

الصراع، القمع والمقاومة في رواية سوزان أبو الهوى (الزُرقة بين السماء والماء)

م. د. د. حيدر محمد مزعل الجنابي
المديرية العامة للتربية في بابل/ وزارة التربية/ العراق

البريد الإلكتروني Email : haider.alj@bab.epedu.gov.iq

الكلمات المفتاحية: سياسات الموت، الصهيونية، إسرائيل، فلسطين، التمرد، القمع، الكبت، المعارضة.

كيفية اقتباس البحث

الجنابي ، حيدر محمد مزعل، الصراع، القمع والمقاومة في رواية سوزان أبو الهوى (الزُرقة بين السماء والماء)، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، أيلول 2025، المجلد: 15، العدد: 5.

هذا البحث من نوع الوصول المفتوح مرخص بموجب رخصة المشاع الإبداعي لحقوق التأليف والنشر (Creative Commons Attribution) تتيح فقط للآخرين تحميل البحث ومشاركته مع الآخرين بشرط نسب العمل الأصلي للمؤلف، ودون القيام بأي تعديل أو استخدامه لأغراض تجارية.

مسجلة في
ROAD

مفهرسة في
IASJ



Conflict, Repression and Resistance in Suzan Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water*

Dr. Haider Mohammed Mezaal Al Janabi

General Directorate of Education in Babel/ Ministry of Education, Iraq

Keywords : Necropolitics, Zionism, Israel, Palestine, rebellion, oppression, suppression, dissent.

How To Cite This Article

Al Janabi, Haider Mohammed Mezaal, Conflict, Repression and Resistance in Suzan Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, September 2025, Volume:15, Issue 5.



This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

المستخلص:

تُقدِّم هذه الدراسة لمحةً عن الصراع الصهيوني - الفلسطيني والقمع الذي تمارسه سلطة الاحتلال على الشعب الفلسطيني. البحث يتطرق هنا إلى مناقشة المقاومة التي يبديها الشعب الفلسطيني ضد هجمة العنف والقمع من قبل المستعمر الصهيوني. أضف إلى ذلك، فإن هذه الدراسة تلقي الضوء على فكرة المؤرخ والمنظر السياسي الكاميروني "أشيل أمبيمي" حول نظرية "مُدن الموتى" وعلاقتها بقتل الفتاة "مريم" على يد الصهاينة ورفضهم تسليم جثتها إلى أهلها وأقاربها. وعليه فإن الدراسة تهدف إلى تقديم خطاب واضح حول الصورة الجريئة التي تقف بها الأجيال الشابة من العائلات الفلسطينية المنفية ضد القمع والفصل العنصري الصهيوني الذي يستخدم مخططات تدميرية.

Abstract

The study presents an overview of the Zionist- Palestinian conflict and the oppression exercised by the occupying authority against the legitimate land owners in Suzan Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Water and Sky*. The research addresses the resistance displayed by the Palestinian people in response to the wave of violence and repression by

the Zionist colonizers. Moreover, the study casts light on idea of the Cameroonian political- political theorist Achille Mbembe as per his theory entitled “Necropolitics” and its connection to the assassination of the young Palestinian girl ‘Maryam’ on the hands of Zionists and their refusal to return her corpse to her family. In this respect, the study aims to provide a clear discourse on the bold stance taken by the younger generations of exiled Palestinian families against the Zionist oppression and apartheid.

1. Introduction

As per power and colonialism, the essential implication of every kind of power is control, violence, subjugation and exploitation. The focal target of colonial power is to suppress the subjects; it exploits common masses through its deceitful discourse and physical defacement. This type of power operates very strictly on the subjects; it controls the subjects through surveillance which, in Foucault’s perception, “holds the whole [group of the powerless] together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another; supervisors, perpetually supervised.” (*Discipline and Punish* 176- 7)

‘The Repressive State Apparatus’ ¹uses repressive and forceful means to colonize and control the subjects. Institution like police department is termed as ‘The Repressive State Apparatus’ because it uses repressive force to curb the subjects. The Cameroonian political analyst and writer, Achille Mbembe has propounded a concept called ‘necropolitics’. This concept has been thoroughly discussed by him in his book titled *Necropolitics* (2019) ‘Necropolitics’ defines ‘necropolitics’ as ‘subjugation of life to the power of death’. The use and deployment of this policy gives birth to what Mbembe calls ‘death worlds’ or “new and unique forms of social existence’ in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead.” (*Necropolitics*: 100)

‘Necropolitics’ operates in two levels: First, it uses oppressive political power to dictate how some people must live and how some must die. Second, it dictates the terms and conditions regarding the dead bodies of the colonized. However, it can be said that necropolitics is based on the premise and strategy of exploitative ideology and colonial oppression.

In postcolonial discourse, colonialism and power are taken synonymously because it is the powerful that colonizes the weak.

¹ The Repressive State Apparatus: French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser’s term for the shape of power that utilizes extreme violence. This ‘apparatus’ is composed of the army, police, judiciary, and prison system. It functions mostly by means of intellectual and bodily coercion and vehemence.



Colonization of the subjects by the imperial powers has been mooted umpteen times. Frantz Fanon and Edward Said are the theorists who have deliberated on the dyad of colonizer and the colonized. They show how power structures work and operate. They also show how subjects are controlled through power. Colonization of the marginal subjects by the powerful is a very debatable issue. Postcolonial literature is a very suitable podium for understanding the power politics of the colonizers. Many postcolonial theorists like Edward Said, and Frantz Fanon have very thoroughly discussed in their works the colonizer and colonized binary as playing the cardinal role in fathoming the concept of power and how it works. Edward Said who is considered, among others, the important postcolonial theoretician has very lucidly discussed the underpinnings of power in his two most important books *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and *Orientalism* (1978). These two books enlighten the readers about the historical roots of colonization and power politics. Besides this, the books explicate on the concepts of hegemony, cultural imperialism, and ideology.

Deliberations on the idea of power and power politics are profusely available both in fiction and non-fiction. This has mainly been done by those writers who have gone through the sordid experience of colonization. The writers from the former colonies boldly depict the misuse of power by the colonizers. They show the resistance of the colonized in response to the exploitation perpetrated by the colonizers. Apart from using the physical violence against the weak and marginal subjects, the colonizers also use the strategies that are meant to belittle and destroy the culture of the colonized. The colonized, then, are stereotyped in order to be rendered as culturally poor and petty. Besides, an attitude of colonizer compels the colonized to resist and wrangle. Olaudah Equiano, in *The Interesting Narratives of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) writes, "When you make men slaves you deprive them of half their virtue, you set them, in your conduct, an example of fraud, rapine and cruelty, and compel them to live with you in a state of war." (Ibid: 77)

2. Resistance and Abulhawa's critique of power

Resistance of power is important since they both go side by side. Foucault opines the same notion when he says that "where there is power, there is resistance." (*The History of Sexuality*: 93) When the colonized resists the power of the colonizer; it not only shows the will of the colonized to survive but also his attempt to live with dignity and respect. This act of the colonized puts him/her on the highest pedestal and thereby makes him/her the focus of analysis.

Power, in this sense, implies the colonizers' influence dominance over the colonized. It bestows upon the powerful the pervasive elements of influence, effect and dominance over the weak. For instance, Israelis have always been calling the shots when they are juxtaposed with the countries that are less powerful and do not have any kind of leverage. The countries like Somalia, Palestine and so on. that do not have any strong influence and effect in the world are at the mercy of those countries that are politically, economically, and strategically strong and more influential. Likewise people who are in minority are always intimidated and trampled by the people who are in majority. The binary of majority and minority works on the premise of power. The minority is always at the disadvantageous position whereas majority always stands at the position of superiority and advantage. This implies, however, that power is a pervasive force; it is based on the premise of absolute control, exploitation, and subjugation of the oppressed. People who grasp the power structures are always out to victimize the powerless subjects.

It is evident that Abulhawa is against the Zionist colonial power in Palestine; the power that has oppressed the Palestinian people for years. Through her novel, Abulhawa exposes the devious Zionist designs through which they have usurped Palestinian land and thereby subjugated its indigenes. She shows how Palestinian women are subjected to inhuman treatment of rape and other kinds of violence and victimization through an agency of imprisonment and killing of their menfolk. Through her novel *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, Abulhawa strongly critiques the Zionist illegal occupation and usurpation of Palestine. Her narrative provides a variety of atrocious images of how Israel has ousted Palestinian people from their own homes and their own lands. Her novel stands for resistance and dissent. Besides this, Abulhawa voices her concern for Palestine and Palestinians through her speeches and blog posts. There is a strong tone of dissent and critique of power both in her novels, speeches, tweets and blog posts. Through her novel, Abulhawa criticizes the ideological constructs of Israel, an approach in which she is very candid in highlighting the wrongs done by the Zionists against the Palestinians.

The Blue Between Sky and Water provides readers with a biographical profile of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict; it throws light on the reasons that compelled the novelist to call for running a campaign of boycott, divestment, sanctions against Israel. It further tells readers how Abulhawa, in her speeches and blog posts, highlights the wrongs done by Israel against the unarmed Palestinian people.



3. Palestinian- Israeli conflict in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*

The Palestinian- Zionist conflict is unending. It has taken a heavy toll on unarmed Palestinian people. The Zionist insurrection started in the year 1947. By dint of political strength, weaponry clout and other allied supportive elements from different organizations, the Zionists ousted Palestinian people and established their colonies illegally on the indigenous Palestinian land. This has been done by a systemic depopulation of Palestinian people. This systemic and forced depopulation of Palestinian people is what Illan Pape calls 'Incremental genocide' in his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Another author, Rashid Khalidi in his book *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine* expounds how Palestinian people were made to feel strangers in their own land, "Palestinians now saw themselves inexorably turning into strangers in their own land." (43)

The Zionists used multiple oppressive means in order to force Palestinian people to leave their homes. They lynched Palestinian men, raped their women and maimed their young and fragile children in order to establish their permanent homes. The Jews from Europe He tightened their grip in Palestine through the British support. This is clearly shown by Illan Pape in his book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. He writes, "When the Zionist Movement started its ethnic cleansing operations in Palestine, in early December 1947, the country had a 'mixed' population of Palestinians and Jews." (29)

Israel, as history is witness to the fact, has wronged Palestine in a manner that is both illegal and unjust. Israeli people had come as refugees to Palestine when they were getting massacred at a large scale during the governance of Adolf Hitler. At that time, Palestinians gave them refuge and haven. But with the passage of time, Israel started emerging as the Zionist State in 1948 after Britain and its allies facilitated its existence in Palestinian territories. The major support for the establishment of home for the Jewish people came from the statement made on behalf of Britain's cabinet by the Secretary of state for foreign affairs namely, Arthur James Balfour- what has come to be known as the 'Balfour Declaration'- comprising a solo and single sentence, "His Majesty's government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object." (Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' war on Palestine*: 26)

As time passed by, Zionists started emerging powerful and because of this power and influence they ousted Palestinian people from their own country. Those who resisted against the occupation were killed. The



women were raped and their unarmed children were eliminated by bullets and bombs. As a result, most of the Palestinians are now living as refugees in other countries. Nevertheless, people who get displaced by force and coercion never live their lives with peace or tranquility.

Abulhawa gives a literary representation to all this through her novels. Her novel *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015) gives a kaleidoscopic view of the Jewish oppression on Palestinian people. Furthermore, this novel very vociferously highlights the plight of Palestinians under the illegal occupation of Jews. Besides, the novelist depicts how the Palestinian people exhibit valor and determination to tackle the oppressive onslaught. Abulhawa shows that it is not only the men who resist the oppressive regime, but Palestinian women also stand strongly against every oppressive and exploitative move by Zionists.

The female characters in the narrative deconstruct the patriarchal myth that women are timid and crumble at the onslaught of any violent crime. Women characters symbolize strength, resilience, rebellion, valor and victory and also keep the interest of the narrative intact. This novel shows how the innocent Palestinian people were ousted from their lands and homes; it portrays their lives prior to the actual war and highlights their plight as refugees in the scattered refugee camps in Gaza and elsewhere post- Nakaba, i.e., 'The Catastrophe'. Through this novel, Abulhawa accentuates oppression and violence unleashed by the Zionists against the Palestinians. She depicts how Palestinian people without any reservations are subjected to the heinous crimes like killing and slavery.

The Blue Between Sky and Water is an account of the Barkha family; the family that is ousted from Palestine and is forced to live their life as refugees in scattered refugee camps of Gaza. The main characters in the novel are: Um Mamdouh, her two daughters: Nazmiyeh and clairvoyant Mariam and a son named Mamdouh who excels in the business of beekeeping.

The other auxiliary characters that are equally important for the interesting plot line of the novel are Nur, Alwan, and Khaled who lives somewhere between the sky and water. They belong to the third generation of Barkha family. The concluding part of the novel narrates the tragic and heartbreaking story of Nur, the granddaughter of Um Mamdouh. Nur grows up in the United States; falls in love with a Palestinian doctor and returns to Gaza and finds herself imprisoned in an open air. How she tries to acclimatize to the suffocating social atmosphere in refugee camps and how she suffers the tribulations of displacement are the moot points in the concluding part of the novel.





The novel is narrated by Khaled in first person. He suffers from Locked- in Syndrome, a condition in which the body is paralyzed while the mind is fully alert. This condition of Khaled symbolizes the condition of Palestinian people in general. Khaled sees everything, hears everything but cannot actively involve himself in the world around him. In a strange way, he floats outside time, giving a different perspective on whatever happens around him. Besides, the title of the novel *The Blue Between Sky and Water* signifies a comatose condition of the narrator, Khalid. The title also implicitly refers to the physically inert condition of Palestinian people due to forced expulsion and exile. They are in halfway between the open blue sky and the naked earth in the makeshift refugee camps in Gaza.

Before the Zionist insurrection, the family used to live happily in the Beit Daras, village which is surrounded by gardens, rivers and olive trees. This is clearly shown by the novelist in the very opening pages of the novel, "A village... surrounded by gardens and olive groves and bordered to the north by a lake... where children played, and where young couples went to escape watchful eyes." (Abulhawa, 2015: 7) By juxtaposing the prosperous and peaceful days of Palestinians with that of ruin, dread and political instability, the novelist actually tries to underscore the damning effects of a political conflict on the people caught in its dreadful whirlpool.

The novel contains elements of magical realism; it comes across the magical realism and supernatural elements in the novel through the character of Um Mamdouh who is possessed by djinn named Sulyman and also through Um Mamdouh's clairvoyant daughter, Mariam. She has a pair of mismatched eyes: one brown and one blue. Abulhawa blends magical practicality, family drama, and politics to tell her fictitious accounts of some Palestinian females attempting to stay alive in Gaza afore and in duration of the Zionist occupation.

Um Mamdouh and Mariam prophesy the impending dangers and disasters in the novel as it opens prior to Israel insurrection on Palestine. The opening of the novel acquaints readers with the Barkha family and how they are living their lives. Besides, the opening of the novel is more focused on Nazmiyeh, the matriarch of the family. Nazmiyeh is very much the main character in the novel. She is the centre of a household of sisters, daughters, granddaughters, whose lives threaten to spin out of control with every personal crisis, military attack, or political landmine. Nazmiyeh is also the character that is on the driver's seat running the family safely. She is the character who is gang- raped in the broad-daylight by Israeli soldiers in front of her clairvoyant sister Mariam.



The essential subject of the novel is interested to show how and when the Zionist atrocities started against Palestine. In the novel, there are three types of topics at play: they are the themes of time, strong women and suffering. The main themes of the novel are definitely repression, conflict, repression and resistance. The narrator of the novel, Khalid narrates how the Zionist oppression started and how the Zionists forced Palestinian people to flee from Palestine. He gives a very cinematic and clear picture of this in the following lines, "The Jews came... [and they] were repelled by the two thousand residents of Beit Daras and their royal djinni, Sulayman. They came again and again, in March and several times in April of 1948." (Ibid: 4) The novelist continues to describe the Zionist's arrival to the town, "their fury grew with incredulity and indignation that a small village of farmers and beekeepers could overcome the firepower of the highly trained Hagnah... under British noses from Czechoslovakia in preparation for conquest." (Ibid: 4) The Author goes on to describe the massacre the Zionists had committed against the Palestinian indigenes, "During the last attack in April, fifty women and children from Beit Daras were slaughtered in a single day, after which men ordered their families to flee to Gaza, while they remained to fight." (Ibid: 27)

The Zionists expelled Palestinian people thanks to mechanized weapons, firepower and fighter planes. By these fatal gadgets, they instilled fear in the minds of unarmed people and thereby forced them to leave their indigenous land to find refuge in the scattered refugee camps in Gaza and elsewhere. Those Palestinian people who resisted the forced expulsion were subjected to the inhuman treatments like rape, abduction, murder and all other means of oppression. The above quoted lines depict the enormity of the Zionist attack on the Palestinian people. The lines depict how fifty women including children were slaughtered in a single day in Beit Daras. This is the flip- side of a political conflict. The conflict does not spare anyone. Whosoever comes in its crosscurrents gets consumed. Bertrand Russell referred to the same thing when he says, "War does not determine who is right... only who is left." (11)

As the conflict and insurrection started, the helpless Palestinian people started fleeing from their country. While taking the road to refugee camps, women were victimized through an agency of rape and molestation. Susan Abulhawa gives a clear picture of this in the following lines: "...He moved closer and lifted a fistful of her hair to his face. He inhaled, closed his eyes, grabbed the back of Nazmiyeh's head and forced her face to rub against his crotch. As the soldier's handled her, ripping



her clothes, forcing her onto her back, baring her flesh..." (Abulhawa, 2015: 37) Nazmiyeh was not able the soldier's words when he shouted prior to his attempt to rape her. "She clenched her teeth, biting the agony of rape lest it escape from her voice and reach Mariam's ears. "Scream!" the soldier demanded in his language as he shoved himself harder into her. "Scream!" He pulled her body up by the hair." (Ibid: 37)

The above lines depict the fate of Palestinian women. They are subjected to the slings and arrows of the conflict through an agency of rape and other allied elements. The lines also describe the pleasure as the sadistic soldier derives while raping Nazmiyeh. He forces her to scream while raping her. He derives pleasure from the physical torture and suffering of the victim. This brutal incident of rape traumatizes Nazmiyeh so much that she refuses to feed her first born baby. The traumatic memory of rape and killing of her sister time and again comes to her mind and flashes in front of her eyes. She becomes paranoid. The narrator depicts her instable psychological conditions in the following lines, "She sat up in bed when the gun rang out and Mariam fell. My jiddo Atiyeh held her in their bed. I couldn't outsmart them. Mariam is dead again and Nur is alone and frightened," she sobbed, pursued by the dream." (Ibid: 87)

After raping Nazmiyeh, the Zionist soldiers first tortured her little sister Mariam and afterwards shot a volley of bullets into her head. This atrocious scene is shown by the novelist in the following lines, "He returned dragging Mariam by her hair... her wooden box of dreams clutched to her chest. The sisters locked their eyes... to fit a word before the bullet to Mariam's head rang out through eternity, her wooden box of dreams falling open." (Ibid: 38) This is what a conflict costs the people who are unarmed and devoid of any kind of influence and power. After Mariam gets killed, Nazmiyeh tries to carry her body in her arms but is denied to do it. An Israeli soldier approached the crime scene and ordered that the dead body of the child to be burned with the rest of the other murdered people. Nazmiyeh, full of rage, collected her sister's notebooks, pencils and papers, "She covered her breasts with Mariam's box and what remained of her ripped clothes. She stood on borrowed strength, semen and blood running down her legs, and walked away with broken steps, without looking back." (Ibid: 39)

This is the extremity of the oppression to which the Palestinian women are subjected to. The dead body of Mariam is not handed over to Nazmiyeh. Instead, the soldier orders that her body to be charred in the broad day light. This is the atrocious colonial strategy of dealing with the

dead bodies of the innocent victims. This is actually the way the colonizers deal with the colonized corpses of their opponents. This colonial stratagem of dealing with the dead is what the Cameroonian historian and political analyst Joseph Achille Mbembe calls 'necropolitics' in his book 'Necropolitics'.

Necropolitics in simple terms may be taken as an opposite to Foucauldian idea of 'biopower' which constricts or disallows living bodies and necropolitics restricts and disallows the dead bodies of the victims for a respectful burial. Mbembe defines 'necropolitics' as 'subjugation of life to the power of death'. The use and deployment of necropolitics gives birth to what Mbembe calls death worlds or "new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead." (*Necropolitics*: 92)

Necropolitics operates at two levels: First, it uses social and political power to dictate how some people must live and how some must die. Second, it dictates the terms and conditions regarding the dead bodies of the colonized. Necropolitics is implicitly at play in the novel *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. The oppression unleashed on the unarmed Palestinians and the inhuman treatment of their dead bodies, particularly, the dead body of Mariam in the novel is nothing but the Zionist 'necropolitics' of oppressing the dead Palestinians by denying them to their kith and kin for a respectful burial.

Necropolitics can also be taken as the political strategy maneuvered by the sovereign state to oppress the people lacking in any power and influence. This is exemplified in the novel when we get acquainted with their pitiable condition of the Abulheja family. The Palestinian people who were ousted from the homes are now living their life as refugees in the shabby refugee camps and are bereft of the things that can fulfill their basic needs. This miserable condition to which the Palestinian people have been subjected can also be taken as the necropolitics on the part of the ruling dispensation. Khaled, the narrator of the novel depicts the horrible and tragic scene of Palestinian refugees in the following lines, "The refugees moved about, beset by confusion for days. Sufficient tents were not distributed for weeks and people slept on earth, with stones and insects and animals." (Abulhawa, 2015: 43) Khaled proceeds with his account saying that, "Bodies accustomed to hard work... awoke before sunrise [to meet] with the sluggishness of dormant fate that carved up into repeating lines and rows... They lined up twice a day for bread and soup. They lined up for communal toilets. (Ibid: 43)



The conflict and the consequent expulsion changed everything for Palestinian people. Living their life as homeless refugees in the scattered camps in Gaza and other places, they are suffering the slingshots of displacement and exile. They are surviving their life on the alms of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency). They sleep on the bare earth and are using the communal toilets and line up twice a day for bread. Their survival in refugee camps is hardly possible. Forced displacement and exile subject them to hardships and survival difficulties. Displacement and exile are also the patterns of violence. Displaced people suffer the experiences of trauma and are subjected to social, cultural, economic and psychological travails. Edward Said, the famous Palestinian theorist dealt with the question of exile and displacement in his paper, *Reflections of Exile* in this manner, "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted." (185) He further says, "... there are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (Ibid: 185)

Nur, the other main female character of the novel, belonging to the third generation of Barkha family suffers highly the pangs of displacement and other damning issues. Displacement forces her to spend her childhood in various foster homes which make her mentally out of place and physically haggard. She always longs to join her grandfather's family back in Palestine, the land close to heart. The narrator, Khaled depicts her dismal emotions of displacement and dispossession, "History took us away from our rightful destiny. But with Nur, life hurled her so far that nothing around her resembled anything Palestinian, not even the dislocated lives of exiles. So it was ironic that life reflected the most basic truth of what it means to be Palestinian" (Abulhawa, 2015: 89) In his opinion, this person is, "disposed, disinherited, and exiled. That to be alone in the world without a family or a clan or country means that one must live at the mercy of others. There are those who might take pity and those who will exploit and harm." (Ibid: 89)

Resistance and defiance to oppression is natural. One generation of Palestinian people suffered oppression both physically and economically but another generation gave a very firm stand to the oppressive regimen of the Zionists. This is clearly shown in the novel through the robust and defiant character of Mazen, the strong and audacious son of Matriarch Nazmiyeh. Mazen proved his mettle when Israeli soldiers under

camouflage attacked Mazen and other members of his family on the day of picnic on the beach. He defied the Zionist soldiers and saved his family. While saving his family, the Zionist soldiers arrested him and bundled him into the jeep. But his stance of defying the forces is all the more effective. The scene of his defiance is depicted in these lines, "Then, a determined defiance pushed up from the chaos. He had leapt to protect his father... and when one of the disguised Zionists put a gun to his head, Mazen hardened with a ruthless resolve." (Ibid: 62) Such a direct threat to life made Mazen summon all his courage unafraid of being killed by the Zionists. He bravely beat the soldier on his chest, "[Mazen's] gray eyes seemed so sure of grace, so in possession of fate that even his attackers froze in that unpredictable moment teetering between life and massacre." (Ibid: 62)

Mazen is the younger generation of the displaced Barkha family. Unlike his forefathers, he comes to the front-line of resistance in order to retaliate and revenge. Despite his arrest, his defiance made the Zionists tremble at his courage when he slapped the Zionist soldier on his chest and told them that their rifles could not kill him, "SHOOT! YOUR GUNS CANNOT KILL ME! [He shouted] BUT THEY WILL KILL YOU AS SURELY AS MY BODY DIES!" (Ibid: 62)

The oppression of the Zionists makes Mazen so defiant and rebellious. This extreme Zionist oppression fills him with the spirit of a revolutionary warrior and helps him to defy the oppressive forces with a determined valor. This is how a subaltern subject defies the dominant forces. The courage and fearlessness exhibited by Mazen in front of the dominant Zionist forces is the example of how the oppressed emerge as a dissent of injustice and tyranny when the oppression is unleashed beyond the limits of human tolerance. Mazen's defiance is shown by the novelist in 'bold capital letters' in the extended sentences of the novel. Showing something in capital letters or in upper case usually symbolizes protest and rebellion. That is why Abulhawa uses this pattern of writing to narrate the rebellious monologues of Mazen in the novel. The most effective, fearful and powerful sentences spoken by Mazen while he was under the Zionist arrest are: "Your rifles] CANNOT RIP MY ROOTS FROM THE SOIL OF THIS LAND YOU COVET! WE WILL NOT LET YOU STEAL OUR LAND!" (Ibid: 62- 3)

The more the Zionist soldiers tried to silence Mazen, the more vociferous he uttered the sentences of dissent and truth. They could not silence him when he was stuffed and bundled into the back of the jeep. He speaks without fear and without break even when he was under danger and threat. In the jeep, he tells them without caring for his life. He



rebelliously addresses the soldiers, "SOMEONE LIED TO YOU! THEY TOLD YOU THAT GUNS MAKE YOU STRONG. REAL POWER DOES NOT USE GUNS. REAL POWER DOES NOT USE FORCE AMONG WOMEN AND CHILDREN!" (Ibid: 63) He continues to shout, "ALL OF YOU ARE DEAD INSIDE AND YOU EMPTY DEAD SOULS ARE WHAT WILL FINALLY KILL THIS CRUEL MILITARY STATE!" (Ibid: 63)

Mazen's defiant attitude makes him heroic among his people. He becomes talk of the town and receives much appreciation and respect. The life imprisonment given to him by the Zionists for his subversive attitude makes him heroically tall and loving among his Palestinian fellows. He attains a cult image and people around him started emulating his rebellious attitude and are committed to his line of defiance. The novelist shows this in the following lines of the novel, "The story of Mazen's stand on the beach against armed Israeli soldiers was passed from mouth to ear, gaining new dimensions each time, until it became local legend. It was confirmed that he had been among the top local underground resistance fighters." Despite the fact that a number of his comrades took shelter in some places, Mazen did not yield to the Israeli torture, "[... nor did he] betray them in Israeli's dungeons, and that entrenched his heroism all the more." (Ibid: 64)

These forceful and subversive sentences in capital letters spoken by Mazen in the face of the oppressive Zionists empowered his followers. These sentences energized the other Palestinians and prepared them for a retaliatory move. While Mazen is in the prison, other Palestinian people joined the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) of Yasser Arafat and Hamas fighters who tried every way to sabotage and subvert the wrong designs of the Zionists. They captured one of the Zionist soldiers namely Gilad Shalit alive and imprisoned him in an underground cell. The other Zionist soldiers searched everywhere but failed to find him. They wreak havoc on the unarmed Palestinian people while interrogating them for the whereabouts of the abducted soldier but they did not succumb to the Zionist torture. The novelist depicts this in the following lines, "When I was younger, Hamas fighters captured an Israeli soldier named Gilad Shalit. Israel broke the ground open looking for him, but they couldn't find him. They killed so many of us to get their soldier, but they couldn't." (Ibid: 280) The novelist continues her recollect her story, "Like a spoiled child having a tantrum, Israel hurled objects of death and destruction at us from land and sky and sea that mutilated, ruined, wrecked, and shattered us. But again, they came up empty-handed. Hamas was beyond their violence. (Ibid: 281)

When the Zionists failed to find their soldier, they signed a deal with Hamas fighters on freeing one thousand Palestinian political prisoners including Hajje Nazmiyeh's rebellious son Mazen in exchange of Gilad Shalit. Through a strategy of guerrilla warfare, the Hamas fighters of Palestine won the fight against the Zionists. The win made the fighters jubilant and the people happy. Had the Hamas fighters not employed the guerrilla strategy of abducting the enemy soldier, the dominant Zionists would not have inked the deal of freeing the thousand Palestinian political prisoners. The strategy of abduction weakened the Zionists and compelled them to yield to the wishes of the rebellious Hamas fighters.

To conclude the discussion of the novel, what comes to fore is that it is full of incidents of conflict, repression and resistance. The novel bears testimony to the fact that conflict and repression lead to loss of lives and subjects the displaced people to psychological trauma and experiences of fear and paranoia. The novel further boils down to the fact that resistance to repression is natural; and resistance of the weak against the dominant leads to their ultimate triumph. This is exemplified in novel when a handful of Hamas fighters stand against the juggernaut of the Zionist forces, abduct their soldier, and compel them to free thousand Palestinian prisoners in exchange of the abducted soldier namely Gilad Shalit.

So, it can be said with certainty that the novelist in the novel shows how any political conflict victimizes the weak, how repression strangles their voices, and how the weak and subaltern ultimately resist against the hegemonic forces and powers with a renewed valor and determination and finally emerge victorious against all odds. The novel on the whole depicts the conflictive nature of the societies living always at loggerheads with one another. In Marxist terms we can say that the novel highlights the class struggle and conflict; the conflict that usually leads to repression and displacement as exemplified in the novel through the pitiable position of the Barkha family in particular and the Palestinian people in general. In finis, it can be said that this novel explores the legacy of dispossession across continents and generations and tries to counterpoint the hegemonic discourse of subjugation and colonial sabotaging of the subaltern and the marginal subjects.

Conclusion

The study comes up to a conclusion that the Palestinian- Israeli conflict has damning implications on the people caught in its cruel and intricate tragedies. The conflict has given birth to oppression, killings and



other associated issues. It has left Palestinian people dispossessed and displaced. It has also subjected Palestinian posterity to the extreme tests of forced exile. This exilic experience has bruised their sensibility and memory and has subjected them to the tribulations of trauma and pain of nostalgia to return to their usurped homeland. *The Blue between Sky and Water* is undeniably a remarkable historical novel that documents the Israel- Palestine conflict in a better possible way. It introduces a thorough literary representation to the long drawn and unending political conflict and tries to highlight the wrongs to which the Zionists have subjected Palestinian people. Besides, it shows the resistance and defiance exhibited by the Palestinian people at the onslaught of oppression.

The novel shows Palestinian people are living in the scattered refugee camps of Gaza. It also shows that the exiled indigenes eagerly try to return to their homeland though this attempt cost them their lives sometimes. The oppression against the locals has been shown through pitiable personae of female characters as they are subjected to the oppressive mechanics of rape and other exploitive actions practiced by the Zionists.

Bibliography

Abkar, Khalid. *New Perspectives in the Israel-Palestine Conflict: Righting the Wrong Through*

Metaphor in Mornings in Jenin: International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature 8.6 (2019): 132-138. Google Scholar. Web. 15 March 2020.

Abulhawa, Susan. *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. London: Bloomsbury Circus, 2015. Print.

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narratives of Olaudah Equiano*. London: Dodo Press, 1789. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books, 1975. Print.

-----*The History of Sexuality*. London: Editions Gallimard, 1976. Print.

Laura, Overmeyer. *Love and Suffering in Gaza*. *Qantare.de*. 2015. Accessed 25 November. 2022.

Khalidi, Rashid. *The Hundred Years War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and*

Resistance, 1917-2017. London: Profile Books Ltd, 2020. Print.

Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 2019. Print.

Pal, Payel. *Loss and Exile: Refugees' Experiences in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin*. GRFDT Research Monograph 22, Vol.2, Number 10, October 2016.

Accessed 23 Aug. 2024.

Pappe, Ilan, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. USA: One world Publications Limited, 2006. Print.

Russell, Bertrand. "The Saskatoon Star-Phoenix." *The Daily Starbeams*, 22 August 1931, p. 11.

Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile & Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. London: Granta, 2000. Print.