

GRACE Editors' Note:

GRACE journal presents this conversation among Stanford students about Israel's war on Gaza which began after the Hamas attack on October 7th, 2023, with a unique focus on the role of AI technologies in that conflict. Although GRACE invited articles that focused specifically on technology, as is the mission of this journal, both groups argued that the historiography of Zionism and anti-Zionism remain inseparable from the unique technology development in Israel. Thus, these two articles present competing histories and critiques. They have read each other and respond to each other, to the Stanford community, and GRACE readership at large.

The opinions in both articles do not reflect the views of GRACE or Stanford, but rather only those of the two groups of students and their affiliates. The Stanford Sit-in to Stop Genocide and The Stanford Students for Israeli Technology are entirely responsible for their respective content. Because conversation proved contentious both in writing and in public exchanges, some students feared for their safety, and therefore requested anonymity. GRACE made the singular exception to allow the groups to publish collectively without individual names. Each article has a corresponding email for the author group responsible for the content of the article. Moving forward, GRACE will require all authors to use their real names.

Ultimately, the writing process challenged everyone involved and these papers demonstrate the willingness of students to learn from each other and evolve their own ideas. GRACE is proud to see contributors engage in this learning process.

Your Tech for Apartheid: Addressing Complicity in Israel's Apartheid Regime



Image Credit: Pamela Martinez Barrera, on White Plaza, Stanford University

“We are the only people on Earth asked to guarantee the security of our occupier... while Israel is the only country that calls for defense from its victims.”

Hanadai Ashrawi

“Technology can bring people together—but when these tools are used to harm communities, they make the world less safe for us all.”

#NoTechForApartheid

“For if life had taught her anything, it was that healing and peace can begin only with acknowledgment of wrongs committed.”

Susan Abulhawa

Abstract

[The Stanford Sit-In to Stop Genocide](#) is a collective of Stanford University undergrads, graduate students, alumni, post docs, faculty, and community members standing in solidarity with Palestinians against Israeli occupation, apartheid, and genocide. We sustained the longest demonstration in Stanford history, a 120-day overnight protest in White Plaza calling on the university to divest from Israel. Our paper begins with an overview of Israeli settler colonialism, occupation, apartheid, and the current genocide in Gaza. A crucial component of Israel's occupation is the US-backed Israeli military-industrial-technology complex. We criticize the unethical use of AI biometric surveillance, brutal AI-equipped weapons systems, and cyberwarfare against human rights activists as well as censorship of Palestinian rights activists. Given the deep complicity of tech industries in the genocide of Palestinians, Stanford's foundational role in Silicon Valley, and the historical successes of worker- and student-led divestment movements, we argue that tech workers and Stanford community members have a crucial role to play in ending our institutions' support for genocide. We support the global divestment movement, draw parallels to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and advocate for economic and political pressures as mechanisms for securing Palestinian liberation. We call on readers to join the movement for Stanford to divest from companies supporting Israeli apartheid and push for an ethics of engineering that refuses complicity in all state and settler colonial violence.

Stanford Sit-In To Stop Genocide 4

Key terms: *Israel; Palestine; Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT); Zionism; Settler Colonialism; Ethno-Nationalism; Hafrada; Apartheid; Domicide; Gaza Genocide; Boycott, Divesment, Sanctions (BDS); Project Nimbus; Pegasus; Surveillance; Silicon Valley; Stanford Sit-In To Stop Genocide*

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Introduction

Israel's recent bombardment of Gaza has once again drawn global attention to the humanitarian crisis in Palestine. Israel's formal declaration of war is limited to Hamas, whose civil branch governs the Gaza Strip, a besieged territory one-fiftieth the size of the San Francisco Bay Area. However, Palestinians across the West Bank and Gaza are experiencing violence from Israel's military, which is ranked as the fourth most powerful globally (USNews, 2024). As of February 29, 2024, the reported Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 30,000, 70% of whom are women and children (Hart, 2024). The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have destroyed nearly 70% of civilian housing and infrastructure, forcibly displacing about 85% of the Palestinian population in the besieged strip (Shah, 2023). Israel has regularly shut off all supplies of food, water and electricity, blocking off or imposing a bottleneck on humanitarian aid and fuel for hospitals ("Gaza Emergency," 2024). Attacks on the Al-Shifa OBGYN building caused infants to suffocate in the ICU ("Gaza City," 2023). The regular bombing of refugee camps ("Israeli Airstrikes Flatten Apartments," 2023) in the besieged territory demonstrates there is no safe place of refuge. The United Nations (UN) has reported the killing of 161 humanitarian workers (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024), the greatest UN staff death toll in any global conflict (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2023), and, while the UN continues to raise alarms of war crimes and crimes against humanity, Israel has openly halted all UN staff visas (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2023). The Committee to Protect Journalists has also reported record deaths, with nearly 100

media workers killed (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2024). This is not legal warfare. Israel has blatantly committed internationally recognized war crimes, including collective punishment of 2.2 million Palestinians and the use of white phosphorus on civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2023a)—acts that scholars and human rights experts have called “a textbook case of genocide” (Burga, 2023). Additionally, Israel's military action has escalated the threat to the safety and lives of Israeli hostages in Gaza, and the IDF was responsible for three video-documented hostage deaths (Schechter, 2023). While this magnitude of destruction by the IDF in Gaza is unprecedented, it must be understood as an escalation of the violence of apartheid, occupation, and settler colonialism inflicted on Palestinians by the Israeli state since 1948. We must not only advocate for an end to the genocide, but the end of the occupation and full freedom and human rights for all Palestinians.

We are a collective of Stanford undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, post-doctorals, faculty, and community members, representing the [Stanford Sit-In to Stop Genocide](#). We build on prior student-led movements pushing the university to divest from human rights abuses in Palestine. In 2015, Stanford Out of Occupied Palestine (SOOP) presented a proposal which passed in the Undergraduate Senate (Stanford Out of Occupied Palestine, 2015) but was dismissed by the Board of Trustees without any consideration for “the veracity of [the proposal’s] claims” (“Statement of the,” 2015). This contradicts the Board’s Statement on Investment Responsibility, which recognizes that companies’ involvement in “abhorrent and ethically unjustifiable” actions, “[including] apartheid [and] genocide,” may warrant “case-by-case review” and “the University’s dissociation” (Stanford University Board of Trustees, 2022). Stanford’s

refusal to investigate its investment ties to Israeli apartheid is part of a larger ethical failure: in a 2023 report, Amnesty International found that “university investment offices...are failing their responsibility under the UN Guiding Principles to respect human rights,” with Stanford scoring a D (18/40) and receiving straight zeroes in the category of “Disclosure & Transparency,” lower than either Harvard or Yale, who earned a B (33/40) and C (24/40), respectively (Amnesty International, 2023a). Perhaps this should come as no surprise; defense contracts were essential to the university’s transformation into an “essential American institution” in the 1950s and ‘60s, with Stanford academics supplying research to the CIA and US military in the Korean War and Vietnam War (Harris, 2023, pp. 321-322). Whether providing research or developing talented engineers for war tech, Stanford is not only a key cog, but a major component in the American imperialist war machine. While the full extent of Stanford investments in companies involved in the Israeli occupation is unknown, as a collective at Stanford that is committed to the struggle for Palestinian liberation, it is clear that our work must start at home. We must push for university investment transparency and divestment from all institutions that support the occupation.



Image Credit: Thomas Yim/The Stanford Daily

The goal of this publication is to contribute to discussions on the Israeli occupation and the impacts of technologies that serve it, and to establish the case for tech and university divestment as mechanisms in the global solidarity movement for Palestinian rights. We especially hope to bring this conversation to Stanford affiliates concerned with AI who may not be familiar with details of the occupation and the role of tech in perpetuating it. Towards this end, we will provide (I) an overview of Israel's settler colonial history and crime of apartheid, (II) discussion of the Israeli military-industrial-complex and the involvement of American investors and tech corporations in the subjugation of the Palestinian people, and (III) historical examples of grassroots divestment campaigns and their efficacy in ending corporate and university complicity in genocide and apartheid.

Chapter 1: Historical Context: Settler Colonialism and Apartheid

Historic Palestine, home to various communities and cultures for thousands of years, refers to the region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The modern state of Israel was formed in the mid-twentieth century as a settler colonial project on Palestinian land. Today the majority of the international community recognizes Israel as the occupying power of Palestine that maintains a system of apartheid—racial oppression designed to segregate and effectively dominate Palestinians’ daily lives—known as “*hafrada*” in Hebrew (United Nations, 2014). As this paper seeks to introduce new audiences, especially those in technology fields, to the conversation on Israel and Palestine, this section provides a historical understanding of the occupation and calls for global economic pressure on Israel.

Israeli Settler Colonialism: A Brief History

In this paper, we argue that the current Israeli military and settler violence in Palestine must be understood as settler colonial: as part of the structural displacement of Palestinians since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Since before 1948, Palestinians have viewed Zionism, the movement to establish a Jewish nation-state in Palestine, as a colonial project, with some Israeli historians adapting this position beginning in the 1980s (Busbridge, 2018). With the growth of settler colonial studies since the 1990s, a wave of scholarship has studied the relationship between Israel and Palestine through this lens, with several special issues of *Settler Colonial Studies* dedicated to Palestine alone (Busbridge, 2018). While some dispute this framework for ignoring Jewish claims to indigeneity (Troen & Troen 2019; Ukashi, 2018), some Jewish

scholars have argued that religious and historical ties to the land do not negate the status of Israelis as settlers, nor do they negate the “settler-colonial dynamics” that structure institutions and daily life in Israel and Palestine (Feldman & McGonigle, 2023).

Zionism, the movement to establish a Jewish nation-state in Palestine and the current ideology of the modern state of Israel, was founded in 1897 by Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian Jewish activist (Abu-Lughod, 1971). Until World War I, some early British Zionists like Israel Zangwill adopted the early nineteenth century Christian vision of Palestine as “a land without a people for a people without a land” (Muir, 2008, originally in Keith, 1843, p. 43; Shapira, 1999, p. 51), a slogan to justify the project of Jewish settlement in Palestine (Morris, 1992, p. 28; Masalha, 1992, p. 5-6; Shapira, 1999, p. 51). However, Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century was not a land without a people. At the time, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, and its population in 1900 exceeded 580,000 people (McCarthy, 1990, p. 10). Moreover, a small Jewish community continued to exist in Palestine throughout these years, growing to an estimated size of about 60,000 people by 1914 (McCarthy, 1990, p. 24). In 1917, towards the end of World War I, with the impending collapse of the Ottoman Empire and under the influence of the World Zionist Organization, the British Empire issued the Balfour Declaration (United Nations, 2021). This statement—issued without the consent, consultation, or even mention of the Palestinians already inhabiting the land—promised British support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (Said, 1992).

With the formal establishment of the British Mandate of Palestine in 1922, the Zionist movement continued to grow in strength, with an increased influx of European Jewish settlers into Palestine (United Nations, 2021). Despite only being a demographic

minority, Jewish settlers came to form and control a separate sector of the economy which purposefully excluded Arab labor, and they even managed to exceed the size of the Arab-owned economy through assistance of massive amounts of foreign capital from Europe (Khalidi, 2020, p. 15). Rising Palestinian resentment against the Jewish settlers coupled with growing disdain for British colonial rule escalated into the Great 1936-1939 Arab Revolt, which ended in the military repression of Palestinian rebels with ten percent of the adult male indigenous population being killed, wounded, or exiled (Khalidi, 2020, p. 15). The demographics of Palestine were also significantly impacted by the widespread persecution of Jewish people in Europe by the Nazi regime, which led to a major wave of Jewish immigration into Palestine; by 1939, Jewish people comprised about a third of Palestine's population (Khalidi, 2020, p. 15).

Following World War II, the British government relinquished the fate of Palestine to the newly formed United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which formed a partition plan that allocated 56% of Palestine to the creation of a Jewish state (Khalidi, 2020, p. 81). In 1947, this resolution was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (United Nations, 1947). Emboldened by the recognition offered by the UN decision, the Zionist movement grew more militant than ever in order to construct a Jewish state by force through ethnic cleansing, or the systematic removal of Palestinians from their homeland (Chomsky & Pappé, 2013, p. 37). The resulting *Nakba* ("catastrophe"), involved the forced expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages, ultimately leading to the creation of the state of Israel on May 15, 1948 (Sa'di, 2007). By 1949 a total of over 700,000 Palestinians (80% of the total population) were forcefully expelled, fleeing to the West

Bank, Gaza, as well as neighboring Arab countries (Abu-Lughod, 1971). With their ancestral homes in Israeli hands and their land being tilled by Jewish settlements, most displaced Palestinians entered refugee camps managed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Around 160,000 Palestinians who managed to remain in what became the state of Israel were cut off from the rest of the Palestinians and the Arab world through military travel restrictions (Khalidi, 2020).

The Zionist settler colonial project of constructing a Jewish state and growing the population into the early 1950s with the "One-Million Plan" pursued by Israel, aimed to absorb a significant number of Jewish immigrants, producing demographic changes and worsening tensions in the region (Eliav, 1994). In June 5, 1967, Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egyptian forces in response to Egypt's closing of the Straits of Tiran, rapidly defeating Egypt's military forces in what came to be known as the Six-Day War, and achieving an unprecedented level of military supremacy amidst tensions with the Arab world. Known as the *Naksa* ("setback") by Palestinians, the war significantly emboldened Israel, leading to its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the illegal ongoing annexation of East Jerusalem (Abu-Lughod, 1971).

The decolonial movement for Palestinian liberation since the 1948 *Nakba* and the 1967 *Naksa* has epitomized a decades-long struggle for justice, dignity, and self-determination, as Palestinians seek to reclaim their homeland and assert their rights in the face of Israeli occupation and dispossession (Erakat, 2020; Qandeel, 2023). During this time, peaceful protest has been met with "disproportionate military force" and "frequent imprisonment of both adults and minors without due process," with both violent and non-violent resistance treated as terrorism by the Israeli state (Feldman

& McGonigle, 2023). As Israeli repression intensified, the Palestinian resistance also turned more militant, with the rise of Hamas as the leading socio-political force in the Gaza Strip in 2006. Since then, air and sea entry/exit from Gaza has been illegally patrolled and restricted by IDF forces, dramatically restricting Palestinians' access to crucial humanitarian aid ("U.N. experts say," 2011). As a consequence of these policies, the average lifespan of a Palestinian in Gaza is 10 years lower than that of an Israeli just a mile across the border (Anderson & Fletcher, 2023). The living conditions in Gaza are especially dire, with 80% relying on humanitarian aid, and an overall unemployment rate of 46.6%, despite a literacy rate of 96.3% (higher than the UNDP 2014 HDI "high human development" category average) and excellent education attainment rates (Dujarric, 2022; UNDP Arab States, 2023). The impact of the occupation on Palestinian life outcomes can be understood as part of what Patrick Wolfe calls "the [physical and symbolic] elimination" that natives face "at the hands of the settlers" (Salamanca et al., 2012, p. 4). The blockade of Gaza is but one of many "painful manifestations" of the settler colonial structure that oppresses Palestinians, from the physical violence of bombardment, massacres, invasion, and home demolitions (Salamanca et al., 2012, p. 2) to the everyday restrictions on Palestinian life and freedom under apartheid and occupation.

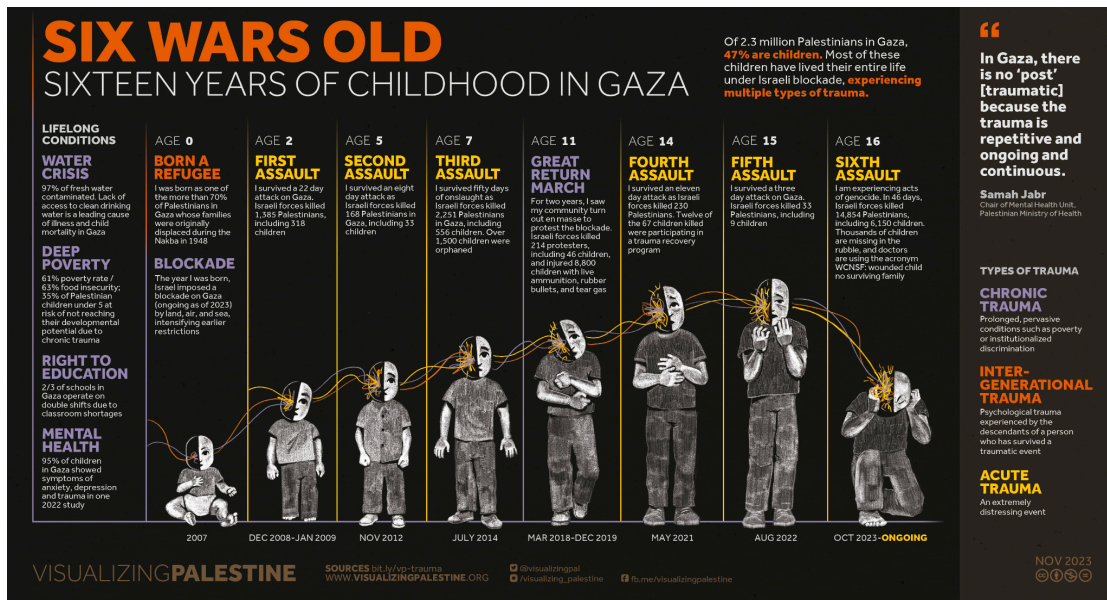


Figure 1: About half the population in Gaza is “Six Wars Old” or younger*

*This and other graphics cited from the non-profit organization Visualizing Palestine, which is a project of Visualizing Impact, a registered non-profit organization in Canada with a fiscal sponsor in the U.S. called Empowerment Works, INC., EIN 31-1796801 (Visualizing Palestine, 2024).

This historical lens is necessary for understanding Hamas—a step that analyst Tareq Baconi (2018) argues is “a prerequisite to halting the cycles of violence...unleashed on the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip” (p. xii). On October 7th 2023, Hamas initiated a surprise offensive called "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood." Thousands of rockets were launched from Gaza into Israel, and hundreds of militants attacked neighboring areas surrounding the Gaza Strip, leading to the deaths of about 1,200 Israelis, along with about 250 people taken as hostages. Several reports of alleged sexual violence during the Hamas attack have also surfaced since the offensive (Lidman, 2024). Hamas justified its attack as a response to the ongoing Israeli

occupation of Palestinian territories, the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and recent regional escalations (Haniyeh, 2023). Hamas also aimed to leverage the hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, 8300 of whom are currently being held (Salman, et al., 2023), 1200 without charges (Frankel, 2023), and 300 women or children (McKernan, 2023).

The United States, Israel, United Kingdom, and the European Union recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization, while several other countries such as South Africa, Malaysia, Turkey, and Venezuela do not. However, we must recognize that terrorism remains a disputed category, especially in a colonial context where the colonizer denounces their opposition as “terrorism.” In fact, the South African apartheid regime called Nelson Mandela a “terrorist” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014). As Baconi (2018) writes, while “[t]here is no doubt that Hamas carries out terror-inducing activities within Israel and the Palestinian territories,” the U.S. State Department definition of terrorism “fails to account for the terror caused by Israel’s relentless military regime over the Palestinians” (p. xviii).

The violence of October 7 is situated within the broader historical context of Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid. In its condemnation of Hamas’ violations of international law, Amnesty International stated, “Civilians will continue to pay a heavy price until Israel dismantles its system of apartheid against Palestinians, including ending its illegal blockade on Gaza” (Amnesty International, 2023d). Moreover, many of the crimes Israel accuses Hamas of, Israel has also been accused of, including torture, sexual violence, hostage taking, and terrorism (B’Tselem, 2017; Bajornas, 2024; “Israel’s Other Terrorist Challenge,” 2009; Grinberg, 2002). In fact, Amnesty

International and B'Tselem have documented the IDF's use of Palestinian "human shields" to guard buildings and artillery and test for explosives (Amnesty International, 2009; B'Tselem, 2017). We argue that any efforts towards a just and lasting peace in the region must take into account these crimes, as part of the larger structural violence of settler colonialism—within which, Israel's apartheid plays a key role.

Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians

International human rights experts and organizations such as Amnesty International (2022), Human Rights Watch (2021), B'TSelem (2024), Al-Haq (2022), and the United Nations Special Rapporteur (2022) have recognized the current state of Israel as an apartheid regime. Israel's apartheid regime denies civil rights to the 2.6 million Palestinians residing in fragmented enclaves across the West Bank, over two million in the Gaza Strip, 350,000 in illegally-annexed East Jerusalem, and an additional estimated 6 million living in exile (Amnesty International, 2022). The Israeli regime dominates all parts of society in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The legal framework around the crime of apartheid according to the United Nations' International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (ICSPCA) and the Rome Statute of 2002 refers to the institution of "policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination" aimed at "maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons [through systematic oppression]." In this section, we review how apartheid is institutionalized in Israeli civil law and IDF military law, contrary to the Zionist narrative that the apartheid is merely a misrepresentation of Israeli security initiatives (ADL, 2021).

Among the seven million Palestinians under Israeli jurisdiction, approximately five million are denied voting rights and their ability to engage in the political entities that rule over them. These Palestinians are subjugated to Israeli military law where they lack civil rights (Al Mezan, 2022; Amnesty International, 2022; B'Tselem, 2022; HRW, 2022). While Arab and non-Jewish Israeli citizens may vote, under Section 7a of the Knesset Law, a candidate or a list of candidates can be barred from running for Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) if their actions or goals explicitly or implicitly include “negation of the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state;” this means that Palestinians who do not recognize the nation in which they reside as an exclusively Jewish state have their voices effectively silenced.

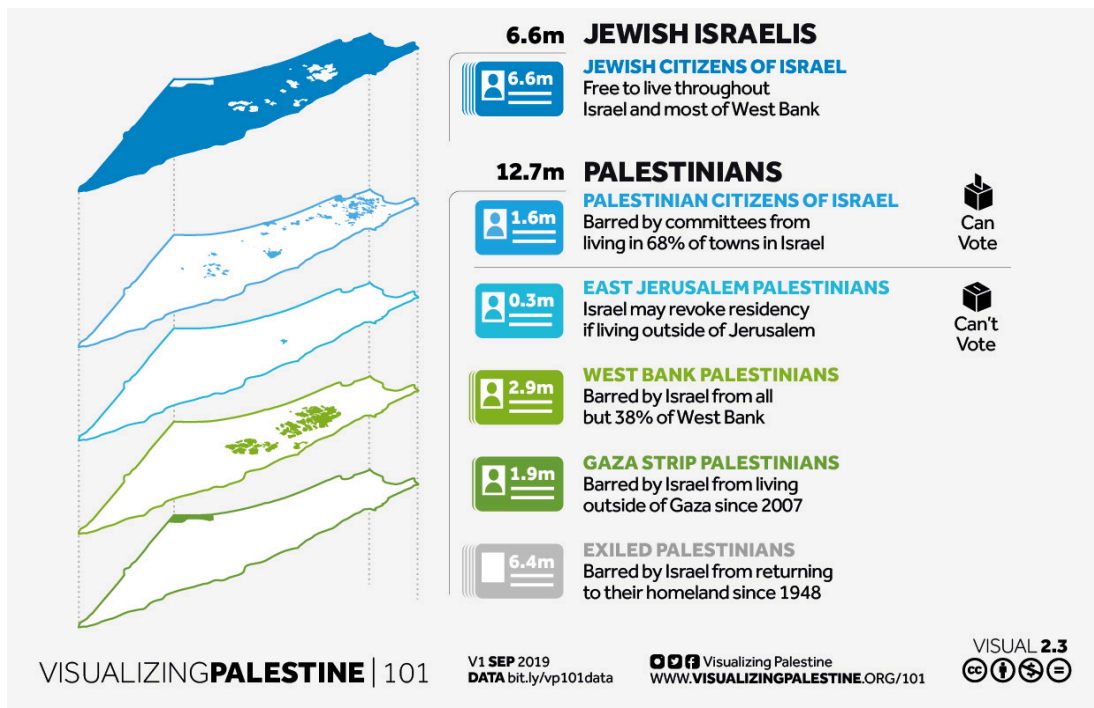


Figure 2: Tiered-Apartheid – Some people are more equal than others.

The apartheid against Palestinians functions as a tiered system. As shown in the figure above, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship sit at the top most tier of the apartheid, facing discrimination within Israel proper and isolated from the rest of the Arab world (Khalidi, 2020). At the bottom tiers of Israeli apartheid are exiled Palestinians and Palestinians residing in Gaza. As a result of the Second Intifada, Israel was forced to withdraw troops and settlements in Gaza while maintaining naval and air control over the Gaza Strip, resulting in an increased separation between Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. As a result, Gaza is often referred to as the “world’s largest open-air prison” (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Gaza’s relation to Israel is parallel to Apartheid South Africa’s “bantustans,” ethnically homogenous enclaves deemed self-governing by the regime but lacking true statehood (Al Mezan, 2021). Likewise, Palestinians in the West Bank are segregated and barred from residing from all but 38% of the West Bank, fragmented into disjointed enclaves (reference the figure above), subjected to military law and brutal segregating checkpoints while Jewish settlers residing in the West Bank live under civil law with Israeli civil rights (Al Mazen, 2022; Amnesty International, 2022; B’Tselem, 2021; HRW, 2022).

The apartheid against Palestinians is so extensive that even the roads are segregated: for example, Route 4307 (constructed 2005-2017) has separate lanes for Israeli and Palestinian drivers (Hassan, 2019; Habbas, 2023). With the two lanes separated by a 26-foot wall topped with metal fencing, Route 4307 is widely known as “Apartheid Road” (Hassan, 2019; Habbas, 2023). Meanwhile, Israel’s Minister of Public

Security praised Route 4307 as “coexistence” (Gantz, 2009). The conditions of apartheid are further illustrated by the most basic of human rights: water, as shown in the figure below.

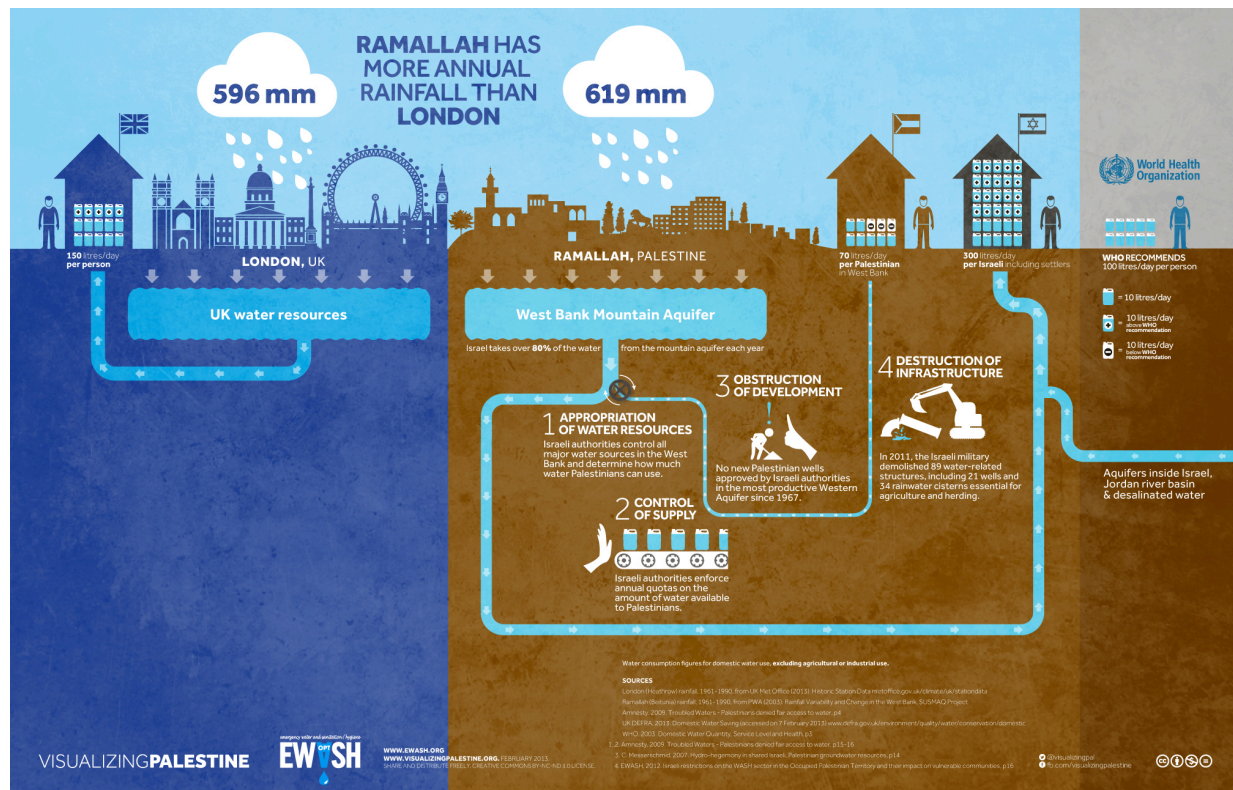


Figure 3: Case study of Israeli apartheid impact – Not Enough Water in the West Bank?

The conditions perpetuated by Israeli apartheid in the Gaza strip also impact Palestinians’ ability to access, study, and develop technology. Since October 7th, the Israeli bombardment has caused the closure of all schools in Gaza, forcing 65,000 Palestinian children out of school; the IDF has attacked every university in the city, destroying or damaging 346 schools, including 65 run by the United Nations (“How Israel,” 2024). Even before the current assault, Israel has bombed universities in Gaza in 2014 (“Israel strikes,” 2014) and 2008 (Habeb, 2008). Although Israel maintains that

its strikes on schools and critical infrastructure aim to eliminate Hamas militants, it has yet to present definitive evidence to support this claim in the ongoing offensive in Gaza (“What is,” 2023). In its investigation into prior wars, Amnesty International found no evidence that Hamas uses civilians to “shield” military personnel or equipment from Israeli attacks (Amnesty International, 2014). The “human shields” argument has proven a convenient excuse to destroy Palestinian life, culture, and infrastructure (Ezra, 2015).

Beyond the wartime destruction of schools, Palestinian students are adversely affected by the daily violence of occupation; the Palestinian drop-out rate is nearly twice that of their Israeli counterparts. Despite such adversity, about 3,500 high-tech engineers graduate from Palestinian universities annually, but they must often leave Palestine to find work in Israel and elsewhere, including “building for companies that work against Palestine” (Hafez et al., 2023). Even Palestinians living in Israel face discrimination when seeking education. For example, most scholarships to Israeli institutions require military service, which Palestinians do not complete. Palestinian citizens of Israel face more crowded schools, fewer teachers, and fewer enrichment, remedial, and special education programs, resulting in a drop-out rate that is three times higher than Jewish students and lower university enrollment (Abukwaik, 2023).

The extensive documentation and condemnation by international human rights organizations, as outlined in this section, underline the severe and systemic nature of Israel's apartheid against Palestinians. This regime not only restricts Palestinians' political freedoms and rights but also severely impacts their daily lives and long-term futures, especially in terms of access to education, technology, and basic human necessities like water. The segregated roads, disparate legal systems, and unequal

access to resources demonstrate a clear institutionalization of racial discrimination and segregation designed to maintain domination by one group over another, fitting the definitions of apartheid under international law. This context of apartheid, with its profound implications for human rights and socio-economic development, calls for urgent international attention and action. It is not simply a political issue but a humanitarian crisis that affects the lives of millions of Palestinians on a daily basis. The international community's response to this situation, including efforts to address and dismantle the structures of apartheid through diplomatic, legal, and economic means, is crucial for achieving justice and lasting peace in the region.

Divestment: A Necessary Step for Peace

In this section, we have discussed the historical background of Israeli settler colonialism, occupation, apartheid, and the ongoing genocide in Gaza. While Palestinians will ultimately determine what their liberation looks like, people of conscience around the world have a role to play in the global solidarity movement. Within this fight, divestment has been identified by Palestinians as a key non-violent tactic to pressure Israel to comply with international law and recognize Palestinian self-determination (Palestinian Civil Society, 2005). To some extent, all companies, organizations, and bodies that actively engage with Israel's economy—whether that be through its companies, organizations, or private interests—play a role in funding the genocide and occupation. Divestment helps ensure that all who contribute to Israel's economy have the opportunity to reassess their involvement, ensuring that they recognize their role in the human rights violations in Palestine. By divesting from entities

associated with Israel's economy, individuals and organizations send a powerful message that they refuse to be complicit in the perpetuation of violence and oppression. Actions such as these aim to pressure Israel, through its economy, into ending their apartheid regime.

Divestment movements also raise awareness, encouraging broader discourse on the ethical implications of economic engagement with entities that actively perpetuate human rights violations. Thus, divestment aims to foster a sense of responsibility among stakeholders to contribute to the immediate end of Israeli violence. Over time, as increasingly more companies and institutions divest from Israel, the pressure for national action in demanding an end to the apartheid will increase. Inspired by the successful use of economic pressure in the South African anti-apartheid struggle, the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement calls on people and organizations around the world to boycott and divest from companies complicit in Israeli apartheid. Companies targeted by BDS, such as Puma, Chevron, Siemens, and Carrefour Group, have engaged in partnerships with the Israeli government or corporations, implicating them in Israel's war crimes and human rights abuses. While elaborating on these campaigns and corporate complicity is outside this paper's scope, readers are encouraged to explore the BDS Movement's website to learn more.

Regardless of the particular path to peace, we argue that Israel's apartheid is dependent on the American-Israeli Military-Industrial Complex including all of the technologies which support it. **Therefore, we demand divestment from Israeli apartheid as a practical, actionable, and necessary step in support of the Palestinian people's righteous struggle for peace and liberation.** Stanford

University must cease ties with all institutions that enable the occupation, as a matter of due diligence in upholding human and humanitarian rights. In the next section, we offer an overview of tech complicity in Israeli violence, building the rationale for why divestment from key corporations is necessary in ending the brutal status quo. Afterwards, we will argue for the efficacy and power of civil grassroots organizing.

Chapter 2: The Technology Industry: Making Israeli Apartheid Possible

Since its forced establishment in 1948, Israel has grown a massive military tech industry. Often touted as the “startup nation,” (Senor & Singer, 2011) Israel enjoys an ecosystem of “2,000 startups founded in the past decade, another 3,000 small and medium-sized startup and high-tech companies, 30 growth companies, 50 large technology companies, and 300 multinational corporations R&D centers” (Deloitte, 2023). Many of these companies have funding and recruitment directly linked to the IDF (Mizroch, 2017; Cordey, 2019). In 2021, amidst rising tensions surrounding the eviction of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah and attacks on Palestinians at Al-Aqsa Mosque, another military confrontation erupted between Israel and Hamas, resulting in 260 deaths in Gaza and 13 in Israel (Al Jazeera, 2024). Dubbed the “first AI war” by the Israeli army, the deployment of weaponry assisted by artificial intelligence marked a key example of Israeli technological developments being used to enact heightened violence against Palestinians (Mhajne, 2023).

Mobilizing US military aid of more than 3.8 billion dollars a year (Congressional Research Service, 2023) and a huge talent pool from its mandatory military conscription (Baram & Ben-Israel, 2019), the Israeli military industry received \$8.8 billion in investments last year, and many US tech giants like Intel, Microsoft, IBM and Meta operate in Israel with ties to the Israeli military. Bombs manufactured by Boeing “facilitated the mass killings of extended families” (Amnesty International, 2023b), and much of the weapons used on Palestinian civilians *en masse* by Israel are designed and manufactured in the US (see Figure 4). Although divesting from all corporations profiting

from the occupation might not be feasible, critical targets can have the most impact in disrupting its industrial backbone as outlined by BDS. In the following sections we will deconstruct Israeli surveillance, military-industrial complexes, and censorship of Palestinian advocacy as well as the deep-rooted complicity of US companies, industry, and institutions. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the broader call for investment transparency and specifically eradicating ties between Stanford University's endowment and Israeli apartheid.

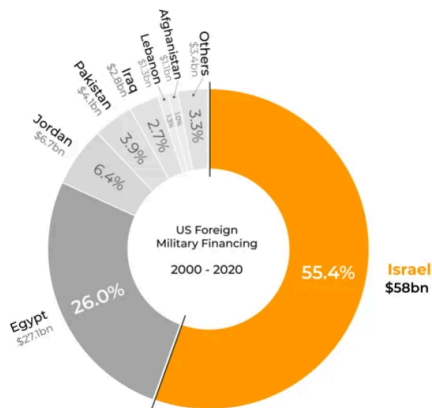
Surveillance and Military Technology

The 21st century has seen a rampant increase in the development of surveillance and weapon technologies. Advanced technologies of the surveillance and weaponry industries play a major role in the Zionist apartheid structure. Furthermore, Israeli technologies contribute to an increasingly pervasive network of surveillance that stretches across the globe. Much like Jeremy Bentham's concept of the Panopticon, a system of social and psychological control, Israeli surveillance works at the core by making Palestinians "feel watched no matter where they are. Israel's digital surveillance is thus the latest iteration of ... 'demonstrating presence,' which promotes Israeli patrols of Palestinian communities for the sole purpose of exhibiting the army's sprawling reach" (Shtaya, 2022; Ziv, 2021). Surveillance is how Israeli authorities entrench apartheid, "aim[ing] to monitor Palestinian voices, restrict freedom of expression, and discourage their autonomy" (Shtaya, 2022). In this section, we describe the relationship between Israel, surveillance and military technologies, and the repression of people's movements for liberation in Palestine and across the world.

Israel has utilized advanced military technologies for both covert, surveillance-based operations as well as more overt weapons operations. Yotam Feldman’s 2013 book *The Lab* about the military tech business and *The Palestine Laboratory* by Antony Loewenstein both demonstrate how Israel’s economy depends on military AI technology. They depict how Israel’s military-industrial complex uses the occupied Palestinian territories as a “testing ground for weaponry and surveillance technology” which they sell globally to any government that wants “field tested” technology to control its populations (Loewenstein, 2023; Abdelnour, 2023). Promoting its “field-tested” weapons in the May, 2021 11-day war in Gaza, Israel declared its “first AI war” using machine learning to resounding success (IDF, 2021).

US military financing

Since 2000, the US has given Israel \$58bn in FMF, more than the rest of the world combined.

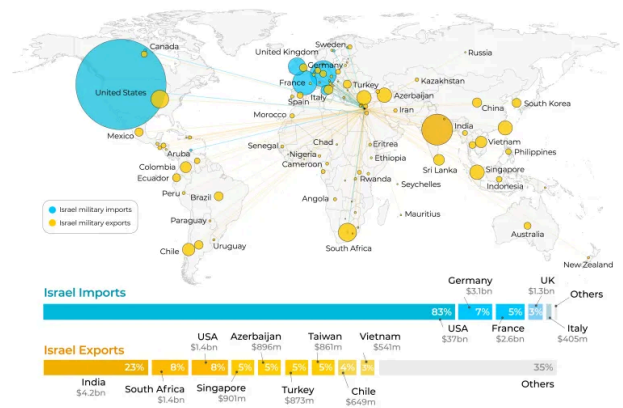


Source: Security Assistance Monitor | Congress
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

ALJAZEERA

Military imports and exports

From 1950 to 2020, 83 of Israel's arms imports came from the US and 23 percent of its exports went to India.



Source: SIPRI | Data as of 2020

ALJAZEERA

Figure 4: American-Israeli Military-Industrial Complex (AJLabs, 2021)

Israeli deployment of surveillance technologies and other advanced weaponry on Palestine is a component of a broader realm of repression. While the impact of

surveillance is particularly visible in the Israeli occupation of Palestine, these technologies have been used to target individuals and vulnerable communities across the world. In August 2016, a research group called Citizen Lab published a bombshell report titled *The Million Dollar Dissent*, detailing the targeted surveillance of an activist named Ahmed Mansoor by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government using a form of an Israeli spyware known as *Pegasus*. In addition, the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a notable activist and dissident, was facilitated by *Pegasus* (Faife & Castro, 2021). Developed by NSO Group, a private Israeli cyber-intelligence firm, *Pegasus* has been sold to client states across the world for surveillance and cyber-warfare (Marczak et al., 2018). NSO Group distributes these surveillance technologies exclusively to governmental agencies (Levinson, 2020), supposedly to “prevent and investigate terror and crime” (NSO Group, 2024). The technology exploits zero-day vulnerabilities in iOS software with zero-click capabilities, meaning that it requires no user interaction for operation. It can be installed remotely, and it can give users access to the phone’s messages, emails, contacts, as well as access to the camera and microphone (Shankland, 2022).

Since the 2016 Citizen Lab report, there has been an extensive amount of international journalism concerning the ongoing impacts of these cyber attacks, collectively referred to as the Pegasus Project. These investigations have revealed how the Israeli software has been linked to acts of repression across the world. In 2020, over 50,000 phone numbers targeted by Pegasus software from more than 50 countries were leaked to Forbidden Stories and Amnesty International, with targets including journalists, academics, union leaders, and heads of states (Forbidden Stories, 2022).

Subsequent forensic investigations by Amnesty International and Forbidden Stories revealed an infection rate of over 85% among phone numbers in the data. These findings showcase the systematic usage of Israeli surveillance as a tool of repression across the world. The sale of Pegasus software to client governments is controlled by the state of Israel, as NSO classifies it as a military export (Priest, 2020).

Israel has directly used NSO Group's Pegasus technology to surveil Palestinians. A November 2021 report by Frontline Defenders, and corroborated by Amnesty International, details how the devices of six Palestinian human rights defenders were hacked using Pegasus (Priest, 2020). Since October 2023, Israel has expanded the use of Pegasus in its war on Gaza, with NSO Group establishing a "war room" to track phones of hostages and Palestinians (Antoniuk, 2023). Former NSO group CEO Shalev Hulio, who has deep ties to the Israeli and international far-right (Gee & Semler, 2024), formed Dream Security, a spyware firm, with over a fifth of its employees from NSO Group (Antoniuk, 2023).

In addition to digital surveillance technology, the Israeli military-industrial complex also aids in global repression through the distributions of other advanced weapons and military infrastructure. Since 2010, the Indian government has worked with Nice Systems, an Israeli artificial intelligence company, to implement a Central Monitoring System (CMS) for monitoring phone calls and text messages, resulting in the arrests of several prominent human rights activists and grassroots organizers (Essa, 2010). Additionally, Israeli weapons and surveillance technologies, including drones, have been deployed in India and the Philippines to suppress indigenous communities and combat terrorism as defined by Israel (Essa, 2010).

The ongoing genocide in Gaza has enabled the state to test its myriad of AI technologies, including the SMASH smart fire control system, which identifies targets such as attack drones and humans (Zomer, 2023), as well as the AI target-creation platform called “*Habsora*” (“the Gospel”), which has significantly expanded the number of targets the IDF can pursue (IDF, 2023). In the past, the IDF could only identify less than 50 targets a year, but now it can identify 100 a day (Davies et al., 2023). A report by *+972 Magazine* and *Local Call (Sikha Mekomit)* confirmed from current and former military members that “loosened rules” enabled what one former intelligence officer called a “mass assassination factory” (Abraham, 2023). Reports claim that Israeli army intelligence approved the killing of many Palestinians in an effort to eliminate a single Hamas member (Abraham, 2023). AI military systems involve a well-documented and large margin of error (Goldfarb & Lindsay, 2021) that the IDF is increasingly willing to accept as it widens its efforts to rout Hamas.

Habsora, developed by the Israeli Unit 8200 (Brumfiel, 2023), uses flawed training data—including data collected without consent from Palestinians—leading to targeting of civilians on a mass scale (Brumfiel, 2023). AI targeting models lack explainability and accountability for machine error, as well as human control over the machine (Atherton, 2022). The platform multiplies the number of targets the IDF can pursue, accelerating both killing and the margin of error. AI targeting systems continue to provide the IDF with a technical *justification* for bombing massacres (Brumfiel, 2023). While Hamas’s armed wing is composed of less than 30,000 members (Ayyash, 2023)—less than 2% of the entire population—the death toll reported by the Gaza Health Ministry is 30,035 as of February 29th, 2024, with around 70% of these

confirmed women and children (Hart, 2024). In this war, Israel appears willing to accept a large amount of *false positives*, resulting in civilian death, to eliminate Hamas which has deeply rooted itself in the densely populated city of Gaza. The use of collective punishment and disproportionate force by the IDF is not new. In fact, the Dahiya Doctrine, a strategy of overwhelming asymmetric warfare which explicitly dictates “targeting government and civilian infrastructure,” was outlined by the former IDF Chief of General Staff Gadi Eizenkot and was first made public in 2008 (Institute for Middle East Understanding, 2012).



Figure 5: “Smoke billows after an Israeli strike on north Gaza on November 22, 2023.

Israel says it is using artificial intelligence to find targets. JOHN MACDOUGALL/AFP via Getty Images” (Brumfiel, 2023).

U.S. Tech Involvement: From Langley to Silicon Valley

The violence of Israeli surveillance, weaponry and other military technologies is abetted by active relationships with technology companies in the United States. Jack Poulson, a research scientist and member of Tech Workers Coalition, has released a detailed report of tech companies and their military and surveillance contracts with the U.S. further highlighting concern over the role of tech in the American military-industrial complex (Poulson, 2017). Big Data, which supports large-scale AI systems, is an unchecked problem which starts in Silicon Valley.

Considered the innovation capital of the world, Silicon Valley is the home base of major tech corporations such as Google and Hewlett-Packard (HP). Silicon Valley and its constituents not only set the technical standard for AI systems around the world, but also the norms, incentives, and expected outcomes of developing and using these systems. Many tech companies in the Valley benefit directly from Israel's segregational and colonial practices in the OPT, Airbnb being a visible example (see Figure 6). In this section, we discuss the role Silicon Valley has in actively supporting and profiting from Israel's apartheid.



Figure 6: Case study of Airbnb’s profit from Israel’s colonial practices within the occupied and segregated West Bank

In May 2021, Google Cloud and Amazon Web Services signed a \$1.22 billion contract with the Israeli government for Project Nimbus, a joint project to provide cloud computing technology to the Israeli military (Koren, 2022). Surveillance technologies operated through cloud computing are deployed by the Israeli military in the OPT to enforce Israeli occupation and expand settlements on Palestinian land, abusing

Palestinian human rights and unlawfully collecting data (Anonymous, 2021)—including biometric data, surveillance footage, locations, social media, internet surfing, messages, calls, and network connections (Shtaya, 2022). All digital, cloud-based components of the Israeli surveillance and military-industrial complex will use Project Nimbus. This partnership directly enables the IDF's systemic forceful and violent removal of Palestinians from their homes in the OPT, further perpetuating Zionist settler colonialism. Project Nimbus's announcement occurred in parallel to an 11-day attack in which the IDF bombed Gaza and killed 248 Palestinians, including 66 children in 2021 (Farooq, 2021). In addition to the death toll, the attacks left over 1,900 people injured (Farooq, 2021) and 72,000 Palestinians were displaced (Lazaroff, 2021).

While Google and Amazon provide Israel with the necessary cloud computing technologies to maintain its settler colonial structure, HP provides the necessary hardware. It has been the exclusive provider of computers to the IDF since 2009 and provides the servers for the Aviv System, a population registry that facilitates Israel's system of racial discrimination and segregation (Who Profits Research Center, 2023). B'Tselem, a major Israeli human rights nonprofit organization, has also documented an alarming prevalence of discriminatory treatment against incarcerated Palestinians amounting to torture in several cases (B'Tselem, 2017). Still yet, HP continues to do business with, and provide technology and services to, the Israel Prison Service where many Palestinians, including children, experience prolonged and discriminatory incarceration without charge or trial and are often subjected to torture (AFSC Investigate, 2020). HP and its subsidiaries still run Research and Development centers within illegal settlements in the West Bank (AFSC Investigate, 2020).

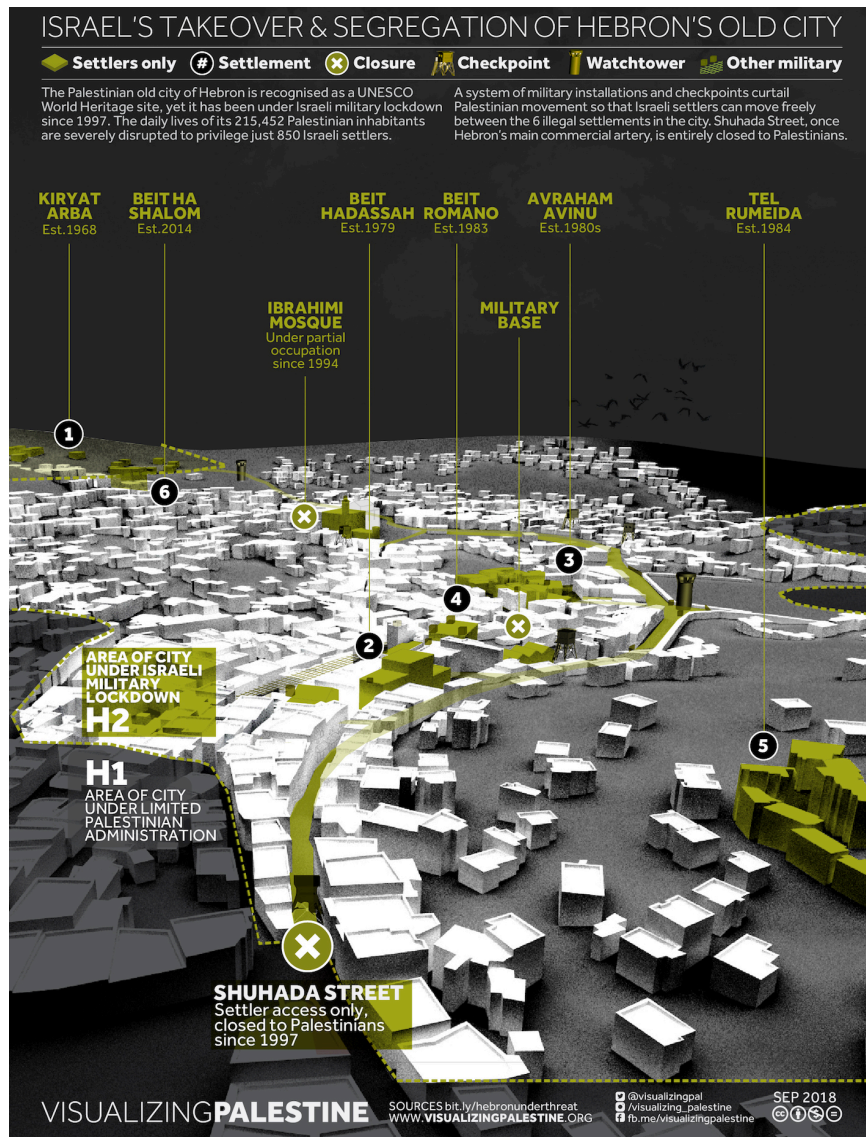


Figure 7: Case study of Zionist settler colonial practices in Hebron – Heritage Under Threat

Through Project Nimbus cloud infrastructure and HP hardware, the acquired surveillance data facilitates Zionist segregation, expansion of illegal settlements, ethnic cleansing, and the *enclavisation* of the West Bank (Amir, 2023; Amnesty International, 2023c; BDS, 2022). In Hebron (Fig. 7) and other Palestinian communities, Blue Wolf,

the Israel army's biometric identification system, is deployed without consent, capturing the faces of Palestinians and maintaining a database for surveillance purposes (Goodfriend, 2023). Blue Wolf extends total control to the Israel army with constant surveillance over the West Bank, where settlers are increasingly encroaching on Palestinian land. In recent years, this industry has increasingly served extremist settlers, who are often Americans (McGreal, 2023). The multitude of Palestinian data collected by Israel does not go unnoticed. In fact, Google just announced expansion of its "Startups Accelerator: AI First" program to Europe and Israel with the intent of bolstering its big data systems (Adan & Jurek, 2023).

Major technology corporations have acknowledged machine errors by calling for responsibility, while simultaneously pursuing *launch and iterate* policies of addressing mistakes only after discovery. The priority remains experimentation/application *in the wild*. In fact, this innovation is so essential that, at least initially, Israel's military tech industry only took a slight hit as a result of its October 7 security failure (Metinko et al., 2023). Within 24 hours of the Hamas attack, Israel's tech industry received massive support from Silicon Valley. Many venture capitalist firms signed a Venture Capital Community Statement of Support for Israel. David Siegel, CEO of Meetup.com organized a trip to Israel in December 2023 to ensure investment in "Israel's flourishing tech ecosystem," declaring that "[a]fter October 7th, we feel it is critical for venture capital and technology business leaders to stand with Israel." 65 attendees joined him, including senior executives from Bain Capital, Meetup.com, Apollo, Houzz, TPG, and Susquehanna Growth Equity, as well as Israeli President Isaac Herzog, war cabinet Minister Benny Gantz and Economy Minister Nir Barkat. ("65 US investors," 2023). Hillel

Fuld, an American-Israeli tech entrepreneur and Zionist blogger, has advocated for more tech investment in the IDF and openly celebrated the bombing of Gaza on X (formerly Twitter). In response to an October 10, 2023 post by Fuld, Tal Broda, Head of Research Platform at OpenAI—a leader in the U.S. tech industry—joined in calling for “[n]o mercy” by the IDF (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: Tal Broda, Head of Research Platform at OpenAI tweeted: “More! No mercy! @IDF don’t stop!” in response to blogger Hillel Fuld’s 10/10/23 tweet: “This is the Beverly Hills of Gaza. This is where all the leaders of Hamas have their palaces. Or should I say, had their palaces. And let there be no doubt, the IDF is just getting started.”

Broda, has made his politics clear, publicly denying the existence of Palestine since 2014 and cheering on the current genocide (Raven Mission, 2023). In the

following days after many complaints to OpenAI about these posts, Broda deleted many of them. Further, activist groups like Jewish Diaspora in Tech and #NoTechForApartheid have been documenting Google's retaliation against employees who stand up for Palestinian rights (Jewish Diaspora in Tech, 2022). A fierce censure continues of individuals in tech speaking out for Palestinian rights, like Web Summit CEO Paddy Cosgrave, who tweeted that Israel was committing war crimes and was forced to apologize and step down from his company (Olson, Hadero, & D'innocenzio, 2023), and Paul Biggar, founder of CircleCI, who spoke in support of Palestine and was fired by the board of his own company (Biggar, 2023). The censorship of pro-Palestinian voices is not only evident in professional and academic settings, but also on several social media platforms.

Social Media Censorship of Palestinian Activism

With the emergence of the internet as a space for communities to interact and organize, the policing of these digital platforms has become a major element of repression against Palestinians. In a 2020 Global Campus report titled "The Cyber Occupation of Palestine," Suhail Taha, a researcher based in Ramallah, describes the suppression of Palestinian digital activism, and argues for the liability of social media companies in these actions (Taha, 2020). Sada Social Center, a campaign to monitor digital violations against Palestinian content, has documented over 20,000 incidents of hate speech and calls to violence, as well as over 11,000 incidents of digital violations of Palestinian content on various platforms since October 7 (Sada Social, 2024). Israel has been an active participant in encouraging censorship of Palestinians. In 2016, Israeli

Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked and Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan announced a collaboration with Facebook, forming teams to monitor and remove content deemed "inciteful" (Nashif, 2017). In fact, a 2017 report by Adalah revealed that since 2015, a "cyber unit" of the Israeli State Attorney office has been coordinating with Facebook and Twitter to remove access to pro-Palestinian sites, restrict users, and otherwise censor Palestinians and Palestinian content (Adalah, 2017). Facebook's algorithm deletes posts with words like " Hamas" and " Jihad" without context, while " Zionist" is designated as a "globally protected group," with any content criticizing Zionism being subject to removal (Human Rights Watch, 2023b). Other social media platforms have acted similarly, with WhatsApp blocking about 100 accounts of Palestinian journalists and activists in 2019, as well as removing content that shared updates about Israel military violence in Gaza (Taha, 2020). Altogether, Israel utilizes their strong information technology industry, proximity to Facebook's offices in Tel Aviv, and threat of lawsuits to assert their power and stifle the criticism they receive on social media platforms.

Since October 2023, the censorship of Palestinian content and activism has heightened on social media platforms. According to an October 17 press report by Sada Social Center, Meta Platforms removed over 795,000 pieces of content in just the first three days after the war. They have also restricted sharing links with Telegram channels that cover Palestinian media (Sada Social, 2023). In addition, both Meta and Facebook have limited visibility of posts and stories supporting Palestine. Several users have also experienced difficulties when attempting to host live videos on the platform, as well as the removal or concealment of posts including phrases and hashtags such as "#FreePalestine" and "#IStandWithPalestine." Instagram recently added "terrorist" as an

incorrect translation to the user bios of several Palestinians, attributing this egregious error to a “glitch” and correcting it after substantial backlash (Sada Social, 2023).



Figure 9: Azmat Khan, winner of a 2022 Pulitzer Prize for international reporting, Patti Cadby Birch Assistant Professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and inaugural Director of the Simon and June Li Center for Global Journalism, tweeted on 10/15/2023: “After posting an Instagram story about the war in Gaza yesterday, my account was shadowbanned. Many colleagues and [journalist] friends have reported the same. It’s an extraordinary threat to the flow of information and credible journalism about an unprecedented war...”

One of the most notable examples of censorship is the categorization of phrases like “From the River to the Sea” as hate speech. In December 2023, Human Rights Watch released a new report, “Meta’s Broken Promises: Systemic Censorship of Palestine Content on Instagram and Facebook,” which demonstrates how Meta regularly censors criticism of Israel as “hate speech” and “dangerous.” Comments such as “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” “ceasefire now,” “stop the genocide,” and the Palestinian flag emoji were often removed by Meta under “spam.” Furthermore, the Israeli Cyber Unit flags and reports content for removal with Meta’s

overall compliance rate never dropping below 77% and in 2018 was reported to be as high as 92%. On the other hand, a disproportionate amount of harmful content such as anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic content would remain even after being reported and reviewed. For example, “make Gaza a parking lot,” “wipe Palestine off the face of the earth and the map,” and other genocidal statements did not violate community guidelines. Human Rights Watch has recommended that Meta change their Dangerous Organizations and Individuals Policy, increase transparency with compliance rates to governmental requests for content removal, implement a newsworthiness allowance for training purposes, change transparency and access to remedy policies, and begin working with relevant stakeholders in human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2023b).

At its peaks, the repression of social media advocacy and digital communications by and for Palestinians, perpetrated by Israel in collaboration with U.S.-based social media tech companies, has amounted to a total communications blackout. Israel’s domination of Gaza’s telecommunications networks has been used to restrict access to electricity and Internet altogether at least ten times since October (Samaro, 2023; Al-Shalchi, 2024). The International Telecommunication Union condemned the coordinated communication blackouts in Gaza, calling for access to networks to be restored (Int’l Telecommunication Union [@ITU] - X Post, 2023). In a time of genocide, tech giants have worked against their purported missions of connecting people, and instead have deprived Palestinians of access to life-saving avenues of communication.

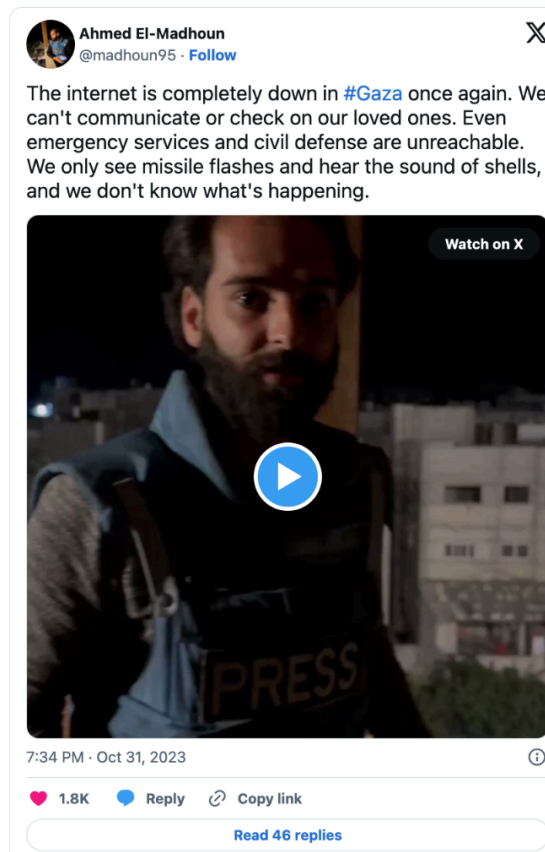


Figure 10: Ahmed El-Madhoun, globally recognized Palestinian journalist and photographer, tweeted: “The internet is completely down in #Gaza once again. We can’t communicate or check on our loved ones. Even emergency services and civil defense are unreachable. We only see missile flashes and hear the sound of shells, and we don’t know what’s happening.”

The censorship of Palestinian voices and activism on major social media platforms further exemplifies the extent to which the tech industry is implicated in silencing the struggle for Palestinian freedom and rights. This censorship, alongside the industry's active engagement in bolstering Israeli military capabilities, creates a digital environment where narratives are controlled, and accountability is evaded. The

implications of such actions are severe, not only for the Palestinians, whose lives and liberties are directly affected, but also for the broader principles of human rights and freedom of expression online. Moreover, the intersection of U.S. technology firms and the Israeli military complex, as detailed in this chapter, underscores a troubling reality: the integral and multifaceted role Silicon Valley plays in supporting and profiting from practices that undermine Palestinian rights and dignity. From the pivotal contracts like Project Nimbus to the provision of essential infrastructure facilitating surveillance and segregation, these partnerships reveal a deep complicity in the sustenance of a settler colonial apartheid regime. This entanglement not only raises ethical concerns but also challenges the supposed values of innovation and inclusivity that many of these tech giants publicly endorse.

In light of these findings, the call for divestment and for a reevaluation of tech companies' partnerships and policies is not only necessary but urgent. Such steps are vital in aligning the tech industry's practices with its professed commitment to positive social impact and ethical responsibility. The global community, including institutions like Stanford and the broader ecosystem of Silicon Valley, must critically assess their investments and collaborations to ensure they do not contribute to the advancement of apartheid and the suppression of fundamental human rights.

Chapter 3: Ethical Responsibility of Engineers to Prevent and Protest Apartheid and Genocide

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) assert that business enterprises have a responsibility to respect human rights—however, an overwhelming number of American corporations have a direct role in propagating and profiting from human rights abuses in Palestine (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011). These corporations must be held accountable for their complicity in apartheid. In this section, we argue that divestment is a practical and actionable step in ending complicity in apartheid and genocide, particularly through grassroots organizing within institutional spaces. Answering the call from the Palestinian-led BDS Movement, grassroots campaigns have already successfully pushed companies such as Veolia, Orange, and General Mills to exit the Israeli market (BDS Movement, 2024b). In this section, we seek to empower scholars, engineers, researchers, and workers to join the divestment movement for Palestinian self-determination through discussion of three grassroots, worker-led, anti-apartheid campaigns, two historical and one ongoing: The Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement, Motorola's Divestment from Apartheid South Africa, and the #NoTechForApartheid campaign. These movements demonstrate that while historic and contemporary tech corporations often choose profit over people, workers have the power to end their employers' support for apartheid and state violence.

The Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement and Motorola Apartheid

Divestment Campaigns

The story of the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement (PRWM), which began in 1970 (McCanne, 2020), exemplifies grassroots activism against apartheid within a corporate environment. Initiated by Caroline Hunter and Ken Williams, two African-American employees at Polaroid, the movement emerged upon discovering the company's role in supplying photo technology to South Africa's oppressive apartheid government (Geburu, 2022). The courageous actions of Hunter, Williams, and their fellow workers led to the formation of the PRWM and an unwavering campaign demanding that Polaroid sever ties with the racist regime. The workers organized through diverse grassroots strategies, establishing workplace committees, distributing informative materials, and staging protests both within and outside company premises. Collective efforts, including work stoppages, petitions, and collaborations with external organizations, amplified their message, resulting in Polaroid's eventual withdrawal of support for apartheid in 1977 (African Activist Archive, 2024).

In the 1980s, workers at Motorola similarly played a significant role in pressuring the company to divest from apartheid South Africa. Mobilizing support through internal committees, educational sessions, and collaborations with external groups, employees engaged in protests, rallies, other direct actions, and lobbying efforts to persuade management to reconsider investments linked to apartheid policies (Teoh et al., 1999). Like the PRWM, their tactics focused on grassroots activism, solidarity-building, and collaboration with aligned allies. External pressure from shareholder activists, human rights groups, and the wider anti-apartheid movement reinforced the workers' actions,

leading Motorola, along with Polaroid, to ultimately withdraw investments and operations from apartheid South Africa. These concerted efforts aligned with the global movement against discriminatory regimes, highlighting the power of collective action and grassroots organizing in effecting meaningful change.

Project Maven and #NoTechForApartheid

As was previously established, Google is complicit in Israel's crime of apartheid. In fact, Google has a history of enabling state violence by providing technology for the United States government, but not without worker resistance. In 2018, Google signed a contract with the Department of Defense for Project Maven which sought to equip drones with AI-targeting systems. Over 3,000 Google employees signed a letter opening with “We believe that Google should not be in the business of war” addressed to Alphabet Inc. and Google CEO Sundar Pichai in protest of Project Maven (Shane & Wakabayashi, 2018). After months of grassroots organizing public and internal pressure, the company backed out of the \$10 billion deal (Nix, 2018). Google’s withdrawal from Project Maven is yet another successful example of change brought about from the collective efforts of workers and community members. However, the fact that the contract was later picked up by U.S.-based software company, Palantir Technologies (Poulson, 2023), highlights the necessity of continued and widespread organizing for divestment.

In response to the \$1.2 billion contract for Project Nimbus (discussed in Chapter 2, “US Tech Involvement”), tech workers at Google and Amazon wrote a joint letter condemning Project Nimbus. The workers stated that they, “cannot look the other way,

as the products [they] build are used to deny Palestinians their basic rights, force Palestinians out of their homes and attack Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.” They called for a rejection of this and all future contracts that harm users. At the time of publication, the letter had the support of 90 workers at Google and more than 300 workers at Amazon (Reed, 2021). Two years later, according to the group's website (<https://www.notechforapartheid.com/>), the letter has garnered signatures from over 1,000 workers across the two tech companies. While Amazon and Google have yet to change their position, the movement, now known as No Tech For Apartheid, has escalated its actions in protest of the current genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, and continues to organize teach-ins, panels, and rallies across the United States. Despite workplace retaliation and pushback from stockholders, the persistence and continued growth of the movement suggests Amazon and Google workers have the potential to build towards victories like those achieved by Motorola workers and the PRWM.



Figure 11: “Activists shut down a portion of Howard Street in San Francisco outside the Google Cloud Next Conference, Aug. 29, 2023. (Photo/SF Standard-Joel Umanzor)” (J. Staff, 2023)

Stanford Divestment Movements

Stanford has a long history of investing in companies complicit in human rights abuses—as well as a long legacy of student-led resistance. In 1977, over 500 students staged a multi-day indoor sit-in protesting the university’s refusal to divest from apartheid South Africa, leading to mass arrests and sparking additional protests at campuses across the country (Michigan in the World, 2024). In 1985, student protests and direct action, including that of 35 students who laid in front of cars of Board of Trustees members, pushed the Board to threaten divestment from Motorola if the company resumed sales to the apartheid South African military and police (Goldstein,

1985). “The university in no way acted on its own initiative...it [acted] merely because of the pressures that were placed on it by the community and fear of further protest,” a student publication argued (Stanford Out of South Africa, 1985). This statement rings true in more contemporary victories as well. As covered by *The Stanford Daily*, the university divested from the Darfur genocide in Sudan in 2005 as well as from coal companies in 2014 as a result of student-led campaigns (Quach, 2015). These examples affirm that students’ collective efforts can push universities to act ethically, and inspire others to take grassroots action. This impulse motivates the efforts of the Sit-In to Stop Genocide, the longest sit-in in Stanford history (Gohill, 2024), which acted as a space of protest, political education, and community organizing for 120 days. Just as years of student activism led to Stanford’s threat of divestment from Motorola, we hope to continue the work for divestment from Israeli apartheid that generations of Stanford students have led (From the Community, 2024).

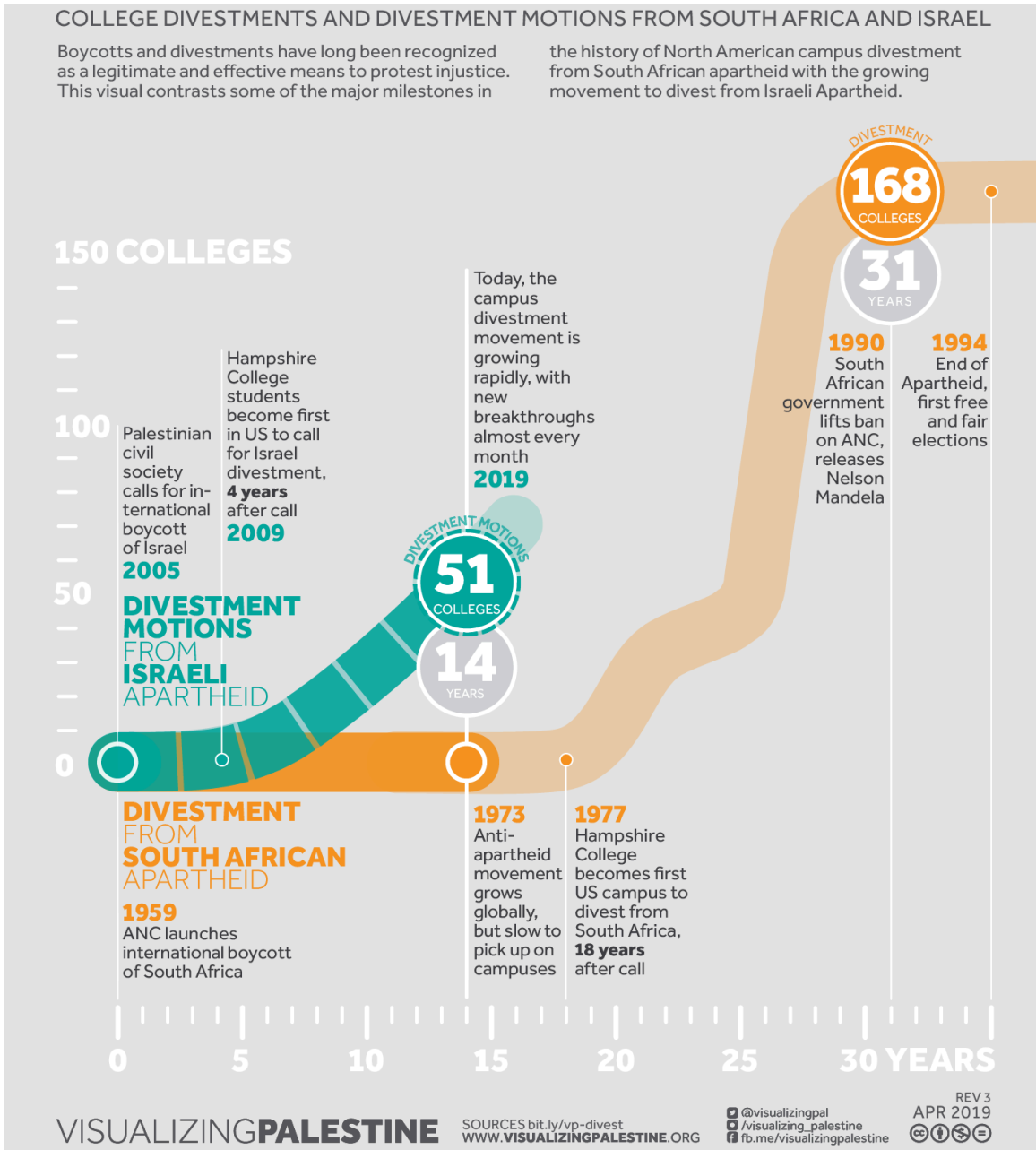


Figure 12: The use of divestment to end apartheid – Divesting for Justice

Science is often celebrated as a shared language—a web of knowledge applicable and accessible to all of us. Many members of the Sit-In chose to pursue engineering because we were inspired by the potential of science to combat global

warming, redlining, and other inequities. However, it has become clear that the technology around us in Silicon Valley is being used to propel the very death and destruction that we hoped to combat. The technological advancements that have streamlined and supported the Israeli bombardment of Gaza are antithetical to engineering's spirit of improvement, optimization, and problem-solving. As the late South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu said in his 1986 lecture at Stanford on apartheid and economic sanctions, "In a situation of injustice and oppression, there can be no neutrality...You have to say, 'Am I on the side of justice, or am I on the side of injustice?'" (Tutu, 1986). Engineers, and community members of all fields involved with the Sit-In, reject the use of technology for injustice and oppression against Palestinians. We call on our fellow engineers and academics to do the same by exerting unequivocal pressure on the tech companies that enable the genocide in Gaza and support the larger Israeli apartheid state.

Discussion

This paper has examined the profound humanitarian crisis unfolding in the OPT and the complicit role played by the U.S. tech industry. Through a historical lens, we critiqued Israel's policies in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem as forms of apartheid and settler colonialism, contextualizing the current genocide in Gaza and highlighting the urgent need for international attention and action. We shed light on the significant role of the American tech industry, particularly in Silicon Valley, in bolstering Israel's military tech sector. This extensive relationship raises profound ethical concerns, especially in the context of the use of AI and other emerging technologies in the military operations devastating the Gaza Strip. We addressed the issue of censorship, particularly on social media platforms, which disproportionately affects pro-Palestinian advocacy while allowing anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic content to run rampant. Our analysis underscores the urgent need for individuals and institutions to recognize and act on their ethical responsibility in the face of human rights violations. We call on Stanford community members and all academics to join the movement for campus divestment, and for engineers and concerned individuals to pressure tech companies to cut ties with Israeli apartheid and genocide.

In her closing statement for South Africa in its International Court of Justice case against Israel for violations of the Genocide Convention, lawyer Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh called Israel's assault on Gaza "the first genocide in history where its victims are broadcasting their own destruction in real-time" ("World has failed," 2024). While Israeli settler colonial violence—funded and enabled by the United States and global

corporations—is not new, people around the world are watching the destruction unfold online in an unprecedented manner. Gazans’ efforts to upload videos, often in English, documenting the daily atrocities of the war at great cost to their personal safety, must serve as a call to action to those in the West. While the US government, tech corporations, and weapons manufacturers show no sign of withdrawing their support for Israel’s genocidal campaign, those of us in the US have a moral imperative to fight back from within “the Belly of the Beast,” in the myriad of ways that we can.

As the successes of the PRWM and Motorola workers against South African apartheid and Google employees against Project Maven demonstrate, grassroots organizing towards collective action yields concrete and material results. People of conscience within complicit institutions have the power and responsibility to intervene in the use of tech for mass murder and destruction. It is within this legacy, and that of the 2015 Stanford Out of Occupied Palestine (SOOP) campaign, that the Sit-In to Stop Genocide and a coalition of Stanford groups have launched Stanford Against Apartheid in Palestine (SAAP), a campaign calling on Stanford to divest from Hewlett-Packard Inc. and Enterprises (HP) and all companies complicit in apartheid and genocide in Palestine.

Stanford University, a premier investor in technological development since its establishment in 1891, has notable ties to Hewlett-Packard; its founders met as students and were among the first cohort of Stanford engineers to grow their start-ups’ success on military contracts (Harris, 2023, p. 222). They established the corporation’s first facility at Stanford Research Park, where Hewlett-Packard Inc. still operates to this day (Hewlett-Packard Company Archives, 2024). HP, which has been described as “the

Polaroid of our times,” is a BDS target for both boycott and divestment due to its role as a “pillar” of Israeli apartheid and settler colonialism (BDS Movement, 2024a). In addition to HP’s direct reinforcement of settler colonial violence in Palestine, the company is also complicit in other acts of settler colonialism, including in the human rights violations (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2022) of indigenous peoples in Xinjiang, China (XqSu, 2021). Divesting from HP is not only an opportunity to divest from Israeli apartheid, but a number of human rights abuses across geographies.

Understanding Stanford as a birthplace, investor, and supplier of talent to HP, this divestment campaign raises core ethical questions about the role of engineering, technology, and universities in perpetuating systems of policing, surveillance, and racial discrimination—from Silicon Valley to Palestine and beyond. Many of us in tech entered the field to engineer a safer, healthier, and more sustainable world—values that stand in complete opposition to the use of technology for genocide and apartheid. As Stanford’s Embedded EthiCS program, part of the university’s computer science curriculum, pushes young engineers to have “moral courage” in the face of ethical issues in the profession (De Witte, 2022), we must start with Stanford itself and its role in ongoing and contemporary human rights abuses. In addition to supporting the SAAP divestment campaign and broader BDS call, we urge Stanford community members to:

- 1) Sign the Sit-In’s petition calling on the university to condemn and divest from Israel’s crimes of apartheid and genocide: tinyurl.com/StanfordSitIn
- 2) Commit to the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), a boycott of Israeli universities and institutions that are complicit in the occupation, until Israel complies with the BDS demands.

- 3) Join campus and greater Bay Area efforts for a Free Palestine; advocate for an end to the genocide however and whenever you can.

Beyond Stanford, we support the No Tech For Apartheid call for tech workers and all concerned individuals to organize against Project Nimbus and uses of technology for state violence. The No Tech For Apartheid website (<https://www.notechforapartheid.com/>) further contextualizes Amazon and Google's support of Israeli apartheid within larger patterns of profiting from state violence against racialized populations. This includes Amazon's long standing relationships with the US Department of Homeland Security, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and law enforcement, in which Amazon provides the data storage and cloud technologies that enable these agencies' surveillance, policing, incarceration, and deportation of migrant, Black, and brown communities in the US (Immigrant Defense Project, 2024). Many of the companies on the BDS list are not only complicit in settler colonial violence in Palestine, but the oppression of indigenous peoples around the world, from Elbit Systems' collaborations with US Border Patrol to surveil indigenous *Tohono O'odham* land to Chevron's environmental pollution of low-income communities in Richmond, California. Our critique of tech and Israeli settler colonialism is not singular, but rooted in the knowledge that struggles against settler colonial state violence are interconnected globally. We hope that not only engineers but all readers will consider their role in this interconnected web: as workers whose labor is exploited for profit and war, as people who may simultaneously face oppression in the US and be complicit in the oppression of people abroad, and as global citizens who can join the fight against Israeli apartheid and for human rights and dignity worldwide.

Visuals of Stanford Student Actions

Captured by Pamela Martinez Barrera, the following images document rallies on January 26th and February 24th, 2024 at Stanford University, organized by Stanford Sit-In To Stop Genocide and its allies.



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