

Fifth session in the seminar series "Urbicide in Gaza:
Spatial Violence, Reconstruction, and Resistance"

"Topographies of Memory and Reconstruction: The Case of Syria"

Dr. Ammar Azzouz – Lecturer and Research Fellow at the School of
Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

Date: Wednesday, November 4, 2026

Time: 17:00 (Jerusalem Time)

Location: Virtual – a Zoom link will be sent upon registration

Moderator:

Dr. Himmat Zoubi, Mada al-Carmel – The Arab Center for Applied Social Research

- **The seminar will be held in Arabic, with simultaneous interpretation in English.**

Mada al-Carmel – The Arab Center for Applied Social Research is pleased to invite you to the fifth session in its seminar series "Urbicide in Gaza: Spatial Violence, Reconstruction, and Resistance." The project emerged from an effort to understand the targeting of the built environment as an attack on the conditions of collective life and the possibility for its continuation and reproduction. Following previous sessions that examined forms of spatial violence, demolition, and erasure, as well as practices of steadfastness, resistance, and the reproduction of space in the Palestinian context, the upcoming session shifts to an exploration of reconstruction as a social and political process, as opposed to a merely technical response to destruction.

The session is intended to reconnect the discussion of Palestine to the broader Arab space, drawing upon the historical, social, cultural, and political bonds that link it to other societies in the region. The dialogue centers on people and their experiences in confronting destruction and its aftereffects, along with their efforts to reclaim life, rebuild their environment, and restore social relations, while remaining cognizant of fundamental differences among the political and historical contexts that generated this destruction. The discussion will continue in the closing workshop of the project, which will be dedicated to the reconstruction of Gaza, emphasizing the role of its inhabitants and their visions for its future. Details to be announced at a later date.

Summary of the Presentation

Many towns and villages throughout the Arab region are experiencing the ravages of war and destruction, including those in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and the Yemen. Yet, despite the urgent need for recovery and reconstruction, local communities encounter profound dilemmas during the rebuilding phase: How can recovery take place while the affected societies are still bleeding? Who sets the priorities for reconstruction and funds related projects? How can the participation of local communities be guaranteed, to preclude their marginalization? And how can the reconstruction process preserve what memory remains of these towns and villages, as well as their tangible and intangible heritage? In this dialogue, we will address some of these questions by focusing on the case of Syria, while highlighting the need to reflect on these issues in a way that promotes the exchange of knowledge between countries across the Arab world.

Dr. Ammar Azzouz is a lecturer and research fellow at the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. He studied architecture at the University of Homs (formerly Al-Baath University) before completing master's and doctoral degrees in the United Kingdom. He is the author of the book *Domicide: Architecture, War and the Destruction of Home in Syria*, published in 2023 by Bloomsbury. Dr. Azzouz has written on cultural heritage, reconstruction policies, and the destruction of memory and cities in a wide range of academic journals and in media outlets such as *Al-Jumhuriya*, *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Guardian*.

Dr. Himmat Zoubi is an urban sociologist and a research associate at Mada al-Carmel, where she directs the project "Urbicide in Gaza: Spatial Violence, Reconstruction, and Resistance." She holds a PhD in sociology and is a postdoctoral fellow in the Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe (EUME) program at the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin. She is also a senior fellow at the Institute for Palestine Studies. Her research focuses on cities and urbanization in settler-colonial contexts, with a special interest in cultural cities and the Palestinian and Arab creative classes. Her work has also addressed feminist issues in Palestine.

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