مركز العودة الفلسطيني
Palestinian Return Centre

# GAZA AS THE SECOND NAKBA

## Panel Discussion Transcript

**SPEAKER**
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**MODERATOR**
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**HOSTED BY**
The Palestinian Return Centre
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**VIDEO RECORDING**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulqN2H3zbI4

# Introduction

This document contains the full, unedited transcript of the panel discussion titled *"Gaza as the Second Nakba,"* hosted online by the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) on May 14, 2025, to mark the 77th anniversary of the Nakba.

Featuring Dr. Maha Nassar, a Palestinian-American historian and Associate Professor at the University of Arizona, the conversation explores the historical continuity between the 1948 Nakba and the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Moderated by Haya Natsheh, the dialogue reflects on the meaning of *Sumood* (steadfastness), the role of Palestinian youth, the intergenerational transmission of memory, and the responsibilities of Palestinians in exile and international allies.

Readers can expect a thoughtful, historically grounded, and emotionally resonant discussion that not only draws on academic insight but also speaks to the urgent moral and political demands of our present moment. The transcript preserves the original spoken form to reflect the authenticity and immediacy of the event.

# Full Verbatim Transcript

## of the Panel Discussion

**Moderator**

▶ 00:26

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us for this urgent and timely discussion hosted by the Palestinian Return Centre. Tonight's talk, *Gaza as the Second Nakba*, is not just about commemorating history, it's about exposing how that history is being repeated right now with terrifying speed and cruelty.

The genocide unfolding in Gaza is not an isolated atrocity. It is the continuation of a decades-long project of erasure and ethnic cleansing—a project that began in 1948 and persists today, live on our screens in full view of the world, and yet still met with shameful inaction by many in power.

We are deeply honoured to be joined by Dr. Maha Nassar, a Palestinian-American historian and associate professor at the University of Arizona. Her work traces how Palestinian steadfastness—*Sumood*—has endured across generations. She will help us unpack the deep historical links between the 1948 Nakba and the current genocide, and what lessons we must draw from that continuity.

This will be a one-hour livestream session. I'll be in conversation with Dr. Nassar and then we will open up to audience questions submitted in the chat. So, let's begin.

Thank you, Dr. Maha, for joining us. I'll start with the fact that you've written extensively about *Sumood*, Palestinian steadfastness. What does it mean to you today, and how has it changed over the decades?

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 01:58

Thank you so much for having me. It's really a pleasure and an honor to be here, especially during this week as we commemorate the 77th anniversary of the 1948 Nakba and also draw upon the lessons that that history can teach us and how we can use it to empower us moving forward.

So, as you mentioned in the introduction, my current book project, I look to historicize the concept of *Sumood* to understand where this idea came from, how it became so deeply embedded in our collective Palestinian existence and our collective memory of what it means to hold fast to our land.

And as I've been doing my research, I've been struck by the wide range of actions that Palestinians have taken that we typically don't think about when we think about *Sumood*.

So, just to have everyone sort of catch everyone up on the same page: typically, when we talk about *Sumood* in the Palestinian context, it's usually talked about in the context of staying on the land. *Sumood* in our land—this is something that we've been hearing a lot coming out of Gaza, especially over the last 19 months.

But even before that, in the 90s, in the 80s and even in the late 70s, there was this concept of Palestinians, especially in the occupied territories—the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem—holding fast onto their land and not being removed from it. Because it was obvious from as far back as '67 that part of the Israeli occupation of the land was aimed at removing Palestinians from it altogether.

And there was a phrase that a historian going through the Israeli archives discovered: this idea of wanting the land, wanting the dowry, but not the bride. So, the Palestinian land being the dowry and the people being the bride—they want to hold on to the land but get rid of the people.

But we also know that even that 50-year-long struggle in the occupied territories isn't the full story, and this is where going back to 1948 can be very helpful.

So even though, in the years from 1948 to 1967, Palestinians weren't actually using the word *Sumood* very often—it's come up sometimes in the archival record but not like that much—what I'm finding is that what we later come to give the name of *Sumood* actually goes way back, really a century.

It goes back to the very beginnings of the Palestinian struggle for liberation: against the Zionists, against the British, against the Israelis, and against really the whole international system that has been backing the Israeli occupation and theft of Palestinian land.

But the other piece of it that is also, I think, really important, is that it's also not just the Palestinians in Palestine who have practiced and enacted *Sumood*—also Palestinians in the *Shatat*, diaspora: Palestinians in the UK, in the US, in the Arab countries, in Latin America, in Europe—all over—have also been practicing *Sumood*.

**So what do I mean by *Sumood* here?**

I talk about *Sumood* as four overlapping spheres. So, it's four spheres of *Sumood*: the personal—that's just being in the world as a Palestinian, often in places that are very hostile to the very existence of a Palestinian people. So this is personal *Sumood*.

There is collective *Sumood*—the idea of building community among Palestinians in a world and under regimes that seek to break us up. They seek to fragment us as Gaza Palestinians, the 1948 Palestinians, *Shatat* Palestinians. So, building that collective *Sumood*.

There's a civic sphere of *Sumood*, which is raising awareness about Palestine in the places that we live. And then there's international spheres of *Sumood*, which is bringing the Palestinian cause to the global stage, whether it's through international bodies like the UN or the ICJ, or other kinds of cross-border or transnational activism.

**So what does this all look like?**

When we look at Palestinians, especially in the *Shatat*, in terms of their *Sumood*, what we find is that they are enacting *Sumood* in all kinds of ways. They're founding political organisations, aid groups, educational initiatives, media projects, artistic projects, literary works, musical endeavours—so many ways in which Palestinians, both in Palestine and in the *Shatat*, have worked together to raise awareness about Palestine.

And then there's also an intergenerational aspect to the *Sumood*, which is that the older teach the younger. We teach our children to never forget Palestine and to keep working for its liberation.

So all of these aspects of *Sumood* have actually been around. Sometimes we refer to it as *Sumood*, sometimes we don't. But this is what *Sumood* means to me: all of these efforts that are not just about formal political activism—although that's definitely a part. It's not just about staying on the land—although that's definitely a part. But it's about all the ways that we keep Palestine in our hearts, no matter where we are.

And so it's changed over the decades in that people have become—it's become easier to connect across nation-state borders. It's easier to bypass traditional gatekeepers, whether it's political or media or others. And now there's a more receptive global audience to these acts of *Sumood* that we've been practicing and doing all of these decades.

**Moderator**

▶ 08:36

Thanks a lot, Doctor. Actually, a lot of the parts speak to me. When you first started speaking about *Sumood*, I remember it's one of the words that my father uses a lot, and I grew up listening because whenever I asked, like, "Why did we remain here?" or "Why did you choose to remain in Jerusalem?", that would be the first word that he uses.

And what you just shared about the fact of how much we put effort in teaching other generations—the older teach the younger—it's very true. Because looking back at things, I feel like I studied politics in school, that's fine, but I learned a lot through my parents, through my siblings.

And now, what I do with my nieces and nephews or with other kids is very much the same and even stronger, just because I feel that's something we don't want to lose.

Because there's a lot of Palestinians who are also growing up abroad, away from Palestine, and might not be doing direct *Sumood* by sticking to the land, but there's a lot for them to learn and to keep the *Sumood* going in the various formats that you've mentioned.

So thanks a lot for that.

**This brings me to ask: in what ways do you see what's happening in Gaza today as a direct continuation of the Nakba, from your own point of view and from your readings and research?**

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 10:09

Yeah. So scholars are increasingly talking—and not just scholars, but Palestinians more broadly—are increasingly making a distinction between the 1948 Nakba, which was an event that happened from late 1947 until 1949, that period of about a year and a half when over half of the Palestinian population—over 750,000 Palestinians—were removed from their land, forced abroad, and not allowed to return.

But then there's another Nakba—the ongoing Nakba—and that is the structural Nakba. The process that it takes to actively prevent people from returning to their land.

So the 1948 Nakba was about keeping them out and initially kind of locking the gates behind them. But the ongoing Nakba has been the 77 years of active prevention—of preventing their return.

So it didn't mark just a single point in time, but the ongoing Nakba is actually part of an ongoing process of dispossession, displacement, statelessness for Palestinians. And that's a process that's still playing out today, especially in Gaza.

Gaza is like the microcosm—it's like putting the Nakba under a microscope. Because remember that over 70% of the Palestinians living in Gaza are themselves registered refugees. Many of them came—most of them, in fact—came from the areas that are from southern Palestine, from the villages that are around those areas, including my own father and his family, who were expelled from the village of Barbara in October of 1948 and fled on foot to Gaza, where my cousins, many of them, still live today.

So there's that ongoing—because it takes effort. It takes ongoing effort to forcibly prevent a people from returning to their land.

A core aspect of the 1948 Nakba and the ongoing Nakba is denying the Palestinian right of return, even though that right was enshrined and recognised in UN Resolution 194, that affirmed the right of Palestinians who wish to live in peace with their neighbors to be able to return.

But again, from the very beginning, Israeli leaders—and they were backed by Western leaders, including British and American leaders—said that the Arab refugees, as they called them, should be settled in other Arab countries. This is as early as 1948, 1949, 1950—that the Palestinian refugees should not be allowed to return. And they were backed in that refusal by the international system.

And there were so many resettlement schemes that were being proposed—kind of like today—how there are these resettlement schemes being proposed to send the Palestinian refugees to Jordan, to Egypt, to Paraguay, all kinds of places.

The hope was that by removing the Palestinians from their camps and from the gates—the borders—of their home villages, that somehow they would forget. But of course, as we also know, Palestinian refugees refused to give up on their right of return and their insistence on returning to their specific ancestral lands.

And this connection to their villages, to their *balad*, is something that's very important, and I think sometimes overlooked—that very specific connection that Palestinians have to a very specific, concrete area of land—their *balad*, their homelands, their neighbourhoods that they came from.

And so Gaza residents, on the one hand, remain to this day confined behind walls and fences, unable to return to their ancestral villages that are just a few miles or a few kilometres away.

But on the other hand, they know what village, what villages, what parts of Palestine they came from. And this remembering is really important because it helps us understand the resistance to settler colonialism.

We often hear about Palestine, or the Israeli project, as a settler colonial project, which is a very specific project by which the native populations are removed from their homeland and replaced by settlers who take their place. And so those villages in southern Palestine that Gaza people come from were being populated—until recently—by Israelis in places like Be'eri and all the kibbutzim that they talk about.

And so the Nakba isn't over. It's transformed. It's evolved. It's endured.

Particularly in Gaza is where it's most stark, because of the high concentration of refugees being so painfully close to their ancestral villages and towns that, in some cases, they can even see.

And Israel knows this. And so today, the aim of the genocide, in large part, is to remove the Palestinians of Gaza even further away from their homeland—to take them out of the country altogether.

And those on the far right in Israel and some of their international backers also hope that by removing all, or most, or even a significant number of the Palestinians from Gaza, that that will be a prelude to removing all 7 million Palestinians who still remain in their lands—including those in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and in the 1948 lands.

So despite this horrendous genocide that's been livestreamed for the world to see, there is—behind it—it's not just killing for killing's sake, as horrible as that sounds. But it's also part of a larger plan of removal altogether.

But despite that, and having said that, I still do see hope for the future, especially when I look at the role of youth, both historically and today.

**Moderator**
17:00

**Thank you so much, Doctor Maha. I will come back to the role of youth.**

It's just—I wouldn't say funny, it's just shocking—that when you just talked about what happened in 1948, it's very similar to Trump's suggestions now, like very recently. And I think he does it every day, whenever he can, to suggest like Palestinians or Gazans could just leave—to Egypt, to Jordan, to any other country—thinking that, as you said, that this could be like a solution until the next thing, you know, uncovers, whether it's in the West Bank or in East Jerusalem.

But I always think, like, leaders should study history. Because we've seen the 1948 people—you being one of the later generations—you're here right now, raising more awareness about it than anything. And I think if they were successful in just removing all Palestinians, I think it would create more challenges for the Israeli and the American government more than us being at home.

**Dr. Maha Nassar**
18:15

Yes, I think you're absolutely right in that.

**Moderator**
18:20

You've noted that the role of youth in Palestinian history has been important. Can you speak to what makes this generation distinctive or especially powerful?

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 18:33

Sure. So, there's a phrase that Palestinians often recall that was attributed to David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister. It hasn't been proven definitively that he said it, but I do think the phrase reflected a lot of how early Israeli leaders thought.

And the phrase is: ***"The old will die and the young will forget."***

And that was the logic—the logic behind resettlement that we just talked about a couple of minutes ago. The logic behind removing the Palestinian refugees and putting them in other countries—other Arab countries specifically.

The assumption behind that was that, well, if they go to Egypt, they'll forget about Palestine and just become Egyptian. If they go to Jordan, they'll become Jordanian. Syria, Syrian.

But we know that that didn't happen. And that even when young Palestinians left their lands, or even when they left their refugee camps to pursue studies, to pursue jobs, etc., they took Palestine with them in their hearts.

So those acts of *Sumood* that I mentioned earlier—remember them? The political organisations, the aid groups, the educational initiatives, the civic campaigns, the media projects, the art, literature, music…

As I've been looking at these acts of *Sumood*, especially in the *Shatat*, especially in exile—and I look at them historically—and then I look up who founded them, and then I look up how old they were, I'm continuously struck by the fact that so many of these projects, these initiatives, were founded and started by young people, mainly in their 20s and 30s, and usually grassroots, without any kind of outside support.

So what this tells me is that youth have always been at the forefront of Palestinian *Sumood*, in both organised and individual ways. And that includes Palestinians in the *Shatat*, in exile, who took it upon themselves—even when they were living in hostile environments—to make sure that the Palestinian cause would not be forgotten.

And I think it's important to remember how much hostility Palestinian existence can have in the West. We know it because Palestinians are often demonised and dehumanised. They face the same kinds of racist assumptions that other Arabs and Muslims face.

But even Palestinians in Arab countries often faced another kind of anti-Palestinianism—a kind of exclusion, or a kind of being blamed for whatever political problems were happening in that country.

So the fact that you had Palestinians who existed in these realms—in both the Arab countries and in Europe and the Americas—they would start these projects. First of all, they would remember Palestine, and they would be Palestinian, and they would find other Palestinians.

And then they would set up these projects, sometimes through universities—oftentimes through universities.

So you had, for example, the General Union of Palestinian Students that had branches all over the world. They had 1,000 branches, I think, at one point in the 1970s and 80s.

You had Palestine Solidarity Committees in the UK, in the United States. You also had GUPS chapters. And then later on, you had Students for Justice in Palestine chapters.

All of these grassroots movements included men and women who often connected across national boundaries. So you would have Palestinian students in one country—so Palestinian students in Syria, for example—raising funds for Palestinians under occupation. Or Palestinian students in Egypt remembering the Balfour Declaration and writing against it—and sometimes they would be in trouble with the authorities for doing so.

Not to mention, of course, the Palestinians in Western countries, where the whole Palestine cause was under suspicion.

So these Palestinian students and other young people were part of these organisations that made sure that the Palestinian cause didn't die. Made sure that other people would remember what the Balfour Declaration was, what the Partition Plan was, what the Nakba was, what the occupation was—all of it. What Land Day was. All of these dates, commemorative dates, in the Palestinian national calendar.

**How do they become commemorated?**

Normally, in a functioning country, national holidays are commemorated by state institutions. There's official recognition. There is a national holiday. Everyone's off work. There are news broadcasts that say, "Today is the official day of such and such." In schools, they'll say, "Today is the official holiday of such and such."

Palestinians had none of that. They have no state. They have no museums. They have no state institutions that normally do the job of teaching people what their national holidays are and what the key events of their national calendar are.

**So how do Palestinians know them? How do they learn them?**

Well, they learn them through these grassroots organisations. Who starts these grassroots organisations? Well, oftentimes it's young people—again, late teens, 20s, 30s—who take it upon themselves.

As you just said, teaching your nieces and nephews. Parents teaching their children.

I learned about the Palestinian national events and national symbols through my father, who was himself active in his student years in GUPS and other things. I learned it through my mother, who was also active both as a young person and growing up. I learned it from my broader family.

So again, the ways in which the functions of a nation-state—the institutions of a nation-state—are actually carried in the hearts and minds and actions of the people. It's the opposite of all the theories that we know about national identity, which is that they're top-down and institutional, and they come through the schoolbooks and the textbooks.

We are the opposite. We are ground-up.

And that ground-up—again, I want to emphasise—the Palestinians who are holding on to the land in historic Palestine play an absolutely crucial role. But so do the Palestinians outside of historic Palestine who hold on to the keys and hold on to the hopes of returning.

So this is the key—that Palestinians in the *Shatat* were not secondary players. And they continue to play that central role.

So, when we turn to the generation of today—you asked me what makes today's generation especially distinctive or powerful?

Yeah, I think there are three factors that make this generation—what we often call Gen Z, and also younger millennials, and also maybe the older Gen Alphas, but we'll say Gen Z for now—I think there are three factors that especially make this generation distinct and powerful.

The first is that they have tools of connection and communication that more effectively bypass traditional powers.

So, my own student activism and my own kind of young adult activism happened on the eve of the internet—like, the internet was a new thing, social media was just barely starting. And so we had those tools, but they were still pretty clunky and limited, and we still had to—for the most part—rely on traditional news sources to find out what's going on.

It was really hard to get information that bypassed those traditional media gatekeepers.

Nowadays, it's much easier to bypass those traditional gatekeepers. So today's Gen Z—the younger generation—it's harder to censor them, it's harder to silence them, and it's also harder to isolate them from one another.

The fact that we're able to see what happens in Gaza in real time—that's due to the young people, the young journalists who are not part of CNN or BBC or any of these things. It's them with their phones and their determination to reach the world.

So it's much easier to keep Palestinian stories in circulation and to get them in front of people who wouldn't normally see them if they were only following regular media. That's one thing.

The second is that the young generation—they're also not as attached to specific ideologies.
When I look at the mobilisation of young people in the 50s, 60s, 70s, they tended to be very attached to specific ideologies. They were Nasserist, or nationalist, or communist, or Ba'athist, or Islamist—and they had strong feelings around them that sometimes, unfortunately, moved into rivalries between different groups. And you had groups competing with one another rather than working together.

I see young people today having less ideological attachment to specific groups and really deciding that ***Palestine is the compass***, and that they're willing to work together for the sake of Palestine. And I hope that that continues.

And the third factor—that is kind of related to that—is that I think young people today are more skeptical of the idea that charismatic leaders are going to come and save them. They're not waiting for someone to come in and swoop in. They see themselves as having that role.

So there isn't a nationalist hero. There isn't a savior coming in. There's more a sense of collective responsibility.

And so those are the things that I think are the most distinctive.

The challenge ahead for this current generation, I think, will be putting these energies—being able to channel these energies—into a political structure that will be able to steer Palestinians into the future.

Because unfortunately, a lot of these structures that were founded back in the 60s by people who were in their 20s and 30s—back in the 60s—are still being led by the same people. Except now they're in their 70s and 80s.

So this is going to have to change if the young generation is going to really be able to move us forward.

**Moderator**

▶ 30:26

Thank you, Dr. Nassar. I can only agree with that.

I remember I was still in Palestine when the Sheikh Jarrah incidents took place, and I believe—speaking about the tools and the things that are available for my generation, younger and older generations—is, for example, how the whole Sheikh Jarrah, let's say, awareness, got to a certain international level, just because everyone posted about it—on Instagram, on TikTok, on Twitter—everywhere.

And the people—the younger people—who lived in Sheikh Jarrah, as you said, it's just themselves. Not being part of any other body. Just on their phones, showing things around the world to everyone around the world.

So I definitely agree that this plays a huge role. And this is a plus for younger generations that previous generations did not have.

And *amen* to the fact that the younger generation doesn't believe in a national hero or anyone to save them. Because I think we can learn from history when it comes to that.

We've got a question from the audience. It says:

**"Do you believe the younger generation in the US is changing, and will they really replicate the US policy towards Palestinians?"**

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 31:54

So not only do I think and believe the younger generation in the US is changing—but the data shows that that is indeed the case.

Americans—I don't think we're unique in this—but Americans love to poll themselves and survey themselves.

So you have these big polling organisations like Pew Research, like Gallup, and a whole bunch of others that love just asking people: "What do you think about this?" "What do you think about that?"

And so, given the historic ties between the United States and Israel, the question about Israel and the Palestinians has been one that's been asked for a very long time.

So we can trace it chronologically across time, and then we can also trace it demographically across generations.

And we see very, very clearly—in the latest Pew Research poll that came out just a couple of weeks ago—that shows that younger people, people under 40, and especially people under 25 or 30, are not only less supportive of Israel, but much more supportive of Palestine and Palestinians.

And this is true across men and women, Republicans and Democrats—for different reasons and at different levels—but it's definitely there.

So yes, I absolutely think it's changing.

The other thing that's changing—or I'll say that's starting to change—is that the stranglehold that pro-Israel narratives had on both political parties in the U.S. is cracking. It's cracking in different ways for the different parties.

In the Democratic Party, it's cracking at the base. Because more and more Democratic base voters—just by seeing what's happening right now in Gaza, because they understand Palestinians to be human beings—are appalled by what Israel is doing.
From a human rights perspective, from a humanitarian perspective, from an anti-racist perspective in some cases.

So that's what's happening on the Democratic side.

And then on the Republican side, you're starting to see—from also elements of the base—I would say you're starting to see a split between the ones who call themselves "America First." Being America First, including *first over Israel*.

In other words, they're saying: we don't want to give up a carve-out or an exception to our America First for Israel. America First means America First, and Israel second. And that means: we don't want to enter into wars, we don't want to be spending so much of our money on wars, or on external political… whatever. And we want to have America First.

So there's this strange kind of Venn diagram—if you can see my fingers—where there's that overlap in the center of, I would say, the anti-imperialist left in the United States and the America First right in the United States, on this question of Palestine.

That's not to say that they all support Palestinians—some do, some don't—but all of this is to say that something is shifting, something is breaking.

We don't know what it's going to look like exactly moving ahead, and this is where we have to be very vigilant.

But this is also where I see potential for change.

**Moderator**
35:40

Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Maha.

Speaking of change—what lessons can we draw from past moments of mass displacement or repression? What should we hold on to now, in your opinion?

**Dr. Maha Nassar**
35:57

I think this potential moment of change is something to really pay attention to.

And for someone like me—who's very much Gen X—my whole life has been growing... I was born and raised in the United States, and so my whole life has been essentially bipartisan support for Israel and ignorance or hostility toward Palestinians.

And so it's taken me a moment to realise that that's actually changing in significant ways, and in ways that I think are irreversible.

So, when I think about these past... when I think about why that was, or how that came to be, it's not that suddenly after October 7th people started paying attention to Palestine. It's that the groundwork had been laid—for decades and decades and decades—by young people here in the United States and elsewhere in the world who maybe thought this isn't making much of a difference, I'm not reaching a lot of people, my efforts are so limited compared to all the powers that are in support of Israel, What am I going to do here by myself, far away from my family?..

But as you just said a few minutes ago, I think that it's precisely because of the mass displacement that our people have experienced that the Palestinian cause is still alive.

This is the great irony—that the effort to get rid of the Palestinian cause by scattering the Palestinians around the world, in fact, made us—made our cause—sprout up *everywhere*.

So there's a phrase that's been in a lot of the protests:

*"They wanted to bury us, but they didn't realise we were seeds."*

And that burying, and the seeds, and the sprouting—I think is a useful image to hold on to.
Because what happened with those earlier generations of displacement—in '48, and '67, and '82, etc.—was that it scattered Palestinians. But then they planted seeds that sprouted.

And those seeds were about *Sumood*.

So much of that *Sumood* that we were talking about earlier is about being a displaced Palestinian in the world, when so much of the world is hostile to your very being.

And one way that we do that—how we overcome that mass displacement—is by *finding each other*.

I'm sure you've experienced this. I know many of us have. When one Palestinian meets another, anywhere in the world, very shortly after meeting each other, they're going to either offer or ask:

*"What balad are you from?"*

Right? What specific town or village or neighborhood in historic Palestine are you from?

You may be three generations removed. You may have never seen your *balad*. But you know it.

I've never been to Barbara, but I will tell you: *I'm from Barbara.*

So what is that doing?

We do it all the time, and we don't think about it. But it actually has profound consequences—profound implications.

**Because it's doing three things:**

1. It's establishing a personal connection with a fellow Palestinian who can understand what you're going through—even if their specific lived experiences are different.
2. It's building Palestinian community in the location that you're in—even if you're far away from your homeland.
3. It's reinforcing a collective memory and a shared geography of Palestine that is *from the river to where?* To the sea.

**When we say:**

*"My family's from Haifa."*
*"My family's from Gaza."*
*"My family's from Jericho."*

We're putting in our mind a collective memory and shared geography that *all of this is Palestine*.

And no matter where we are in the world, we still carry the land of Palestine—the original land of Palestine—in our hearts.

And that work continues to this day. It's work that you do with the PRC specifically.

And so we think about these things as being small and inconsequential in relation to the big global things that are happening in the world. But no—these things are incredibly consequential. And incredibly important.

**Moderator**

41:01

This gives a lot of hope, to be honest.

Because I—one of the many Palestinians—always ask myself: how can I do more? Or what do I need to do more?

And so many times I find myself that speaking about it—just the fact of speaking about it—might really, even if you influence one person every time you speak, that... I wouldn't say that is enough, but this is something to hold onto.

And I always look with huge respect to Palestinians who weren't born in Palestine and haven't seen their home countries, especially historic Palestine, and who still remember and know the names and can tell you—south, east, west—where on the map you can find it.

I was born in Palestine. I know where I was born. And sometimes I might just hear a name that I myself might not know, just because unfortunately, in schools they no longer teach us those names.

But having that mass number of Palestinians in diaspora who still hold on to that, who still write about that, who still research about that—is something I'm pretty sure the occupation knows is very, very hard to dismantle. It's very, very hard to disorient.

And this is something I'm sure they are struggling with.

My nephew lives in Jerusalem, but his father is from the north—Majd al-Krum—which was one of the areas in the 1948 lands where half of the people were expelled, half of them were able to come back, etc.

So whenever someone asks him—and we never taught him that—whenever someone asks him, he says:

*"I'm from Majd al-Krum. And yes, we were of the very few Palestinians who were able to return. And we still live there. And we have lands there."*

And the way—like an eight-year-old boy would say that—you feel all the challenge in his eyes, saying:

*"Yeah, I challenge you. I was able to go back. I was able to hold on to my land."*

Sometimes I think it's just born with us, without us even trying. And hopefully this is passed on to the other generations—the rest of the generations—because with what's happening at the moment, I do feel that people struggle with how to move on and how to deal with what's happening.

But thank you. Thank you for that. As I said, it gives a lot of—a lot of hope.

I'll move to my next question, and I'd like to ask:

**What do you believe is our collective responsibility in the face of this genocide?** Precisely, what roles can people—especially outside Palestine—play to help stop it?

We touched a little bit on our role in speaking about it and continuing that. But for us who feel helpless—let's say, far away—**what else? What more can we do, whether as institutions or as individuals?**

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 44:24

I want to start by acknowledging that feeling of helplessness.
I think that's very important to acknowledge—especially those of us who work on Palestine, for whom it's part of our every day, whether it's in our work or whether it's in our organising or activism and so forth.

And the way that I sort of think about it—the image that comes to my mind—is the image of a runaway, speeding train that's huge. And it's got decades of momentum—centuries of momentum—behind it.

That momentum is being fueled by colonialism, by Orientalism, by racial capitalism, and it's just barreling ahead. And it's destroying everything in its path.

And we, all of us collectively, are holding on to one another and trying to stop this train.
Trying to hold back the train. Trying to slow it down. Trying to keep it from barreling through and trampling over—and killing, frankly—the next group of people in its way. Trying to stop the destruction. But it's big. And we're small. And it has these huge engines behind it. And so it seems like we can't do it.

So I just want to acknowledge that feeling of helplessness—that no matter what we do, no matter how much effort we exert—it just doesn't seem to be working.

But having said that, I think that we have to also remember that the people of Gaza haven't given up hope.

And that the people of Gaza—and the Palestinians in the West Bank, in Jerusalem—they are recognising, many of them, that there's something bigger going on here. That the tide is starting to turn.

Even yesterday, when Edan Alexander—the Israeli-American soldier captive—was released, President Trump expressed his hope that he hopes these are the last necessary steps to end the war.

The editorials in the last week of several major British newspapers—*The Guardian*, *The Economist*, *Financial Times*, *The Independent*—have all put out editorials—not op-eds, but from the editorial board—saying:

*"This cannot continue. This cannot go on. There's a genocide happening. There's famine happening."*

So what had seemed like it was never going to stop—I do think there is an emergent realisation that this has to end.

That this has to stop.

So the first step is: **do not despair.**

Take inspiration from the deep spiritual reservoir and the deep faith of the people—the deep faith of people in Gaza and in Palestine elsewhere.

I remember last September, I think it was, there was a video on YouTube. It was from a big American Muslim conference, and Yasir Qadhi was able to do a Zoom call with Khaled Nabhan—may he rest in peace. He's known for the "*Rooh al-Rooh*" phrase. He lost his granddaughter and grandson, and his picture of him holding his granddaughter and kissing her went viral.

And so he was asked by Yasir Qadhi—in an auditorium full of American Muslims and others who were like, *"What else are we going to do? Come on, give us our marching orders."*

So Yasir Qadhi asked Khaled Nabhan:

*"What can we in America—we in the West—do?"*

And I was listening—we were all listening—expecting to get a list: *do 1, 2, 3...*

And Khaled Nabhan said:

*"Du'aa, Salah, remembering Allah, praying for an end to the genocide."*

And so when we think about *doing*, I fall into this trap all the time. When I think about doing, I want to think about:

*What's the next thing I'm going to write? What's the next thing I'm going to say? What's the next protest I'm going to go to?*

But the first *doing*, I think—especially for those of us outside Palestine—is to tap into our deep spiritual reservoir.
Whether that's through Salah, through Du'aa, through meditation, through contemplation—whatever it is that is your spiritual anchor—I think we have to start with that, **so that we don't despair.**

Second, I would say: **extend grace to yourself.**

Recognise that many of us have been running on empty these last 19 months.

And then take stock. Ask yourself: Which spheres of Sumood have I been practicing for these past 19 months?

That may not be recognised as "big things" that capture the world's attention—but still matter.

Have I been talking to one person?

Have I wore my watermelon pin and had someone ask me about it?

Have I built community with other people?

Have I welcomed people who are new to Palestine into our circles? Or have I shut them out because they're not up to date on everything? What have I done at the civic level? The international level?

So I think it's important that each of us recognise and acknowledge what we've already done—and that we've already done a lot.

And it may not seem enough...

Honestly, opening your social media app and bearing witness to the suffering in Gaza—that is something.

None of this feels like it's enough. But each act is something.

Third, I would say: **extend grace to each other.**

It's not normal to live through a genocide. And we're all processing trauma in different ways.

That's not going to look the same for everyone.

People are going to come in and go out. People are going to be engaged—and then not.

So we need to extend grace and welcome people when they want to come back—when they feel ready to come back to the cause and to working for liberation.

Fourth: **imagine Palestine after liberation.**

What will it look like? What will it feel like to go and visit our grandparents' village? What will it feel like to pray in Jerusalem, or to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre?

Imagine that. And write it down.

Let's take some time to imagine what it looks like. Because we need that vision to keep going.

And finally, fifth: Take a deep breath. Roll up our sleeves. **And dive back in.**

It's important to remember that we don't have to do everything.

I think each of us can choose just one or two things that we're really passionate about and good at—and focus on those.

Maybe it's a creative outlet.

Maybe it's an educational project or a media project.

Maybe you're really good at organising events or building a sense of community.

It could be informal.

A potluck where each person brings a Palestinian dish, for example.

And think about the audience:

Who are you building community with? Who do you want to reach?

Is it your neighbors? Your university classmates? Are you active in labor organising? Are you a creative who wants to reach other creatives?

Think about your specific projects with that audience in mind.

And so I think by doing these things—and working through the heartbreak—actually, *acknowledging* the heartbreak, giving ourselves grace to process it, and then moving through it in creative and productive ways, without berating ourselves or trying to put the whole Palestinian cause on our shoulders...

I think these last 19 months have really driven home the point that: None of us can do it by ourselves. We are undoing centuries of colonialism, centuries of imperialism, centuries of Orientalism.

It's not going to happen overnight. And it's not going to happen through individual efforts.
It's going to happen in community and through collectivity. And we can only do as

much as we can do. So: give grace to ourselves. Give grace to others. Recognise that there are more powerful powers out there. And then—do what we can with the people we know.

**Moderator**
▶ 53:47

Thank you. This is very helpful—even on a personal level.

I have to re-emphasise what you said: the trauma that we are living in. Because I won't even compare, I won't even imagine the trauma that cousins are going through.

But us, outside of Gaza in general—whether in Palestine or outside—we go through a different type of trauma.

Because we watch it. 24/7.

And we—us who are abroad—are worried about our own families.

And I personally would say there is another level of trauma of having to live with the feeling of guilt all the time. Guilt because you belong to that country that a genocide is happening in.
And at the same time, you're unable to fully be happy, to fully be sad, to do something.

One minute you feel like you're doing something. The other, you feel helpless—as I said.

And it was very helpful to hear you saying: *give grace to ourselves and to the people around us.*

And they always say that even tiny steps are steps. Or tiny actions are actions—it's better than nothing. And I'm sure I speak—and imagine my Gazan friends in my head and their reaction toward this—it won't be nice reactions, because I feel them.

Because for them, they expect a lot from us. But I always tell them: You can't imagine the feeling of helplessness that we go through.

And it is—it's definitely testing us all.

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 55:32

It is.

And I think a lot of what I said sounds small. It sounds like it's not meeting the moment—the gravity of the moment that we're in, given the scale of destruction and the levels of genocide, and now the levels of famine. It doesn't feel like it's enough. But—as I said—I've been studying *Sumood* as it's developed over the past century. This has been going on a long time. And we were not supposed to be here.

The British, the Zionists, the Americans—eliminating the Palestinian cause was their plan.

Their plan was that none of us would even acknowledge or recognise ourselves as Palestinians. That we would be saying: *we're Jordanian*, or *we're Arab*, or whatever.

So we have to also, I think, appreciate the profound array of powers that have been arrayed against us, and that have *not* been supporting us. Right? Where are the Arab governments? Where are the Arab leaders? Where are the Arab countries? And recognise, then, that we are a people.

We are a people with very modest tools—but a very strong, strong, strong spirit. And that spirit—you know, a spirit is something you can't see, right? But the spirit is there.

**Moderator**

▶ 57:07

That's very powerful, I have to say.

If I can just ask one last question—very quickly:

**What lessons can we draw from other anti-colonial or anti-genocide struggles globally that may apply to the Palestinian context—whether strategically, legally, or morally—from your opinion?**

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 57:29

I think there's a lot still to be learned about the Algerian struggle for independence.

The Algerian struggle for independence—again, French colonial rule—132 years.

And when you look at when they launched the war of independence in 1954… you look at 1955, 1956, 1957…

It was not clear they were going to win.

The French were extremely brutal.

Extremely sadistic in their punishments, in their torture, in their use of violence.

But the thing that the Algerians had was their spirit.

And what they also had—and what turned the tide of the war—was the ability of the Algerians to reach the conscience of the world, and to isolate the French in a way that made it *impossible* for them to continue.

So it was the on-the-ground guerrilla fighters and their community of supporters. But it was also their ability to share their cause on a world stage.

And that's something that we also have.

Our official leadership and representation on the world stage, unfortunately, leaves much to be desired in this moment.

But again—that's where we come in. Where we are able, for now, to work as individuals and as grassroots organisations to present the Palestinian cause on the world stage.

And then I hope—inshallah, inshallah, soon—we will be able to channel that mobilisation, especially the youth, into a more formal mechanism of leadership that will be able to help guide us toward a free, democratic, and liberated Palestine.

**Moderator**

▶ 59:29

Thank you, Dr. Maha.

Thank you so much for this rich, grounded, and deeply moving conversation.

You've helped us connect the past to the present—from the Nakba to the unfolding catastrophe in Gaza today—and reminded us that *Sumood* is not just about survival and being in the land, but it's about dignity, resistance, and vision.

This is not just history—it's a call to action.

What is happening in Gaza is **not** a stand-alone crisis. It is the continuation of decades of dispossession, forced displacement, and impunity.

And now, I think the question is:

**What will each of us do with the clarity we've gained today?**

PRC believes that our role is not only to document, but to amplify, organise, and mobilise.

And I hope all of us—and all of the people who are in the audience, wherever they are—will take what we've heard today to transform it into action, into education, into solidarity, into pressure on governments.

Thank you so much for joining us today.

It has been a pleasure to have you with us.

And stay connected with PRC on the social media channels.

Thank you so much.

**Dr. Maha Nassar**

▶ 1:00:46

Thank you so much for having me.

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