

If We Must Die, Our Knowledge Must Live: Resistance and Decoloniality Labor in Palestine Academia

This panel will discuss the experiences and challenges of four Arabic-speaking academics in writing and publishing their research, in English-medium journals, about—and from— their home countries: Palestine and Lebanon. More specifically, the panel will elaborate on the ongoing and historical decolonial labor in the Arab academia by discussing:

- A. The growing impact of bibliometric coloniality on the fractured research landscape in the Arab World
- B. The responses to the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge systems and different forms of epistemic disobedience, in the Arab World
- C. The strategies for decolonizing knowledge production in Palestine.

As the title of the presentation indicates, which is adapting the poem of Refaat Alareer, the panel aims to offer a real start for the conversation on the urgent need for epistemic repairs in academia.

The panel's first discussant (Anoud Abusalim) will begin by reviewing the research evaluation system in the Arab World highlighting the growing role of bibliometric coloniality (Mills et al., 2022). By drawing on her experience in an UAE university—the American University of Sharjah (AUS)—, the discussion will outline how the functional transformation of bibliometrics from a tool designed for librarians into a global research evaluation platform (Hicks et al., 2015) has widened the existing inequalities in the global research scene. The discussion will, then, situate the problematic interplay between global university rankings which employ bibliometrics data heavily, and how many Arab countries are shifting their economic models to knowledge economies, without having sufficient material or epistemic infrastructures.

The second discussant (Maya Agasi) will discuss experiences (with) and responses to the epistemic racism faced by many academics publishing about the Arab World in English and/or French-medium journals, by drawing on her experiences in writing about her home country: Lebanon and Palestine in her area of specialization, conflict studies. The discussion will argue how the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge systems was and remains one of the reasons, that limit and complicate the participation of peripheralized and minoritized academics in the global publishing scene (Alatas, 1994; Mignolo, 2011; Said, 1994). The discussion will also outline different forms of epistemic disobedience in which Arab academics respond to “disciplinary gatekeepers” (Kuhn, 1970).

The third discussant (Lama Mansour) will talk about the experiences of Palestinian citizens of Israel working in Israeli higher education, as well as the experiences of Palestinian students at Israeli universities (Wind, 2024). Her talk will highlight the decolonial labor that many Palestinian-Israeli academics have been involved in and the types of pressure they experience, historically (Willaims, 2016).

The last discussant (Maher Hashweh) will discuss decoloniality labor, by drawing on his experiences in Birzeit University, Palestine. The last part of the panel offers critical insights about the epistemological injustices faced by academics in Palestine. The discussion will start by explaining the little impact of research in Palestine on social and political matters because of how research is subjugated to the hegemony of Western frameworks, and how it is evaluated according to scientometric criteria (Kassis, Giacaman & Hashweh, 2022). After that, the discussion will highlight how when Palestinian and Arab academics publish globally, they perish locally (Hanafi, 2011). The discussion will also share the different decolonization strategies adopted in Palestine. The panel will conclude by emphasizing how initiatives for epistemic repair in higher education should account for the diverse academic experiences, across the world.

References

- Alatas, S. H. (1994). The captive mind and creative development. *International Social Science Journal*, 46(4), 691-699.
- Hanafi, S. (2011). University systems in the Arab East: Publish globally and perish locally vs. publish locally and perish globally. *Current Sociology*, 59(3), 291-309.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392111400782>
- Kassis, M., Giacaman, R., & Hashweh, M. (2022). Decolonizing knowledge production: Perspective on promotion and tenure regulations in Palestine and beyond. *Middle East Critique*, 31(2), 105-124.
- Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature*, 520(7548), 429-431.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/520429a>
- Mignolo, W. (2011). Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: On (de)coloniality, border thinking, and epistemic disobedience. *Postcolonial Studies*, 14(3), 273-283.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2011.613105>
- Mills, D., Kingori, P., Branford, A., Chatio, S. T., Robinson, N., & Tindana, P. (2023). *Who Counts? Ghanaian Academic Publishing and Global Science*. African Minds.
- Said, E. W. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage.
- Williams, J. (2016). *Academic freedom in an age of conformity: Confronting the fear of knowledge*. Springer.
- Wind, M. (2024). *Towers of ivory and steel: How Israeli universities deny Palestinians freedom*. Verso Books.