Hatim El-Hibri

9

The Elisions of Televised Solidarity in the 2014 Lebanese Broadcast for Gaza

On July 21, 2014, eight of the major Lebanese TV networks came together to produce a thirty-minute live broadcast as a show of solidarity with Palestine in general and Gaza in particular. "Palestine You Are Not Alone" was shared on all the networks simultaneously and featured segments prepared by each.[1] The significance of the broadcast was underscored by the show of national and professional unity that it was meant to demonstrate—that despite the factional nature of the domestic political order that underpins the Lebanese TV and media landscape, the suffering and struggle in Gaza brought the networks and their audiences together. This break from the ordinary news schedule to bear televisual witness models a kind of solidarity centered on the creation of and participation in TV spectatorship. Solidarity is understood here to emerge from the interconnected acts of making images of and viewing and attuning the self to the suffering of innocent Palestinians.

What are the limits of this conception of solidarity, and what aesthetic and affective forms does it take? To understand the stakes of the broadcast

requires a contextual understanding of how and where it opens up or closes down the possibilities of 2014. I argue that the broadcast embodies the contradictions that inhere in a national frame for solidarity, entangled with and delimited by Lebanese politics. This broadcast also demonstrates the degree to which, by 2014, images of Israeli destruction of Gaza had come to circulate quite widely in the global media landscape and marks the possible exhaustion of a politics of solidarity that presumes an informational or empathy gap to be filled by circulating images of self-evident truth value. The lived conditions of Gaza, while perhaps not always legible in detail, have long been shown to global audiences in high definition and real time.[2] These contradictions inform the broadcast's two foci—the centering of mothers and children as either witnesses to suffering or the ones suffering, and the evocation of memories of past political struggle in relation to place.

This frame's resolute focus on the pain of the dispossessed allows Lebanese broadcasters, audiences, and the state to imagine themselves into coherence. Doing so inadvertently screens out other possibilities for solidarity with Gaza. Palestinians in Lebanon (particularly those in the camps) are not rendered entirely invisible but, rather, are given airtime and humanized on terms that conveniently constrain their political significance. In the same moment that Palestinians' suffering in Gaza is rendered legible and acceptable due to the purity of their victimhood at Israeli hands, Palestinian suffering in Lebanon is refigured in two key ways—meaningful primarily within an unambivalently Palestinian nationalist frame, and not troubled by the deprivations whose more direct source is the Lebanese state. Fixing the question of Palestine in this manner absolves the Lebanese state and society of its own treatment of Palestinians since 1948.

National Frames, Transnational Limits

The 2014 broadcast is informed by a number of factors specific to Lebanon. The complex historical relationship of the Lebanese state to its largest permanently temporary noncitizen population is refracted through the fraught relationship of local, national, and Pan-Arab sympathies and structures. It is also more immediately imbricated with the tensions and exclusions that shape the Lebanese state, which are of course defined by their integration with regional and geopolitical adventurism. For example, one might consider the solidarities between Palestinians and Hizbullah. Since the 1980s, the political party and militia have maintained one of the closest ongoing relationships with the Palestinian struggle. Hizbullah and the Palestinian

cause have long had a relationship of solidarity on the ground with a real social and organizational base, but also one that reflects unevenness in resources and ability to define the nature of that relationship. At times, this unevenness has meant that Hizbullah has shaped or co-opted the symbolic and material conditions of that solidarity (Khalili 2006, 2007). Since the start of the Syrian uprising-turned civil war in 2011, this tension has been complicated by Hizbullah's pro-Assad stance.[3] The comparatively more recent arrival of displaced Syrians to Lebanon was met with a combination of activist initiatives, well-meaning activity by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations, but also a hardened anti-refugee nationalism and governmental regime, expressed in the form of openly hostile bigotry, violence, and discriminatory policies that exacerbated long-standing injustices.

The present focus on the kinds of spectatorial relations and affective forms taken by the 2014 live broadcast is not meant to suggest that the experiences and opinions of Palestinian audiences of the broadcast are of secondary importance, or that the larger question of how images of Palestine can enable a sense of connection for those in Lebanon is anything less than crucial.[4] Interrogating the broadcast itself is additive to those efforts and can help unpack how subtler political openings are flattened by the constraints of the Lebanese nationalist grammar in which it is expressed.[5] From at least the late 1960s to the early 1980s, Palestine solidarity had informed Left internationalism within Lebanon, often seen as part of a step beyond sectarian politics and attachments.[6] This was also roughly the era of Palestinian armed struggle and of Palestinian revolutionary cinema. As Nadia Yaqub (2018) demonstrates, Palestinian film of this sort was premised, like Third Cinema, on the idea of an interventionist creation of images from below by participants in a revolutionary event. Like other radical film practice of that era, this often involved a keen sense of the politics of the image and its relationship to the apparatus of the state, particularly television. The ideal was to inject dissenting voices that expressed and were derived from the lived experience of subaltern audiences, who would themselves decide and shape the mediated intervention. In the conjuncture that came after 2002 and the Second Intifada, there emerged within activist political film a move toward a realist mode intent on "proving" the displacement and suffering caused by the occupation, sometimes following what might be called a humanitarian impulse.[7] Of course, not all cinematic strategies that seek a better reality are as constrained by what currently exists.[8] Just as the present is marked by political limitations and shrunken political horizons, the place

of Palestine filmmaking has also morphed to find footing in the absence of a national film industry.[9]

While the coordination of the broadcast across multiple TV stations is central to its performance of solidarity, the meaning of the broadcast's medium would seem to put it at odds with this older understanding of the politics of the media landscape. However, it is also telling that there are no Palestinian TV networks based in Lebanon, despite the presence of sizable communities of Palestinians for most of the country's history, the important role of Palestinians in its intellectual life and journalism, and the long-standing social and economic ties that predated and transformed alongside the British and French mandates and its border regime. One of the major contradictions of the Lebanese media system is that although it is unique among Arab countries in that its television operates primarily on a private and for-profit basis, the size of the domestic market is so small that it requires most TV channels to rely on a system of patronage to stay afloat.[10] Relatively few turn a profit, and they typically rely on Pan-Arab markets and financing to do so. In addition, ever since the reassertion of state control over the airwaves in the 1990s, the granting of broadcast licenses has followed the logic of elite sectarian rule.

The 1990s also saw the rise of satellite distribution, and the presence of a large number of privately run channels within Lebanon made it so many were poised to partner with financing and political support from the Gulf states, adding another dimension to the local media equation.[11] This has resulted in TV channels defined by a heady mix of political partisanship and commercial pressure. To the degree that political parties are able to act as the sole representatives of an entire sect and can exert direct control over TV channels, TV news can come to sound directly sectarian even as it denounces sectarianism as such. Most of the channels involved with the broadcast have the backing of or a more or less direct affiliation with a political party, or the backing of a wealthy individual with political interests.[12] Some of these affiliations include Future TV with the eponymous Future Movement once led by the Hariri family, Orange TV with the Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun, Al Manar with Hizbullah, and NBN with Amal and Nabih Berri. Tele Liban, as the state broadcaster, is somewhat different, as is LBCI's historic affiliation with Maronite militias that has become more attenuated over time. Al Jadeed and MTV's commercial orientation have even led to an adversarial stance vis-à-vis the state on occasion. However, on a professional level, most members of the press work as colleagues, although of course somewhat segmented by the social forms that inhere to the local

and global industry. The ability to quickly organize a unity broadcast was possible in part because of existing infrastructural and professional mutuality. The divergence between professional closeness but discursive antagonism is a key component of the performative "we may differ but are united for Gaza."

National frames establish a grammar to speak in and come with just as many risks.[13] The aspiration for a future state premised on belonging and returning to the land is a clear unifying demand of many articulations of Palestinian nationalism. Like other foci of transnational solidarity, it is crucial to avoid blunting the edge of the political demand for liberation. At the same time, as feminist, queer, and class-based activism and analysis highlight, it is equally important to not subsume the internally contested nature of its historical and contemporary articulation.[14] The openings of transnational solidarity are productive precisely because of how they can offer opportunities to remake the terms of national liberation or self-determination without undermining its ultimate goal. This political horizon arguably becomes clearest when the question of solidarity is understood to be animated by decolonization—understood as a historical process, political practice, and intellectual endeavor.[15]

The post–Second Intifada period has been marked by the reimagining of transnational solidarity, taking a range of forms that have found the limitations of the NGO-ization of human rights work to be wanting. From the long history at the UN to the post-Oslo era, there emerged a significant gap between the promise of demonstrating the legitimacy and humanity of Palestinian claims and the political realities that resulted from those claims having been made in official forums. Yet some continue to demand and create images whose "immediacy" is meant to inspire or renew solidarity with those suffering and condemnation of those inflicting that suffering. The flaw of this strategy can be found in that while it senses the importance of media to the formation of public discourse, and of spectacle to contemporary politics, it also wants to imbue images with the capacity to act on political structures by acting directly on spectators.[16] The emergence of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in 2005 is one alternative strategy to bring pressure on Israel through the mobilization of transnational solidarity.[17] The 2014 Gaza war was marked by the flowering of renewed Black-Palestinian solidarity, which in turn offered new possibilities and positionalities from which to understand and work to undo contemporary systems of domination.[18] As Noura Erakat (2020) shows, the articulations of the Ferguson-Gaza moment were not unprecedented, nor were the linkages forged there easily

made or maintained. Solidarity requires reciprocal and multidirectional care work, which requires self-reflexivity by all participants.[19]

The idea that a key problem is a lack of global sympathy for Palestinians in general and Gazans in particular is perhaps truer of mainstream political discourse in the United States than in Lebanon. The fixation on the lack of recognition in that important public arena, however, would seem to universalize in a way that misremembers other kinds of actually existing solidarity within the United States, but also obscures other histories, such as those of Irish, Japanese, South African, and Vietnamese solidarity. These histories inform the present moment in ways that are often underappreciated. In addition, the degree to which public reaction to "evenhanded" news coverage of 2014 was largely divided would suggest that, if anything, the problem is not primarily one of an incorrect moral relationship to these images or an insufficient quantity of attention paid to them. Al Jazeera, BBC, and CNN all devoted a great deal of airtime to the 2014 war, as did other transnational European news channels such as France 24. The significance of the specifically Lebanese broadcasters coming together should be understood in terms of their importance to regional and diasporic audiences.

There are two kinds of time to consider when thinking of live broadcasts —the moment of witnessing in relation to the recency of the event, and the viewing duration or screen time within the actual broadcast. Even though streaming live on Twitter or Facebook was not widely available in 2014, in-person on-the-ground footage and photography defined the visual culture of the event. #GazaUnderAttack and #IsraelUnderFire became two key hashtags in the conflict (which were reactivated in May 2021), and Israel's public diplomacy machine sought to manage the competing perspectives presented in these two streams.[20] The year 2014 was the first time the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) deployed their live combat camera project, contending with Palestinian mobilizations of the possibilities of networked photography. Israeli efforts to manage the war's optics suggest that, at least on social media, they believed the coverage to be unfavorable.[21]

The visual culture of the war was shaped by the political economy of the occupation, in which the regulation of mobility dovetails with and is stratified by citizenship and Israeli rule—broadcast time is materially shaped by what Tawil-Souri (2017) refers to as "checkpoint time." During Operation Cast Lead in 2009, the IDF sharply curtailed foreign correspondents' mobility as well, with the exception of some reporters embedded with its own military units. This policy was likely informed by the 2006 Israel-Hizbullah war (Bishara 2016a, 178) and resulted in Palestinian journalists and news

Figure 9.1 The main screen of the broadcast, opening with the presenter from Tele-Liban. Clockwise from the top, the rest are NBN, Al Jadeed, LBCI, MTV, OTV, Al Manar, and Future TV.

agencies on the ground inside Gaza making much of their material available for free.[22] While smartphones and social media may have rerouted attention and distributed the possibilities of image creation in 2014, the control of territory can sharply constrain media production.[23] Professional reporting from within Gaza was mostly done by local journalists in partnership with the global press. Access by those outside was greatly limited by the IDF on the basis that their safety could not be guaranteed within Gaza.[24]

Broadcasting Unity

The 2014 Gaza broadcast would have looked identical on all the channels involved (save for the main logo of the one the viewer tuned in to).[25] Its primary visual device was a series of frames within a frame—one channel at the center, rimmed by a series of smaller panels along the right and bottom sides showing the other channels not currently holding the mic. This tableau serves as a discursive center and transitional device for the broadcast, with most of the screen time consisting of segments produced by the individual channels that the broadcast cuts away to. The broadcast opens and closes on the recitation of poetry by Talal Salman, the editor of the Lebanese

newspaper *Assafir* and one of the main organizers of the broadcast. This plays over a photomontage of suffering, injury, blasts from Israeli bombs, flags, and defiant expressions. Following the introductory montage, each of the anchors addresses the viewer on behalf of their organization via a salutation directed to Palestine — not Palestinians in Lebanon, but Palestine itself and Gaza more specifically. While the thematic focus of each of the introductions varies, from drawing parallels between Israeli assaults on Beirut and Gaza to more romantic evocations of Palestine as "the beloved," they all do so by emphasizing affective bonds between the two nations. As is sometimes the case in editorial commentary in Arab journalism, some of the salutations work in poetic meter and metaphor. This opening tableau serves as the unifying intermezzo and transitional device between the individual channels' segments, which occupy the majority of the broadcast's run time. Each segment strikes a balance between presenting a unique focus and maintaining a cohesive feel to the broadcast. The broadcast closes with the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish.

Two key organizing tropes emerge in the individual segments — that of mothers and children suffering or bearing witness to suffering, and evocations of memories of nationalist struggle and solidarity that live in the contemporary moment. Both are inflected by the contradictions presented to the question of solidarity by a nationalist frame and the Lebanese political context. Elements of these two tropes are present in each of the segments to varying degrees. The segments in the first half of the broadcast (those of Future TV, OTV, MTV, and LBCI) are centered on the experiences of children and women (particularly in their capacity as mothers and widows) and take a human-interest angle. The second half (by Al Jadeed, Al Manar, TL, and NBN) explores different contextual dimensions of the 2014 war, such as the living memory of those forcibly displaced in 1948, of the transnational armed struggle of the 1970s and 1980s in Lebanon, and the tactical dimensions of Palestinian armed struggle since the First Intifada.

Many of the segments demonstrate an acute awareness of images of Gaza as they commonly circulate in global news media. In the LBCI segment, for instance, there is a replay of the now-iconic footage of the four young boys killed on the beach of Gaza City by Israeli naval shelling four days before the broadcast.[26] The TL segment also replays the footage of the killing of Muhammad al-Durrah in 2000 by Israeli sniper fire as his father attempted to shield him — footage of which circulated internationally at the time. In both of these examples, replaying footage is part of a direct and affectively charged appeal to the viewer. In the LBCI segment, it follows a series of chil-

dren saying they wish other children to be brave, and in the TL segment, it appears as part of the narratorial reflection on the history of resistance, one in which the hearts of the rest of the Arabs had "turned to stone." The suffering and death of these children are made to contrast with a callous viewership that neither empathizes nor politically aligns with a self-evident moral truth embodied in the image. This disappointment emerges from the gap between the promise of humanitarianism and its humanizations, and the political realities that give rise to the investment made in that framework.[27] Memories, experiences, and solidarities that do not fit this framework are effectively screened out, and the instabilities of the raw experience of the present tense restabilized.[28]

The LBCI segment—which includes interviews with Lebanese survivors of the 2006 war in the village of Marwahin in the south—demonstrates how this framework establishes a narrowed Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity, even within the already-narrow frame of the national. It presents commentary from young people on their experience of Israeli shelling, many of whom link their memories of 2006 to those of children in Gaza. Marwahin was the site of Israeli airstrikes on July 15, 2006, that killed twenty-three people, almost all of whom were women and children fleeing the IDF's announcement of imminent bombardment.[29] The voice-over informs the viewer that these survivors are all too familiar with the fear in the eyes of Gazan children, and what it means to run to shelters that cannot protect from the impending aerial onslaught. Firsthand experience with Israeli bombardment becomes the basis for the political bond, one that culminates in the reporter asking children and their mothers in Lebanon what they wish for the children of Gaza. Primarily, the wishes are for the children to not have such awful experiences, but to not give in to fear if they do.

Near the end of the clip, this presumed transcendence into common and shared resoluteness is reinforced in an interview with an older woman while she labors over recently picked tobacco leaves. As in many villages within sight of the border, tobacco farming is a staple of the economy, and one with a long history of women's involvement in labor organizing.[30] We are told of the profound losses of children and grandchildren that Umm Karim has suffered, just before she pronounces that she considers all children to be like her own. The segment visually links this familial proximity to a geographic one by cutting to a south-facing shot showing the border, and then the seashore beyond which lies Gaza, the two lands "beneath one sky." It brings narrative closure via close-ups on a graveyard and grave markers with the death dates in July 2006, before a close-up of Umm Karim's face.

Figure 9.2 "Under this one sky . . . ," muses the voice of the narrator, over a panoramic shot facing south from Lebanon, as though straining to see Gaza. LCBI segment.

Women do a great deal of emotional labor in this broadcast beyond being five of the eight presenters. Much of this labor is in specific roles as active mothers to future generations of Palestinian resistance and as givers of testimony regarding the injustices visited in both past and present. In the Future TV segment, this is underscored by interviews with people struggling to maintain a sense of normalcy around iftar, despite what the narrator describes as the impossibility of a "Ramadan atmosphere." The accompanying scene shows a large family eating on a blanket spread on the ground inside a school recently converted into a shelter.[31] Although this testimony is generally quite personal—recounting attempts to save children's lives, to re-create domestic normalcy, to care for the living, or to properly mourn the dead—much of it is delivered by these victims as a matter of fact. This dispassionate self-presentation is often found in those well aware of the demands made of the brutalized, who are then asked to publicly perform the rationality of their claims.[32] The viewer is left to wonder about the labor in "private" spheres, such as caring and cooking for the living, while also publicly mourning the dead.

The second key element in the broadcast is a reflection on the memory of past political solidarities and movements. This is enacted in interviews

Figure 9.3 Reporter Jad Ghosn gazes at an old Yasser Arafat poster. Visualization of an old photo with Kōzō Okamoto, recalling armed solidarity struggles of the 1970s. Al Jadeed segment.

with those who experienced that past, investigations uncovering that which is forgotten, or a restaging of that past via a montage of news footage. The Al Jadeed segment pursues a chapter in the international armed solidarity with Palestine that is largely absent in most contemporary mainstream imaginaries. It follows investigative reporter Jad Ghosn on a journey to find people who remember well-known figures from the 1970s, who may appear to many sensibilities in 2014 as distant as the posters of a young Yasser Arafat that appear on walls in the background in the opening of the segment.

As Ghosn explores a graveyard of Palestinian martyrs, the narration highlights how Palestine is a story not of one people but of many who came from far away. He then asks passersby if the names "Carlos" or "Kōzō Okamoto" ring a bell. He also asks about Rachel Corrie, but none of the first few people recognize the three names. He finds a man who recalls that "Carlos" once fought with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (the reference is to Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, a Venezuelan named Carlos by his Palestinian counterparts and later named "Carlos the Jackal"). One man remembers Kōzō as part of the Japanese Red Army contingent to the PFLP, and another speaks with admiration of Rachel Corrie, an activist who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza in 2003. The segment ends by returning to the graveyard, with the reporter brushing debris off of the grave of Yasuyuki Yasuda, another member of the Japanese Red Army, and adorning it with a string of prayer beads capped with a wood carving in the shape of Palestine. While the man who recalled Kōzō mistakenly believed him to be

dead, the presence of Yasuda's grave stands as a kind of silent testament to a bygone era of armed solidarity. The unusual experience of reading a Japanese name transliterated and written in Arabic calligraphy underscores a nostalgia for strongly held political commitments across perceived cultural distance.

The segments by Al Manar and TL present a history in brief of Palestinian resistance. Al Manar focuses on the tactics of armed struggle since the First Intifada from the perspective of common people involved in mass civil disobedience and combat, presented as a technological progression from "stones to rockets." This theme is continued in the TL segment, which addresses major events and political leaders. The Al Manar segment is primarily a montage of archival and contemporary news footage from what appears to be both the First and Second Intifadas. Its music stands out from the more somber and wistful tone of those that precede it, switching to the synthesizer-driven orchestral bombast commonly found in Al Manar's video clips. Its narrator speaks approvingly of armed struggle in both the past and the present—opening on footage of an Israeli soldier striking an unarmed man, presumably a Palestinian, who responds by grabbing the soldier by the collar, and ending on a graphic of a map of rocket fire from Gaza to Tel Aviv and Haifa. The conclusion speaks in the language of the economy of national memory and martyrdom, in which the blood of children who have died in the conflict is not wasted as it lights the spark of resistance.

This theme is carried through into the TL segment, which highlights the relevance of the individual to the geopolitics of the resistance. It describes a transmutation of the language of resistance, which transforms words into stones that were thrown at the occupier. Interspersed with images of stone throwers is footage of Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in 2000, as well as the famous footage of Muhammad al-Durrah being shot. The narration in this segment introduces a self-reflexivity to the broadcast and the form of witnessing that it encourages. This montage is overlaid with the voice of the narrator, who tells the viewer that even as all these injustices occurred, and even as the resistance gained in strength from the righteous truth on its side, and turned words to stones, and created weapons of the heart, the hearts of the rest of the Arabs turned to stone. The resentment and betrayal affectively activated here have the potential to overwhelm the speaking position of the broadcast itself, directing anger and outrage toward more local injustices. Seemingly in recognition of this potential resonance, the segment ends with the presenter stating that Palestinians will never trade their land, and those in the diaspora all have Gaza in their hearts and minds. Outrage becomes acceptable as long as it remains directed "correctly."

In the broadcast as a whole, victimhood is figured in terms of innocence and a prevailing injustice. The manner in which that victim status slides into either an outwardly directed heroism or an inwardly focused righteous stoicism necessitates a consideration of its melodramatic nature. As a representational mode, melodrama is both central to modern political discourse and potentially intertwined with realism.[33] The broadcast gives viewers firsthand accounts of dispossession, personal loss, destroyed homes and schools, and recollections of past political commitments whose political meaning is refracted through a moral claim and appeal to recognition. Consider the numerous accounts of those unjustly killed (or those who narrowly escaped death), augmented by the untimeliness of having simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and there being nowhere to flee in Gaza.[34] The viewer is brought into a relation of empathy with those recounting stories that are upsettingly familiar despite their immediate novelty. In MTV's segment, this aspect is even presented with a degree of self-reflexivity. As the viewer is shown scenes of injured children, hospitals, and funerary processions with all-too-small bodies at their center, the voice-over remarks that these children have been made to pay a price that would be unacceptable to any other people in the world, a world that remains unconscionably oblivious. This segment also dwells on the destruction of childhood homes and the memories that are destroyed along with them.

Mediated witnessing is itself held to be the desirable act of solidarity, or valuable to those watching who might recognize themselves in the people presented. The moment of empathetic attunement slips into one of mutual identification—particularly in those clips (such as in the interviews set in South Lebanon). The melodramatic resonance of these scenes depends on and is intertwined with the realist mode commonly found in journalism—elements such as witness testimony, factual voice-over narration, archival footage, and on-scene recording. As two key representational modes of modern political discourse that are frequently mutually constitutive, their presence in this broadcast is not inherently suspect. Much of what is given into evidence here depends on realist claims about events as they happened and the experiences of the people presented, which in turn signifies to a viewer in melodramatic demonstration. Child witnesses in wartime reporting often serve to render more complex political conditions in simplified terms—the sheer injustice of seeing injured, traumatized, and dead children refigures the onus placed on the viewer, amplifying the potential affective charge and felt solidarity while also reducing the scope and depth of critical engagement with the realities presented.[35] Rather than creating conditions for the po-

litical work of mourning or interrogating the specificities of solidarity, the mode of engagement closes down more nuanced mutualities of encounter.

It is not the melodramatic mode as such that is problematic here but, rather, how it can close down an understanding of political difference within mutuality. This enacts a limit on the grievances that Palestinians in Lebanon may have with the Lebanese state. It can also undercut the disconnect from or even antipathy toward nationalist invocations that many feel—Lebanese and Palestinian. In making suffering meaningful through a redemptive arc that passes through a nationalist exhortation and then through empathetic viewers, a great deal that might be problematic is naturalized—the requirement of innocence and victimhood for Palestinian political claimsmaking, the performative framework of the news camera and viewer, and the refiguring of solidarity and liberation as the completion of the mediated circulation of affecting images that will itself lead to some transformation of consciousness and therefore broader political change. This not only limits the possible forms that media activism and transnational solidarity might take but also assumes a problem that fits a ready-made answer—just capture the spectacular destruction of Palestinian lifeworlds on camera, and then the world will know the truth and things will get better.

Much of the effect of the occupation is the systematic dehumanization and devaluation of Palestinian life and belonging to the land. As Jasbir Puar (2017) argues, the violence of liberal conceptions of humanity, dramatically manifested in the "less than lethal" forms of securitization in Gaza, demonstrates how the very terms of humanization at work involve a normative conception of life in which certain populations are already produced as inhuman and debilitated. This racialized formation, never far from either implicit or explicit animalization, entered into a terrifying series of slippages in 2014, as was manifest in coverage of inhabitants of the Bisan Zoo in Gaza.[36] Appeals to humanitarianism and human rights frameworks operate on a terrain that is effective at gaining certain kinds of sympathy and solidarity even as it defines and constrains their political outcomes.[37] It should therefore be of no surprise that many see humanization and revelation of atrocious acts and systems as a principal aesthetic aim. This structure contributes to the impetus to circulate images that demonstrate the capacity to be physically and emotionally harmed.

The final segment of the broadcast was produced by NBN and is set in the Burj Al Barajnah camp in Beirut's southern suburbs. It focuses on the question of the lived memory of 1948 in the diaspora, which it explores via an interview with Umm Aziz, a venerable *hajjah* (an honorific earned by

completing pilgrimage to Mecca but often applied to signify respect) with memories of the land and livelihoods in Acre taken from her and her family when she was eighteen. The *hajjah* has two main functions — she cries for the country kept from her and her grandchildren, and she watches her TV set intently, following the news of Gaza (one of the few appearances of TV viewing within the broadcast). This lived memory is counterposed to the experience of the children who appear later in the segment, who say that although they have never visited Palestine, all their thoughts and aspirations are directed toward it and its liberation. The one moment in which Umm Aziz appears not miserable is when a group of boys say that it is their generation's responsibility to liberate Palestine, at which point we cut to the *hajjah* in her doorway blowing kisses to the camera. The concluding NBN segment effectively reintegrates the individual experiences and sentiments expressed in the broadcast within a safe nationalist frame.

Conclusion

In the era of ecological collapse, the beginning of the October 17, 2019, revolution (which featured renewed local debates about Palestine solidarity within revolutionary praxis), the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Beirut port explosion, it might seem ungenerous to focus on the limitations of an attempt to forge the "structures of intimacy" that might underpin solidarity from a previous conjuncture. It is because of these potentialities, and how necessary they are, that it becomes critical to make sense of the pitfalls of good intentions. This broadcast from Lebanon raises a bevy of interrelated issues and questions regarding transnational solidarity with Palestine, the complex forms that it takes and has taken in Lebanon, and the place of communicative practices and aesthetic form in shaping affinities that are felt as they are forged. Part of what is unique about the broadcast is the performance of unity, which was itself made possible by a historical moment when catastrophic suffering in Gaza made a version of televised solidarity possible and palatable to audiences and the political establishment alike. A critical perspective on these issues must interrogate the importance and limitations of national frameworks for politics, legal rights, and cultural memory. Such a perspective must also contend with the antinomies of lived experience in place and the exercise of territorial sovereignty in light of contemporary iterations of settler colonial dispossession within Palestine. It must also contend with the exclusions and contradictions of citizenship within Lebanon.

It might be that the 2014 war coincided with or even facilitated a turning point in global political sympathy for and solidarity with Palestine, in which the severity of Gaza's punishment precipitated the outcome of political work that came before it. It is also the case that in Lebanon, displays of national unity across sectarian and partisan lines are few and far between, even as the country officially remained at a state of war with Israel. While certain components of the broadcast work to center Palestinian voices and experiences, these are primarily presented within the prism of innocence, or from the perspective of those whose steadfastness is meant to inspire viewers to . . . stay tuned for more? Certain components of the broadcast speak of a kind of melancholic attachment to or nostalgia for strong political bonds and the cultural and political radicalism that they have occasioned in the past, a complex matter in the years after the Arab uprisings. The lineage of the politics of victimhood—stretching from the twentieth-century televisual reformulations to the era of social media platforms—can obscure other intimate bonds, mutual vulnerabilities, and political solidarities.[38]

Reactivating and learning from the memory of past solidarity in the present is an important aspect of imagining possible futures. Yet even this aspect of the broadcast is largely recuperated within a nationalist frame that veers quite close to a one-way solidarity with a suffering Other that precludes a radical and relational politics.[39] The realities of Palestinian viewers within Lebanon should complicate any methodological nationalism, as should the long history of solidarity that flows from Palestinian organizations to Lebanese (most recently, in the form of aid in the wake of the 2020 disaster at the Beirut port). The broadcast, as an event within the contested visual culture of the 2014 Gaza war, stands as a testament to the limitations of solidarity understood to be an attunement of viewers to images, even a live national broadcast that stands on its performance of unity within a divided political landscape.

Notes

1 In the order of appearance of the individual segments, these are Future TV, Orange TV (OTV), Murr TV (MTV), Lebanese Broadcasting Company International (LBCI), Al Jadeed, Al Manar, Tele Liban (TL), and National Broadcasting Network (NBN).

2 As the essays gathered in Tawil-Souri and Matar 2016 demonstrate, Gaza is many things, but invisible is not one of them.

3 For example, Allan (2016) shows how the March of Return protest on May 15, 2011, brought Palestinians together across class divisions, was well covered in the Lebanese media, but was also marked by ambivalence by many Palestinians because the spectacle of Nakba commemoration had been co-opted by political parties, including Hizbullah (Allan 2016, 304).

4 This question is productively explored in the work of Allan (2016); Aouragh (2011); and Farah (2015).

5 Referring to the Shatila camp, Allan finds a "surreptitious counterpolitics at work, one in which refugees challenge social, economic, and spatial exclusion not through traditional modes of Palestinian-based political organizing but through an ephemeral, interactive politics of everyday practice" (2018a, 94).

6 Bardawil (2020) argues that the Palestinian revolution had a lasting intellectual impact on the Left in Lebanon and its diaspora that perhaps surpassed the 1967 defeat, and that included bonds of solidarity with the Algerian, Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese revolutions, among others. Matar (2018) shows how PLO films of this period were an aesthetic forerunner to the Iranian Revolution and Hizbullah.

7 Ginsberg (2016) offers a useful examination of this trend in Palestine solidarity film and its limitations. For a critique of this humanitarian impulse, see Rangan 2017.

8 Burris (2019) mobilizes diverse theoretical sources, including the Black Radical Tradition, to argue that a film aesthetics that only catalogs the techniques and effects of domination can limit the political imaginary, especially with regard to the occupation and emergent solidarities that aim to move beyond it.

9 Saglier (2017) proposes understanding contemporary Palestinian cinema as a non/industry that navigates the category of world cinema, the pressures and rewards of international film festivals, and the difficulties of domestic exhibition to compensate for this economic absence.

10 See El-Richani 2016 for a nuanced account of the perpetual crisis of the Lebanese media system. See also Dajani 2019 and the essays gathered in Della Ratta, Sakr, and Skovgaard-Petersen 2015.

11 Kraidy (2010) dubs this the "Saudi-Lebanese" connection. The Pan-Arab TV industry is also thoroughly imbricated in capitalist media systems that extend beyond the region (Khalil and Zayani 2020).

12 Beirut is also home to other channels that are primarily transnational, such as Al Mayadeen. While all the channels involved in the broadcast also have transnational distribution (or are part of a family of transnational channels, such as the LBCI conglomeration), they also all have a local audience and attunement in mind.

13 Salih and Richter-Devroe (2018) offer a productive entry point into the debates around the question of Palestine and national frames. See also Malkki 1992; Rabinowitz 2000; and Stein and Swedenburg 2005. Edward Said's oeuvre remains indispensable to thinking about the possibilities and limitations of this frame.

14 As Atshan (2020) argues, the latter can slip into what he refers to as the "empire of critique," most often wielded against voices and subjects already at a structural disadvantage within these debates.

15 Schayegh and Di-Capua (2020) highlight how decolonization has been discussed in Middle East studies. On the question of transnational solidarity in historical perspective, some important contributions include Allen 2018; Chamberlin 2011; Khan 2018; Lockman 1996; Lubin 2014; and Matthews 2006. On decolonial solidarity in the contemporary moment, see Salih, Zambelli, and Welchman 2020. Al-Hardan (2016) articulates a decolonial approach to memory and postmemory.

16 This is not to say that all spectacular politics are inherently bad. As Kosmatopoulos (2019) shows, they can combine with transnational and class-based forms of solidarity.

17 For example, see Al-Azza 2013 or Allen 2018 on BDS as a political response to the shortcomings of certain modes of transnational solidarity. Qumsiyeh (2011) argues for understanding BDS as a civil society response that mobilizes a longer tradition of popular politics. As Maira (2018) shows, the transnational character of BDS is not separate from the regional ambitions of the United States.

18 See Fischbach 2018 and Lubin 2014 for a fuller contextualization of the role of 1967 and the Black Power movement, and Naber 2017 on 2014 more specifically.

19 Atshan and Moore (2014) offer a productive engagement with queer conceptions of reciprocity and care. As El Zein's (2016) analysis of the phenomenon of "blackwashing" demonstrates, not all articulations of Black-Palestinian solidarity escape the logics of racial capitalism.

20 See Aouragh's (2016) critique of the liberal imperialism found in public diplomacy more broadly. See Chaudhuri 2019; Pennington 2019; and Rodley 2016 on the politics of social media, and Sakr's (2015) visualization and theorization of the images that accrue to hashtags in events like this.

21 Stein (2017) contextualizes this in terms of a competition over networked photography, whereby the IDF found their response to be lacking despite their vastly superior resources.

22 For example, the Ramattan News Agency released a great deal of material under creative commons licensing, with the hope that this would facilitate broader awareness of the conditions on the ground (Ward 2009).

23 See Bishara's (2016a) elaboration of how press freedom depends on freedom of movement in this context, particularly the ability to obtain Government Press Office cards, even as Palestinians have also long worked in global news organizations.

24 See Bishara 2016a for a discussion of these limitations, including the general threat to journalists for simply living in Gaza at the time.

25 As the broadcast was aired on multiple TV networks, it also ended up archived on multiple YouTube channels. For example, the TL version (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyv_uoIrmDA, accessed February 4, 2022) is nearly identical to the one on LBCI, save for the logo identifying the specific outgoing broadcast uplink from which the video was captured.

26 The killing of Ismail Mohammed Bakr, Zakaria Ahed Bakr, Ahed Atef Bakr, and Mohammed Ramez Bakr on the afternoon of July 16 should not be confused with the earlier bombing of July 9 at Khan Yunis, which killed nine people and injured many more.

27 Lori Allen (2009) productively interrogates how this "politics of immediation" emerged during the Second Intifada and has only deepened since. For an examination of a similar dynamic in documentary film, see Rangan 2017.

28 Allan (2013) offers a careful ethnographic perspective on how 1948 and 1982, respectively, dovetail and often crowd out personal memories, particularly suffering framed in the present tense, indicating a source originating from more immediate circumstances.

29 See the report by Human Rights Watch (2007).

30 See Abisaab's (2010) account of the origins of this history in the French Mandate.

31 The New Gaza Prep Boys School was one of many that served as makeshift shelters, even as other schools were destroyed.

32 As Allen (2017) shows, the origins of the institutional demand to monitor Palestinian national sentiment as part of a process of legal recognition can be found in the League of Nations Investigative Commissions such as King-Crane. To extend this insight, this deeper history of rationalized presentation to a global or Western authority informs news and documentary genres.

33 See, for one example, Gledhill and Williams 2018. See also Beckett and Deuze 2016 on the long-standing and evolving place of "affective" news as a valuable, but also potentially problematic, dimension of journalistic practice.

34 The LBCI segment described here opens on shots of a young boy named Hassan, whose age, the narrator says, can be numerated in the time that has passed since the 2006 war, and the seconds that it took for his mother to run with him in her arms to save his life.

35 Child witnesses also populate reporting on the Syrian Civil War. Although the two contexts are obviously quite different, the analysis of Al-Ghazzi (2019) and that of Wedeen (2019) each problematize the function of these figures in the news reportage and public culture of the conflict.

36 See Allen Feldman 2010. Braverman's (2017) analysis extends Puar's productive formulation of a biopolitics of "will not let die" in Gaza, to what she refers to as a "zoometrics" of ranking life in animal-human relations. Braverman, analyzing many common discourses about Gaza, argues that "positioning Palestinians as relatively dehumanized vis-à-vis Israelis and positioning Palestinian children as relatively dehumanized vis-à-vis Israeli children are two different moves (children, both human and nonhuman, are typically considered more zoometrically worthy than adults and could even occupy their own intermediate category on the animal-human divide: closer to nature and thus more innocent, yet at the same time also more beastly and wild and thus dangerous)" (2017, 211).

37 Allen (2018) highlights the long history of this paradoxical quality of human rights and humanitarian political work.

38 As Chouliaraki (2020) argues, the discourse of victimhood originates in the "emotional capitalism" of the twentieth century and, in the contemporary moment, is marked by the relationship between live broadcasting and online platforms. This more recent form makes the performance of victimhood proliferate in ways that destabilize the moral-political valence of the claim.

39 Saleh (2018) warns of the creation of a solidarity marketplace, divided between providers and recipients of solidarity, and that imagines the proliferating causes that one might be in solidarity with to exist in separate worlds rather than the same world.