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Damai Pangkal Damai

# A Race Against Time

Nonviolent Resistance in Indonesia  
and the World 2023

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# **Damai Pangkal Damai:**

## **A Race Against Time**

### *Nonviolent Resistance in Indonesia and the World 2023*

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Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD) is a nonviolence database project and campaign initiated by the Institute of International Studies (IIS) – the research and advocacy arm of the Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada (IR UGM). Its name can be loosely translated as Peace through Nonviolent Means, with a tip of the hat to Johan Galtung’s “peace by peaceful means” approach.

DPD’s database records nonviolent actions that have taken place in Indonesia throughout Reformasi (the post-Suharto era, 1998 onwards). Meanwhile, DPD’s campaign focuses on disseminating information and analyses regarding the 198 methods of waging conflicts nonviolently, as introduced by Gene Sharp in 1973.

Commencing in 2021, DPD publishes yearly reflections on nonviolent resistance in Indonesia and worldwide, with the hope that the publications can serve as a useful resource to those who are committed to strengthening democracies. DPD believes that consolidation of democracy should not only be furthered through strengthening the structures that underpin democracy (free and fair elections, separation of power, etc.) but also through fortifying the cultural components of democracy – including the civil society’s and the state’s preference and skills in resolving conflicts through nonviolent means.

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Damai Pangkal Damai



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## Executive Summary: A Race Against Time

*Damai Pangkal Damai Team*

What is there to be proud of in 2023? Autocratization became worse, Russia's invasion of Ukraine endured, the Israeli occupation of Palestine presented the world with live streamed genocide, right-wing groups continued to emerge and win elections, while the climate crisis remained unaddressed. With those in mind, how are we supposed to be optimistic about 2024, the year where more than half of the world's citizens cast their votes in general elections?

Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD) adopts Thomas Weber and Robert Burrowes' definition of nonviolence as "an umbrella term for describing a range of methods for dealing with conflict, which share the common principle that physical violence, at least against other people, is not used." Equivalent terminologies include active nonviolence, nonviolent conflict, nonviolent action, direct action, nonviolent resistance, civil resistance, and people power.

DPD also refers to Gene Sharp's 198 methods of nonviolent actions, classified into three categories: (1) non-violent protest and persuasion, (2) non-cooperation, and (3) nonviolent intervention.

Source:

Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part 2: The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Bedford: Porter Sargent Publishing, 1973).

Thomas Weber and Robert J. Burrowes, "Nonviolence: An Introduction," *Peace Dossier* 27, no 2 (February 1991).

This fourth edition of Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD)'s annual reflection invites everyone to celebrate those who utilized nonviolence resistance to fight back against the above challenges. As usual, the annual reflection offers four segments, each discussing nonviolent resistance in Indonesia, maximalist movements around the world, a global reformist movement, and a special coverage. The first segment highlights the stagnation of nonviolent resistance in Indonesia. The second segment maps out maximalist movements that emerged, increased in intensity, dwindled, or turned into reformist movements throughout 2023. The third segment analyzes the escalation of the global climate movement. Last but not least, the fourth segment elaborates on the history and dynamics of nonviolent resistance within the Palestinian struggle for liberation. Altogether, the four articles underscore the importance of taking action before it is too late – before autocracy in Indonesia and other countries get firmly consolidated, before the temperature rise exceeds 2 degrees Celsius, and before an entire nation gets wiped out. The following are the key takeaways of this year's reflection:



**Outsmarting the Opponent.** Nonviolent resistance is more than just expressing one's standpoint in the face of social injustices – it is about outsmarting the opponent, about imposing the right dilemma actions that puts the opponent off their balance. Here, opponents are forced to recalculate the moral, political, social, and economic costs they have to bear should they carry on their actions or policies. Successful episodes of nonviolent resistance in 2023 relied on their ability to evoke elements of surprise, which are increasingly unattainable with the classic method of demonstration. Activists have been “spicing up” demonstrations by sequencing them with other methods of nonviolent action, by persistently staying on the streets for weeks or months, by broadening the movement’s mass base, by incorporating arts and pranks, and so on.



**Autocratic Consolidation.** The literature has taught us that, after a period of democratization, we should expect (and push for) democratic consolidation. Having witnessed two decades of autocratization, it is not too far-fetched for us to think that autocratic consolidation may already be underway in various corners of the world. Elections, regulations, and state institutions that once served as the foundation of democracy may already be hijacked or co-opted by autocrats, mostly to institutionalize and “legitimize” repression. As infrastructures of repression proliferate, which infrastructures of nonviolent resistance do we need to build?





**Stagnation in Indonesia.** As in previous years, non-violent resistance in Indonesia remained stagnant. The number of nonviolent resistance in 2023 remained well below the average number of resistance throughout the Reformasi era, the repertoires of contention remained narrow, and the intensity remained low. Taking on the “half full/half empty” perspectives, we can focus on the “good news” that there are still hundreds of methods from the “noncooperation” and “nonviolent intervention” categories that can be utilized by activists. Moreover, activists can take inspiration from strategies and tactics used by other communities across the globe (especially from the Global South), be it on pro-democracy, anti-land grabbing, gender justice, or climate justice struggles.



**Climate and Gender.** The year 2023 saw increased streamlining of gender and climate justice into different movements in Indonesia, some of which include the pro-democracy, labor, and anti-land grabbing movements. Moving forward, gender and climate lenses will very likely be the basis for the formation of cross-sectoral social movements.



**Maximalist-Reformist.** Nonviolence Studies literature has conceptually examined maximalist movements (those that demand regime change) and reformist movements (those that demand issue-based changes) separately. However, in recent years, DPD has highlighted how the two types of movements are highly interconnected. A number of maximalist movements, for example, would often shift into reformist movements to survive blowback from the regime or as a strategic adaptation to achieve their goals.



**Hiatus.** A maximalist movement may seem to “fade away.” This, however, does not necessarily equate to failure. Taking up a hiatus, or a period of laying low, is sometimes needed to avoid more casualties, develop long-term strategies, or prepare alternative institutions.

**Escalating Climate Resistance.** Looking at the three periods of the climate justice movement, it is clear that the movement escalated significantly after the Covid-19 pandemic. Of the five dimensions of escalation, the most prominent ones used by the movement have been escalation in terms of methods and through resorting to provocation. While escalatory strategies, including some cases of sabotage, have brought more news coverage, it is far from clear how effective the new strategies are. Future success of the movement might rely on how it manages to impose dilemma actions towards the fossil fuel industry, wealthy polluters and the state, rather than against fellow citizens.

**Conflict, Occupation, Genocide.** The history of nonviolent resistance in Palestine is rich and nuanced, albeit overshadowed by episodes of violence. Since October 2023, there seems to be a shift in looking at the Israeli-Palestinian issue – from conflict, to occupation, to genocide. While it has not been able to significantly change conditions on the ground, this frameshift is a critical infrastructure in the struggle for Palestinian liberation.





## Indonesia 2023: Before It's Too Late

*Diah Kusumaningrum*

November 2023 saw how hundreds of thousands Indonesians came together in the nation's capital to show solidarity with Palestinians. What does it take to garner such enthusiasm for the various social justice agendas in Indonesia? The answer to this is crucial given the impasse of nonviolent resistance in Indonesia, in terms of its frequency, repertoires, and intensity.

This article opens with some reading of the Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD) database, followed with some discussions on the three main themes put forward by nonviolent campaigns in Indonesia 2023. Amidst rampant autocratization, also the possibility that the result of the 2024 election locks in such trajectories, this article emphasizes the need to up the fight before it is too late.



## Box 1

**Protest and persuasion** consists of methods where actors “simply” show that they are against or for something. This includes demonstrations, marches, parades, petitions, speeches, posters, and art happenings.

**Noncooperation** consists of methods where actors not only demonstrate resistance, but also withdraw their participation from the practices or institutions that they oppose. This includes strikes, boycotts, and divestments.

**Nonviolent intervention** consists of methods where actors not only demonstrate resistance and withdraw their participation, but also strive to disrupt the practices or institutions they oppose. This includes sit-ins, nonviolent obstructions, nonviolent occupations, etc.

Resource:

Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part 2: The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Bedford: Porter Sargent Publishing, 1973).

## 2023 in Numbers

DPD’s main database recorded 15,043 acts of non-violent resistance in Indonesia throughout Reformasi (1999-2023), 356 of which took place in 2023.<sup>1</sup> Given data collection challenges, including limited coverage of protests by the media and social media, as well as the subtle or secretive manner of some campaigns, it is safe to say that there are more acts of nonviolent resistance than what is recorded in the database. Combined and cross-referenced with journalistic and NGO reports, the database shows a rise in the number of nonviolent resistance in Indonesia 2023, although their repertoires remain limited and the overall intensity remains low.

Frequency-wise, acts of nonviolent resistance in Indonesia increased from 219 in 2022 to 356 in 2023. This seems to be a turning point given the previous declines, from 336 in 2020, to 271 in 2021, and to 219 in 2020. Regardless of the increase, the number is far from the all-time (1999-2023) average of 601,72 acts of resistance per year.

Repertoire-wise, similar to previous years, the various nonviolent resistance campaigns that took place in Indonesia throughout 2023 only utilized 34 out of the 198 methods of nonviolent action introduced by

Sharp. As usual, the most frequently used method was demonstration (method #47), combined with speeches (method #1), slogans and hashtags (method #7), posters, banners, and displayed communications (method #8), art performances (method #36), and march (method #38). Altogether, this “classic combo” accounted for 59.26% of nonviolent actions in Indonesia 2023. One method on the rise in Indonesia 2023 was hunger strike (method #159), practiced by those advocating the meaningful adoption of a bill to protect the rights of domestic workers (UU PPRT).<sup>2</sup> It is important to note here that workers’ strike (methods #97-#117) remained very sparsely used in Indonesia despite its uptick among workers worldwide.

<sup>1</sup> See Damai Pangkal Damai’s main database, [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Jakarta Globe, “*Constitutional Court Upholds Validity of Job Creation Law*,” October 2, 2023.

Diagram 1

Number of nonviolent actions in Indonesia throughout Reformasi

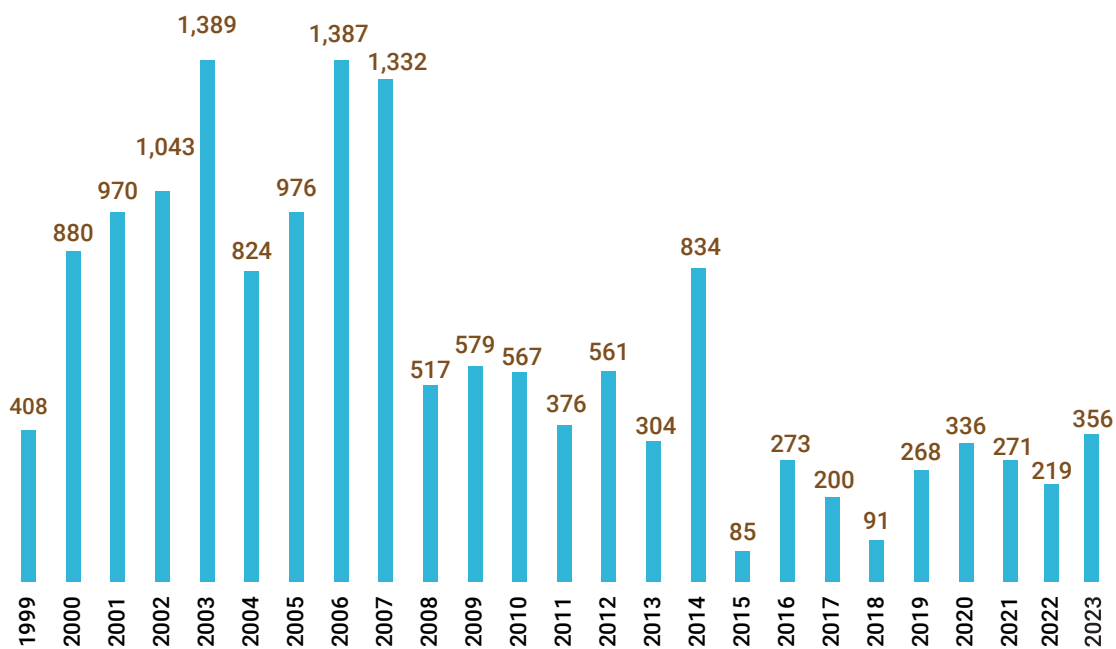


Diagram 2

Composition of nonviolent actions in Indonesia throughout Reformasi



Intensity-wise, nonviolent resistance in Indonesia 2023 remained low. Consistent with the general trend over the 25 years, 92.41% acts of nonviolent resistance in Indonesia 2023 took on methods of protest and persuasion. Meanwhile, only 1.12% and 6.46% utilized, respectively, methods of nonviolent noncooperation and methods of nonviolent intervention. It is important to note that the percentage of nonviolent interventions doubled in 2023, from only 3.19% in 2022. One reason for this is the use of hunger strikes by UU PPRT activists. Another reason has to do with continuous land grabbing practices that called for persistent blockades and occupation of one's own land by communities and activists.



## The Three Main Themes of 2023

Throughout 2023, nonviolent resistance in Indonesia revolved around three main themes: unfair working conditions, bad governance, and land grabbing. While it may seem that they lost prominence, campaigns for gender equity and climate justice were still strong in 2023, albeit more felt in the digital sphere and integrated into the three main themes. The year also saw a number of movements that emerged as a response to the deadly sporting tragedy in Kanjuruhan and the genocide in Gaza.

As showcased in the DPD database, 2023 was marked by a significant increase in non-violent resistance campaigns pertaining to unfair working conditions. Two important sub-themes were the repeal of the “job creation legislation” (UU Ciptaker) and the adoption of a bill to protect the rights of domestic workers (UU PPRT). Both movements are highly connected and are indeed supported by similar groups. Nevertheless, each has their own characteristics. The movement against the 2023 UU Ciptaker carried on with the style of activism used when fighting against the legislation’s earlier versions (the 2020 Omnibus Law and the 2022 Government Decree on Job Creation), which relied heavily on the classic combo of demonstrations, banners, and such. As the conflict moved from the legislative to the judicial arena, these methods were mostly exercised on the days when the court was in session. Meanwhile, the movement supporting UU PPRT utilized the classic combo as support to its main method, hunger strikes. Here, posters and art performances were designed in ways that portrayed the severe conditions faced by domestic workers on a day to day basis. Activists, mainly domestic workers themselves, endlessly hung posters, as if they were clothes on washing lines, meticulously cooked fried rice for the hundreds of parliamentarians, displayed empty plates or plates with cleaning equipment served on top of them to portray the lack of care and compensation they receive, and such. Performed in major cities across Indonesia, such an unusual repertoire of hunger strikes, combined with a creative customization of the classic combo, allowed the movement to quickly grab public attention.

On bad governance, three subthemes emerged. The first was on human rights, which covered the issues of past human rights violations, criminalization of human rights defenders, protection of religious and gender minorities, rights to a dignified life, and such. The second had to do with problematic regulations, for example those on village governance (UU Desa), public health (UU Kesehatan), electronic information and transactions (UU ITE), and such. The third revolved around demands for fair electoral processes, which included repudiations of dynastic politics, linked to the president’s son running as a vice-presidential candidate in the upcoming 2024 election. Most movements under this theme employed the classic combo. While they also engaged in digital activism, they mostly resorted to “digital spectator activities,” instead of “digital transitional activities” or “digital gladiatorial activities.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, both offline

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3 See categorization by Jordana George and Dorothy Leidner, *“From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism,”* *Information and Organization* 29, no. 3 (2019).



and online, said movements relied on methods that are of low intensity. In many occasions the above campaigns coalesce around Aksi Kamisan, a picketing performed every Thursday in front of the presidential palace and in multiple cities in Indonesia since 2007.

Amidst criminalisation of farmers and indigenous communities, nonviolent resistance against land grabbing persisted. As reported by the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA), the numbers of agrarian clashes increased by 12%, from 212 in 2022 to 241 in 2023. KPA's annual report highlighted that 42 (40%) of those clashes were linked to the government's decision to accelerate certain agricultural, mining, and infrastructure projects that are deemed as having high strategic values (Proyek Strategis Nasional, PSN), leading to rapid takeover processes with little or no meaningful consultation with those who live and work on the disputed lands.<sup>4</sup> On the ground, farmers and indigenous communities defended their living space and livelihoods by occupying their own land and/or putting up blockades. In courtrooms, they made use of the classic combo and digital campaigns. More often than not, these acts of nonviolent resistance were met with violence, where a number of farmers and members of the indigenous communities got beaten, got arrested, or even died. Amongst the cases that garnered wide attention due to the standoff between armed officers and unarmed civilians were Rempang, Pakel, Pulau Pari, Air Bangis, and Dago Elos.

While prominent in the previous years, gender equity and climate justice campaigns in 2023 were more felt in the digital sphere. Of course, their presence was still observed on the streets through the Women's March and Climate Marches. Nevertheless, it seems that their off-line presence throughout the year has been more integrated into other movements, including those of UU Ciptaker, UU PPRT, land grabbing, human rights, and such. Here we see gender equity and climate justice becoming important lenses on various pro social justice agendas.

Lastly, 2023 saw a series of campaigns that came forth in response to absence of justice one year after the deadly sporting event in Kanjuruhan,<sup>5</sup> as well as to the genocide in Gaza. Demanding for the Indonesian Football Association and the Indonesian Police Force to be accountable for the death of 135 people and injuries of hundreds others, activists performed the classic combo, held concerts, and displayed art installations in many cities throughout the country. Meanwhile, joining people from across the globe, hundreds of thousands of Indonesians showed up at a rally in Jakarta,<sup>6</sup> while millions brought it to the internet, to condemn the genocide in Gaza. Also, online appeals for boycotting pro-Zionism businesses surged, although it was not clear how seriously people heeded the call. More than an act of solidarity, these acts managed to change the discourse, from the "Israel-Palestinian conflict" to the "Israeli occupation, and genocide, in Palestine."

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4 Consortium for Agrarian Reform, "*Dekade Krisis Agraria: Warisan Nawacita dan Masa Depan Reforma Agraria Pasca Perubahan Politik 2024*," January 17, 2024.

5 The Jakarta Post, "*Justice for Kanjuruhan*," January 24, 2023.

6 Dio Suhenda and Nur Janti, "*Indonesians join interfaith rally in solidarity with Palestine*," The Jakarta Post, November 5, 2023.

## Same Song, New Beat?

Looking back at the “Indonesia chapter” in DPD’s 2020,<sup>7</sup> 2021,<sup>8</sup> and 2022<sup>9</sup> annual reflection, it seems that not much has changed. Nonviolent resistance in Indonesia 2023 remained limited in terms of number, repertoires, and intensity. This is worrisome seeing how autocratization, digital and physical repression, as well as the shrinking of civic space, seem to be going at an accelerated pace.

Here, it is crucial to keep in mind that nonviolent resistance, online and offline, is about outsmarting the opponent. In other words, it is not just about expressing opposition or about self-defense. It is about selecting, combining, and sequencing a number of methods in order to impose to the opponent the right dilemma actions – that is, to force them to (re)calculate the moral, political, social, and/or economic costs of ignoring the activists and of fulfilling the activists’ demands, putting them in a lose-lose situation. While it may be painful, it is important to admit that of the thousands acts of nonviolent resistance throughout Reformasi, only a handful managed to inflict the right dilemma actions onto their opponent. From the opponent’s point of view, the costs for ignoring, or even quelling nonviolent campaigns are “cheaper” than that of going with the activists’ demands. Case in point is how the state still finds it “more bearable” to uphold impunity of past human rights violations amidst Aksi Kamisan’s constant picketing over 800+ weeks, than to prosecute human rights offenders.

This does not mean that past nonviolent campaigns were not at all effective. It needs to be emphasized that, had nobody resisted, Indonesia would currently be in a more severe level of autocratization. What is needed here is a breakthrough, one that can turn the table. Activists should not let their opponents be more skilled at imposing dilemma actions, those that make activists think that the costs of resisting (e.g. physical harm, criminalization, losing one’s job, etc.) outweigh the cost of not resisting.

The opponents’ abilities to effectively inflict dilemma actions has a lot to do with authoritarian learning and authoritarian innovations, where pro-authoritarian actors emulate and perfect each other’s strategies in shrinking the civic space, co-opting democratic institutions, hijacking elections, distracting the public from important issues, adopting populism, etc. The question is, can pro-democracy actors outpace their opponents in learning and innovating?

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7 See Damai Pangkal Damai’s 2020 annual reflection, *Defending Democracy Amidst the Pandemic: Nonviolent Resistance in Indonesia and the World 2020* (Yogyakarta: IIS Press, 2021).

8 See Damai Pangkal Damai’s 2021 annual reflection, *Pushing Back Autocratization: Nonviolent Resistance in Indonesia and the World 2021* (Yogyakarta: IIS Press, 2022).

9 See Damai Pangkal Damai’s 2022 annual reflection, *Stepping Up the Good Fight? Nonviolent Resistance in Indonesia and the World 2022* (Yogyakarta: IIS Press, 2023).

Activists should not lose sight of the fact that, for their opponents, institutionalizing authoritarianism is part of their full-time paid job. This stands in contrast to farmers, religious leaders, teachers, blue-collar workers, domestic workers, parents, students, journalists, whose engagements in nonviolent campaigns are mostly on the side. It is not surprising then to see how the opponents managed to build solid infrastructures of repression, which include regulations that suppress people's rights, executive/legislative/judicial offices that are more inclined to follow directives of major corporations than that of the people, an education system which orientation is to produce workers who are anxious about vertical mobility rather than critical citizens who are adept at lending solidarity to the downtrodden, etc. With that in mind, one should ask, which infrastructures of resistance are needed to make sure that the costs of resisting do not fall heavily on individual activists, thus not outweighing the costs of not resisting. It is not too far-fetched to argue that the reason why hundreds of thousands Indonesians showed up for the November 2023 pro-Palestine rally has a lot to do with the fact that the costs of doing so were almost none, given that the rally was partly sponsored by the Indonesian state. Conversely, the costs of not showing up weighed heavier, as nobody wants to be on the side of the colonizer/genocidaire.

Similar to the previous years' reflections, this article highlights the need for nonviolent campaigns in Indonesia to widen their repertoires and up their intensity. Also, this article underlines the need to center a narrative that those who fight social injustices are patriotic citizens, fulfilling their civic duty. After all, "social justice for all" is explicitly stated in Indonesia's constitution. Let's up the fight, before this very principle is stripped out, making it too late for everyone.





## **Maximalist Campaigns' 2023 Vision: The Year of Continuation, Resurrection, and Celebration**

*Dhanisa Salsha Handiani*

In 2022, a significant number of maximalist campaigns have showcased their flexibility by shifting their aims from a maximalist to a reformist agenda in the face of challenges and repression. In 2023, said flexibility has translated to the persistence of a number of campaigns over the year. How exactly do these shifts in the aims of a movement translate to its endurance? Is the year 2023 consequently filled with familiar faces?

To begin with, Damai Pangkal Damai (DPD) adopts the definition of maximalist and reformist campaigns set forth by the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) Data Project.<sup>1</sup> Maximalist campaigns are movements that aim to remove an incumbent government from power due to popular unrest and dissatisfaction. Conversely, reformist campaigns are movements that are issue-driven, where demands revolve around changes that do not necessarily entail the dissolution of a government.

In studying the kaleidoscope of nonviolent resistance throughout the years, this report also pays heed to George Lakey's "Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution".<sup>2</sup> In it, Lakey argues that a successful nonviolent revolution should undergo several different stages. The first stage, called the conscientization stage, involves the development of collective consciousness and an understanding of the importance of nonviolent resistance to take place. The second stage, or the organizing stage, involves the gathering of people and the strengthening of their solidarity alongside commitment to nonviolence. The third stage, namely the confrontation stage, focuses on sustaining the conduct of mass mobilization that targets the opponent and its pillars of support. The fourth stage, called the mass noncooperation stage, comprises the amplification of the resistance, which takes the form of undoing the people's submission to the regime and getting them to actively withdraw their political and economic support through acts of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention. The fifth and final stage, also known as the parallel government stage, eventually features the creation of alternate systems and regimes to replace the incumbent government.

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<sup>1</sup> Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, "[What is a maximalist campaign?](#)" 2023.

<sup>2</sup> George Lakey, [A Manifesto for Nonviolent Revolution](#) (Philadelphia: Movement for a New Society, 1976).

Last year, our 2022 report analyzed the decline of maximalist campaigns in Hong Kong, Belarus, Thailand, Myanmar, and Algeria, by comparison to the perseverance of Sudan's civil resistance. It also highlighted the maximalist campaigns in Afghanistan, Russia, and Guatemala that morphed themselves into reformist campaigns, alongside ones that recently emerged in Iran, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, China, Ecuador, Panama, and Albania. As of 2023, campaigns in Hong Kong, Belarus, and Algeria have shown little to no updates, while those in Sri Lanka, China, Albania, and Ecuador have roughly achieved their goals. That said, putting the aforementioned seven campaigns aside, the 2023 report aims to shed some light on the sustenance of campaigns in Afghanistan, Russia, Panama, Guatemala, and Tunisia, the dwindling of the Sudanese and Iranian civil resistance, the resurrection of the ones in Myanmar and Thailand, as well as the emergence of new campaigns in Peru, Syria, Poland, Bangladesh, Ghana, South Africa, and Madagascar.

## Persisting through Maneuvering

In 2023, movements in **Afghanistan, Russia, Panama, Guatemala, and Tunisia** managed to retain their presence from 2022. In most of these countries, said retention was bolstered by the movements' maneuver between maximalist and reformist aims.

The movements in **Afghanistan** and **Russia**, for example, continued their resistance by maintaining their reformist demands. While they had – in consecutive order – demanded the deposition of the Taliban and of Putin in 2021, the movements' decision to focus more on fighting for women's rights and against the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022 was preserved in 2023. Amid state repression, groups of Afghan women have continued to sporadically hold marches (method #38) and demonstrations (method #47) in the capital city ahead of United Nations summits,<sup>3</sup> outside of local universities as the new academic year resumes,<sup>4</sup> and in popular spots where new restrictions were implemented – e.g. Taliban-banned beauty salons.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, in Russia, female-led movements conducted rallies and demonstrations in Moscow to demand the return of conscripted soldiers,<sup>6</sup> while “flower protests” were done by creating impromptu memorial sites at places across Russia that symbolize state violence (method #43).<sup>7</sup> In these two countries, focusing on more specific issues has served as an entryway for the general public to retract their support or condemn the countries' incumbent governments more broadly. The United Nations Security Council, for example, would initially condemn the Taliban administration for their repression of women and girls, before shedding some light on the country's larger human rights and economic problems.<sup>8</sup> Comparably, a sharp decline in the

3 Daniel Bellamy, “*Afghan women protest in Kabul demanding the Taliban aren't recognised*,” Euronews, April 29, 2023.

4 Ehsan Popalzai, Shafi Kakar, Niamh Kennedy and Jessie Yeung, “*Afghan women protest outside Kabul University as male students return to class*,” CNN, March 6, 2023.

5 Deutsche Welle, “*Afghanistan: Women protest Taliban ban on beauty salons*,” July 19, 2023.

6 Pjotr Sauer, “*We're tired of being good girls: Russia's military wives and mothers protest against Putin*,” The Guardian, December 25, 2023.

7 Valerie Hopkins and Nanna Heitmann, “*In Moscow, a Quiet Antiwar Protest With Flowers and Plush Toys*,” The New York Times, January 23, 2023.

8 NEWS WIRES, “*UN Security Council unanimously condemns Taliban's crackdown on women's rights*,” France 24, April 28, 2023.



number of Russians who support the war by December 2023 – which was recorded by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) poll – has caused the Kremlin to start fearing for the effectiveness of Putin’s re-election campaign for the 2024 Russian presidential election.<sup>9</sup>

In **Panama**, one could argue that a shift in orientation from a maximalist to a reformist campaign in 2023 was influenced by outcomes in 2022. Upon conducting large-scale demonstrations and road blockades in 2022, the movement – which, at large, aimed to push for the resignation of President Laurentino Cortizo and Vice President José Gabriel Carrizo due to the country’s economic instability – was initially “appeased” by the government’s agreement to lower the country’s gas price by 24%. The decision to strategically lower the movement’s demands was ultimately reflected by focusing protests on the incumbent government’s support of mining projects in 2023. Organized by indigenous leaders, environmentalists, and trade unions, the demonstrations held in Panama City, Colón, La Chorrera, Penonomé, Santiago, and David (method #47) were attended by thousands of Panamanians.<sup>10</sup> To emulate their success in 2022, those demonstrations were accompanied by multiple blockades of the Pan-American Highway (method #172)<sup>11</sup> and strikes by teacher’s unions (method #97)<sup>12</sup> that lasted for weeks on end. In doing so, the protests highlighted corruption allegations against Cortizo’s government, which once again snowballed into criticism of the government’s general failure to cater to the people’s demands.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, in **Guatemala**, the resistance movement’s sustenance of its maximalist orientation has allowed the people to successfully obtain its goal of constitutionally prohibiting Alejandro Giammattei and his corrupt regime from running for a second presidential term in 2022. 2023 consequently yielded a more reformist movement that aimed to safeguard the democratic transition to a new progressive president who was under threat by revisionist forces. In August 2023, when Attorney General Consuelo Porras conducted sham investigations to keep the newly elected President Bernardo Arévalo out of office, mass protests (method #47) were held to end Porras’ attempts to challenge the election results, push Porras to resignation, and allow Arévalo to assume his position.<sup>14</sup> Organized by Guatemala’s indigenous leaders and authorities, the protests were attended by thousands of students, professionals, public sector workers, rural farmers, and informal sector workers from all over the country,<sup>15</sup> and were done in tandem with prayers and spiritual ceremonies (method #20),<sup>16</sup> strikes (method #97),<sup>17</sup> alongside the blockades of a total of 140 roadways (methods #171 and #172).<sup>18</sup>

9 Joshua Askew, “*Russians’ support of Ukraine war collapses, finds poll*,” Euronews, December 2, 2023.

10 María Mónica Monsalve Sánchez, “*Mass protests in Panama to reject new concession for largest copper mine in Central America*,” El País, October 27, 2023.

11 Megan Janetsky, “*Anti-mining protesters in Panama say road blockades will be suspended for 12 hours on Monday*,” Associated Press, November 13, 2023.

12 France 24, “*Las clases se reanudarán en Panamá tras seis semanas de paro por contrato minero*,” November 3, 2023.

13 Luke Taylor, “*Historic moment: Panama activists celebrate ruling against copper mine*,” The Guardian, November 28, 2023.

14 Shannon K. O’Neil and Will Freeman, “*Guatemala’s Protests Go National, Plus Meddling Ex-Presidents and a Thaw in U.S.-Venezuela Relations*,” Council on Foreign Relations, October 16, 2023.

15 Shannon K. O’Neil and Will Freeman, “*Guatemala’s Protests Go National, Plus Meddling Ex-Presidents and a Thaw in U.S.-Venezuela Relations*,” Council on Foreign Relations, October 16, 2023.

16 Jeff Abbott, “*Guatemala’s Indigenous leaders take to the streets in nationwide protests*,” Al Jazeera, October 11, 2023.

17 Astrid Galván, “*In photos: Pro-democracy Guatemalan protesters remain defiant*,” Axios, October 26, 2023.

18 Jeff Abbott, “*Guatemala’s Indigenous leaders take to the streets in nationwide protests*,” Al Jazeera, October 11, 2023.

In contrast to the four resistance movements above, in 2023, the resistance movement in **Tunisia** continued to adopt a maximalist orientation and completely retained its demands from the previous year. With chants along the lines of “Down with the coup” and “Freedom for all the prisoners” (methods #7 and #8), hundreds of Tunisians would demonstrate (method #47) in the capital city of Tunis to demand the dissolution of President Kais Saied’s one-man rule and the release of detained opposition figures.<sup>19</sup> Imprisoned opposition figures – for example, the prominent Abir Moussi, leader of the Free Constitutional Party (PDL) – have also engaged in hunger strikes (method #159) to protest against the curbing of their rights to freedom and political activity.<sup>20</sup>

The movements in all five countries have largely reached the confrontation stage, where alliances among the constituents have been established and resistance has been conducted in a sustained manner. However, considering that progress is not always linear, it is important to note that the aforementioned movements have followed different trajectories to get to their current footing.

As discussed above, even if they all started as maximalist campaigns, the movements in Afghanistan, Russia, and Panama have transformed into reformist campaigns throughout the past few years. The reasons behind those shifts have ranged from (1) avoiding repression (where it would generally be easier to campaign on reformist topics that are perceived as “less threatening” by the government); (2) adjusting to the type of concessions made by the government (which serve as an opportunity to secure small victories needed to buttress their larger goals); and (3) adjusting to changes to the country’s political developments. While these do not necessarily highlight the maximalist movements’ initial strength, it does show their agility in coming up with tactical moves to face changed circumstances to keep their presence afloat.

On the contrary, for Tunisians, whose current movement is seen by many as a continued legacy of the 2010 Arab Spring (termed by local figures as an “intifada” to an incomplete revolution),<sup>21</sup> maintaining the movement’s maximalist orientation is crucial to prevent President Saied from earning more concessions, as well as the continuous backsliding of the country’s relatively new and hard-earned democracy. The need to maintain a similar momentum is also seen in the case of Guatemala – whose movement earned the title of the biggest protest to ever happen in the last two decades – to accelerate the suspension of the incumbent leader and the election of a new reformist president. The ensuing success in 2022 then pushed the creation of a reformist campaign in 2023 to defend the country’s fragile democracy. One could argue that both movements’ commitment to the maximalist orientation was founded on the amount of investment that they’ve put into the resistance, alongside a sense of urgency to prevent further democratic regression.

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19 Al Jazeera, “*Tunisia protest marks two years since president’s power grab*,” July 25, 2023.

20 Tarek Amara, “*Tunisian opposition figure Moussi begins hunger strike in prison*,” Reuters, November 29, 2023.

21 Edna Mohamed, “*Incomplete revolution: Tunisia crackdown slammed by critics*,” Al Jazeera, June 25, 2023.



## Cases of Dissolution and Resurrection

Aside from continuation, 2023 also witnessed the dissolution and resurrection of resistance movements. Despite their recent emergence and perseverance in 2022, the resistance movements in **Iran** and **Sudan** have shown a decline in 2023. Meanwhile, those in **Myanmar** and **Thailand** – categorized as movements that died down in our 2022 report – slowly made their way back to the public.

The **Iranian** resistance that started in 2022 was recognized as the biggest protest to happen in the country since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Alas, the scope of the movement has pushed the government to correspondingly impose a massive crackdown. Aside from restricting messaging applications and the internet to severely disrupt the protesters' connectivity, the government has also confronted protesters with tear gas, live ammunition, and other excessive forms of violence – all of which was assisted by a paramilitary volunteer militia called the Basij.<sup>22</sup> Being a relatively new resistance movement, the dwindling of protests in Iran was consequently buttressed by the need to recover from the government's deadly repression, which resulted in the death of more than 500 people, serious injuries suffered by hundreds of other demonstrators, and the arrest of dozens of journalists who were – as of September 2023 – still behind bars.<sup>23</sup> In the middle of the year, a number of detained resistance members were also tortured and executed following the absence of meaningful judicial proceedings.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, 2022 was the third consecutive year in which the **Sudanese** people had persistently fought for a transition to democracy since the ousting of Omar al-Bashir in 2019. Unfortunately, protests came to a standstill due to the outbreak of a civil war between Sudan's military and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group in April 2023,<sup>25</sup> which resulted in the deaths of 9,000 Sudanese and the displacement of 5.6 million others as of October 2023.<sup>26</sup> Aside from preserving one's safety, weekly protests came to a stop and were no longer viable since protest leaders had to assume the new role of managing and distributing supplies for civilians affected by the war, helping transport casualties to the nearest hospitals and health facilities, assisting people and their own families in fleeing out of the country, and so on.<sup>27</sup>

Conversely, 2023 has seen the revival of the resistance movements in Myanmar and Thailand, which had to lay low in the year 2022. Due to the increased repression by the junta, Myanmar's civil resistance had to initially rely on "silent strikes" at the beginning of 2022 and

22 Parisa Hafezi, *"What has changed in Iran one year since Mahsa Amini protests erupted?"* Reuters, September 13, 2023.

23 Kourosh Ziabari, *"Female Protests in Iran: One Year Later,"* United States Institute of Peace, September 6, 2023.

24 Amnesty International, *"Iran: Executions of tortured protesters must trigger a robust reaction from the international community,"* May 19, 2023.

25 The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had initially worked together to oust President Bashir in 2019, which led to the election of civilian-backed Abdalla Hamdok as the country's prime minister. Alas, the two later orchestrated a coup against Hamdok in October 2021, propelling mass demonstrations demanding a return to civilian control. Only upon agreeing to concede some power to the leaders of the two armed factions that Hamdok was able to get reinstated in November 2021. In 2022, however, Hamdok resigned as a result of the Sudanese protesters' dissatisfaction towards his performance, thus the country's absence of effective civilian leadership and the eventual power struggle between SAF and RSF.

26 Kate Bartlett and Emmanuel Akinwotu, *"Sudan's war passed 6 months, with much of the world consumed by other conflicts,"* NPR, October 21, 2023.

27 Arthur Larie, *"I believe this war will destroy Sudan: the coup protesters now on the run,"* The Guardian, July 13, 2023.

was later taken over by armed self-defense groups such as the People's Defence Forces (PDF), thus plunging the country in a state of civil war.<sup>28</sup> In Thailand, a decline in civil resistance was observed due to heightened state repression and the detainment of thousands of pro-democracy activists.<sup>29</sup>

In the case of **Myanmar**, the stimulant to the resistance movement's resurrection lies within the junta's closest pillar of support. As the crackdown ensued, the conduct of nonviolent resistance started to bloom amongst the security personnel themselves, where more than 10,000 of them – comprising around 3,000 military and 7,000 police officers – chose to defect and desert their responsibilities (method #148) due to the morale crisis that many faced upon being asked to kill innocent civilians.<sup>30</sup> While this has allowed the PDF to reclaim most occupied territories and push the junta's administrators away from their posts, it also triggered civilians to once again embark on what Lakey dubs the "organizing stage", where the people would consolidate their presence and commitment to nonviolent discipline. Taking hold of the fact that not everyone is physically and mentally capable of arming themselves to resist the military dictatorship, approximately 40 protest groups emerged in different towns, further propelling the creation of a regional committee and the revival of street protests in the Kani, Mingin, Salingyi, Yinmarbin, Kalay, Khin-U, Ye-U, and Chaung-U region (method #47, accompanied by methods #7, #8, and #38).<sup>31</sup> This was followed by an increase in nonviolent actions that are of higher intensity, such as staging an outlawed plowing protest (method #141), boycotting military-owned companies (method #71), and rejecting military-sponsored elections (method #124).<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, in neighboring country **Thailand**, pro-democracy movements have reemerged following the rise of the Move Forward Party (MFP), a progressive social democratic political party that aims to detach Thai politics from military influence. While it was not able to replicate the scope of protests before 2022, the victory of MFP in the country's general election in May – followed by the blocking of MFP's Pita Limjaroenrat from assuming the position of Thailand's prime minister – has propelled thousands of Thais to once again hold street demonstrations (method #47) in Bangkok, while shouting "Senators, get out!" (method #7) and blocking busy intersections (method #172) along the way.<sup>33</sup>

Does a decline in nonviolent action and the emergence of an armed group then constitute a failure of civil resistance?

Seeing as nonviolent resistance is affected by the stage of the conflict it is in, halting a movement in the face of an extreme case of conflict escalation (e.g. a deadly war or massive repression) is often seen as a necessity to prevent casualties and even as a period of further

28 Jonathan Head, "[Myanmar: Why once peaceful protesters are now choosing violence](#)," BBC, January 30, 2022.

29 Emmy Sasipornkarn, "[Thailand: What happened to monarchy protest movement?](#)" Deutsche Welle, November 17, 2022.

30 Miemie Winn Byrd and Daniel K. Inouye, "[Unifying efforts Against The Military Junta](#)," Indo-Pacific Defense FORUM, December 18, 2023.

31 RFA Burmese, "[Myanmar's Sagaing region sees a resurgence of anti-junta protests](#)," Radio Free Asia, October 17, 2023.

32 RFA Burmese, "[Myanmar's Sagaing region sees a resurgence of anti-junta protests](#)," Radio Free Asia, October 17, 2023.

33 Sebastian Strangio, "[Move Forward Supporters Gather in Bangkok to Protest Obstructed PM Bid](#)," The Diplomat, July 24, 2023.

planning and organizing. Additionally, while it resembles the movement's current inability to achieve its demands, it does not always translate to the diminishment of the people's determination. Movements that take a step back in the face of challenging circumstances, as in the case of Thailand, can gain new momentum and be able to reestablish their resistance.

Even throughout Iran's long history of protests, periods of laying low have served as the foundation for the emergence of new waves of protests; the decade of "soul-searching" that followed the quelling of the 1999 student protests, for example, was said to pave the way for the establishment of the Green Movement in 2009 (which is hopefully also the case with the current Iranian resistance).<sup>34</sup> In other instances, a period of "hiatus" could be beneficial not only to plan out future tactics and strategies of the resistance movement, but to also create alternative institutions, including a transitional or parallel government, in the event that the revolution succeeded. In Sudan, this could have likely prevented the presence of a vacuum of power – which made the civil war possible – following the success of the resistance movement in ousting the country's dictator in 2019.

Meanwhile, many might also consider Myanmar's initial shift from civil to armed resistance as a failure of nonviolent resistance. However, the re-emergence of civilians embarking on methods of nonviolent action in 2023 might very well serve as a rebuttal to such a statement. Considering that the weakening of the military had occurred upon their personnel's dilemma in inflicting harm upon innocent civilians, one could highlight the importance of the moral and political jiu-jitsu – which only works with nonviolent resistance! – in further pursuing the country's anti-junta resistance. In addition to that, it is also important to note that the coexistence of a civilian and armed resistance does not negate the value of the former; if anything, it could always outpace the latter in the future.

## New Faces of Resistance

New maximalist campaigns also emerged in 2023, which ranged from large-scale ones in **Syria, Bangladesh, Peru, and Poland**, to ones that lasted for a couple of days and weeks in **Ghana, South Africa, and Madagascar**.

In **Syria** and **Bangladesh**, the presence of maximalist campaigns was triggered by economic unrest, which eventually yielded the demand to overthrow the country's respective governments. In Syria, marches (method #38) and demonstrations (method #47) first broke out in the province of Suwayda to address the government's call to end fuel subsidies in the middle of the country's worsening economy.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, protests in Bangladesh first started in December 2022 to criticize Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's inability to manage the country's rising commodity costs and inflation caused by the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> United States Institute of Peace, "*FACT SHEET: Protests in Iran 1979-2023*," May 30, 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Al Jazeera, "*Antigovernment protesters tear down picture of al-Assad in Syria's Sweida*," September 8, 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Vedika Sud and Yong Xiong, "*Tens of thousands protest in Bangladesh to demand resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina*," CNN, December 11, 2022.

In both countries, the large turnout of a diverse set of constituents in the abovementioned protests has allowed the two resistance movements to move past the conscientization and organizing stages, before swiftly embarking on the confrontation and mass noncooperation stage. Aside from street demonstrations, for example, thousands of Syrians managed to gain the confidence to expeditiously call for the removal of President Bashar al-Assad and his regime through the act of ripping banners showcasing al-Assad's face (method #30), holding strikes (method #97),<sup>37</sup> welding government office doors shut (method #172),<sup>38</sup> and shutting down critical provincial roads (method #172).<sup>39</sup> Despite not deploying methods as diverse as the ones in Syria, tens of thousands of Bangladeshis were also able to consistently hold rallies (method #38) and street demonstrations (method #47) throughout 2023, before calling for a boycott of the upcoming election (method #124) should the Prime Minister refuse to resign.<sup>40</sup>

Maximalist campaigns in **Peru** and **Poland**, on the other hand, were prompted to outrightly protest the democratic backsliding occurring in the country. Peruvians were set on demanding the resignation of (previously Vice) President Dina Boluarte – who came into power upon the impeachment of Pedro Castillo in December 2022 – for her repressive action against civil society and refusal to hold immediate elections in the following months.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the people of Poland have been carrying out their resistance to criticize the government of President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, which had recently passed the “Lex Tusk” bill that eroded the country's constitutional separation of powers and aimed at blocking the main opposition leader from running in the country's election.<sup>42</sup>

In Peru, the people's resistance utilized an entire array of nonviolent methods, from protest and persuasion, to noncooperation and nonviolent intervention. In addition to tens of thousands of protesters marching and filling up Peru's streets (methods #38 and #47),<sup>43</sup> Peruvians have also resorted to blocking at least eight highways and other roads in the cities of Puno, Arequipa, Junín, Cusco and Apurímac with stones and burning tires (method #172),<sup>44</sup> as well as conducting work stoppages (method #97) initiated by mine workers and mining unions, whose sector contributes a large part of Peru's GDP.<sup>45</sup> Poland's resistance movement, on the other hand, came in waves of large-scale marches (method #38) and demonstrations (method #47) in Warsaw and other major cities such as Kraków, Szczecin, and Poznań, which were attended by at least 300,000 to 500,000 people and lasted from June to October 2023.<sup>46</sup>

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37 Al Jazeera, *“Antigovernment protesters tear down picture of al-Assad in Syria's Sweida,”* September 8, 2023.

38 Al Jazeera, *“Antigovernment protesters tear down picture of al-Assad in Syria's Sweida,”* September 8, 2023.

39 Ruth Michaelson, *“Syrian protests enter second week with calls for Assad to go,”* The Guardian, August 28, 2023.

40 Reuters, *“Bangladesh opposition vows to continue protests despite ‘autocratic’ crackdown,”* November 29, 2023.

41 Omar Coronel, *“Understanding the protests in Peru,”* Al Jazeera, February 15, 2023.

42 Reuters, *“Polish president signs ‘Tusk Law’ on undue Russian influence,”* May 29, 2023.

43 Marco Aquino, *“Protesters take to Peru's streets, some met with tear gas in capital,”* Reuters, July 20, 2023.

44 The Red Phoenix, *“In Peru the fight against Dina Boluarte continues,”* January 18, 2023.

45 Marina E. Franco, *“Peru's anti-government movement reignited months after deadly protests,”* Axios, July 19, 2023.

46 Vanessa Gera, *“Hundreds of thousands march in Poland anti-government protests to show support for democracy,”* Associated Press, June 5, 2023.

This report also wants to highlight the wave of nonviolent resistance that emerged on the African continent. For three days, hundreds of **Ghanaians** demonstrated in the streets of Accra (method #47), shouting “Stop the looting, we are suffering!” (methods #7 and #8) while donning black and red outfits that symbolize suffering (method #19), to protest against the corrupt government’s incompetence in addressing the country’s sustained financial crisis.<sup>47</sup> In **South Africa**, anti-government demonstrations led by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) were launched for a couple of weeks to criticize the country’s electricity crisis, crime epidemic, and failing economy.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, in **Madagascar**, demonstrations in the capital Antananarivo were held and attended by the incumbent government’s opposition contenders to demand fair and transparent elections,<sup>49</sup> which were accompanied by the erection of barricades along the Avenue de l’Indépendance and Place du 13 Mai (method #172).<sup>50</sup>

It is to be noted, however, that these maximalist campaigns vary in size and duration. In the first four movements mentioned, a strong base of support was critical in ensuring the longevity of their protests. In Poland, this was further bolstered by the presence of renowned political figures such as former Prime Minister Donald Tusk, former President and the Solidarity movement leader Lech Walesa, Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, social activist Sylwia Gregorczyk-Abram, and New Left leader Włodzimierz Czarzasty.<sup>51</sup> Other factors that might also contribute to the lower participant turnout in Ghana, South Africa, and Madagascar feature the immediate strong presence of the police and military within the area, as well as instances of violence that consequently broke out in the middle of the protests.

## Victories and Future Trajectories

That said, 2023 was a year filled not only with extensions from 2022, but also with dissolutions, resurrections, and the materialization of new resistance movements. Amid the diversity of movements and their different trajectories, a number of trends, key takeaways, and future inquiries can be highlighted.

In many instances, maximalist campaigns that recently emerged or grew in intensity from previous years occurred in the wake of democratic backsliding. In Guatemala, Peru, and Poland, the resistance movement’s demand has not been confined to overthrowing an incompetent ruling government, but has also included the safeguarding of democratic principles during transitional periods and under the rule of new governments. Taking this into account, it should be interesting to take a look at the progression of other ongoing civil resistance that does

47 Jeffrey Haynes, “#OccupyBoG: Social protest movements and radical political change in Ghana,” *Democracy in Africa*, November, 2023.

48 Felix Maringa, “What’s driving Africa’s demonstrations?” *Deutsche Welle*, April 6, 2023.

49 Rédaction Africanews, “Madagascar: Opposition candidates protest ‘institutional coup,’” October 15, 2023.

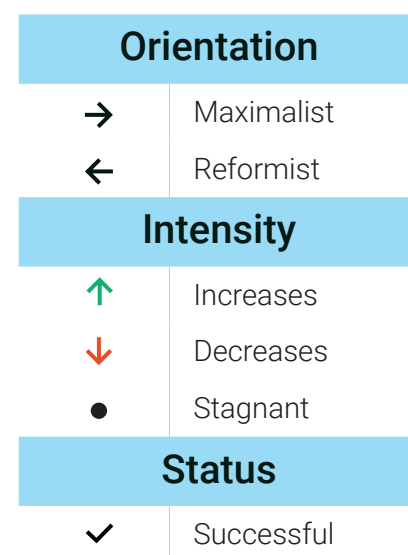
50 Crisis24, “Madagascar: Further protests, clashes likely nationwide ahead of and during presidential election,” November 13, 2023.

51 Vanessa Gera, “Hundreds of thousands march in Poland anti-government protests to show support for democracy,” *Associated Press*, June 5, 2023.

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Afghanistan		→	•←	•←
Albania			→	✓
Algeria	→	↑→	↓→	
Bangladesh				→
Belarus	→	↓→	↓→	
Bulgaria	→	✓		
Chile	→	✓		
China			→	✓
Colombia	→	↑→	✓	
Ecuador			→	✓
El Salvador		→		
Ghana				→
Guatemala		→	↑→	✓+←
Hong Kong	→	↓→	↓→	
Iran			→	↓→
Kyrgyzstan	→			
Lebanon	→	↑→		
Madagascar				→
Malawi	→			
Myanmar		→	↓→	↑→
Panama			→	•←
Peru	→			→
Poland				→
Russia		→	•←	•←
South Africa				→
Sri Lanka			→	✓
Sudan	→	↑→	↑→	↓→
Syria				→
Thailand	→	↓→	↓→	↑→
Tunisia			→	•→

Diagram 1

The trajectory of  
maximalist movements  
in the world  
(2020-2023)



not necessarily demand the ousting of their government – instead, demanding various other reforms or fighting against right-wing elements capable of tainting the country's democracy – that could possibly evolve into future maximalist campaigns. Take, for example, the protest in Spain regarding the Catalan amnesty law, demonstrations against right-wing parties in Colombia who oppose the new leftist government's reforms, and so on.



In terms of adaptability, a number of resistance movements that were able to retain their presence have often shifted their focus towards smaller gains, performing a shift from maximalist to reformist goals, in the eye of changed circumstances. As mentioned above, by highlighting the issue of women's rights and questioning the aims and outcomes of the Ukraine war, the resistance movements in Afghanistan and Russia were able to respectively garner the attention of the United Nations Security Council and challenge the population's support of Putin, thus contributing to each of their larger maximalist goals. In Panama, the decision to shut down the government's exploitative Cobre Panamá operations and successfully push for the resignation of the Commerce and Industries minister also provided the movement with more momentum and bargaining power to achieve their larger aim of dismantling the existing government.<sup>52</sup> Shifting and lowering goals thus does not necessarily mean that campaigns resign their overall maximalist aims, but that they show tactical and strategic flexibility adjusting their struggle to given political circumstances.

Other than that, resistance movements that have shown relatively more ease in going through Lakey's stages of nonviolent revolution also possess a couple of characteristics not to be missed: a vast repertoire of contention and historical background in the conduct of nonviolent resistance (e.g. the spirit of the Arab Spring found within Tunisia and Syria's resistance movements), as well as the presence of a diverse set of constituents capable of getting more people to join the resistance for a sustained period of time (e.g. having representatives of the indigenous population, the youth, and working class in Guatemala and Peru). At the time of this report's writing (specifically on January 14, 2024), the aforementioned factors have successfully pushed for the inauguration of Bernardo Arévalo as Guatemala's long-awaited president, marking it, as one author claims, "the most successful pro-democracy movement of the 21st century".<sup>53</sup>

Lastly, 2023 has brought the resurrection of a couple of nonviolent campaigns that were quelled by repression or outshined by armed resistance in previous years. Taking this as a form of victory on its own, we should pay attention to the future progress of these movements and observe how they co-exist or manage to outpace their violent counterparts in the very spirit of celebrating the appeal that nonviolence has among their people.

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<sup>52</sup> Michael McDonald, "[Panama Minister of Industry, Commerce Resigns Over Mine Dispute](#)," Bloomberg News, December 1, 2023.

<sup>53</sup> Quic Toro, "[Guatemala Just Ran January 6th In Reverse](#)," Persuasion, January 17, 2024.





## Quo vadis climate movement?

### The climate movement is escalating its struggle. How is it working out?

*Daniel Petz*

The heat is on. Due largely to human-caused climate change,<sup>1</sup> 2023 will by significant margins be recorded as the hottest year since temperature records exist, with July 2023 likely the hottest in 120.000 years.<sup>2</sup> Latest data shows that 2023 was 1.48 degrees Celsius hotter than the pre-industrial baseline, coming very close to breaching the 1.5-degree climate target set by the Paris Agreement for the first time in human history.<sup>3</sup> 2023 has already seen a terrifying range of climate disasters. The unprecedented wildfires in Canada have, by August, burned an area of forest larger than England.<sup>4</sup> Record heatwaves have hit North America, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. Extreme rainfalls and storms have devastated Greece, Hong Kong, and Libya.<sup>5</sup> Almost every day, the news reports some kind of major climate-related disaster, including droughts, hailstorms, storms, floods, landslides, and so on. Polar sea ice was at its lowest level in recorded history<sup>6</sup> and climate scientists were highlighting the dangers of climate tipping points, including the weakening and eventual collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, the Amazon rainforest dieback, coral bleaching, sea-ice collapse, and so on.<sup>7</sup>

While almost all countries in the world have agreed to limit global heating to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels,<sup>8</sup> current pledges and policies are not on track to meet those targets. According to the Climate Action Tracker, current policies would amount to 2.7°C of warming.<sup>9</sup> Over the coming decades, climate change will cause suffering to billions of human beings, particularly in the Global South, who have only caused a small proportion of emissions. A recent Deloitte study shows that unchecked climate change might cause costs of up to 178 trillion US\$ in the next 50 years alone.<sup>10</sup> To sum up, the situation is dire and urgent, and will become more dire with every passing year, at least until humanity stops emitting carbon emissions and stabilizes global temperatures. Even then, some climate impacts such as sea-level rise will be around for centuries.<sup>11</sup>

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1 Record temperatures in 2023 were also boosted by the emergence of the cyclical El Nino phenomenon. See National Weather Service, <https://www.weather.gov/news/230706-ElNino>

2 Scientific America, "[July 2023 Is Hottest Month Ever Recorded on Earth](#)," July 27, 2023.

3 Seth Borenstein, "[Earth was hotter than ever in 2023, approaching 1.5-degree warming limit](#)," PBS News, January 9, 2024.

4 Al Jazeera, "[Mapping the scale of Canada's record wildfires](#)," August 23, 2023.

5 Jessie Yeung, "[Ten countries and territories saw severe flooding in just 12 days. Is this the future of climate change?](#)" CNN, September 17, 2023.

6 NOAA, "[Topping the charts: September 2023 was Earth's warmest September in 174-year record](#)," October 13, 2023.

7 David I. Armstrong McKay et al., "[Exceeding 1.5°C global warming could trigger multiple climate tipping points](#)," Science 377, no. 6611 (September 2022).

8 UNFCCC, "[What is the Paris Agreement?](#)" 2023.

9 Even if all the Nationally Determined Contributions would be fulfilled this would still amount to 2.4°C of warming. See: Climate Action Tracker, "[2100 warming projections](#)," October 16, 2023.

10 Deloitte, "[Deloitte research reveals inaction on climate change could cost the world's economy US\\$178 trillion by 2070](#)," May 23, 2022.

11 For a detailed overview of the latest status of climate research please see the latest IPCC report at <https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/>

For as long as climate change has emerged as a major challenge for humanity's well-being and even survival, civil society has organized to push governments, international organizations, companies, and individuals to take the threat seriously and take the necessary steps to minimize climate risks and impacts. The last decade has particularly seen the rise of a multilayered and diverse global climate movement which has employed a wide number of nonviolent methods to achieve those goals. Given the still insufficient actions taken by global, national, and local actors amid the growing urgency to mitigate climate change, we have seen a push to switch tactics by the climate movement, which can be described as an escalation on the part of the climate movement. That said, this article aims to shine a light on recent developments in the climate movement through a lens of escalation based on debates in both conflict and non-violence studies. It starts by discussing escalation as a concept, and what escalation in terms of nonviolence means. This is followed by discussing the climate movement's escalation along the five dimensions proposed by Sørensen and Johansen, namely the quantitative escalation, innovation of new methods, dilemma creation for opponents, provocation, and persistence. Finally, it sketches a number of possible pathways the climate movement might take in the future.

## Escalation and Nonviolent Action

Climate change can be described as a multi-layered conflict that reaches across a number of dimensions. Depending on which issues are at stake, climate change can manifest into a local conflict (for example, when it comes to the development of a local clean energy project or climate change adaptation measures such as building a sea wall), domestic conflict (distribution of emissions between regions within a country), international conflict (distribution of emissions or resources between countries in a region such as the European Union member countries), global conflict (between the high-emitting Global North and the highly impacted Global South), intergenerational conflict (between the young/future generations and the older generations, in which the former would suffer more from climate change than the latter who have benefited the most from development based on fossil fuels), gender conflict (where climate might impact women and men differently), and so on. However, it is worth noting that, according to conflict research, conflicts are ubiquitous in human life and are not necessarily negative, as long as they are handled nonviolently and aim for positive conflict outcomes. Peace studies also argue that conflict management and transformation can decrease instances of direct, structural, and cultural violence, thus contributing to the creation of positive peace.<sup>12</sup>

Having established the fact that conflict can and should be managed accordingly, Kriesberg and Dayton argue that conflict escalation can take place alongside two dimensions – through either intensifying or increasing participation in conflict – which can occur violently or nonviolently.<sup>13</sup> According to the authors, escalation as such does not necessarily need to be

<sup>12</sup> Johan Galtung distinguishes between negative peace (the absence of direct violence such as war) and positive peace (social justice). See: Johan Galtung, "*Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167-191.

<sup>13</sup> Louis Kriesberg and Bruce W. Dayton, *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 143ff.

destructive, where nonviolent escalation might particularly increase chances of constructively engaging with social injustice issues that are previously hidden and unaddressed.

Aside from increasing participation, switching methods is one of the most frequent strategies employed by movements to embark on a nonviolent escalation. According to Gene Sharp (1973), methods of nonviolent action can be categorized into three different groups of intensity: methods of protest and persuasion, methods of noncooperation, and methods of nonviolent intervention.<sup>14</sup> Movements often start with methods of protest and persuasion; if those do not bring success, they might escalate by moving to methods of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention. This might also mean a switch from methods that are within the confines of the law to methods that break certain laws, thus moving to the realm of civil disobedience. Escalation can also happen by using a broader range of methods or a different sequencing of nonviolent methods. As Sørensen and Jørgensen rightly argue, escalation is only successful if the nonviolent action leads to a response by the opponent to the method.<sup>15</sup>

In an attempt to further systematize ways of nonviolent escalation, Sørensen and Johansen differentiate between five different forms of escalation.<sup>16</sup> The first form is escalating quantitatively, in which escalation occurs by mobilizing more activists, expanding the duration of actions, expanding outreach, and so on. Meanwhile, the other four forms are qualitative in nature, where escalation happens in the presence of the innovation of new methods, dilemma action for opponents, provocation, and persistence.<sup>17</sup>

## The Climate Movement and Escalation

Given these various routes and aspects of escalation, I will now try to reconstruct developments within the climate movement in recent years, furthermore discussing them in terms of which types of escalation were used, the possible motivation and reasons for that escalation, and whether or not these steps of escalations were successful. Measuring the success of nonviolent action, particularly in the cases of reformist movements, is of course highly challenging and contested; however, there are some criteria that we can come up with in regard to the climate movement. First, we can take the explicitly stated goals/demands of different climate movements and see if those goals/demands were met. Second, the climate movement is arguably interested in the public's awareness of the climate crisis and willingness to take steps to mitigate climate change. Thus, public opinion surveys might be of some help. Third, looking at the repression that the climate movement is facing might be an indicator of how serious states and other actors take climate activists – or at least how they react to escalation by the movement.

<sup>14</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part 2: The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973).

<sup>15</sup> Majken Jul Sørensen and Jørgen Johansen, "Nonviolent Conflict Escalation," *Conflict Research Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2016): 7.

<sup>16</sup> Majken Jul Sørensen and Jørgen Johansen, "Nonviolent Conflict Escalation," *Conflict Research Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2016): 7.

<sup>17</sup> Majken Jul Sørensen and Jørgen Johansen, "Nonviolent Conflict Escalation," *Conflict Research Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2016): 9.

To begin with, what exactly comprises the climate movement? Defining the climate movement is not an easy task. It can probably be best described as a broad and loose coalition of movements, NGOs, and other civil society groups that are campaigning and lobbying actors to a) mitigate climate change through different policies and strategies to cut emissions with an aim to reach zero – if not negative – emissions in the near future (this includes the transformation of energy use to green energy, changes in agriculture and waste-management, changes in transportation means and habits, changes in diet, and so on), b) adapt to climate change, particularly by supporting the most vulnerable groups and persons, and c) foster climate justice on different levels so that the benefits and burdens of the societal transition are distributed justly, in which those affected also have a say in the transition (procedural justice).<sup>18</sup>

Due to its broadness, aims and scope can also be quite divergent from one climate group to another. While some organizations would promote a more reformist, technological approach, others might promote wider societal transformation such as degrowth strategies or even an end to neoliberal capitalism. It can also be separated into oftentimes local and issue-based movements that try to stop specific projects (which Naomi Klein calls Blockadia), and organizations that engage with the climate issue more broadly and are present in many countries. The first group includes many indigenous and localized movements that aim to stop pipelines or other fossil fuel infrastructure that threatens people's livelihoods, as well as organizations such as Ende Gelände in Germany that specifically aim to stop coal mining. The second group, on the other hand, includes organizations such as Greenpeace, Fridays for Future, and Extinction Rebellion. In some instances, these climate groups have more or less close links to green and environmental parties, where they can increasingly engage in lobbying and climate change litigation.

Another challenging question in regards to the climate movement is the addressee of the struggle. Given that climate change is such a multilayered topic and is a systemic issue, the opponent in the climate struggle is complex and multifaceted, where every human being can be both a perpetrator and potential victim of climate change. While we have seen that the demands of climate activists are largely directed at governments, actions have also targeted extractive and fossil fuel industries, as well as banks and financial institutions supporting those extractive industries. The global super-rich has also been increasingly targeted, as studies have shown that they are particularly potent emitters with their private jets and superyachts. However, certain actions – take, for example, traffic blockades – that are meant to address the government often seem to largely inconvenience ordinary citizens. We can thus argue that many actions by the climate movement have multiple and multilayered addressees, where any analysis of the success or failure of actions needs to take this complexity into account.

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<sup>18</sup> More recently, debates about loss and damage have also picked up steam. Advocating for loss and damage support for those affected by climate change has also become an important area for the climate movement.

Historically, environmental and climate movement organizations have engaged with the climate issue for decades, particularly surrounding the annual Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that has taken place every year since 1995. However, mass mobilization only happened in the 2000s, with its first peak being the protests surrounding the 2009 Copenhagen COP, in which more than 100,000 people gathered in demonstrations. De Moore et al. highlight three reasons for the growth in the climate movement around that time, namely (a) better scientific knowledge and dissemination of that knowledge (for example, through Al Gore's movie "An Inconvenient Truth" from 2006), (b) climatization, where climate becomes a more salient topic for NGOs and movements, and (c) movement spillover from the global justice movement.<sup>19</sup> Amongst the established environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, a number of new organizations were also founded around the time, an example being 350.org in 2008. The Paris Agreement (adopted 2015/in force 2016) furthermore gave the climate movement a powerful tool for accountability, given that almost all governments have ratified the agreement's goals and thus needed to present plans on how to comply with the agreement. Nevertheless, global emissions kept growing.

2018 served as another pivotal year for the climate movement, where Greta Thunberg's first school strike for climate in August 2018 started what would become the Fridays for Future (FFF) movement. Almost during the same time, on 31 October 2018, Extinction Rebellion (XR) declared its rebellion against the British government.<sup>20</sup> The Fridays for Future movement gained traction very fast and the period from 20-27 September 2019, right before the climate summit, saw likely the largest climate movement mobilization in history. Numbers diverged, but between 4 and 7 million people in up to 150 countries joined some form of demonstration or strike during that period. While FFF mobilized in numbers, XR gained headlines through the use of a number of innovative tactics, many using nonviolent intervention. Alas, just when the climate movement seemed to become a force to be reckoned with, the Covid-19 pandemic happened and pushed the wind out of the sails of the movement. Given health concerns, public protests were severely restricted in many countries and the climate movement had chosen to largely comply with government regulations. Interestingly, the immense amounts of money and resources, as well as the will of governments to enforce often coercive regulations, showed the climate movement that if governments really wanted, they could act swiftly and decisively on a crisis, thus posing the question of why they didn't do so in the case of the climate crisis. And while emissions dropped for the first time during the pandemic, they later rebounded again, showing that climate policies were still far from sufficient.

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<sup>19</sup> Michiel De Vydt, Katrin Uba and Mattias Wahlstorm, "*New kids on the block: taking stock of the recent cycle of climate activism*," *Social Movement Studies* 20, no. 5 (October 2020): 620.

<sup>20</sup> Michiel De Vydt, Katrin Uba and Mattias Wahlstorm, "*New kids on the block: taking stock of the recent cycle of climate activism*," *Social Movement Studies* 20, no. 5 (October 2020): 621.

The climate movement has remobilized after the pandemic, but a number of developments have led to shifts in both actors and tactics. First, parts of the movement seem to have decided that mass participation and demonstrations (method #47) are not successful strategies, where they would proceed to found new organizations that utilize more interventionist and coercive tactics such as the Last Generation, Just Stop Oil, and so on. These organizations have engaged in a variety of nonviolent actions, from notoriously throwing paint at famous paintings (method #26), gluing themselves to roads (methods #158 and #171), and more. Second, there is a growing debate within the movement, which is well exemplified by discussions in Andreas Malm's book "How to Blow Up a Pipeline", where shifts to more radical tactics are discussed.<sup>21</sup> Third, there has been rising repression against the climate movement, particularly in the UK and Australia, where governments have passed new laws or rigidly used existing laws to give stiff sentences to climate activists. In many countries, particularly conservative and far-right parties have stepped up their calls for stricter law enforcement and harsher punishment for climate activists.<sup>22</sup>

Let me now take a more systematic look at different forms of escalation by the climate movement in recent years, roughly following Sørensen and Johansen's categorization of non-violent escalation.

**Quantity.** Quantitative escalation can have a number of dimensions, the first and most obvious one being participation in numbers. Throughout the years, we can see that the climate strike and climate march strategy by Fridays for Future was able to mobilize a significant number of participants for their actions – particularly in the Global North, which later extended to Global South countries. As highlighted above, the 2019 climate strikes (methods #62 and #97) and marches (method #38) have likely been the largest coordinated actions by the climate movement. According to the organization, more than 14 million people have taken part in climate strikes since 2018.<sup>23</sup> The movement, while being youth-led, has also branched out to include groups such as Grannies for Future and Scientists for Future, thus broadening the mobilization to different groups and generations. It is to be noted, however, that the Covid pandemic has put a bit of a dampener on the movement; some activists are now questioning the "numbers" strategy of Fridays for Future and advocating for escalation in methods rather than numbers.

Another measure of quantitative escalation can also be seen in terms of the frequency of actions. Here, the advent of new groups such as Just Stop Oil and Last Generation has led to a clear escalation of performing actions more frequently, almost constantly keeping the climate movement in the news.

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<sup>21</sup> Andreas Malm, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire* (Verso Books, 2021).

<sup>22</sup> Zia Weise, "Europe's climate activists face 'repressive tide,'" Politico, August 30, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> See Fridays for Future, "Strike Statistics," 2024.



**Methods.** We can also distinguish a number of dimensions in terms of escalation regarding methods. I'm here digressing a little bit from Sørensen and Johansen's template which only includes methodological invention under this category. While the invention of methods is an important element of escalation by nonviolent movements, I argue that there are a number of other ways in which escalation in terms of methods can be achieved. The classic one is an escalation from methods of protest and persuasion to the two other groups of methods – particularly to methods of nonviolent intervention. This often includes a switch from methods that are legal in democracies, to methods that include elements of law-breaking and are often interpreted in terms of civil disobedience. Such methods are thus riskier and have more severe consequences for activists, such as arrest. A second way of methodological escalation might be by changes in the sequencing of methods. Movements can (among other things) build and maintain momentum by sequencing methods/tactics to keep pressure on their opponents, which helps them in keeping the initiative and element of surprise.<sup>24</sup>

There are numerous examples of methodological innovation by the climate movement. While not all of these methods are new as such, they often represent innovative use of existing methods. Greta Thunberg's school strike (method #62) is one prime example. Her success is also a prime example of how an action by an individual can galvanize a global movement. While the school strike for climate falls within methods of noncooperation, innovation in methods from the climate movement has largely taken place in the realm of methods of protest and persuasion, as well as nonviolent intervention.

Throughout the past few years, climate movements have also seen an increase in the implementation of physical disruptions, disruptions of events, and psychological disruptions. In terms of physical disruptions, activists from a number of different climate movements have been stepping up different forms of blockades. The Last Generation started the campaign of blocking roads by gluing themselves to them (methods #158 and #171). In the UK and the US, activists would obstruct traffic by slowly marching on the streets (methods #38 and #172). A climate group for seniors, which calls themselves the Third Act, has been staging blockades of major banks in the US that fund fossil fuel industries by sitting in rocking chairs and blocking entrances to their buildings (method #171).<sup>25</sup> In the Netherlands, activists blocked private jets from taking off by cycling around Schiphol airport (method #171).<sup>26</sup>

Other than that, activists have aimed at disrupting events by fossil fuel industries and their sponsors. For example, on 23 May, a group of around 100 climate activists broke into a British energy conglomerate's annual shareholder meeting in London and attempted to climb onto the stage (method #170), prompting security personnel to form a human chain to protect the company's leaders and disrupting the event for nearly two hours. In France, the same week, activists tried to disrupt a shareholder meeting by forming a human chain around the build-

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<sup>24</sup> Erica Chenoweth, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 94.

<sup>25</sup> Claire Elise Thompson, "Why older Americans are taking to the streets for climate action," Gist, April 12, 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Fadeke Banjo, "6 of the Most Creative & Powerful Climate Change Protests Around COP27," Global Citizen, November 22, 2022.

ing (method #171).<sup>27</sup> Similar actions also happened in the Global South, where Greenpeace Indonesia disrupted the shareholder meeting of Adaro Energy in Jakarta in May 2023 (method #177).<sup>28</sup>

In the event where business still goes as usual, many activists would also resort to psychological disruptions. One frequent method is creatively using paint or colored flares to target objects or public buildings related to the fossil fuel industry. This ranges from throwing paint, soup, and other materials at famous paintings, spraying the Brandenburg Gate with orange paint in Germany, and spray painting yachts and private jets in a number of different countries (methods #8 and #26).<sup>29</sup> While many question if these actions would still fall within the realm of nonviolent actions, activists in several countries have also committed acts involving sabotage. In Europe, this took the form of targeting SUVs in urban areas by deflating their tires.<sup>30</sup> Amidst last summer's record heatwave, activists in Germany and France targeted golf courses by planting trees at greens and filling holes with concrete to protest the sites' extreme usage of water (method #183).<sup>31</sup> In France, parkour athletes have climbed buildings and disabled lamps to fight light pollution and protest energy waste (method #174).<sup>32</sup> There have also been increasing instances of sabotage of pipelines in several countries.<sup>33</sup> In France, a climate organization claiming 110,000 members, Les Soulèvements de la Terre, was outlawed in June 2023 for clashing with the police and for property damage in an anti-basin rally in Sainte-Soline alongside other protests.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, climate activists have also increasingly utilized hunger strikes (method #159) to inflict psychological disruption. In 2021, activists held a hunger strike in front of the White House in Washington D.C. for the Biden administration to foment stronger climate action.<sup>35</sup> Last Generation activists in Germany similarly forced a meeting with Chancellor Scholz by staging a hunger strike that lasted up to 27 days in early 2023.<sup>36</sup>

**Dilemma actions.** The success of nonviolent action has inevitably depended on how activists impose dilemma actions on their opponents. Dilemma actions put an opponent in a situation where it must either a) grant a nonviolent movement's demand, or b) act in a way that sacrifices some of its own support and damages its public image.<sup>37</sup> Many of the actions taken by climate activists can thus be classified as dilemma actions. Greta Thunberg's school strike for

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27 SRM, "*From suing to sabotage: Protest risks to the fossil fuels industry*," July 6, 2023.

28 Greenpeace Indonesia, *Twitter*, May 11, 2023.

29 David Brunat, "*Climate activists target jets, yachts and golf in a string of global protests against luxury*," Associated Press, August 28, 2023; Associated Press, "*Climate activists spray Berlin's Brandenburg Gate with orange paint*," September 18, 2023.

30 Associated Press, "*Climate activists deflate tires of more than 100 SUVs in Denmark's capital*," June 7, 2023.

31 Associated Press, "*Climate activists deflate tires of more than 100 SUVs in Denmark's capital*," June 7, 2023.

32 Fadeke Banjo, "*6 of the Most Creative & Powerful Climate Change Protests Around COP27*," Global Citizen, 22 November 2022.

33 Jack McGovan, "*Is breaking things the best way forward for climate activists?*," openDemocracy, October 13, 2022.

34 Rémi Barroux and Audrey Garric, "*Environmental activists increasingly tempted to act by sabotage*," Le Monde, May 5, 2023; Joseph Ataman and Laura Paddison, "*French government shuts down a climate group after protests turn violent*," CNN, June 21, 2023.

35 Rachel Ramirez and Elle Nilsen, "*Tired but determined, 5 young activists continue their hunger strike outside the White House*," CNN, October 26, 2021.

36 Jeffrey A. Brown, "*The Last Generation's Climate Rebellion*," Noema, July 11, 2023.

37 Srđa Popović et al., *CANVAS Core Curriculum: A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle* (Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies, 2007).



climate, for example, puts authorities in the dilemma of either punishing the striking students (given that they do not attend school on Fridays) or letting them break school attendance laws.

Many disruptive climate protests, particularly in the realm of Blockadia, have increasingly been more adept at imposing dilemma actions. On the side of the climate movement are their imminently justified demands based on the urgency of the climate crisis.<sup>38</sup> In many instances, civil disobedience tactics can consequently lead to dilemma actions. Excessive punishment of climate activists who block fossil fuel pipelines, paint on buildings, block roads, or disrupt sporting events by the government, for example, might potentially lead to shifts in public opinion towards climate policy and the public image of climate activists. If they give in to the demands of the climate activists, the activists will ultimately reach their goals. Activists, though, cannot take for granted that all instances of nonviolent intervention are successful dilemma actions. As the discussion about provocation in the next subsection shows, disruptive road blockades, for example, have largely led to negative public opinion for the involved organizations. Actions that directly target fossil fuel industries and/or major polluters might thus pose more successful dilemma actions, seeing as they convey a clearer and more direct message than when targeting ordinary people.

**Provocation.** Provocation has two elements: the act of provocation and the reaction of the provoked. If the second part is absent, a provocation is considered unsuccessful. While quite a number of actions by the climate movement can be classified as provocative, the most successful provocative actions in recent times seem to have been the targeting of major artworks by climate activists. This was started by Just Stop Oil activists pouring soup over a Van Gogh painting in the National Gallery in London in October 2022 (method #26), which has since been repeated in other countries such as Germany.<sup>39</sup> While the activists did not damage the artworks in the process, the actions led to strong reactions in the social and traditional media realms. Posing the question “What is worth more – art or life?”, the activists managed to provoke debates about the likely skewed value systems and the indifference of many about the human impacts of the climate crisis.

Climate activists have also, in multiple instances, tried to disrupt sports events such as Wimbledon and the US Open, the Berlin marathon, the World Snooker Championship, football and rugby games, and so on (method #170).<sup>40</sup> Disruptive protests in general seem to be geared towards eliciting strong reactions by the audience and there have, for example, been multiple instances where climate activists were physically assaulted by drivers that were blocked in roadblocks by Last Generation and similar groups.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Almost all demands of the climate movement are based on commitments that countries have already made having ratified the Paris Agreement. Fridays for Future, for example, demands that governments keep temperatures to below 1.5 degrees of warming, listen to the science and ensure climate justice and equity. In addition, several organizations like XR in the UK and Last Generation in Germany advocate for citizens' climate assemblies, similar to those that already took place in countries like France and Austria. In countries where those citizens assemblies took place organizations, such as Last Generation in Austria, fight for the implementation of recommendations from these assemblies. These demands are by no means radical and several can be seen as being backed-up by court verdicts like in German and the Netherlands where courts have pushed governments to be more ambitious in regards to climate change mitigation.

<sup>39</sup> Damien Gayle, “*Just Stop Oil activists throw soup at Van Gogh's Sunflowers*,” The Guardian, October 14, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Damien Gayle, “*Disruptive protest helps rather than hinders activists' cause, experts say*,” The Guardian, July 7, 2023.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, AP News, “*Berlin police record jump in angry motorists attacking road-blocking climate activists*,” June 2, 2023.

Provocation through disruption seems to have become one of the go-to methods of the climate movement, particularly after the pandemic. However, it is debatable if disruptive methods are indeed successful for the climate movement. While some scientists argue that disruptive actions are important for the success of movements, surveys show that large parts of the public see disruptive tactics, particularly those targeting ordinary people such as road blockades, as hindering climate activists' cause.<sup>42</sup>

**Persistence.** The climate movement has so far shown persistence even in the face of growing repression. As of 2023, School Strikes for Climate have been going on for 280 weeks. In general, while I have seen no detailed numbers on climate protests, it seems that the numbers of nonviolent actions by the climate movement have significantly increased throughout 2022 and 2023. This is partly due to the advent of a number of new groups and movements. Even in the face of repression, the movement does not seem to have slowed down. One interesting development has been XR UK's temporary shift away from coercive tactics in 2023 to focus on relationship building. In terms of perseverance, this could be interpreted as a move by the organization to deal with changed circumstances in both the government and the public's reactions to its disruptive tactics, alongside a way to rethink tactics to make the struggle more effective and sustainable.<sup>43</sup>

To sum up, my analysis shows that there have been two waves of escalation by the climate movement: the first wave in 2018-2019 and the second wave after the end of the pandemic in 2022. The first wave can be described by the emergence and growth of major new actors such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion. The second phase of escalation saw the emergence of new actors such as Just Stop Oil and Last Generation, who also have engaged in more interventionist and disruptive methods, seemingly impatient with the mass mobilization and protest strategy spearheaded by Fridays for Future. There seems to be a lively and contested debate about which strategy to use within the movement, as the critique of Last Generation's methods by Fridays for Future activists seems to show.<sup>44</sup> Despite said tensions, Greta Thunberg's increased involvement in more disruptive climate nonviolent actions, including being arrested on a number of occasions, seems in line with a general trend of escalation by the movement.<sup>45</sup>

As the analysis shows, escalation has generally happened among all the five major dimensions, comprising quantitative escalation, methodological innovation (including escalation of methods towards civil disobedience and nonviolent intervention), intervention in terms of dilemma actions, provocation, and also persistence.

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42 Polling by YouGov in February 2023 in the UK, for example, shows the vast majority (78%) of Britons think disruptive protest hinders activists' causes. Also, in Germany, 85% of respondents in a survey find street blockades unjustified. See, Damien Gayle, "[\*Disruptive protest helps rather than hinders activists' cause, experts say\*](#)," The Guardian, July 7, 2023 and Von Marcel Kolvenbach et al., "[\*Deutsche lehnen Straßenblockaden mehrheitlich ab\*](#)," Tagesschau, June 26, 2023.

43 Robert Booth, "[\*Extinction Rebellion announces move away from disruptive tactics\*](#)," The Guardian, January 1, 2023.

44 Benjamin Wehrmann, "[\*Greens and Fridays for Future denounce radical climate protests by Last Generation group\*](#)," Clean Energy Wire, April 13, 2023.

45 Tom Foster and Clare Sebastian, "[\*Greta Thunberg arrested at oil conference in London, eyewitnesses tell CNN\*](#)," CNN, October 17, 2023; Reuters, "[\*Greta Thunberg charged again for disobeying police order\*](#)," September 15, 2023.

There has also been a rise in tactics that include property destruction and sabotage. While I disagree with some authors who classify Just Stop Oil or Last Generation as a radical flank of the climate movement,<sup>46</sup> there seems to be a tendency towards the emergence of a more radical flank of the climate movement which is willing to employ methods that can be questioned in regards to their commitment to nonviolence. Nevertheless, the mainstream of the climate movement, including more newly emergent groups such as Last Generation, are strongly committed to nonviolent struggle, as interviews with movement leaders have highlighted.<sup>47</sup>

## Impact and Reaction

The sustained activism and pressure by the climate movement manages to keep the climate crisis in the focus of the public and, as such, plays an important role in combating the climate crisis. Surveys show that the number of people concerned about the climate crisis has risen significantly over the last couple of years.<sup>48</sup> Activists have also kept shining a light on the activities of the fossil fuel industries and their attempts to slow down climate action. Nevertheless, given that emissions cuts are nowhere sufficient at the moment, the impact of the movement has not been significant enough to declare any kind of victory. Also, there have been few significant successes in having the specific policy demands of movement organizations implemented. One can thus question if the dilemma actions chosen by the climate movement are having the planned impact.

As Sørensen and Johansen argue, escalation is only successful if the opponent reacts to the escalation. In that regard, we can see the rising call for and implementation of repressive laws and policies against climate activists as a success of the movement. A tactic of mass arrest has had some success in previous movements, such as the Indian independence struggle and the anti-Vietnam movement in the United States, but it is too early to diagnose a significant backfire effect as of yet. The development of repressive laws in Western democracies such as Australia and the UK is furthermore worrisome, given possible signaling to less-democratic countries in an international climate of democratic backsliding.

In the face of multiple international crises, including in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine (which have pushed energy prices and inflation globally), right-wing populist parties are on the ascent in many countries. These parties largely ignore the climate crisis and see demonizing the climate movement as part of their mobilization strategy. Victories by right-wing populists and their use of the climate movement as a scapegoat threaten a further polarization of many societies and might make the task of the climate movement even more complicated in the future. Given pandemics, conflicts, inflation, and the rise of the right-wing, the climate crisis has had

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46 Dana R. Fisher and Quinn Renaghan, "[\*Understanding the growing radical flank of the climate movement as the world burns\*](#)," Brookings, July 26, 2023.

47 Arno Frank, "[\*Letzte Generation: Was will Aktivistin Lea Bonasera?\*](#)," Der Spiegel, September 28, 2023.

48 See, for example, UNDP, "[\*The People's Climate Vote\*](#)," January 26, 2021.

the misfortune to – more often than not – be only the second most pressing crisis around. By keeping up the pressure, climate activists will consequently need to ensure that the existential importance of handling the climate crisis does not get pushed into the background.

## What next?

Given that global greenhouse gas concentrations linked to global mean temperatures are rising, there is no reason or indication that the climate movement will cool down its activities in the near future, especially with climate tipping points coming closer. It is thus very likely that the climate movement will keep escalating its struggle, as this article has shown such escalation can take many different forms – both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Quantitatively, there is significant room to grow. Studies show that the climate movement in the Global North is predominantly young, white, highly educated, and female. A recent study about climate activists from the US, for example, shows that climate activists surveyed were majority female (61%), white (93%), and highly educated (91% have completed college).<sup>49</sup> There is thus scope to widen participation to groups that are as yet not as involved in the climate struggle. Geographically speaking, the climate movement has also been particularly strong in certain Global North countries, with significant scope to grow in democratic middle-income countries that are significant emitters in the Global South – take, for example, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and South Africa.

While there have been attempts to interlink the climate and labor movement, many parts of the labor movement seem to be skeptical about the climate movement. Given that a green transition might pose both significant challenges, but also provide a number of upsides for workers, a more intense exchange of ideas, interactions, and coordination between those movements might provide significant benefits. The climate movement could also learn valuable lessons from the labor movement on how to use noncooperation tactics more frequently and effectively. Given the threats of right-wing populism and democratic backsliding, the climate movement will also need to link up with pro-democracy groups, as right-wing populist governments – as the Trump government in the US or Bolsonaro in Brazil has shown – are very likely to weaken climate policies. Generally, there are intersections between the climate movement and many social movements – including feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and anti-war movements – that should be explored and used.

In terms of qualitative escalation, there is also still scope for the climate movement to escalate, innovate, and mix nonviolent methods, which includes particularly becoming more creative in applying dilemma actions to its opponents. As Boyd et al. argue,<sup>50</sup> action logic, or making actions immediately understandable to onlookers and the broader public, is important.

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49 Dana R. Fisher and Quinn Renaghan, “*Understanding the growing radical flank of the climate movement as the world burns*,” Brookings, July 26, 2023.

50 Andrew Boyd and Dave O. Mitchell, *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (OR Books, 2016).

Thus, actions that target the fossil fuel industry, its backers, as well as the super-rich are likely to be more effective than those targeting the broader public. That said, there is, in my opinion, a significant risk that strategies inconveniencing the broader public will antagonize wider parts of the population against the climate movement, as it is not immediately obvious how such actions link to the climate crisis. Clear targeting and messaging also increase the possibility that dilemma actions have the intended effect. Getting arrested for blocking a pipeline, for example, likely elicits a different response from the public than getting arrested for blocking a major intersection during rush hour.

Overall, a dual strategy that focuses on building a broad societal mass climate movement, while also having a more activist vanguard, could be a successful strategy. Nevertheless, there are certain pitfalls that the climate movement should be aware of (which many activists are likely already familiar with). First, societal change takes time. Here, the climate movement has the unfortunate problem of facing a ticking climate clock, in which patience is thus seen as problematic or even defeatist. Still, it is good to take on board Gandhi's lessons of seeing patience as an important virtue for the nonviolent activist. Given the necessary inertia of societal change and the urgency of the climate crisis, the climate movement is caught between a rock and a hard place, as too strong of an escalation by the movement – particularly when engaging in property destruction and sabotage – might lead to significant backlashes against the movement, while not escalating might be perceived as doing too little against the climate crisis. The movement thus needs to walk a fine line between keeping and increasing the pressure, while not losing its mass support. Currently, many people feel overwhelmed by the seemingly unending string of global crises, and the climate movement needs to take those feelings into account if it wants to take the public along on its journey and reach its goals.

Second, impatience might lead to the formation of a violent flank at the fringes of the climate movement. As the literature shows, this would be a very risky development and would likely lead to the demobilization of certain groups of supporters, the emergence of challenges for the movement's public relations and messaging, and (very likely) more repression by authorities against the climate movement.<sup>51</sup> Some steps of criminalizing nonviolent climate activists by governments on the political right could be interpreted as goading the climate movement into taking a more radical road. It should not fall for this trap. In my opinion, nonviolence has so far served the climate movement well and it should stick to a nonviolent path. Creativity, humor, and perseverance will likely serve the climate cause better than blowing up pipelines.

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<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Erica Chenoweth, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).







## **Awakening to Justice: A New Chapter in Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance<sup>1</sup>**

*Kai Peter Stabell*

In a world that yearns for justice and reconciliation, the ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the UN Security Council's (UNSC) resolution demanding immediate ceasefire in Gaza shine as a beacon of hope. It echoes the vision for peace expressed by the Global Majority amidst the enduring conflict. This historic moment marks a pivotal turning point, not only in the legal domain but also in the collective consciousness of communities worldwide. There are many remarkable manifestations of this change, even a profound shift in understanding expressed by some members within the American evangelical community, a demographic historically aligned with a singular narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The transformative power of information and empathy is vividly illustrated, amongst others, in a TikTok video of an American woman. Wearing a keffiyeh, she shares her newfound comprehension of the Palestinian struggle. Her journey of discovery, ignited by the events of October 7th 2023, connects the dots from 1948, 1967, and 2005 to 2018, unraveling the intricate tapestry of the Palestinian quest for self-determination.<sup>2</sup> This awakening, a seismic departure from her previous perceptions, underscores the growing global awareness of the realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It challenges long-held beliefs and dispels misconceptions.

Despite enduring incessant waves of violence for 75 years, with a significant escalation after October 7th 2023, the advocacy for and engagement in discussions surrounding non-violent resistance against occupation have persevered in the face of monumental challenges. The Palestinian context boasts a rich history of nonviolent resistance that stretches back to even before the British Mandate Period. Despite the historical legitimacy of armed struggle under international law, there is an increasing discourse on the relevance and effectiveness of nonviolent strategies in the Palestinian struggle.<sup>3</sup> This shift is not merely a reaction to the absence of violent options but a strategic choice influenced by various factors, including social cohesion and perceptions of success.

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1 This article was prepared in January 2024 as a reflection piece for events in 2023 (and earlier). The writer acknowledges that many have occurred since January 2024 up to the publication of this piece – amongst them being Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation in February 2024, the Freedom Flotilla 2024 mission, student's encampment protests across different universities in the United States, and so on.

2 Christina Hilton, *TikTok*, January 29, 2024.

3 Nizar Mimbles, "*Is Nonviolence Relevant for the Palestinian Struggle?*", Mondoweiss, February 28, 2023.

This article aims to shed light on the journey of Palestinian nonviolent resistance against occupation. It explores how this resistance has influenced international solidarity through both traditional and innovative methods of nonviolence, encompassing art, culture, and more. However, it is important to acknowledge the internal and international challenges and criticisms that accompany this path. The article concludes by discussing future prospects and the potential for peace.

## Understanding Palestine

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a complex narrative that requires a comprehensive understanding. One way to accomplish this is to merge Johan Galtung's triadic theory of violence<sup>4</sup> with feminist conflict resolution approaches. This integration fosters a multi-dimensional perspective that simultaneously challenges the patriarchal paradigm prevalent in peace work. By doing so, we enhance not only the quality of our analysis but also the overall effectiveness of our efforts. This section delves into the history of nonviolent resistance to occupation in Palestine, contextualized through these theoretical lenses.

Galtung's theory provides a nuanced framework for dissecting the conflict. The most visible layer is **direct violence**, which includes physical confrontations and military actions. It captures immediate attention due to its overt nature and the harm it inflicts upon individuals. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the deeper layers of violence that perpetuate the conflict. **Structural violence** manifests through Israeli occupation tactics such as land confiscation, movement restrictions, and resource control. These policies systematically erode the basic rights and needs of Palestinians, affecting their access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. While less visible, this form of violence significantly shapes the daily experiences of the Palestinian people.

In addition to direct and structural violence, **cultural violence** plays a pivotal role. It encompasses prevailing attitudes and beliefs that justify direct and structural violence. Cultural violence can be seen in narratives that dehumanize the other side, historical interpretations that omit certain perspectives, and societal norms that perpetuate inequality and justify the status quo. This aspect of violence is deeply ingrained in the collective psyche and cultural expressions, influencing perceptions and actions on both sides of the conflict.<sup>5</sup>

Integrating feminist conflict resolution theories enhances our understanding by highlighting the critical role of women's experiences and contributions in peacebuilding. Traditional conflict narratives often sideline these voices, despite their essential role in achieving a holistic view

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4 Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence", *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 291-305.

5 Luigi Esposito and Katerina Standish, *Cultural Violence in the Classroom: Peace, Conflict and Education in Israel* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).

of the conflict dynamics.<sup>6</sup> In the Palestinian context, women are not only disproportionately affected by direct and structural violence but also play pivotal roles in grassroots movements and nonviolent resistance. Their resilience and strategies in coping with the daily realities of occupation provide valuable insights into the broader societal impact of the conflict.<sup>7</sup> Feminist perspectives stress the need to address gender-based inequalities and injustices, exacerbated by the conflict, as a crucial component of a sustainable and just resolution.

The intersection of Galtung's theory and feminist approaches offers a richer, more inclusive narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It recognizes the diverse experiences and critical contributions of all affected individuals, particularly women. This perspective emphasizes the importance of addressing all forms of violence – direct, structural, and cultural – for a comprehensive and lasting peace. It is vital to understanding the history and evolution of non-violent resistance in Palestine, reflecting a struggle that is not only against external oppression but also for internal societal transformation and empowerment.

## Civil Disobedience, Long Before and Beyond the 1930s

The history of nonviolence in Palestine is a multifaceted and intricate narrative, intricately interwoven with the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This rich historical account can be comprehended by examining several noteworthy phases and compelling examples.

**1930s.** Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Palestinians demonstrated instances of nonviolent resistance. This encompassed petitions, demonstrations, and strikes against British colonial rule and Zionist immigration. In April 1936, for example, workers, drivers, and shopkeepers across Arab countries held a general strike that lasted until October 1936. Having garnered the support of influential families, religious leaders, and political figures, strikes quickly became a significant repertoire of action within the Palestinian struggle for liberation. By 1938, citizens from various cities would hold strikes throughout the year to protest the British government's acts of repression. In January that year, a four-day strike was initially held in the cities of Safad and Hebron. In April, prisoners in Acre started doing hunger strikes. Said strikes eventually led to the conduct of solidarity strikes in other cities such as Haifa, Bay-san, Tiberias, and Nazareth, mass strikes in almost all cities in the months of July and August, and the month-and-a-half mass strike throughout November and December.<sup>8</sup> The end-of-year strike, which marked the peak of the series of strikes, was furthermore strengthened by the boycott of the colonial government's identification card system.

6 Tony Jenkins and Betty A Reardon., "Gender and Peace: Towards a Gender-Inclusive, Holistic Perspective," in *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, ed. Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (Routledge, 2007); Maryam Khalid, "Gender, Orientalism and Representations of the 'Other' in the War on Terror," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 23, no. 1 (2011): 15-29.

7 Rita Stephan and Mounira M. Charrad, *Women Rising: In and Beyond the Arab Spring* (NYU Press, 2020); Tanetta Andersson, "'Knowing' Palestinian Women: Interrogating Western International Feminist Assumptions, Governance, and Social Science Discourses", *Critical Sociology* 49, no. 6 (2023): 1021–36.

8 Charles W. Anderson, "Other Laboratories: The Great Revolt, Civil Resistance, and the Social History of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50, no. 3 (2021): 47–51.

**After 1948.** Following the Nakba (catastrophe) in 1948, which resulted in the displacement of a large number of Palestinians, nonviolent resistance took on various forms. These included the creation of political organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), literary and cultural expressions, and noncooperation movements. Most importantly, the people of Palestine would ardently commit everyday resistance to reclaim their spaces. Take, for example, the women who were expelled from the Umm Al Fahim village returning to their village by foot to re-occupy their homes; the farmers who were expelled from Wadi A'ara faithfully returning to their fields to work and supply the village with their livestock; citizens choosing to continue planting olive and almond trees, thus disregarding the military government's instructions to grow vegetables; women choosing to sing songs that express their grief and anger – as opposed to joyful ones as ordered – in festivals involving Israeli soldiers; artists holding poetry festivals to recite lines of resistance; singing national songs with local dialects in wedding parties and religious celebrations to prevent the Israeli soldiers from understanding, and so on.<sup>9</sup>

**First Intifada (1987-1993).** This period witnessed a significant shift towards mass non-violent resistance. While often associated with the iconic images of stone-throwing youths, the First Intifada also encompassed widespread civil disobedience, such as boycotts of Israeli products, tax resistance, and the establishment of underground schools. Of the various resistance done by the people, 85% of them remained nonviolent, while 15% of them were accompanied by low intensity violence to respond to the violent repression by Israel.<sup>10</sup>

**Post-Oslo 1993.** After the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, nonviolent resistance persisted but was often overshadowed by escalating violent confrontations. Nevertheless, grassroots organizing, advocacy, and international solidarity campaigns made notable contributions.<sup>11</sup> A prominent action within this period features the conduct of various methods of nonviolent intervention by foreigners in different parts of Palestine. Facilitated by the International Solidarity Movement that was founded by Palestinian activists, volunteers from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Malta, and other countries would set up human shields to prevent the eviction of Palestinian Arab homes, take turns guarding the Palestinian citizens when doing their everyday chores, disregard the curfew set by the Israeli military regime to deliver food and medicine to those who need them, remove blockades concocted by the Israeli army, and so on.<sup>12</sup> In a number of cases, the unfortunate deaths of a number of volunteers have also exposed the international community to the atrocities happening in Palestine – take, for example, through the publication of Rachel Corrie's book and performances that highlight her activism.<sup>13</sup>

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9 Marwan Darweish and Patricia Sellick, "*Everyday Resistance among Palestinians Living in Israel 1948–1966*," *Journal of Political Power* 10, no. 3 (2017): 353–370.

10 Gene Sharp, "*The Intifadah and Nonviolent Struggle*," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 19, no. 1 (1989): 3–13; Véronique Dudouet, *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation: Transitions from Armed to Nonviolent Struggle* (London: Routledge, 2014).

11 Véronique Dudouet, *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation: Transitions from Armed to Nonviolent Struggle* (London: Routledge, 2014).

12 Ghassan Andoni, Huwaida Arraf, Nicholas Blincoe, Hussein Khalili, Marissa McLaughlin, Radhika Sainath, and Josie Sandercock, *Peace Under Fire: Israel, Palestine and the International Solidarity Movement* (Verso: 2004).

13 Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace & Justice, "*Rachel's Words in Print*," accessed February 2, 2024; Rory McCarthy, "*Rachel Corrie play debuts in Israel*," *The Guardian*, March 15, 2008.

**Village Protests 2000s.** Since the early 2000s, villages like Bil'in and Ni'llin have emerged as symbols of nonviolent resistance against the Israeli separation barrier, which, in many areas, cuts through Palestinian land. Weekly protests, involving both Palestinians and international activists, have been held, often facing severe responses from the Israeli military.<sup>14</sup> Every Friday since February 2005, for example, the people of Bil'in would hold marches and demonstrations around the Israeli separation barrier while waving the Palestinian flag.<sup>15</sup> The people of Ni'llin village emulated the same repertoire of action in 2007, when a similar separation barrier was concocted in their own village.

**Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS).** Introduced in 2005, the BDS movement aims to exert economic and political pressure on Israel towards its goals, including the end of the occupation, equal rights for Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. A number of successes in suspending the financial resources and reputation of pro-occupation entities were eventually yielded. Companies such as Veolia, Orange, and CRH were propelled to end their involvement in various Israeli operations that violated the human rights of Palestinians; foreign funds from Norway, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and other countries were successfully divested from Israel or companies that support the Israeli occupation of Palestine; churches from the United States and South Africa started divesting funds donated by their congregations from companies and banks that support the Israeli occupation of Palestine; in 2018, Dublin became the first ever city in Europe to officially adopt the BDS principles; and so on.<sup>16</sup> The gravity of the aforementioned successes even led to accusations of anti-Semitism against the BDS movement.

**Gaza Protests 2018.** The Great March of Return, initiated in 2018 in Gaza, serves as another example of mass Palestinian demonstrations near the Gaza-Israel border. Prompted by a young journalist's social media post about a tent that he had set up near Israel's barrier fence, the Great March of Return protests – which encompass marches and demonstrations attended by thousands of citizens – were eventually held to emphasize the right of return for Palestinian refugees and an end to the blockade of Gaza.<sup>17</sup> Although it was originally set to last for only six weeks (specifically from the Land Day in March 2018 to the Nakba Day in May 2018), the Great March of Return managed to take place until December 2019.

Throughout these periods, Palestinian nonviolent resistance has often been met with neglect, suppression, and at times, violent responses. The impact and visibility of these nonviolent efforts have faced various challenges, including internal Palestinian political divisions, the geopolitical landscape, and the overarching dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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14 Dale Sprusansky, "Activist Discusses Nonviolent Protest in Bil'in, West Bank," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 32, no. 3 (2013): 65–66.

15 Aden Tedla, "Palestinians in Bil'in Protest Construction of Israeli Separation Barrier, 2005-2011," Global Nonviolent Action Database, August 10, 2011.

16 Omar Barghouti, "BDS: Nonviolent, Globalized Palestinian Resistance to Israel's Settler Colonialism and Apartheid," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50, no. 2 (2021): 108–25.

17 Pietro Stefanini, "Incendiary Kites and Balloons: Anti-Colonial Resistance in Palestine's Great March of Return," *PARTECIPAZIONE E CONFLITTO* 14, no. 2 (2021): 663–680; Jihad Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 4 (2020): 90-100.

To delve deeper into the captivating history and future of Palestinian nonviolent resistance, you can explore remarkable books like “Peacemakers in Israel-Palestine” by Robert Hostetter,<sup>18</sup> other thought-provoking articles,<sup>19</sup> and documentaries like “Five Broken Cameras”<sup>20</sup> that offer valuable insights.

## Contemporary Landscape: The Last Three Months

In the final months of 2023, a surge in nonviolent resistance and global solidarity marked the ongoing struggle of the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation. This period witnessed a rich tapestry of peaceful actions, characterized by their diverse participants, strategies, and geographical reach. Key events underscored the unwavering commitment to nonviolent resistance and raised global awareness about the Palestinian cause. As we venture into 2024, these endeavors persist. While previous acts of resistance were often marked by civil disobedience tactics, contemporary resistance seems to be filled with more tactics to call out mainstream narratives that tend to ignore the suffering of Palestinians.

Motaz Azaiza, a 24-year-old Palestinian photojournalist, has emerged as a symbol of hope and resilience in war-torn Gaza. He shed light on the civilian impact of the conflict between Hamas and Israel for 108-days before leaving with a “broken heart” as he departed Gaza. His journey from Gaza to Doha, facilitated by a Qatari military jet, underscores the immense challenges and perils faced by journalists in Gaza.<sup>21</sup> During the conflict, Azaiza’s Instagram following skyrocketed from 25,000 to 18.5 million, a testament to the global resonance of his work. He skillfully weaves together harrowing accounts of airstrikes and personal losses with glimpses of daily life and unwavering resilience.<sup>22</sup> Collaborating with major news outlets and NGOs, Azaiza exemplifies the critical role journalists play in reporting on conflicts. The high death rates among journalists and allegations of targeting by the Israeli military cast a spotlight on the risks and significance of their work in revealing the realities of war to the world.

Palestinian journalists play a crucial role in the nonviolent struggle against Israeli occupation, as highlighted in a recent article from Time magazine.<sup>23</sup> Journalists like Hind Khoudary<sup>24</sup> and Bisan Owda<sup>25</sup> go beyond being mere observers; they actively participate and experience the reality they report. Khoudary’s heartfelt dispatches, amidst challenges like electricity cuts and internet blackouts, convey the overwhelming nature of reporting and living through war simultaneously. Owda’s video diaries provide a raw and personal perspective on life under

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18 Robert Hostetter, *Peacemakers in Israel-Palestine: Dialogues for a Just Peace* (London: Routledge, 2022).

19 Sarah Scruggs, “*Understandings of Nonviolence and Violence: Joint Palestinian and International Nonviolent Resistance*,” in *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, ed. Maia Carter Hallward and Julie M. Norman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011): 69–86.

20 *Five Broken Cameras*, directed by Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi. Alegria Productions, Burnat Films, Guy DVD Films, 2011.

21 Bethan McKernan, “*Palestinian Journalist Leaves Gaza after 108 Days Chronicling War*,” The Guardian, January 26, 2024.

22 Motaz Azaiza, *Instagram*, 30 Januari 2024.

23 Yasmeen Serhan, “*Palestinian Journalists Offer a Rare Glimpse Into Life in Gaza. But for How Long?*,” TIME, December 8, 2023.

24 Hind Khoudary, *Instagram*, November 12, 2023.

25 Bisan, *Instagram*, January 30, 2024.



bombardment, revealing the resilience and vulnerability of these journalists. These accounts humanize the conflict, bringing its emotional and physical toll into sharp focus, going beyond mere statistics.

The challenges faced by these journalists are immense. Many have lost their homes, colleagues, and loved ones. Plestia Alaqad<sup>26</sup> is also among those that had to make the difficult decision to step back from her work for safety reasons. The high casualty rate among journalists, as highlighted by the Committee to Protect Journalists, underscores the dangers they face.<sup>27</sup> However, their commitment to documenting the impact of war on Palestinian lives remains unwavering. They not only inform the world but also provide a sense of connection to Palestinians who often feel isolated. Their work, undertaken at great personal risk, serves as a testament to the power of journalism as a form of nonviolent resistance, offering a window into the struggles and perseverance of a people in conflict.

Wael al-Dahdouh, the bureau chief of Al Jazeera in Gaza, exemplifies the unwavering dedication of traditional journalism in times of conflict. Throughout his extensive career, marked by rigorous reporting and a commitment to factual storytelling, he has showcased the crucial role of conventional journalism in areas of unrest. Despite the perilous conditions, al-Dahdouh fearlessly presented an unfiltered perspective on the realities on the ground in Gaza.

Tragically, the conflict has deeply impacted al-Dahdouh's personal life, as he has suffered the loss of close family members, including his wife, two children, and other relatives in an Israeli airstrike.<sup>28</sup> Despite these immense personal tragedies and the inherent dangers of reporting from a war zone, he remains steadfast in his journalistic mission. His resilience not only underscores the courage required of journalists in such environments but also highlights the vital importance of their role in documenting and disseminating information. Al-Dahdouh's work goes beyond mere reporting; it serves as a crucial link between the besieged enclave of Gaza and the outside world, providing insights that might otherwise remain unseen and unheard.<sup>29</sup> His unwavering commitment to traditional journalistic values amidst chaos and destruction embodies the essence of responsible and impactful journalism.

Since October 7th, the West Bank has experienced a surge in nonviolent resistance, characterized by numerous strikes and rallies. The streets have become a canvas of collective outcry, as people from diverse backgrounds join hands in passionately demanding an end to prolonged violence and occupation. This resurgence of peaceful protest signifies the nature of resistance, reflecting a deep-seated yearning for justice, peace, and the restoration of fundamental human rights. Undeterred by challenges, the demonstrators channel their frustration and hope into a powerful, unified voice.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Plestia Alaqad, *Instagram*, January 30, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Kathy Jones, "*Journalist Casualties in the Israel-Gaza War*," Committee to Protect Journalists, January 30, 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Al Jazeera, "*Al Jazeera's Gaza Bureau Chief Wael Dahdouh in Qatar for Medical Treatment*," January 17, 2024.

<sup>29</sup> Namita Singh, "*Al Jazeera journalist back reporting live from Gaza day after burying son killed in Israeli air strike*," The Independent, January 8, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Al Jazeera, "*Photos: Occupied West Bank Strikes, Rallies for Palestinians in Gaza*," December 11, 2023.

Demonstrating the widespread nature of this movement, a recent article in Haaretz, renowned for its thorough investigative journalism, highlighted that these demonstrations extend beyond the West Bank alone. Thousands have attended protests in major Israeli cities like Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem, and even outside Prime Minister Netanyahu's private residence in Caesarea. This detail underscores the significant expansion of the nonviolent resistance movement, transcending geographical and possibly political divides. The presence of large crowds in these cities signals growing acknowledgment and solidarity from Israeli citizens, potentially marking a pivotal moment in the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.<sup>31</sup>

This wave of peaceful protests makes a powerful statement in a region historically characterized by violent conflict. It suggests a shift toward a more Gandhian approach, favoring non-violent methods to achieve political and social goals. This phenomenon may reflect a broader understanding that lasting peace and justice can only be attained through non-aggressive means. The diverse crowds, composed of people of different ages, backgrounds, and political affiliations, signify a collective awakening and a united front against oppression and injustice. As these peaceful demonstrations gain momentum, they offer a beacon of hope, a glimpse of a future where dialogue and understanding triumph over conflict and division.

The recent involvement of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation by the South African government marks a significant turning point in the history of nonviolent resistance in Palestine. This shift towards a legal and diplomatic approach, rather than physical confrontation, although not new, it injects new hope and legitimacy into the Palestinian cause. By seeking recourse in the ICJ, activists demonstrate their commitment to peaceful defiance, strategically aligning their cause with international law. This decision is not merely tactical, but a profound expression of faith in the transformative power of legal frameworks and the integrity of global institutions. It signifies a transition from the chaos of ground-level conflict to the reasoned deliberation of judicial proceedings, underscoring their dedication to a diplomatic path in the pursuit of justice.

The choice to engage with the ICJ amplifies the Palestinian plight on the global stage, underscoring their dedication to nonviolent methods. It is a powerful statement that sovereignty and justice can be pursued through intellectual and legal prowess, rather than by force alone. This approach stands as a beacon of hope, illustrating that even in the face of overwhelming challenges, there are viable avenues reliant on the strength of legal arguments and the moral authority of the international community. In essence, seeking recourse through the ICJ is a testament to the Palestinians' unwavering dedication to a struggle that transcends political dynamics, and it embraces a universal quest for human rights and justice.

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<sup>31</sup> Adi Hashmonai, Ran Shimoni, and Yael Freidson, "*Thousands Protest across Israel against Netanyahu's Government*," Haaretz, January 20, 2024; Liza Rozovsky, "*Hundreds of Israelis Protest against Gaza War after Police Reverse Ban*," Haaretz, January 20, 2024.

As we shift our focus to the broad support base and global solidarity for Palestine, it is crucial to acknowledge the international attention and empathy garnered through their legalistic and nonviolent approach. The response of the global community to the Palestinian cause, particularly their engagement with the ICJ, reflects an increasing recognition of the legitimacy and urgency of their struggle. Seeking legal redress not only resonates within the Palestinian territories but also reverberates across the globe, rallying support and solidarity from various corners of the world. The following section will explore the manifestations of this global solidarity and its contribution to the Palestinian cause, shedding light on the international dimensions of their nonviolent struggle.

## Broad Support Base: Global Solidarity

“What is happening in Gaza now is not correctly framed as a simple conflict between two parties. It entails, instead, destructive acts perpetrated by an occupying Power, Israel, that has subjected the Palestinian people to an oppressive and prolonged violation of their right to self-determination for more than half a century. And those violations occur in a world where Israel for years has regarded itself as beyond and above the law.”<sup>32</sup>

The quote from Professor Max du Plessisat representing South Africa at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) powerfully sets the stage for understanding the broad support base of international solidarity with the Palestinian cause. He frames the situation in Gaza as not just a conflict but as an expression of prolonged oppression and a denial of self-determination, underscoring the gravity of the situation and its resonance with global audiences. This perspective aligns closely with the activities and sentiments of various international groups and organizations that have rallied in support of Palestinian rights, reflecting a diverse and global movement for justice.

Transitioning from this statement, it's evident that the international community has not remained silent. Various groups and individuals worldwide have actively engaged in non-violent resistance, aligning their efforts with the Palestinian cause and amplifying their voice. For instance, the initiatives by Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP) signify a significant segment of the Jewish community taking a stand against what they perceive as the Israeli government's complicity in the oppression of Palestinians. During Friday rush hour October 27th, JVP staged a takeover of Grand Central Station in New York City. The station was filled with thousands of people passionately chanting “ceasefire now” and “let Gaza live,” ultimately leading to a complete shutdown of the main terminal. As the police closed off all entrances, a spontaneous rally formed outside the station, while inside, nearly 400 individuals were arrested. This remarkable act of civil disobedience marks the largest demonstration of its kind in NYC since the Iraq War.<sup>33</sup> On the eighth night of Hanukkah, JVP members succeeded to shut down eight bridges

<sup>32</sup> International Court of Justice, “*Public sitting held on Thursday 11 January 2024, at 10 a.m., at the Peace Palace, President Donoghue presiding, in the case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*,” 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Claire Fahy, Julian Roberts-Grmela, and Sean Piccoli, “*Let Gaza Live: Calls for Cease-Fire Fill Grand Central Terminal*,” The New York

and highways in eight cities across the U.S. to demand an end to the genocide of Palestinians; “eight cities symbolizing the eight candles lit on the final night of Hanukkah, plus the shamash, or “helper” candle.”<sup>34</sup>

The aforementioned initiatives quickly snowballed into the blockades and occupation of train stations in various other cities in the United States, among which include the Union Station in Washington D.C., the South Station in Boston, and the Pennsylvania Station in Baltimore. Other forms of protest that managed to significantly garner public attention feature the closing of shops in many parts of New York City, including those owned by the Arab community in Brooklyn.<sup>35</sup>

In other parts of the world, workers also unified themselves to do strikes, boycotts and/or blockades to obstruct arms shipments to Israel – take, for example, port workers in Italy, Greece, and Turkey who refused to load weapons onto ships, alongside the blockade against Israeli ships at the Port of Melbourne.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, in Lebanon, solidarity was shown through the temporary shut down of public institutions, banks, schools, and universities.<sup>37</sup> In Jordan, shops and restaurants in the cities of Amman, Zarqa, and Irbid were also closed. In the Netherlands, activists dropped flyers from the top of malls to urge people to retract their support towards pro-occupation products.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, in Glasgow, Manila, and several other cities, students would do school strikes and walk out of their classrooms to show their solidarity towards the Palestinian cause.

Global protests related to the war in Gaza continues, where at the end of November 2023, Reuters had collected data and was able to show that the majority of demonstrations were pro-Palestinian.<sup>39</sup> In Washington D.C., New York City, Berlin, Paris, Vienna, London, Johannesburg, Melbourne, São Paulo, Seoul, Sanaa, Colombo, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, and various other cities, people rose up to collectively demand a ceasefire in Gaza and the end of Israel’s occupation of Palestine. The demonstrations in Johannesburg on November 29th, with thousands advocating for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the isolation of Israel, are particularly significant. They echo the sentiments of global solidarity, resonating with the historical struggles of South Africa itself and drawing a parallel with the anti-apartheid movement.<sup>40</sup> This manifestation of support across continents and cultures is a testament to the growing international engagement with the Palestinian cause.

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Times, October 28, 2023.

34 Kanishka Singh, Hannah Beier, and Kanishka Singh, *“US Jewish Group Protests in Eight Cities for Gaza Ceasefire,”* Reuters, December 15, 2023; Madeleine Hall, *“We Shut down 8 Bridges in 8 Cities on the 8th Night of Hanukkah,”* JVP, 2023.

35 Natalia Marques, *“No more business as usual: the world shuts it down for Palestine,”* Peoples Dispatch, November 18, 2023.

36 Peoples Dispatch, *“European trade unions intensify actions of solidarity with Palestine,”* November 11, 2023; Briana Charles, *“Australia’s pro-Palestinian activists to continue targeting Israeli ships,”* Al Jazeera, January 29, 2024.

37 TRT World, *“In pictures: Global strike in solidarity with Palestine’s Gaza,”* December 2023.

38 Tariq Tahir, *“Pro-Gaza activists stage protest in Amsterdam department store,”* The National News, December 26, 2023.

39 Prasanta Kumar Dutta et al., *“Mapping the Conflict in Israel and Gaza,”* Reuters, December 22, 2023.

40 Mogomotsi Magome, *“South Africa March Demands a Permanent Gaza Cease-Fire on Day of Solidarity with Palestinians,”* AP News, November 29, 2023.

Data indicates that most demonstrations were peaceful, although a few of them turned violent. The United States saw numerous counter-demonstrations involving opposing pro-Israel and pro-Palestine protestors. Significant events, like the evacuation order in Gaza and the Al-Ahli al-Arabi Hospital blast, intensified these global protests.<sup>41</sup> As such, protests turned more creative than ever at the COP28 Summit in Dubai, an unusual sight in the United Arab Emirates where freedom of expression is limited.<sup>42</sup>

It is worth noting that the “conventional” actions above are highly intertwined with symbolic ones. Symbolic gestures have played a vital role in the Palestinian struggle, complementing the diverse expressions of nonviolent resistance. These simple yet profound symbols hold deep historical and cultural significance, amplifying the voice of peaceful opposition. In today’s digital landscape, for example, a new phenomenon known as “algospeak” has emerged. This unique lexicon is ingeniously crafted to outsmart social media algorithms that often restrict or monitor content. Algospeak is a cryptic language, using euphemisms and symbols, allowing users to discuss sensitive or controversial topics without triggering censorship or demonetization.<sup>43</sup> One quintessential example of algospeak is the use of watermelons by Palestinian protesters. This seemingly innocent fruit, cleverly represents the colors of the Palestinian flag - green, white, and red. It serves as a subtle yet powerful workaround to the limitations imposed on directly displaying Palestinian symbols in certain regions. Through this ingenious use of algospeak, the watermelon transcends its traditional role as a summer fruit and becomes a symbol of resilience, serving as a tool for covert political expression in the age of digital surveillance. The watermelon, with its green skin, white rind, and red flesh, subtly represents the colors of the Palestinian flag, ingeniously circumventing restrictions on flag display. This creative symbolism turns an everyday fruit into a powerful emblem of resistance and national identity. Other forms of symbolic protest have also gained more traction in recent months. During various demonstrations, participants regardless of nationality don traditional Palestinian attire, such as keffiyehs and embroidered dresses. These garments serve as expressions of cultural pride and poignant statements against cultural erasure and occupation.

In the realm of digital activism, social media campaigns utilizing specific hashtags have become symbolic protests. Hashtags in support of ending the occupation – among which include #GazaUnderSiege, #GazaGenocide, #FreePalestine, #CeasefireNOW, and #FromTheRiverToTheSea – have gained widespread traction, allowing global audiences to engage with and support the Palestinian cause from afar. Not only have they played a vital role in increasing global awareness and consolidating pro-Palestinian voices, but these campaigns have also reframed the issue from being an “Israeli-Palestinian conflict” to a “genocide” or the “Israeli occupation of Palestine”.

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41 Prasanta Kumar Dutta et al., *“Mapping the Conflict in Israel and Gaza,”* Reuters, December 22, 2023.

42 Alexander Cornwell, *“COP28 a Rare Chance in UAE for Protests on Palestinians, Climate Action,”* Reuters, December 3, 2023.

43 Anna Furman, *“How Watermelon Imagery, a Symbol of Solidarity with Palestinians, Spread around the Planet,”* AP News, January 19, 2024.

Artistic expressions have also played a vital role in symbolic nonviolent resistance. In Palestinian territories and beyond, street art, graffiti, and murals have become powerful mediums for depicting life under occupation and honoring lost lives. These canvases of resistance have garnered international attention, with street artists worldwide showing solidarity with photojournalists risking their lives to cover Israel's war on Gaza. Renowned artist Shepard Fairey, known for the iconic Barack Obama "HOPE" poster, is among the many artists who have joined the Unmute Gaza project.<sup>44</sup> This initiative aims to amplify the work of local photojournalists on the ground, despite Israel's ban on international media in the territory. Fairey and others have transformed harrowing images from Gaza into poignant paintings and sketches, featuring a mute symbol at the center. To raise awareness of the conflict, these artworks are available for free download on the project's website. People are encouraged to print and paste them on walls in their own cities and towns. This collective effort serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggle and the need for global attention and action.<sup>45</sup> Symbolic nonviolent opposition, whether through creative imagery like watermelons, traditional attire, digital activism, artistic expressions, or educational initiatives, remains a crucial element in the tapestry of resistance against the Israeli occupation. These symbols, steeped in cultural and historical significance, not only preserve the identity and heritage of the Palestinian people but also galvanize international support and solidarity for their nonviolent struggle for justice and self-determination.

In educational settings, seminars, workshops, and panel discussions on the history and nuances of the Palestinian struggle serve as symbolic acts of resistance. By educating people about the context and complexities of the conflict, these events aim to foster a deeper understanding and empathy towards the Palestinian plight. Integrating aspects from the "Roundtable: Locating Palestine in Third World Approaches to International Law" hosted in the spring of 2023, it furthermore becomes evident that the legal pursuit set forth by South Africa at the ICJ is a part of a larger strategy of nonviolent resistance in Palestine.<sup>46</sup> The discussion within this Roundtable sheds light on the complexities of Palestinian legal challenges and the importance of international law in framing the Palestinian struggle. It reflects a deep understanding that engaging with international legal institutions can provide a platform to voice the Palestinian narrative and challenge the status quo. This strategy aligns with the Third World approaches to international law (TWAIL), which emphasize the significance of legal discourse in addressing issues of colonialism and oppression.<sup>47</sup>

These global actions, which range from legal battles to educational campaigns and creative protests, indicate a robust and expanding international commitment. They underscore the recognition of nonviolent resistance as a critical and effective strategy in the pursuit of

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44 Lee Moran, "The Powerful Street Art Campaign Spotlighting Israel's War On Gaza," *Huffington Post*, January 31, 2024.

45 UNMUTE GAZA, "#UNMUTEGAZA", 2024.

46 Noura Erakat et al., "Roundtable: Locating Palestine in Third World Approaches to International Law," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, (2023): 1–15.

47 Noura Erakat et al., "Roundtable: Locating Palestine in Third World Approaches to International Law," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, (2023): 1–15.

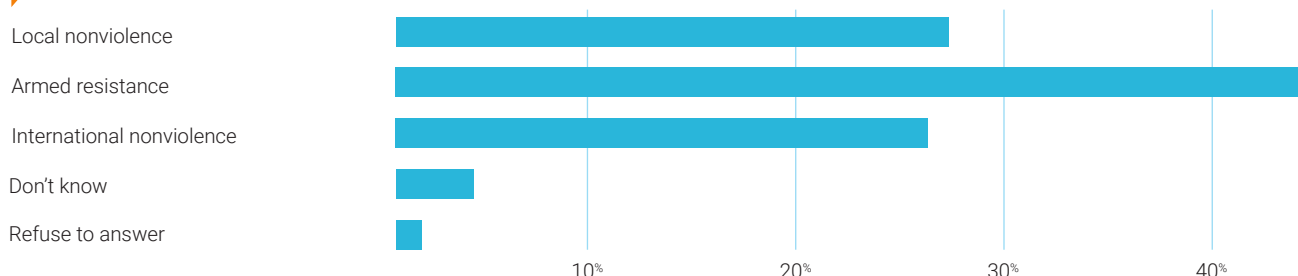


justice and peace for Palestinians, resonating deeply with Professor du Plessisat's poignant remarks at the ICJ. This international solidarity, deeply rooted in a desire for justice and peace, continues to play a vital role in highlighting and challenging the long-standing issues faced by Palestinians.

## Challenges and Critiques

Despite the historical legitimacy of armed struggle under international law, there is an increasing discourse on the relevance and effectiveness of nonviolent strategies in the Palestinian struggle.<sup>48</sup> This shift is not merely a reaction to the absence of violent options but a strategic choice influenced by various factors, including social cohesion and perceptions of success.

**Diagram 1** Preferences for armed versus nonviolent resistance in Palestine



Informative work done by Dana el Kurd using public opinion polls in Palestine reveal a complex dynamic between preferences for armed versus nonviolent resistance.<sup>49</sup> While armed resistance remains a popular choice among many Palestinians, there is a notable inclination towards nonviolent strategies as seen in the graph. This preference for nonviolence, even in the face of increased repression and a stagnant peace process, underscores the evolving nature of resistance in the Palestinian context.<sup>50</sup> At the same time this fragility and division is very real, and cannot be neglected.

The challenges and critiques of Palestinian nonviolent struggle, particularly in the context of recent ICJ statements, are multi-faceted and complex. One significant challenge is the silencing and censorship of voices supporting Palestine and Palestinian human rights, particularly on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. This has been documented extensively, including the systemic and global censorship by Meta (the parent company of Facebook and Instagram), which has led to the erroneous removal of content about Palestine.<sup>51</sup> Between October and November 2023, more than 1,050 instances of content takedowns and suppressions were documented on Instagram and Facebook, predominantly targeting content that supports Palestine and highlights human rights abuses. This systemic and global wave of censorship affected peaceful content expressing solidarity with Palestine,

<sup>48</sup> Nizar Mimbles, "Is Nonviolence Relevant for the Palestinian Struggle?", Mondoweiss, February 28, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Dana El Kurd, "Support for Violent Versus Non-Violent Strategies in the Palestinian Territories," *Middle East Law and Governance* 14, no. 3 (2022): 331–365.

<sup>50</sup> Dana El Kurd, "Armed Resistance versus Nonviolent Strategies: An Analysis of Palestinian Public Opinion," *Al-Muntaqa* 3, no. 2 (2020): 80–86.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Luscombe, "Meta Censors Pro-Palestinian Views on a Global Scale, Report Claims," *The Guardian*, December 21, 2023.

originating from over 60 countries. Meta's extensive censorship, considered the largest to date regarding pro-Palestinian content, calls into question the company's commitment to upholding human rights and fulfilling its due diligence responsibilities.<sup>52</sup>

The report highlights specific instances of censorship, such as the removal of content featuring the Palestinian flag emoji and any neutral mention of Hamas, resulting in content removal and account restrictions. Prominent Palestinian content creators, journalists, and activists have also had their accounts suspended or disabled. Furthermore, Meta's misapplication of its policies is evident in the removal of images depicting the abuse of Palestinians, even when these images do not violate platform policies on nudity or sexual activity. Such misapplication indicates a disregard for the public interest in this type of content and raises broader concerns about online censorship affecting newsworthy material. The censorship by Meta not only undermines the representation of Palestinian voices and narratives, but also raises critical questions about power dynamics and control in digital spaces, particularly in the context of politically sensitive issues like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, the broader environment for free expression about Palestine is under increasing pressure globally. United Nations experts have expressed alarm at worldwide attacks, reprisals, criminalization, and sanctions against individuals expressing solidarity with the victims of hostilities between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups. This has affected artists, academics, journalists, activists, and athletes, who have faced harsh consequences and reprisals for their roles and visibility.<sup>54</sup>

In Israel, legislative measures such as amendments to the Counter-Terrorism Law have increased state surveillance of social media use, further complicating the situation. Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza have also clamped down on free expression, adding to the challenges faced by those advocating for Palestinian rights.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, artists, cultural workers, and academics in various countries have faced silencing, censorship, and intimidation due to their nonviolent pro-Palestinian speech.<sup>56</sup> This includes undue pressure or restrictions on academic freedom, such as being denied funding opportunities, facing disciplinary actions, or being subjected to online harassment. Additionally, they have experienced disinvitations from media interviews and conferences, limiting their ability to share their perspectives and research. There too have been restrictions on peaceful protests in support of Palestine, with authorities imposing stringent regulations, denying permits, or using excessive force against demonstrators.<sup>57</sup> These challenges highlight the on

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52 Rasha Younes, "*Meta's Broken Promises*," Human Rights Watch, December 21, 2023.

53 Rasha Younes, "*Meta's Broken Promises*," Human Rights Watch, December 21, 2023.

54 OHCHR, "*Speaking out on Gaza / Israel must be allowed: UN experts*," November 23, 2023.

55 Mohamed Mandour, "*Attacks, Arrests, Threats, Censorship: The High Risks of Reporting the Israel-Gaza War*," Committee to Protect Journalists, February 1, 2024.

56 Wilfred Chan, "*The Palestine Exception: Why pro-Palestinian Voices Are Suppressed in the US*," The Guardian, November 1, 2023.

57 OHCHR, "*Speaking out on Gaza / Israel must be allowed: UN experts*," November 23, 2023.

going struggle for free expression and the need to protect the rights of those advocating for justice and equality.

## Future Perspectives and Potentials

At this point, more than 27 thousand people have been murdered, more than half of all residential units are destroyed or damaged in Gaza, and at least 378 educational facilities have been destroyed or damaged since October 7th.<sup>58</sup> Efforts to secure a ceasefire have been met with veto at the UN Security Council. However, there is considerable optimism regarding the future, particularly in light of the ICJ Order issued on January 26, 2024.<sup>59</sup>

Additionally, the youth always plays a significant role, as stated in the book “Popular Protest in Palestine: The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance” by my esteemed dissertation supervisor, Andrew Rigby, and his co-author, Marwan Darweish. They cite a palestinian activist expressing awareness of the power imbalance and international support for Israel, but also holds hope for change. He emphasizes the right to live in freedom on their own land and believes that the Israeli occupation will eventually end. The active younger generation is seen as a source of hope, as they have overcome fear and continue to resist Israeli suppression.<sup>60</sup>

In the late 1980s, during the First Intifada, a defining moment occurred as an elementary school boy in Norway. Amidst the new daily routine of reading the newspaper, a map depicting the occupied Palestinian territories stood in stark contrast to the biblical depictions from school lessons. This map, unlike the traditional images associated with Bethlehem, the birth-place of Christ, revealed a different reality – one of conflict and struggle for self-determination. This discovery, in a land far from the turmoil, ignited a lifelong passion for international affairs and human rights, eventually leading to a career at the United Nations. Fast forward to 2023, Bethlehem, traditionally a town of celebration and pilgrimage, especially during Christmas, was shrouded in sorrow and silence. The streets, usually bustling with festive activity, mourned the casualties of the Gaza war, a poignant reflection of the ongoing conflict.<sup>61</sup> The stark contrast between the biblical narrative of peace associated with Bethlehem and the current reality of grief and conflict exemplifies the complex tapestry of the Palestinian struggle.

This juxtaposition of past and present, of religious narratives and contemporary realities, encapsulates the heart of the Palestinian nonviolent resistance. It reflects the broader narrative about the power of nonviolent communication and the far-reaching impact of information. The principles of Gene Sharp’s nonviolent action (method #10) demonstrate how media can influence perspectives globally, reaching even distant lands like Norway.<sup>62</sup>

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58 AJLabs, “*Israel-Gaza War in Maps and Charts: Live Tracker*,” Al Jazeera, October 9, 2023.

59 Justin Salhani, “*What the ICJ’s Interim Ruling Means for Israel’s War on Gaza*,” Al Jazeera, January 26, 2024.

60 Marwan Darweish and others, *Popular Protest in Palestine: The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

61 Bethan McKernan, “*“Sorrow and Silence” in Bethlehem as Christmas Festivities Are Cancelled*,” The Guardian, 25 Desember 2023.

62 Gene Sharp, “*The Intifadah and Nonviolent Struggle*,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 19, no. 1 (1989): 3–13.

## METHODS OF PROTEST AND PERSUASION

- #1 Public Speeches
- #2 Letters of Opposition or Support
- #3 Declarations by Organizations and Institutions
- #4 Signed Public Statements
- #5 Declarations of Indictment and Intention
- #6 Group or Mass Petitions
- #7 Slogans, Caricature, and Symbols
- #8 Banners, Posters, and Displayed Communications
- #9 Leaflets, Pamphlets and Books
- #10 Newspapers and Journals
- #11 Records, Radio and Television
- #12 Skywriting and Earthwriting
- #13 Deputations
- #14 Mock Awards
- #15 Group Lobbying
- #16 Picketing
- #17 Mock Elections
- #18 Displays of Flags and Symbolic Colors
- #19 Wearing of Symbols
- #20 Prayers and Worship
- #21 Delivering Symbolic Objects
- #22 Protest Disrobings
- #23 Destruction of Own Property
- #24 Symbolic Lights
- #25 Displays of Portrait
- #26 Paint as Protest
- #27 New Signs and Names
- #28 Symbolic Sounds
- #29 Symbolic Reclamation
- #30 Rude Gestures
- #31 "Haunting" Officials
- #32 Taunting Officials
- #33 Fraternization

- #34 Vigils
- #35 Humorous Skits and Pranks
- #36 Performances of Plays and Music
- #37 Singing
- #38 Marches
- #39 Parades
- #40 Religious Processions
- #41 Pilgrimages
- #42 Motorcades
- #43 Political Mourning
- #44 Mock Funerals
- #45 Demonstrative Funerals
- #46 Homage at Burial Places
- #47 Assemblies of Protest or Support
- #48 Protest Meetings
- #49 Camouflaged Meetings of Protest
- #50 Teach-ins
- #51 Walkouts
- #52 Silence
- #53 Renouncing Honors
- #54 Turning One's Back

## METHODS OF NONCOOPERATION

- #55 Social Boycott
- #56 Selective Social Boycott
- #57 Lysistratic Nonaction
- #58 Excommunication
- #59 Interdict
- #60 Suspension of Social and Sports Activities
- #61 Boycott of Social Affairs
- #62 Student Strike
- #63 Social Disobedience
- #64 Withdrawal from Social Institutions
- #65 Stay-at-home
- #66 Total Personal Noncooperation

- #67 "Flight" of Workers
- #68 Sanctuary
- #69 Collective Disappearance
- #70 Protest Emigration (Hijrat)
- #71 Consumers' Boycott
- #72 Nonconsumption of Boycotted Goods
- #73 Policy of Austerity
- #74 Rent Withholding
- #75 Refusal to Rent
- #76 National Consumers' Boycott
- #77 International Consumers' Boycott
- #78 Workmen's Boycott
- #79 Producers' Boycott
- #80 Suppliers' and Handlers' Boycott
- #81 Traders' Boycott
- #82 Refusal to Let or Sell Property
- #83 Lockout
- #84 Refusal of Industrial Assistance
- #85 Merchants' "General Strike"
- #86 Withdrawal of Bank Deposits
- #87 Refusal to Pay Fees, Dues and Assessment
- #88 Refusal to Pay Debts or Interest
- #89 Severance of Funds and Credit
- #90 Revenue Refusal
- #91 Refusal of a Government's Money
- #92 Domestic Embargo
- #93 Blacklisting of Traders
- #94 International Sellers' Embargo
- #95 International Buyers' Embargo
- #96 International Trade Embargo
- #97 Protest Strike
- #98 Quickie Walkout (Lightning Strike)
- #99 Peasant Strike
- #100 Farm Workers' Strike
- #101 Refusal of Impressed Labor
- #102 Prisoners' Strike

**#103** Craft Strike  
**#104** Professional Strike  
**#105** Establishment Strike  
**#106** Industry Strike  
**#107** Sympathetic Strike  
**#108** Detailed Strike  
**#109** Bumper Strike  
**#110** Slowdown Strike  
**#111** Working-to-rule Strike  
**#112** Reporting "Sick" (Sick-in)  
**#113** Strike by Resignation  
**#114** Limited Strike  
**#115** Selective Strike  
**#116** Generalized Strike  
**#117** General Strike  
**#118** Hartal  
**#119** Economic Shutdown  
**#120** Withholding or Withdrawal of Allegiance  
**#121** Refusal of Public Support  
**#122** Literature and Speeches Advocating Resistance  
**#123** Boycott of Legislative Bodies  
**#124** Boycott of Elections  
**#125** Boycott of Government Employment and Positions  
**#126** Boycott of Government Department, Agencies and Other Bodies  
**#127** Withdrawal from Government Educational Institutions  
**#128** Boycott of Government-supported Organizations  
**#129** Refusal of Assistance to Enforcement Agents  
**#130** Removal of Own Signs and Placemarks  
**#131** Refusal to Accept Appointed Officials  
**#132** Refusal to Dissolve Existing Institutions  
**#133** Reluctant and Slow Compliances  
**#134** Nonobedience in Absence of Direct Supervision

**#135** Popular Nonobedience  
**#136** Disguised Nonobedience  
**#137** Refusal of an Assemblage or Meeting to Disperse  
**#138** Sitdown  
**#139** Noncooperation with Conscription and Deportation  
**#140** Hiding, Escape and False Identities  
**#141** Civil Disobedience of "Illegitimate" Laws  
**#142** Selective Refusal of Assistance by Government Aides  
**#143** Blocking of Lines of Command and Information  
**#144** Stalling and Obstruction  
**#145** General Administrative Noncooperation  
**#146** Judicial noncooperation  
**#147** Deliberate Inefficiency and Selective Noncooperation by Enforcement Agents  
**#148** Mutiny  
**#149** Quasi-Legal Evasions and Delays  
**#150** Noncooperation by Constituent Governmental Units  
**#151** Changes in Diplomatic and Other Representation  
**#152** Delay and Cancellation of Diplomatic Events  
**#153** Withholding of Diplomatic Recognition  
**#154** Severance of Diplomatic Relations  
**#155** Withdrawal from International Organization  
**#156** Refusal of Membership in International Bodies  
**#157** Expulsion from International Organization

## METHODS OF NONVIOLENT INTERVENTION

**#158** Self-Exposure to the Elements  
**#159** The Fast  
**#160** Reverse Trial  
**#161** Nonviolent Harassment  
**#162** Sit-in

**#163** Stand-in  
**#164** Ride-in  
**#165** Wade-in  
**#166** Mill-in  
**#167** Pray-in  
**#168** Nonviolent Raids  
**#169** Nonviolent Air Raids  
**#170** Nonviolent Invasion  
**#171** Nonviolent Interjection  
**#172** Nonviolent Obstruction  
**#173** Nonviolent Occupation  
**#174** Establishing New Social Patterns  
**#175** Overloading of Facilities  
**#176** Stall-in  
**#177** Speak-in  
**#178** Guerrilla Theater  
**#179** Alternative Social Institutions  
**#180** Alternative Communication System  
**#181** Reverse Strike  
**#182** Stay-in Strike  
**#183** Nonviolent Land Seizure  
**#184** Defiance of Blockades  
**#185** Politically Motivated Counterfeiting  
**#186** Preclusive Purchasing  
**#187** Seizure of assets  
**#188** Dumping  
**#189** Selective Patronage  
**#190** Alternative Markets  
**#191** Alternative Transportation System  
**#192** Alternative Economic Institutions  
**#193** Overloading of Administrative Systems  
**#194** Disclosing Identities of Secret Agents  
**#195** Seeking Imprisonment  
**#196** Civil Disobedience of "Neutral" Laws  
**#197** Work-on without Collaboration  
**#198** Dual Sovereignty and Parallel Government

Source:

Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part 2: The Methods of Non-violent Action* (Bedford: Porter Sargent Publishing, 1973).



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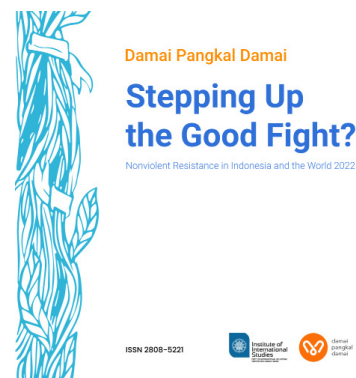
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