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ISSN 2800-1273-EISSN 2830-8379***The Innocence of a Young Man with Down Syndrome
versus the Barbarity of the Zionist Entity:******Visual Crimes through the Lens of International Covenants and Laws***

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The paper discusses the visualization of young man from Palestine, Mohammad Bahar, an individual with Down syndrome who became a victim when the Zionist entity attacked Gaza. The article aims to reveal the explicit (denotative) and implicit (connotative) meaning, which is in the chosen AI-generated image, emphasizing their purpose as visual witnesses to events that are simulated, and go beyond the textual description. This study adopts the semiotic framework by Roland Barthes to examine how the visual signs create multiple layers of meaning and how these layers interact with the international humanitarian law and conventions regarding the protection of civilians, especially persons with disabilities. The findings indicate that the visual crimes committed by the occupation are not only blatant crimes against international treaties but also produce symbolic and cultural codes that make the whole world aware of the horrors that vulnerable groups experience. This interdisciplinary method highlights the strength of images as shaping the opinions of people and shows that the discourse of visual images can be used as potential evidence to systematic human rights violation.

*** Dr. Djeghri Zarouta Nassira**

1. Introduction:

The image is a pillar of visual communication for it is a significant tool to record reality. It is loaded with connotations and implications which allow it to capture what words convey in protracted argument. The photo possesses distinctive psychological and psycholinguistic qualities that enable it to make an impact on the recipient with the help of its compositional and contextual elements. These features are used to influence the masses on social matters, crisis, and wars. Not only is the photo effective in capturing the detail of reality, but it is also important in recording many tragic events.

In addition, the photo shows the scale of human suffering, which touches the heart and triggers the memories every time they are reopened. During the wartime, the use of photos is for the aim to create a psychological pressure and influence the opinion of the people. Take the Vietnam War as an example, which is one of the deadliest wars in history and is instantly evoked in the mind of any recipient due to the abundant photographic coverage. This helped the media to present the truth of the war; which caused the American war crimes to world audience and showed the cruelty of their atrocities. On the other hand, the war of Tofan Al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa Flood) took place in a context marked by the advancement of communication technologies, especially new media and smartphones, which made it possible to spread the photos of the crimes widely.

In that regard, we have been bombarded with visual onslaughts on social media platforms since the 7th October, 2024. Such photos and live videos have vividly captured the terrible suffering of the civilians in Gaza and have done plenty of reports about that. The Israeli war against civilians has released a flood of shocking images leaving viewers to assemble the facts of the story. These photos have been used as brief telegrams summarizing historic events, the devastating effects caused by blind shelling and fatal airstrikes and the subsequent unimaginable massacres; having caused hundreds of people to flee their homes. The violence of Zionists against Palestinians is no longer just observed on our phone screens, but we now feel these traumatic moments, and no further description would be sufficient to describe the intensity of our emotional reaction. This is the typical power strength of the photo.

Visual discourse transcends languages and cultures, requiring neither a tongue nor a specific cultural context. Its message is discerned by the viewer, who becomes saturated with its content, thus creating an impact that no text can match. The violence of the photo is embodied in its very content. It assumes the power of human expression, operating within a space of visual terror. It signifies the death of all the elements of the subject it depicts and constitutes a crime of cultivating aggression in the minds of its viewers, as they become accustomed to accepting atrocity and crime through repeated viewing. Becoming accustomed to death and the violence of photos is the worst thing that visual crimes offer to the

viewer. This is what Susan Sontag identified in her reflections and analysis of photos. In her book "On Photography," translated by Abbas al-Mufreji, she states: "The shock of photographed brutality fades gradually with repeated viewing; the photographed or filmed atrocity provides a certain familiarity with brutality, making the horrific seem common and familiar (Al-Sakr, 2023)."

The photo of Muhammad Bahar, a vulnerable young boy with Down syndrome, is the most heinous crime committed by the Zionist occupation against people with disabilities. His blood was shed with a cold heart, despite the family's repeated pleas for mercy. Ironically, the young boy's spontaneous actions were deeply hurtful. Does this Zionist entity realize the heinousness of the crime it has committed? It carries a symbolism akin to the Holocaust, committing such a crime against an innocent young boy who was unaware of what was happening around him. These are visual crimes committed by the occupying entity and exposed by social media. Thus, this raises the question:

How does international law deal with visual crimes committed against unarmed people in Gaza? This question has been broken down into the following sub-questions:

1.2 Research Questions:

- How does the photographic/digital image expose the brutality of Zionist crimes against civilians, particularly people with disabilities such as the child Mohammad Bahar?
- What are the denotative (explicit) and connotative (symbolic) meanings conveyed by the image of Mohammad Bahar, and how can it be interpreted semiologically in light of Roland Barthes' approach?
- To what extent does visual discourse shape international public opinion regarding the crimes committed in Gaza?
- To what extent has the circulation of this image across the global digital space contributed to the formation of a collective awareness and humanitarian solidarity with the Palestinian cause?
- How does the image reflect the nature of visual crime as a blatant violation of international conventions and laws related to the protection of civilians during armed conflicts?
- What communicative and humanitarian functions has the image fulfilled in bridging the gap between news documentation and the mobilization of global public opinion?

1.3 Study Objectives:

- The study aims to expose the visual crimes of the tyrannical Israeli occupation.
- It seeks to identify and elucidate the connotations of the crime through the photo and the emotions it conveys.

- It aims to understand the underlying meanings of the violence conveyed by the photo against people with disabilities.
- It traces the provisions of international law regarding such war crimes.
- It attempts to monitor the reactions of the international and human rights organizations that are committed to upholding human rights.

1.4 Significance of the Study:

Broadly speaking, this study falls under the purview of visual communication as applied to political media. It delves into the most recent developments of the Palestinian cause, particularly those pertaining to the war of Tofan al-Aqsa (al-Aqsa Flood) and the savage responses of the Israeli entity whose military forces committed unforgivable war crimes. The crime perpetrated against the child Muhammad Bahar has captured the attention of the global public opinion, especially the Arab world, as it represents the heinous murder of an innocent angelic soul, highlighting the brutality of the Israeli occupation. Muhammad Bahar serves as an example of countless other children who have been killed, injured, displaced, or orphaned, left with no one to provide for their basic needs. This study aims to document the suffering of children in general with a specific focus on the agony induced by the photo of Muhammad Bahar being offered as food to a dog, witnessed by his family, who experienced terror, panic, and profound anguish at the hands of the occupying soldiers.

Temporal Scope: June 4, 2024

Spatial Scope: The photo of Muhammad Bahar circulated on virtual platforms.

1.5 Study Methodology:

A methodology is a systematic approach designed to achieve a specific aim (Angers, 2006, p.98)

While definitions of methodology may vary, it remains the backbone of any study. Every research project requires a suitable methodology, and the semiotic approach is most appropriate for this study. Semiotics sheds light on the mechanisms through which meanings are produced within sign systems and reveals the internal relationships that constitute the elements of a photo. Reconstructing the mechanism of signification, semiotic helps to comprehend the role of the photo in a sociocultural setting.

Semiotic, therefore, is a latent, inductive study that involves the reader in an active study of symbols, signs, and codes. It challenges the reader to recreate the semantic scheme and to reveal the relations that lie behind the components of the media discourse. Semiotic allows a deeper interpretation of the role of these messages in a cultural context by redefining the system of signification. Since visual culture is quite common, their study has become a major field of study, and semiotics has become a potent instrument of uncovering their meanings. To achieve the objectives of semiotic study, Roland Barthes' approach was adopted. This approach divides the analysis of the photo meaning into two important levels:

- The denotive level refers to the immediate or literal meaning of the photo. It is a descriptive level that corresponds to a real, denotative meaning, which is accessible to all.
- The connotative level, on the other hand, refers to the deeper, underlying meaning of the message. It is the connotative level of meaning that is not immediately apparent to everyone. Connotation involves the researcher's ability to decode the various implicit meanings and symbolic dimensions embedded within the photo. Barthes argues that a photo is not merely a representation of things but is used to convey something else Rabea (Rabea, 2017, p. 304).

In general, the analysis in this study is based on two levels. The first level is not subject to any prior codification; it is the thing to be represented, what the photo directly intends to convey. The second level is the product of coding, where all latent meanings are generated. The first level is referred to as the denotative level of the photo, while the second is called the connotative level. Roland Barthes argues that a photo consists of two iconic messages: the first is automatically coded at the level of ordinary reading, as the viewer simultaneously receives both a perceptual message and a cultural message. However, this distinction has a practical validity similar to that which allows us to distinguish between a signifier and a signified in linguistic signs, although in reality, some may not be able to separate the word from its meaning without resorting to a metalanguage (Al-Sarraj, 2009, p. 171).

1.6 Research Population and Sample:

Given the qualitative nature of the study, it was essential to address the issue of war crimes within the framework of international law, with its relevant provisions, conditions, and penalties. Thus, a purposive sample was chosen and is symbolized in the image of the young man Muhammad Bahar, as it is full of symbolism that embodies the reality of the war crimes and represents the brutality and savagery of the occupying force by showing an outright assault on people who are not even aware of, nor can they understand the situation they are in. The image was selected very carefully, for it has a representative value since it allows to expose and condemn colonial violence to the global public opinion level.

The researched was based on an image created by means of digital media, which is analyzed by use of semiotic analysis as a visual medium that could be used to express the meanings behind the crime and its direct relationship to this humanitarian tragedy. One may initially think that it is an AI-Generated picture, which raises a possible controversy on the subject matter of algorithmic bias, however, there is a wide agreement of the sources of communication, and the overall trends of world opinion that what the people of Gaza are going through is an organized genocide, and that the crime is indisputable and publicly observable. The visual codes of the picture were an expression of such a potent and self-

evident representation that is surpassed doubt and asserted itself as a testament not refutable.

As some may be inclined to view the analysis as a form of bias, nonetheless, the bloody reality witnessed in Gaza stripe for almost two years carries more than what this image conveys. The brutal spilling of the blood of the ill child Muhammad Bahar proves that the image, even if it is digitally generated, stands as a visual testimony against the crimes. The researcher did not attempt to investigate and search for photographic images or move footage documenting the incident, still the only material found was this image, which was deliberately selected as the subject of analysis.

Even though it might be considered weak to rely on only a single image, its intense symbolic power grants it the capacity to represent a broader tragedy. The principles of representation are clearly embedded withing it, especially what qualitative studies aim to achieve by penetrating the deep structure of visual discourse, as opposed to quantitative analysis, which fundamentally relies on statistical data.

The research population includes all cases of the phenomenon under investigation, and the sample has definite features shared by the elements of the sample. The population of this research will be the entire crimes that the Israeli army committed in Gaza following the Tofan Al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa Flood). Since the study was qualitative, there was a need to analyze war crimes in the context of international law and its provisions, conditions, and penalties. The photo of the young boy, Muhammad Bahar, was chosen purposely, as it embodies the truth about the war crimes and shows the extent of the Israeli entity cruelty in this blatant attack against the vulnerable individuals who are even unaware of what is going on around them. The phot has been selected purposefully as a sample, for it reflected on the crime and showed the world the crimes and the devastation which the Israeli Army did.

1.7 Temporal and Spatial Scope of the Sample:

The temporal framework of the study is defined by the assassination of the child Mohammad Bahar on June 4, 2024-a tragic event that marked the starting point for the wide circulation of the image under analysis across the digital sphere. As for the spatial dimension, it is directly linked to the Al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood in the Gaza Strip, where the incident occurred, granting the image both its factual and symbolic depth. However, this spatial scope does not remain confined to its local geography; rather, it expands through social media platforms to become a transnational digital space in which the image is received as a semiotic structure laden with humanistic and resistant meanings-standing as a testimony to a collective tragedy that concerns not merely one place, but the shared human consciousness as a whole.

2. Operational Concepts of the Study:

2.1 Visual Crimes: These are crimes whose components are constructed through the image-whether static, moving, or in the form of video footage documenting the incident-where the event is visually reconstructed, shifting from mere documentation to a symbolic discourse laden with human and political meanings. In this study, the visual crime is embodied in the image of Mohammad Bahar, a young man with Down syndrome who was assassinated by Zionist occupation forces on June 4, 2024, in the Al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood of Gaza. His image transformed from an isolated incident into an intensified visual testimony that exposes the brutality of colonialism, lays bare its violence, and reconfigures meaning within the collective consciousness as a symbol of oppressed innocence.

2.2 International Conventions:

The term *international conventions* refer to the set of legal and ethical frameworks established by the international community to regulate the protection of civilians and ensure the safeguarding of human rights during armed conflicts. These conventions constitute the normative basis that criminalizes any assault against unarmed individuals-particularly vulnerable groups such as children and persons with disabilities-and serve as a standard for classifying acts committed against them as war crimes and blatant violations of the right to life and human dignity. In the context of this study, the term encompasses all international treaties, laws, and binding or non-binding instruments that prohibit such forms of violence and aggression, deem them a flagrant breach of international legality, and stipulate accountability and punishment under international law.

2.3 Down Syndrome: Operationally, Down syndrome is defined as a genetic condition caused by a chromosomal anomaly resulting from the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21. This leads to distinct physical features and varying degrees of intellectual disability, rendering individuals with this condition more vulnerable and in need of heightened protection.

Within the context of this study, the case of the Palestinian young man Mohammad Bahar-who had Down syndrome-stands as a tragic example of a person with disabilities directly targeted by Zionist occupation crimes, in blatant violation of the right to life and human dignity.

According to semiotic approach, down syndrome is not perceived as a medical disability but rather reconfigured within the visual discourse to become a symbolic expression, which intensifies innocence and human vulnerability. The unique features of Muhammad Bahar had a heavy semantic load which preconditioned the fact that the crime committed against him only emphasized the sheer brutality of the colonial act. Therefore, his photo has become a visual testimony transcending the individual dimension to embody a collective tragedy-laying, laying bare the failure of international conventions to protect the most vulnerable bodies in times of war.

2.4 Semiotic Analysis:

The semiotic examination of the image is an interrogative process of this image that aims at revealing the humanistic and cultural aspect of the image. On the denotive level, one concentrates on the direct and concrete meaning of the image, which is the objective description of what is seen without interpretation. This forms the beginning of the reading.

The image, however, does not remain confined. On the connotative level, it opens onto a broader network of symbolic suggestions, which is drawn from collective imagination and the recipient's social and cultural contexts. Whereby the visual sign becomes the carrier of meanings, which transcend its material appearance.

The accompanying linguistic message, whether in the form of a title, caption, or slogan, plays a guiding role in the interpretive process. It frames the viewer's perspective, determines the possible paths of understanding, and grants the image a deeper communicative dimension that highlights its human value and its ability to touch the heart before appealing to the intellect.

In this study, semiotic analysis is employed specifically to probe the latent level embedded within the visible signs of Mohammad Bahar's image, linking this representational structure to the lived reality from which it emerges and upon which the analysis is grounded.

3. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review:

3.1 The Authority of Applied Ethics Theory in Zionist Violations:

Ethics, in its theoretical dimensions, has accompanied humanity since its existence on Earth. A group of philosophers worked to refine it, and the influence of the surrounding dimensions that determined the value and status of things in comparison to humans was evident. However, in the last decades of the last century, the classical topics of philosophical thought began to decline successively after they were about to achieve their goals. Philosophical movements that dominated the intellectual and cultural scene, such as rationalism, empiricism, positivism, Marxism, existentialism, and structuralism, declined. We even notice a decline in even the most modern philosophical movements that were supposed to last longer in the intellectual and cultural scene, such as hermeneutics, deconstruction, and analytic philosophy. There was even a successive extinction of some of the major philosophical symbols that left their clear mark on philosophical thought (Bouftas, n.d., p. 2).

The emergence of applied ethics and its keeping pace with scientific developments and their potential benefits and harms to humans led to a paradigm shift in ethical thinking. As a branch of moral philosophy, applied ethics is dedicated to applying ethical principles and theories to specific issues and behaviors in the real world. It is grounded in important principles, particularly

those that promote human and societal well-being, such as:

- **The principle of beneficence:** Doing good and helping those in need.
- **The principle of paternalism:** Acting in the best interests of others.
- **The principle of non-maleficence:** Avoiding harm to others.
- **The principle of veracity:** Being truthful and not deceiving others.
- **The principle of legality:** Abiding by the law.
- **The principle of autonomy:** Recognizing an individual's freedom in their actions or body.
- **The principle of justice.** Treating people fairly and equitably.
- **The principle of reparation:** Compensating for harm caused.
- **The principle of fair distribution:** Fairly distributing benefits and burdens, recognizing an individual's right to life.

In addition to the principles of information, privacy, freedom of expression, and safety – principles that are grounded in the utilitarian principles of utility and social benefit – the principles of beneficence, paternalism, non-maleficence, and veracity are based on our duties towards others, while the principles of autonomy, justice, and various rights are grounded in moral rights (Al-Shayyah, 2020, p. 24).

A detailed discussion of these matters is unnecessary, as our focus lies in applying the principles of applied ethics to the violations committed by the Zionist occupation. In other words, we must reflect these ethical principles on the military aspect and military applied ethics, which stipulate adherence to international humanitarian law, respect for civilians, and proportionality in the use of force. However, did the occupying entity respect the principles of applied ethics?

These principles are akin to general law that must be respected, and institutions and organizations have strived to formulate international laws governing these matters, even in times of war. They recognize that war produces nothing but blood and tragedy, but what is important is to uncover and understand the moral dimensions enriched by the vengeful killing practiced against the Palestinian people in Gaza strip. What the Israeli entity has done cannot be described within the framework of applied ethics, nor even within customary or primitive ethics. The moral debate has been overshadowed by the brutality of the Zionist occupier, who has resorted to mobilization and political polarization to neutralize moral judgment on all the violations it commits against civilians and the defenseless.

In the midst of political propaganda and fabricated lies, the army of the Zionist entity, in the aftermath of the Tofan al-Aqsa (al-Aqsa Flood)'s shock, resorted to killing even their own hostages and those fleeing the celebrations. Attacking the military camps and killing soldiers was more shocking than killing and bombing civilians who were sheltered in their homes or elsewhere. The retaliatory response targeted civilians and they were subjected to brutal air raids, so much so that the

survivors clung to the remains of their dead. The occupation forces worked to provide justifications for their immoral actions, and their audacity reached the point of declaring that the bombing of al-Ahli (al-Mamadani) hospital was the result of a failed missile launch by al-Qassam movement. However, as the occupation forces became more brutal, they no longer provided justifications but claimed that their bombing of hospitals was justified on the grounds that the resistance movement had dug tunnels underneath them for shelter, while many civilians had taken these spaces as safe havens, thinking that they would not be targeted by bombing. The occupation forces also blew up numerous schools, in flagrant violation of all laws and norms. However, the true moral lapse is the silence of the so-called civilized world in the face of these brutal violations.

The Zionist entity claimed that the killing of civilians was because Hamas had been using them as human shields. But how can the complete bombing of residential neighborhoods be justified? The occupying Zionist entity does this to humiliate civilians and deepen their suffering, so they direct their anger at Hamas for the wounds, suffering, and displacement it caused them. The occupying forces have violated the rights of people with disabilities by using military dogs, as they did with the young man Muhammad Bahar. They have also torn apart the family fabric, killing children or leaving them orphaned. Their justification, as Isaac Herzog stated, is that civilians are not innocent; they are guilty because they did not rise up against Hamas in Gaza strip (*Al-Sakkar, 2023*).

The desire to punish civilians led Yoav Gallant, the Israeli minister of defense to declare that he had ordered a complete siege on Gaza strip, cutting off electricity and preventing the delivery of food and gas, considering them to be fighting "human animals (*Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed, 2023*).

The Zionist entity, along with the United States, has reduced moral values through media and television platforms to the notion that the mass killing of Gaza's inhabitants is the Jewish's right to self- defense, seen as a natural response to the shock caused by the war of Tofan al-Aqsa on October 7, 2023. This narrative serves to obscure the moral conscience, while the right to self- defense belongs inherently to the occupied people living under colonial rule. The Zionist entity fabricated the lie of fighting terrorism, labeling Hamas as a terrorist organization, which led the United States and European countries to join this equation, as terrorism is seen as a global phenomenon threatening the stability of these nations. This justified the assault on Gaza, particularly by equating Hamas with ISIS. Amid the hypocrisy of the international system and the double standards adopted by friends and foes, morality has been sidelined, and silence has been demanded.

The clarity of the Palestinian cause has exposed the hypocrisy of states and their support for the Zionist entity, even revealing the stance of some Arab countries regarding their support for Palestine. The mass killing of Gaza's

inhabitants has rendered all treaties, agreements, and international law meaningless, with a clear bias in favor of the occupying entity. The blatant hypocrisy of major powers during the Gaza war has been laid bare, with the exception of a few countries like Spain, Ireland, and Belgium that have condemned the actions, though there has been a deafening silence regarding the bombing of densely populated areas. The result has been the killing and displacement of children, including those with disabilities. However, the role of peoples who call for a ceasefire in Gaza cannot be overlooked as they are motivated not by Western affiliations but by humanitarian motives. The principles of applied ethics remain fundamentally humanitarian principles, not Western ones, and cannot condone such Israeli brutality.

The Jews have gained the support of the United States, regarded as the favored child with a right to persistently violate international laws. This genocidal killing practiced by Israel in Gaza has demonstrated that such laws are hollow and merely formalities, never holding war criminals accountable. They serve only as a display of arrogance over the oppressed peoples around the world. After such widespread genocide in Gaza, speaking of ethics and law becomes futile. The principles of applied ethics appear only as empty slogans, with Gaza's inhabitants witnessing the devastation of their loved ones before their eyes. Ethics lack practical applicability and remain mere theoretical propositions that cannot be applied in practice.

3.2 The Zionist Crime Against Palestinian Children:

The Zionist occupation continues to commit heinous crimes against vulnerable populations in Gaza to this day. According to statistics reported by the newspaper (al-Yoam al-Sabea), 16,172 children have been martyred at the hands of the occupying forces, in addition to 17,000 children who have lost one or both parents and 3,500 children at risk of death due to malnutrition and food shortage (Youn7, 2023).

To further clarify, we need to understand the concept of crime and its implications in law. In Arabic, the word Jarimah (crime) encompasses three primary meanings:

✓ **The first meaning:** Cutting. In Arabic, when it is said (jaramaho), it signifies he cut it.

✓ **The second meaning:** Earning or gaining. The Arabic words (Jarma, yojremo and ijtarama) indicate gaining or acquiring. This is often used by Arabs to describe any form of undesirable gain, rather than positive or commendable gain.

✓ **The third meaning:** Sin or wrongdoing. For example, Allah said in the Qur'an: "Say, 'you will not be asked about what we have done wrong'. Here, (ijram) refers to committing sins or wrongdoing. Similarly, the Qur'anic verse: "Say, 'If I have invented it, then I am responsible for my own sin" refers to the

punishment for one's own sins or transgressions. In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "The greatest sinner among Muslims is the one who inquiries about a matter that is not prohibited, and it becomes prohibited because of his inquiry."

The Arabic word "Jorm" is also used to refer to other meanings, including transgression, disbelief, and polytheism, as well as completion and departure. All of these meanings, in their origin and usage, indicate an action, deed, or movement that is prohibited or undesirable. This is because sin, transgression, disbelief, polytheism, and involvement in sin all inherently involve the notion of prohibited movement without dispute (Al-Muweizri, 2022, p. 437).

Crime, technically, refers to an act for which the law prescribes a punishment. It is defined as:

- An action committed by a person in violation of a law that stipulates punishment, which is justified either by fulfilling a duty or exercising a right.
- A legal violation for which the law prescribes either a physical, material punishment or a moral, symbolic punishment. A crime also involves the transgression against human relationships and bonds in their various legal, social, or humanitarian dimensions.

Durkheim defined crime as "any act or omission that contradicts the values and ideas established within the units of a community."

- The concept of crime is widely recognized, yet defining it precisely is challenging due to the numerous disagreements among sociologists, psychologists, legal scholars, and theologians. Therefore, the definitions of crime are as varied as the fields in which it is studied (Yaqout, 2022, p. 288).

3.3 International Crimes:

International crime is considered a violation of the Public International Law and poses a threat to the international order by infringing upon interests protected by this body of law. Perpetrators of such crimes are subject to penalties under the rules of the International Criminal Law, which is a branch of the International Law concerned with crimes that endanger human security and well-being. Generally, an international crime constitutes an act that violates international law and harms the interests safeguarded by it.

The regulations of the international law attribute a criminal nature to such acts, thereby necessitating their criminal prosecution (*Ibrahim, 2020, p. 5*).

3.4 Types of International Crimes:

A-Genocide: The issue of genocide gained significant attention after World War II with the establishment of various texts and laws prohibiting it. On December 9, 1948, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. According to Article 2 of this convention, "Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious

group." The criminal acts defined by this article include: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, or forcibly displacing children of this group to another group (Al-Amin, 2011, p. 380).

According to Article 6 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, genocide is defined as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group by:

- Killing members of the group.
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group.
- Deliberately inflicting conditions of life intended to bring about the group's physical destruction, in whole or in part.
- Imposing measures to prevent births within the group.
- Forcibly displacing children of the group to another group (Al-Amin, 2011, p. 381).

B-War Crimes:

War crimes are violations of laws and customs governing the conduct of states, armed forces, and individuals during wartime. These crimes can be committed against persons and property, and the victims may be civilians, military people, or prisoners of war. Article 8 of the Rome Statute emphasizes serious violations committed during warfare, both in international armed conflicts between states and internal armed conflicts within a single state. Examples of acts considered war crimes include:

- Intentional killing.
 - Inflicting torture and inhumane treatment, including doing biological experiments that cause severe suffering or significant harm to body and health.
 - Causing widespread destruction of property or seizing it without military necessity.
 - Doing flagrant violations of the law.
 - Forcing any protected person to serve in the armed forces of an enemy state.
 - Deliberately denying prisoners of war or other protected persons their right to a fair trial (Mahbouba, 2020, p. 26).

C-Crimes of Aggression:

"Acts of aggression" refer to the use of armed force by one state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence of another state, or in any manner inconsistent with the United Nations Charter. The designation of an act as aggression applies to any of the following actions, whether or not an official declaration of war is made, as per United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3314 of December 14, 1984:

- The invasion of another state's territory or any military occupation, even if temporary, resulting from such invasion or attack, including any annexation of another state's territory or part thereof through the use of force.
- Bombarding another state's territory or using any weapons by one state against another state's territory.
- Imposing a blockade on the ports or coasts of another state by the armed forces of another state.
- Attacking the land, marine, or air forces of another state, including its marine or air fleets.
- Using armed forces stationed within another state's territory with the host state's consent in a manner inconsistent with the terms of the agreement, or extending their presence beyond the agreement's expiration.
- Allowing another state to use its territory to commit acts of aggression against a third state.
- Sending armed bands, irregular forces, or mercenaries by one state or on its behalf to engage in acts of armed force against another state that are of sufficient gravity to be equivalent to the acts listed above, or getting involved in such actions (International Criminal Court, 2021, pp. 10–11).

Protecting "People of Determination" in Armed Conflicts and Wars According to International Conventions:

"People of Determination", a euphemistic term introduced to describe individuals previously referred to as "people with special needs" or "people with disabilities", represent a vulnerable group of people. These individuals are defined as those who require special care and supportive services to enable them to achieve their fullest human potential. They fundamentally differ from other individuals in one or more areas of growth, including cognitive, physical, sensory, behavioral, linguistic, and educational domains. This group significantly declines below the general average of ordinary individuals in their mental, sensory, emotional, motor, and linguistic growth, necessitating special attention from educators. That includes appropriate diagnostic methods; the development of tailored educational programs and the selection of suitable teaching methodologies (Khoja, 2021, p. 5).

In 2017, the United Arab Emirates government coined the term "People of Determination" in recognition of their abilities and social status. People with disabilities enjoy full equality under the law, which prohibits any form of discrimination against them. This legal framework aims to integrate them into society through various means, including healthcare, employment opportunities, and providing them with quality education tailored to the specific needs of each individual.

3.5 Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities:

Given that previous international covenants and laws did not adequately guarantee the rights of this vulnerable group, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities was adopted in 2006 and came into force in 2008. It has been ratified by 187 countries, with the exception of the United States. Comprising 50 articles, the Convention addresses a significant number of rights pertaining to persons with disabilities. However, it does not provide a comprehensive definition of disability, merely stating that persons with disabilities are those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Moreover, the Convention does not clearly elaborate on the issue of protecting people with disabilities during armed conflicts, instead including them under the general category of civilians. Article 11, titled "Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies," addresses their protection, stating the following (United Nations, 2014, p. 11):

The States Parties undertake, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, shall take all possible measures to ensure the protection and safety of people with disabilities who are in situations of risk, including armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, and natural disasters. Accordingly, their protection is provided according to general rules, which include civilians, by applying the principles of international humanitarian law, with a fundamental principle being non-discrimination, which is constant in both war and peace. Discrimination against any individual on the basis of disability is prohibited, as this discrimination prevents people from enjoying their rights on an equal basis with others. However, people with disabilities require special attention during difficult times, as they may not be able to rely on themselves. A clear example of this is Muhammad Bahar.

A- The Optional Protocol:

The Optional Protocol is a supplementary legal text to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, either partially or fully. It was adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 61/106 in December 2006. This protocol is subject to ratification by the signatory states that have ratified or acceded to the Convention. Accession to this protocol is open to any state or regional integration organization, and the protocol enters into force for each state or regional integration organization on the thirtieth day after the deposit of its instrument of ratification or accession, following the deposit of the tenth such instrument *Ma'aber*, 6(1), 216–237.

The Optional Protocol has 18 articles, which is a supplementary international document to the 2006 convention, and it is intended to improve the

implementation and monitoring of the convention. It develops mechanisms of individual complaints, according to which individuals can present petitions to the Committee on matters of perceived violations of their rights. In addition, it includes a procedure which grants the Committee the authority to investigate into grave or systematic violations of the Convention. This Protocol is a tool which states can use to enhance existing mechanisms as to protect the rights of people with disabilities, as well as to promote and protect the rights of those people. Further, it supports the changes in discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and fosters public awareness of the standards of rights for those people (Al-Akhdar, 2021, p. 225).

B-The 1949 Geneva Convention and the 1977 Additional Protocol:

Even though the idea of disability had not yet developed to the extent the state would safeguard it via particular clauses, the Geneva Convention offers full protection of civilians not engaging in the war, and that they need to be treated in a humanitarian matter. This involves their physical safety and respect and safeguarding them against any torture and/or cruel treatment. The Convention refers to them as the "disabled," thereby obligating their own state, the protecting power, or the occupying power to treat them well. The Convention also prohibits certain weapons and restricts the use of others. Furthermore, Article 27 of the Geneva Convention stipulates that those protected persons are entitled to respect for their persons, honor, family rights, and religious beliefs. They must be treated humanely at all times and protected, especially from all acts of violence and threats, with special consideration given to health conditions, age, and gender, without any discrimination. In subsequent articles, the Convention warns against exploiting protected persons and prohibits any physical or psychological coercion against them. This protection extends to individuals with disabilities (Bassiouni, 2016, p. 243).

The Additional Protocol supplements the Convention by specifying in Article 8, which is dedicated to defining terms, that the term "the sick and the wounded" includes newborns and other individuals who may require urgent assistance or medical care, such as those with disabilities and pregnant women who abstain from any hostile acts (Annex to the First Additional Protocol, 1977). The Additional Protocol further urges the parties of the conflict to distinguish between civilian populations and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military targets, directing their operations exclusively against military targets. This is to ensure the safety, respect, and protection of civilian populations and civilian objects, as stipulated in Article (Bassiouni, 2016, p. 48).

Article 50 of the Protocol further clarifies the definition of "civilians" as all persons who are classified as non-combatants and do not participate in hostilities

(Bassiouni, 2016).¹ Despite these international efforts to protect civilians and people with disabilities, there remain blatant violations against the residents of Gaza and people with disabilities, who suffer the devastating effects of siege and bombardment. They are not provided with adequate care by the warring parties or even by non-governmental organizations, and their situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate day by day.

3.6 The Photo and Its Impact on Shaping International Public Opinion:

The photo is a crucial medium in the communication process, as it has become self-explanatory, requiring little to no effort from the viewer to interpret, especially when it is linked to a specific social and historical context in which it was captured. It appears to encapsulate the imagination, with its meaning fully realized as long as it has not been manipulated. In the era of modern technologies, the photo has become one of the unshakable empires, exposing and revealing many violent behaviors and transgressions. It navigates within the new communicative environment. It awakens its ancient symbolic fear by exposing the acts of great nations who purport to defend humanity. The photo aims to draw attention at directing people's opinion on the blatant injustices that take place in wars.

The photo revealed the United States in its war against Vietnam, in which they prohibited AL Jazeera and Al Arabiya from covering its invasion of Iraq. Similarly, the Syrian authorities prevented American photographer Rémi Ochlik and French photographers from capturing the destruction. The Libyan authorities assassinated Al Jazeera photographer Ali Hassan Jaber, and the Zionist entity has repeatedly targeted journalists and photographers during its invasions of southern Lebanon and its continuous bombing of Gaza, where 107 Palestinian journalists have been martyred since October 7, 2023. The photo is critical in influencing people's opinion on matters where opinions are sought. The concept of public opinion dates back to the French Revolution, when French politicians used the term to express the attitudes, opinions, and interests of major merchants and industrialists during the post-revolutionary period. This concept became more defined after World War I and World War II.

Public opinion is defined as the expression of the views of a group of people regarding specific issues, matters, or proposals that concern them, whether they are in favor or opposed to them. Their stance necessarily influences events in either a positive or negative way, directly or indirectly, at a specific moment in history (Tareh, 2020, p. 387).

The psychological dimension is one of the critical aspects leveraged by photos, particularly media photos, which carry narrative structures within them. These photos do not embellish wars but serve as witnesses and interpreters of tensions, tragedies, and sorrows. The photo of the martyrdom of the child

Muhammad al-Durrah in his father's arms, killed by the Israeli occupying forces and widely disseminated by the media at that time, elicited global popular sympathy and mobilized large crowds in protest against the brutality of the Israeli occupation. Similarly, photos that capture the torture of political prisoners in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq shocked people, especially in the Arab world, revealing unprecedented American barbarism that left profound psychological scars on viewers. These photos and their impact spurred extensive popular movements in both the Western and Arab worlds in protest against the invasion of Iraq (Al-Hassani, 2015, p. 12).

The photo of the Syrian child Aylan Kurdi, whose lifeless body was found on a beach, had a profound impact. Turkish photojournalist Nilüfer Demir, working for CNN Türk, reported that she was struck by a sense of numbness upon seeing the photo of the small child washed ashore from Bodrum, with only his red jacket and blue pants remaining. The photo, depicting the child face down with waves brushing against him, received widespread global condemnation for the deteriorating conditions in Syrian regions and the reluctance of countries to accept migrants.

Visual Forms of Israeli Violations Following the war of Tofan al-Aqsa (al-Aqsa Flood):

3.7 The War on Gaza: The Myth of the Photo and the Madness of Bombardment:

New media has played a significant role in highlighting the violence depicted in photos from Gaza since October 7. Social media and media coverage, in addition to traditional journalism, have worked to expose war crimes and the violations faced by the media community in the region. The Israeli entity has targeted approximately 107 Palestinian journalists since the onset of the war of Tofan al-Aqsa. Israel has also killed the son of journalist Wael Dhadouh and nearly targeted his entire family, as an act of retribution and silencing of the voice of truth, similar to what was previously done to the late journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh to intimidate journalists and obscure their work in an attempt to hide their crimes. However, this did not prevent photos of destruction from reaching the public through social media, despite algorithms attempting to remove Gaza war photos from the platform. Nevertheless, the photos of devastation remain etched in the minds of the world. Even if we become accustomed to seeing them, the bitterness and pain they convey cannot be forgotten. The violence of the photo is embodied in its content, endowing it with human significance and operating within a realm of visual horror.

For instance, a child captured by cameras emerges from the rubble that was his own home moments earlier, covered in smoke, looking around in shock and unable to grasp what has happened, seeing the destruction around him. Everything

has become a pile of stones and dirt. He understands nothing and asks his rescuers in a breathless Gaza dialect about his father and his grandmother. Unable to grasp anything, he closes his eyes, surrendering to the arms of young volunteers who struggle to contain their sadness as they lift him off the ground (Al-Sakkar, 2023).



Examples of photos that document the Zionist crime against Palestinian children

Collective memory can retain a comprehensive record of the barbarity practiced by the Zionist entity, particularly in cases of violating and taking the lives of young children or turning them into homeless orphans. The treatment of people with disabilities, such as the photo of Muhammad Bahar and others, will remain a stain on the Zionist entity regardless of the passage of time. Further below, the photo of Bahar's assassination, symbolizing the loss of innocence will be studied and analyzed.

The visual crimes committed by Zionist entity against the Palestinian population surpass the most horrific dystopias one can imagine. While the eyes may become accustomed to seeing pain or it may be forgotten, the memory cannot erase the scenes of terror, bombing, displacement, and the cries of children searching for their parents in the darkness of the night, trying to comfort one another. How can any memory forget these children trembling in fear and terror?

Despite the mobilization of public opinion against these disgraceful scenes, international courts and organizations have remained inactive. Will the perpetrators ever be held accountable for their actions, even if these crimes become obscured by the passage of time.

3.8 The Innocence of Child Muhammad Bahar Versus the Barbarity of the Zionist Entity

The Zionist criminal discourse has proliferated through the photo of the disabled Palestinian child across social media platforms, an additional crime to the tainted record of the Zionist occupation in Gaza. Child Muhammad Bahar was born in the Shuja'iyya district of Gaza with Down syndrome and autism, a condition caused by an increase in the number of chromosomes. Scientifically, it is a genetic incident occurring during the division of the ovule, resulting in a total of forty-seven (47) chromosomes instead of the normal number of forty-six (46). This condition, specifically affecting chromosome twenty-one (21), is more common in our society and is known as Down syndrome, named after John

Langdon Down (1866), who was the first scientist to define the symptoms of trisomy 21. It is important to note that this chromosomal abnormality can manifest in various forms due to increased copies of chromosomes, which may involve chromosome thirteen (13), eighteen (18), or twenty-one (21).

This chromosomal defect leads to dysfunction in the brain and nervous system, resulting in intellectual disability, language communication problems, and disorders in cognitive and motor skills. Additionally, it is characterized by distinct facial and bodily features and congenital defects in body organs and functions (Hoalah, 2011, p. 93).

Muhammad Bahar, a young man with Down syndrome, lived with his family consisting of his mother and siblings. Due to his inability to move, his mother attended to all his needs; he was unable to drink water, eat, dress himself, or perform any other basic activities. One day, after the war of Tofan al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa flood), the family was shocked to find their home surrounded by a military operation that besieged their home on Al-Nazzaz Street in the Shuja'iyya district. This siege lasted for seven consecutive days. The Israeli forces did not limit their actions to surrounding the house and the area; they also infiltrated the residents' homes, destroying all the furniture and belongings they found. Their destruction went beyond the physical, as they unleashed trained dogs with vicious fangs, tearing mercilessly at anyone in their path. Because Muhammad was unconscious, he remained seated as usual, even when the dog started to gnaw at his arm.

While the dog bit the arm of the child causing blood to flow, Muhammad remained oblivious. He continued to pat the dog with his other hand and spoke to it gently, saying "It's enough, my dear," as if speaking to a tame and gentle animal. Despite the family's desperate cries and pleas for the soldiers to stop the explaining that the child was disabled, there was no response. The purpose of the siege was evidently to revel in the suffering of the vulnerable, and to satisfy their thirst for brutality.

Around forty Israeli soldiers entered the house, firing in all directions. A group of these criminals surrounded the family members, pointing their weapons at Muhammad, who had already been a martyr. They also harassed his siblings, Saif and Adam, to instill fear and terror in their hearts. They then expelled everyone from the house in a humiliating manner, leaving Muhammad behind. The family screamed and begged for mercy for the helpless disabled young man, but mercy found no way to the hearts of the Israelis, who are accustomed to committing crimes.



A drawing circulated on social media depicting the moment when dogs mauled the arm of the child, Muhammad Bahar.

Despite the critical case of the child, whom the soldiers had confined to one of the rooms to remain there alone after they removed his sister, mother, and his two brothers from the house, disregarding the mother's repeated pleas to save her disabled son and give him a sip of water to ease his pain, her requests went unanswered. Muhammad remained in that case until he breathed his last, despite the family's desperate attempts to bring a doctor from the Red Crescent to treat his wounds. However, the martyr became an easy prey for the dogs of the Zionists (Al-Youm Al-Sabea, 2024).



A real photo of the child, Muhammad Bahar, before his death, shared by his family on social media.

The story of Muhammad has taken on many forms and has been reiterated in various ways throughout Gaza. Were it not for the photos and media coverage, no one would have heard of such brutality that surpasses even the actions of

wild beasts. The Zionist soldiers are driven by religious extremism, which has deluded them into believing in their historical and religious right to Palestine, viewing anyone who resists or denies this right as evil and anti-Semitic.

The roots of the psychological complex afflicting these extremists date back to the 16th century, during the emergence of the Protestant Reformation. This movement emphasized the belief in the Old Testament of the Torah and viewed the Jews through a biblical lens as the "dispersed people of Palestine." Many Protestants came to believe in the millennial prophecy that the Jews would once again gather in Palestine in preparation for the awaited return of the Messiah, who would then convert them to Christianity.

A form of non-Jewish Zionism developed among the adherents of Protestant churches, who constitute the majority of the populations in Britain, the United States, the Netherlands, and nearly half of Germany. This non-Jewish Zionism was particularly prevalent among Protestants who supported the Zionist project based on religious beliefs. On the other hand, Europe, especially in the 19th century, experienced political changes unprecedented in its history. The gradual emergence of modern European states since the French Revolution against monarchical rule in 1789 led to the spread of nationalist ideas and sentiments. Secular mechanisms were put in place that divided religion and the state and as a result, the position of the church that was once firmly in control of power became marginalized.

In contrast, Jews were emancipated and granted full citizenship rights, particularly in Western Europe, which facilitated their integration into these societies and systems. This allowed them to ascend to higher political, economic, and social positions, thereby achieving greater influence in the arena of politics, economics, and global affairs (Saleh, 2012, p. 24). The colonial plans of the British Empire further encouraged the idea of occupying Palestine to open a route to India, which played a role in the establishment of a Zionist state as promised by the Balfour Declaration. This declaration paved the way for the occupation of Palestine. The remaining Arab territories were subsequently subjected to British occupation (Al-Sarahanah, 2008, p. 296). Today, these occupiers continue to kill and displace the rightful owners of the land in pursuit of a religious falsehood.

3- Semiotic Analysis of the Photo:



A photo/ A photo produced by artificial intelligence that has been circulated by social media users to represent the innocence of Muhammad Bahar and the sorrow of Gaza. The viewer of the photo can infer that it is an output of artificial intelligence, yet it mimics the pain of reality in an excessively dramatic manner, as the creator has skilfully extracted its symbolic meaning.

A-The Denotative Level of the Photo:

When the naked eye engages with the content through a perceptual glance, it perceives a photo of a young man with a flat face and nasal bridge, almond-shaped eyes tilted slightly, holding back tears, small ears, and a short neck. His damp hair is parted at the forehead. The photo is set against a residential cityscape, prominently featuring mosque minarets. The background, which merges with the sky, is dominated by winter scenes of a cloudy sky, pierced by light suggesting lightning, and streaked with rain threads. The dominant color in the photo is a gradient of grey, emanating from the black edges of the frame. At the bottom of the photo, the words "Let me go, my dear! That's enough" are inscribed.

B-The Connotative Level of the Photo:

The photo of Muhammad Bahar conveys the painful narrative of colonial violence, which embodies nothing but tragedies. This photo embodies both a crime and an atrocity, compounded by the underlying context of colonialism. It is, first and foremost, a crime against humanity, and secondly, a blatant violation of the rights of a disabled person. Then, how can the Zionist entity responsibly classify such an act? Despite the photo's lack of iconicity, it has all the qualities of resemblance, even within its artificial construction, and mirrors similarities in

its many details.

For instance, when discussing the signified or the referent, it nearly never means the same thing in verbal language, as the referent differs from the word that designates it. The case is entirely different with the photo because the signified exists within the photo. It is the photo itself, which cannot exist without it. Ultimately, what is presented holds its own specific reference, its pure presentation. Thus, Muhammad Bahar's photo alludes to other children, and it is not far-fetched to say that the photo is the presence of the absence of the subject. The photo is defined as a lived presence of a real absence, where this reality is absent and realized through the form-the photo-then resurfaces as a memory of another photo. In this context, we find ourselves engaged in contemplation, imagining reality or the reality of the imagined, as Edgar Morin suggests. The photo is something that represents something else (Al-Zahir, 2011, p. 38).

From this perspective, the photo represents a reconstruction of the world rather than merely a reflection, especially when it comes to issues of military violence in war. It does not embrace artistic celebration, as seen during the Gulf War when America imposed strict media censorship. Instead, the photo of Muhammad breaks free from falsehoods and embraces truth through symbolic resemblance that transcends artifice.

The photo, produced through Photoshop, touches upon the symbolic significance of the depiction, portraying Muhammad with tear-filled eyes as an expression of the unconscious fear and terror that Muhammad controlled, but which the features of a child with Down syndrome, evident in his appearance, could not conceal.

The eyes have a unique language within the human body, and that they are one of the most focused-upon organs in the process of communication, providing insight into the overall state of the body. Eyes are the windows to the soul. Muhammad Bahar's gaze appears innocent, reflecting the spontaneity with which he played with a dog. The positioning of the photo with the visual markers above the Dome of the Rock carries profound significance. It suggests that Muhammad's ascending soul is symbolically borne by the sacredness of Jerusalem, representing the enduring strength of Islam, whose banner will never be tainted by any other banner. Islam, mosques, the call to prayer and the words of God will persist despite the sorrowful cloud that hangs over the resilient and wounded Gaza.

The clouds of rainy nights surrounding the photo do not represent the idea of safety but the dullness of the winter seasons with its cruelty, severe cold, and heavy rain. These components are a great reflection of the sadness and hardships of life in Gaza, the subject the photo constitutes, the tension of being present and being absent. This is seen in the capture of Muhammad as an innocent, oppressed figure in Palestine: when Muhammad is absent, Jerusalem is present; when Jerusalem is present, Muhammad is absent-a concept known as tensional

semiotics. The rain in the picture is a metaphor that represents the huge tears that fall in Gaza due to the mourning, violence, and fatalities that they go through.

Color is not determined solely by the psychophysiological structure of humans and their mental processes; rather, it is deeply connected to our imaginations, knowledge, and the social and cultural contexts that endow it with meaning through social conventions. This complexity prevents color from having a unified discourse or a comprehensive interpretive framework. Groupe μ has demonstrated the extent to which color is context-dependent and has argued that color exists within a comprehensive social encyclopedia. Some colors are activated in specific social contexts, while others operate intuitively (such as universally recognized colors) in cases like the ordering of colors from pure to mixed (primary and secondary). Some colors are recognized only by certain individuals and represent the highest levels of conscious formation (Grove, 1982, p. 229).

Overall, color is a cultural phenomenon imbued with symbolic meanings by human experience. The gray hue that dominates the photo symbolizes sadness, melancholy, boredom, despair, monotony, calmness, ambiguity, and negativity. The black frame of the photo, however, represents the sorrow and grief that overshadow the people of Palestine due to the harsh colonization. At the bottom of the photo is the linguistic message, "Let me go, my dear! That's enough" the words repeated by Muhammad Bahar while being attacked by the dog, with his innocence failing to realize the danger. In human culture and collective imagination, dogs symbolize guardianship, loyalty, and faithfulness. In this tragic incident, however, the dog became a fierce enemy because of training and conditioning, which made Muhammad a vulnerable victim. With that being said, it reveals the arbitrary nature of Israeli occupation; illustrating that their brutality spares no one.

The creator of the photo opted not to feature Muhammad Bahar nor the dog explicitly; rather invested in the symbolic aspect of the linguistic message. Therefore, that allows the viewer to use their imagination to reconstruct the painful scene, highlighting the senselessness of an act devoid of any human values, which might otherwise connect to the conscience.

4-The Study Findings:

1. Such an analysis of this image shows that it is a complicated sociological machinery where the visual, linguistic and symbolic signs overlap to form a human discourse pushing beyond the boundaries of literal meaning. The innocent face marked by the features of Down Syndrome and the tearful eyes constitute at the denotive level, the traits of an ordinary young man. Still, their placement within a dark visual context dominated by gray tones, and a black frame transports the viewer to the connotative level where individual innocence becomes a

collective symbol of the victims, and personal tears turn into a metaphor for the tears of wounded Gaza. The misty background and faint silhouettes of minarets perform a dual symbolic function. On the one hand, they reflect an atmosphere of sorrow and melancholy; on the other hand, they impart a spiritual meaning that affirms that resilience of religious identity and collective existence.

2. The linguistic phrase: “Leave me, my love, enough” functions as an intensified sign, which does not explain what is visible, as it opens the space for imagination of what is absent. It grants the image an extra emotional dimension by evoking the voice of the victim and placing the viewer before the imaginative experience, which summons the whole tragic scene. One of the essential characteristics of sociological discourse, through the interplay between the visual and linguistic, is embodied: the convergence of signs and the interchange of their roles in the meaning production.

3. The image is found on the dialectic of presence and absence, where Muhammad is present as a symbol; yet absent as a body, and Jerusalem is present as a symbol but absent as a liberated reality. The semiotic tension gives the image expressive power, making it a space suspended between hope and despair between innocence and violence. Not only is the presence of the gray color and the black frame understood in its physiological dimension, but in its cultural and social dimension, carrying widely recognized connotations of grief, death, and despair. Consequently, it reinforces collective memory as well as grants the sign symbolic potency.

4. Regardless of whether the image was produced through Photoshop or artificial intelligence, its semiotic value is not defined by its photographic authenticity but by its capacity to construct a human and collective meaning. It does not represent reality as it is; rather, it reconstructs it through the intensification of symbols and the stirring of emotions, becoming both a symbolic testimony against colonial violence and a visual embodiment of oppressed innocence. From this perspective, two additional conclusions may be drawn:

- The production of the image through digital techniques does not invalidate its symbolic documentary function; but rather it grants it a connotative dimension, which renders it closer to an “*icon*”- one that immortalizes meaning instead of a material moment.
- The resort to artificial intelligence or digital processing reveals the evolution of visual resistance tools, where technology is transformed from a mere technical means into a rhetorical instrument, which contributes to shaping collective consciousness and retelling the story from a resistant human perspective.

5. Down syndrome is not merely as a genetic medical condition, but it is rather transformed within the visual discourse into a semiotic sign that amplifies innocence and human fragility. The image of Muhammad Bahar, with his distinctive features, no longer simply refers to his intellectual disability, but

becomes an intensified visual symbol, which exposes the brutality of colonial crime when it targets a being so innocent that he is unaware of the context of war or its mechanisms. In this way, Down syndrome becomes a doubled semantic element within the image, shifting the tragedy from an individual event to a symbolic testimony of profound human fracture-one that magnifies the horror of occupation and exposes the failure of international conventions to protect the most vulnerable bodies in moments of conflict.

6. The photo is based on an embodied act that necessitates detachment from the singular structures associated with its composition. Instead, it demands an in-depth semantic exploration of the socio-cultural context in which it was produced to define its significance and interpretive directions. Analyzing the photo of the child Muhammad Bahar reveals the following:

7. The photo encapsulates the suffering of all Palestinians in a scene that reflects the the human rights violations and war crimes, as well as the genocides committed by the Israeli occupation against the people and landowners.

8. The linguistic and visual levels of the photo, enriched with certain rhetorical embellishments, significantly contributed to the emergence of symbolic implications. These implications interacted with socio-cultural dimensions to highlight the communicative function of media coverage regarding the crimes of the Jews against vulnerable groups in society, especially children, including those with disabilities.

9. Despite the mechanized production nature of the photo, it closely mimics the original representation of "Muhammad Bahar" and conveys the suffering of the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza, by capturing both overt and latent details.

10. The studied photo documented a war crime against an innocent child, representing just one example among many. The UNICEF spokesperson confirmed that four children are killed or injured every hour, a shocking number reflecting the occupation's intent to exterminate Gaza's population and target women and children, in violation of international laws and norms.

11. The photo challenges the viewer with questions about the motives behind committing such a crime against a disabled person without targeting his siblings. Was it meant to intimidate and scare, an uncalculated crime, an attempt to deepen the wounds of Gaza's residents, or to undermine Hamas? The photo has profoundly and uniquely affected public opinion, despite the fact that public opinion is familiar with the crimes of the Jews, who are seen as inheritors of violence from the Holocaust.

12. The political and propaganda mobilization employed by the Zionist entity and supported by the U.S. has exhausted all ethical standards that could temper warfare and prevent violations and killing, to the extent that ethics have been overshadowed by Jewish barbarism.

13. The criminal behavior ingrained in the Jews' desire for taking revenge on Gaza's residents has led them to annihilate unarmed civilians, extending their criminality to the mistreatment of people with disabilities, as exemplified by the case of the innocent young man Muhammad Bahar.

14. The Zionist entity has violated all international charters, laws, and treaties through its extermination of Gaza's population, aerial bombardments, and unethical practices such as cutting off water and electricity and blocking food and aid to war victims.

15. The crimes and genocide committed by the Zionist entity in Gaza lack a clear explanation for these heinous actions-whether they constitute war, genocide, or crimes-since none of these terms fully correspond to the warfare ethics, laws, and international norms.

16. What is happening in Gaza today and what was inflicted upon Muhammad Bahar have no equivalent in all the wars and crimes committed by humanity since its inception. This raises the question of the relevance of ethics, charters, treaties, international organizations, and courts. Will the entity be held accountable for its inhuman crimes in Gaza?

5- Conclusion:

There is no doubt that a photo conveys significant signs and semantic meanings which are deeply rooted in the production conditions and contexts. The photo of the martyr Muhammad Bahar, embodies many symbolic meanings, reflecting the suffering of an entire people subjected to barbaric colonial actions. The photo has deeply impacted global public opinion, which has condemned the savagery and unjustifiable crimes perpetrated by occupying forces who claim to uphold human rights. The circulation of a photo depicting a young man with Down syndrome ignited international outrage and stirred public opinion. Despite this, the Zionist occupation continues to commit crimes and violations. However, the image, in particular, serves as a stark reminder of the brutality and vileness inherent in colonialism. The atrocities committed against Muhammad Bahar and the ongoing events in Gaza are unparalleled. Will Netanyahu and his followers be held accountable for their crimes against the Palestinian people and against Muhammad Bahar, this innocent angel?

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