Edited by Nadia Yaqub

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Gaza
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Cover art: Basma Alsharif, *Ouroboros* (film still), 2017.
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès.

To Christof, Emma, and Thea

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Contents

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Note on Transliteration

For Arabic we have followed the Library of Congress system of transliteration without diacritics except for ʿayn and hamza with the following exceptions:

For personal names, we follow the spelling in Latin characters that individuals and organizations have chosen for themselves. For well-known figures we follow the most common spellings in American English.

Place-names are written as they most commonly appear in American English if they have an established spelling in English. Otherwise, they are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system.

Terms in spoken (dialectal) rather than modern standard Arabic are transliterated as closely as possible to the Library of Congress system without diacritics except for ʿayn and hamza while reflecting the dialectal pronunciation.

Film titles and film characters' names are translated and/or transliterated as they appear in the films themselves if such translations exist.

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Viviane Saglier

2

Gazan Cinema as an Infrastructure of Care

The Politics of "Care-ful" Filmmaking

Mohamed Jabaly's personal documentary *Ambulance* (2016) begins with a series of statistics assessing the great human and material damage caused by the 2014 Israeli bombings on Gaza. The noise of urban life, which provides the soundtrack to those numbers, is suddenly interrupted by the fall of a missile. When an image finally emerges on the dark screen, it does so from a cloud of dust emanating from the destruction of the house of one of the filmmaker's neighbors. After casting a wary glance from his apartment's windows, the filmmaker, against his family's injunctions, runs toward the scene where the attack has taken place. We follow the shaky handheld camera to the rubble, where the film knits together two complementary points of view: one that accompanies paramedics amid the house's debris in search of trapped dwellers; the other, a drone-generated bird's-eye view, which situates the filmmaker's camera among the many reporters on-site. This

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 Mohamed Jabaly, *Ambulance* (2016). The two distances of care.

opening scene articulates the filmmaker's shifting role within his own narrative and his oscillation between distinct distances and positionalities with respect to the "events" throughout the film. Jabaly is at once emotionally and physically engaged in the rescue operations, which he closely documents during his daily tours with Abu Marzouq's team of hospital paramedics, and he takes on the responsibility of sharing newsworthy images with the world by performing the critical distance of the news anchor.

I start with this vignette to highlight the multiple positionalities and operations at work in what is conventionally grouped under the act of "bear-

ing witness," the documentation of human rights violations for advocacy purposes. *Ambulance*'s narrative is entirely structured around the Gazan filmmaker's decision to follow Palestinian paramedics during their shifts for the duration of the Israeli war on Gaza that lasted from July 8 to August 26, 2014. The film partly reproduces news-informed modes of representation and plays with the subjective aesthetics of the handheld camera that distinctly shaped many of the images produced during the Arab uprisings after 2011 (Shafik 2017). At the same time, as a project partly funded by the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) Bertha Fund and destined for a variety of human rights, art, and documentary film festivals, *Ambulance* presents the typical characteristics of the "creative documentary." The genre responds to the desire for Palestinians to tell their personal stories without being subjected to narrow or official understandings of politics. Invested in self-reflexivity, Jabaly wrestles with his positionality in the process of filming his own community and with the function that image-making may fulfill in the context of emergency.

Jabaly experiments with what "doing something" can look like, as he repeatedly states his inability to sit idly at home, waiting for yet another bomb. The filmmaker's determination to document stems from a desire to use the camera not simply as a means to yield abstract justice but rather with the self-declared aim "to help" his friends, neighbors, and larger community, while leaving open and contingent the modalities of such assistance. *Ambulance*'s politics of proximity and distancing vis-à-vis the events and the people it documents demonstrate the tension between the care work of rescuing wounded neighbors and the labor of reporting it to larger crowds as a means to activate international networks of solidarity and political accountability. What does helping with a camera mean when the past ten years have witnessed a growing disenchantment with "digital democracy" and the dream that portable cameras may produce viral and transparent images that can immediately further political demands of freedom, both in the context of Palestinian citizen journalism and during the Arab uprisings (Stein 2021; Tarnowski 2021)? What images should be produced under emergency when neocolonial visual regimes have systematically used the documentation of wars to dehumanize Palestinians?

The quest to help with a camera is not simply one of representation alone; instead, it raises questions about how image-making is imbricated within distinct industrial and political networks of circulation imbued with different meanings of care, wherein helping holds multiple, sometimes contradictory, implications. For example, photojournalists have increasingly been

collaborating with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as a result of economic, technological, and cultural transformations in photojournalism, and NGOs' need to renew their communication strategies (Hallas 2012, 95). Jabaly's confusion proves symptomatic of the competing economies that are structured around image-making under emergency and that fulfill distinct functions. The Syrian context proves informative here because the practices of citizen journalism that first dominated in 2011 quickly gave way to a form of "media activism" that became increasingly professionalized through workshops organized by television channels. The shift in practice also led to a different mode of address that specifically targeted NGOs and Western media instead of a vague idea of "global audiences." In addition, some Syrian image-makers took up the camera with the explicit aim and desire to make cinema and explore more personal stories. After establishing these distinct trends, Syrian documentary filmmakers Mohammad Ali Atassi and Qutaiba Barhamji and French scholar Cécile Boëx conclude that this complex media landscape created great confusion between the different types of images (Atassi, Barhamji, and Boëx 2020). As this chapter will show, Gaza (and Palestine more broadly) faces a similar situation in which the multiplication of avenues to make images during the permanent humanitarian collapse and the coexistence of different imaginaries of cinematic interventions promise various integrations within global networks of solidarity from which filmmakers need to choose.

Taking *Ambulance* as a road map, this chapter asks: How can Palestinian cinema dispense care in Gaza? I call "infrastructure of care" the ways in which Palestinian cinema is positioned within interconnected global networks of obligations, forms of solidarity, and economies of aid. Since the beginning of Israel's siege of Gaza in 2007, care—understood as the principle to restore and maintain the health of the mind, the body, and the collectivity—is framed by coordinated, overlapping, and/or competing economies of colonization, development, human rights, and humanitarianism as well as Islamic and secular politics of resistance. Today's colliding forms of care often (but not always) emerge out of the reformulations, institutionalization, and corporatization of the politics of human rights developed during the revolutionary period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s (Tawil-Souri 2015).

The ascendancy of a humanitarian discourse has often circumscribed the imagination and modes of collective resistance that Palestinians can mobilize, including through cinema. At the same time, if we examine the filmmaking strategies that Palestinian practitioners marshal within the humanitarian horizon of representation through the prism of what Stefan Tar-

nowski (2021) calls "critical generosity," we can better trace the challenges, compromises, and hopes at play in the labor of producing images with care during manufactured humanitarian crisis and war. Dispensing care through the camera thus presents a crucial double function in the context of crisis: first, it investigates the meanings of care and the possible visual forms of solidarity in a context where both tend to be predefined and determined by dominant news and humanitarian economies; second, it probes the mechanisms through which image-making can implement solidarity *among* Palestinians while addressing global networks of care. What can image-making *do* to enact solidarity during a humanitarian crisis?

Theorizing caring and filmmaking together urges us to identify the forms of solidarity operations that image-making can facilitate under continued settler colonial violence and in a space institutionally defined by humanitarian crisis. It also requires establishing a framework that apprehends the intracommunal relations created through filmmaking as they are inscribed within broader infrastructures and political economies of media production. In other words, despite their intimate history with colonial violence, human rights and humanitarian infrastructures have allowed a space for Palestinian filmmakers to craft their own form of solidarity through cinema. This chapter argues that Palestinians' "care-ful" filmmaking engages with the making of humanitarian representations at the same time as it responds to the colonial fragmentation and isolation of the Palestinian society within Gaza, across (illegal) borders, and with the rest of the world. Palestinian clinical psychologist Said Shehadeh describes colonial strategies as they shift "from managing and controlling the resistance to attempts at destroying it psychologically: mainly by breaking the Palestinian psyche and the social fabric from which it draws its resilience" (2016, 43). As such, filming with care acts as a social glue that strengthens the bonds colonialism seeks to undo. Filmmaking may maintain what anti-colonial clinician Lara Sheehi and visual studies scholar Stephen Sheehi call "the culture and psyche of 'Palestinian presence,'" by reasserting life when colonial biopolitics are designed to draw death as the only possible horizon (2022, 24).

Care-ful filmmaking here mirrors the praxis of *sumud*, which first designated the perseverance and unity of Palestinians who stayed on their occupied lands despite Israel's aggressive politics of population transfer after 1967. For Palestinian anthropologist Leana Meari, *sumud* does not simply represent a set of tactics aimed at preserving Palestinian presence on the land; it is also constitutive of the making of the Palestinian self through the colonial encounter (2014, 548–49). This relational movement between

the Palestinian self and the colonial structure, on which I superimpose the complex entanglements of the Palestinian community with transnational news and humanitarian networks, takes visual shape through Palestinian self-representations. Palestinian filmmakers materialize the desire for social exchange and cooperation by offering modes of self-representation in negotiation with the complex networks that make up the transnational infrastructure of care. As it dispenses care, film functions "as an affective connective tissue between an inner self and an outer world" (Hobart and Kneese 2020, 2) that expands the contours of how the making of Palestinian self-representation may contribute to rearticulating the self and community under threat.

To understand the politics of care-ful filmmaking, we must examine filmmakers' double engagement with the politics of proximity: how image-makers perform various distances with the community they represent, and how such performances articulate representations' positioning within geopolitical relations. This chapter first charts a history of the cinematic infrastructure of care that takes Gaza as its center. By tracing the circulation of distinct forms of care from film representations and filmmaking practices to cinematic institutions, we can map out an affective cartography of Gazan cinema in relation to the financial flows channeled by humanitarian agencies and news outlets that structure a specific global economy of care. I then analyze how the making of *Ambulance* enacted different forms of solidarity that emerged from the filmmaker's labor of positioning himself within the global infrastructure of care. *Ambulance* demonstrates that care unfolds at varied distances and in different directions (one cares *for*, *about*, and even *with*) by performing a visual rescue *for* the filmmaker's Palestinian neighbors and *with* paramedics while simultaneously setting the wider landscape of destruction as a site *about* political inquiry.

**The Cinematic Infrastructure of Care
and Institution-Building**

Gaza's cinematic infrastructure of care articulates Palestinian experiments of self-representation across history with the conditions of production and circulation laid out by distinct networks of aid, solidarity, and resistance. Palestinian cinema has developed alongside varied processes of national institution-building that have constantly negotiated, on the one hand, the disciplining care enforced by transnational humanitarian agencies now closely associated with security imperatives and, on the other, the political

possibilities for reclaiming autonomy and self-determination permitted by those new infrastructures. The paradoxical entanglement of Palestinian rights claims and resistance strategies with supranational institutions historically involved in the partition of Palestine (chief among them, the United Nations) is nothing new. In fact, the managing of care has since the 1948 Nakba constituted a primary site of struggle for the formulation of Palestinian institutions and resistance in Palestine and in exile.

In contemporary Gaza, attempts at organizing cinema production are still faced with the strictures of humanitarian governance, which tackles temporary crises instead of planning for change. Yet, the site where the humanitarian logics most pressingly unfolds, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), holds a paradoxical position. As historian Esmat Elhalaby (2018) explains, while "some see it as a quintessential example of 'humanitarian management,' . . . [o]thers see it as exactly the opposite, an incubator of Palestinian resistance to Israel and [the] United States [one of its main funders]." Since the agency's foundation and establishment in Gaza in 1950, UNRWA camps have provided medical care, essential social and food services, and access to free education, sometimes dispensed by illustrious teachers such as the militant intellectual Ghassan Kanafani in Syria. Camps soon after witnessed the emergence of political and cultural organizations crucial to the revolutionary project in the 1960s and 1970s (Elhalaby 2018).

Palestinian image-making is historically embedded within such paradoxical logics. In the 1970s and in the absence of a Palestinian state and Israeli support (as required by the Fourth Geneva Convention), the magnitude of UNRWA's programs was such that it was often described as holding a "'functional sovereignty' over the refugee population" (Al Husseini 2010, 9)—which represents 70 percent of Gaza's inhabitants. UNRWA also played a key role in creating representations of Palestinians. In the years following the Nakba, the photographs UNRWA units captured both enshrined the image of Palestinians (then referred to as "Arabs") as victims in the international imaginary and served as evidence that Palestinians existed in the face of Zionist erasure. The care these images dispensed addressed Palestinians' suffering in a missionary fashion typical of European humanitarian imperialism as well as the organization's needs for sustained donations (Abdallah 2009). Compassion and vulnerability were used as a currency and remained, until the late 1960s, the dominant representation with which Palestinians could identify in their exchanges with international organizations and interlocutors.

Yet, some members of the filmmaking crew were Palestinians themselves, sent from UNRWA's headquarters in Beirut to Cairo to receive training in filmmaking and script writing (Abdallah 2009, 47). Jerusalem-born artist Vladimir Tamari, among others, learned his trade in the field while working as a film technician for UNRWA in the late 1960s. He produced images that he would later recycle and repurpose in his film *Al-Quds* (1968), which celebrates Jerusalem as a historical symbol of Palestinian life in the wake of the loss of the city in 1967 (Tamari 2006). Sometimes, UNRWA films would also present a basis for discussion around the future of cinema in the liberation struggle, and the piece that Tamari partly edited, *Aftermath* (1967), was screened at the first meeting of Arab filmmakers organized around the theme of Palestine in 1970 in Amman (Yaqub 2018, 20). As a result, the organization did more than contribute to educating some of the filmmakers who would go on to lend their skills to more militant endeavors; UNRWA's collection of films and photographs also importantly provided "an archive *against* which Palestinians defined themselves" by the late 1960s (Yaqub 2018, 18).

Although not the only factor, UNRWA's infrastructures indirectly assisted the emergence of a new strand of production and representation. Palestinian revolutionary cinema originated in Amman in the late 1960s and developed further in Beirut in the early 1970s. These films promoted a different form of collective, politicized care predicated on anti-colonial action, best illustrated in Gaza by Mustafa Abu Ali's *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* (1973) (see Samirah Alkassim's contribution in this volume). If some of the early films subverted the humanitarian registers, they also played with the format of actuality films, producing revolutionary newsreels that redefined the genre. This ensemble of films finally substituted the figure of the victimized refugee for the freedom fighter and by doing so created a different archive as part of the process of institutionalizing both the revolution and cinema's place within it.

From the mid-1980s on, the economic networks and formal experiments of global art cinema started reframing the renewed production of Palestinian self-representations in film, especially for filmmakers who studied abroad. Yet, in Gaza in particular, film production training was and often still is acquired through conventional news coverage due to the absence of film schools outside of communications and journalism programs. For researcher and festival director Alia Arasoughly, by the end of the Second Intifada, "what . . . young filmmakers learnt was news; that is, shooting for news stories. . . . The first generation of post-Oslo filmmakers began making

documentaries in a documentary style consistent with typical news stories" (2013, 106). The opening of a practical and theoretical cinema program at Gaza University in 2017 and the dissemination of portable cameras and recording technologies have, however, contributed to a wider engagement with image-making practices.

The absence of viable movie theaters in Gaza, all destroyed over the years by Israeli foot invasions and arson from Islamist groups, continues to limit access to film culture. Moreover, the current Gazan government's censorship encourages a certain homogeneity regarding human rights themes through the prism of suffering, the weight of colonization, and the necessity for (a specific form of) resistance. More generally, film-viewing culture in Gaza revolves around television series from Turkey and Egypt, as well as Egyptian, Indian, and American cinema readily available via satellite channels (Jahjuh and Jahjuh 2018, 122). The many initiatives around theater and art performance, the increased circulation of Palestinian and Arab films to Gazan audiences, and the expansion of European documentary and fiction markets in search of new talents in the global South have presented opportunities to Gazan filmmakers and introduced more diverse aesthetic frames of references.

The tentative independent film economy in Gaza has taken advantage of the possibilities afforded by the news and the humanitarian image-making economy, which have provided a stepping stone for the emergence of new and established filmmakers. Currently, UNRWA remains an important employer, counting more than ten thousand Palestinian staff members in education, relief and social services, and occasionally within its Camp Improvement Program in Gaza (United Nations Relief and Works Agency 2021).[1] Combining the goals of relief and human development since the beginning of the Israeli siege in 2007, the organization has focused on emergency shelters and creating job opportunities in the context of the recurring Israeli bombings and massive unemployment—up to 60 percent in the youth demographic. Job creation importantly includes some aspects of the film sector that touch on education and advocacy, two major axes of investment for UNRWA. Filmmakers may acquire experience and training through advertising or NGO filming workshops typical of the wider NGO-ization of the Palestinian economy: conducting filmmaking activities in UNRWA schools, producing educational films for UNRWA TV, reporting for international or local news agencies, or working as IT engineers (an industrial sector fast developing in Gaza, also promoted by UNRWA's Job Creation Program).

For example, Gaza-based veteran filmmakers Abdelsalam Shehada and Khalil Mozian most famously started making films with the equipment they could access through their employment in news agencies. Both have, however, also experimented with formal, poetic, fictional, and mixed formats — these experimentations are visible in Abdelsalam Shehada's *Rainbow* (2004) and *To My Father* (2008) and Khalil Mozian's *Gaza 36mm* (2012) among other films. Mozian also mentored the famous twins Arab and Tarzan Nasser, whose films *Condom Lead* (2013) and *Dégradé* (2015) were selected at Cannes. Their most recent film, *Gaza Mon Amour* (2020), which celebrates life in Gaza, was selected at the Venice Biennale and won the NETPAC prize presented by the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema at the 2020 Toronto International Film Festival. Jabaly's trajectory is a bit different. Before shooting *Ambulance*, he was first employed by a local hospital to produce a promotional video and would go on to film surgeries as the designated photographer there (Jabaly 2016). This granted him access to the Public Aid Hospital's paramedic crew and oriented the documentary toward specific forms of care, which included an approach inspired by the news.

International film festivals have played a crucial role in Palestinian and Gazan cinema's institutionalization process and the formation of global and diasporic communities of care. During the revolutionary era, they constituted an important strategy for Palestinian filmmakers and solidified networks of solidarity around the Palestine question in the Arab world, in the Third World, and in Western anti-imperialist film festivals (Dickinson 2018; Yaqub 2018). They later structured the circulation of Palestinian cinema in global art cinema circuits while also crossing paths with hybrid events promoting diasporic cinema or cinema and human rights. That these networks intersect different economies and communities of care is a testament to Palestinian cinema's gradual integration into, and instrumentalization of, the global human rights and humanitarian industry.

In fact, film festivals have become crucial partners for international nongovernmental and humanitarian organizations' work of advocacy, while the human rights industry is in turn increasingly sustaining the film industry at large. This shift can be observed in countries where human rights violations are considered high and where the film industry cannot count on official government support, including in Palestine, where it operates according to what I call elsewhere a "not-yet industry" (Saglier 2020). Significantly, the leading Karama Human Rights Film Festival in Jordan receives funds from the European Union and support from the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights, International Media Support, and Open Society Foundations, among other sources. Since 2010, the multiplication of festivals loosely affiliated with Karama Jordan in the rest of the Arab world — including the Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival in Gaza — speaks to how transregional spaces of solidarity are partly enabled by forms of transnational governance, from which they nevertheless strive to remain independent.

Importantly, recent Palestinian film festivals have connected Gaza with the rest of historic Palestine by holding multisited events in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, Bethlehem, Haifa, and Gaza City, among other locations. Rather than enforcing borders through procedures of humanitarian emergency and forms of exceptionalism, this form of care traverses the two separation walls erected to contain Gaza and the West Bank. In 2015, Mozian cofounded the Gaza Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival, which has positioned Gaza within larger networks in the Arab world. Supported in its first years by a starting grant from Amnesty International's cinema arm Movies That Matter, Red Carpet presents a unique event at which Palestinian films, especially those successfully circulating in the global art cinema circuits, may be showcased in the strip. *Ambulance* opened the second edition of the festival in 2016, thus screening Palestinian self-representations back to the community.

Human rights film festivals have succeeded in attracting financial support and afforded crucial spaces of mentorship by introducing Palestinian cinema to Gazan audiences and by organizing children's and family programs aimed at developing an intergenerational film culture. Similarly, the predominantly West Bank–based Shashat Women's Film Festival, founded by the aforementioned Palestinian scholar Alia Arasoughly, has developed filmmaking workshops in Gaza that both employ local technicians and train young female filmmakers. The varied forms of care these institutions have distributed through film navigate networks of governance, markets, and solidarity that also guide Palestinian filmmakers' own work of self-care and community care.

Local and Global Operations of Cinematic Care

Mohamed Jabaly's *Ambulance* sits at the confluence of the art cinema economy and human rights and humanitarian networks explored earlier in the chapter. In addition to Palestinian, Arab, and diasporic events, the film was screened at international art and political documentary, human rights,

and global health film festivals. The film's essayistic tendencies, manifested through its modest hybrid experimentation, and its appeal to humanity facilitated its circulation within global cinema economies (Steyerl 2017); it presented a typical visual object to the informed crowds of international film festivals while touching close to home for Gazan audiences. *Ambulance*'s position within those networks of humanitarian care and artistic revisiting of Palestinian self-representations through personal and collective narrative crucially inform the film's *operations*—how the process of making images both supports on-site rescuing efforts and responds to the pressure of filming as reporting for the international community (both imagined as news publics and materialized through festival audiences).

According to Jabaly, the aim of *Ambulance* is threefold: it provides a complementary and human perspective to the fragmentary mainstream media coverage of the bombings, it circumscribes Western impositions on what Gazan politics of resistance are, and it takes care of the community through the act of filming. He explains: "It was really hard to make it a personal thing, connected to the people and just to the people. When you say 'Gaza,' it's full of politics. I tried to focus on the human perspective, on the people, on my personal story, on the story of the ambulance, me being with the ambulance unit trying to save people. *That was the main goal, just to go and help*, without any other stuff to think about" (Jabaly 2016; emphasis added). Here I propose that we take Jabaly's impulse very seriously: How does filmmaking help to take care of the wounded?

The focus on filmmaking as a mode of direct humanitarian assistance inscribes the film's operations in a double discourse of impact assessment and community-building through affective engagement. On the one hand, new philanthropist and corporate arrangements around the production of engaged documentaries argue that social change must now be anticipated, audited, assessed, and quantified by focusing on the activist infrastructures made by activist organizations, social movements, decision makers, and policy elites that the film is expected to activate. As Meg McLagan says, "Flipping from the film to the campaign in which it is embedded . . . reveals a film's performative power as it circulates, connecting different actors and arenas, and in so doing, producing political effects" (2012, 312). On the other hand, beyond their simple aesthetic propositions, human rights–oriented documentaries similarly aim to provoke the community into acting for change. In-person screenings in particular present a key moment in the lives of these films when opinions, questions, and affects coalesce into varied articulations of unmeasurable, self-paced, and potential impacts

distinct from, and alternative to, those advocated by the new business model.

While *Ambulance* surely intends to bring forward the latter definition of impact, the broader economies of documentary and human rights and their demands for performative effects continue to underlie the conditions of possibility for the film's production and circulation. The film was produced by the Ramallah-based company Idiom Films, which is headed by Mohanad Yaqubi, himself a filmmaker whose cinematic work has deeply engaged with the archives of the Palestinian revolution. Because of Jabaly's support from Norway national funds and IDFA, *Ambulance* was not directly subjected to those new corporate logics — while still having to follow the evolving demands of the market. The film's "impact" took different forms. In Palestine, the film won the Sunbird Award at the Ramallah-based Palestine Cinema Days in 2016 and opened Gaza's Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival's second edition that same year.

The film's varied modes of global exhibition, however, have also meant activating the infrastructure of care and redirecting its operations toward the institutions that make physical care possible. Its most spectacular screenings, at the Sheffield Doc/Fest and at the Global Health Film Festival in London's Barbican, displayed and promoted Gaza's health infrastructures to British audiences by including events such as pop-up activities, an ambulance artwork installation reproducing the film's vehicle, virtual reality projects in which the viewer occupies the ambulance's passenger seat, and live talks with doctors from Gaza. In contrast with the more openly militant settings of Red Carpet (whose 2016 theme, "We want to breathe," addressed both the Israeli siege and the Hamas government), the most sophisticated screenings of *Ambulance*, complete with props and roundtables, celebrated the strip's medical institutions of care, in dire need of financial support.[2]

The few screenings of *Ambulance* mentioned here cannot alone define the work of care that the film undertakes. Its focus on the people of Gaza intimates that the film's production and circulation across local and non-institutional communities may simultaneously activate a different type of network. Thus, the film makes rights claims sensible through very specific and situated political effects, which cannot always be measured. In addition to the more material and financial networks, Gaza's infrastructure of care unfolds through the quotidian practices of survival and the social networks that individuals build in order to get by. In a context where Palestinians in Gaza are either isolated across borders from potential international support as well as their own families, or abstracted by discourses of victimization,

dehumanization, and criminalization in global media, Palestinian cinema both articulates ways of visualizing the local fabric of life and contributes to weaving communities around the possibility of being seen. Documentary, personal, and experimental films like Nahed Awwad's *Gaza Calling* (2005), Sobhi al-Zobaidi's *Missing Gaza* (2005), or Hadeel Assali's *Daggit Gaza* (2009) connect Palestinian filmmakers and communities in Gaza, the West Bank, and the United States through phone calls, metaphors, food recipes, and memories. Other fiction and observational films like Rashid Masharawi's *Curfew* (1994), Arab and Tarzan Nasser's *Dégradé* (2015), and Samer Qatta and Al Malik AbuSidu's *Fishless Sea* (2017) compose narratives around the communities that emerge from colonial entrapment.

Taken literally, urban infrastructures directly make care possible by distributing essential resources such as water, electricity, or fuel to sustain basic individual needs as well as hospitals, kitchens, and, importantly for us, film screenings. To follow AbdouMaliq Simone's description of people as infrastructure, cinema-making as a "mode of provisioning" can "make the city productive, reproducing it, and positioning its residents, territories, and resources in specific ensembles where the energies can be most efficiently deployed and accounted for" (2004, 407). Here, it is cinema-making that channels, distributes, and operates as a conduit for care and social relations in the form of attention and visibility. As a result, Palestinian and Gazan communities emerge from social practices, which develop across and despite illegal borders. The framework of Gazan cinema as an infrastructure of care privileges the incessant circulation of affects and the labor of care over the enforcing of moral codes dictated by global empathy. These varied affects (anger, frustration, but also love and desire) always arise from the contradictions of colonial and care economies.

In *Ambulance*, the filmmaker's labor of care constitutes a key site for the movement between seeking the international recognition of Palestinian suffering through an experimentation with citizen journalism and news aesthetics (caring *about*) and the work of building a community of care (caring *for*). The articulation of these two forms of care matters more than their distinction. Caring *about* and caring *for* are often at odds with each other and display complex arrangements of subjectivity and collectivity, which are both open-ended and constantly redefined by their mutual interaction. The filmmaker's labor precisely consists in navigating the promise of mutual care by addressing global and abstract audiences, the paramedics working on-site (in *Ambulance*), the neighbors who survived the explosion next door, and Palestinian families in the West Bank, in historic Palestine,

in refugee camps, and in the diaspora, while also addressing Arab and global South–based organizations and allies, where those images circulate in the news and in the Arab and Palestinian festivals mentioned previously.

Ambulance achieves this by balancing real-time events and reflexive meditations. In this hybrid documentary where the subjective and the news documentary blend, the self is constructed as a "subject always already in-relation . . . in the first-person plural" (Lebow 2008, xii). Conversely, the first-person plural mediates the attachments that form the collective networks of care and self-representations. The subjective negotiation of such modalities of collectivity drives *Ambulance*'s narrative. Jabaly's voice-over, addressing the international festival crowd in accented English, explains how his own presence among the paramedic crew was at first considered a hindrance because the camera got in the way of them acting quickly. Soon, however, it came to be welcome and sought after. The team's gradual acceptance of the filmmaker parallels the shifting roles he embodies, from a news cameraman to a paramedic whose work of care is dispensed through the camera itself. Simultaneously, Jabaly's mode of address changes, reflecting a repositioning from asking the world to care *about* Palestinians toward performing care *for* and answering *to* his own community.

The filmmaker distributes care by channeling visibility and reproducing Palestinian self-representations. This work entails moving across the "pre-existing, saturated, overdetermined field of representation" (Hochberg 2015, 125) of Gaza, "an inventory," or "a pile of Palestinian images" that look the same but not quite (Toukan 2019). Images of Palestinians as victims, especially in the strip under siege, have come back to the fore despite the 1960s revolutionary efforts to replace them with self-representations grounded in the dignity of a people struggling for liberation. In his diary of the 2014 war, *The Drone Eats with Me* (2015), Gaza-based writer Atef Abu Saif described journalists' love for catastrophic images in almost anthropophagous terms: "Destruction is a rich meal for the camera. Their camera doesn't observe the fast of Ramadan; it devours and devours. It is constantly eating new images. Gaza is consummately professional in cooking up new TV food, so tasty and delicious for a carefree audience" (2014, 76). Through this metaphor, Abu Saif identifies care and the lack thereof as a central affective mechanism for spectators to relate with Palestinian representations, one that engages the whole body, its senses, and its appetites. More than an aesthetic decision to reproduce or circumvent images of suffering, then, Jabaly must choose from a variety of embodiments, a set of attitudes that belong to multiple economies of care and are reinforced by the constant exposure to colonial

and neocolonial violence. As the website for *Ambulance* reads, "The making of the film itself is a journey that requires Mohamed to search among images of unprocessed pain." In other words, the question of representation is not as important as the affective work of *navigating* images and the filmmaking process.

Provocatively, Oraib Toukan's manifesto "Toward a More Navigable Field" proposes that even images motivated by the cannibalistic desires described by Abu Saif (what she calls "cruel images") can be handled and explored in ways that unearth and reanimate Palestinians' presence. Toukan (2019) formulates a politics of the image that recognizes the nonrepresentational field of affects as a mode of care-ful engagement. Her own short experimental film *When Things Occur* (2016), which prefigured the manifesto, navigates the digital space where images of the 2014 war on Gaza are produced and reproduced. Her digital eye travels across different scales, from the pixels of the mobile phone's picture to the viral reproduction of news images at varied levels of compression—from the "poor" image that put a photojournalist's work on the map to the "quality" image that can be sold to major news outlets. This affective navigation within the texture of the image reveals the very material processes behind image-making during the bombings on Gaza: Palestinian photographers', translators', and fixers' negotiation of their technological instruments, their position in the humanitarian and news market, and their affective relations with those photographed.

One scene of *When Things Occur* illustrates Palestinian photographers' articulation of the market's demands and their respect for their subjects through what Ariella Azoulay (2008) calls a "civil contract," the negotiation of relations between the photographer, the photographed, and the spectator through the photographic encounter, which may enable new forms of shared belonging. There, Gaza resident and photojournalist Hosam Salem describes his approach to photographing the father of one of the four children who died on the beach under Israeli shelling, an event that garnered much media attention. The process of taking the picture resulted from Salem's own position as a member of the community and his understanding of what he could decently ask from his subject at a moment of intense suffering. Moving his camera away from the mother's gesture of ripping up her headscarf, which he deemed inappropriate to capture, Salem redirected his lens toward the father, who was consciously performing his pain for a global audience. "I'm grateful that this father is very understanding," Salem says. "He seemed aware that we as photographers convey messages, so he fulfilled this role well given his unenviable, difficult situation."

At the same time, the father was not simply repeating the part of the Palestinian victim; instead, he was redefining his suffering as a form of resistance. As Salem took the picture, the father claimed: "It's for the resistance . . . we shall be martyred. . . . We're all for Palestine," a call that, however, remained unheard in the still image. Is Toukan's camera, as it enhances specific portions of the picture such as hands tensed in motion, searching for a direct illustration of this man's personal articulation of dignity? Or is the camera investigating the visual and material construction of the picture as an index for its success on the market? According to Salem, the image proved beneficial to all parties involved: the grieving father knew to mobilize his special status in specific ways, while Salem as photographer could produce a photo that would provide more visibility to the cause while enabling him to gain a notoriety necessary to his own survival. Whether or not this account truthfully reflects what went on in the father's mind, it does reveal the logic that governed Salem's own decision-making as he attempted to carve out a space for Palestinian solidarity from within the demands of the news and humanitarian image markets.

Similarly, *Ambulance* navigates the diverse economies sustaining Gaza's cinema infrastructure of care. The negotiation of the "right" distance between the camera and the community, the decision whether to care about or to care for, as well as the hope that both can be achieved at the same time, are most discernible in Jabaly's own struggle with the double role he takes on as photojournalist and essay filmmaker. More often than not, he is tempted to repeat the behaviors and gestures internalized by international and local reporters. When the ambulance he rides in stops to attend to the victims of an attack, he presses Abu Marzouq and the team members for their thoughts. When bombings intensify, he asks a colleague to film him as he comments on the events. To paraphrase Pooja Rangan, Jabaly borrows war reporters' testimonial codes of "live eyewitness" to make himself legible as a humanitarian subject (2017, 66).

As he mimics forms of labor with which he is familiar, Jabaly's first instinct as an improvised documentarist consists of shadowing other camera operators in the field, following them as they push their way into an operating room uninvited. While his previous employment required him to join and document a planned surgery in this very hospital, his new affiliation with global imaginaries of care leads him to indirectly disturb the doctors' urgent interventions. As a makeshift journalist, yet independent from the direct pressure of news networks, he holds the contradictory position of being both too close to the dying bodies and too far from the needs of the wounded.

Gazan filmmakers are faced with the constant, repeated, and never-ending negotiation of the variegated distances of performing care — a situation that reveals complex networks of economic and affective belonging differentially inclusive of the filmmakers, their subjects, and their audiences.

Crucial to this internal struggle is Jabaly's persistent belief in the truth of documentary and the indexical quality of images, also tangible in the way in which the film's duration is tethered to the war's temporal boundaries. In this sense, *Ambulance* is closer to films like Fida Qishta's *Where Should the Birds Fly* (2013), which recounts the 2008 Israeli war on Gaza through the linear interview of a traumatized child from Rafah, than to the contemporaneous experiments of Hadeel Assali's *Shuja'iyah, Land of the Brave* (2014). In her five-minute short, Assali reflects from a diasporic point of view on the Israeli army's massacre of Gaza City's eponymous neighborhood between July 19 and 23, 2014. While "being there" triggered Jabaly's documenting impulse in the first place, this impossibility for Assali demanded other means to enact care and reactivate the affective connection across continents. *Shuja'iyah* uses scenes from a home movie shot during a visit the previous summer, a readily intimate yet universally recognizable documentation of family care for a young child, in order to call out international humanitarian agencies' denial of Palestinians' humanity.

The peacefulness of those images from a different time, in contrast to Jabaly's physical and synchronous involvement, collides with the soundtrack. The passionate speech delivered by Palestinian journalist Samer Zaneed accuses the International Committee of the Red Cross of having abandoned Gazans during the bombings by respecting the closed military zone established by Israel. The film's decisive political stance arises from a distinct engagement with distances and embodiment to perform care. The juxtaposition of the personal footage and the visceral condemnation by Zaneed point to the core contradictions of Gaza's cinema infrastructure of care. By creating this aesthetic disjuncture, the film refuses to take for granted the entanglements with the humanitarian economy that maintain *Ambulance*'s imaginary and cohesion. Instead, the anger that drives Assali's film is born out of the shared affects of the Palestinian community across borders — from the filmmaker's location in the United States to the journalist in Gaza — in a way that also reorganizes the affective and physical distances required by war reporting.

Care-ful filmmaking ensures that the social relations engineered and sustained through image-making practices continue to produce representations across networks, so that Palestine and Gaza in particular remain "the

Make a campaign, please, in English, in Arabic,

Figure 2.3 In Hadeel Assali's *Shujaʿiyah, Land of the Brave* (2014), affects are shared across borders.

image that will not go away," to quote Edward Said (Said and Mohr 1986, 41). Distributing care in the form of visibility also assembles the networks that make care possible. As he develops his role of documenting the bombings and the people directly affected by them, Jabaly attracts attention with his camera and is asked to put his skills and equipment in the service of the community. When Jabaly visits his friend's neighbors whose apartment has been shelled, the father shows him around and points to meaningful items they lost while his wife interrupts the two of them: "Show him!" The father becomes a guide to the camera's eye, and a substitute filmmaker who selects the scenes that matter. At the Rafah checkpoint where the paramedic team helps transport a young girl heading to a surgery in Egypt, travelers waiting to cross brandish their documents and demand to be filmed while they share details of the obstacles they are facing. The Palestinian community is not simply becoming visible; it gains the power to frame itself through collective work.

While the filmmaker's labor is one of navigating the various distances of caring about and caring for, Jabaly is being approached both as a Palestinian neighbor and as someone holding a camera. He has come to represent the ambiguous position of Palestinian journalists on the ground who work for international agencies. Often labeled "locals"—as opposed to the foreign journalists whose lives are not to be put at risk—they operate as fixers and intermediaries between local danger and global witnessing. They benefit

Figure 2.4 Mohamed Jabaly, *Ambulance* (2016). The father's friend asks Jabaly to document how the window frame popped out due to the neighboring explosion.

from an "embodied knowledge" due to their intimate experience of colonial violence, which is precisely what gives them value on the international labor market. The groundwork of local photographers is, in effect, conducive to developing "skills of proximity," a social intimacy that facilitates the work of fixing and reporting (Bishara 2012, 150). *Ambulance* shows the processes through which the skills of proximity are acquired and how negotiating distances is learned through camerawork: what to film or not to film, how to frame it, the questions that can be asked and those that lose meaning in context. Those skills are therefore not only mobilized to the benefit of film-making but also constitute both the condition for, and the effect of, Jabaly's effort of caring *with* the community.

Conclusion

As a framework of analysis, Gaza's cinema infrastructure of care proposes tools to apprehend the role that cinema plays in dispensing care in Gaza. In turn, it points to how modalities of cinematic care emerge from complex economic entanglements now dominated by humanitarian governance. Moving away from debates around aesthetics of suffering, I investigate instead the affective labor of self-representation as a form of care. Rather than questioning what constitutes appropriate images of Palestinians in Gaza and the limitations of humanitarian representations, I redirect the theoretical lens

onto the material conditions of possibility for self-representation, which, to echo Meari's definition of *sumud*, materialize an affective praxis of self and community-building. In other words, if self-representation does produce the possibility for alternative practices of care, it is only through the hard and continuous work of negotiating film economies' predetermined modes of meaning and image-making.

In the final moments of *Ambulance*, Abu Marzouq, the lead paramedic, asks Jabaly to return to the crew with his camera after a short time away from the hospital. Reflecting on his relationship with Abu Marzouq, Jabaly concludes: "My camera had become his friend and it has encouraged me to go back and film." The paramedics whom Jabaly (2016) follows and documents similarly expressed off the record the "need to see [them]selves, see how [they] are working during the war." Their eagerness reflects a desire to witness how the circulation of care fashions self-representations. The filmmaker, whose labor is often diverted toward caring about, learns through practice that long-term work builds the basis for caring for and with. Having to gauge what the camera work does, who the film is addressing, and the ethical implications of self-representation ultimately brings to the fore how the distribution of attention and the mediation of care crucially organize the very construction of community-based trust.

Notes

1   In its annual report "UNRWA in Figures, 2020–2021" (United Nations Relief and Works Agency 2021), UNRWA counts 12,132 area staff members posted in Gaza, in addition to 16 international staff members. In 2018, more than 2,000 new jobs were created as part of the Camp Improvement Programs, but those no longer figure in the 2021 survey.

2   The theme "We want to breathe" resonates with the chant "I can't breathe," mobilized during the Black Lives Matter movement after the murder of Eric Garner by police in the New York City borough of Staten Island in 2014. One member of the Red Carpet festival team drew the comparison between the 2016 theme and the US antiracist protests in a 2020 Facebook post.

Contributors

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Samirah Alkassim is an assistant professor of film theory at George Mason University. She is coeditor of the series Palgrave Studies in Arab Cinema, and coauthor, with Nezar Andary, of *The Cinema of Muhammad Malas* (2018). Additional publications include contributions to the second edition of *The Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema* (2020), and chapters in *Cinema of the Arab World: Contemporary Directions in Theory and Practice* (2020); *Refocus: The Films of Jocelyne Saab* (2021); and *Global Horror: Hybridity and Alterity in Transnational Horror Film* (2022), which she coedited with Ziad El-Bayoumi Foty.

Basma Alsharif explores cyclical political histories and conflicts. In films and installations that move backward and forward in history, between place and nonplace, she confronts the legacy of colonialism and the experience of displacement with satire, doubt, and hope. Her films include *Ouroboros* (2017), *Deep Sleep* (2014), *O Persecuted* (2014), *Home Movies Gaza* (2013), *Farther Than the Eye Can See* (2012), *The Story of Milk and Honey* (2011), *We Began by Measuring Distance* (2009), and *Everywhere Was the Same* (2007).

Hadeel Assali is an anthropologist, filmmaker, and former chemical engineer. She recently completed her PhD in anthropology at Columbia University, and her forthcoming manuscript examines the colonial legacies of the discipline of geology and how it has come up against local, intimate knowledge and relations with the land in southern Palestine. She has made several short films focused on Gaza and is currently working on her first feature-length documentary. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at University of Pennsylvania and has returned to Columbia University as a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, as well as at the Center for Science and Society.

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Ahmed Mansour is a filmmaker, curator, and journalist from the Gaza Strip. His films include *Brooklyn Inshallah* (2019) and *Angel of Gaza* (2021). He also codirected *Return to Ramallah* (2022) with Ziad Foty. He is currently director of programs and curator at the Museum of the Palestinian People and director and producer of Filistia Films.

Arab and Tarzan Nasser, also known as Muhammed and Ahmed Abu Nasser, are directors, editors, and actors from the Gaza Strip and 2010 winners of the Best Artist of the Year award from the A. M. Qattan Foundation for their project *Gazawood*. Their films include *Condom Lead* (2013), which screened in competition at the Cannes Film Festival, and two feature films, *Dégradé* (2015) and *Gaza Mon Amour* (2020), which premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

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