Efficacy of Hunger Strikes: How Culture Determines Efficacy of Hunger Strikes

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THE EFFICACY OF HUNGER STRIKES:

How Culture Determines Efficacy of Hunger Strikes

by

Britney Thorns

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ABSTRACT

Efficacy of Hunger Strikes:
How Culture Determines Efficacy of Hunger Strikes

Britney Thorns

Director: Timothy Schorn, Ph.D.

The question asked by this paper is whether or not culture affects the efficacy of hunger strikes. By utilizing the case study method and examining three cases, Ireland, Palestine and Guantanamo Bay the conclusion can be made that culture does impact the efficacy of hunger strikes.

KEYWORDS: Hunger Strike, Ireland, Palestine, Guantanamo Bay, hunger, protest
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Introduction:

There are many forms of protest. Most common methods include marches, and demonstrations with large crowds.\(^1\) Methods used in the 21\(^{st}\) century tend to be peaceful protests, as influenced by the protests of the 1960’s. Utilizing less peaceful means of protest could potentially include riots and destruction of property in an attempt to aggressively convey the anger, frustration and distraught felt by those rioting. While less common these methods are still used in many parts of the world especially more impoverished areas. Lesser known methods of protest include more self-harm related methods. For example, Tibetan monks protested by using the method of self-immolation. Hunger strikes are another self-harm related method of protest. One of the greatest examples of this strategy would be the use of hunger strikes by the Irish to a powerful effect during the Irish Troubles. The success of the Irish hunger strikes was partially due to the cultural perception of hunger within Ireland. Irish people perceive it as shameful to allow someone to die on your doorstep or because of you.\(^2\) Prisoners in Palestine and Guantanamo Bay have also used this method of protest. However, their reasoning behind utilizing the method has less to do with the cultural aspects of hunger striking and more to do with the lack of other means to protest. The purpose of this study is to examine each case and determine what impact culture has on the effectiveness of hunger strikes.

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These more drastic methods often have a cultural impact. Exactly what impact culture has on the effectiveness of hunger strikes in particular will be examined within this study. Irish culture has a deeply ingrained concept of shame. If someone had previously wronged, you a method of retribution was to starve yourself on their porch and refuse their assistance. This was seen as deeply shameful for the person whose house a person starved themselves in front of. The prisoners associated with the Irish Republican Army utilized this method while being cognizant of the cultural and emotional impact it would have on the public in general. By hunger-striking the prisoners were shaming the British government as well as the people who sided with them.

Another reason for self-harmful protest methods like hunger strikes is a lack of other options available to the protesters. Both Palestinian and Guantanamo prisoners utilize this logic. Both the Palestinian prisoners and Guantanamo Bay prisoners are treated harshly by their captors and the prisoners often lack access to the outside world. With the limited access, the prisoners have to be clever and create a news-worthy situation in order to bring attention to their plight.

Palestinians in the protests which occurred in 2012 and 2014 were protesting against the Israelis’ use of indeterminate detention to punish the actions of the Palestinian protesters who disagreed with Israel’s expansionist policies. Israel and Palestine have a long history of contentious relations stemming from territory disputes as well as whether or not there should be two states or one, probably Jewish, state.

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3 Ibid.
Since Israel has greater power and influence than the Palestinians, the Palestinians are relegated to certain territories of Israel. Along with the relegation of Palestinians to certain areas, Israeli forces control access to these areas as well as access to supplies like clean water and food. Since the Israeli forces have much more power than the Palestinians, the Palestinians lack the ability to use more common ways of protesting. This is especially true with prisoners of detention centers in Israel. The conflict is also a long-standing conflict, and such struggles can lead to fatigue in the international community and media. To generate interest then, Palestinians will hunger strike. Hunger striking brings attention to Palestine’s plight in a dramatic way.

Guantanamo prisoners’ hunger strikes differ from both the Palestinian and Irish strikes in a couple of ways. Guantanamo prisoners have been transplanted from the Middle East to the US base in Cuba called Guantanamo. This situation already separated the prisoners from any of their typical support methods and truly isolated them from their families. Some prisoners claim they have not spoken to their families in decades. The isolation eliminates many of the ways prisoners would typically protest harsh treatment.

All three of these cases are examples of hunger strikes being implemented in unique situations. The three cases though are all political in nature, which maintains a running theme between them as well as the hunger strikes. The purpose of this study is to examine each case and determine what impact culture has on the effectiveness of hunger strikes. This paper will begin by examining the methodology utilized and then move into a literature analysis of the topics of hunger strikes and the cases of
Guantanamo Bay, Palestine, and Ireland. From there all three cases will be examined for efficacy on a case-by-case basis. Next all three will be collectively analyzed and then concluding remarks will end the paper.
Methodology:

The methodology used in this thesis is mostly case study analysis. Case study analysis is particularly useful for this type of investigation. Case studies have been around since the 19th century in one form or another. Typically, case studies are used in anthropology and sociological fields. These fields are particularly adept at utilizing this method due to the subject of their research: people. Since this study is also studying people the case study method is appropriate.

According to Jacques Hamel, “A case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is—at least in part—to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population). Case study research may incorporate several cases, that is, multiple case studies.” This study will be incorporating the case of hunger strikes within Palestine, Guantanamo Bay prison, and Ireland. The method used within this study is more accurately described as a comparative-historical case study. Which means there is more than one case being discussed and studied and that there is temporal variation between the cases. Guantanamo Bay and Palestine’s hunger strikes happen in the early 2000s while the Irish hunger strike occurred earlier in the 1980s.

This method is not without challenges though. Problems with the case study method include a lack of representativeness and “lack of rigor in the collection,

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6 Ibid. 28
construction, and analysis of the empirical materials that give rise to this study.”

All methods have drawbacks however and the lack of representativeness and lack of rigor both are resolved or prove to be less of a concern within this study.

For example, lack of representativeness allows for the researcher to focus more in-depth on a few particular cases and gain a deeper understanding of those particular cultures before attempting to extract a broader understanding of humanity as a whole. According to Hamel;

Understanding the empirical properties of social relationships consequently requires such a description, enabling us to establish the manner in which the object of study determined according to this objective has been concretely defined, within the actual context of the experience of the social actors and meanings they assign directly to such experiences. From the outset, the case study appears to serve this purpose. As it has been traditionally defined, it proves to be the descriptive study, are excellence and in depth. Therefore, the lack of representation and rigor both lend themselves to this type of study and lead to a more in-depth understanding of the context in which these situations occur. Case study methods help researchers focus on the why and how rather than on the more quantitative aspects. According to John Gerring, “case study techniques...they move us closer to a case-based understanding of causation insofar as they aim to preserve the texture and detail of individual cases, features that are often lost in large-N cross-case analysis.” Which further proves the benefits of utilizing a case study as a method for exploring hunger strikes.

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8 Ibid. 24
9 Ibid. 32-33
10 Gerring, John, *Case Study Research* 5
Hamel states, “The case study has proven to be in complete harmony with the three key words that characterize any qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining. Such a study is best able to describe and understand the case under investigation.”¹⁺⁻ This explains why case studies work within this research. The purpose of the research developed below is to explore whether or not hunger strikes are unique to certain cultures or more broadly impactful. This cannot be determined without assessing the cultural context of each of the three cases.

Within this thesis culture is defined as the beliefs and customs of a group of people within a particular setting. For Northern Ireland the majority of the people protesting were Irish Republican Army members, this will be considered a culture for the purpose of this paper. In the case of Palestine, the culture will be very broadly defined as majority Islamic, living in Palestine or Israel and against what they consider to be Israeli occupation of their territory. Lastly the culture of the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay will be defined as the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay who have been isolated from their family/community and majority Islamic.

These case studies were chosen for the ability to represent different situations around the world. With that being said, there are similarities between the cases that make them ripe for comparison. In all three cases the hunger strikes are occurring in prisons by people who can be considered outsiders to the places where they are. For example, the Irish strikers were in British prisons and Catholics in the midst of a Protestant area. The Palestinians were taken out of Palestine and placed in Israeli

¹⁺⁻ Hamel, Jacques, *Case Study Methods* 39
prisons and the prisoners in Guantanamo were removed from their communities to reside in Cuba at a US military base. All three groups have a firm religious background as well. Their situations alter when it comes to attention from the press, and how effective their hunger strikes were. The purpose of this thesis is to examine all three cases in an attempt to find things that make hunger strikes more effective.
Literature Review:

Hunger strikes in general as well as the specific cases of Palestine, Ireland and Guantanamo are all the focus of different types of research that impact this study. Research for hunger strikes in general tends to focus on the medical and legal implications. This holds true for studying hunger strikes in Guantanamo Bay as well. However, in Palestine the researched is more focused on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In Ireland the research is focused on historical implications. Despite the differences in research focus it is important to understand previous research done on these subjects to contextualize this study.

Research about Palestine has in general focused on the longevity of the people’s struggle against the Israelis. Within this section of research, researchers tend to examine political methods utilized by those resisting occupation. This includes works on martyrdom and its relevance for continuing the resistance as seen in the article “The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada” by Lori A. Allen. Allen discusses the importance of martyrs and funerals within continuing the resistance by the Palestinians, especially considering the fatigue and apathy plaguing many Palestinians after such a long period of struggle. Research on hunger strikes in Palestine usually circle back to the Israeli’s use of indefinite detention to attempt and dissuade Palestinians from protesting against Israeli actions.

Allen, Lori A., History and Memory “The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada” (Indiana University Press) 110-111
In regard to the hunger strikes in Guantanamo, the research tends to focus more on US treatment of these prisoners and their situation as indefinite prisoners. There is a lot of writing done on the laws and ethics of the situation of Guantanamo Bay and the treatment of prisoners within its prison. For example, research by Sara Cloon has focused on the legality of force feeding prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. She notes “international law, medical ethics, and case law all understand that patients have a right to refuse medical treatment when they are mentally competent.”\textsuperscript{13} The hunger strikes in Guantanamo Bay tend to be for reasons relating to their treatment within the prisons or the treatment of the Koran.\textsuperscript{14} The research also focuses on the human rights issues and how the US government is failing to meet its international obligations when it comes to human rights and the just treatment of prisoners.

The Irish hunger strikes tend to be analyzed from a more historical perspective since the major hunger strike occurred in the 1980s. These hunger strikes brought into question the ethics of allowing hunger strikers to die as a result of their strike as well as how the strikes helped the Irish liberation movement.\textsuperscript{15} Much of the research also details how the strikes were related to the Irish Republican Army and the fight that

\textsuperscript{13} Cloon, Sara, \textit{Notre Dame Journal of Law Ethics \\& Public Policy} “Competent Hunger Strikers: Applying the Lessons from Northern Ireland to the Force-Feeding in Guantanamo” (University of Notre Dame 2014) 383
\textsuperscript{14} Amnesty International “‘I have no reason to believe that I will ever leave this prison alive’ Indefinite Detention at Guantanamo Continues; 100 detainees on Hunger Strike (Amnesty International Press, 2013 London) 1
consumed much of Ireland during this time period. The Irish culture and its impact on the hunger strike is also analyzed rather deeply by researchers studying these strikes as Irish culture leads to a particularly impactful hunger strike, as discussed below. A question many researchers try to settle is whether successful hunger strikes are a uniquely Irish thing as there is a cultural impact that is not as relevant in other cultures.

Hunger strikes in general are analyzed in research from a variety of perspectives. Legal studies tend to analyze hunger strikes by examining legal practices surrounding hunger strikes. For example, lawyers of Guantanamo Bay prisoners focus on prison conditions and explaining to the public why hunger strikes are necessary in these conditions as well as taking legal action against doctors and military officials violating the prisoners’ rights to hunger strike without being impeded upon. This is important as Guantanamo Bay gives lawyers a unique opportunity to examine laws in a rare situation.

The medical field focuses on the intersection of their oaths to keep patients alive and healthy and their oath to respect patient autonomy. Hunger strikes put doctors in a position where they have conflicting opinions. The World Medical Association states that patients are allowed to hunger strike to the point of death if they are of sound mind when they begin. Which brings into question what it means to be of sound mind within the medical community. There is also a medical ethics debate on whether or not it is acceptable to allow patients to die in your care. While associations declare that it is

\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Sharman Apt Russell, \textit{Hunger: An Unnatural History} 73}
\footnote{Annas, George J., \textit{Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law} “American Vertigo: ‘Dual Use,’ Prison Physicians, Research and Guantanamo” (Case Western Reserve University School of Law) p. 631-633}
the patient’s right to die from a hunger strike doctors sometimes feel compelled to ensure their patients live.\textsuperscript{19} Governments also play a role in this as well. In Italy for example, the government orders doctors to force feed patients who are hunger striking instead of allowing them to strike.\textsuperscript{20}

Force feeding is another dilemma faced by medical practitioners dealing with hunger strikes. Governments and those opposing the hunger strikers may require the doctors to force feed their patients despite the knowledge that this is, in the long term, damaging to the patients.

The majority of research for hunger strikes has been in the legal and medical fields as they are most directly connected to hunger strikes. In the case of Irish hunger strikes though, historians also have a major research part as well, since the hunger strikes are a large part of Irish history and culture.\textsuperscript{21} Guantanamo hunger strike research tends towards a more legal and medical discussion considering the situation of the prisoners.\textsuperscript{22} Palestine is similar but with the added bonus of centering research in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

\textsuperscript{19} Caenazzo, Luciana, Pamela, Tozzo, Daniele, Rodriguez, \textit{Med Health Care and Philos} “Hospitalized hunger-striking prisoners: the role of ethics consultations” (Springer, June 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2016) 623
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. 625-626
Case Studies

The three case studies to be analyzed in an attempt to gain a better understanding of how hunger strikes are effective are the case of the Irish Troubles hunger strike in 1980/1981, the Palestinian hunger strikes of the early 2000s, and the Guantanamo Bay hunger strikes of the early 2000s as well. Despite the gap in time period the three cases were chosen since they all take place in similar situations. All three occur inside prisons where there is a community that supports them and a community that does not support them. For example, the Palestinian hunger strikers are supported by the Palestinians, but not in large part by the Israeli prison system that imprisoned them.

All three cases have differences in effectiveness as well as the research in this thesis will show. The reason for including the Irish Troubles hunger strike is, the hunger strike demonstrates an effective hunger strike that managed to effect change within Northern Ireland, therefore there is more information detailing how this case was successful. The Irish hunger strike also had more information available since all sources were in English and there is not much reporting in general done on Guantanamo Bay and there is so much happening in Palestine that those sections became smaller than Ireland’s.
Irish Hunger Strike:

Protesters have always struggled to attract attention to injustice in such a way as to provoke reform. One of the ways the Irish brought attention to their cause in the 1980s were hunger strikes. The question remains though, were hunger strikes during the Irish Troubles effective in swaying public opinion and support in favor of what the prisoners in Belfast wanted?

The hunger strikers shamed the opposition in a way they could not retaliate against. The hunger strikes also gathered support and momentum behind the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and its causes giving more power to the terrorist organization. The hunger strikes also happened contrary to the wishes of the political leadership and without the support of the public.

Ireland and its relationship with hunger is an oddity. Historically, hunger strikes have been used on the island to shame or punish someone for a misdeed they committed against someone else. For example, if someone had cheated another person out of money, the person who had been cheated could sit on the cheater’s porch and starve to death. Allowing someone to starve or to treat someone poorly was considered very shameful and the cheater was required to take on the victim’s debts as compensation for their actions.\(^{23}\) J. Bowyer Bell, an Irish historian, provides another example; “When in the olden times the aggrieved and powerless sat starving outside the castle gate the mighty lord was shamed.”\(^{24}\) Bell also argues,

\(^{23}\) ibid.

\(^{24}\) J. Bowyer Bell, The Irish Troubles 597
while the hunger strike was hardly Irish alone it was in a sense very Irish, very Irish Catholic, very much a nationalist tool, where the powerful could be shamed by the self-sacrifice of the weak: The process of starving was triumph, not the concessions wrested from authority.  

Lu Yan points out the hunger strikes

...[are] a reflection of resistance to British oppression and pursuit of its own political beliefs....in terms of Catholic, a sort of martyrdom. The strikers, are therefore, regarded as Irish heroes.” The author also adds “Bobby Sands, starving himself to death in prison in 1981, is seen as a republican hero by the Irish, and obtained a great amount of people’s sympathies.

All of these examples provide an interesting hommage to Irish history and the culture as a whole. Irish people would respond more to the shaming of the British rather than aggressive hostile action such as riots. From the cultural perspective, it is easy then to see how compelling a hunger strike during the Troubles would be and how it led to the political cohesion of the public.

During the Irish Troubles, which was the period in Irish History between 1967 and 1992 in which Northern Ireland was a center for violent attacks, Ireland became a hotspot of terrorism and conflict. The animosities were a product of the question of whether or not Northern Ireland would remain a part of Britain or join the Irish Republic. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and other such groups like the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and Sinn Fein strongly desired that Northern Ireland join the Irish Republic and make the island one unified country, as it had been before the British

25 ibid. 595

invasion. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), a terrorist group, also protested against the loss of political prisoner status in the prisons of Northern Ireland.

There were two strikes, one occurring in late 1980, and another bigger strike occurring in early 1981. Both times the prisoners escalated from blanket protests, to covering their cells in feces, to hunger strikes. Hunger strikes were determined to be the best method of protest by the IRA. The people of the IRA and other resistance organizations were mainly Catholics and desired a republican form of government. Catholic people were a minority in Northern Ireland. The majority of the population, which was Protestant and liked the idea of living under a monarchy, desired to be part of the British Union. Many times then, this conflict looks to be religious instead of political. However, regardless of how the Troubles look, they are essentially a political conflict, as the point of this conflict is Northern Ireland’s place, whether it is with the Irish government or with the British, not religious differences.

The hunger strikes did not come into being until after the British revoked political prisoners’ rights to Special Category Status, which granted them the right not to participate in prison labor, right to associate with anyone they wished, the “right to educational and recreational activities”, and the right to wear their own clothes. According to professor Jim Smyth, “...the existence of special category status became anomalous in the eyes of the British, since the whole point of new strategy was to

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depolitize the conflict and criminalize the IRA.” The British wanted to take politics out of the situation and felt this could not be done if a category of prisoners existed that was specifically for political prisoners. The revocation of special category status was also a part of their strategy to criminalize and devalue the political struggle of the IRA as a whole. These rights were taken away as an attempt to control the IRA prisoners in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately for the British, their plan backfired.

The lack of political prisoner rights only served to anger the IRA prisoners more than they had been before. The prisoners began protesting by refusing to wear regulation prison clothing, before graduating on to covering their cells in feces and food, preventing guards from coming into their cells. However, these acts were not taken to be serious protests and their demands were not met. The prisoners came to feel like a hunger strike was “the only way of redressing what they saw as an intolerable situation.” The prisoners felt this way because of the lack of response to their demands as they protested in other ways. A hunger strike, they hoped would pressure the British into giving in to the prisoners’ demands. So the prisoners began preliminary planning with IRA leadership for a hunger strike.

To have an effective hunger strike a couple of needs typically must be met. According to Jim Smyth,

29 ibid. 182
[a] hunger strike must be backed with considerable activity: demonstrations, protests and wide publicity. Without such support those embarking on a hunger strike are doomed to failure and perhaps the forfeiture of their lives. The reason hunger strikes are typically so powerful is because they emotionally trigger people and prove the strikers’ dedication to their cause. According to author Sharman Apt Russell, “Hunger strikers believe that the voice of hunger has a power disproportionate to its source.” Russell also believed that “The voice of hunger can free the oppressed and right injustice.” Hunger strikes also usually have a lot of outside support from the public and the causes they are protesting for.

When the IRA prisoners decided to embark on the hunger strikes, they had none of these things. The IRA leadership outside of the prisons thought that a hunger strike would be a distraction from its military campaigns on the streets of Northern Ireland. The leadership was also convinced there was little hope of gaining mass public support around the hunger striking prisoners. So instead of supporting the hunger strikers the IRA leadership started carrying out a car bombing campaign against prison guards. Dozens of prison officers were assassinated over this period in Irish history. Despite the lack of support, the prisoners went through with the hunger strikes, as they felt they had no other choice but to do so. The hunger strikes thus began.

33 ibid
34 Sharman Apt Russell, Hunger: An Unnatural History p. 73
35 ibid.
36 ibid.
37 F. Stuart Ross, Smashing H-Block: The Rise and Fall of the Popular Campaign against Criminalization (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool England 2011), 22
The hunger strike of 1980 began with seven prisoners and ended after 53 days
and 25 more prisoners striking.\textsuperscript{38} The strike ended because the Irish resistance believed
they had come to an agreement with the British government to solve the special status
of political prisoners’ issue.

Before even the blanket protests there had been many attempts by the Irish
rebels to negotiate with the British but by October of 1980 they no longer felt that such
was possible and committed to the first hunger strike.\textsuperscript{39} “The prisoners were perceived
to be the soft underbelly of the republican struggle. The British thought \textit{[the hunger
strikers]} could be isolated, beaten, intimidated and coerced into accepting the label of
criminal. But republican prisoners are political prisoners—men and women of
conviction, commitment and determination,”\textsuperscript{40} According to Irish political protester and
politician, Gerry Adams the British were colonists in Ireland, while Thatcher and others
within the British government saw the IRA as murderers.\textsuperscript{41} These perceptions led to a
contentious us versus them situation which could only lead to animosity.

It was not only the lack of special status that people on the outside, more and
more so regardless of their affiliation with the IRA, were concerned about. They were
concerned about the conditions of the prisoners as they protested against the loss of
political status. According to J. Bowyer Bell, author of \textit{Irish Troubles},

\begin{quote}
The prisoners \textit{[in the H-block prisons]} were battered, dirty, thin, foul and naked.
They lived in filth, in the cold, existing in inhuman conditions. Photographs
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} CAIN http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/hstrike/chronology.htm (University of Ulster last
updated 9/23/15) accessed 3/21/16
\textsuperscript{39} ibid 86
\textsuperscript{40} Gerry Adams, \textit{Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland} 11
\textsuperscript{41} Sharman Apt Russell, \textit{Hunger: An Unnatural History} 88-89
smuggled out showed strange wraiths with hollow chests, great halos of hair, long beards, and huge staring eyes—icons of suffering.\textsuperscript{42}

This perception of the political prisoners as destitute and not taken care of by the state led to the outpouring of help and support by people outside of the prisons. As time went on even more people supported this movement even if they were not involved in the IRA or particularly political. The change in the amount of involvement by the public is because hunger strikes are an Irish Catholic motif and more likely cause an emotional impact with the Irish Catholic community as it resonates with ideas of suffering for a cause. The strikes actually struck the Catholics so hard that the Catholic Church in Ireland declared that dying in a hunger strike was not suicide,\textsuperscript{43} and openly supported the hunger strikers.\textsuperscript{44} Which is significant, as the Catholic Church has a large amount of power within Irish communities and therefore could sway public opinion.

Outside help took place in support of the prisoners by Sinn Fein, which attempted to help lobby for the prisoners.\textsuperscript{45} Families of the prisoners also helped show support for them by dressing only in blankets and picketing or holding protests in England and Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{46} More outside help was found in the form of protesters during the summer of 1981. During this time the British used plastic bullets to deter protesters.\textsuperscript{47} However it only amplified the protests and support behind the hunger strikers.

\textsuperscript{42} J. Bowyer Bell, \textit{Irish Troubles: A Generation of Violence} 586
\textsuperscript{43} Sharman Apt Russell, \textit{Hunger}, 90-91
\textsuperscript{44} F. Stuart Ross, \textit{Smashing H-Block} 48
\textsuperscript{45} Gerry Adams, \textit{Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland}
\textsuperscript{46} F. Stuart Ross, \textit{Smashing H-Block}, 11
\textsuperscript{47} ibid
For example, the Belfast march attracted thousands of civilians protesting the prison conditions and showing solidarity with the prisoners.\textsuperscript{48} Many new groups popped up around Northern Ireland as well, to help coordinate efforts to show support for the prisoners.\textsuperscript{49} Still, Smyth argues “[s]upport for the prisoners was surprising in its depth and intensity. However, it was still possible to see this support as being of an emotional and transitory nature.”\textsuperscript{50} The support of the public at this time, while high, was an uncertain factor. Many other issues occurring in Ireland during this time could grab the public’s attention and end up shunting the hunger strikers out of the public eye. This rallying though, continued on the side of the protesters through the second protest in 1981.\textsuperscript{51}

Between the two protests a moment of calm occurred. The Provisional IRA created a truce with the British and opened secret talks.\textsuperscript{52},\textsuperscript{53} While negotiations were ongoing Sean McKenna, one of the hunger strikers, was near death and so the prisoners and IRA leadership took an offer from the British officials, which the prisoners believed might lead to a solution for what they were protesting against.\textsuperscript{54} As was to be expected during this conflict, because of the hard line approach by Thatcher’s government,

\textsuperscript{48} ibid. 96
\textsuperscript{49} ibid. 98
\textsuperscript{50} Jim Smyth, \textit{Political Communication and Persuasion} “Unintentional Mobilization” 185
\textsuperscript{51} F. Stuart Ross, \textit{Smashing H-Block} 128
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. p. 101
\textsuperscript{53} J. Bowyer Bell, \textit{The Irish Troubles} p. 604
\textsuperscript{54} F Stuart Ross, \textit{Smashing H-Block} p. 101
England did not hold up its end of the truce and therefore a second hunger strike was threatened in 1981.\textsuperscript{55}

The British were in negotiations with the opposition to end the hunger strikes and come to an agreement on special category status within Northern Irish prisons. But the British reneged on their promises made during the negotiations. According to Gerry Adams, “The prisoners were furious. Bobby Sands had wanted to recommence the fast almost immediately after there was evidence of British duplicity.”\textsuperscript{56} Bobby Sands would go on to become one of the most well known hunger strikers during this era. His desire to continue striking showed the relentlessness of the hunger strikers and their determination to get what they desired from the British.

There has been some disagreement about the truce period between 1980 and 1981. Most historians and Irish political scientists claim the peace fell apart because of England’s inability to follow through with their end of the deal. However, author Stephen Hopkin claims, “...the outside leadership ensured the potential deal was rejected, and thus the hunger strike continued, with the hope that the sympathy generated in the broader Catholic nationalist population would permit Owen Carron...to win the [parliamentary] seat once again.”\textsuperscript{57} This strike was determined even more by the prisoners within the Northern Irish prison system as they felt they had no other way to protest the British’s reneging on the truce that ended the first strike.

\textsuperscript{55} ibid 109
\textsuperscript{56} Gerry Adams, \textit{Hope and History} 10
\textsuperscript{57} Stephen Hopkins, \textit{Irish Political Studies} “‘Our Whole History has been Ruined!’ The 1981 Hunger Strike and the Politics of Republican Commemoration and Memory” (Vol 31, issue 1 2016) 44-62
The second hunger strike started with Bobby Sands in March of 1981. Bobby Sands was disappointed with the lack of progress and felt; once again the best way to protest the British’s policies was a hunger strike. So, again the prisoners struck, this time the strike only ended after several deaths. According to Stuart, “After eight deaths, however, critics of the anti-H-Block campaign grew more and more vocal.” This goes to show the power of the hunger strikes as well as the continued support by the public. The end of hunger strikes only occurred because families intervened on behalf of unconscious family members, some even going so far as to state they felt this was the only option and condemning the state for allowing their loved ones to end up in such a position. The families were terrified the strikers would die, but while the strikers were conscious many families would not take the choice away from the prisoner, it was only after the hunger striker became unconscious the family took over. Amnesty International also declared the human rights had been ignored in Northern Ireland prisons, which further helped the prisoners’ case against the British state.

Hunger strikes bring light to situations deemed intolerable by those striking. However, sometimes governments take a lot of pressure to pay attention to what people are striking over. For example, the southern Irish government in Dublin remained out of the conflict for a while. According to Smyth “the concern of Dublin administrations for the plight of the minority [Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland] did not appear to be very great until the hunger strike protest led to the political consolidation

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58 F. Stuart, *Smashing H-Block* 47
59 ibid.
60 ibid.
of Sinn Fein.”\textsuperscript{61} This was a concern because Sinn Fein had not been seen as a threat to establishment politics until they gained political solidification through the political organization’s part in the hunger strikes.

Political groups were not the only ones affected by the hunger strikers. According to Jim Smyth, “The level of discontent was rising in the nationalist community, but it had not yet found a focus. The prison issue was to provide the spark.”\textsuperscript{62} People in Northern Ireland were angry and wanted a part in finding a solution for their country. However, there had not been a focal point for the people to rally around, until the issue of the treatment of political prisoners. “The hunger strikes crystallized and focused the discontent of the nationalist minority.”\textsuperscript{63} Which is important as it led to the consolidation of political parties and unification over a single goal. Had the hunger strikes not brought the northern Irish population together, there could not have been an effective movement against the British, as they were too easily divided and conquered. In this way the hunger strikes proved to be extremely helpful in creating a unified dissent against the British.

Even the prisoners protesting against the British felt the power of the hunger strikes. Lu Yan states “[f]or [Bobby Sands], the British presence deprived the Irish people of self-determination.”\textsuperscript{64} Bobby Sands and the other hunger strikers felt they were giving a purpose and a focal point to the otherwise scattered movement. By doing this

\textsuperscript{61} Jim Smyth, \textit{Political Communication and Persuasion} “Unintentional Mobilization” 180
\textsuperscript{62} ibid. 181
\textsuperscript{63} ibid 186
\textsuperscript{64} Lu Yan, \textit{Review of European Studies} “Impacts of British Policies and the IRA’s Ideology on the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike” 9-15
hunger strikers were helping their country in the fight against what they saw as oppression.

As a result of the first hunger strike as well, Jim Smyth claims “there is evidence that a harsher regime was introduced [by the British], thus making the second strike inevitable.” Which goes to prove how impactful the first protest was in unifying the Northern Irish populations. Countries like England would not enforce harsher regimes if the first protests were ineffective.

The hunger strikes had various impacts after they concluded in 1981. In the end, the hunger strikers in Northern Ireland accomplished the goal they set out to achieve; the restoration the status of political prisoners. J. Bowyer Bell states that [for] Sands and for those who would come later, the strike would not really be about the five demands, [political status, or the legitimacy of the movement and the armed struggle]; it was to pit the will of the just against the power of empire....And he was sure that Britain would act to character, hold firm, and so lose a moral struggle.

And true to character, Britain held firm until the cost was no longer worth the fight. They then relented, giving the protesters what they wanted and proving hunger strikes as an effective method of protest. Another consequence was political. In Northern Ireland two political groups, the IRA and Sinn Fein “...were immeasurably strengthened and gained a political cohesion which they never had before.” This led to more

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66 F. Stuart Ross, *Smashing H-Block* 258
67 J. Boweyer Bell, *The Irish Troubles*, 609
68 Jim Smyth, *Political communication and Persuasion* “Unintentional Mobilization” 188
nationalist groups within the Northern Ireland parliament and continued the movement along legal means long after the hunger strikers had completed their task.

Considering the importance of the Catholic church to the Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland at this time it is important to examine their response to the hunger strikes as well. The Catholic church was ambivalent and hesitant to take on any particular role during the strikes. Eventually the parishioners themselves forced a reaction from the Church as they saw the church as leaders in their communities and needed their response to know how to react. Certain priests were involved in IRA activities and attempted to bring the church further into the fold, but on the whole the Church attempted to stay out of the strikes.\footnote{Briggs, Kenneth A., \textit{New York Times}, “Catholic Church Endeavors to put Hunger Strikes in Perspective” (1981)}

While the hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981 have long since passed, their impact on Irish politics has not. According to Stephen Hopkins, a professor at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom, “Almost every grade of republicanism, with the exception of the ‘Official’ republican movement, either celebrated or, at the very least, sympathized with the heroic sacrifice of Bobby Sands and his nine comrades who died on strike...”\footnote{Stephen Hopkins, \textit{Irish Political Studies} “‘Our Whole History has been Ruined!’”} Hopkins then goes onto state “the hunger strikes...were also consciously commemorative in their design and spirit, anticipating their own memorialization by invoking the legacies of previous generations of republican martyrs.”\footnote{ibid.}
The question of who owned the legacies of the strikers, has become more of an issue in this time period as political groups that once worked together separate and disagree.\(^{73}\) “[…in the new century the legacies of the 1980-1981 hunger strikes have become much more ambivalent.]^{74}\)

In the political situation of this century in Ireland, the Sinn Fein and Provisional government organizations have been debating how to utilize the hunger strikes politically. Both have been working to claim the narrative powers over the strikes as their own, while negating the impact of the other in the strikes.\(^{75}\) Hopkins also states in his article

The hunger strikes, which had been understood and experienced for so long as a force for internal cohesion within the broad republican family, have instead over the course of the last decade been the site of suffocating and traumatic conflict.\(^{76}\) “[…in the case of the hunger strikes, the last decade shows us that the role of commemoration in binding together the republican community has come under intense strain.]^{77}\)

In the past, the hunger strikes of the 1980’s brought the Northern Irish community together, but now they are acting more divisive, as the Irish people try to determine which political party has more clout in claiming the Irish hunger strikers as their own. Despite this though, the hunger strikes are still impacting Irish politics to this day, further proving the strength of hunger strikes and how powerful they can be in forcing change.

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\(^{73}\) ibid.  
\(^{74}\) ibid. 48  
\(^{75}\) ibid. 57-58  
\(^{76}\) ibid. 56  
\(^{77}\) ibid. 57
Palestinian Hunger Strikes:

The situation in Palestine has been fraught with conflict since the creation of the state of Israel in 1949. Territorial disputes and disagreements over how to negotiate the question of Palestine within Israel i.e. Two state solution or one state, led to violence on all sides. Eventually the Israelis put into place a policy that would allow them to detain Palestinians for an indefinite amount of time if they were suspected of committing crimes against Israel.\textsuperscript{78} The implementation of this policy, called administrative detention, is often cited as the reason for Palestinian prisoners to go on hunger strike.

Palestinians have used hunger strikes as a method of protest since 1968. They have used it to protest Israeli detention policies, detention conditions, inadequate medical treatment and torture.\textsuperscript{79} According to Mezan “A significant portion of current rights that Palestinian prisoners have in Israeli occupation’s prisons were obtained through hunger strikes.”\textsuperscript{80}

Like the Irish, detailed above, the Palestinians share the mentality that “personal sacrifice is, for many, a sign of one’s faith in God, and for most, a manifestation of a profound personal commitment to the goal of national independence.”\textsuperscript{81} Palestinians, like the Irish are usually working towards independence or at least the liberation of their

\begin{footnotes}
\item Mezan “Factsheet: Force-feeding under International Law and Medical Standards” (2015)
\item Ibid.
\item ibid.
\item Allen, Lori, \textit{History & Memory} “The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada” (All-Prison Hunger Strike by Palestinian Political Prisoners Ignites Widespread Demonstrations 1992) 108
\end{footnotes}
fellow Palestinians when they hunger strike. This cements the hunger strikes in a moral and religious basis, much like the Irish hunger strikes of the 1980s.

Palestinian hunger strikes are more frequent than Irish hunger strikes though.

Starting up around 1992 and continuing through 2017, Palestinians have been hunger striking. One of the most important happened in 2000 while another occurred in 2012 and yet another in 2017. The hunger strike in 2000 was due to prison conditions faced by the Palestinians. The strike ended on May 31st of 2000. The hunger strike also ended in concessions from the Israeli government. According to the New York Times, “Israel granted the inmates more liberal family visitation and moved five out of solitary confinement, among other concessions.”

The strike in 2011, which began in September had similar goals. The prisoners protested against “poor prison conditions and a lack of basic rights.” Around 100 of the imprisoned Palestinians began this open-ended hunger strike as an attempt to force the Israeli security forces to listen to them. The prisoners demanded the cessation of solitary confinement and humiliation of detainees. The strike within the prison caught on and sparked hunger strikes by people not in prison. One of the women protesting in solidarity with the prisoners states “...one of the main goals of our strike is to encourage

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84 Kestler-D’Amores Jillian, The Electric Intifada “Hunger strikes will continue until prisoners’ demands respected” (The Electronic Intifada 2011)
85 Ibid.
the political prisoners, the political heroes, in continuing their strike...”

The Palestinians are therefore proven capable in this strike to effect change and inspire people outside the prison system to also speak out and seek change.

The 2012 hunger strike was focused on two people, Hana Shalabi and Khader Adnan who both went on hunger strike to protest the Israeli use of administrative detention. Administrative detention is “a practice of the Israeli military courts that allows imprisonment based on secret informants or information and that has been used against thousands of Palestinians over the years.” According to reporter Isabel Kershner, “Israel defends its use of administrative detention as necessary for national security...” Opponents of the policy make the point that Israel is violating international law with the indefinite detainment of these administrative detentions. These two prisoners went on hunger strike to protest their own detention though, setting up a trend “in which hunger strikes increasingly are launched by individual prisoners seeking their own release, rather than the traditional collective push for improved conditions for all.”

86 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
The Israeli perception during this hunger strike was that if the guards ignored the prisoners’ rights and isolated the prisoners they could break said prisoners and the hunger strike would be broken.91

Adnan’s protest did garner media attention and inspired other prisoners to go on strike with him. An estimated 1,800 Palestinian prisoners went on strike along with Adnan. His hunger strike ended when the Israeli government agreed to release him in April, two months after his hunger strike ended.92 This agreement had a serious impact on other hunger strikers, Bilal Diab stated in an interview, “when Khader Adnan emerged victorious from his hunger strike by securing a deal based on his terms, we were filled with more motivation and steadfastness to embark on a hunger strike ourselves in order to be released.”93 Adnan managed to inspire and encourage others to do as he did, hunger strike and then bargain with the Israelis for their release.

While the focus of much of the media attention of the hunger strikes was focused on Shalabi and Adnan, former soccer player Mahmoud Sarsak hunger struck for 86 days around the same time. He had been held for three years under the administrative detention policy and his hunger strike was an attempt to get the Israelis to either indict him or release him to his family.94 Sarsak’s case gained attention in the

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91 Kestler-D’Amores, Jillian, *The Electronic Intifada* “Israel puts ‘every possible obstacle’ in way of respecting hunger strikers’ rights, say doctors” (Electronic Intifada 2012)
92 Ibid.
93 Alsaafin Linah, *The Electronic Intifada* “Winning the battle of empty stomachs: hunger striker Bilal Diab interviewed” (Electronic Intifada 2012)
94 Daily Beast “Hunger Strike, Palestinian Prisoner Near Death in Israel” 1
sports world, since he was formerly a soccer player. This attention by an alternative section of the world was hoped to have more of an impact by informing people who may have not known about the strike.

The strikes of Ms. Shalabi and Mr. Adnan did have impact on their situation though. Their hunger strikes “drew international attention to the continuing use of administrative detention and prompted concerns in Israel that a hunger strike to death could set off widespread unrest.” This proves there was an impact from their hunger strikes. Not only was Israel forced to make even minor concessions, there was a concern of unrest from the public, who could put more pressure on the Israelis to end their practice of administrative detention. The striking also led to a deal between Palestinian prisoners and the Israeli Prison Service. The prison guards agreed to end the use of long-term solitary confinement for ‘security reasons’, allow family visits from Gaza and West Bank, end night raids and restrictions to access to legal counsel and improving medical care within prisons. Because of these strikes, other prisoners have gone on strike as well to protest their imprisonment under administrative detention.

Between 2014 and 2015 there were several minor strikes that took place in Israeli prisons as well. While not as big and impactful as the 2000 and 2012 strikes they

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95 Trimel, Suzanne, *Amnesty International USA* “Israel Must Immediately Release or Provide Medical Treatment for Soccer Professional On Hunger Strike” (Amnesty International USA 2012)
96 Ibid.
97 Meazan, “Update on the current situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli custody, six weeks after the conclusion of an agreement between hunger strike leaders and the Israeli Prison Service” (Mezan 2012)
98 Ibid.
are still worth noting as they show how the hunger strikes are pervasive and show a determination from the Palestinian prisoners to make a difference. The protest in 2014 was a hunger strike against administrative detention and banning of family visits. The ban was reinstated by the Israelis after 2012 and the administrative detention practices of the Israelis against Palestinians never actually stopped. “To settle the strike, Israel agreed to allow the resumption of prison visits by families of Palestinian prisoners from the Gaza Strip...”

A hunger strike in 2015 was incited by lawyer Muhammad Allen who lived in the West Bank and had “…been on hunger strike for at least 50 days in protest of his detention without charge or trial since his arrest in November.” The Israelis threatened to force feed him, which is illegal according to international law and agreements to which Israel is a party. However, Allen managed to win his freedom via hunger strike.102

One of the most current hunger strikes in Palestine has been the hunger strike initiated by Marwan Barghouti, that includes 1500 Palestinian prisoners and occurred in 2017. Barghouti has been a protester against the Israeli government for the majority of his life. He has also been in prison for the past 15 years, as of June 2017.104

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99 Catron, Joe, *The Electronic Intifada* “Palestinian prisoners ready for mass hunger strike” (The Electronic Intifada 2014)
100 Ibid.
101 Murphy, Maureen Clare, *The Electronic Intifada* “Israeli force-feeding of Palestinian hunger striker imminent” (The Electronic Intifada 2015)
102 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
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initiated this hunger strike in an attempt to better the conditions for the 6,500 Palestinians in Israeli detention. Many of these people have been imprisoned and placed in administrative detention.\textsuperscript{105}

The Israelis, according to Philip Giraldi, “...describe the hunger strike as a ‘violation of prison rules’.”\textsuperscript{106} While Giraldi does not explain how the Israelis planned on handling this particular strike, he did note that in the past the Israelis have used force feeding and restraints to end the hunger strike.\textsuperscript{107} These practices have been called out by international human rights groups as violations of the prisoners’ basic human rights. There is hope that through a social media campaign by Barghouti’s son, awareness of this issue will be heightened, and more pressure will be put on the Israeli government.\textsuperscript{108}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
**Guantanamo Bay Hunger Strikes:**

Guantanamo Bay is a US military prison on a military base in Cuba. It is not technically legal.\(^{109}\) The prison started to be used to a great degree after 9/11 occurred in 2001. The main purpose of the prison is to contain suspected terrorists. There are no rights for the prisoners. During the early 2000s it was also a place of human rights abuses. Torture occurred to a majority of prisoners. Access to the prison is incredibly limited as well. The men in Guantanamo Bay (GTMO) often do not know why they are imprisoned, no charges have been filed against them, they just wait in limbo.

Due to the conditions of the prison, as well as the lack of rights or other means to protest, the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay often go on hunger strike in an attempt to draw attention to their plight. Amnesty International points out, “…detainees being held year after year after year with no indication of when, if ever, they will be released or brought to trial. Distress and protest are predictable outcomes of treating detainees as if they have no human rights…”\(^{110}\) Often times this distress leads prisoners to protesting against their conditions. Especially if the conditions get particularly worse or alter significantly.

One of the detainees Obaidullah stated “I am losing all hope because I have been imprisoned for almost eleven years now at Guantanamo and still do not know my...

\(^{109}\) Johan Steyn, *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* “Guantanamo Bay: The Legal Black Hole” (Vol 53 no 1 Jan 2004, Cambridge University Press) 1

\(^{110}\) Amnesty International “‘I have no reason to believe that I will ever leave this prison alive’ Indefinite Detention at Guantanamo Continues; 100 detainees on Hunger Strike (Amnesty International Press, 2013 London) 1
fate.’” This is a common theme amongst the detainees in Guantanamo. There is a sense of hopelessness and inevitability. Suicide is incredibly common. Between 2002 and 2013 there were nine suicides committed by prisoners. This sense of desperation led directly into the hunger strikes of 2005 and 2013.

The 2005 hunger strike occurred in the summer of that year. According to the Center for Constitutional Rights, “[b]ased on US promises to bring the detention center into compliance with the Geneva Conventions, the June/July 2005 hunger strike ended on July 28, 2005. The current hunger strike was initiated after the DOD reneged on those promises.” All five prison camps were involved in this protest. They were protesting their indefinite imprisonment and living conditions. “The strike called ‘for starvation until death’” and was entirely nonviolent. The prisoners’ demands were simple, fair trial for their crimes, respect for the Qur’an, proper food and water, ability to see the sun, an explanation for why camp 5 is the worst and why people end up there, medical treatment and ability to contact their families. According to a special report by the Center for Constitutional Rights,

The prisoners’ demands reflect their continued problems with religious discrimination at the base. Prisoners have repeatedly reported interference with the call to prayer by prison guards and by the simultaneous broadcast of unrelated messages in English. Additionally, attorneys have voiced concern for detainees held in solitary confinement for months at a time, with no access to

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111 ibid.
112 ibid. 8
113 Center for Constitutional Rights “New Hunger Strike Begins after the Department of Defense Reneges on Promises to Detainees” (New York, 2007)
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
sunlight. Despite DOD press tours highlighting certain detainees’ treatment the prisoners have also consistently complained of a lack of sufficient amounts of food and contaminated drinking water at camp 5\textsuperscript{117}

GTMO was not and continues to not be in compliance with the Geneva Conventions to which the United States is party to. This is part of what makes GTMO illegal. The hunger strike was to recognize the prisoners as people instead of the enemy. As part of a deal to end the strike the DOD permitted “the creation of a prisoners’ representative committee to negotiate with prison officials concerning the protesters’ demands.”\textsuperscript{118}

The hunger strike ended with the acknowledgement and partial attempts by prison officials to solve the problems the prisoners had with the system in place at Guantanamo Bay. However, this did not end the problems at GTMO as there was a subsequent hunger strike in 2013.

The 2013 hunger strike had a number of factors. Striker Msa‘ab Al Madhwan claimed he was protesting “deteriorating conditions of detention, including lack of potable water and cold temperatures in his cell.”\textsuperscript{119} Another prisoner Obaidullah, claimed that in Camp Six there was a shakedown. US soldiers went into each cell and searched all of the prisoner’s belongings. “…the soldiers confiscated detainees’ personal items, including blankets, sheets, towels, mats, razors, toothbrushes, books, family photos, religious CDs, and letters, including legal mail.”\textsuperscript{120} Prisoners also accused

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Amnesty International “‘I have no reason to believe that I will ever leave this prison alive’ Indefinite Detention at Guantanamo Continues; 100 detainees on Hunger Strike. 6
\textsuperscript{120} ibid. 7
soldiers of mishandling the Koran. This took away the prisoners’ sense of humanity and appeared unjust as the prisoners felt they had done nothing to provoke this response. The hunger strike started on February 6th before escalating to 14 detainees on March 15th, and to 100 prisoners by April 29th.

The United States’ response, including President Obama’s, to this situation in 2013 was to blame Congress for stalling the President’s efforts to end Guantanamo Bay. There was a lot of talk and political rhetoric from the former president on closing Guantanamo Bay, but that never occurred. During the hunger strike, the response of soldiers and medical officials within the prison was drastic.

Prisoners have been force fed, which goes against international law. Prisoners also claimed to have been punished for participating in the hunger strike. Search and seizures of personal possessions, deprivation of hygiene products and personal effects occurring to people who are hunger striking seems like punishment for their decision. These actions go against the international laws that protect prisoners but since the United States is so powerful often times other countries look the other way instead of forcing the United States to keep its commitments.

The issue of force feeding prisoners leads back into the conversation by physicians and psychologists about the ethics of force feeding. George Annas focused

121 ibid. 8
122 ibid. 7
123 ibid. 2, 7
124 ibid. 1
125 ibid.
126 ibid. 3
127 ibid. 9
specifically on this issue. By putting physicians in this position, the military forces at Guantanamo Bay are turning professionals, who prisoners ought to be able to rely on and trust to assist them, into part of the torture and dehumanization of the prisoners.\textsuperscript{128} Annas also attempts to answer the question of whether or not Guantanamo is unique or a symptom of the mass prison problems within the United States. While he never quite answers the question, Annas makes it clear that the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay is not entirely unique.\textsuperscript{129} This is an important thing to note as it reemphasizes the need for the United States to have a serious conversation about Guantanamo Bay and its prison system overall.

\textsuperscript{128} Annas, George J., \textit{Case Western Reserve journal of International Law} “American Vertigo ‘Dual Use,’ Prison Physicians, Research, and Guantanamo” 631-650
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
Analysis:

Hunger strikes are contextualized and altered by the culture of the society in which they occur. Palestinian hunger strikes differ in how they are implemented on a more individual level. Guantanamo Bay hunger strikes tend to be least effective possibly due to the surrounding culture being unlike the striker’s own. The Irish hunger strikes were powerfully effective in part due to the cultural context of the country.

The Irish hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981 were effective for a variety of reasons. The Irish hunger strikes were successful because of the unique cultural aspects of Ireland and its history. Ireland has a history of using hunger strikes as a way of shaming a person, therefore the utilization of this against the British in the 1980’s brought more of the Irish public to the strikers’ side because of the emotional impact hunger strikes had on less political people.

The hunger strikes in Ireland were also unique because, contrary to the way hunger strikes typically work, these strikes happened without the support in the beginning of the Irish public or the leadership of dissenting organizations such as the IRA. The hunger strikes also continue to affect Irish politics to this day. Currently Sinn Fein and other groups have diverged from their unity of the 1980’s and become more like opposing forces. This has created tensions for the memory and memorialization of the hunger strikers of the 1980’s as there is now a question of which group is truly the group that can claim the strikers and say they have the authority on the memory of the hunger strikers.
Palestinian hunger strikes are unique as well. The goals Palestinians are protesting are much different than the goals of the Irish. The goals and evolution of the way Palestinians hunger strike led to a difference in how they were successful in some ways and not as successful in others. For example, according to reporter Bailey Pam the Irish hunger strikes of 1981 had an ally in the United States. However due to the lobbying power of groups in the United States, the US is not helping the Palestinians so much as attempting to limit their ability to strike and increase Israel’s ability to do as they please. Pam also points out “[w]hen a movement lacks powerful allies, media coverage becomes especially important- and much of the American mainstream media function virtually as an arm of the Israel lobby.” Despite the slightly paranoid twist at the end, Pam has a point the most important part of hunger striking is to have the media report on it and broadcast it to the world.

The uncoordinated, half strikes taken up by individual Palestinians with no grand goal in mind also damages their cause as it “induced a sense of fatigue among both activists and the media, as well as doubts in some quarters about the prisoners’ commitment.” There has also been a tendency for Palestinian prisoners to abandon hunger strikes without a determined settlement, sometimes stopping so as not to impede on peace talks or because of a vague promise made by the Israelis. All of these factors have worked to the detriment of Palestinian hunger strikes.

131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
Despite this there have been successes brought about by Palestinian hunger strikers. Adnan and Shalabi, whose cases are discussed above, were both freed as a result of their hunger strikes. While these are not dramatic, widespread changes like those witnessed in the Irish hunger strikes they are still changes. The success of these hunger strikes indicates that Israeli policy is malleable and could be forced to change by high public pressure.

Guantanamo Bay’s hunger strikes are possibly the least inspiring case of hunger strikes. While there has been media attention given to the hunger strikers and the human rights agencies like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have put forth a significant amount of energy, the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay are still there, and unlikely to be freed any time soon, especially under the current United States administration.

Mass hunger strikes in the early 2000s, though, did lead to changes in the prison system itself though. A large-scale hunger strike led to a change in policy concerning the treatment of the Koran within Guantanamo Bay as well as a change in permitting prisoners to fraternize.

From these three cases it appears that for a hunger strike to create dramatic change a few factors must be met. First, more than one person needs to be willing to hunger strike for maximum effect. While some of the Palestinian and Guantanamo Bay hunger strikes were single person events they did not have the same impact as larger hunger strikers. Adnan managed to free himself, but the Israeli system of indefinite
detention still exists while the Irish hunger strikers managed to force a change in British policy.

Second, media attention is important as well. If there is no media coverage of the event, then there is little outside pressure by other people and governments in addition to the pressure put on the government by its own people. The two-pronged pressure forces the government to be accountable in one form or another.

Third, the people hunger striking must be willing to die for their cause. While this may seem dramatic a commitment to the cause and the strike is needed so there is not release of pressure on the government. The Irish hunger strikers did not stop in 1981, even after ten of their men were dead from striking. The death toll and threat of more deaths on the horizons forced the government to do something about what was happening. A lot of the Palestinian hunger strikes end when the Israeli government promises to make changes or to release the main person protesting. In this way small successes are made but the government can come to the conclusion that small concessions will suffice instead of making big policy changes. The pressure is released too soon.

To more clearly comprehend the dynamics of the hunger strikes it may be helpful to examine which hunger strikes were collective instead of individual and implemented by political instead of common criminal prisoners this is depicted in table 1. The Irish was originally considered to be a collective political hunger strike, which gave the strike more negotiating power and credibility. This credibility remained despite the view within the British government that the Irish hunger strikers were not political
prisoners but common criminal prisoners. Much like Ireland the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay are viewed as criminals using hunger strikes as a collective action. By this table then, it does not seem logical that the Guantanamo hunger strikes were not as successful. This case is further understood by table 3. The Palestinian case of hunger striking is unique in the more individualistic approach taken by hunger strikers. These elements all created differing situations within the systems that the hunger strikers were protesting against.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>Irish/GTMO</td>
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Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Palestine</th>
<th>GTMO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience Effected?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes created?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Table 2 shows how success is determined in all three cases. By using the effect upon audiences, which is more fully explained in table 3 and the changes created by the hunger strikes it is easier to understand how the hunger strikes were successful and what success looks like in a hunger strike. To determine the success of a hunger strike it is important to answer two key questions; were audiences effected by the hunger strikes and were changes created or enacted because of the hunger strikes?
For the case of Ireland, as is depicted in table 3 the audiences were, for the most part effected by the hunger strikes. In the case of Ireland, changes were enacted on behalf of the hunger strikers as well. The British government and IRA came to an agreement. Since Ireland answered both questions in an affirmative manner, the hunger strikes can be deemed a success.

In the case of Palestine audiences were only partially affected by the hunger strikes, as evidenced in table 3. This lack of impact mitigated the hunger strikers’ ability to successfully change what they wished to change. Palestinians did manage to create some change through their hunger strikes though. While not grand, sweeping change that impacted all hunger strikers, some strikers managed to have their detention sentences lifted or shortened, which is a success. However, in comparison to the Irish hunger strikes the Palestinian strikes were not as successful and likely to decrease in successfulness over time due to the lack of engagement by audiences and knowledge by Israelis that it is possible to end a hunger strike by making small compromises.

Guantanamo Bay is another case entirely. As evidenced by the third table there was a distinctive lack of audience response to the hunger strikes in Guantanamo Bay. The reasoning for this is explained further down but in summation it is a challenge to strike against a powerful nation that controls where you are, what is going on around you and who has access to you. Despite the lack of audience response, the hunger strikers at Guantanamo Bay did have a partial success in creating a prisoner’s council and ending the desecration and disrespect for the Koran and prayer times. There is also
been outrage against the US’s use of force feeding against the strikers as well, which could also be considered a success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audiences</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Palestine</th>
<th>GTMO</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prison Staff</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-community</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-community</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
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<td>World</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

Table 3 gives a visualization of how different audiences reacted to the different kinds of hunger strikes. This information helps visualize where particular hunger strikes were most effective and where hunger strikes needed improvement. For clarification, an in community within this context refers to the community from which the protesters hail from. In the Northern Ireland case this would be the Northern Irish Catholics and members of the IRA. The out community then are those people influenced by the strikes but not a part of the in community. In the case of Northern Ireland, non-IRA supporting Northern Irish would be an example of the out-community.

The first audience to be considered for the effectiveness of the hunger strikes against would be the prison staff. Prison staff have the ability to make a hunger striker’s fast either easier or more difficult. In the case of Ireland the prison staff were not
necessarily encouraging of the fast but also did not interfere with the strike either. This was not the case of hunger strikers in Palestine and Guantanamo Bay. In both cases prison staff were unsympathetic and directly interfered with the strikes. In Palestine, the interference was being chained to a hospital bed and the guards eating food around the strikers in an attempt to break their fast. In Guantanamo Bay the prison staff used the medical staff at the prison to force feed the prisoners to break their fast.

In the case of Palestine and Ireland the in community was motivated by the protests. This is unsurprising since it is easy to get people motivated when people like them are dying. The Irish hunger strikes were part of a larger political movement and was then utilized by the movement to generate support. In Palestine the same thing occurred. Palestinians held marches or sit-ins to show support for hunger strikers during various strikes.

Guantanamo Bay is a difficult case to assess, as there is little information. The in-community for GTMO prisoners would be their families and communities in their home countries. While those people may want their relatives back there is little evidence of concentrated movements to free prisoners by their family and friends. Part of this has to do with the political situations in the Middle East, where most prisoners are from. The turmoil of the region makes cross-continental protests challenging. Also, the people taken prisoner to GTMO may be of an unknown status to their communities.

As for the out-community both Ireland and GTMO managed to reach out to said community and encourage them to take part in the situation. In Ireland, non-IRA members and Northern Irelanders in general came out in defense of the hunger strikers
to a degree. They did not necessarily agree with the strikers but understood their plight.

In GTMO out-community members like human rights groups became a part of the conversation and protested on behalf of the GTMO prisoners. Both cases managed to gain attention from groups that were not their own. Palestine, however struggled to get the attention or sympathy of Israelis as part of their hunger strikes. There is little evidence suggesting a majority of Israelis even paid attention to the strikes.

Governments were another audience targeted by hunger strikers. In the case of Northern Ireland, the British government was forced to pay attention to the strikers and their demands, especially once word of the strikes went global and other countries began demanding action. In Palestine, the Israeli government has attempted several times to repeal the ability to give out indefinite detention to Palestinians, the government has also ceased even considering force-feeding hunger strikers as a result of the hunger strikes. However, indefinite detention remains and the situation in Palestine is not resolved. Which is why the government wide effect of the Palestinian strikes has been only partially effective. Guantanamo Bay has partially forced changes in the US government as well via hunger strikes. Because of the strikes the US government banned the abuse of the Koran and attempted to create a prisoner’s council to discuss issues and foster a relationship between prisoners and guards. It has not worked out perfectly and force-feeding has not be forcefully stopped or opposed by the government, despite pressure from human rights groups and other governments.

Lastly, the global impact of the hunger strikes must be assessed. In the case of Ireland, it was partially due to global outrage that changes were made by the British
government to address the issue. In Palestine, there has been note and news coverage of hunger strikes and some out pouring of support but burnout in activists is a real issue being faced by Palestinians as the conflict continues and little seems resolved. In Guantanamo Bay there has been some international outrage towards the United States considering their use of force feeding hunger strikers, however this has not and will probably continue to not deter the United States from doing what they wish regardless of international obligations.

Overall the hunger strikes need audiences to be affected by the hunger strikes and for the strikes to generate some kind of change on a large or small scale to be considered successful. While all three strikes can be considered partially successful in that the striker’s made gains and got concessions from those they were protesting against Ireland is the most successful case. By understanding how Ireland was successful and what Palestine and Guantanamo’s strikers did right and wrong people can better understand how to utilize a hunger strike to ensure it is more effective.
Conclusion:

The Irish hunger strikes prove how important and impactful hunger strikes are and how they can change politics as well as shape the future. Hunger strikes I conclude are an important and effective method of protest. They are also more pleasant than other methods, as they are less detrimental to everyone and everything except for the strikers themselves. It is this self-destruction that proves the protesters’ dedication to their cause and helps the world, and especially Ireland, understand and empathize with the cause the hunger strikers are protesting for.

The Palestinian hunger strikes were successful in small ways. Particular prisoners were freed but no grand changes were enacted because of the hunger strikes. This may have to do with the Palestinians not being as relentless as the Irish on the hunger strike and stopping well before they would die.

The Guantanamo Bay hunger strikes were effective in a similar way to the Palestinian hunger strikes. Both managed to make small changes but the overarching system of subjugation is still there. The prisoners at GTMO still have not been able to leave and will probably not be able to. While the hunger strikes have been able to grant them small changes and get the prisoners closer to being treated like human beings they are still illegally imprisoned.

It is important to note the links between cases. According to reporter Dan Ephron “[i]sraelis often defend [administrative detention] by pointing out that the
United States detains people without trial at Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{134} This is a significant statement. The United States is often seen as a leader in the international realm. By maintaining Guantanamo Bay and the tactics utilized there, it limits the United States’ effectiveness in monitoring other countries.

The Irish hunger strikes are often seen as a prominent example of what can be accomplished with dedicated strikers who are willing to die. The hunger strikes in the 1980s forced a change in British policy towards IRA prisoners. Palestinian hunger strikes prove that the commitment is absolutely necessary to force governments to follow through with meeting the demands of the prisoners. There is also a fatigue that can plague protests and hunger strikes. Despite this though, Palestinian hunger strikers have made significant accomplishments. Perhaps not on the same scale as the Irish strikers but still an accomplishment worth noting. The Guantanamo Bay hunger strikes prove the importance in the utilization of media for hunger strikers. The ethics of how to treat hunger strikers is also something emphasized and really harped on by the research surrounding the GTMO hunger strikes. The ethics, both medical and legal, are often debated in regard to this case.

Future research into this subject should include a broader range of hunger strikes, perhaps extending the time period as well to include the hunger strikes of women in Britain and the United States in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. There should also be an attempt to further research GTMO, perhaps even visit the prison in an attempt to gain a better more complete picture of what is happening there. There is a strong

\textsuperscript{134} On Hunger Strike, Palestinian Prisoner Near Death in Israel
possibility the media does not have a perfect picture of what is occurring there and visiting the actual prison with full access and the ability to interview prisoners could help strengthen the study.

All sources utilized in this study were in English, which is a drawback as it limits the perspectives included within the study. Future research should include translators for Arabic and Celtic but most importantly Arabic. By having a translator of Arabic as part of the research team there is a better chance of understanding the whole picture and how the citizens of Palestine and prisoners of GTMO feel. This would also allow for their perspectives and ideas to be better included within the study.
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