



Palestine is a Global Issue: Situating the Genocide and Beyond

University Institute of Lisbon

21-22 May 2026

Looking at the last two years in the land of Palestine, the Gaza genocide and the escalating colonial violence across the West Bank have been depicted as a continuation of decades-long Israeli policies and military strategies (Achcar, 2025), but also as a possible last chapter of Zionism and end of Israeli settler colonialism (Pappé, 2025). This is not happening in a vacuum, but it is part of a long-term intentional and systematic forced displacement and replacement of the Palestinian people (Albanese, 2024). And, in this current reality, the language we use to describe facts on the ground often fails us because, as Azeezah Kanji from the Yellowhead Institute writes in *A Dictionary of Unnameable Violences: From Aerocide to Zygoticide in Palestine* (2024), "there are no legal terms for many of the forms of violence inflicted by Israel on Palestine".

This conference aims to underscore the urgent need to confront not only the material destruction but also epistemic erasure or, in other words, the silencing of Palestinian knowledge, voices, and histories, within academia and socio-political as well as cultural spaces. Israel's epistemic violence has been perpetrated through different levels and in different fields, as an ongoing narrative of silencing and erasing the Palestinians as a people. We recognise that documenting the unprecedented violence and dispossession currently taking place, is not only a scholarly task, but an urgent and ethical one - one that bears witness and asserts the right to narrate and to exist.

In the last decade, Palestine Studies has opened new interdisciplinary avenues and comparative analyses to question the ongoing invisibilisation of the Palestine question in several domains, starting within academia. As a newly established *Observatory for Palestine Studies* and the first academic initiative of its kind in the European Union, in this conference we suggest that it is necessary to focus on three central thematic lines that are at the core of the current academic discourse as well as at the level of civil society. It will thus be structured as follows:

1) Connecting Palestine: Resistance(s), Transnational Solidarities, and Activism

The global wave of mass mobilisations and student encampments across the world up to the most recent initiative of the Global Sumud Flotilla have revealed how movements for climate justice, decolonization, and liberation are deeply interlinked around Palestine as a global issue. We seek to reflect on the numerous ways civil society has engaged in the past two years through transnational initiatives, but also how smaller acts of activism and community building in the *backstages* of social movements (Treré, 2020) we might be overseeing. These everyday gestures - whether in the streets, in classrooms, or in digital spaces - embody often overlooked but vital forms of solidarity and coalition building.

Beyond the topic of transnational solidarities, we are also interested in discussions of how Palestinians in the *shatat* (diaspora/exile) continue to resist erasure through acts of cultural preservation, storytelling, and artistic expression, and how digital media has both amplified and constrained these efforts (Aouragh, 2008; Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014; Shehadeh, 2023; Matar & Tawil-Souri, 2024). While social media and the internet have offered new tools for raising awareness and connecting struggles, they have also reinforced structures of censorship and silencing, once again denying Palestinians the "permission to narrate" (Said, 1984).

By bringing together diverse perspectives and practices, this thematic line seeks to explore the entanglements between everyday resistance, transnational solidarities, and creative forms of organising.

2) Reckoning Palestine: International Law, Justice, and Education

The effectiveness of international law has come into question many times over the years as not a tool or framework to challenge power imbalances or deliver justice, but rather one that perpetuates the global neoliberal order for colonial reasons. Unsurprisingly, the Israeli genocide against Palestinians has raised doubts of any possibilities for true international justice as no guilty parties - from the “enablers” to the “displacers” to the “replacers” (Albanese, 2025) - have been brought to justice for their war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of genocide. It seems we will be reckoning with genocide, settler colonialism, and apartheid until long after they are eradicated.

Institutions reinforce one another just as systems do and both western academia (Pervez, 2025) and NGOs (Howe, 2025) have been laid bare with their silence and complicity in genocide and neo-colonialism (Wildeman & Tartir, 2021). In line with this, this section aims to articulate epistemologies of justice and collective knowledge, obstruction of justice through media or institutional propaganda, and academia’s complicity in genocide.

In this section, we also welcome explorations into how pedagogies of liberation (Natanel et al., 2023) and international law may intersect, struggles for gender justice and feminist emancipation (Cavazzoni et al., 2025), abolitionist perspectives in law or justice and beyond (Qutami, 2024), the political economy of international law, and Indigeneity and land rights under international law.

3) Preserving Palestine: Politics of Memory, Heritage and Erasure

The question of memory in Palestine is inseparable from the politics of dispossession, resistance and the ongoing struggle over history and identity. Since the Nakba in 1948, Palestinians have experienced a systematic attempt to erase not only their physical presence from the land but also their historical and cultural narratives, as well as the environment itself. This erasure has taken many forms, from the destruction of villages, land and historical and religious sites, to the suppression of oral histories and the marginalisation of Palestinian narratives.

Likewise, the field of archaeology and heritage in Palestine has been, since its emergence, one of capture, appropriation and occupation on behalf of Israeli and North American actors (Masalha 2007; Hawari 2013, 2022). With regards to environmental destruction through military activity, land and resource grabbing, and pollution, Raja Shehadeh beautifully described (2008) how the Palestinian landscape itself is steadily shifting to memory through consecutive acts of occupation and settlement, diversion and destruction. Altogether, such processes work towards making the content of Palestinian history and memory progressively ‘unavailable’ and ‘undetectable’.

At the same time, memory has also always functioned as a form of resistance. Across generations and geographical divides, Palestinians have mobilised collective memory to assert continuity, to claim rights, to generate archives, and to preserve their heritage, both in tangible (physical objects, places and artefacts) and intangible (traditions and knowledge) forms. Memory is then embodied in storytelling, literary traditions, art, culture, architecture, landscapes, and everyday practices, forming a counter-archive to colonial or hegemonic narratives.

This thematic line invites critical interventions that examine how in particular in the last two years of genocide memory and heritage are preserved, contested or erased. We call for contributions dealing with questions on how Palestinian communities navigate and challenge the imposed silence or hegemonic narratives, and how landscapes are transformed into sites of forgetting, being or resisting.

Submission and Participation in the Conference

We invite scholars, artists, and activists to engage critically and creatively with these urgencies. We welcome contributions in academic formats (paper presentations) - interdisciplinary approaches are very appreciated - as well as artistic interventions, including performances, visual and photographic works, short-films, or poetry. We highly encourage early career researchers and Ph.D. students to

submit. The format and content may reflect your practice, from community-based work to training, art or research.

Please submit your proposal in this [form](#) by 15 December 2025. The organising committee will inform selected participants on acceptance by mid-January 2026. The conference will be held in Lisbon, Portugal at the University Institute of Lisbon on 21-22 May 2026.

The conference fees will cover the costs of snacks and drinks during the conference breaktimes, keynote speakers, etc. There will be no fee for speakers from low-income economy countries. The fees for PhD students will be 30 Euros and for Professors and Researchers it will be 60 Euros.

If you have any questions about the appropriateness of your proposal, please email us at palestinestudies@iscte-iul.pt.

Conference Organising Committee:

- Giulia Daniele, CEI-Iscte
- Sophia Kelsch, CEI-Iscte
- Ruy Blanes, CRIA-Iscte
- Annelien Groten, CEI-Iscte
- Ashley Dell'Orso, CEI-Iscte
- João Borralho, CEI-Iscte
- Abbas Ismail, CEI-Iscte

Conference Scientific Committee:

- Giulia Daniele, CEI-Iscte
- Miguel Vale de Almeida, CRIA-Iscte
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- Federica Stagni, Scuola Normale Superiore
- Shaireen Rasheed, Long Island University
- Basil Farraj, Birzeit University
- Nadia Naser-Najjab, Exeter University
- Arlene Clemesha, Universidade de São Paulo
- Véronique Bontemps, CNRS, IRIS

Suggested Readings

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Albanese, F. (2025). From economy of occupation to economy of genocide: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. In *Human Rights Council* (A/HRC/59/23). United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessionsregular/session59/advance-version/a-hrc-59-23-aev.pdf>

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