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Confronting the world's 21st century colonial genocide

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Summary

Commonplace analyses of Israel's genocide against Gaza have attributed responsibility in concentric circles. Starting with the innermost circle of Israeli politicians and armed forces, bigger circles have included Israel's settler-colonial political culture, the USA's massive military aid, Western imperialism and more broadly global racial capitalism. Extending the latter analyses, this essay situates Israel's ongoing genocide in the wider, deeper world of *colonial modernity*. This concept understands colonial relations as central to the making of the modern world, not just in the past but also in the present. Thus it subverts the hegemonic Eurocentric frame in which modernity today has overcome colonialism. We propose a 'topological' perspective on colonial modernity's deeply constitutive relations, highlighting how these remain largely the same, even as they enact violent socio-materiality in many new and horrific forms. Beyond the immediate cessation of Israel's genocidal violence and the centrality of Palestinian anticolonial resistance, our analysis makes a case for directly confronting and transforming modernity's colonial topologies *around the world*. Topological transformations require worldwide mobilisations not only for dismantling the web of relations constituting colonial modernity, but also for the flourishing of decolonial relations that make many worlds grounded in reparative justice and demilitarisation across Palestine and elsewhere.

Introduction

Israel has persisted with a genocide in Gaza, as recognized by many Palestinian civil society organisations, Amnesty International and UN representatives [1], [2], [3]. Commonplace analyses of this genocide come in concentric circles. Starting with the innermost: responsibility is attributed to individual criminality, for instance in actions and political interests of the Israeli Prime Minister and his former Defence Minister, as endorsed in the November 2024 ICC arrest warrants [4]. Other observers attribute responsibility to the wider

circle of the Israeli military and its encompassing settler-colonial political culture [5]. Still others argue that the genocide in Gaza has been driven by the USA's massive military aid and ceasefire vetoes (at the UN Security Council), expressing President Biden's commitments to Israel since October 2023 [6]. Some observers go further by contextualising the genocide of Palestinians in *Western imperialism* and global *racial capitalism*, for instance Englert and Bhattacharya [7].

Extending such conceptual work, we argue in this essay that the genocide in Gaza has been made by the *wider, deeper world of colonial modernity* [8]. We approach this world relationally, to theorise *today's processes* of concentrating and accumulating modern power and privilege. Across local and global scales, these processes re-enact specific historically entrenched colonial relations. We examine six such relations constituting modernity that are enmeshed with each other: assuming comprehensive superiority, asserting military supremacy, enforcing gendered domination, appropriating cultural privileges, extending controlling imaginations, and expanding toxic extractions [8]. Beyond the immediate importance of *ending all military and settler violence* in Gaza and the West Bank as well as of Palestinian resistance to Israeli settler colonialism, we argue that it is crucial to directly challenge colonial modernity's constituting relations in all other parts of the world, so that the many forms of violence these relations enact can truly sustainably give way to peaceful alternatives.

Scrutinising how the six constituting relations of colonial modernity have made the genocide in Gaza, we offer what we call a *topological perspective*. According to this perspective, forms of (violent) socio-materiality are enacted in new and horrific ways, but their deeply constituting relations remain largely the same unless confronted by adequately mobilised counter-forces. Unless the associated underlying topology is transformed, effectively nothing changes. It is to understand this *political topology*, we must analyse those relations that most deeply constitute today's colonial modernity.

Beyond complicities

At the outset, however, we must ask like Englert and Bhattacharya [7] if this is really the right time to do conceptual work, when mass killings have been inflicted every day in Gaza, when millions of people are displaced, and when others have been broken by hunger and disease. Perhaps our efforts are better expended in helping to organise and agitate to stop the genocide (and to enact reparative justice), also through direct action, while holding Western governments and institutions accountable for their complicity?

Such actions are indeed necessary and urgent. Yet we write with the hope that conceptual work can complement and reinforce those efforts in the wider political struggle for Palestinian freedom and reparative justice. Concepts are crucial perhaps to anticipate how struggles for peace, freedom and justice, may be marginalised and/or co-opted by the same political formations that have inflicted the genocide in Gaza. So, we need a wide range of understandings and strategies to avoid such marginalisation and co-optation.

Inquiries concerning the genocide in Gaza are often expected to acknowledge the atrocious attack in Israel on 7 October 2023. So, we too might be asked to condemn the killings and

kidnappings by Hamas. Peace activists as we are, we do not support any form of violence. In relation to Palestinians (as to other colonised peoples) moreover, we stand with Arundhati Roy [9], and quote from her speech accepting the PEN Pinter prize: “I refuse to play the condemnation game. ... I do not tell oppressed people how to resist their oppression or who their allies should be.”

Even where the genocide in Gaza and Israel's bombing of Lebanon are seen as wars with contending machineries for perpetrating extreme violence, the internationally-backed Israeli war machine has far out-scaled its 'enemies' on every capacity to inflict regional devastation and mass murder. To the routinely evaded responsibilities of Israel's government, and its military forces, we must add the complicities of international weapon suppliers, aid providers and apologists across the so-called West and beyond. Such complicities, as we elaborate below, are grasped more extensively by situating them in colonial modernity.

Indeed, perhaps most egregiously central have been the complicities of Western powers privileged by colonial plunder and control in the *modern era* [8]. It is Western imperial metropolises in North America and Europe (including Germany that accounts for 30% of Israeli imports of major arms between 2019–2023), that have provided a bulk of the military support to Israel [10]. Similar complicities have been enacted when supposedly 'dual use' services and products are traded with Israel by powerful Western corporations, especially Big Tech including Microsoft, Amazon and Alphabet/Google [11].

Beyond the West, complicities manifest when a former European colony – India – is implicated in Israel's genocide. India is the single largest destination for Israeli military exports [12]. India has also sent thousands of skilled workers to Israel since October 2023 [13], to replace the expelled Palestinians. Depressed wages and vast unemployment in India [14], mean that workers have been generally keen to accept such opportunities (even where they might be critical of the wider geopolitical context).

Such complicities – realised through the movement of goods and workers in a highly unequal world – may be analysed using the lens of global capitalism, within which racism is now sometimes acknowledged as a constituting factor [7]. However, theories of racial capitalism, and theories of capitalism more widely, do not generally account for the agency of modern nation-states in enacting violence beyond what is demanded or determined by capital. They also neglect the agency of modern sciences and technologies, by privileging deterministic accounts – either of modern technology as a maker of social relations or of capitalist interests as producers of techno-scientific outputs [15].

To address a wider range of interrelating agencies as constitutive of the genocide in Gaza, therefore, we argue to grapple with *colonial modernity*. Not only does this concept offer a way to grasp colonial relations as enacted today, it also historically encompasses diverse political formations including all nationally bounded examples of European imperialism. In addition it helps account for colonial actions of non-capitalist formations such as fascism, state communism and modern socialism [16], [17], [18].

Given its immensely diverse social-political-material forms [19], modernity's deeply constituting features are often approached as *ontological* (referring to the most

fundamental assumptions about being and knowing), in STS and related disciplines. To such ontological approaches, we add a **topological** conceptualisation of modernity for addressing **deeply entrenched relations** that transcend the location, configuration and scale of specific actors, knowledges, technologies, institutions and polities (as detailed below).

Colonialism makes the modern world and devastates many

In decolonial conceptualisations, modern ontology privileges categorical borders between a singular universal 'nature' and plural cultures [20], [21]. This categorical ontology is seen as centrally constitutive of **the modern world** – even equated with it, such that the notion ontology may be used interchangeably with the term 'world' [20]. Categorical ontology then provides the basis for modernity's power hierarchies enacted between variously racialised, gendered and otherwise categorised humans as well as between human subjects and objectified nonhumans.

In contrast, following Latour [22], STS scholars see categorial borders and hierarchies as mere fictions in accounts of socio-material practices where subjects and objects, cultures and nature dynamically intermingle to produce modern knowledges [23], [24]. Amidst such attention to hybrid and fluid 'practical ontologies' that are mapped across different forms of modernity [23], [25], it may nevertheless be acknowledged that moderns have – as per Latour – “stabilized universality [of nature] too fast and accepted plurality [of cultures] too lightly” [26, p. 302].

In decolonial critiques, moderns are single-mindedly committed to their expediently bordered categories [21], as they try to slot complex and diverse worlds or culture-natures of colonised peoples into a singular universal 'nature' (that is separated from plural cultures) – nature that is seen to be revealed exclusively through modern science. In doing so moderns obscure diverse ontologies associated with colonised peoples' ways of knowing and being, while also suppressing anticolonial resistance and refusal [27], [28]. For some colonised peoples – who today are addressed using the term 'Indigenous' – the lands, rivers, mountains, forests, animals and even some plants are powerful **world-making actors** with myriad cultural, spiritual and epistemic relations [29]. As these vibrant socio-materialities of Indigenous worlds do not fit into modernist 'nature vs. culture' categorical schemas, they may be conceptualised as grounded in relational ontologies [21].

Arguably similar to these relational ontologies, STS scholars may appreciate all kinds of nonhumans as actors (building on the work of Callon, Mol, Latour, Law and others). Diverse relational ontologies may then be seen as underpinning all kinds of modern world-making practices [30], [31], not just colonised and Indigenous worlds. This overarching embrace of ontological diversity in STS is seen as presenting a challenge to modernity's 'one-world world' assumptions [32].

However, finding ontological differences everywhere can in some ways be much like obscuring those differences altogether. Seeing ontological alterities as ubiquitous in modernity can produce a similar flattening effect as pushing modernity's universalist 'one-world world' metaphysics. Both views can neglect modernity's foundational colonial

relations, through which many radically different worlds have been violently subordinated, curtailed and marginalised during the last five centuries [8].

While radical alterities of colonised and Indigenous worlds need not be obscured under ubiquitous ontological diversity, those alterities can be grouped together or conflated with the many 'practical ontologies' mapped by STS scholars in modernity. This conflation means that no specific vantage point needs to be afforded to the radical difference of colonially subordinated Indigenous worlds. Vastly diverse in themselves, these help sustain 80% of the Earth's remaining biodiversity (and much of its linguistic diversity) on less than 20% of its land [33].

Such elision of radical worldly alterities, in STS and beyond, also means that no specific solidarities are needed with Indigenous and other colonised peoples whose many worlds have been damaged by colonial modernity over five centuries. And that no specific (global) struggles are required to *decolonise modernity* for it to finally stop the plunder and destruction of land, water, minerals and forests made and sustained by colonially subordinated worlds.

Just like the universalising assumptions of modernity's 'one-world world' metaphysics, mapping diverse ontologies everywhere can therefore inadvertently undermine decolonial struggles in specific places. Metaphysics of universalist oneness and of ubiquitous diversity can both end up obscuring and maintaining worldwide colonial relations entrenched over the last five centuries. Most urgently in the present case, as we discuss below, such relations have been centrally constitutive of the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

To address the limitations of focusing on ontologies as outlined here – especially for confronting the ongoing genocide in Gaza – we pay attention to modernity's *deeply entrenched* colonial relations with other worlds and their entangled peoples and lands, even where they have been largely assimilated into modernity. While these socio-material relations may remain egregiously neglected in Eurocentric STS discourses, they are today ensconced at the heart of modernity to constitute it from within [8]. We use the term political topology as introduced above, to describe the meshwork formed by these constituting relations in and of modernity (c.f. Ingold [34]). These relations resist transformation in time and space even as they enact a wide of range of other changes in actors, knowledges, technologies, institutions and polities.

Topological constitutions of/through colonial modernities

A five-century history involving thousands of culture-natures across all continents on Earth renders it impossible to develop a comprehensive articulation of colonial relations that make the modern world. Therefore, we focus on those colonial relations that are arguably more deeply entrenched and more widely pervasive than others, even if they are routinely obscured by modern concentrations of power and privilege. We approach such relations as *topological*, considering them to be *foundationally constitutive* of the modern world, not just from the outside (in relating with other worlds) but also from within (through deeply entrenched socio-material relations that are immanent to modernity).

Topology for mathematicians means going beyond merely geometric changes achieved by

squeezing or stretching extant sizes and shapes [35]. For instance, a coffee mug and a doughnut are considered topologically similar because either of them can in principle be stretched and squeezed to realise (the shape of) the other [36]. Topological transformations are deeper and more radical than just up or down scaling along already-defined dimensions. Changing topologies can involve the piercing, joining, turning inside-out, or weaving in-between of existing geometries through added or subtracted dimensions. It is rare in STS and related disciplines, to use topological ideas to grapple with socio-material relations and structures. This is despite early inspirational engagements by Mol and Law [37], who addressed different spatial ontologies – clusters, networks and fluids – using the term ‘social topology’, mainly to appreciate “changes in shape and character” (p. 664). In contrast, here we analyse patterns of socio-material relations that remain largely the same over time and space, while enacting many ‘changes in shape and character’ of identities, institutions and materialities. Such relations can thus be maintained indefinitely and extended widely, unless some adequate topologically focused counterforces disrupt them.

By reference in radical critiques to labels like political ecology and political ontology, we describe such relations by using the term *political topology*. Mapping political topology as a meshwork of entrenched relations constituting the modern world, may reveal how the ongoing genocide in Gaza is being made and sustained by a diversity of globally distributed actors, institutions and polities armed with new knowledges and technologies.

To confront the modern world that has made the genocide in Gaza, we describe a meshwork of six topological relations: assuming *comprehensive superiority*, asserting *military supremacy*, enforcing *gendered domination*, appropriating *cultural privileges*, extending *imaginings of control*, and expanding *toxic extractions* [8]. We approach these relations as abstractions that can find relevance in Gaza and in different ways, across other social-material-political formations of colonial modernity.

While narrating the meshwork of such relations constituting the genocide in Gaza, we situate Israel-Palestine in discourses and developments beyond the Middle East. Given that we aim to confront a wider world behind the genocide perpetrated most proximately by Israeli armed forces, we focus here in particular on enmeshments between military supremacy and the other five relations of colonial modernity.

Political topology of a genocide, in and as colonial modernity

On 8th October 2023, when Israel began its genocidal war against the people of Gaza, its government’s spokespersons used the violence of 7th October as *the* justification for their warmongering. Obscuring almost a century of settler-colonial violence and four Israeli military attacks since 2007 [38], this ‘year zero’ narrative misleadingly implied that October 2023 was the first time that Israeli armed forces were bombing the besieged enclave of Gaza.

Racist imaginings

Colonised people of Gaza were portrayed as aggressors by Israeli authorities. They were “human animals” in the words of Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant [39], [40]. Therefore

they deserved a ‘complete siege’ ... “no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel, everything is closed.” United Nations reports have affirmed that any such siege is illegal under international law. Given the embeddedness of this law in colonial modernity (see endnote [i]), it is unsurprising that Israel’s powerful international allies have continued to provide moral, political and military support. By failing to stop the war crimes and holding the Israeli government to account, Israel’s allies make it clear that rights are not bestowed by humanity, but by the parties who decide who is human [41].

The parties deciding this in Palestine are Israeli colonisers and their allies (most of which are/were colonising powers themselves). It is they who have thus assumed comprehensive superiority over Palestinian lives and livelihoods, *enmeshing* their assumed superiority directly with the military supremacy imposed on Gaza.

Key benefits for partners and clients stem from Israeli assertions of military supremacy. Colonised Palestine has served as a real-life laboratory for testing different kinds of weapons and other ‘security’ interventions, which Israel (as the 9th largest exporter of major arms in the world between 2019–23) trades with numerous modern nation-states [42], [43], [44]. Palestine has also served as a laboratory for testing Big Tech’s digital surveillance and targeting technologies that have then moved in global markets (see more below). The same applies to ‘dual-use’ innovations such as biometric cameras and drones. Improved through Israeli tests on Palestinians, these innovations have been later marketed for civilian purposes elsewhere [45].

Colonial appropriations and control

For a long time, Israeli authorities have used claims of precise targeting of Palestinian ‘terrorists’, to boost export sales of their ‘counter-terror’ measures. Such claims of precision – rooted in imaginations of control – now appear more fallacious than ever, largely due to the genocide in Gaza where targeting has prioritised civilian infrastructure rather than ‘enemy combatants’ [46]. Israeli armed forces claim that they can always cleanly pick out combatants from civilians. As nearly 70% of the people killed in Gaza by Israel in the first six months since October 2023 were women and children [47], this imagination of controlled separation has been clearly proven to be a fallacy. Yet it continues to be deployed to justify and whitewash Israeli assertions of military supremacy.

The Israeli settler-colonial project in Gaza and the West Bank has involved a long-term gestation of technological infrastructures [48]. By building infrastructures such as settler highways and sunk wells in the West Bank, Israel appropriates Palestinian cultural privileges based on access to land, water, and other life-sustaining needs. Where *enmeshed* directly with military supremacy, such appropriations have often entailed the outright expulsion of Palestinians from their land, as indicated by ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Northern Gaza since October 2024 [49].

Israel’s relentless attacks on Gaza’s people and land have been enabled by ammunition from the USA, Germany and elsewhere in the wider colonial-modern world [43]. This bombing campaign has damaged most of Gaza’s housing and public infrastructure. For instance, in a study that analysed 592 bomb craters caused by detonations between October 7th and November 17th 2023, Kunichoff and colleagues show that one in four of

Gaza's 36 hospitals had a crater within a 'lethal' range of 360 metres and four in five had craters within an 'injury' range of 800m [50]. Their study focused only on craters caused by a single type of ordnance – 900kg airdropped M-84s bombs manufactured by General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems for the US Department of Defence [51]. Showing the fallacy of imagined control that underpins technological precision, Kunichoff et al. conclude that a widespread feature of Israel's military campaign has been indiscriminate bombing in dangerous proximities to hospitals – afforded special protection under international humanitarian law [50].

It is estimated that Israel dropped 85,000 tonnes of bombs in the first year of its war on Gaza [52] and by March 2024 it had destroyed nearly half of Gaza's trees [53] – home to nearly 250 species of birds living in the territory [54]. Many now argue that Israel is inflicting an ecocide alongside a genocide [55], [56]. Israeli assertions of military supremacy thus *enmesh* with assumptions of comprehensive superiority, to treat Gaza's nonhuman lives just as expendably as its humans.

Gendered dominations

Alongside the enmeshing of military supremacy, controlling imaginations, comprehensive superiority and appropriation of privileges discussed above, Israel has enforced gendered domination on a daily basis in Gaza through a genocidal war on the lives of women and children. Widespread killing of women and children in the 2023-25 genocide reproduces existing settler-colonial patterns [47], embedded in the Zionist imagination of the "demographic threat" posed by Palestinian women giving birth [57], [58].

To satisfy this racist imagination of comprehensive superiority, Israel has designed colonial-modern infrastructure that produces high rates of miscarriages among Palestinian women: those in labour are forced to wait at checkpoints and as access to clean water and medicines is blocked. In this colonial context a 300% increase in miscarriages has been reported in Gaza over the last year [59], [60], not least because Israel has repeatedly attacked maternity wards in Gaza's hospitals.

Further *enmeshing* military supremacy and gendered domination, Israeli forces have inflicted numerous cases of 'sexual and gender-based violence'. According to another UN report [61], these are "part of Israeli Security Forces' operating procedures." This report documents a range of such violations including "public stripping and nudity intended to humiliate the community at large and accentuate the subordination of an occupied people." It is in this way that racist assumptions of Israeli comprehensive superiority are *directly connected* with violent enforcements of gendered domination.

Expansive extraction and fallacious control through Big Tech

It is devastatingly clear that the colonial-modern meshwork of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, as outlined above, has involved many governments around the world, particularly those that send and buy weapons [43], [62]. The role of large transnational corporations in the political topology of this genocide is also increasingly evident. Since 2021 various reports have documented Israeli contracts with Big Tech corporations including Microsoft, Palantir, Alphabet/Google and Amazon [45], [63], [64].

Examining a \$1.2 billion cloud computing contract – dubbed Project Nimbus – between

Alphabet/Google, Amazon and the Israeli government, the Time magazine reported that Israel's Ministry of Defence has its own 'landing zone' into the Nimbus infrastructure [65]. This 'landing zone' has included cloud use by two government-owned manufacturers of "drones, missiles, and other weapons Israel has used to bombard Gaza" [11].

Project Nimbus embeds machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities built on massive modern infrastructures for toxic extraction from diverse ecologies and wider worlds, of resources to manufacture computing equipment and to produce energy for data centres [66], [67], [68]. AI 'capabilities' further expand the extraction of public cultural knowledges from around the world, through mechanistic algorithms deployed by a handful of powerful corporations and their clients such as the Israeli government [69].

AI 'capabilities' also extend hubristic imaginations of control by pretending to realise 'accurate' face detection, object tracking, sentiment analysis, and more [70]. Similar imaginations of control underpin Google's Lavender AI system that is powered by Nimbus to generate supposedly 'precise' bombing targets in Gaza [71], [72].

Claims based on imaginations of control can be used to camouflage brutal assertions of military supremacy. Israeli armed forces have claimed to be using AI-based targeting technologies to make "precision strikes" [73]. AI-targeted deaths are asserted to be 'surgical' i.e., focused ostensibly on 'combatants' that are categorically distinguished and separated from 'civilians', even though such systems are widely known to be error-prone. Unsurprisingly, just like the wider war machine of Israel, AI-based targeting has led to the killing of Gaza's civilians [71].

More specifically, Israel has used the AI system called Lavender to identify 37,000 Hamas targets, including 'junior' militants and staff [74]. To kill them, the military gave its operatives permission to kill increasingly large numbers of others nearby, using 'dumb' bombs with large explosive power that often destroy multi-story buildings. Such bombs have become "standard weaponry" in Gaza, yet are claimed to be used in a manner that ensures "a high level of precision" [72]. Dubbed as 'modernisation', AI targeting systems *enmesh* Israeli military supremacy with Big Tech-based imaginations of control, while expanding toxic extraction worldwide.

By generating targets in Gaza, the Lavender AI system and other algorithms such as the Gospel [75], have helped to justify mass murder, assuage guilt about the genocide and help evade the moral and legal responsibilities of military targeters [76]. As one intelligence officer said, 'the machine did it coldly. That made it easier.... And the targets keep coming' [72]. Imaginations of control underpinning AI-based targeting systems thus help in cooling targeters' emotions in assertions of military supremacy, while making easier targets of Palestinians and thereby enacting Israeli colonisers' assumptions of comprehensive superiority over them.

Beyond Big Tech companies headquartered in the USA, others have been exchanging technologies for Israel to assert its military supremacy. For instance, since October 2023 Israeli soldiers have been using 'AI-enhanced' assault weapons and machine guns in Gaza that are produced in collaboration with an Indian firm, Adani Defence & Aerospace [77]. Adani also has a joint venture with Israel's Elbit Systems, which has exported drones made

in India to Israel [78]. In this modern tie-up investments by some formerly colonised people end up affording colonial violence, rather than enabling anticolonial nonviolent struggles for justice and freedom.

Conclusion

To grasp and resist the genocide in Gaza requires robust challenge to the most deeply, expansively constituting relations of the prevailing colonial modern world. We have attempted to briefly show how a meshwork of six such relations are constituting the genocide. These topological relations were originally articulated by relying on histories of violent destruction by the 'one-world world' of colonial modernity, not only of so many peoples and entire cultures but also of their radically different and intricately entangled worlds [8]. Focusing on ontologies underpinning modern techno-sciences (and other ways of knowing), or on institutions and corporations of racial capitalism, does not highlight such meshworks of topological relations that enact a wide range of innovative and horrific practices, while remaining largely the same.

Dismantling modernity's deeply constituting relations thus requires decolonial transformations of thought and action that go well beyond what is possible by merely stretching, shrinking or reshaping of established institutional, cultural and ontological forms. What is needed thus are *topological transformations* in colonial modernity's relations that enmesh with each other in a variety of contextual ways to mangle our critical and emancipatory visions.

Central to such topological transformations, we have argued, is apprehending and confronting the colonial modern world that transcends and encompasses all forms of capitalism and socialism alike. We have also argued for the need to go beyond both the ubiquitous ontological diversity found in some STS scholarship and the work on multiple ontologies found more widely in academia. Seeing all ontological differences as effectively symmetrical or complementary, STS perspectives (outside decolonial studies) obscure concentrated power and privilege in modern societies that inflict colonial forms of violence today. Such perspectives thereby evade, obscure or refuse the obligation of specific solidarities with colonised peoples' different worlds that continue to be damaged or even annihilated by colonial modernity.

To conclude in relation to Israel, topological transformations of colonial modernity foreground not just Palestinian but equally global struggles for the following kinds of relations: *comprehensive equality* with all Palestinian lives and knowledges; *restoration of Palestinian cultural privileges* through the return of land, water and other bases of life; practising *diverse values of care* to counter all fallacies of imagined control over Palestinian territories of belonging; sustaining *commitments to reparative justice* in ways that are defined and led by Palestinian women and children; *demilitarising movements* for intercultural conviviality and peace, under which Palestinian lives can flourish every day; and *reparations of many worlds* so that a diversity of ways of knowing and being can once again thrive together in Palestine and beyond. For meshworks of these relations to become *decolonial topologies*, continually generative and diverse struggles may be required more

than the scaling up of some successful grassroots initiatives. Such struggles for decolonial topologies are therefore crucial antidotes to modern quests for colonial victories that will otherwise continue to inflict extreme violence.

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ENDNOTES

- International law warrants a special note about its relevance as an instrument of colonial modernity, designed to 'civilise' non-European peoples rather than being applied symmetrically to (former) colonial rulers [79]. It is not a surprise, then, that Israeli violations of international law have been repeatedly overlooked by colonially privileged Northern powers, as they have continued to provide military and other political support to Israel.

Since Israel began its blockade of Gaza in 2007, various reports have highlighted its contravention of international law, especially the occupier's legal responsibility to protect any population which it occupies. For example, the 2011 report, *UN independent experts on the Palmer Report: How can Israel's blockade of Gaza be legal?* [80]. Since Israel began its invasion and more comprehensive blockade in October 2023, UN reports have strongly denounced this for contravening international law. For example: '*Six-month update report on the human rights situation in Gaza, 1 November 2023 to 30 April 2024*' [81].

For many years, UN expert bodies have issued reports about Israel's violations of international law throughout all of historic Palestine. These reports have made no practical difference to Israel because it has been exempted from international law by major Western powers. This implicit policy has been widely analysed as 'the Palestine exception'. For example, the book by Noura Erekat, *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* [84].

The rare attempts to apply international law have revealed colonial assumptions exempting Israel. When a prosecutor at the International Criminal Court sought arrest warrants for Israel's leaders, he was quietly warned against doing so. As an un-named US politician advised him, the ICC was 'built for Africa and thugs like Putin', not Western leaders or Israel [85].

Broader than international law, political support for Israeli impunity pervades Western institutions through their basic colonial assumptions, complicit investments and suppression of pro-Palestine dissent, superseding academic freedom. This pervasive role reinforces the wider complicities of colonial modernity, as highlighted here in Israel's 21st century genocide.

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