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The Doomsday Economy: Colonial Violence, Environmental Catastrophe, and Burning Tires in Palestine

The article analyzes the Palestinian act of tire burning at the intersection of the following frameworks – colonial violence, racial capitalism, and environmental discourse. The analysis considers the many functions of Palestinian tire burning: capital accumulation, waste management, protestors’ protection, counter-violence, pollution redistribution, and spectacle production. This analysis leads to the argument that Palestinian tire burning takes part in a “Doomsday Economy.” The article promotes the concept of a “Doomsday Economy” as a frame for understanding violence toward Palestinians and the contemporary intent of tire burning. The Doomsday Economy is a violent economic structure that involves two interplaying processes: (a) the positioning of a discursive catastrophe in a deferred future by colonial powers in order to conceal the present violence and production of a daily doomsday for the oppressed; and (b) the oppressed’s acceleration of the future-doomsday’s arrival for all participants of this economy – through pollution and images – introducing doomsday as a present state.

Keywords: Palestinian resistance, greenwashing, settler colonialism, racial capitalism, environmental justice

“A personal relationship, or love, or affection, is made between the [local] resident and his tree, to the point of willing to die for it” (Fawaz Hamayel’s words, a resident of Beita, West Bank, who was shot and killed during an Israeli army invasion to Beita on April 14, 2021).

“It was tremendously important. Firstly, an oil fire is very spectacular, physically. For miles away the enormous column of smoke was visible. It wasn’t something they could hide [...] Nobody could deny or downplay the action. It shattered the myth of white invulnerability. It was not about a quantity of oil that was lost by sabotage, it was that column of smoke that was important” (Frene Ginwala’s words [in Hengeveld and Rodenburg 1995, 36]).

Introduction

During Gaza’s Great March of Return series of demonstrations (March 30, 2018, to December 27, 2019),¹ tire burning was one of the most prominent activities. Protesters named the second Friday of demonstrations, which occurred on April 6, 2018, the “Friday of Tires.” The plan for that Friday was to collect and burn as many tires as possible next to the Israeli border fence, primarily to block the sight of Israeli snipers, who killed 15 Palestinian protesters on the first Friday of the Great March. However, some Palestinians, jokingly (or not), circulated online the idea of burning a layer in the ozone through tire burning, adding the quote, “we will all live in dignity together, or we all die together” (*Nuhafaat Shawaar’ina* 2018; Razq 2018). The hint was clear: if we cannot breathe, you cannot breathe; if it is doomsday for us, it is doomsday for you.

The Israeli reply to the “Friday of Tires” preparations did not take long, mostly revolving around an environmental discourse. The Israeli media covered the possible ecological dangers for all – animals, Israelis, Palestinians, and the world’s population. (Berkowitz 2018; Levi 2018;

1 The article will refer to “the Great March of Return” as “the Great March” from this point onwards.

Magid 2018; *al-Munaseq* 2018). Simultaneously, Israeli authorities addressed international organizations, including the World Health Organization, with a request to stop the coming “ecological catastrophe” (Berkowitz 2018). However, what was lacking from the media coverage and the appeals to international organizations was not only the violence toward the Palestinian protesters and the systematic injustice and oppression that led to their protests, but also the Israeli “greenwashing” agenda and its colonial economy that heavily damages the environment.

The “Friday of Tires” is notable for the number of tires burned and in the interest it raised concerning the act of tire burning in the Palestinian, Israeli, and international media. Nonetheless, the “Friday of Tires” is not exceptional; tire burning is a common sight in Palestine. Tires are burned in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of waste management. Palestinians regularly burn tires in demonstrations against Israeli occupation throughout the West Bank – in city squares and streets, in village entrances, at the foot of hills taken by Israeli settlements, and at the Israeli army’s apartheid fences, walls, and checkpoints. Moreover, tire burning leaves its footprint evident on Palestinian ground, clothes, hands, and lungs. However, as yet no academic research has been conducted on the different functions of tire burning in Palestine.

This article argues that in the context of the Palestinian struggle, tire burning is an expression of, and participation in, a “Doomsday Economy.” This article proposes the concept of “Doomsday Economy” as the intersection of (settler) colonial violence, imperialist capitalism, and the climate change discourse, within the context of Palestinian tire burning. Within these frames, the Doomsday Economy is composed of two entangled actions: (a) the positioning of a doomsday in a deferred future by colonial powers in order to legitimize the present violence and production of daily doomsday for the oppressed; and (b) the oppressed’s acceleration of the future doomsday’s arrival, through pollution and images, introducing it as a present state for all participants in the economy.

Since the Palestinian act of burning tires is the sole focus of inquiry, this article aims to contribute significantly to the understanding of a contemporary and commonly seen aspect of the Palestine/Israel situation and the Palestinian struggle. This understanding is expected to support comparative studies of tire-burning acts, and resistance in general, in other localities around the globe. The major contribution is the promotion of the concept of the Doomsday Economy. This concept aims to provide a new framework for the intersection of environmental studies, settler colonial studies, and the critique of capitalism.

To reach its argument, this article first situates the Palestine/Israel condition(s) and the Palestinian struggle within appropriate theoretical frames. The first frame is settler colonialism, a framework for interpreting “a distinct mode of domination” of a settler colonial apparatus toward an indigenous population (Veracini 2016). In the last two decades, especially after the emergence of the journal *Settler Colonial Studies*, there has been vast growth in inquiries focused on the Palestinian situation and struggle within the settler colonial framework (Busbridge 2018; Veracini 2019). These inquiries led to the mutual contribution and a broader understanding of the settler colonial apparatus and the situation in Palestine/Israel. However, while settler colonialism is often used as a paradigmatic framework of analysis in the Palestine/Israel field, its criticism is crucial to its appliance (Barakat 2018; Busbridge 2018; Desai 2021; Englert 2022). The most essential of these is Rana Barakat’s. Barakat (2018) argues that the burgeoning scholarly interest in Palestine/Israel within the framework of settler colonialism tends to produce correlating dichotomies of settler/native and triumph/defeat, which eventually results in silencing Palestinian voices and resistance. Along with this tendency, settler colonial studies may favor the exclusive examination of the settler domination apparatus, leaving unattended indigenous experiences and agency, thus further silencing indigenous voices.² With this critique in mind, the article examines and applies the settler colonial framework not in its paradigmatic manner, but as a body of thought that includes its local articulations.

The settler colonial frame functions as the ground on which other theoretical frameworks – some historically emerging from the study of settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel – come into play. The theoretical frameworks of interest here are necropolitics, “greenwashing,” and racial capitalism. Although contextualized within the locality of Palestine/Israel, this article regards the frames along their glocal axis, which sees the locality in its affinities to international forces and global markets. The discussion in these frames suggests that colonial violence, both local and global, renders Palestinian lives almost unbearable while obscuring its own violence by discursively positioning a threat of ecological catastrophe in the future.

2 A striking example of that is Veracini’s (2010) words in his book *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*: “It is important that we focus on the settlers, on what they do, and how they think about what they do” (15). While Veracini explains his choice to focus on the settlers, the result is still the marginalization of the indigenous population.

Following this understanding, the article analyzes the Palestinian act of tire burning and its many functions. The functions considered are capital accumulation, waste management, protestor protection, resistance, pollution redistribution, and spectacle production. Along with its functions, the analysis examines different occurrences of tire burning and the discourses revolving around it – Palestinian, Israeli, and international. Within this analysis, tire burning is revealed as resistance to the local and global violence that pushes the Palestinian living conditions to their limits. What is more, tire burning calls for attention to the legitimization of this violence by revealing the present state as a catastrophically violent one. Thus, the final discussion brings together the act of burning tires in Palestine and the two movements of the Doomsday Economy.

Settler Colonialism and the Daily Doomsday

In the last two decades, the settler colonial frame and critical studies of Palestine/Israel seem to have been bound together. This is not by chance, as the frame and the field help illuminate each other (Pappé 2012). Rachel Busbridge (2018) points to this simultaneous growth and explains it by the mutual donation of the two for further developing an understanding of the other; while

[t]he analytical and political appeal of settler colonial studies for scholarship on Israel-Palestine is evident, given its grounding on an enriched and revitalized reworking of older accounts of settler colonialism [...] the settler colonial paradigm offers a holistic perspective that brings to the forefront the systematic pattern of Zionist colonization vis-a`-vis the Palestinians (95-6).

Applied in the Israel/Palestine field, the settler colonial paradigm helps to understand Zionism as a structure and ongoing process of violently appropriating capital – mostly in the form of land (Salamanca et al. 2012; Lloyd 2012). The prioritizing of accumulating land over the control of labor produces a deadly regime, which works according to the logic of elimination, as Wolfe (2006) argues. The paradigm understands accumulation through elimination as a structure and not as an event, and thus as an ongoing and ever-evident process in the state of settler colonialism (Wolfe 1999; Busbridge 2018, 92). This understanding corresponds with the Palestinian concept and experience of the ongoing or continuous *Nakba*, a daily and never-ending catastrophe for

the Palestinian people as a whole, as well as for Palestinian groups and individuals (E. Khoury 2012; 2022).

One prominent theoretical formation that stems, at least partially, from an analysis of the Israel/Palestine settler colonialist situation is Achille Mbembe's "Necropolitics." In his book *Necropolitics*, Mbembe (2019) examines the Israeli colonial project's heavy domination of Palestinians through necropolitics. This domination relies on the power to dictate a worth-living life from a worthless one. In Palestine, necropolitics comes into play through various methods and structures: advanced surveillance systems that produce a state of (in)security for the Palestinians; infrastructure destruction, which leaves the Palestinians in ruins – economic, ecological, physical, and psychological, among others; different types of blockades and borders that produce a state of siege – on Palestinian territories and people; and a constant threat to life by colonial powers. Though focused on theorizing a new concept of sovereignty, Mbembe's analysis does not overlook its effect on the occupied population:

To live under late-modern occupation is to experience a permanent condition of "being in pain": fortified structures, military posts, and roadblocks everywhere; buildings that bring back painful memories of humiliation, interrogations, and beatings; curfews that imprison hundreds of thousands in their cramped homes every night from dusk to dawn; soldiers patrolling the unlit streets, frightened by their own shadows; children blinded by rubber bullets; parents shamed and beaten in front of their families; soldiers urinating on fences, shooting at rooftop water tanks just for kicks, chanting loud and offensive slogans, pounding on fragile tin doors to frighten children, confiscating papers, or dumping garbage in the middle of residential neighborhoods; border guards kicking over vegetable stands or closing borders at whim; bones broken; shootings and fatalities—a certain kind of madness (91).

As Mbembe argues in his celebrated statement, all these amount to "creating *death-worlds*, that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*" (92).

Although scholars have contested the notion of necropolitics as a holistic framework for understanding Israeli sovereignty over Palestinians, the stress remains on processes that mark Palestinian lives with signs of death and render them almost unbearable. For Jasbir K. Puar (2017), "[t]hrough debilitating practices of maiming and stunting, Palestinians are further literalized and lateralized as surface, as bodies without

souls, as sheer biology, thus rendered nonhuman” (150). For Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015), it is “[t]he constant and continuous dispossession sustained by a [Israeli] colonial political economy of fear, maintained by bureaucracies of control” which leads to “[t]he transformation of lives and homes into spaces of constant surveillance and terrorism” and overwhelming human suffering and trauma for Palestinians (40). Whether through necropolitics, debilitating practices, or politics of fear, it seems that settler colonial efforts to make Palestinian life “unbearable, to a degree beyond the limits of endurance” are, at least partially, successful (Muhareb 2013, 11). As Hasan al-Kurd, one of the organizers of Gaza’s Great March, testifies on the reason for the Great March: “[t]he situation in Gaza has become unbearable and we absolutely can’t live in Gaza anymore” (Younis 2018).

A primary part of the settler colonial aspirations, and consequently also a significant part of the indigenous condition, are achieved through treating the environment as a favored form of capital, a tool, and an essential discourse. This affinity to the environment can be seen as a part of what Iris Braverman (2023) recently described as “settler ecologies,” which is “the coproductive relationship between settlers and nature” (6). Within this frame, the settler colonial apparatus simultaneously and codependently dispossesses the indigenous population from its environment, violently modifies the environment, and dominates modes of “ecological knowledges” (2), which bestows it with the right to manage both the environment and the indigenous population. Thus, the settler colonial process of land grabbing extends to the whole environment and includes the air (B’Tselem 2011), water (B’Tselem 2011; McKee 2021), minerals and oils (UNCTAD 2019), vegetation (Braverman 2021), and animate beings (Gutkowski 2021; Amira 2021). Israel’s colonial efforts are thus aimed at accumulating the environment.

The exploitation of the environment by Israeli sovereignty is further demonstrated in numerous violent practices, which not only utilize the environment as a tool for domination but heavily damage it: tear gas from grenades and smoke from bombings pollute the air (Al-Agha 1997); land barriers block the animals’ natural movement (Gutkowski 2021); sewage and waste from settlements contaminate the soil and water (Al-Agha 1997; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019; 2021); the Jewish National Fund planned landscapes destroy the native vegetation (Braverman 2021); shatter solar panels (Hughes, Velednitsky, and Green 2022); destroy water tanks (McKee 2021); uproot trees (Turcios 2019; Kirk 2022; Sasa 2022); and more. Moreover, the environment also suffers

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from the indirect effects of Israeli necropolitics, especially siege warfare. Most prominently, this comes into play in Palestinian waste management and its impact on the environment (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019). Colonial efforts thus damage the local environment in a complex and multilayered manner, which amounts to an “environmental *Nakba*” (Qumsiyeh and Abusarhan 2020).

Ironically, the Israeli apparatus also exploits the environment to legitimize its actions by participating in global environmental discourses. This practice is widely known as “greenwashing.” Greenwashing functions in the vast apparatus of settler colonialism, which “obscures the conditions of its own production” (Veracini 2010, 14). Israeli Greenwashing conceals and justifies violent actions, sometimes against the environment itself (Feitelson, Tamimi, and Rosenthal 2012; Mason 2013; Al-Haq 2021; Charrett 2021; Hughes, Velednitsky, and Green 2022). It does so with excuses of climate aid, environmental protection, and progress – often articulated within a neoliberal discourse.

The State of Israel’s greenwashing procedure appeals to modern environmental discourse and the fear of climate catastrophe to obscure and legitimize settler colonialism. Sara Salazar Hughes et al. (2022) claim that by “Anticipating climate catastrophes and preempting these through the development of green technology, Israeli authorities frame the nation as an indispensable actor within the global community” (6). As Hughes et al. further claim, framing Israel as a critical factor in “climate change mitigation and sustainable ecological management” attempts to obscure and legitimize settler colonialism (2). The legitimization of the control over Palestinian land stems not only from the claimed ability of the State of Israel in the environmental scope but also from the claimed inability and even hostility of Palestinians in it. As Catherine Chiniara Charrett (2021) and Hughes et al. (2022) stress in their studies, Israel claims superiority – morally, technologically, and strategically – over the Palestinians in the environmental scope.³ These claims for superiority position “Israel as a responsible—and, by proxy, legitimate— steward of Palestinian lands” (Hughes, Velednitsky, and Green 2022, 2). The claims for superiority, which must be seen in relation to the ongoing Zionist claims of superiority that Edward Said describes in *The Question of Palestine* (1992), are supposed to give the State of Israel the moral ground and acute necessity to expand imperialistically.

3 Though statistics show the opposite at the Global Footprint Network website: <https://data.footprintnetwork.org>.

Said's examination of the Zionist project's international aspects demonstrates that the Israeli colonial project, regarding the environment or not, cannot be isolated from the global economy. Much like the Israeli warfare technologies, with the Elbit case as a well-known example (Graham 2014), Israeli green technologies are developed and tested on local grounds and are later sold to different international forces; some also use them to duplicate the greenwashing of their local violent regimes (Hughes, Velednitsky, and Green 2022). Israeli greenwashing thus operates as a local market within a global economy of climate mitigation, green technologies, and colonial domination.

The strong relations between the local and the global in the Palestine/Israel environmental case are not unusual. They are inherent to the general issue of climate. In a reductive manner, climate change knows no borders (UN 2015); different localities affect the global situation, and vice versa – global actions may result in local effects. However, while climate change occurs globally, its local effects differ. In the case of Palestine, not only does research show that the area suffers more from climate changes than others, but that because of the colonial situation, Palestinians are less resilient to these changes (Feitelson, Tamimi, and Rosenthal 2012; Mason, Zeitoun, and Mimi 2012; Mason 2013; Freij 2021; Al-Haq 2021; Kirk 2022).

Beyond indirect environmental damage and ignoring the violence of the State of Israel, global forces have a direct role in the Palestinian situation. The most prominent example is the US government's military and economic support for the State of Israel (Sharp 2023). Different and recurring international sanctions on various Palestinian bodies – areas, political parties, and NGOs – also severely damage Palestinian lives (OHCHR, 2022; Policy Working Group, 2018; BADIL, 2020). However, international violence can be more subtle. In her study of the Gaza Strip's contemporary political economy, Charrett (2021) argues that because of Israeli colonial aggression and international neo-liberal policies, “[t]he Gaza Strip emerges as a site of unruly behavior and as a site that needs saving” (213). This situation “provide[s] opportunities for unlikely partnerships to form, through which hyper-masculine state leaders perform their saving/taming of the Gaza Strip” (214). Charrett claims that international and global forces, such as the UN and the EU, also participate in this political economy for their own political and violent interests. She argues that the international political bodies' so-called aid is “reproducing white supremacy and indigenous inferiority” (215). Hence, the violence toward the Palestinians is not solely a product of the local economy

of violence but is “productive of anti-black and anti-Muslim violence that has circulated globally upon which material economies rely” (217). It is thus evident that the Palestinian condition and its environment is a global question – obscured through the global discourse and economy of climate catastrophe; and is affected by the planetary effect of climate change as well as by capitalist and neo-liberal international forces.

The mentioned aspects of the Palestinian condition – the current unbearable life, the Israeli greenwashing, the global discourse of climate catastrophe, and the international capitalist economy – come into play within an economy of violence. The concept of a “Doomsday Economy” may accommodate these aspects and their actions. These aspects incorporate the first act of the Doomsday Economy, which is the positioning of a catastrophe in a deferred future in order to conceal and legitimize the present violence and production of an unbearable life.

The positioning of a catastrophe in the future and its constant deferring is best expressed by the image and logic of the Doomsday Clock. Doomsday, represented in the signifier “midnight,” is an inevitable future event which “our societies and the human species” constantly try to defer to the distant future (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists). In the current case study, this means the positioning of an environmental doomsday in the future and its constant deferring into a remote future through “sustainable technology, afforestation, and arid land management” (Hughes, Velednitsky, and Green 2022).⁴ These two processes – the positioning and deferring of a doomsday – lead to the persistence of a future environmental catastrophe.

The persistence of the future environmental catastrophe enables a continuous violent settler colonial regime in Palestine which, together with international capitalist forces, produces an unbearable life for Palestinians; or, as this article suggests – a sense of daily doomsday. While the environmental catastrophe continues to be deferred into the future, the Palestinian population experiences a daily and ongoing catastrophe: marked by death, debt, fear, and debilitation; experiencing diminishing spaces for living, the disappearance of familiar ecologies, and the disavowal of these experiences. Moreover, as many of the scholars mentioned here – such as Charrett (2021), Puar (2017), and Hughes et al. (2022) – stress, colonial and capitalist forces withhold

4 The language of a recent statement by U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres – “the climate time-bomb is ticking” – strengthens this claim (Stanway 2023).

Palestinian futures. Similar to settler colonialism's aspiration to replace the indigenous population, indigenous futures are threatened with disappearance or with having the future dictated in colonial terms (Puar 2017, 148). These attacks on indigenous futures, too, act through "settler ecologies." Hughes et al. (2022) examine "Israeli environmental innovations not only as technologies of environmental governance, but also as attempts at ensuring Israeli futurity on occupied land in ways that actively undermine Palestinians' opportunities for collective continuance" and thus argue that the "Israeli vision of the future [is] one in which Israel manages Palestinian ecologies" (10). Therefore, while dictating and conquering the future through "settler ecologies" and greenwashing, colonial and capitalist forces cancel Palestinian futures. In other words, for Palestinians, the present is midnight on their doomsday clock – it is daily suffering without a future. Doomsday is every day under the occupation.

However, this is only the first act of the Doomsday Economy. The following section aims to develop the concept of the Doomsday Economy, and the Palestinian resistance and participation within it. This is done by analyzing the Palestinian act of tire burning. Since this analysis is the first of its kind, it requires close examination. By closely examining this act and its functions, an understanding of the Doomsday Economy and its glocal market in Palestine/Israel is developed.

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Burning Tires in Palestine

During the writing of this article, on February 14, 2023, two years after an Israeli soldier shot him in the neck and left him paralyzed, Harun Abu 'Aram died of his wounds (Shezaf and Khoury 2023). Abu 'Aram lived in Khirbet al-Rakeez, a small and impoverished community in Masafer Yatta (South Hebron Hills). On January 1, 2021, on Abu 'Aram's 24th birthday, Israeli forces reached al-Rakeez to confiscate Abu 'Aram's neighbor's working tools (B'Tselem 2021). While attempting to stop these forces from confiscating his neighbor's electricity generator, Abu 'Aram was shot in the neck by one of the Israeli soldiers, leaving him severely disabled. Abu 'Aram needed constant attendance and treatment. Just recently, because of the harsh conditions that led to recurrent infections, Abu 'Aram needed to undergo surgery to amputate one of his legs. About a decade before the shooting incident, young Abu 'Aram had appeared in Ada Ushpiz and Shosh Shlam's 2012 documentary, *Good Garbage*, documenting Palestinian stories revolving around

the Hebron Hills garbage dumpster. The dumpster, which serves as the waste disposal site of the area's settlements, was a source of income for several Palestinian families in the area. One method for profit-making – far from being the most profitable method while presumably being the most dangerous – one that young Abu 'Aram favors in the film, is tire-burning.⁵

This grievous anecdote brings us to the atmosphere of tire burning in Palestine. Although currently occurring less as a profit-making method that relies on collecting the metal left behind from the burnt tires, tire burning is firstly an economic act. If not for accumulating profit, tire burning is, at the very least, a result of settler colonial racial economics and the state of siege. Tire burning is a part of the waste management issue in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019; Abdallah et al. 2020). Due to fact that it cannot be transferred, as well as the lack of infrastructure for processing, waste is piling up in Palestinian territories. Within these limitations, burning is a common and simple method for the disposal of waste.⁶ This burning leads to dual damage to Palestinians. First, unavoidable trash burning risks Palestinian health (Lemieux and Ryan 1993). As Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins (2019) claims: “When they burn trash piling up in public dumpsters, the flaming garbage diffuses into children’s lungs dioxins that are difficult for Palestinian physicians to detect” (7). Beyond its immediate damage, “Israelis and foreign observers may read the smoke as a sign of Palestinians’ cultural backwardness and conclude that Palestinians are unfit to govern themselves, hence that an Israeli presence is needed in the West Bank to protect not only the environment but even Palestinians (from) themselves” (7). Hence, the settler colonial waste siege that leads to coerced trash burning further legitimizes settler colonialism, much like Braverman’s (2023) examination of nature preservation, as it marks Palestinians as enemies of the environment and themselves. The first smoke rising from the burnt tires is thus that of the racial economy within the settler colonial state, which both directly damages Palestinian health and deepens Israeli domination over Palestinians.

Although the functions of tire burning outlined above are crucial for this analysis, demonstrations are the central scope of this current

⁵ Tires are burnt to collect and burn the metals in them, which are left after the rubber is burnt.

⁶ Karaeen et al. (2017) offer solutions for reducing the pollution of car part disposal in Palestine. However, in the current condition, these solutions seem far-fetched and unachievable systematically.

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inquiry into the act of tire burning. The Palestinian tactic and tradition of tire burning in resistance to Israeli forces are commonly attributed to the First Intifada of 1987 (Al-Agha 1997).⁷ Since then, tire burning has frequently appeared in Palestinian demonstrations. However, since the Great March, there has been an increasing emphasis on tire burning in Palestinian resistance. This increase is best illustrated by the emergence of the Tire Unit (*wihdat al-kawshuk*). During the Great March, the idea of the Tire Unit emerged – a resistance unit among the protesters in charge of acquiring, mobilizing, and burning tires. The name and structure of the Tire Unit spread quickly, and significant centers of resistance around the Gaza Strip and the West Bank initiated their own Tire Units (*Huriya News* 2021; also see the Facebook pages of *Wihdat al-Kawshuk Khanyounes* and *Qal'at al-Khurba al-Samida Beit Dajan*). Though sometimes the Tire Unit functioned only as a mere title, in several places – Beita, for example – the Unit offered a form of organization for the struggle (*Huriya News* 2021).

In the context of Palestinian demonstrations, the smoke – black, heavy, and toxic – is tire-burning's most essential advantage. In the Palestinian experience, smoke from burned tires protects protesters (*al-Araby al-Jadeed* 2018). The smoke works as a screen that blocks snipers' clear view of the protesters – a view that often leads to injuries and deaths. For example, on March 30, 2018, in the Great March's first demonstration, most of the fifteen Palestinians killed by Israeli Forces were killed by snipers (Balousha and Holmes 2018; Kershner and Abuheweila 2018). Alongside the killing, maiming was another prominent Israeli reply to the Palestinian protests. In an interview concerning Israeli snipers' experiences during the Great March of Return, an Israeli sniper recalled injuring 42 Palestinians' kneecaps in one day (Glazer 2020). Another describes the typical scene around the shooting-to-maim: “The regular scenario is supposed to be that you hit, break a bone – in the best case, break the kneecap – within a minute an ambulance comes to evacuate him.” Alongside snipers shooting live metal bullets, there is also the threat of rubber and sponge bullets, as well as the direct shooting of gas canisters, which can lead to various degrees of injury. Shooting does not necessarily relate directly to the actions and nature of the protest. Shouting, giving aid, tire burning, rock throwing, walking, or just gathering can all lead to injury and death within the appliance of Israeli military warrant no. 101, which paves the way for defining every Palestinian protest as an illegal riot (Jaraisy and

7 Though burning tires as Palestinian resistance is mentioned in Sahar Khalifa's 1979 Novel, *The Sunflower*.

Feldman 2014). Hence, producing a smoke screen can protect protesters' bodies – if not physically, at least emotionally.

Besides the direct injury by Israeli forces during protests, Palestinian protesters are at risk of later punishments because of their participation in demonstrations. Palestinian protesting is often criminalized, and it is a common phenomenon that a local protest movement in the West Bank and Israel is accompanied by a wave of threats, interrogations, and arrests by Israeli forces (MEE Staff 2021; Amnesty International 2021; The New Arab 2021).⁸ Most interrogations and arrests in connection with protests occur outside the borders of the protest and only at a later time. They are often undertaken by the Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet) and may lead to administrative detention. These actions rely on heavy surveillance apparatus, during and after the protests. Although it is almost impossible to avoid the surveillance apparatus altogether, burning tires block some of the direct surveillance from the side of the Israeli soldiers and their cameras. Thus, though temporary and partial, the tires' heavy smoke protects Palestinian protesters from Israeli gunfire and surveillance. Hence, it is hard to read beyond the cynicism of the Israeli Coordinator's Facebook post, calling the Gazans not to burn tires during the Great March because it poses a danger to their health (*al-Munaseq* 2018). For Palestinian protesters, burning tires is lifesaving.

However, tire burning at Palestinian demonstrations is also a method of active resistance and counter-violence. At the beginning of May 2021, amidst an Israeli-Palestinian violent crisis, Israeli settlers constructed the illegal outpost of Evyatar (Ofra 2021; B'Tselem 2022). The outpost is built on private Palestinian land on Mount Sabich, between the towns of Beita, Yatma, and Qabalan, south of Nablus. Palestinian resistance to the outpost broke out immediately, concentrating in Beita, which suffered heavy tolls from Israeli forces since 1967 and the occupation of the West Bank. Just one year before the struggle on Mount Sabich, settlers tried to take over another mountain in Beita's municipality, Mount al-'Urma. While Beita's resistance to the violent taking over of the land of Mount al-'Urma stopped the settlers from completing their mission, the struggle led to two martyrs, many injured, and economic and ecological damage to the town (The New Arab 2020; Land Research Center 2020; Hammad 2022). Nonetheless, when settlers constructed an outpost on Mount Sabich, Palestinians rose up to push them away from the outpost. Among the tactics of the local resistance, one of the

8 The demonstrations in Haifa, Jaffa, Beita, Qarayut, Kifr Qadum, and al-Twani are examples of this phenomenon in the last few years.

most prominent was tire burning. In the first few weeks of the struggle, tires were burning almost constantly – day and night – as cars and trucks filled with tires continued to arrive in Beita from around the West Bank. The Tire Unit maintained tire fires around Mount Sabich, trying to make the settlers' lives unbearable and drive them off the mountain (Lazaroff 2021; Konrad 2021). On the 75th day of the resistance to the outpost, the local count of burned tires stood at seventy thousand (*Huriya News* 2021). To some extent, the tactic worked as the settlers left the outpost after a few weeks, leaving the soldiers behind and transforming the outpost into an army outpost in practice. For months, an anecdote was circulating in Beita about a settler woman in the outpost telling her husband that she could no longer stand the situation and was afraid of getting cancer from the tires' smoke, threatening to divorce him, leave the outpost, and take their kids along. The man refuses to leave, and she carries out her threat – divorcing and leaving him, taking the kids with her. The anecdote ends with him leaving the outpost by himself only days later.

Tire burning, then, is a violent response to Israeli aggression. A comparison with the act of returning tear gas canisters to the Israeli forces illuminates this function. Tear gas is often shot at Palestinian protesters, burning, suffocating, and causing long-term damage to protesters and others in their proximity (Al-Agha 1997). Beyond gas masks, smelling onion, using alcoholic sprays, and running away, another method of coping with tear gas involves throwing back the canisters. When possible, the canisters are returned to the proximity of the soldiers, “giving them a taste of their own medicine.” Returning tear gas canisters is both distancing the gas from the protesters and a method of distancing the soldiers. Tire burning and smoke can also be located within the suffocation economy. Moreover, as a protester said in an interview during the “Friday of Tires”: “we will suffocate them, just as they shoot our kids with corrupted bullets [...] God will paralyze them as they paralyze us” (*Az al-Din Abu Isha* 2018) Thus, tire burning is also a form of counter-violence and participation in the economy of suffocation and pain.

Here tire burning and its setting reach what Frantz Fanon (1967) calls an “atmosphere of violence” (71). Violence is everywhere and is taken up by both sides, even if not equally. The fire, smoke, smell, and powder left behind by the burnt tires – all express and signal a violent atmosphere and rage. It is not by chance that Palestinian “Rage Days” (*yawm al-ghadab*), which follow Israeli attacks and killings of Palestinians,

Hands, shirts, shoes, lungs, city squares, main roads, village entrances, fences, walls, and checkpoints are all marked by the black footprints of tires, maintaining and circulating symbols of struggle, racism, and violence.

are frequently accompanied by tire burning.⁹ The black and heavy smoke rising above can be seen every Friday across the West Bank, signaling clashes or demonstrations are taking place. Hands, shirts, shoes, lungs, city squares, main roads, village entrances, fences, walls, and checkpoints are all marked by the black footprints of tires, maintaining and circulating symbols of struggle, racism, and violence. As it is mainly located at the borders – between the soldiers and the protesters – it symbolizes not only the colonizer’s aggression but also the colonized’s counter-violence. The traces of tire burning are a mark of clashes; it expresses – and thus takes part in producing – the general atmosphere of violence.

This atmosphere is not just local, as the rage and smoke of the burned tires are part of a global state of affairs. Palestinians often point to the silence and hypocrisy of global politics, disregarding the violence and criminal actions of the State of Israel (Traynor 2012; Aludaini 2022).¹⁰ Within this silence, tire burning operates as an attempt to communicate an unjust situation. As a protester in the “Friday of Tires” situates the scene: “in the second Friday of anger in the Gaza Strip [...], in the international day of the tire [*kawshuk*], the whole world will witness the Gazans” (*Az al-Din Abu Isha* 2018). This correlates with Amia Srinivasan’s (2018) argument that “[a]nger is also a form of communication, a way of publicly marking moral disvalue, calling for the shared negative appreciation of others” (132). Thus, Palestinian tire burning can be seen as utilizing the Zionist discourse, best expressed in Ryan James’s (2019) article, “Palestinian Tire-Burning: Why is the World Silent?”. For Palestinian protestors, tire burning is, also, to make the world stop being silent. The tires’ smoke is for the world to see; it is a spectacle.

However, tire burning is not aimed just at grabbing attention and communicating a social injustice; it is aimed at the global forces’ actions and their part in the injustice. As discussed in the previous section, international and global forces directly and violently affect Palestinians – their economy, ecology, climate, and racist oppression. The evocation of the international and global scope is enhanced when returning to the Gazans’ remarks on burning a hole in the ozone through tire burning,

9 Not only the days themselves but also media coverage and invitations for “Rage Days”.

10 Syed Saddiq’s (2021) tweet, responding to Greta Thunberg’s neutrality concerning the situation in Palestine/Israel, is particularly relevant: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. /You preach for climate justice but turn a blind eye when Palestinians are killed indiscriminately. /Climate change forces people out of their homes, /So does Israeli oppression. /Your neutrality cloaks the horrible injustice.”

and the Israeli appeal to the WHO concerning an “ecological catastrophe.” Moving to the international arena locates the act of tire burning in the global discourse of climate disaster and in relation to Israeli greening. The questions at hand are the present and future of the world population, of humanity, with climate change felt worldwide and doomsday looming above. Fanon’s (1967) terrifying words receive a new meaning within this argument frame:

This atmosphere of violence and menaces, these rockets brandished by both sides, do not frighten nor deflect the colonized peoples. We have seen that all their recent history has prepared them to understand and grasp the situation. Between the violence of the colonies and that peaceful violence that the world is steeped in, there is a kind of complicit agreement, a sort of homogeneity. *The colonized peoples are well adapted to this atmosphere; for once, they are up to date.* Sometimes people wonder that the native, rather than give his wife a dress, buys instead a transistor radio. There is no reason to be astonished. The natives are convinced that their fate is in the balance, here and now. *They live in the atmosphere of doomsday*, and they consider that nothing ought to be let pass unnoticed (81; my emphasis).

While, as Charrett (2021) claims, Palestinians are commonly positioned as living in the past by global forces, here they are up to date; they live in, and reproduce, the atmosphere of doomsday. Hence, when expanding the frame of the economy of violence and counter-violence to the global arena, the Palestinian act of tire burning is revealed as resistance on a global scale. It is a Palestinian answer to the global violence of silence, racial capitalism, and climate racism that further pushes the Palestinian living conditions to their limits, to the daily experience of doomsday.

When expanding the frame of the economy of violence and counter-violence to the global arena, the Palestinian act of tire burning is revealed as resistance on a global scale.

Tire Burning and the Doomsday Economy

If, as discussed earlier, the oppressive actions in the Doomsday Economy are the positioning of doomsday in the future and its constant deferring, then resistance and equality in this economy bring the general doomsday closer to all its participants. In other words, it is the attempt to accelerate, to bring the deferred future – the looming doomsday – to the present. Thus, though small in scale, the Palestinian act of tire burning participates in a local market of this Doomsday Economy as it introduces doomsday as a present state.

Tire burning operates and participates on two layers in the Domsday Economy: the production of toxins and pollution and the production of doomsday spectacles. The production of toxins and pollution takes part in ecological warfare. However, in opposition to its use in other frames – for example, in the hands of settler colonialists as a method of eliminating the other and accumulating land – in the Domsday Economy, counter-ecological-warfare takes the form of acceleration. Instead of attempting to slow climate change or bring it to a halt, the production of toxins seeks to accelerate it.¹¹ Hence, resistance to the oppressive apparatus of the Domsday Economy abides by Mbembe's (2019) claims concerning suicide bombers: “[h]omicide and suicide are accomplished in the same act. Resistance and self-destruction are largely synonymous” (89).

However, within the Domsday Economy, the discursive operation of tire burning is more effective than the equal redistribution of toxins and climate change, i.e., environmental pollution.¹² It is not only because the local act of tire burning is incomparable to the Israeli ecological footprint and the global economy of toxins and pollutants. It is because, within the frame of climate change and greenwashing, doomsday is a discursive apparatus. While the smell of the burning tires and their toxins do not reach the international arena, images do. Around the time of the Great March, especially the “Friday of Tires,” a growing number of images of Palestinian tire burning appeared in international newspapers (Morris, Balousha, and Eglash 2018; Rory Jones 2018; Halbfinger 2018). A prominent example of the spread of these images is the success of Mustafa Hassona's award-winning photograph series of the Great March (Bell 2018). Nonetheless, the wide circulation of Palestinian tire burning images includes many localities and occasions beyond the Great March, as the success of images from Beita's struggle demonstrates (AFP 2021; El-Kurd 2021; Torokman 2021). These published images are filled with the blackness of the tires'

11 The attempt to accelerate time can also be understood as an answer to what Wassim Ghantous and Mikko Jorenen (2022) call “dromoelimantion,” which is “an elimination through speed” (407). According to Ghantous and Jorenen, Israel uses the acceleration of pace and process to push its oppression of Palestinians further.

12 The current research is not an empirical one. However, next to colonialist projects' ecological footprint in general, and Israel's in particular, even burning thousands of tires over the span of months seems peripheral. It is also true when comparing it with the magnitude of Israeli settlers' violence, for example, the burning of ten buildings and over two hundred (complete) cars on one night in Huwara (Ziv 2023).

smoke and its footprints on human bodies and the environment; the sky is absent or gray from the heavy smoke; sometimes, the red and orange of the fire show; and the tear gas strings of white smoke occasionally drop from the sky. The language of these images seems to echo the depictions of the apocalypse in British romanticism (mostly in John Martin's and Albert Goodwin's works); nature photography of volcanic eruptions (as can be seen in Francisco Negroni's award-winning photograph, titled "Apocalypse"); Hollywood apocalyptic films (the poster of the 2013 film, *Goodbye World*, is a good example); or "apocalyptic" images of wildfires around the globe. Thus, tire burning's reply to the global discourse of a future climate catastrophe; doomsday is not the future and cannot be deferred; it is here and now.

Conclusion

Palestinian life is almost unbearable under the oppression and domination of local and global forces. The widespread and varied manifestations of violence as a daily experience, along with the denial of a future, amount to the present doomsday for Palestinians. The present doomsday is maintained and obscured through the claims for ecological superiority and the securitization of the future for the dominants – the State of Israel's settler colonial project and international capitalist and imperial systems. Thus, the claims for one's future deny the other's; the deferring of one's doomsday produces a present and a daily doomsday for the other. As this article proposes, this is the first phase of the Doomsday Economy.

This article examines the Palestinian act of tire burning as one of the responses to this phase and economy. Tire burning is by no means the only, or primary, response to the violence and injustice.¹³ However, tire burning, as a recurring feature of the Palestinian resistance and an under-studied phenomenon, demands this examination. Among the many functions of tire burning, it also functions as counter-violence in a global environmental scope. Within this scope, though on a small scale, tire burning (re)distributes toxins and pollutants – a (re)distribution that accelerates climate change. This function is secondary to the production of doomsday images, that resist violent discourses of a future

13 For a few examples of other forms of Palestinian resistance see: Rijke and Van Teeffelen 2014; Turcios 2019; Ambler 2021; Desai 2021; Sheehi and Sheehi 2021; Sasa 2022.

doomsday. Tire burning thus counters the violent discursive deferring of a doomsday to the future by introducing it as a present condition.

Hence, the article offers contributions in two primary forms: its analysis of the Palestinian act of tire burning and the flexible model of the Doomsday Economy. To summarize this model, it is composed of two interplaying processes: (a) the positioning of a doomsday in a deferred future in order to conceal the deployed violence that produces a daily doomsday for oppressed populations; and (b) the acceleration of the arrival of the future doomsday to all participants in the economy, through pollution and images, introducing it as a present state. While every phase of this economy needs further study, as do their implications and potentials, this article sheds light on life experiences and acts of resistance to colonial and imperial violence. Most importantly, this examination might help in thinking of methods of escaping from this kind of economy, even before the deployment of violence and its concealment with the excuse of a future doomsday.

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Tytuł: Ekonomia dnia zagłady. Przemoc kolonialna, katastrofa ekologiczna i palenie opon w Palestynie

Abstrakt: Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza palestyńskiego aktu palenia opon w kontekście zjawiska przemocy kolonialnej, kapitalizmu rasowego i dyskursu środowiskowego. Wskazane zostały różne funkcje tego aktu: akumulacja kapitału, zarządzanie odpadami, ukrywanie protestujących w dymie, kontrprzemoc, redystrybucja zanieczyszczeń i produkcja spektaklu. Palenie opon w Palestynie można rozumieć jako część „ekonomii dnia zagłady”, czyli brutalnej struktury ekonomicznej, która obejmuje dwa wzajemnie na siebie oddziałujące procesy: (a) mocarstwa kolonialne umiejscawiają dyskursywnie katastrofę w odroczonej przyszłości w celu ukrycia obecnej przemocy codziennego dnia zagłady oraz (b) poprzez zanieczyszczenia i obrazy uciskani przyspieszają nadejście katastrofy dla wszystkich uczestników tej ekonomii, przedstawiają stan zagłady jako stan obecny.

Słowa kluczowe: opór palestyński, greenwashing, kolonializm osadników, kapitalizm rasowy, sprawiedliwość środowiskowa