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Every US-led imperial war in the Arab region extends itself into the lives of Arab diasporas in the United States. The period directly after the 1967 Arab–Israeli war, when the United States consolidated its relationship with Israel, entailed the first significant institutionalized attacks against Arab activists in the United States.[1] As Arab American studies has shown, many Arab Americans tended to enjoy a "proximity to whiteness."[2] Yet the aftermath of 1967 set off a conflation between Arabness (and Arab anti-imperialist activism) with the racialized figure, Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim enemy of the nation within US corporate media and government rhetoric.[3] Indeed, Arab American racial formations have depended on shifting US imperialist agendas. The 1990s Gulf War marked one of the most widespread periods of anti-Arab/anti-Muslim violence in the United States up until that period—from fires that destroyed Arab American businesses to public beatings, hate crimes, firebomb attacks, bomb threats, and vandalism—contributing to increased representations and treatment of Arab Americans as different from and inferior to persons perceived to be whites.[4] An Arab American woman whom I conducted research with in 2000 who was in high school during this period recalled her teacher asking her to raise her hand. Her teacher then said, "Raise your other hand," and she did, to which her teacher replied, "That's how all of you should come here, with your hands up." In 2006 during the US-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon, US government and corporate media discourses rendered Lebanese people who were crying out against the invasion, including Lebanese diasporas in the United States, as terrorist supporters.[5] Mohammed, whom I interviewed in Dearborn, Michigan, at the time, told me:

> People were crying, saying, "It's my family, it's my father, my sister, my mother, my cousin, my nieces, my nephews [being killed]. But they projected it as [support for] terrorism. There was a well-orchestrated effort to make you feel like you are committing a crime for calling for a cease-fire. The minute you become critical, you're anti-Semitic, and pro-terrorist.[6]

What can we gain from interrogating US imperialist expansion from the location of Arab diasporas? For one thing, we gain a transnational perspective on US Empire building that urges us to collapse the space-time distinctions between US Empire "abroad" and "domestic" US racial formations. For instance, while a great deal of scholarship interrogates how whiteness and nonwhiteness within the domestic boundaries of the United States have been forged in relation to US Empire and state violence abroad, it tends to conceptualize the domestic United States, on the one hand, and the places where the United States has intervened, on the other, as distinct spatiotemporal locations. Here, I aim to challenge the assumption that while people living in the Arab region face war, Arab diasporas in the United States encounter white supremacy, racism, and Islamophobia as mere impacts or coincidences of war.[7] I take special interest in how military violence (bombs, bulldozers, etc.) and what takes place within the geographic boundaries of empire (i.e., white privilege, the criminalization of immigrants, detentions, etc.) magnify each other and are moving parts of the same imperial present. They take place within the same spatiotemporal context. Of course, Arab and Muslim diasporas in the United States may not experience military violence in the same ways or to the same degree as the people in the countries targeted by the bombs or the bulldozers, but Arab and Muslim diasporic life is constituted by racism and imperial military violence all the same.

Again, consider Israel's massive invasion against Lebanon in 2006 that killed twelve hundred Lebanese; wounded four thousand; displaced one million; and destroyed tens of thousands of homes as well as hospitals, schools, factories, roads, airports, power stations, fuel depots, warehouses, and most of the country's bridges.[8] Members of the Lebanese diaspora living in Dearborn, Michigan, encountered vicious anti-Arab/Muslim racism in the United States while the invasion ensued in Lebanon. Some Lebanese displayed emblems of whiteness in attempts to disassociate themselves from the figure of the terrorist. Some shaved their beards. Christian Lebanese wore larger crosses on their necks. In Dearborn, Lebanese also experienced the killing and the destruction of the invasion within the intimate domains of family and community. Local newspapers reported that one woman had six hundred family members targeted by Israeli bombardment. One man lost twelve family members; another lost over forty. At the Bint Jubeil Cultural Center, a meeting point for Lebanese diasporas and their allies during the invasion, people held memorial services for persons killed in Lebanon, fundraisers for relief funds, and media and letter-writing campaigns. I interviewed one woman who lost her aunt and grandmother in

Lebanon at the time. She recalled: "It was an amazing outpouring of people caring and wanting to be there and cry with us, to make sure we ate, drank, and were feeling okay. We put an obituary in a local paper for my aunts and my grandmothers and people we didn't know sent flowers, breakfast, lunch, dinners. It took three hours to shake every hand."

In the summer of 2006 Lebanese were not only experiencing the impact of war but war itself. Here diaspora is itself a product of global power relations shaped by imperialism: US citizens do not migrate en masse to Beirut, but Lebanese have been driven by European expansion, a civil war in which the United States is deeply implicated, Israeli expansion, and economic neoliberalism to migrate. As the saying in Britain used to go, "we are here because you were there." Yet in addition to being "here" because Europe and the United States was "there," southern Lebanese in Michigan were intimately living the US- and Israeli-led invasion from the distance of diaspora.

No context better elucidates the workings of US Empire inside the empire than that of Palestinian and Arab diasporic activism in the United States. Efforts to suppress Arab American activism have been well documented: from Operation Boulder in 1972, when the FBI spied on Arab Americans, to the LA 8 case when seven Palestinians and one Kenyan were targeted with deportation proceedings for twenty years based on secret evidence for speech-protected activities,[9] to the ongoing systematic targeting of Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim student activists.[10] Most analyses have explained concerted efforts to criminalize the constitutionally protected political activism of Arab diasporas as institutionalized attempts to quell criticism of Israel in the United States through the use of fear and intimidation. Yet it is important to bring the direct connection between these attacks against Palestinian and Arab activism in the United States and the US–Israeli imperial agenda in Palestine to the center.

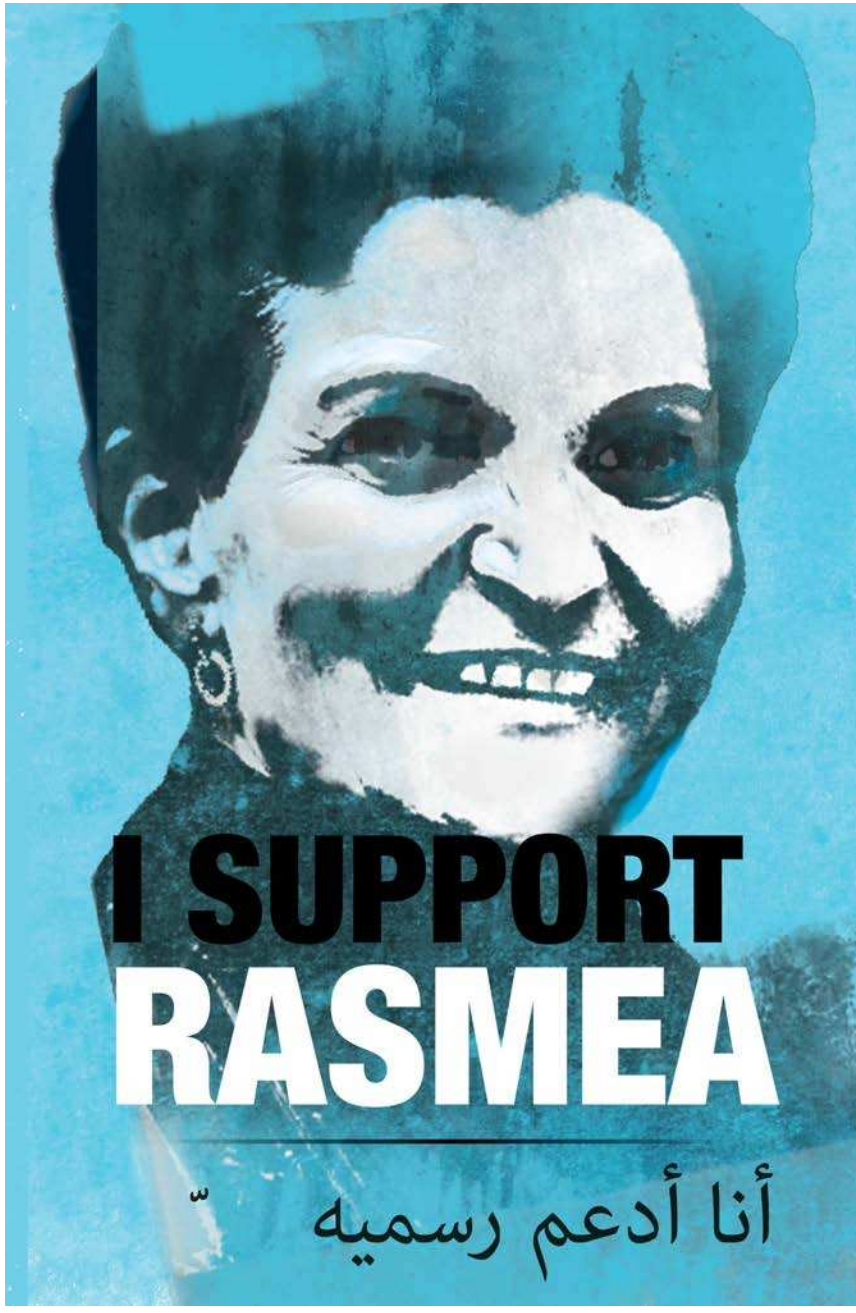
Consider the period after the US-backed 1993 Oslo accords, which established interim governance arrangements, including the transfer of control of the major Palestinian cities in the West Bank and Gaza from the Israeli military to a newly created Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority was to serve as an interim structure to oversee administration and security in those areas. In fact, Oslo is better understand as the normalization of colonization. Obscured through the rhetoric of "the peace process," Oslo brought about continued Israeli colonization of Palestinian land and Israeli expansion, the delegitimization of the Palestinian struggle, and the general complicity of the Palestinian Authority with Israeli and US imperialism and neoliberal economic domination.[11] After Oslo, the United States created lists of FTOs

(Foreign Terrorist Organizations),[12] allowing the United States to target many groups, including Palestinian and Arab diasporic activist movements that had been critical of the Oslo process.[13] These lists obstructed the ability of Arab diasporas to maintain connections to struggles in their homelands in order to destroy those same movements in Palestine.[14]

Exemplifying this is the case of Muhammad Salah, first initiated in Israel in 1993 where Salah was arrested while he was distributing money to disenfranchised occupied Palestinians, and was tortured and interrogated. He then returned to the United States where he was labeled a specially designated terrorist "by executive order with no legal process, no limitation in time, and no process to challenge this."[15] In his high-profile 2007 trial, Israelis were feeding information to prosecutors based on his confessions under torture.[16] Consider also the related 2008 conviction and indictment of Dr. Abdelhaleem Ashqar for obstruction of justice and criminal contempt when he refused to cooperate with federal grand juries' investigations of Hamas and the Palestinian anti-occupation movement. He was given the choice of informing or going to jail for criminal contempt. The US government asserted that Ashqar's refusal to testify before a grand jury required him to be sentenced as if he had aided and abetted terrorism.[17] In the current case of sixty-six-year-old Palestinian American activist Rasmea Odeh, the federal government is using immigration infractions as a political tool. Odeh is charged with immigration fraud based on a naturalization application she filed *twenty years ago*. The indictment paints Odeh as a terrorist and focuses on Odeh's alleged involvement in a Palestinian movement critical of Israeli state violence and Oslo and her conviction in 1969 by an Israeli military court that has a near 100 percent conviction rate of Palestinians. The fact that she confessed under conditions of sexual and psychological torture in Israeli jail has been ignored. Also ignored is that the US attorney's office initiated a request to the state of Israel for their records on Rasmea Odeh as part of their investigation into twenty-three Palestine solidarity and antiwar activists in 2010—activists who were ordered to appear before a grand jury investigating "material support of terrorism" and who were never indicted.[18]

Figure 1.
Image from the United States Palestine Community Network and StopFBI.net's pamphlet used to mobilize activists to join the campaign "Drop the Charges against Rasmea Now" to support Rasmea Odeh.

White supremacy and imperial power also constitute Arab diasporic life through the collective sense that avoiding racial targeting does not always require phenotypically passing as white, but even more importantly, hiding


I SUPPORT
RASMEA
أنا أدعم رسميه

emblems of Islam or Arabness (for those privileged enough to do so). This might entail changing one's name (from Osama to Sam), speaking without an Arabic inflection, avoiding appearances associated with Arabness or Islam (beards, headscarves, traditional clothing). Yet it also demands remaining silent about US imperial violence and Zionist colonization and expansion, a disciplinary effect I have theorized elsewhere as an "internment of the psyche."[19] This is a sort of internal incarceration or collective sense of fear that at any moment one of us could be harassed, beaten up, picked up, locked up, or disappeared by the policing mechanisms of the security state. Racial profiling "here" is a key strategy of empire. It *is* empire.

Throughout US histories, the tension between republican aspirations to democracy and the drive to empire (and settler colonial expansion) has been constant. Opposition to Palestinian activism and the current boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement (BDS) is symptomatic of the limit on democracy that the commitment to imperial alliances has always involved. Antagonism to Arab Americans and Muslim Americans and the restriction on basic freedoms this imposes demonstrates that.

We might then ask, what does holding the empire and the diaspora within the same spatiotemporal space imply for social movements such as BDS? While it is crucial that Palestine solidarity movements remain focused on the colonization of Palestinian land, BDS and related movements still need to determine how to engage the United States itself not only as a supporter of Zionism elsewhere but as a principal spatiotemporal location of Zionism. We need to think beyond nation-states here, about whiteness in the context of transnational imperial spaces and political formations that go beyond the territories of nation-states and are not bound by them. For instance, how might we bring together an analysis of the complicity of Israeli institutions in Israel's targeting of Palestinian scholars *with* an analysis of the complicity of sectors of US academe and US Zionist organizations in the targeting of Palestinian, Arab American, and anti-Zionist scholars in the United States without erasing the asymmetry in the balance of powers between Palestinians living under colonization and those of us living and working in the United States?[20] Indeed, the US Empire, founded on settler colonialism, white supremacy, and the racialization of its victims, finds its perfect imperial ally in Israeli settler colonialism, and this alliance reverberates back within the United States.

Of course, empire also crafts and shares military technologies transnationally. When the New York City police department was secretly monitoring Muslim students at schools far beyond the city limits, they used the same surveillance technology used to advance the invasions in Iraq and carry out

the global campaign of assassinations waged by the Obama administration in Pakistan, Yemen, and beyond. As surveillance aids and abets racialization, the NSA's surveillance apparatus is now integrated into US imperialism's global military operations.[21] Technologies that violate the constitutional rights of Arab and Muslim Americans are part of the same material apparatus of US Empire, which itself creates a shared space. We might then consider whether whiteness should be thought of as that which adopts, supports, and aligns with the strategies of the imperial state.

Transnational and women of color feminist scholarship has established that the US war on terror developed more broadly through the restructuring of US domestic *and* foreign policy via an expansion of the conjoined heteropatriarchal, racist, and classist structures of the prison industrial complex and the military industrial complex. Both phenomena were of course driven by the economic neoliberalism of the late twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries.[22] Yet there remains an analytic tendency to spatially and geographically separate US-led empire from the realities of life in the United States. Black British cultural studies writers have theorized the diaspora of empire in terms of people, such as Algerians in France, who reside in countries that formerly colonized them. Kobena Mercer theorizes the diaspora of empire as a "reminder and a remainder of the nation's historical past."[23] Yet Arab diasporas targeted within the contemporary United States cannot be understood as a postcolonial diaspora wherein the diaspora moves into the seat of its former empire. Rather, the stories of many Arabs in the United States becoming a diaspora of empire points to a moment in which the empire and its subjects exist in a transnational and contemporaneous frame. The subjects of the current empire reside within the empire itself. While conventional US diaspora studies reveals diasporic immigration as tracing a route *back to* the *formerly* imperial metropole, diasporas of empire emerge against the highly invasive and shifting relations of power central to *contemporary* US settler colonialism and imperial formations. This formulation also requires expanding empire studies beyond nation-based frameworks or the separation between colony and metropole in most studies of colonialism. Contemporary US imperialism requires us to reframe time and space—it is all happening together, even if in different spaces. The diaspora of contemporary US Empire means that one lives one's homeland differently, as part of a transnational diaspora. One is still the subject of an existing imperial war, but differently so.

Transnational trends within Arab American studies have almost always collapsed the time-space distinctions between US Empire "over there" and "over here." Indeed transnational Arab American studies—and activism—can help us

think through increasingly urgent questions about solidarity such as these: How might the growing support for Palestinian self-determination within American studies and ethnic studies account for the workings of US imperialism and Zionism *inside* the empire? How does this affect how we theorize whiteness and US-based racial violence? And how might US-based solidarity movements conceptualize alliance building with Palestinian and other national liberation struggles that are not entirely bound by the territories of nation-states?

Notes

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6. I use pseudonyms throughout the essay. I conducted this interview in August 2006.
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