images containing physical violence had fewer likes (median = 9) than those without physical violence (median = 15), suggesting that users were less likely to like these types of images. However, images containing property violence had more likes (median = 11) than images without property violence (median = 2). Similarly, images that contained restriction of movement had more likes (median = 24) than those without (median = 12). Notably, however, the image that gained the highest number of likes overall (1878) did not show either property violence or restriction of movement but instead was an image of a man praying in the road in front of a row of soldiers holding riot shields, with their hands up to hide their faces from the camera (I-048 (FOA, 19/05/19)). The other image that received an exceptionally high number of likes (1354) was also posted on Instagram by FOA (I-049, 17/05/19) and this image also did not contain violence, but instead showed two Palestinian men confronting soldiers outside of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

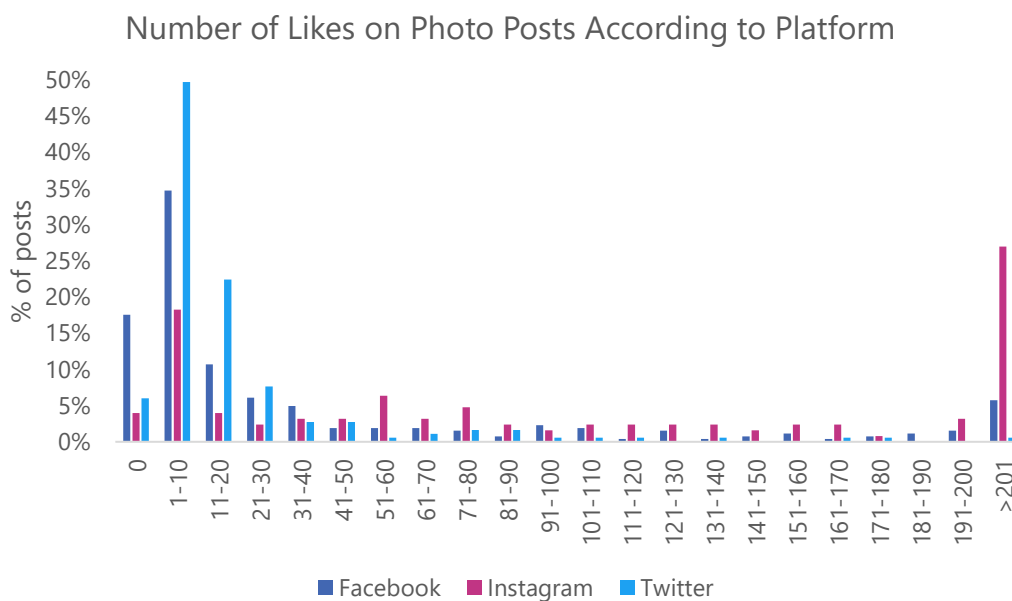


Figure 12. Number of likes for photo posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter

There were differences observed between the eleven organisations in terms of the number of likes that the photo posts received. There were some organisations that were more likely to get no likes than others, typically those with fewer followers. The organisations with high numbers of followers received likes on almost all of their posts, for example, 90% of photo posts shared by Electronic Intifada received more than ten likes and over half were liked more than 100 times. Similarly, nearly half of the posts shared by BDS were liked over 100 times (although some posts received much fewer likes). With roughly the same number of followers on BDS' Twitter and Facebook account, there did not seem to be a difference in the number of likes on Facebook and Twitter posts. The organisation that was the most likely to receive a high number of likes was B'Tselem. Similarly, none of the posts from FOA got no likes and almost half of these posts got more than 200 likes. This organisation had the highest number of followers on Facebook (540,000) and Instagram (62,500), which could account for this organisation having high numbers of likes. FOA had fewer followers on Instagram than Facebook or Twitter but the posts that received the highest number of likes were posted on Instagram while FOA's posts with the lowest number of likes were found on Twitter.

Other organisations were less likely to receive a high number of likes, and some often received no likes at all on their posts. Almost a quarter of posts shared by CPT got no likes, and the maximum number of likes for the posts from this organisation was 73. For CPT (as was the case with FOA) the Instagram posts tended to receive more likes than Facebook or Twitter posts despite having fewer followers on Instagram. Similarly, around half of the posts shared by Pal Observer and most of the posts by PRC received ten or fewer likes. Sabeel Kairos also did not receive very many likes on their posts, with the maximum number of likes being 15. This was unsurprising as this was also the organisation with the fewest followers on both Facebook

(1,400) and Twitter (1,000). Overall, the organisations with the most followers were more likely to get more engagement.

A comparison of the different organisations showed that there were differences between the number of likes received on the video posts. Some of the organisations received a high number of likes on all of their video posts, for example BDS, who only posted three videos in total (making a very small sample), received 174, 178 and 1000 likes. Meanwhile, B'Tselem, who posted a higher number of relevant videos on their accounts received a range of likes from 14 to 535. Other organisations did not get a lot of likes on the video posts, for example, the maximum number of likes on video posts shared by CPT was 104, although this was one of the organisations with the lowest number of followers, suggesting that, to some extent, engagement was associated with the size of the following on each account.

There appeared to be differences between the organisations in terms of the engagement on the three different platforms. Some of the organisations received more likes on the Facebook videos that they posted than those that they posted on Twitter, for example CPT. Similarly, the videos posted on FOA's Facebook account received more likes in general (all videos got more than 100 likes) than videos posted to their Twitter account where the maximum number of likes was 36. The posts from ISM also showed this pattern with Facebook videos receiving more likes in general than Twitter videos. Pal Observer, as an account with less followers, got fewer likes in general than other organisations, with a maximum of 38. The one Twitter video that was analysed from this account did not get any likes. However, the number of likes on videos shared by PRC showed a different trend, with more likes being received by videos posted to this account's Twitter account than their Facebook page, where most videos were liked less than 10 times. Overall, these findings suggest a lack of a correlation between engagement and choice of platform; similarly, the previous analysis showed a lack of correlation between the content of images and engagement.

4.5.1.2 Video

There was a similar trend in relation to the most liked videos in the dataset, which tended to be posted by the organisations with the most followers, with the video post with the highest number of likes being posted by FOA (FB-037, 15/11/19). Overall, the number of likes received by the video posts ranged from zero to 2000. It was not possible to collect the number of likes of the videos posted to Instagram, as this is not visible on the platform, therefore, it was not possible to do an analysis of the likes of video posts from this platform. Video posts were less likely to receive no likes than photo posts, with only 2% of Facebook videos receiving no likes, compared to 18% of Facebook photo posts. The video posts on Facebook received more like compared to the photo posts with 19% of videos from Facebook getting more than 200 likes, compared to around 5% of photo posts. Only 1% of Twitter video posts got no likes and 75% of Twitter posts got between 1 and 40 likes.

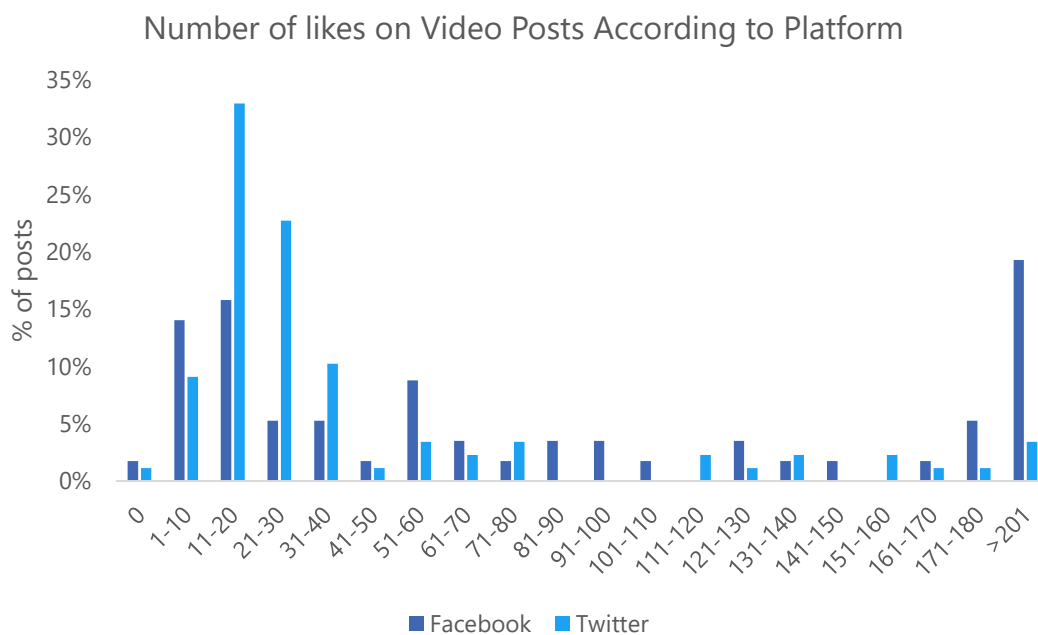


Figure 13. Number of likes for video posts on Facebook and Twitter

Overall, videos containing scenes of restriction of movement such as checkpoints were more likely to have a high number of likes (median = 136) compared to those without this content (median = 37). The video with the highest number of likes was a video titled “what are illegal Israeli checkpoints?” (FB-307, FOA) and this was a compilation of video clips taken at checkpoints that showed a number of different interactions between Palestinians and security forces. It received 2000 likes. Furthermore, videos that documented Palestinian children being arrested were more likely to get a high number of likes (median = 47 compared to 6) and the third most liked video overall was a video compilation of children being arrested (FB-035, FOA), this video received 455 likes. Both videos were posted by FOA, one of the organisations with the most followers. BDS, who also had a high number of videos posted the video with the second highest number of likes (1100). This video (T-462) showed the night arrest of Palestinian activist Mahmoud Nawajaa. The same video was posted the following day, also by BDS (T-460, 31/08/20) but this time it got a much lower number of likes (n=178).

Only a small number (n=4) of video posts received no likes and this was in contrast to the photo posts, of which a large proportion received no likes. One of these was FB-371 (Pal Observer, 12/06/20). The video showed soldiers assaulting a young man and the post got no likes, comments, or shares. Overall, there did not seem to be a pattern as to the content of the most liked videos, with videos showing both physical and non-physical violence getting high numbers of likes and videos of explicit physical assaults getting no engagement. Furthermore, even the same video, when posted a second time, did not receive the same level of engagement as the first time it was posted.

A comparison of the different organisations showed that there were differences between the number of likes received on the video posts. Some of the organisations received a high

number of likes on all of their video posts, for example BDS, who only posted three videos in total (making a very small sample), received 174, 178 and 1000 likes. Meanwhile, B'Tselem, who posted a higher number of relevant videos on their accounts received a range of likes from 14 to 535. Other organisations did not get a lot of likes on the video posts, for example, the maximum number of likes on video posts shared by CPT was 104, although this was one of the organisations with the lowest number of followers, suggesting that, to some extent, engagement was associated with the size of the following on each account.

There appeared to be differences between the organisations in terms of the engagement on the three different platforms. Some of the organisations received more likes on the Facebook videos that they posted than those that they posted on Twitter, for example CPT. Similarly, the videos posted on FOA's Facebook account received more likes in general (all videos got more than 100 likes) than videos posted to their Twitter account where the maximum number of likes was 36. The posts from ISM also showed this pattern with Facebook videos receiving more likes in general than Twitter videos. Pal Observer, as an account with less followers, got fewer likes in general than other organisations, with a maximum of 38. The one Twitter video that was analysed from this account did not get any likes. However, the number of likes on videos shared by PRC showed a different trend, with more likes being received by videos posted to this account's Twitter account than their Facebook page, where most videos were liked less than 10 times. Overall, these findings suggest a lack of a correlation between engagement and choice of platform; similarly, the previous analysis showed a lack of correlation between the content of images and engagement.

4.5.2 Shares

The function to publicly share a post is limited to Facebook and Twitter, therefore, the analysis of the number of times posts were shared was limited to these two platforms. Overall, the number of shares for the posts ranged from zero to 5000. 43% of all posts across Twitter and Facebook were shared less than ten times, however, there were a small number of posts that were shared over 1000 times. The post that was shared the most (FB-037) was also the post that received the highest number of likes.

As was the case with the number of likes received by the different organisations on their posts, there were differences between the organisations in terms of the number of times that their posts were shared, typically this was associated with the number of followers the organisation had, although many followers did not necessarily translate to shares, for example FOA and EI, which had some of the highest number of followers found around half of their posts were not shared at all. In contrast, other organisations were less likely to find that their posts were not shared, for example 29% of posts by B'Tselem, 38% of posts by PRC, 37% of posts by ISM and 28% of posts by Pal Observer were not shared. On the other hand, only 10% of posts shared by PSC were not shared at all. The content posted by some of the organisations had few shares, for example the posts by CPT that were shared by social media users were all shared fewer than 10 times. Similarly, posts by PRC also tended to have a small number of shares and

almost three quarters of photo posts by Sabeel-Kairos and 59% of posts by Stop the Wall were shared between 1 and 10 times. Other organisations were found to have some posts that were shared more than 100 times, in particular, almost a quarter of BDS’s photo posts, 57% of B’Tselem’s posts, 10% of PSC’s posts and 8% of FOA’s posts were shared over a hundred times. Overall, although these organisations with more followers were more likely to get higher numbers of likes on some posts, they also found many posts not getting shared.

There were differences between the different organisations in terms of the number of times their video posts were shared, some of these differences could be associated with the number of followers each organisation has. For BDS (an organisation with a high number of followers) all three videos posted were shared more than 100 times each. In contrast, none of the video posts by Stop the Wall and Pal Observer (who had much fewer followers) received these many shares. All of the videos posted by Stop the Wall were shared less than 50 times and one video was not shared at all. Half of the videos posted by Pal Observer were shared between 1 and 10 times, with only a small number being shared more than 50 times. Other organisations had a small proportion of videos shared more than 100 times, specifically 30% of videos posted by B’Tselem, 20% by PRC, 23% by FOA and 11% by ISM. Although only a quarter of videos posted by FOA were shared more than 100 times, two of the videos posted by this organisation were the most shared videos. Finally, for CPT, one post was shared more than 100 times, with 40% being shared between 1 and 10 times. Similarly, 30% of videos posted by PRC were shared between 1 and 10 times.

4.5.2.1 Photo

In general, photos posted on the Twitter accounts of the organisations were more likely to be shared than those posted on Facebook accounts. Almost all posts on Twitter (93%) were shared at least once, compared to 70% of Facebook posts (see Figure 14). However, the actual number of times these posts were shared was low, with the majority (70%) of Twitter photo posts found to be shared between one and 20 times. Only a very small proportion of posts were shared more than a hundred times, both on Facebook and Twitter.

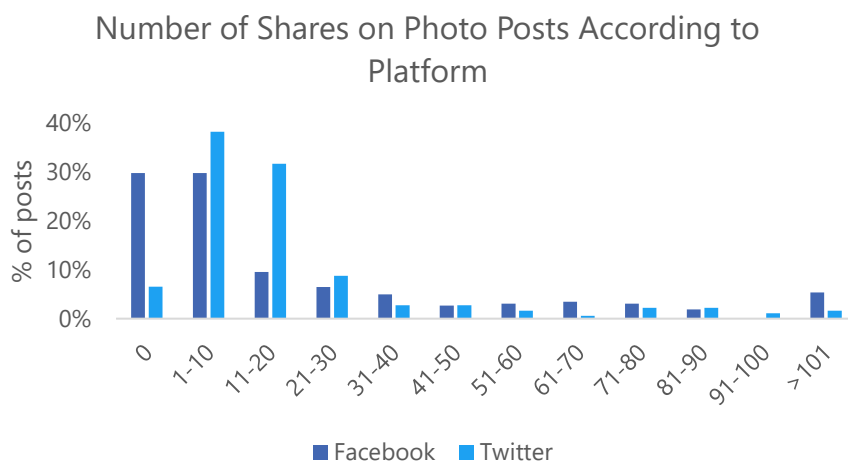


Figure 14. Number of shares for photo posts on Facebook and Twitter

4.5.2.2 Video

Video posts collected and analysed from the accounts of the organisations on Twitter and Facebook were, in general, more likely to be shared than the photo posts. It was found that 32% of Facebook video posts were shared more than 100 times (see Figure 15), compared to only 5% of Facebook photo posts. This was also found to be the case with the Twitter posts, with 13% of video posts shared more than 100 times, compared to only 2% of photo posts. Videos were also less likely to not be shared at all, with only 2% of Facebook video posts and 1% of Twitter video posts receiving no shares compared to 30% of Facebook photo posts and 7% of Twitter photo posts.

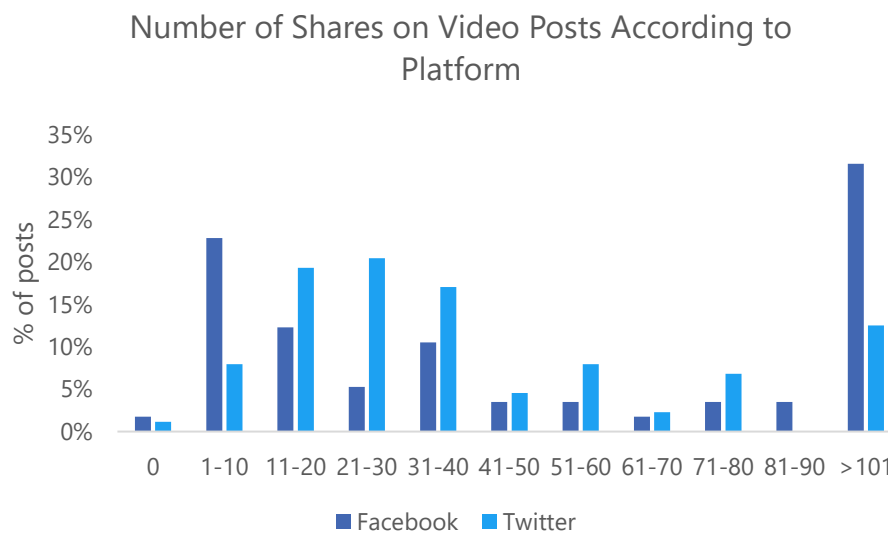


Figure 15. Number of shares for video posts on Facebook and Twitter

4.5.3 Comments

Both liking and sharing suggest that the user agrees with the information posted, however, commenting can be used to either express agreement or disagreement with the content. Commenting requires greater effort by the social media user, and subsequently it was found that there were fewer comments overall than likes and shares on the posts analysed. Around half of the photo posts received no comments and the majority that were commented on received less than ten comments. Social media users appeared to be more responsive to video content, with much fewer of the video posts receiving no comments. The content of comments provided insight into the ways in which users were responding to the posts (Reich, 2011).

There were more likes and shares than comments overall on the posts. From all of the posts that were collected and analysed, 3818 comments were collected. This was made up of 2047 comments left on the 571 photo posts and 1771 comments left on the 170 video posts. The number of comments left on the posts ranged from zero to 426. Overall, video posts were more likely to receive comments than photo posts.

Differences in terms of the number of comments were partly explained by the number of followers each organisation had on their social media accounts. Organisations that had fewer followers on their Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts such as Sabeel-Kairos typically had very few comments on their posts, while organisations that had a larger following like FOA and B'Tselem tended to receive more comments on both the photo and video posts. 87% of the posts shared by Sabeel-Kairos received no comments, compared to none of the posts by B'Tselem. Furthermore, 71% of photo posts and 78% of video posts shared by B'Tselem received more than 20 comments. Another organisation that was likely to get a lot of comments was BDS; all of the video posts and a quarter of photo posts received more than twenty comments and only 9% of photo posts did not get any comments.

For most of the organisations, video posts were more likely to be commented on than photo posts. For FOA, 45% of video posts received more than twenty comments, compared to 16% of photo posts, and for ISM, 55% of video posts received more than twenty comments, while only 5% of photo posts received more than ten comments. Similarly, none of the video posts shared by Pal Observer, Stop the Wall and PRC received no comments, whereas 55%, 71% and 50% of photo posts were not commented on, respectively. This was also the case for CPT; 43% of video posts were commented on more than 20 times and only 14% received no comments, whereas 63% of photo posts shared by this organisation received no comments. Finally, there were two organisations that were found to only post photo content, Electronic Intifada and PSC. For Electronic Intifada, around three quarters of posts received between 1 and 10 comments and for PSC, 40% received no comments, 40% got between 1 and 10 comments and 20% received more than 20 comments.

4.5.3.1 Photo

Overall, the number of comments left on the posts was associated with the number of likes and shares, although the number of comments was always less than the number of shares and likes, as posting a comment requires a greater commitment. As was the case with the number of likes and shares, the number of comments ranged across all of the posts analysed, with a range of zero to 225 for photo posts. Nearly half of all of the photo posts received no comments, with posts on Facebook and Twitter more likely to receive no comments (49% and 41% respectively) compared to Instagram (34% received no comments). Of the posts that were commented on, the actual number of comments was generally very low, with almost half of posts getting between one and ten comments and only a very small minority (1%) getting more than 50 comments. While Instagram posts were less likely to get no comments, they were also less likely to get a high number of comments

A further 48% of posts received between one and ten comments. A very small minority of posts got more than fifty comments (1%), and these were all posts on Twitter and Facebook. No Instagram post got more than 20 comments (see Figure 16).

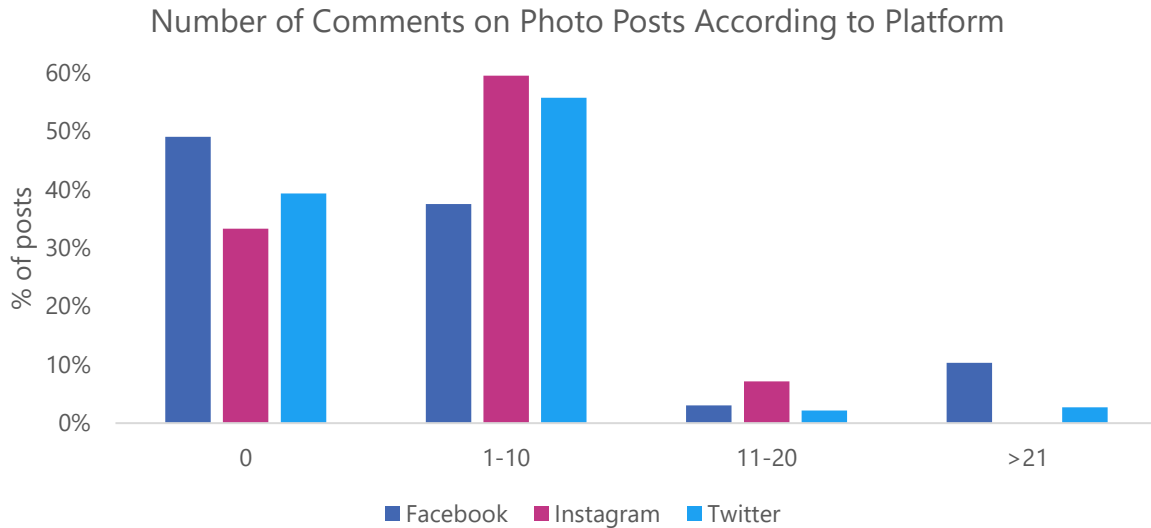


Figure 16. Number of comments for photo posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

There were different ways of commenting on the photo posts, namely, through text, emoji, hashtag, image, mention, GIF and hyperlink. Text was the most likely to be used to comment on the posts on all three platforms, however, while almost all of Facebook comments used text, this was lower on Twitter posts at 78% and lower still on Instagram posts with 64% of comments using text. There were also differences observed between the other types of comments left on the posts on the three different platforms (see Figure 17). Emojis were found to be used the most frequently on Instagram comments, present in almost half of all comments, compared to only 6% of Facebook comments and 8% of Twitter comments. The most frequently occurring emojis were the Palestinian and Israeli flags, while emojis expressing emotional responses, typically sadness and anger (😡 😠 😞 😡 😞 🥲 🥲) were also frequently used.

Hashtags were found to be most frequently used in Twitter comments, occurring in 30% of Twitter comments, compared to 2% of Facebook and 6% of Instagram comments. The mention (@) function, which was used to tag other accounts, was used rarely on all three platforms, with around 10% of comments on these platforms using this in the comments. An even smaller proportion of comments used images, GIFS and hyperlinks. GIFS were included in 1% of Facebook and 2% of Twitter comments, images were used in 2% of Facebook and 7% of Twitter comments, and hyperlinks were used in 4% of Facebook and 6% of Twitter comments. These three functions were not used at all in the comments of the photo posts on Instagram.

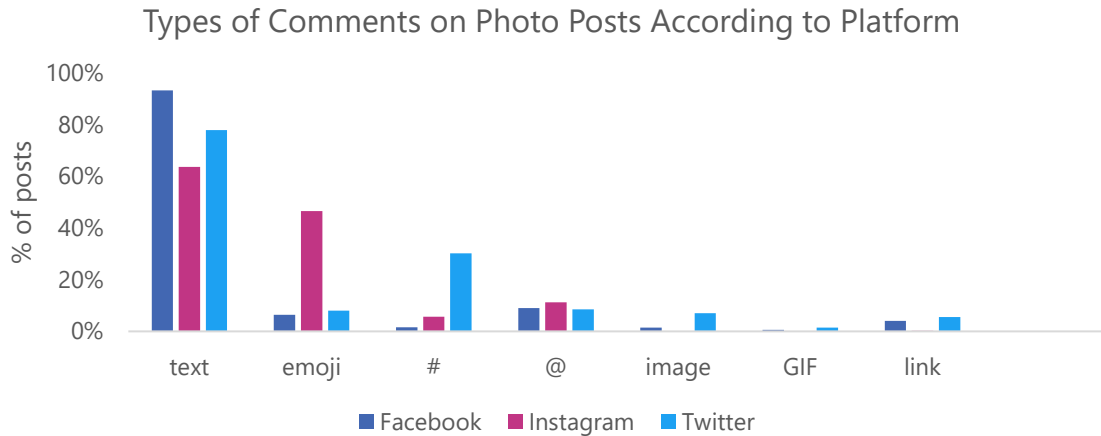


Figure 17. Types of comments on photo posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

4.5.3.2 Video

While almost half of the photo posts received no comments, only 12% of video posts got no comments, suggesting that social media users were more responsive to the video content. On the video posts, the number of comments ranged from zero to a maximum of 426, with the majority of posts receiving between 1 and 10 comments. Facebook posts were the most likely to receive no comments, but also the most likely to receive more than 20 comments (see Figure 18).

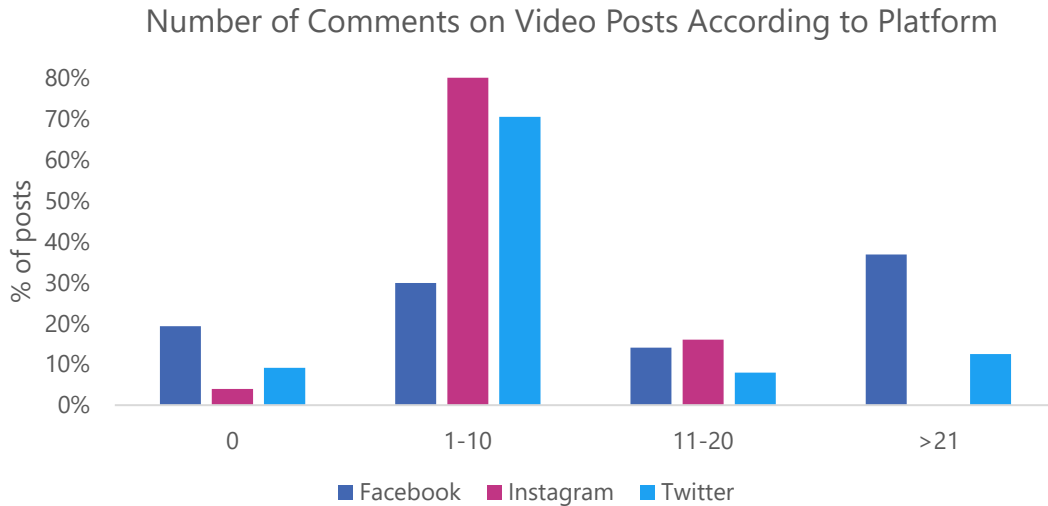


Figure 18. Number of comments for video posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

Differences were also observed between the three platforms when it came to the comments on the video posts, showing a similar trend to the comments on the photo posts (see Figure 19). Most of the comments used text, although Instagram comments were the least likely to contain text. Instagram comments were much more likely to contain emojis than Twitter and Facebook, with around 55% of comments collected from the Instagram posts including one or more emojis. Hashtags, however, were the most likely to be found in the comments of the

Twitter posts, present in around 20% of comments. The @ function was used rarely, in 6% of Facebook comments, 2% of Instagram comments and 11% of Twitter comments.

The use of images within the comments was most likely to be found on Facebook, and more likely to be found in the comments on the video posts than the photo posts, with images being used in 14% of video post comments compared to 2% of photo post comments. Most of these images were posted on one post, FB-037 (FOA, 15/11/19) and were cartoons that were either anti or pro-Palestine, for example, a cartoon of a man representing the UN walking behind an Israeli soldier wiping up blood. Meanwhile, a pro-Israel image showed IDF soldiers carrying a dog (representing Palestinians) on a stretcher.

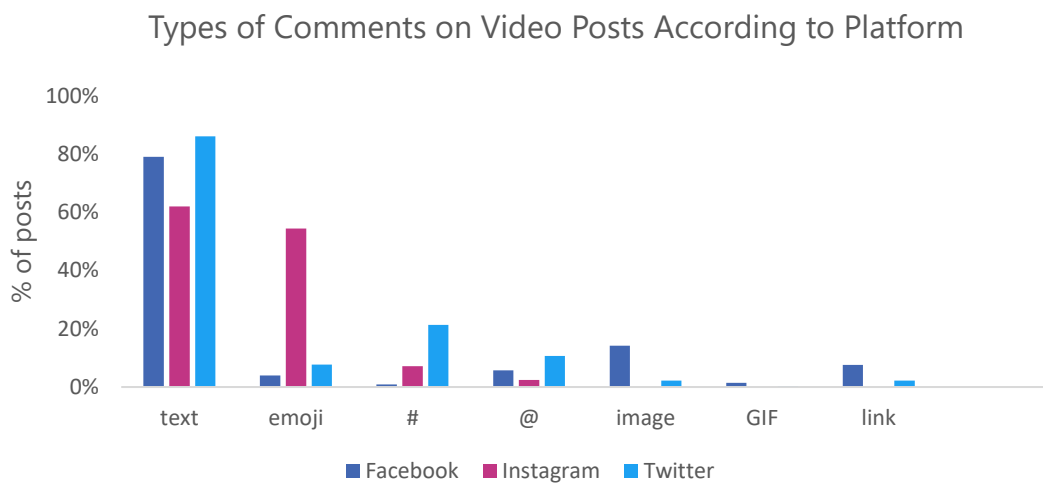


Figure 19. Types of comments on video posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

4.6 Conclusion

In total, 740 posts were collected from the eleven organisations’ Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts. This consisted of 170 video posts and 570 photo posts. Posts typically consisted of one photo or video, however there were cases where multiple photos were posted on one post, typically of the same incident or of a common theme and there were some videos (almost all posted by FOA and B’Tselem) that were a compilation of multiple video clips. Many of the images were collected from two or three platforms, showing how images were repeated across platforms (and sometimes organisations). However, there did not appear to be a consistent posting strategy with the same images being posted at the same time across all three accounts that the organisation owned, suggesting that different content was being adapted for each platform, or alternatively, that there was not a clear strategy for social media content. The images documented interactions between security forces and Palestinians, discussed in detail in the following chapters and captions were used to provide additional information for almost all images (discussed in chapter 9). Social media users were found to interact with these posts by liking, sharing and commenting on the posts, although overall, engagement was low.

5 Visual framing: Violence

5.1 Introduction

Analysis of the images from the Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts of the organisations showed they depicted a range of different types of state violence, not only acts of physical violence against Palestinians but also non-physical, structural forms of violence such as the demolition of property. They documented the ways in which power was exercised over Palestinians by Israeli security forces, as an extension of the Israeli occupation, through both physical and non-physical violence and framed the Palestinian issue as one in which Palestinians are victims of settler-colonial violence. This chapter looks at how the visual framing of interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians are characterised by violence in its many forms.

5.2 Physical violence

Of the 610 still images collected and analysed from the Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Palestinian advocacy organisations, around a quarter (26%) contained some form of physical violence against Palestinians carried out by Israeli security forces. Meanwhile, of the 250 videos collected and analysed, almost half (46%) documented acts of physical violence. These images documented soldiers using actual physical violence against individuals, including pushing, punching, beating, dragging, shooting, or pinning them to the ground. Acts of violence were typically carried out against young men, however, a minority of images also showed violence against women, children and elderly people. Very rarely were acts of fatal violence shared on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram by the organisations. A minority of images showed Israeli forces using violence against groups as opposed to individuals and this typically took the form of firing tear gas into crowds of people.

Images posted by the organisations that documented physical violence against unarmed Palestinians by Israeli security forces challenged a common mainstream representation of Palestinians as aggressors and Israelis as victims of such. Captions that were posted with these images reinforced this alternative narrative by making claims of excessive and unjustified force by the soldiers against unarmed Palestinians who were not presenting a threat. Viewers were presented with evidence of Palestinian victimisation at the hands of the security forces. Even in images without physical violence, Israeli security forces were depicted as physically threatening, heavily armed and aggressive, creating a constant sense of threat and visually highlighting the power imbalance of an occupying military force and the occupied Palestinian people.

5.2.1 Video was more Likely to Contain Physical Violence than Photo

Both photo and video content depicting physical violence was posted by the organisations, however, a higher proportion of the videos (46%) were found to contain physical violence than still images (26%). Video was able to capture more information about an incident, including audio, which often provided important contextual information about the event. Furthermore, the additional information captured on video can be used to counter Israeli claims, such as that the physical violence was justified, contributing to the alternative narrative that the organisations were presenting. This was the case in a video clip that documented the fatal shooting of a Palestinian man, Nur Shqeir, posted by B'Tselem on 20/11/20 (T-512). In the video, soldiers were shown running down the road towards a man (identified in the caption as Shqeir) who could be seen running away from them, and then multiple shots were fired. People were heard shouting and the video had been subtitled with an English translation to what they were saying: "don't shoot". The caption's claim that he was shot "while he clearly posed no risk" appears to be supported by the video which documented Shqeir fleeing from the soldier rather than attacking as was claimed by security forces.

5.2.2 Differences Between Organisations

In the time frame that data was collected, all of the eleven organisations posted at least one image that showed physical violence by Israeli security forces towards Palestinians on their Twitter, Facebook and/or Instagram account. However, there were differences observed between the organisations in regard to the likelihood of posting such images, as shown in Figure 20 below.

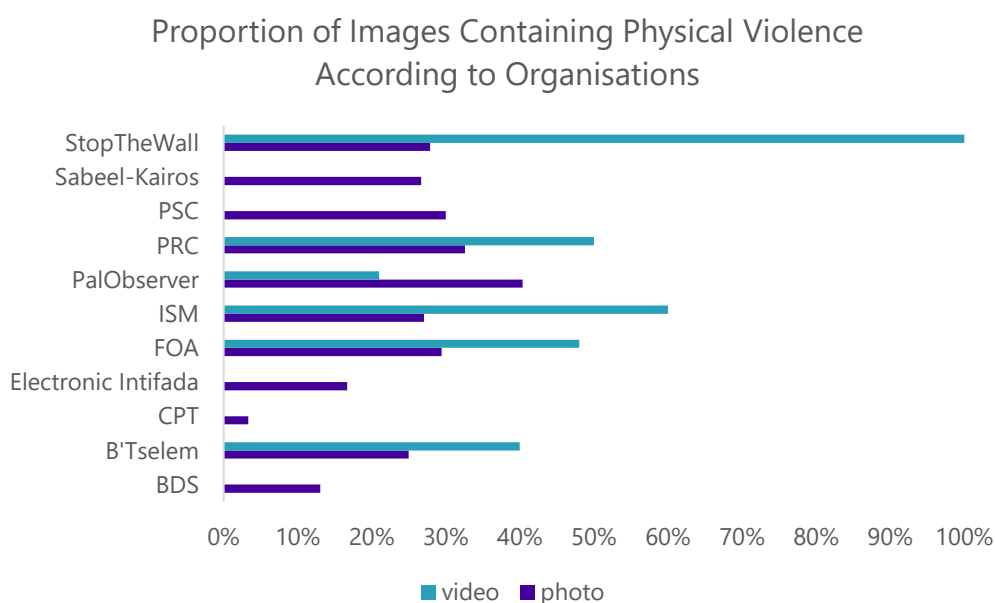


Figure 20. Proportion of Images Containing Physical Violence According to Organisations

Some organisations were less inclined to post this type of visual content, in particular, CPT only posted one image of physical violence and was more likely to share images that contained other types of interactions such as violence against property, discussed later in this chapter. Other organisations were more likely to share images of physical violence, with this type of image making up 40% of Pal Observer’s content that was collected and analysed and all eight of the videos posted by Stop The Wall showed acts of direct physical violence.

5.2.3 Organisations less likely to post images of physical violence on Instagram

The proportion of still images collected and analysed from the organisations that contained physical violence was the highest on Facebook (32%), compared to Twitter (25%) and Instagram (20%), as can be seen in Figure 21 below. Meanwhile, in the case of the videos, the platform with the highest proportion of physical violence was Twitter, with these videos accounting for just over half of all videos collected from the Twitter accounts of the organisations, while this was around 40% on Facebook and 30% on Instagram.

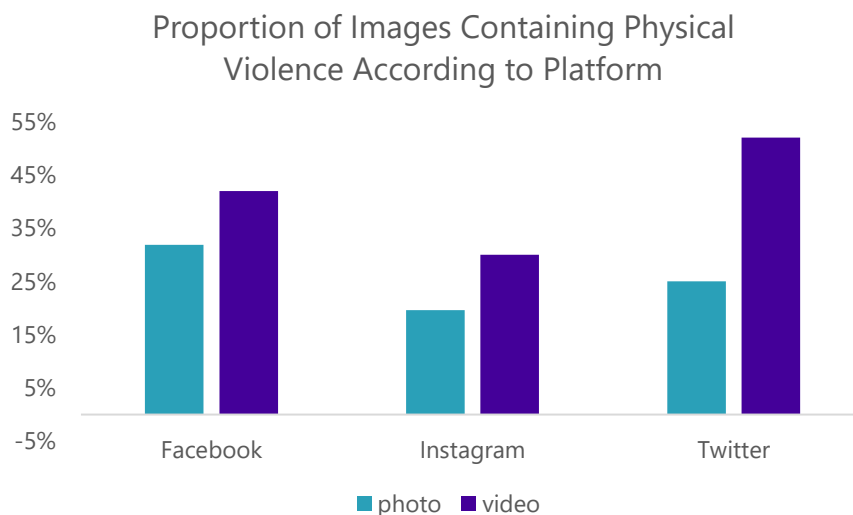


Figure 21. *Proportion of Images Containing Physical Violence According to Platform*

While the proportion of images of physical violence was lowest on Instagram, not all of the organisations had Instagram accounts, and in particular PalObserver (which posted a high number of images of physical violence on Twitter and Facebook) did not have an account on Instagram. However, even after accounting for this, there was a tendency for all the organisations with Instagram accounts to post fewer images of physical violence on this platform than the other platforms, perhaps due to a stricter moderation policy of Instagram. Almost all of the images that were posted on Instagram by these accounts were duplicates of images that were posted on Twitter and/or Facebook.

There were some images that were posted across the different platforms, while other images appeared only on one of the organisation’s platforms, showing that there was not a consistent strategy of posting the same content across all three platforms where the organisations had

accounts. For instance, of the 85 photos of physical violence posted on Facebook, 21 (25%) of these were photos that were also posted on Twitter and/or Instagram, while the remaining three quarters of images were only posted on Facebook.

5.2.4 Individual Violence: Knee on neck

Images of physical violence against individual Palestinians took many different forms, however, there were some images that depicted a specific visual frame of physical violence, namely Israeli soldiers kneeling on the necks of Palestinians to restrain them on the ground. There were seventeen images in total, all posted between May and October 2020 on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by BDS, Stop The Wall, ISM, Pal Observer and Electronic Intifada. What made these images significant is that they evoked the iconic image of George Floyd who was killed by an American police officer by kneeling on his neck in May 2020 and most of these images deliberately drew attention to the similarity of police tactics in the text captions.

One image that was posted by ISM and Stop The Wall on Facebook (FB-201; FB-222 and FB-227) was a close up shot of an elderly Palestinian man on the ground with an Israeli soldier kneeling on his neck, a machine gun pressed against his face. In the caption of FB-201 (Stop the Wall, 20/09/2020), the link was made between the scene shown in the image and George Floyd; "Palestinians recall the chokehold technique used by a racist white policeman and ended the life of #GeorgeFloyd last May." Another post with a visually similar image posted on Twitter by Stop The Wall (T-396, 21/09/20) in which a soldier is shown kneeling on the neck of a Palestinian man on the ground, also draws the comparison between the scene depicted and George Floyd. It reads "Palestinians recall the chokehold technique that killed #GeorgeFloyd". In yet another post with an image of a soldier kneeling on a Palestinian man's neck (T-169, BDS, 25/03/20), a link is made between the scene and the Israeli-US policing exchange program¹²; the caption reads "Through exchange programs, Israeli soldiers and police and US police share worst practices of racialized, repressive policing".

The phrase "I can't breathe" was used explicitly on one of the posts which contained four different photos of Palestinians being restrained in this way by Israeli security forces (T-324, Pal Observer, 29/05/20). The caption read "Scenes of violence repeated daily. #BlackLivesMatter 🇸🇵🇦 #ICantBreathe". The hashtag #ICantBreathe represents a key slogan of the Black Lives Matter movement, taken from the words spoken by Eric Garner before he died. As well as the organisations, social media users were also found to reflect on the similarities between the scenes of Israeli policing of Palestinians and scenes of police brutality against African Americans. For instance, on post T-426, three of the ten comments made the comparison between US and IDF police tactics and these comments were critical of the policing in both contexts. Similarly, on post T-433, two of the comments made the link between policing tactics

¹² Discussions of US-Israel police exchange are contentious. Al-Jazeera has written on this subject (e.g. [How the US and Israel exchange tactics in violence and control | Conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)) and Jewish Voice for Peace published a 2018 [report](#) on the links between Israel and US although the findings are disputed.

in these two contexts. While the captions of the posts described above present information that explicitly draws a comparison between George Floyd's murder and the actions of the Israeli security forces in Palestine, there were four images (FB-184, FB-185, FB-186 and FB-187), posted by Pal Observer on Facebook without any caption, which was unusually for the posts collected and analysed (96% had a caption). It could be interpreted that the organisation believed that the visual similarity of the image they posted with the iconic image of George Floyd was sufficient for social media users to understand what was being communicated with the image.

Transnational support and solidarity were built by attempting to draw links between the shared suffering of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli security forces and Black Americans at the hands of the American police. This was done by posting visual content of Palestinians being brutalised by Israeli forces that mirrored the iconic image of George Floyd under the knee of a US police officer.

5.2.5 Group Violence

While most of the images of physical violence documented Israeli violence against an individual, a minority showed Israeli forces using violence against groups of Palestinians and this typically took the form of firing tear gas into crowds of people. In total, seventeen videos showed tear gas being used against Palestinians. The majority of these videos (65%) were posted by ISM. While some of the images showed tear gas being used against protesters, for example (T-435, ISM, 23/08/2020), others documented tear gas being used in what appeared to be unprovoked attacks against children in the street, worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, farmers harvesting olives, and patients inside a hospital.

Two videos posted on Twitter showed separate occasions in which Israeli soldiers fired tear gas at Palestinian children. One of these videos was T-543 (ISM, 22/09/19) and in this video, a Palestinian man was filmed speaking to soldiers in a residential street. He pointed up to the roof of a building where other soldiers were standing and firing tear gas into the street towards a group of children. The camera then panned down to show people running away from the tear gas, covering their faces, and then returned to the man talking to the soldier. Behind them, a soldier walked down, presumably from the roof, waving his gun in their air and grinning. In a similar video, soldiers were recorded firing tear gas towards children in the street (T-534 (ISM, 29/11/19)). Both of these videos were captioned with information about the location of the incidences and pointed out how tear gas and stun grenades were commonly used by Israeli forces against Palestinian children. On both posts, comments by Twitter users expressed solidarity with the Palestinians, and others mocked the soldiers for targeting children. The two videos were posted to Instagram (but not Facebook) by ISM. The Instagram caption of video I-228 (22/09/19) was longer than the Twitter caption of the same video and included more hashtags than the Twitter one. It also prefaced the caption with the phrase "watch til the end", a phrase which ISM used on multiple Instagram posts.

Another video showed tear gas being used against a large group of Palestinians at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. In this video, people were recorded running away from the gas, and in the foreground of the video, an elderly man looking upset was helped to sit down away from the commotion. People were shown recording the scene on their phones and cameras. This video was posted on Facebook by Stop The Wall (FB-021, 11/08/19) and on the same day on Twitter by ISM (T-556). Each organisation posted a different caption with this video. The caption posted by Stop The Wall included a quote from a Palestinian analyst, Jamal Juma, who provided an analysis of what had happened; he claimed that "Israel wanted to test the possibility of permanent takeover of Al-Aqsa" and a link to the full story on Stop the Wall's website. ISM's Twitter caption, on the other hand, was much shorter and used eleven different hashtags integrated into the text, for example, "#soldiers attack civilian #Muslims worshipping".

5.2.6 Fatal Acts of Violence Rarely Shared

Very few images (still and moving) showed acts of fatal violence against Palestinians. One of these rare examples was a video that captured the fatal shooting of a Palestinian man, Nur Shqeir, recorded by a witness standing above the road where he was shot (T-512, B'Tselem, 30/11/20). In the video, soldiers were shown running down the road towards a man (identified in the caption as Shqeir) who could be seen running away from them, and then multiple shots were fired. People were heard shouting and the video had been subtitled with an English translation to what they were saying: "don't shoot". As the soldiers closed in on the man, the video was cut off, perhaps a deliberate decision by B'Tselem to crop the video so that the actual moment Shqeir was shot was not shown. The caption provided the man's name, posted a link to a press release by B'Tselem and claimed he was shot "while he clearly posed no risk". This video clip was also posted to Facebook by B'Tselem (FB-311, 30/11/20). While the caption on Twitter was short, the caption on Facebook was much longer and provided greater detail about what happened. It also presented and disputed the Israeli narrative that Shqeir drove his vehicle into border officers at the checkpoint, using evidence from the video clip of him running from soldiers. It stated that:

"the fact that Shqeir was shot from afar, while his car was idling and although he clearly posed no risk, demonstrates yet again how easily Israeli security forces use lethal fire against Palestinians without justification". The caption then explained how, more generally, the law enforcement system does not hold soldiers to account when they use fatal force against Palestinians.

While it was rare to find images showing actual fatal violence posted on social media, there were a small number of photos and videos that showed the aftermath of fatal acts of violence. For example, T-028 (Stop the Wall, 23/03/20) showed a young man covered in blood being taken into an ambulance on a stretcher, surrounded by armed soldiers. In the caption, it was claimed that the young man, Sofyan Al-Khawaja, was "shot dead" by the Israeli forces. Similarly, in FB-269 (PRC, 02/10/20), a woman was depicted lying on the ground next to a

checkpoint with two Israeli soldiers standing over her. The caption claimed that she had been shot dead, however, unlike the previously described post, the organisation included a link to an article written by PRC which included details about the incident, verified by The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre. A third image, posted by Electronic Intifada, also appeared to show the death of a Palestinian man depicted lying on the ground in the street with a soldier standing over him holding a machine gun (I-190, 17/08/20). Again, the caption was used to provide information about what had happened, and it claimed that the man was killed following an alleged stabbing incident in Jerusalem's Old City. The caption also acknowledged that there was video evidence showing the man lunging at officers but claims that soldiers opened fire at a time when the man posed no threat. It also claimed that, generally, video evidence is released by Israel when the video "serves its narrative" but is not when video evidence contradicts their version of events.

One video showing the aftermath of fatal violence was posted on three different occasions on Twitter by B'Tselem, twice on 27/03/20 (T-367 and T-368) and once on 28/03/20 (T-366). This video showed men running to retrieve the body of a deceased Palestinian man as an Israeli military bulldozer drove over and dragged the body away. The three posts have slightly different captions. T-366 stated what happened; it described how soldiers fired on "men trying to evacuate a body." In addition to this information, T-367 contained a quote attributed to one of the men involved and a link to the story on B'Tselem's website. The caption on T-368 was more attention-grabbing and used phrases such as "the mission: body snatching" and "like a violent video game" to describe the video. The video was also posted on their Facebook account (FB-318, 27/03/20). The Facebook post had a long caption (552 words) which narrated the incident in great detail, using emotive language; "Like in a spine-chilling video game broadcast live from the chaotic reality of Gaza, viewers watched a fight between a bulldozer, a tank, armed Israeli soldiers, Islamic Jihad operatives, paramedics and innocent residents". The caption claimed that the actions of the soldiers were "illegal and immoral". As was the case with the Twitter posts, the caption also included quotes from witnesses and a link to an article on B'Tselem's website.

In the comments of both the video of the shooting of Nur Shqeir and the video of the body retrieval, social media users were divided on whether or not they agreed with the claims being made by B'Tselem. Some users expressed horror at the actions of the military and sympathy and solidarity with the Palestinians involved. These comments agreed with the claims being made, for example, that the man was shot when he posed no threat. On the other hand, there were a number of comments on all four posts that did not agree with the claims being made, for example, they claimed that the use of bulldozer was justified as the men presented a threat. There were also comments that accused B'Tselem of lying about the incidents or not telling the full story. These types of comments that aimed to discredit the footage and the claims being made were evidence of the wider documented strategy adopted by Israel to accuse Palestinians and their supporters of staging or manipulating visual content that is used to portray Palestinians as victims of Israeli state violence (Stein, 2021).

5.2.7 Aftermath of Fatal and Non-Fatal Violence

A minority of images showed the aftermath of violence or implied violence rather than the act itself. For these images, the text captions of these images played an important role in helping the audience understand the image by making claims about the events that led up to the scene documented in the image. For example, T-028 (Stop the Wall, 23/03/20), which was described above, and showed a bloodied man on a stretcher being taken into an ambulance was captioned with a statement that the man Sofyan Al-Khawaja, was “shot dead” by the Israeli forces. This information was crucial for the audience’s interpretation of the image in a way that the organisation intended and the man became a victim of Israeli state violence. These claims were not verified in the caption, unlike in other posts where there were attempts made to provide corroboration of the claims. For instance, another image posted by Stop The Wall (T-397, 06/09/20) showed men being carried on stretchers down a street and the caption claimed that the two brothers depicted were injured by Israeli forces during a raid on Jenin refugee camp, this information was attributed to the Palestinian Prisoner’s Commission. Furthermore, when the same image was posted by a different organisation (PRC), also on Twitter (T-491, 07/09/20), a link was provided in the caption to direct the user to PRC’s website where there was a report of what had happened including verification from Wafa news organisation.

Links to external websites appeared to be used by the organisations to provide additional verification and authentication of the claims being made in the social media posts particularly when the images themselves were somewhat ambiguous, as is the case with the images documenting the aftermath of violence where there is not enough information in the image to attribute the cause of the injury. Links were used in the captions on all three platforms, for example, the Facebook post FB-269 (PRC, 02/10/20) of the image of the woman who had been shot dead (described in the section above) included a link to an article written by PRC which included details about the fatal shooting, verified by The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre. PRC appeared to use hyperlinks in this way much more frequently than the other organisations, suggesting that this was an important strategy for this organisation.

This strategy was less likely to be employed by other organisations, despite them also posting these types of images showing the aftermath of violence. In the post I-174, posted by ISM (29/08/20), a set of images documented scenes from a protest in Haris in which Palestinian protesters were met with violence from Israeli security forces. In one image, soldiers were standing in front of a yellow gate confronting a group of protesters with Palestinian flags, a woman was holding up her mobile phone to capture the scene and journalists with blue press helmets were holding up cameras. In the next image, an old man was holding a hand to his eye, appearing to be injured and the caption claimed that this was an injury caused by soldiers beating him. The caption also claimed that pepper spray was used against the protesters. None of these claims are verified through an external news report, however.

5.2.8 The Constant threat of violence

Although not all of the images contained evidence of the actual act of violence, all of the images displayed the constant threat of physical violence in everyday contexts, in particular through the presence of military weapons which were sometimes aimed directly at Palestinians. Therefore, even when there was no explicit physical violence recorded on camera, the underlying potential for violence and harm was captured. This militarised threat made visible the power imbalance that represents the relationship between the occupying force and the occupied people, particularly as the Palestinian civilians were never armed. While these types of images were not shocking because of explicit violence, they highlighted the everyday reality of military occupation for Palestinians. Even in images without physical violence, Israeli security forces were depicted as physically threatening, heavily armed and aggressive whereas Palestinians were depicted as unarmed men, women and children and this juxtaposition countered mainstream narratives of Palestinians as aggressors and Israelis as victims that has been used to justify state violence.

Children were frequently present in these images and a common visual frame that was used to convey the constant threat of violence was Palestinian children in the street being watched by heavily armed Israeli soldiers. For example, in an image posted by FOA on 15/05/20, (T-072) two boys could be seen walking down a street with backpacks, as though they were on their way to school. The older boy had his arm around the young one. Along the sides of the street there were heavily armed soldiers wearing helmets, watching them. In a visually similar photo, posted by PRC (T-226, 07/05/20), young girls wearing school uniform and backpacks walked along the pavement, in the foreground of the image were three soldiers. This image was posted on the same date by PRC on their Facebook page (FB-173, 07/05/20). Other organisations posted visually similar images of children with soldiers, for example, in an image posted by Electronic Intifada on 02/10/20 to both Facebook (FB-238) and Instagram (I-185), young children in school uniform were documented walking past three male soldiers holding machine guns.

5.2.9 Conclusion

Still and moving images that documented acts of violence carried out by Israeli security forces against Palestinians were distributed across the three social media platforms by the international solidarity organisations as part of their advocacy work. This shows that Palestinian social media advocacy continues the longstanding strategy of using images as part of the struggle for liberation by countering Israeli narratives of legitimacy of the regime (Atoui, 2020; Neidhardt, 2015; Toenjes, 2015). Images of physical violence depicted the brutality of the settler-colonial state of Israel and its impact on the Palestinian people. Furthermore, although not all of the images contained evidence of the actual act of violence, all of the images displayed the constant threat of physical violence in everyday contexts. Therefore, even when

there was no explicit physical violence recorded on camera, the underlying potential for violence and harm was captured.

Acts of state violence carried out by Israel are frequently justified by Israelis in terms of national security or as a response to Palestinian violent resistance (Chiniara Charrett, 2021; Halabi et al., 2021; Saba, 2021) and mainstream media narratives reinforce this by representing resistance as a conflict between opposing parties, disregarding the context of occupation which is characterised by a power imbalance. The images and their captions presented an alternative narrative that countered claims of Palestinians being a threat and instead framed Palestinians as victims of Israeli violence. At times, this challenging of Israeli narratives was explicit in the captions, with text being used to explain how the images were visual evidence against such accounts. For example, the video recorded by witnesses of the shooting of Nur Shqeir who was shot dead by soldiers, appeared to contradict the Israeli claims that he was attacking when he was shot, as in the video he was running away, and this was emphasised in the caption. With images of physical violence making up a high proportion of the images of interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians, this created a steady stream evidencing state violence and Palestinian victimhood, thus rallying support for the Palestinian cause on social media (Swed, 2020; Volinz, 2018).

5.3 Property violence

Violence was not solely portrayed as being actual physical violence, but other forms of violence carried out by Israel against Palestinians were showed in the images posted on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Together, these images depicted many of the different types of violence that are experienced by Palestinians at the hands of the security forces, reflecting the ebb and flow of disproportionate physical assaults on Palestinians as well as the low-level everyday violence which is built into the fabric of the occupation (Joronen, 2019; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Weizman, 2012). A common visual framing of structural violence that was posted by the organisations was property violence, a core form of structural violence used to expel Palestinians from their land, fragment Palestinian territory (Joronen, 2019; Meade, 2011; Yacobi & Milner, 2022) and as a form of collective punishment (Siegfried, 2020). Of the 610 still images collected and analysed from the Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Palestinian advocacy organisations, 11% showed property violence and of the 250 videos, around a quarter (16%) showed property violence. Property violence was most often visually represented as home demolitions, but it also included home, office and mosque raids. Images of property violence typically took the form of home demolitions, and these images were used as evidence of Israeli property violence. These images were often accompanied by text captions which described the ways in which Israel uses urban planning as a weapon to control and restrict the expansion of Palestinian neighbourhoods through a system of permits and administrative demolition of property.

5.3.1 Differences Between Organisations

As was the case with images of physical violence, images of property violence were more likely to be posted by some of the organisations than others (see Figure 22). Photos of property violence were the most likely to be posted by PSC and BDS, with this type of interaction being depicted in 40% and 43% of their still images respectively, however both of these organisations were not found to post any videos showing property violence. In contrast, Sabeel Kairos and CPT did not post any photos containing scenes of property violence during the time period data was collected. Interestingly, however, CPT was the most likely to post videos of property violence, with almost 45% of the videos posted by CPT containing this type of violence.

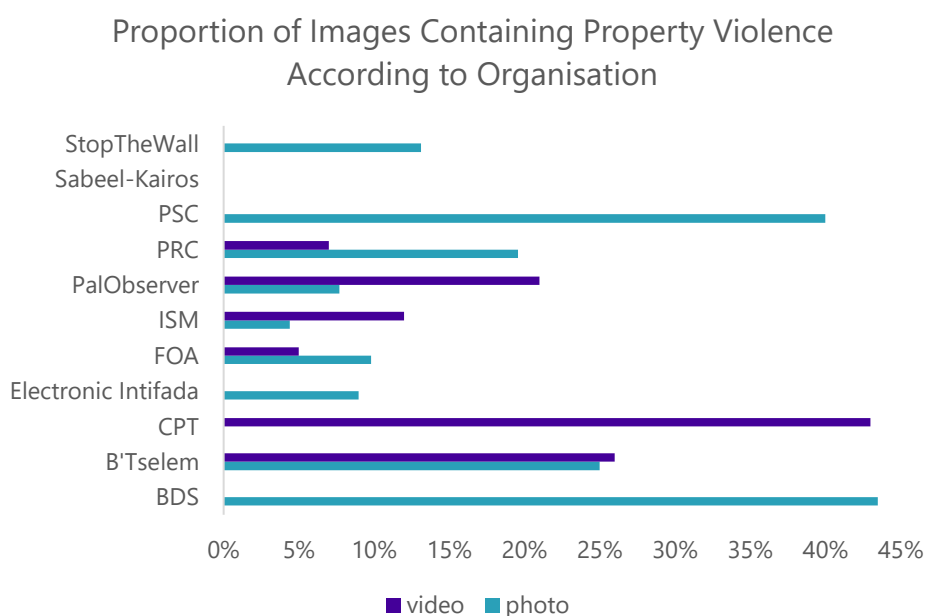


Figure 22. Proportion of Images Containing Property Violence According to Organisations

5.3.2 Platform Comparison

As can be seen in Figure 22, there were differences observed between the three platforms, with organisations most likely to post visual content containing property violence on Twitter as opposed to Instagram and Facebook. Of the posts collected from Twitter, 17% of photos and 18% of videos were found to depict some form of property violence, in contrast 10% of photos and 13% of videos on Facebook and 7% of photos and 13% of videos on Instagram showed property violence.

Almost all of the images that contained property violence were posted more than once on more than one platform, either by the same organisation or by a different organisation. Some of the images were posted many times, for example one image which showed a Palestinian man crying in front of a property being demolished was posted seven times across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram by three different organisations, FOA, PRC and Pal Observer.

However, this image was used in different ways by the different organisations with their own text captions and hashtags being used to frame the image in different ways.

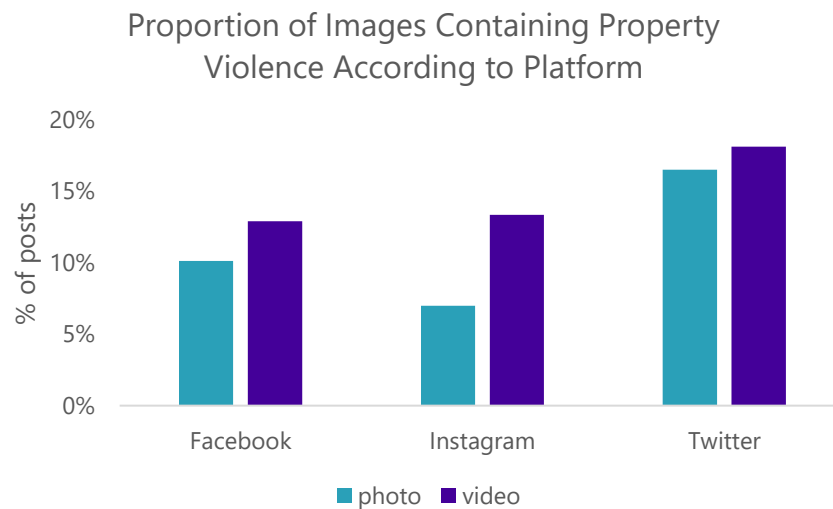


Figure 23. *Proportion of Images Containing Property Violence According to Platform*

5.3.3 Building Demolition

A common visual framing present in the majority of images of property violence was that of a bulldozer demolishing a building. These types of images made up 56% of still images and 64% of videos that documented property violence. The majority (70%) of these videos were posted by B'Tselem with one posted by FOA, one posted by ISM, and one posted by Pal Observer. These images contained common features: a bulldozer, a property in the process of demolition, members of Israeli security forces standing by and Palestinians witnessing the demolition. For example, in T-469 (PRC, 09/12/20) a group of ten Palestinian men were shown sitting on a hillside, watching a bulldozer demolish a building while a group of five soldiers were standing by holding machine guns. In another similar image, a group of men and a group of soldiers were standing and watching a demolition (T-218 (PRC, 05/06/20)). Both images were posted along with a caption that provided information about the location and date of the property demolitions. They also included links to articles on PRC's website which contained a more detailed report of the event and corroborated the claims being made.

Many of the captions that were posted with these images provided information about the specific demolition depicted in the image. For example, I-201 (PRC, 09/12/2020) depicted a group of Palestinian men sitting on a hillside watching a demolition with a caption that claimed that this image showed the demolition of "Palestinian houses in Shalal al-Auja community, north of Jericho city" which led to at least 44 people being displaced. A link was provided to an article by PRC with further information. This image was also posted on Twitter on the same day by PRC with the same caption (T-469). Similarly, I-214 (PRC, 28/08/20), depicted a row of men and boys watching a demolition from behind a barrier guarded by police. This caption also provided details of the demolition including the location (the village

of al-Araqib in the Naqab desert). It was claimed that the structures were demolished for the “177th time since 2000 and for the sixth time this year”. Again, a link was posted in the caption to an article by PRC.

The Palestinian people who were present in the images were documented showing a range of reactions ranging from passively watching, to expressing sadness and anger, to confronting the soldiers at the site of demolition. These emotional responses were captured in the image, for example, in a photo (T-322) posted by Pal Observer (12/06/20), a man was shown standing in front of a building being demolished in a residential area, crying. This particular image was also posted by FOA and PRC on Twitter (T-410 (FOA, 10/10/20); T-472 (PRC, 29/11/20)). Despite this being the same image, the three organisations used the captions to present three different issues. Pal Observer’s caption focussed on the demolitions themselves and used the hashtags #NoToAnnexWestBank and #StopAnnexation while FOA’s caption raised awareness of the issue of mental health of Palestinians who experience traumatic events such as home demolitions, posted on #WorldMentalHealthDay. Finally, PRC’s caption, posted on the International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People focused on the need for international solidarity to stand with Palestinian people.

Children were frequently shown as being the victims of property violence. These videos often captured the emotional response of children to the demolition of their homes, for example, in T-513 (B’Tselem, 30/11/2020), a young girl was shown crying and being comforted by an elderly woman as they sat outside and watched a bulldozer tear down a building, which appeared to be their home. The caption of the post included a link to a press release by B’Tselem on their website about the demolition, providing more information about where the demolition took place and linking it to the wider issue of property violence. In the comments section of this video, there were calls to boycott companies such as Caterpillar and JCB that are considered as complicit in facilitating the demolition of Palestinian property.

Videos of home demolitions captured more information about these scenes than the still images. They documented the emotional reactions of Palestinians to the destruction of their property and verbal interactions between soldiers and Palestinians, some of which were translated into English for international audiences. For example, a video that documented demolitions in Masafer Yatta, in the southern West Bank (T-514 (B’Tselem, 29/10/20)) showed a soldier arresting a young man and dragging him away. In another clip, in the same video, a woman who was holding a baby, shouted at a soldier who has grabbed her by the arm, asking him “where will my son go?”. The speech has been translated into English subtitles. Similarly, T-510 (B’Tselem, 13/12/20) documented the demolition of homes in Ras al-Auja, a village in the Jordan Valley of the West Bank. In the first video clip, the camera panned along a long row of people who were sitting on the ground watching a bulldozer tear down buildings with a row of heavily armed soldiers standing guard in front of them. The following clip showed a man confronting the soldiers, with English subtitles captioning the interaction for non-Arabic speakers. The soldiers could be seen pushing the man. In the third clip, another Palestinian man was recorded confronting soldiers, saying to them “I cannot go to my home?”

5.3.4 Homes, Offices and Mosque Raids

While the visual of the bulldozer demolishing Palestinian property was the most common type of image of property violence, there were other forms of property violence documented and shared on social media by the organisations. One of these was Israeli forces raiding Palestinian properties. Three videos posted on Twitter by FOA, and ISM showed Israeli soldiers attempting to force entry into a Palestinian home (T-091, FOA, 03/01/20, T-109, ISM, 23/02/20 and T-549, ISM, 11/09/19). The caption on T-109 claimed that the video showed Israeli forces "illegally entering and occupying" homes in al-Khalil on that day and the caption on T-549 claimed that the video showed night-time raids in villages in the South Hebron Hills. In contrast, the caption for T-091 did not provide details about the specific home raid depicted within the video, but instead made a general statement about home demolitions and illegal Israeli settlements.

Furthermore, two different videos were posted that were recorded from the inside of a house that was being raided by soldiers, presumably by the victims of the raid. Posted on Twitter (T-390), Facebook (FB-303) and Instagram (I-161) by CPT on 03/08/19, the camera followed soldiers as they entered a home at night. It showed a Palestinian woman with small children standing in a doorway watching, one of the children was crying. The caption of the post provided detail about the context for the home raid. It explained how a young Palestinian boy, Nasser, was attacked by settlers in the street and later soldiers "invaded" his family's home. These raids, the caption claimed, were "frequent" and often carried out for "no apparent reason". This video was one of a minority of videos that were posted by the same organisation to all three platforms. As CPT had more followers on Facebook, it was not surprising that the Facebook post received the highest number of likes (104), comments (18) and shares (158), although it is notable that only 1% or less of their followers interacted with the Facebook post. The Facebook and Instagram posts had broadly the same caption, however, some of the words were hashtagged on Instagram, for example #Hebron, #checkpoint and #soldiers.

In another video posted on Facebook (FB-316) and Twitter (T-360) by B'Tselem, soldiers in hazmat suits and clinical face masks entered a house, guns pointed, with a dog. One of the soldiers noticed the person recording and came towards them, gesturing for them to stop. The caption claimed that during the Covid-19 pandemic, "Israel continues arrests and house raids in the West Bank". One of the victims was quoted describing how the soldiers "came in without permission, didn't show us any warrant and had no respect for our privacy inside our own home. The soldiers looked stressed. It was obvious they didn't want to touch any things or any of us". It was further reported in this caption that 100 homes were raided in March 2020, with a link provided to an article on B'Tselem's website about the home raids that occurred during this period of time. The video clip had also been edited to include a text caption at the beginning, written in English, Arabic and Hebrew which described the event in more detail. This was an example of how organisations shared content relevant to the Covid-19 pandemic during this time and used captions to draw attention to how the pandemic was affecting Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

It was typically homes that were documented being raided by Israeli forces, however there were two photos that depicted a raid on a Palestinian office posted by PRC on Twitter (T-503; T-504), Facebook (FB-252; FB-251) and Instagram (I-221; I-222). The first image, posted on 23/07/20 showed police officers inside an office rifling through folders and files and taking photos of documents. The second image, posted on 26/07/20, a photo that appeared to be from the same incident, showed a police officer forcing open a filing cabinet inside the office. The captions on the images posted on Twitter provided context to the image, describing the scene as a raid on “cultural centres” by Israeli forces in East Jerusalem. A link was also provided in the second post (T-504) which directed the viewer to a post by PRC in which more detail about the incident was found. Although the Instagram caption was the same, there was a slightly different caption on the Facebook post and there was no link. The posts showing the office raid that were posted on Facebook received slightly more likes than the same posts on Twitter and Instagram; PRC has many more followers on their Facebook account compared to their Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Finally, another video posted by PRC (FB-278, 13/03/19) showed a raid by Israeli security forces on a prayer room at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In the video, which was recorded on a mobile phone, Israeli police officers were documented walking over the prayer mats wearing their boots inside the room. The person with the mobile phone followed the officer as he walked around the room and commented verbally on how the soldier refused to remove his boots despite being aware that this was considered disrespectful for the Muslim Palestinians who prayed there. His words were translated into English subtitles and, unusually, the response of the soldier has also been translated. “These are the police of Israel, who claim that they respect religions” the caption stated.

Together, these videos of raids on Palestinian property were used to show the range of structural violence experienced by Palestinians by Israel. Captions were frequently used to provide additional information about the scene, as well as deliberately linking the events to the occupation as the cause of such violence.

5.4 Conclusion

The images posted by the organisations on their social media accounts reflected many of the different types of violence that were experienced by Palestinians at the hands of the security forces. This reflected the ebb and flow of disproportionate physical assaults on Palestinians as well as the low-level everyday violence which is built into the fabric of the occupation (Joronen, 2019; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Weizman, 2012). All of the images documented the Israeli security forces exercising power over Palestinians through the use of physical, non-physical, or the threat of violence. All interactions between the two groups of people involved a certain power imbalance as security forces were granted a position of authority by the Israeli state over Palestinians. This power was made visible through the images documenting physical and structural violence. These images posted to social media created a continuous stream of visual content that highlighted the power asymmetry and oppression that was perpetuated by Israeli

occupation. The act of recording and sharing interactions showing these different forms of violence can create visibility and this can be a form of activism in that this visibility can raise awareness and challenge mainstream narratives. By making these visible, this may create potential to challenge the legitimacy of such aspects of the occupation and, therefore, the occupation itself, however unless this content reaches audiences beyond the organisations' immediate supporters, this will not be realised.

6 Visual framing: Structures of Occupation

6.1 Introduction

Structural violence in the form of the restriction of movement of Palestinians was primarily portrayed through checkpoints and roadblocks but also through images that showed Palestinians being stopped and searched on the street. The checkpoints were depicted as physical barriers, either permanent structures or temporary blocks that were manned by military forces, these types of images are described in section **Error! Reference source not found.** Then, in section 6.3, the images that showed Palestinians being stopped and searched on the streets by Israeli security forces are described.

6.2 Checkpoints

Overall, there were 52 photos and 21 videos that showed an interaction between Palestinians and Israeli security forces at a checkpoint or roadblock such as the Qalandiya checkpoint or another, unnamed checkpoints. Images taken at checkpoints contained visuals that gave a sense of the environment of restriction at the checkpoints and the militarisation of the site, such as metal bars, barbed wire, concrete blocks, fences, turnstiles and narrow passages. In all of the images, there were heavily armed soldiers present creating a sense of the constant threat of physical violence. In some of the images, this sense was heightened through the depiction of soldiers pointing their guns directly at the people crossing the checkpoint, for example one image which showed a soldier aiming his weapon at Palestinians waiting at the turnstile of a checkpoint was posted by FOA, Sabeel-Kairos and BDS on Twitter and Facebook.

6.2.1 Organisation Comparison

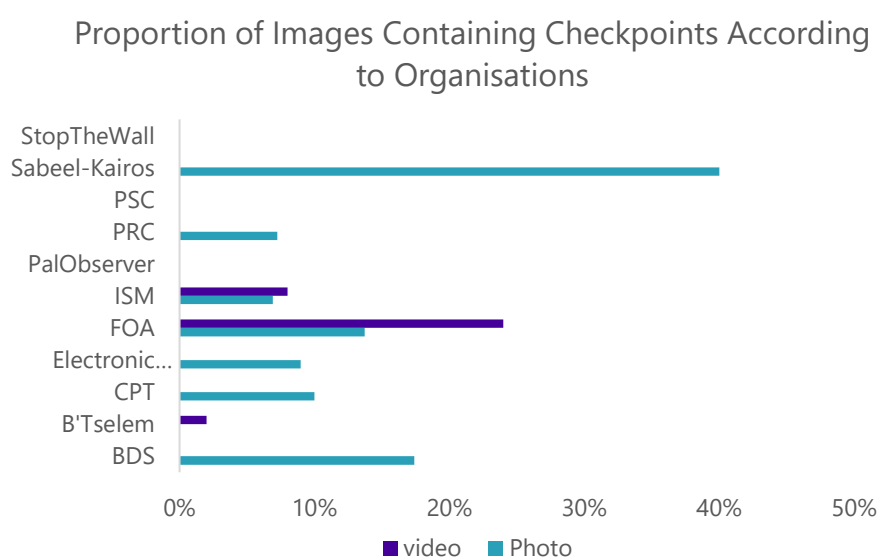


Figure 24. Proportion of Images Containing Checkpoints According to Organisation

Unlike physical and property violence, not all of the organisations were found to post images that documented restriction of movement at checkpoints, specifically, Stop the Wall, PSC and Pal Observer posted no images that showed interactions between Israeli forces and Palestinians involving the restriction of movement. Of those organisations that did post this content, some were more likely to post this type of image than others (see Figure 24). Sabeel-Kairos and BDS were the most likely to post still images of checkpoints or roadblocks. FOA was the most likely to post video content of checkpoints and roadblocks with 15 videos posted by FOA across the three platforms showing this type of interaction. This was much higher than the other two organisations that posted videos of checkpoints, ISM posted four videos and B'Tselem posted two videos.

6.2.2 Platform Comparison

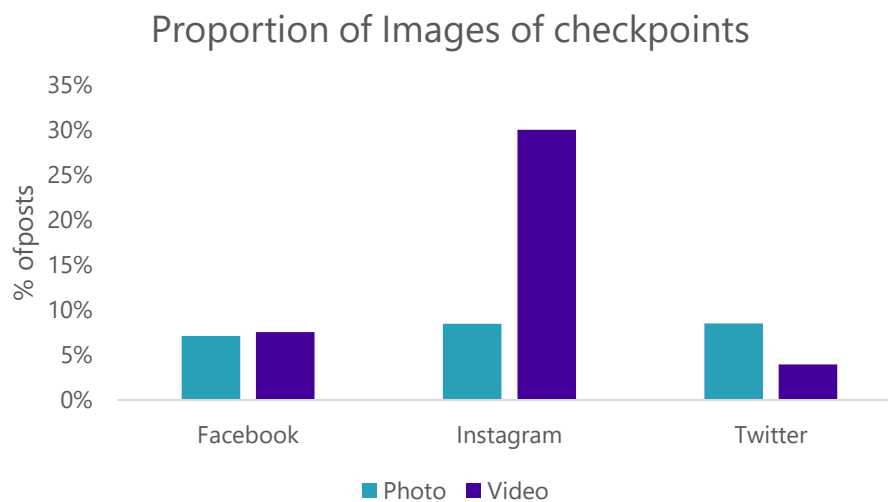


Figure 25. Proportion of Images Containing Checkpoints According to Platform

Across the three platforms, a similar proportion of photographs containing scenes of restriction of movement were found (see Figure 25), with 12% of images found from the Twitter accounts of the organisations, 12% of images from the Facebook accounts and 15% of images from the Instagram accounts. Many of these photos were the same photos that were posted across two or three of the platforms either by the same or a different organisation. However, there were bigger differences between the three platforms when it came to video content of restriction of movement, with 30% of videos collected and analysed from Instagram showing this type of interaction between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, compared to only 4% on Twitter and 8% on Facebook. The actual numbers of videos on the platforms were low, with nine videos on Instagram, seven on Facebook and five on Twitter showing checkpoints and the majority of the videos were posted by FOA.

6.2.3 The Threat of violence at checkpoints

Most of the images of checkpoints conveyed a sense of the threat of physical violence faced by Palestinians at these sites. For example, T-140 (BDS, 10/05/20) showed a soldier crouched behind a concrete barrier, a machine gun rested on top of the block, aimed directly at a queue of men standing at the turnstile. The man inside the turnstile had his arm rested on the bar, resting his chin on the other, looking bored. This same image was posted three times on Facebook by three different organisations (FOA (FB-051, 15/07/2019), Sabeel-Kairos (FB-066, 03/12/2019) and BDS (FB-080, 15/04/2020)). The image posted by BDS had been annotated with text overlaid which said:

“HP enables apartheid in Palestine. HP companies provide the technology for Israel’s population registry and ID card system. This is a key tool of apartheid against Palestinians in Israel and East Jerusalem, ensuring discrimination in healthcare, education, housing, employment, marriage and policing. Boycott HP.” It was also posted to Instagram by FOA (I-038, 15/07/19) with the same caption as was used on the Facebook post.

In the images of checkpoints, men, women and children were all depicted together with the armed Israeli soldiers, with children being present in many of the images posted, for example, FB-172 (PRC, 08/05/20) depicted a woman with three small children standing and speaking to an Israeli police officer at a makeshift checkpoint, with another soldier checking a man’s ID behind her. Above their heads, on a grass verge by the side of the road another police officer was sitting, looking down at them, holding his machine gun.

In a video compilation posted by FOA (FB-037, 15/11/19) titled “what are illegal checkpoints?”, multiple clips showed Palestinians that were being restricted by security forces. One of these clips documented an interaction between a woman who had three small children with her and three soldiers blocking her passage through a checkpoint. The children were crying, and the woman looked around frustratedly. She said to the soldier “I want to go to the hospital; my husband is in the hospital” (this was subtitled in English). Another person off camera explained that “he (the soldier) doesn’t want to let her through”. The soldier looked disinterested by her pleas to be let through and handed back her ID card and the video clip ended. Other clips within this compilation video showed scenes of physical violence with soldiers slapping Palestinians, breaking up crowds with horses, and scenes of intimidation, such as a clip in which soldiers aimed machine guns at young children in school uniforms.

Another compilation of multiple clips showing Palestinians queuing to cross a checkpoint was posted by FOA (T-070, 20/05/20). In one of these clips, men were filmed packed into a narrow waiting area and queuing to pass through the checkpoint. Above their heads, several men could be seen to have climbed on the bars of the fences surrounding the queue and walked along the bars above the crowd. A second clip within this compilation, filmed this time from outside of the bars, was a close up shot of men queuing and being pushed along. A man looked into the camera and said (subtitled in English) “Look at us! What do you see? What can

we do?" before being pushed forward by the men behind him. The caption appealed for social media users to "look how humiliating Israeli checkpoints are" and encouraged them to take action by donating to the organisation.

Another video that documented the impact of checkpoints was T-371 (B'Tselem, 01/03/2020) which was recorded on a mobile phone. In this clip, a soldier could be seen confronting a small group of men with young children who were standing waiting at a yellow gate that is closed and blocking access to the road. He shouted and gestured at them. The caption provided context to the interaction and explained how soldiers unexpectedly closed the checkpoint, causing disruption to the lives of local people who use the checkpoint to travel between areas.

Images that were taken at checkpoints often received high levels of engagement across the social media platforms. The video post titled "what are illegal checkpoints?" posted on Facebook (FB-037), received the most likes, shares and comments across all of the accounts and platforms with 426 comments, 2000 likes, 4900 shares and 72000 views. This level of response was much higher than the other posts collected, with most gaining less than ten likes. Many of the comments left on this video post expressed sympathy and anger at the checkpoints and, more generally, Israel itself. However, some were supportive of the presence of checkpoints as being necessary for security. On this post, many of the comments were not text but in the form of images or GIFs of general pro-Israel or anti-Israel content, for example an image of the Israeli flag and the words "God bless Israel. God bless the IDF" overlaid, alternatively, the Israeli flag with the words "Israel has no history only a criminal record". Other memes shared anti-Palestinian tropes, such as a cartoon with text that read " Hamas has money for 500 rockets a day aiming to kill Israeli civilians? Tell me more about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza", and a cartoon that depicted a Palestinian soldier standing behind a child in a pram, both perpetuating the narratives of Palestinian violence. This type of trolling by posting many anti-Palestinian images on these posts was rare, with most of the comments overall being supportive of the Palestinian cause. The video "what are illegal checkpoints?" was also posted in Instagram (I-011, 15/11/19), however it did not receive the same level of engagement, receiving 1044 views compared to 72000 views on Facebook. One explanation for this might have been that the organisation had fewer followers on Instagram than Facebook, as was the case for most of the organisations.

Other images on Instagram of checkpoints, however, did have high levels of engagement relative to the Instagram posts. For example, I-017 (FOA, 09/09/20) received 265 likes. This was an image that showed a large crowd of men packed into a checkpoint queue with some climbing along the fence above their heads. The caption called for the audience to "imagine if this was the only way you could get to work" and appealed for them to boycott HP as providing the technology to manage the checkpoints. While the response was high in terms of liking the post, there were only six comments on this post, four of which were only emojis, specifically the broken heart (❤️) and crying face (😭) emoji.

When comments were left on images of checkpoints, there was often some level of disagreement between the users with some expressing support for the Palestinians experiencing the restrictions and others disputing and disagreeing with the claims being made by the organisations posting them. For example, on T-073, the majority of comments disagreed with the narrative being presented, with one claiming that the caption falsely represented the image and the reality of the checkpoints, while another argued that the security measures were justified due to the threat of Palestinian violence. Similar critical comments were also found on T-101 and T-140, with both posts receiving anti-Palestinian and anti-BDS comments.

6.3 Stop and Search

Checkpoints were not the only manifestation of occupation and structural violence, although they did represent a concrete, visible indicator of such. One of the interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians that was frequently depicted in the photos and videos posted by the organisations was Palestinians being stopped on the streets for searches or ID checks. These images showed yet another form of oppression and restriction that Palestinians faced and were used by the organisations to make claims of apartheid and discrimination in the captions. Overall, 4% of photos and 3% of videos showed Palestinians being stopped on the street by Israeli security forces.

6.3.1 Organisation Comparison

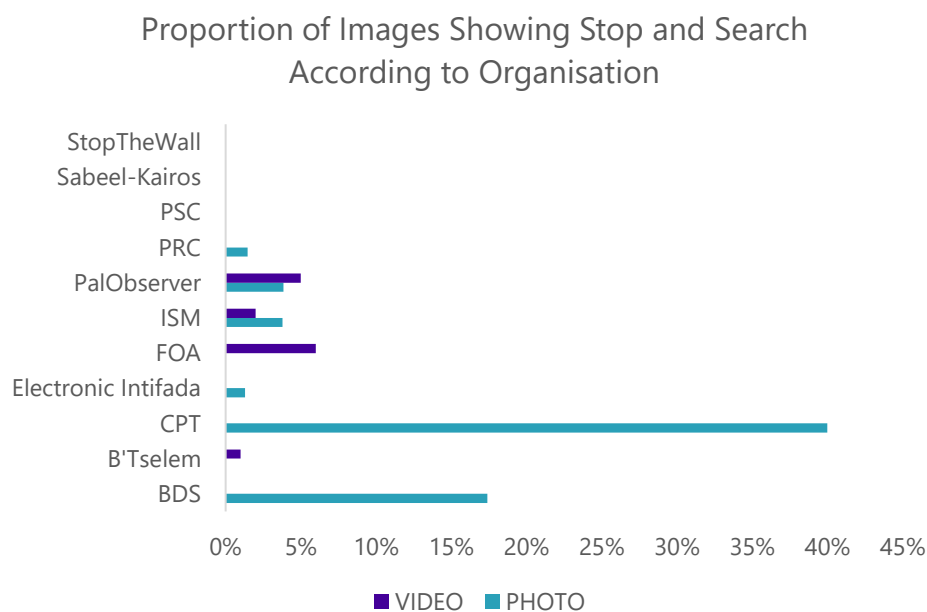


Figure 26. Proportion of Images Showing Stop and Search According to Organisation

CPT was the organisation that was the most likely to post content showing Palestinians being stopped on the street by Israeli forces, with around 40% of the photos posted by this organisation showing this type of interaction. For the other organisations, however, this visual

frame was rarely posted, if at all (see Figure 26). Videos were even less likely to contain scenes of stopping and searching than photos, with less than 10% of the video content posted by all the organisations showing this.

6.3.2 Platform Comparison

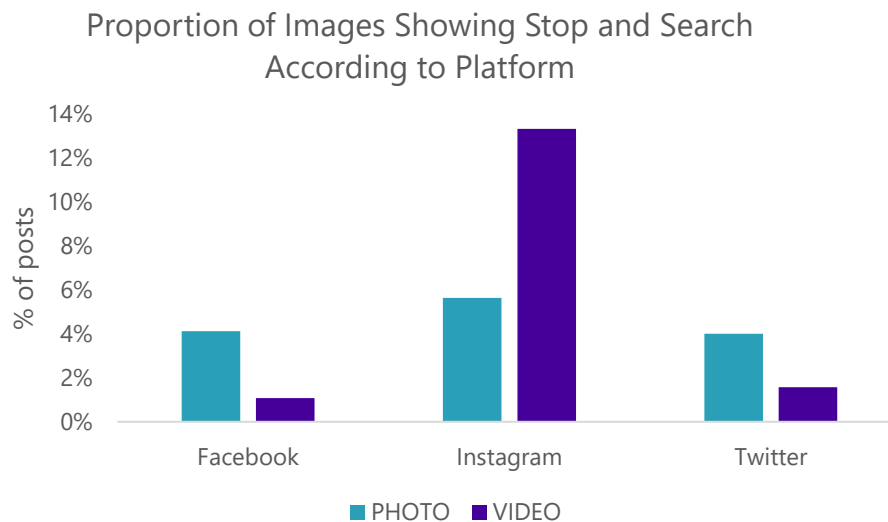


Figure 27. Proportion of Images Showing Stop and Search According to Platform

Content that depicted Israeli forces stopping Palestinians on the street was most likely to be found on Instagram (see Figure 27), with around 14% of video content on Instagram overall depicting this form of interaction. The proportion of photo content that showed this was much lower across all three platforms, with 4% on Facebook, 6% on Instagram and 4% on Twitter.

6.3.3 Description of images

In these types of images, Israeli security forces were often documented stopping Palestinians to check their ID cards, for example, in T-139 (BDS, 11/05/20) a Palestinian woman was shown standing against a wall while a soldier checked her ID card. The caption of this image stated that Israel was committing the “crime of apartheid” and called for the viewer to engage in the BDS campaign as a way of taking action. The comments section of this post contained some debate between the users about whether or not the term apartheid could be applied in the context of Israel. Some comments made a claim that because there were Muslims living in Israel, it could not be called apartheid while others claimed that the security measures that were being labelled as apartheid were necessary for Israeli defence against Palestinian violence. This was a common criticism that was expressed in the comments as a counterpoint to the claims being made and reflected common mainstream pro-Israeli narratives.

Other images showed Palestinians being searched by security forces. For example, FB-332 (Pal Observer, 18/09/19) showed a row of young men stopped on the street with their hands up against a wall surrounded by police officers and this was a similar visual in FB-393 (ISM,

07/09/19) and FB-354 (Pal Observer, 25/05/19). Captions of these posts included information about the Palestinians being stopped such as their names and the location of the incident, as a means of verification. In yet another image, it was a journalist who was being stopped and searched, for example in T-387 (CPT, 16/12/19) three soldiers were shown to have stopped a man wearing a blue press vest in the street with one soldier holding the man's tripod and camera. In the caption, CPT claimed that "Israeli forces target Palestinian journalists with physical assault, confiscation of cameras, and aggressive body searches". A similar scene was depicted in T-421 (ISM, 12/10/20) which documented another incident of soldiers stopping journalists in the street and confiscating their equipment. The caption of this post claimed that in this situation, "Israeli forces prevented Palestinian journalists from entering and reporting on the violence".

In three images of Palestinians being stopped and searched by security forces, the images have been edited to blur the faces of those Palestinians in the image. In FB-288 (CPT, 18/12/20), a soldier was documented as he searched through a Palestinian woman's handbag. In this photo, the woman's face had been blurred out to hide her identity, while the soldier's face was visible. In a similar way, the photo on post FB-291 (CPT, 20/09/19) has been edited to blur the Palestinian boy's face while the three soldiers' faces were visible. The image was also posted on Instagram (I-157, 18/12/2019). It was not clear whether the edit was carried out by CPT or by the photographer. The organisation that posted this image, CPT, did not do this on any of the other images that they posted, neither did any of the other organisations.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the visual framing of occupation in ways that it manifests other than violence (both physical and non-physical) which was the focus of the previous chapter. Two of the most common visuals that were used by the organisations to present evidence of structures of occupation were the checkpoints, representing the restriction of movement of Palestinians, and the stopping and searching of Palestinian people on the streets by Israeli security forces. As was the case with images of violence, these images created a visual stream documenting the reality of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation and the power imbalance of this. Captions of these images were used to corroborate and verify the events as well as deliberately linking what was seen in the image to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In this way, the advocacy organisations made visible to an international audience the ways in which Israeli occupation presented and invited the viewer to empathise with the Palestinians and mobilise to take action in some way.

7 Visual Framing: Arrests

7.1 Introduction

The most common type of interaction between Palestinians and Israeli security forces was arrests, with this making up 37% of photos and 52% of videos overall. These images documented the arrests of both adults and children and were used as evidence of the oppressive nature of policing by Israeli forces. The images of children, in particular, were emotive in that children are typically seen as vulnerable innocent members of society so the visual framing of them being arrested was used to evoke sympathy in the audience.

7.2 Comparison of Organisations and Platforms

As can be seen in Figure 28, images of arrests were found to be posted by all of the organisations, with some posting images of arrests more frequently than others, for example all of the videos posted by BDS depicted an arrest being made.

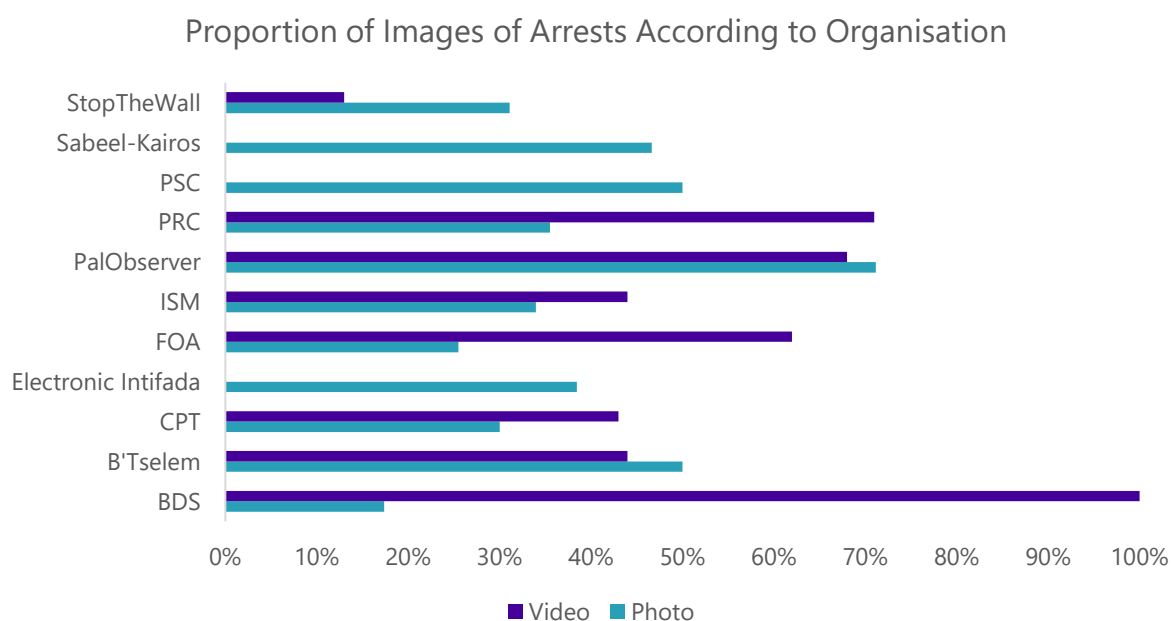


Figure 28. Proportion of Images of Arrests According to Organisation

As can be seen in Figure 29, across all three platforms, a similar proportion of video and photos contained interactions in which Israeli security forces were arresting Palestinians. Video was more likely to show arrests on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with around half of the videos posted on each platform by the organisations depicting this interaction.

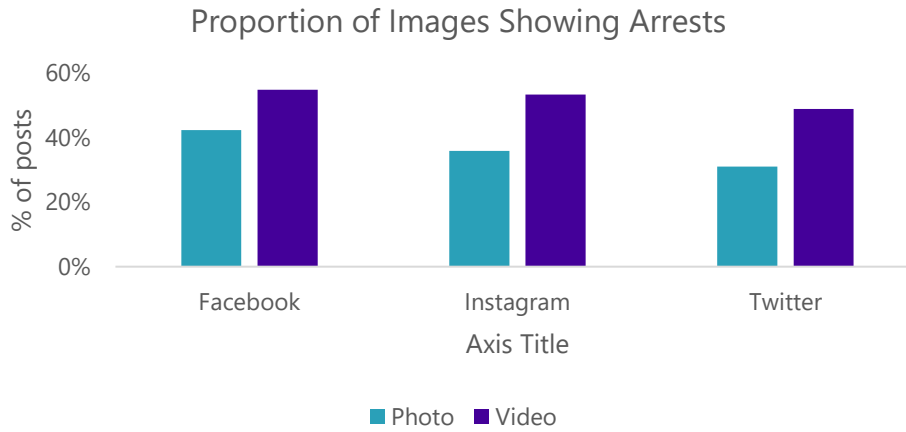


Figure 29. Proportion of Images Showing Arrests According to Platform

7.3 Child Arrests

Palestinian children were shown in images with Israeli security forces in a range of different interactions, including both physical and non-physical violence. However, the most common type of interaction between children and Israeli forces was being arrested. Overall, this type of interaction was present in 17% of all of the still images and 17% of the videos. Furthermore, around half (47%) of the still images and 34% of the videos that depicted an arrest of a Palestinian showed a child as opposed to an adult. The photos of arrests posted on Instagram were the most likely to show children being arrested, as seen in Figure 30, with 61% of the images of arrests on this platform showing a child.

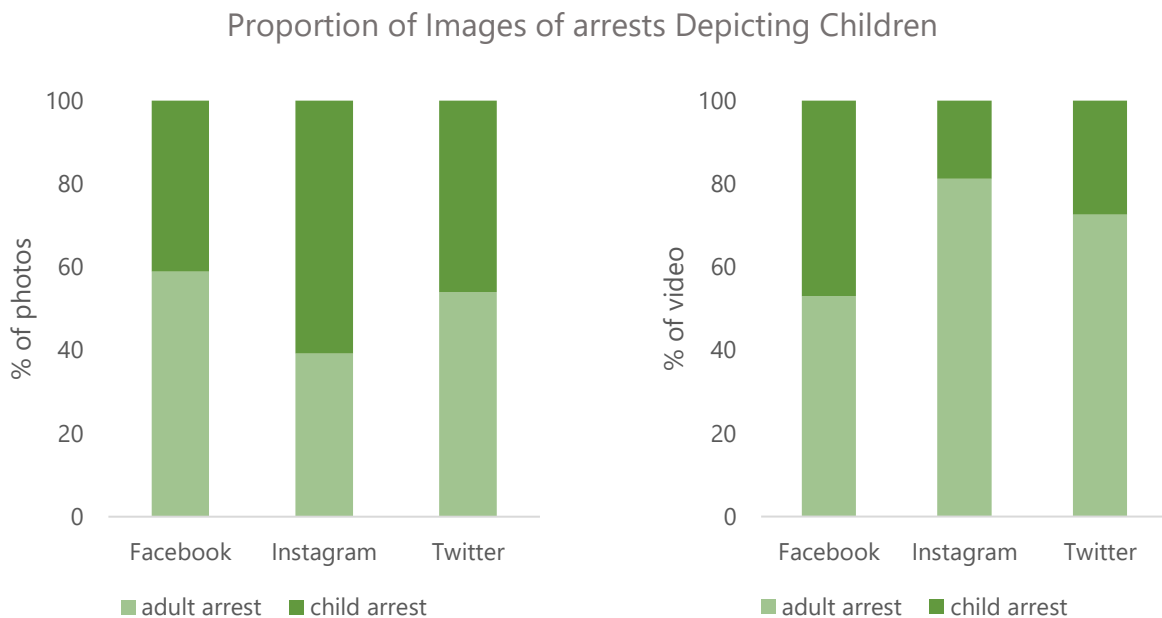


Figure 30. Proportion of Images of Arrests Showing Children

Palestinian children were shown as victims of Israeli policing that criminalises them. By choosing to post images that showed children and teenagers as victims of the occupation, the organisations were seeking to elicit a strong emotional response in the viewer as children are considered the most vulnerable members of society and have been found to be effective communicators of human suffering and produce a sense of wanting to help (for example Durham, 2018). Many iconic humanitarian photographs that have evoked sympathy, solidarity and support have been images of children, for example, the images of the Palestinian boy Mohammad al-Durra being shot and killed by Israeli soldiers as he sheltered with his father was widely shared as evidence of Israeli state violence (D. Campbell, 2004; El-ibiary, 2010; R. L. Stein, 2021) and was considered to have widely damaged Israel's reputation, leading to an ongoing campaign to discredit footage that portrayed Palestinians as victims of Israeli violence (Stein, 2021).

Images captured the fear and emotional responses of young children whilst being arrested by Israeli forces. For example, in T-029 (Stop the Wall, 04/03/20), a young boy who appeared to be aged around seven or eight years old looked terrified as he was arrested by a group of four soldiers. This image was also posted by the same organisation on Twitter a month later (T-022; Stop the Wall, 05/04/20) with a different caption. The former has a caption that spoke of walls imposed by Israeli occupation, while the latter's caption (posted on Palestinian Child's Day) spoke about the detention and deaths of Palestinian children. While the young children often looked afraid in the photos, some of the teenagers were photographed looking into the camera and smiling. For example, T-354 (Pal Observer, 14/01/20) showed a teenage boy smiling into the camera as he was being arrested in the doorway of a house. In a visually similar image posted on Facebook (FB-348, Pal Observer, 02/07/19) another teenage boy grinned into the camera as he was arrested by a soldier in what appeared to be a sign of defiance in the face of Israeli state violence.

For some of the videos of child arrests, the conversation between security forces and Palestinians was subtitled in English so that an international audience could understand what was being said. This was typically done by B'Tselem, for example on a video posted on Facebook (FB-323, 25/03/19) which showed the arrest of two young Palestinian boys by soldiers inside a school. In the video, men were speaking to soldiers who were attempting to take the boys away. The officer said "move! Go away!" and the teacher said, "don't take the boy". The video continued for around two minutes as the teachers argued for the boys not to be taken. At one point, the teacher said, "speak Arabic, we don't understand you!" and the soldier replied, "I couldn't care less about your Arabic". Towards the end of the video, the boy said "I swear I didn't throw any stones! I swear I didn't!" The same video, when posted by BDS (FB-111, 04/04/19) was compiled differently and had been edited together with a video interview by the mother of the boys from the video and it is her words which were subtitled over the top of the video clip. She explained how they were "arrested for more than two hours" and how they were now "suffering from psychological issues". She called for IARPP (the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy) to move their

conference from Tel Aviv as holding it in Israel “will contribute to covering up Israel’s colonisation and violations of our rights and goes against IARPP’s calls for the healing of victims”. She called for the boycott of the conference and the video ended with a slide saying “IARPP move your conference from Apartheid Israel”.

Text was also used within the captions in order to provide additional information about the arrests depicted. Some of the captions on the images of children being arrested were used to provide contextual information about who was arrested and for what reason, for example, T-565 (ISM, 24/03/19). In this image, a teenage Palestinian girl wearing a black and white scarf and pink hoodie was shown being arrested by three armed soldiers. The caption of the post claimed that the girl was arrested for a Facebook post she had written, and a link was provided directing the viewer to a news report by MEMO¹³ which verified the arrest according to Asra Media Office. The report also discusses the issue of social media censorship of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities, particularly through the state’s Cyber Unit which monitors and removes Palestinian content from social media. This corroboration of the arrest through a link was only present in a minority of posts, and most captions only provided information about the arrest without verification, for example, T-385 (CPT, 15/09/20) documented the arrest of a teenage boy who was being dragged along the ground by five Israeli soldiers. The caption claimed that the boy was arrested in Hebron that day but was not able to corroborate this.

Other captions on these types of images were used to make wider claims of state violence against children. For example, T-470 (PRC, 03/12/20) showed a very young boy being arrested by Israeli soldiers. In the caption, there was a link to article written by the organisation which discusses the UN’s call for an investigation into Israeli state brutality against children¹⁴. Other images used the caption of the image of the child arrest to provide details of that specific incident and then give information about the scale of the issue. For example, I-238 (ISM, 02/08/19) which showed a young Palestinian girl being detained by soldiers had a caption that provided contextual information, it explained how “according to sources who informed the Palestinian news agency Wafa”, the eight-year-old girl was taken to be interrogated by Israeli soldiers from Hebron. The caption then generalised this incident to the wider issue of very young children being detained by soldiers for allegedly harassing settlers. It went on to state that “according to the Palestine branch of the rights group Defence for Children International, at least 8,000 Palestinian children have been arrested and prosecuted in the Israeli military detention system since 2000.” Similarly, post FB-171 (PRC, 10/05/20), which was also posted on Twitter (T-224) showed a blindfolded teenage boy held in a headlock as he was arrested by soldiers. The caption on both platforms stated that: “Each year approximately 500-700 Palestinian children, some as young as 12 years, are detained and prosecuted in the Israeli

¹³ Middle East Monitor is a not-for-profit press monitoring organisation focused on Palestine and the wider Middle East context

¹⁴ [UN calls for probe into Israeli injuring of 4 Palestinian children in past 2 weeks – Middle East Monitor](#)

military court system. The most common charge is stone-throwing which is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. This is #NoWayToTreatAChild!"

A photo that gained one of the largest number of responses within the overall image dataset was FB-307 (B'Tselem, 27/01/19) which showed police officers with machine guns holding a teenage boy in a headlock in the foreground, while in the background, police officers were scuffling on the ground with another teenage boy surrounded by tear gas cannisters. The post received 944 likes, 438 shares and 225 comments. The comments consisted of a mixture of general comments about Israel/Palestine and relevant comments that remarked on the image itself, for example commenting on the age of the boy. Within the comments section, there were a number of threads of conversation between Facebook users. These threads were generally a back and forth between users with opposing viewpoints on whether the arrest was justified, with some sympathetic towards the Palestinian and others arguing that the arrest was necessary. One user asked what they could do to help and received a number of responses suggesting supporting BDS and writing to their political representative to demand government action. These types of threads of back-and-forth conversation were uncommon within the comments sections of the posts, with this being one example of an exception.

7.4 The Arrest of Khairi Hanoun

There were a small number of events that were highly documented and shared multiple times on different platforms and accounts. One such incident was the arrest of Khairi Hanoun, an elderly Palestinian man protesting against home demolitions and settlement expansion. As well as video footage of the arrest, there were three still images that were posted on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by multiple organisations. The first image was posted three times on Twitter, three times on Facebook but not on Instagram (T-426; T-396; T-433, FB-201; FB-222; FB-227). The second image was posted twice on Twitter, twice on Facebook and once on Instagram (T-484, T-490, FB-262, FB-267 and I-211). The third image was posted once on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (FB-239, T-525 and I-186).

The first image was a close up shot of Hanoun's face pressed into the ground with a soldier kneeling on his neck. It was posted on Twitter by ISM (T-426, 21/09/20 and T-433, 02/09/20) and Stop the Wall (T-396, 21/09/20). All three posts received at least one comment that made the link between US policing and the death of George Floyd, and the tactics depicted in this image showing the knee on the man's neck. Comments on T-426 and T-433 also referred to the absence of the incident from mainstream UK news such as the BBC. In T-433, five of the twenty comments used the @ function to link to either MSM outlets such as BBC News, Channel 4 News or politicians such as Boris Johnson, prime minister of the UK and Justin Trudeau, prime minister of Canada. The majority of comments on T-433 expressed anger and anti-Israel sentiments. There were two comments sending solidarity from Pakistan, showing the range of international support for the Palestinian cause. A small number of comments claimed the image was staged, with one user responded to this saying it was not fake. This image of Hanoun on the ground was posted on Facebook by Stop the Wall and ISM. In the caption of

FB-201, the same caption was used as in the Twitter post posted by ISM, discussed above. In the caption, the link was made between the heavy-handed policing of Khairi Hanoun and the murder of George Floyd in America; "Palestinians recall the chokehold technique used by a racist white policeman and ended the life of #GeorgeFloyd last May. #FreeKhairiHannoun #FreePalestinianPrisoners".

The second image was posted twice by PRC on Twitter; T-484 (21/09/20) and T-490 (08/09/20). This image showed Hanoun on the ground holding onto a Palestinian flag with a soldier standing over him and another who was holding up a machine gun in the background looking at the camera. The captions of the posts described the incident and named Khairi Hanoun as the man depicted. Neither post got any comments. The image was posted on Facebook by PRC in posts FB-262 (08/09/20) and FB-267 (21/09/20) and on Instagram (I-211, PRC, 08/09/20). The posts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram had the same captions and used the hashtag #FreePalestine.

The third image was posted by Electronic Intifada on Twitter (T-525, 01/10/20), Facebook (FB-239, 02/10/20) and Instagram (I-186, 02/10/20). This image was a close up, taken from above, of Hanoun's face looking up, under the knees of a soldier. The captions across all three platforms were the same:

"PHOTO: Israeli soldiers detain a Palestinian protester during a demonstration against settlement expansion in the village of Jbara, south of the West Bank city of Tulkarm <https://bit.ly/2GIUOFx> #PalestineInPictures".

As was the case with the posts discussed above, the comments on this image reflected on the similarity of the image and the image of George Floyd, claiming that the techniques used by US officers were learnt from Israeli training. Comparison of the engagement to these three posts in terms of likes, shares and comments showed that the Instagram post was liked the most with 130 likes, whereas the Facebook post got the most comments (15). While the Facebook comments were all text, the six comments left on the Instagram post were almost all emojis; these were the broken heart (💔) and crying face (😭) emojis as well as one comment which was a row of the Israeli flag emoji (which could be considered trolling behaviour). One Instagram comment made a claim that the journalist who took the photo was arrested and jailed, although there was no source provided to verify this claim.

The incident was not only documented and shared through photographs but also in two videos that were posted on Facebook and Twitter by multiple organisations. One of these videos was posted four times, three times on Twitter by PRC, FOA and B'Tselem and once on Facebook by PRC, and the other video was posted only by FOA on the same Twitter post as the first video. These video clips were not posted by any of these organisations on their Instagram accounts.

The first video showed a soldier pushing Hanoun to the ground and people rushing to record the incident on their cameras and phones. Another soldier moved to stand in front of the

scene in an apparent attempt to block the recording but there were many people with cameras, and he gave up and turned to assist the first soldier with the arrest. The first soldier knelt on Hanoun's neck and tied his hands behind his back. The camera then zoomed in to film a close up shot of Hanoun's face pressed against the ground. This video was posted on Twitter by PRC (T-494; 01/09/20), FOA (T-412; 07/09/20) and B'Tselem (T-515; 24/09/20). The posts by PRC and B'Tselem received a high response from Twitter users, with 162 and 65 likes, and 71 and 27 comments respectively, while FOA's post only received 15 likes and three comments. Like the photos, many of the comments reflected on the similarities between this image and the iconic footage of the death of George Floyd under the knee of a US police officer and included hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter and #PalestinianLivesMatter, making the link between the BLM movement and scenes from Palestine. Others mentioned the link between the training of Israeli forces and US police established by an exchange programme which saw US police officers receive training in Israel. This video was posted by PRC on Facebook (FB-274, 01/09/20) accompanied by the same caption it posted on its Twitter account. Commenters expressed their anger at the treatment of the man and more generally, against Israel. Neither FOA nor B'Tselem posted the video on their Facebook or Instagram account.

The second video that showed the arrest of Hanoun was shared in the aforementioned post from FOA containing the first video (T-412). This meant that this post contained two video clips of the same event, while the other posts shared by the other organisations only contained the first video. This video clip was a close up shot of Hanoun's head pressed into the ground by a soldier. The video which was made up of both of these video clips also had photos from the arrest and had text added over the top that described what was happening with a subtitled part of what is being said in English "why are you doing this?". As mentioned above, the FOA video received fewer likes, comments and shares than the videos of the same event posted by B'Tselem and PRC despite this organisation having a much higher number of Twitter followers than PRC.

7.5 Conclusion

Arrests were the most common form of interaction between Israeli security forces and Palestinians that were depicted in the images overall, as opposed to other forms of violence and oppression. Images of arrests frequently showed (sometimes very young) children being the victims of Israeli policing which presumably were used to evoke sympathy and empathy. For images of arrests, text captions were important for the audience to understand that this was not justified policing of criminals but instead part of a wider strategy of oppression used by the occupation forces to suppress Palestinians.

8 Visual Framing: Resistance

8.1 Introduction

Although many of the images that were posted on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram by the organisations depicted Palestinians in the role of victims of Israeli occupation, this was not the only representation of them and there was a subset of images that showed the active resistance to occupation and oppression. This typically was in the form of organised protests in which Palestinians were documented holding flags and placards and facing armed soldiers. Some images depicted the violent response to protests by these soldiers although the majority showed security forces not actively engaging with the protesters but as a threatening presence. As was the case with the images of arrests, discussed in the previous chapter, images of protests were accompanied with text captions providing key contextual information about the legitimacy of the protest and often describing violence that took place that was not depicted in the image. Aside from these organised forms of resistance, there were images that showed individual acts of resistance, particularly individuals confronting security forces in different settings such as at property demolitions and intervening in arrests of children.

8.2 Protests

Overall, 22% of photos and 4% of videos documented Palestinian protests, meaning that organisations were much more likely to post photos of protest than video. Most of these images were of single events, however, there were a series of protests that were heavily documented, and the images were shared across platforms by ISM. These were the protests that took place in Haris over several weeks of July and August 2020 in response to settler violence, annexation and the normalisation deals between Arab states.

8.2.1 Organisation comparison

As shown in Figure 31, all of the organisations were more likely to post photos of scenes at protests than video. For some organisations, images of protest made up a large proportion of the photos posted, for example this type of image made up 40% and 36% of the photo posts distributed by PSC and Stop The Wall respectively. However, only three of the organisations were found to post videos of protest (Pal Observer, ISM and B'Tselem) and these made up a small proportion of the overall videos shared by these organisations.

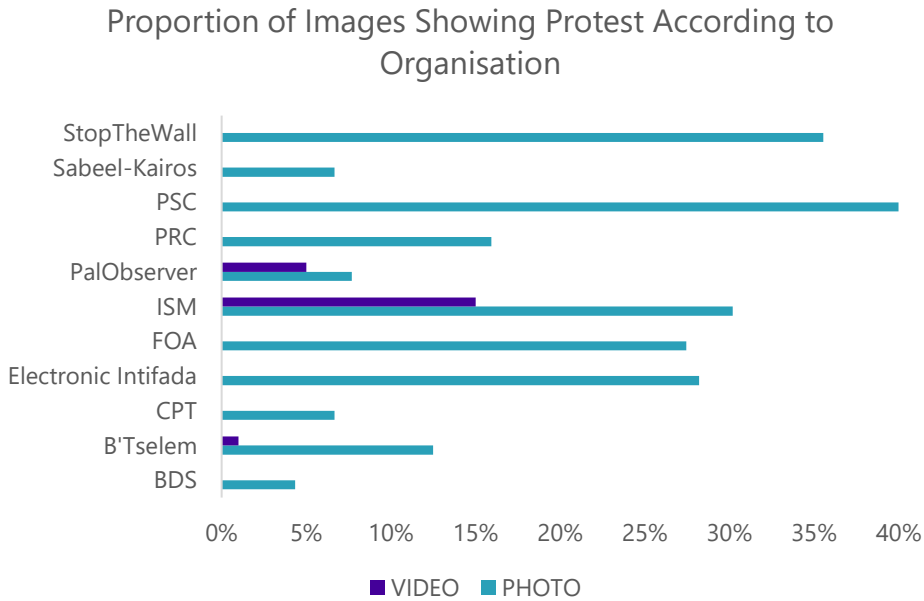


Figure 31. Proportion of Images Showing Protest According to Organisation

8.2.2 Platform comparison

As stated previously, photo was more likely to show protests than video and this was true across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (see Figure 32). The proportion of images of protest compared to other types of interaction was high across all three platforms, although organisations were found to be slightly more likely to share this type of image on Instagram compared to Twitter and Facebook.

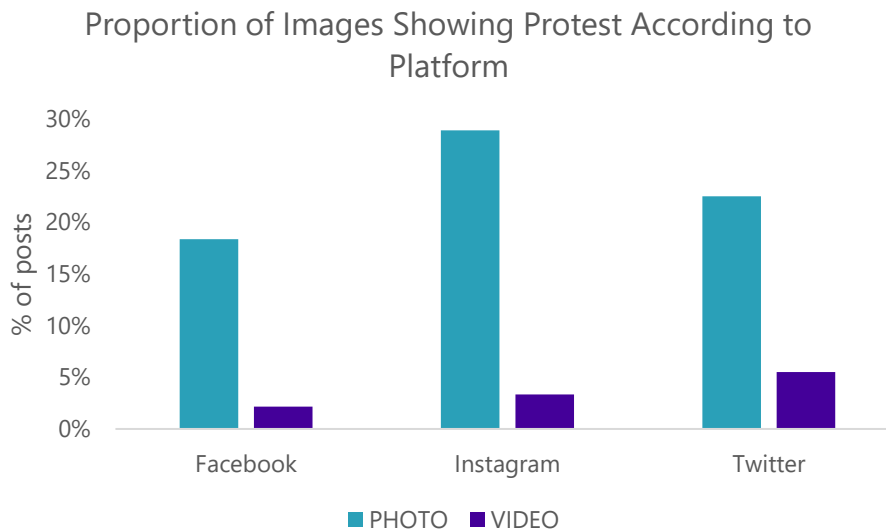


Figure 32. Proportion of Images Showing Protest According to Platform

8.2.3 Legitimising protests

For images of protest, text was an important complementary component for the audience to be able to interpret the image and encouraged them to support the protesters. A key use of text captions posted alongside the images of protests was to emphasise the legitimacy of the protest by explaining the reasons why Palestinians were protesting and to make claims of a disproportionate heavy-handed response to the protests by Israeli security forces. Thus, images that showed protests were almost always given captions by the organisations that clearly stated the reasons for the protest, for example:

“Protests in Tulkarm yesterday, against plans announced by illegal Israeli settlers to seize land in Jabbara, Ras, and Shufa village” (FB-217).

8.2.3.1 *Weekly Protests in Haris*

ISM posted images of a series of protests that happened in Haris over several weeks in July and August 2020. The first set of images was posted across all three of ISM’s accounts on Twitter (T-442), Facebook (FB-209/FB-210) and Instagram (I-179) on 18/07/20. One of the images showed a group of Palestinian protesters with flags standing on one side of a yellow gate with a row of soldiers standing on the other side with machine guns. One of the protesters was recording the soldiers. A second image showed rows of men praying on one side of the gate, soldiers standing on the other side. The post was captioned: “Weekly protest in the town of Haris, west Salfit, against ongoing violence by illegal settlers.” This caption was the same on all three platforms, however hashtags were added to the Instagram post (#protest #weeklyprotest #salfit #hares #haris #illegalsettlers #israelisettlers #israelisoldiers #israeliarmy #apartheid #discrimination.) In this post’s caption, the cause of the protest (settler violence) was made clear and additionally, the Instagram caption used hashtags to make clear that the settlers were “illegal”.

Palestinian protesters waving flags during the Haris protest the following week were also captured in photographs shared by ISM a week later, on 01/08/20. For example, an image was posted by ISM on Twitter and Facebook (T-440; FB-213) at the same location showed a man standing in front of the same yellow gate waving two Palestinian flags with a row of soldiers who were standing in a row behind the gate. The caption of this post was “Eid prayers in Haris, West Salfit. Photos by Palestinian journalist Ahoud Al-Khuffash.”

A week later, on 08/08/20, another set of images was posted to Twitter, Facebook and Instagram by ISM of protests at the same location. One of the images showed a woman with a press vest holding a camera next to other journalists and protesters; soldiers were standing around with guns (FB-216; I-177-1; T-439). Another image depicted the protesters at the yellow gate, soldiers were standing by and one soldier was standing above on a concrete block taking photos of the protesters (I-177; T-439-3).

On 29/08/20, another image was posted to Twitter (T-434) and Instagram (I-174) of the protests in Haris. In this image, a group of protesters holding flags were confronting soldiers at

the yellow gate. In the caption, “The weekly protest in Haris, west Salfit, against annexation, the UAE-Israel deal, and occupation violence. Israeli soldiers injured 5 protestors by pepper-spraying them. A 6th protestor was injured in the eye after being beaten by Israeli forces.” The Instagram post used the same caption but with hashtags (#haris #hares #salfit #uaedeal #trumpdeal #israelisoldiers #protest #equalrights #FreePalestine #pepperspray #policebrutalityawareness). This was an example of how text was used to provide additional information about protests that was not captured in images, specifically about the response by the soldiers to protests.

8.2.4 Response to Protests

As shown in Figure 33, the majority of images of protest across all three platforms showed no physical violence on the part of the security forces policing the protests, with most images showing Israeli security forces present but not actively engaging with the protesters. A minority of images showed soldiers using physical force, such as tear gas, against them.

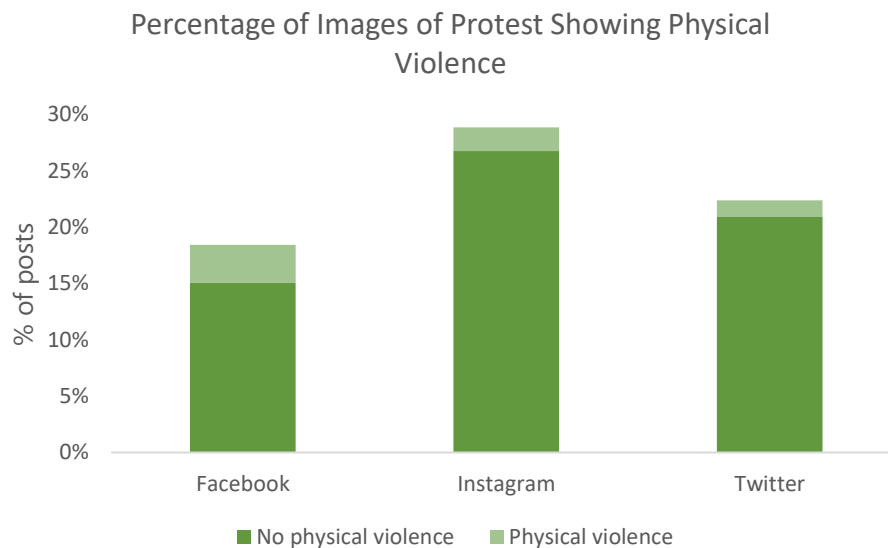


Figure 33. *Percentage of Images of Protest Showing Physical Violence*

In most of these images of Palestinians protesting, Israeli soldiers were shown standing by and observing rather than intervening, however the text captions made claims of violence that happened. For example, Stop the Wall documented scenes from a protest that took place in Wadi Hummus in response to the demolition of buildings. In FB-022 (03/08/19), three men, one who was holding a flag, one holding a camera and one holding a placard were shown opposite two soldiers beside a demolished building. The caption of the image described how Stop the Wall, along with other organisations, had organised a “solidarity prayer” which was disrupted by Israeli forces using tear gas against those that had gathered in protest against the demolition of homes in Wadi Hummus. Similarly, in another image (FB-023), a group of men, including two wearing press vests, stood opposite a group of soldiers in an image that had been taken from a vantage point above. The caption claimed that the soldiers had destroyed a

tent set up by the protesting residents of Wadi Hummus. As with the image above, the audience did not see the actual act of violence (in this case property violence), but instead was presented with an image of the context to the violence.

8.3 Confronting Security Forces

Palestinians were not only shown as victims of violence but shown actively confronting the security forces. This was common in images that depicted property violence, with many of these images documenting the response by Palestinians to the soldiers who were overseeing the demolition of their property. For instance, an image posted both on Facebook and Twitter by PRC (FB-181 and T-238) on 07/01/20 showed a man and woman confronting a soldier who was standing in front of their property which had been demolished. In a similar manner, a video posted by ISM on Twitter (T-547) and Instagram (I-231, 12/09/19) documented a young Palestinian boy confronting Israeli soldiers about the demolition of his house. Although what the boy was saying was not translated into English subtitles, the caption explained that the twelve-year-old boy asked soldiers “why they came to this land” after witnessing the demolition of his family’s home. The caption provided context, explaining that “11-year-old Ali asks Israeli soldiers why they came to this land, after being forced out his home and having to watch bulldozers destroy his and his 5 siblings' house” and on Instagram it contained twelve hashtags including #IDF, #israelioccupation, #Netanyahu, #HumanRights and #childrights. This video did not depict the actual demolition, nor did the caption provide verification of these claims, however almost all of the 22 comments on Twitter, and the four comments on the Instagram post, supported the boy and praised his bravery, despite not being presented with visual evidence of the actual demolition.

8.4 Conclusion

While an important visual frame was presenting the Palestinian people as victims of the Israeli occupation and its physical and structural violence, it was important that this was not the only representation of Palestinians and images of protests and of confronting soldiers framed them not as passive victims in need of international help but as active participants in their own resistance and liberation. Almost a quarter of photos that showed interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians were in a protest setting and these provided some alternative visuals to the stream of images of violence and victimisation. It was not just images of organised protests that were shared that showed resistance but also images that documented individual acts of resistance such as confronting the security forces that oversaw the demolition of a Palestinian property.

9 Interaction between Image and Text

9.1 Introduction

The vast majority of images (96%) were shared alongside with a text caption that provided textual information, in English, about the photo or video that was posted. This is typical for images posted on social media platforms Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, where visual content is usually posted not in isolation but using the text caption function which allows the user to add text, hashtags, links, emojis and mention (@). The captions consisted mostly of text, however around a quarter of posts included hyperlinks used to direct the user to an external website and around half contained hashtags, used to create searchable tags (discussed in chapter 9). This chapter, however, focuses on the text. There are different ways that text can interact with the image to confirm or conflict with the visual content within the process of interpretation (Brantner et al., 2011; Unsworth & Cléirigh, 2009). In this study, captions were analysed alongside the images to gain understanding of how the text interacted with the images to guide the interpretation of the images. Analysis revealed captions were used for a number of different purposes; primarily to add additional information about the image and guide the viewer's interpretation of the image, as well as situating the events depicted in the image within the context of the settler-colonial framework, corroborating the events shown, encouraging the viewer to support the cause and promote a sense of responsibility to take action in some way. In this chapter, the captions of the posts and the ways that they were used by the organisations are discussed.

9.2 Guiding Interpretation and Framing Discourse

Text provided additional information in a different format to the image that could help the audience to understand and interpret the image, supporting previous research that has shown how captions provide information and cues to guide interpretation (Zappavigna, 2015; Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018). Most of the text captions reflected the content of the images and provided detail about the events shown. This was typically key contextual information, typically the names and ages of the Palestinians, the date and location, and a description of what had happened. Sometimes, quotes from witnesses were included, for example the caption posted on an image of a young Palestinian boy being dragged away by a police officer described what had happened and included an explanation by his father:

"His Father Karam described what happened: "The officer told me that he was going to arrest Wadi' and hand him over to the Palestinian Coordination. I asked him: "Why arrest a five-year-old boy?" A soldier standing next to the officer showed me a stone and claimed that my son had thrown it, and that it had hit the car of a settler who was driving north, near 'Abed checkpoint." (FB-043).

Captions for the images of demolitions were used not only to convey information about the incident pictured but also to share information about the scale and nature of property demolitions and tended to focus on systematic property violence. These often mentioned the issue of illegal Israeli settlements and expanding settlements on Palestinian land. For example:

“Jewish settlers have been setting up caravans on a plot of land that belongs to local Palestinians and fenced it as they expand their illegal outpost established a year ago in Abu al-Qandol area in the northern Jordan Valley. #EndApartheid #FreePalestine” (I-221).

Beyond the specific incident, captions frequently included statistics (although rarely corroborated) about the scale of the issue, for example:

“The #Israeli occupation has demolished 6,116 Palestinian structures in the West Bank and East #Jerusalem between 2010 and 2019” (FB-181).

When the caption discussed a specific eviction or demolition and there was something tangible that the viewer could do, this was stated in the caption, for example, the link in this caption directed the audience to a letter that they could sign addressed to the Foreign Office asking them to take action to prevent the family being evicted:

“Please help stop this eviction: <http://palestinecampaign.eaction.online/lobby/sheikh-jarrah-sabbagh-family-to-be-evicted-from-their-home-in-east-jerusalem> @UNHumanRights @NPMPParty @Palestinianspe1@Zaytoun_CIC” (T-206).

In a similar way, captions posted alongside images of checkpoints and roadblocks typically used the image as a way to demonstrate the broader issues of restriction of movement on Palestinians, for example, this caption posted by FOA with a video showing scenes at checkpoints:

“Hate the morning commute? #MondayBlues Imagine if this the only way you could get to work. Palestinians start queueing from the early hours of the morning just to cross through the illegal Israeli checkpoints & make it to work.” (I-032)

Images that documented protests were almost always given captions that clearly stated the reasons for the protest, for example:

“Protests in Tulkarm yesterday, against plans announced by illegal Israeli settlers to seize land in Jabbara, Ras, and Shufa village” (FB-217).

They also emphasised that protests were peaceful and that protesters were unarmed, this helped to legitimise the actions of the protesters, for example:

“Hundreds of Palestinians have peacefully marched today” (FB-009).

All of the organisations used the captions to not just talk about the specific incident depicted in the image but to deliberately link it to the systematic and structural violence of occupation. Almost half (44%) of all the captions analysed contained the word “occupation” or some form

of it such as “occupied”. Furthermore, the word “settler” or “settlement” appeared in around a quarter (23%) of captions. This language created a consistent narrative across all of the organisations and platforms to frame the discourse around the Palestinian cause as being that of a settler-colonial occupation. While organisations frequently used the words “occupation” and “settler” when discussing Israel, they were much less likely to use the word “colonial” or “colonisation”, with this language only occurring in 3% of captions. This is despite colonisation, and specifically settler-colonisation, being a common framework used by Palestinians and activists.

Around a quarter of captions (23%) deliberately drew attention to the fact that the actions of the Israeli security forces were illegal under international law. Most often, this was in reference to the displacement of Palestinians and the building of illegal Israeli settlements. For example:

“The settlements are illegal, a violation of international law and displace thousands of Palestinians” (I-034), and:

“Last September, the Israeli PM Netanyahu announced his intention to make the Jordan Valley an integral part of Israel. By so doing, he violates Articles 47-78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention stating that “an occupier may not forcibly deport protected persons, or deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into occupied territory.” (FB-012).

In a similar way, the text captions highlighted how Israeli actions violated Palestinian human rights, for example:

“Around 700 Palestinian children are detained by the Israeli military every year for throwing stones. Their detention often includes physical and psychological assault, sexual assault and solitary confinement for up to 2 weeks. Not only is this policy discriminatory, it is illegal under international law and a violation of the 4th Geneva convention. Israel has been violating international law for years.” (FB-042).

The combination of images and text captions framed the security forces as agents of a settler-colonial force, thereby shifting the narrative away from a legitimate policing force to an illegitimate occupying force that was enforcing an apartheid regime. Images of property violence, in particular those that showed family homes being demolished, were powerful visual representations of the enactment of settler-colonialism and the removal of native people from a land and was difficult to justify as necessary for national security.

9.3 Corroboration and verification

Providing detail in the caption about the incident depicted in the image was a way of corroborating and verifying the image. These details were typically the names and ages of the Palestinians, the date and location, and a description of what had happened; this was information which could not be conveyed through an image. For example:

“Last night, the IOF shot dead Sofyan Al-Khawaja (26) from Ni'lin town-Ramallah and took his body” (FB-007)

Beyond the specific incident, captions frequently included statistics (although rarely referenced) about the scale of the issue such as property violence or child arrests, for example:

“The #Israeli occupation has demolished 6,116 Palestinian structures in the West Bank and East #Jerusalem between 2010 and 2019” (FB-181)

“around 700 Palestinian children are detained by the Israeli military every year for throwing stones” (FB-024)

This type of information was important for placing the image within the context of Israeli occupation and helped to strengthen the claims being made by the organisations about the victimisation and oppression of Palestinians in a systematic and structural manner. However, this was not present on all of the posts and was more likely to be posted by some organisations than others.

A further strategy used to add credibility and verification of the image was through the use of hyperlinks, which were present in 34% of all captions and linked to an external website – sometimes the organisation’s own website or another. They directed the user to an article in which there was a greater amount of detail about the incident. On some posts, a link was used to provide more information about an image when the word limit restricted how much could be included in the caption. This can be seen in the comparison of posts FB-304 and T-369, both posted by B’Tselem, which presented the same image. The Facebook post had a very long caption that claimed that the image depicted the confiscation of a Palestinian medical tent intended for a covid-19 clinic among other structures. It also made claims that Israel continued the demolition of property even during the pandemic. However, the word limit meant that the caption of the Twitter post of the same image was much shorter, with only one sentence, but the caption provided a link to a press release by B’Tselem which contained the text from the Facebook caption, suggesting that this strategy was used to adapt content to the different platforms. However, the use of hyperlinks was more likely to be done by some organisations than others, for example Sabeel Kairos and PSC used hyperlinks in the majority of their posts whereas ISM and Pal Observer rarely made use of this function.

9.4 Hashtags as shortcuts to understanding

As well as text being used within the captions to present this information, hashtags were present in around half of all of the captions posted by the organisations that were analysed. This finding was similar to previous research on the use of hashtags by NGOs on social media which also found hashtags being used in around half of posts by these types of organisations (Guo & Saxton, 2014). However, hashtags were not used consistently by the Palestinian advocacy organisations, with some being much more likely to use them in their captions than others, for example FOA and PRC used hashtags in almost all of their posts, while B’Tselem

rarely used hashtags. There was also a difference between the use of hashtags on posts on the three social media platforms, with captions on Instagram being more likely to include hashtags than Twitter or Facebook. This was in contrast to the use of hashtags by social media users who were found to be most likely to use hashtags in the comments on Twitter posts than Facebook or Instagram. The lack of consistency of hashtags suggests an overall lack of coordination between the organisations in terms of their use of social media for sharing similar visual content.

It was found that there were many unique hashtags that were used across the organisations and platforms on the posts. There did not appear to be one central hashtag that was used consistently by the different organisations as a focal point to social media content, in contrast to other social movements such as Black Lives Matter which had a number of key hashtags including #BlackLivesMatter and #ICantBreathe. The most frequently used hashtag found within the captions was #FreePalestine and this hashtag was also used within the comments by social media users, however it was not used consistently. Other common hashtags were key locations, for example, #Hebron and #Jerusalem, and others were semiotic tools for framing the post such as #IsraeliCrimes and #apartheid. It could be argued that a weakness of the social media strategy of the organisations was the lack of a consistent hashtag that could be used by all organisations to bring content together and also to reach audiences beyond their immediate supporters.

Previous research has identified different ways that hashtags can be used by social media users. As well as the original function of indexing and organisation, hashtags may be used for starting conversations, connecting people around shared interests, expressing sarcasm, irony or humour, and building interpersonal connections (Dorsch, 2020; Page, 2012; Vessey, 2015; Zappavigna, 2015). Some of the hashtags that were included in the captions of the posts by the Palestinian advocacy organisations appeared to be serving the original purpose of indexing and categorisation purpose, for example location-based hashtags such as #Hebron could be used to link together posts that spoke about issues relevant to Hebron. As well as this functional use, hashtags helped guide the interpretation of the image, supporting previous research that suggests that hashtags have the ability to create a shorthand based on a word or phrase for representing broader concerns of an issue or cause such as #BlackLivesMatter. When used, this recalls experiences and beliefs within an easily reproduced form (Jackson et al., 2020, p.199). In the posts analysed in this study hashtags such as #Israelicrimes and #apartheid framed the posts and guided the viewer to interpret the images in a particular way, specifically that Israel was treating Palestinians in a discriminatory way and violating international law. These hashtags provided quick cues to interpretation and shortcuts to understanding the image and what it was showing, in a similar way to how hashtags were used as framing tools to create meaning within the BLM movement (Ince et al., 2017) and also supporting claims by Hitlin and Holcomb, (2015) that hashtags can be particularly useful at providing context to images.

9.5 Making Palestinian voices heard

The text in the captions was used by the advocacy organisations to give a voice to the Palestinians, and this was typically done by including quotes from those present in the image or those who witnessed the event. For video content, this also took the form of adding subtitles to the video which translated what was being said by those in the video to make it available for international, English-speaking audiences. However, both of these were not done consistently by the organisations. Furthermore, when subtitles were added, only certain parts of speech were subtitled. This meant that, overwhelmingly, the dominant voice within the posts was that of the organisations who make decisions about which images are used, the text that accompanies them, which quotes are included and whose voices are subtitled in the videos. They are therefore gatekeepers of the information. This raises questions about to what extent the claims being made by the organisations on behalf of the Palestinian people are congruent with the cause and to what extent the photos and videos are being used in a way that was intended by the photographer.

9.6 Comparison of Organisations

There were similarities and differences in the way that each organisation captioned their posts. While all the organisations used the captions to provide detail about the incident featured in the image or video, some provided much more detail about this, such as the date, the place, the people involved and a description of the event. Several of the organisations were more likely to use the captions to generalise from the incident to a bigger issue such as apartheid or ethnic cleansing. The use of hashtags and hyperlinks in the captions also differed between the organisations in terms of the number and consistency of hashtags and whether hyperlinks were used to link to external sites. Furthermore, the tone of the captions was different between the different organisations. Some organisations wrote in a very factual, concise manner by stating what had happened, others were more emotive in their choice of language.

Some of the organisations wrote short and concise captions that provided the facts about the event but not much more, for example, Electronic Intifada, Pal Observer and ISM. On the other hand, the captions written by B'Tselem, and CPT were much longer and more detailed, including a lot of contextual background information beyond the date and location, and often included quotes from witnesses, for example:

“Abdallah, 12: “I kept crying, and one of the soldiers told me to be quiet. The jeep drove off, but I didn’t know where we were going.” (T-374)

While the captions of most of the organisations were focused on the specific incident in the image, captions by FOA tended to be less about providing detail about the specific incident but instead were used to draw attention to a wider pattern of injustice and system of oppression. For example, on a video of home demolition, instead of providing detail about the location of this demolition, the caption said:

“homes, memories, security all gone down in a moment. Home demolitions are illegal but still happen. This is part of Israel's occupation in which they steal #Palestinian land. Palestinians will not be free until the occupation ends. DONTE (sic) TO END IT ps 🙏 : <https://www.foa.org.uk/support-us/?action=Donate>” (FB-034).

When the same image was posted by different organisations, the captions were sometimes used to point to different actions that the audience could take, suggesting the images were occasionally being repurposed for different purposes by changing the caption. For instance, there was one image that was posted by multiple organisations that depicted a soldier crouched behind a concrete block aiming his gun at men waiting at a turnstile at a checkpoint. When the image was posted by FOA (I-038 and FB-051) and BDS (FB-080 and T-140), these organisations used the caption to call for a boycott of HP due to its complicity in maintaining the population registry used to control the movement of Palestinians. However, when the same image was posted by Sabeel-Kairos (FB-066), the caption did not call for a boycott but instead shared a link to an online article written about human rights work carried out by CPT at checkpoints by Kumi Now, an organisation working towards justice and peace for Israel and Palestine.

In summary, while the organisations, generally, posted similar visual content such as physical violence, property demolition and checkpoints, the captions on these images showed some differences in the ways that these images were used to draw attention the Israeli occupation and convince social media users of its illegitimacy and captions reflected different strategies adopted by these organisations in their social media use.

9.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the importance of captions for providing text that interacted with the images has been shown. Text played an important role in adding context to the images and guiding the interpretation of them by the audience. By adding information that showed how each interaction depicted in an image was evidence of the Israeli occupation, this built up a strong and consistent narrative across the platforms and organisations that framed the issue not of a two-sided conflict, as would be portrayed often in the MSM, but as a struggle to survive and resist an occupation force. Text also served an important purpose to corroborate and verify what was depicted in the image, perhaps deliberately to counter the campaign by Israeli supporters to discredit images and narratives put out by Palestinians and their supporters, although this strategy was not consistent.

10 Affordances: Visibility

10.1 Introduction

As has been previously stated in chapter 2, an important affordance of social media that can be leveraged by advocacy organisations and activists is the affordance of visibility which is about how content can be shared on platforms to make this information seen by a wide audience (boyd, 2014; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). For Palestinian advocacy organisations where one of the main goals is to raise awareness of the cause through sharing information about the nature of Israeli occupation and the oppression and suffering of Palestinians under such a system, visibility is critically important. The advocacy organisations that were the subject of this study were found to use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to distribute visual content that framed interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians as being an interaction between a settler-colonial military force and victims of occupation. These visual frames have been discussed in detail in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. This chapter now turns to the ways that social media, specifically its affordances and features, was used by the organisations to enhance visibility of these posts.

10.2 Hashtags for visibility

Activists can seek to increase visibility of their content by making use of the hashtag function which is available on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (along with other social media platforms). This function is a means of making posts searchable. Adding hashtags to a post means that users who search for the hashtag may come across that content as opposed to actively seeking it out. This makes it a useful tool for activists to have in their repertoire to generate greater visibility and awareness for the cause and reach new audiences that could be converted into supporters of the cause.

10.2.1 Twitter Hashtags

For the activist organisations that were the subject of this study, hashtags were used widely on Twitter posts, with 67% of all Twitter photo posts and 49% of all video posts containing hashtags. Of these, 54% of photo posts had more than one hashtag and 49% of video posts had more than one hashtag, as seen in Figure 34 below. Hashtags were used differently by the different organisations, with PRC and Stop The Wall using hashtags on almost all of their Twitter posts whereas Pal Observer and Electronic Intifada rarely used hashtags.

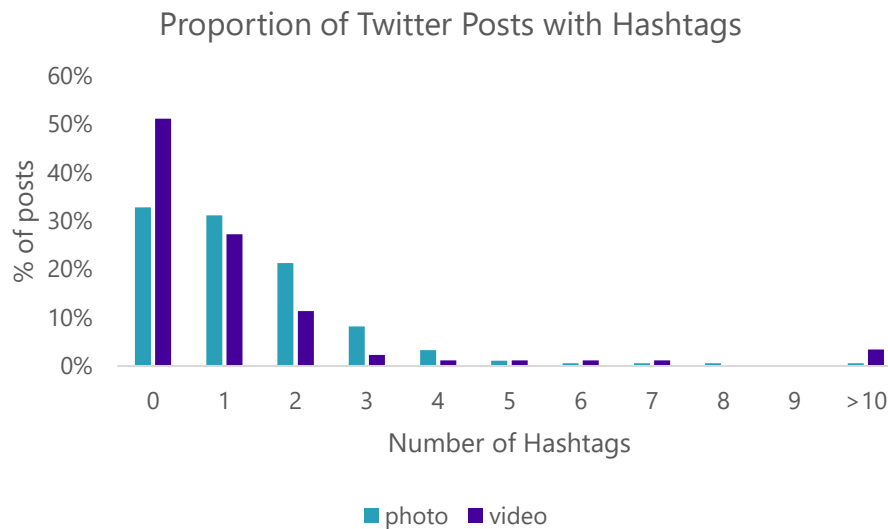


Figure 34. *Proportion of Twitter Posts Hashtags*

Analysis of the hashtags themselves revealed that there were 146 unique hashtags used on Twitter photo and video posts, with the majority (61%) of these being used only once. There appeared to be no common hashtag that was used by the organisations to bring together this shared content. The hashtag that was used the most was #FreePalestine, which was used 47 times by four different organisations. Used 18 and 15 times respectively, by three organisations was #IsraeliCrimes and #Palestine. Overall, the lack of a key hashtag for content posted with a shared message and cause, suggests a lack of strategy in terms of social media use by these organisations.

While hashtags can be leveraged to increase visibility of the Palestinian cause, this also exposes the content to trolling from those who do not support the cause or co-opting the hashtags (Stache, 2015). This is due to the nature of the collapsing context of the social media platform which means that content is posted for an intended audience but ends up being seen by others who may respond in unintended ways (Marwich & boyd, 2011). Evidence of trolling was found in the comments left under around a quarter of Twitter posts, with half of these being posted on Tweets from BDS. These comments typically mocked the post or the organisation or presented one of a few anti-Palestinian narratives, specifically those that claimed Palestine never existed, depicted Palestinians as violent terrorists and, thirdly, claimed that Palestinians were not interested in pursuing peace with Israel. It is, however, important to note that not all of the trolling comments were left on posts that contained hashtags, suggesting that it was not necessarily the increased visibility through the use of hashtags that contributed to this behaviour.

10.2.2 Facebook Hashtags

Hashtags were first introduced on Twitter however have become a feature across many social media platforms, including Facebook which introduced them in 2013. There is little research

about how hashtags are used on Facebook as opposed to Twitter (Weller, 2016), despite the same features being used differently across different platforms.

This study's cross platform design meant that hashtag use could be compared across the different platforms and shed light on how the same users may use the same features differently on Facebook, compared to Twitter or Instagram. In this case, the organisations under investigation were much less likely to use hashtags on Facebook compared to Twitter and Instagram. On Facebook, only 32% of all photo posts analysed and 40% of video posts contained one or more hashtag. This proportion was lower than Twitter, where 67% of all photo posts and 49% of all video posts used hashtags. When hashtags were used on Facebook, usage was similar to Twitter posts, with around half (49%) of photo posts with hashtags using more than one hashtag and 40% of video posts.

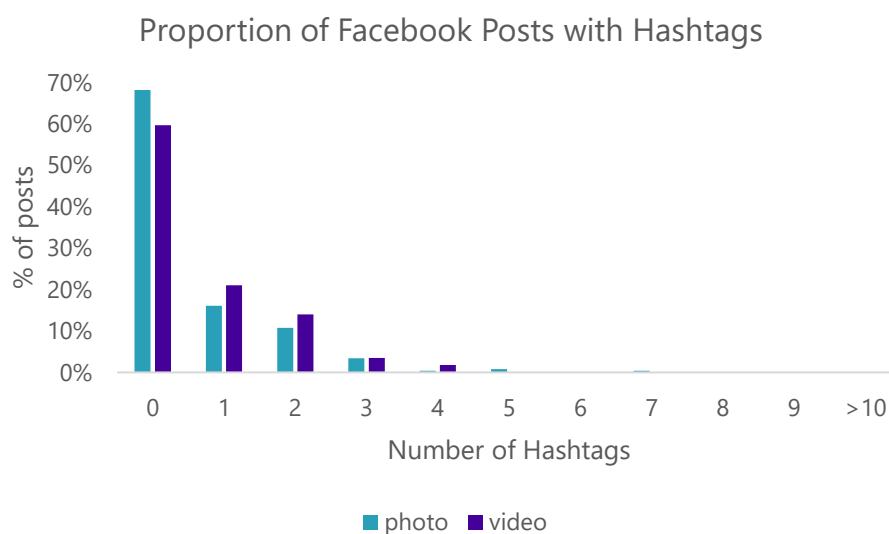


Figure 35. Proportion of Facebook Posts with Hashtags

Furthermore, as was the case with the hashtags collected and analysed from Twitter posts, a wide range of hashtags were utilised on Facebook. There were 183 unique hashtags identified from the Facebook posts, with a quarter (26%) only occurring once on Facebook posts. There was an overlap of the hashtags used on Facebook, with most being the same hashtags as posted with the posts on Twitter, suggesting that there was little or no consideration of using different hashtags for different platforms. The three most common hashtags from Twitter were also found to be the most common on Facebook, with #FreePalestine used 26 times, #IsraeliCrimes used 16 times and #Palestine used 13 times on Facebook.

10.2.3 Instagram

Overall, 60% of Instagram photo posts contained one or more hashtag in the caption (see Figure 36), similar to the rate of hashtags found in the Twitter posts. Video posts on Instagram, however, were much more likely to include hashtags, and multiple hashtags, with 92% of video posts having at least one.

Particularly prominent on video posts with 92% of video posts on Instagram having one or more hashtag. Of those with hashtags, 92% had more than 1 and 32% had more than 10. This was a difference observed between the platforms, showing that the organisations were appearing to adapt their social media strategy across the platforms in terms of making use of the hashtag function.

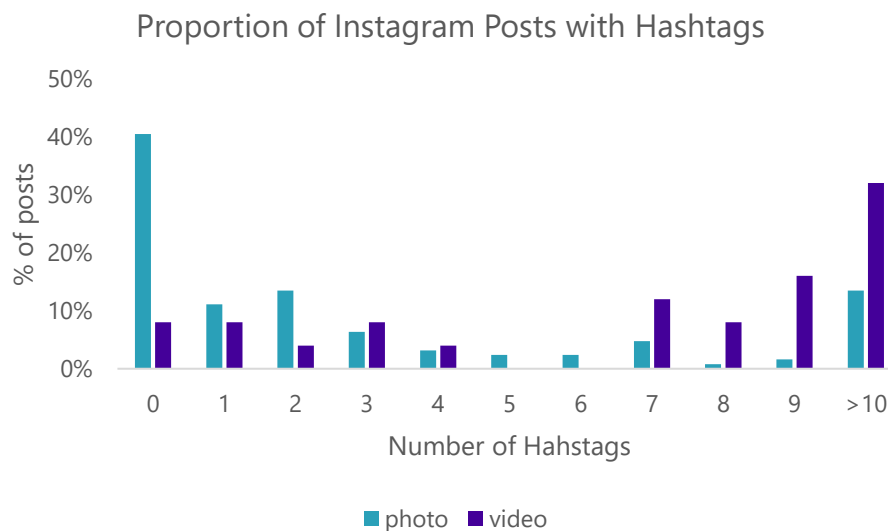


Figure 36. *Proportion of Instagram Posts with Hashtags*

A comparison of the same image across the different platforms was able to uncover some of the differences between the platforms. When organisations posted the same image on Twitter, Facebook and/or Instagram, the captions posted on Instagram typically included many more hashtags. For example, an image posted on Facebook (FB-221) and Instagram (I-174) by ISM showed scenes from a protest in Haris in which Palestinian protesters were met with violence from Israeli security forces. The text caption was the same on both Facebook and Instagram, however the Instagram post contained a list of hashtags at the end of the written statement, these were #haris #hares #salfit #uaedeal #trumpdeal #israelisoldiers #protest #equalrights #FreePalestine #pepperspray #policebrutalityawareness. In this case, a large range of hashtags were used as a way of increasing visibility of this post, this included some specific hashtags such as the location of the protest (#Haris) and some more general hashtags such as #Protest, #equalrights and #policebrutalityawareness. These broader hashtags would be used to reach out to a wider audience beyond the organisation’s supporters. However, in this case, the effectiveness of such strategy was questionable as both the Facebook and Instagram post received little engagement from social media users, with no comments on either post, and 2 and 34 likes on the Instagram and Facebook post respectively.

10.2.4 Organisation comparison

There were differences between the organisations in terms of how hashtags were used, as shown in Figure 37 below. Several organisations posted hashtags in most of the captions of

their images, others were more likely to post multiple hashtags and some organisations rarely used hashtags, suggesting differences between the platform affordances and also the organisations. Of organisations that used Instagram, almost all used hashtags on all of their posts (all used hashtags in at least 80% of Instagram posts). Some of these organisations (for example B'Tselem and Sabeel-Kairos) that used hashtags on Instagram did not use them much on the other platforms.

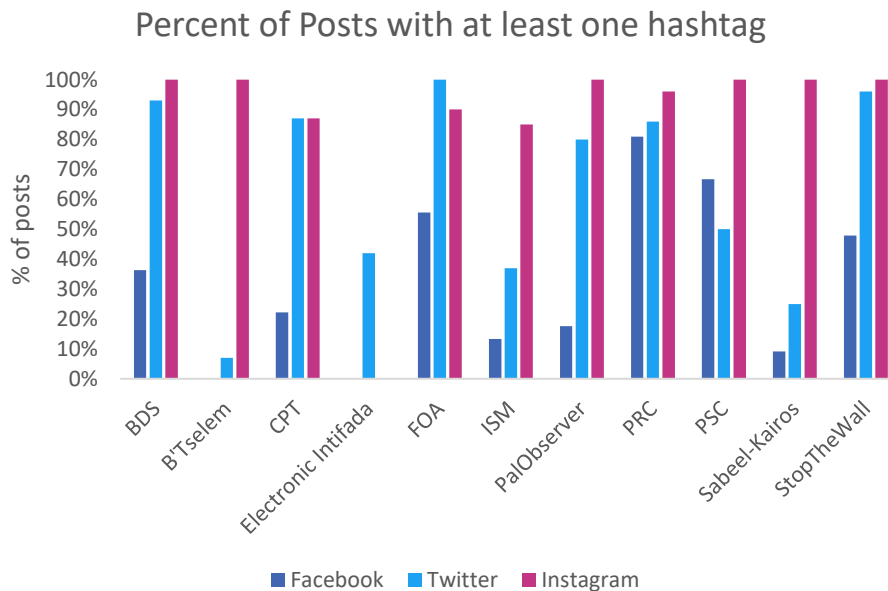


Figure 37. Proportion of Posts with at least one hashtag according to organisation

There were also differences between the organisations in terms of the content of the hashtags that they posted. Some of the organisations were more consistent in their use of hashtags, for example, Electronic Intifada used only one hashtag (#PalestineInPictures) and only used it on five of their posts. PRC was also consistent in their use of hashtags, using the hashtag #FreePalestine 62 times and #IsraeliCrimes 29 times on their posts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Other organisations were less consistent with their use of hashtags. PSC used twenty different hashtags, with none of them being used more than three times on the posts. Stop the Wall used forty-five unique hashtags, with their most frequently used being #COVID19underApartheid which was used four times. B'Tselem used 33 unique hashtags with no hashtag used more than twice. Sabeel-Kairos had four hashtags that were each used only once on a post. BDS used the hashtag #BDS only three times, with their most frequently used hashtag being #FreeMahmoud and this was only used four times. CPT was the only organisation that used hashtags in a language other than English, in this case Arabic, for example, #فلسطين (Palestine). ISM was the organisation with the largest number of different hashtags used across their posts, with 250 unique hashtags. The most common used by ISM were #Israeliarmy, #Israeli and #FreePalestine. FOA also had a high number of different hashtags across their platforms, with 103 unique hashtags. The most frequently used by FOA was #Palestine.

FOA had a number of hashtag campaigns that were used during the time period of data collection. These hashtags were created by FOA and related to specific campaigns that they were running. This included #NotInMyFridge, which was originally used in a post in 2015¹⁵ that encouraged Twitter users to post their own content using this hashtag to show their support for the boycott of Coca-Cola. It also included #HandsoffAlAqsa which is used to frame posts around the threat of the Israeli occupation to al-Aqsa, an important religious site for Muslims. FOA was the only organisation that was found to use specific hashtags for campaigns and, according to their website (2023), currently has 15 active hashtag campaigns.

10.2.5 Hashtags in Comments

Hashtags could also be used by the social media users who responded to the posts in the comments. Overall, 8% of all the comments collected and analysed contained a hashtag but this was not consistent across the three platforms, with hashtags being much more likely to be used by Twitter users than Instagram or Facebook users (see Figure 38), with 30% of the comments on photo posts and 21% of the comments on video posts including one or more hashtag.

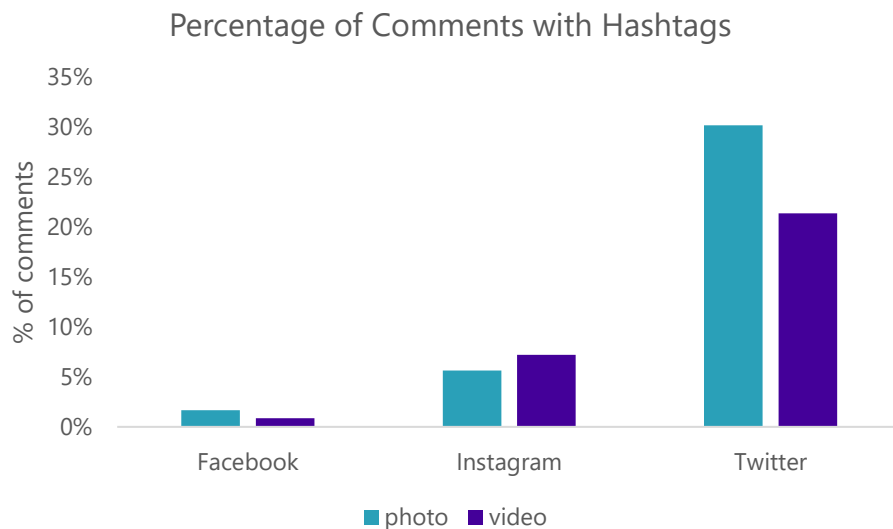


Figure 38. Proportion of Comments with one or more hashtag

Overall, 46% of the comments with a hashtag used only one hashtag and almost all had less than 10 hashtags in the comment. The maximum number of hashtags in a comment was 42 (FB-034) and this comment consisted solely of a list of hashtags. Overall, 42% of comments with hashtags only contained hashtags and no other form of communication. Around half of these were one hashtag, the other half were a list of multiple different hashtags.

¹⁵ Caption of Twitter post: “Why is there no Coke in your fridge? Explain using #NotInMyFridge along with a photo of your Coca-Cola free fridges.” (FOA, 18/01/15)

Analysis of the hashtags themselves revealed a total of 419 unique hashtags that were used in the comments on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Of these, 67% were only used in one comment and 98% were used between one and ten times. Only eight hashtags were used more than ten times in the comments (see Table 8), and even these were not used very many times, suggesting that there was not a core set of hashtags that were used by supporters of the Palestinian cause. Hashtags that drew on BLM (#PalestinianLivesMatter) were not used extensively, as can be seen in Table 8, appearing only 12 times across all 3818 comments. Most of the commonly used hashtags were the same as those posted by the organisations in the captions, for example, #FreePalestine was the second most frequent hashtag used in the comments and the most frequent hashtag within the captions.

Table 8. *Most frequently occurring hashtags in comments*

	FREQUENCY
#BDS	63
#FREEPALESTINE	51
#ISRAELICRIMES	36
#APARTHEIDISRAEL	26
#PALESTINE	28
#ISRAEL	20
#APARTHEID	19
#PALESTINIANLIVESMATTER	12

10.3 Tagging Users to increase visibility

Adding hashtags to posts can create visibility in the sense that those posts become searchable and may reach a wider audience beyond the immediate supporters and followers of the organisations, however, there is another function of social media platforms that can be used to increase visibility in a more targeted way – tagging specific users. By tagging another social media user by using the @ function, this notifies the user of this interaction and encourages them to view the post (Mascaro & Goggins, 2012). It also brings that user into the conversation and encourages them to respond or contribute in some way and also means that that user becomes visible to others, increasing transparency of the conversation (Tremayne, 2014). Therefore, tagging high profile actors relevant to the cause can bring passive or antagonistic actors into the discussion, invite them to contribute and take a stand (Wonneberger et al., 2020).

Tagging was used infrequently across the platforms, being present in 6% of captions on Twitter, 0.3% on Facebook and 23% on Instagram. Not all of the organisations were found to use this function, with Electronic Intifada being the most likely to use it – typically to tag the photographer in the captions on Instagram posts. Other than tagging the photographer, organisations were found to tag companies to boycott as part of the BDS movement, such as

HP, Caterpillar and HSBC, politicians such as Dominic Raab (then foreign secretary of the UK) and media outlets such as Aljazeera.

It was not just the organisations that could tag other users in the posts, but social media users responding to the posts could also use this function in the comments to link to another user. The use of the @ function in the comments was not common (see Figure 39). These tags were to a range of different users, typically politicians, celebrities, media outlets and other activist organisations.

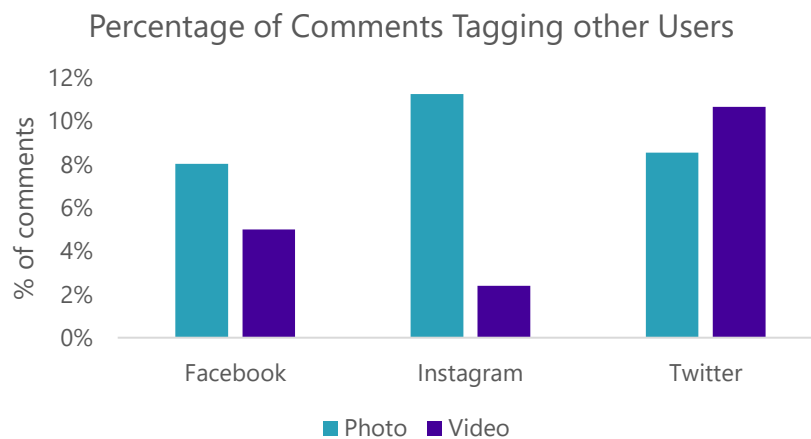


Figure 39. Proportion of Comments Tagging other Users

10.4 Retweeting to create visibility

The main way in which social media users could increase visibility of the content was by sharing the posts. This represented one of three measures of engagement that were collected and analysed in order to gain insight into the ways in which people responded to the content. While likes imply agreement with the posts (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar, 2015; Zell & Moeller, 2018), sharing suggests that the users believe that the information is important enough to be seen by more people (Carah, 2014; Coursaris et al., 2016; Kim & Yang, 2017). Sharing requires greater commitment (Kim & Yang, 2017) because users are aware that sharing a post makes it visible to their network. The number of times the posts analysed in this study were shared was typically low, with nearly half of photo posts shared less than ten times. Video content was, in general, more likely to be shared more times, with around a third of video posts shared over 100 times. A small number of photo and video posts were shared many times, and these were the same posts that received many likes, suggesting an association between the two types of engagement.

Video posts were, in general, more likely to be shared than photo posts with only 1% of video posts receiving no shares compared to 30% of photo posts on Facebook and 7% of photo posts on Twitter. Videos were also more likely to be shared by many users, with 32% of video posts on Facebook being shared more than 100 times. This suggests that social media users are more responsive to video content and are more likely to want to share this with their own

networks, creating greater visibility. Posts on Twitter were more likely to be shared (retweeted) than posts on Facebook with almost all posts on Twitter (93%) being shared by at least one other user. The number of retweets was typically low, with most of those being shared by less than twenty people. In contrast, while posts on Facebook were less likely to be shared, there were some that were shared many times. In fact, 32% of Facebook video posts were shared more than 100 times. The video post that got the highest number of shares was posted on Facebook FB-037 (FOA, 15/11/19) which was shared around 4900 times. This video was titled "what are illegal Israeli checkpoints?", discussed in chapter 6. Across all three measures of engagement, this post was the most engaged with, receiving 2000 likes and 225 comments. As well as checkpoints, social media users were found to be more responsive to videos of children being arrested, with videos containing this content being more likely to be shared (median shares = 65) than those without (median shares = 32). For example, the video with the third highest number of shares was a video about child arrests (FB-035, FOA).

There appeared to be some relationship between the number of followers and the number of shares received by the posts of that organisation. All of the videos posted by BDS were shared more than 100 times. However, organisations with fewer followers such as Stop The Wall and Pal Observer did not receive anywhere near 100 shares on any of their posts. That being said, the highest numbers of followers did not necessarily see the most shares of their content. For example, FOA and Electronic Intifada had the most followers of the organisations but around half of both of their posts that were analysed were not shared at all. In contrast, some of the other organisations were much more likely to see their content shared (for example, 90% of PSC's posts were shared at least once). CPT, who had very few followers compared to the other ten organisations, was found to have one post that was shared more than 100 times (FB-303).

10.5 Conclusion

Visibility is critical for activists seeking to further their cause as it is by raising awareness of and drawing attention to the issue that they gain supporters who can be mobilised to bring about change. In this chapter, I have shown how the affordances of social media platforms, specifically Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, were leveraged by the Palestinian advocacy organisations in order to promote visibility of their content. Hashtags were used in the captions as a way of making the posts searchable and therefore able to be seen by social media users beyond their immediate supporters, for example by searching for a hashtag like #HumanRights, #policebrutality and #Protest. However, there was a lack of consistency with hashtag use, suggesting a lack of a social media strategy. Tagging other users was used, albeit infrequently, to increase visibility through linking to high profile people. Again, this was not done consistently. Meanwhile, an important component of visibility on social media platforms is relying on other social media users to share the content, thereby increasing reach across networks. The posts analysed in this study were found to have low levels of retweeting and public sharing overall, although there were some exceptions to this.

11 Affordances: Networked mobilisation

11.1 Introduction

The affordances of social media make platforms well suited for the creation of networked and affective publics which bring together people around a shared cause who can then be mobilised in the form of offline action (Gerbaudo & Treré, 2015). As established advocacy organisations, the organisations posting on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram presented specific ways that the viewer could take action for the Palestinian cause, this included signing a petition, attending a solidarity event or protest, sharing the post on social media or boycotting a particular company as part of BDS.

11.2 Captions call people to take action

A minority of captions included calls to action in the form of tangible ways that people could support the Palestinian cause. These actions included signing a petition, joining an event or protest, sharing the post on social media, writing to a political representative or boycotting companies and products as part of the BDS campaign. Twenty-two of the captions were used to urge the viewer to sign a petition or letter expressing opposition to policies. These were posted by ISM, FOA, B'Tselem, Sabeel-Kairos and EI. For example,

“You can take a stance against injustice and raise your voice with us against this organization. Sign and share our petition to #DismantletheGhetto” (FB-143) and:

“Head to our Insta stories to sign the letter and be a part of the change.” (I-050).

Five captions promoted an event that was taking place in solidarity with the Palestinian people. In two posts on Instagram and Twitter, PRC promoted the International Day of Solidarity (I-205 and T-472), Stop the Wall posted about the Palestinian Child’s Day in one Twitter post (T-022) and FOA encouraged people to join a demonstration

“to show support for the Palestinian struggle, and to rally for Palestinians’ fundamental rights to EXIST, RESIST & RETURN! 🇵🇸🇵🇸🇵🇸🇵🇸🇵🇸🇵🇸” (I-057).

Finally, PSC and BDS promoted Israeli Apartheid Week and the National Day of Action (I-105 and FB-099).

Another form of offline action that was encouraged in the captions was to boycott organisations said to be complicit in Israeli occupation, as part of the BDS movement. Thirty-seven (5%) posts in the dataset mentioned BDS. It was not just BDS the organisation (although almost all their captions included calls to BDS) that posted this type of call to action, but also Stop the Wall, FOA, PRC and Electronic Intifada. This often took the form of naming companies and products to boycott, for example,

“HP makes daily Human Rights violations possible” (FB-046)

Most of the time, the caption made a link between the scenes in the image and the company, for example, an image of a checkpoint made reference to how the population database that is used to maintain apartheid is built by HP, therefore, it called for the viewer to boycott HP (T-140, T-448, FB-080 and I-017).

BDS was the organisation that was the most likely to use their captions as a space to call people to take action, with the majority of their captions being used to call for the boycott of certain brands such as HP, Trip Advisor, HSBC or Caterpillar who were all identified as working with the Israeli regime. These were typically linked to the image, for example, images of home demolitions which included Caterpillar bulldozers were captioned with calls for the audience to boycott this brand due to its active role in the demolition of Palestinian property.

Similarly, in all but two of the captions posted by PSC, there was a specific action presented that the social media user could take. However, rather than focusing on a specific form of action like BDS, this ranged from writing to an MP, supporting a campaign, and taking part in Israeli Apartheid Week. Most of these captions written by PSC started with a capitalised statement such as "TAKE ACTION" or "WRITE TO YOUR MP". These statements that spoke directly to the viewer were also frequently used by FOA and Stop the Wall, for example:

"LET'S URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO BAN ALL TRADE WITH SETTLEMENTS" and "WATCH A REAL VICTORY".

Occasionally, the captions of posts did not directly reflect the image itself but were used to promote a campaign that was being run by the organisation, or the organisation itself. Of all the organisations, FOA was the most likely to do this in their captions of images. For example, I-054 (FOA, 06/04/19) showed a young man being dragged along the ground by his arms and legs by four soldiers, his face covered in blood. The caption of this image was used by FOA to draw attention to UK exports of weapons to Israel and called the audience to take action by signing a petition. The caption included a link to FOA's website where the user could send a letter to their Member of Parliament (MP) asking them to support the "Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill".

While it was found that text captions were used for mobilisation purposes in the captions, this was infrequent which was surprising, given that these organisations are about the mobilisation of international people for the cause. Instead, it appeared that these organisations were mainly making use of the affordances of social media for information sharing and visibility purposes rather than calling for action. This placed social media as one part of their advocacy strategy as all of these organisations did not only use social media but were also active on their website, as well as offline. The interaction between the offline and online action was beyond the scope of this study and presents an avenue for future research.

11.3 Hashtags bring people together

Previous causes have found success by bringing together an ad hoc public around a shared issue through the use of a central unifying hashtag. This has been widely documented within the Black Lives Matter movement in which individual Twitter users used a number of key hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter, #ICantBreathe and #IfTheyGunnedMeDown to collectively shape the public narrative around the killing of a number of Black Americans and challenge the negative media representations of the victims (Ince et al., 2017; R. Jackson, 2016; Leyh, 2020; Tillery, 2019). The success of these hashtags came from their widespread use and participatory nature, with individuals posting their own, personalised content with the hashtags ... In a similar way, the #MeToo campaign was made up of a vast number of personal disclosures of individual experiences tagged with the hashtag that helped to shape the conversation through a bottom-up framing process and shift discussions of sexual harassment and violence from an individual to a structural issue (Bogen et al., 2021; Gleeson & Turner, 2019; Mueller et al., 2021). Advocacy organisations can be part of these conversations when they are related to their issue and use their expertise to shape the conversation. Yet, the use of hashtags within the captions of the posts that were shared by the organisations in this study was inconsistent and uncoordinated, meaning that the organisations were not taking advantage of the full potential of hashtags to contribute to emerging and ad hoc discussions about Palestine.

11.4 Comments Express Intent to take action

A minority of comments expressed the social media user's action that they had taken in support of the cause, for example, that they had signed and shared a petition shared by the organisation. A small number of these expressed an intention to take action, such as boycotting a company that was identified in the caption of the post. Beyond individual actions that social media users could take, there were some comments that discussed the action (or lack thereof) that could be taken by those in power such as governments. There was, overall, a sense of international silence on the Palestinian cause. People used the comment section to express their frustration at the lack of action from the wider international community and those in power, to condemn Israeli oppression. People asked why there were no "sanctions" for Israel, why the abuse of power seen in the images and videos was allowed to happen "while we stand and watch". There was a sense of frustration that these incidents were documented on social media for the public to see but there was a lack of coverage in the mainstream media for the same content. The international mainstream media was criticised for overlooking the issue. There were comments where the social media users went a step further and claimed that this silence constituted complicity on behalf of the governments and mainstream media who did not speak out on the human rights of Palestinians. A number of commenters condemned the UK and USA, in particular, for their support for Israel and complicity in the human rights abuses of Palestinians. Some expressed a sense of shame at being British as the government supported Israel through arms sales, foreign aid and lack of criticism.

12 Responses: Affective solidarity

12.1 Introduction

Having considered the ways in which the organisations use social media as a tool for distributing images of the manifestations of Israeli occupation and its impact on Palestinians with the hope that by making such injustice visible, it will lead to public support for the cause, the focus now turns to the ways in which social media users actually respond to this content. Specifically, this chapter discussed the comments that were left on the posts and what they can show about the potential for such images for promoting affective solidarity. Solidarity is a driving force for the Palestinian resistance movement which draws upon international public support and a form of affective solidarity can be developed on social media as publics come together through shared expressions of sentiment (Papacharissi, 2015). This could involve a process of responding emotionally to an image of Palestinian suffering and coming to an understanding that this is caused by the Israeli occupation which would promote a sense of solidarity with the Palestinian people and a moral imperative to seek justice and accountability through the channels available. In this chapter, I discuss what the comments on the posts in this study show about how this may (or may not) be realised.

12.2 Emotional response to images

Images can evoke emotional responses (Bleiker, 2018; Brantner et al., 2011; Schlag, 2018) and in this study, there was evidence that social media users were reacting in an emotional way to the images. The dominant emotions within the comments sections were anger and sadness. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown how viewing images of human suffering can elicit feelings of sadness, anger and compassion (Hurtado-Parrado et al., 2020; Iyer et al., 2014; Shoshani & Slone, 2008). Emotional responses were expressed both through a text comment or emojis. Text was used by the social media users to express sadness at the treatment of the Palestinians in the images and key words such as "horrific", "tragic" and "heart-breaking" were expressed as a response to the posts. Social media users also expressed anger at the Israeli security forces with words like "sadist" and "savage" being used to describe them. Alongside text responses, emojis were used in the comments to express emotional reactions and these were most likely to be used on Instagram, with around half of the comments with emojis collected from Instagram, compared to 29% from Facebook and 18% from Twitter.

Emojis were used in 468 of the comments across the Twitter, Facebook and Instagram posts, being present in 12% of all of the comments collected and analysed. However, they were disproportionately found on Instagram comments, with 49% of all Instagram comments left on the posts containing one or more emoji. Analysis of the emojis that were used identified 130 unique emojis across all platforms and accounts. This included face emojis, gestures (such as 🍷 🙌 🍷) and objects (Palestinian and Israeli flags). The most frequent emojis were the

Palestinian flag (used 178 times), the angry face (🔪) which was used 136 times and the Israeli flag (used 85 times). The use of the Israeli flag appeared to be evidence of trolling by pro-Israeli social media users. The main uses of emojis across all of the comments was to express an emotional response, with the most common emotions being sadness and anger. The crying face emoji (😭) was used 83 times and the broken heart emoji (💔) was used 60 times and both represent that the user wanted to express sadness about the post. Of the emojis that represented anger, the angry face emoji (😡) was used 55 times, another (😠) was used 44 times and the swearing angry face (🔪) was used 36 times.

Nearly half of the comments with emojis used emojis as isolated responses without any text. These were most likely to be expressing sadness with the broken heart (💔) or crying face (😭) emoji or expressing anger with the angry face (😡) emoji. Often, this was a string of multiple emojis, either the same emoji repeated or thematically similar, for example "💔😭💔😭💔😭💔". While the majority of emoji comments on Instagram were emojis without any accompanying text, either single or multiple emojis, when emojis were used on Facebook and Twitter, they were more likely to be accompanied with text. In these cases, emojis were used to reinforce a written comment, typically at the end of the statement. For example, a comment condemning Israeli soldiers included an angry (🔪) emoji or a statement asking God to protect the Palestinian people included a sad (😭) emoji and praying hands (🙏). Occasionally, emojis were used in combination with hashtags, this was most likely to be in the Twitter comments, for example #FreePalestine could be accompanied by the Palestinian flag and 🇵🇸.

Overall, it was found that one of the most common types of responses expressed in the comments was an expression of emotion, typically sadness and anger. This is consistent with previous research that has established that images such as these that show suffering and oppression are able to evoke sympathy, empathy, sadness and anger within the viewer (Hurtado-Parrado et al., 2020; Iyer et al., 2014; Shoshani & Slone, 2008). It is these emotional responses that can then lead to the viewer supporting those depicted in the images and building a sense of solidarity.

12.3 Emotional Responses Leading to Support

Overall, the analysis of the comments showed that there were more comments supporting the Palestinian cause compared to Israel, these comments expressed sympathy with the Palestinians in the images, condemned the security forces and, more generally, Israel itself, often focusing on the unjust treatment of Palestinians and the illegitimacy of Israeli military occupation of Palestine. These comments frequently referred to "occupation", and "apartheid" and the treatment of Palestinians as "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide", reflecting language that was used by the organisations in the captions, as discussed in chapter 9. Furthermore, these comments expressed agreement with the claims being made by the organisations in the

captions, even when there was no corroborative evidence of what had happened, for example the images showing the aftermath of violence. In contrast, a minority of comments supported Israel and the actions of the Israeli security forces documented in the images. These comments directly challenged claims being made by the organisations and made counterclaims that the image was fake or that the narrative was not accurate. They also justified the actions of the security forces as necessary.

Of the comments that supported Palestine, the majority were general statements of support for Palestine or criticism of Israel. A minority of comments focused on the individual people or interactions depicted in the image, for example, comments on a video of the arrest of a child asked why a country would arrest a five-year-old child and others mocked the soldiers for detaining a young child. These expressed outrage at the abuse of power, at the arbitrary restrictions and the use of force. Most, however, did not differentiate between the individual soldiers depicted in the image and the IDF, or Israel as a whole, suggesting that most of the commenters saw the actions of the forces as part of a system of institutional injustice and oppression rather than the actions of a few bad individuals. These comments agreed that images showed excessive force by Israeli security forces, unjustified arrests of Palestinians and unwarranted home demolitions. Many also agreed that these interactions were evidence of the structural injustices of an occupation, with comments rarely speaking about the Israeli security forces as individuals but instead as a whole, for example "soldiers" or "Israeli military". Some of the most frequently used words used to describe the Israelis were "terrorists", "oppressors" and "cowards". Supportive comments also agreed with the claims about Israel being made by the organisations, in particular, claims of occupation and apartheid, and these were words that were mentioned within the comments. These findings suggest that many people were not only accepting claims of specific incidences of police brutality carried out by individuals but also accepted that these were evidence of structural violence and systematic oppression by the occupation.

A minority of comments, however, did not agree with the claims in the posts and did not support the Palestinian cause. These comments either made general statements criticising Palestinians or celebrating Israel, or they specifically disputed the image or its caption. There were some comments that directly criticised the images and videos and alleged that they were fake or staged or challenged the narrative that was expressed within the caption by the organisation that posted the image or video. Comments that argued that the images were faked, manipulated or staged were infrequent but appeared across all platforms and accounts. Another criticism that appeared, infrequently, in the comments was that important contextual information was deliberately left out of the caption or the image or video, such as information about what was happening before the interaction, seemingly questioning the credibility of these images and videos. These two types of comments were a reflection of the well-documented strategy by Israel's supporters to discredit Palestinian images (Stein, 2021).

Alternatively, the more general anti-Palestine comments often presented one of a few key narratives, specifically those that claimed Palestine never existed, depicted Palestinians as

violent terrorists and, thirdly, claimed that Palestinians were not interested in pursuing peace with Israel. Comments also disagreed with the narrative that was presented in the caption of the image, for example by accusing the Palestinians of violence. This then made the Israeli use of force justifiable, therefore, refuting the claims that were being made in the post. References were made to incidents of Palestinian violence against Israelis to rationalise the actions of the forces. Checkpoints were justified because of previous Palestinian violence and the threat of future attacks. Arrests of children were justified, according to these social media commentators, because the children were throwing stones. This was often despite there being no evidence of this in the images and videos. For these social media users, Palestinian children were 'young terrorists' rather than innocent victims.

Although there were comments that disagreed and disputed the claims being made, the majority were supportive of the Palestinian cause. This suggests that the posts by the advocacy organisations were mainly reaching an already supportive audience rather than extending beyond their immediate supporters to raise awareness of the Palestinian cause in a wider audience. This has implications on the effectiveness of the social media activity of the advocacy organisations as the impact of such information depends on its visibility and reach of the content through a network of distribution (Reilly, 2020). The finding that the majority of comments expressed agreement with the claims being made is in contrast to previous research into the social media response to videos that made claims of police brutality against protesters. In two studies of the response to surveillance of protests in Bristol and Northern Ireland, Reilly (2015; 2020) found that the majority of social media users did not accept the claims of police brutality and instead blamed protesters for the violence depicted in the videos. These comments typically reflected the narratives presented in the mainstream media coverage of the protests. In these case studies, comments disagreed with and disputed the narrative presented by the activists and refuted the claims being made. Social media users commenting on the videos of protesters in Bristol and Northern Ireland tended to speak about the individuals depicted in the video, this was in contrast to most of the comments on the images of interactions between Palestinians and Israeli security forces which spoke in a more general way about either the Palestinians or Israeli forces.

A key difference, however, that could account for some of these differences was that the images analysed in this study were from Palestinian advocacy organisations whereas the videos analysed by Reilly (2016; 2020) were posted with general titles on YouTube and would have been viewed by people who were not necessarily sympathetic to those portrayed. The videos analysed in this study were most likely to be viewed by supporters of the organisation due to the nature of the social media platforms that would make these posts visible to those who followed the organisations. There were, however, some similarities between the content of comments that disputed the post in this study and in the studies by Reilly (2016; 2020), mainly that the use of force by security agents was justified due to the threat of violence. These types of comments also directly refuted attempts to delegitimise and condemn the actions of security forces, whether that was in the OPT or in Bristol.

Overall, the main message that emerged from the comments left on the posts was one of support for the Palestinians, both those depicted individually in the images and more generally. Social media users expressed agreement with the claims being made by the organisations that images showed oppression and injustice and that Israeli occupation was directly responsible for this. This had the effect of building up a stream of supportive messages on the social media accounts of the Palestinian advocacy organisations.

12.4 Support to Solidarity

While there was evidence of social media users supporting the cause in the comments that were left on the posts, the extent to which this support extended to solidarity was less clear. Most obviously, were comments that directly expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people from people who were far removed from the situation, typically these said, "solidarity from..." and the country that the user was presumably located in. These countries included Italy, Pakistan, Malaysia, South Africa, Ireland, Scotland and Algeria, suggesting that social media users were located in these places and the content was reaching them. In this way, trans-national solidarity was built in the comments section with messages of support and solidarity coming from different places around the world. Furthermore, although most of the comments were in English, 9% of all text comments were written in a language other than English, including Hebrew, Arabic, Spanish, Dutch and Indonesian. As well as this, when posts were retweeted on Twitter, these were sometimes accompanied by a translation of the caption into another language, seemingly to share the content with speakers of non-English languages. These translated captions included Catalan, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish. This was evidence of the international solidarity that was being built by reaching audiences across the world.

Furthermore, trans-national solidarity was developed by bringing together the Palestinian cause and another social movement or issue, for example Black Lives Matter. The hashtag #PalestinianLivesMatter was used in comments, adopting the #BlackLivesMatter movement's hashtag, to build a sense of solidarity between the oppressed people in Palestine and the Black Lives Matter cause in the US. Furthermore, the similarity between state violence in America and Israeli violence against Palestinians was addressed within the comments section, typically on images of soldiers restraining Palestinians. Solidarity was also built between Palestinians and Kashmiris and Native Americans, with comments drawing links between their shared struggle against occupation and settler-colonialism. A small number of comments also drew comparisons between other international contexts including the war in Afghanistan, Yellow Vest protests in France, the Syrian war and Irish Troubles.

It could also be argued that comments that were used to tell others about actions that the user had taken to support the cause also demonstrated solidarity as these required the person to have taken additional steps to engage in the movement. Most often these comments were that the user was boycotting or intended to boycott a company as part of BDS. These types of messages were typically left on the posts by BDS, whose captions directly encouraged boycott

of these brands. Meanwhile, on other organisations' posts, other comments stated that the user had signed a petition which had been promoted in the caption of the post. For example, on post FB-145, which encouraged users to sign a petition addressed to the Attorney General of New York asking them "to investigate the charitable status of the Hebron Fund", most of the comments simply said "signed". This was also the case with post FB-164 which encouraged people to sign a petition to the Foreign Office to demand the UK take action to protect Palestinian children from arrest and detention.

A number of emojis were used to express solidarity in a non-verbal way with gestures such as the praying hands (🙏), muscles (💪) and the closed raised fist (✊), either in a comment by themselves or with a message of prayer, hope and solidarity. That these emojis were found to be the most common to express support and solidarity was consistent with previous research that has shown how these emojis are used to express support and solidarity in a range of contexts (Sharp, 2018; Elwert et al 2023; Wu & Montgomery 2021; Duncombe 2020; Barbala, 2023; Ross, 2022). The Palestinian flag was the most frequently used emoji overall in the comments and was another symbol of solidarity with the Palestinian people, consistent with previous research on social media content that has found the Palestinian flag to be an easy visual expression of support for Palestinians (Abbas et al., 2022). This is not limited to the Palestinian content, but consistent across different crises, for example (Santhanam et al 2019) showed how the French flag was used frequently as a way of expressing solidarity with those affected by the Paris terrorist attacks of 2015.

Most of the comments expressed support and solidarity with the Palestinian cause. This took the form of general statements of support, such as calls to "free Palestine" and expressions of solidarity from different parts of the world. While this appeared to be evidence of transnational solidarity arising from feelings of compassion and empathy (Fattah & Fierke, 2009; Schlag, 2018), there was little evidence that this solidarity was leading to a sense of responsibility, with very few of the comments expressing intentions to take action. This reflected previous research by Sajir and Aouragh (2019) on the responses to images of child victims of the Syrian war. The authors argued that while the image of Omran Daqesh in the back of an ambulance evoked strong emotional reactions, it produced a weak, insubstantial solidarity that did not lead to feelings of responsibility and, ultimately, was not effective at mobilising people to create change.

12.5 Visibility to accountability

It can be argued that the distribution of the images of the interactions between Palestinians and Israeli security forces by the organisations had a clear political motivation as part of advocacy work to resist occupation, raise awareness and challenge Israeli narratives. The images also served as visual evidence of Israeli occupation, with arguably some expectation that by making the injustice of occupation visible, this would lead to a sense of responsibility to hold the Israeli regime to account for moral violations and violations of international law. Making state violence visible does not necessarily mean that those responsible will be held to

account, however, it may have the potential to do so. This potential has previously been theorised within the concept of hierarchical *sousveillance* (Mann et al., 2003). It was envisioned that the mass availability of portable recording technology would empower citizens to demand accountability of those in positions of power by contributing to a society in which those not in power could monitor the actions of the powerful (Mann et al., 2003). Recording could therefore lead to greater visibility and accountability as it would make it more difficult to act with impunity, and when power is abused, this misconduct can be held to account (Bakir, 2010; Bradshaw, 2013; Huey et al., 2006; Mann et al., 2003).

Many studies of the relationship between visual evidence and accountability have paid attention to the ways in which the police are recorded by citizens, most often within a US context (Bradshaw, 2013b; Huey et al., 2006). Furthermore, Goldsmith (2010) argued that the society was entering an era of new visibility in which citizen recording reduces the power of the police to act with impunity, exposes misconduct and increases accountability and these claims were also echoed by Brucato (2015) and Miller (2016), among others. However, the extent to which accountability can result from citizen recordings is unclear. One consequence of the recording and sharing of negative interactions between citizens and police is that they reduce public trust and perceptions of the legitimacy of police (Graziano & Gauthier, 2018; Mohler et al., 2022). This suggests that there is potential for images showing evidence of abuse of power to shape public perceptions, which may in turn lead to public pressure for greater accountability.

It was, arguably, through the recording and distribution of images that documented police brutality against individuals that mobilised the Black Lives Matter movement in the US (Chang et al., 2021; Cornet et al., 2017; Edrington & Gallagher, 2019; Richardson, 2017; Smit et al., 2018). These images made visible the institutional racial violence against African Americans and created outrage in the American public who were then mobilised to demand accountability from law enforcement. Accountability was sought through existing political and legal channels, for example convicting US officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd through the American justice system. Although there were calls within the BLM movement to reform the law enforcement institution, most of the focus was on demanding justice and accountability through existing, internal systems (Tillery, 2019).

Seeking internal accountability can be a strategy where the public has faith in the justice system to hold those responsible to account, however, this is where the Palestinian cause diverges from the BLM cause. It is widely recognised by Palestinians that the judicial system was developed by and for Israeli colonisers and is unlikely to work for Palestinian interests. It is rare for there to be consequences when Israeli security forces kill or injure Palestinians, even when there is clear visual evidence that calls into question the legality of the actions of the individuals, as Israeli forces are protected by this legal system. For example, no legal action was taken against the soldier who shot and killed Palestinian man Mustafa Tamimi, despite human rights groups arguing that the video evidence showed the soldier acting outside of the Israeli military's own regulations (Cohen, 2013; Mann, 2019). More recently, the Sheikh Jarrah

evictions have been held up as further evidence of a legal system that works for Israeli interests and is almost impossible to challenge from within. Despite this, research has shown evidence of Palestinian activists continuing to engage in the act of recording and sharing images at West Bank checkpoints (Swed, 2020) and at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound (Volinz, 2018). More widely, B'Tselem utilises strategic image recording as a means of documenting human rights abuses (Stein, 2021).

This research shown how recording and sharing images as an activist practice occurs beyond these key locations in Palestine. Recordings captured a wide range of interactions between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, which were shared on social media platforms by international advocacy organisations to international audiences to create visibility. In this case, international audiences were targeted with English language content with the aim of shifting international public opinion on Palestine in order to mobilise the public to pressure external governments to demand Israel be held accountable. Within a context where internal routes to justice appear to be inaccessible and Palestinians feel as though they cannot achieve accountability through the existing Israeli justice system, accountability could be achieved by drawing upon support from the international community. However, this accountability was arguably not being achieved as the analysis showed that there was little evidence of the activists tagging journalists and mainstream media outlets when posting the images; without MSM coverage, it is unlikely to get the coverage required (Bakir, 2010; Matheson & Allan, 2009; Reilly, 2020)

This strategy of reaching out to international audiences could be comparable to the ways in which images were used by international advocacy groups during the Syrian war to make claims of war crimes and demand accountability for the abuse of human rights (Ritchin, 2014; Yousef & Taylor, 2017; Wall & al Zahed, 2014). During the Syrian war, a huge number of images were recorded, mainly by citizen journalists, and distributed to the international public, which created visibility and awareness of the human suffering and called for governments and the international community to hold the Syrian regime and its allies to account. Yet despite the mass availability of images that provided evidence of war crimes in Syria, there was frustration that this did not lead to greater international accountability (Doucet, 2018). The potential for images to bring about meaningful change in behaviour, arguably, was not realised (Lenette & Miskovic, 2018; Adler-Nissan, Anderson & Hansen, 2020). Similarly, in this study, there was little evidence that the social media posts were having an impact on shifting opinion or leading to calls for accountability. There was also a sense of frustration within the comments at the lack of international action against Israel, despite the substantial documentation of its abuse of Palestinians, suggesting that supporters were aware of the limits of this type of online activism. Social media users commented on what they perceived to be complicity by other states including the UK through arms sales and Arab states through normalisation deals with Israel. They also commented on the lack of mainstream media attention in reporting on issues of Israeli occupation.

Accountability of Israel could be achieved through political channels, but another major part of Palestinian resistance is the BDS campaign which seeks corporate accountability for complicity in maintaining the structures of occupation and oppression. Many of the captions called for the boycott of companies which were documented as operating within the occupied territories and facilitating structural violence against Palestinians, such as Caterpillar which supplies bulldozers that are used to demolish Palestinian property and HP which provides the technology for the population registry which is used to control and manage the Palestinian population. These captions called for accountability of such corporations on a public platform by linking them to the suffering depicted within the images and demanding that they cease to be complicit. This type of call to action (BDS) appears to be directed at an international public as a form of activism that they can actually do to make a difference. While they may not have any power to intervene in specific incidents, they can engage with the cause and show their support through the boycott of brands. This would suggest that social media can be considered as a form of bottom-up advocacy in which the goal is not a direct appeal to those who can enact political or structural change but seeks to shift public opinion by presenting acts of support that are realistic, such as boycotting a brand or writing to a political representative. The strategy of calling international publics to boycott an oppressive regime follows the example of the BDS movement against South African apartheid which contributed to success in making the state accountable. Yet, the same success has not yet been realised within the context of Israel/Palestine.

12.6 Conclusion

The number of comments left on the posts collected and analysed in this study were low, with many of the posts shared by the organisations receiving no engagement in the form of comments, and those that did typically saw a small number of comments. Despite this, the content of comments showed an overall statement of support for the Palestinian people from a wide range of different social media users, creating a network that had the potential to be mobilised through affective solidarity to hold Israel to account for its transgressions.

13 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the ways in which social media platforms, specifically, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are used by international Palestinian advocacy organisations as a form of activism to distribute still and moving images that capture interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians. This research builds upon existing research in a number of fields, in particular, digital activism and the ways in which social media offers opportunities for advocacy, visual communication as a way of drawing attention to international causes and building solidarity, and the Palestinian solidarity movement. Four research questions were presented:

RQ1: What are the visual frames present in the still and moving images of interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians?

RQ2: How does the text caption interact with the image?

RQ3: How were the affordances of social media platforms leveraged by the advocacy organisations to amplify visual content?

RQ4: What do the responses by social media users show about the potential for using social media to build affective solidarity for the Palestinian cause?

A methodology was developed to answer these research questions taking a novel approach that drew upon existing social media research and visual methods to design a suitable method. This involved collecting data manually from the Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts of eleven Palestinian advocacy organisations that would post images of Palestinians and Israeli security forces. By taking a cross-platform approach to data collection that allowed for comparable data to be collected from the three different platforms, it was possible to gain insight into how the affordances of different social media platforms are used by organisations and how, or indeed if, they were adapting their content for different sites. Furthermore, the collection of multiple types of data including images as well as text meant that the interaction between the image and text could be explored.

RQ1: What are the visual frames present in the still and moving images of interactions between Israeli security forces and Palestinians? In chapters, 6 and 7, the visual content was discussed by identifying the visual frames that were present across the platforms and accounts. Violence was a key frame, whether that was actual physical violence, structural violence or the threat of violence against Palestinians. It can be argued that, in the context of Palestinian activism, image activism can be an effective strategy as the issue of Israeli occupation manifests in concrete and visual ways such as checkpoints and the demolition of property that can be photographed by Palestinians. In this way, images can be an important part of Palestinian activist strategies. A number of key visuals were identified, and these were repeated in many images, particularly physical brutality, the yellow bulldozer tearing down a Palestinian

property, security forces arresting and detaining young Palestinian children and the physical structures of checkpoints. The repetition of these visual symbols in multiple images, posted across three platforms by eleven different organisations contributed to creating a stream of images evidencing Israeli occupation. This stream of images, which characterises the social media feed, may outweigh the significance of individual images (Rubenstein & Sluis, 2008). Furthermore, according to Mirzoeff (2019) the repetition of images matters as it serves as a refusal to keep these issues out of view. The repetition of similar images makes them a call to action to right an injustice.

Chapter 9 presented the discussion of the analysis of the text captions as a response to **RQ2: *How does the text caption interact with the image?*** The analysis showed how the text captions were used by the organisations to not only explain what the image showed, but also to situate this within the wider context of Israeli occupation and oppression. The repetition of this narrative by the different organisations on the consistent stream of images that provided visual evidence of the claims may serve to challenge and disrupt dominant mainstream narratives that persist in Western MSM, particularly those that portray the issue as a cycle of violence between two equal parties and Palestinians as violent terrorists that threaten the national security of Israel (Siddiqui & Zaheer, 2018; Halabi et al., 2021; Noakes & Wilkins, 2016; Richardson & Barkho, 2009; Philo & Berry, 2004; 2011). In this way, social media can be used for sharing information, raising awareness and shifting public discourse of the Palestinian cause. This supports previous research on digital activism that has shown how activists use social media platforms primarily for information sharing (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009; Jansen et al., 2009; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Guo and Saxton, 2014). The strong narrative built through the use of captions on images that was consistent across all the organisations' content was arguably one of the main strengths of the social media strategies of these organisations. On their own, images can risk de-politicising the suffering of others and without a narrative rooted in activism, they may produce feelings of pity rather than solidarity which is not sufficient for action (Sajir & Aouragh, 2019), therefore, it was important for the captions to be used to not just show violence against Palestinians but to define why it was occurring and shape the discussion of responsibility. This, then, has the potential to build solidarity with the Palestinian cause and, ultimately mobilise people to take action to change the conditions that cause their oppression.

Chapters 10 and 11 presented a discussion of **RQ3: *How were the affordances of social media platforms leveraged by the advocacy organisations to amplify visual content?***

First, the affordance of visibility was important for the Palestinian advocacy organisations as part of their efforts to increase awareness of and support for the cause. By using hashtags, organisations could seek to make their content visible to a wider audience beyond their immediate supporters who were already committed. Secondly, organisations attempted to mobilise people to take action through their social media content by making use of the mobilisation potential of images and text on social media. They used images of Palestinian

victims to evoke support and used text captions to express specific ways that people could help.

Chapter 12 presented the analysis of the responses to the posts by social media users on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. This analysis aimed to answer **RQ4: What do the responses by social media users show about the potential for using social media to build affective solidarity for the Palestinian cause?** It highlighted how engagement was low overall across all platforms and accounts. Unsurprisingly, there was more engagement with the content posted by those organisations with a higher number of followers, but the number of likes, shares and comments was still low. The qualitative analysis of the comments revealed most responses were supportive and agreed with the claims being made by the organisations about state violence and Israeli occupation, with a minority disputing the claims and these typically expressed narratives of Palestinian violence to justify Israeli state violence. These results suggest that the posts were not reaching a wider audience beyond the organisations' immediate supporters who follow their account. This is significant as social movements rely on reaching a wide audience to convince them of the legitimacy of their cause. It could be argued that the Palestinian advocacy organisations that were investigated in this study were not leveraging social media to its full potential, supporting previous research (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009; Elliott & Earl, 2018). As many social media users are accidentally exposed to political content on social media rather than seeking it out (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010; Tang & Lee, 2013; Xenos et al., 2014), it could be argued that these organisations are not doing enough to make their content visible to wider audiences. It is important to acknowledge here that visibility is increasingly determined by the platforms and that these have been found to be biased against Palestinian activism (Aouragh, 2016; Nashif, 2017, Sa'di, 2021, Almehdar, 2021), however, activist organisations can leverage functions of platforms strategically, for example through the use of key hashtags around which ad-hoc publics can gather without needing to be affiliated with the organisation. As the analysis of hashtags used by the organisations showed, hashtag use was inconsistent and there was no pivotal hashtag used by all organisations to bring their content together and this, arguably, is a weakness of their social media strategies.

In conclusion, social media has changed activist communication and offers new opportunities for sharing information about a cause, challenging mainstream narratives and building solidarity. This study has shown how social media has been added to the repertoire of offline and online strategies adopted by Palestinian solidarity organisations to achieve their aims of mobilising international audiences to support the Palestinian struggle for liberation. Images are central to communication on social media and digital image activism continues the history of sharing images of Palestinian suffering under Israeli occupation to international audiences (Faulkner, 2018; Hochberg, 2015; Allen, 2009). Social media offers greater opportunities for Palestinians and advocacy organisations to reach and speak directly with international audiences in attempts to build support and solidarity. However, it also creates new challenges that need to be addressed; how to get attention when social media users are flooded with

different content, how to maintain attention on the cause and how to mobilise people from online support to take action offline to bring about change. Furthermore, activists must contend with online surveillance and censorship by the Israeli regime and the platforms themselves which are increasingly determining visibility of content through algorithms that present content on the basis of complex, often hidden data analysis (Etter & Albu, 2021; Hutchinson, 2021). Whilst acknowledging these challenges and calling for future research to examine the impact of these on digital activism, if the Palestinian struggle is around the need for self-representation and visibility (Said, 1978; 2006), this study has shown how social media platforms can potentially serve this purpose. Furthermore, in the same way that the repetition of images of state violence in many forms can create a stream of visual content that creates visibility, the comments left by social media users on the posts create a steady stream of support from distant audiences who see these images, see the Palestinian suffering and say, 'I stand in solidarity with you'.

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Appendix 1: Ethics Approval



Downloaded: 04/06/2022
Approved: 27/02/2020

Jennifer Hayes
Registration number: 180264216
Information School
Programme: Information School PhD

Dear Jennifer

PROJECT TITLE: The use of social media for sousveillance
APPLICATION: Reference Number 032156

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 27/02/2020 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 032156 (form submission date: 27/02/2020); (expected project end date: 01/12/2021).
- Participant information sheet 1076188 version 1 (27/02/2020).
- Participant information sheet 1074666 version 1 (20/01/2020).
- Participant consent form 1076189 version 1 (27/02/2020).
- Participant consent form 1074597 version 1 (17/01/2020).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Paul Reilly
Ethics Administrator
Information School

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure>
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.6710661/file/GRIPPpolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

Appendix 2: Search Strategy for Organisation Selection

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
Stop The Wall Campaign	YES	http://www.facebook.com/stop.the.wall.campaign?ref=bookmarks	https://twitter.com/stopthewall	https://plus.google.com/u/0/103956445067466358446/videos	x	
Friends of al Aqsa	YES	https://www.facebook.com/foapeaceinpalestine/				
International Solidarity Movement (ISM)	YES	https://facebook.com/ismpalestine	https://www.twitter.com/ismpalestine	https://www.youtube.com/user/ISMMediaOffice	x	
http://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/	YES	https://www.facebook.com/SabeelKairos/?ref=br_rs	https://twitter.com/SabeelKairos	x	x	
The Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions Campaign	YES	https://www.facebook.com/Boycott-Divestment-and-Sanctions-BDS-Movement-115083011869901/	https://twitter.com/bds_movement	x	x	
ELECTRONIC INTIFADA	YES	https://www.facebook.com/electronicintifada	https://twitter.com/intifada	https://www.youtube.com/user/electronicIntifada	x	

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	YES	https://www.facebook.com/palestinesolidarityuk	https://twitter.com/pscupdates	x	https://www.instagram.com/palestinesolidarityuk/	
Palestinian Return Centre	YES	https://www.facebook.com/returncentre	http://twitter.com/prclondon	https://www.youtube.com/user/PalestineReturn	x	
International Solidarity Movement	YES	https://www.facebook.com/ismpalestine	https://twitter.com/ismpalestine	https://www.youtube.com/user/ISMMediaOffice	https://www.instagram.com/ismpalestine/	
B'Tselem (The Israeli information Centre for Human Rights)	YES	https://www.facebook.com/btselem	https://twitter.com/btselem	https://www.youtube.com/user/btselem	x	
Christian Peacemaker Team (Palestine)	YES					
Scottish Friends of Palestine	NO	http://www.facebook.com/ScottishFriendsOfPalestine	https://twitter.com/SFoP_Palestine	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
http://www.boycottisraelnetwork.net	NO	http://www.facebook.com/BoycottIsraelNetwork	https://twitter.com/BoycottIsraelUK	http://www.youtube.com/user/BoycottIsraelNetwork	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Stop the War	NO	https://facebook.com/stwtopthewarcoalition	https://twitter.com/stwuk	https://www.youtube.com/StoptheWarCoalition	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
Amos Trust	NO	https://www.facebook.com/amosjusticeandhope/	https://twitter.com/amos_trust	x	https://www.instagram.com/amos_trust/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Brighton & Hove Palestine Solidarity Campaign	NO	https://www.facebook.com/BrightonandHovePalestineSolidarityCampaign?ref=hl&ref_type=bookmark	https://twitter.com/BrigntonPSC	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Exeter Palestine Solidarity Campaign	NO	https://www.facebook.com/exeterpalestinesolidaritycampaign/	https://twitter.com/ExeterPsc	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace FFIPP	NO	https://www.facebook.com/FFIPP-Europe-Educational-Network-for-Human-Rights-in-Palestine-Israel-521490911278116/	https://twitter.com/FFIPP_Europe	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Friends of Birzeit	NO	https://www.facebook.com/fobzu/	https://twitter.com/fobzu?lang=en	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM1wX9pdHBg3TnayB_E3QWQ	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
FQMS Foundation for al Quds University Medical School.	NO	https://www.facebook.com/FQMSPalestine	https://twitter.com/FQMSPalestine	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)	NO	https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=4341366018	https://twitter.com/CAABU	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Cambridge Palestine Solidarity Campaign	NO	https://www.facebook.com/groups/cambridgepalestineforum/	x	x	x	No Twitter
Israeli committee against house demolitions	NO	https://www.facebook.com/ICAHDUK/	https://twitter.com/icahduk	x	https://icahd.org/our-mission-and-vision/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
ICAHD UK	NO	https://www.facebook.com/ICAHDUK/	https://twitter.com/icahduk	x	https://www.instagram.com/icahduk/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
www.interpal.org	NO	https://www.facebook.com/interpalUK	https://twitter.com/interpalUK	x	https://instagram.com/interpal_uk	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Kairos Palestine	NO	https://www.facebook.com/kairospalestine/	x	https://www.youtube.com/user/kairospalestine/videos	x	No Twitter
Liberal Democrats Friends of Palestine	NO	https://www.facebook.com/lawyersforpalestinianhumanrights	https://twitter.com/LDFop	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights	NO	https://www.facebook.com/lawyersforpalestinianhumanrights	https://twitter.com/lphr_lawyers	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Medical Aid For Palestinians	NO	https://www.facebook.com/MedicalAidforPalestinians	https://twitter.com/medicalaidpal/	https://www.youtube.com/user/MedicalAidPalestine	https://www.instagram.com/medicalaidpal/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Medical Aid for Palestinians Supports health and medical needs. Registered in the UK.	NO	https://www.facebook.com/MedicalAidforPalestinians	https://twitter.com/medicalaidpal/	https://www.youtube.com/user/MedicalAidPalestine	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Middle East Monitor	NO	https://www.facebook.com/middleeastmonitor	https://www.twitter.com/middleeastmnt	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJX8Wn6opMsBng3QWh0dK6g	https://www.instagram.com/middleeastmonitor/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Muslim Council of Britain	NO	https://www.facebook.com/muslimcouncil.uk	https://www.twitter.com/MuslimCouncil	https://www.youtube.com/MuslimCouncil	https://www.instagram.com/muslimcouncil.uk	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Palestinian Forum of Britain – on facebook>>	NO	https://www.facebook.com/PalestinianForumInBritain/	x	x	x	No Twitter
www.palestine-studies.org	NO	https://www.facebook.com/palstudies/	https://twitter.com/PalStudies	https://www.youtube.com/user/PalestineStudiesTV	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
Manchester PSC	NO	https://www.facebook.com/PSCMan/	https://twitter.com/manchesterpsc	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Scottish Palestine solidarity campaign	NO	https://www.facebook.com/scottishpsc	https://twitter.com/scottishpsc	x	https://www.instagram.com/scottish_psc/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign	NO	https://www.facebook.com/scottishps https://www.facebook.com/scottishpsc	http://www.twitter.com/scottishpsc	https://www.youtube.com/c/SPSCTVChannel	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Association of the Palestinian Community in the UK (APC)	NO	https://www.facebook.com/TheArabBritishCentre	https://twitter.com/ArabBritishCentre	x	https://www.instagram.com/arabbritishcentre/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
War on Want	NO	https://www.facebook.com/waronwant	https://twitter.com/waronwant	https://www.youtube.com/user/PovertyIsPolitical	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
British Artists for Palestine	NO	x	https://twitter.com/Art4PalestineUK	x	https://www.instagram.com/artists4palestineuk/	No Facebook
British Committee for Universities for Palestine (BRICUP)	NO	x	https://twitter.com/bricup	x	x	No Facebook

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
Conservative Middle East Council	NO	x	https://twitter.com/cme_c_uk	x	x	No Facebook
Corporate Occupation	NO	x	https://twitter.com/CorpOccupation	x	x	No Facebook
Hoping Foundation Supports community projects working with children in Palestinian refugee camps. Registered in the UK.	NO	x	https://twitter.com/HopingPalestine	x	https://www.instagram.com/hoping_foundation/	No Facebook
Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (J-BIG)	NO	x	https://twitter.com/Jews4BIG	x	x	No Facebook
International Middle East Media Center	NO	https://www.facebook.com/imemcnews/	https://twitter.com/imemcnews	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
palestinesolidarityproject.org	NO	https://www.facebook.com/pg/Palestine-Solidarity-Project-	x	x	x	No Twitter

ORGANISATION	INC LU DE	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM	NOTES
		276985608975/about/?ref=page_internal				
International Women's Peace Service	NO	https://www.facebook.com/WorldWomenforJusticeforPalestine	https://twitter.com/IWPS_Palestine	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Ta'ayush (Israel)	NO	https://www.facebook.com/Taayush/posts/10156817924466986?_tn_=_K-R	https://twitter.com/taayush	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
The Rachel Corrie Foundation	NO	http://www.facebook.com/rcfoundation	http://twitter.com/rcfoundation	http://www.youtube.com/c/RachelCorrieFoundation	https://www.instagram.com/rachelcorriefoundation/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Jewish Voice for Peace (US)	NO					
Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, UK	NO					No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Right to Education Campaign	NO	https://www.facebook.com/right2edu	https://twitter.com/right2edu	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmRECxSxEXk-2hCjRAaPn2g	https://www.instagram.com/right2edu/	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Palestine solidarity association in Sweden: PGS	NO					Swedish

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>INC LU DE</u>	<u>FACEBOOK</u>	<u>TWITTER</u>	<u>YOUTUBE</u>	<u>INSTAGRAM</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
The Olympia-Rafah Sister City Project	NO					Romanian
Palestinian campaign for the academic and cultural boycott of Israel PACBI	NO					No content
UCU	NO					not relevant
UNISON	NO					not relevant
BDS-Info - Swiss site in French and German	NO	Not English				Not English
British Committee for Universities in Palestine (BRICUP)	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media
Glasgow Palestine Human Rights Campaign	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media
Labour Friends of Palestine & the Middle East	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>INC LU DE</u>	<u>FACEBOOK</u>	<u>TWITTER</u>	<u>YOUTUBE</u>	<u>INSTAGRAM</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Palestine Israel Ethical Shopping Initiative	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media
Sheffield PSC	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media
West Kent Palestine Solidarity Campaign	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media
York PSC	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media
Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (Canada)	NO					n/a
Don't Play Israel	NO					n/a
Durham Palestine Education Trust: DPET	NO					n/a
Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine (UK)	NO					n/a
Friends of Birzeit University FOBZ U	NO					n/a

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>INC LU DE</u>	<u>FACEBOOK</u>	<u>TWITTER</u>	<u>YOUTUBE</u>	<u>INSTAGRAM</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Who Profits from the Occupation? (Israel)	NO	https://www.facebook.com/WhoProfits/	https://twitter.com/WhoProfits	x	x	No evidence of sousveillance in past 3 years
Gush Shalom (Israel)	NO					Hebrew
Rabbis For Human Rights	NO					Hebrew
Alternative Information Centre (Israel)	NO					Unable to find
Architects and Planners for Justice for Palestine	NO					Unable to find
Badil	NO					Unable to find
Boycott Israeli Goods: BIG	NO					Unable to find
Scottish Palestinian Forum	NO					Unable to find
Anarchists against the Wall	NO					Unable to find
Balatacamp	NO					Unable to find
Boycott Israeli Goods	NO					Unable to find

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>INC LU DE</u>	<u>FACEBOOK</u>	<u>TWITTER</u>	<u>YOUTUBE</u>	<u>INSTAGRAM</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Campaign to stop Caterpillar	NO					Unable to find
Durham PSC	NO					Unable to find
Glasgow University Action Palestine	NO					Unable to find
ISM – London	NO					Unable to find
ism-scotland.	NO					Unable to find
P10K (Palestine 10,000)	NO					Unable to find
Palestine: Articles with Provenance	NO					Unable to find
Wolverhampton PSC	NO					Unable to find
Campaign Against the arms Trade: Stop Arming Israel	NO					Unable to find
Matzpun ('la conscience')	NO					Unable to find
MuzzleWatch	NO					Unable to find
Palestine Remembered	NO					Unable to find

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>INC LU DE</u>	<u>FACEBOOK</u>	<u>TWITTER</u>	<u>YOUTUBE</u>	<u>INSTAGRAM</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
International solidarity movement, Germany (ISM-de)	NO					German
AURDIP (Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine) - (France)	NO					French
Coordination des appels ppur une paix juste au Proche Orient: CAPJPO	NO					French
Resistance Art	NO	x	x	x	x	No social media
Jerusalem center for social and economic rights	NO					Arabic
International Solidarity Movement – London	NO					Account suspended

