

6 The changing patterns of disciplining Palestinian national memory in Israel¹

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The representation of the past is a major sphere of contestation in Israel/Palestine; more specifically, it is a battleground between the state of Israel and its Palestinian citizens. This chapter deals with the attempts of the state and groups in the mainstream Jewish population to shape the way Palestinians remember their past. In this context, I argue that “surveillance,” as it is commonly conceived in surveillance studies, is insufficient for analyzing the way collective memory is controlled and disciplined. If surveillance is indeed “the focused, systematic, and routine attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection or direction” (Lyon 2007: 14), the term too heavily emphasizes the collection of personal data, giving only secondary importance to discipline as one of its potential purposes. Discipline, however, can be achieved by alternate means that do not necessarily include the collection of personal data.

Transferring the focus from “surveillance” to “discipline” would allow us, first, to move beyond the level of individuals in analyzing the control of collective phenomena such as collective memory. In a later reference to his influential panopticon metaphor, Michel Foucault downplayed the political importance of the focus on the individual in the panopticon: “what appeared now, is not the idea of a power which would take the form of an exhaustive surveillance of individuals . . . but the set of dispositifs which, for the government and those who governed, make relevant very specific phenomena which are not exactly individual phenomenon” (quoted and translated by Bigo 2008: 100). This rethinking by Foucault might explain his consent to translate the title of his related book *Surveiller et Punir* to “Discipline and Punish” (Foucault 1977) in English. What lies at the core of the panopticon metaphor is not the collection of data, but the potential to instill self-discipline by making the subject aware that he/she is being watched. My aim is not to reinstate a “pure” Foucauldian perspective, but to emphasize that the collection of personal data in itself lacks political meaning if it does not have the power to affect the subject and shape its behavior.

A second purpose of emphasizing discipline over surveillance is to invite a discussion of the attempts to shape consciousness, rather than bodies or behavior. Although influencing the subject’s consciousness is a major goal of governments, existing technologies are not yet effective in monitoring consciousness. Surveillance studies therefore say little about attempts to discipline consciousness, including collective memory. Instilling self-discipline does not require collecting data on subjects’ behavior: it is enough to let them know that they are being watched. That is, the visibility of the surveillance apparatus and the constant reminder of the

existence of the gaze are as important as the visibility of the subject and the focused collection of individual data.

In this chapter I illustrate how, in the course of specific historical developments, “surveillance” as a mechanism to discipline Palestinian national commemoration inside Israel has been losing its centrality (although not disappearing entirely), while alternative disciplinary practices have emerged. There has been a shift from the reliance on strict monitoring by authorized security agencies to a combination of two increasingly important elements: the “civic gaze” of ordinary people; and sporadic public intimidation by politicians.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault described a historical change in the disciplinary means in France between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. One dimension of this change was “the state-control of the mechanisms of discipline.” Foucault argued that, while in England private religious groups continued to carry out social discipline, in France the most important aspects were taken over by the police apparatus (Foucault 1995 [1975]: 214). The growing emphasis on civic gaze at the expense of direct state surveillance, as described below, can be considered a privatization of the disciplinary agency and, therefore, an inversion of the dynamics which represented and shaped the rise of modernity, according to Foucault. Interpreted thus, we are witnessing a “post-modern” and “post-state” form of discipline. This privatization, however, does not signal a weakening of the nation-state. Rather, it reflects the internalization of the state’s ideology by individual Jewish citizens who voluntarily serve as its agents in imposing the official narrative. In addition, the civic gaze is backed by public intimidation directly performed by state agents, and its efficiency is derived from the state’s power.

The rules have changed

On December 9, 1992, a heated debate in the Knesset dealt with a proposal to outlaw Campus, the Arab students’ association at Haifa University. One of the major concerns of Gonen Segev, the Knesset Member from the right-wing Tsomet Party who initiated the discussion, was a calendar distributed by the student organization. The calendar referenced key dates in the Palestinian national narrative. Segev protested:

Some of the dates mentioned in this calendar: the anniversary of the Palestinian revolution; Land Day; the Deir Yassin massacre; the partition plan; the anniversary of the trauma of 1948 (and I know this is the day when the war of liberation of my people erupted) . . . ; the Balfour declaration is mentioned there as well and also the Intifada anniversary. The anniversary of the Palestinian revolution and Palestinian Independence Day – the day is mentioned at Haifa University as a holiday.

Honorable Speaker, Knesset members, I am talking about students at Haifa University and not about students in Beir-Zeit or an-Najah. I am talking about Arab students born in Israel in its limited pre-1967 borders. You call them Israelis. They call themselves first of all Palestinians. They mention the dates of the Palestinian people and make our national holidays days of mourning. This is the main problem.

Member of Knesset (MK) Tawfik Zayad (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality): There is no contradiction.

MK Gonen Segev: The day when the state was declared is considered by them as a day of mourning . . . Yesterday a sticker was distributed at Haifa University which says: “today is the fifth anniversary of the blessed Palestinian Intifada. On the same day three victims of the Intifada were buried . . .

MK Zayad: Send them to jail. What do you want?

MK Segev: If we will not bash the head of the snake while it is still young, a latent Intifada will erupt among the Arab Israelis and we will not know how to stop it. I am calling on the Minister of Education to impose order on the chaos which prevails in the institutions of higher education and in schools. I would like to remind everyone that we live in the Land of Israel, in the home of the Jewish people. I demand that Campus be outlawed and that the activity of Campus members in the universities in Israel be forbidden.

(Knesset 1992)

As a cycle of holidays specifically designed to commemorate socially marked events, the calendar year often encapsulates the conventional master-narratives constructed by mnemonic communities from their history, and therefore demonstrates the most sacred events in a group’s collective past. Moreover, the calendar symbolically reproduces the national past: by blurring the boundary between present and past, the past stays alive in the present (Zerubavel 2003). This is exactly what brought the calendar distributed at Haifa University to a parliamentary session, whose proceedings were symptomatic of the evolving atmosphere in Israel in the 1990s.

For many years Israeli–Zionist hegemonic collective memory has de-legitimized public discussion about the tragic price the Palestinians paid for the establishment of the Jewish state, the destiny of the Palestinian refugees, and the drastic change in the country’s landscape following the war (Raz-Krakotzkin 1994). Since this past is perceived by state agencies as challenging the legitimacy of the state of Israel (Swedenburg 1995: 38–75; Benvenisti 2002), and since keeping this past alive could have meant the persistence and validation of a Palestinian national identity within the state of Israel, attempts to commemorate it by the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel – especially the commemoration of 1948 – were carefully monitored.

Arab formal education might be the extreme example. The official curriculum in history has ignored the Palestinian national narrative. Teachers with a nationalist orientation were not hired or were fired once this political tendency was discovered (Al Haj 1995). Approaches to both curriculum and hiring have seen a gradual liberalization; however, their contemporary character still reflects a fear of the Palestinian national narrative (see below).

Another strictly monitored sphere has been political commemoration. For the military government officers and the *Shabak* (General Security Services) in the 1950s and 1960s, the celebration of Israel’s Independence Day was the ultimate test of loyalty, a litmus test which enabled the state to rank Arabs according to levels of obedience. Every year, all state institutions in Arab towns and villages were required to perform festive ceremonies and raise the Israeli flag (Al Haj 1995; Bauml 2001; Robinson 2005; Cohen 2006). Police informants received detailed instructions to

report on the atmosphere in their villages on Independence Day. “Negative” attitudes, such as removing or vandalizing flags and pictures of leaders, or speeches which referred to the “tragedy of the Palestinian people,” were followed by police investigations and arrests (Bauml 2001). Interestingly, the end of the military government in 1966 did not immediately change this policy. Although since the 1970s Arab citizens have not been brutally forced to celebrate Israel’s Independence Day, authorities still show strong concern for how Arabs behave on that day.

Since the mid-1980s, however, the state’s motivation and ability to discipline Palestinian memory has rapidly waned, a result of several interrelated socio-political processes in the state and among both Jewish and Arab societies. The strengthening of the liberal discourse of citizenship and the increased power of the Israeli Supreme Court, which defended this discourse (Shafir and Peled 2002), created a wider range of freedom of speech. Furthermore, among certain elements of the Jewish Israeli academic elite and related circles, publications of the “new historians” partially legitimized public discussion about Israel’s responsibility for the Palestinian tragedy (Ram 1998). The exclusion of Egypt from the Arab-Israeli military conflict, and the dismantling of the Soviet Union – the major strategic ally of Israel’s enemies – also reduced the siege mentality by abating existential anxieties and increasing the collective self-confidence of Jewish society in Israel. Later, the Oslo process intensified this dynamic and introduced some “post-conflict” attitudes among the Israeli elite, who conveniently adopted the view in the late 1990s that the conflict had virtually ended.

At the same time, Arab society gained confidence with the emergence of new circles of educated elites, which led to the founding of an independent Arabic press in the 1980s (Caspi and Kabaha 2001), formalized leadership in the form of the Follow-Up Committee (*Lajnat al-mutaba’a*) and its sub-committees, and massive commemorative rituals interwoven with political protest, such as Land Day (Yiftachel 2000). Moreover, Arab local governments gradually gained more autonomy (Rosenfeld and Al-Haj 1990). This was especially important in the field of high school education, since local councils nominate teachers for these schools. One major development that represents this changing political atmosphere was the establishment in the early 1990s of several committees formed by the second generation of internal refugees to protect the rights of the displaced Israeli (Arab) citizens of 1948, to “cultivate the heritage,” and commemorate the lost (Benvenisti 2002: 268; Cohen 2003). These signified the growing confidence to deal publicly even with the most sensitive subject of the 1948 war and Palestinian refugees.

As a result of these broader trends, in 1992 Arab students were already confident enough to distribute a calendar that referred to the establishment of the state as a “tragedy.” It seems that for some Jewish politicians the mere existence of this narrative was a surprise, while for others its public appearance was a threat. The sarcastic reaction of MK Zayad (i.e., “jail them”) clarified that the arsenal of legitimate methods to confront this narrative was by then limited. The Knesset voted against Segev’s demand,² and for the next nine years there was no recorded attempt by legislators to clip the wings of Palestinian national commemoration inside Israel.

The implications of October 2000 and the second Intifada

The change described above does not mean that during the 1990s Palestinians in Israel were free to write their own narrative or to commemorate their national past without interruption. Arab formal education continued to be monitored. Despite the introduction of some changes in the 1970s, the official curriculum still ignored the Palestinian national narrative (Al Haj 1995). The new spirit of the 1990s was reflected in the attempts of three education ministers from the left-wing Meretz Party to reduce the *Shabak's* involvement in authorizing nominations of teachers and school directors, but their success was only partial. Similarly, organized visits to the ruins of Palestinian villages in the 1990s sometimes faced police interference, and violent confrontations developed (Benvenisti 2002: 268).

The tension between the “1990s spirit” and its backlash reached its peak around the time of the fiftieth anniversary of Israel’s establishment and the *Nakba*. In March 1998, the Higher Follow-Up Committee (FUC) decided to commemorate the *Nakba* in a series of events. This decision provoked both explicit and implicit threats from the Israeli government. The Minister for Arab Affairs in Netanyahu’s government, Moshe Katzav (later elected as Israel’s president in 2000), described the FUC’s decision as one that was “dangerous and might damage Jewish–Arab co-existence” (*Al-Ittihad* 1998). Minister of Interior Eli Yishai threatened to cut governmental funding of any local authorities that financed the *Nakba* commemoration. In the same year, massive rallies and processions to and within abandoned Arab villages did not result in the authorities’ interference. However, officials of the Israel Land Authority embarked on a large-scale operation of fencing off abandoned Arab structures and erecting large signs that warned against “trespassing” (Benvenisti 2002: 268).

Before the eruption of the second Intifada, these public threats were vague and relatively minor in their tone. This dynamic prevailed, however, only as long as it was accompanied by a decline in the level of existential anxiety on the Jewish side. The events of October 2000 and the second Intifada interfered with the coherence of these two processes. Historian Tom Segev, who celebrated post-Zionism in a book published shortly before the Intifada, wrote: “Palestinian terrorism seems to push Israelis back into the Zionist womb” (Segev 2002: 151), and the “Zionist womb” resists Palestinians commemorating their tragic past. At the same time, socio-political developments have made it impossible to restore the old practices of disciplining memory.

In addition, some processes among the Arab-Palestinian society in Israel made their own contribution. First, during the 1990s Palestinian civil society inside Israel grew and became institutionalized to create a strong web of self-confident civil activism. Many organizations directly or indirectly deal with establishing the public presence of a Palestinian national narrative. Second, new communication technologies (e.g., internet and satellite TV) have made the flow of information more difficult to control. In a survey I conducted in July–August 2008 with representative samples of the Jewish and Arab populations in Israel, I asked respondents to identify the main source of their historical knowledge.³ Among the Arab respondents, 24 percent mentioned television and 16 percent mentioned the internet; among the Jewish respondents, only 14 percent mentioned television and just 6 percent mentioned the internet. These gaps suggest that, for the Arab citizens, new technologies were especially important, given their mistrust of the state-sponsored school system.

The implications of the Intifada on Arab citizens, and especially the events of October 2000, were equally dramatic. During late September and early October 2000, with the beginning of the Palestinian uprising, flames spread inside the 1967 Green Line, and the country witnessed a wave of demonstrations, stone-throwing, blocked roads, and police gunfire against demonstrators. Inside Israel, police killed thirteen Palestinian Arabs (twelve of them Israeli citizens). These events triggered a political earthquake among Arab citizens. The unbearable ease with which demonstrators were killed and the indifferent reaction of the frightened Jewish public to the police brutality invoked widespread frustration and a growing awareness of the fragility of the civil and political rights of Arabs in Israel. This awareness has translated into the removal of self-imposed barriers on political protest, as well as on public displays of the Palestinian national narrative (Sorek 2008).

The following story illustrates the inability of the old disciplinary mechanism to deal with these new developments. A major source of power among the Palestinian community in Israel is the relative autonomy of local councils that support and sometimes initiate commemorative events. In Israel, when a local council or mayor fails to run their town or city, the Ministry of the Interior is authorized to dismantle the council or fire the mayor, and to nominate a temporary committee or a temporary mayor. Only Jewish temporary mayors are appointed to run failed Jewish councils; in Arab localities most of the appointees are Jewish as well.

On December 25, 2007, due to the complete failure of the local council of Kafr Kana, an Arab town, the Minister of the Interior nominated Ilan Gavrieli as temporary mayor. In May 2008 the local branch of the Islamic Movement planned to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (*mawlid an-nabi*) and to commemorate the *Nakba* at the same event in the local stadium. It submitted a routine request to the local council and to the police, and received the latter's approval. However, it was astonished to receive a negative answer from the nominated council. According to the council, "this is a political event and it is forbidden by the law" (Rofe-Ophir 2008a). The furious activists organized a protest and distributed a flyer that read: "we will not allow the military government to return to Kafr Kana." They also appealed to the district court in Nazareth to overrule the council's decision. The appeal was accepted and the event took place as planned.

The majority's disciplining civic gaze

The court's decision clarified that the old methods used to discipline Palestinian memory had lost their legitimacy. However, certain forces in Israeli society have been trying to reinstate the undermined disciplinary power. These attempts are carried out by an increasingly present voluntary "civic gaze" of ordinary citizens, backed by public intimidation by certain functionaries in the legislative and executive branches.

For Foucault, the gaze imposes disciplinary practices that inscribe identities upon docile bodies (Foucault 1995 [1975]). Foucault's original thesis referred to specific agents, specialized in specific kinds of surveillance, who direct their scrutinizing gaze to specific individuals. Foucault's panopticon metaphor, which symbolizes this ever-present institutional gaze, certainly fits the reality of the military government. Furthermore, the military government's long shadow still deters Palestinians in Israel from approaching "sacred cows" of the Zionist ethos (Sorek 2008; Sabbagh-Khoury

forthcoming). The Jewish civic gaze on Arab public behavior, however, is much less institutionalized and its sources are more vaguely identifiable. The civic gaze should not be confused with the phenomenon of self-appointed informers – namely, citizens who voluntarily report other citizens to the security services. The agents of the civic gaze themselves act to correct the subject's behavior. In addition, the civic gaze is not focused; rather, it is a consistent, random scrutinizing of the public sphere without pre-determined attention to specific individuals. Nevertheless, as I will illustrate later, it is still effective as a disciplinary mechanism.

The civic gaze in practice

The majority's disciplinary gaze is as old as the state, and it has been functioning from the very moment Arabs met Jews amid the post-1948 balance of power. Because of the effectiveness of state-controlled disciplinary practices in the specific field of political commemoration, most Jewish citizens have never encountered the commemorative events organized by Arab citizens. With the exception of university settings, Palestinian political commemoration has been carried out exclusively inside Arab towns and villages. Since 2000, however, Jewish citizens gradually and increasingly have been paying attention to these events. Since Palestinian political memory has become increasingly public and more determined to broach topics sensitive for the Jews in Israel, it has been watched not only by the authorities but by gazing civic eyes, ready to correct “diversions” from the dominant Zionist narrative. Even until 2005, opposition was concentrated mainly in the universities, where sporadic clashes between Arab and Jewish students – especially around *Nakba*/Independence Day – occurred. More recent years, however, have witnessed confrontations between Arab commemorators and Jewish counter-demonstrators in other contexts.

On June 17, 2005, about 150 people, most of them Arab-Palestinian citizens, marched in a memorial parade from the old prison in Acre to the Muslim cemetery in the city. They were commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the execution of three Palestinians by the British authorities (Rabed 2005). The three were the first to gain the status of Palestinian national martyrs in Palestinian national mythology (transmitted from parents to sons and daughters), and are considered anti-colonial heroes. In the early years after their execution the Arab Higher Committee organized massive commemorative rallies of national protest; decades later the parade organizers from the Tawfiq Zayad Institute intended to renew this tradition.

On their way to the cemetery, the parade participants were surprised to encounter a group of Jewish-Israeli protesters waving Israeli flags and holding large signs bearing the word “traitors.” From a Jewish-Israeli perspective, this commemoration was outrageous: the three men had been sentenced to death for their part in the massacre of Jews in Hebron and in Safad/Tsfat in August 1929, an event which became a constitutive myth of victimhood in the Zionist narrative (*pra'ot tarpat*). Moreover, although the parade did not directly refer to the *Nakba*, it was a reminder that the Palestinians in Israel are remnants of a viable national community that existed before the state was established, and whose destruction was a precondition for the existence of a Jewish state. Subsequent short reports about the parade on some Hebrew news websites sparked furious reactions from Jewish readers (see, for example, reader's comment on Rabed (2005)).

In recent years, the *Nakba* has also been commemorated in mixed Arab–Jewish towns. The modest event organized in Lid/Lod in 2006 faced a Jewish counter-demonstration organized by some right-wing members of the local council under the title “Flags for Israel.” One member wrapped in an Israeli flag addressed the participants and warned:

Commemorating the *Nakba* by the Arabs of Israel is a denial of the mere existence of the state of Israel, and whoever denies our right to live in peace and security cannot complain that we do not accept him for a job, cannot complain that he is not allowed family unification, cannot be surprised that we check him from head to toe when he enters the bus and should not be surprised if he is not welcome to live near us.

(Ganei Aviv and its Residents 2006)

Interestingly, every element in this multidimensional threat has been identified by Sabbagh-Khoury (forthcoming) as a deterrent to Palestinian citizens in Israel from protesting against issues considered taboo by Jewish-Israelis: the economic dependency on the Jewish side, the tendency to give priority to issues concerning their daily lives, and, finally, the fear of another expulsion, shaped by the trauma of the *Nakba*.

On May 8, 2008, group of Jewish activists came for the first time to confront the annual Return Parade, the central event of *Nakba* Day among the Palestinian citizens of Israel. At the invitation of a new organization named ha-Shomer he-Hadash (the New Guardian), several hundred people attended a massive picnic at the Jewish settlement of Tsipori. The *Nakba* parade route was obstructed since, on its way to the destroyed village of Safuriye, it went through Tsipori, which had been established in 1949 on Safuriye land.

Ha-Shomer he-Hadash was founded in early 2008 by Jewish ranchers who felt that the state had failed to protect them against trespass and looting. Although their point of departure seems to be related to mere protection of private property, their struggle is articulated in the typical ethno-nationalist discourse of a settler society, and it is consciously contextualized in the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Their name echoes the name of a pre-state paramilitary organization, ha-Shomer, founded to substitute Arab guards in the Jewish settlements with Jewish guards. Symbolically, their first country-wide meeting was scheduled for Land Day (March 30) 2008. At this meeting, the chair, Yoel Zilberman, said: “An all-out war is managed every day and every hour over the national land of all of us, there is a need to return the national pride, patriotism and Zionism and make sure that the ranchers learn to be courageous and proud” (*Maariv* 2008).

Several weeks later, ha-Shomer organized the protest against the *Nakba* commemoration in Tsipori. The event deteriorated into a violent confrontation between the Arab participants and the police. There were injuries on both sides, and thirty-one Arab demonstrators were arrested. It is noteworthy that counter-demonstrations in front of parades commemorating post-1948 events such as Land Day or the October 2000 uprising had never been documented before. These new counter-demonstrations signal to Arab citizens that they are touching a very sensitive nerve in the collective ethos of Jewish citizens.

Public intimidation

This civic gaze has no power of its own. In order for it to be effective, everyone involved must be aware that it represents the interests of the state, which is, for its part, ready to use its own disciplinary mechanism. Therefore, the gaze is complemented by more formalized steps.

Post-2000, the Arab-Palestinian minority has increasingly been seen by the authorities as an existential threat to the Jewish state. The level of anxiety is manifest in the description of the current processes in Arab society in Israel as the “real strategic danger in the long term.” This assessment comes from a private discussion of *Shabak* senior advisers with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and was carefully chosen for release to the press (Caspit and Hilleli 2007). Nevertheless, the post-2000 modes of disciplining memory are not necessarily part of an organized and coordinated plan. Their main characteristic is their public visibility. Politicians, whether in office or aspiring to office, make public declarations which have the potential to deter Palestinian citizens from organizing or participating in commemorative events. Sometimes these declarations are explicit threats, but the intimidator cannot always follow through, so their main effect is to create an intimidating public environment.

For example, in May 2001, before the first Independence Day after the eruption of the second Intifada, the new Minister of National Infrastructure, Avigdor Lieberman, instructed his ministry’s functionaries to avoid any contact with public figures who participated in *Nakba* commemorations. The Ministry of National Infrastructure has a large budget, and denying access to its resources could seriously impede Arab municipalities. Lieberman justified his decision by the need to “punish public figures who turn the Day of Independence into a day of holocaust” (Nir 2001). Three months later, the Minister of Education, Limor Livnat, declared that she was considering making allocation of bonuses and extra funding to schools conditional on their being “loyal to the state.” Livnat explained that “schools that commemorate *Nakba* Day, or raise the Palestinian flag and celebrate after terrorist attacks, should not receive bonuses” (Trabelsi 2001).

Livnat went to the media with her new ideas before consulting the ministry’s legal advisors (Trabelsi 2001). In both cases, the legality of the newly declared policies was dubious,⁴ and there is no evidence that either policy was officially implemented. However, as I asserted earlier, the importance of these statements lies mainly in the atmosphere they create.

Although Lieberman and Livnat were the most explicit in linking commemoration of the past to the distribution of resources in the present, their attitude represents a wider spectrum of the “carrot and stick” policy frequently articulated by Israeli cabinet ministers. For example, as part of the preparations for the celebration of Israel’s sixtieth Day of Independence, the Israeli government tried to convince Arab municipalities to take part. Arab political leaders were promised that the “celebrations will include money investment in the infrastructure of the Arab localities” (Inbari 2007). Although we could classify this policy as a “carrot,” the poor infrastructure of most Arab towns and the desperate need for funding for public projects should have made them high priorities on the government’s list of supported projects regardless. Therefore, making the support they deserve conditional on obedient political behavior should be seen more as another form of threat.

Although the FUC leadership publicly rejected these attempts to “bribe” Arab mayors, in some municipalities the “carrot and stick” policy seems to have been effective. Orsan Yassin, mayor of Shefa-’Amr from 1998 to 2008, organized an official Independence Day celebration in his town. He explained his political philosophy on several occasions: for example, “I had enough of the extremists. We, the moderates, will overpower them. I expect that the Prime Minister will support the moderate Arabs more significantly” (Retner 2000). In another interview to the Hebrew media he complained:

This is our state and we should be part of it. The FUC positions only hurt our lives. We have to find a good way to educate the children to be part of the state . . . The problem is that in spite of what I am doing for the state, I am not being backed up. The relation [of the government] to Shefa-’Amr is like [its] relation to Umm el-Fahm. We should receive different treatment so everyone will go in my direction.

(Vitkon 2008)

It is noteworthy that in 1998, the newly elected Yassin destroyed a new monument for the *Nakba* martyrs that had been erected in his town (Sorek 2008). Yassin might be extreme in his overt instrumentalism, but he could also represent a wider phenomenon. For example, the government was able to recruit two Arab-Muslim mayors to sit on the advisory board of the sixtieth anniversary celebrations (Sami I’sa from Kafr Qasim, and Talal al-Kirnawi from Rahat).

Some public intimidation inhabits the twilight zone of bizarre politics and potential crimes against humanity. On December 3, 2007, the Israeli Knesset gathered for a special festive session to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the UN decision to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The Arab MKs boycotted this event, provoking furious reactions from some Jewish MKs. Two days later, the FUC chair, Shawki Khatib, informed the Israeli government that the Arab municipalities would not take part in the celebration of Israel’s sixtieth Independence Day: “We are not part of these festivals because, in our view, the State of Israel was founded on the ruins of the Palestinian people and because of the expulsion of 80 percent, if not more, of the Palestinian residents who lived then in Palestine” (Inbari 2007). Following this decision the Public Security Minister and former head of the *Shabak*, Avi Dichter, declared, “Whoever cries about the *Nakba* year after year shouldn’t be surprised if they actually have a *Nakba* eventually.” He called on Israeli-Arab leaders to reconsider their decision not to take part in the celebrations. In the same context, he attacked the mere use of the term *Nakba*, and argued that it harms the Arab public: “From the *Nakba* they will not get any better education, from the *Nakba* they will not get better economic opportunities” (Rabed 2007).

These threats were made before an Arab audience at the opening ceremony of the first Arab branch of the Kadima Party in a non-Jewish locality, in Shefa-’Amr. Meron Benvenisti (2007) wrote in *Haaretz* that “only paranoia and a repressed feeling of guilt could produce” Dichter’s declaration. Only seven years earlier, in 2000, Ami Ayalon, Dichter’s predecessor in the *Shabak* (1996–2000), recognized that “their [the Palestinians] *Nakba* accompanies them as a trauma in the same way that the Holocaust accompanies us” (Mifneh 2001), an empathic statement that was diametrically oppo-

site to Dichter's view. Although the difference between these two statements is related to differences in personality and politics, it might well indicate the changes in the level of "Nakba anxiety" in Israel's main surveillance agency over the last decade.

Recognizing that the authorities' ability to discipline commemoration of the *Nakba* is restricted by the rule of law, right-wing politicians have been involved in recurrent attempts to outlaw *Nakba* commemoration. In July 2001, four MKs from different right-wing parties submitted a bill aimed at amending the Independence Day Law. According to the proposed amendment, a person who commemorated Israel's Day of Independence as a day of mourning would be jailed for one year or fined 100,000 NIS. The bill was rejected by the Knesset, was resubmitted in March 2003 (Knesset 2003) and failed again. A third attempt was made in January 2005. This time it was barely rejected in the preliminary vote: 29 against 22 (Knesset 2005). Although the government opposed it, this time the amendment was supported not only by the Israeli extreme right but by the mainstream Likud Party. The strongest support came from the centrist Shinuy Party (all nine MKs of that party who attended the session voted in favor), a strong indication of the popularity of the idea in Israeli mainstream politics. Interestingly, discounting the seven Arab MKs who opposed the amendment, it would have been a tie between the Jewish MKs who supported it and those who opposed it. The same amendment was rejected again in January 2008, but in May 2009, following the establishment of a new right-wing coalition, it was adopted for the first time by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation. Later, the government backtracked and proposed an amended bill, according to which the Minister of Finance is authorized to halt public funding for organizations (read: Arab municipalities) who support the "negation of Israel as a Jewish state" (read: mourn at the Day of Independence). The new bill was approved by the Knesset on July 19, 2009.

Although calls to ban Palestinian commemoration have usually been limited to *Nakba* Day, they were recently extended to include another event: Land Day (Rofe-Ophir 2008b). This development is also related to the intensified political activism following October 2000, since in recent years Land Day has been celebrated not only in Arab areas but in mixed Arab-Jewish towns. As a result, Land Day, which is usually rich in symbols of Palestinian nationalism, became more visible to the Jewish public. In Lid, the Land Day rally in 2006 raised concerns among Jewish residents which propelled them to demand the banning of a similar rally on *Nakba* Day (Channel 7 2006).

Measuring the effectiveness of the new disciplinary modes

Nur Masalha argues that "the more the state policies were focused on suppressing *Nakba* memory and dissolving the internal refugees problem, the more the indigenous resistance to that policy became stronger and the more visible *Nakba* commemoration and actual direct action became" (Masalha 2005: 43). Indeed, judging by the public visibility and salience of the *Nakba* commemoration practices, one might argue that the new disciplinary mechanisms mostly failed to achieve their goal. The *Nakba* is frequently discussed in the Palestinian press, and it is commemorated annually in rallies and visits to the depopulated villages. In some schools the *Nakba* has become part of the unofficial curriculum, reluctantly ignored by the Ministry of Education. For a fuller picture, however, one should take a look not only at the presence of national commemoration but at its absence.

We will never know how many Arab mayors have considered commemorating the *Nakba* in their towns but were deterred by the above-mentioned public intimidation. What we can do is look at the ways in which Arab citizens of Israel answer questions about the *Nakba* and attempt to assess the level of their concern and hesitation based on these answers. Before proceeding, I should point out that I make the following assumptions:

- 1 The *Nakba* is the major anchor of the contemporary Palestinian national narrative.
- 2 In the Palestinian national narrative the *Nakba* is a direct result of the aggression of the Jewish military forces in 1948.
- 3 The establishment of the state of Israel is the major anchor of the contemporary Israeli national narrative (as demonstrated by Schuman *et al.* 2003).

In the survey I conducted in July–August 2008 (see above), interviewees were asked: “In 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became refugees. According to your opinion, who is responsible for that?” Respondents were offered five options, ranging from complete responsibility of the Jewish side to complete responsibility of the Arab side. The answers given allow us to assess the extent to which Arab respondents dare to adopt the Palestinian national narrative in conversations with anonymous interviewers (all of whom were Palestinian citizens of Israel). Since the Israeli national narrative is compatible with the authorities’ expectations, it was expected that Jewish citizens would feel free to express that narrative in conversation with a stranger. Therefore, the data from the Jewish sample will be presented as a point of reference. Finally, since the youngest generation (eighteen–twenty-nine) has been exposed primarily to the more recent disciplinary modes, we can learn about their efficacy if we compare the level of adoption of the Palestinian national narrative among different generations.

There are some indications that respondents saw the question about responsibility as a threat. Some of them made wry comments, such as “That sounds like a *Shabak* question.” More significant were the relatively high percentages of safe, “middle of the road” answers, which indicated equally shared responsibility, and the refusal to apportion responsibility to either side, which together totaled 51 percent. In the Jewish sample, these options represented only 39 per cent.

Interestingly, only 23 percent of Arab respondents answered that Jews are the main or only party responsible, while 26 percent blamed the Arab side, fully or primarily. Among Jewish respondents, 54 percent blamed the Arab side fully or primarily, while only 7 percent said that the Jews were mostly or fully responsible. This was despite the fact that the Jews, as a majority and victorious in the war, might have been expected to feel more confident to practice self-criticism.

Even more telling is the gap between generations (see Table 6.1). Among the third generation, the percentage of those who followed the Palestinian national narrative was more than three times that of the first generation. And the percentage who refused to apportion any responsibility was more than six times higher in the first generation than in the third generation. There are two likely explanations for this: on the one hand, the “long shadow” of the military government, which continues to dictate caution among the first generation; and, on the other, the dramatic impact of the events October 2000 on individuals who were teenagers at the time. In the Jewish

sample there was almost no comparable difference between the generations (see Table 6.2), emphasizing that the Arab generational gap is related to the Arab status as a surveilled minority. Still, given the centrality of the *Nakba* in the Palestinian national narrative, and given the popular image of the young generation as the “Stand-Tall Generation,” a term coined by Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005), the percentage of those who emphasize Jewish responsibility remains suspiciously low. This suggests that personal memories of the military government are not necessary to prevent the adoption, or at least the presentation, of a Palestinian national narrative.

Another interesting comparison is between the results of the phone interviews and a study based on face-to-face interviews that asked a similar question (Zureik 1999). This comparison is presented in Table 6.3. The gaps between the answers in face-to-face interviews and phone interviews are remarkable. They imply that the interviewees were concerned that they might be “tested” by the authorities in phone interviews (or that the authorities were tapping the phone lines), a concern that might have been significantly reduced by sitting with the interviewer in their own homes. It

Table 6.1 Who is responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem in the 1948 war? (Arab sample)

	<i>The Jewish side is the only or the main party responsible</i>	<i>Equal responsibility of Jews and Arabs</i>	<i>The Arab side is the only or the main party responsible</i>	<i>No answer/ everyone/ no one/ a third side</i>
Third generation (18–29)	31.7%	44.3%	19.0%	5.0%
Second generation (30–59)	17.7%	37.6%	30.1%	14.7%
First generation (60+)	9.6%	26.9%	32.7%	30.8%
Total	22.6%	39.3%	25.8%	12.2%

Table 6.2 Who is responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem in the 1948 war? (Jewish sample)

	<i>The Jewish side is the only or the main party responsible</i>	<i>Equal responsibility of Jews and Arabs</i>	<i>The Arab side is the only or the main party responsible</i>	<i>No answer/ everyone/ no one/ a third side</i>
Third generation (18–29)	10.6%	28.7%	54.3%	6.4%
Second generation (30–59)	6.0%	34.3%	50.6%	9.2%
First generation (60+)	6.6%	24.6%	58.1%	10.8%
Total	53.7%	30.1%	7.0%	9.2%

Table 6.3 Who is responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem in the 1948 war? (A comparison of answers obtained by face-to-face and phone interviews)

	<i>The Jewish side is the only or the main party responsible</i>	<i>Equal responsibility of Jews and Arabs</i>	<i>The Arab side is the only or the main party responsible</i>	<i>No answer</i>
Phone interviews (Sorek, 2008)	22.6%	39.3%	25.8%	12.2%
Face-to-face interviews (Zureik, 1999)	73.6%	9.6%	5.4%	0.6%

is noteworthy that the concern about surveillance seems to be salient only when it comes to suggesting Jewish responsibility for the *Nakba*. In other questions from the same questionnaire, respondents were not deterred from openly displaying Palestinian identity and pride. For example, in response to the question, “To what extent do you feel proud of being Palestinian” (possible answers: “very proud”, “proud to a certain extent”, “not so proud”, “not proud at all”), 58.3 percent chose “very proud.” The first generation (age sixty and above) even led this tendency, with 74.5 percent. When asked about their pride in Israeli identity, only 19.3 answered “very proud.” These numbers suggest that merely displaying Palestinian pride or a critical attitude toward the state is not widely perceived as risky behavior. However, many Arab citizens still feel that directly blaming the Jewish side for the expulsion of 1948 skirts too close to, or even crosses, the threshold of tolerance of the state or the Jewish majority.

Conclusion

The anxiety of the Jewish public in Israel regarding the public appearance of a Palestinian national narrative has led to continuous attempts to discipline the public display of Palestinian political memory. In the first decades after 1948 this discipline was imposed mainly by strict monitoring by the security services and even forcing Arabs to display the Zionist narrative publicly. As the Jews’ siege mentality abated and Arab self-confidence and organizational ability increased in the 1980s and 1990s, the Palestinian national narrative, and especially the commemoration of the *Nakba*, gained more public visibility. The second Intifada reversed the direction of Jewish anxiety in Israel, but it was too late to restore the old modes of disciplining memory. Instead of strict monitoring by the security services, however, Palestinian memory in Israel is still shaped by the watchful civic gaze of ordinary citizens and by public intimidation by government officials. Recurrent attempts to use legislation to outlaw memory of the *Nakba* have failed so far, but they are now supported by forces from the center of the Israeli political map. It is thus feasible that these attempts could succeed in the future.

Findings from a nationwide survey were used to assess the readiness of Arab citizens of Israel to display the Palestinian national narrative. A surprisingly low number of Arab respondents in the survey adopted the conventional Palestinian national narrative in their answers. The fact that less than 10 percent of the respondents of the first generation and only 17 percent of second generation blamed the Jewish side, fully

or mostly, for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem implies that even in 2008 a significant proportion of the population did not feel comfortable in making the *Nakba* an actual political issue.

Among the third generation the proportion of those who blamed the Jewish side was much higher, but it was still less than a third of all respondents in that age group. This is far lower than the percentage of those who blamed the Arab side in the parallel Jewish cohort. These findings suggest that, although the contemporary disciplinary modes are not as influential as those of the military government period, their effect should not be underestimated.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on research funded by a Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Fellowship and by a grant from the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.
- 2 Segev himself later became a symbol of corruption. In September 1995 his vote in the Knesset was crucial to the approval of the second stage of the Oslo Accords. In exchange for his support of Rabin's government he became the Minister of Energy. In 2005 he was jailed for attempting to smuggle Ecstasy pills into Israel using his expired diplomatic passport.
- 3 530 Arabs and 502 Jews were interviewed by phone in their native language (Arabic, Hebrew, or Russian) by interviewers from their respective ethnicities. The survey was carried out by the B.I. Lucille Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research at Tel Aviv University.
- 4 The Association for Civil Rights in Israel sent letters to both Lieberman and Livnat to protest and explain the problem of their proposal from a legal point of view. See <<http://www.acri.org.il/SearchResults.aspx?type=0&group=0&topics=0&text=ggg16ggg11ggg02ggg05&cb1=False&cb2=False&results=1> [Hebrew]>.

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