

WEEKEND

Hagar Shezaf

Four years ago, historian Tamar Novick was jolted by a document she found in the file of Yosef Vashitz, from the Arab Department of the left-wing Mapam Party, in the Yad Yaari archive at Givat Haviva. The document, which seemed to describe events that took place during the 1948 war, began: “Safsaf [former Palestinian village near Safed] – 52 men were caught, tied them to one another, dug a pit and shot them. 10 were still twitching. Women came, begged for mercy. Found bodies of 6 elderly men. There were 61 bodies. 3 cases of rape, one east of from Safed, girl of 14, 4 men shot and killed. From one they cut off his fingers with a knife to take the ring.”

The writer goes on to describe additional massacres, looting and abuse perpetrated by Israeli forces in Israel's War of Independence. “There's no name on the document and it's not clear who's behind it,” Dr. Novick tells Haaretz. “It also breaks off in the middle. I found it very disturbing. I knew that finding a document like this made me responsible for clarifying what happened.”

The Upper Galilee village of Safsaf was captured by the Israel Defense Forces in Operation Hiram toward the end of 1948. Moshav Safsufa was established on its ruins. Allegations were made over the years that the Seventh Brigade committed war crimes in the village. Those charges are supported by the document Novick found, which was not previously known to scholars. It could also constitute additional evidence that the Israeli top brass knew about what was going on in real time.

Novick decided to consult with other historians about the document. Benny Morris, whose books are basic texts in the study of the Nakba – the “calamity,” as the Palestinians refer to the mass emigration of Arabs from the country during the 1948 war – told her that he, too, had come across similar documentation in the past. He was referring to notes made by Mapam Central Committee member Aharon Cohen on the basis of a briefing given in November 1948 by Israel Galili, the former chief of staff of the Haganah militia, which became the IDF. Cohen's notes in this instance, which Morris published, stated: “Safsaf 52 men tied with a rope. Dropped into a pit and shot. 10 were killed. Women pleaded for mercy. [There were] 3 cases of rape. Caught and released. A girl of 14 was raped. Another 4 were killed. Rings of knives.”

Morris' footnote (in his seminal “The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949”) states that this document was also found in the Yad Yaari Archive. But when Novick returned to examine the document, she was surprised to discover that it was no longer there.

“At first I thought that maybe Morris hadn't been accurate in his footnote, that perhaps he had made a mistake,” Novick recalls. “It took me time to consider the possibility that the document had simply disappeared.” When she asked those in charge where the document was, she was told that it had been placed behind lock and key at Yad Yaari – by order of the Ministry of Defense.

Since the start of the last decade, Defense Ministry teams have been scouring Israel's archives and removing historic documents. But it's not just papers relating to Israel's nuclear project or to the country's foreign relations that are being transferred to vaults: Hundreds of documents have been concealed as part of a systematic effort to hide evidence of the Nakba.

The phenomenon was first detected by the Akevit Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research. According to a report drawn up by the institute, the operation is being spearheaded by Malmab, the Defense Ministry's secretive security department (the name is a Hebrew acronym for “director of security of the defense establishment”), whose activities and budget are classified. The report asserts that Malmab removed historical documentation illegally and with no authority, and at least in some cases has sealed documents that had previously been cleared for publication by the military censor. Some of the documents that were placed in vaults had already been published.

An investigative report by Haaretz found that Malmab has concealed testimony from IDF generals about the killing of civilians and the demolition of villages, as well as documentation of the expulsion of Bedouin during the first decade of statehood. Conversations conducted by Haaretz with directors of public and private archives alike revealed that staff of the security department had treated the archives as their property, in some cases threatening the directors themselves.

Yehiel Horev, who headed Malmab for two decades, until 2007, acknowledged to Haaretz that he launched the project, which is still ongoing. He maintains that it makes sense to conceal the events of 1948, because uncovering them could generate unrest among the country's Arab population. Asked what the point is of removing documents that have already been published, he explained that the objective is to undermine the credibility of studies about the history of the refugee problem. In Horev's view, an allegation



IDF soldiers and Palestinian refugees in Ramle, July 1948. The defense establishment has undertaken to remove evidence of expulsions and more from Israeli archives.

Benno Rothenberg/The IDF and Defense Establishment Archives

Burying the Nakba

For years Defense Ministry teams have scoured local archives and removed historic documents. But it's not just papers relating to Israel's nuclear project that are being locked up: Huge troves of information have been hidden in a systematic effort to conceal evidence of the expulsion of Arabs in 1948

made by a researcher that's backed up by an original document is not the same as an allegation that cannot be proved or refuted.

The document Novick was looking for might have reinforced Morris' work. During the investigation, Haaretz was in fact able to find the Aharon Cohen memo, which sums up a meeting of Mapam's Political Committee on the subject of massacres and expulsions in 1948. Participants in the meeting called for cooperation with a commission of inquiry that would investigate the events. One case the committee discussed concerned “grave actions” carried out in the village of Al-Dawayima, east of Kiryat Gat. One participant mentioned the then-disbanded Lehi underground militia in this connection. Acts of looting were also reported: “Lod and Ramle, Be'er Sheva, there isn't [an Arab] store that hasn't been broken into. 9th Brigade says 7, 7th Brigade says 8.”

“The party,” the document states near the end, “is against expulsion if there is no military necessity for it. There are different approaches concerning the evaluation of necessity. And further clarification is best. What happened in Galilee – those are Nazi acts! Every one of our members must report what he knows.”

The Israeli version

One of the most fascinating documents about the origin of the Palestinian refugee problem was written by an officer in Shai, the precursor to the Shin Bet security service. It discusses why the country was emptied of so many of its Arab inhabitants, dwelling on the circumstances of each village. Compiled in late June 1948, it was titled “The Emigration of the Arabs of Palestine.”

This document was the basis for an article that Benny Morris published in 1986. After the article appeared, the document was removed from the archive and rendered inaccessible to researchers. Years later, the Malmab team reexamined the document, and ordered that it remain classified. They could not have known that a few years later researchers from Akevit would find a copy of the text and run it past the military censors – who authorized its publication unconditionally. Now, after years of concealment, the gist of the document is being revealed here (see Haaretz.com for the entire text).

The 25-page document begins with an introduction that unabashedly approves of the evacuation of the Arab villages. According to the author, the month of April “excelled in an increase of emigration,” while May “was blessed with the evacuation of maximum places.” The report then addresses “the causes of the Arab emigration.” According to the Israeli narrative that was disseminated over the years, responsibility for the exodus from Israel rests with Arab politicians who encouraged the population to leave. However, according to the document, 70 percent of the Arabs left as a result of Jewish military operations.

The unnamed author of the text ranks the reasons for the Arabs' departure in order of importance. The first reason: “Direct Jewish acts of hostility

against Arab places of settlement.” The second reason was the impact of those actions on neighboring villages. Third in importance came “operations by the breakaways,” namely the Irgun and Lehi undergrounds. The fourth reason for the Arab exodus was orders issued by Arab institutions and “gangs” (as the document refers to all Arab fighting groups); fifth was “Jewish ‘whispering operations’ to induce the Arab inhabitants to flee”; and the sixth factor was “evacuation ultimatums.”

The author asserts that, “without a doubt, the hostile operations were the main cause of the movement of the population.” In addition, “Loudspeakers in the Arabic language proved their effectiveness on the occasions when they were utilized properly.” As for Irgun and Lehi operations, the report observes that “many in the villages of central Galilee started to flee following the abduction of the notables of Sheikh Muwannis [a village north of Tel Aviv]. The Arab learned that it is not enough to forge an agreement with the Haganah and that there are other Jews [i.e., the breakaway militias] to beware of.”

The author notes that ultimatums to leave were especially employed in central Galilee, less so in the Mount Gilboa region. “Naturally, the act of this ultimatum, like the effect of the ‘friendly advice,’ came after a certain preparing of the ground by means of hostile actions in the area.”

An appendix to the document describes the specific causes of the exodus from each of scores of Arab locales: Ein Zeitun – “our destruction of the village”; Qeitiya – “harassment, threat of action”; Almaniya – “our action, many killed”; Tira – “friendly Jewish advice”; Al'Amarir – “after robbery and murder carried out by the breakaways”; Sumsum – “our ultimatum”; Bir Salim – “attack on the orphanage”; and Zarnuga – “conquest and expulsion.”

Short fuse

In the early 2000s, the Yitzhak Rabin Center conducted a series of interviews with former public and military figures as part of a project to document their activity in the service of the state. The long arm of Malmab seized on these interviews, too. Haaretz, which obtained the original texts of several of the interviews, compared them to the versions that are now available to the public, after large swaths of them were declared classified.

These included, for example, sections of the testimony of Brig. Gen. (res.) Aryeh Shalev about the expulsion across the border of the residents of a village he called “Sabra.” Later in the interview, the following sentences were deleted: “There was a very serious problem in the valley. There were refugees who wanted to return to the valley, to the Triangle [a concentration

of Arab towns and villages in eastern Israel]. We expelled them. I met with them to persuade them not to want that. I have papers about it.”

In another case, Malmab decided to conceal the following segment from an interview that historian Boaz Lev Tov conducted with Maj. Gen. (res.) Elad Peled:

Lev Tov: “We're talking about a population – women and children?”

Peled: “All, all. Yes.”

Lev Tov: “Don't you distinguish between them?”

Peled: “The problem is very simple. The war is between two populations. They come out of their home.”

Lev Tov: “If the home exists, they have somewhere to return to?”

Peled: “It's not armies yet, it's gangs. We're also actually gangs. We come out of the house and return to the house. They come out of the house and return to the house. It's either their house or our house.”

Lev Tov: “Qualms belong to the more recent generation?”

Peled: “Yes, today. When I sit in an armchair here and think about what happened, all kinds of thoughts come to mind.”

Lev Tov: “Wasn't that the case then?”

Peled: “Look, let me tell you something even less nice and cruel, about the big raid in Sasa [Palestinian village in Upper Galilee]. The goal was actually to deter them, to tell them, ‘Dear friends, the Palmach [the Haganah “shock troops”] can reach every place, you are not immune.’ That was the heart of the Arab settlement. But what did we do? My platoon blew up 20 homes with everything that was there.”

Lev Tov: “While people were sleeping there?”

Peled: “I suppose so. What happened there, we came, we entered the village, planted a bomb next to every house, and afterward Homesh blew on a trumpet, because we didn't have radios, and that was the signal [for our forces] to leave. We're running in reverse, the sappers stay, they pull, it's all primitive. They light the fuse or pull the detonator and all those houses are gone.”

Another passage that the Defense Ministry wanted to keep from the public came from Dr. Lev Tov's conversation with Maj. Gen. Avraham Tamir:

Tamir: “I was under Chera [Maj. Gen. Tzvi Tzur, later IDF chief of staff], and I had excellent working relations with him. He gave me freedom of action – don't ask – and I happened to be in charge of staff and operations work during two developments deriving from [Prime Minister David] Ben-Gurion's policy. One development was when reports arrived about marches of refugees from Jordan toward the abandoned villages [in Israel]. And then Ben-Gurion lays down as policy that we have to demolish [the villages] so they won't have anywhere to return to. That is, all the Arab villages, most of which were in [the area covered by] Central Command, most of them.”

Lev Tov: “The ones that were still standing?”

Tamir: “The ones that weren't yet inhabited by Israelis. There were places where we had already settled Israelis, like Zakariyya and others. But most of

them were still abandoned villages.”

Lev Tov: “That were standing?”

Tamir: “Standing. It was necessary for there to be no place for them to return to, so I mobilized all the engineering battalions of Central Command, and within 48 hours I knocked all those villages to the ground. Period. There's no place to return to.”

Lev Tov: “Without hesitation, I imagine.”

Tamir: “Without hesitation. That was the policy. I mobilized, I carried it out and I did it.”

Crates in vaults

The vault of the Yad Yaari Research and Documentation Center is one floor below ground level. In the vault, which is actually a small, well-secured room, are stacks of crates containing classified documents. The archive houses the materials of the Hashomer Hat-zair movement, the Kibbutz Ha'artzi kibbutz movement, Mapam, Meretz and other bodies, such as Peace Now.

The archive's director is Dudu Amitai, who is also chairman of the Association of Israel Archivists. According to Amitai, Malmab personnel visited the archive regularly between 2009 and 2011. Staff of the archive relate that security department teams – two Defense Ministry retirees with no archival training – would show up two or three times a week. They searched for documents according to such keywords as “nuclear,” “security” and “censorship,” and also devoted considerable time to the War of Independence and the fate of the pre-1948 Arab villages.

“In the end, they submitted a summary to us, saying that they had located a few dozen sensitive documents,” Amitai says. “We don't usually take apart files, so dozens of files, in their entirety, found their way into our vault and were removed from the public catalog.” A file might contain more than 100 documents.

One of the files that was sealed deals with the military government that controlled the lives of Israel's Arab citizens from 1948 until 1966. For years, the documents were stored in the same vault, inaccessible to scholars. Recently, in the wake of a request by Prof. Gadi Algazi, a historian from Tel Aviv University, Amitai examined the file himself and ruled that there was no reason not to unseal it, Malmab's opinion notwithstanding.

According to Algazi, there could be several reasons for Malmab's decision to keep the file classified. One of them has to do with a secret annex it contains to a report by a committee that examined the operation of the military government. The report deals almost entirely with land-ownership battles between the state and Arab citizens, and barely touches on security matters.

Another possibility is a 1958 report by the ministerial committee that oversaw the military government. In one of the report's secret appendices, Col. Misha'el Shaham, a senior officer in the military government, explains that one reason for not dismantling the martial law apparatus is the need to restrict Arab citizens' access to the labor market and to prevent the reestablishment of destroyed villages.

A third possible explanation for hiding the file concerns previously unpublished historical testimony about the expulsion of Bedouin. On the eve of Israel's establishment, nearly 100,000 Bedouin lived in the Negev. Three years later, their number was down to 13,000. In the years during and after the independence war, a number of expulsion operations were carried out in the country's south. In one case, United Nations observers reported that Israel had expelled 400 Bedouin from the Azazma tribe and cited testimonies of tents being burned. The letter that appears in the classified file describes a similar expulsion carried out as late as 1956, as related by geologist Avraham Parnes:

“A month ago we toured Ramon [crater]. The Bedouin in the Mohila area came to us with their flocks and their families and asked us to break bread with them. I replied that we had a great deal of work to do and didn't have time. In our visit this week, we headed toward Mohila again. Instead of the Bedouin and their flocks, there was deathly silence. Scores of camel carcasses were scattered in the area. We learned that three days earlier the IDF had ‘screwed’ the Bedouin, and their flocks were destroyed – the camels by shooting, the sheep with grenades. One of the Bedouin, who started to complain, was killed, the rest fled.”

The testimony continued, “Two weeks earlier, they'd been ordered to stay where they were for the time being, afterward they were ordered to leave, and to speed things up 500 head were slaughtered.... The expulsion was executed ‘efficiently.’” The letter goes on to quote what one of the soldiers said to Parnes, according to his testimony: “They won't go unless we've screwed their flocks. A young girl of about 16 approached us. She had a beaded necklace of brass snakes. We tore the necklace and each of us took a bead for a souvenir.”

The letter was originally sent to MK Yaakov Uri, from Mapai (forerunner of Labor), who passed it on to Development Minister Mordechai Bentov (Mapam). “His letter shocked me,” Uri wrote Bentov. The latter circulated the letter among all the cabinet ministers, writing, “It is my opinion that



Children awaiting distribution of milk by UNICEF at the Nazareth Franciscan Sisters' convent, on January 1, 1950.

AW/UN Photo

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the government cannot simply ignore the facts related in the letter.” Bentov added that, in light of the appalling contents of the letter, he asked security experts to check its credibility. They had confirmed that the contents “do in fact generally conform to the truth.”

Nuclear excuse

It was during the tenure of historian Tuvia Friling as Israel's chief archivist, from 2001 to 2004, that Malmab carried out its first archival incursions. What began as an operation to prevent the leakage of nuclear secrets, he says, became, in time, a large-scale censorship project. “I resigned after three years, and that was one of the reasons,” Prof. Friling says. “The classification placed on the document about the Arabs’ emigration in 1948 is precisely an example of what I was apprehensive about. The storage and archival system is not an arm of the state’s public relations. If there’s something you don’t like – well, that’s life. A healthy society also learns from its mistakes.” Why did Friling allow the Defense Ministry to have access the archives? The reason, he says, was the intention to give the public access to archival material via the internet. In discussions about the implications

Yehiel Horev: ‘The subject is examined based on an approach of whether it could harm Israel’s foreign relations and the defense establishment. Those are the criteria. It’s still relevant.’

of digitizing the material, concern was expressed that references in the documents to a “certain topic” would be made public by mistake. The topic, of course, is Israel’s nuclear project. Friling insists that the only authorization Malmab received was to search for documents on that subject. But Malmab’s activity is only one example of a broader problem, Friling notes: “In 1998, the confidentiality of [the oldest documents in the] Shin Bet and Mossad archives expired. For years those two institutions disdained the chief archivist. When I took over, they requested that the confidentiality of all the material be extended [from 50] to 70 years, which is ridiculous – most of the material can be opened.” In 2010, the confidentiality period was extended to 70 years; last February it was extended again, to 90 years, despite the opposition of the Supreme Council of Archives. “The state may impose confidentiality on some of its documentation,” Friling says. “The question is whether the issue of security doesn’t act as a kind of cover. In many cases, it’s already become a joke.”

In the view of Yad Yaari’s Dudu Amitai, the confidentiality imposed by the Defense Ministry must be challenged. In his period at the helm, he says, one of the documents placed in the vault was an order issued by an IDF general, during a truce in the War of Independence, for his troops to refrain from rape and looting. Amitai now intends to go over the documents that were deposited in the vault, especially 1948 documents, and open whatever is possible. “We’ll do it cautiously and responsibly, but recognizing that the State of Israel has to learn how to cope with the less pleasant aspects of its history.” In contrast to Yad Yaari, where ministry personnel no longer visit, they are continuing to peruse documents at Yad Tabenkin, the research and documentation center of the United Kibbutz Movement. The director, Aharon Azati, reached an agreement with the Malmab teams under which documents will be transferred to the vault only if he is convinced that this is justified. But in Yad Tabenkin, too, Malmab has broadened its searches beyond the realm of nuclear project to encompass interviews conducted by archival staff with former members of the Palmach, and has even perused material about the history of the settlements in the occupied territories. Malmab has, for example, shown interest in the Hebrew-language book “A Decade of Discretion: Settlement Policy in the Territories 1967-1977,” published by Yad Tabenkin in 1992, and written by Yehiel Admoni, director of the Jewish Agency’s Settlement Department during the decade he writes about. The book mentions a plan to settle Palestinian refugees in the Jordan Valley and to the uprooting of 1,540 Bedouin families from the Rafah area of the Gaza Strip in 1972, including an operation that included the sealing of wells by the IDF. Ironically, in the case of the Bedouin, Admoni quotes former Justice Minister Yaakov Shimshon Shapira as saying, “It is not necessary to stretch the security rationale too far. The whole Bedouin episode is not a glorious chapter of the State of Israel.” According to Azati, “We are moving increasingly to a tightening of the ranks. Although this is an era of openness and transparency, there are apparently forces that are pulling in the opposite direction.”

Unauthorized secrecy About a year ago, the legal adviser to the State Archives, attorney Naomi Aldouby, wrote an opinion titled “Files Closed Without Authorization in Public Archives.” According to her, the accessibility policy of public archives is the exclusive purview of the director of each institution. Despite Aldouby’s opinion, however, in the vast majority of cases, archivists who encountered unreasonable decisions by Malmab did not raise objections – that is, until 2014, when Defense Ministry personnel arrived at



Palestinian refugees who had fled to the Gaza Strip board boats for Lebanon or Egypt, in 1949. *Brant Nakashian/UN Archives*

the archive of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. To the visitors’ surprise, their request to examine the archive – which contains collections of former minister and diplomat Abba Eban and Maj. Gen. (res.) Shlomo Gazit – was turned down by its then director, Menahem Blondheim. According to Blondheim, “I told them that the documents in question were decades old, and that I could not imagine that there was any security problem that would warrant restricting their access to researchers. In response, they said, ‘And let’s say there is testimony here that wells were poisoned in the War of Independence?’ I replied, ‘Fine, those people should be brought to trial.’” Blondheim’s refusal led to a meeting with a more senior ministry official, only this time the attitude he encountered was different and explicit threats were made. Finally the two sides reached an accommodation. Benny Morris is not surprised at Malmab’s activity. “I knew about it,” he says “Not officially, no one informed me, but I encountered it when I discovered that documents I had seen in the past are now sealed. There were documents from the IDF Archive that I used for an article about Deir Yassin, and which are now sealed. When I came to the archive, I was no longer allowed to see the original, so I pointed out in a footnote [in the article] that the State Archive had denied access to documents that I had published 15 years earlier.” The Malmab case is only one example of the battle being waged for access to archives in Israel. According

to the executive director of the Akevot Institute, Lior Yavne, “The IDF Archive, which is the largest archive in Israel, is sealed almost hermetically. About 1 percent of the material is open. The Shin Bet archive, which contains materials of immense importance [to scholars], is totally closed apart from a handful of documents.” A report written by Yaacov Lozowick, the previous chief archivist at the State Archives, upon his retirement, refers to the defense establishment’s grip on the country’s archival materials. In it, he writes, “A democracy must not conceal information because it is liable to embarrass the state. In practice, the security establishment in Israel, and to a certain extent that of foreign relations as well, are interfering with [the public] discussion.” Advocates of concealment put forward several arguments, Lozowick notes: “The uncovering of the facts could provide our enemies with a battering ram against us and weaken the determination of our friends; it’s liable to stir up the Arab population; it could enfeeble the state’s arguments in courts of law; and what is revealed could be interpreted as Israeli war crimes.” However, he says, “All these arguments must be rejected. This is an attempt to hide part of the historical truth in order to construct a more convenient version.”

What Malmab says

Yehiel Horev was the keeper of the security establishment’s secrets for more than two decades. He headed the Defense Ministry’s security department from 1986 until 2007 and naturally kept

out of the limelight. To his credit, he now agreed to talk forthrightly to Haaretz about the archives project. “I don’t remember when it began,” Horev says, “but I do know that I started it. If I’m not mistaken, it started when people wanted to publish documents from the archives. We had to set up teams to examine all outgoing material.” From conversations with archive directors, it’s clear that a good deal of the documents on which confidentiality was imposed relate to the War of Independence. Is concealing the events of 1948 part of the purpose of Malmab? “What does ‘part of the purpose’ mean? The subject is examined based on an approach of whether it could harm Israel’s foreign relations and the defense establishment. Those are the criteria. I think it’s still relevant. There has not been peace since 1948. I may be wrong, but to the best of my knowledge the Arab-Israeli conflict has not been resolved. So yes, it could be that problematic subjects remain.” Asked in what way such documents might be problematic, Horev speaks of the possibility of agitation among the country’s Arab citizens. From his point of view, every document must be perused and every case decided on its merits. If the events of 1948 weren’t known, we could argue about whether this approach is the right one. That is not the case. Many testimonies and studies have appeared about the history of the refugee problem. What’s the point of hiding things? “The question is whether it can do harm or not. It’s a very sensitive matter. Not everything has been published

about the refugee issue, and there are all kinds of narratives. Some say there was no flight at all, only expulsion. Others say there was flight. It’s not black-and-white. There’s a difference between flight and those who say they were forcibly expelled. It’s a different picture. I can’t say now if it merits total confidentiality, but it’s a subject that definitely has to be discussed before a decision is made about what to publish.” For years, the Defense Ministry has imposed confidentiality on a detailed document that describes the reasons for the departure of those who became refugees. Benny Morris has already written about the document, so what’s the logic of keeping it hidden? “I don’t remember the document you’re referring to, but if he quoted from it and the document itself is not there [i.e., where Morris says it is], then his facts aren’t strong. If he says, ‘Yes, I have the document,’ I can’t argue with that. But if he says that it’s written there, that could be right and it could be wrong. If the document were already outside and were sealed in the archive, I would say that that’s folly. But if someone quoted from it – there’s a difference of day and night in terms of the validity of the evidence he cited.” In this case, we’re talking about the most quoted scholar when it comes to the Palestinian refugees. “The fact that you say ‘scholar’ makes no impression on me. I know people in academia who spout nonsense about subjects that I know from A to Z. When the state imposes confidentiality, the published work is weakened, because he doesn’t have the document.” But isn’t concealing documents based on footnotes in books an attempt to lock the barn door after the horses have bolted? “I gave you an example that this needn’t be the case. If someone writes that the horse is black, if the horse isn’t outside the barn, you can’t prove that it’s really black.” There are legal opinions stating that Malmab’s activity in the archives is illegal and unauthorized. “If I know that an archive contains classified material, I am empowered to tell the police to go there and confiscate the material. I can also utilize the courts. I don’t need the archivist’s authorization. If there is classified material, I have the authority to act. Look, there’s policy. Documents aren’t sealed for no reason. And despite it all, I won’t say to you that everything that’s sealed is 100 percent justified [in being sealed].” The Defense Ministry refused to respond to specific questions regarding the findings of this investigative report: “The director of security of the defense establishment operates by virtue of his responsibility to protect the state’s secrets and its security assets. The Malmab does not provide details about its mode of activity or its missions.” Lee Rotbart assisted in providing visual research for this article.

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Mohammed. Throughout the holy month, Abdallah’s father promised him that on the last Friday, they would go together to Al-Aqsa, in Jerusalem’s Old City. Late Thursday, Abdallah was supposed to help his grandfather, a contractor, at a construction site, but he got the evening off and went to the family’s ceramics store to collect the 100 shekels (\$28) he was owed in wages. He was very excited about going to Jerusalem. Before he went to sleep, his father said Abdallah looked as if he had grown, and he measured him: 171 centimeters (5 feet, 6 inches). Abdallah wasn’t wearing a shirt, and his father remembers thinking: The boy has become a man. “You Israelis don’t know how we feel,” Luai says now. “You go on hikes, you go abroad. You don’t know a thing about the pain we live with.” Another groan. At 3 A.M., Luai woke up and saw that Abdallah was still awake, as is customary on Ramadan nights, and playing with his sisters; only later did he fall asleep on the living room sofa. Father and son had agreed that on their journey in the morning, they would take three of the sisters and a cousin, Abd al-Rahman. They set out in the family SUV just after 7:30 A.M.: Luai; his daughters Shaimaa, 16, Tartil, 14, and Daniya, 12; his niece, Sirin, 14; Abdallah; and Abd al-Rahman, 18. Entry to Jerusalem for young men of 16-30 was forbidden so the two teens had to sneak into the city, as many Palestinians do. Luai was afraid of being stopped by a traffic policeman, because he was carrying more passengers than is legally allowed, so he took a bypass road, toward the Mazmuriya checkpoint, north of Bethlehem. Abdallah joked with his sisters the whole way, Luai recalls. At 8 A.M. they reached the separation barrier, a few hundred meters from the checkpoint. The barrier here isn’t high: roles of concertina wire

and two barbed-wire fences, between which a rocky path passes; there’s a breach in one fence and the other is also easy to get through. Many young people wanted to pass through to get to the prayers. About three hours earlier, a young man named Muaman Tbayesh, from the Al-Fawar refugee camp, had been wounded here by Border Police gunfire. Hundreds of young people who intended to cross at the site had gone elsewhere. But Luai was unaware of this. He dropped off Abdallah and Abd al-Rahman next to the breach in the fence and parked a few dozen meters away, planning to go through the checkpoint on foot with the girls. The two boys advanced toward the fence. Abd al-Rahman relates now that he didn’t see the Border Policemen lurking in ambush across the way. The boys didn’t know they were entering a death zone, like the one between North and South Korea, like the one between East and West Berlin before the wall fell.

boys didn’t yet know that they were entering a death zone, like the one between North and South Korea, like the one between East and West Berlin before the wall fell. Suddenly Abd al-Rahman saw a Border Policeman moving toward him. Quickly he ran back through the first fence, but Abdallah was caught between the two fences. The officer ran toward him. No one could imagine that he would open fire at an unarmed teen with live ammunition, executing him. But when he was about five to eight meters away, he fired twice at Abdallah. One bullet struck him in the chest, on the left side. Abdallah managed to get back to the other side of the fence before collapsing, his face slamming into the earth, and losing consciousness.

Hearing the shots, Luai rushed over and saw Abdallah stumble and fall, bleeding. Two Border Policemen were standing nearby. Luai pulls out a photo of his son, his face battered after his fall. Luai and Abd al-Rahman carried Abdallah quickly back to their car, asked the dumbstruck girls to get out and sped toward Al-Hussein Hospital. An eternity seemed to pass, but they got there in 10 minutes. In the hospital, Luai heard the doctors talking among themselves about his son’s heart and realized he was in critical condition. He called his wife and brother and told them the situation was very grave. They told him to pray. A physician emerged, asked the father for his full name and then uttered the words he had so hoped not to hear: “I hope that Allah will compensate you.” Luai followed the ambulance carrying his son’s body to Al-Ahli Hospital in Hebron, for preparation for burial. Only then, he says, did he fully grasp what happened. Asked for comment, the Israel Police made the following statement to Haaretz: “During the last Friday of Ramadan [May 31], large forces of the Israel Police were deployed to secure events and to prevent terror and the infiltration into Israel of people without permits. The forces operating in the Al-Muntar sector had to contend with disturbances that included rock throwing and damage to the separation barrier. “During the course of the activity, a number of suspects were identified climbing on the security barrier and entering the territory of the State of Israel illegally. In accordance with the rules of engagement in such a situation, the force fired a Ruger [rifle], aiming it at the lower part of the body of one of the suspects, following which the suspects ran from the site. The police will continue to operate decisively against every attempt to infiltrate the State of Israel, and will act to protect the security of the residents of Jerusalem and the citizens of Israel.” A report released last week by the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem, following its investigation

of the incident, states that Abdallah was shot with “two-two” (.22 caliber) bullets, from a Ruger rifle – a weapon that the military advocate general stated a decade ago could be used only in cases in which security forces faced mortal danger. “Were the shootings of 15-year-old Abdallah and 20-year-old M.T. [shot earlier that morning] criminal?” the B’Tselem report asks, in its conclusion. “Absolutely. They were entirely unjustified. Neither Abdallah nor M.T. posed any danger. Nor could they have posed any danger as they were: in broad daylight, caught between concertina wire on one side and a high barbed-wire fence on the other, facing Border Police officers who were armed and ready and in protective gear. “This is not a case of mortal danger, or in fact of any danger at all. Under such circumstances, the use of weapons capable of causing serious injury and even death – as has been done before and as the officers did here – cannot be justified on any moral or legal grounds. The fact that the predictable and deadly outcome of this egregious conduct is met by public indifference and that the conduct receives the full backing of all official bodies demonstrates just how little worth is accorded to Palestinian lives.” In his living room, the bereaved father continues to pour out his agony: “Every day I am sadder than on the day before. I thought it would lessen, but the pain only increases. My life is pointless now. You [Israelis] live far away. You do not feel us. You think our pain is small. But Abdallah was my whole life. When a person loses a cat or a dog, it is painful. But when you raise a child... You just don’t know... it’s far more than you imagine. “May God burn whoever killed my son. Everything is worthless now. Worthless. I will live until 70 or 80 with this pain, together with my wife. There is no life after this. Your government is criminal. You don’t know what mercy is. This is the gift I received from the State of Israel, besides the regular suffering of life under the occupation: to see my son shot to death in front of me,” says Luai. “He will never return, Abdallah.”

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Jankel Adler, Figure, Pencil and watercolor on paper, 20X13 cm. Signed.



Salvador Dali, Alice in Wonderland, Album of 13 etchings, 47X34 cm. Signed on the cover.



Gregoire Michonze, Figures, 1981, Oil on canvas laid down on wood, 14X8 cm. Signed and dated.



Joan Miro, Untitled, Lithography, 35X50 cm. Signed and described XIV / L.



Lajos Kolozsvary, Two Rabbis, Oil on canvas, 42X52 cm. Signed.

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	SATURDAY (Day of Auction)	6.7.2019	11:00 - till the beginning of the auction

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