

The Political Haunting of “Martyrdom” in the Palestinian Context

Authors : Mai Awad

Abstract : This paper aims to focus on the phenomenon of martyrdom—particularly its performative aspect—and how social and popular cultural representations address the multiple meanings of the loaded image of a Palestinian martyr. This focus will help us to explore the possible reasons that might push Palestinians to consider pursuing “martyrdom” or suicide operations. Tracing what happened in the past and what is currently happening (that is, haunting) will aid in theorizing how the act/practice of “martyrdom” is produced. It is believed that there are social and political forces, particularly in a colonial society like Palestine, that influence the subject and its experience. But what is unique about this paper is its attempt to disclose the invisible, hidden narratives and complexities of Palestinian life that we do not see. By giving “martyrs” a chance to speak and express their own narratives—since “martyrs” usually leave written letters for their families, which are published after their death—this study must broaden the whole picture and discuss what is missing. The analytic method to be used: For the methodology, the paper recruits discourse analysis as a method for tracing the emergence, circulation, and productivity of the martyrdom discourse across a range of social practices in Palestinians’ everyday life after the Nakba. The paper analyzes the letters that “martyrs” left to their families, relatives, and the Palestinian community after their death. By letting “martyrs” speak for themselves and hearing their unique discourses, the research would suggest that more explanation is needed to describe the “martyr” identity. Hence, it is not possible to study the “martyr” identity in Palestine without understanding the colonial context that governs it and shapes their subjective experience.

Keywords : martyrdom, palestine, haunting, nakba 1948

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