

**Smadar Lavie***University of California, Berkeley*

## Gaza 2014 and Mizrahi Feminism

*What is the relationship between Mizrahi feminism and Israeli ultranationalism? What is the relevance of gender justice activism to Operation Protective Edge (the 2014 Gaza War) and Israel's foreign policy? Mizrahi protests dissipate and disappear when the Israel-Palestine conflict dominates the headlines. This essay connects intra-Jewish racial and gendered dynamics to the 2014 Gaza War. It tracks sequences that began with social protest and ended with elections that bolstered Israel's political right wing. In between came bloodletting between the Israeli Defense Forces, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel's neighboring Arab states. The 2014 Gaza War was a watershed not only for the Israel-Palestine conflict; under the smokescreen of war, Israel accelerated neoliberal economic reforms. The first victims of this restructuring were Mizrahi single mothers. Palestinians, however, would pay the highest price for Israel's Mizrahi-Ashkenazi rift. [Israel-Palestine, Gaza, Mizrahi feminism, neoliberalism, social movements]*

All Israel in pledge to each other  
All Israel in pledge to each other  
All Israel in pledge to each other  
All Israel brethren

One people, one heart  
One people, one name  
One people, one man  
Hear, O Israel, one people  
(Almagor 1972)

So goes the Israeli pop tune. So does the world believe when it comes to Israeli national unity against the *goyim* (traditionally gentiles—that is, non-Jews—of any nationality). In colloquial Hebrew, however, *goyim* means, “the enemy,” often referring to Arabs and Muslims. This article examines the relationship between war and Israeli intra-Jewish racism. It decodes the ways the Israeli state uses war to divert attention away from domestic issues of racial and gender justice and toward the security of a colonial-settler Jewish state in the midst of the Arab world. Israel's 50-percent citizen majority is *Mizrahim* (or Jews with origins in the Arab and Muslim World and the margins of Ottoman Europe).<sup>1</sup> The other two segments of Israel's citizenry are the Palestinians with Israeli citizenship at 20 percent of the population, and *Ashkenazim* (European Jews of Yiddish-speaking origins) at 30 percent. Ashkenazim control the division of power and privilege in the state (Ashly 2019; CIJA 2014; Swirski 1989). I will argue that there is a direct relationship between large-scale Mizrahi protest against social injustice in Israel, military operations against the Palestinians, and the rightward movement of Israeli politics. Central to grasping this

relationship is an understanding of Mizrahi feminist activism and its internal contradictions (Lavie 2011). To make my case, I will track sequences of events that began with Mizrahi protest and ended with elections that bolstered the power of the political right. In between was a bloodletting cycle among the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Israel's neighboring Arab states. I offer an analysis of Operation Protective Edge, also known as the 2014 war on Gaza that focuses on the possible links between Mizrahi protest, the neoconservative restructuring of the Israeli economy, and the sanctity of the Jewish state.

My data, culled from extensive interviews, conversations, Hebrew print and electronic media analysis, and investigation of social media, illustrates the perspectives of some Israeli Jews and the majority of Mizrahi activists.<sup>2</sup> Mainstream and alternative printed and electronic materials support responses from the activists. Facebook became a major platform for Mizrahi political and cultural discussions and calls for action around 2010. This data confirms that the 2014 Gaza War was launched for three reasons: to preempt Mizrahi protests, to preclude resistance to the further privatization and deregulation of the Israeli economy, and to break the Hamas-PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) coalition.

It has not been easy for English-language readers to access information about the ways that protests led primarily by Mizrahi feminists might be connected to the Gaza War in 2014. Many Israeli Jews across the board exercise the Hebrew idiom *yod'im ve-shotkim* (knowing and keeping silent). This is the case for issues pertaining to the security of the state during episodes of military conflict (Herzog and Lahad 2006). The analysis that follows is an attempt to fill the lacuna created by these voluntary silences and the Hebrew-to-English translation block in Israeli media.

The progression of the 2014 events in Gaza points to two separate but parallel tracks, or timelines. The first is related to political and (inter)national understanding of the Israel-Palestine binary; that is, when the non-Hebrew-speaking world followed what was happening by what was in the news. This news coverage reflected the dominant narrative produced by both Israel and the PA and adopted by international media, wherein victimhood rarely departed from the category of the nation. It delineated conflicts between Israel and Palestine and between Israel and the Arab world. The other track, less familiar to non-Hebrew-speaking readers of the news, followed the timeline of internal social affairs: the ever-resilient Mizrahi-Ashkenazi racial formation (Lavie 1992; Omi and Winant 1986). Examining the interplay between these two parallel tracks called attention to a particular sequence of events: Mizrahi protests gathered momentum, Israel's Ashkenazi leaders choose go to war, elections followed, and finally, the government moved further to the right. This article brings together the two timelines by examining one case study: Mizrahi protests against mass evictions in the Labor Hill B-Jamusin neighborhood of Tel Aviv, beginning in 2013, and the political process that culminated in Operation Protective Edge against Gaza in 2014. What became clear is that the Israeli regime brought about the protest's failure through the war on Gaza.

### The Translation Block

Grassroots Mizrahi scholarship is stymied in its journey from Hebrew to English. A block on translation is prevalent in academia and mainstream and alternative media. The simplistic binary—Israel-Palestine—dominates news aimed at international consumption as well as US-European foreign policy decisions regarding the state of Israel.

English editions of Hebrew outlets such as *Haaretz* or *Y-Net*, and alternative media outlets like +972, have only recently started publishing stories on Mizrahim that are written for an international audience. These stories depict the internal decay of a Jewish state that

was once celebrated by the progressive Ashkenazi diaspora in North America and Western Europe as a “project of compassion” or “affirmative action on a national scale” (Feldman 2015, 145, 197). Such coverage of Mizrahi affairs is rarely connected to the larger “Question of Palestine” (Said 1979).<sup>3</sup>

English-language outlets cater to US-European interest in the Israel-Palestine conflict and vehemently deny their white, Ashkenazi privilege and participation in Israel’s racial order. The interconnectedness between the Israel-Palestine conflict and intra-Jewish racism is lost. The reasons for this lacuna are clear: exposure of Israel’s Ashkenazi-Mizrahi racial rift would alarm the financial machine of the pro-Israel lobby. Whereas progressive diaspora Jews, who are Israel’s broadest base of support, are mostly Ashkenazim, and identify with the ruling minority in the state of Israel, they have also been deeply involved in antiapartheid movements in South Africa, civil rights movements in the United States, and anticolonial movements in Latin America. It is unlikely that they would continue to support colonialist and racist ideologies and practices directed at Jews-of-color in the homeland of the Jews, where all Jews are supposedly equal.<sup>4</sup>

### The Pincers of the State

Even though Mizrahim form the majority of the Israeli-Jewish population, they do not control the policies of the Israeli state. Policy is still driven by the ruling Ashkenazi minority (see Lavie 2014; Swirski 1989). In striving to prove themselves to be just as Israeli as the Ashkenazi elite,<sup>5</sup> many Mizrahim are the staunchest supporters of Israeli ultranationalism and, by extension, of all Israel’s wars against its neighboring Arab states and against Palestinians—from the 1948 *Nakba* (catastrophe, Arabic) to Gaza 2014.<sup>6</sup>

The consequences can be seen in what happened to the movement of Mizrahi single mothers in 2003. My recent book, *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel: Mizrahi Single Mothers and Bureaucratic Torture* (Lavie 2014, hereafter referred to as *Wrapped*), presents a detailed case study of the two timelines of Mizrahi resistance and Israel’s wars. Mizrahi single mothers, led by Vicky Knafo, organized and marched on Jerusalem to protest an amendment to Israel’s *Ḥok HaHesderim* (or Arrangement Law), that slashed single mothers’ welfare allowances. *Ḥok HaHesderim* is the Israeli version of the United States’ Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985—a “Reaganomics” initiative to deregulate and downsize government, reduce spending, decrease taxes for the upper classes, and ease inflation through monetary control. Every other year, the Knesset Finance Committee presents to the plenum an amendment to *Ḥok HaHesderim*. The amendment is usually voted into law in the wee hours of dawn.

Mizrahi single mothers protested the 2003 grave cuts in their welfare allowances, but their movement eventually failed when a Palestinian suicide bomber dressed as an Orthodox Jew detonated a bomb aboard a Jerusalem bus. The plight of the single mothers had reached the point where agency dissipated and disappeared. It was completely off the public agenda in favor of the Palestine-Israel conflict.

### *One people, one heart*

The Mizrahi feminist strategy has always been to avoid discussion of Palestine because the majority of activists are left of Israel’s political center. They are either Socialist-Zionist, post-Zionist, or anti-Zionist. Their constituencies, however, are mainly ultranationalists or way right of center.<sup>7</sup>

By discussing Palestine, Mizrahi NGOs run the risk of losing constituencies—and therefore, funding—for their projects. Mizrahi feminist activism against intra-Jewish racism has

chosen to strategically disassociate itself from the Question of Palestine because its work is largely based in Mizrahi communities that are almost always ultranationalist, and because it relies on funding from progressive Zionist donors in North America and Western Europe. Thus, issues raised by particular protests, such as the 2003 Mizrahi Single Mothers' March on Jerusalem, eventually dissipated (Lavie 2011, 2014).

From 1999 to 2007, during my years in Israel as a welfare mother and Mizrahi feminist leader, I experienced firsthand the propensity for Mizrahi social protests to crumble when the Israel-Palestine conflict dominated international media coverage. Sometimes, the Mizrahi protests made headlines, but only when there was a lull in the usual reporting on the Israel-Palestine binary. A breaking event such as violence in Gaza, military conflicts with Lebanon's Hezbollah, or a soon-to-happen Israeli bombardment of Iran's nuclear facilities would blanket news outlets just as a protest gained momentum. Once the Israel-Palestine front exploded, it would effectively crush the movements. Mizrahi protesters would quickly bracket their causes and unite with Ashkenazim to defend the Jewish fortress against threatening goyim.

This is one side of the pincer that closes on Mizrahi social protests and deprives the Mizrahim of agency. The other side is the bureaucracy. People in all parts of the world, of all classes and races, have run-ins with bureaucracy. Those with means can either ignore or sidestep bureaucracy's ill effects by hiring specialists, such as lawyers and accountants, to navigate the labyrinthine systems for them. Disenfranchised populations in the Middle East and elsewhere often lack the ability to voice their concerns to those who would listen, however. Bureaucracy's lethal webs cannot be easily brushed aside, and yet activists and ethnographers of the Middle East neglect the centrality of bureaucratic transformation to any viable social change.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of Israel, one cannot separate religion from the gendered and racialized construction of citizenship. The state defines itself as a national homeland of the Jews. Jews religiously conceive of themselves as the "chosen people" and mandatory Palestine, turned into the state of Israel, is their "chosen land." Feminists who write and organize around intersectionality often overlook the interplay among gender, race, class, religion, and state bureaucracy. While most studies of neoliberal bureaucracy employ a Foucauldian or Marxian lens (Bear 2015; Graeber 2015; Mathur 2015; Gupta 2012; Hull 2012), my framework illustrates how Israeli bureaucracy draws on a theological essence that fuses these factors into the foundations of citizenship. Bureaucratic structures themselves, however, do not provide activists a clear target to coalesce against.

The state of Israel uses bureaucracy as its main tool to create a docile body of citizens and eliminate resistance to neoliberal restructuring (Handelman 2004). At welfare bureaus, single mothers often waited in long lines with no promises that their problems would be resolved (Lavie 2014). Many times, they reached a bureaucrat only to be sent to another bureau. When the well-being of a child, payment of rent, or access to low-income housing depended on a single mother giving a blow job to a government clerk, the clerk became an executioner of state torture and the mother, the tortured. This existence—bouncing from bureau to bureau and back—forced single mothers to live in a constant state of anxiety almost impossible to escape. Moreover, the psychic and somatic effects of single mothers' bureaucratic encounters—whether standing in line or in their own homes—gradually destroyed their bodies and souls. Bureaucratic torture is unspeakable. It is one of the state's gross crimes, even though it might not fit the narrow legal definition of "torture" (Lavie 2014).

### The New Black Panthers or *HaLo Neḥmadim*

Aḥoti (Sistah, in Hebrew) is one of the largest and most visible feminist organizations in Israel. Heart at East, initiated by Aḥoti, is a coalition of twenty NGOs dedicated to promoting community consciousness as it exposes and defies Israel's folkloric marginalization of Mizraḥi cultures. Heart at East issued landmark studies about racism in the distribution of public funds for Mizraḥi culture (Aḥoti 2011, 2012).

On the night of June 9, 2013, Carmen Elmakiyes led a group of activists from Aḥoti and other Heart at East NGOs, including *HaLo Neḥmadim* (literally translated as the Not-Nice but known in English as the New Black Panthers), to glue the names of Mizraḥi artists, authors, and historical figures over Tel Aviv's almost entirely Ashkenazi street signs.<sup>9</sup> This "direct action" (Graeber 2009) protested the exclusion of Mizraḥi history from Tel Aviv's public sphere. The event was important enough for *Haaretz* to sum up in its English edition. The translation block, yet again—the story appeared in English, but skipped over the larger historical context of Mizraḥi discrimination that appeared in the Hebrew original. The action remained well within the realm of internal social affairs: the timeline of the Ashkenazi-Mizraḥi racial rift.



Figure 1: *HaLo Neḥmadim* activists in Tel Aviv replace sign for Allenby Street, named after British General Edmund Allenby, with Vicki Shiran, founder of Mizraḥi feminism. Allenby was not Ashkenazi. He led the British army when it occupied Palestine from the Ottomans. Allenby Street is an exception among Tel Aviv's largely Ashkenazi street names.

**Photo credit:** Daniel Bar-On/*Haaretz*, 2014.

[Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

*HaLo Neḥmadim* was the most militant among the Heart at East NGO coalition. It was a nonpartisan group of neighborhood activists who organized after the failure of the Tel-Aviv-Tahrir Occupy 2011 protest, when the concerns of the neighborhoods were overshadowed



by Ashkenazi youth leadership. Its key actors were also leaders of Aḥoti, and they were primarily active in Black City.

Tel Aviv is divided into Black City and White City (Rotbard 2005). Black City mostly consists of Mizraḥi ghettos. White City takes its name from UNESCO's World Heritage Site white Bauhaus-style buildings, nestled between glass and steel high-rises. White City residents are mostly Ashkenazi (Rotbard 2005). HaLo Neḥmadim explicitly challenged Israel's racist policies against Mizraḥim. Its advocacy focused on the fight against gentrification evictions, homelessness, poverty, and other issues of race-related neglect in Black City Tel Aviv and in Israel's largely Mizraḥi development towns. For summer 2014, HaLo Neḥmadim planned violent demonstrations against additional neoliberal economic reforms (Levy 2016; Misgav 2015, 150).

Summer is an auspicious time for street protests because landlords who price families out of their apartments and evict them, and banks that enact foreclosures, aim to coincide these efforts with the end of the school year, when they are less likely to be served with antieviction lawsuits. Evicted families, in theory, can use the summer break to look for housing or to protest. Warm weather allows for demonstrations and tent-living in urban parks or on shaded boulevards. School is out, and volunteers who sympathize with the protesters keep their children occupied with games and activities. Protesters hope this convivial scene will deter police violence. Summer 2014 was ripe with possibility for HaLo Neḥmadim to rouse Israeli streets.

### **Ḥok HaHesderim 2014**

On February 10, 2014, the Knesset's Finance and Economics Committee presented an irregular interim amendment to Ḥok HaHesderim, the same biannual deregulatory budget-cut legislation that sparked the 2003 protests. Although the law had been amended the previous year and was not scheduled for further amendment until 2015, the Knesset planned to vote on it in late spring 2014.

After reading a first draft on February 17, the Knesset returned the amendment to the Finance and Economics Committee for revisions (Knesset 2014a).

"The only way it's going to pass is under the smokescreen of a war," an old-timer Mizraḥi activist rasped to me over Skype one winter Shabbat.

The first group to be further harmed by the 2014 amendment would be Mizraḥi single mothers.<sup>10</sup>

On May 26, 2014, the Knesset Finance and Economic Committee met and prepared for a vote on the amendment to Ḥok HaHesderim (Knesset Finance and Economic Committee 2014).<sup>11</sup> It proposed the privatization of state-owned utility companies and ports and their possible sale to conglomerates based in the Netherlands, the Philippines, Germany, or China. Furthermore, the amendment detailed the cancellation of an NIS 1 billion low-income housing project. It is probable that the funds for the housing project were reallocated to partially cover the NIS 3.14 billion debt of the Israeli Military Industries (IMI). The regime planned to sell 49 percent of the IMI to outside investors, who were wary of the IMI's deep debt.

The funds to cover the IMI debt did not come from taxation or foreign aid, but may have instead been redirected from Mizraḥi housing projects. In the late 1990s, the Mizraḥi Democratic Rainbow NGO led a successful campaign for the sale of low-income housing units to their tenants, so that they might deed them to their children instead of continuing to pay subsidized rent. This resulted in 2001 legislation that transferred housing ownership rights from the Housing Ministry to low-income Mizraḥim, and generated about NIS 1 billion. In addition to transferring the housing funds to cover the IMI debt, investigative

journalists in the mainstream media reported that the government “took a haircut” of about NIS 2.5 billion from the IMI debt to make it attractive for foreign investors (Azulay 2014; Hasson 2014; Channel 2 News 2014). The regime’s choice of date for this irregular amendment was puzzling to many: it conjoined financial policies directed at Israeli citizens with the foreign affairs move to sell 49 percent of its prized weapons industry—the two seemingly disparate time tracks of the state.

The government’s neoliberal reforms were not consistent with similar budget cuts and privatization policies around the world in response to the global financial crisis of 2008. Indeed, the crisis did not affect the state of Israel (Klein 2007, 485–590; Rozenhak and Shalev 2011, 47). The 2006 Lebanon-2 War had bolstered the Israeli economy. The regime funneled vast sums of money to the IMI to restock weapons, rebuild the Galilee after the Hezbollah bombardments, and fund posttrauma social services. Just as international media applauded Israel’s financial stability, the Israeli government enacted more austerity measures toward disenfranchised populations (Davidoff 2014).

### **Labor Hill B—Jamusin**

The catalyst for HaLo Neḥmadim’s major mobilization in 2013 was the state’s plan to evict, demolish, and gentrify the Mizraḥi neighborhood Giv’at ‘Amal Bet (Labor Hill B, in Hebrew)—the neighborhood’s name is a vestige of Israel’s socialist era. Before the 1948 Nakba, Labor Hill B was the Palestinian village, Jamusin.<sup>12</sup> Labor Hill sits in the middle of White City between elegant apartment buildings and skyscrapers on one side, and the IDF Central Command on the other. As Labor Hill’s population grew, housing regulations for refugees inherited from the British mandate transformed it into a heap of temporary structures, since the rules prohibited permanent foundations and roofs. Well-heeled White City Ashkenazim would visit for authentic Mizraḥi food or drugs and often shake their heads: “This is just like the Untouchable shantytowns we saw in India on our big South-Asian tour.” Gazan and West Bank Palestinians who would visit their blue-collar Mizraḥi bosses would often rub their eyes in disbelief: “This is just like a refugee camp.”

Unlike the Mizraḥi ghettos in Black City, Labor Hill occupied prime real estate in Ashkenazi territory. Starting in 1954, Labor Hill fell under *Pinuy-Binuy* (Evacuate and Build in Hebrew) of Tel Aviv’s municipal master plan,<sup>13</sup> the term city planners adopted for emptying Mizraḥi barrios during gentrification. For residents, the reality was dispossession-destruction-exile: standard practice is that any belongings residents cannot salvage are to be bulldozed. Palestinian homes are simply demolished. For sixty years, the people of Labor Hill suffered through a labyrinth of court orders and bureaucratic procedures while the Israel Land Administration Authority sold Labor Hill’s Palestinian land to private contractors, who sold it to other private contractors because residents remained steadfast. They could not afford even below-market-rate buy-ins in the new development.

The era of postponement came to an end in March 2014. The regime approved the deployment of Yasam (the anti-terror Israel Police Special Patrol Unit) to forcibly evict two families from their homes. Yasam is the same riot control counter-terrorist unit that uses live fire to squelch Palestinian demonstrations inside pre-1967 Israel. Meanwhile, young activists started trickling into Labor Hill for the planned protests. Most were Mizraḥim, and many were Ahoti activists, many from HaLo Neḥmadim. Some were Ashkenazi-Israeli anarchists, Ashkenazi Jewish members of Israel’s Communist Party, and North American and Western European internationals from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), who had a history of demonstrating against the separation wall and demolitions of Palestinian homes.<sup>14</sup>

Were these protesters and residents of Labor Hill strange bedfellows?<sup>15</sup> Mizraḥim have always supported the Zionist political right because it was the socialist Zionist left that advanced the ideologies and policies of intra-Jewish racism. In addition, like all Mizraḥim, the people of Labor Hill have relatives whose only way to escape the slums was to move to affordable housing in larger West Bank settlements. This is exactly what anarchists, communists, and ISM activists oppose. Unlike most Ashkenazim on the Israeli left, these anti-Zionist, direct-action activists began to realize the significance of the relationship between Mizraḥi and Palestinian precarities. Five more expulsion-demolitions for Labor Hill were scheduled for summer 2014. Encouraged by international support in the spring, HaLo Neḥmadim started to make Molotov cocktails, amass gas tanks, and collect barriers to fortify the neighborhood. Together with residents, they planned to resist the Yasam by tying themselves to gas canisters and blowing themselves up in front of the five families' homes.

In spring 2014, the world's major media was busy reporting on the Ebola outbreak and the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17—there were no blowups in the Israel-Palestine border zone. HaLo Neḥmadim hoped the lull would continue into the summer and thus grant their spectacular resistance international media coverage.

As usual, though, lethal bureaucratic entanglements soon followed—just as they had in the summers of 2011 and 2003. Activists' old parking tickets, ancient water bills, and long-forgotten bounced checks, including interest and late fees, suddenly resurfaced. These were the same tactics that preempted the long-term social change that was the hoped-for result of the Single Mothers' March on Jerusalem in 2003. Like every Mizraḥi social movement, this one also had its paid Shabak (Israel Security Agency) informers, and they did their jobs well.

### **The Hamas Salary Fiasco**

In spring 2014, the PLO and Hamas shifted their attention from Israel to the task of forming a coalition.<sup>16</sup> After the Oslo Peace Accords of 1993, the PA, whose main political party was the PLO, had become the largest employer in the West Bank and Gaza. When Hamas won elections in January 2006, thereby turning the PLO into the opposition, the PA had about two hundred thousand employees. As a result of the 2006 elections, Hamas and the PLO formed a unity government for both Gaza and the West Bank until 2007. After a series of violent clashes in 2006 and 2007, however, Hamas ended up in control of the Gaza Strip, and the PLO in control of the West Bank. Between 2007 and spring 2014 Hamas controlled Gaza, and PLO controlled the West Bank. The majority of West Bankers, however, have remained Hamas supporters (Levitt and Zilber 2015; Mor-Haim 2014).

Since the Hamas 2006 election victory, the PA has paid its bureaucrats unemployment in exchange for them not working for Hamas. This meant that Hamas was forced to establish an entirely new bureaucratic apparatus that gradually grew to include forty-five thousand people. Their salaries were paid primarily from the heavy taxes Hamas levied on goods smuggled through tunnels connecting Egypt to the Gaza Strip.<sup>17</sup>

In July 2013, Abdul Fataḥ al-Sisi led a US-backed military coup in Egypt backed by the US, suspended the Egyptian constitution, and appointed himself president (Kirkpatrick 2013). In early March 2014, an Egyptian court declared all Hamas activity in Egypt illegal (*Al Jazeera* 2014). The Egyptian military proceeded to close half the tunnels, diminishing revenues from smuggled goods. This meant no salaries for Hamas bureaucrats. The Hamas financial crisis resuscitated the attempt to form a unity government with the PLO and resulted in a May 2014 reconciliation agreement (BBC 2014b). The crux of the arrangement was that the Emir of Qatar would transfer funds generated from natural gas exports to the



PA. The PA, in turn, would then transfer part of this sum to Hamas, who would use it to pay its employees (Levitt and Zilber 2015; AFP 2014).<sup>18</sup>

The Israeli government responded by threatening banks involved with sanctions for “financing terrorism” if they transferred Qatari funds to Hamas. Robert H. Serry, the UN Secretary-General’s personal representative to the PLO and PA, warned of Hamas missile attacks on Israel if Qatar was indeed prevented from transferring the money (Akram and Rudoren 2014). Israel, the United States, and the PA refused to listen.

### Operation “Brother’s Keeper”

The media focus on HaLo Neħmadim came to an abrupt end on June 12, 2014. An extremist splinter of Hamas kidnapped three Israeli teenagers—Naftali Frankel, Gilad Sha’er, and Eyal Yifraħ—while they hitchhiked in the West Bank.<sup>19</sup> This was in response to a series of IDF atrocities in Gaza that followed the signing of the Hamas-PLO reconciliation agreement. The IDF Air Force had launched two missiles at a motorbike moving through Gaza. Israeli intelligence assumed that the rider was a senior Hamas leader. The effort failed. Instead, the missiles severely injured seven passers-by. In early June, the IDF continued these attempts to target Palestinian guerrillas with heavy-duty bombs, but managed only to kill a seven-year-old Gazan boy. In addition, Israel tightened the Gaza blockade in its efforts to break the Hamas-PLO coalition (Landau 2014).

How did the Hamas splinter cell choose these boys as its targets? The decision might have heeded the recommendations of the 2010 *Hamas Kidnapper’s Guidebook* (Channel 2 News 2010).<sup>20</sup> The Guidebook’s author explains that the preferred target should have an Ashkenazi phenotype because the Israeli regime has historically proven more amenable to releasing prisoners in exchange for Ashkenazi rather than Mizraħi hostages. A long-time grassroots Mizraħi feminist leader put it to me over Skype:

Yifraħ, a classic Yemeni, he just looked it, and his last name. Make no mistakes about Frankel—it’s the last name and color. No wonder his mom was all over the press. Sha’er looked white. I guess they asked him his last name. It’s Arabic. Surprise, surprise. With two Mizraħim and one Ashkenazi you can’t negotiate much.

The boys were instantly codified by the kidnappers at first by phenotype that indicated a quarry of significant value—two Ashkenazim and one Mizraħi. When the kidnappers learned the last name of the light colored Mizraħi boy, however, they suddenly discovered that they did not have the leverage they had before.

In *Wrapped*, I coined the term GendeRace to describe the calcified amalgamation of gender and race that happens in the blink of an eye. GendeRace points to how the constructionist concepts of “gender” and “race” become essences—primordial truisms that racialize Israel’s demographic Mizraħi majority into a disenfranchised minority. GendeRace petrifies “the intersection.” Rather than moving through it, people are stuck. They are therefore unable to construct racialized and gendered identities that lend themselves to political agency.<sup>21</sup> Even the *Kidnapper’s Guidebook* stays faithful to the racial formations of Zionism, because they seem to work.

The publicity of the kidnapping allowed Hamas to resume its place at center stage and created a chain of other events. Operation “Brother’s Keeper” began on June 15, 2014 in response to the kidnappings. What was ostensibly a search to find the boys and their captors in the West Bank included massive air strikes across Gaza. The IDF killed nine Palestinians and raided thirteen hundred properties, including commercial and residential buildings in the West Bank. More than five hundred Palestinians were arrested without charge or trial

and the IDF enforced a curfew across the Hebron area (*Times of Israel* 2014). The national mood in Israel turned somber. Sad songs of bravery and loss poured out of radios and TVs.

*One people, one heart*

On June 15, twenty-five thousand people attended mass prayers at Jerusalem's Western Wall for the safe return of the boys (*Haaretz* 2014). On June 28 at Tel Aviv's Rabin Square—the Western Wall's antithesis, the starting point for LGBTQ pride parades and leftist antigovernment mass demonstrations—tens of thousands rallied in solidarity with the boys' families (Hartman 2014; Misgav 2015, 163). Between the two demonstrations, and twelve days after the kidnapping, Bibi (Benjamin Netanyahu) sent the boys' mothers to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to plead for the safe return of their sons (UN Watch 2014). Netanyahu and the regime, however, knew the boys were already dead. On the evening of the kidnapping, June 12, at 10:25 p.m., Sha'er had called the police emergency hotline (Edmiston 2014).

A cry of pain.

Close-range gunfire.

On June 26, the IDF identified the kidnappers (Erdman 2014). Civilian volunteers, *not* the IDF, found the three boys' bodies in a field outside Hebron four days later.<sup>22</sup> Why wait eighteen days to tell the public that the boys were dead? Was it a tactic to foster national unity? An entire nation united behind the hopes of the three families at any cost—even the exchange of Palestinian guerillas with “blood on their hands.”

*All Israel in pledge to each other*

As early as winter 2014, Mizrahi activists had predicted that if the HaLo Nehmadim protests gathered momentum, an international crisis would follow. Public attention would shift. Indeed, with the kidnapping crisis, fortification of Labor Hill against the planned expulsions-demolitions stopped. As the mothers made futile pleas for the return of their sons in Geneva, HaLo Nehmadim went home. The entire July and August summer break lay ahead of them. They hoped to revive their momentum when the national mood recovered following the funerals of the boys. Instead, however, the regime issued *Tzav Shmone* (Order Eight, in Hebrew), the IDF's immediate extra active reserve-duty summons, enlisting reserve soldiers into war (*Jerusalem Post* 2014). No social justice demonstrations. Time to bracket the cause and join with the Ashkenazim, united yet again as Israelis against the Arab goyim.

**The War on Gaza – Protective Edge**

Between July 8 and August 27, 2014, the IDF launched Operation “Protective Edge”, also known as the Gaza War. The operation involved a forty-nine-day massive aerial and ground artillery bombardment followed by incursions of IDF soldiers who fought in the streets and homes of Gazans. Hamas responded by striking White City, Tel Aviv with missiles.<sup>23</sup>

The Palestinian death toll was approximately twenty-two hundred and consisted mostly of civilians (BBC 2014a). More than eleven thousand were wounded (Defense for Children International 2015). According to a United Nations Development Program report (2014), one in four people in Gaza was forced to flee their home during the seven-week Israeli operation. The IDF Air Force, ground artillery, and infantry destroyed almost all Gazan infrastructure: hospitals, schools, and mosques were reduced to rubble. Gazans suffered an Israeli-made disaster unparalleled since the 1948 Nakba. During that same period, 66 Israeli

soldiers and 7 civilians were killed, and 1,620 soldiers and 837 civilians were wounded (BBC 2014a). The War on Gaza destroyed what foreign capital had built after the Oslo Accords. It also hammered the last nail in the coffin of the two-state solution peace plan. The Nakba had exiled Palestinians from their homeland, but the Zionist regime had left infrastructure intact, at least temporarily, to accommodate a forthcoming mass migration that was mostly Mizrahi. The Israeli regime dynamited most of it soon after. Gaza 2014 was even more destructive: it left hardly anything intact.

A scene at dusk outside Sderot, a small, largely Mizrahi desert town about five kilometers from the Israeli border with the Gaza Strip. The town is a stronghold of Mizrahi culture (Saada-Ophir 2006). It has been a constant target for Hamas rockets for the past fifteen years. PTSD is endemic. With high unemployment, ever-increasing costs of living, and ever-shrinking social services, Sderotis had planned to join forces with HaLo Nehmadim in the summer 2014 nationwide protests. Instead, they were taking in the military spectacle of IDF bombardments on Gaza. As the Mediterranean breeze wafted from the Gaza shores, they left their air-conditioned homes to watch the war while picnicking, drinking espresso, and eating popcorn (Mackey 2014).

*One people, one heart is a popular bumper sticker.*



Figure 2: Sderot's Mizrahi residents gather at dusk to watch July 2014 bombings of Gaza Strip.

**Photo credit:** Oren Ziv/ActiveStills, 2014.

[Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

Halfway through Operation "Protective Edge", Israel granted the Palestinians a respite. Ever resilient, Palestinian families used the ceasefire to celebrate the end of Ramadan, *'Id al-Fitr*, and enjoy a holiday meal amid the rubble of their homes and mosques.

As Hamas bombarded Tel Aviv, Mizrahi feminist activist Na'amit Mor-Haim published a captivating analysis of Gaza 2014 on *Ha'Okets*, the leading Mizrahi blog. It bore a

magical realist title: “The Stunning Story of How I Got Entangled in a Hamas Bookkeeping Quarrel.”

... Did we engage in warmongering over twenty million dollars of salaries just as Hamas was trying to unite ranks with the PLO? Was it worth it? That is, I get the timing—this week [the government] okayed the wiping out of three billion of IMI’s debt a moment before its sale [to private investors] ... and that every round of Gaza boosts IMI sales five to ten billion dollars. This bonanza is soaring over my head as the interceptors are roaring to meet nozzle-rockets that don’t even arrive in one piece. It all feels to me a bit Kafkaesque from [the improvised shelter of] my staircase, to think that I got entangled with Hamas’ accountants. This all could have been avoided by [Israel’s] facilitating the Hamas salary payments and by loosening the Gaza blockade for the people of Gaza to regain a bit of normal[cy]... We can play with terrorism as a language game, but this [military operation] is about electricity, ports, and basic goods for ... families, hundreds of thousands of people and children, even though we’ve chopped their numbers in recent days. All to create more nests of resistance and more people with good reasons for wanting revenge, so that we are able to yell: “Hate! Hate!” and continue to control the city of lab rats to test our weapons. Until the next round (Mor-Haim 2014, see Oren 2016).



Figure 3: A Palestinian family celebrates the feast of ‘Id al-Fiṭr during the Gaza 2014 ceasefire. Their home lies in ruins following the IDF bombardment.

**Photo credit:** ‘Ali Hassan/Anadolu, 2014.

[Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

## Under the Smokescreen of War

While Na‘amit and other residents of central Israel spent the summer sweating in crowded, makeshift shelters, the Knesset continued with its regular legislative schedule. The irregular amendment to *Hok HaHesderim* was scheduled for a second reading before the Knesset plenum on July 14, only two days into Operation Protective Edge. Expectedly, both Hebrew and international media outlets were focused on the Gaza Carnage. The streets of Tel Aviv were empty. No tent cities of protesters set up along tree-lined boulevards. Those who could afford it had flown to Europe or North America for vacation. Others sought relief in remote, eco-friendly desert resorts that were too far away for the media to cover, and therefore, impervious to Hamas missiles. Such escapes were beyond the means of HaLo Nehmadim activists and their constituents.

By June 2014, “Not to worry, a war is coming—one people, one heart,” was appearing in my Facebook newsfeed.

The July 14 Knesset session to discuss the amendment to *Hok HaHesderim* started at 4:01 p.m. with a welcome from the Chairman, post-Soviet emigré Member of Knesset (MK) Yuli-Yoel Edelstein of Likud (Knesset 2014b):

Knesset members . . . Today is the Seventeenth of Tammuz<sup>24</sup> . . . [Today] marks the eighth anniversary of the eruption of the Lebanon-2 War. In these hours, not only the people of the south, but all of us, together, confront the present security crisis. Lest we forget, this is a day for hundreds of families to visit military cemeteries and mourn loved ones<sup>25</sup> . . . These days, we can clearly see the lessons learned from the Lebanon-2 War by the political ranks as well as the IDF . . . The present battle demonstrates that we have put those lessons into operation<sup>26</sup> . . . We ought to separate criticism levied at decision-makers . . . from our support of IDF troops. They are all our sons . . . protecting our people and state, so that here in the Knesset, we can continue our parliamentary deliberations in peace (Knesset 2014a).

Palestinian MK Moḥammad Barakeh (Hadash, then the only non-Zionist, left-wing political party) received permission to address the plenum first.

Mr. Chairman and Knesset members, these days we are told: “Quiet, We’re Shooting” (*sheket yorim*, Hebrew).<sup>27</sup> My heart goes out to entire Gazan families that IDF bombardments extinguished. . . . What is the aim of Netanyahu and his government? Do they still cling to the delusion that the more dead Palestinians, the safer Israelis are? . . . Netanyahu cynically advances a political agenda against his opposition from inside and outside the coalition government by means of war [against the Palestinians] . . . Has Israel gone to this war, really, to protect its citizens? . . . This is a crime against humanity.

Israel defends the occupation and endangers its citizens’ lives as it commits war crimes . . . I’m calling on those Israelis who broke the silence in an anti-war demonstration with Palestinians in Tel Aviv . . . The protesters were attacked by fascists and police . . . If the streets are going to be filled with . . . gangs attacking people for their opinions . . . fascism is not at our doorstep, it’s already here.

MK Barakeh was referring to the demonstration on July 12, where the “fascists” were young, muscular, brown men, wrapped in Israeli flags, and the police—mostly Mizrahi and Ethiopian. Both groups loathe the well-heeled Ashkenazim, who attend every demonstration

against Israel's military atrocities directed at Palestinians. Nevertheless, these demonstrators are rarely seen at Mizrahi demonstrations protesting hunger, homelessness, and insufficient health care. Disenfranchised Mizrahim conceive of pro-Palestine demonstrations as white, Ashkenazi privilege.

Underneath these violent demonstrations lay a deep racial wound with a long past—first blood—“before a scab is formed, it hemorrhages again” (Anzaldúa 1987, 2–3). The genesis of Zionism's racial formation was the 1882 importation of Yemeni “natural workers” to labor for the first wave of socialist Ashkenazi settlers in Palestine. This was the birth of the Ashkenazi left's white privilege.<sup>28</sup>

The chairman to Barakeh: “Please end up.”

Shortly after the obligatory statements of solidarity with soldiers and the silencing of MK Barakeh, MK Gila Gamliel (Likud) took over as chairperson. The discussion turned to the crux of this unusual session.

Prof. Avishay Braverman, a key Labor Party MK and head of the Knesset Finance Committee, took the floor. A Stanford alum, he is a renowned economist and former president of Ben Gurion University. He said “It is my honor to present to you for a second and third read, Amendment No. 14, 2014 to Hok HaHesderi.”

When Prof. Braverman was done introducing the law, even as the Gaza War continued to roar, the Knesset proceeded to consider the sale of surveillance equipment to Singapore. Then it turned to national funding for marine research. The penultimate item dealt with boarding schools and runaway children in such a way that would further disenfranchise Mizrahi single mothers.<sup>29</sup>

Despite sparse attendance, Amendment 14 to Hok HaHesderim was voted into law. As Gamliel was ending the session, she addressed the visitors' gallery. She began in Hebrew, “I want to welcome our guests, tourists from the United States,” and then shifted to English: “Welcome to Jerusalem! Welcome to the Parliament! The Knesset! The parliament of Israel!”

The Israeli public only learned about the amendment's ratification as law on July 24, when it was published in the Israeli Statutes at Large (Knesset 2014b).<sup>30</sup> The session had aired live on the Knesset television channel, but public attention was focused on Gaza rather than the “everyday business of governance” (Knesset 2014a). Hebrew media finally covered the amendment three days later. Channel 2 reported that the IMI had already received bids from Dutch, German, Chinese, and Philippine investors for the sale of the industry's 49 percent. Similarly, bids arrived for the sale of 49 percent of the state-owned utilities companies and ports. All these companies were newly listed on the stock market (Channel 2 News 2014). Finance Minister Yair Lapid used the spectacle of war to nix an NIS one billion plan to remodel dilapidated low-income housing projects and build new ones (Busso 2016). Meanwhile, new military contracts to restock the IDF with weapons were expected to further bolster the industry. As done every summer, Knesset members also succeeded in securing a pay raise for themselves. Meanwhile, many public sector employees were already subject to salary freezes and furloughs, and thus underemployment. Order Eight reservists' incomes were cut.<sup>31</sup>

I returned to Tel Aviv for the *Wrapped* book launch party at Aḥoti's Home and for the Jewish High Holidays less than a month after the Gaza War 2014 ceasefire. My friends and sisters in the Mizrahi struggle, the efforts to end the occupation, and the coalition to recognize children as the inalienable property of their mothers all came to celebrate with me.<sup>32</sup> To my relief everyone got along—right-wingers and left-wingers, Ashkenazi peace



activists and Mizrahi feminists, traditionalists in long sleeves and kerchiefed heads and secularists scantily dressed to alleviate the late summer's humid heat. None of my Arab '48 friends showed up, however. Palestinians with Israeli citizenship would not dare venture to Ahoti's Home in Black City. Much of south Tel Aviv is a right-wing bastion. Everyone repeatedly told me to keep quiet about Operation "Protective Edge". Fascist gangs roaming Black City with chains and knives would break your bones, they warned. But I was home. When I compared the ends of both the 2003 Knafo march and the Tel-Aviv-Tahrir Occupy 2011 with the truncated protests against the expulsion-demolition of Labor Hill, the packed room made the connection to Gaza 2014 before I could spell it out.

Two days later, on Rosh Hashanah Eve, the urban din of Tel Aviv quieted. That morning, the Yasam had arrived with the developers' bulldozers to destroy five more Labor Hill houses. They had chosen the date carefully. The public, exhausted by Gaza 2014, was preparing for the second most sacred Jewish holiday. At dusk on Rosh Hashana Eve, the entire country shuts down. That morning, Labor Hill residents had posted a call-to-arms on Facebook. A few die-hard Ahoti and HaLo Neḥmadim activists came to protest the expulsions-demolitions, only to be treated with extreme violence by the Yasam. The developers and police assumed, and rightly so, that not many activists would disrupt the first day of the Jewish New Year to hold mass protests in solidarity. Instead, concerned citizens brought potluck to share with families whose homes were demolished. Together, they prayed and ate the holiday meals in front of the rubble.

*One people, one heart*



Figure 4: Residents of Labor Hill eat their Rosh Hashanah meal in front of their demolished homes.

**Photo credit:** Shiraz Grinbaum/ActiveStills, 2014.  
[Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

### **Elections 2015: The Center Moves Further to the Right**

Having been directly in the line of fire in 2014, many voters for the “Land for Peace” parties—well-off Ashkenazim and base voters for bourgeois Labor or Meretz Zionists—became disillusioned with the peace process. For the first time in their lives, they considered voting for ultranationalist parties, despite the courtship and perks promised by the Labor-Meretz bloc. Elections were scheduled for 2017. The Knesset, nevertheless, voted to dissolve in December 2014. This sequence followed the same familiar cycle as years prior and points to the convergence of the two timelines: the Israel-Palestine binary clock tracked by international news, and the intra-Jewish racism masked from view by the Hebrew-to-English translation block. Thanks to a lull in the Israel-Palestine conflict in summer 2011, the Tel-Aviv-Tahrir Occupy 2011 protests had succeeded in getting international media attention. The IDF Operation Pillar of Cloud in Gaza, however, ended the protests. That operation in turn led to an early October 2012 call for elections after parliamentary gridlock over a draconian budget proposal for the upcoming year. In just the same way, a timely Palestinian suicide bomb ended the 2003 Knafo march—a protest that had become possible thanks to a lull in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The bomb was one of the cumulative reasons for the IDF to launch its 2008 Operation Cast Lead (as translated from Hebrew) or the Gaza Carnage (as translated from the Arabic). Operation Cast Lead united all Israeli Jews and thus ended the Knafo unrest. Shortly thereafter, Israel’s prime minister resigned, the Knesset dissolved due to gridlock over the budget, and the president called for elections. The political center moved to the right, and Netanyahu was elected prime minister.

So here they go again. On March 17, 2015, Israelis went to the polls for early parliamentary elections. Of the 120 Knesset seats, Likud won 30 and the Zionist Union won 24. The new ‘48 Arab party, having united several smaller parties of Palestinian citizens of Israel into the Joint Arab List won 13 seats, becoming the third-largest party. This shocked many Israeli Jews. Another new party, *Kulanu* (All of Us, in Hebrew), also right-wing on the subject of Palestine, won 10 seats. Their diverse list even included a Druze. Led by Moshe Kahlon, whose parents immigrated to Israel from Libya, Kulanu’s platforms focused on income inequality, cost-of-living, and other socioeconomic issues. It had Mizraḥim on its advisory board and list of candidates. Kahlon, however, distanced himself from anything ethnic. His platforms therefore lured some of the disappearing middle class, both Ashkenazi and Mizraḥi. Many seasoned activists’ Facebook posts accused Kahlon of running on a false social ticket.

President Reuven Rivlin followed procedure and on March 25, 2015 appointed Netanyahu as prime minister to form the thirty-fourth government of the state of Israel—on the Mizraḥi majority vote, yet again (Hoffman 2015).<sup>33</sup>

A day before these Israeli elections, the United States and Iran began historic, direct negotiations for a nuclear treaty. Netanyahu invited himself to the US Congress in an attempt to sabotage any possible US-Iranian agreement (Rudoren 2015). This foreign-policy grandstanding deflected the media’s attention from the spike in the cost of living and the rapid deterioration of nutritional stability and public health care for Israel’s disenfranchised.

Meanwhile, entire Mizraḥi neighborhoods and towns in the center of Israel are being gentrified and ethnically reconstituted. The Ashkenazi real estate bubble continues to expand. Buying homes in pre-1967 Israel has become completely unaffordable for most young Mizraḥim. As the political center keeps moving to the extreme right, the West Bank settlements present one of the few options for newlyweds to become homeowners (Lavie 2011, 2014). The accelerating housing crisis has intensified the unchecked growth of the large urban West Bank settlements near the 1948 armistice line. In addition, middle-aged, middle-class Mizraḥim, who gained equity in the real estate bubble of pre-1967

central Israel, are more often selling their homes to Ashkenazim. Many parents of young Ashkenazi couples can no longer afford to help their children make a down payment for housing in upper-middle-class enclaves in Israel's geographic center, so they are buying out the homes of the Mizrahi middle and lower-middle classes. Mizrahi parents are dividing the cash from the sales of their pre-1967 central Israel homes among their children. This is facilitating down payments for affordable housing in the settlements. The apartheid road system (B'Tselem 2004; McGreal 2005) grants settlers a quick commute to pre-1967 Israel, where most of their jobs are located.

The difficulties of rebuilding Gaza under a stricter Israeli blockade and stringent regulations were relegated to the back pages of newspapers, if featured in the press at all.

Since September 2015, the Israel-Palestine conflict has yet again escalated into what international media has dubbed the Intifada of the Knives. Statistics posted by the Red Cross of Israel in May 2016 showed that in 2015, there were 34 Israelis killed and 380 injured as a result of car rammings, stabbings, and shootings (Magen David Adom 2016). Meanwhile, also in 2015, 208 Palestinians were killed and more than 1,400 have been injured (Middle East Monitor 2016; UNOCHA 2016).<sup>34</sup>

Jamusin, or Labor Hill, is no longer on the public's radar. The Israel-Palestine conflict persists.

### **The Steady Drumbeat of Eternal Return**

The aim of this article is to depart from the usual political perspective—the Israel-Palestine binary. It presents a new analytical toolbox. It challenges assumptions that the domestic socioeconomic politics of intra-Jewish racism and the (inter)national aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict are two distinct domains. I argue that the plight of Israel's Mizrahim and the plight of Palestinians are complementary. The state of Israel uses war as a unifying force to divert attention from domestic issues of racial and gender justice through the sanctity of the chosen people in their chosen land. Israeli Jews—Ashkenazim and Mizrahim alike—are completely in thrall to the binary.

While Mizrahi feminists of color do stage protests against neoconservative restructuring in Israel, they cease when Israel undertakes a new cycle of violence against the Palestinians. They do not challenge their communities' ultranationalism. As a result of the Jewish state's unity against all goyim, Israel's demographic Jewish majority—racialized and minoritized—increasingly votes for neoconservative, authoritarian politicians. The political center keeps moving further to the right.

*One people, one heart*

The eternal return of the question I asked in *Wrapped*:

*How long can the regime depend on Mizrahi docile loyalty to the Jewish state?*

More questions follow. Will Mizrahim continue to be at the bottom of the benefits' list for their efforts on the killing fields, on the streets, and at the polls in support of the same right-wing parties that implement the policies that work against them?

Two Mizrahi dudes in the Mitzpe Ramon swimming pool, the 2006 Lebanon-2 War:

*The government has abandoned us not only on the battlefield but also in their bomb shelters.*

*They're corrupt, all of 'em. What can we do? Nothing.*

### Notes

1. In English, Mizrahim are often mistakenly called Sephardim, derived from the Hebrew word, *sfaradim* (Spaniards). The Sephardim are descendants of the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492, and they constitute one group of the Mizrahim.
2. Preliminary anthropological fieldwork and archival research were conducted during 1990–94 through three-month visits to Israel and were funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the University of California Humanities Research Institute at Irvine, and the University of California, Davis Junior Faculty Research Grant. Further fieldwork was conducted between 1999 and 2007 while stranded in Israel and supported by inadequate single-mother welfare provided to me by Israel's National Security Bureau. From August 2007 to present, I have not lived a day-to-day life in Israel. In-situ fieldwork was conducted over periods of three to six weeks at a time between 2009 and 2014. Between 2007 and the present, I conducted lengthy interviews and conversations over Skype and phone on a weekly basis, participated in e-groups, and collected relevant Israeli media in print and online. From 2013 to present, data from social media has been collected on a daily basis.
3. When I mention the Question of Palestine, I allude to Edward Said's path-breaking book of that title (Said 1979).
4. Indeed, in recent years, the US-based anti-Zionist, pro-BDS organization, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), mainly in dialogue with Israel's Ashkenazi non-Zionist left, has formed a Mizrahi-American-Jews-of-color caucus to address identity politics issues of their non-Ashkenazi constituencies. This caucus also functions as an entryway for JVP to explore Israel's Mizrahi demographic majority rather than simply view all Israeli Jews as a uniform body of citizens. Since the publication of *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel* (Lavie 2014), Mizrahi communities have, nevertheless, continued to move further toward the ultranationalist right on the political scale. Thus, Israeli-based Mizrahi NGOs and activists have largely avoided contact with new diaspora initiatives such as JVP, fearing a resultant alienation from their constituencies and the potential loss of funding from progressive Zionist diaspora Jews who donate large amounts of funding to these NGOs through the New Israel Fund (NIF) in the name of diversity and gender equality. One noted exception is Reuven Abergel, co-founder of Jerusalem's Black Panthers, who toured US JVP branches in 2017. Abergel's history as an icon allowed his support of the BDS in the early 2000s to be excused by the Mizrahi community. For further discussion of how the NIF controls Israel's NGO sphere, see Lavie (2011, 2014).
5. For a further discussion of the Ashkenazi whiteness of the North American-Western European Jewish diaspora, please see Lavie (2014).
6. *Nakba* (catastrophe, Arabic) is the 1948 expulsion of most Palestinians from their homes, villages, and towns in order to carve out the State of Israel.
7. Left wing Mizrahi activists are not to be confused with Israel's affluent Ashkenazi political left – be it the Ashkenazi Socialist left, post-Zionist left or anti-Zionist left. When in power in the 1990s, the Ashkenazi Zionist left has consistently carried out right-wing domestic social and economic policies. The Ashkenazi post-Zionist and anti-Zionist left did not protest these policies, fearing to disrupt the Oslo peace process (Lavie 2011, 2014).

8. Anthropological literature has recently turned its eyes onto the subject of bureaucracy (Bear 2015; Graeber 2015; Mathur 2015; Gupta 2012; Hull 2012). This trend has not followed in large part into Anthropology of the Middle East. Noted exceptions are Feldman (2008), though it is a historical analysis rather than one based on contemporary issues, and more recently Berda (2017) and Babül (2017). The only place where bureaucracy is being discussed as a tool of colonialist governance are the many newspaper articles on how the state of Israel uses bureaucracy to control Palestinians in the West Bank (see also Berda 2017).
9. HaLo Neḥmadim trace their Hebrew name to a stormy meeting between the Jerusalem Black Panthers and the Prime Minister Golda Meir on April 13, 1971. She was outraged by their violent methods, trivializing them with the phrase: “they’re not nice” (Mann 1998, 84-85).
10. In the eyes of authors of Ḥok HaHesderim, single mothers stand as non-entities since they constitute a family without a patriarch and are thus invalid. So single mothers stand to have their funding cut first because there is no man to earn it by serving in the military and providing reserve duties (see Lavie 2014).
11. Knesset of the State of Israel Finance Committee Meeting, Minutes No. 271 on Legislative Amendment No. 14 to Ḥok HaHesderim, 19th Knesset [in Hebrew], Knesset Finance and Economic Committee, May 26, 2014. <http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawSecondary.aspx?lawitemid=548662> (accessed on May 4, 2016).
12. The village’s full name was *Jamusin al-Gharbi*. After the 1948 Nakba, the Zionist regime renamed many Palestinian villages to reflect Socialist-Zionist imagery — therefore “Giv‘at ‘Amal Beit” or “Labor Hill B.” There was also “Labor Hill A.” Until recently, Israeli Hebrew-speakers often referred to pre-1948 Palestinian place names in everyday speech, so they used “Jamusin.” To create a broad coalition, HaLo Neḥmadim strategically used the Hebrew name, Labor Hill (omitting the “B”), to avoid the Arabic. Throughout this article, I use “Labor Hill” when referring to the neighborhood.
13. *Pinuy-Binuy* is the status for dilapidated, one or two-story residential homes slated for destruction to make room for multi-story residential complexes. The Ministry of Housing can declare a renewable, six-year Pinuy-Binuy zone. Although Pinuy-Binuy became official Housing Ministry policy in 1998, it has been an integral part of gentrification and urban development in major Israeli cities since the 1950s.
14. The ISM is a Palestinian-led civilian social movement founded in 2001 that is committed to nonviolent protest to support Palestinians in the Israel-Palestine conflict.
15. Such a coalition between right-wing Mizraḥim, Jewish members of Israel’s Communist Party, anti-Zionist anarchists, and ISM members happened for the first time in 2007 during the expulsions-demolitions in Salameh-Kfar Shalem (See Lavie 2007).
16. Hamas is an acronym for *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-‘Islāmiyyah*, or Islamic Resistance Movement.
17. Since the 1980s, there has been a system of tunnels connecting the Gaza Strip to Rafah (Egypt), the main town at the west end of the Gaza Strip. Its eastern part is controlled by Hamas, and its western part was returned to Egyptian sovereignty in 1982. The tunnels were dug to circumvent the Israeli blockade of goods into Gaza from the Israeli port of Ashdod. These tunnels are also employed to smuggle people and weapons.
18. The Emir of Qatar has been hospitable to Hamas leaders exiled by Israel from Gaza and the West Bank.

19. Sha'er's Arabic last name revealed his Mizrahi origins. During Operation Brother's Keeper, the media Hebraized Sha'er's last name (meaning "poet," Arabic) to "Sha'ar" ("gate," Hebrew).
20. The author of the *Guidebook* is Mohammed Hassan Ahmed 'Arman from Kharbata in the West Bank. He is one of the leaders of the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. He was arrested in 2002, tortured, and received thirty-six life sentences. In 2014, he was elected to the committee that represents Hamas prisoners (*Middle East Monitor* 2014 and Isacharoff 2010).
21. GendeRace is comprised of the Husserelian noesis-noema complementary binary that constructs the essence. For a detailed discussion of GendeRace, see Lavie 2014, 80-81.
22. The IDF killed the boys' abductors in a shootout at the basement of a Hebron carpentry workshop on September 23, 2015 (Ben Yishai and Levi 2014).
23. While Hamas had the capacity to bomb Tel Aviv, they avoided missile deployment in the heart of Ashkenazi Tel Aviv until Gaza 2014.
24. The Seventeenth of Tammuz is a fast day and the first holiday of the *Beyn HaMetzarim* ("between the straits," Hebrew), three weeks in the Jewish calendar for memorializing the process of the Temple's destruction. The period culminates in *Tisha B'Av* (Hebrew), the annual fast day, or the ninth day of the Jewish month Av, commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.
25. It is a Jewish custom to visit the graves of family and friends on minor fast days. Cemeteries have special areas for fallen soldiers.
26. Much of the Israeli public interpreted the outcome of the 2006 Lebanon-2 war as a loss to the Hezbollah.
27. "Quiet, We're Shooting" is a shortened 1970s song lyric that has become a cultural reference. The full line, "Dear Father, Quiet We're Shooting," is taken from Hanoach Levin's play, *Queen of the Bathtub*. It was performed during the War of Attrition with Egypt in the Suez Canal and the PLO in the northern Jordan Valley (1969-1970). The play, highly critical of Israel's military death cult, was censored by the Council for the Oversight of Plays and Cinema. Since then, "Quiet, We're Shooting" has become a colloquialism in Hebrew. Since the 1982 Lebanon War, the phrase lost its gallows' humor and became a call for unity in wartime. MK Barakeh was purposefully evoking an expression that spans many registers of Hebrew language and Israeli culture.
28. On the history of Zionism and Mizrahi labor from 1882 onward, see Lavie (2014, 29-67).
29. The proposed law would make harboring runaway children illegal. It is well-known to Mizrahi single mothers that boarding schools do not screen for pedophiles in their staff-hiring process. The proposed law required anyone with information about a runaway to make a police report (see Lavie 2014, 120-144).
30. The text of the July 27, 2014 ratification to the irregular amendment to *Hok HaHesderim* does not spell out the issues appearing in the Knesset transcript of July 14, 2014. Rather than reflecting the contents of the Knesset sessions, this one-page document contains procedural legalese.
31. Every summer, MKs receive an annual cost-of-living salary increase. During Operation Brother's Keeper, 21,000 citizens signed a petition demanding immediate discussion of a salary freeze. MK salary increases in times of war were frivolous and irresponsible (Movement for Quality of Government in Israel 2014). The petition was presented to the Knesset on July 11 and promptly ignored.



32. There were no books for the Aḥoti launch event because the first print sold out halfway through my Ireland tour, which preceded my trip to Israel.
33. The fall 2014 Knesset dissolution stemmed from two other points of contention that took a backseat to the budget: disagreement over negotiations with the Palestinians and the drafting of ultra-orthodox men into the military.
34. Unlike the readily-available numbers for Israel's dead and wounded, there are no easily obtainable figures for Palestinian casualties. The UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory (UNOCHA) provides an estimate as of December 2015.

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