

Resisting Erasure: Representations of Palestinian Struggle in Ghassan Kanafani's Short Stories

Rizki Februansyah

Language Education Science, Faculty of Language, Arts, and Culture, Yogyakarta State University,
JalanColombo No.1 Karangmalang, Yogyakarta
rizkifebruansyah.2024@student.uny.ac.id

Suminto A. Sayuti

Language Education Science, Faculty of Language, Arts, and Culture, Yogyakarta State University,
JalanColombo No.1 Karangmalang, Yogyakarta
suminto_sayuti@uny.ac.id

Maman Suryaman

Language Education Science, Faculty of Language, Arts, and Culture, Yogyakarta State University,
JalanColombo No.1 Karangmalang, Yogyakarta
maman_suryaman@uny.ac.id

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i4.2224>

APA Citation: Februansyah, R., Sayuti, S. A. & Suryaman, M. (2025). Resisting Erasure: Representations of Palestinian Struggle in Ghassan Kanafani's Short Stories. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 7(4).213-224. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i4.2224>

Received:

18/05/2025

Accepted:

28/06/2025

Keywords:

Palestinian literature, resistance, child patriotism, identity, Israeli occupation.

Abstract

This article explores the theme of Palestinian resistance against Israeli colonization through a literary analysis of selected short stories by Ghassan Kanafani. Employing a postcolonial framework, the study examines how resistance is articulated in both overt and subtle forms—ranging from armed struggle to everyday social defiance. The stories analyzed include Paper from Ramleh, The Child Borrows His Uncle's Gun and Goes East to Safad, Dr. Qassim Talks to Eva About Mansour Who Has Arrived in Safad, The Child, His Father, and the Gun Go to the Citadel at Jaddin, Abu Hassan Ambushes an English Ambulance and Guns in the Camp. These narratives present various representations of resistance: through the suffering of women and children, symbolic and physical sacrifices by individuals, and the moral and ideological tensions within Palestinian society. Kanafani's portrayal of child figures and community elders illustrates how resistance is both inherited and redefined across generations. The study concludes that Kanafani's work serves not only as a literary reflection of Palestinian struggle, but also as a powerful instrument for reclaiming identity, dignity, and collective memory in the face of systemic erasure.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term resistance is broadly defined as the act of fighting against something that is attacking or oppressing, or as the refusal to accept an imposed condition or injustice (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary>). In socio-political contexts, resistance emerges as a response to domination and systemic oppression. It spans various dimensions, including political, economic, cultural, spiritual, and psychological spheres. At its core, resistance is rooted in the inherent human desire for freedom, dignity, and self-determination. People subjected to colonialism, apartheid, occupation, or any form of injustice often develop

multifaceted methods of resisting such conditions, whether through organized political movements, intellectual engagement, or cultural production. These methods can be classified into two broad categories: violent and non-violent resistance.

Violent resistance typically arises when all other avenues for liberation appear closed. It is often interpreted as an immediate and forceful response to direct acts of aggression, occupation, and state-sanctioned violence. Frantz Fanon (2004), in *The Wretched of the Earth*, articulates that for the colonized subject, violence is not merely a physical act but a cathartic and existential necessity for reclaiming agency and breaking the psychological chains of subjugation. In the Palestinian context, violent resistance has taken the form of armed struggle against the Israeli military and settlers, exemplified by groups like the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, which has been active in the Gaza Strip. These acts, though controversial and heavily contested in international discourse, are perceived by many Palestinians as forms of legitimate self-defense against a settler-colonial regime.

Conversely, non-violent resistance encompasses a wide range of strategies designed to confront oppression without the use of arms. These include peaceful protests, international advocacy, legal campaigns, diplomatic lobbying, artistic expression, and economic boycotts. Among the most notable and globally recognized forms of non-violent Palestinian resistance is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Launched in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, BDS calls for the international community to exert economic and political pressure on Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights. The movement is inspired by historical precedents, particularly the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the U.S. civil rights movement, and, to a lesser extent, the anti-colonial movements in India and Ireland (Barghouti, 2021). Through peaceful means, BDS seeks to challenge the structures of Israeli occupation, apartheid, and settler colonialism by targeting institutions that are complicit in these injustices.

Due to its growing influence, BDS has become a focal point of geopolitical tensions. The Israeli government, viewing the movement as a strategic threat, has actively lobbied against it, labeling it as anti-Semitic and attempting to criminalize its activities in various countries. The United States, under the Trump administration, for example, threatened to reconsider trade relations with entities supporting BDS, showcasing the degree of international backlash against this form of resistance. Despite these challenges, the movement remains a symbol of Palestinian civil resistance and continues to gain solidarity across the globe. (*ibid*).

The Palestinian struggle for liberation is deeply anchored in historical trauma, particularly the events of the 1948 Nakba (*catastrophe*), during which more than 800,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes. This mass displacement was orchestrated through a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing carried out by Zionist militias and facilitated by British colonial authorities, resulting in the destruction of over 500 villages and the depopulation of numerous towns (Petrovic in Pappé, 2009). The Nakba not only created a protracted refugee crisis but also laid the foundation for decades of occupation, statelessness, and resistance. It remains a central collective memory for Palestinians and a rallying point for both violent and non-violent forms of resistance.

In the realm of literature, Palestinian resistance has found a powerful voice in the works of Ghassan Kanafani (1936–1972), widely regarded as the father of *adab al-muqawama*, or resistance literature (Harlow, 1987). Born in Acre and displaced during the Nakba, Kanafani became an influential writer, journalist, and political figure. His literary works vividly portray

the Palestinian experience of exile, dispossession, and defiance. As the spokesperson for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Kanafani used both his pen and his political platform to advocate for the liberation of his homeland. His assassination by Israeli agents in 1972, via a car bomb that also killed his niece, Lamees, underscores the perceived threat posed by his voice and the broader power of cultural resistance (Riley, 2000).

Kanafani's short stories are not merely literary texts but political artifacts that bear witness to the Palestinian struggle. They document the lived experiences of ordinary people grappling with loss, exile, identity, and resistance. His narratives are marked by a profound empathy for the marginalized—especially women and children—while simultaneously exploring the moral complexities and ideological divisions within the Palestinian national movement. Among these divisions, one of the most compelling is the **tension between generations**, as older Palestinians who endured the Nakba and early armed resistance often hold different perspectives from younger characters shaped by exile, diaspora, and disillusionment. Kanafani skillfully portrays how these generational gaps affect the continuity of resistance, revealing internal conflicts over methods, ideologies, and visions for the future. As Cooke (1996) notes, Kanafani's work often stages a "dialogue across generations," with younger characters questioning the past and seeking new forms of agency amid inherited trauma and ideological rigidity. This dynamic enriches the depiction of resistance, not as a monolith, but as a contested and evolving process within Palestinian society.

This study seeks to examine Palestinian resistance as portrayed in a selection of Kanafani's short stories: *Paper from Ramleh*, *The Child Borrows His Uncle's Gun and Goes East to Safad*, *Dr. Qassim Talks to Eva About Mansour Who Has Arrived in Safad*, *The Child, His Father, and the Gun Go to the Citadel at Jaddin*, *Abu Hassan Ambushes an English Ambulance*, and *Guns in the Camp*. These works present a rich tapestry of resistance in its many forms: from the symbolic defiance of children to the political awakening of exiled intellectuals; from the grief of women who have lost loved ones to the physical confrontations with colonial forces. By analyzing these stories, the study aims to uncover how Kanafani's literature constructs and disseminates the ethos of resistance, and how it contributes to the broader discourse of decolonization, liberation, and cultural survival.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, as it aims to collect, analyze, and interpret rich narrative and visual data to gain deeper insights into a specific phenomenon. The objectives of qualitative research are broad in scope and emphasize the development of a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of a particular context, process, or belief—elements that are not easily captured through quantitative methods (Gay et al., 2006). In other words, this approach highlights the value of analyzing qualitative data in the form of words and images rather than numerical data (Hammersley in Silverman, 2000).

The primary data in this research consist of short stories written by Ghassan Kanafani, while secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, and credible online sources. Data collection was conducted through a library study, and the analysis was carried out using a close reading method. The interpretation of the texts was presented in sequence, beginning with the story *Paper from Ramleh* and concluding with *Guns in the Camp*.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Paper from Ramleh

The short story *Paper from Ramleh* begins with a haunting scene that starkly reveals the cruelty inflicted upon Palestinian civilians under occupation. The narrator, a nine-year-old boy, recounts being pulled away from his mother and forced by an Israeli soldier to stand on one leg in the scorching July sun, with his arms raised above his head (Kanafani, 37). Although the child poses no threat, he is publicly humiliated, becoming an object of power and domination. This act is more than personal aggression—it is a calculated performance of colonial authority over the most vulnerable segment of the population: children. Symbolically, this moment functions as an introduction to the broader theme of dehumanization, which permeates Kanafani's work and reflects the lived realities of Palestinians under military rule.

From a legal standpoint, this scene exemplifies a violation of international humanitarian law, particularly Article 24 of the Geneva Convention (<https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries>), which ensures the protection of children in armed conflict. The Convention stipulates that children must be provided with safeguards regarding their health, welfare, and education, especially in situations of occupation or displacement. Forcing a child into such a degrading position not only undermines these protections but also reflects the psychological warfare often used to subjugate entire communities through fear and humiliation.

The abuse does not end with children. Kanafani's narrative moves on to portray women subjected to similar degradation. One striking passage describes how Israeli soldiers snatch jewelry from Palestinian women, both old and young, treating them as objects rather than human beings. This action aligns with what Ilan Pappé (1996:201) identifies as a common pattern during the Nakba and subsequent military operations: the systemic stripping of Palestinian civilians of their personal property. Pappé notes that women, in particular, were often robbed of everything from jewelry and household items to clothing and money. These acts were not isolated incidents but part of a broader strategy of erasure—economic, cultural, and psychological.

Such treatment of women directly violates Article 27 of the Geneva Convention (<https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries>), which demands that women be protected from rape, enforced prostitution, and all forms of indecent assault. Yet, Kanafani's story and historical testimonies suggest that these protections were frequently ignored. By placing women's suffering at the forefront of his narrative, Kanafani emphasizes the gendered dimension of colonial violence, illustrating that the occupation's brutality does not discriminate by age or gender, but rather seeks to dominate every facet of Palestinian life.

Kanafani deepens the emotional and moral weight of the narrative through an especially disturbing episode in which an elderly Palestinian woman is physically assaulted and shot by an Israeli soldier. The narrator, a child, witnesses this horror unfold: he sees the woman kicked to the ground, bleeding from her face, and then fatally shot in the chest (Kanafani, 2000:39). The image of this brutal execution, told through the innocent eyes of a child, compounds the trauma and delivers a scathing critique of the militarized dehumanization inherent in colonial power.

This scene functions as both a literal account of violence and a symbolic moment in Kanafani's postcolonial critique. The old woman becomes a representation of Palestinian dignity, wisdom, and endurance—qualities violently rejected by the colonial forces. Her

murder, then, is not only an attack on an individual but an attack on the collective cultural memory of a people.

Kanafani's portrayal is further grounded in empirical evidence. Pappé (2006::245) recounts a chilling real-life case in which a twelve-year-old Palestinian girl was abducted, detained in a military facility in the Negev, and sexually assaulted for several days by a group of Israeli soldiers and then murdered. Despite the horrific nature of this crime, legal accountability was shockingly minimal: only one soldier received a two-year prison sentence, while the others received either lighter punishments or were not prosecuted at all. This episode, like many others, highlights the systemic failure of justice in the face of institutionalized violence and reveals the moral impunity often granted to occupying forces.

Such instances serve as more than historical documentation—they reveal the lived trauma experienced by Palestinian families and underline the larger ethical and political implications of ongoing occupation. Kanafani weaves these realities into his fiction to underscore how colonial violence is not only physical but also structural, psychological, and generational. The emotional toll on the Palestinian people is immense, and Kanafani does not shy away from showing how even the youngest members of society internalize these traumas.

This narrative approach also aligns with postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, who argues that colonial domination operates by dehumanizing the subject through both symbolic and physical violence. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004), Fanon contends that colonial regimes rely on psychological terror to maintain control, and the abuse of women and children serves as a brutal mechanism of that terror. Kanafani's story vividly illustrates this principle, exposing how power is enacted through domination of the most vulnerable bodies and reinforcing the message that no one is safe from the reach of occupation.

Finally, the repetition of violence in *Paper from Ramleh* serves to highlight a dangerous cycle of impunity. As Kanafani suggests—and as evidenced in both historical and current contexts—the absence of justice only emboldens perpetrators. When crimes go unpunished, or when judicial responses are insufficient, the structures of violence are reinforced rather than dismantled. The result is the normalization of abuse, the continuation of trauma, and the erosion of any meaningful standard of human rights.

In sum, *Paper from Ramleh* functions as both literary testimony and political indictment. Through the lens of a child narrator, Kanafani exposes the cruelty and injustice of Israeli colonial practices while invoking international legal standards to frame these acts as violations of humanitarian law. By combining personal narrative, historical resonance, and legal critique, Kanafani compels readers to confront the full spectrum of resistance—not only through armed struggle, but also through storytelling, memory, and the persistent demand for justice.

3.2. The Child Borrows His Uncle's Gun and Goes East to Safad

One of the primary catalysts for armed resistance in colonial contexts, as theorized by Frantz Fanon (2004), is the accumulation of violent injustices perpetrated by occupying forces. Fanon argues that colonialism breeds resistance as a natural and necessary response to sustained oppression, humiliation, and dispossession. In Ghassan Kanafani's short story *The Child Borrows His Uncle's Gun and Goes East to Safad*, this theoretical insight is vividly embodied in the figure of a young boy who embarks on a perilous journey, driven by a profound sense of patriotic duty.

The child protagonist undertakes an arduous trek from Majd al-Kurum to Safad, a distance that is symbolically and physically daunting. While modern maps estimate the trip as a 12-hour drive (Google Maps), the child makes this journey on foot and alone—an act that underscores his remarkable resilience and determination. His objective is singular and profound: to borrow a gun from his uncle in order to participate in the fight for Palestinian liberation. This decision, made in the face of tremendous personal risk, highlights not only his courage but also his political awareness and emotional maturity, which far exceed his age.

The literal difficulty of the terrain is articulated in a striking line from the story: “The path between Majd al-Kurum and Safad is so rocky that even the goats find it difficult. A child like you will die in the thorns before he gets halfway there” (Kanafani, 2000:47). On the surface, this quote emphasizes the physical challenges of the journey, but on a deeper level, it serves as an allegory for the broader Palestinian struggle for freedom. The rugged path represents the treacherous road to liberation—a road paved with pain, sacrifice, and uncertainty. That a child chooses to walk this path alone highlights Kanafani’s belief in the moral clarity and commitment of youth, who, despite their physical vulnerability, often exhibit the greatest resolve in moments of crisis.

In Kanafani’s literary universe, children are not passive witnesses or symbolic innocents; they are active agents of history and resistance. The child’s decision to fight, even at the cost of his life, reflects a deeply rooted sense of national consciousness—one forged not through ideological indoctrination, but through lived experience. This aligns with the concept of child patriotism, which refers to a form of political loyalty that arises directly from encounters with violence, loss, and dispossession. As Allan (2014) notes, such patriotism is not theoretical but embodied, cultivated through the everyday realities of occupation.

The story also reflects the principle of *sumud*—a uniquely Palestinian concept of steadfastness in the face of adversity. Sumud is more than mere survival; it is a moral posture of unwavering commitment to homeland and identity, often expressed through seemingly small but profoundly meaningful acts. The child’s journey is a powerful illustration of this ethos. His struggle is not framed in terms of political strategy or military logic but in terms of emotional loyalty, familial duty, and inherited resistance.

The emotional climax of the story is encapsulated in the boy’s statement: “*If I die, Hisam will return it to you. I know he’s there and I’ll get him to do it.*” (Kanafani, 2000:49). These words reveal the child’s profound acceptance of mortality. He fully understands the risks involved in his mission and prepares for the possibility of death—not with despair, but with a sense of responsibility. By entrusting his friend Hisam to return the borrowed gun, he demonstrates both a deep sense of honor and an understanding of resistance as a collective endeavor that extends beyond individual survival.

This moment also carries symbolic weight. The gun, in this context, is not merely a weapon; it represents the continuation of struggle, the transmission of resistance from one person to another, from one generation to the next. The child does not seek glory or martyrdom, but rather, continuity—he ensures that the tool of resistance, once borrowed, will be returned, respected, and perhaps used again. In this way, Kanafani reframes the Palestinian resistance not as a temporary burst of anger, but as a sustained and intergenerational fight for dignity and liberation.

From a postcolonial perspective, the child’s agency challenges dominant narratives that often portray colonized people—especially children—as helpless victims. Kanafani’s narrative

directly confronts this trope by offering a counter-image: a child who, shaped by violence and occupation, refuses to remain passive and instead asserts his right to fight for his homeland. His resistance is not fueled by ideology alone but by an intimate understanding of loss, family loyalty, and national identity.

In conclusion, *The Child Borrows His Uncle's Gun and Goes East to Safad* is a profound literary articulation of the psychological and emotional roots of Palestinian resistance. Through the lens of a child's journey, Kanafani demonstrates how colonial violence produces not just trauma but also resilience, political consciousness, and moral clarity. The story serves as both a tribute to youthful courage and a powerful reminder that the spirit of resistance often germinates in the most unlikely hearts, fueled by collective memory, personal sacrifice, and an unshakable commitment to justice.

3.3.Dr. Qassim Talks to Eva About Mansour Who Has Arrived in Safad

The Israeli colonial power is not only present in the form of conventional military, but also disguised in the form of ordinary, unsuspecting “civilians”—restaurant, hotel, and shop owners. Ghassan Kanafani rhetorically asks: “*Who suspects...?*” — inviting readers to realize the slippery and systemic infiltration and disguise of colonial power. It can be seen in the following quote:

Edel Mayberg, Edel . . . Edel . . . Who suspects that he's a member of the Haganah? And that his hotels and restaurants and houses are filled with arms? Or the foreigner Mr. Bar, the one who looks out at people from behind the glass counter and whose lace looks like a chicken's face, who would bet that he's a military officer who procures weapons and draws up plan (68)

This shows that the Zionist colonization of Palestine can be categorized as a structural and cultural colonization: not only controlling the land militarily, but also forming a new socio-economic face that looks civil, but actually contains a colonialism project. As Edward Said said, modern colonialism often uses a “neutral face” as a guise of domination (Said, 1992). Hence, the colonial tried to conceal their hidden agenda by utilizing some civilian institutions in order to mingle with the target more easily and to get rid people of any suspicion toward their evil plan.

This quote also depicts the reality of Zionist colonization in Palestine, which not only uses military force overtly, but also infiltrates civilian life. Names such as Edel Mayberg and Mr. Bar reflect figures who appear to be ordinary citizens or common people—hotel, restaurant, and merchant owners—but are actually part of the military structure of the Haganah founded in 1920 and its literal meaning is defense in Hebrew (Pappé, 2006:40). It was the primary Zionist underground militia based in Palestine that crafted the plan for the demolition of Palestinian rural and urban areas systematically and other atrocities toward Palestinian people (Pappé, 2006:14-16). They were also complicit in other systemic human crimes.

The statement that “*hotels and restaurants and houses are filled with arms*” shows how the daily lives of Palestinians are contaminated by the presence of weapons, symbolizing the militarization of civilian space and the involvement of civil society in the colonial project. This indicates how Zionist colonization operates with a complex and hidden strategy, not just a frontal military invasion.

The physical description of Mr. Bar's face as “looks like a chicken's face” has a deep symbolic meaning. The chicken face is often associated with weakness or fear, but here it is

used as a form of satire on deceptive appearances. Although he appears ordinary and non-threatening, Mr. Bar plays an important role as a military officer who regulates weapons procurement and strategy.

The chicken face can also be seen as a metaphor for the hypocrisy of colonialism—it appears weak and harmless on the surface, but underneath it hides systemic military power and aggression. “Behind the glass counter” emphasizes the social and power distance that separates the occupier from the Palestinian people, constructing an image of the occupier as hidden and difficult to recognize.

3.4. The Child, His Father, and the Gun Go to the Citadel at Jaddin

In Ghassan Kanafani's short stories, resistance to colonialism is not always manifested in the form of armed action. One interesting form is social resistance that is manifested in everyday actions. The character of Hajj Abbas in *The Child, His Father, and the Gun Go to the Citadel at Jaddin* is a symbol of this form of non-military resistance. In one part it is told:

Hajj Abbas was nonetheless eager to protect his personal connections with everyone. He visited them and kept in touch. No one was better than he at giving wedding presents. He gave his blessing on all the new births and his condolences when anyone died. He read the newspapers aloud to those who couldn't read, and would go to Acre to get the doctor if there were anyone sick (Kanafani, 2000:85)

From this quote, Hajj Abbas emerges as a central figure who maintains the social network in his community. He maintains personal relationships, shows concern for important moments in people's lives, and becomes a liaison for information and medical assistance. Such characteristics play a key role in maintaining social cohesion in the midst of an occupational situation that systematically seeks to weaken local Palestinian communities.

His actions reflect the concept of everyday resistance put forward by James C. Scott (1985), namely a form of resistance that emerges from the daily social practices of oppressed people. In this case, Hajj Abbas does not take up arms, but he refuses to submit to the destruction of the social structure that is the target of colonialism. He reads newspapers to residents who cannot read - this is not only an informative act, but also a form of resistance against the ignorance that is often maintained by the colonial system. He is willing to travel to Acre for medical treatment - an act that emphasizes the value of collectivity and social responsibility.

Thus, the figure of Hajj Abbas represents a strong form of civil patriotism. He maintains the survival and values of the community as a form of cultural and social resilience. In the context of the Palestinian conflict, this role becomes very important, because resistance against colonialism is not only carried out with weapons, but also by maintaining the existence and dignity of the community.

As emphasized by Edward Said (1992), the Palestinian struggle is also a struggle to maintain narrative, identity, and existence in the face of forces that try to erase it. A figure like Hajj Abbas, with his concern for the people around him, is a persistent and meaningful guardian of the Palestinian humanitarian narrative. He is the embodiment of a collective survival strategy, which unites the values of humanity, communality, and resistance in everyday life.

Thus, the analysis of this figure enriches our understanding that in Kanafani's work, resistance against colonialism can take the form of small, repetitive and social actions, which slowly but surely maintain the pulse of Palestinian society.

3.5. Abu Al Hassan Ambushes an English Ambulance

Your brother's in Haifa, running around with Jewish women. I've just dragged him out of there. He's an even more disobedient dog than you are, you wretch . . . and now you . . ."

The above quote reveals the emotional and ideological tensions between father and son in the context of the occupation of Palestine. The father's remarks not only reprimand his children's personal behavior, but also contain deeper layers of meaning, related to identity, nationalism, and cultural conflict under colonialism.

On the surface, this appears to be a father's anger at a son who is seen as violating family norms. However, more broadly, this anger reflects the anxiety of the older generation of Palestinians about social change and the penetration of Israeli colonial culture that is seen as threatening the purity of national identity. The son who "hangs out with Jewish women" becomes a symbol of moral and ideological crisis: the body and personal relationships become the arena for a struggle for meaning between loyalty and betrayal.

The use of words such as "disobedient dog" and "wretch" shows how the rhetoric of patriarchal power operates in a society oppressed by colonialism. The father assumes the position of guardian of national honor and head of the family, and tries to discipline his children's behavior with harsh, controlling, and emotionally oppressive language. In this context, the family becomes a miniature of the state: when the state is in crisis, power relations within the family become repressive.

Furthermore, this quote shows the tension between the older and younger generations in Palestinian society. The older generation, who have suffered from displacement and colonization, tend to maintain a rigid and exclusive national identity. In contrast, the younger generation faces a more complex world full of identity choices, but each choice is interpreted politically—even personal relationships cannot be free from ideological judgment.

Kanafani, through this narrative, voices the failure not only of the colonizers, but also of the internal structure of society that suppresses personal freedom in the name of nationalism. He shows that colonial trauma does not only come from outside (from the Zionists), but also develops from within—through social pressure that burdens the younger generation with a heavy moral burden and collective expectations.

Thus, this quote represents the multidimensional conflict in Palestinian society: between personal freedom and social control, between national identity and personal relationships, between the history of colonization and an unclear future. Kanafani gently, yet firmly, reminds us that the Palestinian struggle does not only occur on the battlefield, but also within the families, languages, bodies, and hearts of Palestinians themselves.

3.6. Guns in the Camp

Ghassan Kanafani, through his short story *Guns in the Camp*, symbolically presents a new dimension of the Palestinian struggle by placing a small child as the center of attention in the following scene:

There he is! He's the one lifting the rifle. Do you see him?" So as not to burst out laughing, Umm Saad trilled again loud and joyously. The clapping continued while the child waved his gun in the face of the men crowded about. His forehead shone in the light of the setting sun, when suddenly an old man who was sitting on the edge of the wall looked at Abu Saad and said: "If only it had been like this from the beginning, nothing would have happened to us." (133)

This scene contains a strong symbolic charge: a child raising a weapon in the midst of a crowd of adults not only shows the role of the younger generation in the Palestinian struggle, but also illustrates the collective psychological transformation of a society that was initially passive to conscious and militant. In this context, the child becomes a symbol of hope as well as the continuation of resistance.

In Kanafani's works, children are often presented as representatives of a generation that has not been contaminated by political interests or a sense of defeat. The child in this quote stands in the midst of the crowd, raising his small weapon, and is greeted with applause and cheers. Umm Saad's cheers are not just a mother's joy, but a symbol of social acceptance of a change in attitude: that the struggle is no longer postponed, even by the youngest generation.

The sunlight shining on the child's forehead is a glorifying visual image — he is presented as a figure with a promising future. In this case, Kanafani constructs the child not only as a victim of war, but as an active actor in the national struggle. This is a form of counter-narrative to the stereotype of Palestinian children as passive and helpless.

The weapon held by the child signifies a shift from a narrative of resignation to active resistance. But more importantly is the statement of an old man: "*If only it had been like this from the beginning, nothing would have happened to us.*" This sentence implies collective regret for the delay of the previous generation in taking up arms to defend the homeland. This is where Kanafani criticizes his own generation — that colonization occurs not only because of external forces, but also because of internal weakness in taking decisive action.

In the context of postcolonial discourse, this is a form of ideological introspection, namely the recognition that oppression can continue if there is no awareness and courage to actively resist. So, the child who is now holding a weapon is a symbol of an effort to atone for this historical failure.

This scene also illustrates how the values of struggle are symbolically passed down from one generation to the next. Children who take up arms not in an aggressive context, but in a moment of celebration and community pride, show that resistance has become part of social identity. In this case, weapons are not just a tool of combat, but a symbol of courage, self-esteem, and commitment to the homeland.

This is in line with Edward Said's (1992) idea that the Palestinian struggle is a struggle to maintain existence, identity, and history. By placing children as central figures in the scene, Kanafani emphasizes that the struggle does not only belong to the past, but must be inherited, maintained, and continued.

4. CONCLUSION

Through a close reading of selected short stories by Ghassan Kanafani, this article has revealed the multifaceted nature of Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation. Kanafani does not depict resistance as a monolithic or purely militant endeavor. Instead, his stories

present a wide spectrum of resistance—ranging from armed struggle and symbolic defiance to personal sacrifices and everyday acts of perseverance.

In *Paper from Ramleh*, the dehumanization of Palestinian women and children serves as a stark critique of colonial brutality, while figures like Abu Utsman embody sacrificial patriotism through material and familial contributions to the struggle. *The Child Borrows His Uncle's Gun and Goes East to Safad* and *Guns in the Camp* place child characters at the center of resistance narratives, symbolizing both vulnerability and unshakable national consciousness. The inclusion of these young figures challenges dominant images of children as passive victims and instead frames them as active inheritors of the national struggle.

Meanwhile, *Dr. Qassim Talks to Eva About Mansour Who Has Arrived in Safad* and *The Child, His Father, and the Gun Go to the Citadel at Jaddin* illuminate the invisible networks of colonial power—embedded in civilian facades, economic structures, and family dynamics. Kanafani exposes how colonialism infiltrates not only territory but also language, identity, and interpersonal relationships. Figures like Hajj Abbas stand as icons of social resistance, maintaining communal cohesion, dignity, and identity amidst political and cultural erasure.

Importantly, Kanafani's work highlights the internal contradictions and generational conflicts within Palestinian society itself, such as in *Abu al-Hassan Ambushes an English Ambulance*, where rigid nationalism clashes with individual freedom. These tensions serve as a reminder that resistance must also contend with internal power structures and inherited traumas.

Ultimately, Ghassan Kanafani's literary portrayals of resistance function as both testimony and tool: preserving memory, provoking conscience, and inspiring continued defiance. His stories do more than recount Palestinian suffering—they reclaim space for Palestinian agency, offering a nuanced and humanized vision of struggle in the face of historical dispossession.

REFERENCES

- Allan, Diana. 2014. *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile*. Stanford University Press.
- Barghouti, Omar. 2021. "BDS: Nonviolent, Globalized Palestinian Resistance to Israel's Settler Colonialism and Apartheid." <https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2021.1906067>
- Cambridge Dictionary. *Resistance*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary>
- Carpi, Estella. 2016. Book Review. *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile* by Diana Allan. DOI: 10.1353/anq.2016.0034
- Cheurfa, Hiyem. 2020. "Testifying Graphically: Bearing Witness to a Palestinian Childhood in Leila Abdelrazaq's *Baddawi*." <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2020.1741185>
- Child, Peter. 1999. *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Cooke, M. 1996. *Women and the war story*. University of California Press
- Dana, Karam. 2016. *Confronting injustice beyond borders: Palestinian identity and nonviolent resistance*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1229625>
- Fanon, Frantz. 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. 2006. *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*.

Resisting Erasure: Representations of Palestinian Struggle in Ghassan Kanafani's Short Stories

- Ghabra, Haneen Shafeeq. 2020. Performative communication: Palestinian resistance, hip-hop and cyberspace performances <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2020.1832415>
- Hamidi, Luthfi. 2014. Edward Said: The Postcolonial Theory and The Literature of Colonization. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/328024387.pdf>
- Harlow, Barbara. 1987. *Resistance Literature*. New York: Methuen.
- Källstig, Amanda & Carl Death. 2020. Laughter, resistance and ambivalence in Trevor Noah's stand-up comedy: returning mimicry as mockery. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1743191>
- Kanafani, Ghassan. 2000. *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*. (Harlow, Barbara & Riley, Karen E, Trans.). London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
- Pappé, Ilan. 1996. *The Making of the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1947–1951*. I.B. Tauris
- Pappé, Ilan. 2006. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.
- Said, Edward. 1977. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin
- Said, E. W. 1992. *The Question of Palestine* (2nd ed.). Vintage Books.
- Scott, James C. 1987. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press.
- Seidel, Timothy. 2019. Neoliberal Developments, National Consciousness, and Political Economies of Resistance in Palestine. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2019.1585921>
- Silverman, D. 2000. *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. SAGE Publications.
- The Geneva Conventions. "Law and Policy." International Committee of the Red Cross. <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries>