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The everyday life of the Israeli deportation regime

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Between the excessive and the effective:
The everyday life of the Israeli deportation regime

Ilan Amit

Between the excessive and the effective: The everyday life of the Israeli deportation regime – Ilan Amit

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aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex
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Promotor

dr. B. Kalir

Universiteit van Amsterdam

Copromotor

prof. dr. H.W. van Schendel

Universiteit van Amsterdam

Overige leden

prof. dr. A.C.A.E. Moors

Universiteit van Amsterdam

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dr. D.V. Vigneswaran

Universiteit van Amsterdam

Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragwetenschappen

**Between the excessive and the effective:
The everyday life of the Israeli deportation regime**

This dissertation, a study ‘up’ of Israeli powers of immigration enforcement, offers a contribution to an evolving body of work focusing on the state’s forces of immigration management, rather than on the migrants themselves and their personal stories. It seeks to shift the focus back to the state and the formation of its forces of coercion and exclusion projected at irregularised migrants. Immigration enforcement in Israel is rooted in the state’s relatively short and unique history as well as within its colonial present and the occupation of the Palestinian Territories. In Israel, where the settler-colonial context is linked with a siege mentality and national anxieties about the loss of the state’s Jewish character, immigration enforcement becomes a powerful mechanism of state building, governance and internal expansion. This dissertation illustrates the creation of Israel’s immigration enforcement implementation surplus and the expansive translation of immigration enforcement policies into acts of deportation and exclusion. It does so on the basis of extensive fieldwork conducted among Israel’s immigration enforcement agencies as well as with various immigration-related non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The empirical work guides the reader through state agencies such as the Israeli Population, Immigration and Border Authority, the Israeli Prison Service and the Refugee Status Determination Unit, with a focus on the translation of immigration policies into expansive enforcement in the form of deportation and exclusion. It continues by surveying the work of non-state, immigration-related organisations such as pro-immigration human rights NGOs as well as far right, anti-immigration activists, their pro-deportation legal and lobbying work and their agency in the Israeli Parliament. The conclusions arising from this dissertation expand our understanding of immigration enforcement within the broader international context, portraying migration management as a state-making mechanism, rather than linking it with a refugee ‘crisis’.

**Tussen excessief en effectief:
Het dagelijks leven van het Israëlische deportatie regime**

Deze dissertatie, over Israëlische immigratiehandhaving, levert een bijdrage aan onderzoek gefocust op de machten achter immigratiemanagement, en niet aan onderzoek dat de persoonlijke verhalen van migranten zelf centraal stelt. Het verlegt de focus naar de staat en de vorming van krachten van dwang en uitsluiting gericht op irreguliere migranten. Immigratiehandhaving in Israël is zowel geworteld in de relatief korte en unieke geschiedenis van de staat, als in het koloniale heden en de bezetting van de Palestijnse gebieden. In Israël, waar de koloniale context in relatie staat tot een belegeringsmentaliteit en nationale zorgen over het verlies van het joodse karakter van de staat, is immigratiehandhaving een krachtig mechanisme voor staatsopbouw, bestuur en interne expansie.

Gebaseerd op uitgebreid veldwerk in Israëlische immigratiehandhavinginstanties en diverseniet-gouvernementele organisaties (NGO’s) die zich bezighouden met immigratie, beschrijft deze dissertatie de creatie van het overschot op de uitvoering van immigratiehandhaving door Israël en de uitgebreide vertaling van het immigratiehandhavingsbeleid naar daden van deportatie en uitsluiting.

Dit empirische werk maakt de lezer bekend met staatsinstellingen zoals de Israelische Bevolkings-, Immigratie- en Grensautoriteit, de Israëlische Gevangenisdienst en de Refugee Status Determination Unit, met een focus op de vertaling van immigratiebeleid naar uitgebreide handhaving in de vorm van deportatie en uitsluiting. Het onderzoekt ook het werk van niet-gouvernementele organisaties die verband houden met immigratie, zoals pro-immigratie mensenrechten NGO’s en extreemrechtse activisten tegen immigratie, hun juridisch en lobbywerk voor deportatie en hun agentschap in het Israëlische parlement. De conclusies die voortvloeien uit dit proefschrift vergroten onze kennis over de handhaving van immigratie in de bredere internationale context, waarbij migratiebeheer wordt beschouwd als een mechanisme voor het vormen van de staat, in plaats van als verbonden met een vluchtelingen crisis.

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Prologue

The dissertation you are about to read is not only the result of the fieldwork I conducted in Israel and the academic analysis and the writing that followed. In many ways, it is the product of my immersion, for over a decade, in Israel's civil society. Years of volunteering and work, in organisations, campaigns and organised protests, for a variety of NGOs, have grown into a genuine interest in studying and understanding the state's work. It is my frustration, and the mostly futile attempt to shape the state's ways which led me to the conduction of the study of 'the state' from within, or in Katherine Verdery's (2014) words, my endeavour to 'cross the lines'.

Fieldwork for the dissertation took place in Israel between December 2015 and September 2016. I surveyed various sites of state agencies and non-governmental organisations that compose the Israeli deportation regime. Interviews and participant observations took place not during the peak of the arrival of African asylum seekers into Israel, or the waves of public incitements against them. Rather, it occurred at a time when Israel's newly formed, exclusionary immigration enforcement agencies were already operating under specific circumstances. On one hand, the state was pushing immigration enforcement agencies towards a maximalist interpretation of deportation policies. On the other hand, a popular, far-right, pro-deportation campaign was pulling the state closer towards the conduction of a broad deportation campaign. Analysis of this 'race to the bottom' for the maximalist interpretation of deportation policies is the core of this dissertation.

The pace of events taking place that are relevant to this dissertation is staggering. Since I conducted my fieldwork and wrote this dissertation, the state of Israel took additional actions in order to step up its exclusionary efforts. These included, among others, attempts to expand Israel's target destinations for deportations by signing third-state agreements with African states, placing further restrictions on the labour of African asylum seekers, and the expansion of Israel's 'voluntary leave' program. They took place on the background of mass action by pro- and anti-deportation activists and their organisations.

Out of respect for the qualities of ethnographic work, and by way of resisting the activist reactionary urge, this dissertation is restricted to my personal findings, interviews and participant observation in Israel, and excludes my remote impressions of events that took place after the termination of fieldwork. As tempting as it was to update and revise my

writing on the basis of indirect impressions, I chose to keep this thesis within the realm of my personal ethnographic experience. I truly hope that, as it did for me, this dissertation will shine a new light, even if a modest one, on the state's exclusionary work.

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I wish to thank the European Research Committee (ERC) for the grant they provided to the SOLIDERE research group, and which enabled this project. My sincere thanks go to the members of the SOLIDERE research group: Ioana Vrabiescu, Katerina Rozakou, Realisa Masardi and Sara Rizzotti. Our discussions, comparative work and interest in each other's projects assisted me in understanding the unique characteristics of my own case. Annika Lindberg, while not on the SOLIDERE team, was very helpful in reflecting on my work in comparison to hers, and I am thankful for that. A special thanks goes to Roman Rozenberg for his sharp eye behind the camera and his remarkable photos accompanying this dissertation.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family. It is their love and warmth, and my children's laughter and smiles at the end of each day, which enabled me to carry on through this PhD.



Immigration Enforcement in the Settler-Colonial State

“What if, in reinventing anthropology, anthropologists were to study the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless, the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty?” — Laura Nadar (1972:285)

Mass movements of refugees and asylum seekers in recent decades have resulted in a plethora of studies focusing on the migrating populations themselves. The majority of such studies focus on the movement of refugees and asylum seekers towards Europe, or their lives after arrival in European states. Such research draws our attention to the personal stories of flight and the victims of current asylum policies and regulations, while shedding little light on the production of such policies or the state agencies and bureaucracies implementing them. This dissertation offers a contribution to an evolving body of work focusing on forces of immigration management, rather than on the migrants themselves, in an effort to shift our focus back to the state and highlight the outcomes of its forces of coercion on non-citizens. It does so via an ethnographic study of Israeli immigration enforcement. As I seek to demonstrate, this mechanism is exclusionary and effective due to its inextricable ties with its neighbouring system of military colonial control of the Palestinian population. The focus of this research is Israeli immigration enforcement agencies that aspire to maintain Israel as a Jewish-only state by isolating and excluding, physically and bureaucratically, various groups of non-Jewish and non-Israeli people from the Israeli state and society.

Israel’s relatively short history is dotted with several mass campaigns of displacements, relocations, expulsions and deportations. These originated in the establishment of the Israeli state and the creation of Palestinian refugeehood. They include the removal of international labour migrants, mostly Thai, Filipino, and Latino, and quite recently, African asylum seekers. My study of the Israeli deportation regime took place during a broad state campaign for the exclusion and deportation of African asylum seekers. Their processing by immigration enforcement state agencies is therefore the focus of this ethnographic work.

Immigration enforcement agencies and ‘street-level’ bureaucrats serve as the implementing branch of state deportation regimes. They are the ‘muscle’ of a system composed largely of legal, bureaucratic and procedural exclusionary mechanisms. This is what makes it of

interest, as it is the moment where ‘the state’ meets migrants’ eye to eye in its attempt to exclude them, generating proximity for the sake of elimination. Within such a context, what makes the Israeli deportation regime an interesting case study is the state contemporary colonial project. This project produces a rich environment for the study of the work of exclusionary mechanisms in real time.

The coming sections of this introduction will guide the reader through the relevance of the Israeli case study. It includes a brief theoretical overview of the field of deportation studies and a description of the writer’s experience accessing Israeli immigration enforcement agencies. The second part of the introduction briefly surveys the history and the emergence of the Israeli deportation regime, following central milestones such as relevant episodes from the initiation of the Jewish state, Israel as a settler-colonial society, and militarization and securitization in contemporary Israel. The focus will remain on Israel’s forces of ‘street-level’ immigration enforcement.

The framing of deportable non-Jewish populations in relation to the state’s ethno-national project of building a Jewish, Zionist ethnocracy is essential, considering the ways in which deportation aims for the creation of a utopian society by controlling entry or exit to a given territory and producing the condition of illegality (Balibar 2010). The effectiveness of Israel’s immigration enforcement, to be broadly discussed here as the result of a utopian, Jewish, Zionist vision, raises foundational questions regarding the very nature of the Israeli deportation regime.

Israel is a state in which “no legal code for naturalization exists, except for the right of return granted automatically to all newcomers of Jewish ancestry and their close relatives. Under such circumstances, it is no surprise that it circumvents the implementation of a legal system to deal with the current wave of immigrants and asylum seekers” (Kritzman-Amir and Spijkerboer 2013: 23). Since the early 2000s, some 65,000 African asylum seekers have entered Israel by foot via its border with Egypt. Fewer than 0.01% of the people appealing for asylum were granted an asylum permit. Nowadays, nearly half of those incoming asylum seekers have left Israel, and continue to leave by means of deportation or as part of a ‘voluntary return’ program. The number of new entries has dropped down to practically zero since Israel initiated an effective border barrier with the Sinai (Nathan 2017). Upon entry, African asylum seekers are labelled as ‘infiltrators’, which becomes one of the main discursive means by which their ‘illegality’, ‘otherness’, and ‘dangerousness’ were constituted, perpetuated and enhanced (Berman and Ziegler 2015).

The term “infiltrators” was coined in the early 1950s in reference to expelled Palestinians attempting to enter into the newly formed Israeli state in order to salvage their belongings or cultivate their agricultural lands (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015). The entry of African asylum seekers had prompted the revival of the term and expanded its meaning in referring to practically any non-Jew attempting to enter the state illegally, regardless of the cause of their entry. As African asylum seekers were equated with people whom Israel perceived as being the nation’s greatest security and demographic ‘threats’ (i.e., Iran and Palestinians, respectively), their subjection to legislation originally intended for combating terrorism, and which brought about unprecedented detention practices, is perhaps less surprising.

As Ann Stoler (2010) has pointed out, “the resulting chronic anxiety is at the core of any colonial order.” This is why settlers preemptively and continually attack and destroy the natives: to appease their paranoia, and to provide a sense of security from those who haunt them. The state masks its anxiety by projecting resilience, formalizing policies and producing narratives that it uses to govern and coerce.” (Stoler 2010:105) Such anxieties are projected at African asylum seekers in Israel while being rooted in the relations between the Jewish nation and the native ‘others’, the Palestinians. These are at the heart of this dissertation. Much has been written about the anxieties themselves in relation to the colonial framework in Israel (Kalir 2015) and elsewhere (Ang 1999, Papastergiadis 2004, Stoler 2010, Kalir 2014). This dissertation follows the materialisation of such anxieties into ‘street-level’ actions of enforcement, exclusion and deportation.

“To account for postcolonial relations is thus to pay attention to the workings of power in its minute details, and to the principles of assemblage which give rise to its efficacy” (Mbembe 2001:4). Such is the task undertaken in this dissertation: resisting the urge to succumb to the performative nature of various state institutions, while paying close attention to the workings of power in its minute details; that is, ethnographically exploring immigration enforcement in Israel.

Research questions

- To what extent does Israel’s deportation regime reflect the national ‘siege mentality’ (fear of losing a Jewish majority)?
- How did Israel create and intensify an ‘implementation surplus’ in immigration enforcement?

- How do local civil society organisations shape the actions of the Israeli deportation regime?

Relevance of the Israeli case of immigration enforcement

In interactions between immigration enforcement agents and illegalized migrants, “it is the state bureaucrats who can make the Israeli national context into a social fact” (Korczyn 2011:92). Immigration enforcement agents represent the state, and they have the power to imprison and deport unwelcome migrants. In the Israeli case, various deportable, non-Jewish, non-Israeli migrants “have little control over the contextualization of their narrative. They may possess a completely different context to explain their plight, but without the state apparatus to back them they have no power to force their context on others or to translate their context into actions” (Korczyn 2011:92). This is why the study of immigration enforcement agencies matters, especially within Israel where such asymmetric power relations between the state and the migrant prevails. It is an attempt to disturb the invisible and shielded social production of indifference taking place in the everyday work of immigration enforcement agencies.

Terminology has consequences, especially in cases where social and political conflicts put people’s lives at stake. I choose, as others have (Paspalanova 2008, Bauder 2014, Pace and Severance 2016) to use the term ‘illegalized migrants’ rather than ‘illegal migrants’ on the grounds that only people’s actions, and not people themselves, can be deemed illegal. Within the Israeli case, in which African asylum seekers are constructed as a national threat and subjected to recurring campaigns of vilification and exclusion, the reader’s sensitivity to such terminology becomes crucial. Within the given focus and context, what are the gaps in the existing research to which this dissertation contributes?

Gaps in deportation studies

Deportation is not a bygone event, an incident initiating or ending with the elimination of a person from a certain space. It is the visible encasing of complex, multi-layered processes and political economies that operate in mutual interdependency, or in other words, within a regime. Deportation regimes facilitate and accommodate the asymmetric dependency between a state and its unwelcomed migrants. Assuming that we accept the common framing of deportation as a

practice of immigration control, it would be constructive to examine if “the relations between the state and the immigrant minority still occur through a similar process of mutual constitution” (Feldman 2005:215).

Immigrants are illegalized by the state by several means, such as further investment in security, or the reinforcement of national narratives through otherization. They are constituted by the state no less in their elimination from the state than by their processing while in it. A performative approach toward the ‘refugee crisis’, which this dissertation follows, suggests “that ‘crisis’ is not an objective condition that threatens the viability of the nation-state per se, but rather an ascriptive category that generates the identity of the actor that does the actual ascribing. The state and the ‘crisis’—just like the ‘nation’ and the immigrant minority—are the mutually dependent products of discursively produced binary oppositions.” (Feldman 2005:217).

From policy design to the physical act of performing the expulsion, deportation can validate, serve, and fulfil multiple needs. It can be used politically as a mechanism offering political traction; economically to gain large scale labour and employment control; or socially as an internal process of re-establishing and strengthening citizenship boundaries (Bigo 2002, Schuster 2005, De Genova 2007, Gibney 2008). Often utilizing NGOs and other non-state agents in addition to multiple state institutions, countries form a continuum of laws and procedures that validate and support the state’s utilization of deportation, creating an infrastructure of modern deportation regimes (Mitchell 2006, Ellerman 2009, Koch 2014).

Deportation is “an expression of the basic policing powers of the state: its agents employ this tool to enforce laws that regulate entry across and residence within its borders, and to exclude individuals who may pose a threat to public order. And yet, the use of deportation as a measure of coercive social regulation is an intensely political and problematic undertaking. Deportation turns out to be an ideal site for exposing the intensity of the conflict that can arise when the exercise of basic public functions runs up against the most fundamental interests of the individual” (Ellerman 2009:151). It is common in existing literature to assume that within the transfer from the legislative stage to the implementation of the deportation procedures, public attention will shift from the purported benefits of regulation to its harsh costs, whether in terms of funding or violations of human rights. As this dissertation demonstrates, this is clearly not the case here. The Israeli case represents a condition in which national anxieties, and the state’s siege mentality, push the majority of

the Israeli public and the state's immigration enforcement agencies toward an expansive, maximalist interpretation of deportation policies, regardless of the social or material costs.

Researching 'street-level' immigration enforcement: Drawing the borders of the field

Literature analysing 'street-level' bureaucracies and the rationale behind their actions is either progressive, as in the works of Lipsky (2010) and Mountz (2003), or ambiguous, as within the works of Heyman (1995) and Herzfeld (1992). Progressive approaches assist in penetrating the façade of immigration enforcement in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the nature of the state in engagement with discourse regarding state performativity. Such is the case, for example, in Papastergiadis's (2004) work, which traces the roots of the Australian 'invasion complex' back to its settler-colonial origins rather than, for example, only analysing the work of the state's immigration enforcement agencies. Ambiguous approaches point at the state's failure to achieve its proclaimed goals of immigration enforcement as a result of malfunctions, the challenges of policy adaptations or failures of 'street-level' implementation. Such is the case with Ellerman's (2009) description of the failure of 'street-level' immigration inspectors in Germany and the USA to carry out deportations due to public scrutiny. Under pro-immigration public pressure, suggests Ellerman, immigration enforcement agents in Germany use their discretionary power in the sense of distancing themselves from the state, which leads to an increase in the implementation gap.

The focus of this dissertation is not the discussion of deportation as a growing global phenomenon, or policy analysis of deportation procedures, but the 'street-level' performance of deportation regimes. Lipsky (2010) draws attention to the moment of deportation execution, that of the 'street-level' implementation. By focusing on the people who individually deliver the policy to the public, Lipsky demonstrates how the policy as it is recognized lies in the discretionary hands of 'street-level' bureaucrats. This often results in an 'implementation gap', which Lipsky refers to as a condition in which 'street-level' bureaucrats, while essentially being state employees, distance themselves from the idea of the state using various strategies and at times contesting its legitimacy by opposing the policy at the moment of its implementation, using discretion as the power currency of their individual agency. I refer here to Lipsky's analysis because I wish

to draw attention to the discretionary power of 'street-level' agents in Israel's immigration enforcement. Chapters Three and Four focus on the implementation interface and provide an insight into this aspect of immigration enforcement by asking whether 'street-level' agents use discretionary power in order to distance themselves from the state, or rather to further identifying with it, minimizing the implementation gap via an expansive interpretation of deportation policies.

For several reasons, as this dissertation outlines, immigration enforcement and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are inextricable. While some of the examples I use are historical, some are contemporary and practical. First, regarding the deportation of African asylum seekers, Israel struggles to 'return' them to their countries of origin (mostly Eritrea and Sudan), while at the same time it negates in all possible ways the Palestinian's right of return to contemporary Israel. The Second example regards mandatory military service: Israel repeatedly emphasizes that mandatory conscription and defection from it are not legitimate reasons for asylum application. The main reason for seeking asylum among Eritreans fleeing to Israel is defection from mandatory military service, which results in long term imprisonment in Eritrea. In Israel, military service is mandatory at the age of 18, and defection can easily result in imprisonment as well. Such examples, and several others that will be discussed throughout the dissertation, resonate with Israel's past and present nature as a settler-colonial society and state.

The settler-colonial context: From the historical to the contemporary

Settler-colonial societies are inherently insecure, an endemic structural characteristic that is expressed through a surplus investment in securitization (Wolfe 2008). Another endemic process taking place in settler-colonial societies, and specifically in the in the case of Israeli colonialism, is the cleansing of non-native populations by various means such as exclusion, relocation and deportation (Veracini 2013). settler-colonial societies seek their own ends by extracting a logic of elimination in various forms (Morgensen 2011). One in particular that I will investigate within the Israeli context is immigration enforcement as a practice that aims to eliminate the non-native (other), with the Palestinians being the ultimate non-native.

The Israeli state, and its specific case of settler-colonialism, utilizes the security forces at its disposal, such as the military forces, to rule the civilian Palestinian population to a point in which the roles of the two

conflate. The state's military constructs everyday civil life in fields such as immigration management, just as much as ordinary citizens accept their mandatory military conscription as part of their normal life-cycle. The separation between Israel and Palestine, Israelis and settlers, and Arab citizens of Israel or in the occupied Palestinian territories is vague at best, as the two are inextricable. Half a century of Israeli occupation has blurred the border lines and moved academic research towards examining control of the population rather than control of space. It is precisely this blur which contributes to the array of practices composing the Israeli deportation regime, feeding, among other things, on the experience gained by the Israeli regulation of Arab-Palestinian lives. How do such processes take place at the micro-level? Are they the result of exclusionary ethno-national narratives? Or perhaps the result of residual colonial legislation?

I consider the relevant academic literature for this dissertation as part of the turn towards 'dark anthropology'; that is, "anthropology that focuses on the harsh dimensions of social life (power, domination, inequality and oppression)" (Ortner 2016:48). Within this dissertation, and especially in the sections concerned with academic literature, the reader's attention will be drawn to the exclusionary, depriving and restricting aspects of the state agencies described. For example, within the discussion on bureaucracy, the focus will not be on state development, bureaucrat career patterns or the improvement of the delivery of public services through micro-reforms, as exemplified in *States at Work*, an edited volume dedicated to the dynamics of African bureaucracies (Bierschenk and Olivier De Sardan 2014). Rather, the focus will be on the exclusionary, degrading and harmful aspects of bureaucracy, as described in Herzfeld's (1992) *The Social Production of Indifference*. The field of deportation research and its focus on the harsh dimensions of social life is one of the clearest examples of 'dark anthropology'.

My analysis of my fieldwork findings, which takes place within the realm of the anthropology of the state, follows Mbembe's suggestion that in order to "to account for both the mind-set and the effectiveness of postcolonial relations of power, we need to go beyond the binary categories used in standard interpretations of domination, such as resistance vs. passivity, autonomy vs. subjection, state vs. civil society, hegemony vs. counter-hegemony, totalization vs. detotalization. These oppositions are not helpful, rather, they cloud our understanding of postcolonial relations." (1992:103) In other words, they force us to succumb to the performative nature of state institutions.

Deportation regimes are embedded with various coercive powers of the state that occur at the moment of the performative encounter between the 'street-level' agent and the migrant. Such is the case with 'voluntary' return programs as well, a relatively new and costly mechanism that offers minimal use of visible force for the act of removal. As deportation costs soar, and deportation's visibility raises public tension, a common goal arises for state agents to regulate migration by incentivizing and yielding illegal migrants' cooperation, rather than opting for forceful removal (Gibney 2008). Such is the case with detention as a coercive policy for 'voluntary return'. 'Voluntary returns' are becoming the main objective of deportation regimes, often making use of both state agents and institutions such as detention centres and economic restrictions, along with NGOs and para-governmental institutions assisting such returns (Kalir 2017, Vrăbiescu 2019). What is referred to in this dissertation as the 'implementation interface' is exactly that: an amalgam of enforcement agents, NGOs and para-governmental organisations, detention centres, coercive mechanisms and 'street-level' bureaucracy. Such is the case referred to within this dissertation, in which immigration detention centres in Israel (see Figure 1) serve as coercive means for 'voluntary return'.

The analytical point taken in this dissertation, the study of the effectiveness of immigration enforcement mechanisms within the context of a settler-colonial society and state, draws attention to similar context within states such as Australia and South Africa. The particularities of the Israeli case will be highlighted and analysed within such a context, often on the basis of such references.

Framing immigration in the Israeli context

The state of Israel was founded on the basis of Jewish-only immigration and the absorption of that immigration, a beginning which generated ideological and political implications that are still relevant today. "Israelis from different political perspectives have portrayed the question of the migration balance and to the relationship between a declining migration balance and the re-emergence of the 'demographic problem' as a political, cultural, and psychological reality of enormous resonance for Jewish Israelis" (Lustick 2011:35).

A common belief among Israeli Jews is "that the world has negative behavioral intentions toward them. This belief reflects their deeply embedded siege mentality. A long history of prosecutions and hatred

Introduction

throughout the world, epitomized by the Holocaust, has grounded this siege mentality in the Jewish tradition. In the present century, the beliefs of siege mentality, playing an important role in Zionist ideology and have become part of the Israeli ethos” (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992:252). In contemporary Israel, an “exclusionary institutional approach is intimately determined by an entrenched anxiety that underlies and informs the construction of non-Jewish others as abject figures whose presence allegedly poses an existential threat to the Jewish state” (Kalir 2015:5).

“Immigration policy in Israel is based primarily on the implementation of the principle of *ius sanguinis*. In practice, this principle virtually restricts the eligibility of citizenship to members of a specific ethnic group, in this case, people of Jewish origin” (Shuval 1998, Bos 2000, Friedberg and Kfir 2005 In Gal 2008). “Similar to the German policy toward ethnic German immigrants (*Aussiedler*), Israeli immigration policy severely limits incorporation in the case of immigrants lacking proof of Jewish ancestry” (Joppke and Rosenhek 2002:301 in Gal 2008:640). “This immigration policy stems from the basic tenets of Zionism, according to which Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, the State of Israel was explicitly established to serve as a haven for Jews, and Israel is a Jewish state” (Gal 2008:640).

In Israel, immigration is seen and understood through a specific framework of Judaism and Zionism and is handled accordingly. It is seen and understood through the framework of *Alia* (Hebrew for ‘ascending’); Jewish immigration to Israel; the goal to return to the historical, biblical homeland; and as an effort to preserve the Jewish people as the ethnic religious majority in the land of Israel. I therefore handle this topic within a framework of securitization and militarization, as well as responses to national anxiety over the potential loss of majority, better known as the ‘demographic demon’ (Lustick 2011, Abulof 2014). Under such terms, the work of immigration enforcement translates into the task of homeland security. Such a take on the entire concept of immigration is the substance of the deportation surplus as it will be illustrated in this dissertation. With a starting point of an *Alia* regime rather than an immigration regime, surplus investment in immigration enforcement becomes inevitable.

Israel’s immigration police force was formed 2002. Its peculiar name, given to a force that is mainly concerned with deportation and expulsion, is an expression of what Wacquant (2004) calls the penal state: the withdrawal of the state from the economic arena, which narrows down the need to minimize the essence of its social role,



Figure 1: Locations of detention and ‘residency’ centers for African asylum seekers in Israel. Map source: TRT World.

and the expansion and strengthening of its punishing interference. Within an historic context, Israel's immigration enforcement agencies demonstrate rapid progression. Accords of previous deportation campaigns, for example those of the international (mostly Thai, Filipino and Latino) labour migrants from the early 2000s (Kemp and Raijman 2008, Kalir 2010), have become less valid in light of current policies and their implementation. Israeli immigration enforcement agencies, as this dissertation demonstrates, are constantly 'testing the waters' precisely with the 'street-level' agents and interfaces that I will describe in the coming empirical chapters.

Yet we must not forget the global dimension of deportation regimes while drawing focus to the 'street-level' sphere. The state's capacity to deport is highly dependent on international factors, such as having valid destinations for deportations available. Such is the case demonstrated in this dissertation with respect to Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers in Israel as they cannot be deported to their states of origin as third state agreements with states such as Rwanda and Uganda have collapsed. Without such agreements, cooperation and understanding between states, deportation regimes are crippled (Walters 2002). Such cooperation can be achieved in various ways, creating an international regime of deportation and exclusion that is supported by a variety of technologies and policies.

Methodology

The previous section surveyed relevant academic literature, while describing the relevant historical context. This section discusses the methodological choices I have made as well as the challenge of gaining access to the field. Fieldwork conducted in Israel's immigration enforcement agencies, as well as in immigration related civil society organisations, took place between December 2015 and September 2016. During this time, the Israeli deportation regime was almost entirely occupied with the deportation and detention of African asylum seekers arriving mostly from Eritrea and Sudan. Had I studied the Israeli deportation regime a decade ago, I would have encountered structural interest in other targeted groups such as Asian labour migrants. African asylum seekers were not a deliberate choice of focus; it was simply that the system I studied was processing this group during the period of my fieldwork.

When I first approached Israel's immigration enforcement agencies

I expected a certain level of suspicion, reluctance to cooperate, or at best, disinterest. Unfortunately, such expectations materialised. While eventually I got 'in' and gained access, it required a great effort and careful, strategic maneuvering between the different state agencies. The moment of applying for access to Israeli immigration enforcement agencies provided the state with an opportunity to study me. The state utilized this opportunity to a point where, to a certain extent, the roles of the researcher and the state conflated and I found myself to be the object of study. This took place through a series of interviews, questionings and security screenings that I underwent in order to gain access. Within the coming empirical chapters, prior to the unfolding of the ethnographic data from the various state agencies, special emphasis will be given to my experience with gaining access to the field.

Being an Israeli and a native Hebrew speaker, with over a decade of work with human rights organisations as well as with state agencies, prepared me for the challenge of accessing the state. Such experiences made me aware of the specific terminology that I should and should not use, and the general approach I should take while introducing myself to agencies such as the Israeli Ministry of Interior and the Refugee Status Determination Unit. The careful application of terminology at the early stages of applying for access can be crucial in determining whether or not it will be granted. For example, while applying for access to the Refugee Status Determination Unit, I was careful not to use the term 'refugees' while referring to African asylum seekers. At the same time, I intentionally did not use the state's terminology of 'infiltrators'. I chose 'status-less Africans', 'asylum seekers who came through the Sinai', or 'Eritreans and Sudanese subjected to enforcement',¹ which implied a certain level of negation of the state's immigration attorney's terminology, but which was not harsh enough to deter them from granting me access.

In the case of the Israeli Prison Service, which operated the Holot Immigration Detention Centre for African asylum seekers, access, as limited as it was, demanded 5-6 months of correspondence and screenings before I was allowed 'in' for interviews, discussions, or to conduct participant observations. In other cases, access was easily granted, but still involved hurdles such as an initial screening or questions from the agencies I approached regarding my political views, sources of funding for my research, or my perceptions with respect

1 הפיכא יכילהב מינדוס, מירתיירא, יניס רךד ועיגהש טלקמ ישקבמ, דמעמ ירסח מיאקירפא

to African asylum seekers in Israel. The state, as it seems, was always present, even ‘down’ at the offices of ‘street-level’ agents.

I studied the Israeli deportation regime and the state agencies of which it is composed using qualitative methods, namely in-depth interviews and participant observation. State mechanisms studied included Israel’s detention centre for African asylum seekers (operated by the Israeli Prison Service), the Refugee Status Determination Unit, the enforcement unit at the Population Immigration and Border Authority, and the ‘anti-infiltration’ committee within the Israeli parliament. Additionally, drawing upon the continuum approach (Kalir and Wissink 2016), I used similar methodological means to study the actions of immigration related civil society organisations with a focus on African asylum seekers. This aspect of fieldwork included far right, anti-immigration, pro-deportation activists as well as human rights activists and NGOs providing material and legal support to African asylum seekers.

While I was granted access to various state mechanisms, my access was restricted to a selected number of personnel that I was given permission to interview (mostly high-ranked positions or legal advisors). Another form of restriction regarded the locations I was allowed to visit. For example, in the case of immigration detention, I was only allowed to enter the Holot Immigration Detention Centre and was prevented from accessing Ketsiot and Saharonim, the two immigration prisons operated by the Israeli Prison Service. Such restrictions limited my possibilities for data collection. Had I been provided with broader access, I would have focused more on ‘street-level’ servants, such as wardens in the case of immigration detention. This dissertation is a categorical case of ‘studying up’—that is, studying power—within the context of immigration enforcement. Access, as my experience suggests, was similar to that of other scholars. Such scholars attempted to penetrate and study the shielded structures of state power, as in the cases of Nadar’s study of structures of social power (1972) and, more specifically, with Verdery’s (2014) experience of studying ‘up’ in Romania under the surveillance of the state’s secret police. Nevertheless, such limitations of access led me to collect materials from secondary written sources. These included governmental tenders’ documents regarding the selection of personnel (as in the case of ‘street-level’ immigration inspectors), and the training course manuals of immigration enforcement agents.

During my nine months of fieldwork between December 2015

and September 2016 I collected the following data. First, I undertook a total of 41 in-depth interviews, nearly all recorded and transcribed for analysis. In regard to state actors, interviews included state officials and ‘street-level’ agents at Israel’s immigration enforcement agencies. With regards to civil society, I interviewed legal representatives of asylum seekers in refugee status determination and deportation hearings as well as activists providing African asylum seekers with material support. These interviewees were usually, but not exclusively, attorneys, NGO staff and academics. Eventually, interviews and participant observation took place among anti-immigration, pro-deportation activists, their legal representatives, and lobbyists at the Israeli parliament. Interviews took place at activist’s offices and homes, and during anti-immigration, pro-deportation demonstrations and rallies.

Second, I conducted nine participant observations at the Israeli parliament. All materials from my visits to the parliamentary committee were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Additionally, I participated in eight discussions in the Israeli Supreme Court and regional courts on deportation-related discussions. Third, a variety of additional field visits took place in various offices of pro-deportation NGOs, the UNHCR Israel headquarters, additional governmental agencies, the parliamentary archive, and the Israeli state archive.²

Chapter summaries

My unfolding of the Israeli deportation regime takes place throughout the following chapters:

Chapter One, ‘Theoretical and historical review’, provides an overview of the main themes and points of analysis approached in this dissertation. Some of the central themes are deportation and deportability in Israel, siege mentality and the national anxiety of loss of Jewish majority, and militarization and securitization in Israel. Special attention is given to deportation regimes within settler colonial contexts such as South Africa and Australia.

Chapter Two, ‘Preparing the grounds for “street-level” enforcement’, is the first empirical chapter of this dissertation. It provides an internal view of the back-stage preparations of various governmental

² See Annex 1, table of interviews and table of field visits.

agencies prior to the initiation of enforcement campaigns. This chapter's ethnography offers insights into parliamentary rationalization and decision-making processes in regards to illegalized migration, as well as a focus on the selection, recruitment and training of 'street-level' immigration enforcement staff, and the effective design of the organisational structuring of Israel's immigration enforcement agencies.

Chapter Three, "Street-level" agents and the everyday life of immigration enforcement, focuses on the unleashing of forces of coercion and implementation. It discusses the effects of the creation of the 'anti-infiltration' barrier on immigration enforcement and provides a unique, inside view of the conduct of refugee status determination interviews. I also demonstrate the rationalization behind the operation of the Holot Immigration Detention Centre.

Chapter Four, 'Exporting Israeli technologies of enforcement', discusses deportation technologies and policies and their export. It highlights the 'team spirit' behind the successful attempts to export Israeli technologies of immigration enforcement. The process has broadened the cooperation of immigration enforcement agencies by creating international parallels, and resulting in the internationalization and normalization of disproportionate deportation policies. Following this chapter, a shift in this dissertation's focus takes place and my ethnographic work takes aim at non-governmental organisations focusing on illegalized immigration from both sides of the deportation continuum:

Chapter Five, 'The grassroots perpetrators of the Israeli deportation regime', highlights the role of pro-deportation, anti-immigration activism in shaping the Israeli deportation regime. It does so through ethnographic analysis of far right, anti-immigration, Jewish, Zionist activism in Israel, illustrating the boundaries of the Israeli deportation continuum. The focus of this chapter is the agency that such pro-deportation activists have within the Israeli parliament, as well as among governmental agencies.

Chapter Six, 'Between a rock and a hard place: Israeli pro-immigration organisations', discusses the work of human rights organisations and pro-immigration activists, and their attempts to shape immigration enforcement policies and their implementation.

It unfolds the consequences of legislating the surveillance of human rights organisations and discusses the activists' motivations for seeking social change in the field of pro-immigration activism.

Chapter Seven, 'Conclusion', analyses the findings resulting from my ethnographic work. The concluding chapter shows how my analysis contributes to existing research in line with the existing gaps in deportation research, and marks the way forward to future research.

Theoretical and Historical Review

“There is a daytime Israel and a night-time Israel. The first is self-confident, pushy and passionate, like other Mediterranean lands. It is hedonistic, materialistic and almost arrogant. During the night-time, people are terrified, people are filled with existential dreads.” — Amos Oz³

Introduction

In the wake of the refugee ‘crisis’ in Europe, a broad array of writing appeared discussing the ways in which the state controls irregular migration. Two general tendencies appear in this body of work. The first of these focuses on analysis of the global challenges of migration control, while paying little or no attention to specific state responses (Andreas and Snyder 2000, Castles 2004, Feldman 2011, Coutin 2015). Such analysis of global migration control fails to consider the responses of individual countries and their domestic immigration and coercion mechanisms. The second tendency is to examine specific state actions, while leaving their relation to global trends out of the study. Such is the case with respect to analysis of the broad legislative arena, which has resulted in turning a blind eye to the constraints on policy implementation (Heyman 1995, De Genova 2002, Andreas 2003, De Genova, and Peutz 2010). “On matters of immigration control, the gap between the law and its implementation is colossal” (Ellerman 2009:157). As a result, migration control literature exhibits a set of explanatory weaknesses.

In resonance with research focusing on state performativity and the state effect, such as appears in the work of Abrams (1977) and Mitchell (1990, 1991), my study of irregular migration control and coercive migration policies focuses on the actions of individuals and the consequences of their actions, rather than analysing state actions on a policy level. The study of ‘street-level’ politics of the Israeli deportation regime will take place at the final, and arguably most crucial, policy stage: that of ‘street-level’ implementation. Specifically, I examine the relatively high capacity of the implementation interface to carry out removals by force or by coercion for ‘voluntary’ departure, which results in an implementation surplus. By studying ‘street-level’ actors upon whose shoulders lies the task of implementation, this dissertation provides a test case for a theoretical framework that links together two inextricable foundations of the anthropology of the state: state capacity

3 Originally in German. Issue 9/2017 (February 25, 2017) of DER SPIEGEL

and state performativity.

This dissertation's ethnographic chapters shed light on Israel's deterring mechanisms of immigration enforcement at a specific moment in time, during which such mechanisms directed the majority of their resources and efforts towards one specific community of non-Jewish, non-Israeli people in Israel: African asylum seekers. The reader will notice that a significant portion of the previous chapter (the introduction) and this one is dedicated to surveying the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, along with various aspects of Palestinians daily life, from both sides of the green line. As the literature review has indicated, and which the ethnography will demonstrate, the Israeli occupation is inextricable from daily life in Israel, the work of governmental agencies in general, and migration enforcement specifically. Various practical aspects will be presents here as well, such as the overlap between military training and the training of migration enforcement field inspectors. The ties between the Israeli occupation and the state's work are rooted in a culture of militarisation and securitisation. This dissertation wishes to portray these aspects to the reader to enable a deep understanding of the logic behind the actions of the Israeli immigration enforcement agencies. Immigration enforcement in general, and deportation in particular, have comprised a growing body of academic research, which I will survey in the coming sections with a focus on the Israeli case.

Current streams in deportation research

“The new field of deportation studies emerged at the intersection of immigration and security studies in the early 2000s. Focusing on deportation raises new questions about migration and enforcement tactics, but reproduces assumptions about the nature of movement and the centrality of the state in enforcement efforts” (Coutin 2015:671). Current debates on deportation in the academic arena evolve around several approaches, each with its relevant literature and specific critical points. I will define these approaches in order to position my research in relation to them. I will then identify the existing cavities in current deportation studies into which my literary contribution will fit.

Shifting focus from deportation to the condition of deportability highlights how the latter, as a method of capitalism, produces a ‘revolving door effect’ that provides the economy with cheap labour (De Genova 2010). In terms of labour migrants in Israel, highlighting

the dependence of the Israeli economy on cheap, flexible, exploitable labour is a promising approach. However, utilizing this approach would also necessitate a sharper analytical distinction between migrant workers and African asylum seekers, and would not indicate how the two are framed as deportable subjects using the same rhetoric of an existential threat. For example, Coutin (2015: 678) argues that:

“...in the USA, it was almost impossible both physically and politically to remove some 12 million unauthorised immigrants living in the country, deportation policies could not be attributed to this goal. Rather, De Genova contends, deportation produces deportability, that is, unauthorized migrants’ awareness that they could be deported, an awareness that reduces unauthorised workers capacity to challenge exploitative labour conditions.”

Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005), drawing on the work of Carl Schmidt, observes that deportation, detention and additional related practices are the production of bare life that enables the sovereign by maintaining a permanent state of exception (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2004). While Agamben's insight that the sovereign is he who decides on the exception, other ‘Agambenian’ approaches have been criticized for being too static, totalizing and even apocalyptic, and for overlooking the political subjectivity of migrants (Walters 2002, Mezzadra 2011). The ‘Agambenian’ approach stands in contrast to a different understanding of deportation, in which “understanding of deportation-as-move, implies that deportation is a discrete event, directs attention towards the deportee as the person who moves and highlights the significance of national borders in shaping subjectivity and mobility” (Coutin 2015: 677).

This critical view approaches deportation and detention as elements of a biopolitical apparatus that consists of policy makers and agents of civil society (Feldman 2011). The apparatus approach examines the deportation regime as one in which power and agency are widely distributed. Attending to legal technicalities “denaturalizes immigration categories, making it clear that rather than being intrinsically unauthorised, irregular, undocumented or illegal, people are constituted as such through a process of illegalisation” (Coutin 2015: 676).

This research contributes to the field of deportation studies by describing a state's deportation regime in its entirety, at a particular point in time. Both approaches—a utilitarian one relating to the economic aspects of deportation, and another that involves observing deportation as a biopolitical apparatus—will be shown to exist within

a single, integrated Israeli deportation regime. Both approaches are lacking in the sense that they fail to highlight the mutual constituency existing between deportees and the deportation mechanisms. I will highlight this asymmetric dependency by analysing such relations at the micro level, observing the role of 'street-level' agents and bureaucrats, the 'face' of the regime at the site of the encounter.

Deportation as a practice, as many have suggested (see Figure 2), is not a unitary action that is executed for a single purpose. The Israeli deportation regime is motivated by a variety of motives, such as regulating the labour market by assuring the availability of a cheap, exploitable international labour force through the control and limitation of work permits for West Bank Palestinians and visas for international labour migrants. This is the case with the mass campaign for the deportation of Thai, Filipino and Latino labour migrants taking place in Israel in the mid-2000s (Kemp and Reichman 2008, Kalir 2010). Deportation can be a performative act of deterrence aimed at non-Jewish (Arab) citizens of the Israeli state in order to preserve existing power structures within the Israeli society: that is, Jewish hegemony and the Israeli ethnocracy (Yiftachel 2006). As a political mechanism, deportation can be political futile when it aims to divert political discussion, whether parliamentary or public, to and from certain topics. Such a case will be demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, in my ethnography of the 'anti-infiltration' committee in the Israeli parliament. But as a political mechanism, it may be gazing outward just as much as it projects policies inward. Deportation of non-Jewish, non-Israeli people may serve as a performative act, serving the goal of sustaining Israel's importation regime toward international Jewry by enhancing Israel's pull factor towards Western diaspora Jews. Deportation is thus used as a sanitary tool for maintaining and preserving Israel as a Jewish, Zionist, and broadly white state. This dissertation is concerned with the use of deportation as means for the facilitation of internal expansion, boosting the state apparatus in the form of legal and bureaucratic institutions and deepening the state's bio-political control. As this dissertation will demonstrate, such a process of internal expansion is inextricable from Israel's colonial expansion in the Palestinian territories.

Governance in Israel and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank

Willen (2010) contends that we cannot make sense of the Israeli government's aggressive deportation agenda without situating it

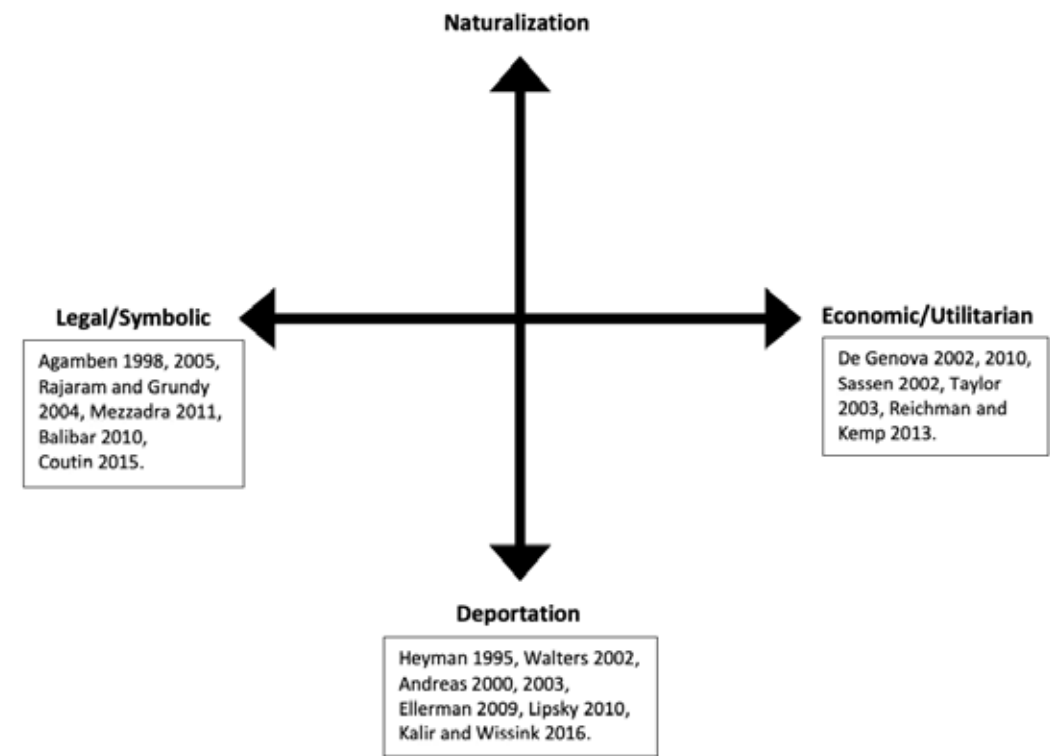


Figure 1: Streams in deportation research. A significant part of deportation studies is dedicated to motivations and effects of the practice. This dissertation wishes to focus on the practice itself.



Figure 2: The journey across the Sinai Peninsula is perilous, spanning over a thousand miles. For many Eritrean and Sudanese migrants who end up in Israel, the journey begins at a UN camp in Kassala, near the Sudanese border. It winds through Egypt, before continuing on through the lawless Sinai. Map source: TRT World.

within the broader biopolitical framework through which otherness is articulated and given expression in Israel. Willen argues that in order to make sense of Israel's mass periodical deportation campaigns it is necessary to consider how the Israeli state imagines and treats not only new populations of foreign others, but also another group of non-citizens who are typically constructed within the Israeli public imagination as its indigenous 'real others': Palestinians. The Israeli state's ways of treating Palestinians, both in Israel and in the Palestinian territories, has provided elements of an unwritten governmental template for the deportation campaigns that target other 'others'.

The Israeli occupation, initiated in 1967 with no sign of termination on the horizon, is often portrayed as a case of settler-colonialism that bares the dire consequences of brutal violations of human rights. Assuming that this is the case, it would be appropriate for this dissertation to focus on settler-colonialism as a generator of 'street-level' coercive powers of exclusion, rather than to describe the meta-structure of the Israeli colonialism as that of a clash between settler colonizers and indigenous inhabitants, or the violations of human rights that it brings. Analysis of the Israeli expertise in projecting coercive policies and subordinating unwelcomed populations can contribute to a better understanding of the Israeli deportation regime. In the Palestinian case, coercive powers are projected through a massive performative bureaucratic apparatus of a civil administration of the occupied Palestinian population (Berda 2012). This bureaucratic system and its 'street-level' agents monitor and control nearly every aspect of daily Palestinian lives. This includes monitoring of the registry of births and deaths, maintaining control of labour force through a system of work permits, using regional military headquarters to monitor residency and the changing of addresses within the occupied Palestinian territories, control over departure and entry permits from abroad or to and from Israel, and notifying the Israeli authorities about Palestinians' political affiliation. Over the past few decades, the Israeli documentation and surveillance system has begun using biometric technologies and a biometric database known as 'the smart card'. In recent years, the use of the smart card was expanded and currently includes labour migrants and African asylum seekers.

The ability of the Israeli colonial regime to exert coercive powers relies on a detailed knowledge of the population onto which they are projected. This model of coercion through ownership of knowledge, and the power of knowing and gathering knowledge, is commonly used nowadays with respect to the deportation of African asylum seekers.

One example regards procedures such as the ‘Gedera-Hedera’ order,⁴ which confines asylum seekers’ residence to certain areas of the state. This has been practiced on the Palestinian population in various ways. Such orders can only be implemented if the whereabouts of an asylum seeker is registered by a bureaucratic system that issues such orders and naturalizes them in various state and economic systems. There must also exist ‘street-level’ enforcement to conduct arrests in cases of violations, and a punitive system in the form of detention and deportation orders held against the violators. Such mechanisms, harmonized in their mutual constituency, construct the very essence of the effectivity of the Israeli deportation regime, and are deeply rooted in the Israeli colonial rule of the Palestinian territories.

Within the Israeli case, the temporal enabling of the mixing of certain populations is more interesting than their labelling as deportable. In the global context, “cosmopolitan mixing is seen to directly drive economic creativity within high-technology capitalism. At the same time, though, such celebrations systematically ignore how the North’s global cities so often act as economic or ecological parasites on the human or natural resources of the South. Even less recognized are the ways they act as the main sites for controlling, financing and orchestrating geographies of imperial or neo-imperial control over the developing world that are at the heart of the extension of neoliberal capitalism” (Graham 2012).

Selective totalitarianism and the ethnocratic state

During my fieldwork in Israel I would occasionally make my way from Tel Aviv’s southern neighbourhoods, in which the majority of the African asylum seekers reside, to ‘the white city’, the liberal, Western Central and North Tel Aviv. To understand this journey, I found Azoulay and Ophir’s (2008) concept of ‘selective totalitarianism’ useful. While the Israeli society is apparently functioning as a democracy, there are pockets of populations among it living under a totalitarian regime. In their book, Azoulay and Ophir describe the Israeli regime as a dual, split form of governance in which military occupation and democratic rule exist side by side but are not assimilated into each other.

Yet more can be done theoretically with the concept of ‘selective totalitarianism’, especially in relation to other ‘othered’ non-Israeli, non-Jewish populations that are not Palestinian. There are several ways in which we can understand and apply the concept of selective

totalitarianism on the Israeli deportation regime. First, in the sense of totalitarian pockets in the government within a democratic state, we can examine how totalitarian practices are projected at selected populations. The coming empirical chapters will lead the reader between various sites of immigration enforcement agencies and their proxies.

One of the sites is the ‘anti-infiltration’ governmental committee at the Israeli parliament, in which immigration enforcement and deportation are discussed in relation to African asylum seekers. Another way to understand the term ‘selective totalitarianism’ would be in the spatial sense of geographic pockets, such as the Holot Immigration Detention Centre for African asylum seekers, which I also visited during my fieldwork. The last interpretation of selective totalitarianism would be in the Foucauldian sense, described in the work of Agamben in terms of ‘bio-power’ and ‘bare life’ (Agamben 1998), which is similar to scholars’ understanding of the condition of deportability (De Genova 2002, 2007).

Seeing these three aspects of selective totalitarianism as overlapping, and keeping them in mind while approaching my ethnographic material, it should be noted that all three rely on an acceptance of such forms of totalitarianism by the majority of the Israeli society. This dissertation argues that such civil complicity and passive cooperation with the state’s deportation regime are carried out due to the militaristic character of the Israeli society. Within such a specific context of settler-colonialism with totalitarian aspects, we should pay attention to the ways in which non-Jewish, non-Israeli populations are constructed via discursive and bureaucratic means.

Refugees, asylum seekers or African infiltrators?

In referring to African asylum seekers or other non-Jewish, non-Israeli populations in Israel, I choose to use the term ‘illegalised’. I do so as this term “draws attention to the institutional and political processes rendering people illegal. The use of this term constitutes a discursive strategy to engage the negative consequences of the term ‘illegal immigrant’ and its implied meanings and corresponding emotional responses, which can influence legal decisions, policies, and legislation, as well as relations between affected migrants and civic society” (Bauder 2014:327).

Israeli public discourse is “concerned with the different categories of African refugees; Darfurians, asylum seekers, infiltrators, ‘just Sudanese’, Eritreans and Africans are but a few of the definitions used” (Gold 2008:107). The most commonly used term is ‘infiltrators’. It is not only

⁴ <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5074906>

the term used in Hebrew, due to a series of public appearances by Israeli officials citing the term, but is also the language of the law. Upon entry, African asylum seekers are labelled as ‘infiltrators’, and this has become one of the main discursive means by which their ‘illegality’, ‘otherness’, and ‘dangerousness’ are constituted, perpetuated, and enhanced.

The term ‘infiltrators’ was coined in the early 1950s in reference to expelled Palestinians attempting to enter into the newly formed Israeli state in order to salvage their belongings or cultivate their agricultural lands (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015). The entry of African asylum seekers prompted the revival of the term and expanded its meaning to refer to practically any non-Jew attempting to enter the state illegally, regardless of the cause. As African asylum seekers were equated with Israel’s worst perceived security and demographic ‘threats’ (i.e., Iranians and Palestinians, respectively), their subjection to legislation that was originally intended for combating terrorism led, unsurprisingly, to unprecedented detention practices.

The term ‘infiltrators’ did much more than shed a negative light on African asylum seekers. It ignited the process of re-activating the work of the same state mechanisms who faced the original ‘infiltrators’, and progressed various exclusionary state actions by immigration enforcement agencies. While the term ‘infiltrators’ re-emerged in Israeli public discourse regarding African asylum seekers since it was originally coined in the early 1950s, there have since been other developments in the terminology and legislation of asylum in Israel.

Immigration enforcement and structural violence

Structural violence is described by Anthropologists in terms of “both chronic, historically-entrenched political economic oppression and social inequality and mechanisms by which social forces ranging from poverty to racism become embodied as individual experience” (Farmer 2009:11). It is thus part of a “violence continuum that ranges from the chronic, historically embedded structural violence whose visibility is obscured by globalized hegemonies, to symbolic violence and routinized everyday violence, to direct physical assault.” (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004a:317, 2004b:7). For those defined as ‘illegal’ migrants in Israel, multiple forms of violence converged when the Israeli state began channeling its migration anxieties into an expensive, wide-scale mass deportation campaign in mid-2002. Designed to operate ‘like a military campaign’ and animated by a sophisticated

regime of governmentality, the operation has relied on a constellation of techniques ranging from intimidation and coercion to the persistent threat, and at times the material reality, of physical violence and police brutality (Willen 2007). Such a mechanism of ‘street-level’ bureaucracy and enforcement, projected at African asylum seekers, is the core of this dissertation. Prior to my approach to the field, I observed similar specific case studies of immigration enforcement and border control agencies in order to develop my methodology.

Bureaucracies are hierarchical organisations designed to shape the production of thoughts in the practice of work. ‘Street-level’ bureaucrats attempt to carry out power decisions over non-bureaucratic populations. The assumption of a control bureaucracy is that the subject population is subordinate, the recipient of actions (Heyman 1995). Within the scope of this research, this is strongly the case, as the ‘clients’ of these ‘street-level’ bureaucrats are under the constant risk of deportation. At best, ‘street-level’ bureaucrats invent “benign modes of mass processing that more or less permit them to deal with the public fairly, appropriately and successfully. At worst, they give into favouritism, stereotyping and routinizing—all which serve private or agency purposes” (Lipsky 1983:xii).

State logic usually seeks to render eternal and inviolable certain principles of national sovereignty that gloss over the ever-labile issue of who ‘we’ are. This is what nationalist essentialism is all about. But such essentialism is no less a creation of stereotyping that the nation-state itself. Attacking ‘the state’ and ‘bureaucracy’ is a tactic of social life, not an analytical strategy. Ethnographically, it would lead us to ignore the multiplicity of sins covered by the monolithic stereotypes of ‘the bureaucracy’ and ‘the state’ (Herzfeld 1992). “Bureaucrats put a face of unemotional neutrality on their every action. It is only when one makes a conscious effort to contrast their practices with those of everyday sociality that the systematic oddity of what they do begins to emerge with clarity” (Herzfeld 1992:46)

In a classic definition, Anderson et al. (2014: 21) describes deportation as “an exercise of state authority that aims definitively to end the relationship of responsibility between the state and the non-citizen by forcing the noncitizen beyond the sphere of the state’s authority.” This definition explicates the administrative option of the state to use deportation as a remedy to social harm. Among the principal challenges faced by deportation bureaucrats are the political gains and costs associated with ‘street-level’ enforcement. To the extent that removal imposes severe costs on migrants and asylum seekers, it

is likely to be marked by high levels of conflict, or as this dissertation wishes to demonstrate, socio-political support. The politically problematic nature of deportation has been poignantly articulated by Gibney (2008: 152): “Deportation is a ‘cruel power’, one that sometimes seems incompatible with the modern liberal state based on respect for human rights. Deportation tears individuals from families and cruelly uproots people from communities where they may have lived for many years, sometimes banishing them to places where they have few ties or connections. It requires the coercive hand of the state on what are often extremely vulnerable men, women and, perhaps most controversially of all, children. The coercion required for deportation may be contested in the courts or on the street. Grassroots campaigns can turn local schools, neighbourhoods and churches into formidable, if unlikely, sites of resistance and expulsion”.

According to Ellerman “in liberal democracies, the mass expulsion of millions of immigrants does not constitute a feasible policy option, given that the political precariousness of deportation holds even for individual cases” (Ellerman 2009:122). Her empirical work on deportation in Germany and the United States demonstrates that the forced removal of even a single family from their local community can become a lightning rod for highly visible anti-enforcement drives that have far-reaching consequences for ‘street-level’ bureaucrats. The empirical data presented in the following ethnographic chapters does not align with Ellerman’s description and analysis. I will demonstrate how, in the Israeli case, government backing for campaigns of vilification against African asylum seekers, and broad public and civil society support for deportations in Israel, illustrate the opposite: in a reality where the political costs of not deporting, or not deporting at a satisfying rate, leads to public pressure calling for expansive implementation of deportation policies.

The implementation surplus and the Israeli occupation

A wide range of studies is concerned with the modes and practices of military occupation in our time. The Israeli occupation of Palestine is one of the few remnants of such a reality in developed nations. As a result, many studies of military occupation and its daily effects on the life of the civilian population focus on the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and particularly the West Bank. In their article “juxtaposing the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories with colonial bureaucratic history”, Berda and Shenhav (2009:1) discuss

the colonial foundations of the state of exception in Israel. According to them, the Israeli permit regime conducted in the West Bank is a bureaucratic apparatus entirely separate from the state bureaucracy within Israel itself. The decrees were founded on a racial distinction in that they pertain to Palestinians alone and do not include Jews, whose settlements in the Occupied Territories has been judged to be illegal under international law. Laws and decrees, and their implementation and fundamental civil rights, differ greatly between Jews and Arab-Palestinians, even when they commit the same offences in the same territory (Ben-Naftali, Gross and Michaeli 2005).

Berda (2012) focuses organisational mechanisms, describing how Israeli occupation works administratively by using military power, space management, time control and knowledge management. Berda suggests that separation transformed the rulers’ perspective from that of managing a civilian population to that of managing a hostile population. Control of Palestinian lives in the West Bank through surveillance and monitoring tools intensified Israeli supervision of daily Palestinian lives. In fact, although the mode of control had changed from physical presence to bureaucratic supervision, it only became more powerful. Another conclusion from Berda’s book is that the ostensible temporariness of the occupation not only legitimizes it politically and paradoxically ensures its perpetuation, but is also characterized by frequent changes, contradictory orders and administrative acts that cancel each other out. All these are typical of the colonial bureaucracy and remain invisible to those who examine the occupation’s organisational apparatus according to the model of a classical bureaucracy. In the coming empirical chapters, the resonance of such administrative acts and means of bureaucratic control will be made visible through ethnography of Israel’s immigration enforcement agencies.

In *Hollow Land*, Eyal Weizman (2007) offers a spatial analysis of Israeli occupation. Among other things, Weizman shows how the occupation uses spatial planning for its own ends. He argues that the study, planning and control of built areas are used by the occupying power as military measures applied against their civilian inhabitants. He rejects the definition of the regime in the OPT as colonial, and instead argues that the OPT space is characterized by a multiplicity of actors with diverse interests in different arenas. This conceptualization is then used to explain the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the Separation Wall in the West Bank as a move from a form of control relying mainly on Israeli territorial presence in the OPT, that is, control ‘from within’, to control ‘from outside’—one which reorganises

space using checkpoints, tactical incursions, drones and bombers. We must therefore distinguish between changes in individual dimensions and certainty and stability on the structural level. What could be interpreted as a variety of changes and adjustments to realities on the ground is often the extension of a stable and uniform policy by the regime. Such historic, colonial, legal and spatial factors resonate with Israel's contemporary immigration enforcement, and with the forms in which the state designs its detention centres for irregularized migrants or their bureaucratic apparatus. But without the historical context for such state actions, we are at the risk of remaining only with the 'how', without uncovering the 'why'.

Citizenship in Israel

In addition to typical anxieties about the growing arrival of irregularized migrants, which have become especially prominent in European and North American political discourse of late, Israel's reluctance is further intensified by its ethno-nationally defined 'migration regime', governed by a basic principle of explicit and formal demarcation between Jews and non-Jews (Rosenhek 2000). Formal, ratified migration to Israel hinges upon proven Jewish descent, a close familial relationship to someone Jewish, or conversion to the Jewish religion via state-approved channels. Given the pre-eminence of Jewishness as a criterion for citizenship eligibility, it is virtually impossible for non-Jews from Moldova or the Philippines, Columbia or Ghana, or their Israeli-born offspring, to become Israeli citizens (Kemp 2004, Willen 2007, Kalir 2010). Israeli citizenship can only be acquired according to the law of return. The law, passed in 1950, grants exclusive rights for Jewish people to immigrate to Israel, but denies Palestinian refugees the right to return (Rabinowitz 2010). The law then solidifies the idea that immigration to Israel stands for Jewish immigration to Israel. The only exception to this privilege exists in cases where the state viewed an individual as a danger to the health and security of the state or as a threat to the public peace.

The law of return does not exist as a symbolic policy representing only Jewish idealism. During years of brutal persecution from the Third Reich, Jews attempting to escape Nazi control found the 'doors of all countries of refuge closed to them, including the gates to Palestine, which the British closed'. The Law assured world Jewry that 'at least one country's gates would be perpetually open', thus "embodying the Zionist ideology upon which the state was formed by offering 'a home to any Jew who [felt]

impelled by external pressures or spiritual urge to make his home in Israel'. The Law of Return, in its basic form, is still in effect. It presently serves as the legal basis for Israel's policy of encouraging immigration from Western nations, the republics of the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and any other country that Jews feel compelled to leave because of political or economic hardship. Application of the Law, however, has changed significantly over the past forty years, causing much controversy" (Dick 1993:101).

In 1952, the Law of Entry⁵ set out the parameters of non-Jewish immigrants entering the country. The modern 'anti-infiltration' law (not allowing the state to recognise the status, and therefore to accept, non-Jewish refugees and asylum seekers), originally passed in 1954, is the source of today's legislation instrumentalized to criminalize asylum seekers. The purpose of the 'anti-infiltration' law was to deny people who have resided in 'enemy states' entry into Israel, most notably Palestinians.

A common claim within research combining analysis of nationality, identity and territory is that following long periods in which certain groups control a territory and bind it with multiple narratives, a paradigm shift occurs and the group no longer defines the territory, but it is the territory which defines the group (Herb 1999). The nation state attempts to mark its territory not only with a cartographic border, but with a cultural border as well. Within the tension between these border makings, struggles over cultural and political hegemony evolve in which the state attempts to achieve supremacy by policing the identities of its citizens (Kemp 2004).

Within such a specific context, historical background and perception of an immigration regime, a unique terminology had evolved concerning various aspects of citizenship and status. I will hereby explain some of the terms so that I can refer to them in the empirical chapters:

Infiltrator	The legal and common public form in which African asylum seeker are recognised.
Israeli citizen	Jewish by birth or Alia. Muslim or Christian by birth but not by immigration as the law of return stands for Jews only.
Tsabar	A romantic term, originating in the state's early days, referring to an authentic Israeli Jew born, raised and living in Israel.
Assimilation	Cultural and ethnic, but mainly religious, assimilation of Jews in their surrounding culture. Can be done by marriage with a Goy. Jewish leaders have repeatedly referred to the assimilation of Jews as 'the silent holocaust'.
Goy	Any person who is not Jewish, regardless of their religion.

5 https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law01/189_003.htm

Migrant	A nearly non-existent category within contemporary Israeli discourse.
Jew	According to the Halacha (traditional Jewish law), a son of a Jewish mother, or a person who acquired a Jewish status.
Giur	Acquired Judaism. Conversion to the Jewish religion via state and Rabbinical institution-approved channels, followed by the legal acquiring of Israeli citizenship.
Labor migrant	Non-Jewish, temporary, and categorical (Thai for agriculture, Chinese for construction work, etc.)
Sojourner	Used mostly in the context of Palestinians residing in Israel, specifically within the parameters of East Jerusalem.
Refugee	Seldomly used in Israel in relation to non-Jews. Mostly connotated in relation to the Jewish flight of WWII.
Asylum seeker	A term rarely used in Israel. The common term used in legal and popular reference to asylum seekers is 'infiltrators'.
Diaspora Jew	A Jew residing outside of Israel, eligible to become an 'Ole'.
Ole	(Ascending, positive connotation) A Jew immigrating to Israel under the power of the law of return.
Yored	(Descending, negative connotation) A Jewish citizen of Israel emigrating permanently, or for a long period of time, away from the state.
Illegal resident	A labour migrant, tourist, failed asylum seeker or sojourner, violating their categorical visa terms, non-Jewish, deportable.
Temporary resident	A non-Jew who is not an Israeli citizen, residing legally in Israel for a long period. A temporary resident is eligible for some social rights but cannot vote or become a full citizen.

Immigration enforcement and the settler-colonial state: Drawing on insights from Australia and South Africa

In the early 2000s, South African Department of Home Affairs officials have directed the implementation of an internal control policy in opposition to border control. The core tenet of this policy was “to shift administrative and policy emphasis from border control to community and workplace inspection. The new policy was set to focus enforcement activities on the places where undocumented migrants worked, interacted with governing agencies, and sought refuge and resources, rather than the places they originated from and moved through” (Vigneswaran 2008:784). A rationale of deterrence, similar to the one in Israel that this dissertation presents, underpinned this approach in the South African case: “The intention was to transform the host environment into a place where undocumented migrants

would feel unwelcome, and thereby be encouraged to return home, or better yet, to not come at all” (Vigneswaran 2008:784). In the words of Israel’s former Minister of Interior,⁶ an ultra-orthodox Jew and an architect of the Israeli deportation regime:

“We will make the lives of infiltrators bitter until they leave.”

The settler-colonial framework casts a shadow on contemporary deportation regimes. “In the South African case, the fact that immigration enforcement institutions were designed for Apartheid era purposes of segregation and racial domination supported a policy of ‘internal’ over ‘external’ controls” (Vigneswaran 2008:785). I will be further using the term ‘external control’ in the sense of blocking any further entry of illegalized migrants, for example by building border barriers. The term ‘internal control’ will refer to mechanisms such as immigration detention, exclusion from labour market or surveillance, and the complicity of citizens in enforcement, all coercing illegalized migrants to leave the state and the settler-colonial ‘template’ upon which such a division is laid.

Nowadays, South African immigration enforcement bureaucracy “still functions in accordance with institutional rules laid down during the apartheid era, which were designed to achieve a significantly different form of control” (Mamdani 1996 in Vigneswaran 2008:790). This bureaucratic system was based on “the legal foundations of a political divide between a privileged white citizenry and a disenfranchised black subject class. Crucially, while South Africa possessed specific immigration control laws and policies, it did not possess an administrative apparatus that was designed for immigration control. Instead, responsibility was divided among a number of different institutions that were simultaneously responsible for different aspects of immigration enforcement” (Posel 1999 in Vigneswaran 2008:795). Here as well, the resemblance to the Israeli case is striking. One of the main findings of this dissertation, demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, is the division of immigration enforcement responsibilities among a great variety of state agencies.

Another settler-colonial project resembles the Israeli case of being a prolific deporter and prisoner of unwelcomed migrants. In a paper tracing back the motivations for contemporary immigration enforcement in Australia, Papastergiadis (2004) discusses the Australian ‘invasion complex’. In Australia, as in Israel, dealing with the arrival of

⁶ Eli Yishay, 29 August, 2012, all Israeli news channels

asylum seekers “cannot be explained in purely geo-political or economic terms. The number of asylum seekers in Australia is tiny in the global context.” (Papastergiadis 2004:10). “The adoption of a mandatory detention system and the exercise of draconian military actions not only violate human rights as enshrined in international law but, as it has been discovered in the USA, lack credibility as either a deterrent or as a cost saving measure” (McMaster 2001:115 in Papastergiadis 2004:10). “Given that there are no realistic threats of an invasion, the government’s discriminatory attitude towards refugees warrants further examination in terms of the repressions that are involved in the cultural unconscious. The extreme effort that was mobilized to keep refugees out of Australia corresponds to the resistance against the return of an unconscious fear that we would rather repress.” (Papastergiadis 2004:10). Under such circumstances, suggests Papastergiadis (2004:11), the main achievement of Australian leadership “was not to democratize the national imaginary but to contain the debate on cultural hegemony by limiting the agency of indigenous people and immigrants, and drawing out the white anxieties over land tenure and territorial invasion”. Papastergiadis (2004:11)

The comparative view on immigration enforcement within settler-colonial societies is fruitful as it points at local contexts, anxieties and ethno-national mentalities as resources for the analysis and understanding the exclusion of the ‘other’. “As Ang has argued, the racial anxiety of invasion is inexorably linked to guilt over spatial appropriation”. (Ang 1999:191 in Papastergiadis 2004:12) Within the Israeli case, however such spatial appropriation is not only rooted within the state’s colonial past and present, but also within the specific context in which immigration is perceived.

Positioning Israel among other state deportation regimes: Between the exceptional and the mundane

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of the relations between the Israeli deportation regime and ethno-national anxieties and mentalities, this dissertation positions the Israeli deportation regime among some of its international parallels. Such a positioning contributes to shifting our gaze to the central motivations behind the work of Israel’s immigration enforcement agencies. The comparative view on the Israeli deportation regime was carefully framed in relation to the foundations on which Israeli immigration enforcement stands, including historic and organisational aspects. What kind of image

is drawn when the Israeli deportation regime is positioned among international parallels?

Observing the work of refugee status determination units and deportation agents in Germany and the USA (Ellerman 2009) in comparison to similar units in Israel is drawing the Israeli unit in an exceptional, excessive light. It portrays the work of Israeli refugee status ‘interrogators’ as harsh and arbitrary in comparison to the ‘softer’ German and USA cases. Such an image was drawn by paying attention to the gap between the minimal acceptance rates of the Israeli refugee status determination unit and its German parallels or the military-like training of Israeli ‘street-level’ immigration enforcement agents (see Chapter Three). Some of the work methods, including the methodology of the interviewers and their self-perception as interrogators, portray the unit as being like a military intelligence-gathering one that is concerned with homeland security rather than determining refugee status, which would imply a regime of protection.

Another comparison, based on border technologies and border control, portrays the Israeli case as robust and effective. The newly formed barrier, hermetically sealing the southern border with the Sinai, appears as exceptional when compared to the ‘revolving door’ effect at the US-Mexico border (Andreas 2009). While Andreas describes a dynamic of ‘border games’ in which illegalized migrants are deported by U.S immigration enforcement agents, only to attempt and cross the border again within a matter of hours, in the Israeli case such a dynamic is simply impossible. The state’s borders are fully militarized, shut and guarded electronically to the point where almost no entry is possible. It is within its border regime that the Israeli siege mentality takes on a physical meaning. It is not a phantasmic perception of the impenetrable border, but an actual barrier between Israel and the surrounding states.

In conducting such comparisons, my intent was not to make implications regarding the morality, ethics, or levels of human rights abuse within state mechanisms, such as immigration detention or the termination of borders. Such considerations are not the focus of the theoretical analysis applied here. Rather, they were used in order to try to understand how deportation regimes are created, shaped and implemented within ethno-national contexts. It is only when we align the Israeli case with those of its parallels in other settler-colonial states and societies that a mundane image of the Israeli case emerges.

In the Australian case, for example, with its ethno-national ‘invasion complex’ (Papastergiadis 2004) where harsh immigration

detention is implied at remote, isolated islands, or in the South African case in which harsh immigration enforcement have been shifted into social spaces within the state (Vigneswaran 2008, Vigneswaran 2011), Israeli immigration enforcement ceases to appear as exceptional. Such a comparison with two prolific deporters of illegalized migrants manages to portray Israel's robust immigration enforcement as rather mundane, thereby pointing to the direction which the analysis of ethnographic data should take.⁷ With such an understanding of the concept of citizenship in Israel, and the specific relation of the society and the state to immigration, we can now proceed with this dissertation's empirical chapters.

⁷ Nevertheless, even within this seemingly mundane comparison of harsh deportation regimes, and although in recent decade states such as South Africa and Australia have granted asylum to hundreds of thousands of refugees, Israel's acceptance rate still stands on 0.01%

**‘It is our job to eradicate them’:
Preparing the grounds for ‘street-level’ enforcement**

Introduction

“Strangers are not a modern invention—but strangers who remain strangers for a long time to come, even in perpetuity, are.” – Bauman (2003:4)

In November 2010, soon after the initiation of the entry of African asylum seekers into Israel from the Sinai, the Israeli political system and the media were in turmoil. Prior to the examination of even a single refugee status application by the state of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s long-standing Prime Minister, had stated:

More than 99% of the infiltrators are labour infiltrators. The infiltrators come here because they know that Israel is a good place to live in, because we are humane ... They will change the face of the nation’s steadfast as a Jewish nation. Those are not refugees. Only 0.01% of the infiltrators are refugees.⁸

Several weeks later, in a special parliamentary discussion, Eli Yishay, the head of Israel’s largest ultra–orthodox party, then Minister of Interior and an architect of the Israeli deportation regime, said⁹:

Nowadays, we are dealing with tens of thousands of infiltrators, arriving in growing numbers that will surely add up to a million. They will come now ... hundreds of thousands of foreigners with hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV, and drugs... are Israeli citizens willing to accept 2.5 million Sudanese and Eritreans?

Several years later, Israel acceptance rate of African asylum requests indeed stands at only 0.01%, with nearly all of the asylum appeals rejected. Of the forecasts of 2.5 million ‘infiltrator’ arrivals, only several tens of thousands have arrived. In the years that passed since the initiation of the arrival of Africans through the Sinai, Israel constructed a robust and effective chain of immigration enforcement mechanisms that seized the entry of any further asylum seekers through the Sinai and still leads to their departure, ‘voluntarily’ or by force. This dissertation is the story of the internal work of Israel’s immigration

⁸ <https://news.walla.co.il/item/1760874>

⁹ https://hotline.org.il/wp-content/uploads/IncitementReport_English.pdf

enforcement agencies, and the specific character that such agencies receive within the context of a settler-colonial society.

The core of the ethnographic materials presented in this chapter and the two chapters that follow concerns state-generated, structural violence. It is an exploration of a particular use of state violence that needs to be seen in the light of the state's colonial past and military colonial present. This empirical chapter, initiating the first part of this dissertation focusing on the Israeli deportation regime, examines the interactions of the state, government agencies and 'the street', prior to the design of coercive mechanisms and the everyday translation of policies into 'street-level' enforcement. It surveys the ways in which the Israeli state had problematized the issue of incoming African asylum seekers, and the forces it chose to utilize in order to react to their arrival. It attempts to answer question such as 'what happens before coercive powers in the form of enforcement are unleashed?', 'how do such actions affect the task of coercion?', and 'how does a state, investing hundreds of millions in a refugee status determination unit and its proxies, navigate such a mechanism towards the production of a 0% asylum acceptance rate?'

This chapter relies on ethnographic material from visits to the Israeli parliament during fieldwork, and on materials that are partially written, and partially drawn from interviews regarding the interaction between members of the Israeli parliament and pro-deportation activists. Studying actions taken prior to implementation, at the early stages of designing the procedures and parameters for enforcement, provides insights regarding the creeping of securitization practices into 'street-level' enforcement, and the initiation of the governmental campaigns of dehumanization and vilification that render African asylum seekers as deportable and disposable in their removal back to Africa. This journey of nominal inclusion of asylum seekers under Israeli law for the sake of their elimination initiates in the Israeli parliament, within a governmental committee operating under the title 'The Anti-Infiltration Committee'.

The parliamentary committee: Discussing the removable futures of African asylum seekers

Following the arrival of African asylum seekers into the state during late 2000s, the Israeli Parliament initiated a special parliamentary committee in charge of all matters relating to the issue. The committee

was named 'A Committee for Finding a Solution to the Problem of Infiltration into Israel and Safeguarding the Return of Infiltrators to their States'¹⁰. It was set up to implement a law titled 'The Law for the Prevention of Infiltration and the Assurance of Departure of Infiltrators from Israel'. Committee discussions, field visits, hearings and ad-hoc meetings are held once or twice per month. In order to gain access to the committee, one has to receive an entry permit, pre-coordinated over phone or email. One needs a specific reason in order to receive such a permit, mine being academic research. In my first attempt to receive the permit, I stated the academic institute as being the University of Amsterdam. I soon received a phone call from the parliamentary office and was asked numerous questions regarding my identity, the source of funding for my research, the reasons for my interest in the subject of 'infiltration' in Israel, and more. To request access to the governmental committees I chose to change my strategy. I began to apply repeatedly as a researcher from Ben Gurion University of the Negev, my previous academic institution in Israel at which I gained my M.A, and stated my research interest as 'demography in Israel'. I was automatically granted a permit, no questions asked. In this case, it was my identification as an Israeli, affiliated with a notable Israeli academic institute, which portrayed me as 'one of us' and granted me access.

While access to the Israeli parliament's 'anti-infiltration' committee was fairly simple in comparison to my experience of gaining access to other state agencies, it was not less telling than the Refugee Status Determination Unit or the Holot Immigration Detention Centre, as presented in this dissertation. At the committee, various state representatives would present to the Minister of Interior, comment on current deportation campaigns or criticize each other openly for various decisions taken.

Ricoeur, in his work *Oneself as Another* (1992), argues that in order for actions, occasions and persons to be intelligible to us and attain a certain meaning we necessarily understand them through the form of a narrative. Ricoeur's central point is that our sense of self is necessarily derived from a narrative in which we are the character, and that these narratives themselves are always largely informed by narratives the subject has learned throughout his life. This is what Ricoeur defines as the process of mimesis, in which the world of action (not action in Arendtian terms; rather, more generally the world in which things occur), first finds its expression in a pre-narrative, where it is

intelligible, but attains its meaning in the form of a narrative, which in turn informs this pre-narrative state. Simply put, our state of being is defined by constantly creating a meaning within a narrative structure, which is never by itself, but always includes interpretations of the world of action, either by oneself or through the learned narratives. The Zionist narrative of siege mentality and survival against all odds does not simply exist in Israeli society and culture. It is repeatedly revived and revisited, updated according to the time and occasion. It is through organisations like the 'anti-infiltration' parliamentary committee that such a narrative receives its validity through the portraying of immigration enforcement as the protection of the state from a harmful enemy, in this case African asylum seekers.

The committee, officially named 'The Governmental Committee for the Solution of the Problem of African Infiltrators in South Tel Aviv and Securing the Removal of the Infiltrators Back to their Countries of Origin' was formed by the Ministry of Interior in order to execute exactly what its title suggests. Apart from procedural, pragmatic discussions regarding the advancement of deportations, the committee had become a space in which citizens and activists utilize such a channel with policy makers in the parliament. Committee meetings also serve as a space in which directors and key figures in various immigration enforcement state agencies are held accountable by ministers and members of the parliament in front of far-right, pro-deportation activists. Fieldwork for this dissertation included participation in seven such committees, resulting in a large amount of ethnographic materials of different sorts.¹¹ The focus here will be on one specific committee meeting that took place following a governmental field day in South Tel Aviv, to be described in detail in this chapter as well. David Amsalem, a West Bank settler who resided at the Ma'ale Adumim settlement and was a member of the ruling Likud party, serves as the committee's director.¹² Amsalem had spent a lifelong career as a bureaucrat in various governmental agencies. He is a savvy politician who is familiar with state bureaucracy and the manoeuvres of power in the government's halls. Amsalem is personally acquainted with the pro-deportation activists participating regularly in the committee. He opens the committee meetings by naming one of the heads of the pro-deportation movement as the opening speaker, and says:

11 All governmental discussions took place in Hebrew. Translations of transcriptions and other related materials are mine

12 By the time of writing of this dissertation, Amsalem was promoted and now serves as the parliament chairperson.

Go ahead, let's hear it, get us in the right mood for the committee meeting.

This was followed by an emotional, patriotic and Zionist speech puts the committee in the 'right mood' for governmental work. Here is what the mood of one of these pro-deportation speeches is about:

I am the son of a refugee, my father is a 63-year-old disabled military veteran, an Israeli Tsabar¹³ who fought here, grew up here and gave his soul to this country. The unbearable reality caused by the masses of infiltrators arriving to South Tel Aviv have destroyed him and us. My father told me to run, leave everything and save myself. He told me that South Tel Aviv is lost, they (the Africans) are here to stay and more will come, no government will stop this catastrophe. I'm here, I am not running away, I will serve as my father's voice. Those of you who do not live in South Tel Aviv cannot begin to imagine the scale of this catastrophe. Jewish communities are falling apart, on their ruins, families of African infiltrators establish their homes. Synagogues are deserted and left to crumble. Instead of them, makeshift churches pop up in every corner. The holy spirit of the Jewish Shabbat is gone, you will not hear the sound of Shabbat songs. There are the weddings of the Eritreans with loud music, baptising ceremonies of Africans in public gardens in which Israeli children used to play safely. This is a disaster that may be un-reversible. We are here a moment before it becomes too late, it may already be too late and we may have already crossed the point of no return. The point of no return is not Natanz, Fordou or Arak¹⁴, I am talking about the point of no return which lies at the heart of the land of the Jews. If this government will not act now and operate for the immediate removal of the infiltrators, this will be the end of Tel Aviv. Under your noses, the veteran neighbourhoods of the first Hebrew city will be diminished, on their ruins, an African city will be established. If you fail to act, you will be remembered in history books as those who established an African, Eritrean, Sudanese state at the heart of the land of the Jews¹⁵.

Once the committee is in 'the right mood' the speakers proceed, in order, to discuss practical ways forward in order to 'solve' the 'problem'. The director repeatedly chairs the committee in a clear, constant order: anti-

13 A Jew born in Israel, non-immigrant, an authentic Israeli.

14 Locations of Iranian nuclear facilities. Perry compares the African asylum seekers to the much-discussed issue in Israel of Iranian nuclear armament.

15 An excerpt from the testimony of Daniel Perry, a veteran resident at South Tel Aviv. Recorded at a Ministry of Interior committee on the subject of the formation of a national policy towards African 'infiltrators'. The Israeli parliament, Jerusalem, 8.6.2016.

immigration, pro-deportation activists, mostly residents of South Tel Aviv, initiate the discussion, then the ‘professionals’ and stakeholders proceed (attorneys, representatives of governmental agencies, representatives of the Tel Aviv municipality, etc.). Eventually, only if there is any time left for the committee discussion, human rights activists—and in a single incident an African asylum seeker—get to have their say.

Sheffy Paz, a prominent leader of the pro-deportation movement in South Tel Aviv, is a veteran resident of the neighbourhood. She regularly visits the parliament for committee discussions, along with a large crowd of pro-deportation activists composed mainly of Mizrahi Jews. From the moments before and after the committee meetings take place, it is obvious that the pro-deportation activists and the government representatives are not strangers. They talk and laugh with each other, shake hands and exchange friendly pats on the shoulder, and come in and out together from the hall from joint visits to the smoking area. At the same time, the few human rights activists in the room sit quietly in the corner, in what seems to be an unpleasant isolation in a socially hostile environment. The committee discussion resumes and Paz offers her take on the implementation of past governmental decisions regarding immigration enforcement:¹⁶

The people who are sitting behind me, are the ones I call the deserted people of South Tel Aviv. These are people arriving repeatedly to the parliament, for years, and for them, nothing happens. For them, things are only getting worse. Let's talk about the Supreme Court order, and where we are now. In August 2013 Gideon Sa'ar, then Minister of Interior, said that Israel signed an agreement with third states, and that after the Jewish holidays a governmental plan will initiate, for the deportation of the infiltrators to Rwanda and Uganda (...) it is all stuck nowadays and nobody gets deported because of the human rights organisations' appeals to the Supreme Court. It's been three and a half years since we started our struggle here, in which they (African asylum seekers) gave birth to additional thousands of babies here in Israel. We are not struggling here for ourselves, but for the entire state.

While Paz claims that ‘it is all stuck nowadays and nobody gets deported’, the numbers indicate otherwise. In a matter of five years, the number of entries into Israel has been reduced to zero, and the number

16 Governmental discussion, the Israeli parliament, Jerusalem, 8.6.2016.

of ‘infiltrators’ had reduced from 65,000 to 38,000.¹⁷ But no one in the room seems to be interested in the numbers,¹⁸ at least not in this sense. Paz’s words are very telling as she clearly puts the blame on human rights, pro-immigration activists who find ways to ‘put stick in the wheels’ of the government. Anat Berko,¹⁹ another parliament member of the ruling Likud party, responds to Paz’s words in a heated temper:

I want to present an additional aspect here. In order to arrive to Israel from Sudan you have to cross the Sinai, right? Sinai is controlled nowadays by ISIS. People who are Muslim have crossed an ISIS controlled area, were ideologically contaminated and are here nowadays. There are dormant Muslim terrorist cells here and nobody talks about it. Masses of those people are swarming our borders. They are NOT refugees. They are infiltrators, they are labour migrants and they are a security hazard. I want to have a clear answer from the Population, Immigration and Border Authority here. How can it be that you are providing them with temporary residing permits when they get married? Do you know who it is that they marry?! those are Bedouin and Ethiopian women?!

Securitisation “starts with a ‘securitizing move’; that is, a discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object. This discourse may then be accepted by its audience as legitimating ‘emergency measures’ entailing securitisation” (Abulof 2014:396). As such ethnographies demonstrate, as well as others in this dissertation, portrayals of African asylum seekers as a security hazard are key to understanding Israel’s deportation regime implementation surplus.

The Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan describes in his book, *The Killing Compartments*, the socio-political conditions preceding mass acts of murder and ethnic cleansing. De Swaan (2015:37) suggests that the “intended victims must first be identified, registered, isolated and made the object of a persistent campaign of vilification and dehumanization; hatred and loathing must be evoked against them

17 Population, Immigration and Border Authority’s data is published on a monthly basis in highly detailed statistical reports: see https://www.gov.il/he/departments/general/foreign_workers_stats

18 Many sources of information, quantitative and qualitative, survey the African community in Israel. They vary in quality and frequency of update. Some of the most reliable sources are blogs, managed by several human rights activists. Some identify by name such as attorneys Oded Feller and Jonathan Berman. Some choose to remain anonymous, such as Eishton.

19 Berko, mother of three, is a lieutenant colonel at the Israeli military, and a visiting Professor at George Washington University. Her PhD dissertation concerned suicide bombers, with emphasis on female and child Palestinian suicide bombers. Retrieved from Berko’s personal page at the Israeli parliament website: <http://main.knesset.gov.il/mk/current/pages/MkPersonalDetails.aspx?MKID=918>

among the population at large”. De Swaan describes this (2015:38) as “the social work of ‘dis-identification’, which goes together with a campaign to strengthen positive identifications among the rest of the population”. As the committee meeting proceeds, parliament member Nava Boker summarises the discussion:

We have to scale up our enforcement layout, increase the efficiency. We have to cast sanctions on employers who let them work, we have to significantly increase the capacity of Holot detention centre, so we would be allowed to incarcerate parents as well, fathers and mothers. We have to approve sanctions on house owners, who rent them apartments.

After hearing the words of various governmental representatives, pro-deportation activists and residents of South Tel Aviv, the subtext of such governmental committee meetings becomes clearer. The government and the pro-deportation activists share similar intentions: a maximal deportation of the African asylum seekers, and as soon as possible. The image drawn is one in which various forces of immigration enforcement agents are anticipating orders, so as to be able to initiate deportations of ‘infiltrators’, and the fact that this does not happen is the fault of the left-wing organisations and the Supreme Court, who are jamming the system in the short term while leading the collapse of the Jewish state in the long term. In the meantime, until the state and pro-deportation activists overcome this obstacle together, they are attempting to move forward in any way possible.

One example is found in a recently legislated law, an extension of the state legislated ‘anti-infiltration law’,²⁰ which orders ‘infiltrators’ employers to deposit 20% of their employees’ salaries, and an additional equal amount from their own income, into a fund that will only be given to the ‘infiltrator’ once he is outside of the borders of the state. This is a twofold incentive for the ‘voluntary’ departure of the asylum seekers, and for employers not to employ them as they will bear the costs. The law was originally offered by an attorney,²¹ a pro-deportation activist, in a ‘softer’ version that cast economic restrictions on the account of the African asylum seekers only. Following internal governmental discussions, mostly at the committee meeting, the state decided to cast the restrictions on the employers as well, which seemed to surprise

20 https://www.nevo.co.il/law_word/Law15/memshala-1065.pdf

21 Telephone interview, director of the Israeli Immigration Policy Centre. 24.12.2016.

even the pro-deportation activists.

While the state had been posting a ‘not allowed to work’ stamp (see Figure 1) on temporary residence permits of African asylum seekers since their arrival, such a law was never put in effect. In fact, the only legal limitation on asylum seekers’ labour, in the form of the deposit fund, came after the direct intervention of the pro-deportation civil society.

The traditional separation between the Israeli government and the Israeli pro-deportation civil society is absent in this case, as the boundaries between the two are vague to the point that they are politically, ideologically, and socio-economically inextricable.

Probably the most important aspect of the committee’s discussions is absent from the discussion room: the actual task of ‘street-level’ enforcement. Returning visits to the committee taught me that the state’s perception of enforcement is absolute, as I later discovered that they truly are on the ground (see Chapter Four). This is exemplified in the example of the ‘anti infiltration fence’: when the state decided to terminally stop the entry of African asylum seekers, it did so in a matter of months, regardless of the fact that this necessitated erecting a 245-kilometre fence in the middle of the desert (see Chapter Four). While it may be unlikely that other states’ immigration enforcement agencies would take such an action in an attempt to stop the flow of unwelcomed migration, in the Israeli parliament, and on the ground, enforcement is simply a matter of decision. As the director of the Holot Immigration Detention Centre remarked during our interview²² in regard of another drastic step taken by the state that resulted in the creation of the largest detention centre in the world:

One of the basic decisions that the Israeli Prison Service had made is that we do not interfere with the Ministry of Interior’s work. We accept and face anything they demand from us. We are a disciplined authority. When we receive an order, we carry it out.

The ‘anti-infiltration’ governmental committee may be described as an open invitation for a ‘broken windows’ form of policing and enforcement that targets low-level infractions for intensive, invasive, and aggressive enforcement. This theory presented in behavioural research shows that “when a car is left unattended on the street it is

22 Interview at the Holot Immigration Detention Centre with the Deputy Commander and Director of Holot detention centre for African asylum seekers, Israel’s Prison Service, 7.8.2016,

usually left alone, but if just one window of the car is broken, the car is quickly vandalized” (Wilson and Kelling 1982:2). In a similar manner, when a population is severed at a level such the Ministry of Interior, by legal or physical exclusionary restriction, additional governmental agencies and representatives of the civil society unleash additional forms of latent destructive tendencies.

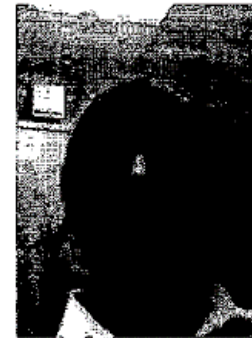
In his book *When the State Meets the Street* (2017), Bernardo Zacka suggests that one of the defining characters of ‘street-level’ work is “that it involves direct, typically face-to-face, contact with clients. ‘Street-level’ bureaucrats are able to witness first-hand the impact of their actions. On a psychological and phenomenological level, such proximity to clients makes their job fundamentally different to that of their peers in the back office.” (Zacka 2017: 120). In the coming section, the committee described here, together with various immigration enforcement representatives, does just that—meeting with its somewhat absent ‘clients’—the African asylum seekers.

A parliamentary field day: Up there in Jerusalem, down here in South Tel Aviv

One of the claims repeatedly made by the South Tel Aviv representatives at the parliamentary committee was that the government sits ‘up here, in Jerusalem’, and has no clue about how severe the situation is ‘down there, in South Tel Aviv’. South Tel Aviv residents were promised that members of the Israeli parliament would take a field trip to South Tel Aviv to see the living conditions in the ‘infiltrator-infested area’, and the promise was kept. The parliamentary day out was arranged as a tour de force²³ of the Israeli security forces. Securitisation, as demonstrated here, was pushed to the maximum extent possible. The tour was scheduled to begin at 10am inside the parameters of the South Tel Aviv special security force, where prior to departure attendants were briefed directly by the Chief of Police of the Tel Aviv district. The brief included general safety instructions:

Remain within the security ring which will be formed around the group by security forces. If anything happens, let the security forces handle it and

23 South Tel Aviv in general, and ‘infiltrators’ neighbourhoods in specific, are policed by an independent police force dressed in black uniform, named ‘Sela’ (a rock) – a Hebrew acronym of ‘the urban safety patrol’. ‘Sela’ is another branch of Israel’s immigration enforcement agencies, and is limited to the parameters of South Tel Aviv only.



רישיון זמני לישיבת ביקור
לפי סעיף 2(א)5 לחוק הכניסה לישראל, התשי"ב-1952

STATE OF ISRAEL מדינת ישראל רישיון זמני
366-0000005-16 Temporary license

Category ס' 2(א)5 לחוק הסוג
CONDITIONAL RELEASE משוחרר בתנאים

Surname שם משפחה
Given Name שם פרטי
Date of birth. תאריך לידה
Pass.No. מס.דרכון

אינו רשאי לעבוד

תחנת גבול:
הסתננות

יינקטו הליכי אכיפה כנגד העסקה לא חוקית
בתוקף עד 11/01/2016 Valid Until

תתימת הפקיד

חותמת

תאריך
11/01/2016

מקום הנפקה
אכיפה בני ברק

רישיון הישיבה הזמני תקף, רק עם התקיימות התנאים הבאים הקבועים בו:

1. בעל הרישיון ישתף פעולה באופן מלא עם רשויות המדינה לרבות בהליכי יציאתו מישראל.

2.

שם הפקיד וחתימה:

תאריך:

תאריך פגישה:

שעה:

חתימה וחחותמת:

מקום:

מטרה:

11/01/2016

הוסבר לנתן בשפה ה: באמצעות המתורגמן:

הצהרת הנתין: אני מאשר בחתימתי כי הוסבר לי תוכן מסמך זה. חתימה:

Figure 1: Conditional release form, from Holot Immigration Detention Centre. While the form, issued by the Immigration Enforcement Authority states, 'not allowed to work, illegal employers will undergo enforcement' the law says otherwise, and does not prohibit asylum seekers from working, or from business owners to employ them.

don't interfere. During stops for observation or discussion remain within the security ring and don't wonder around on your own.

The field day included a walk through the 'infiltrator-infested areas'²⁴ of South Tel Aviv, and discussions with Jewish home and shop owners. Haim Goren²⁵ took a leading position in guiding the field visit. Minutes after embarking from the secured parameter, into the Lewinski public garden, he pointed towards several 'trees' of security surveillance cameras, attracting the attention of the group to the newly installed security measures in the neighbourhood (see Figure 2). 'Who gets the footage? Who's watching all of this?' I ask, puzzled at the dozens of security cameras covering such a small public garden. 'Everyone', Goren replies. 'The municipality, the police, the South Tel Aviv security force, everyone.'

Goren is a highly appreciated figure by pro-deportation activists in South Tel Aviv. Born and raised in the settlement of Karnei Shomron in the northern part of the West Bank, he moved to South Tel Aviv with a group of ideologically motivated young settler families. 'Settling at the hearts' was their motto, meaning that it is not only the lands of the West Bank that should be settled, but the hearts of the secular, liberal Tel Avivians as well. Goren teaches in a local high school and serves as an educational community coordinator for the neighbourhood. He has a notable military background. He proudly wears his hand knitted Kippah (Yarmulke), which affiliates him with nationalistic, expansionists, religious Jews—the salt of the earth of the Zionist state. Just a few years ago, the South Tel Aviv community supported him as their representative for the city council. Nowadays, Goren bounces back and forth between his various roles as an elected member in the Tel Aviv municipality, a contributing resident of the neighbourhood, and a member of the pro-deportation movement. Goren stops at the centre of the Lewinski public garden, the epicentre of the arrival of African asylum seekers, and initiates his instructions:

It is impossible to perfectly reflect the local reality, but we will do our best to do so. I want to say something upfront. Put it on the table so it would be clear as sun in blue skies: We will provide you the story, the point of view of the neighbourhood's original residents and the municipality. If you wish to investigate what's happening here on the infiltrator's behalf, how they

24 Amir Ohana, member of the Israeli parliament, 3.3.2016

25 During my fieldwork I encountered Goren several times at the Parliamentary committee in Jerusalem and in South Tel Aviv but never managed to interview him.

are treated and all of that, this demands another tour, a different visit. We can't do all of that in one day. Our time is short.

In Israeli culture, the concept of the Morak is ubiquitous. Morak is an acronym for Moreshet Krav, stories and tales from famous wars and battles. School kids are taken to strategic points where an Israeli tour guide tells tales of soldiers' bravery in past wars in a military-like dictation. You would hear tales of the Six Day War and the fearless crossing of the Suez Canal, of the 1967 'unification' of Jerusalem and the cries of joy by paratroopers touching the Western Wall. When Goren stands at the Lewinski public garden in South Tel Aviv and describes life among the 'infiltrators', he is telling a Morak, a war story. And the subtext is clear: it is our duty to win this war, to be the heroes of this tale:

This neighbourhood, ironically, whether you like it or not, was built by refugees. In 1924, Jewish refugees ran away from Jaffa following events of terror and massacre by the Arabs. They settled here, on the sands of Tel Aviv and called this neighbourhood Neve Sha'nán [a carefree haven] hoping to live a carefree life. They've built a beautiful neighbourhood at the time, with lots of public institutions, synagogues, schools. Right here, where all of you are standing, there used to be a school, the Bialik school, for the South Tel Aviv kids [...] it got shut down. It was decided to unite it with the Rogozin school, of the children of the infiltrators. This is a result of the enormous growth in the number of infiltrator's children. Look, really, I don't know how to say this, but if the state will not decide to take action, a removal, then we have 30,000 people here who are having children. Those are 6,000 children by now!

Representatives of the neighbourhood and the pro-deportation activists begin shouting immediately. 'Where are our leaders?' and 'This school will remain here on my dead body!' I am still surprised by Goren's statement with regards to the 6,000 'infiltrators' children. In my inquiries,²⁶ the number of African asylum children in South Tel Aviv turned out to be about 1,500, while at the last parliamentary meeting, it was stated that there were 3,000. It is either that this community, comprised of a majority of men, demonstrates supernatural or amoeba-like skills of multiplication, or that someone is really not interested in

²⁶ https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/generalpage/foreign_workers_stats/he/foreigners_in_Israel_data_2016_0.pdf



the numbers. Goren stands quietly while David Amsalem, head of the Parliamentary committee, steps in as the responsible figure and quiets down the audience. Someone shouts in return:

Do you understand that once you give them schools they will stay here forever? You will never be able to deport them that way!

The secured tour of South Tel Aviv continues, and the line of visitors from 'up there in Jerusalem' is isolated from the street to the left and to the right with border police soldiers wearing olive green uniforms, constantly holding their rifles in a reconnaissance position, and personal security guards, armed and wearing black suits and ear pieces. The front and the back of the line is populated by guards from the South Tel Aviv special security force, armed and dressed in black uniforms. Ahead of the line are blue uniformed civil police personnel, riding two police cars and two motorcycles and shutting down each junction the group arrives at in order to ensure a safe and smooth passage. Prior to our departure from the secured parameter, we were assured by Amsalem, head of the committee, that if anything went wrong the police has a riot control force on standby, which he pointed out at the back of the security force parking lot. Now, walking the empty streets of South Tel Aviv, we see the backup force from afar. Goren continues:

This is a classic example. Here you can see how the infiltrators have swallowed the Jewish community. In here used to stand the Georgian Jewish community's synagogue. They've built a synagogue here, brought their ritual objects, their holy books, built a synagogue from scratch. The infiltrators have turned it in to a Chamara [wine house].

Various representatives of the community and the authorities share their stories and professional viewpoints, all in a similar spirit. We continue to a remoted point where small craft houses and garages are located. We stop at the entry of a small printing and binding shop to which a visit was coordinated beforehand. A Mizrahi man in his early sixties, dressed in worn-out workwear, steps out. He tells us about the damage that his business suffered as a result of the arrival of the infiltrators, and how he lets his female employees leave before dark, even if there is work left to do, because he is afraid that they will be assaulted at night by the Sudanese 'infiltrators'. He continues talking while I walk around the group and step into his shop where boxes lie ready to be delivered, full

Figure 2: A security camera 'tree' in South Tel Aviv. In a matter of months, since the arrival of the African asylum seekers, their entire residing area was covered with a variety of surveillance measures, in spite the fact that the crime rate within this population is among the lowest in the country.

of prints of Eritrean business invitations, restaurant menus, and what seems to be an invitation to an Eritrean music festival. I walk back to the group, wondering if I should ask him about his businesses with the Africans, and decide to keep my profile low. The man finishes his short speech and the discussion continues, but then he breaks out in a loud voice, as if there is something important he forgot to say:

Over here, it's not like it is in the territories. Those Africans, you can't touch them. In the territories you go to the Arab, raise your baton, and blow his head off!

We continue our tour, which remains consistent with the kind of speakers and the overall spirit of things being presented to the group. It's past noon, and I'm looking around for a bite for lunch. The Eritrean Injera shops around this area are all locked and shut with metal bars, in spite of the time on a weekday. South Tel Aviv, an area bustling with shops, restaurants and cafés owned by internationals, seemed to fall silent around us. Most of the 'infiltrator' owned shops remained closed in light of the immense security force. What could have been a nice, calm morning stroll in South Tel Aviv is unveiled as a sieged, anxious, hyper-securitised patrol. The noisy, securitised field trip group enters into the air-conditioned hall of the Neve-Sha'an community centre. The hall is arranged and ready for a large-scale committee meeting. The media's presence is massive. David Amsalem, head of the committee, opens the discussion:

I wish to thank you all (...) now, please keep quiet and imagine for a moment that we're at the parliament, sitting at the parliament in Jerusalem, and having a regular committee meeting.

Now that the committee is meeting on the home turf of the pro-deportation activists, Amsalem lines up Tamar Zandberg, a representative of the opposition left-wing MERETZ party, as first speaker. As expected, she immediately takes fire. The discussion continues with the director constantly trying to lower the flames of the discussion. It seems as if the vilification of the asylum seekers themselves, who were absolutely absent from the day, cannot go to any further extremes. Just then, Galit,²⁷ an attorney and a leading figure in the pro-deportation



Figure 3: The parliamentary committee excursion in South Tel Aviv. What could have been a nice morning stroll unveiled as a military-like patrol, surrounded by border police, civil police, and anti-riot force personnel, on top of personal security guards.

Israeli Bar Association will not come out against governmental policy, but if there is a policy, implement it. We can't make these people's lives miserable, fighting this battle against them.

What I'm saying here is very simple. There is a clash of interests here between this committee and the farmers who need worker's hands. Those workers have a great interest in leaving South Tel Aviv and earning their living, regaining respect. So, I'm asking, if this is your policy, say it. If your policy is to make their lives miserable, so they'll leave as fast as possible, get their 3,500 USD and fly out of here—just say it. So at least we'll know how to move forward here. After they get to us from Holot they are exhausted, I mean, after you exhaust them in South Tel Aviv you exhaust them in Holot, and then they get to us and the employers. These guys will never leave, simply because they have nowhere to return. A young man from Darfur whose family were all murdered, will never go back there. Not for 3,000 and not for 10,000 USD [...]

I am only asking for one thing, and I am saying this in the name of the Israeli Bar Association. They are the weakest link within the Israeli population. The poorest. The most miserable. Do you hear me? They get thrown out of all their jobs because of your policy. You have to treat them with a basic respect for humans. You cannot make their lives miserable.

To a stranger, such words may seem to cause shame or cast doubt among state representatives. But in fact, something else is happening in the room. The parliament members attending the committee receive a validation to the effectivity of their policy of ordered disorder (Paz 2011) towards the African asylum seekers. As simply put by one of Israel's veteran human rights attorneys during our interview:

The absence of a clear bureaucratic procedures is the state's way to execute its policies ³¹

Paz (2011:2) suggests, in reference to the population and immigration authority, that “Israel has constructed its own national order of things: an ordered disorder which serves the evolutionary pattern through which it responds to asylum seekers. This ordered disorder progresses through ostensibly contradictory and confused policies, but a vivid exclusionary principle governs its overall execution. Instigating this spectrum of responses, asylum seekers are shaped and perceived

31 Yonatan Berman, a human rights attorney, representing asylum cases at Israel's supreme court.

by the state as a blank slate, open to discursive turns supported by the strategic choices of actors from across the political spectrum”.

In an interview with the Refugee Status Determination Unit's head attorney, at their headquarters in Jerusalem, I was provided with a glimpse of this rationale during a discussion regarding the legal aspects of Israel's asylum policies:

Me: And what if those Sudanese, Darfurian asylum seekers will marry Israelis? Will they naturalize? receive citizenship?

Attorney: Don't put any new ideas in their heads. We already have such cases. Infiltrators with an S2A5 [the code for the temporary sitting permit for infiltrators] who apply for [permanent] residency following their marriage with Israelis³². What usually takes longer in their cases is that they cannot prove the credibility of their papers. We have found solutions for that as well. There are solutions for everything. Look, it changes, everything here is dynamic. We do something, we get attacked in court and we implement and improve. This is why I told you in the beginning [of our interview], we are still in our diapers. There is a lot more for us to learn and implement.

‘It is our job to eradicate them’: Conveying the duty of enforcement to state agents

In their book *Bad Days*, Azoulay and Ophir discuss various ways in which the Israeli state harnesses the Israeli public to cooperate with its colonial, expansionist aspirations. They write, “The power of the regime is found in its capability to remain shielded and discretionary without having to expose the violence it exercises to the public” (2002: 18). The key to the practice of such discretionary violence, as the coming chapter presents, is to be found in street-level bureaucracy.

State coercion is initially aimed toward ‘street-level’ agents and bureaucrats, shaping their motivations and world views with means of vilification, before being projected onto target populations such as African asylum seekers. State representatives themselves are to be under the power of coercion in order to later practice it successfully in the field. In order to motivate ‘street-level’ agents into implementation, the state must first diffuse a particular worldview through which the use of forceful acts will later be justified and normalised. In light of the strong civil call for governmental action, both pro- and anti-deportation, such

32 The attorney refers to a few cases of Eritrean asylum seekers who married Ethiopian Israeli Jews.

a worldview, and the unit's spirit, also makes it clear on whose side the unit stands. Such was the case with the initiation of the enforcement unit at the Population, Immigration and Border Authority, the 'Oz'³³ unit, during the early days of entry of African asylum seekers into Israel. In the words of the unit's director, laid out in his letter of inauguration of the 'street-level' enforcement staff:

It is obvious that the sovereign, the ruling regime, must exercise force in order to implement its decisions. That force, in the case of the state of Israel, is in operating the 'Oz' unit in order to fulfil our laws and gain order in our streets. On the one hand, those are people [asylum seekers and labour migrants] and our hearts ache for them. On the other hand, the illegal residents are brought here by criminal organisations (...) they strike our economy and take over the jobs of 250,000 unemployed Israelis. At the heart of the illegal residents' communities, extreme violence and crime prevails. And it is our job to eradicate them. Our top priority is to narrow down the number foreigners residing illegally in Israel by removing them as soon as possible (...). We understand, but we don't accept the sensitivity that certain parts of the Israeli society have against our work. We are determined to convince those who stand against us and succeed at our task, day by day, hour by hour, for the state of Israel. We are witnessing the broad support in our actions by citizens in various cities. I shall quote the words of David Ben Gurion³⁴ who said, "our future depends not on what the gentiles will say, but on what the Jews will do". The future of our mission is dependent not on the background noises around us, but on our actions as the immigration authority...

As with the parliamentary committee discussions, the head of the 'OZ' unit shows very little interest in real numbers, in this case by arguing that 250,000 jobs are taken by irregular migrants. At the time of writing the letter, the number of African asylum seekers in Israel was a matter of a few thousand.

Israel's representative to the OECD Group on Migration had encountered this disinterest first-hand. He served as a researcher at the Parliamentary Research and Information Centre³⁵ during the arrival of African asylum seekers and was requested to produce numerous reports

³³ Hebrew for gallantry, valour.

³⁴ The primary founder of the State of Israel and the first Prime Minister of Israel. ³⁵ https://knesset.gov.il/mmm/eng/MMM_about_eng.htm

³⁵ https://knesset.gov.il/mmm/eng/MMM_about_eng.htm

for policy makers concerning this irregular immigration into Israel. The parliamentary research centre is highly involved with parliamentary work. Policy makers consult with specialists from the research centre on various subjects, request for reports, while the centre's researchers publish reports on parliamentary work. When the OECD representative was asked to produce a report concerning African asylum seekers' crime rates, he did exactly that. He cross-examined statistics from the Israeli police, various municipalities, media reports, border police and additional related organisations. His findings were simple and straight forward: Asylum seekers' crime rates are very low in comparison to their proportion of the population, and one of the lowest in the country. Those findings did not align with the parliamentary campaign of vilification or and that of the pro-deportation activists against this group of unwelcome newcomers. A call to impeach him came from pro-deportation activists and resonated well into the corridors of the parliament. He shared his story with me in an interview, two floors underground at the parliamentary archive located inside the parliamentary bomb shelter:³⁶

I was thrown out of the Parliamentary Research and Information Centre after they claimed that I cooked the numbers. Crime-related statistics regarding African asylum seekers. But all I did was present the numbers. Police representatives used to arrive to the parliamentary committees and state that they are dealing with an enormous number of infiltrator-related crimes. But then, when I asked them for the numbers so I could put it in the reports, I got totally different data. They claimed that I was lying, in front of the committee, but I was just presenting their numbers.

He was then removed from his position in the parliamentary research centre to the parliamentary archive, of which he explains:

I do nothing here. They put me here under the ground where I don't disturb anyone. I still get to write my reports to the OECD, they left me that position.

Nowadays, regardless of several reports stating that crime rates among African asylum seekers are significantly lower in comparison to the general population, including one report by the Israeli Prison

³⁶ Interview, Gilad Natan, the Israeli Parliament, 3.5.2016

Service itself,³⁷ state campaigns of vilification continue undisturbed. The most recent example³⁸ referring directly to the African asylum seekers includes a statement by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs that ‘Israeli citizens live under immigration terrorism’.³⁹

‘Street-level’ enforcement: The everyday life of ethnic profiling

Ethnic profiling is one of the most crucial steps in ‘street-level’ immigration enforcement as it is the moment of identification that takes place prior to enforcement. Academic literature regarding the practice of ethnic profiling is lacking at best, especially when it comes to Israel. As scholars in the field of ethnic profiling point out, “Even with the persistent allegations and anecdotal incidents of profiling in airports since that date, to our knowledge, there are no empirical studies that have examined whether the screening or other practices implemented after September 11 have been colored by racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination. Thus, even though acquiring the requisite data to study this topic is likely to be challenging, there is a serious need for further research in this area” (Higgins, Gabbidon and Jordan 2008:1532).

Existing literature on ethnic profiling seems to focus broadly on the outcomes of ethnic profiling, especially (if not only) with respect to airports and Muslim populations. Some scholars who write on racial profiling have suggested the entire practice of ethnic profiling is ineffectual or counterproductive (Harcourt 2006). Schauer (2003:23) is generally “supportive of the use of profiling, but not when it comes to the use of ethnic profiling in airports”, as he is “overly concerned with airport security personnel over heavily relying on ethnicity”. Hasisi et al. (2012) are concerned with the social costs of ethnic profiling in Israeli airports. They have interviewed over 900 passengers of various points of origin who have undergone such profiling, and offer a list of policy recommendations to Israeli airport security. Barak-Erez (2007:6) argues that “even if ethnic profiling is thought to be effective, it is nevertheless important to re-examine its effectiveness over time because its use involves significant human rights costs”.

The state of Israel does not admit that it employs ethnic profiling, but as the materials here demonstrate, it most certainly does. ‘Street-level’ agents at the immigration enforcement are the ‘muscle’ of the

37 <http://ips.millennium.org.il/IPS/zohar/17/mobile/index.html>

38 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.5827939>

39 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.5827939>

Israeli deportation regime. Their role divides into two main parts: bureaucratic and physical enforcement. The first includes refugee status determination interviews, renewal of temporary sitting permits, issuing fines against employees for employing ‘infiltrators’, operating ‘encouragement’ talks with asylum seekers for ‘voluntary return’, and more. The physical aspect of enforcement includes the detention and incarceration of African asylum seekers, searches and arrest for visa overstayers, ambushes and surveillance of employees, random searches in South Tel Aviv and ethnic profiling. The Population, Immigration and Border Authority ‘street-level’ agents carry out such tasks, while often utilizing personnel from neighbouring security forces to carry out some of the tasks (see Figure 4).

Israel immigration enforcement personnel undergo detailed training, which includes theoretical and physical aspects in the form of enforcement simulations. The course is structured in a pragmatic, practical, straightforward way. It begins with the instructor presenting a rationale for the unit’s actions and giving a detailed description of the practice of arrest and detention, and ends with practical training regarding deportation. The course hosts representatives from various governmental agencies and proxies is composed various units of the Israeli deportation regime, such as the Israeli civil police, the prison service, the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Trade and Industry (in regard of labour migrants) and others. The coming pages present fragments from the course booklet, PowerPoints, and additional course materials demonstrating the general rationale and mode of action acquired by the participants to, become ‘street-level’ agents at the Population, Immigration and Border Authority, mainly in the enforcement unit.

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the participants to, become ‘street-level’ agents at the Population, Immigration and Border Authority, mainly in the enforcement unit.⁴⁰ The course begins with general background about the founding of the unit and the rationale behind its actions. For example, it discusses the Israeli law of return, stating that:

The law of return is an expression of the vision and the ideology of the people of Israel, enabling any Jew to return⁴¹ to the land of his fathers by automatically granting him the status of an Ole [a Jewish immigrant] [underline in original].

In response to the question of who is eligible to immigrate (make Alia) to the land of Israel according to the law of return, the booklet states:

A Jew and his family members.

This part of the training course discusses the law of return at length, examining a variety of aspects of the law down to the finest details, such as the distance of generations or a marital status and its effect on the Jewishness of a person (and therefore his/her eligibility to immigrate to Israel). It then proceeds onto discussing the variety of legal statuses of people in Israel, highlighting the hierarchy between them. These are discussed at length as well, with an emphasis on the Palestinian residents of Israel, from various legal professionals within this legal hierarchy.

The course’s next phase proceeds into the task of enforcement, debating various legal and physical aspect of the act, as the main mission of the unit. It initiates with a general description of the task, detailing the five main stages:

1. Intelligence gathering.
2. Fieldwork, conduction of arrests.
3. Processing of foreigners at the unit.
4. Transfer of foreigners to detention.
5. Deportation.

Such a process of enforcement is described as ‘completing a full

⁴⁰ Immigration enforcement inspection course manual, Ministry of Interior, Population, Immigration and Border Authority instruction unit. In cooperation with SHOHAM, organisational counselling, development of teaching and instructional courses and human resources support

⁴¹ As underlined in the original text.



Figure 4: Israeli border police soldiers in south Tel Aviv carrying a random search of an African asylum seeker. The Israeli border police are often utilised for daily immigration enforcement tasks, far from the state’s borders. Photo: Magad Gozni (Haaretz).

circle', and is discussed in several class meetings, with an exam at the end of each class regarding the various phases. This entire part of the course discusses the enforcement procedure as a single-direction process, one that ends with deporting the foreigner⁴². As the coming fragments will demonstrate, in spite of the fact that a great variety of non-Jewish populations are described and discussed, their processing all ends in a similar way: –with deportation.

The course extensively discusses the sensitivities of migration enforcement, in relation to various ethnicities, locations, how to approach the employees of labour migrants, and more.

This is a significant part of the course, detailing not only the sensitivity of ethnic profiling and the arrest procedures, but the different ways in which different ethnicities should be approached, where and how to approach them, and the different locations in which field agents should focus their enforcement efforts. It also details where field agents are forbidden to carry out acts of enforcement (consulates, police stations, military bases, governmental offices, elected parliament members, private residencies, the parliament).

Following a discussion in class, students go out onto the street for a field training in ethnic profiling. As they return, the course manual demonstrates the complexities and the sensitivity of conducting street arrests. The ludicrous phrasing and imaging leave no room for doubt: everyone is a suspect.

About a quarter of the immigration enforcement training course engages directly with the practice of searching and arresting non-Jewish foreigners in Israel. This part includes various diagrams specifying how to set up military-like ambushes in urban areas, industrial zones, or agricultural farms. It details the composition of search teams and the division of tasks between street agents and undercover agents. Specific details are discussed, such as how to camouflage an ambush of Asian labour migrants in rural areas, in contrast to how to conduct undercover observations at construction sites where east European labour migrants are employed. The drills and practicalities described in this section could have been easily taken from a military or a border police manual. In several cases, the cases demonstrated seem to be drawn directly from the experience of the Israeli military in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, such as in the case of conducting searches and arrests.

⁴² The term 'foreign worker' is a direct translation of the text. The term 'labour migrant' is not used in the course.



Figure 5: The immigration enforcement inspection course manual. The over 600-slide manual, only briefly summarised here, offers instructions to everything from search and arrests, flight bookings, spotting counterfeit travel documents, and interrogation methods to ethnic profiling.

Eventually, the course makes it to the top of the enforcement pyramid, deportation. Again, very specific details are discussed. ‘Street-level’ agents are taught which airlines are the best to book flights for deportees: the ones less likely to ask any questions about the nature of the journey. The course material also details the maximum number on deportees on each flight allowed by the airlines’ insurance companies. Every little detail is covered, including where to seat the deportee in the plane, how to engage with the airline personnel, how to manage the paperwork. It even provides a dress code for the flight. An extensive part of this section covers all aspects of deportation, and discusses the treatment of ‘deportation *refuseniks*’⁴³. The course material provides sample scenarios, and the trainees need to solve these according to their training thus far. For example:

In a conversation you had with the deportee at the pre-deportation facility, the deportee refuses to board his flight because he has no money to return from the airport to his village. What will you do?

The manual then offers three answers:

- I will solve the problem and make sure he has money for the return trip;
- I will ignore his request and, by using force, get him on the flight, in spite of his refusal;
- I will explain to the deportee that there is nothing to do about it, and that he should have taken care of that problem before he arrived at the airport.

The manual states that the first answer is wrong, moving on to discussing various aspects of handling the ‘flight *refusnik*’ at the airport terminal. The materials presented here are instructive in several ways, not only because of the military-like nature of the process and the ethno-national rationale for deportations, but also because of the rigidity and totality of the process. It is a wholesome process of sorting Jews from non-Jews in a simplified, almost sisyphic task, very much reminiscent of enforcement at the West bank checkpoints.

Fassin discusses the thin line between truth and fiction. He does so by analysing several ethnographic works in literature, cinema and academic research. Fassin “describes incidents in which, during fieldwork, he

⁴³ The term *refusniks* (*sarvanim*) is negatively charged as it alludes to Israelis avoiding their mandatory military service.

personally witnessed near riots, and was told of several similar episodes in which the police would describe them afterwards as ambushes, implying that youth had set up a trap for them and thereby denying their own initial provocation. The media would then repeat this interpretation, leading the public to consider the officers as the victims and to call for more severity against the youth.” (Fassin 2014:51). The plot and the images, as they are described by the police during Fassin’s fieldwork, held remarkable power of persuasion. Surveying the field agent’s instruction course raises the question of the image of the field imparted to the students by the instructors and the state before going out there to ‘do the job’. The military-like jargon that is used all through the course, the ambush schemes, the safety and personal security instructions in each chapter, and the intelligence-collection methods described, convey an image of the everyday, ‘street-level’ work of immigration enforcement as a military-like task that takes place under maximum security measures.

Returning to the Israeli immigration enforcement, and the military-like methods it utilizes in non-militarized contexts, what is striking in this process of training for immigration enforcement is how relatively short it is considering how effective the Israeli deportation regime is. Such ‘street-level’ agents fulfil a great variety of tasks and seem to be trained to achieve a certain end goal rather than to handle the process of immigration enforcement. Why, then, is their training so short? The answer is to be found in the character and the past training of those who join the lines of immigration enforcement. These students have a background in a variety of security mechanisms, and have past experience of service in different task forces. Taking a closer look at the process of recruitment contributes to our understanding of Israel’s deportation regime implementation surplus and the on-going securitisation of the mechanisms it includes.

To further explore this question, I surveyed dozens of tenders for a variety of newly opened positions at the Population, Immigration and Border Authority. These reveal that military service with a commanding position serves as a basic condition for service in the unit. An overview of what some of those positions’ descriptions include is instructive. All positions are presented in male form:

- A position defined as ‘an appointee of escort in Israel and abroad’ requires escorting arrested illegal migrants from the detention centre to the pre-removal centre or directly to their deportation flight. The position requires prior employment in full military service in a combat unit.

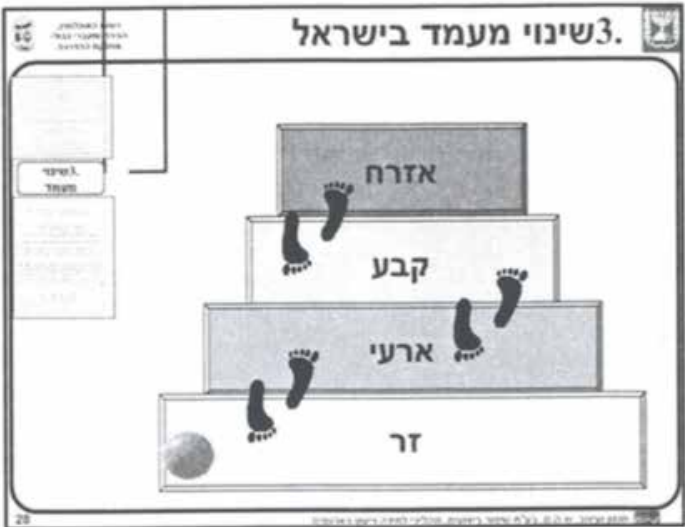


Figure 6: The pyramid of statuses (top to bottom) states:

- Citizen
- Permanent resident
- Ephemeral resident
- Foreigner



Figure 7: Ethnic profiling questionnaire. The course discusses the practicalities of 'street-level' enforcement. The PowerPoint shows a number of slides with a variety of people, ethnicities, occupations, genders, at a variety of locations, and repeatedly asks, 'Which one of them would you stop for a check? Which one of them, to your opinion, is a foreign labour migrant?'

Figure 8: Images of Jewish people, of different ethnicities, ages and genders. Next to each image a reference is made to the ethnicity of the photographed (clockwise):

- Jewish immigrants (Olim) from Kaifeng, China
- A Jewish immigrant from Russia, Sobotka
- A Jewish immigrant from North India, 'The Tribe of Menashe' community
- A Jewish immigrant from Peru

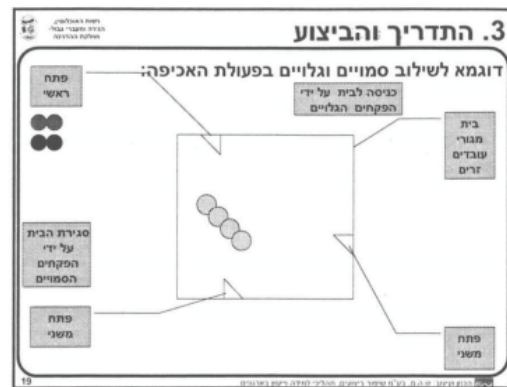
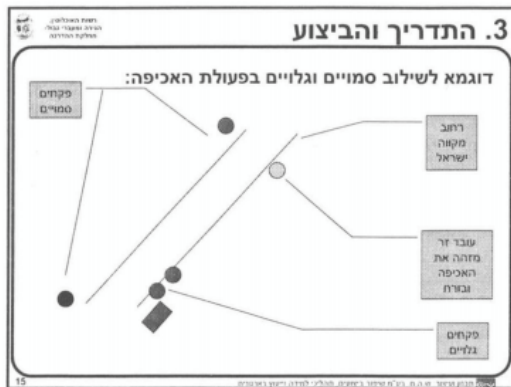
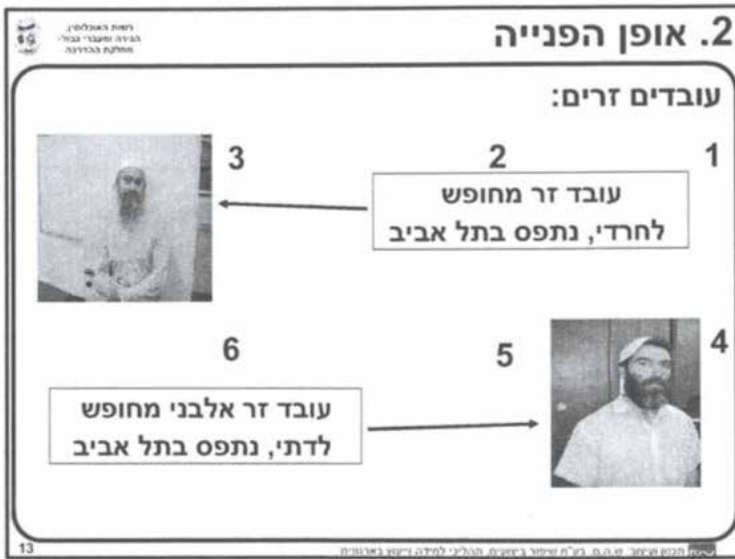


Figure 9: Examples of the difficulties of ethnic profiling. (Left) an Albanian foreign labourer dressed as a religious Jew, caught in Tel Aviv. (Right) A foreign labour migrant dressed as an orthodox Jew, caught in Tel Aviv.

Figure 10: The class manual then further complicates the sensitivity of street arrests by simulating a random check at a factory, asking the participants which one of the figures photographed they would hold for a check. The PowerPoint then reveals that one of the persons (second to the left) is an undercover immigration agent, another (second to the right) is an agent and that the remaining two are foreign labour migrants.

Figure 11a–11b: Examples of combining undercover and visible field agents in ‘street-level’ enforcement. The images offer a variety of ways to disperse agents on the ground, around a house, within a building or in a street. The training instructs how to position agents in ways in which they will catch ‘runaways’, or siege a house with visible agents, calling the ‘illegal’ migrants to exit, a practice which often takes place in the West Bank during the conduction of Palestinians’ arrests. This method is called the ‘pressure cooker’ (Sir Lahatz).

- A position defined as ‘director of immigration unit at the Jerusalem area’ requires directing the entire actions of the immigration enforcement unit in the municipality of Jerusalem and its surroundings. This includes arrests, gathering of intelligence, training staff, transferring illegal residents between various detention centres, and overseeing deportation. The position demands a background in full military service in a combating unit, service in a commanding position in such a unit, and previous work experience in a security company.
- A position defined as ‘head of intelligence and investigations’ demands operating the entire process of intelligence-gathering at the Population, Immigration and Border Authority with a focus on African asylum seekers. Job responsibilities include supervision of interrogators and intelligence officers at detention centres, managing a daily interface with the Israeli military, prison service and ‘translating the gathered intelligence into action on the ground’. The position demands previous full military service in a combating unit, preferably in military intelligence, and states that commanding service in such a unit is an advantage.

Probably the most ‘street-level’ position of all is that of field agents, the same people who undergo the training described above. The job description demands locating, identifying, and searching the belongings of ‘illegal’ migrants (‘for the location of weapons’) and arresting them. It also demands registering them in a designated biometric system and bringing them to the detention centre or to the pre-removal facility next to the airport. The position requires the applicant to have done full military service in a combating unit, and states very specifically the need for infantry training at a combat level. It informs the applicants that the job may demand spending extended periods of time outdoors, possibly even sleeping outdoors, and ‘some strenuous physical activity from time to time’. At the time of my review, the Israeli Population, Immigration and Border Authority had 50 vacancies open for this position, about the size of an infantry unit in the Israeli military.

It is worthwhile to remind the readers at this point that these positions are aimed at immigration control enforcement in Israel regarding labour migrants and asylum seekers. After the initiation of the arrival of African asylum seekers, Israel significantly expanded its immigration enforcement in terms of budgets, technologies, and especially personnel. Within the broad discussion concerning the power of the state to enforce and execute exclusionary and harmful measures against ‘others’, Bauman (1989:21) argues that “most people ‘slip’ into

the roles society provides them”. He does so while “being very critical of any implication that faulty personalities are the cause of human cruelty”.

Rahar and Rice (2015) discuss the ‘warrior mentality’ of American police officers as a possible explanation for police violence targeting ‘blacks’. They describe a ‘street-level’ translation of policy into enforcement in which police officers often think of themselves as soldiers in a battle with the public, rather than as the guardians of public safety. Returning to the Israeli case, the fact that ‘street-level’ officers in Israel are military veterans only fuels this perception, as well as the belief that entire communities are disorderly, dangerous, suspicious, and ultimately criminal (Vitale 2017). In the Israeli case, so it seems, enforcement remains exclusively in the hands of military veterans, as it is hard to imagine a person lacking full military service (*refusnik*, or unfit for service) being accepted to the lines of immigration enforcement.

Initiating a refugee status determination unit aiming at 0% asylum acceptance

As I had expected, my main challenge when entering the field was gaining access. Six months passed between my first request to conducting a set of interviews at the Refugee Status Determination Unit and when I was finally granted access. Within those 6 months, I corresponded with various civil servants at the Israeli Population, Immigration and Border Authority, including the head of legal affairs, the head of the research unit and the Ministry of Interior’s spokesperson. My interlocutors copied the Ministry of Interior’s spokesperson on their emails, so she could not only track my emails to the unit, but also the replies I was receiving from the unit’s staff. The level of control over the correspondence was absolute to the smallest details. This was made clear to me by the spokesperson’s replies and interventions in the correspondence.

Following three months of mundane correspondence, I was invited to two separate meetings, during which I was screened prior to be granted with permission to visit the unit. Those meetings took place in Jerusalem, at the Population Immigration and Border Authority headquarters, with the participation of the spokesperson and one of the unit’s attorneys. I was asked to present my work and explain my research interest, and the spokesperson confronted me with the rationale behind the authority’s actions. During those long months of correspondence and screenings, with the Ministry of Interior’s spokesperson demonstrating a clear disinterest in allowing me to

enter the ministry's immigration enforcement agencies, it was made clear to me that I was not welcome at the unit. A Ministry of Interior spokesperson was aware of when my fieldwork would terminate. I suspected that the unit was hoping that I will simply give up or that my time in Israel would end without me stepping through the doors of the unit. But even when I finally received access to the Refugee Status Determination Unit, I still had to physically step through its gates.

In their ethnography of the daily lives of Palestinians in Israel, Rabinowitz and Abu Baker point out that 'despite appearances as bustling, liberal, and open areas, Israeli cities remain, in essence, spaces designed for Israeli Jews' (2005: 131). Guards stationed at the entrance of restaurants, malls, movie theatres, and other public spaces are trained to be suspicious of individuals with Arab bio-profiles, who are often subject to additional surveillance measures and sometimes to outright harassment. Both at Israel's national airport and at airports abroad, Palestinian passengers on Israel's national airline are often subjected to lengthy and humiliating security screenings (2005, 146). Similar to African Americans in the USA, Palestinian citizens of Israel are consistently subject to harsher treatment at all levels of law enforcement—including the police, state prosecutors and the courts—than Jewish Israelis. This is even more true in regard to the treatment that African asylum seekers receive. This is evident in the locations and entry compound, as described here, of the Refugee Status Determination Unit. All Israeli Refugee Status Determination interviews take place within one of two locations: the Bnei Brak office or the South Tel Aviv office, with the majority occurring at the latter. Both offices are located in highly secured, newly built compounds that stand in striking contrast to their poorly maintained, old residential surroundings and their ethnically mixed, low socio-economic residents. My engagement with the unit took place at the South Tel Aviv location.

The building has two security points preceding the entrance. The first is located at the entry to the building; the second is on the ground floor prior to the entrance to the unit. Each security point has two fully armed security guards, a walk-through metal detector, and a screening machine for personal belongings. At the entry to the building there is a set of secured lockers. Any recording or filming equipment is to remain outside of the unit and returned when the visitor leaves the building. Entry to the unit can be done in one of three ways: as an employee with a magnetic card; on the basis of a pre-scheduled, approved appointment, or for a refugee status determination interview. Once a visitor arrives at

the security post at the entrance to the building, the armed guards verify the time and location of their appointment with the second security point upstairs over the radio. The visitor's ID is examined and the identity number is verified in their database. The visitor is then allowed to take the elevator to the floor on which the unit is located. Exit from the elevator leads to the second security point, where visitor's IDs are re-examined in the online database. The security guard then verifies directly with the person from within the unit that he/she is expecting a visitor, opens a secured metal door with his magnetic card, and leads the visitor directly to the room in which the appointment will take place. The ceiling is dotted with security surveillance cameras, and all windows are barred.

Even after crossing this hyper-securitised entry compound when my first day at the Refugee Status Determination Unit had finally arrived, I was yet again shadowed by the spokesperson, now in person, who carefully listened to every word spoken in the room. I was moving between different offices within the RSD unit,⁴⁴ conducting interviews and participant observations. When the discussion moved to topics that the spokesperson was not interested in discussing, she quickly interfered and changed the subject, or simply ordered us to 'move on'.

Interviewers at the refugee status determination unit refer to themselves and their colleagues as *Khokrim*, interrogators, rather than as interviewers. In Hebrew, the same word (*Khoker*) symbolizes the role of a researcher, an investigator and an interrogator. The use of the word *Khoker* immediately conveys an investigation or an interrogation. It is coercive, even intimidating, police work in relation to a criminal act rather than an academic or an administrative interview.

Probably the most central unit within the immigration enforcement branch, the Population, Immigration, and Border Authority, is the Refugee Status Determination Unit (RSD). As the material presented here demonstrates, this unit functions autonomously and in an insulated fashion, with very little interaction with the 'outside' world aside from the legal arena. A rare case in which the unit interacts with neighbouring mechanisms takes place within the parameters of an ongoing coordination with the Israeli representative of the UNHCR. In an interview, the external relations officer at the UNHCR Tel Aviv office shared⁴⁵ her insights from her long-term work with the Ministry of Interior and the Refugee Status Determination Unit:⁴⁶

44 The RSD unit's director's office, the passports and travel documents authentication laboratory, RSD interrogation rooms.

45 Interview with the External relations director, UNHCR, Tel Aviv office, 30.3.2016.

46 Interview with the External relations director, UNHCR, Tel Aviv office, 30.3.2016.

At the structural level, what Israel has is an immigration enforcement unit for foreigners, aimed directly at the task of deporting Africans. Within this enforcement unit sits the refugee status determination unit. The main task of this unit is deportation of foreigners in Israel. It was decided to position the unit that was supposed to contain, accept, those who are eligible for an asylum permit within the deporting unit (...)

I have been in the field for years⁴⁷. During my time at the UNHCR, I worked on a regular basis with the person who is now the head of the Refugee Status Determination Unit [interviewed within the following chapters]. He was posted back then at the Ketsiot immigration detention centre and was head of the deportation operations. Deportations! They have initiated a unit that is supposed to provide protection and asylum permits for Africans, positioned it within the unit that is in charge of deportations, and placed the person who was in charge of deportations of Africans for years as its director.

As our interview proceeds, she provides me with an insight regarding the governmental campaigns of vilification and dehumanization of African asylum seekers and the effect they generate on 'street-level' bureaucrats:

As someone who used to do refugee status determination interviews, how can you do refugee status determination interviews objectively when the Minister of Interior, then Eli Yishay, blows in my back and tells the media every morning that the goal is to get them [the African asylum seekers] out of here, and that none of them should stay here, while the prime minister repeatedly says that they are all labour infiltrators. How can I even think about recommending one of them for getting an asylum permit?

In several cases, the RSD unit had approved applications for asylum status, but they were then personally disqualified by the Minister of Interior. I was told by the unit's spokesperson that: *Those cases were very few, and only occurred in the beginning of our work, shortly after the unit was formed, when we were still in the process of learning.*

This may need a bit of a further explanation as the spokesperson's words are very telling. What the spokesperson actually suggests is that

47 Harel, trained as an anthropologist at the Hebrew university of Jerusalem, has been working in various UN agencies in Israel for nearly two decades in various roles.

רשות האוכלוסין וההגירה

למיזם בעל חשיבות לאומית
בהובלת רשות האוכלוסין וההגירה
דרושים/ות

פקחי הגירה

לביצוע משימות אכיפה
כנגד שוהים בלתי חוקיים

תיאור התפקיד:
ביצוע משימות אכיפה, כגון איתור, תחקור ועיכוב, כנגד שוהים בלתי חוקיים ומעסיקיהם ובכלל זה, פעילות שטח ומשימות משרדיות שמהותן טיפול בנתינים זרים.

ניסיון וכישורים נדרשים:
•ניסיון בתחומי העיסוק של המשרה בעלי 12 שנ"ל - שנתיים
בעלי תואר ראשון- לא נדרש ניסיון לדרגה תחילית
•רישיון נהיגה בתוקף
*דרישות נוספות מפורטות באתר

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חוזה אישי ושכר מתגמל למתאימים!

מענק כספי משמעותי בגובה של עד **30,000** יינתן בתום תקופת ההעסקה לזכאים בלבד.

ניתן להגיש מועמדות דרך מערכת הגיוס המקוונת באתר נציבות שירות המדינה (מכרז מס' 53032) בצירוף קורות חיים, תעודות המעידות על השכלה ואישורים המעידים על ניסיון עד ליום 21.1.18

*המודעה פונה לנשים וגברים כאחד

Figure 12: An Israeli immigration enforcement recruitment add: 'For an initiative with national importance, led by the Population, Immigration and Border Authority, immigration enforcement inspectors are needed, for the conduction of enforcement tasks against illegal residents.' The add offers a 30,000-shekel (7000 euro) bonus for excellence in service. The recent recruitment campaign (March 2018) would add 140 employees to the enforcement unit, on top of the existing 185.

the Minister of Interior expects a zero-acceptance rate from the refugee status determination unit. While they were testing the procedure, they made a few ‘mistakes’ and approved several cases. These were disqualified by the Minister of Interior in person. The unit now knows better, and does not approve any cases, so as to not bother the minister.

Ellerman defines coercive social regulation as “policies that regulate individual behaviour in highly intrusive ways and, in the process, impose severe personal costs on the regulated. Very often such policies also rely on the routine use of physical force for their enforcement” (2009:57). This dissertation, following Ellerman’s line of work, examines “one of the most basic, and most heavy-handed, tools at the disposal of the state: the deportation of non-citizens” (Ellerman 2009:12). Drawing on materials gathered in the field, I argue that in the Israeli socially coercive arena, which operates to exclude non-Jewish non-citizens, officials exert substantial pressure, including coercive measures, on bureaucrats and ‘street-level’ agents in order to perform implementation at a high capacity. This also implies high levels of insulation of such bureaucrats and agents from external interferences to implementation, such as protest against deportation, pro-human rights interpretation of the law, or even the media. Where the public and the Israeli media’s opinion are in favour of deportation and a harsher execution of policies, the exposure of bureaucrats and ‘street-level’ agents can also serve as an internal coercive measure for harsher implementation.

Israel’s refugee status determination unit currently has the lowest acceptance rate in the world, approving less than 0.1% of submitted asylum appeals. As the next chapter will demonstrate, while the operation of such a unit may seem marginal within the broader context, not only of immigration enforcement but in questions of national identity and citizenship, it plays a central role in the Israeli case.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the actions taken, and the perceptions held, prior to the unleashing of coercive powers aimed at the exclusion of non-Jewish, non-Israeli people. It surveyed the detailed process of selecting, recruiting and training ‘street-level’ immigration enforcement staff, such as field inspectors, refugee status determination interviewers, and directors at various level of the Population, Immigration and Border Authority. This chapter elaborated on the forces of coercion targeting ‘street-level’ agents themselves,

prior to unleashing them in order to carry out immigration enforcement tasks. ‘Street-level’ agents in Israel’s immigration enforcement are not only active members in the state’s efforts to exclude various ‘others’, but are in many ways subjected to the same regime of exclusion.

Fragments presented in this chapter from the ‘street-level’ enforcement training course, conveying a military-like enforcement, complete the image depicted while surveying job descriptions for enforcement unit personnel. With a military-like training course and personnel with military backgrounds in operational combative units, there is little need to wonder at what the nature of ‘street-level’ enforcement would be like, or how the nature of the broad translation of policy into immigration enforcement would take place.

Data from the parliamentary committee demonstrate the way in which the state frames any ‘infiltration’-related issue as an issue of security, both in the parliament and in the street. The state, following a strict policy ensuring a Jewish majority in Israel at all cost, sees and hears only what aligns with this perception, regardless of the numbers and the daily reality that might tell otherwise. It is not legislation or organisational procedures that pave the road forward, but the state’s anxieties and the struggle to maintain Israel as a Jewish only state.

State deportation regimes utilize internal and external strategies of immigration enforcement. Some choose to seal the state’s borders in order to prevent any further entries. Some focus their enforcement activities internally, on places in which irregular migrants work, or preventing their access to pro-immigration organisations who provide them with material support, in order to make their environments hostile and encourage them to leave. Some focus their efforts on effective procedures of detention and deportation in order to physically remove the unwelcome migrants. Israel has been active on all of those fronts due to a high level of collaboration between the various state agencies composing the state’s immigration enforcement and the tendency towards expansive implementation of deportation policies. This chapter assisted in understanding the effective nature of Israel’s immigration enforcement, achieving goals such as the prevention of any further entries of African asylum seekers, and reducing the numbers of asylum seekers who have already entered the state in relatively short period of time. The following chapter proceeds to describe the everyday life of immigration enforcement and the interactions between ‘street-level’ agents and their ‘clients’: illegalised, deportable African asylum seekers.

‘Solving’ the ‘problem’: ‘Street-level’ agents and the everyday life of immigration enforcement

“The state will tell you that it has an immigration policy, but what it actually has is a deportation policy, a “who cannot get in and how to get him out” policy. You will not find there anything at all about immigration.”
— External relations director, UNHCR Israel

“We wake up every morning, get out there, and do our job for this country. Someone has to, don’t you think? Who else will?” — Director of the Refugee Status Determination Unit

Introduction

The previous chapter surveyed the actions taken prior to the unleashing of exclusionary coercive powers by Israel’s immigration enforcement and the everyday translation of policies into actions. This chapter advances further to immigration enforcement, and the variety of ‘street-level’ methods utilized at the core of the Israeli deportation regime. It is an overview of ‘the most violent spaces of the state’ as those ‘where non-citizens and marginalised groups are identified’ (Zackari 2016). The chapter surveys ethnographic materials from encounters and interviews with various units at the Israeli immigration enforcement such as the Refugee Status Determination Unit and the Holot Immigration Detention Centre. While governmental campaigns of vilification and dehumanization continue undisturbed, calling for the ‘solution’ of the ‘problem’ of the African ‘infiltrators’ in Israel, it is possible to see the ‘problem’ as already ‘solved’. With no new entries since the formation of the barrier blocking any further entries from the Sinai, ongoing deportations, and a stable rate of ‘voluntary’ departures, numbers of African asylum seekers in Israel are dropping. This chapter provides an ethnographic study of this ‘solution’.

Designed and introduced by the Israeli state in relatively short period of time of 5 to 6 years, the ‘solution’ is comprised of seven main modules: (1) formation of the southern barrier with the Sinai for the prevention of further entries, (2) the Refugee Status Determination Unit, (3) the Holot Immigration Detention Centre, (4) Asylum Seekers Deposit Fund, (5) coercion for voluntary return, (6) de facto deportation and (7) third state agreements.

This chapter does not only aim to contribute to further expanding

the academic branch of 'Israel studies'. The contribution that this chapter wishes to generate is not in the area of studying the Israeli case in particular, generating a better understanding of the state and the Israeli people. Instead, it focuses on studying the characteristics of a highly effective mechanism of immigration enforcement and aims to make an academic contribution in two parallel and separate fields: the study of bureaucracy and 'street-level' enforcement, and the study of immigration control. The premise of this chapter is discussing 'street-level' aspects of immigration enforcement in the Israeli deportation regime. As states deform and reform, or in the Israeli case, as the state's Jewish and Zionist characteristics deepen, people can see (from the street, as it were) who is doing the state's work (Greenhouse 2002). We therefore move forward from preparation and training for immigration enforcement towards the visible aspects of the Israeli deportation regime.

Materialising the national siege mentality: The anti-'infiltration' barrier

The building of the 245-kilometre-long anti-infiltration fence was completed in January 2013 at a cost of 450 million dollars.⁴⁸ The five-metre-high steel barrier is dotted with visual and thermodynamic cameras, radar and motion detectors, and Roboguards (to be further discussed in Chapter Five). Prior to the erection of the barrier, numbers of incoming asylum seekers have drastically dropped,⁴⁹ hitting practically zero after its completion (see Figure 1). In addition to the physical aspect of the barrier, and the variety of electronic detection systems, the barrier is constantly patrolled by the Israeli military and Israel's border police. The two forces work hand in hand to secure the border, with a turn of duty ranging from conscripts to reserve soldiers. The area adjacent to the border fence is considered a 'closed military zone', a vague term that does not necessarily specify exact parameters, locations or goals. During fieldwork I visited the Sinai border area on several occasions and due to different opportunities. In several incidents (one of which included my supervisor arriving to visit me during fieldwork), when I approached the fence military or border police officers would immediately arrive, within a matter of a couple of minutes, and question us regarding our business within the 'closed military zone'. In two other incidents, while

48 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/31/israeli-fence-cuts-migration-egypt>

49 Source: https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/generalpage/foreign_workers_stats/he/foreigners_in_Israel_data_2017_2.pdf

hiking at an area of the border declared to be both a closed military zone and a protected nature reservation, we were never interrupted, although we saw military patrols from time to time and were watched by the video cameras dotting the border.

The use of a 'closed military zone' area for purposes of migration enforcement or migration control is a late addition to a long list of uses made by the state of such a flexible legal warrant. These vary from confiscation of Palestinian agricultural lands in the West Bank, to the termination of Palestinian building processes and the forced dispersal of demonstrations from both sides of the Green Line.⁵⁰ The effect of the physical, fully militarized sealing of the border (see Figure 2) extends the physical aspect of immigration enforcement and concretely re-conceptualizes the task of field agents in the everyday translation of policies into actions. As the state becomes a true 'container' of people, barred and fenced, the task of deporting non-Jewish, non-Israeli people, down to the very last of them becomes perceivable and achievable. As the Population, Immigration and Border Authority head attorney noted in one of our conversations:⁵¹

Me: Don't you think that in a way, you've already "solved" the "problem" of "infiltration" into Israel? I mean, there are barely any entries, it's next to impossible to enter nowadays.

Attorney: Do you know how many infiltrators entered Israel so far, this year, through the Sinai?! Ah?! 12 infiltrators! If we would have solved the problem, it should have been zero. We still have a lot of work to do, we can't just sit like that with our arms crossed saying we've solved the problem when there are still entries.

The aim here does not seem to be deterring further migration, reducing the numbers of migrants, or controlling their flow, but to terminally stop the entry of any further African asylum seekers, to the very last. As Figure 3 demonstrates, the fortified border is almost hermetically sealed, even down to the movement of animals far smaller than human beings. The drive along the endless border, which slashes the desert in half, is an experience that leaves a strong, long-lasting impression that feels somehow more like driving along the Grand Canyon rather than the remnants of the Berlin Wall. But the effect of

50 <http://orders.arij.org/>

51 Interview, head attorney of the refugee status determination unit, Israel's Ministry of Interior. 28.3.2016. Shahrar is referring to 12 African asylum seeker entries over a period of three months.

the Sinai border is achieved not only due to its physical nature, but due to the ubiquitous presence of the military as well.

In his book *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide* (2000), Peter Andreas discusses the everyday work of border police agents on the US-Mexico border. He reflects on the ‘revolving door’ effect in which Latin American deportees reappear back in the USA shortly after their deportation (in some cases literally in a matter of hours). In his study of the bureaucracy of immigration enforcement, Andreas states that “what seemed to matter most for politicians and bureaucrats was the high visibility and symbolic value of the border deterrence effort, and that they could point to indicators showing ‘progress’ toward the goal of border security.” (Andreas 2000:39). Andreas’s description stands in a great contrast to the formation of the barrier in Israel and the everyday work of the Israeli military and border police in maintaining the border. It seems that the state is uninterested in the visibility of the border deterrence effort, but literally, as the numbers succeed in demonstrating (see Figure 1), in the total prevention of any further entry of asylum seekers. This barrier, to the south of Israel, is a late addition to several other barriers fortifying Israel’s borders. The only border remaining partially penetrable is the state’s border with Jordan. The Israeli government had laid the plans for the fencing of this border as well, which will complete the fortification of Israel’s borders in its entire circumference, giving the term ‘siege mentality’ a physical aspect. The solidification of the southern border with the Sinai removes it from the realm of the phantasma into a very real, concrete form of border work. But what happens in the bureaucratic realm, and in other areas in which the state is performed?

Refugee status determination interviews, coercive interrogations

The description of the internal work of Israel’s Refugee Status Determination Unit is the story of a regime of protection disfigured into a regime of deportation. Interviewers from the Refugee Status Determination Unit refer to themselves and their colleagues as *Khokrim*⁵², interrogators, rather than as interviewers. The unit, located organisationally at the enforcement branch of the Population, Immigration and Border Authority, serves as the legal stamp for the disqualification of asylum requests, which turns the status of the asylum

⁵² In Hebrew, the same word (*Khoker*) symbolises the role of both a researcher and an investigator. The use of the word *Khoker* brings an immediate connotation of an investigation; a coercive, even intimidating matter of police work in relation to a criminal act rather than that of an academic or an interviewer.

seeker into ‘enforcement eligible’, rendering African asylum seekers as deportable. This is not only a process of exclusion, but a process of inclusion and integration as well for Jewish newcomers at the Israeli table. As Daniel, an interviewer at the unit, explained to me in his office in regard to Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia:

When I arrived to this unit, I thought that there would be lots of Ethiopian Jews here. I knew I came to work with the African infiltrators, mostly from Eritrea, and I assumed that because they come more or less from the same culture, same background, there would be lots of Ethiopian interviewers. But no, only the translators are Ethiopians. But they help us, I talk to them, I know now where the Ethiopian translators are from, which locations in Ethiopia, and I ask them questions all the time. They help us realize if the stories that the infiltrators tell us are real, can really happen, for example, if someone from a certain ethnic group in Eritrea tells us that he got married with someone from another group, they tell me if it’s possible. Or if someone from a certain tribe tells me that he lived in a specific place, they tell me if it’s possible as well.

The Jewish Ethiopian translators in this case, translating the Eritrean asylum seekers’ ‘stories’ from Tigrinya to Hebrew and vice versa, receive an opportunity to advance their seats closer to the Israeli table, to affiliate. Within the interrogation, they are asked to validate answers, and it is obvious to them that they have to pick a side, the interrogator’s or the ‘infiltrator’s’. The translator’s role then conflates with that of a witness, as they become second testifiers at the interview, which instantly becomes a trial-like encounter. The physical setup of the interview room (see Figure 4) plays a role here as well: While the room and the atmosphere are set up as a location for a police interrogation, it is obvious who is included and who is secluded.

As the one who is supposed to be the ethnographer in the room, I find myself impressed by the interrogators’ ethnographic capabilities. During interviews it seems that everything is pertinent for the interrogators: not only what the asylum seekers say during their interviews but what they do not say as well, and what their interrogators say on record, receives attention.

In addition to the cameras and the interrogative atmosphere, shortly after the interview begins the asylum seeker is asked to provide his passport/travel document and sign a form that allows the unit to verify its authenticity. The travel document and the form are theatrically placed in a plastic sleeve, as they were bullets from a murder crime scene, to be

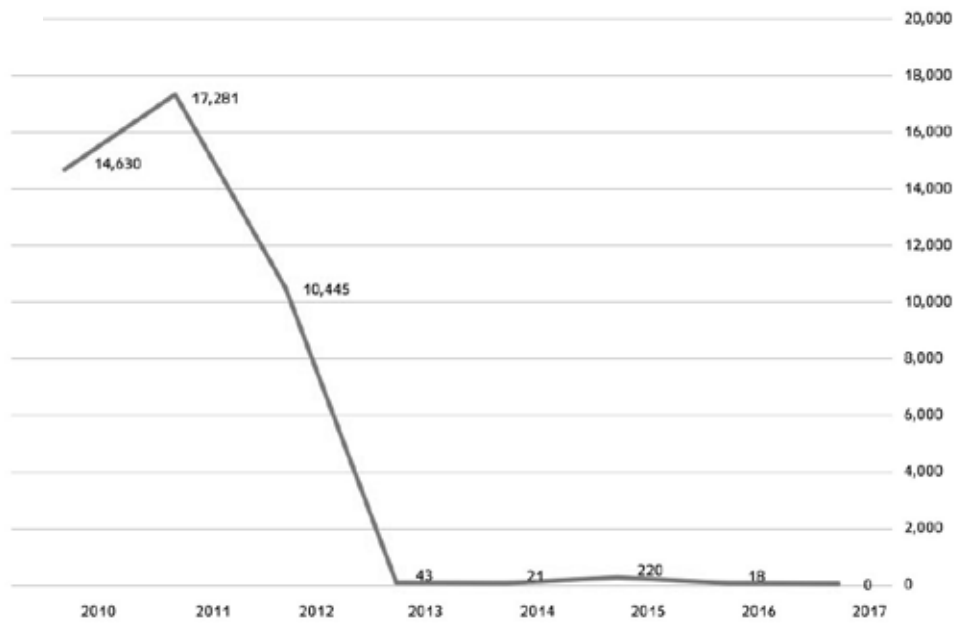


Figure 1: Number of entries of African asylum seekers through the Sinai border. The building of the fence was initiated in 2012.



Figure 2: An Israeli military patrol along the 'anti-infiltration fence'. Photo: Mosh Milner.

Figure 3: Barred waterways underneath the 'anti-infiltration' fence. The 245-kilometre desert barrier is impenetrable to any living creature larger than a mouse. Photo: C. Alon.

forensically examined. The interviewer then stated (to the translator):

Tell him that we've send his passport to the laboratory for examination, to see if it's faked. I will have the results by the end of our interview.

During my participation at a refugee status interview,⁵³ sitting next to the asylum seeker in the room, I could not help but imagining how terrifying the position he was in would be. There are at least a few different ways that the 'interrogation' room could have been set up for an interview that would be less confronting; for example, around a round table or in another more conversational setting, but the interrogational set-up was selected. As soon as the asylum seeker entered the room, he was asked to sit in the corner of the room, with the interviewer immediately turning on both video cameras and aiming them at the asylum seeker's face. The Eritrean asylum seeker was then asked not to move too much, so as to stay on the interviewer's screen (as the camera was rolling). In fact, the interview was not exactly conducted face to face with the asylum seeker, as the interviewer was mainly looking at the screen and having the entire conversation with the Jewish Ethiopian translator. Here as well, the set-up could have been different. For example, even in regard to the decision to film the interview, there could have been one camera, in the corner of the room, documenting all the participants in the interview and not the asylum seeker alone. In a way, however, with the Israeli immigration enforcement being what it is, the interrogation room set-up actually makes sense. This dissertation includes ethnography of Israel's human rights organisations opposing the exclusion and deportations of African asylum seekers. In rare cases, human rights activists are allowed to accompany asylum seekers to their refugee status determination interviews as supporters in case of physical disabilities, for example. Danielle,⁵⁴ a human rights activist, reflects on her experience:

Emotionally, I simply cannot do it anymore. I accompanied an asylum seeker to a refugee status determination interview three weeks ago for the first time. It was one of the most horrible experiences I've had in my life, and unfortunately, I had some miserable experiences in the past. There is no evil

53 Participative observation, 22.6.2016. Refugee status determination, Tel Aviv, Israel. My access to refugee status determination interviews was limited, and I eventually participated in two. In order to receive a better understanding of how such interviews are conducted, I interviewed several attorneys who have regularly attended the interviews with their asylum-seeking clients.

54 Pseudonym, interview, Jerusalem, 18.2.2016.

there, people there are not evil. They just do their thing from nine to five. It's simply this apathy that allows such things to happen.

As Kalir states, nation states : "exclude abject others (Kristeva 1993, Nyers 2003) by their very inclusion as those who stand outside the political realm and whose presence threatens to undermine the very distinction and legal border between the inside/outside of the sovereign state. The anxiety that the abject Other generates in those who find themselves on the inside of the national community, always arbitrarily defined (Balibar 2002), helps to produce and to perpetuate the fiction of tangibility of 'us' and 'them' (Isin 2002)." (Kalir 2014a:584). Sitting in the corner of the room while the interview is advancing, it seems only natural for the Eritrean asylum seeker and the Ethiopian translator to share the desk, facing the Jewish Ashkenazy interviewer together. The basis of this organisational operation relies on the assumption that the required end result is clear to all state actors, while a certain vagueness and room for improvisation constantly remains in relation to the procedures of implementation. This process demands a high capacity of learning and cooperation. Similar mechanisms exist in other states; Israel has not 'invented the wheel' of exclusion. As the director of the Refugee Status Determination Unit indicated in our interview:

I'm telling you, nothing will stop people's will to get to a better place. No matter what fence you'll build, add another meter, they'll buy another meter of rope. I've been there, the whole unit visited at the US-Mexico border. This is just like the Gaza border there, the distance between the US and Mexico. I visited Africa as well, I know what hunger looks like. Nothing will help, if Europe wants to help those people it's only with money or infrastructure in order to improve their conditions in their states. Do you know how many requests we receive here? Not just from Africa but from Eastern Europe as well. Professors, PhDs, they are all trying to improve their lives, to get to a better place. They all try to get here because of economic reasons. And they truly are miserable there in Africa, each and every one of them, all ruled by dictators. I'm telling you, they are truly miserable. We should wake up every morning and thank god that we live in a country that people run to and not from. But I don't get it, why do those Africans try to get here? Why don't they go to Europe? Why, if they can make it to Israel, can't they make it to Holland? Won't it be better for them in Holland? by the way, I've been to Holland, I've seen how they live there [the asylum seekers]. Some countries think differently from us. Don't you think it's better for them in Holland? Why do they come here?

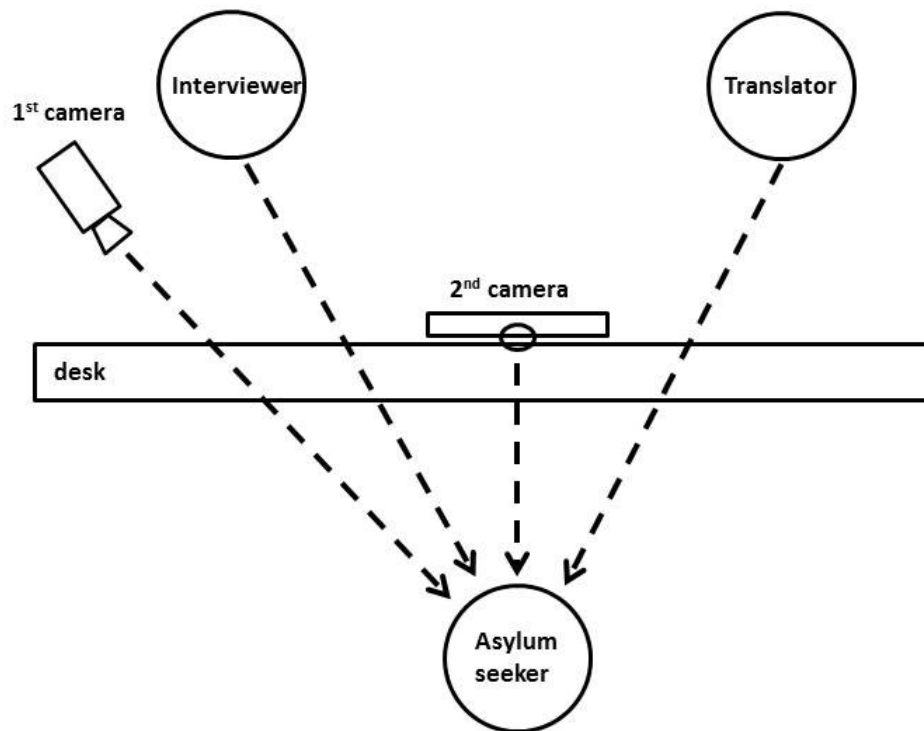


Figure 4: The Refugee Status Determination Unit interview room set-up could serve as a location for a police interrogation. Outline: Ilan Amit (on the basis of field visit).

As the director of the Refugee Status Determination Unit refers to various kinds of people trying to enter Israel as labour migrants for economic reasons, he clearly states that he is aware of the hunger in Africa and life under dictatorship in some African countries. He refers to border management as a security task by going as far as comparing the US-Mexico border to the heavily militarized, highly securitized Israeli border with Gaza. But above all, he is well aware of the asylum regimes of other states. Later in our interview, the director tells me that he conducted study visits with various state representatives to Germany, Italy and Hungary, and that just a few weeks prior to our interview his office was visited by Italian and German colleagues. He is well-informed about the acceptance rates of refugees from various origins and receives updates on a daily basis on immigration and asylum-related news from Europe. The director even pointed out relevant reports and websites on the matter to me.

Refugee status determination interviewers are provided with a broad vector for disqualifications of asylum requests, while having to find the exact coordinates for the disqualification of each and every case. In order to do so, interviewers and their peers (translators, laboratory technicians, the unit's intelligence officer) spend a significant amount of time and effort attentively listening, translating, transcribing, video recording, comparing versions of the stories of the asylum seekers, and then verifying them with other sources of information. This raises an important question regarding the motivation of the Refugee Status Determination Unit staff. To an outsider, the work of this unit is a true riddle. Why would the state invest such a massive amount of resources in operating a unit employing dozens of employees,⁵⁵ with a yearly budget of millions of shekels, when the end result of nearly 0% acceptance rate is clearly known, even before the first interview takes place? With respect to the 'street-level' agents, interviewers, translators, lab technicians and intelligence officers, the puzzle may be even greater. Why bother doing all this work, day in and day out, when the result of their arduous work remains identical?

The findings from my fieldwork with the Israeli immigration enforcement provide several insights with respect to the everyday translation of policy into enforcement actions. For example, we should examine the motivations of individuals at the service of the Refugee Status Determination Unit from a different angle. Officers' efforts to spot lies, inconsistencies, and incoherence in each and every refugee status

55 The Refugee Status Determination Unit houses 36 full-time staff.

determination interview can provide them with satisfaction and provide a genuine challenge. These ‘benefits’ motivate the unit’s proxies as well. For example, laboratory technicians who have advanced technologies at their disposal, try to find the tiniest hints in each and every travel document in order to enable them to disqualify it. Indeed, as Kalir (2014:3) suggests, “an implementation surplus is not uncommon among state agents who often possess a strong ‘enforcement ethos’ and a ‘desire to do the job’ (Weissinger 1996, Wilson 1989).”

Fieldwork for this dissertation included interviews with seven civil society attorneys who have represented asylum seekers within the past decade,⁵⁶ and who work for various Israeli human rights organisations. They have all participated personally in refugee status determination interviews of their asylum-seeking clients, who have arrived from various locations and backgrounds. Due to the amount of materials gathered from these interviews, I will not be able to go in detail into their work or their encounters with the Israeli Ministry of Interior and the Refugee Status Determination Unit, but these interviews left me with one strong impression that should be described here in detail: the interrogative nature of the refugee status determination interviews.

Asylum acceptance rates vary in relation to the specific population, location, context and gender of the person appealing.⁵⁷ The application is time-sensitive as well, as developments in countries of origin effect the likelihood of receiving an asylum status. All my human rights attorney interviewees firmly believed the impression that the stronger the case was for their client to gain asylum status, the more arduous was the interrogative nature of their interview. They describe attending interviews lasting up to eight hours per day, with very short breaks if there were any at all. Some of the refugee status determination interviews they had attended lasted 16 hours (eight hours over two consecutive days). During such prolonged interviews/interrogations, interviewers take turns, replacing each other to conduct the interview, operating significant mental pressure on the asylum seeker by repeating the same questions for hours on end, and demanding to repeatedly revive the events leading to their appeal. In some cases, two of the attorneys interviewed reported that they had to stop the interrogative interviews out of concern for the asylum seeker’s wellbeing, as they seemed to be cracking under the pressure. They specifically recalled refugee status

56 Yonatan Berman 10.2.2016, Assaf Weizen 19.5.2016, Yuval Livnat 4.9.2017, Tali Krizman Amir 30.5.2016, Anat Ben Dor 23.6.2016, Sivan Carmel 11.1.2016, Ariel Shendar 11.1.2016.

57 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics

determination interviews concerning African asylum seekers from Darfur, and Chinese members of the Falun Dafa.

It may be reasonable to assume that the impact of such interrogative interviews on the asylum seekers is sufficient to deter others from applying for asylum status. In this way, the asylum seekers themselves become a kind of unwilling agent of the Israeli deportation regime. In a brief discussion in the corridors of the Refugee Status Determination Unit with the unit’s director I ask him about the intensity of the interrogations, hinting cautiously at the intensity of the process. The director indicated:

The unit that I run here, sitting here at Shlomo road number 53, 7th floor, is clean of any background noises. I’m telling you, all this noise from the outside, the supreme court, criticism, the NGOs, I don’t allow it to get inside. I run every interview independently.

Later on, in an interview with Daniel, a refugee status determination interviewer who had served at the unit since its initiation, the same logic was unveiled:

As far as I’m concerned, every person here faces himself, and himself only. Not the state of Israel, and not the NGOs or anything like that. He first of all has to tell the truth, his story, and our job is to verify this story in the best possible way. I’d much prefer to grant asylum status to a thousand liars, then have one person here who really deserves to be given asylum and we will disqualify him by mistake, because we’ve conducted a false examination. This is why we verify every case independently.

The tough interrogative nature of the refugee status determination interrogations is a single link in a long chain of coercive methods projected at African asylum seekers, or any other non-Jewish asylum seekers, for that matter. Probably the strongest link in this coercive chain is prolonged detention at the remote Holot Immigration Detention Centre, built especially for the African asylum seekers.

‘Holot’ detention centre: The business of ‘making their lives miserable’

The Holot Immigration Detention Centre, built especially for African asylum seekers, is operated by the Israeli Prison Service, which operates under the authority of the Ministry of Interior. While the

Israeli Prison Service is responsible for African asylum seekers while in detention, the Ministry of Interior holds the power to place them in detention, release them or deport them.

While Israeli authorities insist on using the term ‘an open detention centre’ in referring to Holot, it operates under the direct supervision of Israel’s prison service. Israel has three operating immigration detention/incarceration centres for African asylum seekers and a pre-deportation facility near the state’s international airport.⁵⁸ I made an official application to the Israeli Prison Service to request to visit all four facilities, but I was eventually only permitted to visit Holot.

Following five months of correspondence with the Israeli Prison Service research committee, sending formal letters, signing legal wavers, and translating official documents from English to Hebrew and vice versa, I was asked to present my research proposal to a group of Israeli Prison Service officers. I hoped that they would approve my visit to the centre. Prior to my presentation to the committee, I was asked to send my research proposal, which I polished repeatedly so that it would read as smoothly, as non-critically and non-intrusively as possible, while still coming up with a substantial reason for the requested interviews and field visits. The committee took place at the Ayalon prison, at which I underwent security clearance procedure in order to enter. The committee, comprised of eight uniformed officers of various ranks, demonstrated very little interest in my presentation until one of the members asked, ‘who funds this research?’ Following my reply that the EU funds it through a European Research Council (ERC) grant, the room fell silent and eight pairs of eyes abandoned their laptops and smartphones screens and stared directly at me. The committee then embarked on an argument I was not prepared for. One of the officers insisted that allowing me to approach the centre will be ‘very problematic’. Turning to the committee, he stated that:

1st Officer: Seriously? Are you seriously considering letting him get in there? For the Europeans this is a prison. They look at it and they see a prison. They don’t understand that this is an open centre.

2nd Officer: Yes, but denying him access would be worse, you don’t want to create the impression that Israel has something to hide. He’s got a letter from the EU asking to get in there.⁵⁹

58 Holot, Shaharonim, Ketsiot.

59 A discussion at the research committee, the Israeli Prison Service, Ayalon prison, Ramla, Israel, 4.7.2016.

I was then quickly asked to leave the room and wait outside, which I did, wishing I could remain inside, recording the forceful argument proceeding in the room. I was eventually granted permission to visit one of Israel’s detention centres. But negotiating access to the detention centre didn’t end there. Even after being granted a permit to conduct the visit and the interview at the centre, on the day of our arrival we were once again introduced to the physical aspect of gaining access.⁶⁰ A security guard called the head office in order to verify our visit. We were asked to present our identifications and were provided with visitor tags. We were then allowed to cross the biometric entry gate and were accompanied into the director’s office by another uniformed Prison Service warden. Even once I was in the director’s office, the director himself re-verified my visit via a personal phone call to the research committee’s officer back at the Ayalon prison office. After all these different stages of clearance I had gone through with the Israeli Prison Service, followed by the security clearance within the detention centre, where I was already sitting at the director’s office having a cup of coffee, he still would not say a word before he personally verified my identity and the scheduling of the visit with the head of the unit at the Ayalon prison in Ramla. This demonstration of anxiety and mistrust was telling in the sense that the director presented the same level of suspicion and fear of disclosure as the spokespersons and attorneys shielding the unit from the ‘outside’.

The Holot Immigration Detention Centre, operative since late 2013, has been described repeatedly by the state and the Israeli Prison Service as a ‘success’ story, with Israeli parliament members repeatedly calling for its expansion to its full capacity of 8,000 detainees. As the strongest link in a chain of actions taken by the state to encourage ‘voluntary’ return, Holot had proven its effectiveness with African asylum seekers leaving not only from the centre itself, but also soon after receiving the order to arrive at the centre for their detention period, a phenomenon described by state officials as ‘the Holot effect’. As described by Suliman⁶¹, an asylum seeker from Darfur:

I did not want to leave Israel, but Immigration gave me a summons and said—it’s either Holot or Sudan. I had no choice. I did not want to be in prison again. I was already in Saharonim⁶² when I entered Israel.

60 At the time of the visit, one of my PhD supervisors, Prof. Barak Kalir, visited Israel.

61 Interview held in September 2014 by the hotline.

62 The interviewee refers to a period of up to three months of imprisonment at Sharonim or Ketsiot prisons upon entry to Israel.

Holot operates as an 'open' detention centre housing 3,650 African asylum seekers in a remote desert location for terms of up to one year, while supplying them with their minimal basic needs. The main goal of the detention term is to keep African asylum seekers away from the Israeli labour market, Israeli society and their communities, while operating massive coercive powers for 'voluntary' departure from Israel. As is clearly stated by the director of the centre:⁶³

Look, this is not a secret. The Ministry of Interior, at the end of the day, their goal is to get them out of here. The law is very clear, it states: [the 'Infiltrator'] "Will remain in Holot until deported or until his voluntary departure, or upon a new governmental decision, and for no longer than 12 months". By the way, the law's name is "the law for the prevention of infiltration and the assurance of the departure of infiltrators away from Israel". This is the law's full name. We all call it the law for the prevention of infiltration. But it has a second part. And this is the parliament, the legislators have legislated it. I mean, the aim here is absolutely clear. No one is trying to blur it.

Holot houses a massive biometric tracking system operating in a specific set up, as if not simply to register the whereabouts of the asylum seekers, but in order to perform the presence of the state around the clock. Each detainee is biometrically registered and obliged to constantly carry a magnetic card verifying his personal attributes. Entry and exit from the centre require biometric identification, verification with a magnetic card, and face recognition by a warden observing the computer screens next to the metal carousel gates at the moment of identification. Additional biometric gates operate between the entrance to the residential sections and between the residential sections themselves. The result of this architecture of micro surveillance is that asylum seekers experience dozens of daily biometric identifications. Finally, each residential section has an additional independent biometric identification system, which is locked in a metal box and opened for a headcount in the early morning and a late evening. Not showing up for such a head count brings costs to bear on the detainees, such as movement restrictions or reduction of pocket money. The head count procedure is entirely performative and normative, as by the time the

63 Interview at Holot Immigration Detention Centre with the Deputy Commander and Director of Holot Immigration Detention Centre for African asylum seekers, Israel's Prison Service, 7.8.2016.

detainees sign into the system located in the residential area, they have already affirmed their location in three additional registration points. The centre's director explains:

The main story here is order and discipline. You can't run a place like this, in which the residents according to the law, from 6 am to 10 pm don't owe you anything, are free to move, leave and comeback (...). Look. There will always be criticism. Holot is only one link in a chain. I think Holot is a model, an example of how the state of Israel knows how to give the detainees, who are under restrictions, what the legislator had demanded, ordered, they'll get. Because eventually, in a state which respects the law, we have to refer and do what the legislators dictate, and they have determined clearly what should be done with them.

The director of Holot has designed in person the outline of the maze of biometric gates and head counts. His lifelong service in the Israeli Prison Service provided him with rich experience regarding the control of various populations. He reflects on the effectivity of the detention mechanism he designed, as well as on the entire enforcement effort directed by the state:

In my opinion, ten years from now there will be no Holot because of a simple reason. I think that Israel is slowly creating a balance of deterrence (...) I think that the balance will be found. A balance will be created. But we will keep on processing them in the same way because we are just one state, a small one, not big. We have to guard it, don't you think? So the balance will be found. They will create the balance.

During our interview the director, a warm, Mizrachi, affectionate, fatherly figure, constantly removes himself from the outcomes of the detention mechanisms he designed and facilitates on a daily basis. He would note that they will find the balance, or they will create the deterrence, as if he is not the director of Israel's strongest link in a chain of exclusion of African asylum seekers. As the discussion progressed, his level of micro-management of the centre and his creativity unfolded:

I can let 150 people in and out in one minute and it's all biometrically documented. There is a bit of a problem with it. We are not allowed to hold a biometric database here. So, his fingerprint is on the card, and only the connection between his card and his finger approves that it's actually him.

The director, an attorney by training, is highly sensitive to the legal implications of his actions at the centre and the broad variety of legal interpretations that can be given to his actions. In our interview he repeatedly refers to the legal aspects of his actions:

The law says that I have three ways of punishing a detainee for a disciplinary offense. First, to confiscate his pocket money to a certain extent. Second, to forbid his departure from the centre for up to 48 hours per week. And since all systems are biometric, including the gateway complex, I can block his exit. Third, I can fine him a certain amount of money in case he damaged something. I use the first and the third all the time. With the second, we've never restricted the departure of any of them, not even once, and that is because we wouldn't want this place, not even for a moment, to seem like as a prison.

Ellerman (2009:12) argues that “in the fields of coercive social regulation, the basic conditions underlying state capacity vary across policy stages. Reinforcement rests in the hands of a specialized public bureaucracy”. Her work on deportation units in Germany and the U.S offers a window of understanding into the ways in which “fields of coercive social regulation distinguish themselves by vast ‘street-level’ bureaucracies of law enforcement officers authorized to wield the state’s powers of coercion” (Ellerman 2009:12). It is within the political realm of coercive social regulation, that ‘street-level’ bureaucrats become key actors in the struggle between the state and the targets of regulation, that is, irregularized migrants themselves. Ellerman (2009:13) concludes that “we can thus define policies of coercive social regulation as measures that control individual behaviour in highly intrusive ways, impose severe personal costs on the regulated, and often rely on the routine use of physical force for their enforcement”. Such is the case of detention in the remote, isolated, Holot detention centre. The securitized centre, holding 3,500 African asylum seekers at a remote desert location in south Israel, serves as Israel’s most substantial act in an ongoing effort to coerce asylum seekers to ‘voluntarily’ return to Africa.

This dissertation had so far discussed ‘street-level’ immigration enforcement (arrests and searches, detention, border enforcement) as somewhat detached from ‘street-level’ immigration bureaucracy (visas and permits, refugee status determination, verification of travel documents). I will now contest division, which prevails in relevant literature as well, and instead draw an image of the two as complementary

and depending on each other. They are interlinked not only on the technical and procedural level (such as a detention warrant leading to a physical detention) but also, as this entire dissertation aims to show, from the point of view of ‘street-level’ agents themselves. It is the language of the law, and the reassurance that paper work provides (as demonstrated above by the detention centre director) that provides ‘street-level’ agents with their own personal justification for their actions. Without embarking on literary references to Arendt’s *Eichman in Jerusalem*, or Herzfeld’s *The Social Production of Indifference*, this chapter discusses the basis of contemporary examples from Israel’s immigration enforcement agencies, with a special focus on bureaucratic technologies.

Bureaucratic spaces, moral voids

Heyman (1995) discusses various aspects of the anthropology of bureaucracy in his decades long work, conducting ethnographies of immigration and naturalization services on the US-Mexico border. Heyman describes bureaucracies as “hierarchical organisations designed to force the production of thoughts as a work duty”. According to Heyman:

“Thought-work occurs under regulated and monitored circumstances. It is distinct from the autonomous contemplation, memorization, or recitation involved in other systems of conceptual production. Thought-work is required of any attempt to control the behavior of other human beings because those human beings have their own wills and motivations and their responses cannot be entirely anticipated by instructions” (1995: 270).

The study of the everyday translation of policy into immigration enforcement, and the technologies it utilizes, provides an insight into the moral space in which ‘street-level’ agents are expected to manoeuvre, within state agencies operating to solve social and political issues using technological aids. High tech laboratories for document verification (see Chapter Five), hyper bureaucratic procedures, total documentation of the asylum procedure by files and video, and repeated biometric authentication of identities all produce a clean legal apparatus to execute an orderly and democratic state procedure. Such technologies provide space for state employees to prove to themselves that they are operating as part of a democratic state, and ethically and morally in line with Western colleagues.

The technologies embedded in Israel’s Ministry of Interior that

are used to process African asylum seekers, and the legal and discursive frameworks in which they are introduced and appropriated, have a similar effect on 'street-level' state servants as the electric buttons, dials, and white laboratory robes in Stanley Milgram's (1974) experiment had on his student research subjects. Milgram's well-known experiment measured willingness to "obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts conflicting with their personal conscience, using a technological intermediary in a coherent, laboratory-like set up. The experiment found that a very high proportion of people were prepared to obey, albeit unwillingly, even if apparently causing serious injury and distress." (Milgram 1974:36).

This is precisely the space in which the concepts of good and evil conflate: in a state with a robust refugee status determination mechanism costing tens of millions of shekels per year, and which recognises 0.01% of the asylum appeals submitted. In the words of the director of the Refugee Status Determination Unit, reflecting on his role in processing African asylum seekers:

I told you before, at my office, when you asked about the gaps between the Israeli acceptance rates and those of European countries. I prefer having a thousand liars passing here through our unit, and getting their refugee status without deserving it, then denying it un-righteously from someone who deserves it. This is why we verify all the asylum requests in the very best way possible. Every man faces himself here. His story and his papers.

Under such terms, it is no wonder that the director simply dismisses the core of the refugee status determination procedure, instead redefining the goal of the entire process and reversing the roles of good and evil, truth and falsehood. Christopher Browning's research (1998) on Unit 101 in German-occupied Poland, which in 1942 committed massacres and round-ups of Jews for deportations to the Nazi death camps, follows a similar logic and provides an additional historic approval of Arendt's and Milgram's thesis. According to Browning (1998:18):

"The men of Unit 101 were not ardent Nazis but ordinary middle-aged men of working-class background from Hamburg, who had been drafted but found ineligible for regular military duty. After their return to Poland these men were ordered to terrorize Jews in the ghettos, and in notable cases, committed wholesale massacres of all Polish Jews—men, women and children. In other cases, they were ordered to merely kill a specified number

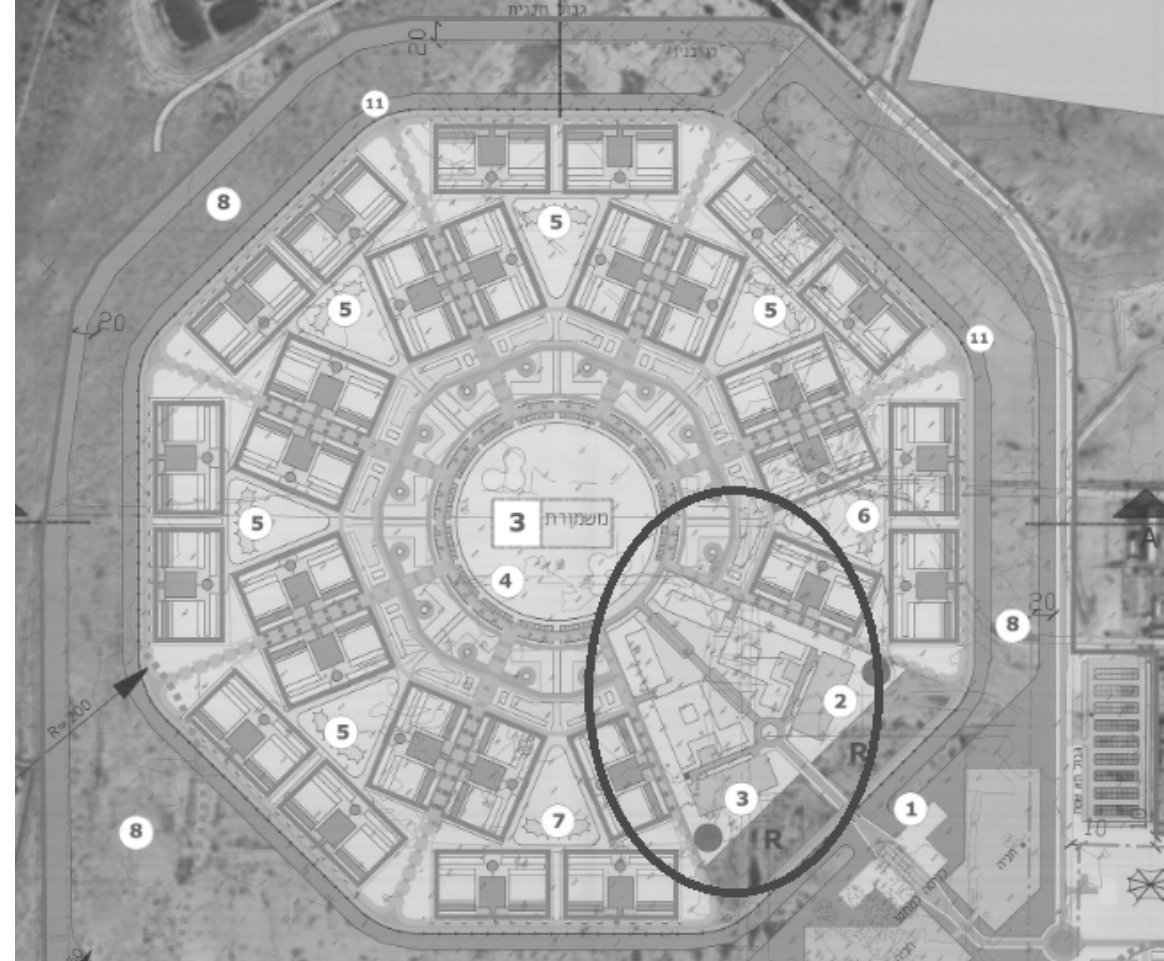


Figure 5: An excerpt from the Holot Detention Center planning scheme. The circled 'slices' (2, 3) are the only currently operative sections. Others are reserved for future expansion. The two currently active sections hold 3,650 African asylum seekers.

Figure 6: A biometric magnetic card of a detainee at the Holot Immigration Detention Center. While the card is provided by the Israeli Prison Service, which operates the detention centre, asylum seekers are not defined as prisoners or even detainees. The Hebrew writing on the card suggest 'a sojourner identity card'. Photo: Ilan Amit.

of Jews in a given town or area. The commander of the unit gave his men the choice of opting out of this duty if they found it too hard”.

Browning describes a reality in which almost all of them chose not to exercise that option. The conclusion of Browning's book, influenced in part by Milgram's experiment, was that the men of Unit 101 killed out of a basic obedience to authority and peer pressure, not blood-lust or primal hatred. In his book *The Killing Compartments* (2015), the Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan draws upon his research on the conditions advancing genocide to contradict the thesis on the 'banality of evil' shared by Arendt, Milgram and Browning. De Swaan researched the cultural context and the state of mind of those who conducted mass slaughters during the 20th century. Genocide, writes de Swaan, was preceded by strong cognitive and emotional characteristics: the capacity of the dominant group to create a "powerful internal cohesiveness, a sense of exaltation, the cultivation of a shared glorious history, and a sense of common mission and non-identification with the Other" (De Swaan 2015:67). Such a process usually takes place after the minority group is separated from the dominant group physically and symbolically. It is tempting, within the study of state deportation regimes, to make such an analogy with the dissertation of the banality of evil. But this dissertation also blurs historical differences and contexts, and eventually may make it harder to understand what the nature of such studies resists. The state of Israel is not a Nazi state; it has no intentions of conquering broad parts of the world, and it did not industrialise the extermination of the Palestinians or the African asylum seekers. While some similarities are found in the comparison with the apartheid regime, it cannot be referred to simply as an apartheid state, at least not outside of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The discussion that evolves in this section and the next concerns how the discretionary work involved in immigration enforcement agencies provides space for 'street-level' agents, and the ways in which various technologies validate the moral choices and procedural decisions they receive on a daily basis.

**'When I wear my uniforms, I take off my emotions':
Everyday 'street-level' enforcement**

In the early days of its operation, the 'street-level' inspection unit, which conducted searches and arrests of various non-Jewish,

non-Israelis, was criticized not only by human rights organisations but by employers of labor migrants as well. Criticism targeted the unit's military-like methods and the arrest, detention and deportation of minors and even toddlers. The unit, in an attempt to save its reputation, offered a veteran Israeli news reporter from the then sympathetic news corporation Ma'ariv to join their 'street-level' actions.⁶⁴ They wanted to share the complexity and difficulties of their work, hoping it would portray them in a positive light.⁶⁵ The resulting article was titled 'Hunting season: a field week with the OZ unit'. OZ, at the time, was Israel's 'street-level' immigration enforcement unit, responsible mostly for the conduction of searches, arrests, and carrying out deportations. The outcome turned out to be quite the opposite of that intended, and the cooperation to produce the news article turned out to be the first and the last that the unit ever granted. The article was deleted from the front page of the original news site but was luckily archived on the web.⁶⁶ This article is very telling, as the coming paragraphs demonstrate:

I don't give a damn about all this criticism about us" [says Asaf Hayun, a 'street-level' officer] "I am not ashamed of what I do. This is holy work we're doing here. I walk the streets with my back straight. These people (criticizing me) think that they (the foreigners) are miserable, and that it's a shame we deport them. They pollute the state with drugs and diseases and occupy the positions of our unemployed (...) they come and they stay and they have children too. Take a walk in Levinsky (South Tel Aviv) and you'll see what's happening over there. Pollution and dirt (...) and they can contaminate you with disease as well while they are robbing and stealing. We have to remove them. Yes, they are miserable, and they simply came here looking for a job. But I'm on duty now as well, and if I won't do it nobody else will. I'm a professional. When I wear my uniforms, I take off my emotions.

What do you like about this job so much?

Hayun replies *"getting into a house, there's excitement about it. You want to find them. I love doing enforcement. Several weeks ago, we got into a house to verify information on an illegal caretaker. The homeowner denied, but we knew she was there. She was hiding behind a wall. She was holding a three-year-old child. The baby didn't even squeak, but then she*

64 Liat Shlezinger.

65 I received this explanation regarding this one specific news article from the Israeli Ministry of Interior spokesperson

66 http://cafe.themarker.com/post/1168486/module/blog_post/?plasma=true

started to cry. She understood she had to go home. For me, catching her is an achievement.

Hayun was a criminal investigator for the Israeli military police. Many others were recruited to the unit after serving the military and the police, after stumbling upon the advertisement for new recruits.

In his book *When the State Meets the Street* (2017), Bernardo Zacka explores the moral lives of 'street-level' agents, bureaucrats and police officers who serve as the government's face to ordinary citizens. Such agents, during service in various state bureaucracies, are expected to act sensibly in a challenging work environment. Confronted by the pressure of everyday workload, state authority, as well as their peers, "they often and unknowingly settle for one of several reductive conceptions of their responsibilities, each by itself pathological in the face of a complex, unexpected and messy reality" (Zacka 2017:32). Zacka suggests that "by reducing the capacity for independent judgement, eroding individual agency, diluting the sense of individual responsibility, and blocking human responses, bureaucracies create an environment that is hostile to moral personhood (ibid: 33). It is important to note that this charge is meant to apply to bureaucratic organisations with some generality and not simply to Nazi bureaucracies. The latter are simply thought to have taken things to the extreme, and thus to have rendered visible tendencies that are latent in any bureaucratic organisation.

Yigal Ben Ami, the commander of the Tel Aviv immigration enforcement patrol team at the time of preparing the news piece, was the commander of the Nes Ziona police station, a small Tel Aviv satellite town. Nowadays, Ben Ami is the director of the entire immigration enforcement unit and is in charge of hundreds of personnel, patrol teams and the Refugee Status Determination Unit surveyed extensively in this dissertation. Ben Ami stated in my interview with him:

This is not a 'grey' job. We are exposed to very unfortunate cases here. People have built whole lives here and our job is to slash it while they are living them to the fullest. But ten years from now there will be a third world country here and we will end up being the immigrants to other countries because we will not want to be here anymore. They are not criminals, they are miserable. Yesterday we held a Filipino woman, who had an expired visa, for inspection. We took her to the pre-deportation arrest and she broke into tears. An elderly lady. I gave her chocolate and some paper tissues so she could wipe her tears. That's all I could do.

Scholars have shown that the bureaucratic encounter itself—the moment people come into contact with public agencies—can be demeaning, disempowering, and paternalistic; that it can contribute to reinforcing status distinctions, and that it can discourage citizens from being active participants in political life (Lipsky 2010, Soss et al. 2011, Graeber 2012). When applied to non-citizens, the effect achieved by deportation is simply removal from political life and social agency altogether.

To a great extent, the effectivity of the current deportation campaign against African asylum seekers has stemmed from its convincing portrayal of those present in Israel as a problem in need of solution. More specifically, the campaign has constructed and disseminated the message that African asylum seekers pose a new kind of fundamental threat to the ‘security’ and the integrity of the Israeli state and Israeli society. This ongoing campaign, rooted in a campaign taking place a decade ago that called for the deportation of international labour migrants in Israel (Willen 2007), operates according to what Foucault (2004) describes as a regime of governmental rationality or ‘governmentality’ that is bolstered by a particular ideological vision of the Israeli state and the imagined community it embodies.

To understand the efficiency of the Immigration Police we therefore need to consider the particular Israeli ‘governmentality’, to use Michel Foucault’s term, which is based on the conversion of most political and civil issues into national security threats. In other words, we should consider the particularly Israeli way of managing a population and running a state, which is contingent on the cultivation of a particular subjectivity. This subjectivity of Jewish Israelis is conspicuously attuned to the need of the Jewish state to protect its territorial and ethno-religious borders from the perceived invasion of non-Jewish elements. The cultivation of this subjectivity among Jewish Israelis is largely predicated on the collective remembrance of the Jewish history of persecution and exclusion (Kalir 2010).

In certain cases regarding African asylum seekers, Israeli governmentality walks a thin line: while remembering the personal, historical horrors of prosecution and exclusion, and attempting to not sit in the perpetrator’s seat, the state does everything in its power to remove non-Jewish, non-Israeli people from Israel. Such is the case of the ‘deposit fund’, a segment of the anti-‘infiltration’ law.

The anti ‘infiltration’ law:

A creative addition of taxation and employment restrictions

The Israeli government has been creative in the past decade in utilizing new forces in order to make the lives of asylum seekers less pleasant in the country. Former Minister of Interior Eli Yishai, an architect of the Israeli deportation regime who is personally responsible for many of the various mechanisms described here, makes a comparison between the African asylum seekers and the much-feared Iranian nuclear threat in Israel, while stating his intentions:⁶⁷

The threat of the infiltrators is not less severe than the Iranian threat. Until I have the possibility to deport them, I will put them in detention and make their lives miserable.

Such intentions have not remained theoretical, but have moved on to implementation. A late addition to a long list of limitations and restrictions on various aspects of daily life comes in the form of taxation and employment restrictions on African asylum seekers and their employers. The Israeli Supreme Court recently handed down concomitantly two decisions that would further restrict the employment opportunities of asylum seekers in Israel. In one decision,⁶⁸ taken in September 2017, the supreme court ruled that a tax of up to 30% would be levied on employers who employ ‘foreign workers’ as well as on the African asylum seekers themselves. This would apply to employers who employ Eritrean and Sudanese nationals. Both deductions are then placed in a fund that migrants can claim only outside of Israeli state borders (received by electronic transfer). African asylum seekers are employed state-wide in the service sector, more specifically in cleaning, gardening and physical manual work. This is especially true for large scale institutions such as hospitals, which broadly rely on their labour. The second addition to the law simply means a mass firing of African asylum seekers in order to continue the flow of governmental budgets to those institutions.

According to Noa Kaufman, a researcher in one of Israel’s pro-immigration NGO’s ‘Kav Laoved’ “The purpose of setting up the fund, according to the law, is to ‘ensure the exit of infiltrators from Israel and to increase enforcement’, however, there are specific conditions to the

67 <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4269522,00.html>

68 Civ. App. 4946/16 Saad v. Revenue Services, Ashkelon Branch, <http://elyon1.court.gov.il/files/16/460/049/T28/16049460.T28.htm> (in Hebrew, 12.9.2017).

manner in which the worker may get these funds. First, the worker must leave Israel, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in order to receive the money. Upon his/her departure, the worker may receive two thirds of the money accumulated in the fund (including the profits made, deducing commissions and taxes). The remaining third is conditioned: once the worker's permit expires there is a growing portion of the fund, which s/he does not receive. The law includes the following table:⁶⁹ (Figure 1).

<u>Extension of residency (lag)</u>	<u>Rate of deduction</u>
Between 1 and 2 months	25%
Between 2 and 3 months	35%
Between 3 and 4 months	50%
Between 4 and 5 months	65%
Between 5 and 6 months	80%
Over six months	100%

Figure 1: The rate of deduction due to a lag in 'voluntary' departure (full table in Hebrew in origin)⁷⁰.

For example, an African asylum seeker who makes 14,916 euros per year working full-time for minimum wage in Israel⁷¹ will have to deposit almost 3000 euro to the 'infiltrators deposit fund'. If he fails to leave the country within five to six months from reception of his deportation order, he will have 600 euros remaining from his fund.

Given that African asylum seekers residing in the state of Israel for years, and labour migrants remaining in Israel for long periods due to various reasons, the majority of them will receive the minimum amount in return after departure; that is, 20% of the total deposited sum. "The result of this amendment, is that the wages of workers are severely depleted, and there is a misappropriation of wages and social rights that they are legally entitled to in order to pressure him/her to leave the country."⁷²

But immigration enforcement, whether in the form of detention, deportation or exclusion from the labour market, is not equally projected at all deportable subjects. There is an internal logic that stratifies various deportable populations and, therefore, their eligibility for enforcement.

69 <http://the-migrant.co.il/en/node/30>

70 See table (in Hebrew) p.6: <https://www.gozlan-luria.co.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2.pdf>

71 <https://www.btl.gov.il/English%20Homepage/Mediniyut/GeneralInformation/Pages/Minimum-Wage.aspx> Minimum wage in Israel, as of 1.1.2018, was 1,243 euros.

72 <http://the-migrant.co.il/en/node/30>

The prioritizing aspect of deportation regimes: Lessons from the Israeli case

Deportation regimes can act or perform as robust and absolute, weak and porous, or simply ambiguous, but beyond the issue of effectiveness stands the question of selective targeting. While in each and every state a variety of populations can be targeted by the state's deportation regime, states only gain traction with some. As the Israeli case shows, one of the most important aspects of deportation is its multi-faced nature, conceptually and operationally. From policy design to the physical act of expulsion, deportation can validate, serve, and fulfil multiple needs of the state. It can be used politically on the local level in the form of pacifying pro-deportation civil unrest, or to send a clear impugning message to liberal, pluralistic voices and institutions, as Chapters Six and Seven will demonstrate. Regarding economic aspects, deportation is used as means to gaining control over large-scale labour and employment (Kemp and Raijman 2008), and socially as a domestic process of re-establishing and strengthening boundaries of citizenship inclusion and exclusion (Foner and Simon 2015, Kasinitz and Waters 2015). These have a direct impact on the selectivity of the target deportable populations and the audience for performative goals. As the Israeli case serves as one of the most robust and effective deportation regimes operating, its analysis can generate a contribution to the overall study of state deportation regimes. During one of my interviews, I caught a glimpse of the state's considerations regarding prioritizing deportations:

Nobody remembers this, but in the beginning, when the Sudanese began to arrive through Sinai, the immigration enforcement agents refused to accept them, refused to arrest them. Sudan is defined as an enemy state, so you can't deport Sudanese back to Sudan because you can't land there. So, the Sudanese got stuck at the detention centres for long periods of time and totally filled them up. So, the immigration police couldn't arrest the Thais and the Turkish and the Philippines in order to deport them.⁷³

Israel's deportation regime is effective, but selective. While certain groups are deported, others who may be equally deemed deportable are ignored. While some face a powerful bureaucracy of coercion to leave the state's borders, others are left untouched regardless of their

73 Interview, external relations director, UNHCR, Tel Aviv office, 30.3.2016.

ambiguous legal status. The question discussed here is: how does the Israeli deportation regime prioritize its targets? The answer lies in a constellation of state balances between the will to perform the assurance of the state's Jewish character, and the means to act in order to do so. This will assist us in delimiting the borders of Israel's deportation regime in two ways: it will show the extent to which Israel aspires to remove non-Jews, and the limits of its power to do so. While the aim is to focus on 'street-level' practices as much as possible, in some cases the answer is to be found in policy analysis. Asking the Israeli Ministry of Interior's head attorney about the issue of enforcement provided me with a glimpse of the ambiguity of the entire process:

At the Holot detention centre there is not enough space. Otherwise, they would have all been there. So, if we don't have a solution for them, and we allow them to be here, then they have to do something with themselves, don't they? they have to provide for themselves. So, we've guaranteed the supreme court that we will keep a blind eye, as long as we don't have another solution for them. The state doesn't have a solution for them, so we let them work, and do not enforce their labor restriction. Who gets enforced? On which infiltrators do we still impose enforcement? On those for example who ran away from the detention centre or haven't made it on time for their visa renewal. They get enforced.

The state issues a warrant which restricts the access of asylum seekers to the labour market. The only ones who are allowed to work are those who have managed to apply for asylum, only a small part of the entire population of legally defined 'infiltrators'. Renewal of the temporary 'infiltrator' residence permit takes place at one location in the state on a monthly basis, where long lines, occasionally of several thousand African asylum seekers, wait for a renewal stamp. Failing to renew one's visa is considered a violation of Israeli law and may lead to incarceration or deportation. But even when a visa is renewed on time, there may be a catch. Detention in Holot is determined upon a large variety of variables, which constantly change according to governmental decisions. Upon arrival for renewal, one might receive a detention order and sent immediately to the remote detention centre. The result is life in a constant state of anxiety, in what amounts to a regime of bureaucratic state terror.

Golash-Boza(2009)explorestheU.SImmigrationindustrialcomplex, asking why the state enforces robust and expensive immigration policies

that are destined to fail. She concludes that "the discord between rhetoric and reality when it comes to immigration policy points to the importance of using a framework similar to that of the prison industrial complex and the military industrial complex to understand the immigration industrial complex. These three complexes share three major features: (a) a rhetoric of fear; (b) the confluence of powerful interests; and (c) a discourse of otherization. with the military build-up during the Cold War, the 'others' were communists. With the prison expansion of the 1990s, the 'others' were criminals (often racialized and gendered as black men). With the expansion of the immigration industrial complex, the 'others' are 'illegals' (racialized as Mexicans). What is common to the different cases and historic contexts is that the creation of an undesirable other created popular support for government spending to safeguard the nation". (Golash-Boza (2009: 294).

A large number of variants can determine the deportability of a given asylum seeker. Some of these variants may be visible upon entry to the state or in public spaces. Some of the variants determining the prioritization of deportability may have nothing to do with the acts of the deportable subjects themselves, such as the ability of the state to achieve third-state agreements, providing destinations for deportation. As tempting as it is to focus on the ubiquitous performance of immigration enforcement as demonstrated earlier in this chapter, we must not forget that the entire matter is dependent first and foremost on the governmentality of borders. In relation to border enforcement, what is striking in the Israeli case is the lack of interest in performing border work and the actual, practical creation of a rooted, solid and durable entity, an undeniable line inscribed in the landscape. This stands in contrast to a large body of literature discussing border fluidity. Schendel (2005) describes commodities, persons and ideas crossing the borders of territorial states, while their movement is difficult to study adequately by means of territorial methodology or state centred concepts. Schendel describes borders as spaces of engagement and cultural diffusion, as well as pivotal nodes of capital, labour and culture. Andrijasevic and Walters (2010:977) discuss these issues in their article 'The international organisation for migration and the international government of borders'. They describe "different ways one can observe in very material terms how the project of making borders into a problem of 'management' conflicts with a perception of borders as sites of social struggle and politics." Passi (2007) suggests that we observe and understand borders and ethno-national boundaries as social processes.

He defies the perception, common to political scientists and political geographers, of borders as fixed, stable, empirical entities. Passi emphasizes the meaning of borders and boundaries in the construction, organisation and reproduction of social life, territoriality and power.

In light of the rigidity of the Israeli borders, the notion I wish to suggest here is that the Israeli deportation regime is inseparable from the Israeli border regime. Israeli borders are removed from the mobility, fluidity and zones of interaction described above. Is it the rigidity of the borders that dictates the strictness of the deportation regime, or is it the other way around? Through which ties are they bonded?

But there is an additional component to the prioritisation of the deportation regime in general, and specifically Israel's choice to focus on African asylum seekers (although, for example, the state could have targeted tens of thousands of Eastern European illegalised residents in Israel). This is the choice of anti-immigration, pro-deportation activists, and their highlighting of certain groups (as demonstrated in Chapter Six) and the specific terminology that such popular campaigns utilise against the selected target populations. Currently, African asylum seekers are the main target of Israel's immigration enforcement agencies. Israel managed to achieve transfer agreements regarding African asylum seekers with two states.⁷⁴ In 2013, it was announced that:

...an agreement with a "safe third country" had been reached for the transfer of "infiltrators" and, in 2014, transfers to two African countries commenced. The government consistently refuses to reveal the identity of the countries, the content of the agreements, or any other details, but it is now known that transfers were made to Uganda and Rwanda. So far, approximately 4,000 "infiltrators", most of them Sudanese and Eritrean, have been transferred there from Israel under the 'voluntary departure' program (Bar-Tuvia 2018: 5).

Eventually the two countries backtracked and the plan collapsed. The only state besides Israel that is currently experimenting with such an unprecedented policy against asylum seekers, namely their permanent transfer to less developed and less stable countries in return for some form of payment to these receiving countries, is Australia. The comparative view of the two states, on the basis of their settler-

⁷⁴ Population Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA), Ministry of Interior, 'A Proactive Procedure for Removing Infiltrators from Holot to a Third State' (31 March 2015, in Hebrew).

colonial characteristics, is not merely historical or theoretical. It is also practical, as the two states have been active in their implementation of exclusionary policies, grounded in their specific ethno-national contexts of racialized control.

**'When grammar breaks down':
A matter out of discourse, a target for exclusion**

During parliamentary meetings or discussions between state personnel in court, a conflation of the terms 'deportation' and 'voluntary return' occurs. Examples are abundant, even in rare cases in which the speakers are affiliated with the left side of the political map, clearly opposing deportation and supporting the granting of the asylum seekers with refugee status. For example, Michal Rozin, a member of the opposition left-wing party Meretz, stated in what may appear as an oxymoron:⁷⁵

Most of the voluntary returnees are from Sudan, that's because it's less of a problem for us to deport them.

While to the external observer this conflation of terms may appear enigmatic, it actually makes a lot more sense when participating in parliamentary meetings discussing the processing of the African 'infiltrators'. The term 'immigration' is not used in Hebrew; it is replaced by *Alia* or *Yerida*, which refer to Jewish-only immigration or emigration. The language lacks the terms to describe immigration, and the grammar applied disables their use.

According to Baumann and Gingrich (2004:18) "a structural and comparative approach to the articulations of identity and alterity, has immediate implications also for an understanding of extreme forms of collective and genocidal violence." (Baumann and Gingrich 2004:18). They suggest that "just as linguistic grammars offer a set of rules which allow sentences to be formulated, so these social grammars offer a set of rules which allow otherings to be articulated". (Baumann and Gingrich 2004:18). They use examples from various historical backgrounds such as the 'coloureds' of apartheid South Africa or the 'half-breeds' of the nineteenth-century US west." Baumann and Gingrich's strongest argument, which coincides the most with the Israeli case, is that "grammars

⁷⁵ Protocol no. 35. The committee for the examination of the labour migration problem, the Israeli parliament, Jerusalem, 19.3.2014.

are assigned a normative status by the social and cultural contexts that privilege, or indeed demand, one or another grammar to be used. Those who use an orientaling grammar to define others normatively expect these others to recognize themselves as the non-contemporaneous negative mirror images of the orientalizers, and orientalists normatively expect other orientalists to use the orientalist grammar rather than the grammar of segmentation or the grammar of encompassment in given contexts". Baumann and Gingrich's (2004:21) Such grammars do not primarily focus on any kind of individual action and interaction, but on those forms of agency that constitute relations between human groups. While genocidal grammars are in no way 'immune' to individualist interpretation, the main thrust of their conceptualization is directed towards social agency rather than individual action. When grammar breaks down, the other cannot be related to in a human way. This is the stage in which genocidal violence takes place.

While not comparing the acts of the Israeli deportation regime to those of historical genocide, I have focused here, as in the previous chapter, on the totality of the social act in the Israeli case, which can be seen and understood as a form of spatial ethnic cleansing. It is the meticulous, sisyphic task of sorting out and deporting every non-Jewish, non-Israeli person in Israel, to the last of them, regardless of the reason for their residency or their ethnic affiliation.

Conclusion

The contribution this chapter wished to make was not to shed light on Israeli case in particular, generating a better understanding of the state and the Israeli people. Instead, it focused on studying the characteristics of a highly effective mechanism of immigration enforcement, and aimed to make an academic contribution in two parallel and separate fields: the study of bureaucracy and 'street-level' enforcement, and the study of immigration control.

If the common claim in literature that security practices produce the insecurities they seek to prevent is true (Badredine 1998, Bar-Tal 2001, Walters 2012), then the Israeli state probably provides its best example. Within the context of the arrival of African asylum seekers, the more the Israeli state fortifies its borders in order to effectively prevent their entry, places them in securitized detention, and addresses them as a threat to the very existent of the Jewish state, the fiercer the campaigns for their vilification, either by state officials or by pro-

deportation civil society activists, become.

The ethnography presented in this chapter surveyed the everyday work of several immigration enforcement mechanisms, including the Refugee Status Determination Unit and the Holot Immigration Detention Centre. Findings from fieldwork conducted at the Refugee Status Determination Unit shed light on the motivations of the unit's staff. Holding a strong belief that asylum seekers are 'infiltrators' and labour migrants places the burden of proof on their shoulders. Their task is to find the 'hole' in each and every 'story' told by an 'infiltrator' which will enable them to disqualify his/her application and turn them legally into deportable subjects. This focus on the agents' motivation to do their job properly and seek the 'truth' contributes to our understanding of the implementation surplus, which characterizes the entire work of Israel's immigration enforcement.

The fortification of Israel's border, specifically with the Sinai, offers a very practical example of the work of Israel's 'street-level' immigration enforcement agents. The fact that entering the state illegally by land has become next to impossible materialises the state's aspiration to 'purify' itself of its non-Jewish, non-Israeli residents. In such a reality of enforcement, coercive measures can be used to their fullest extent. The example of the Holot detention centre, and the disproportionate use of technology in the form of the massive biometric system at its core, is probably the most obvious example. It adds to a long list of coercive, normative mechanisms such as the 'infiltrators' deposit fund and bureaucratic torture (Lavie 2014) concerning the requirement to constantly renew temporary residence visas. The effectiveness of the described mechanisms speaks for itself. With the constant drop in the numbers of African asylum seekers in Israel, the director of Holot is probably correct when he states that in a decade or less Holot will probably not exist, because the state of Israel will 'find the right balance'.

The next chapter examines various international aspects of Israel's immigration enforcement. These include the marketization of enforcement technologies, collaboration with international peers and the internal impact that exposure to similar international cases has on the work of the Israeli agents.

Killing a fly with a cannon: The export of Israel's technologies of immigration enforcement and the positioning of 'street-level' agents among international counterparts

“Something has changed in the past two years. They used to look at our numbers up there in Brussels, in regard of the infiltrators, and say—those Israelis, how can they allow themselves to do things that way? But now it's more like, those Israelis, how do they manage to work it out this way? What can we learn from them?” — Israel's representative to the OECD expert group on migration

“Israel is the world's shopping mall for homeland security technologies.” — Naomi Klein (2007:428)

Introduction

Previous chapters have described the work of Israel's various immigration enforcement agencies and the construction of the state's immigration enforcement. Following my discussion of the work of such exclusionary state mechanisms and the ways in which they reflect Israel's mechanisms of colonial rule, this chapter addresses the international aspects of Israel's deportation regime. It does so by highlighting several aspects of the export of Israeli immigration enforcement and surveillance technologies, such as the exposure of Israeli immigration enforcement agents to their international counterparts and the ways in which such exposure resonates with their work. Another consequence of the Israeli export of such technologies and exposure to international, mostly European, peers is the positioning of Israeli immigration enforcement agents among international peers. Such a positioning, as this chapter suggests, relieves Israeli agents from moral and ethical considerations as it normalises their work within a competitive, international field.

However, the introduction of technologies into immigration enforcement and detention also blurs the jurisdictions between the various enforcing agencies such as the Israeli Prison Service, the Population, Immigration and Border Authority and the Ministry of Interior. Once the deportable subjects become electronic files it matters less to agents which authority handles them exactly, as visibility and performativity become less important and the roles, jurisdictions and responsibilities between various units are conflated.

When asylum seekers initiated their entry into Israel through the Sinai, the state responded in a way that was aligned with previous national responses to newly formed geo-political conditions: by means of fortification and maximum securitisation. The arrival of asylum seekers was cast as a ‘problem’ in need of a ‘solution’, and as a threat to the existence of the state itself. As previous chapters demonstrated, the state’s response, on the basis of security means, was effective. It terminated any further entries of African asylum seekers, while producing a steady departure of asylum seekers who had entered the state prior to the terminal closure of borders. In a governmental meeting dedicated to the ‘solution’ of the ‘problem’, the then Minister of Finance, Yuval Steinitz, concluded:⁷⁶

If Israel wants to secure its character as a Jewish, Zionist state, it has to stop the immigration from Africa. We are learning from the experience of other states in Europe. They have initiated detention centres and have legislated acts in order to face illegal immigration.

While the Minister of Finance was pointing at the need to learn from European states, a parallel process was taking place, that of exporting Israeli homeland security technologies for the use of immigration enforcement to Europe. Such exports were based on the ‘success’ that Israel generated in the use of similar technologies by various security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Such a ‘success’ has attracted the attention of international, mostly European, parallels to the Israeli immigration enforcement mechanisms. Within the last several years, as the ethnography in this chapter demonstrates, Israel’s immigration enforcement agencies have been communicating and exchanging knowledge with other international border security forces in various forms. In some cases, certain technologies, policies or legal interpretations are exported to European states.

Prior to the establishment of the Refugee Status Determination Unit, the Israeli government had claimed that the percentage of ‘actual’ refugees, out of the entire group of African asylum seekers is 0.01%. Such acceptance rates are unprecedented in Western states practicing similar asylum procedures.⁷⁷ Ethnographic materials suggest that the process of exporting the Israeli deportation regime begins by mapping a variety of

76 28.11.2010. Yuval Steinitz, the Israeli Parliament. <https://news.walla.co.il/item/1760658>

77 http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/u8/Asylum%20seekers%20Eritrea%20Sudan%20in%20Israel%20June%202016_0.pdf

national responses to the arrival of refugees prior to their ‘improvement’ with Israeli legislation and technologies. Cohen,⁷⁸ the director of CIMI,⁷⁹ an Israeli branch of the IOM, had been arranging study trips to Europe for the directors of various units of Israel’s Population Immigration and Border Authority and accompanying them on these trips, along with department directors from other related governmental agencies. These include meetings with parallel authorities, community centres for refugees and asylum seekers, refugee status determination units and temporary residencies for asylum seekers in other countries. Cohen shared his experience from joint trips with the immigration enforcement staff:

I’ve been there with them, not long ago, we visited Italy together. The whole idea was that if we will show them how things work in other countries, maybe they will change their minds a bit, soften up a bit. I even helped them arrange some of those study visits. But no, it doesn’t work that way. They are very interested in what’s happening in other countries, but they always look for the most minimal standards possible, in everything, and then they challenge those standards. We visited a detention centre in Italy, I was there with the head of the enforcement unit. And he was very interested in the numbers. How many people in a room, how many toilets for how many people, etc. Then, the whole conversation among them was about how in certain things, we offer better conditions in Holot, and how we should immediately lower the standards, if Italy can do those things, we surely must do them as well.

From battlefield proven to refugee ‘crisis’ durable

Several motives stand behind the export of Israeli deportation technologies and policies to Western states. Findings suggest that some of those motives are not merely economic, and that the export of exclusionary technologies to Western states serves the state of Israel by way of neutralising international criticism and securing its position in the international community. Israeli technologies and policies regarding what constitutes a ‘successful’ national reaction to the perceived ‘refugee crisis’ are not simply exported as stories of success. They are accompanied by a narrative that binds the arrival of refugees with a security crisis at a national level portraying asylum seekers as potential terrorists and leading to an immediate push for

78 Interview with Ilan Cohen, Jerusalem, 7.4.2016

79 <https://www.cimi.org.il/>

deep securitisation. This narrative is reinforced by Israelis in Israel, a nation that progresses and evolves from one security crisis to the other (Midzen 2006, Yacobi 2008, Kalir 2010, Shokeid 2015).

The first step in exporting the Israeli deportation regime is rooted in problematizing movement in general, and specifically that of non-citizens across national borders. Such a narrative is shared with Western representatives of state immigration control personnel, diplomats and ministers, and by a variety of representatives from Israel's hyper-securitised Population, Immigration and Border Authority. These include state immigration attorneys, refugee status interviewers, field enforcement personnel, and wardens of Israel's detention centre for African asylum seekers operated by the Israeli Prison Service. This narrative forms a unique relationship between Israel and Western states facing the 'refugee crisis' in the sense of 'we are all in this together', with Israel providing a helping hand. Such a relationship blurs questions of the morality and violations of international law behind Israel's exclusionary migration policies towards asylum seekers, and of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It begins with imagining the future of the Israeli state and its mechanisms of migration and population control, and how they will be perceived by the international community. It ends by taking pride in the state's rapid response under what is portrayed as an African 'invasion' that threatens to compromise the very foundation of the state. It also suggests that social and national problems can be solved by technological means, either by adaptation or by intensity of use. I suggest that the blurring between securitization and migration control, as natural as it is to Israel's representatives within the Israeli context, is not natural and normal, and that its motivations and implications should be further inspected. In this sense, a better understanding of this intentional blur assists us in understanding how the combination of technologies, policies and the Israeli security narrative combine to form a trustworthy, exportable model of migration control.

The Israeli security exports

Israel has more surveillance companies per capita than any other country in the world and uses non-stop surveillance in its military occupation of the Palestinians (Klein 2007). Hewlett Packard, for example, developed the hi-tech chip card that is being used by Palestinians at Israeli checkpoints. The card and the system to which it is

connected collects biometric data such as facial maps, fingerprints, and retina prints. The same card is being used nowadays for the biometric documentation and surveillance of African asylum seekers at Holot.

Israel is one of the world's major exporters of military equipment, accounting for 10% of the world's total.⁸⁰ Various media reports provide indications of the growing interest of European states in Israel's technology of handling irregular migration.⁸¹ Such technologies include border fencing for the prevention of entry, robotic border patrols, detention technologies, and surveillance and biometric documentation systems. Some of these foreign interests have materialised into practical measures, and mass deals with Israeli security companies have been signed.⁸² The amount of media reports, research projects and documentaries concerning Israel's export of military equipment is in accordance with this interest. In recent years, the focus on Israel's military industry complex has seemed to shifting from war or fighting-related products to migration and population control and surveillance. This is evident in the fact that during 2015, the peak year of the perceived refugee 'crisis', Israel's export of security-related systems to the USA and European countries doubled, amounting to 6.5 billion dollars.⁸³

It is not the magnitude of Israel's military industry complex that matters here, but the role that it has in the appropriation of technology for security use. It seems that Israel holds a perception according to which there are technological solutions to social and political problems. Several human rights organisations and funds, such as The Fellowship of Reconciliation in the UK, have recently addressed what they describe as the growing 'accountability vacuum' regarding armed drone attacks and the worrying 'Play Station mentality' that comes with it. Their report, 'Convenient Killing', highlighted the number of casualties in Gaza, including civilians' deaths.⁸⁴ Another example is found in 'smart fences' such as the Roboguard (see Figure 1). This technology was once used for the management of livestock in large scale farming, and was later appropriated by Israeli companies for border patrolling. The Roboguard can be mounted with machine guns or grenade launchers as well, in its 'response' mode.⁸⁵

80 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/defense-industry-the-business-of-war-in-israel-a-988245.html>

81 <http://www.haaretz.com/Israel-news/1.780198>

82 <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2016/06/Israel-conflicts-trade-weaponry.html>

83 <http://www.vjpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Military-exports-rise-to-65-billion-485574>

84 Cole, Ch., M. Dobbing and A. Hailwood (2010). From the conclusion: 'Far from resolving conflicts, their indiscriminate nature is fuelling further anger, mistrust and division between human communities and perpetuating cycles of violent conflict.'

85 <https://www.gd-ots.com/armaments/remote-weapons-stations/samson-mk2/>

Marketing the disproportionate use of technology

As noted by Tyner and Rice (2016) and Graeber (2015), bureaucracies, as structures of violence, ‘provide context for physical violence’. My fieldwork included a visit to the laboratory of the Refugee Status Determination Unit in which the validity of asylum seekers travel documents is tested. The disqualification of their authenticity renders asylum seekers as deportable, therefore providing the legal context for state violence in the form of detention and deportation.

My visit to the laboratory included an interview with the two head technicians, both of whom had backgrounds in Israel’s hi-tech industry. During the visit I was introduced to the variety of scanners and the large hi resolution screens connected to each of them. I was also introduced to the fine process of chemical washing, which selectively removes or highlights certain types of ink from passports or visas in order to expose what is underneath it, and I was given an explanation that the laboratory is connected to the two largest international confidential databases in the world, that of Interpol and the FBI. Both technicians were proud of their work at the lab and their high level of training, and were happy to share their pride with me. They had recently returned from a conference in Hungary where they gave lectures on the subject of passport forging, they serve as consultants for the Israeli police forensic lab, and they regularly travel to the USA to participate in FBI training. Not long ago they were visited by their counterparts from Italy and Germany, who came to learn about their advanced methods of work:

Me: Don’t you think that’s a bit too much? I would have expected that in the criminal field, but those are simply asylum seekers, this is an RSD unit...

E (technician): Look, we are experts in our field, it doesn’t matter to us if we do what we do here, or for the police. We do it in the best way we can, with the best tools we can put our hands on. We are not involved at all at the RSD process. We don’t see who’s coming in or out of the interviews, none of it... we get the passport or the paper, and a form, filled by the RSD interviewers and our job is to say if it’s true or false. We don’t only say if the papers are true or forged, our job is also to say if they match the story that the infiltrator tells the interviewer as it appears on the form. All of it later goes on to court as evidence... I’ll give you an example: not long ago we received a piece of paper, just regular paper, with stuff written on it, I’m not even sure what language that was. We were told that was a ransom letter given to an interviewee after his family was kidnapped. We ran some

tests on it, and showed the court that it is impossible. The paper and the ink couldn’t have come from where he said they did, and the paper couldn’t have been as old as he said it was.

Me: What happened to that guy?

E (technician): I don’t know, probably deported. As I told you, we are not at all involved with the refugee status determination process.

The laboratory serves as yet another brick in the wall of disqualification of asylum requests. While in the room during the interview, the investigators try to find mismatches in the interviewee’s ‘story’ that would prove the unreliability of the ‘infiltrator’. Outside the interview room, in the lab, the technicians were trying to disqualify the reliability of the asylum seeker’s papers.

Observing disqualification letters reveals that the Refugee Status Determination Unit uses several standard disqualification replies that are copy pasted in a random order, regardless of the country of origin, reason for application, gender, or any other specific characteristic of the applicant. Some of these standard disqualification replies include (original report in Hebrew)⁸⁶:

“In order to be eligible for refugee protection under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol), you must establish that you are outside your country of origin and are unwilling to return there owing to a well-founded fear of persecution on account of the [sic] one of the Convention grounds. Based on the above-mentioned elements, your claim could not be established in regard with the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Therefore, your refugee claim is rejected.” (p.43)

Some are even shorter, as in the case of A, an Ethiopian asylum seeker: *“Due to credibility problems in your testimony it has been determined that crucial elements in your application were not established as true.”(p.44)*

Even when the disqualification letter clearly states that the application was disqualified due to specific information relating to the country of origin, it does not detail what that information is, as in the case of G, an asylum seeker from Mauritania:

⁸⁶ <https://hotline.org.il/wp-content/uploads/202505247-Until-Our-Hearts-Are-Completely-Hardened-Asylum-Procedures-in-Israel.pdf>

“On the basis of a thorough review of the available and generally accepted information regarding your country, it has been determined that there is not a reasonable possibility that you will suffer a serious harm if you return there.”(p.44)

Technologies composing state deportation regimes commonly include detention, biometric surveillance and classification systems, and border control technologies such as smart fencing. These are used internationally in various combinations and intensities, on the basis of national immigration control apparatuses as well as geographic locations and paths of immigration movement. My interlocutors in various roles within Israel’s immigration enforcement reported recurring visits from their European counterparts. Whether the Refugee Status Determination Unit, the Holot Immigration Detention Centre or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israeli immigration control personnel take pride in their actions and of the means at their disposal. One example of what can be best described as a disproportionate use of technology is found at the Refugee Status Determination Unit. On one occasion when I was conducting participant observation at the unit, there was a knock on the door during a refugee status determination interview with an Eritrean asylum seeker (see Chapter Four). The director of the Refugee Status Determination Unit peeked into the tiny interrogation room and said, with a satisfied look:

We’ve just caught a forged passport; do you want to see it?

Being thankful for the opportunity to leave the room and the interrogative interview, I followed the unit’s director down the hall to another side of the building, passing through two security doors opened with the director’s magnetic card. Suddenly we were not in the gloomy halls and rooms of the Refugee Status Determination Unit anymore, but in a hi-tech laboratory that seemed like a potential set for a modern crime scene investigation television series. The large room was divided into three parts. On one side, a couple of special scanners were placed next to each other. The two lab technicians, both wearing ironed buttoned shirts and not the Population, Immigration, and Border Authority blue uniform shirt like the other members of the unit, immediately started explaining what they were about as they noticed my puzzled gaze.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Field visit, the travel document authentication laboratory at the refugee status determination unit. 22.6.2016.

The passport, or the travel document we are verifying, is pressed between two plates of glass in the middle of the scanner. We can control the wavelengths of the light that is projected from each side, until we find what we are looking for.

They enthusiastically turn my attention to the central wall, covered with HD screens: *You see? These are the images from the passports that are in the machines right now. This is the one we’ve just caught, through the different wavelength scan we can see that these papers, with the visas on them, are fake, but we couldn’t see it right away, we had to put it through a chemical wash.*

The second technician then turned my attention to the other side of the room, where another set of large electronic boxes were aligned. He eagerly explained the process of chemically washing travel documents with various chemicals. They do so in order to find traces of ink that was removed from travel documents, distinguish between different kinds of inks, or notice later additions or corrections:

We can play with it here at the lab, wash and scan or the other way around, until we find what we are looking for. You see, we would have sent it to a better lab but there is none. This is currently the most advanced laboratory for paper counterfeiting in Israel. We created this lab with assistance from the police’s forensics, but now they are using our assistance.

Later on, following explanations regarding various methods of forging passports and visas, the first technician shared with me a handwritten letter on one of the screens, glowing in blue light, in what seems to me like Tigrinya:

This is a ransom letter that one of the infiltrators here claims that he got from his relatives, being held by the Bedouins in Sinai. One of the Refugee Status Determination Unit interrogators wasn’t sure about it so we took a look at it. It’s forged, actually, most of what gets to us is forged, or faked. In this case we looked at the kind of the ink, paper and some other traces that we found on the document and saw that it doesn’t match the time and location he claims it was written.

While both technicians continued showing me different examples of documents on the screens or in the machines, I couldn’t help but

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- **Routine patrol**, in which it travels autonomously at about 5 kilometers per hour, scanning and searching for perimeter anomalies such as fence holes or nearby suspected objects
- **Response mode**, in which the robot rushes promptly to home in on a suspected intrusion, acting as a first responder

Figure 1: The Roboguard. An excerpt from the company's brochure. The promotional video shares in detail the activation of the system and the effect it had on the entry of African asylum seekers to Israel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=250&v=pCp_Uk5yKqY



The Samson Mk I has performed under combat conditions with excellent feedback from users in the field.

Figure 2: The 'Samason' is the 'response mode' form of the robo-guard (excerpt from the company brochure). Mounted with a broad variety of fire arms such as sniper rifles, machine guns and grenade launchers. This Israeli developed tool of 'remote warfare' was toned down for the use of border patrols in the southern border with the Sinai. Additional examples exist for the fluidity of technologies from the Israeli occupation to Israel's immigration enforcement (see the 'smart card' in the previous chapter).

think that they were excited by my visit and don't get to share their work so often. Quarrying this line of thought, I was told that:

We visited our counterparts in Italy and Germany not long ago, and they've just visited here. We've been advising them on how to do things right. We've just returned from a conference in Hungary where we gave a couple of lectures on new methods to identify forged travel documents. You see, we both got here from the high-tech industry. We could have stayed there and just made money, but here it's something else. We get approach the Interpol and FBI databases, it's something else, fascinating.

A couple of minutes later, the unit's director, returned to the lab and I was quickly pulled out for the remainder of my visit. 'So, what do you think?', he asked with a satisfied smile. I reply that I was truly speechless, that I had not expected anything like it in the Refugee Status Determination Unit: maybe in the police's forensic unit, looking for criminals or terrorists, but surely not here. Walking back from the sci-fi realm of the forensic lab to the dull corridors of the Refugee Status Determination Unit, I could not help but think about the millions of dollars invested in this unit, its equipment and personnel, and that international colleagues would probably be blinded by the sight of those technical toys. But what struck me most was the performance of professionalism. During my visits to the Israeli parliament or to regional courts, sites in which state and civil society representatives embark on arguments over the future of asylum seekers in Israel, professionalism is the main component of performance. In general, human rights activists in Israel struggle to present themselves in a professional light, rather than as activists, and human rights attorneys present themselves as legal experts in front of the court and members of parliament. This should be understood in light of the fact that the great majority of the discussion on African asylum seekers in Israel takes place in the legal arena. In such an arena, evidence, and not commentary, are what matters. With such technical toys and professional performance, it is no wonder that the state is nearly invincible at court. I can only assume how appealing that must be to Israel's immigration control authority's international colleagues.

Head of the legal refugee rights clinic at Tel Aviv University, shares with me some of her experience as a litigator at Israel's supreme court, attempting to protect asylum seekers' rights and prevent their deportation:

This is the true power of this system. It is capable of producing

bureaucracy, information, knowledge, that no one has the tools to face with. And when those cases make it to the judge, 40 pages of interview protocol, opinions stated by professional experts, verdicts from parallel supreme courts from all around the world, with photographs, documents and forensic evidence, the judges are simply devastated. They treat all of it as an absolute truth, a fact. They are not capable of understanding that this whole system of evidence and testimonies is standing on unstable grounds, with whole parts of it completely fabricated.

Such supreme court cases, in turn, become legal precedents themselves and serve as the basis for the state's claim that African asylum seekers are 'illegal infiltrators' entering Israel for economic reasons and therefore, eligible for detention and deportation. The methods of rendering them deportable, such as producing the forensic evidence which serves their legal exclusion, is part of the Israeli deportation regime export model.

Cross-cooperation at the everyday translation of policy into enforcement

As demonstrated in previous chapters, in some cases the key for the understanding various aspects of Israel's deportation regime is to be found in Israel's longstanding occupation of the Palestinian territories. Halper suggests that the occupation of the Palestinian Territories "is thus a resource for Israel allowing it to export high-tech weaponry that has been tested in pacifying a recalcitrant population" (Halper 2014:14). Helpers approach, backed by the writings of additional researchers of securitization and militarization (Graham 2004, Weizman 2007) describes Israel's leading role in shaping security perceptions and securitization tactics internationally. While this description focuses on policies, in an interview⁸⁸ conducted in his rickety studio in Jerusalem, Helper shares with me an insight regarding the Israeli securitization apparatus, from his study of the 'street-level' aspects:

What is striking in the Israeli case is the level of cooperation between the different security forces. In the U.S, everybody fights about authority and jurisdiction. You know that moment in American movies when the F.B.I agent arrives to a crime scene and takes charge of the investigation out of

the hands of the police. In Israel, in a field such as Immigration enforcement, you would have a full cooperation between the military, border police, civil police, Ministry of Interior, the Mossad, the international airport security force, the prison service, and that's just a partial list. Nobody makes a big deal about it, they simply work together in concert. Is it the fact that they are all Jewish? that they all served in the military? Maybe.

And indeed, it is hard to distinguish, in most cases between the different actors, and their changing roles, complicit in sustaining the Israeli deportation regime. One example is found in Israel's detention centre for African asylum seekers—Holot, as it is described by the centre's director:⁸⁹

This centre is run by a number of agencies. The central one is the Israeli Prison Service (...), there's the Ministry of Interior, which is also in charge of the movement regime, who gets in and out. They also have a refugee status determination unit within the facility, they've got everything here, including a police unit operating 24/7 (...) This population of infiltrators here, it's not only the interest of the Israeli Prison Service. It is the interest of the state of Israel. It interests external actors as well, all sorts of them arrive here, I call it Holot tours. We get loads of groups coming here. Lately I have received seven consoles from various states and the representatives of the embassies, those are obviously coordinated with me by the ministry of foreign affairs.

Such high level of cooperation between various state agents composing the state's deportation regime is one of the most outstanding components of the export model. The notion that is accepted is that state representatives are sharing a common national responsibility rather than simply doing their job, in respect of the specific state agency in which they serve. But what kind of an external border regime would such a high level of internal cooperation dictate?

Crimmigration, securigration, exaggeration

Gideon Sa'ar, a former Minister of Interior at the Israeli parliament and one of the architects of the Israeli deportation regime in regard to African asylum seekers and labour migrants, describes Israel's task of

⁸⁹ Interview at the Holot Immigration Detention Centre with the Deputy Commander, Director of Holot Immigration Detention Centre, Israel's Prison Service, 7.8.2016.

migration control as that of securitising national borders:

“For Israel, the issue of immigration has a known strategic significance, with far reaching consequences for the broader sense of national security. Israel is the only Western country with a land border with Africa, a huge “immigration exporter” to the West, and is also very inviting to the many Palestinians residing illegally in Israel's borders (...) Tens of thousands infiltrated into Israel from the Sinai border in order to find employment. With Sudan defined as an enemy country, and given the dire state of human rights in Eritrea, sending the infiltrators back to their countries of origin is problematic.” (Sa'ar 2016:1-4).

Sa'ar then immediately relates the arrival of African asylum seekers to the control of movement of Palestinians, connecting it with national defence:

“Fifteen years ago, Israel halted a large influx of Palestinians seeking to enter Israel on the basis of “family reunion” with Arab citizens. During the second intifada, security agencies became aware that many of the most severe terrorist attacks were being carried out by Palestinians who had gained entry into Israel in this manner. As a result, the Israeli government decided to ban family reunions and at the government's urging, the Knesset enacted legislation forbidding family reunions. (...) An additional challenge facing Israel revolves around illegal residents and the possibility of a non-military mass storming of its borders.” (Sa'ar 2016:1-4).

“More than a few terrorist attacks in the current wave were carried out by illegal residents, and the phenomenon of illegal entry by Palestinians cannot be stopped unless it is addressed effectively. Except for the storming of the Israeli border by a mass of Syrians (of Palestinian origin) during the Nakba Day events in June 2011, Israel has not yet been challenged by significant infiltration from neighbouring countries, but it is best to prepare for this scenario. Israel is liable to encounter infiltration in the future, whether from a country defined as an enemy country (Syria) or from a country with which it has a peace treaty (Jordan). The destabilization of the countries in the region increases the risks of this type and brings with it both political and security risks as well. (...) Israel must realize that its standard of living and proximity to conflict-torn areas in the Middle East and Africa expose it to the ongoing risk of illegal immigration.” (Sa'ar 2016:1-4).

Eventually, Sa'ar states his clear view in regard of Europe's experience

with irregular immigration, namely that Israel learned from its bitter experience, and sets the main challenge for the future of the state:

“In response to this challenge, Israel must therefore adopt a clear, resolute policy. The failure of Europe in coping with mass immigration should act as a warning sign, as Israel faces the challenge of protecting its character as the nation state of the Jewish people.” (Sa’ar 2016:1-4).

Sa’ar, a member of the ruling Likud party, is considered a moderate figure in Israeli politics. He represents a common perception of Israel’s policies in regard to international migration. Sa’ar’s perceptions suggest that Israel’s aura of a state that is experienced with securitisation and the handling of a precarious population through a security lens portrays it as a knowledgeable and professional actor in the realm of migration control as well. This is a central aspect of the process of exporting the Israeli deportation regime, as it is broadly composed of the process of utilizing and embedding existing security practices in the immigration enforcement arena.

Disproportionate policies

Soon after the initiation of the entry of African asylum seekers into Israel, the Ministry of Interior formed the Administration of Enforcement and Foreigners Unit. This newly formed unit came about as a result of the reorganisation of the former OZ unit in charge of the arrest and deportation of illegal labour migrants. Field units once responsible for physically handling the deportation of tens of thousands of labour migrants and their families are currently processing asylum seekers through the Refugee Status Determination Unit at the newly formed administration. The unit’s acceptance rate of asylum requests is currently 0.01% of submitted requests. The export of the Israeli deportation regime begins here, with the examination procedures of the asylum requests. An interview with the head attorney of the Refugee Status Determination Unit reveals her reflections on the actions of EU states in regard to the acceptance of asylum requests:

They show a lot of interest in us at the EU. Our unit had travelled there a lot. They went for courses and trainings and met with a lot of people from the field. They are very curious about the whole phenomena of infiltration that we had here, and about the way that Israel managed to stop further

infiltration. They are very curious about it, European states. Britain recently contacted us and asked how did we manage to do it. They are specifically interested in the subject of voluntary return of Eritreans. You know, Eritreans come to us and ask voluntarily to return to their country.

Seeking to further understand what it is that the British government is specifically interested in, I encountered an original interpretation of asylum policies:⁹⁰

In 2013, we wrote a legal opinion on the treatment of Eritrean asylum requests. Back then, it was an international consensus, at least that’s how we’ve understood it, that an Eritrean equals a refugee. The UNHCR recommendation was to provide collective protection, not to examine separately each and every case. We were very curious about it so we wrote a legal opinion about what happens in other states. Some states that are more permissive such as Britain and some that are stricter such as Germany and Switzerland, in order to see how they treat the subject of defection from military service. Within the context of Eritreans, this is the most common claim, that due to military defection you are politically prosecuted. And we’ve discovered that there is a variety of approaches and eventually we adapted it to our immigration policy, which really is the same as the first opinion written by the (Israeli) administration. There is a similar opinion in regard of Sudan.

The head attorney of the of the Refugee Status Determination Unit was referring to the first opinion written by the administration, and publicly quoted relatedly by Israeli officials, that 99.9% of the asylum seekers are ‘work infiltrators’ who come to Israel for economic reasons. This opinion was written prior to the establishment of the unit, without even examining a single asylum request. Later on, in our interview the attorney added:

A lot of reports are issued by the British government. And we see the difference in their approach from one report to another. They are more concise recently. Suddenly they see things in a new light. They say, and they wrote to us as well, that they have recently discovered that not every Eritrean who returns to Eritrea will be prosecuted.

⁹⁰ Interview with the Head Attorney of the Refugee Status Determination Unit, Israel’s Ministry of Interior. 28.3.2017.

The insight arising from the attorney's approach is that if certain states are stricter in regard to their rates of acceptance of asylum seekers, while others are more permissive, then the whole matter of asylum acceptance rates can be compromised, as it is all an issue of the worldview of the unit examining asylum requests. In this case, Israel has the right to exercise a close to zero rate of acceptance. The attorney later suggests that the Israeli interpretation assisted the British government in seeing the point as well, which was followed by their practice of a more concise policy.

One central issue that gives the Israeli export model its trustworthy image is the fact that it is 'crisis' tested and proven. The Israeli state has no natural border with Africa in the sense that African asylum seekers had literally walked into the state across the border with Egypt. As the number of some 65,000 African asylum seekers who have entered the state had reduced in half, and was still decreasing with no new entries, Israel's immigration control personnel can rightly claim that they have effectively handled the 'African flood' of 'infiltrators'. They take a further step in creating a direct link between the successful policies and their past experience in security-related enforcement. The director of the Holot Immigration Detention Centre for African asylum seekers, a former director of a securitised state prison for Palestinian prisoners, described such adaptations and the transition from the securitised prison service to the incarceration of African asylum seekers:

When a warden who arrives here, he turns by definition into an employee of the centre, and I am the director of the centre. They go through a five-day training course where they are exposed to the whole spectrum. First of all, the legal, then the social, understanding the array of immigration, where have they come from, where did they arrive to. I've also highlighted the importance of our relation to the media. This is a very intensive course, but for me this is only the starter. What's important is what we do during the day (...) how do we present ourselves inside this facility and how we market ourselves outside of it. This is all very important because you have to trust in yourself that you are not a warden anymore. You are an employee of the facility and you have to adapt your DNA to that, and you represent a state. There is no black and white here, it's all grey.

Selling security, conveying a worldview

A bi-product of the two prior forms on which the Israeli export model operated is its worldview, relying on the state's siege mentality,

national anxiety from loss of Jewish majority over the land of Israel. This worldview suggests that very little, if any separation exists between the refugee 'crisis' and the terrorist acts of fundamental Islam. Therefore, it suggests that 'infiltrators' should be dealt with security means and treated accordingly, as security hazards, rather than within the framework of immigration. As a representative of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained:

We are talking about a problem caused by people coming all the way from Africa to Israel. Walking all this way. Just think about the fact that there are millions who are real refugees, right across the border, and we cannot take them not only because we would not like our resources to be used by them, exploited by them, but because these are people that we have no idea who they are. They may be ISIS, El kaida, Hamas, and who knows what.

Israel's borders are fully militarised, including the Israeli-Egyptian border through which African asylum seekers enter the state. Upon entry, asylum seekers are loaded onto military buses, mostly by patrol soldiers, to be taken to the Saharonim prison where they first encounter the Population, Immigration and Border Authority. The military procedure dictates that upon first contact at the border, asylum seekers are physically searched for weapons with a metal detector. Upon arrival to the prison, asylum seekers undergo a second, more thorough search. Even after months and years in Israel, after being discharged from prison and having served their 12-month term at the Holot detention centre, African asylum seekers still undergoing metal detector searches and biometric identification on a daily basis, on the basis of being suspected terrorist infiltrators. The director of the detention centre explained:

Dwellers, the infiltrators, arrive here on their own free will, from Israel. There is an ordered process with residing procedures, on how should we receive them. For example, one of the central things that I emphasize in my work here, is that no one will reside here without a residing permit granted from the Ministry of Interior. (...) From a security point of view, I don't want ISIS to infiltrate into this place. This is why at the entry compound there is an ordered inspection procedure and registration.

Prof. Jeff Helper, an anthropologist specializing in the Israeli export of security systems, has been documenting for over two decades the ways in which the state of Israel uses the Israeli occupation of the

West Bank and Gaza as an open-air laboratory for the field proofing and live-testing of military and security systems:

Israel tells the world, you are getting it all wrong. You see us as an occupying state. But, what you have here is a Western, developed state, with a strong, advanced economy, only 60 years old, that half of the people residing in its borders are potential terrorists. Now, if you want us to show you how to do it we would love to teach you.

And it seems that the process of exporting the Israeli deportation regime manages to generate the demanded impact. As S, the director of Holot explains in regard to his presentation of the centre to critical eyes: *The main motive of all of these visitors and groups is: my opinion, my perception of this place, before I got in, and after I've seen it and heard, is totally different. Even the president of the regional court who arrived here with his judges said, now we understand that what we are told at the court hall is not exactly what we see here.*

Lately, Israel's efforts to convey a 'corrected' international image have stepped up with the Israeli military setting up the Consciousness Ops Unit to Influence Foreign Media and Public Opinion.⁹¹ This new 'soft power' psychological warfare unit is said to intensify Israel's security forces with respect to cognitive-related activity and significantly build up processes in the area and develop technological tools. Technological development enables a wide range of means of influence vis-à-vis various target audiences, and in effect creates another combat arena beyond the classic kinetic combat arenas (Siboni and Finkel 2018). Siboni and Finkel's paper makes the existence of the Consciousness Ops Unit publicly known and states that armies and states must contend with the enemy's attempts to gain influence using technology and social media rather than traditional war. Armies and states must work defensively, countering enemy efforts proactively and on the offensive plane, in order to achieve objectives by influencing enemy target audiences, including decision makers, commanders, combatants, and domestic and world public opinion. The army could stand to learn from civilian public relation campaigns for selling things from products to politicians, they suggest.

91 <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/with-eye-on-hearts-and-minds-israeli-army-sets-up-consciousness-ops-1.5888362>

Conclusion

'Street-level' agents at the service of Israel's deportation regime challenge the borders of immigration enforcement by utilizing various technologies and policies to their maximum capacity, while maintaining the democratic casing of their actions as regular migration control. But the marketing of immigration enforcement technologies is merely the mechanism that enables the state to convey wider strategies and perceptions composing the Israeli deportation regime. Such a process of export to, and learning from, international parallel programs bares an internal effect as much as it effects other states and international markets of immigration control and surveillance technologies. The export of such technologies and meetings with international counterparts, and the presentation of deportation work in international professional conferences, contributes to the self-perception of Israel's immigration enforcement agents in two ways.

First, it contributes to their sense of their 'team spirit', their commitment to their own work and their enthusiasm to pursue it. The sharing of knowledge with international counterparts, the export of certain technologies, generates a sense of success and being within a process of growth and improvement. Israeli immigration enforcement agents perceive themselves as being ahead of their international counterparts, which to a certain extent is true if we choose to accept that the measure of success is that the numbers of African asylum seekers are dropping and further entries have been prevented.

Second, exposure to international immigration enforcement in other countries strengthens the moral and ethical perceptions that immigration enforcement agents seem to hold regarding their work. Their understanding that other states, mainly European, utilize the same technologies and use similar detention and deportation regimes relieves Israeli agents from doubt in regard to their actions.

These two aspects of exposure to international parallels and the export of Israeli technologies of immigration enforcement contribute to our understanding of the implementation surplus. The motivation that such aspects of enforcement generate to 'succeed' pushes 'street-level' agents to an expansionist interpretation of asylum policies, and to experiment with new methods and technologies.

But technology has an additional effect that seems to be under-researched within the context of immigration enforcement. Technology significantly shortens bureaucratic time spans, focuses process, and

solidifies the legality of illegalizing the deportable subjects. This is evident in the way that the verification of travel documents takes place during the refugee status determination, with in some cases the result being granted in a matter of minutes.

Additional aspects of the growing use of technology in Israel's immigration enforcement is the blurring of jurisdictions between the various enforcement agencies. As data is shared on databases, it is not clear where the line passes between the use of information for the granting of asylum status, criminal records, or exclusion from labor markets, for example. Such a conflation of responsibilities and jurisdictions expands the circle of complicity.

Finally, for the state, introducing new technologies into the field of immigration enforcement, as in the case of digitizing the process of refugee status determination, is tempting and nearly inevitable. The state performs modernization and progress, and can point at concrete, visible measures taken to stop unwelcome migration (scanners, fingerprint readers, databases), which translates into political gain. In this way the state saves time and money in the process of immigration control, but most importantly it is less exposed legally as deportation is backed by hard evidence. Such aspects of export of immigration enforcement technologies, and the exposure to international peers that follows, contribute to our understanding of how the Israeli implementation surplus is not just a domestic matter, but is also concerned with its international position.

But regardless of the internal validation that such mechanisms of export and peer-learning provide, and the effect of technological advances, some activists, lawyers, scholars, and others attempt challenge the work of Israel's immigration enforcement agencies from various points of view of the political map. The next two chapters (Six and Conclusion) will present ethnography of Israel's civil society actors who challenge the Israeli deportation regime in radically different ways: pro-deportation activists who call on the state to deport more and faster, and human rights activists who try to slow down the wheels of the deportation regime.

The grassroots perpetrators of the Israeli deportation regime: Anti-immigration, pro-deportation mobilization

“Exactly because of what the Jews have gone through in the holocaust, we have to remember that we have no other people and no other country. If we allow our country to be taken over from within, the borders and fences surrounding us will lose their meaning.” — Parliament member and leader of South Tel Aviv pro-deportation activist group

Introduction

Ethnographies of far-right, pro-state, anti-immigration activists in Israel expose deep ethnic, racial, and socio-economic ruptures at the root of the Zionist state (Duman 2014). Israel has its own unique performance of xenophobic, anti-immigration protest in which the protest, rather than being led by white, elite, supremacists, is led by the brown, often excluded, lower classes.

In the past decade, such activists and their web of NGOs and lobbyists have been effective in their struggle to shift the state’s migration policies further to the right, resulting in the exclusion, detention and deportation of African asylum seekers. This group struggles for the maintenance of Israel as a Jewish-only state, in the name of conservative Zionist values. With Israel’s rich past of colonial civil society organisations (Perugini and Gordon 2015) appropriating human rights discourse for nationalist causes, such appearance of pro-state activism in the realm of immigration enforcement is relatively new.

Dichotomous categorization of social actors into ‘brothers’ and ‘Others’ is both sustained and propagated through the mechanism of biosocial profiling (Shamir 2005:198), “an emergent technology of social intervention that objectifies whole strata of people by assigning them into suspect categories, thereby enabling the paradigm of suspicion to be translated into elaborated practices of containment”. In other words, biosocial profiling, to paraphrase Mary Douglas (1966), provides a quick and easy method for identifying bodies out of place.

Civil society and the Israeli deportation continuum

Kalir and Wissink defy the common division between state and civil society in regard to deportation regimes. They contend that “an image of a marked divide between these two sides is too simplistic to capture

the complexities of actors involved in the highly charged deportation field, where inflaming rhetoric often disguises actual practices” (Kalir and Wissink 2016:2). Therefore, they suggest that we conceptualise the social field in which deportation is being discussed as “a continuum that is underlined by a dominant logic, common categories, shared political subjectivities, and pre-agreed lines of political actions” (Kalir and Wissink 2016:12). In the Israeli case, we follow the continuum approach, but for entirely different reasons. In Israel, a mass pro-deportation public protest and the actions of several pro-deportation NGOs seems to be forming a different kind of continuum with the state. Such civil society activists are constantly pressuring the state in order to step up its actions to deport or coerce African asylum seekers still remaining in Israel to ‘voluntarily leave’. Such activists regularly attend relevant governmental committees, publish statistics and reports on asylum seekers in Israel, and suggest, on the basis of their relations with politicians, further legislation for the banning of entry and the deportation of ‘illegal’, non-Jewish residents on the basis their struggle to maintain a Jewish only state.

Perugini and Gordon describe the way in which, in Israel’s settler-colonial civil society, a new interpretation of human rights activism had emerged, and how it operates in several ways. First, such civil society organisations “have appropriated the language of human rights, translating it into a specific colonial dialect. Second, they have been mirroring the techniques and strategies of liberal human rights NGOs. Finally, they have been trying to invert the way the asymmetry of power on the ground between colonizer and colonized is framed by transforming the settler into the native, and the indigenous into the invader”. (Perugini and Gordon 2015:105) Under such terms, it is no wonder that African asylum seekers are broadly titled as ‘infiltrators’ defying the Jewish character of the nation. Chapters Six and Seven of this dissertation, with their focus on Israel’s pro- and anti-immigration civil society organisations, expand this notion of activism and non-governmental work within a settler-colonial society.

Pro-deportation activists mirror the techniques and strategies of liberal human rights NGOs. By portraying the asylum seekers as ‘infiltrators’ and as a security hazard threatening the very existence of the state, they manage to invert the asymmetry of power between citizens and asylum seekers, restructuring them as a battle between the native and the invader.

This chapter tells the story of a few powerful, far-right, nationalistic

activists and civil society organisations that support the deportation of the African asylum seekers through carrying out a pro-state civil campaign. It does so to complete the image of the Israeli deportation regime in which non-state actors force the state into an immigration enforcement implementation surplus.

Pro-deportation activists utilize Jewish history according to a very specific terminology and discursive context. They do so by emphasizing Israel’s wars and the narrative of survival against all odds with respect to the surrounding Arab states, portraying the arrival of African asylum seekers as an invasion of Muslim forces of terror that are planning to dismantle the Jewish state from within. Highlighting the demographic threat imposed by such populations, they emphasize the national motivation to ‘deport the Africans to the very last of them, especially the women’⁹² in order to prevent such populations from multiplying and affecting the Jewish majority position in the Israeli state.

Anthropological accounts of NGOs and civil society organisations have mostly focused on NGOs and the development-nexus (Lewis and Mosse 2006). In contrast, this research seeks to take NGOs as the proxy or starting point to examine questions of deportability, the state and humanitarianism, by looking at the specific relationship that relatively independent NGOs in Israel (rarely supported by the government) have with human rights, humanitarianism and the nation-state. Research encompassing NGOs and civil society organisations in Israel is abundant, focusing on various aspects of Israeli civil society in the construction of the Zionist state, while rarely observing its role in designing the relation of the state to the matter of non-Jewish immigration in general, and that of immigration control in particular (Peled and Ophir 2003, Ben-Eliezer 1999, Gidron et al. 2002, Gidron and Katz 2002, Kaufman 2001). Such literature concerns the growth of Israeli civil society as a reaction to privatization and the crumbling of the historical socialist state in the light of global processes.

As the ethnographic material in this chapter demonstrates, the traditional division between state and civil society in the Israeli case fails. Civil society activists are often a motivating force for the deportation of non-Jewish, non-Israeli people on the basis of their vast agency within various governmental organisations. The traditional division between left and right fails here as well, as in Israel’s current colonial reality settlers have appropriated the language of human rights

for expansionist reasons. The Israeli civil society is highly divided. On the one hand, a group of pro-deportation, anti-assimilation, far-right activist are anxious about the possibility of loss of the Jewish majority position. On the other hand, left-leaning human rights NGOs challenge the state, mostly along legal lines, to align with international human rights discourse. As the Israeli political map had shifted significantly further to the right over the past few decades, the call for international humanitarian values is perceived as a radical act. The boundaries of the social act are measured by the extent of the legitimacy and licitness given to it by the Israeli society, with the preservation of the Jewish majority being the bar of examination. While human rights activists are perceived as hazardous, radical, far left enemies of the state, what they actually do is propose a mild, conservative interpretation of asylum law. While pro--deportation activists appear to be conservative, Zionist, salt of the earth types, they offer a radical interpretation of the role that the state should play in the Israeli society; that is, serve as the watchdog for keeping the state composed only of Jewish citizens.

Schendel (2005) introduces the concept of social legitimacy or licitness and sets it against political legitimacy or legality. This emphasises the politically derived nature of this distinction and its moral-institutional nature, and assists us in denaturalizing law as the common-sense condition of domestic national space. Schendel demonstrates how the spatial implications of the binary terms legal/illicit and illegal/licit produce multiple kinds of 'criminal space', therefore drawing attention to those spaces where legal activities that violate social norms flourish, and where illegal but licit activities are commonplace. While the legality of the Israeli deportation regime is being repeatedly tested in the Israeli Supreme Court, as well as challenged by international perceptions of human rights, its licitness is beyond doubt. Those who challenge this licitness are considered illegitimate and are marked as enemies of the state and the Jewish people. As far as the vast majority of the Israeli public is concerned, acts of deportations, migration detention, or any other exclusionary actions taken by the state against non-Jewish, non-Israeli people, as described in the previous chapters, are legitimate and licit, regardless of their legality.

Additionally, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate, this battle between 'pro' and 'anti' deportation activists in Israel extends political worldviews and is rooted in a long-lasting ethnic and racial divide. Politics of race and colour are inherent in the Israeli deportation regime, extending far beyond national aspects of citizenship into questions concerning the pillars of the Israeli society and the making of the Jewish state.

Pro-deportation, pro-state, far-right organisations: Access to the field

Pro-deportation activism is not the natural habitat of the writer of this dissertation. During my fieldwork, I repeatedly encountered pro-deportation activists in the Israeli parliament, as they were participating in governmental committees. Additionally, the names of heads of the pro-deportation campaigns and their leading attorneys and lobbyists were mentioned to me by state agents during interviews. While such state agents always thought to mention that such activists have no influence on their work, it became clear that they are more than familiar with their reports and main lobbying pitches. Such was the case with Eitan,⁹³ the Israeli immigration policy centre. 'Eitan', a legal and policy-focused, pro-deportation NGO that has been lobbying for a broad interpretation and a strict implementation of the anti 'infiltration' law, has been registering success among state officials. Its greatest record was suggesting and passing the 'deposit fund law' (see Chapter Five), which burdens African asylum seekers with economic restrictions as a coercive mean for 'voluntary' return. In October 2017, a major Israeli newspaper published that the Israeli Ministry of Interior was attempting to use the consultancy services of Eitan directly, without the legal procedure of publishing an open tender, an attempt that was blocked by human rights organisations in court.⁹⁴ Understanding how closely the state and the pro-deportation activists collaborate, I decided to use my time and look into this influential grassroots movement during the conduct of my fieldwork with the state.

Initially, I began arriving at pro-deportation demonstrations in South Tel Aviv. These kept to the same ritual, with the demonstrators holding 'protest' marches in specific parts of the neighbourhood in which the majority of residents were African asylum seekers. Protestors would gather for a couple of hours before the initiation of the demonstration and embark on preparations. Some would wear blank white t-shirts and write the main protest messages on each other's back with black markers. These would read, 'Sudanese back to Sudan', 'Death to Sudanese' or 'Deportation now', and a lot of Israeli flags would be handed to the demonstrators.

Some of the demonstrations turned physically violent, with

93 <https://oneisraelfund.org/oif-projects/eitan/>

94 <http://hotline.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/%D7%9E%D7%9B%D7%AA%D7%91-%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%A2%D7%93%D7%AA-%D7%9E%D7%9B%D7%A8%D7%96%D7%99%D7%9D.pdf>

demonstrators engaging forcefully with the African residents while the Israeli border police and the civil police would attempt to enforce separation. In some cases, the physical exchange of blows reached a point where the anti-riot squad was thrown in to the crowd in order to stop the violence, practically protecting the African asylum seekers from the pro-deportation crowds while at the same time very rarely arresting any pro-deportation demonstrators.

I would follow the demonstrations, avoiding the helter-skelter in the frontlines and instead attempting to engage in discussion with others in the back, mostly elderly women. This proved to be a successful tactic. Some of those encounters remained short discussions, while in some cases phone numbers were exchanged and full interviews were later conducted. It is interesting how different the back side of a demonstration may be from its front. While following the demonstrations I would stumble upon less forceful protestors and would try to engage them in conversation. These would be people who were state officials and wanted to participate but were concerned about being photographed among the protest signs and the physical violence. In some cases, they would be residents of the neighbourhood who had received a restraining order from the police for engaging in violent blows in previous demonstrations and did not want to be seen by the police. In one case, even the organiser of the demonstration, the head of the South Tel Aviv liberation front, was trailing at the back as after several arrests they had been warned by the police from further participation and incitement of the crowd.

Blee “examined the role of women within active self-defined racist and anti-Semitic groups operating within the U.S. today. Although organized racism is commonly assumed to be an exclusively male province, women have been a growing component of the movement since the early 1980s, comprising an estimated 25-50% of members in some groups. Racist leaders target women and teenaged girls for recruitment for several reasons. Some assume that women members will recruit their husbands and children into racism. Others reason that women will be less likely to attract the attention of law enforcement to the group since they are less likely than men to have criminal records. And still others hope that increasing numbers of women will counteract the sluggish gains in membership experienced by some racist groups.” (Blee 1998:384). During her interviews, describes Blee, she was prepared to elaborate on the nature of her disagreement with organised racism, but in nearly every case her respondents cut her short in this effort

as they were eager to move into a presentation of their own ideas and personal history. My experience proved to be similar to Blee’s, as demonstrated in my interview with Rinat⁹⁵, among others, I met Rinat initially by following one of the demonstrations, and later on, to my gratitude, she proposed that we meet for a cup of coffee not far from her office in South Tel Aviv. In our interview meeting, which took place in a loud café near the Yad Eliahu stadium, she barely allowed me to properly present myself and my research before she initiated a series of statements bearing similar messages:

I’m having a hard time with the fact that we are losing the Jewish character over this land. I have to say this to you right away. I think that this is something that should hold us together. We’ve made it here first of all, in order to have a Jewish state. Democracy can only be second to that. I see the Jewish state as preceding the democratic state. I am not ashamed to say that. I am not a strict religious Jew but I say that. We’ve seen enough, we’ve been through too much, and we don’t have to be nobody’s Guinea pig. First of all, Jewish. Then let’s talk about being a democracy.

Rinat, a Mizrahi woman in her early fifties, had ‘climbed out of the neighbourhood with bare claws and teeth’. As an attorney and a partner in a local law firm handling mostly divorce cases and debt escrows, she handles pro-bono cases for the ‘South Tel Aviv liberation front’, the prominent pro-deportation organisation operating in the neighbourhood. Releasing activists from arrest, assisting in fund raising for pro-deportation campaigns, and placing legal suits against the opening of kindergartens for African children are some the things she has been doing voluntarily. Born and raised in the neighbourhood, Rinat had experienced several waves of immigration and population change:

The Russian wave of immigration came with drinking and prostitution as well, they had a lot of non-Jews as well. When they came to the neighbourhood we didn’t like it at all. Our husbands started saying “Russian prostitutions for five shekels, Israelis for ten” and we would be insulted. You know, when the Israelis started saying, “you don’t need to buy a whole cow for a glass of milk”.

We met again a couple of weeks later at the same loud café next to

95 All pro-deportation activists’ names are pseudonyms.



Figure 1: Pro-deportation demonstration, South Tel Aviv, 31.3.2016.
Photo: Ilan Amit.

her office, and later we also discussed her thoughts over the phone. To my surprise, Rinat was more than willing to share; she was simply happy to have someone listening to her life experience in South Tel Aviv. The more we talked, the further I understood how apolitical the entire matter of pro-deportation activism was for her. Ever since her high school years she had been volunteering for various initiatives in her neighbourhood, varying from assisting elderly women to after school hours support for disadvantaged youth. For Rinat, pro-deportation activism had very little to do with racism and the state. Rather, it is a form of supporting her community and remaining in contact with her childhood friends. It slowly became clearer that she saw no contradiction in doing pro-bono legal work for the termination of African kindergartens operating in the neighbourhood and the Tzedakah, a notable communal Jewish value of charitable giving. While she repeatedly claimed to be a secular Jew, she acted as though she was at least traditionally religious,⁹⁶ and repeatedly referenced the superiority of the Jewish people:

Take the central bus station⁹⁷ and copy-paste it to Khartoum, Sudan's capital. Instead of opening a school for them here, open it in Sudan and send them there to study in it. Invest in them, but there. Look at how the Palestinians, you tell them take this money, go build your own state, instead of throwing this money at your stinky Arab youth, or at the European Union voting against us twice a week. They've received houses after we've evicted Yamit⁹⁸ and turned them into weapon storages. If they really wanted to build their own state they would have had it a long time ago, but they are led by the wrong ideals. With the Jews, they are led by the right ideals. The worst it ever gets is a scuffle among brothers. In general, we are heading in the right direction. It's like a couple that gets along just fine, but the groom's parents hate the bride. It's internal, solvable.

As I've come to learn, most of the pro-deportation activists were volunteers, either in NGOs or in less formalized community organisations and neighbourhood watches. It did not occur to me that any of them was

96 Rinat suggests that our meeting will take place in a kosher café, 'away from those places that the Africans opened'. She regularly visits the synagogue, blesses Hamotzie before she drinks and eats, and dresses along the Jewish religious code. According to her, she considers herself secular because she is not orthodox.

97 The very centre, and a popular symbol of South Tel Aviv.

98 Referring to the eviction of the Yamit settlement in the northern part of the Sinai handed over to Egypt in April 1982, as part of the terms of the 1979 Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty. Among the Israeli public, it is repeatedly claimed that 'we gave them lands and received rockets', referring to the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005. My interlocutor conflates the two evictions, which occurred over two decades apart and in remote contexts.

receiving any material support for their actions. I will return to this point in the next chapter, surveying the work of human rights organisations where the majority of interviewees were employees of NGOs.

African asylum seekers are not the only target of pro-deportation activists. Pro-immigration human right activists have been repeatedly targeted by the same activists and organisations described in this chapter for their efforts to place obstacles in the way of immigration detention and deportation.

The de-legitimization of human rights organisations by pro-state activists

The perception of civil society, known as ‘the civil society argument’, “considers vibrant civic activism as a major reason for—and guarantor of—the rise and sustainability of democratic regimes and cultures. However, a one-dimensional affinity between civic activism and democracy and liberal values has been fiercely challenged over the last few decades.” (Jamal 2018:2). Scholars have demonstrated that civil society organisations could be “deeply involved in antidemocratic initiatives and the exclusive promotion of nationalist, religious, or racialist ideals. These experiences have led to the differentiation between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ civil society, based on the contributions of civil society organisations toward the promotion—or the dismantling—of open and democratic societies. ‘Bad’ civil society is not marked by opposition to the liberal worldview or criticism of liberal opponents, but mainly by the combination of advancing chauvinistic nationalist or religious ideals and targeting the legitimate existence of liberal opponents through various means, especially shaming, stigmatizing, silencing, and lobbying tactics that are aimed at outlawing or shrinking the financial resources of their opponents” (Jamal 2018:2).

This normative differentiation “is not strictly dichotomous and is contiguous. Civil society organisations whose *raison d’être* is the tolerance of differences in the name of civic values—even when they promote conservative worldviews—differ from civil society organisations that utilize the open civic sphere to propagate a chauvinistic nationalist worldview, and in this spirit view critical civic initiatives as detrimental to society and the state. These civil society organisations view differences in perceptions of society and the state as being sufficient justification for silencing or delegitimizing others. Civil society organisations could be depicted as ‘bad civil society’ when they cross the boundaries of legitimate

debate on differences, advance a narrow, nationalist worldview, and lobby for state practices that delegitimize, stigmatize, silence, or seek to outlaw critical civil society organisations, thereby limiting the space for differences and debate in civil society.” (Jamal 2018:2)

In contemporary Israel, expands Jamal, “a growing number of CSO’s⁹⁹ are crossing the boundaries of legitimate competition between different worldviews and promoting hate speech, exclusive nationalist values and practices, attacking HRO’s¹⁰⁰ and delegitimizing their role, and cooperating with political parties in order to promote legislation that seeks to silence liberal CSO’s and narrow the democratic spaces in society and the state. The rising influence of nationalist CSO’s (...) illustrates this process, despite the fact that these CSO’s are not equally radical and aggressive in their worldviews, goals, and means. They do not fall within the traditional ‘right’ / ‘left’ political dichotomy of Israel. Nonetheless, most of them utilize nationalist discourse to win support, stigmatize liberal HRO’s as enemies, and facilitate sophisticated lobbying policies that delegitimize HRO’s and frame them as anti- patriotic political organisations, thereby encouraging government measures that will cut them off from their financial resources. One of the common features of the policies of these organisations is blurring the differences between marking violations of the basic human rights of Palestinians and making accusations that human rights organisations are protecting—or even assisting—terrorists or associated individuals and organisations.” (Jamal 2018:3)

In such a discourse, little separation exists between the hate speech targeting human rights activist working for the Palestinian cause, or those who work in favour of African asylum seekers. They are all equally marked as enemies of the Zionist people and state because they are considered to have brought about a demographic calamity. In what follows, I will focus only on one specific area of the deportation continuum (Kalir and Wissnik 2016), namely far-right pro-deportation activism, demonstrating the ways in which it targets the Israeli government.

The Israeli deportation continuum: Pulling the state to the right, cutting off the left

The continuum approach (Kalir and Wissink 2016) draws an image in which the state is broadly responsible for exclusionary actions such as

⁹⁹ Civil Society Organisations

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Organisations

deportations and immigration detention, while civil society represents a pro-immigration position with a 'grey area' in between the two in which some of the traditional roles conflate. Applying the continuum approach to the Israeli deportation regime sheds light on a uniquely unbalanced sequence portraying the acts of the state and civil society due to two main reasons. First, the Israeli state is challenged by anti-immigration, pro-deportation activists to proceed further towards mass deportation of non-Jewish, non-Israeli residents of the Jewish state. While the continuum approach refers to the bridging of civil practices in the form of 'soft' deportations, in the Israeli case civil society rather paves the road to excessive use of raw state power in the form of detention, deportation, bureaucratic torture (Lavie 2014) and exclusion from the labour market. Some evidence for this form of a continuum has been presented in previous chapters, where I discussed the role of pro-deportation activists in the governmental committee for the 'solution' of the 'problem' of 'infiltration', and additional findings will be presented in this chapter. Second, a variety of measures such as state support, or simply by virtue of their numbers, human rights activists and international humanitarian NGOs represent a negligible portion of the entire continuum, so that the image portrayed is one of a combative, cornered minority versus a strong majority, rather than that of a balanced continuum.

I therefore suggest here, on the basis of the Israeli deportation continuum, to understand the 'active' side (i.e. pro-deportation activists, rather than 'passive' and complicit NGOs) as part of the violence continuum (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004a, 2004b), encompassing often overlapping dimensions of physical, structural (Farmer 2004), symbolic (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004), and slow violence (Nixon 2011).

Observing the Israeli deportation continuum in comparison to the Dutch deportation regime as highlighted by Kalir and Wissink (2016) raises an interesting point: while in the European case civil society organisations may assist the state in carrying out deportations for the sake of a 'softer' approach, in the Israeli case, far-right civil society allocates deportations back into the hands of the state, who supervise the efficiency of the process and apply pressure for stricter implementation. So, instead of civil society encompassing the state 'from the left' for the sake of 'softening' the process, the Israeli model proffers a civil society that encompasses the state 'from the right', calling for a strict, maximalist implementation and contributing to an implementation surplus. While 'soft' complicity of non-governmental organisations in the state's deportation regime is nearly non-existent in Israel, 'hard'

involvement, in the sense of pro-deportation support, proliferates.

Heeding the call: Pro-deportation activists, the state, and what's (lacking) in between

'The South Tel Aviv liberation front' campaign,¹⁰¹ calling for an absolute deportation of the entire African 'infiltrator' community in Israel, had expanded and reached new and various crowds. The campaign expands an already existing, deeply entrenched ideology of membership and exclusion that shapes many forms of everyday interaction within Israeli social space. This ideology relies on a naturalized, common-sense distinction between 'brothers' (Jews, Israelis) and 'Others' (non-Jews, non-Israeli people). This brother-Other distinction is generally deployed in accordance with a deeply rooted, security-motivated 'paradigm of suspicion' (Shamir 2005) and 'hermeneutic of distrust' (Seeman 1999). "This unwritten system for differentiating between insiders and outsiders is reproduced and reinforced not only through messages disseminated by the state and other mainstream social institutions (Rabinowitz 1997; Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005; Reiss 1991; Rouhana 1997; Torstrick 2000) but also by the perpetual public discussion surrounding issues of demography (Kahn 2000; Kanaaneh 2002; Willen 2005) and by the unwritten and implicit racialized hierarchy into which Israeli citizens are socialized over the course of a lifetime (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005)." (Willen 2010:272).

Despite the substantially different kinds of threat these two groups are constructed as posing, they are nonetheless linked within the Israeli imaginary as enemy Others or, put differently, as the nation's 'real' Others (Fassin 2001).

Patterns of biosocial profiling were firmly established in Israel by the state well before the civil campaign calling for mass deportation was set in motion by the South Tel Aviv grassroots movement. For example, less than a decade before the arrival of the African asylum seekers to Israel, techniques of bio-profiling, in addition to structuring the vulnerability of 'illegal labour migrants' to exploitation, arrest, and deportation, took on a great significance during an ongoing propaganda campaign sponsored by the newly created Immigration Authority. The Immigration Authority bombarded the public with radio, television, and print media messages defining 'the foreign worker problem' as a

101 <http://www.south-tlv.co.il/articlecategory/mproblem>

grave social issue requiring a national response. Although their content varies from one advertisement to the next, the campaign's public service announcements conveyed a single, overarching message encapsulated in a somewhat polysemous, redundantly broadcast slogan: 'it's not legal, and it doesn't work' (zeh lo khuki, v'zeh lo oved). Some media messages blamed the alleged illegal labour migrants for the country's economic disarray, whereas others implied that they are 'a demographic ticking bomb'. Through this media campaign, average Israeli citizens were depicted as both part of the problem (i.e., if they employ illegal workers in their businesses or in their homes) and, if they followed the campaign's advice (fire their illegal employees, report on others who employ them, etc.), part of the solution. Although relatively rigid, the boundary between these two groups is not beyond contestation. In the 1990s, for instance, two groups of 'new migrants' arrived in accordance with the Law of Return whose Jewish roots were contested: Ethiopian Jews and migrants from the former Soviet Union. In both cases, and in different ways, these groups' arrival in Israel challenged the conceptual and phenomenological relevance of this otherwise straightforward dichotomy (Bar Tal and Teichman 2005). Can we truly refer to pro-deportation activism in South Tel Aviv as a grassroots movement, or was it ignited by the state spreading xenophobic perceptions? Can we point a finger at the state for carrying out massive deportation campaigns while the public and civil movements demonstrate such enthusiasm over the idea of keeping the state free of 'problematic' populations?

Black people from both sides of the fence: The relevance of the Mizrahi-Ashkenazy aspect

In many ways, the story of the Israeli deportation regime is also the story of Zionism's internal 'others'. "The creation of Israel was to have far-reaching effects, not only for Palestinian Arabs but also on the identity both of European Jews and of Asian and African Jews. Whereas non-European Jews were classified as Sephardim (Spaniards) and later Mizrachim (Easterners), and were juxtaposed to the Yiddish-speaking Jews whose Ashkenazi identity preceded Zionism Palestinians were divided into Druze, Bedouin, and Christian and Muslim Arabs. Israel, consequently, was based on a complete overhauling of the ethnic identities of the population over whom it was to have jurisdiction" (Massad 1996:55). The task for European Zionism was to 'raise' the cultural levels of non-European Jews to European standards, without



Figure 2: A pro-deportation activist in South Tel Aviv. Protests do not necessarily take place during organized demonstrations. In several cases protestors randomly walked the streets with megaphones or signs as a way of 'reclaiming' their neighbourhood by achieving visibility. Photo: Brett Stevens.

being ‘brought down’ to their ‘primitive’ levels. The principle of white supremacy, which was brought to Israel from Europe, remains a prominent characteristic of Israeli society. “Jewish people living in contemporary Israel are broadly divided into three main groups: Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi. The Ashkenazi commonly originates from Europe. The majority of American Jews nowadays are Ashkenazi, descended from those who arrived from Europe in the mid-1800s and early 1900s. The Sephardi and Mizrahi originate from countries such as Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East” (Massad 1996:57). This ethnic divide is no a bygone historic fable. On the contrary, it is a bleeding wound at the heart of the Israeli society. It is a fault line of racist divides, socio-economic gaps and opposing political affiliations.

Yehouda Shenhav, a Jewish Mizrahi academic and an Israeli of Iraqi origin, believes that “the situation of the third-generation Mizrahi Jews compared with Ashkenazis is worse today than it was 30 years ago. In the Seventies, Shenhav suggests, ‘there was one Mizrahi with a baccalaureate diploma to three Ashkenazis. Four percent of Mizrahi got the baccalaureate compared with 16 percent of Ashkenazim. Today, the gap has widened to about 12 percent against 50 percent. I re-invented myself as Israeli rather than Arab. The more you distance yourself from Arabness, the more chance you have of integrating into Israeli society. It’s sad, notes Shenhav”.¹⁰²

Nowadays, “it is still impossible to erase the very significant disparities and powerful tensions between Jews of European background and Jews whose origins are in Arab and Muslim countries. From the establishment of the state through our own day, the two groups, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, have lived under what amounts to a regime of separation: whether in terms of real estate, education, employment or culture, there is still a clear hierarchy, whereas Ashkenazi Jews are advantaged in every sphere”¹⁰³

Being an Israeli, I recognize the ethnicity of the person sitting in front of me, especially during fieldwork, and instinctively ‘ethnically profile’ my interlocutors. As this chapter crosses the line of the study of the state towards the study of Israeli society, the point at which the common myths about the Mizrahi–Ashkenazy divide should be concisely portrayed and examined. Such common-knowledge myths outline the Mizrahi as a racist and subordinate to the state, and the Ashkenazy as

102 Interview by Al-Jazeera. Retrieved at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeera-world/2016/07/israel-great-divide-160712124159372.html>

103 Interview by Tom Mehager for Middle East Eye. Retrieved at: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/mizrahi-or-ashkenazi-jews-israels-regime-separation-1999909256>

patronizing, hypocritical human rights supporters. As Orit, one of my interlocutors and¹⁰⁴ a pro-deportation activist explains¹⁰⁵:

How did the Arabs begin receiving their rights over this land? Not from Arab NGOs. Precisely because of the Israeli democracy! Precisely because of the Israeli human rights organisations! And then they’ve learned the discourse, and harvested their successes, and now they’re making progress. And today, I’m not ashamed to say, this puts my house in ruins. Ruins my neighbourhood, hurts my children, this thing puts my house in ruins. And in this way, very fast, we will find ourselves with those, in a state where violence will get sky high. They will revolt, run to the parliament.

Almost without any exception, all the state affiliated figures that the reader has encountered so far in this dissertation who were active members of the state’s deportation regime were also Mizrahi. The director of the Holot Immigration Detention Centre, the director of the Refugee Status Determination Unit, attorneys at the Ministry of Interior, the head of the governmental committee and others, are all distinctively Mizrahi. The people from both sides of the fence of the Holot detention centre and people from both sides of the desk at the refugee status determination interview are black, or at least not white. Nearly all of them are Mizrahi, dark-skinned men and women. The Mizrahi are the ones who, at the ‘street-level’, turn the wheels of the Jewish state bureaucracy in their roles as prison wardens, interviewers or state attorneys at deportation hearings. The irony about the Mizrahi identity created by the Ashkenazi establishment is that it came to be internalized by the Mizrahi themselves.

The academic body of work regarding this internal Jewish ethnic divide is large and growing. Eva Illouz, an Israeli Mizrahi Professor of Sociology and an activist against the marginalisation of the Mizrahi in the Israeli society, describes her experience from a visit to the Saharonim immigration prison for African asylum seekers.¹⁰⁶

I’ve known well before that one of the main ways for socio-economic mobility for Mizrahi men and women is employment and service in the security forces, especially the military, the police and the Israeli Prison Service. It wasn’t supposed to surprise me that those are the Mizrahi that

104 Interview 13.4.2016, South Tel Aviv. All pro deportation activist’s names are pseudonyms.

105 Interview 13.4.2016, South Tel Aviv. All pro deportation activist’s names are pseudonyms.

106 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/israel-peace-convention/MAGAZINE-1.2759367>

are implementing on the ground the various draconian sections of the anti 'infiltration' law. In spite of that, visiting the Saharonim prison was one of those moments in which the Mizrahi oppression made my stomach turn harder than ever, personally more than ever. The people operating the filtering mechanisms of the Israeli oppression towards the asylum seekers are not accidentally Mizrahi. This cooperation is a result of a deep, historic oppression. An oppression dictating that any chance for significant social mobility was, and still is, in the service of the Ashkenazi elites as industrial labour or the labourers of the Israeli occupation.

And indeed, as this dissertation had pointed out in previous chapters, the Israeli deportation regime, and the inter-social Mizrahi-Ashkenazi divide are inextricable. But what happens with respect to another Jewish, non-Ashkenazi group, such as the Jewish Ethiopians? Were they harnessed as the people operating the filtering mechanisms of the Israeli oppression towards the asylum seekers?

Politics of race and colour and the Israeli deportation regime

This dissertation previously reflected on the role of black, Ethiopian Jews in the Israeli deportation regime (see Chapter Four); for example, as translators and informants during refugee status determination interviews. Since the arrival of African asylum seekers to Israel, public discourse regarding 'street-level' acts of racism and police use of force against the black Jewish community are revived. In numerous cases, due to the ethnic similarity between Jewish Ethiopians who are Israeli citizens, and Catholic Eritreans who are asylum seekers, 'street-level' immigration enforcement agents held Ethiopian Jews, asking for papers and identifications and mistaking them for African asylum seekers, or arresting them under the suspicion that they are African asylum seekers holding forged documents, hiding in plain sight as Ethiopian Jews. Some of these cases mounted to violent skirmishes that escalated to several riots and mass demonstrations. In response, the state initiated a broad governmental plan to combat racism against the Jewish Ethiopian community and launched a new governmental branch¹⁰⁷ within the Ministry of Justice, coordinating between various state agencies, Jewish Ethiopian NGOs and neighbourhood committees in order to track and counter acts of racism toward this community.

107 <http://www.justice.gov.il/Publications/Articles/Pages/RacismEradicationCommittee.aspx>

Betzalel Ya'akov, a spokesperson of the Jewish Ethiopian community and an activist against racism as part of this newly lunched governmental plan, was called to testify in the Israeli parliament just minutes before the crucial governmental vote for the termination of the Holot Immigration Detention Centre and the mass deportation of African asylum seekers to Rwanda.¹⁰⁸ The presence of a black person standing at the podium at the anti-infiltration committee resulted in silence descending on the room. Very rarely do African asylum seekers themselves attend such committee meetings, and in the past, at the single instance¹⁰⁹ in which a representative of this community was called to the microphone,¹¹⁰ the hall broke into havoc with security leading some of the pro-deportation activists outside the doors. Betzalel's articulated Hebrew seems unfitting with the genuine rage expressed in his voice:

Not in Eritrea, and not in Sudan, right now, is there a war taking place. The lefties would like to portray them as rough and dangerous countries because they are comfortable with that. One day they'll have a new poll of voters, this is why they attempt to civilianize them. We want our neighbourhoods to remain Jewish as they are. We do not want the infiltrators in our neighbourhoods. Anyone calling for their integration in our neighbourhoods, keep in mind, does not want to integrate them in his own. (...) The Jewish Ethiopian people have suffered from the infiltrators more than anyone else sitting in this room. Do you know why? Let's not forget that the Sudanese, that the lefties portray as miserable and goodhearted, slaughtered 7,000 Jewish Ethiopians in Sudan. I'm sick of this hypocrisy. Those who speak of integrating the infiltrators in my neighbourhoods will not even agree to see me in their own. (...) for 2,000 years the Ethiopian Jewry fought over its Jewish identity against the missionaries. In here, where I stand now, this battle will not be lost.

For a few seconds after Betzalel finished his speech, the room remained silent. In his words, the representatives of the Jewish Ethiopian community had managed to shame everyone in the room, right or left, pro- or anti-deportation activists: Then the head of the parliamentary committee remarked: *The vote for the fifth 'correction' of the anti 'infiltration' law will take place now.*

108 9.11.2017, the Israeli parliament.

109 Moutasim Ali.

110 Moutasim Ali.

The fifth ‘correction’ is the one ordering the termination of the Holot Immigration Detention Centre and the mass deportation of African asylum seekers. He looks at the committee’s legal advisor and speaks into the microphone: *I want you to start reading the corrections, so we can vote on it, and don’t stop. I won’t let anyone interfere.*

Betzalel’s words were still resonating in the hall, and no one seemed to be interested in saying anything. Everyone in the room understood how needless it was to bother to vote. With the result known to all, it was simply an act of paving the road for the paper trail to deportation. The ‘correction’ was quickly read, hands were raised, and it was passed by a broad majority. This small addition to the law significantly contributed to the effectiveness of the Israeli deportation regime. It would have passed anyway, but the call for deportation by a black Ethiopian Jew made it clear that everyone, with no exception, should tighten the reins. On paper, what just happened in the room was a dull bureaucratic procedure, but everyone who attended the meeting, whether politically right- or left-leaning, was flooded with emotions.

Beyond state performativity? The state-civil society un-orchestrated ‘division of labour’

This dissertation has reflected on various aspects of state performativity and the various ways in which the Israeli state is not interested in performing power of authority, but literally in the ‘solving’ what is defined as social ‘problems’. One example previously discussed (see Chapter Three) is the difference between the porosity of the US border regime and the performance of border enforcement rather than the actual termination of entries (Andreas 2003), in opposition to the hermetic sealing of the Israeli border with the Sinai, which brought the number of ‘infiltrations’ to practically zero. Observing the actions of Israel’s pro-deportation civil society in this light may point towards an interesting trade-off between the state and civil society in which the state carries out, while civil society performs. While writing this dissertation, the state of Israel decided to step up its efforts to deport all African asylum seekers, using extensive measures. Probably the most heated discussion among pro-deportation activists in this regard concerns the deportation of African women and children, as estimations suggest that some 5,000 African children were born in Israel, residing almost exclusively in South Tel Aviv. In a recent parliamentary meeting,

the pro-deportation activists made their opinion in this regard very clear, marking the end goal of the state’s advancement on the matter. Sheffy Paz, the head of the popular pro-deportation protest who begun her practice two decades ago as an activist for LGBT rights, received the microphone. During a parliamentary meeting¹¹¹ she addresses the Minister of Interior directly:¹¹²

[Sending them to] Rwanda doesn’t mean sending people to their death. Rwanda is a prosperous, developing country. Maybe not so democratic, but the lefties think that Israel is not a democracy anyway. The lefties think that Israel is an apartheid state and a racist state, so what’s the difference? Perhaps it’s better for those children, complaining about how they are being shouted at and cursed at in the streets, to live in a place without racists, why shouldn’t they live in Rwanda? I want to make one thing very clear. I don’t know what your plans are in regard of Rwanda and how many of them you will actually succeed to get out of here, but hear this clearly, we will fight over the families! You will not leave us with the families and children in the neighbourhoods!

This un-orchestrated ‘division of labour’ of deportation between the state and civil society in which pro-deportation activists mark the end goal, raising the bar of expectations while performing public pressure in the form of rallies and demonstrations and creating the space for the state to ‘deliver’, is indicative of how the Israeli deportation surplus operates compared with other states.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the actions of pro-deportation activists and their relations with the state. This group could have been (and in some ways should be) the subject of an entire dissertation, given their immense relevance to the subject of this dissertation. However, I was only able to survey them briefly within this single chapter, and only had space to present a fraction of the materials I collected. One of the most interesting characteristics of the pro-deportation movement is its versatile nature. It is composed of different actors—political, apolitical,

111 The governmental committee for the ‘solution’ of the ‘problem’ of infiltration to Israel. Jerusalem, the Israel Parliament, 29.11.2017.

112 The governmental committee for the ‘solution’ of the ‘problem’ of infiltration to Israel. Jerusalem, the Israel Parliament 29.11.2017.

secular, religious, LGBT, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi—but all are Jewish.

Nevertheless, this short presentation sheds light on the Israeli deportation regime in several ways. First, it contributes to our understanding of the deportation implementation surplus. While we intuitively seek supporting evidence to explain the surplus in state actions, in the Israeli case some of the answers are found in the actions of pro-deportation civil society. This takes place in several ways; for example, as civil pressure on African asylum seekers in the form of demonstrations, hate marches and acts of violence in their neighbourhoods; and also, more importantly, in the form of legal assistance, consultation with ‘professional’ civil society pro-deportation attorneys and lobbyists. While the lines between the pro-deportation civil society activists and the state are blurred, the nature of the relations between them is clear: pro-deportation activists pressure the state from the right side of the political map to generate stricter, broader implementation of the anti-‘infiltration’ law, while at the same time offering expansive interpretations of the law.

Second, the Israeli pro-deportation activists strengthen our understanding in regard to motivations for exercising deportations. While motivations for deportations vary from control of the labour market to ethno-national identity, and as the state invests significant resources in the current deportation campaign, the civil campaign for deportation highlights just how significant the ethno-religious aspect is in the case of the Israeli deportation regime.

Third, we can learn something about the role of civil society in regard to state performativity. Ethnographic materials gathered from interviews and participant observation in the anti-‘infiltration’ committee suggest an un-orchestrated ‘division of labour’ between the state and far right civil society in regard to the exercise of state power and its performance. While the state utilizes its power for the implementation of an effective deportation regime, civil society performs the people’s demand for deportation, the popular ‘justification’ for xenophobia, and the need for strict, immediate action. The state, so it seems, is well aware of the self-governing forces operating within Israeli society, a result of decades of militarization and deep securitization, and utilizes those forces according to its needs.

Last, but not least, the emphasis on the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi divide was brought here as an additional means to emphasise the inextricable nature of the Zionist colonial project and the Israeli deportation regime. At several points throughout this dissertation, this relationship

was unfolded either in the top-down form of the connections between the Israeli occupation and immigration enforcement, or bottom-up in the form of relations between race and ethnicity, and the motivations of ‘street-level’ staff for the deportation of non-Jews. Highlighting the interrelations between race and ethnicity among the actions of pro-deportation activists adds to the importance of this component in our understanding of the effectiveness of state deportation regimes. Hopefully, this contribution to the understanding of the xenophobic state and civil society actions will not only remain theoretical, but will also enable their material disentanglement.

Above all, the gaze towards Israeli pro-deportation activism demonstrates the strength of the adaptation and replication of the colonial logic of separation within Israeli society, and the way in which this logic acts as a tool of governance that intensifies the logic and the power of the Zionist nation.

**Between a rock and a hard place:
Israeli pro-immigration organisations**

We cannot ‘stutter’ while carrying out deportations. Those who show mercy and hypocrisy damage the state of Israel. This mission has the ever-highest importance for the Zionist calling. — Former Israeli Minister of Interior

Introduction

The arrival of African asylum seekers to Israel, and the reaction of the Israeli state, exposed critical gaps in the state’s administrative fabric. Human rights activists have charged into legal battles in an attempt to fill such gaps with legislation supporting African asylum seekers on the basis of liberal, international human rights values. The Israeli human rights organisational arena is fairly modest. Some are involved in small, direct actions or protest groups and are influenced by anarchist or socialist political thought, while others work or volunteer in one of a handful of human rights organisations that catalogue and campaign against systematic abuses of Palestinians and other marginalised groups. Many have given up on the sphere of formal party politics, feeling that even the parties that have historically represented ‘the left’ in mainstream Israeli discourse are unable and unwilling to challenge the violent status quo. Others cast their vote for one of the Palestinian-led parties in national elections or retain hope that one of the small socialist or left-wing liberal parties may have a positive ‘damage limitation’ effect in the Israeli parliament (Wright 2018).

The final chapter of this dissertation is the story of this battle for pluralization and democratization of the Israeli society, under terms in which the powers of the state’s deportation regime extend those of legal bureaucracy into the governance of the Israeli society, which is rooted in decades of militarization and deep securitization (Abulof 2014). It is the story of human rights activists’ struggle not only for the sake of African asylum seekers in Israel, but for the face of the Israeli society as well, and of what can be learned from their failure about the powers of the state.

**Access to the field: Human rights
organisations and pro-immigration activists**

In contrast to my access to the groups studied in previous chapters

(immigration enforcement, governmental agencies), gaining access to human rights activists and NGOs to conduct my ethnographic research was easy. They were supportive of, and sympathetic to, my research goals. This came to me as no surprise. At this point, it is my duty to disclose that for over a decade, previous to my engagement with this research, I was an active member of Israel's human rights organisations. From my initial involvement in campaigns, demonstrations and marches in my early twenties, to the direction of human rights programs, fund raising and NGO board member roles in my mid-thirties, I was fully immersed within this small, yet determined, group of activists. My cross-border work during this decade, with Israelis and Palestinians in Israel and in the West Bank, led me to collaborations with peers and parallels from other conflict-stricken areas of the world. Curious about their insights and resolutions for paving a non-violent way forward, I found myself serving various roles in cooperation with activists and NGOs from Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus and Northern Ireland. These provided me with a broader understanding of the Israeli human rights arena as it is situated in a global perspective.

Anthropological accounts of NGOs have mostly focused on the development-nexus (Lewis and Mosse 2006), whereas his research takes NGOs as the proxy or starting point to examine questions of deportability, the state and humanitarianism, by looking at the specific relationship that relatively independent NGOs in Israel (rarely supported by the government) have with human rights, humanitarianism and the nation-state.

In the Israeli case, as this chapter demonstrates, the state is very well aware of the attempts of human rights organisations to undermine the state deportation regime by legal means, providing material support to illegalized migrants or popular protest. The state replies to such attempts by the promotion of carefully crafted legislation, which walks the thin line between anti-immigration, pro-deportation organisations (see Chapter Six) and pro-immigration human rights organisations.

Legislating the surveillance of human rights organisations

The Israeli parliament (Knesset) has an exceptional power in the sense of the coalition's capability to legislate new rules. Institutionally, it is not subjected to international institutions such as the EU or the European human rights court. Israel does not have a president in the American sense, where the president has a veto right on legislation, or a second house of legislators as in Britain or Germany, which shares

authority over legislation to balance the process. Israel does not even have a constitution, and it is the parliament that is bestowed with the capacity to legislate constitutional laws. These conditions turn the Israeli parliament into one of the strongest in the democratic world. The Israeli Supreme Court of Justice is the only body that has the authority, under certain circumstances, to restrain the parliament's legislative powers (Shany and Rabin 2004, Shany 2007, Shany and Harpaz 2011).

In recent years, the state of Israel has been persistently targeting human rights organisations by promoting legislation limiting their steps. The attacks on human rights organisations writes Amal Jamal in 2016, "come from high up in the government. This is reflected in a clear legislative process in the Knesset that establishes the differences between legitimate and illegitimate civic engagement and activism. This process seeks to avoid being characterized as anti-civil or anti-liberal, while still being able to put pressure and limits on particular forms of civic engagement and certain civil society organisations, especially those that are associated with the 'peace camp' or which promote the language of human rights and social justice for all, including Palestinians."¹¹³

Jamal expands on this issue, concerning Israeli human rights organisations: "A good example is the so-called 'NGO Law', whose precursors date back to at least 2007. Since then, the Knesset has seen various attempts to advance an amendment that aims at enforcing the state's supervision and surveillance of CSO activities and financing (...) One of the most prominent amendments to the law is Amendment 36a from 2008,¹¹⁴ which requires CSO's to reveal their sources of financing and reinforces previous state supervisory provisions." (Jamal 2018:4). Such attacks on the work of civil society and human rights organisations initiate with personal initiatives of Israeli Parliament members. "Extreme nationalist members of the Knesset (MK's) were not satisfied with the 2008 amendments (...) they sought the tightening of state supervision over HRO's, arguing that they endangered national security and served foreign interests. In this they were assisted by key members of the ruling Likud Party. The right-wing parties' aspirations were based on allegations made by nationalist CSO's, such as Im Tirtzu¹¹⁵, that HRO's are financed by foreign governments and hostile foundations." (Jamal 2018:4). "Ambassadors of Germany, the UK, France, Holland, the EU, and the US expressed concern about the proposed legislation.

113 <https://fanack.com/bad-civil-society-in-israel/>

114 http://fs.knesset.gov.il/17/law/17_lsr_300054.pdf

115 <https://imti.org.il/en/about-us/movement/>

The European Commission criticized the bill, saying that its demands on CSO's would go "beyond the legitimate need for transparency" and that it is seemingly "aimed at constraining the activities of these CSO's working in Israel."¹¹⁶ (Jamal 2018:4). "Human rights activists defined the meaning of the legislative process as a way of branding them 'traitors.' Many argued that it was worrying since it was coming from high up in the government, as well as from the mainstream press. The bill, promoted by Minister of Justice Shaked, was added to the list of laws in Israel that, in the name of 'progressive' ideals, promote more government surveillance and control over the activities and engagement of liberal and human rights civic activists. Indicative of the spirit of the times were the words expressed by opposition leader Isaac Herzog. Who said that the NGO law 'is indicative, more than anything, of the budding fascism creeping into Israeli society'" (Jamal 2018:5).

Under such conditions, Israeli human rights organisations struggle to perform as professionals rather than as activists. It should be noted that the great majority of the discussion regarding African asylum seekers in Israel takes place in the legal arena, where activists perform as lawyers at the supreme court level. NGO workers, such as the ones interviewed in this chapter, emphasize their professionalism, their remoteness from activism, and their high level of familiarity with the law and legal procedures. Performing in the face of the state demands performing as a legal expert because this is the only channel that is left for negotiation with the state. But, at the same time, as my ethnographic findings demonstrate, the obsession with the law falls into the trap of operating as a field in which the state may have the upper hand.

Human rights organisations: Fighting a battle of many frontiers

Within the Israeli context of civil society's work, human rights organisations are broadly perceived as treacherous, anti-state activists who work for the sake of the Palestinian goal, while compromising the Israeli state from within, in what is in reality a demographic zero-sum game (Darwish 2010). This perception is rooted in a fundamental characteristic of the relation between the Palestinians and the state of Israel. The Palestinians, according to the Jewish majority, are not eligible for political affiliation with the Israeli political community—not because of their different racial or religious origin, but because they cannot participate in

the Zionist endeavour for redemption, as it is from them that Zionism has to redeem itself (Cabha 2002, Shiftan 2011, Reches 2017).

According to Jamal (2018:2) Human rights organisations in Israel "have been undergoing a growing conflict that mirrors broader trends taking place in Israeli society, namely the conflict between the rising conservative nationalist social forces and the dwindling liberal and humanist camp represented by human rights organisations". Jamal describes a reality in which within the last few years, "there has been a clear rise in the power of conservative nationalist right-wing organisations, which receive firm support from politicians who have influential positions in the Israeli government. These organisations have been leading aggressive political and media campaigns against human rights organisations, especially those involved in defending the rights of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank or under siege in the Gaza Strip, or who are African asylum seekers". (Jamal 2018:2). In the social dynamics described by Jamal, "the conservative nationalist CSOs accuses HROs of being anti-patriotic, treasonous and cooperating with the enemies of society and the state. They utilize three strategies to promote their agenda. The first is delegitimizing HROs through naming and shaming tactics. They lead well-orchestrated political and media campaigns that associate HROs with terrorist organisations. The second is silencing HROs by shaming the institutions—educational, cultural, and media—that invite the former to speak to their audiences. The third strategy is cutting off the sources of funding for HRO's through lobbying activities in donor countries and putting pressure on governments to stop their funding of the former" (Jamal 2018:2). "This process of radicalization has not been linear, and there has been strong push-back by liberal forces seeking to protect the liberal spaces in Israeli society. Nonetheless, the well-orchestrated efforts have sought to reduce the liberal-democratic spaces that have characterized the Israeli political system through the promotion of illiberal, religious-nationalist, and anti-human-rights ideals. These seem to have gained the upper hand.¹¹⁷ The process of radicalization, especially as reflected in the campaigns against HROs, goes beyond the traditional, well-known differentiation between right and left in Israel and could be viewed as gaining traction in the competition for influence on state policies in various fields, especially in economic, security, and foreign policy areas, as well as with respect to

the character and identity of the state of Israel.” (Jamal 2018:4). Over a decade of failure to pressure the state of Israel to grant asylum seekers with refugee status, and given a history of similar failed attempts in the Israeli-Palestinian context, has prompted human rights organisations and activists to resort to everyday material support. For the past couple of years, the dominant trend has been the promotion of ‘social rights residency’ or a ‘welfare residency’; that is, a struggle for granting asylum seekers with access to social services without accepting, or even discussing, their legal status.

This process is best exemplified through an overview of the subjects for whom human rights organisations appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court in representation of African asylum seekers.¹¹⁸ This includes eligibility for health services or day-care vacancy, protection of workers from exploitive employers, and eligibility for registration at certain school in South Tel Aviv. But not everybody is happy with such modes of action. As the former director¹¹⁹ of one of the prominent NGOs¹²⁰ in the Israeli human rights arena stated:

They have to receive a status, and not some kind of ‘welfare residency’. I don’t believe in this term, welfare residency. I’m familiar with the theories behind it and I don’t fall for it at all because I’ve seen with my own eyes what it’s worth, what it’s worth when someone decides to put you in prison and throw you in a country where your life will be in danger. Once you are vulnerable, there will always be someone who will find a way to exploit that. Eli Yishai¹²¹, he can, in any given moment, do whatever he wants with those people, because they don’t vote for him, they can’t vote. They are subordinates, vulnerable to people’s caprices. In my perception, there is no such thing as a welfare residency. In the nation-state, which is the screwed-up model which we live in, you are nothing without citizenship, and I totally agree with Hannah Arendt on this matter. Once your citizenship is revoked, they can do whatever they want with you and we see it here in front of our eyes. Especially in a place like the state of Israel in which even your citizenship does not grant you with safety, for example, if you’re Arab.

Such words serve as an example of the complexity of the human rights camp versus the unity of the pro-deportation activists. While the

118 <https://www.acri.org.il/he/category/civil-rights/refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

119 Interview, Shevy Korzen, Tel Aviv, 21.1.2016

120 <http://www.kavlaoved.org.il/en/>

121 Then Minister of Interior and a hardliner on the deportation of asylum seekers.

pro-deportation camp (see previous chapter) is united under one clear goal (deportation of all African asylum seekers, safeguarding Israel as a Jewish-only state) the human rights camp is stratified and divided. What matters here is the clear separation between various groups of non-Jewish, non-Israeli people on the basis of categorical identities.

What makes it hard for the Israeli human rights camp to unite is exactly what makes possible for the pro-deportation activists to do so. It is the dichotomous, zero sum game discourse that clearly draws the lines between ‘brother’ and ‘others’, which in the case of the African asylum seekers portrays their supporters as enemies of the state and the Zionist cause. While working for the Zionist cause and being a pro-deportation activist are actions in perfect unison, being a human rights activist and supporting African asylum seekers, stands in perfect opposition to the assurance of Israel’s Jewish-only nature, defying the Zionist cause.

Indeed, human rights discourse in the Israeli case takes a different turn to that of the USA or the EU. Dudai (2017:868) suggests that “‘right-wing’ groups imitate, seek to be included in, and exploit human rights discourse in order to pursue a ‘right-wing’ agenda. The ostensible objective of this effort is to hijack the movement from within, defend Israel and undermine the Palestinian struggle for human rights”. While human rights have traditionally been seen mainly as a tool used by underprivileged or disadvantaged groups for progressive causes, in the Israeli case they are increasingly being deployed by conservative and illiberal civil society groups (Shor 2008). The shift to the right in human rights discourse reflects the ongoing shift of the entire Israeli political sphere in a similar direction.

Arenas of left-wing, human rights civil practice are strongly intertwined on a personal level. The same community of activists demonstrates against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the deportation of African asylum seekers. Human rights attorneys represent legal cases drawn from both arenas. The two fields are entangled in the sense of their funding as well, originating from very few, non-governmental domestic funds while mostly being based on international sources of funding. At the same time, there is a clear separation between campaigns calling for the promotion of rights in different populations. As one of my interlocutors, a director of a Jerusalem based NGO assisting African asylum seekers, put it:

The separation between the African refugees and the Palestinian refugees is intentional, it didn’t happen by chance. You try to get to a

place where, when you mention the word “refugees” to Israelis, they see in their minds the horrors of the Second World War and not the Palestinian refugees. So, the intention of not binding this with the Palestinian struggle is also because it’s been going on for so long, and as you can see, no progress is made. There are two separate struggles here. One for them (the African asylum seekers) and one for the face of the Israeli society. The struggle for the face of the Israeli society is tied to the foreign labour migrants, the Palestinian refugees, the house demolitions of the Bedouins, they are all tied with each other. The structural militarism we have here takes everybody down eventually, and it doesn’t matter who you are. Eventually, everybody here has to walk around with their heads down.

Under such conditions—a battle with the state, and nearly the entire Israeli society—what makes human rights activists so persistent in their work?

Motivations for change: The ‘fight or flight’ of human rights activists

All human rights activist I have encountered had their own personal story of why and when it dawned on them when they realized that something was wrong in their society and, moment of disillusionment, they decided to change it. David Sheen,¹²² a Jewish Canadian human rights activist, blogger and an editor at Ha’aretz, shared his story with me:

When the first groups of Sudanese came we opened up our homes. They had no place to live. Afterwards, the army was arresting them upon entry and then jailing them.¹²³ They wouldn’t allow them to live a normal life. And then, the first accommodation that was made was a capitalistic one. They said, these kibbutzim in the south, if they need cheap labour, because Jews don’t want to sweat and do agricultural work, so, look, there are these black people, and we have them in jail anyway, rotting in jail and asking for their food. Let’s give them to the kibbutzim and it’s a win-win situation. The problem was, of course, that they only wanted to accept single men because then they only had to pay to feed a single person. If they accept the family, they have to feed the family. So, they said, no more.

My reporting on it started in 2010, when I started working in

122 Interview, David Sheen, 24.3.2016, Dimona.

123 Prior to the establishment of Holot Immigration Detention Centre, African asylum seekers were imprisoned immediately upon entry in one of two prisons in south Israel (Ketsiot, Shaharonim).

Ha’aretz, and when you’ve started to see far right rallies, in South Tel Aviv. I’m a journalist. So, I document what’s interesting and what isn’t being documented. I thought it was news worthy, so I just went there with a camera, and started filming and interviewing people.

I quickly came to realize that there were no other journalists there. So, I felt, there was an obligation there. Then, I would interview people, and I realized that the Israeli consensus is so far to the right, that all the reporting in the world won’t help. Because the politicians have already done their job, they’ve already incited. And to be honest, they were already working on fertile ground because of years and years of incitement against the Palestinians and non-Jews in general. And all the Garinim Torani’im¹²⁴ in South Tel Aviv, putting in people’s heads that they are the chosen people, and that those Goyim (gentiles, Africans among others) are sub-humans.

Another human rights activist working with African asylum seekers in Jerusalem ties her awakening with her family’s personal history: *In the beginning we thought, refugees? My grandma was a refugee! I’ve been educated on that for 12 years within the Israeli education system, I took the holocaust trip to Poland because of that. I was an officer in the Israeli air force, filled with pride, as if I’m protecting the state so we’ll never be refugees again. Somewhere in the broader struggle in support of asylum seekers in Israel we thought it would be easier, explaining that to people. We wrote the 1951 UN Convention for Refugees and all of that, so how can it be?*

Her mentioning of participating in a holocaust trip to Poland is telling as the holocaust remains present in Israelis’ daily lives, contributing vastly to the design of social perceptions.

Feldman (2002, 2008) aims to illustrate how ‘the Israeli Ministry of Education has built its world view—sometimes unconsciously—into the framework marking the boundaries of the enclave of the ritual visits to Poland’. By showing how Israeli high school students, who are on the brink of their mandatory military conscription, join various guided tours to the Polish death camps, Feldman’s ethnography manages to shed light on the construction of the perception of the holocaust within Israeli society. Feldman (2002:85) shows how such repeating visits “draw a clear, but constantly threatened, boundary around the Jewish-Israeli

124 A group of idealistic, religious, expansionist Zionists, individuals and families, who settle in socio-economically underdeveloped communities to help build up and strengthen the community through social and religious programming, as means of spreading their ideology

collective, and present that boundary in such a way as to appear to those participating in the visits as natural". He examines this process in light of Mary Douglas's (1966) characterization of the practices of the enclave. "In Poland the students visit the death camps, cemeteries, remains of former Jewish shtetls¹²⁵ and abandoned synagogues. They listen to the testimony of survivors at the sites of their suffering and struggle, and perform ceremonies at the Warsaw Ghetto, the sites of the murders and the crematoria. On their return to Israel, they are defined 'witnesses of the witnesses' and entrusted with the task of passing on their experience to their classmates, friends and siblings." (Feldman 2002:86). The sum total of these educational practices is to reconstitute the child in the image and substance of the citizen: one whose ultimate loyalties will be to the abstract idea of the nation state (Handelman 1990). It is a process that culminates in the young Israeli's compulsory military service.

To the participants in these educational visits to Poland, "Israel takes on cosmic proportions and becomes the centre of the world through experiences that are non-Israeli, such as the Holocaust. By experiencing what is not Israeli as mortally dangerous, Israel takes on mythical proportions as the only place where Jews are secure." (Feldman 2002:90) "The Jewish people become the locus of identification by experiencing non-Jews as anti-Semites. Thus, a picture of the world is created in which impermeable boundaries separate 'us' from 'them'." (Feldman 2002:91).

Previous chapters in this dissertation reflected on various divisions in Israeli society, such as that of the Mizrachi and the Ashkenazim. The Israeli government has actively chosen to politically utilize the memory of the holocaust in very specific ways, such as with ritual tours to the Polish death camps. Commemorative ritual can build political solidarity even in the absence of ideological consensus (Hobsbawn 1983). While we examine the invented traditions of national rites, we look for interests and manipulations and fail to see that both the powerful and the weak are within constructed tradition (Kepferer 1988). Human rights activists' attempts to break such constructed traditions, and compromising such ideological consensus bares a social cost.

The comparison often made by human rights activists between the deportation of African asylum seekers and that of the Jews during the Second World War is considered a crossing of a red line by the broader Israeli society. It is not only seen as a taboo, but as a cynical, hypocritical act. A great deal has been written against this comparison. The essence

of it is summarized here by Makor Rishon,¹²⁶ Israel's leading religious and nationalist paper, which is affiliated with the conservative right-wing Israeli parties:

The campaign against the deportation of the infiltrators had crossed every possible line. I will not be amazed if one day the left-wing organisations will stick yellow star badges on the clothes of the African infiltrators. It's just a matter of time. The left-wing organisations leading this campaign, are trying to burn our consciousness with the claim that deportation of illegal infiltrators away from Israel is nothing short of sending them to Auschwitz. In their twisted theatre, Israel is the Nazis, or at least, their collaborator, and the labor infiltrators are the hunted Jews.

We have to say this loudly and repeatedly: this is the denial of the holocaust. When immigration enforcement agents are being compared with the Gestapo, this is not only ignorance but the distortion of truth. When the Israeli Minister of Justice is compared to Reinhard Heydrich it doesn't only insult the minister but minimizes Heydrich's acts of horror. When the children of labour infiltrators are being compared to Jewish children hiding in attics because of their Jewishness—that eliminates the memory of the holocaust.

As ethnographies of human rights activists and their NGOs demonstrates, their struggle is layered, as it is not only the state they struggle against in order to cease the deportations of African asylum seekers, but the majority of the Israeli society, as seen in actions such as the Polish death camps visits and broad efforts to undermine and delegitimize the work of human rights activists and their NGOs.

With such a variety of frontiers for legal battles, struggle for material support and the attempt to remain licit in the eyes of the Israeli public, how do pro-immigration human rights organisations utilize the services of various state agencies in favour of African asylum seekers?

African asylum seekers: New 'customers' for veteran human rights organisations

In the early 2000s, as a reaction to the West Bank closure following the second intifada, the state of Israel initiated the importation of foreign labor migrants, mostly from Asia, as a replacement of the cheap, flexible, unprotected Palestinian labor force. In parallel, the flow of African asylum

seekers from Darfur, and later from Sudan and Eritrea, began to arrive by foot via Israel's southern border with Egypt and the Sinai.

By the early 2000s, civil society in Israel in general, and human rights organisations in particular, were already active. Pro-human rights civil society was rich with initiatives orchestrated by the actions of local and global NGOs as a result of the long-lasting struggle of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Refugees, asylum seekers and illegal labour migrants were understood by these NGOs as new 'customers' in the human rights arena. A plethora of dozens of newly-created NGOs, social groups, and branches within veteran NGOs have formed in order to assist and represent these communities. While this may appear to be a robust reaction to the state's exclusionary measures towards African asylum seekers, the scale of this reaction was modest in terms of manpower, funding, and public support.

This array of organisations and initiatives is relatively wide in its scope of operations and volume in social network, considering that and the total number of asylum seekers (45,000-50,000) and 'illegal' labour migrants (180,000-200,000) in Israel is relatively low in comparison to other Western countries¹²⁷

The state's reactions to this new reality did not fail to arrive, and left no room for wonder. Their reactions included a series of brutal deportations,¹²⁸ the initiation of Holot Immigration Detention Centre,¹²⁹ for refugees and asylum seekers, the legislation of the 'anti-infiltration law'¹³⁰ and the building of the 'anti-infiltration fence' on the border with Egypt, as well as a strong call from members of the parliament in favour of the deportation of these communities. Taken together, these reactions sent a clear message to Israel's human rights organisations: these communities are not here to stay.

The message was so strong that Israel's human rights organisations backed away from their attempts to lead the state of Israel to recognize these populations, grant them with refugee status, or supply them with temporary residency permits. In doing so they aimed to focus on what was feasible to achieve in face of the immensity of the Israeli deportation regime. This marked the birth of the 'salami technique' in which Israel's human rights organisations moved toward a process of

127 <http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m02986.pdf>,

128 <https://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m02279.pdf>

129 <https://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m02958.pdf>

130 http://knesset.gov.il/laws/data/law/2483/2483_1.pdf

specialization in different sub-groups of African asylum seekers. They reified of fields of operation in which sub-groups are exceptionalized in legal terms, mostly on the basis of medical conditions or marital status, in order to be rescued from deportation or long-term detentions.

Anthropologists and others who investigate the dynamics of social movements, including movements that deploy similar tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience, have considered the theatrical elements of protest in various ways (see Figure 11). These analyses question any approach to activism that would narrowly consider its efficacy in positivist terms or propose a functionalist analysis of social movements, focusing instead on the symbolic resonances and phenomenological experiences of activist displays within specific cultural and political contexts. A significant thread of such interpretations emphasizes the creativity of these protests, which often use music, art, and humour to expose or symbolically invert dominant power relations (Reed 2005, Spellman-Poots et al. 2014), and often create alternative or 'liminoid' spaces that imagine or 'prefigure' (Juris 2014) different cultural and political forms.

Central to theatrical forms of activism, however, is not so much the impetus to create different worlds to the one in which they live, but rather exposure to the violence and injustice of activists' own reality as well as the crucial challenging of their entanglement within this political domain. Contrary to accounts of activist performances that emphasize the creation of alternative realities through performance and storytelling, Wright (2018) proposes the notion of a 'theatrics of complicity' as a key feature of this particular case of nonviolent activism and civil disobedience.

A 'theatrics of complicity' describes "the way in which this activism operates by staging a certain confrontation with state authorities. This confrontation allows activists to exploit the cultural intimacy between themselves and the police officers or soldiers with whom they come into contact, in order to expose their own privilege as Jewish Israeli citizens and thus their complicity with the Israeli state regime. This is enacted through physical presence in Palestinian areas, presented as an act of cooperation and solidarity with the Palestinian residents: subjects who, however, appear only in the background of this activism. They can only appear as such because the potency and reverberations of this activism depend precisely on a Jewish Israeli cultural poetics of complicity with colonial domination. What this activism also highlights, then, is the uncomfortable symbiosis of state sovereignty and activist

mobilizations, a distinction that some scholars of social movements tend to take for granted and to draw crisp and clear lines between. It is precisely through employing their own status as Jewish Israeli citizens in these confrontational performances that these activists unsettle and place into question the ethics and politics of a militaristic and colonial political culture more broadly. They make the distinction between themselves and state authorities through the dramatics of their activism by rendering visible how close and familiar they are to them.” (Wright 2018: 37) But how does the state adapt and respond to such a variety of forms of activism?

State adaptation to human rights’ organisations campaigns

During 2015, Holot was at its fullest capacity, with 3,650 African detainees. On winter nights at the remote desert location of the centre, temperatures would hit zero. During summer days, they remain at around 40°C or more for weeks. Asylum seekers, accommodated in thin-walled mobile trailer homes, would complain of sleepless nights of freezing cold or days of unbearable heat, and the Israeli Prison Service operating the centre would ignore their complaints.¹³¹ Asylum seekers then turned to Israel’s leading human rights organisations, who have taken the case to the Israeli Supreme Court.¹³²

What followed is very telling in the sense of the triangle of relations between the state, human rights organisations and the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court, following correspondence with different sides, ruled that without proper air conditioning during peak winter or summer detainees should be released from the centre. The commander of Holot Immigration Detention Centre explains what followed that decision:

There was the Supreme Court appeal concerning the air conditioning. We (the Israeli Prison Service) had 5 days to fix it. So, within 5 days the company installed 362 air conditioners over here, within the rooms. Now we have air-conditioning within every room. And then, I refused to give the detainees their remote controls. So, they (the human rights organisations) told me, why don’t you give them the remotes? I said, If I give it to them they’ll fight over it. I’ll order to install on/off switches, and I’ll decide what the temperature will be. They (human rights attorneys) passed my reply to

¹³¹ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.2535258>

¹³² 11.1.2015, attorney Oded Feller, representing the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants, and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHRI).



Figure 3: A pro-human rights demonstrator holding a ‘slaves for sale’ sign at an anti-deportation demonstration in Tel Aviv, January 2018. Photo credit: Activestills. During the current campaign of deportation of African asylum seekers, protestors stepped up their efforts in the form of pop-up ‘slave markets’ and direct comparisons to the deportations of the Jews during the Second World War.

the Ministry of Justice. Eventually the detained bypassed the whole thing with a phone app, they do whatever they want. Four million kilowatts, an electricity bill of 2.5 million shekels per year. It's absolutely insane.

During our interview, the commander of the Holot Immigration Detention Centre browsed through a pile of appeals made by human rights organisations against various aspects of the Israeli Prison Service's work:

Here, look, these are the new Supreme Court appeals: use of internet, forbidden objects, what gear is allowed in, Ministry of Interior, reception and orientation of detainees... but we (the Israeli Prison Service) know how to deal and adapt to each and every one of them. And more than that, this guy, the attorney, (naming a head attorney of the human rights organisations) he's almost like a friend of ours by now. Can you ask for more than this, a better watchdog than the Supreme Court? Have you ever heard of a case in which the Israeli Prison Service came against a supreme court decision? We are a law-abiding state, and I'm telling you as a citizen, and forget the fact that I'm the commander, sorry, the director of the centre, I am so proud to live in a country that guarantees human rights.

The detention centre's commander describes a variety of cases in which some of the human rights organisations' appeals to the Israeli Supreme Court have managed to gain some, even if little, traction on the ground, mostly in the form of improvement of services and living conditions of African asylum seekers within or outside detention. In spite of how cornered and ostracized human rights organisations are, they operate within a legal vacuum. But the case described here regarding the air-conditioning demonstrates how well the state manages to adapt to such appeals, neutralize their essence while succumbing to the Supreme Court rule. While nearly no successes are recorded in the principal field of granting the asylum seekers a refugee status, human rights organisation focus on generating minor progresses in the form of material support.

**'They are asylum seekers, not infiltrators':
Where discourse is governed**

The small group of human rights organisations working in Israel is combative in its effort to negate various state's efforts coinciding

with liberal values. Such human rights organisations' complicity in the form of managing 'soft' deportations, in the sense of contribution to the deportation continuum, is rarely taken in account. Only one NGO in Israel, the Centre for International Migration and Integration (CIMI),¹³³ manages 'soft' deportations in the form of relocations and family unifications, operating in cooperation with the state. The scale of work of this NGO is modest, encompassing a few dozens cases per year. Their work, located in the grey area between the state and the human rights organisations, is extremely sensitive, especially when it comes to cooperations with governmental agencies or municipalities. Danya,¹³⁴ a field coordinator for this NGO, explains just how cornered they are about such interactions:

I constantly need to choose. For example, in (the municipality of) Eilat, where they demonstratively use the term 'infiltrators' out of conscious choice, if I use the term 'asylum seekers' they correct me and say 'infiltrators'. So, I choose when to say 'asylum seekers', or 'those who departed Eritrea and Sudan', so it would be easier for them to discuss. Sometimes I stop the discussion for a minute and explain that I intend to use the term asylum seekers and portray it as a necessity for professional terminology, so it will pass.

While this is almost the only local NGO that has some sort of formal cooperation with the Israeli immigration authorities their steps are extremely limited, as Danya explains:

When I started working here I couldn't get it: why can't we really work with the Population, Immigration and Border Authority, tell them what we think. Now, after two and a half years, I totally get it, although it is still absolutely unacceptable in my opinion. The perception is that the organisational cost is too heavy. Getting the authorities mad, the cost of such a move... the fear is that the NGO will simply cease to exist.

Human rights activists and NGOs struggle against the state's deportation schemes despite their isolation and their on-going struggles over terminology. Under such hostile social circumstances, what personal motivations push such activists towards this kind of work?

133 <https://www.cimi.org.il/>

134 Pseudonym, interview 7.4.2016, Jerusalem.

Human rights activists: Desperate and disillusioned

I meet Orit¹³⁵ in mid-January in South Tel Aviv at the ASSAF¹³⁶ office. It's a day of scorching heat at what is supposed to be mid-winter and we have a laugh about it. The ASSAF offices are a makeshift space, strangely brought together from leftover spaces between several houses and shops. The walls are now covered with a variety of medical and legal instructional posters and flyers in Hebrew, Arabic, Tigrinya and English. I mention that I haven't seen any African asylum seekers on the street but was quite astonished by the number of used syringes on the sidewalk just outside and people who seemed to be wiped out, some of them leaning on the parking cars while dozing on the pavement:

Yeah, our neighbours here are the Ministry of Health's methadone dispensing unit. You've arrived just at the right time of the day. What can I say, we cannot afford rent anywhere else, and it's a walking distance for most of the South Tel Aviv refugees.

ASSAF was founded in 2007 in order to aid African asylum seekers in Israel, mostly in the field of psycho-social support. The ASSAF team, composed mainly of social workers, receives hundreds of African asylum seekers per month for one-on-one sessions, group support, paralegal consultation, language classes and other various activities. It is a hybrid organisation that does a bit of everything according to the current needs of the people at its doors. Orit was a co-founder of this NGO a decade ago when the Africans began arriving in large numbers, and unlike the rest of the founding members she never jumped ship. She is a 'war veteran' when it comes to working with state agencies:

Today the way the state breaks them down is mental, psychological. A person is not allowed to dream. The maximum he can dream of is that he will not be thrown into Holot, and that if he would be thrown in there, that eventually he will end up at the same situation in which he was before, at the same dish-washing job from which he was taken. Two weeks ago, at the UNHCR offices we had an asylum seeker with chronic illness who tried to jump out of the window, tried to kill himself. We caught him at the last second. He's treated with dialysis, sleeping on the floor in a Sudanese

135 Interview, Orit Marom, ASSAF, South Tel Aviv, 19.1.2016.

136 <http://assaf.org.il/en/node/2>. The organisation's full name is: Aid Organisation for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel.

restaurant, has no supporting community, the few friends he has were sent to Holot, has no food or ways to support himself, a young guy. Maybe he's better off in Holot. Sometimes we laugh about how maybe it's better for them to be in Holot.

In the past decade, the ASSAF team in general, and Orit in particular, have seen more failures than successes. With the state making up the rules as it goes along, adding or removing corrections to the 'anti-infiltration' law, and with the circulation of Ministers of Interior who seem to only shift further to the right in their policies, Orit and her team of social workers are disillusioned. During my interviews in circles of human rights activists in Israel, people confessed off the record that they do not believe that they would be able to stop the state from deporting the African asylum seekers, and that what they are actually doing is struggling for the sake of 'the bottom of the barrel'. By this they mean the chronically ill, the elderly, perhaps even the children. ASSAF does just that, which makes their daily struggle even more frustrating. Years of this kind of work have taken their toll:

I don't have any more power for this. What I really want to do is go farming in Klil (an off-the-grid, hippie hilltop community in north Israel). I'm at a place in life where I'd like to go live in Goa with my child and not live in this place where you constantly have to struggle. Look, I have two friends, they are from the same milieu as I am, they immigrated a year and a half ago to New Zealand. Their life is honey. We talk and she tells me: I'm calm, I'm not stressed anymore, I don't have this existential anxiety in which I constantly have to fight everything, run somewhere.

In an attempt to get out of the Tel Aviv 'bubble' of human rights organisations and the 'echo-chamber' of voices against deportations, I contacted human rights activists working with African asylum seekers in other areas of the state. Human rights activist interlocutors in Tel Aviv recommended that I contact Danielle,¹³⁷ who was at the time was leading the Jerusalem African Community Centre (JACC). She was sharp, straightforward, honest and desperate. One of the first things she told me was:

We are a state-wide group of activists who work together, but most of

137 Pseudonym, interview, Jerusalem, 18.2.2016.

us live around Tel Aviv. Every time we get together and talk about current political matters, we agree that five years from now, there will be no African refugees in Israel. Holot will be shut down. Not only that Holot will be shut down, we will end up finding ourselves locked in it.

In a different interview, David, an activist living in south Israel shares with me his desperation and the personal context in which it takes place in his daily life. Just a few years ago David and his family have moved to Dimona, a remote, southern Israeli city with a large community of Afro-Americans who made it to Alia during the late 1960s:

To be honest, I don't know for how many years I'm going to do this... If I was rich, or materially comfortable, I could buy my peace of mind. You know, I could buy a house, with a big garden and just obsess with growing food and vegetables, living a healthy life, grow children, you know. My private bubble where I don't have to live with the crazy racism. I would live in neve-shalom, my kids could grow up learning Hebrew and Arabic, at least we could have a normal bubble. But I don't have that money, I don't have a place to escape to. This is my reality.

The reason we left Tel Aviv was because we didn't want to be near the pogroms.¹³⁸ I didn't want to leave Tel Aviv, I wanted to leave the country altogether. My wife wanted to stay. I said ok. But I'm not going to live in Tel Aviv anymore, I'm not going to take the risk of this happening. Because I was there when it happened, I saw it with my own eyes. So, I should explain, my wife is black.

I didn't want to think, one day she goes to work, and something happens, and I can't get in touch with her, I can't protect her, I can't help her. I can't live like that. We have a child.

There, in Tel Aviv, the blacks they keep their head down, they don't make eye contact because they're afraid that something will happen. So, I don't want to raise a black child in Tel Aviv, seeing how black people keep their heads down. In Dimona, there's a lot of racism, there are lots of problems, but at least the black people you see, they walk with their heads up, wearing African clothes, their backs straight, they're not ashamed, they are proud of themselves. I want my child to see other kids that look like her, proud human beings.

138 Referring to a series of cases of arson and physical attacks of far-right activists on African asylum seekers in South Tel Aviv.

As most of human rights activism takes place within the legal arena, my efforts during fieldwork were focused on attorneys and para-legal activists representing various cases of African asylum seekers in court. Pro-human rights lawyers were relatively easy to find and talk with. Most of them worked for several NGOs, such as Hamoked or the Workers hotline, and were in charge, at any given moment, of more cases than they could possibly handle. While their online home pages and well-produced reports were impressive and indicated highly active organisations, I soon discovered that these legal and para legal human rights organisations employed a couple of full-time lawyers at most. I was surprised to discover that some of the prominent cases I had heard of were not handled by them, but by employees and partners of some of the biggest law firms in the country, who only dealt with several human rights cases pro bono per year. In such a system, attorneys employed by legal firms handle several extra cases per year for zero fees. While I'm not able to provide a specific number of attorneys providing such free legal assistance for asylum seekers, I can say that based on my interviews and estimations there are two dozen at most operating in the entire state.

All of my human rights legal activists pointed to the refugee rights legal clinic in Tel Aviv University as the most important player on the ground in this specific arena. Anat Ben Dor and Yuval Livnat,¹³⁹ heads of this legal program, have been the main 'engine' behind a long list of legal battles and Supreme Court appeals with the state for the sake of the African asylum seekers. We met several times, always in their Tel Aviv University office. The initial impression that they both generate is that they are not 'street-level' human rights activists. Sitting in their university offices, with walls decorated with dozens of folders carrying titles of Supreme Court appeals and using articulate language, it seems that activists like these have mastered the art of speaking with the state in its own language: bureaucracy. With a long list of academic titles that is only surpassed by their list of academic publications and Supreme Court appeals, one would assume that such professionals would manage to achieve some success, at least partially, in their battles with the state, but reality dictates otherwise.

Agreements, we laughed at them. We couldn't believe that they were capable of all of that. They were so incompetent, but they've really

139 Anat Ben Dor, Yuval Livnat, interview, Tel Aviv University, 23.6.2016

improved. Look at the RSD (Refugee Status Determination) office, for example. Allegedly, this investment of billions of shekels along the years in such a system is absolutely ridiculous, just so that three people would receive their asylum status, but you have to look at it from an opposite viewpoint. This investment is done so that it will be able to disqualify the thousands of others, in a solid way, so they will not make it to court, where the state is exposed. And don't forget that the existence of this system also enables a lot of other systems to operate and budgets to flow: the building of Holot, building of the fence, consultation to other European states on the basis of the successful Israeli experience, and so on.

And again, we have to admit, they really got their act together, and so did other governmental agencies. For example, look at the case of driving licenses which we were handling at the time. There was a long period of time, of several years, where African asylum seekers had some living space. You could be an 'infiltrator' with papers that are worth nothing, but you could have got a driving license and drive in Israel. At a certain point, the Ministry of Interior figured that out. They started holding meetings with the Ministry of Transportation, telling them that that the temporary sitting permit that they give the 'infiltrators' is not a visa, and that those people are here illegally, temporarily. And then the Ministry of Transportation started saying that they are not allowed to drive or hold licenses.

This is just one example, we saw it gradually happening in many places, taxation, couplehood, home rentals, it really felt like your living space was gradually narrowing down. I mean, you were being targeted as an infiltrator. It is mostly obvious with the current separation of offices. Initially, they ('infiltrators') used to receive various governmental services at all regular offices, nowadays they have dedicated offices. You really walk around feeling as if you're targeted. You have no place in which you can, even for a short while, not be an 'infiltrator'. I cannot help but feel, out of a perspective of over a decade, that we're fighting a losing battle, and that's hard.

Talking about the African asylum seekers, Orit often conflates first person and third person affiliations to a point in which it is understood that while legally representing them, she puts herself in their shoes, experiences their daily struggles first-hand.

Conclusion

This chapter described the persistence of human rights activists against all odds in challenging the Israeli deportation regime. My

ethnography of human rights activists described their actions as a process in which the state promotes practical steps, such as limiting legislation aimed at such human rights organisations' funding, while the broader society undermines them through the use of hostile discourse that presents human rights activists as treasonous agents who compromise the very existence of the state.

In order to face such a reality successfully, human rights activists perform legal 'professionalism' rather than activism in their struggle with the state's deportation regime. This is not a particular case reserved for the legal arena. In the field of humanitarian and medical aid in Israel, the use of both medical-scientific language and the compilation of such testimonies into statistical knowledge partook of a kind of technocratics of development and human rights bureaucracies (Escobar 2001, Ferguson 1990, Li 2007)

As nearly all other channels for activism are closed, the only place in which it is still possible to debate with the state is through the legal system and Supreme Court appeals. Even then, as demonstrated in the case of the appeals against living conditions within Holot, the state finds ways to adapt to Supreme Court rulings and neutralize the essence of the criticism against governmental actions. Within this dire condition of legal and social limitations to their work, human rights activists find that the discourse is governed as well, as even the terminology used by them is not acceptable by the majority of the Israeli public.

The ethical and political engagements of Jewish Israeli left radical activists are characterized by an unsettling discomfort and melancholic ambivalence. For these activists, ethics is not about working toward a given moral stance, but involves responding to, as well as struggling against, particular 'others' within a given political and discursive regime in which multiple, ambiguous and contradictory affects and identifications are at play. The inevitable question here is: why do such activists maintain their struggle under such dire conditions? The answer may be found in comparing this chapter with the previous one, which portrayed the work of far-right, pro-state supporters of deportation.

The most substantial difference between the two groups is the difference between their own views of their personal futures in Israel. Pro-deportation activists dream of a time (real or imagined) before the arrival of the African asylum seekers, missing the way 'their neighbourhoods used to be' and trying to 'return things back to the way they were'. They imagine their futures right where they are nowadays, but simply without the 'infiltrators'. Human rights activist, on the other

hand, are desperate to the extent of imagining themselves leaving their jobs, their cities, and possibly Israel altogether, in order to distance themselves and their children from the everyday expressions of racism. They imagine a (possible or impossible) different Israel that they are not necessarily a part of. Desperate, cornered and disillusioned, they dream of migrating to other states, regimes and societies.

**Between the excessive and the effective:
The everyday life of the Israeli deportation regime**

Deportation regimes are becoming an inextricable part of the modern Western state. Immigration enforcement, border policing and detention centres are now ubiquitous, normalised into various spaces of the state. Most of us accept the work of immigration enforcement agencies unquestionably as they have been normalised into our understanding of the state's work. Such normalisation is only contested at the margins. This is precisely why studying such state mechanisms is more relevant now than ever. Contesting the normalizing of deportation regimes has been the motivation for writing this dissertation.

The aim of this dissertation was to study the daily life of 'street-level' immigration enforcement agencies. Writing in 'the age of involuntary mobility' (Carling 2002), I chose to focus on the deportation regime itself, the production of deportability and the execution of deportation procedures, rather than on the lives of refugees and asylum seekers, and their experiences under immigration enforcement. Lahav and Guiraudon (2006: 204) have noted that 'implementation' is 'an often-missing variable in the public policy literature, especially with respect to immigration control'. Within this dissertation, I aimed to respond to this problem by presenting an ethnography of 'street-level' immigration enforcement and capturing 'a view of the state from the bottom-up' (Heyman 1995, Mountz 2003). This dissertation, and the conclusion before you, are a categorical case of the study of power (Nadar 1972, Verdery 2014), within the context of immigration enforcement.

My ethnographic work was motivated by two main puzzles. First, to what extent does Israel's deportation regime reflect the national 'siege mentality' and the common fear of losing a Jewish majority? Second, how did Israel create and intensify an immigration enforcement implementation surplus? Exploring these two puzzles led to a third: how do local civil society organisations shape the actions of the Israeli deportation regime?

In this current era of expanding deportation regimes, the growing utilization of deportation, and the production of various conditions of deportability by states, the relevance of the Israeli case is twofold.

First, a close observation of the state's reaction to the arrival of refugees from an anthropological, 'street-level' point of view enables us to shift from discussing the 'refugee crisis' to questioning the nature

of the state crisis and the refugees, asking ourselves whether it is actual or performed (Moffitt 2015). Such a discursive shift assists in deflecting our focus from the victims of this 'crisis' to the ones sustaining it. However, it is hard to make within a top-down view of state agencies, such as those tasked with immigration enforcement. It easily overlooks crucial processes such as the role of discretionary power in the hands of 'street-level' agents, and the ways in which, in the Israeli case, this leads to expansive implementation and maximalist interpretation of deportation procedures. As this dissertation suggests, despite the recurring state reference to the terminology of crisis and the alleged 'swarming of the Israeli borders by African infiltrators', the Israeli 'crisis' is performative. A close inspection of the state's structural reaction to the arrival of refugees exposes growth and internal state expansion. It is the generator of deepening circles of national belonging, exclusion of 'others' and further safeguarding of nationality and fortification of borders. The magnitude of the Israeli state response to the African newcomers, in a context of a small-scale arrival in comparison to neighbouring states, or European states facing incoming immigration from similar origin states, enables us to gain insights regarding the performative nature of the state's immigration enforcement.

Second, securitization and immigration management are becoming a worrisome euphemism. Israel is a leading international provider of arms, surveillance systems and security installations, while serving as an advisor for various states in such designated fields. As previous studies of the newly opened market of securitization of immigration control have suggested, Israel is an international leader in the export of such technologies and the training and legal work that supports it. As this dissertation outlines, Israel had already begun exporting its newly developed methodologies and technologies of immigration enforcement, which were tested and designed in real time during the arrival of asylum seekers.

These are the components of which this dissertation is made: the relevance in global times of expanding, securitizing deportation regimes, the Israeli context of a settler-colonial society wracked with national anxieties, and the effectiveness of the implementation of immigration enforcement policies from a 'street-level' view.

African asylum seekers epitomize Israeli national anxieties: tens of thousands of young, black, non-Jewish men, mostly Muslim,

arriving from the Sinai by foot to the Jewish state. Their arrival has not woken up the 'demon' of the Israeli anxieties and siege mentality. It simply exposed it, offered us a window through which we can observe, understand and analyse it. We need, then, to look into the settler-colonial context in order to find explanations for the effectiveness and the implementation surplus realized by the Israeli deportation regime.

The broad variety of possibilities of the temporary bureaucratic existence of non-Jewish, non-Israeli people within the Israeli space is an intensified reflection of recent international development concerning questions of citizenship, belonging and exclusion. As noted by Balibar (2006), 'the further states lose their capabilities to completely seal themselves from entry of non-citizens, the more sensitive are the bureaucratic, legal barriers and surveillance mechanisms they develop towards immigrants'. Visa regimes, identification papers and entry or exit permits, which used to regulate the passage between states, have now become a means for distinguishing between permanent and temporary residents, and 'good' and 'bad' immigrants. Israel operates at both ends: under specific geographic conditions it seals, almost hermetically, the state's external borders, while at the same time improving its technologies of identification, separation and exclusion, using them in more excessive ways. As Bigo (2002) and others (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018) have demonstrated within different contexts in the Western world, border work, which belongs at the border, had shifted into the heart of Israeli cities and civil spaces by means of immigration enforcement.

A decade ago, when the Israeli state directed its deportation agents at Thai, Filipino and Latino labour migrants, immigration enforcement operations took a certain form. Mass arrests and man hunts were the common implementation methods. Nowadays, with African asylum seekers kept at bay, the state's campaign of exclusion bares another method. Mass detention, exclusionary bureaucracies, the hermetic sealing of borders, exclusion from the labour market and economic sanctions currently set the stage of immigration enforcement. Such developments, carried out within a relatively short time frame, demonstrate the agility and capacity of the Israeli state. It is constantly changing and adapting in relation to the global no less than to the local. But as a political mechanism, deportation may be gazing outward just as much as it projects policies inward. Deportation of non-Jewish, non-Israeli people may serve as a performative act, serving the goal of

sustaining Israel's importation regime toward international Jewry by enhancing Israel's pull factor towards Western diaspora Jews.

In Israel, the settler-colonial 'template' on which immigration enforcement is constructed is linked with national anxieties and the state's siege mentality. This leads to an immigration enforcement surplus that is carried out by the expansive implementation of deportation policies. Israel's immigration enforcement performatively universalizes Western, liberal, democratic governance through the nominal inclusion of African asylum seekers, as with other populations within its body of law, only to face the elimination of their racialized existence by placing them 'outside' the law. By doing so, the state authority manages to steer the asylum regime, a regime of protection, into an effective regime of exclusion and deportation. Such insights are hard to make with a top-down analysis of deportation policies or by studying the refugees' personal stories of flight. This is precisely the point at which the 'street-level' approach prevailed in sites such as the Israeli parliament, where the translation of the settler-colonial present and national anxieties materialised into practical means of 'street-level' enforcement.

National programs such as mandatory military service are only one example of a social structure sustaining the state's anxieties on the basis of the colonial 'template'. Mandatory military service, often taking place in the West Bank, redeems Israelis as active members within the colonial project. It is the colonizing 'education' that Israelis undergo, and their role as active members within the colonial project, which contributes to the effectivity and expansive implementation of deportation policies. The worldview of securitization, the set of skills gained during military service, and the prism it provides state agents with respect to their understanding of the state, enables them later on to observe a civil space such as the Refugee Status Determination Unit as a potential space of ethnic-based conflict. Refugee Status Determination interviewers, who occupy a crucial 'street-level' position, interpret their role as interrogators in a work environment designed to maintain homeland security. They do so by implying broader perceptions of the 'real' 'others' (i.e. Palestinians) on the other 'others' (African asylum seekers). Within the specific Israeli context, Palestinians are not eligible for political affiliation with the Israeli political community—not because of their different racial or religious origin, but because they cannot participate in the Zionist endeavour for redemption, as it is from them that Zionism

has to redeem itself (Cabha 2002, Shiftan 2011, Reches 2017). The same perception applies to African asylum seekers subjected to immigration enforcement, rather than life under a military occupation.

The phenomenon of street-level immigration enforcement surplus is an important means to realise the implementation surplus. State authorities achieve effectiveness not by presenting effective policies or by introducing improved technologies of surveillance and detention. Rather, the state channels experienced personnel from the neighbouring colonial project into the arena of immigration enforcement, supplying them with toned-down instruments of war. Such a form of achieving effectiveness within immigration management demands little intervention on the policy level, as 'street-level' agents are well-experienced with the everyday life of enforcement and the processing of illegalized populations. Such an effective design is interesting in regard to our understanding of the 'monolithic state' and the translation of policies into implementation, given that in the Israeli case the power of the state represents a bottom-up construction. It is not the introduction of successful or effective policies that is effective, but their implementation by like-minded, 'street-level' agents who affiliate themselves closely with the state, using their discretionary powers to achieve expansive implementation.

Settler-colonial societies seek their own end by pursuing the purity of the nation (Wolfe 2006). The concept of immigration enforcement provides such societies with an expanded toolkit. The true power of the Israeli state in this case is not in achieving a complete termination of border entries, or a constant reduction in the number of unwelcome newcomers. It is the state's capability and capacity to harness nearly all governmental agencies, and broad sections of the Israeli public as well, to the task of excluding the 'others' by selectively and strategically reinforcing national anxieties. But it is not only the state or 'street-level' agents who are held captive within the settler-colonial template. Israel's civil society, non-state agents and para-governmental organisations succumb to the same relations with the state and the colonial project. Such is the case with pro-deportation, anti-immigration NGOs, who are the grassroots perpetrators of expansive implementation of deportation policies. Anti-immigration, pro-deportation activists successfully utilize their broad traction among various state agencies. They balance their efforts to expand deportation policies with orchestrated popular

protests, as well as with lobbying and advocating policy-level actions. Such work takes place, at least partially, due to the 'grey area' existing between the state and pro-state activists. It is within this 'grey area' that anti-immigration activists utilize nationalistic, Zionist discourse for the expansion of deportation policies. Such a form of conservative, pro-state activism expands the concept of the deportation continuum (Kalir and Wissnik 2016) to the point of challenging the capacity of the state in order to maximize immigration enforcement policies. In this sense, one of the outcomes of this research raises the question of whether we can actually expose the true nature of the Israeli deportation continuum given that the state has exclusively taken over the realm of immigration enforcement by allocating no authority to para-governmental or non-governmental organisations. While other organisations, such as the IOM for example, partake in various forms of 'street-level' enforcement, in Israel the state has absolute responsibility for handling various forms of detention, exclusion and deportation.

While the continuum approach reflects the various ways in which pro-immigration NGOs and human rights organisation partake in the state's deportation regime by various shades of complicity, the Israeli case unveils a reality that is somewhat different. It is a case in which civil society organisations are not complicit collaborators of the state's deportation regime. Rather, they attempt (and in certain cases succeed) to stir and direct the ship of exclusion and removal towards harsher implementation and expansive interpretation of deportation policies. Rather than expanding the deportation continuum towards the 'left' in the bottom-up sense of assisting the implementation of deportation procedures, they do so towards the 'right' in the sense of pushing the state top-down, within the realm of policy design. In the performative sense, what such popular anti-immigration movements perform, is being popular. They are fully invested in legal, policy-level work, while performing their grassroots, popular nature. As the only non-governmental organisations allowed 'in', to intervene in the state's deportation regime, such organisations, and their forms of interaction with the state, should be the focus of further ethnographic research. Such work should examine the construction of state deportation regimes as an expression of the work of anti-immigration, pro-deportation civil society organisations.

From the other side of the deportation continuum, Israeli pro-immigration organisations present little or no achievements in their

strive to negate the states' deportation regime, which does not seem to affect their work. As accurately put by Wright (2018: 145), discussing another group of Jewish Israeli, pro-Palestinian, human rights activists, "There is simultaneously self-negating and affirming quality to their activism that knows it is failing and yet, persistently, and with hope, continues to fail". The ethnography of pro-immigration human rights activists unveils power relations in which the state promotes practical steps such as legislation aimed at limiting human rights organisations' funding. At the same time, broad sectors of Israeli society are governed through repeating campaigns of vilification targeting not only illegalized migrants, but the human rights activists themselves, presenting them as treasonous agents who compromise the very existence of the state.

It is this moment, in which the state is fully dedicated to the effort to deport and exclude and boasts broad popular support, which provides a window of understanding into the limitations of state deportation regimes. Regardless of the mass securitization of immigration enforcement, militarization of borders, a 0.01% asylum acceptance rate, and a comparatively small scale of arrival of asylum seekers, Israel still sees itself as experiencing an immigration enforcement implementation deficit. To repeat the words of the head attorney of Israel's central immigration enforcement agency:

Do you know how many infiltrators entered Israel so far, this year, through the Sinai?! Ah?! 12 infiltrators! If we would have solved the problem, it should have been zero. We still have a lot of work to do, we can't just sit like that with our arms crossed saying we've solved the problem when there are still entries.

Such a concern over the arrival of a dozen asylum seekers is telling within the analysis of the implementation of deportation policies. This dissertation assists in drawing the borders of the capacity of state deportation regimes by drawing attention to their objective limitations. Regardless of how robust immigration enforcement may be, or how much material support the state may offer, the phantasmic promise of the state to 'purify' the nation by deportations is far from reach. Even within a deep security state such as Israel, in which the state's control and surveillance is ubiquitous and various state agencies are harnessed to the task of exclusion and deportation, Israeli immigration enforcement fails to meet its own declared goals. Such attempts, failed or successful,

to raise the bar and prevent all irregular entries, or deport all African asylum seekers, seem to always have the same effect on immigration enforcement—expanding the implementation of deportation policies. And indeed, while terminating any further entries, the hermetic sealing of the southern border with the Sinai has not led to the reduction of the efforts of immigration enforcement. On the contrary: once the borders were shut, a sharp rise in internal forms of enforcement, exclusion and surveillance took place. The Israeli case, with its extreme nature of securitization, sheds light on the self-supporting argument of immigration enforcement: While successful, state authorities point at enforcement mechanisms and demand additional resources to sustain it. When immigration enforcement fails, state authorities point at enforcement mechanisms and demand additional resources to improve it. Either way, the state asks for and justifies additional resources. Such a finding is aligned with the context of immigration enforcement in other settler-colonial societies such as Australia (Papastergiadis 2004) and South Africa (Vigneswaran 2008, Vigneswaran 2011). Such similarities strengthen this dissertation's analysis of Israeli immigration enforcement within the settler-colonial context.

Such a policy, which leans on the collaboration of citizens and employers and the cooperation of a variety of state and para-state agencies, can be described as successful. However, the state of Israel is still short of eligible destinations for deportations in two senses: destinations that will not be disqualified by the Israeli Supreme Court and destinations in the sense of states willing to accept the deportees. Recognizing such global limitations to state deportation regimes points us towards an understanding of the limitations of state deportation regimes.

First, there is a limit to the capacity of technological means to solve social 'problems'. Fencing, biometric surveillance, technologies of detention and exclusion from the state's economy can only achieve a certain amount of 'success'. Such a perception, aspiring to solve social problems with technologic means, is rooted in the proliferation of Israeli security and military products in international markets. It is the internal notion of success 'outside' that leads to the further attempt to expand and experiment with technologies in immigration enforcement within the state.

Second, as Israel's incapability to achieve valid destinations for deportations suggests, we should be working toward a global

understanding of deportation regimes. Deportation regimes are internationally dependent and inter-related: portraying certain populations as deportable in a certain state sheds a similar light on them within others. The refusal of a certain state to absorb deportees renders them un-deportable within their states of refuge. The local context of immigration enforcement is inextricable from the international aspects of irregularized migration, regardless of the state's investment in constructing them as a local threat to the 'nation' and the 'people'.

Deportation, as the Israeli case demonstrates, remains as a fantasy (Coutin 2015, Kalir 2014), as even such a mass investment in enforcement, combined with military experience and efficiency, does not manage to achieve the state authorities' goals. But it does produce several economic and diplomatic gains for the state that support the extension and expansion of the state's deportation regime. Deportation regimes fortify state institutions, pave the road to internal state expansion and consolidate the political hegemony of the xenophobic, nationalistic right, especially within the context of settler-colonial societies. Such effects solidify the state's support in immigration enforcement even in conditions, under which deportation is simply impossible under international circumstances. Any future attempt to dismantle the Israeli deportation regime and detach it from national anxieties will require a deep discursive shift within the Jewish-Israeli society regarding questions of nationality, identity and land. It is not the biometric checkpoints at Holot or the mass border-fence that need to be reconfigured, but the self-perception of the majority of the Israeli society and its relation to the 'other'.

Immigration enforcement and deportation regimes are broad concepts that shift the responsibility for state violence back to an abstract 'state', and by doing so blurring the spaces in which such violence is perpetrated. This dissertation highlights the role of the individual as a 'street-level' enforcer in such spaces carved by the state. It sheds light on the place of the individual within the social production of indifference (Herzfeld 1992) in global times of expanding state deportation regimes. It is my hope that this ethnographic work had offered a modest contribution that could be of assistance in making life less exclusionary for those who are forced to find refuge away from home.



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Table of interviews

	Organisation	Name	Position
1	Mesila - Aid and Information Centre for Migrant Workers and Refugees, Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality	Miri Barbero Elkayam	Director
2	Assaf	Orit Marom	Department Director - Advocacy and Public Relations
3	HIAS Israel	Attorney Sivan Carmel	Director
4	Kav Laoved	Attorney Ariel Shendar	Department Director - Refugees and Asylum Seekers
5	ACRI, Hamoked	Yonatan Berman	Attorney, Researcher
6	Hamoked	Shevy Korzen	Director
7	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Orly Gil	Head of Third State Agreements Task Force
8	JACC	Shany Bar Tuvia	RSD Program Director
9	JACC	Yael Agur	Director
10	BINA	Elliot Weisraub Glassenberg	Head of Asylum Seekers Educational Program
11	NGOs' Coalition Parliamentary Lobbyist	Daniel Dotan	Lobbyist for Civil Society Coalition for Asylum Seekers in Israel
12	Bimkom	Nir Shalev	Urban Planner, head of the appeal against state plan 46 #1 and #2
13	University of Haifa	Prof. Arnon Soffer	Haikin Cathedral for Geo-Strategic Research Consultant for various security companies.
14	Haaretz newspaper	David Sheen	Journalist, editor, activist
15	Population, Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA)	Sabin Haddad	Head of Advocacy, Spokesperson
16	Population, Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA)	Shonit Shahar	Head of Legal Affairs, legal representative of PIBA
17	Refugee Status Determination Unit	Daniel Baumgarten	Refugee status determination interviewer
18	UNHCR Israel	Sharon Harel	Assistant Protection Officer
19	CIMI	Ilan Cohn	Director
20	CIMI	Keren Hendin	Director of Asylum Seekers Welfare Program, Municipality of Jerusalem
21	The South TLV Liberation Organisation, The South TLV news website	Ronit Cohen Oren	Director of Asylum Seekers Welfare Program, Municipality of Jerusalem

22	CIMI	Margarita Gorodnitsky	Migration Management Training Program Director in cooperation with PIBA
23	Independent documentarist	Silvina Landsman	Director of "Hotline"
24	OECD, Israeli Parliament Research Centre	Gilad Natan	Researcher, Israel's representative to the OECD on the subject of labour migrants
25	CIMI	Yonatan Paz	Researcher, Israel's representative to the OECD on the subject of labour migrants
26	Dayan Centre for African Studies, Tel Aviv University	Prof. Galia Sabar	Head of Dayan Centre for African studies
27	Ir Amim	Oshrat Mimon	Attorney, Head of Policy Development Team
28	Hamoked	Assaf Weizen	Head of legal department, attorney
29	Ramat Gan College of Law and Business	Dr. Tali Kritsman Amir	Attorney, Head of Human Rights Program at CLB
30	Ministry of Welfare	Lily Yosef	Former Head of Social Services at South Region
31	Ruppin Academic Centre	Dr. Efrat Ben Zeév	Head of M.A Program in Immigration Studies in which most of the students are PIBA or RSD employees
32	Population, Immigration and Border Authority – Refugee Status Determination Unit	Haim Efraim	Director
33	Tel Aviv University Faculty of Law	Dr. Anat Ben Dor	Attorney, Director of the Refugee Rights Clinic at Tel Aviv University
34	Israeli Prison Service	Deputy Commander Shalom Ya'akov	Director of Holot Immigration Detention Centre
35	ICHAD (Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions)	Prof. Jeff Helper	Director
36	EITAN – The Israeli Centre for Immigration Policy	Yonatan Yakobowitz	Director
37	The Migration & Social Integration Department at Ruppin Academic Centre	Anonymous	M.A student
38	The Migration & Social Integration Department at Ruppin Academic Centre	Anonymous	M.A student

39	The Migration & Social Integration Department at Ruppin Academic Centre	Anonymous	M.A student
40	The South Tel Aviv Front	Anonymous	Pro-deportation activist

Table of field visits and participant observations

	Date	Location	Event
1	8.2.2016	Be'er sheva	State regional court, Holot discharge representation by Hamoked, Eritrean asylum seekers
2	15.2.2016	Be'er sheva	State regional court, Deportation hearing. Hamoked
3	7-12.3.2016	Field visit – Prof. Willem van Schendel	Holot, Hebron, Kiryat Arba, South Tel aviv, East Jerusalem, Bedouin unrecognised villages, the Sinai border fence
4	3.3.2016	South Tel Aviv	Ministry of Interior, members of the Israeli Parliament field day in South Tel Aviv.
5	31.3.2016	South Tel Aviv	The South Tel Aviv Front pro-deportation demonstration
6	8.6.2016	Jerusalem, The Israeli Parliament	The Governmental Committee for the Solution of the Problem of African Infiltrators in South Tel Aviv
7	12.7.2016	Jerusalem, The Israeli Parliament	The Governmental Committee for the Solution of the Problem of African Infiltrators in South Tel Aviv
8	18.7.2016	Jerusalem, The Israeli Parliament	The Governmental Committee for the Solution of the Problem of African Infiltrators in South Tel Aviv
9	25.7.2016	Jerusalem, The Israeli Parliament	The Governmental Committee for the Solution of the Problem of African Infiltrators in South Tel Aviv
10	27.7.2016	Jerusalem, The Israeli Parliament	Special discussion with representatives of Ministry of Interior, the police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PIBA, MOFA, Ministry of Law
11	1.8.2016	Jerusalem, The Israeli Parliament	The Governmental Committee for the Solution of the Problem of African Infiltrators in South Tel Aviv
12	7-12.8.2016	Field visit – Prof. Barak Kalir	Holot, Hebron, Kiryat Arba, South Tel aviv, the West Bank
13	16.8.2016	Jerusalem, The Israeli Parliament	Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, special discussion on African asylum seekers

