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Gazos De Frambuaz is the only
Ladino-inspired, raspberry-themed
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 אה נורמאליזאר איל צ'יז'ילאנטיקמו פייניקטו

**LAS POLITIKAS LOKALAS PRO-ISRAEL EN MIAMI BEACH
 AYUDARON A NORMALIZAR EL VIJILENTISMO SIONISTA**



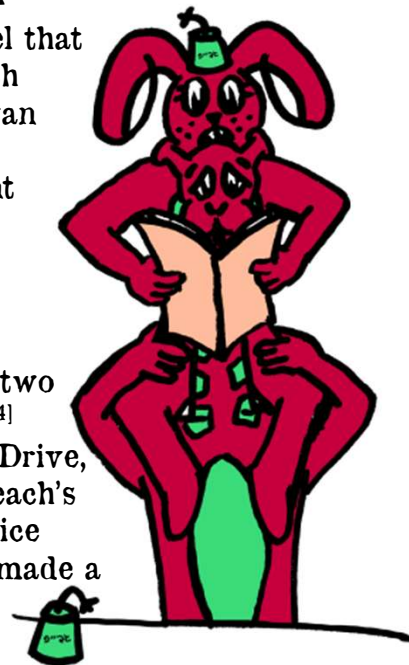
This story was originally published in Truthout^[1] on March 1, 2025. On November 4, 2024, the Miami Jewish Film Festival screened *June Zero*, an Israeli American film about the 1962 Israeli execution of Nazi official Adolf Eichmann.^[2] Miami Beach Mayor Steve Meiner opened the showing with remarks about the threat of antisemitism.^[3]

In the speech, Meiner glorified Miami Beach as the best place in the entire world for Jews to live. The audience began to grumble, and he nervously corrected himself, "except for Israel!"

The film he introduced portrayed an Israel that was not exactly ideal to some of its Jewish citizens. Its opening scenes exhibited Libyan Jews facing discrimination and difficulty assimilating into Israeli society. The recent Miami Beach shooting should make these contradictions at the center of the Jewish state more obvious.

Police alleged that on February 15, 2025, Jewish resident Mordechai Brafman shot two men, father and son Yaron and Ari Rabi.^[4] Brafman was driving south on Pine Tree Drive, minutes away from the heart of Miami Beach's Jewish community at 41st Street. The police report stated that Brafman, unprovoked, made a U-turn before exiting his car and firing 17 times at the victims' vehicle.

According to police, in the interview room Brafman "stated that while he was driving his truck, he saw two Palestinians and shot and killed both." In actuality, Brafman seriously injured the two




men who were in fact Israeli Jewish tourists. Police claim Brafman and his victims did not know each other. Given his alleged statement to police, the Florida chapter of the Council of Islamic-American Relations (CAIR) called for Brafman to be charged with federal hate crime charges. On February 24, Miami-Dade County prosecutors added a hate crime enhancement to Brafman's charges. Brafman's arraignment will take place on March 10.^[5]

You might find it hard to believe that a Jewish vigilante shot two Israeli Jews he believed were Palestinian. But to Israelis, headlines of Zionists targeting Palestinians but mistakenly attacking Jews are quite familiar. The February 15 shooting is traceable to a longer history of systemic anti-Arab racism in Israel.

Anti-Arab racism in Israel has not limited itself to Christian or Muslim victims. As far back as 1988, the scholar Ella Shohat published an essay on Israeli discrimination against Arab Jews, or Jews from the Arabic-speaking world. Her essay noted that, "the Semitic' physiognomies of the [Arab Jews] led to situations in which they were mistaken for Palestinians and therefore arrested or beaten."^[6]

In 2015, journalist Sigal Samuel wrote about a man who stabbed a fellow Israeli Jew, "believing him to be an Arab. In fact, this man was an Arab—only not the kind that the assailant took him for."^[7] The attack was part of a greater wave of Zionist vigilantism in 2015.^[8]

Such incidents are rooted in Zionism's insistence on a dichotomy between "Arabs" and "Jews." According to scholar Avi Shlaim, the establishment of "Israel was a reaction against the Jewish [diaspora]" and centered on "creating a new Jew."^[9] Zionism therefore eliminated Arab Jewish identity. Additionally, because of the historic belligerence between Israel and its neighboring Arab states, Israelis consider anything Arab to be "hostile, foreign, alien, and primitive." Because "Arabs were the enemy, and Arabic was considered the language of the enemy," Zionism forced Arab Jews to forsake crucial parts of their culture. As the scholar Orit Bashkin has revealed, Israel also humiliated, suppressed and discriminated against its Arab Jewish citizens.^[10]



It might seem unlikely that the alleged shooter was unfamiliar with Arab Jews and the possibility that his alleged victims were Jewish. Arab Jewish life is quite prevalent in Miami Beach. The city is home to several synagogues catering to Arab Jewish congregants, it hosts Israeli restaurants serving food associated with Arab Jews, and a nearby Israeli radio station often plays Arab Jewish artists.

But the visibility of Arab Jewish culture does not prevent Zionist vigilantism. In fact, it's a liability. Writing about the February 15 shooting, journalist Orli Noy argued that when the alleged "shooter left his house with the intent to kill Palestinians, he wasn't thinking about Palestinians in a political sense. Even if his victims had been Palestinians, he had no way of knowing whether they were Zionist Palestinians, like Yoseph Haddad. His target was Arabness itself."^[11] Noy connected the Miami Beach shooting to "a well-known Israeli rule of thumb: the more tense and violent the reality, the more dangerous it is to seem Arab."^[11]

Immediately before the shooting, it didn't appear Miami Beach had matched that Israeli calculus. However, it's likely racism was already brewing in Brafman's community. For example, since October 7, 2023, it's not uncommon for some Miami Beach synagogues to honor congregants-turned-soldiers returning home from periods of service with the Israeli military. Beyond the celebration of violence in Miami Beach's Zionist community, and beyond the anti-Palestinian racism implied by Brafman's alleged statement, a long series of pro-Israel policies have fostered a reality of anti-Arab racism in the city. To begin with, in October 2023, Miami Beach pledged to double its investment in Israel bonds to \$20 million,^[12] hoping to show "support for the people of Israel."^[13]

As Israel's genocide against Palestinians escalated, Palestinian, Jewish, and other social activists took action against the city's policies. In December 2023, activists protested at the signature Miami Beach "Art Basel" fair.^[14] In February 2024, Jewish activists disrupted a talk by Alan Dershowitz, a former law professor who often appears on television to defend Israel, at a local synagogue.^[15] In March 2024, activists gathered at the Miami Beach Convention Center. According to an activist, the



demonstrators sought to distribute leaflets about Israel's genocide against Palestinians to attendees of an ongoing climate conference. But police removed them to a "free speech zone" surrounded by barricades, explaining that only credentialed conference attendees could enter the "security zone" they established around the convention center.^[16]

The so-called "free speech zone" indicated the city's changing approach to Palestinian advocacy. In March 2024, the city passed a resolution sponsored by Meiner and Commissioner David Suarez "to implement [...] time, manner, and place restrictions [...] to control future protests and demonstrations."^[17] The resolution claimed its aim was "public safety [...] and preserving the rights of all."^[18] But during the meeting, Meiner backed up the proposal by referencing the recent Miami Beach pro-Palestine demonstrations. A draft of the proposal framed the resolution as pro-Israel. It originally condemned the phrase "from the river to the sea" as "pro-Hamas," and cited Miami Beach's sister city relationship with Nahariyya, Israel.^[19]

In June 2024, the commission adopted a resolution prohibiting the city from contracting with any parties boycotting "Israel or Israeli-controlled territories."^[20] In September 2024, the commission considered a proposal to fund a delegation to Israel "to demonstrate the city's unwavering support [...] for the Israeli people [...] and to help bolster the Israeli economy."^[21]

At city commission meetings, activists criticized the pro-Israel ordinances for being "motivated by [the city commission's] and the Mayor's hostility to any criticism of the State of Israel."^[22] They blasted the commission for voting "for any bill that appears to be in the interest of the government of Israel, whether or not it is in the interest of the people of Miami Beach."^[23] The commission responded by routinely interrupting activists and muting their microphones. At the June 2024 meeting, Meiner claimed that criticisms of the boycott prohibition were "not just hostile, not just anti-Zionism, they're antisemitic."^[24] At the September 2024 meeting weighing a solidarity mission to Israel, Commissioner David Suarez exploded, saying, "I've had enough of these so-called 'Free Palestine activists' marching into city hall pretending to be champions of LGBTQ rights, women [sic] rights



and human rights.... I'm calling out 'Queers for Palestine'^[25] and the rest of you shamelessly standing here today.... If you took your so-called 'woke' nonsense and your pronouns to Gaza, you'd face a much harsher reality."^[26]

Rather than mitigate anti-Palestinian racism in the wake of the February 15 shooting, the Miami Beach Commission continues to propose pro-Israel policies. For instance, they added to their February 26 agenda an item to approve a \$50,000 grant^[27] to the Center for Combating Antisemitism, launched by the Zionist group StandWithUs in 2019.^[28] The vote for the grant was unanimous.

When addressing the February 15 shooting, local social activist groups emphasized the need to prioritize anti-Palestinian racism in Miami Beach and nearby cities. Students for Justice in Palestine at Florida International University, for instance, highlight in a press release the city's Zionist atmosphere systematically targeting advocates for Palestinians.^[29] Jewish Voice for Peace South Florida, which I organize with, argued in a separate press release that the shooting itself was "fueled by a [Miami Beach] city administration" which has celebrated Israel's genocide of Palestinians while silencing dissent.^[30] Both groups were clear: The February 15 shooting ultimately stemmed from the dehumanization of Palestinians.

In advancing these policies, ignoring any criticism and dismissing Palestinian voices, Miami Beach has entangled its citizens in Zionism. In the process, some of its Zionist citizens have begun to emulate the racism and violence inherent to Israel's existence. Mirroring the land between the river and the sea, Palestinian and Jewish citizens of the city are intertwined. Jewish safety cannot come at the expense of Palestinian lives. Rather than continuing to bolster Zionism and to eliminate Palestinian advocacy, Miami Beach must take seriously the dehumanization of Palestinians in its own right.

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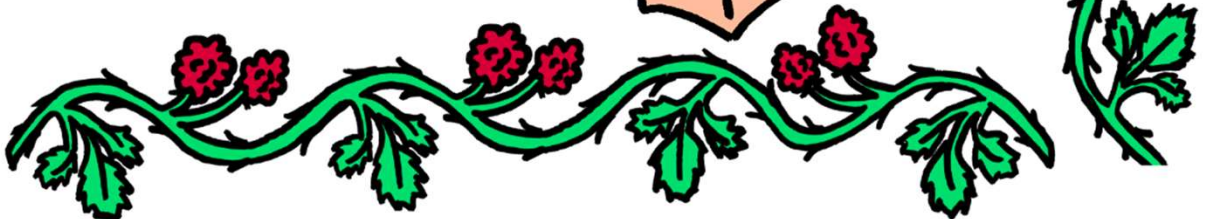
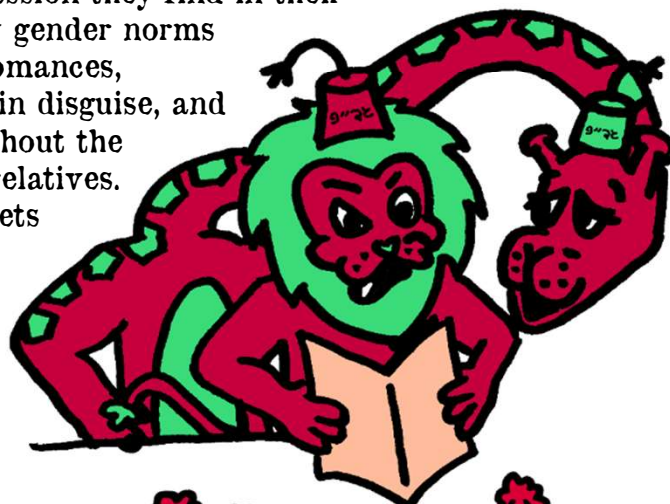
LA MELDAHONA II



In March 2025, a transitional government was declared in Damascus. Skeptics, both Western and Syrian, have understandably doubted that the fourteen year long civil war is coming to an end. Imagining a Syrian future in such a moment is challenging. Exploring Damascus' past through *Sabriya: Damascus Bitter Sweet* has helped me overcome that challenge. The gap between the novel's Damascus of 1925 and the Damascus which media conveys in 2025 is vast. But *Sabriya*, though a work of historical fiction, represents a possible path for the present.

Sabriya: Damascus Bitter Sweet is the 1997 American English translation Arabic *Dimashq Ya Basmat al Huzen* ("Damascus: The Smile of Sadness.") The novel was written by Ulfat Idlibi in 1980. Born in Damascus in 1912, Idlibi was married before she could complete her education. Nevertheless, she contributed a study, two novels, and countless short stories to Arabic literature.

The story-within-a-story traces a young woman's coming-of-age in 1920s Damascus. Much of the novel revolves around the Great Syrian Revolt. Time and time again, women in the novel criticize the patriarchal oppression they find in their homeland. They defy gender norms by pursuing secret romances, conducting business in disguise, and selling heirlooms without the permission of male relatives. Their resistance targets both patriarchal oppression and French colonialism. Restricted from fighting but eager to revolt, they prepare



ammunition, smuggle arms, and demonstrate under threat of arrest and abuse.

Yet, one of the most stunning passages in *Sabriya* appears to contradict these themes of resistance. Following the French colonial shelling and bombing of Damascus, Idlibi's character reflects that,

Damascus became like a humble dove that folds its wings over a fracture and remains silent in steadfast defiance. Damascus, a smile of sorrow, harboring tragedy. The secret of your eternal survival, dear Damascus, is that silence in the face of disaster. You have suffered so much. Through raids and plunder you remain forever.

Many might consider silence to symbolize complacency or ambivalence. Instead, in *Sabriya*, Damascus' silence is the key to the city's "eternal survival" against the disasters of the ancient past and the French colonialism of the 20th century.

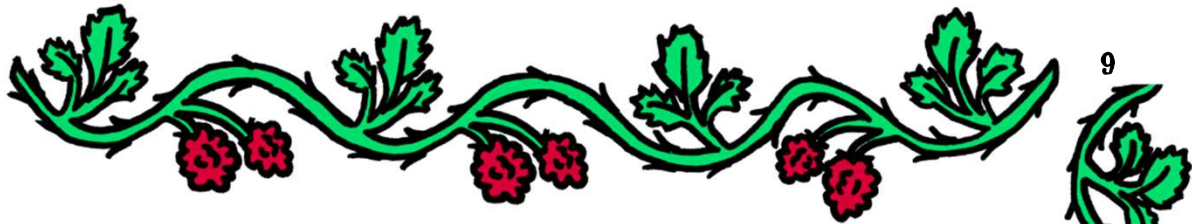
Today, that same dove folds its wings over yet another fracture. A divided Syria dominates recent memory. *Sabriya: Damascus Bitter Sweet* allows readers to glean a unified way forward. Its poetic reflections, defiant characters, and intimate scenes of resistance in daily life shed light on the Damascus of 1925. They also inspire us to reconsider the possibilities for the Damascus of tomorrow.

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קאנטאנדן סוברי איל דולור ג'ודיי

SINGING JEWISH PAIN



This piece was originally published in Passover During the Plague of Genocide^[1] on April 9, 2025. The zine is part of a campaign by JSWANA Bay^[2] to support Prosthetics for Palestine.^[3] Please consider making a donation and reading the full zine.

Tears slipped out of my mother's eyes. Her voice began to crack. She lowered her gaze. Her hand gripped her chest, comforting her breaking heart. Her melody, fragile yet forceful, led a choir of ten mediocre voices. Our family was celebrating Pesah, sitting at the seder table and reciting the piyyut "והיא שעמדה" / vehi she'amda."

My mother cried because her grandparents had lived this piyyut. She remembered their stories each time she sang the painful verse "שככל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו" ("in every generation they rise up to destroy us"). As a child, her mother narrowly escaped the Nazi conquest of her Polish town, shuffling between Soviet socialist republics as a refugee. Her father's family survived oppression and starvation under fascist Romania. His was one of the lucky families which avoided deportation and death.

Both of her parents left war torn Europe for war torn Palestine. My mother's mother arrived shortly after independence, eventually occupying a Haifa home cleansed of its Palestinian residents. My mother's father, interned on Cyprus, had to wait much longer before arriving in the same newly-conquered city. They would later marry and move to the U.S., where they instilled Zionism and fear in my mother's heart. Therefore, she didn't simply sing "vehi she'amda." She saw the piyyut as prophetic. "It's coming," she ominously repeated to my siblings and I throughout our childhood. "It," being a second Holocaust.

In the first part of the piyyut, my family sees the Jewish past. They see Zionism in the second: "והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם" ("and the Holy One, blessed be He, saved us from their hands").



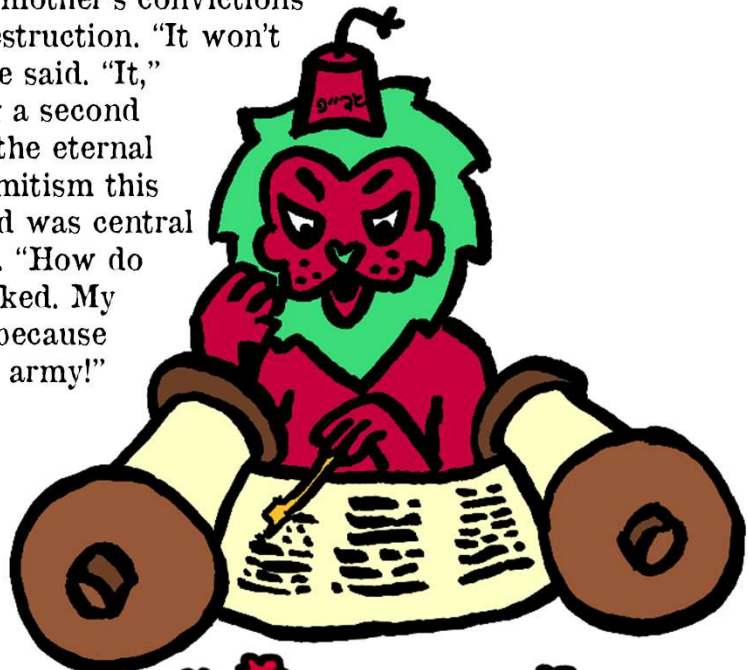
My mother's mother is more religious. She views the State of Israel as if it were the Holy One saving us from destruction. My mother's father, a devout *hiloni*, saw Zionism as taking into our own hands what the Holy One neglected. But both my grandparents, like other Israelis, saw in this piyyut a justification for the Nakba, when they even acknowledged it.

For my mother, each syllable of "vehi she'amda" carried the weight of centuries of destruction in Europe. But my father didn't cry for the piyyut.

He didn't cry for much. The machismo he inherited from his Sephardi father was partly to blame. Many Jews left or were forced from the Islamic world after 1948. But his ancestors settled Palestine in the early 1930s. They didn't experience the destruction described in the piyyut, at least not to the extent that his in-laws did. So my father was unbothered by the fears which haunted my mother. But that didn't mean "vehi she'amda" had no bearing.

Once, I had a panic attack after coming home from middle school. Our class had just watched a rather intense Holocaust film. My father came to my room to comfort me. His reassurances contradicted my mother's convictions About Jewish destruction. "It won't happen again," he said. "It," once more, being a second Holocaust. Still, the eternal inevitable antisemitism this Piyyut envisioned was central to his worldview. "How do you know?" I asked. My father grinned, "because now, we have an army!"

My ancestors' experiences with antisemitism, Zionism, and the colonization





of Palestine were starkly different. Therefore, my parents' views of Jewish destiny diverged. Nevertheless, they share the same outlook as "vehi she'amda." The song conjures my mother's pain, numbing her to the oppression of Palestinians. The song prompts my father's militarism, dismissing the oppression of Palestinians. But both firmly believe in antisemitism as an essential force and the irrelevance of Palestine. The piyyut highlights how Zionism has flattened diverse Jewish experiences, like those of my family, into one lachrymose history. To them, "diaspora" means "danger," "state" means "safety," and "Nakba" means nothing at all.

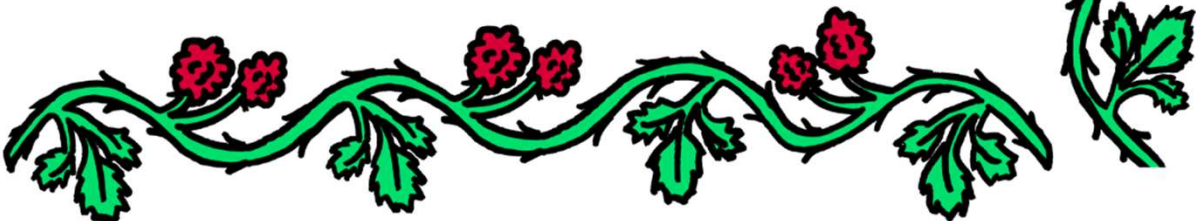
This year, when I sing "vehi she'amda," I'll share my mother's pain. My voice will join in the chorus just as shattered and afraid as hers. But when I utter, "עומדים עלינו לכלותנו" ("they rise up to destroy us"), I won't sing only to recognize the oppression my ancestors faced. Instead, I'll sing to begin reconciling the oppression they've perpetrated, and to revive the Jewish diversity Zionism has collapsed.

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In the late-nineteenth century, Ottoman *sharbat* fused with European *eau gazeuse*, creating an infused sparkling water called "*gazoz*." Meanwhile, Ashkenazi communities had cultivated medicinal and culinary traditions for raspberry syrup. Perhaps fusing these separate histories, a raspberry flavor of *gazoz* appeared in the mid-20th century kitchens of the land between the river and the sea. Today, people across the Southwest Asia are reviving *gazoz*, motivated by nostalgia and good taste.

Raspberry *gazoz* is just as much a product of Ottoman culture, European colonialism, and transnational migration as it is of soda and syrup.

מצי"י

ILLUSTRATIONS

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