"Are You Still Alive?":
Survival Politics, Art, and Grief in Visualizing Palestine

"Hâlâ Hayatta mısın?":
Filistin'in Görselleştirilmesinde Hayatta Kalma Siyaseti, Sanat ve Yas

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ABSTRACT

This research analyses the difficulties and rights violations of the Palestinian people through visual narratives. The Palestinian struggle for freedom has been ongoing for many years, especially under Israel's military rule and settlement policies. The study focuses on the Visualizing Palestine (VP) platform, which aims to strengthen this struggle and develop an alternative visual language against hegemonic media narratives. The population of this study includes all visual narratives and reports produced on the Palestinian issue, including digital platforms, publications and media content. The sample is specifically selected from VP's 2021-2023 annual reports and 2023-2025 strategy reports. Using techniques such as Semiotic Analysis, visual content analysis and structural analysis, along with Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) methodology, this study explores how the visual content of these reports acquires meaning in social, cultural and political contexts. The findings reveal how VP's visual strategies have reshaped Palestinian identity and historical memory while increasing global awareness and empathy towards the Palestinian issue. The results show that through visual narratives, Palestine's international visibility is enhanced, awareness of rights violations is strengthened, and global social responses are mobilised. The findings also reveal how visual tools can challenge dominant narratives, promote activism around social justice issues and contribute to the transformation of public discourse.

Keywords: Palestinian resistance, visual narratives, identity construction, digital platforms, social awareness

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ÖZ

Bu araştırma, Filistin halkının yaşadığı zorlukları ve hak ihlallerini görsel anlatılar aracılığıyla incelemektedir. Filistinlilerin özgürlük mücadelesi, özellikle İsrail'in askerî yönetimi ve yerleşim politikaları altında uzun yıllardır devam etmektedir. Çalışma, bu mücadeleyi güçlendirmek ve hegemonik medya anlatılarına karşı alternatif bir görsel dil geliştirmeyi amaçlayan Visualizing Palestine (VP) platformuna odaklanmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın evreni, dijital platformlar, yayınlar ve medya içerikleri de dâhil olmak üzere Filistin meselesiyle ilgili üretilen tüm görsel anlatıları ve raporları kapsamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın örneklemi ise özellikle VP'nin 2021-2023 yıllık raporları ve 2023-2025 strateji raporlarından seçilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Kress ve Van Leeuwen'in (2006) metodolojisine dayanan Çok Modlu Söylem Analizi (MDA) ile birlikte göstergebilimsel analiz, görsel içerik analizi ve yapısal analiz gibi teknikleri kullanarak, bu raporların görsel içeriğinin sosyal, kültürel ve politik bağlamlarda nasıl anlam kazandığını araştırmaktadır. Bulgular, VP'nin görsel stratejilerinin Filistin kimliğini ve tarihsel hafızayı nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini, Filistin meselesine yönelik küresel farkındalığı ve empatiyi nasıl artırdığını ayrıntılı bir şekilde ortaya koymaktadır. VP'nin raporlarından ortaya çıkan sonuçlar, görsel anlatılar aracılığıyla Filistin'in uluslararası görünürlüğünü artırmakta, hak ihlallerine ilişkin farkındalığı güçlendirmekte ve küresel toplumsal tepkileri harekete geçirmektedir. Araştırmanın bulguları ayrıca görsel araçların egemen anlatılara nasıl meydan okuyabileceğini, sosyal adalet meseleleri etrafında aktivizmi nasıl teşvik edebileceğini ve kamusal söylemin dönüşümüne nasıl katkı sağlayabileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filistin direnişi, görsel anlatılar, kimlik inşası, dijital platformlar, toplumsal farkındalık

Introduction

"The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place, there is a language of images. What matters now is who uses that language for what purposes" —John Berger[2] (1972, p. 33).

This research analyses visual narratives that aim to strengthen Palestine's own narrative and highlight the hardships and human rights violations Palestinians face under Israeli settler-colonial and military regimes. These systems deprive Palestinians of the opportunity to envision a healthy future, continuously violating their rights (Hatoum, 2021, p. 2). The study focuses on exploring visual forms that enable Palestine to express its voice and identity in response to these violations.

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[2] This quote reflects the shift from traditional art authority to the power of images, emphasising the importance of who controls them and for what purposes. The Visualizing Palestine platform exemplifies this idea by using images and data to challenge dominant narratives and offer alternative perspectives on Palestinian issues. In this study, these concepts are drawn upon to explore how visualisations can reshape discourse and present new ways of engaging with socio-political topics.

Recent scholarship, activism, and advocacy on apartheid and settler colonialism in Palestine have deepened the understanding of the decades-long struggle for Palestinian liberation (Muhareb et al., 2022, p. 1). Resources like Visualizing Palestine (VP) document how Israel's apartheid regime enforces segregation across physical, social, economic, and environmental dimensions, highlighting the multidimensional obstacles Palestinians face. VP develops an alternative visual language to counter dominant narratives about Palestinian struggles and imperialist policies toward Palestine. It aims to deconstruct hegemonic discourses and create effective visual narratives to challenge them. Beyond defending Palestinian rights, VP also functions as a platform for global resistance against hegemonic media and cultural strategies, raising awareness of international pressures and imperialist interventions.

Palestinian identity, evolving within a social and cultural context, shapes the perspective on resistance and struggle. VP's strategic plan approaches Palestinian identity not only as a physical entity but as a cultural and social whole, emphasising the global interconnectedness of the Palestinian struggle for justice. The study analyses the construction of Palestinian identity and the impact of VP's 2021, 2022, and 2023 reports, as well as the 2023-2025 strategic plan. The Palestinian struggle is framed as part of a global fight for justice, highlighting its social, cultural, and historical dimensions.

The study examines the role of VP's visual narratives in shaping Palestinian identity and contributing to the struggle. As Berger (1972, p. 33) suggests, the authority of past art has shifted to a language of images, making it crucial to analyse how this language is used. VP's visual narratives serve as a powerful tool in shaping and communicating Palestinian identity. This research addresses the following questions: What is the role of visual narratives in the Palestinian struggle, and how do they contribute to identity construction? How do the VP's strategic plans transform the struggle for freedom into a global justice movement? How does VP offer an alternative to hegemonic media narratives by visualising the impact of Israeli regimes? How is Palestinian identity shaped by cultural, social, and geographical dimensions, and how do VP's strategic goals influence this process? Additionally, the study examines the Palestinian liberation process from a global justice perspective and the importance of developing alternative visual strategies.

Cultural Resistance, Visualisation and Ideology: The Power of Visual Media

Culture, as Williams (1985) describes, is a dynamic process that shapes ideologies and meanings through social, political, and cultural elements. It is not limited to material production but extends to practices, art, language, and visual representation. Visualisation, especially through art, graphic design, fanzines, and street art, plays a crucial role in expressing, questioning, and transmitting cultural ideologies. These vi-

sual forms function not only as representation but as resistance, identity construction, and the preservation of collective memory. Rhetorical devices such as metaphors and irony, when paired with visuals, demonstrate how meaning is constructed not just through words but also through images, expanding cultural expression (Selvam & Mukherjee, 2023, p. 628).

In the Palestinian context, visual media is essential for resistance, identity formation, and memory preservation. Works like Banksy's murals in the West Bank, Palestinian posters, and the Handala figure facilitate the global circulation of political narratives (Abu-Fadil, 1993; Banksy, 2005; Boullata, 2009; Schwarz, 2011). New digital technologies have reshaped how art is produced, disseminated, and consumed, allowing visual media to become a powerful tool in ideological struggles (LeVine, 2015, p. 1280). Interactive digital tools can directly influence narrative framing (Baumer, Snyder & Gay, 2018). In Palestine, visual content such as animations, manipulated maps, viral designs, and propaganda posters shape public perception and challenge hegemonic narratives. Data visualisations, while often perceived as neutral, inherently reinforce power structures and serve ideological purposes (Kennedy & Hill, 2017, p. 773).

Visual media in Palestine transcends representation, acting as a form of cultural struggle that resists colonial narratives and shapes the aesthetics of resistance. Posters, murals, fanzines, and digital illustrations preserve cultural memory and raise global awareness. Visualisations which complement or replace text, help construct ideologies and social memory, revealing patterns and trends difficult to express through language (Wise, 1999). Duncombe (2002, p. 5) explains that cultural resistance generates new spaces of opposition against hegemonic structures. Visualising events and histories in Palestine creates 'free spaces' for both local and global resistance. Infographics, interactive maps, and digital documentation are powerful tools for exposing violations and influencing global opinion. Visual media offers an alternative to dominant narratives, allowing history to be reinterpreted through written sources, data visualisations, and multimedia content, positioning it as both an aesthetic and political intervention.

New 'Saids': Postcolonial Art, Exile and Visual Aesthetic Dimensions

Edward Said's experience of exile represents more than just individual loss; it critiques the systemic displacement caused by modernity, uprooting individuals from their origins (Araeen, 2000, p. 8). Social networks today, which blend text, image, and video, align with Saidian perspectives, especially regarding the digital art and visualisation practices of the big data era. These practices serve as a form of resistance, documenting Palestinian trauma, resistance, and social memory through new media tools. Digital artists reconstruct postcolonial narratives, offering a space for critical engagement and amplifying resistance through visual narratives.

Palestinian massacres exemplify the global politics of segregation and serve as a lens for understanding postcolonial art and resistance. As Gardner (2011, p. 142) points out, the increasing discourses of war and terror deepen divisions, erecting walls that exclude the 'other'. Israel's violent policies represent both physical occupation and cultural colonisation. Through various media such as murals and photography, Palestinian artists document these oppressive systems while creating a collective memory that resists them. Here, postcolonial art serves both as a form of aesthetic expression and as a political tool.

However, the use of indigenous aesthetic elements can sometimes lead to commodification, transforming cultural differences into a consumable product. Despite this, such self-othering can be seen as part of the political struggle of postcolonial artists (Tan, 2021, p. 36). Critiques of postcolonial cultural theory raise concerns about the intersection of this art with hegemonic discourses, often co-opted by art institutions that dilute its political essence for their own agendas. The role of traditional culture in postcolonial strategies varies across institutions (Van Beurden, 2016, p. 256), demonstrating how institutional forces can neutralise the political potential of art.

Art institutions often align aesthetic production with postcolonial discourses, reducing the social function of art to visual consumption. This process transforms art into an interpretive form of reality rather than its embodiment. As a result, postcolonial art risks losing its resistance potential and becoming part of capitalist cultural production. However, resistance within postcolonial art remains, particularly when produced outside institutional frameworks, which continue to serve as mechanisms of power (Enwezor, 2003, p. 77).

The artistic resistance to Palestinian massacres exemplifies this dynamic. Palestinian artists reconstruct art's political impact within the context of colonialism and imperialism, balancing aesthetic and political power. Jacques Rancière (2009, p. 23) argues that the politicisation of art is not in the messages it conveys but in the space and time it constructs and how it frames people. Palestinian artists use this framing to detach art from hegemonic narratives, creating its own political space. This shift allows art to resist hegemonic structures that reduce it to mere visual consumption. By using aesthetic power as a form of resistance, artists push for social and political change, transforming art into a site of struggle for justice. According to Bennett (2013, p. 30), culture and art become tools for influencing society, interacting with expertise, public spaces, and infrastructures, thereby reinforcing the role of art in processes of social transformation.

Visual Communication in the Age of Data Art and Activism: The Narrative Wave Approach

Narrative is a fundamental part of the human experience, existing across cultures and throughout history (Barthes, 1982, pp. 251-252). Narratives are not limited to litera-

ture but are shaped by visual arts, media, and digital technologies. They allow events to establish the order of time, assuming that events logically follow one another (Copeland, 2019, p. 234). In data art and activism, narrative transcends its aesthetic role, becoming a strategy that makes social realities visible, enhancing collective memory. Digital artists and activists use data-driven practices to create experiences that encourage critical thinking and social action, transforming viewers from passive to active participants. Narrative thus functions not just as representation but as resistance, offering alternative perspectives to dominant discourses. Narrative research examines how people experience the world, with researchers collecting and writing narratives of experience (Gudmundsdottir, 2001). In visual communication, this is especially relevant, as visual elements trigger not only text-based reactions but also emotional, mental, and cultural responses.

There is no singular truth; experiences and interpretations of the world are shaped by subjective positions (Peshkin, 1991), which is significant in visual communication. Images convey layered meanings that shape viewers' perceptions, influenced by personal experience and cultural background. Different viewers interpret the same image in diverse ways, revealing how visual narratives are shaped by their experiences, beliefs, and values. Visuals in media and art become not only representations but also spaces of interpretation that challenge social structures and offer alternative perspectives. Visual narratives shape cultural meaning by reflecting personal experiences and constructing collective memory. These narratives are not limited to media but appear in physical spaces, such as cities. Maasri (2009) notes that materials like posters, graffiti, and billboards serve as both communication tools and markers of influence. In times of war, street art, described by Najjar (2015, p. 7) as a prevalent form of visual culture in urban areas, reflects the dynamics of urban life and subcultural identities.

Visual narratives influence how people perceive the world, fostering new forms of storytelling that question social norms and values. Photography, illustration, and graphic design present diverse perspectives on social events and cultural dynamics. Visual communication allows viewers to move beyond passive observation and engage in the reconstruction of individual or collective stories. This process requires imagination, particularly in public spaces (Musih, 2021). To understand a person, it is essential to consider their social, cultural, and institutional context (Moen, 2006, p. 64). Thus, visual arts and media are crucial for social transformation and critique, not only transmitting information but also reshaping social structures based on ideology and values. The education of the imagination and the public sphere provide the necessary tools for transformation.

Digital technologies have significantly transformed the tools to educate the imagination and enhance visual narrative. Emerging technologies extend the boundaries of visual storytelling, allowing for deeper audience engagement and social critique.

The Narrative Wave Approach suggests that narratives spread in waves, engaging viewers at different levels. Digital technologies amplify this impact, enabling rapid dissemination and broader resonance within social contexts. This contributes to a globalised media culture dominated by visual media, with visuals as the primary source of information (Sulpovar, 2011, p. 2). However, this visually dominant culture also fosters alternative forms of narrative. A deconstructive perspective suggests that narratives do not hold a single truth but contain multiple interpretations (Stelter, 2013, p. 409), allowing digital media to serve as a platform for alternative voices to thrive.

Research Method:
Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Palestinian Narrative

This research examines the impact of Visualizing Palestine's (VP) 2021-2023 annual reports and 2023-2025 strategy reports on the development of visual narrative forms. VP uses visual storytelling to reshape social, political, and cultural perspectives on Palestine, highlighting its importance in interpersonal communication. The study focuses on how these reports develop a narrative using visual tools and graphical language. By analysing the 2021-2023 reports, the research will explore the alignment of visuals with content, the production of meaning, and the global influence of the platform. The data sources for this study are the VP reports (2021-2023) and strategy reports (2023-2025), which demonstrate how visual narratives are crafted and presented. The analysis will focus on the composition of visuals, the use of colour, iconography, and the interaction of graphical elements with social media to understand the global resonance of these narratives. Furthermore, the VP's strategic plans for the future will be examined within the context of this study, as they provide insight into the organisation's vision, target audience, and strategies for social change.

This study employs a visual analysis method, emphasising that visuals are not merely aesthetic but convey messages shaped by specific ideological and cultural contexts. A thorough analysis of the graphic elements, symbols, and colours in the VP reports will be conducted to understand the form of the visual narrative, its relationship with the content, and the effectiveness of the message. The study will also examine how icons, infographics, and photographs interact with text to support the narrative. Additionally, the connection between visual and textual narratives will be explored, with a focus on how visuals influence the target audience and how the interaction with social media is strategically utilised. The social media data integrated into the reports will also be considered.

This research follows Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), based on the methodology of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), alongside visual content analysis, structural analysis, audience impact assessment methods, and Semiotic Analysis to explore how visuals gain meaning within a social context. It investigates how digital media

and visual arts empower individuals and communities to challenge social structures by actively engaging them. This digital transformation amplifies the power of visual narratives, fostering an environment that strengthens social critique and promotes alternative forms of storytelling. The Narrative Wave Approach, which suggests that narratives spread in waves and resonate within social contexts, provides an appropriate framework for this study, enabling an exploration of the dynamic and multi-layered effects of visual narratives.

Findings

In this study, the processes of raising global awareness of the Palestinian issue through visual narratives and social media were analysed.

Table 1. Results and Analysis Table Data from Visualizing Palestine (2021) & Visualizing Palestine (2025)		
Theme	Code	Explanation
Fading Headlines, Lasting Struggle	Ongoing Struggle	The often ephemeral and superficial coverage in the media of the stated ongoing struggle for Palestinian rights.
Palestine 2022: Raising Global Awareness through Visual Narrative	Visual Narrative and Its Impact	The impact of visual narratives in raising global awareness, especially by 2022.
Genocide, Colonialism and Social Media	Social Media and Genocide	How social media platforms shape and propagate issues such as genocide and colonialism against Palestine.
The VP Strategic Plan and Palestinian Identity Construction	Identity Construction and Resistance	How resistance, time and space, and cultural transformation combine to construct Palestinian identity.

 Source: https://visualizingpalestine.org/ (Visualizing Palestine, 2021 & Visualizing Palestine, 2025)

* This table was created by the author using data from Visualizing Palestine (2021) and Visualizing Palestine (2025) to show the relationship of themes, codes and explanations to the research process and data analysis.

The first sub-heading addresses the fleeting and superficial media coverage of the Palestinian struggle. The second examines the role of visual narratives in raising global awareness since 2022. The third explores social media's impact on shaping and disseminating issues like genocide and colonialism. Finally, the fourth analyses how resistance, time-space relations, and cultural transformation shape Palestinian identity. These findings highlight Palestine's role as a strategic communication tool, using visual narratives and social media for resistance and social change.

Fading Headlines, Lasting Struggle:
The Unyielding Fight for Palestinian Rights

The Palestinian rights struggle gains global media attention during crises but fades as coverage wanes. Visualizing Palestine's 2021 report highlights this cycle: intense focus during conflicts, as seen in the May 2021 Gaza attacks, sparks global solidarity, but media interest declines once crises subside. This pattern obscures ongoing oppression, settler colonialism, and human rights violations, underscoring the need for sustained advocacy and activism.
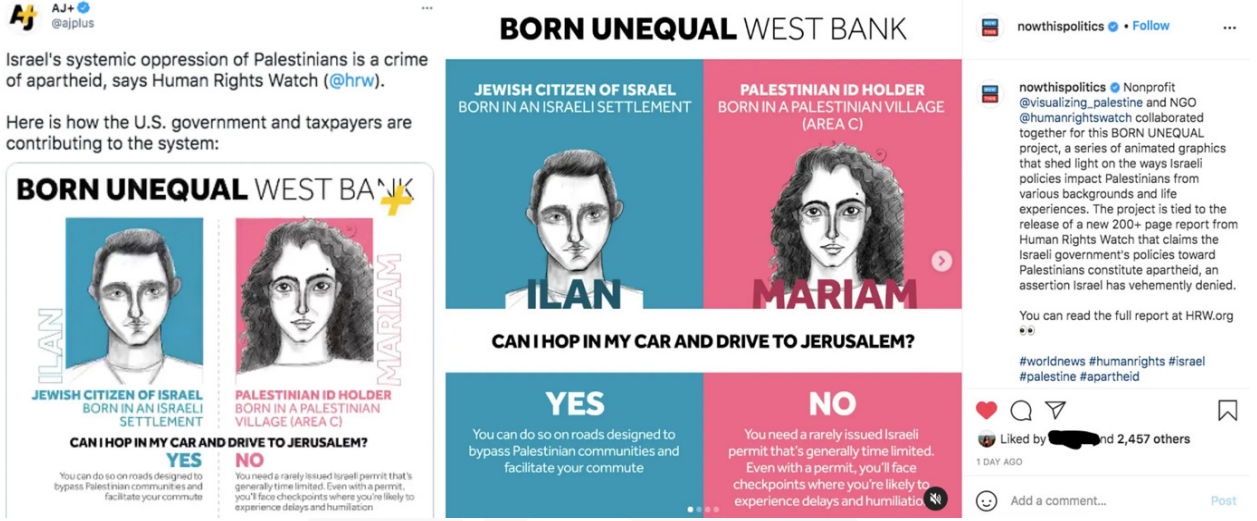
Table 2. VP's Global Impact and Visual Strategies in 2021 Data from Visualizing Palestine (2021)	
Activity	**Outcome and Impact**
494 people from 59 countries accessed VP visuals.	VP's global impact was reinforced.
17 new infographics were produced.	Information was provided on important issues such as apartheid crimes, childhood in Gaza, environmental justice, and ethnic cleansing.
The visuals were prepared in English and Arabic.	Created effective tools to bring the Palestinian issue to a wider audience.
'Gaza Water Confined and Contaminated' and 'Administrative Detention' infographics were updated.	Provided comprehensive information on the environmental and legal pressures Palestine faces.
4 animated visuals were published on YouTube.	Increased VP's visual diversity by reaching new audiences.

Source: https://visualizingpalestine.org/process/ (Visualizing Palestine, 2021)

* This table was created by the author using data obtained from Visualizing Palestine (2021) to reflect its global impact and visual strategies.

In 2021, VP launched initiatives highlighting Palestinian struggles and Israeli apartheid, reaching 494 individuals across 59 countries. It produced 17 infographics on key issues like apartheid crimes and ethnic cleansing, updating its most-used visuals, "Gaza Water Confined and Contaminated" and "Administrative Detention." VP expanded its reach with four animated visuals on YouTube and added 164 events to its timeline, boosting social media engagement by 250%. Major campaigns, "Gaza is Palestine" and "#NoTechforApartheid," gained widespread support, while VP's community strength was reflected in contributions from over 600 members, 55 volunteers, and seven partners.

Image 1. Mainstream Media Impact of 'Born Unequal Series'

Source: https://visualizingpalestine.medium.com/when-headlines-disappear-the-movement-is-still-he-re-a42057422f42

Media dissemination has also been a key focus, with VP, in collaboration with Human Rights Watch, achieving significant media impact through its "Born Unequal" series. These visuals played a pivotal role in promoting the more frequent use of the term "Apartheid", marking a crucial step in global human rights advocacy. One of the featured infographics, "Four Wars Old," reached 425,000 people on social media and highlighted the 14-year-long war experience of children in Gaza. VP's projects have been widely shared by educators, activists, and students for use in various campaigns, exhibitions, and events. This highlights the effectiveness of VP's visual materials as powerful tools for raising awareness about Palestine.

Palestine 2022: Raising Global Awareness through Visual Narrative

In 2022, amid heightened international attention on Palestine, VP's visual narratives played a key role in exposing occupation and human rights violations. Through social media campaigns and reports, the VP amplified awareness and mobilised global support.

Table 3. Palestine 2022: Visual Narrative and Political Developments Data from Visualizing Palestine (2022)
Apartheid
- Amnesty International Report: Israeli apartheid regime documents
- Report of the UN Special Rapporteur: Michael Lynk and experts' assessments
- Coalition Report: Apartheid and the links to settler colonialism
- Divide and Rule Strategy: Israel's policy of dividing the Palestinian people
- Gaza Blockade: 30 years of isolation
Environmental Justice
- Green Colonialism: Sierra Club cancels trips to Israel
- Food Sovereignty: Israeli restrictions on Palestinian food production
- Hunger Strikes: Alaa Abd El-Fattah's action during COP27
- Climate Justice: Collaborations with Fridays for Future
Freedom of Expression
- Spyware: Pegasus impact and its impact on human rights defenders
- Anti-BDS Laws: Possible move to the Supreme Court in the US
Settlements and Settler Violence
- Settler Violence: 170% increase in the West Bank
- Settlement Attempts: Psagot Winery's link to illegal settlements

Source: https://visualizingpalestine.medium.com/ (Visualizing Palestine, 2022)

* This table was created by the author using data obtained from Visualizing Palestine (2022) to reflect its narrative interventions and campaigns in 2022.

Table 3 highlights a range of human rights violations linked to Israel's apartheid regime and settler colonialism. VP's reports emphasise that beyond military violence, Israel's policies impact environmental justice, freedom of expression, and settler violence. VP provides a multidimensional view of Palestinian struggles by framing these issues within local and global contexts.

Amnesty International (2022) defines apartheid as a violation of international law and a crime against humanity, encapsulating decades of Palestinian oppression. VP's visual contributions, including the "Divide and Dominate" visual, illustrate Israel's strategic fragmentation to sustain its apartheid regime.

Image 2. Divide and Dominate

In 2022, VP also focused on highlighting the intersection between environmental justice and Palestinian rights. The "greenwashing" visuals, which challenge the efforts

of governments and corporations to create environmentally friendly images, aimed to expose Israel's environmentally harmful practices. Freedom of expression emerged as another critical theme in 2022. Issues such as the crackdown on Palestinian rights organisations, the dismissal of journalists, and legal obstacles against the BDS movement were among the most pressing and topical concerns for VP during that year.

Genocide, Colonialism and Social Media: 2023 Perspectives on Palestine

For Palestinians, 2023 marked a year of the most intense settler-colonial oppression since the 1948 Nakba. According to VP's 2023 reports, the discourse defining this period resonates as a question to humanity: "Are you still alive?" (Visualizing Palestine, 2023). These reports serve as a call to confront what has transpired, while laying the foundation for a powerful movement centred around the themes of documentation, determination, and remembrance.

Table 4. Global Impact and Reach Report Data from Visualizing Palestine (2023)	
Categories	**2023 Data**
Infographics	29
Interactive Platforms	5 (Palestine Open Maps (new features), A Place of Many Beginnings, We Had Dreams, Remember their Names, The Rise of U.S. Anti-Boycott Legislation)
Short Videos	2
Social Media Followers	212,000 (112% increase compared to 2022)
Total Social Media Reach	8.6 million
Use Cases of VP Images	1,347+ (237% increase compared to 2022)
Countries	79 (46 countries in 2022)
E-newsletter Subscribers	2,895 new subscriptions (up 248% compared to 2022), totaling 10,334 subscribers
Donors	909
Active Members	731
Translation Requests	+135 (Translation requests to different languages)
Volunteers	67
Supported Campaigns	2 (No Pride In Apartheid, Not on Our Dime)
Advertisements in North American Newspapers	2 ads, 3 newspapers, 1 million+ subscribers

Source: https://visualizingpalestine.medium.com/ (Visualizing Palestine, 2023)

* This table was created by the author using data from Visualizing Palestine (2023) to show the global impact and reach report in statistics.

Table 4 shows the VP's expanded impact in 2023, with 29 infographics and five interactive platforms shaping the Palestinian narrative. Despite fewer short videos, social media reach hit 8.6 million. VP saw a 112% rise in followers and a 237% increase in visual usage, broadening its presence from 46 to 79 countries. A 248% surge in e-newsletter subscribers and strong donor and volunteer engagement reflected growing global interest. Notable campaigns included "No Pride In Apartheid" and "Not on Our Dime".

Table 5. 2023 Palestine Analysis: Genocide and Resistance Data from Visualizing Palestine (2023)	
Subject	**Description**
Genocide	In 2023, genocide was the most critical lens for understanding what was happening in Palestine. Israel's actions against Palestinians were genocidal.
Colonial Narratives Sustaining Violence	Colonial narratives led to the unequal application of international law as Israel killed Palestinian civilians after Hamas' October 7 operation.
The Power of Social Media	Despite communication blackouts in Gaza, Palestinian narratives reached billions of people on social media in 2023. Social media played a major role in spreading pro-Palestinian narratives.
A Silencing System	Those who raised their voices on Palestine faced intense repression. Pro-Palestinian voices were censored, threatened and punished.
Beyond Gaza	More Palestinians were killed in the West Bank in 2023 than in any year since 2005. Israel invaded cities in the West Bank and carried out mass arrests while attacking Gaza.

Source: https://visualizingpalestine.medium.com/ (Visualizing Palestine, 2023)

* This table was created by the author using data from Visualizing Palestine (2023) to reflect the prominent themes in the analysis of the movement around the concepts of genocide and resistance.

VP's 2023 analysis centres on the concept of genocide, highlighting it as a crucial perspective for understanding events in Palestine. The analysis asserts that Israel's actions exhibit genocidal intent, and these events are evaluated through the frameworks of international law, media, and social media. Campbell (2009) defines genocide as "organised and unilateral mass murder on the basis of ethnicity", a definition that informs VP's evaluation of Israel's actions. El-Affendi (2024, p. 3) considers genocide to be the "crime of crimes," representing an extreme form of violent evil in the pursuit of domination and extermination, while Sultany (2024) critiques the legal

definition of genocide for its limitations. VP challenges the international community's reluctance to recognise the events in Palestine as genocide, questioning the global approach to labeling these atrocities.

Colonial narratives are another significant component of VP's analysis. The report argues that Israel's policies against the Palestinians are often legitimised by North American and European narratives, which have traditionally been reluctant to engage in nuanced discussions about the various responses of colonised peoples to systemic oppression. The power of social media plays a central role in VP's analysis as well. Maharani (2024, p. 275) observes that social media has been instrumental in conveying Palestinian narratives, particularly during the Israeli attacks on Gaza. Unlike traditional media, which often fails to provide a balanced view, social media in 2023 proved to be an effective tool for disseminating pro-Palestinian narratives on a global scale. Despite multiple communication blackouts in Gaza and record number of journalists killed by Israel, Palestinian stories have reached billions worldwide. The fact that TikTok was compelled to explain that the popularity of Palestinian content reflects the views of young people and the increased views of pro-Palestinian content on Instagram and Facebook underscores the role of social media as a critical tool for oppressed communities to share their narratives. However, VP also highlights the suppression and censorship of pro-Palestinian voices as a significant concern.

VP's analysis further emphasises the ongoing Israeli military operations, not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank and other Palestinian territories. May 2023 marked 75 years of Israeli colonisation of historic Palestinian lands. Israel's actions in the West Bank since 2005, resulted in the highest number of Palestinian casualties in 2023, with 39% of these deaths occurring before October 7. Amid Israeli military assaults on Gaza, West Bank towns and refugee camps have been occupied, mass arrests have been conducted, and illegal settlements and armed settlers have expanded. However, VP reveals that this process has not led to the forced disintegration of Palestinians; instead, they have maintained solidarity and persistently exposed the ongoing violence and injustice perpetrated by Israel.

Image 3. Gaza in 2023: Tracing Visual Sources

The VP Strategic Plan and Palestinian Identity Construction: Resistance, Time-Space Relations and Cultural Transformation

The VP Strategic Plan (2023-2025) is a powerful activist initiative designed to facilitate a profound narrative shift and reshape the time-space relationship surrounding the Palestinian issue. The process of Palestinian identity formation is not confined to a geographical concept; rather, Palestinian identity as a social and cultural

collectivity is evolving in a way that enables Palestinians to construct a comprehensive worldview (Hatoum, 2021, p. 9). The perception of Palestine as a geo-historical concept rooted in historical consciousness has developed over time, not solely as a physical territory or nation-state but as a dynamic entity shaped by culture, social ties, and collective memory (Biger, 2008, p. 68). This effort challenges the role of dominant narratives in perpetuating oppressive power structures and seeks to create narrative interventions that can alter these dynamics. VP has established five key narrative goals that will guide its efforts in shaping the discourse on Palestine (Visualizing Palestine, 2025).

Table 6. Palestinian Resistance and the Intersecting Struggle for Liberation Data from Visualizing Palestine (2025)
Palestinian voices and experiences at the centre → Palestinian resistance is a legitimate response to colonial oppression → Rejection of harmful discourses about Palestine → Palestine is an intersectional liberation issue → Imagining a future beyond oppression and settler colonialism.

Source: https://visualizingpalestine.medium.com/ (Visualizing Palestine, 2025)

* This table was created by the author using data from Visualizing Palestine (2025) to reflect the themes that emerged in the analysis of the movement around the concepts of voices, discourses and imagining the future.

The narrative objectives outlined in Table 6 reflect a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to addressing the Palestinian issue, emphasising the importance of centring Palestinian voices and experiences. This strategy acknowledges Palestinian resistance as a legitimate and necessary response to colonial oppression, framing it not merely as a conflict but as a struggle for justice and dignity. By positioning Palestinian narratives at the forefront, the VP strategically challenges harmful and reductive discourses that often undermine the legitimacy of Palestine's cause.

One of the core principles in VP's approach is the rejection of the notion of Palestine as merely a territorial issue, focusing instead on the dynamic evolution of Palestinian identity and collective memory. This perspective builds on the politics of temporality, a concept explored by El Shakry (2021), which examines how contemporary Palestinian art practices disrupt the linear flow of time. These practices do not merely manipulate the past to shape a desired future, but rather, they reveal the ongoing impacts of occupation on the Palestinian experience, offering a transformative view of time as a space for collective healing and justice. VP's strategic plan also underscores the importance of situating Palestine within a broader context of global struggles for

justice. The framing of Palestine as an intersectional liberation issue speaks to the interconnectedness of struggles against colonialism, oppression, and systemic injustice worldwide. This approach not only advocates for the Palestinian cause but also aligns it with anti-colonial and anti-racist movements, positioning it as part of a larger global framework for liberation.

The emphasis on creating a Palestinian worldview that is grounded in relationships, shared experiences, and cultural ties speaks to a deeper understanding of Palestinian identity. Hatoum (2021) highlights that this worldview is not confined to notions of place or nation-building but is instead a dynamic and evolving concept shaped by social and cultural connections. This approach encourages Palestinians to construct and assert their own identities through lived experiences, cultural production, and solidarity, offering a counter-narrative to the oppressive forces that seek to define their existence. Ultimately, the VP's strategic goals aim to mobilise broader social transformations, positioning the struggle for Palestinian liberation and justice as not just a political project but also a deeply cultural and social one. By reimagining the role of Palestinian identity within the context of these broader goals, VP seeks to foster a global movement that aligns the fight for Palestinian freedom with universal struggles for justice, equality, and human dignity.

Conclusion

This research underscores the pivotal role that visual narratives play in the Palestinian struggle, particularly in the process of reconstructing Palestinian identity. VP's visual content serves as a powerful tool for exposing human rights violations while also functioning as a form of cultural resistance. By providing an alternative to mainstream media representations, VP amplifies Palestinian voices and resistance on a global scale, defending Palestinian freedom and contributing to the broader struggle for justice and equality. Art and culture, as revolutionary tools, enable the sharing of Palestinian collective memory and identity with a wider international audience, breaking down the hegemonic narratives that often distort the Palestinian experience.

Palestinian identity, as constructed through its social, cultural, and geographical dimensions, evolves over time, shaped by the experiences and struggles of the Palestinian people. The 2021, 2022, and 2023 VP reports have been crucial in capturing the shifting dynamics of this identity. The 2021 report highlighted the global dimensions of Palestinian resistance, illustrating how this struggle is not confined to a specific territory but is embedded in the collective memory and identity of the Palestinian people. The 2022 report expanded on this by framing the fight for freedom as a universal cause for all oppressed peoples, demonstrating how Palestinian resistance has become a symbol of hope globally. Meanwhile, the 2023 report adopted a temporal-politi-

cal perspective, weaving together past and present narratives to reshape Palestinian identity in a way that reflects the ongoing struggle against colonialism.

VP's strategic plan aims to reposition the Palestinian liberation movement not solely as a territorial dispute but as a broader cultural and social struggle. This transformation shifts the narrative from one of territorial loss to one of cultural resilience and social solidarity. Through its visual content, VP seeks to reframe Palestinian resistance as a global issue, emphasising that the struggle for justice in Palestine resonates with worldwide movements for freedom and equality. By foregrounding Palestinian voices and experiences, the platform challenges global audiences to engage with Palestine not as a distant, isolated issue but as a critical point in the fight for justice on a global scale.

The visual and strategic objectives of VP are key to reshaping the identity and historical memory of the Palestinian people. By emphasising the global scope of the Palestinian struggle, VP ensures that Palestinian voices are central to the global discourse on justice. This process advances a narrative of resilience and hope, framing the fight for freedom as a global pursuit. Ultimately, VP's efforts to reinterpret Palestine's past, present, and future contribute to the broader struggle for human dignity worldwide.

Acknowledgments

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