

Dynamics of Prison Resistance

Hunger Strikes by Palestinian Political Prisoners in Israeli Prisons

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A box of stone
where the living and dead move in the dry clay
like bees captive in a honeycomb of a hive
and each time the siege tightens
they go on a flower hunger strike
and ask the sea to indicate the emergency exit
– Mahmud Darwish, “Mural” (1999)¹

In addition to the loss of land and the pain of dispossession, the great Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish evoked the loss of freedom of those locked behind Israeli bars. In his poem “Mural,” he beautifully represents power and resistance, giving poetic expression to Michel Foucault’s contention that “where there is power, there is resistance.”² While the oppressor can capture or tighten the siege on the living as well as the dead, the oppressed – like bees in a honeycomb – resist, not by stinging but by going on “a flower hunger strike.” They tactically diffuse (to use Doug McAdam’s language)³ their methods of resistance, appealing to the sea, a symbol of freedom and contact with the wider world, or those free from domination.

A hunger strike is a powerful means of prison resistance. Prisons and detention centers are places of power, but also resistance, and hunger strikers seek to use the authorities’ apparent strength against them. Deciding to embark on such a strike is one step in a lengthy process of struggle to make changes in the prisoners’ lives and conditions. Ultimately, the prisoners’ willingness to deprive their own bodies of food and to put their lives on the line exemplifies Bargu’s concept of necroresistance,⁴ put simply in the slogan “death or freedom.”

Not even a full year after Israel’s military

conquest of the remainder of Palestine in June 1967, Palestinians in Israeli prisons embarked on their first hunger strike. On 18 February 1968, prisoners in Ramleh prison demanded that their imprisonment conditions improve and, most importantly, that their dignity be respected. In particular, they demanded that they should no longer be forced to address Israeli prison officials with *ya sidi* (“my lord” in Arabic). Since then, Palestinian prisoners have embarked on a large number of collective and individual hunger strikes.⁵ Using interviews with hunger strikers,⁶ analysis of media documents, and a nuanced review of hunger strikes by Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons between 1968 and 2018, this article explores the dynamics within which the process of hunger strikes operates. It starts by introducing the concepts and theories used in the article, before moving on to examine means of prison-based resistance. It then provides insights into the type of repression used by the colonial authorities to stop hunger strikes, with a specific focus on force-feeding. The strategies and effectiveness of hunger strike protests inside prisons are not shaped in a vacuum. Apart from the oppressive responses of prison authorities that are the immediate context, protest actions are heavily impacted by sociopolitical events happening in the broader community.

Hunger Strikes in Theory and Practice

While hunger strikes as a form of protest have occurred throughout history, they are a feature of activism that became widespread during the last century. The typical location of these protests is a prison, a “place of power,” where the absolute power of the authorities can be challenged, but only in certain ways.⁷ Michel Foucault and later Magnus Hörnqvist argue that power relations are complex, unstable, contentious, and unequal, and therefore subject to disruptions and resistance.⁸ These power relations are also subject to the political opportunity structure, with respect to how prison conditions affect the prisoners’ potential to mobilize effectively. The political opportunity structure in prison shapes the possibilities for resistance in highly constrained environment. (Thus, for example, first-time prisoners are generally unfamiliar with such opportunities, making their resistance more difficult or less likely.) The provision and acceptance of food, however, is one arena in which power and resistance have the opportunity to play out in prison.

Consideration of the political opportunity structure of prisons can also help challenge the common conceptualization of hunger strikes as a form of principled nonviolence and passive resistance.⁹ Hunger strikes are pragmatic forms of resistance. They, arguably, are not chosen as a method based on protestors’ morals and ethics guiding them toward nonviolence; rather, hunger strikes are chosen in order to bring about results in an arena in which the opportunities to achieve change are severely limited.¹⁰ Furthermore, the binary reduction of protest into violent or nonviolent action has its roots in the colonial narrative and fails to recognize the agency of protestors: when violence is equated with barbarism and nonviolence is equated with passivity on the part of the oppressed, the participants are implicitly dehumanized.¹¹

Hunger strikers' willingness to die before submitting to a life without dignity, what Banu Bargu terms necroresistance, can sustain a movement and lead to change. Necroresistance transforms the body from a site of subjection to a site of insurgency, which "by self-destruction presents death as a counterconduct to the administration of life."¹² Necroresistance seizes the power of life and death from the state, thus establishing an active counter to sovereign power. It also brings the concept of sovereignty to a human and personal level, focusing on the administration of people's lives as the object of power, but noting that the power structure can be inverted in the protesters' favor.

Still, there is a difference between deliberate acts of resistance and the kind of refusal that hunger strikers perform. Hunger strikers place themselves in a position where physical weakness reduces the ability to act and think, depending on the distributed effect of the strike to spur other participants and supporters to action. In other words, becoming weak as an individual, and thereby creating particular conditions of possibility to mobilize strength elsewhere, is a mode of actively doing politics that expands repertoires of protest and asserts agency and ownership of one's body. This is not the mere refusal to consume food; hunger strikes are not effective if divorced from a larger strategy that aims at winning demands and invoking a response from the target.¹³

Palestinians imprisoned by Israeli authorities have learned from protests elsewhere a range of often effective methods to challenge the prison systems and motivate for improved conditions. In an interview, hunger striker Mahmoud Sarsak said that prior to embarking on hunger strikes, prisoners held awareness sessions to examine strikes in Northern Ireland and other countries.¹⁴ Likewise, other struggles looked toward Palestinian hunger strikes. For example, in 1981, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) contacted a Palestinian prisoner who had survived a hunger and thirst strike for a long period. The IRA began to study the process of hunger strike more carefully and tried to put the Palestinian strikers' experience to use.¹⁵ This communication took place before the major IRA hunger strike in 1981, during which ten men died, and which brought significant national and international attention and sympathy to the movement for a united Ireland.¹⁶ Similarly, the Palestinian experience inspired the Kurdish hunger strikers in the 1980s and 1990s. The Kurdish hunger striker Suna Purlak, imprisoned in Turkish prisons between 1993 and 2000, told me that in the 1980s, the Kurdish hunger strikers were inspired by the Irish as well as Palestinian strikes.¹⁷ When the Kurdish prisoners embarked on further hunger strikes in the 1990s, she added, it was the Palestinian hunger strikes that inspired them the most.

Unlike revolts and riots, hunger strikes can be a prolonged and open-ended form of prison-based resistance. The prisoners' power is embodied in their choice of action, and their ability to start and end it whenever they want. Through their strikes, the prisoners claim the ownership of their own bodies and even lives. Although authorities have greater power to establish the narrative outside the prison, labeling prisoners "terrorists" and "militants" who deserve to die in prisons, through their actions strikers send a message to the outside world, emphasizing that they are victims and subject to oppression.

The strikers' power is not merely quantitative in terms of (re)claiming ownership of

their bodies for a particular period of time. It is also qualitative in terms of the type of achievements they secure. In Israeli prisons, Palestinians have achieved key demands through hunger strikes. One prisoner put it:

Everything inside the prison has a story of resistance behind it. So, as I said, everything you find in prison, the blanket, the cup, the pens, the paper, the books in the library, the food. There is a story of the struggle behind this. And one day it was one of the prisoners' demands in their hunger strikes.¹⁸

Achievements go beyond basic necessities to winning agency, dignity, and power. A leader of the collective hunger strike of 1992 said that Israeli prison guards “doffed their hats for me.” She added that they “would count twice before they would speak to any prisoners without our [prisoners' leadership] permission.”¹⁹

Repertoires of Prison Mobilization

In Israeli prisons, prisoners tend to create their own opportunities. Through the practice of *sumud*, roughly translated as “steadfastness,” they refuse to confess and comply, and continue on with their resistance, not only to their daily treatment or imprisonment conditions but also to their imprisonment in the first place, whatever the charges (if any). Through *sumud*, prisoners destabilize colonial order and its power relations.²⁰ This is once again an emphasis on the reality of prisons, as places of power and resistance, in which the prisoners fight domination and subjection, and try to use these spaces and their dynamics for their own benefits.

Heather Ann Thompson argues that state officials in the U.S. context “fail to recognize that prisoners are human beings and that, as such, they will always resist being treated like animals.”²¹ Palestinian prisoners are also dealt with as subhumans, consistently dehumanized, degraded and deprived of their basic rights, referred to by numbers and without names.²² Hunger striking is a means to bring about changes to the conditions of imprisonment, including inadequate portions and quality of food, the use of torture and mistreatment, inadequate medical care, and denial or restrictions of family visits and access to lawyers. Prisoners may employ temporary hunger strikes of set duration or open-ended hunger strikes, with no set end date. The open-ended hunger strike shows a willingness to go as far as death to press demands.

Since 1967, 216 Palestinian prisoners have been killed in Israeli prisons.²³ The two predominant causes of death are medical negligence and torture.²⁴ Both reasons are themselves major motives to embark on hunger strikes. However, hunger strikes themselves can be life-threatening, especially if open-ended in time frames. Thus, before embarking on a strike, prisoners tend to try other less high-stakes means of resistance to free themselves, whether for freedom in its physical meaning, or freedom from abuse and mistreatment.

Palestinian prisoners have tried to physically escape prison on numerous occasions. This is perhaps the definitive act of resistance for those incarcerated, though it is often sensationalized by the media or romanticized by Hollywood.²⁵ The reality of physical escape from prison is markedly different, of course. With advances in security technology, prison structures and conditions became more repressive and physical prison escape became almost impossible. On 17 May 1987, an escape from Israel's al-Saraya prison in Gaza was successful.²⁶ In the process, six prisoners managed to escape. Even if successful, escape attempts are rarely documented as Israeli authorities do not want to publicize their failures or the success of prisoners' resistance.

When physical escape is impossible, other less risky means of resistance are more likely. This may include noncompliance with the prison authorities' daily search routine orders, as in regular prison cell inspection. By communicating with lawyers, family members, or media networks regarding conditions of confinement, prisoners are also able to embarrass or put pressure on prison authorities. The Israeli legal system, although hardly trusted by prisoners, can also be used in an attempt to defend prisoners' rights. Another form of resistance is seen when prisoners educate each other about politics, holding reading groups and informal meetings to discuss resistance. Political education and consciousness-raising in prisons cannot be underestimated; it is an important way to instigate other forms of resistance, as part and parcel of organizing and uniting prisoners. Among these forms of daily prison resistance, we can also include one-day hunger strikes or other hunger strikes of limited duration. However, all of these methods are subject to repression by Israeli prison authorities. Prisoners who were interviewed spoke of Israeli attempts to prohibit communication with the outside world, forbid lawyers' and families' visits, and disallow writing materials into the prison facilities.

If these types of resistance failed to achieve results, prisoners turned to methods of last resort in an attempt to meet their needs and to protest the intransigence of the military court system and imprisonment of Palestinians without fair trial. Hunger strikes usually take significant time – up to several years – and effort to organize and prepare.²⁷ Although records are incomplete, Palestinian prisoners have conducted hunger strikes at least since 1968. Influenced by external events, hunger strikes have been launched in waves over the decades, and met by authorities with evolving strategies to impede or prohibit them. Most of the early strikes, up to the twenty-first century, were collective protests involving many prisoners and various prison facilities simultaneously, which included the establishment of prisoners' committees and standard procedures for negotiation. While prisoners were released as a result of internationally brokered agreements, the gains from these collective actions diminished over time. The more recent pattern has seen multiple individual hunger strikes conducted mainly in the hope of securing release from prison. In practically all cases, Israeli authorities' agreements to meet strikers' demands were reversed at a later stage. However, protest actions, collective and individual, continue in an effort to expose the inhumane conditions of imprisonment and attract support from overseas

organizations. All of this is important to the greater cause of liberation.

To disrupt these efforts, authorities isolate leaders in solitary confinement, prevent communication between prisoners, and cut off their contacts with the world outside. As in the case of prison escapes, there is evidence of the Israeli authorities failing to document or let others document hunger strikes. The same authorities try to diminish or undermine hunger strikes and to redefine what counts as an open-ended hunger strike. The debate about what constitutes an open-ended hunger strike is ongoing and contentious, as Palestinian prisoners attempt to establish control over their bodies and Israeli authorities seek to diminish the political impact of hunger strikes by claiming that they were not “true” hunger strikes. For example, Khader Adnan, on hunger strike for 66 days, considers an open-ended hunger strike to be the refusal of any nourishment other than water and salt, without any intravenous vitamin intake. Samer Issawi was on hunger strike for 277 days.²⁸ This may have been possible because of the vitamin “cocktail” administered intravenously, which kept him alive even though he was not eating.

Palestinian prisoners who embark on open-ended hunger strikes place themselves at considerable risk to their health and safety. Mahmoud Sarsak noted that, on the eighteenth day of his hunger strike, he fainted several times, and each time he was left on the prison hospital’s floor until he resumed consciousness.²⁹ Although his health condition was critical, and loss of consciousness could easily have led to a coma, prison medics did not interfere to provide medical support. This indicates that Israeli authorities not only fail to provide for prisoners’ needs, but, as noted by Thompson, degrade and dehumanize them, even if it means leaving them to die.

In relation to hunger strike, the question of medical care is particularly fraught, as it was often used to undermine or break the strike. For example, intravenous treatment is typically forced on strikers and then used to diminish the credibility of the scale of their strike. In an interview with Issawi’s sister Shireen, she said Samer was compelled to take sustenance intravenously “only when he lost consciousness and was in the recovery room.” Furthermore, it was forced on him without his consent. Shireen added that the Israeli authorities used the intravenous treatment in an attempt to diminish the impact of his strike. Beyond intravenous treatment, Palestinian prisoners have also been subject to force-feeding. This is the focus of the next section.

Force-feeding

As soon as a hunger strike begins, Israeli methods of repression escalate. Hunger strikers are put in solitary confinement to separate them from nonstriking prisoners, refused visits from their families and lawyers, and their belongings are confiscated.³⁰ They may also be force-fed. Force-feeding as a method of breaking hunger strikes was documented as early as 1897 in the case of the British suffragettes’ movement. A letter to the *Manchester Guardian* on 27 June 1912 stated that the suffragettes were not

striking against their imprisonment but against the government's refusal to acknowledge the crimes for which they were being held as political acts.³¹ The length of their hunger strikes varied – the first woman to hunger strike, Marion Wallace Dunlop, did so for 91 hours before being released.³² It is not clear how many women were on strike or for how long,³³ but the British government refused to release most of those on strike.³⁴ To stop their action, the British government used force-feeding, through either a stomach pump or a nasal tube, to end the suffragettes' action against their will. The so-called Cat and Mouse Act of 1913 allowed for the temporary release of hunger strikers who become ill, allowing them to regain their health only to be re-arrested once they were well enough to complete their sentences.³⁵ Later, in 1917, Irish hunger striker Thomas Ashe died due to complications from force-feeding.³⁶

Since the 1970s until 2015, forced feeding was conducted arbitrarily and without regulation in Israeli prisons.³⁷ Forced feeding was conducted primarily as a form of physical and physiological torture, to stop prisoners' peaceful protests demanding their rights; it was conducted not to save strikers' lives, but to degrade and dehumanize them.³⁸ Moussa Sheikh, a hunger striker, who was force-fed in 1970, explained the process as follows:

The prisoner enters the room handcuffed and legs shackled. There are two police officers on either side of the prisoner, who terrorize him physically and mentally. They poke him harshly in the ribs and on the back of the neck, talking the whole time in a way that is meant to break the prisoner's spirit, saying things like "You are practically dead now." The prisoner is tied to a chair so that he [cannot] move. The doctor then sticks the tube up the nose of the prisoner in a very harsh way... When it was done to me, I felt my lungs close as the tube reached my stomach... I almost suffocated. They poured milk down the tube, which felt like fire to me. It was boiling. I could not stay still and danced from the pain.³⁹

'Abd al-Qadir Abu al-Fahm, who joined Sheikh in the 1970 hunger strike in Ashkelon prison, died as a result of force-feeding on 11 May 1970, one of four documented cases of hunger strikers who died during or after being force-fed.⁴⁰ Rasim Halawa and 'Ali al-Ja'fari were killed in July 1980, when the Israeli authorities inserted feeding tubes into their lungs instead of their stomachs. The fourth to die was Ishaq Maragha, who passed away in Beersheba prison in 1983, three years after being force-fed. Although it is not clear whether force-feeding caused his death, his health had been seriously compromised from having been force-fed.

These four deaths negate Israeli claims that force-feeding is used as a last resort to save hunger strikers' lives – a justification put forward, for example, by Yoel Hadar, legal advisor to the Israeli Ministry of Public Security, in 2015.⁴¹ A thorough investigation into the details of the conditions under which these hunger strikers were force-fed show they were in the initial stages of their hunger strikes when they were

force-fed, and not on the verge of death. For instance, Abu al-Fahm was in the third day of a hunger strike when force-fed, and his health was good enough not to require such extreme intervention.⁴²

The death of hunger strikers in 1980 led to political unrest, as the Palestinian public protested, demonstrated, and clashed with the Israeli forces in several parts of Palestine.⁴³ Force-feeding was subsequently stopped by an order from the Israeli High Court.⁴⁴ This highlights the importance of political unrest in exerting pressure on colonial authorities; although Israel is the hegemonic power, any unrest that affects its security is a red line for its calculated actions. The High Court's decision to halt force-feeding did not last for long – it was disregarded by prison authorities. Force-feeding continued, without a constitutional law. In an interview, Mahmoud Sarsak revealed that Israeli authorities attempted to force-feed him and another hunger striker in 2012. This was done in the prison's medical clinic and not in the ordinary cell, as hunger strikers are moved to the clinic once their condition deteriorates. In this instance, the attempted force-feeding was stopped by the intervention of other prisoners, who “started shouting and kicking the doors in protest.”⁴⁵ Sarsak added that Israeli authorities used force-feeding via tubes as a threat to coerce him and other prisoners to accept vitamin cocktails intravenously, adding that Israeli authorities customarily view either intravenous injection or force-feeding (or both) as the equivalent to breaking the strike.⁴⁶ This interpretation is also clear in the case of Samer Issawi, whose intravenous “feeding” was subsequently used by Israeli authorities to try to diminish his strike.

In response to increasing numbers of individual and collective hunger strikes, and with attempts to force-feed prisoners combatted by prisoners' persistence and noncompliance, Israel sought to legalize force-feeding. A bill doing so was officially introduced in 2014, and passed on 30 July 2015.⁴⁷ In Israeli interior minister Gilad Erdan's words, force-feeding is a means to “prevent” prisoners from “applying pressure on the state.”⁴⁸ Qaddoura Fares, head of the Palestinian Society Prisoner's Club (*Nadi al-asir al-Filastini*), affirmed this interpretation, and added that Israel is using force-feeding to stop future hunger strikes,⁴⁹ given how much they had energized broad support for the prisoners' cause, and the Palestinian cause more generally, throughout the years. Though force-feeding had been used before, Israel wanted to make it harder for human rights organizations to oppose them. Sahar Francis, director of Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, stated in an interview with *al-Jazeera* that the intention of the law is that Israel “can use force-feeding as a tool, legalized by a law, and then it will be very hard for us as lawyers and human rights organizations to oppose and face such systems.”⁵⁰

Israeli authorities also claim the bill aims to avoid irreversible damage to prisoners. However, the legislation allows considerable latitude for authorities to act without medical consultation chosen or trusted by the prisoners to judge their health. Rather it allows for force-feeding upon request by the Israel Prison Service, following approval by either the attorney general or district attorney of Israel, submitted to the president of an Israeli district court or to an attorney.⁵¹

The 2015 law lists three elements to be assessed before force-feeding: state security, public safety, and the person's threat to themselves. Taking the first two into account, and in accordance with article 19 of the Patients' Rights Act that guarantees "medical confidentiality," court hearings on force-feeding can be based on "secret evidence" and held in closed sessions, without prisoners or their attorneys knowing, or being able to challenge, the evidence or justifications. The use of secret evidence is, ironically, the very reason for some administrative detainees embarking on hunger strikes.⁵² The use of nonnegotiable secret evidence is a political intervention aimed to preclude any defense.

The third element assessed when force-feeding is taken as a measure – the prisoner's threat to themselves – is cast as an attempt to preserve the lives of hunger strikers. But, as noted earlier, force-feeding has political, more than medical, objectives. Revealingly, the bill was passed in the Knesset and supported by the political apparatus of the state, despite determined opposition from medical and legal organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁵³ Israeli doctors refused to back the proposal, and later the legislation, with the nation's leading clinicians' association, the Israel Medical Association, branding it as "torture."⁵⁴ Israeli doctors declared that they would not follow the law for ethical and medical reasons, including the need for informed consent from hunger strikers. Informed consent is particularly important because hunger strikers are not normal patients, but people who have, to achieve a demand, willingly placed themselves in a situation that may end their lives. Moreover, doctors refused to allow medical decisions to be dictated by politicians. This was affirmed by Yoel Donchin, a member of the Israel Medical Association and of Physicians for Human Rights, who said:

I don't have prisoners. I have patients. I'm not going to do any harm to the patient against his will, and I am not going to rape him under the law. I am not going to insert a tube if he refuses. If the patient is in a grave condition and he's going to die in my department, I have to consider it between my own ethical values and the patient's values and the family response, not by any law that politicians who get thirty votes or forty votes decided for me what to do to my patient... This [force-feeding law] is beyond and above any medical issue. It has nothing to do with the Hippocratic oath and nothing to do with my values as a physician facing a patient.⁵⁵

Israel's claim that the objective of force-feeding is to save prisoners' lives – and its broader attempt to portray itself as interested in the health of Palestinian prisoners – is disingenuous. A review of medical history in Israeli prisons clearly shows the type of medical negligence and torture to which prisoners are subjected. The Palestinian Society Prisoner's Club and the Prisoners' Commission documented 72 deaths due to torture since 1967.⁵⁶ Prisoners who suffer from serious ailments are often freed once

their health condition is irreversible, but they are then generally refused permission to travel abroad to seek treatment.⁵⁷

Despite the Israeli authorities' attempts to portray force-feeding as a humanitarian action, it is more realistically a short-cut to stop prisoners from hunger striking and, at the same time, ignore their demands. Most importantly, it allows Israel to avoid deaths of hunger strikers, which might spark uprisings and further instability in Palestine, as in the 1970s and 1980s. This was emphasized by Yoel Adar, a legal advisor to the Ministry of Public Security, who, when asked whether a hunger striker could harm the public, responded: "If he [the hunger striker] dies in prison, it causes riots – in prison, in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank], in Palestinian territories. This has a definite implication on Israel."⁵⁸ The death of hunger strikers and the subsequent unrest inside and outside of prisons remain red lines for Israel's security.

Despite medical, legal, and human rights efforts in opposition to force-feeding, there were no attempts to change or repeal the law, and it seems that Israeli authorities have not felt much pressure to acquiesce to Palestinian prisoners' demands or discuss the potential for a law against force-feeding. This suggests that Palestinian hunger strikers continue to be under threat of force-feeding.

Conclusion

This article has sought to contextualize hunger strikes within a broader range of Palestinian prison resistance. Further, it has focused on the role of force-feeding in the struggle between Palestinian prisoners and Israeli authorities over the very basic control over the bodies and dignity of the imprisoned. Although Israeli authorities have claimed that force-feeding is a humanitarian tool – a means of securing the lives of Palestinians intent on doing harm to themselves – all evidence points to its political, not medical, motivations. First, force-feeding has been a way of inflicting violence against prisoners, leading in the 1970s and 1980s to the deaths of four hunger strikers, including 'Abd al-Qadir Abu al-Fahm, who was force-fed on the third day of his strike, when he was in no medical danger and strong enough to continue his strike. Further, Israeli authorities' supposed interest in the health and well-being of prisoners is undermined by the numbers of Palestinians killed in Israeli prisons through torture and medical negligence. Finally, when in 2015 the Israeli Knesset voted to legalize the force-feeding of hunger strikers, this was done despite the Israel Medical Association's serious opposition. It becomes clear, therefore, that the aim of such life-threatening tactics is to punish hunger strikers and forcibly put an end to their strikes or to frighten other Palestinian prisoners who may think of embarking on a strike into abandoning the last resort to achieving their demands. Yet, as the history of prison hunger strikes in Palestine and elsewhere indicates, it is unlikely to succeed.

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Endnotes

- 1 Mahmud Darwish, "Mural (1999, an Excerpt)," trans. Rema Hammami and John Berger, *Middle East Report* 248 (Fall 2008): 33, online at www.merip.org/mer/mer248/mural (accessed 9 July 2018).
- 2 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 95.
- 3 Doug McAdam, "Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (Dec. 1983): 735–754.
- 4 Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
- 5 I use "detainees" and "prisoners" to refer to Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. "Detainees" refers to those held without charge or of unknown status, and "prisoners" to those who have been charged and/or sentenced. When it is not known whether an individual is a prisoner or a detainee, I use "political prisoner," because all administrative detainees are imprisoned for political reasons. In other words, all administrative detainees are political prisoners but not all political prisoners are administratively detained. Also, when the word "prisoners" is used to refer to Palestinian prisoners, it refers to "political prisoners." Israel perceives them as "criminals" and "terrorists," but Palestinians tend to see most of them as political prisoners, held for resisting a brutal occupation that violates international law. This understanding is based partly on the interviews conducted with former hunger strikers, noted below, as well as on the writings of Nahla Abdo, *Palestinian Women's Anti-Colonial Struggle within the Israeli Prison System* (London: Pluto Press, 2014); and Esmail Nashif, *Palestinian Political Prisoners: Identity and Community* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
- 6 All interviews were conducted by the author between March 2016 and July 2018. Interviewees are: Ahmed al-Faleet (from Gaza, in April–July 2018), Fahed Abu al-Haj (from Jerusalem, in January and May 2018), Hana Shalabi (from Jenin, currently residing in Gaza, on 13–14 April 2017 and 19 July 2018), Hani Issawi (from Jerusalem, on 20–21 July 2018), Mahmoud Sarsak (from Gaza, currently residing in London, on 25 May 2018), Mazen Malasa (from Amman, in March 2016), Shireen Issawi (from Jerusalem, in July 2018), Suad Ghanem (from Furaydis, south of Haifa, currently residing in Exeter, on 20 September 2017), all of whom were at one time incarcerated in Israeli prisons; Suna Purlak (currently living in the United Kingdom, on 10 June 2018), a Kurdish woman previously incarcerated in Turkish prison; and June Purvis, emerita professor of women's and gender history at the University of Portsmouth (via email, 14 July 2018).
- 7 Bargu, *Starve and Immolate*.
- 8 Magnus Hörnqvist, *Risk, Power, and the State: After Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4–5; Michel Foucault, "The Subject of Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 777–795.
- 9 Lauren Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 26, 65; Stephen Scanlan, Kimberly Lamm, and Laurie Copper Stoll, "Starving for Change: The Hunger Strike and Nonviolent Action, 1906–2004," in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change*, ed. Patrick G. Coy (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2008), 283–84.
- 10 Scanlan, Lamm, and Stoll, "Starving for Change," 283–84.
- 11 Banu Bargu, "The Silent Exception: Hunger Striking and Lip Sewing," *Law, Culture, and the Humanities* (24 May 2017), online at journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1743872117709684 (accessed 25 July 2018).
- 12 Bargu, *Starve and Immolate*, 85. See also: Abdo, *Palestinian Women's Anti-Colonial Struggle*.
- 13 Carl Sebastian Abrahamsson and Endre Danyi, "Becoming Stronger by Becoming Weaker: The Hunger Strike as a Mode of Doing Politics," *Journal of International Relations and Development* (2018): 23–24.
- 14 In 1917, following the outbreak of the Anglo-Irish War of Independence, a rash of hunger strikes erupted, initially in response to violent treatment of prisoners at a Dublin jail. Strikers also refused to wear prison uniforms and do prison work. The leaders of the strike, including Thomas Ashe, the former president of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a forerunner of the Irish Republican Army, died during the strike. Ashe was forced by British authorities. The most recent Irish hunger strike was in 1981, during which ten strikers died. See: Peter Barberis, John McHugh, and Mike Tyldesley, *Encyclopedia of British and Irish Political Organizations: Parties, Groups, and Movements of the 20th Century* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 777; and David Beresford, *Ten Men Dead: The Story of the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987), 17. Earlier precedents included the 1909 hunger strike undertaken by British suffragettes. See Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage*

- Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866–1928* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2003), 306. More recently, prisoners at the U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo Bay embarked on several hunger strikes. The first of these ended in 2005, when prison authorities agreed to provide prisoners better access to books and bottled drinking water. See: Audrey Gillan, “Hunger Strikers Pledge to Die in Guantánamo,” *Guardian*, 8 September 2005, online at www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/09/uk.guantanamo (accessed 25 July 2018); Stefan Simanowitz, “Rapper’s Hunger Strike Shows Power of Ancient Form of Protest,” *HuffPost*, 22 October 2015 (updated 22 October 2016), online at www.huffingtonpost.com/stefan-simanowitz/rappers-hunger-strike_b_8332524.html (accessed 25 July 2018); and Basil Farraj, “How Palestinian Hunger Strikes Counter Israel’s Monopoly on Violence,” *al-Shabaka*, 12 May 2016, online at al-shabaka.org/commentaries/palestinian-hunger-strikes-counter-israels-monopoly-violence/ (accessed 25 July 2018).
- 15 Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA: A History* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1993), 377. Shannon Scott writes, for example, “This preparation and experience helps to explain why Bobby Sands became concerned at one point that a toothache would develop into something serious enough to force him off of his strike.” Shannon Scott, “The Once and Future Bobby Sands: A Critique of the Material Rhetorical Appeal of the 1981 Hunger Strike in Long Kesh Prison” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2004), 166.
 - 16 See, for example, Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*; Scott, “Once and Future Bobby Sands,” 166; McAdam, “Tactical Innovation”; Coogan, *IRA*, 377.
 - 17 Author interview with Suna Purlak, 10 June 2018.
 - 18 From an interview with a former Palestinian prisoner (quote obtained from Julie Norman during a conference in Belfast Queen’s University on 2 May 2018).
 - 19 Author interview with Suad Ghanem, 20 September 2017.
 - 20 Lena Meari, “Sumud: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* (2014): 547–49.
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