

Understanding Palestine

Poster Project

An Educational Initiative
to Celebrate
A People's Culture
and Encourage
Courageous Conversations



Copyright 2025 by Understanding Palestine.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form (electronic, print, or otherwise) outside what is specified in the use and instructions listed in this work, or without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published by Uplift Publishing.

ISBN: 979-8-9926294-0-8

All research, writing, formatting, and cover design by Understanding Palestine.

Permission to use photos have been secured. Some photos and graphic images are sourced from Canva.com. All other photos are public domain unless specified by the listed copyright.

Reviewed by wonderful friends who believe in collective liberation. Thank you for your support and solidarity.



For the children of Palestine who deserve to be free.

And for all the children at school who deserve to be seen.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Poster 1 - Olive Tree Cultivation

Poster 2 - Palestinian Tatreez

Poster 3 - Palestinian Ceramics

Poster 4 - Keffiyeh Headdress

Poster 5 - Historic Palestine



INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE POSTER PROJECT

Understanding Palestine: Poster Project was developed as an educational project dedicated to helping people understand the culture, traditions, and history of Palestine.

In order to justify and obfuscate political violence, the perspectives of Palestinians around the world have been institutionally silenced and repressed under the guise of avoiding conflict or division. Particularly at schools and public institutions, learning about Palestine from the perspective of Palestinians is made difficult, shut down, or instantly politicized. This is made possible by anti-Palestinian racism, dehumanization, and misguided efforts to conflate a land dispossession issue with religious bigotry.

This work is an invitation to learn about Palestine from the perspective of Palestinians, and to open doors to courageous conversations centered on mutual respect, understanding, and anti-racism. The posters can be used in a variety of educational spaces including school events celebrating diversity, libraries, events commemorating indigenous peoples and traditions, and more. Individual poster designs provided in the pages that follow can be printed as-is (no modification) with attribution to Understanding Palestine.

USE & PRINT INSTRUCTIONS

A total of 5 posters are provided below. The posters can be printed as-is (no modification) individually or as a set. A high quality PDF file containing the design can be sent directly to a local print shop. Each poster/page is designed to be printed on an 18" x 24" medium. However, the design can be resized to other poster dimensions with a 3:4 ratio. To facilitate re-use, consider printing on heavy weight paper with lamination, or printing on durable foam board.

For questions, more information, or to receive a copy of a high quality PDF, please email understandingpalestine@gmail.com.



Olive Tree Cultivation

Thousands of Years Old

Olive trees in Palestine are thousands of years old, and some considered among the oldest in the world. One of the oldest trees is in the village of al-Walaja near the outskirts of Bethlehem in the West Bank. It is estimated to be between 4000 and 5000 years old. It is often called “Al Badawi”, which translates to “the Great One” in Arabic.



Al-Badawi Tree in Al-Walaja Village



Integral to Economy

Olive cultivation plays an integral role in the economy through table olives, olive oil, and soap production. Nearly half of all cultivated land in the occupied West Bank and Gaza is planted with more than 10 million olive trees of mostly native, drought-resilient varieties. In 2022, an estimated 100,000 tons of olives and 20,000 tons of olive oil were produced by Palestinian farmers.

Cultural Significance

Olive trees are symbolic of Palestinian heritage and stewardship of the land. Because olive trees are drought-resistant and grow under poor soil conditions, they represent Palestinian resilience to harsh living conditions and steadfastness. Since the forced dispossession of Palestinian land in 1947 and beyond, more than one million olive trees have been uprooted and destroyed by occupation forces or settlers. Illegal settlers routinely target olive trees to cut off food and income. Since October 2023, over 75% of olive trees in Gaza have been destroyed, and more than ten thousand trees in the West Bank have been intentionally destroyed or vandalized.

Palestinian Tatreez

Art of Embroidery

Tatreez is a folk embroidery art form that originated in rural Palestine. It uses a needle and colorful thread to stitch symbolic motifs on textiles. Designs are often passed down from mother to daughter, spanning generations of Palestinian women. A long loose-fitting dresses (called "Thobe") is most commonly decorated with tatreez.



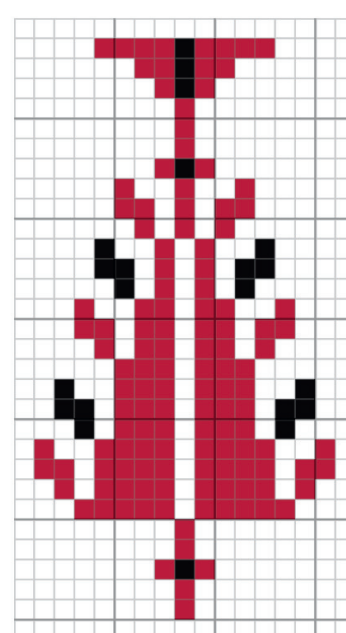
© Wafa Ghnaim, The Tatreez Institute



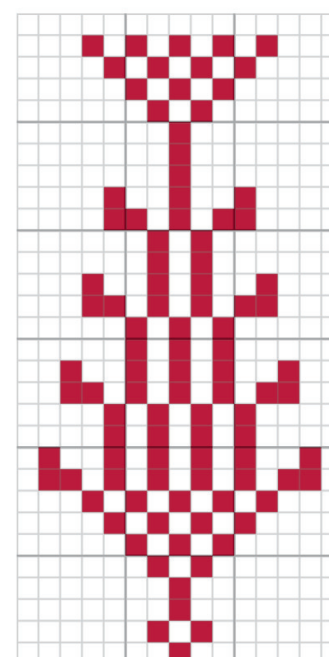
© Wafaa Abu Gulum, Palestine, 2020

Stitching History

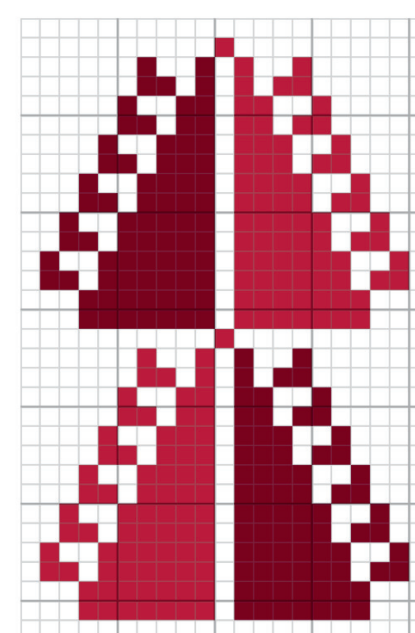
Tatreez patterns are often stitched to tell a story or commemorate an event. Patterns use nature-inspired motifs like ears of corn, olive branches, or trees indigenous to the land. Different villages have developed unique styles and colors reflecting local experiences, making it possible to trace designs back to specific communities.



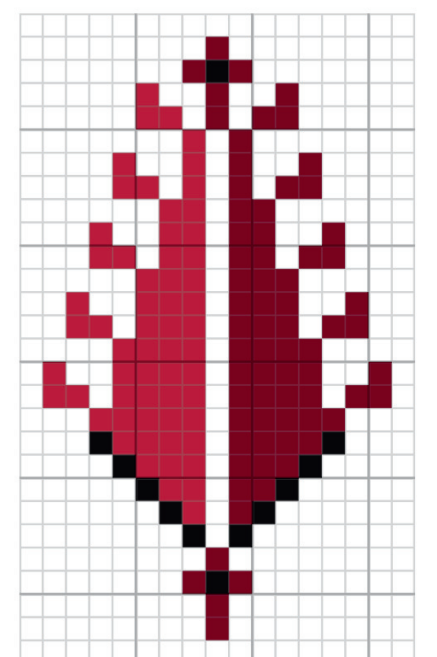
Cypress Tree
(Sarw)
Ramallah & Yaffa



Cypress Tree
(Sarw)
Al Khalil



Cypress Tree
(Sarw)
Bir Al Saba



Cypress Tree
(Sarw)
Gaza

© 2024 Tatreez Traditions

Cultural Significance

Tatreez is a cherished traditional craft in the hearts of millions of Palestinians. Due to the ongoing ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people and culture, many Palestinians have made an effort to learn the craft and archive motifs in order to preserve its history. Thousands of patterns have been archived into digital libraries. In 2021, UNESCO added traditional Palestinian embroidery to its Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list.

Palestinian Ceramics



© Katie Miranda

Centuries-Old Tradition

Palestinian ceramics are celebrated for their blend of cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and vibrant artistry. Pottery traditions date back thousands of years to the ancient Canaanite and Byzantine periods. Each ceramic is hand-made and hand-painted with geometric patterns and floral motifs in bright, vivid colors. The iconic blue and white color palette holds a distinct significance in Palestinian tradition and the colors symbolize purity, serenity, water, and life.

Functional Art

Palestinian ceramics are not just decorative but functional, serving as an example of eco-conscious artistry. The locally-sourced clay and traditional firing techniques, led by family-run workshops, minimize the environmental impact. The meticulous process of molding, high-temp firing, and glazing ensures each piece is built to last.



© Artisan Variety



© MECA

Cultural Significance

The old cities of Hebron (Khaleel) and Jerusalem (Al Quds) are best known for their ceramics. Like the rest of the West Bank, both cities are under military occupation which restricts the movement of people, materials, and finished goods. Palestinian families must work under these constraints when producing and selling their work. For this reason, and in light of efforts to erase or appropriate Palestinian heritage, ceramic pieces are highly coveted in the global market. Non-profit organizations in the U.S. and Europe often purchase and resell ceramics to support local Palestinian businesses that otherwise have great difficulty selling.

Keffiyeh Headdress



Historical Origin

The keffiyeh is a traditional cotton scarf that originated in ancient Mesopotamia. Farmers and shepherds wore it to protect themselves from the sun and dust. Over time, the keffiyeh became a hallmark headpiece across the Arabian Peninsula and Levant. The red keffiyeh is popular in Jordan, Iraq and the Gulf; the Palestinian version is marked by its distinct black and white pattern.

Olive Leaves

Represent the cultural and economic significance of olive trees.

Fishnets

Represent the history of fishing and sailing along the Mediterranean sea.

Bold Lines

Represent historical trade-routes going through Palestine and the importance of trade and cultural exchange.



Cultural Significance

The keffiyeh became a symbol of Palestinian identity in the 1930s during the revolt against British military occupation. It was adopted by leaders advocating for liberation and continues to be a cultural relic worn by Palestinians. To dehumanize Palestinians, some portray the keffiyeh as a hate symbol, leading those who wear it to face sharp criticism, hate, or violence in their community spaces. In November 2023, three college students in Vermont were shot in an anti-Palestinian racist attack while speaking Arabic and wearing keffiyehs.



Historic Palestine

A Land of the Levant

Nestled at the crossroads of ancient trade routes, Palestine plays a critical geopolitical role due to its fertile land and sacredness to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. While ruled by changing political powers through the years, the people were a reflection of natural migration patterns of the larger Levant. The primary language was Arabic and the land was home to Druze, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Palestinians along with Palestinians of other faiths. In the early 1900s, Palestine flourished as a thriving hub of commerce, culture, and scholarship.

The Nakba

In 1948, Zionist militia (backed by British forces) expel at least 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, depopulate villages, and rename historical cities in order to shift the demographics of the region and declare Israeli statehood. This event is called the “Nakba” (or catastrophe in Arabic) and marks the first phase of ethnic cleansing of non-Jewish Palestinians from the land.



Keys of Hope

Many Palestinians still hold on to the keys of their original homes they were forced to expel. The key is a symbol of hope they can one day return to their home - a right recognized by the UN and international law. Palestinians continue to appeal to the international community to uphold justice and equality under the law.



Displaced Palestinians, November 1948 © Jim Pringle, AP

Determined to Stay

Millions of displaced Palestinians live as refugees inside West Bank and Gaza, as refugees in neighboring Arab countries, or part of the larger global diaspora. While there is a longing to return, there is a more pressing determination to stay and resist expulsion. Daily acts of dispossession and violence are designed to make life unlivable so Palestinians leave. Through poetry, music, and dance, the determination to stay and find joy despite a life of erasure is now ingrained in the culture.

Understanding Palestine

“We need more light
about each other. Light
creates understanding,
understanding creates
love, love creates
patience, and patience
creates unity.”

Malcolm X /
El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz