



Lauren Walker / Truthout

Facing Down Settler Colonialism: O'odham-Palestinian Struggles



A Report by Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance (APSA)

www.ArizonaPalestine.org ArizonaPalestine@gmail.com

Authors/Researchers/Contributors: Geoff Boyce, Blake Gentry, Rebekah Kartal, Todd Miller, Sarah Roberts, Gabriel Schivone

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Summary

In this research report, our goal is to demonstrate that the current increasing militarization in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory and Israel/occupied Palestine is not simply a new phenomenon; it has its roots in settler colonialism. As such, our report consists of three sections. In section one, we examine the current militarization of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, highlighting the use of Israeli technologies that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) employs in their mission for “securing the border.” In the following section, we argue the U.S.-Israeli boundary surveillance nexus goes beyond just technology, emphasizing settler colonial ideology and concomitant dispossession of indigenous peoples through the examination of Sderot as a case study. The last section provides a comparative analysis of settler colonialism in O’odham homeland and occupied Palestine, highlighting parallel histories of indigenous displacement. In both cases, access to natural resources is a necessary component to settler colonialism since these resources are utilized by settler societies and for further expansion of the capitalist-based, settler colonial state. Finally, we end the report with a discussion of ongoing indigenous resistance to settler colonialism.

Settler colonialism for this report may be defined, according to Patrick Wolfe, as an ongoing structure of power that systematically displaces and dispossesses indigenous peoples from the land (through genocide, assimilation, the taking of resources, and other means) and replaces them with settlers from around the world.

The Role of Elbit Systems from Palestine to U.S.-Mexico

Coming to the Border

For the Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan, Custom and Border Protection (CBP)'s Chief Acquisition Officer Mark Borkowski explained in 2017 at the San Antonio Border Security Expo, CBP sought technology that “already existed” elsewhere. Israeli giant, Elbit Systems, with its towers in the West Bank, fit the bill.

The highest selling point for Israeli weapons giant Elbit System's products the world over, according to its own marketing, is the company's “10 plus years securing the world's most challenging border,” as was its slogan when selling its technologies to CBP. To the company executives, their decades-long claim to superlative global securitization is one of the longest-running military occupations in modern history—the ongoing Israeli occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, in 1967—the year Elbit Systems was founded.

Atop one of the remote hills and canyons 10 miles north of Nogales, Arizona, an Elbit-made surveillance tower looms high in the still air. The path to the tower

lies off a rural roadway called Ruby Road. On foot, reaching the top requires a 20-minute hike up a winding access road cut into the peak.

In 2006, Border Patrol began to use southern Arizona as a testing ground for its “virtual wall.” The agency awarded the Boeing Company a contract for a technology plan known as SBInet, which would build 80-foot surveillance towers in the Arizona desert. Boeing hired Elbit as a subcontractor. When Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano cancelled the plan in 2011, complaining about cost, delays and ineffectiveness, CBP launched a new project, the 2011 Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan. As part of it, Elbit Systems won a \$145 million contract to construct 53 integrated surveillance towers in 2014.

Equipped with a fenced enclosure, a propane tank and solar panels, the Ruby Road tower utilizes night and day and thermal cameras and radar. The tower, roadway, and Border Patrol presence scar the southwestern edge of the Coronado National Forest. The tower’s construction here was preceded by an ongoing binge of environmental degradation that enjoys free reign through a hefty stack of national security waivers to build roads and walls, first passed under the George W. Bush administration and expanded under President Obama, with President Trump adding a few more on the top.

The tower is part of an expansive U.S.-Mexico “virtual wall” project called the Integrated Fixed Towers (IFT) system that includes 53 towers spread across Southern Arizona and the southernmost area of the Tohono O’odham reservation, bisected by the US-Mexico border. Southern Arizona is the pilot project area, intended for further expansion in the borderlands.

The Elbit towers project fits into a combination of tactical units, surveillance technology, and boundary infrastructure—all part of a broad, “multi layered” border apparatus whose reigning doctrine includes, among other military-style enforcement campaigns, “prevention through deterrence.” Deterrence strategy involves agents, technological, and barrier infrastructure in urban areas thereby steering migration routes into remote and hazardous terrain of Southern Arizona where the “mortal danger” of the desert acts as a deterrent, in the words of a 1994 planning document. The strategy thus uses geography as an “ally” (according to an early strategic planner, Doris Meissner) to “deter” border-crossers. One Border Patrol agent described this strategy as putting “choke points” in the desert, across which it is impossible to bring enough water for the days-long journey. More than 7,000 human remains have been recovered since the strategy was deployed in the 1990s and many, many families are still in search of their lost loved ones. The predecessor to the IFT towers, SBI-net, of which Elbit was a subcontractor, was the subject of a

recent academic study—employing archeological and military science methodology—that found a “meaningful difference in the distribution of human remains” before and after SBIInet’s deployment. “In short,” conclude the scholars (including an APSA researcher), “our findings affirm that surveillance programs like SBIInet work not only to increase rates of detection or interdiction, but also operate in concert with the rugged desert climate and terrain to maximize the hardship and suffering inflicted on unauthorized migrants,” including “an increase in the rate of mortality among authorized border crossers over time.”

It is worth mention that the point of origin of many border crossers passing through Southern Arizona is relevant to Israeli regional security activities. The Israeli arms and homeland security trade throughout Central America and Mexico casts, as one an APSA researcher writes elsewhere, “a long shadow” over the various refugee and migrant trails. In places like Guatemala, Israel contributes both to domestic destabilization (especially through the private security industry) and to Israel's nation-state clientele which use Israeli boundary-building products to police people on the move from the Northern Triangle to Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico border.

Since the Elbit tower’s cameras are capable of spotting objects and people seven miles away, at every turn a border crosser may wonder if they’re being

watched—and, indeed, at a nearby command and control center, a Border Patrol agent is, in fact, able to watch them closely and direct field agents to their location. The towers are equipped with night vision and thermal imaging cameras. One agent gushed to an APSA researcher that the towers were a “force multiplier” and one tower could do the work of 100 agents, stressing the ground sweeping radar. The towers are meant to work in tandem with each other creating an electronic surveillance wall, reinforced by the more than 12,000 implanted motion sensors along the U.S. Mexico divide. If a sensor is tripped, a beeping sound goes off in the command center where agents watch the monitors. If one of the unmanned aerial vehicle spots something, drones once used on the battlefields of the greater Middle East, agents would also be alerted.

When APSA researchers first visited the Ruby Road site in January 2015, the tower was still under construction following a competitive \$145 million contract awarded by Customs and Border Protection several months earlier. A gaggle of workers in reflective vests milled around the summit, where the area was marshaled by a single man armed with a sidearm and dressed in camouflage pants, black army boots, a Kevlar combat helmet, and a bright red t-shirt. He was employed by International Towers, the company contracted to build the actual tower and provide security during the towers’ construction. At one point a worker perched atop the

tower, some 35 feet up, spoke to his co-workers below and could be heard as clearly as if he spoke three feet away—a testament to the remoteness of the location.

Elbit Systems: An Overview

A multi-billion-dollar company, Elbit Systems is Israel's largest private arms manufacturer, and ranks 27th worldwide. During Israel's largest and most deadly incursion in Gaza to date, Operation Protective Edge, Summer 2014, not only did Elbit's profits [increase](#) by 6.1 percent during a single month as its munitions and hardware were showcased the world over. The company also enjoyed a more significant [revenue increase](#) in 2014-2015 than during its entire average annual growth.

The recently retired Vice President for Government Relations of one of Elbit's multiple U.S. subsidiaries, Elbit Systems of America, served on President Trump's landing team into the White House. Between 2016-2018, Elbit committed \$3 million in lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill, specifically in support of bills related to military, homeland security, border security and drug interdiction. Since the George W. Bush administration overall spending for lobbying has [increased](#) by Elbit dramatically.

Elbit Systems has a multitude of subsidiaries active globally from Western Europe to Latin America. Through its U.S.-based Elbit Systems of America, the company has expanded more and more into the border and boundary-building and surveillance tech-industry. “The world has changed,” Ehud Biederman declared, wistfully, to a 2016 drone conference audience in which APSA researchers were in attendance. “The challenge,” he said, “is much wider...Homeland security takes a much bigger place. Today the world is much more gray,” and, “the shades are multiplying.”

It’s no small wonder, then, that Elbit Systems beat out weapons giants like Raytheon and Lockheed Martin to get the virtual wall contract in Southern Arizona. At the time of Elbit’s award by CBP, in spring 2014, a Bloomberg trade analyst estimated that Elbit’s \$145 million award “may eventually reach \$1 billion if legislation to rewrite US immigration laws passes Congress and helps fund the project’s expansion in the Southwest”.

Elbit is only the most prominent example of an Israeli-United States corporate border nexus. Israel is by far the number one country for homeland security/surveillance industry per capita. The first drones to marshal the desert skies, in 2004, were Israeli-made Hermes models. At every turn Israeli systems are installed as a constant fixture of the U.S. border surveillance apparatus. In 2007,

according to Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine*, the Golan Group, an Israeli consulting company made up of former IDF Special Forces officers, provided an intensive eight-day course for special DHS immigration agents covering “everything from hand-to-hand combat to target practice to ‘getting proactive with their SUV.’” The Israeli company NICE Systems even supplied Arizona’s Joe Arpaio, “America’s toughest sheriff,” with a surveillance system to watch one of his jails. In 2018, just before the child separation “zero tolerance” crisis, CBP announced that Elbit Systems of America would [provide](#) its “in-fill” radar system at the Texas-Mexico border.

Elbit’s TORCH electronic surveillance system, [deployed](#) now in Southern Arizona, was built specifically for the Israeli annexation wall. Some 85 percent of the wall cuts deep into the occupied Palestinian West Bank beyond the international 1949 armistice “Green Line.” The Norwegian Government Pension Control Fund [divested](#) from Elbit for enabling the wall, deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

The Israeli model goes well beyond just the simple transfer of technology. Intrinsic in the technology are the policies and practices of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, what Israeli activist Jeff Halper calls the “export of an occupation”. In this way, Israel is an intrinsic part of a global border building machine.

Cutting-edge Israeli security technology is packaged, commercialized, and shipped to every corner of the world where governments wish to keep some people in and keep others out. But there's more than just a market exchange going on here. To best understand how Israel attracts the eager clientele within the global boundary-building marketplace, one must look to the Israeli barrier-surveillance model itself as the sum of its parts, as Israeli Col. Dan Tirza (ret.)—the senior Israeli military strategist in charge of the West Bank annexation wall—described in an interview with an APSA researcher.

Col. Tirza puts it this way: “The wall is “just a symbol,” urging against focusing too much attention on the wall itself. Like swatting at a fly, he was making emphatic hand gestures to put this idea out of mind. “It’s not enough to construct the wall,” he says. Instead, “you have to construct all the system [sic] around it,” while cautioning that “you have to understand the whole system, then you can build the whole infrastructure on the ground.”

In other words, Israel is selling a system and a model. More than 9,500 U.S. law enforcement officers have cycled through Israeli conferences in the Law Enforcement Exchange Program (LEEP) between 2002 and the present—including former CBP commissioner Gil Kerlikowske. “The barrier is just part of the system,” Col. Tirza finds it worth repeating, useless without the electronic system, the

soldiers, the intelligence operations managing it. “[The wall] is what people see in the media. But it’s not the whole story. The whole story is about seeing the whole project together and to combine it.”

All of this is a marriage made in heaven—for border industrialists—in Arizona, where the Israel-United States nexus converges most acutely. Southern Arizona is home to an emergent trinational U.S.-Mexico-Israel security project called Global Advantage, headquartered at the publicly funded Tech Parks Arizona, a [business incubator](#) on a 1,345-acre research park that offers its homeland security clients a manufacturing base in Sonora, Mexico. To us, the combination functions as a multinational assembly line where NAFTA free trade policies grease the working parts of an emergent homeland security border apparatus.

The Israeli edge of the Global Advantage nexus, deemed the Israeli Business Initiative, is designed by the Tech Parks Arizona leadership to solicit Israeli homeland security companies to provide “proof of concept” clientele and thereby open up the project to meteoric world markets in boundary-building—[valued](#) at \$526 billion last year and estimated to strike \$742 billion by 2023.

Deep into the Country’s Interior

By 2017, according to Borkowski, nearly all the towers had been built or were about to be built around Nogales, Tucson, Douglas, Sonoita and Ajo. The holdout was the Tohono O’odham Nation.

The virtual wall expands away from the international boundary, deep into the interior of the country. As Trump fights Congress and the courts to get \$5 billion in “emergency funding” for a border wall, Border Patrol is already tapping into existing funds to expand both physical and virtual walls. While new border barrier construction on the Tohono O’odham Nation remains in limbo, new surveillance infrastructure is moving onto the reservation.

In March 2019, the Tohono O’odham Legislative Council passed a resolution allowing CBP to contract the Israeli company Elbit Systems to build 10 integrated fixed towers, or IFTs, on the Nation’s land, surveillance infrastructure that many on the reservation see as a high-tech occupation.

Part Three: The Face of Settler Colonialism

Current militarization of the international border between Arizona in the United States and Sonora in Mexico mirror those already in place in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Naqab/Negev between Israel and Egypt. They are part of a global trend. The US Border Patrol operates not just on the US- Mexico border, but also in the Dominican Republic, Central America, Brazil, Mexico, Kenya, South Africa, Italy, and Canada. Likewise, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), the State of Israel's military force, was, by 2016, the 7th largest exporter of arms and military technology worldwide.

Paramilitary and military activities drive iterative stages of indigenous displacement and dispossession, which in turn leads to internal and external exclusion of indigenous peoples in occupied Palestine and the O'odham homeland. That exclusion began, but does not end, with settler colonialism. Once occupation harnesses natural resources in indigenous areas, the technology of repression that relies on settler colonialism for its reproduction, is exportable by states that benefit from the practice like Israel and the United States.

Borders are now literally built by private Israeli and US companies. They are enforced by Israeli paramilitary and military forces in occupied Palestine, and by

the Sinaloa Cartel and US Border Patrol in the O'odham homeland. The para-state security complex is structured to ensure border trade operations and economic control. Globally dispatched border military technology relies directly on state support for its ongoing development. These allied forces carry out settler colonization in Palestine and in the O'odham homeland, respectively. A single unifying characteristic in the settler-state's early stage of industrial development is colonizing land with settlers and militias. In the later stage they harness natural resources to secure military dominance and produce weaponry for domestic and export sales.

International intra-state cooperation between Israel and the United States in support of settler colonialism is not new. Israel's support of Guatemalan paramilitary and military forces in the 1970's and 1980's was a modern iteration of the historic exclusion of indigenous groups in the Guatemalan Highlands, while US post-war economic policies of free trade and the dispossession of small agricultural producers is still taking place in the western highlands and in lowland Petén (northeastern Guatemala), and reinforced at the US Southern Border. Guatemalan military campaigns directly repressed indigenous (peasant) revolts that opposed settler colonialism in the Guatemalan Highlands under a succession of ruling

powers (Spain, Mexico, the United States). Over much of the same time period, Palestinian resistance took place under Egyptian, Ottoman, and Israeli rule.

US Border militarization often involves industrial-scale acts of installation and the operation of physical border barriers as well as surveillance monitoring of human incursion. Those acts in the borderlands purposefully exclude external access of indigenous peoples (Palestinians and O’odham) to natural resources, and are designed to separate and isolate Central American and Mexican immigrants from water and indigenous communities as they enter the United States in Texas and Arizona, as discussed above. Paramilitary forces destroy natural environments in the borderlands that remain outside their logic of commerce and production. As a result, immigrants who seek to enter the Tohono O’Odham Nation at Mexico’s northern border are among those who experience one of the highest rates of death anywhere in the United States. Having been dispossessed in their own homelands, they become surplus workers; expendable in exile. As a strategy of settler colonialism, the violence of environmental exclusion ultimately terminates lives of innocent people, regardless of the place in which they finally perish. The same stratagem is applied to dispossessed Eritrean and Sudanese as among indigenous African immigrants entering the Naqab/Negev Desert border between Egypt and Israel.

Escaping the Effects of Settler Colonialism

A major finding of this section is that policies of expulsion of external refugees began with internal expulsions of indigenous peoples: Palestinian and O’odham. Expulsion of external refugees is a basic iterative process of settler colonialism. That is why border militarization as a means to preclude the cross-border mobility of Palestinians and of O’odham is a direct extension of internal settler colonialism. Prior to World War Two, newly arrived (white) settler colonists to the US were objects of deportation motivated by racist and newly acquired nationalist beliefs. Repeatedly the religious allure of the Biblical “Promised Land” was conceived of by those who imagined it being promised solely to themselves. Their accumulative social capital was converted into financial capital and then used to fund various means of immigration control, eventually re-focusing legislative action away from immigrants arriving at the East and then West coasts toward immigrants traversing the more imaginary southern border. Coinciding with colonial settlers’ western expansion, Americans particularly view the completion of Manifest Destiny as the end of “their” European immigration. This sense of a populated nation completely obscures the indigenous peoples like the O’odham, or the Cocopah, or Kickapoo whom they displaced and dispossessed, and it fuels a

belief, shared by Israelis, of being original settlers rather than colonizers.

Regardless of whether settlements are colonizing schemes to acquire interior lands or deployed to establish a nation's border, border militarization without settler colonialism is humanly unsustainable.

Major tenets of Patrick Wolfe's definition of settler colonialism are utilized in these pages: Christianization of religious practice, institutional re-socialization, and biological and cultural assimilations, all proved accurate with a modified substitution of Zionist ideology for Christianization of religious practice. National Zionism (or Jewish Nationalism) in Israel was preceded by various strands of Zionist movements. But then they consolidated and became institutionalized as a nationalist religious ideology in educational institutions and in the IDF. Israeli "alienation of native territory into non-native individual title" is practically a textbook case of the United States' late 19th Century and early 20th Century acts of indigenous displacement and dispossession.

Migration is often used to supplant displaced native populations with coerced workforces. Though expulsion is not the origin of border building itself, it is a secondary benefit to settler colonists when it supports their domestic labor need or an internal demand for suppression of wages to maintain low wage and mobile undocumented labor forces. Operationally, it is carried out by two national

governments: Israel and Egypt, and United States and Mexico. In-migration is often used to supplant displaced native populations with coerced workforces to carry out manual labor. Coercive anti-immigrant policies can mask an internal demand for low wage undocumented mobile laborers when they are not deported from work sites, but their labor is criminalized for wage suppression in public labor markets. Israeli and the United States' anti-immigrant policies are little different from vagary laws that disallowed peasants to collectively produce outside the economic regime of rural lords under feudalistic societies. Suppression of labor forces works well with the expansion of prisons in Israel and the US. Both maintain control of a coerced criminalized labor force, and their political right to asylum which has its roots in wartime displacement and dispossession is systematically discounted. Expulsion of political asylum seekers is illegal under UN accords of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Long before border militarization in Arizona began physically separating O'odham in Mexico from O'odham on the Tohono O'odham Nation, settler colonial designs in the Sonoran Desert were implemented. While railroad interests convinced the US Congress to move the international border from the Gila River to Nogales with the Gadsden Purchase in 1852, through the Gadsden Purchase, cattle

subsequently came in on those very railroads to colonize the desert grasslands in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century; cattle driven by cattlemen and their guns.

Wolfe's thinly described "biological and cultural assimilations" hints at settlers' absorption of native species in landscapes foreign to settlers. It does not define a process of how displacement and dispossession lead to that finality. In Palestine, an initial land dispossession preceded displacement in Palestine around Jaffa and Jerusalem in the late 1800's, and in the O'odham Homeland in Arizona Upland and the Lower Rio Colorado biomes around the same time. But terminal dispossessions required occupation with violence by paramilitary and violence by state forces.

Another finding from this report is that the autonomy and agency of Settler Colonialism preceded and structured state responses at the outset, and not the other way around.

Yet one more finding is that the development of militias as a fulcrum, even from disaggregate movements such as the original and New Yeshuv movements in pre-state Palestine, is visible currently under the aegis of free trade corridors that directly facilitate transnational cartel narcotics smuggling at the US Mexico border. The Sinaloa Cartel is a multinational multi billion business which easily coopted US Customs and Border Patrol at US Ports of Entry. The function of the CBP for

the Sinaloa Cartel in Arizona is similar to rural Jewish Paramilitary militias of agrarian settlements which became units of underground warfare prior to 1948 in Palestine. The former now enforces trade regimes imposed as a result of the evolution of property owning settlers transferring their capital in support of state control over natural resources. The state then became the guarantor of border security for the transshipment of goods; both “legal” and “illegal”. In Palestine, Jewish militias transformed into the IDF which created an Israeli arms industry; an industry that necessarily consumes natural resources in order to produce and export goods for profits.

A major challenge for settler colonists is to take offensive control of indigenous ingress and egress to natural resources, which is a fourth finding of this report.

A fifth finding is that watershed control is required for settler colonialism to thrive in both arid lands of Palestine and the Sonoran Desert, home of the O’odham.

In the Occupied West Bank of Palestine, Israeli Water Policy in Area C has proven untenable for sustaining Palestinian communities’ domestic consumption and agricultural uses of water. Some storage of the watershed just east of the 1967 Green line but now contained in the Israeli controlled Seam Zones, purposefully excludes Palestinians from access to water within OSLO II which had carved out

for the Palestinian Administration control of their own water resources in Area A, but not in C which surrounds Area A and B. But that provision never became operable by design of the Israeli Water Regime. It provides a pretext for Israel to point to OSLO II and wring their hands of supplying potable water equitably to Palestinians as the occupying power, or rebalancing water distribution on equitable terms.

What the Israeli Water Regime does extremely well is capture and defend that natural resource for the blooming of settlements and their agricultural enterprises. Settlements' water needs are pre-defined to meet standards written by the government that also approves of settlement planning; plans constructed into Settlement Blocks under Israeli "civilian" authorities protected and directed by the Israeli military. Sderot is a modern example of what it took thirty years to achieve in the West Bank, a model Settlement that transforms settler colonialism into Militarism.

The arrangement replicates the United States Department of War planning under the Office of Indian Affairs and the US Congress' Homestead Act; the granting of land parcels to settlers, 36 years later.

Water Regimes and Sderot: A Case Study

Palestinian community and water resource planning is prohibited by Israel courts as in the case of al-‘Aqaba, a Palestinian community commandeered by the IDF which led to displacement of 85% of residents. Dispossession, seen in the slow motion colonization of al-‘Aqaba in the West Bank by the Israeli Military, demonstrates what will be the next phase; Settlement construction or its use as a military outpost.

Watersheds are the most scrutinized of natural resources by Israeli planners. Without Israeli containment of aquifers in the mountains of the West Bank, Israeli settlement close to the Seam Zone (the area of land east of the 1949 Armistice Green Line and west of the Israeli annexation wall) would be quite unsustainable given they completely depend on the mountain watershed in the West Bank. The western and eastern aquifers’ flowage west toward Israel are largely captured in and along the Seam Zone, and or captured from aquifers where Israel walled in water extraction sites which jut into the west bank at odd angles.

The post-1967 War, security wall-building east of the Green Line, was a pre-meditated plan to capture Palestinian water resources necessary for Israeli settler colonialism. Water control will have a much greater impact over the long occupation of Palestine than walls which serve as shorter term security deterrents.

As a military strategy, wall defenses have exploitable weaknesses because they are guarded by human troops. For example, walled cities in China like Beijing in 13th Century, and Xian in the 20th Century, learned that the hard way. Control of ingress and egress to water sources in the West Bank is the major feature of Israeli settler colonialism in the West Bank.

Israeli territorial control of Gaza and its direct deleterious restrictions on importing equipment and infrastructure to treat and dispose of 95 percent of available water to Gazans is on-going. Mekorot directly pumps ground water within a kilometer of the Gazan Border to grow crops and support an armaments factory. Both strategies are one and the same military strategy, but without Settlers in West Bank Settlement Blocks and at Sderot, just east of Gaza, border militarization cannot be sustained. Restriction of Palestinian mobility is a second strategic concern, but Palestinians once readily supplied a cheap labor source for Israelis, and any negotiated agreement is likely to restore that strategy.

The deliberate control of water resources in Palestine and of watersheds and aquifers shared with Palestinian populations by Israel's state planners is part of Israel's larger war strategy and it has no justifiable place in international law. As in the West Bank, the Israeli government deliberately prevents Gaza Palestinian authorities (Hamas or the Palestinian Authority) from rebuilding plants to collect,

treat, and distribute water; water that is available but contaminated by enforced human occupation. By August, 2018 Gaza remained without any functioning natural environmental or human designed systems of filtration.

After Israel's pull out of settlers from Gaza in 2005, its subsequent permanent land, sea, and air blockade was not just a low intensity warfare strategy masquerading as a permanent economic blockade. It was key to understanding Israeli war strategy as the implementation of the Israeli Water Regime over Gaza - an act of war against a civilian population. As Noam Chomsky has pointed out, the IDF continued its policy of ghettoization of Gaza long after its withdrawal in 2005, repeatedly breaking ceasefires, and turning Gaza into an experimental fire zone for testing war material. It was a strategy designed from the outset to deliberately preclude any negotiation for a peace accord.

Water location partially determines customary indigenous agriculture and hunting practices. As indigenous peoples, Tohono O'odham resemble the seasonality of Bedouin mobility, but Akimel O'odham share sedentary routines of Palestinian villages that maintain fields, if some distance from their habitations. By legalizing the territorial dispossession of O'odham peoples under Spanish, Mexican, and then American rule, settler colonists control large areas of desert through violent occupation. Their paramilitary forces (cartel and CBP) work transnationally

in Mexico and the United States. Their cooptation of US Federal Government paramilitary forces, when combined with paramilitary cartel, have respectively diverted and usurped O'odham water sources in the Sonoran Desert.

Indigenous Resistance to Settler Colonialism

Tohono O'odham, like the Bedouin, have been dispossessed not just of land, but most critically, of water. For 70 years Palestinians have lived as indigenous peoples outside their dispossessed lands, and like the O'odham, their remaining lands are under occupation. Communities of O'odham in Mexico are in the process of undergoing dispossession of traditional O'odham territory by the combined free trade militia of the Sinaloa Cartel and the CBP. They continue to resist assimilation through their elected autonomous Traditional O'odham Government representing 12 communities; a government that has been recognized six times by the Tohono O'odham Nation since 1979, and as recently as in February 2018. It is a government fighting assimilation by expanding its recognition of O'odham descendants documented under its own population census. It is an autonomous government that declared in 2015 its support for San Andres Accords, the unratified agreement negotiated by the EZLN with the Mexican Federal Government. In those negotiations, O'odham from Sonora were participants, not observers.

Palestinian resistance against occupation carried out by settler colonialism and the State of Israel is highly evolved.

It is now organizing internationally to sanction Israel with economic boycotts. At the height of its repression in previous organizational structures, Palestinian resistance has been declared broken many times by proponents of Israeli settler colonialism. The final tenet in Wolfe's thesis of settler colonialism regarding "biological and cultural assimilations," overlooks that indigenous knowledge is deep and at the core of their resistance. Palestinian tenacity is a measure of the missing aspect of settler colonialism. Settlers ultimately cannot survive unless they entirely eliminate indigenous populations, completely subjugate their labor, or assimilate to indigenous customary land uses. In time, all water regimes are challenged by natural limitations of population and climate. When, and not if, Israel reaches those limits, customary land uses that recognize seasonal Bedouin migration and stationary Palestinian agriculture practices as sustainable, will challenge the static limitations of Israeli water regimes. Even in asymmetrical warfare, Palestinian resistance from Gaza at Sderot is recognizable, for by the end of March 2018, the Gaza border area experienced some 300 fires from Palestinian forces. Israeli losses were costly: Some 5,000 dunams (1,235 acres) of crops, mostly wheat, worth around five million shekels (\$1.4 million) burned; Some 2,100

dunams went up in flames in Jewish National Fund forests; as well as 5,000 to 4,000 dunams in the Besor Forest Nature Reserve, and thousands of dunams of woodland and brushland as well.

Numerous American Indian Tribes in the United States (and indigenous elsewhere) have had to wait generations before more equitable conditions existed in the US legal system that allowed them to seek and win redress as apolitical strategies against the “finality” of settler colonists who once usurped their land and water resources. Palestinians also seek legal redress, but in international courts. Concluding O’odham and Akimel O’odham displacement and dispossession to date is a permanent *erasure* of their indigenous communities, is also contrary to their actual status. Such conclusions, easily advocated by the framework of border militarization, disregards indigenous agency, its autonomy, and history. This eradication of indigeneity is predictable, given the fear induced by militarization and the atomization of individuals in the face of pervasive lethal modern technology. Without a grounding in settler colonialism and human collective opposition to it, a framework of militarization alone authenticates the ideology of settler colonialism, especially in its modern form, as inevitable. Indigenous resistance is also a process, it is grounded in customary land uses.

O’odham reproduce their cultural practices in arid lands, resisting (in Wo’oson) and decolonizing settler colonialism’s water regimes (in San Xavier, and Gila River). O’odham will again decolonize the US-Mexico border area when they regain access to water despite the paramilitary forces of drug cartel “ranchers’ in Northern Sonora and their allies in the US Customs and Border Patrol.

Palestinians currently resist settler colonialism in many forms, through international economic boycotts, and by using their customary and traditional knowledge of agriculture and pastoralism in the West Bank and the Naqab/Negev Desert. They will further decolonize when they secure greater ingress and egress to West Bank and Gaza watersheds, and secure greater access to the Mediterranean Sea.

We must hope that both indigenous peoples, Palestinian and O’odham, will increasingly draw on their traditional environmental knowledge in the face of displacement, dispossession, and climate change. For the O’odham, the word for steadfastness is *himdad*; for Palestinians, *sumud*. Rather than a series of events, decolonization must be a conscious and sustained process aided by those who understand its significance and by perseverance over time.

References/Notes:

Please contact (arizonapalestine@gmail.com) for notes or references and you will be put in touch with one of the researchers of this report.