

# A Multimodal Analysis of Political Cartoons and the Discourse of Palestinians' Displacement: Sheikh Jarrah Case

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<b>Article information</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<b>Article history:</b>	<i>This study aims to explore the political cartoons that highlight the displacement of Palestinians in the village of Sheikh Jarrah. It investigates the way this discourse is portrayed as well as the predominant themes of these cartoons. The data of this study consists of eight political cartoons drawn from Palestinian online newspapers from May to July 2021, featuring the displacement issue of Sheik Jarrah by well-known local cartoonists. Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) in which language analysis is combined with the analysis of other semiotic resources including colors, gestures, images, etc. for interpreting meaning (O'Halloran et al., 2011), is adopted for the analysis. Visual Social Semiotics of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) is also used as a linguistic framework. The study asserts that understanding the three different aspects of the visual compositions, namely, representational, interactive and compositional, that serve as a semiotic mode of communication, is essential for conveying the intended message of the visual compositions. The study also identifies the predominant themes or messages of the selected cartoons, which mainly focus on two main points: (i) the tyranny and oppression of Israel over Palestinians through eradication and displacement; and (ii) the Palestinians' struggle, steadfastness and resistance in the event of Israel's forced displacement.</i>
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## INTRODUCTION

Palestinians have experienced their first displacement in 1948, named the Nakba (means the disaster or catastrophe in Palestinian terminology), which is one of the most traumatic tragedies in the world. This year witnessed the establishment of a settler-colonial Zionist state on 78 percent of Mandatory Palestine (Masalha, 2008, p. 123). In 1917 during the First World War, the British government issued a public statement, known as Balfour Declaration, where it announced a full support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish" in Palestine. This declaration is extremely seen as the precursor to the 1948 Nakba which marked

the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians and the massive destruction of historic Palestine (Masalha, 2008, p. 124). The dispossession and expulsion of the Palestinians was executed through a series of massacres and the systematic use of terror, in which Zionist armed groups were trained by the British (*ibid.*). Due to the catastrophe, approximately 13,000 Palestinians were killed and more than 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homeland. Major Palestinian cities were attacked and about 530 Palestinian villages were destroyed (Haddad, 2015). Accordingly, the Palestinian lands were transformed into Israeli settlements, forests, and national parks. The displacement of the Palestinians and the ethnic cleansing of the Nakba did not end with the 1948 war since Israel has carried on with the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians (Masalha 1997; Boqa'i, 2005). Today, the Palestinian refugees and their descendants constitute more than seven million.

Recently, tensions have flared up as Israel has planned to forcibly expel Palestinian families from their villages, including Silwan, Beita, and Sheikh Jarrah. The Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood is the focus of this study. It is a Palestinian area that is located north of the Old City of occupied East Jerusalem. Sheikh Jarrah is home to about 3000 Palestinian refugees who were forcibly expelled and ethnically cleansed in 1948 from their homes in other areas of historical Palestine which are currently occupied by Israel (Alsaafin, 2020). Over the last three years, several families have been forcibly displaced while more than 27 Palestinian families are at risk of forced eviction and dispossession (Yousef & Thabet, 2021). The world has recently witnessed an escalation of tension in this neighbourhood as Israeli settlers demanded their government to forcibly displace Palestinian families living there. In compliance with their demands, in October 2020, the Israeli magistrate court of Jerusalem approved a decision to expel 12 Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah to make way for Israeli settlers. In addition, this court also ordered each Palestinian family to pay fees of \$20000 for covering the settlers' legal expenses (Alsaafin, 2020). On the other hand, Palestinians and families living in Sheikh Jarrah, specifically, continue to fight for their homes. Many protesters have been trying to prevent Israel government from evicting, even though the Israeli forces are using increasingly heavy-handed tactics to stifle protests. A number of Palestinian activists and journalists were also detained by Israeli forces to silence their voices and prevent them from exposing these occupation crimes.

### **Research questions**

The aim of this paper is to investigate the political cartoons that highlight the displacement of Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah village. Thus, this research is an attempt in answering the following questions:

- (i) How is the discourse of displacement portrayed in the cartoons?
- (ii) What are the predominant themes of these cartoons?

### **Political cartoons**

Cartoons or caricatures are defined as "social artifacts" which are constructed in response to a social event "guided by socially determined intentions" (Stöckl, 2004). Political cartoon establishes 'a peculiar genre' with its own communicative processes, conventions and history

(Hussein, 2019, p. 453). Hussein adds that it is a sub-genre of journalese, or the news discourse genre and it is considered as one of the dynamic multimodal media that uses verbal and non-verbal elements in order to form a specific meaning (*ibid.*). In general, political cartoons address a contemporary political event or issue, a well-known personality or a social trend in a way that also introduces a certain opinion. They mostly have an element of irony or at least something surprising or conflicting, although they are not always funny (El Refaie, 2009). They can also be reported as “a platform” where various meanings and themes that demonstrate group interests and the views of cartoonists and their communities are negotiated (Al-Momani et al., 2016). Moreover, Walker (2003) asserts that political cartoons show discontent with prejudices and injustices as they contribute to raising one’s voice against social threats and tend to mirror public points of view.

Little academic attention has been given to the popularity and influence of political cartoons (Hussein, 2019). In the Arab world, few studies have been carried out on political cartoons. Among which are the studies of Abdel-Raheem (2020), Hussein (2019), Al Kayed et al. (2015), Al-Momani et al. (2016), Ibrahim (2014), and Najjar (2007). Furthermore, scholars assert that cartoons function as narratives and they are important in employing the reader’s general knowledge of the world to communicate a certain story. As El Refaie (2012, p. 231), for example, states that “many single-panel cartoons ‘encourage viewers to construct a mini-narrative on the basis of what is suggested by the depicted moment’”. In his study, Abdel-Raheem (2020) challenged the traditional perspective that cartoons are composed of one panel only. He analysed 20 Arabic political cartoons drawing on social semiotic theories and cognitive discourse analysis, suggesting that every cartoon panel is a piece of a narrative and that narrative elements (places, characters, and objects) interact coherently and cohesively with the cartoon reader or viewer.

This study focuses on political cartoons using multimodal analysis since only a few studies in which multimodal analyses of political cartoons are carried out can be found. Among these few studies are those conducted by Kulikova and Detinko (2014), Tehseem and Bokhari (2015), Shaikh et al. (2016) and Samuel (2017). Kulikova and Detinko (2014) state that “cartoons as types of multimodal texts are actively exploited in a media determined political discourse for construction of ‘other’ which is especially characteristic of the British press” (p. 1381). They explored the representation/construction of “others” in British political cartoons through two perspectives intra-cultural (in-group) and inter-cultural (out-group). From the intra-cultural perspective, much focus was given to details and the image itself is restricted to the concrete actions of politicians. Posture and facial expressions of the characters made the cartoons more emotional. On the other hand, from the inter-cultural perspective, artists of cartoons tend to utilize generalized images to characterize general situations, such as with the use of well-known politicians and well-known metaphors. Tehseem and Bokhari (2015), on the other hand, analyzed political cartoons in two Pakistani newspapers using MDA, and argued that political cartoons often serve as the face spoiler for one participant (leader/political party) and the face saviour for another depending on the political affiliation of the media group publishing the cartoons.

Shaikh et al. (2016) analysed political cartoons published during the general election campaign

2013 in Pakistan. During this period, Pakistan witnessed political conflicts among its political parties who utilized various resources of media to persuade their voters. Their semiotic analysis revealed that cartoons are used as communicative tools on print media and the internet to feature dominant political themes and deliver significant meanings. Furthermore, the study of Samuel (2017) analyzed four political cartoons in Nigeria selected from 2016 editions of the *TELL* news magazine, using frameworks of MDA, and his study proved that political cartoons are meant to support easy understanding and interpretation of the messages on sensitive political issues.

The researchers believe that this study is significant due to the great influence the displacement has on different aspects of Palestinians' life; hence, we believe that political cartoons are by-products of the socio-political concerns or issues Palestinians are facing. Another reason is due to the scarcity of studies on political cartoons conducted in the Arab world in general and in Palestine in particular, as mentioned earlier. More specifically, to the knowledge of the authors, no previous study has been carried out on the discourse of displacement as negotiated in political cartoons in Palestine. This study also adds value to existing research in the field of multimodal analysis through addressing a new topic, that is, the discourse of displacement, in a genre of discourse (political cartoons) that to some extent has received little attention in research within the Arab context.

## METHODOLOGY

The data for this study consists of eight political cartoons drawn from Palestinian online newspapers from May to July 2021. The source of each cartoon and the cartoonists' names are provided above each political cartoon. All of cartoons feature the displacement issue of Sheik Jarrah. We explored many cartoons and then categorized them based on themes. After that, we chose appropriate comic strips for each theme. The cartoons were created by well-known local cartoonists. We believe that local cartoonists better portray the discourse of displacement over non-local ones as they have more insight of the socio-political issues surrounding them.

This research adopts multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) in which language analysis is combined with the analysis of other semiotic resources including colours, gestures, images, etc. for interpreting meaning (O'Halloran et al., 2011). Visual Social Semiotics of Kress and Van Leeuwen is used as a linguistic framework to analyze the data. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 1), who followed Halliday's functional socio-semiotic theory of language (1975, 1978, 1994, 2004), suggest that visual texts are "resources for encoding interpretations of experience and [enacting] forms of social (inter)action". They propose three functions of meaning that serve as a semiotic mode of communication, which are, representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning. These three functions of meaning were used by the researchers to examine the way the discourse of displacement is portrayed in each of the studied cartoons.

(i) The "representational meaning" deals with internal relations between participants (represented and interactive participants), the action that is happening, and the setting of the circumstance.

This level deals with two patterns of representation that show the internal relations of visual images, namely, narrative patterns and conceptual patterns. The key signal to distinguish between the two patterns is through the presence of a vector, which is created by an abstraction such as an arrow or by some part of the represented participant. The conceptual patterns represent participants in terms of meaning, structure and types and can be labeled into three sub-process: symbolic process, classificational process and analytical process. The narrative patterns, on the other hand, can be either “transactional” including both an actor (from whom the vector is produced) and a goal (towards which the vector is directed), or can be “non-transactional”, including only an actor (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59).

(ii) The “interactional meaning” relates to patterns of interaction or “with the things we can do to, or for, each other with visual communication, and with the relations between the makers and viewers of visual ‘texts’ which this entails” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 15). That is, the interactional meaning involves two types of participants, represented participants and interactive participants, and the relations between them. According to (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 114), represented participants are “the people, the places and things depicted in images.”, while Interactive participants are the real “people who communicate with each other through images, the producers and viewers of images”. The interactive meaning of an image is examined through three visual systems (i) gaze or contact (offer or demand); (ii) size of frame or social distance (social, personal or impersonal) and (iii) attitude or power relations (the camera angles)

(iii) The “compositional meaning” refers to the visual resources that make a visual text “cohere both internally with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced” (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006, p. 43), accordingly integrating both representational and interactive meanings. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), there are three interrelated visual systems of composition: (i) framing (or its absence), signifying “individuality and differentiation” or “group identity;” (ii) salience or visual weight including cultural symbols, placement of elements, relative sizing, foregrounding vs. backgrounding, etc.; and (iii) information value (the placement of elements in a composition and the way they give values to images).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, each selected cartoon is analyzed using MDA to investigate the underlying messages based on three levels of meaning, namely, representational, interactive and compositional.

### Analysis of political cartoon (1)



Figure 1 Cartoon 1 by the cartoonist Ahmed Qadoura 2021

With respect to representational meaning, the cartoonist successfully portrays a narrative process. The main represented participant, the person with gun who carries houses, is an Israeli settler, who is the actor. The second main participant is another settler who seems persuaded with what the participant is telling him. On the other hand, the other participant who is pulling the settler is the 'goal'. The setting is Sheikh Jarrah as written on the wall in Arabic and English. This narrative process is a transactional reaction since there is an action process and a reaction process. A prominent key narrative process is the verbal process in which a dialogue balloon forms a vector between the speaker and the other participant. The settler says, "If I don't steal her home, someone else will do!". The tool that executes the action is considered as "means". It is important to highlight that this statement was in reality said by Jacob Fauci, an Israeli settler to Muna al-Kurd, a Palestinian woman who accused him of stealing her home in Sheikh Jarrah. Regarding the conceptual process, the symbolic process is the main notable one: the settler symbolizes ruthlessness, deception and theft of properties. The second settler symbolizes agreement and support on occupation agenda. The little girl signifies the helpless Palestinians who are the victims of displacement. The personalities of the two settlers are easily identified: the first settler is identified via the Israeli flag held in his hand, the gun he is carrying on his back and the Jewish skullcap (*yarmulke*), while the second settler is identified through his silence over the situation of Palestinian houses being stolen by the Israeli settler. The Palestinian girl is identified through her Palestinian scarf (*kuffiya*). The wall cracks indicate the act of demolishing. Another conceptual process shown is the classification aspect in which an overt taxonomy is identified through representing the main participants as the super-ordinate and the Palestinian participant as the subordinate since she is depicted as being of the smallest size and in the background. Hence, the cartoonist conveys a manner of superiority in Israel as well as the ignorance of Palestinians' rights.

The interactive meaning is mainly identified through two aspects gaze and power relations. The viewer is the subject of the look since there is no contact with the represented participants' settlers and the Palestinian girl and with the viewer. This kind of image is called an "offer" as it offers the represented participants to the viewers as objects of contemplation or as items of information. The gaze of the two settlers' eyes delivers a sense of cunningness and expresses

their contentment since the first settler has an evil and scary look while the second settler has an envious-look for not overtaking the houses. The close shot serves to capture the surrounding settings. For power relation aspect, the two settlers are more powerful and superior than the Palestinian girl as depicted by size.

Regarding compositional meaning, information values are given to this cartoon based on the placement of elements. A horizontal left-right polarization is used to represent the main participants: the left element being represented by the settlers, signifies 'Given' something the viewers know, while the right element represented by Palestinian girl, signifies 'New' a thing that needs a special attention by the views. Salience is another key in this cartoon. The big size of the settlers compared to the Palestinian kid reflects a sense of tyranny and power and the helplessness of the victim. This is also confirmed by placing them in the foreground while the Palestinian kid is placed in the background. The communicative message conveyed in this portrayal is the tyranny and oppression of Israel over Palestinians as embodied through the stealing of their homes.

### ***Analysis of political cartoon (2)***



Figure 2 Cartoon 2 published in 1 May 2021 in Al-Quds newspaper

In terms of representational meaning, the cartoonist artfully portrays a non-transactional narrative process. The represented participant is an Israeli judge (an actor). In terms of the conceptual process, each element appears in the cartoon is a signifier. The flag behind the judge represents Israel and it shows that this court is a biased court. The setting of the court is identified by the judge's bench, judicial balance symbol, and the judge's gavel. The judge's head is replaced by the bucket of a bulldozer to equate to possessing the same agenda as the illegal settlers. It also indicates the abuse of power where the judge himself agrees on the unfair displacement's decision. The houses, being in a cage, represent the Sheikh Jarrah case. The absence of people of Sheikh Jarrah represents the one-sided decision of the court and it reflects the muteness of people's voice in appropriating their property. Sheikh Jarrah is written in the caption in Arabic and English. Therefore, the cartoonist successfully portrays the displacement in a metaphorical way. In this context, we should point out that Israel's Supreme Court recently approved a decision to displace families in Sheikh Jarrah in order to pave way for Israeli settlers.

Regarding interactive meaning, there is no contact with the viewer since the head of the judge is basically a bulldozer's bucket as mentioned earlier. Hence, this cartoon offers the represented participant to the viewers as an object of contemplation or an item of information.

Regarding compositional meaning, this composition is centered as the judge is placed at the centre. Salience is a clear aspect shown in the large size of the judge's head (bulldozer), strongly reflecting a sense of tyranny and abuse of power. The Israeli flag is foregrounded to reflect Israel's dominance in committing crimes of persecution against Palestinians. The message conveyed by the cartoonist is the unjust application of Israeli law to expel the Palestinians living in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and ethnically cleanse Palestinians through displacement.

### *Analysis of political cartoon (3)*



Figure 3 Cartoon 3 published on 6 July 2021 ([alqudsnews.net](http://alqudsnews.net))

With regards to representational meaning, this cartoon is a non-transactional narrative containing one participant Ghadanfar Abu Atwan, a 28-year-old Palestinian man who was in Israeli detention. He was released after ending 65 days of hunger strike. Ghadanfar was arrested and given a six-month administrative detention order. Administrative detention policy is used by Israeli occupation forces to arrest Palestinians without trial or charge. Ghadanfar was protesting against this order through hunger strike. He is portrayed laying on a bed and holding a sign in his hands reading (We will not leave). The cartoon has the caption (We will not leave individuals and groups). On the top left of the sign, in a blue rectangle, a number 13 is written as well as Sheikh Jarrah, which appears to be the address normally found on a home; not to mention, the sign itself is also drawn like a wall. Regarding the conceptual process, Ghadanfar represents Palestinian resistance against tyranny and the scarf he is wearing (*Kuffiya*) is a symbol of Palestinian identity. The sign that has the markings of a wall powerfully conveys the message that Sheikh Jarrah belongs to Palestinians. It should be noted that Ghadanfar is from the town of Dura located in the occupied West Bank. However, the cartoonist conveys the message that all Palestinians are united to defend their rights against displacement.

Regarding interactive meaning, there is no direct contact with the viewer (offer). The cartoon hence offers the represented participant to the viewers as an item of information. The close shot of the cartoon that captures subtle facial expressions of the participant suggests engagement with the viewer. The facial expressions of Ghadanfar reflect the inner feelings of sorrows and pain due to his situation. It also reflects his resistance and patience against Israel injustice and tyranny.

This composition is “centered” as it has only one element placed at the centre. This placement assigns information value to signify resistance. Salience is another obvious aspect of visual composition: the main participant is foregrounded (cultural symbol) and the sign is close to him, the color of the sign’s writings and the address inside contrasts with the color of the cartoon to capture viewers’ attention. The communicative message conveyed in this portal is resistance against the decision of the dispossession of Sheikh Jarrah in its different forms and the fight against oppression or occupation to defend one’s rights. It also conveys a message that all people regardless of their status, prisoners or commoners everywhere in Palestine will not give up on their land.

#### Analysis of political cartoon (4)



Figure 4 Cartoon 4 by the cartoonist Alaa' Allaqua published in Arabi 21 news

In relation to representational meaning, this cartoon portrays a transactional narrative process involving the Israeli family (sensor) as the one who is looking at the Palestinian family, the one being looked at (phenomenon). That is, there appears to be an action and a reaction. A prominent key narrative process is the verbal process through the hashtag written in Arabic, meaning (Save Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood). Regarding the conceptual process, classification is the most prominent process where the Israeli family is the super-ordinate and the Palestinian family is the subordinate. Another conceptual element is represented through symbolic process. The flag of Israel held by the hand of an Israeli father is a symbol of authoritarianism, whereas the flag of Palestine being on the floor while the little boy is trying to pick it up represents Palestinians as victims who are in a weak situation. The bag next to the Palestinian’s mother

is a symbol of homelessness and leaving from house. The scarf the small kid is wearing is a symbol of Palestinian identity. Moreover, a mental process is represented through a thought bubble where the Palestinian mother thinks about her homeland, and a feeling of detachment from Jerusalem. This reflects the deep sorrow this woman has faced due to being displaced from her home.

The interactive meaning is mainly identified through two aspects, which are, gaze and power relations. There is no direct contact between the represented participants and the viewer. In addition, the cartoon shows a clear contrast between the facial expressions of the two families. The big smiles on the Israeli family's faces indicates utter contentment and triumph and possibly, malicious intentions, in addition to inner feelings of ruthlessness and cruelty. The angry face of the small Israeli boy expresses cunningness and hate. The facial expressions of the Palestinian family express deep sorrow, pain, loss and helplessness. Furthermore, the power relations are portrayed through the position of the participants: the Israeli family is at the top (looking down at the Palestinian family as well as the viewer), signifying power and dominance while the Palestinian family sits at the bottom, signifying vulnerability.

Regarding compositional meaning, information value is given to this cartoon through a top-bottom structure where the top signifies (Ideal), the aim of settlers, and the bottom signifies (Real). Framing is another prominent aspect of compositional meaning as the physical distance between the two families indicates the contrast in status for both families; that is, between the occupier and the occupied, or the oppressor and the oppressed. The communicative meaning conveyed in this portrayal is the unfair forced displacement of Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah and the practices of persecution and ethnic cleansing by Israel.

#### *Analysis of political cartoon (5)*

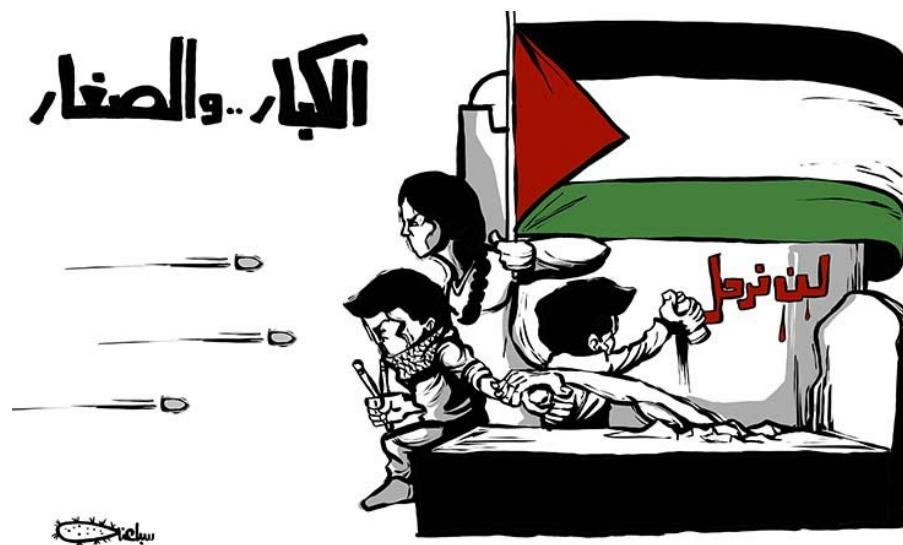


Figure 5 Cartoon 5 published on 24 June 2021 (<http://alqudsnews.net/>)

This cartoon portrays a non-transactional narrative process as it only involves a group of participants who represents one actor (Palestinians). The cartoon has the caption (the old and the young) indicating collaboration and unity against oppression and tyranny. Regarding the conceptual process, the most prominent sub-process is the symbolic one. The participants, with their different ages, represents the Palestinians. The scarf (*kuffiya*) the kid is wearing is a symbol of Palestinian identity. The slingshot (an instrument used to throw stones as a kind of resistance) is a symbol of fighting or retaliation. A small boy is writing on the wall, in Arabic, the words (We will not leave) in a red bleeding color, signifying that Palestinians sacrifice their blood to defend their country against occupation. The woman holding the flag symbolizes the materialization of a life mission, the ability to procreate and transform themes of patriotism, resistance and empowerment. In addition, there is a visual metaphor portrayed through the hand of a dead body (martyr) in the adjacent grave, tightly grasping the hand of the boy who is fighting. This metaphor successfully conveys the message that even though people are killed because they defend their country, the new generation will not give up and will continue on the resistance for freedom. The action of sitting on the grave signifies the meaning that they are struggling to protect the country even if it costs them their life. Hence, the meaning of patriotism is clearly portrayed through the visual metaphor. Furthermore, the bullets represent Israeli violent action against Palestinians as a way of repression to steal properties.

Regarding the interactive meaning, there is no contact between the participants and the viewers (offer). The cartoonist, hence, offers the represented participants to the viewers as items of information. The oblique angle utilized in the cartoon expresses the detachment of the viewers from the world of the represented participants. In addition, the close-up shot helps to capture the facial expressions that reflect inner feelings of resistance and steadfastness.

In terms of compositional meaning, this composition is centred because only one element (Palestinians) is placed at the centre. Framing is an important aspect in this cartoon; the represented participants who represent one group are closer to each other, along with the martyr's hand, and this conveys a meaning of unity and fighting towards a common goal: freedom. The underlying message conveyed in this cartoon is the Palestinian struggle and resistance coming from all genders and ages, in resistance against Israel's forced displacement.

#### ***Analysis of political cartoon (6)***

حبي انشيخ جراح ...



Figure 6 Cartoon 6 published in Al-Quds Alarabi 6 May 2021

In terms of representational meaning, the cartoonist portrayed a transactional narrative process. The Israeli inside the excavator is the actor and the Palestinians killed bodies are the goal. This cartoon has the caption (Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood). This cartoon artfully conveys the meaning of the superiority Israel has over the Palestinian. Regarding the conceptual process, the symbolic process is a key aspect; each object that appears in the cartoon is a signifier. The Israeli inside the excavator represents the Israeli government and symbolizes barbarity and ruthlessness. The murdered corpses represent the Palestinian people who have been killed by the Israeli government while being displaced from their homes. The exposed hands of the victims signify a sense of awakening from the world and international politicians on the issue, hence, a call for help. The Israeli flag gives us the identity of the excavator's owner while the stone debris represents what is left of Sheikh Jarrah homes. Another key aspect of the conceptual process is the classification one, where the Israeli actor is depicted as a super-ordinate whereas the Palestinians are the subordinates. Even though the size of Palestinians is portrayed as bigger than the Israeli manning the excavator, the superiority of Israel is nevertheless still conveyed through the sheer size and menacing presence of the excavator, specifically its oversized bucket (or claws). The subordinate status of Palestinians is also portrayed through the movement of their hands, indicating a certain time element in which they seek help.

The interactive meaning is identified through gaze. There is no contact between either the represented participants or the viewers (offer). The cartoon, hence, offers the represented participants to the viewers as objects of contemplation. The oblique angle utilized in this cartoon signifies the detachment of the viewers from the world of the participants.

Information values, based on the placement of elements, are one aspect of the compositional meaning where a horizontal left-right polarization is used to represent the main participants: the left element being represented by the Palestinians, signifies 'Given', something the viewers know, while the right element is represented by the excavator's driver, signifying 'New', something that requires special attention by the viewers. Framing is another key aspect: the space between the represented participants recognizes them as separate from each other, i.e. victims (Palestinians) versus oppressors (the Israeli government). Salience is also another key aspect where the immense size of the claws and the Palestinian corpses both emphasize the cruelty and terrorism practiced by the Israeli government against the Palestinians. Not to mention, the Palestinian corpses are foregrounded while the Israeli driver is shown in black shade. The communicative message conveyed in this portrayal is the unwanted eradication and forced displacement Palestinians are facing in Sheik Jarrah through killing and the destruction of homes.

### Analysis of political cartoon (7)



Figure 7 Cartoon 7 published on 5 May 2021 (Nawa Network)

The cartoonist artfully portrays a transactional narrative process. The main represented participant is the woman named Muna Alkurd, whereas the other participants are comprised of Israeli soldiers. The setting is Sheikh Jarrah, as written on the wall in blue. Alkurd is a prominent Sheikh Jarrah activist resisting the Israeli expulsion drive. She has a degree in journalism and has extensively appeared in international media highlighting the Israeli forces' attempts to steal her family home. She was detained by the Israeli forces who have tried to mute her voice of freedom that has reached millions around the world. After being released, Alkurd continues to tell the stories of families who have faced Israel's forced expulsion and threats of displacement in Sheikh Jarrah. The cartoon has the caption (Muna Alkurd, is defending the nation alone). The word 'nation' here refers to (Arabic Nation) and the statement highlights Alkurd as an icon of power and resistance. The caption also highlights the ignorance of Arab leaders for this Palestinian case. The wall has the writing (We will not leave) indicating the steadfastness of Sheikh Jarrah residents in defending their homes. Regarding the conceptual process, the classification aspect is the main notable one in which an overt taxonomy is identified through representing the main participant, Alkurd, as the super-ordinate while the Israeli forces are the subordinate as depicted by their difference in size. This reflects the power and confidence of Alkurd who does not fear threats from the soldiers. Another conceptual process shown is the symbolic process: Alkurd, a Palestinian icon, signifies the Palestinians' courage and struggle against Israel's systematic ethnic cleansing policy, whereas the Israeli forces symbolize theft of properties. Alkurd also symbolizes the role of women in resistance. The moon represents a symbol of hope.

The interactive meaning is identified through the gaze where the main participant has a direct contact with the viewer. Such a visual look is called (demand) as it demands that the viewers enter some kind of imaginary relationship with the represented participant. The cartoon is a close-up shot aiming to capture facial expressions and to suggest involvement with the viewers. The facial expression of Alkurd conveys a sense of challenge, self-confidence and persistence,

whereas the facial expressions of the soldiers reflect the status of anger they have toward Alkurd due to her powerful role in exposing their crimes.

Information values, one aspect of compositional meaning, are given to this cartoon based on the placement of elements. A top-bottom structure is used in this cartoon in which the top element (Alkurd) signifies the 'Ideal', courage and determination of Alkurd, and the bottom element (Israeli soldiers) signifies the 'Real' to give information on what is happening (forced displacement). Salience is another key in this cartoon; the larger size of Alkurd compared to the soldiers reflects a sense of emergent challenge and courage against the oppression of the Israeli regime. Framing aspect is also shown in this cartoon as indicated from the close distance between the two represented participants. This framing reflects the real threat approaching the Sheikh Jarrah residents. The communicative message conveyed in this portrayal is the patriotism of Sheikh Jarrah residents, embodied by Alkurd through defending their homes and exposing the crime of forced displacement. It also conveys the message that in spite of Israel's overwhelming power, the spirit of Palestinian resistance will never be broken.

#### *Analysis of political cartoon (8)*



Figure 8 Cartoon 8 published on 3 June 2021, Almad Newspaper

The cartoonist artfully portrays a transactional narrative process. The main represented participant is an old man, named Nabil Alkurd, and the other participant is an Israeli settler, named Jacob Fauci. Nabil Alkurd is the father of the 'iconic' twin Palestinian activists from Sheikh Jarrah (Muna and Mohammad). Half of his house had already been taken over by the settler, Fauci. The cartoon has the caption (We will not leave) in a big size to highlight the attachment of Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah with their homes. Regarding the conceptual process, the classification aspect is the main notable one in which an overt taxonomy is identified through representing the main participant as the super-ordinate while the other participant as the subordinate as depicted through their difference in size. Another conceptual process

shown is the symbolic aspect, in which Alkurd with his old age signifies that Palestinian grandparents are older than Israel which was created in 1948. The way Alkurd is sitting conveys a meaning of comfortability and ownership since he owns the house. The enlarged size of the Palestinian man signifies his authority and ownership of his house. Fauci, who represents Israeli settlers taking over Palestinians' homes, is being likened to a mouse, with attributed features of a household pest through his relative size.

The interactive meaning is identified through the two prominent aspects: gaze and power systems. The main participant has a direct contact with the viewer (demand). This visual look demands that the viewers enter some kind of imaginary relationship with the represented participant. The way how the represented participants are positioned along with the vertical angle expresses power relations; Alkurd is portrayed as being more powerful than the settler. The facial expressions of Alkurd suggests engagement with the viewers and conveys a sense of challenge, self-confidence and persistence.

Regarding compositional meaning, information values are given to this cartoon based on the placement of elements. A top-bottom structure is used in this cartoon in which the top element (Alkurd) signifies the 'Ideal', self-confidence and determination, and the bottom element (Fauci) signifies the 'Real' to give information on the reality of forced displacement. Salience is another key in this cartoon, the larger size of Alkurd compared to Fauci reflects a Palestinian sense of steadfastness and resistance against the Israeli policy of forced displacement. The communicative message conveyed in this portrayal is that Palestinians grandparents and ancestors are older than Israel which was created in 1948; Palestinians have existed before then, are embedded in their homelands and are not willing to give up their rights.

## CONCLUSION

This paper was an attempt to investigate the political cartoons that highlight the displacement of Palestinians in the village of Sheikh Jarrah using MDA. The authors pointed to the novelty of their work since to the best of their knowledge, no previous study had been carried out on the discourse of displacement as portrayed in the political cartoons in Palestine. The study asserts that understanding the three different aspects or meanings of the visual compositions, namely, representational, interactive and compositional, that serve as a semiotic mode of communication, is essential for understanding and conveying the intended meaning or message behind the visual compositions. Hence, this study agrees with other previous studies that identify the significance of the function of political cartoons in addressing a phenomenal political issue. It confirms Walker's idea (2003) that political cartoons show discontent with injustices as they contribute to raising one's voice against social threats, such as in the case of the displacement of Sheikh Jarrah villagers.

In light of analyzing the selected cartoons, it was found that different semiotic elements were utilized by the cartoonists that ultimately, resulted in identifying the discourse of displacement in Palestine. The following, hence, is a list of predominant themes or messages governing these cartoons:

- (1) The continuance of tyranny and oppression of the Israeli government against Palestinians.
- (2) The unwanted eradication and forced displacement Palestinians are facing in Sheikh Jarrah through killing and the destruction of their homes.
- (3) The unjust, forced displacement of the Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah and the practices of persecution and ethnic cleansing by the Israeli government.
- (4) The unity of the Palestinians regardless of their status, gender, or age.
- (5) The Palestinians' struggle, steadfastness and resistance against the Israeli government's forced displacement and overwhelming power.
- (6) The power of non-violent resistance through documentary and exposure of the crime of forced displacement, as portrayed by activist Muna Alkurd.
- (7) The prominent role and empowerment of the Palestinian women in the discourse of displacement, as portrayed by Muna Alkurd.
- (8) The existence of the Palestinians' grandparents and ancestors before the creation of Israel in 1948.

It can be concluded that this research offers a comprehensive perspective of analyzing political cartoons within the Arab context. This, hopefully, will help enhance researchers' appreciation of the different frameworks utilized in political cartoons, which in turn, might help to produce more semiotic research in an already under-researched area.

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