

ANATOMY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE GENOCIDE IN GAZA: INTERRELATIONS

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Abstract: This article presents the main considerations of the report “Anatomy of a genocide”, by Francesca Albanese. We cross it with current and interdisciplinary productions. The emphasis is on the legal concept of apartheid as a necessary interpretative key and on the psychological damage caused to the Palestinian population as a consequence of the colonial and genocidal project. The accuracy of Albanese’s report is noted, but also the need for complementation to ensure a more comprehensive view of the visible damage caused in the Gaza Strip. The unprecedented use of the genocide typification in the document of the special rapporteur appointed by the UN Human Rights Council for the specific case demands and justifies the in-depth analysis proposed here.

Keywords: Apartheid; Colonialism; Genocide.

Introduction

Currently, Italian jurist Francesca Albanese holds the mandate of the “Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) since 1967”, linked to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). One of the predecessors in the position, John Dugard, in 2022, highlighted the links of the first rapporteurs to political-diplomatic contexts, which made it difficult to perform the role (Fábio Sahd, 2022a). The resurgence of criticism has been notable since Dugard’s term, the first to denounce the crime of apartheid by Israel, back in 2007. Three rapporteurs have held the position between Dugard and Albanese, with American professor Richard Falk also

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standing out for his assertiveness, going even further than Dugard's accusations that the Israeli occupation contains elements of colonialism and apartheid. Falk (United Nations, 2014) connected these categories to Israel's colonial project, guided by the Judaization of the territory and which implies ethnic cleansing. This is linked both to settler colonialism and to the classification of genocide.

In March 2024, after signing two collective notes warning of the risk of genocide being committed in the Gaza Strip, Albanese, as rapporteur, published the document "Anatomy of a Genocide". Since Israel prevented her visit, the report was based on data and information from organizations, international jurisprudence, investigative reports and consultations with individuals, entities, authorities and experts, citing other UN members, academics and the legal case brought by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice (United Nations, 2024, p. 1-2). Previously, she had reiterated the understanding of Dugard, Falk and Lynk (United Nations, 2021a) that the situation fits the typifications of colonialism and apartheid. So far, after five months, "Israel has destroyed Gaza", including 70% of residential areas, killed "more than 30,000 Palestinians, including more than 13,000 minors", in addition to 12,000 "presumed dead" (missing) and 71,000 injured, many with permanent maiming. 80% of the entire population has been forcibly displaced and thousands "detained and systematically subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment". Furthermore, the siege imposed since 2007 has intensified the closure policy, in force since 1993. If the 2023/2024 operation was preceded by five others, only between October 7 and 9, 2023, did it cause more deaths, even than the one in 2014.

The context, facts, and analyses presented lead to the conclusion that there are "reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold necessary to indicate that Israel has committed genocide has been reached." Its actions were guided by a "genocidal logic consistent with its settler colonialism project in Palestine, signaling a predicted tragedy," after all, genocidal intent and practices are inherent characteristics of this type of colonization (United Nations, 2024: 2). Albanese defines genocide as the process of denying a people's right to exist and the subsequent attempt to annihilate them through different acts of persecution and destruction, ranging from physical elimination to the forced disintegration of people and their culture and institutions. "Since settler colonialism aims to acquire indigenous lands and resources, its mere existence poses an existential threat to the colonizing society," making its destruction and population replacement "inevitable." "Settler colonialism is a dynamic, structural process and a confluence of acts aimed at displacing and eliminating indigenous groups, of which genocidal extermination/annihilation represents the pinnacle" (United Nations, 2024: 3).

Albanese then contextualizes the Palestinian genocide, framing it from the formation of Israel as a "Jewish state," implying as early as 1948 the "displacement and erasure of the indigenous Arab presence." She reiterates that annihilation is preceded by preparatory stages (systematic persecution and discrimination). She cites passages from Zionist leaders

defending ethnic cleansing, even before the founding of Israel, which occurred precisely in this process, also known as the *Nakba*, which is a structuring factor of Palestinian identity. Another wave of ethnic cleansing occurred in 1967, when Israel “advanced its project of settler colonialism through military occupation.” The result was the “segregation and control of Palestinians,” land confiscation, demolitions, visa revocations, and deportations. “By punishing their indigeneity and their rejection of colonization, Israel has designated Palestinians as a ‘security threat’ to justify its oppression and ‘de-civilization’”, with Gaza progressively becoming a “highly controlled enclave” (United Nations, 2024: 3-4). It is worth noting that the Israeli education system reproduces the stigmatization of non-Jewish otherness and the legitimization of violence and colonization (N. El-Hanan, 2019), making it fertile ground for the commission of atrocities.

Having introduced the case, it is worth explaining the methodology adopted in this article to answer the central question proposed here, namely, to investigate the contributions and possible limitations of “Anatomy of a Genocide”. In order to delve deeper into the considerations made in Albanese’s document and its possible derivations, other passages are presented below, contrasted with the specialized bibliography on the case and the broader theoretical literature. We draw on authors from different disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, history, and international law. Trauma and apartheid are the main concepts worked on, with the former being linked to psychological suffering and the latter as a broader framework in which genocide is inserted or constitutes a limiting act. The mobilization of these interpretative keys to understand the case highlights limitations or the inadequacy of part of the theoretical framework itself, such as the concept of post-traumatic stress. Regarding the division of the text, we first qualify the contextualization of the case, relating colonialism, apartheid, and genocide from the perspective of the human sciences and international law. Next, we delve into social psychology, contrasting canonical authors with recent Palestinian bibliography. We conclude by corroborating the general adequacy of Albanese’s report to the reality in question, but also the demand for its theoretical complementation.

Colonialism, apartheid and genocide: between the human sciences and international law

It is commonplace to conceptually frame the Palestine/Israel case from the perspective of colonialism and colonality, which imply racial discrimination⁴. A canonical example is “The Question of Palestine” by Edward Said (1992). “Israel’s Colonial Project in Palestine:

4. Coloniality implies social processes of “racialization” (Mbembe, 2014) that legitimize atrocities, which in the field of international law is codified by the International Convention on the Eradication of Racial Discrimination (ICRD). This is understood as a social phenomenon with racial markers varying in each context. In fact, the guardian or monitoring body of the ICRD has long admonished the State of Israel to adapt its policies to the terms of the Convention, requiring the abandonment and modification of policies that imply racial discrimination, segregation and even apartheid, as stated in its third article (Dugard; Reynolds, 2013; Sahd, 2022).

Brutal Pursuit” by Elia Zureik (2016) also details the violent consequences of this racist perspective, which created the categories of settlers and “natives”. This approach also appears in reports on violations in the OPT, especially from Dugard’s report onwards, for whom the occupation goes beyond the strict scope of the IHL, as it presents elements of “colonialism and apartheid” (United Nations, 2007). In any case, it has spread as an interpretative framework in the bibliography and reports (produced within the scope of the UN system or global civil society – international, regional and local NGOs). Serious consequences for indigenous populations arise from this process. Colonial metaphors (“a land without a people for a people without a land”, “making the desert bloom”) well represent the invisibility and violation of otherness, covering up a series of violences and losses.

Albanese (United Nations, 2024) specifies the Palestinian/Israeli case as one of “settler colonialism”, which implies that the emphasis is not on the exploitation of the territory and its resources for the benefit of the metropolis, but on the “nativization” of the colonizing population in replacement of the indigenous people, with the former claiming “true” nativity and in contrast to the colonial power that facilitated its installation in the territory, making the indigenous people invisible, violating and gradually expelling them (Al-Haq, 2019; A. Clarno, 2017; R. Kasrils, 2012; N. Rouhana, 2012; Zureik, 2016). A report published in 2009 by the South African Humanities Research Council and coordinated by Virginia Tilley found that Dugard’s accusations were pertinent. In fact, the genocide in Gaza is contextualized in this population replacement project, which is practically equivalent to apartheid for some of the bibliography, and also has an inherent genocidal potential. However, this reference is not consensual. Ran Greenstein (2016; 2020) emphasizes that apartheid regimes derive from uninterrupted colonial experiences, in which power passed from the metropolises to the “nativized” settlers, who maintained and intensified the structures of domination, plunder and repression.

Anthony Löwstedt (2014) also has reservations about the use of the concept of settler colonialism for the Palestinian-Israeli case because it does not take into account its specificity. He defends his sociological concept of apartheid⁵, very close to the legal definition⁶. Colonialism, apartheid and genocide would be manifestations of racial crimes, which vary in their objectives and effects on the “natives” according to the demographic intentions of the colonizers (to maintain or abruptly reverse the situation). It is possible for a colonial case to escalate and become apartheid or even genocide, or for a society to be apartheid,

5. Anthony Löwstedt reflected conceptually on apartheid as an “ideal type”, exemplifying it from three cases, including that of Palestine/Israel. He differentiates apartheid in a broad sense from a narrow one, with the former encompassing the beginning of the process of colonization and violation of indigenous people, which is consolidated instead of being overcome with the independence of the metropolis and the transfer of power to colonial agents who claim nativity.

6. In the field of international law, apartheid was typified in a specific convention in 1973, being defined as a regime of racial domination of one group over another, which, in order to maintain it, oppresses the inferiorized otherness by resorting to inhumane acts.

genocidal and colonial at the same time, but in different places, or in the same place, but in different ways and at different times. “An apartheid society is much more than a settler colony. It exploits like colonialism (although much more), but it also denies the humanity and even the existence of its victims and exterminates like genocide (but less)” (Löwstedt, 2014: 108). This original interweaving creates a bridge to the connection made by Albanese between settler colonialism and the genocide in Gaza. This is the broader framework, the process or the long duration in which the annihilation of part of the Palestinians is inserted today. It is yet another *sui generis* combination of common elements of modernity (gardener state, nationalism, racism, colonialism, etc.), which amalgamate in the production of genocides (Bauman, 1998).

For the purposes of this article, we highlight the legal definition of apartheid as the deliberate infliction of physical and mental harm, which arises from the broader framework of maintaining racial domination and oppression through inhumane acts. The specialized rapporteur has denounced these practices in Palestine/Israel since the 1960s (Sahd, 2017), including collective traumas, such as the founding of Israel itself through ethnic cleansing, which left a large contingent of the Palestinian population exiled and dispossessed, constituting a central element of their collective identity. It is noticeable in both the legal and sociological definitions of apartheid its links and direct citations of the instruments that define colonialism and genocide. The former reproduces the confinement, expropriation and territorial fragmentation, as well as the racialization of the population and the denial of rights such as self-determination. The 1948 Genocide Convention incorporates three of the five acts that characterize this crime against humanity. In this case, murder, the deliberate infliction of serious physical and mental harm and the creation of living conditions aimed at causing the destruction of all or part of the native population. These actions must be carried out with the general and specific intention of destroying, in whole or in part, a group (national, ethnic, racial or religious) as such. In addition to being characterized as genocide, they also constitute extreme acts of an apartheid regime to impose and maintain racial domination.

According to Albanese, there is evidence of the commission of these three common actions in Gaza: killing, causing serious damage and creating living conditions calculated to provoke their destruction (United Nations, 2024: 5-9). Like the specialized bibliography (D. Feierstein, 2011), she highlighted that genocides constitute processes and not a sudden rupture in space-time, being a construction that begins with the discrimination and/or dehumanization of otherness (United Nations, 2024), followed by the first unpunished manifestations of persecution and violence against it.

Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza is an advanced stage in a long-term process of erasure by settler colonialism. For more than seven decades, this process has suffocated [...] – demographically, culturally, economically and politically – seeking to displace, expropriate and control their lands and

resources. The ongoing *Nakba* must be stopped and remedied once and for all (United Nations, 2024: 24).

There is ample documentary and bibliographical support for the assertion that the genocidal process is at an “advanced stage”, with the conditions for the extermination of some of the Palestinians having long been in place as a paradigmatic stage. Since then, the unpunished violence against them has become commonplace and the deliberate “humanitarian catastrophe” has intensified, creating a huge and unmet demand for support, including psychosocial support (B’Tselem, 2017; Center for Constitutional Rights, 2016; Russell Tribunal, 2014; Sahd, 2012). Analyzing the siege and the destruction caused during the 2008 and 2009 operation, an independent committee has already highlighted the creation of “conditions inimical to human life”. The actions of the colonial power would satisfy “the actus defendants of the Genocide Convention” (Independent Fact-Finding Committee on Gaza, 2009: 135). By October 2023, it was estimated that hundreds of thousands of people were in need of psychosocial support, with the “indiscriminate and disproportionate” Israeli blockade and attacks spreading the scarcity of food and services and insecurity (United Nations, 2021). The “flour massacre” in Gaza is paradigmatic of this logic.

Brief theorizing on identity, community and trauma

The minimal contextualization of the case from the perspective of human sciences and international law led us to consider apartheid as the most comprehensive and appropriate legal concept and classification to encompass the different aspects and violations caused by the Israeli State, including the recent genocide. With the situation thus framed, in this section we will focus on its psychological consequences, such as the development of the individual and collective identity of the Palestinian subject as a subjugated people, deepening the “mental damage” suffered. Since the creation of Israel, they, under its yoke, have seen their lands continually invaded, with several cities and villages razed to the ground and their original names replaced by the names of the colonizer, in a continuous change of political geography. This is the first observation to be made, which is obvious to anyone who observes the map of the progressive expansion of Zionism, guided by the de-Palestinianization/Judaization of the territory, configuring a “gradual apartheid” (O. Yiftachel, 2006).

The ongoing expropriation of Palestinian lands is advancing through the creation of settlements, mainly aimed at new waves of Jewish immigrants. The strategies for possession and expansion of these lands are multiple, as already highlighted, implying the subjugation and identity suffering of the colonized subjects, aggravated by catastrophic situations of bombings, murders and imprisonments. Throughout history, its tragic events circumscribe a situation of unpredictability, anguish, fear and humiliation, outlining a space of intense affections as striking experiences that promote psychological illness, which are interconnected and overlap. It becomes a field of affectation, a relational space,

whose dimensions of subjective experience will facilitate the creation and apprehension of meanings in relation to the excesses of the traumatic becoming. The reason, the effect and the testimonies of the events hurt and hurt the pride of the subjects brought together by the same situation. This shared framework challenges the psychic vitality of enduring and continuing resistance to the invader. And as is evident, the traumatic impacts and the meaning given to the situation of submission become one of the vectors of the process of subjectivation that progresses in the psychological and social development of the subjected individual.

From the family matrix, the founding cradle of the individual, the community memory, its traditions, and its religious beliefs are transmitted. At the birth of the “I of the child” that is structured in intra-family relationships, the instance of the Super-ego and the Ideal-of-the-ego is added. Through the messages of his parents, the first signifiers that will outline his profile as a social subject will be internalized, subjecting him to the law and its prohibitions, at the same time that he internalizes values and examples of behavior that point to an ideal of existence to be achieved. In the relationships with the closest social environment, the significant figures unfold that will be added as emitters of new signifiers, values, and examples of behavior that will be added by identification, adding to his identity architecture. As the young person progressively matures, his intrapsychic mechanisms will externalize themselves in the action and outline of an individual sense of identity that bears fruit in the collective bond.

Therefore, this framework that feeds the dynamics of intrapsychic mechanisms will engender a profile of thinking, acting and behaving. Evidently including in this process the political face of their individual identity that accompanies the community narrative. In the case in question, the threatening colonial reality involves sudden, humiliating, deadly and destabilizing events, such as the daily passage through racialized checkpoints, which strangle the daily coming and going, in addition to the ongoing expropriations. In addition to the suffering, a quantum of hatred and fear of the image of the invading Other, concretized in the military expeditions, is added.

The subjugation of the population through its tragic events will configure, with each new crisis, tensioned areas that require strategies to face the effects of these situations. The search for the connection between the various destabilizing attacks, which continually provoke the risk of physical and social death, will provoke in the group memory the alignment of events and their historical interpretation. From the consensual narratives about this legacy arises the demand for struggle and its strategies. From this articulation, the meaning to be given to the traumatic will then be mediated by the ideological reading.

The Zionist colonial saga, which is structured on socio-anthropological and religious grounds, serves as justification for expanding its “indisputable right” over the entire biblical Canaan, then inhabited by the Philistines. Convinced of this historical and mythical

construction, today's so-called Palestine is claimed as property of the inheritance destined for Abraham by God. This fundamental myth then begins the expulsion of the ancient Philistines, today's Palestinians, through combat and terror, which includes the provocation of different forms of pain. The concept of state terrorism is appropriate here (Sahd, 2017: 319; A. Shlaim, 2004: 454-470), since cruelty is profitable for Zionism, interpreted as just punishment, or worse, imposition of legitimate, sacred and necessary work of cleansing its sacred land. The report on Gaza, since the first decade of the third millennium, emphasizes the intentionality of Israeli attacks against civilian targets as well as the harmful consequences of the siege and blockade for the population as a whole, aiming to keep it "under pressure". It would be the application of the Dahyia Doctrine, first implemented against the Shiite neighborhood of the same name in Beirut in 2006, which expands the list of "valid targets" to include civilians, making deaths and destruction the agenda to be followed and not merely "collateral effects", which supports the denunciation of the ongoing genocide (Amnesty International, 2023; Goldstone Report, 2009; Russell Tribunal, 2014; Raz Segal, 2023; Martin Shaw, 2023).

It is appropriate to conclude these observations with the statements of the well-known Israeli psychoanalyst Daniel Syboni (2006), who states that it is a misfortune of Palestinian history to confront such a strong enemy, since ghosts and ancestral voices run through their lands (theirs). He suggests that this imaginary (theirs) transmitted intergenerationally justifies ignoring the course of the historical material conditions of the development of that region, in order to establish only their people, the "true heir". In short, this land is haunted by the "Jews" because they have not stopped talking about it, talking to it for millennia. Syboni adds: the "Arabs of Palestine" did not know that the land where they lived was already haunted by the presence of Hebrew "spirits" that populated it, issuing warnings that they were already "working there". It is worth highlighting the consequences for the other peoples, who also inhabit it, of this imaginary transmission that grants exclusive title to property. It can thus be seen that, through the memories and identities constructed, apartheid and the ongoing genocide extend their arms to the imaginary roots of the Hebrew people, mobilizing in the Palestinian trauma the evocation of their own roots. In this way, this colonial situation also reveals a war of memories and a confrontation of myths.

From now on, approaching mental damage as part of a genocidal process, we will introduce the notion of individual trauma, and then dedicate ourselves to ongoing suffering, which is linked to superimposed traumas. Trauma and its psychic disorganization, in the psychoanalytic sense (S. Ferenczi, 1981; S. Freud, 1920), is installed when a sudden and violent event strikes a subject who was not prepared for it. The surprise factor triggers the destructuring shock, awakening terror in the situation felt as life-threatening. The resulting disorganization will weaken the loss of references of the situation. Mental confusion sets in, the sense of time is shaken, the impossibility of describing the situation is accompanied by physiological disorders, which can last for a long time.

We observe that the power of the shock will be perceived or faced subjectively, and not by its “measurable size”. The effect of the overflow of excitement will be measured in the relationship of the subject with the surrounding environment (F. Canavê, 2015). The feeling of helplessness will extend over time, according to the individual’s psychic resistance and the degree of acceptance by their closest group. The shock will cause the interruption of part of the conscious psychic activity, resulting in the repetition of dissociated affects that cover up the traumatic experiences. The psychic reality, Canavê observes, will be the sum of traces left by these experiences with the environment, while the external reality will be what the perception makes known of the world around. It is this psychic reality of each one that will tell us whether or not an event was traumatic for the subject. The account of a member of the NGO Save the Children working in Gaza during the 2023 genocide is enlightening:

There is so much loss and so much pain. We are afraid: of what the next few hours will bring, of what tomorrow will bring. Death is everywhere. My children look into my eyes every day, they are searching for answers. I have no answers for them. It is very difficult, especially for the children. We try to come together to support and protect the children. The needs are enormous (Save The Children, 2023: online).

Anguish returns every time a situation is associated with that previous experience, mobilizing something of the helplessness the greater the power of the pain and humiliation experienced. The feeling of outrage that may accompany us is not erased; its impressions remain in the unconscious, returning when evocations of the past occur. Trauma becomes collective, first of all, through the common experience and contiguity in extreme situations and through dissemination by the media. Common sense about the history and reason for previous sufferings, added to those of the present, induces its components to appropriate these sufferings, to then include them in the chain of meanings specific to each individual.

Significant events experienced in common and their symbolism, the messages of their founding myths and the shared imagination of the present day, are part of this construction, which strengthens intercommunity ties and confers a feeling of “brotherhood”; we could say, it reinforces ethnic narcissism (the image that is constructed of oneself, as a group). Individual strengthening and the feeling of security will be nurtured in this group alliance that serves as a reading board of the social environment. Community thinking, which includes and provides subsidies for the political ideology that is woven in the resistance to the colonialist invader, will provide the knot of meanings for understanding the situation, while at the same time preparing it for action.

The result of these transactions adds new meanings to individual identity, which means being shaped and at the same time taking part in the shaping action of collective identity and the contours of its symbolic boundaries. In this way, culture provides a form of organization that extends into the psychic structuring of its components. These systems

of thought overlap and overlap as a key to interpreting the surrounding reality and guiding behavior. The long and continuous experience of paroxysmal situations, of disruption of the expected course of daily life and the consequent psychic exhaustion, is limited to the experience of long-term traumas for Palestinians. However, even though they are able to control their emotions and continue their daily activities, these surprised and continually astonished subjects receive successive marks that become new traces in their psychic architecture and consequently in their sense of identity. However, despite these continuous experiences, pacifying intra-group social exchanges ensure individual resilience and collective resistance to the invader.

The policies and practices of destruction and the ongoing Palestinian trauma

Continuing with this reading, it is common for some psychic mechanisms to develop in subjects, among others that we have mentioned, irritability, denial, apathy, indifference and even feelings of guilt for having survived a bombing. Colonialism is present in everyday life, with practices of control, expropriation and humiliation. A significant contingent of the Palestinian population has already been subjected to torture, imprisonment or administrative detention, without trial or due process. Situations that deepen the lack of perspective regarding the future (Instituto Silvia Lane, 2024).

Samah Jabr, a Palestinian psychiatrist and psychotherapist who coordinates the Mental Health Unit of the Palestinian Ministry of Health, defines Palestinian trauma as the disaster of hopelessness. It is a context made sick by the racist and colonial regime of Zionism, where more than 50% of the population of Gaza, 60% of the West Bank and 80% of children suffer from depression (Instituto Silvia Lane, 2024). For Jabr (2018), the classic psychiatric definition of trauma does not include the most common traumatic experiences for Palestinians: such as forced helplessness due to the destruction of homes and olive trees, random arrests of relatives of individuals who committed acts of violent resistance, land theft, imposition in prisons to kiss the Zionist flag, or for a Muslim man to stand naked in front of his daughters, addressing them with obscene words. These experiences are not explicitly listed in the list of causes of trauma, according to the American Psychological Association (APA).

The broader picture experienced by the Palestinian population is that of a historical, collective, continuous and transgenerational trauma, as Fanon (2008) had already generalized for colonial situations. It is worth mentioning the refugees of 1948 and their descendants, who, with the exception of Jordan, were not fully integrated into the destination societies (as projected and desired by the Zionist perpetrators in order to lose their national identity). Israeli apartheid has at its core the policy of fragmentation of the Palestinians, with each group affected in a different way by the regime of discrimination and systematic oppression.

Given this panorama, it is important to highlight that Albanese's report limits the damage caused to the context of 2023, when it can and should be considered in the larger context of a long-term apartheid regime that began in 1948, as Jabr's reflections point out. In fact, the document itself uses the expression "continuous *Nakba*", taken from other human rights reports. In both historical and psychological terms, it is necessary to emphasize continuity, avoiding the risk of fragmenting a history of tragedies that incessantly traverses bodies and minds. In the summary of her report, Albanese states that: "The incalculable collective trauma will be experienced for generations". This perspective is corroborated by an article cited in her report, written at the beginning of the genocide by the organization Save the Children (2023: online), which warned: "A month of relentless bombing has exacerbated the already critical mental health crisis for Gaza's children, with far-reaching consequences". With bombings that do not discriminate against schools, hospitals and temples where families take refuge, "violence, fear, sadness and uncertainty are causing serious mental harm to children who have no safe place to go" leading to the coining of the expression "injured child with no surviving family".

In the current conditions in Gaza, children are experiencing a range of signs and symptoms of trauma, including anxiety, fear, concern for their safety and that of their loved ones, nightmares and disturbing memories, insomnia, suppression of emotions and separation from loved ones. The trauma that gives rise to these symptoms is ongoing, relentless and worsening day by day (Save The Children, 2023: online).

A 2014 report already pointed out that in the territory "at least 373,000 children were in need of direct and specialized psychosocial support, as they present symptoms of increasing distress, including bedwetting, clinging to parents and having nightmares (United Nations, 2014: 4). A 2022 report by Save the Children (2022: 4-5) then concluded that in Gaza, "since 2018, the psychosocial well-being of children, young people and their caregivers has declined dramatically to alarming levels". For example, children reported "feeling afraid (84%), nervous (80%), sad (77%) and grief (78%) in 2022, compared to afraid (50%), nervous (55%), sad (62%) and grief (55%) in 2018". In the same study, bedwetting increased from 53% to 79% and reactive mutism from 42% to 59%. It is difficult to imagine the reality after the genocide is completed, between 2023 and 2024. The document contains direct testimonies, which describe a "perpetual state of fear, worry, sadness and grief, awaiting the eruption of the next wave of violence", with Palestinians "feeling unable to sleep or concentrate". Several "vivid memories of the bombings they suffered are reported, recalling how their homes and schools were destroyed and how their loved ones were killed". It is worth reproducing excerpts from a letter written by six children, between 10 and 13 years old.

Because it is so small, everywhere is dangerous and there is no place to take shelter. We want people to know that Gaza, our home, is being destroyed. [...] Life is scary and our roofs are falling on our heads. Every time there is an airstrike,

we are terrified. [...] Above all, we want to live like children in other countries who can play in playgrounds instead of hiding from bombs (Save The Children, 2022: 3).

Theoretical reflection on the Gaza case based on classical categories is flawed, precisely because of the continuity of traumatic factors. Regarding the consequences of trauma, Western literature proposes the concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). However, Jabr (2018) considers it inadequate for the Palestinian context since one is never in the “post” phase: the trauma is recurrent and long-lasting, because colonialism is long-lasting, and has been going on for 73 uninterrupted years. A young person from Gaza, today, aged 15, has not only experienced several conflicts but also experiences a very real threat, not just an imaginary one. This, evidently, implies immense traumatic consequences, including a huge change in their worldview, their belief system, their way of life and the way they relate interpersonally (Jabr, 2018). This confirms what we previously observed about the affectation in the identification process of young people with its implications on the way of relational life. Therefore, it is necessary to understand, from a macropolitical perspective, that depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts in OPT are collective and social psychological conditions, and not individual ones, due to the entire violent and sickening situation. And, therefore, the classifications in manuals and other medical categorizations do not contemplate the political, social and economic complexity of scenarios under occupation, colonialism and apartheid, such as the Palestinian one.

Thus, there are issues that cannot be resolved if we focus on the individual level. Collective interventions are needed, and we need to understand how people organize themselves and deal with their traumas in order to reproduce these successes. But above all, a concrete solution is urgently needed for the primary problem, colonialism and its escalation into apartheid and genocide. This is a key point that leads us towards a more comprehensive theorization that, unlike generic manuals, also considers the specific Palestinian situation. This is what we can call anti-colonial psychology or psychiatry. In this perspective, we have Fanon’s (2008) seminal work on the psychic components of racism in colonial contexts. His lines of thought make it possible to rethink psychic suffering in view of the social and historical experience of colonialism and its consequences on subjectivity, such as a neurotic inferiority complex, the threat of dissolution of the psychic structure, the denial of humanity and the collective origin of suffering, which must be worked on by the individual and the group (“collective catharsis”). After all, psychic symptoms derive from multiple, analogous and repeated traumas, with each day representing a drama in colonized countries.

In his revolutionary humanism, Fanon (2005) considers violence a relevant and necessary phenomenon for political action, since the violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the colonized balance each other out in a homogeneity, with decolonization being an eminently violent phenomenon, and violence, while originating

from the colonial process, an element of rupture and destruction of colonialism. In this sense, the colonial context is a fertile environment for the outbreak of violence and terror against the violator and the oppressor, which is why Fanon calls colonialism a machine of the purest unreason, that is, a natural circumstance of violence, reinforcing his thesis of the impossibility of the anti-colonial struggle through peaceful means alone (R. Rabaka, 2010). Furthermore, political violence is a means that contributes to individual stability and collective victory. And in this line, for the Palestinian case, resistance is an essential element in the recovery of the 'occupied mind', as it restructures and reorganizes the subject psychically. From this perspective, decolonization is impossible through waiting for the common sense, kindness or diplomacy of the settlers. Fanon (2005) highlights that the colonized masses realized precisely that freedom would only be possible through the use of the force that remained to them. That is, once weakened, hungry and without techniques, it is up to the oppressed to use counter-violence.

Thus, the mutuality of violence is the only possible relationship between colonist and colonized. For Fanon (2005), brutalized subjects demand nothing more from those who have historically oppressed them than reparation and restitution of their humanity. In his understanding, violence assumes an emancipatory, liberating and constitutive perspective of the subjectivity denied by the colonist, allowing the colonized to find their place again, to reintegrate themselves; through it, the violated human being recomposes himself. In the words of Sartre (2005: 14) "no gentleness will erase the marks of violence; only violence can destroy them".

Returning to Albanese's report (United Nations, 2024: 7-8), while her characterization of the situation is also correct in terms of the genocidal act of deliberately causing physical and mental harm as part of the destruction of all or part of the group, her emphasis on the consequences of the immediate context may lead to misunderstandings (even if she frames the case from the perspective of settler colonialism). As multi-causal harm involves deprivation of rights, degradation of conditions and "severe and lasting impairment of a person's ability to live a normal and constructive life", we must necessarily trace back to the founding of a Jewish state in a multi-ethnic territory based on ethnic cleansing and how the consequences of this situation affected the different fractions of the Palestinian people (refugees, second-class citizens in Israel, residents of Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and Gaza).

Albanese is not wrong in stating that "since October 7, 2023, Palestinians have suffered incessant physical and mental harm." The issue is the necessary expansion of the temporality and spatiality of the process, understanding that that particular date marks an exponential worsening or brutalization of a long-standing colonial situation. In any case, the current characterization as genocide and Second *Nakba* seems to capture well the mental and identity consequences for the Palestinian population as a whole of this

process of continuous and overlapping traumatization. Albanese is very precise on this point: “the survivors will carry an indelible trauma, having witnessed so many deaths and experienced destruction, displacement, emotional and material losses, endless humiliation and fear” (United Nations, 2024, p. 8).

CONCLUSIONS

The excessive recurrence of cruelty in military interventions goes far beyond violence. They aim to cause the greatest possible harm to the individual subjected to them, seeking, through various tactics, to make them completely give up their territorial claims and even regret having been born in those lands (V. Grape, 1996). In war as a continuation of politics, cruelty is not enough to defeat the enemy; war aims to make them suffer to the extreme, nullifying them as social and moral individuals and degrading them as human beings. In the historical Israeli imagination, an ancestral and ethnic hatred for the various peoples who passed through those lands is mobilized, and the transmission of this feeling can be seen today. Recent articles have cited rabbis resorting to this repertoire in the preparation of soldiers before entering Gaza (Breaking The Silence, 2009). In this narrative, the current enemy prevents the return to the imaginary biblical lands from taking place, and since he is united by bonds of filiation, his eradication must go beyond individual physical death to reach the entire community.

While accounts from *Nakba* survivors reveal the scale of this catastrophe and its impact on the psyche of those who were expelled and dispossessed, human rights reports on the OPT, produced since the 1960s, reveal the continuity of traumatic factors. When these “inhumane acts” of Israeli apartheid are considered in terms of the deliberate infliction of physical and mental harm as part of such a regime, and also of a genocidal process, we have the broader contours of the situation, with the intentionality of the destruction deriving from the multi-decade project of territorial Judaization/de-Palestinianization or “settler colonialism,” as Albanese summarized it. Terror, therefore, is a political and state weapon that not only kills and uproots, but also leads to physical and mental illness.

Interestingly, in a previous report, the jurist defined the military legal system in the OPT as a pillar of “the Israeli regime of apartheid and settler colonialism,” which promotes crimes cumulatively as part of a “policy of de-Palestinianization,” accompanied by annexation (United Nations, 2023: 7; 21). Although she does not mention apartheid in the body of “Anatomy of a Genocide,” at the end she mentions it in the recommendations, reproducing the demand of her predecessors that the Apartheid Committee be recreated within the UN to deal with the case. This is a conceptual weakness of the document, since apartheid as an interpretative key is structural, connects colonialism and genocide, and integrates and explains state crimes committed in different times and spaces. In any case, it is also possible

to derive from her reflections the long duration of the physical and mental damage caused to the Palestinian population by the Zionist colonial project, which invites us to expand the spatio-temporal limits of genocide. Gaza is the first case of an apartheid regime that resorted to the “crime of crimes” as the ultimate inhumane act to maintain racial domination.

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