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HOMEFRONT AS BATTLEFIELD: Gender, Military Occupation and Violence Against Women
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There is a strong connection between violence against women and violence in the Occupied Territories. A soldier who serves in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and learns that it is permissible to use violence against other people is likely to bring that violence back with him upon his return to his community.

(Ostrowitz in interview with Sharoni 1990)

INTRODUCTION

In April 1989 Gilad Shemen, a twenty-three-year-old Israeli-Jewish man doing his military service in Gaza, shot and killed a seventeen year-old Palestinian woman, Amal Muhammad Hasin, as she was reading a book on her front porch. The Regional Military Court convicted Shemen of carelessness in causing Hassin's death, but he was released after an appeal. Two years later, on June 30, 1991, Gilad Shemen shot and killed his former girlfriend, nineteen-year-old Einav Rogel. In an interview right after her death, Einav Rogel's parents recalled that their daughter had supported Gilad Shemen unconditionally during his military trial, trying to convince everyone around her that he was not guilty. Yet during that entire period Einav did not tell anyone that Gilad also had been violently abusing her. She did not recognize the connections between Gilad's shooting of a Palestinian woman and the violence and fear that Gilad brought to her own relationship with him. Einav Rogel lived and died in a society that draws clear distinctions between 'us' and 'them,' and usually doesn't even record the names of Palestinians who are shot. At the same time, she did not realize that, like many other Israeli women and most Palestinians (both women and men) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, she belonged to a high risk population since she lived in the line of fire of an Israeli man who had learned to use his gun to deal with crises and difficult situations.

This tragic story underscores the complex relationship between sexism, militarism, and violence against women. This relationship has been explored at length by feminist scholars and activists (Accad 1990; Morgan 1989; jeffords 1989; Ruddick 1989; Cooke 1988; Enioe 1988; Cohn 1989; Reardon 1985). It is extremely important, however, also to situate the tragedy of Gilead Shemen within the specific sociopolitical context of the third decade of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This chapter deals with the impact of the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip on women's lives, by highlighting the connections between, on the one hand, the social construction of gender identities and gender relations in Israel and, on the other, the use of violence in the Occupied Territories and on the Israeli 'homefront.' Although the chapter focuses primarily on the origins and manifestations of men's violence against women, it does not treat violence as a set of practices with which men are born; these practices are used rather as a means of coping and they are acquired by and reinforced in Israeli men through education and social interaction.

The chapter will critically examine the dominating role of the Israeli military in all spheres of Israeli society, and the social and political implications of militarization and violent conflict for women's lives both in Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The central argument here is that violence against women is intimately related to other forms and practices of violence, especially in the context of the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Much of the recent literature on women's ways of

coping with the violence inflicted upon their lives by war and conquest tends to remain caught between two opposed, stereotypical images: the image of woman-as-victim; and that of woman-as-heroine (Sharoni 1993; Abdo 1991). To move beyond the constraints of these dominant representations, this chapter will focus on particular stories which demonstrate the range of women's daily experiences of violence and the diverse strategies which women have employed in resisting violence. In addition to drawing attention to the multifaceted struggles of Palestinian women in the Israeli Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the chapter will explore recent attempts by Israeli-Jewish feminists and peace activists to connect, on the one hand, their own resistance to the violence inflicted upon Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Israeli military and, on the other hand, their own struggles to end male-inflicted violence in the lives of women in Israel.

MILITARY OCCUPATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S LIVES

*The pitchforks in local women's hands are brown:
nails and nails,
rust and rust in their edges
and a long wooden handle
intended to pierce the flesh of our faces,
to pluck.
Our women, pluck their eyebrows.*

(Sternfeld 1988, quoted in Ben Ari, 1989: 375)

This poem dramatizes the intersection between sexist, militaristic, and racist discourses. Three particular distinctions are at play here: between men and women; between 'us,' the local-patriots, and 'them' (the 'enemy'); and between 'our' women and 'their' women. These configurations reflect particular power relations, which are grounded in and reinforced by the reality of military occupation. The poem calls attention to the fact that Israeli soldiers have used the pretext of cultural and moral superiority to justify their use of excessive power over Palestinians, both women and men, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. While he treats both Palestinian and Israeli women as objects with no political agency, Sternfeld maintains a clear distinction between them by using Orientalist depictions of Palestinian women. ² Moreover, Sternfeld uses his portrayal of Palestinian women as vicious enemies, ready to pierce and pluck the flesh of Israeli soldiers' faces, to resolve the tension between the Israeli army's self-portrayal as a humane army that has tried at all costs to prevent women and children from suffering (Gal 1986) and the reality of military occupation, which has been sustained through an indiscriminate use of violence against Palestinians as a whole, including women and children.

The indiscriminate use of violence and oppressive practices against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially since the outbreak of the intifada in 1987, has had particular implications for women's lives. Palestinian women have had to confront violence on two intimately related fronts: as members of the Palestinian community; and as women. Their homes and bodies have become the battlefields for these confrontations. Rita Giacaman's and Penny Johnson's gendered examination of the first year of the intifada (Giacaman and Johnson 1989) highlights these multidimensional confrontations in relation to the ongoing struggles of Palestinians against the Israeli Occupation. Giacaman's and Johnson's retelling of the story of Umm Ruquyya ('mother of Ruquyya'), the mother of a young Palestinian woman activist in the West Bank, captures the harsh reality of life for women under occupation: 'we went to visit her on November 6, 1988 when we heard that the family house had been demolished by the Israeli army. Hers was one of more than 100 houses destroyed in the northern Jordan

Valley, leaving about 1,000 persons homeless and devastated' (Giacaman and Johnson 1989: 155). Ruquyya was the first among both the men and the women of her community to mobilize resistance in response to the demolitions of family homes by the Israeli military, thus serving as 'one of many women forging a new chapter in the history of the Palestinian women's movement' (Giacaman and Johnson 1989).

The Israeli military has used multiple strategies to suppress the unprecedented political mobilization of Palestinian women. During the first two years of the intifada, the Israeli military used tear gas, which was found to cause miscarriages, to suppress demonstrations and to deter women from future participation in public political events. In addition, by declaring the Palestinian Women's Working Committees and any other form of social and political organizing by women illegal, the Israeli military authorities created a pretext for massive arrests of Palestinian women. Women were arrested and interrogated not only because of their political activities but also in order to put pressure on their families and to get incriminating evidence against family members (Strum 1992). Sexual harassment and sexual violence, in addition to other means of torture and humiliation, have also been used as weapons against Palestinian women (Rosenwasser 1992; Strum 1992). To live under military occupation is to live in a permanent state of war, with no place to hide and no cease-fires. Palestinians have lived with the oppressive and violent reality of occupation since 1967.

Only with the outbreak of the intifada in December 1987 have these circumstances begun to be exposed and subjected to public scrutiny, as abuses such as sexual harassment and sexual violence against Palestinian women have been added to the agenda of human rights and women's peace groups in Israel. Since the beginning of the intifada, the Women's Organizations for Women Political Prisoners (WOFPP) in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem have received numerous complaints of sexual violence committed by Israeli military forces against Palestinian women in the Occupied Territories. Such incidents occur not only during interrogation but also in connection with street patrols and the suppression of demonstrations. The case of thirty-six-year-old Fatma Abu Bacra from Gaza, who was arrested in November 1986, is a representative example of the sexual abuse and humiliation which Palestinian women have suffered during interrogation by the Israeli Security Services. One Israeli male interrogator touched her face and breast, while another showed her a picture of a naked man and told her that the picture was of himself. He then took off his clothes and threatened to rape her. Abu Bacra reported the torture to her male lawyers, but only submitted a detailed affidavit about the sexual abuse later on when she had a woman lawyer. In this affidavit, Fatma Abu Bacra describes how, further, she was removed by one of her interrogators to a separate room, with no policewoman present (in violation of regulations), and forced to sit in a corner with her head wedged between the interrogator's legs while he touched her, verbally abused her, threatened her with rape, and eventually reached sexual climax (WOFPP Report 1992). This affidavit was accepted on November 22, 1988 by a military judge, as the basis for a pre-trial hearing on the validity of admissions which Abu Bacra had made under sexual torture. In the spring of 1989 the pre-trial hearings began, and during the proceedings a plea bargain was reached: under pressure Abu Bacra agreed not to challenge the way in which her confession had been obtained; in return, she was promised that her sentence would not exceed five years. However, in June 1989 Fatma Abu Bacra was given a seven-year sentence. She appealed and the sentence was reduced to six years. The Israeli authorities later used this unfulfilled bargain to claim that Abu Bacra had retracted her statement on the torture and sexual abuse which she had undergone during interrogation. Since the minutes of these proceedings remained classified, Abu Bacra's lawyer appealed to the High Court of justice demanding the right to publish them. Finally, in order to circumvent publication of the interrogation minutes the authorities decided to release Fatma Abu Bacra a year earlier than her sentence had stipulated, in November 1991, on the condition that her appeal be withdrawn (WOFPP Report 1992).

Although the Palestinian uprising has not broken the silence and denial of Israeli society in general, it has served as a turning point in the political awareness of many 'Jewish women in Israel. The Israeli Women's Organizations for Women Political Prisoners, for example, have been documenting particular cases, like Fatma Abu Bacra's, of torture and sexual violence experienced by Palestinian women; thus they have, like other Israeli women's peace groups, begun to expose the connections between the excessive use of sexual violence as a weapon against Palestinian women, the sharp increase in violence against women in Israel, and the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Especially since the outbreak of the intifada, many women in Israel have begun to challenge the marginal, passive roles assigned to them in Israeli society and politics. For the first time in the history of the state, women have organized and taken clear positions against state and military policy. Israeli women have voiced strong dissent against the Occupation and against the brutal violence used by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. New women's protest groups such as Women in Black, Reshet (The Israeli Women's Peace Net), Women's Organizations for Women Political Prisoners, Shani Women Against the Occupation, and The Women and Peace Coalition have emerged, providing opportunities for women to step out of their socially assigned, politically peripheral roles (Sharoni 1993a; Deutsch 1992; Chazan 1991). Israeli women's political interventions have not found widespread acceptance among Israeli men. Women in Black groups throughout Israel have become targets for verbal and physical violence that is almost always laced with sexual innuendo. The epithets which some men shout at women protesters 'whores of Arafat' or 'Arab lovers' reflect the culture of militarism and sexism within which Israeli men are socialized.

But while many Israeli men find it difficult to understand what has motivated women to protest weekly for more than four years against the Occupation, for Women in Black the interconnectedness between militarism and sexism remains a tangible, experienced part of their struggle to find a political voice for themselves and to express their opposition to the continuing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The image of the brutal occupier who commits daily violence against Palestinian women and children and brings the violence home to his family and friends does not fit the national image of the brave Israeli soldier who has no choice but to fight in order to protect Israeli women and children. But, slowly, the message is starting to become clear: the violent patterns of behavior that are used by the Israeli army against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are part of a culture of unchallenged sexism, violence, and oppression which women face daily on Israeli streets and in their homes.

EVERY WOMAN IS AN OCCUPIED TERRITORY

They bombarded us they shoot one salvo after another Directing toward us strafing and guns. Nurit, I have encircled the Third Battalion, Now I want to encircle you.

In this 'love' poem, the heroic/erotic discourse fuses militaristic metaphors as expressions of love and lust, violence and sex. Women like the enemy are to be encircled and occupied by Israeli heroes. This particular poem is but one representation of the perverse relationship between militarism and sexism that surfaces in most spheres of Israeli society. That relationship is clearly inscribed in the Hebrew language as well. The multiple meanings of the word *kibush* represent a striking case in point. The word *kibush* is the most commonly used Hebrew term for the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and is also used in Hebrew to describe conquest either of a military target or of a woman's heart. This conflation of women and military targets is not merely linguistic, but rather informs numerous practices in Israeli society in general and in the Israeli military in particular. During military training exercises, for example, the strategic targets are quite often named after significant women in the soldiers' lives: women, like military targets, must be protected so that they will not be conquered by the 'enemy'; while men must fight, occupy, and protect. These examples suggest interplay between gender, language, and politics in Israel, which has been grounded in and reinforced by particular social and political conditions. Israeli men

soldiers have constantly to prove their readiness to sacrifice their lives on the battlefield; while Israeli women are left with no other choice but to 'sacrifice' their lives, freedom, and independence on the homefront. Israeli women's bodies, hearts, and identities have been conquered, occupied, and objectified in numerous ways. Language further reflects the state of Israeli gender relations and cultural politics. The common word for 'husband' in Hebrew, for example, is *baal*, which also means both 'owner' (noun) and 'had intercourse with' (verb), indicating that women are perceived as their husbands' property. Israeli men's 'private' ownership of 'their' women has in fact been extended to the state. The treatment of Israeli women as occupied territories also manifests itself in numerous practices of control over women's identities, roles, and bodies, which have been reinforced by the escalation of the Arab-Israeli/Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Three practices are of particular relevance here: the steep rise in violence against women in Israel since the outbreak of the intifada, and particularly in the aftermath of the Gulf War; the mobilization of women's reproductive work in the service of the state under the pretext of 'demographic war', a pretext that has been used to justify impediments on women's reproductive rights in general and restrictions on abortion laws in particular; and the mobilization of gender identities in service of the state.

Violence against women

The connections between sexism and militarism, and between violence against the 'enemy' on the battlefield and against women on the homefront, are by now considered old feminist themes (Enloe 1988; Woolf 1977; Brownmiller 1975). Women peace activists in Israel have become particularly aware of these connections since the outbreak of the intifada. Rachel Ostrowitz, editor of the Israeli feminist magazine *Noga*, calls attention to the similarities between the ways in which both Palestinians and women are treated by Israeli men: The similarity in the treatment of oppressed human beings is clear to us. When we read every day about nameless dead Palestinians, we remember that women are often treated as persons without names. 'Women are all the same,' they tell us; 'all Palestinians are the same.' The voices merge. (Ostrowitz 1989: 14). The dehumanization of both Palestinians and women legitimizes the discrimination, the humiliation, and the oppression and violence inflicted daily upon them. Rachel Ostrowitz further delineates the connections between the use of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the steep increase in violence against Israeli women on the homefront: "Oppression is oppression is oppression . . . There is a strong connection between violence against women and violence in the Occupied Territories. A soldier who serves in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and learns that it is permissible to use violence against other people is likely to bring violence back with him upon his return to his community. This has direct implications for our lives as women". (Ostrowitz in interview with Sharoni 1990)

The structures which Ostrowitz sees as responsible for the oppression and humiliation suffered by Palestinians and by Jewish women are grounded in and reinforced by the unchallenged acceptance of 'national security' as the top priority in Israel: The twisted priority that land is more important than human life reminds us of other twisted priorities military equipment instead of equal pay for women, or better education for the future generation. (Ostrowitz 1989: 14-15) Such 'twisted priorities' have served as pretexts in the recruitment of women's bodies in the service of the state.

Women's bodies as national battlefields

In virtually all societies, the military maintains a major role in the shaping of gender identities and gender relations, especially in war zones. Focusing on the army as a major 'agent of socialization' for men, Cynthia Enloe points out how the juxtapositions of masculinity against femininity and of men against women serve as important ideological frameworks in the military. Military forces past and present have

not been able to get, keep and reproduce the sorts of soldiers they imagine they need without drawing on ideological beliefs concerning the different and stratified roles of on women and men. Without assurances that women will play their 'proper' roles, the military cannot provide men with the incentives to enlist, obey orders, give orders, fight, kill, re-enlist, and convince their sons to enlist. Ignore gender and social construction of 'femininity', and 'masculinity' and the relations between them and it becomes impossible adequately to explain how military forces have managed to capture and control so much of society's imagination and resources. (Enloe 1988: 212). Enloe's powerful critique demonstrates how women, and strategies for controlling women, have been used to support military campaigns around the world. This has been definitely true in the case of Israel. In direct relation to men's wars on the battlefield, Israeli Jewish women have been 'recruited' on more than one front.

Since the early 1950s, Israel has utilized one myth in particular that of a nation under siege to justify political practices such as the 'demographic war.' Prime Minister David Ben Gurion actually raised the issue of women's fertility to the level of national duty, arguing that: 'Increasing the Jewish birthrate is a vital need for the existence of Israel, and a Jewish woman who does not bring at least four children into the world is defrauding the Jewish mission' (quoted in Hazleton 1977: 63). In the 1980s, that old myth was once again invoked to fit the political agendas of the time. The 'Efrat Committee for the encouragement of Higher Birth Rates' linked the public debate on abortion to the 'demographic war,' for which women's bodies had served as the designated turf. Utilizing the rhetoric of religious anti-abortion groups, the Efrat Committee called upon Jewish women to fulfill their national duty by bearing more children in order to replace the Jewish children killed by the Nazis (Yuval-Davis 1987).

An extreme example of how this ideology was put into practice was a narrowly defeated proposal by the then advisor to the Minister of Health, Haim Sadan. Sadan proposed to force every Jewish woman considering abortion to watch a slide show which would include, in addition to horrors such as dead fetuses in rubbish bins, pictures of dead Jewish children in the Nazi concentration camps (Yuval-Davis 1987). This shocking example is not unique. In fact, the Holocaust has been mobilized in this way by the state and its dominant institutions not only to justify hardline political positions and military campaigns, or racist and sexist policies such as 'demographic war', but also to clearly mark the borders between what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man in the Jewish state.

Gender identities in the service of the state

In order to have a place in the Israeli collectivity and to share the patriotic ethos of 'national security,' Israeli women have to enter the narrow doorways marked 'mother' or 'wife' through their affiliation with a male soldier. Former Knesset Member Geula Cohen, the founder of the extreme rightwing Tehlya party, utilized the rhetoric of national security and her platform as a political woman to remind Israeli women of this national obligation: 'The Israeli woman is a wife and a mother in Israel, and therefore it is her nature to be a soldier, a wife of a soldier, a sister of a soldier, a grandmother of a soldier. This is her reserve duty. She is continually in military service' (Hazleton 1977: 63). It is in this light, according to former Israeli Knesset Member Marsha Freedman, that women's liberation in Israel is deemed a threat to 'national security' (Freedman 1990: 108).

In addition to the 'reserve duties' articulated by Geula Cohen, Israeli women have to mediate the relationship between Israeli male soldiers and their motherland. The word for 'homeland' in Hebrew is *moledet*, which is a feminine noun derived from the verb 'to give birth.' Moreover, 'homeland' is almost always presented in Israeli popular culture as motherland, and men are portrayed as sons who return home to the warmth, love, and support of their beloved mothers. But Israeli men are socialized to understand that in order to be worthy of homecoming they must accept the need to sacrifice their lives for the homeland as a national duty and an honor.

The national narrative of heroic sacrifice is constituted from early childhood onward through mythologized stories such as these of Masada and Tel-Hat, and becomes the major model for measuring loyalty to the state and its ideology (Zerubavel 1990, 1991). This erotic/patriotic complex informs politics not only on the battlefield but on the homefront as well. For example, the funerals of Israeli soldiers are usually broadcast on radio and TV, and become politically charged as top government officials are shown comforting weeping mothers and commending them for raising up sons who were ready to sacrifice their lives for their homeland. In sum, the institutionalization of Israeli Jewish women's roles as the primary caretakers of a nation of soldiers would not have been possible without certain dominant interpretations of the Israeli-Palestinian and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Similarly, the 'recruitment' of Israeli women's reproductive organs into the service of the state depends upon the prevailing myth of Israel as a nation under siege, the underpinning of political practices such as the 'demographic war.' The linkages drawn between the Holocaust and Israel's anti-abortion campaigns further reinforce a particular order of gender relations in Israel, revolving around militarized men who fulfill the sacred task of protecting women and children on the 'homefront.'

ZIONISM, 'NATIONAL SECURITY' AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MILITARIZED MASCULINITY

The centrality of the military among Israeli social and political institutions has often been taken for granted. However, this centrality is not natural. It has been constituted and reinforced through specific ideologies and practices. The establishment of the Israeli state and the elevation of its hegemonic Zionist ideology made 'national security' a top priority, designed to secure the survival not only of the country but of the Jewish people at large. This view of the priority of Israel's 'national security' is grounded in a particular historical narrative concerning the birth of Israel, an historical narrative whose core is formed by several unchallenged myths. The notion of Palestine as the 'land without people for the people without land', and the claim that the Zionists welcomed the partition of Palestine while the Palestinians rejected it belong to one sort of myth. Another is that the Palestinians fled Palestine in 1948 despite Jewish leaders' efforts to get them to stay, or that after the 1948 war Israel extended its hand in peace to all neighboring countries, but not a single Arab leader responded (Segev 1986; Flapan 1987; Morris 1988). Through such self-legitimizing myths, the state's dominant historical narrative regarding the birth of Israel has hardened into an ideological shield that has been projected on to Israeli society as well as the Jewish Diaspora.

The Israeli military has become the major agent for facilitating this process of ideological projection. Since the establishment of the state, the declared objectives of the Israeli doctrine of 'national security' have always been to build a cohesive, unified front. Accordingly, as discussed earlier, Israel's dominant conceptualizations of 'national security' have been constructed around unchallenged representations of Israel as 'a nation under siege,' surrounded by enemies that threaten to throw the entire population into the sea; and this myth has been reinforced through constant invocations of the Holocaust and through political manipulations of facts concerning the 1948, 1967 and 1973 wars. In recent years, a new generation of Israeli historians such as Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (1992), Simha Flapan (1987), Benny Morris (1988), Anita Shapira (1992), and Tom Segev (1986) have begun to challenge the conventional belief that in all the wars it has fought Israel's action have been 'just and inevitable, guided by the principles of human dignity, justice, and equality. However, despite compelling evidence presented in this scholarship, most Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora still cling to the illusion that Israeli domination and repression have been inevitable; essential to the survival and security of the nation. Simha Flapan reflects on the rigidity of these myths and their centrality in Israeli society and politics by sharing his own experience: "Like most Israelis, I had always been under the influence of certain myths that had become accepted as historical truth. And since myths are central to the creation of structures of thinking and propaganda, these myths had been of paramount importance in shaping Israeli policy". (Flapan 1987: 8)

Yet, what remains missing even from revisionist accounts, like Flapan's, of Israeli history is a gendered understanding of dominant historical narratives and myths, exploring the particular conceptions of masculinity and femininity that these historical narratives Present. By making 'national security' a top priority, by grounding it in specific interpretations of Zionist ideology and of the history of the Jewish people, and by turning military service into a national duty, the state has offered Israeli Jewish men especially those of European or North American descent privileged status in Israeli society. Furthermore, since one of the primary objectives of the Israeli doctrine of 'national security' has always been to build a cohesive, unified front, 'national security' has been used to justify Israeli militaristic and expansionist policies and political practices and also to neutralize and thus to legitimize and reinforce existing inequalities among Israel's citizens along lines of gender, ethnicity, class, and political affiliation. Israel's disenfranchised populations have in effect been asked to understand that until the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved they must stand united against the external 'enemy' (Swirski 1989; Shohat 1988). Attempts by grassroots social movements representing Israel's second-, third-, and fourth-class citizens women; Jews from Arab and North African countries; and Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship to protest against discriminatory state policies have been dismissed under the premise of 'national security.'

What remains particularly concealed in most existing critiques of Israeli 'national security' is the fact that the rhetoric of 'national security' depends on the preservation of the status quo not only with respect to Israeli-Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflicts but also with respect to the social construction of gender identities and roles. Israeli feminists and activists are gradually coming to terms with the ways in which the construction of Israeli masculinity is linked to the militarized political climate in Israel and in the region. More specifically, many women peace activists in Israel have recently argued that the institutionalization of 'national security' as a top priority in Israel contributes to gender inequities and legitimizes violence against Palestinians and against women. The Israeli state's doctrine of 'national security' depends both upon men who are ready to serve as soldiers, as fighters on the battlefield, and upon women who are ready to adjust to the needs of the Israeli collective experience. On one hand, women are socialized into the roles of unconditional supporters, exceptional caretakers, and keepers of the homefront; on the other hand, they are expected to remain vulnerable and in need of protection.

While these contradictory messages no doubt result in major problems in the construction of Israeli women's identities, Israeli popular culture has attempted to resolve the contradiction by subordinating both roles to the primacy of national identity and by utilizing both images as pretexts for wars. It is important to note that the practical and symbolic mobilization of gender identities, roles, and bodies in the service of the Jewish state would not have been possible without engaging the mythologies of Israel as 'a land with no people for the people with no land,' as the only safe place for Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and as 'a nation under siege.' These narratives, sanctioned by some of the major tenets of Zionist ideology, have been used to Justify the masculine and militaristic practices associated with the establishment of the state of Israel; through them Israel's reassertion of 'masculinity' has been explained in terms of the need to end a history of weakness and suffering.

The symbol of the sabra can stand as an exemplary metaphor for this reassertion of masculinity. Named after the indigenous cactus which is tough and prickly on the outside and soft and sweet on the inside, the image of the sabra has played an important role in the construction of the identity of the new generation of Jews born in Israel. This generation has been portrayed as the antithesis of the weak, persecuted, and helpless Jews most commonly associated with collective traumatic memories of the Holocaust. The image of the sabra as the antithesis of the Diaspora Jew is used to reinforce the notion that Israel's offensive operations and military campaigns are a matter of national survival (Sharoni 1992a); in turn, the sabra's offensive and aggressive codes of behavior are Justified through the a-historical appropriation of the motto of 'never again.' Yet, exploitation of the sabra image is grounded not only in the 'uxtaposition of the image of the sabra against the image of the persecuted Jew in the Diaspora, but

also in the juxtaposition of masculine and feminine identities. In the terms of this gendered juxtaposition, men must be offensive on the battlefield in order to protect vulnerable women on the homefront. The underlying model of relations between strong, possessive men and weak, helpless women serves not only as a pretext for continued male domination on the homefront and justification for the use of violence on the battlefield but also, more generally, as justification of violent behavior by men. Thus the dominant juxtapositions of the invincible sabra man with the weak and helpless Diaspora Jew, and of men as protectors and women as needing protection, have been strongly informed and reinforced; even Justified by Zionist ideology and by the unchallenged centrality of 'national security' in Israel. The sabra has become a common metaphor in Israeli literature and popular culture for Israeli men, who are thus characterized as strong and brave, pragmatic, aggressive, and emotionally tough. Few have noticed, however, that only the tough and prickly outside part of the cactus fruit has been incorporated into readings of this metaphor.

There are no references in Israeli popular culture to the soft and sweet inside part of the fruit, which might be deemed 'feminine.' The sabra metaphor may therefore shed light on the ambiguities embedded in Israeli society's expectations of women. On one hand, when Israeli men are on the homefront, women are relegated to conventionally gendered roles: they have to be 'Inside,' 'soft,' 'tender' and sweet.' On the other hand, during wartime when men are on the battlefield, women are expected to step out of their traditional roles and to enter, if only temporarily, the public political arena. During such periods pragmatic, assertive, and tough behavior on the part of women is praised as a significant contribution to the collective national effort.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter explored the social construction of gender identities and gender relations in Israel in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, especially, in relation to the third decade of Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The chapter focused primarily on the relationship between sexism and militarism and its implications for Israeli and Palestinian women's lives, and on the connections between violence on the 'battlefield' and violence on the 'homefront.' The murders of Amal Muhammad Hasin and Einav Rogel by Gilad Shemen are but one symptom of the strong link between militarism and sexism; sexual abuse and violence used against Palestinian women political prisoners is another manifestation of this pathological relationship. However, Israeli society on the whole has so far refused to address the interconnectedness of militarism and sexism; in particular, it has ignored the relationship between the escalation of violent practices by Israeli soldiers against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and the steep increase in men's violence against women in Israel. Journalist Gabi Nizan was among the few Israelis who have tried to situate the murders of Einav Rogel and Amal Muhammad Hasin in the social and political context of military occupation.

A few days after Einav Rogel's murder he wrote in the Israeli mass circulation newspaper Hadashot: "In a country without wars, Einav Rogel and Amal Muhammad Hasin could have been good friends. In such a world Gilad Shemen could have been a good friend of both of them. But in our society, Shemen met both of them with a gun in his hand. This is very normal for an Israeli his age and it is normal that a gun shoots. This is what weapons are for". (Hadashot, July 4, 1991: 16)

Gilad Shemen will probably be sent to a mental health institution and not to jail; other Israeli men like him will continue to use violence as a means of dealing with problems both on the battlefield and on the 'homefront.' At the same time even the more liberal sectors of Israeli society hesitate to link publicly the use of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the increase in violence against Israeli women at home. When the Israeli media finally took note of the tremendous increase in incidents of violence against women including murder over the years of the Occupation, the reports lacked any

reference to the broader historical and political context within which such incidents of violence emerge and are tolerated. There has been hardly any mention of the impact of the Gulf War on the masculine self-image and national identity of Israeli men, or on the increasing vulnerability of Israeli women. The Gulf War was the first time that Israeli men were not drafted during wartime. Men remained on the 'homefront,' confronted with their families' fears, with their own fears, and with the vulnerability and helplessness of being locked in a sealed room. The image of the invincible Israeli soldier ready at all costs to protect women and children was endangered. Israeli men became increasingly uncomfortable with this unfamiliar role; many used the word 'impotent' to describe their feelings. Unable to express themselves violently against Arabs, as they have been trained and conditioned to do, and confronted with the fact that the separation between violence on the 'battlefield' and violence on the 'homefront' existed only in their minds, many Israeli men 'cured' their feelings of 'impotence' and longings for the excitement of the battlefield by projecting their aggression onto women (Sharoni 1991).

Separating one set of inequalities from another reduces possible threats to the often unchallenged regimes of power and privilege. But such connections do, nonetheless exist. Many of the same Israeli men who carry out violent practices against Palestinian men and women in the Occupied Territories with an official license from the state treat the significant women in their life as their 'occupied territories.' The murders of Amal Muhammad Hasin and Einav Rogel by the same man in military uniform is not a tragic coincidence, but a direct result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a context where every man is a soldier, every woman becomes an occupied territory. Feminist scholars and activists who are committed to social change need to challenge the silences and gaps in the conventional scholarship on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to examine further the relationship between militarism, violence, and the social construction of gender in Israel and elsewhere.