# POLITICAL CONCEPTS: A CRITICAL LEXICON

# Archive

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Translated by Tal Haran

*This paper is dedicated to Anat Kam, whom I consider to be the founder of the Israeli Archive of Executions, for the creation of which she has been penalized with two years of house arrest, and a four-and-a-half year prison sentence.*

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For the past two decades, the Hegelian concept of *Aufhebung* keeps appearing in the elaborate literature being written on the subject of archives, in order to describe archival work. Here is a late, characteristic example to this approach, from an essay by Ignaz Cassar: "To archive is to put away, to shelter, to keep […] The modality of *Aufhebung*, conventionally translated into English as 'sublation', ushers us into the spaces of the archive. The polysemic of the *Aufhebung* implies both preservation and cancellation."[1]  There is something rather suggestive and seductive in this pair of opposites that encompass an entire universe, embracing the world of the archive as if nothing can escape it. However, anyone who has ever searched an archive would immediately note that the series of actions, situations and emotions experienced thereby cannot be exhausted by the opposition between keeping and putting away, preservation and cancelation. One might even get the sense that the philosopher's archive and the archive one has visited belong to two different worlds. For the sake of simplicity, let me call these two worlds *the abstract archive* and *the material archive*. The former is described in texts of the kind I have cited above, and shows no trace of the people who created it, nor of those who use it. This archive is envisaged as operating by itself, of its own accord, as though it were *the* home of that dialectic of preservation and cancellation. Photographs such as those of Patrick Tourneboeuf, in which one sees spaces devoid of humans that converge into a vanishing point in infinity, are a manifestation of this approach. Such a point of view on the archive, which exceeds the here and now, might be the result of physical conditions that do not allow the photographer to position him- or herself



Archives Nationales, Paris, 2004, photographer: Patrick Tourneboeuf.

otherwise. Yet even when the archive is fully lit and relatively flat, such a view of the archive is either invented or sought after. The second kind of archive, on the other hand, is more concrete. Its depiction is interwoven with the presence of those who occupy various positions of power, authorizing them to both preserve and expose materials, as well as with the presence of those who come to leaf through those materials.

In his book *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida presents the figure of the *archon*, guardian of the documents, the sentry, as one of the three pylons supporting the archive. The other two are the place and the law. The

discussion of sentries enables Derrida to slightly reduce the abstractness of the archive, and to speak of figures of power that legislate, repeat their law, and enforce it. However, the way he looks at the sentries from the outside, as those who set archival borders, allows them to fool him at times: to force him to look at the threshold from their point of view, namely inward, at the way in which they uphold the law of the archive, leaving Citizen Derrida and his fellows outside, beyond the conceptualization of the archive. Yet Derrida, in his turn, fools them, writing that: "It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow."[2]

For a long time archons of the archive prevented the outbreak of archive fever as we witness it today, and through which I wish to think what an archive is. They succeeded in this since they were put in charge not only of preserving documents, and of what Foucault called the "space of appearance" through which these documents are seen, but since they were also in charge of always distancing those wishing to enter the archive too early, before the materials stored within would become history, dead matter, the past. This distancing constructed the archive as a deposit of a time that is past, completed, one that poses no real threat to the power and to the law, and at most can serve for writing history. In real time, that which has been stored in it could have often provoked a scandal, upset people whose destiny had thereby been decreed behind their backs. In the archive, constructed as ex-territorial and as a receptacle for the past, that which had been cruel and biting is supposed to appear, or so we expect it to appear, as dulled; a piece of history, its accusing finger cut off, blunted. The time archives were allowed to rob of citizens—20, 30 or 40 years of safekeeping documents until citizens are allowed to look at the files—turned from being an unnecessary and unjustified sovereign violence into an essential feature of the archive. Those—many, too many—who sought to conceptualize the archive while not contesting its being the home of the past, fell into the trap set for them by the sentries.

The extensive power vested in the sentries must not cause us to underestimate the importance of the archive fever typical of our time, and the possibility it offers us to re-think the archive from its foundation—from the perspective of the fever, and of the acts of those whom it infects. Instead of asking "What is an archive?", in a manner that keeps the archive outside, as a fortress external to our world, with us as its pilgrims, I shall begin by asking "Why an archive?", or "What do we look for in an archive?".



Archive accessories, photographer: A.A.

If we closely follow in the footsteps of those entering the archive, we shall discover that the way to file any document in it, let alone search for a document, is lined with a rich constellation of accessories and mechanisms that in themselves already serve as sentries—cards, forms to be filled, search engines, lists, code words, folders, clerks, laws, regulations, gloves, aprons, robes, brushes, chemicals, customs and rituals. These remind us that historic material is at hand, data and notes that must be salvaged and treated with caution; that every piece of paper must be returned to the exact place where it was found, even if we have our reservations about the place allotted to it. However, this constellation, aimed at distancing us, is meant no less to bring us closer: to ensure that, in the archive's garden of forking paths, we shall behave in a manner that will not disturb the rest of other items, that we will not paint an all-too encompassing picture, made up of materials from more than a handful of folders at one and the same time. This suspending constellation ensures that we will not devour the archival items the way Chronos devoured his children, in order to later regurgitate them, willingly or at random, as dwellers of the present, in the present.

Think for a moment of Anat Kam: A young Israeli woman who, a few years ago, during her compulsory military service, collected digital documents containing explicit discussions and instructions regarding the "liquidating" of Palestinians, euphemistically referred to as "targeted killing." Two years after her release from the military she deposited the CD containing these documents at the hands of an *Haaretz* journalist, who published some of their indicting contents. Following an investigation by the Security Service, the journalist gave away enough information to expose his source, and Kam was arrested soon after and accused of treason. Imagine her, first, as one of the sentries, as part of the ranks guarding those sweet documents away from the public eye. Now imagine her as a citizen passing on valuable documents, in which people are doomed to their fate without being brought to trial. Imagine the awakening of her consciousness, the possible awareness that arises from viewing such documents—if I don't rescue them, they will be trashed or, at best, stored in the archive for another 40 or 80 years; either way they will escape the public eye. Imagine Kam's horror while reading the contents of those documents, and her determination, the well-known "fanatical dedication" of rescuers of documents and objects, realizing that she is facing the opportunity of founding the Israeli archive of executions. Imagine her swallowing one document after another, all two thousands of them, ingesting them, making sure not a single crumb escape her lips. She did not neglect her duties as a sentry, in charge of the gates of that archive—she watched over the documents well, made sure to produce copies, and established several rules of her own for the sake of protecting them from others. But as two years passed, she burst with anger, shame, rage, fear and responsibility, realizing that keeping the documents for herself, in her own belly as it were, deprives the private archive she had collected on her computer of the public dimension that justifies the very existence of an archive, that allows it to maintain documents regarding others, that turn it from a private collection of documents into an archive per se. Therefore, in the responsible manner of an archivist, instead of whimsically depositing the documents at the hands of just anyone she happened to meet, Kam gave them to a journalist of a respectable newspaper. In hindsight this proved to be a wrong choice, since right there, in the public sphere, instead of citizens, lurk wolves.

My first answer, then, to the question "What do we look for in an archive?" will be: that which we have deposited there. Not necessarily you or I personally, but you and I as those sharing a world with others; "we" who are beyond the borders of a certain time and place; "we" who do not converge into a collective of national or ethnic identity; "we" who ought to have been regarded as the reason and sense of the archive, but were instead replaced by "history"—as if at the end of time history itself would come knocking on the gates of the archive, demanding to settle the accounts. Archive fever crosses borders. It is manifest in the demand for gaining access to that which is kept in the archive, and no less in the demand for partaking in archival practice, through the founding of new sorts of archives—archives that would no longer allow the dominant type of archive, the one founded by the sovereign state to go on determining what an archive is. Archive fever is a rejection of the logic of the archive as a realization of the fifteenth clause of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which limits the citizens' right to the archive to their right to "know" or to "require of every public agent an account of his administration." Archive fever challenges the traditional protocols by which official archives have functioned and continue to do so. It proposes new models of sharing the documents stored therein, in ways that requires one to think of the public's right to archive not as external to the archive, but rather as an essential part of it, of its character, of its *raison d'être*.

"Archive fever" is not simply a problematic translation of a book title, Derrida's *Mal d'archive*. It is a real phenomenon that Derrida ignores. It is the result of numerous individual initiatives of creating new archives and depositories, and of claiming the right to re-arrange and use existing ones. Radical changes brought about by the new social (civil) media have turned these initiatives into a contagious and irreversible trend, whereby archival procedures, such as collecting, extracting and cataloguing, can be practiced through these new media in a way that contests the monopoly, let alone the authority or prerogatives, of official archival agents and institutions. These procedures are replaced by more web-like procedures: hence collecting becomes grouping, extracting becomes sharing, and cataloguing is replaced by indexing and tagging. Paradigmatic examples of this trend and its contemporary culmination is Wikileaks, based as it is on a new understanding of the role of the sentry, or Flicker, out of which new norms and practices of depositing and sharing documents by anonymous users are shaped. The production and archiving of an excessive quantity of digital images, which greatly exceeds the capacity of its producers to ever consume so much as a portion of them, should be understood as a new type of archival contract among image producers, mediated by their cameras, cellphones, and the entire technology of the internet. This contract implies the citizens' right to share not only what is stored in the archive, but also the right to be involved in producing and depositing materials in the archive. Citizens take part in producing and sharing images, knowing that the images one produces always exceed one's capacity to understand their content and meaning; that the interpretation of

images is a task that calls for multiple collaborations; and that each of their images might one day emerge—usually by or through the gaze of others—as "the missing image."

Archive fever enables one to retroactively reconstruct this right as one that is inscribed in the logic of the archive from the very beginning—in its spatial organization, in its architecture, and in the mechanisms that maintain it—no less than the presence of the archive's sentries is written in its logic. The sentries' administration and monitoring of our movements in the archive places obstacles in our way; but no less than that, it expresses the clear recognition of the fact that our right as citizens to that which is stored therein exceeds the limited access we are allowed. The spatial administration of the movements of archive users is a means for preventing the complete fulfillment of the right to (the) archive. There are many aids that assist us in the many windings of the archive: sponges over which crumbling papers must be placed, desks, lamps, photographic instruments, card catalogues, indexes, and white gloves. Had our public right to access everything in the archive not been recognized as an inalienable one, no one would have gone to the trouble of supplying us with such aids—even if at times their main purpose is to keep us from complaining that such access has been denied us. Just as our body bursts with withheld rage, knowing that within the walls of the archive—sometimes between its lines—are the very items we are seeking.

Withheld rage, suffocation, nausea, anger, frustration, fright, horror and helplessness, no less than the hope or passion reported by those infected with archive fever, bear witness to the fact that archive documents are not merely a collection of dead letters. They are not items of a completed past, but rather active elements of a present. They must be properly and carefully handled, precisely because they are the means by which destruction might continue to be wrought—just as they might enable some restitution of that which continues to exist as present, in the present. The habitus that I have briefly described here, motivated by a right and by the claim to practice it, is not the classical habitus of a historian tracing the past, but that of researchers whose interest in the archive is aroused by relatively novel realms of knowledge, from post-colonialism to gender theory, or by common sense of responsibility such as that exhibited by Anat Kam. All of them are motivated by the understanding that that which has been institutionalized as the order of things is not merely infuriating but reversible—and their archival work is one of the keys to this reversibility. Intervention, imagination and transmission are the main practices through which researchers and artists today exercise their right to (the) archive, that is, the right to share the archive, the right to make use of the archive in ways that do not take it (merely) as a depository of the past, storing materials that document what is over and done with. Traces of the constituent violence preserved in the archive can either be preserved untouched, preserving the law of the archive, or be reconfigured and re-conceptualized through a new grid, whose consequences affect the way one is governed, as well as the ways one shares the world with others. Curiosity—but also rage, solidarity, resistance, dissatisfaction, doubt and suspicion, arouse citizens' interest in the archive, in that which is stored inside, in its structure, in the forms of control it produces and is subject to, and in the possible ways for unraveling and re-composing documents outside the reach of its law and authority.

Such interest-taking is not external to the archive, and ought to be taken into consideration in any conceptualization of it. One cannot continue to conceptualize the archive as if such citizens had never set foot in it, and as if, had they indeed done so, no new type of archive budded at the spot where they set foot. By focusing on the figure of the sentry, Derrida's influential essay exemplifies this omission of the archive's citizen-users from the ontology of the archive. The famous call by Jean and John Comaroff for the creation of "new colonial archives of our own," the colonial archive of sentiments developed by Ann L. Stoler, or the archive of affection proposed by Leela Ghandi or Achille Mbembe are examples of a new archival contract, "signed" by users without the sentries' consent. Here are a few more examples among many. The archive *Kurdistan*, created by Susan Meiselas , who insisted on restoring that which had nearly disappeared inside the imperial narrative, and later the national one, while turning the archive into a platform for the rehabilitation of a community.

"Kurdistan In the Shadow of History", Susan
Meiselas (archive founded in 1992, shown at
ICP, Fall 2008).

Or Akram Zaatari and his partners in "Arab Image Foundation," who created a visual-political corpus
undermining the borders of the nation, assuming/claiming to impose artificial divisions upon shared visual
spaces.



Arab Image Foundation (founded in 1997,
Beirut).

Or Walid Raad and *The Atlas Group*, who introduced the "if only" as a living material into the organization
of the archive they created.



Walid Raad, My neck is thinner than a hair: 14
June 1985, 2003, © Arab Documentation
Center / The Atlas Group

Or the *Unknown Photographer* archive, created by Michal Heiman, which foregrounds the figure of the
photographer in environments where photographs hover in journalistic space, as if created by themselves.

Michal Heiman, Photographer
Unknown Archive (founded in ,
Tel Aviv)

Or the effort to re-define the borders of a realm of knowledge, such as architecture, not from the point of view of its sovereign agents, who guard the borders of its objects, but rather from a space of relationship that these objects create and operate—the way Zvi Elahyani does in the Israel Architecture Archive.



Israel Architecture Archive (founded in 1991,
Tel Aviv), photographer: Zvi Elhyani

Or creating a shared film archive, an Israeli/Palestinian one for example, reconstructing the fact that Israelis and Palestinians are inseparable "Siamese twins," as Eyal Sivan did.



Eyal Sivan, Happy birthdays, Common
Archive, fragment 1 (founded in 2008, photo of
installation).

Or an archive of constituent violence, the violence that constituted the Israeli regime in the late 1940s, as I attempted to do; a civil archive of photographs that suspends the rule of the existing archives—the Zionist and that of the Nakba—reconstructing the photographs as shared documents of a potential history.

Constituent Violence 47-40 (founded in Tel
Aviv, 2009).

The many claims archive fever has let loose in public have foregrounded the most essential and important
feature of an archival document—being deposited in the name of the public, for the public, and thus not
being appropriable by a single person or a group. If a right can be formulated in regard to the archive, it
should be based on this feature, embodied in each and every archival document, requiring that it would
potentially be accessible to all those to whom it may concern—the public. An archived document provides
information or evidence, and serves as an official record that cannot be reduced to the story, deed or work of
its author. It always contains an excess of information concerning others. The claim to access it is embodied
in this excess. Official records preserved in the archive as remnants from a world shared by many are
therefore a locus of a potential claim pertaining to this shared world: for the world is always shared, even
under conditions—such as those prevailing in a disaster area—in which the idea of sharing seems most alien.

Archive fever made a film director like Neta Shoshani demand access to pictures taken at the Deir Yassin
massacre in 1948, and are known to be hidden away from the public eye inside the Israeli State Archives.
"No wrong has been found in the ruling of the Ministers' Committee regarding access to confidential
archival material" was the reply to her petition, in which she requested to study materials supposedly
accessible to everyone, after 50 years in which the state was allowed by law to keep them confidential.

However, archive fever is not reducible to the claim to study documents. Archive fever is also the claim to
revolutionize the archive; the claim to a different understanding of the documents it holds, of its supposed
purpose, of the right to see them and to act accordingly; the claim to the forms and ways of categorizing
presenting, and using these documents. Archive fever challenges the norm that stands at the basis of how
sovereign power defines archival documents: documents the writing of which the powers that be dictate, and
later also order their hiding. They are the ones who determine when the public will be permitted to study
these documents. Archive fever reveals the binding feature of archival documents in the opposite sense to the
way in which they serve the powers that be: they are not the property of these powers, and should be
protected from them. They must not be rewritten or changed, they should be made available to whoever
might express interest in them, and to serve in any future claim as to the power exerted through and by them.
As the archived documents touch upon shared life, they contain information about that life: decrees and
rulings responsible for its design, claims to challenge it, documentation of its repression, proposals for
change, and other information ensuring its continuance. The archive fever responsible for creating other
archive models exposes the fact that the distancing by law of citizens from documents regarding their lives,
for decades at a time, is a violation of the basic right to share the archive, a right that is embodied in the
archive as such, in the mere fact that the documents it holds regard those striving to actualize this right. Thus,
instead of regarding the archive as an institution that preserves the past as though its contents do not directly
impact us, I propose to see the archive as a shared place, a place that enables one to maintain the past
incomplete, or to preserve what Walter Benjamin referred to as the "incompleteness of the past."[3]

Surprisingly—or not—sovereign regimes treat photographs in a different manner than documents. They do
not usually include them in the archiving regime that confiscates documents for lengthy periods of time.
Photographs are not perceived as documents at all. No wonder, then, that the accessibility of photographs and
their public distribution has enabled the creation of non-state photography archives long before the
possibility of creating an alternative archive became widespread, a fever.
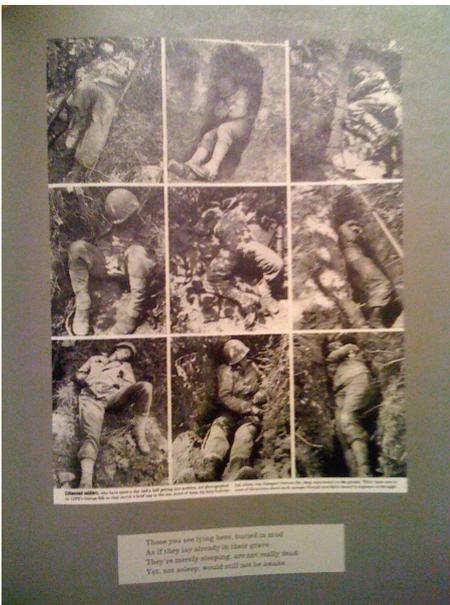
Bertolt Brecht, War Primer (la
collection was completed in 49 and
first published in 55).

Examples include the archive *Mnémosyne* (created in the 1920s), Hannah Höch's *Scrapbook* (created in the
1930s), and Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (created in the 1960s) [4]. The war archive that Bertolt Brecht created in
the 1940s, based entirely on photographs available in the press, which he cut out of newspapers and re-read
in order to extract them from "bourgeois blindness," as he put it, is an explicit effort to create a "new surface
of appearance". These alternative photography archives—whether the scattered ones created in the early half
of the twentieth-century, or those that have flourished in recent decades—are mostly characterized by not
being based upon sensational photographs exposed for the first time after years of intentional censorship.
These are archives that enable one to see in photographs, stored as well as exposed, that which previously
seemed to be available only in the censor's chambers.

In order to understand how an archive enables photographs to be at the same time hidden and revealed, I
shall present two competing approaches to photography, and argue that the new photography archives have
flourished in the tension that exists between these two. The first approach, which I call instrumental and
productive, identifies photography with its product—a photograph—and with the "photographed event"—as
though this photographed event is petrified and fixed in the photograph as such. The second approach regards
the photograph as a document produced during an encounter, and therefore as never fixed and completed.
The first, instrumental approach to photography, then, regards photography as a technology for producing
photographs of some object X, which are the finished products of a single subject—a technician, operator or
photographer. This approach is widespread in existing archives, where photographs are sorted based on what
they show according to those who preserve them. As we approach these photographs, we search for them
through readymade categories to which the seen is referred.  This is our common practice for viewing
photographs—pointing out the seen and stating "This is X." Apparently we perform the same gesture by
saying "This is Aunt Hannah," "This is a refugee," or "This is a wanted man," as if these three were simply
proper names. When we say "This is X" we are actually applying a name, category or concept to the
photograph. In order to do so we first strip the photograph of the plurality inscribed in it, and reduce it to the
"this" that is there in the photograph or, in Roland Barthes' famous words, to "This was there." Thus, when
we say "This is X," we are actually saying "X *was* there." I propose to regard this fusion of two procedures—
stripping on the one hand, and pointing out on the other— the zero-degree of an iconization procedure, which
is a constitutive part of the act of viewing photographs, regardless of whether a certain image is designated as
"iconic."

By iconization I mean the transformation of the photograph into a photograph of X, in a way that makes us
assume that not just "this" was there but rather that "X" was there. Iconization accompanies our viewing of
photographs and enables us to find our way in them and to them. The filing of a document in an archive is no
simple task, and the chance of the photographed image getting lost—regardless of sentries who serve
particular masters—is immense. [5]  Although we cannot manage without a certain degree of iconization, we

ought to be careful and alert about it, keeping in mind that a photograph does not document a concept or a demarcated event, but is rather a document, the product of an event shared by several participants.

The process of iconization usually makes us forget this event that I call "the photography event." [6] This event takes place either with the mediation of the camera, or with the mediation of the photograph. This second event, which takes place in and through the encounter between a spectator and a photograph, constantly undermines the turning of the photographs in the archive into dead pages, stable references of concepts, or the categories that served to file them and subsequently stuck to them like a second skin.

Photographs as icons are the outcome of sovereign regimes that create sovereign archives. Official archives are based on an instrumental attitude towards photographs, as if they were the signifiers of a typical event or situation—"the photographed event"—which they document from the outside. Storing photographs in an archive and distancing the public from them, as if thereby annulling the photography event, is the way in which a sovereign regime treats the common domain, be it public space, photography, or the archive. The protocol of iconization is responsible for the illusion that anyone has the power of total mastery over that which would be inscribed in a photograph: as if a photograph expresses a world-picture; as if the camera sees eye-to-eye with the person holding it, with whoever sent him or filed the photograph in the archive. In every encounter with a photograph in an archive, an iconization protocol is enacted. It is that which enables one to file the photograph and to extract it. Sometimes photographs yield easily to names or concepts attached to them; other times they remain a dim image that does not coagulate into a typical object, and the pointing-out "This is X" gesture requires much strength in order to be linked to them. A photograph, any photograph, is produced within the framework of a shared world. Therefore, the denotation "This is X" can play a practical role of *identifying* one by his or her name, or *describing* the photographed person by a family name, without this name being attached to her/him.  But it can also *violently constitute* the photographed person through a category that shapes her/him in its image, thereby deciding the fate of the photographed person in a way that fuses together image, concept and reference. These three types of iconization are distinguished by the power exerted in the iconization process, in the fusion of the proper name with the reference, in the distancing, sharing or excluding of some of the viewers, in the sharing, considering or disregarding of the referent—the photographed person—as partners in the archive and in the operation of the items collected in it. The latter type of iconization, produced through constituent violence, creates communities and destroys others, decides fates, contests certainties, sabotages, destroys, rescues and challenges.



Afula, "Arab citizens harvesting crops in the fields; Haganah members guarding them", Photographer: Fred Chesnik, IDF and Defense Archive, 1948

Let me briefly turn to a few examples. This photograph was filed in the archive under the laconic caption —"Afula. Arab civilians harvesting a field, *Haganah* members standing guard over them."  One cannot with any certainty determine whether the photographer who took it was summoned to the spot or came at his own initiative, and whether or not he was a welcome guest. We can state that the photograph itself is the product of certain negotiations between the photographer and the soldiers present, empowered to regulate the distance he was supposed to keep in order not to get too close to the objects of the photograph, and in order not to infringe the boundaries of the field of vision determined for him in advance. This is certainly not a classical snapshot taken clandestinely or in haste, but rather a deliberate instance of framing, an intended allusion to art history that clearly evokes Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners* (1857). The framing  that

results from the placement of the photographer is misleading: it makes the spectator acquiesce, even if only momentarily, that what is visible accords with the verdict of the official caption—"Arab civilians harvesting a field." Were the photographer to approach any closer it would have been possible to capture the men at work not merely as silhouettes, together with the object of their intervention—the spot towards which they are all leaning. However, in spite of the relative distance from which the photograph was taken, the details inscribed in it suffice to refute the pastoral description of a grain harvest attributed to it. The armed soldiers overseeing the work of the Arabs protect their mouths and noses from some powerful stench using strips of white cloth. These are not heaps of harvested crops that are visible at the perimeter of the circle the Arabs form: the field they are supposedly harvesting is not cultivated but barren. The Arab figures are gathered around a pit. At least two of them are holding hoes: they are digging a pit. The pit they dig is not shallow— some stand in it, knee-deep. Alongside this *excess* of details that contradict the official caption of the archive, the photograph suffers from a substantial *lack* of information concerning the photographed event. When the official caption is juxtaposed to the details I have described, one clearly realizes that this lack of information is no coincidence, but rather meant to prevent that which is inscribed in the photograph—the burial of something inside a pit—from emerging into plain view; to assist in burying this sight behind a bucolic caption.

The photograph under discussion was exhibited as part of the archival exhibition, "Constituent Violence 47-50." At the time I was working on it, I hoped that I, or one of the historians I consulted, would be able to link the photograph to a specific event and location. I therefore examined photographs and documents from various sites of massacres and battles in area. Although I gradually reconstructed the photography event and accumulated more relevant data, I was unable to link it with certainty to a specific date and place.

This was not a matter of bad luck or coincidence, but a result of the continuous abuse of our right to share the archive with Palestinians who were deprived of it. The right to share the archive is part of a larger project that seeks to reconfigure human rights discourse, in a way that foregrounds the impact of the abuse of one's rights on the others. Depriving the Palestinians of their right to share the archive in many ways had an irretrievable effect on decades of historiography. Since the creation of the state of Israel, Palestinians were excluded from Israeli state archives, even though so much of what is stored in them concerns their lives. They were excluded both as potential claimants and as concrete photographed persons, who had been part of the history depicted in these photos. As a consequence, such photographs were stripped of their events and tended to became mere icons. In the last decade, when I started to look at these photos from 1948, the *Nakba* —the Palestinian catastrophe— offered itself as a prism through which these kind of photos can be viewed and as a framework for their interpretation. This perspective, important as it was for creating a space for the emergence of Palestinians as claimants of their own history, was still caught in the law of the archive— namely partition and separation, as if two histories had been unfolded in parallel. My task was to benefit from the new perspective without being constrained by it.

The archive I created was a conscious effort to shatter the separation inscribed into both Zionist and Palestinian archives, and to archive the procedures through which this separation itself has been constituted and imposed as a law of nature. Instead of reading what was done to Palestinians through this photo, as critical historiography would suggest, I looked for the conditions that made it almost impossible to read such photos in connection with the numerous testimonies that describe almost verbatim what can be seen in them. I discovered many Palestinian testimonies, some of which matched that which is seen in this particular photograph, while others referred to places from which I could not locate any photographs. They describe how the witnesses were concentrated by soldiers at gunpoint and ordered to bury the dead, with the stench of bodies heavy in the air. These testimonies helped me restore the event of photography: not the information regarding when and where the photo was taken, but the specificity of this burial procedure, which was routinely practiced during that period. The photograph revealed itself as a rare, concrete instance of this procedure. The extent to which the various testimonies matched what I had managed to reconstruct, on the basis of the specific pattern of excess and lack configured in this photograph, made it clear to me that even if I could not determine the singular event in question, the photograph nonetheless testifies as to the precise details of a procedure typical of the late 1940s, in which Palestinians were called upon to bury other Palestinians. The difficulty of determining the time and place of this specific occurrence derives from the very nature of this procedure, and from the erasure and denial that surrounded it, which were part of the political and cognitive conditions of the archive, of archive-ability, and of visibility in and through the archive.

Let us briefly look at another photograph—that of the 'ink flag' at Um Rashrash, classified in Israeli archive as a victory shot marking "the end of the War of Independence."



Ink Flag, photographer: Micha
Peri

The denotation "This is victory" assumes that we are facing a photograph of determination in a war that took place between two sides. The repetition by a spectator of the same denotation is supported by previous visual images of victory, such as that of soldiers hoisting a flag up a pole, which has become institutionalized as an icon of victory. In the case at hand, there is a concrete visual reference—the famous photograph from Iwo Jima signifying the American victory over Japan at the end of World War II. This reference was already in the mind of those who hoisted the flag at Um Rashrash. [7] Attaching the concept "Victory" to the photograph produces a referential circle in which the concept—victory—indicates the image and the image points back at the concept—victory is victory is victory. One thus forgets that a photograph is an image produced from within a shared reality. Its preservation as "victory" means first and foremost the distancing from the archive of those for whom it was not a matter of victory to begin with.

In a disputed reality, as in the Israeli case, such circular repetition occurring for several decades must arouse suspicion. My suspicion was aroused as I began to construct a photographed archive, focusing on the period in which the above photograph was taken. I started to question not only the outcome of the war—the Zionist narrative of victory versus the Palestinian narrative of catastrophe, the Nakba—but also whether this was war at all, and whether there were two sides to begin with. A prolonged look at the photograph enables one to notice that, besides the formal repetition of a victory icon, the photograph holds no signs of battle or war. If we exit the frame and reconstruct what happened at Um Rashrash, and then return to the photograph equipped with that information, we shall discover that it is not only the pretense of producing an icon that is responsible for the void inside the picture. Um Rashrash was not inhabited by an enemy. However, by stepping out of the limits of the frame, not only to Um Rashrash but also to an archive of that period, and by viewing photographs *not* through the concepts which the archive attaches to them—"The battle of Latroun," "Operation Yoav," "Lifting the siege on Jerusalem," or "Cleansing terrorist nests"—we gradually discover that most of these violent events did not tip the scales in battles between two sides, but rather cleansed the body politic of the governed and constituted the law that institutionalized the demographic, economic, social, urban and political reality that this cleansing had produced. [8]

While the claim "This is X"—like "This is victory"—makes superfluous the renewed look at the photograph, and while the seen in this photograph, or in its archive neighbors, appears again and again as a repetition of that very same "This is X"—as long as none of the gaps, mistakes, injustices, lusts, lies, or pieces of information revealed in the course of time do not negate the circular relation between image, concept and reference, as long as they do not undo their fusion, we as citizens must realize that, as we enter the archive, a red warning light flashes. It indicates that we are facing a non-civil archive, in which the photographs have turned from shared documents into icons that serve the archive's sovereign.  The icon, as I have shown, is an

effect of the usage and mode of reading, a protocol, and not an essential characteristic of a particular photograph.
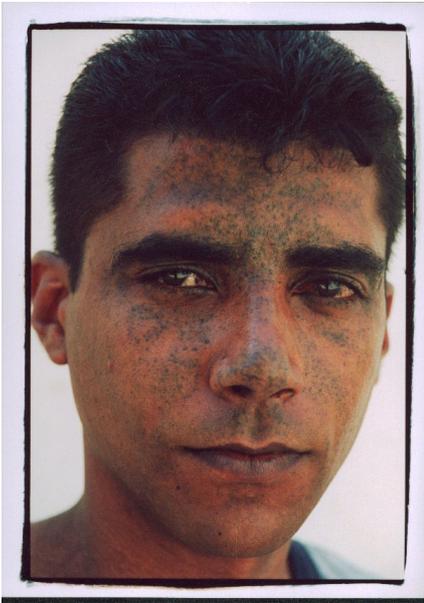


Zacharia Zveidi, 2001,
photographer: Miki Kratsman

The iconization of the third degree is part of a constituent violence. Within the photograph itself it produces the law of what may be seen and what may not. It recruits the viewers to preserve the violence of the law. As indicated above, the instrumental gaze of the first two degrees of iconization is not harmful, and is mostly necessary for our orientation. Iconization of the third degree, on the other hand, tends to evade us—and so too does the fact of having become accomplices to the constituent violence, of having been turned into its maintainers, its sentries, the preservers of its law.  Is this person not a wanted man? In this manner, acts of state—such as the the decision to turn Palestinians into refugees or to execute "suspect" Palestinians—while written in textual documents, are preserved for long periods of time out of the the public's reach, while being distributed across public space through photographs. Although the latter, depending on the degree of recruitment of its spectators, might be kept unseen.

Here again is an example of a documented instruction, of the kind the public exposure of which Anat Kam is serving a prison sentence for. It is a public photograph taken by Miki Kratzman, published in *Haaretz* daily newspaper more than once. It is disseminated as a photograph of a "Wanted man." Not a photograph of a citizen sought by an emergency regime, but rather a photograph of a "wanted man," one who is destined– as we have learned from the documents collected by Anat Kam, but having known this earlier as well—to die. Our chances of seeing in Zakariya Zbeide's portrait anything other than a "wanted man" are rather limited. After all, Zbeide's existence in our shared space has been constructed as that of a "wanted man," such that this concept has attached itself to him like a proper name, fused with his portrait, with his image. In view of the photograph we are expected to say "This is a wanted man."

In order to contest this portrait's being that of a wanted man, we have to place a protocol countering that of iconization, something I suggest calling "an iconoclastic protocol."  Archive fever instructs us that it is not the destruction of photographs that is at hand here, but rather the destruction of icons, of photographs as icons. This destruction cannot take place without undoing the point of view of preservers of constituent violence—a point of view that sees concepts where photographs are displayed—and without the destruction of the archive as an institution for preserving the past. The archive preserves items of our shared world, it preserves that which enables us to shape it differently, anew, in common.

Under conditions of what I have elsewhere called "regime-made disaster," when the regime produces an ongoing disaster and administers the archive of this disaster, an iconoclastic protocol is not merely a protocol of reading individual photographs. It involves the claim to naturalize existing archives, and at the same time, or in the meantime, to create alternative ones, through a willful exposure to archive fever. Instead of going on sorting photographs by concepts or photographers, in both the archives I created—*Act of State 1967-2007* and *Constituting Violence 47-50*—I collected existing photographs, of the kind that dwelled safely in other

archives, and removed the partitions between photographers and photographed persons, between photographed persons and spectators, and between periods of time—that which has passed and that which is at our door. The inevitable separation between the "two sides" cracked open nearly by itself, and the Israeli-Palestinian history began to inevitably appear—as is the case with national conflicts everywhere—as a history of the entangled relations between heterogeneous populations. The photographs began to appear as complex events, and the disaster inscribed in them no longer appeared as the disaster of only one side, but rather as a regime-made disaster, and its victims were no longer voices of a completed past. They began to sound like living figures, partners, intervening in the present; turning to the viewer, and together with her/him creating the conditions under which the photographed documents could reappear as samples from a shared world they demand to shape: a world formed not under the conditions of the constituent violence inscribed in the photographs, but rather together, in such a way that none of the participants agrees to take part in dividing this world, by constituting humans in the mold of political concepts like "refugees," "wanted people," "collaborators," or "illegal immigrants," and by forcing the spectator to recognize them as such, since that is the way the archive has presented them.

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*Here is a photograph that resembles many recent events of public occupation. We see people on the move, people occupying a space. We may ascribe to them a claim to have a right to enter or occupy that space; a claim to the right to (share the) archive in which their history is preserved; the right to this land where, a few decades ago, their presence was far from contested.*



Northern Israeli Border, Nakba Day, 2011
JACK GUEZ/AFP/Getty Images

*If we look at these people again in the next photograph, this time from the point of view of the sentries who are awaiting them, the sense of their presence changes immediately. Now they are likely to be classified as "infiltrators," breaching the law of a sovereign state, or even as terrorists. The photograph, taken in the northern border of Israel, on May 15, 2011, the Nakba day, shows Palestinian refugees and their descendants trying to return to their homes.*



JACK GUEZ/AFP/Getty Images

*Let me recall very briefly several historical images: the women's march on Versailles, the Afro-American march on Selma, blacks marching on Cape Town. In these images, part of the governed population—whose*

*part in the body politic was not recognized—is moving towards what at the time emblematized the power that oppressed them and ignored their claim. These people are moving towards a place and occupy it. The major happening in these different events is the public claim of part of the governed people, made by their very presence, to their right to share the territory and its rule. Implied in this claim is another claim: that of being part of a body politic from which they have been excluded. For decades, their march and claims were seen from the perspective of the sentries, who excluded them and kept them outside the body politic, whose members possess a right to make claim.*

*In order to see the photographed Palestinians not as "refugees," and hence as people who are not part of the body politic; in order to see them rather as **non-governed citizens**, and to recognize their presence at the Israeli border as another instance of the "occupy" movement, it was not enough to criticize the Israeli ideology that regards every Palestinian as a suspect. What was required was a conceptual shift, an archive fever whose dynamic generated a shift in the concept of the archive itself.*

1. Ignaz Cassar, 2010. "Photoworks", *Philosophy of Photography*, Vol. 1, No 2, p. 202. ↵
2. Jacques Derrida, 1995. *Archive Fever*, The University of Chicago Press, p. 36. ↵
3. "The past", Benjamin wrote, "carries with it a secret index by which it is referred to redemption" (Benjamin, Walter, 2003. *Selected Writings Volume 2 – 1938-1940*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 390). ↵
4. On which Georges Didi-Huberman recently wrote: "we could legitimately see the Atlas by Aby Warburg as a tool for gathering, or for 'sampling', by means of interposed images, the great chaos of history". See Georges Didi-Huberman, May 2011, "Sampling Chaos", *Etudes photographiques*, No 27, p. 49. ↵
5. New technologies of tracing the form of the image, if and when applied to the photographs stored in existing archives, will enable the continued development of visual research from within an existing image. At the moment, however, they too are limited in their possibility to assume such research. See, for example, Tsila Hassinne's "image tracer" at http://missdata.org/israel%20tracer/index.html. ↵
6. See my discussion of the two photography events in Ariella Azoulay, *A Civil Imagination – A Political Ontology of Photography*, Verso 2012. ↵
7. More on these two photographs see Ariella Azoulay, "Declaring the State of Israel: Declaring a State of War." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2011. ↵
8. See Ilan Pappe's use of the term "ethnic cleansing" not as the massacre of a population but rather as cleansing a region of a certain population (Pappe, Ilan. 2006. *Ethnic Cleansing, Oxford: Oneworld*). ↵

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