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Tourism as a Colonial Practice: Pinkwashing and the Israeli Pride Parade

Case Study

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Abstract

In this study, I aim to deconstruct the existing relationship between colonialism and tourism. In describing the frameworks, structures and power relations that shape colonialism politically, historically, economically, and culturally, I propose that tourism is a colonial practice. As a case study, I examine the Israeli pride parade in the city of Tel Aviv, and its connection to the concept of tourism as a colonial practice through its expressions within the Israeli pinkwashing policies. To this end, I analyze various texts, photos, videos, articles, and Israeli advertisement campaigns to explicate this relationship, relying on postcolonial and gender studies.

Key words: Colonialism, Israel, Palestine, tourism industry, homosexuality, homonationalism, pinkwashing, pride parade.

Introduction

During the last decade, the State of Israel has become a prominent global tourist destination in what has become known as gay/ queer¹ tourism, as tens of thousands of gay, bisexual, and transgender tourists visit every year in June during the annual pride parade in Tel Aviv. This inflation in gay tourism is due to Israeli 'pinkwashing' policies. It is a label that many anti-occupation activists and academics began using in recent years to describe Israel's, and many of its other informal institutions', exploitation of LGBTQ+ rights to cover up its colonial practices against the Palestinian people, and to normalize its colonial settlement system and apartheid policies. These policies are based on the convergence between the interests of the Israeli tourism industry seeking material profit and the interests of Israeli governments seeking to change their image, especially in the West, from the occupying state or a war zone to a modern state that preserves rights and provides freedoms. On the other hand, local and international Palestinian activists and movements are actively working to deconstruct the processes and discourse of promoting LGBTQ+ rights adopted by Israel, linking them with the nature of the Israeli system as one that portrays itself as modern liberal, open, accepting, and one that has achieved equality, while resisting this discourse and exposing its falsity and the political exploitation of sexual pluralism to cover up the crimes of the occupation and its violent nature. In this case, the gender struggle meets with the political struggle to confront the Israeli use of the "gay rights card", both internationally and locally, towards Palestinians who live different sexual experiences.

In this study, I discuss the relationship of gay/ queer tourism to colonialism and capitalism (or economic profit) through pinkwashing and the Israeli pride parade, and address models of resistance to pinkwashing policies and rhetoric. The research raises questions about what images and messages Israeli pinkwashing promotes, about how the pride parade in Israel is related to the perpetuation of the colonial discourse and reality through gay/ queer tourism, and about the identity of anti-pinkwashing voices.

In this study, I proceed from the hypothesis that the Israeli pink washing discourse used through the pride parade in Tel Aviv, which annually attracts tens of thousands of tourists from around the world, is related to a global phenomenon, namely the relationship between the gay/ queer tourism industry in postcolonial countries with homonationalism and homonormativity, which perpetuated inequality and recreated a new colonial logic through the practices of tourists. This relationship is connected to transformations within

1. Queer: A term used to describe sexual identities that are different from the culturally and socially dominant gender identity, namely straight/ heterosexual. The word 'queer' in Arabic means "abnormal and deviant from the norm" or atypical. Later, the queer political movement redefined the word to give it a positive, politically resistance meaning.

capitalism that have changed its previous structure based on heterosexuality to include queer sexual identities. This converges with the dominance of the homonationalism and homonormativity discourse prevailing in western countries such as Europe, the United States and Canada, from which most visiting tourists in Tel-Aviv's pride parade are from, and where the Israeli pinkwashing discourse seeks to achieve political goals usually directed with the aim of polishing the image of the occupation.

The importance of this study lies in the fact that it examines a current topic and a newly formed situation that continues to form - the Israeli pride parade and pinkwashing, through which the State of Israel succeeds in presenting an image of itself as a modern liberal state that is open to gays and different genders, to cover up its crimes by attracting tens of thousands through gay/queer tourism annually. This study seeks to provide a different analysis and reading of this issue based on feminist, queer and other theories related to postcolonial studies, and to further deconstruct the Israeli policy strategy through its successful pinkwashing propaganda on a global scale.

The importance of the study stems from the great lack of in-depth studies on this topic in Arabic, at a time when there are many discussions about it in universities and the Western media, and in the presence of a local Palestinian and international critical current fighting the Israeli pinkwashing, which this study aims to introduce. Based on this, there is a need to link the local research sample (the pride parade in Tel Aviv) with the literature I am addressing in this study related to tourism, colonialism, homonormativity and homonationalism, to find out the reasons for the success of the Israeli pinkwashing.

Gay Tourism and Postcolonialism

Studies of colonialism and postcolonialism (a set of theories, political and intellectual approaches that investigate societies that have been subjected to colonization) are of importance in understanding the prevailing discourse and analyzing many issues related to sexuality and its connection to gender, race, and class.

To answer the research question and read the sample of the study reviewed from a broader perspective, I first touch on the relationship of tourism with colonialism and postcolonialism, as an introduction to understanding the relationship between gay tourism and Israeli pinkwashing. I take examples from several places around the world that reflect different experiences, but they intersect in shaping the concept of tourism as a colonial practice.

In Jamaica Kincaid's famous work, *A Small Place*, which combines memoirs and fiction, she addresses and criticizes colonialism and the postcolonial state that arises in her country of Antigua, a small island between the Americas, the writer tells of her personal anger at the white male tourist that she still views and treats as a colonizer.

This text, according to Kincaid, reflects the ugliness and logic of colonialism. The island of Antigua was a former British colony, and a rest stop for ships bringing slaves from Africa to the United States. Kincaid talks about the white American/ European man who comes to the island in the post-colonial period as a tourist. She claims that the new industry of colonization is tourism, which cannot be separated from original colonialism. In the past, the colonizer came looking for sugar, but today he comes looking for sun and beach through tourist trips. For her, tourism today is a modern face of colonial history, and she sees the tourist as an heir to this history, because if he was not an heir, he would not have been able to be a tourist. The visiting tourist believes and acts as though he is contributing to civilizing and developing the destination country by spending his money through tourism, and by doing so he uses the same logic that claims that colonialism aims to improve the conditions of the country and its civilization.²

We witness what Kincaid speaks of in other examples around the world, and it is not an isolated case. The Republic of Mauritius, an island nation located in the Indian Ocean, which experienced periods of Dutch, French and then British colonization, today has a tourism industry based on the reworking of colonial fantasies to attract tourists.

Researcher Uma Kothari discusses the state of the Republic of Mauritius and the idea of harnessing the colonial imagination for a tourism agenda by researching luxury hotels on the island, designed in a style that resembles colonial sugar plantations and which reproduce the colonial presence today. These hotels are aimed at the middle class of rich western countries to provide their desire for luxury, a warm tropical atmosphere, and the "exotic". All entertainment services are available in these beach-side hotels, including swimming pools, playgrounds, restaurants, nightclubs, bars, internet networks and international satellite channels, isolating hotel guests from the "outside world", which is usually portrayed by hotel staff as a dangerous world full of diseases and thefts in order to make the tourist spend most of his time and money at the hotel so as not to get out of it and communicate with the locals. Even the way hotels are built with their beach-view terraces creates an illusion and a fantasy about the place that is different from the reality of the country. This illusion produced by the tourism industry, behind which there are global companies, tourism and advertising agencies, travel agents and numerous services, reproduces the colonial presence through the process of segregation.³

2. Kincaid, Jamaica. (1988). **A small place**. London: Macmillan.

3. Kothari, Uma. (2015). Reworking colonial imaginaries in post-colonial tourist enclaves. **Tourist Studies**, 15(3). Pp. 248-266.

Mass tourism based on bringing as many people as possible to a particular tourist area with the aim of economic profit is often seen as an expression of modernity. Walid Hazboun discusses this issue by studying the case of the beaches of Tunisia and Spain, how beach tourism was formed in the Mediterranean, and its connection with geopolitical factors that imposed cultural and architectural expressions of modernity inappropriate for local contexts. Hazboun links the way of understanding tourism as a cultural expression of modernity in the Mediterranean countries, which began in the sixties and seventies, to the processes of developing tourist beaches according to Western standards, which required the replacement of the characteristics of the place and its local concepts. The development of tourism in the Mediterranean countries has not been based on the history and concept of tourism in its local context and in a way that does not suit it, even the development of local forms of tourism has not been carried out and the residents of these countries have abandoned the development process.⁴

Author Jacqui Alexandre discusses the relationship between tourism and colonialism by addressing the issue of the white gay man tourism, specifically meaning educated middle-class or wealthy European-American, to countries outside the mother colony and which were previously colonized. Alexander deconstructs the nature of this tourism, in which a white man usually comes through a special gay cruise that sails the seas and stops at different stations in countries in search of sexual relations with locals, to which there is a special attraction as they are "different". This process is similar to old colonialism, in which the white man came in search of land, raw materials, slaves, and most importantly, new markets, in service of the existing capitalist system. Alexander bases this analogy on the fact that the capitalist system, in essence, is always looking for new markets, which motivates this system to include new gender identities and create a market for them, and this tourism lays within this framework; hence, the white man is no longer only heterosexual as gay men with a financial surplus also look to relax and rest on vacation. A new gay capital and purchasing power emerges and is expressed through tourism, which in turn has created a new sexual desire that is the basis of a gay map, that classifies countries and regions that are safe and recommended for gay tourism, and those that are not recommended and unsafe.⁵ This map is nothing but a neo-colonial map, in which the world is divided according to the desires of the white man, the same old colonial logic that was "exploring" the world and classifying it for the sake of its capitalist interests.⁶

4. Hazboun, Waleed. (2009). Modernity on the beach: A postcolonial reading from southern shores. **Tourist Studies**, 9(3). Pp. 203-222.

5. Look for example at the [Spartacus Gay Map](#).

6. Alexander, Jacqui M. (2005). **Pedagogies of crossing: Meditations on feminism, sexual politics, memory, and the sacred**. Durham: Duke University Press.

Alicia Simpson discusses the effects of global queer tourism, specifically when a white middle-class Western homosexual from the United States enters a country like Brazil and seeks to determine the impact that gays from the United States have left on masculinity in the city of Rio de Janeiro, relying on queer imperialism theory, according to which the tourist becomes a colonizer, and the local Brazilian becomes colonized. Simpson examines the Rio de Janeiro Carnival as a case study, where the tourism industry, through images, language and advertising, shapes sexual attraction towards Brazilian males and reproduces dominant Western ideals. The Rio de Janeiro festival constituted a consecration of the existing power structures by adopting a certain style of masculinity consumed through the neoliberal capitalist tourist industry and creating a sexual attraction towards Brazilians.⁷

In his book *Caribbean Pleasure Industry*, which includes research on local issues related to gender politics and sexuality, Mark Padilla also referred to the colonial history and the current prosperity of the tourism industry in the Caribbean islands. Padilla takes the Dominican Republic as a case study of a tourism economy based on creating needs - such as comfort, pleasure, and escape from everyday life in rich countries - by exploring spectrums of identity, affiliation, and same-sex attraction, and the practices of working-class and poor Dominican men working in sex as a profession by practicing it with foreign and local men and women without identifying themselves as gay or bisexual.⁸

There are many examples from around the world. Take, for example, the island of Barbados (where David Murray studies a hotel managed by a British man who promotes it as a gay tourism site, and directs tourists to places where they can have sex with young local men),⁹ in addition to Dana Collins' study about gay expatriates living in the city of Manila in the Philippines and the space they have created for normalizing Western sexual identity.¹⁰

7. Simpson, Alycia. (2013). Flirting with desire: An analysis of masculinity through Rio de Janeiro's carnival as influenced by Queer tourism and imperialism. [GWAR](#), 305(02).

8. Decena, Carlos U. (2010). Caribbean pleasure industry: Tourism, sexuality, and AIDS in the Dominican Republic by Mark Padilla. [American Ethnologist](#), 37(1). Pp. 167-168.

9. Murray, David AB. (2007). The civilized /homosexual: Travel talk and the project of Fay identity. [Sexualities](#), 10(1). Pp. 49-60.

10. Collins, Dana. (2009). "We're There and Queer" homonormative mobility and lived experience among gay expatriates in Manila. [Gender & Society](#), 23(4). Pp. 465-493.

Homonormativism and Homonationalism

For a deeper understanding of the gay/ queer tourism industry, I address two central concepts, 'homonormativity' and 'homonationalism', which are directly related to the subject of study and are considered the product of critical thought and studies within feminist, queer and postcolonial studies.¹¹ Radical intellectual differences emerged within the LGBTQ+ movement, which works towards civil equality (including the issues of legalizing same-sex marriage and allowing gays to serve in the army as central issues), and the critical current of this dominant approach of the LGBTQ+ movement proposed by the atypical movement influenced by queer feminism, which believes in intersectionality, rejects the fragmentation of repression, and combines class, race and gender.

The concept of homonormativity, which means the gender policy of neoliberalism, is represented by the standards that homosexuals should adopt in their struggle or as principles. Lisa Duggan described it as the homosexual mentality that does not confront heteronormative assumptions and institutions but adheres to it and maintains it.¹² Duggan's argument on the imposition of homonormativity within the overall framework of a normative society based on heterosexuality, links the class dimension to the discussion. Homonormativity reflects the ways in which the homosexual middle class needs to occupy a safe place within the neoliberal system.¹³

The term 'normative heterosexuality' is derived from a critique of homosexual movements prior to the decades-long domination of a single gender approach over society in its institutions and dealings, the heterosexual orientation. The term 'homonormativity' is a critique within the queer movement of the dominance of the same logic of normative heterosexuality over the logic of the Western gay movement. Michael Warner was the first to use the term 'homonormativity' in the first works of queer theory where he discussed how heteronormativity reinforces social institutions and policies that assume that the nature of people is heterosexual, and that sex and gender are binary - male / female, man/ woman - and he argued that this culture fosters a climate that discriminates against the LGBTQ+ community in issues such as marriage, work, and taxes.¹⁴

11. Postcolonial studies are interested in deconstructing the relationship of power common during and after the colonial era in various fields of research (literature, sociology, anthropology, art, history, feminist studies, psychology, etc.). Notable thinkers who have written about it include Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and others.

12. Duggan, Lisa. (2002). The new homonormativity. In Castronovo, Russ, & Nelsom, Dana (Eds.). **Materializing democracy: Toward a revitalized cultural politics** (pp. 175-194). Durham: Duke University Press.

13. Ibid.

14. Warner, Michael (Ed.). (1993). **Fear of a Queer planet: Queer politics and social theory** (Vol. 6). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

The term 'homonationalism' was first used by Jasbir K. Puar to describe the processes in which the authorities and the LGBTQ+ movement share the same positions to justify racism, xenophobia, and transphobia, especially towards Muslims, as political positions are formed to use sexual diversity and LGBTQ+ rights against immigrants. These positions are increasingly adopted by far-right movements and white Americans. In her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, published in 2007, Puar discusses a central idea on how to partially and functionally exploit gay rights in a way that ultimately leads to the promotion of intolerance, ignoring homophobia and the existence of large gaps in inequality within Western societies in general, by adopting gay rights as a general criterion of equality - a mistaken idea of equality - as one of these rights is the legalization of same-sex marriage, in order to evaluate the rest of the countries and peoples of the world according to this criterion. This is consistent with the attitudes of chauvinism towards those countries and peoples that have not legalized same-sex marriage, or that have not adopted the package of rights acquired for homosexuals in the West. These attitudes are often associated with Muslims.¹⁵

Tourism and the Israeli Colonial Project

The beginning of the Zionist settlement project in Palestine, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, represented a pivotal turning point for the Palestinians and their collective rights, since this project was able to achieve its goal of establishing a Jewish State in 1948, that State was founded on the ruins of the Palestinians through organized ethnic cleansing operations in order to occupy as much of Palestine as possible and evacuate it from the indigenous population. But what happened in 1948 was not the end of the realization of the dream of establishing a Jewish State, but a new, more institutionalized, and bloodier stage in the continuation of the colonial settlement project, the control of more land, and the establishment of a racist apartheid regime that violates human rights and international agreements and resolutions to this day.

Perhaps the research work done by the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, in his book "Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine", provides us with an accurate description of the steps taken by the Zionist movement to carry out ethnic cleansing operations in Palestine, to establish a national homeland for the Jews in the last days of the British Mandate on Palestine and after. Pappé believes that ethnic cleansing, defined as a crime against humanity, represents the deportation of the largest possible number of residents through mass expulsion by all available means, to evacuate a certain area in the context of legitimizing acts of

15. Puar, Jasbir K. (2007). **Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer times**. Durham: Duke University Press.

punishment and revenge, resulting in a refugee problem within a pre-prepared plan and strategy, essential to the overall Zionist movement strategy. Pappé refutes the Israeli version of what happened in 1948 as the expulsion of Palestinians was not a mass escape, but was a detailed plan developed by Ben Gurion in Tel-Aviv on March 10th, 1948. The Israeli occupation forces aimed at ethnically cleansing Palestine by instilling widespread fear; besieging and shelling villages and population centers; burning houses, property, and goods; expulsion; demolishing houses and facilities; and planting mines among the rubble to prevent the expelled residents from returning to their homes.¹⁶

We cannot understand the beginning of the Zionist movement's enterprise in isolation from the surroundings in which it originated; in essence, Zionism is a movement with European roots, in thought and practice. Zionism did not form within a single group of Jews gathered in a specific geographical area with similar socio-economic conditions, such as those in which the European nationalist movements arose at that time. The Jewish elites, effectively integrated into the European imperialist capitalist system, played the missionary role of this movement, and presented themselves as an intermediary between the dominant groups in the imperialist centers and the Jewish communities, taking advantage of the tense situation between the Jews and their surroundings to offer Zionism as a solution to the problems by recruiting, displacing and settling Jews in locations that serve the interests of the dominant capitalist groups. Therefore, apart from all the Zionist claims about Jewish nationalism, the historical right to Palestine and the practical achievements made by Zionism in this regard, all these would not have formed as a viable phenomenon outside the cadence of the Middle Eastern question and the imperialist struggle over the region.¹⁷

Israeli leaders have always been proud that Israel has established the only democratic system in the Middle East, but Azmi Bishara believes that Israeli democracy is problematic, because of the type of settlement culture and its relationship with democracy as a Republican state united by settler values such as reverence for security, military service, military values and ease of spreading a sense of threat; the Israeli security doctrine states that there is no choice for society and the state in Israel but war and constant preparation for it, that is, staying ready. Bishara notices another problem in Israeli democracy, that of citizenship and the Jewishness of the State. This problem is twofold: first, the Jewishness of the State is based on the lack of separation between religion and nationality, and thus leads to the lack of separation between religion and the State. Secondly, the State is not

16. Pappé, Ilan. (2007). **The ethnical cleansing of Palestine** (Arabic translation by Ahmad Khalifa). Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies.

17. Shoufani, Elias. (2003). **Summary of the political history of Palestine: from the dawn of history to 1949**, (third edition). Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies.

only Jewish by virtue of the Jewish majority in it, but also by virtue of being the State of the Jews; that is, it is a State of many people who are not yet citizens of it, which means that the State has an ideological task in persuading them to come and live in it.¹⁸

The tourism sector in Israel has never been disconnected from the nature of the colonial system of the Israeli state. Since its establishment in 1948, Israel as a settler state has sought to exploit tourism, besides being a source of economic income, as a tool to promote the Zionist narrative. Tourism has been a central tool in shaping images and imagined geographical areas related to both Palestine and Israel, and as a result, the Palestinian reality has been largely erased from the Israeli-controlled tourism sector in historical Palestine. Tourism today plays an important role in the ongoing colonial situation in Palestine and is crucial in proving the successes of the Zionist establishment. These successes began before the establishment of the State of Israel through Zionist organizations that worked to create platforms to transform the Arab-Palestinian image of Palestine into a Jewish image, through the production of brochures, maps and guides. In addition, Israeli tours - in the Old City of Jerusalem, for example - offer a Zionist narrative different from the Palestinian narrative, and the absent, invisible Palestinian is recalled in these tours through Israeli jewelry stores and Israeli tickets as folklore sold among Israeli souvenirs, such as embroidery, glass and olives - for example.¹⁹

The complex relationship between ideology and tourism is amplified in situations of conflict and war and plays a role in the development and honing of tools for building a belief system that serves the ideology. The Zionist movement began its activity in building a belief system to serve its ideology through tourism since 1925, by establishing the 'Zionist Tourist Information Office', which was aimed at Jews in Europe who travel to Palestine, by organizing tours and meetings for them with Jewish settlers in Palestine and building relationships between them. Even the tourist maps that were prepared for this aim were drawn in such a way as to show the Jewish character of Palestine, in addition to organized tours that were supervised only by Jews. Thus, directing tourists to Jewish hotels, and using Jewish drivers for tourists were all part of the organized immigration of Jews to Palestine during the British Mandate period, operations of the tourism industry were then used to create images to serve this migration.²⁰

18. Bishara, Azmi. (2010). **From the Jewishness of the State to Sharon - a study in the contradiction of Israeli democracy**, (second edition). Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouk. [In Arabic].

19. Vanden Boer, Dorien. (2016). Toward decolonization in tourism: Engaged tourism and the Jerusalem tourism cluster. *Jerusalem Quarterly*, (65). Pp. 9-21.

20. Cohen-Hattab, K. (2004). Zionism, tourism, and the battle for Palestine: Tourism as a political-propaganda tool. *Israel Studies*, 9(1). Pp. 61-85.

Mass tourism in Israel is an economic, political, and ideological goal based on the injustice of the Palestinians and on the erasure and concealment of violence directed against them. Israel has taken control of the tourism industry, and has excluded the Palestinians from sources, sites, and tourism possibilities due to the occupation. Moreover, the Israeli program prepared for tourists nowadays hides the reality and the Palestinian narrative, and visits to Palestinian sites and towns are sometimes prohibited except for purposes that serve propaganda, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is the only place possible for visiting in the West Bank, and only for limited hours.²¹

Zionist propaganda through tourism is continuing and at a higher rate and is more organized. For example, in research conducted on young Jewish tourism to Israel published in a book in 2008, which bore the title *Young Tourism to Israel... The Educational Experience of the Diaspora*, we find the extent to which this tourism is institutionalized and linked to international Zionist institutions to encourage Jews outside Israel - especially the younger generations - to visit it. This institutionalization associated with Israeli institutions working on this systematically, among which is the Israel Experience Program, which since 2000 has attracted more than 298 thousand Jews around the world to multiple organized trips to Israel.²²

In addition, the report *"Touring in Israeli Settlements: Trade and Pleasure for the Occupation Economy"*, issued in September 2017 by the Women's Global Alliance for Peace as part of its **Who Profits** project²³ (a research project aimed at exposing the economic involvement of Israeli and international companies in the ongoing Israeli control over the Palestinian and Syrian territories), shows us information and concrete evidence of the Israeli approach to the tourism sector in the territories occupied in 1967.²⁴

Realizing the great tourism potential of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, Israel pursued a dual strategy of aggressive exploitation and invested heavily in Israeli tourism projects outside the Green Line. With the emerging markets in digital tourism and online booking platforms, more Israeli and multinational companies are making huge profits from tourism in the occupied Palestinian territories, which enhances the opportunity to retain illegal Israeli control over the population, the economy, and the Palestinian and Syrian territories.

21. Kassis, Rami. (2004). The Palestinians and justice tourism. [CONTOURS-BANGKOK THEN HONG KONG](#), 14(2/3). Pp. 18-21.

22. For more, visit the [program website](#).

23. The organization is subject to prosecution for its activity in providing information on violations of the Israeli occupation. For more information, see: Al-Na'ami, Saleh. (2017, November 9). Israel reveals the list of boycott organizations that are targeted for legal prosecution. [The New Arab](#). [In Arabic].

24. Who Profits. (2017). Touring Israeli settlements business and pleasure for the economy of occupation. [Who Profits](#).

The Israeli Pride Parade

The annual Israeli pride parade, which started in Tel Aviv and later became organized in other cities, is an annual carnival parade organized at the beginning of summer every year in June, and includes many events and activities accompanying the event known as a "happening". They are jointly organized by the public, various institutions, and associations, and include press conferences, film festivals, celebrations. In recent years, the pride parade, in which more than 200 thousand people have taken part, has received significant support from the Tel Aviv municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Tourism.

The first official and recognized pride parade was held only in 1998, due to two events that led to this - the first was the victory of the Israeli transgender singer Sharon Cohen (known as Dana International) at the Eurovision competition, representing the State of Israel. The second was the Wigstock events, where the Israeli police suppressed a gay celebration on Independence Avenue in Tel Aviv, which caused an uproar in the media and in which the police conduct at that time was considered as an expression of homophobia. This was an important turning point in the history of the Israeli LGBTQ+ movement, and only since then has it been organizing an official and recognized pride parade in Tel Aviv, and it has become one of the most important events demanding rights and equality for the Israeli LGBTQ+ community. Until 2005, the parade was organized by the LGBTQ+ organization with a massive increase in participation, and the organization collected donations and subscriptions to finance the parade from its supporters. The parade was not organized in 2006 because the organization was unable to raise sufficient funding. Thus, it was decided that the Tel Aviv municipality would finance the parade, and in 2007 and 2008 it financed it from the municipal budget allocated for 'unexpected expenses', and in 2009 there was a fixed budget from the municipal general budget allocated for the parade annually.

Since 2008, the parade has taken a larger and more organized turn, as that year the first LGBTQ+ community center in Israel affiliated with the Tel Aviv municipality was opened, which works to integrate the community within various institutions in Tel Aviv. In 2009, same-sex weddings were held during the parade for the first time publicly. In 2010, three pride parades were organized (due to disagreements within the LGBTQ+ movement), one of them was huge, organized by the municipality with the participation of tens of thousands.²⁵ In 2011, the number of participants in the parade reached almost 100 thousand, and for the first time official representatives of the religious LGBTQ+

25. Shaked Zahi, Israeli tour guide. (2010). **Tel Aviv gay parade Israel - the first part 2010** (video). [YouTube](#).

movement in Israel also took part.²⁶ In that year, Tel Aviv also won the global competition for the website **GayCities.com**, which is active in publishing about the best cities around the world for the gay community, outperforming cities such as Madrid, London, Toronto and New York - for example - with a vote of 43%.

In 2012, the number of participants was estimated between 100 thousand and 200 thousand, the Israeli Ministry of Tourism proceeded to finance the event as an attractive pride event, and for the first time, thousands of foreign tourists participated in it that year. In 2013, the parade began to take on a more global resonance, Israeli politicians began to participate in it and speak, cruise ships from European countries began to participate for the first time, bringing thousands of gay tourists, and that year the marriage of two French men was announced at the parade.²⁷ The organization of the parade and its accompanying activities continued in 2014 and 2015 with a significant increase and development in organization and participation.²⁸ In 2014, for the first time, a delegation from the Jewish Community Center of North America (JCC) participated in the parade, which was coordinated with activists in the Israeli LGBTQ+ movement to promote the parade in the United States.²⁹

In 2016, the Israeli Ministry of Tourism decided to allocate 11 million NIS to promote "pride tourism" - a term that has become widely used in Israeli media discourse, through media and public relations campaigns in Europe and other countries to market the State of Israel as a liberal state, and to invite the LGBTQ+ community to visit Israel. According to the Israeli Minister of Tourism at the time, Yariv Levin, the strategic plan, coordinated with the Tel Aviv municipality and professional experts, will be long-term.³⁰ One of these campaigns, which the Ministry of Tourism worked on, was the recruitment of the Israeli drag dancer Arie Oshri, who lives in Berlin, by choosing him as a representative of the State of Israel at the International Tourism Exhibition held in March 2016 in Berlin.³¹

In 2016, the opening of the first pride hotel in Israel was announced, located in Tel Aviv, under the name **NYX**. The hotel hosts events related to the pride parade in coordination with the Tel Aviv municipality, such as the official press conference of the parade,

26. Havruta – Religious Gays. (2012). **Pride parade in Jerusalem Tel Aviv 2011-Havruta -a proud religious community** (video). [YouTube](#). [In Hebrew].

27. Bacchi, Umberto (2013). France's first married gay couple at Tel Aviv LGBT parade 2013. [International Business Times](#).

28. Yarekzi, Dana. (2014, June 13). Tens of thousands at the pride parade in Tel Aviv "a celebration of freedom". [Walla](#). [In Hebrew].

29. Creative, Fireman. (2013). First LGBTQ boarding pass trip to go for 2014 Tel Aviv gay pride parade. [Jcca](#).

30. Sadeh, Danny, and Kotler, Amit. (2016, March 3). The new weapon of the ministry of tourism: Drag queens. [Ynet](#). [In Hebrew].

31. Ibid.

which is attended by journalists from several countries around the world, in addition to seminars and celebrations.³²

The economic magazine *The Marker*, affiliated with the *Haaretz* newspaper, dealt with a report on the tourist incomes that Israel benefits from during the Pride Week in 2017, in which it expects profits of 100 million shekels (almost 30 million dollars) from foreign tourists who come specifically for this week.³³ The report pointed out that the pride tourism in recent years has become highly profitable and has become a tourist attraction, which is reviving the economy and the work of hotels, restaurants, cafes and entertainment shops in Tel Aviv. According to the reports of the Tel Aviv municipality, many tourists are returning tourists; that is, they participated in the past and returned to participate again. Also, according to the municipality, each tourist is expected to spend an average of 270 dollars a day, although the general average tourist spending in Israel is 155 dollars. "The gay tourists participating in the parade, after their return to their countries, turn into ambassadors of the advanced liberal State of Israel," says Yaniv Weitzman, a member of the Tel Aviv municipality who oversees the file of organizing the parade.³⁴

In addition to this development of the Israeli pride parade, in recent years there have been prominent discussions within the Israeli society itself about the image of the parade and the message it carries. At the beginning of the millennia, an Israeli radical movement known as Black Washing was formed, which includes a group of Israeli gays with leftist/anarchist approaches and began to call for the need to talk about other issues besides gay rights in Israel, including social justice and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. The movement's activities included protests within the pride parade itself, where its activists raised banners against the Israeli occupation also in Arabic and against Israeli militarism. The activities of the Black Washing movement have not been accepted by activists and leaders of the Israeli LGBTQ+ movement, with the claim that gay rights issues should not be confused with other unrelated radical political issues.³⁵

Moreover, in recent years, discussions have intensified, especially with the start of Israeli ministries to finance promotional activities for the parade, revolving around the exploitation of Israeli ministries (such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism, for example) for goals that serve the ministry's agenda rather than the agenda set by

32. Mako. (2017, May 16). Tourists on the way: The first proud hotel in Tel Aviv. [Mako](#). [In Hebrew]

33. Melnitsky, Gili. (2017, June 8). New predictions: tourists of the pride parade will spend at least 100 million dollars. [The Marker](#). [In Hebrew].

34. Mako. Ibid.

35. Rubinstein, Tanya. (2017, June 6). Lesbian and military celebrations in the the Tel-Avivian bubble. [The Sting](#).

activists and leaders in the Israeli LGBTQ+ movement who are credited with organizing and developing the pride parade. The background of these discussions' dates back to the period when the Ministry of Tourism announced the allocation of a budget of 3 million dollars for the operating the Pride Airplane, branded with the colors of the pride flag and touring a number of European cities to take gays to the pride parade. These discussions reached their peak in 2016, when the leaders of the Israeli LGBTQ+ movement threatened to cancel the parade for that year if the Ministry did not communicate with the movement to allocate budgets for organizing the parade itself, not to spend them on unnecessary things and serve an agenda different from that of the original parade, which prompted the Ministry to freeze the allocated budget at that time.

In the next part of this study, I will address the questions that I proposed above regarding the relationship of gay tourism in Israel with its colonial policies of pinkwashing, and at the end of the paper, I will refer to the Palestinian and world activism in the fight against these policies.

Methodology

To answer the research questions, I will read and analyze the speeches used in the advertisements promoting the pride parade in Tel Aviv in various sites through photos or videos, adopting the qualitative textual analysis approach, which deals with the study of text in its broad and comprehensive sense as a "cultural product" as described by Stuart Hall, which includes visual or literary compositions and norms for generating meaning.³⁶ The process of analyzing the texts of these ads will be through the process of deconstructing the discourse within the various images, scenes and stories, which helps to build an accurate study of real-life examples and link them to the theoretical framework above.

My choice of text will have two considerations, first is the versatility of this text (e.g.: image; video; written text, etc.), which may be manifested by an advertising campaign or an advertising site. Secondly, the texts I analyze should be issued by multiple parties: official government bodies; active civil bodies; profit-making bodies (such as companies).

36. Hall, Stuart. (2016). **Cultural studies 1983: A theoretical history**. DUKE University Press.

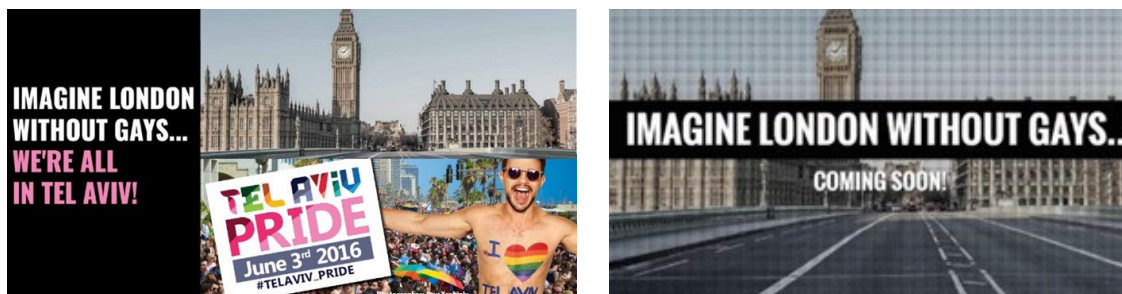
Study Sample

In the sample, I selected a set of texts consisting of articles, advertisements, campaigns, photos and videos produced by various Israeli entities in the period 2016-2017,³⁷ some of which are produced officially by the government; others by tourism companies; unofficial civil society. All sources have one thing in common, that is they all implement pinkwashing agendas.

1. 'Imagine a World Without Gays' Campaign

As part of a campaign for the Israeli Ministry of Tourism and the government advertising office in 2016, a propaganda video was released titled **Imagine a World Without Gays**.³⁸ It reads: "Imagine a world without gays... Imagine parties without gays... Beaches without gays... Restaurants... Art exhibitions... A life without gays... Imagine a world without gays. Because we are all in Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv Pride June 3, 2016... Only 4 hours from Europe... Fun... Fun... Beaches, and the most interesting people on the globe. Book your flight to Tel Aviv now".

This is the spoken text, accompanied by photos and videos from the pride parade celebrations in Tel Aviv showing what is stated in the text.



Photos 1+2: Posters within the campaign "Imagine a world without gays".³⁹

37. These two years were chosen as the majority of the work on this study was in 2017, and the last two years of organizing the parade were chosen. Some of the studies and reports used in the study may be after 2017.

38. To watch [The video](#). [In Hebrew]

39. This [video](#) was previously published by advertising posters of the [campaign](#) bearing pictures of global cities such as Berlin and London - for example - that read: "Imagine London without gays... Coming soon", as a kind of propaganda that excites and draws attention, to be followed by the same poster with a new text: "We are all in Tel Aviv", and the announcement of the pride parade.



Photo 3: A plane colored with a gay flag with an advertisement for the pride parade in Tel Aviv.⁴⁰

2. Article on the Website of the Israeli Consulate General in the United States

The Israeli consulate in the city of New England in the United States published an article in English with the title *"Welcome to Tel Aviv, the gayest city on earth"* by Christopher Muther.⁴¹ The article was previously published in the Boston Globe on March 17th, 2016, and the consulate republished it on its official website. In it, Muther describes his experience at the pride parade in Tel Aviv, considering it the most ideal place, saying no words can describe Tel-Aviv as "Super gay. It can even be described as post-gay... It's a gay ghetto with so many gay-friendly urban places". In his promotional article, he quotes a recent conversation between him and a hotel owner in the city, in which the latter said: "Everything in Tel Aviv is gay, gay by nature. The people are creative, open, liberal, and bold. Tel Aviv is open to new forms of art and music and accepts everything". Then he goes on to say that it is known that the percentage of homosexuals in the world in general is 10%, but in Tel Aviv-according to some officials - they are estimated at 25% of its population, and he calculates as follows: the population of the city is 420 thousand... So, 105 thousand of them identify themselves as gay in this secular bubble. "I walked several miles on sunny beaches and saw several same-sex couples holding hands", he continues to describe. He also describes the noisy nightlife of the city with gay parties until the morning hours and asks: "Are they trained within the compulsory army service to endure parties in such quantity?" Then he says: "the city has a unique and thriving scene of restaurants with a Middle Eastern theme and chefs with European roots. Notwithstanding the Old City of Jaffa, Tel Aviv is a young city... It's the most gay-friendly city in the Middle East", he says.⁴²

40. This year's campaign also included a gay flag-colored plane, with an advertisement for the Tel Aviv pride parade called "Airplane Pride" to promote the march by transporting travelers from Europe to Israel. To [photo source](#).

41. Muther, Christopher. (2016, March 17). Welcome to Tel Aviv, the gayest city on earth. [The Boston Globe](#).

42. Ibid.



Photo 4: The illustration that appears in Muther's article.⁴³

3. GayWayTLV Website

A tourist site specializing in gay tourism in the city of Tel Aviv in English, contains many offers for a holiday in Tel Aviv, including entertainment tours; concerts; various activities and more.

The site also has a special tab titled 'A Day in Old Jaffa',⁴⁴ with a photo of one of the neighborhoods of Jaffa, in which a cross appears on one of the buildings, and the page reads: "Located on the outskirts of the gay city of Tel Aviv is the Old City of Jaffa, a beautiful spot that you should not miss because it is one of the best parts of gay tours in Israel: there is something simple and charming, modern but with an ancient past, authentic... It is only a few minutes away from the heart of the gay city of Tel Aviv... After all that noise and breathtaking views, it's time to see some of the beautiful places of the Old City. Let yourself get lost in the old, romantic alleys of Jaffa, where many artists and gays live. There are also many galleries".⁴⁵

4. A Wider Bridge Website

On September 26th, 2016, the website A Wider Bridge,⁴⁶ published an invitation about an activity in which several institutions participated - including The LGBT Olim,⁴⁷ the

43. Illustration by Isabel Espanol. Photo taken from [The Boston Globe](#).

44. The site is not currently available on the internet, but it was available years ago. Can be found on [Facebook](#).

45. Ibid.

46. [A wider bridge](#) is - according to the website - a gay foundation in North America that works to support Israel and the gay community.

47. It is an institution that cares for gay, transgender and bisexual people who have moved to live in Israel. For more information, visit [their website](#).

LGBT Center in Tel Aviv, and the Tel Aviv municipality - to announce the 'Coming out, Coming Home' online program for gay people who are interested in immigrating to Israel. It is the first program of its kind on the web, and it is the first time that the Jewish Agency has partnered with the organization Nefesh B'Nefesh (a Jewish organization that works in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom to promote Jewish immigration to Israel), and with the Ministry of immigration in a program related to LGBTQ+ people interested in immigrating to Israel.⁴⁸

Coming out, coming home
Everything you wanted to know about LGBT aliyah, but were afraid to ask!

Get answers to all your LGBT/aliyah-related questions from a panel of experts, including the Jewish Agency, Nefesh B'Nefesh, Telfed.
9am PDT (West coast USA, Vancouver)
12pm EDT (East coast USA, Toronto)
4pm GMT (UK)
6pm IST (Israel, South Africa)

Followed by an introduction to Israel's LGBT organizations. Discover just how vibrant and diverse the Israeli LGBT community is:
11am PDT (West coast USA, Vancouver)
2pm EDT (East coast USA, Toronto)
6pm GMT (UK)
8pm IST (Israel, South Africa)

The event will take place on **Thursday 3rd November** at:
- The Gay Center, Tchernichovsky 22 (inside Gan Meir), Tel Aviv
- **Live-streamed via Facebook** - [facebook.com/lgbtolim](https://www.facebook.com/lgbtolim)

 **LGBT Olim** **LGBT CENTER**

Photo 5: A picture of the announcement of the program of moving to live in Israel within the immigration path for the Jew ('Aliyah').

5. Israeli Army Campaign

Shachar Erez, who served five years in the Israeli army, is recognized as the first transgender officer. In a video posted on the English-language page of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁴⁹ about the officer Erez, he is introduced as follows: "This is Charles Erez. The first openly transgender officer". Then Erez, wearing the uniform of the Israeli occupation army, starts talking and says: "Hello. My name is Shachar. I am a lieutenant in the Israel Defense Forces... This is my fifth year in the service, and apparently, I am the first openly transgender officer to serve in the military. In the first 24 hours of service for any soldier, he must pass a personal interview with his commander. I sat down with

48. The first session was devoted to these institutions, with the option for people to ask questions online, which focused on the immigration of homosexuals to Israel. The second session discussed the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community in Israel and its dynamics.

The sessions were broadcast on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/lgbtolim).

49. To watch [The video](#).

my commander who was 19 years old... She is only one year older than me ... And I told her I was transgender. Just imagine all the questions that she must have had, but she asked me only one question: "How can I help you? What do you need?" At this moment I was shocked... Thus began my service". Then he continues: "Everyone joins the IDF... It doesn't matter who you are, nor where you come from, nor your culture or origin... Everyone comes to the IDF... We are used to making everyone feel equal". The video then ends with the written sentence "Israel is free so you can be who you really are".



Photo 6: A scene from the video.⁵⁰

6. Outstanding Travel website

There is another tourist site⁵¹ that works on gay tourism trips in Greece and Israel, run by an Israeli named Nadav, that focuses on the tourist places that gay people from outside Israel can visit during Pride Week, from Tel Aviv and other destinations (such as the Dead Sea and the city of Jerusalem for example). The site reads: "Welcome to the most unpredictable vacation. Ask any friend who's been to Tel Aviv, and they will tell you that the city surprises them every time, making them forget everything and have a really good time. Tel Aviv is fun, freedom and splendor". The site continues to provide an explanation about the pride parade and recommended places to visit, accompanied by tourist ads and photos, mostly of young males in their twenties and thirties with muscular bodies.

50. For the source of the image see previous note.

51. To view the website: [Outstanding Travel](#).



Photo 7: One of the photos posted on the site Outstanding Travel.⁵²

Discussion

Pinkwashing has become a strategic need for Israel, which is exploited through the discourse of gay rights, and in particular the widespread promotion of Tel Aviv as the gay capital of the Middle East, to cover up its bad image due to its colonial and military practices. This is confirmed by the writer Jean Stern (2017), the author of the book *A Gay Mirage in Tel Aviv*, published in French. Stern explains, through his investigation, the marketing strategy adopted by Israel to attract the Western gay community and says during an interview with him about the book and about Israeli contracts with advertising companies in Europe to attract gays through tourism, "It is about the company OutNow, to market for brands such as "Orange" and "IBM", as well as marketing cities (Berlin; Vienna; Copenhagen...). Beginning in 2008, the Israeli government set up a structure for "Brand Israel", which is directly connected to the office of the then Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni (the latter was a Mossad agent), who was fully aware of the disastrous image of her country. Livni's team used all marketing resources to improve this image, spending tens of millions of dollars over several years. From these resources the World Congress of Queer Tourism was held. And starting from 2009-2010, the tourist flow began. Today tens of thousands of Western gay tourists take part every year in the Gay Pride Festival, at the beginning of June. It is a very profitable tourism; as it brings business to many bars, nightclubs, and hotels. Although Israel spent a lot of money on it, the returns on this investment were attractive, not only for its contribution to attracting tourists to Tel Aviv, but also because it contributed to changing the country's image among gays, as the following saying: "The country is nice to us, so it cannot be bad - as they say - with the Palestinians".⁵³

52. For the source of the image see previous note.

53. Stern, Jean; and Barzilli, Martin. (2017, June 2). Pinkwashing in Tel Aviv (translated by Walid Daw). [Publication: Socialist Forum](#). [In Arabic].

The Vice President of the American Jewish Committee for Public Policy said, during a meeting with activists and leaders in the gay movement in Los Angeles with the Israeli Minister of Tourism in 2015, to encourage gay tourism to Israel: "With the increase in the boycott (BDS) in universities and the increase in anti-Semitism, it is important to have other groups beside you. It is sad to hear that gay student groups support the Students for Justice in Palestine group. How can they not understand that Israel is the only place in the Middle East where homosexuality is safe and welcome, where women and minorities enjoy equal rights, and where democracy prevails?!"⁵⁴ The nature of these visits, which are carried out by the Israeli Minister of Tourism, shows that pinkwashing is a central goal of the Israeli government to obtain the support of the leaders of the global gay movements, and is part of the whitewashing of Israel's image globally.

The pinkwashing strategy depends on targeting the secular and liberal groups in the West, not the religious Jewish and Christian groups that were previously on the side of Israel, by forming an image of Israel as modern and free of religion or war; this is a mask to distract from the reality of institutionalized racial discrimination. This strategy was the brainchild of American experts in the field of marketing, with whom three Israeli parties contracted in 2005 - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Prime Minister's Office; Ministry of Finance - to launch a global propaganda campaign later known as "Brand Israel" to counter the international boycott movement.⁵⁵

Ido Aharoni, the Israeli diplomat who worked in the Israeli Foreign Ministry for many years, and the founder of the "Brand Israel" idea, says that each country has a specific personality that is universally defined (for example, Brazil is fun, and Paris is romantic). However, according to research conducted, Israel is linked to the conflict. This is a negative trait that will not attract tourists - even if they are pro-Israel. Therefore, through Brand Israel, Aharoni worked to change this image by marketing Israel as an attractive destination for its renewable energy, desert agriculture, in addition to films, dance, arts, lifestyles and entertainment.⁵⁶

This was later followed up on Tel Aviv for being gay-friendly to the point of being a gay city. The pinkwashing rhetoric also relies on promoting the argument that Tel Aviv/Israel is the only country in the Middle East that is safe, welcoming, and gay-friendly. Through this discourse, pinkwashing can be considered more like an ideology and a strategic Israeli propaganda project. This project also intersects with the "Hasbara" project, which means interpretation or explanation, and it is active on several fronts

54. Dekel, Yanir. (2017, December 3). Israeli tourism minister Uzi Landau meets LGBT leaders in Los Angeles. [The Jerusalem Post](#).

55. Elia, Nada. (2012). Gay rights with a side of apartheid. [Settler Colonial Studies](#), 2(2). Pp. 49-68.

56. Anonymous. (2010, June 17). Diplomat's bid to 're-brand' Israel. [The Jewish Chronicle](#).

of public diplomacy and relations to improve Israel's image in the world, and its most prominent contents are: 1- The enemies of Israel seek to de-legitimize it. 2 - The Arabs do not accept the right of the Jewish people to self-determination. 3 - Highlighting the story of the Israeli success in establishing a democratic state. 4 - Highlighting the issues of human rights violations in the Middle East and the suppression of religious and political freedoms of minorities in the Middle East. 5 - Israel believes in peace, but its Arab neighbors do not believe in it and constantly threaten it. And more...⁵⁷

An example of the pinkwashing industry is the gay porn movie "Men of Israel", released in 2009 by Russian Israeli director Michael Lucas, and promoted as the first Israeli gay porn movie. The film was filmed in many areas, including Tel Aviv, Haifa, the Dead Sea and the destroyed and abandoned Palestinian village of Lifta in 1948, to which its people cannot return to this day. The director wrote on the film's official website: "The international media has created an image of Israel as a war-torn region. Images broadcast are either from the West Bank or from the Gaza Strip, regardless of whether the story has a favorable or adverse point of view. It never shows Tel Aviv, Haifa, the Red Sea, the Dead Sea, the beautiful beaches, the amazing architecture and the culture of embracing that allows its citizens to thrive. That's why, in addition to showcasing the ingenuity of Israeli men, Lucas completed "Men of Israel" as a bold step to promote Israeli culture and tourism. The film does not show the settlements based on the locations in which its scenes were filmed, nor does it mention that Lifta is a displaced village, and through this work we see how pinkwashing is based on the claims of "gay freedoms" that seem comprehensive and apolitical by portraying Israel as liberal to gays, but it hides a policy based on racial classification."⁵⁸

Pinkwashing is not limited to promoting Israeli democracy and open liberalism towards homosexuals, but also carries a rhetoric concerning Palestinian homosexuals that Israel is a safe place for them because it protects LGBTQ+ rights, a discourse that "takes a racist colonial and Orientalist logic that dehumanizes Palestinian indigenous identities by portraying Palestinian society as a backward reactionary society that oppresses its members sexually and gender-wise, in which Israel plays the role of a savior through which the occupier disintegrates and becomes a haven for oppressed Palestinians. It is a strategy to legitimize the Zionist colonial system, even if it takes legal titles that camouflage the facts and reality."⁵⁹ This is an important part of the pinkwashing discourse

57. Tamimi, Nawaf Yusuf. (2016). **The Zionist lobby and public opinion in Britain influence and impact**. Doha: Al Jazeera Center for Studies. [In Arabic].

58. Britt, Brett Remkus. (2015). Pinkwashed: Gay rights, colonial cartographies and racial categories in the pornographic film men of Israel. [International Eminent Journal of Politics](#), 17(3). Pp. 398-415.

59. Amna Jamal, Rafat. (2015, June 13). [Israel and the 'Washing' campaigns: Colonialism in pink](#). Al Qaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society. [In Arabic].

that we cannot separate from the colonial logic and the imagination that draws it; as "Zionism and pinkwashing deny Palestinian belonging, and the process of repudiation and erasure of the Palestinian body are essential parts of the Israeli pinkwashing, where the image of the Palestinian as a security threat always appears, as opposed to the image of the Palestinian homosexual as a victim of the culture of his community and a refugee in Israel, which offers a shelter".⁶⁰ The reason for this discourse lies in the fact that it divides society into binaries in regards to homophobia as a political framework by defining who are the "allies of homosexuals" and who are the "enemies of homosexuals", and hides the nature of the existing regime, a discourse adopted by many homosexual movements and associations around the world. Thus Tel Aviv - for example - becomes the refuge that saves Palestinian homosexuals - and saving in this context means the hatred of the Palestinian homosexual for his community.

It should also be noted that originally promoting the idea that Tel Aviv is a refuge for Palestinian gays is incorrect; this is because it hides a different reality experienced by those who decide to go to live there, including life difficulties and the pursuit of the police who are looking for Palestinians who entered Israel illegally, in addition to the Shin Bet's exploitation of social blackmail for homosexuals in order to obtain intelligence. This method of social blackmail is used by the Shin Bet, which is not limited to homosexuals, by threatening people to report or expose them.⁶¹ The electronic monitoring unit, known as Unit 8200, monitors the Palestinians. Three years ago, 43 reservists in this unit published a manifesto denouncing the work they were required to do in it: monitoring gays, lesbians, sex workers, and alcoholics for later extortion.⁶² Therefore, pinkwashing is considered a violent mechanism towards Palestinian homosexuals because it "sells" them an imagined refuge and pleasure in a different reality.⁶³

Moreover, pinkwashing conceals homophobia within the Israeli society itself, and does not mention the numerous cases of attacks by Israelis against homosexuals, some of which amounted to murders and in the city of Tel Aviv itself.⁶⁴ Pinkwashing also hides the views of people - albeit a few within Israeli society - gay and straight activists opposed to Israeli pinkwashing and Israeli occupation policies. Some of them decided to emigrate from Israel and no longer see it as a safe or comfortable country for them as people

60. Schotten, Heike, & Maikey, Haneen. (2012, October 10). Queers resisting Zionism: On authority and accountability beyond homonationalism. [Jadaliyya](#).

61. O'Connor, Nigel. (2013, February 19). Gay Palestinians are being blackmailed into working as informants. [Vice](#).

62. Stern and Barzilai. Ibid.

63. For more information on this subject, it is possible to review the special issue of [Jadal Magazine](#), (24), issued in 2015, which dealt with the issue of sexual policies and their relationship to colonialism.

64. Gallagher, Paul, & Agencies. (2009, August 2). Two killed in Tel Aviv gay support centre shooting. [The Guardian](#).

who identify themselves as queer and are fed up with the hetero-Zionist domination of Israeli society and culture; even while celebrating the pride parade, the Knesset dropped proposals for laws related to gay rights.⁶⁵

Post Discussion: Resisting Pinkwashing

Researcher Sarah Schulman, in her book *Israel /Palestine and the Queer International*, discusses, through her tour in Palestine and Israel, the following question: "Why should the queer movement stand in solidarity with Palestine and abandon the standards of 'homonationalism' through its struggle, and not separate gays from the fabric of their communities and deal with them within externally imposed standards that do not read the political, cultural and economic reality of gays in each country?" In her analysis, Schulman relies on deconstructing the power politics on which the LGBTQ+ rights discourse is based through her criticism of international politics, considering that focusing on the discourse of "rights" and "safety", without linking it to the anti-colonial struggle, leads to the exclusion of gays, lesbians, and transgenders. Schulman considers, based on interviews with Palestinian queer activists on her tour, that without linking queer theory to anti-colonialism, we cannot talk about queer theory, because it will use this identity to justify injustice everywhere; this is because queer freedom - according to Schulman - cannot be based on the denial of the rights of others.

It is worth noting that in previous years, queer international campaigns began calling for a boycott of the Tel Aviv pride parade. The documentary "Pinkwashing Exposed: Seattle Fights Back", directed by Dean Spade, is one such example, as it examines the reaction of queer activists in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States to the pinkwashing campaign, through a tour by Israeli gay activists in the United States. The film showed the experience of these queer activists in Seattle in confronting this campaign and exposing the gay rights discourse that is used to cover up the crimes of the occupation and pro-Israel propaganda.⁶⁶

In 2016, Israeli activists released a video titled "Official Tel Aviv Pinkwash 2016", a satire on the videos of the "Official Tel Aviv Pride Parade 2016", posted on YouTube before the annual pride parade, and it simultaneously shows images promoting the parade and scenes from the practices of the Israeli occupation that pinkwashing hides.⁶⁷

65. Amit, Hilla. (2016, March 1). Queer emigration from the country. [The Sting](#).

66. Dean Spade. (2017). **Pinkwashing exposed: Seattle fights back** (full-length with English captions) (video). [YouTube](#).

67. Vardi, Sahar M. (2016). **SHEFITA - Pink [Aerosmith cover] - Tel Aviv Official Pinkwash 2016** (video). [YouTube](#).

An international campaign entitled "Pink Israel Watching" monitors and exposes Israeli pinkwashing practices.⁶⁸ In recent years, many activists around the world have also taken the initiative to demonstrate during official pride rallies in their countries against the Israeli pinkwashing, and to raise this issue on a global level.⁶⁹ In addition, Al Qaws Association for Sexual and Gender Diversity within Palestinian Society is active in raising awareness about Israeli pinkwashing.⁷⁰ The activity of Al-Qaws in the fight against pinkwashing carries a broader dimension than the organization of media campaigns; the activity of this organization, which extended for years, succeeded in providing a queer Palestinian framework and space, in contrast to the Israeli institutions that use the discourse of pinkwashing towards Palestinian homosexuals and protecting them from their "oppressive society". After years of demands by Israeli queer institutions that Palestinian queers be granted residency in Israel on humanitarian grounds, these institutions failed in achieving this even after the issue reached the courts; this is because the law states that shelters are intended for queers in distress, if they are citizens of the State of Israel.⁷¹

Shafi'i considers that Israel resorts to "Fabricating lies and inventing myths about saving Palestinians from their unjust families and societies in which homophobia is rampant. One of the methods that Israel has been using for years in its pinkwashing campaign is to rescue Palestinians from their families and communities and provide them with protection in Tel Aviv, an oasis of freedom for homosexuals. Tel Aviv may be a paradise for Israeli citizens, or even for hundreds of visitors who are attracted to gay tourism in it, but this is not the case for Palestinian gays", she says.⁷²

68. [Official Campaign](#) website.

69. See example: [Berlin Pride Parade 2016](#) (video); [London Pride Parade 2012](#) (Video).

70. For the activity of Alqaws in this regard, see: <https://cutt.ly/PfmugdO>.

71. M'eiki, Haneen. (2017, November 9). Tel Aviv protects homosexuals? About the escape to an Israeli myth. [Metras](#). [In Arabic]

72. Shafi'i, Ghadir. (2015, Summer). "PinkWashing": Israel's international strategy and its internal agenda. [Kohl](#). [In Arabic].



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