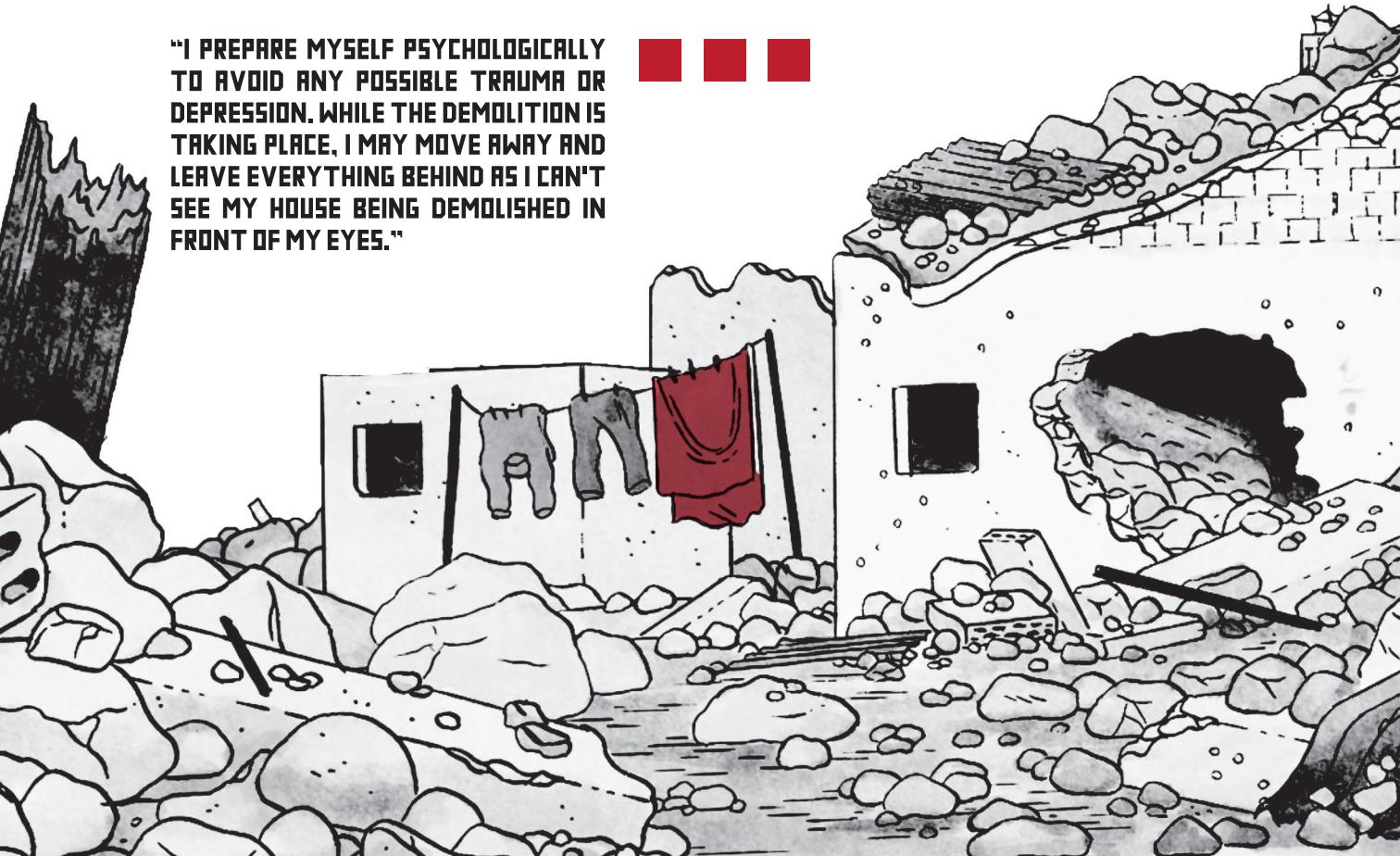




"WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER WEAPONS BUT THE CAMERA TO RECORD AND DOCUMENT FOR THE WORLD TO SEE THE OPPRESSION OF THE OCCUPATION AND HOW BADLY THEY TREAT PALESTINIANS. WE SEND THESE RECORDINGS TO FACEBOOK PAGES AND THE WORLD SEES WHAT HAPPENS TO US. IF SOMETHING HAPPENS AND WE DON'T DOCUMENT IT THE WORLD WOULD DOUBT THE CREDIBILITY OF THE EVENT. BUT IF THERE'S A RECORDING, WE HAVE EVIDENCE"

"IF YOUR HOUSE IS DEMOLISHED OR THREATENED WITH DEMOLITION, YOU MAY NEVER THINK ABOUT STARTING A FAMILY AS CHILDREN MAY COME TO LIFE AND FIND THEMSELVES IN A DEMOLISHED HOUSE. WHEN YOUR HOUSE GETS DEMOLISHED, THIS MEANS THAT YOU WON'T AFFORD TO PURSUE YOUR EDUCATION, GET MARRIED AND START A FAMILY. YOU WILL PUT SUCH STUFF BEHIND YOU [...]."

"I PREPARE MYSELF PSYCHOLOGICALLY TO AVOID ANY POSSIBLE TRAUMA OR DEPRESSION. WHILE THE DEMOLITION IS TAKING PLACE, I MAY MOVE AWAY AND LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND AS I CAN'T SEE MY HOUSE BEING DEMOLISHED IN FRONT OF MY EYES."





كلية الفنون الجميلة
جامعة النيجر الوطنية



What is ISSRAR?

ISSRAR is an international research project that focuses on understanding young Palestinians' responses to house demolitions and how these responses impact on their abilities to cope with violence, maintain dignity, imagine their futures and build sustainable development for Palestinians.

Why focus on youth and house demolitions?

The contemporary period of Israel's occupation of Palestine is marked by house demolition as a form of collective punishment and means to further land sequestration. Destruction of Palestinian houses to make way for further expansion of Israeli territories, however, has a long history. Since 1948, the prospective and material loss of home has been central to Israel's control over Palestinian place and people. Palestinians can find themselves in positions of great precarity where memories, experiences and threats of violence and demolition over long periods create fear and anxiety around the future loss of home.

By the first quarter of 2021,¹ the Israeli authorities demolished or seized almost 300 Palestinian-owned structures, displacing more than 450 people across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has highlighted between 2009 and September 2021, over 11,866 people have been displaced, and 7927 structures destroyed, 79% of which are in Area C of the West Bank.

Everyday, informal and cultural responses

Young people's experiences of house demolitions have often been explored through a focus on trauma or seen through the lens of humanitarian response. Their responses to demolitions are often seen in terms of publicly recognised forms of activism. Less attention has been paid to the everyday, informal and cultural responses of young people as they experience the anticipation of potential house demolition over time, they experience demolition itself, or they witness others' houses being demolished.

Everyday, informal and cultural responses, and how they help young people develop strategies to cope with violence, maintain dignity, imagine futures and build sustainable development, have been the focus of ISSRAR. This knowledge is important if young people's energies and ideas are to form part of strategies for sustainable development for young Palestinians and their communities.

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), March 2021.

Our approach

To actively engage young people in shaping our research, ISSRAR used an interdisciplinary participatory methodology. This approach built on research that identifies aesthetic, embodied and cultural meaning in the coping strategies of young Palestinians and how fear can facilitate narratives of hope despite the denial of agency and citizenship.

Mixing qualitative, visual and material-orientated approaches grounded in design anthropology enabled the project to unearth hitherto hidden experiences and responses to house demolitions. The research team worked with young people and civil society organisations across the West Bank, using youth engagement kits to invite young people to identify themes and issues that were important to them.

Creative and Visual Responses

This booklet shares examples of young Palestinians' visual and creative responses to house demolitions. Through this, we aim to provide new understanding and insight into the different ways young people make sense of, think, and feel about house demolitions as they affect their lives in Area C of the West Bank. We also wish to foreground different ways of expressing these feelings and ideas that go beyond interviews and other methodologies that more strongly prescribe what is shared.

Using the themes identified by young people in the field research in the early phases of the research, the project leader at An-Najah, in close collaboration with staff at the Art Faculty and with the project manager in the UK, worked to curate and develop an exhibition of young people's creative and visual responses to house demolitions. Young people were particularly asked to explore and reflect on their feelings about house demolitions through the following themes:

- Dignity
- Friendship
- Home
- Hope
- Loss
- Strength

ISSRAR Exhibition and Conference

This booklet shares a selection from the over 50 works that were produced by young Palestinians in response to the themes set out above, and were shared at a large public exhibition at An-Najah National University in September 2021. This exhibition took place alongside a youth conference which brought together young people, academics, and civil society stakeholders, to share experiences, explore project findings and identify opportunities for change.

Project Findings

The images presented here, youth engagement kits data collected as part of ISSRAR and wider research on young people and house demolitions, reveal a set of issues that are critical to understanding how young people respond to and experience house demolitions. Recognising these issues and their interconnections can help in designing approaches that better support young people to cope with the violence of house demolitions, maintain their dignity and imagine and construct sustainable development for themselves and their communities:

Impacts on young people's health and well-being

Our data highlights the multiple ways house demolitions impact youth health and well-being. House demolitions cause significant trauma for young people and their communities, but this is experienced differently by different young people. Impacts are highly gendered, and there is a geography to their impacts, with variations between rural and urban areas. Our data shows that it is important to look beyond a medical model of understanding impacts on health and well-being. In particular, it is important to link understandings of the impacts of demolitions to experiences, expressions and ideas of identity and heritage.

"I prepare myself psychologically to avoid any possible trauma or depression. While the demolition is taking place, I may move away and leave everything behind as I can't see my house being demolished in front of my eyes."

Legal geographies and youth education

A complex legal geography plays a key role in shaping and constraining young people's responses to house demolitions. Multiple legal frameworks using different concepts and languages govern house demolitions

across different geographical settings in the West Bank. Our research has identified not only this complexity, but the struggles young people face in making sense of them in order to challenge demolition orders. This in turn has highlighted issues of learning and education, both in terms of education around legal systems for young Palestinians, as well as lifelong learning in terms of the ways stakeholders work with young people to build their capacities and knowledge.

"My house has been under the threat of demolition for a long time. When we were young, we filed a lawsuit against the occupation because it would demolish our home. But the case has never come to any conclusion since that time, so the occupation may come at any time to demolish the house because we did not obtain any confirmation or rejection of the decision of demolition from the court. There is no doubt that this thing affected my life. I think all the time, and I am always afraid and anxious that they might suddenly come and demolish my house, and I will be left without a home then. Today I sleep on my bed, and in my room. I am happy with my family, but tomorrow I may not have that room and this house. What I am experiencing is very uncomfortable."

Anticipation, waiting and deferred futures

Many demolition orders are not carried out, but their constant threat impacts young people in profound ways. Not only does this create further and persistent trauma and psychological damage, but it has long lasting social and cultural impacts. The anticipation of demolitions impacts young people's planning of their future lives, impacting marriage, reproduction, education and hence, employability and skills. Not only does this impact individuals, but it is shaping the demographics of Palestine in the future. Our research highlights the importance of looking at different timeframes to understand home

demolitions and young people's responses to them. As well as looking at the recent or past loss of home, and developing strategies to support young people to cope with this, the anticipation of the future loss of home is significant and requires a different approach oriented to development over humanitarian relief.

"If your house is demolished or threatened with demolition, you may never think about starting a family as children may come to life and find themselves in a demolished house. When your house gets demolished, this means that you won't afford to pursue your education, get married and start a family. You will put such stuff behind you [...]."

Youth responses and humanitarian action

Our data reveals a complex geography to civil society and youth activism in relation to house demolitions. We have identified a strong contrast between humanitarian response from civil society actors and young people's own actions for accountability and solidarity. Often young people do not view the support they receive from civil society and other organisations as adequate. Most support is offered under a banner of humanitarian response, and this is often limited to immediate help. This means that young people's needs for longer term housing and livelihoods can be neglected. Our data suggest there is limited understanding of young people's own responses to house demolitions. Some young people respond to the limited support through documenting house demolitions and their impacts, while others have shown increasing independent use of social media. In both cases, young people are often concerned to mobilise international support rather than changing local response. This then leaves a gap in relation to strategies for sustainable development.

"We don't have any other weapons but the camera to record and document for the world to see the oppression of the occupation and how badly they treat Pales-

tinians. We send these recordings to Facebook pages and the world sees what happens to us. If something happens and we don't document it the world would doubt the credibility of the event. But if there's a recording, we have evidence"

Intimate and hidden responses

Our use of youth engagement kits has enabled ISSRAR to identify hitherto hidden forms of youth response to house demolitions. While there is recognition of public forms of activism and resistance, our research has identified more quiet forms of response and how these are shaped by different vulnerabilities. This has included exploring the spaces within communities that create a sense of safety, the things that people do as a demolition gets underway, who young people connect with as well as how the decisions they make about their futures emerge through and against the threat of house demolitions. These different kinds of response present a significant challenge to established thinking about young people experiencing house demolitions in Palestine, and how they can be supported to build sustainable development for themselves and their communities.

"My mother is suffering a lot of ailments, so her health deteriorates when she hears some bad news like a house demolition. She feels terrified, pained and worried. [...] My mum is what we care about the most, especially after my dad passed away. This is why we need to check on her health all the time. She is a source of optimism. [...] She is the source of love and security."

SUMMARY

Through these visual and creative responses, the youth engagement kits, working with civil society organisations and the participation and insights of over 150 young people, ISSRAR has demonstrated the distinctiveness of young people's experiences of house demolitions and how they shape their hopes and fears for their futures. It has also highlighted how informal, everyday and cultural responses to demolitions are a key part of how young people cope with violence, maintain dignity, imagine their futures and search for ways to build sustainable development for themselves and their communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ISSRAR team would like to thank: the young artists for their creativity and energy in producing the works presented here; young people and civil society organisations across the West Bank for their participation in this research; staff of the Faculty of Art at An-Najah National University for curating and supporting the development of these art works; staff at An-Najah National University for their support of the project.

Find out more about ISSRAR

ISSRAR was funded by the British Academy/Global Challenges Research fund (SDP2/100391) and was delivered through a collaboration between An-Najah National University in Palestine and Northumbria and Newcastle Universities in the UK, working in partnership with local civil society organisations and young people themselves.

To find out more about the ISSRAR Project, including downloading a youth engagement kit, visit the ISSRAR website <https://issrar.community/home/about/>.

PLEASE NOTE:

the works and comments presented in this booklet do not reflect the views of the participating organisations or the funders of the research.

The Artworks



Hiyam AL-Jouhary

Grains of Sand

2021

Oil on canvas

(100x70cm)

Rawan Dar Yaseen

The Beginning of the End
2021

Acrylic on canvas
(100x70cm)





Asia Sawalha

The Game "C"

2021

Oil on canvas
(100x70cm)



Hadeel Al Shaer

The Physics of Justice

2021

Oil on canvas

(100x70cm)



Ola Issa

Zinko
2021
Acrylic on canvas
(100x70cm)

Jana Alawneh

The Shoes of destiny
2021

Oil on canvas
(120x80cm)





Yara Al-Qubaj

Pick Pocket

2021

Video art

Duration : 1:30 min.

Dimensions variable



Roaa Odeh

Rough smoothness
2021
Oil on canvas
(100x70)



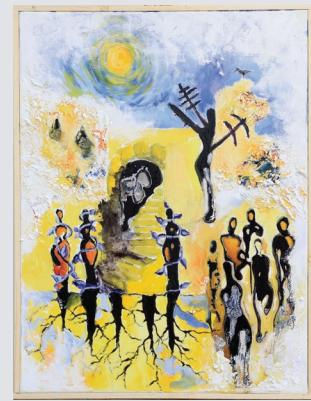
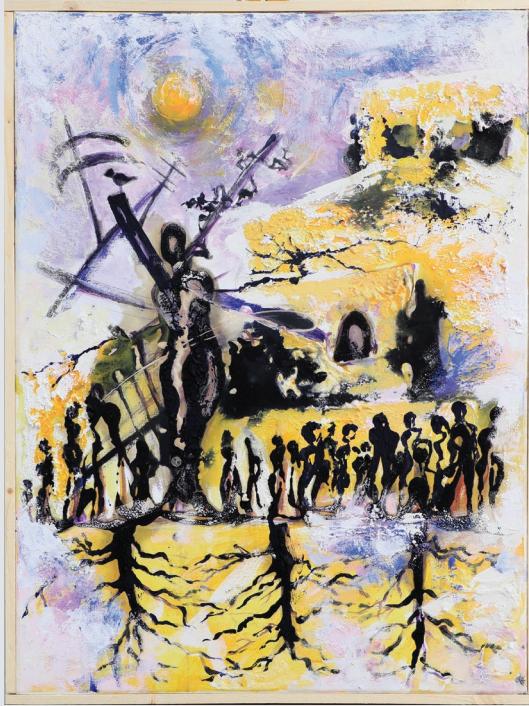
Madlen alhmoud

Zeegh

2021

Oil on canvas

2x(50x32), 80X60 cm



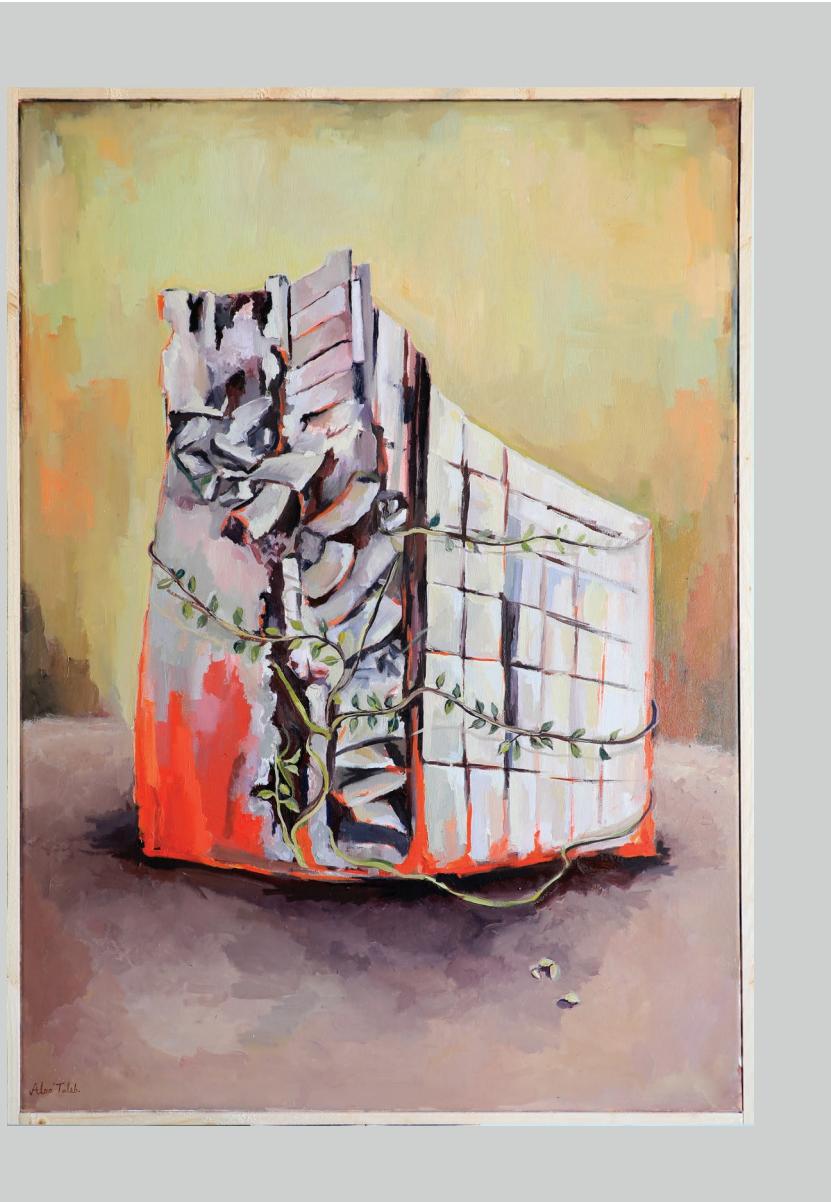
Samah Soufan

Moonlight on stone

Sep 2021

Mixed media on canvas

3(80x60 cm)



Alaa Taleb

Clinging
2021
Oil on canvas
(100x70)

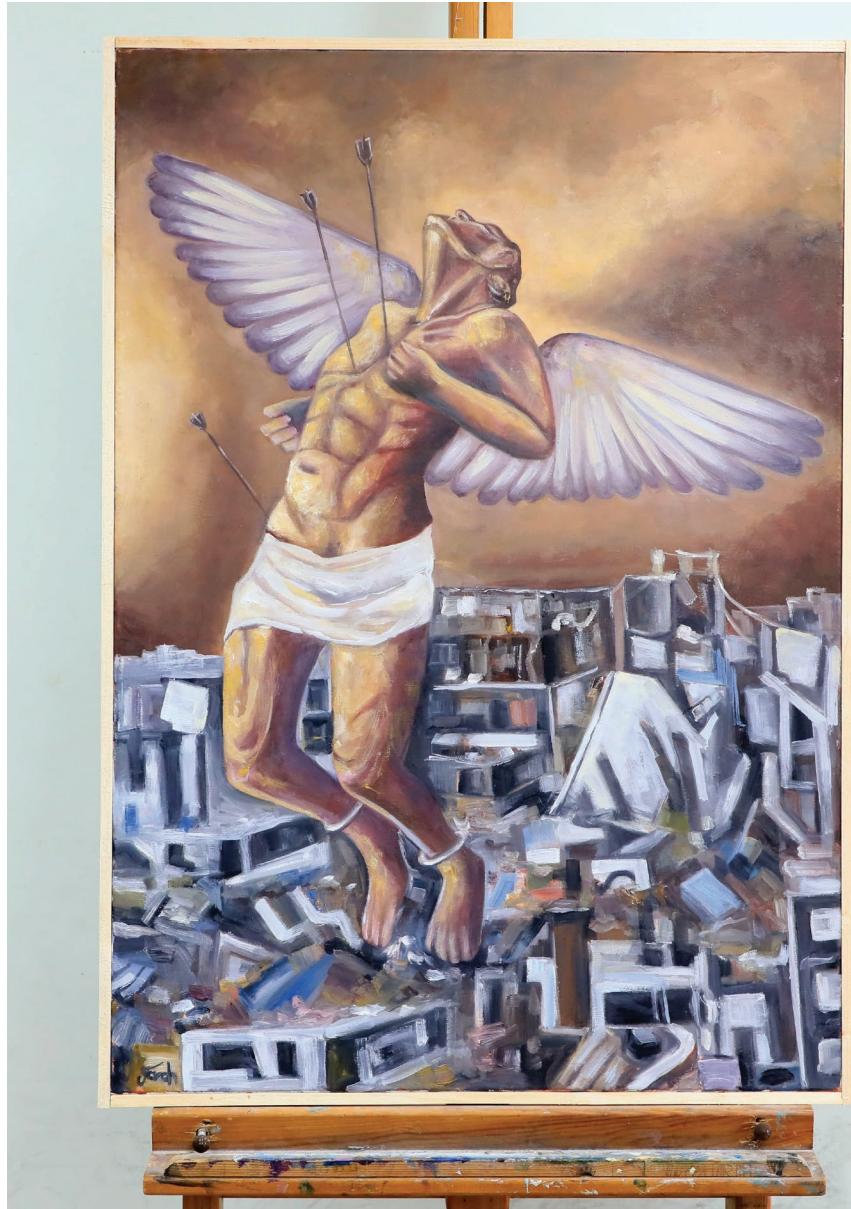
Farah al haddad

Giant wings

2021

Oil on canvas

100*70





Remy Nawahda

Hope

2021

Acrylic on canvas

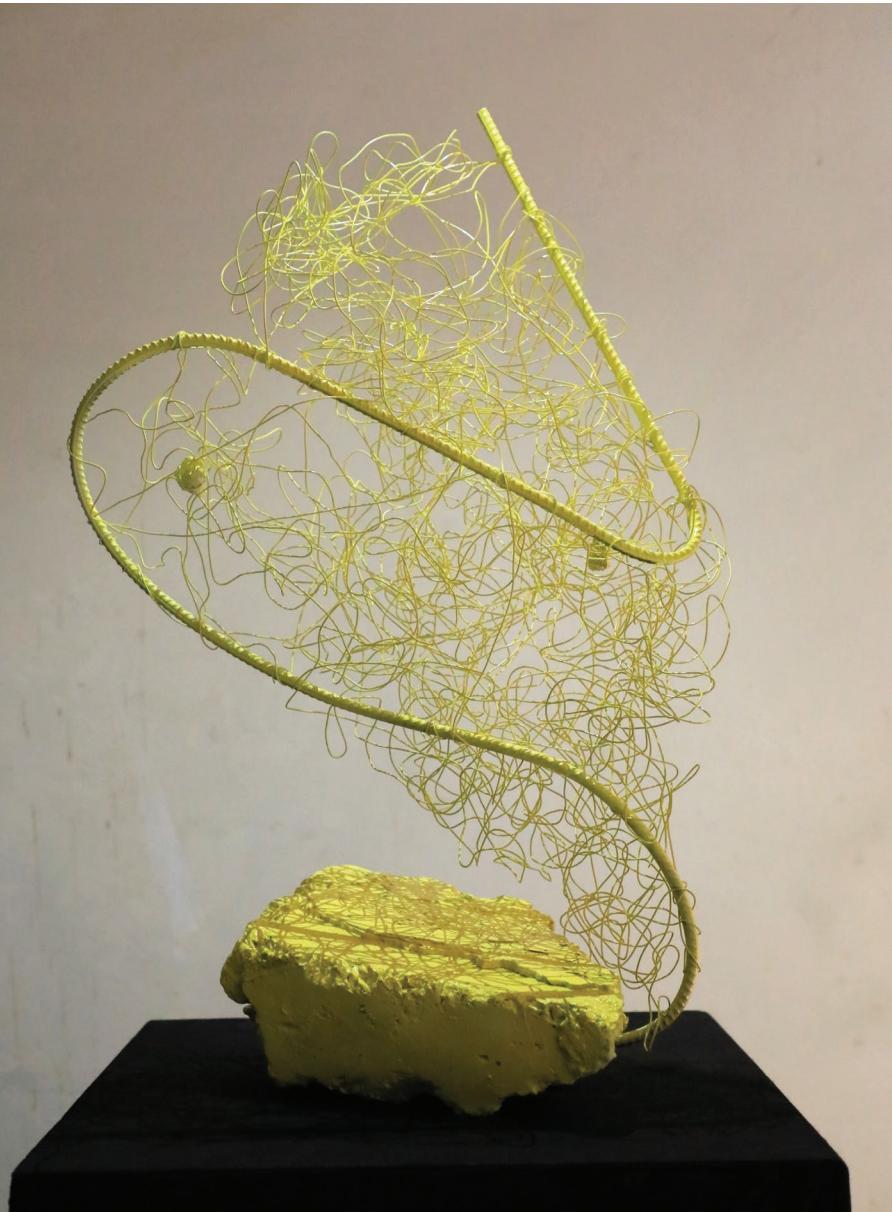
(100x70cm)



Sawsan Shehade

Steps back
2021

Acrylic and inks on canvas
(120x80cm)



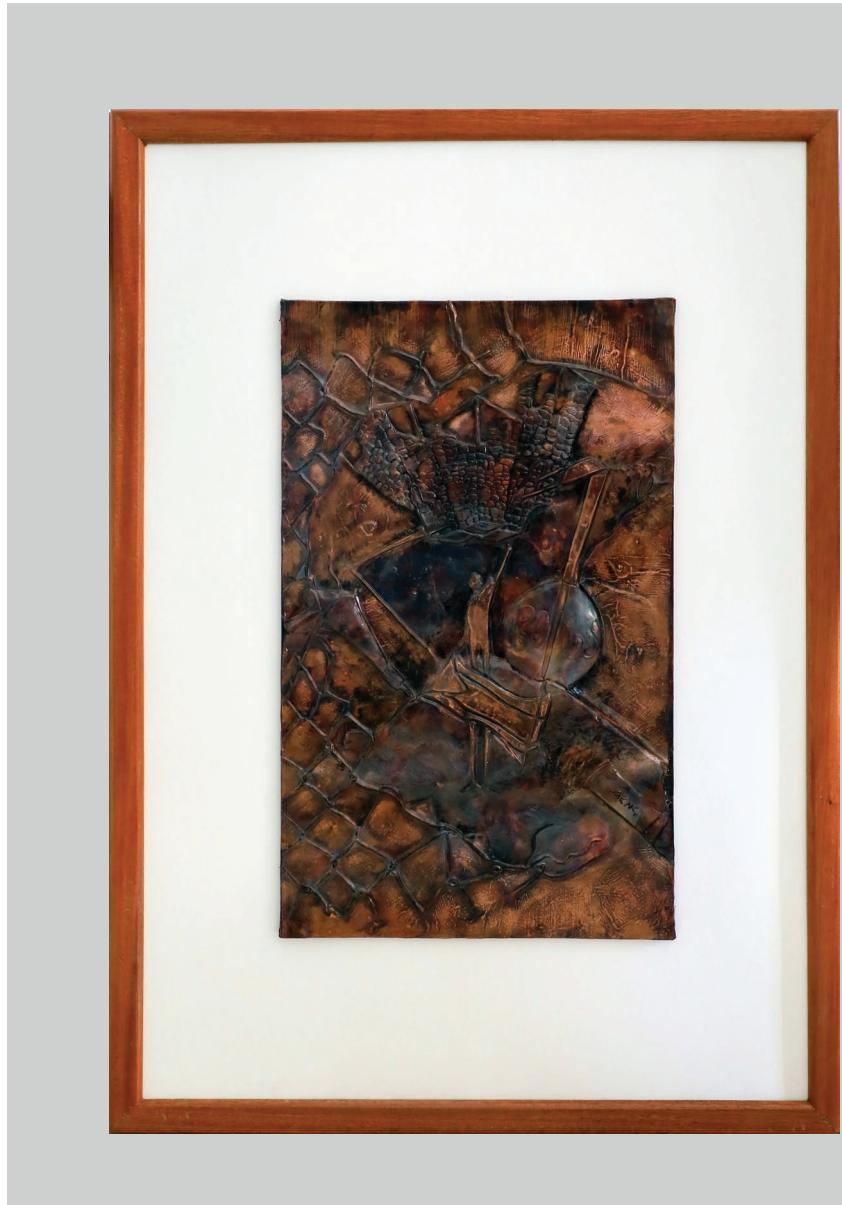
Sara Yaseen

Hanging nightmares
2021

metal wire, debris of blocks and
iron rods.
Dimensions 40x40x50 cm

Sarah Hamwi

Our living root, keep on
holding on
2021





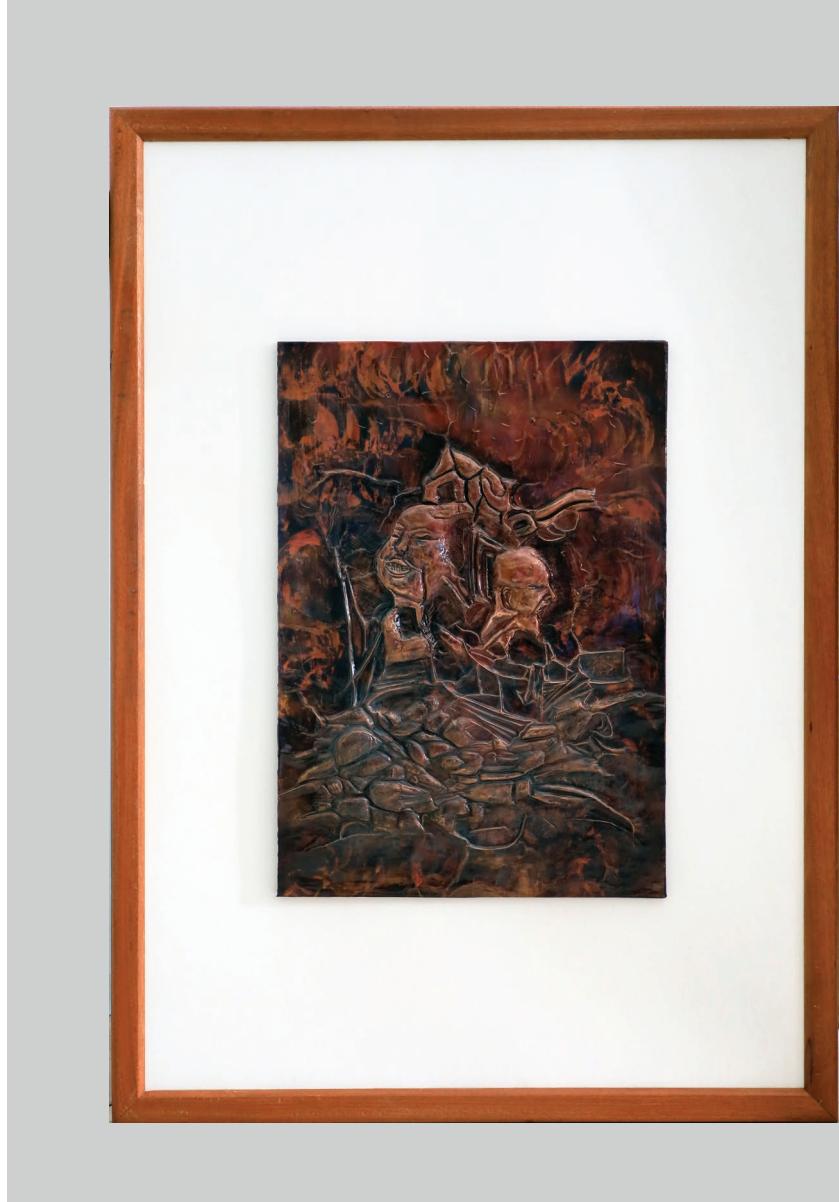
Raghad Ismail

Resilience despite the demolition
of homes.

2021

Dana Aljayyousi

The House is Dead "A poetic text
by Mahmoud Darwish"
2021





Hala Khlouf

Vivid to Life
2021



Amna Dababat

Remaining as Long as the Cactus
Remains.
2021

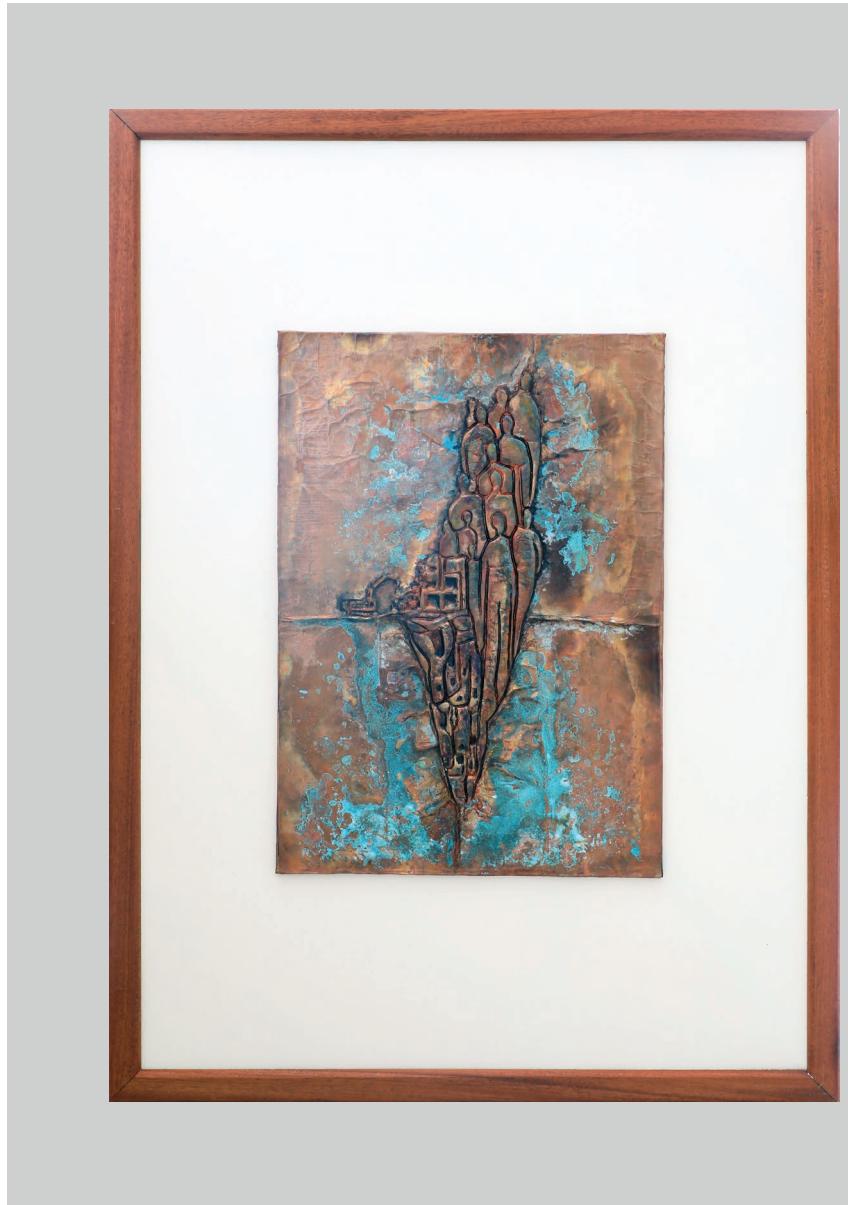


Shahd Abu Areida

We will Build Another Thousand
2021

Sara Shawahneh

Remaining as Solid as the Mountains.
2021





Shahd Sihweil

Soba (A Palestinian Depopulated
Village)
2021

Rama Hleil

"Remaining"
2021



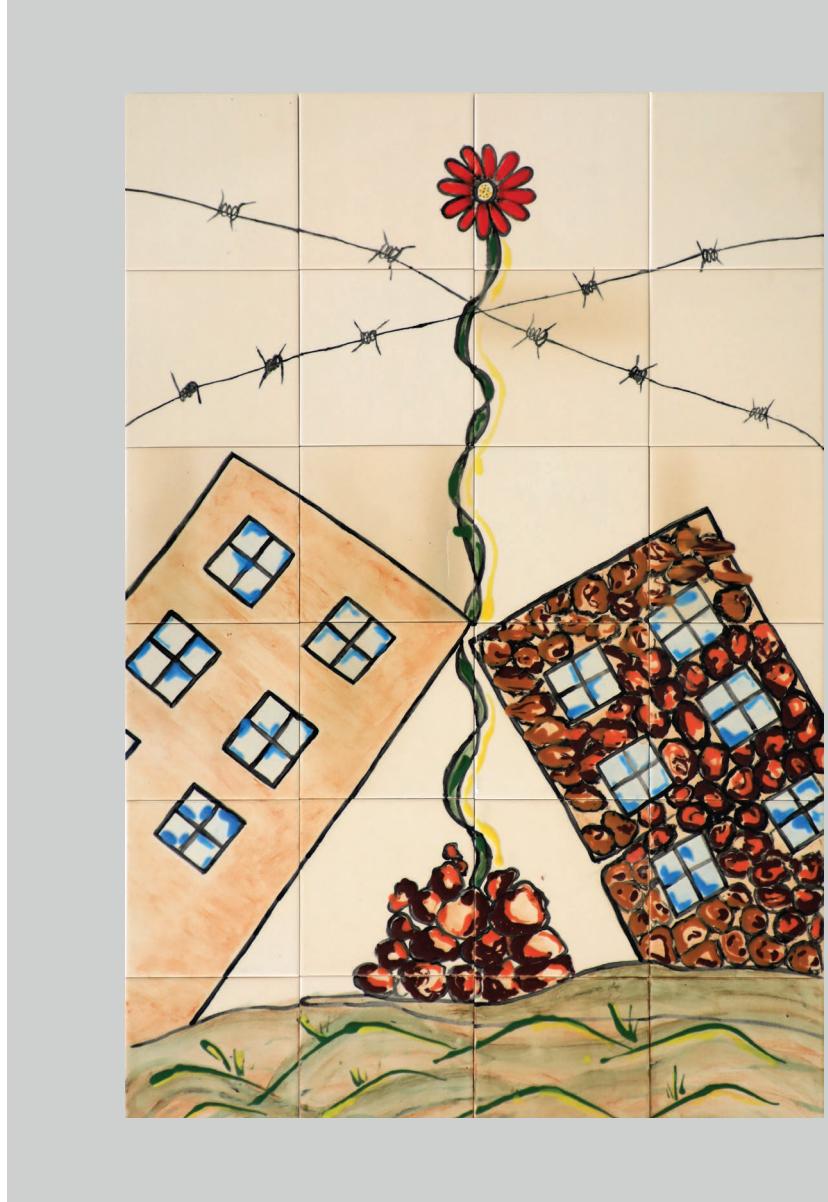


Mona Jarrar

"Hope"
2021

Diana Saleh

“The flower of life”
2021



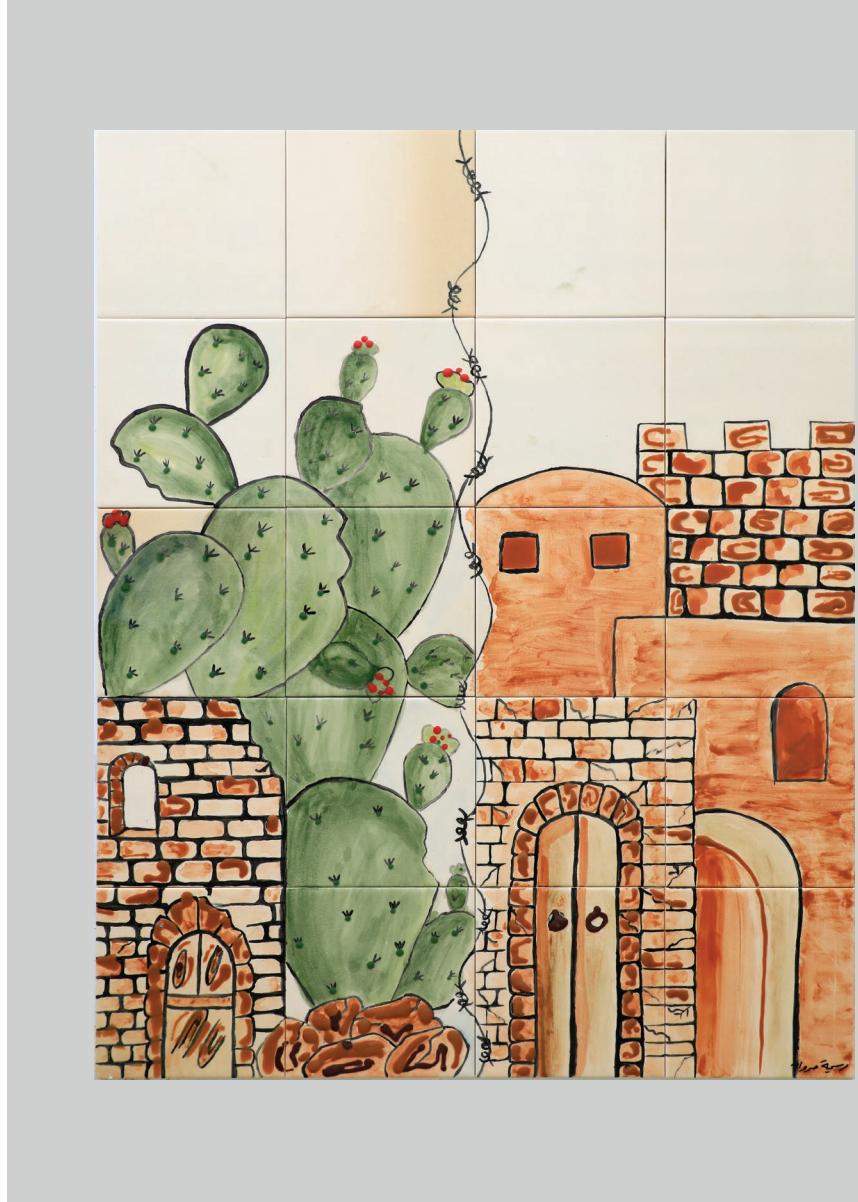


Zeina Jamal

"Custodians of Hope"
2021

Hiam Awwad

“Window of Hope”
2021





Dima Al Husseini

“Dawn”
2021

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