

Audio file

[NGOization of the Palestinian civil society post-Oslo.mp3](#)

Transcript

Speaker 1

This panel is worth the wait, I can promise you. We have two esteemed panelists. My name is Mariam Alamzadeh. I'm a fellow at the Mili Center here. And it's my extreme pleasure to chair this panel with Dr. Amal Nazal and Dr. Sahir Asad from Haifa, who will be joining us remotely. Amal is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Business and Economics at Birzeit University, and she's currently with us here as the George Antonius Birzeit Visiting Fellow. She holds a PhD in organizational studies from the University of Exeter, which she got in 2017, and her research interests are quite broad. They include decolonized mechanisms and dynamics in organizations, indigenous theory in organizational studies, indigenous organizing, intersectionality, feminist organizing, social capital, social network theory, and new social media in organizations. I know a lot of our students have already tapped into her deep and broad knowledge for their work. She's also interested in new research methods such as digital ethnography and social media content analysis. Amala is also on the advisory board of the Institute of Women's Studies, BDS Movement, and Right to Education Campaign at Birzeit University. And her research has been published in journals such as the Journal of Business Research, Human Relations, and International Journal of Communication. And in addition, she has written many opinion pieces here and there. Let me introduce Sawyer as well, and then we'll move on. Hello from Oxford, Sahir. Sahir Ras Ayad is a Palestinian political and feminist organizer and a movement advocate. She leads international advocacy at RAWA, an initiative community participatory fund that works within progressive philanthropy and cross-movement spaces to address harm caused by funding. promote accountability, and advance trust and solidarity-based approaches that return power to communities, and support infrastructure for independence in Palestinian community work. Zoher is also the co-editor of the Funding Freedom Project and serves as an advisory board member of the Adala Justice Project. She earned a master's degree in international human rights law from the University of Notre Dame in the U.S. And she is a human rights lawyer who has previously worked extensively in legal research, international human rights advocacy for Palestinian rights, and legal defense against political arrests. Throughout her years of organizing, she has co-founded several feminist and political movements and initiatives in Palestine. Please join me in welcoming these two very esteemed guests.

Speaker 2

Well, thank you. Unfortunately, Soher couldn't join us in Oxford, but still she's joining us online. Thank you so much, Mariam, and thank you for coming. In our presentation today, I'm going to speak about the enjoyization of the Palestinian civil society, in particular in the West Bank, and focusing on feminists. NGOs or NGOs who are working with Palestinian women in the West Bank. And my part is more speaking about what is the concept of NGOization and how can we read NGOization critically in Palestine. Is it different than NGOization happening in different places in the world? I'm going to also focus about the role of the Palestinian Authority as a mediating system of adding another layer of oppression and suppression to the process of NGOization in Palestine. Also, I would love to speak more about the Palestinian agency in this process, because so far what has been written in the literature about NGOization, it has been studying the NGOization of the Palestinian civil society more from a structural perspective of this transformation of the social movements, unions, grassroots movements in Palestine into a more structured form of NGOized work. But still, the Palestinian question of agency and what the Palestinian agents inside these organizations are doing? Is there any possibility for resistance within these structures of NGOs? So that would be my part. Suhair, she got brilliant stuff because she is working in a grassroots initiative, Rawah. So she's going to speak more about this initiative, a great initiative, which does believe in the independent political saying of the Palestinian of how to work for the Palestinian society. Plus, she is going to highlight this discussion about the international aid and the ongoing genocide in Gaza. And Speaking about Gaza, I would love every one of us to take just like one minute silence dedicating this and sending our solidarity to Gaza and the Gazan people for their long, standing against Israeli colonization and this brutal everyday mass killing. So just one minute and then we'll start. Thank you so much. So let me start first, and I do believe that within the Q&A and the questions, because the topic is broad, and we aim me and Suhail to cover as much as we can, but definitely within the Q&A, if you have something in mind, we can discuss it further. So the Angelization is not a new terminology. It has been introduced to the literature in 1990s. And basically, it is the transformation, the structural transformation of grassroots and social movements into a more professionalized institutions. And the critical analysis of enjoyization, where I do align with, is turning social movements into a more professionalized, depoliticized, and demobilized structures, where resistance is trapped and tied with the conditions of the international donation. And then we have an important thing to discuss, which is also not only the enjoyment of the structures and the work, it's also the enjoyment of the politics. So what's happening within the politics of a nation, of a community, is also linked to, first of all, the international donation, the agenda of the donor, and the local as well structures of domination and power inside such a community. And turn, the work and the resistance and the social movements into a more well-mannered, task-oriented, project-oriented kind of stuff where you got

salaries for it. And the question is, so what is different in Palestine? There is a phenomena. What is different within the Palestinian context? And what is different in the Palestinian context is this, and I will start this very quick story, which also motivated me to start this research, because what I'm going to present today is a part of the research that I'm doing. So on the 24th of June, 2021, the political prisoner, Nizar Banat, he's not prisoner, sorry, a political activist, who was criticizing, I mean, definitely the Israeli occupation, but plus, the Palestinian Authority and its authoritarian role inside the West Bank was assassinated by the Palestinian security forces and its intelligence unit. And for us, it was shocking, not because there wasn't any violence from the Palestinian Authority, nor it was, specifically when Palestinians went out to the streets after the Egyptian Revolution, Tunisian Revolution, but the killing of a Palestinian activist was pretty shocking. So people went out the street to demonstrate, and there was another layer of violence physically, specifically upon women. To make the long story short, these women, some of them, they got very much hurt physically, threatened to death. So they approached the what so-called feminist NGOs or NGOs who are working with women and for women for a long period of time. And most of them, like 90% of them, they refused even to write a letter to condemn this violation against the women, saying, these Palestinian women, saying that this is too much political for us. And I was questioning myself, what is political and what is not political, and how come a Palestinian organization working with women, filled with projects about women human rights, will refuse to support Palestinian women. I mean, there is a shift within what is feminism in here, and there is a de-politicization within the whole structure. And this is not only limited to organizations working with women. When I say Palestinian civil society, I'm also speaking about youth organizations. I'm also speaking about professional associations like doctors, lawyers, legal associations as well, working in Palestine, run by Palestinians. So the team and the employees are Palestinians. But there's international donation, which is conditional. Literature so far Palestinian scholars like she's based in so far they discussed the of the Palestinian society. This is not new, but what I do believe what is new is the mediating role now of the Palestinian Authority and its whole system in definitely aligned with the Israeli occupation and its logic of tightening of resistance in the West Bank and the conditional funding from the international donation has to be studied, right? Because the level of oppression and this mediating role of controlling the money, policing the work of the Palestinian civil society should be studied. And another thing is the agency of the Palestinians who are working in these organizations. Because one of the analysis is that the transformation has happened, and now we have this phenomena of NGOization, but yet we are speaking about Palestinians in these organizations, that they have long history of engagement with the politics of Palestine. And let me clear this a little bit. So as I told you, it was the Palestinian question of the agency of these women. Because the methodology that I started with is interviewing Palestinian women who has been working for a long period of time in these organizations to ask them what is happening

from the inside. Because you cannot say that these structures has been NGOized and that's it. there's a place to understand the meanings, the interpretations, the subjectivities of these women. Because if I will show you quickly, because my methodology was oral history, speaking with these women, their age ranged between 43 to 72. Many of them has been engaged in the First Antifada and the Second Antifada, and they have their own special political engagement in the Palestinian women movement. And these women in Oslo 1993, they have been transformed, you know what I mean, in these new angelized shapes. So their agency as well is questionable in terms of better understanding what happened. It's not only the structure, it's them. And there's a range. It doesn't mean that the structure changed, then you definitely change within the structure, because there is possibilities of resistance even within these structures of NGOs. For example, I mean, these are not the real names for the participants, but you can see the number of years of activism that we cannot just like deny and pass of the process of changing their work or the dynamics of the work. And just like to give you an idea, they are based in different NGOs, feminist NGOs, political leftist women, left women organization committees, legal committees, counseling feminist NGOs, some programs for global dialogue and democracy. So my point was that these women, they have long history of engaging with the Palestinian politics, have been also politically engaged. In also 1993, They chose because, there was that dream of building a state, and a state needs its institutions, and these institutions to be recognized. They have to speak the international language of the shape, the structure, and the linguistics, and the proposals, and the programs. So back in time, until then, this was the rules of the game, and they got engaged in this. And Also to give you a quick idea why is it important to look back and to have this historical analysis of where these women came from, because I will show you in a minute how currently there are, like RAWA for example, and other, like Talahat, we're going feminist initiative, where they are be questioning of the feminist issue. And they are opening up different possibilities to reimagine different indigenous grassroots structures of working. So the Palestinian women movement has been always there since 1920s. And this is a photo for the Palestinian Women's Association in 1921. where they were rooted as well in the Palestinian resistance. This is a photo that I like. It's the first feminist demonstration against Balfour Declaration and the Jewish immigration in 1929. When we're speaking about Palestinian women movement as well, we're speaking about Palestinian women who were fully influential, right? It wasn't like adding the gender element. They were there, practically there, taking position in leadership, political leadership as well, and working on the feminist question and on the national question, because they couldn't be separated, right? And that the feminist question of getting our own rights, confronting patriarchy in Palestine has to be understood within the broader colonial understanding of Israeli colonization and any suppressing local authorities. But this has been shifted, as you can see, in Oslo, but now there are different possibilities to revisit and re-question what has been already started by our own Palestinian women

movement. Between the 70s and the 60s, it was more of a social kind of focus. And as I told you, as in this phase, the 70s and the 80s, the political Palestinian parties have emerged, in particular Fatah and many of the left political parties. And that was also aligned with empowering more the Palestinian women movement, where exactly I told you there was an activism for the feminists, plus the nationalists. They weren't separated. But the process of NGOization, the aim of depoliticizing the two. So nowadays programs speaking about women human rights, it will be about local domestic violence. And what does that mean? Violence produced by the males, right? By the male relatives. That's it. But if I will apply proposal for one of these organizations, asking them to better understand how violence is produced against Palestinian women bodies at the checkpoints, Israeli checkpoints, that wouldn't be acceptable. Why? Because it is way too much political. But the problem since 1993 until now, that become a culture, you know what I mean? A culture of working on these, a culture from these NGOs. that these are the most important kind of understanding these topics. And this is problematic and this should be revisited. As I told you, they were also taking main important role in political leadership. And this is one of the examples that I said. So from Oslo until 2000, this is a poster produced by So my rights, our power. And if you revise the proposal, the whole narrative de-politicize what is violence in Palestine. So violence is only produced within the patriarchal system. This intersectionality in between patriarchy, Israeli colonialism, and the Palestinian Authority and its Palestinian security forces and intelligence units, because there is also violence produced from there wouldn't be within the work and within the scope of work for these NGOs. And currently, I think we're facing, but in parallel, we're facing this and we're facing this. So I will start with this. It's oppression for some, right? Why? On this photo, you can see, so this is one of the demonstrations, you can see this woman in red pants because she got famous after this photo. She's a female recruited thug because Ashana Ayer, by honor, she should drag the female activist because if a male will drag her, that would be a taboo problem. Forgetting the whole setting of violating her right to protest. I mean, this is, to that extent, the Palestinian security forces and intelligence units are also using females to practice violence against Palestinian female activists in a way that it wouldn't be kind of questionable, but still it does exist. And this photo is a photo with the deputy of Mahmoud Abbas, not Mahmoud Abbas, Hassan Sheikh, deputy president of the state of Palestine. And next to him are the head of the Palestinian women organizations, just taking a photo. And this is recent. This was 30th of April this year, right? So it's clear. It's clear that our agenda is aligned in parallel all is good, and that the Palestinian Authority and its different systems inside Palestine has kind of partially succeeded in legitimizing this logic that this is the surface, this is the ceiling, this is the ceiling of work. Other than that, it will be problematic. But still, what is promising And I do believe in this, and I love the Palestinian people, and I'm one of them, but why? Because we will never ever believe that this is the end first, and there's always possibilities for resistance in our imagination as well. So what we have learned

from our grandmas and mothers especially the ones who are politicized and who have this early socialization of understanding politics in Palestine, that this, sorry, this is not it, right? This is not it. There's other ways of working. And there is newly emerged, youth-oriented groups, and Suhair definitely is going to speak more about ROWA. Although ROWA is working on different programs, but it's like the logic of this initiative is run by Palestinian is the Palestinian question, is the Palestinian agenda. It's the Palestinian dynamics of work. where we have also to re-question how we have been working before until now. And if there's something, to be honest, that the genocide in Gaza taught us and still teaching us, we have a proverb in Arabic. There's nothing that can, give me, scratch your skin. It's only your own fingers, right? I mean, there's allies, there's friends. There's people who want to help. There's organizations who totally understand the aim that Palestinians are looking for liberation and self-determination. But yet what has been done to the Palestinian civil society and the level of NGOization again and the level of dependency on conditional funding should be revisited seriously because definitely there's possibilities to to rework in different ways. So these are photos of an initiative called Talaha, who are posing the question again of what is feminist and what is political and that we can't reach our own rights as Palestinian women without integrating this call within patriarchy, yes, but colonialism as well, and any other local oppressing systems. So yeah, just like quickly I will finalize with this and then we will move to Suhair because she got interesting things to share. So looking at NGOization in Palestine and Palestine and why is it different, because I think we do need an intersectional, multi-layered understanding of this process. It's not only the transformation of the structures. NGOization should be understood nowadays with what I have been discussing. It's, yes, the international conditional aid. It's the local structures of oppression. It's the Palestinian, how the Palestinian society has been shaped, plus how the Palestinian agency of working inside these organizations also have been changed. I think this is important because angelization has also empowered culture of consumption, culture of individualism, culture of relying on. Like, I can't move towards working on this unless I write a proposal. I can't be proactive and take the action unless I will hear the feedback. And that there are multiple other indigenous grassroots ways of doing what we need in Palestine that we have to deconstruct kind of what we have been. And this is a long process, to be honest. I mean, not a long process. This needs that energy to, I hate this word, get outside the box, but just like to reimagine and revisit how our Palestinian community back in time have been working. So for example, the depoliticization, as I told you, the depoliticization, it's within the agenda. It's even within the linguistics of not using settler colonialism, of not using genocide. You're aware definitely of this. Something interesting that a lot of conditional money will interfere of who will benefit from these projects, right? So some beneficiaries, not all. And what the condition will be, if you can imagine, the beneficiaries for a specific project funded by an international organization would be any Palestinian family who does not have anyone who got injured or killed from the Israeli occupation. This will a

pure, clean beneficiary. And in the Palestinian, like in the Palestinian community, we have like each and every single Palestinian house does have a political prisoner, someone who was killed, or someone who got injured. Like, who are the imagined beneficiaries? And if we analyze this, has to do with the punishment and the discipline of the Palestinian society, right? It has to do that you will benefit from this money unless you are within the track that we want to create. And it also spreads that culture of, yes, I'm in, I'm not in, I can benefit, I cannot benefit as well. Another last example about how they also, the NGOization has changed, very important concepts like leadership. An NGO which called Sharak, Indram Allah, funded by international donations, working more with Palestinian youths, for a long period of time, five years the project was, they have been worked on leadership. We want to teach Palestinian youths how to be leaders. And I think the structure and the dynamics of the work is just like training, training, training, services, services, services, hotels, accommodation. It's all about services. There's no, like, there isn't some fundamental building of. So the money, because there's a study that 70% of the funding will go on services. because by then you will stay on the shallow, not grassroots level of have something more structural. And when I revise the material of leadership, it's individualistic leadership of how to be leader by yourself, get your professional CV, work on yourself. So that understanding of how a leader could be a leader within a collectivity, it wasn't there, this is 1. And #2, since when we need an NGO, and excuse me, since when we need an organization to tell me, as a Palestinian who has been teaching what's leadership since that long history of confronting occupation, what leadership is and revising the material more, this has to do with shifting the concept. You know what I mean? Now we're going to learn something else about leadership. Now we have to depoliticize the concept of leadership and not tapping, without saying so, not mentioning Palestinian political, engaged in politics leaders. Now there's another formula of leadership because the project run for five years and I was like, all of this money, leadership, leadership, yeah. What's happening? What's leadership is that? That's why I advised the material. And That's why, as you can see, it is problematic, because this accumulation on different levels will change a culture of concepts of thinking about. But as I told you, many, many of the Palestinians, they are aware of these dynamics, and Suhair will tell you more. And I think what we need now to better understand where we are and what is happening, and how these structures has, how these structures have not only transformed the structures, but they have also transformed something else. And thank you so much for your time.

Speaker 1

Thank you so much, Amal. We will now go to Soher Asad. Welcome, Zair. You can hear and see us, I hope.

Speaker 3

I'm really glad to be with you today. I wish I could have been in person. Thank you, Amal, for this brilliant presentation. And I think what Amal started with and really the focus on the work of... Feminist organizations or gender equality organization, I would call it more, really is a manifestation of the wider case among Palestinian civil society. And I'll speak about that very soon. But I think I cannot start us on this conversation without situating ourselves in the scene today. because the scenes in the genocide, I must say, might look exceptional. But I think they are a clear and extreme manifestation of what we Palestinians have done, have known for years, especially after the Oslo Accords. The scenes from yesterday, from the American, Israeli, whatever they call it, humanitarian, not humanitarian, but more humiliation fund, that really came to replace an already failing system of humanitarian aid in ways that I cannot even start to describe the scenes that we saw yesterday of putting Palestinians in cages, really threatening us Palestinians to exchange food with dignity for people in a context of a genocide, where the conversation about aid has been manipulated and centered in ways that let the perpetrators of a. that we were witnessing of the hook, a conversation that includes impunity and really decontextualizing what we've been seeing over the last two years. People who went to get aid were shut up. People who went to get aid were disappeared. Aid is being manipulated to push people to force displacement, to take over Gazi, to complete the genocide. And we can speak more and more about this, about the different plans that we Palestinians have witnessed over the last year being suggested, like real estate plans and others, all really serving the Israeli interest to complete this genocide, to force displaced Palestinians to take over the land and to really, really humiliate Palestinians. And this extreme manifestation is really not the exception. It really fits perfectly of what we have known about aid in Palestine since Oslo. And I think also not to exceptionalize Palestine, I think it's also the role of aid across the Global South and in many other contexts that I'm not going to speak about, but it's always important to remember that we need to situate Palestine within a global context of how aid and philanthropy, and I'll reach to philanthropy, have been manipulated into actually really leading us to more enshrining of already existing colonial systems, extractive capitalism, and et cetera. Now, Historically, in Palestine, aid has served as a way to really subordinate Palestinians to turn liberation into a project of statehood. In the case of especially the West Bank and Gaza, Amal has already spoke about the role of the PA in this and really ridiculously turning liberation work into reformist work and their colonization and whatever that mean. already shifting Palestinian social structure and really economy towards a new liberal economy with all what that entails, but also into development framework in exchange for peace, which is something we keep hearing and it's keeping escalating, which is what it led to even before October and in the last few decades into the total dependency of Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy. And we have no illusions about liberated economy or independent economy under colonization. But we know from our history that there's enough wisdom in the Palestinian community of how we work on the

resilience of the people. And there are examples from our history. Aid has reached even into a point of profiting Israeli economy, Israeli companies. For example, in facilitating, aid has worked to facilitate, for example, the over Ghazde reaching into the pockets of Israeli companies. It has, if we go to the Ghazde case, the blockade that existed before October 7th for many years has been treated as a humanitarian case. where aid is like to measure the calories that Palestinians consume. What we're seeing now, the forced starvation of Palestinians, this is a process that started before October 7th, and aid agencies and governments have been part of that. Reconstruction. Gaza has been into rounds and rounds of work, where conversation about reconstructing Gaza today in the massive destruction that we see, the elimination of every aspect of life in Gaza, these are not new conversations. They are extreme now. But Gaza has gone through war where military aid by governments is used and given to Israel to drop bombs in people's head. And then after that, to try to repair this by reconstruction. We enter this war where we're still talking about reconstruction, Gaza, from 2014. And I think we need to understand that now there is a global, everyone is freaking out about Trump and about the US because of, of course, the over centralism of the US in the conversation. And we all heard about cutting USAID and what cutting USAID means in different contexts in the Global South and in Palestine. I think among many the leftists and even NGOs that are part of the philanthropic kind of sectors, we know that USAID has completely served colonial interests of Israel and the imperialist interests of the US in the region. And I'll give you an example of the last months. After the attacks, the biggest attacks on Palestinian refugee camps across the West Bank, the biggest since 2002, USAID suddenly appeared in the Tulkarim refugee camp, in Geneen refugee camp, and started to offer grants of up to \$150,000. Now, why would USAID do that? And why would USAID offer that with very, very minimal conditions, which is very unknown of USAID? The only conditions that USAID put at that time were you cannot use this money to reconstruct demolition by Israel and We encourage you to use this money for integration in the cities outside the refugee camp. And in a way, money and financing and resourcing is used to advance Israeli plans of emptying the refugee camps, ending the issue of Palestinian refugees. That comes at the same time with the attacks that we've seen in the Olive War. And this is only one example of how it has been manipulated. And we all watch countries across the globe fund Israel with military aid and dropping from the sky, killing Palestinians often on the head of Palestinians, including the US and many others. So we've seen how aid has been manipulated in ways to often facilitate the continuation of the genocide and to stop the efforts to end it, including the pictures that we saw yesterday. Now, philanthropy maybe is not aid. Maybe it's not the bilaterals and the big international aid groups, but philanthropy is also not outside of this equation. We cannot understand philanthropy without understanding the political economy of how aid has been working and how aid has been manipulated. And in the context of the genocide without understanding the political economy of the genocide itself. Philanthropy is money that comes from

resources that we need to question. Philanthropy is money that is often moved to movement, to NGOs, to grassroots on the ground, as many times extracted money or money that was created by wealth. But we need to understand where it's coming from and therefore we find ourselves in this paradox of relying on wealth to do social justice work in the global context of political work and in the context of Palestine doing liberation work. Now, philanthropy has moved money in Palestine in many ways post-Oslo that have been very harmful to movement and liberation work. And I'm going to get to it, but I think one of the really most contradictory things that many of us Palestinians have been looking at since the beginning of the genocide is how the same money that is moved to our organizations sometimes is moved in drops. While the rest of the wealth of many of these philanthropic institutions, and in the case of the US, you are supposed to give 5% of your endowments, 95% many times it invested in the same reasons for harm that you're trying to repair, whether it's... Israeli companies, what is it, weapons companies, private presence in the case of the US, for example, issues like investments that harm the environment and many and many. So you say like, I think when we look at philanthropy before even getting to Palestine, we need to zoom out and understand how this wealth that is dropping in movements globally is also at the same time implicated in violence in the economic system that we see globally. And the process of angelization that Aman spoke about, again, is not exceptional to Palestine. If you speak to people in Latin America, if you speak to people in Africa, the same thing happened to liberation and struggle structures across the globe. Palestine is the extreme manifestation, I think, it's important to learn from our experience in Palestine and to apply it globally to social movement and especially with what we've been witnessing in the recent years. Now, since Oslo, I think that I'm going to focus on progressive and liberal philanthropy and you will ask me why. And this is the margin of philanthropy because philanthropy is also the philanthropy that supports fascist. It's also the philanthropy that also supports a supremacist organization. I'm going to focus on more progressive and liberal ones because I think those have the major impact on the NGOs that we're speaking about or grassroots movements. And I'm sipping all of this because before I speak about RAWA, we need to understand that the reality that RAWA was made inside and came to answer and to respond to. Now, since also what we saw in the level of aid and its impact on Palestinian economy, especially in the West Bank of Gaza under the PA, you can see the parallel of philanthropy giving. And by the way, also governmental giving to NGOs, not only philanthropy, but I'm going to focus on philanthropy to what used to be liberation infrastructure in Palestine, from movements, from labor unions, neighborhood unions, feminist movements, and others. Throughout time, including individuals who were them, all of this was kind of transformed into an NGOized process, which Amel have described. And I think in order to understand what happened to our community, we cannot only focus on the NGOization of organization and what we're seeing in the level of organization. We need to understand that this kind of shifted the whole culture of political and social work across our community,

including movement work. And as someone who comes from movement work and also NGO work, I would say that movements who often reject and resist the impact of funding and enjoyization are sometimes part of the same circle and are sometimes falling into the same traps that we see. What we saw is a process, as Amal described, of depoliticization. It's really an over-professionalization. And I think at a certain point, as a political organizer myself, We started to see that it became a liability to be too political in a Palestinian organization. You have a profession, you have a theme of work. If you work gender, if you work environment, then this is your work. And you need to think about it in a reformist way, either in the West Bank and Gaza where you work with the PA or combating Israel. But even if you work in '48 Palestine, where I live, where two million Palestinian citizens of Israel live, it needs to be framed as a struggle for democracy under Israeli for reforms of the Israeli system. And in a way, the approach of reformist approach versus what we need in the context of colonization, which is a liberation approach and also structured organizational structures, it created a situation of competition as if we're in a market competing over resources and really scarcity mindset. And it's all related to the fact that organizationally, we were structured in a way, and Amal already mentioned that, that is highly reliant on giving service. The community suddenly became recipients of our service. Instead of community work that we do together, we became professionals inside an industry. And a class was created of Palestinian professionals. Many of them, by the way, are involved in movement work. Some of them are people who were for many years involved in the struggle. It's not to target individuals or to target this specific organization, but really us trying to understand what happened to many of us. And in a way, the work, instead of starting from community needs, started to start from donors priorities. If someone is Switzerland sitting on their desk in a European foundation wants now to focus on gender, then we do gender work. And we do it in the way they define it, as Aman said, not in a way of what a feminist struggle inside a community that is under colonization should look like, the way we define it. We also... So the elitism and really the class issue inside the Palestinian community. And many times we speak about Palestine and we erase class from the conversation. But class is pretty much the center of the conversation in Palestine as well in the way that who is defined as the recipient of services of NGOs, but also who gets to be hired by these NGOs and who gets to give these salaries and values in our community, such as community work, people's participation in the struggle and really pushing people to the margins of passivity and being just recipients of services has really thrives and pushing values such as volunteerism, which we actually didn't used to call volunteerism. We used to call it just political work. Volunteerism is also like a slightly modern way to distinguish professionalized work and, okay, I'm volunteering, but this was just the reality of political work that we know in Palestine. And then I think it's important to speak about power relation that was created as a result of funding. So funding was used to filter who is radical, too radical, and who can be swallowed by funders, who is okay and passes

by funders. And I think this worked inside the organizations themselves of who gets to be in the leadership, sometimes pushing the younger, the more radical outside this organization, really many of us being consumed by this struggle to reform our organization, our NGOs internally. And power relation also can be understood in historical revolutionary moment. And I'll give an example of the unique uprising of 2021, for those who understand, don't know, there was an uprising across all historic Palestine in May 2021, and it was mainly started in Jerusalem and in '48 Palestine among Palestinian citizens of Israel, later in the West Bank, and Gaza joined, and of course, Gaza was bombarded then by Israel. And in that uprising, we saw a glance of what community work could look like. We saw the community rise and organizing the level of neighborhood, in the level of a village, in the level of friends organizing, really grassroot organizing, not paid. And then we saw all of this collapse immediately. We saw the rising of many youth movements, and immediately after May, they were collapsed. People were oppressively, and I'm speaking about '48, attacked, arrested, Some of them are incarcerated for 10 and 13 years for simply protesting. And this really deterred the community and entered it into fear. But I think a parallel process that happened is many of... NGOs or political leadership that didn't have a role in the uprising was flooded by money after that, and I'm speaking about the context of '48, to support coexistence project. Again, before this project, the struggle of Israelis for democracy, and around that time, Israelis were marching the street to save their whatever, quote-unquote democracy, which is a struggle of how to run the oppression machine in a sophisticated or direct way. And then Palestinians in '48, because of funders, because of the millions that flooded, were somehow swallowed inside that Israeli-centered struggle instead of really us sticking into reclaiming our unity and anti-fragmentation across all historic Palestine. And in a way, money was used in a violent way to oppress and to really stop a revolutionary process that was happening across my generation and the younger generation in historic Palestine. And the other issue, I think, is fragmentation, which funded also has, Israel has already fragmented as to Palestinians in the West Bank, in Jerusalem, in '48, Palestinian refugees. And funding programs has worked in the same way. So you could be working on, I don't know, family unification, which impacts all Palestinians. across geographies, but you will get funding to work on it on the West Bank or Jerusalem, but if you work on it in '48, you need to work on it separately. And in a way, some funders also put the conditions that we don't fund, for example, for many years. And that fragmentation is not simply where the money, it's really... impacts the way we describe our reality, the way we understand it. And fragmentation didn't stop on geography. Fragmentation also became a causes issue. You get funding for gender, and I already spoke about that. You have nothing to do with art and culture. If you do get funding for... agriculture, you have nothing to do with political organizing. And in a way, what used to be a harmonic way of organizing for liberation, where you don't have a professionalized speciality, you just work and take your role in the struggle, became a professional segregated areas. And instead of a

cause, we became different causes of areas of work or whatever. And that's globally also is a phenomena of like the way liberal philanthropy has shifted global movements for justice into liberal movements that are really trying to push them in. Stay in your lane, struggle for your cause, even fragment that cause. And that's why philanthropy, after October 7th, and since the beginning of the genocide, punished very harshly solidarity with Palestine. They didn't only punish and cut funds from Palestinians, they punished black-led movement, indigenous movement, movements across Latin America, across the Global South, for standing. It's liberate because the movement's there to get out of that framework and to get out of their lens and view Palestine as a global struggle for justice, and I think... The main point discussion of like philanthropy that people speak about often is like political conditions, cutting funds, punishment, which existed well before October and after October. It really escalated in Palestine and globally from cutting funds, non-renewal of funds, even surveillance. Philanthropy was surveilling Palestinian employees or directors of organization and threatening them for expressing their political opinion vis-a-vis the genocide that is happening. Now, facing all of this, what is the pathways and how Palestinians have been resisting? Now, for many years, the conversation about funding has been happening across Palestine. There is nothing new about that. Maybe Palestine is one of the places where foreign funding is considered the liability among the community. And the conversation had been happening for a long time. And there were a lot of attempts at And REWA is part of these attempts. REWA was created in 2018 as a pilot, and it's very important for me to stress that we're a pilot because part of the way we think about our experience is continuing to be experimental, flexible in ways that don't look like professionalizing Jai's work, but look like community work, which people make mistakes, which people shift, which people don't put strategic plans for 10 years or five years, but people do liberation works in ways with the community. So part of the ethos of the way we look at ourselves is we work with the community in that way. is a kind you would think about as a kind of a protective umbrella that is navigating the paradox of philanthropy, understanding the problem of philanthropy, and at the same time understanding that in order to shift to independency, we need to navigate that. And the way we're navigating this is through a participatory model of Palestinian organizers across all historic Palestine in the West Bank, Russia, Jerusalem, and 48, who They make the decisions of where our resources go. The employees of RAWA, the ones who get paid, we don't get to decide on where this money go. We work for our community, we work for these activists, we work to serve the initiatives that we support. In a way, separating the power of being employed from the way money is moving in the community. And these people who are part of the participatory model of RAWA are activists across the community, they volunteer, they don't get paid, Throughout the years we supported around 60 initiatives. Most of them are unregistered across all Palestine. We don't have priorities. We don't tell people what to do. We don't have conditions. We don't allow funders to put conditions on us and and we really do trust work based on how to

resource our community together. with the initiatives and with those who take decisions as activists as part of the participatory model. We give smaller funding and we don't give it only because we don't have a huge budget, but intentionally, we don't want to drown people in money because part of the problem of NGOization is we got used to do everything with huge money. If you want to open an organization, immediately you want to jump to huge budget and you want to open branches across Palestine instead of thinking, I'm opening something because there's a need in the community and maybe I don't need branches. Maybe I just can work with people who are already working locally. Maybe I don't need all this administrative costs. We also really think about like the type of activities people used to do. Like you will have a festival in Palestine that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. when you can do it with zero money. And we already experimented in Leva. We created a festival in 2022, I think, where we had the community festival where we brought activists together and we paid \$0 because we relied on community resources. And when I say resources, I don't mean money. I mean people's minds, people's skills, people's abilities from someone coming and giving a... to someone, a woman who volunteered in one neighborhood in Nazareth, for example, and they cooked, and they gave money, sorry, in Haifa, and they cooked for this event instead of other ways of contribution. And I'm giving examples of how community work can be done. Now, the way we work is We, I already said, we work as an umbrella, so we're both a funder, so we give resources to the community, but also we fundraise. So, how do you fundraise in an environment of conditional funding, in an environment of everything I just heard of what now? We simply don't fundraise. We do political work and organizing within philanthropy. We tell people about the harms, and this is the work I do in Dawa, specifically advocacy work, the harms of philanthropy. for many years in Palestine, and we don't accept money that will put any conditions in our community that in any way will harm our initiatives, will drag them into enjoyization. We don't want to corrupt them with this money, and therefore we really are careful of interrogating the sources of our money. And we're not naive. We know that we will fall into contradiction and it's not easy, but we do this intentionally. For example, We wouldn't accept money. We have a whole process of funders usually vet Palestinian organization based on clauses, terror clauses or like political opinions. In Rawah, we don't vet initiatives. We trust them. We vet funders. So if someone offers Rawah money, he will be vetted by the Rawah team. So we're shifting the whole relationship to who gets to give Palestinians money, who gets to influence us. and maybe not influence us, but actually contribute to our struggle with resourcing. And in the last two years, this intensifies because we worked intentionally to shift all our structures from the fiscal sponsor, we're not registered, we don't want to register, and it's also intentional. The fiscal sponsor that we work with, how it's structured, because we believe structure is political, organizational structure is political, it's not a technical issue. From that to the contract we have, which is mainly a gift contract and not a contract that we will make Palestinians run for receipts, risking their lives for us in the middle of a genocide. But

also we came up with a resource mobilization strategy that is working within, against, and outside philanthropy. And I will explain the lessons from it, and I'll end with that from the last years. The last years hit us hard, two years. in the middle of a genocide that doesn't work, emergency grants. We do long-term support for community work and suddenly we have to respond to an ongoing genocide. So we ask ourselves, what is our role? How is our small money going to fit in a picture of a huge aid influx that is going to Ghazi or the picture of people just doing mutual aid and fundraising for their family members to get out of Ghazi? And we really understood that the relationship we've built in Ghazi over the years are the key. that maybe we don't have the huge grants, but we can move resources that support the resilience of people. And people in Grazia, and I don't mean to romanticize people because I don't think we need to romanticize people who are going through a genocide, we were shocked that people who lost everything, personally, but also their initiatives collapse, somehow managed to keep organizing and shifting across the genocide. What we're witnessing in Grazia, I think, is one of the biggest modern organizing in the level of the grassroots also transparent, people don't see it, of people really doing community initiatives from health to food to supporting children across community and caring for the community the way they're caring for their families. So we decided to go back to our relationship to support based on trust and we established a committee that is all from Ghazde to to respond rapidly and to give smaller grants to more than 30 initiatives across all Gazi. When Big Aid abandoned the north of Gazi, we didn't abandon the north of Gazi. We found ways to move that money with zero bureaucracy, zero conditions, and we were there just to serve the community. And I think the lesson really to look at is Money is flooding in big aid and money is flooding for individuals, but I think there is a responsibility now to think about how urgently to research the grassroots organizing that is still happening in Razi, but also how to think about strengthening it in the long term. And what we did is also, I will tell you how we got money over the last year. We tripled our budget three times where many Palestinians lost their funding. How did we do this? We did solidarity. We worked with movements globally to fundraise for us. We got solidarity support from movements, from organizers who do political work. We did initiatives in our community, people who make hacks or give classes or write a book or make, I don't know, a body butter even, make products, use the skills and fundraise. And we moved all this money to Hase. And we decided that the money that we have now, we're not going to spend it immediately because we are not the aid that goes to Hase and then suddenly wakes up and shifts to other contexts. The way aid and philanthropy has moved who've been moving globally from Syria to Ukraine to Sudan, and then abandoning people, which is happening over and over again, which also philanthropy did, by the way. And I'm giving an example of George Floyd uprising in the US where philanthropy pitched huge amount of money for black liberation and then abacked from their commitment. And we see this happening over and over again. So we need to think in ways that keep these resources for the long term. And one of the ways also we're pushing for this is Really in an era

where philanthropy is freaking out globally also by the rise of fascism, which is a pretty word people use to describe what people in the Global South have been living under for many years when it comes to white people, and we need to say this, while really not learning from how this oppression has been happening globally. So many funders are sacrificing the movement in the way for their own survivors because they're being targeted too. And what we're inviting them to do, if you cannot be brave enough to protect the movement, move the money to the movement to create sustainable infrastructure. And in a way, we ask funders to invest in their own irrelevance, invest in the independency of movements. So move the money to intermediaries or groups like us, and we know how to manage it for the long term. We are planned and we are structured to any political oppression, any political circumstances, and to keep these resources in a responsible way for our movements, because we are in the community and part of the community. And I'll finish by saying this is work that not only RAWA has been doing, other organizations after October. rejected funding from funders merely because of political statements. There is a collective initiative called ONI that is also challenging philanthropy, holding it accountable and establishing local mechanisms such as mutual aid, local baskets, where you don't get into this circle of consumption, but exchange services in the community and putting a political manifesto of How do we move from, not only move from philanthropy, how do we shift our culture deeply, culture of work, and how we repair what was destroyed by years of that harm? And it's difficult, it's challenging, but we have all the resources we need in our history and in our community. Thank you, and I'm sorry for the very long intervention.