The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities & Sciences

Refusing to Wait:
Hunger-striking in the Age of Gazafication

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The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Egyptology

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As well as committee members Kiven Strohm, Martina Rieker, and Hanan Sabea

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Abstract

What happens when six months of waiting become six more and six more, always arbitrarily and uncertainly? And, in turn, what happens when people refuse to wait? I address this question by tracing how Palestinian prisoners refuse to wait in detention by increasingly resorting to individual “freedom strikes” since 2011 to demand their release—as opposed to the First Intifada-style of collective hunger-strikes demanding improved prison conditions, lasting until 2004. I trace how freedom-strikers’ shift towards targeting administrative detention is a refusal not only of their own arbitrarily renewable detention periods, but also of Israel’s new mode of governing at large: with the permanent negotiations following Oslo inscribing a shift from “waiting for” towards “waiting to wait.” I situate this shift in waiting within Israel’s intensified individuation practices and closure technologies after the Second Intifada and the resulting repression of the collective structure of doing politics, rooted in the nationalist factions and movements. This thesis moves beyond a simplistic portrayal of how individuation technologies divide and discipline people into good subjects who waits crises out. Instead, it explores how the individual freedom-striker stubbornly forges new terrains of struggle where the former collectives, organized into the logic of nationalist parties and factions, no longer hold; how individual bodies emerged, one after the other, out of the void of hunger-strikes between the last general collective strike in 2004 and 2011 to craft a different mode of collectivity and sculpting potentialities beyond the time-space of waiting to wait. This thesis situates prisons as a site that is generative of such potentialities, and traces the reconfiguring and reassembling of collectivity within the fields and assemblages of hunger in contemporary Palestine.
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Ayah Abo-Basha • MA Thesis in Anthropology • American University in Cairo

Supervised by adviser, Dina Makram-Ebeid and committee members Kiven Strohm, Martina Reiker, & Hanan Sabea

Cover Photo ©Suhad Khatib, captioned: “Three Baby Rocks: In the romantic sense of art and mythology, they turn into birds.”
Acknowledgements

This research is dedicated to all the brewed coffees from the summer of 2016. To Ghassan, who first welcomed me and introduced me to the Addameer office as a visiting intern and fieldwork researcher; to the perverse laughter that filled the kitchen when he began reading people’s upturned coffee cups one day before stealthily leaving all the saucers on Beesan’s desk for her to have to wash. To Suzanne who always indulged my incessant questioning with coffee breaks, and even coffee-flavored booza. It was during those chats with Suzanne and later with Randa, that my questioning of individual hunger-strikes came to life, later unraveling into further coffee chats and with former prisoners and their family members. I am grateful for the coffees and conversations shared with Mahmoud Kayed, Arafat Barghouthi, Abdel Razeq Farraj, Wisam Rafidi, Ahmed Qattamish, Rula Abu-Duhou, Mohamed al-Qiq, Khader Adnan, Fadi Hammad, Laila Issawi, Murad Jadallah, Aysar Al-Saifi, Diaa Ali, Bilal Saifi, Tarek Mattar, Murad, Maya, and Naj Odeh, and Yasin Abu-Khedair, who unpacked their memories and theorizing of hunger with me. Hafez for sharing his graphic art and stories. Ahmed for back-to-back coffee re-analysis conversations. Greg for pointing me towards the Abu Jihad prisoner’s museum and archive at Abu Dis. And Randa for sending me to the prisoner’s section at the Nablus Public Library. Flipping maqloobas and afternoons cooking with Leena or watering her rooftop garden was my constant. Her exclusive invites to Saturday mornings at the Salon with the girls, fed me with all the laughter and love and gossip of Ramallah to get me until the next week.

Upon my return to Cairo, it was Kiven’s encouragement that pushed my service trips between coffee chats into written reflections, while the whipping of the wind through the windows still felt fresh, and my skin still glowed from all of Leena’s olive oil recipes. These words would not have been written, several times over, if it weren’t for his persistent check-ins on my writing. Coffees with Dina queued “writing mode” in earnest, with her incredibly diligent follow-ups pushing me to consider
continuities when my writing over-emphasized rupture and to reassess binaries with considerations of how seemingly separate categories like the individual and collective or are in continuous enmeshment. Her careful reading and plentiful commenting gave me the energy to continue rethinking and revising, and pushed me to grow through my writing. Coffee with Martina marked my departure and arrival from Ramallah. She has been there since day one (literally, teaching me my first class in the MA program), and continues to transform the way I rethink of my everyday and its constant process of becoming. This project would not have come about if it weren’t for Martina’s encouraging of a seemingly far-fetched idea I had in the shower one morning. Hanan Sabea is the reason I remember things like the green-capped man who frequented the hunger tent and the jokeful laughter at the office so vividly. Her encouragement to pay attention to the energy emanating from what for most, might fade into the background, has helped my eyes, ears, and nose salvage moments from the field that may have slipped away otherwise. I owe the continuing vividness of some of my memories to you. My conversation with Hani Sayed nudge me to force my thoughts into spoken-out-loud words which he enriched with his own legal analysis, as the title of my thesis and engagement with his concept of Gazafication suggests. And Ian Morrison’s mentorship throughout my writing semester, inspired moments of playful writing and rearranging from the sometimes-rigid script of a student thesis. Patrick Zaki and Ghassan Kamel’s help with transcribing fieldwork interviews helped me revisit and rethink my field notes.

There are the people who nurtured me with their warmth and support. Without Banan, Claire, Alya, Sophie, and Ahmed I would not be able to look back on these past few months as ones filled with joy.
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**Prologue**

Even when the bus does not come, even when people are feeling stuck in a queue that is not moving, they heroically keep on queuing . . . The heroism of the stuck seems to me to signal a deeper [and new] form of governmentality . . . [one] that invites and indeed valorizes self-control in times of crisis. Even when possibly facing death I should learn to act in an orderly fashion. Here, queuing even in the midst of disaster is understood as something one has to do.

— Hage, 2009, p. 104

Let’s be honest. There is no such thing as a collective hunger-strike in Palestine right now—nor 4-5 years ahead. I mean, why do we embark on individual strikes to begin with? It’s because we know that once we enter into the prison itself, we'll be stuck for 2-3 years on administrative detention, and they [the parties’ prison committees] will tell us to wait to go on a collective strike. But there is no collective strike, if I’m going to be honest with you. Without sugar-coating. Without preaching ‘oh, the prisoner’s movement!!’ There is no collective strike. And I did not want to wait.

—al-Qiq, personal interview, August 2016

**Day 27**

Today was day 27. Long past the hunger pangs and stomach cramps (day 1-3), or even the sensation of thirst (lost at day 15). By day 27, one is only left with the sensation of cold, and more cold, of light-headedness, or inversely of mental sluggishness. Standing up is difficult to impossible.
And the body becomes physically lighter. Somewhere in Ohalei Kedar prison\(^1\), Bilal’s body had shed 25 kilos, leaving 18/100 parts of itself behind. The shedding was a corporal count-down of sorts, keeping time through bodily decay. Such is the course of hunger.

But day 27, for me, was only the beginning. Day 27 was my first. And day 28 would become my second, and so forth, a hunger calendar, tick-tocking my everyday, as I began my internship at the Addameer office in the up-scale neighborhood of Masyoon, Ramallah—the administrative center of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank. Not long after I arrived, Ghassan from the advocacy unit told me that I would be sitting in on an office-wide emergency meeting: for day 27 of Bilal Kayed’s hunger strike.

About eight people were seated across the conference table. Diaa—siting at the far end—laid out the agenda, as everyone silently took cues from him, allowing him the space to give them: 1. Legal representation (Addameer lawyers were representing Bilal’s appeal case) 2. Media advocacy 3. On-the-ground organizing, which I would later come to realize, is almost synonymous with the blue prisoners' tents set up in squares in various cities from Ramallah to Bethlehem to Nablus. Murad was the first to chime in. “We’re an advocacy organization. Let the street do its work, but we should focus on what we can uniquely offer along with the legal representation – liaising with the media, being a source of info.” Sumoud, Ranin, and Falastine from the documentation room—their presence as fierce as their names suggested—would soon jump in as well, as I ferociously began to take it all in, field notebook and pen in hand.

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\(^1\) Ohalei Kedar is one of the prisons in the Beersheba prison complex located close to the city of Beersheba South of the West Bank. Israel often uses this site to isolate Palestinian prisoners for specific cases such as hunger-strikes (Addameer, n.d.)
I was seated between Ghassan, who had just introduced me to the office as a summer intern and fieldwork researcher, and Amani who had worked for the NGO a few years ago. Diaa had called her in to ask her about the hunger-strike campaign she had worked on before—treat her like a hunger-strike consultant of sorts. "But Amani, what do you think?" Diaa would consistently interrupt others throughout the meeting to ask her, "But Amani, what did you do with the other strike?" Each time, I would scribble down Amani's responses: A brief to the EU representative, social media coverage, twitter storms, international human rights organizations like UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA). At some point, Sumoud from the documentation unit would implicitly point out the West Bank/East Jerusalem focus that biased the conversation: “We can't forget to make sure Gaza radio stations air this, so that exiled prisoners will be able to hear it.” The room harmonized with a collective sigh of agreement that nudged me to make note of it, before they moved on to discuss who they should invite to the press conference tomorrow. There was a consensus that Mahmoud Kayed, Bilal's brother, had to be present. And after the conference, Amani suggested, to ask Mahmoud about taking videos in the solidarity tent set up for Bilal near the family's home in Asira al-Shamaliya, near Nablus. But the most important thing, Sumoud interrupted was not to use all of these cards at once: “We have to remember, this is a long battle.”

After the meeting, I shuffled back to the advocacy room, at the desk adjacent to Ghassan's where I would spend most of my time at the office for the rest of the summer of 2016. As a dual

2 I had planned my travels according to my internship duration at Addameer—a prisoner's support organization in Palestine, that I had come across while researching Black Lives Matter’s internationalist work on prisons and militarization. The slogan “Ferguson to Palestine” linked the condition of black Americans living under the imperialism of the US to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.
intern and fieldwork research at Addameer, a prisoner’s support organization in Ramallah, my time in Palestine was bookended by the two Eid holidays; I arrived on July 3rd and left on September 19th. Little did I know that those dates would largely overlap with the duration of Bilal Kayed’s hunger-strike as well.  

As I glanced up, the faces on the poster-plastered wall in front of my desk stared back at me. Their faces would gradually reveal what Sumoud's comment about the "long battle ahead” or Diaa’s questioning of “what’s the point of these strikes” seemed to suggest: That what was new to me on day 27, was part normal to the rest. This normalization began to sink in from that first day, when my eyes lingered at a pair of oval-wired spectacles on one of the posters. The familiarity gnawed at something inside of me that I couldn’t quite reach-- until Diaa walked in the office to ask Ghassan something. The feeling of vague familiarity clicked into place at the sight of Ghassan’s glasses. I glanced back at the poster as he left: "Guilty for defending prisoner's rights" it read, surrounded by other posters of past hunger-strikers. Rows of these faces stared at me, with the repeated caption: "Hungry for Freedom.” Though I would pause at the sight of this phrase spray-painted on buildings or hanging on posters throughout my fieldwork, others around me would barely take notice of something that was perhaps so ordinary to their everyday.

Just when I felt like the staring-faces-wall was beginning to overwhelm my senses, Ghassan started bickering with Beesan across from me, with the sharpest humor that would become a daily dose of relief from the heaviness of our work. Beesan had tossed a comment full of snarkiness at

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Though I had planned to travel with visiting Black Lives Matter delegations, my fieldwork pushed me towards the assemblage of hunger in Palestine, which became the focus of this written work.

3 Bilal began his hunger strike on June 15th and ended it on August 25th.
Ghassan who had just sneezed, to which he had clapped back "Oh shut up, instead of sending me blessings! I could have died," he dramatized in the hyperbolic way he was known for. “I hope you get arrested," he snickered " so we can make you a nice poster." On another day, I would walk into the kitchen to Ghassan pretending to read people's upturned coffee cups: "I see romance in your future; but also a travel ban," he announced to a giggling Falastine. "Imagine reading these cups for prisoners," he scoffed to Beesan. "There is a hunger strike in your future; there is renewed administrative detention in your future . . .”—the ensuing laughter so perverse, but so needed—and always lined with a daily rhythm that only repeated morning coffees and perverse giggling would help me come to terms with: Hunger was no stranger here.

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**Day 29**

10:30 a.m. | Ghassan and Beesan's already-familiar joking filled the room, what seemed like a bit too brimmingly today. "I hope you get arrested and that your detainment gets renewed three times for 10 months," Beesan pouted. "And why 10 months?" Ghassan would amusingly jab back a little too close to home, as we sat in the advocacy room waiting to hear about Bilal's appeal against his administrative detention order from Ofer military court any minute now. By the time I had settled into my desk with my Arabic coffee, Diaa had paced into the advocacy room at least two or three times as we all waited. But instead of any news, the day would unfold with only more of Diaa's pacing, and each time he left the advocacy room, the trail of nerves he brought with him seemed to linger a little longer. Later, Iyad and Falastine -- the other 20-year-old somethings in the office-- would soon join us. "Is there any hope out of all this," Iyad would sputter, "What happen when the next person goes on strike? What are they doing with this? Where is it all going?" Falastine, speaking from what I felt were a set of heavy
bricks Iyad had just stacked on my chest, paused while shuffling the agricultural calendars on Ghassan's desk: "But no. This time it's different. It is a special case; Bilal spent 14.5 years completing his prison sentence only to be transferred to administrative detention at the end, instead of being released. It could become a dangerous precedent for all prisoners."

* * *

This seemingly subtle exchange was full of friction and discord, that I would slowly begin to sense towards the end of my two and a half months at Addameer: For though it was true that Bilal was the first prisoner to be transferred straight to detention without even being able to see his family after 14.5 years of awaiting his release, Falastine's "this time is different" referred to so much more. That several people like Falastine, who identified as a leftist and a member of the Popular Front for Palestinian Liberation (PFLP), considered Bilal's hunger-strike a "special case"—that is, worthy of their support and advocacy—was different. That they supported an "individual" hunger strike was different. That they supported a strike against administrative detention demanding freedom of one individual detainee (as opposed to improved living conditions for all prisoners) was different. It is worthy to note that Bilal Kayed was a prominent leader in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a faction that several employees at Addameer identified with. Thus, the fact that he had embarked on an individual hunger strike—a practice predominantly associated with Hamas and Islamist Jihad party members (who comprise most of the detainee population)—was not only different; it also put some members of the PFLP who oftentimes condemned individual hunger strikes, dismissing them as antithetical to collective values, in a difficult position. These people were put in a bind—pushed to justify and support a form of struggle they had so often criticized.

In this context, Falastine's "This time is different" is pregnant with contention that must be engaged with, which is where this thesis seeks to focus. In other words, I will trace the difference embedded in the predominance of individual (as opposed to) collective hunger-strikes in Palestine
since 2011 that many people whom I spoke to from the West Bank and East Jerusalem portrayed as
a difference in Islamist versus the PFLP’s leftist ontologies of body and struggle.

This difference beckoned me during my fieldwork, filling me with questions which I wrestle
with through this thesis, namely: Why did this particular modality of self-destruction or human
weaponization through “individual hunger-strikes” as opposed to the collective hunger strikes which
proliferated before 2011, become one of the most predominant modes of resistance by Palestinians
in Israeli prisons? Or as hunger-striker Mohamed Al-Qiq put it once while talking with me: "Why do
we resort to individual strikes to begin with?" To answer this question, I will explore how the increasingly
common –almost unending—string of individual strikes since 2011 are not only a continuation of the
long history of Palestinian prisoners’ hunger strikes, but also a departure towards a different mode of
bodily politics. My time in Palestine whether working at the Addameer office, visiting the hunger tent
or speaking with former prisoners, began to center around how people make meaning of this
departure; I became intrigued by how many people, especially on the left given my fieldwork primarily
with them, find these new strikes so contentious, even disastrous. And I began to probe how these
debates—about the efficacy of individual hunger-strikes, their necessity according to many, or their
reprehensibility according to others—reflect on the “Palestinian national prisoner’s movement” as
many prisoners refer to their resistance. How were the individual strikes affecting the ‘national
prisoner’s movement’ and its thought? How, in many ways, is its nationalist discourse coming apart?
How is it transforming?

Questioning the shift to ‘individual’ hunger-strikes in Palestine since 2011 cannot be divorced
from interrogating the strikes’ weddedness to the policy of administrative (or forcible) detention. Until
2011, the concept of hunger-striking to demand that one be freed from prison altogether was not part
of the repertoire of modes of struggle. Certainly, there were a handful of cases over the years. But the
overwhelming predominance of the individual strike since Khader Adnan declared he was going
hungry to be freed is a definite departure from previous strikes since 2004 and before. Before 2011, hunger-strikes typically demanded improved eating, sleeping, and family visiting standards—that is, simply an improvement of carceration standards, not a rejection of them altogether. These are "freedom strikes," Khader Adnan would later tell me when I asked about his strike in 2011, and its being cited as the trigger of endless individual strikes that followed against administrative detention. But Khader would not use the term "individual" while speaking to me: "freedom strikes," he would repeat. "My administrative detention was a gift from god," he would continue, "because it gave me the chance to demand freedom." Mohamed Al-Qiq would similarly suture individual strikes with the policy of administrative detention—almost implying the former would not have come about it if it weren’t’ for its centering around the latter; that the two are intrinsically sutured: "These hunger-strikes are the illogic that responds to the illogic," Al-Qiq declared while speaking into a microphone during one of his speeches in the prisoners' tent in solidarity with Bilal Kayed. The illogic that Al-Qiq spoke of constantly came up when I interviewed family members of administrative detainees: "It makes no sense!" Administrative detention (AD) is Israel's policy of detaining Palestinians without charge or trial for 6-months at a time. "But the thing about AD," as the mother of detainee Mohammad Abu-Sakha told me "is that it can be renewed at any time" without any justification. The end of each 6-month period is always up for renewal by Israel's military courts, effectively keeping detainees and their family members in a constant state of stuckedness in time and anticipation. "At the end of Abu Sakha's first 6-months," Abu-Sakha's mother told me as we sat in her living room with pictures of her detained son on the side-tables, "I had cooked all his favorite foods—prepared a feast! Then, only a few hours before his release, we were told that his detention was renewed. . . I couldn't even eat the food. I just stuffed it all into the freezer." Seemingly complete the mother's train of thought, the wife of Shaher al-Rai, while scrunching a pillow that she had made for her 6-year old son with a picture of her detained
husband asked out loud: "We waited the 6 months, and they were renewed. We waited again, and it was renewed again-- until when will we continue to wait??"

**12:45 p.m** | The press conference was minutes away, and yet there was still no word from Ofer military court about the appeal decision. Sumoud, Diaa, and Ranin from the documentation unit gathered their things and were off to the Watan media office. I lingered behind to finish preparing the hand-outs for the conference. I continued stuffing printed articles about Bilal's case and deteriorating health into a brown cardboard folder. The front of these were stamped in large red letters- SECRET FILE- to symbolize so many public secrets: the absence of any charges or trials that were represented to Bilal's attorney; the absence of any justification for Bilal's solitary confinement for the last year of his sentence, nor his automatic transfer to administrative detention on the day his mother and family were waiting for him to be released; nor the details of the appeal that we would have no updates about. After the printer chucked out the last few reports, I grabbed the prepared folders and hurried to the Watan Office with Iyad. A few minutes into the conference, a Palestine Authority official would announce: "We are still waiting on the appeal decision from Ofer military court."

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The liminality of time signified by the food that Abu Sakha's mom shoved into the fridge captures the illogic that Mohamed Al-Qiq spoke of, as I came sense it in my daily encounters and conversations at the office and with friends: illogic as a radical disorganization of daily flow, disruption of people's life-rhythm. To think through what some perceive as an 'illogical' shift towards 'individual' strikes is, therefore, to think through the 'illogic' of administrative detention—and what it reveals about the temporal politics not only of Israel's governmentality, but also that of the PA and political parties and factions in Palestine which are all inextricably sutured together into a spatial-temporal field of frozen-ness, stuckedness, and endless *endless* waiting. "I did not want to wait!" as Mohamed Al-Qiq
described the impetus for his hunger-striking, then becomes much more than a selfish desire to return to his two children and wife, at the expense of the collective, as some leftists might bemoan. It is a refusal of much more than one's individual detention; a refusal of a wider politics of governmentality usually periodized around the Oslo Accords, but not materially felt in the prisons until the last collective strike in 2004, a politics of occupation turned into permanent negotiating, Gazafication of Palestinian time-space (vis-a-vis the Israeli policy of disengagement), and a politics of perpetual waiting. This thesis will unpack these various dimensions of refusal through hunger-striking. I am primarily exploring how these 'strikes for freedom' intervene within Israel's temporal politics of administrative detention. In order to do so, I build a conceptual framework that combines fieldwork experiences and interviews in a way that is attuned to the bodily politics of hunger-strike in Palestine—especially how the individual body moves and negotiates time and space in tandem.

4:30 pm | Sumoud burst open the door to tell us that Mahmoud and Mahmoud had just arrived—the Addameer lawyer and Bilal Kayed's brother—finally back from Ofer. Everyone bustled into the kitchen to hear the announcement we had been waiting for all day. Diaa lingered at the kitchen door behind me. The news was brief: "No decision," Mahmoud stated matter-of-factly, "maybe after the weekend. Maybe Monday. Or Tuesday." Ranin sighed while others' eyes seemed to glaze over into a trance before shuffling out of the kitchen much more hesitantly than they had bustled in; slowly, almost draggedly. Back to waiting.
Suppose the bus does not come? [Badiou] Invites us to think. People start to feel agitated. People start talking to each other not about the banal things they usually do to fill up time while waiting but about the unbearability and inhumanity of being subjected to such conditions external to themselves. And suddenly communication with the other is made on the basis that they, like us, find waiting unbearable. . .

— Hage, 2009, p. 103

Is waiting an exercise of agency or a lack of it? At the most immediate and superficial level one can rush too quickly to say that waiting is a passive modality of being where people
lack agency . . . Yet, there are many cases where agency oozes out of waiting. We can also easily see it as ‘active passivity.’

— Hage, 2009, p. 2

On the 15th of June, Bilal (35 years old) set his black plastic Japanese Casio watch, the only watch the Israeli Prison Services allows prisoners to wear. This Casio would count off the days of Bilal’s strike, even when his health deteriorated, or he lost consciousness for long periods, or if he forgot—the watch would keep track. And every time the Casio counted 10 days, Bilal would reset it, to count off 10 new ones, then 10 more, then 10 more. And he would, with every reset, also renew an intention to himself: to continue with the strike.”

— Hammad, 2016

**Day 36:** Today was the first of many days that I would spend at *dwar al-Sa‘a* (clock square) standing behind rows of plastic chair set up beneath blue tarp: the prisoners' solidarity tent in Ramallah. Pretty soon, the faces in the tent would set a rhythm of ordinariness—their features growing familiar to me and mine familiar to them, as the occasional smile or raised eyebrow towards me would convey. The most reliably familiar figure would sit at the front of the tent. Each time I stopped by, I would spot him: always in the very front row facing clock square; always perched at the edge of his chair, green cap atop his head, prayer beads and a pocket-size Quran in his right hand, a massive chain of keys of return in his left, with his few free fingertips clasping a poster that he would hold up, his arms permanently raised, to display to passerby on foot or in cars. Scattered around this man was the usual sight of mothers carrying a framed portrait or poster of a young man—their incarcerated husband, son, or grandson—beneath their chins. Even when I attended the solidarity event in front of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) in Bireh, the man and the mothers he was flanked
by seemed to have been copy-pasted from the hunger tent in Clock-Square with their familiar garb. Beneath these archipelago of prisoners' tent sites, these usual faces would listen to the usual rally speakers, kick off the routine solidarity marches, and enjoy a children's concert as part of the solidarity actions for Bilal's strike. But most of the time, the tent-visitors were just there: fanning themselves with newspapers, asking each other about one-another's health or kids' schooling, shushing their kids who were misbehaving, discussing their plans for the weekend, checking their phones, sometimes just sitting, waiting—ever so banally.

Waiting in the hunger tent was usually boring. I would get restless. Check my watch. Think about the complaint to the EU I needed to write, or the prison map project that needed translating. I did not have time to waste today, I would decide, leaving the tent—the waiting—behind and speed-walking back to the office.

But there were layers to this waiting. On the one hand, waiting in the hunger tent, brought together the individual waiting time-lines of various family members who had formerly awaited their detained or imprisoned sons, husbands, and daughters in seclusion. The archipelago of hunger tents made individuated waiting collective. On the other hand, waiting in the hunger tent created, through the hunger-striker’s body, a temporality that rejected the passive waiting of administrative detention. Instead, as the new graphic designs counting the number of days Bilal was on strike indicated, the hunger tent transformed its visitors’ modality of waiting from passively waiting out uncertain detention periods, to a more active (albeit at times inescapable) passivity: a refusal of waiting on the Israeli state’s arbitrary and precarious release conditions, to an active waiting—turned ever-more pressing by the wrenching of the hunger-striker’s body—for the freedom from detention (and its state-prescribed waiting) that Bilal Kayed was contesting.

Looking at the green-capped man in the tent captures the genealogy and transformations of waiting in Palestine, as his huge chain of interlocked key of returns embodies: how wait to return
slowly became the wait of “eternal refugees” as the novelist Susan Abulhawa (2010:120) puts it: After 1967, waiting in displacement sometimes two-or-three times over from Haifa to Jerusalem to Kufr Aqab, in refugee camps where tents were turned into concrete; waiting out prison sentences that are transformed into open-ended detention-periods, or in checkpoint lines that can be turned away altogether at any whim. Waiting for a Palestine not premised on living under these closures, and precariously waiting within it.

* * *

One cannot discuss the green capped man waiting with a key of return in hand at Bilal Kayed’s hunger tent, or Bilal himself resetting his watch while waiting on hunger-strike without also discussing a woman giving birth at a checkpoint—and the other Palestinian woman who takes oxytocin to speed up her labor when her due date approaches (Wick :33), lest she face the same fate: having her water break in front of a closed checkpoint; and being told the corporally unbearable: to wait. Banally waiting at 'clock square' is perhaps a most apt snapshot, not only of my fieldwork working on Addameer’s “Stop Administrative detention” campaign and Bilal Kayed’s hunger-strike advocacy. But it is also a snapshot of how temporality is experienced within intensified closure in contemporary Palestine at large. Much of the literature on waiting in Palestine has focused on the ways in which people cope with the endless waiting for the Palestinian nation-state with meaningful sovereignty: by assembling modes of refracted sovereignty in Gaza between 48-1967 in Gaza, for example (Feldman, 2008), or how women form temporary alliances at work in place of the ones they’re permanently waiting for after Oslo – usually family they are separated from via checkpoints or prison/detention sentences (Wick, 2011). Paying attention to how people navigate waiting, whether in the form of resigning to oxytocin to avoid waiting at a checkpoint, or forming friendships at work in place of extended family support in the 80s, which post-Oslo walls and barriers have torn apart and individuated; or molding citizenship to address current needs within the framework of a Palestine sovereign-to-come—are all
important insights as to how people experience political conditions through their bodies, reorient their identities, reshape their subjectivities, and maintain a practice of citizenship while waiting.

But what happens when people refuse to wait? And why has this refusal, especially within Israeli prisons, largely taken the form of individual hunger-strikes? These sutured questions have received sparse scholarly attention, despite their overwhelming relevance to everyday life in Palestine, especially in the context of the increasingly common—almost unending—string of individual strikes against detention since 2011. Individual hunger-strikes have become so routine, that for the average passerby walking past clock-square, the hunger tent almost fades into the background of everyday bustle, the rhythm from today to tomorrow. Moreover, the administrative detention policy that hunger-strikers refuse—was almost a rite of passage for so many Palestinian men and fewer women who lived through the first and second Intifadas. And up to this day, its arbitrary and uncertain arrest without charge or trial and endlessly renewable detention periods, makes bare the precarious waiting that characterizes people’s everyday beyond prison walls in the wake of Oslo and its endless negotiations.

So when a hunger-striker declares “I do not want to wait” and goes hungry to refuse their administrative detention—the moment opens up critical questions; especially considering that this form of hunger-strike, predominant since 2011, represents a stark departure from demanding improved prison conditions as most prisoner strikes did in 2004 and before. Instead, the primary demand has become release from prison and an end to administrative detention orders—a departure which, in Khader Adnan’s words, signify a new mode of hunger-striking: ḫarabaṭ ʿalḥorreyya (hunger-strikes for freedom). This thesis explores why this shift in hunger strikers’ demands occur. It traces why the modality of self-destruction or human weaponization in the form of “individual hunger-strikes,” as opposed to the collective hunger strikes before 2011, emerged becoming a predominant mode of refusal by Palestinians in Israeli prisons. How are the cyclical individual strikes since 2011
not only a continuation of the long history of Palestinian prisoners’ hunger strikes, but also a departure towards a different mode of bodily politics? (A question I unpack in the second chapter). How does the individual body reassemble the ‘collective’ in Palestine and the way that it imagined? (which is the question animating the third chapter). In answering such questions, this thesis ultimately argues that hunger striker’s declaration—’I do not want to wait’—intervenes not only within Israel’s policy of administrative detention but the larger temporal politics it represents in Israel’s post-Oslo mode of governing. The fourth chapter analyzes what is at stake for Israel in maintaining the temporality of detention; and in turn what is at stake for the hunger-strikers who refuse it? This thesis is therefore ultimately about the prison in Palestine as a sight generative of potentialities that transgress its walls—potentialities embedded within the alternative temporalities that refusing to wait opens up.

These questions are just as dynamic as their subject—as the ongoing collective hunger-strike, commenced on April 17th, 2017, reminds me while writing this. The strike included a list of demands that fused the older demands of improving prison conditions with the demand to end administrative detention which individual strikes protested. As such, even the collective strikes of the contemporary moment are different from those that came before it; and can only be understood in relation to the individual strikes and their transformation of the landscape and modalities of hungering in contemporary Palestine. Since 2011, individual strikes have continued consistently even after and between the few collective strikes that have intersperse the freedom strikes: the 2012 collective strike against isolation (Sobha and Khofsh, n.d.); the smaller 2014 strike against administrative detention in which over a hundred prisoners participated; and lastly the 2017 strike for improved prison conditions. As al-Qiq and Khader insisted, and others at the Addameer office seemed to sense, individual strikes against administrative detention don’t seem to be going anywhere anytime soon. Rather individual strikes continue in tandem with the collective strikes that the former has helped revived and transform since the last collective strike in 2004. Thus, this thesis is important to theorizing the ways in which
the story of individuation and closure technologies, characteristic not only of Palestine but the neoliberal moment at large, is not simply a story of disciplining people into good subjects who “wait crises out” (Hage, 2009: 100). But that there’s a story to be told about how the individual stubbornly forges new terrains of struggle where the former collectives, organized into nationalist and political-party logic, no longer hold; how the individual body meets the resulting illogic, of recycling old modes of politics that no longer hold, with the seeming illogic of reconfiguring the social into new and unfamiliar modes of collectivity. This thesis tells the story of such reconfiguring and re/assembling of collectivity, within the fields and assemblages of hunger in contemporary Palestine.

WAITING UNDER CLOSURE: INDIVIDUATION AFTER THE SECOND INTIFADA

Paying attention to individuation of neighborhood and family networks as a result of the intensified closure post-Oslo becomes particularly relevant when thinking through the individuation of hunger strikes since 2011. Returning to the figure of Hiba, the pregnant woman taking oxytocin to speed her contractions before having to cross a checkpoint, Livia Wick (2011:30) writes about Hiba’s life as a genealogy of enclosures: with Hiba’s mother having to say goodbye, permanently, to her family in Lebanon upon deciding to join her husband in Jerusalem; and Hiba in turn becoming isolated from her family once she married and moved with her husband to the West Bank—across the separation wall built after the Second Intifada lined with checkpoints, both permanent and sometimes flying, with all their unpredictability. So, though Hiba can point out her family’s home while standing in her balcony she rarely gets to see them. Neighborhood committees—along with their weddings, funerals, political and cultural gatherings—diminished between the two uprisings of 1987 and the 2000 Aqsa Intifada as well (Wick, 2011: 29). Lives at home became incredibly localized. Hiba remembered the neighborhood as being “intense and connected but having now become ‘a prison with home as
cells” (Wick, 2011: 29). The parallel she draws is more than metaphorical. Simultaneously—especially after a mass hunger-strike in 2004, commonly referenced as the “failure of 2004”—Israeli Prison Services were implementing drastic material and procedural changes within prisons (Daqqa, 2009). Thus beyond the enclosures following the Second Intifada hampering families ability to visit their imprisoned kin without difficult-to-obtain permits and security clearances, within the prisons themselves the IPS introduced a glass barrier to prevent family members and visitors from touching their loved ones during visits. Units became separated by prisoners’ city of origin and party allegiance, and newly built prisons were built ‘American style’ with a circular blueprint that facilitated isolation. I will discuss how these material changes of enclosure—changes that physically and psychologically isolate and individuate—were introduced, experienced, and theorized by prisoners more at length in chapter two.

The most resounding consensus among my day-to-day conversations at the Addameer office or during one-one-one interviews with former prisoners and their family members, is that the way they navigate their increasingly localized existence following post-Oslo securitization is concomitantly temporal. Before the waiting at checkpoints are the byroads to reach them. The white license plates that confine Palestinians to these inferior roads inscribes the ‘oh, brother’ that people would groan at me when I told them I was taking a service South to Hebron: “That will take forever!” Or the deep breath the woman beside me would gulp as she clasped onto the seat in front of her when we reached the much-dreaded wadi el-nar (the valley of fire), a small two-way road that wrapped around a mountain dizzyingly a few miles away from Bethlehem. As we reached the top, the pristinely paved settler-only highway (road 60 via Jerusalem) was in full slight below us, as we twisted around and around the USAID-funded routes Palestinians with West Bank IDs were forced to take instead. I knew that the now-nauseous woman beside me understood how the body experienced space and time in tandem just as much as the Palestinian intellectuals who borrowed a neologism from the Arab Maghreb,
namely zamakaniya, or time-space \(^4\) (Wick, 2011: 25). On the way back from Hebron, we hit mad traffic. I lost track of how much time we had spent inching past “prisoner’s square”, barely moving, waiting.

The temporal dimensions of individuation under closure since Oslo—the waiting—beckons the question of how Israel’s post-Intifada securitization and confinement has changed the way people wait. Palestine, as the green capped man’s keys of return reminds us, has been a story of waiting from the beginning; waiting always been part of the experience of occupation. In her piece *Waiting for Palestine*, Ilana Feldman (2008) traces the wait for meaningful sovereignty and recognized citizenship in the yet-to-be nation of Palestine since the Mandate era and the British imposing of the Westphalian state system into Ottoman territory after World War I; though Feldman focuses her analysis of the “waiting for” during the Egyptian occupation of Gaza between 1948 and 1956 and 1956 and 1967. The ‘waiting for’ that Feldman writes about is situated in the period after the Nakba marking indigenous people’s wait to return to the homes they were displaced from; a wait that became more and more skeptical as decades passed. All the while, following the Nakba, Palestinians’ mobility became severely restricted whether in cities or refugee camps chartered by the UN in the West Bank and Gaza, or camps and cities in other countries. Yet again time-space was recharted beneath people’s feet in 1967 for the ensuing first 20 years of what can be called “open occupation” (Wick, 2011: 28). During this period, Israel reopened historical Palestine to Gazans and some West Bankers, freeing them from previously instated internal barriers; though this move was accompanied by closures that made it difficult Palestinians to travel to and from other Arab countries (Wick, 2011: 28). Within this opened up internal mobility, Palestinians experienced security-based measures up to the Oslo years as unusual interruptions from the norm. Though after people became accustomed to this internal

\(^4\) In my writing of this section, I also drew on Jon May and Nigel Thrift’s (2003) elaboration of the concept of timespace duality in their edited volume *Timepace: Geographies of Temporality*. 

mobility, they were jolted by its permanent withdrawal when Israel enacted permanent closures on Gaza, Jerusalem, and between areas of the West Bank, villages, and refugee camps in the years following the Oslo accords to prevent the borders of a Palestinian entity that may have emerged. After the Second Intifada, the sporadic disruptions of the open occupation years became the norm, beckoning a permanent state of exception, to use a perhaps over-used Agambian concept. The permanence of the Oslo closures became concretized by the separation wall as well as other ubiquitous confinement technologies which were used in increasingly violent, frequent ways. With each of these turns, during the ‘open occupation’ following the Naksa and the violent closures following the Oslo period, I argue that Feldman’s “waiting for” took on new dimensions; and that the way Palestinians experienced time-space shifted to ultimately empty Feldman’s ‘waiting for’ of its meaning; so that in the post post-Oslo moment following the Second Intifada, waiting in Palestine has become a temporality of ‘waiting to wait.’

LIVING UNDER SETTLER-DISENGAGEMENT: THE ERA OF ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

The violently escalated closure systems following the Second Intifada particular to the contemporary global moment at large: crisis as ordinary. Sporadic as norm stitched itself into the everyday rhythm of going to work if you had a job, giving birth, visiting family members in other towns or villages, going on vacation, applying for a permit to go to the beach. Each of these ordinary activities were interweaved with unpredictability more heightened than ever before, disrupting people’s ability to expect when they will arrive to the hospital, if they will make their flight from Queen Alia Airport across the border in Jordan on time to catch their flight, or if they will be able to spend Eid holiday on the beach this year. Irene Calis (2017: 66) captures this post-Oslo temporality emerging
with the construction of the wall during the Second Intifada “a state of doubleness of social being,” vis-à-vis Michael Taussig: “in which one moves in bursts between somehow accepting the situation as normal only to be thrown into a panic or shocked into disorientation at any moment; living under constant threat of consistent yet unpredictable disruption” (Calis, 2017:66).

Similarly, the predictability of everyday life during prison sentences (with defined periods based on charges) was also disrupted by Israel’s accelerated use of administrative detention (based on secret information without charge or trial) ever since the First Intifada onwards. Up until 1989, if Israel decided to use administrative detention to incarcerate Palestinians, it was obliged by law to come to that decision through a military trial held within 96 hours of the person’s arrest. Such were the terms of the policy, as inherited by the emergency regulations of the British Mandate which was the first to introduce administrative detention to historic Palestine before Israeli forces inherited and developed the policy to facilitate its occupation. But at the beginning of the First Intifada, as a young Military Judge Ilan Katz explained, the inherited legal system—with its 96-hour court requirement—“was helpless. . . It reminded me of the little Dutch boy, with his finger in the hole in the dike; the hole that keeps getting bigger. You put your finger in, you finish 20 cases, and they tell you there are 200 more detainees (Alexandrowicz, 2012, 51:51). The judge was not exaggerating. Since 1987 and throughout the mass uprisings, Israel arrested fifty thousand Palestinians in such a short period; time and space made court cases physically impossible, which one lawyer tried to manipulate while defending three Palestinians from Gaza. The three detainees had been kept by the IDF in prison for over a week despite not being taken to court after the 96-hour limit. Military Judge, Jonahtan Livny, who presided over the case recalled that he had to release them “as the law dictated” (Alexandrowicz, 2012, 55:00). However, upon doing so, Livny explains, he realized that “in desperate times, we should change the law” (Alexandrowicz, 2012, 55:00). Thus the Israeli military court, without bothering with the façade of parliamentary debate, issued a military order that both (a) removed the 96 hour limit and
(b) did away with the requirement of administrative detainees to be brought to trial altogether. “If a detainee wanted a trial, he could request one,” Livny paraphrases” (Alexandrowicz, 2012, 55:30) what amounted to an Agambian (1998) moment of total upheaval of the law under the guise of ‘exceptional circumstances’ that would, with time, make such an exception the rule.

Ever since, Israel has continued to use administrative detention, to detain Palestinians under secret evidence without charge or trial—especially amidst Israel’s crackdowns on Palestinian civil society at large, during times of organized resistance and unrest. Thus, after the number of detention orders had dwindled after the First Intifada with as little as 34 detainees in Israeli prisons in December of 2001, by January of 2003 Israel had detained over 1000 more Palestinians without charge or trial (see figure 1). The number of Palestinian administrative detainees would never fall back to its pre-Second Intifada lows. Well after the Second Intifada, Israel continued its sustained campaign of detainment between 2005 and 2007 following the Palestinian elections. Due to Hamas’s sweeping victories, which caught Israel and the US by surprise, Israel used administrative detention to keep party members and other influential figures from becoming powerful. This crackdown continued, throughout and following the US-backed civil war in Gaza between Fatah and Hamas to undermine and overthrow the national unity government between the two parties. Though Israeli military court detention orders began to decrease after 2009, they never returned to the pre-intifada levels. Moreover, after a collective hunger strike against detention in 2014, Israel issued more than 300 detention orders

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5 The Israeli military commander issues administrative detention orders based on article 285 of military order 165.

6 The number of Palestinian administrative detainees held by Israel remained stable at approximately 765 detainees (See Figure 1).
within a few weeks, as if to emphasize the hunger-striker’s defeat and to underscore that administrative detention was not going anywhere anytime soon.

**Figure 1**
**Administrative Detention in Numbers**

“Total number of administrative detainees in Israeli custody at the beginning of the month since January 2001 until February 2016. Statistics are based on reports from the Israeli Prison Service, via B’Tselem, and on Addameer documentation” (Addameer, 2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
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<th>Apr</th>
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<td>2004</td>
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To this day, Israel continues to use the policy both as a form of collective punishment as well as targeted pressure against journalists, members of political parties (all of which Israel has banned), prisoners’ family members, or prominent public figures. To facilitate arresting people for such political ends, administrative detention does away with the necessity of charges, trumped up or otherwise, altogether, making intelligence officers’ jobs much easier. In fact, it is Israeli intelligence that determines whom will be detained and for how long. The military judges become puppet figures with little authority, merely confirming and signing detention and renewal orders that reach them. Though according to Israeli military order 1651, an administrative detention order cannot exceed more than six months, the order is renewable indefinitely—which pushes detainees and their families into an unpredictable cycle of waiting for release. “When your six months are up,” Diaa at the Addameer office reflected on his year in detention, “you don’t know if you will be released or if your detention will be renewed. You’re in that middle place.”

Thus, to theorize detention (and hunger-strikes against it) is to theorize release—and what distinguishes the endless wait for it. For even prison sentences imply a wait; but they come with a count-down. The detainee is deprived of one—of something to look forward to, to prepare for, to unfold an everyday rhythm between today and tomorrow. Rather, due to the always present possibility of 6-month renewals, detainees and their families live in perpetual limbo. Almost every former detainee, hunger-striker, or their family members whom I spoke to while in Palestine iterated that this was what distinguished administrative detention from prison sentences: the uncertainty and arbitrariness of their waiting—not knowing when they were waiting for. This uncertainty inscribed itself into daily lives, such as that of Mohamed Abu Sakha's mother, for example, who had cooked up
a feast of her son’s favorite food on the day of his scheduled release, only to have to pack it up and stuff it into the freezer when she caught wind of his detention being renewed. A former detainee whom I spoke to, Diaa Hroubi, recounted his own experience with this destabilization of time and lack of control over it caused by the state's "blowing hot and cold, raising expectations and then mutely crushing them" (Auyero, 2012: 74). Hroubi (Addameer, 2016b) recalled:

With administrative detention, you know nothing. The administrative detention order was set to end, but a day before Eid they renewed it. It was not easy for my family or for me. It was psychologically devastating. I had somebody with me who was in prison for 14 years who said to me that he was in a better position than me because at least he knew the date of his release, but I didn’t. I was psychologically unstable.

Though in the case of Bilal Kayed, the distinction between prison sentences and detention orders that Diaa spoke to became blurred. When the military court transmuted Bilal's 14.5-year prison sentence to administrative detention on the day of his scheduled release, his count-down to June of 2017 was suspended indefinitely. As Falastine emphasized to Iyad in the office, Bilal's case was important since it implied the threat of a precedent: Israeli military courts’ proclivity to transmute any other prisoner’s sentences into a detention order. Not only could anyone outside of prison become detained without any charge or trial. Even within prison, all inmates could become detainees, forced to watch their release dates dissolve into open-ended renewals.

WAITING TO WAIT: GAZIFICATON OF TIME-SPACE

That Bilal and his mother, brother, and sisters who had counted down the 14.5 years to his release became obliged to wait yet again, and this time open-endedly, is an effect of power—one that Javier Auyero (2012) explains is integral to domination. In his book, Patients of the State, Javier Auyero
(2012: 25), quotes Bourdieu: “making people wait . . . delaying without destroying hope” is part of the domination. In Auyero’s ethnography, he describes how the state in Argentina dominates the urban poor by injecting uncertain and arbitrary waiting periods into their daily encounters with state bureaucrats: while receiving welfare benefits in Buenos Aires, applying for a national ID, or seeking public housing benefits. Auyero recounts the story of one particular waiter, a mother, who would wake up in the middle of the night to take a train, bus, and then walk with her children to the ID office where they wait for hours for the office’s unpredictable opening time; only to be turned away when she finally got in, for missing a stamp no one had told her about before. She would have to come back another day after receiving the stamp—which would require taking several additional days off work. Repeated stories of this sort, testing people’s ability to wait—to become patients of the state—stretches people’s limits to such extremes, animates the central question of Auyero’s ethnography: Why do people put up with all this waiting? Why do waiters, particularly the urban poor, remain patient? Granted, to think with hunger-striking ultimately requires flipping Auyero’s question on its head—precisely since Palestinian hunger-strikers undermine its very premise: they refuse to wait on the state. Nonetheless, Auyero’s question warrants unpacking before subverting it.

Auyero (2012:7), by working through a framework that the why of waiting is in the “how,” argues that the frequent interactions between the poor and street-level bureaucrats are "daily crash courses in the workings of power." Auyero (2012:7) argues that these encounters "teach political lessons that contribute to [their] political expectations." That through patience, waiters might eventually benefit from the state’s benevolence. In other words, the state produces waiting subjects—not through extra-ordinary moments of repression, but by repeatedly forcing its patients to endure waiting in their mundane encounters with street-level bureaucrats. People wait, sometimes forming their own lines, because they’ve become used to waiting. It becomes expected, almost second nature, that when one reaches a government office to issue an ID card, they will stand in line, deal with
arbitrary closing/opening times, and perhaps albeit grimly have to navigate new rules and obtain new documents that suddenly became required.

The arbitrariness and uncertainty that the urban poor must endure to receive government services in Argentina is representative of the contemporary moment at large—or the conditions of permanent crisis we live in. This perpetual crisis, Ghassan Hage writes (2009: 97) in his edited volume *Waiting*, has led to a proliferation and intensification of a sense of “stuckedness” which he elaborates (2009: 104) is a form of social and existential immobility that people experience when the queue stalls:

“They are no longer going somewhere, now ‘stuck’ in the queue.” Just as Auyero is concerned with asking what makes the urban poor in Argentina wait, Hage (2009: 97) examines the process whereby “stuckedness in crisis’ has become transformed into an endurance test—of waiting it out.7 Waiting becomes glorified as the practice of the good citizen—which Hage (2009: 99) calls “the heroism of the stuck.” This glorification, not of what one can create or achieve, but of ones’ “capacity to stick it out and ‘get stuck well’” has become normalized as the default mode of being a good citizen (Hage, 2009: 100). Hage (2009: 104-105) elaborates:

What we have is a new form of governmentality that invites and indeed valorizes self-control in times of crisis. Today, I go on the plane and I am told that there is always a possibility of a ‘crisis’ and I need to be prepared, know about oxygen masks, . . . so that if a crisis comes I am prepared to self-govern myself even in such demanding times. Even when possibly

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7 In writing on the racist attitude of white Australians towards immigrants and ethnic minorities, Hage points out that the former experiences ‘mobility envy’ against the latter who appears unwilling to be part of the hero-ified “community of the stuck.”
facing death I should learn to act in an orderly fashion. Here, queuing even in the midst of disaster is understood as something one has to do.

In an age of perpetual crisis, it is not a coincidence new forms of governmentality have exalted waiting through it all—whether the crippling consequences of economic recessions, wars, fracking earthquakes, climate change storms, and so forth. With such disruptions happening at an ever-increasing, almost constant, rate, governments have focused on encouraging us to adopt restraint, self-control, and self-government: To wait out, rather than revolt against, unbearable conditions (Hage:102). The more one is capable of enduring a crisis, the more of a good citizen one is (Hage: 104).

Waiting in Palestine after Oslo is no exception to this global shift of hero-ifying the stuck as a new mode of governmentality. However, waiting in the West Bank, Gaza, or East Jerusalem, does take on situated forms: Waiting in Palestine, after all, has always been waiting for Palestine. The two cannot be divorced from one another. In “Waiting for Palestine,” Illana Feldman (2008: 447) explains how the wait for unqualified and meaningful sovereignty has shaped Palestinian life in profound ways. In her writing about Gaza under the Egyptian administration (1948-1967), Feldman details how Palestinians have always had to negotiate the future state—that is always yet to come—with their existing needs. The compromise Gazans reached, according to Feldman, meshed their expectations of a future ‘Palestine’ with a refracted form of citizenship. In other words, though this form of latent citizenship was not tethered to the legal configuration of a present-day nation-state, it nonetheless enabled people to make demands of the Egyptian administration without letting go of their desire for a future Palestine. This is a different take on waiting than Auyero or sometimes Hage’s focus on governmentality offer. Rather than the rendered image of an automaton passively queuing for the state, Feldman’s analysis gives life to the active forms of waiting that Gazans created through their experiential (albeit never legally sanctified) modes of citizenship. The passive waiter is made active.
Palestinians have not been queuing their lives away. But it does become important to extend Feldman’s analysis to ways of waiting—both passive and active—in Palestine following Oslo and the Second Intifada. For much like the awaited bus Hage references through his engagement with Sartre and Badiou—the bus which never seems to come—Oslo has so severely constrained the notion of a Palestine that is sovereign through a nation-state configuration, almost to the point of it being fictional.

The wait for the Palestine that never seems to come coupled with an environment of constant crisis has burdened Palestinians with a different mode of waiting than that of the mandate era or the period directly following it, which was the scope of Feldman’s analysis. Though this always two-fold waiting for and waiting in Palestine is as old as the Mandate’s inception, there is still something to be said about the way in which Palestinian experiences of waiting has changed following Oslo, but especially after the Second Intifada. This is where paying particular attention to the Gaza disengagement plan becomes crucial. In passing, Feldman (2008:448) references a ruling by the Jerusalem District Court which stated that “the Palestinian Authority fulfills the criterions to be legally considered as a state.” This ruling was issued in response to an Israeli plaintiff trying to get the court “to enforce a civil judgement against a Palestinian in the territories. The court’s decision effectively denied the plaintiff’s request ruling that Israeli law could not be enforced in territories under PA sovereignty” (Feldman 2008: 448). This ruling, according to Feldman, seems to reference a vision of Palestinian sovereignty brought into being with the Gaza disengagement plan: when Israeli settlers and soldiers were forcibly evicted from Gaza and four West Bank settlements in 2005 in order to vest the PA with responsibility to govern the West Bank and entire Gaza strip. At the moment, it seemed that the PA which supposedly consisted of “population, territory and government, would accumulate other aspects of a sovereign state, such as elected political authorities, international standing, police force, independent currency, [to] increasingly resemble a political entity” (Feldman, 2008: 447). Such
justification by the Jerusalem District Court was not, as Feldman (2008: 448) notes, a naïve outlook on the incredible constraints on the PA’s actual ability to accumulate characteristics of formal sovereignty, but rather demarcating the perimeters of a territory from which Israel would disengage—that is, absolve itself from the responsibility to manage civilian affairs.

Hani Sayed (2014: 87) picks up where Feldman leaves off, by exploring the implications of such a ruling—with its rootedness in the Gaza disengagement plan of 2005—to Israel’s contemporary spatial-temporal mode of governing, or what he terms "the Gaza-ification of the Occupation." Sayed (2014: 87) writes:

The Gaza disengagement plan in 2005 is not a policy unique to Gaza, but the template for a new mode of Israeli control of the Palestinians structured around the separation between military control and governance of people . . . [and] understood by the political and military establishment in Israel as final rather than a transitory arrangement awaiting the outcome of the peace process.

In other words, Sayed (2014) argues that with the signing of the Oslo Accords, Israel had inscribed its future disengagement not only from Gaza, but the Occupied Palestinian territories altogether including the West Bank. In that sense, the officiation of this disengagement through the Gaza disengagement plan was symbolic of Israel’s shift in its mode of governmentality since the Oslo Accords. Since the 1993 agreement, Sayed argues, Israel could no longer be deemed an occupying power. That would imply the duty to govern inscribed in Article 43 of Hague relations—which Israel has practically absolved itself from by adopting a mode of governing to one of exerting effective control when needed—without acknowledging any responsibilities to “govern” i.e. mediate socio-political issues (2014:119). Sayed calls this mode of governmentality one of "disengagement" or “Gaza-ification” represented by the Gaza disengagement plan in 2005. This new mode of governing since Oslo—of which the PA is a crucial player— absolves Israel of its legal duty to provide social-political
services. Through the Gaza disengagement plan followed by the division of Gaza and the West Bank after the 2006 elections, Israel has isolated the Gaza strip in its entirety into an open-air prison through a siege and multiple wars. As a result, access to the most basic of needs like reliable electricity are much more dire in Gaza. Yet, as Sayed argues, the mode of governing inscribed in Israel’s disengagement in 2005 is not altogether separate from its approach to occupying the West Bank. Gazafication in the West Bank, as Sayed writes, facilitates Israel’s ability to isolate the cities into heavily-populated concentrations that are cut off from one another. All the while, Israel has shifted towards maintaining peace negotiations as the final solution; negotiations are an end not a means. After exceeding the amount of land Israel could annex through massive settlements, Sayed (2014: 92) describes a shift towards managing the fragmented Palestinian populated areas in the West Bank, or rather the “residual curiosa in an Israeli landscape” as he quotes Lagerquis, through a policy of disengaged containment. These institutional re-arrangements were marred with an excess rather than absence of law, as Laleh Khalili (2013) would agree, especially those contained in the Oslo Accords according to Sayed. The latter, with the introduction of the PA shifted the relationship of an occupying power with responsibilities to manage and oversee affairs in occupied territory, to one of disengagement – which in the long run simply solidifies the death of the two-state solution.

One could say that the process of waiting for (Palestine, recognized citizenship, release from prison) in this way becomes re-inscribed through Israel’s shifted governmentality towards one of waiting to wait. There is no more waiting for a peace process. No more desperately awaited negotiations. The latter are simply ways of disguising disengagement from the West Bank (or rather, what’s left of it) which Israel seeks to neglect while retaining the upper hand. Former hunger-striker Mohamed al-Qiq (personal interview, August 2016) seemed to summarize Sayed’s theory of disengagement from the residues of the West Bank, while explaining his take on the policy of administrative detention to me:
So, it’s like walking into a kitchen and seeing that it is such a mess with so many problems and so what do you do? You close the kitchen door and go home. . . and as such, even if [the intelligence officer] hasn’t been surveying someone extensively they can simply arrest and throw him into detention. Why? So that the officer doesn’t have to think or tire himself. [Israel] is saying, I don’t want to tire myself to put him in jail [by finding a charge]. This is administrative detention. It is a lazy and stupid, temperament [of Israel] that nonetheless pressures the region.

In a way, closing the kitchen door, becomes an apt metaphor for the disengaged Gaza-fication of Israel’s governmentality. It pushes us to think of administrative detention not only within the context of Israeli prisons but as a mode of governance altogether; to think of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem in the contemporary moment not as territories under occupation, but under administrative detention—waiting to wait. Centering this shift in governance in analyses of the hunger strikes is paramount to unpacking the potentialities at stake when hunger strikers refuse to wait. In order to theorize refusal, one must ground their analysis in an engaged legal and political analysis of what is being refused. That is why this thesis will continuously draw on Sayed’s legal analysis to refer to the West Bank, Gaza strip, as well as East Jerusalem not simply as occupied territories; but as territories under Israel’s new regime of settler-disengagement.

REFUSING TO WAIT

The new category of “freedom strikes,” that Khader Adnan assigned to individual hunger strikes against detention, warrants careful engagement. There is so much to unpack in such a distinction, in its juxtaposition against the imagination of a “collective” hunger strikes, and its contrast from the latter’s demanding of better prison conditions (which people refer to as *iddrabat matlabeya* or
demands-based strikes) or changes in policies (which people refer to as ʿḍrabat siyasiya or political strikes). Granted, Khader was not the first to strike against his own administrative detention. Khader was preceded by at least a few others. But none of these earlier strikes came anywhere close to garnering the wide-spread support and attention that Khader’s did in 2011. Something about the assemblage that formed then and there inspired a string of additional detainees to embark on their own individual hunger-strikes—so much so that when you mention individual strikes to anyone following Palestinian prisoners’ affairs, they almost always nod with a reference to administrative detention. “Hunger-strikes are the talk of the hour!” the wife of recently released former prisoner, Yassin Abu Khedair, affirmed to me once over Saturday lunch in her living room. Indeed, whether at hunger-strike solidarity events or youth groups lectures and discussions, many Palestinians are steeped in sometimes heated debates about the emergence of individual strikes as a predominant mode of struggle in the past few years. One of these events was hosted by a PFLP-leaning youth group, called Nabd, where Mohamed al-Qiq sat on a panel with Abdul Razeq Farraj who had participated in a collective strike against administrative detention in 2014.

The situating of the two on a panel to discuss

What is unique about the 2014 strike, is that it was a collective strike including over 100 Palestinian prisoners mostly from Hamas and the PFLP striking collectively against administrative detention. This reveals an interesting relationship between the individual strikes and its reconfiguring of what a collective strike can look like and what it can demand. 2014 departed from the hitherto model of collective strikes like that of 2012, 2004, and the First-Intifada era strikes which demanded improved prison conditions and involved wide-spread participation in the thousands. Instead, this strike demanded an end to the practice of renewing administrative detention; or in other words stripping detention from the temporal liminality—embedded in the possibility of renewal—characteristic to it.
“different perspectives” already points to a contrast that is being suggested— between the individual and the collective; between conditions or policy-based or needs-based demands and demanding one’s freedom. In many ways, these debates, encapsulated in the youth group panel is what permeated the everyday conversations in my fieldwork, and it is where this thesis will depart.

Here the anthropological literature on refusal, specifically as it situates itself in relation to resistance, becomes a relevant toolbox to unpack these debates. That is, in order to think not only with Khader of Islamic Jihad, but also Abdel Razeq Farraj of the PFLP, and the several other hunger-strikers, former prisoners, and their families whom I spoke to from across the political spectrum in Palestine, the distinction between refusal and resistance helps us sift through the different arguments being made: about what a hunger-strike should represent, embody, and ‘effectively’ do. Or quite simply: what makes a hunger-strike ‘proper’ to different people engaged in Palestinian prisoners’ affairs. For example, Many PFLP members whom I spoke to, blamed individual strikes for ‘raising the ceiling’ of hunger-strike durations—from an average of less than 30 days during the collective strikes up until 2004 to at least 70, sometimes 90 or longer since Khader’s individual strike in 2011. So, the argument would continue, not only do individual strikes only achieve individual gains (of ending one’s detention). The process itself, due to having one rather than hundreds of bodies on strike, stretches out the normalized timeline of hunger-striking, which in turns stretches the bodies of future hunger-strikes to incredible limits, oftentimes well beyond the boundary of possible death (day 65 when cardiac collapse can occur at any moment).

Though people like Khader (personal interview, September 2016) would agree their individual strikes did indeed forge a different relationship to time—strikes that are especially prone to be drawn out—they would argue that it is not simply because of the individuality of the strikes, but also because of what the strikes are targeting:
A lot of people are saying that Khader Adnan raised the ceiling of hunger-strikes which was about 20 or 30 days before. But Khader went on strike for much longer so he gave the green light to the occupation that one can persevere so they may not acknowledge his strike during the first few days. Yes, they did not give me my freedom until after 65 days. . . But, here we compare the hunger-strike to improve conditions of life which differs from the hunger-strike for freedom. A freedom strike is a strike to break and end abolish detention altogether. It is not a strike for a telephone, or a mattress, or food, books, or visits. This strike breaks. It breaks the prison authorities. It breaks the occupation. So, it is extremely harsh and the price is high—but so are its fulfillments.

What Khader is theorizing here, is a distinction between the kind of political space forged by mat'laby strikes, as many Palestinians label them, as opposed to strikes against administrative detention, which some label as siyasy or “individual.

It is interesting to note how the distinction between mat'laby and siyasy strikes that resurfaced into public discourse with Khader’s strike in 2011, was also resurfacing in other contexts like Cairo. In Cairo, the political strike was the one that demanded large-scale changes—in regime or governments or work-place administrations—while mat'laby was used to refer to protests in front of government buildings demanding specific services. During 2011, the siyasy strike was discussed and planned for more enthusiastically, just as the strikes against administrative detention which some Palestinians deemed as siyasy (political) strikes were becoming predominant. Bringing up similar distinctions between mat'laby and siyasy modes of struggle and the increased tendency to resort to the latter in both Cairo and Palestine, implies that this thesis speaks to more than just a revisiting of the political—what it entails and how it should be practiced—in Palestine alone. Future research projects can connect it to the revisiting and reconfiguration of the “political” and its relationship to collectivity in Palestine, Cairo, as well as other locales that charted the 2011s into the global moment it was.
In many ways, the distinction between *maṭlaby* and *siyasy* is a contrast similar to that anthropologists draw when comparing acts of resistance and refusal. Distinguishing between resistance and refusal, in theory, often centers around the former’s parasitic relationship to that which it resists—that weekly protests at Bil’in or Nil’in⁹, for example, would become meaningless without the ensuing confrontation with the Israeli Defense Forces and subsequent arrests. Similarly, *maṭlaby* hunger-strikes for improving conditions of imprisonment are predicated upon prisoners’ very existence in jails and detention centers. Refusal, on the other hand, bypasses this parasitic relationship to forge new spaces of politics altogether—spaces that offer themselves as sites of transformation where new alternatives of relating to time and space can be carved out. Alternatives that *break* as Khader put it; that *break* from the prison authorities; that *break from* the existing configuration of Israeli-PA sovereignty. In this sense one can tease out theorizations of different modes of hunger-striking; in the already widespread distinctions between *maṭlaby* and *siyasy* strikes; and perhaps even more explicitly in Khader’s giving strikes against detention their own label, apart from other *siyasy* strikes: “These are freedom strikes!”

Theorizing freedom strikes as refusal-strikes is, in some sense, a divergence from the standard take on refusal and resistance. Unlike resistance, refusal is sometimes attributed for its lack of confrontation (Weiss, 2016); a modality of action that subverts state and social control but without a loud-speaker announcement. Just doing it without a fuss, almost to the point of imperceptibility. The writings of Dimitris Papadopoulos et al (2008) on *Escape Routes*, becomes relevant. For escape routes, as he writes, are modes of action stitched into one’s daily activities out of a need for survival. Their subtleness is inscribed in their everydayness. Like the Palestinians who live on lands designated as

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⁹ These are villages where Palestinian activists hold weekly marches on Friday in protest of Israeli settlements and the separation wall
Area C, but continue to live in their homes and build clinics, schools or plant and harvest crops anyways. Knowing it could all possibly be demolished at any moment; but staying put and constructing out of a need to sustain one’s survival: ‘Housing is unavailable elsewhere, so I will keep living and building here’ (Hayes, 2012).

The emphasis on the everyday helped push contemporary theory away from an understanding of revolution in the capital ‘R’ sense to instead think through actions usually taken for granted. That sustaining everydayness can involve disrupting its internal logic was not intuitive to academe when contemporary scholarship first theorized the concept. But this is precisely the type of thinking everyday theory encourages us to probe: how the everyday can be transformative and offer escape, as Papadopoulos might say. Nasser Abourahme (2012:453) argues that to this day, not enough attention has been paid to the everyday; that “most scholarship on Palestine remains caught up in reductive binaries of violence versus resistance and heavily reliant on rigid and aggregated categories, the bulk of it unable to capture entire assemblages of action . . . that inflect so much of contemporary quotidian life.” Theorizing the everyday remains a theoretical invite to disrupt event-based narratives of histories, in which transformations are marked by the extra-ordinary. Rather, Papadopoulos et al (2008) continue, mundane actions taken out of the pure necessity for survival can carve out “escape routes” towards new spaces that can generate transformations.

This invitation hit a chord, with many theorists moving to explore how extra-ordinary events are always rooted in ordinary acts; or, as social movement theorist Raul Zebiche (2011) put it, in the revolving of a zumbayllu (spinning top): over and over around its axis, until gradually having spun and moved a considerable lateral distance. The double movement of the zumbayllu, has in different terms, been theorized as the revolutionary lateral movement embedded in the processual axial movement from today to tomorrow. Situating the zumbayllu in Palestine helps cultivate a sensibility to perceive quotidian escapes: building neighborhood roads and facilities when the PA and Israeli government
don’t; tucking the neighbor’s son into bed with your children when the IDF is looking for them in Dheisheh refugee camp; nonchalantly flipping through TV channels when another man jumps into your living room and sits next to your mother, and understanding why when the military quickly swoops in and out during a night-raid, looking up and back at the TV screen with your mom as if this stranger was family—and resuming your day at any rate.

The zumbayllu of escape routes introduce rich lens for theorizing different modalities of struggle. Though, I do depart from some scholars’ emphasis on the mundaneness of everyday. It solidifies and generalizes the mundane as the everyday and the extraordinary as the event, reverting back to binaries that as Abourahme (2011) noted overlook or misunderstand in-between examples that don’t quite fit. Some literature on refusal and resistance, including the work of Elisabeth Weiss (2016) among others, also falls into this trap of binaries. In line with the general distinction made between resistance and refusal, Weiss takes the example of military conscription in Israel. She argues that public objectors – those who ‘make a show’ out of their objection—inevitably fall into ‘resistance traps’: the necessity to engage with the state on its terms and eventually being coopted by it. Public objectors, according to Weiss, fall into the trap of the very conscription they were evading; once they are put into military uniform and sent to a sentencing officer, they become ensnared into the state projected. Public objectors are conscripted into recognizing the authority of the state they were attempting to defy, even if they do not end up serving in the military. “Much as in quicksand, when operating on the state’s terms, the harder you struggle, the deeper you sink. It is this trap that silent refusal avoids, revealing abstention to be a more radical alternative to resistance” (Weiss, 2016: 355).

Silent and abstentive refusal, in Weiss’s eyes, is embodied by the citizens of Israel who evade service without ever formally declaring their refusal; they simply do not respond to the repeatedly mailed draft forms. This “calculated passivity” according to Weiss is a no that generates a yes by investing in possibilities that evade, rather than confront, the state project altogether. Silence affirms that there are
still places “the state cannot reach.” It refuses to confront, and inevitably to invest, in the state and its logic.

But one thing Weiss leaves unexamined is how silence can also be an investment in the existing state of things—especially in the context of the Israeli state where she equates being jailed with being conscripted to the military but refuses to problematize how the silence of non-indigenous citizens of Israel complies with settlerism. More fundamentally, Weiss stretches her refusal-resistance binary to its limits in such a way that illustrates how the focus on confrontation or the lack of it is irrelevant, or at least not all-encompassing. Perhaps Weiss’s most protruding blind spot is highlighted when she advocates for silent refusal, as opposed to public resistance, through her argument that resistance in the public sphere is reserved for elites. Though, at the outset, this may sound like a productive theorization of respectability politics, it overlooks domains of privilege many Palestinians are not privy to. To argue against Habermas’s depiction of the public sphere as a democratic utopia for discussing national affair, Weiss recounts a story of young adults who publicly refused military service for Israel; after which only the boys were jailed. The girls were simply dismissed. Based on this example, Weiss argues (357) that “even in dissent, the public sphere is only available to the state’s most hegemonic citizens.” Though that certainly is not untrue (Palestinians with Israeli citizenship are exempted from the military draft and precluded from the ability to publically refuse as well) implying that silent refusal is somehow more inclusive is just as flawed.

By focusing on silent refusal that avoids confrontation, Weiss and other who theorize refusal as such, ignore how in some instances silent abstention can also be a sphere for the elite. In the total institution of the prison, for instance, constant surveillance makes the distinction between public resistance and private refusal irrelevant. If Israelis are afforded the privilege of not having to confront the state when they don’t respond to draft mail, Palestinians are not offered that option when waking up to an officer’s role call in a prison cell, or crossing from the West Bank to Jerusalem at Qalandiya.
checkpoint. That is why I don’t find the focus on so-called non-confrontation in refusal literature to be useful. In the “Theorizing Refusal” issue of Cultural anthropology, for which Weiss was writing, other authors provide examples that illustrate how confrontation is a messy rule of thumb. Carol Mcgranahan (2016) writes about Tibetans who refuse citizenship papers from the states of Nepal or India. In doing so, McGranahan (2016: 336) argues, Tibetans preserve space to maintain their claims to an alternative Tibetan sovereignty and their own state rather than an existing one. It is therefore characteristic of refusal in that it generates alternative ways of relating to governments and borders; it carves out escape routes different possibilities. But at the same time, such refusal though generative isn’t entirely abstentive. Audra Simpson (2014) writes of a similar situation: Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke, a reserve community in what is now southwestern Quebec who refuse Canadian or American citizenship. However, Simpson writes how when people refusing citizenship paperwork attempt to travel, they have to confront and present paperwork or the refusal thereof to authorities at the border. Similarly, Palestinians building their homes and clinics in Area C lands must eventually confront the state when it comes to demolish their neighborhoods.

So instead of theorizing refusal vis-à-vis everyday mundane or non-confrontation (or possibility for cooptation), this thesis will focus on the poiesis of refusal, while recognizing that it always exists in relation to and in enmeshment with resistance. Focusing on poiesis as a concept, is to focus on creation and processes that open up the possibility for new kinds of social organization (Hayes et al, 2012). This gives room to distinguish between different ways of objecting—resistance and refusal—without discounting important forms of refusal that are not totally abstentive or silent. It allows us to think through how freedom strikes against administrative detention are indeed categorically different than striking against prison conditions. The latter is a no that recreates the same fundamental systems that produced it: imprisonment. Freedom strikes, on the other hand, is a no that begets a yes, as McGranahan (2016) puts it, affirming alternative possibilities for the future. In this
way, striking for freedom transforms hunger-strikes from demanding changes within imprisonment to creating possibilities beyond it—in pursuit of creating a life beyond administrative detention.

At the same time, I draw on theories of affect (Gregg & Seigworth, 2014) to emphasize that acts of refusal produce potentialities that embed themselves within subsequent acts of resistance and vice versa. Rather than pitting the two different modalities against each other, affect theory redirects this thesis’s focus to how collective *maṭlaby* strikes in the contemporary moment build on and transform the “ambient irradiations” that each strike leaves behind for continual transformation and becoming (Gregg & Seigworth, 2014: 6). Recognizing that refusal and resistance are enmeshed is the only way to make sense of how Palestinian prisoners organize and struggle. And since prisons are so central to Palestinian life—having impacted the 40% of male Palestinians imprisoned since 1967 (Addameer, 2014)—this enmeshment is important to making sense of the complex assemblages and “dissonant subjectivities” within the contemporary moment in Palestine at large (Abourahme, 2011).

There will always be an element of resistance within refusal and refusal within resistance; *maṭlaby* strike within freedom and individual within collectivity. Sometimes, even refusal can fall into the trap of resistance and become ensnared into the project of the state, of its carceral regimes, or its temporal politics of waiting out administrative detention. I expand on the latter in particular in chapter four, which deals with how the Israeli state uses tactics like force-feeding threats and detention freezing to undermine the incredibly powerful time-space freedom strikes have opened up. I discuss the most common tactic of the state: forcing Palestinian detainees to spend their first six-month detention period in prison even after ending their hunger-strikes against detention. Hunger-strikers, on the verge of death in their 60th, 70th, or sometimes 90th day of hunger, end their strike considering the state’s public agreement not to renew their detention, a victory in itself.

Nonetheless, despite this 6-month waiting period, there is something different about how freedom strikers who refuse administrative detention say no. This always contingent poiesis can be
summarized by Susan Ruddick’s (2010) reference to Deleuze’s scream. In her piece the “Politics of Affect” Ruddick theorizes a mode of escaping that begins with refusing, with screaming. She builds on Deleuze’s scream as a vehicle to escape from cramped spaces of subjugation—from seemingly inescapable confrontation—and to assert new terrains of struggle and possibility. Ruddick (2010: 38-39) argues that the scream itself has uncertain outcomes: it can reinforce the separation from which the scream erupted or offer a moment of alternative becoming. This is important when recognizing the distinguishing acts of poiesis within freedom strikes—carving potentialities beyond the time-space of waiting to wait, and indeed breaking the liminality even if ephemeral when they receive a release date—but nonetheless remaining alert to the ways the Israeli state has attempted to coopt the strikes through force-feeding and other means.
Chapter Two
Freedom in the Becoming: The Bloom-Spaces of Hunger

There is no one fixed line from which the hunger-strike for freedom—the refusal to wait in prison—in contemporary Palestine unfolded. It has been in the becoming, in the affectual doings and undoings of Palestinian hunger-strikes for years; sometimes with faint intensities of backdrop stars in a full-moon sky, other times protruding roundly and fully like the broadness of daylight – but always blooming with possibility. The bloom-spaces of hunger lie in this yet-ness of a body’s doings and undoings; the Spinozist not-yet knowing of how hunger-strikes in the now will affect forward in to the next encounter of hunger-assemblages, “and the next, and the next, and the next” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 2). In order to take this Spinozist reading of the history of Palestinian hunger-strikes to heart, this chapter will not take the binaries of “collective” and “individual” or “matlaby” and “freedom” strikes for granted as structural binaries or opposing poles. Rather, by drawing on affect theory and Roland Barthes’ *The Neutral*, I will replace the yes/no of two distinct categories of hunger-strikes with the plus/minus of elasticity and stretching. In doing so this chapter sketches the incremental and sometimes undulating intensities with which freedom-striking became accentuated within prison politics—and the “stretching” and unfolding of becomings throughout (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 10-11). As such, this chapter seeks to sketch the changeover process from which the freedom strike, and its refusal to wait, gradually infiltrated the realm of the ‘possible’ – with “shimmering gradations of intensities”—and transformed the social imaginary in Palestinian prison politics (Gregg & Seigworth: 11).
OSLO FREEDOM DREAMS: THE VERY FIRST STRIKE FOR ‘FREEDOM’

One cannot theorize the relationship between request strikes that dominated the pre-Oslo year to the more prevalent individual freedom strikes—and their refusal to wait in detention—in the contemporary moment without returning to the interim years of the Oslo Accords. In order to fully understand this change in hunger-striking pre- and post- Oslo and to appreciate why 2004 marked a turning point between the two, this section engages with the interim years of the Oslo period itself. Overlooking the years between 1993-1999 makes any analysis of the contemporary moment superficial. For it is during this period when “the very first strike for freedom,” as my interlocutors phrased it took place. This chapter follows my interlocutors tracing back and forth between the Oslo years and the periods that flanked it in their narration of the history of waiting and hunger-strikes in Palestine. In doing so, I attempt to co-sketch the changeover process from which the freedom strike, whether “individual” or “collective,” gradually infiltrated the realm of the ‘possible’—with “shimmering gradations of intensities”—and transformed the social imaginary around the politics of waiting in prison (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 11). Without tracing the Oslo years, the failure of 2004 appears as a simple byproduct of Israel’s intensified closure technology. And though that is certainly crucial context, it is not all of it. Even before Israel began building the separation wall along the West Bank and installing glass walls within prisons amidst the Second Intifada, prison conditions and prisoners’ subjectivities were affectively and processually reconfiguring one another. The signing of the first Accord in 1993 which created the Fatah-led Palestinian Authorities, signified a particular world-belongingness for the prisoner at the time, which gave rise to a restless subjectivity embodied in a different orientation of hunger-strike in 1996. In the preceding years, though there were 11,000 Palestinian prisoners at the time, the first Oslo Accord completely ignored them. In response, a group of prisoners of the Fatah movement wrote a letter to Yasser Arafat, asking about their place in relation
to the agreement: “How do you forget us when we are your soldiers? It is thanks to us that you are signing this agreement now!” (Murad: Personal Interview, August 2016). As a result of this letter and other acts of protest by the prisoners, the agreement of Cairo in 1995 included an amendment stating that a number of Palestinian prisoners would be released as long as they did not engage in direct combat with Israeli soldiers.

Accordingly, waves of release began, and by 1996 more than 5,000 prisoners had been freed. Though “the prisoners released were mostly from Fatah” which had transitioned from a revolutionary movement to a ruling party with the formation of the PA. Thus, the prisoners who remained, and there were thousands of them, were mostly from factions/movements other than Fatah—most prominently Hamas, which was the largest in size. In the following years, “they would release prisoners as a goodwill gesture during holidays,” Rula Abu Duhou who was a prisoner at the time recounted. “But they didn’t prioritize releasing those who were sick, those with long sentences, and women.” And so, in that year, as the Palestinian leadership geared up for the first legislative elections, 1600 prisoners went on a hunger strike for 20 days to demand their release from prison as the 1995 agreement stipulated. Murad Jadallah (citation) explained:

They were saying, again, we have been forgotten; the first thing international law states is that in the case of entering a peace treaty, prisoners must be exchanged. And when that was not fulfilled the prisoners began entering political hunger strikes that did not have the goal of bettering conditions in prison such as allowing visits and such. But rather a complete release from prison in relation to what the law states.

Demanding complete release from incarceration rather than improved conditions within it fundamentally transformed the potentialities of hunger-striking as a mode of politics. “This was the
very first strike for freedom,” Rula Abu Duhou stated. It was the first time, as far as demands are concerned, that hunger-strikes did not focus on daily life within prison, but rather freedom from it. This was a stark departure from the collective strikes that were the more popular mode of hunger-striking up until the strike of 1992. The demands of the latter centered around improvement of daily life within prison—serving two eggs instead of one for breakfast, putting a stop to strip searches of family members during visits, allowing reading and writing materials to be given to prisoners. While speaking to lawyers, former hunger-strikers, and activists, people would oftentimes refer to these collective strikes for improved prison conditions as “idrabat matlabeja” which can be roughly translated into “request strikes.” The strikes during the Oslo period, people would explain to me, were classified as “idrabat siyasiya” or political strikes. “They began taking on a political nature,” Ahmed Qattamish iterated “and more so to pressure the Palestinian Authorities rather than the occupation” and intervene into the larger configuration of power dynamics that Oslo was creating.

Shortly after the 1600 prisoners went on a hunger-strike demanding freedom in 1996, women behind bars found out that all of them would be released except for five women. “I was one of the five,” Rula Abu Duhou recounted to me one day as we sat in the prisoner’s tent during Bilal Kayed’s strike. The women prisoners, who were around forty or so at the time, decided that either all of them would be released or none of them: “We declared that we would only be released together and embarked on a collective strike for freedom for 16 months,” Abu Duhou went on to explain that they did not embark on an open hunger strike (completely abstaining from food and drink) but rather a series of protests that lasted for 16 months: a hunger strike for limited periods, a strike abstaining from the prison yard; sending letters to international rights groups; their mothers protesting in front of Arafat’s headquarters. At one point, the Israeli authorities attempted to end the strike by forcibly releasing many of the women. But the women defied the attempt and locked themselves into two cells, blocking the prison guards from entering, even as the prison authorities turned and kept the
alarm system on. At the end of it all, as Rula nodded to me, the women succeeded; all of them were freed, shuttled in a bus in the middle of the night and dropped off at the Muqataa (Palestinian Authority headquarters) in Ramallah at 2 am. “It was the first time in history that there were no Palestinian women in prison,” Abu Duhou exclaimed—a collective freedom as a result of an emerging “political strike.”

Within this distinction, the words people use point to a theorization of what counts as political, and what by the same token is normalized and deemed beyond politics. But what I am mainly trying to explore through this thesis is how the ambient irradiation of social relations beginning with the Oslo period gave rise to the composition of a “freedom strike.” By that, I invoke composition in the several senses of the word as “an ontology always coming to formation but also more prosaically as a creative/writerly task (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 11). And I argue, that though the composition is constantly and subtly underway from the Oslo period to this very day, 1996 was a moment when the composition was more seismic. Registering the resonances of composition that vibrated around 1996 and the period that directly followed until 2004 is crucial to grasping how ‘freedom strikes’ became incorporated into the “repertory of actions at the disposal” of Palestinian prisoners; how, social worldings and imaginaries were creatively de and re-membered so as to situate the freedom strike within “the implicit map of social space” in Palestine today (Charles Taylor 2002: 111).

Following the ‘first freedom strikes’ in 1996, thousands of people still found themselves in prison a year later. Yet prisoners, especially those belonging to the Fatah party which signed the accords, were encouraged by the release of some of their fellow inmates; they harbored hope for their own freedom, shuffling into a different mode of waiting—no longer restless in its urgency to assemble and protest on behalf of the collective, but instead modulated by a patience stubborn with cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011). ‘They are releasing people’ Fatah prisoners told themselves, ‘and thus it is a matter of time until my own turn.’ And as such, almost half of the prison population attached itself to
the fantasy of release—patiently and stubbornly so—despite growing indication that the PA formed by the Oslo configuration was unable, and perhaps disinterested, in advocating on behalf of the prisoners who remained. By the end of the Accords period, the composition of freedom—as a restlessness to wait—ebbed almost as swiftly as it had flowed onto the shore. Instead the freedom dreams of some prisoners became scorned by others as obstacles to their flourishing both as individuals and a collective of prisoners. Holding onto the increasingly unachievable desire for release, at least at a comprehensive level that did not exclude non-Fatah prisoners, got in the way of prisoners reverting to the organizing structure before Oslo: to advocate on behalf of one another for better food and facilities and to build the enriching educational spaces central to the prison experience of First Intifada prisoners; in short, to provide opportunities for individuals to make their lives “add up to something,” as Lauren Berlant (2011: 2) puts it. But even as those waiting prisoners began to grasp the shortcomings of the Oslo configuration—its mere posturing as separate entity of power that was actually an extension of the occupation—they simply continued to wait. Their hopeful wait was gradually tempered by gnawing despair, as they desperately hung on to a knowingly dwindling possibility of freedom.

Tracing the affective responses to the realization of Oslo’s pitfalls, as Berlant (2011) encourages us to do, is important to understand the ways prisoner adjusted over time, and reoriented their very approach to ‘doing time’ in prison as the Israel cemented the emerging crises of the post-Oslo and Second Intifada years into the ordinariness of life under occupation. In my fieldwork, my conversations with Oslo period prisoners sought to do just that: trace the affective history of prisoners’ everyday. Doing so repeatedly revealed that it was during the Oslo period that the normalization of prisons through the logic of sacrifice—the hero-ification of prison life as necessary waiting for freedom fighting—began to crack. Rather than normalizing prison sentences as a requisite burden
that revolutionaries must wait out, prisoners began questioning the premise of incarceration to begin with. Ahmed Qattamish (Personal Interview, September 2017), of the PFLP, explained:

There was still the dream to liberate Palestine, and that prison was a necessary tax for many of us who had been imprisoned for revolutionary fighting. But that conviction began to wane among many of the prisoners, for example those of Fatah, who began asking: why are we in prison?? So, there was a longing for release that began to grow stronger and wider; a desire to be freed and rid of one’s imprisonment.

Self-sacrifice for the nation, has always been the utmost marker of devotion to the nation-state, or the dream for it. This is why many prisoners from marginal factions such as the PFLP or the Hamas party would look at Fatah prisoners waiting for release with disdain—one that was compounded with the realization that the Fatah-affiliated Palestinian Authority created by the Oslo Accords amounted to little but coordination with the occupation. Nonetheless this letting go of prison waiting as the price one must pay—even if it was not unanimous, even if it was painted by other prisoners as betrayal and a descent into cruel optimism—represents a significant moment in the always processual sense of momentousness, in the history of Palestinian prisoners: an ongoing (re)introduction of a new subjectivity that no longer normalizes waiting out imprisonment, but longs for freedom from it. A subjectivity that would flicker into constant (re)formation that intersect with al-Qiq’s impetus for hunger-striking against his detention in 2015: “I did not want to wait.”

As the Oslo period came to an end, the skeptical yet stubborn hope for freedom among those who remained in prison was swamped by the influx of the Second Intifada prisoners. As scores of a new generation filled previously emptied sections by the thousands, the First Intifada generation painfully detached from their freedom dreams, in all their cruel optimism, yet the only optimism they
had left: “They were absolutely devastated,” Arafat who was among the younger Second Intifada prisoners recounted. “They were literally waiting for release at any moment according to the Second Oslo Accord in 1995”—only to realize they were waiting for an authority that was incapable or uninterested in freeing them. That loss of hope was only underscored as the prisons filled up around them with the Second Intifada. Needless to say, the concept of a collective strike for freedom seemed ludicrous by 2004. The subjectivity of the prisoner restless for release was devastated and shifted into a complex assemblage: including the first intifada prisoners who resorted back to a waiting that had not only lost its heroic and sacrificial force—a dispirited and resignatory waiting; and there was the just-arrested younger prisoners, ready to translate their revolutionary activity from the Second Intifada into their prison life, carrying off where the pre-Oslo prisoners’ organizing had left off. The former, Arafat recounted, was in no shape to train and organize the latter generation, new to the prison environment. And as detailed in the last chapter, the organized prison committees of the factions and parties from the pre-Oslo were not only literally decades displaced, but were also subject to the extreme repression through Israel’s individuation technologies. This is important context for understanding the odds and crosshatchings within which prisoners organized the *matlaby* hunger-strike in 2004. The demand for freedom that older prisoners had briefly introduced into the repertoire of hunger strikes was no longer discussed as prisoners resorted back to acquiescing to their imprisonment and the waiting it entailed. Instead of striking against the wait they were striking to improve its conditions—which Israel was severely worsening by reneging on previous gains from the *matlaby* strikes in 1992 and before. Yet, when the 2004 strike failed resoundingly, the ensuing crackdown by the IPS compounded the already existing feeling of hopelessness among older prisoners. Even the younger prisoners who had just participated in their first strike only to see it fall apart, gravitated towards the subjectivity of their older counterparts: demoralized and lackluster waiting. With the turn of the millennium, in a little over a decade, prisoners’ orientation around waiting continually
repositioned from waiting as heroic sacrifice before the Oslo Accords, towards a restless and entitled waiting to be released in the Oslo period, which became less emboldened and more dispirited towards the end of the interim years of waiting tempered by cruel optimism, only to be crushed into a waiting stripped of any optimism even in its cruelest forms, and even its former heroism—only lackluster, dispirited, hopeless waiting marked the turn of the century.

STRIPPING THE BODY FROM THE COLLECTIVE: WAITING IN PRISON AFTER THE SECOND INTIFADA

2004 is a year that disrupted; that boiled transitioning policies out from beneath the surface and into full-view; where comparisons of the glorified “pre-Oslo” and the deplored “post-Oslo” periods, common in activist public discourse, materialized and take on palpable forms. Oftentimes, when I would ask people to tell me what they meant by their “you know, after Oslo” comments, they would fast-forward to 2004. “You cannot understand hunger-strikes in Palestine today, without reading about 2004,” countless people advised me on separate occasions, turning me towards books to read and former prisoners to speak to—this is how I came to know Arafat Barghouthi. As plans for the 2004 hunger strike were in the works, Arafat had just been detained for the first time in his life – like many 20-something year olds at the time. He found himself with a group of 60 other young men, who at the heel of the Second Intifada were packed into prison sections that had lounched empty since the First. Ayalon prison sections in the Rimon complex had been closed since Israel’s last wave of mass arrests in 1987. When Arafat and all the others were sent to the section in Ayalon almost two decades later, water dripped from the cracked roof above and spilled out from the leaking pipes below. There was no ventilation whatsoever; only the unbearable stench of sewage; and the caving in
of an era that could no longer contain the next. 1987 could not house 2004. The prison rooms from the First Intifada were uninhabitable by the time of the second. The interim period, especially the Oslo Accords, had torn apart too much. 2004 did not come out of nowhere, Arafat iterated, “It was the piling up of so many things.” The prisoners of the First Intifada, or the few hundred that remained of them, understood these piles. They had been waiting under them for years; waiting as the prison population got smaller and smaller; as they saw several of their life-long comrades leave the prison through the Oslo Accords agreement at Camp David to free them; as they waited for their own freedom that their hope was growing tired for, the freedom that never seemed to come. But then it was 2004. And the First Intifada prisoners were still behind bars. And the slowly emptied prisons, were now filling once again, destroying the older generations dreams for release, and replacing them with the unfamiliar. Even as their freedom dreams were shattered, the First Intifada prisoners were not able to return to the pre-Oslo prison life they had known, and the familiar inmates they had grown fondly of. Instead, they were flooded with new young faces (including Bilal Kayed’s) and, slowly but surely, a new “post-Oslo” prison.

With the end of the interim Oslo period in May 1999, though a “comprehensive peace agreement” was not and as yet to be reached, the Accords did introduce changes that reconfigured power relations in historic Palestine: the interim PLO-led Palestine Authority became permanent with the supposed possibility of ruling a future Palestinian state. At the same time, however, Israel took several measures to undermine any real possibility of meaningful PA sovereignty yet alone a future PA-governed state. As part of the accords, Israel divided up the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C with the latter, which makes up 60% of land in the West Bank, placed exclusively under Israeli military control and depriving any Palestinians from the right to build homes on C lands.

A year later, Israel would carve out even more land from the West Bank by building the separation barrier after the onset of the Second Intifada under the premise of security concerns. The
wall was coupled with a network of checkpoints, watchtowers, and other confinement technologies that concretized the scattered and sporadic security checks of the Oslo years into an increasingly violent and pervasive norm. The violence of these closures became so invasive so quickly that within months, children in East Jerusalem would have to confront it every morning on their way to their schools, which for many, were now on the other side of the separation wall in the West Bank. The reverse trips, for those with West Bank IDs became stalled-subject to difficult-to-obtain permits and security clearances – hampering people from visiting family members who may only live five minutes away across the newly built separation wall or in other West Bank towns separated by unpredictable checkpoints that people prefer to avoid. As a result, Palestinian neighborhood committees—along with their weddings, funerals, political and cultural gatherings—diminished following the Second Intifada (Wick, 2011: 29); and lives at home became incredibly localize. Women who remembered neighborhoods as being “intense and connected” before the enclosures of the Second Intifada, now describe them as “a prison with home as cells” (Wick, 2011: 29). The parallel these women draw is more than metaphorical – which is where this chapter will depart.

In this section, I explore how the individuation of Palestinian neighborhoods and towns caused by the intensified closure Israel put into place beginning in 2000 was mirrored behind prison walls. By coupling my participant observation at Addameer with one-on-one interviews and archival research, I will argue (or rather, reword the argument of the former prisoners whom I spoke to) that only through tracing these changes in Israel’s confinement technologies, by tracing the events of the 2004 hunger-strike, can one come to understand the individual hunger-strikes in the contemporary moments. By exploring how the figure of the individual hunger-striker came to be stripped away from the collective of the pre-Oslo years, I will then argue how this individual body is doing a different kind of work than the thousands of bodies that preceded it -- striking with the general collective for better living conditions up until 1993. I will invite readers to consider how the individual striker has been
revisiting, albeit in different ways, the hope for release that the First Intifada prisoners held onto during the Oslo period; and how, in doing so, her body is reconfiguring the collective that Israel's closure technologies tore apart— into new multitudes with new potentialities for popular struggle in Palestine.

“Why did we go on strike in 2004?” Arafat would ask me rhetorically as we grabbed coffee close to the Addameer office one afternoon. “We went on strike because of the humiliating practices by the prison authorities,” he continued. Walid Daqqa (2009), who has been held in Israeli prisons since 1986, details these practices—and their shift from the First Intifada and Oslo period conditions—in his brief book Sabr el-Wa’ı. (The Melting of Consciousness). Daqqa traces these material transformations of carceral technologies to Yaacov Ganot, who he describes as the engineer of the post-Oslo prison. Ganot was appointed as commissioner of the Israeli Prison Services from 2003 to 2007. Up until then, he had spent several years serving in the Police Border Unit – a tenure for which he was critiqued by Israeli citizens for “imposing a reign of terror and transforming the lives of labor migrants [to Israel] into a hell.” It is perhaps not a coincidence then, that a former Border Police Commander introduced material changes that would individuate and cut apart prisoners from one another. In fact Daqqa contends that the material changes that Ganot introduced were meant to serve this purpose—individuation and the breakup of collective consciousness (hence Daqqa’s book title) that animated the prisoners movement as the First Intifada generation had built it.

Many of the material changes Ganot put into practice were simply retractions of previously earned demands by collective hunger strikes before the Oslo period. As a result of the collective strikes since 1967 up to the First Intifada wave of prisoners, the ensuing years “92 through 98, were the golden [years],” former prisoner and detainees Wisam Rafidi (Personal Interview, August 2016) explained while recounting the different periods he spent in prison:
We used to sleep on blankets, then they brought us condensed-sponge mattresses and we could buy a pillow. Sometimes they would allow your family to bring in shoes during the visits, sometimes food, sometimes even books -- half of my library I read in prison. . . After the 1992 strike, we got hot-plates inside the rooms and the families were allowed to give us vegetables during their visits: za‘atar, marameya. . . that sort of thing; the breakfast the prison itself provided now included vegetables. . . before we would never get vegetables. The kitchens were with us; we secured 45 minute visits with family members, allowing children to come during visits; and visits were every two weeks not once a month like the ICRC has changed it to [a few weeks ago in the summer of 2016]; isolation: there were several people who had been in isolation for more than two years, we canceled their isolation and got them out. In the 1992 strike alone, we achieved about 17 important demands. Then the Oslo period that followed were the golden years . . . But after Oslo, there was a deliberate attack on all of our hard-earned gains. Beginning in 2003-2004, they began attacking what we earned fasm 1992 [and before] and withdrawing all our achievements.

Indeed, by the time Gonot was appointed in 2003 many of the changes the prison authority were beginning to implement were simply reversals of previous gains from the collective hunger-strikes before Oslo. Though the IPS did not take back the mattresses or hot plates in the room along with the ability to purchase food from the prison canteen. On the contrary, the canteen became an increasingly central aspect of prisoners day-to-day, with the IPS periodically increasing the amount of money family members could disburse in prisoners’ canteen account—money which came from the newly formed PA (through the Europe-based aid organizations it is sutured to). The PA funneled the European money to each prisoner’s family on a monthly basis as a rateb (salary) from which they could disburse up to 1300 to 1400 shekels in the prisoner or detainee’s canteen account. And as the IPS revoked previous gains, especially around visit conditions and prisoners’ connection to the outside
world, the prisoners’ reliance on the canteen only increased. According to one Olso period prisoner, Rula Abu Duhou, the Palestinian Authority became a barrier to justice. The small allowances that the PA gives to prisoners, just pays for the prisoners, allowing Israel to jail Palestinians for free.”

From 2000 onwards, the hard-earned right of prisoners to see their family members during visits was compromised by Israel’s introduction of new carceral technologies both within and outside the prison. Just as children’s trips to school were disrupted by the newly built separation wall, so were a multitude of other connections, including those between family members in the West Bank whose loved ones were now incarcerated in prisons on the other side of the separation wall. This compounded the wait for the bimonthly visit that prisoners had went on hunger-strike to secure with another layer of waiting: the wait for permits. Permits to cross the separation wall could be denied and approved arbitrarily—an increasingly common aspect of Israel’s mode of governing, that characterizes waiting in neoliberal times: perpetual uncertainty. Uncertainty marred every step of the visit journey—even after permits are secured; after the oftentimes long trip in the ICRC bus to reach the prison, prison authorities can deny family members their visit at random. Prison authorities’ groundless justifications can be as ridiculous as deciding that a 17-year-old child is now 18; or that only one person, a daughter or son, is allowed to visit, making the other family members who had been waiting to enter the visit now have to wait outside for everyone else to come out, and cross their fingers that their waiting for the next trip would not be in vain. And in the occasions where they do allow prisoners’ families to deliver clothes, that too becomes subject to precarity: A pair of pants can be denied by a prison authority who can simply decide “black is not allowed” despite the mother’s swearing that it was allowed during her last visit; or, in other cases, prison guards can assert that the pants need a security clearance of their own, separate from that of the visiting family members. And the latter could, at any moment, be revoked by Israeli security personnel under the premise that the family member now presents a ‘security threat’—a practice that the IPS implements arbitrarily but systematically. It is
not uncommon to stumble across someone in Palestine who has not seen his imprisoned brother or father for years due to being labeled as a security threat.

Though Israel has always painted Palestinians as terrorists and security threats, their enshrining of the category as a go-to legal loophole became more and more common with the onset of the global war on terror in 2001, in line with Israel’s shift in its deployment of power with the Second Intifada. Detaining someone for no reason other than being a threat to national security was always Israel’s premise for administratively detaining Palestinians without charge or trial; it is a policy they adopted from the British mandate years, after all. However, the permeating of this category “the security threat” into almost every aspect of Palestinian prisoners’ experience—including the black pants their mom is trying to send to them in the winter—is characteristic of the contemporary moment. Israel resorts to the specter of the ‘security threat’ to provide itself with an automatic ‘dismiss’ button to annul rights guaranteed by International and Israeli law or achievements gained through wrenching hunger-strikes in prison. Through this category, the Israeli state, without passing a single policy per se, but rather through its systematic arbitrariness (its security ‘exceptions’) effectively cut off many prisoners from their family members; more so than the typical prison experience before the Second Intifada, that is. These uncertain obstacles coupled with ultimate and concrete representation of them—the separation wall— contributed to the individuation of Palestinians after the Second Intifada and the tearing apart of collective and family networks that Wick wrote about.

But even after crossing all these obstacles—the loopholes of arbitrary security measures and the crossing of the separation wall— when family members’ do get to see their loved ones, it’s only behind another separation wall inside: the glass barrier. Sumoud Sa’adat (2015) from the Addameer office explained this experience while writing about a visit in 2015 to see her father Ahmed Sa’adat, leader of the PFLP:
The first thing I noticed there was the window which separates us from the prisoners. I wished the glass separating us could break so he would hug me as he did when I was young.

But some dreams are never meant to come true. The glass did not break.

Following the Oslo period, prison authorities began replacing the metal chain-link gates in the visit areas with glass walls. It changes the entire dynamic. A visitor can no longer poke through the holes to grasp her father or brother’s hands. She can no longer speak to him directly. Instead, each of them have to pick up their respective telephone receiver on either end of the wall. And after the 45 minutes are up, the voice cuts out. Here we see Israel’s policy of stripping and separating individuals from their neighborhoods and family members happening outside the prisons with the introduction of the separation wall, being recreated quite corporally with the glass walls inside the prison. Not only is prisoners’ ability to share time-space with their family members severely compromised by Israel’s new closure technologies, but even when they do manage to overcome these obstacles, even when they manage to be in the very same room, they are still separated. The glass wall disrupts their time-space materially. They are in the same space, but not quite. “I have not been able to touch my father in 15 years,” Arab Barghouthi (DemocracyNow, 2017) famously said when speaking about his father and Fatah prison leader Marwan Barghouthi. Understanding the introduction of the glass wall into prisons through the context of Israel’s post-Oslo regime at large is revealing; it exposes the underlying logic of Israel’s closures after the Second Intifada and makes it plain: stripping the body away from the collectives it belongs to, beginning with its family; in prison the individuation is so explicit it deprives family members from the interactions essential to human contact: touching, hugging, feeling, and hearing one another in real time and space. Prisoners were corporally cut off from their loved ones, just as love across the separation walls became tumultuous outside of the prisons; “As an ex-prisoner, I have to be careful who I fall in love with,” Alaa Ali would sigh to me one day as we passed through Qalandiya checkpoint to Jerusalem. “Crossing this checkpoint is unpredictable for me; as an ex-
prisoner, they can decide to hold me for hours for interrogation at any moment. So my Jerusalem and West Bank IDs would not mix. Just arranging to see each other would be logistically miserable.”

This stripping bare of the individual—cutting the body apart from its corporal connection to family members and the outside world in prison—was iterated on a regular basis in 2004 with the prison authorities’ dramatic increase in strip searching prisoners. “We went on strike because of the humiliating practices of the prison,” Arafat recounted: “the fact that we were being strip searched on a daily basis; and there was a practice of strip searching our family members when they visited us too.” The prison authorities’ repeated stripping of prisoners” bodies was coupled with stripping them from collective spaces: including shared prison sections as well as the shared kitchens within them. Up until the Oslo Years, prisons used to have shared kitchens in the sections where prisoners could work and cook their own meals. “By 2004, there were only a handful of prisons the most important being Nafha after Ofer and Megiddo where prisoners still had the kitchen, and cooked and worked in it” Arafat explained. Instead prisoners received ready-made food or were allowed to cook frozen goods on the hot plates in the rooms themselves. Thus, as the post-Oslo closures tore apart neighborhood collectives and resource sharing across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the prison authorities mirrored the same breakup within the prisons.

Stripping prisoners’ bodies from the collective continued with the Inqisam between Gaza and the West Bank in 2006. 2006 decisively marked the breakdown of collective supra-factional organizing in Palestine from the First Intifada years to the congealing divide between Hamas and Fatah. “What happens outside is always reflected inside,” Ahmed Qattamish commented while explaining the factional divisions that would ensue within prisons:

Before the Inqisam, everyone lived together. After the Inqisam, you are now talking about designated sections for Hamas and for Fatah. The prisoners themselves wanted this to minimize tensions after 2006 events. So the Occupation succeeded in its goal; this is what they
wanted, to break up the collective identity of the prisoners . . . The prison authorities only acknowledged these two main factions. How it works is that each section consists of 120 prisoners. Now for the fringe factions—for the PFLP or Jihad or the very few of the Democratic Front, if they ever got close to exceeding 120 members in a particular section, the prison authorities would move them to another prison, to prevent them from having an entire section to themselves. So you are either Fatah or you are Hamas.

Each of these material changes by the Israeli prison authorities—designating faction-specific sections, seizing the shared kitchens from prisoners, installing glass wall barriers between prisoners and family members, stripping prisoners’ body bare through regular strip searches—worked to effectively strip the influx of new prisoners apart from one another. As thousands of young men were imprisoned after the Second Intifada, the Israeli prison authorities ensured that they would be integrated into a social starkly different from that of the First Intifada generation of prisoners—a social that Israel sought to fragment along factional alliances; to strip from the collective organizing, educating, and decision-making processes that the First Intifada prisoners had built over the years. Qattamish continued:

So what you are left with is a move towards factionalism among Palestinians. Fragmenting the public. And this becomes a political problem: one decision becomes two: a separate decision for Fatah and a separate decision for Hamas. And thus, you no longer have the collective hunger strike in prison—that is the essence of the matter.

Indeed, the prison that the generation of prisoners following the Second Intifada experience is materially different than that of the generation that came before them. The social that the latter had
built gradually became disintegrated; though the impact of Israel’s individuation strategy was immediately felt during the 2004 hunger strike—and dismally so.

THE LAST GENERAL COLLECTIVE STRIKE: THE FAILURE OF 2004

Israel’s individuation of prisoners—and Palestinian society at large—following the Second Intifada was dramatized by the 2004 hunger-strike. In hindsight, it is not surprising that a general collective strike planned in the very midst of Israel’s individuation practices disintegrated so thoroughly. A general collective strike—by its very nature of being comprehensive of all prisons and all factions—necessitates communication across prison walls and movement leaders. The pre-Oslo prisoners managed to pull off this organizing feat not once, but dozens and dozens of times since 1967 up until the Oslo period through a central structure: the strike committee. The committee is composed of leaders from the different factions who comes together to coordinate the list of demands, the zero hour (the beginning of the strike) and most critically “fak el-idrab” (the ending of the strike). “Usually, in the general strikes, we would have a committee elected by the prisoners and consisting of faction leaders. Only this committee negotiates with the prison administration,” Arafat explained:

In the past, the prison authorities would try to speak with each member of the committee individually. But the committee would always be adamant about bringing all the strike leaders together face-to-face for them to take the final decision. . . And the administration would oblige. Then when the committee came to a decision, the prison administration would let leaders of the general committee go around the prisons; so they would transport them in the administration’s cars and take them to the prisons so they could deliver the message. Every
*ta'atweem* (organization) has its representative. The representative would go in and tell them that we have ended the strike or we will continue the strike.

Arafat continued to contrast the pre-Oslo past with the break from it in 2004: how the central structure of the group strike—the strike committee—fell apart in 2004.

Arafat fleshed out the details I had always heard referenced in passing; how the prison authorities did not let the committee meet up in the same room before traveling around the prisons to communicate their decisions. This time around, the prison administration did not allow this. Instead they broke up this structure and its communication system by undermining the shared time and space it depended on. In 2004, the prison authorities isolated most of the leaders in the strike committee and began tempting them to negotiate on their own. As a result—for the first time in the history of Palestinian hunger strikes—the strike leaders proceeded to negotiate on behalf of their respective prisons alone, rather than all the prisons together.

Now, in the 2004 strike, the prison administration isolated the leaders in every prison by themselves and prevented communication between them. They isolated them and then they began to tempt each prison on its own. So for example, they would go speak to Ashkelon prison and say: we’re willing to stop strip searching in Ashkelon if you end the strike. But the thing is, the prisoners in Ashkelon actually did end their strike. And they left the other prisoners still on strike in other prisons. Because there was no communication between them. But also, some of the leaders of the prisoner’s movement became opportunists. They began to act as if every prison would negotiate on their own directly with the administration of the prison they were in. So Ashkelon prison broke the strike without there being a collective decision from all the prisoners to end the strike—without agreeing with the other prisoners.
or coordinating with them. And Hamas negotiated on its own and ended the strike shortly after as well… Then the prison administration would let the organizations and parties that conceded, they would let the leaders of the specific parties communicate with each other. So when, for example, Fatah in Ashkelon prison gave up the strike, the prison authorities allowed a representative from Fatah in Ashkelon to communicate with a representative of Fatah in Hadareem, that we have taken a decision as a tantheem to stop the strike.

Even before the strike’s zero hour had been announced, the prison authorities had attempted this individuation along prison location and party lines by attempting to manipulate the gaps in the new closure practices it was beginning to introduce: like taking away the common kitchen and introducing the glass barrier. For instance, in 2011, Ramleh prison was the only one where prison authorities had not installed the glass wall in the visiting area yet. And so, a Fatah leader in this prison used that as justification to argue against Fatah members in Ramleh entering the strike. “He argued ‘we have a prison canteen and we don’t have the glass wall, so why should we strike and lose these privileges?’” Arafat recalled. Nonetheless, following the end of the strike, prison authorities installed the glass wall shortly after in Ramleh; their lack of participation did not preclude them, as they had calculated.

The same happened with the kitchen in Nafha prison—the last kitchen that prisoners still had access to. In all other prisons, prisoners could no longer cook their own food together, since the kitchens were turned over to the Israeli criminal prisoners. Palestinian prisoners were forced to eat what was prepared for them and supplement it with whatever canned goods they could buy from the canteen and prepare on the section hotplates. The ability to make one’s own food in a shared space was just as important as the ability to plant and harvest one’s own crops beyond prisons in the West Bank or go fishing on the Gaza shore—an ownership of one’s livelihood that Israel targeted to cut people’s relationship to the collective processes and land that fostered them. But in 2004, Nafha was
the only prison where Palestinians still had a kitchen to congregate and cook in. And the prison authorities manipulated this disparity yet again, to individuate the hunger-strike process by making each prison end their hunger separately. The Nafha prison administration bartered with the hunger-striking prisoners, trying to convince them to end the strike in exchange for keeping the kitchen; otherwise, the administration threatened, they would lose access to it. “But when tantheem leaders in Nafha ended the strike, based on those promises, the administration reneged. They lost the kitchen, which was symbolically a huge loss for all prisons.

But the kitchen was not the only thing Nafha lost. They also had to turn in 35 smuggled cellphones. Around the time of the Second Intifada, the prison authorities began turning a blind eye to Israeli guards smuggling cellphones to the prisoners—at extremely inflated prices). One day when I was speaking with Khader Adnan in a pharmacy in Nablus, he picked up my cellphone that I had placed next to me, and asked me “how much did you buy this cellphone for? In prison, it would at least be 10 times that price. And people buy them anyways. And they’ve changed things drastically.” On a separate occasion while speaking to Samer Issawil’s mom she joked to me “yeah, they were definitely pushing it first. Almost every prisoner had a cellphone” she giggled while adding “and the person who smuggles it in is considered a (fida’i) freedom fighter.” Other times, when I would tell people that I was tracing the shift to individual hunger strikes, they would nod their head and mumble something about “the cellphones!” Not only are the prison authorities fully aware of the smuggled phones, and probably wiretap the prisoners’ phone calls. But to this very day it remains an open secret that prison authorities exploit to individuate prisons and keep them separated. The prison authorities know that their deliberate acquiescence can be manipulated at any moment, as was the case in 2004 when the Nafha administration forced the prisoners to turn in 35 cellphones they had managed to bring in. This unspoken privilege coupled with the always-present possibility for the Israeli prison authorities to revoke it has succeeded in making prisoners discipline themselves—to think twice
before striking or resisting in a way that could jeopardize their access to their expensively smuggled phones. After all, when family visits are so precarious, phone-calls are a huge source of comfort for both prisoners, and their families. This mode of connection—however compromised and stripped from physical contact—becomes an important albeit always inadequate substitute for families sharing of their everyday in the same time-space. And, understandably so, prisoners become hesitant to risk losing such compromised contact with the outside world in times of individuation. Not only does the risk in itself build an inertia among prisoners to participate in collective hunger-strikes in the almost unanimous numbers of the general collective strikes in the past; but it also becomes a way for Israel to individuate prisons through their differential access to these phones—in a way similar to the administration’s negotiations about the kitchen in Nafha and prisoner’s reluctance to strike to avoid the glass wall in Ramleh in 2004.

In this way, each of the material changes introduced by the IPS during the Second Intifada, functioned to materially individuate prisoners: whether the glass wall that mirrored the separation wall outside and cut the shared time-space of families; or the smuggled cellphone which became a compromised substitute for that meaningful and bodily contact; or withdrawing the shared kitchen that further stripped individual bodies from collective time-spaces and replaced them with measly hot plates in prison sections. But at the same time, beyond their immediate and more obvious functional uses, the prison authorities introduced each of these material changes unequally among the prisons so that they could manipulate the differential conditions— to indirectly encourage self-discipline or to use them as grounds for explicit threats and punishment when needed to crush acts of dissent.

As different prisons became ensnared by these practices of differentiation and individuation and ended their strikes individually while leaving other prisoners hanging, people’s spirits were crushed (Arafat: Personal Interview, August 2016):
Here, the prisoners who were left hanging, we were totally shocked. We’re on strike, but Fatah got the message that Fatah prisoners were ending their strike. We starting thinking – what is going on?? Why is this happening?? Why did Fatah end their strike, then Hamas shortly after?

We had a radio that we had smuggled in, and we started hearing the news: that Ashkelon ended the strike. The next day, Hadareem ended the strike. We tolerated so much humiliation—the crackdown for this strike was very intense—it was the first time for the prison administration to confiscate the salt that we had in the sections while on strike; they intensified the strip searching; they would make us take off all our clothes and throw them out into the courtyard in plain view of the Israeli criminals above for us to go fetch them. Absolutely humiliated. And we persisted. But for the end of all this to be nothing. It was crushing.

The IPS’s crackdown did not end with the strike. Rather they escalated it. They made a point to not only deny the prisoners’ demands in the strike but to worsen the conditions they were protesting. In addition to installing the last glass walls and withdrawing the last collective kitchens, the IPS began strip-searching prisoners even more regularly than before. “The whole thing became ruthless revenge,” Arafat iterated:

The strike was not just utter failure in the sense that it broke up the united prisoner’s movement and crushed its sprits. No. There were serious material losses that we lived out and felt on the ground . . . It was almost as if they were saying to us, oh you went on strike because of the strip searches, we’re going to strip search you now more frequently and abashedly then before. It became ridiculous. For those of us who had participated in the strike and were visiting the clinic, they would strip search us on our way there a few doors down, and strip
search us on our way out. . .and they continued strip searching our families when they tried to visit us too.

Adding insult to injury seemed to be the approach of the IPS under Ganot after the strike’s failure. And it worked. The prisoners’ sprits were devastated, and their trust in the collective hunger strike as a mode of struggle was shattered; the next attempt at a collective strike would not take place until 2011—and even then, it was only factional PFLP strikes. Other parties and tanbeemat (movements) did not participate. And when different parties and factions did come together in 2012 to strike collectively, only about one thousand or so joined. The comprehensive participation of 4,000 prisoners known before Oslo, to this day, has not been replicated.

One prisoner who lived through the 2004 strike, Walid Daqqa of the PFLP, wrote about the failure in detail arguing that the ensuing individuation and despair was precisely what the prison authorities under Ganot had sought to achieve. Daqqa points to the crushing crackdown and goes as far as arguing that the IPS had wanted the prisoners to go on strike; that the IPS deliberately intensified its humiliating and individuating practices so abruptly so as to provoke the influx of new prisoners to go on strike, crush the spirit and resistance tactics they may have learned from the First Intifada prisoners that came before them, and discipline them into letting go of them and succumbing to a new era of prison politics. Daqqa cites Naomi Klein’s “Shock Doctrine” to argue that the prison administration intended to use the 2004 strike as a shock, much as 9/11 or hurricane Katrina were shocks, to make a tabula rasa out of the thousands of new prisoners and inscribe a new mode of prison politics centered around the faction and ultimately the individual rather than the general collective. I did not pursue any archival research to further explore Daqqa’s plausible argument; but regardless, the outcome was very much as he described: a complete obliteration of hunger-strikes as Palestinians, since 1967 had come to know them; almost four decades of building the general collective decisively
torn apart; and a new generation of prisoners reluctant, even scared, from organizing in the same way as the one that came before it.

That the 2004 hunger-strike represents a break from the past is an important part of how former/recurring prisoners make sense of the present-day resort to individual hunger-strikes. Many old-time hunger-strikers from the First Intifada generation are understandably adamant about the need for a remedy: that power rests in numbers; that prisoners and Palestinians at large must defy Israel’s individuation tactics; that they must fix the so-perceived problem of the individual strike; and receive the collective hunger strike of the pre-Oslo past. Within this line of thought is an implicit recognition that Palestinians since the Second Intifada are now living in a moment different than the one that came before Oslo. But this recognition is altogether dismissed when former/recurring prisoners and solidarity groups suggest that the way forward – the way to defy individuation—is to revive the general collective of the pre-Oslo past.

Such a recapitulation of the past as the remedy for the present stubbornly denies what 2004 dramatized: that the tools of the past no longer work as they once used to. 2004 was a watershed in the history of Palestinian hunger-strikes: when the attempt to resort to the pre-Oslo collective was met with a jolt; and clashed against Israel’s new individuation tactics. It was a realization that the Second Intifada prisoners were hunger-striking in a different historical moment. Thus, when prisoners and solidarity groups romanticize a return to the pre-Oslo collective, they fall into cliché: suggesting a return to a moment that has been lost. This is not to dismiss the importance of collective organizing whatsoever. That the recent collective strike in 2017 generated far more publicity and international solidarity as opposed to the string of individual strikes that preceded it is a testament to that. In this section, however, I am making a point that I will return to in the next chapter— to draw attention to the ways the individual body of Palestinian hunger-strikes is doing this very work that public discourse is slower at: tearing away from the cliché to offer different platforms for collective organizing in the
contemporary moment. In the upcoming sections, I will trace the demand for freedom within Palestinian prisons from the Oslo period to the present-day individual strikes. In doing so I will suggest how the individual body is fraying away from the pre-Oslo collective to revisit the freedom dreams of the Oslo period, albeit in different ways: to shift and re-organize new collectives.

REVISITING FREEDOM: STRIKING AGAINST ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

Even throughout the affectual turns in prisoners’ relationship to waiting detailed above, it must be noted that one turn did not entirely do away with the forms of waiting that preceded it. Resonances and excesses of the restless desire for freedom coexisted in more subdued crosshatchings and incoherence. The “bloom-spaces” of this restlessness would appear and reappear with future hunger-strikes, with all their affectual doings and undoings of waiting: sometimes with faint intensities of backdrop stars in a full-moon sky, other times protruding roundly and fully like the broadness of daylight – but always pregnant with possibility and exceeding the context of their emergence in the Oslo years (Gregg & Seigwick, 2010: 9). This chapter traces the Spinozist “not-yet” of the hunger-striker for freedom and their affectual restlessness, beyond 2004 (Gregg & Seigwick, 2010: 3). Though the decisive failure of the 2004 hunger-strike crushed prisoners’ willingness to strike for improved prison conditions, let alone for freedom, the excess of the not-yetness of the hunger-strikes, which are always in the becoming, percolated. The demand for freedom articulated during the Oslo period did not totally fade away, lingering in crevices that were “hidden-in-plain-sight” of the everyday (Gregg & Seigwick, 2010: 7). Though the subjectivity of the prisoner who became restless for freedom—no longer a patient waiter— was squashed amidst the trauma of 2004, it did not altogether disappear. The “yearning for freedom” would continue to emerge and remerge, albeit in divergent ways. As Ahmad Qattamish (personal interview, August 2016) put it, “the 1996 hunger-strike for freedom
would not be the last.” The re-orienting of subjectivities away from the logic of necessary sacrifice during the Oslo years and the failure of 2004 both left a seeming void in the place of collective prison politics—a void pregnant with the lingerings of affectual excess. Meanwhile Israel escalated its individualization technologies and increasingly isolated prisoners who expressed dissent whether individually or collectively. Yet, even as the collective organizing built by the First Intifada prisoners was repressed and side-lined, individual bodies emerged from the teeming void. They poked out from beneath 2004’s despair and the breakdown of the First Intifada collective, daring to (re)craft, out of the vacuum with all its excesses of restlessness, a different kind of politics—and to (re)assemble different collectives. This constant negotiation between a hunger-striker’s ‘individual’ body and the social world it is suspended within is precisely why one could never speak of the individual without also implying the collective it is sutured to. Khader’s body is at once also “an ambient irradiation of its worded-ness,” (Gregg & Seigwick, 2010: 6). When I invoke the “individual” or “collective,” I am doing so with the understanding that they are not distinctly separate, but rather a complex assemblage that composes bodies of hunger-strikers and their social worlds simultaneously (Gregg & Seigwick, 2010: 6).

Within the political void following Oslo and 2004, the figure of the individual hunger-striker began to splinter and (re)open the field of intersubjective bonds and attachments, even as Israel continued targeting them. The individual striker maneuvered around the administration’s repression of the collective strike committee while revisiting and resurfacing the demand for freedom from the Oslo period—albeit from a different subjectivity. Unlike the prisoners’ hopeful confidence in Oslo Accords ability to release them which inflected some of the prisoners’ (especially Fatah members’) restless waiting before 1996, following the second Intifada the nationalist honey-moon of the interim years began to fade. The Second Intifada, as Reema Hamami theorized in her writings on the checkpoint, brought about a “distinctly liminal space . . . between the waning obligations of a national
collective and its dissolution by disaggregated interests” (Abourahme, 2011: 457). This disaggregation percolated and reconfigured the excesses of restless waiting towards the issue of administrative detention—or freedom from it, as Khader put it: “I was sending a message that the occupation was not fate. Just like people assume the occupation is fate and that detention is fate, perhaps freedom can also be our fate.” Khader’s desire for freedom was resonating well before his strike. In 2008, for instance, the assemblage of restlessness and disaggregation gave rise to administrative detainees planning a hunger-strike against Israel’s unlawful detainment without charge or trial. But once the IPS caught wind of it, they separated the strike committee and isolated many of them. “I was one of the committee members sent to isolation, well before we could even begin the strike” Arafat recalled. “But there was one prisoner, I don’t quite remember his name, from the Islamic Jihad party, who went on strike against his administrative detention in Naqab prison. By himself. And within three days the prison authorities had sent him to a zinizana (isolation cell). The emerging of the individual body to fill the place of the repressed collective threatened the hierarchy of parties, movements, and marginal factions such as the Islamic Jihad which the hunger-striker belonged to. It is therefore perhaps not a surprise that the latter, according to Arafat, sent a representative to the prisoner to tell him to end his strike: “[The PIJ representative] told him to forget it. ‘Don’t waste yourself on this, just be patient.’ And the young man did not continue his strike; he did not go home and was returned back to the prison section; and there was no ruckus like there was with Khader Adnan in 2011. But even if this detainee ended his strike at PIJ’s behest, his very attempt to maneuver around the repression of the collective underscores the agility of the individual body: its capacity for spontaneity and flexibility that the imaginary of a collective wedded to pre-Oslo nationalist politics lacked; for instrumentalizing its ability to bypass the collective committee which the IPS surveys and targets, and hold on to moments of possibility from the shadows and run with it, even if on their own.
A few years after PIJ ordered its member not to strike against his detention alone— to wait for the collective, to be patient— another member, Khader Adnan, refused to wait. In 2011, Khader Adnan who had also been administratively detained without charge or trial, decided to commence a hunger-strike for his freedom. He, like Mohamed Al-Qiq of Hamas who would come after him, and the string of detainees striking in between, would do so without the approval of their factional/movement leaders. Though that, as Wisam Rafidi pointed out, is precisely the point: “the collective” which is always imagined in the First Intifada sense (comprised of members all the recognized parties and marginal factions including Fatah and Hamas as well as the PFLP, PIJ, and the Popular Democratic Front respectively) has been undermined and disaggregated by Israel’s socialization of prisoners into an individuated prison environment. And as such, the general collective – as well as the factions and parities it is composed of – are no longer able to meaningfully organize on behalf of their members. “Khader would not have had to go on strike alone, if it weren’t for the weakening of the parties and movements and factions. This is the essence of the matter. And all these other strikers: Mohamed Allan, Al-Qiq, and Bilal today—they are exemplars of this moment we’re living in,” Rula Abu Duhou iterated. In other words, when Khader defied PIJ’s orders and went on strike alone, he side-stepped the hitherto known structures of a ‘collective’ which was failing him: not only the general collective (and its strike committees which are comprised of different faction and party members); Khader also eluded the faction itself.

Later when I spoke to former striker al-Qiq in the Addameer office, he repeated several times to me: “There is no such thing as a collective strike in Palestine at the current moment,” invoking the vernacular use of the ‘collective strike’ as synonymous with the First Intifada strike. Al-Qiq proceeded to repeat the go-to explanation about the breakdown of the collective and weakening of the factions that Rula and others had unanimously mentioned. “For freedom,” Khader Adnan would qualify to me in a separate sitting “No such thing as a collective strike for freedom.” Al-Qiq would later add the
same caveat “the factions and parties are only concerned with daily needs. Not with essential things like administrative detention. So, the detainees themselves are left to fight. . . I was not going to wait for my movement to fight.” Wisam Rafidi of the PFLP who had served a prison sentence during the seventies and Oslo years and later a detention during the second intifada supported and further analyzed Al-Qeeq and Khader’s critique:

The collective has not been able to organize around administrative detention. It is not even on the table. And thus, you cannot tell someone, why are you engaging in struggle. It is his right to struggle. So when Hamas views Al-Qiq as acting without a qarar tantheemy (organizational decision, it’s absurd: What, now a person needs an organizational decision to struggle?! If he waits for the movement to join him in solidarity to end administrative detention, we will never see the end of it. I mean, if 500 detainees decide to end administrative decision and to struggle towards that end meaningfully, then ok, that could have happened long ago. But the entire situation of the prisoners’ movement does not promote a collective strike for essential issues. It pushes everyone who needs to solve his own problem to do so alone. This is exhausting on one hand, but on the other, there are no alternatives. There are no options available to the detainee except this direction.

Thus, when Khader, al-Qiq, and numerous others defy organizational orders to go on strike, they dramatized how the individual body could be the “collective alternative” as al-Qiq put it. How the body stubbornly forges new terrains of struggle where the collective stagnates. And invites new collectives to converge around it.
Chapter Three  
The Gift of Hunger: Between Collective and Individual Hunger-Strikes

It is not an individual strike in that individual sense that people imply when they use it. “Individual” is not a word that I like, because it implies selfishness. But the individual is not striking only for himself. He may be striking for his mother or his sister; his wife his kids. Just his presence in her home is a benefit—to take care of his mother and family and his finances without the people also having to strain themselves through a kidnapping or political activity. Without all that, the detainee still goes home, and at a much cheaper price. He goes home. And, yes, this is at the expense of wearing out his own health. But it is done at the least price for us as Palestinians.

So, I do not like this term. Since the individual strike also provokes other prisoners to strike:
It provokes the family. It provokes the streets. And it alsoprovokes the occupation to come out to the world and say these people are simply individuals, not an entire people, not an entire cause. It also provokes the NGOs and human right organizations and legal and medical institutions, many of which fall into this error, as well as the minister of prisoners and some of the NGOs who work with prisoners, who use this expression, even though they do so while very well knowing that there are huge difficulties stalling a collective strike.

– Khader Adnan (Person Interview, September 2016)

In order to trace the provocation of freedom strikes that Khader points to, this chapter conceptualizes hunger-strikes as gifts in the anthropological sense—much like contemporary artists approach their artwork: traps, apparatuses, or devices that not only entrap and engage social actors, but also produce...
new agents and social relations out of latent potentialities as well). As Carole McGranahan (2016: 355) puts it, in her writings on self-immolations of Tibetans refusing foreign citizenship: the gifting of the body as an offering “compels witnesses to receive and then to transform in some way.” I argue that hunger-ing a body, similar to immolating it, is also an offering of the body. As Khader says, it is an offering that provokes other prisoners, to the hunger-striker’s family, to the streets, and even to the occupation to receive and transform the gift in some way – and *makes things change*. Tracing hunger-ing’s gift-giving and its transformative receiving brings a multitude of figures out of the background: beyond the moment when a hunger-striker first refuses prison meals, to latent potentialities the gift of corporal refusal spurs and the field of relations that it intervenes within and transforms. A field where everything from the prisoner’s loss of eyesight or collapse-prone heart—all of these things take on an agency of their own to create a field that *assembles* the hunger striker’s *amʿa el-khaweya* (empty organs) with a converging multitude. In this way, this chapter argues, individual strikes must be understood as constantly in relation to the socials they are worlded within; as well as what constitutes as a ‘collective’ in the social imaginary. Theorizing the doings and undoings of the individual body is also a theorizing of the collective it relates to, and how the imaginary of the latter is made and remade through the individual body striking for freedom in the post post-Oslo moment.

**HOW BODIES PROVOKE**

Khader’s qualms with the label of “freedom strikes” invites a theoretical pause: What if one were to wade out of the anachronistic quality of the popular discourse on hunger-strikes; beyond the disdain painting ‘individual strikes’ as betraying the collective principles of the First Intifada—the only path to nationalist liberation; or the uncritical boxing of ‘individual strikes’ into the nationalist liberation project of the 70s and 80s. Khader’s moving of the conversation to how the hunger-strike provokes is an invitation to move beyond
nationalist clichés and their representational mode in public discourse. To skim past a political vernacular caught up with representing the 70s-era nationalist glory that a hunger-strike is and instead to really consider what a hunger-strike does in the contemporary moment? This question is the iteration of another: What if we consider that objects, or hunger strikers’ bodies, “are not second class citizens of subject-dom” but can also “operate as agents and ‘do things’”? (Sansi, 2014:56). As Khader succinctly put it: bodies provoke. In this chapter, I pay particular attention to this provocation—and the openings and changes that bodies on strike bring about within the social they are worlded within. In doing so, I argue that bodies like Khader’s, through their provoking, are not replacing the collective of the First Intifada years. After all, there is no ‘individual’ strike in the literal as Khader asserts; for the individual is always relational to the social it is worlded within. The individual striker’s body is thus constantly acting and being acted upon by the social relations it is sutured to. And through this dialectical relationship, individual strikes are reassembling (not replacing) different kinds of collectives. In this chapter, I examine how these new collectives move beyond the rigid structure of the pre-Oslo collective premised upon the collaboration of political parties and factions with all their organizational politics.

In his book *Art, Anthropology, and the Gift*, Sansi (2014) poses a cross-hatched challenge to anthropologists to learn from the turn in contemporary art: the latter of which convinces people to consider how artworks “are a provocation—meant to generate a reaction from the public” (Sansi, 2014: 53); that artworks do not have to give answers, but rather can ask questions. Sansi invites engaged anthropologists to do the same, framing their fieldwork questions in the same way that the contemporary art exhibit begs its visitors too: not to ask what a certain artwork means, but what it does (Sansi, 2014, 46). By adopting both Sansi and Khader’s challenge, this thesis explores how the bodies of recent hunger-strikers provoke; how it does and undoes the worldedness of bodies and their relationship between one another in the Palestinian social. Theorizing freedom strikes in this way builds on the affect theory presented in the first chapter (the doing and undoings of bodies constantly
in the becoming) by melding it with the Maussian Gift in the same way that contemporary art has appropriated (and transformed) the concept. In many ways, the shift from the representational mode of classical art to the experimental surrealists (breaking fixed categories instead of creating and reaffirming them) followed by event-creating situationists (creating art that provokes), is a result of artists appropriating the methods of ethnographic fieldwork and taking the concept of the Maussian gift to heart. The anthropological gift, as Marcel Mauss seminally wrote, is not just a static ‘object,’ but a dynamic body infused with intentions and provocations of people who give and receive them (Graeber, 2001). Anthropologists like Alfred Gell have argued for a similar approach to ethnographic fieldwork—not as a mode of representation that churns out descriptive accounts. But ethnography that does not take the dynamism of their fields for granted and engages with it: considering how the field is full of “objects” that are not just passive but infused with intentions of people who interact with them (Sansi, 2014: 88), much like Marcel Mauss’s writings on the mélange of the gifters’ spirit with the gift (Graeber, 2001). Contemporary artists, as Sansi writes, appropriated this ethnographic turn, premising their work on the dynamism of the Gift rather than mere representation of it, and in doing so pushed the limits of the Maussian gift even further. Mauss’s writings, and many of those who theorize from him, brings us back to a Decartesian separation of human minds and passive objects. Analyzing vis-a-vis Mauss, much like existing hunger strike literature, becomes an act of tracing (human-mind) agents entrapped in gifts or the events of the field (like the hunger strike) to search for the symbolic origin embedded within them. Sansi seeks to push past Marcel Mauss’s ultimate anthropocentrism by drawing on the work of contemporary artists. Sansi argues that anthropologists can learn from artists’ fusing of Latour’s assemblage with the gift, which is a post-humanist task at its core.

Latour invites us to think on what we are missing when we consider that “social action does not start from human agency or intentionality, but from events and objects themselves,” (Sansi, 2014: 57);
and, as affect theory urges us to add, from latent potentialities that remain embedded in the social. Just as affect theory solicits us to trace how latent potentialities of freedom strikes since their first iterations during the Oslo period percolate within the social and operate as agents in their own sense, a Latourian conception of the body approaches hunger-strikers’ bodies with that same latitude of possibility. Beyond critiques that focus on the individual striker’s selfishness or ideological proclivity, this thesis opens up space for the body. To elevate it above the ‘second class citizenship-status of subject-dom’ pervading political vernacular, and engage with the body’s ability to “operate as agents and ‘undo things’: and provoke (Sansi, 2014:56). The body after all, as a former hunger-striker put it has immense power, sometimes overshadowing and outdoing the aims declared by the striker or the strike committee. “The starved body can get in the way… the body itself can pressure your mind, it pressures your ‘will,’” former striker Abeel Razeq Farraj (Person Interview, Septmeber 2017), contemplated out loud over coffee once with me. Thinking with Farraj, and drawing on contemporary art and contemporary theory through Sansi, moves us beyond writings on hunger strike or prisoners’ resistance at large that reduce acts to a retroactive causality; that locks us into taking declared intentions at face value; and to instead become closely attuned to the work of the body itself. Tracing the affectual doings and undoings of the body, I argue, allows us to consider not just the agencies locked within the ‘origins’ of the hunger-strike (a frozen moment: the prisoner’s declaration), but to trace how the body becomes a continuous producer of agents. And how the body itself acts in conjunction or disjunction, with the poetic declarations of hunger strikers like Khader’s: during smuggled videos or Bilal’s letters made public through his lawyers. Alongside these moving moments, the body makes statements of its own.

That the body is powerful—that it forces its own politics and gift-givings—was perhaps something that had been so normalized in a Palestine where hunger-strikes have almost been never-ending since 2011. It almost becomes taken for granted, with the declaration of each new hunger
strike, that the body is doing incredible work. Especially in contexts like the Addameer office, where I was during most of my fieldwork; and where most of the people around me were constantly shifting from writing about one hunger strike to the next. The details of each body, in its own right, would get buried beneath the report writing, quoting officials and lawyers, calling on international audiences to pay attention—day after day, strike after strike, becoming its own perverse *a'adi* to invoke Calis (2017) becoming routine. Yet the work of the body, even when routinized, seeped into and underlied the office’s day-to-day rhythm and its emotional tone. Especially after the first month when Bilal’s health condition became more and more unpredictable—subject to heart collapse at any moment after day 45. Or passing day 50 when Bilal was moved to the ICU. As the strike countdown continued, the stress in the office became more and more noticeable. When someone would snap at the other in the office, murmurs that so-and-so was *not* in a good mood today following the news debrief (or lack thereof) with the lawyers, though that would never be attributed as the cause. The un-explained yet always growing stress in the office embodied a routinization of the liminal waiting between appeals but also the always unspoken sometimes dismissed knowledge that the striker’s body is decaying; the never-spoken-out-loud but always simmering question “what if he does die?”

But even amidst this routinization of the body’s doings and undoings at Addameer and – to perhaps a lesser extent among the core group of activists and organizers who closely follow hunger-strikes—there are moments when the routine is ruptured. Shortly after Bilal Kayed’s ended his strike once authorities agreed to release him after his first detention period, the overlapping strike of two brothers and university student was on the brink of the two-month borderline—with all the unpredictable but possibly fatal health complications that it brings. Around September 5th, just a few hours before I traveled to Nablus to meet Khader, a video went viral: Mohamed al-Balboul laying in a hospital bed, staring blankly upwards as a Doctor waved his hand back-and-forth in front of his eyes: “can you see my hand?” Dr. Tibi is heard asking, “tell me what you see.” Yet, Balboul’s pupils
do follow the doctor’s hands “nothing; I can’t see a thing” the detainee responded. The doctor would phone Mahmoud’s mother and hold up the phone to the detainee’s ear. He tells his mom that he will remain steadfast and continue his strike before breaking into tears and telling her how much he missed her. They cry together. The next day Mahmoud’s mother calls Khader as I’m sitting with him—a mother of two Fatah brothers prompted by the eyes of her son to call on a PIJ member who could relate to the anatomy of hungering. “Don’t worry, his eyesight will return and he will be freed,” he reassured her. In the following days, Balboul’s eyes continued to prompt and provoke conversations, graphic art, and calls for solidarity. The night before I met Khader, I visited the graphic artist, Hafez Omar in his studio. It was Hafez who had drawn the image of Khader with a lock in place of his mouth in 2011 during his strike and the faceless hunger-striker image in brown uniform during the 2012 collective strike. Addameer would regularly call on him to help with hunger strike visuals from then on, as they did during Bilal’s strike. When I walked into his studio that night, I caught glimpses of pencil sketches outlining the Balboul brothers faces on his desk. He held the paper up to me sighing “I just had to draw something tonight. His eyes are gnawing at me.”

A few days later as I sat with Bilal Kayed’s brother, Mahmoud, who had acted like a spokesperson of sorts on his brothers’ behalf throughout his strike, the conversation turned towards Balboul’s eyes. “I’m going to visit his mother on Eid,” he told me, referring to the large rally and visit planned at the Balboul residence in a few days. With the Balbouls’ mother by his side, Mahmoud Kayed held the microphone and rallied a crowd of at least a hundred or so both familiar faces from Bilal’s hunger tent as well as plenty of unfamiliar ones, chanting and marching in unison through the cramped streets of Bethlehem’s old city. As I listened to Mahmoud Kayed speak, I couldn’t help but think of how the timing of the overlapping bodies was reflected in the unique crowd gathered today: a mesh of faces who showed up for the PFLP leader Bilal Kayed mixed with new ones for the two brothers and Al-Qadi from Fatah. How this crowd may have looked different if it was directly
following Al-Qiq’s strike, for example. That even though over 6 years of back-to-back hunger-strikes began to push the modality of struggle towards the backdrop of routine, there were still aspects of each new hunger-strike that produced and generated new collectives and situations different from the one before. And how the body retains its ability to force its own unique polities; after all no two bodies hunger-strike in the exact same way. Yes, there is a general timeline of when certain organs are expected to deteriorate. “But everybody will face different complications at different times,” Khader commented. And thus, no strike can totally predetermine the outcome of the next. Each body retains a biological unpredictability in its own senses, depending on the weight, age, strength, and sex of the body. Hence Mohamed Allan’s unconsciousness catching people off guard, and the Mahmoud Balboul’s eyes gnawing and tugging people out of the routinization of hunger. Each body continuously produce agents on its own accord; and to organically generate and entangle fields and actors “from places faction and movement leaders cannot account for,” as Al-Qiq put it. From then to now as affect theory reminds us; from day 1 to day 77 of Bilal’s strike; from Khader Adnan in 2011, reviving the demand for freedom from 1996, to Bilal Kayed and the Balboul brothers and Malik al-Qadi in 2016—and beyond, with freedom-striking constantly in the becoming.

GENERATING FIELDS, ENTANGLING ACTORS

“[The individual strike] is what moves the streets,” Mohamed Al-Qiq noted adding: “It is the collective alternative.” Al-Qiq was pointing to the publicly perceived absence and weakening of the collective hunger-strike, arguing that the individual body was filling in the void. Indeed, until 2011, the last time Palestinian prisoners had gone on strike was in 2004. Granted, there had been other acts of protests like returning prison meals and boycotting visits or court. Though the last and most risky resort of the open hunger-strike was buried beneath the failure of 2004 for about seven years. The
first hunger strike to end the gap actually preceded Khader’s by a few months (in October 2011) and differed from the collective mode of hunger-striking—which including representatives from every faction and party: this strike towards the end of 2011 only included members of the PFLP faction who were protesting to remove their leader Ahmad Saadat from isolation. It was the first time a faction would go on strike on its own, signaling that the seven-year gap since 2004 would be succeeded by a different kind of collective strike—beyond the participation of all factions and parties before 2004. Though in the wake of Hamas’s prisoner’s exchange deal freeing 1050 prisoners (*safiqet el-ahrar* or the Shalit Deal), they were forced to end the strike without garnering too much attention beyond tight leftist circles and without achieving their demand: “They saw it wouldn't be convenient for people to be celebrating on the street when they are still on strike,” Murad, PFLP member and former advocacy officer at Addameer, noted. But a few months later, when Khader Adnan began his strike in December, the streets were full.

Khader, who was a member of the PIJ had been arrested several times prior by the PA and Israel. Yet he did not come to be a public figure in the sense that he is today until he declared to go on hunger-strike on his own against administrative in 2011. Though, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Khader was not the first to do so. Gradually following 2004, prisoners had thrown the idea of a hunger-strike here and there, and had actually attempted to plan a collective strike against detention in 2008 before the IPS isolated the committee members. One detainee, also from the PIJ, continued striking on his own anyways but his strike only lasted a few days before PIJ officials told him to end it; and not to deviate from the collective decision-making model. This is all to say that although the dynamism that came with both Khader as a figure and 2011 as a moment were incredibly important factors in shaping the assemblages that would come about with Khader's strike, the lingerings of former strikes both attempted and diverted also contributed to the moment. That is to say that Khader's strike appropriated and transformed the latent potentialities of hunger-ing in
general since 2004, and freedom strikes in particular since the Olso period in 1996. And at the same
time Khader’s body also intervened in the moment that was 2011 and provoked its unique social webs
in a way that pushed to change re/assemble it.

Paying attention to how hunger-strikes assemble different fields and actors—theorizing hunger
as a gift of refusal, as presented in the introduction—is particularly pivotal in thinking through the
mode of so-called ‘individual’ strikes” against detention since Khader’s in 2011. Though, this thesis
follows Khader’s warning to slip into treating individual and collective strikes as completely static
categories or opposite poles. The diverted collective strike in 2008 and the PFLP factional strike in
2011 certainly embed and re-embed themselves within the freedom strikes that followed. And in turn
the collective strikes of 2012, 2014, and 2017 were shaped and influenced by the string of freedom
strikes in between. The attribution of maṭlaby and freedom strikes to collective and individual
respectively, therefore also needs to be complicated. Take for example the fact that the 2017 strike
which included a list of maṭlaby demands to improve prison and visit conditions also demanded an
end to the policy of administrative detention challenged by freedom strikes. Both modes of striking
oftentimes unravel into each other in a relationship that is constantly being made and remade. So, it
is tricky territory to slip into the normative mode of elevating one supposedly distinct form of strike
over the other as is often done in public discourse. This thesis is not an attempt to favor or disfavor
the individual—whether as heroic or selfish. Instead, it seeks to approach the so-called collective
maṭlaby and individual freedom strikes as in a constant process of relating and relaying between one
another on the one hand—never wholly separate; rubbing off certain affects with different gradations
of intensities.

On the other hand, it is precisely these different gradations of intensities between what
constitutes a ‘collective maṭlaby’ strike or an ‘individual freedom’ strike in the social imaginary, that this
thesis deems worth exploring and rethinking. It is true that the distinction between “individual” and
“collective strikes in political vernacular is based on a particular imagination of what an ideal
“collective” constitutes. The latter, is usually double speak for the sometimes-romanticized model of
hunger-striking during the First Intifada years, which the failure of 2004 seemed to signal the end of:
a strike with a structured committee that includes leaders from each of the parties and factions which
are unanimously represented, making the ration of total prisoners and participating hunger-strikers as
close to equivalent as possible. The first Intifada model of collective strikes as the ideal strike is always
implicit in public discourse’s reference to “the collective.” Within this imagination the strikes of 2012,
2014, or 2017 where certain factions and parties participate in greater numbers than the other are still
referred to as ‘collective’ but the implicit understanding is that they are subpar to the model that
preceded Oslo.

It is also true that if we move beyond this limited imagination of what a collective can look like
altogether, many so-called ‘individual strikes’ can actually be considered somewhat collective. Several
of the former actually involve two or more hunger-strikers: like when the two Balboul brothers and
Malik al-Qadi went on strike together in 2016; and when six men from Dheisheh refugee camp also
began their strike against detention together, calling their hunger-strike the “Battle to Break the
Chains.” Moreover, one cannot separate an ‘individual strike’ from the solidarity collectives it
assembles and moves on the street. All strikes are collective in that sense. Nonetheless, with all these
caveats in mind, there is still something productive that comes out of contrasting the labels of
‘individual’ and the ‘collective’ hunger-strikers as they are imagined in political vernacular. Within this
distinction is a theorizing of what makes these different modes of hunger-striking– the work that the
strikes do, the affects that they imprint—different. And these differences, warrant exploring.

Unlike ‘collective’ strikes in the way that they are imagined resembling that of the First Intifada
model, individual strikers announce their hunger without prior notice, sometimes from the isolation
of their interrogation rooms. Such spontaneity cuts social relations, especially that of the First Intifada
strike committee and the factions and parties it is composed of. There is no strike committee in the individual strike; there are no carefully picked members from each participating political party. The strike committee, which is such an essential part of the ‘collective’ hunger strikes, is entirely done away with. This is a significant deviation. The strike committee defines how hunger appears on the scene: with months of planning, discussing, and more planning, the public as well as the IPS inevitably catches wind of the strike. *Manakh el-ḍrab* (the climate of hunger) is how former hunger-strikers would describe this period to me. But with individual strikes, there is no gradual climate change. We do *not* hear murmurs of planning weeks beforehand. Nor do we analyze leaked rumors about the tedious debates to draft collective demands on behalf of every striker who decides to go hungry. We do not wait for the *sa et el sefr* (zero hour) when collective strikes jointly begin. Every hour becomes a possible zero hour. This was a necessary liberation from the political impasse of the collective strike—whose structure became immobilizing in the midst of the decline of the political party and its faction, as discussed in the previous chapter. Collective strikes that are premised on the collaboration of parties and factions became an obstacle when these modes of organizing were falling apart amidst the individuation of the second intifada moment. In this sense, the strict imagination of a collective strike tied to the party-model became stagnating. It is from within this stalemate, that we can understand how ‘the individual strike emerged to shake things beyond the rigidity they had fallen into. It is why the individual body in this particular moment became capable of refusal –that is “not fixed in formation” (McGranahan, 2016: 355)—in the way the collective strike, due to imaginations of how it must form coupled with material crack-down on the way it used to organize, fell short. So when freedom strikers such as Mohamed Al-Qiq receives an order from his party, Hamas, not to go on strike alone and wait for the collective—the collective that since 2004 had failed to come together as individual parties/factions to organize on behalf of prisoners; demands, let alone collaborate through the united parties/ factions model of the First Intifada era. When Mohamed Al-Qiq is told to wait for
this collective, but al-Qiq refuses to wait, it is important to think through how such refusal tugs away from the existing state of things; the usual go-to hunger matrix that insisted on the First Intifada collective structure and party or faction approval.

Individual freedom strikers opened up possibilities for deviation from this matrix. Their deviation did not grow out of a vacuum, but was simmering in the growing disenchantment with the inability of parties and factions to advocate on behalf of prisoners. This simmering can be theorized as the affectual “world-belongingness that gives rise to a body’s doing” (Gregg & Seigwick, 2010: 6).

Amidst the “ambient irradiation of social relations” and political disenchantment of the post-post-Oslo moment, the individual hungering body offered itself as a unique gift-giving act of refusal that invited a transformation and re/assembling of collectives and the imaginary of them. Al-Qiq and other individual strikers’ refusal to wait for their factions or parties introduced a spontaneity to hunger-striking that became necessary when the imaginary of how to hunger-strike would not budge. The spontaneity allowed for digression from the ingrained imagination of what a strike should like: of committees, of waiting for different parties and factions to come together—all of which are of course not unimportant components of organizing and have the capacity to transform and assemble actants that open up potentialities in new and unique ways. But because the collective model was so wedded to the party or faction that was in decline in the Post-Oslo moment it had stalled the possibilities of hunger-striking to the point of inaction. In this context, the refusal of the individual hunger-striker took on more willfull forms than the rigidly imagined collective it was told to wait for. Sarah Ahmed (2014: 10) captures how this willfulness can embody the gift-giving and Latourian elements of refusal to carve out open-ended possibilities for change:

The will makes human beings continuous with atoms, made from the same stuff; stuff understood neither as shaped by a preordained purpose and design, nor as lifeless and inert, but as motion and
deviation. In his descriptions of the physical universe, Lucretius offers an account of will in the form of swerving atoms: “when the atoms are travelling straight down through empty space by their own weight, at quite indeterminate times and places, they swerve ever so little from their course, just so much that you can call it a change. To swerve is to deviate: it is not to be carried by the force of your own weight. . . The swerve is just enough not to travel straightly; not to stay on course. Oh, the potential of this not!”

The potential of individual freedom strikers’ *not*—not to eat, not to wait on detention, not to wait for the collective and its weddness to the declining party or faction— is a swerve, perhaps just enough to shake up the imagination and assembling of the collective in the post post-Oslo moment; to swerve from the anachronistic political vernacular wedded to the pre-Oslo hunger-strike, to swerve just so much that we can call it a change.

Granted the individual body as a gift-offering is nothing particular to the post post-Oslo moment. Individual strikers were preceded by other, albeit distinct, acts of individual self-weaponization, perhaps the most politicized being the Qassamist suicide bombings between the Oslo singings in 1994-2000. But although the suicide attacks maintained a level of independence from the larger Hamas party, it still maintained some semblance of an organizational affiliation with the armed wing still operating within the organization’s larger script. Rather, Khader, Al-Qiq, and all the strikers in between took on a particular form of individuated self-weaponization that bypassed factional/movement/party structures, including armed wings, altogether. When Khader Adnan of Islamic Jihad went on strike, the mufti of Egypt issued a fatwa declaring it an act of suicide, prevented in Islam; when Al-Qiq declared his strike, he knew it was going against the grain of many of his Hamas party members. Yet they both swerved from their faction/movement and its orders. Khader’s wife went as far as responding to the mufti declaring “an idler cannot preach to a fighter.” Freedom strikers’
individual acts of weaponizing their bodies is thus perhaps more comparable to the sporadic knife stabbings, or the “Intifada of the Individuals” as Israelis called it, around 2015. The period entailed a series of predominantly ‘lone wolf’ attacks and knife stabbings that young Palestinians would carry out spontaneously, without premeditation, let alone party coordination. Though party members, such as PFLP-ers tried to paint the attacks through their nationalist discourses, there was no disagreement that the attacks themselves did not initiate from the matrix of factions and movements that partook in the First and Second Intifadas. Rather, the knife-stabbers much like the individual freedom strikers – albeit the latter inflict the violence inwards on their own bodies—swerved away from the existing course of nationalist politics towards an unscripted domain that beckons collectives and frameworks beyond self-determination through nationalism, and perhaps towards a moment not unlike the initial non-national orientation to decolonization that Aime Cesaire, Paul Senghor and others had at first (Wilder, 2015: 101). Theorizing these potentialities for reassembled collectives beyond a nation-state framework may seem far-fetched and perhaps inconsistent with the nationalist discourse that gets pasted onto so many forms of struggle in Palestine. Nonetheless, each time a freedom striker refuses to wait for the collective strike and its rigidly imagined party politics, the potentiality of their refusal is opened, and offered as a gift to transform social relations; and to ask: What is happening to the ‘national prisoners’ movement,’ as many Palestinians refer to it? How is the collective it is premised upon coming apart? How is it transforming?

RE/ASSEMBLING NEW COLLECTIVES

Even beyond prison walls, in the years leading up to Khader’s strike, the disenchantment with the existing matrix of politics wedded to nationalist political parties and factions was brewing. Then came 2011, when Palestinians were following the rise of the so-called Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt during the
same time that Khader had declared his strike. “When the people stood up to support the Egyptian revolution in Ramallah,” organizer Murad Jadallah (Person Interview, September 2016) recalled “they were attacked by the Palestinian security forces.” Despite (or perhaps, fueled by) the PA’s crackdown, there was a defiant movement shaping up alongside other Arab protests to demand change in Palestine as well. At the time, Murad Jadallah, a prominent PFLP member, was working as an advocacy officer in the Addameer unit where I now spent my days. Upon my prompting, he continued to recount his recollection of the days leading to and following Khader’s strike: “The movement that was shaping up was completely independent and peaceful. It was spontaneous. And it sought change from the existing regime of rule. It was demanding a new Palestinian council that would redefine relations with Israel to suit the current conditions.” Beginning with the PFLP’s factional strike and by the time Khader began his own, there was indeed a street full of people willing to support Khader. People looked at Khader’s strike, which was bold in its newness: in how it built on the momentum of the prematurely ended PFLP strike, how it transformed the modality of hunger-striking as people knew it. The boldness of Khader’s strike indeed provoked and intervened into the existing simmering both within and outside prisons: “Khader’s strike really exposed what people were trying to highlight.” Murad added “he reiterated the truth we were trying to articulate about the PA. That it could not even protect one detainee of its own people.” The emerging movement quickly rallied around Khader’s strike, citing the moment as a crucial convergence for its organizing. One particular group, the Independent Youth Movement, played a huge role in supporting the strikes, and built so much momentum in the process, so much so that the PA labeled them as a banned group working with foreign agendas to support Israel. Though it is worth emphasizing that Murad and the IYM were only a few of the polyphony of voices and collectives that organized amidst Khader’s and subsequent individual and collective strikes. Even people who supported the PA, came out to support Khader in his first strike—until he became more outspoken against the PA when he was released, that is.
Nonetheless, Khader’s individual strike, operating as a gift-offering, was therefore an intervention into an already lively moment that groups like the IYM pried at and transformed in their own way. As Khader’s individual strike, the IYM, and prisoners’ solidarity groups including the PA affiliated prisoner’s club interacted with each other in tandem to “move the streets” as al-Qiq put it, the collective alternative that he spoke of indeed began to emerge—not only as an alternative that tears individual bodies away from the default imagination of the collective as it took form in the pre-Oslo year. But the individual body through its dialectical relationship with the already moving streets played an important role in proposing and re/assembling different imaginations of collectives: Not only in the sense that chip away from the collective’s weddedness to parties and factions with their nationalist politics rooted in the pre-Oslo moment. But also, reimagining how exactly collectives could come together: beyond simply demanding improved prison conditions towards demanding more upturning change; towards demanding freedom. As the previous chapter noted, the latter was a return to the early Oslo period freedom strikes without taking the Oslo configuration of power for granted, and demanding freedom from them as well. This disassembling of a collective wedded to the nationalist politics of the First Intifada and to an extent, early years of the Oslo Accords, created space to get at more jawbary (essential) issues,” as Al-Qiq said that parties were not concerned with: freedom from detention. The demand for freedom by hungers-strikes resonated with growing unrest in the streets at the time. The Independent Youth Movement, through its organizing, was attempting to theorize change just as upturning; undoing the logic of the workings-of-power and demanding new configurations of politics beyond the political party that gets co-opted, as Fatah was with Oslo. Both groups within and beyond prisons were engaging in politics of refusal: Declaring a no, that begets a yes. This ‘yes’, as the IYM and hunger-strikers posited, is pregnant with alternatives: that “disrupt and bypass in favor of different ontologies of becoming and belonging” in Palestine (McGranahan, 2016: 334).
At this point, perhaps the elephant in the room to anyone following prisoners’ hunger-strikes in Palestine, is that the notion of individual bodies re-assembling new collectives, or at least imaginaries thereof, beyond the nationalist party and its factions does not hold. While working in the Addameer office and visiting Bilal Kayed’s tent, I constantly heard commentary that disrupted this hopeful picture: “As you can see only the PFLP is here in the solidarity tent. And only the PFLP prisoners went on solidarity strike with him.” And after Bilal’s strike ended on day 71 and blurred into the Balboul brothers (who were from a Fatah-affiliated family) 60th day of hunger the comments became: “why isn’t Fatah pulling up its weight?” or “The PFLP can’t be expected to do it all, we are too exhausted after 70 days of organizing for Bilal.”

It is clear that the moment in which I was visiting the prisoner’s tent for Bilal was markedly different from when IYM and others were visiting it for Khader in 2011. The faction/party/movement—based expectations for solidarity campaigns and organizing, which was momentarily superseded with Khader’s strike in 2011, has regained some of its primacy. Nonetheless, one cannot conclude that the work of the individual body has been done away with or is over. For it continues to de- and re/assemble the collective in small and everyday ways: When the Balboul brothers’ mother called on Khader for support when her son lost his eyesight during his strike. When Al-Qiq showed up to speak at Bilal Kayed’s hunger tent. When Bilal Kayed’s brother went to stand with Al-Qadi and the Balboul brothers’ mothers at the rally in their Bethlehem residence. When, as Hafez Omar chuckled to me, teenage girls ran up to Khader Adnan who was walking with the PFLP parliament member, Khalida Jarar to take a selfie with him. “They of course didn’t think twice that he was from Islamic Jihad, that he doesn’t even shake hands with girls. But Khader joked it off, saying that ‘walking with you guys so much, people are starting to think I’m from the jabba (PFLP).’” The moments of superseding the faction and party-based logic, that Israel’s individuation cornered the
collective into, do continue to emerge and remerge, even half a decade later. The individual strike, as al-Qiq put it, is still bringing about collective alternatives.

There are times, when the work of the individual body is much more dramatic than a phone-call or selfie—protruding out from the everyday. This work played a role in putting the “demand from the PA not to go back to negotiating but to release the pre-Oslo captives” back on the table. “And Mahmoud Abbas was compelled to prioritize this demand,” Murad recounted. In 2014, three groups of the First Intifada prisoners, a total of 75 who had been in prison for 20 years, were indeed released.

“We Palestinians have always had failed governments,” Murad added “but at that moment we determined how the PA must act on our behalf.” During that same year, a group of over one hundred prisoners from different movements and factions went on a collective strike against Israel’s policy of administrative detention. The hunger-strikers demanded an enforcement of Israel’s 6-month limit, and ending its use of the “subject to renewal” loophole which allowed it to detain people over and over for years on end. And in so doing, the prisoners and detainees embodied a shift in the collective away from the matlaby strikes of improving prison conditions towards a freedom strikes: chipping at the incarceration system rather than reiterating it. It is important to reemphasize the point made in the last chapter: that this shift from matlaby to freedom striking was not only due to the impact of individual freedom strikes on prison organizing. It was also rooted in the material and political economic shifts exemplified by the building of the walls in and out of prison during the Second Intifada. Thus, when the 2004 matlaby strike occurred, it came out of that particular moment that had to do with the way incarceration was changing and becoming neoliberalized at the turn of the century. This in turn was met with the need to revive the gains of previous hunger-strikes in 1992, by revisiting the matlaby strike as a mode of struggle. The same mode of matlaby strikes was revisited again in 2012. Yet, after several years of ambient irradiations of individual strikers’ subjectivities coupled with
continuing neoliberalization, the collective began incorporating the call for freedom from prison altogether.

Though in this collective strike against detention in 2014, prisoners were forced to end over 60 days of collective hunger with the outbreak of the Gaza; they did not achieve any tangible success against administrative detention as a policy. But nonetheless, the reappearance of administrative detention—or rather the ending of it—as a demand in the 2017 collective hunger strike, carries on the baton that 2014 left behind. And that scores of individual strikers have adopted in between. Even the 2012 strike (the first of the three collective strikes since 2004)\(^{10}\) which included over a thousand prisoners and resembled the \textit{maṭlaby} strikes before Oslo to improve prison conditions – even within that was the workings of the individual body, reviving the mode of hunger-strike from the shadows 2004 had relegated it to, back to the forefront of prisoners’ struggle. Thus, the individual strikes beginning in 2011 not only appropriated and transformed the latent potentialities of freedom strikes from the Oslo era; they also provoked prisoners to organize collective strikes for the first time since 2004, albeit in unique ways: “And it keeps provoking other prisoners to go on strike,” Khader added. In short, the work of the individual body has not been done away with just yet. It cannot be dismissed as a tool that has lost its ability to disrupt and reassemble, even when the existing party/faction-based configuration persists, so does the course of hunger that occasionally supersedes it, sometimes dramatically in the form of the revival of collective strikes some of which have adopted the demand

\(^{10}\) The three collective strikes interspersed between the scores of individual strikes took place in 2012 (against isolation and securing rights of families in Gaza to visit prisoners); in 2014 (against administrative detention); and in 2017 (a combination of 2012 and 2014: demands for improved living conditions, increased monthly visits, and ending administrative detention)
against administrative detention’s legality, and sometimes as mundanely as a short phone call or selfie. To conclude with al-Qiq: “The individual strike is still a terrain of struggle.”

There’s more to be said about 2011 as a moment though, and the shifting from maṭlaby to freedom strikes which some prisoners refer to as sijasi. The distinction is nothing new to Palestine; it was used at least since the 90s to refer to the freedom strikes in the Oslo years and other strikes that followed targeting policies rather than prison provisions. But the re-emergence of this distinction, with the reintroduction of hunger-strikes to the scene of prison politics in 2011 requires an unpacking of how that relates to the moment at large. For the same distinction was being made in protests in Cairo, for example, during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011—when people would attend maṭlaby protests demanding services in front of government buildings versus the shift towards demanding more upturning reorganizations of the government entities altogether. I will not explore how exactly these categories circulated among these different locales, these 2011’s. That can be the work of further research. But I do make note of the circulation between the 2011’s to point out that it is telling how these categories continued to be theorized from and come out of prison organizing in Palestine. It says something about the centrality of prisons to reimagining and rethinking modes of struggle in Palestine at large.

Khader’s strike in 2011 and the subsequent freedom strikes against detention became a way for people like Murad to connect prisoners issue to the Palestinian condition at large. Though one could argue that the sheer numbers of prisoners (over 40% of the population since 1967) has always made prison issues central to Palestinian politics. It’s nonetheless important to mention that after years without hunger-strikes amidst the IPS’s repressing of dissent, 2011 acted as a moment that reinvigorated the inside/outside relationship of prisoners to the streets. And, for many, it centered prison politics as a metaphor for understanding the post post-Oslo social condition in Palestine at large. Murad reiterated:
I truly believe that the case of the prisoners is the most exposing case to the truth of the Palestinian situation and the occupation. It's the secret of this country. Whoever wants to understand the occupation can simply come to Addameer and see the figures of daily, monthly, yearly prisoners, their situation, and how many of them became martyrs. That's how you understand the political situation of Palestine.

Many of Murad’s counterparts in the PFLP or other factions like the DFLP, PIJ, or Hamas party and, to a much lesser extent members of Fatah, would echo Murad’s assertion about the importance of theorizing Palestine from the prison. And that the return to prisoners’ freedom strikes from 1996 in 2011 is revealing about the greater political situation in Palestine. Beyond the departure from collective to individual strikes, is also the change in the orientation of freedom strikes altogether—from entrusting the ability of the PA to advocate on their behalf through the Oslo configuration that created it towards indicting the Oslo configuration as one of Israeli disengagement—one that robs Palestinians of control over their own lives, yet alone a government capable of representing them. Murad continued: “These strikes explain why the Palestinian government cannot be depended on to protect Palestinian detainees, or even just to pressure Israeli forces to stop detaining Palestinian civilians. It proves that the Palestinian government does not hold the power to rule, or protect.” Though Murad’s way of putting things is certainly on the extreme end of critique against the PA, the main point of what he is saying, that the PA is not a reliable entity to turn to when detainees are trying to end their waiting to wait, is one that is shared among many Palestinians. It is taken for granted, for example, that Palestinians who or imprisoned or detained by the PA are spending “wasted time”; that once they are released they will be immediately rearrested or detained by Israel and taken to Israeli-run prisons. It is common knowledge that PA-run prisons tunnels act as mere tunnels to their Israeli counterparts. Thus, when Palestinians resort to hunger-striking and appealing their detentions within the Israeli
courts, rather than calling on the PA to free them, it signifies an implicit giving up on the Oslo configuration and the PA structure it revolves around—that the latter, is simply a convenient excuse for Israeli disengagement.
Chapter Four

Force-feeding and Detention-Freezing: The Specter of Death in Israeli Prisons

When Bobby Sands and his comrades went on strike in British prisons, we felt this is our issue, those are our people, suffering from the same burdens. But there is an essential difference, that then and there in Britain, it was permissible for a prisoner to die while on strike. And so, he died, he became a martyr. Legally, they did not prevent strikers from dying. And so, we had hunger strike martyrs in 1981 in Ireland. But now and here, the climate differs. They will not let you die – not even go unconscious; they’ll rush to give you supporting vitamins. Legally, they will not let you die.

—Wisam Rafidi, personal interview, August 2016

I told the interrogator, I will continue to hunger-strike—until I die as a martyr. So that the record shows that a journalist died in the occupation’s prisons, and exposes your injustice.

—al-Qiq, personal interview, August 2016

desert prison became corpses: Ali Al-Ja’fari, Rasem Halaweh, and Ishaq Moragha. Then days after, a fourth: the corpse of Anees Dawla (El-Regoob, 2014). The first three died as Israeli prison officials force-fed them, attempting to quell the strike. Sticking the force-feeding tube down their noses, but missing their stomach for their lungs, puncturing their breathing to death. Following the deaths, the Israeli High Court subsequently banned the practice of force-feeding hunger-strikers. Ever since, no Palestinian prisoner has died while on hunger-strike. Even after the High Court reinstated the legal basis of force-feeding in 2015 (following the second collective strike since 2014), and repeatedly threatened to force-feed strikers. At the time of this writing, no hunger-striker has been force-fed. The overwhelming consensus among prisoners whom I spoke to is that we are living in a different moment. The hunger-strikes since Khader’s in 2011 are not only different from those of the 1980s in their demands and in their numbers—the relationship of hungering to dying has changed: “They will not let you die in prison,” several prisoners repeated. So much so, that Israel has not attempted to utilize the force-feeding method of repressing strikes that it legalized.

So what is it about death in Israeli prisons in the contemporary moment? Why can you have as many dead bodies at a checkpoint or even town-sidewalks, but not in a prison cell? And what emerges when prison deaths are something the Israeli state cannot have? This chapter is an engagement with these questions: First, it explores why the specter of death, dangled by the Palestinian hunger-strikes, is so threatening to the Israeli state’s mode of governing. What and how does it provoke? While the previous chapter traced the provocation how hunger-strikers assemble different fields and actors—among other prisoners, hunger-strikers, their families, and social networks in the West Bank and Gaza—this chapter, explores how hunger assemblages provoke the state. It traces how the new modality of hunger-striking against detention in the contemporary moment pierces aspects central to Israel’s regime: first that no prisoners die in Israeli custody; and second that no one on detention escapes Israel’s temporality of disengagement—waiting to wait—even if through death. Unpacking
the state’s response to the hunger-strikes, as the chapter proceeds to do, reveals the state’s attempt to deal with the incredibly powerful interventions hunger-strikes have and continue to produce; and the new collectives that have been opened up. More specifically, Israeli authorities’ approach towards the strikes reveals a certain kind of coercion under which the state operates: cornered between the need to maintain its liberal image that precludes prison deaths while also imposing the liminal temporality of waiting on detention. The latter is premised on the existence of a body to detain, adding a Foucauldian layer to the state’s inability to allow hunger-strikers to die while on strike. Without the body there is no detention, nor the temporality of disengagement that it inscribes.

The remainder of the chapter explores how the state is continually shifting its response towards hunger strikers—whether through deportation or requiring hunger strikers to finish their first detention period. Or, beginning in and increasingly after 2015, through detention freezing and the (not-yet-acted-upon) threat of force-feeding. This analysis reveals not just the workings of the Israeli prison system, but the occupation of Palestine at large. And even more broadly so, about what type of death is and isn’t allowed in the modern states and their “biosovereign” mode of governing—and by the same token the new stakes claimed by hunger-striking in the contemporary moment from Israel to the Guantanamo to Turkey (Bargu, 2014).

THE POEISIS OF DEATH

The new modality of hunger-striking against detention in the contemporary moment pierces aspects central to Israel’s regime: first that no prisoners die in Israeli custody; and second that no one on detention escapes Israel’s temporality of disengagement—waiting to wait—even if through death. As far as the latter, when Israel presents waiting as non-negotiable—that the negotiation process is itself a process of permanent waiting, striking against that is no simple feat. As Al-Qiq implies, it
theorizes possibilities beyond waiting, which, as detailed in the introduction, is essential to Israel’s contemporary phase of its occupation: disengaged settlerism. Israel’s disengagement is premised on Palestinians being content with waiting out their detention, which on the one hand is expected due to Israel’s widespread use of detention, but on the other never totally predictable due to the deliberate arbitrariness of detainment on Israel’s part. Though Israel’s imposition of this liminal waiting goes beyond the practice of administrative detention itself. Rather, as the work of Irene Calis (2017: 66) captures, it is definitive of the temporality in the West Bank and East Jerusalem at large: Where “seemingly chaotic and random military disruptions also have a patterned character,” through faceless bureaucracy measures –like the secret file of detention or the permit system to cross the wall—so much so that they become aadi or “routine.” Calis (2017: 66) continues: “At one level the certainty of Israeli control over one’s life and, in turn, the awareness of one’s own lack of control are articulated as ‘adi. ‘Adi can be translated as something that even if not readily accepted is nonetheless ‘not out of the ordinary.” This sense of lacking control in the face of unpredictable bureaucracy is often translated into a resignation to the waiting bureaucracy entails (Auyero, 2012). Whether in detention centers, or while waiting for permits to cross the wall and reach their farmlands, give birth, receive cancer treatment, or even go to the beach. Mohamed al-Qiq (Personal Interview, August 2016) summarizes this equation of inescapable waiting as it was presented to him during his interrogation upon his arrest:

They told me, you either confess or go to detention. Meaning, it is impossible for us to send you home. He told me straight up. Impossible to send you home. So I decided there’s no such thing as no such thing. There’s such a thing as “no,” but there’s no such thing as impossible. And I went home. Because then they had told me you either confess and go to prison or get detention and go to prison. So in either case prison, prison. I said to myself prison, prison—no, I’ll strike before any of it.
When Israel imposes waiting as the only option for Palestinians in its configuration of disengaged settlerism—in al-Qiq’s case either waiting out a prison sentence or waiting in detention—refusing to wait defies the very logic of the occupation in its contemporary iteration. His body, as he pushes it closer towards the possibility of death, disrupts. It manages to carve out an escape from the waiting: A refusal that confronts a supposed dead-end with a deadening body. And in doing so, digs out of this possibility of deadness a field for life-making and re-making. The hungering body, in its approach towards death, becomes a gift of refusal marked by its poiesis: the bodies’ embodying of new kinds of social organization to emerge from within it.

The question becomes how. How does hungering towards death—or the possibility of it (since no hunger striker has died since 1980)—provoke the state to change something about its imposition of waiting? After all, when Khader, al-Qiq, and Bilal Kayed decisively returned to their homes at the end of their first six months, they effectively forged an alternative to waiting out a sentence or waiting in detention. Their strikes do put an end, even if ephemerally to their endless waiting. Rather than waiting out a detention period that is always subject to renewal, al-Qiq spent five months in the hospital and was released to his home after; Khader only had to complete one detention period after his strike, and was released at the end of it, as was Bilal. Though it is true, that a caveat worth mentioning, is that this end to the waiting is only conditional, since many former detainees do not escape the possibility of future re-arrest through their hungering. Re-detainment is always eminent yet unpredictable, normal in its everyday occurrence, yet jarring when it finally does happen as it did to Khader in 2015, and al-Qiq in 2017 (Calis, 2017). What exactly freedom means amidst the doubleness of detention’s routine that is always relational to the rupture of (re)arrest is a point that I return to in the next section. But it does not negate the main focus of this chapter on the moment when the striker’s release date is announced—breaking the state of waiting to wait, to a waiting for—and secondly, when the striker walks free into a time-space that they starved their bodies in order to define
on their own terms. These two moments, even if fleeting, are moments of exceptions from the confining temporality of waiting to wait; from Israel’s depriving Palestinians of a waiting for a time and space that they can envision and create themselves. If hunger-strikers’ dangling of their own death before Israeli authorities is what carved room, both temporal and spatial, for these exceptions to waiting it wait. The intervention that death is capable of doing—of provoking deviations from Israel’s temporality of disengagement, bears unpacking.

In order to explore the capacities that a hunger-striker’s imminent death brings about, it is important to unpack what happens throughout the 60 or sometimes up to 91 days of hunger. Like with all hunger-strikes, when Khader or Bilal go hungry, it is the time of the body—or rather the decay of it—that takes center stage and disrupts detention’s liminality instated by arbitrary court rulings. In that sense, hunger-striking fits into the larger repertoire of direct action meant to intervene into existing temporalities in an attempt to transform them—whether it be the sit-ins of the civil rights era meant to disrupt segregationist America and move it towards desegregating, or arsonists in Buenos Aires burning down shanty town to pressure local authorities to prioritize their public housing needs. Direct action is premised on disrupting the normalization of ‘normal’—what becomes a’adi—precisely because so much power is inscribed in maintaining a’adi as such. In the case of Palestine, Israeli authority asserts a particular system of control through its bureaucratic and administrative methods that “rupture social life while becoming an ordinary part of it” (Calis, 2017: 66). Israeli power—and its matrix of control is therefore invested in the state of things as they are as well as thwarting or stalling any efforts to transform it. But what is unique about hunger-strikes in prison—and what makes them a last resort—is their ability to intervene into the state of things with an urgency that can’t be as easily dismissed or repressed as acts like refusing to stand up during headcount, returning meals, boycotting courts, or other modes of struggle in Israeli prisons. The possibility of death in prison complicates and challenges the state’s response.
The image that Israel and IPS purport on a global stage, as many Palestinians would assert, makes prisoners’ dangling of the specter of death a huge point of leverage. “They don’t let you die in prison.” Ahmed Qattamish (Personal Interview, August 2016) would echo what so many others had said to me. With the exception of some prisoners who like Arafat Jaradat, among a few others, were tortured to death at the hand of his interrogators, since 1980, when Israel killed three hunger-striking Palestinians while force-feeding them, no Palestinian hunger striker has died in prison while on strike. The Israeli state’s swift reaction to ban force-feeding after the three deaths is telling. As is the way the 2004 hunger-strike was repressed and undermined, not through force-feeding but rather using individuation technologies and differential privilege practices characteristic of the period following the Second Intifada. And though countless Palestinians recalled the IRA strikes and the resulting deaths, including Bobby Sands in 1981, in their narration of the contemporary hunger strikes in Palestine, the overwhelming consensus was that the politics of dying on strike has distinctly shifted. And thus, so has the entire assemblage of hunger. The individual striker who insists on the taboo—on dying in prison—as Al-Qiq did puts prison personnel and interrogators in a bind as to what exactly there is that they can do with this hungering body that is trying to escape what the state portrays as an inescapable temporality of waiting, but at the same time cannot be allowed to die in state custody.

So what is it about death in Israeli Prisons? Why can you have as many dead bodies at a checkpoint or even town-sidewalks, but not in a prison cell? “Israel’s politics does not entail killing people in prison,” Qattamish (Personal Interview, August 2016) responded. “Israel sees itself as a civilized advanced state. So how could someone die in their prisons? No! . . . Even if there is someone on the brink of death, and he could die in prison or with his family, [the IPS would say] ‘No. Release him. And let him die with his family.’ In other words, it is not that Israel no longer kills Palestinians with impunity—the daily assassinations of fishermen on the shores of Gaza or shot-dead women at checkpoints or assassinated Palestinians in their own homes say otherwise. Rather, Israel in its
investment to maintain its public image as a ‘liberal state,’ has created a particular geography of state-inflicted Palestinian deaths. Dead bodies of Palestinians in Israel’s purportedly humane prisons are a huge blemish to its liberal image—which, as Laleh Khalili (2013) argues, is crucial to its ability to maintain its status as a legitimate and permissible occupying power. Shifting tactics of control, or as I argue, at least the appearance of them beyond slaughter to elaborate systems of detention encourages policymakers in said liberal states to willingly choose to continue waging war. Though I digress from Khalili’s point to stress that liberal states have not actually shifted away from manslaughter—the US-led war in Iraq and Israel’s slaughtering of Palestinians in the thousands during its wars on Gaza are testaments to that. Rather, I prefer to build on Banu Bargu’s (2014: 26) theorizing of the ‘biosovereign assemblage’ which challenges conventional understandings of governmentality vis à vis Foucault as transitioning from corporal loyalty as a means of extracting power to administration of lives and well-being. Instead, I argue vis-a-vis Bargu (2014: 33) that states simply build Foucauldian apparatuses of biopolitics and disciplining life-forms upon a "substrate of old techniques" including physical torture and slaughter that didn’t disappear, but were merely “refurbished.”¹¹ This is how we can make sense of Israel’s slaughtering of Palestinians in wars on Gaza and assassinations in the West Bank, at the same time that is has integrated technologies of individuation and isolation meant to discipline life, or ‘melt one’s consciousness’ as Walid Daqqa’s (2009) prison memoir title puts it. Nonetheless, the appearance of liberal states as humane—as having shifted from gruesome corporal punishment to biopolitical forms—is central to their ability to divert public criticism and carry out imperial wars and

¹¹Though Bargu was theorizing within the context of Turkey, I am arguing that the same concept of ‘biosovereign assemblages’ applies when thinking through the mode of governing carried out by so-called ‘liberal’ states like the US and Israel which continue to inflict corporal violence while also integrating advanced biopolitical technologies and tactics.
occupation. The transition to biopolitics makes prisons and wars more acceptable among the general public. Thus, if we take prisons as spaces where the public consents and even expects liberal states to bio-politically punish, correct, and rehabilitate criminal bodies taken under its custody (and not to torture them to death)—then flagrant instances of torture or deaths of prisoner corrupts such a liberal image. Whether it was the leaked images of torture in Abu Ghreib or news about the hunger-strikes and suicides in Guantanamo, these moments were met with such public outcry precisely because they corrupted the image that people expect of liberal states.

In a place like the prison, where inmates are ultimately in state custody, what happens behind bars is perceived as a reflection of the way a state exercises power. Thus, portraying an image that tactics of control have indeed shifted beyond the corporal within prison is crucial to a state’s maintenance of its liberal image. In the case of Israel, it encourages policymakers within and beyond its borders (especially in the US) to provide financial and material support for the occupation. Thus, Israel is invested in preventing hunger-strike deaths from happening in an institution so tied to the liberal state’s image—where the public assumes liberal states no longer kill but humanely discipline. When a prisoner goes to such extreme lengths of protest, so much so as to will their bodies towards death, they draw attention as to what inhumane conditions would push them to do so. This is why hunger-strikes or suicides, whether in Israeli prisons or elsewhere, are so contentious. So much so, that during the hunger-strikes against the introduction of maximum security prisons in Turkey in 2001 that Banu Bargu (2014: 3) writes about, when leftist prisoners insisted on carrying out their hunger strikes to the death, the state eventually mass-pardoned the striking prisoners, so that they could die outside the hyper-scrutinized limits of state custody within prison. This is also why, as mentioned in chapter two, Israel has turned to various means of repression to discourage prisoners from going on strike (revoking privileges, confiscating smuggled possessions, prison relocations, and isolation). Though these tactics proved effective throughout the long gap of hunger-strikes since 2004, Khader’s
strike in 2011 gave rise to not only subsequent individual freedom strikes, but revived the collective strike anew. In doing so, as detailed in the previous chapter, Palestinian prisoners and detainees have moved hunger-striking back into the landscape of Israeli prisons—with the strikes continuing, almost without disruption, to this day. And in doing so, placing Israel under an unforgiving public light, just as Mohamed al-Qiq had theorized: so that the record shows and exposes the injustice happening behind bars, and in doing so, opens opportunities for change.

WHEN HUNGER BECOMES MARATHON: THE WAIT-OR-LEAVE ULTIMATUM

If Israel seeks to maintain its status as a liberal state and legitimate occupier, Palestinian prisoners’ endless hunger-striking against detention puts Israel in a bind. It forces Israel to figure out how it can sustain a geography of death that precludes prison while also asserting its temporality of waiting to wait – both of which are crucial aspects of its occupation. Palestinians who go on strike understand this dilemma that they create, as al-Qiq said to me: “I told the interrogator, I will continue to hunger-strike until I die as a martyr, so that the record shows that a journalist died in the occupation’s prisons, and exposes your injustice.” How Israel confronts this double threat to their liberal image and temporality of disengagement is revealing. The details of how Israel responds, the calculation that they make while responding to the strike, reveals important underpinnings of the occupation; what state authorities deem worth prioritizing. Though the IPS does eventually release many individual hunger-strikers demanding an end to their detention, they do so conditionally and after a drawn-out negotiations process. Most commonly the first offer Israel proposes in exchange for the detainee ending his/her strike is *ib’ad* or deportation. In the case of Bilal, for example, around his 20th day on strike, there were murmurs from the kitchen from Bilal’s lawyer: “The military commander, with recommendation from the intelligence” offered Bilal a deal—to be deported to Jordan for 4 years
under condition of no political involvement” Farah Bayadsi drafted as a press release. When Bilal refused the deal, according to Farah, the military court threatened to keep him under detention for an additional four years. Yet, Kayed stood his ground announcing to the press, through his lawyer, “I did not go on strike to negotiate! I went on strike for freedom.”

This conditioning of release with deportation by Israel is not limited to Bilal’s strike, but is actually characteristic of their approach to freedom strikers—and therefore warrants unpacking. The ultimatum Israel intelligence is presenting to hunger-strikers is that they can either wait or leave. Waiting on detention is only excused if the hunger-strikers are willing to leave the homes they seek to return to in the first place. Here, May & Thrift’s (2003) work on ‘geographies of temporality’ becomes pertinent – reminding us, as Massey did, that the temporal is inextricably intertwined with the spatial (hence the concept of timespace). Thus, Israel’s imposition of a temporality of waiting is interwoven with the space it occupies—whether in territories occupied since 1948, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, or Gaza. This is implied in its regime of settler disengagement—with the suspended present that allows Israel to disengage from any meaningful ‘solution’ that would bring meaningful liberation for Palestinian peoples tied up with its settler politics of taking over more land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Since the temporal and spatial modes of Israel’s occupation are inextricably intertwined, the only means through which the state can allow an exception to its politics of waiting is by displacing the hunger-striker spatially; in other words, the hunger-striker cannot determine space and time on their own terms – for those are the planes where the state asserts its dominance. It is as if to say Palestinians can only assert their claim to one (time or space), but since both are intertwined (that duality is a myth) it is to say that you can have neither. You can be released, but only if you agree for us to deport you to Jordan, the military commander told Bilal. Or to Gaza, in the case of Hanaa Shalabi. Or even another place in the West Bank that is not the hunger-striker’s hometown. The point is to displace; and to deny the hunger-striker their ability to move through time-space on their own
terms. That this ultimatum is dictated to hunger-strikers over and over underscores the importance of temporal-spatial dominance to Israel’s regime of settler disengagement—and how the hunger-strikers hit the nail on the head, challenging power from where it extends.

When detainees defy the deportation-or-detention ultimatum and continue with their strike, as they often do, the state reverts back to its imposition of waiting: Israeli intelligence makes the striker wait on them for their next response, suspending appeal trial dates arbitrarily and without warning and stretching out the duration of the hunger-strike in the process. Sometimes the state also threatens hunger-strikers with force-feeding, well before and increasingly after its passing of the force-feeding law during Muhamed al-Qiq’s strike in 2015—a point I will return to in the next section. Through all of these time-stretching measures, the state administers, even throughout the strike, the suspension and liminality of detention that the hunger-strikes is attempting to escape. Only when the hunger-striker’s body is on the verge of death—when the state has imposed waiting for as long as it can without death jeopardizing its ‘liberal’ image—the military commander, again via intelligence, offers another settlement. Release is still conditional, but this time rather than being bound by deportation, the hunger-striker is told that they will be freed but only after completing the original order of detention (usually four to six months). In turn, the state agrees not to renew the striker’s detention order and to release them. Most hunger-strikers would accept this arrangement, as it is usually proposed when they are on the brink of dying. Granted the possibility of re-arresting the hunger-striker for a new detention period is not taken off the table by Israeli authorities. Nonetheless, when the detainee waits out the remaining order confident that they will walk free at the end of it. That they had broken, even if ephemerally, the liminality characteristic of administrative detention. So that when the detainee walks out of their detention and towards their own homes, in that deleting moment, they enact their freedom. When Bilal returned to Asira al-Shamaliya in January 2017, Khader to Jenin in
2012, al-Qiq to Hebron in 2016, they asserted a place for themselves in time-space of contemporary Palestine on their own terms. They broke the temporality of waiting to wait.

BODIES IN SUSPENSION

As the string of detainees striking for freedom continued well beyond Khader’s first strike into 2015, the way Israeli intelligence dealt with hunger-strikers began to shift. This became most apparent during the strike of Muhammed Allan in 2015 and later Mohamed al-Qiq in 2016. Over the course of Allan’s last few days on strike, the Israeli authorities confronted the possibility of his decaying body in two ways that were distinctly different from the conditional release scenarios they resorted to in the past. Beyond threatening prisoners with the deportation-or-extended-detention ultimatum or requiring hunger-strikers to wait out the rest of their detention period before release, during Allan’s strike Israel introduced two additional tactics: 1) the threat of force-feeding and 2) the practice of detention “freezing.” Though Benjamin Netanyahu himself had begun dangling the specter of the former during the collective strike of 2014—a relic that Israel had used until force-feeding was outlawed after it killed three prisoners in 1980—“detention freezing” was a first. Israel began using the latter when Mohamed Allan was on the brink of death.

After two months of hunger-striking, on his 59th day of strike, Allan’s body shook with continuous shivering and seizures before he was unable to breathe and lost consciousness. The Barzilai hospital staff in the South of Israel immediately resuscitated him and put him on a life supporting respirator while administering basic minerals and nutrients that do not break the hunger-strike to his body (Murphy, 2015). Since 2011, this was the first time a Palestinian hunger striker’s health condition had deteriorated to the point where mechanical ventilation was required. And when this happened, Israel’s high court intervened in an unprecedented way: the court ruled to suspend the administrative
detention order Muhammad Allan was hunger-striking against. In doing so the court cited an MRI the hospital had taken during his coma indicating that he had suffered brain damage as a result of his protest (Murphy, 2015b). Unlike some strikers who sometimes take vital vitamins during their strike to prevent their organs from decaying, Allan had refused to take anything but water insisting on freedom or death. And in visibly nearing the latter to the point of unconsciousness, he came dangerously close to piercing aspects central to Israel’s regime: first that no prisoners die in Israeli custody and second that no one on detention escapes the wait to wait, even if through death. The Israeli court’s response seemed to shrewdly circumvent both of these threats to its governance by simply suspending the detention order altogether. Doing so gave Israeli authorities a new leeway: if medical tests showed that Allan suffered irreversible brain damage, the court would revoke his detention thereby preventing the possibility of fatal medical complications in prison to preserve its liberal image. Until then, however, Israel would use the suspension as a way to deter the strikers attempt to escape the liminal waiting of detention: As long as Allan’s body was in critical condition, the detention would be suspended until his health ‘stabilized’—after which the court could decide to return to reinstate the detention order. In doing so, Israeli authorities adapted their approach to the emerging hunger-striker’s movement which challenged Israel’s delicate balance between maintaining a liberal image that precludes prison deaths while imposing a liminal temporality of waiting on detention.

By suspending Allan’s detention when his body was on the verge of collapsing, the state aimed to disrupt his dying body’s disruption. The act was a meta-liminal one of sorts: suspending an already suspended temporality—the detention that Allan was protesting. And in doing so, the state meant to put everything on pause until Allan’s condition stabilized, while under observation in intensive care. “Stabilizing” his medical condition is doublespeak for counteracting the urgency for freedom his death posed. By suspending the detention, the state at once avoided both a potential death which would
blemish the occupation’s liberal legitimacy, with all its contradictions; as well as the hunger-striker’s ability to break the liminality of detention. The latter is characteristic of the state’s wider approach of presenting itself as an occupying power that is in never-ending peace talks—always liminal, but implicitly permanent. But Israel’s inscribing of disengagement through administrative detention is also premised on the presence of the detainee’s body. Thus, in addition to maintaining its liberal image of prisons free of death, there is a Foucauldian element to the state’s response to hunger-strikers: the idea that without a detainees’ body, there is no detention. There is no disengagement. Thereby, debasing the approach of the state towards occupying Palestinian territories in the contemporary moment. Through this lens, one can make sense of Israel’s practice of suspending striker’s detention— in a way not unlike that of the Turkish state pardoning hunger-strikers turned death-fasters en masse—with the purpose of expelling them from their custody, lest they undermine the fabric of state power. But instead of releasing prisoners, the Israeli state does so only after they complete their first detention order. Though this practice of detention-freezing introduced in 2015 adds another barrier to unequivocal release, while effectively expelling strikers from their custody while they’re in critical condition through the suspension.

Suspending detention can therefore be analyzed as a way for the state to expel strikers with critical condition from their custody, but without releasing them, lest this disrupt the temporality of disengagement on the one hand and inspire future strikes on the other. Israel’s minister of public security, Gilad Erdan, indirectly articulated this equation when the court suspended Allan’s detention. Erdan stated that he rejected all proposals to release Allan, adding “it would be a prize for the hunger strike he initiated and may lead to mass hunger strikes among the security detainees, after they discover a new tool with which to extort the state of Israel” (Lis et al, 2015). In fact, a precedent of the “mass hunger strike among security detainees” that Erdan feared had just occurred in 2014 when the over 100 detainees, emboldened by the individual strikers, went on hunger strike to demand an end to the
endless renewal of detention periods—or rather, what makes detention a state of suspension. What Erdan was implicitly admitting was that the individual strikers against detention – what he calls “security detainees” or sometimes “terrorists” – had not only paved a path to break the liminality that detention is structured to create. But also, that in doing so, the likes of Khader, Al-Qiq, and Allan inspired and re-assembled the collective hunger-strike. And together these recurring group and individual strikes have coalesced into a full-fledged movement. 2015 therefore represented a calculated restlessness on Israel’s part: to put an end to the escape from detention that previous strikes seemed to have paved and instrumentalize, and expelling prisoners on the brink of death from their custody, all while appearing to do so out of concern for the detainees’ deteriorating health to maintain their liberal image. But not only does suspension freezing try to avert hunger-strikers’ attempt to escape waiting to wait, but through the state’s suspension, it also reasserts its system of control through maintaining a relationship between routine and rupture, which characterizes the uncertainty of detention, and manifests itself in different ways throughout daily life in Palestine. By suspending a hunger-striker’s detention, instead of granting them the definite release date they are striking for, the suspension makes their detention all the more uncertain.

In addition to detention freezing, in 2015 Israel passed the “Law to Prevent Harm Caused by Hunger Strike” (Addameer, 2015). The law allowed Israeli doctors to force-feed Palestinian hunger-strikers for the first time since the 1980s. Just like as it did with suspension-freezing, Israel disguised the practice—which the World Medical Association denounced as torture—as one that was sympathetic to detainee’s well-being. The bill was passed by the Knesset, shortly before Allan’s strike. In fact, before Allan lost consciousness Israeli authorities had threatened to use the newly passed law to force-feed him. They leveled the same threats less than a year later against Muhamad Al-Qiq; and when the latter began intermittently losing consciousness and vomiting acid from his empty stomach, prison guards tied al-Qiq to his hospital bed at the civilian HaEmek Medical center as the medical
team put an IV into his arm administering salts and minerals (Silver, 2016). Al-Qiq, who was shackled to his bed, pleaded with the hospital staff to remove the IV. Though the substances did not amount to force-feeding which entails substantive nutritional substances, attorney Samer Sam’an then argued that since the minerals were administered forcibly, not only could they further endanger al-Qiq’s life, but the coercion made it carry the same weight as force-feeding (Silver, 2016). Though the hospital continued to administer the IVs to Al-Qiq’s shackled body and later threatened that they were forming a medical team to force-feed him. The threat to force-feed was no different than the threats al-Qiq interrogators attempted to intimidate him with when he was arrested: that there was no way out of waiting, not even through death. As the interrogator said to Al-Qiq “It is impossible!” In a way force-feeding does similar work as that of detention-freezing: a way of undermining the hunger-striker’s body’s unique mobility – to move and break through the state’s limbo of waiting, and through its self-destruction carve a route beyond detention altogether. If hunger-striking was a fast-forward out of an endlessly looping detention, the detention-feeding would be the pause button—a temporary ejection from state custody in prison, and the force-feeding a rewind. With the latter, instead of averting the threat of prison in death by appearing to remove detainees from state custody—at least in name, since hunger-striker’s shoes detention are suspended remain shackled to their beds for ‘security’ purposes—force-feeding would simply end the threat of imminent death and maintain detainees within detention. Yet the state, until now, only uses force-feeding as a threat, without actually utilizing the practice. And so just as individual striker’s forged new territory for Palestinian hunger-striking—both individual and collective— to remerge after 2011, the Israeli state adapted and reconfigured its policies in turn. But that would not be the end of the story, as the likes of Al-Qiq and Bilal Kayed and the Balboul brothers continuing to strike after 2015—as well as the most recent 2017 strike—assure.
Not only did many Israeli doctors vow to ignore the new force-feeding bill to abide by the globally esteemed medical ethics of groups like the World Medical Association. But Al-Qiq and the hunger-strikers that followed vowed to continue with their strikes regardless of the threat by the new law. In a way, the very fact that Israeli authorities felt compelled to pass the law, with Erad warning that “hunger-strikes have become a mean to threaten Israel,” indicates that the hunger-strikes did indeed manage to break the order of things, even if indirectly. The strikes pushed Israel to compromise its liberal standing to prioritize its imposition of the temporality of uncertain detention. Perhaps that is what is underlying Erad’s absurd equating of the strikes as “a new type of suicide terror attack,” attempting to justify the unfavorable bill with the go-to cloak of ‘security’ concerns. And after a decade of wars waged in the name of security, the justification no longer holds the weight it once did and is increasingly scrutinized by populations globally but also locally in present-day Israel; with each additional hunger-striker’s writhing body inviting further scrutiny.

When the Israeli High court continued to suspend detention orders of hunger-strikers after Mohammad Allan, as it did with al-Qiq shortly after, the latter refused the conditions dictated by the court: to remain in HaEmek hospital and receive medical treatment and agree to medical tests. Al-Qiq insisted that he would not be treated under suspension, vowing to continue his strike even in the face of force-feeding threats, until he was allowed to leave the hospital as a free person. Later al-Qadi and the Balboul brothers who went on strike a few months later (during and following Bilal Kayed’s strike), would follow al-Qiq’s example, refusing the suspension and continuing the strike until they could leave the hospital knowing that their detention order would end without renewal rather than have the possibility of re-instatement still hanging over their heads. And each of them—al-Qiq, al-Qadi, and the Balboul brothers—did indeed reunite with their families after their detention period ended without renewal. Their stubborn refusal continues to ignite the delicate configuration of Israel’s mode of
occupation. And, as the recent collective strike in 2017 showed, this work of the hunger-wrenched bodies is continuing to emerge and re-emerge in new ways.

Conclusion

The Potentialities of Everyday Hunger

In many ways, this thesis is constantly returning to Mohamed al-Qiq’s declaration that he simply could not wait—not on the state to free him from his detention, nor for his political movement leaders to come together and organize a collective strike. On the one hand, “I do not want to wait” becomes an indictment of the waiting inscribed in administrative detention and disengagement as one and the same. Theorizing one becomes theorizing the other—how disengagement makes waiting cease altogether; it destroys it; and confronts people with the limits of the nation-state they are waiting for; how it might never come to exist. On the other hand, refusing to wait, is a refusing to wait for the First-intifada style of collective strikes that factions and movements leaders could not organize from 2004 to 2011. “There is no such thing as a collective strike in Palestine today, nor five years ahead” in al-Qiq’s adamant words, does not signal the end of collective politics altogether. Rather, it is a grappling with how the way of imagining collectives, within a pre-Oslo moment that no longer exists, has become illogical. Individual freedom strikes confronts the illogical with the illogical—or rather with seemingly absurd and unfamiliar ways of collectivity. The illogic becomes the terrain of a reconfiguring of politics and how people make sense and time and space for themselves when the political, as they have become accustomed to imagining it, becomes evacuated.

The body of the individual hunger-striker takes to task the revisiting of politics by reassembling the meaning of collectivity that could no longer come together following the Second Intifada
individuations; in refusing to wait for the stagnated collective, the hunger-strike becomes an offering of the body as a gift to entrap new actors and fields: new hunger-strikers along with their family members, who in turn support subsequent strikers’ family members and in the process offer glimpses of what new collectivities, beyond rigid nationalist factions divisions, can look like.

There is something ineffable about these glimpses: whether it is marked by inescapable “moving of the streets” when Khader Adnan went on his first strike in 2011, and the convergence of thousands of bodies from across the occupied territories. Or the subtler moments that have since followed. These moments of blurring continue, even after the fatigue of 6 years packed with dozens and of freedom strikes have seemed to break back down into the strict lines of “logic”: the prisoner’s tent rotating between the faction members whose family the last striker is affiliated with. They continue even, as the Israeli state, increasingly uses tactics like force-feeding threats and detention freezing since 2015 to undermine the incredibly powerful time-space freedom strikes have opened up. The glimpses are embedded in the comfort that the mother of Mahmoud Balboul (considered to be Fatah-affiliated) seeks by turning to Khader Adnan when her son is on the brink of losing his eyesight; when the mother stands with Mahmoud Kayed at her side during a rally at her residence, as he echoes through the microphone her son’s call for freedom; and when Khader Adnan jokes about being mistaken for being a PFLP-er – the strict lines of previous collectives become blurred beckoning new assemblages.
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