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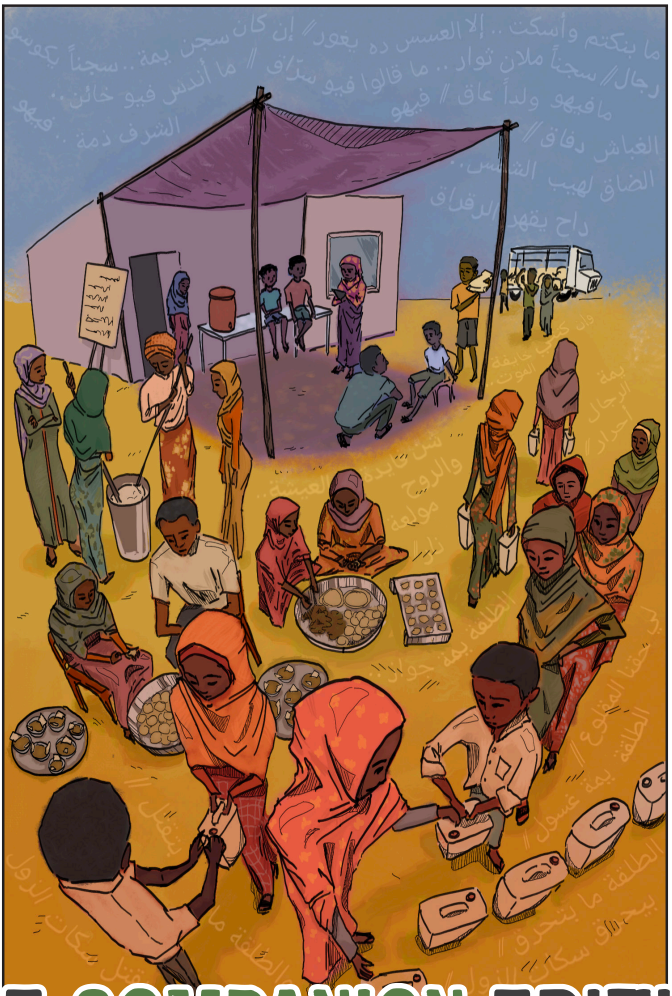

THE COMPANION EDITION

WRITTEN REVOLUTION ©

About Us

Written Revolution is a publication intended to allow the unempowered voices on campus to share their creative projects in a collective framework. Fundamentally, this publication platforms revolutionary thought on campus - we believe that writing and art are among the most powerful tools for conducting a revolution. We are aligned with the liberation of all oppressed peoples, with global indigenous rights movements, with people-oriented philosophies and practices, and with anti-capitalist sentiment. In particular, we hope to spotlight projects that engage with culture and community by producing radical shifts away from the hierarchical and individualistic.

We share essays, poems, sketches, cartoons, and many other forms of content in order to further the liberatory frame of mind. Written Revolution is open to those who support our cause, and our content submission is open to all MIT community members. We also summarize revolutionary actions and activities taken on campus to further the call to liberation, be it through student unions, grassroots movements and demonstrations, or large-scale organizing. We are here to encourage such collective action on our campus. We are the revolution, and we are writing our own history.

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Seventh Edition Cover Art Grey Sarmiento

MIT SPOCS FOR GAZA

AN EXTENDED INTERVIEW FEATURE


SPOCs
for
GAZA

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPANION

Welcome to the companion edition of Written Revolution 7. Our main edition focused on mutual aid, and we amplified some examples – the MIT Coalition's Mutual Aid Gaza campaign, Sudanese Resistance Committees, and Boston's own Heal the Hood. In this companion edition, we focus on a specific program which we feel deserves attention for its incredible efforts to help students in Gaza continue their education despite the genocide they face. This program is called MIT SPOCs for Gaza, and it is offered via MIT's Open Learning platform. In our first-ever interview feature, we spoke with several people involved in SPOCs, from the executive side to the course TAs and even to the students who benefited from the program in Gaza and Cairo. Our goal is to show SPOCs as an incredible program of mutual aid – an initiative which empowers the Palestinian community it serves rather than create dependencies that undermine self-sufficiency and self-determination.

But first, we wanted to go back to the basics: what even is mutual aid? As we expressed in the introduction to the main edition, there are many terms which describe collective labor within communal societies, especially within indigenous communities, such as al-'ouna in Palestine and nafeer in Sudan. In the literature of the Global North, the specific term "mutual aid" has an even broader origin: biology.

In his now classic essay entitled Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution, Peter Kropotkin, a Russian prince-turned-anarchist thinker and naturalist, reflected on his observations of the natural world from within a post-Darwinian culture. He challenges some of the basic tenets of biology espoused by the so-called Darwinists, who popularized their own interpretations of Darwin's work by coining and spreading slogans such as "survival of the fittest" and "eat or be eaten". Kropotkin rejected this cynical view of the natural world – instead, he reflects on his own observations of intra-species and even inter-species collaboration to conclude that:

"We at once perceive that though there is an immense amount of warfare and extermination going on amidst various species, and especially amidst various classes of animals, there is, at the same time, as much, or perhaps even more, of mutual support, mutual aid, and mutual defence amidst animals belonging to the same species or, at least, to the same society. Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle."

Kropotkin was not directly contradicting Darwin, and this is not an anti-evolutionist perspective; instead, Kropotkin suggested that perhaps there were forces besides struggle and competition which could lend a given population some evolutionary advantage. He asserts that "prac-

ticing mutual aid is the surest means for giving each other and to all the greatest safety, the best guarantee of existence and progress, bodily, intellectual and moral."

There were important reasons to draw this distinction and make this direct contradiction against the Darwinists. For one, many Darwinists such as Herbert Spencer, who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest", went on to produce a series of papers and essays propagating pseudoscientific and racist theories which would later be referred to as "social Darwinism". These theorists borrowed selective quotes and passages from Darwin (and were often in communication with him) to justify capitalist and imperialist policies on the basis that the traits of wealth generation and bootstrapping could be "inherited" by future generations and societies, and that the societies which did not emphasize rugged individualism were simply inferior. Kropotkin saw things differently, as did Marx when he wrote one of his basic principles of socialist economic organization: "[Take] from each according to [their] ability, [give] to each according to [their] needs".

The concept of mutual aid is therefore a crucial concept in developing anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist praxis. And the systems of capitalism and Empire understand this – despite all you might hear about the militancy of the Black Liberation Army, the real reason why the State decided to bring the Black Panther Party to its knees is because of its mutual aid program. After all, in 1969, the night before the Chicago chapter was set to launch their Free Breakfast Program for schoolchildren in poor communities, Chicago police broke into the church in which the food was being stored and urinated on it, causing the launch to be delayed.

Our call in the 7th edition of Written Revolution is to get organized. We need to begin caring for our neighbors, our floormates, our fellow city residents, and our neighborhoods by working together for the common good. The State has shown us time and time again that it will not protect us. The contradictions between our material conditions (our wages, our rent, our grocery prices) and the interests of the State (tariffs, trade wars, recessions) has never been higher than it is today. Many people believe that this is the moment which will incubate revolution – but without structures of mutual aid and support, the freezing cold winds of Empire will stifle its growth. Let us not allow the collapse of an Empire to destroy our communities or disrupt our unity. We must all do our part to take care of our own, from Cambridge to Roxbury, from Sudan to the Congo, from the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the forests of Telangana, and from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

THE PEN & THE SWORD

REFLECTIONS RESISTANCE

ON A SEMESTER OF THROUGH EDUCATION

Education is a cornerstone of Palestinian society. According to the most recent report from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Palestine's population has a 97.8% literacy rate, with all demographics between the ages of 18 and 45 achieving over 99% literacy rates in 2022. These standards are even higher in Gaza, with an overall literacy rate of 98.2%. In 2023, 51% of people in Palestine above the age of 18 had attained at least a high school diploma, including 48.9% of adults in the West Bank and 54.3% of adults in Gaza. Trends over the last few years have seen a significant increase in the number of Bachelor's degree holders and post-baccalaureate education.

Contrast this with the physical state of the education system in Gaza today. Already over a year ago, according to the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing (and MIT DUSP Professor) Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure under Israeli airstrikes and genocidal military campaign fell under the description of "domicide", i.e., "the widespread or systematic destruction of homes". A few months later, in April of 2024, human rights observers and UN Special Rapporteurs also concluded that the "pattern of attacks on schools, universities, teachers, and students" in Gaza amounts to scholasticide.

This disturbing facet of Israel's military action underscores its genocidal intent – in an attempt to dismantle Palestinian society and culture, the Zionist entity seeks to destroy every opportunity for Palestinians to pass down knowledge cultivated over centuries of indigenous existence and decades of resistance. Israel has launched attacks on over 200 educational institutions in Gaza, including schools and universities. They have attacked every single major university in the Gaza strip and destroyed over 80% of its schools. To anyone with a clear enough conscience to see through their obfuscation attempts via weak refrains of "human shields", it is obvious that Israel is engaged in a concerted effort to dismantle the education system that formed such revolutionary Palestinian scholars as Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, and Bassel al-Araj.

Students displaced from Gaza to Cairo, Egypt as well as students displaced internally within Gaza still retain their spirit of resilience. They continue to seek every opportunity to improve their conditions, including via education. So students, faculty, staff, and alumni of conscience came together to play our part. Through the resources of MITx, the dedication of MIT student and alumni TAs, and the instruction of MIT professors, the MIT Gaza Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs) program was delivered. Over the course of several months during the Fall semester, Palestinian students in Gaza and Cairo persevered against a horrific genocide to learn subjects such as Introduction to Computer Science (6.100A), Data Analysis for Social Scientists (14.301x), and Calculus 1A and Calculus 1B (18.01 A & B), taught by MIT professors and TA'd by students at MIT, Harvard, University of Toronto, American University of Cairo (AUC), and from many other parts of the world. In our first-ever interview-style feature, we at Written Revolution attempt to bring to light the amazing efforts of our comrades at MIT SPOCs4Gaza and the brilliance of the students who continued the Palestinian tradition of excellence in education.

Editor's Note: *The following feature contains transcriptions of multiple conversational interviews with students, TAs, support team volunteers, and executive members of SPOC discussing their educational journey, experiences with online learning and teaching, and thoughts for the importance of and future of the program. The transcripts have been edited for grammar and clarity while preserving the original wording and intent.*

All names of SPOCs TAs, executive directors, and student support volunteers have been shortened or changed regardless of their citizenship status in order to protect the identity of those involved who could be at risk. It seems almost absurd that we should have to obscure someone's name for participation in a purely educational program at an academic university such as MIT, which is known for its online education platforms. However, recent events nationally and even locally have demonstrated the willingness of American Empire to persecute people for their perceived political views, creating a situation which is more precarious than ever for our international community. Our interviewees affirm their solidarity with one another; if even one of them has cause to hide their name due to this draconian repression, then all of them would do so as well. We will do our utmost to protect the people who have helped bring this incredible program to life.

The introduction and editor's notes are written by the Written Revolution editors and not representative of any political view of the program; SPOCs is an academic and community-centered program intended to provide students from Gaza with an opportunity to continue their education, and its framing as a mutual aid project is intended to highlight the importance of community empowerment via education.

Finally, the perspectives documented here are the perspectives of various individuals, some of whom are closer to Gaza than others. The content of their perspectives is informed by their own background as well as their experience with SPOCs, but these interviews are not endorsed by SPOCs nor do they constitute a complete view of the SPOCs program, which is multifaceted. This interview piece is an endeavour of the Written Revolution team, and was not an idea formed within SPOCs – it therefore does not necessarily represent SPOCs as a program.

We would like to thank our interviewees for their time and their thoughtful comments:

Prof. Khashkhash, SPOCs executive director
Taja, SPOCs executive director
Kholoud, Head TA for Intro to CS
Nai, Head TA for Calculus
Raghad Abdul Rahim, SPOCs student in Gaza
Tasneem Abu Shaban, SPOCs student in Cairo
Rose, student support team coordinator
Enriqueta, student support volunteer

PART ONE

EDUCATION DURING A GENOCIDE

CREATING SPOCS

Given MIT's stated mission to "make the world a better place," it might seem natural for the MIT administration to lead the way in offering educational and research opportunities during times of crisis where academic programs have been disrupted. In the case of the prolonged genocide in Gaza, MIT administration maintained the wall of silence and complicity that epitomizes the Palestine exception – action was instead prompted by a faculty- and student-led initiative. We asked Professor Khashkhash (Prof. Kh), the originator of the idea, how this remarkable program came to life here at MIT.

Prof. Kh: Well, nine months went by and we were sitting on our hands. Eventually it occurred to me that MIT has this long history of online education, starting with OpenCourseWare – why shouldn't we try to make use of that in Gaza? I was initially unclear about what the response would be, but I got on a Zoom call with the leaders of Open Learning, and to my amazement, they jumped on the idea. They proposed running these Small Private Online Courses – they put down some parameters, like the number of courses and number of students they could accommodate, but they were enthusiastic about making that contribution. It's just an example of what we should all be thinking about – how can we, as individuals and as institutions, do something constructive.

At that time I thought – this is going to be easy! I made a selection of courses by looking at the catalogue, set up a survey and sent it out through whichever channels I could think of in Gaza. My thought was that this would just be online courses, and I could push the button to start them and that would be the end of it. Then I went to one of the MENA+ faculty support lunches and mentioned this idea, and it generated a lot of excitement from the students there. That led to this incredible outpouring of creativity and energy to make this SPOCs project much more meaningful and powerful than I had imagined it at the beginning. And I think more than the people at Open Learning had imagined as well.

How does it compare to other educational efforts on the ground, and to MIT's usual online learning and OpenCourseWare initiatives?

Prof. Kh: This kind of deep penetration into a very at-risk population with intense buy-in from students here – it's unique in the history of MITx. It also seems to be unique in Gaza – there's a lot of online education going on in various ways there, including from Palestinian universities like Birzeit and the universities in Gaza themselves, and Imed Romdhani has a wonderful program to give free certificate-granting access for EDx and CoursEra courses to thousands of students in Gaza. But this Gaza SPOCs program has been unique in terms of its high-touch aspect, in the intense relationships that have developed between stu-

dents there and their peers here, a complete circuit. It's been really important for both groups.

SPOCs faced many challenges even from the start, many of them anticipated and many of them not. We spoke with Taja to learn more about how the SPOCs team began to discover and address these challenges.

Taja: Let's start with the student side - the number one issue was something that we did expect, to worry about any of that.

But in Gaza specifically, it was really tough. Even though we did have internet hubs that were available in Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah, some students live far away from these spaces. And while we were running the program, it was very dangerous for these students to walk these distances to access the hubs. We did want to have a hub in North Gaza at the time as well, but while it was being built, it got destroyed [by the IOF]. It

which was the internet connection. Not just the internet connection but also the electricity, because the students had to charge their devices. So even though we planned sessions for each course, for example twice a week they had to attend a synchronous session to review the topics that they have, still only 3-4 students from Gaza would attend. This has been easier for students in Cairo, because they just meet up at the AUC [American University of Cairo] and don't have was very difficult for the students in North Gaza. This was another major challenge – as part of the program we provided psycho-social support gatherings in Gaza, and they were great, they were beneficial for the students, but it was only offered to those in more southern areas of Gaza. Students in the northern areas of Gaza were not able to benefit from this. Hopefully in the next round we don't run into something similar.

Students learned about the

SPOCs program through a network of contacts – members of Palestine@MIT helped by tapping into their networks to ensure that students in Gaza received the interest form which helped the SPOCs team pick the courses. There were also several SPOCs volunteers with connections to the AUC who were able to reach students displaced to Cairo. We asked Proh. Kh and Taja about how the admissions process worked for SPOCs.

Taja: Admissions was a very tough process for me, personally. I realized that the best way to admit students to such a program that is growing iteratively, with nothing set as a base, was to have 1-to-1 contact with the students.

Prof. Kh: The first hard problem was finding a network to distribute this opportunity. That was slow to evolve – I think we extended the sign-up period because we slowly became aware of more networks. But getting the involvement of students here – I had almost nothing to do with it, that was completely generated by the students on the exec team and so many others. They created this whole organization with different committees and groups and responsibilities. They came up with this amazing hackathon that quickly generated a lot of material, and they helped drive the realization of what was needed to make these courses meaningful for students in Gaza – that is to say, the supplementary material that was generated, putting things on Google Drive rather than the MITx framework – all that was a revelation to me, and I watched in amazement as the students put that together.

I would directly contact each of the students to see whether they still wanted to continue in the program, try to explain how the program would work, trying to sort of onboard them and explain how the materials can be accessed. I did this 1-to-1 contact for all of the students in Gaza and most of the students in Egypt, so it was very tough – I spent a good 2 weeks at least speaking to students 1-on-1. Some of them dropped out, some of them wanted a follow up afterward, and some of them, we became friends afterward, so it was a good thing for me too. At the time, communicating with students helped me understand the structure more and get a sense for how we can provide more of a benefit for them.

TEACHING DURING A GENOCIDE: LESSONS AND REFLECTIONS

An essential aspect of SPOCs is delivering the course material in a way that works within the students' capacities and needs. This is a very different environment from the traditional Teaching Assistant role at MIT – and required a significant level of dedication. We spoke with Kholoud, who served as a TA for the Intro to CS course, and Nai, Head TA for the calculus course, to learn about the early considerations of the TA team at SPOCs.

Kholoud: Initially we were debating whether we should include Gaza or not, because it was much harder. But then we decided that this was truly our goal, that we were going to try to offer this to students in Gaza. And then we had to scramble to get the schedule together and figure things out, and at some point we tried to test the internet in Gaza – I think they have like 1G or 2G internet speeds. We tested this on the current MITx platform, and it took maybe 15 minutes to load the lectures. So we had this crisis moment where we felt that it was not going to work out, and that was a low. Most of the material we were teaching was online material, and for example in CS you need tools to code, watch videos, test your code, etc. So a big focus of the work was taking this content and converting it into something that students could use offline. That was the biggest challenge, and the biggest difference between Gaza and Egypt as well.

We also started by teaching both Gaza and Egypt together, but it didn't go well. People in Egypt already had access to a university campus, they were sitting in classrooms, they had laptops, they had TAs in person with them. But students in Gaza had to disconnect every other second, some of them wouldn't be able to join at all and had to watch recordings offline, and so on. So that's when we decided to split the groups.

I worked mostly with the Gaza team, and it was very hard. Even emotionally it was hard. We here as students at MIT reach out to S^3 when we're sick; people in Gaza would reach out to us when they're being displaced, or when they have zero internet, or need to walk 30 minutes to reach the internet hub that we provided. It was a lot. I don't know if I have the words to describe it – they're resilient. I have so much respect for all the students.

Nai: The students in Gaza were not gathering in one location, because that was deemed unsafe, although we would have loved to put them together. In AUC, they were in a classroom, so technology wasn't an issue. They had a

lot more access to resources at AUC. Something that I didn't take into consideration is that people in AUC had a lot of other responsibilities besides this class that took their time away; some students had jobs outside of class. Whereas, the students in Gaza had less access to resources and less responsibilities, so they put in more time and effort to try to get access to the same information. It was an interesting juxtaposition.

What were the technological challenges that students faced?

Kholoud: We had students submit their work on paper a lot. What we would do was take the videos and assignments and all of that material and convert that into PDFs to send to the students. Some students were taking the whole course on their phone for example – and it's a coding class! That's really hard. And some students didn't have advanced phones – they would basically only be able to access the WhatsApp channels. They would sit down, write down all the questions, write their answers, and submit written solutions on WhatsApp.

For me, personally, the main reflection that I had was that they motivated me to continue my education. During the genocide, it's been easy to lose faith in everything and lose motivation for everything, and one of those things is also education, especially with how complicit these institutions are. But seeing people in Gaza, despite everything, despite having barely any electricity, living in tents, being displaced from their homes, not having access to technology, and so on, still wanting to study - it's not like they were doing it because they had to, it's a completely optional project that they were enrolled in. And they wouldn't just do it at the surface level, like an item off a checklist – they would put effort and try to seek every opportunity we gave them to learn more.

Nai: For our class, the attendance was quite low on Zoom a lot of the time. I remember we were upset because we thought the students weren't interested, but then we started getting a lot of questions about the content in the Zoom lectures – a lot of them were watching the video recordings. That got us more excited to see more engagement, but at the same time it was also upsetting because a lot of them couldn't join the Zoom and they would probably have liked to have more interaction.

A lot of people couldn't access and submit their homeworks through the MITx website; to overcome that we spent hours taking screenshots of the website and putting it into PDFs. We couldn't figure out how to give them multiple attempts on the problems like on the MITx site, so the learning feedback was lost a little.

We heard about the internet challenges that students faced – can you describe your approach to helping students obtain better internet connections?

Kholoud: From what I've heard from students, it was good to have the internet hub, but honestly it still wasn't enough. I was telling a student once that we had reached out to an internet hub and asked if she was able to visit it. But she said that she would have to either pay

5 Shekels (which is almost nothing in dollars but it's a lot in Gaza now) to get some transportation, or she would have to walk for 30 minutes to an hour. So even though in terms of distance it is still close to her, all the destruction made it impossible to get there. And it's dangerous to be walking during an active genocide. This was actually one of our first considerations – we were debating whether to set up a similar structure to AUC, where students in Gaza could go to an internet hub and join the meetings from there and have a classroom setting. But our biggest fear was that it was going to be an easy target for the IDF, and that was scary. Every time a student would not be responsive, the first thing I would think of was if something happened to them.

And the students would do the same for us – I know this isn't related to the question, but I found it very touching. During finals, with everything going on we kind of disappeared, we weren't as active here and there, and they would always check up on us. When the wildfires happened in California, they texted me asking if I was okay. I can't imagine – with all the things happening in Gaza – that their first thought would be to check up on us.

Nai: There was one student who would walk an hour each day to get to the internet cafe, sit there and do the class, then walk back. Although it was still difficult – she had to walk there and back, and she was also using a shared computer so she couldn't join each session – it still enabled her to join the class. I was amazed by how many connections we were able to make with the people on the ground to provide this support.

To optimize content for a low-resource environment, SPOCs hosted a "hackathon" to bring together SPOCs volunteers and beyond to work on the slides and other material. The TAs explained how they modified the content to make it more accessible for students, and how the idea for the hackathon came about.

Taja: At some point, as TAs, we did see the need for generating content that works best for students in Gaza – like PDFs, parsing files, and creating slides – that were better suited to a lower resource environment. So we ran a "hackathon" where a lot of MIT students volunteered and participated in creating the content that was very helpful for us. The hackathon helped in making the material more accessible – now we have reusable material for the next round. Hopefully we will use these same practices to build up, now that we have a better grip on what we're doing.

Kholoud: When we started the course, being honest, we were not ready. We had a lot of motivation and a lot of students who were interested, good ideas, and access to content from MIT. But in terms of logistics, content, and infrastructure – we were not ready. And it wasn't just that we were not ready – usually you know what you need to do to finish a project. But with how variable the situation is in Gaza, we did not even anticipate these challenges. We had assumptions about what these challenges might be, but we only got to know our needs and the constraints that we had when we started to interact with the

students. That was very different from other programs I've worked with, but it was also very special, because it meant there was a constant feedback loop between us and the students. But it got to the point where we had to make slides, download the content, simplify the content, write some of it in Arabic – and you know, we're all college students, so it was a lot of work. We just needed to sit down for a few hours and recruit people who wanted to be a part of this but who didn't necessarily speak Arabic – initially it was only people who spoke Arabic acting as TAs. So that's where the idea for the hackathon came from – let's make an intensive working session. So we sent out an invitation and a lot of people signed up, a very diverse group, and we got a lot of work done. It gave us a great push to continue with the course.

me to come help create content for this program that we have to teach students in Gaza. It was very vague, I wasn't sure what it was about, but I am passionate about education and about Palestine so I cancelled plans for the day and went to join it. There were multiple rooms, and you could join based on necessity or interest. There was one room for calculus, one for CS, and one for the data analysis course – I went to make slides for the data analysis class. It was great to connect people who were interested in helping Palestine – there are a lot of people who want to help but don't feel comfortable going to demonstrations. This was a way for them to contribute in a way that wasn't public facing. I met a lot of people that day, and spent maybe 3 hours with the people leading the statistics class. They told me which slides to take,

Nai: The hackathon is how I discovered SPOCs. I wasn't aware of it before. I remember getting an email on a random Sunday asking and I could work with others and ask whether the content I was creating was understandable.

I remember even after that day,

the Head TA for data analysis would reach out to me sometimes to ask for help with making slides. I love the idea of the hackathon because it connected people in that way, and connected us to the broader idea – once you feel responsible for something, you feel more excited to contribute to it. I wasn't part of the data analysis course anymore, I don't know any of the students, but I felt good about contributing to it through the hackathon, and continued to provide help when needed. Some TAs had issues with the slides later in the program, like inconsistencies between lectures, so it wasn't perfect, but it is always easier to build on something that exists than to start from scratch. More than just generating lots of content, I think the Hackathon helped the whole SPOCs program generate momentum.

How did you adapt materials during teaching to ensure they were accessible despite technological limitations? How did teaching in Arabic affect your approach to delivering the course materials?

Kholoud: The main thing was downloading the content. Basically we would go into MITx and download every video there, and for every video download all the subtitles and other files. MIT has subtitles in Arabic, so we would download those – the translation was not ideal, but it helped. We had one big Google drive where we stored these files – one folder for videos, one for exercises. Actually we couldn't download the exercises, so we had to rewrite those in a PDF and put that in the drive as well. We did the same for PSETs – these were the most challenging because they were very code-heavy, and we understood that not every student had the privilege of being able to run their code. It's crazy to think of that as a privilege, but we were very understanding of that when we graded. For exams, we basically assigned a big homework – we couldn't find a 2-hour chunk when everyone had an internet connection and could do the exam.

We had two sessions per week. The first part of each session was a few slides that were a summary of the material in the videos – we would expect students to watch the videos on MITx and then come to the class to ask questions, engage, and do a quick review. We recorded these meetings and uploaded them as well – and before the midterm we did a review session. A lot of students didn't know about the program when we launched it and so they joined partway through, so we did some smaller reviews to help them catch up.

All of the content was in English except the subtitles. But we tried to include examples that were more relatable to Palestinian people, mostly food examples like knafeh or the names of cities, we'd change those from American cities to Palestinian cities. Also the content itself was in English, but we would present it in a simpler style of English. There's a saying in Palestine – if an American person goes to Palestine and speaks English, you'd need someone to translate English to English! So we did that as well, and the hackathon helped a lot with that. We also tried to speak Arabic during the class itself. You can't really translate CS, it's a language itself.

It's not very intuitive to translate. But it does help a lot when you know your TA speaks Arabic and you can reach out to them in your mother tongue.

If you've ever been a TA at MIT before, how different was your experience in SPOCs? Were there any similarities?

of the challenges, they still finished this content in such a short period of time with very limited resources. At MIT you have office hours every day, the LAs and TAs are there for you – they didn't have that in Gaza.

One of the obvious similarities was the content of the class, we were teaching at the MIT level – I think that's a very important thing to men-

Kholoud: Actually, that same semester I was a Lab Assistant for 6.100, so it was the same class. The main difference that comes to mind immediately was that the students from Gaza had way more passion for the class, because they don't take it for granted. Also 6.100 has different variations – there's a shorter, faster version called 6.100A. And we finished the CS class in 2 or 2 1/2 months, which is equivalent to the 6.100A material. I'm honestly shocked at how smart these students are. Despite all tion. One of the main things that we should consider for SPOCs that we can learn from MIT is that when you take a class, especially at MIT, they always try to show you how you can use the content – whether it's applied to UROPs on campus or the next course in the sequence. And since we just threw ourselves into the first iteration of SPOCs, we didn't have answers to these questions. A lot of students came to us and wanted resources to learn web development, or game design, or machine

learning. People were interested to learn more.

Explain the Head TA role? How is that different from a normal TA for a class, and how did it help?

Nai: Halfway through the semester, the exec team reached out and asked if I would like to join a more logistical role. They said everyone was kind of figuring things out as they went along, and they needed somebody to be in charge of logistics because the TAs were burned out by having to curate content, teach, and also keep everything up to date, like the Zoom recording links and the slides. It sounds simple, but it's a lot to take on for one person – it's like a professor hosting a class. A regular TA wouldn't have to do all these things on the fly. You would normally prepare over the summer for your class and only have to deliver the content and grade throughout the semester. So it's a lot to expect of someone to manage all of this content creation and course organization while managing teaching.

The Head TA keeps track of which students are attending the class, and which students are not – and also which students are submitting their assignments. If I noticed that someone was missing some assignments in a row, I would message their TA and ask them to check in with them. It was easier on the TAs this way. They each had 2-3 students to keep on track, and if I noticed that one of them wasn't on track – missing some assignments or hadn't attended classes – I would message their TA and ask them to check in. We had a weekly meeting among the TAs, and I'd ask them to tell me about their classes and who attended, and I would note that down. They could have done that on their own, but it would have taken a lot of time – I spent a lot of time keeping track of this, and I wasn't even teaching! It also helped the TA feel less pressure – if they were unable to come to a TA group meeting, it was fine because I could check in with them separately, whereas otherwise if they have to keep each other accountable, it becomes easy for someone to slip through the cracks.

For the first two weeks, I attended their meetings to listen and learn what trouble they were having, and I talked to each TA on their own as well as the other Head TA to see what they were struggling with. It was mainly keeping track of things, and making sure everyone is responding to students on time. The students were very insecure about not being able to join classes. If they missed a class due to some WiFi problem, they would ask if they could drop out of the program because they felt like they weren't giving it their all. Instead of the other way around, where we are trying our best to give them this program, they felt they were failing us. They would apologize and say something along the lines of, "I'm very sorry that I missed this class, I embarrassed you all and I won't do it again." None of the attendance and submission tracking is to reprimand the students for falling behind, don't get me wrong, it is quite the opposite. They needed someone to put out those little fires when they cropped up, and send a message to the students: we're trying to do the best we can for you, so whenever you are able to attend is perfect, and if you can't attend, that's fine – we'll find a different way for you. It took a while to shift that mindset in the students, it took a lot of messaging – being overly communicative and responsive on Telegram.

LEARNING DURING A GENOCIDE: TWO STORIES OF RESILIENCE

At the center of the SPOCs community are the students, all of whom have faced traumatic events over the past year and a half of genocide and displacement. We spoke with two students, Raghad Abdul Rahim in Gaza and Tasneem Abu Shaban in Cairo, to hear their stories and experience through the program.

Tell us about yourselves and how you found out about SPOCs?

Raghad: My name is Raghad Abdul Rahim, a Palestinian from North Gaza. I finished high school in 2023, graduating from Yasser Arafat Secondary School for Gifted Students, where I was on the scientific stream. I began my studies in Artificial Intelligence and Engineering at the Islamic University. I was dedicated and put in a lot of hard work during the first two weeks of my journey, but the genocide in Gaza disrupted my education. So, I decided to start looking for online courses instead of wasting time and doing nothing. I started taking a course in Data Analytics on Coursera. One day, my friend texted me and told me about a program for Palestinian students, encouraging me to apply. I applied, got accepted, and started my journey with you all.

Tasneem: I was in my second year at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) when the war started. I couldn't study due to displacement; we were just trying to survive. We faced bombings everywhere we went, but we finally managed to reach Egypt. I was studying Electrical Engineering, but when my university was destroyed, along with everything else, my future felt destroyed, too.

One day, I heard from my friends about a course offered through a collaboration between the American University in Cairo (AUC) and MIT. I had never heard of MIT before, so I Googled it and found out it was one of the best schools for engineering. I registered for the course and chose to study Computer Science and Data Analysis.

Attending AUC and getting my student ID helped me feel like I was back at a university. It brought back memories of my life in Gaza. I completed the course, Alhamdulillah. These courses were very important because now, as a Computer Engineering student, everything I study builds on what I learned in that program. It created the perfect academic environment for learning, with professors, assignments, and structured coursework.

How was your experience during the program? What has been your favorite course or topic, and why?

Raghad: If I had to pick a favorite course, it would definitely be Introduction to Computer Science and Programming Using Python. This course really stood out because it introduced me to coding and computational thinking in a way I had never experienced before. The assignments

were tough but incredibly rewarding. They pushed me to think critically and solve real-world problems rather than just build a foundation in Python. This course actually sparked my passion for programming. It made me realize that I want to pursue a career in Computer Science—something I hadn't been so sure about before!

Were there any differences you noticed between MIT's approach to education and your university's or high school's approach?

Raghad: Yes, there were some noticeable differences. One of the biggest differences was the focus on practical, hands-on learning. At MIT SPOC, everything revolved around coding and solving real-world problems, which was a stark contrast to the more theoretical, exam-focused approach I was used to. Instead of just memorizing information, the assignments really pushed us to think critically and apply what we learned.

Another major difference was the TA system. The teaching assistants were incredibly supportive and always available to help—whether it was debugging code or explaining tough concepts. What stood out to me was how understanding they were of our challenges, like internet issues. They even extended deadlines when needed, which was something I had never experienced before. The program also emphasized collaboration and community; the learning environment felt like a family where everyone supported each other. It made the whole experience much more engaging and far less stressful compared to the individualistic approach in traditional education.

Tasneem: Of course, there are differences between MIT, AUC, and IUG. MIT's approach is more hands-on and problem-solving oriented, which is more useful to students. At most universities in Gaza, the professor simply gives a lecture, and that's it. It can be boring and passive. The TAs were incredibly supportive. We could ask them anything without fear, and they always helped us. One TA, Ahmed, was especially helpful; he supported me even after the course, guiding me in continuing my studies at AUC.

The exams were also very different from what I was used to. We had enough time to complete them at home, which allowed us to do our best. If we had any questions, the TAs were there to explain. I never felt overwhelmed because I was always supported. I think this learning style is ideal. The program guided me on how to start, how to continue, and how to excel. AUC provided us with access to computers and WiFi, ensuring that we had the necessary resources to succeed.

Were there any challenges you faced while accessing the class materials? How did the teaching or support team address them?

Raghad: I definitely faced significant challenges due to limited internet access in Gaza. There were times when the connection was so slow or completely gone, making it hard to download materials, attend live sessions, or even submit assignments on time. On top of that, the ongoing genocide and unsafe conditions in Gaza made it difficult to stay focused on my studies. There were moments when I had to prioritize my safety over my learning, which was incredibly frustrating.

These challenges were addressed thanks to the support and flexibility of the MIT SPOC team. The teaching assistants were very understanding, giving us extended deadlines when internet issues arose. They never made us feel alone; their encouragement and practical solutions helped me continue

learning despite all the difficulties. They often reassured me that I was doing well, which reduced my stress and kept me motivated. Honestly, I wouldn't have made it this far without my own hard work and perseverance. I refuse to let these challenges hold me back—my passion, determination, and hope keep me going.

Did the program help you feel part of a broader community? How did that impact you, especially during the genocide?

Raghad: Yes! The program helped me feel connected to a global learning community. The support from TAs and peers reminded me that I wasn't alone. This sense of belonging was incredibly important during such difficult times. The program also gave me the opportunity to interact with students and professionals worldwide—like Prof. Kh; he is such a great person! These connections gave me strength and motivation, helping me push through when it was easy to feel isolated and hopeless.

Tasneem: Through this program, I met incredible people. The care team at AUC was amazing. Taja and I became friends, and Carlos, who focused on mental health, made sure we were all connected and felt supported. He checked in on us, asked about our days, and truly listened.

Beyond academics, this program built a community. We were all Gazan students, yet many of us didn't know each other before. Through this course, we worked together, solved problems, and bonded. We became more confident and made friendships naturally, without feeling forced.

How do you see yourself using your education to help people in Gaza? What do you want to do with your education in the future?

Raghad: It allows me to create job opportunities by building startups or training others in tech skills. I can also develop solutions to local problems, such as improving healthcare access or optimizing resource distribution. By sharing my knowledge, I can empower more youth and inspire them to pursue careers in tech. Additionally, Computer Science skills enable me to expand digital access and develop affordable tech solutions.

Tasneem: After graduation, I would love to stay in academia. I might pursue a master's degree, either here or abroad. The program taught me that training your brain to solve academic problems also helps in non-academic situations—it builds critical thinking. I no longer feel restricted to one plan or major; I embrace change and new opportunities.

Education is the heart of the Palestinian people. This course taught me so much. My younger brother, who was a business major in Gaza and only attended university for one day before the genocide started, took the Python course through this program. Now, he is considering switching to Engineering. The right environment truly shapes your decisions. When Gaza begins rebuilding, engineers will be essential. Universities will need lecturers. I hope to contribute by teaching and helping rebuild our community.

Taja: Seeing how students want to use this opportunity to rebuild Gaza is incredible. They want to learn and gain all these skills so that they can rebuild the educational infrastructure, so that they can give back to their own community as well. I think that was also really wonderful, just to gain a sense of their own motivations. We had several students get accepted to universities in Egypt, including AUC, through the exposure they got during the program.

PART TWO

CREATING NETWORKS OF RESILIENCE

BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

As part of the SPOCs program, volunteers provided community support resources to students in Gaza and Cairo. This community support was independent of the coursework – students could reach out for mental health support and other needs they or their families encountered while surviving the genocide. We spoke with Enriqueta, Carlos, and Rose, three of those volunteers, to learn more about this incredible aspect of the SPOCs program.

What was the motivation to implement community care? How did the idea originate and how did you come together to make it happen? How did you get involved?

Rose: Originally the idea was that the TAs would maintain consistent 1-on-1 contact with the students, but very quickly it became clear that this wasn't feasible because they were already preparing material, giving lectures, etc. There came a point where the course staff felt that they didn't know where the students were at. It was especially hard to track the students' progress because they sometimes couldn't access the MITx website to input their work, so the TAs wouldn't know where they were in the course material. So that challenge was the origin of bringing the community care aspect in, but it quickly ended up going beyond that. We ended up having a connection with the mutual aid team as well to provide other needs.

Taja: Back at the beginning, we had this suggestion that each TA should do 1-on-1 outreach with their students. I was personally in contact with a lot of the students, and I realized that this kind of support is very, very critical and much-needed. I created really strong friendships which really matter to me right now, but I was worried about the students I wasn't personally close to – I didn't have the capacity to contact over 50 students. So I was constantly asking the TAs to check up on their students, but they really didn't have the capacity to do that. Some of them did, some of them didn't, and it was also unstructured – if you were a TA for Calc 1 and you contacted a student, and if they needed support in Intro to CS, it was hard to juggle so many tasks – students could take more than one course. I started things with Rose and Rawan – Rose developed this well-documented and structured way to do regular 1-on-1 outreach. Then people like Carlos, Enriqueta, and others came up with different ways in which we could support the students emotionally, materially, and also through mutual aid. This kind of community support was one thing that eventually inspired MIT Mutual Aid Gaza by identifying emergent student needs.

What were the challenges and considerations you had when thinking of ways to implement community care?

Rose: At first, there were two of us and 80 students. We had to get the balance right – we also started this mid-program, so we had to figure out how we could start building enough of a relationship with our students to the point where they're comfortable with telling us about what they're struggling with and what their needs are, while also building out the infrastructure and recruiting people. When we first started reaching out to students, they'd kind of react like "oh, why is this person reaching out to me?" And in the first couple weeks, if we asked them whether they were struggling with anything, they would say "oh no don't worry everything's fine, everything's fine." I don't know if they didn't want people to know they were struggling, or it was just that they didn't know us which is also fair.

Carlos: The students I'm in touch with fled from Gaza and are currently in Cairo. Although they are safer than their friends and family who are in Gaza, they've endured deep trauma and continue to face serious challenges. One of my students lost her younger brother—how do you find the strength to go back to school, to return to "normal" life after that? Another had a terrifyingly close encounter with an Israeli drone and was convinced he was about to die that day. They carry a constant weight of worry for the lives of their loved ones in Gaza, and even in Egypt their lives remain precarious and uncertain. Should they start over in Egypt, wait indefinitely for a Canadian visa, or cling to hope of returning home someday?I wanted to offer some small relief from that, when possible. When we chat on WhatsApp or meet over video calls, I try to create a space where they can breathe, laugh, and feel a bit lighter. At the same time, I don't want to ignore or minimize what they've been through—or what's still unfolding around them. That's the challenge: how do you build a relationship that holds space for the heaviness of their reality while also allowing moments of ease and joy? Sometimes I'll ask: what music are you listening to these days? How do you cook shawarma in Palestine? What's it like getting around Cairo compared to Gaza? I often joke that I'm distracting them from their studies rather than helping with the SPOCs courses—but they seem to enjoy it, at least it's what they tell me. But it's a delicate balance: to be a source of support without being overly serious, to show care without turning every interaction into a reminder of pain, to offer presence that feels both grounding and gently uplifting.

Enriqueta: One challenge that I would encourage especially people that join our team to grapple with is the internal challenge. It sounds selfish to say it, but it's important to reflect on your positionality when joining. It's kind of a light challenge, but sometimes you feel so intimidated reaching out to students in Gaza because we are so removed, it feels like we're coming from different worlds. I especially didn't want to make it seem like a savior complex situation, and so there was some anxiety around reaching out.

The other challenge is logistical – how do we get aid to these students. One example that resonates with me was that I really wanted to send laptops to Cairo - not even Gaza, just to Cairo where thousands of Palestinians are displaced. But this challenge was monumental - I'm still waiting on getting some laptops through, and I'm not sure they will. There's just a lot of bureaucratic red tape. Folks on the ground were instrumental to help determine what support is needed and the avenues to channel support through – the students know who's on the ground, so you learn about resources through the students too.

How did you balance the emotional weight of the situation while providing support?

Rose: In my experience, it felt weird to ask them about their assignments when I knew there was so much more that they were dealing with, but also I had just met them, so I didn't expect them to open up to me about the stuff they were going through. I started by asking about everyday things, things that they liked to do – beyond just being a student, but also beyond the genocide. I tried to provide emotional support in that sense so that they knew we didn't just see them as students or that we didn't just see them as people who are experiencing hardship, but instead that we see them as people. Carlos was really good about setting up calls with the students and talking about their lives and little things that happened during their day. And through that we were also able to find out what they needed, if they were having issues with their WiFi or other issues.

Enriqueta: I don't know. In all fairness, the balancing part doesn't come in much for me – in a way, the students are very uplifting. Not to be poetic, but the idea that existence is resistance – you're kind of meeting the strongest power when you're talking to students. That is the greatest testament to the fact that there is perseverance. And I don't say that easily because I think it's also valid for students to feel down or exhausted especially after their lived experiences, but I've only really experienced joy when I'm communicating with them. We would send each other photos of our families, you know, they would share pictures from before October 7th. They would tell me how their day is going and how school is going.

Kholoud: One easy answer was that we were super flexible with deadlines. As long as people communicated, their extension would be granted – that was the very minimum we could do. Otherwise, joining the sessions a few minutes before the session starts and talking with the students helped – at the beginning maybe it was awkward, everyone's cameras would be on mute and you'd just talk to yourself for a bit. But after a few sessions students started to engage more and participate, tell you about their day. I don't think it should be the expectation to talk about politics and what's happening – we all understand, we all know what's happening. But I think at the same time, not running away and avoiding that conversation is key. And that's something that unfortunately MIT professors

and TAs do, not just here but all around the world. For example, when something happened we would text in the group chat – students would often send videos of airstrikes near them. It was not an easy thing to handle, but being present and saying a good word and not running away from the conversation is important.

Nai: It has a lot to do with mindset. You can always feel crippled when you have nothing to do and a lot to feel, but this was a way to do something. That gives you control over your emotions – the feeling is important because it is supposed to push you to do something. SPOCs was our way to do something. This might sound weird, but when something would happen in Gaza and I would get upset, I would open my Head TA spreadsheet and revamp it or do something to organize the course. Individual actions do help – the way to deal with your emotions is to do something useful with it, and for me this was the useful thing.

For the TA team as a whole, leniency was key. If someone was going through something – emotions can be crippling – we would practice leniency and be there for each other. One of our students – who was also one of the best-performing students, always enthusiastic, always positive – was being unresponsive for a few days. Then she sent a voice note apologizing for being unresponsive because there were airstrikes in her village. And in that voice note you could hear in the background the sounds of airstrikes. And then we didn't hear from her for a while – we were all incredibly nervous about this, and we were amazed that she was so worried about the class and our made-up deadlines when there was something more important going on. Nothing is ever business as usual – all the deadlines are made up, and all the structure is also made up. We can always work around this thing that we created. The more put together we are, the more confident the students feel.

I think about that story all the time. Like anyone with a heart, I get upset when I hear the news – but knowing now that there is a possibility that these people we've been interacting with, our students, could also be subject to that… it brings another layer of closeness to the situation.

How did you facilitate communication and ensure that students had real people to talk to rather than just online graders and online content?

Carlos: Building relationships is an ongoing process, always developing. When I first reached out to students, many would apologize: "Sorry I haven't submitted my problem sets yet." I'd reassure them: "That's not why I'm here! I'm here for you, to check on how you're doing and to support however I can." Once we made sure their internet connection could support a Zoom call, I'd say, "Why don't we hop on a quick call and get to know each other?" In those first calls, they'd often keep their cameras off. So I'd make a point of showing my own face, being present and open, showing up authentically. That was the first step in building trust, and over time, they began to open up and trust me in return.

As those individual relationships took shape, I naturally began thinking about ways to bring

people together, so I'd suggest, "Why not try a group call?" This wasn't about saving time by combining calls. It was about creating a shared space where they could connect with and support one another. If someone asked about scholarships or transferring to universities in Cairo, often another student had already done the research and could share valuable insights. I also began inviting other SPOCs volunteers to our group calls, so students could connect with additional mentors—some of whom, unlike me, spoke Arabic. That added another layer of support and connection. Over time, I came to see that this kind of community-based support was more meaningful than anything I could provide alone.

Enriqueta: I felt that same question when I joined - I asked myself, "how am I not going to seem like a support chat box?" At first it was very mechanical – we were onboarded quickly and we were given a script. At that time it was also a priority to do a check-in academically, to see where the students are. But over time, what allowed us to sound more human was sharing about ourselves – that's what worked for me the best, gently easing into it. Explaining the story behind my nickname, or for example, I enjoy baking, so every now and then I would share "I'm going to go bake!" And honestly sometimes I was really tedious about it, I would say "oh give me one second I have to go check on my muffins that I'm putting in the oven and I'll be right back". And that would open up a conversation, like "oh! What kind of muffins are you baking?" It seems crazy but that helped over time.

Rose: Consistent 1-on-1 communication was big, and reaching out not necessarily because there's homework due, but just to check in. I felt kind of annoying at first texting "Just checking in! How are you?" every five days, but I do think it makes a difference over time. They need to know that we're there for them beyond just the classes – the classes are important to the program, but in terms of the support aspect, it was always intended to go beyond the classes.

Taja: What people on the support team would do is not just ask about academic things, but ask about needs, like "how are you doing?" For example, during the Winter, each of the volunteers would ask the students, "is your family in need of clothes, tent supplies, etc.?" When the ceasefire was announced, the volunteers were celebrating with the students – just being there for them at every step of the way. TAs take care of the academic support, but the student support team is more about communicating that we can support you in other ways, it's about building a virtual community out of support and care for one another.

Did this role influence your perspective on and approach to education?

Enriqueta: I think yes - I would be remiss to say that I didn't see myself as a student, my own experiences. I come from two spheres of schooling. One that relies a lot upon the school-to-prison pipeline from inner city Detroit. The idea of care is put on its head, because the idea of care

is very surveilled. If you draw attention from a school in the inner city of Detroit, it's for all the bad reasons. It's because in some way you need remedial attention. So when I grew up I always thought, OK, I need to steer clear of anything drawing attention to myself. And so I think care here would have been so transformative and uplifting. At the end of the day I don't really believe in bad behavior, especially only punishing bad behavior – there's always root causes we need to understand for why students might behave a certain way, what their needs are, and if those needs are being fulfilled. And you don't get that when you go to the punishment mode, which is what I think a lot of students are used to and might resonate with in a certain capacity. And then I think on the privileged side of spaces like Wellesley and MIT, for someone with a background like myself, it feels completely foreign – the idea of S^3 at MIT, it's very strange to me, the idea of going to my Deans and asking for help. So I think that might be something that other students might resonate with again. Having more tailored relationships that are 1-on-1 are in a way more simultaneously encouraging, where the student gets to learn something from the peer they're assigned with, and the peer learns from the student. Not making it a power imbalance is something that makes it far more appealing to ask for help, and to form a connection that is more supportive. It's important to be the person listening to them and even being a ranting board if that's what they need you to be, rather than being a one-directional office for "health".

Carlos: Absolutely. My research focuses on care-centered facilitation of learning, and this experience has deeply reinforced those beliefs on a personal level. Care-oriented learning is, to me, the only kind of learning that truly matters. That might sound like an exaggeration—of course, people need to gain skills—but what we really need is to learn how to care for one another. And that feels more urgent than ever in a world increasingly shaped by a survival-of-the-strongest mentality. I really believe mutual care is the key. The question is: how do we learn to care? I think it starts with modeling—showing that we care. Also being on the receiving end of care is essential if we're to carry it forward. And just as important is being part of a community where those values are shared and lived. In education, what you do matters more than what you say.

Imagine filming the atrocities you're living through, posting the videos on Instagram, saying, "Hey, look what's happening!"—and nothing changes. Imagine being in that situation your whole life… When I hear my students talk about the injustices they've faced—and continue to face—I find myself saying, "Oh my God, this is horrible." And they respond, "Don't worry, it's normal." But it's not normal! It's just become normal for them because they're so used to living in a world where people outside their immediate communities don't care about them or their lives.. That's why the role we play is so important—we become their interface with a part of the world they didn't even believe existed, a world that actually does care. Sometimes they ask me, "Why do you care?"

Rose: I think it makes a huge difference. At MIT, it's supposed to be what S^3 does. And I think some of the S^3 deans are good about it, and others aren't. But especially in this context where students are more hesitant to go to the TAs – not always, but there was a sense among the students that they didn't want to be a burden, which is crazy. Being very intentional and telling them we were here to support them with whatever they needed made a big difference. A lot of them would say that they couldn't complete the course because they were behind, but I think knowing that there were people who were willing to support them with whatever they needed helped keep a lot of them in the courses.

What was the student feedback to this community care approach? Do you think it successfully improved their learning?

Enriqueta: I think part of the success of the support team is that it doesn't matter how poorly or well you do in the SPOC program, you have someone who's independently supporting you. It helps to have that separation, because it builds trust, so that has been something I've extrapolated from students. It's kind of like unconditional care from a family member - I mean, I don't want to go as far as family members because we're not taking on that role, but it feels that way.

Raghad: The community care team was incredible. They really created a sense of family, making me feel understood and valued. Their emotional and practical support was crucial in keeping me focused and motivated during tough times. For example, when I had trouble with internet access, the TAs quickly reassured me and extended deadlines without hesitation. They also helped me find workspaces with better connectivity and electricity, which was a huge relief.

Taja: Yes, definitely. If we didn't have the community care, being strictly honest, I think a lot of the students wouldn't have finished the courses. The TA 1-to-1 student support wasn't there because they had a lot of work to do, and every time I would check students' progress I would see that they were falling behind – this was a problem. Part of our community support includes checking whether the student is on track, to see whether they are submitting everything, whether they need help, whether they are going through something and need an extension. If we didn't have this sort of community support, I think a lot of the students especially in Gaza wouldn't have passed – but thanks to the support, they have passed these courses.

In providing community support, we're also helping the students overcome certain obstacles so that they can focus on learning. A lot of them had things come up along the way and felt like they couldn't continue. If not for the reassurance and understanding provided by the community support, I think they wouldn't have continued because it would have felt just like any other online course they could take on Edx. When we did the first psycho-social gathering with FDC, a lot of students told me they felt more encouraged to solve stuff, to submit things, to progress in the course. Intro to CS has been really successful – I think all of the students passed that course.

ON-THE-GROUND PARTNERSHIPS

In order to facilitate both the education and the community support, SPOCs partnered with groups on the ground in Gaza and Cairo. The American University of Cairo (AUC) was the primary partner in Egypt – students were able to take classes in person, use technological resources and internet capabilities on the campus, and interact with AUC students and TAs. In Gaza, SPOCs partnered with HopeHub to provide free internet services for students to join synchronous Zoom lessons or access the online materials. Additionally, SPOCs partnered with the Future Development Commission (FDC) to organize multiple psycho-social support sessions for students in Gaza, since their mode of education did not include the community aspect that makes college campuses so stimulating. Here's what our interviewees said about these connections.

Prof. Kh: We have a close connection with a Tunisian academic computer scientist, Imed Romdhani in Edinburgh, who started in February of 2024 making massive online courses available to students in Gaza. He negotiated vastly reduced fees for certificates in Edx courses and CoursEra courses, then aggressively raised funds to pay the residual fees. At the same time, he developed a whole series of maybe ten or so internet hubs that his students could use. Now he's financed another hub that will be dedicated to this group of students. So we're collaborating with him in various ways, it's a really important collaboration. Right now, he's not using that brand new hub because it's too dangerous. Finding those international collaborators to improve our network within Gaza has been super important.

There's also an amazing guy, Stephen Friend, who introduced us to people working in Gaza and transformed the project because of that, and helped us understand the importance of the extracurricular support that we began running. He was extremely generous, not just with his time and his contacts, but financially as well. We found enormous resources and pools of generosity from all these people we didn't know beforehand.

And the people we were working with, the operators of these solar-powered internet hubs, were putting themselves at great risk. They stayed in Gaza to help their nation survive this onslaught, and sent their families out of the country for safety. They committed enormous financial resources, as well, to make it possible for these students to access this fragment of education. It's such an inspiring story.

Carlos: The first thing my students in Cairo told me was how amazing it felt to attend a university in person—to have access to laptops, libraries, and even a bus ticket to get around the city thanks to their student ID. That was a big deal for them. They said it felt almost like having a normal life again, like be-

ing able to return to university—the thing they missed most about their lives as young people and students. It made a huge difference. And it was a bit unexpected for me, because we often assume that the main value we're offering is the academic content, like learning Python. But for them, the real impact came from being students again—going to campus, making friends, meeting in person. That experience meant a lot.

his background and work. He's an amazing researcher. It's fascinating to see what people manage to do with very limited resources, especially compared to a place like MIT. I have so much admiration for him. He told me about a project involving conductive materials for prosthetics, and I mentioned some groups at MIT working on similar topics. He said, "Yeah, I know them—they're great. They work with carbon fiber and all

I met one of the TAs at AUC, Ahmed, who's from Cairo. He's an incredible person—I first got to know him because he organized a graduation party at his house and invited all the students from the SPOCs who were in Cairo. He hosted this gathering with pastries and food, and they wanted to connect with us at MIT, so we had a video call. We chatted about our experiences and shared some funny stories. After that, I connected directly with Ahmed, and we had a really nice conversation about

that, but we don't even have basic equipment here. I had to take apart instruments from other labs just to build what I needed." And still, he managed to reduce the cost of the conductive material he's using from around $100 to just $5. That's incredible—and yet stories like his rarely get the visibility they deserve, unlike even the smallest development at a place like MIT. He's not only a brilliant researcher but also a warm, caring person—a real human being. It was so inspiring to meet

someone supporting students in such a genuine way. Everyone loved him—I mean, he opened his home to host their graduation!

Rose: One of the biggest partnerships we had in Gaza was with Hope Hub, because they provided free Internet Cafe access. And after talking with the students – that was huge, being able to go to the Internet Cafes, because the ones that weren't free were I think $15 per day. So having that internet access was a really big help. There was also an org called the Future Development Committee who organized these two days where all the students near Gaza City got together and did different activities. That was also a big help for them, to see other students in person and be together.

Tasneem: Before this course, I thought like any other student: finish university as fast as possible, get good grades, and graduate. But after joining AUC, my mindset changed. Everything around me changed. I started meeting people from different backgrounds—Egyptian, Canadian, Irish—and learning from their experiences. This diversity expanded my perspective. In Gaza, we were all in the same environment, the same courses, the same way of thinking. But in Egypt, it's different.

In Gaza, I was an Electrical Engineering student, but now at AUC, I am continuing as a Computer Engineering transfer student. I asked my TA, Ahmed, about transferring to AUC, and he explained the process. Now, I'm continuing my education here.

Raghad: The support from HopeHub and the Future Development Commission was equally valuable. They provided not only the resources we needed but also the encouragement that made us feel connected to a larger community. The activities they organized helped students escape the stress for a little while, and it was heartwarming to see everyone happy, even if just for a moment. I really appreciated that.

Taja: When it comes to mental health support, we're trying to provide the services that already exist for people in school – but these services have a lot of takers and might not be regularly available to our students, so we try to do what we can to be there as a community to make that person feel that they are important and supported. It's been easier now at the AUC, because they go out together and plan hangouts.

In Gaza, we worked with FDC as a partner group who helped us with two psychosocial gatherings. These were really helpful. We had a recorded session during the first one, but there were internet issues which prevented that for the second one. But still, we need to address the gap here – even if these gatherings did happen, most of the time students are not receiving that type of community support that we have at AUC, or that you would expect in a typical classroom.

One of our students wrote to us about the importance of having a virtual community that they all feel like they are a part of, and I found that very insightful. Yes, we have this 1-to-1 support, but one thing I want to focus on in the second cohort is how we can establish community support that helps in the long term.

Enriqueta: I would say one event that was unbelievably touching was

a type of graduation ceremony and get-together in Gaza where SPOCs had specialists in mental health and community building. We saw photos of all these students getting together, playing group activity games, and enjoying meals together, and it was a really beautiful image to see coming out of Gaza. In Cairo, we had another graduation ceremony held at a TA's home in Cairo, and the support team based in the US joined virtually. It really speaks to how everyone wants to contribute so much, that the TA even offered their home. I think that was going above and beyond, that being so simple but it goes a long way to impact the world. And

Kholoud: I was impressed with the way we built connections with people from AUC or Gaza even though we've never been to AUC or Gaza. It was a proof of concept, and it was very cool that we were able to do it. Going forward – and this is something we were considering for a long time – there are so many educational initiatives in Gaza, we're not the only ones. So some sort of coordination with other educational opportunities partnering with universities in Gaza would be great. Not just bringing projects from the outside, but to use the resources and the educators who are in Gaza. And MIT should also build connections with universities in Gaza – we don't

I would say in terms of outreach, Gaza Student Support Network (GSSN) is mainly in California, and the scholarships I've been able to raise are from Arab networks within Michigan. So I think there's a lot of space to involve more players outside of Gaza and Cairo to enhance the education of the SPOCs students, whether it's through the SPOCs program itself or outside of it.

want to be coming in with a savior mindset, that's not what's happening. It's a collaboration, and there's a big difference between the two. But we should also use the current infrastructure. This is a small project as part of a bigger educational mission, and there are already a lot of programs that are doing this, so building an ecosystem that can collaborate and coordinate between all these programs is essential.

REFLECTIONS

As SPOCs enters its second semester of course offerings, we asked the volunteers about their motivations for joining the initiative, stories from their experience, and reflections and lessons moving forward.

What motivated you to join SPOCs? How do you feel about joining it?

Carlos: I moved from software engineering into education and pedagogy more than ten years ago, when I started volunteering in my free time to teach creative coding to children—something I found deeply meaningful and fulfilling. Over time, my focus shifted from Computer Science toward understanding how to build relationships that truly support learning—relationships grounded in social and emotional connection. This led me to work with educators, offering free online courses to support their growth as facilitators. Today, both my research and my life revolve around creating communities of people who care about these values and want to learn how to nurture them, especially in online environments.

So when I heard the SPOCs team was looking for volunteers to support young people from Gaza—not just academically, but through socio-emotional support and holistic care—I immediately felt called to join. It was a chance to offer something meaningful, however small, in the face of the unbearable conditions and deep injustice they endure. I also wanted to feel personally closer to the people who are facing those conditions. I think what's often missing—in public opinion and in these conversations—is a real sense of shared humanity. For me, building those direct relationships has been powerful—not just for me, but for the people I talk to. When I say, "my friends, my students are there," it shifts the conversation. It brings the reality closer, in a way that invites more empathy and awareness.

Kholoud: On a personal level, despite all the criticism I have of MIT, and even though things are not on good terms now, programs like this helped me to get into MIT. I can't deny that. And seeing people from Palestine who go to these universities and come back, getting to interact with them, it makes the dream kind of possible. Seeing that we did this program and now students from Gaza are applying, honestly that meant the world to me. I don't think MIT is the goal – that's not what I mean at all. But just to see people dreaming big, despite all the destruction and the genocide and how hopeless we are about the situation, the fact that they are having hope and thinking big means a lot. I'm from Nazareth, and I have the privilege to go to the West Bank and travel abroad and all this – but my first time meeting people from Gaza was at MIT. And it's 2 hours away from me by car, but with the segregation and apartheid system they built, they make it seem like it's so far away from you. My dream is to go to Gaza. The first time we interacted with the students was very emotional – it felt like we had broken through a blockade and we were able to speak and interact with each other. I was able to see Gaza through their eyes. That means a lot to me. It's a dream I've always

had. I'm so grateful for the students who were part of this project, I feel like we learned so much more from them than they learned from us.

Nai: When I think of mutual aid, I think of providing people with what they need because governments or other entities are not providing, through direct community connections. Everybody can contribute with the thing they know best, in the way they know best. My whole life, I have been trying to do something good for Palestine, in the way I know how. I think that's rooted in almost every Palestinian in the diaspora. Growing up, my grandparents always emphasized the importance of education. My grandparents were both forced to leave their homes in Safad and Akka during the Nakba in 1948 and abandon their schooling. My grandfather taught himself to read and write by working as a newspaper boy, and my grandmother went back to school after giving birth to my father. She recently got her Bachelor's degree at the age of 77. Everything was taken away from them once, their homes, their opportunities, their old lives, their freedoms, but education was something that could never be taken away from them. There's an Arabic saying,

literally "seek knowledge even if it's in China", meaning go even to the ends اطلبوا العلم ولو في الصين sue it. So that's rooted deeply in my family.

Education is always liberation – the more you know, the more aware you become. You can tell by the way that Israel and the U.S. government have been destroying universities in Gaza and targeting student activists here, respectively – people who know things are dangerous. Learning is also not just about the content that you learn, it's about the way you learn. In the second round of SPOCs, we're introducing journalism and film, but even if students are learning calculus or statistics, we're really teaching them how to teach themselves, and that's a really powerful tool.

Enriqueta: I love talking about the SPOC program to anybody I can. It's interesting – in a way education is highly political. And the SPOC program is highly political. But compared with other actions like protesting, it doesn't seem that way. If you were to put together an "organizing resume", you wouldn't expect the SPOC program to catch much attention or controversy. But I think it's a really powerful need. When I talk about the SPOC program, it opens up pockets for people to contribute, and what I've been finding is that those pockets of opportunity really are also for scholarships for students or providing funds for SPOC to grow.

Taja: We always say that this is rewarding for students and that we are providing opportunities for them, but it is also rewarding for us as people being involved in this program. For me, personally, it has helped me form really good friendships that felt like family and it made me connect with some people who knew my relatives back in Gaza. It had the benefits of how rewarding a community can be. I initially joined SPOCs because my cousin was looking for an educational initiative that can support Gazans so that she feels distracted from the war, and for months, I was looking for something of the sort that I can volunteer in and provide for people back home. Back then, this program was just an idea and a suggestion. And now, as it grows, I hope that it benefits as many Gazans as possible, because education is sacred in Gazan culture, it's what we are raised to love and appreciate, and it's how my parents, relatives, friends, and everyone from

there shows resilience.

How can SPOCs be improved? What more can be done to help the students?

Prof. Kh: This is a really important model. It addresses a young adult population that is wildly underserved by NGOs – there's a lot of focus on children, young children and their mothers, and these are super important populations. But there's also the underserved, unemployed population of college-age students. And there are many other examples of other places with a similar situation – not as life-and-death as in Gaza, but every Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan or Lebanon or the West Bank has not too dissimilar a situation. So using this as a proof-of-concept to generate meaningful educational experiences that have deep psycho-social impacts as well, for both populations, I think this is an interesting model that could be expanded if it's done carefully and with sensitivity.

Rose: A lot of students appreciated the courses and were interested in pursuing computer science, but oftentimes they cared more about what they could do right now to support their families. They would come to us asking for connections to jobs, or they would ask us, "can this course actually help me get a job?" which is a fair question. This question of how we can actually provide that support, especially since that's what they need most urgently, is a difficult one. It feels wildly insufficient to say "this is building your background to help you find a job later". The question of to what extent this is actually providing the educational and career needs that they have is difficult – we're trying to talk to people about ways to build that out. We want to make the program as helpful as it can be, but we have to grapple with the fact that there are some things it can't yet do. A big area to grow for us is making the program feel like a community. They have a group chat that they all text in, but it would be cool to see the relationships between the students get stronger so that it feels more like a network rather than them only coming to us

Kholoud: I think that continuance is super important, and was something that the students were looking for. I know it's hard to provide it because everything in Gaza is very uncertain. But thinking about creative ideas to explain to the students what the SPOC certificate means – does it give me credit at other universities? Does it open up work opportunities for me, or get me connected to more people at MIT? I think this is important. Another thing is the physical space. With all the initiatives to rebuild Gaza, I think this is a main thing that we should be focusing on and thinking about for the long term.

Nai: Many students actually didn't finish with certificates because they were having a lot of trouble keeping up throughout, so it piled up towards the end and they became demotivated to have to go back in and do all the homeworks and quizzes from the beginning of the course in a short time period. More personal attention to individual students can be facilitated if we keep track of how they're doing in the middle and towards the end, which could help students like this early on.

We have to hold ourselves to a really high standard when it comes to teaching the classes. Delivering materials on time and being organized – even just presenting the facade of a super organized program – is better for the students. I feel like we lost that

a little bit toward the end in Calculus because of finals week and MIT's Winter Break not overlapping with a SPOCs course break. We need to be a lot better about being consistent going forward.

Although a lot of students do watch the Zoom recordings, I wonder if there is a better way to deliver the content. I personally don't enjoy rewatching full lectures, I usually just find a YouTube video that's short enough for me to watch it. I wonder if there is a better way to include students who aren't able to join the Zoom calls so that they aren't just watching a video of the lecture. It's like watching a 45 minute video of a private tutoring session. There must be a different way to reach them, but I don't know what the solution is.

Carlos: Most of the needs of my students in Cairo were related to career support. Just last night, one of them asked for a letter of recommendation. Another student was admitted to AUC with a partial scholarship, and we helped cover the rest of her tuition. A third student was also able to get a scholarship through our network. Funding and help accessing scholarships have been consistent needs.

I also spoke with students graduating in computer science. One of them builds full-stack open-source web projects and has an incredible sense of design—he's developing a learning platform that looks like it was built by a professional team. Another student develops mobile apps and is equally talented. What they're looking for now is freelance work. They told us they appreciate the material support, but what they really want is to be able to provide for themselves and their families. They have the skills—they just need the right connections. There's something powerful about being able to support yourself rather than relying on help—it restores a sense of agency and dignity. So our team has been focusing, among many other things, on finding job opportunities.

Has SPOCs been successful in your view? How do you measure its success?

Prof. Kh: I think the measure of success is the amazing buy-in we have to do it again. You could talk about the academic success of the students – that's been mixed, to tell the truth. But in terms of what really counts, I think it's been a huge success. I don't think there's anything else to say, it's been way beyond anything I certainly imagined possible. There's the question of what happens next, which is always scary. You think about trying to establish a protocol and things that can be carried forward, and further implementations of this in Gaza. We know so little about the future there that it's hard to predict. That's one of the reasons I think it's important to think of this as a pilot for other regions besides Gaza as well.

Carlos: For me, the fact that one of my students reached out just yesterday asking for a letter of recommendation is already a sign of success. It shows that he sees me—and us—as a resource he can turn to when he needs support. That's what success looks like to me. This particular student wasn't particularly active in our group calls—he joined only a few times. So if we were measuring participation alone, it might look like we weren't reaching him. But then he calls me at 4am in Egypt saying, "Hey, can you help me with this?" I love that. It means he felt he could rely on me. And that's just one example—there are many others.

Of course, it's important to pay attention to things like attendance, en-

gagement in the WhatsApp group, and other quantitative indicators. When we noticed fewer people joining calls or responding in chats, we took that seriously. But when we think in terms of long-term impact, the ways we offer support are often subtle and not immediately measurable. Maybe a year from now, a student will come back with something they created—something inspired by what they learned or by a conversation they had through SPOCs. That, too, is success.

And it's not just about what the students are learning—it's also about what we are learning, how volunteers are growing and evolving. I was just thinking about this as my hunger increases—I'm about to break my fast in ten minutes! The fact that I chose to fast during Ramadan, in solidarity—it's something I would never have done if I hadn't built these relationships with my students. I also started learning Arabic. These are all ways I feel more connected to them. And it goes both ways. My students have been there for me too. They've motivated me to stay focused on my thesis and helped me build better self-discipline. I truly feel like I'm gaining more than I'm giving—and for me, that's a powerful measure of success. The benefits are mutual. And I believe, actually I'm sure, that many others who are part of SPOCs feel the same way.

Enriqueta: I would put the word success in a bit of a time capsule, because it has a timeless meaning to me. I think the success to me is that I've built relationships with students, which God-willing I will be able to gently continue for a long time in a mutual way. I dislike the idea of seeing individuals as "clients" for non-profit need or aid; that approach really hurts people, and takes away their dignity or agency. And I think the support team does a good job of not creating that sphere, and having an equal footing between the peer and the student. And that equal footing can continue for a long time. That's really the success, that I get to see friends out of this experience that I will hopefully hear are graduating from these programs in two, three, four years. That would be the real success.

Rose: I think it helped – it's hard to tell. The students who are more talkative will always be more receptive to this kind of support. I personally got the sense that the community support aspect was working when students started reaching out to me, without me going to them. Not even related to school – some people asked me about college, or asked me about which code editor to use – but when they started asking me about things beyond their assignments. And some of them will text me to ask me how I'm doing even now. That's when I got the sense that they do feel that they can come to us with stuff.

Kholoud: One thing that SPOCs did that I don't think we were able to do as much in the broader Coalition was looping in people who are less involved. It was very easy to get on the project. Especially for the Palestinians, and the Palestinian freshmen who were still a bit intimidated by everything that was happening, maybe they think, OK I can't go to every protest and show my face, but this is an official MIT program, it's an educational thing. I feel that there's an agreement among all Palestinians that when it's educational, you can do it – and you're not scared. This is a good way to loop in so many people who might be more vulnerable to the oppression we face right now and still feel that they're doing something that's impactful and important. That's

something that every movement should have in my opinion.

Nai: The students are the ones who should answer that question. That could be now, or it could be in hindsight, in a few years.

What reflections have you had about the program? What has it taught you?

Prof. Kh: It's crowdsourcing at its best. One lesson is that we can all do something. This was the simplest thing in the world for me to do – I arranged a Zoom call with some people and made a proposal. That was all I did. Everything else was spontaneously generated by the community. There's a lesson there – it had nothing to do with the weight of those three letters: MIT. It could happen anywhere. Even the buy-in from students in Gaza, I don't think that depended upon MIT. It was an exciting opportunity that let them get back in touch with the people they were before this war started, and we see that level of interest from the courses that Imad runs. So never underestimate the power of crowdsourcing.

At the beginning, I assumed that we would simply not be able to run this at all in Gaza. The fact that there was enormous buy-in and willingness to take the risks that students had to endure in Gaza – it completely amazed me, it was completely unexpected. To my mind, it's an amazing tribute to the commitment to education that we see throughout Palestine, especially in Gaza, because in situations of high unemployment, what do you do? You get educated. This is something they have been living with for decades. Gaza has a highly educated population who value education very highly. The students would walk for miles to get to solar powered internet hubs – and there, they had a choice. They could communicate with their friends, who might be in Cyprus or Cairo; they could convey messages to their families; they could do other work on the web to support their families; but they chose to do their schoolwork. In many cases, they sacrificed immediate opportunities to find food and other resources and prioritized their homework. Many of them risked their lives and livelihoods for this educational opportunity. It's so admirable and impressive.

Taja: I want people to take a step back, reflect, and realize how privileged we are, and how we live such sheltered lives. People always look at environments like Gaza, Sudan, etc. as areas affected by war, just using that label, and never try to reflect on how so many individuals are impacted in different aspects of their lives, and one such aspect, a crucial aspect, is education. People take for granted their privilege in being able to go to school, even if it is public school you are still very privileged because you can go to school and get the education you want. People never reflect on how privileged and sheltered their lives are. People need to be more involved in communities that help in rebuilding the educational infrastructure in places like these. We always talk about scholasticide in Gaza, but do people ever try to take accountability and help rebuild the educational infrastructure there? I think this question is very important and should be at the forefront of our minds. In the context of the community of Gaza specifically, education is very important, very crucial – it is how we live, it is how we find hope, how we try to persevere. Gazans are raised to love and cherish the privilege of education as it is a rewarding guiding light living through the brutal blockade, so the destruc-

tion of schools and universities in Gaza is very hard for people to grasp. Reflecting on these things is important – it's not just abstract, it's a call for people to contribute to rebuilding the educational infrastructure. If academics truly care about education, then Gaza should be a top priority. You cannot call yourself an academic if you're not thinking of ways that you can help contribute to rebuilding the educational infrastructure of Gaza.

Kholoud: I really do believe in education as a resistance tool. It is one of the main resistance tools we have as Palestinians. I was involved in so many educational programs before, as a student and as a teacher, and I love it – this is something I'm passionate about and I want to do more in the future. And I always ask myself, "what is Palestine getting out of this today, tomorrow, in a month?" Usually it's a bit harder to find this answer in the short term. But when you think about the ultimate goal of the liberation movement, it's to live in a free Palestine. When I try to imagine this free Palestine, I see these educational tools and programs and those scholars who are excelling in their fields – these are the resources and people that I imagine in a free Palestine. These are the people I imagine will be rebuilding this nation. There's so much talent, so much excellence among Palestinian people, and hard workers as well – but still we have our own problems, and we do struggle to imagine a free Palestine unfortunately. I feel that the people who we're teaching now are going to be the core of a free Palestine, to build a free Palestine that we want to live in. For the long term, I see this as the main resistance tool. Now also after the ceasefire, we're seeing that the focus should be on those rebuilding initiatives – maybe it's more short-term impact but it's still very important.

Nai: A lot of people spend time thinking about their purpose, or something along those lines – what can you give to the world, and what are you good at? Mine has always been education and teaching and Palestine, and I never felt like I had found an outlet for it until SPOCs. It definitely planted the seed for something I want to do for my future – this is the thing I will continue doing.

Carlos: I can't overstate how much this program has impacted my motivation and my relationship with MIT. Before SPOCs, I was feeling disconnected from MIT and unsure how I could contribute meaningfully to anything that aligned with my values by staying here. It's easy to feel powerless in the face of the mass killing of innocent people—especially when the institution you're part of not only fails to take a stand against the ongoing atrocities, but also disciplines students who are peacefully expressing dissent and calling for the violence to stop.

But this experience gave me some hope. It helped me reframe my relationship with the institution by showing that there are people here who are committed to supporting efforts rooted in care and solidarity. I realized that, at times, it is possible to work within the institution to do something positive and constructive, even though, I recognize, it is a drop in the ocean.

Through SPOCs, I found a community I care deeply about, at MIT and beyond, and I've seen how much more people are willing to engage when approached with sincerity and openness. This work has given me a renewed sense of purpose, and I'm excited to keep contributing and helping it grow.


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About the Cover

This cover art is inspired by the operations of various Resistance Committees and Emergency Response Rooms in Sudan, especially in Khartoum State. These Resistance Committees are not only entirely volunteer-based, but also serve as a tool of empowerment for women in Sudanese communities. Many women have risen to become leaders of the Resistance Committees in Sudan, including Maryam Elfaki, who was a representative to the national elected council and contributed to the Freedom and Change Charter. The Arabic text overlayed onto the land and sky comes from a popular Sudanese resistance poem by Azhari Mohamed Ali. The most popular line reads, “the bullet doesn’t kill / what kills is the silence of the people.

WRITTEN REVOLUTION

MIT COALITION FOR PALESTINE

بدك تصير مثقف؟ لازم تكون
مثقف مشتبك. واذا ما بدك
تشتبك، لا فيك ولا في ثقافتك

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