



FROM GAZA TO GREECE:

In Solidarity with Palestinian People

**open assembly against /
Lesvos
border violence**

From Gaza to Greece

“What am I to do without exile, without a long night staring at the water?”

- Mahmoud Darwish

For Gazans, the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean is a horizon. On all other frontiers, they have been subject to blockade since 2006, enclosed in what has been called “the world’s largest open-air prison”. The sea at least carries the possibility of hope. When, however, they try to cross this sea through the Aegean into Europe, it becomes a prison wall: from 2022-2023, more than 10,000 Palestinians were pushed back from the Greek islands while attempting to cross the Aegean Sea, the second largest nationality group (after Afghans) to be subject to this practice. Not only does Europe, through its blind-eye to the current Israeli onslaught, fail to protect the right of Palestinians to live in their own land, it even denies them the right to live in exile.

On the position of Greece

Greece, for its part, has reinforced the blockade of the Palestinians by signing security agreements with Israel and Cyprus. It is worth noting that Greece was the last country in the EU to recognise Israel in 1989 and the only country in Europe not to recognise Israel in the United Nations’ resolution in 1947. Yet today, it is promoting the EU-Israel alliance to serve its geopolitical interests. There are both anti-semitic and anti-islamic stereotypes in Greece. Due to the current developments, the latter is more visible today, but intrinsic anti-semitism still strongly resides in the nation-state’s identity. Immediately after the war was declared on 7th of October, Greece sent the frigate Psara to the Israel-Lebanon border and deliberately chose to abstain from the UN Resolution on the humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. Moreover, the government has created a climate of terror within the country by adopting the “Palestinian = Terrorist” rhetoric. This led to the arrest of a Palestinian who raised the Palestinian flag in Syntagma Square, to which the Minister of Citizen Protection personally intervened to praise the quick reflexes of the Greek State in suppressing solidarity.

Greece created a greater climate of fear among the already oppressed and incarcerated Palestinian migrants in the camps, where overnight, state and security services decided to ban or restrict the demonstrations within camps allegedly fearing “terrorist attacks”. On 12 October, a group of 123 Syrians and Palestinians were intercepted in Leros island attempting to board a ferry for Piraeus. There was speculation that the group was attempting to join Palestine solidarity demonstrations in Athens scheduled over the following days. Security officials framed this as an attempted response to “the call made a few days ago by the Palestinian organization Hamas for a holy war”. The National Information Service (EYII) and Anti-Terrorism unit warned of the risk of “uprisings” in the Aegean island camps, and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum decided to “temporarily suspend the possibility of exit of the residents”. Meanwhile the Governmental Council for External Affairs and Defence (KYΣEA) decided to strengthen security measures in

response to the risk of “riots” in the island’s camps, leading to the deployment of reinforcements of riot police.

On 18th of October, around 700 people in the closed camp of Samos were surrounded by police forces after attempting to demonstrate in solidarity with the people of Palestine, with 5 people arrested on charges of incitement, resistance and breach of the peace. *Η Καθημερινή* newspaper described it as a “demonstration of support for Hamas”. Days later, on 20th of October 2023, the exit of Arabic-speaking people from Schisto and Malakasa camps was prohibited as an “emergency measure”, during a period in which Islamophobic attacks against Arabic-speakers increased. The discourse of state actors and mainstream media cast protesting Palestinian migrants and their supporters from the Arabic-speaking world yet again as a threat to public order, a terror-sympathising enemy within.

On the effects of the war on migration

Historically, since the 1948 Nakba, an overwhelming majority of Palestinians were driven from their homes to become refugees in their own land. Statistically, around 70% of the Gazan population are either refugees themselves or descendants of refugees. Roughly half of the population of Gaza are children. Under the conditions of the blockade, it has been completely forbidden for Palestinians to leave Gaza, with the exception of those experiencing specific medical problems that need medical attention that cannot be obtained in Gaza. The UN World Food Programme specified that half of the population of Gaza lives in a state of constant food insecurity. Furthermore, UN reports have shown that since 7th of October, about 2 million people have been displaced in Gaza, while the population of Gaza was 2.1 million people.

As of today, Palestinian migrants who manage to arrive in Greece end up in camps which essentially share conditions that resemble Gaza before the 7th of October. Very recently, civil society actors in Greece have drawn attention to the conditions in camps: in Lesvos CCAC, access to food, medical care and asylum procedures has been routinely denied to the camp residents. As of 17th of May 2023, Greek authorities announced that food and water would not be provided to residents who are no longer part of the asylum procedure, a recurring theme over the years. Access to medical care has been severely limited due to the fact that only two doctors are available within EODY, and a transfer to the Vostaneio Public Hospital has become almost impossible. Lack of capacity and “qualified staff” has also been used as an excuse to block the access of migrants to the asylum procedure.

It is fair to say that the conflict that has continued over decades has made several generations of Palestinians refugees over and over again, becoming synonymous with their identity. Whether they stay or whether they leave...

Therefore, we demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire right now! End the blockade in Gaza completely and indefinitely! Freedom and equality for the Palestinian people!

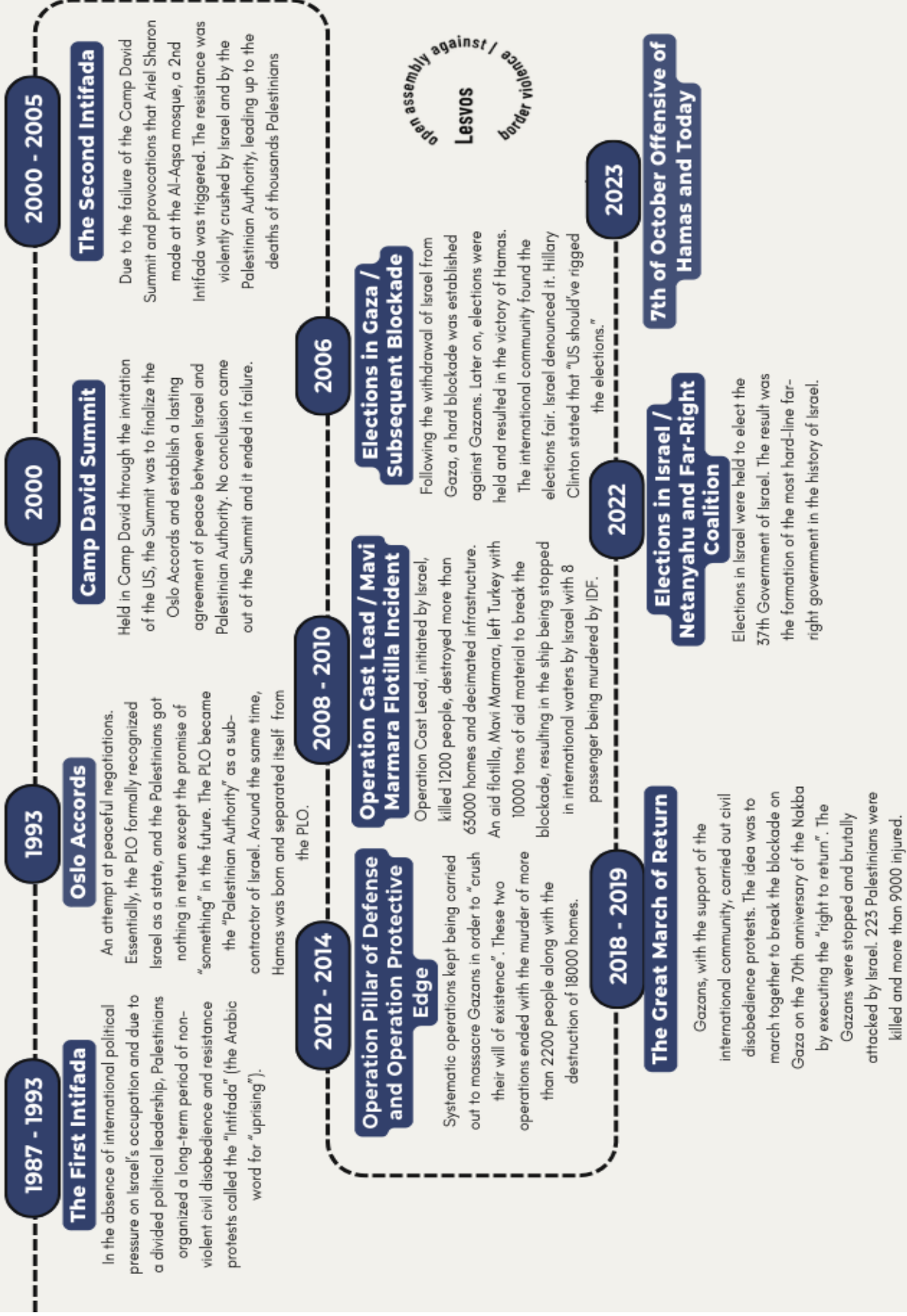


MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF PALESTINE - ISRAEL CONFLICT





MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF PALESTINE - ISRAEL CONFLICT



- In the loving memory of Refaat Alareer

Rest in Power (6.12.2023)

This poem was posted in November 2023 on the social media account of Refaat Alareer. In December 2023, in the midst of the Israeli military's campaign of genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, news broke that Alareer was murdered by Israeli violence. Alareer was an important political voice in Gaza, organizing Palestinian youth to engage in writing to amplify their voices. He has written several books and contributed to various projects such as "Light in Gaza: Writing Born of Fire", an anthology published in 2022. He was an academic in the Islamic University of Gaza teaching literature and Shakespeare. He refused to abandon his family during the shelling and stated on a live interview: "(...) I am an academic. Probably the toughest thing I have at home is an EXPO marker. But if the Israelis invade, if they barge at us, charge at us, open door-to-door to massacre us, I am going to use that marker, throw it at the Israeli soldiers. Even if that is the last thing that I would be able to do."

What follows is a poem that he published on social media before he lost his life:

"If I must die
You must live
To tell my story
To sell my things
To buy a piece of cloth
And some strings
So that a child, somewhere in Gaza
While looking heaven in the eye
Awaiting his dad who left in a blaze
And bid no one farewell
Not even to his flesh
Not even to himself
Sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above
And thinks for a moment an angel is there
Bringing back love
If I must die
Let it bring hope
Let it be a tale"



We are the Open Assembly Against Border Violence Lesvos.

The assembly came together in May 2022 in response to the ongoing pushbacks happening from the island of Lesvos. We do not only focus on pushbacks, but on border violence more generally, for example we stand against the use of detention centres, surveillance, the criminalisation of solidarity and migration itself. We are a non-hierarchical self-organised assembly, and we take all decisions collectively.

We meet to exchange information about and prepare actions against pushbacks. We understand ourselves as having a clear political perspective on this phenomenon, but as an open assembly we do not have any single ideological identity.

We prepare actions, public interventions and info-sessions, to bring the topic to the attention of (local) society.

The assembly gathers every Wednesday between 17:00 to 19:00 in Mpineio. Otherwise you can contact us on borderviolencelesvos@espiv.net or through our web page on <https://borderviolencelesvos.noblogs.org>.