

Epistemic Violence and Academic Repression: Anti-Palestinian Racism and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Context of the Gaza Genocide

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Abstract

This paper critically interrogates the institutionalized repression of pro-Palestinian scholarship in academia, particularly within psychology and allied social sciences, framing it within broader neoliberal and settler-colonial structures. Drawing on postcolonial and decolonial critiques, it examines how anti-Palestinian racism operates as an epistemic weapon to silence, delegitimize, and erase Palestinian narratives through carceral academic mechanisms, targeted defamation, and institutional complicity. The analysis situates these dynamics within the corporatization of universities (particularly in North American and European higher education), the weaponization of allegations of antisemitism, and the entrenchment of Zionist ideological imperatives in knowledge production. In particular, it centers the racial and colonial legacy of psychology, positioning the case of Palestine as a paradigmatic example of how these broader structural dynamics of epistemic violence operate within academic disciplines. Through a critical examination of case studies and self-reflexive scholarship documenting institutional repression of pro-Palestinian scholars, this paper exposes academia’s alignment with colonial logics—particularly within psychology and the social sciences in North American and European institutions more broadly—and its role in maintaining epistemic violence. Further, it advocates for radical, justice-oriented methodologies—such as participatory action research and transnational solidarities—to reclaim universities as sites of decolonial resistance and epistemic justice. Ultimately, the paper calls for dismantling academic



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structures complicit in oppression, and stages decolonization as refusal: a mode of affective-academic disinvestment in the colonial university fostering a transformative, anti-colonial praxis in higher education and psychology.

Keywords

epistemic violence, settler-colonialism, anti-Palestinian racism, decolonial resistance, neoliberal academia, Zionism

المخلص

تناول هذه الورقة بالنقد القمع المؤسسي للمعرفة المناصرة للفلسطينيين داخل الأوساط الأكاديمية، وتحديداً في مجالي علم النفس والعلوم الاجتماعية المرتبطة به، وتضع هذا القمع في سياق البنى النيولبرالية والاستعمارية الاستيطانية الأوسع. وبالاستناد إلى النقد ما بعد الكولونيالي واللاستعماري، تبحث الورقة في كيفية عمل العنصرية المعادية للفلسطينيين كسلاح معرفي يهدف إلى إسكات السرديات الفلسطينية ونزع شرعيتها ومحورها، من خلال آليات أكاديمية عقابية، وحملات تشهير ممنهجة، وتواطؤ مؤسسي. وتضع الورقة هذه الديناميكيات في إطار خصخصة الجامعات، وتوظيف اتهامات معاداة السامية كأداة سياسية، وترسخ الحميات الأيديولوجية الصهيونية في إنتاج المعرفة. وتركز الورقة بشكل خاص على الإرث العرقي والاستعماري لعلم النفس، معتبرة الحالة الفلسطينية نموذجاً يوضح كيف تعمل هذه الديناميكيات البنيوية الأوسع للعنف المعرفي داخل التخصصات الأكاديمية. ومن خلال دراسة نقدية لحالات موثقة للقمع المؤسسي بحق الباحثين المناصرين لفلسطين، إلى جانب كتابة تأملية ذاتية، تكشف الورقة عن تماهي المؤسسات الأكاديمية مع المنطق الاستعماري ودورها في إدامة العنف المعرفي. كما تدعو إلى منهجيات جذرية قائمة على العدالة، كالبحت التشاركي والتضامن العابر للحدود، لاستعادة الجامعات كفضاءات للمقاومة اللاستعمارية والعدالة المعرفية. وتختتم الورقة بالدعوة إلى تفكيك البنى الأكاديمية المتواطئة مع القمع، وتقديم اللاستعمار كفعل رفض، أي كشكل من أشكال فك الاستثمار الأكاديمي الوجداني في الجامعة الاستعمارية.

الكلمات الدالة

العنف المعرفي، الاستعمار الاستيطاني، العنصرية المعادية للفلسطينيين، المقاومة اللاستعمارية، الأكاديميا النيولبرالية، الصهيونية

Non-Technical Summary

Background

Universities are often seen as places where new knowledge is created freely and fairly. But scholars who study or speak out about the occupation of Palestine—especially since the war in Gaza escalated in October 2023—have faced serious professional consequences: silenced speech, cancelled talks, disciplinary action, and even job loss. This paper looks at how and why this repression happens, and argues it is not random or isolated, but reflects deeper patterns in how universities operate.

Why was this analysis done?

The authors wanted to understand why criticism of Israeli state policy is treated so differently from other kinds of political critique in academic settings—and why psychology, a field that prides itself on progressive values, has largely stayed silent or even been complicit. They also wanted to document their own and colleagues' experiences of professional

repercussions, since these experiences are rarely written about openly, out of fear of further retaliation.

What did the researchers do and find?

The authors combined a review of existing research with three real-world examples (including a 2018 conference controversy in South Africa and the treatment of individual scholars) and their own personal reflections as academics working on this topic. They found that universities increasingly function like businesses—chasing rankings, funding, and reputation—which makes them more likely to punish scholarship that could be seen as controversial or reputationally risky, including support for Palestinian rights. They also found that accusations of antisemitism are sometimes used, in specific and identifiable ways, to shut down legitimate academic criticism of state policy, and that this fits into a longer history of psychology being used to justify colonial and racist projects rather than challenge them.

What do these findings mean?

The paper argues that protecting Palestinian scholars and scholarship is not a side issue—it is a test of whether universities and academic disciplines like psychology actually live up to their stated commitments to justice, free inquiry, and challenging oppression. The authors call for concrete changes: universities standing up for scholars under attack, journals and reviewers examining their own biases, and academics building collective support networks so no one has to face these pressures alone.

This paper aims to contribute to the broader anti-capitalist critique of academia by critically examining its entanglement with neoliberal and colonial structures as they manifest primarily in North American and European higher education, particularly in relation to mental health and psychological disciplines within the academic sphere. Through an analysis of three vignettes alongside the author's self-reflexive experiences documenting institutional repression of pro-Palestinian scholarship, it interrogates the deep entanglement between globalized academic institutions and the ultra-neoliberal, colonial project upheld by Zionist ideology, as it operates through specific institutional structures in North American and European academia.

We define the following key concepts as follows, for precise and consistent use throughout the paper. By *Zionism*, we refer to a political ideology and settler-colonial project oriented toward the establishment and maintenance of an ethnonationalist Jewish state in historic Palestine, as critically examined in settler-colonial studies (Ayyash, 2024; Confino, 2023). *Epistemic violence* denotes the systematic devaluation, erasure, and delegitimization of subaltern knowledges within dominant regimes of knowledge production (Brunner, 2023; Spivak, 1988). *Neoliberalism* is understood as a political-economic rationality that restructures institutions—including universities—according to market logics,

competition, and managerial governance, shaping what counts as legitimate knowledge (Adams et al., 2019). Anti-Palestinian racism refers to the systemic denial, erasure, and delegitimization of Palestinian rights, history, and narratives, operating through both individual acts and institutional practices (Institute for Understanding Anti-Palestinian Racism, n.d.). While neoliberalism represents the specific market-driven restructuring of academia since the 1980s, capitalism provides the broader economic context within which these dynamics operate. Both systems prioritize profit motives, shareholder value, and market competition over critical scholarship that challenges powerful interests, particularly when those interests include states and corporations invested in maintaining the Israeli colonial project (della Porta, 2026; Saifer & Ahmad, 2026; Shakir et al., 2025; Wind, 2024).

The paper exposes the structural links between academia and neoliberalism, highlighting how academic institutions increasingly prioritize profit-driven models, corporate ideological funding, and managerial governance. These imperatives shape research agendas, faculty employment conditions, and knowledge production, aligning universities with broader systems of colonial and settler colonial capitalist exploitation rather than spaces of critical thought and social transformation. In this context, neoliberalism operates not only as an economic framework but as a governing rationality that reshapes universities according to market logics. Knowledge production becomes tied to funding availability, institutional rankings, and political acceptability, privileging research agendas that align with dominant geopolitical and economic interests while marginalizing critical or dissenting perspectives (Adams et al., 2019). As a result, scholarship on Palestine is often rendered “risky,” as it may threaten donor relations, institutional reputations, or state-aligned funding streams.

It also critiques the colonial foundations of globalized higher education, examining how academic institutions—particularly in the Global North—reproduce violent colonial epistemologies, extract knowledge from the Global South, and marginalize anti-colonial scholarship (Bou Zeineddine et al., 2022; Coşkan et al., 2021; Glasford & Brown, 2025). These dynamics are analyzed within the broader context of the ongoing settler-colonial project in Palestine, demonstrating how knowledge production is weaponized to sustain and legitimize colonial oppression and dispossession.

Furthermore, the paper interrogates the role of Zionist ideology in shaping academic institutional politics and knowledge production, particularly in North American and European universities. It explores how universities actively participate in normalizing and legitimizing the Zionist colonial project through institutional partnerships with Israeli universities (Atshan, 2019; Wind, 2024), in suppressing pro-Palestinian scholarship and activism (Alqaisiya & Perugini, 2024; Palestine Legal, 2023), and reinforcing orientalist and Islamophobic narratives in curricula and research (Ramadan, 2025; Weiner, 2023).

Incorporating self-reflexive narratives, the paper also reflects on the author’s own experiences within academia, illustrating the constraints, contradictions, and possibilities

of resistance to epistemic violence and exclusion of Palestinian scholarship and Palestine solidarity. By centering these experiences, it sheds light on the pressures exerted on scholars who challenge dominant power structures and advocate for decolonial and anti-Zionist perspectives.

This paper argues that anti-Palestinian racism in academia (as defined further above, drawing on the [Institute for Understanding Anti-Palestinian Racism, n.d.](#), and [Ahmed, 2007](#)) operates as a form of epistemic violence embedded within neoliberal and settler-colonial structures that govern knowledge production. We show how these dynamics are reproduced through institutional practices, disciplinary norms, and global inequalities in academic power, resulting in the systematic marginalization of Palestinian scholarship and its allies. The paper proceeds by first examining anti-Palestinian racism as a mechanism of epistemic erasure, then situating these processes within the colonial and racial legacy of psychology, before analyzing the case of Palestine as a paradigmatic site of academic repression. We then explore how neoliberal transformations of the university intensify these dynamics, and finally outline pathways toward epistemic justice and decolonial transformation. We propose refusal as a mode of affective-academic disinvestment in the colonial university ([Grande, 2018](#); [Metcalf, 2019](#); [Tuck & Yang, 2014](#)) while insisting on mobilizing and offering “pedagogies of refusal” ([Rodríguez, 2019](#)).

In sum, the paper proceeds as follows. First, we examine anti-Palestinian racism and academic repression as forms of epistemic violence. Second, we situate these dynamics within the colonial and racial legacy of psychology. Third, we analyze Palestine as a paradigmatic case of epistemic suppression—that is, the active institutional blocking and punishment of Palestine-related scholarship, distinct from the more diffuse epistemic erasure discussed above. Fourth, we examine the role of neoliberal academia in structuring these processes. Finally, we outline pathways toward epistemic justice and decolonial transformation.

While these dynamics have historical roots in the ongoing settler-colonial project since 1948, this paper focuses particularly on their intensification in Global North (i.e., primarily Europe and North America) academia following October 2023, when the Gaza genocide triggered unprecedented levels of academic repression and institutional complicity ([FIDH, 2025](#); [Palestine Legal, 2023](#)).

Academic Racism and Affective Erasure

According to the Institute for Understanding Anti-Palestinian Racism, anti-Palestinian racism seeks to censor and erase Palestinian narratives from the public sphere, either directly through punitive measures or indirectly by fostering fear of such measures to deter individuals from expressing support for Palestinian rights ([Institute for Understanding Anti-Palestinian Racism, n.d.](#)). These tactics vary depending on the context and often

include, but are not limited to, defaming individuals' character and reputation, falsely accusing them of promoting hate, violence, or antisemitism, denying or threatening to deny professional opportunities or advancement, dehumanizing Palestinians, negating their lived experiences, and portraying them as an inferior people. The persistent and predictable nature of these forms of backlash have the effect of discouraging open discourse on Palestine and instilling fear in those allies who might otherwise participate in or support Palestinian initiatives ([Institute for Understanding Anti-Palestinian Racism, n.d.](#)). Drawing on Sara Ahmed's (2007) work on racialization and the production of 'white space,' anti-Palestinian racism operates through the active construction of academia as a domain where Palestinian perspectives are deemed inappropriate, threatening, or irrelevant. This racialization process produces what Ahmed calls 'spaces of whiteness' where certain bodies and knowledges are excluded through seemingly neutral institutional practices. This definition is consistent with emerging scholarly work that conceptualizes anti-Palestinian racism as a distinct form of racialization embedded in global systems of Islamophobia, securitization, and colonial governance ([Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2024](#); [Fekete, 2024](#)).

The academic sphere is not immune to these dynamics. Over the past two decades, tertiary institutions have increasingly adopted aggressive policies that silence Palestinian voices and their allies within knowledge production and academia. This trend reflects broader systemic efforts to marginalize and suppress critical engagement with Palestinian perspectives ([Deeb & Winegar, 2024](#)). Various forms of harassment actively undermine pro-Palestinian scholarship within academic institutions. These tactics include professional marginalization, targeted defamation, false accusations of antisemitism or extremism, threats to career advancement, and institutional censorship. Such efforts create a hostile environment that discourages scholars from engaging with Palestinian issues, ultimately restricting academic freedom and critical inquiry ([Alqaisiya & Perugini, 2024](#)). The racialized policing of pro-Palestinian scholarship in academia lies in the neoliberal logic of academic institutions (predominantly Global North institutions, albeit with regional variation). Capitalist narratives have long functioned as instruments of epistemic violence, structuring knowledge production in ways that marginalize, suppress, and delegitimize scholarship that challenges the hegemonic order ([Kelly, 2023](#)). Within this framework, capitalist imperatives shape what counts as legitimate knowledge by rewarding productivity, neutrality, and alignment with dominant power structures, while disincentivizing research that challenges state violence or colonial relations. This creates structural pressures on scholars to conform, avoid politically sensitive topics, or frame their work in ways that depoliticize systemic injustice ([Adams et al., 2019](#)). Nowhere is this more evident than in the systematic policing of pro-Palestinian scholars and their allies, who find themselves surveilled, defamed, and institutionally obstructed for daring to articulate Palestinian narratives ([Shwaikh & Gould, 2019](#)). This form of anti-Palestinian racism operates not merely as an exclusionary practice but as an active erasure,

reinforcing settler-colonial power by rendering Palestinian knowledge production illegitimate, dangerous, or subversive (Fúnez-Flores, 2024a). For example, this is evident in the systematic marginalization of scholars such as Norman Finkelstein, whose work on Israel-Palestine led to his academic dismissal; Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, whose research on securitization and settler violence faces institutional suppression; Lara and Stephen Sheehi whose work exposes what they define as “psychoanalyses under occupation”, and Steven Salaita, who was terminated from the University of Illinois in 2014 for his tweets criticizing Israeli policy. Similarly, Lara Sheehi faced professional repercussions at George Washington University for her work on ‘psychoanalyses under occupation’. These cases, which have been widely documented in scholarship on academic repression and the “Palestine exception” to academic freedom (Falk, 2017; Salaita, 2015; Shwaikh & Gould, 2019), exemplify a broader strategy of intellectual erasure and repression.

Academic institutions reveal and perpetuate their colonial legacy through the erasure and delegitimization of the Palestinian narrative (Weiner, 2023). Historically complicit in colonial projects, they continue to function as gatekeepers of knowledge that conforms to U.S. imperialistic and neoliberal logics (Lynn, 2026). Palestinian scholars, by virtue of their very subjectivity, are positioned as “suspect intellectuals” (Vose, 2022)—their analyses dismissed as polemical rather than scholarly and their work deemed too “political” to warrant legitimacy (Pappé, 2024). This racialized dismissal is not incidental; it is an integral function of academia’s role in sustaining structures of domination. Scholarship that exposes the entanglement of Zionism with colonial violence, genocide, and apartheid is preemptively discredited, while narratives aligned with settler-colonial interests are institutionalized as neutral, objective, and authoritative. For instance, Hakim et al. (2023) demonstrate how mainstream social psychology reproduces settler-colonial assumptions by depoliticizing Palestinian precarity, framing it as individual vulnerability rather than structurally produced violence.

Anti-Palestinian repression in academia does not merely take the form of exclusion but operates through carceral mechanisms that actively punish dissent (Falk, 2017). Universities (particularly in North American and European contexts), increasingly corporatized and tethered to political and economic interests, deploy punitive strategies to silence scholars critical of Israel’s settler-colonial regime (Landy et al., 2020). These strategies include the surveillance and blacklisting of Palestinian academics and their allies, often facilitated by external Zionist organizations working in concert with university administrations (Wagner, 2010). The strategic deployment of allegations—primarily accusations of antisemitism—functions as a disciplinary mechanism, forcing scholars into defensive positions where they must constantly justify their work’s legitimacy rather than engage in substantive intellectual inquiry (Finkelstein, 2000; Rakipoğlu, 2024). Reports by organizations such as Palestine Legal document hundreds of cases of surveillance, doxxing, and institutional sanctions targeting scholars and students engaged in Palestine advocacy in the United States (Palestine Legal, 2023).

Silence is an active force in the maintenance of colonial structures. The complicity of academic institutions in anti-Palestinian racism is not simply a matter of passive neglect but of deliberate alignment with power. In multiple documented cases, university administrations have capitulated to lobbying pressures, issued statements that erase Palestinian suffering, and imposed bureaucratic obstacles to Palestine-related research. For example, multiple universities in the United States and Europe have cancelled Palestine-related events or sanctioned faculty following donor or political pressure, illustrating the institutionalization of such constraints (Achenbach et al., 2024; Deeb & Winegar, 2024). This complicity extends to peer review processes, where Palestinian scholars and their allies encounter disproportionate rejection rates, editorial bias, and ideological gatekeeping that ensures that the boundaries of acceptable discourse remain firmly within colonial epistemologies (Maira, 2018). This racialized academic complicity functions affectively and politically not only to exile Palestinian narrations and scholarship, but also Palestinian futurity and survivability amidst such ‘affective economies’ (Ahmed, 2004).

The Racial Legacy of Psychology and Allied Disciplines

The historical trajectory of psychology and its allied disciplines is deeply entangled with colonial and racial structures that have shaped both its epistemologies and practices (Malherbe et al., 2021; Teo, 2022). Emerging within Eurocentric frameworks, psychology has long functioned as a tool of colonial governance, pathologizing indigenous and racialized communities, legitimizing racial hierarchies, and reinforcing systems of domination under the guise of scientific objectivity (Durrheim, 2024). From early intelligence testing, which provided pseudo-scientific justification for eugenics and racial stratification (Gillborn et al., 2023; Tabron & Thomas, 2023), to the ongoing disparities in mental health diagnoses and access to care (Lu et al., 2021; Rodgers et al., 2022), psychology has played an active role in the reproduction of structural violence. Despite increasing critiques, the discipline continues to evade a substantive reckoning with its complicity in racial capitalism and settler colonialism, failing to address racism as both a systemic reality and an internal disciplinary crisis.

Psychological science has historically failed to confront its own complicity in colonial structures, a failure most evident in the systematic erasure of anti-colonial and decolonial scholarship from mainstream psychology curricula (Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021). Despite their profound contributions to understanding oppression, resistance, and the sociopolitical dimensions of human suffering, critical thinkers such as Lev Vygotsky, Frantz Fanon, and Hussein Bulhan remain marginalized in psychological training (Bulhan, 2015). This exclusion reflects a broader disciplinary reluctance to engage with radical critiques that challenge the status quo, ultimately perpetuating epistemic violence and reinforcing hegemonic narratives. Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory challenged the dominant Euro-American emphasis on individualistic cognition, yet his insights have been largely overshadowed by positivist and decontextualized

models of psychological functioning (Barone et al., 2012). Fanon's (2023) decolonial psychoanalysis exposed the psychic wounds inflicted by colonial violence, articulating the deep interconnections between racism, psychological distress, and revolutionary resistance. The marginalization of Fanon within social and political psychology has been critically documented (Abi-Ghannam et al., 2023). Similarly, Bulhan's (1985) work on "psychological oppression" extends Fanon's critique, demonstrating how coloniality continues to structure mental health systems and knowledge production (Fúnez-Flores, 2024b; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). The exclusion of these scholars from dominant psychological discourses is not incidental—it reflects the discipline's investment in maintaining epistemic hierarchies that privilege Euro-American thought while erasing alternative knowledge systems rooted in the lived realities of the colonized.

Beyond its epistemological foundations, psychology remains structurally implicated in the global asymmetries of knowledge production. Research funding, agenda-setting, and authorship remain concentrated in the Global North, while data are disproportionately extracted from majority-world countries. Grantmakers in the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe dictate research priorities, methodologies, and theoretical framings, reducing the Global South to a site of data collection rather than intellectual production. This neocolonial structure reinforces the idea that knowledge flows unidirectionally—from the center to the periphery—denying scholars from the Global South the agency to define their own research agendas. This dynamic is also reflected in global inequities in knowledge production, where scholarship from the Global South is systematically devalued (Bou Zeineddine et al., 2022). Recognizing these inequalities, *The Lancet* has recently mandated that studies using data from majority-world countries must include at least one author from the country where the data were collected (Kumar et al., 2022). While this policy is a step toward greater inclusivity, it does little to disrupt the deeper power relations embedded in global academia. Under the Trump administration, federal funding cuts in the U.S. (e.g., NIH, USAID) deepen epistemic injustice, which tokenistic inclusion cannot fix; meaningful decolonization requires redistributing resources, dismantling gatekeeping, and fostering equitable North-South collaborations.

Psychology's complicity in systems of domination is not limited to knowledge production; it extends to its historical and ongoing entanglements with state violence and imperial warfare (Robertson et al., 2007). One of the most egregious examples of this complicity is the American Psychological Association's (APA) longstanding refusal to prohibit its members from participating in torture programs at sites such as Guantánamo Bay and CIA black sites (Soldz, 2008). Unlike other professional bodies, such as the American Medical Association, which explicitly banned medical professionals from engaging in torture, the APA actively facilitated the involvement of psychologists in the development of "enhanced interrogation techniques"—a sanitized term for psychological torture (Eidelson, 2023). Sleep deprivation, sensory overload, solitary confinement, and other methods of coercion were designed with the explicit participation of psychologists,

who provided the scientific rationale for these abuses. Even after public outrage and the 2015 Hoffman Report exposed the APA's collusion with the U.S. Department of Defense, meaningful accountability remained elusive (Aalbers, 2022). This episode is not an aberration but a manifestation of psychology's deep-rooted structural alignment with imperial power, where scientific expertise is weaponized in service of state violence rather than human liberation.

A decolonial reimagining of psychology requires more than superficial reforms or the inclusion of diverse voices within existing frameworks; it demands a radical rupture with the discipline's colonial foundations (Veronese & Kagee, 2025). This entails building and mobilizing refusals that center narrations, epistemologies, struggles, and resistances of the Global South, rejecting the co-optation of decolonization into a mere metaphor, and actively dismantling the institutional structures that sustain and mobilize epistemic and material inequalities (see, e.g., Grande, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2014 on refusal and the risks of decolonization becoming a metaphor). Psychology cannot claim to be a discipline committed to human well-being while remaining complicit in the very systems that produce psychological suffering. Decolonizing psychology as we see it directs attention to the affective aspects of "scholarly academic" complicities that silences voices of dissent, and refuses to be used and abused as a tool of colonial brutality. Decolonizing psychology outlines and transforms the racialized academic system into a site of resistance, solidarity, and collective liberation (Diab et al., 2020).

The Case of Palestine: A Long History of Whitewashing or Demonizing Palestinians and Their Allies

The case of Palestine exemplifies the ongoing whitewashing and demonization of Palestinians and their allies, a process deeply embedded within colonial structures of power that seek to suppress and distort Palestinian narratives (Lentin, 2020). The systematic manipulation, silencing, and misrepresentation of Palestinian voices are not mere by-products of the conflict; they are deliberate tactics designed to maintain the dominance of settler-colonial narratives and uphold the interests of imperial powers. The erasure of Palestinian experiences from academic discourse functions as a tool of epistemic violence, denying the legitimacy of Palestinian knowledge and reinforcing colonial and Zionist ideologies that position Palestinians as "the other" or as obstacles to the supposed peace and progress of the region (Eliassi, 2021).

Historically, Palestinian resistance and sovereignty have been systematically delegitimized within academic circles (Riemer, 2022). The narrative of Palestinians as terrorists or passive victims of an intractable conflict is a manifestation of this colonial manipulation, which seeks to frame Palestinians as undeserving of self-determination (Al-Hindi, 2023). This historical demonization, deeply rooted in the colonial project of Zionism, has resulted in the marginalization of Palestinian scholarship and activism, with voices critical of Israeli policies often dismissed as biased or radical. These scholars

are routinely excluded from the broader academic conversation, their work dismissed or overshadowed by the dominant narratives that support the Israeli state's colonial objectives (Ayyash, 2023).

This institutional erasure is a direct manifestation of the power dynamics that permeate academia, where knowledge production is shaped by imperial and neoliberal interests. Academic institutions, as sites of power and knowledge, are complicit in the broader settler-colonial project (Giacaman, 2023). By privileging Western and Zionist narratives while silencing Palestinian voices, these institutions not only perpetuate the status quo but also serve to legitimize the continued dispossession and marginalization of Palestinians. The refusal to engage with Palestinian epistemologies—rooted in lived experiences of occupation, exile, and resistance—ensures that colonial power remains unchallenged within these spaces (Fernandes, 2024; Veronese & Kagee, 2025).

The failure of major international academic societies to take explicit and unequivocal stances against the ongoing genocide in Gaza reflects a profound complicity in the structural violence that underpins the Israeli settler-colonial project (Giroux, 2024). Many of these organizations have remained silent or issued limited responses in the face of the violence and dispossession that Palestinians, especially those in Gaza, continue to endure. This reluctance to condemn the genocide is not a neutral stance; it is a deliberate choice to align with hegemonic power structures that prioritize geopolitical interests over the lives and dignity of oppressed peoples (Fúnez-Flores, 2024a). For instance, the American Psychological Association (APA) has faced criticism for its historical silence on settler-colonial violence, despite taking positions on other global human rights concerns (Eidelson, 2025). More broadly, Hakim et al. (2023) demonstrate how social psychological research has systematically reproduced settler-colonial assumptions by depoliticizing Palestinian precarity and aligning with dominant geopolitical frameworks.

Further, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (October 10, 2023) and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) (October 13, 2023) released one-sided statements on October 7 that ignore Israel's occupation and its impact on Palestinian rights and mental health (Jabr, 2023).

International academic societies, as institutions that shape global knowledge and influence policy discourse, have a moral responsibility to respond to state-sanctioned violence and human rights abuses, particularly when they are of a genocidal nature. However, instead of actively condemning the brutal assault on Gaza, many of these societies have chosen to remain silent, citing political neutrality or avoiding involvement in “conflict” narratives (Kynsilehto, 2025). This refusal to take a stand is indicative of a broader unwillingness within the global academic community to confront the realities of settler colonialism, especially when those realities implicate powerful members of Western nations, such as Israel. In doing so, these organizations uphold the status quo, privileging the interests of the powerful over the lives of marginalized peoples (Suslovic et al., 2024).

This silence is not merely a passive absence of condemnation; it is a form of structural violence in itself. By refusing to speak out, academic societies tacitly endorse the ongoing genocide, enabling the continuation of a system that marginalizes and dehumanizes Palestinians. This ambivalence sustains the colonial infrastructure that facilitates the dispossession, displacement, and killing of Palestinian people.

The failure of academic societies to address the Gaza genocide is also tied to the broader political economy of academia itself. Many of these institutions rely on funding and political backing from governments and organizations closely aligned with Israel, particularly in the United States, United Kingdom, and parts of Western Europe, where military, economic, and academic partnerships with Israeli institutions are well documented (Afana, 2023; Forthofer, 2024; Oleart & Roch, 2025). This financial and political dependence creates a situation where academic societies are unwilling or unable to challenge the power structures that shape their existence. This dynamic, rooted in neoliberalism and imperialism, renders these societies complicit in the larger project of Zionist colonization and the genocide being carried out against Palestinians.

Moreover, this complicity is not only about the silence on Gaza but extends to the broader failure of international academic organizations to engage with the history of Palestinian dispossession and the ongoing settler-colonial violence. These societies are often quick to condemn other forms of state violence or human rights abuses in regions where their own political and economic interests are not at stake. Yet, when it comes to Palestine, they adopt a stance of silence or equivocation, treating the issue as a political "conflict" rather than a clear-cut case of genocidal violence. This disingenuous framing allows the international community, and particularly the academic world, to avoid confronting the deeply embedded systems of racial and colonial oppression that continue to define the Palestinian experience (Hashemi, 2024).

In critically examining this silence, we must recognize that it is not simply an omission but an active participation in the erasure of Palestinian suffering and the legitimization of colonial violence. The academic world, through its silence or ambivalence, effectively reinforces the structures of oppression that Palestinians face daily. To address this, international academic societies must move beyond the rhetoric of neutrality and take decisive stances against the ongoing genocide in Gaza. This requires a radical rethinking of the role of academia in perpetuating colonialism and a commitment to amplifying the voices of those who have been silenced by violence and dispossession. Only through such an approach can academic institutions begin to fulfill their potential as spaces of truth-telling, justice, and liberation.

The Securitization and Pathologizing of Palestinian Mental Health

The securitization of transnational mental health "interventions" and "collaborations" represents a critical aspect of the broader dynamics of racialized oppression and colonial domination that shape global mental health initiatives. In recent decades, mental health

has increasingly been framed within the context of security, particularly in post-conflict and crisis zones (Martin, 2017). Here, securitization refers to the process by which mental health interventions and humanitarian collaborations become entangled with state security agendas, surveillance, and geopolitical control, rather than functioning as more neutral therapeutic or humanitarian enterprises. The securitization of Palestinian mental health signifies a particularly insidious form of epistemic violence, as it pathologizes political resistance while obscuring the structural violence of occupation (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2020). This medicalization strategy serves to delegitimize Palestinian experiences of oppression and maintain colonial control through psychological mechanisms (Jabr, 2023; Shekhani & Jafarey, 2025).

This securitization not only reframes the nature of mental health care as a matter of state and international security but also serves as a mechanism that deepens colonial power structures under the guise of humanitarian aid. By analyzing the framing, production, and performance of security regimes within the realm of global mental health, it becomes evident how these interventions function to reinforce systems of racialized oppression and colonial domination, while legitimizing the continued control and surveillance of marginalized populations, particularly in the Global South (Younis, 2021).

Mental health interventions that are positioned within security frameworks are often promoted as necessary to stabilize "fragile" states or populations that have been deemed "vulnerable" by international actors. This narrative is deeply colonial, as it assumes the superiority of Western frameworks of mental health and the need for external intervention to "fix" those perceived as psychologically "damaged" or "backward." The framing of mental health care within the security paradigm often ignores the broader sociopolitical and economic factors that contribute to mental distress, such as structural violence, occupation, and systemic racism. Instead, these interventions focus on individualizing the problem, pathologizing affected populations, and failing to acknowledge the colonial, imperial, and capitalist systems that create and perpetuate trauma.

The production and performance of these security regimes are closely tied to the international aid industry, which has increasingly become a site for the reproduction of global power imbalances. Humanitarian mental health interventions, when linked to security objectives, often result in the co-optation of psychological services by military and political actors. This is especially apparent in conflict zones like Palestine, where mental health programs are not merely about alleviating suffering but also about maintaining control over populations deemed "at risk" or "unruly." The involvement of international actors—be it through NGOs, peacekeeping forces, or foreign governments—in mental health initiatives further legitimizes these systems of control, making them appear as benevolent or neutral, when in reality they serve to uphold the status quo of occupation and colonial violence (Veronese & Kagee, 2025).

Mapping mental health interventions that maintain, strengthen, and expand colonial occupation requires a critical examination of the ways in which such programs are implemented in regions under occupation or settler-colonial rule. In contexts like Gaza, the West Bank, and other occupied territories, mental health programs are often presented as part of broader “stabilization” strategies that purport to restore normalcy to communities affected by systemic violence. However, these interventions often do not address the root causes of psychological distress, such as the ongoing violence, displacement, and systemic oppression that Palestinians face daily (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2020). Instead, they focus on individual coping mechanisms and psychological resilience, which, while important, fail to challenge the structures of occupation and violence that perpetuate trauma. By focusing on individual healing rather than structural change, these programs inadvertently support the continuation of colonial domination.

Moreover, the securitization of mental health interventions often involves the deployment of surveillance technologies and data collection methods that further entrench colonial control. In many instances, mental health programs are tied to broader security initiatives that monitor and regulate the behavior of populations under occupation, framing these interventions as tools for “risk management.” This process not only depoliticizes mental health care but also weaponizes it, turning it into a tool of surveillance and social control. The mental health field, in this context, becomes an extension of the colonial apparatus, ensuring that resistance to occupation or colonial authority is contained and that the political, economic, and social structures of domination are reproduced.

This securitization of mental health also reinforces racialized power dynamics, as interventions are often targeted at marginalized populations who are racialized and viewed as the racial or cultural “other.” The portrayal of certain populations as inherently violent, unstable, or in need of intervention draws directly from a colonial racial logic that has historically justified the control and subjugation of Indigenous and Black peoples. By casting these groups as “psychologically disturbed” or “dangerous,” these interventions perpetuate colonial stereotypes and dehumanize the very people they claim to help. The framing of mental health as a security issue serves to legitimize the criminalization of resistance and the justification of ongoing occupation and dispossession (Qato, 2020).

In sum, the securitization of transnational mental health interventions, framed as humanitarian efforts, plays a significant role in sustaining and expanding colonial occupation and racialized oppression. Rather than offering genuine solutions to the mental health crises faced by marginalized populations, these interventions serve as tools of control, reinforcing existing power structures and ensuring that the systems of violence and dispossession that cause widespread trauma continue to thrive. To challenge this, there is a need for a radical rethinking of global mental health that centers decolonial approaches, addresses structural inequalities, and amplifies the voices and needs of the populations most affected by occupation and colonial violence. Only through such a

transformative approach can mental health interventions be truly emancipatory and supportive of communities' collective struggles for liberation and justice.

Gaza Genocide: Unmasking Academic Racism and the Systematic Silencing of Palestinian Voices

The ongoing Gaza genocide is not limited to physical violence; it extends into the realm of knowledge production through what can be understood as both *educide* and *epistemicide* (Gordon & Turner, 2024). In this context, *educide* refers to the systematic destruction of Palestinian educational institutions and cultural infrastructure, while *epistemicide* denotes the deliberate erasure of Palestinian ways of knowing and intellectual contributions. By targeting schools, universities, and intellectual communities, the perpetrators aim to dismantle the very foundations of Palestinian identity, ensuring that the narrative and history of the people are rendered illegitimate and subversive.

The authors of this paper, including a Palestinian academic and their allies, have personally experienced this assault through various forms of marginalization and silencing. Influential academic journals have frequently engaged in biased gatekeeping—rejecting, censoring, or otherwise devaluing critical work that addresses the Gaza genocide. Similarly, academic conferences and seminars that might serve as platforms for pro-Palestinian discourse are often cancelled, postponed, or heavily sanctioned, reinforcing a culture where dissent is not only unwelcome but actively suppressed (see also documentation by Palestine Legal, 2023, and the American Association of University Professors' Academic Freedom Tracker). Accusations of weaponizing or politicizing science further undermine these voices, as scholars are branded as ideologically biased merely for challenging the dominant, colonial narratives.

These strategies reflect the deep entanglement of politics and academic inquiry, particularly within the fields of psychology and the social sciences. Political biases infiltrate scientific discourse, shaping research agendas, peer review processes, and even funding allocations in ways that perpetuate systemic racism and reinforce settler-colonial power structures. The ethical responsibility of academia, therefore, is not simply to maintain neutrality but to actively interrogate and dismantle these oppressive frameworks, challenging the status quo that privileges Western, neoliberal, and imperial narratives.

Silencing and defamation have become potent instruments of domination within academic spaces. The deliberate dismissal of Palestinian scholarship—as “too political” or “suspect”—is not a passive oversight but a calculated strategy designed to delegitimize dissent and maintain hegemonic power (Abu El-Haj & Latif, 2025; Shakir et al., 2025). This suppression not only restricts academic freedom but also stifles the diversity of ideas necessary for a robust, critical inquiry. By systematically erasing Palestinian perspectives from curricula, research funding, and professional opportunities, academic institutions actively contribute to a broader epistemic siege that renders Palestinian knowledge invisible (Sen, 2024).

In response, there is an urgent need for an international movement within psychology and allied disciplines to resist complicity in this genocide. A collective global response must be forged—one that champions antiracist methodologies and ethical frameworks while amplifying the voices of those marginalized by colonial violence. Psychology, when reimagined as a tool for decolonization, has the transformative potential to rehumanize Palestinians, challenging dehumanization and fostering solidarity across borders. Embracing antiracist practices is not only a scientific imperative but a moral one, central to addressing the systemic injustices that underpin both individual suffering and collective dispossession.

Ultimately, the systematic erasure of Palestinian narratives in academic spaces is a clear extension of the broader settler-colonial project—one that seeks to render Palestinian existence unthinkable. Confronting this requires a radical rethinking of academic structures and the adoption of decolonial strategies that transform universities into spaces of resistance, liberation, and transformative inquiry. Only by rejecting the complicity of existing power structures and embracing a commitment to epistemic justice can academia hope to repair the historical harms inflicted on Palestinian knowledge production and contribute meaningfully to a more equitable, inclusive future.

The Corporate University and Its Silencing of Dissent

Following the onset of globalisation and the neoliberal turn that began to characterise the economies of most high-income countries in the late 1980s and 1990s, universities too started to resemble corporate entities rather than places of scholarship (Adams et al., 2019; Giroux, 2024). Indeed, terms such as throughput, output, publication units, intellectual capital, rankings, branding, third stream funding, cost recovery, and the knowledge economy are in common usage among university managers. High rankings in systems such as Times Higher Education and QS are coveted among university managers as they are attractive to donors, high fee-paying international students, and corporate partners. An audit culture of this nature risks focusing on university business performance outcomes that are operationalizable and measurable, rather than on the social value of principled scholarship. The corporate nature of universities is embedded in the neoliberal system that has dominated the Global North and has permeated even middle and low-income countries (Mentan, 2015). To this extent, a managerialist culture has permeated both public and private universities. University officials such as department heads, deans, and vice-chancellors now serve more as chief executive officers in their environments rather than as scholar-leaders.

Concerns about the loss of revenue streams and an increasing reliance on the private sector for funding has led many universities to attempt to silence dissent from the accepted assumptions of the Zionist logic—namely, the assumption that unconditional support for Israeli state policy is a precondition for legitimate institutional standing, and that criticism of that policy constitutes antisemitism or reputational risk. The influence

of the United States, the world's largest economy, as a champion of the Zionist cause is a case in point. For example, in all likelihood, recent decisions by President Trump to cease or reduce funding to PEPFAR and USAID are in part a retaliation against South Africa for bringing a case against Israel for the crime of genocide at the International Court of Justice (Semafor, 2026). Similarly, universities are concerned about threats to research funding, for example, from both private or public donors if they do not suppress activism for Palestinian rights on their campuses (Jewish Currents, 2025; Romero, 2024). An apolitical stance—itself a political position that indicates complicity with the status quo—in tandem with the suppression of criticism of Zionism and war crimes committed by the Israeli state, are thus direct consequences of the corporate culture of universities, which in turn is embedded in the neoliberal capitalist system.

There does not appear to be an easy way out of this situation. Humanities disciplines such as philosophy, history, and cultural studies are increasingly under threat at many universities as—unlike fields such as science, technology, engineering, finance and accounting—their financial benefits are not immediately obvious. Yet, many humanities disciplines teach important critical conceptual and theoretical skills such as post-colonial theory, critical race theory, and various critiques of capitalism and Zionism. Disciplinary suppression is therefore a feature of the corporate university where the emphasis is on preparing student-customers for absorption in the economy, sometimes at the expense of becoming critical thinkers and developing an anti-racist consciousness.

The following case study offers a concrete illustration of the dynamics of neoliberal disciplinary suppression discussed above, tracing how these pressures unfolded at a specific institution in the Global South over time.

From the 2018 Conference to the Gaza Genocide in Stellenbosch, South Africa

In 2018, the Recognition, Reparation and Reconciliation (RRR) Conference took place at Stellenbosch University. Among the various symposia was one titled “Can we empathize with the narratives of our enemy? Encountering collective narratives of the ‘other’ in the Israeli Palestinian context”, where Israeli scholars were present. Activists opposed to this symposium proceeding stated that it was paradoxical to discuss peace and reconciliation while at the same time Israel continued to occupy the West Bank and East Jerusalem and wage regular military attacks on the Gaza Strip. Further, none of the Israeli presenters had distanced themselves from Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land, the detention of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli prisons, and the multiple military attacks on Gaza. The symposium was subsequently cancelled, provoking an international furore. Scholars from both Israel and South Africa condemned its cancellation, calling it a violation of academic freedom and thus conveying the liberal assumption that academic freedom is sacrosanct, and, in all cases, trumps concern about human rights. Stellenbosch University's rector, Professor Wim de Villiers, expressed dismay at the cancellation of

the symposium and referred to it as “a disappointing outcome” (see [Kagee, 2022](#) for a full analysis). This emphasis on individual rights, which includes unfettered academic freedom to create opportunities that seek to normalise the occupation of Palestinian land at the expense of human rights, fits well with a neoliberal corporate university culture.

A related incident occurred in 2024, when the Dean of Medicine and Health Sciences at Stellenbosch University attempted to ban a seminar titled “Current state of health care in Gaza in March 2024.” Following appeals by the organisers to the university management on the grounds that such a ban violated academic freedom, the seminar ultimately went ahead. Another example was when students displayed the Palestinian flag in the Stellenbosch University library in 2024 in a silent protest against the Gaza genocide. The students were asked to remove the flag and were summoned to a meeting by the university’s leadership where they were reprimanded for breaking the university’s rules. These examples suggest that academic freedom is wielded when it suits the Zionist cause but is suppressed when it calls attention to human rights violations perpetrated by Israel.

The Weaponization of Peer Review: Academic Gatekeeping and Silencing of Palestinian Scholars and Their Allies

Another tool that is frequently weaponized to marginalize pro-Palestinian scholarship is the peer review process, often framed as a neutral quality-control mechanism. This reflects a broader crisis in academic publishing linked to overwork and exploitative labor conditions under neoliberal academic capitalism ([Adams et al., 2019](#)), which is not unique to Palestine-related scholarship but is intensified here by explicit political gatekeeping that deters research on Palestine. For example, submissions on Palestine are routinely dismissed as ‘too political’ or criticized for lacking ‘neutrality’—as if neutrality were attainable or desirable in contexts of structural violence ([Ziadah, 2025](#)).

In one recent review of a manuscript submitted by the authors of this paper to an international psychology journal, a reviewer stated: “This study seems to reflect a particular political viewpoint that could impact objectivity. [...]. Such a pronounced political inclination might challenge perceived neutrality and rigor, making it less appropriate for a journal that values unbiased reporting.” Similarly, another reviewer questioned the framing of the research, arguing: “The current Introduction [where we comment on the genocide in Gaza] clearly states the perspectives and judgments of the research team—which is not best practice in scientific publication.” Such critiques reveal how academic journals uphold hegemonic power structures, using calls for neutrality as gatekeeping tools to marginalize Palestinian perspectives and reinforcing settler-colonial epistemologies ([Fúnez-Flores, 2024a](#)).

Beyond methodological concerns, accusations of bias often coerce us into defensive positions through implicit or explicit allegations of antisemitism. For example, one reviewer of the manuscript mentioned above commented:

Reviewers 1, 4, and I were concerned you crafted your paper primarily to advance your perspective rather than the measured approach expected in rigorous scholarship. For example, you make no mention of the hostages taken on October 7th nor sexual violence perpetrated against Israelis by Hamas (see [Zafran et al., 2026](#)).

Yet, our paper did not mention hostages—Israeli or Palestinian—as they were not the focus, nor did it discuss allegations of sexual violence, which were later denied by Israeli media, while abuses against Palestinian detainees were documented by the UN and human rights organizations. The political nature of such critiques is further evident in the sources we are urged to cite. The insistence on citing Israeli authors—even when unrelated—underscores this bias. One reviewer recommended an article by researchers from Ariel University, located in an illegal settlement. How can research be rigorous and non-political when produced within institutions that perpetuate settler-colonial domination?

In another case, two of the suggested references explicitly declared support for Israel (“we stand with Israel”), yet their inclusion in academic discourse was not questioned. Were these authors required to cite Palestinian scholars for balance? Reading their work, it seems clear they were not—yet the same journal that rejected our paper for supposed bias readily published theirs.

This double standard is particularly evident in the language of reviewers of our manuscripts, who frame Palestinian scholarship as inflammatory. For example, another reviewer of our work commented: “Their tone is too politically biased and would offend any Jew who read it, diminishing the work overall. Regardless of their opinions, the authors should rewrite the paper in neutral terms. [...]. I think the political anti-Israel assumptions diminish the work, which is offense.”

This invocation of ‘offense’ as a measure of academic validity exposes peer review’s ideological function—not to ensure rigor, but to discipline scholarship in alignment with dominant narratives. Crucially, our work has never contained offensive material toward Jewish people; rather, it critically interrogates structural racism in all its forms. As broader critiques of academic censorship note, depoliticization is not a call for rigor but for erasure. It reflects the epistemic violence underpinning anti-Palestinian racism in academia, where documenting Palestinian realities is framed as subversive.

This dynamic does not merely exclude Palestinian voices from scholarship—it reinforces the very systems of oppression critical inquiry seeks to dismantle. Notably, the journals referenced here describe themselves as critical or feminist, raising urgent questions about their commitment to justice, anti-oppression, and decolonial inquiry.

Silencing Palestinian Scholars Through Harassment and Elimination

Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a Palestinian feminist scholar, was arrested in April 2024 at her home in Jerusalem as part of Israel's broader repression of dissent. A professor at Hebrew University, she had been suspended for condemning Israel's actions in Gaza, defining it as a genocide late October, 2023. Though reinstated after international pressure, she ultimately stepped down following her persecution both by her own academic institution's hostility, as well as ideologically driven nationalist attacks.

Her arrest was marked by severe mistreatment: she was strip-searched, detained in freezing, unsanitary conditions, and denied necessary medical care. Although a court ordered her release, Israeli authorities appealed to prolong her detention. Hebrew University not only failed to defend her but actively misrepresented her views, fueling public outrage and distancing itself from her work. Facing relentless threats and institutional hostility, Shalhoub-Kevorkian decided ultimately to attend to her family's and personal safety and leave her academic "home".

Shalhoub-Kevorkian's scholarship on unchilding, gendered violence, sacralized and securitized politics and settler colonialism (e.g., [Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2020](#)) directly challenges Israeli narratives. Her persecution exemplifies the growing risks faced by Palestinian academics as Israel escalates its crackdown on free expression. International scholars have condemned her arrest ([Aurdip, 2024](#); [Times Higher Education, 2024](#)), underscoring the urgency of defending academic freedom and resisting Israel's systematic suppression of Palestinian voices.

Conclusions

In today's academic landscape, the intersection of politics and scientific inquiry is both profound and inescapable. Political biases not only shape research agendas and academic discourse but also reinforce systems of oppression that marginalize critical voices—especially those of Palestinian scholars and their allies, as we pointed out in this paper. In the context of the Gaza genocide, these dynamics are starkly evident as academia can become complicit in the systematic silencing and defamation of dissenting narratives ([CCC Editorial Collective, 2025](#)).

We examined how political forces infiltrate scientific practice, the deliberate use of silencing as a tool of dispossession, and the urgent need for an international movement within Psychology to confront these injustices. We also explored the transformative potential of decolonial, antiracist methodologies in giving voice to Palestinians and reshaping the field of psychology into a catalyst for social justice and liberation.

Psychology, as it stands and functions and as seen in the analysis presented in this paper, is a space packed with complicit brutality, masked with "tensions and

complexities” that further dispossesses, excludes and re-instates hegemonic ideologies. To decolonize psychology we must engage with efforts to unpack the affective matrix of power, with all its networks and alliances; aiming at confronting academic complicities, and re-claiming the academy as a decolonial space of abstention. Decolonial psychology requires that we interrupt the smooth operation of the hegemonic regime of power (Simpson, 2014). It is an ethico-political and affective liberatory act that highlights the lived experience, narrations and desires of the colonized (Burman, 2016; Coulthard, 2014; Murdock, 2019), keeping in mind that the academy is an affective site of decoloniality.

Politics and Psychology/Science: How the Two Levels Are Profoundly Intertwined

Academic inquiry and political power have long shared an uneasy alliance, where scientific inquiry is rarely neutral but rather a reflection of prevailing political biases. Research agendas, funding priorities, and the very framing of questions are deeply influenced by political interests that often align with neoliberal and imperial logics (Kelly, 2023). This weaponization of science to serve capitalist agendas not only shapes what is considered valid knowledge but also marginalizes voices that challenge dominant power structures (Mentan, 2015). In this context, academia carries an ethical responsibility: to actively interrogate these biases and to dismantle the structural racism and political oppression embedded within research practices and institutional policies (Phiri, 2021). Scholars must strive for a decolonized approach to knowledge that prioritizes justice and amplifies marginalized perspectives over the status quo (Rodríguez, 2018).

Silencing and Defaming as a Means of Domination

Silencing dissent in academia is not a passive byproduct of ideological disagreement; it is a deliberate mechanism of control (Sultana, 2018). Through systematic defamation and exclusion, dissenting voices—especially those challenging colonial narratives—are labeled as overly politicized or ideologically extreme (Koshkarian, 2025). This targeted discrediting not only undermines the credibility of Palestinian scholars and their allies but also stifles the diversity of academic thought essential for vibrant intellectual discourse. The repercussions extend far beyond individual careers: the deliberate erosion of intellectual diversity constrains academic freedom and reinforces hegemonic structures that privilege white, patriarchal, masculine and colonial perspectives while marginalizing minorities’ voices. Such practices contribute to an environment where only the voices that align with dominant power interests can thrive, further entrenching systems of academic and political domination. The systematic erasure of Palestinian narratives within psychological and academic disciplines calls for a coordinated international response (Fúnez-Flores, 2024a).

Psychology as a Main Road for Rehumanizing Palestinians and Contributing to Decolonization

Psychology holds transformative potential in the struggle to rehumanize Palestinians and foster a broader decolonial academic framework (Atallah & Dutta, 2023). By critically reexamining its methodologies and theoretical underpinnings, the discipline can dismantle the dehumanizing narratives historically used to justify oppression (Samuel & Ortiz, 2021). A decolonized approach in psychology means centering the lived experiences, resilience, and agency of Palestinian communities. This involves developing culturally grounded therapeutic practices, educational models, and community-based interventions that affirm Palestinian identity and humanity. When reimaged as a tool for liberation, psychological practice can contribute to healing individual and collective trauma while challenging the structures of colonial violence, ultimately playing a pivotal role in the broader struggle for decolonization (Cavazzoni et al., 2025). Thus, embracing antiracist practices is not an optional add-on but an essential transformation for the field of psychology (Rauk, 2021).

Recommendation for Epistemic Justice

This paper has demonstrated how anti-Palestinian racism operates as a form of epistemic violence embedded within neoliberal and settler-colonial structures that govern knowledge production in academia. Through an analysis of institutional repression, racialized disciplinary practices, and the systematic silencing of Palestinian voices, we have shown how academic institutions actively participate in normalizing and legitimizing the Zionist colonial project. The Gaza genocide has intensified these dynamics, revealing how even fields with self-professed progressive or critical commitments like psychology remain complicit in structures of domination through their epistemological foundations, research agendas, and institutional partnerships. Our findings underscore that epistemic violence against Palestinians is not incidental but systemic, reflecting the deep entanglement between globalized academia and colonial power. In the following, we outline pathways toward decoloniality within the structures of settler colonialism and neoliberal knowledge production.

Decentering Eurocentric Epistemologies

Psychology and allied disciplines must actively work to decenter Eurocentric frameworks that privilege Western knowledge systems while marginalizing anti-colonial scholarship. This requires redistributing resources, dismantling gatekeeping mechanisms, and fostering equitable North–South collaborations that center Palestinian intellectual agency and lived experiences of occupation. Such transformation entails dismantling institutional complicity—where corporate universities prioritize financial interests over justice—by

resisting financial coercion and advocating for academic freedom (Bazian, 2015; Kemp, 2011). This also involves critically rethinking dominant epistemological frameworks and advancing decolonial approaches to knowledge production that prioritize justice and marginalized perspectives (Patel, 2021).

Institutional Refusal and Disinvestment

We propose refusal as a mode of affective-academic disinvestment in the colonial university (Grande, 2018; Metcalfe, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2014). This includes withdrawing institutional partnerships with Israeli universities complicit in occupation, divesting from funding sources that support Zionist colonialism, and implementing pedagogies of refusal that challenge the foundational assumptions of the neoliberal university (Rodríguez, 2019). Universities must also confront the structural entanglement between knowledge production and imperial and capitalist interests that shape research agendas and institutional priorities (Kelly, 2023; Mentan, 2015; Phiri, 2021).

Transforming Curricular and Research Agendas

Academic institutions must transform their curricular and research agendas to center Palestinian perspectives and challenge colonial epistemologies. This involves developing courses that critically examine the psychology of settler-colonialism, supporting research methodologies that prioritize community-based participatory approaches, and creating spaces for Palestinian scholars to lead knowledge production about their own experiences. Such transformation includes adopting participatory action research and oral history methodologies that amplify lived experiences under occupation, while challenging dominant narratives embedded in academic research (Patel, 2021). It also requires integrating critical and decolonial scholarship into curricula to counter epistemic violence and foster alternative frameworks of knowledge (Brunner, 2023).

Challenging Professional Association Complicity

Psychological and academic associations must challenge their complicity in state violence and imperial warfare by issuing clear condemnations of Israeli apartheid and genocide, divesting from partnerships with Israeli institutions, and supporting members who face professional repercussions for Palestine advocacy. The American Association of Black Psychologists' stance on racial justice (Association of Black Psychologists, n.d.) should serve as a model for principled institutional positioning. More broadly, academic institutions must move beyond claims of neutrality, recognizing that silence in the face of structural violence constitutes a form of complicity (Fassin, 2026; Fúñez-Flores, 2024a).

Building Solidarity Networks

Scholars must build transnational solidarity networks that support Palestinian academics facing repression, create alternative knowledge production spaces outside institutional constraints, and develop collective strategies for challenging epistemic violence. This involves sharing resources, amplifying Palestinian voices, and creating platforms for decolonial scholarship that bypass traditional gatekeeping mechanisms. Transnational solidarities must take concrete form through collaborative networks among students and faculty, recognizing intersectional struggles and disrupting hierarchical divides within academia (Pearlman, 2022). This includes supporting global movements such as Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), as well as developing alternative publication infrastructures that challenge exploitative academic publishing systems, including open-access and community-driven platforms (Carbone, 2025).

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