

## Ariella Aïsha Azoulay Unshowable Photographs

Once photography is understood – as I proposed in *The Civil Contract of Photography*<sup>1</sup> – to be an encounter in which several protagonists are involved, a series of practical and theoretical distinctions necessarily follow. Let me briefly present one of these distinctions – one that lies at the heart of my current research of photography and human rights and that grew out of my interest in the reconstruction of the Israeli regime through photography.<sup>2</sup> I want to focus on the distinction between the *photograph as a product of the act of photographing* and *photography as an event of a special kind*. Photography as an event can take place through the mediation of the camera or through that of the photograph. While the link between these two types of events is complex and far from linear, to hypothesize about its existence is extremely helpful in situations where photographs are missing. When I began to employ these distinctions in the construction of photographic archives, their important implications became manifest.<sup>3</sup>

One of these implications can be illustrated by the category of ‘untaken photographs’, in which a photographic event took place in the real or imagined presence of a camera, but no trace of that event was recorded on a photographic support. My assumption is that the

presumed presence of a camera suffices to create a photographic event.<sup>4</sup> In the continuum that lies between the untaken photograph and the photograph on display, we might note one more familiar category, the ‘inaccessible’ photograph, as well as another category, demonstrated by the series of drawings reproduced below, the ‘unshowable’ photograph.<sup>5</sup> Some photographs are known to have existed but for some reason have become inaccessible. Other photographs may be accessible but unshowable – that is, those who have access to photographs may view them without being allowed to show them to others, in public. In these cases, photographs are ‘missing’, creating a hole in our ability to reconstruct that of which we ourselves are a part. This fact must be neither ignored nor forgotten – rather, it should be studied and further elaborated upon.

A group of photographs taken in Palestine between 1947 and 1950 that I viewed at the CICR (Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, or International Committee of the Red Cross) archive in Geneva in 2009 are accessible to the public. But in order to *show* them, one needs the permission of CICR. Permission depends on the CICR’s approval of any text that an archive user might write to accompany the photographs. By controlling the way photographs are described in public, the archive sentries appear authorized to deny citizens the right

to freely read their history, show it to others, reinterpret it, share it and imagine another future out of it. With this abuse of power, the archive betrays its vocation as a public institution and as a depository of documents that belong to the public, if only because they concern the lives and histories of many. Because I insisted on my right to describe the photograph in a civil way that suspends the national paradigm of ‘two sides’ – namely, Israeli and Palestinian – I was not authorized to show them publicly. I have therefore titled them *Unshowable*, enabling them to exist beyond my own memory of them. Since the photographs were unshowable but not inaccessible, I could draw them and show their substitutes.

The official captions given to the photographs by the CICR are part of the constituent violence that I describe in the texts I have written to accompany the photographs and that the archive forbids me to display publicly. This is what Walter Benjamin refers to as constituent violence, the violence that constitutes a new state of affairs as law.<sup>6</sup> This violence established Israel as a Jewish state by uprooting 750,000 Palestinians from their homes between 1948 and 1950 and transformed that uprooting into an administrative matter of preserving the ethnically cleansed zones as such. The CICR archive sentries who didn’t approve my reading of the photographs were not authorized to censure

my text, but they sought to obstruct my interpretation by denying me the right to show the photographic documents in public as the material on which I based my research.

Speaking more generally, those photographs that are made 'inaccessible', 'unshowable' and even 'untaken' by the archive sentries<sup>7</sup> are only one specific product of the photographic event in which they were produced. Some photographic events can be reconstructed from oral testimonies, as has been done in the case of images of torture.<sup>8</sup> On other occasions, as I try to show here, the event of photography can be reconstructed in a way that attests to the existence of photographs, whether inaccessible or unshowable.

From written documents I had read prior to my visit to the CICR, I knew that representatives of that organization had been present at places in Palestine where massacre, expulsion and destruction had taken place between 1947 and 1950. I was hoping, then, to find photographs in that archive the likes of which I had not been able to view in Zionist archives. To my great surprise, I was shown only about six hundred photographs taken during these four formative years of the transformation of Palestine into Israel.<sup>9</sup> Most of them were apparently taken in places and times other than those in which the actual catastrophic events took place in Palestine at that time. When I asked how the CICR could possibly possess

so few relevant photographs considering the number of places the Red Cross had frequented at the time, the archive workers told me that these were all the photographs they had and emphasized that the Red Cross is a 'neutral' organization. I did not understand whether that meant that they do not take a stand regarding the photographs and therefore I must not suspect that they hide any material from the public, or that this neutrality refers to the photographs themselves and that which is seen in them – and that therefore I would not find photographs in their collection that are not neutral. (I did not talk with the staff about the meaning of the concept "neutrality" and its specific character in the Red Cross.) After my initial disappointment, I viewed the photographs again and selected several dozen. I then sorted out twenty-five photographs, which I divided into three groups.

The first group I addressed contained photographs that, according to the archive captions, had been taken in Kfar Yona, a Jewish agricultural settlement founded in the 1920s. This group of photographs attracted me immediately since I recognized the faces of many of the people photographed – not personally, but rather as 'archival acquaintances' from my encounter with photographs I had found in the Israeli State Archives and collected for the archive I created and named *Constituent Violence 1947–1950*.<sup>10</sup> The angles

represented were different in the CICR photographs, but the place, the event and people were the same. My curiosity was especially aroused by the language of the CICR captions, which described a reality different from the one I knew from the historiographic literature of the time and from what I had reconstructed from the photographs I knew, as well as from captions that accompanied the photographs of this event kept in Israeli State Archives. The first dissonance in the CICR captions of the photographs from Kfar Yona was in their use of the concept of 'repatriation' regarding the women, children and elderly expelled from Fureidis (in Palestine) to Transjordan, after having been expelled from Tantura (in Palestine) to Fureidis several months earlier. I was disturbed as well by certain somewhat less outrageous concepts describing the images, such as naming the Palestinian city of al-Ramle a 'Jewish zone' and the ease with which accessible concepts of ethnic separation served to create and ground a reality that had been violently imposed upon the inhabitants.

The military terminology used in the CICR captions, which, through phrases such as 'A zone monitored by Arab forces', articulated a division of the region into two sides, swiftly erased a mixed and complex geo-cultural space, one that, until shortly before 1947, had comprised neighbourly and trade relations between Jews and Palestinians,

orchards, fruit groves, commercial areas, cultural establishments and markets. The language sounds official, familiar, but still alien and violent in relation to what happened in Palestine during the late 1940s. It took me a while to realize that the categories that had served the representatives of the Red Cross – such as ‘repatriation’ to describe the transfer of Palestinians women to Transjordan – was part of a European political jargon that had come into being during two world wars and in the extended, systematic relocation of populations in Europe after the end of the Second World War. The neutrality that this jargon used by international organizations claims to express actually acknowledges and sanctifies only the sovereign power of nation-states in which these organizations allegedly do not interfere.<sup>11</sup> The problem with this language is not the actual shift of categories from one political reality to another, but rather its violent application to a reality in which these categories, splitting the common along national lines, were themselves one of the main bones of contention.

The Arab majority living in Palestine in the 1940s opposed partition. Many of those international actors who took part in and supported the partition plan eventually backed off – including, for instance, the British and the American governments – realizing that if implemented, it would result in bloodshed.<sup>12</sup> It is commonly argued that

Jews fully embraced the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine. However, even in the absence of data (which have never been collected) documenting the extent of support for the partition plan among Jews, there are sufficient data to claim that not all Jews living in Palestine who supported the idea of a national home in favour of partition or of the separation and ethnic cleansing that would inevitably follow.<sup>13</sup> No less important is the multitude of Jewish-Palestinian collaborative efforts in that period to sign civil pacts and exchange mutual promises to avoid violence.<sup>14</sup>

One day after the declaration of the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, in November 1947, the military and political powers of the Jewish community in Palestine began a massive military mobilization for a war that was presented as vital for survival, but was – de facto – designed to change the borders set by the partition plan as well as the composition of the population. Soon enough, the Jewish power that conducted itself as a sovereign one was recognized as such by the international representatives who visited Palestine in numerous areas and by representatives of the British Mandate who, in refraining from interfering, shirked their responsibility toward the local population. The military interference of various states in support of the Arab population that was expelled en masse from its land exacerbated even

1. Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone Books, 2008.

2. See, for example, the archive I created in *From Palestine to Israel: A Photographic Record of Destruction and State Formation, 1947–1950*. London: Pluto Press, 2011; this is the English translation of my book *Constituent Violence 1947–1950*. Tel Aviv: Resling, 2009.

3. A second archive I created, *Act of State 1967–2007*, is composed of 730 photographs. This archive is published in Italian as *Atto di Stato Palestina–Israele, 1967–2007: Storia fotografica dell'occupazione* (a cura di Maria Nadotti). Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2008.

4. See the exhibition I curated titled *untaken photographs*, winner of the Igo Zabel Competition, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, April–May 2010.

5. The drawings will be shown in the Paris triennial, *La Triennale: Intense Proximity*, curated by Okwui Enwezor, 19 April – 26 August 2012.

6. ‘Critique Of Violence’, in Peter Demetz (ed.), *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, (Edmund Jephcott, trans.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

7. When I searched for photographs of rape from the years 1947–50, it seemed as none were taken. Only after a while I was able to reconstruct some ‘untaken photographs’ from within existing photographs where rape became invisible. See the last chapter of my book *Civil Imagination–A Political Ontology of Photography*. Verso, May 2012.

8. See, for example, the photographic reconstruction of modes of torture at B’Tselem (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), ‘Detainees and prisoners’, [http://www.btselem.org/photos/4\\_photographs\\_3555\\_2627\\_2635](http://www.btselem.org/photos/4_photographs_3555_2627_2635).

9. I looked especially for photographs of ‘expellees’, but those presented to me mostly showed the Palestinians already as refugees, as if violence were not required to transform them into this state. The Palestinians were photographed in their new dwelling place, refugee camps outside the borders of the State of Israel. Since my main interest was in the Israeli regime and its modes of action, I chose not to use those photographs.

further the conception of the new reality: that goings-on in Palestine were a conflict between states that had to be settled. The violence of ethnic cleansing – the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians – perpetrated in order to create a Jewish majority in Palestine in support of the declaration of the State of Israel was achieved with the support of the violence of a 'neutrality' derived from the pact among nations who recognized only the official representatives of acknowledged parties as possible partners for treaties. Thus, within several months, the local Palestinian population gradually slipped away from political space, and reality was organized as a bi-partisan conflict of which the Palestinians were not a side but, rather, a disruption to be removed in order to settle the conflict.

A photograph from the Red Cross archive, taken at Al Qubab in November 1948, illustrates this political reality. The houses in the background have been emptied for a while now: the village was conquered in June 1948, its inhabitants displaced, and most of the houses demolished at Ben Gurion's behest in September 1948. The negotiation carried out by 'Jewish and Arab soldiers', as recorded in these photographs, is not performed by indigenous people, Jews and Palestinians. Rather, it takes place between soldiers who represent the new Jewish sovereignty of the country and soldiers of the Jordanian

Legion. In this reality where sovereignty was achieved through sheer violence of deportation, terms such as *transbordement* – passage between borders – or 'repatriation' are not neutral. They are the language of sovereign power imposing its violence as law and receiving international recognition.

Such reconstruction, such reading of photographs, is carried out from a civil perspective seeking to suspend and counter the effects of the regime in the archive – in this particular case, the preservation and reproduction of practices whose aim is the cleansing of the body politic or the governed population. In the photographs I found in the CICR archive, there was nothing particularly different from what I saw elsewhere. None were a sensation compared to what we have already seen from that time. Deeming these photographs to be 'unshowable' is not an act of censure against scandalous material. It resists an event of photography initiated by civil discourse that contests fundamental categories of the sovereign power and that refuses to incarnate the spectator position set by the archives of relating to these images as documents of past events. The operations recorded by these photographs, as well as the political language used by the CICR to caption them, partake in a national bond implemented at the time through the support of the international community. What we are attending to is not a *past* sovereign

decision to abandon the life of Palestinians manifested as a historical document at the archive, but rather a present, continuing event that implicates us as citizens-spectators. It threatens to make us accomplices, collaborators bonded with the sovereign power to administer populations against their will along national lines. Captions in sovereign archives – national and international – are manifestations of constituent violence. Captions too, one must remind herself, do not speak for themselves. They need us, readers and spectators. If we do not uphold our responsibility as citizens – not as citizens of a state, but as citizens who share a world with others – when we participate in the event of photography, we preserve the law achieved by constituent violence. By retracing the violence that transformed history into a *fait accompli*, thereby cleansing the ethnic cleansing itself, reconstructing the photographs contrary to the pact signed through them in the archive restores the potentialities of the archive. It generates what Walter Benjamin called the 'incompleteness of history',<sup>15</sup> the potential of a mixed population to limit the power of national sovereignty. It questions the international initiative, support and recognition of national partition.

*Translated into English  
by Tal Haran*

10. This archive was recently published as a book in English. See note 2.

11. See Hannah Arendt's discussion of the millions of refugees who flooded Europe in the first half of the twentieth century as a result of nations taking over states – in part because of treaties between sovereign states that rid themselves of alien 'minorities'; in Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975.

12. For more on the imposition of the 'two sides' paradigm through the category of 'war', see Ariella Azoulay, 'Declaring the State of Israel: Declaring a State of War', *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 2, 2011.

13. See, for example, J. L. Magnes, *Palestine—Divided or United?* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1947; reprinted 1983.

14. In my 'folded exhibition' *Potential History*, I present one of many examples of such encounters. *Potential History* was first shown in *10x10: Nineteen forty-eight*, BWA Wrocław – Galleries of Contemporary Art, Poland, and will be shown in at the Israeli Center for Digital Art, Holon, Israel, in May 2012.

15. See Walter Benjamin, 'On The Concept of History', (Harry Zohn, trans.), in *Selected Writings*, Volume 4: 1938–1940. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 389–411.





There was nothing accidental about the photographer capturing a line of women and children with his camera – this was the nature of the community exiled from Tantura to Fureidis a mere few weeks earlier and deported from Tulkarem on the day the photograph was taken. The men – 'of recruitable age' – were arrested and transferred to prison camps, and over one hundred of them (historians debate the exact number) were massacred. Numerous photographers were allowed to come and document the 'willing transfer' of these one thousand women, under the auspices of the Red Cross, which even supplied the buses to transport them most of the way. In spite of the aid the

women received, one of the Red Cross officials who gave a neutral description of their fate could not refrain from reflecting their despair as they marched the one-and-a-half kilometres to the border.

*And what about all those who had not managed to stack such a heavy load on their heads? And even if they did manage to squeeze a whole world into that sack, would that suffice to fill their basic needs once they arrived at their encampment? And their bare feet – when, if at all, would they be able to soak them in some warm water, soothe them from the exhausting march? And when one of the girls burst into tears, was she allowed to halt the advance of the caravan and to be attended to, to*

*receive support and attention? What child would not cry, first having been evicted from home after her father was taken and vanished all of a sudden, and now forced to march – adult-like – the distance of one-and-a-half kilometres toward the unknown? Would she ever see her father again? How could one understand the disappearance of all the men of the community? Were any explanations offered? Or was the question superfluous?*



These women's fate would be sealed for at least some decades after they were transported here on buses and crossed this thin barbed-wire fence. Out of the 2,000 women fated for 'transfer' through this kind of expulsion, conducted 'willingly', about 800 refused to evacuate in spite of being threatened by the Jewish forces about that which awaited them.

Based on their experience of the previous weeks, those who signed the agreement to leave their home in return for being promised safe conduct apparently preferred to get out of the Jewish forces' reach at any price. To date, no research has been done of the reasons those women either agreed or refused, nor has any investigation been

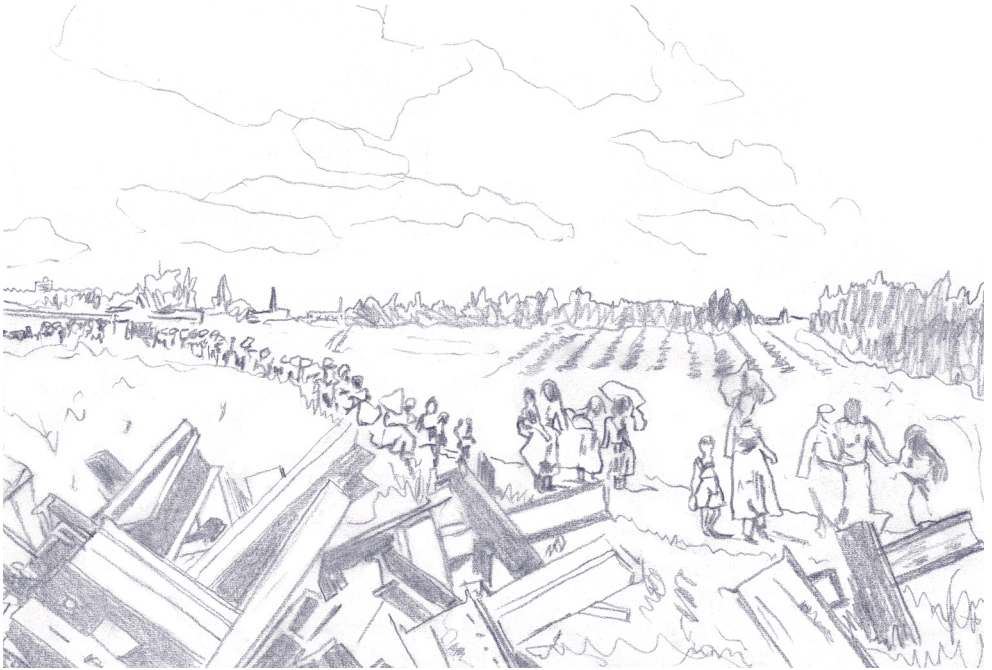
made of the connection between their decision to leave and whether one of their loved ones had been slaughtered in Tantura. At the Israel State Archive, photographs of the same event are classified under the caption: 'Arab women from Tantura going to Jordan.'

*How did the term rapatriement find its place in the description of this situation? In what homeland exactly are the Palestinian women 'repatriated' as they are being driven across the borders of the new state that has just been founded? Could the mukhtar (leader) of Fureidis village, standing in the foreground, left, who was forced to participate in this deportation, begin to imagine that from that day onward the*

*Palestinians remaining and the Palestinians deported would be shaped as two separate political groups with different identities and characteristics? Had the Red Cross or other organizations and additional cameras been present at all deportation operations, would we then also see at least half of the population refusing to be deported? Is this the reason for which cameras and aid organizations were distanced from the mass-deportation scenes of hundreds of thousands of human beings of whom we have no photographs at all?*

*Kfar Yona. Rapatriement de 1.200 civils arabes. 1949.*

V-P-PS-N-00004-2673



Another few metres and they would catch their breath after the exhausting march, and Red Cross buses would transport them from the border to Nablus or Hebron, where a refugee camp was in the process of being built, where they live to this very day.

In this 'model deportation', which many journalists and photographers have been invited to cover, the women being expelled from al-Tantura, who've been held in Fureidis for a month, are now being deported to Tulkarem.

*Why were these women, living in their homes in Tantura until several weeks earlier, described as 'held by a Jewish force', whereas in fact they had taken shelter in the Arab village of Fureidis, Palestine? And why was their*

*expulsion from Fureidis described in terms such as 'leaving a Jewish area'? No less infuriating was the fact that they were required to sign declarations agreeing to leave of their own free will, but even more infuriating is the knowledge that the Jews who made the deportees sign these statements started to believe in them. To what extent did the involvement of international organizations, the Red Cross among them, contribute to the 'repatriation' of that population? Could there be any place more suitable for any population than its own home?*

*Région de Tulkarem. Transfert de 1.100 femmes, enfants et vieillards d'origine palestinienne d'une région occupée par les forces israéliennes. Ils rejoignent la zone contrôlée par les forces arabes près de Tulkarem. 18/06/1949.*

V-P-PS-N-00004-2674



The 1,200 Palestinians described as being on their way to Transjordan are actually becoming unwelcome in their homeland, sentenced to homelessness, deprived of their community, turned into what is internationally called 'stateless persons' – refugees knocking at others' doors.

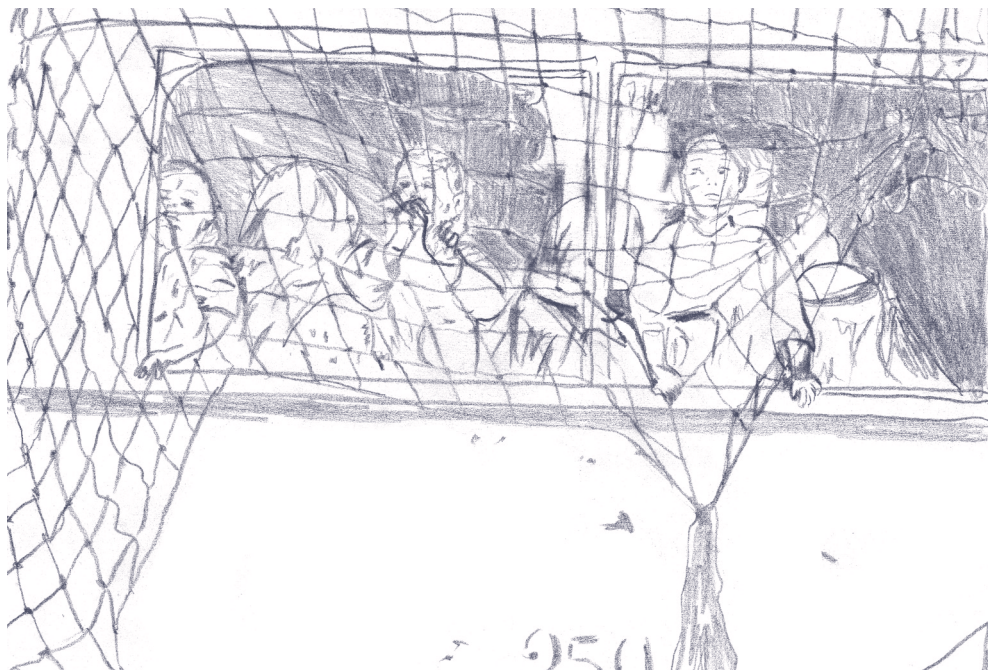
*Why do none of the photographers and none of the archives declare having a photograph of a deportation? Is it because so many officials count the deportees one by one, check their names against lists, touch them lightly on the shoulders and – for the photo opportunity – make them look like valued citizens?*

*And if today the lists were found, would there be a chance for an official petition*

*in the names of the deportees, protesting the fact that their signatures on the 'willingly deported' papers were obtained through deceit, under pressure and threats?*

*Kfar Yona, 1ère ligne juive. Le contrôle des listes par le délégué du CICR, le doyen du camp et le chef de secteur juif. 1949.*

V-P-PS-N-00004-2675



The women sitting in the bus turn their backs to the exterior that has rejected them, and the children, like little angels of history, have their eyes and mouths wide open and their wings outstretched. Where we see a chain of agents, foreigners and internationals, fighters and photographers, the children see one single catastrophe that everyone around them is bringing about. So many people observed these expulsions – the many bus drivers who transported them, the Jewish inhabitants of Kfar Yona who filled the women's water bottles, the internationals who assisted the Israeli forces – without realizing they were seeing people actually being deported. At least this is what may be learned from

their reports in the Red Cross bulletins or from the local daily press.

*What maintained this dissonance between what the photographers, the archivist who classified the images and others spectators saw and how they conceptualized it? Do the captions produce the dissonance between 'children' and 'inmates' consciously and intentionally? Did their author wish to express in this way an objection to the classification and selection of humans in ways that sealed their fate? Or does this indicate an automatic acceptance of the official jargon of the new regime that through such dissonances managed to blur the fact Palestinians were treated as transferable?*

*Enfants à bord d'un autobus conduisant les internés civils à Kfar Yona le jour du rapatriement. 1949.*

V-P-PS-N-00004-2676



The elegant figure of this elderly man appears again and again in photographs taken by others. His refusal to accept the deportation threatened to spoil the spectacle of 'leaving of their own free will'. In all the photos where he appears, representatives of the various groups are seen gesticulating around him, trying to find the right words and gestures to enable him to accept his fate and leave his homeland of his own free will, as it were.

*What did the Red Cross representative hear from that elderly man? How did it come about that from the moment the photograph was taken until it was filed in the archive, the man – who had not been captured with the younger men and was*

*allowed to remain with the women and children – become a 'prisoner of war'? Did the rebellious older man speak his mind? Did he tell them what he thought of their deeds? Did they understand his language? His arguments? Did the interpreter deliver the man's words precisely, or did he choose to spare the deporters his curses and abominations?*

*Kfar Yona, premières lignes juives. Un ancien prisonnier de guerre est interrogé en présence d'un délégué du CICR.*

*De gauche à droite: commandant du secteur juif; ancien prisonnier de guerre; capitaine commandant du secteur irakien (portant un casque); autre capitaine irakien; Jean Courvoisier, délégué du CICR.*

V-P-PS-N-00004-2677

*Evacuation of their 'own free will'*



The young man spoils the order of things. Unless he had had trouble walking, he would not be seen among the elderly, the women and the children, but rather as a prisoner in one of the improvised camps.

*Was he disabled and therefore not captured along with his peers, or did the horrendous events at Tantura disable him and thus spare him captivity?*

*Région de Tulkarem, 60 km de Tel Aviv.  
Transfert de 1100 femmes et enfants—  
rendus par les autorités juives à la zone  
arabe. De délégué CICR accompagnant  
le cortège. 1948.*

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone' (Ramle–Ramallah)*



The clothes of the persons photographed in this series do not seem suitable for the heavy heat of July 1948, when inhabitants of Ramle were deported by the tens of thousands. No record of the deportation depicted in this series of photographs – some of which are filed in the archive under 23 November 1948 (and others simply under the year 1948) – seems to exist in the annals of reported deportations. The fact that some of the photos showing only the year were printed in the Red Cross bulletin as having been taken in November allows us to assume that they were all taken on the same day in November. Perhaps this deportation followed the Security Council declaration of a ceasefire on 16

November, after which 'prisoners of war' were supposed to be exchanged and the wounded and ailing evacuated. Thus, too, the Red Cross caption describes this deportation as a 'transfer' and 'evacuation' of a population of the wounded and ailing. No data or well-ordered evidence exist of the way these categories were redefined and used in order to justify the deportation of more and more of the thousand people who were initially permitted to stay in Ramle and Lod after the deportation of about 60,000 in July that year.

*What is she asking him? What is he noting down of what she says? Is he pretending or does he truly believe that the written data will indeed 'be looked*

*into'? Is the Red Cross photographer aware of the gaps between the calm evacuation he sees with his own eyes and the horror stories he is likely to have heard from the refugees about the uprooted in July, the robbery of their homes, the looting of their property? Does the photographer – taking this picture just a few years after the end of the Second World War – realize the meaning of the picture of an apparently calm and orderly evacuation of the population? Does he register being witness to a whole world destroyed?*

*Ramleh. Transfert de civils arabes sous les auspices du CICR. En attendant l'arrivée du convoi. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00068-00A

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone'*



Following the harrowing tales of the hardships and suffering of deportees from Lod who had to walk all the way to Jordan in July of that year with no provisions, the Jewish forces allowed the photographing only of deportations carried out with vehicles. Given the number of buses and lorries, clearly this is not the evacuation of a few wounded people but rather a 'mini-deportation' of at least some hundreds.

*Why were the buses transporting the Palestinians covered in opaque sheets of canvas? What and whose gaze were the deportees supposed spared? Why are not the deporters themselves hiding behind opaque sheets? Are they not making even the slightest*

*effort to hide their deeds? Do the auspices of the Red Cross suffice for the meaning of the deporters' actions to escape their own eyes?*

*Ramleh. Transfert de civils arabes sous les auspices du CICR. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00068-21A



The men and women assembled in the town square look like people who have groomed themselves rather carefully. No signs of haste characterize the deportees of July 1948. If we did not know the circumstances, we might assume they are gathered for a filming of the Ramle bourgeoisie. Fine suede shoes, tweed skirts and jackets, starched collars and careful coiffure – all in the best of taste and latest fashion. The natural mingling of women and men seen here is atypical of the photographs of that period, most of which show the stamp of separation created by the Jewish forces amidst the Palestinian population – whereby men of 'recruitable age' were taken away from the rest and sent to prison camps.

*Why are there Palestinian men under 50 years of age (namely, of 'recruitable age') present in this photograph? Have they already spent some weeks or even months in the prison camps and been freed only in order to be exchanged as 'prisoners of war' in some contemptible deal or other? Or can one assume that – on account of their dress, outstandingly fashionable and groomed compared to that of the July 1948 deportees – members of the well-connected upper class who might be useful were allowed to remain?*

*Ramleh. Transfert de civils arabes sous les auspices du CICR. En attendant l'arrivée du convoi.*

V-P-PS-N-00070-34A

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone'*



The handsome houses seen in the background had already been evacuated by their inhabitants in July. Between that time and their assembly this morning, at the square, to await deportation, they lived in improvised shelters. The Ramle they knew will never be the same again. First it was almost entirely emptied of its inhabitants and became a ghost town, and then it was populated by Jews. The few Arabs who remained disrupted its ethnic 'cleanliness' to such an extent that they had to be deported as well. Had the photographer stepped back a little with his camera, one could more definitely establish whether the deportees that morning numbered 300, 400 or perhaps 800.

*How many persons were deported on 23 November 1948? And why has nothing of this event remained in the written archive? Is it possible that for 62 years it has not been investigated or at least mentioned in the deportation chronicles? How could the separation between areas and populations – Jews and Arabs respectively – have possibly become a 'fact of nature' in such a short time? Indeed, is this the one and only way to describe reality – the division of human beings according to ethnic categories, separating them from one another for the sake of neat archive drawers in the world order shaped along two world wars? Where were those just men of Sodom when they should have cried out the cry of citizenship that is not*

*conditioned by nationality? Should they not have mourned the trampling of the right to residency?*

*Ramleh. Transfert de civils arabes sous les auspices du CICR. En attendant l'arrivée du convoi. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00070-33A

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone'*



To their right is the yard where they were all assembled. In this area, apparently, personal effects and 'different' cargo are inspected. She retains her poise and insists on her elegant presence in spite of the humiliating, debasing situation. In high-heeled pumps and clothes unbecoming of a deportation even if by vehicle, one would think this woman and her daughter are awaiting being driven on a touring holiday abroad.

*Has she packed her television set in its cardboard box as the lettering on it states, or has she stored her personal effects inside? How many television sets were there in Palestine at the time, and from which countries could one receive broadcasts?*

*Would the bus take her into Jordan or only up to the new border, where she would have to change to another bus? Would she find shelter in Ramallah, a town of 4,000 inhabitants that within days had absorbed refugees by the tens of thousands, or would she, too, be forced to find shelter in open groves or in the corridors of public buildings?*

*Ramleh. Transfert de civils. En attendant l'arrivée du convoi. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00068-11A.

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone'*



Save for a car or two of this type, the only vehicles allowed here are military buses or Red Cross lorries. In order to keep them 'out of harm's way' – the deportation in itself is not likely to be defined as 'harm' – these vehicles too will join the convoy only after a white flag with the Red Cross is tied on. These are the last hours of the beautiful neighbourhood seen in the background. Ramle would never again be the same.

*When did Ramle begin to be called a 'Jewish zone'? Did the Red Cross officials not know that Ramle was a flourishing Arab town, or did the neutrality in which the organization takes such pride oblige it to accept as a matter of course the way one side imposed partition upon*

*the land and its people? And the Jewish soldiers – what did they tell their families as they returned home that evening, or several days later? Did they say there had been a deportation, that they themselves had carried it out? Or perhaps they talked about the way in which they helped Arabs who happened into the 'Jewish zone' find their place again in the 'Arab zone', among other Arabs like them? And how quickly did they forget? Was the black car sent specially to collect the notables to safety? And, come to think of it, how was inequality established vis-a-vis the deportation?*

*Ramleh. Préparation du convoi de civils arabes transférés de Ramleh en zone juive vers Ramallah en zone arabe en passant par Latroun. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00068-26A

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone'*



These must be the few ailing and wounded who gave the entire evacuation its 'moral justification' in the eyes of those who perpetrated it. No one knows the number of people deported on this occasion or whether they needed evacuation on medical grounds. According to Red Cross data, known to all, 'Jewish hospitals' at the time provided better medical care than 'Arab hospitals'.

*What are they asking? Have any promises been made to them about their property? Did they, too, have to sign a declaration that they were leaving their homes 'of their own free will'? Was there even any room for negotiating the conditions? Were they allowed to take along their belongings? What*

*of reparations for the houses? For the agony? And if not, at least over the type and nature of their transport?*

*Ramleh. Transfert de civils arabes sous les auspices du CICR. Car pour le transport des personnes malades. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00068-24A



Although the sign is folded in half, it obviously reads 'a special transport'. No doubt the deportation of people from their homes, even if not defined by its perpetrators as 'deportation', is indeed special.

*Besides the ailing, the elderly and the needy who were sheltered in one site, where was the healthy population allowed to dwell in the months that passed from the moment the city was occupied and most of its inhabitants were deported? Were they left as prisoners in their homes or, like the population of the elderly and needy, concentrated in one place? Was this old man able to understand that this journey to Jordan was different from all former ones*

*and that this time he would not be coming back? Could he have possibly imagined that his journey to the neighbouring land was a one-way exit and that from now on the border he was crossing would become a border of no return?*

Ramleh. Préparation du convoi de civils arabes transférés de Ramleh en zone juive vers Ramallah en zone arabe en passant par Latroun. 1948.

V-P-PS-N-00068-28A

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone'*



Perhaps one day, in one of the local archives, a document will be found, signed by some commander, explaining the instruction he had issued his subordinates to search the bags of the deportees.

*Even if such a document be found, could it possibly justify the sights we see? Did the Jewish soldiers searching those bags fear that the deportees were 'smuggling out' their property? What did they actually expect to find there? Were these November deportees spared being looted, after the public condemnation of the looting of jewels and valuables of the July deportees? Did this 'orderly inspection' suffice to make them forget the robbery of their houses? Or was the agreement to leave obtained*

*because they received very minor compensation for their properties, as long as they left?*

*Ramleh. Transfert de civils arabes sous les auspices du CICR. Contrôle des bagages en attendant l'arrivée du convoi. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00068-06A

*Evacuation from a 'Jewish zone' to an 'Arab zone'*



Suitcases, crates, bags and satchels are piled up on the roofs of buses. But as many as they might be compared to what the Tantura deportees were allowed to take along, these deportees still had to give up their homes and most of their belongings.

*How many people were transferred from 'side' to 'side'? Were they made to sign a document attesting to this being 'transfer of their own free will'? What did they receive as remuneration, if anything? Let us assume for a moment that they did leave 'willingly' – were they left a choice? Does the agreement imposed upon them – violently, through terror and intimidation – enable us not to name that which we see with our own eyes: deportation?*

*Perhaps some of them did prefer to move to one of the Arab towns rather than continue living under a Jewish rule that had destroyed the fabric of their life. Who decided upon this transfer, and who were the 'sides' that agreed to this? And why have we never heard their voices until now?*

*Ramleh. Chargement des bagages sur un autobus faisant partie du convoi de civils arabes transférés de Ramleh en zone juive vers Ramallah en zone arabe en passant par Latroun. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00068-29A



It was probably at Latroun that the deportees changed buses. Those who transported the Ramle deportees could not proceed from here to Ramallah. In order to stabilize the separation of the 'Jewish zone' and the 'Arab zone', a 'security zone' had to be produced, like the security zones produced in the wars of Europe. Thus Palestine, whose Arab and Jewish inhabitants alike were used to traveling freely between Jaffa and Amman (Jordan), Nazareth and Haleb (Syria), and between Tel Aviv and Beirut (Lebanon) – this practically borderless Palestine – was removed in one blow from the cultural-geographic space of which it had been a part, and its inhabitants deported from one side to

the other of the new border imposed upon the region, as in Europe.

*Was this the end of a process of ethnic separation effected ostensibly out of concern for 'the population's health'? How many sick and wounded had at that time been hospitalized in Ramle? Who was to be included in this 'ailing' population? Who maintained the economy of deportation? Who supplied the physical means for deportation? And who coordinated the various bodies that took part in it?*

*Latroun. Transbordement entre les lignes du convoi transférant les civils et les malades arabes de l'hôpital de Ramleh en zone juive à Ramallah en zone arabe. 23/11/1948*

V-P-PS-N-00069-01A



Apparently, this photograph, also taken in November 1948, does not pertain to the series of photos from the deportation from Ramle. The transfer spot of that deportation had been Latroun, while here it is Al Qubab that serves the same function. The inhabitants of Al Qubab had been deported several months earlier, and Ben Gurion had already ordered the demolition of most of the village's houses by November. Most likely, the 'mini-deportation' documented in this photograph, too, took place following the Security Council ceasefire declaration, as a part of 'finishing up the job' of ethnic cleansing Palestine.

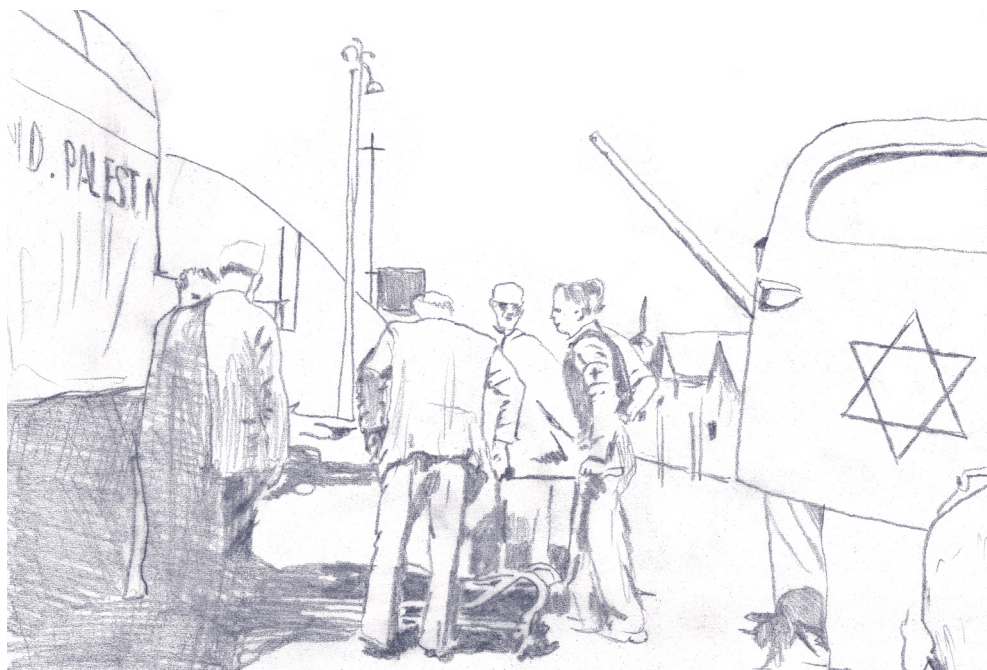
*Who are the people being deported here, and from which village are they coming? Does*

*the bus convoy stretch further beyond the limits of this frame? Were those carrying out the deportation asked to wear suits? Or did their formal dress make it easier for them to cope with the horror in which they were taking part?*

*El Qubab. Des délégués du CICR accompagnent le transfert de civils arabes. 11/1948.*

V-P-PS-E-00087

*Evacuation of the 'wounded and ailing' (Tel Aviv-Jaffa)*



These six photographs document separate events taking place in 1948–49. Although I have no detailed information about any of the specific cases (beyond their captions in the Red Cross Archive), their common mode of action is relatively easy to detect based on a similar pattern repeated in many places, as I have shown in the analysis of the Ramle (November 1948) photo series. The pattern I refer to is that of completing the ethnic separation of the Arab and Jewish populations. Given that this separation resulted from the deportation of the Palestinian population by the Jewish population, it would be more accurate to describe this pattern as 'completing the deportation'. In the archive, this mode of

action is described according to the overt motivation of the agents taking part in the actual evacuation: 'The transfer of the Palestinian elderly, ailing and wounded from Tel Aviv to Jaffa.'

*Could one see in the evacuation that preceded the occupation of Jaffa (for example, in February 1948) a harbinger of the larger deportation that would take place after that occupation? Without doubting the motives of international representatives taking part in the evacuation, one should insist on asking whether the wounded had received such faulty treatment in the 'Jewish' zone – their own homes – that their lives had been at risk and they had to be rushed to the 'Arab' zone for rescue? What*

*was the contribution of the justified evacuation, as it were – 'moral reasons' or 'medical necessity' – to the deportation project of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian men and women?*

*Transfert de vieillards et blessés arabes de Tel-Aviv à Jaffa. Été 1948.*

V-P-PS-E-00067

*Evacuation of the 'wounded and ailing'*



*Transfert de vieillards et blessés arabes de Tel-Aviv à Jaffa, avant l'occupation de Jaffa par les troupes juives.  
Le délégué CICR et son chauffeur transportant une personne blessée. 1949. V-P-PS-N-00070-06A*



*Tel-Aviv. Opération de transfert d'une femme blessée arabe vers Jaffa. 05/1948.  
V-P-PS-N-00070-05A*

*Evacuation of the 'wounded and ailing'*



Tel-Aviv. Transport de vieillards et de blessés arabes vers Jaffa, avant son occupation par les troupes juives. 08/1948. V-P-PS-N-00070-07A



Entre Tel-Aviv et Jaffa. Dans le no man's land, passage d'une ambulance juive dans une ambulance arabe. 06/02/1948. V-P-PS-N-00041-2405

*Evacuation of the 'wounded and ailing'*



*Evacuation of the 'wounded and ailing'*

*Jaffa. Devant le siège de la  
délégation, une ambulance du  
Magen David Adom va emmener de  
vieux arabes et enfants en territoire  
arabe. 1948.*

V-P-PS-N-00069-35A

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