

Photographic Conditions: Looting, Archives, and the Figure of the “Infiltrator”

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A vast treasure of books, documents, and photographs looted from Palestinians in 1948 became part of the Israeli archives established or reorganized after the founding of the Israeli state. But this did not remain a single past event. The looting of archives has been ongoing and should not be understood merely as a violation of Palestinian property and rights, but rather as an ongoing performance of national sovereignty in which the persona of the “infiltrator” plays a foundational role. The looting has been one of the acts by which this sovereignty has been performed as the ongoing project of partition of populations into distinct, differentiated groups, whereby violence among the two groups is both the pretext and the effect. Using the archive as a medium for the performance of national sovereignty, I will show that the Schmittian conceptualization of sovereignty as power that hinges on brief, singular moments of decision presupposes full control of the archive and the erasure of the ongoing struggle over sovereignty taking place in and through it.

I. The Infiltrator Does Not Exist

The category of “infiltrator,” a constitutive element of differential sovereign regimes, i.e., regimes whose governed population is differentially ruled, is usually attached to the bodies of those who are forced to incarnate it as a different skin color, and is read by security forces on borders and front lines as a set of instructions: interrogate, arrest, harass, expel, or execute. Infiltrators, the archive lures us to comply, should be looked for *in* photographs and documents, while making room for scholars, citizens under the regime who make the archives available, to come and look at them carefully, study their images, manners, habits, modes of infiltration, and thus

acknowledge their existence there, in the archive as our object of knowledge. Hence, my study of the infiltrator is based on the assumption that the infiltrator who is allegedly captured in the photos *does not exist*. As spectators, we attend the event during which state agents try to force a Palestinian – who resists the authority of the state to expel him from his homeland – to become an infiltrator. We can either reiterate the act of the state and bring it to completion, or join the Palestinian’s struggle to reject this figure of infiltrator and be recognized as exercising his right to return. My assumption – the infiltrator doesn’t exist – is a politico-historical assertion that the archive cannot confirm or refute since the archive is one of the sites where infiltrators are fabricated. Being a product of violence, the infiltrator cannot be studied for itself but rather, in relation to the citizen who – by differentiating herself from it – participates in its fabrication. The persistence of this figure, I argue, is evidence of the nature of citizenship, archives and scholarship in places where such a category has been naturalized into the discourse. In this text I would ask: what are the photographic conditions for the fabrication of the infiltrator?

Photographs and documents are held both secretly and openly in archives which we visit in order to research photography, under the aegis of the Absentees’ Property Law. This is how such property is defined by the law:

“absentees’ property” means property the legal owner of which, at any time during the period between the 16th of Kislev, 5708 (29th November, 1947) and the day on which a declaration is published, under section 9(d) of the Law of Administration Ordinance, 5708-1948, that the state of emergency by the Provisional Council of State on the 10th Iyar, 5708 (19th May 1948), has ceased to exist, was an absentee, or which, at any time as aforesaid, an absentee held or enjoyed, whether by himself or through another.¹

To avoid doubt, the part of the law addressing “rules of evidence” indicates that “where the Custodian has certified in writing that a person or body of persons is an absentee, that person or body of persons shall, so long as the contrary has not been proved, be regarded as an absentee,” but clause 30(i) makes clear that: “The plea that a particular person is not an absentee, within the meaning of section 1(b)(1)(iii), by reason only that he had no control over the causes for which he left his place of residence as specified in that section shall not be heard.” Poetics of the law is used to dislocate the attention from the violent process of uprooting people from their homes into the accomplished state of these people being “absent” from their homes, i.e., being “absentees.” Naturally, so-called absentees’ photographs and documents are abandoned (along with the rest of their belongings and property). As scholars visiting Israeli archives and relying on them to conduct historical research, we freely make use of looted documents that have remained, since they were looted, almost completely inaccessible to Palestinians. Palestinians were alienated from them first through expulsion, and then over the years through further forms of physical and symbolic violence that kept those documents apart from them and vice versa.

The role of looting in the formation of archives cannot be understood without attention to a different dimension of the violence, which, while directed against the dispossessed,



Image 1 and 2: “Abandoned Documents, Israel State Archives, George Antonius Archive” (photos by Michal Baror).

also impacts the group who is meant to benefit from the looting – Jewish Israelis. Receiving and using all that has been forced out of Palestinians’ hold, Jewish Israelis are made complicit in the naturalization of the violence of looting. They continue to use the archive as an institution whose documents can be used as arbiter in disputed and unresolved histories, cleared of the act of their creation and accessibility.

Two generations of historians who frequented the Zionist archives did not share with their readers the unwritten “deal” that was at the basis of their research and turned them – knowingly or unknowingly – into collaborators with a regime of differential sovereignty. This deal enables (mainly Jewish Israeli) researchers access to valuable documents about the history of this place in return for recognition of the archive as the legal owner of the documents it places at their disposal. The Absentee Property Law (1950) and the Archives Law (1955) sanctioned the robbery.

Relating to the archive as a documents-centered institution driven by concern for the past, as we do when we consult the documents it holds, elides the violent military, as well as ideological and political, campaign taking place inside and outside the archive, often even outside the country, to maintain this perception of the archive as a professional institution in charge of preserving the past. Frequent statements that express shock at the poor conditions of preservation or maintenance of negatives and documents, important as they might be, uphold the idea of the archive as a site of historical preservation rather than as one that – under dark regimes – collaborates with serious crimes such as looting, dispossession, and distancing.

The Israel State Archives, according to

the 1955 Archive Law, is trusted to preserve “any writing on paper or any other material, any graph, diagram, map, drawing, painting, character, file, photograph, film, record etc. in the possession of a state institution or local authority, except for material that has no value as an original.”²² The state positions itself as successor of the previous political regime and institutes its duty to care for “any archival material of official institutions previous to the founding of the State of Israel, and any archival material of a state institution or a local authority that is no longer in existence and not been replaced by any other institution, as well as any other material of a state institution or authority.”

However, the law clarifies the scope of its universal mission: documents “existing at any site with interest for research of the *past, the people, the state or society*, or that are linked to the memory or action of public figures” [emphases added here and below – A. A.]. The use of this chain of words – past, people, state, or society – as if they were synonyms cancels their differences not for any inclusive purpose but rather on the contrary, for the sake of exclusion. Their articulation should guarantee that it is the past of the Jews that prevails in the archive. But since the past cannot be partitioned along ethnic or national lines, it is the through the corresponding persona of the “any person” who is welcomed in the archive that this exclusive identification is operated. It should be familiar enough for her even without necessarily being familiar with the letter of the law: “*Any person* is allowed access to archived material, but this right *may be restricted by regulation* and the restriction might be respective of the type of archival material and given period of time since its creation.”

The category “any person” is not universal, but rather derived from the same principle of differential sovereignty. The law continues: “the archivist authorized by the commission may classify archival material as confidential – on grounds of posing a *hazard to state security* or *foreign relations* – and clandestine – on grounds of damage to individual privacy; the archivist is permitted by the council to do any of the above *on other grounds*.” Note that the appointment of the archivist reflects no mark of excellence in archive work but rather a government nomination. The archive takes part in regulating the naturalness of identifying these different words – past, people, state, society – through the ongoing use of the key that enables them to be applied interchangeably: “state security.” This is not the security of the state as a general form of organizing the governed, but rather the security of the state as a Jewish state whose enemies are all those who oppose the fact that its Jewishness was imposed on its inhabitants, and must be expelled or excluded as equal players. The secret is not the one kept carefully in the archive, in those documents stamped “highly confidential” or “classified,” but rather the open secret of the archive in which we the citizens reaffirm our role as its accomplices. It is the secret that it is not state security that is at stake, but rather the promise of role-distribution in the regime theater among Jewish citizens and the others. This is what assures that “our” documents will be properly secured in the institution called the archive, while other documents, either in the possession of Palestinians or touching upon their past – as if the past too may be partitioned like an item in a political plan – will be incorporated into ours while still separated and handled differently.

II. Looted Archives

In 1948, as Jews took hold of parts of Palestine, vast treasures of looted property also, included intellectual property – books, documents, and photographs – became part of Israeli patrimony. Looting was not a single past instance; the looting of Palestinian archives has been an ongoing procedure, under the pretext of collecting incriminating material, evidence of Palestinians plans, intentions, motives, and aspirations, preserved alternately in the state or army archives.³ The inclusion of “Arab material” in the IDF archive was reported as a matter of fact in local newspapers one year after the 1948 violence. Already the principle of who and what belongs where was imposed and everyone was already expected to partake in maintaining the consequent order.⁴ A few decades passed and the looting began to be studied as the discovery of a secret, even though all these years, and up to the present, portions of the looted material were available without concealment.⁵ Looting was never concealed, but its meaning was impeded from emerging as a crime; thus, every time this meaning surfaced, it took the form of a discovery.

Looting should not be understood merely as a violation of property and rights, but rather as an ongoing performance of differential sovereignty. Looting is a particular form of “changing hands” – it is simultaneously the process of depriving people of what belongs to them and appropriating it in a way that naturalizes the possession and the new emplacement of the looted material. The military context of the word “loot,” often emphasized in dictionaries, is relevant to the violent moment of deprivation – though it may not necessarily be carried out by soldiers or in the battlefield – and is oblivious to the civil naturalization of those looted items. Hence, any item looted from Palestinians should be studied also through the ways it was naturalized by and through Jewish Israelis. I included several such examples in the chapter on looting in the photographic archive I assembled of the formative years of the transformation of Palestine to Israel.⁶ One of them was a photo of the first Israeli prime minister’s office and some information on the correspondence between the prime minister’s secretary and the Custodian’s Office, the special office in charge of the orderly distribution of looted items. The letter to the “Jaffa Office” responsible for “abandoned property” requests that the prime minister’s office’s staffers be permitted to “examine the carpets in their warehouse in order to select carpets for the main government building.” In order to allay any suspicion that these representatives might be taking the carpets for themselves, and to make sure that the action is both legal and coordinated among the various government ministries, the letter continues: “After they select the carpets you will receive instructions from the Finance Ministry regarding their transfer and destination.” The transfer of the rug was duly recorded in official letters, fully transparent, and I looked in vain for any effort to conceal it.

The presence of people in this series of photographs that welcomes visitors to the Zionist archive Web site does not change the depiction of the archive as documents-oriented. The people captured in those photos are seen performing several abstract archival procedures: *collecting*, *filing*, and *studying*. These photos depict those who take care of piles of documents and files. Nothing stands in the way of those who truly care



Image 3: Screen shot from the homepage of the Zionist Archive Web site.

and look for them – neither their placement on the highest shelf (a ladder is available) nor the colossal piles in which they may be lost. The documents are construed as the core of the archive, its *raison d'être*, and around them archivists labor like industrious ants, sheltering, sorting, and putting the documents away to be carefully studied by people who will later come to consult the archive to learn about the past. The documents, this photo series tells us, are safe in the archive. Nothing is especially disturbing in these images, and they supplement many similar representations of the archive's professional work, dedicated to the fulfillment of its official tasks. The particular temporality of differential sovereignty, which transforms its crimes of appropriating the property and wealth of the population it dispossesses into a *fait accompli* that cannot be negotiated and imposes the temporality of progress as the sole guarantor of the common good, is inscribed in this idyllic picture of the archive as a shrine for a precious and cherished past.

The past is recorded in the documents and hence accomplished as exemplified by categories such as “infiltrator.” This is an *ex post facto* category that obliterates the prior condition of the Palestinian as a native, and forces her or him to act as an infiltrator, who by definition violates the legitimate sovereign politic.

III. The Loss of the Common

Obviously, the looting and dispossession of Palestinians, who were made “refugees” or “infiltrators,” meant economic disaster for Palestinians and benefit for Israeli Jews. As regards culture, however, the connected vessels law did not hold in the same way. The massive ruination, destruction, and appropriation of the infrastructure of culture in Palestine in the late 1940s produced dispossession not solely among Palestinians – what was lost was not exclusively Palestinian but common, as culture is often produced. Jews were dispossessed of the cultural infrastructure of a mixed society of which they had been a part, as well as their own past in Palestine, a past that became identified solely with Arabs, since Israel imposed itself as representative of the Jews.⁷

The lovely street captured in a famous photo from the collection of the American Colony was densely inhabited by numerous photographers’ studios – those of Militad Savvides, Boulos Meo, Elia Studio, Khalil Raad, Garvad Krikorian who worked with David Sabunji of Jaffa, Jacob Ben Dov, and others – animated sites where diverse types of encounters and activities took place.⁸ Alongside these studios, there were photography stores such as Photo Prisma, Photo Europa, Ganan, and Abraham Yehezkeili.⁹ This is one of the major sites where much of the history of early photographic activity in Palestine took place: an urban open-ended space where many photographers had their studios, and photographed persons came by to have their photos taken or to buy those of others, and distant spectators acted and interacted according to variegated protocols that they shaped and adopted. In a dense, fruitful, and challenging urban fabric, frequented by at least one thousand people each day, male and female professionals labored together as operators of cameras, assistants, those preoccupied with lighting, those who developed the negatives and those who printed them, those who retouched photographs and others who designed the space with accessories to accommodate different photographed persons’ taste and helped them find the right dress.¹⁰ Those spaces were frequented by collectors and travelers, tourists and local clients, photographed persons of all kinds who came to buy photographs and postcards of themselves and of others, of beloved or exotic places and varied landscapes. This street and the entire neighborhood was the beating heart of the photographic field of Palestine. A ten minutes’ walk away from there were the studios of Rassas, Za‘rur, and Hana Safieh, as well as the American Colony studio. Since the late nineteenth century and up until the late 1940s, many photographers worked in the vicinity, among them Furman Baldwin, Elijah Meyers, Lewis Larsson to mention just a few.¹¹

The activity of these photographers combined studio work and a fascinating documentation project of Palestine as it was undergoing political, cultural, and social development. With time, the drawers and shelves of each of these studios contained a rich archive of photographs of life in Palestine and a unique record of a vivid local photographic culture. From our perspective today, it is tempting to say that a mixture of ethnic and national groups had been formed by means of photographic activity. However, a more accurate historical description would be that, in this area of Jerusalem, photographers, photographed persons, and spectators mingled without conceiving of themselves in total opposition to others. The binary division of the world into Arabs and Jews was not



Image 4: American Colony Photo Department (headed by Elisha Meyers), Jaffa Street, Jerusalem, 1898–1902. From the glass negative. Courtesy of the G. Eric and Edith Matson photo collection, Library of Congress Print and Photography Department, Washington, DC. This photo is a part of the photograph album “Jaffa-Jerusalem, 1898–1900,” American Colony Archive Collections, American Colony Hotel, Jerusalem.

operative and photographers, for example, were known by their name, advertised on the street signs, and their geographical provenance: Armenian, Safadi, or Jerusalemite. The camera enabled them to remain oblivious to ethnic and national origins. These forms of identification did not limit or subsume their actions and interactions with others – whether with the photographed persons caught in the lens, the clients who patronized the shops, or, certainly, those with whom they shared a passion for photography.¹²

Following the July 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem by the Etzel (Irgun) Jewish underground militia, the staff of the American Colony studio feared for the thousands of photographs created in the colony and sent about twenty thousand negatives to the United States, thus saving them from brutal extinction, looting, and appropriation.¹³ Since 1949, this possibility of a mixed photography in Palestine that is not determined by the power relations imposed by the political regime has been destroyed. Palestinians who opposed the partition of Palestine were not represented in the legal agreements achieved between Jordan and the State of Israel, where technical slips turned this area – the locus of the genesis of photographic activity in Palestine – into no man’s land, disputed territory. Even though neither side – Israel or Jordan – was authorized to control it or intervene there, “the line of houses in the no-man’s-land, on both sides of Jaffa Street was ruined.”¹⁴ In the photograph taken by Werner Brown in



Image 5: Jaffa Street in ruins. Photo by Werner Braun.

1951, the buildings where the photographers' studios and stores were located are already collapsed.¹⁵ No one claimed responsibility for the ruination, nor for the looting of the vast and invaluable photographic archives. Later, in David Kroyanker's book, taking up all of half a line, one can read that "demolition crew members of the Israeli army blast abandoned houses in the city, from Jaffa Gate to the Fast Hotel."¹⁶ In 1967, when Israel conquered the eastern part of Jerusalem, it completed the erasure of this area. The brutal transformation of Palestine into rubble was motivated by a total disregard for the world created there and a desire of the militant faction of Zionism to render Palestine Jewish. Here on Jaffa Street, intentionally ruined, the invaluable fabric of one hundred years of photography in Palestine as a practice in which photographers, photographed persons, and spectators participated was extinguished.

What was destroyed in the violence of the late 1940s was much more than singular studios of talented photographers, now being discovered and rescued from concealed military basements.¹⁷ We still cannot know how large these looted accessible collections are and how much was destroyed or is still concealed. Whoever claims to know is misleading, since they can only repeat military information shaped by considerations foreign to a civil logic of archives. Additional Israeli archives might enjoy parts of these collections and are complicit not only in the crime of looting but in the crime of violently differentiating access to the materials along ethnic lines. The exclusion of Palestinians is what impedes the collapse of the hall of mirrors in which Jewish Israelis are trapped,

viewing infinitely reflected the point of view violently imposed by differential sovereignty. Very little is known of these photographic collections in comparison to the number of studios and the intense activity that encouraged photographers and traders to open studios and stores next to each other in this quarter. From the relatively small quantity of available photographs, it is clear that everything and everyone was eligible to be photographed. Further, it seems that a kind of pleasure was shared in the photographic lens's capability to re-view the familiar and be surprised at the new. In order to account for what was ruined, we should refrain from projecting on this photographic activity the sovereign conception of master photographers and remind ourselves that many of these photographers and much of this activity was not produced as national patrimony to be collected by national museums.

IV. Cohort of Archivists

Unlike Gish Amit's groundbreaking work on the robbing of Palestinian libraries, Aharon Shai's work on the involvement of the Israeli Antiquities Authority in the destruction of Palestinian villages, or Rona Sela's work on looted collections of photographs held in the IDF archive, which are based on exposing classified documents stored for decades in archives, I am interested in the robbery and looting that take place in broad daylight, openly, whose public performance is an essential component of the formation of Israeli citizens who have also been its target audience, those who had to constantly acknowledge it as non-violence.¹⁸ Photographs of looting and looted photographs teach us about the way photographs are handled, the body language involved in appropriating them, the photographic ceremonies of pictures taken with the looted material, the consideration and judgments by soldiers on the value and uses of photographs, the meaning endowed them as incriminating evidence of enemy aspirations, confidential or dangerous material, or objects of ethnic distinction between them and their previous owners.

The materials are sorted by military needs as well as interests that affect the way history could be told. Some are thrown on the ground or demonstratively trashed, expressing soldiers' authority to assess materials and their value. Some are sorted during a military action, others after it ends, inside the relevant institutions. Some are certainly placed in the hands of archivists and librarians, who are supposed to handle them with the proper professional care and attention. Some materials, with or without army commanders' agreement, are taken out of the national booty and put into the realm of private individuals, serving as personal souvenirs through which family members are socialized into the theater of looting.

In this photograph of a soldier holding bunch of photographs, I propose to see a different figure of the archivist than the one who welcomes visitors in the Web site of Zionist archive (see Image 3 above). This is not a typical image of an archivist, but it is essential to our understanding of a photographic archive. This photo, one of many uploaded with pride by former soldiers to the Web site of their military unit, shows that soldiers are authorized to handle photographic collections. The mission of Unit 101 was



Image 6: “Arik and Davidi checking documents and pictures found at the outpost near the Customs House.” Courtesy of the Paratroopers’ Heritage Association.



Image 7: A paratrooper holding a kerchief with the picture of Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir, al-Sabha Mission, Operation Volcano, 2 November 1955. Courtesy of the Paratroopers’ Heritage Association.

to pursue “infiltrators” before or after they cross the borders into Israel. Until 1956, this unit was responsible for what were called “retaliation operations,” but as can be seen on their Web site, a component of these operations was the looting of documents – including photographs. In this photo, probably taken during a nighttime operation, several soldiers crowd around a number of small photographs held by one soldier. This soldier shows them to his unit-mates and passes some of them to the soldier standing next to him. The soldiers whose attention is focused on the photos seem rather amused by what they see. We cannot know what is in those photos, or whether they are personal or official. We can tell, though, that looking together at looted photographs, photographs seen without permission and in the absence of their owners, is a bonding moment, the bond of accomplices that have the power to transform a crime into an acceptable act. Their way of holding their photographic booty arouses reasonable suspicion that not all photographs were deposited in archives, and that some – reaching military offices that found them neither incriminating nor valuable – were trashed.

In another photo from “Operation Volcano” at Sabha outpost in Gaza – probably taken after the soldiers’ return from the military operation, based on the posture of the soldier, the full daylight, and the skyline reminiscent of a Jewish settlement – the soldier poses in a photograph with his booty. He presents to the camera Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir’s portrait printed at the center of a kerchief as incriminating evidence of the fact that Egyptians – and perhaps even Palestinian refugees in Gaza – adore their leader.¹⁹ The soldier is indifferent to the kerchief as an intimate possession of its



Image 8: The locked gate of Orient House, 2013. On the door is posted a closure order, which the Israeli military renews and posts anew every several months. Photographer: Josh MacPhee, librarians and archivists' delegation to Palestine.



Image 9: Emptied shelves, the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1982.

owner or as a popular platform of sharing photography.²⁰

The photo-kerchief was not appropriated in the imperial manner that recognizes the value of the looted item and hence enriches its national patrimony. Rather, it was reduced to its “content,” devalued as a sign of a backward culture based on a leader’s personality cult and denied its particularities as a specific form of personalized photo-object. To this day, the destruction of decades of photographic activity in Palestine has not ceased to affect conditions for the possibility of creating and researching photography in the entire region. Photographs taken in other places and times by Palestinians, with the intention of documenting the destruction left by Israeli soldiers as they looted archives of documents and photographs, reaffirm this assumption regarding the way photographs are handled when looted.

The looting of Palestinian archives was not an isolated event that took place once upon a time in the past, evidence of which one should seek in the archive. This is an ongoing phenomenon, as Nur Masalha shows in his book *The Palestine Nakba*.²¹ Since 1948, Israeli soldiers periodically invade some building or another belonging to Palestinians; remove materials of historical value; trample anything in which they have no interest and is in their way; collect documents they deem valuable, dangerous, or incriminating; while performing this act of looting, get their pictures taken with the booty; and make available to the public some of these documents and objects as well as photos of the way they were acquired.²² This has happened in almost every Israeli military operation, and on a large scale in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, and on until the

present. No need to find a hidden archival document issuing an order to loot – the locked gates of the Jerusalem Orient House, looted in 2001 and standing shut under military orders to this very day, or the photos from last summer in Gaza suffice.²³ Nor should the constitution of Israeli archives out of the looted material should not be understood as an act directed solely against Palestinians, but rather as an outgoing performance in which national differential sovereignty is constituted through the partition of populations into distinct groups, linked mainly through violence.

V. The Fabrication of “Infiltrators”

The ruination of the non-partitioned photographic field that was active in Palestine until 1948 is imprinted, I argue, on any photograph that is produced in what became Israel, even when no traces are visible within the borders of the photographic frame. It can be reconstructed from the limits of what could be seen, studied, or said, who can participate in the telling, and how far and how much these constraints can be pushed away.

Infiltrators cannot exist anywhere except in the archive, and cannot persist there unless Israeli Jews collaborate in their fabrication. In all other places where “infiltrators” could be looked for, their presence was short-lived. They were either killed and eliminated or returned to their “proper” place – i.e., refugee camps – where they stopped being infiltrators. Hence, the study of this figure is the study of the citizens of the same differential sovereign regime that fabricate them.

The return of Palestinians to Palestine was a daily phenomenon in the years from 1948 to 1956. We can attribute to this return different motives, like harvesting fields or visiting family members, but there is no need to assign concrete objectives or justifications to the simple acts of people who refuse to be kept outside of their homes or accept their expulsion as a *fait accompli*. “Here was I born, and here will I be buried,” said Halim Ramadan (seen on the photo on the left in the double spread of *ha-Olam ha-ze* weekly magazine) to the investigator at the police station upon his arrest in 1950, having been detained by soldiers after he clandestinely crossed into Israel.²⁴ Following the sovereign regime’s narrative and terminology, historians described waves of returnees – about seventy thousand – entering Israel in those years as “infiltrators” and the grandiose spectacle of violence exerted against them as “Israel’s border wars.”²⁵ These “wars” left a meager body of photographs accessible to public view.

A 1950 headline in *ha-Olam ha-ze*, a journal openly critical of the Israeli regime, asks, “How are infiltrators expelled?” Instead of an answer, a photo is printed in which Palestinians are lined up before a firing squad. The criticism implicit in the juxtaposition, however, is aimed at soldiers who take the law into their own hands and exert excessive violence to deter refugees. Whatever empathy was shown by the magazine staff toward the refugees, and shocked as the editor may have been at the army’s conduct, Halim Ramadan’s demand to return to his home and be considered part of the body politic of governed population in Palestine is foreclosed: “No state can tolerate armed persons nightly crossing its borders – let alone persons bent on robbery. Be their personal tragedy



Image 10: *Ha-Olam ha-ze* weekly magazine, no. 661, 1950.

as it may, the state must protect the lives and property of its inhabitants. Those soldiers and policemen who do this job deserve all of our thanks.” According to the most radical Israeli periodical of its time, “Infiltration is a plague upon the State.” It continues: “We shall not prevent it by sporadic initiatives. We can reduce it by more effective warfare. . . . However, a final solution to this problem can only be found by distancing the Arab refugees from our borders and rehabilitating them.”²⁶ The editor’s position is based on the spatial assumption imposed by the differential sovereignty imposed in May 1948 – excluding the majority of Palestinians out, who would remain non-governed beyond the state’s borders, and ruling differentially the minority that was left. In the 1950s, Israeli citizens – including journalists or editors – were already interpellated to identify themselves with the sovereign voice and repeat it as their own, unaware that their moral stance was necessarily compromised by this position.

Clearly these photos were not taken hastily but processed meticulously, frame by frame, in the best tradition of reportage that allows us to assume that the photographer was permitted to join the soldiers. If indeed this exposure meant to present the army’s conduct as a moral scandal, why was the photographer allowed to come along and why wasn’t the censor – who at the time was working around the clock – doing his job? The reporter implies that infiltrators endanger the state’s residents, and therefore, the state as sovereign has a duty to protect its citizens and to stop this phenomenon. Hence, the criticism, acute as it might be, was already made from within the framework of sovereign differentiation between citizen and non-citizen – namely “infiltrator.” Once national sovereignty is accepted as given, the “radical editor” is allowed to take an openly critical

position. Thus, the radical Jewish editor himself has trouble identifying the violence that is exerted upon him and which turns him unknowingly into the regime's spokesman.

This is a form of violence that is unique to national differential sovereignty since it is based not solely on the oppression of the weakened population but on the engagement of the privileged population in the perpetuation of crimes legalized as acts of state. The editor of the critical journal, who as a citizen conceives of his relations to others through the differentiation of citizens from non-citizens, seems to have had a hard time asking questions about the violence the regime exercised on him. His privileged citizenship involved him in crimes of dispossession and thus allowed him to perceive more easily the more overt violence exerted on others, and even then only when it was exercised "to excess." Thus he does not wonder why his own photographer is allowed to be in on the scene and take photographs. The exclusion of Palestinian photographers likely hardly even crossed his mind – after all, most Palestinians were expelled, the infrastructure of their photographic activity destroyed, and their role as prominent figures in the photographic scene revoked. Others, who could have been there, were at the time subject to military rule. Nor did the reporter manage to ask why had the army volunteered secret information about its actions, and enabled him to join its soldiers. Instead, he enjoyed being the army's confidant, as he did his position as the one who can speak with expertise when explaining what sovereignty is. He does not let us – his readers – know that he learned this lesson about sovereignty's proper order from the ruling power itself. Otherwise he would have noticed that here, right in front of him, among those facing the firing squad, are people who considered themselves part of the body politic that should have constituted sovereignty in Palestine, and that without their expulsion it would necessarily be an altogether different kind of sovereignty – namely civil sovereignty.²⁷

The quest for civil sovereignty is a political struggle that Jews and Palestinians must perform together in order to overcome exclusionist and differential national sovereignty, to break its lethal vicious circle. Potential history begins when the archive is not accessed as a depository of documents out of which "infiltrators" – or "refugees," "absentees," or "wanted persons" for that matter – could be traced, but rather as a site for the ongoing struggle over sovereignty. If one sides with civil rather than national sovereignty, one would not enter the archive without Palestinian companions, joining the civil struggle in which they are engaged and rehearsing together the performance of civil sovereignty.

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Endnotes

- 1 Absentees' Property Law, 5710-1950 (14 March 1950), accessed 27 February 2015, online at unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/E0B719E95E3B494885256F9A005AB90A.
- 2 Archives Law www.archives.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/DD86DC0B-33B3-47C0-A2E7-0022EACA84DC/0/ArchiveLaw.pdf.

- 3 See Ofer Aderet's report on the organized visit for journalists in the IDF archive: Ofer Aderet, "Classified Treasures that Cannot Be Disclosed" [in Hebrew], *Ha'Aretz*, 5 July 2013, accessed 27 February 2015, online at www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/premium-1.2064040.
- 4 An example of this factual language can be read in Ephraim Talmi: "The Arab material is divided

- into four types [based on provenance]: from the Egyptian army; from the civil administration in Beersheba district; from the Liberation Army of Qawuqji; and from the government of Lebanon.” His article ends with a call to support the archive whose workers are devoted to the mission but lack the adequate budget and infrastructure to pursue this incredibly important national task. Ephraim Talmi, “Israeli Army Archive” [in Hebrew], *Davar*, 30 June 1949, accessed 27 February 2015, online at jpress.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI_Heb/SharedView.Article.aspx?parm=CzRg1ZXXmnsNeV487qhwprhSqPNrKyqZLeSgejoa%2FKxLci91AghrB6jb7Fh3wssYw%3D%3D&mode=image&href=DAV%2f1949%2f06%2f30&page=2&rtl=true.
- 5 On the looting of Palestinian archives see Nur Masalha, “Appropriating History: Looting of Palestinians Records, Archives and Library Collections, 1948–2011,” in *The Palestinian Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012). On the looting of photographic archives see Rona Sela, *Le-‘iyun ha-tsiibur: tatslume Falastininim be-arkhiyonim tseva ‘iyim be-Yisra’el* [Made Public: Palestinian Photographs in Military Archives in Israel] (Tel Aviv: Helenah, 2009). The continued open presence of such material in Israeli archives can be found using the online search engine of the state archive, for example: see archives.gov.il/ArchiveGov_Eng/Our+Holdings/.
 - 6 See Ariella Azoulay, *From Palestine to Israel: A Photographic Record of Destruction and State Formation, 1947–1950* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 230.
 - 7 An expression of the perversion that such division – Israel for the Jews and Palestine for the Palestinians, i.e., Arabs – has generated may be seen in the digital picture collection created lately by the University of Haifa. Although its index does not disclose any detail that might lead one to assume that some of these materials were looted, the collection is named “Historical Images of the Land of Israel,” which is another form of looting. The archive of photos from and of Palestine is cleansed of Palestine from the moment one enters it. The text greeting the visitor instructs: “The Land of Israel has always attracted professional and amateur photographers who perpetuate it in pictures. Over the years private persons as well as various archives and institutions have preserved collections of rare photographs documenting its unique geographical and human landscapes.” The archive is available online at lib.haifa.ac.il/collections/isratage/index.php/he (accessed 27 February 2015).
 - 8 On photographic activity in Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century see, for example: Issam Nassar, *Laqatat Mughayira: al-taswir al-futughrafi al-mahalli al-mubakkir fi Filastin* [Different Snapshots: Early Local Photography in Palestine] (Ramallah: Kutub and Qattan Foundation, 2005); and Guy Raz, “Umm el-Nur: Photography, History, Identity,” *Umm El Fahem Gallery*, accessed 1 March 2015, online at umelfahemgallery.org/?p=5028; Walid Khaldi, *Before their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876–1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984), online at btd.palestine-studies.org; Rona Sela, *Tsilum be-Palestin/Eretz-Yisra’el bi-shenot ha-sheloshim veba-arba ‘im* [Photography in Palestine/Eretz Israel in the Thirties and Forties] (Herzliya: Muze’on Hertzliya le-omanut, 2000).
 - 9 See David Kroyanker, *Rehov Yafo, Yerushalayim: biyografyah shel rehov, sipurah shel ‘ir* [Jaffa Road, Jerusalem: Biography of a Street, Story of a City] (Jerusalem: Keter, 2005), 57.
 - 10 On the vivacity of the street and the number of passers-by, see Kroyanker, *Rehov Yafo*.
 - 11 On the American Colony photographers, see Tom Powers, “Jerusalem’s American Colony and Its Photographic Legacy” (2009), accessed 1 March 2015, online at israelpalestineguide.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/jeruselems_american_colony_-_its_photographic_legacy.pdf. On photographers in Jerusalem, see Raz, *Tsalame ha-aretz*.
 - 12 On this mixture, see filmed interviews held by Akram Zaatar with Palestinian photographers (*Projects 100: Akram Zaatar*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, September 2013), as well as Guy Raz, *Tsalame ha-aretz: me-reshit yeme ha-tsilum ve-‘ad ha-yom* [Photographers of the Country: From the Early Days of Photography to the Present] (Tel Aviv: Mapah, 2003).
 - 13 On the fate of the collection and its donation to the Library of Congress in the 1950s, see the library’s Web site at www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/colony.html.
 - 14 Kroyanker, *Rehov Yafo*, 78.
 - 15 Through a study of the famous American Colony photograph and this photograph taken by Werner Braun in 1951, Guy Raz identified the rubble of this photographers’ quarter.
 - 16 Kroyanker, *Rehov Yafo*, 357. This destruction was not part of war but of constituent violence whose purpose was to preserve the outcome of violence as a fait accompli. More on this type of violence see Azoulay, *From Palestine to Israel*.

- 17 On the looting of a house in Jerusalem see Bayan Nuwayhed Al-Hout, "Evenings in Upper Baq'a: Remembering Ajaj Nuwayed and Home," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 46 (Summer 2011): 15–22; On the looting of the archives of 'Ali Za'rur, see Dalia Karpel, "Negative-Positive" [in Hebrew], *Ha'aretz*, 9 April 2008, accessed 1 March 2015, online at www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1317383. On Khalil Raad, see Rona Sela's catalogue of the exhibition at the Nahum Gutman Museum in Tel Aviv: Rona Sela, *Khalil Raad, tatlumim 1891–1948* [Khalil Raad, Photographs 1891–1948] (Tel Aviv: Nahum Gutman Museum and Helena, 2010). See also Vera Tamari, *Filastin qabl 1948: laysat mujarrad dhakira: Khalil Ra' d (1854–1957)* [Palestine before 1948: Not Just a Memory: Khalil Raad (1854–1957)] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2013), which is based on Lebanese Archives.
- 18 Gish Amit, "Salvage or Plunder? Israel's 'Collection' of Private Palestinian Libraries in West Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 6–23; Aron Shai, "The fate of Abandoned Arab Villages in Israel on the Eve of the Six-Day War and Its Immediate Aftermath" [in Hebrew], *Cathedra* 105 (September 2002): 151–170; Sela, *Le- 'iyun ha-tsibur*.
- 19 Numerous are the variations of this type of photograph with Arabs leaders disseminated publicly as incriminating material. See some examples in Benjamin Gepner, ed., *A Picture Story of the Sinai Campaign* (Tel Aviv: Ledory Publishing House in cooperation with Glocer & Partners, 1957). The Hebrew title reads "war" instead of "campaign."
- 20 A similar kerchief is stored in the Imperial War Museum, where its caption reads: "A patriotic and inspirational propaganda scarf produced in Egypt in 1956. It bears Nasser's portrait and scenes of the improvements and prosperity he planned for Egypt, including the Aswan High Dam." Scarf, Egyptian, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 10001, accessed 23 March 2015, online at www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30089765.
- 21 Masalha, "Appropriating History."
- 22 On the destruction of the municipal archives of Jaffa see Mark LeVine, "Globalization, Architecture, and Town Planning in a Colonial City: The Case of Jaffa and Tel Aviv," *Journal of World History* 18, no. 2 (June 2007): 177. LeVine does not at all address the question of whether these archives were destroyed or also eventually looted.
- 23 According to a report on the Orient House by a delegation of librarians and archivists: "the Orient House was after an Israeli police raid in August 2001. A significant portion of the library's archival collections were confiscated during the raid, including materials related to the Jerusalem negotiations, the 1991 Madrid conference, and the photography collection of the Arab Studies Society. The photography collection includes a unique body of materials relating to Jerusalem's 19th and 20th century history. The library remains closed under an Ottoman era law, which is renewed every six months and posted on the front door of the building. The extent of the damage to the collections or what materials remain in the building is still unknown." "Orient House," *LibrarianswithPalestine.Org*, accessed 1 March 2015, online at librarians2palestine.wordpress.com/featured-projects-members/research-centers/orient-house/
- 24 *Ha-Olam ha-ze*, no. 661, 1950, 4.
- 25 See Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Shaul Bartal, *The Fedayeen Emerge: The Palestine-Israel Conflict, 1949–1956* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011).
- 26 *Ha-Olam Ha-ze*, no. 661, 1950, 4.
- 27 On the potential of a civil sovereignty in Palestine see my film: *Civil Alliance*, directed by Ariella Azoulay, 2012, accessed 23 March 2015, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqi4X_ptwWw.