

Memory Wars and the War on Palestinian Memory: Ongoing Catastrophe, Trauma and Decoloniality between Crisis and Possibility

*“What is beautiful about Gaza is that our voices do not reach it. Nothing distracts it; nothing takes its fist away from the enemy’s face. Not the forms of the Palestinian state we will establish whether on the eastern side of the moon, or the western side of Mars when it is explored. Gaza is devoted to rejection... hunger and rejection, thirst and rejection, displacement and rejection, torture and rejection, siege and rejection, death and rejection. Enemies might triumph over Gaza (the storming sea might triumph over an island... they might chop down all its trees). They might break its bones. They might implant tanks on the insides of its children and women. They might throw it into the sea, sand, or blood. But it will not repeat lies and say “Yes” to invaders. It will continue to explode. It is neither death, nor suicide. It is Gaza’s way of declaring that it deserves to live.” (Samt Min Ajl Gaza, Mahmoud Darwish, 1973. Translated by Sinan Antoon from *Hayrat al-`A'id / The Returnee’s Perplexity*, 2007)*

The day Israel annually celebrates as its “Day of Independence” Palestinians commemorate as their day of catastrophe (al-Nakba). To most Palestinians, the catastrophic loss of Palestine in 1948 represents the climactic formative event of their lives through which the Palestinian society was transformed from a thriving society into a “nation of refugees” scattered over multiple geopolitical borders. In the aftermath of the Gaza genocide, this lecture offers a reflection of the ways in which Palestinian generational narratives deal the traumatic past of *al-Nakba* and its significance to their lives in the present. The discussion will focus on the activity of remembering and its possible fragmentation in the context of historical catastrophe and exile as well as current debates concerning (anti/post/de)coloniality, settler colonialism, conflict heritage, and Holocaust analogies and the ability to establish socio-cultural frameworks beyond identity politics that allow the integration of competing memories into broader historical narratives of victimhood and perpetration.

Bio:

Prof. Ihab Saloul is Founder and Research Director of the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture (AHM), and Professor of Memory and Narrative at the University of Amsterdam. Saloul is a founding editor of several book series: [‘Global Heritage and Memory Studies in the Present’](#) (Amsterdam University Press), [‘Heritage and Memory Studies’](#) (Routledge), [‘Palgrave Studies of Cultural Heritage and Conflict’](#) (Palgrave Macmillan), and the forthcoming book series ‘Palestine: Past, Present and Future Narratives’ (Central European University Press CEU). He is also the Editor-in Chief of the International Journal of [‘Heritage, Memory and Conflict \(HMC\)’](#), and Editor-in-Chief of the [‘Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Cultural Heritage and Conflict’](#).