

Written on the Wall: Resistance Culture and its Representation in the Occupied Palestinian Visual Public Sphere



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This is an examination of the phenomena of resistance and martyrdom in West Bank Palestinian society through the constructed visual public space. This thesis is the culmination of theoretical, historical, and ethnographic research into the motivations of martyrdom and the role of resistance in Palestinian identity. Palestinian resistance culture was examined through the course of this study through the lens of West Bank Palestinian understanding and consumption of cultural artifacts. In particular, these artifacts include posters, stencils, murals, and graffiti, that form the visual public sphere, or the constructed visual landscape of the Occupied West Bank. Particularly through the figure of Omar al Abed, an insurgent jailed youth, these motivations and the mythology constructed around armed resistance in Palestine can be discerned on an individual level. This exploration of Palestinian resistance culture aims to contextualize martyrdom and other resistant acts, as well as deconstruct Western notions concerning the nature of martyrdom, Islam, and Palestinians, conceiving these concepts outside limiting language like terrorism. Understanding martyrdom and resistance from a Palestinian perspective is essential to comprehending an important dimension of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, without which Western media perceptions can continue to dominate and corrupt the narrative. Through a study of the visual culture of the West Bank, it is evident that resistance is an immutable dimension of Palestinian society under the conditions of occupation, fed by a decades-long tradition of armed and non-violent struggle.