

Editorial

Our Violence Mirrors the Violence of the State and Concepts Legitimizing Violence

The articles contained in this issue of *Jadal* warn of the spreading phenomenon of violence, and its destructive impact on both the Palestinian individual and community within the Green Line. We each in turn emphasize that the current situation is one characterized by chaos, a persistent rise in the crime rate, and the emergence of new and previously unseen forms of violence. In addition, the state has failed to provide protective services or deterrence, despite the rise in the number of people seeking assistance and its own responsibility for the harsh conditions in which we live. Therefore we must all – institutions and individuals alike – intervene swiftly and broadly to address the various factors that cause violence, and not reduce our view to a narrow perspective.

The articles herein attempt to identify the causes of violence and to offer analyses of the current reality. Some of them refer to the effect of societal causes, modes of education and concepts that we have internalized – as individuals and institutions – in our practices and in the ways we treat each other. Most of them underscore the interaction of the harsh political, social and economic factors in which we live, and can also be attributed to our political status within the state, a status that signifies the structural violence (of the state) practiced against us and is reflected in our marginalization at every level. Violence is also reflected in the policies of spatial restriction and displacement that assume various forms and names, such as “development” and “beautification,” and the aim of Judaizing the place, which in turn creates frustration among individuals, driving them towards violence as a form of catharsis.

It is important that we – as a society – fight customs, concepts and practices located within ourselves and in our dealings with the Other that legitimate certain forms of violence, and that we lay the responsibility for remedying the phenomenon upon ourselves as a society. However, we must also point to the role of the state and its fundamental responsibility for the lack of programs, services and funding for dealing with the problem, and hold it responsible for not making serious efforts to stem the

spread of weapons and crime within our towns and villages. We also regard the state as directly responsible for the spread of violence against us and among us, as a result of the discriminatory and oppressive policies it employs through its various agencies, including the police. These policies are reflected in its racist and violent practices against us, which assume the cover of legality, in addition to racist laws, such as land and citizenship laws, and statements issued by senior security and state officials who consider us a fifth column and a security threat.

We would not wager that the state will succeed in curbing the spread of violence and crime, because we do not trust that it has the intention of doing so. Furthermore, we accuse it of benefiting from the continued presence of violence among us and from our preoccupation with the subject. We charge the state with direct responsibility for creating the harsh social and economic conditions in which we live – including poverty and unemployment – which provide fertile ground for the proliferation of violence, and for its direct exercise of violence against us. However, we do not absolve it of its responsibility for playing a central role in addressing the matter, or for its role as a state and regime for the increase in rates of violence and crime.