



FROM IMAGE TO BODY:
Visual Violence as a Tool of Humiliation
and Domination over Palestinian Youth

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7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media

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Research and Writing: Afnan Kanaaneh

Design: Qafzeh - Marketing, Digital, and Production

Translation to English: Ghadir Shafie

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During the war on Gaza, an escalating pattern of visual violence emerged, perpetrated by Israeli occupation soldiers through documenting assaults and violations against Palestinians and transforming them into public spectacles, which were deliberately published on social media platforms and received widespread engagement and acclaim from Israeli users. These practices specifically targeted Palestinian youth, as the demographic with the greatest presence in digital space and most subjected to arrest, inspection, and visual persecution in daily military contexts. These practices included filming detainees stripped naked, documenting strip searches and sexual assaults inside prisons and at military checkpoints, filming the storming and seizure of homes, documenting killings and destruction, and posting videos of celebration and dancing to racist songs calling for murder. These scenes were presented as digital war trophies displayed for bragging, mockery, and public humiliation.

This paper is grounded in the understanding that these practices do not represent individual aberrations or byproducts of war, but rather constitute a structural shift in the relationship between violence, image, and power, wherein the image is deployed as an instrument of control over the Palestinian body, rendering it into visual material subjected to display and circulation without the consent of those depicted. The paper seeks to dismantle the mechanisms through which the production and consumption of images are instrumentalized to subjugate and degrade Palestinian youth in both physical and digital realms, and to examine the resulting impact on their digital and human rights.

The paper argues that forced filming and the dissemination of degrading images do not constitute a natural consequence of violence, but rather a distinct violation of digital and human rights, particularly the right to privacy, digital dignity, and protection from inhuman and degrading treatment. In this context, the image does not function as a tool of documentation or accountability, but as a direct extension of the act of violation itself, deployed to subjugate the Palestinian body, strip it of its humanity, and reproduce power relations through public humiliation and sovereign spectacle. The paper demonstrates that the circulation of such material in digital space does not merely expand the scope of violence, but transforms it into a normalized spectacle rendered consumable and routinized, leaving profound psychological, social, and political repercussions, including digital trauma, the dismantling of communal solidarity, the distortion of collective memory, and the neutralization of ethical sensitivity among the viewing public. From this premise, the paper emphasizes the necessity of addressing visual violence as a central rights-based and political issue, requiring protective and accountability mechanisms that confront the act of filming itself, not solely the violation it documents.

Theoretical Background

The modern era is characterized by visual density and the dominance of the image, driven by technological acceleration, the evolution of mobile phones, and the rise of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, such that the production and consumption of content has become fundamentally reliant on visuals rather than text¹. The term visual culture refers to the ways in which images and visual media contribute to shaping our understanding of the world around us, including our attitudes, emotions, and social and institutional relationships. Visual culture is not confined to our mere capacity to see, but extends to the manner in which we perceive images, deploy them, and are influenced by them, and to the physical, sensory, gendered, racial, and cultural dimensions they embody—all of which play a role in structuring human values².

Given that social media platforms operate on an «attention economy,»³ visual language has imposed itself on the cultural and social landscape with all the power it possesses influence, shape, and manipulate consciousness⁴. Images possess a distinct social and psychological force that enables them to dominate, captivate, or paralyze the viewer⁵. Images have the capacity to penetrate us psychologically because they are processed through an intuitive, emotional, and rapid cognitive system, compared to text which is processed through a slow and analytical cognitive system, thereby stimulating the recipient both psychologically and culturally⁶. Moreover, images address everyone indiscriminately and require no specific skills for their consumption, unlike texts whose comprehension necessitates linguistic knowledge; similarly, the image demands little cognitive effort and engagement.

All of this has led to the characterization of the current era as the age of the image, contemporary society as a society of spectacle, and present-day civilization as a civilization of spectacle⁷, particularly with the proliferation of communication technologies that feed into and propagate the culture of spectacle. Spectacle, in its definition, is not merely a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images. French theorist Guy Debord describes the «society of the spectacle» as one founded on the production and consumption of images, commodities,

¹ Mirzoeff, Nicholas. (1999). **An Introduction to Visual Culture**. London: Routledge.

²Hamidović, David, Claire Clivaz, and Sarah Bowen Savant. (Editors). (2019). **Ancient Manuscripts in Digital Culture: Visualisation, Data Mining, Communication** (Vol. 3). Leiden: Brill.

³Schroeder, Jonathan E. (2020). **Visual consumption in the image economy**. In Ekström, Karin M. (Editor), *Elusive Consumption* (pp. 229–244). London: Routledge.

⁴Mizyane, Nadia. (2022). The Deployment of Visual Culture via Social Media Platforms in Distorting the Image of Islam: Visual Memes as a Model. *The Algerian Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, 10(2), 407–421.

⁵Mitchell, William J. T. (1996). What do pictures really want? *October*, 77, 71–82.

⁶Kahneman, Daniel. (2011). **Thinking, Fast and Slow**. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

⁷Mizyane, Nadia. (2022). The Deployment of Visual Culture via Social Media Platforms in Distorting the Image of Islam: Visual Memes as a Model. *The Algerian Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, 10(2), 407–421.

and fabricated spectacles through news, propaganda, marketing, and entertainment, such that spectacle has become the dominant mode of social life. This holds equally true for political and social conflicts, which are increasingly waged through spectacular scenes in media and on screens—in cases of violence and crime, terrorist bombings, and the scandalization of celebrity and political life⁸. Consequently, the expanding role of images and spectacle in wars becomes manifest when communication technologies flood the media space with dramatic and shocking scenes from the battlefield for various purposes.

Digital technologies have enabled military and media institutions to document and publicly disseminate human rights violations from the battlefield⁹. In doing so, technology has expanded the public's capacity to witness violence, death, massacres, torture, police brutality, drone strikes, and more, through live, real-time broadcasts¹⁰. Accordingly, visual materials are considered a form of ideology and social power¹¹, indeed an instrument of combat¹², and a means of reinforcing racial and ethnic supremacy¹³ by transforming the violence inflicted upon victims into material for spectacle, entertainment, and pleasure for the peoples of the «First World.» The term «visual regime» is relevant here, as it manifests in the attempt to organize and govern visual materials by determining what is permitted and what is forbidden to be seen, by whom, and under what conditions¹⁴.

The history of documenting human rights violations in wars and converting them into visual materials can be traced back to the Vietnam War, which is widely regarded as the first televised war. The Gulf War was the first war to be transmitted via satellites by global news channels, while the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq marked the first digitized wars in which soldiers were extensively equipped with digital media technologies on the battlefields¹⁵. The images and video clips that emerged from Abu Ghraib prison at the time constituted a profound moral and humanitarian shock, demonstrating the manner in which the camera had lost its innocence¹⁶. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, a 2004 report by the Israeli newspaper "Yedioth Ahronot" documented a widespread phenomenon within the Israeli military, whereby soldiers and officers photographed themselves with the corpses of Palestinians arranged and positioned in degrading ways. These images were kept as «souvenirs,» «talismans,» «photographic trophies», materials for entertainment circulated

8Debord, Guy. (1967/2014). **The Society of the Spectacle** (K. Knabb, Trans., Annotated ed.). Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets.

9Whitty, Noel. (2010). Soldier photography of detainee abuse in Iraq: Digital technology, human rights and the death of Baha Mousa. **Human Rights Law Review**, 10(4), 689–714.

10Austin, John L. (2022). Seeing all evil: The global cruelty of digital visibility. **Global Studies Quarterly**, 2(2), 1–11.

11Keifer-Body, Karen, Patricia M. Amburgy, and Wanda B. Knight. (2007). Unpacking privilege: Memory, culture, gender, race, and power in visual culture. **Art Education**, 60(3), 19–24.

12Brothers, Caroline. (2013). **War and Photography: A Cultural History**. London: Routledge.

13Cohen, Hella, and Sreyoshi Sarkar. «Introduction: Visualizing Violence.» **Interventions** 23,5 (2021): 655–668.

14Shapiro, Gary. (2003). *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

15Kennedy, Liam. (2009). Soldier photography: visualising the war in Iraq. **Review of International Studies**, 35(4), 817–836.

16Tétreault, Mary Ann. (2006). The sexual politics of Abu Ghraib: Hegemony, spectacle, and the global war on terror. **NWSA Journal**, 18(3), 33–50.

among soldiers and their relatives, and occasionally sold for modest sums¹⁷. Such uses of visual materials align with those observed in previous historical cases, alongside their deployment in war propaganda and as instruments of humiliation and psychological torture¹⁸, as well as for asserting racial or military superiority, providing proof for fulfilling orders, intimidating targeted groups, or satisfying sadistic impulses. In such cases, the image does not function as a tool of documentation, but rather as a constitutive element that completes the act of violation itself¹⁹.

According to the Council of Europe's guidelines on the protection of private life in the media²⁰ and the European Court of Human Rights' guide concerning Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights²¹, the right to the protection of one's image is considered a fundamental component of the right to private life, as it constitutes one of the principal attributes of an individual's personality and reveals the characteristics that distinguish them from others. Consequently, every person has the right to control the use of their own image, including «the right to refuse the publication of their photographs, and to object to its recording, storage, and reproduction.» Moreover, the publication of a person's image is considered «a more significant violation of the right to private life than the mere mention of their name.» Additionally, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 explicitly prohibits the public dissemination of names, photographs, or personal data²², and prohibits exposing civilians or prisoners of war to «public curiosity,» which refers to the public display of individuals through the publication of their images, video footage, or personal data by which they can be identified²³.

Since October 7, 2023, numerous archives, databases, and human rights and media reports have been issued documenting the phenomenon of field and live documentation of assaults against Palestinian youth, some of which were recorded and published by Israeli soldiers and settlers themselves. These include, but are not limited to: [Al Jazeera](#), [The Washington Post](#), [Accountability Archive](#), [Databases for Palestine](#), [Hind Call](#), [Law for Palestine](#), [Israeli Violations Tracker](#), [Find IDF Soldiers](#), and [Getty Images](#).

¹⁷Khouriya, Samer. (2004, November 18). Zionist Soldiers Mutilate the Bodies of Palestinian Martyrs and Take Souvenir Photos Beside Them. Donya al-Watan. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click here](#)

¹⁸Bresheeth, Haim. (2006). Projecting trauma: War photography and the public sphere. **Third Text**, 20(1), 57–71.

¹⁹Whitty, Noel. Ibid,

²⁰Council of Europe. (n.d.). Guidelines on the Protection of Private Life in the Media. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click here](#).

²¹European Court of Human Rights. (2020, 31 August). Guide on Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights: Freedom of expression. **Council of Europe**. Retrieved on 01/02/2026, from: [Click here](#).

²²International Committee of the Red Cross. (1958). Commentary on Article 27: Treatment of protected persons – General observations. **Geneva Convention**

(IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Retrieved on 01/02/2026, from: [Click here](#).

²³Mahnad, Ramin. (2022, 28 June). Shielding prisoners of war from public curiosity. International Committee of the Red Cross – Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog. Retrieved on 01/02/2026, from: [Click here](#).

Sexual Assaults as (Public) Spectacle

Sexual assaults constitute one of the most prominent features of violations against Palestinian youth, compared to elderly individuals who are subjected to such abuse less frequently. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights revealed, through a series of testimonies, a systematic and organized practice of sexual torture, including: rape, forced stripping, forced filming, and sexual assault involving instruments and dogs²⁴. Social media platforms were flooded with numerous images taken and published by soldiers depicting cases of forced collective stripping of Palestinians upon arrest²⁵, such as the widely circulated image of civilians detained in a Gaza school and photographed naked²⁶. In comparison to the first image, in which soldiers did not force detainees to remove their underwear, less than a month after the beginning of the genocide, a video circulated showing Israeli soldiers after they had completely stripped a group of workers near Gaza and assaulted them by dragging, beating, and spitting on them²⁷. This type of filming recalls images of detention camps, where the Palestinian body is transformed into an exposed body stripped of individuality and privacy. Although these images carry significant legal value as evidence against the violations committed by Israeli soldiers, most perpetrators showed no hesitation in publishing them, a consequence of decades of impunity and absence of accountability and punishment²⁸.

In addition to images of forced stripping and forced filming, numerous cases have been documented of the rape of Palestinian men and women, and the filming of the act of rape or the victim's condition in its aftermath. For example, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights documented the testimony of a Gazan woman who was raped four times over two days, which was filmed by other soldiers who were present and watched, and who in turn threatened her to publish these images on social media²⁹. The United Nations documented similar incidents³⁰, which collectively reflect Israeli soldiers' attempts to assert their control over Palestinian women's bodies through the public dissemination of these assaults as a means of collective intimidation³¹. Sexual violence constitutes an egregious violation of international humanitarian law and the laws of war³².

²⁴Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. (2025, November 10). Palestinian Centre for Human Rights Documents Testimonies of Rape and Systematic Sexual Torture in Occupation Prisons Against Released Palestinian Detainees. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click here](#).

²⁵Human Rights Watch. (2024, 23 July). **Israel: Detainees Face Inhumane Treatment – Degrading Photos Circulated; Acts Amount to War Crimes**. Retrieved on 01 February 2026, from: [Click here](#). See also the images in the following report: Fabian, Emanuel, Agencies, and Jacob Magid. (2023, December 10).

Images of Stripped, Bound Gazans Prompt Concern; Israeli Official: Won't Happen Anymore. The Times of Israel. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click here](#).

²⁶To view the video: [Click here](#)

²⁷Shaalán, Hassan. (2023, 31 October). IDF soldiers filmed abusing Palestinians and boasting about it. **ynet**. Retrieved on 01/02/2026, from: [Click here](#).

²⁸Nasser, Tala. (2024, July 3). Scenes of Brutal Torture Displayed Before the World... Amid the Occupation's Impunity. Institute for Palestine Studies. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click here](#).

²⁹Nasser, Tala. (2024, July 3). Scenes of Brutal Torture Displayed Before the World... Amid the Occupation's Impunity. Institute for Palestine Studies. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click here](#).

³⁰United Nations. (2024, 19 February). **Israel/oPt: UN experts appalled by reported human rights violations against Palestinian women and girls**. Retrieved on 01/02/2026, from: [Click here](#).

³¹Apel, Dora. (2005). Torture culture: Lynching photographs and the images of Abu Ghraib. **Art Journal**, 64(2), 88–100.

³²Human Rights Watch. *Ibid*.

In another incident, a leaked video from Sde Teiman prison showed a group of soldiers raping a Palestinian prisoner while attempting to block the camera with shields, resulting in his transfer to the hospital following injuries to his rectum, according to the organization “Physicians for Human Rights- Israel”³³. This incident sparked widespread local and international controversy, but this was insufficient to ensure serious accountability for those responsible. Nine Israeli soldiers were initially arrested following the video’s emergence, but most were quickly released, while the remainder were charged with aggravated abuse rather than rape³⁴. However, rather than provoking outrage over the documented violence, Israeli debate focused extensively on the video leak itself and the resulting damage to Israel’s international image³⁵. Indeed, the chief military prosecutor of the Israeli army, Tomer-Yerushalmi, was reportedly subjected to a criminal investigation for leaking the video.

Meanwhile, as the Zionist right exerts pressure to soften the investigation into the rape³⁶, members of the Israeli public welcomed the accused with warm applause and embraces upon their entry into the Israeli Supreme Court³⁷. The shift of discussion from the crime itself to the «leak scandal» or «the army’s image» constitutes, in itself, an erasure of Palestinian youth’s bodies in favor of spectacular scenes that re-present the perpetrators as heroes. This serves as evidence of the calculated management of visual violence: what may be published, what must be concealed, who is held accountable and who is celebrated. It further suggests the likelihood that additional filmed clips of other violations exist, but have not yet been published.

Sexual assaults against men in the context of wars represent attempts at the objectification and feminization of the male body in order to achieve absolute domination. In this sense, visual materials documenting sexual assaults against Palestinians reproduce and reinforce power relations between the occupier and the occupied, a logic rooted in patriarchal norms that frame domination through the subjugation of the female body to male power. These images further seek to violate the dignity and privacy of detainees’ bodies, shatter their self-perceptions as men, and attack their religious beliefs³⁸.

33Al Hilou, Tareq, Abeer Salman, and Nadeen Ebrahim. (2024, 25 August). ‘They told me to strip.’ Former Palestinian detainee says he was sexually abused in an Israeli prison. **CNN**. Retrieved on 01/02/2026, from: [Click here](#).

Goldberg, Ori. (2025, November 7). Both sides of the Sde Teiman leak debate reflect Israel’s moral decay. **+972 Magazine**. Retrieved on 12 February 2026, from: [Click Here](#).

AOAV (Action on Armed Violence). (2025, November 3). Israeli military in crisis as Advocate General resigns over rape video leak. Retrieved on 12 February 2026, from: [Click Here](#).

34Speakman Cordall, Simon. (2025, 1 November). Why has the Israeli army’s top lawyer resigned after leaking rape evidence? Al Jazeera. Retrieved on 1 February 2026, from: [Click here](#).

35Ofir, Jonathan. (2025, 4 November). Outrage over video leak of Israeli soldiers’ gang rape of Palestinian exposes rot in Israeli society. **Mondoweiss**. Retrieved on 1 February 2026, from: [Click here](#).

36Aladam, Mera. (30 October 2025). Israel launches probe into leak of video showing troops raping Palestinian prisoner. **Middle East Eye**. Retrieved on (01/02/2026) from: [Click here](#).

37See the video: [Click here](#).

38 Tétreault, Mary A=nn. Ibid.

Beyond the immediate physical violations, the practices of filming and publishing sexual violations against Palestinian youth transform digital space into an open arena for violence and the infinite reactivation of trauma. Violent visual materials threaten the individuals' sense of existential security, amplify the sense of danger, and generate physiological responses such as tension, anxiety, fear, and neuromuscular constriction, ultimately leading to emotional exhaustion³⁹—a process aimed at breaking Palestinians psychologically, both as individuals and as a society. The psychological trauma resulting from the consumption of violent visual content in the Palestinian context may lead to a state of moral, political, and activist paralysis among Palestinian youth⁴⁰, thereby undermining communal solidarity⁴¹.

³⁹ Austin, John L. Ibid.

⁴⁰ Cohen, Hella, and Sreyoshi Sarkar. Ibid.

⁴¹ Austin, John L. Ibid.

Producing the Subjugated Body

Body language in the images and videos published by Israeli soldiers of Palestinian youth during arrest constitutes a crucial analytical entry point, one that requires careful examination of the purposes and implications of this mode of visual representation. It is evident that soldiers intentionally focus on filming Palestinian youth and children blindfolded and handcuffed⁴², while in many clips forcing them to lower their heads⁴³, sit in kneeling or squatting positions⁴⁴, lie on their stomachs with their faces turned towards the ground⁴⁵, or raise their hands in gestures of surrender⁴⁶. Israeli soldiers' violations extend beyond producing pain; they encompass attempts to visually reconstruct the Palestinian body through positions that produce a subjugated, inferior, broken, and submissive body—thereby transforming the moment of arrest into a sovereign spectacle. When soldiers force Palestinian youth to look at the ground and forbid them from raising their heads, they deprive them of the right to return the gaze, just as their bodies have been converted into rendered objects of visual consumption and observation. These visual positions serve to produce a form of presence without subjecthood: the image displays the Palestinian body while concealing its voice, face, name, identity, thoughts, emotions, personal attributes, and individuality—thereby stripping them of their humanity and constraining the viewer's capacity to perceive them as human beings.

Visual violence in arrest cases extended beyond merely controlling the positions of detainees' bodies to encompass a more profound level of domination: The control of their actions, movements, and what they are compelled to say or perform before the camera. Examples include taking detainees to a beach and forcing them to dance while being filmed by soldiers⁴⁷, forcing a Palestinian youth at a West Bank military checkpoint to repeat phrases in Hebrew—«I love Israel» and «I will do whatever is asked of me»—then posting the video on Facebook⁴⁸, and compelling others to chant «Long live the people of Israel» before the camera⁴⁹. In these cases, the videos serve to entertain and gratify viewers by rendering arrest and coercion as spectacular forms of entertainment, thereby generating pleasure at the expense of detainees' dignity.

Conversely, numerous cases have been documented in which Israeli soldiers filmed Palestinian

⁴²See Example here:

Abraham, Yuval. (5 January 2024). Inside Israel's torture camp for Gaza detainees. +972 Magazine. Retrieved on (01/02/2026) from:[Click here.](#)

⁴³See the video: [Click here.](#)

⁴⁴Please see example: [Click here.](#)

⁴⁵Please See example:

Al Hilou, Tareq, Abeer Salman, and Nadeen Ebrahim. Ibid. [Click here.](#)

⁴⁶Please see example: [Click here.](#)

⁴⁷Abraham, Yuval. Ibid.

⁴⁸See video: [Click here.](#)

⁴⁹Thomas, Merlyn; Ryan, Jamie; Brown, Paul. (2024, 17 May). Israel troops continue posting abuse footage despite pledge to act. BBC News (BBC Verify). Retrieved on : (01/02/2026) [Click here.](#)

detainees in front of the Israeli flag⁵⁰ or with their bodies wrapped in it—a practice that appears to reflect a policy encouraged by senior Israeli military officials and government ministers⁵¹. This phenomenon resembles scenes of armies planting their flags in territories they have invaded and seized, in order to declare their sovereignty over the area, even at the level of visual representations. Wrapping Palestinian bodies in Israeli flags carries political messages, including the treatment of Palestinian bodies as «spoils of war» or a prize harvested by the Israeli soldier, and thus the need to visually mark this prize as a demonstration of Israeli power, arrogance, dominance, and control on the battlefield.

The ultimate level of control over Palestinian bodies is manifest in Israeli soldiers' documentation of their use of Palestinians as human shields, such as the image showing soldiers hiding behind Palestinian youths after binding them to a tank in Gaza⁵², reflecting that the Palestinian body amounts to nothing more than a protective instrument for Israeli sources. In other cases, soldiers document the assassination of Palestinians even while in states of vulnerability and surrender and posing no discernible threat, such as the video posted by an Israeli soldier on digital platforms showing the bombing of five Palestinians as they were displaced in Gaza⁵³. Another soldier posted a video documenting the assassination of a Palestinian youth returning from aid distribution centers while carrying a sack of flour on his back⁵⁴. These scenes reflect the highest levels of control over Palestinian bodies, as soldiers assert through filmed clips their sovereignty over life and death itself- the authority to decide who may live and who must die.

Visual violence in war contexts plays a role no less significant than material resources in projecting military power⁵⁵, as it produces distorted collective memories among Palestinian youth about themselves and among others about Palestinians, thereby entrenching dominant ideologies, perceptions, and stereotypes as established truths⁵⁶. Indeed, scenes of visual violence since October 7 have supplanted the image of the Palestinian as a human being, an intellectual, a political and social agent, and a rightful owner of the land, with an image of him as weak, violated, humiliated, degraded, starving, and dead. The image constitutes one of the central epistemic means for constructing what we know about the world, about ourselves, and about the other; filming itself, therefore, operates as a form of power. Those who wield political, economic, and technological power possess the capacity to determine how marginalized groups are represented, how they are categorized, stereotyped, and constructed as different within visual culture ,and consequently how they are positioned within racist structural formations.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ See image: [Click here](#)

⁵¹ See examples in this report: Thomas, Merlyn; Ryan, Jamie; Brown, Paul. Ibid. [Click.](#)

⁵² See example: [Click here](#)

⁵³ See example: [Click here](#)

⁵⁴ Tétreault, Mary Ann. Ibid.

⁵⁵ Al Jazeera Net. (June 29, 2025). Watch: Israeli Drone Bombs Palestinian Carrying a Sack of Flour. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click/Press.](#)

⁵⁶ Scheerlinck, Sofie. (2009). **The Visuals of Violence**. London School of Economics and Political Science. Retrieved on (1 February 2026), from: [Click here.](#)

⁵⁷ Keifer-Body, Karen, Patricia M. Amburgy, and Wanda B. Knight. Ibid.

Torture Before the Camera

Since the beginning of the genocide⁵⁸, numerous reports have been issued, and many images and video clips have been leaked from Israeli prisons documenting the torture of detainees within prisons or during arrest, as well as their abuse and detention under harsh and degrading conditions⁵⁹. One soldier posted a video in which he repeatedly slaps a Palestinian detainee across the face in the West Bank⁶⁰, while another video shows a soldier kicking a teenager in the head during arrest as he lies on the ground with visible signs of physical assault on his body⁶¹. In a third video, Palestinian detainees appear stripped of their clothing, blindfolded, and with their hands bound with plastic restraints, bearing signs of severe beating—bruises, wounds, and blood traces visible on their bodies as they lie face down on a paved path beside a grassy field, while an Israeli soldier in military uniform stands nearby⁶².

In these cases, it becomes evident that violence is not confined to the body alone, but is also visually produced to reinforce the visibility of punishment, discipline, and the violability of the Palestinian body. The camera, therefore, is an integral component of the military apparatus that exercises control and organizes the relationship between the soldier and the Palestinian. It functions as an instrument of security classification that determines who constitutes a threat, who is to be subjected to control, and who is rendered visible. The filming of Palestinians constitutes a violation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which stipulates the necessity of protecting data that may lead, directly or indirectly, to the identification of an individual⁶³.

These incidents are usually followed by questions about whether the dissemination of such filmed clips is capable of provoking public outrage or mobilizing actors at the political level to prevent the continuation of the documented atrocities⁶⁴. However, these clips not only failed to provoke outrage among the Israeli Public, but Israeli citizens themselves were directly complicit in these practices. A report by the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor reveals that the Israeli army permitted groups of 10 to 20 Israeli citizens at a time to enter detention centers and prisons to watch the torture of Palestinian prisoners from Gaza. The Monitor also reported that these civilians laughed at them and filmed them with their personal phones while they were subjected to forced stripping, physical abuse, beatings with metal batons and electric sticks, and having hot water

⁵⁸Read more: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2025, 16 September). Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission finds. Retrieved on (12 February 2026), from: [Click here](#).

⁵⁹Amori, Said; Sio, Mohammad. (2025, 24 October). Photos reveal harsh conditions of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jail. **Anadolu Agency**. Retrieved on (1 February 2026), from: [Click here](#).

⁶⁰To watch the video please [Click here](#)

⁶¹To watch the video please [Click here](#)

⁶²To watch the video please [Click here](#).

⁶³European Union. (2016, 27 April). Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council (General Data Protection Regulation). Retrieved on (1 February 2026), from: [Click here](#).

⁶⁴Austin, John L. Ibid.

being poured over their heads⁶⁵. The torture and inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners constitute crimes against humanity and violations of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention⁶⁶, Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights⁶⁷, Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁶⁸, and Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁶⁹.

The Euro-Med Monitor warns of the dangers of involving Israeli civilians in these practices as they contribute to entrenching a climate of extremism, inflaming hatred, and inciting Israeli public opinion⁷⁰. Repeated and sustained exposure to violent filmed clips leads to the numbing of empathic responses, diminishing sensitivity to the pain and suffering of the others, and consequently neutralizing moral considerations among individuals⁷¹—ultimately encouraging the commission of further crimes and violations against the Palestinian people, particularly as the Israeli government promotes these crimes as necessary to ensure Israel's safety, survival, and strength.

Israeli soldiers did not limit themselves to filming the torture of living Palestinians, but also documented even more sadistic and macabre practices involving the abuse and mutilation of the bodies of martyrs, in violations of international law⁷². For example, a photographer for Israeli Channel 14 posted a video documenting a soldier binding the corpse of a Palestinian youth to a tank and dragging it on the ground⁷³, while a video published on the B'Tselem website shows numerous clips in which soldiers bulldoze the bodies of Palestinian youth in Gaza and the West Bank while mocking them⁷⁴.

Cases of assault on the Palestinian body, whether living or dead, constitute a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirms the inherent dignity and equal rights of all human beings as the foundation for freedom, justice, and peace worldwide⁷⁵. Filming Palestinians during torture and beatings violates their fundamental right to dignity, which

65Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor. (2024, 12 February). "They brought Israeli civilians to watch our nude torture": IDF torture of Palestinian prisoners is turned into entertainment for Israeli viewers. **Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor**. Retrieved on (1 February 2026), from: [Click](#).

66Human Rights Watch. Ibid.

67Council of Europe. (1950). **European Convention on Human Rights. Council of Europe**. Retrieved on (1 February 2026), from [Click here](#).

68United Nations. (1948). **Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations**. Retrieved on (1 February 2026), from: [Click here](#).

69United Nations. (1966). **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. United Nations**. Retrieved on 1 February 2026, from [Click here](#).

70Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor. Ibid.

71Bresheeth, Haim. Ibid.

72B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. (2025, April 28). They Kill and Mutilate Corpses: The Phenomenon of Corpse Mutilation by Israeli Forces is Also Part of the Mentality of Dehumanizing Palestinians Prevalent in Israel. B'Tselem. Retrieved February 1, 2026, from: [Click here](#)

73To watch the video please [Click here](#)

74B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. Same source.

75International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Ibid.

forms the basis for recognizing an individual's worth, status, personhood, and humanity within society. Visual violence and brutality reflect the racist ideology of those wielding the camera and a deliberate attempt to shatter Palestinian pride, inflict public shame and disgrace upon victims, and ultimately erase their dignity and human worth. The significance of the image for the aggressor lies in the message it transmits to the Palestinian people: digital platforms enable the families of victims, the families of perpetrators, their communities, and other users worldwide to be exposed to visual violence—thereby reinforcing racial hierarchy, weakening Palestinian steadfastness, and spreading collective fear by generating the sense that this could happen to them as well.

Humans as Security Data

The final section of the position paper focuses on more structural, systematic, and sustained modes of visual surveillance that possess the capacity to monitor Palestinians on a large scale, namely biometric surveillance, which the occupation has long relied upon to surveil and observe Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem specifically⁷⁶ through a dense network of closed-circuit television (CCTV)⁷⁷ surveillance cameras. This type of filming reaches the apex of visual violence because it reduces the human subject to mere assemblage of digital data, used to suppress, subjugate, and exclude the Palestinian people from public space and entrench apartheid structures.

Among biometric surveillance methods is a system known as «Blue Wolf,» a mobile application used by Israeli soldiers to photograph Palestinians at military checkpoints and upload these images to the app. The application then cross-references these images with databases containing personal information and displays color-coded alerts if a match is found—indicating whether the individual should be detained, arrested, or allowed to pass⁷⁸. Additionally, the occupation relies on another system called «Red Wolf,» which is typically viewed as a complementary extension of «Blue Wolf» system. This system conducts live facial scans of Palestinians at military checkpoints without their knowledge or consent, and then compares them with biometric data stored in other databases to determine whether the individual is to be permitted passage or to incorporate new facial data into these databases⁷⁹. These practices violate the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which prohibits the collection or processing of sensitive personal data, including racial and biometric data used to identify individuals⁸⁰.

These biometric technologies transform the Palestinian body into material for observation, examination, and surveillance, while enabling the production of a cumulative visual archive of Palestinians that is neither neutral nor objective. The image here serves as an instrument through which violence is exercised against Palestinians, as such surveillance facilitates the subjugation and governance of monitored communities. Indeed, numerous previous studies by 7amleh have demonstrated that the continuous surveillance to which Palestinian youth are subjected ultimately leads to the activation of self-censorship and the modification of their behaviors, such as abstaining from both digital and field political participation alike. According to a Washington

⁷⁶bu Sneineh, Mustafa. (2021, 9 November). Meet Blue Wolf, the app Israel uses to spy on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. **Middle East Eye**. Retrieved on (01/02/2026), from: [Click here](#).

⁷⁷Elizabeth Dwoskin. (2021, 5 November). Israel escalates surveillance of Palestinians with facial recognition program in West Bank. **The Washington Post**. Retrieved on (01/02/2026), from: [Click here](#).

⁷⁸Elizabeth Dwoskin. (2021, 5 November). Same source.

⁷⁹Amnesty International. (2023, 2 May). **Israel/OPT: Israeli authorities are using facial recognition technology to entrench apartheid**. Retrieved on (01/02/2026), from: [Click here](#).

⁸⁰Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council. Ibid.

Post report, surveillance and the resulting restrictions have led some Palestinian families to evacuate their homes and relocate⁸¹, while others have been barred from entering their residential neighborhoods due to automated decisions made by discriminatory surveillance systems. Others further stated that these surveillance systems violate their privacy, suppress their activism, diminish their social lives, and leave them feeling persistently exposed and violated⁸².

Above all, Israeli forces conduct nearly daily night raids in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, some of which form part of an «intelligence mapping» policy, whereby Israeli forces storm Palestinian homes to conduct searches⁸³, document the layout of rooms and entrances, assault their occupants, interrogate them, forcibly collect personal information about them (such as ID or phone numbers), and most critically, photograph all of residents, including children and the elderly⁸⁴. These incidents constitute a violation of Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁸⁵ and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights⁸⁶, both of which stipulate that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference in their privacy, family, home, or correspondence. Examples of these violations include a raid documented by B'Tselem on a home in Hebron, where soldiers pulled thirteen children from their beds at night and forced them to stand to be photographed. In the video, the voice of an Israeli soldier can be heard asking the children to «say cheese⁸⁷.» Another image shows a soldier taking a selfie with another soldier inside a home while behind them sits a small Palestinian girl and a woman holding her infant⁸⁸. Another soldier posted a video from inside a home in Jabaliya (Gaza), where he is seen detaining a Palestinian family—women and children⁸⁹. These incidents reflect how Palestinian life is converted into a perpetual theater of operations, erasing the boundaries between the battlefield and ordinary daily life, with assaults extending beyond moments of confrontation. They also indicate that the camera is deployed as an instrument of occupation that reproduces military control by transforming Palestinians and their intimate space into visual material subjected to observation, scrutiny, and circulation.

81Elizabeth Dwoskin. Ibid.

82Amnesty International. Ibid.

83Middle East Eye. (2021, 17 November). **Israeli forces pull Palestinian children out of bed to photograph them during raid**. Retrieved on 1 February 2026, from:[Click here](#).

84Yesh Din – Volunteers for Human Rights; Physicians for Human Rights Israel; Breaking the Silence. (2020, November). **A Life Exposed: Military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank**. Retrieved on 1 February 2026, [Click here](#).

85Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ibid.

86European Convention on Human Rights. Ibid.

87Middle East Eye. Ibid.

88Thomas, Merlyn; Ryan, Jamie; Brown, Paul. Ibid. Click.

89To watch the video please [Click here](#).

Conclusion

This paper has sought to deconstruct the ways in which the image—from the moment of its production to its circulation and biometric scanning—is deployed as an instrument of control and humiliation against Palestinian youth in both physical and digital spaces, and to examine the ramifications of this for their digital rights and the pathways of protection and accountability available to them. The paper reveals systematic visual violence in the Palestinian context, in which the image has been transformed from a documentary medium into a direct extension of violence and an instrument of collective discipline that redefines the relationship between power and sovereignty through the management of visibility, gaze, and dissemination across both physical and digital spaces.

The paper demonstrates that forced filming does not merely constitute a subsequent consequence of violation, but represents in itself a political and epistemic weapon predicated on public and spectacular humiliation, the undermining of dignity and selfhood, the stripping away of humanity, and arbitrary interference in privacy and intimate space. In this context, the camera does not function as a neutral instrument, but as a structural component of the Israeli military apparatus of control. The dangers of this phenomenon lie in the fact that the unchecked use of visual materials and their widespread circulation can transform digital space into an arena of infinite trauma that intensifies psychological harm, contributes to the disintegration of Palestinian social fabric, distorts collective memory and representations of Palestinians in the global imagination, and is further entrenched through the cumulative and sustained operation of surveillance and biometric imaging systems. This circulation also contributes to the normalization of violence and its transformation into a routinized spectacle available for consumption and even gratification, thereby numbing empathic responses, neutralizing moral considerations among the Israeli public, and inciting the commission of further crimes and violations.

Consequently, the paper affirms that visual violence is not peripheral to war, but constitutive of its very structure: administered through the camera, entrenched by algorithms, and legitimized through social normalization. Therefore, any serious response to this pattern of violations necessitates recognizing visual violence as a distinct violation in its own right, and addressing it through coordinated pathways that include holding perpetrators accountable, restricting the circulation of visual violence, and protecting victims from repeated exposure to it.

Recommendations:

- **Restrict the use of biometric surveillance and imaging technologies as a military tool** by exerting international and human rights pressure on the Israeli army and authorities to halt the deployment of such systems and prohibit Israeli soldiers from filming Palestinian youth.
- **Hold technology companies accountable** for permitting the circulation of visual violence by compelling them to remove visual materials that document violations or the humiliation of Palestinians ,beyond narrow content-moderation standards.
- **Establish specialized monitoring mechanisms on visual violence** whose task is to document the act of filming itself (who filmed? how? under what circumstances, and where was it published?).
- **Recognize filming ,publication ,or threats of publication as standalone offenses** in complaints submitted to international and domestic courts ,rather than solely pursuing perpetrators of physical violations.
- **Develop psychosocial support programs** addressing the impact of visual violence and digital trauma on Palestinian youth ,and providing them with tools to strengthen psychological resilience against repeated exposure.
- **Launch awareness campaigns and develop a Palestinian ethical framework that** governs the circulation of violent visual materials by the public, activists, and journalists, and define clear criteria for publication and removal, preventing the reproduction of humiliation and trauma while safeguarding the dignity of victims.

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List of links to images and videos on social media:

- » <https://x.com/ActuallyNewsX/status1773550773382566197/>
- » <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DT6X4VxCEJH?igsh=MXU5eWFnZnJvZjFxcQ3%D3%D>
- » <https://www.facebook.com/AJA.Palestine/videos/?1080086986857776/rdid=bNjRRrENzSTsG4w>
- » https://x.com/sputn1k_ma/status1772756617559146773/
- » <https://x.com/ytirawi/status1802436588246286588/>
- » <https://x.com/OunkaOnX/status2014072840769642912/>
- » <https://x.com/ireallyhateyou/status1794697651524714868/>
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- » <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQFHdZogaRT?igsh=Z2lkY2NhdHBuZno1>

Contact Us:

info@7amleh.org | www.7amleh.org

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