A Microscope's Journey Through Israel  
Revealing Some Fine Details  
by Dana Visalli  
April 2018

I spent the month of March in the Palestinian city of Hebron, volunteering as an English teacher. Because I work as a botanist, I was interested in introducing Palestinian children to the pleasures of observing flowers, and for this reason I brought a cheap dissecting microscope with me. My plan was to leave it as a gift upon my departure, but plans often go astray. I signed in with the Israeli El Al airline in New York for the flight to Tel Aviv, but once the El Al personnel learned that I was going to Palestine, I was subjected to considerable scrutiny. This was magnified substantially when they encountered the little microscope, which they took away for a long inspection. Ultimately they confiscated it, and let me know that if it did not have explosives in it they would send on a later flight.

A few days later I received a telephone call in Hebron from a delivery company, who informed me that the microscope had made its way to Tel Aviv and they wanted to bring it to me. The glitch in this plan was that Hebron is Palestinian, and is closed to Israelis—except for the Israeli settlers and soldiers that live in enclaves in the city. There is a red sign at the highway turnoff that reads, “The Entrance For Israeli Citizens Is forbidden, Dangerous To Your Lives, And Is Against Israeli Law.”

The delivery service decided to drop it off at a hotel in Jerusalem, where I could presumably come pick it up. But the hotel had a policy to not even touch a package not addressed to them, so they certainly were not going to accept delivery. In the end the box with the microscope was sent back to the airport in Tel Aviv, where I was able to pick it up on my way out of the country, and after another hour of physical and X-ray inspection, bring it back to the United States with me.

The question is, what is going on here? Why are Israelis afraid of a microscope? What is the history of events that have put so much fear and trepidation into Israeli citizens? I had an analogous experience while hiking in a natural area near Hebron called Wadi al-Quff. I took a taxi out to the trailhead—by the time the 20-minute drive was completed the Palestinian driver had given me a children's book he himself had written and invited me to his home for a meal. I spent two hours hiking up a steep trail to the hilltop, where there proved to be a concrete bunker and a soldier pointing a machine gun at me. The site was Israeli military outpost, and the soldiers were completely shocked to see a human being out looking at flowers. The female soldier lowered her gun when I produced my American passport, but she repeatedly exclaimed, in English, how weird it was that anyone would be out observing nature in Palestine, and that in her opinion any Palestinians that found me would kill me. There was a small irony here of course in that the only Palestinian I had encountered (the taxi driver) had given me a gift and invited me home for dinner. So again the question arises, what's going on here?

What is going on of course is that the Israelis and the Palestinians both claim the same small piece of the Earth to be their homeland. The actual history of the area that is often referred to as the Levant (the countries of the eastern Mediterranean; the word came into being in about 1500 from an Italian word for 'rising,' as in Italy the sun rises to the east, in the Levant) is long and complex. In the larger sweep of history both Israelis and Palestinians are merely bit players, present over the past 2500 years in

Cyclamen in Hebron; it is a common Mediterranean wildflower.
one form or another in a land that has a 10,000 year tribal history and 100,000 year human history. Both are Semites, which is language group, not a race nor ethnicity. Genetic studies have shown that Mediterranean Jews (Sephardic) are identical to Palestinians, that is, they are the same people, while both are more distant genetically from European Jews (Ashkenazi).

An evolutionary (scientific) explanation for any religion is that it unites its adherents as being a 'chosen' people by the ruling god or gods of any given belief system. This as true for Judaism as for any religion. A basic tenet of one of the Jewish religions books, the Kabala, is the absolute superiority of the Jewish soul and body over the non-Jewish soul and body. According to the Kabala, the world was created solely for the sake of Jews; the existence of non-Jews was subsidiary. A famous teacher of the Kabala, Rabbi Kook, stated, 'The difference between a Jewish soul and souls of non-Jew is greater and deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle.' Exceptionalism can be said to be the very core of all religious belief, granting social identity, albeit imaginary, to the believer.

When the Zionist Jews decided to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine (a seminal date for this being the 1st International Zionist Conference in 1897), their sense of their own exceptionalism reduced the existing population of Muslims and Christians in Palestine to a sub-human, almost non-existent stature. Thus Golda Meir (the 4th Prime Minister of Israel) was able to pronounce in 1969, 'There is no such thing as a Palestinian people. It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn’t exist.'

In fact about one million people lived in Palestine at the turn of the 20th century, and Muslims and Christians made up 97% of that population. The only way for Palestine to become a Jewish state was to drive the non-Jews out. In December 1940 Joseph Weitz, responsible for Jewish colonization and a senior official of the Yishuv (settlement plan) wrote in his diary, 'It must be clear that there is no room in the country for both peoples . . . If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us . . . The only solution is a Land of Israel, at least a western land of Israel, without Arabs. There is no room here for compromises.'

A common misconception about the formative years of Israel is that violence erupted between Arabs and Israelis after Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948. But in fact a series of Israel massacres of Palestinians were initiated the year before, the purpose of which was to drive the 'non-existent' Palestinians off of their land. The massacres were consciously executed to terrorize the Palestinian people.

The village of Deir Yassin became the most famous massacre because of the barbarity involved and the fact that over 20 villagers were taken to a nearby Jewish settlement, paraded as game and then killed. Menahem Begin gloated about the massacre, writing, 'The legend in Deir Yassin helped us in particular in the saving of Tiberia and the conquest of Haifa... All the Jewish forces proceeded to advance through Haifa like a knife through butter. The Arabs began fleeing in panic, shouting Deir Yassin. Arabs throughout the country were seized by limitless panic and started to flee for their lives.'

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saw one young Jewish woman carrying a blood-covered dagger and saw another stab an old couple in their doorway. The representative wrote that the scene reminded him of S.S. troops he had seen in Athens.

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The Deir Yassin attack was perpetrated by two Zionist militias and coordinated with the main Zionist forces, whose elite unit participated in part of the operation. The heads of the two militias, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, later became Prime Ministers of Israel. Begin, head of the Irgun militia, sent the following message to his troops about their victory at Deir Yassin:

'Accept my congratulations on this splendid act of conquest. Convey my regards to all the commanders and soldiers. We shake your hands. We are all proud of the excellent leadership and the fighting spirit in this great attack. We stand to attention in memory of the slain. We lovingly shake the hands of the wounded. Tell the soldiers: you have made history in Israel with your attack and your conquest. Continue thus until victory. As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy. God, God, Thou has chosen us for conquest.'

The British decision to give Palestine to the Zionists, formalized in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, is now understood have been calculated to help the British win World War I, to help keep Britain's route through the Suez Canal to its 'crown jewel' colony of India (where it was growing opium to unload on China) protected, and as an added bonus, to induce the messiah Jesus to come back to Earth. Seriously. This is the level of intelligence that drives most big government decisions (which really should make people question the existence of big governments).

By mid-1916 Britain was in danger of losing World War I. In the Battle of the Somme of that year it lost ½ million men killed or wounded, with nearly 60,000 lost in the first day of fighting. Wealthy Zionists offered to persuade the United States to enter the war on the side of Britain if given the gift of Palestine as 'homeland.' President Woodrow Wilson, who had won re-election in 1916 on a promise to keep the U.S. out of the war, then declared war on Germany in April of 1917. Thus it was the Jewish-Zionist community that engineered the defeat of Germany in that war (a fact not lost on the Germans after the war).

In addition, Britain's most lucrative colony in its worldwide empire was India, and access to and from India via the Suez Canal was vital to controlling the oppressed Indian people and keeping them working for British profits. In creating a 'Judeo-Christian enclave' in the Levant the British government felt it could better protect its shipping route though the canal. It is also the case that Arthur Balfour (the Foreign Secretary of Britain during World War I and one of the authors of the Balfour Declaration) was a fundamentalist Christian who believed with some others that certain passages in the bible indicated that Jesus would not return to Earth until 'the Jews were back in Jerusalem.' Which, if you think it through, means that the last 70 years conflict in the Holy Land has been in the name of the Prince of Peace. It has been said that god loves irony.

With this background information we can better understand the behavior of the Israelis that I encountered on my trip to Palestine. Because they terrorized the Palestinian people in 1947-48 and drove one million of them off of their land and into refugee camps, then stole the land and the dwellings and made them their own, because for 70 years now they have continued to usurp Palestinian land, brutalize the Palestinian people and have continued to try to drive them out of Palestine, because all of this nefarious behavior is based on power and dominance and mythology and lies-- the Israelis have to constantly watch their backs. In fact 70 years after the creation of a Jewish state on Palestinian land, the most dangerous place in the world to be a Jew is in Israel.

There is a clear way out of this Gordian Knot and that is for the Israelis to abandon the pseudo-religious mythology of being somehow superior to the rest of humanity, to tear down the concrete walls they have built across the Holy Land and the concrete walls permeating their minds and hearts, and to create an egalitarian society based on human decency and perhaps even a measure of love, with the other inhabitants of the Levant, the Palestinian people, their genetic and geographic brothers and sisters.
Ahed Tamimi & the Pathology of the Israeli Mind
by Dana Visalli
March 2018

The trial of Ahed Tamimi—the sixteen year old Palestinian girl who slapped a fully-armed Israeli soldier who was standing in her front yard looking for Palestinian demonstrators to shoot—is supposed to reconvene in a few days. Israeli military courts have a 100% conviction rate, even of children. Ahed is one of several Palestinian youth who have become symbolic throughout the world for the 70-year old Palestinian struggle to regain and retain their own land and their basic rights as human beings. She has already been in prison for three months for attempting to protect her home and family from Israeli soldier-intruders. Her mother Nariman, who went to visit Ahed the day after she was taken to prison, was arrested upon her arrival and has also spent the last three months in jail.

I traveled to Ahed's village of Nabi Saleh a week ago, to learn more about problems confronting the village as Israelis appropriate their fields and water supplies for an ever-growing illegal (according to the United Nations) Israeli settlement nearby, and in hopes of meeting Ahed's father Bassem and her cousin Janna Jihad Ayyad. Upon arrival no one was home so I took a seat on the front porch. Soon various people were coming and going, and one of them told me Bassem was away, but that Janna was around. We phoned her and she showed up a few minutes later.

Janna is a precocious eleven year-old who speaks English fluently and has been filming and reporting on the abuses of her people by the Israelis since she was seven. The deaths of two men in her village—her cousin, Mustafa Tamimi, and another uncle, Rushdie Tamimi—served as a trigger for her to begin documenting what was happening in Nabi Saleh. Mustafa was killed by an Israeli gas canister and Rushdie was fatally shot in his groin.

She has risked her own safety many times to document Israeli behavior in Palestine, which over the last 70 years includes driving a million Palestinians off of their land and from their homes, and appropriating for themselves the vast majority of what prior to 1947-48 had been the Palestinian homeland. To some degree she has an advantage over adult reporters, because as she puts it,"The soldiers catch the big journalists and take their cameras....The camera is stronger than the gun. I can send my message to many people, and they can send it to others." At this point she has a Facebook page with 280,000 followers and her own Youtube channel, well worth visiting. Children in Palestine are forced to grow up early and fast. Janna's uncle Bilal explained, "We must teach our children not to accept humiliation and not be cowards. We are under occupation. We cannot teach our children silence; they must fight for their freedom."

On the day I visited our conversation took a different direction. After briefly talking about life under occupation and how much she missed her best friend Ahed, I showed her a book I had brought with me, *Wildflowers of the Mediterranean*. She was quickly transformed from a serious journalist reporting on the disaster that has befallen her people into an animated, enthusiastic student of the natural world. She dashed around Ahed's yard, bringing in the many spring blooms, searching in the book for the ones she did not recognize, and pointing out the ones she already knew.

At one point she stood in the very spot in the entryway to the Tamimi household where Ahed had confronted the Israeli soldiers three months before. Where Ahed had found young Israeli men armed with machine guns bent of perpetuating violence against
Palestinians on Palestinian land, Janna was for that moment immersed in the beauty of the good earth. The contrast could not have been more stark. Foreigners arriving with guns and bombs are resisted. Arriving with peaceful intentions one is met with a cup of tea.

I spent two hours with Janna, wandering the hills above the village, identifying flowers and enjoying the impressive limestone geology. The ground everywhere is littered with tear gas canisters, spent concussion grenades and smoke bombs. The Israelis have been harassing the people of Nabi Saleh for 70 years, plenty of time for the spent ammunition to form windrows among the fields of flowers.

The cruelty exhibited by the Israelis in their hungering to imprison the young Ahed Tamimi, whose only wish was to protect her people and her home from intruders and whose only weapon was a mere slap—the inherent cruelty of those hungering to put her in a prison cell for years, or even forever, with some government officials calling for rape and further darker abuse—this display of pathological cruelty by an entire society has people throughout the world wondering what curse has befallen the people of Israel.

One possible answer is that they are obsessed with the hallucination that they are somehow a 'chosen people,' that they are somehow better than the rest of humanity, even that they are the preferred favorites of some mythological god. As prime minister Menachem Begin exulted after the Zionist slaughter of Palestinians at the village of Deir Yassin prior to the 1948 war, “God, God, Thou has chosen us for conquest.” According to the Israel Democracy Institute, approximately two thirds of Israeli Jews believe that Jews are the “chosen people”.

This sense of superiority over others is in fact a common human trait, mixed though it always is with a countervailing feeling of inferiority and fear. Albert Einstein in the wisdom of his old age addressed this pathology when he observed, “A human being experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. The delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us.”

The obvious deeper truth made clear in our time through scientific inquiry is that all humans have the same long, deep and difficult history. All humans evolved together in Africa for 200,000 years before any left that continent. All human beings share 99.9% the exact same genetic code and 99.9% the same long, traumatic evolutionary journey.

The human family faces pressing ecological challenges at this particular locus along the course of our Big History, shared by all people, such as, for example, overshoot of the human population and diminution of the richness, beauty and diversity life on earth. None of our challenges are mitigated or even addressed by the mythologies spun by the human mind over the course of our short-term, 3000-year Little History. Those working for a viable future for all of people and for the biosphere as a whole look forward to the Zionists and the Jews and all Israelis maturing out of their mythological hallucination of separateness and rejoining the family of humanity and the community of life on the journey towards a viable future.

*Dana Visalli is an ecologist living in Washington State. He is currently volunteering in Palestine for a month. He can be reached at jdanavisalli@gmail.com, www.methownaturalist.com
A Brief History of Palestine and Israel Explains Everything
by Dana Visalli

While it is certainly true that the Jewish people have relatively deep roots in the land that is today known as Palestine and Israel, this area has been a crossroads since the origins of the human species. In fact the oldest known Homo sapiens fossil outside of Africa was recently found in modern-day Israel, dated at approximately 180,000 years old. Neanderthal bones have also been found in the Levant. In historical times the Palestine region or parts of it have been controlled by numerous different peoples and regional powers, including the Canaanites, Amorites, Ancient Egyptians, Israelites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, ancient Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Muslims. The Levant has been a mixing pot for the people of three continents for thousands of years.

A Zionist movement arose in the late 1800s in Europe as a concept for Jews from around the world to return the land of their historical roots. The origin of the word Zion is uncertain; it is first mentioned in the Old Testament as the name of a Canaanite, not Jewish, fortress, and its usage predates the Jews. A gathering of Zionists in Switzerland in 1897 chose Palestine as the location for their proposed Jewish State, even though the population of Palestine at that time was 96% Muslim and Christian. An exploratory group of Jews visited Palestine at that time and reported that, “The bride is beautiful, but she is married to another man.” The Zionists understood from the beginning that force would be necessary to remove those people in Palestine for whom it was already a homeland.

Palestine at the time was a province of Ottoman Syria, a of the Ottoman Empire. Zionists inquired with the Ottoman Turks about the possibilities of creating a Jewish homeland; the Turks responded that immigrants of any group were welcome but that the land was already occupied and a restrictive race- and/or religion-based state was out of the question.

The Zionists turned to the British, who were amenable to the concept for several reasons, one of which was that in 1916 they were in danger of losing WW I. In the battle of Somme initiated in July of that year Britain suffered 57,000 casualties on the first day of fighting, an astounding number of dead young men. The Zionists suggested that they and their Jewish friends in high places could induce the United States to enter into the war on the side of the British. American career Foreign Service Officer Evan M. Wilson, who had served as Minister-Consul General in Jerusalem, described this arrangement in his book Decision on Palestine. He wrote that the Balfour declaration “was given to the Jews largely for the purpose of enlisting Jewish support in the war and of forestalling a similar promise by the Central Powers (Germany and the Ottoman Turks).”

In addition, Britain was still deeply involved in growing opium in its “crown jewel colony” of India to sell to the Chinese (whom the British had conspired to get addicted to the drug almost two centuries before by mixing opium with tobacco) and was dependent upon the revenues thereof, and therefore needed all the protection it could muster for the empire's access route through the Suez Canal. It perceived a Jewish state in the area to be more friendly to its imperial holdings than the surround Arab Muslims.

A third reason that Britain embraced the idea of Jews displacing Palestinians was that fundamentalist Christians held the belief that the “Second Coming of Christ” would not occur until “the Jews were back in Jerusalem.” In fact Arthur Balfour, a primary author of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which gave British government support to a Jewish State in Palestine, was just such a fundamentalist believer.

Thus Britain supported the creation of a Jewish state on Palestinian land in order to maintain its global empire (a primary cause of WW I), protect its lucrative opium market in China, and to attempt to induce the 'seconding coming' of Jesus. The enormous violence and cruelty inflicted on the Palestinians ever since has been perpetuated in the name of the Prince of Peace and the gods of capitalism.

The Third Palestinian Congress in Haifa in 1920 decried the British government's plans to support the Zionist project, and rejected the declaration as a violation of international law and of the rights of the indigenous population. Wilson sent a commission to Palestine to investigate the situation in person. After spending two months
in the area interviewing all sections of the population, the commissioners stated that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine could be accomplished only with “the gravest trespass upon the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine,” pointing out that subjecting Palestinians “to steady financial and social pressure to surrender the land, would be a gross violation of the principle of self-determination and of the peoples’ rights.”

The report stated that meetings with Jewish representatives made it clear that “the Zionists looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine.” It concluded that armed force would be required to accomplish this, and urged the Peace Conference to dismiss the Zionist proposals. The commission recommended that “the project for making Palestine distinctly a Jewish commonwealth should be given up.” The report was in fact suppressed, and when Britain obtained a “mandate” from the League of Nations it included the Balfour Declaration support for a Jewish homeland in existing Palestine.

From this point on Jewish immigration to Palestine increased rapidly. When the newly created United Nations approved a partition plan in 1947, dividing land between Palestinian and Jews, the Jewish population had grown from 4% in 1917 to 30%. But, because the United Nations has always been largely controlled by western powers, the Jews were given 55% of the land. The Zionists accepted this partition plan, while the Arab/Muslim community did not, as they were losing a considerable portion of what had been their homeland to Western imperial power. In internal discussions in 1938 David Ben-Gurion (first prime minister of Israel) stated that “after we become a strong force...we shall abolish partition and expand into the whole of Palestine.”

The passing of the partition resolution in November 1947 triggered the violence that State Department analysts had predicted and for which Zionists had been preparing. There were at least 33 massacres of Palestinian villages, half of them before a single Arab army joined the conflict. Zionist forces were better equipped and had more men under arms than their opponents, and by the end of Israel’s “War of Independence” over 750,000 Palestinian men, women, and children were ruthlessly expelled and over 500 Palestinian villages were destroyed. The Palestinians call this the Nabka: the Catastrophe. As Israeli historian Tom Segev writes, “Israel was born of terror, war, and revolution, and its creation required a measure of fanaticism and cruelty.”

One of the better-documented massacres occurred in a small, neutral Palestinian village called Deir Yassin in April 1948 – before any Arab armies had joined the war. Richard Catling, British assistant inspector general for the criminal investigation division, reported on “sexual atrocities” committed by Zionist forces. “Many young school girls were raped and later slaughtered,” he reported. “Old women were also molested.” The Red Cross representative who found the bodies at Deir Yassin arrived in time to see some of the killing in action. He wrote in his diary that Zionist militia members were still entering houses with guns and knives when he arrived. He saw one young Jewish woman carrying a blood-covered dagger and saw another stab an old couple in their doorway. The representative wrote that the scene reminded him of S.S. troops he had seen in Athens.

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Begin, head of the Irgun militia, sent the following message to his troops about their victory at Deir Yassin: “Accept my congratulations on this splendid act of conquest. Convey my regards to all the commanders and soldiers.....Tell the soldiers: you have made history in Israel with your attack and your conquest. Continue thus until victory. As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy. God, God, Thou has chosen us for conquest.”

The Jewish mystical book, the Kabala, teaches that non-Jews are the embodiment of Satan, and that the world was created solely for the sake of Jews. Rabbi Kook, who achieved saintly status among his followers in Israel and the U.S., stated: “The difference between a Jewish soul and souls of non-Jews… is greater and deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle.”

Unfortunately for Zionist objectives they have not to date been able to rid Palestine of the Palestinians. Of the
approximately 12 million Palestinians in the world today, 3 million live in the West Bank, 2 million live in the Gaza strip, and almost two million live in Israel.

To say that Palestinians are treated as second-class citizens by the Israeli Jews would be considerable understatement. Every aspect of Palestinian life is controlled by the Israelis in a repressive and often violent manner. There are at least 7500 Israeli soldiers in the West Bank, for example, and at least 98 checkpoints, where Palestinians may be stopped for hours or even days. Soldiers regularly raid all Palestinian property; when I was teaching at an Palestinian elementary school in Hebron in February of 2018 it was raided by dozens of soldiers, who fired tear gas into the school yard. There are over 600 Palestinian children under the age of 18 in Israeli prisons, along with approximately 6000 Palestinian adults.

Since 1967 Israel has confiscated 73% of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Israeli government encourages and subsidizes the construction of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. Between 1967 and 1999 Israel established 200 settlements in the territories, including East Jerusalem. These colonial outposts are built on hundreds of square kilometers of land confiscated from Palestinians and require an large military presence around them for defense. Settlement building is illegal under international law; the fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the transfer of civilian populations of the occupying power into occupied territory. A network of large, well-maintained roads connect every Jewish settlement to Israel proper, roads upon which Palestinians may not travel, nor even walk across. All these roads are built on ‘expropriated’ Palestinian land, and carve up the West Bank into isolated segments.

Also since 1967 Israel has demolished over 48,000 homes in Palestine, leaving several hundred thousand Palestinians homeless. Palestinians wishing to build homes on their own land are subject to a lengthy and costly permit application process, and are almost invariably refused. The Israeli military then uses the lack of permits to justify destroying homes. Also since 1967 Israeli has torn out over 800,000 trees in Palestine, most of them olive and other food producing trees. The objective of this on-going cruelty is to drive the Palestinians out of Palestine, in fact Israel has proposed that Jordan would make a fine home for them.

Clearly Israel is something more than an apartheid state, a word coined in South Africa meaning “separateness.” Israel Zionists want exclusiveness—exclusively Jews in Israel and Palestine. This exclusivity is in itself a myth, as it has been proven that genetically there is no such thing as pure genetic race of Jews, and in fact Mediterranean Jews match Palestinian DNA at 100% (and all Homo sapiens have 99.9% the same DNA). From a religious perspective Jews are as divided among themselves as are any religious groups. In the name of this mythology of being a specially anointed people the Israelis in general Zionists in particular have committed on-going crimes and continuing brutality and cruelty against their own brothers and sisters, the Palestinian people.
During the 1948 war in Palestine, around 85% (720,000 people) of the Palestinian Arab population of what became Israel fled or were expelled from their homes to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the countries Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. There still exist today 62 Palestinian refugee camps. The total number of Palestinian refugees is assessed to be between 5 and 8 million.
Occupation is ultimately a form of total power. Also because the concept of ‘security’ is left undefined, the Israeli army is not accountable for its actions. Many soldiers feel that the present situation of gross inequality has somehow become normal, and think they can do what they want, at checkpoints or elsewhere.

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